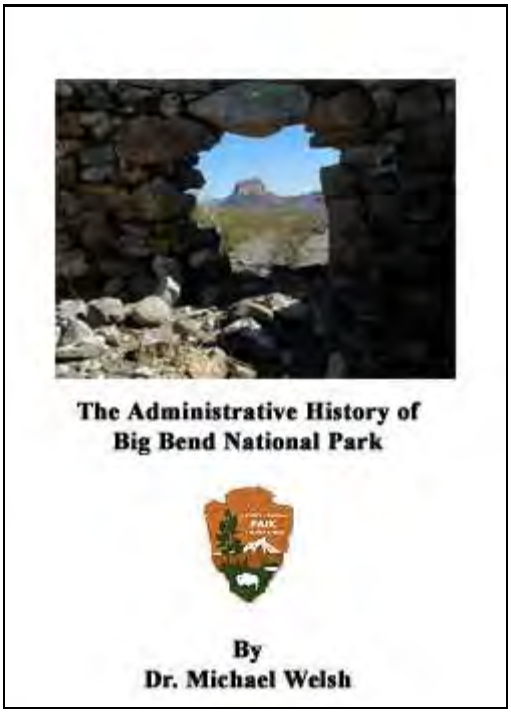
Big Bend

Administrative History



Landscape of Ghosts, River of Dreams: A History of Big Bend National Park

by
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University of Northern Colorado

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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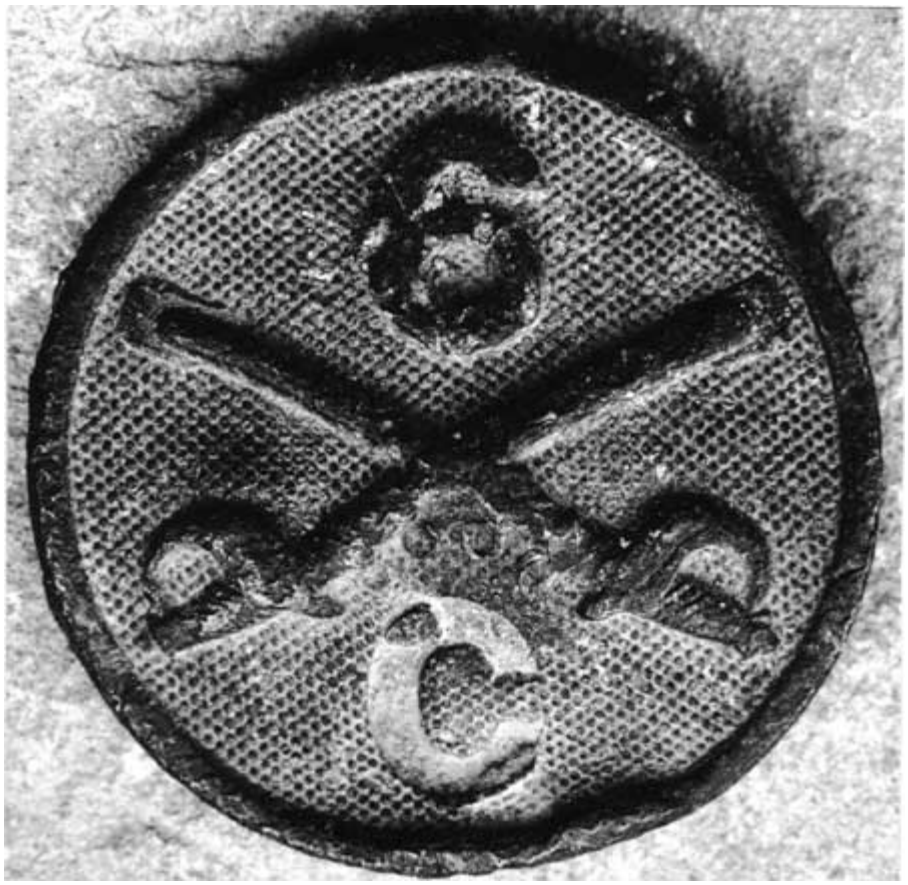


Figure 1: 6th Cavalry Button

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FOREWORD

The written Administrative History of a park serves several purposes, not the least of which is to inform park managers of the present and future about the events, actions and decisions in the past that have influenced our current status. Without that information we might have a difficult time understanding our present circumstances. As parks age, another purpose of the history is to provide accurate historical information for interpreting park history to our visitors who are often fascinated by the people and events of the early years.

Michael Welsh has produced an exemplary Administrative History of Big Bend National Park that will long serve as an important management document and as an interpretive tool, as well. His love for the Bit Bend and its people is evident in his writing. The workload of travel, interviewing, organizing and writing was immense. From Washington, D.C. to Chihuahua City, Mexico Dr. Welsh ferreted out important, but often obscure, information. However, he has brought it all together into an accurate and readable history.

I thank Dr. Welsh for producing this invaluable history. I'm sure he would support my dedication of this document to the men and women of the past and present who have worked to preserve, protect and provide for the enjoyment of this magical place we know as Big Bend National Park.

Frank J. Deckert
Superintendent, 2002

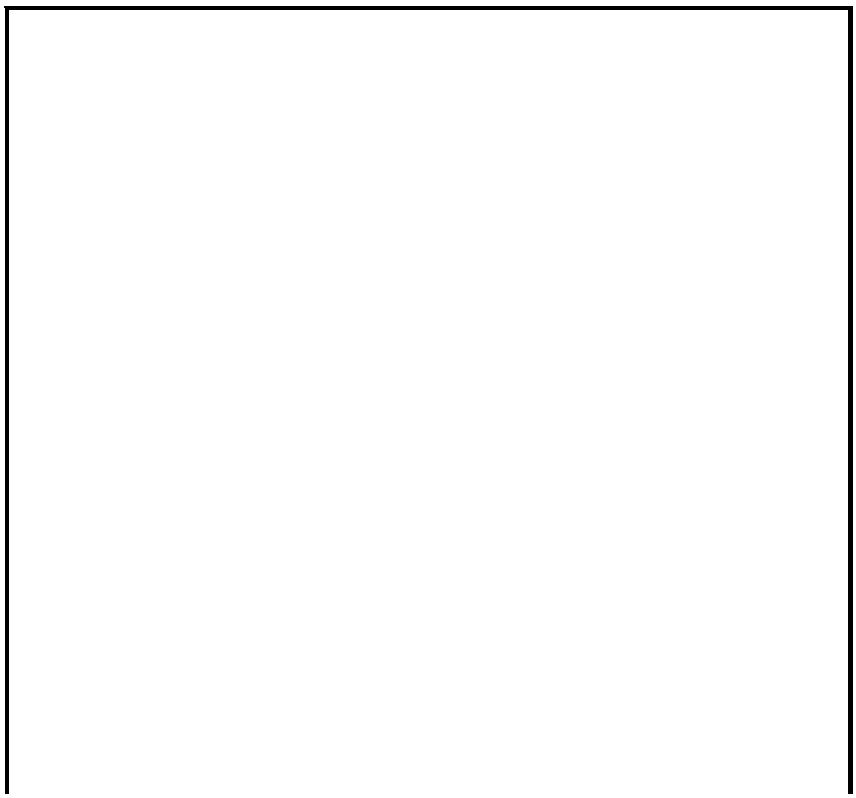




Figure 2: Conrad L. Wirth, Supervisor, Recreation and Land Planning, National Park Service Santa Fe, New Mexico

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

National parks join the system for a variety of reasons: great natural beauty, the need to preserve wilderness in the face of development, historic resources that the nation needs to remember, and the like. For Texas's first unit of the NPS system, Big Bend National Park, all of the above features applied. In addition, the distinctive ecology of a mountain, desert, and riverine landscape compelled NPS officials and local sponsors alike in the 1930s and 1940s to plead with private donors and elected representatives to make Big Bend in 1944 the 28th unit of the NPS organization (at the time its sixth-largest park in the nation).

Were these dimensions of Big Bend National Park all that claimed the attention of park sponsors, its story might not unfold in quite the dramatic fashion that it did. Located along a 129-mile stretch of the border with Mexico, Big Bend National Park offered a glimpse of the cultural and diplomatic history that Americans shared (but little understood) with their neighbors to the south. Park officials could not decide whether to promote Big Bend as a wilderness or as a refuge. In like measure, they could not agree on whether to emphasize the otherworldliness of border culture, with its mixture of romance and violence, or to ignore the differences that a shared environment masked.

Big Bend National Park followed the standard cycle of its peers throughout the NPS system in its six decades of history. The struggle to create a park unit over 100 miles from the nearest transportation center required avid champions, and also encountered spirited resistance from local ranchers and absentee landowners. The depths of the Great Depression stimulated interest in donating over 1,200 square miles of southwest Texas to the federal government, and to create a tourist attraction in the most unlikely of places. Nine years of campaigning for private and state funds resulted in a frantic land-acquisition program in the early years of World War II, even as the NPS had applied every available dollar from the Civilian Conservation Corps. This money not only allowed for facility construction, but also underwrote much of the early scientific research of the Big Bend area.

When Big Bend opened for business in the summer of 1944, the task of building a park while entertaining visitors fell to Ross Maxwell, a geologist who had studied the area and advised on many details of park development. Maxwell and his successors would confront the perennial challenge of securing adequate funding for operations and maintenance, even as the forces of nature wore down park infrastructure. The vaunted MISSION 66 initiative brought the completion of the park's physical plant, not to be replaced for at least a generation. Park staff from the 1950s to the 1970s, then, addressed the tasks of interpretative programming, border relations, and the isolation that accompanied many NPS units. Of these, the most intractable would be Big Bend's relationship to its Mexican neighbors, which became strained in the 1970s with increases in illegal immigration, drug smuggling, and the resultant anxieties that accompanied federal agency operations in the area.

With facility and community relations at a nadir in the late 1970s, the NPS decided to promote a new generation of management at Big Bend. From the engineering skills of superintendent Robert Haraden, through the cultural sensitivity of his successors Gilbert Lusk

and Jim Carrico, the park labored in the face of limited financial resources to become better neighbors to Mexico, and a better host to visitors. The 1990s witnessed more challenges in both domains, as superintendents Robert Arnberger, Jose Cisneros, and Frank Deckert advanced the cause of park service values in the heart of west Texas.

Six decades of NPS operations along the Rio Grande reveal much about Big Bend, Texas, Mexico, and the American ideal of preserving what is best about the land and the people who made it their home. Proud of their heritage as a private-property state, Texans had to learn about the ways of resource management that the NPS brought. The park service, in turn, had to address the political clout of the Texas congressional delegation, even as it negotiated with its Lone Star neighbors over such issues as predator control, land purchases, and visitor accommodations. Mexico also took a journey with the NPS, from the heady days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy," through the industrialization and land reforms of World War II and the Cold War. Only with increased awareness of the joint occupation of the frontier zone along the Rio Grande in the 1980s and 1990s did both countries find the means to work towards the dream of an international park for peace. How that dream would unfold in the twenty-first century, and how it would parallel the internal needs of both nations' park systems, would determine how another generation would view the handiwork of Big Bend's creators and stewards.



Figure 3: Early Ranchers, Chisos Mountains (1933)
Left to Right: R.E. Thomason, J.W. Gillett, A.F. Robinson, S.R. Nail

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A story as vast as the landscape of Big Bend National Park is a function of numerous individuals, and not the author's alone. Art Gomez and Neil Mangum of the Program of History at the National Park Service's Southwest Support Office in Santa Fe drafted the scope of work for this project, and Art Gomez saw it through the many twists and turns of research, writing, and revision. To his love of the landscape, this manuscript is a testament. To the NPS officials in Santa Fe, Denver, and at Big Bend itself, the author wishes to express deep appreciation. Superintendents Stan Joseph, Gil Lusk, Jim Carrico, Rob Arnberger, Jose Cisnersos, and Frank Deckert gave of their time and wisdom to place the issues of six decades at Big Bend in managerial perspective. Documents alone cannot convey the scale and scope of the Big Bend story, but the archivists at the National Archives and Records Administration deserve much credit. Joel Barker, Eileen Bolger, Joan Howard, and Eric Bittner at the NARA's Rocky Mountain branch in Denver, and Barbara Rust at the NARA facility in Fort Worth, showed this author just how much material a big park can generate. The archivists at the Archives of the Big Bend, housed in the Wildenthal Library of Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas, are to be thanked as well, with Meletta Bell and her staff enthusiastic about the story on their shelves and in their photographic collection. At the park, such staff members as Vidal Davila, Tom and Betty Alex, Mike Fleming, and others were most helpful. Likewise, the officials of the park concession, National Park Concessions, Inc., were very gracious with their advice and materials, among them the late Garner Hanson, Jim Milburn, and Ron Sanders. The author also would be remiss if he did not acknowledge his debt of gratitude to officials of the Mexican government, and in particular its natural resources agencies (SEMARNAP). Julio Carrera, Pablo Dominguez, Miguel Mendoza, and Rodolfo Garza, all explained with great patience the differences and similarities between Mexican and American park policies. Dominguez and Mendoza in particular were excellent hosts on research trips to Ciudad Chihuahua, where the author learned how much the people of Mexico care about the lands far to their north, and how they dream of a joint park along the Rio Grande as did their predecessors of the 1930s.

Finally, the author owes more than he can say to his family, including his wife Cindy, daughter Jacquie, and son Eddie. Cindy's knowledge of west Texas emanates from her family's roots in Midland and Fort Davis, and her appreciation for the subtlety of race relations helped enlighten the narrative in many places. To Cindy and my family, I thank them for their patience, and hope that this story conveys a sense of what made the story of Big Bend National Park worth the effort.

Michael Welsh
University of Northern Colorado
January 2002





Figure 4: CCC Quarters, Chisos Mountains

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CHAPTER 1:
Creating a Border: The Cultural Landscape of the Big Bend

As with most units of the National Park Service (NPS) in the American West, Big Bend National Park entered the NPS system before its managers could inventory the extent of its natural and cultural resources. Encompassing over 700,000 acres when the state of Texas in 1944 deeded the land to the federal government, and expanding by 2001 to 801,163 acres, the desert, mountain, and river valley terrain that comprised the nation's fifteenth-largest park challenged the mandate that Congress gave the NPS in 1916 to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Yet the park service, no less than its predecessors in a world that the Spanish would call *el despoblado* (the unpopulated land), encountered the same conditions of beauty and harshness, cultural interaction and conflict, that made the Big Bend country worthy of inclusion in the nation's park system. [1]

Now that the park service has managed the vastness of Big Bend for five decades and more, a clearer picture emerges of the interplay of natural and human forces that defined the region. Said Arthur R. Gomez, NPS historian and author of a 1990 historic resources study of Big Bend, "according to local legend, after the making of heaven and earth was accomplished, the Creator took all the remaining stone and rubble and tossed it into the remote corners of West Texas." Despite the apocryphal nature of this tale, its meaning suggests the value of linking folklore with scholarship to define the essence of a land ranging from 7,825 feet in the Chisos Mountains (Emory Peak), to a mere 1,800 feet along the banks of the Rio Grande. "No other national park," wrote Frank Deckert in 1981, "has this combination of size and remoteness coupled with the romance and mystery of the Mexican border." Deckert, the chief naturalist at Big Bend from 1975 to 1980, and later superintendent of the park, noted that millions of years ago Big Bend lay below a huge ocean: "The skulls and skeletons of sea creatures piled one upon another until they formed layers of limestone thousands of feet thick." Yet modern visitors to the park, no less than the Native and Spanish travelers of long ago, often marvel at the spectacle of warm-water creatures fossilized in the stones where less than 17 inches of precipitation fall in the mountains, and a mere ten inches or less in the desert. [2]

Nature's power, and its ability to rearrange itself over millennia, became a theme of substantial historical research in the late twentieth century. Scholars have recognized that nature realigns itself many times through phenomena like fire, wind, rain, erosion, and volcanic and tectonic upheaval. Sometimes the change is incremental; sometimes violent. Yet the physical forces present in Gomez's story of Big Bend's creation were but the precursor of human use of the landscape that follows a similar pattern of modest and dramatic change. Over time erosion carried boulders and rocks down such streams as Tornillo and Terlingua, which respectively constitute the eastern and western drainage basins of present-day Big Bend National Park. Volcanic forces also shaped the Chisos Mountains north of the Rio Grande during the Tertiary Period (from 28 to 45 million years ago). Then the cutting action

of the Rio Grande (named the *Rio Bravo,* or "wild river," by the Spanish in the sixteenth century) through the limestone layers formed the signature canyons of Santa Elena, Mariscal, and Boquillas, as well as the sharp turn of the river from which the park and the region get their name. [3]

Whoever first set foot in the future Big Bend National Park noticed these conditions and thought of strategies to bend the earth to their wishes. Yet nature's power would ensure that only the hardiest plants, animals and humans would grace the landscape; a factor in the richness and beauty of its flora and fauna that today draws visitors from around the world. Deckert noted in 1981 how 98 percent of the park was Chihuahuan desert, yet most park patrons preferred the coolness of the Chisos Mountains or the greenery of the Rio Grande and its canyons. It was in the desert, where ground temperatures could reach 180 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer, that the keen eye could detect over 60 species of cactus (eleven alone of prickly pear), 56 species of reptiles, and over 100 variations of grasshoppers. One plant that served Native, Hispano, and Anglo dwellers well was the *candelilla* (wax) plant, whose properties when boiled yielded a substance used in perfumes, lubricants, and the like. Another plant that lured humans was the *agave,* or *"mescal"* plant, which the *Inde* people (whom the Spanish called *"Mescaleros"*) ate to gain sustained energy for their journeys through the desert. Finally, large quantities of cinnabar (the host ore for the element mercury, or "quicksilver") were found in the late nineteenth century north of the Rio Grande. This made the Big Bend for a time the nation's (if not the world's) most important producer of this key element in the preparation of fulminate of mercury (an explosive). [4]

Park archaeologists like Tom Alex noted in the 1980s and 1990s that early human interaction with the land was not sporadic, but in Alex's terms "heavy" and constant. At least 8,000 years ago, desert tribes traveled down the drainage basins of the Big Bend, leaving fire rings and campsites in large numbers. "Over 200 kinds of foods were available to these people," wrote Frank Deckert, "who used several parts of a variety of plants and animals." Distinguishing characteristics of these ancestral peoples emerged with the establishment of permanent communities some 60 miles up the Rio Grande from the western park boundary; the place that the Spanish called *La Junta de los Rios* ("the joining of the rivers"). There the Rio Conchos flowed north and east to meet the Rio Grande coming south from its headwaters high in southern Colorado's San Juan Mountains. Called *Patarabueye,* these village-dwellers multiplied in the fertile river valley until early Spanish explorers estimated their number in the late 1500s at 10,000 or more. Even today, the most substantial population base between the park and El Paso (a distance of over 300 miles) is the border area of Presidio, Texas, and Ojinaga, Chihuahua, located at the confluence of the Rio Conchos and Rio Grande. [5]

Scholars of the early twenty-first century still refer to these people by the term that the Spanish gave them: *Jumanos.* No translations for this term are offered in historical texts of the Big Bend, and the archaeological evidence links these people to the communities of farmers far to the north and west in New Mexico whom the Spanish identified as *Los Pueblos* (translated as "villagers"). This may indeed be the case, as the word in Spanish for "human being" was *humano* (written in sixteenth-century Castillian with a "J"). All tribes in the Southwest, and for that matter throughout North America, referred to themselves as "people" or "human beings." Hence the possibility that the *Jumanos* typified one behavioral trait in the Big Bend region: settled agriculturalists who solved the mystery of survival through ingenuity and dedication to the soil.

The disappearance of most of these communities, and the persistence of one area around La Junta, may stem from the presence in the Big Bend of another type of Native society: the semi-nomadic hunters and warriors whom the Spanish would encounter throughout the Great Plains and the high desert of the Southwest*: Los Indios Bravos.* These "wild" tribes would not submit to the demands of the Spanish for labor, tribute, concubinage, or conversion,

preferring their own existence in a harsh land. In later years these tribes would include such names as *Apaches* (the Zuni Pueblo word for "enemy"); *Comanches* (the Ute Indian word for "the people who fight us all the time," or *Koma'antsi*), and the most mysterious of all: the *Chisos* people, from whence comes the name of the most prominent mountains of Big Bend National Park. As with *Jumanos*, the texts of the Big Bend state repeatedly that the word meant "ghost;" a reference to the mountains where these people hid as a sanctuary, or to the mist-shrouded peaks in winter and spring that summon up images of ghosts on the hillsides. Even a folk tale of the "Lost Mine Trail," where supposedly the Spanish enslaved Indians to work digging for gold in the Chisos, emanates from this translation of the word. [6]

Because scholars can identify all of the nomadic peoples who journeyed through the Big Bend except for "Los Chisos," and because the name means so much to the region's folklore, a search of Spanish lexicons revealed a similar pattern to the translation of *Jumanos*. The formal Spanish word for ghost is *espectro* (as in "spectre"), and sometimes *fantasma* (as in "phantom"). Yet the term *Chisos* has as its root the common Nahua Indian term *chi*, which translates into English as "wild" or "uncontrollable." *Chihuahua* has such a root, as does the Apache band that the Nahuas called *Chiricahua*, and who called themselves *Indeh* (for "people"). Old Spanish documents that served as the primary sources for Max L. Moorhead, author of *The Apache Frontier: Jacobo Ugarte and Spanish-Indian Relations in Northern New Spain, 1769-1791* (1968), mentioned Spanish soldiers chasing *Mescaleros* (Governor Ugarte called them the "Enemy") into *Sierra de los Chizos*, and across the Rio Grande at the *Paso de Chisos*, upriver from Mariscal Canyon. Given the Spanish precision in their naming practices, and their penchant for recordkeeping, it seems unlikely that Spanish officials would not mention why they referred to the *Chisos* people or mountains as "ghostlike". [7]

One reason for this discrepancy may have been the way that Big Bend place names appeared on old maps and charts. In 1948, park superintendent Ross Maxwell wrote to the director of the NPS's Region Three (based in Santa Fe), stating that "for quite some time I have been concerned over the general interpretation or translation of the term 'Chisos' as meaning 'ghost' or 'phantom.'" Maxwell confessed: "I am guilty of the usage myself, and I know that several other Park Service employees have also stated that the meaning of 'Chisos' is 'ghost.'" The superintendent believed that "there probably is not a Spanish term 'chisos' which is translated as 'ghost,' but that perhaps it might have originally come from one of the various Indian tongues or tribal languages." Maxwell wondered about the wisdom of using a term that lacked clear definition, especially in light of a conversation that he had had in 1940 with Dr. Robert T. Hill, famed for his 1899 rafting trip through the canyons of the Rio Grande. When the superintendent had asked the explorer the origins of the term, "he told me at that time that when he made his trip through this country the Mexicans told him that the term 'Chisos' came from a small tribe of cannibalistic Indians [who] were feared and hated by all other tribes." These people "were eventually exterminated by their larger and more powerful enemies," Hill told Maxwell, "but the name 'Chisos' was applied and retained for this group of mountains because it was the last stronghold of the small Chisos tribe." [8]

Because Maxwell had such reservations about the translation of the word for one of the park's most distinctive features ("I shiver any time I hear one of the Park Service employees say that 'Chisos' means 'ghost'), the NPS regional office asked for opinions from its staff. Erik K. Reed, the regional archaeologist who had surveyed the future park site in 1936, told Maxwell that "the word 'chiso' or 'chizo' is not given at all in the few available Spanish-English dictionaries." This led Reed to believe that "if it does not mean 'ghost' or anything else, it is at least not Castilian and probably not standard Mexican Spanish but a local word." The archaeologist apologized for not recording the word's meaning when he conducted his survey, but did offer the possibility that "the Indians in question were named from the mountains instead of vice-versa." He also theorized that "the name is actually an Indian word meaning 'ghosts' which somehow was applied and then was assumed to be Spanish." Reed

then asked his colleague in Santa Fe, Walter W. Taylor, Junior, for his opinion. Taylor had spent considerable time in the Big Bend area (including Mexico) as part of his biological survey work for the future NPS unit. Reed informed Maxwell that "the geologically similar range just across the river, along the Coahuila-Chihuahua border, is named the Hechicero Mountains." This term meant "witches" or "enchanters," and Taylor contended that "'chisos' is a corruption or contraction of that work, with the related meaning of 'ghosts' having become attached to it." Reed concluded that in Taylor's opinion, "any 'Chisos Indians' or 'Chisos Apaches' received that name from the mountain-range, not vice-versa." [9]

Interaction between the Spanish speakers and the *Jumano* and *Bravo* peoples they met formed the story of the Big Bend for the better part of three centuries. Scholars have uncovered in the study of Spanish-Native history evidence of cultural interaction as well as conquest. Such is the case for the Big Bend and the people who inhabited it from the mid-sixteenth century to the arrival of the Americans 300 years later. Students and aficionados of Texana attempted to link the Big Bend country to the first Spanish wanderers, the party of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca. His trek through the wilds of west Texas and southern New Mexico in the 1530s produced stories so fabulous that in 1540 Spanish royal officials commissioned the famed *Entrada* of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado. Vaca cannot be placed within the boundaries of the modern-day park as he traversed the valley of the Rio Pecos, nor did Coronado and his outriders record any travel farther south than present-day Lubbock, Texas (nearly 400 miles north of the Rio Grande). For good reason did Vaca and Coronado avoid *el despoblado,* as both followed river courses in west Texas that provided more sustenance than the Big Bend terrain. The area thus avoided Coronado's battles with the Pueblos of central New Mexico or the Plains tribes of western Kansas; stories that would have their parallels in the Big Bend after permanent Spanish settlement of *Nueva Espana* in the seventeenth century. [10]

The hardiness of the Spanish brought them on several occasions to the lands along the Rio Grande, beginning in 1581 with the exploration of the Rodriguez-Chamuscado party. Gomez wrote of the journey down the Rio Conchos by these soldiers and missionaries, wherein they encountered *Jumanos.* From them the Spaniards learned that Cabeza de Vaca had traveled through the area. Chamuscado and Rodriguez then ventured northwest along the Rio Grande to present-day El Paso, on their way to central New Mexico and more fertile fields for missionary work. When word reached Mexico of the failure of this latest effort to control the Southwest, a relief party retraced their footsteps the following year under the command of Antonio de Espejo. Espejo reported the presence of 10,000 Native people residing in five substantial villages around the juncture of the Conchos and Rio Grande. It also was Espejo who spoke of the wild tribes of the Big Bend as *Los Chizos,* a people whom Frank Deckert called "fierce warriors who resisted Spanish enslavement and raided Spanish border settlements." These also may have been Mescaleros, but the historical record is silent because the Spanish did not return to the Big Bend area for nearly a century after the Espejo journey. [11]

While the sixteenth century produced in northern New Mexico a permanent Spanish colony and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, Spain's inability or lack of desire to establish control of the Big Bend country left the latter outside of the orbit of Spanish imperial dominion. The flight of the Spanish and their Indian allies southward to El Paso in 1680 did not remove the Europeans from the region. Instead, the Spanish in 1683 entertained a delegation of *Jumanos* who sought protection from the Apaches who raided deep into west Texas. *La Gran Apacheria,* as the Spanish called the huge area from modern-day central Kansas to southeastern Arizona, witnessed a higher concentration of "the Enemy," as the Apaches' opponents labeled them, which in turn threatened the lives of the more-sedentary *Jumanos.* The leader of the delegation to El Paso, a man whom the Spanish called Juan Sabeata, included in his request for protection a plea for conversion to the Catholic faith. The Spanish

interpreted this as an admission that Apaches posed more of a threat than the very same Spaniards whom the New Mexican Pueblos had fought just three years earlier. [12]

Still stinging from their retreat from Santa Fe, and nearly a decade removed from a successful *reconquista,* Spanish officials in El Paso agreed to send three priests down the Rio Grande to La Junta: Fray Nicolas Lopez, Juan de Zavaleta, and Antonio de Acevado. Soon thereafter, New Mexico Governor-in-exile Domingo Jironza Petriz de Cruzate dispatched a military unit under the command of Captain Juan Dominguez de Mendoza to survey the new mission. The latter's journey took him downriver as far as the Rio Conchos, and then by a circular route northeastward to what would become the Davis Mountains (which Mendoza called *Los Reyes).* Before returning to El Paso, Mendoza met with Juan Sabeata at Horsehead Crossing on the Rio Pecos, a spot north of modern-day Fort Stockton that the Comanches used on their annual raids. There the *Jumano* leader gave Mendoza a French flag, evidence to the Spanish that a new European power had penetrated deep into the Southwest. [13]

Spain's fears of foreign competition east of New Mexico compounded the obstacles of distance, isolation, aridity, and resistant Native peoples that had hindered *Nueva Espana* since the days of Francisco Coronado. In Texas, the French presence along the Mississippi River (Louisiana) forced the Spanish to defend their claims with presidios and missions in San Antonio and Nacogdoches (known *La Mision de Los Adaes*). History texts of the Southwest speak of the efforts of eighteenth-century Spanish rulers (the Bourbon family of France) to modernize the colonial empire through strengthened defenses and expanded trading zones. In 1747 the *audiencia* of Mexico reported, in the words of Gomez, "that not a single presidio existed between San Juan Bautista [near present-day Piedras Negras/Eagle Pass] and El Paso, a distance of over [360] leagues [approximately 540 miles]." Catholic missionaries had continued the work of Fray Lopez, et al., but they did so among the people of La Junta without any military support. In that same year, the Governor of Coahuila, Pedro Rabago y Teran, led a party to the Rio Grande near modern-day Del Rio, then southwest to near Boquillas; a site that they named "Santa Rita." From there they journeyed across the river through the Chisos Mountains, across Terlingua Creek, and back to the Rio Grande at Lajitas en route to La Junta. No more Spanish interest in the area occurred for a generation, and only then because of Spain's final commitment to improvement of imperial defense in 1768 under the famed Marques de Rubi. [14]

The appearance in the Southwest of the Royal Corps of Engineers, Spain's version of the French military academy of Saint Cyr (and later the United States Military Academy at West Point), precipitated the review of Spanish military readiness. Inspired by the French model of science and engineering, the Royal Corps sent Rubi to suggest a radical departure in its strategies for protection of the Rio Grande. Together with his assistant, Nicolas de Lafora, Rubi journeyed from the Native villages near Tucson of the *Pagapo* (the *Tohono O'Otham*), to the Sabine River in central Texas. Rubi described the Indian villages, sources of water, mineral deposits, and flora and fauna, and made suggestions for roads and trails. In his report, Rubi warned his superiors that it would be impossible for Spain to provide military garrisons for every settlement located south of the Rio Grande. He also criticized the decentralized process of presidio alignment, as these appeared wherever a community wanted one, rather than following a coherent plan of defense. The Spanish government adopted Rubi's recommendation for three new presidio sites in the Big Bend area: one at San Vicente Pass south of the Chisos Mountains (the future location of the villages of San Vicente on both sides of the Rio Grande), another at San Carlos, a dozen miles or so south of Lajitas, and a third at the thriving communities around La Junta de los Rios. [15]

Despite the wisdom of Rubi's judgment, the reality of Spain's imperial decline (and eventual ouster from Mexico in 1821) meant little funding for such an elaborate scheme of defense. In addition, the Comanches had surged southward to the Rio Grande and Mexico in the years

after 1750, driving the once-feared Apache bands further into Mexico and exposing villages there to constant fear of raiding and retaliation. In 1767 the Spanish sent to the new presidio at San Vicente a commander of Irish descent, General Hugo Oconor, known as *El Gran Colorado* for his flaming red hair and beard. Knowing how the Mescaleros used the Chisos Mountains for protection, Oconor and his troops marched down the Rio Grande to La Junta, then eastward to the Big Bend area. Before arriving in the Apache stronghold, Oconor visited the presidio at San Carlos, where he placed Captain Don Manuel de Villaverde in command of 50 soldiers and their families. He then stopped at San Vicente to install Captain Francisco Martinez as commander, in hopes that a unified presidial defensive line along the Rio Grande would drive the Apaches northward into the territory of the Comanches. [16]

Whatever his credentials and accomplishments, Oconor's decision to constrain the Apaches in the Big Bend did not sit well with Teodoro de Croix, the new commandant-general of Spain's *Las Provincias Internas* (the new name for the interior provinces of the Southwest. Himself a Frenchman, Croix preferred a strong offensive against the Indians, as well as a complicated alliance with the Comanches to defeat the Apaches. He also thought that the presidios at San Vicente, San Carlos, and La Junta were unnecessary, and called for their removal. Then Croix ventured into the Big Bend area in early 1778 from Chihuahua, only to be attacked by a party of 500 Mescaleros. Based upon this incident and his personal review of the Big Bend presidios, Croix concluded that the garrisons barely supported themselves, and lacked adequate grazing land for the soldiers' mounts. To make matters worse, the quartermaster at San Vicente had gone bankrupt twice since establishment of that presidio, leaving the Spanish troops, in the words of Gomez, "unpaid and demoralized." [17]

A decade later, the Spanish decided to engage in an elaborate scheme of treaties and coercion to succeed where presidios and frontal assaults on the Apaches had failed. Juan de Ugalde, successor to Jacobo de Ugarte as Governor of Coahuila, moved in 1779 to pursue the Mescaleros north of the Rio Grande. Several years of effort resulted in the Spanish victory at the battle of *El Aguaje de Dolores* in the Chisos Mountains. Two years later, three Mescalero band chiefs sought peace, which entailed a settled existence on land around Presidio. The same could not be said for the other Native bands that surged through the Big Bend country, the Comanches. The Comanches continued raiding throughout the remainder of the Spanish imperial era, reaching Spanish villages as far south as Zacatecas, more than 500 miles below the Rio Grande. Thus few residents of the Big Bend, whether Spanish or Native, noticed in 1821 when the Mexican Revolution ended and the new government of Mexico City declared a republic to replace imperial Spain. Even more so than the more-populous centers of New Mexico and eastern Texas, the Big Bend reverted in the Mexican interlude (1821-1846) to a state that one visitor in 1828 to San Carlos called "a half-wild Indian and Mexican settlement on the Rio Grande." [18]

Just as the Mexican independence movement meant little to the villages and presidios along the bend of the Rio Grande, the advance of the "Army of the West" through New Mexico and California during the War with Mexico (1846-1848) brought few changes to daily life. General Stephen Watts Kearny and his 6,000-member force sent no one southeastward from El Paso to survey the new territory. Nor did American forces under General Zachary Taylor show much interest in the Big Bend country as they moved south that year from modern-day Brownsville, Texas, to capture the Mexican state of Coahuila. The corridor from San Antonio to Monterrey that Mexican President Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana had taken in 1836 to recapture the Alamo had no spur lines westward to Big Bend. Thus the United States claimed an area about which it knew little, and which required much in the way of defense, scientific study, and economic support. [19]

More substantial for the future of the Big Bend under American domination would be negotiations for the peace treaty held near Mexico City, and the subsequent boundary survey

required by the treaty commissioners. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in the Mexican community of the same name on February 2, 1848, contained clauses about citizenship, land-grant rights, and protection against Indian raiding that appealed to *Mexicanos* throughout the Southwest. Scholars of the 1960s and 1970s decried the consequences of "lost lands" or discrimination against Spanish-speaking peoples of the region; a condition all too real throughout the Southwest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet they ignored the fact that the treaty's Article XI, in the words of Gomez, "provided that the United States would bear the burden of responsibility for restraining Indian attacks along the international border [Mexican negotiators had referred to them as 'tribus selvajes,' or 'savage tribes']." In addition, Article V "called for each nation to appoint a commission to work jointly on the formation of a common border." These two mandates brought the same U.S. Army to west Texas and the Big Bend that had defeated Santa Ana and the Mexican forces months earlier, and launched the first of many official scientific and diplomatic studies of the region. [20]

While the treaty negotiators hailed their accomplishment, another event occurred that linked the Big Bend more closely to the orbit of American power and influence. In January 1848, a supervisor of timber workers in California's Sierra Nevada found traces of gold in the millrace. The discovery unleashed the most dramatic surge of population across the continent that America had ever seen. While the preferred venue was sailing around South America, some hardy souls trekked across the desert Southwest to avoid the Rocky Mountains. The 49ers also found relatively flat land between the Texas coast and San Diego, making a southern route to California a priority for the federal government. The potential for Indian resistance only heightened as thousands of gold-seekers poured across the central and southern Great Plains in 1849 and 1850, with west Texas especially vulnerable because of the intractable Comanches and Apaches. [21]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 2:
Saving the Last Frontier: Texas, Mexico, and the Big Bend National Park Initiative, 1930-1935

Despite the bold statements of Carlyle Raht about the virtues of the Anglo frontier of west Texas, by 1930 few residents could share his optimism for their future. The nation, the American West, the Republic of Mexico, and the Big Bend country faced the most devastating economic and ecological crisis of their histories, in the form of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. Prosperity generated by the war in Europe and the subsequent spending spree of the 1920s had convinced many that the good times would last forever. Once the reality of economic and social collapse struck the nation, all shared the need to find solutions to unemployment and environmental degradation resulting from poor farming and ranching practices. The change of presidential administrations in Washington, DC, and Mexico City, in the mid-1930s ushered in a revolutionary concept: preservation of what local residents loved to call the nation's "last frontier," and to connect its vast acreage of mountains, streams, and desert to the equally striking landscape south of the Rio Grande in an international park.

Interest in some sort of national park facility in west Texas began as early as 1921, when a group of civic officials petitioned the Texas state legislature to identify lands within the Davis Mountains for a state park. The rise of tourism generated by the popularization of automobile travel, and the passage in 1916 of the Federal Highway Act, opened the region to visitors seeking the exotica and wonders of the Far West. In 1924, an Alpine doctor and state senator, Benjamin F. Berkeley, asked William C. Boyd of the Texas Fish, Game, and Oyster Commission about establishment of a 25,000-acre park in the Chisos Mountains. The following year, U.S. Representative Claude Hudspeth introduced in Congress a resolution to appropriate $100,000 to purchase lands in the Davis Mountains. This idea died in committee, but it stimulated interest among local and state leaders to plan for road construction in and around the storied military post of Fort Davis. Nothing came of the initiatives for parks in the Davis and Chisos ranges, and Texas promoters of tourism and travel looked elsewhere in the late 1920s to invest their time and resources. [1]

Private-sector interest in the Big Bend area resurfaced in 1929, when J.J. Willis, an automobile dealer from Odessa, Texas, purchased the abandoned property surrounding Glenn Springs with plans to convert the former military post into an exclusive hunting preserve for West Texas residents. The collapse of the New York Stock Exchange that year inhibited the plans of Willis for his "Chisos Mountains Club." He had wanted to stock his 25,000 acres with game animals indigenous to the Big Bend area. Few investors showed much interest in this enterprise, given the loss of 50 percent of the nation's industrial output and the closing of banks and savings institutions daily. [2]

Willis was but one of many disappointed business people who had hoped to reap profits from the Big Bend country. The historian Gerald D. Nash, in *The American West in the Twentieth Century* (1977), wrote that "everywhere western dreams for sustained economic growth lay

shattered." Farm and ranch income in Texas and the West fell more than 50 percent, while oil prices (the source of Texas' prosperity in the 1920s) declined from $2.50 per barrel in 1929 to ten cents per barrel four years later. Richard W. Lowitt, author of *The New Deal and the West* (1984), declared that "depression, drought, and dust undermined dependence on the marketplace as an arbiter of activities." In 1931, the famed University of Texas historian, Walter Prescott Webb, released his magisterial study of life in the arid West, *The Great Plains*. Writing at the dawn of the Depression, as the drought conditions of the "dirty thirties" had just commenced, Webb warned his readers that "the failure to recognize the fact that the Plains destroyed the old formula of living and demanded a new one led the settlers into disaster, the lawmakers into error, and leads all who will not see into confusion." [3]

As the Great Depression lengthened, the Texas state legislature began a search for economic relief, an idea disturbing to people who identified as independent and hardy. Yet the desperation facing the nation led its conservative Republican president, Herbert T. Hoover (1929-1933), to seek liberal use of the Antiquities Act of 1906 to include public lands in the national park system that contained "man-made wonders or scientific curiosities." A young state representative from Abilene, Robert M. Wagstaff, received inspiration in December 1930 from an article on the Big Bend area in the magazine *Nature*. Interviewed a dozen years later by his hometown *Abilene Reporter-News* upon the occasion of the 1944 opening of Big Bend National Park, Wagstaff recalled being "impressed by the fact that apparently Texas had scenic beauties comparable to those of Colorado." Wagstaff was "determined to look into the question of whether a state or national park could be established in Texas." He then approached J.H. Walker, state land commissioner, during the 1931 session of the legislature to ascertain "whether or not there might be a considerable amount of state-owned land within the area, which might be included in a state park." [4]

Historians of Big Bend National Park, and NPS officials in the 1930s, often credit the park's origins to Everett Townsend, who on March 3, 1933, coauthored House Bill No. 771 to create "Texas Canyons State Park." Yet the impetus for that legislation included Wagstaff's inquiry two years earlier to J.H. Walker, who "'became very much interested in the matter and made a careful check of the area.'" Wagstaff recalled that Walker "'decided that it would be better to delay action a couple of years on account of the fact that some of the most desirable lands for a park, adjoining the main [Rio Grande] canyons, had been forfeited for non-payment of interest, but were still subject to reinstatement.'" The Texas lawmakers did, however, agree that year to adopt Senate Concurrent Resolution 9, which called upon the federal government to conduct an immediate survey of potential parklands in the Lone Star state for inclusion in the national park system. J. Frank Dobie, the noted writer of Texas frontier novels, echoed these sentiments with his call in 1930 for a park in the "wild Big Bend." The Hoover administration further whetted the appetite of local interests by declaring no fewer than nine western areas as "national monuments" in the waning days of his administration. One of these was the 250,000-acre gypsum field of New Mexico's Tularosa basin that became White Sands National Monument. Momentum for creation of parks like Big Bend had accelerated, believed Wagstaff, strengthening his resolve in the 1933 session of the Texas legislature to pursue his dream of a park for west Texas. [5]

The arrival in Washington, DC, in March 1933 of the presidential administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt meant much to the champions of Big Bend National Park. The harshness of four years of economic collapse led FDR and his advisors to press for imaginative and experimental solutions; the process known as the "New Deal." Michael Kammen, author of *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (1991), referred to Roosevelt's "distinctive capacity to connect innovation with tradition." Kammen noted that "American society increasingly needed and sought a meaningful sense of its heritage in crisis times," further commenting that "had there not been a Great Depression, it might have taken considerably longer for government at any level to concern itself with

American history, myths, and museums." This latter point would be crucial to the success of any effort to bring Big Bend National Park into the NPS system, as the park service had included only areas of great scenic beauty; "crown jewels," in the words of many park admirers. As Richard Sellars noted, "the 1930s saw a vast diversion of Park Service programs, which expanded responsibility beyond management of mostly larger natural areas and drew attention to matters other than nature preservation." [6]

Robert Wagstaff did not know on Texas Independence Day (March 2, 1933) that his bill to set aside fifteen sections of land around the Rio Grande canyons of Santa Elena, Mariscal, and Boquillas, would become by 1944 the first national park in Texas. His colleagues approved of the measure in short order, but problems that would plague the formation of the park for the next decade required another version for a special legislative session that September. Section 2 of the new park bill held that "the legislature of the State of Texas hereby withdraws from sale all unsold Public Free School Lands situated in Brewster County, Texas, South of North Latitude 29 degrees, 25 minutes; and said lands, estimated to consist of about 150,000 acres." The name of the park also would be changed from "Texas Canyons State Park" to the "Big Bend State Park." These school lands would be valued at one cent per acre for payment to the Public School Fund (or the sum of $1,500.00). Wagstaff and co-sponsor Townsend also agreed in the amended bill that "all minerals in and under the above described sections of land are hereby reserved to the Public School Fund, to be developed under present or future laws as minerals under other unsold school land." Section Five of the new bill indicated the hopes of its sponsors for federal inclusion of Big Bend in the NPS network of parks: "The fact that the State of Texas owns additional lands located near the Canyons of the Rio Grande and in the Chisos Mountains of Texas, which are suitable for park purposes, and that Federal aid will probably be secured to improve said lands if they are taken over for park purposes." Wagstaff and Townsend then cautioned their legislative peers that "steps should be taken immediately to set aside said lands before they are acquired by private parties;" a condition that "creates an emergency and an imperative public necessity." [7]

In between the signing on May 27, 1933, of the original park bill by Texas governor Miriam (Ma) Ferguson, and her endorsement five months later of the vastly expanded Big Bend State Park, the Alpine Chamber of Commerce assumed the lead in gaining regional support for the proposed park site. Local sponsors, preeminent among them James Casner, a recent arrival in town who had bought the local Chevrolet auto dealership, knew that Congress that spring had passed legislation to create the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). This program, part of the heady "First Hundred Days" of legislation signed by FDR between March and June 1933, had as one of its goals, said Sellars, "protection of the nation's forests from fires, insects, and disease damage - goals that matched perfectly those of most national park managers." The CCC included a state parks assistance program that attracted the attention of the Alpine chamber of commerce, which brought to the attention of park service officials in Denver, Colorado, the merits of including their favored location. If Brewster County could receive one of the CCC's 600 units, 200 young men would soon arrive, earning $30 per month. Their employers also would stimulate the west Texas economy with purchases of construction materials, food, clothing, and shelter. [8]

CCC camps were not easy to acquire in the first weeks of the program, and the Big Bend sponsors had to wait until May 1934 to welcome the program to their area. Conrad Wirth, assistant director of the NPS (eventually to become director of the system), wrote in July 1933 to Herbert T. Maier, director of the NPS's Denver office of state park conservation, to express his concerns about the efforts of promoters of parks in the Big Bend and Davis Mountains. Maier had offered to travel to west Texas to examine the sites, but Wirth preferred to wait until the NPS's premier authority on potential park locations, Roger Toll, would be able to leave his post as superintendent of Yellowstone National Park and visit Big

Bend. Wirth cautioned Maier that "the meager reports we have on these areas . . . would not indicate that they measure up to National Park calibre." The assistant NPS director did offer hope that "these reports do indicate that [Big Bend and the Davis Mountains] are excellent State Park material so perhaps they should be retained and developed as State parks." Since Wirth's office could not guarantee support for the Texas units, he also did not see how they could be included in the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program, an alternative to the CCC. [9]

Aware that politics affected park creation as did economics and aesthetics, the Alpine chamber of commerce undertook their own campaign for Big Bend. Chamber director Forest Robinson called upon local business leaders to speak on behalf of the merits of the CCC, and to promise financial support if necessary. James Casner and his colleagues convinced Herbert Maier that they needed not one, but two CCC camps in the Chisos Mountains (a total of 400 employees). F.A. Dale, Texas district inspector for the CCC program, wrote in September 1933 to Major John D. Guthrie, commander of the Eighth Corps Area of the U.S. Army (which oversaw the operations of the camps). Dale suggested that both camps be located at Government Springs, as the "camp site and water" had been "placed under lease by the Chisos Mountainspark committee and the Brewster County Chamber of Commerce." The sites had access to Marathon, and would consist of employees transferred from other CCC districts. Dale then offered the logic that would prevail for the remainder of the planning process for Big Bend: "The National Park Service is particularly interested in this park on account of its outstanding qualities as a wilderness and recreational area." [10]

The reality of CCC funding, and the need for the NPS to understand the merits of Big Bend, affected the negotiation process attempted by the Alpine chamber and other champions of a national park for Texas. Herbert Maier, now the ECW district officer for Texas, wrote to Conrad Wirth in Washington in early October 1933 to warn him that "I have told the Chisos [Mountain] people that the camps as first recommended for their area could not be awarded because two camps had to be withdrawn from the Texas list for Arizona." Budget constraints (the bane of many New Deal programs throughout the 1930s) required Maier to judge the Big Bend proposal carefully, and his decision revolved around the obstacles of distance and isolation. "The Chisos Mt. camps," said Maier, "were decided upon for this switch because of their high altitude and very long dirt road." Maier would disappoint backers of a CCC camp in Bastrop, Texas, "since the unfortunate reduction in the total number of Texas camps makes it desirous to spread the camps around as much as possible in the light of so many applications." Bastrop had offered the NPS some 2,000 acres of land on the chance that three camps would be awarded. The selection of a west Texas site had become more complicated, and raised the stakes for the Alpine chamber as the NPS calculated the benefits of Big Bend. [11]

As Maier struggled to balance the Big Bend request with the onslaught of applications for CCC work, his district inspector continued to echo the sentiments of local promoters from Alpine. On October 6, 1933, Dale again reminded Maier that, "considering scenery, climate, flora, fauna, and Indian relics, there is nothing approaching [Big Bend] closer than Colorado." ECW personnel who had visited the area judged it "as far superior to Palo Duro Canyon;" the area south of Amarillo being promoted for NPS inclusion for its connection to the Coronado expedition of 1541-42. "The Big Bend district," said Dale, "may not have much influence, but it certainly has the best park possibility now offered in Texas." He encouraged Maier to move quickly, as "the next six months have practically no rainfall - hence no objection from the Army on account of unbridged creeks, etc." Dale also noted that the Army had rejected calls for a CCC camp at "Santa Helena" in June because of "excessive heat." Should Maier adopt the Chisos Basin site, Dale believed that "the area would be used extensively by vacationists from all over Texas and possibly adjoining states." He rationalized that the Chisos "and the Davis and Guadalupe Mountains are the only cool spots

in Texas in the summer." The state of Texas could be counted upon to improve the road from Marathon to the park, said Dale, "which would put the area within one and one-half days drive of Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, and Austin." Dale then closed his plea to Maier with the suggestion that "here is an opportunity of raise the standards of the E.C.W. parks in Texas," as Texas' natural attractions suffered in comparison to the more striking physical beauty of the Rocky Mountains and the desert Southwest. [12]

Herbert Maier would define this contrast more clearly when he wrote on October 12, 1933, to Everett Townsend, apologizing for rejection of the Chisos camps after his favorable recommendation. Texas had to reduce the number of CCC sites from 17 to 14, and the Army's judgment about the "Saint Helena" camp influenced its thinking about the entire Big Bend area. The park service remained committed to promotion of the site, given the imperatives of the New Deal to improve the economic life of the nation, and the political realities of including Texas in the net of services and programs emanating from Congress. George L. Nason, director the NPS's state parks division in Oklahoma City, asked Professor B.C. Tharp of the department of biology and bacteriology at the University of Texas, for his opinion of Big Bend. Tharp in turn supplied Nason with a research paper written by C.H. Mueller, one of his graduate students who in the summers of 1931 and 1932 had conducted fieldwork in the Chisos Mountains. While Tharp encouraged Nason to engage in much more thorough analysis of the area, he agreed with Mueller that "this region is of outstanding scientific value by virtue of the fact that it is the meeting place within the United States of representatives from Mexico and from the Rocky Mountain systems lying to the north." In addition, the Big Bend area housed "a rather surprising number of eastern species and of species from the arid west." Big Bend's scientific value from the standpoint of vegetation, Tharp claimed, was "further enhanced by virtue of the fact that the Chisos Mountains are not a range but rather a 'heap' whose diameter is essentially equal in whatever direction it is measured." The height of the mountains "above the surrounding plain is relatively greater than that of other mountains in the state," even though "the altitude above sea level is somewhat less than the maximum." [13]

None of these testimonials to the beauty and power of the Big Bend landscape mattered as much as the report filed by Roger Toll. The Yellowstone superintendent ventured through the future park site from January 8 to 11, 1934, accompanied by J. Evetts Haley of the history department of the University of Texas, Everett Townsend, John W. Gillette, president of the Alpine chamber of commerce, local rancher Homer Wilson (who also served as the outfitter for the surveying party), and other NPS officials. In a letter to Arno Cammerer, director of the Interior department's office of national parks, buildings and reservations in Washington, Toll spoke to the concerns of the Army and the park service regarding Big Bend's inclusion in the NPS system. "The Chisos Mountains . . . have attractive vegetation with some trees and plants not found elsewhere in the United States," Toll reported, and "the view from the South Rim is highly spectacular." The canyons of Santa Elena, Mariscal, and Boquillas had "spectacular gorges, from 1,000 to 1,500 feet deep," which the Yellowstone superintendent considered (along with the Chisos Mountains) to be "the chief scenic features of the area." Toll judged the Big Bend to be "a wilderness area," marked by its aridity and its "very sparse population." Most of the economic activity revolved around the raising of cattle, sheep and goats, as well as "mercury ores and some other mineral deposits." Toll thus agreed with F.A. Dale that "the Big Bend Country seems to be decidedly the outstanding scenic area of Texas." Should the NPS construct a road to the three canyons and the Chisos, "the area would offer a scenic trip that would be of national interest." He further warned Cammerer: "The area will not have many visitors until the facilities of access and accommodation are provided." [14]

No sooner had Toll left the Big Bend area (and before he could file his report to his superiors in Denver and Washington), local supporters of the park resumed their lobbying efforts

among state park and NPS officials. D.E. Colp, chairman of the Texas state parks board, wrote to Herbert Maier in early February 1934 to ask that he "discuss this with Mr. Roger W. Toll as he inspected this property and I am sure the NPS would place a good deal of confidence in whatever he had to say about it." Colp informed Maier that "it is our plan to acquire something like one million acres in this area by getting small amounts at each session of the Legislature." He then mentioned for the first time that "we are working out a plan with the Mexican Government with a like amount on the Mexican side of the river." This venture to incorporate one million acres on each side of the international boundary arose because of a change in leadership in the Republic of Mexico. Lazaro Cardenas became president of Mexico in the spring of 1934, offering a dramatic departure for his impoverished nation that included redistribution of lands from the wealthy to the masses, an increase in educational opportunity, and social reforms to improve the daily lives of Mexican citizens. Cardenas' governing agenda, in the words of Lane Simonian, author of *Defending the Land of the Jaguar* (1996), included reversal of Mexico's tradition of exploitation of natural resources, and preservation of the environment because "people's well-being depended upon the maintenance of stable ecosystems." [15]

Over the next several months, the concerns of the Big Bend sponsors revolved not around Mexico, but the sense that the NPS and Congress had changed their minds about their CCC application. D.E. Colp ranked the "Chisos Mountains Park" fourth in priority for the Texas state parks board, behind Palo Duro Canyon, Bastrop, and the Davis Mountains. Harry L. Dunham, ECW district inspector in Austin, informed Maier in February 1934 that the Chisos camp sponsors had secured the backing of U.S. Representatives Robert Ewing Thomason of El Paso, Thomas R. Blanton of Abilene, and R.M. Kleberg of Corpus Christi. The overpowering beauty of the Big Bend, felt Dunham, more than compensated for the cost of facility and road construction to the remote site. "You will note," Dunham advised Maier upon submission of the Texas request, "that the estimates on the road items are less than 50% of the estimated total man hours." Land acquisition costs likewise had been reduced, as the original 225,000-acre request had shrunk to 105,000 acres. Dunham believed that the NPS could not justify work on park lands that it could not acquire easily, and the latter figure represented acreage already under the parks board's control. Other budget items in the CCC proposal that Dunham highlighted for his superiors included the need for a "rock quarry" in the Basin, some $2,000 to drill a well, and monies for fighting forest fires around the CCC camp. "I learned yesterday from Mr. Townsend," Dunham wrote, "that within reasonable distances from the probable camp site there are very large capacity springs of potable water." As for fire suppression, said Dunham: "We assumed that while there had been a few, if any fires in the Chisos area up to now, it is entirely possible that the advent of some 600 men into the area might occasion fire." [16]

Based upon the remarks of Harry Dunham, the appeals of the Alpine chamber, and the impending report of Roger Toll, Herbert Maier moved quickly to submit the Big Bend State Park application to his superiors in Washington. Maier told Conrad Wirth in February 1934 that "the name, Big Bend, is being used because it is the ambition of the [Texas] Park Board to finally acquire the whole Big Bend area of a million acres for a National Park." The NPS wanted three CCC units, "all to become located at one point in the Green Gulch in the Chisos Mountains." The park service's initial reviews of potential work included twenty miles of truck trails, 72 miles of fencing, an undetermined number of horse and foot trails, as well as over-night cabins, a concession building, and a telephone line. Maier, operating on Toll's statement to him of the merits of Big Bend, asked if the NPS realized "that the work would be outlined down there in such a way as to tie in with the final master plan for a national park," a task that Maier conceded "is not an easy thing to do." Toll further worried about "what effect our activity will have on the values placed on land still to be purchased by the state." In a telephone conversation between Colp, Toll, and Maier, Colp reported that "the people down in that part of the country have promised various parcels of land with the idea

that either a state or national park will become an actuality." Maier worried that "since they [local landowners] have been turned down on [CCC] camps both in the first and second periods [of 1933-34], they will lose all confidence in the project if it is turned down." [17]

To expedite the Big Bend request, Maier and Toll offered suggestions for the location of roads, trails, and buildings that revealed the distinctiveness (and the cost) of CCC work. Toll argued that "three roads will eventually run up the walls of the Rio Grande Canyon onto the plateau above, and thence across this plateau partly over existing roads up to and through the Chisos Mountains." Toll and Maier called for CCC work at Santa Elena, as "the state now owns two or three sections of land suitable for a camp." The NPS, however, would need at least two camps there, as "a road leading up the walls of the Rio Grande Canyon would have to be practically their sole project." Another site of interest to Maier and Toll was Green Gulch, "which will always be the natural entrance way to the park from the west, and to which one can drive at the present time." Maier called for a camp there with primary tasks of "building . . . foot and horse trails, the developing of water, some overnight cabins, and above everything else a survey of the road from here on." The NPS would need special permission to "devote 90% of the [CCC] activity to the building of this road," as the CCC preferred spending the bulk of its funds on preservation projects. Maier saw Roger Toll's opinion as influential with the CCC, and "we might justify this as 100% conservation in that everything done in the area, whether road or otherwise, is being carried toward the permanent conservation of the area." [18]

More than road and trails, the search for water in the Chisos Basin concerned Maier and Toll as they promoted the new Texas park. D.E. Colp had assured Maier that "the water up in Green Gulch . . . will surely pass inspection this time," and the parks board chairman "intends to sink a well with CWA [Civil Works Administration] labor and have the water ready in plenty of time before the camps are installed." While Maier wondered how the state could guarantee funding for such a speculative venture as well-drilling, he noted that "Colp has a way of obtaining his objectives in the end." Colp knew the director of the Texas relief commission, and CWA officials in Texas acquiesced to Colp's wishes. This pattern of political maneuvering also concerned the NPS in matters of land ownership, as Toll did not believe that Texas had unrestricted access to the 105,000 acres projected for Big Bend State Park. In addition, Colp had succeeded in acquiring passage in the Texas state legislature of a measure allocating $50,000 for the Big Bend CCC program, and the state senate and the governor seemed equally inclined to support Colp. "You have certainly got to hand it to him," Maier told Wirth, and concluded about the camps: "Although we may not go into this thing, taking it all in I think it deserves to be classed as an 'A' project." [19]

Once Colp had convinced Maier to advance the Texas proposals, the latter official turned to Roger Toll on February 19, 1934, for more specific details. Toll compared the process for creation of a Big Bend National Park to that recently used with Tennessee's Great Smokies, Virginia's Shenandoah, Kentucky's Mammoth Cave, and Minnesota's Isle Royale national parks. "The danger of doing any development before the park has been established and the land secured," said Toll, "is that the valuation of the land will be increased by having the State and the Federal Government committed to the project, and by the expenditure for roads and other development on near by [*sic*] land." The Yellowstone superintendent realized "the urge to start development with relief funds that are now available, but which may not be available in later years." He asked Maier to secure from Colp maps of the proposed park site, including notation of the state lands. Toll closed his recommendations by encouraging a first camp at Santa Elena, because of its access to water from the Rio Grande, as opposed to the Chisos Basin, where "the water supply is doubtful and the [CCC] men could not begin immediately on road work." [20]

Any delay in establishment of the camps threatened the plans and dreams of the Big Bend

promoters, as Colp had estimated a direct cash infusion of $200,000 into Brewster County within six months of the creation of a CCC facility. In March 1934, Colp met in Alpine with the Alpine chamber of commerce, calling upon them to purchase even one quarter-section (160 acres) in the Chisos Basin to demonstrate their commitment to the NPS and Congress. The release of Roger Toll's highly favorable report encouraged the chamber to fund its own search for water supplies. Herbert Maier wrote to Conrad Wirth on April 9 to warn Washington officials of the NPS that "the water question in the Chisos Mountains has not as yet been settled to the satisfaction of the Army." Chamber officials first had approached rancher Waddy Burnham, owner of substantial water rights in the Basin, to sell the needed supply to the CCC. When Burnham refused, Everett Townsend convinced the Alpine boosters to join with the CWA to fund the drilling of two wells. The chamber employed Dr. Charles Baker, chairman of the geology department at Texas A&M University, to determine the location of a steady supply of water. On April 16, 1934, Townsend's crew tapped a source of water at the foot of Pulliam Bluff on the north side of the Basin that released eight gallons per minute, three gallons more than the minimum standard used by the Army. This discovery triggered the rush to approve the CCC camp, and to begin the hiring of its 200 employees. [21]

While Brewster County park advocates reveled in their good fortune, in the spring and summer of 1934 the NPS accelerated the process of park surveys. By the end of that year, the park service had a much clearer idea of the opportunities and challenges awaiting Big Bend National Park. Yet the NPS also faced similar demands for reviews and planning throughout the country as its share of responsibility grew for economic recovery and resource preservation. The experimental nature of the CCC and related work programs, the lack of any experience with long-range planning for government employment programs, and the costs of operations in the isolated conditions of Big Bend rendered the exercise problematic for the NPS, even as state officials moved legislation through Congress toward incorporation of the site as the 27th national park.

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 3:
First Impressions: A Critical Year of Park Planning, 1935

Enthusiasm ran high in the winter of 1934-1935 for creation of a national park in the Big Bend country. Brewster County officials had secured federal funding for a CCC camp in the Chisos Basin, NPS staff members had visited the potential site to initiate scientific surveys, and the Texas congressional delegation had signaled its willingness to sponsor enabling legislation. Mexican officials under the reform leadership of President Lazaro Cardenas announced their intention to establish a joint U.S.-Mexico international peace park, akin to the Canadian-American venture connecting Glacier and Waterton Lakes parks. At the same time, the sluggish economy dictated delays in Texas' desire to pay for the massive land acquisition program mandated by federal law. U.S. officials also chafed at the restrictions that Texas placed upon land transactions between private owners and public entities. Not until the onset of World War II, with its massive federal expenditures for weapons procurement, food and fiber production, and employment in the public and private sectors, did Texas's leadership agree to contribute its share of financial resources. Thus a careful analysis of the "first impressions" of all parties to the formation of Big Bend National Park might reveal the lessons learned in the first year of park planning.

Indication of the seriousness of the NPS's position on Big Bend came in January 1935, when ECW regional director Herbert Maier released a lengthy report on the geology, vegetation, wildlife, history, boundaries, and international dimensions of Big Bend National Park. Consisting of a series of studies begun in the fall of 1934, and serving as the rationale for El Paso Congressman R. Ewing Thomason's bill to establish the NPS's first park site in Texas, the report outlined the complexity of Big Bend's appeal. "The Big Bend area is the last great wilderness area of Texas," wrote the NPS official, with "the reason for the long isolation . . . [being] its low economic value." Other than quicksilver operations at Mariscal, Study Butte, and Terlingua, "there has been no need for arteries of trade." The ECW did not seek control of the entire ecosystem of 3.5 million acres, "since the northern portion thereof consists principally of dry plain having no superlative features." Maier and the NPS staff members did see value in recognizing the presence of Mexico across the border. "The romance of old frontier Mexico," said the report, "is in the atmosphere of the Big Bend region." Echoing the sentiments of Everett Townsend, Maier believed that "everything should be done in developing the area to preserve for the tourists seeking rest and relaxation the Spanish-Mexican feeling of manana." This meant pursuit of the "highly intriguing . . . aspects of a possible international park." Finally, the state of Texas, which Maier identified as the "largest state in the Union," had no national park unit, an oversight that Big Bend could correct. [1]

While the park service's preliminary endorsement of a site along the Rio Grande stimulated much public interest, the NPS recognized many challenges awaiting its personnel. Maier informed Conrad Wirth, at that time the director of the ECW's state-park program in Washington, that Congressman Thomason had solicited advice from Everett Townsend, now designated "project manager" of the "land acquisition program." Two features of local

interest concerned Maier: the potential for increased land values, and the independent initiative for an international park. Maier knew that "West Texas had National Park aspirations for this area and carried out publicity accordingly long before we came into the picture." For that reason, "it is . . . difficult to entirely smother publicity especially since a CCC Camp has been installed there." Regarding the international park idea, "while I believe it will be a most outstanding thing if such an international recreational area of this scope could be realized," Maier sensed that "such a thing is far in the offing." Speaking prophetically to Wirth, Maier contended that "Mexico would move very slowly in such a matter since she has done little in large park development." History also would affect any negotiations for the venture, as "the Mexicans and Texans were pretty bitter toward each other in the old days." Maier predicted that "a National Park on the U.S. side would have to be a glorious relationship before the Mexicans would enter into the thing with gusto." [2]

Beyond the dream of Mexican-U.S. collaboration, Maier faced the task of acquiring land on the American side of the border in the event that Congress approved Thomason's bill. In January 1935, the ECW district director wrote to Dan T. Gray of the University of Arkansas to explain the preliminary steps to define the scale and scope of land purchases in Brewster County. The NPS hoped to accelerate park creation by including much of the acreage under the New Deal program of "sub-marginal land projects." This initiative allowed for federal purchase of lands considered unfit for future agricultural production, and their restoration for purposes of recreation and wildlife habitat. To that end, the NPS had hired Everett Townsend to classify all of the potential acreage, pursuant to an official survey and campaign for acquisition. "It takes a great many years," Maier told the Arkansas university dean, "to get the land matters straightened up in an area considered for an National Park." In his capacity as a reviewer of the merits of sub-marginal lands, Gray could assist the NPS in "this outstanding opportunity not only for working up the land status but also for land acquisition." [3]

In addition to land surveys, the NPS also needed to link the ongoing construction work of the CCC camp in the Chisos Basin with any future plans for the park. George Nason had asked Maier in January 1935 for advice on building permanent structures with an eye to NPS use and maintenance. Maier cautioned Nason that the NPS needed a master plan prior to any approval, a condition exacerbated by the agency's workload and the distance to the Chisos CCC site. Maier noted with some concern the increases in cost for roads and trails construction, which could exceed the NPS's standard of spending no more than 25 percent of a camp's budget on roadwork. Nason asked Maier to support his efforts in the Chisos Basin, as "carefulness of development is the important thing in this area." Nason also agreed that the park service should move cautiously on plans to build elaborate resort facilities in the Basin without NPS approval of the master plan. [4]

To ascertain the merits of ECW plans for Big Bend, Maier asked Dr. Hermon C. Bumpus, chairman of the NPS's education advisory board, to visit the future park site in late December of 1934. Familiarizing himself with the planning process by means of Maier's report, Bumpus joined A.F. Ahrens, district inspector for the ECW, and their spouses on a trip from Oklahoma City to Big Bend. Bumpus found the isolation of Brewster County invigorating. "To leave a trans-continental highway," he wrote to Wirth, "and motor away from railroads, hotels and filling-stations invariably gives a pleasurable reaction to a sensitive person." Big Bend, moreover, exceeded Bumpus's expectations. "When [a visitor] passes through a country that is wide in its expanse, rich in the volcanic monuments of the geologic past, fascinating in its color effect and suddenly comes to a stop within the solid walls that Nature has erected around the 'Chisos Bowl,'" said Bumpus, "he is prepared to relax." Particularly attractive to Bumpus and other NPS officials was the area's proximity to Mexico. Describing the village of Boquillas, Texas, as "a miniature garden," and its Mexican counterpart "an irresistible lure for the kodak [camera]," the advisory board member summarized the charm of the border for future visitors: "May the burros, that provide the scant international transportation across the

river at this point, never be succeeded by ferry or bridge." To Bumpus, "the beauty of the river, the enclosing walls, the vegetation and the primitive human habitations all conspire against modernity." Bumpus deferred to NPS experts in wildlife and geology to explain the area's natural resource significance. He concluded that "the desires and ambitions of a relatively small fraction of our population should not alone [inspire] hope that this - possibly the last of our frontiers - may come under Federal control and be preserved so coming generations may derive pleasure therefrom." [5]

Bumpus's description of the Big Bend area intrigued ECW personnel, as he offered the first "outsider's" view of their planning. A.F. Ahrens told Maier of the good time that the Bumpus party had in traversing the countryside, despite the cold temperatures and dusty conditions. Bumpus "spent considerable time studying the rock formations and especially the fossils and relics" that J.O. Langford had on display in his store at Hot Springs. While visiting the mining community of Terlingua, Bumpus remarked to his NPS and CCC hosts about "the typical local color portrayed and the lack of any attempt to 'modernize' the village." He also told Ahrens of his preference for hotel accommodations within the Chisos Basin, rather than at the entrance in Green Gulch (Bumpus noted the fact that sunlight struck that location later than in the basin, resulting in a lingering chill on winter mornings). "It is hardly necessary for me to say," Ahrens concluded, that the party "departed very much enthused over the country and most anxious to see it become a National Park." [6]

For Maier and Nason, the visit by Dr. Bumpus vindicated their efforts to design the NPS's 27th park site in the absence of close supervision by Washington officials. "As far as you and I know," Maier told Nason, "in dealing with this ever-changing picture, we might not be able to get [Conrad] Wirth down here for a year." Absent the guidance of the ECW's planning chief, Maier had to pursue the sub-marginal lands project, and to initiate road construction. Nason concurred, heralding "Dr. Bumpus' opinion [as] the first authoritative opinion we have had." Nason told his superior that he "had just approved and had forwarded to you plans showing some four and three-quarters miles of road leading from the desert up to the saddle [of the Chisos Basin]." The ECW inspector believed that "any road that we build must go through this pass," a situation which entailed "a considerable amount of work to be done." Yet "we do own the land up to this point," Nason told Maier, and hoped that problems with future land purchases could be addressed by the Texas state parks board. [7]

Nason's delight at Bumpus's praise for the work at Big Bend contrasted sharply with the ongoing dispute between the park service and Texas attorney general, James V. Allred. The latter on November 19, 1934, had ruled on the legality of the Big Bend State Park Act, finding unconstitutional the provision to "sell" the mineral rights of approximately 121,000 acres of state school lands. While granting that the Texas legislature had the right to create parks, maintain them, and accept donations for the purchase of private lands, Allred opined that "one cent an acre or five cents an acre [the valuation given by the lawmakers to the mineral rights] is so palpably insufficient as consideration for the sale of Texas Public School Lands that it must be treated as no consideration at all." Allred placed himself between the schoolchildren of Texas and the ambitions of park promoters by holding that "the two parks acts [of 1933] plainly violate Sections 4 and 5, Article VII, of the Texas Constitution." The attorney general agreed that "the establishment of a system of State Parks is important to the health and happiness of a people," but concluded bluntly that "support therefore must be found in sources other than [the] Permanent School Fund." [8]

The future Texas governor's ruling caused much consternation in the park service's Washington and Oklahoma City. The NPS had counted on the state legislature's generosity to expedite planning for Big Bend National Park. Douglas C. Lauderdale, regional attorney for the NPS, hurriedly drafted a memorandum in February 1935 to explain the park service's position on the school lands controversy. Lauderdale argued that the $1,500 allocated by the

legislature to the state school fund from the sale of the mineral rights constituted a donation. In addition, "after the park has been developed, much revenue should be derived from the sale of gas, and much profit to the people in general." Neither should one overlook the intangible benefits of Big Bend, said the regional attorney, as "the scenic beauty of the Big Bend project will be brought out as a diamond in the rough." Allred's charge that the state had been denied full market value for its lands struck Lauderdale as spurious. "I am sure," he wrote, "that no individual would accept the school lands that have been picked over and left, which now lie idle, as a gift if they had to pay taxes on it and further, if the mineral rights were reserved by the Public School fund." Lauderdale believed that the state park had managed to generate revenue where none had existed, since the lawmakers had included "the consideration of an added tax revenue that would be derived from the sale of gasoline from tourists in every section of the country coming to Texas to view the beautiful park that we hope to develop." The NPS lawyer then turned Allred's argument around, noting that in light of the hardships that the people of Texas had endured throughout the Depression, "the Federal government, in . . . buying up the lands within the various states of the Union, does so only to relieve the farmers who have here-to-fore been unable to enjoy a high standard of living." Lauderdale further charged that "if the State is unwilling to cooperate by adding lands which they own to projects within the purchase area of proposed [park] sites, then the Federal Government does not want to be antagonistic, and therefore, will not insist in this program being carried out." [9]

As Congressman Thomason drafted his legislation to create a federal park in Brewster County, and the state of Texas argued with its future partner in park management, NPS officials in February 1935 continued to struggle with the vagaries of nature in the Big Bend region, and the politics of New Deal agency funding. Maier and Nason discussed at length the problem of building a campground high in the Chisos Basin. "We have the blue print of the Big Bend Shelter here in the office now," said Maier, "and obviously it is impossible." The district ECW officer told Nason that "for a structure to be placed in a future National Park it certainly looks like hell." Nason had designed a facility that was "vertical rather than horizontal," with a "roof well-nigh impossible" and "rocks . . . all out of scale." Maier then addressed the complaint made a year earlier by W.G. Carnes about the lack of architectural expertise at Big Bend. "That [shelter] seems to be one of the difficulties down at the Big Bend," said Maier. "No one down there seems to have grasped the idea of scale," and despite the fact that "it may be very hard to get big rocks," Maier nonetheless warned that "we will never get away with using the size of stuff that is restricted to city parks." Instead he suggested that Nason "call off work on the shelter immediately," and await the arrival of an NPS architect. [10]

As if funding, staffing, design, and legal issues were not enough, the NPS also faced in early 1935 local ranchers' confusion over the status of grazing lands in the future park. Maier learned that "grazing is still continued in the Chisos Mountains on the areas on which we are working." Because of this, "the trails that we have built have been destroyed at several points." Contributing to this problem was the attitude of rancher Ira Hector, the first to sell a portion of his land to the NPS for the Chisos CCC camp. Nason informed Maier of the tenuous relationship that the NPS had with Hector, as "the section just west of No. 32, which was turned over to the [state] Parks Board by Mr. Hector, was turned over with a definite agreement that cattle could be left in until the sum of $3800 had been paid." Hector had agreed to accept less payment from the parks board for each year that he continued to graze on his former acreage. "We are now faced with the proposition," said Nason, "that the State does not really own this land and cannot stop the grazing." Nor did the NPS "have any fences around the few sections that we do own that can keep cattle from wandering on." The ECW official also disliked the fact that "Section 32, where a lot of the trails are, is school land and there is no authority to order these cattle off." Local ranchers had used the school lands of the Big Bend area as open range, and "until we can consolidate enough sections in one area,"

said Nason, "there is no use of fencing." Then in a contradictory conclusion, Nason suggested: "I do not think the damage to the trails is so very serious." He believed that the cattle "are breaking down the shoulder slopes on the upper side into a rather natural condition." This led Nason to remark: "This may be classified as 'local participation' by the local inhabitants!" [11]

Far from the trails of the Chisos Basin, on March 4, 1935, Ewing Thomason formally requested that the U.S. House of Representatives make permanent the dream of Everett Townsend and the NPS planners for a national park in the Big Bend country. In the first session of the 74th Congress, the El Paso Democrat introduced House Resolution (HR) 6373, "A Bill To provide for the establishment of the Big Bend National Park, in the State of Texas, and for other purposes." Morris Sheppard and Tom Connally, like Thomason members of the majority political party, asked their Senate colleagues to do the same. Cognizant of disputes in Austin and Brewster County about the purchase of private lands with public monies, Thomason declared that Big Bend would open only "when title to such lands as may be determined by the Secretary of the Interior as necessary for recreational park purposes within boundaries to be determined by him within the area of approximately one million five hundred thousand acres, in the counties of Brewster and Presidio, . . . shall have been vested in the United States." No federal funds would be expended on private property. In addition, stated Thomason, "no land for said park shall be accepted until exclusive jurisdiction over the entire area, in form satisfactory to the Secretary of the Interior, shall have been ceded by the State of Texas to the United States." Then in a reference to the issue of water resource development in arid west Texas, Thomason stipulated that "the provisions of the Act of June 10, 1920, known as the 'Federal Water Power Act,' shall not apply to this park." Congress had authorized creation of the Federal Power Commission (FPC) to study construction of hydroelectric power sites in the nation's rivers and streams. Exclusion of Big Bend's stretch of the Rio Grande from the purview of the FPC would have implications soon thereafter, as in 1935 the International Boundary Commission (IBC) would study the potential for hydropower facilities in the canyons of the upper and lower Rio Grande. [12]

Where Thomason's bill emphasized the financial and political realities of Texas and the Big Bend country, Senator Sheppard furthered the cause of the international park concept by soliciting the support of President Roosevelt. The president, eager for venues to pursue better relations with Mexico, asked Interior Secretary Harold Ickes to respond quickly to Sheppard's request. Ickes, known for his incorporation of employment and economic development features in national parks, submitted to FDR a proposal for a park unit at Big Bend. He concurred in the judgment of Herbert Maier, Conrad Wirth, et al., "that the area referred to in Texas be established as the Big Bend National Park." He added that "the possibility of an international park in this region meets with my approval." If Congress concurred, said Ickes, "the Mexican Government [should] be invited to cooperate with the United States in the establishment of such an international park." [13]

Once the White House and the powerful Interior secretary went public with their endorsement of the Thomason and Shepard initiatives, planning for Big Bend accelerated. Four days after the introduction of HR 6373, Texas attorney general Allred agreed to vacate his decision on the mineral rights issue. Allred's earlier opinion unfortunately had blocked NPS approval of Big Bend's submarginal-land project. "This [the school lands controversy] was a rather unhappy discovery," Maier informed Wirth, which forced the NPS to exert "considerable pressure" on Allred to "bring about a reversal of this opinion." After "a long session with the Attorney General," said Maier, Douglas Lauderdale received a telegram from Allred declaring that "the School Fund can turn over its land in fee simple to the State Park Board and the State Park Board is the only one that already has the right to turn the land over to the Federal Government for National Park purposes." Maier contended that "the main stumbling block as regards the land acquisition program has been removed," and he hoped that "the

State of Texas will now be in a very strategic position to accumulate the necessary area for a National Park." [14]

From his vantage point in Oklahoma City, Lauderdale could be optimistic about the future of Big Bend. Less enthusiastic was Everett Townsend, a landowner in his own right and the manager of the land acquisition project terminated by Allred's earlier restrictions on school land sales. Townsend knew the ranchers of Brewster County well, and warned Maier "that if the responsibility for the acquisition of lands . . . is placed with the State, it will be a very slow process." The harsh realities of the Lone Star economy meant that "any procurements made will have to be wrung from an empty treasury - a difficult problem." In addition, said the former U.S. Customs officer and Brewster County sheriff, "donations from those owning lands within the area can hardly be expected, except on a very small scale because they are now laden with debts from which they can never emerge." When one considered the drought and the deplorable economic condition of the inhabitants of the region, said Townsend, "there is much merit in giving it serious consideration under the [sub-marginal] Land Program." Committed as ever to his dream of a national park, Townsend told Maier: "I shall keep right on with the work I am doing and hope to completely cover the Chisos Mountains area and the most important sections of the River front by the end of the month." "My heart is in this 'project,'" he confided to Maier, "and I am ready to do my best no matter whether I am off or on the pay-roll." [15]

When Townsend completed his report on March 31, he had produced no fewer than 56 pages of names, property valuations, and land status for the NPS to consider. Working non-stop through the months of February and March, Townsend had not had time to identify all property owners with delinquent taxes on their lands. In addition, he found in the Brewster County clerk's office a disturbing pattern of recordkeeping. "The addresses of many of the non-resident owners are missing," he told Maier, as "few of these are correctly given on the Tax Rolls." A correct list could "be obtained only by the examination of hundreds of letters received in the remittance of taxes for all parts of the County, all of which are thrown indiscriminately into a large drawer without any semblance of order." Such carelessness in official documentation led Townsend to discover another feature of Brewster County's lax procedures: "In my work I have found two valuable surveys, one in the Chisos Mountains Basin and the other on the Boquillas Canyon, which are claimed by individuals." Townsend believed instead that "the Texas State Parks Board [has] valid title." One example was the claim of A.M. Gilmer, whose land the state legislature had included in the Big Bend State Park Act because of nonpayment of property taxes. "It is the only survey we can claim that lies immediately on the Boquillas Canyon," Townsend told D.E. Colp, "and is very valuable for park purposes as it [is] within the bend of that canyon and the River flows on two sides of it." The Gilmer claim, while "almost unknown," constituted what Townsend called "scenically one of the grandest regions in the Park area." In like manner, Townsend uncovered a deed for 640 acres of land in the Chisos Basin once claimed by the Gulf Coast and San Francisco Railway. This included "the greater part of the 'Window:'" the spectacular notch in the Chisos Basin that looked out onto the Rio Grande and Mexico below. [16]

NPS officials in April then learned that the CCC camp wished to implement an aggressive predator-control program in the Chisos Basin. George Nason informed Maier that "panther, or mountain lion, are causing considerable trouble in preying on young deer in the mountains." James O. Stevenson, regional wildlife technician for the NPS, noted that camp officials sought permission "to establish trap lines to catch these animals." The issue of predator removal echoed a debate at the highest levels of the park service, where in 1931 then-director Horace Albright had, in the words of Richard Sellars, "announced the policy of limiting predator control to what was absolutely necessary." By that time, said Sellars, "wolves and cougars had been virtually eradicated from all national parks in the forty-eight states," leaving only the coyote "in substantial numbers." [17]

As with land acquisition matters, predator control in the Big Bend area forced the NPS to reassess newly drafted regulations concerning issues of wildlife and ecosystem management. Stevenson told Maier that, "according to the policy of the National Park Service and the State Park Division, as explained in the ECW Handbook, predators are definitely protected." The rules did allow "in extreme cases" for control, "but they should never be exterminated." NPS guidelines held that "no predator, such as the panther, should be destroyed on account of its normal use of any other park animal unless that animal, such as the deer, is in danger of extinction." Stevenson, however, hinted at his desire to accede to the wishes of CCC camp officials and local ranchers. "If action on this emergency situation is authorized by the Washington office," he told Maier, "I will write the Biological Survey for the best and most practical means of control." In his opinion, "if trapping is the most feasible way, a man experienced in predatory animal control must be obtained to superintend this work." [18]

By June 1935, the NPS had completed enough survey work on land issues and natural resources to submit a formal application for Big Bend National Park; a prerequisite to congressional and executive action. Herbert Maier noted in his letter to the NPS's State Park ECW office that little had changed since he had filed his report in January on Big Bend. The NPS should seek a land base of some 1.5 million acres (or 2,343 square miles, nearly double the size of the state of Rhode Island). "From personal knowledge of the area," wrote Maier, "I would say that the caliber of such an area would rank favorably with that of Zion National Park, although different in physical aspects." The nation also would gain a cultural resource unlike any other in the NPS system, as "the general atmosphere of the Big Bend area is Spanish-Mexican in feeling and would add an entirely new flavor to the chain of national parks." Maier further encouraged NPS officials to focus upon the Chisos Mountains, which "themselves might be considered as a preliminary acquisition area, comprising approximately 65,000 acres." He also reminded his Washington superiors that Roger Toll had praised Big Bend's national benefits, even as he noted its land-purchase issues, when he recommended following the procedure of Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee, where a portion of the future park entered the NPS system prior to final acquisition. [19]

Coincident with Maier's application for park status for Big Bend was completion in July of a report by H.P.K. Agersborg, chief biologist for the NPS, entitled, "Certain State Parks and Other Areas in Texas." Agersborg had gone to Big Bend in the spring with James O. Stevenson and J.T. Roberts of the Oklahoma City NPS office. Conceding that his first impression of the area "was not favorable," the NPS biologist nonetheless offered a balanced perspective of Big Bend's strengths and weaknesses as a new park unit. "While the distance from civilization over 112 miles of 'corduroy' road," said Agersborg, "makes it rather expensive to reach the interior of the area," it was "necessary to go to this trouble in order to save this area for the future." Echoing the thoughts of George Nason and Herbert Maier, Agersborg admitted that "to build a good road will be very costly," yet "it will pay" in the long run. The park service biologist then offered the most critical assessment of the drought of the 1930s on the Big Bend ecosystem. "After one reaches the more scenic parts of the park area," said Agersborg, "one is met face to face with problems vital to the State [of Texas]." In Big Bend, "one sees the badly eroded, denuded soil, closely cropped flowering desert shrubs--which otherwise should be beautiful--and the presence of hungry and thirsty herds of sheep, goats, beef-cattle and horses." Beyond this, "continuous grazing over a long period has left the land desolate," a condition that Agersborg believed "the State wants to change." "It is somewhat paradoxical," he noted, "to witness domesticated cattle graze side by side with the park officials as the latter are trying to build a park in a desert for the public to enjoy." Adding to the future park's ecological burden were the practices of the CCC workers to strip the bark from the century plants, and visitors who "in the past have been allowed to kill and carry off valuable and rare birds." During the previous year (1934), hunters had bagged 5,000 deer in the park area. All of this, Agersborg hoped, would cease once Big Bend entered the

NPS system, with tourism replacing the current destructive uses of the landscape. [20]

A step in that direction occurred on June 20, 1935, when Congress enacted and President Roosevelt signed Public Law No. 157. This measure authorized the creation of Big Bend National Park. FDR and the nation's lawmakers accepted the NPS's request to set aside 1.5 million acres of land for "recreational park purposes." Other suggestions for purchase of the lands made by Herbert Maier and his staff became part of the act, as did the proscription against inclusion of the park's portion of the Rio Grande in any FPC project development. This permitted Everett Townsend to return to the field as "senior foreman" at the Chisos CCC camp, with the authority to continue his surveys of property ownership. Among his more daunting tasks was convincing J.J. Willis to deed his holdings to the State Parks Board. Townsend had discovered that "much of [Willis's land] he had bought at tax sales in 1929 and has paid no taxes on any of it since that year." Townsend also learned that the Houston and Texas Coast Railway had subdivided two sections of the Chisos Basin adjacent to the CCC camp into 40-acre tracts. He hoped to convince the Brewster County court to declare this land delinquent in tax payments, and include them in the early design of the park. [21]

Throughout the summer of 1935, CCC work moved forward in anticipation of the land-acquisition program. J.T. Haile of the ECW Procurement Office in Austin went to the new park area to review the distinctive conditions of work. He noted the need for an extensive fleet of trucks, and the heavy use they received in driving from the railheads in Alpine and Marathon through the desert and up the north face of the Chisos Mountains. "In this rough area," Haile wrote to his superiors in Oklahoma City, "there is no choice of roads over which to transport men and material." One must "build as you go, and there is no opportunity of detouring to avoid a rough spot or an excessive grade." The Chisos camp (renumbered as SP-33-T), had a crew of 247 men who had to be driven some three miles daily to and from their work sites. "When these trucks have delivered their men to the work sites over road conditions prevailing at this camp," said Haile, "there is very little time left for their use in the transportation of construction materials before they are required to return for the workers." Among the items transported were "stones weighing from 6,000 to 8,000 pounds" to be used in the construction of head walls and culverts. Haile asked the ECW to provide additional equipment for the Chisos camp, "in order that the work program, as outlined for this park, be carried out properly and effectively, and in view of the large number of enrollees now stationed at this camp." [22]

Another sign of the permanence of the CCC program, and of the distinctive cultural features of the region, came in July when Maier asked L.W. Rogers, educational advisor for the Army's Eighth Corps Area at Fort Sam Houston, to provide Big Bend with an educational specialist. Robert Morgan and his staff were "exceedingly anxious to have such a man," wrote Maier, "not only because of the good it will do the enrollees," but because they were "off in the mountains where they very seldom have the opportunity of going into town, and so the work is bound to aid the general tone of the camp." An earlier educational advisor had proven "of very little value," and had not remained in camp long. The CCC staff also believed, in the words of Maier, that "the educational adviser must know Spanish in order to get along advantageously with the Mexican enrollees who comprise more than fifty per cent of the personnel." [23]

Commitment of resources to Big Bend's park planning also led the ECW to prepare a thorough report in July on the status of land title searches. Everett Townsend had completed his survey of all state and privately owned parcels within the park, and had drawn a map outlining them for use by the NPS. Raymond Higgins, assistant regional projects manager for the Oklahoma City ECW district, told Herbert Maier that "any discussion of Texas land titles must commence with an explanation of the historical origin of the railroad grants and public school lands." In addition, the NPS needed to know "the constitutional and statutory

provisions relating to Texas lands." Higgins characterized this story as one where "the pioneers of the Republic, and later State, of Texas were early concerned with three major problems." These Higgins identified as "encouraging immigration; encouraging the construction of railroads; and, provisions for education." In this the Texas lawmakers mimicked the practices of the U.S. Congress, which had enacted similar legislation for the expanding United States through the Land Ordinance of 1785, and subsequent grants to railroad companies to accelerate the pace of national growth and absorb the risks normally encountered in the free market. [24]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 4:
A Dream in Waiting: Promotion of a Land Base for Big Bend National Park, 1936

Momentum towards establishment of Big Bend National Park, so apparent in the critical year of 1935, led park promoters and NPS officials to expect more good fortune in their quest to acquire over 1,200 square miles of land. With congressional approval in hand, the park service and Brewster County chamber of commerce anticipated in 1936 a year of intense coverage to gain public support and state legislative authorization in the biennial session of 1937. Then the surprising veto that year by Governor James Allred of state house speaker Coke Stevenson's park purchase bill stalled the ambitions of NPS and local park champions alike. From this ensued a laborious process to generate private donations of money and lands that challenged all who had dreamed in 1935 of creation of Texas's first national park.

