

The Director

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
HEADQUARTERS, SOUTHWESTERN MONUMENTS
COOLIDGE, ARIZONA



REPORT OF INSPECTION

ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT

By Charles A. Richey, Assistant Superintendent
October 18, 1941

On October 18, in company with Regional Architect Bennett, a field trip was made to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument to review proposed development on the Charles Luke property, adjacent to the international boundary on the Ajo-Sonoyta road.

At Gila Bend we picked up Mr. Charles Luke and Mr. Ike Houker, lessee, who will operate the filling station on the Luke property. These men accompanied us to the monument and returned with us as far as Gila Bend that evening. En route we had an opportunity to discuss details of the proposed development of the Luke property. At the monument we contacted Custodian Supernaugh who accompanied us during our inspection of the area.

The U. S. Customs Service and Immigration Service are pushing Mr. Luke and Mr. Kalil, both grantors of right of way for the Ajo-Sonoyta road, for residences to house their employees. It is understood that Mr. Luke plans to construct two of the residences and that Mr. Kalil will provide two on his private holdings back of the road right of way. Both of these right of way grantors have informed Mr. Supernaugh that they would like to have the residences conform with National Park Service ideas. It was understood that the residences referred to above will be constructed with FHA funds. It was understood from Custodian Supernaugh that Mr. Kalil had requested the Service suggest their ideas relative to the appearance of his buildings, through presentation of preliminary sketches. This matter was brought to Mr. Bennett's attention, and it is hoped that the Region Three Headquarters will be able to furnish some information for the guidance of this construction. Since the buildings referred to are on private lands within the monument boundaries, and as we have no control over these lands, exterior appearance of buildings and their grouping is of vital concern to this Service.

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Mr. Luke was agreeable to the general scheme of development for his area shown on Plan No. NM/CPC-2002, Suggested Charles Luke Development, prepared by Associate Landscape Architect Miller of the Plans and Design Division, except for the switching of types of use for the buildings, and requested that the entrance to his development be moved farther away from the border. This change, it was understood, was made at the request of the U. S. Customs Service, and should be helpful in making the crossing between their station and the Luke development more logical. It will also tend to improve a bad traffic condition at these points.

Mr. Luke agreed to have his architect in Phoenix prepare tentative plans and sketches along the lines of our general agreement, and submit them to the Plans and Design Division, Region Three Headquarters, at an early date. He also advised that he would be willing to go to Santa Fe to review his proposed development with them, if this would be helpful in arriving at an early solution to this problem. Mr. Bennett felt this would be unnecessary, and that sufficient information was available for review of the plans in the Region Three Headquarters.

Since this trip was largely for the purpose of determining the character and layout of the Luke development and to see if proposals would be agreeable to this Service, general agreements reached with Mr. Bennett and Mr. Luke indicate an early approval of this difficult problem.

Provisions were not made in the plans of the Ajo-Sonoyta road to care for curbing in the vicinity of the U. S. Customs Service and the proposed Luke development. It is believed that the area in the vicinity of both of these developments will be uncontrollably disturbed by car traffic unless curbing is constructed to control it. In case plans for these developments are definitely approved prior to this construction, it is hoped that a change order can be approved on the road contract to take care of this necessary curbing.

Assistant Superintendent.

Washington Office
National Park Service, Washington
National Park Service, Santa Fe

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL PARK

FILE NO. 204

REPORT BY O.A. WEESE
ON ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NAT'L MONUMENT.

IMPORTANT

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NEWTON B. DRURY,
Director.

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ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NAT'L MONUMENT (1928) ORGAN PIPE

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UNITED STATES
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National Park Service

File

of the Monument, accompanied by Messrs. McDougall and Supernaugh. During
The Director,
U. S. National Park Service approximately 350 miles, within the Monument,
Washington, D.C. was covered, as indicated on the accompanying sketch map. This gave me the

Dear Sir:

opportunity of seeing practically every part of the area, except the
During the period between April 9 and 20, I made a trip to the
higher mountain regions. The morning of April 17 was spent in confer-
Organ Pipe National Monument, and spent such time as was not taken
with Superintendent Hugh Miller, with whom I travelled to Tucson, and
up by travel, in the examination of this area and in conferences
and Saguaro National Monument in the afternoon. Further conferences with
with individuals from whom information could be obtained. My first
Drs. Vorhies and Shreve and with A. A. Nichol of the Arizona Game Depart-
conference was with Dr. Charles T. Vorhies of the University of
ment were then held.