Throughout 1935, Everett Townsend had traversed the haunting landscape of the Big Bend country to study land ownership patterns and potential costs for state acquisition. He had discovered much about the status of property in the area, and in January of that year had warned NPS and state officials that the process would not be easy. In addition to the 150,000 acres owned outright by Texas, the Lone Star state, said Townsend, "has an equity in probably 60 or 65% of the remainder of the lands that will be within the boundary designated by the National Park Service." Along with these lands came state claims to the mineral rights beneath them. Townsend explained that "these lands were sold to the Original Grantees on terms which permitted the payment of 1/40 of the principal at the time of purchase." Then the new owners faced "deferred payments to be extended over a period of forty years, bearing interest at the rate of 3%." Very few of the owners of these lands had paid in full, and "in most cases none of the principal has been paid and the individual owes to the State the entire 39/40." Because of the lack of concern by state and local officials about the condition of ownership, said Townsend, "in times past these lands have frequently changed hands between individuals by the simple process of the purchaser paying the seller a bonus per acre and assuming the obligations due the State." [1]

Knowing the land and its owners as he did, and conscious of Texas's lack of familiarity with federal land law, Townsend recommended to the state and NPS that an elaborate system of surveying and purchasing be implemented. He wrote that "an appropriation of a sum sufficient to pay the bonus price to the owners of State Land and to buy the patented land (35 or 40% of the total acreage) should be asked of the legislature." In addition, "an appropriation to compensate the State Public School Fund for the surface and mineral rights to all State or school lands should be asked also of the legislature." Townsend once more dismissed claims of mineral wealth in the Big Bend country, as "the whole area has been prospected for more than fifty years and there seems little likelihood of any considerable minerals (either hard or petroleum) being found within the region." Further, said Townsend, "it is a well known fact that minerals can be more safely stored underneath the ground in their native elements than by any other method devised by man." He also noted that "the markets for most minerals are glutted today, because of over production." Townsend thus

sought to "reaffirm that if any [minerals] do exist there they will be securely stored to be scientifically developed should the need ever arise for them." A similar case could be made for terminating leases for cattle grazing. "The poor grazing quality on the surface," he reported, meant that "it will take seventy five to one hundred acres per cow or horse." Big Bend ranchers also suffered from the fact that "there are many 640 acre tracts that will not support one animal through the year." With the NPS spending "vast sums in the development of the Park area," the "additional consumption of gasoline in Texas" by motoring tourists, and the potential for visitation to an international park someday, Lone Star legislators would do well to accept the gift extended by the U.S. Congress and prepare for land acquisition soon. [2]

Following upon his recommendations, Townsend by 1936 had developed a classification system for the 643,115 acres of privately owned land in the Big Bend area. If a landowner had managed to secure good pasture and water, he or she could anticipate earning anywhere from one dollar to ten dollars per acre in a sale to the state. These ranchers and farmers also were the most conscientious in their payment of property taxes. These "Class I" lands comprised 286,094 acres, or 44 percent of the private property needed for the park. Townsend's "Class II" lands were "owned by non-residents in quantities of two surveys or more each." All of these 228,832 acres (or 35 percent of the park area) were "unimproved and minus water with rare exceptions." Townsend also noted that "several years taxes are due on some of the patented land," while "much of the Public School land is far in arrears for interest due on unpaid principals and for State, County, and School taxes." These lands, estimated Townsend, would be worth only one dollar to $1.50 per acre. Finally, his "Class III" acreage (128,189 acres, or 20 percent of the park) was "owned by non-residents in quantities of less than two surveys each." Like Class II lands, these properties had little water and few improvements. In this category Townsend discovered that "the greater number of patented surveys and some of the Public Schools [lands] have been sub-divided and many individuals own tracts of less than one acre each." Predicted Townsend: "It will be more difficult to contact these numerous owners and make purchases." Thus he recommended that the state "place a higher valuation" on this property ($2.50 per acre). He encouraged such generosity, even though "some of it [the land] will probably be forfeited (sale cancelled) for non-payment of the interest to the School Fund." Finally, Townsend cautioned that "careful resurveying of the whole region may result in reducing the totals by about 12,000 to 13,000 acres." [3]

Upon completion of his work in 1936, Townsend had learned that the NPS and Texas State Parks Board would need to examine some 1,179 land surveys, amounting to 788,683.75 acres. Absentee owners claimed the largest individual parcels, with the Texas and Pacific Railway in control of 41,600 acres. Of ranchers living on their lands in the Big Bend country, Townsend identified Homer Wilson in the Chisos Basin as the largest single owner (at 30,149.5 acres). The Cartledge family, possessors of three parcels in the Castolon/Santa Elena area, owned 30,817 acres jointly. Other local ranchers with spreads in excess of 10,000 acres were Boye Babb (10,891 acres), Sam R. Nail (11,842.5 acres), W.E. Simpson (14,080 acres), J.J. Willis (25,232 acres), and a ranch owned by "Herring and Johnson" (23,040 acres). In all, Townsend named 82 individual or family owners of property residing in the future Big Bend National Park (or having what Townsend called "local ties), of whom thirteen (or one-sixth) were Hispanic. The most prosperous Hispanic rancher was R.A. Serna, with 3,840 acres, while a woman named Juana Hernandez of Terlingua was reported to have 1,280 acres (two sections), the use of which Townsend identified as "farm and home." Of note also was the fact that none of the thirteen Hispanic landowners were delinquent in their tax payments, while the Odessa auto dealer Willis owed back taxes on all of his properties. [4]

Big Bend's future depended most heavily, its sponsors thought, upon the Texas state legislature to appropriate the monies necessary for the direct purchase of the acreage

surveyed by Everett Townsend. But the delay between legislative sessions meant that the year 1936 would not see action on any park bill. Instead, promoters engaged in a series of publicity ventures designed to inform Lone Star residents of the value of Big Bend to their future. In March 1936, Herbert Maier wrote to Conrad Wirth to seek advice about "the value of motion picture and lecture publicity" for the park. Maier knew of earlier efforts to film in the Big Bend area, and recommended that the park service "have a man make the Chambers of Commerce, Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs, churches and schools in the State, especially the more thickly populated part." In so doing, said the ECW regional officer, ""public opinion would swing in favor of acquisition and the latter would be greatly hastened." [5]

Stimulating Maier's interest in media productions on Big Bend was the visit in March by George Grant, chief photographer for the NPS. Grant traveled throughout the future park, and crossed into Mexico with Everett Townsend to document the wonders of the Fronteriza Mountains. The NPS hoped to use Grant's images in an upcoming display at the Texas Centennial festivities in Dallas, and with a presentation that Maier and other park service officials planned in Mexico City later that year. "Since the Mexican area has never been photographed," Maier told Wirth, "I think it will be a very fine thing if Grant can bring back a complete collection." One reason for the necessity to keep Grant in the field was that "[W.D.] Smithers, the photographer at Alpine, who has such a wonderful and the only collection of Big Bend pictures, has had difficulty with the State Parks Board, and is leaving Alpine." Smithers' unhappiness led him to "lock up his negatives," denying their use to the NPS "nor to anyone else." Grant considered this latter decision by Smithers as tragic, as he informed Maier: "I think this Big Bend project is the most important thing we [the park service] have on the docket at the present time." He found "the Big Bend country to be as big as Yellowstone [National Park] and even more varied." The ruggedness of the terrain, and the isolation of the CCC camp, led Grant to complain that "the way I am working at present . . . is not practical to do any justice to this area." This he attributed to "dust storms, rain, wind and many other conditions that make good photography impossible at this time of the year." The NPS photographer sought "encouragement from both you [Maier] and Wirth," as "under present conditions here it seems too much of a waste of time to stay here indefinitely." [6]

Townsend's service to George Grant, along with his earlier work in land title research, led Maier to ask the former Texas Ranger to travel to Austin upon returning from the photographic survey to "undertake an investigation of the present land ownership status of the various Texas park areas in which the CCC has undertaken, has completed, or is undertaking developments." Maier nominated Townsend for this task because Washington officials of the NPS had learned of the displeasure expressed by Pat Neff, chairman of the Texas State Parks Board, who in Maier's words "is especially sensitive when any subject involving honest dealing is concerned." The parks board "no longer has an attorney," Maier reported, and "since the investigation is up to us the only man who could undertake it without serious conflict is Mr. Townsend." The departure of D.C. Colp as parks board director had been acrimonious, and "you can realize that Mr. Colp left that sort of thing, undoubtedly, in a very questionable state." Besides not having legal counsel, the board lacked funds "for carrying on lengthy title investigations." Thus Maier had advised Townsend "to go into the investigation of each area to only a reasonable degree so that the National Park Service will be reasonably protected if questions regarding this matter arise." [7]

Townsend's research of all Texas CCC property acquisitions dramatized the complexity of politics, economics, and history that affected Big Bend. He discovered that "there is no certificate filed by the State Land Commissioner showing transfer of all school land within that area." Townsend thus advised Colonel R.O. Whiteaker, chief engineer for the state parks board, that "such certificate should be requested from the Land Commissioner or in lieu thereof, some other acknowledgement of the transfer of these lands." He had learned that Whiteaker "had prepared two hundred and thirteen (213) deeds of such character covering the

same number of tax suits and sales to the State, but these deeds have not been signed by the [Brewster County] sheriff." Townsend believed that "the rather high costs . . . of completing these deeds has deterred further progress in that direction." He hoped that his friendships in Alpine would allow him to identify a notary public who would process all of the deeds "for a very nominal fee [$500]." Townsend's only concern was "whether or not the law will permit these two officials to charge less than the statutory fee for such services." [8]

The realities of Brewster County land acquisition continued to engage the attention of NPS officials as they planned for the 1937 Texas legislative session. J.W. Gilmer, owner of some 60,000 acres of land near the proposed park entrance at Persimmon Gap, wrote in May 1936 to Maier to offer the services of his "Big Bend Abstract Company." Gilmer claimed to have worked in the "land business" for a quarter-century, the past eight years of that in Alpine. "My knowledge of the park area," said Gilmer, "and having been interested in the park [ever] since it originated, and knowing the big job it will be to secure these lands, have prompted me in making application to your office for the job of assisting in the work." Even as Gilmer expressed optimism for the future of Big Bend, Maier and his NPS colleagues would read in the *Dallas Morning News* of May 18 the headline: "Chance of Big Bend Park Being National Domain Is Dwindling." Correspondent Alonzo Wasson reported that "those in a position to size up the prospect have become pessimistic with respect to the Big Bend Park project." Wasson cited "the large number of private ownerships within the boundaries of the school lands that were dedicated as a State park by act of the Legislature." Instead of trading their lands to the TSPB, local ranchers in possession of 200,000 acres "have announced they would part with their holdings only for cash." The *Morning News* claimed that "these owners are seized of a strong hunch that their lands are rich in minerals, and have graduated their prices by their high faiths." Given this obstructionism, wrote Wasson, "there seems no possibility that a solid block of such area as the Federal Government requires for establishing a national park can be pieced together." [9]

More troubling to Wasson, however, was "the recent dictum" of NPS director Arno B. Cammerer "that the gift if it was to be made acceptable to the Federal Government, would have to be freed from the operation of that provision of the act of the Legislature which, in offering the surface, reserved all minerals that might be found to underlie it." Wasson could find no language in the 1935 congressional edict authorizing Big Bend National Park that mandated such a concession, "but it is assumed that Cammerer speaks by the book in saying that the title to the surface must convey ownership also of whatever mineral wealth may be hidden beneath." The Lone Star state had sold school lands in the past "without reservation of the mineral estate," said the *Morning News* reporter, "and nearly every such sale sowed the seed of regret." Wasson could not imagine that the Texas lawmakers, "great and genuine as is the desire to see the Big Bend become a national park, could be persuaded to deed away a mineral prospect as promising as that which the geologists have declared is there presented." Since "there is no possibility that any Legislature . . . would comply with the terms set forth by Cammerer," Wasson predicted that "it looks as though the Big Bend Park is destined to remain a State park." Unless the NPS relented in their demands, "the Federal Government will have to content itself with the surface without all of anything there may be beneath." This meant that the 4,000 acres set aside for the CCC camp "will not measure up to the proportions of a national park, but . . . will make a sizable State park." [10]

Wasson's article sparked much debate among Big Bend sponsors in west Texas, the state capital at Austin, and within the park service. Horace Morelock of Sul Ross State Teachers College asked Maier how to present the NPS's version of the Big Bend land-acquisition story to several audiences that he would address. The "Highway 67 Association" had asked the Sul Ross president to speak on the importance of Big Bend National Park to their plans for a Dallas-to-Presidio route. "I am wondering if Wasson's article will be helpful or hurtful," asked Morelock, and he wanted advice on "what I should say to this group with references to

his conclusions." More important to Morelock was his service on the executive board of the Texas State Teachers Association. "A good many people seem to think," Morelock informed Maier, "that the State Teachers Association of Texas will be the only stumbling block in the way to getting a deed to the school land." Morelock had asked the teachers board to come to the Big Bend area to "make a personal investigation as to the intrinsic value of school land." For his presentation to the executive committee in Fort Worth on June 6, Morelock had hoped to emphasize how "the money to be derived from the sale of gasoline . . . which would go to the school fund would be worth much more to the public schools of Texas than they would ever get out of the land." Yet the *Morning News* article had highlighted the way in which "the mineral rights have crept into the picture." As rumors spread that Governor Allred might ask for a special (or "call") session of the legislature, one that could address the land questions for Big Bend, Morelock wanted the NPS to assuage the doubts of the teachers executive board, with a personal appearance by Maier the most effective means to accomplish this. [11]

Echoing the sentiments of Morelock was Everett Townsend, who saw the Wasson piece as a critical juncture in negotiations with the state legislature. The long-time champion of a national park in Brewster County asked Maier to attend the Fort Worth convention of the state teachers association because the *Morning News* had its facts wrong about mineral deposits in the park area. "After a careful survey," said Townsend, "the National Park Commission carefully excluded all known mineral lands from the designated area." Further, "the region embraced within the Park area has been diligently prospected by scientists as well as the 'grub staker' and nothing of any value has ever been found therein." Townsend conceded that "there is one exception to this last statement," as "a small quicksilver mine was operated for a few years at the north end of the Mariscal Mountain." Its prospectors found "no great sight of ore," and the site "has long been abandoned," even though "a thousand holes have dug all around it." Townsend concluded that "the more than fifty years of intensive prospecting has developed a thorough knowledge of all of the formations of the region," and "no one of scientific understanding expects minerals of value to be found there." Then Townsend got to the heart of the matter of school lands and mineral rights. "It has been my pleasure and my pain," he told Maier, "to be lined up with and against the school teachers of Texas." He knew "their weight as friends and as foes." Townsend advised Maier that "I want 'em on our side in this coming contest," as "with their help we will have little trouble in obtaining our objective." Once the teachers saw that "the whole program is so obviously in their favor they will not object to the ceding of a few hundred thousand acres of purely desert land." To sweeten the deal for the Texas school teachers, Townsend suggested that "as a great out-of-doors University preserved and cared for by the Government, [Big Bend] will be of much greater value to the schools than under the present status." [12]

The next step for local promoters of Big Bend was to contact the state teachers association to express their concerns over the mineral rights issue in general, and the *Morning News* story in particular. Morelock wrote to Lewis B. Cooper, director of the association's research department, to determine that organization's sentiments. "There are several angles to this whole situation," the Sul Ross president acknowledged, and he hoped to "present them from an impartial point of view." Like Townsend, Morelock saw as critical an awareness of the teachers group "of returns on [the] tourist trade to the Chisos Mountains in the event an International Park is established there." He referred to data generated by the New Mexico State Highway Department, which in 1935 had invested $30,000 to advertise tourism to the "Sunshine State." "Their tourist trade," said Morelock, "during that year increased to the extent of $11,000,000.00." In response to this windfall of visitation to the historic and natural wonders of New Mexico, that state would "spend this year $60,000.00 because of what they realized on the other investment." Morelock knew that "there is the feeling that since the University of Texas realized such returns on its oil lands in this section [east Texas], public school people are hoping they might get the same returns from the minerals of the Chisos

Mountains." He asked Cooper to invite "the State geologists of Texas and the Government geologists who have made a study of this matter" to speak to the convention. In so doing, the teachers could gain "such information on State minerals as will best help them to proceed intelligently and in the best interests of the public schools." Morelock saw only good things resulting from such a thoughtful approach, as teachers would "realize [that] an International Park within [Texas's] borders . . . would produce for the public schools a revenue for all time to come." [13]

The level of anxiety displayed by the Big Bend sponsors prompted Herbert Maier to respond to Morelock's entreaties, counseling patience rather than panic. He apologized for declining their invitation to travel to Fort Worth for the teachers' convention, noting that "it was necessary that I be at the CCC Exhibit building at [the Texas Centennial in Dallas] that day, pulling it together for the opening." More importantly, Maier "felt reluctant to speak on two or three of the subjects suggested in Mr. Townsend's letter." From his wider angle of vision at the NPS, Maier recognized that "of course some opposition is to be expected before the Big Bend area finally becomes a National park." It was "a perfectly natural condition," as "very few areas, if any, have come into the National Park System without opposition from certain sources." Morelock also needed to know, said Maier, that "during the period preceding acquisition, the National Park Service may act in an advisory capacity, but it is not considered the best policy for field officers to take too active a hand in promotion." In regards to the issue of mineral rights, Maier warned once again (despite the *Morning News* story) that "the Federal Government cannot accept any land for National Park purposes unless both the surface and sub-surface rights are turned over in fee simple." He agreed with Morelock and Townsend that "it is not at all likely that minerals of any considerable economic value will ever be found in the area as outlined." Yet "we cannot expect this matter of the mineral rights to keep from creeping into the picture." He advised Morelock that "it is just as well for it to come to the front at the start, since it will probably prove to be the major stumbling block." Whatever the anxieties of the local interests, Maier declared: "I have no doubt in my mind but that it can be overcome." [14]

Maier's advice notwithstanding, Morelock and Townsend spent much of that summer appealing to state and local officials to resolve the mineral rights questions threatening land acquisition at Big Bend. Townsend informed Maier of his intentions to contact Coke Stevenson, speaker of the state house of representatives from the Hill Country town of Junction, and "probably the most [eminent] lawyer who is well versed in all of the laws pertaining to the School Lands of Texas." Morelock for his part appealed to L.A. Woods, superintendent of education for the state of Texas, to join a party visiting Big Bend that included "the President of the State Board of Education, . . . and the President of the State Teachers Association." This group could "inspect the ground in person, and be ready to make a report on this subject at the next Legislature." Ben F. Tisinger, the teachers' association president, had informed Morelock "that he planned to spend a part of his vacation in this section." If Woods could join the group, "the Chamber of Commerce here will be happy to take all three of you down to the Chisos Mountains for a personal inspection of the park area." [15]

The work of Morelock and Townsend to change attitudes about the public school lands met with some success in July 1936. Maier contacted NPS officials in Washington with word that "one of the citizens in west Texas who is interested in the Big Bend area may be in a position to donate approximately 2000 acres within the proposed park boundaries to the Federal Government." Such a gesture, said Maier, would publicize "the idea that this will not only start the 'ball rolling,' but will result in an advantage to the National Park Service in that the latter can say that some land has already been donated for park purposes." Maier's hope was that "further donations may and probably would be made to supplement this acreage," and "quite a nucleus may be on hand in a short time, not so much for practical purposes, as for

psychological effect." Maier conceded that "the Department of the Interior would probably not accept a fraction of the proposed area." Thus "the suggestion . . . might be made that the citizen in question should deed the land to the state now for future national park purposes, if and when the total acreage has been acquired and is ready for transfer." Yet the ECW regional director saw problems connected to the controversy over public school lands, and feared "that the donation of this acreage to the state in this case would be 'buried' and the action would have little salient effect." [16]

A breakthrough in the mineral rights controversy came in July 1936, when Maier wrote to Conrad Wirth about a decision by the Texas state attorney general. "It has now been definitely decided," said Maier, "that the School Fund can release its mineral rights but some reimbursement will have to be made." Maier was not sure "whether 25 [cents] per acre will be regarded as a gift, and nothing less than say a dollar per acre can be regarded as a sale." He expected the attorney general to resolve this detail soon, and thus proceeded to the more pressing question of legislation for the acquisition program. "I had Mr. Townsend in the office the past two days," Maier told Wirth, and "we went over the whole thing." Above all else, the two men agreed that "the State Representatives and Senators must be lined up in favor of the issuing of warrants for the purchase of the land." When they decided upon an amount to request of the Lone Star lawmakers, Maier estimated that "offhand I would says that only a million and a half dollars may be needed to handle the whole thing." The ECW's regional director then approached Wirth's superior, NPS director Arno Cammerer, for advice on taking a more aggressive and public stance on the land-acquisition matter. "I have been continually urged to appear before certain groups," he told Cammerer, "to explain to them how the School Fund will actually benefit by relinquishing its rights to the land." Such groups as the state teachers convention "have desired me to make rather definite statements on the approximate amount of money which the Federal Government will spend eventually on the development of the area." Maier knew that "for an employee of the National Park Service to do this may be out of line," yet he also believed that "it can be handled discreetly and without embarrassment." Thus Maier asked Cammerer to "be given permission to accept certain invitations where this seems advisable, and to work with them." He warned the NPS director that "it is quite possible that some criticism may result due to the strong emphasis on States Rights in Texas." Nonetheless, "the U.S. Forest Service recently has had considerable land in East Texas turned over to the Government for National Forest purposes." This indicated to Maier that NPS policy might need to change, as Texas slowly came to appreciate the benefits brought to the Lone Star state by federal land management agencies. [17]

Further advancing the cause of publicity for Big Bend was completion in August of a Texas travelogue, made by M.S. Leopold of the NPS's Motion Picture Production Section. Leopold sent an advance copy to Morelock and Townsend for their review, and planned to present the motion picture at the Texas Centennial in Dallas. Morelock found somewhat disturbing the decision by Leopold to cut out "the college scenes (including pioneer dance in Outdoor Theater, horseback riding, tennis and bowling, also a panorama of the town [of Alpine] taken from the grandstand of the Athletic Field)." Morelock considered these essential to any film about the region, as "Alpine is the open gateway to the Big Bend National Park, and the people of this section are not only expected to do all the work but to furnish practically all the money necessary to get this project before the people of Texas." In particular, "the college has taken an active part in this program," said the Sul Ross president, "and has spent both money and time to the end that the people of Texas might know about the wonderful scenery in the Chisos Mountains." Sul Ross also had "organized groups of students in attendance upon our Summer School from all parts of Texas for week-end trips down into the Chisos Mountains," so that "they might go home and tell their people about the advantages of this area for a national park." Claimed Morelock: "Naturally, when the college, as a part of this set-up, is excluded from the motion picture, it is difficult for us to maintain our enthusiasm." Especially galling to Morelock was the insistence of universities and colleges in Texas to be

included in the NPS movie. "Of course," said Morelock, "the other institutions would like to capitalize through this picture [on] the opportunity to get before the people of Texas, but they have no valid claim on being a part of the Big Bend National Park." [18]

For Townsend, the Big Bend movie had other problems beyond the affront to Sul Ross and Alpine. "The film is very good," he told Maier, "but does not contain enough of the Park Area to attract the desired attention." Townsend had traveled with Leopold and the NPS film crew, and recalled that "we shot from the top of Boquillas Canyon, around the two Boquillas villages on both sides of the river, at Johnson's [Ranch], in Pine Canyon and Blue Creek." Unfortunately, said Townsend, "none of these are in the reel." He also remembered that "some good stuff was taken from the South Rim, which does not appear in the picture." Then he criticized rather sharply "the psychological effect [that] the showing of 'so much oil' may have upon the minds of our educational people." Local park sponsors had begun "a crusade to educate the school teachers of Texas to the idea of dedicating a great domain of school land together with all mineral rights, to the public for recreational purposes." Yet Leopold's story began with "an epitome of the vast oil resource of the State, scattered from one end of it to the other," and continued in that vein throughout the film. Townsend recognized that "it was correct to show the Gulf [Sulphur] Company's holdings and give them credit and praise for the production of the picture." Instead of a brief glimpse of Big Bend, however, Leopold should "call attention to [Texas's] lack of National Parks and then swing Colorado, Arizona, or California (one of these [that] have the most parks) onto the screen, show its park sites, and some of the vast crowds who flock to those places." Townsend had come to this realization after screening the film to the Alpine Lion's Club, whom the NPS had asked to critique the story line before release of some 40 to 50 reels of the film throughout Texas. Townsend told club members that "my objection to this picture is that it is made for the purpose of selling our Park to the very people who now have rich incomes from the oil industry." He found it problematic that the NPS would "go ahead and devote the first half of the reel to showing the resources of their great wealth," then asking them "to give half a million acres of undeveloped land" to the federal government for a park. [19]

Where Morelock's entreaties for scenes of his college campus failed to move the NPS, Townsend's more trenchant criticism led Herbert Maier to ask the Interior department's division of motion pictures to change the storyline and edit the footage. Maier informed Ellsworth C. Dent of the motion picture division that "it is too short, and furthermore, the first half of the reel is given over entirely to the benefits derived from exploitation of natural resources in Texas." The ECW regional director noted that "it is the opinion all around that it is most unfortunate that a reel designed to advocate the perpetuation of a primitive area is tied in as the tail to a kite to about a thousand feet of film depicting [oil development]." Maier could only conclude: "The whole thing, you will agree, is incongruous." While the NPS had little choice but to recognize the patronage of the Gulf Sulphur Company in the film's production, "the thing will by no means do for the need we hoped it might fill, since it may defeat our purpose." Maier hoped that Dent could prepare instead "a single reel . . . consisting entirely of Big Bend scenic subject matter." This version should eliminate "all of the Sulphur and helium material," as well as "the State Park subject." Maier noted that "the editor apparently intended to lead up to the Big Bend subject, but we feel that this film should step out immediately with a bang as to Big Bend country rather than that its final effectiveness should be softened by a gradual build-up." Target audiences for the Big Bend film included "Rotary, Kiwanis and [Lions] Clubs, church organizations, schools, etc." Equally important was a screening to take place that fall at the gathering in El Paso of Mexican and U.S. officials planning the international peace park. [20]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 5:
A Dream Delayed: Failure to Secure Public Funding for Big Bend National Park, 1937

Whatever their doubts concerning the future of Big Bend National Park, NPS planners and local sponsors focused all of their energies in the winter and spring of 1937 on the members of the Texas state legislature. There they hoped to convince the Lone Star lawmakers of the wisdom of purchasing land for the state's first national park. Publicity ventures that had accelerated during the year 1936 reached a crescendo, with newspaper stories and other media presentations saturating the Texas countryside. Walter Prescott Webb, dean of Lone Star historians, would undertake a highly publicized river-rafting trip through the canyons of the Big Bend, just as the legislature contemplated their vote on the land-purchase bill. Yet the vagaries of the state and national economy would compel Governor James Allred to veto the legislation, forcing park promoters to turn to the private sector for assistance.

As many lawmakers claimed allegiance to Texas's agricultural heritage, one of the more pronounced venues for park publicity in early 1937 was the *ACCO Press.* This journal described itself as a monthly magazine for the cotton farmer, with funding from Anderson, Clayton, and Company, identified as "an institution benefited by whatever benefits the cotton industry." In an article entitled, "America's Last Frontier and what a country!" the editor recounted the story of H.P. Attwater, a British immigrant who "at one time . . . was agricultural agent for one of the state's largest railroad systems." Attwater had spoken often of his love of the Big Bend country, which the ACCO Press editor experienced during a trip through the region in late 1936, joined by a companion identified only as "the Judge." Readers of the cotton trade journal learned of the romantic history of the Big Bend, from its geology to its Indian lore. The editor did mention the difference of opinion that people had about the etymology of the word "Chisos," which he reported as "commonly accepted as an interpretation of the Indian word ‘ghost.'" The editor then noted that "a few natives insist, however, that the interpretation should be ‘echo.'" He was "inclined to agree with the latter minority," as "the Judge's yodel rang on and on through the [crags]." The editor then turned his attention to local residents, remarking at length on the trading post operated by A.F. Hannold, which he described as "not only the last but only gasoline stop to the river." Within the store the editor found "fancy rugs and saddle blankets . . . made from wool - sheared, cleaned, carded, dyed and woven by Mexicans living in the vicinity." Hannold also impressed the *ACCO Press* editor because of his service as "Justice of the Peace Precinct No. 4, Brewster County;" an area of some one million acres (or nearly 1,563 square miles). [1]

Once the editor and his companion had left Hannold's store, they headed for the Rio Grande to sample the exotica of the border. He described the village of Boquillas, Texas, as "probably the most remote point in the whole United States." The party stopped at "Juan Sada's place," where they met the proprietor and his wife, Charlotta (known locally as "Chata"). The editor called Juan Sada "a courteous, highly intelligent Mexican who has a neat house and store on the American side." The editor could see that the town once was a thriving center of a silver mining region, but noted that "today Boquillas is a sleepy village

which draws scant trade from scattered squash, bean and pepper farmers of the interior who drive for miles to barter and trade for the bare necessities of life." As the party drove upriver, they came to Hot Springs, which the editor characterized as making "the boast of being the only postoffice in the United States that is surrounded on three sides by the Republic of Mexico." The town consisted of "two souls; namely, J.O. Langford, the Postmaster and his wife." They received delivery of letters and packages once per week, and "ranchers [rode] horseback as far as 40 miles to get their mail." From there the party "spent several hours browsing about the old Mexican town of Boquillas (You would, too, if you went there)." They then "swam [their] horses back across the Rio, sat around for awhile on Juan Sada's veranda, and finally ‘pushed off' for home." [2]

Once the editor had completed his circular tour back to Alpine, he speculated on the meaning of Texas's first national park. Given that his readership was primarily rural, he highlighted the vastness of Brewster County, especially its southern reaches. "It is 136 miles from Boquillas to Alpine," wrote the *ACCO Press* editor, "and between the two points there are 225 qualified voters." By comparison, "there are 46,745 white-face cattle in the country, some 75,000 sheep and lambs, and, ironically, 47 hogs." The editor further marveled that "in a day and a half the Judge and I passed on the road two cars and one man on horseback." This led him to compare Big Bend to "the Blue Ridges of West Virginia," which he considered "quiet, serene, soothing," and the Rocky Mountains, which were "majestic, awe-inspiring." "But how to describe the Big Bend," he asked rhetorically, using terms like "raw" and "wild." These words were "inadequate," as "that country gets in your blood somehow." But the editor somehow envisioned a future park much different from the desolate and haunting landscape he had just visited. "I am afraid," he concluded, "that by the time [my] children grow up the roads of the Big Bend will be lined with hot dog stands and soft drink places;" a reference to the encroachment on open space in the more-populous eastern and mid-western states. [3]

The *ACCO Press's* enthusiasm for Big Bend, and its editor's focus on the wildness of its landscape, fit the pattern of park promotion undertaken by the NPS and local interests throughout the 1930s. Behind the scenes, park service officials and their allies in west Texas prepared for an intense round of lobbying in Austin in the first months of 1937. Texas lawmakers would be asked for $1.4 million for the land purchase program, with the issue of mineral rights on school lands yet to be resolved. Maier had held several meetings in the Lone Star capital with state school officials. These encounters only echoed the common wisdom that "certain members of the [teachers' association] Executive Committee are emphatic in their statement that no legal precedent should be established permanently denying the rights of the School Fund to engage in mineral development where it holds such rights." As to the suggestion that the teachers' association support "a gift of its mineral rights within the area," Maier noted that "this is not constitutionally possible and would require special legislation which we doubt could be passed." In addition, the teachers' group could not authorize acceptance of payment from the state to purchase the mineral rights. Even if it could, Maier feared that the addition of one dollar per acre to the land-acquisition bill, increasing the appropriation to some $450,000, "might wreck its chances of passing." [4]

To move the discussion forward, Maier asked the NPS director "if it would not be possible, since there is admittedly only the remotest possibility of oil ever being discovered in this area," that "the [Interior] Secretary . . . accept the titles as they are, providing that a committee of the best geologists of the Department of the Interior were to advise him, following a thorough investigation of the area, of the apparent absence of any major mineral deposits." As evidence of this scarcity, Maier recalled that "the Chisos Range is igneous, and . . . the surveys as made by oil companies had not resulted in a single lease within the area." To insure the veracity of the Interior department's judgment, Maier suggested selecting geologists from the NPS, the Bureau of Mines, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Even with this review process, Maier could not predict the response of the school lands advocates. As

long as the school lands remained under state control, wondered Maier, "could it [the teachers' association] force the Department of the Interior to permit drilling?" Maier believed that "it is unfortunate that the question of mineral rights must be so paramount," and he reiterated his call for a blue-ribbon committee of geologists to survey the Big Bend area before the Texas legislature began its deliberations. At the same time, Maier wanted "a man from the [NPS] legal division in Washington [to] be sent to Austin, to assist the State in drafting the bill." Coke Stevenson, who would introduce the Big Bend measure, and other sponsors had requested such help from the park service. Maier also thought that an appearance by Cammerer himself before the legislature would "be of tremendous help." The stakes were high, Maier concluded, as "there is opposition expected from the industrialists since the appropriation for land would come from the general tax fund which is already $15,000,000 in arrears." Yet he had faith in the competence of "the West Texas group, with what help we can officially give them," and he praised them for "working assiduously and with much hope." [5]

While the park service sought to acquire funds from a depleted Texas treasury, it also learned that the senior citizens' pension program laid claim to the taxpayer's largesse. Carl White, president of a printing company in Port Arthur, Texas, wrote to Leo McClatchy about the NPS's media packet on Big Bend, and about his own conversations with business people in Texas regarding the new session of the legislature. The bill to appropriate $1.5 million, said White, came "at a time when all of the would be statesmen are trying to put all of the old people in the state on ‘Easy Street' without a sales tax." White feared that "anything which involves the expenditure of money on the part of the state is going to be hard to get through the legislature." White then supplied McClatchy with news clippings from the *Houston Post* and *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* endorsing the park bill. "Texas long has neglected exploitation of her natural beauties and recreational facilities," wrote the *Post* on January 24, "with consequent loss of substantial revenue from [the] tourist trade that could be built into a profitable industry." The *Post* claimed that states like California, Florida, South Carolina, and Colorado "reaped a golden harvest of tourist dollars, [while] Texas was content to plug along developing business and industry." Yet state lawmakers had proof, with the success of the 1936 Texas Centennial, "just how profitable tourist business can be." The *Post* believed that the Lone Star state "has an opportunity to acquire a tourist industry that will provide at least $1,000,000 a year in new business by taking advantage of the Federal Government's offer to establish a National Park in the Big Bend Section." "Conservative estimates," said the Houston paper, "indicate that income from the new park would exceed in two years the amount needed to buy land for the park." Citing statistics provided by the NPS for park visitation nationwide in 1936, the *Post* revealed that "more than 6,000,000 persons visited the twenty-six national parks of the United States." Only two NPS units, "one in distant Alaska," said the Post, "had attendance of less than 50,000." Appealing to its readers' pride in Texas, the *Post* noted that "in neighboring Oklahoma, Platt National Park, in an area without the scenic and recreational attractions of the Big Bend, the attendance was 235,000." Big Bend would, in the estimation of the *Post*, be more like parks such as Carlsbad Caverns (150,000 visitors), or Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park (with 550,000 visitors in 1936, or nearly 10 percent of the NPS total). "There is every reason to believe," concluded the *Post*, "that the proposed Texas park would attract that many, or more, visitors annually [as Platt National Park]." This "appears to be an opportunity which the State of Texas can ill afford to ignore." [6]

From within the park service itself, the level of activity escalated once the legislative session opened. Horace Morelock wrote directly to Arno Cammerer with an invitation for the NPS official to speak before the Lone Star lawmakers. Because the Sul Ross president had close contact with leading Texas politicians, he advised Cammerer to focus on three points: the benefits accruing to states with national parks, the specific details of work at Big Bend, and the successful strategies of other states in securing NPS units. Morelock reiterated his own

abiding interest in the creation of Big Bend, and hoped that "it may become a reality at an early date." He then noted in the margin of his letter to the NPS director that the state attorney general would be visiting Alpine and the Big Bend in his own aircraft in early February, and that the new president of the state board of education had agreed to accompany Everett Townsend on a sightseeing trip to the region. [7]

The issue of the international park became a selling point for Herbert Maier in his correspondence with Cammerer, as he reported to Washington on January 27 about the drafting of the Big Bend land-purchase bill. "It has been proposed," said Maier, "that along with the bill, a Concurrent Resolution be submitted to both [Texas] Houses, in which the Governor, Lieut. Governor, Speaker of the House, and other members would be delegated to visit the City of Mexico for the purpose of inviting the Mexican Government to participate in the creation of the international park." Maier had told the measure's sponsors that "such an action should prove to be an excellent gesture." In so doing, the park sponsors not only would "draw broad publicity to the project, but considering the fact that Mexico and the Republic of Texas were one time at war, such a personal visit and invitation to participate in an international peace park would be in line with the current stressing by Washington of the 'good neighbor policy,' especially as it relates to Latin-American countries." Such a grand strategy might overshadow the discouraging news that "Governor Allred is not in favor of the Big Bend bill, covering the appropriation, . . . due to the fact that he is committed to a no-additional taxation policy." Endorsement of the "Resolution by the legislature providing for the official trip by the Governor would, however," said Maier, "bind the State administration definitely to the land purchase bill." The ECW regional director conceded that "there may be some federal constitutional prohibition which prohibits a state from dealing directly with a foreign government." Yet if Texas officials were to travel to Mexico as part of a federal delegation, the lawmakers could see for themselves the extraordinary nature of the international park designation, and remember that in their deliberations in Austin. [8]

Two years of NPS and local-sponsor efforts resulted on February 23, 1937, in the introduction in the Texas house and senate of a bill for the purchase of land for Big Bend National Park. State representative Coke Stevenson, no longer speaker of the house, addressed his colleagues on the matter of spending precious state tax money on a recreation area far from the centers of population in the Lone Star state. Beyond the one million dollars that potential visitors to the park would spend, said the Junction representative, "property values along main roads would be increased by Big Bend travel to an extent that would undoubtedly exceed by many times the $1,400,000 the Legislature is being asked to appropriate." Private employers would profit from the circulation of new money throughout the economy. Finally, said Stevenson, "the Texas Legislature should keep faith with the National government by enabling Texas to do its share in making possible the establishment of the Big Bend park." [9]

In the Texas Senate, H.B. Winfield of San Angelo offered S.B. No. 308 to his colleagues, who on March 24 reported favorably on the measure. Winfield called upon the lawmakers to authorize establishment of a "Board for the Acquisition of land within said area," which the state senator estimated at 736,000 acres. He also gave the board the authority to "acquire such additional lands in such amounts just so the total amount purchased in said area does not exceed one million acres." The land board would consist of "the Attorney General for the State of Texas, Chairman of the State Board of Control and two members of the State Board of Education." The members would receive no compensation for their services, "except to be reimbursed for all necessary and actual traveling expenses." The members also would serve "from the effective date of this Act to the time when the purpose for which this Act was created is completed." Winfield gave the board "the power of eminent domain . . . to condemn for park purposes within the said area." Also, the board could "institute, maintain, and prosecute suits in the name of the State of Texas, for that purpose applicable to the

condemnation of lands by counties or by railroads or any other method authorized by law." The Texas State Parks Board would own all of these lands, and the Brewster County attorney would be asked to assist the state in the pursuit of any necessary legal action. [10]

To expedite the purchase of these lands, Winfield asked his colleagues to offer the State School Fund one dollar per acre for their properties. In exchange, "the Legislature of the State of Texas hereby transfers and conveys all mineral estates now owned by the State of Texas for the benefit of its Public Free School Fund in the area defined in this Act to the State of Texas for park purposes in consideration of the sum of fifty cents per acre." Mindful of the controversy over such a transfer, Winfield noted: "It is the purpose and intent of this Section of the Act only to place a value upon the mineral estate in lands where the mineral estate has been severed from the surface estate, the State Public School Fund having no interest in the surface." For lands in private hands, the board could offer no more than two dollars per acre, "exclusive of improvements, thereon for voluntary sales, provided this limitation shall not apply on lands acquired through condemnation proceedings." Where owners had purchased school lands "on the deferred payment plan and there are now outstanding balances," the board could "place a value on the purchasers' equity therein and pay such purchaser" no more than two dollars per acre, and then "pay the State of Texas for the benefit of the Public School Fund the amount of unpaid balance due thereon." Winfield estimated that the total operation of the board would require no more than two million dollars, which he wished to be expended by the close of the 1938 fiscal year (August 31). [11]

Once Senator Winfield had determined the scale and cost of the land-purchase program, he then turned his attention to the relationship between the state and the NPS. When Texas wrote its deed of conveyance, Winfield wanted the Lone Star state to reserve to itself "concurrent jurisdiction with the United States over every portion of the lands so ceded." This meant that "all process, civil or criminal, issuing under the authority of this State or any of the courts or judicial officers thereof, may be executed by the proper officers of the State." These laws would be applied "upon any person amenable to the same within the limits of the land so ceded as the area for Big Bend National Park, in like manner and like effect as if no such cession had taken place." The state further had the right "to levy and collect taxes on sales of products or commodities upon which a sales tax is levied in this State." Texas also could "tax persons and corporations and franchises and properties, on land or lands deeded and conveyed under the terms of this Act." Residents in the park area would have "the right to vote at all elections within the counties" comprising the park, "upon like terms and conditions and to the same extent as they would be entitled to vote in such counties had not such lands been deeded or conveyed as aforesaid to the United States of America." Winfield closed his legislation by noting that Congress already had authorized creation of the park, and that "the lands lying within said area [are] of little, if any, value for any other purpose." Texas would gain a great measure of economic and recreational opportunity from the purchase of these lands for the NPS, and he asked his colleagues to consider the bill "an emergency and an imperative public necessity," allowing it to be read and approved quickly. [12]

Once Winfield had brought the Big Bend measure to the attention of his peers, local sponsors extended to the state senators an invitation to inspect the area personally. Herbert Maier discussed with CCC camp superintendent Morgan the details of this visit, scheduled for mid-March. Maier asked Morgan to solicit the services of Ross Maxwell, attached to the CCC as a geologist, to speak to the lawmakers. "He should stress the academic side of it," said Maier, "and give the story in general without being too technical." Maxwell, however, "should not unconsciously convey the idea that the area has strong mineral value, since we know that such is not the case." Maier reminded Morgan that "since to the average Texan the word geology is synonymous with oil and commercial deposits," Maxwell should "bring out the

fact that there has never been a single oil lease in this area and our access to confidential reports of Texas oil companies show that none of them entertain any hope of finding oil within the proposed park area." Maier then cautioned the CCC superintendent: "For this reason, I suggest that the party not be taken to Terlingua, which is outside the area, and where false impression of local mineral deposits may result." [13]

Horace Morelock saw another angle for the NPS to pursue with the legislative tour of Big Bend. He wrote to Cammerer with a suggestion given to him by a member of the local chapter of the American Legion. "I have been told," said the Sul Ross president, "that certain provisions have been made by which disabled veterans of the [First] World War were given accommodations in the Yellowstone National Park." Morelock noted that "it so happens that a large portion of New Mexico and West Texas have no facilities for accommodating the disabled veterans in this territory." Thus he wondered "if the National Park Board could provide suitable quarters for this group in the Big Bend National Park." Morelock believed that Cammerer knew that "the recreational facilities and the climate in that area would be fine" for the veterans. In addition, the NPS "would be rendering a great service to a worthy group, who, incidentally, would naturally be influential in Texas in obtaining through legislative enactment the money necessary to purchase this land." Morelock wanted Cammerer's thoughts on the matter, as "this weekend sixteen legislators are to pay the Big Bend National Park a visit, and next weekend thirty additional members are to make the trip to the Chisos Mountains." It was his hope that "the situation will so impress these groups that the park bill will go over in good form;" hence the need for the NPS director's opinion on the disabled-veteran proposal. [14]

While Morelock pursued his ideas for attracting legislative support for the Big Bend bill, Herbert Maier corresponded with Senator Winfield in advance of his party's arrival in Brewster County. Maier wanted Winfield's opinion on a measure working its way through the Texas state house of representatives to increase the tax on oil by one-quarter of one cent per barrel (to three cents). "The suggestion was made," wrote Maier, "that it may be possible to slap an amendment on the bill in the Senate adding 1/2 [cent] or 1/4 [cent] per barrel (which would probably be enough to meet the land cost)." Maier's contact within the legislature believed that "the oil companies might favor this because they are expecting increases in the tax anyway and would favor this particular fraction because it would last for one year only." Once the lawmakers arrived in the Chisos Mountains, this and other ideas received much attention as they rode horseback with Everett Townsend and Robert Morgan. Townsend had arranged for a Texas railroad to absorb the cost of transporting the larger party of state legislators to the Big Bend. He then asked the Alpine chamber of commerce to fund the meals and incidental expenses for the state senators' party, among which he listed "dinner for gang at [Dona] Chata's (and extras)" ($25.70 for a group of eleven), and a box of cigars worth $2.35. [15]

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CHAPTER 6:
Keeping the Faith: The Struggle to Sustain Momentum for Big Bend National Park, 1938

For the youthful National Park Service (barely two decades old in the late 1930s), delays in securing land for Big Bend National Park were distressing indeed. Yet a mixture of determination and faith carried NPS planners and their local partners in Texas through what many park service officials recognized a daunting task: acquisition of the $1 million-plus fund to purchase a tract of land in excess of 1,230 square miles. With Texas mired in the throes of the worst economic crisis in state history, and the rules of Congress clear on federal participation in matters of park land acquisition, no one would have been surprised if the NPS and west Texas interests conceded defeat in their dream to open the first national park in the Lone Star state. Yet the persistence of Everett Townsend, Horace Morelock, and their peers would join with the strategies of Herbert Maier and other NPS officials to convince Texas lawmakers that scarce tax revenues allocated to the Big Bend National Park idea were monies well-spent.

Whatever the status of negotiations with the Austin lawmakers, park sponsors in the early days of 1938 noted a gradual shift in local consciousness of the merits of the park in particular, and of the economic benefits to accrue to west Texas with the advent of publicly funded tourism. A key feature of this optimism for the future came in January when Joe M. Graham of Center, Texas, wrote to his old friend Everett Townsend in regards to the sale of his family's property to the park. Graham, his wife, and Ed Daniel of Del Rio had missed their payment on bank notes of $4,500 for their property along the Rio Grande near Boquillas Canyon. In their desperation to resolve their chronic financial woes, Joe Graham told Townsend that he and his partners "will let the [state] park board have it at that price if they will take it at once." He then asked Townsend: "Please do me the favor to take it up with the park board, [as] they need it as it is a key to the situation there on the river." He felt no compulsion "to describe it to you any further," as the Graham-Daniels ranch had the best supply of water along the river (and would become one day the location of the park's Rio Grande Village campground). [1]

A similar plea came the following month from Mrs. Margaret Buttrill of Marathon, and Mrs. Louana Leary of San Antonio. Each had mailed to Townsend their deeds to 140-acre parcels in south Brewster County, prompting the former land surveyor to ask the state parks board for a ruling on such offers. Will Mann Richardson, the board's chief clerk, cautioned Townsend that "these deeds recite that the Grantee shall assume the unpaid balance of the purchase price." The board had "no idea how much money is due on this property, and it is possible that by accepting the land we might be held bound to pay this amount that is still due." Richardson speculated that if "we do not accept the land and the parties merely allow the land to revert to the State, then we will acquire title under the Big Bend Act without any payment from this office." Yet another clause in the Buttrill/Leary deeds stipulated that "the land must be conveyed to the U.S. Government as part of the National Park, or title will revert to the Grantor." Richardson feared that "if we should assume the unpaid purchase

price, and . . . something should happen and the National Government refused to accept the park as a National Park, then this provision would make the title revert to these Grantors, although we had paid the unpaid purchase price." The state parks board had been in receipt of several other unsolicited deeds with similar caveats, and hoped that Townsend could enlighten the board on the best procedure to follow. [2]

Correspondence such as this with potential land donors made the NPS and local sponsors realize that the dream of a park in the Big Bend country rested upon their unceasing efforts at promotion and lobbying of state lawmakers. Thus the Alpine chamber of commerce eagerly agreed in January to join with other west Texas communities to organize the "Highway 51 Association." In a letter from Glenn Burgess, president of the Littlefield chamber (and a future executive director of the Alpine chamber), Herbert Maier learned that this group planned a meeting at the abandoned CCC camp in the Chisos Mountains. There Burgess and representatives of some 18 Texas towns would discuss construction of a "direct north-south connection between the Big Bend and the Black Hills area of South Dakota." Burgess asked Maier to send to this meeting Walter McDougall and Charles Gould of the NPS regional office in Santa Fe, as Burgess had been quite impressed with a presentation made by McDougall at the Gonzales Palmetto State Park. Everett Townsend echoed Burgess's sentiments, informing Maier that the proposed highway would run south from "near the Canadian line" through eastern Colorado before "tapping our #3, a few miles East of Sanderson [approximately the routes of U.S. Highways 285 and 385]." Townsend noted that the Highway 51 Association had "made arrangements with Mr. [Lloyd] Wade to take care of the visitors and will provide a good barbecue and plenty of eats." As the organizers expected "a good crowd and some of them from pretty far North," Townsend asked Maier to send them "a good man," as "we consider this meeting of much importance to our program." [3]

The group of 150 highway promoters gathered in the Chisos Mountains agreed that an aggressive and bold strategy would be needed to energize the Big Bend park initiative. Thus the participants voted to change their name to the more-impressive "International Parks Highway Association," with their goal a federally funded route from the "national parks of Canada" to the Rio Grande. As proof of their earnestness, the Lions Club of Odessa gave Horace Morelock a check for $441.55 to purchase lands for the park. F.M. Gwin, highway association vice-president, carried a message from Texas highway commissioner Harry Hines conveying his support for the concept. "Between 80 and 85 percent of the route in other states," said the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* "already consists of improved roads." Texas, with some 540 miles of the international corridor, "is lacking on 130 miles, although the rest is traversable, and 150 miles, between Brownfield and McCamey, is paved." The *Star-Telegram* reported that "the route extends north through Oklahoma, Colorado, Nebraska, South and North Dakota." Its planners hoped "eventually to connect Acapulco, Mexico, and the Canadian national parks in the Calgary section of the Dominion." W.J. Rozary, president of the chamber in Hot Springs, South Dakota, came to speak for road sponsors in the Black Hills of his state, while severe weather prevented the Colorado and Nebraska delegations from attending. Texas civic officials at the Chisos gathering pledged "completing [of the] acquisition of rights of way in this State," said the Fort Worth paper, while all attendees "left the hills ringing with their determination to make the proposed Big Bend National Park an early reality." [4]

Simultaneous with the press coverage of the highway promotion came word in the *Star Telegram* that the U.S. House of Representatives had approved a measure "authorizing the Federal Government to acquire the balance of the land needed for the Great Smoky National Park in Tennessee and North Carolina and the growing success of the campaign for contributions to buy land for the Big Bend National Park in Texas." The Fort Worth daily reported that Congressman Ewing Thomason "will offer a bill for a Federal contribution for Big Bend as soon as the Texas Legislature acts again upon the state appropriation." The El

Paso representative had noted that "the House showed by its vote Wednesday that it will pay for a part of the land for a national park if local interests and the States will first show their sincerity by supplying a part of the money." The precedent established by Congress in the Great Smoky land-purchase program included "expenditure of $743,265.29 for the acquisition of slightly more than 26,000 acres of land." Through a mixture of private monies and state appropriations in Tennessee and North Carolina, park promoters had acquired 410,000 acres for the future NPS unit. "The people of Texas," concluded Thomason, "are showing their good faith in the [Big Bend] project," and he believed that "the Texas legislature will appropriate a part of the money needed to acquire the land for the park when it meets again." [5]

Given that the Lone Star lawmakers would not reconvene in Austin for another ten months, Thomason's promises meant little if park promoters could not sustain the publicity campaign begun more than three years earlier. Walter Prescott Webb, whose report on the history of the Big Bend country could do so much for the promotion of the park, disappointed NPS officials in early 1938 when he admitted that he did not have a narrative ready for publication. In an uncharacteristic display of contrition to Herbert Maier, the dean of Texas historians claimed that "the job assigned to me could not, under the best conditions, be completed in a satisfactory manner in sixty days." Webb contended that "the country itself is a confused mass of geologic ruins and the historical writing about the Big Bend is more confused than the geology." Instead he offered to submit "a record of the work finished thus far, the material that I think will be of most use in promoting an interest in [Big Bend]." Webb would "continue the study on my own time until I can deliver to you a finished manuscript which will serve as an adequate guide to the proposed park." Then Webb conceded that "I have no doubt that the delay in making this report has occasioned you some embarrassment; a circumstance in which the UT professor admitted: "I assure you that I am conscious of my own guilt and wish to take all the blame." He preferred that Maier reproduce the photographs shot during the May 1937 canoe trip through Santa Elena Canyon and use them for publicity purposes. Webb further asked Maier to send a set of the pictures (which he called "a complete photographic record of the most remarkable and least known wonders of the Big Bend") to his fellow travelers: Thomas Skaggs of McCamey; James W. Metcalfe (U.S. Border Patrol); Pete Crawford (Texas Ranger); and N.M. Nelson (commander of the El Paso unit of the U.S. Coast Guard). "The part that these men played in the trip," declared Webb, "is made clear in my report and without their assistance the photographs could not be obtained." He also wished Maier to acknowledge their work as public servants, with only Skaggs not associated with state or federal agencies. [6]

The use of photographs to heighten interest in the future park extended to Maier's request to Townsend for pictures of wildlife and early ranching activities. Maier wanted to emphasize in publicity venues that the area, reiterated Townsend, "will rapidly return to a highly productive range for wild life when grazing is entirely removed." Townsend also contended that "this certainty and the climatic conditions, will make it one of the greatest wildlife preserves in our country." He then responded to Maier's inquiry about a "hay mowing photograph" from the Big Bend. "I have seen hundreds upon hundreds of acres of good grass, suitable and plenty good for cutting hay," wrote Townsend, "in those open flats south of the Chisos, and in like places near Persimmon Gap, along Santiago Draw." He noted that "close around the base of the Chisos on the East, North, and West there has always been so much shrubbery and cacti, that it would have been difficult to cut hay." Nonetheless, said Townsend, "I have seen grass growing luxuriantly among those plants." He recalled "the first time I ever rode up Green Gulch (May 1895), the grass and sotol attracted my attention to such an extent that I borrowed a companion's camera and photographed them for myself." Unfortunately, Townsend had lost the picture, but noted: "At that time I was not much interested in photography and in the weeks of riding through the Big Bend that was the only scene of which I wanted a picture, so the grass and sotol must have been very good." [7]

Maier's need for images of the Big Bend corresponded with the coverage in the January 14 issue of the *Fort Worth Star Telegram,* in which the editors decried the "lack of concentrated energy behind it." The Amon Carter-owned paper claimed that "daily, the subscription list is lengthened by a few names accompanied by the price of an acre or two of the proposed area." The *Star Telegram* contended that "Texans generally have given the idea a most enthusiastic indorsement." Yet "the drive has not been manned and engined" to the satisfaction of the Fort Worth daily. One example of its frustration was the fact that "the school children of Texas could have purchased the entire tract in their own name by simply contributing a dime each for the nine months of the 1937-1938 school term." The *Star Telegram* claimed that "everywhere the idea was introduced it was applauded - but no machinery has been constructed for collecting the dimes." Further, "a large sum already has been collected from volunteer subscriptions and the civic groups of the State could have supplied the impetus for sending the collections over the top." The paper's editors suggested that "there could be nothing comparable as a monument to the school children of Texas who have it easily within their power to assure the Big Bend Park." Instead, the *Star Telegram* argued, "the most individualistic of achievements is lagging for no other reason than collective procrastination." [8]

In the game of park politics, the signal sent by Amon Carter's editors forced the NPS to rethink its role of indirect support for the Big Bend fundraising campaign. Conrad Wirth, assistant NPS director, asked Herbert Maier "whether there is any danger that the present land acquisition program being carried out in the State is apt to dwindle down before it terminates to such a point that subscribers, especially those who were enthusiastic at the start, may become discouraged and disgruntled." He then asked Maier: "Do you think it would be wise for the Texas Park Board to use what money is now on hand, then make a fresh start in the campaign as a means of reviving interest?" This, Wirth hoped, would "serve to dispel the present lethargy mentioned in the press release." In his reply to the NPS director, Maier acknowledged that the use of funds for immediate land purchases "is what the State [of Texas] intends to do." The Texas parks board, said Maier, "had contemplated starting spending the funds obtained long before this." What the board lacked was enabling legislation from the state's lawmakers to do so. In November 1937, the legislature had consented to this practice, yet "they [the parks board] have not started spending their money," said Maier, "because they have been waiting for the Governor to name a committee of 150 outstanding men in the State to carry on the fund raising campaign." The committee would have 100 representatives from the chambers of commerce of the Lone Star state (coming from each of five sectors), and Governor Allred would name the additional 50 members. Maier confided in Wirth that James Record of the *Star Telegram* "is himself holding up the completion of the naming of this committee for some reason which we have not been able to learn." NPS officials in Santa Fe suspected that Record "does not want the committee rounded out unless certain individuals connected with large corporations, such as oil companies, are maneuvered on to the committee." From this body would come a "small executive committee which will work with the Texas State Parks Board in taking up the land purchased." The committee also would "buy such tracts of land first, as are offered at the cheapest price." While this meant that "the land offered at the best bargains will be bought up first, regardless of location," properties of "those who later hold out for more money can be brought in by condemnation proceedings." These conditions led Maier to counsel patience for NPS planners: "In other words, I do not think there is anything to be concerned about." [9]

While this debate over land purchases persisted within the park service and the Texas state parks board, NPS publicists sustained their optimistic tone in the promotion of a visit to the Big Bend area by members of the National Geographic Society (as part of a larger NGS journey from El Paso to Brownsville). Herbert Maier asked Ross Maxwell, now posted to the NPS's state headquarters in Austin, to accompany the society's officers on a river trip through

the canyons of the Big Bend. Maxwell noted that the only boats suitable for such an excursion were the canoes of the Webb party, which the park service had stored at the Chisos camp along with a large volume of surplus Army equipment. Maier asked Maxwell, who in February was on assignment at the CCC camp at Longhorn State Park in Burnet, to meet the National Geographic entourage at Del Rio. From there Maxwell was to take the group to Lajitas, where they would float downstream to Boquillas. "Most certainly," said Maier, "the party should go up into the Chisos Mountains," even though "we cannot pay for horse hire except for a horse that you would ride." "Above everything else," Maier emphasized, "I want you to see that the party gets to the South Rim!" The Region III official claimed that "too many official parties have gone into the Chisos for a day, only to find themselves shunted off down to Hot Springs just because someone at the camp was too lazy to round up a few horses." From there Maxwell was to lead the society members "over onto the Mexican side and drive up to the Fresnos, and go up into the Fronteriza Mountains to the point where the official party went at the time Mr. [Roger] Toll was with us." Even though he had no monies to sponsor the work of Everett Townsend, Maier hoped that the latter would help guide the society members because "a good article in the National Geographic, with some good photographs will do more toward the permanent establishment of the park than could any article published in any other American publication." Townsend also could assist the party in gaining the permits necessary to travel and take photographs on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande, as well as arrange for a string of horses to carry them into the mountains. [10]

Once Maxwell had orchestrated the details of the National Geographic trip, Maier then warned him: "We should not stress the geology of the region to the exclusion of everything else." Maier believed that "when withdrawn from grazing, and after a period of years when the range will have been able to rehabilitate itself, the wildlife values will be outstanding, looking toward the reintroduction of antelope and other fauna." Maxwell should point out that "the openness of the country would make wildlife observation much more practical, from the standpoint of the visitor, than is the case of some of our heavily forested parks." Maier also wanted Maxwell to stress that "the mountain ranges on the Mexican side run north and south," making it "comparatively easy later on to run a road from the Mexican side southeast to join the Laredo-Mexico City Highway, so that this great international highway might eventually become the outstanding tourist gateway between the two countries." [11]

Maier's detailed advice about the logistics of the National Geographic survey revealed the need for all the good publicity that Big Bend could get, and from the presence of Frederick Simpich, assistant editor of *National Geographic Magazine.* In its February 12 issue, *The Texas Weekly* reported that "Texas owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. Simpich, for he it was who came down to the Lone Star State some ten years ago and wrote an article called ‘So Big Texas.'". In that piece (June 1928) Simpich "set forth, interestingly and accurately, highlights in the story of Texas," in the words of *The Texas Weekly,* "where ‘native Americans, starting only with hard hands, strong wills, and great energy, have built up a vast, rich, and powerful commonwealth.'" The weekly continued this strain of self-congratulatory prose, claiming that "the Big Bend, in a matter-of-fact world, in the streamlined twentieth century, is a romantic little empire of its own, containing the last vestiges of the primitive West." Ross Maxwell also came in for praise from *The Texas Weekly* once it learned that he would guide the National Geographic party. Quoting Maxwell's lush description of the sunset on the cliffs of the Sierra del Carmen, the magazine called this "an added bit of evidence that the beauty and grandeur of the Big Bend lure all visitors into using superlative adjectives." Finally, the National Geographic excursion meant that "when the world starts coming, that will mean valuable additions to Texas's tourist trade." Good business prompted the call for creation of the Big Bend National Park, and the presence of so prominent a magazine in the area reminded *The Texas Weekly:* "Establishment of an international park in the Big Bend area would preserve a region which is probably the last in the United States where the intangible spirit of the Western frontier still reigns." [12]

Once Simpich and his NGS colleagues arrived in the Big Bend area, the *Alpine Avalanche* praised their efforts to fulfill the dream of local park sponsors. "With the blue bonnets in bloom," wrote the *Avalanche*, "and the cacti just budding out, no better time than now could have been found for an inspection of the southern part of Brewster County and the northern part of Coahuila and Chihuahua." Yet Sul Ross's president expressed some discontent when he realized that the Local Park Committee had been ignored in the haste to accommodate the magazine's writers. Morelock reminded Maier that he had played a major role in the campaign to raise funds for the park, to the extent that he traveled to El Paso as the National Geographic Society party drifted down the Rio Grande. While in El Paso, Morelock met with Ewing Thomason about inclusion of Big Bend's land purchases under the aegis of the "Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act." Morelock also had worked to organize the statewide fundraising committee, and had discussed the park issue with citizens in every corner of the Lone Star state. Yet "no one was invited from the Governor's office or any other State department in an official capacity to play a part in the expedition." Morelock warned Maier that "if we are to work with a minimum of friction on the Big Bend National Park, I personally believe that we should invite all agencies in Texas which are interested in the Park and which will play a part in the acquisition of the land." As proof of his sincerity, Morelock enclosed in his correspondence a copy of the 1938 summer course bulletin for Sul Ross. This publication went to some 7,000 schoolteachers throughout Texas, and Morelock noted how Sul Ross had allocated three pages of "free space to the Big Bend National Park project." He also informed Maier of the creation of the "West Texas Chamber of Commerce Resource and Museum Institute." Based in Abilene, the organization included the state colleges in Canyon, Lubbock, El Paso, and Stephenville (as well as Alpine). Among the facility's first exhibits, Morelock hoped, would be original scientific specimens loaned by the NPS from the museum at the abandoned Chisos CCC camp. [13]

Promotion of the Big Bend fundraising initiative included journals of lesser circulation than *National Geographic Magazine.* Maier wrote in February to Elmo Johnson of the growing number of requests for news stories and features about the Big Bend area. "To date we have confined ourselves primarily to rather technical information and general descriptions," said Maier, but he recently had an inquiry about human history in the future park. Maier thought that "it would be a fine thing to describe one of the several visits which ‘Uncle Everett' Townsend and I have made to the Johnson Ranch during the past few years." Thus he asked Johnson to recount "the story you told us one evening of the visit which the bodyguard of [Pancho] Villa paid to you a year or two ago and his proposition regarding a trip over onto the Mexican side in order to excavate the bullion which he claimed Villa had buried." Johnson then recalled how "just four days after the visit of the [bodyguard] a Department of Justice man was here to see me." To the longtime Big Bend rancher, "this proved . . . that the man was being closely watched and to them the story was well known." Johnson asked Maier not to use the person's name, but instead "you could use any good Mexican name for the body guard." He then closed his letter to Maier by reminding him: "We are one hundred percent for the Park." [14]

Even more dramatic a promotional strategy than Johnson's story of Pancho Villa's gold was the attempt by Everett Townsend to enlist the aid of President Franklin Roosevelt. "Your foreign policy [the Good Neighbor Policy towards Latin America]," wrote Townsend, "meets with the approval of the greater number of thinking people in this part of the country." Townsend and his friends believed that "we should be well prepared for trouble as it appears to be brewing in all parts of the world." As to FDR's critics, said Townsend: "They live in the past, in the days of our forefathers and gained no vision from our bitter experiences in trying to evade the [first] World War." He then suggested that even nature had cast FDR in the role of peacemaker by sending the president a picture of a rock formation in the Dead Horse Mountains that Townsend claimed resembled Roosevelt. "It may not flatter you," said

Townsend, "but the likeness is less remote and not so repulsive as many cartoons carried in the newspapers." The formation, when viewed carefully at an angle, "indicates its international phase as the face is found in Mexico and the body in Texas." The area that Townsend described was "one of the three canyons of the Rio Grande that are within the area of the proposed International Peace Park, the successful fruition of which, I believe, will prove a peace gesture of great importance to our hemisphere." Townsend advised the president that many Texans "do not realize the importance of this friendship park between the nations, two nations which have not always been over [solicitous] about each other's welfare, and we are not making much progress with the campaign." Townsend recalled more than 50 years of personal interaction along the border, suggesting that it was his "firm belief that the successful issue of this project will be one of the longest steps we can take towards winning the esteem of our goodly neighbor." The former customs officer called the Mexicans "truly marvelous people and to know them is to love them." He wanted all Americans to "become better acquainted with them." To that end, he told FDR: "A good word from you, Mr. President, will go far towards helping Texas put over this enterprise of incalculable value to our country." [15]

Townsend's suggestion of a presidential likeness, and the response of the park service, indicated the importance of his role in the campaign to secure private funding for Big Bend. Instead of dismissing his idea as specious, NPS director Cammerer wrote back to Townsend with the note from the FDR administration. "The special emphasis you have placed upon international aspects of the project seems especially worthwhile at this time." Cammerer further noted: "Let me say that both the White House and this Department fully appreciate the splendid contributions you continue to make toward eventual establishment of an international park." Then Cammerer bantered with Townsend about "the figure bearing some resemblance to the President which you have seen in the cliffs and ridges bordering the Rio Grande." The park service director called this "curiously interesting," and then informed Townsend: "To some of us here in Washington, the face also carries a slight suggestion of likeness to Vice-President [John Nance] Garner." Cammerer then concluded: "You may rest assured that whenever an opportunity is found to further the land acquisition program now underway in Texas, we will not hesitate to act accordingly." [16]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 7:
Clouds of War, Pleas for Help: The Big Bend Land-Acquisition Campaign, 1939

From the invasion of Poland in September 1939 by the armed forces of Adolf Hitler's Germany, to the fall of France and the humiliation of British troops at the Battle of Dunkirk the following spring, news of war and death overshadowed all other matters in the public's mind. At home, the transition from a peacetime economy to military preparedness moved awkwardly, complicated by the election in November 1938 of a conservative Congress eager to reduce or eliminate New Deal social-welfare programs and their perceived wastefulness. All of this portended failure for Texas's first national park, especially given the Lone Star state's dislike of taxation and government regulation. Yet prospects for funding the purchase of nearly 800,000 acres of land in the Big Bend, while dismal throughout much of this period, nonetheless remained alive and received a boost oddly enough from the very forces of war that threatened the lives of millions in Europe. By the close of the decade, then, park promoters stood ready for a final assault on the Austin capitol, with the strategies of this 12-month period both a continuation of and a break from the efforts employed for nearly a decade by sponsors of Big Bend National Park. [1]

Of utmost importance to NPS officials in Santa Fe was the 1939 session of the Texas legislature. Herbert Maier assigned W.F. Ayres, a park service inspector from the regional office, to monitor events in Austin. In addition, Ayres kept close watch on the intentions of the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* to initiate the multi-million dollar fundraising campaign for purchase of private lands. Ayres had gained experience with the Texas situation during his frequent trips to CCC camps in the Lone Star state. While conducting an inspection tour of sites in Brownwood and Cleburne, Ayres learned from James Record that "of the $25000. which [the statewide committee] had agreed to raise, $17000. was in hand and the remaining $8000 due from the Dallas contingent would be received in a day or two." Record also confided in Ayres that "a contract had been made with a national advertising company (Wychgell) to put the campaign on for $25000. and this would be started just as soon as the money was all received." State parks board president Wendell Mayes further advised Ayres that "bills had been drawn and were ready to be introduced by Senator [H.L.] Winfield." As far as Mayes knew, "it seems that [the bills] were only for the purpose of facilitating transfer of the land to the Federal Government for national park purposes, and not appropriation bills for purchase of land." The issue of mineral rights and school lands continued to endanger the future park, as Horace Morelock had informed Ayres of the reaction he had received when he spoke to the annual meeting of the Texas State Teachers Association. "Over his protest," Ayres told Maier, "the Assn. passed a resolution favoring the creation of a National Park in the Big Bend, but reserving all mineral rights on school lands for the State of Texas." Of major concern to Morelock and Ayres was the fact that "one of the principal sponsors of the resolution was Dean Shelby, of the University of Texas." "You know," Ayres warned Maier, "the story of oil on University lands." Given the fact that the parks board director, William Lawson, "expects a fight with economy minded legislators over appropriations for the Parks Board," Ayres agreed with Record that park sponsors should "do nothing about legislation at

that time." [2]

Once Ayres reached Fort Worth, he met with the *Star Telegram's* James Record to coordinate the work of the park service and private interests. Record indicated that fundraising had not moved as expeditiously as Ayres had thought. Dallas and Houston had not sent in their equal shares of $4,000, forcing Record "to raise this part from other towns." The statewide committee had agreed with Adrian Wychgell to pay his New York firm $10,000 as salary for the campaign, with expenses controlled by the committee. Ayres then learned that "Wychgell's original proposition was to put on the entire campaign for $82,000." While the committee would not sign Wychgell's contract until the $25,000 had been raised, Ayres reported that "Record expects this to be within a very short time, and he feels that now is an auspicious time for the campaign to go on." At the moment, Record could claim to have "about $16000 on hand in Ft. Worth, and there are sizeable sums deposited in local banks in San Angelo, El Paso, etc." Record also believed that "the $1,500,000. can be raised in four months time." Ayres then inquired about the status of park measures in the upcoming session of the Texas legislature. Senator Winfield had collaborated with Lieutenant Governor Coke Stevenson to "amplify the bill passed at the last session [1937] authorizing the Texas State Parks Board to buy land in the Big Bend with money raised by the campaign." In addition, Winfield and Stevenson wished to "establish the procedure for transferring the land to the Federal Government for National Park purposes." Record suggested that the park service join in an aggressive publicity effort to "push the campaign now and complete it while the legislature is still in session." Should "any deficiency" result, this could "be met by the legislature . . . (Or possibly by Rockefeller Foundation)." This strategy included review of the measure by NPS officials, and a personal appearance in Austin by Maier to lobby on behalf of Big Bend. [3]

While these details were under negotiation in Austin, Maier learned from Earl A. Trager, chief of the NPS's naturalist division in Washington, that the most famous scientist of the Big Bend country wished to support the park bill in the Lone Star legislature. Robert T. Hill, whose 1899 river trip and subsequent article in *Century Magazine* had defined the otherworldliness of the Rio Grande canyons for the state and nation, met with Trager at the annual conference of the Geological Society of America to discuss the park initiative. Not only was Hill eager to assist the NPS in its plans for a national park, Trager told Maier, but he "is a bit impatient that things are not moving faster." Trager identified Hill as "one of the earliest geologists who worked in the Southwest and has an enviable reputation in the geological profession." Hill had since retired from teaching, said Trager, "and writes a weekly article for the DALLAS NEWS on matters pertaining to geology." When Hill offered "to do anything he could in his column to promote the project," Trager responded that "we would have you [Maier] advise him of the present status of land acquisition and of the tack he should follow in presenting the project in a feature article." Hill had suggested that "someone should extend the topography from the Big Bend into Mexico because by this method the history of the area is more easily understood." Trager's office had "just completed an attempt along this line," he told Maier, and sent Hill "a set of blue prints for critical review." He then remarked that "Dr. Hill is almost 80 years old and I am sure you will find him an ardent supporter and possessed of a vitality which is not anticipated in a man of his age." Trager closed by noting the degree to which the geological profession respected the work of Hill: "He was one of the five men honored at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Geological Society of America on December 30 [1938]." [4]

As the legislative session commenced in mid-January, NPS attention shifted from publicity to lobbying in the halls of the state capitol. Horace Morelock had asked Everett Townsend to return to Austin to represent the Alpine park promoters. Townsend wasted little time in contacting Senator Winfield and Scott Gaines, whom W.F. Ayres identified as "a former [state] Assistant Attorney General, now connected with the legal department of the University

of Texas handling land matters." Gaines "had a good deal to do with preparing the [land-acquisition] bill two years ago," Ayres told Maier; a critical feature since "Senator Winfield is not a lawyer (He is president of the bank at Ft. Stockton)." Winfield had corresponded with Amon Carter regarding the language of the legislation, and Ayres hoped that Maier could join the team of Winfield, Carter, Morelock, Townsend, Gaines, and himself in Austin to prepare the final draft. One reason for organizing such a work session was Ayres's recent conversation with William Lawson of the state parks board. The latter informed Ayres that his agency "would take no part in [the] present legislative effort along Big Bend lines." Ayres admitted that "it is difficult to get at the true feeling of the Board, as Lawson is very jealous of any contact with them other than through him." For his part, Lawson "is not going to do anything that might jeopardize his own Park Board bill;" a phenomenon triggered by the fact that "the Board of Control has already cut it down to [the] approximate level with [Lawson's] present budget, about $40,000." In addition, said Ayres, "the legislature is in a very economical frame of mine." He also noted that "as a rule the Park Board has a more liberal view of things than its secretary." As if these clouds on the legislative horizon were not enough, Ayres heard rumors that "there also appears to be the beginning of a feud between Gov. O'Daniel and Lieut. Gov. Coke Stevenson." Since the latter had championed the Big Bend measure two years earlier, the NPS inspector advised Maier: "It might be well to let Senator Winfield be the principal sponsor this time." [5]

Heightening the sense of urgency facing park sponsors was the inquiry of John N. Harris, Jr., a Dallas attorney representing H.A. Woodruff, a landowner in the future Big Bend National Park. Harris's client had received some 40 acres in Brewster County as a gift from his father-in-law, J.M. Smith. When Woodruff inquired of the county clerk's office about the property taxes for 1939, said Harris, "he was informed that the land was now owned by the state park board." Thus Harris wanted the board to explain "the procedure used in condemning this land, and if possible, the consideration that our client will receive." Chief clerk Will Mann Richardson wrote back to inform Harris that "several years ago when the Big Bend Park was first begun a law was passed conveying to the State Parks Board all lands in the area which were sold for taxes." While "a number of these tracts were foreclosed on and transferred to the State Parks Board," Richardson had to admit that "no accurate record can be found in this office as to what tracts were sold for taxes." Unfortunately, said the board's chief clerk, "we have had several letters from other parties claiming that they still own the land, and that they had never been delinquent in their tax payments." "To such persons," wrote Richardson, "we have replied that there is nothing that we can do at this time to remove the cloud on their title." Instead, "the land will have to be purchased if the Big Bend project goes through, and the Parks Board will probably take notice of their title when purchasing the tract." As an indication of the chaotic state of affairs awaiting NPS and Texas officials, Richardson had to ask Harris if his firm could "investigate and find out whether or not Mr. Woodruff has been delinquent in his taxes." Even if Woodruff had paid his bills, said Richardson, "the only remedy which we know of will be to settle with him at such time as funds are provided for the purchase of Big Bend Park." [6]

By late January the impetus for a new park bill had become clear. Herbert Maier corresponded with James Record to gain a sense of Amon Carter's position on the legislation, asking him to use the 1937 measure as a guide. One feature that local sponsors had suggested was "to call for an appropriation of one thousand dollars so that it may be definitely classed as an appropriation bill." This gave the measure more legitimacy among the Lone Star lawmakers. In addition, said Maier, "a contingency clause is to be included to the effect that the final amount which the State is to appropriate is to be equal to the total sum of money raised by the Big Bend National Park Committee in its forthcoming fund raising campaign." Maier then wrote to Senator Winfield to coordinate plans for introduction of this bill, saying that "it will obviously be best if Mr. Carter, as Chairman of the Committee, signifies his concurrence in the procedure in writing." Maier also commented on discussions had by

Winfield and Carter in late December, in which "Mr. Carter was apparently afraid that you or some group might reintroduce last session's bill or rider which was passed by the House and Senate authorizing an appropriation of $750,000." Maier warned that "obviously, if this were to eventuate, it would upset the fund raising campaign." The acting Region III director then summarized the status of his conversations in a report to the NPS director, Arno Cammerer. "I found the matter stymied," wrote Maier, "due to the definite instructions from Amon Carter . . . to the effect that the bill should carry no appropriation." Carter's "insistence that no appropriation be requested of the Legislature is variously interpreted," said Maier. One version had it that Carter "does not wish to place himself under obligations to the new Governor." Others suspected that "he expects to get the money in one lump sum from some donor." Maier informed Cammerer that "Mr. Nelson Rockefeller was mentioned to me in this connection, but I doubt this very much." [7]

Because of the delicate nature of negotiations with state officials, Maier had come to Austin "to get some sort of bill in the hopper at once so as to insure an early number." To his chagrin the acting Region III director "found out that until yesterday, 250 bills had already been given priority." Maier reminded Cammerer that in the 1937 session, "the bill introduced Feb. 23rd could not win, place or show, and the appropriation had to be tacked on at the last minute as a rider to the regular appropriation for the State Parks Board." Hence Maier's screening of the new park bill through James Record. "Amon Carter," said Maier, "is the most powerful man in Texas, [and] must be reckoned with in every move." Maier told Cammerer that "unfortunately he is very busy and is usually inaccessible, and spends much of his time in travel." On a more hopeful note, Maier could state that "certainly this appears to be the most favorable set up we have had on Big Bend Legislation in 3 sessions." Governor O'Daniel, lieutenant governor Coke Stevenson, and Senator Winfield, now a member of the powerful Finance and Banking committees, also championed the legislation. "Rep. [Albert] Cauthorn from the same district [as Winfield] has maneuvered himself onto the House Appropriations Committee for this express purpose," said Maier, while "Chairman [Tom] Beauchamp of the State Parks Board has been named Secretary of State and told me last night he will use his influence to the fullest." Amon Carter had announced that he would invite Director Cammerer to the future park site later that spring, while Governor O'Daniel "has expressed himself likewise." The only caution that Maier had was that "there is nothing new on the fund campaign." He had learned that "there are contracts from three fund raising firms on Mr. Carter's desk, but he has not decided which one he will accept." This latter delay symbolized to Maier the problems facing the NPS in their efforts to create Big Bend National Park, and he concluded to Cammerer: "I do wish this angle of the thing were less of a mystery." [8]

The irony of Maier's remark was that "mystery" had defined the promotional literature supplied to local park promoters by NPS publicists for much of the 1930s. The most erudite voice of Big Bend's otherworldliness, Walter Prescott Webb, visited Fort Worth in January of 1939, and granted an interview to the *Star Telegram.* In a story syndicated statewide, Amon Carter's editors quoted Webb as saying: "The palpitating beauty and the varying effects of sunshine, rain, and passing clouds make the Big Bend a 'mysterious, wild country with a peculiar effect on those fortunate enough to visit there.'" Echoing much of his earlier writing about the future national park, Webb recalled for the *Star Telegram's* readers "his first visit to the Big Bend in a Model T Ford in the Summer of 1924." Webb asked rhetorically: "'I don't see why more people don't go there,'" as Big Bend offered "'something for everyone - the natural scientists, anthropologists, historians and especially the general public.'" This rendered Big Bend "'a veritable museum,'" said the dean of Texas historians, as "'the land has little economic value.'" Yet "'Mexico is ready to add an even larger parcel of land to the proposed park,'" Webb told the *Star Telegram,* and "'the resulting international park would be a strong factor for peace in a world where most countries feel they must maintain a strong guard around their borders.'" He recalled how he had looked at the sunset over the Sierra del

Carmen, seeing in silhouette "a massive human form outstretched in perfect repose, feet 30 miles from head, hands folded over chest, good chin, straight nose and fine brow." This likeness the Texas Rangers had called "the War God of the Rio Grande." Now that global conflict loomed once more on the international horizon, Webb told readers of Texas newspapers carrying the *Star Telegram* interview: "'The whole effect, as we sat under a million stars, the silence broken by coyotes yip-yapping to each other from distant hills, was not that of war, but of tranquility and peace.'" The University of Texas scholar then concluded that "Texans should make every effort to acquire the land for the park." [9]

To the authors of Senate Bill 123, however, the quest for funding for Big Bend National Park was no mystery. They knew exactly the conditions of politics and economics that they faced when H.L. Winfield and Albert Cauthorn stood before their colleagues in the Austin state capitol on January 31 and asked them to endorse the plan for private purchase of the acreage needed. The NPS's W.F. Ayres and Ross Maxwell had read the bill, noting that boundary adjustments had been made to the 1937 measure. "You will notice," said Ayres in correspondence to Maier, that "the first 'call' runs straight to Sue Peaks from the monument we set two years ago." The state parks board would be "the agency to carry out the provisions of this act," while "school lands are to be withdrawn for sale, and the surface rights sold to the State for park purposes at $1.00 per acre." As for the hotly contested mineral rights, these "are to be sold to the State . . . at 50 [cents] per acre." Ayres predicted that "we will no doubt run into a battle with the Texas State Teachers Assn. on this; yet we must try to get these rights and let Legislature settle the question." Winfield and Cauthorn included a provision whereby "the Texas State Parks Board is authorized to exchange lands which they hold outside the park area for lands inside," while the board would offer "purchase limited to $2.00 per acre on voluntary sales paid from appropriated funds." Finally, the west Texas lawmakers asked their colleagues for the nominal sum of $1,000 to initiate this program, and granted to the governor the right to "convey to the United States" title to all lands purchased for the park. Perhaps the best news forwarded by Ayres to regional headquarters was that Amon Carter had read the contents of Herbert Maier's memorandum on the Winfield/Cauthorn bill, and "was in complete accord with it." Ayres concluded that Carter was "anxious to proceed as outlined," and saw hope for the champions of Big Bend as the legislature contemplated the park's destiny. [10]

Within days of the bill's introduction, park sponsors in Washington, Santa Fe, Austin and Alpine circulated press releases touting the benefits to accrue to Lone Star citizens once their elected representatives approved of the land-acquisition program. No less a personage than Elliott Roosevelt, son of the president, called in a national radio broadcast for passage of Texas Senate Bill 123. Reading from copy provided by the NPS, the younger Roosevelt claimed that Big Bend would be "commercially beneficial to every section of Texas." Reiterating the mathematical model of five days of travel within the Lone Star state by the average tourist, Elliott Roosevelt declared that "the State will profit by new, improved highways built with money derived from gasoline taxes which the tourists will pay." Texans also would gain, in the estimation of the president's son, "an advertising medium [that] alone would be worth thousands of dollars . . . in drawing new industries and permanent residents, as well as tourists, to the State." For Texans "with limited means and short vacation periods," Big Bend offered "the scenic wonders of a national park without having to journey out of state." Elliott Roosevelt also suggested that the new park "would provide a place near by for the Texas business man to enjoy weekend outings without the loss of time and money that it would take for him to go out of the State." He predicted easy passage of the legislation in the Texas senate, even with the opposition of the state's school teachers, as "the additional revenue which would go into the school fund from the sale of gasoline to state visitors who would come to see the park would more than equal the board's present income from the land." Roosevelt then concluded that "the popular subscription drive will be one of the most gigantic demonstrations of concerted effort ever seen in Texas." [11]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 8:
A Brighter Day: Improved Prospects for Big Bend National Park, 1940

In a most ironic twist to the creation of Big Bend National Park, prospects for acquisition of its vast acreage improved just as the clouds of war engulfed all of Europe. Six years of persistent promotion by the National Park Service and local sponsors had made the general public in Texas and the nation aware of the future NPS unit, while expansion of the Lone Star economy in wartime meant increased tax revenues for the state legislature to distribute. Park service officials capitalized on all of these forces in play during 1940, adding tried-and-true strategies like highly publicized trips to the Big Bend, the projected windfall of tourism spending, and appeals to Texans' sense of pride in their state. At year's end, park promoters could detect a ray of hope that few could have imagined twelve months before: passage of a measure to purchase with state funds the 788,000 acres that would constitute the Texas's first national park.

One reason for Big Bend's good fortune in 1940 was the cumulative effect of New Deal investment in the state park system of Texas. The NPS chief of land planning prepared a memorandum on January 5 for Conrad Wirth, providing him with details of work in Texas that director Cammerer could use in his upcoming conference with the new Under Secretary of the Interior, Alvin Wirtz. Even better news was that the "Texas Big Bend National Park Association [had] employed Adrian Wychgel and associates of New York City to conduct the campaign to raise funds from private subscriptions" for the park. The NPS memorandum knew that "the campaign has not yet started but is expected to commence shortly." The land planning chief conceded that "it will be difficult to estimate the amount of funds that may be raised," but did note that Governor O'Daniel "apparently believes that it will be necessary to supplement the funds . . . from private subscription by State appropriations in order to raise the necessary amount." Big Bend also fit with a larger strategy unfolding in NPS circles to expand the agency's network in Texas. "For a number of years," said the land planning chief, "the Service has been interested in the proposal to establish a national seashore along the Texas Gulf Coast." The memorandum suggested that "perhaps the most suitable area is Padre Island, approximately 118 miles in length, extending from Corpus Christi to Point Isabel." The Santa Fe regional office hoped to send a review team into the field soon, but realized a problem similar to that facing Big Bend and nearly all potential park sites in Texas: "The chief difficulty here is the fact that the majority of the lands are in private ownership." [1]

This reference to NPS plans for Padre Island National Seashore revealed changing attitudes in Texas toward national parks. The land-planning chief told Cammerer that by early 1940 "consideration has been given the proposal to establish the Palo Duro National Monument along Palo Duro Canyon in Randall and Armstrong Counties near Amarillo, Texas." NPS inquiries found that "the State has contracted to purchase a portion of the lands involved at what appears to be an [exorbitant] price," but that "Representative Marvin Jones is interested in this project." In addition, said the memorandum, "Old Fort Griffin has been proposed as a unit of the national park system by Representative Garrett of Texas." The regional office

found that, "after careful study of the proposal, the Service advised Representative Garrett that Fort Griffin appeared to be more suitable for administration as a State park." Then there was the "area in East Texas known as the Big Thicket," which the NPS planning chief described as "a unique type of biotic community [that] should be preserved because of the scientific and inspirational features found therein." As with Big Bend and Padre Island, however, the Big Thicket was "in private ownership and it is estimated that approximately $4,000,000 would be required for its purchase." [2]

Yet another area of Texas studied by the NPS in the late 1930s was "the proposal to extend Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico." This idea also "received consideration," said the land-planning chief, "but the area in Texas is privately owned and no funds are available for its purchase." Then the memorandum noted that "since the Under Secretary is a native of San Antonio, Texas, he may be interested in the La Villita project of the National Youth Administration, sponsored by the City of San Antonio." Responding to the mayor of that city, the Santa Fe Regional Office sent NPS technicians to study the site. "We have advised the mayor," the chief of land planning told Cammerer, "that the Service will be glad to cooperate in every possible way to insure the preservation of the historic values involved." Among its recommendations was that "the City employ a historian to supervise the work." Then the NPS land-planning chief remarked that "the most important historical area in Texas in which the Service is cooperating is the Goliad State Park at Goliad, Texas." The memorandum suggested that "perhaps no other part of the United States offers in as pure and untouched a condition, material evidences of the influence of the padre, the soldier, and the settler illustrated by the mission, the presidio and the town." The land-planning chief, as with the other Texas sites under consideration, offered Cammerer a written report on Goliad, "with accompanying photographs," for the discussion that the NPS director would have with the native Texan who had become the Interior department's undersecretary. [3]

As the park service explored new areas of Texas for inclusion in the NPS system, Horace Morelock persisted in his efforts to stimulate interest in Big Bend's private fundraising campaign. Rumor had it that Amon Carter would commence the initiative before the end of February, and the Sul Ross president contacted Representative Ewing Thomason to take full advantage of the publicity. One feature that Morelock believed would ensure a successful campaign was mention of the international park in the same press releases going out to newspapers statewide. Thomason then wrote Interior Secretary Harold Ickes on the subject. Quoting Morelock, the El Paso congressman asked: "'Do you not think that we should immediately take the necessary steps to get the National Park Service of Mexico City to be ready to announce that the 400,000 acres just across the border will be available when and if the National Park on this side of the Rio Grande is a reality.'" Again using Morelock's words, Thomason told Ickes that, "'if I interpret properly the many questions that have been asked me relative to the international phase of the park, I think publicity of this kind released at the time of the start of the campaign in Texas will bring at least 30 percent more money from Texas people than you will get otherwise.'" The El Paso representative noted that "Dr. Morelock suggests that a special trip be planned to Mexico City to work out details," and that the Sul Ross president "desires to enlist your good offices to the end that there be proper Government participation in such a trip." Thomason knew of Ickes's "very deep interest in the establishment of the Big Bend Park," and thus hoped that the Interior department "will render all possible cooperation." The Interior secretary concurred, advising Thomason that "Dr. Morelock's suggestion should be taken up with the Department of State." Should that agency agree, said Ickes, "this Department will be glad to render all possible cooperation" through the NPS regional office in Santa Fe. [4]

Simultaneous with his appeal to Harold Ickes, Morelock worked with the influential Fort Worth Garden Club to sponsor a luncheon to raise funds for the Big Bend land-acquisition campaign. From the dollar paid by attendees at the February luncheon, 25 cents went towards

the land-acquisition fund. Amon Carter had agreed to preside at the gathering of dignitaries and club members, with one newspaper account claiming that "many out-of-town reservations are expected." The NPS's Region III sent several members of its Texas state office, who joined with the president of the Texas State College for Women, based in Denton. The group heard Morelock speak on "The Educational Advantages of the Big Bend National Park." Carter then addressed the gathering with remarks about the fundraising venture, and introduced Sul Ross's Dr. Preston Smith, who presented color slides of the future park site. The group also witnessed a fashion show of "recreational togs" that one might wear to Big Bend, and watched a square dance that the program said was "dedicated to Mr. Amon G. Carter." They viewed a display of outdoor camping equipment suitable for the ruggedness of the new park, and dined on a menu created to evoke the sense of mystery and wonder that marked the promotional literature about Big Bend for nearly a decade: Horsetail Cataract shrimp cocktail, Pack Saddle chicken, Paint Gap Hills green beans, Green Gulch Canyon salad, Del Carmen barbecue sauce, Mariscal sweet potatoes, Baldy Peak rolls and doughnuts, Chisos Mountains pie, and Capote Falls coffee. [5]

Soon after the high-profile luncheon in Fort Worth in support of the fundraising campaign, Representative Thomason asked for permission to inform his colleagues in Congress of the merits of Big Bend National Park. On April 3, Thomason delivered an address that included a lengthy article from the *El Paso Times* written by Milton Hill. The El Paso congressman told the House: "The Big Bend is literally what the name implies." Thomason recounted how in 1935 he had sponsored the legislation authorizing creation of the park, highlighting how "this act made no mention of funds for purchase of the necessary land, as it is against the policy of the Federal Government to appropriate money to buy land for national park areas." The nation's lawmakers, Thomason noted, "expected that adequate appropriation by the State legislature will be made and supplemented by funds which shall be raised through private subscription." Since Thomason's initial effort on behalf of Big Bend, "the Government made a substantial contribution to the fund for purchase of land in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park." Thomason had voted for this measure, "as I felt that Federal funds could not be expended to a more worth-while end." He then stated rhetorically: "I wish my colleagues would support me in an appropriation for the Big Bend Park." He wrote that "the people not only of my district but the entire State are making a vigorous campaign at this time to raise money to buy the land." Yet "up to this time nothing like a sufficient amount has been raised." The Texas legislature in 1937 had appropriated $750,000 for land acquisition, only to have it vetoed by Governor Allred "on the ground that the financial condition of the State did not warrant the outlay." Thomason did express optimism that Governor O'Daniel's public support of the project would influence the state's lawmakers, and that "funds may be made available at the next session of the legislature." [6]

Beyond the financial details of the land-acquisition program, Thomason wished to link Big Bend's creation to the worsening crisis in Europe. "A vital need in the world today," said the El Paso representative, "is cultural and economic understanding between countries." He predicted that "an international park on our southern border would be a means of promoting contacts that would be not only interesting and instructive, but invaluable to the people of both countries." Thomason then focused upon the intrinsic benefits of a national park such as Big Bend. "As our country nears the saturation point in population," said Thomason, "we are forcibly reminded of the need of extensive recreation areas that shall be established in perpetuity." Thomason claimed that "there are no more public lands that may be set aside for national park purposes and unless the Federal Government establishes the policy of acquiring areas of outstanding scenic aspects for such use, then our people must raise funds and buy them." Texans "welcome all the help our neighbors will give us in the establishment of Big Bend Park," said Thomason, "which will be enjoyed by people from every section of our own country and travelers throughout the world." [7]

In order to dramatize that beauty, and also to encourage those donations (and perhaps a congressional rescue of the fundraising campaign), Thomason then introduced into the record Milton Hill's story about the value of Big Bend to travelers and locals alike. "To become a national park," said the Methodist minister from Pecos, Texas, "a region must have exceptional qualifications." For many of Hill's west Texas neighbors, "it is a little difficult for us to realize that right here at our back door is such a place" as Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Glacier, and Mount Rainier National Parks. Lone Star citizens, Hill admitted, "have been in the habit of thinking of beautiful and picturesque places as being far, far away in some distant State." Thus it came as a pleasant surprise to Hill that "the national park people, who are familiar with the scenery of the entire Nation tell us that the Big Bend does qualify." Hill then reminisced about his own youth, where "I worked one season in Yellowstone Park, and I remember how disappointed some tourists were because Yellowstone did not have flower beds with iron fences around them." This, said Hill, "was their idea of a park." He then warned readers of the *El Paso Times*: "Someone [of this persuasion] might form an entirely wrong impression of the Big Bend Park." They instead should come prepared for a place whose "outstanding feature is grand and spectacular desert and mountain scenery, and it is a wonderful example of the unspoiled wilderness of the Southwest and of the health-giving atmosphere that goes with it." [8]

To aid the potential visitor, donor, and state or federal lawmaker, Hill outlined what he considered the best trips one could take in the future national park. "I have visited the Chisos fully 15 times," he wrote, "and each time this scene [Green Gulch] becomes more impressive and beautiful to me." "Very fortunate is the visitor," Hill continued, "who sees the clouds when they hang low in the mountains and drift among the great cliffs and crags." Hill himself had "seen them pour down through the clefts in immense cascades of white vapor." Green Gulch carried the visitor into the Chisos Basin and its C. C. C. camp, "where a company of boys are at work." Once one reached the "Window," a visitor could glimpse the quicksilver-mining town of Terlingua, and "beyond it the distant blue Bofecillas Mountains." From the Window, Hill encouraged the traveler to choose between a footpath "through a narrow, winding gorge with springs and a beautiful little creek," or to hike "to the head of Juniper Canyon, a great trough which comes into the mountains from the east." It was the third option for the Big Bend visitor, however, that Hill considered "the finest in the mountains." One rode horseback "through the forest to the pass just west of Emory [Peak]," then "[went] by an old lake bed, the Laguna, turn[ed] to the east, and pass[ed] under the south side of Mount Emory." In so doing, the traveler encountered Blue Creek Canyon, where "all around are great forested mountains." To the north stood Boot Canyon, and to the south the rim where one stood "on the edge of a tremendous escarpment, 6,000 feet higher than the Rio Grande out there below you." The horseback rider encountered "a land of clouds and trees; far below is the desert wilderness." Hill could only conclude: "The national park people are accustomed to grand and spectacular scenery and are not easily made enthusiastic." Thus "it means something," said the Pecos minister, "when they state that they consider this as magnificent as view as can be found in the United States." [9]

Once visitors availed themselves of wonders such as these, Hill believed that they would stay to appreciate some of the other attractions that Big Bend had to offer. "The park will be a large-scale museum for the botanist," wrote Hill, and "geologically the region is one of the most interesting on the continent." Yet "equally remarkable are the magnificent canyons of the Rio Grande," with Hill claiming that "it will be possible for tourists to make the trip up into the [Santa Elena] Canyon with little difficulty and no danger." He found that "words are utterly inadequate to describe the magnificence and grandeur of this canyon." Downriver in Mariscal Canyon, Hill reiterated his thoughts from earlier publications. "It has marvelous rock sculptures," said Hill, "wonderfully varied scenery, and it can be traversed by boats, with no danger when the river is normal." The Rio Grande canyons, he summarized, "will some day be recognized among the most magnificent and beautiful pieces of scenery in the United

States." Even so, the visitor also should venture into "the desert badlands, where the earth has been carved into weird and fantastic shapes with rich and beautiful coloring," formations that Hill contended "will surpass the noted badlands of South Dakota and Nebraska." He then concluded that "in our hurried and busy age there is needed a region such as this, rich in grand and varied scenery, mild and invigorating in climate, a place of healing and restoration of mind and body." The park would be of "inestimable value . . . for the people of the entire Nation and for our own great State and its citizenship." Donors to the land-acquisition fund thus would ensure "the greatest single step ever taken in the history of the State of Texas." [10]

Thomason's speech to Congress, and the moving prose of Reverend Hill, became public as the NPS changed management in Santa Fe. Colonel John White replaced Hillory Tolson as director of Region III, and worked with Alvin Wirtz to grasp the politics of park building in Texas. Wirtz corresponded with former Texas lieutenant governor Walter Woodul, advising him that White would visit on an upcoming tour of Texas. "I would like for you," said Wirtz," to have Col. White tell you what other and poorer states than Texas have done in the matter of putting up funds, both private and public, for the acquisition of land needed for the establishment of national parks." In addition, the undersecretary hoped that Woodul and White could discuss "particularly the States of Tennessee and Kentucky with respect to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park." [11]

To Amon Carter, Wirtz offered more detailed information about the new Region III director. "I have assured Colonel White," said the undersecretary, "that you, as Chairman of the Texas Big Bend Park Association, are the man to get the job done." Wirtz then advised Carter: "Since I have become connected with the Department of the Interior and have had the Park Service under my direction, I have come to realize what a great asset a national park can be to our State." He also apologized for "how backward we have been on the Big Bend project." It bothered Wirtz that "poor states such as Tennessee and Kentucky have raised huge sums of money for the acquisition of lands necessary to the establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park." The undersecretary especially worried that "the funds required of those states are much larger than [have] been asked of Texas;" monies that Wirtz pointedly noted "were raised by private donation," even as he forgot the substantial contributions by the states and the federal government. Wirtz also told Carter: "Of course, the state [of Texas] could afford to spend the money out of its general treasury, if it had any, as the traffic going to the park would practically all traverse the entire state." The "contributions in the way of gasoline taxes alone," he surmised, "would more than repay the State on its investment." [12]

Cultivating Amon Carter in the spring of 1940 was an important feature of NPS work on Big Bend. Milo S. Christiansen, acting assistant director for Region III, tried to contact the *Star Telegram* publisher on April 10, reaching instead James Record. From him Christiansen learned that Carter planned to open the Big Bend fundraising office on May 15, "that the subsequent 90 days would be spent on a preliminary campaign, and that the big drive will start with a big splurge the day after Labor Day." Carter wanted this portion of the campaign to last only fifteen days, with a "plan to have the whole thing through with by October 15." Christiansen informed Conrad Wirth that "at the present time the groundwork is all laid, and with good luck -- a good wet summer -- and the war situation does not get worse, it is figured they can clean it up in 15 days in September." Carter had agreed to employ Adrian Wychgel's firm to collect $1 million. In addition, Record advised Christiansen that "they have a lot of encouragement, and feel it is 'over the hill,'" with "some of the money . . . already raised." [13]

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http://www.nps.gov/bibe/adhi/adhi8.htm
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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 9:
"Doing Pioneer Work": The Civilian Conservation Corps and Facility Planning, 1936-1941

As promoters of Big Bend National Park solicited funds for land acquisition, so too did National Park Service planners devote an extraordinary amount of time and money to the design and construction of the new park's infrastructure. After the "first impressions" of 1935, when Congress authorized creation of Texas's inaugural NPS site, park officials from across the nation ventured into the Big Bend country to oversee the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps, to study the plant and animal life of the region, to examine Big Bend's geology and hydrology, and to prepare the site for visitation. Building upon knowledge acquired earlier in the decade, the park service proceeded through the auspices of the CCC to prepare for Big Bend's facility construction, resource management, interpretive programs, and concessions development. Only in the matter of the international peace park did the NPS lose momentum. Even though land acquisition did not occur, the investment by the NPS in park planning in the absence of any guarantees of park creation gave hope to advocates of Big Bend that they would have a national park someday.

One feature of NPS planning in the late 1930s that aided Big Bend was the professionalization of park planning and design. Linda Flint McClelland, author of *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (1998), noted that "the programs of the 1930s put into operation and proved the value of the master planning process spearheaded by the Landscape Division, later renamed the Branch of Plans and Design." The Great Depression had left many architects and planners without work, and the NPS utilized their talents as the system expanded with New Deal agencies like the CCC, WPA, PWA, ECW, and the state parks. Big Bend further benefited from its location within the ECW's Region Three, which McClelland called "perhaps the most successful of the regions from the viewpoint of consistent, imaginative, and successful application of national park principles and practices." This McClelland attributed to the leadership of Herbert Maier, who "brought experience, wealth of sources, and an amazing ability to express clearly the qualities of naturalistic architecture and landscape design." Maier's inspectors, like the Harvard-trained George Nason, "ensured the high workmanship and consistent adherence to principles of naturalistic and rustic design," features that confronted the CCC at its camp in the Chisos Mountains. Maier became an authority within the park service for his training methods, and for McClelland his "greatest contribution to park design was his mastery of rock work, assimilating both the landscape gardener's emphasis on naturalism and the architect's vision of the construction potential of this material." Big Bend and other future park sites in Maier's southwestern region allowed he and his small staff to experiment with "conventions of landscape architecture such as winding walks, native plantings, flagstone terraces, and open foyers." Thus the CCC camp in the Chisos Mountains provided Maier and other NPS planners with a laboratory for innovation, not to mention the challenge of extremes of distance, isolation, and environment. [1]

"Camp No. SP-33-T" in the CCC program faced these conditions, and also the challenges of

all New Deal relief agencies: the experimental nature of economic stimulation, the political influence of local and state leaders, and the turnover in crew members dictated by the limits of employment. For these reasons, camp superintendent Robert D. Morgan wrote in January 1936 to Maier of his concerns about the operations of the Chisos outfit. With some fourteen months' experience in charge of the camp, Morgan wondered whether "the organization as a whole, I mean the one I know in Texas, had really grasp[ed] the idea regarding our work, in a way that would enable us to get the very best out of the work being done in the Parks of Texas." In Morgan's estimation, "the vast majority of the men engaged in the Park work in Texas were just the same as myself," in that "the work was vastly different than any we had done, especially we who had been engaged in Engineering work." Reading Maier's manual entitled "Park Structures and Facilities," Morgan mused: "I would have to change a lot of ideas I had about structures, location and plans for buildings and roads." In addition, the Chisos superintendent would "have to learn to listen to a different group of men than I had been accustomed to being in contact with." This level of performance required Morgan to "read different type[s] of books and magazines, and take a greater interest in nature, and particularly to be willing to take suggestions different than ordinarily given regarding a similar building or structure in a different location or under usual conditions." [2]

Morgan's critique arose from his sense that "the entire organization had not yet realized just what it was all about." He had visited other CCC camps in Texas, and concluded that "members of the organization [who] were working on a project were not sold on the project, nor enthusiastic about the project." A good many men, Morgan informed Maier, "told me that they could see no reason for the project and that it would never be of any service to any one and it was merely a meal ticket until something else came along." Morgan discovered that "another outstanding point was the tension and ill feeling existing between some men and the inspecting personnel." Personal animosities also arose within CCC crews, as "a lot of the men I talked [to] seemed to want to critici[z]e the other [man's] job and the work that was being done." He believed that "it is the ability to conceive just what is right and best in each of the different locations that should . . . develop us all into Park men." Yet more disturbing to Morgan was the revelation that "the lack of enthusiasm was not confined to the men actually on the project, but existed in men in higher authority." These observations led Morgan to admit: "I was determined to sell this project to all the personnel." The Chisos camp needed to see itself as "part of a chain that was to tie us to an organization that was providing not only a job but an opportunity to advance and to have a part in the development of a project that will mean a lot to Texas and the nation." For his part, said Morgan, "I would discuss with my men the various things that came up in the work, urge them to read the books and magazines that came into the office regarding paper work and to impress upon them to take the suggestions given by our inspectors in a constructive way." For Morgan this meant that the crew "would live the job." Then reflecting the appreciation for Herbert Maier defined in McClelland's book one-half century later, Morgan concluded: "I think we owe it to you as our Regional Officer, to our Inspector and to our National Office to render a service that will reflect credit upon the National Park Service and help to stimulate the admiration of the public for the work being done." [3]

Other observers of CCC work shared Morgan's assessment of the significance of Big Bend to the CCC and NPS. George Nason wrote to Maier in February 1936 to endorse funding for another 90-day period at Big Bend, calling the site "probably a park that should rank as A No. 1 in awarding applications." The "necessity of doing pioneer work on this area," said the senior regional inspector, meant that "a great portion of cost is for road projects plus a pipe line to carry water." Nason recognized that operations at Big Bend created "excessive overhead" charges, as the distance from population centers made the cost of oil and gas quite high. He noted that "the grades are steep and . . . automobiles must many times run in low [gear]." Roads into the Big Bend area were "poor and pioneer," which "adds considerably to the maintenance cost." Then he claimed that "because of the very high number of uneducated

Mexicans in the camp, it will be necessary to hire a clerk, which runs up the supervision cost." The Chisos camp budget of $22,000 included $16,000 for overhead charges. Yet Nason asked Maier to authorize the new expenditures, "justified by the fact that this is more important than our normal Texas State Park Camps." [4]

To address the concerns of Nason, Morgan, and other students of the Big Bend situation, Maier agreed in March to the suggestion made the year before by William Carnes of the NPS's San Francisco office to "furnish a man to contact the ECW inspector periodically in the Big Bend." Carnes's office had undergone substantial reductions in force, and Maier knew that no one would be forthcoming from the Bay Area. The pace of road construction into the CCC camp had sparked the interest of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce "to have some form of overnight accommodations provided for the visiting public." The chamber planned to publicize the project in order to promote the land-acquisition program. This necessitated "some form of limited accommodations" in the Chisos Basin, and to that end Maier asked that Charles Richey be assigned to review construction planning at the camp. Fortuitously, the San Francisco office that spring had construction work underway only at three sites: Platt National Park in Oklahoma, Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico, and Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. As these were part of Richey's workload, and because "practically all parks and monuments in his territory now have a well formulated master plan," Carnes conceded that "some adjustment will need to be made to include more work for this summer in his territory." Richey himself had expressed an interest in working at Big Bend, and by relocating from San Francisco the inspector could visit more frequently the NPS sites at Carlsbad Caverns, White Sands National Monument, and the planned park unit in El Paso (the future Chamizal National Memorial). [5]

With management and oversight in hand, the NPS could devote its attention to the many tasks of design and construction at the Chisos camp. The onset of spring weather accelerated road construction, with the NPS pleased to learn from Everett Townsend of the state highway department's plans for the Big Bend area. As "senior foreman" at the Chisos camp, Townsend worked closely with the Brewster County commission to grant jurisdiction over access routes to the future national park. The route involved, Townsend told Maier, branched off from "State Highway No. 3, at Marathon, follows the present Boquillas road southward to the junction of the Big Bend Road, thence via the Big Bend Road to Burnham's Ranch; thence to Terlingua and from there to the mouth of the Santa Helena Canyon." With the shift of jurisdiction to the state, said Townsend, "it seems an appropriate time to urge the opening of a road from some where on the Terlingua[-]Alpine road through the Christmas Mountains to a connection with the other roads at or near the Burnham Ranch." To expedite this plan, said the camp's senior foreman, "I believe a word from you to the Chamber of Commerce, with an offer of advice through your road engineers as to the most practical and beneficial route, would create a lot of encouragement for this undertaking." [6]

Townsend's suggestion reminded Maier of the tenuous nature of park planning in Big Bend. Bernard Manbey, associate engineer with the NPS office in San Francisco, had surveyed a similar route in August 1935, hence Townsend's knowledge of the merits of the Terlingua-Alpine connection. Frank Kittredge, chief engineer for the San Francisco branch, reminded Maier that "from an engineering standpoint such a road is entirely feasible." This route would shorten considerably the distance between Alpine and park headquarters (then contemplated for the Chisos Basin. Kittredge predicted that "in view of the fact that the great majority of tourists visiting the Big Bend National Park would already have traveled great distances before they reach Alpine, any way of shortening the road from Alpine to the park would seem to be well worth while." An additional advantage would be that "all the necessary culverts and bridges could be put in the initial stage and the road laid out with proper grades, thus considerably cutting down the cost of subsequent maintenance." Kittredge attributed "the high cost of maintaining roads such as the existing ones and their frequent impassable

condition" to "the lack of the very necessary above-mentioned structures and the consequent frequent washing away of stretches of road, as well as the formation of dangerous holes." The San Francisco engineer further noted that "since there is no public domain in the State of Texas, all approach roads would have to be built by the State, or else jointly by the State and County." It made sense, then, for NPS and Texas highway officials to collaborate from the start on road construction. [7]

Even as the NPS studied highway access to the Chisos camp, the U.S. Army (supervisor of camp operations) had plans to link the remote area to the outside world by means of an upgraded airstrip at the ranch of Elmo and Ada Johnson. At first Herbert Maier assumed that the site would be used "only for emergency purposes," but surmised that "if this location were fortunately on land now owned by the State, a good beginning could be made toward an eventual major landing field for this future national park." The Works Progress Administration expressed an interest in collaborating with the CCC and NPS on the Johnson airfield, and Maier learned from Robert Morgan that the latter had detailed Paul Pressler, an NPS architectural foreman, to work with Johnson at the site. "Of course we cannot let the work in the Chisos Mountains suffer," Maier warned Morgan, "but you should assist Johnson to as great an extent as you reasonably can." The ECW director's rationale was that "that part of the territory is in the proposed final area and anything done should be as well executed as possible under the existing conditions." Army officials then outlined their specific route of travel, with flights departing from Dryden to Sanderson, then heading southwest across the Santiago and Chisos Mountains, to land near the Rio Grande at Johnson's Ranch. The Army Air Corps thus would have service within sixteen miles of the Chisos camp. This plan appealed to all parties, and the WPA undertook the initial grading of the strip in April of 1936. Yet when Johnson attempted to secure a position with the agency to earn additional income, the NPS could not accommodate him. Instead, Maier offered Johnson employment as a "skilled workman" at the salary of $150.00 per month, assisting Erik Reed on his archaeological survey. Even this became problematic as the CCC's budget faced new reductions in June. By then Maier had nothing at all for Johnson; a situation that he regretted, as he told Reed: "Mr. Johnson has always cooperated with us one hundred percent." The best that Maier could do was to order the two CCC technicians assigned to the Johnson Ranch airstrip to rent accommodations from Johnson, rather than in the CCC camp in the mountains, so that Johnson could earn some revenue from the federal presence on his land. [8]

The desire of local ranchers to earn income from the NPS extended to Ira Hector, whose horse concession was the only one available to the CCC camp or to visitors. By May of 1936, superintendent Morgan reported problems with Hector's arrangement. The state parks board, lacking the funds to purchase Hector's lands, had granted grazing leases to him on "all State Owned land in and adjoining the basin." In exchange, Morgan told Colonel R.O. Whiteaker, chief engineer of the Texas parks board, "Hector agreed to pay into the Park Board $140.00 per year." In addition, the rancher "was given the horse concession in the [state] park," and was to "give to the Park Board twenty five percent of all monies collected." The state board intended that "this percentage along with the lease money was to be given to the heirs of the estate to pay them for their shares of the land." Hector complained to Morgan that "no payment has been made to the heirs although he has turned in a considerable sum of money." Thus the rancher "has refused to let any government man have any horses and this forces us to go on the outside and secure horses from other sources." Morgan also contended that "[Hector] is anxious to leave here as he claims to be having a lot of trouble with the boys in the camp." According to the rancher, the CCC crew members "are catching his horses and riding them, and in their travels out into the mountains that they run his cattle, steal his bells off his horses and so on." [9]

Hector's demands placed the CCC and its superintendent in an awkward position. Morgan

informed Whiteaker that Hector had "wanted me to get the boys all confined to camp as he felt that they were trespassing on him since he had this land leased." The superintendent had no recourse, as "the Army has charge of the boys in camp." In addition, "the National Park Service has always raised sand about the [Hector] cattle being in here," as "they are doing a great damage to the trees and plant life and we would be far better off with them out of here." Morgan had learned from Hector that he would leave the Chisos basin "if some arrangement can be made to pay this land out." Hector would "take a payment of $100.00 per month and leave," said the camp superintendent. Morgan doubted "if the [parks] Board can pay this section out at this time," and had inquired of Everett Townsend to see if the Brewster County chamber of commerce would do so. In the interim, Morgan canvassed the other ranches in the Big Bend area to determine which could supply horses on a daily basis. Erik Reed and his archaeological surveyors were in need of mounts, but traveled great distances and did not spend more than one day in any given location. Morgan noted to the Austin office of the NPS that Waddy Burnham "has the only horses available to be used in [the] immediate area of the camp, and he has to bring them seven miles to start from here." At that, Burnham could not supply horses for any of the survey work underway in the Dead Horse and Rosillos Mountains, nor in the vicinity of Boquillas, Castolon, Johnson's Ranch, and San Vicente. Finally, the CCC camp faced a quarantine zone south of the basin, "and ranchers can not take horses into or out of this zone." Morgan asked permission to rent horses from a network of ranchers in the Big Bend country, and to authorize automobile travel as far as possible before switching to mounts. [10]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 10:
A Different Frontier: Mexico, the United States, And the Dream of an International Park, 1935-1940

Of all the initiatives pursued by the park service in the fateful year of 1935, none had the drama or complexity of the international peace park. Building momentum since the earliest days of park planning, and stimulated by policies in Mexico City and Washington to rethink each nation's relationship to the other, the idea of a joint park along the Rio Grande at Big Bend received its most serious attention in the fall of that year. In so doing, each nation learned a great deal about the conditions of the past that had separated them, while facing the obstacles of economic and ecological devastation that triggered FDR's "New Deal" and Lazaro Cardenas's reform movement. Optimism was in the air as officials at the highest levels explored the means of cooperation, while NPS personnel prepared for inclusion of the international park in the larger domain of Big Bend planning.

While much has been written about the conservation and "Good Neighbor" policies espoused by Franklin Roosevelt, less is known of the work of Cardenas and his advisors on environmental protection. Lane Simonian wrote that "indeed, the exploitation of natural resources has been the dominant theme in Mexican environmental history." He argued that "if the conventional wisdom is true that poor people cannot afford to protect natural resources, then there would be no basis for conservation in Mexico." Yet that is precisely what occurred in the 1930s, when Cardenas asked Miguel Angel de Quevedo to lead a newly created *Departemento Forestal, Caza y Pesca* (Department of Forestry, Game and Fish). Quevedo, who would work closely with NPS officials in 1935 and 1936 on the joint-park proposal, had studied forest conservation in Paris at the Ecole Polytechnique, receiving in 1889 a degree in civil engineering. His exposure to American conservation programs occurred in 1909, when outgoing President Theodore Roosevelt invited Quevedo to Washington to attend the "International North American Conference on the Conservation of Natural Resources." Consultations with the likes of Gifford Pinchot, Roosevelt's chief of the U.S. Forest Service, helped Quevedo develop an interest, said Simonian, that "lay less with the establishment of a forest industry based upon the principles of sustained yield than it did with the protection of forests because they were biologically indispensable." [1]

Quevedo's journey from the halls of the White House to the Big Bend of the Rio Grande symbolized not only the history of Mexican conservation, but also that of border relations and the twentieth century Mexican political economy. Eager to promote his ideas of forests and parks, Quevedo sought to interest revolutionary leaders like President Venustiano Carranza, who agreed in 1917 to establish outside of Mexico City the first Mexican national park: *El Desierto de los Leones* (The Desert of the Lions). Five years later, Quevedo had formed the private "Mexican Forest Society," and petitioned President Plutarco Elias Calles "to establish national parks in areas with high biological, scenic . . . and recreational values." Calles did not implement Quevedo's plan, and Simonian summarized Mexico's conservation ethic by the 1930s as "weakened by the disinterest of powerful Mexican officials and by a lack of general public support." [2]

Quevedo's persistence would pay off, and hopes for a true national park system in Mexico would rise, when President Cardenas announced that, in the words of Simonian, "conservation was in the national interests and the irrational exploitation of the land must come to an end." Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman, authors of *The Course of Mexican History* (1995), described Cardenas as "intensely interested in social reform." The Mexican leader also "had that special charismatic quality of evoking passionate enthusiasm among many and strong dislike among some." He inherited a nation that was but 20 percent urban, and where rural "per capita income, infant mortality, and indeed life expectancy lagged behind that of cities." To address these inadequacies, said Simonian, Cardenas's "administration undertook the largest land reform program in Mexican history, extended irrigation projects to small farmers, experimented with alternative 'crops,' such as silkworms and sunflowers (for the oil), created rural industries, and established fishing and forestry cooperatives." Cardenas also approved of Quevedo's efforts to mitigate erosion caused by deforestation of Mexican lands. From 1934 to 1940, Quevedo oversaw the planting of some two million trees in the Valley of Mexico alone, and four million more throughout the republic. This commitment encouraged Quevedo to press for more work, in that "Mexico's forest problem was so complex and so difficult that only a permanent campaign that enlisted the support of the entire citizenry on behalf of forest conservation could succeed." Finally, Quevedo worked with Cardenas to establish some 40 national parks in Mexico, although in the words of Simonian: "Twenty two were less than the size of Hot Springs National Park [in Arkansas], the smallest national park in the United States." [3]

The limitations that Cardenas placed in the summer and fall of 1935 on Quevedo's plans for national parks would hinder negotiations with the United States. "Like their U.S. counterparts," wrote Simonian, "Mexican officials rarely created national parks that incorporated whole ecosystems." Quevedo identified park lands based upon their "scenic beauty, recreational potential, and ecological value." Much like the NPS, the Mexican system of parks would be promoted for their "therapeutic value." Finally, Quevedo "believed that international tourism would further cooperation between Mexico and other countries;" a key feature of FDR's Good Neighbor Policy and his New Deal ventures into natural and cultural resource preservation. This meant an emphasis on park development in and near the population centers of Mexico, especially its capital city. "Quevedo created a national park system," said Simonian, "whose centerpiece was the high coniferous forests of the central plateau." How this concentration of resources and attention far to the south of the Rio Grande would affect negotiations for a joint international park became clear as the two countries planned meetings along the border, and talked at the highest diplomatic levels about a partnership never before attempted. [4]

Given the circuitous journey taken since 1935 to establish an international park in the Big Bend area, the speed with which American and Mexican officials moved that year engendered hope for the future of the partnership. Interior Secretary Harold Ickes had asked Secretary of State Cordell Hull to formulate the diplomatic protocol for planning such an endeavor. Ickes himself envisioned naming the new park (or at least the American side) the "Jane Addams International Peace Park." John Jameson wrote that the Interior secretary saw this as "a fitting memorial to a fellow Chicagoan and the winner of the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her lifelong commitment to international peace and understanding." Addams had brought to the immigrant neighborhoods of late-nineteenth century Chicago the British concept of the "settlement house," where educated reformers (both male and female) would teach middle-class values and American citizenship. Popularized in her book, *Twenty Years at Hull House,* Addams's outreach programs increasingly included Latinos recruited to the Midwest to replace the European ethnic groups she had first encountered in the 1880s and 1890s. Ickes, who had worked in Progressive-era reform programs in his hometown of Chicago, saw a strong connection between Addams' service to Latinos, the president's initiatives for better relations with Mexico, and the appeal of an international park dedicated

to peace in an era of escalating tensions in Europe and the Far East. [5]

Word of Mexico's commitment to the discussions came in late July, as U.S. ambassador Josephus Daniels wrote to Hull that "it is my understanding that the Bureau of Forestry of the Mexican Government has written to the Foreign Office expressing its interest in the project." Daniel Galicia, chief of the Mexican forestry bureau, informed Daniels that "he was sending an expedition into Coahuila and Chihuahua in about three weeks to study the possibility of establishing a corresponding reserve on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande." Galicia had asked the American diplomat "especially for a map showing exactly the areas involved in the American project and any other [particulars] which might be of assistance to him in making plans for a Mexican park." Galicia's superior, Miguel Angel de Quevedo, also asked Daniels to coordinate a meeting with U.S. officials on the initiative. "I found Mr. Quevedo personally most enthusiastic at the idea," said Daniels, with "his chief interest [being] the possibility of making the park a great game reserve." Quevedo mentioned to the U.S. ambassador that "the big game in the northwestern part of the State of Coahuila, some of the finest in the country, is in danger of extinction." Daniels believed that "the Government already owns much of the land in this section and that the President has approved the drafting of a bill for submission to the next Congress authorizing the Forestry Department to issue bonds for the purchase of any additional lands necessary for national parks." Quevedo and Daniels also discussed "the naming of the park," and the former stated that "this was a matter on which [the Mexican] Congress and the authorities of the States concerned would probably wish to be consulted." [6]

To expedite the request of Galicia and Quevedo, American and Mexican officials met in El Paso on October 5 to plan for a larger conference in that border city the following month. There Herbert Maier learned from Galicia and from Armando Santacruz, Junior, Mexico's commissioner to the International Boundary Commission, of that nation's interest in water projects along the Rio Grande. Maier quickly corresponded after the meeting with L.R. Fiock, regional director of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), about Santacruz's suggestion "that it is the plan [of the IBC] to erect three dams along the Rio Grande in the Big Bend area;" one each at the mouths of Santa Elena, Mariscal, and Boquillas Canyons. "From what he said," reported Maier, "I gathered that the U.S. Federal Government tentatively favors the erection of these dams." Maier recalled that upon his most recent visit to the Big Bend, he had heard of "the possibility of such dam promotion." This he had dismissed because, "as you know, dams have been proposed for about every strategic point on about every river in the United States during the past decade." The NPS officials told Fiock that "even if the Mexican government favors such a move, I am sure that it will be out the line of normal policy to approve of our participation in these hydraulic ventures because . . . our national park areas are to be maintained in their wilderness state." Maier decided not to engage Santacruz in a discussion of NPS policy "because I did not wish to complicate the picture." He informed the USBR official that "it has been tentatively proposed that the area on the Mexican side be set aside as a large Forest and Game Preserve." He knew that the Rio Grande's international status meant that "such hydraulic ventures would have to be anticipated." Yet the United States, "on the basis of its future adoption of the area as a national park, can withhold participation in such ventures if that appears advisable." As Fiock had replaced the current U.S. commissioner to the IBC, L.M. Lawson, Maier asked that Fiock supply him "with information as to what extent the U.S. Reclamation Service is seriously considering the erection of dams at these three canyons." He also asked that Fiock "hold the matter of my inquiry confidential," as Maier knew that the NPS's Washington office would handle all conversations with Mexican officials on this matter. [7]

Issues of water quality and quantity would affect management of Big Bend National Park from its inception. Thus Fiock's response to Maier's confidential inquiry revealed how each nation would envision water resource planning in the Big Bend area. Fiock claimed that he

possessed only "meager knowledge" of the "proposed construction of dams on the Rio Grande below El Paso." He had not worked on the surveys for water projects between that city and the Gulf of Mexico, but did have access to informal details within the USBR. "In 1919," Fiock recalled, "the Bureau of Reclamation through some cooperative arrangements with the Irrigation Districts of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Brownsville section) made a preliminary investigation of possible storage reservoir sites." He also knew that "being an International proposition the International Boundary Commission, . . . [had] interested themselves during the past several years in these matters." This led Fiock to believe that the IBC was "working cooperatively on plans, at least to the extent of collecting necessary essential data." The USBR official had visited the three canyons of the future park, and considered them "exceedingly favorable for dam construction." He cautioned Maier that "it seems doubtful that there is a sufficient discharge of water in the Rio Grande at these points to fill the reservoir which could be created by either one of them." Fiock reminded Maier that "the flow of the Upper Rio Grande is entirely controlled by Elephant Butte Dam and Reservoir," north of Las Cruces, "and there are no large tributaries to the Rio Grande between Elephant Butte and the Pecos River," below the proposed national park. In Mexico the only stream flowing into the Rio Grande in the vicinity was the Rio Conchos, and "there is already constructed on the Conchos River a dam and reservoir almost identical in proportions with Elephant Butte [itself a storage basin of two million acre-feet of water]." [8]

Besides the lack of water quantity in the Rio Grande through the Big Bend, Fiock also noted the use of irrigation far from the park. "Construction of dams in the canyons of the Big Bend," said the USBR official, "can not provide major flood control to the lower Rio Grande Valley because of the tributaries which produce high runoff which causes the destructive floods entering the Rio Grande below the dam sites." Even if "international relations permit and funds [are] made available," said Fiock, "the first dams to be constructed will be as far down the Rio Grande as possible and still be above the Lower Rio Grande Valley." The USBR knew of two such sites: "the Salineno site for a dam and regulating reservoir and the El Jardine site for storage and flood control." Then Fiock suggested that "there are no favorable sites between the El Jardine site and the canyons of the Big Bend." This meant that "possibly the Boquillas site or one even below that would be chosen if it is at all possible to find a satisfactory site on farther down the river." He then hinted that "apparently the only reason there would be for consideration of the construction of more than one dam in the canyons of the Big Bend would be for the purpose of power development." Yet "the isolation of the territory from any large power market even if there was river discharge enough to generate any appreciable quantity of power," said Fiock, meant that "the chances of development of power possibilities are very remote indeed." Should that be the case, "dams could be constructed at each successive site which would back water to the dam next above and so on down the river through the entire canyon section of the Big Bend." [9]

Fiock's ambivalent stance on water projects in the Big Bend canyons led Maier to correspond with his superior in Washington, Conrad Wirth, about inclusion of this topic in the upcoming meetings with Mexican officials. Even though Maier had confidence that the Interior department could block such projects, he told Wirth that "I want to have first-hand information as to just what the U.S. Reclamation Service and the International Boundary Commission down there really have had in mind." Thus Maier had initiated his contact with the El Paso office of the USBR. "This had taken a little time," he told Wirth in explaining the lateness of his report on the October 5 meeting in El Paso with Mexican representatives. It also "has had to be handled carefully," Maier noted, "because we do not wish to 'scare' the Mexican officials away from the park idea." [10]

Soon thereafter, L.M. Lawson of the IBC contacted Maier to offer his thoughts on the Big Bend dam issue. Lawson's organization "[had] for some time been engaged in a study regarding the equitable uses of the waters of the Lower Rio Grande," said the U.S.

commissioner, "and [had] been active in the measurement of discharges of the main Rio Grande and tributaries." In recent years "extremely large flood flows and serious water shortages" throughout the length of the Rio Grande had raised "the question of flood control and conservation of water." In August 1935, President Roosevelt had signed legislation that gave the IBC authority to conduct technical and other investigations relating to flood control, water resources, conservation, and utilization of water, sanitation and prevention of pollution, channel rectification, and stabilization and other related matters upon the international boundary. This had granted the IBC its access to the Big Bend area, though Lawson echoed the thoughts of the USBR when he told Maier: "The use of water, both in the United States and Mexico, above the Presidio Valley, which is the beginning of the Big Bend district, results in very little accumulation to the river from the upper Rio Grande." Records kept by the IBC "would indicate that about seventy percent of the Lower Rio Grande flow come from Mexican tributaries, with the remaining percentage from the Devils and Pecos Rivers of Texas." [11]

Lawson then advised Maier that "while some flood control works are now being construction by the Commission on the Lower Rio Grande, "others are planned in and below the Big Bend district." His agency had studied "a number of damsites . . . with the view of developing storage and hydroelectric power." Mexico and the United States, Lawson conceded, "have not yet come to final agreement upon the equitable distribution of the international waters." The IBC commissioner also admitted: "Nor have final plans reached any definite form as to which storage site in the Big Bend district would be the most feasible and economical." Lawson assured Maier that "this decision . . . rests upon the joint determination of the undertaking." He then closed with the vague statement that "it can be assumed that at some future date plans will be carried out to some finality in taking advantage of the storage possibilities that exist between the canyon section of the Rio Grande in the Big Bend district." [12]

While planning for water projects worried Herbert Maier, he also had to oversee the details of the first major gathering in the twentieth century of Mexican and U.S. officials on border issues. Less than two decades after the "raids" by Pancho Villa and the resultant Pershing expedition into Mexico, American and Mexican scientists, park officials, and diplomats agreed to assemble in El Paso. Even before this meeting on November 24, 1935, Maier coordinate a visit to Arizona by Daniel Galicia, Maynard Johnson, and Walter McDougall to accompany a U.S. Biological Survey party in the "King and Houserock Valley Refugees areas in Arizona." Their goal was consideration of the plans for the "Ajo Mountain National Monument," later to become Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Galicia noted that this desert plant extended from southwestern Arizona to the Gulf of California. This shared ecosystem prompted calls for an international park on the Arizona-Mexico border similar to Big Bend. Maier suggested to Conrad Wirth that this surge of interest by Mexican officials might be enhanced not only by the El Paso meeting, but also by extension of invitations to Miguel Angel de Quevedo and other Mexican park officials to travel to Washington in January 1936 to attend the annual NPS superintendents' conference. "It occurs to me," wrote Maier, "that, after all, the final conference on the birth of the International Park should be considered rather an historic event." In conjunction with the anticipated agreement between Mexico and the United States, Maier encouraged Wirth to extend the hand of friendship to the NPS's future partners at Big Bend. "This will not only impress them with the importance of what they are entering into," said Maier, "but should go a long ways towards assuring the success of the undertaking." In turn, the presence of Mexican park planners would "make a favorable impression on the National Park Superintendents and others attending this conference." Quevedo, Galicia, and their associates would thus represent the future of U.S.-Mexican border relations in ways that no one could have anticipated even a decade earlier. [13]

Pursuant to this meeting, and the prior engagement in El Paso, Maier asked Johnson and McDougall for their thoughts on the boundaries for a Mexican park opposite Big Bend. The surveyors disappointed Maier, in that they had not traveled into the Mexican interior. In addition, said Johnson and McDougall, "we know of no one who has made a sufficient investigation of it to attempt a location of boundaries." CCC superintendent Morgan did inform Maier that on July 4, he had entertained a "Dr. Francisco Del Rio," who represented the governors of Coahuila and Chihuahua. Del Rio reported that the Mexican Government is interested and would establish a park of such an area as would be in keeping with the one established in the Big Bend. Morgan noted that Del Rio spent one day in the area, "but was not sufficiently familiar with it to make definite boundary recommendations." Johnson and McDougall did know that Daniel Galicia "is to go into the region for a preliminary survey and then to return later with a party of engineers and surveyors for a more thorough investigation. Galicia had indicated to them that he would make this trip after his survey of the international park at Ajo Mountain. For his part, the chief forester for the Republic of Mexico wrote to Maier on November 12 to indicate his support for collaboration with the United States. "I wish you'd know how glad I'm with it," said Galicia, "because we've found a probability to [e]stablish a[n] Inter-National Park in Punta Penasco, Sonora State, and game refuge along the border." He planned after the first of the year to visit the Boquillas area. "It would be very convenient for you and Mr. de Quevedo to [discuss] the matter over, on his [upcoming] visit to El Paso." Galicia then thanked Maier for sending him booklets on NPS units in the region, and promised to devote time to discussing Big Bend and Punta Penasco at the El Paso conference. [14]

As the international park meeting neared, NPS officials in Washington asked Mexican officials to visit other sites in the United States to observe how the park service did business. Arthur E. Demaray, acting NPS director, wrote to Juan Zinser, chief of the game division of the Departemento Forestal y Caza y Pesca, when he learned that Zinser had decided to travel to California after leaving the El Paso conference. "I hope very much," said Demaray, "that you will be able to visit some of our national parks on the way." This gesture emanated from "the recent resolutions of the Second General Assembly of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History urging park systems for other American countries." Demaray recommended the Grand Canyon "and some of the national monuments established to give protection to historic areas of great interest." In California, Zinser should see Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks. Then he should travel to San Francisco, where "you will find a group of [NPS] engineers and landscape architects who are fully conversant with park policy and operation." Finally, Demaray suggested contacting the California fish and game commission, "the State organization with which Mexico has long cooperated in connection with fisheries off the coast of lower California." The acting director described "this outstanding conservation organization" as "typical of the machinery utilized by the states in enforcing regulations concerning fish and game in conserving natural resources." This effort by the NPS was well-received by Zinser, whom Lane Simonian identified as the member of Quevedo's staff who "established wildlife refuges, signed a migratory bird treaty with the United States, and fostered the establishment of hunting groups" in northern Mexico. [15]

When the historic day arrived, NPS and Mexican park officials demonstrated an eagerness for cooperation and partnership that overrode any concerns held by Herbert Maier about the details of an international park. Among the attendees from Mexico were Miguel Angel de Quevedo, Daniel Galicia, Juan Zinser, Jose H. Serrano and Juan Thacker of Quevedo's staff, and Armando Santacruz, Junior, of the IBC. Other Mexican representatives came from the states of Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Sonora (the latter to discuss the Ajo Mountain park proposal). American officials included Maier, Frank Pinkley of the Southwestern National Monuments, Vincent Vandiver, regional geologist for the park service, Don A. Gilchrist, director of Region Three of the U.S. Biological Survey, and Charles E. Gillham, game management agent for the biological survey. Maier reported to Conrad Wirth that "the

primary purpose of the conference was to afford the Mexican representatives an opportunity for an official indication as to the extent of their participation in national park, monument, and wildlife undertakings immediately along the International Boundary." In so doing, "there was compiled a set of eight resolutions outlining preliminary policy covering the creation and administration of such areas along and extending over into both sides of the boundary." [16]

First among the resolutions was the statement that "the Mexican Government accepts the suggestion of the United States Government for the creation of International Parks designed to include adjacent areas of outstanding scenic beauty on both sides of the International Boundary." From this would come "fostering of a closer understanding between the peoples of the two nations and inaugurating a joint effort for the conservation of natural resources." They saw as critical "the conservation of plants, animals and birds and of all such natural conditions." Each park unit "will be controlled by the proper Department of each Government, subject to joint Regulations to be agreed upon for the maintenance and conservation of the areas involved." Wildlife refuges would be an important feature of international park planning, with "regulations . . . to properly provide for the crossing of the Border by administrative forces as well as the wild life," while "peculiar and beautiful vegetation and outstanding geological phenomena" merited their own "National Reservations." Reflecting Quevedo's concerns for ecological zones shared by border towns, the conference resolved that "with a view to improving the esthetic and health conditions as well as for recreational value to the present communities along the Border[,] it is recommended that the two Governments cooperate in establishing forest plantations around these communities in both Countries." Finally, the attendees declared the need to make permanent the partnership forged in El Paso that day, with a "Joint Commission" created "to carry out at an early date the necessary investigations and surveys for the location of the areas to be included in the proposed International Parks, wild life Refuges, plant Reserves and forest plantations." They then called for another meeting in the Texas border city no later than January 15, 1936, with submission of their findings and recommendations to the leaders of their respective nations some 60 days thereafter. [17]

Herbert Maier analyzed the tone and mood of this conference, and found much to commend. The NPS already had studied the American portion of suggested international park units at Big Bend, the "Espuelos Mountains" of Mexico and the "Hatchet Mountains and Animas-Pelonicello areas" of southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona, and the proposed Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (including the "Rocky Point Area [*Bahia Adair*]" of Mexico). The latter site had garnered the support of Mexican park officials, who envisioned "a recreational area for fishing and bathing" that would be "accessible from the International-Pacific Highway leading from Mexico City and Guadalajara up the coast to Southern California." [18]

For Maier and his colleagues, the "only international park in which the National Park Service is, or is likely to be, interested in along the Boundary is the Big Bend." Maier liked the suggestion of Quevedo for tree plantations at border communities; something that the forest, fish and game chief had observed in his drive with NPS officials from Laredo to El Paso. Maier praised Quevedo for his "early outstanding record in the reforestation of land surrounding [Mexico City]," and agreed that "such undertakings will be highly worthy and could probably be carried out on our side under the extended CCC program." SWNM superintendent Frank Pinkley noted that each nation need not be bound by the designation given to an area, such as a wildlife refuge adjoining a national park, as "desirable ranges of scenery, fauna or flora, [should] be units rather than limited as at present to an arbitrary line." [19]

The NPS's Maier then offered his assessment of the mood of the attendees, describing that of the Mexican representatives as "earnest and enthusiastic." "Senor de Quevedo," said Maier,

"although seventy, is a very energetic individual." Reiterating details of Quevedo's meeting in Washington in 1909 with Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, Maier noted that he also "is an honorary member of the Society of American Foresters." Quevedo informed Maier of "the legislation he now has in process of formation which will enable his Department to regulate and practically prohibit hunting along the entire Mexican-U.S. Boundary within a zone 150 kilometers [90 miles] south of the international line," a measure that Quevedo assured Maier "has already received the approval of Pres. Cardenas and the Cabinet." Maier then advised Quevedo on his itinerary of western U.S. parks, hoping that he could see the Grand Canyon because of "a similar area in the State of Chihuahua which is also a mile in depth and which the Mexican government has under consideration as a national park [Copper Canyon in the Rio Conchos basin]." Quevedo did not have time to travel to Arizona, but "being primarily a forester," said Maier, "he desired above everything else to see the Sequoia." [20]

Most critical, however, were Quevedo's thoughts on Big Bend National Park. "The Mexican Government," Maier learned from Quevedo, "is prepared to prohibit all hunting on the Mexican side of the Big Bend at an early date." Quevedo also hoped that "the boundaries of the Mexican area shall be based upon biological as well as scenic considerations." While "the bulk of the land is in private ownership (large ranch holdings)," said Maier, "Quevedo stated definitely that he favors the undertaking of a program of land acquisition covering all lands within the boundaries to be proposed." Maier and Quevedo agreed that "this, of course, will be a long term program." The American land-purchase program "will no doubt require several years for acquisition by the State of Texas," wrote Maier, "and just how rapid land acquisition by the Mexican Department will be, it is impossible now to [gauge]." Maier contended that "it is natural to assume that land acquisition may be more difficult for the Mexicans to effect than with us." Yet he saw hope in the suggestion by Daniel Galicia for "acquisition by exchange." [21]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 11:
Discovering Nature's Way: Scientific Research and Resource Protection, 1936

The years between congressional authorization of Big Bend National Park and its establishment witnessed a steady stream of university faculty and graduate students, as well as park service technicians, eager to chart the natural and cultural wonders of the region. These observers of the landscape anchored Big Bend's reputation as a marvel of scientific opportunity. They also recognized the need for protection of the flora and fauna from human intrusion, and called on many occasions for regulation of such practices as overgrazing and big game hunting. From these appeals would come patterns of resource management that reinforced Big Bend's reputation as an outstanding nature park. The emphasis on the latter phenomenon also paralleled the general NPS tendency to discount cultural resources. Thus the legacy of Big Bend as a "pristine" wilderness, where signs of human habitation should be removed, gained momentum in the first years of research, and had become its signature when the park opened for visitors.

Once the preliminary surveys of Big Bend had been completed, NPS officials set out in early 1936 to expand upon the findings and make recommendations for park facilities, interpretative programs, and future research needs. The massive study undertaken late in 1935 by William B. McDougall and Maynard Johnson led George F. Baggley, wildlife supervisor for the NPS's branch of planning and state cooperation, to suggest several initiatives for the Big Bend. "In view of the present land status in the Big Bend area," Baggley warned Conrad Wirth, "it is naturally difficult to undertake any large work projects with the CCC camps now in the area." Yet the NPS wildlife supervisor saw an immediate need for "range study plots," as these would "determine the rate of change in range grass cover and forest reproduction." Baggley wanted "at least one such plot . . . located in each of the different cover type zones." These would measure 33 feet square, and would have to be fenced "to exclude all animals." The state of Texas could assist the NPS by conducting "erosion control on State-owned land." The park service would need a relief map of the future national park unit, as well as a topographical map "with as many of the existing roads, trails, fences, and other improvements as possible." Baggley hoped that the NPS could initiate "a continuing project to provide for wildlife observation and a study of all wildlife species, their abundance and distribution." Building on that study, Baggley wanted to "arrange with the State authorities for immediate protection of the Peccary which has no protection whatever in the Big Bend project." Baggley then reminded Wirth: "On the Big Bend project similarly as at Boulder Dam there seems to be a definite need for the assignment for a wildlife foreman to devote his full time to this project." [1]

Survey of Big Bend's natural landscape had an additional purpose in 1936: the need for regulation of resource use. Conrad Wirth asked George A. Moskey, assistant director for the NPS, to offer advice on requests for permission to mine the region. While the history of the Big Bend reflected the impact of resource extraction, the new authority of the park service prohibited this pattern of use. Moskey told the NPS director of land planning that "we should

make it clear to these people that when the lands are turned over to the Federal Government for national park purposes, no mining of any kind can or will be permitted." The park service needed to make clear, Moskey warned, that "any reservation in the deed of conveyance, or any covenant in connection with the transfer, which could require that the land be open to mining, or compel the United States to open the area to the extraction of minerals, will prevent our accepting the land for national park purposes." Moskey noted that the NPS had faced similar situations when accepting land donations for such parks as Shenandoah, Great Smokies, and the Everglades. The assistant NPS director also advised Wirth that "a well-studied letter should be written to the [Texas] Governor to supplement the brief letter of October 14, 1935, covering fully the requirements that will be insisted upon by us in the transfer of lands to the Federal Government." He also asked Wirth to remind Texas officials of "the necessity for the State to enact preliminary legislation ceding to the United States exclusive jurisdiction over the area." This latter point would complicate relations between the park service and state and local law enforcement officials for the remainder of the twentieth century. It also required legal clarification as late as 1996 when closure of the park during a shutdown of the federal government blocked access for travelers and locals across the vast expanses of the park. [2]

Protection of the NPS's interests in the area, and acquisition of knowledge about Big Bend's resources, also required the park service to promote the findings of its technicians. In April 1936, George Baggley received an invitation to speak on Big Bend at the annual meeting of the Society of Mammologists. Baggley asked Maynard Johnson to craft an argument that would appeal to his audience, and the NPS regional wildlife technician responded by linking the American and Mexican portions of the Big Bend. This would give scientists, said Johnson, "an approximately complete biological unit," making Big Bend "the only national park that does so." Johnson also praised the future park's inclusion of the Chisos Mountains, as they were "separated from any other mountains by wide stretches of desert flats." This meant that "the fauna will be better protected in certain respects than is possible in any other national park." Johnson remarked that another distinctive feature of Big Bend was "several Mexican species that enter the United States only at this point," most notably the "weeping Juniper (Juniperus flaccida)." The wildlife technician noted that the "most characteristic plant" of the plains surrounding the Chisos Mountains was the creosote bush, with mesquite, ocotillo, lechuguilla, and prickly pear the other representatives of lower Sonoran desert cacti. The higher that one climbed into the Chisos, said Johnson, the more one encountered Upper Sonoran species like the Mexican buckeye, desert willow, Apache plume, oak, pinon, juniper, Arizona cypress, Douglas fir, and yellow pine. [3]

Johnson hoped to impress upon Baggley that "the study of the flora of this region is in its infancy." While scientists already had identified some 450 to 500 species, much remained to be accomplished. As an example, Johnson cited disparities in naming oak trees in the future national park. "There are probably nine or ten species and varieties of oaks in the Chisos Mountains," wrote Johnson, "some of which may be new to science and some of which are probably hybrids." Since Baggley's audience would focus primarily on mammals, Johnson mentioned that "tree squirrels, and porcupines, are among the mammal groups absent from the area -- perhaps because an extensive area surrounding the Chisos Mountains is treeless semi-desert." In the proposed park area as a whole, the mammals most frequently seen were Texas jackrabbits. The "most abundant" of mammals "are various species of Peromyscus -- especially in the mountains, and perognathus -- especially on sandy lowlands." [4]

Despite large quantities of mammals as common as jackrabbits, Johnson nonetheless recognized that "there are several other features or characteristics that will serve to make the mammalian fauna of this park outstanding and intensely interesting." He noted that "the peccary occurs here and in no other existing or proposed national park." The regional wildlife technician reiterated the charge of earlier NPS surveyors that the javelina "was formerly very

abundant in this region but has been killed extensively for hides and often by hunters merely for the sake of something to shoot." Johnson did know of "several small bands in the area," and believed that "with protection they will increase satisfactorily." Of major importance to this effort, wrote Johnson, were plans "to make the area a state game refuge in order to prohibit all hunting until such time as the park is established and full protection is given to the entire fauna and flora." [5]

In addition to the need for protection of the javelina, Johnson also drew attention to "another characteristic of the unique mammalian fauna of this park:" the presence of three distinctive species of deer. Most common was the Mexican mule deer. "Since this is the only place in Texas where the mule deer is abundant," reported Johnson, "it has in the past been hunted rather persistently." NPS officials had undertaken "voluntary agreements with the ranchers" that provided "a measure of protection." Mule deer as a result had become "quite abundant," and were increasing "at a satisfactory rate." The NPS technician also noted the presence of the Texas whitetail deer, "found mostly in the rimrock country of the southern foothills of the Chisos Mountains." Johnson found that "the range overlaps that of the mule deer to a certain extent," but did not extend to the surrounding flats "where the mule deer has a tendency to range." The whitetail also foraged higher into the mountains, encountering there the fantail deer. "Since the whitetail deer are common in some other parts of Texas," Johnson told Baggley, "and are smaller than the mule deer they have not been hunted so persistently." [6]

Johnson then turned to mountain lions, which were "frequently killed" by local hunters. Echoing later laments of NPS officials about the hunting of predators, the technician reported that "there seems to be no way of giving certain protection to these animals at present." One reason was because "these animals range so widely," so that "the protection that is given them in most national parks is often of little benefit." Johnson hoped, however, that "since the Big Bend National Park will be biologically isolated the protection of predatory animals will be a somewhat simpler matter than elsewhere." He claimed that "indeed, this park is likely to be one of the most favorable places in the United States, if not the most favorable, for the permanent preservation of any kind of cougar," as "the variety occurring in the Big Bend (Felis oregonensis azteca) is not found in other national parks." Johnson then added three smaller mammals "that are peculiar to this park:" the Couch black rock squirrel, which was "found only in northeastern Mexico and the adjacent part of Texas;" the Chisos Mountain cotton rat, "known nowhere else in the United States;" and the Davis Mountains cottontail, which Johnson claimed "is known only from the Davis, Chisos and a few other mountains of southwestern Texas." [7]

The field research conducted in the Big Bend area by regional geologist Charles H. Gould paralleled the biological work of McDougall and Johnson as the Civilian Conservation Camp expanded. On the second of six visits to the area in April 1935, Gould sought more information about the future park site, and also hoped "to collect specimens and start the geological museum." His first destination was the "Chisos Pen," an old camping and branding site located near some *tinajas* (rock water holes) about three miles south of Slick Rock Mountain, "at a point where Cottonwood Creek has cut its way through a row of hills which extend north from the north end of Burro Mesa." Here at what local ranchers called "Sulphur Springs" did Dr. J.A. Udden in 1907 make "his classic section of the Rattlesnake (Aguja) beds." Gould described the formation as "yielding large quantities of petrified wood, and occasional dinosaur bones and sharks' teeth." The geologist also identified deposits of sandstone, volcanic igneous rock, clays, sandy shale and coal around Sulphur Springs, the latter connected to an abandoned mine at the south flank of Slickrock Mountain. Some of the sandstone strata along the north side of Cottonwood Creek contained "many fossils, chiefly oysters," and Gould highlighted this in his call for more research on the area. [8]

From the Chisos Pen at Sulphur Spring, Gould then journeyed to the Banta Shut-In, which

the geologist described as "a deep narrow gorge cut by water flowing in Tornillo Creek through an intrusive sill of lava." He examined a section some 5.5 miles "as the crow flies" due east of "the point where the road to the [CCC] camp leaves the Marathon-Boquillas road." Gould noted that "this region is now impassible for cars," as he had to drive over "an old road, to a point on Tornillo Creek about a mile west of the old Stillwell Ranch, and the same distance southwest of McKinney Spring." At that juncture Gould had to proceed on foot, "down the dry bed of Tornillo Creek, a distance, following the winding of the creek, of about six miles." The geologist found his hike "very interesting," as Tornillo Creek and its tributaries "have cut steep bluffs and over-hanging cliffs, in places 100 feet or more high, in the Rattlesnake and Terlingua beds." As he had at the Chisos Pen, Gould found in the Banta Shut-In oyster shells and petrified wood. He then speculated on the formation of the Banta Shut-In; a term that "has long been used for a narrow gorge, which in many ways, rivals [the] Royal Gorge of Colorado." The Banta Shut-In, "while not so deep as the latter," nonetheless "has sides . . . as precipitous," with a canyon narrower than the Arkansas River chasm in south-central Colorado. Gould suggested that the "Banta Shut In might be utilized in one of two ways:" as a "show place, and second, as a reservoir site." Because "people like to walk through narrow gorges," said Gould, "a road could be easily constructed from the present Marathon-Boquillas road along one of the ridges between draws, and come out on top of the gorge." The dam site could "form a lake for bathing and fishing," as "there is little doubt that the basaltic walls would hold water." Gould estimated that the drainage area for a reservoir would be over 300 square miles. Hindering such a plan, reported the NPS geologist, was the fact that "rainfall is scanty, occurring usually as cloudbursts." In addition, "the evaporation is excessive, and the reservoir will probably silt up rapidly." Thus Gould cautioned his superiors: "Careful studies should be made of all the involved factors before seriously considering building a dam." [9]

Gould's third inspection in the spring of 1936 was in Dog Canyon, which local residents also called "Bone Gap". Situated about five miles south of Persimmon Gap, Bone Draw had cut "a deep and narrow gorge . . . across a limestone mountain 500 to 1000 feet high and a mile wide." This constituted part of a larger series of fissures in the earth that stretched "for a distance of approximately 80 miles in Texas and for an unknown distance in Mexico." Gould found that "the dry bed of Bone Draw affords easy walking, and an auto road could easily be lead down the canyon, the entrance to which is about two miles from the Marathon-Boquillas road." Its only problem, Gould conceded, was that "this road would have to be repaired after heavy rains." Nonetheless, the regional geologist pressed for inclusion of Bone Draw in the park's planning, as "I do not remember of ever having seen finer examples of faulting in limestone than those shown in Dog Canyon." The area was "longer and deeper than the Banta Shut In, but not so narrow." It also did not require the twelve-mile hike of Banta Shut-In for access. Gould did note that "on account of the porous and soluble nature of the limestones comprising the walls[,] Dog Canyon would probably not be suitable as a reservoir site." Given this dilemma, the geologist suggested that "mention should be made of Devil's Den, located about one mile south of Dog Canyon." This "narrow, winding, tortuous gorge, easily seen from the road," had "many tenajas [sic], or rock water holes, in the gorge, so that under ordinary conditions it can be traversed only by swimming in certain places." [10]

Completing his arc from northeast to southwest in the Big Bend area, Gould stopped last at the "Terlingua-Lajitas country." He described Lajitas as "a small village located one mile above the entrance to Santa Helena Canyon and twelve miles southwest of Terlingua." Surrounding Lajitas were rocks dating to the Cretaceous age, while "fossil shells found at Fossil Knobs two miles northwest of Terlingua indicate that the rocks are Boquillas flags." Further to the southwest, Gould identified "large fossil oysters thirty inches in diameter" in the Terlingua beds, "very similar to those found at San Vicente." Between Terlingua and the Rio Grande, "and extending from the mouth of Santa Helena Canyon to Lajitas," reported Gould, "appears to be a series of fault blocks, similar, structurally, to those which make up

the Del Carmen-Dead Horse-Santiago Range." Known as the Mesa de Anguila on the American side of the river, and at the time the "Sierra Rica" on the Mexican side (later changed to "Sierra Ponce"), these ridges "constitute the western limit of the 'graben' which occupies the greater part of Big Bend park." [11]

With his journey complete, Gould devoted the remainder of his report to his efforts to create at the Chisos CCC headquarters a geological museum. Workers at the camp had finished a laboratory-museum structure that allowed the geologist to "have tables built and shelving erected, to display a number of geological specimens." After each surveying trip made by Gould, he would send back to the camp a truckload of specimens, and "one special trip was made to San Vincinte [sic] and Glenn Springs to collect large fossil oysters." Once Gould had departed the Chisos Mountains, the museum had over 300 specimens on display, with "the most abundant material [consisting] of fossil oysters and ammonite found in the Terlingua beds." He also took pride in the display of "a very good collection of 'desert pebbles,'" along with "crystals of calcite and quartz, novocalcite, celestite, lava, petrified wood, sandstone, limestone, flint chips, hammerstones, and metates." The museum also benefited from the assignment by CCC superintendent Morgan of two enrolless, "one lettering signs and labels, the other arranging specimens." These activities led Gould to conclude: "Only a very crude beginning has been made, but with time and effort a very creditable exhibit of geological and paleontological material may be collected and displayed." [12]

Throughout the summer of 1936, voices of concern arose to call for protection of the future park's natural resources. Arthur F. Robinson of the Alpine chamber of commerce wrote to Conrad Wirth and Herbert Maier to offer his advice. "Because of my continued interest in our Big Bend Park and close observance, for a number of years, regarding plant life, animal life and Indian Archaeology," said Robinson, "I am taking the privilege of outlining information which I believe will be valuable to you . . . for the future good of our Park." The Alpine business leader noted that "conservation of the plants and animals and the archaeological sites of the Big Bend is a subject near to the hearts of an increasing number of residents of the region." Along with "observers from outside," champions of the new park "realize the imminent danger of their [the resources'] serious depletion, and even of the extinction of some species." For Robinson and other park advocates, "since the acquirement of the land for park and its transfer to the National Parks Service will require some time, steps should be taken IMMEDIATELY to form a game reserve that will include the whole Big Bend." This would mean that "the remaining remnants of deer, bear, jabalinas [sic] and other animals may be preserved to become a [nucleus] for the Big Bend National Park." [13]

As for the flora of the region, said Robinson, "hundreds of truck loads of cacti have been taken from the Big Bend by commercial curio dealers and [those] to whom the fad of a cactus garden appeals." These thieves ignored "the commoner species," preferring "the smaller and rarer species." Thus "whole localities have been denuded of rare species that once occurred plentifully." All of this persisted "in spite of a prohibitory measure passed by the State Legislature some five years ago." Robinson conceded that "regulations should not preclude the taking of herbarium specimens by bona fide scientists." He also noted that "the dry shelters of the Big Bend are known to contain relics of ancient cultures about which too little is known." He feared that "if the present practices of relic hunters and amateur archaeologists from the city museums are continued, these shelters will be denuded without doing anyone any good or proper records being obtained." Robinson called the Big Bend "the happy hunting ground of relic hunters who invariably spoil more material than they save." He called upon the NPS to leave "as many of the shelters in the Park area as possible . . . in their natural state." Robinson would allow for "representative shelters [to] be explored for the material for study to determine the culture represented, the material to be deposited in a museum at the Park headquarters with duplicates in the museum of the West Texas Historical and Scientific Society [in Alpine]." [14]

Robinson gave specific attention to the "pulling of wild flowers" in the Big Bend region by visitors, calling this "an inane and useless pastime as they seldom last half an hour before wilting." His observations led the Alpine chamber official to conclude: "Whole areas of lupines, penstemens and other wild flowers that formerly grew in certain localities in profusion have entirely disappeared due to their destruction by thoughtless people." Ironically, Robinson claimed that "the publicity given the region by reason of the establishment of the Big Bend National Park has turned the attention of game and relic hunters to the Big Bend." Ignoring his chamber's role in the promotion of the future park, Robinson told NPS officials: "Conservation measures should be initiated immediately if they are to do any good." He wanted "property owners in the region [to be] encouraged to cooperate in protecting the flora and fauna which, after all, contributes so much to the charm of the Big Bend." This meant that the NPS should station a uniformed ranger in the area "at an early date." He then revealed his proprietary interest in the scheme: "As you know my intimate acquaintance with the property owners and this territory for twenty years, I shall appreciate your consideration for the position." [15]

While the park service could not accommodate Robinson's request for employment, it did take seriously his call for protection of natural and cultural resources in the Big Bend area. James O. Stevenson, acting chief of the NPS's wildlife division in Washington, asked officials of the Oklahoma City-based region for advice on "current activities of Texas or federal agencies for the conservation of wildlife and Indian relics in the Big Bend." Stevenson acknowledged that "Doctor McDougall has discussed establishment of a game refuge in Brewster County, Texas, with the Texas Game Commission." Stevenson also knew that "some action is being taken for the protection of javelina and one or more species of deer." The park service, however, realized that "Texas authorities feel there is little likelihood that the entire Big Bend can be made a game refuge as suggested by Mr. Robinson." The acting wildlife division chief reminded Region Three officials that "it is certainly desirable that Texas laws, prohibiting removal of cacti, be enforced." Stevenson thus wanted to know if the regional office had "any information as to which bureau of the Texas government should be contacted with reference to this enforcement?" [16]

Regional biologist William McDougall participated in this dialogue with additional work related to resource protection in the Big Bend area. In June 1936, McDougall outlined some six pairs of plots of land for range study, with different types of vegetation for accuracy in sampling. These pairs would have one section of 33 feet square fenced to keep out all grazing animals. Dr. Omer C. Sperry of Sul Ross College would monitor the plots, with the goal "to show what progress in the recovery of over-grazed areas may be expected when domestic animals are finally removed from the Big Bend Park area." McDougall foresaw an additional benefit from the range-study plots: "They will also be very valuable in enabling us to estimate the wildlife carrying capacity of the various portions of this area." Beyond that, said the biologist, "the plots will be of considerable value in enabling us to work out the natural plant successions in this area." [17]

McDougall also addressed the pleas of A.F. Robinson and others for protection of fauna in the future park. McDougall's conversations with officials from the state game, fish and oyster commission revealed that "'since several large areas have already been set aside as game refuges in Brewster County it would not be possible, under the law, to include more than 20,000 acres in a Big Bend refuge.'" Everett Townsend had suggested that the Texas legislature enact sweeping legislation protecting entire species of animals that inhabited the Big Bend, but McDougall believed that "'this could not be successfully done without the consent of the ranch owners in the region concerned.'" The NPS biologist recalled that "'before there was any protection at all for game animals in the Big Bend area, hunters came into the region by the hundreds to shoot deer and incidentally to kill javelinas and other

animals.'" Then Texas passed a law "'prohibiting any hunting on privately owned land without the consent of, and some compensation to, the owners.'" McDougall claimed that "'this served to materially reduce the numbers of hunters.'" He then turned to predators, stating that "'the ranchmen are constantly fighting the predatory animals and especially the mountain lion.'" The only such animal for which they might accept restrictions, reported McDougall, would be the bear. Further complicating the work of resource preservation was the ranchers' belief that "once the international park is established and protection given to all life the predatory animals will increase rapidly.'" [18]

With the admonitions of A.F. Robinson clearly in mind, McDougall had sent Everett Townsend "a list of eight species of animals including the javelina, three species of deer, bear, badger, raccoon, and rock squirrel with instructions to contact the ranchmen and endeavor to get their consent to the protection of these animals.'" The biologist also had "given [Townsend] authority to remove from the list any animal that the ranchmen object to excepting the javelina.'" From this Townsend could approach "'a local representative to introduce a bill in the next legislature when it meets in January.'" McDougall had less advice for Herbert Maier about the issues raised by Robinson on the loss of plants in the Big Bend country. "I question whether much destruction of flora is taking place under present conditions," wrote the biologist, "other than that done by domestic animals and by the activities of [Ira] Hector in burning old maguey and sotol plants." McDougall nonetheless warned that "nothing should be taken for granted and every effort should be made to give as much protection to the flora as possible." He advised Maier to seek the advice of Townsend and the CCC superintendent, "since they are not seeking jobs as rangers." McDougall agreed that "certainly there should be one or more rangers in the area." Yet he saw "no way of putting them there unless the Texas State Park Board can do it." He then concluded by noting to Maier: "I have no information about the archaeological situation." [19]

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CHAPTER 12:
Redrawing the Boundaries of Science: 1937-1944

In the years between the first NPS surveys of southern Brewster County and the opening of Big Bend National Park, the park service devoted much time and money to drafting plans for natural and cultural resource management. The NPS and academicians would expand the database formed in the first months after congressional authorization, and work with the state of Texas to protect the land and its flora and fauna from exploitation. Throughout this period, the NPS faced the loss and restoration of the Civilian Conservation Corps and its camp in the Chisos Mountains, and the onset of the Second World War with its budget reductions and restrictions on travel. The park service also endeavored to fulfill the dream of an international park by means of further scientific research in the mountains of Mexico. Finally, the desire of Sul Ross State Teachers College to ally itself with the new national park took several turns, as President Howard Morelock pursued funding and facility development on his campus from the NPS and private agencies in the name of international peace and hemispheric cooperation.