Arizona, and Dr. Forrest Shreve of the Desert Laboratory, with whom
The Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument represents the largest area
I spent the evening of April 10, after my arrival at Tucson, and a
at low altitudes in the Southwest under the control of the National Park
considerable portion of April 18, after my return to that city.

Service. It is the only area of anything like similar character, which
Drs. Vorhies and Shreve are my associates on the committee of
is large enough for the preservation of the original biotic conditions, great
the Ecological Society of America having power to make recommendations
There is also sufficient diversity of conditions within the Monument to
in regard to the Organ Pipe National Monument. They were unable at
provide for the maintenance of an adequate sample of the biotic community
this time, to accompany me to the area, but since they were already very
of the Sonoran Desert. This, I believe, should be the primary purpose of
familiar with the territory, our conversations were helpful.

This Monument, although the scenic values as represented by the rugged
Others with whom I conferred, in addition to the National Park
mountains and the desert valleys are not to be ignored. According to the
Service personnel, were Mr. A. A. Nichol, of the Arizona Game Department,
classification of elements, the biotic community of this area is that
who has been familiar with the area for many years; and Mr. A. H. Trowbridge
Larrea-Truncata Formation, of which it is a typical example. Larrea
of the Fish and Wild Life Service, stationed in Tucson.

(Yucca baccata) and Yucca (Yucca) are the most prominent and
I left Tucson the morning of April 11, and during the forenoon conferred
widely distributed plant community in the Monument. Other plants men-
tioned by the above author as characteristic of the Shrub Desert Community
with acting Superintendent Richey, Messrs. McDougall, Dodge, Supernaugh, and
others, travelling to Ajo by car with Messrs. McDougall and Supernaugh
such as Agave (Agave), Yucca (Yucca), Parkinsonia (Pala verde),
during the afternoon. The succeeding five days were spent in examination

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of the Monument, accompanied by Messrs. McDougall and Supernaugh. During this period, the distance of approximately 350 miles, within the Monument, was covered, as indicated on the accompanying sketch map. This gave me the opportunity of seeing practically every part of the area, except the higher mountain regions. The morning of April 17 was spent in conference with Superintendent Hugh Miller, with whom I travelled to Tucson and Saguaro National Monument in the afternoon. Further conferences with Drs. Vorhies and Shreve and with A. A. Nichol of the Arizona Game Department were then held.

The Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument represents the largest area at low altitudes in the Southwest under the control of the National Park Service. It is the only area of anything like similar character, which is large enough for the preservation of the original biotic conditions. There is also sufficient diversity of conditions within the Monument to provide for the maintenance of an adequate sample of the biotic community of the Sonoran Desert. This, I believe, should be the primary purpose of this Monument, although the scenic values as represented by the rugged mountains and the desert valleys are not to be ignored. According to the classification of Clements, the biotic community of this area is the four Larrea-Franseria Formation, of which it is a typical example. Larrea (Creosote bush) and Franseria (Bursage) are the most prominent and the most widely distributed plant dominants in the Monument. Other plants mentioned by the above author as characteristic of the Shrub Desert Community such as Acacia (catclaw), Prosopis (Mesquite), Parkinsonia (Palo verde),

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Dalea (Smoke tree) and Chilopsis (Desert willow) are also present in abundance.

The flora includes also many species which are not to be found beyond the Monument, except in the Coastal Plain Desert of Mexico, and there are others which are to be found but sparsely beyond this area. Outstanding examples of this are the Senita Cactus and the Organ Pipe Cactus which has given to the Monument its present name. The Saguaro is also a prominent feature of the landscape.

I find that there is a misapprehension on the part of local people, and perhaps on the part of those elsewhere, to the effect that the principal purpose of the National Monument is as indicated by its name, the preservation of the Organ Pipe Cactus, which is used as an argument for the reduction of its area to include merely some prominent stands of this plant. The greatest value of the Monument can be realized only if it is considered as an opportunity for the preservation of an outstanding example of the Sonoran desert of the Southwestern United States and Northwestern Mexico.