One of the first studies available to NPS officials in the spring of 1937 was the full report of Ernest G. Marsh on his survey the preceding summer of the Sierra del Carmen and the Santa Rosa Mountains of Coahuila. Marsh told his superiors of his difficulties in gaining access to Mexico, as he had been told by the office of the Mexican consul in San Antonio "that other than my having to have the necessary collecting permits from the Mexican department of Caza, Pesca y Forestal for which negotiations were already underway," that he should have no problems. Then the University of Texas graduate student discovered that "the Mexican immigration officials in Piedras Negras insisted on making a very technical interpretation of my entrance, to cause me a prolonged delay." For eighteen days, Marsh "worked with the Mexican officials to have one question after another arise as we progressed." The student technician's every answer would be transmitted to Mexico City for an official ruling "before my permits were in order and my equipment bonded under the rules and regulations of Mexican law pertaining to the 'Transuente' passport issued to me." [1]

Heavy rains some 50 miles south of Piedras Negras slowed Marsh's travel substantially, requiring seventeen hours to reach the interior town of Muzquiz. From there he joined with local guides Victoriano and Fidel Villarreal to head north into the Sierra del Carmen. At the small village of Piedra Blanca the party left their automobile, and loaded their equipment onto pack mules for the remainder of the journey. "During the next month," Marsh would recall, "I experienced alternating sieges of good luck and misfortune." At times "I was truly fascinated with the wilderness of virgin nature that lay on every side," only "later to find myself damning my incompetence and fate." Yet Marsh managed to spend "long hours in the field," covering "quite thoroughly the canyons along the western sides of the northern Del Carmens." After a month in the field, "certain losses from the plant and bird collections made me think it better to return to Muzquiz and thence to Eagle Pass rather than to follow the original plans of passing at Boquillas." It took ten days to retrace his steps "over La Gacha, La Mariposa and the Canyons along the Santa Rosa Escarpment." From there Marsh had an uneventful drive to Piedras Negras, and returned home to Austin in late September. [2]

Marsh's report to the NPS included the most thorough set of color slides of northern Coahuila yet available to park service planners. The student technician took extensive notes of the flora and fauna in each picture, often remarking on their beauty and uniqueness. He also caught on film community life in Muzquiz and other villages that few Americans had ever seen. Marsh saved his most effusive comments for the fauna of the Sierra del Carmen, noting the abundance of the band-tailed pigeon, "appearing in great numbers with as many as one hundred birds flying together as they feed on the acorns and wild cherries growing in the arroy[o]s of the upper foot-hills." The Texas graduate student told his superiors that "this beautiful bird has evidently found its perfect habitat here in the northern Carmens." With an "abundant food supply," and "the absence of its most destructive enemy, man," the band-tailed pigeon flourished in the north (a condition that changed the further south Marsh observed the bird). He also saw at least four species of doves, five species of hawks, and had several sightings of the golden eagle. "The question often has been raised," wrote Marsh, "as to whether the Golden Eagle actually does kill young stock animals." The technician examined a report of seven young calves killed by eagles on La Mariposa Ranch. Marsh could not link the mutilations to the golden eagle, but he did report that "in the Del Carmen Mountains, I saw an eagle kill a large jackrabbit and fly several miles with it dangling from its claws." He surmised that "the occasions are few when [the eagle] finds it necessary to attack animals so large as calves, but when there comes the time, his great strength and courage can serve him well." [3]

Mammals of all types abounded in the Sierra del Carmen as Marsh and his guides hiked the canyons and mesas. One of the most commonly sighted creatures was the opossum, which local residents referred to as the "chicken hunter." The student technician also marveled at the number and variety of bats in the Sierra del Carmen. "The little Canyon Bat," he reported, "is very abundant throughout the Western Hills," and Marsh considered it "a rare sight to see with the aid of a long range light after nightfall the thousands that feed over the Western Hills tank." Black bears proliferated in northern Coahuila, but they also faced the hazard of hunters. Until 1932, wrote Marsh, American hunters killed several bears annually on the Jardin Ranch. That year "the owner of the north Carmen country, an official in the Mexican Diplomatic Corps, began to refuse permission to hunting parties." As a result, "only three bear are reported as having been taken since by residents who have stock on parts of the range." Marsh contended that "the heaviest drain on the bear in the northern Del Carmens over a fifteen year period" came from "hunting activities of members of the American Club, located across the mountains from the Jardin Ranch." In recent years, however, "impassable roads" had rendered the club "inactive." Thus Marsh could report in 1937 that "in general, the present status of the bear in the Del Carmen and Santa Rosa Mountains is excellent." Mexico had placed "no rigid rules of enforced preservation" on hunting bears, but Marsh believed that the animal faced "little danger of depletion." Instead, "under such ideals of habitat as are furnished by the inaccessible rocky canyon country and a bountiful food supply of acorns, madrona berries, wild cherries, and persimmons as well as small mammals," wrote Marsh, "there is every evidence of significant increases." [4]

The NPS technician could not say the same about smaller animals such as the raccoon. "I saw no sign of this intelligent little fur bearer north of the Rosita Ranch," reported Marsh, as "the last raccoon taken from the northern Del Carmens was caught by a trap in 1930." Further south towards Muzquiz, Marsh learned of sightings of raccoons, but "the status of the raccoon could be improved." The technician believed that "in those regions where he is adapted to live," the raccoon "is persecuted continuously by an abundance of dogs and men." The striped animal "is forced to take refuge in the mountains and live in discord to his preference." Marsh contended that "it is reasonable to believe that after seeing the region that raccoons were once quite common around Muzquiz and in the lowland valleys as far north as Piedra Blanca." He told the NPS that "with some enforced protection," the raccoon could be

restored to the Sierra del Carmen. [5]

More surprising to Marsh was the presence of small fur-bearing animals like the mink and spotted skunk. The NPS technician caught some 30 specimens of the long-tailed Texas skunk, which he "found abundant throughout the Del Carmens and Santa Rosa Mountains." Marsh also had trapped a Mexican Badger, but could not locate the Arizona Gray Fox. Coyotes were quite common in the Sierra del Carmen, said Marsh, and "hardly a night goes by without the 'music' of this desert hunter." He most often spotted coyotes that were "small and buffy-white shading to black." Yet Marsh also recognized a larger coyote with longer and lighter hair. The student technician found "astonishing the number of coyotes which can be brought together by dragging the viscera of a butchered cow over several miles of cattle trails." Marsh recalled that "among my pleasantest experiences have been the times that I lay hidden on the leeward side of frequented trails and watched the coyote bands pass in the moonlight." He counted as many as twenty animals traveling together, and also remarked that "even though the coyote lives in such abundance to the region, it is seldom condemned as a predator." Marsh learned that "occasionally it is accused of killing goats or sheep," and in such cases "a few animals are trapped each year," in one case by "two dogs trained as killers that had the reputation of having betrayed many a coyote into his death." [6]

Marsh spoke at length also about the Mexican gray wolf, known as the *lobo*. Santo Domingo to the east of the mountains, wrote Marsh, "reports 200 cattle killed in 1934 and 1935 by ravaging bands of lobo." The NPS technician learned from local ranchers that "over the last fifteen years, the number of domestic stock pastured in northern Coahuila has more than doubled." Yet "reports of a wolf caught by trap are rare, principally because the wolf is a wary creature and the average Mexican trapper has not learned to match his wits." Another species of predator that Marsh noted was the Mexican cougar (sometimes called a mountain lion). "The accounts of the lion are many," wrote Marsh, "though he is seldom seen alive." He also observed that "a number of hides are found used as rugs in every hacienda." Local hunters attributed to the cougar the "killing of young horses and deer." A "Mr. Pauly of the Encantada [Ranch]" told Marsh that "a lion [had] killed three colts in his remuda on four consecutive nights in 1935," with one of the horses "found dead forty miles from the site of the killing the night previous." Marsh reported "no wholesale persecution of the lion over the region," yet "once a killer lion makes his appearance, he is pursued at once." [7]

Based on his extensive fieldwork, Marsh surmised in the spring of 1937 that "wildlife research in the Sierra del Carmen be made continuous from this study as a cooperative program between the Department of Parks in Mexico and the National Park Service." His travels through the frontier of Coahuila indicated that "such a program would be welcomed and beneficial to the Mexican department." In addition, joint studies "would stimulate a very desirous spirit of cooperation between the corresponding departments in the two nations." Finally, wrote Marsh, this collaboration "would facilitate in time, money, and results the rehabilitation of the Big Bend Park area." He noted that NPS officials like William McDougall, Maynard Johnson, and James Stevenson had called for "the making of certain ecological studies in order to determine the original status of plants and animals over the land area." Marsh also thought it wise to "observe the relation of one species with another toward the end of rehabilitation of the depleted wildlife." This latter initiative would "accomplish an understanding of the physical environment most conducive to a favorable propagation and distribution of native plant and animal species." [8]

Marsh had evidence of this because of the stark contrasts between the ecology of the Big Bend area and northern Mexico. "Subjected for many years to the adverse influence of man and livestock," wrote Marsh, the future NPS site "has been sorely used." Even "such environmental conditions as could be generated on experimental plots for ecological study could not be of the most desirable character." Marsh believed that "once a maladjustment is

stimulated, even though the cause is in time removed, the original set-up cannot be established except over long periods of years." The NPS could not afford the luxury of such lengthy studies, as "the need of results is for the immediate future in order that a directional influence can be placed upon phases of the Big Bend wildlife to accomplish a timely restoration." [9]

Given this scenario, the NPS technician viewed the Sierra del Carmen as "structurally and biologically, a region essentially identical to that of the Texas Big Bend and the Chisos Mountains." He conceded that "the Del Carmen Mountains and the surrounding plains for a number of years have been subjected to the influence of man." Yet he considered this "to such a lesser degree, that excepting certain localities, words [such] as overgrazing and depletion are not needed in descriptive phrases." He noted that "certain large areas in the mountains and on the plains have been free of livestock for twenty years and longer, while more extensive tracts have seen little detrimental effect from the few live stock that they have held." This condition had occurred with "little enforcing of game laws by officials in northern Coahuila." One reason was because "upon those large ranches that hold the bits of concentrated population, the ranch owner takes great pride in the game upon his property, and under such conditions of abundance as exist, comparatively little hunting is encouraged." Marsh found this "reflected into the unrestricted areas free from molestation," where "the wildlife responds positively." Journeying out from Muzquiz, "the most impressive feature is the apparent abundance of wildlife and the congeniality it holds for its progeny." Marsh then concluded that "for a true understanding of an original, unmolested environment, and for a less expensive, more satisfactory program," Mexican and American park planners should select portions of the Sierra del Carmen to be "studied extensively, the results of which will be applicable immediately to the corresponding areas in the Texas Big Bend." [10]

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CHAPTER 13:
A Park at Last: Land Acquisition, Facilities Development, And Border Issues in Big Bend, 1940-1944

For promoters of Texas's first unit of the National Park Service, the dream of the 1930s came true when the state legislature agreed in 1941 to purchase the land identified for Big Bend National Park. A concentrated twelve-month campaign of survey and acquisition included reestablishment of the abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps facility in the Chisos Basin, this time to construct buildings for visitor services and administrative use. Park officials also continued their efforts to link Big Bend with Mexico, even though the press of the Second World War limited planning and implementation of the hopes of FDR and Lazaro Cardenas for a realization of the "Good Neighbor" policy. Finally, the NPS selected a staff in anticipation of the first visitors to southern Brewster County, with Ross Maxwell designated as the inaugural superintendent of the Lone Star State's "crown jewel" on the Rio Grande.

Changes in the political landscape of Austin in the winter of 1941 inspired Big Bend advocates. On January 23, Fort Stockton senator H.L. Winfield introduced Senate Bill 128, a measure to allocate $1.5 million from the state general fund to purchase land for the park. Soon thereafter, Eagle Pass state representative Calvin C. Huffman joined sixteen colleagues to introduce House Bill 63 for the same purpose. Local promoters then invited members of the state senate's appropriations committee to tour the future park site, with Frank D. Quinn, executive secretary of the Texas state parks board, Everett Townsend, and NPS representatives John C. Diggs and Ross Maxwell as guides. Then on March 5, 1941, regional director Minor Tillotson appeared before the appropriations panel to champion SB 128. Two months later, the Big Bend Park Association petitioned Amon Carter to form an eleven-member executive committee to promote the bill. Carter's decision not to release monies from the association's account for publicity led the Alpine chamber of commerce to undertake a frantic campaign to collect funds for this purpose, leading James Casner of Alpine to recall years later that this saved Big Bend. [1]

By June of that year, Winfield and Huffman had shepherded the Big Bend land-acquisition bill through the halls of the Austin legislature, achieving on June 17 the victory so long sought by west Texas park promoters. Two weeks later, Governor W. Lee O'Daniel signed into law the General Departmental Bill that included Big Bend's $1.5 million. Winfield recalled how delicate the negotiations and voting had been, and how the governor still had doubts about the wisdom of such an appropriation. The Fort Stockton lawmaker went to O'Daniel's office after passage of the measure to obtain his signature. James Anderson would write in 1965 that Winfield "told O'Daniel that he could not let him down, and tears streamed from Winfield's eyes as he pleaded for the park." Speaking with James Casner two decades after the creation of Big Bend, Anderson would note that "Casner believed that 'without Winfield, we would have never had a park,' because if O'Daniel had vetoed the bill, it would have died." [2]

No sooner had the governor approved of the bill than did opponents of excessive public spending initiate action to stop the land-acquisition process. State representative A.H. King of Throckmorton filed an injunction against the state comptroller, George H. Shepperd, prohibiting him from releasing any funds for Big Bend. This maneuver endangered the success of the campaign, in that the bill had given the state parks board only twelve months to complete all transactions. While NPS and state officials engaged in preliminary studies of land titles and conducted evaluation surveys, the Texas court system held the project in check until the state supreme court on February 4, 1942, denied King's appeal. Thus the appraisal team of Frank D. Quinn, Everett Townsend (associate administrator), Eugene "Shorty" Thompson (chief appraiser), A.T. Barrett (junior assistant appraiser), Robert L. Cartledge (auditor), and Frederick Isley (assistant attorney general), among others, could move forward with the massive task of securing the consent of over 5,000 landowners, the vast majority of whom lived out of state and owned less than ten acres each. [3]

With Thompson handling the negotiations, and Townsend serving as the liaison with local politicians, the Big Bend Land Department devoted the months of September through November to a complete survey of the southern portion of Brewster County. They agreed that 99 percent of the future park should be classified as grazing land, calculating payment on such features as the extent of grazing, proximity to water, lease agreements, and the value of improvements on the land. Office staff in Alpine prepared long lists of landowners, with their acreage, value, and taxation noted for use by Thompson and his surveyors. The staff also detailed the public school lands, with their mineral rights. They determined that some 2,353 individuals would be approached for sale of 1,154 sections of land (a total of 777,718.18 acres). With administrative costs included, Thompson and his colleagues believed that they could fulfill the legislature's mandate by August 1942 with expenditure of $1,486,315.24. [4]

As the surveyors fanned out across Brewster County, NPS officials reviewed the documentation needed to insure federal control of the land. On October 8, 1941, acting Interior secretary E.K. Burlew approved a clause in the draft agreement with the state of Texas stating that the federal government would give any purchased land back to the Lone Star state if Big Bend should ever cease operations. Soon thereafter, the Big Bend Land Department announced that it had inventoried nearly 5,000 parcels, with closure on the survey process targeted for November. In early December, Eugene Thompson and his staff outlined the procedure for payment. One dollar per acre would be offered for land considered "very poor," which James Anderson in 1965 called "the semi-rolling, eroded area with little feed and top soil." Adding to the modest value of this land, said Anderson, were the presence of "grave and greasewood, some areas of water retention, hills, and fair grazing." Next in value were lands considered "poor," and for which the state would pay $1.50 per acre. These Anderson defined as "accessible to distant water," and which had "some hillside grazing." Acreage worth $2.00 apiece the land department described as "areas which had fair grazing, access to a spring or tank, rolling topography, and fair top soil and more moisture." The best land that would fetch in excess of two dollars per acre included the Chisos Mountains, "where there was good year-round grazing." [5]

When the state parks board and Big Bend land department met on December 8 with officials of the NPS, the outline of purchasing had become clear. The largest landowner by far was the Texas and Pacific Railway, which held 41,500 acres (the equivalent of nearly 65 square miles). Three parcels ranged between 20,000 and 30,000 acres, with Homer Wilson's ranch in the Chisos Mountains at 28,804 acres, and Wayne R. Cartledge's 20,650 acres near Castolon among them. Twelve additional ranches had between 10,000 and 20,000 acres, while the remaining owners had modest to miniscule holdings in the future park area. Land department officials then told the park service and state parks board that the King case hampered their ability to make offers on these parcels, and that reluctant owners might require the application of condemnation procedures (something that the federal government had never

done before in Brewster County). Finally, the surveyors were surprised to learn that, in the words of James Anderson, "much curative title work would be necessary because of the 'almost total' absence of abstracts from most of the owners." The state and federal officials thus approved the use of title insurance to expedite the search process, and also agreed to grant grazing permits of up to three years' duration to existing ranchers in exchange for their promises of sale. [6]

Armed with these gestures of support, Eugene Thompson and his staff drew boundary lines that conformed to the parcels defined in their surveys. With the exception of the Rio Grande, the land department preferred following section lines to simplify mapping. The NPS wanted "a land of contrasts," wrote Anderson, and thus reviewed the land department's maps to accommodate that concept. Ross Maxwell, even though he spent the year 1942 working as assistant superintendent of the Southwestern National Monuments office in Arizona, received copies of these reports, and noted that Tornillo Creek would be useful for its dinosaur fossils. Maxwell and other NPS officials also championed extending the CCC work out of the Chisos basin, so that the range of experiences for visitors would highlight the landscape of the Big Bend country. Thus the news that the King suit had been settled, and that land acquisition could advance, came as the NPS had a satisfactory inventory of natural resources and acreage for the future national park. [7]

Given less than 150 days to acquire over 700,000 acres of land, the land department began by purchasing from the state of Texas its portion of school lands (221,636.10 acres) for about two dollars per acre (with mineral rights constituting about half of the cost). Thereafter the land department secured commitments from 125 individuals with the largest holdings to sell (376,398.55 acres). Thompson had to initiate 57 condemnation proceedings against nearly 3,000 owners, with legal fees reducing the monies available to pay for the land. As the August 31, 1942, deadline approached, Thompson realized that his office had expended the entire $1.5 million state appropriation, leaving no monies for administrative tasks or purchase of the outstanding parcels. Amon Carter and the Texas Big Bend Park Association agreed to provide nearly $8,400 in donated funds, while local chapters of the organization advanced that total to $15,169.25. Thus the land department could operate until September 30, with some twenty parcels of land (13,316 acres) not acquired within the future park boundaries. With their valuation set at $64,000, the land office recommended that the association raise more private funds. [8]

The early success of the Big Bend land-acquisition program pleased park advocates from Alpine to Austin, and from Santa Fe to Washington. By the end of 1942, acting Interior secretary Abe Fortas approved of the boundaries that would comprise Big Bend National Park, while NPS director Newton Drury called the campaign "'a really great accomplishment.'" The efficiency of the land department staff appealed to Drury, who then asked the state parks board for copies of the procedures used, in the words of James Anderson, "to serve as a guide for the same type of programs in the future." Texas lawmakers especially praised the land department's overhead rate of merely four percent, which they described as "'in all probability an unparalleled record in itself.'" Texas Governor Coke Stevenson claimed that the land value exceeded $3 million, while Amon Carter estimated the Chisos acreage alone to be worth $1 million. All that remained was for Governor Stevenson to present the deed to the purchased lands to NPS regional director Minor Tillotson in a ceremony on the campus of Sul Ross State College. Joining the governor and Tillotson on September 5, 1943, were members of the land department, state senator H.L. Winfield, and Sul Ross president Howard Morelock. One last-minute detail remained: the acknowledgment by state officials that the federal government would have "exclusive jurisdiction" over Big Bend National Park. Governor Stevenson would accept this condition on December 20, 1943, when he signed the "deed of cession" requested by Interior secretary Harold Ickes. [9]

Concurrent with the land-acquisition strategy of the state of Texas, NPS officials pursued development and planning strategies from 1940-1944 that would ensure a smooth transition to park status for Big Bend. In February 1940, Conrad Wirth would advise the regional director of the plans of the CCC to expand upon the work of the camp undertaken from 1934 to 1937. When officials of the US Army, CCC, and NPS returned to the Chisos Basin, they would have in place some seven miles of truck trails, six miles of horse trails, one latrine, 2,000 feet of pipelines, ten acres of landscaping, and a parking area. Harvey Cornell, now the NPS's regional landscape architect, would comment in March 1940 on the master plan for Big Bend. Cornell could report that the state highway department had included the entrance route from Marathon to the state park in its system. The architect did note, however, that there existed a "general plan requiring that a major road closely parallel the Rio Grande River for military protection." Thus the NPS would be asked to provide a western park entrance near Terlingua; a condition that might satisfy Alpine boosters seeking road construction to the southern park of Brewster County. Cornell did not recommend any routes into the park from the east, as "it appears that the one important entrance will be located at Boquillas." [10]

Cornell's report also examined interior routes in the Big Bend area, with his recommendation of a road from Persimmon Gap southward to Boquillas, "and a connection between the Basin and the possible west entrance near Terlingua." The NPS could build secondary routes to Santa Elena Canyon, "and a road leading from Boquillas to Mariscal Canyon." Less important would be "a circulatory road on the American side of the Rio Grande," as he predicted a similar route on the Mexican side of the park. Cornell advocated that the lodge and visitor services center be placed in the Chisos basin, as "the series of Juniper flats above the originally proposed lodge site afford an excellent area for the construction of cabins." In addition, said the architect, "the view from these flats through the Window is most dramatic." Cornell disliked, however, NPS suggestions to place campgrounds in the basin. He preferred Pine Canyon, "referred to locally as Wade Canyon," where Ross Maxwell had identified a supply of water. Pine Canyon could be reached from the Boquillas road, but Cornell believed that "a much shorter alignment is possible as a direct connection between Pine Canyon and the main Park road just north of the Basin." [11]

In the matter of administrative facilities, Cornell anticipated "a large number of buildings, including residences for Park employees." He cautioned his superiors that "the various sites previously under consideration appear to be exposed to views from the main park road." Thus he recommended "a site north of the Basin and on the east side of the main park road," as this met "space requirements and was quite thoroughly screened from the main park road." He also opposed any facilities in the area of the South Rim, but did conceive of "a minor development affording overnight facilities adjacent to the South Rim," with access gained by a tramway from the Laguna area. Cornell further advised the NPS to plan for a longhorn cattle ranch, as "a large number of park visitors will be interested in the usual ranch activities common to West Texas." He believed that "if a Ranch is established in this area we doubt if local private interests would criticize the competitive nature of the development as the nearest 'Dude' Ranch would be many miles distant." He concluded his assessment of the planning of Big Bend by observing that "very little study was made of the possible park development in the adjoining area in Mexico." He surmised that "the most interesting portion of the proposed park is in the vicinity of the Sierra del Carmen and the Fronteriza Mountains ranges," and thus spent no time on the Chihuahua side of the Rio Grande. [12]

As the CCC camp undertook the task of preparing Big Bend for its inclusion in the NPS system, the park service in March 1941 sent a team of inspectors to review their work. John H. Veale, assistant regional engineer, accompanied Ross Maxwell and other staff members on a survey of the water-supply and sewage-disposal facilities in the Chisos Basin. They viewed the cabins under construction, and noted the work in adobe brick-making. Maxwell

spoke at some length in a report to the regional director about the process of adobe construction. The NPS's regional geologist commented that CCC crew members "are using a weathered calcareous shale which is obtained from near Terlingua at the same site from where most of the adobes in the buildings at Terlingua were made." Maxwell conceded that "this clay is mixed with sand and the results appear excellent as compared with most adobes." Yet the geologist worried that the crew was "attempting what is almost 'the impossible,' an adobe brick with perfectly square corners, straight surfaces, and sharp edges that can be laid in a wall as perfectly as high-grade brick." John H. Diehl, the NPS regional engineer, offered a more optimistic report about the work on the sewage disposal unit. He told the regional director that "there is practically no possibility of contamination to the creek or Oak Springs, which are at elevations considerably lower than the development area." Diehl also believed that "the site . . . is far enough distant from the development area to avoid any odor nuisance, and can easily be screened for landscape purposes if this should become necessary." [13]

The comments of the review team, especially Maxwell's criticism of the adobe-brick process, prompted the Santa Fe regional office to consult with associate architect Lyle Bennett. J.E. Kell, acting regional chief of planning, reported to the director that Bennett considered Maxwell's assumptions "'entirely incorrect as it was intended that the adobes should have "sound" faces rather than "perfect" faces.'" Kell reminded his superior that "'the first adobes made showed disintegration of one-half inch or more of the faces and that many had lost the original faces entirely from disintegration and internal stresses.'" Bennett wanted adobe that had "'some chipping of edges and bulging, roughness, or irregularity of faces'" because "'that is the natural character of adobe brick.'" The associate architect noted to Kell that the NPS's southwestern region already had "'received criticism from various sources because of the "perfection" of masonry work and the amount of waste rock.'" Bennett contended that "'too much cutting of stones is going on in an attempt to arrive at some preconceived perfection of line and surface.'" Even though the NPS had instructed its CCC crews at Big Bend and elsewhere that "'a stone veneer was not sound construction because it produced a weak wall,'" and that "'this pattern is neither economical for natural stone nor does it bring out the most desirable natural qualities of real stone,'" Bennett had to admit that "'it is still evident that the square and chisel are being overworked in an effort to force a naturally irregular material into an unnatural regularity, thereby losing some of the best qualities of the material.'" Bennett wanted Kell to know that "'disregarding the fact that we are trying to reproduce . . . a Mexican hut of very honest construction," the NPS should remember that "'the people who will rent these cabins will be more pleased with a structure which has character, informality and softness in line and texture, and a general atmosphere inducing relaxation, in contrast to hard, precise, sharp, and perfect lines and contours of a more sophisticated structure.'" [16]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 14:
Facilities and Operations At Texas's First National Park, 1944-1960

At a distance of one-half century and more, the activities in the Big Bend country prior to the park's opening in the summer of 1944 remain quite remarkable. From land acquisition to facility construction to resource management, the National Park Service had expended a great deal of time and money in preparing for the day when Big Bend National Park became the twenty-eighth unit of the NPS system. For the next five decades, park service personnel and planners would work to strengthen the management and operations of Big Bend, facing the same obstacles of distance, isolation, aridity, border relations and community concerns about the federal presence in their midst. From Ross Maxwell in 1944, to Jose Cisneros 50 years later, park superintendents sought solutions to the tasks of building construction, roads and trails development, visitor services and concessions, resource management, and law enforcement. Frank Deckert, the park superintendent at the start of the twenty-first century, would inherit those five decades of history as he addressed the need for stable funding of park operations and upkeep of Big Bend's physical plant.

When Superintendent Ross Maxwell reflected in July of 1945 on the first year of Big Bend's existence, he could be forgiven for comparing his park to a frontier experience. Among his first tasks, and that of his small staff of five, included "the conversion of the old CCC camp buildings into a temporary park office, warehouse, truck and tool sheds, shops, and residences for the park employees." Maxwell's first ranger, Oren Senter, would devote his patrols to "becoming acquainted with the local ranchmen who were still living in the park, meeting local representatives of federal and state agencies, local civic clubs and other citizens." Senter, Maxwell, and the rest of the Big Bend staff sought out these groups to explain "to them the policies and objectives of the National Park Service so that they could help with our protection program." [1]

Aiding the NPS in its first year of operations was the Texas State Highway Department, which maintained some 75 miles of roads through Big Bend. A problem for Maxwell and the NPS staff was the presence of some 40,000 head of livestock allowed to graze on park land for the duration of the war to meet beef-production contracts. By the end of the 1945 fiscal year, Maxwell could report a 90 percent decline in stockraising within the park. As for concessions, "miscellaneous service permits were issued to local residents to provide lodging, meals, groceries and gasoline and oil to park visitors." The National Park Concessions, Inc., sent its president, H.S. Sanborn, to Big Bend in April 1945 to plan for postwar visitor services. The park also benefited from the NPS's decision to host the regional superintendents' conference at Big Bend, as well as a forest-fire training meeting. This attention encouraged Superintendent Maxwell, as it coincided with visits from regional NPS officials that first year. [2]

Fifty years later, when the park's budget stood at $4.5 million, the first expenditures seemed meager. Yet Maxwell noted that the appropriation of $15,000 (as well as $2,170 for staff

overtime) allowed him to fund the positions of chief ranger, clerk, foreman, and laborer. The superintendent also devoted some $2,136 to fire prevention, which he described as "fire tools, horses, riding saddles, pack saddles, horse feed and other fire protection equipment and supplies." Maxwell dedicated some $1,560 to an "erosion control project in the temporary park headquarters" in the Chisos Basin. Auditors for the park service came to Big Bend after the first six months of operations, and declared the park to be in good fiscal condition. [3]

Speaking of the challenges that Big Bend faced in attracting visitors in its first year, Maxwell informed his superiors that "like all the Southwest the Big Bend is a dry country." Overgrazing contributed to the barren slopes, but the prohibition of stock raising, especially at higher elevations in the park, promised the return of vegetation. Big Bend also benefited from positive coverage in the regional news media, most notably the December 2, 1944 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post.* Maxwell could report that "a photographer and research writer from Life Magazine spent six weeks in the area gathering material for an article." In addition, NPS collaborator Freeman Tilden "prepared articles on this and other parks during an extended stay here." The superintendent could not "claim fame for large travel figures during the 1945 fiscal year." Yet "not many days have passed that someone has not visited the area." The bulk of the early visitors hailed from the Lone Star state, and "many of them came just to see what 'their national park' is like." Maxwell reported that "some war defense plant workers have found this a quiet place to take a few days' rest." In like manner, "fishermen from the Texas plains like to try their luck at cat fishing in the Rio Grande." He concluded that "in all a few hundred people each month take a chance that their tires and gasoline will 'hold out' and come to the Big Bend." [4]

Two years after the opening of Big Bend, Maxwell could detect patterns of operations that would persist for decades to come. "The appropriation is small," he wrote to his NPS superiors in July 1946, "and we are handicapped by a small staff and inadequate equipment." Yet the former NPS regional geologist could claim that "there has been some progress in maintenance, protection, and conservation." He praised the "change-over from private ownership and usage to National Park Service administration" as "smooth." Maxwell also reported that "Service policy on conservation was reasonably well accepted by the local people." Neighboring ranchers "cooperated by helping gather their stray stock and drive it from the park or build drift fences on or near the boundary." Twenty-four months of stock-free resource management meant that "flowers that were sparce [sic] in former years are now common." Similar conditions prevailed for the fauna of Big Bend, leading its superintendent to predict that "in a few decades the area will approach the biologic conditions that existed a few centuries ago." [5]

Better environmental conditions joined with the close of World War II to expand visitation totals dramatically. "With V-J Day and the lifting of gasoline rationing," wrote Maxwell, "there was a marked increase." The superintendent cautioned that "a total of 6,000 visitors is not a large figure, but for a new area having very limited public facilities, poor roads, and when the most of our visitors have old cars and poor tires it indicates that travel will be heavy." The majority of visitors were "vacationists," and Maxwell found it "gratifying to know that many have stayed several days, in some cases longer than they had planned, because they enjoy being in the pioneering atmosphere away from the crowds of the cities, factories and the War." At first, three vendors offered services to the traveling public "with the understanding that they would vacate as soon as National Park Concessions, Inc., could furnish the necessary public services." NPCI began a construction campaign in the spring of 1946 that would bring some 20 "prefabricated cabins" to the Chisos Basin, along with meal service, a store, and service station. The Kentucky-based concessionaire also agreed to provide visitor facilities "at a river site for this coming winter." [6]

In matters of road maintenance, Maxwell reported that by August of 1945 the state of Texas

had discontinued its operations within the park boundaries. The NPS regional office in Santa Fe thus provided Big Bend with "one motor patrol grader" and an operator. Maxwell noted that "we have been able to keep the roads open, but part of the time they have been in poor condition because of insufficient equipment and lack of personnel." To aid in the expansion of the park's road system, the U.S. Public Roads Administration undertook a survey in January of 1946, starting with the entrance at Persimmon Gap and surveying nearly 29 miles. [7]

Road networks would assist the NPS and NPCI in planning for "concession development, campgrounds, headquarters development, [a] road maintenance program, and trail system." Maxwell and officials of both agencies agreed that "temporary guest facilities would be placed in the Basin." They also called for visitor services at the Daniel's Ranch site on the Rio Grande, and selected a site near Panther Peak for administrative headquarters. To achieve these goals, Maxwell and NPS officials also filed applications for water rights from the Rio Grande. Staffing of the park had increased in fiscal year 1946 to eight, with a budget of $25,368 (an advance of nearly 60 percent). Publicity also grew in the second year of operations, with the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* highlighting both the park's attractions and the obstacle of in-holdings to park management. "The majority of Alpine citizens," concluded Maxwell, "will support any activity to acquire the remainder of the private lands." [8]

By the spring of 1947, Superintendent Maxwell could include discussion in his annual reports of the return of scientific researchers to the park. "Professional men are finding this area interesting," wrote Maxwell, among them "pressmen, photographers, explorers, short story writers, lecturers, and representatives of all the natural sciences." Himself a student of the park's geology, Maxwell recorded visits by scholars from such campuses as the University of California, Berkeley, Harvard University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Texas. The Geological Society of America continued its substantial geological research at Big Bend, and Peter Koch, formerly a photographer for the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and the husband of Big Bend's administrative assistant, Etta Koch, had traveled throughout the United States showing his slides "that have brought in thousands of requests for technical and non-technical information on the park." [9]

The park concessionaire also had much to report for fiscal year 1946, with its operations in the Chisos Basin including four housekeeping cottages and a second small building used as a grocery store, restaurant, and kitchen. NPCI also opened its 21 "prefabricated huts," of which seven were used as employee housing and the remainder for overnight guests. A three-hut unit served as a modern bathhouse, comfort station, and linen storage room. Maxwell concluded of the park's concessionaire that, "in spite of a shortage of funds, materials, and manpower, National Park Concessions has done a good job." The superintendent's evidence was that "the guests like the service and the operation appears to have a bright future." [10]

Less optimistic was Maxwell's notice that "the well that supplies water to the concession operation failed materially." The superintendent was surprised that "the well has failed to furnish adequate water even for the winter and spring operation," requiring the park staff to haul water to the Chisos Basin and the NPS to fund emergency drilling of a new well. NPCI also surveyed the Basin for additional sources of spring water, and began the reconditioning of a former water system at the old Graham Ranch, to be used as a temporary source for the concessions' Rio Grande development. At the same time, the Public Roads Administration (PRA) continued their survey of a road from the planned headquarters site at Panther Peak to the Daniels Ranch. This augmented the earlier study of a route from Persimmon Gap to the Chisos Basin, with proposed bridge sites identified as well. [11]

In matters of equipment acquisition, Maxwell noted that, "prior to this year all our equipment

and most of our hand tools had been acquired on a transfer basis from other National Park Service areas." Then "our big break came when we were able to obtain about $84,000 worth of surplus property from the Army and War Assets Administration." This latter agency collected supplies and materiel from military installations decommissioned at the end of the Second World War, offering them to civilian federal agencies. In this fashion, Maxwell managed to acquire road construction and maintenance equipment, trucks, pickups, power plants, powered shop tools, numerous varieties of hand tools, and considerable quantities of building materials and supplies. This good fortune meant that "now our roads are good and can be driven safely except during and immediately following a rain." [12]

The issue of private in-holdings continued to burden park planning, as "their existence will certainly retard the road building program for some of these tracts are on the right-of-way and others are close by." Maxwell also noted that "there is grazing on some of the private unfenced tracts," making it "impossible to keep those herds off the adjacent park land." More troublesome was the fact that "the price of candelilla wax has been exceptionally high," and "private landowners are anxious to get all they can." Maxwell reported that "their boundaries are not only unfenced, but unsurveyed." The superintendent reminded his superiors that "considerable time has been expended toward convincing the State legislators that sufficient funds should be appropriated in order to purchase these small tracts and thus eliminate the private in-holding problems forever." Maxwell believed that "the legislators appear to be in sympathy with the problem but little toward actual legislation has been accomplished." [13]

By 1947, Maxwell's main difficulty was funding. "We started and operated during the war," he reported, "with small appropriations and it has taken every available dollar to purchase the essential materials and supplies." In addition, "all our structures, including residences, office, shop, warehouse, etcetera, were converted from old CCC barracks or from former ranch buildings." The CCC facilities had been built more than ten years earlier, and "these conditions have made living difficult and especially so since the headquarters is eighty miles from the nearest town." Maxwell warned that "these hardships have caused dissatisfaction among some of the employees and their comments and actions have lowered morale and decreased the efficiency of most of the staff." [14]

Beyond this, said the superintendent, "every branch of this administrative unit is under-staffed, and every branch head, together with his various assistants, has more duties than he can possibly properly perform." Maxwell conceded that "all we can do is to try to select the more important problem and delay acting on those that appear to be minor in nature." Echoing a lament known to later generations of NPS employees as "deferred maintenance," Maxwell reported that "some things have gotten away from us." One example that he cited was that "it is impossible for one clerk and one clerk-stenographer to handle all fiscal and personnel matters, attend to the purchasing, warehouse, correspondence, and file." Big Bend's chief ranger, George Sholley, and his three district rangers "cannot keep control over everything in a 700,000 acre tract, especially so when there are not any checking stations and the boundary is not fenced." The park had only one mechanic, one maintenance man and one laborer "to convert the old buildings to residences, care for the maintenance on all automotive and heavy equipment, all buildings and utilities, plants, sanitation, etcetera." [15]

Despite this grim scenario, Maxwell concluded on a more optimistic note. Big Bend joined other NPS sites in greeting record numbers of postwar visitors, "the crowds have been cared for, and certain accomplishments have been realized." Admitting that he had filed a "more gloomy outlook," the superintendent admitted that "perhaps those accomplishments should be summarized to show that our Service has advanced in spite of its many handicaps." [16]

As the nation distanced itself from the strain of war, the staff of Big Bend National Park could devote more attention to expansion of its facilities in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Park workers reconnected the irrigation system at the Daniels ranch, allowing the planting of some 1,000 seedlings of cottonwood, willow, and tamarisk. Water was found in sufficient quantity at the proposed headquarters site of Panther Junction. Road maintenance advanced with the addition of war-surplus equipment, and the federal government allocated to the park $35,000 to purchase private land near Persimmon Gap for a new road alignment with the entrance highway. The Texas state legislature also contributed $12,000 for the acquisition of private in-holdings at Big Bend, but by the summer of 1948 state park officials had yet to expend the funds. [17]

One year later, Superintendent Maxwell could report to his superiors that land acquisition had accelerated, with the private Big Bend Park Association donating $3,000 to augment the state's $12,000 appropriation. This permitted the state parks board to purchase nine sections of private land and negotiate for two additional sections, for a total of 7,040 acres. All that remained of the original 706,000-acre survey was 9,000 acres of private land. Visitation continued to increase, and NPCI had to divide its cabins with partitions to accommodate more overnight guests. Maxwell noted that the cost of maintaining the war surplus vehicles strained the park's road budget, while oiling projects on the 100-plus miles of gravel and dirt roads were limited in 1949 to the seven-mile stretch of the Green Gulch-Basin route. The superintendent complained that "the Armed Forces obtained the economic value from their equipment at an early date, and by the time it was passed on to us the most of it could not be operated without recurring repairs." Adding to Big Bend's woes was the specialized nature of war materiel. "When one of these devices fails," wrote Maxwell, "it takes months to get a replacement part." [18]

Maxwell's complaints about budgetary constraints grew as visitation to Big Bend surged with the larger pattern of American travel in the years after the war. Where the superintendent had counted only 2,500 visitors in 1944, five years later he registered 60,000 patrons at Texas's first national park (and claimed to be on a pace in 1950 to break that record). More visitors meant expansion of the concession operations. B.F. Beckett and NPCI agreed to establish a horseback riding service in the Chisos Basin. In addition, Maxwell entered into a five-year agreement with Peter Koch to provide photographic services in the Basin. The road network grew in 1950 by 7.7 miles, as the T.C. Gage Construction Company of San Antonio paved the loop road in the Panther Junction area. Panther Junction also had four residential dwellings constructed, along with a 150,000-gallon water reservoir, an underground power system and liquefied-petroleum gas system. Maxwell negotiated with neighboring ranch owners to collect wire and fence posts located within the park and place them along the northwestern boundary. The superintendent reported that this "has greatly reduced our trespass grazing problem and also improved our public relations with the adjoining ranchmen." The Cartledge property near Castolon, on the other hand, received a permit to continue grazing until the NPS acquired the land. All of this activity led Maxwell and local park sponsors to initiate plans in the spring of 1950 to host a dedication of Big Bend that October. Among its highlights was a personal invitation extended to President Harry S. Truman to attend, along with the President of Mexico. [19]

The year 1950 brought changes to Big Bend, as it did much of America once President Truman announced the nation's entry into the Asian conflict with North Korea. This precluded the president's travel to Big Bend, and the subsequent delay of the dedication ceremony for another five years. Big Bend was asked by the Department of Defense to provide "ample space for the military personnel to set up camp for isolated recreational purposes." Superintendent Maxwell agreed to extend special-use permits to soldiers, but warned his superiors that the park had "a very limited number of accommodations in the way of cabins and meals for anyone, either military personnel or the traveling public." He argued instead that "any proposed trip of that kind should be planned well in advance so that accommodations can be obtained." Park staff could offer to soldiers "campfire programs,

lectures, and advice about the area regarding individual hikes, horseback trips, photography, or various types of activities." Maxwell also agreed to "cooperate with the defense officials at any time regarding activities that might appear to be detrimental to the safety of our nation." [20]

This latter point about criticism of NPS sites concerned Maxwell, who devoted a long section in his 1951 report to "public relations." He noted that "Big Bend and San Jose Mission [in San Antonio] are the only National Park Service areas in Texas." While the state had purchased the acreage for Big Bend, "the ideals, rules, regulations, conservation practices, protection of wildlife, including predators, elimination of grazing, and other policy matters were foreign to the majority of the citizenry." Since Big Bend faced criticism, said Maxwell, "the improvement of our public relations became paramount." First to challenge the NPS were local ranchers, irritated at the park service's rules on predator control and grazing leases. Maxwell made it a point to attend stockmen's association meetings, where he "seldom argued, but let them argue and when they were through, explained our conservation and protection program, with an invitation to visit the park to see the effectiveness of our protection policy." The superintendent had more success with officials of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. "Through our invitations and encouragement," said Maxwell, "they have made day trips with ranchmen to the area." The superintendent also accepted an offer from a San Angelo sportsmen' club, located in the heart of what Maxwell called the "sheep and goat industry." Finally, Maxwell cultivated friendships with reporters in west Texas. "To those that you can trust," he told his NPS superiors, "it is well to send them little news releases on such subjects as rainfall, range recovery, condition and abundance of game, road condition, and fishing." [21]

For the year 1952, Maxwell would report much the same for his park. Road and trails construction gained in mileage, while the Boquillas and Persimmon Gap ranger stations were modernized. Nearer to the Panther Junction area, said Maxwell "the old K-Bar Ranchhouse was completely renovated, modernized, wired for electric current; new floors, doors and windows added" so that an NPS employee could inhabit the dwelling. Houses at Government Spring and Grapevine also received attention that year. The conflict in Korea, however, brought a new threat to park resources: the heavy ore hauling operations initiated during the fiscal year by M.G. Michaelis, Jr., and O.D. Burleson. Maxwell informed his superiors that "extensive deposits of high-grade fluorspar exist in Mexico directly south of the Park at distances from a few miles to 50 or 60 miles from the International Boundary." Since "acid grade fluorspar is a critical defense mineral," said Maxwell, the only feasible outlet into the United States from these mines ran through the park. The superintendent reported that the ore trucks carried out some 200 tons daily of fluorspar, and "expected that the daily traffic may reach 500 tons." For Big Bend this meant that "damage to our light pavement and inconvenience to visitor travel are inevitable." The only saving grace, Maxwell concluded, was that "damage to the desert scenery of the area is so restricted as to be negligible." [22]

Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 15:
Maintaining Big Bend: Operations, Planning, and Personnel Issues, 1960-2001

Observing the daily operations of Big Bend National Park reveals much about the hopes and dreams of its early advocates and employees. Big Bend also provides an excellent venue for understanding the complex relationship of park service policies, public moods, and political pressures that have affected all NPS units over the past four decades. Once the infrastructure funded by Mission 66 was in place, it fell to the management and staff of Big Bend to uphold the mandate of preserving the park's resources for the enjoyment of the taxpaying public. Among the more intriguing features of that process was the shift in public attitude from development in national parks to preservation of wilderness; a circumstance that Big Bend's neighbors found problematic (despite the park's creation in harsh environmental and economic times). As the nation and the NPS struggled at the turn of the twenty-first century to define a new generation of park policies, the story of Big Bend's management (with its isolation, distance, aridity, size, and location along the border between the United States and Mexico) offered insights that had parallels throughout the NPS system.

Whether coincidental or not, each decade of Big Bend's existence after the dedication of the Mission 66 structures had its own character and challenges for park staff. The 1960s, a time of great turmoil nationally amidst the movements for civil rights, antiwar protest, and environmental activism, seemed to bypass Big Bend, with the result a stagnant operation awaiting the need for a new master plan. The next decade, however, was not so fortunate. During the 1970s the process of rethinking Big Bend's management style included the new ideas of ecological sensitivity and reduction of human use of the resources. At the same time, the failure of the superintendent and his top staff to solve the difficulties of managing Big Bend required drastic measures of NPS supervisory personnel. When the park service decided in the early 1980s to change the direction of Big Bend, the interaction of the park and its neighbor to the south became intertwined with management objectives. Then in the 1990s, the need for increased funding to upgrade the half-century-old physical plant brought Big Bend's problems once again before the park service.

When Stanley Joseph took command of Big Bend in 1960, he realized quickly that Mission 66 had not resolved all of the issues that had plagued the park since Ross Maxwell's day. Doug Evans, chief naturalist at Big Bend from 1961-1966, analyzed in 1965 the visitation patterns of the park in anticipation of changes in the interpretative program. As late as 1959, wrote Evans, Big Bend hosted some 70,370 patrons; a number that was hard to verify, since Big Bend did not charge admission, and there were no automobile counters installed at the entrance stations until the late 1960s. By 1963, Big Bend's visitation estimates had grown some 62 percent (to 114,232). Evans speculated that "if this rate of increase continues, we could expect 185,000 visitors in 1968 and 300,000 by 1973." The chief naturalist viewed these figures as "conservative," assuming that "visitation will certainly be affected by the completion of the new interpretative roads, new lodge, campgrounds, trailer facilities, and museum facilities" that he studied. He also believed that once "the new road, now being

constructed northward from Muzquiz, Coahuila toward Big Bend is completed, the number of park visitors will certainly soar above all predictions made thus far." [1]

Reflective of the mood of park officials prior to the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Evans offered solutions for this visitation that accepted current visitor habits and tastes. "At the present time," wrote the chief naturalist, "all visitors to Big Bend come in private cars." These patrons "drive either to Santa Elena Canyon," he noted, "or Boquillas Canyon, and to the Chisos Basin." The most striking feature of visitor use, said Evans, was that "during the summer months, up to 80 percent of park visitors go to the Basin." He suggested to NPS officials that "with improved facilities there we can expect that nearly all visitors will go to the Basin in the future." Thus Big Bend needed to improve roadside interpretation, which Evans hoped would include self-guided tours of the main roads and trails. The park also could expand its programs of guided walks, campfire talks, and museum exhibits. Evans also encouraged more use of the Rio Grande Village, which he envisioned with "overnight accommodations, [a] dining room, and saddle horses" to augment the existing campground, picnic area, and service station. "Interpretation in the Rio Grande Village," wrote the chief naturalist, "will emphasize the biology of the river floodplain and the river." Evans also called upon NPS officials to construct at the river's edge "a campfire circle with a seating capacity of about 250." He predicted that ""when proposed facilities are complete, and naturalists become available, campfire programs will be conducted seven nights a week through at least nine months of the year." Should the NPS add "trailer facilities and air-conditioned accommodations," the park could anticipate a twelve-month schedule of activities in the vicinity of the old Daniels ranch and the mining community of Boquillas. [2]

At the west end of the park, said Evans, the NPS should consider expansion of visitor services at the old Army compound of Castolon and the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon. "Plans for the future," he wrote in 1965, "include sleeping and dining facilities, saddle horses, campgrounds, trailer facilities, and picnic areas." NPS staff could explain to visitors "United States Cavalry operations during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920, and of an isolated Mexican-border trading and ranching center." Evans suggested that the park service use the Alvino residence to "illustrate the way of life on an Mexican border farm." The interpretation could include "a small demonstration garden of vegetables and melons" growing next to the house. Then in a statement filled with irony, the chief naturalists noted that "the candelilla wax processing system will be restored nearby." Museum exhibits to be housed in the old Castolon store also would have on display candelilla wax, which Evans characterized as "an important means of livelihood." [3]

The chief naturalist's plans for interpreting Big Bend's story represented the peak of the "development" phase at the park. Within two years, NPS resource planner David J. Jones would come to Big Bend to gauge the future of resource planning, and comment on the challenge that facilities expansion posed. "The establishment of Big Bend as a National Park has not entirely solved the problem of consumptive use," claimed Jones in a 1967 natural sciences research plan. "Recreation has replaced the previous forms of land use," he suggested, "but it, too, places demands upon natural resources." In Jones's mind, "three developmental determinants established long ago are critical factors." These he labeled as "encouraging a highway in Mexico to connect with the park ending at Boquillas; concentrating visitor-use facilities in the Chisos Basin; [and] developing visitor-use facilities at Rio Grande Village and Castolon to avoid over-concentration of visitors in the Chisos Basin during the heavy travel season." The NPS faced "a crucial problem . . . [in] making the decisions now that will control how we accommodate the one million visitors anticipated annually some 60 to 100 years from now." This would include "providing them [with] an enjoyable and quality park experience with minimum impact upon the biological and esthetic well-being of the land." [4]

While not mentioning the work of Mission 66 in the park, Jones nonetheless asked: "Is it wiser to concentrate in one large developed area the principal food service and overnight accommodations offered visitors by the concessioner, and government employee housing and administration facilities?" These he attributed to "the scheme envisioned in the master plan team study dated February 1965." Instead, wrote Jones, "is it better to have what amounts to four highly developed areas of the park: one in the mountains; one on the upper bajada; and two at the river, as proposed by a different study team plan dated June 1965." The NPS resource planner recognized the need to balance visitor demands and "the biological well-being of the park." Equally challenging was Jones's question: "Which [option] is more feasible to finance, is the least costly to operate, and is the best investment for the concessionaire?" NPS planners would need to determine "adequate water supply, disposal of sewage, garbage, and trash, space enough to expand accommodations as the need arises, ready and free-flowing access to and egress from the major points of interest in the park (the Chisos Mountain Basin being a prime example)?" Jones declined to "review the validity of the basic development scheme which has prevailed for the past 20 years," preferring to ask: "How productive have our efforts to achieve this really been?" He then wondered: "Is it not possible that by the time such an investment becomes economically feasible the Mexicans will have developed acceptable high standard facilities at Boquillas as part of the Border Improvement Program?" [5]

For the NPS resource planner, the challenge included the thinking of the park service itself. "If restoration to a vignette of primitive America is to be attempted at Big Bend," wrote Jones, "who determines what was there in 1880 (the date proposed by the park staff)?" Jones could not ascertain "who knows what is 'natural' when one is dealing with an area supporting some vegetation and perhaps some fauna that are either relict species [of] that date from a more favorable environment of the past or are species just becoming established?" The planner worried that "a number of competent scientists, including biologists, who have experience with paleo-reconstruction in the Southwest doubt the wisdom of such an effort." Instead, Jones concluded, "it would be more practical and useful to manage Big Bend 'to assure a minimum of man-induced interference with the natural evolutionary process.'" This involved what Jones called "documenting the changes of the past to the degree possible, determining what is taking place today, and noting trends that indicate what changes might occur here in the future." The Southwest regional planning team should revisit its assumptions made in February 1965, and "utilize both normative and humanistic decision model theory, if possible, before selecting the appropriate development scheme to be followed in the future of Big Bend–if the goal is to produce a minimum of damage and deterioration to the natural resources the park was established to perpetuate." [6]

David Jones's comments reflected the growing discontent within scientific circles about environmental degradation and land-use patterns in national parks. To claim that the park service was harming the Big Bend ecosystem like the ranchers before them said a great deal about the turmoil and confusion awaiting the staff and management of the 1970s. A decade of planning ensued, with criticism and complaints about NPS strategies arising almost immediately. Three factors came together in park planning that generated much controversy: the 1964 wilderness act, the 1968 wild and scenic rivers act, and the 1969 national environmental protection act. All three measures would influence thinking about Big Bend, and would draw attention from landowners in the area, environmental activists far away, and NPS planners from Santa Fe to Washington.

Like every other federal agency involved in natural-resource issues, the NPS had to adjust its planning process after the passage of NEPA to solicit public commentary at open meetings. In January of 1972, a group out of Temple, Texas calling itself "Americans Backing Better Park Development" called upon the park service to consider their "Alternative to the Master Plan and Wilderness Proposal for Big Bend National Park." Bob Burleson, president of the

association, echoed David Jones's cautions about the 1965 master planning strategies. The 1972 document, said Burleson, "would authorize projects that in the long run will result in over-development in the form of high-speed highways, excessive automobile and commercial traffic, an international river crossing to Mexico, and excessive water use and impact in the Chisos Mountains Basin." Burleson's association realized that "all parks cannot be left forever undeveloped, and that some segments of public pressure on the National Park Service will tend to call for increased development in the future." But the group warned that "over-development, in the long run, will be a much greater sin than under-development." [7]

The organization, which Burleson claimed had over 1,000 members in chapters throughout Texas and in Los Alamos, New Mexico, agreed with the NPS that "the Wilderness proposal is realistic and large enough to protect the most important values in the Park." Burleson called the "Chamber of Commerce-type groups" that opposed the plan "misguided." What they sought, claimed the association, "is an influx of automobile tourists, the 'pie in the sky' road link with Mexico, motels and campgrounds for the 'swelling millions' of tourists that they envision will contribute heavily to the Alpine-Marfa economy." Burleson's group believed that visitation would increase with "a really quality experience," given that "the beauty of the Big Bend Country lies in its mood of remoteness, of silence, of vast and untouched space, of its blend of desert and mountain wilderness." While criticizing the tone of the master plan as "vague," Burleson agreed with its goals "to reduce human impact in the Chisos basin, remove the horse concession to some other point in the park and to concentrate development in the future in the area of Panther Junction, Nugent Mountain and Rio Grande Village." But the "consensus" of the association was that "the proposed Master Plan will continue to allow excessive impact and development in the Chisos Basin, and that its emphasis on the proposed international park and bridge crossing into Mexico is highly dangerous to the long-term survival of the highest values of the Park." [8]

Writing some 40 years after the initial conversations with Mexico about the international park, Burleson and his group regarded the Muzquiz-Boquillas road as "the most dangerous proposition that Big Bend National Park will ever have to face, exceeding in gravity even the anticipated large increases in automobile visitation to the Park from the United States of America." The road was "fraught with such danger to the park," said Burleson, that "we were shocked by the great emphasis placed upon this proposal in the Master Plan and by the enthusiasm with which the Park Service has embraced a proposal that threatens the ultimate destruction of the most valuable features of the Park." Burleson warned that "the National Park Service was not created as an instrument of foreign policy, and is ill-suited to the role." Unaware of the four decades of negotiations over the international park, the association claimed that "anyone acquainted with the history of Mexico and its present problems of population growth vs. economic growth will at once recognize the dangers of mixing Big Bend National Park with foreign policy." Burleson argued that "the Mexican government is obliged by political expediency to remain committed to The Revolution, one of the cardinal tenets of which is that the rural landholdings should be broken up and re-distributed to the former peons." This had given rise to "the Ejido Program, under which tracts of land are worked cooperatively, almost communally, both for livestock grazing and for row-crop agriculture." The *ejidos* created near Boquillas and Santa Elena, claimed Burleson, included "a vast grassland area, and an important source of commercial timber, as well as active mines." The association president warned that "all of these are local economic interests which will have to be reckoned with by the Mexican government if it should ever actually be serious about an international park." [9]

Burleson then noted the policies of the Mexican government in the 1960s to shift its population from the central valleys to the northern border. "The lack of money, jobs and space in Mexico," wrote Burleson, "and the ease with which the border is illegally crossed and employment obtained, has caused tremendous buildups of population in Mexican cities

along the border where international crossings are maintained and cities have grown up." Given these realities, the association claimed that "Mexico has no genuine interest in withdrawing lands from economic use and creating on its soil a 'national park' of the type that we have in Big Bend." Burleson believed that "economic self-interest" tied the chambers of commerce in west Texas to Mexico's plan for a highway to Boquillas. Since "the Mexican government cannot be expected to take away the property and livelihood of the local miners, ejido-dwellers, and ranchers without gaining for the area some economic benefits," Burleson claimed that "this must come from the proposed commercial uses of the new road and river crossing." He warned that "the population of Boquillas can be expected to increase perhaps a thousand-fold in the event that there is an automobile linkup and river crossing." "Who wants a Villa Acuna across from Rio Grande Village," asked Burleson, "among the tourist traps and vice parlors?" Instead, wrote the association president, the NPS "should stick to its business of providing quality park experiences within our own national park system, and leave the economic development of northern Mexico to the Mexican government." The park service would do better to encourage development at the La Linda bridge-crossing outside park boundaries. The local economy would not suffer, and "both tourism and commercial use would be greater on such a road . . . because it would be less restricted." [10]

Turning their attention to the Chisos Basin, Burleson's group highlighted the impact studies conducted there for the NPS by Dr. Paul Whitson. He had concluded that "the upward spread of desert vegetation and the drain on limited water resources" faced any plans for expansion of visitor services. Burleson found particularly offensive the master plan's call for "new structures for the private personal gain and benefit of National Park Concessions, Inc." Whitson and others had found that "pollution problems are becoming more pressing in the Basin with the advent of new developments and increased overnight use by staff and tourists." Big Bend had but two percent of its acreage devoted to woodlands, and Burleson saw "no excuse or justification for further concentration of the major human use and impact on the smallest and most fragile part of the Park environment." The 1972 draft master plan called for a multi-story motel unit in the upper Basin, a new interpretative-contact station in the upper Basin, new employee housing and storage areas near the Chisos Remuda location, a new house for the NPCI concession manager, and a new gas station-store and ranger station in the lower Basin. Burleson wanted NPCI to build any new motel units at Panther Junction, Rio Grande Village, "or elsewhere in the developed areas outside the mountains." He also called for retention of the CCC-vintage "Dallas huts," with their "common shower houses and toilets." Should these be replaced with more modern accommodations, "the water usage by overnight guests rises in direct proportion to the availability and ease with which water can be used." Aesthetics, ironically enough, added to the appeal of the Dallas huts for Burleson and his association. "The Dallas huts, as old as they are," he wrote, "at least blend with the landscape and are not readily visible from a distance, as from the trails to the South Rim, etc." [11]

If the park were to limit expansion of visitor service in the Chisos Basin, argued the association, it also should follow the master plan's recommendation to remove the horse concession. "The horses are daily contributing to the ruin of the Chisos Mountains trail system," wrote Burleson, "and to the pollution of the Basin with fecal matter and exotic plants." The association conceded that visitors liked the horse concession, and suggested one of three options for relocation: Rio Grande Village, Castolon, or "the proposed campground are near Nugent Mountain." Burleson preferred the latter site, as it was "at an elevation high enough to make summertime riding possible." He admitted that "the horses will still do some trailside grazing and damage to the new trails." Yet Burleson believed that "the grassland slopes around Nugent Mountain are more stable than the woodlands in the Chisos, and comprise a much greater percentage of the land area of the Park than do the woodlands." Burleson called this "the top priority" for the NPS, and asked that it be accomplished within two to three years. [12]

If the association's advice were taken, said Burleson, within a generation all visitor facilities and NPS operations in the Chisos Basin would be gone. The Nugent Mountain area, which Burleson suggested could be built "west of the Boquillas Road and 1/2 mile below the K-Bar Road," would include the Chisos Remuda, a campground, amphitheatre, and ranger-interpretative station. NPCI also should be encouraged to locate a service station, grocery store, and trailer court at Nugent Mountain. "Ample water has been demonstrated in this area," wrote Burleson, "and no natural water sources such as springs are involved." By 1995, the visitor would find in the Chisos Basin a landscape not unlike that encountered by the CCC when its first work crews began the task of creating Texas's first national park. [13]

The Burleson study of Big Bend's future had elements of the larger planning process that the NPS faced throughout the decade of the 1970s. By January of 1973, the park service had decided to request wilderness protection for 523,800 acres of the park (nearly three-quarters of the park's land base). Some 245,000 visitors had come to Big Bend in 1971, but the vast majority had not ventured into areas that the park service outlined in its wilderness proposal. The area most utilized, the Chisos Mountains, should be included (a total of 141,000 acres), with twelve additional sections of the park comprising the request for wilderness designation (each needing at least 5,000 acres to qualify). At public meetings held in Alpine, a group calling itself the "National Park Development Committee, Inc., wanted no action taken on the wilderness proposal, and asked that any future designation expire within seven years. The "Lone Star Chapter" of the Sierra Club, by contrast, joined with the Wilderness Society and the Fort Worth chapter of the Audobon Society to petition the NPS to expand wilderness in Big Bend to 669,000 acres (almost 95 percent of the park). The Texas Highway Department, speaking through its office of travel development, vigorously opposed the master plan. "The wording of the restrictions," wrote Richard H. Pierce of the highway department, "makes it abundantly clear that 74 percent of Big Bend National Park will be placed off limits for casual family travelers." This included "the station wagon family with youngsters, who are neither inclined nor equipped for cross-country hiking and dry-camp survival." Also prohibited would be "the senior citizens who travel so extensively, but are physically incapable of the rigors of back-packing across mountain and desert." The Texas highway department found most disturbing the clause in the 1964 wilderness act that would "apparently make impossible any future expansion or development of normal tourist facilities in that Wilderness Area, without a special rescinding act by Congress." [14]

Public debate about the master planning process for Big Bend led NPS officials in March 1973 to send another team to assess the interpretative needs of the park. Aram Mardirosian and Bill Ingersoll of the NPS's Denver Service Center went to Big Bend with Bill Brown of SWR, and discussed the issues surrounding the master plan with park staff. The team tried to reconcile the vision of park use outlined by Doug Evans in the mid-1960s with that of the environmentally conscious planning of a decade later. While no thorough assessment had been made of the types of visitors to Big Bend, the team identified "Texans and other southwesterners" as the primary users of the park. Their desire for high-altitude recreation in the summer would require "stimulation to explore the desert more carefully," wrote the review team. The same could be said of other groups like senior citizens, young people seeking solitude, and families coming at other times of the year like winter and spring holidays. Responding to the concerns of the early 1970s created by the "energy crisis," the review team conceded that their proposals "are based on the assumption that visitors will continue to explore Big Bend in private cars." The team believed that "ten years from now, the private-car, family-group type of visitor may be a rarity." In their place, "charter-bus tour groups may be the norm, with in-park bus tours the principal patterns." To meet that exigency, the NPS review team suggested that "wayside exhibits would have to accommodate to this, or they might be dispensed with in favor of on-bus personal and audio interpretation." [15]

The DSC review team also commented at some length on the park's distinctive historical resources, and noted the need for more recognition of the cultural heritage of the Big Bend country. The team liked what it found at the Castolon compound, especially the presence in the grocery store of historical detail that "gives the place the look of an old country store." The team called upon park officials to provide "formal furnishing plans" at Castolon, as "Big Bend is a marginal area, and there are virtually no social histories of that time and place." They believed that "the first decades of the 20th century are just long enough ago so that furnishings are beginning to interest collectors." Then the team commented at length on the invisibility of Mexican culture at the compound. "Big Bend is curiously free of Mexican food," wrote the reviewers, "although there is hardly any place in the park where you can't see Mexico." They suggested that "a small Mexican kitchen in the other wing of the [Garlick] house could sell tacos and burritos or something similar." The team believed that "interpretively, the Mexican kitchen would underscore the fact that Big Bend is not as overwhelmingly Anglo as the visitors are, [and] that the ecology of the Chihuahuan Desert ignores the international boundary." Their plan for a Mexican restaurant "would certainly not be aggressively modern, but then it wouldn't be historically pure either, just a comfortable sort of bridge across the river, linking the past and the present." In like manner, concluded the review team, the park needed "special salvage and documentation of cast off debris at places like Glenn Springs and Mariscal Mine," as well as "the need for more emphasis on oral history." The team noted that these tasks "are admittedly low priority in the operational context," but believed that they would "produce valuable interpretive data–and the things and the people involved are fading away fast." [16]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 16:
"What a Beautiful Laboratory Big Bend Was!": Resource Protection and Management At Big Bend National Park, 1944-200

The famed environmental writer, Edward Abbey, found special satisfaction in visiting the wonders of Big Bend National Park. A former seasonal ranger at Arches National Park in southeastern Utah, the controversial and opinionated author of such works as *Desert Solitaire* (1968) and *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), recalled in the late 1970s that "half the pleasure of a visit to Big Bend National Park . . . lies in the advance upon the object of desire." Calling the Chisos Mountains "a castled fortification of Wagnerian gods," Abbey also likened them to "an emerald isle in a red sea." He appreciated as well the cultural heritage of this rugged land, remarking that "we have good reason to think of frontier history as we drive steadily toward the looming mass of the Chisos Mountains." Then in a statement that echoed his love of undeveloped landscapes, Abbey declared: "I'd rather be broke down and lost in the wilds of Big Bend, any day, than wake up some morning in a penthouse suite high above the megalomania of Dallas or Houston." The author then promised the readers of *One Life at a Time, Please* (1988): "We will return, someday, and when we do the gritty splendor and the complicated grandeur of Big Bend will still be here." [1]

The process of resource protection and interpretation that so impressed Edward Abbey in the 1970s had followed a route that mirrored the bend in the Rio Grande from which the park received its name. Big Bend witnessed all of the policy changes implemented by the NPS in the half-century after World War II, and then reflected its own distinctive location in one of the most arid and isolated quarters of North America. Superintendents and their staffs from Ross Maxwell in the 1940s to Jose Cisneros in the 1990s had to reconcile visitor expectations, park needs, budget constraints, changes in scientific research, and NPS policy directives that shifted from the promotion of scenery to the championing of ecology to the rehabilitation of cultural landscapes. By the turn of the twenty-first century, Big Bend could claim a place in the larger park service system as a window on the fascinating and complex world of resource management every bit as important as parks with far greater visitation and public profiles.

For NPS historian Richard Sellars, the first years after World War II presented the park service with a critical challenge. "Park development," wrote Sellars in 1997, "was to be carried out with a scientific understanding of natural resources to help ensure their preservation." Unfortunately, "documented needs and statements of good intentions notwithstanding, the Park Service made no real increases in its biological program during the [Newton] Drury administration [1940-1951]." This Sellars attributed to the parsimony of conservative Congresses, the intrusion of war in Asia (the Korean conflict), and public use of the nation's premier parks at record rates. Recreation, especially for a war-weary nation just embarking upon the "baby boom" of the 1950s and early 1960s, dictated strategies for recreation rather than science, and the removal of "eyesores" and "hazards" from parks like Big Bend. [2]

During the tenure of Ross Maxwell as superintendent of Big Bend (1944-1952), the geologist had to devote the bulk of his energies to the creation of park infrastructure. Among his early staff hires was Harold Schaafsma, whose son Curtis Schaafsma recalled in a 1996 interview the summers that he spent with his father in the Big Bend country (1948-1952). "Harold was the de facto naturalist," Curtis told an interviewer, even though he had no scientific training or experience as an interpreter. Schaafsma would give campfire talks in the Chisos Basin nightly that drew substantial crowds (there being few other options for entertainment). He also "would travel to surrounding towns to sell postcards and window decals of Big Bend;" a source of income that augmented his modest ranger's salary. Curtis Schaafsma remembered in particular the time that the famed nature photographer Ansel Adams visited Big Bend (1947), with Harold Schaafsma serving as his personal guide. "Harold shared that late 1940s romantic vision of protecting pristine nature," said his son five decades later; a perspective that Adams promoted in books, calendars, and brochures about the wonders of the national parks. [3]

In order to fulfill this vision, the park service and superintendent Maxwell could not devote much attention to scientific research. Instead, they would remove old structures from the landscape that marred the beauty and/or starkness that evoked such a vision of serenity and escape. In 1951, architect Kenneth Saunders advised NPS director Conrad Wirth that the park service could not afford the cost of rehabilitation of the many facilities at parks like Big Bend that the NPS had inherited. Reductions in the budget for park maintenance during the Korean conflict further convinced Saunders of the merits of this policy. Thus Maxwell set out to remove such historic sites as Glenn Springs, and the famed bathhouses at Hot Springs. The park's roads and trails crew, recalled longtime maintenance worker Francisco Grano, would be sent out to remove these buildings. "Waddy Burnham's house [at Government Spring] was very nice," said Grano, "but it was torn down." Local ranchers like Hallie Stillwell long remembered with bitterness this destruction of their memories. Yet Reece Sholley McNatt, widow of chief ranger George Sholley, would recall in 1996 that "the Hot Springs bath house had terrible sanitation." Its proprietor, Maggie Smith, "didn't have a permit," said McNatt, "and didn't keep the tubs clean." Thus "the old buildings had to be destroyed, and Maggie was crosswise with the NPS over this and other issues." [4]

Other resource issues for Maxwell and his staff included the eradication of feral stock to ensure the restoration of a pristine wilderness. Early rangers like Bob Smith, Joe Rumburg, and Stan Sprecher recalled five decades after their employment at Big Bend that they would be sent out by Maxwell to hunt and shoot wild burros and horses. At the same time, hunters would enter the park illegally to shoot wild game, even as the park hired its own hunters to remove predators like mountain lions. Henry "Hank" Schmidt, who came to the park in 1957 as assistant superintendent under George Miller (1956-1960), recalled that "predators would be chased into the park and killed." Lions were plentiful, Schmidt told an interviewer in 1996, and "one woman was pulled off a horse in the Chisos Basin on a day ride by a lion." Restoration of the grasslands denuded in the 1930s and 1940s by overgrazing also occupied much of the staff's time under Maxwell, with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) arriving at Big Bend in 1951 to study this issue. But the area along the River Road suffered because the NPS allowed fluorspar mining to proceed in Terlingua and Boquillas to provide raw materials to the steel industry during the Korean war. The park service charged "user fees" to the trucking companies, remembered Roy Pitcock, owner with his brother Louis of the Rosillos Ranch within the boundaries of the park. The park also had purchased soil and water from "Tiny" Phillips, the previous owner of the Rosillos Ranch, for the construction of U.S. Highway 385 from Persimmon Gap to Panther Junction. [5]

When Lemuel "Lon" Garrison succeeded Ross Maxwell as superintendent of Big Bend, the first thing that he noticed in 1952 was the tragedy of decades of overuse. "We had not done

right by this land," Garrison would write 36 years later in his memoir, *The Making of a Ranger: Forty Years with the National Parks* (1988), "but we could give it another chance and it would bloom again in the sense that it would fulfill its appropriate role in the series of microcosms of which our world is made." Garrison, who had come to Big Bend from a six-year tour as assistant superintendent at Grand Canyon National Park, marveled much like Edward Abbey a generation later: "What a beautiful laboratory Big Bend was!" His new park was "a land of strong beauty — often savage and always imposing." Big Bend was still in the midst of "a ten-year drought period" in which "two-hundred-year-old oak trees had died." Garrison also recalled that "beautiful Green Gulch had had one year of recovery from the 2,000 sheep 'Waddy' Burnham was reported to have held there." Tornillo Creek "also showed signs of this abuse," as "it had been beaten down fifty years earlier." Speaking of the historic road network in the park, Garrison claimed that "there had been hundreds of horses, mules, or burros hitched to freight wagons." All of these "had lived off the native vegetation, devastating a strip about five miles wide." [6]

What impressed Garrison as much as the natural resources of Big Bend was the human history still evident in its structures and sites. Gilberto Luna "survived eleven wives, sired thirty children, and was in his late nineties when he finally moved in with his grandchildren in Fort Stockton." The superintendent "had a suggestion of the extent of the farm populations from ruins of old adobes, melted into the ground from which they had been fashioned." One example was "an undated church ruin two miles below Gilberto's home," which "revealed occasional mounds of earth and rock marked by crude and anonymous, obviously human, graves." Garrison also remembered conversations with Bob Pulliam, "owner of the Mariscal Mine down in the deepest part of the park near the Rio Grande." Pulliam, for whose family Pulliam Peak was named, told the superintendent that "park acquisition of the [Mariscal] property included a commitment that he could recover all mining machinery or materials on site." By the time that Garrison had visited the mine, "much of the mining equipment had really vanished, probably into Mexico." [7]

By the mid-1950s, resource management at Big Bend faced the same dilemmas as other parks: the need for more scientific research, the growing visitation of a booming population (both nationwide and in the "Sunbelt"), and the lack of economic support from Congress. Russ Dickenson, a future director of the NPS (1980-1985), came to Big Bend in 1955 to spend a year as its chief ranger. He noted in a 1997 interview that he shared Lon Garrison's sense of wonder at the beauty and mystery of Big Bend. Before traveling to his assignment, Dickenson had visited in Washington with NPS director Conrad Wirth, who regaled Dickenson with tales of his experiences at Big Bend in the 1930s. Once there, Dickenson worked with chief interpreter Harold Broderick to create new programs for visitors. One feature that Dickenson recalled over 40 years later was the acquisition of an old house from a nearby ranch. He and Broderick brought the large, one-room structure to the Chisos campground, where it could seat 25 to 30 people for evening talks, or serve as a shelter in inclement weather. Dickenson also recalled that the prime visitation period in the 1950s coincided with school vacations (May through September). "Visitors were interested in the desert," noted Dickenson, and one of his tasks as chief ranger was to advise new employees "to acquaint themselves with the desert." Every six to seven years, Big Bend witnessed "the giant blossoms of cacti," and Dickenson was fortunate in 1955 to be present for this event. The chief ranger concluded upon his departure the following year that "Big Bend was a compression of ten years of experience into one," and later would consider it "the biggest small park in the NPS system" for its limited visitation, vast acreage, and many natural and cultural resources. [8]

Big Bend in the mid-1950s may have had this effect on a future park service director, but its resource management programs also took second place to the massive infrastructure initiative known as MISSION 66. Richard Sellars wrote with some irony that Lon Garrison would

leave Big Bend in 1954 to become "the first chairman of the Mission 66 Steering Committee." The former Big Bend superintendent "recalled that the committee was instructed to 'dream up a contemporary National Park Service,' in effect, and to prepare the parks for an estimated 80 million visitors by 1966." Sellars would remark 50 years after the implementation of MISSION 66 that the program showed "evidence [of] the power that the construction and development professions had attained within the Service, epitomized by the influence of the landscape architects." By comparison, scientific research (never promoted heavily, according to Sellars) yet again waited for its turn in the NPS hierarchy of policies. [9]

For Big Bend, the MISSION 66 work brought much-needed improvement to visitor services and staff facilities. But the park also faced problems of visitor use, most obvious in the late 1950s with the celebrated media coverage of the death of Clifford White. Chuck McCurdy, hired in 1957 as the district ranger for the Maverick district on the park's west side, recalled four decades later how newspapers as far away as Denver sent reporters to cover the search for White and his wife, whom McCurdy called "a secretary for an oil company executive" from Houston. McCurdy and his chief ranger, Monte Fitch, spoke on different occasions in the late 1990s about the rescue mission as if it had just happened. The Whites had stayed in the Chisos Basin, and had hiked the Lost Mine Trail, said Fitch. Then the couple approached the park's gas station attendant to borrow a five-gallon can of gasoline, in the words of Fitch, "to go on a tour." McCurdy recalled seeing them drive by him on the park's west side carrying ocotillo plants in their station wagon. When he stopped them to inquire about the origins of the cacti, Clifford White claimed that "they got them outside the park," and that "they had been told they could harvest on unfenced land." Even though the Whites had "an air-conditioned car," McCurdy warned them of overheating in the intense desert sun. [10]

What happened next surprised even park rangers accustomed to lost visitors. For the next eight to nine days, said McCurdy and Fitch, the staff (already stretched thin by summertime visitation and its demands) scoured the southern reaches of Big Bend in search of the Whites. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) joined the rescue mission, believing that Mrs. White had gone to the river and drowned. More prosaically, Clifford White had driven their car to the Castolon site, passing through a barrier warning of erosion that had closed the River Road. "Big Bend can put someone in trouble right away," Fitch remarked in 1997, noting that "the temperature at Maverick Ranger Station was 122 degrees while the White search was underway." The NPS staff and federal agents confronted temperatures "so hot that horses died and planes couldn't fly in the heat." The park hired Mexican trackers to aid in the search, and Fitch recalled that they "only wanted ice cream to eat." Further complicating matters were the curious visitors who had come to Big Bend "to see the disaster." Finally the searchers came upon White's body, finding him near the Mariscal Mine where he had walked five miles from his abandoned vehicle. His wife had waited in the vehicle for several hours, then hiked towards the Chisos Mountains, where she found a cave with water. McCurdy recalled that "she ate prickly pear, and got the needles on her chest and mouth." [11]

The power of nature at Big Bend ironically hampered the park's efforts in the 1960s to accommodate the new directives of Interior secretary Stewart Udall. Appointed in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, and continuing in that capacity under President Lyndon B. Johnson, Udall wanted America's parks to accept ever more visitors and add lands to their boundaries. Superintendents like Stanley Joseph (1960-1963), Perry Brown (1963-1969), and Luther Peterson (1969-1971), would watch as the nation created dozens of new park units under NPS director George Hartzog. In addition, the country witnessed a shift of values prompted by the environmental movement, and capped by passage in 1964 of the Wilderness Act. The goal was to set aside lands for future public enjoyment undamaged by human use. Doug Evans, who replaced Howard Broderick in 1961 as chief naturalist, wrote the first interpretative prospectus for Big Bend, and recalled in 1996 how his work at the park

prepared the way for additional preservation of natural resources. In 1956, said Evans, Broderick had "pioneered the program of plants, and also got the Big Bend Natural History Association going." From this base, Evans in his five-year tenure as chief naturalist could develop "contact points at each major area of the park." In addition, Evans "created a small amphitheatre, and also did exhibits . . . and nature trails." [12]

In retrospect, the realities of the Big Bend landscape fit perfectly the goals of Udall and other champions of natural beauty and ecology. In April 1966, the Interior secretary accompanied Lady Bird Johnson on a one-day raft trip through Mariscal Canyon on the Rio Grande; a visit designed, said Doug Evans, to focus national attention on wilderness preservation. Joined by some 90 reporters and photographers, the First Lady came to the Marfa air station on April 2 to spend three days in west Texas, one of which would be devoted to Big Bend. El Paso Natural Gas Company paid the costs of her visit, recalled Evans, who drove to Marfa to escort Lady Bird, Udall, and NPS director George Hartzog to the park. "A cottage in the Chisos was 'redone' for her," Evans remembered, and the raft trip included "35 NPS trainees from the Albright center [at the Grand Canyon] in twelve Navy rafts." Lady Bird "was in the lead boat," said Evans, who paddled for her and Udall, and "she asked to be pulled ahead of the press" to gain some privacy. Evans mused that "the media were 'fish out of water,'" with several rafts capsizing on the ten-mile journey from Talley Ranch to Solis. Garner Hanson, president of National Park Concessioners, Inc. (NPCI), recalled in 1997 how his organization catered the event, and how superintendent Perry Brown "saw the visit as a challenge to preservation." Several Greyhound motor coaches traveled down the rutted dirt road to the Talley "put-in," while Lady Bird's press secretary, Liz Carpenter, wanted a "big bonfire" at the Chisos campground for effect. That evening, recalled Evans, NPCI arranged to have "a fiesta for her at the Rio Grande Village, complete with recorded coyote sounds." All of this graced the nightly television news, and the headlines of the nation's newspapers, not unlike the coverage generated three decades earlier when Texas historian Walter Prescott Webb promoted Big Bend's charm and peril in his own river trip through Santa Elena Canyon. [13]

One of the ironies of the visit in 1966 by Lady Bird Johnson was its focus upon the need for more wilderness designations in the United States. Big Bend appeared to the reporters covering the raft trip to be nothing but wilderness, as several interviewees recalled the difficulties of getting film footage out of the canyon area each day for shipment to the television networks. Yet 1966 also represented another defining moment for resource management within the NPS and other federal organizations: passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). This required public agencies to identify and research the historic significance of structures and neighborhoods, with the goal being protection via listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A young graduate student in history in the 1960s at Texas Tech University, Jerry Rogers, would later become director of the National Landmarks program of the NPS in Washington. In a 1997 interview, Rogers (a native of west Texas and the field superintendent at that time of the NPS's Southwest Support Office in Santa Fe), recalled how Big Bend National Park had fared in matters of cultural resource management before and after passage of the NHPA. "Big Bend was typical of other great scenic national parks," Rogers noted, in that "drawing visitors was more important." For Big Bend, "the great crime was bulldozing San Vicente," a small community of Mexican people on the United States side of the Rio Grande. The legacy of this and other efforts to remove evidence of human habitation at Big Bend bothered Rogers and Curtis Tunnell, director of the state of Texas's office of historic preservation (SHPO). Tunnell complained in public meetings that "the National Park Service gave lip service to archaeological resources [at Big Bend]," said Rogers. It helped Big Bend little that Rogers's supervisor, NPS director George Hartzog, created the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP). "Then the battle of George Wright and the 1930s biologists to gain equal status with scenery recurred with cultural resource management." [14]

With little chance for extensive work on Big Bend's remaining historic structures, staff time and money in the late 1960s and early 1970s went toward completion of surveys for wilderness designations. Under the Wilderness Act of 1964, Congress had required the park service and other federal resource agencies to submit such designations within ten years. Areas of 5,000 acres or more that had not been opened to public use (the "roadless areas" concept) would be sent to NPS headquarters for adoption into the wilderness program. Richard Sellars noted that "in part because of the opposition of local congressional members to a changing national political climate [the return of conservative leadership under the Nixon and Ford administrations], several large parks containing huge tracts of de facto wilderness never gained the added protection of the Wilderness Act." Among these were "Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, and Big Bend, in addition to Great Smoky Mountains." Interior secretary Udall had asked the NPS "to analyze specific wildlife management issues by placing the concerns in a broad ecological and philosophical context." The "Leopold Report" of 1963 that had prompted this initiative, said Sellars, "urged that scientific research 'form the basis for all management programs' and that every phase of management come under the 'full jurisdiction of biologically trained personnel of the Park Service.'" [15]

This emphasis on natural resource management came at the same time that other congressional initiatives affected NPS policy system-wide. By 1969 the parks had come under the aegis of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), with its calls for more public involvement in the planning and development process on federal lands (including discussion of "no-build" alternatives). In quick succession the nation witnessed in 1970 the first "Earth Day," followed by formation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to monitor the ecological health of the nation's land, air and water resources. The Clean Water Act of 1972 further strengthened the role of government oversight of natural resources, as did the Clean Air Act. Park management from 1970 forward would require attention to these features, not to mention the training, funding, and awareness that these required of park staff. Especially problematic for Big Bend would be the promotion of the concept first articulated in the Leopold Report to restore the "ecological scene" to parks; a reference that Sellars called "the conditions at the time of the first European contact." [16]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 17:
From Good Neighbors to Armed Camps: Mexico, the United States, and Big Bend National Park, 1944-1980

The essence of national park designation is features of natural and/or cultural significance not found elsewhere in America. For Big Bend National Park, the existence of 124 miles of the Rio Grande coursing along its southern boundary meant issues of planning, operations, maintenance, interpretation, and law enforcement rarely encountered in the vast NPS system. Then the presence of an international neighbor along that river further distinguished Big Bend from other units of the park service. From the end of World War II, through the "Sunbelt boom" and Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s, the violence of the drug wars of the 1970s, and the efforts of the past two decades to restore the civility first apparent in the era of the New Deal and the Good Neighbor policy, Big Bend National Park had to fashion policies and procedures about the use of the Rio Grande that had no parallel anywhere in the NPS network. Finally, the restoration of cordial relations with Mexico in the last two decades of the twentieth century, aided by the passage in 1994 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), allowed the dream of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Lazaro Cardenas to reappear in the form of discussions about collaboration where once there was only violence and war.

Upon reflection at a distance of six decades, a student of Big Bend could surmise that park management would have been a challenge, even without the presence of the Rio Grande. Big Bend's isolation, distance, aridity, the attitudes of local communities and ranchers, and the fluctuations in funding that beset all NPS units would have taxed the patience and imagination of every superintendent and staff. Yet the Rio Grande possessed its own ecology, cultural life, and policy imperatives, such that the fate of Big Bend over the years often hinged upon the success or failure of its managers to understand the river and its users (both Mexican and American). Those policies included efforts to rid the landscape of historic cultural resources, the production of candelilla wax (itself a legal product until the close of the Second World War), trespass livestock, and immigrants seeking a better life north of the Rio Grande. At century's end, the NPS finally had come to grips with the need for careful attention to the river's realities, with the hope of shared use of the Big Bend landscape more promising, and the memory of border conflict a feature left to history.

When the first superintendent at Big Bend, Ross Maxwell, assumed his duties in the summer of 1944, much had changed in the relationship of the United States and Mexico since the days when the NPS geologist had hiked with Everett Townsend along the Rio Grande and into Mexico. Lane Simonian wrote that after 1940, "Mexican policymakers did not provide conservation agencies with enough human power to enforce land use restrictions in nature reserves." First with President Manuel Avila Camacho (1940-1946), then with his successors for the next four decades, Mexico "promoted the expansion of agribusiness to provide the underpinnings for industrialization itself." World War II brought to Mexico, as it would for the United States, a bonanza of factory and farm production that had to be sustained in order

to avoid relapses into the depths of depression. For Avila Camacho, said Simonian, this meant that "Mexico should industrialize to meet its domestic needs so that it could break its cycle of dependency in which it exported cheap raw materials and imported expensive manufactured goods." Given such imperatives, said Simonian, "the Mexican government was a principal agent in the country's environmental decline." [1]

This shift of emphasis at the dawn of the park's existence suggested that neither nation would address the bi-national resource in the same way as their predecessors of a decade earlier. Julio Carrera, director of the Maderas del Carmen protected area in the state of Coahuila, noted in a 1999 interview that "after 1940, the United States and Mexico turned to other issues." From his perspective of three decades of natural resource management and research at La Universidad Antonio Narro in Saltillo, Coahuila, Carrera declared that "the politicians looked for urban development," while "the structure of natural resources in Mexico placed [the bi-national park concept] under some economic agency." One example of this policy affecting the Rio Grande and Big Bend was the signing in May of 1944 of the treaty between Mexico and the United States regulating usage of the waters of the border streams. Carlos Marin, chief engineer for the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) in El Paso, recalled in a 1998 interview that the treaty allocated to Mexico one-half of the stream-flow in the Rio Grande below Fort Quitman, Texas. "Mexico's policies on irrigation can be variable," said Marin, as "water has been a sensitive issue between the U.S. and Mexico." Thus usage of water and land resources would occupy much of the thinking of both nations during and after the Second World War, leaving national park dreams on hold. [2]

What did exist on the border in 1944 was a world inhabited by people like Maggie Smith. As the wartime operator of J.O. Langford's Hot Springs resort, Maggie (a native of Uvalde, Texas) and her husband Baylor returned in 1943 at the behest of the Texas state park board. John Jameson would write that park officials "were concerned that the vacant site would fall prey to vandals during the transition from state to national park." Etta Koch, the administrative assistant at Big Bend from 1946 to 1955, had come to the river in 1944 in search of a cure for the tuberculosis that she had contracted in her native Ohio. When her photographer-husband, Peter Koch, traveled around the country in the winters showing his films of Big Bend, Etta and her three daughters moved into one of the cabins at the Hot Springs. She remembered in a 1996 interview that among the qualities that appealed to the NPS about Maggie was her ability to speak Spanish. "Mexicans came over to her store to trade," recalled Etta Koch, and they would make "clothes out of flour sacks, and were very particular about the choice of sacks" at the Hot Springs store. Etta Koch also spoke of attending a wedding in Boquillas with Maggie. "It was a 'pretty wedding,'" Koch noted, where "men and women sat on opposite sides of the dance floor." Then "someone had a baby in the middle of the dance," recalled Koch, and as "Maggie was a midwife, [she] delivered it." Maggie also was famed along the river for delivering sacks of candy to Mexican children on Christmas eve; an event in which Etta Koch once participated while staying at the resort. [3]

Perhaps the most distinctive stories of the first years of the park's relationship to the Rio Grande and Mexico came with the memories of Curtis Schaafsma, the young son of park ranger Harold Schaafsma. Curtis Schaafsma, later to become the state archaeologist for New Mexico, and whose wife Polly would write extensively about petroglyphs in the Southwest (including the NPS's Petroglyph National Monument near Albuquerque), visited Big Bend each summer between 1948 and 1953 to stay with his father. Through the eyes of a youth (Curtis would arrive at Big Bend at the age of ten), the Rio Grande was a place of wonder and mystery. "It is hard to explain how wild the river was," recalled Schaafsma in 1996. One day in the summer of 1948, Harold and Curtis joined NPS ranger Stan Sprecher and Bobby Cooper (son of W.A. Cooper, storeowner near Persimmon Gap), to navigate Santa Elena Canyon. They took one large automobile tire's inner tube, and "walked five hours from

Lajitas to the Rio Grande without water." Curtis remembered nearly 50 years later that "none of the 1948 party had been down the river before." They entered the river above Santa Elena Canyon and floated "to the rock fall, then up Fern Canyon on the Mexican side." Schaafsma noted that "maidenhair ferns grew out of the rocks," impressing him as "an Eden." Two years later, Curtis and several other park rangers rode the river through Mariscal Canyon in war-surplus life rafts. "Mariscal Canyon was a marvelous trip," said Schaafsma, "but the River Road was very rough in those days to get to Tally [the entrance point to Marsical Canyon]." Nonetheless, Schaafsma believed that "this was the beginning of proper river trips." [4]

Beyond the experience of navigating two of Big Bend's canyons, Curtis Schaafsma made mental notes of the communities along the river that stayed with him for five decades. "People on the Mexican side," said Schaafsma, "were growing crops and running stock." He recalled "an active town life in San Vicente and Boquillas." The mines in the Sierra del Carmen "sent ore trucks through Boquillas to Marathon," he remembered, as well as his own experience in catching rides on the trucks from Marathon to park headquarters at Panther Junction. "These were huge six by six transport trucks," said Schaafsma, necessary for the carrying of silver ore. He also mentioned in 1996 that "life in Boquillas was 'real Mexico,'" as he met "river runners, cowboys, rangers, and all wore pistols." Then Schaafsma recalled that "the Mexicans were equally rowdy." He detected "much tension because of the untrustworthiness of the *federales*," even though the latter limited banditry. This degree of law enforcement was necessary, as "few people went south of Boquillas because of violence." Schaafsma had scant memories of the town of San Vicente, but recalled that "Castolon was really neat." He saw farms irrigated at Cottonwood Campground, and "the Castolon store was where farmers shopped." The latter establishment "had very little for tourists," even though it operated year-round. Schaafsma also spoke of the Greene brothers, Aaron and Wayne, who were "river riders" for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Husbandry. The Greenes, said Schaafsma, "kept cattle with hoof and mouth disease out of the United States." They also would "kill trespass stock, of which there were quite a few," with the animals coming through the park on trails that ran from Lajitas to Stillwell's Crossing. [5]

As the decade of the 1950s unfolded, Big Bend's reputation as a border park would attract young rangers eager to serve in a rugged wilderness setting. One of these was Joe Rumburg, whose year at the park (1950-1951) was part of a long career that included service as director of the NPS's Southwest Regional Office in Santa Fe (1974-1976). Rumburg came to Big Bend to be the district ranger at Castolon, and discovered that "the big problem on the border was candelilla [wax] harvesting." Speaking from retirement in 1996, Rumburg recalled that "Mexican *forestales* [forest service officials] ran candelilla harvesters across the river." The Mexican government then "bought wax from the harvesters, [and] sold it either in Mexico or the United States for profit." Local residents told Rumburg that "candelilla was used in wax records, and also cosmoline." He knew that the wax "was used by the military as packing for rifles," as it was "the equivalent of a vacuum seal." From his perspective at Castolon, Rumburg encountered "no trouble with illegal immigrants." He conducted no river patrols, but did join the animal husbandry bureau in removal of trespass stock. "There were few law enforcement problems," Rumburg concluded, with "wax running . . . the only real [challenge]." [6]

Serving with Joe Rumburg in 1950 at the Boquillas district was Bob Smith, who recalled 46 years later how he and Rumburg constituted the entire NPS presence along the river. Boquillas, Texas in 1950 offered Smith "an old ranch house" with "a white washed adobe wall between [there] and Aaron Greene's." Nearby, said Smith, "was an old structure that had been a restaurant at Boquillas station [perhaps the famed 'Chata's' frequented by NPS and Mexican officials in the 1930s]." Burros would cross the Rio Grande "to drink at the Boquillas spring," recalled Smith, and "there was a gas engine to pump water into a tank on

the roof of [his] house." In the 100-plus degree heat of a Big Bend summer, "the water was very hot," allowing Smith to have hot showers in the open. His porch "was screened by ocotillo branches," and the "roof was made of carrizo cane." [7]

One of Smith's first encounters with law enforcement on the river occurred when he and Rumburg "went on big roundups of hoof-and-mouth searches, riding from Boquillas to Santa Elena." Smith recalled that he, Rumburg, and the Greene brothers "stopped at an abandoned ranch to corral stock for blood tests," and to prepare them for auction. Unfortunately, said Smith, "the stock had venereal diseases, and had to be disposed of." On another occasion, the district rangers joined with chief park ranger George Sholley on a search of Santa Elena Canyon, where they found wild burros on park land. "George shot and killed three or four burros," Smith remembered, "and asked the others to shoot the rest." Sholley also would fly in fixed-wing aircraft belonging to the U.S. Department of Agriculture in search of animals, while the "hoof-and-mouth riders covered areas of four to eleven miles each day." Yet another detail of Smith's patrols was the search for candelilla wax camps. "In May 1950," said the former Castolon ranger, "candelilla wax sold for 22 cents per pound." He noted that "Mexicans could not bring wax into the U.S., but once here it could be sold." The following year, "wax sold for 54 cents per pound," and "the *forestales* wanted their cut of wax production." He remembered that Maggie Smith would purchase wax from Mexican producers, and "so did Raymond Fisk of San Vicente." [8]

As did Curtis Schaafsma, Bob Smith marveled at the distinctiveness of life in the Mexican villages across the river from Big Bend. Smith once was asked to go to Boquillas to purchase liquor for a party held by NPS staff in the Chisos basin, as this was the closest place to do so. "There were lots of goats running through town," he recalled, while "children were poorly dressed and barefoot." To Smith, Boquillas "looked like a slum area." He noted that "the locals had a little garden between the Rio Grande and town." Boquillas itself consisted of "only thirteen adobe units," and "there was a tower and cable used to transport ore." Smith then recounted an incident where "a young girl had been bitten by a rattlesnake, and was brought across the river" to the ranger's office. Smith took her to Alpine (a distance of 120 miles), only to be "later told that Alpine doctors did not like indigent patients." Then when a knifing occurred at Boquillas, Smith "did nothing because of his earlier experience." Someone else transported the wounded man to Alpine, and Smith then was advised "to take people to Alpine" again. [9]

As the 1950s advanced, and the NPS invested monies in facility development under the aegis of MISSION 66, park officials had to resolve the question of their relationship to the river. Chief ranger George Sholley's demolition of the Hot Springs caused no small amount of tension on both sides of the Rio Grande, and placed the NPS in the awkward position of asking Maggie Smith to leave. Monte Fitch, chief ranger from 1957 to 1959, recalled four decades later that "Maggie Smith was in on everything happening on the river." Fitch claimed that ""she smuggled guns into Mexico," and that she "could tell stories that were unbelievable." By contrast, said Fitch, "George Sholley was not loved on the river," nor did Sholley venture across it very often. When the park service closed the Hot Springs concession, wrote John Jameson, "fifteen hundred people signed a petition to allow Maggie to stay, but to no avail." Smith and her husband then left to operate stores in the town of San Vicente (until it too was bulldozed), and then on the western edge of the park in Study Butte (where she died in 1965). Russ Dickenson, chief ranger at Big Bend in 1955-1956, would note in a 1997 interview that "Maggie Smith was still in business" when he arrived, and that she was "an independent western woman . . . [who] tolerated rangers because they were no threat." Dickenson, who in 1980 would become director of the park service, recalled that "her trade with Mexicans was the basis of her business," and that "she spoke Spanish well." For Dickenson, "the border was its own world," and Smith symbolized all that was good and bad about it. [10]

Dickenson's year at Big Bend was marked by the enthusiasm with which he and his rangers addressed the persistent candelilla wax trade. When the future NPS director arrived in the park in 1955, there had been talk of Big Bend being incorporated in plans for civil defense against foreign aggression (primarily fears of Communist invasion in the Cold War). Should a nuclear attack or conventional invasion occur, Big Bend would serve as a military training and surveillance center. Dickenson, a veteran of World War II, was told by superintendent George Miller "to carry the fight agains wax camps." The chief ranger recalled that "rangers' shirts were covered with sulphuric acid from blowing up vats." The Mexican wax producers used tubs made from "fifty-five gallon barrels . . . cut in half" that "could handle .45-caliber shot." Dickenson and his rangers would use "Primacord," an explosive that they acquired from the military, to "explode the vats." His theory was that "veterans knew how to use explosives." Keeping with the combat motif, Dickenson further stated that he and the ranger staff "used 'search-and-destroy' tactics for trespass stock." If NPS staff "saw horses on the U.S. side opposite villages like San Vicente, the rangers would warn villagers." If the Mexicans did not gather up their animals, "these would be shot" as well. Dickenson's logic was that "Big Bend had a small force." Aerial surveillance identified the camps, and two-to-three-man teams "used the element of surprise, coming in at daybreak." What Dickenson often found were "primitive" conditions, and he and his rangers burned any supplies left behind by the wax workers. [11]

In contrast to the military-style raids on the wax camps, said Dickenson, was sporadic interaction between the park and the Mexican communities. Echoing Bob Smith and other rangers of the 1950s, Dickenson recalled that "the villages were primitive." Rangers would cross the Rio Grande at Boquillas to purchase "Boca Negra whiskey," and "there was a one-day fiesta when Panther Junction and Boquillas got together for a barbecue." Dickenson recalled no "cross-river transportation," and "no visitors went to Boquillas unless they could drive." He did note that "there was individual boating and rafting," but that "Big Bend did not issue permits." There were no outfitters in the 1950s, and for those individuals who floated the Rio Grande, "World War II rubber rafts were the most common." Superintendent Miller did recognize the need for some level of visitor protection on the river, and asked his chief ranger to train the rangers in search-and-rescue techniques. [12]

Monte Fitch's tenure at Big Bend echoed the experiences of Russ Dickenson, only with a larger staff and more financial resources as a result of MISSION 66 development projects. When he came to the park, "rangers shot everything that crossed the river." Then superintendent Miller decided to halt the shooting of animals, "as this had made people destitute." In addition, the park generated "bad public relations" from the campaign to rid feral and trespass stock. Candelilla production, however, contined to face ranger attacks under Fitch. "Candelilla was harvested by permit in Mexico," he recalled in 1997, and the park service had "no authority to cross the river." Fitch and his patrol crews found piles of candelilla "as big as haystacks," with the plants "torn out by the roots." He then learned that "it was legal to bring candelilla across the river and sell to Marathon and Alpine." Fitch "orderd blocks of [the explosive] TNT, and packed it into the camps." The park service then "detonated the drums, and also confiscated the [pack] burros." Fitch would find that "mostly Santa Elena and Mariscal Canyons were isolated enough for wax camps." He also discovered that "there were a lot of arms and ammunition going to Mexico, and also lots of illegals [Mexican nationals] heading north." [13]

At decade's end, the Rio Grande seemed to new rangers like Eldon Reyer, Chuck McCurdy, and Bill Wendt to be, in the words of Reyer's wife Karen (the daughter of superintendent Lon Garrison), "wild and wooly." McCurdy, who served as the ranger for the Maverick district in the late 1950s, remembered 40 years later the work of Aaron and Wayne Greene on the hoof-and-mouth patrols. "Aaron Greene had been ten years old," said McCurdy, "when

Mexican raiders had crossed the Rio Grande in 1916." Greene told him four decades after the fact that he "remembered fleeing to safety." This made the Greene brothers "very cagey about relations with Mexico;" a circumstance exacerbated by "incidents with the hoof-and-mouth disease campaign." For McCurdy, "there was very little law enforcement, except for candelilla camps and trespass stock." He knew that "tanks [for the wax] were made at Lajitas by Rex Ivey, a car dealer in Alpine." Ivey would charge $25 for his tanks, "which were floated down the Rio Grande to Santa Elena Canyon, then carried up the [Mesa de Anguila]." McCurdy also learned firsthand of the rigors of rafting the Rio Grande, as he joined photographer Peter Koch on one outing. On another occasion, the Maverick district ranger used a "two-man surplus Air Force craft . . . to go through the [Santa Elena] canyon after a flood to look for damage and bodies." He found it "hard to get through the rock slide," and heard from local *Hispanos* that "there was a 'bull' in the water between Lajitas and Santa Elena that rose up and ate people." [14]

McCurdy would in later years find the level of tension on the border troubling, and preferred to dwell upon his efforts at cultural interaction. After the flood of 1958, he learned from the "head of the [Santa Elena] ejido . . . that they needed medical supplies." McCurdy then approached the Red Cross to provide these necessities, while he solicited the aid of the Civil Air Patrol to bring them to the park. From there the Red Cross conveyed the medical supplies and food to Santa Elena in rubber army rafts. In like manner, McCurdy recalled the efforts of river ranger Rod Broyles and his wife, Phyllis, to bring some semblance of decency to the trespass stock removal program. Both Broyles's spoke Spanish, and Phyllis would offer evening instruction in the language for any park staff who demonstrated an interest. "They wrote brand names in Spanish on paper," remembered McCurdy, "and told the people that the NPS would round up the stock." Once impounded, "Mexicans came to the corral at Maverick [district] to pick up their stock." Local Mexicans came to view Maverick and Castolon districts as "a customs and check station," and "when locals wanted questions answered, they were put on the radio to Phyllis Broyles." [15]

McCurdy contrasted this effort at cultural accommodation with stories told to him by Wayne Greene, who recalled working with Joe Rumburg in stalking a wax camp. "Joe took out his revolver," said McCurdy, "and looked at the escaping Mexicans." Their flight had made "Joe so angry," said Wayne Greene, that "he was going to shoot the Mexican 'like a duck in a rainbarrel.'" Wayne then "hit Joe's arm as he fired," propelling the bullet harmlessly away. The second story of border tension that remained with McCurdy involved Wendell Bryce, a ranger who claimed descent from Ebenezer Bryce (owner of the land that became Utah's Bryce Canyon National Park). Bryce and McCurdy came upon a wax camp where McCurdy "found a Mexican with his ten-year-old boy." He recalled that "they did not run, and the family crossed over" the Rio Grande. At that point he "took the man in, and his family was crying." McCurdy later learned that the wax worker "was processed at La Tuna [the federal prison] in El Paso." Yet a third border incident that defined the complexity of the border for McCurdy was the campaign to stop the smuggling of cotton across the river from Santa Elena to Castolon. "The Castolon cotton ranch was suspected of receiving cotton from the Santa Elena ejido without passing through Customs," said McCurdy. Park rangers asked Wayne Greene to "cross the river one night to sprinkle fluorescent powder on the cotton, so that it could be traced." No more problems emanated from the Mexican cotton fields after Greene's espionage. [16]

Border issues by 1960 were central to the thinking of superintendent George Miller and his assistant, Hank Schmidt, who served as acting superintendent that year between Miller's departure and the arrival of his successor, Stanley Joseph. For Schmidt, the river area was as wild as any place where he had worked for the NPS (which included the Arches National Monument in southeastern Utah; a place that prompted seasonal ranger Edward Abbey in 1968 to write his book, *Desert Solitaire*). "The River Road had only carried ore trucks,"

Schmidt remembered in 1996, "and had to be improved for visitors." He also found "no motorboating on the Rio Grande," and "few rafters." It was superintendent Miller who "came up with the idea of permits for rafters." Float trips by Schmidt led him to conclude: "The Rio Grande is not a 'boating' river; it is for rafting." At first the river was used primarily by people from El Paso and Alpine. Then "tourists came unprepared," said Schmidt, requiring NPS staff to warn them of the dangers of the river, most significantly the need for plenty of drinking water. [17]

For assistant superintendent Schmidt, as with his predecessors in park management, matters of waxmaking and trespass stock absorbed much of his time. "The candelilla problem was west of the Hot Springs," he recalled, "in the lower foothills of the Chisos." He and the rangers found "regular trails to the candelilla." Compounding this, said Schmidt, was the fact that "Jim Casner was buying candelilla wax for a nickel a pound," even though he was "a big booster of the park." With trespass stock, Hank went to Boquillas to discuss the issue. There he learned that "Mexico was different, and NPS staff were welcomed." Schmidt later remembered that "the towns were very poor," and that "a Lions' Club in Marathon . . . took Christmas groceries to Boquillas." In like manner, "park staff gave their old clothes to Boquillas." He also noted that "drugs were no problem for Big Bend in the 1950s." Yet he did recall that "Mexicans would come for [the hallucinogen] peyote between Boquillas and the foothills of the Chisos." The Mexicans followed "an old road from Boquillas west to the Chisos" for peyote, which they then sold across the river. [18]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 18:
Ghosts and Dreams: Big Bend and the Rio Grande, 1980-2001

If the pattern of relationships at Big Bend meant anything, they revealed after 1980 the need for the NPS and Mexico to reassess their historic roles as neighbors and adversaries. Starting in 1981, the new park superintendent, Gilbert Lusk, would reach across the Rio Grande with a gesture of goodwill (the "Good Neighbor Fiesta" and discussions about reenergizing the international park concept) that would persist for the remainder of the twentieth century. Regional director John Cook, who returned to Santa Fe in 1986 and who selected superintendents for Big Bend during that two-decade era, made improvements in border relations one of the criteria for management. Through the eras of Jim Carrico (1986-1990), Rob Arnberger (1990-1994), Jose Cisneros (1994-1999), and Frank Deckert (appointed in 2000), each superintendent would recognize the value of sustaining interest in better working relationships between the two countries. Nothing would be simple, however, in this quest for accommodation. The wild and scenic river debate would simmer once the designation was in place, while matters of trespass stock, drug traffic, and immigration rose and fell with the tides of public policy. Even the efforts by Jose Cisneros and his staff to make real the international park, aided in 1994 by Mexico's announcement of its "protected areas" in Coahuila (Maderas del Carmen) and Chihuahua (Canon de Santa Elena) south of the Rio Grande, did not forge the bonds of partnership before Cisneros's retirement. Yet the journey of understanding begun when Gil Lusk sat for eight hours in the outer office of the governor of the state of Coahuila, waiting for an interview that never happened, would make Big Bend more conscious of the neighbor at its door, and remind Mexico that the promise of opportunity that so many of its people sought in the fields and factories of *El Norte* might also be found on the "last frontier."

Superintendent Gil Lusk, in the opinion of his successors, put in motion long-range plans that compelled the NPS to see the Rio Grande in new ways. When he arrived in 1981 at Big Bend, "border interdiction was 80 to 90 percent of the world-view of the rangers." Lusk sought to reduce this at least in half, emphasizing the need for cultural understanding. Among Lusk's initiatives that first year and soon thereafter was encouragement of Spanish-language training for the ranger staff, and initiation of the "International Good Neighbor Day Fiesta" that October. Over the next five years, Lusk and his staff would implement in 1985 the "Border States Conference on Parks, Recreation, and Wildlife." Dennis Vasquez, a ranger at Big Bend in the early 1980s who would return a decade later to serve as chief of interpretation, wrote in 1994 that this strategy "provides a forum for scientists, researchers, and resource professionals from the border region in both countries to present papers and exchange information." Vasquez believed that "many doors have been opened and many alliances have been built as a result of these conferences." Both the fall fiesta and the border conferences would become mainstays of park operations, helping support Lusk's idea that "our strategy was broad enough to allow us to build on success and not have minor failures along the way derail the entire process." [1]

Two issues along the border, however, challenge Lusk and his staff as they rebuilt the "good neighbor" relationship with Mexico so eagerly promoted by Franklin D. Roosevelt and others. In 1981, the General Management Plan for the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River was written and submitted through NPS channels for approval in Washington. Its rejection at the highest levels left river operations and funding in limbo until the mid-1990s, when Superintendent Jose Cisneros initiated a new management plan that rectified the mistakes of the first endeavor. Then in 1987, the reputed drug dealer Pablo Acosta was captured and killed in the Mexican village of Santa Elena, with United States and Mexican drug agents involved. In each case, the strain upon the "good neighbor" initiative threatened to undo the hard work of Lusk and his staff. Yet by the mid-1990s, the call for better relations on the river (on both the Mexican and American sides) would result in the most aggressive effort to unite the two nations since the 1930s.

When the WSR planning team, headed by John Murphy of the NPS's Denver Service Center, submitted their report in November 1981, they noted that the original idea of an expansive river boundary could not be achieved. The WSR designation would be "only the river area from the United States/Mexico international boundary in the center of the river to the gradient boundary at the edge of the river on the United States side." Its length would be "from the Chihuahua/Coahuila state line to the Val Verde county line." Segments of this 195-mile stretch of the Rio Grande from Talley to Solis (Mariscal Canyon), from the entrance to Boquillas Canyon to its exit, and from Reagan Canyon to San Francisco Canyon below the park boundary line, would become "wild" portions of the river. "The remaining sections," said the 1981 report, "shall be designated as SCENIC." The park would manage this resource as part of its larger operations. Two public-access points would be negotiated with private landowners below the park boundary: the La Linda community and the Dryden Crossing. [2]

In studying the river for management as wild and scenic, the NPS learned much about its character and problems. Water quantity was a function of releases from the Rio Conchos in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, some 50 percent of the total stream-flow annually. The planning team determined that "the reach of the Rio Grande designated as ‘wild and scenic' is classified as suitable for contact recreation, for propagation of fish and wildlife, and for domestic raw water supply." They did note that "during storm-related stream-flow rises, high concentrations of fecal coliform bacteria can occur as the adjacent land surface is washed by rainfall runoff." In addition, "there has been some concern about water quality degradation related to the fluorspar processing plant at La Linda, Mexico," and with "mercury pollution emanating from an area of abandoned mercury mines in the Terlingua Creek drainage on the west side of Big Bend National Park." While these charges were difficult to confirm, the NPS found that "the most significant water quality problem in the area of the Rio Grande is the presence of DDT and its metabolites." The WSR planners learned that "concentrations of these compounds in excess of the levels recommended by the Food and Drug Administration have been found in Rio Grande fish near Presidio, Texas." The FDA believed that this came from Mexican irrigation return flows to the Rio Conchos, and "high levels of DDT residues seem to be concentrated in the area where the Rio Conchos joins the Rio Grande." [3]

Another resource issue that the planners detected while compiling data for WSR operations was air quality. "Preliminary information from Big Bend," wrote the planning team in 1981, "indicates that the area experiences decreased visibility in some directions, probably as a result of high altitude particulates originating from industrial facilities in El Paso, Texas; Carlsbad, New Mexico; and perhaps from northern Mexico." In addition, the planners noted emission of particulates from the Dupont Chemical Company's fluorspar mill at La Linda. Then the report prophesied that "impaired visibility and acid precipitation are potential air quality problems for the future, although both problems would result from activities distant from the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River." [4]

The NPS's acknowledgment that it could not control any land along the riverbank also hampered planning for the WSR. A group of private landowners formed the "Texans for the Preservation of the Rio Grande" to stop the designation process. When that failed, said Judge Dudley Harrison, they approached lawmakers in Austin and Washington to force the park service to accept the limitations found in the 1981 report. By March of 1982, the NPS would instruct its regional office in Santa Fe to cancel implementation of the WSR plan, leaving the river with little funding and staff. Then in 1986, Congress amended the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to permit "study" rivers like the Rio Grande to have an "interim boundary" that ran one-quarter mile from the average high-water mark. Jim Carrico, superintendent of Big Bend when this strategy was implemented, would recall a decade later that "the Rio Grande WSR was not negotiated ahead of time." He attributed its problems to the lack of public hearings, noting that "all action occurred at high levels." His agency engaged in "some arrogance," which "contributed to the ‘backlash' now toward the government." It did not surprise Carrico that the Interior secretary, James Watt, refused to press Congress in the early 1980s for resolution of the Rio Grande WSR boundary controversy. As a devotee of the "Sagebrush Rebellion," Watt and President Ronald Reagan took a dim view of expanded federal presence on private property. Thus it would fall to Jose Cisneros and his successor as superintendent, Frank Deckert, to revitalize planning for the WSR, and to establish better relations with local landowners as part of the new planning process. [5]

The second feature of 1980s border management that challenged efforts at peace and friendship involved the smuggling of narcotics from Mexico into the United States. Marty Ott, chief ranger at Big Bend in the mid-1980s, recalled that "drugs were an absolute real problem" for park rangers in 1983 when he accepted his assignment (and came back to the park where his father had been chief of maintenance in the late 1950s). Ott noted that "some folks chose to ignore the problem," while paranoia among others "created a sense of being overrun." The administration of President Reagan had promoted its "Just Say No" campaign against drug use in America, and the NPS found itself on the defensive at Big Bend as it had been in a decade earlier. Then a Mexican drug trafficker named Pablo Acosta (whom several park officials considered in league with Mexican drug agents) became what Ott called "an embarrassment to Mexican officials." The chief ranger believed that "politically, [Acosta] could no longer be tolerated." Thus the FBI sent agents from El Paso to inform Ott of an impending raid on Acosta's headquarters in the village of Santa Elena. Federal agents landed in helicopters on the American side of the Rio Grande, and watched as their Mexican counterparts "ran into a firefight of one hour." One agent was wounded, and darkness threatened the operation. Then Ott received word that Acosta had been killed, and the FBI asked him to pick up the body. Ott went to the Castolon store, purchased every sack of ice they had in stock, and flew across the river to escort Acosta's corpse to an American coroner. The chief ranger remembered more than a decade later the scene in Mexico when he landed, as "nearly all the residents of Santa Elena were lying down in the street." Jim Carrico added that he wondered at the time "how Santa Elena people judged this, as Acosta was a ‘Robin Hood' who gave money to the poor." [6]

The death of Pablo Acosta did not trigger discontent among the residents of Santa Elena and other border communities along the Rio Grande. But it did contribute to a growing sense that better relations with Mexico meant good business. In 1988, the park added a staff position (the "international cooperation specialist") to coordinate work with Mexican agencies and townspeople. Ramon Olivas worked with Bill Wendt (himself a former Big Bend ranger from the late 1950s) to develop cooperative training programs for employees of Mexican resource agencies involved in border areas. Olivas also established conferences between officials of both countries, and in the words of Dennis Vasquez, "served as the coordinator for the Big Bend ‘Good Will Ambassador' program with local Mexican communities." Then in October 1988, regional director John Cook met with Eliseo Mendoza, governor of the state of Coahuila, to sign "an agreement of good will acknowledging the benefits of cooperative

efforts between the USNPS and the State of Coahuila in the areas of resource management." A month later, the park service and the Mexican secretariat for urban development and ecology (SEDUE) embarked upon a plan to develop "protected areas," which included training technical assistance, and research. [7]

The efforts of the Mexican affairs specialist caught the attention of NPS officials in Washington, who in 1991 asked Olivas to join Howard Ness to expand into other border parks in the Southwest. This collaboration would be housed in the city of Las Cruces, New Mexico (on the campus of New Mexico State University), and would be called the Mexican Affairs Office (MEAF). Dennis Vasquez would recall in 1994 that "as the environmental movement began to grow throughout Mexico, Big Bend National Park became more well known among Mexican governmental, non-governmental, and university officials as an example of a well established protected area and as a source for training and support materials." Olivas would relocate to Las Cruces, and apply his knowledge of border resource areas to NPS units in Arizona and New Mexico. Yet a sense developed at Big Bend that MEAF's gain was its loss, as diplomacy and broader bi-national issues replaced the local momentum that had promised much for Big Bend. Vasquez wrote in 1994 that "no ‘sister' park had been established, no solutions to cattle trespass had been achieved, and longstanding law enforcement problems and resource management concerns had not been resolved." [8]

To address the perceived decline in cross-border relations, superintendent Rob Arnberger instructed his staff in 1989, in the words of Dennis Vasquez, to restore the "grass-roots" approach initiated a decade earlier by Gil Lusk. "The programs would be designed to achieve specific products for Big Bend," said Vasquez, "as well as to continue nurturing neighborly relations." Among the first steps taken was identification of employees who were sensitive to cultural diversity, had a language proficiency in Spanish, and were "knowledgeable in the Hispanic culture." Arnberger wanted "an understanding of the entire staff of the importance of the constructive relations with our Mexican neighbors and an appreciation for cultural differences." The park then created a Mexican Affairs Team to "serve as key contacts with the small rural villages adjacent to the park to coordinate any number of activities that might come up from organizing health clinics to providing mechanical support for community water systems." Vasquez noted that "poor communications and inconsistent actions over the years have been the source of persistent difficulties." Educational outreach programs could "carry a message about the function and goals of the USNPS," and "highlight the significance of the natural and cultural resources which we share with our neighbors." The park's chief of interpretation realized that "generations of rural villagers have lived across the river from Big Bend National Park without hearing this message." Even controversies surrounding trespass livestock, drug traffic, and border crossings became part of the dialogue. "While these topics may have a negative connotation," wrote Vasquez, "the park has not shied away from these open discussions." Instead, "the regular official visits by Big Bend National Park staff to adjacent Mexican communities have opened lines of communication and helped create a sense of community." [9]

One unique feature of the renewed efforts at local cooperation was creation in 1989 of the joint Mexican-American firefighting unit known as "Project Diablos." Three years of wild-land fires at Big Bend placed the park's resources in jeopardy; a condition exacerbated, said Vasquez, by Big Bend's remoteness. "Through standard channels," wrote the chief of interpretation, "response time by qualified fire crews is a minimum of 12 to 30 hours." The park recognized that "there existed a pool of potential firefighters nearby, across the Rio Grande who were well suited for arduous fire fighting duty in the extreme heat and rough conditions of the Chihuahuan Desert." Turning to the Mexican villages that had supplied so many workers for American ranchers and government agencies in the past, Big Bend recruited some twenty men to become wild-land firefighters. "When the idea was posed to some of the men," recalled Vasquez, "they responded enthusiastically, stating that if they

were given the opportunity they would work like ‘diablos' to prove their worth." Such a venture required the approval of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), as well as the U.S. Social Security Administration. The program operated for several years, until budget cuts in the mid-1990s eliminated the use of Mexican firefighters in the park. [10]

Changes on the American side of the Rio Grande in the late 1980s and early 1990s towards working with Mexico found a positive response among officials of the Mexican government. Gloria Uribe, a former staff member of the natural resource agency SEDUE (later renamed SEMARNAP), would recall in a 1999 interview in Ciudad Chihuahua, that during this time Mexican resource policy "shifted from forestry to desert studies." The National Institute of Ecology also turned from forest concerns to wildlife. "Environmental issues became more important to plans of management," said Uribe, "like air and water quality." This change emanated from "university professors from the United States and Europe," who "helped expand the consciousness of diversity." So to did an awareness of endangered species, "as did pride in being part of the five mega-diversity countries [a reference to international recognition of threatened ecological zones worldwide]." Early efforts to link Mexico's northern border with the environmental and national park ideas of the United States received attention with an agreement signed in 1992 in La Paz. "Sister cities and sister parks were promoted," said Uribe, and in Chihuahua "some people saw the need for conservation." When the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed in 1994, work on protected areas and bi-national strategies of management accelerated. Chihuahua joined for the first time with its eastern neighbor, the state of Coahuila, to address the decades-old dream of an international park along the Rio Grande. Mexican planners, recalled Uribe, "tried to shift from urban programs to protected areas." Resources to accomplish this objective were not easy to find, leading the planners to conclude that "only communities can save these areas." [11]

Those resources did appear, however, in limited form after the signing of the NAFTA accord, as international agencies and non-governmental organizations included the Big Bend-Mexican park idea in their agendas. Dr. Alfonso LaFon, professor of natural resources management at La Universidad Autonoma de Chihuahua, recalled in a 1999 interview that his home state's willingness to work with Coahuila and the Mexican federal government helped overcome the obstacle of outside support for resource protection along the Rio Grande. "In the late 1980s," said LaFon, "the "World Bank began funding some studies" in Chihuahua. Then NAFTA "pushed increasing the protected areas." One strategy was "political," through the use of "decrees, and management of the land." Mexican authorities also had to work with *ejido* residents to educate them in better use of the land. Yet another issue facing LaFon and other resource officials in Mexico was the country's change of leadership every six years (known as the *sexeno*). Fortunately, the 1990s witnessed "the continuity of natural resources planning and NPS training." Officials like SEMARNAP director Julia Carrabias promoted a mixture of "conservation, research, administration, and education" to strengthen the presence in the Mexican government of environmental consciousness. Carrabias would work in the 1990s with her counterpart in the U.S. Interior department, Secretary Bruce Babbitt, to create and maintain international relations at their intermediate levels. In so doing, said LaFon, "making permanent relationships and education programs between the NPS and protected areas helps overcome policy." [12]

Reference to "policy" limitations on improved border relations included in the early 1990s the issue of electrical supply from the United States to Mexico, and the termination of the unofficial practice at Big Bend of issuing *permisos* (temporary passes for border crossings). The former involved plans by the governor of Coahuila, Eliseo Mendoza Berrueto, to create the protected area of Maderas del Carmen. A draft NPS memorandum of September 1990 regarding the international park concept noted that the governor's agenda included "drawing tourism and upgrading the quality of life for the residents of Boquillas and adjacent

communities." Mendoza called for "rehabilitative work in Boquillas, the installation of a potable water system, open air restrooms, a visitor center, and the exportation of electricity through Big Bend National Park." Daniel L. Roth, a graduate student in the public affairs program at the University of Texas at Austin, wrote in his 1992 master's thesis of the opposition by American environmental groups to the electric transmission line across the Rio Grande. "The Audobon Society and the Sierra Club," said Roth, "met with the governor of Coahuila to support solar energy as a source for power in the area." These groups feared that the line would endanger the nesting of the peregrine falcon, while other organizations believed that the volume of electricity would allow the Mexican government to invite urban growth. Even "leftist group leaders and some farming groups" in Mexico, wrote Roth, "have recently opposed land reforms in Mexico, which may affect the ejido system, which in turn may affect park development." [13]

In the matter of permission slips for border crossings, Dennis Vasquez noted in 1994 that "for over 20 years, the USNPS staff at Big Bend National Park issued immigration permits on behalf of the USINS to Mexican nationals living adjacent to the park." Vasquez wrote that while the park service "had no official authority or jurisdiction in conducting this activity, it was done in the interest of providing a service to park neighbors who otherwise would have to travel over 100 miles to secure permits to travel within the United States." In October 1994, "this longstanding program was discontinued for a number of reasons," the most compelling being "the increased workload that the permit program entailed and the decrease in staff size." Vasquez conceded that "the discontinuance of the immigration permit function at Big Bend National Park has had a serious impact on [the] ability of Mexican nationals who have a right to travel in the United States to secure immigration permits. As of 1994, Big Bend had protested this situation to the INS, but to no avail. [14]

The year 1994 also marked the turning point for Mexico's commitment to the decades-old dream of a bi-national park. On November 7 of that year, Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari announced establishment of the two protected areas across the Rio Grande: the Maderas del Carmen in Coahuila, and the Canon de Santa Elena in Chihuahua. The former consisted of 514,701 acres (208,381 hectares), while the latter comprised 684,706 acres (277,209 hectares). In extending the status of protection over this 1.1 million-acre area, the Mexican government gave the NPS and Interior department the opportunity to develop strategies for collaboration in matters of resource management, scholarly research, and eco-tourism development. Julio Carrera, a longtime natural resource official for the state of Coahuila, became director of the Maderas del Carmen region, while Pablo Dominguez assumed direction of Chihuahua's portion. Dominguez spoke in a 1999 interview in Ciudad Chihuahua about the benefits of partnership with the United States. "On maps of the World Wildlife Fund," said Dominguez, "there are very few disturbances to Canon de Santa Elena land." His hope was to "make some kind of deal on correct use of natural resources without eliminating the historic land uses." In collaboration with La Universidad Autonoma de Chihuahua, SEMARNAP developed a program of management (*Programa de Manejo*) that explained the region's unique natural and cultural resources, and offered options for visitor services that did not conflict with "the consensus of the people." [15]

Because of his concern for international relations, as well as his commitment to protection of cultural resources, Big Bend superintendent Jose Cisneros made it a signal feature of his management to advance the cause of the bi-national park. In July 1996, Cisneros escorted a party of American and Mexican natural-resource officials to the international peace park at Waterton Lakes-Glacier National Park, on the border between Montana and Alberta. Writing three years later in the magazine Environment, Cisneros and his chief of interpretation and visitors services, Valerie J. Naylor, concluded that "the group was impressed with the international peace park designation and with the collaboration between the two parks." Cisneros, his American colleagues, and the Mexican officials left Waterton-Glacier after four

days of study believing that "such a relationship was possible in the Big Bend region." In February 1997, Mexico's SEMARNAP sent to the U.S. Department of the Interior "a proposal for the establishment of protected natural areas of bi-national ecosystems in the Big Bend area." This region then would become the model for other shared park sites on the Mexican-United States border. [16]

Mexico's gesture required consideration by entities other than Big Bend National Park or the NPS, but the statement indicated to Cisneros that the dream of a borderless park was closer to reality than at any time since the 1930s. The superintendent remarked in retirement in 2000 that his goal had been to move border issues to the forefront of the discussion about Big Bend's future; a strategy that he believed had borne fruit as the park expanded its general management plan research under his successor, Frank Deckert. Flora, fauna, and people did not recognize the artificiality of the boundary line, noted Cisneros, nor did history show any benefit to keeping people apart in the Big Bend country. He applauded the efforts of Rotary International to provide for the bi-national area of Big Bend (including the NPS unit, Texas's Big Bend Ranch State Park, and the Mexican protected areas) what it had acquired for Waterton-Glacier in 1932: the status of an international peace park. Cisneros also spoke in his 1999 article on the actions of the World Conservation Union "encouraging nations to collaborate in the management of trans-boundary ecosystem." Cisneros marveled that "today, Big Bend National Park, the adjoining Protected Areas for Flora and Fauna in Mexico, and nearby state lands protect more than two million acres in the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert." If his successors could maintain the dream of Franklin Roosevelt, Lazaro Cardenas, Everett Townsend, and many advocates of peace on the border, "the ecosystem will be the ultimate beneficiary of coordinated bi-national efforts." On that day, Big Bend would have risen above its many challenges of nature and history, and would represent what is often said of national parks: the best idea that America ever had. [17]



Figure 23: NPCI Castolon Store (1961)

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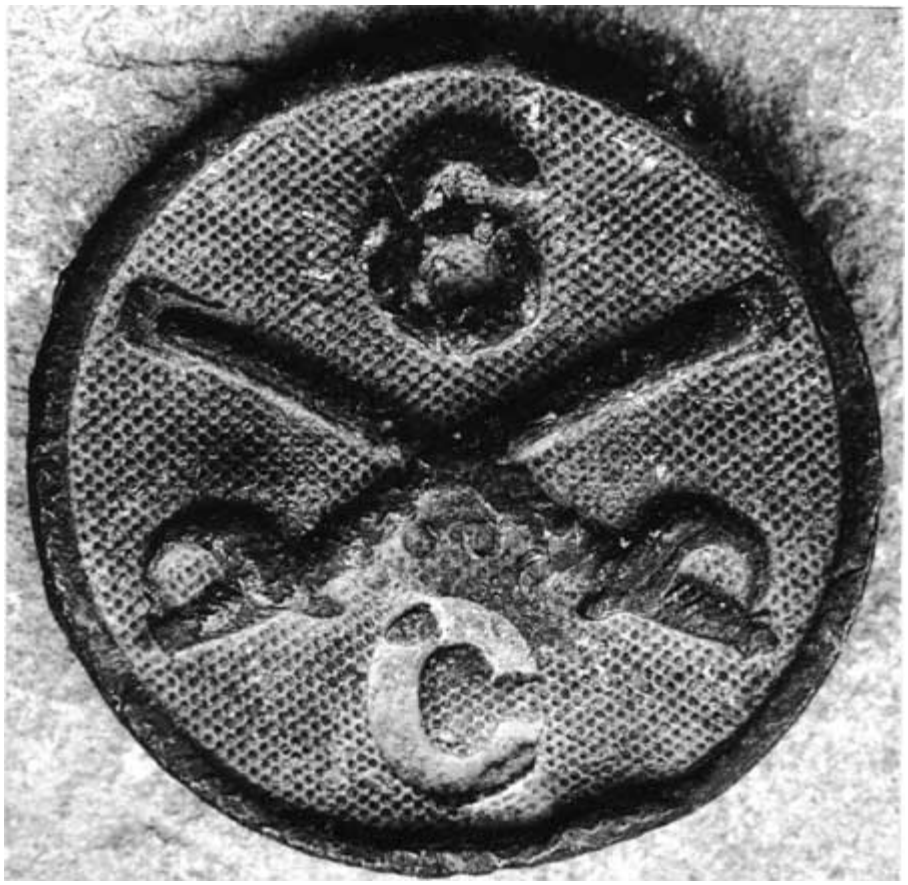




Figure 24: Panther Junction Headquarters Area and Service Station (1958)

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Reconfiguration of "Dallas Huts"
after "Mission 66" paving of
parking lots and drives


CHEVRON
GAS STATION






"Dallas Hut"
Guest Room
Circa 1950- Kerosene Heat and Lighting






"Chuck Wagon"
Dining Room Interior












Magdaleno U. Garcia (behind counter)
Buell Dismukes (back to camera)
C. R. Blakey, Manager, NPCI
Gasmen Store - 1961



Big Bend

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CHAPTER 1:
Endnotes

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CHAPTER 1:
Creating a Border: The Cultural Landscape of the Big Bend (continued)

The U.S. Army and its Corps of Topographical Engineers (CTE) accepted the dual challenge of surveying the Mexico-U.S. border and opening travel corridors across the interior West. In March 1849, Major Robert S. Neighbors led a unit of Army troops westward from the state capital of Austin for the desert outpost of El Paso. Their plan was to survey a wagon road for military and civilian traffic that would link central Texas with the far Southwest. Also that year, Lieutenant William Whiting led a force from San Antonio with the assistance of Brevet Second Lieutenant William F. Smith. The Whiting-Smith party became the first American officials to survey the Davis Mountains. They camped on Limpia Creek near the site of Fort Davis (constructed six years later to protect travelers along the future San Antonio-El Paso highway). From there the party headed southwestward to Fort Leaton, established in 1848 near the town of Presidio (the Spanish *La Junta*), and on to El Paso. They then turned downriver, attempting to float from El Paso to Presidio. Records are not clear on this point, but this appears to be the first American effort to navigate the Rio Grande. Whiting and Smith faced substantial obstacles in reaching Presidio, eventually deciding to survey the river by land. It was Lieutenant Whiting who christened the area "the Big Bend," and his report, in the words of Gomez,
"recommended . . . that the neighboring region . . . be thoroughly reconnoitered as it represented the last expanse of frontier in Texas known only to its native residents." [22]

That survey came in 1849 as part of the work of the United States-Mexico Boundary Commission. Based in San Diego, the group encountered a host of obstacles (the Gold-Rush induced inflation in California, civilian-military competition, and sectional politics in Washington between North and South). The commission nonetheless took the field with Mexican and American officials working together. One of its prominent members was CTE Lieutenant William H. Emory, who served as chief astronomer and who did many of the measurements for the team. When the commission reached Presidio in August 1852, it detached a crew under the direction of Marine T. Chandler, a civilian meteorologist, to study the canyons of the Rio Grande by boat. They had few scientific documents to consult, with the exception of a map drawn by the Mexican exploration party of Colonel Emilio Langberg. In 1851, Langenberg had undertaken the first general inspection of the north Mexican states since the war. He reported that while frequently the target of Indian raids, San Carlos was also a major trade center for surrounding tribes friendly to both the Spanish and the Mexicans. The colonel had crossed the Rio Grande into U.S. territory along the Comanche trail into the Chisos Mountains, which Langberg described as being "like a chain of hills running uninterrupted as far as San Vicente, presenting a vision of distinct figures resembling wondrous castles and towers." The Langberg party followed an old Indian trail eastward to a place he called *La Boquilla,* and then turned upstream toward the old presidio of San Vicente. Even though the adobe walls lay in ruins, Langberg saw its potential once more as a defensive site against Indian raiding. He also noted "the inscriptions on the adobe walls, bearing the names of a generation of soldiers who had passed before him in search of

Indians." [23]

In retracing the steps of the Langenberg party, the Chandler crew managed to travel by boat from Presidio to Santa Elena Canyon. Chandler had to climb the walls of the Mesa de Anguila to plot his course. This angle of vision convinced Chandler to avoid the narrow walls and rushing water within the canyon by riding around it. From there the party spotted a mountain that they named "Emory Peak," in honor of their chief astronomer (who did not accompany them through the Big Bend). This became their mark for triangulating distance and altitude in the area. Then Chandler and his fellow surveyors plunged into Mariscal Canyon, passing mountains that they referred to as *Sierra San Vicente.* After a two-day journey, they emerged from Mariscal Canyon and followed the river to the San Vicente presidio ruins. Finally reaching an opening that they named *Canon de Sierra Carmel* (modern-day Boquillas Canyon), Chandler and his peers agreed that they had neither the endurance nor the will to continue downstream. "Some of the members," said Gomez, "were suffering from extreme hunger, while others lacked adequate shoes and clothing." The boundary commission thus had little knowledge of the river valley at least 100 miles upstream from its intersection with the Rio Pecos. [24]

Neither the United States nor Mexico chastised the Chandler party for its failure to survey the canyons of the Rio Grande. Evidence of the limits that nature had placed upon the boundary commission appeared in 1859, when the "Camel Corps" of the U.S. Army sent a detachment through west Texas to determine the feasibility of these desert animals as beasts of burden. Second Lieutenant Edward Hartz, along with Brevet Second Lieutenant William Echols, journeyed south with their North African mounts to the area later known as Willow Spring (south of present-day Marathon). The camel corps walked through Dog Canyon (near the northern entrance to the future Big Bend National Park), then south along the east flank of the Chisos Mountains and across the Rio Grande at Presidio San Vicente. Hartz and Echols explored and mapped the area between Boquillas and Mariscal canyons for about a week. They then returned north along Tornillo Creek to Fort Stockton, but did not identify a site in the Big Bend for a military post. The Army sent Echols back into the area in 1860 with a camel unit from Fort Davis to survey the area from Presidio to Santa Elena. Echols recommended a site several miles downstream from the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon for an Army post, but the onset of the Civil War drew attention away from the Big Bend. [25]

In the interim between the boundary survey and the camel corps experiment, the United States addressed the challenge of border defense against Indian raiding required by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The U.S. Army placed outposts far to the east of the Big Bend at Fort Duncan (Eagle Pass), and 120 miles to the northwest at Fort Davis. The military had targeted San Antonio and Austin for maximum protection, with the road to El Paso included in their strategy. Gomez noted how "Mexican newspapers were quick to editorialize their outrage towards the United States for failing to comply with its obligations under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo." Conditions along the border had deteriorated such that in 1852 "Chihuahuan authorities sought permission in Washington for Mexican forces to cross the Rio Grande in an all-out offensive against the Indians." From this crisis came the Gadsden Purchase (1853), in which the United States gave Mexico $15 million to acquire the section of land west of El Paso and south of the Gila River (including Tucson). More important for the Big Bend region, the agreement contained language abrogating Article XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Said Gomez: "No longer committed to the protection of the Mexican frontier, the War Department devoted its full attention to Texas, and the remaining southwestern territories." This meant more troops and supplies for Fort Davis, which in the mid-1850s housed over 400 uniformed personnel, and the establishment of Fort Stockton in 1859 to ensure delivery of the U.S. mail along the San Antonio-El Paso road. [26]

The Gadsden agreement resulted also from conscious efforts by the Mexican government to

establish communities along the Rio Grande. After 1848 Mexico created some eighteen *colonias* in areas traversed by nomadic tribes, among them the old presidios of San Carlos and San Vicente. In 1850 Mexican officials invited some 200 members of the Seminole and Kickapoo tribes to reside along the border. These Indians had been displaced from east of the Mississippi River by war and removal policies, and had disliked their new homelands in eastern Oklahoma. A third group accepting the Mexican offer of residence were black Seminoles, the descendants of runaway southern slaves who had intermarried with the Seminoles in Florida, and who were targeted in the Indian Territory by slave raiders. These mixed bands, led by such luminaries as the Seminole Coacoochee ("Wild Cat"), served as mercenaries against the enemies of the Mexican communities of the Big Bend area. Their bravery and willingness to run the enemy tribes to the ground led Mexico to offer them lands deeper in Coahuila and Chihuahua for farming, one being the community of *Nacimiento de los Negros* ("the birthplace of the black people"), and another near the town of Muzquiz. With the Civil War ended and slavery abolished, most Indians and blacks returned north. A small number of black Seminoles remained along the border with the Indian-fighting U.S. Army (the famed "Seminole Negro scouts"). [27]

These joint efforts of the United States and Mexico to terminate raiding by a common enemy affected the Big Bend region after the Civil War in two ways. The presence of soldiers at posts like Fort Davis, Fort Stockton, and Fort Concho near San Angelo lured ranchers and farmers to supply the Army with food, fiber, and supplies. A combination of military defense and procurement stabilized the economy of the region, making it attractive to families seeking new opportunities in the postwar era. Francis Rooney and John Beckwith established ranches in the Big Bend after 1870 to feed soldiers at Camp Pena Colorado (south of Marathon), and at Camp Neville Springs in the 1880s (within the confines of the future Big Bend National Park). Daniel O. Murphy came to the Fort Davis area in the early 1880s in anticipation of the arrival of track belonging to the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railroad (GH&SA). The railroad connected his cattle town of "Murphysville" with east Texas, and led to its renaming as "Alpine" to appear more attractive to potential eastern investors and tourists. [28]

Once the route passed through the Big Bend in 1882, more ranchers and community-builders arrived, and by 1887 they had succeeded in carving out Brewster County from the much-larger (and quite empty) Presidio County. Carlysle Raht, author *of The Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country* (1919), wrote that early Alpine "was composed of seven lumber shacks, one general store, and two saloons and dance halls combined." The former Murphysville may have changed its name, but it remained a place where "every man was a law unto himself, and carried his code with him." Raht, a graduate of the University of Texas and an aficionado of the folklore that glamorized the wildness of west Texas, noted that "gambling was open, and on hot summer days the tables and the 'layout' were placed on the front verandas of the saloons." He especially liked the response of travelers along the railroad who "never had been west of New York, and often their credulity and inquisitiveness was taxed to the breaking point." [29]

It was Raht's reading of the drama of the Big Bend that would echo in advertising and tourism promotion well into the twentieth century. "The Big Bend," said Raht, "was the scene of many daring exploits of the [Texas] rangers," who patrolled an 18,000-square mile area that was "the rendezvous of many desperate outlaws, murderers, robbers, smugglers, and a great variety of other criminals." None, however, were more threatening in Raht's opinion than Mexican *desperados*. "During this time," said Raht, "the Big Bend was infested with several notorious Mexican bandits who crossed the line at will, for the purpose of stealing cattle." One such person was Coo-Coo Torres, who would ford the river, capture American stock, and drive it back to a Mexican ranch for concealment. Ignoring the presence of Anglo outlaws, Raht warned his readers that until the United States could rid the Big Bend of Torres

and other Mexican *bandidos,* American citizens could not make west Texas their home. [30]

That process of homesteading, so important to the state of Texas and the federal government, began in the late 1870s with the appearance of John T. Gano in the Big Bend. The son of a former Confederate Army general, Gano came to Presidio County in 1879 as a surveyor for private land claimants. Within a decade, according to Art Gomez, Gano and his family had acquired some 55,000 acres of land, much of it in trade with other ranchers for their surveying work. By 1890, the Ganos ran over 30,000 head of cattle between Terlingua Creek and the Chisos Mountains, with line camps at sites within the future boundaries of Big Bend National Park (Santa Elena Canyon and Oak Creek Spring). On the southeast side of the future national park, E.L. Gage ran cattle near McKinney Springs northeast of the Chisos Mountains in the shadow of the Sierra del Carmen. Later he moved his operations northward to the railroad town of Marathon. In the 1920s he built the Gage Hotel to house his guests and white-collar employees, as these were too numerous for private accommodations on the ranch. Gomez also noted the multicultural world of ranching in the Big Bend's early years, with the appearance of Martin Solis and his brothers at the turn of the century. They owned land from Boquillas Canyon to Mariscal Mountain, and "supplied beef to the thriving mining communities that appeared along the Rio Grande." Other Mexican ranchers included Felix Dominguez, Frederico Billalbo, and Feliz Gomez. The success of the Mexican ranchers provided a contrast unrecognized by Carlysle Raht and others as they sketched the cultural contours of early twentieth-century Big Bend. [31]

The intersection of government, the railroad, eastern consumers of beef, and eastern investors seeking new opportunities, made west Texas ranchers prosper in an area that had challenged all entrants, no matter their ethnicity or status. A survey of the statistical data for Brewster County from its inception in 1887, until the economic collapse of the 1930s, indicates at once how small the population remained, yet how much opportunity did surface, especially after the opening of the quicksilver mines in Terlingua and the fluorspar mines in Boquillas. It also reveals the lag between economic development of the Big Bend and that of the state of Texas (itself undergoing change in an urbanizing America). "Texas, because of the Civil War," wrote T.E. Fehrenbach in *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (1985), "was about two generations behind the dominant Northern tier of states in social trends and developments." The capital invested in the railroad communities of Alpine and Marathon, and in the mining camps of Terlingua and Boquillas, allowed these areas to mimic the prosperity and diversity of the nation. The Big Bend, in sum, was not quite the bandits' roost portrayed by Carlysle Raht, nor the domain of cattle kings that led Fehrenbach to write on the eve of the Texas sesquicentennial: "The whole history of Anglo-Texas was a history of conquest of men and soil, and with the closing of the last frontier no such powerful thrust and impetus could merely die." [32]

When residents of Alpine asked the state of Texas in 1887 to separate them from the far-distant county seat of Presidio County, the new county of Brewster had only 307 people scattered over some 5,000 square miles. The first official enumeration of Brewster County occurred three years later, with U.S. Census officials noting the presence of 710 people. Of Brewster County's total population, 666 that year lived in "Precinct No. 1," the term for the town site of Alpine. An additional 44 lived in "Precinct No. 2" (the remainder of the vast county). To place Brewster County in regional perspective, Texas in 1890 ranked seventh in the nation in population, with 2.235 million people. Of that number, only eleven percent lived in towns of 2,500 or more (this at a time when the national average of urbanites stood at nearly 40 percent). Among Brewster County's 710 individuals, 695 were classified by race as "white," an intriguing reference in that this included Hispanics (who most definitely were not considered "white" by local Anglos). The county that year also claimed a dozen residents identified as "colored" (the term used for blacks, or African Americans), and three people of "all other" races. [33]

More revealing about change in Brewster County are the data uncovered by the census bureau in its 1900 enumerations. The state of Texas had grown by 36.1 percent, compared to the national average of 21 percent. Brewster County maintained its isolated character compared to Texas and the nation. Where in 1900 the United States was 48 percent urban, Brewster County still stood at less than two people per square mile (the census bureau's definition of a "frontier" area). But the presence of mining communities in the southern portion of the county (and the agriculture to support them) shifted the balance of population substantially. Precinct One (Alpine), with 778 people, now fell behind Precinct Three (the town and ranching area of Marathon), which claimed 799 people. There were two new precincts in 1900: Terlingua (Number Two), with 197 people, and Boquillas (Number Four), with 218 people. The 1900 census also had much more precise data in the manuscript census, which revealed that the county was not a haven for single-male outlaws (males outnumbered females by only 1,345 to 1,011). In addition, the census now listed Mexicans in the foreign-born count, with Brewster County registering 733 Mexican natives. By comparison, Germans comprised the next-largest ethnic group (a mere eleven people in the county's population). The vast majority of Mexican nationals resided in Terlingua, where they comprised nearly all of its citizens, and most jobs were listed as "miner," "laborer," or "freighter." [34]

By 1910 the advances in transportation, communication, and investment in the Big Bend country had changed Brewster County even more than in the previous decade. The state of Texas continued to outpace the nation in population growth, up nearly 28 percent while the United States grew some 21 percent in the first decade of the century. The Lone Star state continued to lag behind the nation in population per square mile (14.8 people in Texas as compared to the U.S.'s 30.9 people), as well as in urbanization (24.1 percent in Texas versus America's nearly 50 percent). Brewster County now stood at 5,220 people, slightly more than one person per square mile (a doubling of population density in just ten years). Alpine now had 2,216 people (nearly the entire amount for the county a decade before), while Terlingua claimed 1,122 (nearly ten times more people than in 1900). Marathon, the champion of population growth a decade earlier, now had 1,567, an increase of nearly half (but slower growth than its western neighbor of Alpine). Boquillas rounded out the census totals, with 315 residents (an increase of nearly half in a decade). [35]

This data on population growth coincided with economic development noted by Arthur Gomez that from 1900 to 1918, "west Texas stock did so well on the grasses of the Big Bend that most yearlings weighed anywhere from five to seven hundred pounds upon delivery." The combination of untouched grazing land, local markets consuming large quantities of beef, and the general climate of prosperity during the period known as the Progressive Era (1900-1920) convinced investors and settlers alike that the Big Bend could indeed bloom like other desert environs of the Southwest. Ironically, the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914 also fueled the economic boom of west Texas, as the belligerent nations of the Allied and Axis powers purchased huge quantities of food, fiber, and meat from American farmers. Federal agencies like the U.S. Food and Fuel Administration encouraged farmers and stock raisers, in the words of director Herbert Hoover, to "plant fence to fence for national defense." The result for ranchers like John and Fred Rice, originally from Barstow, Texas, was their ability to improve their status from cowhands in the early 1900s to owners of their own spreads of longhorn cattle, then more hardy Brahma cattle. In 1908, Waddy Burnham started a Hereford ranch near Government Spring, while Sam and Jim Nail bought land near Burro Mesa in 1916 to raise Herefords for the booming war economy. [36]

Good water, tall grass, warm weather, and hungry miners and soldiers all made for a strong cattle business in a part of west Texas that would become famous in song and story for its cowboys and ranches. Yet one other feature of life in the Big Bend from 1910-1920 also contributed to the real prosperity of Anglo ranchers, and the folklore of lawlessness and

banditry of the region. The Mexican Revolution of 1910, marked by bloodiness and factionalism, drove more than one million Mexican citizens north of the border in the years before and during the "Great War" in Europe. American employers throughout the Southwest, from Los Angeles to San Antonio, encouraged these refugees to seek their fortunes in the mines, mills, farms and ranches of the burgeoning regional economy. Immigration already had touched the Big Bend area, as the discovery of silver in the Sierra del Carmen in the early 1890s had created the twin border villages of Boquillas. Between 1897 and 1917, the Kansas City Smelting and Refining Company (KSARCO) would build a huge processing plant in El Paso. KSARCO and its successor, the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO), constructed a cable across the Rio Grande between the two towns named Boquillas, and upgraded the road to Marathon along Tornillo Creek to expedite the shipment of workers, supplies, and ore. This explained the presence of 200 to 300 residents in Boquillas, Texas, as well as estimates of 2,000 to 4,000 people in Boquillas, Coahuila, at the peak of mining operations. [37]

West of the Big Bend, the largest concentration of Hispanic labor worked the cinnabar mines of Terlingua. Kenneth Ragsdale has written of the changes brought to the west side of the future national park by the operations of the Chisos Mining Company. Howard E. Perry of Chicago had acquired a large parcel of land in south Brewster County in exchange for a bad debt. In 1903 Perry and Eugene Cartledge, a lawyer from Austin, lured hundreds of Mexicans north to Terlingua to work for the Chisos Mining Company. Gomez wrote that of the "company-town" atmosphere of early-twentieth century Terlingua, where Perry's mine paid workers in "scrip" to keep them indebted to their employer (this while the management staff received regular paychecks). One environmental feature of the operations was the need for large quantities of wood to fuel the huge ovens burning the quicksilver at high temperatures. The Chisos Mining Company hired Mexican freighters to haul large quantities of wood great distances from the Big Bend and northern Mexico. Like overgrazing, this wholesale deforestation had a profound effect on the landscape for decades to come. [38]

Not all *emigrados* from the calamitous Mexican revolution came to work for the wages of the Chisos Mining Company, or the ranches of the Big Bend. The periodic cross-river raiding that had persisted since before the days of the Spanish accelerated with the decline of order in Mexico, and paranoia in the United States over German espionage in northern Mexico (pursuant to German promises to restore the Southwest to Mexico in exchange for its support against America in World War I). Gomez noted that "only a handful of soldiers, assigned to guard the federal post offices located at Boquillas and Glenn Springs . . . were available to defend against potential bandit attacks." Glenn Springs grew in importance when in 1913 a retired Army captain, C.D. Wood, came to the small community to build a candelilla wax-processing plant. The Army prized candelilla for its waterproofing capabilities; "a highly valued commodity during the First World War," said Gomez, because of the dependence of the military on canvas tents in the humid, rainy climate of northern Europe. This new economic activity worried the United States when in March of 1916, the Mexican revolutionary Francisco "Pancho" Villa crossed the border into southern New Mexico and raided the small town of Columbus. "American interventionists," wrote Gomez, "clamored for a half-million U.S. troops to invade Mexico." Proof that they were not overreacting came six weeks later, when four Americans died at the hands of Mexican raiders while working near the Glenn Springs wax plant. The next morning (May 6, 1916), an armed Mexican party struck the American village of Boquillas, seeking money and supplies, and leading local residents to fear wholesale violence. [36]

While Colonel John J. Pershing led his "Pershing Expedition" of Army troops through the state of Chihuahua west of the Big Bend, other American officers contemplated similar actions in and around Boquillas. Negotiations in April 1916 in El Paso between Mexican and U.S. representatives had resulted in promises by the former to stop the raiding by bandits into

the United States. With the collapse of that agreement a month later, General Frederick Funston decided to divide the "Big Bend Military District" into ten separate outposts; ironically, the same strategy as suggested by Spain's Marques de Rubi some 150 years earlier in the face of Native attacks. One of these military installations was called "Camp Saint Helena;" an Army post built on land leased in October 1916 from Clyde Buttrill at Castolon. This facility would offer protection to the quicksilver mines of Terlingua. But the announcement six months later by President Woodrow Wilson that the United States would commit troops to the war in Europe reduced the Army's presence on the border. W.D. Smithers, a muleteer at Glenn Springs, lamented in later years that the Army had little to do after the 1916 hostilities but to "'watch for bandits and play baseball.'" Immediately after the war, the Army tried to strengthen its defenses via the "Mexican Border Project," in which nine structures were added to Castolon, along with electrification and water and sewage connections. The Army Air Service that year also established aerial patrols along the Rio Grande out of Presidio and Camp Marfa, only to halt these in 1921 with the wholesale reductions in the nation's force structure following World War I. [40]

When the U.S. Census Bureau returned in 1920 to Brewster County, it found a landscape altered by the fortunes of war and civil unrest (if still far behind the changes sweeping a postwar America). The nation had finally become "urban," as 51.4 percent of the population lived in towns of 2,500 or more. This had many implications for political and economic power in America, as rural constituencies feared the domination of cities and the corruption of their attendant lifestyles. Texas also continued its shift towards the national pattern of urbanization, with the state now fifth in population at 4.7 million (up 19.7 percent in a decade). More telling was the Lone Star State's percentage of urbanites: 32.4 percent, which included rapid growth in such cities as Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. For Brewster County, however, the story was the reverse. The population fell by eight percent, to 4,822 people. Alpine lost over ten percent (to 1,989), even as Marathon grew to 1,928 (an increase since 1910 of 41 percent). The Terlingua and Boquillas census districts had merged in 1910, and their total declined from 1,567 that year to 1920's 905 persons, a shrinkage along the border of nearly 60 percent. [41]

The future of Brewster County, then, seemed to reside in the cattle business and its ranching communities, not mining towns near the Rio Grande. This pattern prevailed throughout the 1920s, as the expanding urban economy of Texas and the nation relied upon beef production to feed a growing populace. Gomez detailed the surge in ranching throughout Brewster County's 5,000-plus square miles during the "Roaring Twenties," when people like John O. Wedin of Kansas came to the Rio Grande near Boquillas to run sheep and irrigate for wheat. Joe H. Graham, a Del Rio rancher, followed in 1926 by purchasing the Wedin property to raise cattle and grow alfalfa for their pasturage. He eventually purchased the Rosillos ranch south of Marathon (which forms a northwestern border today with Big Bend National Park), while John R. Daniels of Presidio acquired another portion of the Graham ranch. One of the most prominent Big Bend landowners in the 1920s was Wayne Cartledge. The brother of Terlingua's Eugene Cartledge envisioned a vast irrigated domain near Castolon, where he could grow cotton with plentiful supplies of water from the Rio Grande, and the abundant Mexican labor force. Cartledge also managed the store at Castolon, and in 1925 purchased from the Army the new structures at Camp Saint Helena. Said Gomez: "Local residents depended upon [Cartledge] to provide U.S. Immigration officials with acceptable legal proof that they were American citizens not subject to deportation." Cartledge was indeed the *patron* of the west side of the Big Bend, to the extent that in 1928, when the federal government began stricter adherence to immigration laws, he argued that "continued enforcement . . . would devastate the farming industry throughout the state [of Texas]." [42]

The efforts of the federal government to realign the Mexico-U.S. border, making it more of a boundary than a river to be crossed, would be a source of contention for the remainder of the

twentieth century. This was not surprising, given the state of relations in the 1920s between Mexico, other Latin American nations, and the United States. President Calvin Coolidge called out the American Marines on numerous occasions to occupy such Latin countries as Nicaragua and Santo Domingo, all in the name of protection of American vital economic interests. On the Rio Grande, this included construction in 1929 of an Army Air Corps facility at the ranch of Elmo Johnson, located midway between the east and west sides of the Big Bend. Johnson, a north Texas farmer, had bought land downstream from Castolon in 1928 from two failed tobacco farmers, G.N. Graddy and W.B. Williams. Joined by his wife, Ada, and by W.D. Smithers, who worked as a photographer and journalist for *the San Antonio Light,* Johnson negotiated with the Eighth Air Corps of San Antonio to lease a dirt landing strip for one dollar per year. The Big Bend received a federal presence to ease its concerns about border problems, especially the Escobar Rebellion in Mexico. Said Gomez: "[The young pilots] spent much of their time fishing, hunting, river rafting, and consuming Ada Johnson's home-cooked meals on a regular basis." [43]

The history of the Big Bend, west Texas, and the nation, would change once more with the economic collapse known as the "Great Depression." Census-takers could not predict in 1930 when they came into the communities of the Big Bend how the stock market crash would affect the region. The census of that year offered a snapshot of Brewster County at yet another moment of crisis, this time one that its ranchers and miners could not overcome on their own. Since the 1920 enumeration, the famed Mariscal Mine had closed, leaving behind its towering mill and substantial dwellings and offices scattered below on the River Road between Boquillas and Solis Ranch. A world at peace did not need the mercury extracted from the cinnabar ore of the Big Bend, nor did investors far away wish to pour good money into the expensive operations first built in 1919. Jose Cisneros, superintendent of Big Bend National Park from 1994 to 1999, secured funding from the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) program to study the ruins of the Mariscal Mine, and of its place in the cultural landscape of the Big Bend. Cisneros recalled in a 1998 interview how little the mine mattered to the average park visitor, given its isolation and distance from the main highways. The superintendent believed, as did the HAER crew of surveyors and historical researchers assembled in the spring and summer of 1997, that such an imposing facility could speak to the power of nature to shape life in this part of the world. Equally important to park interpretation, the Mariscal operation evoked the opportunities taken by Hispanic miners and mill workers at a time of national emergency (World War I). [44]

The 1930 census recognized the impact of the Mariscal Mine's closure, along with the realignment of capital and technology in the Big Bend area. That year Texas reported over 5.8 million residents; an increase of nearly 25 percent in a decade. Further revealing was the 41 percent figure of urban residents. Brewster County had shared in this growth, increasing to 6,624 in 1930 (or nearly 38 percent over 1920's statistics). The 1930 census also revealed the future of Brewster County, both in concentrations of population and ethnic mixture. Alpine surged to 3,860 people, far outstripping Marathon's 1,071 people and Terlingua's 1,424. Boquillas reappeared as a distinct census precinct (most likely because of the increase in ranching activity along the Rio Grande), with 209 people listed in its environs. Ethnicity, measured for the first time by native-born as well as foreign-born, found the county with a "majority-minority" status. Alpine, which that year finally became an "urban" area in the eyes of the census bureau, registered 63 percent white, and 37 percent "Mexican." But the county as a whole had 3,111 "native whites," and 3,411 "Mexicans" (both native and foreign-born). Employment indicated the reliance of Anglos on Hispanic labor. The county, which reported 2,089 males and 400 females as employed, had 205 miners, 409 farm laborers, and 204 workers in the building trades; all categories in which Hispanics predominated. Finally, the statistic on literacy revealed the changes in Brewster County as well. Whereas the 1920 census had found 31.4 percent of county adults illiterate, ten years later this statistic had fallen to 15.7 percent, or half of the previous count. [45]

The realities of a mixed world in Brewster County would continue in the 1930s, as the harshness of the Depression and efforts to create Texas' first national park inspired strident rhetoric about its land and people. The work of Anglos and Hispanics, locals and outsiders, to carve out prosperity and success in the bleakness and beauty of the Chihuahuan desert became a tale told by Walter Prescott Webb, J. Frank Dobie, and other devotees of the lore of a wild West. Such would be the milieu that the National Park Service would enter as it moved to design what would become among Big Bend's canyons, deserts, and mountains the sixth-largest park in the United States (as of 1944). "A country so thinly settled," Carlyle Raht had written in 1919, "makes an ideal rendezvous for persons of loose character who desire to remain unseen." Invisible to Raht and other writers of the Big Bend were the people of *el despoblado,* who had struggled for centuries to make it their home. "The white male adult only has been considered," conceded Raht in his *Romance of Davis Mountains and Big Bend Country*, "for the reason that, while the Mexican may be a peace-loving citizen, he is rarely active in furnishing information that may lead to the apprehension of local criminals." But Raht spared no literary expense in praising the abilities of white west Texans. "Despite all these obstacles," said the Austin native, "the West-of-the-Pecos country has grown and prospered." Nowhere in the world, said Raht, "will be found a higher type of citizenship." Having regaled readers with stories of Mexican perfidy and lawlessness, Raht cautioned that the Southern Pacific Railway was "a dead line which no Mexican bandit has the intrepidity to cross." He then promised that "the final settlement of the troubles in Mexico and along the border will insure the future of this great country." [46]



Figure 5: Residence Area, Chisos Mountains (1956)

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 2:
Endnotes

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[30] Carnes to Maier, August 8, 1934, RG79, NPS SWRO, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-34, Box 95, Folder: Project 1005, DEN NARA.

[31] Ibid; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks,* 134.

[32] Maier to Carnes, August 16, 24, 1934, RG79, NPS SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-34, Box 95, Folder: DSP 1, DEN NARA.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Carnes to Maier, September 19, 1934, RG79, NPS SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 000 General Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[36] Maier to State Park ECW, NPS, Washington, DC, Oct. 31, 1934, RG79, NPS SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW and ERA Work in National Forests, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-34, Big Bend National Park, TX-Bryce Canyon National Monument, UT, Box 97, Folder: 601-03.1 (CCC) Applications for Camps (2 of 3), DEN NARA.

[37] Herbert Evison, Supervisor, NPS State Park Division, Washington, DC, to Maier, November 27, 1934, RG79, NPS SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW and ERA Work in National Forests, Monuments, and Recreational Areas, 1933-34, Big Bend National Park, TX-Bryce Canyon National Monument, UT, Box 97, Folder: 601-03.1 (CCC) Applications for Camps (1 of 3), DEN NARA.

[38] Nason to Maier, December 6, 1934, RG79, NPS SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-34, Box 95, Folder: DSP 1, DEN NARA.

[39] Jameson, *The Story of Big Bend National Park,* 103; W.D. Smithers, Alpine, TX, to Maier, n.d. (December 1934?), RG79, NPS SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-34, Box 95, Folder: DSP 1, DEN NARA.

[40] E.E. Townsend, "Adjoining Area In Mexico," unpublished manuscript, n.d. (December 1934?), RG79, NPS SWRO, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments, and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 94, Folder: N/A, DEN NARA.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Maier to Smithers, December 14, 1934, RG79, NPS SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-34, Box 95, Folder: DSP 1, DEN NARA.

[43] Maier to Townsend, December 19, 1934, RG79, NPS SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-34, Box 95, Folder: DSP 1, DEN NARA.