The larger desert animals are well represented in the area, although they have not been studied as thoroughly as might be wished. There are two or three bands of the Desert Mountain Sheep; at least three or perhaps four species and subspecies of deer, desert antelope, and Javelinas. These mammals were present in much larger numbers than at present before the beginning of the recent period of extended drouth, but with the return of more humid conditions and with some rather slight provisions for the maintenance of the water supply during drouth periods, a considerable growth in the

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possible without administrative complications, that the name be changed. The population of larger mammals might be expected. Another favoring circumstance would be the elimination of grazing by cattle, on the expiration of present permits. The limiting factor for the larger mammals seems to be water, rather than vegetation, as it appears that food plants are plentiful, even in drouth seasons. There is sufficient diversity of physiography and of vegetational type to make possible the permanent maintenance of the typical animal components of the Scrub Desert. Any reduction of the size of the monument would seriously limit its value. The biotic community, including both plants and animals, must be preserved in its entirety. A sufficient animal population is as necessary for the maintenance of the proper conditions for the plant components of the community, as are the plants for food and cover for animals. No small area, however outstanding some of its features may be, can suffice for the preservation of a complete biotic community. that present permits allow the grazing of 500 head Birds are abundant. No attempt was made during the present reconnaissance to make a list of species. Prominently observed were the Western Mourning Dove, Gambel's Quail, the White-winged Dove, the Red-tailed Hawk, the Phainopepla, etc. apply rather than food.

Many reptilian species are, of course present, including the Gila Monster, the Red racer and other spectacular forms. Indian herds and probably some stock of various kinds, drifting in from Mexico. The boundary should be fenced to prevent the last mentioned.

Because of the restricted connotations of the title "Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument", it seems to me desirable, whenever it becomes

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possible without administrative complications, that the name be changed to one more descriptive of the broader purposes of the area. Such designations as "Sonoran Desert N.M.", "Gila-Sonoran Desert N.M." or even "Sonoran N.M.", "Gila-Sonoran N.M.". Others may be more suitable. The

above suggestions including the word "Sonoran" serve to indicate the continuity of the area with the state of Sonora, Mexico, and also to call attention to "Life Zone (Merriam)" represented. I believe the term "Desert N.M." has been suggested by the Gila Bend Chamber of Commerce, but that title seems to be of too broad application.

The importance of the area is such that I would favor its ultimate designation as a National Park. However, this is probably not the time for the proposal of such a change.

However, the opening of the Monument to prospecting at this time would probably result in a considerable number of prospectors, and a period of

It is my understanding that present permits allow the grazing of 525 head of cattle on the Monument. It does not appear that this number is excessive, although there is some trampling and overgrazing in the vicinity of waterholes. The limiting factor in carrying capacity for domestic stock appears to be water supply rather than food.

In addition to the 525 cattle mentioned above, there are on the area a considerable number of wild horses and burros, some Indian horses and probably some stock of various kinds, drifting in from Mexico. The boundary should be fenced to prevent the last mentioned.

The number of cattle permitted on the Monument should not be increased,

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and grazing should be terminated with the expiration of the present permits. This will liberate the grazing areas, and more importantly, the waterholes for the use of wild game, and will make possible the increase of this population to its natural size.

PROSPECTING AND MINING

Prospecting has been carried on in the area of the Monument for a long period of time. The mineralized nature of the mountains to the north of the Monument was known prior to the establishment of the present boundary between the U.S. and Mexico. There have been several periods of rather intense activity within the Monument itself. This activity has resulted in the establishment of no mines producing at the present time. However, the opening of the Monument to prospecting at this time would probably result in a considerable influx of prospectors, and a period of feverish activity for a few years, since an announcement of the opening of the area to prospecting would serve to create the impression that a new and unexplored area was being opened. This would result, undoubtedly, in the establishment of many new trails and primitive roads, the effects of which remain in the desert for a long time after their abandonment.

It would be impossible to prevent the use of a certain amount of vegetation for fuel and other uses, and each prospector considers the possession of a dog and a gun as his inalienable right. This combination of circumstances would make the development of a normal game population difficult, even if we do not consider the difficulty of restraining of

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poaching, which would undoubtedly be increased with the opening of the area to prospecting. The difficulty of patrolling the Monument under such conditions is apparent.

The effect of opening the area to prospecting as I see it, would be to postpone for a considerable length of time, the establishment of a normal game population, and to make that establishment more difficult when finally attempted. Mining does not, in my opinion, need to be considered seriously, except as a short period of activity might intensify the conditions noted under prospecting.

The change of status of the Monument to a recreation area would be unfortunate, as it is not suited to recreation as ordinarily understood, and would probably make more difficult the exclusion of hunting.

2. That, upon disbursement of the sum of the Monument be changed to one of the following and more desirable.

A part of this report is being submitted to the Committee on the Management of National Monuments of the Biological Society of America, and suggestions as to action to be taken by it and the Executive Director of the Society.

Respectfully submitted,
(s) A. C. Jones

Collector

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(sgd.) A. O. Weese

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