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 2:
Saving the Last Frontier: Texas, Mexico, and the Big Bend National Park Initiative, 1930-1935 (continued)

In anticipation of the discovery of water, the NPS sent a delegation of regional and national officials in early April 1934 to Big Bend. George Nason (later furloughed himself for budgetary reasons) was recommended for supervision of park planning in southern Texas, with sites at Palo Duro Canyon, Fort Davis, and Big Bend. Herbert Maier saw more potential for CCC work at Big Bend than at existing campsites at Stephenville and Lampasas, and made plans to move them once the Army approved the Chisos Mountains proposal. From April 5to 8, 1934, Ben H. Thompson of the NPS's newly formed "Wildlife Division" conducted the first official park service study of the flora and fauna of the Big Bend area. Thompson represented the entering wedge of professionalism in park ecology and natural resource planning emanating from the University of California campus at Berkeley. There, according to Sellars, "the university was becoming a center of Park Service activity that included education, forestry, and landscape architecture," fields of expertise that the NPS would apply to the planning for Big Bend's future. [22]

Thompson's report reiterated the detail and sense of wonder about Big Bend that Roger Toll found in the area. The NPS wildlife biologist noted that southern Brewster County had endured "a period of perhaps forty or fifty years of domestic stock raising." Cattle, sheep and goats had predominated, and "needless to say, over-grazing is characteristic of the entire area." Thompson lamented that "most of the grass is gone and the more palatable species of browse have been greatly depleted." The biologist wrote that "with protection from grazing the vegetation of the area would restore itself markedly." Even though aridity marked the landscape, "springs are numerous, providing abundant water for the native wild life." One side effect of this combination of grazing and dryness was the abundance of exotic vegetation, as "only the thorny varieties could persist in the face of fifty years of grazing." Thompson identified some 33 forms of grass, cactus, and brush, with the "weeping juniper" (*Juniperus flaccida*) as a species "found only in the Chisos Mountains [of] Texas." [23]

Once Thompson had examined the extent and complexity of plants and grasses, he reported to his superiors about the conditions of animal life. Sellars contended that "biologists were gaining an increased comprehension of the role of habitat in the survival of species," a phenomenon not mentioned by park promoters and landowners (whose concerns gravitated towards economic relief and recovery). In addition, "the biologists [in 1933] proposed to perpetuate existing natural conditions and, where necessary and feasible, to *restore* park fauna to a 'pristine state.'" While Thompson did not resort to such dramatic terms, nonetheless his coverage of mammals indicated their endangered status in the face of land-use practices of local ranchers. One example was his focus on the species of peccary, which local residents claimed devoured a considerable amount of *lechuguilla*. If this were the case, said Thompson, Big Bend could become "the most suitable preserve for the peccary and a type of area which is not included in any other national park." [24]

In addition to threats to the javelina, Thompson also wrote about the presence of three types of deer in the Chisos Mountains: mule deer, which he said were "commonly hunted," "Arizona white-tailed deer," which Thompson believed "finds it eastern limits of range in the Chisos Mountains" and fan-tailed deer. The NPS biologist had inquired of locals about the presence of "Mexican Bighorn" sheep, as Vernon Bailey in 1905 wrote that "they have been killed on the north slope of the Chisos and may still be found in the Santa Helena Canyon." Thompson wondered if pronghorn antelope had ever inhabited the area, in that "the range looks suitable," and "it is possible that they were once native." Local residents, however, could not remember sightings of the pronghorn. Black bears, said the locals, still existed in "the upper regions of the Chisos," although they "are no longer abundant." Before 1920, wolves had been targeted for special eradication, as they "once were common in the region." Coyotes and foxes continued to inhabit the area, as did bobcats and cougars. Thompson noted that gray foxes had been trapped and penned at a gas station some 20 miles north of the Chisos Mountains, a facility owned by W.A. Cooper. Many species of small game could be found throughout the Big Bend country, from raccoons to skunks to jackrabbits. Of these, perhaps the most intriguing to Thompson were the brown bats and Mexican free-tail bats. "Numerous bats were flying around," he reported, "when it was too late for visual identification and no specimens were collected." [25]

Future travelers to Big Bend National Park would be most excited about the "great variety of bird life" that Thompson noted on his four-day excursion to the desert, mountain, and canyon country of the Rio Grande. "Many species of subtropical birds not found elsewhere in the United States," said the NPS biologist, "would be seen by the visitor to the Big Bend, and in the winter months it is a great highway for migrating birds." In his brief tour of the vast Big Bend country, Thompson identified no fewer than 33 types of birds, from blue herons to the "White-rumped Shrike." Visitors also would appreciate Thompson's statement that few poisonous snakes inhabited the area, with garter snakes most common along the Rio Grande. [24]

When Ben Thompson contemplated the future of Big Bend National Park, he echoed policies already forming within George Wright's wildlife division. "Of all their proposed solutions," said Sellars, Wright's "survey team most frequently emphasized the need to expand boundaries to include year-round habitats for protection of wildlife." Thompson saw in Big Bend an excellent opportunity to apply this logic. "The flora and fauna of the Big Bend area," he concluded in April 1934, "is varied and abundant." He warned his superiors in Berkeley that "to draw up any sort of proposed boundary which would follow natural barriers and faunal zones is impossible because of the nature of the terrain." He recommended that the NPS "reserve a sufficient chunk of territory to provide adequate habitat for the species involved" as "the next best possibility." This corresponded with Toll's boundary suggestion of the northern parallel of 29 degrees 20 minutes, "excluding of course the town of Terlingua and the adjacent mercury mines." Thompson then concluded: "It is suggested from the wild life point of view that the area is of national parks caliber," with Toll's demarcation "adequate to protect the wild life of the area." [25]

George Wright's wildlife division (in the person of Ben Thompson) had defined the essence of Big Bend's appeal to future visitors worldwide. Yet the immediate concerns of the park service and the CCC were more pragmatic: claiming public land for the Chisos Basin camps, constructing facilities that could become part of either a state or national park, and easing the twin burdens of economic hardship and ecological ruin in southern Brewster County. To that end, a host of federal officials came to Big Bend in the spring of 1934 with goals other than those of Ben Thompson. Even as the wildlife biologist circled the future park site in April of that year, W.C. Carnes, the assistant chief engineer of the NPS for its Western Division in San Francisco, met with Conrad Wirth to discuss facilities and road planning. Wirth asked Carnes "to review the geological conditions and flora to determine in general the probable

highway development [that] would be needed for the area to attain National Park status." This in turn would allow the CCC to focus its resources on "development of water resources, camp sites, possible truck trails or parking areas at points which would fit with an ultimate National Park development." The NPS engineer noted that Big Bend's isolation and distance from a transportation hub "is not dissimilar to that of Grand Canyon, Zion, or Bryce [Canyon]" national parks on the Colorado Plateau. He decided to send the assistant landscape architect at the Grand Canyon, Harry Langley, to join with a Phoenix-based engineer from the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads to inspect the Big Bend. "It is so seldom," Carnes told Dr. L.I. Hewes, deputy chief engineer of the Bureau of Public Roads in San Francisco, that "we have a chance to influence the development of areas before they become National Parks." Thus the reconnaissance would help the NPS avoid mistakes of the past, where poorly coordinated transportation planning hindered park service operations. [26]

For the boosters of Big Bend, the key figures in the area that spring were George Nason of the ECW program and Robert D. Morgan, superintendent of CCC camp "SP-33-T." They came to the Chisos on May 21, 1934, with the first installment of the 200-member work crew (80 percent of whom were Hispanic). The CCC bought the original camp acreage from ranchers Ira Hector and Waddy Burnham, using money provided by the Alpine chamber of commerce. That organization then had to recapture their investment through a bond election. The Texas state parks board "owned" the property occupied bys the first and second CCC camps (the latter designated as "SP-34-T"). The board then informed the Army that "the United States is authorized to use this property for camp sites for one year or as much longer as camps are retained on the Big Bend State Park, said occupancy to be without cost to the Federal Government." D.E. Colp then told the commanding general of the CCC, stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, that "any and all buildings, structures or installations erected on these camp sites by the Government shall be and remain the property of the Government." Should the government decide to abandon the CCC camps, "the land shall be disposed of by the Government in any manner it may deem to be [in] its best interest." [27]

D.E. Colp's optimism, and that of the Alpine chamber, soon faded as the economic realities of New Deal programming took hold in the Big Bend. On June 1, 1934, George Nason wrote to Maier asking that the NPS limit its work to the Chisos Basin proper, and not expand down the mountain. Early plans had called for "an open air pavilion in Boot Spring Canyon." Nason agreed that Boot Spring "is a magnificent setting for such a structure." Yet he had to limit the scope of CCC work, and contended that the pavilion "would not add to the magnificence of the superbly wooded area." The CCC also could not release its workers from the Stephenville camp as early as it had hoped, leaving Big Bend short of time and money for the planned second camp (the budget for all CCC work in the Chisos in the summer of 1934 had shrunk by nearly half). Ironically, the state parks board and the Alpine boosters managed to secure a special type of CCC camp that summer: DSP-1, a "drought relief camp." No one could explain why the temperate Chisos Basin qualified for this program, but it promised to give the NPS the additional manpower and funds to create the "class A" facility that so many park planners had envisioned. [28]

New Deal work relief programs often faced criticism from politicians and conservative commentators in the media for their wastefulness of money and human resources. W.G. Carnes expressed some surprise in July when resident NPS architect Harry Langley informed him that the first weeks of the Chisos basin CCC programs had not gone well. "No member of the personnel in charge of development there," said Carnes, "is at all familiar with development on National Park standards." Langley responded: "I am somewhat concerned as to the results that will be obtained." Langley did not blame Nason, whom he described as "a very capable man" who "has too much territory to cover to devote the time needed for proper study of the problems." Compounding Nason's situation was the success of local park boosters in acquiring promises of CCC labor. "Within another month," Langley warned

Carnes, there will be four camps established in the area (approximately 1000 men)." The Grand Canyon architect could find only one architect and "Landscape Foreman" on site in July 1934, and called for "more Landscape Architects [to] be engaged immediately to prepare the necessary development plans at once and supervise the work;" people whom Langley pointedly described as familiar with Park Service methods and personnel. [29]

Discontent with the NPS-CCC partnership, the haste with which these programs unfolded, and the lack of professional staff to manage the growing workload affected many park service sites in the 1930s. Langley's critique of Big Bend's CCC camps prompted Carnes to visit him at the Grand Canyon to explore the issue further. In a "Personal and Confidential Air Mail" message on August 8 to Herbert Maier, Carnes admitted to be "somewhat alarmed at the fact that the camp superintendent [R.D. Morgan] is entrusted with so many duties." Beyond his usual tasks, which Carnes identified as "organizing the crews and equipment and direct charge of the work," Morgan "also submits the projects to be initiated and prepares whatever drawings are necessary." George Nason, nominally in charge of the CCC operations, could only make "infrequent trips to Big Bend." Thus Morgan undertook "a wide range of work which would ordinarily be performed by architects and landscape architects." Langley voiced particular displeasure with Morgan's plans for several highway bridges, at least one of which had a 50-foot span. Carnes advised Maier that "in our own work a full fledged highway engineer is not entrusted with the preparation of bridge plans, particularly for masonry bridges which have to be very well done or the result is terrible." Even a bridge specialist would require five to six weeks to design such an important structure, as well as "administrative facilities such as office, shops, etc." He also had to determine the location of "future camp grounds, housekeeping camps and hotels in areas suitable for their ultimate needs." This would require a "development plan . . . to be made before working drawings, on any particular building." If not, warned Carnes, "buildings would be planned, one at a time, without any definite relation to one another." [30]

The success of the New Deal hinged upon public acceptance not only of the expenditure of funds on work relief, but also of the quality of their labors. Richard Sellars, viewing the CCC from the perspective of the 1990s, wrote that "in both state and national park construction, the Service's architects and landscape architects of the 1930s directed CCC craftsmen toward a harmonious blending of new construction with the surrounding park landscapes." Carnes had that legacy in mind when he informed Herbert Maier: "If you State Park people are forced to depend upon either the camp superintendents or the landscape foremen for the preparation of all your plans, I feel that you are being seriously handicapped." The San Francisco engineer thus wrote to Maier "principally to inform you that the National Park camps are not on a similar starvation diet so far as designers and supervisors are concerned." He cautioned Maier that "inasmuch as in the future any one viewing the work done in the State Parks may say 'well, this work was done under the supervision of the National Park Service, why didn't they get it done just the way they wanted.'" Carnes warned that such critics would not know "that your set-up contained no man who could devote his whole time to the preparation of plans." In addition. "the inspectors had so many camps to cover, that their trips were necessarily hurried and none too frequent." [31]

The Carnes-Langley review of Big Bend's early CCC days struck a nerve with Herbert Maier, who knew from other camps of the strain of supervision and the limits of staffing. An indication of this condition came in Maier's response to Carnes, in which the ECW district officer reminded the NPS engineer: "I am very busy at the present moment and have not read your letter over as carefully as I will presently." He then spoke personally with George Nason at the state park division office in Oklahoma City, and his reply of August 24 was both defensive and critical of Carnes' judgment. "Yes, our set-up is quite different from yours," Maier responded, as "we do not have anything that corresponds to a central drafting office." Maier admitted the problem when he conceded, "except of course that here at my office I try

to help out all I can with plans that are sent in for approval and revision." Maier then moved to the heart of the matter (at least from his perspective), revealing the burden that New Deal economic recovery placed on the NPS. "In some of the eastern states," he told Carnes, "where the state parks may have been a going concern for a number of years, where they have a state park board with perhaps a consulting architect, and one or two landscape architects," Maier would agree that "the matter of design is quite simple." Western conditions, however, had affected Maier more than he realized. "Out here in the wilds," he told his San Francisco colleague, "where the State Governments have perhaps never heard of a landscape architect, and where State Parks Boards have been very recently set up in order to take advantage of our program," the NPS found it "necessary . . . to carry on our design work at the camps under the jurisdiction of the Inspectors as the work progresses." All they could do, Maier declared, was to "try wherever possible to keep the plans ahead of the work." Alternately apologetic and irritated, Maier admitted that "since as a rule no work may be undertaken before the camp moves in, this does not always work out as satisfactorily as it should." Thus his judgment differed from Carnes: "We have gotten along very well and are now finally getting the horse before the cart." [32]

When Maier turned to the particular details of the Big Bend CCC program, he took pride in the obstacles overcome. "We have in the original camp," he told Carnes, "two graduate landscape architects, one graduate architect and three graduate engineers." Maier admitted that "this may not be as satisfactory as a central drafting office where standards are established and ability is concentrated." Yet he believed that "it has the good point of placing the designer right on the job." In particular, Maier took issue with Harry Langley's criticisms of Robert Morgan, whom he described as "a Civil Engineer with twenty years experience." Instead of dismissing his abilities in bridge design and construction, Maier judged Morgan as "capable of designing a highway bridge as far as the structural efficiency is concerned." Other NPS staff would draw the plans, and George Nason would review the final product. More troubling for Maier was Langley's claim that the Big Bend camp did not follow a master plan carefully for facilities construction. He agreed that, "as you know, while a general plan is at first agreed upon, this is kept in a flexible state and cannot be entirely completed before the draftsmen take hold of other things to keep ahead of the work." Maier cautioned Carnes that "this does not mean that these items are out of sympathy with the general plan;" a situation exacerbated by the CCC's rule that "camps are approved for a six months period only," meaning that "drafting frequently cannot be concentrated on one item at a time." Big Bend in particular posed a serious design-build problem, in that "it is difficult for us to make a final general plan in an area that has never been surveyed." The CCC crews "must carry on topographical work a considerable length of time before any final master plan may be drafted." [33]

Despite these clear differences of opinion on NPS-CCC policy, Maier appreciated the gravity of the Big Bend case, and of the need for firm oversight of the planning process. The NPS's Oklahoma City office needed closer contact with Denver and San Francisco personnel, and all should visit Big Bend on a regular basis. "There is too much at stake," said Maier, "in working in an area that may later become a National Park." He also confided in Carnes that "you know that my own knowledge of park development is really quite limited." It did not help that Langley and Nason now disliked each other, and that Maier had to recommend Charles Ritchey, who "covers New Mexico and gets down to Carlsbad," as an alternative to the staff member assigned to landscape architecture oversight (Langley). "I realize," concluded Maier, "that Mr. Ritchey probably has a mighty full program as it is," but he could not allow Big Bend to fail because of personality conflicts and planning disputes. [34]

As the NPS and CCC moved into the first fall season of work at Big Bend, the issue of oversight and budgetary constraints did not ease. By mid-September, Carnes had acknowledged his inability to provide Maier with sufficient staff time for supervision. Carnes

conceded that "I have not even seen the place," and had written Maier only "as an inquiry concerning the type of overhead personnel and how the different phases of the work are handled." Carnes then gave Maier more disheartening news: "As to the making of periodic inspections, this is becoming more and more difficult." Carnes lost one of his top landscape architects to the NPS office in Washington, and "our resident landscape architect at Yosemite was made Assistant Superintendent." Such personnel changes "necessitate our older field men taking on larger and larger territories," said Carnes, "and it is getting to a point where their services are spread pretty thin." Then in a statement typical of the erratic nature of New Deal budgeting, Carnes advised Maier that if he could wait until winter, he would have "eight or ten capable and experienced men available by transfer from the Northern parks." The CCC expected a reduction of camps in the fourth quarter (October-December) from 58 to 29, forcing Carnes "to let quite a few good men go." [35]

Given this situation, Maier in late October revised plans for Big Bend's "drought relief" funding, with hopes that he would receive twelve months of support. He informed the national ECW office that "the beauty and grandeur" of the area "is unsurpassed in Texas, and has been said by park authorities to be the equal of any other like area in the United States." Original plans for two CCC camps had not materialized, and now Maier had word that Big Bend would lose the one camp established that May. Thus the drought relief unit of the CCC would have to "embrace those essential projects for this park;" a factor in the high budget estimate that Maier had calculated. He hoped to use "native rock and timber," but it would have to be carried from the Marathon railhead to the site. The Texas state parks board had agreed to "furnish all building stone and such sand, gravel and timber as are available on the [105,000-acre] property as its contribution to the development of this park." Then Maier itemized the facilities needed at Big Bend for the year 1935: a "lookout house" in the Chisos, "six miles of truck trails . . . to open up the mountainous areas and make accessible the lookout house . . . as well as the Boot Springs Canyon area and South rim mesa of the Chisos Range." With an eye toward the day when tourists would converge on Big Bend, Maier then asked for $2,200 to build "a combined concession house and lodge, to be known as the Hacienda de los Chisos." His rationale was that "being located 90 miles from a railroad, practically all visitors to this park will of necessity spend one or more nights therein, and housing facilities must be made available for their comfort." An additional $1,000 would permit construction of "5 native stone cottages for use of park patrons." Yet the most expensive detail of park construction was purchase of seven trucks (for $4,000), as employees would have to be transported throughout the Basin daily, and materials hauled down the long dirt road from Marathon to the campsite. [36]

As much as the NPS wished to endorse Maier's request, Big Bend received authority to operate only until the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 1935). In the estimation of Herbert Evison, the NPS state park division supervisor in Washington, Big Bend was lucky. He informed Maier on November 27 that the normal authorization of CCC units expired on March 31, 1935. "With that in mind," said Evison, "work at Big Bend should be so scheduled that everything undertaken before March 31 will be in a fair state of completion in the event the camp is discontinued on that date." Evison further suggested that Big Bend add "fireplaces, tables or other desirable small equipment" to the Chisos campgrounds, and to "undertake erection of more than the five cabins approved." Evison's logic was that "since this area is so isolated from any town and, presumably, from any place offering satisfactory overnight accommodation," Big Bend needed facilities more elaborate than the rustic arrangement offered by Maier. [37]

With funding in hand for at least 120 days, the NPS turned to an issue that arose in December 1934 that threatened continued work. Texas attorney-general James Allred declared as "unconstitutional" the state parks board's plan to pay one cent per acre to the school fund for all mineral rights on school lands in the Big Bend area, and five cents per acre for the "Big

Bend District" (the 105,000 acres in the Chisos Basin). Nason warned Maier that "we probably do not have clear title to the section where the Army Camp is constructed, and have recently obtained a clear title to the section containing a lodge location, subject to a tax of $970.00 to the State." Nason planned to request a rehearing on the matter with Allred, who played an important role three years later as governor when he vetoed legislation that would pay landowners $1.5 million for their lands and donate the acreage to the NPS. Yet the park service and CCC had to proceed in hopes of resolution, with a new round of studies and surveys triggered by the stabilized funding of the "drought-relief" program. [38]

Simultaneous with Allred's objections to Texas' gift to the CCC and NPS, Everett Townsend and W.D. Smithers advanced the cause of the international park between Mexico and the United States. John Jameson noted that the first person to draft a plan for such an initiative was Alfred Dorgan of Castolon, a concept that he called the "Friendly Nations Park." By December 1934, Townsend and Smithers saw the emerging sentiment in Mexico for natural resource conservation aligning with NPS plans for the Rio Grande canyons, and the Roosevelt administration's call for a "Good Neighbor Policy" between the United States and Latin America. Smithers, an experienced photographer, asked Herbert Maier if the NPS would fund his travel across the river to document the wonders of the Mexican north. Smithers commented on the cost in time and money of acquiring permits from the Mexican government to explore the area, and the rigors of travel south of the border. "I know how to get around in Mexico," said Smithers, "as I have been all over it, and I will go into the very best areas, no matter how rough it is." He mentioned in particular an area some eight miles south of the Elmo Johnson ranch, which he had been told had "the largest groups of pectographs [pictographs] in America." Smithers claimed that "with the exception of two other men, I know of no other white men that has [sic] been to this Canyon." He surmised that "if the park is ever made, this will be one of the main attractions," as Mexicans had told Smithers that the canyon's name was "the Salado, also . . . the El Boquillas de los Muertos," which he translated as "the Canyon of the Dead." [39]

Townsend also contributed his share of historical knowledge to the momentum in Brewster County for designation of an international park. In December 1934, he submitted to the NPS a narrative entitled, "Adjoining Area in Mexico." Since his days as a U.S. Customs agent and later a Texas Ranger, Townsend had found the Mexican side of the Rio Grande fascinating for its environment and cultural complexity. "The truth of the matter," said Townsend, "is that, in our grandest and most striking views, the greater values seem to lie beyond the Rio Grande," and "to reap the full value of their own scenery, the Mexicans must come to our side to see it." Townsend considered the "flora [as] almost identical on both sides of the River with an occasional rare and beautiful exception." The Mexican mountainsides, like the Chisos, boasted plentiful varieties of plants and trees. He spoke most movingly, however, of what he called the "Hechereros or Palomas Mountains." These Townsend identified as "about thirty miles from the western part of our State Park." "Hechereros [the proper spelling of which was *Hechiceros*]," said the advocate of an international park, "means enchanting, bewitching, and in this instance, the term is no misnomer." The area had "considerable water . . . and a sprinkle of trees, but no forests." There the Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa "had a stronghold for years, a great remount and resting station, from which his enemies never succeeded in driving him." Other topographical features that Townsend praised were the "Noche Buena Peaks" and "El Pino Mountain." He had never visited the Fronteriza Mountains (another local term for the Sierra del Carmen), but had it on good authority that "vegetation is quite extensive, that there are forests of great trees, also that water is frequently found in their canyons." [40]

With such natural beauty available so close to Big Bend, Townsend encouraged the NPS to consider an aggressive campaign with the government of Mexico to join the two nations in an international park. "The territory on the south bank of the River is scantily populated,"

Townsend reported, "and much of it is said to be public land." Like south Brewster County, Mexico's share of the international park would be "of no great commercial value." Then Townsend echoed the sentiments of FDR's Latin American policy, an attitude not shared by some of his own neighbors. "Undoubtedly such a great recreational area," he wrote late in 1934, "would go far toward bringing the two races closer together." Townsend hoped that such a park "would tend to solidify more securely the friendship that has been forming for some years." Visitors from both nations could find in the Big Bend country "a zona libre, in which the tourist upon entering the gate of the Park on either side would find himself free from all customs and immigration regulations so long as he stayed within its bounds." This bold plan, the source of much debate between the two nations (and within Texas) for the next 60 years, "would create ties of kindly sentiment that would multiply and become stronger between the Mexican and American peoples," said Townsend prophetically, "now almost unknown to each other, as the future years roll by." [41]

The touching sentiments of Townsend, and the eagerness of Smithers to catalogue the wonders of the Mexican *frontera,* caught the park service off-guard. Focused as it was on the politics of the New Deal, the peripatetic nature of federal budgeting, and the delicate negotiations with the Lone Star state's congressional delegation to achieve park status in 1935, Herbert Maier had to caution both Brewster County residents about the hazards of ambitious promotion and private entanglement in diplomatic relations with Mexico. Maier wrote to Smithers on December 14 to deny federal funding for his Mexican photographic survey. He also warned Smithers, as he would Townsend, to "be careful in the future in giving out any information as to our work that has come to your attention." Experience had taught Maier that "local publicity is of little value since the procedure of the government is based entirely on the native calibre of an area." Adding to the NPS's concerns was the fact that "local landowners, et cetera, thereby frequently get a distored and overambitious picture of a project in which the government has indicated an interest." [42]

To Townsend Maier was more candid: "There is one thing I should like to request of you in regard to the Big Bend project and that is you appoint yourself a committee of one to see that absolutely no publicity of any kind gets out on it." Maier had seen all over the country where the NPS "had one project after another killed as a result of publicity." Maier had learned a hard lesson in Alpine itself, when his offhand comment to the unnamed "President" of the chamber of commerce led to an *Alpine Avalanche* story "describing an 'International park of two million acres.'" Instead, Maier counseled Townsend to appreciate the fact that "the Big Bend area is at present receiving all of the attention that it is possible for the Federal Government to give it." The park service's major problem at Big Bend, now that the CCC had begun facilities construction, remained acquisition of private property. "I have felt," said Maier, "that the best way to organize the property ownership part of the program is to have a project manager, such as yourself, who is thoroughly familiar with local conditions, appointed." The park service could take advantage of the "sub-marginal program" that allowed for the "purchase [of] large tracts of sub-marginal land." If the NPS would accept the area as a sub-marginal project, "it will probably materially hasten the matter of land acquisition." Maier compared the Big Bend property issue to a similar situation in southern Florida, where the original legislation to create the Everglades National Park had passed Congress in 1926, but land purchases had yet to be completed. Maier's determination to include Townsend in the Big Bend process had led to his candor, and the ECW director predicted: "I should not be at all surprised but what unless the matter is very carefully, vigorously and intelligently handled it will take ten years to make a National park out of the Big Bend area, if ever." [43]

Maier's judgment of the next phase of park planning proved eerily prophetic, as it would be June 12, 1944, before the NPS could open the park for visitors. In the meantime, careful attention to detail by the park service and the CCC coexisted with obstacles of land

acquisition and reductions in federal spending as the New Deal faced growing criticism in Congress. Then the imperative of global conflict from 1941 to 1945 would halt most plans for expanding the NPS system. Yet the determination of local sponsors to convince the Texas legislature to appropriate funds for land purchases, and their aggressive campaign to acquire the properties for the nearly 800,000-acre park, proceeded with the same energy and enthusiasm that the new partnership between Texas, Mexico and the NPS had demonstrated in their quest to save the Southwest's "last frontier."



Figure 6: Adobe and Stone Cottages Built by the CCC (1940-1941)

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CHAPTER 3:
First Impressions: A Critical Year of Park Planning, 1935 (continued)

Once Texas had committed itself to a partnership with farmers, ranchers, and railroads to stimulate growth in the vastness of the Lone Star State, the legislature had authorized in 1854 and 1875 donations of 16 sections of state land (10,240 acres) for each mile of track that the companies might construct. As Texas had no apparatus in place to survey these lands, the lawmakers agreed to allow the railroads to determine the acreage they wanted. In exchange, they would identify the even-numbered sections as state school lands, while claiming the odd-numbered sections for themselves. Supposedly this pattern of "checker-boarded" land grants would guarantee more sales (given the stake that the railroads had in the growth of any particular area where they ran track), and the money generated by the sale of school lands "has always been zealously guarded by the Legislature and the powerful school lobby or group." In 1897, the lawmakers added mineral rights to oil, gas, and coal, to the school fund upon the sale of any state lands. Two years later the legislature declared that "all un-appropriated public domain and any lands thereafter recovered by the State, as lands forfeited for non-payment of taxes, were set apart for and added to the school fund." Finally, in 1919 the state ordered that "15/16ths of the oil and gas in school lands were relinquished to the various purchasers by which Act the School Fund and the owner of the surface each own half of lease bonuses, rentals and the customary 1/8th royalty of production." [25]

In the case of Big Bend, this meant that the Public School Fund had title to 116,722.1 acres in numerous tracts scattered over the entire area, 8,470.5 acres of these in the Chisos Mountains. Higgins believed that the school fund also controlled 2499.5 acres, "the exact location and conditions of title of which are as yet not ascertained." Everett Townsend had determined that "a total of 25,595.2 acres has been forfeited to and title is now held by the State of Texas by reason of non-payment of taxes and forfeiture suits and judgments." Another discovery of Townsend's was that "the Public School Fund formerly owned a great deal of the now privately owned lands and, on the sale of such lands, retained all or part of the mineral interests, the amount reserved being dependent on the date of the respective sale." Higgins determined that "these School Fund mineral interests in privately owned lands are restricted and inalienable under present laws." Higgins considered it legally impossible "for the Federal Government or anyone else to acquire the full fee title, including all mineral rights, to any Public School Lands or tax-forfeited lands in the State of Texas." To do so, the NPS would have to seek amendment of these laws in the face of "the attitude of recent Legislatures and the powerful and continued activities of the influential school bloc." As a former member of the state house of representatives, Townsend suggested to Higgins that the NPS support a bill giving the parks board control of state mineral reserves in the park area for a total of 99 years. Townsend explained to Higgins that "when the public sees the realization of the Park, understands its recreational and educational values as well as enjoy the great financial increases in returns to the Public School Fund through the gasoline tax," Texans would not hesitate to give complete title to all rights held by the state. [26]

Soon after the Higgins report went to Washington, a team of high-ranking NPS officials traveled to Big Bend in August to inspect the site. Led by assistant director Conrad Wirth, the party included fifteen representatives of the park service, the ECW, the state parks board, and Everett Townsend. W.C. Carnes, now deputy chief architect for the NPS's Western Division branch of plans and design, reported on the four-day excursion through the future park site. "The purpose of the trip," said Carnes, "was understood to be two-fold: first, to submit recommendations on the desirable boundaries of the proposed National Park and second, to study the probable ultimate development, should the area acquire National Park status." This latter issue involved coordinating ECW plans with NPS ideas for the larger Big Bend park unit. Carnes recalled how impressed he had been in earlier visits to the area, and now realized that "the scenic, historic and scientific features of the area are quite varied and few, if any, of its qualities duplicate anything already existing in the National Park System." Carnes and others in Wirth's party agreed that "from a landscape point of view the suggested north boundary with a latitude 29 [degrees] 41 [minutes] is satisfactory." He dismissed talk of including "the mountains which lie north of this[line], as they "offer no incentive to commercial development and will always be part of the scenic assets of the area, without being brought within the park boundaries proper." The Rio Grande made logical sense as the southern limit of the park, reaching from Santa Elena Canyon (which locals called the "Grand Canyon"), through Mariscal and Boquillas Canyons. "The points at which the north and south boundary lines should tie into latitude 29 [degrees] 31 [minutes]," said Carnes, "are not important from a landscape viewpoint, and should be determined more from the geological and wild life standpoint, based upon the particular features and the amount of natural range it is desired to have within the park." [27]

Wirth, Carnes, and the other inspection team members took the route south of Marathon to Big Bend, which Carnes described as a "panorama . . . of mediocre scenic value." The NPS architect found a "much superior panoramic silhouette," however, in the Chisos Mountain range "when viewed from either the east or west sides." The party took the road from the Chisos Mountainswest to the mining town of Terlingua, and thence north to Alpine. They believed that neither route merited inclusion in park planning. Instead, Carnes hoped that the NPS could identify "a possible route which could be constructed in a more direct line and which would avoid the several rivers at present encountered and which are dry much of the time, but of flood water proportions after heavy rains." The Wirth reconnaissance suggested that any road come out of Alpine, with a "fork somewhere in the vicinity of Government Spring and that one branch of it lead along the west side of the Chisos Mountains and on to Santa Helena Canyon." The other fork should circle the east side of the Chisos Mountains and "terminate on the Rio Grande River at the Mexican community known as Boquillas. Carnes surmised that "fullest use of the park in the future may force the construction of a road along the Rio Grande River between Santa Helena Canyon on the west and Boquillas on the east." Yet the NPS inspection team did not wish to recommend this as part of the master plan, in that "there seem to be no points of interest between these two terminals to warrant the construction of a road, considering the construction difficulties which would be encountered both in location and in the number of drainage structures required." [28]

In assessing the challenge of road building, the architect suggested that "little encouragement should be offered tourists to visit this area until suitable roads have been constructed." He noted that "many of the existing roads follow creek beds which can become raging torrents within an hour's time after a heavy rain starts." Carnes feared that "a venturesome tourist might well become marooned in some canyon, many miles from store, gasoline, tow cars, or emergency repair service." He predicted that "should the Big Bend area become a National Park, the Service must look forward to spending a fair portion of its major road bill annually over a period of say five years and, in addition, keep a maintenance organization on hand for repair work after storms." Despite the area's desert conditions, "road construction here is not going to be inexpensive." Carnes did note, however, the presence of such road-building

materials as sand, gravel, and stone in the park, thus reducing the costs of construction. [29]

When the Wirth party turned to park administration and concessions facilities, they agreed upon five items: a visitors lodge, "housekeeping cabin units," a campground, a "Government area, utilities and residences," and a "checking station." The group debated the merits of a lodge at the site known as Laguna, "well up in the Chisos Mountains." Carnes described the area as "a beautiful mountain meadow with large shade trees in abundance." NPS officials worried that "the difficulty of building a road to it, and the desirability of preserving the area undeveloped, are sufficient to eliminate it as a possible building site." Hence the party agreed upon the "comparatively level bench above the present C.C.C. camp," the future site of Basin development. "The area has a goodly number of fair sized oak trees," said Carnes, "which offer considerable shade." For Carnes and the others, "its chief attraction scenically is that it overlooks the canyon which terminates well above the surrounding plateau and which is known locally as 'The Window.'" [30]

Summarizing their thoughts, NPS planners needed to remember that "Texas was once part of the Mexican nation." In addition, said Carnes, "the area in question at Big Bend has never been developed by Americans beyond the few scattered ranches and isolated mining activities." The architect noted that "considering the possibility that the Republic of Mexico may establish a national park across the Rio Grande," he recommended that "so far as physical improvements are concerned, the Mexican hacienda, or "ranch type" of development be followed as closely as possible." Similar cultural resource issues prevailed at Santa Elena Canyon, which Carnes believed could contain "a stone or adobe ranch style of development, to function quite similar to the Phantom Ranch at Grand Canyon National Park." At Boquillas, Carnes again called for this architectural form, with the hope that "the existing Mexican ranches there can be preserved, as they are bonafide examples of same, having been [built] before there was any thought of their being used as tourist attractions." [31]

To implement this plan, thought Carnes, the NPS needed to be mindful of the partnership developed with the state of Texas. David Colp of the Texas state parks board suggested a quick resolution to the boundary survey, so that ongoing CCC activities would meet park service expectations. Carnes offered to provide an architect from the San Francisco office to begin work that fall or winter. Finally, he warned his colleagues that "since there is no public domain in the State of Texas, it seems unlikely that the National Park Service can ever use any of its road funds for construction of approach roads." He called instead for the NPS to decide "on the proposed road system for the park in order that whatever work the State of Texas or the County of Alpine [Brewster County] performs in the next few years, may be invested on an alignment which will be utilized when, and if, the park is created." [32]

When the Wirth inspection team returned from the Big Bend area to Alpine, local boosters of the park called upon them to reveal their findings in a public meeting held on August 8 at the Holland Hotel. There in the ballroom, Wirth and his colleagues spoke of their journey via car, horseback, plane, and on foot. The *Alpine Avalanche* reported that "Colonel Wirth was enthusiastic about the possibilities of the Big Bend from the standpoint of park development." Wirth saw "educational advantages and year round accessibility" as the park's strengths. "No other National Park," the *Avalanche* quoted Wirth, "included a complete mountain, offering life zones from Lower Sonoran, through Upper Sonoran and Transition, to Canadian, with their gamut of changing flora and fauna." Herbert Maier told the audience of "the financial advantages of national parks," and how "he counted himself fortunate in having Texas in his [ECW] district." David Colp then asked Brewster County residents to cooperate with the state parks board in the land-acquisition program, which he hoped would begin "immediately upon notification by the National Park Service of the boundaries of the acceptable area." [33]

True to their word, Wirth's associates returned to their offices in Washington, San Francisco, and Oklahoma City to record their thoughts on the status of Big Bend as a national park site. James O. Stevenson called the area "a true biological 'gem,'" whose "value of fauna and flora . . . lies not only in their varied nature and abundance but in the fact that many of their components cannot be duplicated in any other sections of the United States." The wildlife specialist noted the presence of more than 60 species of mammals, while recording the extinction of such creatures as big horn sheep and antelope. The Big Bend country could boast of more than 200 species of birds, a function of its location at "the meeting place of many species whose main range lies to the north or to the south." Stevenson also observed "a mingling here of typical Mexican species with others representing the Rocky Mountain fauna of the Western United States." These birds and mammals could find in the Chisos Mountains alone more than 450 species of plants. "Several eminent botanists," wrote Stevenson, "have stated that more species of plants are found on the higher slopes of the Chisos, in an area of approximately 30 square miles, than in any other region of similar size in the United States, with the possible exception of one locality in Florida." [34]

Because of Conrad Wirth's highly publicized plan for establishment of park boundaries, Stevenson and his colleagues weighed in with their suggestions based upon their particular area of expertise. "Since there are no natural barriers in the Big Bend or faunal zones which form boundaries to animal life," said Stevenson, "the best solution in insuring the protection of wildlife is to obtain an adequate tract of territory in the southern tip of the Big Bend." He called for making Boquillas Canyon an eastern terminus, with a line northward to the Sue Peaks in the Caballo Muerto range. Stevenson believed that this would offer "an adequate deer range in the desert mountains east of the Chisos," even though its lack of water and vegetation meant that "it will never have great general importance for wildlife." Stevenson's park boundary would then move north from the Sue Peaks to Persimmon Gap, "in order to control roads leading to the Chisos and to check on visitors to the area." He would have the line then run south (to the east of the Rosillos Mountains), and then westward to include Grapevine and Paint Gap Hills, which formed the southern boundary with the Christmas Mountains. From there, Stevenson would draw his line southwest from Slickrock Mountain to include Burro Mesa and the Rattlesnake Mountains, and then to the western end of Santa Elena Canyon. Once that had been achieved, Stevenson would call for "a thorough biological survey of the Big Bend and an extensive report on suitable boundaries or possible park extensions." Finally, park planners should remember that "a study of the biology of the adjacent region in Mexico, . . . with relation to a possible future international park, should be made." [35]

Bernard Manbey, associate engineer for the NPS's western division in San Francisco, echoed the sentiments of Stevenson, and offered his thoughts as a facilities designer. He marveled at the breathtaking beauty of the South Rim of the Chisos Mountains, which "at least insofar as distance goes, would be hard to beat anywhere." Manbey theorized that "the average person does not realize that there are almost innumerable mountains in Texas and range after range after range in the adjacent portion of Mexico." He recommended that "a standard horse trail from the 'Basin' to the 'South Rim' might be included as one of the first ECW projects under the 6th Period Program." The party then drove to Terlingua, forded several streams where the cars had to be pushed across, and then stopped at "the former military post at Castolon" for lunch. After a long drive across the southern tip of the future park, Manbey and his colleagues came to Boquillas at sunset. "Here, in a typical setting of Old Mexico," said the engineer, "we had our dinner with a Mexican host, Mexican orchestra, and Mexican dishes which the writer cannot attempt to enumerate or describe." [36]

Adding to the stimulating experience for Manbey was the opportunity to fly over the future park. Manbey also hiked in the Chisos to the top of Casa Grande Peak (elevation 7,350 feet). He then encouraged the party to include the area north and west of Terlingua in the park,

because of "the reported wealth of unique and valuable geological formations in that district," including Solitario Mountain. Manbey also noted the unusual collection of "skulls, skeletons, bones, Indian basket work, stone arrow heads and tools," that Elmo and Ada Johnson had on display at their ranch. The Johnsons contended that these came from caves along the Rio Grande, and Elmo Johnson recommended to the Wirth party that if the NPS made a "'Natural Museum' out of one or two of the caves and show relics in various stages of discovery," the caves "would have a far greater appeal and be intensely more interesting to the average tourist." The Indian sites would only enhance the dominant theme of old Mexico surrounding Big Bend. Manbey wrote that "the C.C.C. enrollees are mostly Mexicans, the mines are worked almost entirely by Mexicans, the houses are Mexican, there are very interesting Mexican cemeteries at Terlingua and elsewhere." Thus he concurred with all suggestions to retain the border atmosphere in architecture and concessions, a situation that Manbey saw as "particularly fitting in view of the fact that the area is spoken of as an "'International Park.'" [37]

Enthusiastic reports like those of Manbey and Stevenson led NPS officials to implement some of their recommendations as quickly as personnel and funding permitted. An important feature of this process was an official survey of plant and animal life, as suggested by James Stevenson. In late September, NPS officials in Washington detailed Maynard S. Johnson and William B. McDougall to the Big Bend for an assessment of the flora and fauna that the NPS would soon inherit and protect. After ten days in the area, Johnson and McDougall went west to New Mexico and Arizona to conduct research at a future site of U.S.-Mexican collaboration in park management: the Ajo Mountains (later known as Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument). They then returned to Big Bend for a month's work, and filed their reports by the close of 1935. As the NPS specialist on wildlife, Johnson noted the climate and topography of the area as highly complex and little understood. The Chisos Basin had sufficient rainfall to permit continued grazing, said Johnson, while "we were told that between Glen[n] Spring and the river there had been no rain for three years." Johnson and McDougall also did not venture into the Dead Horse Mountains. "Apparently no other Park people have been there," Johnson reported, "and Big Bend residents with whom we talked have only the vaguest notions of that section." Perhaps the reluctance to travel into the area resulted from its supposed lack of food and water, but Johnson believed that "it should be investigated." [38]

With Johnson's main focus the historical and contemporary conditions of animal life in the Big Bend, he interviewed a variety of local residents about their perceptions of native animals. Because ranchers had increased their stocks of sheep and goats in recent years, they had begun extensive operations to remove what they called "panthers" (the term used by locals for all manner of mountain lions and cougars). "I am told," wrote Johnson, "that Mr. Homer Wilson killed 28 panthers in the last six years - six or eight in the last year." Johnson also learned that "a government trapper was working in the Rosillos Mountains, trying to trap another panther." He believed that panthers were not being depleted, since "they are more abundant here than in any other park area," yet the "present drain on their numbers seems more than could be withstood permanently." Johnson hoped that "the existence in this proposed park of such a 'biological island' as the Chisos Mountains . . . perhaps offers the best chance in the United States for the perpetuation of this cat." Similar stories were told about bears in the Big Bend area, which local residents considered to be "less abundant than panthers." CCC camp superintendent Morgan told Johnson that he had found bear tracks recently near his cabin, and others said that "a year or two ago a bear was seen to swim across the river at Boquillas, going from the United States into Mexico." Elmo Johnson also offered the opinion that "bears are very abundant in the mountains on the Mexican side of the river." [39]

Two other animals noted in abundance by Maynard Johnson were several kinds of deer, and

the peccary (known as the "javelina"). Deer provided opportunity for local ranchers to earn additional income by hosting hunting parties, primarily in the Chisos Mountains. Mule deer seemed the most prominent to Johnson, although "does considerably outnumber bucks--according to some estimates as much as ten to one." Texas white-tailed deer had begun to proliferate in the Chisos area, as had fan-tailed deer. For reasons not explained by Johnson, hunting parties avoided the area near the fan-tailed deer population. "Neighboring ranchers," he wrote, "have agreed not to bring hunters into the higher parts of the mountains, and the main entrance road into the Basin is prominently marked with 'No Hunting' signs." No such generosity was extended to the javelina. "Javelinas have been killed for their hides, and shot by hunters," said Johnson, "merely for something to shoot at." The peccary had "no protection at law, and practically none from public sentiment." The NPS biologist found this disconcerting, in that javelinas "are harmless in their food habits and seem destined for extirpation if they are not protected." A request by Texas game department officials "to give javelinas part-year protection by classing them as game animals failed to pass [the legislature]," he noted, and hoped that "special state action might be taken to give year-round protection to javelinas in and near the proposed Big Bend National Park, if such action were requested by or on behalf of the National Park Service." [40]

Where deer and javelinas prowled the Chisos Basin in abundance, Johnson noted the near-absence of two additional species once present in the area: big horn sheep and antelope. The former "were best known in the Mariscal Mountains," said the biologist, "at the point of the Big Bend of the river." In addition, big horn sheep sightings had occurred "in Santa Helena canyon, on Pulliam's bluff in the Chisos Mountains, and also in the Rosillos Mountains." Johnson had learned from Ray Miller, a local rancher, that "the last instance of a mountain sheep being shot in this region was in 1907" when Tom Golby came upon a band of fifteen sheep and killed one. A 1931 study of bighorn sheep in west Texas by Vernon Bailey concluded "that it is highly probable that the Texas bighorn in early days extended almost continuously in Texas from the Guadalupe Mountains (its type locality) to the Chisos Mountains." By the mid-1930s, said Johnson, "the habitat for mountain sheep in the Mariscal Mountains of the Big Bend is no doubt as good as ever, and restoration of them there would be desirable." Unfortunately, "there is at present no group of this variety of sheep secure enough to serve as a source of stock for reintroduction." Compounding the problem was the eradication of the animal on both sides of the Rio Grande, as the Mexican bighorn seemed the more common before the twentieth-century campaign of removal. [41]

With the fate of the antelope, Johnson noticed a different rationale for their demise. Everett Townsend told the NPS biologist "that he has seen antelope within the park area a number of years ago." Some still roamed around the town of Alpine, "but none now south of the railroad." Their disappearance Johnson attributed to a lack of "suitable habitat," a circumstance that also militated against "possible reintroduction." "There is now no sod or extensive grass," said Johnson, "on any part of the flat lowlands of the proposed park." He detected evidence of grasslands to the south and west of Persimmon Gap, and to the west of Mariscal Ridge. "When livestock grazing is discontinued," he reported, "grass may become reestablished in these places, and satisfactory antelope habitat restored." Should the park service wish to restore the animal sooner than that, Johnson surmised that the best opportunity for antelope would be the Sierra Quemada, south of the South Rim of the Chisos Mountains. This he found to be "somewhat broken, treeless country, with grama grass and sotol in abundance." Were the NPS to find a source of water in the area, "there is food and apparently [a] favorable situation for a considerable herd of antelope here." [42]

Johnson then spent some time discussing smaller game, along with lesser predators like the coyote, the fox, and the wolf. "Coyotes are characteristic of the flat lands in the Big Bend Park region," Johnson reported, with their main territory being the foothills of the Chisos Mountains. "In this region," he noted, "they are destructive to sheep and goats, but not to

cattle." Yet "coyote skins are of little value," and local ranchers trapped them "more from the standpoint of protecting livestock than of deriving revenue from pelts." Less common in the area was the New Mexico desert fox, known to local residents as the "kit fox." As for the "Gray or 'lobo' Wolf," which Johnson labeled *Canis lycaon nubilus*, the biologist believed that it "probably once occurred here, though I have no definite records of it." Ranchers had reported no sightings of the lobo anywhere in the Big Bend area. [43]

Perhaps the most intriguing feature of Big Bend's wildlife was what Johnson called "wild" livestock. Later managers of the national park would struggle with feral stock throughout the mountains and deserts. Wild horses had roamed the area, said Johnson, but local ranchers had shot them "because the ownerless horses trampled their range and muddied their springs." Any horses not killed "were caught and shipped out of the region, as horse prices rose enough to make such action profitable." Johnson saw as more problematic the presence of wild burros, which he calculated "outnumber all other kinds of wild livestock." He predicted that "they will be much less easy to eliminate than were the wild horses, either by shooting or trapping." In addition, "the importance of the wild burro situation is increased by the Texas Fever quarantine south of the Chisos Mountains, and the impossibility of giving the wild burros a required dip at two-week intervals." Johnson saw evidence of some wild sheep and goats that had escaped from ranchers' corrals, while "several people have reported a group of turkeys existing wild in Boot Canyon." Finally, he reported that "a pair of hounds belonging to Mr. Ira Hector are allowed to run at large, and spend much of their time in [the] Chisos Mountains chasing deer." [44]

Once Johnson had completed his inventory of animal life in the future Big Bend National Park, he offered his recommendations to those already submitted by earlier NPS visitors. One striking difference in his report was the inclusion of the Christmas and Rosillos mountains within the park boundary, as "these mountains with the intervening flat land would provide ample range for the proposed longhorn cattle ranch without encroachment on the biological unit of the Chisos Mountains." NPS officials had considered, and would study that fall a plan to run a herd of cattle in the park area to remind visitors of the heritage of ranching in the Big Bend. Beyond this plan, Johnson saw a larger boundary providing "a buffer area which would considerably improve the survival prospects of panthers and eagles within the park, and lessen complaints against these predators by neighboring ranchers." To leave out the Christmas and Rosillos ranges meant that "access of ranchers and their stock would be across the park." Realizing the political and economic variables present in boundary studies, Johnson nonetheless asked the NPS that "consideration should still be given to the desirability of acquiring it [the expanded acreage] as [the] first addition to the original park." [45]

In matters of roads and trails, Johnson called for "only a single entrance road on the United States side, at least until traffic shows actual need of additional entrances." He argued that "the administrative problems of an international park would be multiplied by multiple entrances." Johnson had no preference between a route south from Marathon, or from Alpine through Terlingua. He also saw value in horse trails within the park, primarily in the Chisos Basin. "There should be a horse trail by way of Laguna and Boot Spring to the South Rim," Johnson recommended, as "this trail will exhibit most types of habitat in the park which are not reached by road." He further predicted that, "as the South Rim is probably the supreme view in the park, this trail will be much used." Yet he knew that "not half the people who come into the park will spend the several dollars necessary to hire a horse, and still fewer will hire a horse more than one day." For that reason, Johnson called for several hiking trails in the basin, each to "offer some fairly strenuous climbing, and superb views, to be had without the hire of a horse." Johnson did caution his superiors that "further development of roads and trails be deferred until the need for them is clearly demonstrated, and that in any case such development be kept to a minimum." He warned that "the great bulk of the park

area (especially the Chisos Mountain area) should deliberately be left alone to recover its wilderness character, undisturbed by human intrusion." If park planners accommodated his vision, prophesied Johnson, "there will be more wilderness along the trails, if the trails do not too greatly subdivide the wilderness." [46]

A similar logic should prevail in the design of overnight accommodations for visitors, said Johnson. "There will be less disturbance of the biology of the region," he reported, "if all development of public use areas (hotel or lodge, cabins, and camping area) in the Chisos Mountains [are] confined to the Basin or the road between Government Springs and the Basin, rather than scattered in several places in the mountains." He noted that calls might be made for lodging "at the river crossings -- at Boquillas, and either at Castellan [Castolon] or Johnson's Ranch." Evidence of this came from the fact that construction of accommodations for government officials, including Park Service officials, already had been authorized at Johnson's Ranch as a relief project. [47]

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CHAPTER 4:
A Dream in Waiting: Promotion of a Land Base for Big Bend National Park, 1936 (continued)

What had happened to the Big Bend film would repeat itself throughout the process of publicizing Texas' first national park: the differing perspectives of NPS officials in Washington, state officials in Austin, and local sponsors of the park. Herbert Maier would write in late August to Fanning Hearon of the Interior department's motion picture division, about the need to rethink the messages transmitted in the promotional venture. "I realize how the film may be viewed by Washington with an eye to its commendability," said Maier. Yet "if you were out here in the plains States," he told Hearon, "you would realize that the words 'oil' or 'mineral rights' are the most magical words in the English language, especially when dealing with school lands." Maier doubted "if there is any area in the world which has had a parallel experience with that of Texas." Recalling the history of public land sales in the Lone Star state, Maier noted that "as far as the settlers in many parts of Texas knew, until very recently, there was not a remote possibility of mineral deposits on their land." Then "in the early '20's somebody invented the core drill," said the ECW regional director, "which was capable of going down 6000 to 8000 feet." Such advances in technology revealed "immense oil-bearing deposits . . . at this level and below." "Subsequently," said Maier, "the Public School Fund which held tremendous but apparently valueless acreages suddenly found itself on Wall Street, and the University of Texas overnight became the wealthiest university in the World." As a result, Maier told Hearon, "the probability of mineral deposits of all kinds has been indelibly impressed upon the minds of all Texans for the duration of the human race (or at least for the duration of the ECW)." [21]

Maier's appeal to Hearon included the caution that "from the standpoint of a Texan, the Leopold film would appear to have been designed to defeat its own purpose." Knowing of the heavy workload facing Hearon's motion picture division, Maier asked that he "send us a sample print of the strip, or a reel of all the scenes of the Big Bend you have available." The ECW had "access to a motion picture laboratory nearby," and could "run off the various scenes and cut those we feel desirable and splice same in the order that we feel best." Hearon accepted Maier's offer, submitting to the ECW official the work print of the Big Bend film, along with "nearly 2000 extra feet of Big Bend scenes made by cameramen of this Division and the cameramen [who] did the Gulf Sulphur job." Hearon advised Maier to "do what you like with the extra footage, arranging it as you want it to appear in the special Big Bend production and indicating any titles you want used." He did, however, warn Maier that "we must ask that the work print of the Gulf Sulphur subject be left untouched." Hearon further cautioned: "Despite how enthusiastic you and the Texas people may become, it has been our experience that one-reel subjects are much easier to handle and much more effective." His willingness to accommodate the editing request from Maier resulted from a preliminary advertisement of the picture by the Interior department. "You will be interested to hear," Hearon informed Maier, "that requests for the original Big Bend picture are more than double the amount of prints available in this Division and at the Pittsburgh office of the [U.S.] Bureau of Mines." [22]

A promotional film that spoke to the perceptions and concerns of Texas audiences came none too soon for the NPS and local park promoters, as Governor Allred had indeed announced a special session of the Texas legislature. Everett Townsend spoke with house speaker Coke Stevenson, who suggested that the Big Bend sponsors delay any request for financial assistance. One reason, said Townsend to Maier, was that "fifty percent of the new house are new members." Stevenson thought it more prudent to approach the legislature in January, when the freshmen members had taken their seats. Yet Townsend continued to canvass legislators about the merits of the Big Bend project. He offered to coordinate more trips to the park area by state lawmakers, and asked whether the NPS could support his lobbying efforts and research into school lands records while in Austin. Herbert Maier worried that "all travel incurred by anyone connected with the State Park Commission, directly or indirectly, of Texas, should be borne by the State Park Commission." Yet Townsend had "been with us too long not to know where you need to exercise discretion." Maier acknowledged that "both you and I are so zealously imbued with the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the Big Bend area that we are willing and prepared to meet any expectations which the General Accounting Office may take in our expense account from our personal pockets." The ECW officer informed Townsend that "I am with you a hundred percent in putting across the Big Bend National Park as an outstanding monument to the efforts of the CCC, even if it calls upon me personally 'as a Californian and a Texan' to meet exceptions of the General Accounting Office." He believed that Townsend's lobbying and research work was "justifiable in the consummation of the CCC endeavor in the Big Bend in Texas." [23]

While Townsend worked the halls of the Texas legislature on behalf of the NPS, Maier prepared top officials of the park service for discussion of the land-acquisition program while in El Paso for the international park conference. To Conrad Wirth, Maier noted that the actual purchase price for the 643,115 acres of private lands would not be onerous (an average of two dollars per acre), and that the campaign to influence the opinions of the Texas school teachers' association had gained momentum. "As it now stands," said Maier, "the School Fund receives 1 [cent] of the 4 [cent] tax on gasoline." The NPS, which earlier in the year had dismissed the uniqueness of the school lands issue, accepted the fact that "the School Fund now has before it the impressive precedent of having suddenly discovered in 1924 that its 'worthless' school lands in the eastern part of the State contained oil deposits." Not only had the Austin campus become richly endowed from the revenues, but "the School Fund as a result of this also carries a surplus running into several million dollars." The ECW official reported that "it is planned to introduce a bill in the coming State legislative session in January, calling for authorization to purchase the private land holdings by the issuing of warrants against the land in the amount of about $1,250,000." Once the warrants had been issued, landowners could "convert them into cash, although at a discount," because "it would require a constitutional amendment to issue bonds [to purchase the lands]." [24]

Then Maier introduced a new obstacle to the land-purchase bill: "industrial lobbyists." At the ongoing special session of the legislature, members debated "the new State Pension Fund which, if it is to become permanent, will call for about $6,500,000 additional taxes per year." "The State," reported Maier, "is already about $12,000,000 in the red;" a condition that he considered "nothing unusual in a State having the size and resources of Texas." In a normal year, said the ECW officer, "the State is usually from five to twelve million dollars in the red." Yet "the bill proposing the purchase of the private land is bound to meet with a strong opposition from industries, because industry is so heavily taxed in this state where homes of less than $3,500 valuation are exempt from taxation." In addition, "there has been a strong opposition to a sales tax," wrote Maier. "But after all," he believed, "a million and a quarter dollars is a very low figure for such an area, especially in view of the many millions that would eventually result to the State." Maier did express concern about the campaign to inform Texans east of the Big Bend country of the merits of the park. "Most of these people," said Maier, "have never been to the western half [of Texas] and are not particularly interested

in a project benefiting that part of the state." Nonetheless, "a great deal of good work has been done in contacting the Members of the Legislature and a great many have already pledged their support of the proposed bill." Maier also noted that the attorney general had agreed to a "sale" of the 97,799.60 acres of school lands at the cash value of one cent per acre. This the attorney general had ruled was not "a gift," and "at this price the amount involved [$978] would be negligible." [25]

The mineral rights issue, and the need for resolution in advance of the 1937 Texas legislative session, reached all the way to the NPS director's desk in Washington. Maier wrote to Arno Cammerer to solicit either his attendance at the Texas schoolteachers' association conference, or that of a high-ranking NPS representative. T.H. Shelby, chairman of the executive committee of the teachers' association, told Maier that he would support waiver of the mineral rights "if it can be proven that the income that will result to the School Fund from the establishment of the national park would be greater than that which might obtain from future mineral developments." "Of course," Maier declared, "such a comparison is one that only the Lord himself could prove." Yet the NPS needed a spokesman at the convention to state "what the [Interior] Secretary will accept and what he will not accept in the case of mineral restrictions." Maier advised that "a clean-cut proposition on the part of the National Park Service representative at the meeting appears obligatory." Maier did not wish to commit the NPS to a position not easily defended, yet "favorable consideration of the Appropriation Bill by the State Legislature in January is so very definitely dependent upon a prior indication of support by the School Fund, which is the strongest lobby in Texas." [26]

With the stakes so high, and the need for positive imagery so critical, NPS historian William Hogan approached Maier in October 1936 with what he called "a suggestion which may seem unusual at first glance but which is more than justified by the facts." He wanted his superior in Oklahoma City to consider employing the noted Texas historian, Walter Prescott Webb, as an historical consultant. Hogan, a former student of Webb's at the University of Texas, described the scholar's 1931 study of the Great Plains as "one of the greatest contributions ever made to western historiography, perhaps the greatest since Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 epoch making address before the American Historical Association." Hogan knew that Webb had taken a leave of absence for the 1936-1937 academic year, and suggested that "he be requested to visit the Big Bend country with the end in view of preparing a series of historical sketches, perhaps three in number, relating to the historical background of the proposed international park." Hogan had "reason to believe that Dr. Webb would seriously consider such an offer," as the Texas professor "not only has a personal interest in the proposed Big Bend Park, but he is also the type of writer who enjoys and believes in the necessity for field work as a preparation for writing." The NPS should also realize that "if he should decline the offer, it would probably be because of salary considerations." The standard NPS consulting rate of "ten dollars per day is a small salary," said Hogan, "for a man who has sold the movie rights in his last book [*The Texas Rangers*] at a figure variously reported to be from ten thousand dollars to twenty-five thousand dollars." Hogan also encouraged swift action, as "Dr. Webb may never be available again," and "his plans for the next nine months are fast maturing." [27]

The NPS historian also contended that "a still more pressing reason is that the historical and legendary background of the Big Bend country can best be found out now, before the influx of tourists and dude ranches." In addition, "Dr. Webb is a master at writing history from modern, living sources;" a key aspect of a project where "men are yet living who can speak with authority about the development of this part of the West." As to those NPS officials who might prefer a park service historian, Hogan replied that "Dr. Webb's contribution, whatever it may be, will be absolutely unique and . . . no other man in the historical profession, either in or out of the National Park Service, is so well equipped to make the type of study herein suggested." Webb would not be asked to write "the whole history of the Big Bend area," as

"that will, of course, be a future task of National Park Service historical technicians." Instead, the agency should realize that "the employment of such an eminent historian and writer would, undoubtedly, give the National Park Service an invaluable contact with the historical profession." This, in turn, "would serve to give Park Service historical activities a higher rating among historians," an important feature of NPS work in light of passage in 1935 of the Historical Sites Act, giving the park service a mandate to preserve America's cultural and historic treasures alongside its monuments to natural beauty. [28]

Hogan's idea fired the imagination of Herbert Maier, who wrestled with the constraints of New Deal funding and the realities of park promotion. Maier wrote to Branch Spalding, acting assistant director of the NPS in Washington, to solicit funds for Webb's work. "At the present time," said Maier, "we are doing everything possible to emphasize to the people of Texas their great opportunity in turning over the Big Bend area to the federal government as a national park." To expedite this process, said Maier, "we must emphasize its values." Thus he considered "the temporary employment of Dr. Walter P. Webb as an outstanding opportunity." Spalding wasted little time replying to Maier that "this idea is one which we naturally support very enthusiastically." He had asked the personnel division of the NPS for advice on a fee for Webb, and learned that "it might be possible to secure as much as $20.00 per day." Spalding cautioned that "all of this, of course, assumes that sufficient money is available in the [CCC] camps of your Region to meet this sum." Maier then turned to Hogan to identify the potential for funding, and to outline "a very clear-cut understanding with Dr. Webb as to just what he would produce in the time that would be allotted to him." Maier knew "the value that would probable result from Dr. Webb's work." Nonetheless, said the ECW official, "we must bear in mind that the appropriation under which we are working is part of the relief administration and funds must be spread out as much as possible." He also recognized that "any such writing would return profit to Dr. Webb." Maier thus warned that "the profit would be his and the royalties would not accrue to the government as would otherwise be the case." Yet the imperatives of park promotion led Maier to conclude: "I am very much in favor of getting the material from Dr. Webb, especially at this time." [29]

Even as Herbert Maier pursued the talents of Walter Prescott Webb to promote the future Big Bend National Park, he also in late 1936 had to contend with the lack of photographs for use in publicity. George Grant had yet to generate a set of prints from his venture into the Big Bend country and Mexico. Maier also learned of the reason why W.D. Smithers had denied the NPS use of his collection of Big Bend photos. In correspondence with Fanning Hearon, Maier reported that Smithers "has had a falling out with the Texas State Parks Board in connection with the right to take photographs in this area." Smithers for years "had done considerable business in the making of photographic post cards and scenic views of this area as a commercial activity." When Smithers "locked up all of his negatives," and "consistently refused to furnish any prints of any kind of the Big Bend," he left Alpine "on a scientific expedition," said Maier, "Lord knows where." What few copies the NPS had of Smithers' work "have had extensive use," he told Hearon, "and are second-rate." Maier now believed that "it is unreasonable to offer these same second-rate copies over and over again in connection with articles and publicity material we are constantly being requested to submit for publication." [30]

As 1936 drew to a close, concern over the land acquisition plan became more intense with word that Ira Hector, the Chisos Basin rancher on whose property the CCC camp stood, wanted permission to build a residence and corral on "Section 16," which the Texas state parks board had yet to purchase. Camp superintendent Morgan reported to William Lawson of the state parks board that Hector's "cattle are doing a lot of damage and his attitude is getting worse and worse." Hector was "continually burning things in the area," Morgan continued, "and causing damage to trees and other vegetation." The solution, said Morgan, was to "satisfy him on this section 16 and get him out of here," a strategy that the CCC camp

director called "a very wise move." The Hector controversy led Maier to write William Lawson about the larger issue of land acquisition. The ECW official recalled that "this land is a part of an estate left to [Hector] and his sisters some time ago," with Ira Hector "the only one attempting to make any sort of a living on this land." Then D.C. Colp, Lawson's predecessor as executive secretary of the parks board, had negotiated with Hector "to pay . . . a certain amount for the land he holds in Green Gulch, which is absolutely necessary as a road is to be built to the heart of the area." In exchange, "Hector was to retain grazing rights." Maier since had learned that "this contract [with the state parks board] was not carried out and that Hector has never received any of the money for the portion of his land, excluding grazing rights." [31]

With the legislative session in Austin set to open within 30 days, Maier pressed Lawson for advice on correcting Colp's oversight. "As regards the road we are building into the Basin," said Maier, "which is to be the principal development area regardless of whether the Big Bend becomes a national park or not," the NPS faced an obstruction - Ira Hector's cabin- which was "right in the narrowest portion of Green Gulch." Said the ECW regional director: "It is absolutely necessary to run the road through the corral and cabin site in order to get up over the Pass, since at this point there is a deep ravine and the canyon cannot be more than 100 yards wide." Then the NPS needed resolution of "this confounded matter of grazing rights." Maier claimed that "Hector's cattle run wild over the Chisos Mountains, and they are continually cutting through trail banks and shoulders, and breaking down road bank sloping activity" undertaken by the CCC. The work crews had graded the road "to its objective, with the exception of the gap at Hector's cabin, and this is doubly serious because a vehicular bridge at this point has to be left incompleted." Maier further expounded upon Hector's habit of burning all of the *maguey* or century plants that he could find. "These beautiful specimens," said the ECW official, "dot the landscape everywhere in the Chisos." The park service had learned that "someone once told Hector that they [the plants] are poisonous to cattle." Since "Hector believes this," said Maier, he "now has the distinction of being the only man in the world who is cracked on the subject." Maier described Hector's behavior as "everytime he sees one of these beautiful things towering perhaps twelve feet in height, he must set fire thereto." Compounding the problem of environmental damage was the fire hazard created by such indiscriminate burning. Yet Maier found Hector to be "comparatively careful, and I know that he is sincere when he feels that this growth is injurious to his stock." [32]

This latter admission made the land-use controversy most difficult for Maier to resolve. "He is a dandy fellow," Maier told the parks board executive secretary, "a dyed-in-the-wool West Texan, and a good wrangler." Maier did "not know the terms of the original written or verbal agreement between [Hector] and Mr. Colp," and thus could not "say who has been in the wrong." Maier then revealed the challenge that the NPS had faced in the Big Bend country with the state of Texas as a land-acquisition partner. "I most decidedly do know," said Maier, "with all due respect to Mr. Colp, that the latter was better at making promises and closing agreements than with the carrying out of these covenants." In conversation with Everett Townsend, the latter believed that "Brewster County can somehow complete the purchase of Hector's land, particularly that which is needed for the completion of the section of road described." The county could use its own general fund, advised Townsend, "or perhaps through some special appropriation." Maier speculated that the county would need an additional $3,500 beyond what the parks board already had paid Hector, but that the NPS could not contribute to this latest payment. Because of criticism engendered by the original action, Maier suggested that "it would, perhaps, be simpler for Brewster County to purchase the Hector land with an eye to selling it later to the state Government, when and if the State acquires the land for national park purposes." [33]

As if it were an omen of events to come in 1937, the discovery by Herbert Maier of the

extralegal practices of D.C. Colp portended the failure of Texas to appropriate the funds needed to purchase lands in south Brewster County. Robert Morgan had learned from the chief engineer of the state park board that "he did not see any chance for the Legislature to do anything" in the 1937 session. R.O. Whiteaker had come to the CCC camp with three state representatives, and Everett Townsend, in mid-November, and the party contended that "it is almost impossible to hope for any success for our efforts." To this Morgan could only add: "This has led me to believe that probably you [Maier] are not getting very much assistance from that point." He claimed that "from my previous political experiences in Austin I long ago came to the conclusion that the Oil Companies come very near to controlling the legislature bodies." His assumption "has been confirmed to a certain extent lately by conversations I have had with parties who have visited us here." Morgan thought that "we might accomplish a lot if we could get the Oil Companies sold on the proposition and get them to use their lobby for us." The CCC superintendent recommended that Maier approach a friend of his, L.W. Kemp, formerly of the "Asphalt Sales Division of the Texas Co. [later renamed 'Texaco']." Kemp was "very popular around the Capitol," said Morgan, "and with all the contractors and engineers in Texas." An added bonus for the NPS was that Kemp "is a member of the Centennial Committee on Historical points." Because Kemp had "lots of contact with the Legislature on matters of this kind and knows every angle of the lobby business," Morgan believed that "his influence . . . would help." Then the CCC superintendent warned Maier of yet another political problem facing the Big Bend land program. "I am informed," wrote Morgan, "that in all probability there will be quite a fight over the Speaker of the House this next session." Coke Stevenson "will probably be lined up in opposition to the man having the backing of Governor Allred." While the NPS could do nothing about internal Texas politics, Morgan wondered: "Just what influence this would have on a [park] bill sponsored by Mr. Stevenson is a question worthy of some consideration." [34]

Herbert Maier received independent corroboration of Morgan's claims after Thanksgiving, when Leo A. McClatchy, associate regional planner for the NPS office in Oklahoma City, wrote to his superior that "executives of Texas metropolitan newspapers . . . are of the opinion [that] there is very little chance of passing through the 1937 Texas Legislature a bill carrying an appropriation to purchase land to establish the Park." McClatchy, well-connected in media circles, reported that "the next Legislature will be very 'tight' on appropriations, and will probably throw aside all bills seeking funds for projects that are not deemed to be immediately essential." Big Bend, unfortunately, fell "in this class," said McClatchy's confidants, who believed that "it would require the active support of influential organizations and individuals who are strong politically, to get such a bill passed." This "active support," however, "does not appear to be available." McClatchy had found no concentrated opposition to the land program; indeed, "all of the newspaper people with whom I talked are friendly to the park." They also had "given help both in their editorial and news columns." Several media officials "suggested [that] the National Park Service should drum up this active support." McClatchy could only offer standard NPS policy that "we could not be placed in the position of a federal agency attempting to tell a State what the State should do." The park service, McClatchy reiterated, was "ready to cooperate in every way possible, but that we cannot come into the State and take the initiative." In response, the Texas media representatives mentioned that the land bill "should be introduced in January," as "committee hearings would develop considerable publicity, and would pave the way for getting the appropriation from a later session . . . when the State is in a better financial position than it is now." [35]

At year's end, no one in the NPS could predict the mood of the Lone Star lawmakers towards the land-acquisition bill. Newspapers as distant as the *San Francisco News* carried Leo McClatchy's press releases on the merits of Big Bend. In a story entitled "1,200,000 Acres of Peace Proposed on U.S. Border," the California daily told its readers: "While President

Roosevelt at Buenos Aires was lending the weight of his presence and his well-chosen words toward the securing of peace among men of good will in the two Americas, scientists of neighboring North American republics are examining the possibilities of a proposed International Peace Park in the Big Bend country of the Rio Grande." After outlining the standard NPS description of Big Bend's extraordinary ecology and geology, the *News* asked: "With a region combining the sublime and the startling, Jack Garner presiding [as vice-president] over the Senate, and Maury Maverick in the [U.S.] House, can there be any doubt of the future of the Big Bend country?" Everett Townsend, however, saw another side to the land-acquisition controversy not conveyed to readers of park service publicity. In a last-minute canvass of state lawmakers over the Christmas holidays, Townsend had learned that the Texas State Teachers Association would not accept any settlement of the mineral-rights claims that they held in south Brewster County. Coke Stevenson had told Townsend to have NPS officials ready in Austin at the start of the legislative session to meet with the state attorney general, and to draft a bill soon thereafter. Then the NPS should invite the attorney general "or one of his assistants," said Townsend, to visit Big Bend. Having these officials in the future park area as the legislators discussed land purchase would generate valuable publicity, as well as prepare the attorney general to make the NPS's case effectively in Austin. [36]

In light of this mixture of editorial support and legislative opposition, the park service weighed in with its own brochure at the end of 1936 entitled, "The Big Bend National Park: A State Asset." When readers turned past the cover photography of "St. Helena Canyon," the first sentence read: "What would be a finer thing for Texas, just as an advertising medium, than to have located within its borders one of the largest National Parks on the American Continent?" The brochure quickly moved to quotations from major newspapers nationwide on the value of Big Bend to the American people. Even the *New York Times* of November 15 had only words of praise for this "symbol of peace between two nations." The *Times's* editors declared that "nature lovers will travel in the next few years to enjoy the splendors and scenic beauties of what eventually is expected to be the largest international park on this continent." They noted that "the international nature of the project was virtually assured last week when committees representing the United States and Mexico met at El Paso, Texas, and worked out detailed plans for cooperation between the two governments." In addition, editorialized the *Times,* "almost all of the superlative adjectives imaginable have been used by visitors to describe those parts of the Big Bend park site which they have seen." [37]

As if to demonstrate the power of Big Bend upon the imagination, the park service brochure stated: "This little Empire, shut off from the rest of Texas by a kind of no man's land, holds within its confines the last vestiges of the primitive West." The brochure evoked a land "rich in romances of the long ago, in Indian legends, in folklore, in cowboy songs, and its border feuds." Added to this was the scientific value of Big Bend, leading "eminent scientists from all parts of the country [to visit] this treasure-house annually for new specimens and discoveries." For those drawn to the natural beauty of America's national parks, Big Bend offered "its magic purple of mountains; . . . its green, rolling uplands; . . . its verdant riot of canyon depths and gray crags brooding above; . . its flaming sunsets; and . . . its white-starred depths of night." To this land "artists from Texas and beyond its borders are finding new materials in color and form." The brochure writers thus predicted: "What a fortunate date for Texas when paintings of her own scenery shall adorn the art galleries, homes, and public schools all over the State!" In a more realistic vein, the brochure noted that "good highways will follow in the wake of the Park." Once the Big Bend country had access to the outside world, "what would be more natural and logical," asked the writers, "than for the American tourist from the heart of the United States to take the most direct route through the Chisos Mountains, linger there awhile to marvel at its wonders, and then journey on into the fairy land of Old Mexico rich in its art treasures, fascinating in its tumultuous but enlightening history, and glorious in its scenery!" Even if visitors had more prosaic tastes and desires, said

the brochure, they too could find solace and wonder in the Big Bend. "But it is as a Playground that the Big Bend National Park would be most valuable to Texas people," declared the NPS brochure. "The family with moderate means could afford to take a vacation and a much needed rest within the borders of its own state," while "the business man, perplexed with his problems or wearied with his toils, could find within striking distance of his business, just the relief he needs in the quiet retreats of mountain fastnesses." [38]

Eighteen months after Congress had authorized creation of Big Bend National Park, the patterns of land acquisition and publicity had become clear. Park service officials and local park sponsors mixed imagery of isolation and wilderness with beauty and wonder to attract future visitors, and to convince Texans of the rare opportunity awaiting them with their first national park unit. Yet behind the scenes, these same individuals struggled with the realities of the Depression, the New Deal, Texas's relationship to the federal government, and the power of ranchers and corporate officials to direct the fortunes of Brewster County. Once the Lone Star lawmakers gathered in Austin to discuss the fate of Big Bend National Park, the NPS and its private-sector allies could only hope that months of planning and dreaming would make a difference.



Figure 8: Congressman Thomason Riding Horseback in the Chisos Mountains, 1933

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 5:
Endnotes

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[21] Townsend to R. Ewing Thomason, May 12, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend, DEN NARA.

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[25] Webb to McClatchy, April 5, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 0-30 Big Bend International Park Part 2, DEN NARA.

[26] Webb to McClatchy, April 7, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 0-30 Big Bend International Park Part 2, DEN NARA.

[27] Walter Prescott Webb, "Big Bend Park Will Put Texas On Travel Map," *The Dallas Morning News,* April 18, 1937.

[28] Press Release, "The Big Bend of Texas," by Walter Prescott Webb, April 25, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: Big Bend International Park Part 2, DEN NARA.

[29] Maier to Webb, April 26, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box x, Folder: xx, DEN NARA.

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[31] Ibid.; "Dr. Webb Leads Exploring Trip Through Canyon," *Austin Texan,* n.d. (May 1937?); "Webb Defying Canyon Perils," *Austin Statesman,* May 17, 1937; "No Word From 4 Explorers," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* May 18, 1999; "Explorers On Perilous Ride," *Oklahoma City Oklahoman,* May 19, 1937.

[32] Telegram of Townsend to Milo F. Christiansen, NPS, Little Rock, AR, May 20, 1937; Telegram of Harry J. Adams, Superintendent of Parks, Fort Worth, TX, to Allred, May 21, 1937; Telegram of Townsend to Maier, May 21, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend; W.B. Tuttle, San Antonio Public Service Company, San Antonio, TX, to Maier, May 21, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 0-30 Big Bend International Park Part 2, DEN NARA.

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[38] Maier to Townsend, July 13, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

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[40] Maier to James R. Record, Managing Editor, Star Telegram, Ft. Worth, TX, July 13, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1, DEN NARA.

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[53] Webb to McClatchy, August 10, 1937; "Pres" (Presley Bryant) to "Leo" (McClatchy), n.d.; Maier to Webb, August 19, 1937; William R. Hogan to Region III, NPS, Oklahoma City, Attn: Mr. Hagerty, August 12, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 0-30 Big Bend International Park Part 2, DEN NARA.

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[55] Maier to the NPS Director, Attn: Miss Isabelle Story, Editor-in-Chief, August 18, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 0-30 Big Bend International Park Part 2, DEN NARA.

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[61] Ibid., 4-5.

[62] Ibid., 6-7.

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[73] Townsend to Maier, December 23, 1937, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 5:
A Dream Delayed: Failure to Secure Public Funding for Big Bend National Park, 1937 (continued)

Once the Texas legislators had seen the wonders of the Big Bend country, the NPS and park promoters accelerated their lobbying efforts in Austin. Herbert Maier sent to Everett Townsend "a large easel of fine photographs with descriptive labels." Maier told Horace Morelock that Townsend could move the display from one hotel lobby to another in Austin, and can also probably place it in the cloakrooms of the two houses and at functions in Austin where legislators will be present." In so doing, said Maier, "every single legislator will have had at least one chance to view it before the bill is voted on." He further suggested that "our technicians, most of whom are good speakers, can arrange their official travel in such a manner that they can speak at any luncheon or gathering you may have in mind." The Sul Ross president's idea for coordinating a series of public addresses at luncheons and club meetings appealed to Maier, who inquired of Morelock: "It appears to me that someone should be given the task of determining the most strategic functions of that kind in Texas that will eventuate between now and the time the bill comes up for a vote." Maier also acknowledged Morelock's warning that the park promoters would need private monies to implement this plan. "I have no doubt," said the ECW regional officer, "that your fund raising campaign will be a success," as "it is almost impossible to do anything without the expenditure of some funds." [16]

When state representative Albert Cauthorn of Del Rio prepared to speak to his colleagues about the park bill, he too called upon the NPS for information and advice. Everett Townsend passed along to Maier the request of Cauthorn for details of the "area and acquisition cost to Virginia of the Shenandoah National Park." Cauthorn also wanted numbers on the costs incurred by the states of North Carolina and Tennessee to gain approval for Great Smoky Mountains National Park, as well as the federal outlay for development of these facilities. Townsend then asked Maier if Cauthorn could "have on hand data concerning the expenditures during the past few years in the Yellowstone or some of the other larger National Parks, which have been in the process of improving over a long period of years." Then on April 7, Townsend could report to Maier that "over two thousand copies of the inclosed circular have been mailed out to the Hotels of Texas, by the Hotel Association." When Senator Winfield brought up his bill for scheduling on the calendar, Townsend reported proudly that the vote was twenty-one to five. While this offered no indication of the final vote totals, Townsend sensed victory. Yet Townsend found troubling the attitude of the *Dallas Times-Herald,* which on February 23 had asked the rhetorical question, "But How About The State Deficit?" Townsend sent to Maier a copy of the rather caustic editorial, in which the *Times-Herald* reminded its readers: "There are lots of interesting ways in which Texas could spend money. But where to get the money is a problem that the legislature is finding hard to solve." The editors remarked that Coke Stevenson "has been a strong advocate of economy," and that "perhaps he is prepared to show how the park expenditure is justifiable at this time." The *Times-Herald* conceded Stevenson's point that "the park would more than pay for itself by attracting tourists to this state." Yet the editors counseled patience by noting

that "the money from tourists would be obtainable only over a period of years." [17]

Such negative commentary challenged Townsend and his fellow park promoters to work all the harder to convince the legislature and governor of the merits of the land-acquisition program. On April 14, Townsend wrote to Herbert Maier with news that advocates of the park bill had met with Governor Allred, "and the Governor promised that he would not veto the Bill should we succeed in getting it up to him." Allred further informed the park sponsors that Walter Woodull, the lieutenant governor (in his capacity as presiding officer of the state senate), "had promised . . . that he . . . would do everything possible to get the Bill up in the Senate." The support of such an important official excited Townsend, as "quite a number of bills have been set for special consideration." Since many of these were of "a controversial nature," Townsend noted that they "have been accumulating on the calendar and many in the ordinary course of action have precedence over the Park Bill." Even though "all these [bills] in order are stacked up on the presiding officer's desk at the beginning of each day's work," nonetheless Woodull "is allowed a certain latitude;" a circumstance that Townsend described as "pulling one from the middle or bottom of the 'deck.'" Thus he hoped that Woodull would exercise his prerogatives in favor of the Big Bend legislation, and concluded to Maier: "Everything looks good." [18]

Given the circuitous journey that the Big Bend measure had taken to date, one could forgive Maier for being cautious despite the optimism of Everett Townsend. He learned from Ted L. Edwards, superintendent of the CCC camp in Daingerfield, Texas, that media coverage remained positive, but that "the only hitch that I have uncovered at any point is a rumor that major oil companies are looking to the Big Bend Country as a potential supply when the fields now operated that are close to rail heads and tide water are exhausted." Yet Edwards, like Townsend and other advocates of the park, believed that "this will be no obstacle to the passage of the bill and that if conditions in this area are indicative, we have every assurance that the bill will go through." Maier could not operate on such rosy assumptions, however, and he wrote to Conrad Wirth on April 26 with a plea for director Cammerer to send an airmail letter immediately to Governor James V. Allred of Texas. Maier went so far as to draft the lengthy letter for Wirth's review, in which the NPS director would remind the governor that "there has been expended by the Federal government an estimated sum of $12,800,000 in development of state parks in Texas during the past four years." From this the Lone Star state received some 25 recreational areas that drew "hundreds of thousands of people." Cammerer would inform Allred that "in Feb. 1937 the President wrote you and stressed the fact that the period of emergency was over and that the State government would necessarily have to assume responsibility for the investments made;" a condition that Maier found "in accordance with the assurance given by the State in requesting CCC camps for state park development." [19]

Maier's anxiety had arisen from learning that "the appropriation bill reported out by the Texas Senate Finance Committee is inadequate and actually does not even provide for a State Director of Parks." In addition, said the ECW regional official, "it makes no provision for Custodians [superintendents] for the state parks." Maier saw as obvious the fact that "the property which has been built must be protected from vandalism and maintained in a sanitary and usable condition for the public." He and his colleagues "believe it is self-evident that unless adequate State funds for park maintenance are provided, the Federal government cannot continue to approve further expenditures." The FDR administration already had announced a "proposed reduction in the strength of the CCC," and "the major share of the reduction will necessarily fall upon those states making the least effort to comply with the President's request." Maier compared the Texas legislation for state parks with the commitments of other states, and suggested that "if the bill is passed with its present limited provisions, it will be necessary to place future applications from the Texas State Parks Board . . . low in priority compared to those states which have made provision to properly maintain

their parks." The NPS should ask Allred at a minimum to "include at least the position of Director of State Parks, which we understand now carries the title of Executive Secretary, together with a Custodian for each park." Maier acknowledged that "our relationship with your State Parks Board as it is conducted through its present Executive Secretary [William J. Lawson] is most satisfactory." It was his hope that "in the event of a permanent Civilian Conservation Corps we may have the opportunity to carry the work now begun to a satisfactory conclusion." Such a partnership could be secured, Maier concluded, if Texas accepted "its responsibility for public recreation in the form of adequate funds for park maintenance." [20]

Soon after the state senate had reported out the state parks bill, word came to Maier that the Big Bend measure faced similar reductions. Everett Townsend wrote on May 12 to Representative R. Thomason to offer his thoughts on the actions of the Lone Star lawmakers. Champions of Big Bend National Park knew that their original request of $2 million had no chance in the 1937 session. "No doubt you are acquainted," said Townsend, "with the snarl in which the legislature has gotten itself and for that reason it has been impossible to bring the Bill up in either House." On April 27, the day after Maier had pleaded with Conrad Wirth to have NPS director Cammerer intercede with the legislature, Townsend had managed to get the Big Bend bill attached to the larger "Departmental Appropriation Bill." The senate had agreed to fund the land-acquisition program at $750,000; an amount that Townsend believed would satisfy the demands of the budget-conscious state representatives. Unfortunately, Townsend admitted to Thomason, "we could not in these amendments to an appropriation Bill set up the entire machinery for the acquisition, transfer, etc., to the government." Instead, park promoters like Townsend "had to content ourselves with the largest sum we could get for the purchase of the lands for a State Park and confine it to the limits set out in your [1935] Congressional act." Fortunately for the NPS, said Townsend, "all legislators understand that this is only the beginning and that it will be made into a National Park." He predicted that "at a later Session we will have no trouble in enacting the necessary legislation to complete it." In the interim, "the sum named is large enough to secure the most desirable areas and to insure future appropriations for the whole set-up." Townsend noted that "as quickly as some of the larger ranches are taken over, I believe it advisable that the Park Service take over the enforcement of protection for the game and of course, I would like to see general improvements continued as far as possible." [21]

Coincident with the aggressive campaign by Big Bend park sponsors, and timed for the legislative vote in mid-1937, was the NPS's contract with Walter Prescott Webb to conduct historical research on the future national park. In an effort to maximize the publicity that Webb could generate on behalf of Big Bend, the park service in January developed plans for the famed Lone Star historian to work on what Herbert Maier told his superiors would be "a readable study of the known history of the Big Bend (since 1850) based on [Lieutenant William H.] Emory and other early authorities, and on information gathered from living persons." Maier wanted Webb to "include brief biographical portraits of some of the outstanding figures in the region's past," and to develop "a study in which the influence of the environment on individuals would be clearly [delineated]." Finally, Webb was to offer "brief sketches of interesting historical points in the park," written "with a light touch and illustrated with photographs and perhaps with drawings." Maier was sure that "Dr. Webb could be depended on to catch the spirit of the region as a whole." In addition, "his interpretation of past life in the Big Bend would be a real contribution to history and would undoubtedly lay open new vistas for further research." [22]

The NPS was fortunate to have someone, said Maier, whose "published volumes have been read widely by the general public, and at the same time have been recognized by historians as being brilliant and sound." Not the least of Maier's hopes was Webb's potential to "generate publicity values in arousing public opinion in support of land acquisition legislation which

will be introduced at the next session of the Texas legislature." Webb had "accepted an invitation to deliver a series of public lectures at the University of London;" something that Maier characterized as "an unprecedented honor for a Western historian." Even "a brief note in any historical journal to the effect that the National Park Service had employed Walter Prescott Webb," said Maier, "for even a brief period would receive instant attention from the whole of the historical profession." The ECW regional director asked his superiors to approve a contract for 60 days of work by Webb, payable at $20 per day (for a total of $1,200). Maier told the NPS that "the amount . . . is available from the [CCC] camp allotment to the Big Bend SP-33 camp for this purpose." Maier also solicited endorsements of the contract from members of the NPS advisory board. Dr. Hermon C. Bumpus, an early advocate for park status, advised Arthur E. Demaray, acting NPS director, to support Maier's request, and the latter submitted the proposal to Interior secretary Harold Ickes for final approval. [23]

By early March 1937, Webb had traveled to the Big Bend area to survey the landscape and prepare for his historical research and writing. After a four-day excursion on horseback through the Chisos Mountains, guided by former state game warden Pete Crawford, Webb returned to Austin to correspond with Herbert Maier about the park. Webb accepted the designation of "consulting historian," and authorized publication of a press release on his contract at once. "My preliminary trip to the Big Bend," he told Maier, "was filled with interest." From it Webb would prepare "a general article entitled, subject to your approval, 'Is the Big Bend park Worth While?'" Webb assumed that he could "meet every argument save one that is being made by the school people who are afraid of losing some mineral rights." He agreed not to "touch that subject at all, because I am of the opinion that the more it is agitated the worse off we will be." Webb did note that "a horseback ride to the South Rim and vaccination by U.S. health service who came to the camp where I was on a smallpox scare, almost put me out." Nonetheless, Webb had commenced reading all that he could find about the Big Bend region, adding: "I only wish that I could convey its charm and spell to the public in written words." He planned to return soon to the future park site "in company with Pete Crawford, who knows the land, the legend, and the history [to] explore the country by car, horse, and, if possible, by boat." Webb especially targeted "some possibilities in those canyons, Santa Helena and others, that are worth considering." The Texas historian closed by asking Maier if he could assist in the lobbying campaign in Austin, and solicited his thoughts on the message that Webb could deliver to the Lone Star lawmakers. [24]

Webb then expressed to Leo McClatchy a particular curiosity in the international park concept, asking the NPS publicist about other such park units worldwide. He also promised to write immediately a newspaper feature in which Webb "tried to portray something of the spirit of the Big Bend region." He also noted that "this afternoon [April 5] an Austin paper, The Dispatch, will start a series of editorials on the Big Bend." Webb had learned that "these will be blocked in on the first page and a copy of the paper will be laid on the desk of each legislator daily." Webb himself would write these editorials, and would seek prior approval from McClatchy before their publication. "The [*Dispatch]* editor," said Webb, "seems to be of the opinion that the newshawks will pick up the story." Thus if McClatchy had "anything that you want to appear here, let me have it at once." For his part, the NPS publicist could supply Webb with "a history of the origins and development of the National Park System," as he was "in immediate need of the material" for his research. [25]

True to his word, Walter Prescott Webb began earning dividends for the NPS and the Big Bend sponsors by promoting the concept statewide. Webb airmailed to McClatchy on April 7 the first in his series on the future park, which the historian contended "took some time to prepare . . . because it is not an easy matter to encompass the Big Bend and explain it so that an outsider can gain any conception of what it is like." Webb then discussed with McClatchy his plans for "the Santa Helena trip." In conversation with Herbert Maier, Webb had concluded that "the difficulties involved in getting the government to sponsor the trip are too

great." Thus Webb had decided to make the raft trip "a private enterprise, to be carried out after I have finished my contract with the National Park Service." While "the results, if any, will of course be used to promote the park," Webb faced a campaign of solicitations from newspapers and magazines in Texas and nationwide. "If you can get Life Magazine to co-operate by accepting one or more articles," said Webb, "that will be fine." For his part, Webb had traveled to San Antonio from Austin to meet with radio station WOAI and the *San Antonio Express.* The editor of the *Express* advised Webb to contact the Texas Newspaper Association "to sponsor the undertaking," which Webb believed would have to occur in August, as "there is not time to prepare before the spring rains set in." Webb then revealed the excitement that the Big Bend contract had stimulated in him: "Incidentally, this park work thrills me and I fear that I shall be no good as a teacher from now on." [26]

By April 18, Webb had placed in newspapers statewide the first of two major features about Big Bend and the land-acquisition bill before the Texas legislature. "Big Bend Park Will Put Texas On Travel Map," read a headline in the *Dallas Morning News*, with the tag line "Another Yellowstone as a Tourist Attraction, Avers Expert of Proposed National Project." After recounting the now-standard evidence of geological and historical distinctiveness, Webb summarized "the first impression of the country - one that does not wear off - [as] that of magnificent confusion." Geologists and biologists had pieced together parts of the natural story, but "the historian has less chance than either of these to assist in the restoration." All that an historian could hope, said Webb, was "to attempt a generalized picture of the place, much simplified, and with the full knowledge that there are exceptions to every statement he makes." Poets and novelists could invoke the "atmosphere and circumstance in which human beings move like microbes across the brilliant yet awesome landscape." Yet even such literary talent could not "convey the sense of unreality and romance that overwhelms the spectator and leaves him with a recurrent nostalgia for a land in which he cannot live." Webb then attempted to describe the geologic forces that shaped the Big Bend country, only to conclude that the future park was "the geologist's paradise and his despair." By this Webb meant "his paradise because he finds on the surface such a variety of formation; his despair because he can hardly classify them, much less explain how they came there." [27]

On the following Sunday (April 25), Webb further regaled Texas newspaper readers with historical tales of significance to the Big Bend. He noted the artifacts found in caves along the Rio Grande by Elmo and Ava Johnson, "the remains of the Basket Makers who disappeared before the white man set foot on the land." Webb recounted the story of Pete Crawford when the former state game warden had chased a herd of wild burros in the Chisos Mountains that local stock raisers wanted killed "because they destroyed the grass needed by the cattle." When the party of hunters trapped the burros in a narrow ravine, the reports from their guns echoed several times, leading Crawford to name the area "Echo Dike." As for the Rio Grande, Webb noted that "in finding its way through the debris of the sunken block, [it] does all sorts of queer things." Eastern visitors might find it modest, yet "to the people of the West, of the Great Plains, and the arid region, it appears a mighty stream." It was the lure of the river, and of its stunning canyons, that Webb devoted most of the space in his April 25 feature. "I wish to say," the Texas historian wrote in conclusion, "that there is something very precious in this wild country, and that is a place of temporary escape from the world we know." Webb found the Big Bend "a place where the spirit is lifted up as it must have been when the white man found America and before he had time to mar it with his improvements." Because "man has not seriously disturbed the Big Bend," wrote Webb, this "recommends it as a National Park site." Had the NPS found the area "thickly settled, it would be out of the picture." But "there it lies in its gorgeous splendor and geological confusion," said Webb, "almost as it fell from the hands of the Creator." Webb then delivered the famous line often quoted in the press and historical works: "Because it seems to be made up of the scraps left over when the world was made, containing samples of rivers, deserts, sunken blocks of mountain and tree-clad peaks, dried up lakes, canyons, cuestas, vegas,

playas, arroyos, volcanic refuse, and hot springs, it fascinates every observer." He further addressed the potential of an international park, echoing the sentiments of Everett Townsend: "Men have not always lived in peace here, as one can learn by sitting in camp and listening to the border men - Texas rangers, border patrol, river guards, game wardens, and cow men." But the NPS, and the nation, could redress those grievances, Webb believed, "if the Big Bend of Texas, and the wild region opposite in Mexico, could be converted into an international park devoted to the pleasure and enlightenment of man, and to the promotion of peace and understanding between neighboring nations." [28]

One day after publication of the April 25 story about Big Bend, Herbert Maier wrote to Webb to outline the final product that the NPS needed from its illustrious historical consultant. Maier conceded that a 60-day contract would not generate the definitive treatment of the Trans-Pecos area that the park service would like. Yet if Webb could identify the naming of historical landmarks in the area, and compile "a chronology of the important historical events which have occurred in the region," he could "point the way for further researches by National Park Service technicians in the future." Maier also noted Webb's request "to retain an unofficial or semi-official connection with the Service after the expiration of your present working period." The ECW official wished to assure Webb that "we are very appreciative of this attitude and shall do everything in our power to cement this valuable relationship." [29]

The park service found reason to avail itself of Webb's commitment to promotion of Big Bend National Park when prospects for passage of the land-acquisition bill turned sour in the Texas legislature. While Webb as late as mid-April had discounted the possibility of a river trip through the Rio Grande canyons, suddenly the NPS announced plans for Webb to float the "Grand Canyon de Santa Helena" on May 16. Just days before the vote in Austin on the park bill, Webb joined a party led by Thomas V. Skaggs of McCamey, Texas, who along with fellow McCamey resident Joe Lane, and James W. Metcalfe, acting chief inspector for the U.S. Immigration Service's Border Patrol, would spend the next two days in two steel boats named the *Cinco de Mayo* and the *Big Bend.* The *Austin Dispatch* identified other onshore participants as James Lederer of Bastrop, Texas, who would film the journey, Pete Crawford, who would oversee activities at the base camp at Castolon, William R. Hogan, historian of the NPS from Oklahoma City, and members of the U.S. Border Patrol. The *Dispatch* told Austin readers that "all branches of the border service are cooperating to make this expedition a success." The CCC had sent a work crew to the railhead in Alpine to bring the steel boats down to the river, and "a new United States Coast Guard Ship is standing by to fly over the exploring party and receive signals of distress if any should develop." Border patrol officers would be stationed at the mouth of the canyon "with a boat which can go up stream to aid the party if trouble develops." In addition, "news of the expedition will be radioed to the outside world through the station at Johnson's Ranch in the bottom of the Big Bend." All of this exertion was for a trip that would take less than 48 hours. Yet *The Dispatch* noted that "the present expedition is the best equipped one that has attempted the venture, and if successful, may open the way for other parties to follow." [30]

As the foursome and their well-wishers gathered at the town of Lajitas that Sunday, they pondered the state of deliberations on the Big Bend park bill in Austin. The scale of the operation, and the precautions taken by state and federal officials, dramatized the need for maximum publicity and attention to the wonders of the Rio Grande canyons. The Coast Guard plane flew over the river just before the steel boats put into the water, and reported the current as low. The *Austin Texan* reported that "the Rio Grande at this point has never been popular with navigators," noting "only Dr. Robert T. Hill [in 1899] having gone through heretofore." The *Austin Statesman* played the story for its dramatic effect, headlining on May 17 with "Webb Defying Canyon Perils." "Treacherous rapids flow through the 2,000-foot high walls of the [Santa Elena] canyon," wrote the *Statesman,* "and no one is known to have navigated the river at this point." Webb's wife told the *Statesman* that she had received both a

letter and a telegram from her husband while camped at Lajitas, and she expected to hear from him within 24 hours of his completion of the trip. Then the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* of May 18 carried the cryptic headline: "No Word From 4 Explorers." "While they had expected to complete their hazardous journey through the dangerous, rock-studded waters this afternoon," said the *Star-Telegram*, "word as to whether or not they accomplished the feat was not known." The newspaper had called the telephone operator at Marathon, described as "117 miles from the canyon," but "her last report at [7] o'clock was that the voyage had not been completed." The Coast Guard added to the mystery when it informed the paper that it "had men stationed about seven miles from the [Santa Elena] canyon at Castolon, but they had received no report at that time and could be reached by telephone afterward." Then the Associated Press reported on May 19 that Webb and his companions had reached Castolon after "an arduous trip" through the canyon. The Texas historian told the AP reporter that "there was no serious trouble on the 16-mile trip though it had been made with much difficulty." [31]

One day after the news of Webb's successful completion of the Big Bend boat trip, the realities of Texas politics neutralized the public relations bonanza generated by the Rio Grande expedition. Everett Townsend sent a hurried telegram to Milo F. Christiansen of the NPS's office in Little Rock, Arkansas, asking him to tell Herbert Maier of his telegram to Thomason with the news that Governor Allred "is seriously considering the veto" because of "state finances." Townsend suggested to Maier's assistant that the park service "bring every possible influence to bear and if possible include that of the vice-president [John Nance Garner of Texas] and senators." W. B. Tuttle of the San Antonio Public Service Company told Maier that Allred worried about "the failure of the legislature to appropriate funds to meet the State's financial necessities." Tuttle had asked Allred for a personal meeting before the governor took any action on the Big Bend measure, and hoped that Maier could accompany him on such a visit. Harry J. Adams, superintendent of parks for the City of Fort Worth, wired Allred on May 21 to warn that "your failure to approve this bill will greatly embarrass the National Park Service in the program which they have setup for this wonderful and worthy project." In addition, Allred's veto would "seriously retard the entire State Park program." Then Townsend approached Herbert Maier directly on May 21, telling him tersely: "Situation not good." He minced few words by advising the ECW regional director: "Imperative that pressure from Washington continue." Then the longtime promoter of a national park in the Big Bend asked that "if possible, direct endorsements from Mexico City" be sent to Allred to influence his opinion. [32]

Pressure from park advocates motivated Herbert Maier to write two dozen Texas newspaper editors on the best means to lobby the Governor. The latter, said the ECW official, "believes that the State of Texas would benefit immeasurably by establishment of the Big Bend National Park," having said as much in a speech the previous month at the CCC state-park facility at Bastrop. Yet even the $750,000 appropriated by the state's lawmakers (half the original request of the NPS and park sponsors) troubled the governor. Maier asked J.J Taylor of the *Dallas News* if his paper could highlight the efforts of "the Government of Mexico . . . to acquire, by exchanging publicly-owned lands, the 400,000 privately-owned acres that are to become a National Park in Mexico." This "combined area would be of such international importance," said Maier, "as to attract tourists into Texas from throughout the world." The NPS believed that "a strong editorial in *The News* right now would help to convince the Governor that he is justified in signing the Big Bend bill because of the increased revenues that will be collected in Texas annually." In addition, "the expense of development would be taken over entirely by the Federal Government." Between visitors' expenses and the taxes collected from them, Maier saw Big Bend bringing into Texas "every year a very minimum of three million dollars." Allred's signature "absolutely assures annual and permanent increased revenues to the State," and Maier advised Taylor: "You can editorially justify signing of the bill along that line alone." The NPS then offered kind words to Taylor for the

"splendid support you have given in the past, both in editorial and news columns." All Maier now asked was for the *News* to "please sew up the whole issue right now with this last clinching editorial." [33]

Maier's campaign with Texas newspaper editors found widespread support, as the *Amarillo Daily News* declared rhetorically: "By All Means Sign It, Governor." Gene Howe, publisher of the Amarillo paper, noted that the governor meant well in "opposing other appropriation measures that do not make provision for the raising of the money to be expended." In the case of Big Bend, however, "Texas is so badly, badly in need of more parks and lakes and recreational places." Howe claimed that "we have been so backward, so stubborn in developing our wonder places and in providing outdoor recreation for our citizens that it would be little short of a disaster if the governor failed to sign this bill." The *Daily News* asked its readers: "Think of the millions we waste: think of the pitiable few dollars we spend to attract tourists and to make our state more attractive for our own citizens." Howe conceded that "up here in the Panhandle we are in the other extreme end of the state." Yet Big Bend fit a larger scheme of promotion of Lone Star attractions for Howe and his newspaper. "We want the Big Bend," editorialized the *Daily News*, "we want the Palo Duro [canyon state park south of Amarillo] improvement carried on and we want more parks and lakes in every district, in every county, if practical, in the whole state." Howe pleaded with Allred: "We are so many years behind the eastern states, governor, that it would be most, most regrettable if this worthy movement was delayed or broken down by your veto." For his part, Howe promised that his paper would "send thousands of West Texas citizens down there to see it." As proof, Howe argued that Texans would "much rather travel in Texas than other states but first you have to have something worth seeing to attract them." [34]

The *Amarillo Daily News's* editorial stand on the Big Bend measure echoed the campaign that the park service undertook in the days prior to Governor Allred's refusal to sign the bill. Herbert Maier had asked Daniel Galicia and Juan Zinser of the *Departemento Forestal, Caza y Pesca*, to "arrange to have [Mexican] Ambassador [Josephus] Daniels contact Governor Allred . . . by wire in favor of the appropriation which is now before the Texas State Legislature for purchase of land in the Big Bend." Maier had not known of Daniels's return to the United States, and he apologized to Galicia and Zinser for the diplomatic confusion. Yet Miguel Angel de Quevedo revealed the high regard that he held for the NPS by responding that Galicia "was commissioned to lay this matter before the Charge-de-Affaires of the United States Embassy here and to make known the contents of your letter, having previously made similar representations to Ambassador Daniels relative [to] establishment of Big Bend National Park." Then Quevedo mentioned for the first time the contemplated name for the Mexican portion of the international park, which he called "'Sierra Del Carmen' National Park." The NPS director followed with his own direct appeal to Allred, sending a telegram on June 5 urging "favorable consideration." The park service, Cammerer declared, was "confident from past experience that indirect benefit to state both financially and socially will greatly exceed requested appropriation." "We realize your problem," said the NPS director, "due to [the] failure of [the] legislature to pass additional tax bills." Yet Cammerer predicted (without substantiating data) that "increased travel to Texas will return money through existing taxes a hundred fold." The director reminded Allred that his agency had "enjoyed cooperating with Texas both in allotment of camps and money for development [of the] Texas state park system." Thus it was Cammerer's hope that "you will see your way clear to assist us in developing our national park system." [35]

Big Bend

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CHAPTER 6:
Endnotes

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[2] Townsend to William J. Lawson, February 9, 1938; Will Mann Richardson, Chief Clerk, Texas State Parks Board, Austin, to Townsend, February 11, 1938, Townsend Collection, Folder 4, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

[3] Glenn Burgess, President, Highway 51 Association, Littlefield, TX, to Maier, January 18, 1938; Townsend to Maier, January 15, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 0-1 (NPS) Conferences Big Bend, DEN NARA.

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[5] "U.S. Aid For Big Bend Forecast," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, February 4, 1938.

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[7] Townsend to Maier, February 5, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 9, Folder: 503 (NPS) Pictures (General) [Folder 2], DEN NARA.

[8] "Big Bend Park," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, January 14, 1938.

[9] Wirth to the Acting Regional Director, Region III, NPS, Santa Fe, February 8, 1938; Maier to the NPS Director, ATTN: Conrad Wirth, February 19, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 7, Folder: 501 Publicity, DEN NARA.

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(General?), RG79, NPS, CCF 1933-1949, Big Bend National Park 501-04 - 504.04-2 Files, Box 831, DC NARA II.

[13] "'Dreams Come True,'" *El Paso Times,* February 27, 1938; Morelock to Maier, March 14, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend; Morelock to Maier, February 19, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 22, Folder: 833 Exhibits, DEN NARA.

[14]Maier to (Elmo) Johnson, c/o Johnson's Ranch, Castolon, TX, February 19, 1938; Johnson to Maier, February 28, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 7, Folder: 501 Publicity, DEN NARA.

[15] Townsend to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 22, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA. M.A. LeHand, private secretary to FDR, sent Townsend a note of thanks for his letter, stating: "I can assure you that he [FDR] will appreciate your interest in writing and will wish me to thank you for your kindness in giving him an opportunity to see those interesting photographs." (M.A. LeHand, Private Secretary, The White House, Washington, DC, to Townsend, March 3, 1938, Townsend Collection, Folder 4, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.)

[16] Cammerer to Townsend, March 18, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927, 1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

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[30] "Development of the Big Bend Country Is Aim of West Texas Group," *Texas Hotel Review,* May 1938: 23, Townsend Collection, Box 9, Wallet 24, Folder 4, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

[31] Maier to the NPS Director, May 28, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA. For more information on Jesse Jones, see Gerald D. Nash, *The West in World War II: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 9-10.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Memorandum of Maier to McClatchy, May 30, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 7, Folder: 501 Publicity, DEN NARA.

[35] Townsend to Maier, July 3, 1938; Maier to Townsend, July 8, 1938; Memorandum of Cammerer to "Mr. Maier and the Files," July 11, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

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[52] Carter to Senator H.L. Winfield, Fort Stockton, TX, December 20, 1938, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend, DEN NARA.

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CHAPTER 6:
Keeping the Faith: The Struggle to Sustain Momentum for Big Bend National Park, 1938 (continued)

As spring approached in the year 1938, promoters of the park could take some satisfaction in the continued stream of positive news features about Big Bend, and of the organization of the statewide fundraising committee. On March 10, Morelock sent to James Record "two checks in the sum of $100 each from Dr. J.E. Mowinkle and Mr. H.R. Smith, both of them oil men from San Antonio." Mowinkle and Smith (the latter the brother of Sul Ross history professor G.P. Smith), "have traveled widely in the United States, in Mexico, in Canada, and in Europe," said Morelock. H.R. Smith told the Sul Ross president that "we are interested in the Big Bend National Park to the extent that we should like to make at least two more personal trips into this area, taking photographs and perhaps a movie of the park area both on the American side and the Mexican side." Smith further claimed that "'the climate of the Big Bend section alone justifies the establishment of a Big Bend National Park, and the picturesque grandeur of the scenery is not surpassed by the scenery of any other national park I have seen--and I have visited practically all of them.'" Mowinkle expressed similar delight with Big Bend's "'geological possibilities,'" which he called "'unsurpassed by any other area in the United States.'" Mowinkle believed that "'the study of geologic formations in the Big Bend will be tremendously helpful in solving the geologic problems of other areas in Texas.'" In more practical terms, said Mowinkle: "All of Texas will profit financially by virtue of a national park and the oil interests, as well as many other big business concerns, will be direct beneficiaries of additional revenues that will come to Texas because of a national park.'" [17]

To Horace Morelock, the contributions of Smith and Mowinkle proved the merits of an aggressive statewide campaign to raise funds for Big Bend's land-acquisition program. Thus he worked with Wendell Mayes, chairman of the state parks board, to select an executive committee for the park initiative. "Naturally," Morelock informed Amon Carter, "we must have on this committee not only people with a vision for Texas and its future, but people whose standing in Texas will guarantee the success of the campaign." For that reason, "it is the consensus of our opinion and the opinion of many other people that you should be chairman of the Executive Committee." Morelock identified as reasons for Carter's role the fact that "the Fort Worth Star-Telegram has done more for West Texas than any other newspaper, and has taken an unusual interest in the Big Bend National Park project as such." This, plus Carter's "standing in Texas and [his] ability to achieve worth while objectives," Morelock contended, "will guarantee the success of the campaign." The Sul Ross president asked Carter's advice on the draft plan for the statewide committee, and surmised that "the Press of Texas should give wide publicity to the [Austin] meeting" to be called by Governor Allred. To Herbert Maier, Morelock reported that "things are moving along in rather good form, and I believe that by the middle of April the park engine will have full steam up." The Alpine chamber would contribute to this committee's work by printing a 36-page bulletin filled with illustrations of the future park area. "We are asking four well-known artists (Gutzum Borglum, Xavier Gonzalez, Audrey Dean Nickols, and Mr. Teel)," said Morelock, "to furnish us free of charge one of their autographed paintings of this section, the same to be

reproduced in colors in the bulletin." To make the point even more emphatic, Morelock asked Maier to verify the statement that Big Bend marked the first time that Congress made its pledge of support "in advance of deeding the land to the national government." Finally, Morelock wondered if "the National Park Service could arrange with the government of Mexico for a representative who would appear on this program [in Austin], and who would indicate just what the Mexican government has done." He believed that "this number [400,000 acres] would add a great deal to the program," and asked Maier: "Will you please see what can be done on this score?" [18]

This latter request reflected a flurry of activity on the Mexican side of the future Big Bend International Park, instigated when Morelock sought that nation's endorsement of the private fundraising campaign. Daniel F. Galicia responded to a letter sent to him in late April regarding a road to be built from the city of Monterrey in the state of Coahuila northward to the Rio Grande. Galicia apologized for not answering Townsend for some two weeks, saying: "Please excuse the delay which was caused by an excess of work, which you well know that I have." For his part, the chief of forestry for the Cardenas administration inquired of "the Secretary of Communications and Public Works for his cooperation in the opening of said roads in the lands which soon will be declared a National Park and called ‘Sierra del Carmen.'" This correspondence had followed the ten-day trip that Galicia had taken into the future international park with Texas oil men H.R. Smith and J.E. Mowinkle. Townsend had guided the party of NPS officials, Texans, and Galicia some 50 miles south of Boquillas, where they camped for several days at the "San Ysidro ranch" and inspected the Sierra del Carmen and the Fronteriza Mountains. The *Dallas News* reported on April 5 that the group had high hopes for a successful survey, given the rumor that Governor Allred might call a special session of the Texas legislature the following month to consider the Big Bend land-acquisition program. The *News* then spoke of the work of "an international park committee organized some time ago [that] has ironed out any difficulties that might arise over border situations." Among these, said the Dallas paper, was "a tentative agreement" that "if the park becomes a reality to allow citizens of both countries into both sides of the park without the formality of passports." [19]

The international park survey team ventured into Mexico just as a late winter storm descended upon the Sierra del Carmen. The party, said the *Alpine Avalanche,* was "whipped by bitter winds, blinded by dust, half frozen by the cold of high mountains." Nonetheless, they returned with what the *Avalanche* called "the first pictures of the scenic region taken specifically and exclusively for park promotion purposes." The excursion had been a "‘gift' of two San Antonio men to the park promotion cause [Smith and Mowinkle], . . . and it is known that this trip cost them into four figures [over $1,000]." Along with Townsend, Galicia, and the oil men were Sul Ross's G.P. Smith, Allen Smith (the nephew of the Smith brothers), John Ponder of San Antonio, John King and Earl Moore of the *Dallas News* staff (the latter the staff photographer), two students from Sul Ross (Horace Jones and John Dear), and Mexican customs official Jesus Guerrera. Townsend recalled that the weather deteriorated as the party rode on horseback above 8,000 feet in altitude. "‘We had not taken adequate bedding for such a cold spell,'" Townsend admitted, "‘not anticipating such a drop in temperature.'" They had "plenty of wood'" with which to build fires, but "‘the winds blew terrifically,'" he told the *Alpine Avalanche,* "‘shutting off views with dust clouds.'" The weather notwithstanding, Townsend and others took many excellent pictures. Then he recounted how "Senor Galicia expressed himself as delighted with the scenic region and eager to see an international park created." Galicia further declared to Townsend "an intention of cooperating in every way." The party emerged "out of the wilderness," said the *Avalanche,* "in a mood of pleased satisfaction with what was accomplished in the way of pictures and knowledge gained." [20]

Much of the success of the survey party could be attributed to the skills and diplomacy of

Everett Townsend. Earl Moore wrote to Townsend upon his return to Dallas to thank him for his services as guide. "I consider meeting you and knowing you one of the greatest events of my life," said Moore, as "you represent a type of man which I have always admired." Townsend's reply revealed the source of Moore's adulation, as he said of the surveying party: "It was just about the finest lot of fellows I was ever out with." Townsend, who had recently escorted the National Geographic crew into the Big Bend country, and who had guided Governor Allred the year before, said of the Smith-Mowinkle party: "Each was true grit to the bone." Even John King and Earl Moore, whom Townsend characterized as "the two tenderfeet and 'rears,' the News-Boys," emerged as "heroes." While "neither had ever hubbed any real hardships or ridden more than a few miles," said Townsend, "they came through like He-Men." Townsend, who had seen many photographs of the Big Bend in his day, considered Moore's shot of the Sierra del Carmen as "simply marvelous." That plus the portrait of Townsend in the field would "occupy a page in that Jimmy Allred scrapbook" kept by Townsend. [21]

While Townsend and the Smith-Mowinkle party planned their work on behalf of the international park, the acting director of NPS Region III (Herbert Maier) delivered an address on March 22 to the Texas State Planning Conference. Maier told the state's planning officials that "a major project of this sort [Big Bend], designed to benefit a people at large can usually only be consummated after a lengthy, and sometimes exhaustive, educational campaign." Thus Maier wished to identify the key features of the Big Bend fundraising initiative, doing so by placing the endeavor in the larger context of NPS park development elsewhere. By 1938, said Maier, the NPS had but four park sites awaiting congressional approval: "Mount Olympus in the State of Washington, the King's River Canyon in California, the Everglades in Florida, and the Big Bend area of Southwest Texas." Maier surmised that "if, and when, these four areas have been acquired, there may not be any more additional National Parks added to the system because the Lord did not create any others." Big Bend also benefited from the ironic demand of an urbanizing nation for escape from "the congestion of cities and intensified farming areas." Maier considered it "the duty of society, functioning through the Federal and State governments to provide such playgrounds" as Big Bend might become. He then outlined for his audience the vastness of Big Bend; dimensions that he saw fitting for the "nation's largest state." Among its charms was the fact that Big Bend offered "the outstanding example of U.S-Mexican border scenery." In addition, "the wildlife capacity of the range when reestablished through National Park Service protection methods," said Maier, "will probably be greater per acre than that of the Yellowstone with its heavy lodgepole forests." Maier also suggested that "few regions in the United States afford such an opportunity for demonstration of reversion to proper land usage;" a reference to the disastrous practices of grazing in the Big Bend country after the turn of the century. [22]

For Maier, "the feature of most spectacular interest after the Chisos Range is the Rio Grande itself." Beyond its natural beauty, the river provided the only permanent body of water in the entire area. "Sufficient and potable water for serving the public," Maier told the Texas planners, "if this is to become a major recreational area, may be obtained in ample quantities by surface drainage at points where utility and public service units may be established." He noted that officials of the United States and Mexico had recommended that "a strip of land five miles in depth would also skirt the Rio Grande opposite the American side to the West and for its full length so that both sides of the three canyons would be included" in an international park. In addition, "investigation has shown that it should not be too difficult a task to later build a road from the Mexican area to join with the Main Mexico City Highway at Monterrey." This brought to Maier's mind the fact that "general plans for the development of each area have at the request of the Mexican Government been considered as a single problem." NPS planners had recommended "that the main approach road from the North terminate at a tourist center to be located in the lower Chisos Mountains with a system of horse-trails affording the only connection between this and the principal points of interest in

the higher country." One route could lead southwest to Santa Elena Canyon, with another angling southeast to Boquillas. "From thence," said Maier, "the road could skirt the base of the Del Carmen and Fronteriza ranges in the Mexican area to Canyon del Fresnos up through which access would be had to a principal tourist development." Maier also envisioned that "from the international bridge at Boquillas a road is proposed skirting the Rio Grande westward on the Mexican side and affording spectacular views down into the Mariscal and Santa Helena Canyons." On the American side, "little more than a service road is planned . . . so that no artificial barrier will discourage a free flow of wildlife to and across the River." To Maier this meant: "In other words, it is not planned to encircle the Chisos Mountains with a road system." [23]

When determining the "atmosphere in the region," Maier defined this as "decidedly one of manana." Thus park planners believed that "everything must be done in developing the area to preserve for the tourist seeking rest and recreation the Spanish-Mexican atmosphere." He called for "an architecture for government and operators buildings [that] might well be based on Spanish-Mexican lines." Maier foresaw the "hacienda" as "a prototype for a main tourist lodge while perhaps a few of the already existing native adobes along the river might be retained as minor tourist stopping places." He recounted the declaration of NPS director Cammerer that "the international project [was] ‘a gesture toward international good will that might set an example to other nations.'" Maier stated that "undoubtedly such a major project would go far toward bringing the two races together." He then added on the American side the concept of a working longhorn ranch. "It is felt by some," said Maier, "that it is as important to reestablish here a herd of longhorns under their original conditions as it has been to preserve the buffalo that roamed the plains before them in the Yellowstone." Adding to the aesthetic value provided by the longhorn ranch would be its "historic value." "The old spring and fall round-up and branding party," Maier noted, "would afford the keenest interest and value to many who visit this park." [24]

Should Texas's planners support the Big Bend park, Maier claimed that the Lone Star state would accrue "pronounced financial benefit." "Virtually every state in the union," said the acting Region III director, "and most foreign countries are bidding for tourist patronage." Maier presciently portrayed tourism as "a comparatively new industry, brought into being by the facilities for travel by paved highways, and the automobile, and by the new life of shorter working hours and more abundant leisure which has been forced upon us." Maier conceded that "there were tourists before the automobile." Yet these were "comparatively few and mostly of the wealthy class." With the advent of the car culture, "today's tourist ranges from the bottom to the top of the social scale with a large bulk composed of the great middle class." Texas made its first foray into the tourism business with the 1936 centennial, but in the words of Maier, "this objective is passed." "The ideal thing," he advised his audience, "would be to have a permanent major objective" for travelers; a situation resolved by inclusion of Big Bend into the NPS system. Then, too, Maier reiterated predictions made by his listeners, the Texas State Planning Commission, that "the population of Texas will increase by a million and a half in the next 20 years." Between tourism and population growth, Maier claimed, "the American public spends tens of billions of dollars annually for recreation in all of its forms and this sum filters into almost every variety of business." The Lone Star state would be remiss, Maier concluded, if it did not embrace this plan for "proper land use" with such good fortune at its doorstep. [25]

When Maier returned to his Santa Fe office, he wrote back to Horace Morelock with a more detailed description of his remarks to the Texas planning conference, and his sense of the merits of private fundraising for land acquisition (the only activity underway regarding Big Bend throughout 1938). Maier noted the discussions with the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, the Texas State Parks Board, and the NPS to convene the statewide fundraising committee. The parks board director, William Lawson, had told Maier that "the delay was the result of Amon

Carter's conjecture that the money can be raised from some private source." Maier disagreed, confiding in Morelock: "I doubt very much that Mr. Carter will succeed in this, but of course it is well worth trying." The NPS official could not think otherwise, as "in any campaign of this sort a long delay means stagnation." Maier also had to clarify a point raised by the Sul Ross president about the uniqueness of the Big Bend fundraising initiative. Where Morelock believed that Big Bend broke precedent as the "first case in history where such [congressional authorization] was made prior to the acquisition of the land by the State," Maier suggested that "this is the usual procedure." Until "the interested groups have an advance guarantee" of a land base for a park, "Congressional authority simply amounts to the guarantee that the Secretary of the Interior will accept the area as a national park if and when the land has been deeded to the federal government." [26]

Once Maier had corrected Morelock's impression of Big Bend's land program, he then addressed the Sul Ross president's plans for the meeting in Austin of the fundraising group. Morelock wanted someone from the Cardenas administration in Mexico to speak before the Texas officials. Maier suggested Daniel Galicia, who "spends a great deal of time at El Paso and Laredo--usually the latter." Maier claimed to "know Senor Galicia well," and believed that he would accept an invitation to the Austin gathering. "You will recall," said Maier, "that [Galicia] gave a brief talk at Congressman [Ewing] Thomason's luncheon at Alpine in October [1937]." Maier did caution Morelock, however: "He is not given to speaking in English but he does pronounce his words well and I guess he would be willing to say just about anything we coached him on." [27]

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Endnotes

[1] For a good discussion of the war in Texas and the West, see Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

[2] Memorandum of W.F. Ayres to the Acting Regional Director, Region III, NPS, January 7, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610:01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[3] Memorandum of Ayres to the Acting Regional Director, Region III, NPS, January 9, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[4] Memorandum of Earl A. Trager, Chief, Naturalist Divison, NPS, Washington, DC, to Acting Regional Director, "Region 3," January 16, 1939; Trager to Dr. Robert T. Hill, Dallas, TX, January 16, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 20, Folder: 731.02 Topography of Parks, DEN NARA.

[5] Memorandum of Ayres to the Acting Regional Director, Region III, January 19 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[6] John N. Harris, Jr., Dallas, to The State Park Board, Austin, January 24, 1939; Will Mann Richardson, Chief Clerk, TSPB, to Harris, January 26, 1939, Townsend Collection, Folder 4, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

[7] Maier to Record, January 24, 1939; Maier to Winfield, January 24, 1939; Memorandum of Maier to the NPS Director, January 24, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[8] Memorandum of Maier to the NPS Director, January 24, 1939.

[9] "Park Area Described As ‘Mysterious, Wild Country With Peculiar Effect On Those Fortunate Enough To See It,'" *Alpine Avalanche*, January 27, 1939.

[10] Memorandum of Ayres to the Acting Regional Director, Region III, NPS, January 31, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks,

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[11] "Elliott Roosevelt Stresses Value of Park in Big Bend," *Fort Worth Star Telegram,* February 4, 1939.

[12] "Bellow Bred Out Of Bulls, Complains J. Frank Dobie," *Pampa (TX) News,* February 10, 1939.

[13] Maier to Townsend, Februrary 21, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[14] Richardson to Hillory A. Tolson, Regional Director, NPS Region Three, Santa Fe, February 23, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[15] Memorandum of Maier for Files, February 27, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[16] Memorandum of Ayres to the Acting Regional Director, Region III, NPS, February 28, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120 (NPS) Legislation (General), DEN NARA.

[17] Daily Report of Ayres to "Austin Headquarters," March 1, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Daily Report of Ayres, March 4, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[20] Tolson to Carter, March 7, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[21] Memorandum of Maier for State Supervisor Fuller, March 17, 1939; Maier to Record, March 17, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[22] Memorandum of L.C. Fuller, State Supervisor, Recreation Study, NPS, Austin, to the Acting Regional Director, Region III, March 21, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 120-07 (NPS) Proposed Legislation Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[23] Wirth to the NPS Director, April 28, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence

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[24] Adrian Wychgel, New York City, to Cammerer, May 3, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[25] "Amon Carter Warns That Signing of Bill Is Only First Step in Creating Park," *Houston Chronicle,* May 13, 1939.

[26] "Anything as Big as Big Bend Calls for Use of Big Pen," *Fort Worth Star Telegram,* May 14, 1939; Memorandum of Maier for the NPS Director, May 13, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[27] Milton F. Hill, Marfa, TX, to Maier, March 31, 1939; Maier to Hill, April 27, 1939; Hill to Maier, July 4, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 22, Folder: 867 Tours (General), DEN NARA.

[28] Hill to Maier, July 4, 1939.

[29] "Robstown Editor Races Rio Grande," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times,* May 28, 1939; "Pair Swims Treacherous River Through Canyon," *Tyler (TX) Telegraph,* May 29, 1939; "Brothers Swim Perilous Canyon," *The Albuquerque Journal,* May 29, 1939.

[30] "Scenario - by H.W. Kier, 'Big Bend' National Park, Capt. E.E. Townsend," Townsend Collection, Box 9, Wallet 24, Folder 1, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Katharine Seymour, San Antonio, to Maier, June 12, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 9, Folder: 504 (NPS) Publications (General) [Folder 2], DEN NARA.

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[35] A.M. Turney, County Attorney, Brewster County, TX, to Wendell Mays (Mayes), Commissioner State Park Board, Austin, July 28, 1939, Townsend Collection, Folder 4, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

[36] "Tourist Opportunity," *Fort Worth Star Telegram,* September 12, 1939.

[37] Maier to the NPS Director, October 19, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[38] Morelock to Maier, November 4, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 9, Folder: 504 (NPS) Publications (General) [Folder 2], DEN NARA.

[39] Frank D. Quinn, Executive Secretary, Texas State Parks Board, Austin, to Brewster C. Kenyon, Long Beach, CA, November 16, 1939, Townsend Collection, Folder 4, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU; Memorandum of Wendell E. Little, Planning Coordinator, NPS, Washington, DC, to Mr. Sager and Mr. Thompson, November 9, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[40] Memorandum of Tolson for Mr. Fred T. Johnston, NPS, Washington, DC, November 10, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #1 Big Bend; Maier to Morelock, November 15, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 9, Folder: 504 (NPS) Publications (General) [Folder 2], DEN NARA.

[41] A.C. Jones, Dallas, TX, to Governor W. Lee O'Daniel, Austin, December 4, 1939, Townsend Collection, Folder 4, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

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CHAPTER 7:
Clouds of War, Pleas for Help: The Big Bend Land-Acquisition Campaign, 1939 (continued)

Another, more curious promotional angle about Big Bend came from J. Frank Dobie, whom the *Pampa News* said had "run out on English classes he teaches in the University of Texas to 'hole up' in the [Chisos] mountains here while he works on his next book, 'Texas Longhorns.'" Dobie told an interviewer that he had come to the abandoned CCC camp in the Chisos Mountains "to spend some six weeks working on his book, which is to be a comprehensive history of the development of the Longhorns from the time the first Spanish cattle were unloaded on the island of Sant[o] Domingo by Columbus on his second voyage to America." The Texas folklorist had sought in the Big Bend remnants of the longhorn breeds that he knew as a youth on his family's ranch in the Live Oak country. Those animals, Dobie told the *Pampa News*, "would lift sand upon their backs and necks with their fore feet, bellowing constantly." After "working themselves into the proper mood for battle," the longhorns "would lower their heads and charge, and acres of brush would be trampled before one bull succeeded in goring to death or whipping out the other." This Dobie called "'a grand spectacle,'" and one that he hoped to witness while in the future national park. He then remarked to the Pampa reporter on the distinctive features of life in the former CCC camp. "To clear his mind between working hours," said the reporter, "Dobie chops stove wood or explores the wild mountain peaks about him, sometimes accompanied by the only other occupant of the camp, Custodian Lloyd Wade." [12]

Yet a third news story spawned by the media campaign surrounding Senate Bill 123 was more worrisome to Herbert Maier and his NPS colleagues. The local newspaper in Fort Stockton reported that Senator Winfield had "announced that definite assurance had been received from a scientific foundation that it would donate $1,000,000 for the Big Bend National Park project." Maier quickly contacted Everett Townsend for advice, noting that "I do not think that Senator Winfield would give out such a statement in his home paper unless the statement had a sound basis in fact." "Naturally," Maier cautioned, "we are very much interested in this statement since we, like others, have wondered about the delay in getting the fund raising campaign under way." Maier realized that "Mr. Carter was flirting with various foundations," and asked if Townsend could "look into this and drop us a line at the earliest moment?" [13]

While Maier awaited word from Townsend about Winfield's claim of a million-dollar donor for Big Bend, the Texas state parks board registered some surprise late in February when the new Region III director, Hillory Tolson, wrote to William Lawson about other potential NPS sites in Texas. "We, of course," responded chief clerk Will Mann Richardson, "have no objection to Palo Duro Canyon becoming a National Park." Yet the parks board warned Tolson that "we should call to your attention one or two facts in regard to the area" south of Amarillo. "In the first place," said Richardson, "we do not believe it will be possible to get the Legislature to appropriate money to purchase this land now when we are trying to get the Big Bend area purchased for a National Park." Another concern for the parks board, said its

chief clerk, was that "it would take an Act of the Legislature to transfer whatever interest the State may have in the area to the National Park Service." Even if the Lone Star lawmakers agreed, "we would hate to transfer to anyone the obligation, which we now have, to pay a grossly exorbitant price for the [Palo Duro] property." Richardson contended that "the indebtedness against the land at the present time is around one-half million dollars and out of all proportion to the value of the property." He then warned Tolson: "If the landowners are going to insist on such a valuation being placed on the property we feel that you should be aware of this fact before anything further is done." [14]

Within days of Tolson's inquiry about NPS status for Palo Duro Canyon, Will Mann Richardson contacted W.F. Ayres with news that Governor O'Daniel, in the words of Herbert Maier, "is planning to introduce a bill for conveying the Big Bend land to the Federal Government, and, apparently, will include in the bill a request for a large appropriation for land purchase." Maier worried that "this second bill, if introduced, will confuse the situation." He then advised Ayres "that apparently State Park Chairman Lawson, who is now Acting Secretary for the Governor, and Secretary of State Beauchamp may have advised the Governor to introduce his own bill so as to 'steal the show' from Amon Carter." Maier speculated that "the Governor may, however, be ignorant of the fact that a Big Bend bill was already introduced a month ago by Senator Winfield." Since "we do not know what has prompted the Governor's action," said Maier, "I advised Ayres that . . . he should not contact Lawson or the Governor, but should immediately contact Senator Winfield and Representative Cauthorn, and have them size up the situation and report to this Office by air mail." The associate regional director surmised that "if the Governor's bill calls for a large appropriation, and if it comes up about the time the fund-raising campaign is under way, the public may become confused and private subscriptions discouraged." This realization came just as the NPS had completed a "relief model of the Big Bend area made at Fort Hunt." Maier had received permission to display the model at the Texas state capitol, but complained that "the map was not painted in realistic colors but in a monotone, and this is certainly unfortunate," as well as the map itself being assembled in two pieces, "which is further unfortunate." [15]

O'Daniel's rumored intervention forced NPS officials and park sponsors to assemble in Austin, where they converged on the office of Secretary of State Tom Beauchamp. Once there, NPS inspector Ayres learned that the governor merely planned "to send up a message to the legislature endorsing the Big Bend Park movement in general." Senate Bill No. 123 had been reported out of the finance committee, but Senator Winfield still awaited the "action of Amon Carter and the executive committee." One concern for Ayres was "that the legislature is deadlocked on this old age pension business, and its attendant Transaction Tax." Yet Ayres could report to Maier that "both Winfield and Cauthorn feel confident that a substantial appropriation bill could be passed, and if the Carter faction don't act pretty soon they may introduce an amendment to this bill carrying a big appropriation." Winfield also indicated to Ayres that "the Senate at least will retain the 'mineral rights' clause, and convince the School Lobby that they will get more from their share of the gasoline tax (1 cent per gallon) on the increased travel than they ever would from developed minerals in the area." Ayres also had been able to inquire of Winfield the significance of his remarks to the *San Angelo Times* about the "'definite assurance'" of a million-dollar donation to the Big Bend campaign. Winfield had meant "merely a 'possibility,'" Ayres told Maier. Yet "of course this kind of publicity is bad for a public subscription campaign," said the NPS inspector, noting also that "there are a surprisingly large number of people who feel that it would be much better and easier to have the legislature appropriate the funds." [16]

True to his word, Governor O'Daniel sent to the state house and senate on March 1 his message in favor of the Big Bend land-acquisition program. He wished to point out "a few interesting facts concerning this great 'GIFT OF GOD' to Texas and to our Nation." O'Daniel

further wanted to "declare that an emergency exists and that great loss may accrue to our people unless immediate action is taken on the pending bill." Speaking lyrically of the beauty and grandeur of the future national park, O'Daniel told the state's lawmakers that the Chisos Mountains "have been described as the most rugged mountains in the world, wherein we find deep gorges and cliffs and mile-high peaks dyed in deep mineral coloring and dressed with nature's most wonderful blanket of trees, vines and grasses." The governor, himself a visitor to the Chisos, claimed that "from many large peaks the gorgeous scenery is as impressive as a vast fairy land." Saving special praise for the South Rim, O'Daniel claimed that "from high mountain cliffs we may look down upon a landscape . . . which has been proclaimed by many as the most gorgeous on the continent." The Chisos in particular, said the governor, "have become the garden for a most unusual plant life comprising a variety of nearly one thousand species." They constituted what O'Daniel called "both a vegetable island and an animal island," as scientists "find here life of both in abundance which is strange to the country around for hundreds of miles away." Among these was an "oyster shell thirty six inches in diameter." Big Bend's cultural and historical resources also rendered the landscape worthy of NPS protection, said the governor. "The word Chisos means 'Ghost,'" O'Daniel intoned, "and it was believed that in the early days the ghost of many who ventured the climb into them constituted the strange inhabitants." He also spoke of the archaeological surveys undertaken by Harvard University and Sul Ross State Teachers College, with the conclusion of one "eminent geologist . . . that the grandsons of the geologist of today will not have completed the lesson which they are now studying in this great classroom." [17]

In order to convince the Texas legislators of the merits of Big Bend, O'Daniel recited the by-now familiar economic data of tourist expenditures and ancillary benefits from increased tax revenues. "I have been informed," said the governor, "that many parks have been offered to the National Government for National Parks, but this Big Bend areas is perhaps the last important area which the National Park Department so strongly desires." He then highlighted the "talk of Mexico setting aside one million acres directly across the Rio Grande." This gesture would make "an International Park, unequalled anywhere else on earth, and a strong influence toward the 'Good Neighbor' policy." O'Daniel closed his plea to the legislature by reading from a letter written by President Franklin Roosevelt. "'As you may know,'" said FDR, "'I am very much interested in the proposed Big Bend National Park in your State.'" The president had "been hoping that this Park could be dedicated during my Administration." Roosevelt thus requested of O'Daniel that "'this large and very interesting area could be bought for a comparatively small sum--a sum that would be insignificant in comparison with the economic return that would follow to the State of Texas and to the Nation, from every point of view.'" FDR then summarized his appeal to the Texas governor: "If the Texas legislature at this session should see fit to make an appropriation for the acquisition of this land, it would be very gratifying to me personally, and I am sure that it would win the general approval of people everywhere.'" [18]

With the endorsement of Franklin Roosevelt, and the enthusiastic support of the governor, park sponsors began to imagine a grander scenario in which they appealed to the Texas legislature for a substantial sum of money. Inspector Ayres filed daily reports with NPS officials in Santa Fe to offer them a sense of the momentum building among Lone Star lawmakers for the land-acquisition program. On March 4, Ayres informed his superiors that "there is the feeling, which I share, that now is a very good time to insert a clause raising the appropriation to $750,000." The more controversial measures awaiting legislative action had yet to be addressed, and "I am afraid if we wait too long," said the NPS inspector, "the bill may get involved in the general fight, and get slugged as an economy gesture by tax opponents." Ayres learned from capitol insiders that "the legislature could start the movement with this amount, and public subscription, private foundation[,] etc[.] could supplement the funds." Should park sponsors not prevail in their donation campaign, "this is all the money the [parks] board could spend for land in the next two years, and then they could get the

balance from the next legislature." Most surprising was the consensus, as reported by Ayres, that "in any event it looks as though they may not wait for Amon Carter, since we are in the third month of a four month session, and pass the bill anyway." [19]

Sentiment for avoiding the dilatory tactics displayed by Amon Carter faded as the NPS realized the importance of the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* to their efforts at publicity for Big Bend. Thus Hillory Tolson wrote on March 7 to Carter to seek his advice on the language contained in the land-acquisition bill. The park service agreed in principle with the objectives of Winfield and Cauthorn, offering only two suggested changes. The first requested that the document read: "Which a sales tax is levied in this State, and to tax persons and corporations, their franchises and properties, on land or lands deeded . . . ." More substantial, in the minds of Tolson and his superiors, was the need to delete a sentence that "provides for the free admission of all school children under eighteen years of age." The NPS counsel ruled that "the inclusion of this sentence would present an administrative limitation by the State on the exercise of Federal authority over the area after it becomes a national park." Tolson reminded Carter that "an admission charge as such is not being charged nor is any contemplated in any of the national parks." He admitted: "It is true that a guide fee is charged at Carlsbad Caverns National Park, but groups of school children under 16 years of age are admitted without charge when accompanied by an adult teacher, upon payment of the regular fee by that teacher." Tolson suggested that Carter encourage the removal of the sentence on fees, in order that NPS officials not raise "a serious technical objection." [20]

Whatever the language of the Big Bend park bill, word circulated by mid-March of problems with its passage. Herbert Maier learned from Conrad Wirth that officials from the El Paso chamber of commerce had informed him that "Governor O'Daniel is having a great deal of difficulty in getting the Big Bend bill through the legislature." Maier indicated to NPS personnel in Austin that "some definite urging by way of a strong letter to the Governor, on the part of the Secretary of the Interior, appeared advisable at this time." Maier himself had no evidence of "any real difficulty" confronting the park bill, with both house and senate committees reporting favorably on its contents and "a great many newspaper clippings" generated by the publicity campaign. Nonetheless, Maier did acknowledge that "the Governor is having much opposition in getting many of his proposals through," and that "some legislators will call attention to the likelihood that the $1,000 appropriation called for may be many times increased before final action on the bill is consummated." Wirth's suggestion that Harold Ickes endorse the park measure concerned Maier, given the highly publicized letter from FDR. Some in the Texas capital might perceive this strategy "as excessive pressure on the part of the Government, since the acquiring of large blocks of land by the Federal Government is very much of a new idea in Texas." Thus Maier solicited the opinion of Amon Carter, asking James Record to "obtain information and advice from him as to the exact status of the bill, and its chances for passage, and as to whether the proposed letter from either the Secretary of the Interior or the Director of the National Park Service would be the advisable thing to do." [21]

Maier and the Big Bend sponsors expressed relief that Texas lawmakers had not singled out their measure for particular criticism. The park bill's advocates maintained their vigil in Austin, working with Senator Winfield and Representative Cauthorn to assess the temper of the legislature. The former told W.F. Ayres that "the Senate was in an ugly mood provoked by discussion of the very controversial budget bill." Lieutenant Governor Stevenson advised Winfield "to wait for the proper opening when the members were in a better frame of mind generally." Everett Townsend sought out the opinion of a former legislator, Judge Walter E. Jones, identified by Townsend as "probably the best informed man in Austin on just what is going on in the legislature." Jones dismissed fears about the lawmakers' state of mind, reminding Townsend that "no bill of importance has passed either house." He predicted "no serious trouble ahead," and "advised to leave well enough alone." All parties consulted by

park sponsors counseled against intervention by NPS officials from Washington, yet the state parks board's Richardson noted that "the younger House members from East Texas . . . are for the Big Bend bill, but are going to try to hang on an amendment providing for establishment of the Big Thicket also as a National Park." Given the interest growing in the state for national park units, L.C. Fuller, state supervisor of recreation studies for the NPS, suggested to Maier that "a telegram from the Secretary or the Director should be prepared and held in readiness for dispatch to the Governor at the proper time." He then closed his "confidential" memorandum to Maier by noting the attitude expressed by Townsend, "who thinks the bill will pass but has recently placed added emphasis on the word 'dam' which always precedes the word 'schoolteachers' in his conversation." [22]

Despite these obstacles, sponsors of Big Bend National Park persevered in their lobbying efforts throughout the spring of 1939. By April 28, the Texas State Representatives had voted 23 to 2 in favor of the measure, and sent it over to the state senate. Conrad Wirth kept NPS director Cammerer apprised of the Big Bend legislation, informing him that "the bill calls for an appropriation of only $1,000." This Wirth believed "is included merely to give it the status of an appropriation bill," and "the amount can be increased indefinitely in committee in order to make up any deficit in the [fundraising] campaign." This latter initiative still concerned Wirth, who had asked Herbert Maier to "furnish a report on the progress." Wirth then reminded Cammerer of the significance of FDR's personal endorsement of Big Bend to Governor O'Daniel, and of Interior Secretary Ickes's request to Vice President John Nance Garner to do likewise, but "so far the Vice President has not indicated what action he will take." Yet the newspapers of Texas found the state house's actions reassuring, as the *Dallas News* of April 30 reminded its readers: "With many families already planning summer trips, it is not too early to point out some of the advantages of vacations in Texas." "If one is not hardy enough for the still undeveloped wilds of the Big Bend," said the *News's* editors, "there are attractive dude ranches in the Davis Mountains and fishing and bathing resorts on the Gulf coast." The *Dallas News* noted how "with help from the Civilian Conservation Corps, the state parks of Texas have undergone a surprising transformation in the last six years." The CCC had expanded recreational sites, "and accommodations have been provided for picnickers and overnight visitors." Big Bend National Park would become part of this outdoor experience, said the *News*, and "despite the lure of far-off places, it will pay to see Texas first." [23]

While Texans contemplated a visit to their future national park on the Rio Grande, and lawmakers in Austin prepared to pass a bill making that more of a reality than ever, the fundraising campaign continued to lag. A telling example of the caution exercised by Amon Carter and the park sponsors came on May 3, when Adrian Wychgel of New York City wrote to Arno Cammerer about receiving a copy of the NPS booklet promoting Big Bend. "It was awfully good of you to place my name on your mailing list," said Wychgel, "and I appreciate this courtesy." Whether Wychgel was sincere or cynical, he told Cammerer: "I am still urging the Committee in Texas to get started on the money-raising effort." Wychgel had been informed by "Mr. Carter and his associates . . . that when the time is right, that my services will be retained in connection with the fund-raising endeavor." Yet the New York consultant was "fearful, to speak very confidentially to you, that like all matters of this kind, the committee is just putting off from month to month." Wychgel had heard of the imminent passage of legislation in Austin, a move that he considered "in the right direction." Yet "the matter of interesting the public and engaging their attention should not be delayed any longer." Sounding as if he saw little chance for his firm to bid on the fundraising contract, Wychgel advised Cammerer: "Knowing how interested you are in seeing the Big Bend Project become a National Park, I am just wondering if there is anything you could do to urge the Committee to immediate action." [24]

Wychgel's anxiety had some basis in fact, even when the Texas state senate on May 12

passed and sent to the governor the Big Bend measure. The *Houston Chronicle* carried a statement from Amon Carter that "passage . . . of the Big Bend Park bill and signing of the same by Governor O'Daniel did not mean that the park is now an accomplished fact, or even near an accomplished fact." Carter told the *Chronicle* that "the real work is now before us," the raising of some $1.5 million to acquire land "which the bill gives us the authority to buy and to present to the National Park Service." The *Star Telegram* publisher noted that "this bill is only enabling legislation." He then outlined the steps to be taken by the "Texas Big Bend Park Association," with a "'working fund'" that still required "'that all subscribers . . . complete their quotas so that the state-wide campaign can begin.'" Carter declared that tourism in 1938 had generated some $45 million in Texas, and that "a national park will double and treble this sum the first year." He also cautioned readers of the *Chronicle* that "'the impression gained circulation that the recent action of the legislature in passing the enabling bill has been the final step toward establishment of the park.'" Carter instead declared that "the purpose of this statement . . . is to correct this wrong impression and to let the public know that the fate of the park is now in the hands of Texas as a whole.'" Once Lone Star citizens contributed to the fund, said Carter, "'we hope to complete the campaign in short order, as we want to dedicate the park during the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Vice President John N. Garner.'" [25]

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Endnotes

[1] Memorandum of the Chief, Land Planning Division, NPS, Washington, DC, to Wirth, January 5, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

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[3] Ibid.

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[5] Memorandum of Inspector (John Diggs), NPS, Austin, to the Acting Regional Director, Region III, NPS, February 13, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 0-3 (NPS) Invitations and Addresses Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[6] "Big Bend National Park," Speech of Hon. R.E. Thomason of Texas in the House of Representatives, April 3, 1940, Townsend Collection, Box 9, Wallet 27, Folder 2, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

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[12] Wirtz to Amon Carter, April 12, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA,

[13]

Memorandum of Milo S. Christiansen, Acting Assistant Regional Director, Region III, NPS, for File, April 15, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[14] Memorandum of Cammerer for the Under Secretary, April 18, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Thomason to Cammerer, April 26, 1940; Memorandum of A.F. Robinson, Alpine, TX, "Proposed Project for Obtaining Required Lands for National Park in the Big Bend of Texas known as the Chisos [Mountains] of Brewster County," n.d., RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[17] Morelock to (Colonel John R.) White, Regional Director, NPS, Santa Fe, May 7, 1940; White to Morelock, May 11, 1940; Program, "To Promote Good Highways To Big Bend Park Meeting Of West Texas Citizens At Alpine," May 24, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 0-3 (NPS) Invitations and Addresses Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[18] H.W. Morelock, "The Big Bend Empire," unpublished manuscript, July 27, 1940, Folder A976.4932, M8396, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

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[24] Memorandum of Milton J. McColm, Acting Regional Director, Region III, NPS, Santa Fe, to the NPS Director, August 13, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[25] "N.P.S. Regional Director Boosts Big Bend Project," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, August 27, 1940 (material taken from NPS press release of August 10, 1940).

[26] Morelock to Carter, August 15, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2], DEN NARA.

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[28] Wayne Gard, *The Dallas News*, Dallas, TX, to McClatchy, August 31, 1940, RG79, NPS,

SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 22, Folder: 867 Tours (General), DEN NARA.

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[30] "Big Bend Trip Is Completed," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, September 29, 1940; Wayne Gard, "Park Official Enthusiastic On Big Bend," *Dallas News*, September 29, 1940; Wayne Gard, "Fair to Get Relief Model Of Big Bend," *Dallas News*, September 29, 1940.

[31] Memorandum of Tillotson to the NPS Director, October 4, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[32] Ibid.

[33]Tillotson to Nelson Lee, Jr., Manager, Chamber of Commerce, Alpine, TX, October 4, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 22, Folder: 867 Tours (General), DEN NARA.

[34] Harry Connelly, Executive Secretary, Texas Big Bend Park Association, Fort Worth, TX, to Tillotson, October 5, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[35] Tillotson to Connelly, October 15, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[36] Carter to Tillotson, October 17, 1940; Connelly to Tillotson, October 24, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[37] Carter to Tillotson, October 24, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[38] Memorandum of A.E. Demaray, Acting NPS Director, for the Regional Director, Region Three, NPS, December 10, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2, Folder: #1, DEN NARA.

[39] Connelly to Tillotson, December 16, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA. The Coronado Cuarto Centennial Commission (or the "4Cs"), formed in 1934 at the University of New Mexico, promoted awareness of Hispanic culture and tradition in the Southwest to mark the 400th

anniversary of the arrival of the Spanish conquistador, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado (1540). For a discussion of this program, see Michael Welsh, "A Prophet Without Honor: George I. Sanchez and Bilingualism in New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review*, Volume 69, No. 1 (January 1994): 19-34.

[40] Connelly to McColm, December 20, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2], DEN NARA.

[41] Charles L. Woody, Gifford, Woody, Carter and Hays, Counsellors at Law, New York City, NY, to the Texas State Parks Board, Austin, December 20, 1940, Townsend Collection, Folder 4, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

[42] Frank D. Quinn, Executive Secretary, Texas State Parks Board, Austin, to Woody, December 31, 1940, Townsend Collection, Folder 4, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU.

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CHAPTER 8:
A Brighter Day: Improved Prospects for Big Bend National Park, 1940 (continued)

Land-purchase matters by the spring of 1940 had become quite complex, as the story given to the Texas public emphasized the virtues of private subscriptions for Big Bend park, while park advocates explored subsidies from the Lone Star legislature and the U.S. Congress itself. Arno Cammerer advised Undersecretary Wirtz that "there has been a definite trend in recent years toward Federal appropriations for the outright purchase of lands necessary for establishment of national parks and monuments or extensions thereto." The NPS director labelled this "a consistent process, since the Government purchases land for numerous other types of reservations-the Forest Service, for example, having spent more than $60,000 since 1911 for the purchase of forest lands under the Weeks Act." Beyond this initiative, said Cammerer, "since 1927, by several different acts, Congress has appropriated over $3,000,000 for the purchase of lands for national park purposes, the Federal funds to be matched dollar for dollar by contributions from other sources." Most recently the nation's lawmakers had voted $743,265.29 to complete the purchase of land in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, after the major portions of the necessary land had already been acquired by other means. Yet another precedent had been Colonial National Historical Park in Virginia, where the Federal Government had expended over $1,000,000 while Virginia contributed only $80,000. Isle Royale National Park in the midst of Lake Superior had required 85 percent federal funding for land acquisition, "with a small contribution by the State." "While Isle Royale was purchased for ECW purposes," said Cammerer, "the authorized objective of the area was the establishment of a national park." Finally, the NPS director pointed to "the appropriation of $2,005,000 to purchase the Yosemite Sugar Pines [as] another instance in which the Federal Government purchased lands outright for park purposes." [14]

Further evidence for Cammerer of the ability of the park service to seek federal funding for parklands came "in the cases of Homestead National Monument, Nebraska, and Ackia National Monument, Mississippi." Here "congress appropriated funds for the outright purchase of all the necessary lands." Other park units whose enabling legislation contained federal funding for their land base included Virginia's Appomattox Courthouse National Monument and the Patrick Henry National Monument, as well as the Andrew Johnson National Monument in Tennessee. "It is apparent," wrote Cammerer, "that there is ample precedent for the appropriation of Federal funds for the purchase of lands for parks." He then told Wirtz that "authority for the Secretary to enter into contractual obligations to the extent of $1,000,000 to cover half the price of land was contained in the Act of March 4, 1929 (45 Stat. 1600) and extended by the Act of February 14, 1931 (46 Stat. 1154)." The park service director suggested that "the introduction of a bill to include the Big Bend project within the Secretary's authorization to enter into contracts for 50% of the purchase price of lands would not, we believe, receive serious opposition since it would merely extend an existing authorization to include an additional project." Cammerer believed that "such a bill should also provide that the appraised value of lands within the proposed park area which may be donated to the United States shall be considered as matching funds so as to authorize

contractual obligations in an equivalent amount for the purchase at their full value of other private lands within the park project." The NPS director offered to Wirtz yet another compelling rationale for inclusion of the Mexican lands in such legislation. "In view of the strained European situation," said Cammerer, "we believe this is an excellent time to emphasize the international aspects of the Big Bend National Park." He argued that "there could be no more appropriate gesture than to establish the proposed Big Bend International Peace Park as a symbol of goodwill and friendship with our neighbors to the south." [15]

To local advocates of the new national park, the source of funding for land acquisition mattered less than an aggressive campaign of surveying and purchase. A.F. Robinson of Alpine wrote to Representative Thomason in late April to offer a strategy for buying land. "As an interested citizen and co-worker," said Robinson, "I offer suggestions with the belief that they can be used beneficially by the Texas Legislature and the National Park Service." He had learned that "a number of the ranchers in the County own land, about half of which is deeded land, the remainder being school land." Many of these owners "had purchased [the land] from the State of Texas a number of years ago, a down payment of one fortieth of the [principal] being made at the time of purchase, forty years to pay the balance." In 1940 "this land was valued at a rate of $1.00 to $3.00 per acre," said Robinson, with "the interest being 3 percent." Echoing the comments of Everett Townsend several years earlier, the former chairman of the Alpine chamber of commerce found that "in many cases nothing has been paid on the [principal], and in [a] number of instances not even the interest has been paid." Yet "they still hope to receive $1.00 bonus per acre on said land." Robinson suggested that "if possible, the State or the [fundraising] Committee allow them $1.00 bonus per acre in lease, thereby, allowing the ranchman the privilege of running [a] certain amount of cattle or livestock for a definite period of years, contracts of course being made with each one to insure the protection of all wild life." In this manner "the Committee would not have to raise funds for the purchase, and the [ranchmen] would have their leases paid up for several years." The ranchers also could "continue making a livelihood from the only business with which they are familiar." Robinson warned Cammerer that "there are obligations on many of the ranches," some of which were 30-year loans just taken out from the Federal Land Bank. He then asked the NPS director: "Could the State or Committee [or] the National Park Service or the Federal [government] assume these obligations?" Robinson claimed to "have talked to about 60% of the land owners and did at one time take options on all this land." By this process the Alpine businessman had learned that "90% of the owners [were] glad to work with the Park Committee or with the National Park Service or with the Texas State Parks Board if they understand." [16]

By early May, Horace Morelock had decided that a direct appeal to Colonel John White would be the most expedient means of gauging the potential of federal funding of Big Bend. He sought a visit from the Region III director because he had learned that "the Texas State Highway Commission will not allocate sufficient funds for the proper development of highways contiguous to the park proper until the National Park Service definitely and finally locates the Main Entrance to the Park." Morelock advised White that he served as president of the Highway 67 Association in west Texas, and had planned a meeting in late May in Alpine to advance the cause of good highways and national parks. White, who would serve in Santa Fe as the regional director for only a few months, nonetheless informed Morelock that "there is nothing in Region III in which I am more interested than the proposed Big Bend National Park." White anticipated "with much pleasure visiting Alpine, the proposed Park area, and meeting all of you who are interested in its creation and development." Despite the tragic circumstances surrounding White's brief tenure as regional director (he died of a heart attack 30 days in office), local park sponsors went forward on May 24 with their meeting. "All towns of West Texas," read the promotional literature, "are not only interested in good highways to this section, but in the proper routing of highways as well." [17]

The summer of 1940 brought the lengthiest delay in promotion of Big Bend National Park since the start of the decade. With the U.S. Congress in recess, a presidential election campaign underway nationwide, the Texas legislature out of session until the following January, and Amon Carter awaiting more propitious times for raising private funds for land acquisition, even Horace Morelock found little to do on behalf of the Lone Star state's first national park unit. Thus the Sul Ross president took time to draft a story entitled, "The Big Bend Empire," which he distributed to friends and associates as his synopsis of the cultural history of west Texas. Employing dramatic metaphors, Morelock called the Big Bend "the Abyssinia of the West;" an area "shut off from the rest of the world by a 'no man's land' of desert and mountains." "Until recently," Morelock continued, "but little was known of its people and the life they fashioned except as this country has been fabled in song and story as a 'scene of border raids, the home of bandits, and the last stronghold of the pioneer.'" Evidence of this for Morelock was the story of "Judge Roy Bean, ironically known as 'The Law West of the Pecos.'" Bean had come to the Big Bend country in 1882, "and as Justice of the Peace continued to hold court in his 'Jersey Lily Saloon' at Langtry until 1905." Calling Bean "this Falstaff-Robin Hood of the Big Bend," Morelock contended that "these stories reveal in a somewhat realistic way the spirit of the time, and they were on the whole true to character." [18]

From dime-novel drama, Morelock turned to historical figures of the Alpine area, naming the major ranchers of the region as "adventurous young men from distant parts of Texas [who] yielded to the lure of the West and followed dim trails into the Big Bend." Of these individuals, said Morelock (among them H.L. Kokernot, Everett Townsend, W.B. Mitchell, and A.S. Gage), "their heroic struggles for a half century, in the face of baffling difficulties--long distances to market, periodical dry years, no roads to travel, and no fences to mark off their individual domains--would match the resoluteness of any other group of pioneers in American History." By 1940 these "Cattle Barons," as Morelock described them, "own ranches ranging from 40,000 to 250,000 acres, and the 'Highland Hereford Association' with headquarters at Marfa is nationally known for its grass-fed cattle." The Sul Ross president then essayed an historical analogy between these men and "the pre-Civil War 'Southern Planters' with Negros as tillers of the soil." For Morelock, "in each case the elite cultivated a dignified independence in word, deed, and thought." Southerners and Big Bend ranchers also "loved isolation, and they resented any attempt at social, educational, and economic intrusions." As a man of learning himself, Morelock noted that "for the most part, those with sufficient economic competency sent their sons and daughters to 'finishing schools' for their college education." In so doing, he contended, "a distinct landed aristocracy was born and fostered." [19]

Given these socioeconomic parallels, Morelock did distinguish between "the social, intellectual, and spiritual life in the Big Bend and in the Old South." Speaking of black slaves in terms more common to the mid-nineteenth century, Morelock said that "the 'Plantation Darky' had but little background of race-culture; social equality and independent thinking were foreign to his desires and to his opportunities." Then the Sul Ross president changed direction with his assertion: "Not so with the Mexicans in the Big Bend." He claimed that "for although most of them are a mixed breed of Indian and Spanish, they have inherited and still cherish a sensitive pride both in their ancest[o]rs and in their achievements." The Sul Ross executive wrote that "many of them speak only [S]panish in their homes, and old and young alike maintain a punctillious regard for a variety of festive occasions that date back to a remote past." Among these, said Morelock, "Cinco de Mayo is more sacred than the Fourth of July, and their chief interest in affairs of government is economic competency for their loved ones." Morelock believed that "as a race the Mexicans are fond of music, but there is no such thing as a 'Negro Spiritual' in all their repertory of music." An example of this for the Sul Ross president was "how far removed is the studied grace of the Mexican 'Jaraba Tapitio' from the improvised 'shuffle' of the 'Southern Darky.'" Yet another cultural trait that drew

Morelock's attention was "the religion of the Mexican," which he disparaged as "largely an indoctrination of fixed tenets, which find expression in colorful decorations in their Churches and cemeteries and at their weddings." By contrast, said Morelock, "the Negroes' religion is colored by a kind of superstitious regard for some all-powerful deity who lurks behind most of life's phenomena with an avenging scowl on his countenance." [20]

Into the Big Bend of the late nineteenth century had come "many influences," Morelock stated, that "have conspired to revolutionize primitive life." For him the "first harbinger of change" had been William B. Bloys, "an 'Itinerant Cowboy Preacher' who came like John the Baptist into the wilderness to proclaim a new order." His early efforts to minister the word to ranch families expanded by 1890 to the "Bloys Camp Meeting," where one-half century later "thousands of people from all parts of Texas come to this shrine every summer to enjoy free meals of barbecue at the ranchers' table and to listen to some of the greatest ministers in the South." Then modestly Morelock noted the opening in 1920 of his own campus in Alpine, where "on the first morning, cowboys wearing their boots, spurs and an occasional bandanna registered with a kind of idle curiosity." Morelock, himself the epitome of the college administrator, saw in these first students "a frankness in expressing their wishes and a freedom in their conduct that was somewhat disconcerting to faculty members recruited from the cloistered halls of staid academic institutions." Yet the small enrollment and close interaction of students and teachers led all to "study together in the classroom and to play together in the big outdoors of the open West." From this "democratic atmosphere," said Morelock, "formal discipline has seldom been necessary, and character development and academic achievement have progressed of their own volition." Praising the wonders of nature that surrounded Alpine, and proud of the conventional thinking of his students, Morelock concluded that "campus life at Sul Ross is tainted with few questionable 'isms,' and students who wish to keep physically strong while they are passing through the ordeal of achieving a college education are happy in their enviroment." [21]

It was this serendipitous union of higher learning and natural beauty that promised so much for tourism promotion in west Texas once Big Bend National Park opened. In the Davis Mountains the University of Texas and the University of Chicago had joined forces to build and maintain the McDonald Observatory. This facility, and the 1935 congressional authorization of Big Bend, said Morelock, awakened the citizenry "to the reality that a new day dawned for this entire section." The Sul Ross executive declared that "the widespread publicity accompanying these achievements brought many tourists to the Big Bend." One example was the meeting in Alpine in May of 1939 of the Southwestern Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which "gave a new basis to raw materials in geology, in biology, in archaeology, and art of the entire Big Bend Section." This plus "the further fact that graduates of Sul Ross have gone back to the ranches and others into the public schools as teachers," said Morelock, "augur a new era of far-reaching consequences for the entire Trans-Pecos region." Morelock claimed that "life in the Big Bend is trembling on the borderland of change akin to that which Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris caught and portrayed for Virginia and Georgia." His prediction was that "the next ten years will see more adjustments in the economic, social, and educational program of the Big Bend than have taken place in all its previous history." A signal event for Morelock was that "even the coming of more than 200,000 thoroughbred sheep into this section during the past four years may revolutionize the cattle industry planned and built up by the 'Cattle Barons.'" [22]

All of this change for Big Bend and Morelock's campus would make west Texas a different place. He promised that "Sul Ross State College will naturally square itself with the new order." At the same time, the college president hoped that "whatever the changes, let us hope [to maintain] the friendliness of the Big Bend pioneer which recognized no caste except individual worth, courage which prompted him to use the six-shooter if necessary in

defending his code of honor, the chivalrous attitude which he maintained towards women on all occasions, also the true American-way, which believes that the Declaration of Independence demands loyalty in deed as well as in word." Such claims to virtue would give pause to later generations of historians of the American West, as they looked more closely in the late twentieth century at the disparities between professions of freedom and the reality of contested landscapes. Yet Horace Morelock, now heavily invested in the entwined futures of his school and Texas's first national park, closed his cultural history of Big Bend with the plea that "these sterling pioneer qualities which are the safeguards of our civilization, shall not be lost to American life." [23]

Whether coincidental or deliberate, Morelock's story of the Big Bend country appeared just as the National Park Service undertook one last campaign of publicity and promotion for the park; an initiative timed for the election season of the fall of 1940, and not incidentally targeting Texas lawmakers seeking to represent their districts in Austin the following January. Milton McColm, acting regional director in Santa Fe, advised NPS director Cammerer of the status of Amon Carter's fundraising ventures. Milo Christiansen of the Santa Fe office had travelled to Dallas in early August to attend a meeting of river basin planners. There he conversed with James Record of the *Star Telegram* and Harry Connelly, a former *Star Telegram* reporter now detailed to the Texas Big Bend Park Association. Record had unpleasant news, said McColm, as "progress in raising funds had become stalemated," a situation that the managing editor of the Fort Worth paper attributed to "the war scare." He believed that "'the oil companies certainly would not be generous in their contributions.'" In addition, McColm reported that "Texas, as stated by Mr. Record, does not want the Federal Government to appropriate funds for the land acquisition program." This the managing editor viewed as "contrary to the spirit and purpose of the Big Bend Association." Instead, "Mr. Connelly stated [that] they were making plans to increase the membership of the Big Bend Association and to establish an organization committee in each county [a total of 254] as contrasted to the 39 members which represent 20 out of the 21 congressional districts." Record and Connelly also told McColm that they had rejected the appeal of Morelock and the west Texas park advocates to spend the $100,000 raised on immediate land purchases. Connally further "stated that he was being called on continually to dispute the fact that there is an abundance of oil and minerals in the Big Bend area." The fundraising committee had asked Ross Maxwell, now residing in Austin, to ascertain the merits of these claims. McColm closed his memorandum to Cammerer by noting that "the publicity is being kept alive by the Fort Worth Star Telegram and other newspapers and magazines, but the intensive campaign for fund raising will not be launched until conditions become more favorable." [24]

In conjunction with McColm's conference with representatives of Amon Carter's committee, regional director Minor Tillotson spoke on August 13 in Ruidoso, New Mexico, to the "Southwestern Chamber of Commerce Association." His message was the "tremendous financial benefits" to descend upon the area once Big Bend National Park opened. Tillotson, the replacement for Colonel John White, reminded the audience of business leaders that "'we [the NPS] have given, and are continuing to give, every possible encouragement that we can to make this park a reality.'" He recalled how "Secretary of the Interior Ickes, under the authority given him by the Congress, is ready to proclaim the park status just as soon as the privately-owned lands have been acquired and the area is deeded to the federal government." Important to this effort, said Tillotson, was the fact that "we have recently re-established a CCC company to continue work in that portion of the project that is already owned by the State." When the national park became a reality, much of the needed development already would be accomplished. As to the growing demand for information about Big Bend by potential visitors, Tillotson noted that "we have been publicizing this area in newspapers, magazines, and over the radio for more than five years, so you may be certain it is pretty well known all over the country." The regional director, himself recently transferred from the superintendency of Grand Canyon National Park, compared that unit's annual visitation of

400,000 people, and lamented that he and his staff had to tell inquirers of Big Bend's status that "the area is not ready for visitors," and that "there are no facilities for tourists." [25]

Minor Tillotson's optimism did not assuage the doubts of Horace Morelock, as the promotion of Big Bend remained problematic. On August 15, the Sul Ross president corresponded with Amon Carter regarding the fundraising initiative, and also reported on his own recent visit to the future park. Morelock had suggested to James Record that Carter join a party touring the Big Bend area that would include Harry Connally, Wendell Mayes, Senator H.L. Winfield, Colonel Thomas Boles (superintendent of Carlsbad Caverns National Park and a reviewer of potential NPS units), Minor Tillotson, and Daniel Galicia of the Mexican department of forestry, game and fish. Morelock himself had driven down to the reopened CCC camp in the Chisos Mountains, where he spoke with the camp director, Captain K.H. Scott. The latter showed Morelock "the complete plans (not yet released) which the National Park Service had made covering the entire area." Scott "appeared to be greatly interested in getting the Ira Hector section of the land settled," Morelock told Carter, and "also in the acquisition of additional land for development purposes." Morelock hoped that this would convince Carter to "agree that some of the money we have already collected for the purchase of land can be placed in the State Treasury to the credit of the Texas State Parks Board." The Sul Ross president's sense of urgency emanated from his observation that "at present, a good many of the tourists who go into the park return home with somewhat of a distaste in their mouths because there are no overnight accommodations in the area." This meant "no places to get meals, and therefore, not sufficient time to see enough of the section and return to Alpine by night." Morelock suggested to Carter that "if we had adequate accommodations down there for tourists they would return home and be the greatest salesmen we could have for the park." [26]

Despite the reputation of Carter in the Lone Star state, Morelock chided him about the Big Bend fundraising initiative: "I do not know what your plans are as to who will conduct the campaign or when it is to start." Adrian Wychgel had written to Morelock with a warning "not [to] wait later than September 1," and Minor Tillotson's remarks in Ruidoso "emphasized the unusual interest which the National Park Service has in this project." Morelock conceded that "there is never a 'good time' to start a campaign to raise money." Yet the Sul Ross executive believed that "if we had the Big Bend Park under way at an early date it would be the greatest revenue producing agent in the state in a very short time." Carter also needed to know, said Morelock, of the "very definite impression" that he received from the Ruidoso meeting "that both New Mexico and Arizona are far ahead of Texas in their advertising campaign for tourists." Despite the publicity given Big Bend by Carter's newspaper, "they are going to take away some of our possibilities for the future unless we act at once." Morelock saw it as "unfortunate if we cannot go ahead with our Big Bend project at an early date and make it attractive to tourists." The Sul Ross president, himself a busy man, nonetheless asked Carter: "I hope that you may find time to write me fully and frankly on all these points and such other points as you may have in mind." [27]

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Endnotes

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[49] Memorandum of J. Atwood Maulding, Director of Personnel, NPS, Washington, DC, for the NPS Director, November 22, 1939, 0-32 ECW Big Bend File, RG79, NPS, CCF 1933-1949 Big Bend 847-900.02 Files, Box 837, DC NARA II.

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[56]Cammerer to Thomason, February 27, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 12, Folder: 610.01 Purchasing of Lands #2 [Folder 2] Big Bend, DEN NARA.

[57] Memorandum of Wirth to the Regional Director, Region III, NPS, Santa Fe, February 23, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-1934, Box 96, Folder: 600-03 CCC Development Outline, DEN NARA.

[58] Memorandum of Harvey H. Cornell, Regional Landscape Architect, Region III, NPS, to Mr. (Thomas) Vint, March 12, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 10, Folder: 600.01 (NPS) Master Plan [Folder 2], DEN NARA.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid. A discussion of the changes in Mexico by 1940 that eliminated the international park from the Big Bend master plan is found in Chapter Eleven of this manuscript.

[64] Connelly to Tolson, March 12, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-1934, Box 96, Folder: 600-03 CCC Development Outline, DEN NARA.

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[73] J.E. Kell, Acting Regional Landscape Architect, Region III, NPS, "Field Report, Plans and Design Division, Big Bend National Park Project, April 23-24, 1940," RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-1934, Box 96, Folder: 204-01 CCC By Field Officers, DEN NARA.

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[76] Kirk S. Scott, Project Superintendent, NP-1-T, "Job Application, Education Guide, Big Bend NP-1-T," June 19, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Forests, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-1934, Big Bend National Park, Texas/Br[y]ce Canyon National Monument, Utah, Box 97, Folder: 830 (CCC) Service to Public (General), DEN NARA.

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[81] Lyle E. Bennett, Associate Architect, Region III, NPS, "Field Report, Plans and Design Division, Big Bend National Park Project, September 17-19, 1940," RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to CCC, ECW, and ERA Work in National Parks, Forests and Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1933-1934, Box 96, Folder: 204-01 CCC By Field Officers, DEN NARA.

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[86] Memorandum of Scott to Bennett, November 26, 1940, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 15, Folder: 620.08 (CCC) Shelter Cabins, DEN NARA.

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 9:
"Doing Pioneer Work": The Civilian Conservation Corps and Facility Planning, 1936-1941 (continued)

While Morgan struggled with transportation matters at the CCC camp, NPS architects Paul Pressler and Albert Benson scouted the landscape for potential visitor facilities. J.T. Roberts, regional NPS inspector, informed Maier on April 7: "I feel that the work in this area will soon be in such shape that we should begin to consider this development rather seriously." His first priority was a water system, from which the architects could then imagine locations for the "Casa de los Chisos," as Roberts named the lodge compound. He noted that the plans of Pressler and Benson placed the southwestern structure "on the shelf above the camp," making it invisible "as one comes down the road along Sierra Casa Grande leaving the fine views uninterrupted." As one drove south past Lone Peak, "the building forms an interesting termination," said Roberts, "settling down low with Mt. Emory towering above in the distance." Roberts further noted that "the pines immediately behind will offer a soft background, which will tie-in and blend with those about the Casa to unite the entire picture." Such a design, said the inspector, "demands a free, low Spanish-Mexican type of rambling structure, and should be erected with indigenous material to further complement the area." In so doing, said Roberts, "we may build a large structure, yet not one to be imposing or startling —- one suggesting or retaining the spirit of manana." [11]

When Roberts turned his attention to visitor-use patterns, he argued for access that was "easy, definite and confined." Automobiles would stop first at the main lobby, with bus travelers loaded and unloaded away from the entrance. As for the structural design, said Roberts: "I like particularly the idea of several small patios offering opportunity to pass from ceiled rooms to open rooms, to have a play of light and shade, to obtain variety, interest and color." The inspector found "very intriguing" the "idea of a small Spanish Capilla, on the point of land overlooking the window and on the main axis." Such a design "will draw many to that spot," Roberts contended, and suggested that "the circulation there needs more study." In comparison to other plans, Roberts disliked the concept of "cabins placed in the area between the Casa and the window." The road continuing through the court, claimed Roberts, "is to me impossible." Were the NPS to locate cabins in this area, "I would prefer to place them in the pines high up on the flats to the south of Casa Grande and then no road — pack in — that would have character and not spoil the area." Yet a third plan reviewed by Roberts called for a swimming pool, while the "road around that very fine elevation to the south and over the point of land to the southwest, where one of the finest views of the window is obtained, should never be considered." Such thinking "indicates a passion for roads," said the NPS inspector, "and the road must be stopped." Park service designers needed to remember, said Roberts, "that the idea in all Mexican structures that I have seen is to obtain light and air to rooms, to have a more or less garden room for short siestas and for fiestas and perhaps a place to whisper 'mi querida' to the Senoritas." [12]

Contingent upon a successful architectural design for lodging at the basin was discovery of sufficient water supplies, a task undertaken in May 1936 by Charles Gould and Ross

Maxwell. The regional geologist and his assistant began by analyzing the original well dug in the basin in April 1934, which sank 27 feet down in the area of Kibby Springs, a branch of Oak Canyon (the primary drainage corridor that flowed westward to the Window). Gould and Maxwell detected a steady flow of 30 gallons or more per minute, which was pumped uphill to metal storage tanks prior to redistribution by gravity to the CCC camp. In order to accommodate the NPS and concessions facilities planned for 5,400 feet, reported Gould, the geologists studied a hill some 5,750 feet in altitude that stood 4,100 feet away from the existing CCC well. "The cost of lifting the water approximately 700 feet into a reservoir 4100 feet from the source," said the geologist, "will be excessive." Thus Gould and Maxwell sought "to locate in The Basin an ample supply of potable water at an elevation above 5750 feet," reporting that "in this attempt we were not successful." They concluded that "the only available supply of water at the present time is Kibby Spring, located on the west slope of Casa Grande at an elevation of about 6000 feet." They realized that "the water is potable but the supply is not sufficient for park needs, being only about two gallons per minute." [13]

In need of alternatives for water, Gould and Maxwell turned their attention to the streams surrounding the basin proper. One was the "main branch of Oak Canyon near Ward Mountain on the west side of The Basin," said Gould, while the other was "the middle arroyo which heads south west of Casa Grande and passes just west of the proposed building site." They offered "no assurance that any considerable supply of water will be encountered," but believed that "it is worth a trial." Another strategy had Gould and Maxwell survey Cattail Canyon, to the west of the basin. "Water in quantity is reported in this canyon," said Gould, and he surmised that "it may be possible to utilize it either by gravity or by pumping." Yet a third option for the geologists involved "check dams across the various arroyos flowing into Oak Canyon." Such facilities, said Gould, would "store storm water and the subsequent underflow through the gravel." Given the delicate environment of the basin, said the geologist, "the sites for these dams should be selected with care." Failing this, the NPS geologists concluded that "it will probably be necessary to utilize the present wells and pump the water 4100 feet with a 700 foot lift," a perspective that contrasted with the enthusiasm expressed by J.T. Roberts in the design of structures in the basin. [14]

As the Chisos CCC camp headed into the fall of 1936, rumors began to circulate regarding its management. In an otherwise laudatory letter by Representative Ewing Thomason to Maier, the El Paso Democrat closed with the cryptic note that "some complaints have also come to me that there is a lack of harmony and cooperation among the officials of the camp." Thomason, the author of the 1935 legislation authorizing Big Bend, told Maier: "I hope this can be ironed out, if same has not already been done." The NPS regional officer took Thomason's instructions seriously, and inquired of the Army's Eighth Corps area at Fort Sam Houston about its plans to replace "Lieutenant Sagaser" when his tour of duty ended in November. "In view of this," Maier wrote to J.C. Roak, the liaison officer for the CCC at Fort Sam Houston, "I think it will be in order for us to state that we sincerely hope that the officer who is to replace Lieutenant Sagaser at Big Bend will be of a type able to adjust himself to such conditions as surround this particular project." Maier considered "these conditions" to be "not in themselves complex, but are nevertheless of real importance to the National Park Service." Maier reminded Roak that "it is necessary for us to assign quite a number of technical men who represent such branches as wildlife, archaeology, forestry, etc., periodically to this area." The NPS employees "must be housed and fed at the camp, and as you know, we have constructed a building especially for the purpose of housing these men." Maier also reported that "the distance from the railroad at Marathon to the camp is close to a hundred miles, and so it is necessary for a great deal of give and take to be exercised on the part of the project superintendent and the Army officer in charge." Finally, Roak needed no reminder that "a considerable number of officials visit the Big Bend, such as State Legislators, Congressmen, etc., and this must also be taken into consideration." [15]

Big Bend was not the only NPS site facing managerial challenges in the heyday of the CCC. Yet the program overall evoked words of praise from media, civic officials and crew members alike. Soon after the landslide re-election in November 1936 of President Roosevelt, the *Dallas Dispatch* informed its readers that "undoubtedly one of the most popular enactments of the Democratic congress under Roosevelt was the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps." The original goal of the CCC had been met, claimed the Dallas paper, but its director, Robert Fechner, had plans to make the program permanent. Fechner believed that "healthy employment should be found for youths whom private industry has not or cannot assimilate." In addition, said the CCC director, "the corps should continue as long as there is valuable work to be done." In matters of park construction, the *Dallas Dispatch* had only high praise for the CCC crews. The editor declared that the "CCC has done notable work in the 18 state parks in Texas aggregating 325,000 acres in extent." The most dramatic setting for CCC attention was Big Bend. "Covering over 250,000 acres," said the *Dispatch,* "much of this vast wilderness was almost wholly inaccessible when CCC enrollees began construction of roads and trails." Big Bend constituted over three-quarters of all the Texas land under the CCC's purview, and the *Dispatch* advised its readers: "Work on this magnificent Big Bend project should by all means be continued, and as far as Texas is concerned maintenance of the CCC is worth while for this reason alone." [16]

Warm regards for the CCC in general, and at Big Bend in particular, complemented the efforts of the NPS and park boosters to secure private or state funds for land acquisition. For this reason, major park service personnel made the Chisos camp part of their itineraries when inspecting CCC sites. Conrad Wirth, director of the CCC program nationwide, recalled years later his December 1936 tour of the Southwest with Herbert Maier, and their memorable visit to the Chisos basin. "There was a state park of about 640 acres in a small valley in what was called the 'window,'" wrote Worth in 1980. He especially remembered the fact that "most of the men were of Hispanic descent." In honor of the visit by top NPS officials, the CCC workers held a Christmas party that Wirth called "very hospitable." One feature of note was the effort made by camp members to serve eggnog at the party. "We drank some of it," said Wirth, "but it wasn't too easy to do!" It seemed that "it was made from goat's milk, the only milk they could scare up on short notice, and tequila." The CCC director admitted that "the spirit was right," but conceded that "I've tasted better eggnog." After imbibing the distinctive Big Bend version of the holiday treat, Wirth, Maier, and their party "joined the boys for an extra fine Christmas dinner." [17]

Internal and external praise for the CCC work in the Chisos Basin continued in the spring of 1937, with the state highway department contributing an historical assessment of the building of roads by the camp. An unidentified state highway engineer that April delivered a paper at the annual meeting in San Antonio of the American Society of Engineers. The engineer recounted some of the history of the region for his audience, noting that "prior to 1936 no State Highway penetrated this vast land of rugged mountains and plains, chiefly because it is off the beaten track and the population is small and widely scattered." Highway officials came to the area to survey a route to the Chisos Mountains, which he told his audience meant "ghost" in the language of the Yaqui Indians (who lived far to the west in the Mexican state of Sonora). When the highway department entered the area, they discovered that "there were U.S. Geological Survey maps . . . but such maps do not supply complete information for general location work." The department also faced limitations of time and money, and "therefore, it was decided to make a motion picture reconnaissance of the existing roads and trails." By using these images, said the engineer, "together with the Geological Survey maps," the department could determine routes for highways into the future park site. The surveyors drove south from Marathon, using the odometer on their vehicle for measurement. Every five miles they halted to film the landscape, covering some 250 miles of terrain "varying in type from a very serviceable county road serving the quicksilver mining town of Terlingua down to trails that were merely two dim tracks over the prairie and through the mountains." [18]

Confronting the survey crew not only was the landscape of the Big Bend country, but also the tastes of "a traveling public primarily interested in scenery and pleasure." This meant routes "located to afford access to the points of interest, while at the same time, in view of limited funds, it must be located through a region containing natural building materials if possible." Technical concerns abounded, such as placing the road "where grades and curvature were not excessive," and "where the road could be built without excessive excavation or construction of embankments." The highway crew filmed during the daylight hours, "and it was necessary to spend many hours each night interviewing ranchers and others who were familiar with the roads and trails of this region." The surveyors took "many side trips to investigate different routes which were found impractical." Once they reached the Santiago range some 40 miles south of Marathon, they determined that Persimmon Gap "offered the most accessible pass." They decided that "this pass will form the principal gateway of the Big Bend Park, if and when the entire acreage of land is procured and the Big Bend Park reaches the size contemplated." At Persimmon Gap the surveyors "began to see a new form of vegetation, or perhaps we should say new types of thorn bush and cactus." One such specimen that the engineer called "very formidable," was the "Pitahaya," which he claimed "is beautiful when in full bloom and later produces a delicious fruit." [19]

Once the state highway surveyors had cleared the Persimmon Gap area, they quickly noticed the dominant feature on the southern landscape: the Chisos Mountains. "The road traverses country principally made up of gravel deposits or broken stone," they reported, with "many arroyos to cross, which in time of rain carry a considerable volume of water." The engineer realized that "rains in this region are often very hard but not of long duration." Nonetheless, "the lack of heavy vegetation and the rocky nature of the country makes the run-off fast, and in soils that erode easily the arroyos become very deep." Some fifteen miles south of Persimmon Gap the survey party encountered "an unusual strip of land which extends across the Big Bend." This was a band "about ten miles in width and is made of very unstable clays, and is known as the 'Bad Lands.'" The engineer reported that "this section is really very picturesque in that the clays are brightly colored in almost every conceivable shade." Erosion in turn "has left grotesque shapes, which under the early morning or late evening sun, present a continuously changing color picture." More practical was the engineer's assessment that "this land becomes unstable when wet, therefore it will be necessary to import surfacing material for the road through this section from either side of the ten mile strip," a circumstance mitigated by the presence of rock and clay nearby. [20]

As the surveyors drove into the Chisos range, they encountered yet another landscape with "oak, cherry and many other varieties of trees." They marveled at the mystery of the Lost Mine Trail, and the massiveness of Casa Grande. Conveying them to the center of the basin was the CCC road, which the surveyors reported as "in very good condition." One had to travel over a pass at 6,000 feet in elevation, then descend some 1,000 feet into Green Gulch and the CCC camp quarters. Once there, the surveyors had to "spend a day in the saddle to study the possibilities of another means of entry into this valley." They climbed "a few hundred feet to a small plateau where the Government will build a hotel," and there stopped to admire the view from the Window. "Through this gap," said the highway engineer, "all of the water falling in the valley must flow, or at least all that does not go into the gravel which is underground." Above the Window the surveyors reached "a pass known as The Laguna, where we find a very rare grass, called Pine Grass, and also the smallest of the many varieties of oaks found in the mountains, which is the Dwarf Oak [a mere four feet high]." This was but one of seventeen varieties of oak growing in the basin, along with four types of pine. "We find large groves of Douglas fir trees which are hundreds of miles from their natural setting," remarked the engineer, as well as the Arizona cypress, "some of these four feet in diameter." The survey crew also marveled that "the varieties of trees and shrubs to be found are almost numberless," and they were told "that there are many varieties of flowers

which up to this time are unidentified." Large game animals proliferated in the Chisos, among them "Brown bear, Mule Deer, White Tail or Virginia Deer, and the Arizona Flag or Franciscan Deer." As for birds, said the engineer, "at certain seasons of the year tropical birds of vivid plumage come into these mountains apparently to spend a few weeks time and then to return to the tropics." The surveyors heard that "colleges and universities have in recent years learned of the wonders of this spot, and there have been many expeditions of scientists to study the plant and animal life as well as the geology and other features." [21]

With a brief stop at Boot Spring to gather their strength, the state highway surveyors rode south to the rim of the Chisos, "where one can look down a practically sheer cliff two thousand feet," or see "off in the distance about fifteen miles the Rio Grande . . . faintly glimmering in the sunlight." By riding horseback through the basin, the engineer concluded that "there is only one economical means of entry for automobiles into the valley, and that is the one that is being improved by the C.C.C. workers." At dusk the trail riders remarked that "we are treated to a beautiful display of colors from the rock walls of the surrounding peaks." Then "later on the moon comes up bright and clear, and we find that the coloration of the rock is so vivid that it is visible to a certain extent by moonlight." The party also learned "why the mountains are called Chisos, Ghost, as there is a peculiarly silvery light cast over the valley, possibly reflected from the rock walls, and the rugged cliffs." The engineer became almost poetic in describing nightfall in the basin, saying: "Peaks that surround us seem to dance in the moonlight, or perhaps my eyes were deceiving me." [22]

From the Chisos Basin the highway crew moved to the "St. Helena Canyon," "or the Grand Canyon of the Rio Grande." They noted that "as there is a possibility of a better road into the mountains through Alpine and Terlingua we go west to the quicksilver mining country surrounding Terlingua." First they passed through "the little mining town of Study Butte, which is second only to the Terlingua mine in size." Once in Terlingua, the surveyors would "find the picturesque adobe houses of the Mexicans who work in the mines, and . . . a small hotel, one of the few hotels in this territory." Heading south toward the Rio Grande, the crew crossed Terlingua Creek, which they decided "may prove a very serious obstacle to highway construction as a large volume of water flows down this creek during the rainy season," and which had no bridge. Upon traversing the face of the Rio Grande escarpment to reach the canyon, they came upon "the home of one of the County Commissioners of this, the largest county in Texas." The surveyors stood in awe of the sheer cliffs, noting that "as we swing toward the canyon the rock wall at first deceives the eye, and it is hard to believe that there is a drop of 1900 feet on the Mexican side from the plateau above the river," with the Texas side dropping some 1,800 feet. They could not look far into the canyon because "the river has cut a winding channel through this rock," leaving but "a narrow trail up one side of the canyon about one-half mile." From this vantage point the crew saw "large boulders that have fallen from the canyon wall above, one of them being sixty feet square." The surveyors climbed onto one of these boulders to gaze upon the river, and then turned to view the Chisos Mountains "thirty five miles away." [23]

Even though (like many first-time observers) the highway surveyors had come under the spell of the Rio Grande, their task was more mundane: to suggest transportation routes for the state of Texas to build. The engineer reported that "the shorter and more logical location of a road into this country is from Marathon south to the Chisos Mountains, and then for those who are interested in seeing the St. Helena Canyon, a road leading west to Terlingua and then south to the canyon." Texas officials adopted the recommendations of the surveyors, "adding 115 miles to the State Highway system." By the spring of 1937, the road had become "very serviceable" as far south as the Chisos Mountains, while "the road leading to the St. Helena Canyon . . . crosses Terlingua creek twice, and traffic is interrupted on this road for several days in time of high water." Unfortunately, no hotel facilities had been constructed on the road into the Big Bend country, and the engineer suggested "to those who plan to spend

more than a day in the mountains that they carry camping equipment," although water would be available. Should visitors brave the rugged conditions of the state park, the engineer believed that "a vacation in these mountains would be an unusual experience." [24]

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Endnotes

[1] Simonian, *Defending the Land of the Jaguar*, 68-69, 76-77.

[2] Ibid., 79, 81, 83-84.

[3] Ibid., 87, 90, 93-94; Meyer and Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History*, 596, 600.

[4] Simonian, *Defending the Land of the Jaguar*, 94-100.

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[8] Fiock to Maier, October 16, 1935, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 94, Folder: Big Bend Correspondence (Folder 1), DEN NARA.

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[14] Maynard Johnson and Walter McDougall to Maier, November 9, 1935, Daniel F. Galicia to Maier, November 12, 1935, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 94, Folder: Big Bend Correspondence (Folder 1), DEN NARA.

[15] A.E. Demaray, Acting Director, NPS, Washington, DC, to Juan Zinser, Chief, Departmento Forestal y Caza y Pesca, Care of Mr. George B. Shaw, American Consul, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, November 19, 1935, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 94, Folder: 4th Progress Report on Big Bend - Region III, DEN NARA; Simonian, *Defending the Land of the Jaguar,* 101.

[16] Maier, "Report on the Conference with Mexican Representatives Relative to the Proposed Big Bend National Park and Other Border Areas," El Paso, TX, November 24, 1935, RG 79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 1, Folder: 0-30 (NPS) Big Bend International Park, DEN NARA. Frank Pinkley supervised a group of small NPS sites in Arizona and New Mexico that focused upon cultural resources like Indian ruins and Spanish missions; hence the generic term "Southwestern National Monuments," or SWNM.

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Maxwell, "Summary of Events That Led to the Establishment of the Big Bend National Park," n.d. (1949?): 6, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments, and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 2, Folder: 101 NPS History; Telegram of Thomason to Townsend, February 10, 1936, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments, and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Folder: 4th Progress Report on Big Bend — Region III, Box 94, DEN NARA.

[24] Maxwell, "Summary of Events That Led to the Establishment of the Big Bend National Park," 7.

[25] Jameson, *The Story of Big Bend,* 109; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks,* 101.

[26] Maier to Juan Thacker, El Paso, TX, March 8, 1936, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments, and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Folder: 4th Progress Report on Big Bend — Region III, Box 94, DEN NARA.

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] McColm to Arthur Brisbane, King Features Syndicate, Inc., New York City, December 1, 1936, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 7, Folder: 501 Publicity, DEN NARA.

[39] H. Conger Jones, "El Parque de la Paz de Mexico," trans. Carmen Reyes Arroyo, *American Forest*, December 1936, Box 9, Wallet 28, Folder 1, Townsend Collection, Archives of the Big Bend, SRSU; Morelock to the Honorable R.A. Bandeen, Stamford, TX, February 8, 1937; Townsend to Morelock, February 11, 1937, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Folder: Big Bend General, Box 94, DEN NARA.

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[50] Memorandum of Maxwell for Maier, May 22, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 602 (NPS) Boundaries (General), DEN NARA.

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[52] Memorandum of Maier for the NPS Director, May 27, 1939; Memorandum of Demaray for the Regional Director, Region III, July 1, 1939, RG79, NPS, SWRO, Santa Fe, Correspondence Relating to National Parks, Monuments, and Recreational Areas, 1927-1953, Box 11, Folder: 602 (NPS) Boundaries (General), DEN NARA.

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CHAPTER 10:
A Different Frontier: Mexico, the United States, And the Dream of an International Park, 1935-1940 (continued)

With an eye towards accelerating the process of park planning, Maier suggested to his superiors in Washington that they select a small group to be assembled in Alpine on January 15 to spend some 30 days in the field. The Mexican government had named nine individuals to collaborate with the NPS, but Maier feared that "there is already danger of the party becoming unwieldy." He also noted that beyond Big Bend and Organ Pipe, "the remainder [of the suggested sites] are low in scenic and recreational values from a national park standpoint and should, perhaps, be set aside primarily for the conservation of their peculiar fauna and flora." The U.S. Biological Survey could survey these areas in more detail, leaving the NPS-Mexico team to examine Big Bend and Organ Pipe. [22]

Policymakers in both the NPS and the *Departemento Forestal, Caza y Pesca* had much reason to celebrate in the first weeks of 1936, as the American secretary of state, Cordell Hull, announced on February 8 his appointments to the United States Commission on International Parks. The list sounded like a "who's who" of natural resource agencies: Conrad Wirth, Roger Toll, Frank Pinkley, George M. Wright, and Herbert Maier of the park service; Laurence M. Lawson of the IBC; and Ira H. Gabrielson of the forest service (replaced a week later by Dr. W.B. Bell). U.S. Representative Ewing Thomason anticipated the importance of this delegation's visit to Alpine in mid-February, and telegraphed Everett Townsend with the news of their impending arrival. "[I] am sure you and other citizens of Alpine appreciate [the] great importance [of] this visit," wired the El Paso congressman, "and what it means toward helping put over our program." Thomason made it clear to the "father of Big Bend" that "I am leaving nothing undone here [Washington] to get results and am sure you are doing same there." In particular, wrote the congressman, Townsend needed to know that Wirth "is our friend," and that "if Mexican authorities are strong for it [the international park] I will co-operate [sic]." Among Thomason's plans were "ideas for getting some money." He then admonished the former Brewster County sheriff: "This is big stuff and we must put it over." [23]

No one had to remind Townsend of the gravity of the moment, as the U.S. delegation stepped from the platform of the Alpine train station on February 17 and shook hands with the longtime park promoter. They and the Mexican commission members, among them such staunch advocates of international cooperation in natural resource conservation as Miguel Angel de Quevedo and Daniel Galicia, drove southward to the future national park and thence to the Rio Grande. Crossing the river at Boquillas, the commissioners drove into the Fronteriza Mountains before exchanging their vehicles for horses. After some time in the area that one day would become the Maderas del Carmen Flora and Fauna Protected Area in Coahuila, the party resumed their automotive tour to what future park superintendent Ross Maxwell would call "several interesting native villages." Then the US and Mexican commissioners drove from Boquillas westward around the north face of the Chisos Mountains to the border town of Lajitas, fording the Rio Grande once more for the trip south

into the state of Chihuahua to the historic community of San Carlos (the largest town in what would become in 1994 the Canon de Santa Elena Flora and Fauna Protected Area). [24]

As the commissioners left the Big Bend area, they carried with them the radical idea of breaking with tradition to join the United States and Mexico in creation of an international park where Mexican *bandidos* and American soldiers had clashed less than two decades before. Photographs of the commission's tour of the Coahuila and Chihuahua landscape published in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* revealed the sense of brotherhood and commitment shared by commission members. The historian John Jameson wrote that the officials marveled at the differences across the river in Mexico, where "unlike the overgrazed American side, there was little evidence of erosion in Mexico, and the mountains were covered with virgin stands of pine trees, some as tall as sixty feet and three feet around the base." Then one of the most tragic events to strike Big Bend (not to mention the international park idea) occurred less than 24 hours after the commission dispersed: the deaths of Roger Toll and George Wright in an auto accident. The two park service officials were en route from Big Bend to study the Arizona border park sites when a car veered into their lane on the old two-lane highway east of Deming, New Mexico. Richard Sellars, writing with the hindsight of six decades of history, would note in 1998 of the untimely deaths of Toll and Wright: "Although not fully apparent at the time, the loss of Wright's impressive leadership skills marked the beginning of the decline of [park service] science programs." It would be 60 years before the NPS and the government of Mexico would hold similar conversations at the highest levels about joining their two nations along the Rio Grande, and by then the memory of Toll and Wright's contributions would have faded considerably. [25]

At the time, however, NPS officials and their Mexican counterparts expressed a determination to continue planning for the international park, using the deaths of Toll and Wright as an incentive. Nonetheless, the initiative had lost two of its most ardent advocates, a circumstance that all who wished for a joint park realized within days. Herbert Maier wrote to Juan Thacker, one of the Mexican commissioners from El Paso, on March 8 to review the planning to date. Maier reminded Thacker that "upon my last visit in your office I had a conference with a man from Chihuahua who is interested in securing a nucleus herd of buffalo and elk for a club in the vicinity of Chihuahua in Mexico." The regional director of the ECW program had discussed the idea with Toll and Wright while on the inspection tour of the international park, and told Thacker: "Both of these gentlemen assured me that it will be possible to secure both elk and buffalo from the Yellowstone herds. [where Toll was superintendent]." Toll and Wright did caution Maier: "It will be highly advisable to consider the matter of undertaking the developing of herds of these species with a great deal of care and forethought." They knew that "in many cases living specimens supplied by wildlife refuge officials have proven a liability rather than an asset, . . . since the undertaking of development of herds involves a great many scientific and practical considerations." Toll advised Maier that "the elk and buffalo indicated for distribution during the current year have all been pledged." Yet the Yellowstone superintendent believed that "it will be quite possible to secure specimens during the coming year." Then Maier revealed to Thacker the scale of the deaths of Toll and Wright to the park service: "Considering the fact that both of these fine men have been unfortunately removed from our midst, I suggest that the individual in charge of this undertaking, . . . take up the matter directly with Mr. Ben Thompson, . . . who is a wildlife expert, and who was assistant to Mr. George Wright." [26]

The death of Toll and Wright also had personal implications for park service officials engaged in the work of park planning in Texas and Mexico. Amidst the correspondence that Leo McClatchy handled that spring was a note from Mrs. Roger Toll, who resided in Denver while her husband traveled the West in search of new parks for the United States. Toll's widow noted that the *El Paso Times* had printed pictures of the international park survey, and wondered if McClatchy would provide her with copies of the images that included her

husband. The NPS publicist could not locate any of the original pictures, as all of the negatives had been sent to the NPS headquarters in Washington. He did, however, have a clipping from the *Star-Telegram* where "Mr. Toll is seen helping to push the car out of a rut." Then in a touching statement about the meaning of Toll's work to his peers within the NPS, McClatchy told his widow: "Though I had known Mr. Toll but a brief time, he was extremely courteous and helpful to me on the Big Bend trip, going out of his way to assist me in gathering information." [27]

Officials of the department of forestry, fish and game in Mexico sustained their own investment in the international park concept throughout the spring and summer of 1936, with the key representative, Daniel Galicia, soliciting of Leo McClatchy any newspaper stories in the United States about the project. Writing in Spanish, Galicia referred in a March 25 letter to the process of "establicimiento del Parque Internacional 'Rio Bravo' [establishment of the Rio Bravo International Park]." Galicia then wrote to Conrad Wirth to thank the assistant NPS director "for all the courtesies shown me and the members of the Mexican Conference on the International Commission of Parks and Reserves." The Mexican forestry division chief was "very happy to know that you [Wirth] enjoyed the trip that we made in the sierra del Carmen, in the State of Coahuila, in order to establish the Mexican portion of the International Park of Peace between Mexico and the United States." He also wanted Wirth to know that "we are also working to gather all the necessary data on the formation of the National Park 'Rio Bravo' in Coahuila as part of the Big Bend in Texas." From this Galicia hoped that "soon we will be able to declare it a National Park although we are faced with legal difficulties insofar as the acquisition of the land is concerned." Galicia nonetheless anticipated "another International Conference," along with a visit from Wirth to Mexico "to show you some of the beautiful attractions which we have in my country." He then praised "the enthusiasm and patriotism of my superior Senor Ing. Miguel A. Quevedo," for "these places are now being converted into national parks." [28]

By late June, NPS officials had just begun to recoup the momentum on the international park interrupted by the deaths of Toll and Wright. Conrad Wirth discussed with park service director Arno Cammerer the need for another meeting with the International Commission. "As you know," wrote Wirth, "after the terrible accident, things were rather left up in the air." Yet the assistant NPS director reminded Maier that "we did make arrangements insofar as the international park at Big Bend is concerned, to meet with the Mexican authorities this fall and go over their proposed boundaries." Wirth then asked the NPS's Region III director to contact officials in Mexico to see if "they would have the material ready so as to be able to sit down and decide on the boundary lines and determine the final recommendations to be made to both Governments." Director Cammerer had planned to attend this gathering, said Wirth, who hoped that Maier could coordinate such a gathering in Mexico when the director also could meet with Texas officials regarding the bill to be placed before Lone Star lawmakers for purchase of lands on the American side of the Rio Grande for Big Bend National Park. Maier reported back to Wirth that he had spoken with Santos Ibarra, the commission member charged with identification of the Mexican boundary location. From Ibarra Maier had learned that "it has been a little difficult to determine . . . just how they [Mexican officials] intend to acquire their portion of the land." Compounding this situation, wrote Maier, was that "of course their idea of setting up a National Park has been quite different from ours, for the most part, because funds are not available to purchase immense areas." This procedure Maier described to Wirth as "in some cases they declare an area a national park, although there are private holdings within it, and in such cases they limit destruction of all plant and animal life, but do not force such land owners that may be within the area to immediately give up the land." Yet Maier conceded that the Mexican commissioners "are thoroughly in sympathy with our ideals, and this contact with our National Park Service will probably eventually lead to the same general policies as ours." To strengthen this bond, Maier noted that "when we were in Mexico City a trip for the Mexican

officials was planned which would bring them up into Yellowstone and other National Parks in August and September." [29]

In preparation for the fall gathering of the international park commission, Maier assigned J.T. Roberts, associate landscape architect for Region III, to join Daniel Galicia in Alpine to study "the problem of boundaries for the proposed park." When the two departed for the Rio Grande on September 2, Galicia informed Roberts that his instructions from Miguel Angel de Quevedo "were to limit the boundaries, as far as possible, to the forested area because of the very limited funds available for use in obtaining land for park purposes." Galicia and Roberts had to leave their vehicle at the river town of Boquillas, Texas, because "the Rio Bravo [was] on a 6 foot rise." Taking a truck from the Mexican village of Boquillas, the party traveled along "the eastern and northern extremities of the Fronteriza Mountains," finding that "the timbered lands were mainly above 1780 meters, or approximately 5300 feet." Roberts would report to Maier that "for this reason Sr. Galicia first proposed an eastern and northern boundary from Mesa de los Fresnos to Mesa de los Tremblores." From there, wrote Roberts, the boundary line would extend "to Pico Sentinel, then north, including only the face of what we know as Del Carmine, then to Stillman at the end of the Boquillas Canyon." Roberts believed that "this would be similar to establishing the boundaries of the Chisos Mountain area by running a line from Mule Ears to Castillon Peak to Elephant Mountain to Crown Mountain to Lost Mine Peak and so on." The problem for the NPS architect was that "in this no consideration was given to the wild life or scenic values." He informed Maier that "with some difficulties in conversation I presented these points as we traveled along, and it was finally determined that the park should include all the mountain areas and such adjacent land necessary for the protection of wild life;" a decision that Roberts said "will include Pico Etereo." [30]

In order to redesign the Mexican portion of the international park, Roberts told the Region III director that "Sr. Galicia will recommend that the entire area within the original proposed boundaries be established as a game preserve, eliminating at once the value of the land for hunting." The NPS architect noted that Galicia "will then suggest that those owners within the boundaries of this area exchange their holdings for other excess forested areas now held by the Government." Roberts conceded that "the greatest trouble experienced by the department [of forestry, game and fish] is not with the native owners but with those owning 'The Club,' all of whom are citizens of the United States." Within the acreage owned by these foreigners, "the physical features," said Roberts, "may be described as very rugged, of volcanic origin and heavily timbered above 5300 feet." Among the species of timber were "Ponderosa pine, Mexican white pine, cypress, and fir, probably pseudopseudo douglasii." Roberts further reported that "below 5000 feet there is a great variety of trees, the most predominant being the oak and wild cherry." He contended that "sufficient water is available, all year, at The Club for a large development, and it may be found that there is an ample supply below the mine." Roberts indicated that "there are may other places, such as the Laguna and Carbonera, for overnight facilities." This latter locale was, "on the present trails, a three hour horseback ride from 'Casa del Nino' and four hours from The Club . . . at an elevation of 2170 meters (6500 feet)." Roberts estimated that "the distance between The Club and Casa del Nino is 28 kilometers [16.8 miles]," and he claimed that "it is between those two points that the most beautiful scenery was found on this inspection trip." Other distinctive features included an area "above the laguna, which is about 5 kilometers [three miles] north and east of Carbonera," which was called "Mesa Escondida where the largest timber of the mountains is found." Roberts also "found a cave described as being 'large enough to hide two hundred men and horses and with water convenient.'" The NPS architect then closed his report by noting that Galicia spoke less enthusiastically of "the eastern slope of the 'Del Carmine Mountains' — that is, the limestone uplift from Boquillas south." Roberts agreed that the area "is barren of trees and has no spectacular geological formations." Thus he concurred in "Sr. Galicia's point of view [that] it is of no value as a National Park and is in fact of interest only as a

wild life refuge." [31]

Galicia's caution reflected the sentiments of his supervisor in Mexico City, Miguel Angel de Quevedo. While dedicated to natural resource preservation, Quevedo also knew of the political and economic realities of life in Mexico that constrained the Cardenas administration in its negotiations for an international park at Big Bend. As he prepared to attend the commission meeting in El Paso that fall, Quevedo advised Herbert Maier in September that he would accept NPS director Cammerer's invitation, "inasmuch as I have numerous problems I desire to clarify." American promoters of Big Bend National Park, however, saw only good fortune awaiting the deliberations of the international commission. Amon Carter's *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* trumpeted the windfall of publicity and tourism to come to the most isolated reaches of the Lone Star state. "Texans have a right to be enthusiastic about this development," declared the *Star-Telegram* on November 4, 1936, as "already the Big Bend park begins to take rank among the foremost on the national list." Carter's editors could hardly restrain themselves when calculating the benefits to accrue from the "millions of American holiday visitors" about to descend upon the "last frontier." Echoing the prose of Walter Prescott Webb, the *Star-Telegram* reminded its readers that "great mountain ranges on both sides of the river, gigantic abysses, towering peaks and crashing streams complete the region's attractions to the sightseer." Then the paper noted that "the international aspect of the park project enlarges its possibilities to an infinite degree." If possible, "the area in Mexican territory has been even more remote, more inaccessible, than that on the Texas side." This led the *Star-Telegram* to claim that joining the two countries in a venue covering some 1.2 million acres in "an international park freely open to the public of both nations — a sort of free port of recreation and fraternization — is a notable project in international relations." [32]

Four days after Franklin Roosevelt achieved the most sweeping victory in modern times in a presidential election, the director of the NPS arrived in Texas for a series of meetings on Big Bend and the adjacent Mexican park initiative. Historians have noted the energy that surged through the FDR administration in the days and weeks after his capturing of 61 percent of the nation's popular vote, and all but eight of the 535 electoral votes for president. Roosevelt and his staff believed that the public had validated their measures for reform, economic recovery, and protection of the nation's natural and cultural resources. Issues to be discussed at the El Paso gathering of federal officials from the United States and Mexico thus expanded to plans for reforestation along the border (a favorite of Miguel Angel de Quevedo), and a meeting of NPS officials and the "National Park Committee" of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce. Headed by Sul Ross's Howard Morelock, the entourage wanted to remind the park service of their own work on the acquisition of land for Big Bend, and of the need to highlight statistics about travel and economic development akin to those of the *Star-Telegram's* news story of the previous Sunday. [33]

When the international commission on parks and reserves came to order on November 9, the attendees represented the highest levels of natural resource management in both the United States and Mexico. NPS director Cammerer joined with his top assistants, Conrad Wirth and George Moskey, Herbert Maier of Region III, and Frank Pinkley, the longtime superintendent of Casa Grande National Monument who also served as the coordinator for the Southwestern Monuments network. Maier had invited his top assistant, Milton McColm, along with his chief biologist, Walter McDougall, Merel Sager of the surveying parties, and Everett Townsend, representing local interests in the international park initiative. Daniel Galicia led the Mexican contingent, which included game division chief Juan Zinser, Juan F. Trevino, and Juan Thacker. The International Boundary Commission likewise sent its highest ranking members from both countries: Laurence M. Lawson for the United States, and Joaquin C. Bustamante, the IBC's consulting engineer from Mexico. The NPS played for the commission a reel of film on the Big Bend region, followed by a presentation from Maier on the criteria

used by both nations to determine the boundary lines of the international park. [34]

It soon became clear to the attendees that the demarcations of the joint initiative would be the most challenging task before them. Maier reported after the meeting that "it will be highly desirable that the east and west boundaries of the Mexican area, as nearly as practical, coincide with those of the Texas area where they join the Rio Grande." The commission members thus "agreed that the point where the Mexican boundary line will touch the River on the west should be the confluence of San Antonio Creek with the Rio Grande." The regional director then noted that "this will throw the Lajitas Crossing and its road for mining and cattle outside the area, which is desirable." Maier conceded that "while the eastern boundary of the Mexican area will contact the Rio Grande at the present proposed point," he realized that "the American line will be swung somewhat to the north so as to strike the Rio Grande at Los Vegas de Silwell [Las Vegas de Stillwell]." The attendees further decided that "probably only one vehicle bridge across the Rio Grande within the international park, crossing to the Mexican side, will be necessary and advisable for administrative and policing purposes." The future park management would have to consider, however, "that visitors should have free access to both sides, any Customs regulations being taken care of at the checking stations leading into each area." Then director Cammerer agreed that "it will probably be best not to run a main park road along the Rio Grande on the American side." Instead, the NPS director believed that "this should be left free for open wildlife range down to and across the border." [35]

After a luncheon hosted by the El Paso chamber of commerce, the commission heard from the IBC's Lawson, who showed them "very useful aerial surveys and aerial photographs of the Rio Grande." The group then revisited the boundary question, agreeing that "the present crossing at Boquillas for cattle and the mines could continue to operate even after the park is established." A primary consideration was the location of the road from Boquillas to Marathon along the eastern edge of the proposed Big Bend National Park. Several attendees noted that "mining activity on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande is almost extinct and the moving of cattle to the U.S. side is now of little consequence." Referring to "the small ranches now operating along both sides of the Rio Grande," Maier reported that "it was felt that the two governments, even though acquiring the land, might well extend permits to the owners of the land to remain for the remainder of their lifetimes." Then the regional director observed that "the boundaries of the American and Mexican side were corrected on the map by Daniel Galicia and Merel Sager and new photostats struck off and copies distributed to both delegations for future guidance." [36]

Following the discussions of boundaries and their locations, Conrad Wirth "suggested that on the basis of these lines the President of each country should be approached by the respective Departments and the two Presidents could then make final arrangements for the international aspects and proclamations." One detail that might hinder such collaboration was addressed by the IBC's Lawson, who "discussed the possible hydrographic considerations along the Rio Grande within, above and below the area in which it [the IBC] and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation may in the future be interested." Lawson led the commission to believe that "no major hydrographic project along the Rio Grande within the proposed area is now being considered." Yet several commission members had heard that "there may be a storage reservoir established immediately below the eastern U.S. boundary [of Big Bend]." Maier added in his report that "the fact that the present Irrigation Project on the Mexican side along the Conchos River, running into the Rio Grande above the area, may in time consume the major part of the water at present flowing into the Rio Grande proper below this point and through the proposed park;" a point which the attendees agreed was "of marked importance." The El Paso conferees concluded, however, "that once the international park is established an adjustment in the operation of the Conchos River irrigation project may be effected by the Mexican government so as to prevent this threatened consumption of the main source of Rio

Grande water within the park area." [37]

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CHAPTER 11:
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CHAPTER 11:
Discovering Nature's Way: Scientific Research and Resource Protection, 1936 (continued)

Conscious of the need to address resource protection issues, more NPS staff and academics converged upon the Big Bend area throughout the summer of 1936. One party traversing the Grapevine Springs district of the future park uncovered "two teeth of an elephant believed to have perished in the mud and water of an ancient lake." An NPS press release of August 6 further stated that "other discoveries made in the Big Bend district include bones of dinosaurs, shark, and giant turtles." Park service officials reported that "more than 100 specimens have been collected of oyster, clam, and other shells, and a similar number of volcanic rocks have been found." This activity prompted Everett Townsend to approach Stanford Payne, state representative from Del Rio, with clarification of the issues of resource management confronting the park service. Sensitive to charges of federal intrusion into private lands, Townsend told Payne that neither the NPS's William McDougall nor the agency itself wished "to deprive the residents of that region of revenues that may come through seasonable hunting privileges." Townsend had discussed McDougall's list of potential protected species in the Big Bend area with local ranchers, and found that "there is no objection to including the deer in the protective list as some of them derive much needed income from the hunters each season." Townsend himself wanted the deer protected, but cautioned: "I hardly think they will all be killed before the area is acquired." The longstanding champion of Big Bend National Park had spoken with Ray Williams, local game warden, and learned of his willingness to "close the deer season over those portions of the counties [lying] south of the Southern Pacific Railway." Williams had advised Townsend that in this area "the deer are rapidly disappearing," and the former county sheriff hoped that Payne "will get through a bill closing the season on all of these animals, excluding the deer, unless your investigations convince you they should be included." Townsend then appended to his remarks the warning that "because of the difficulty in defining the boundary of the Park Area and the trouble in enforcing a local law where the boundary line is not marked and well known," Payne should include all lands south of Alpine and Marathon in any protection of the species outlined by McDougall and accepted by local ranchers. [20]

With the close of the summer research season, NPS officials in 1936 had a wealth of data from which to plan future development of Big Bend National Park. Erik Reed, assistant archaeologist for Region III, completed what would be the most thorough assessment of cultural resources in the park area for the next five decades. As had his peers in biology and geology, Reed outlined the distinctive features of human habitation of the Big Bend area. "The Big Bend proper," reported Reed, "is less rich in specimens than other sections" of the United States, "especially the lower Pecos [River]." Yet the NPS archaeologist found that "many good collections have been made there; of sandals, matting, wooden implements, basketry, etc." Reed told his superiors that "the historic occupants of the Trans-Pecos (Jumanos, Lipanes, etc.) are not very thoroughly known, and the affinities of the prehistoric cave-dwellers are a matter of controversy." This was "in contrast to the northern Arizona-southern Utah area," where "the culture of the Basketmakers of the northern part of the arid

southwest is fairly well known." Archaeological evidence there had identified "the irruption of a new people into the Pueblo civilization, and connection somehow with the historic Shoshoneans of the Great Basin." Unfortunately, reported Reed, "none of these statements apply to the west Texas cave-dwellers." [21]

Despite the lack of scholarly interest in the cultures of the Rio Grande basin, Reed found of value their survival skills in the desert. "The group under discussion," wrote the NPS archaeologist, "lived in caves and probably also crude brush shelters, had very little agriculture (none on the Pecos; some maize grown in the Big Bend; apparently none in the Hueco-El Paso area)." While these ancient peoples "made no pottery [a feature that enamored archaeologists of the Pueblo cultures of northern New Mexico and Arizona]," Reed found that "they wove quite good baskets -twined and coiled, especially split-stitch coiled - and twilled matting." Their sandals were "roughly woven of yucca leaves, in several techniques," while "little else is known of their clothing." For weapons the Big Bend cultures "used the atl-atl or dart-thrower," and evidence abounded of the use of the bow and arrow (which Reed noted was "not known to the southwestern Basketmakers until the beginning of Pueblo immigration"), as well as the "carved rabbit stick" that archaeologists had located among the Basketmakers and the Historic Shoshoneans of the Great Basin. [22]

It was the comparison with the more prominent ancestors of New Mexico's Pueblo peoples (whom the NPS had begun to study in depth in the 1930s at sites like Chaco Canyon, Bandelier, and Mesa Verde) that drew much of Reed's analysis, although he did report that "one cannot safely link them [the Big Bend peoples] at all strongly with . . . the Lipan Apache, the Patarabueyes or Jumanos, and the Basketmakers of the Southwest." The Big Bend cultures, the New Mexican Native communities, and ancient villages known to park service archaeologists as "Ozark bluff-dwellers" "all have many points of similarity, but are nevertheless separate entities." Reed placed these groups "all on about the same level of cultural development, at a stage that many cultures pass through." He then stated that "there is no need to suppose that these three peoples spoke the same language, were more closely related than any other widely separated groups of aboriginal Americans or were even contemporary - although all this is perfectly possible." Reed believed that "the Patarabueyes who were settled at the mouth of the Conchos (where now is Presidio, Texas) in the sixteenth century are to be connected with the west Texas cave-dwellers." More likely for Reed was evidence from "two additional groups of archaeological finds in the west Texas area." These he labeled "the discovery of extremely ancient sites in Guadalupe Mountains in Texas and in New Mexico and farther north around Clovis and Roswell, New Mexico," as well as "the 14th century occurrence of Pueblo culture around El Paso." Reed claimed that "it is perfectly possible that the Big Bend cave-dwellers were descendants of the very early inhabitants of the Guadalupes." He also suggested that "the folk who lived in the El Paso pueblos and manufactured crude polychrome pottery were a branch of the cave people become sedentary and relatively civilized under Puebloan influence from the Mimbres-Chihuahua basin." [23]

It was easier for Reed to distance the Big Bend cultures from the Lipan Apaches, "who are the most important people of west Texas in historic times." He argued that, "despite great superficial similarity," one would have to accept "very unlikely hypotheses" that included "that the whole cave-culture dates from after the 13th century (or else that the Apache came into the southwest much earlier than is at present believed)." Reed added to this scenario the idea that "agriculture was abandoned, that certain arrowpoint types disappeared and quite different ones replaced them (instead of one type gradually evolving into another)." The NPS archaeologist, however, did find "definite connections southward of the west Texas cave-dwellers -with a very similar but little-known cave culture in the mountains of Coahuila." Yet Reed declared it "impossible to specifically link them with any historic or prehistoric group in the United States." At best, the scientific evidence revealed that the Big Bend culture "is very like that of the Basketmakers and that the two groups may well be cognate

representatives of the same fundamental stock." [24]

Given this dilemma of identity, Reed could speak with more certainty about "their place in time." He reported that "the west Texas cave-dwellers may have been in existence as such two thousand years ago and they may have still been there when Cabeza de Vaca traveled through Texas [1541]." The archaeologist noted that "an antiquity comparable to that of the Basketmakers (i.e., going back a few centuries before the time of Christ) has been postulated and is supported by the finding of cave-dweller materials in association with an extinct species of antelope (Tetrameryx)." A "competent and trustworthy archaeologist" had found shards of fourteenth-century Pueblo pottery ("El Paso polychrome notably"). This led Reed to theorize "that the west Texas cave-dwellers inhabited the region from fairly early times on down to about the fourteenth century, at which time they were overrun by the Lipanes and either vanished into the mountains of Coahuila or became the Patarabueyes at the confluence of the Conchos and the Rio Grande." Reed thus concluded about the identity of the cave-dwellers: "They present an interesting problem, in whose solution the discipline or technique to be most utilized is that of the shovel and trowel." [25]

That reference to the "spadework" of archaeologists led Reed to outline the plan of work undertaken from June to September of 1936. Working with the Oklahoma City-based archaeologist on a full-time basis were Edgar C. Niebuhr of the University of Texas, and J. Charles Kelley of the University of New Mexico, joined for part of the summer by William M. Pearce of Texas Technical College in Lubbock. "In one excavation job," reported Reed, "several enrollees from Co. 1855 USCCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] were used for labor and did excellently." Reed also praised the work of "the SP ECW staff at SP-33-T (Big Bend State Park)," singling out Superintendent R.D. Morgan for his "cooperation and helpfulness." The team devoted "somewhat over half the time [to] archaeological reconnaissance-survey," where "the area is thoroughly scouted and as many sites as can be found are located and described as exactly as possible and surface specimens collected." That summer the Reed party visited 184 sites, selecting four to be excavated. One was a small rock shelter in the Chisos Basin "which yielded no specimens," while others included "a small cave in Mariscal Mountain," a cave in the east side of the Val Verde in the Dead Horse country, and "a debris-midden in the Chisos . . from which a fair number of stone artifacts was recovered." Reed reported that 325 archaeological specimens were collected that summer from 45 surface sites. "It is to be hoped," the NPS archaeologist concluded, "that a good deal of further archaeological work can be carried on in the Big Bend in future years by the National Park Service, or by other competent public and private organizations," as "there is much that should be done - and done right - in the Big Bend area." [26]

Reed's crew worked in conjunction with several other groups of archaeologists throughout west Texas that summer, making 1936 perhaps the high point of scientific effort in matters of cultural resource research. To emphasize the significance of the collaborative efforts in the region, Reed noted that excavations were underway in the Val Verde country ("the lower Pecos, Seminole Canyon, Shumla, Devil's River Canyon") by the University of Texas and by the San Antonio-based Witte Museum. Around El Paso Reed found crews digging near the Hueco Tanks, while "minor investigations have been carried out in the northern part of the trans-Pecos, especially Culberson county." The Smithsonian Institution and the West Texas Historical and Scientific Society had sent crews into the field north of Alpine and Marfa, while the former agency also had workers inside the boundaries of the future Big Bend National Park at Mule Ears Peak. Frank Setzler of the Smithsonian's National Museum (the precursor of the National Museum of American History) oversaw excavation of two caves in that area, while the Witte Museum staff examined the west side of Panther Canyon northeast of the Chisos Basin. Reed had less information about the work that summer of M.R. Harrington, although the latter and E.F. Coffin had dug in Bee Cave near Chalk Draw in the vicinity of Santiago Peak. [27]

The NPS archaeologist had few kind words for the "great deal of amateur excavation and vandalism" that coexisted with professional activity throughout the Trans-Pecos region. "In the Big Bend proper," wrote Reed, "most of the amateur archaeological work has been done by Mr. and Mrs. Elmo Johnson of Castolon." Reed also identified "Tom and Roy Miller of San Vicente" as exploiters of the region's cultural heritage. "Most of the other local people," said Reed, "have done little or no digging, but many have collected numerous arrowpoints, metates, etc., on the surface." He did concede that "the work done by the Johnsons in the Big Bend and across in Mexico is more or less all right." Reed stated that "they have taken care of their finds in most cases, and are genuinely interested," a circumstance validated by their cooperation with Smithsonian and park service crews. "The Johnsons fall in the group I classify as more or less beneficent amateurs," wrote Reed, "whose activities are to be encouraged and guided rather than halted (which is almost impossible anyway)." Unfortunately for Reed, "all other local digging has been vandalism, at best curio-hunting, including that of the Millers." The archaeologist stated that "the cooperation of the Millers with the field groups of the Witte Museum is not enough to their credit to make their account balance." Reed admitted that "the picking-up of projectile points and other surface specimens is regrettable but cannot be stopped; and it can be partly justified in that most good archaeologists start out as arrowhead-collectors." In addition, Reed noted that "a few curio-hunters have come in from the outside, but have not done as much damage as might be expected in most cases [as] the local people are opposed to outsiders taking materials out." [28]

As did other NPS scientists who came to Big Bend in the summer of 1936, Erik Reed and his archaeological crew included examination of cultural resources on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande. Reed's journey south into Coahuila and Chihuahua revealed that "very little archaeological work has been done in northern Mexico in general, and almost none in this region." He learned that "the more westerly part of Chihuahua has been studied extensively, with very little reference to the mountains of eastern Chihuahua." In the area of Coahuila to become part of any future international park, Reed noted that a survey team from Harvard College had spent time there in 1885. "This has never been completely published," reported the archaeologist, "but the cultural material recovered is still at the Peabody Museum in Cambridge, Mass." Reed then spoke of his conversations with Elmo Johnson about cultural resource sites in Mexico. "A good part of [the Johnsons'] collection comes from south of the river," wrote Reed, with one particular site "a largish cave in which were a great number of burials, the skeletal material being in quite good condition apparently." Reed lamented that "this site is totally lost to science, due to Johnson's digging therein," but he hoped that "there may be others like it" in the area. Reed himself only had time to visit one site in Mexico that summer: the Canon de los Altares in Chihuahua, which he reached from Santa Elena. There he reported "an unusually extensive set of petroglyphs." Reed also recognized "camp-sites along the Mexican side of the Rio Grande as on the Texas side," while "back into the hills there are shelter sites and camps." In addition, said Reed, "there are interesting early Spanish sites at a few places on the river, notably presidio San Vicente." [29]

While the international park idea attracted the curiosity of Reed and his colleagues, he devoted much of his report to the details of the 184 sites examined on the American side of the Rio Grande. Of these, 89 he called "open camps." There were 95 caves explored that "not only showed definite evidence of having been utilized as at least temporary or occasional dwellings but also of containing in their fill cultural remains of their occupants." The open sites "yield few specimens and none of the perishable materials" of the caves, yet Reed found in them "utilized flint - spalls, chips, rejects, and cores - scattered over an area a few hundred feet each way." Some of the campsites had "accumulations of refuse - ashes and burnt rocks." These could be as small as "a few bed-rock mortars, . . . a few rock hearths and practically nothing else." Such camps appeared most frequently along the Rio Grande, rather

than in the mountains. Reed also discovered what he called "sotol pits:" "a burnt-rock mound in the shape of a ring instead of irregular flat or subconical." Conventional wisdom held that "the depressed center of the mound represents the actual hearth where sotol was cooked with hot rocks." These then "were thrown away as they split into small fragments, forming a circular accumulation around the sotol hearth." [30]

Reed's surveys led him to draft several general themes for the NPS to consider in its planning for cultural resource preservation at Big Bend. "Archaeological sites in the Big Bend are for the most part near a permanent or semi-permanent water supply," wrote Reed, "as is the case in most areas." He determined that "any archaeological site that is not within striking distance of a spring or stream (or where the water table is easily reached) is obviously certain at least to have been little more than a halting place where a nomadic people made occasional dry camps." Reed then commented upon the ethnic complexities in the Big Bend region when he advised his superiors: "At almost any present point of settlement - any ranch or Mexican shack - there are remains of aboriginal occupants." This he considered "actual enough - if it is a good place for white men or Mexicans to settle, it was a good place for Indians." [31]

The work of Erik Reed in the field paralleled that of Charles Gould, who made yet another tour of Big Bend in August 1936 with a crew of geologists. Among his employees was Ross Maxwell, the junior geologist with the NPS's Region III, and student technicians Hugh M. Eley and O'Reilly N. Sandoz. Early in the summer Gould's crew had the services of Dr. C.P. Ross of the U.S. Geological Survey, whom Gould identified as having surveyed the western portions of the Big Bend area in 1934 "while engaged in quicksilver investigation." Between Maxwell's map, and the assistance of the students, Gould could report in September that "something between one-half and two-thirds of the area of the proposed park has been mapped." The regional geologist also took notice of the fact that "it now looks as if the Big Bend area will be one of the most prolific dinosaur collecting areas in the United States." The geology surveyors found "some eight to ten areas yielding dinosaur remains," with several large bones excavated by Maxwell and the technicians. These finds represented six different species of dinosaur, among them Diplodocus, Ceratops, and Stegosaur. "The men estimate that they have seen traces of several hundred individuals," reported Gould, "and it is a fact that at certain places one may walk one-half mile and step on broken fragments of dinosaur bones all the way." Other discoveries included turtle bones, sharks' teeth, a pre-historic bird, petrified wood (the largest of the "hundreds of stumps" measuring ten feet in diameter and 30 feet in length). Gould also claimed to have found a new species of oyster fossilized in the rock, with the largest being three feet eight inches by four feet. The "many specimens of volcanic and other igneous rocks" would be loaned to Hugh Eley for his master's thesis from the University of Oklahoma, while the Big Bend museum now boasted of 125 labeled species of invertebrates, and a similar number of rock specimens. [32]

When Gould had more time in the fall of 1936 to reflect upon the findings of his geological survey crew, he wrote to Herbert Maier about the problems of preserving the specimens at hand. "The greater part of the land which contains these prehistoric remains," said Gould in October, "is now in private ownership, and until it has been secured by the State or National park authorities it will perhaps be best to give little publicity to the existence of these fossils." Gould also warned his superiors that "the effective display of dinosaur skeletons requires considerable space." Some of the specimens at Big Bend could reach lengths of 30 to 40 feet, and stand 20 feet tall. "If they are to be displayed to advantage on the park," wrote Gould, "it will necessitate a rather large museum building containing one or more halls devoted to dinosaurs." Such a facility also could stabilize the bones excavated by the geology crew, as O'Reilly Sandoz had placed some 300 bones in plaster that could deteriorate over time and ruin the specimen. Similar attention needed to be paid to the abundance of petrified wood. "There is scarcely a square mile in the Big Bend Park," said Gould, "where [the Aguja] formation [containing the wood] does not occur." Fossils of oysters embedded in the

"Boquillas flags" proliferated, including *Inoceramus grandis*, which Gould believed was new. [33]

Ross Maxwell spent much of his time identifying and cataloguing the varieties of volcanic rock that abounded in the future national park. "As more and more time is spent in Big Bend country," reported Gould, "and more details worked out it becomes increasingly evident that we have only begun to read the story told in the rocks." Maxwell and Hugh Eley read the literature extant about Big Bend's geology, and conversed with the eminent scholars working in the area. Among their conclusions that Gould supplied to NPS officials was evidence that "a considerable part of Pulliam and Ward Mountains consist of a bathlith [sic] across which Oak Canyon has cut a deep gorge." They believed that "Emory Peak, Casa Grande, South Rim, and other peaks, consist of intrusive lava, in the form of sills [in actuality extrusive surface lava flows]." Maxwell could not determine, however, the origins of this material, as he found "no evidence of cores, plugs or volcanic vents from which this material might have come." Similar mysteries abounded with the study of the volcanic ash and tuff that comprised the Chisos Beds. [34]

As had Erik Reed, Charles Gould appealed to regional NPS officials to sponsor additional survey and research work on the Big Bend's geological wonders. "At the first possible moment," wrote Gould, "at least three scientists, each man a specialist in his particular line, should be assigned to work in Big Bend." One should be a vertebrate paleontologist, whose task would be "dinosaurs and associated forms." An invertebrate paleontologist with expertise in cretaceous fossils "should work out the petrified shells." The third specialist, an expert in volcanic and igneous petrography, "should attempt to solve the problem of the origin of the volcanic rocks, and identify and classify them." Gould was pleased that Ross Maxwell would remain involved in the drafting of the geologic map for Big Bend. Then Gould suggested that the NPS consider the following summer's research needs by including a survey of the Dead Horse Mountains, which he claimed had "never been visited by the technicians of the National Park Service." Gould noted that Herbert Maier "has authorized a pack-train trip to be taken in October of this year to explore the area." The group would number two geologists, two wildlife experts, a guide and a camp outfitter. Their agenda would include Boquillas, a hike up Straw House Trail to Heath Creek, and then a journey north past Sue Peak to Dagger Flats and on to Persimmon Gap. [35]

Perhaps the most dramatic survey conducted in the Big Bend region in the summer of 1936 was that of Ernest G. Marsh, Junior, a graduate student in botany at the University of Texas. On October 11, Marsh filed with Region III officials "A Preliminary Report on a Biological Survey of the Santa Rosa and Del Carmen Mountains of Northern Coahuila, Mexico." His findings, while not complete, were such that the regional NPS office sent press releases to all newspapers in the Southwest trumpeting his achievement. Marsh had accepted an appointment "to spend three months in the Muzquiz-Boquillas region of northern Coahuila." The trip began eighteen days late, with the UT graduate student "awaiting permission from the Mexican government to enter the country as a government employee." Then "a delayed rainy season broke heavily two days before my arrival in Muzquiz." Marsh faced "continual rains, the loss of seventeen bird specimens, and a shortage of time" that prompted "abandoning the avifaunal and reptile collections for the Muzquiz area." He then made "successive trips of one week's duration to the Sabinas River, the Zacate-Encantada, and the Mariposa-Gacha," turning his attention to the more northern regions of Coahuila. [36]

Marsh's descriptions of his journey, and of the places that he surveyed, read more like an adventure novel than a scientific report. It took him nearly one week to drive from Muzquiz to the Big Bend area, where he encountered the 2,000-foot Carmen escarpment (which could be crossed only on a wagon road). Once in Piedra Blanca, some 175 miles north of Muzquiz, Marsh had to abandon his vehicle and transfer his equipment to "a more favorable mode, the

burros." On July 30, he made camp at Canon de las Vivoras, south of the "Haciendo del Jardin," or 35 miles west of Piedra Blanca. From this base Marsh observed that "the northern Del Carmens are represented by two chains of mountains running parallel in a general northeastern direction." He then wrote that "the more western chain ends abruptly in probably the highest peak of northern Coahuila, La Sierra del Jardin." Marsh noted that "the complexity of the rough country and the slow method of travel force me to concentrate my efforts to a portion of the area rather than the whole." Claiming that "for no reason other than that it was a bit farther removed from inhabitants," Marsh "chose the western side of the western chain, a fifteen mile stretch of deep canyons and towering peaks." For the next six weeks he studied the Sierra del Carmen, coming to appreciate "the immensity of problems arising within such a small area of unexplored mountains." His hikes took him to the "great bare slope that leads up to approximately 6,000 feet to terminate in an abrupt Escarpmento de las Fronterizas." After making two excursions into the mountains, Marsh found himself riding out onto "the wide stretch of flats along the Chihuahua line." From there he "retraced the road to Muzquiz to spend seven days working in the Muzquiz Swamp and the canyons of La Mariposa." When it came time to leave, said Marsh, "it was almost with regrets that on September 23 I saw the last horizon of old Mexico pass behind me, and I was back again to the point of beginning." [37]

Marsh's survey marked the most detailed explanation to date of the Mexican side of the Rio Grande available to the park service. His collections included four species of amphibians from the Sierra del Carmen, one of which (the leopard frog) Marsh described as "the largest specimen I have ever seen." He also gathered samples of 39 species of birds, out of some 83 species that he recorded in the Coahuila range. He also recorded (but did not collect) 31 species of mammals on his tour. The UT graduate technician also collected some 850 specimens of plants, 400 of which came from the Sierra del Carmen. In addition, Marsh carried out "some thirty five or forty species of cacti, which, as yet, have not been determined." Of reptiles, Marsh could report preserving nineteen species. Completing Marsh's work were 100 photographs of animal and plant life, as well as scenic shots of the Sierra del Carmen, the Santa Rosa Mountains, and the town of Muzquiz. [38]

It was Marsh's description of the communities and land forms that he encountered, however, that gave the NPS for the first time a detailed picture of life in what one day would become Mexico's protected areas along and near Big Bend National Park. Muzquiz was "a picturesque Mexican village of 6,000 population," wrote Marsh, "lying off the south escarpment of the Santa Rosa Mountains." He had learned that "for many years this town was the most important mining center of northern Coahuila," a distinction that had faded with time. "Coal, copper and silver are still mined," reported Marsh, and "ranching has grown much in importance over the last twenty years." Thus "the little town of Muzquiz now devotes the major part of its business toward the several large ranches extending to the east and north." Two of these ranches ("El Zacate" and "La Encantada") were owned by Americans, and could be reached "by journeying east from Muzquiz, and north through the Santa Anna Canyon." Beyond the Encantada ranch, "there is no road for vehicles," said Marsh, "and to reach the great FRESNOS MESA country one must travel by horse." In Santa Anna Canyon, Marsh found "a forty mile expanse of walled valleys, offering the one gateway to the west." From there "a seldom used trail strikes west from the Zacate to cross the arid west plains of Coahuila and into the State of Chihuahua." [39]

To the east of Muzquiz, and "swinging north around the southern tip of the Carmen escarpment," said Marsh, were "three other ranches, LA MARIPOSA, LA GACHA, and LA ROSITA." Marsh found there "deep canyons and grass-filled valleys radiating down from the mountains [that] furnish them with abundant pasture lands." To the north of La Rosita he encountered "the famous LA BAVIA ranch, once owned by Spanish royalty, but now by an American capitalist." Marsh described the ranch as "a great valley floor 40 miles from east to

west, and 100 miles long, watered by mountain springs." This he called "the most perfect ranching country in all of northern Coahuila." Beyond La Bavia to the north Marsh found Santo Domingo, "a German owned ranch," and Conejo, "a government inspection post inhabited by two customs officials." The small village of Piedra Blanca was "ranching territory owned by an American living in Del Rio, Texas," wrote Marsh. He marveled at the grandeur of El Jardin, "a local term applied to the highest and most northern peak of the Del Carmen mountains." This term also applied "to the extensive land holdings of a Mexican diplomat," and constituted "the Jardin Ranch which includes almost the whole of the northern Carmens, west to the Chihuahua line and north to Boquillas." Within the ranch, Marsh found the "American Club," "probably the most beautiful part of the lovely Carmen Mountains, owned by a party of American sportsmen who visit there during the hunting seasons." The eastern terminus of Marsh's journey was Boquillas, which he described in his 1936 report as "a small Mexican border town of 200 inhabitants, located near the southern tip of the Big Bend area, originally settled as a gate for the transportation of mineral ore from the Carmens into Texas." With the decline of the mining industry, said Marsh, Boquillas was "now dependent upon the small cattle and goat farms along the Rio Grande River and the Fronteriza Escarpment." [40]

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Redrawing the Boundaries of Science: 1937-1944
(continued)

Marsh's words went unheeded by NPS officials, as more pressing needs prevailed on the American side of the Rio Grande. Rollin H. Baker, a graduate student at Texas A&M College, worked in the summer of 1937 as a technician conducting an entomological survey of the future park location. For over 100 days, Baker went first to the Chisos Mountains and then fanned out across the lower elevations of southern Brewster County. The technician noted the presence of "a beautiful, tiger-striped, long-winged butterfly" in Juniper Canyon as one of the more unusual species. Nights spent on foot in Boot Canyon were punctuated by "the growls of bobcats and foxes," while during the day Baker and his crew observed "many deer, eagles, and other wild animals." He found most interesting the hike to Boquillas, where "the farmers irrigate their land along the river affording insects a wonderful playground amid the thick vegetation of the irrigated flood plain." Boquillas had a great variety of butterflies, among them the milkweed butterfly "clustering on all types of vegetation." Baker and his partners made note of a party from the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago that "spent several weeks in camp with us in late July and early August." This group sought reptiles and mammals, and Baker "enjoyed several collecting trips with them learning much from them in the ways of collecting." Baker also traveled westward to Santa Elena Canyon, where he found that its "insect fauna . . . closely resembled that of points further down the river." He concluded that "though I have collected in the Big Bend Proposed Park Area some two thousand specimens of the insect fauna, I feel that three and one-half months in an area as large as this region is not fully adequate for more than a beginning on an entomological survey." He suggested to the park service that "the area can be worked a great deal more for insect abundance and types, and there are many interesting ecological studies to be dwelt upon before a final survey can be accomplished." [11]

While Rollin Baker hiked across southern Brewster County in search of insects, the NPS approached Dr. Omer E. Sperry of Sul Ross to collect plant specimens for the future national park. Sperry, who had consulted in the past with NPS biologist Walter McDougall, asked one of his students, Barton C. Warnock, to join him in the field for the summer of 1937. Warnock, who would become the most prominent local scholar of Big Bend vegetation, took advantage of the collection of plants housed on the Sul Ross campus before accompanying Ross Maxwell and his student assistants on a survey of the area. Warnock's efforts were hindered by the lack of transportation throughout the area, and he concentrated on the Chisos Mountains "and the various interesting canyons that open into the Basin." He recorded a large Juniper tree of some 40 feet in height and two feet in diameter growing near the "Window," while the north slope of Mount Emory had a stand of large Douglas firs. When he moved down to Boot Spring, Warnock found the firs and the Arizona Cypress "to be the outstanding trees beautifying this area." [12]

The Sul Ross student then explored the Rio Grande from Boquillas to Lajitas, reporting that "the two most interesting places visited . . . were Boquillas Canyon and Mesa de Angu[i]la." Warnock and the survey crew "were able to wade and swim about a mile down the Boquillas

Canyon," and they carried out "several nice specimens" from the banks of the river. Other notable sites for Warnock were Santa Elena Canyon, where he found "a species of Acacia which appears to be different from those previously collected," a weeklong trek through the Dead Horse Mountains, and another week collecting below the South Rim. Warnock reported that the most common plant in the area surrounding the Chisos Mountains was *lechuguilla,* followed by nearly a dozen other cacti. His final report included mention of some 500 species, of which 60 percent had not been recorded in earlier surveys. [13]

Yet another student researcher assigned to the Chisos CCC camp in the summer of 1937 was Tarleton Smith, a graduate student at the University of Texas. He worked with Karl P. Schmidt, curator of reptiles for the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, to identify specimens for future investigations of the park. Smith would travel around the basin and the lower elevations with Rollin Baker and Barton Warnock. Each day Smith and his companions would drive or hike up and down the canyons of the basin, with Smith most interested in "collecting and observing frogs, lizards, and snakes." His research included "observing their actions in obtaining food, courtship, and general activity." Smith then would try to photograph animal life, and bring back specimens for recording at camp in the evening. At summer's end, Smith returned to Chicago, where he worked closely with Karl Schmidt to prepare the identifications. Smith noted that the Field Museum had "a wonderful collection of books and papers at our disposal pertaining to the study of reptiles, probably one of the most complete collections in existence." The museum also provided other specimens that allowed for comparison of the Big Bend items, "while the wide experience and knowledge of Mr. Schmidt in the field of herpetology and in the precise manner of preparing a scientific paper were most illuminating and invaluable." Smith's work did encounter some difficulties, as "there were certain discrepancies in the literature published on a few species." This he found "especially true in the case of the racerunner lizards." Smith also faced "a scarcity of material, as in some cases only one specimen of a reptile was available." [14]

Once the student workers had departed the Big Bend area, NPS regional geologist Charles Gould returned in December 1937 to examine the status of scientific research as rumors circulated of the closing of the CCC camp in the Chisos basin. Gould joined Walter McDougall and the NPS chief naturalist, H.E. Rothrock, on a brief survey that focused primarily on the findings of Ross Maxwell. Gould's previous six visits to the area led to the conclusion that "the geology of the Big Bend is extremely complex." He noted the "great Cretaceous rocks . . . aggregating many thousands of feet in thickness," while "these beds have been faulted and folded in a very complicated manner." Further faulting and volcanic activity gave "rise to great numbers of dikes, sills and plugs." For these reasons, the park service had asked Maxwell in 1936 to prepare a geologic map, and to collect materials for a geological museum. Gould could report that Maxwell spent some nineteen months in the field, and that his work "has been of a high order." While "much yet remains to be done," said Gould, "and it will probably be many years before the last word has been said on the subject," the NPS official felt confident that Maxwell had made Big Bend's geologic history "fairly well understood." [15]

Gould also deduced from Maxwell's work that Big Bend would need "a competent vulcanologist to pass upon the origin and method of occurrence of the volcanic rocks in the area," as well as "an igneous petrographer to study under the microscope, and describe, these rocks." The park service then should dispatch "an invertebrate paleontologist, well versed in Cretaceous . . . fossils," as well as a "vertebrate paleontologist, to describe the dinosaur and other vertebrate remains." Finally, Gould asked for "a phytopaleontologist, to name and identify the fossil wood and other plant remains." The regional geologist knew that "this is rather a tall order, and calls for the best efforts of a number of men, each eminent in his own narrow specialty." Yet Gould saw in Maxwell's mapping and collecting the basis of "a complete knowledge of the geology of the Big Bend." As of December 1937, Gould had

found in the CCC camp museum nearly 2,600 specimens of invertebrates, vertebrates, minerals, and rocks. "For his faithful work," concluded Gould, "both in the preparation of the geologic map, and in the collecting and preparing of the museum material, Dr. Maxwell deserves great credit." The NPS geologist believed that Maxwell "has a broad knowledge of his subject, is industrious and accurate, and has performed a difficult task in a workmanlike manner." [16]

Park service officials could add to Maxwell's data in the spring of 1938 the report of Omer Sperry, whose student Barton Warnock had indicated the extent of Big Bend's biological richness in his own study of the previous autumn. Sperry had devoted portions of the preceding eighteen months to "the collection, determination, and classification of the plants in the area." In addition, the Sul Ross biology professor had taken a series of photographs of plant life in the Big Bend, and conducted a study of "the effects of grazing as indicated by the re-establishment of plants in a few protected areas." Sperry had focused much of his time to the ferns, gymnosperms, and other flowering plants. He built upon the pioneering work of Walter McDougall, expanding the original list of 59 specimens to some 1,281 by the end of 1937. When added to the work of Ernest Marsh in Mexico, and Barton Warnock's data, Sperry could report that the "collection of the National Park Service, now housed in the Department of Biology at Sul Ross College in Alpine, contains close to 2200 specimens." Sperry believed that the final study would contain some 900 distinct plant species within Big Bend National Park. [17]

The biologist also noted that "since the names of many canyons, mountains, hills, and local sites used within the area are local and are not included in any list upon any available maps of the area," he and Warnock devised their own list of place names for reference. He also encouraged the park service to send a professional photographer to the area to record the plant life, as his own efforts were hindered by the intense light and inadequate equipment at his disposal. This would be of special benefit to the study of the six "grazing check plots in the original project." Sperry took notes of the vegetation to detail changes in the preceding year. "Several years will be needed to complete and draw definite conclusions regarding the return of the vegetation to what might be termed its normal condition," wrote Sperry. Yet "it is obvious," he believed, "that the region is greatly over-grazed and that limited and restricted grazing should be carried out if that phase of the park[']s beauty is to be developed." Sperry knew that "this report includes much more work than could have been possible of accomplishment during the 60 days allowed." This would mean compilation of a complete list of plants, and "much work should be done on the ecology, pathology, and the general biology of the area to build a basic scientific foundation necessary [for] information and publications that can be made available to the visiting and interested public in connection with a national park area." [18]

The benefit of these studies became evident in the fall of 1938, as the Santa Fe regional office notified the national media that "three plants previously unreported to science have been found in the proposed Big Bend National Park of Texas." NPS officials acknowledged the work of Ernest Marsh, as Paul Standley, nationally recognized botanist and curator of the Field Museum, named two of Marsh's discoveries: "a wild mallow (Abutilon marshii), which is similar to a hollyhock but has smaller flowers; and a wild nightshade (Chamaesaracha marshii)." This latter specimen Standley described as "a flowering plant of the potato family." As for the third new species, "a shrub locally known as 'senisa,'" Standley called it "Leucophyllum pennelli." The NPS press release said that it "resembles a snapdragon, belongs to the figwort family, and has been named for Dr. Francis W. Pennel, Curator of Plants in the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences." [19]

With the closure of the CCC camp, and the impending completion of Ross Maxwell's geologic map, the park service had to rethink its priorities for scientific work in the Big Bend

area. In August 1939, Herbert Maier responded to inquiries from the Washington office about Maxwell's future. Carl Russell, chief naturalist for the park service, had wanted Maxwell to replace Charles Gould as regional geologist while the latter took a temporary position in NPS headquarters. "It is our plan," wrote Maier, "to assign Dr. Maxwell to the geological problems in connection with the CCC program in the State of Texas as suggested by Dr. Russell." The acting regional director added that "this is the work which Dr. Maxwell should actually be performing considering that his salary is being met from camp funds." Maier also wanted to "utilize Dr. Maxwell in an advisory capacity on most of the jobs that are planned for the Big Bend CCC camp because of his familiarity with 'every inch' of the area." Yet another task that Maier could assign to Maxwell would be "the study of the water supply situation in the various State Parks of Texas." Maier considered this of particular value to Big Bend, as "the only body of water in the entire area is the Rio Grande." Since the NPS planned to locate "the major tourist development and administrative buildings in the Chisos Mountains," said Maier, "this makes the matter of water supply a major problem." [20]

Water issues would persist in Big Bend for the remainder of the twentieth century, making the first impressions of Maxwell and other NPS officials important for future policy planners. Maier told NPS inspector John Diggs in December 1939 that "we should look toward a complete survey and scientific analysis of the underground water resources of this important area." Maier wanted Diggs to consider available supplies in the Chisos Basin, as current plans were that "the intensive development be located on the first shelf to the south and the operation at that point will eventually result in quite a high consumption." The acting regional director wondered if "water will have to be pumped up from wells in Oak Creek Canyon in the bottom of the Basin as now obtains in the case of the CCC camp." Some water might be found in the second and third shelves, said Maier, but "quite probably the major supply will eventually have to be brought over from Boot Spring." Maier asked Diggs to determine how much money such a survey would require, as "we are being continually cautioned regarding travel and per diem allowances." If Maxwell "is to receive free lodging while in the area and may do his own cooking," wrote Maier, "his will constitute a typical case which certain auditors now in the field are looking for and which may result in a later demand for reimbursement, in part, a thing which is always painful to the traveler." Thus Maier asked Maxwell to "await the establishing of the CCC camp in the Big Bend so that that camp can bear the expense of his study." [21]

The press of business elsewhere in the NPS system kept Ross Maxwell and other park service officials from examining the issue of water supply until the spring of 1940. Then H.E. Rothrock noted a story in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* about the water problems facing the newly reopened CCC camp in the Chisos Basin. The acting chief naturalist for the park service apologized to Herbert Maier for not getting to Big Bend that winter to undertake such a study, but offered several recommendations for the CCC officials. Among these were monitoring of withdrawals from the camp reservoir, as "the reserves are definitely limited and the use of the area should be planned with this limitation in mind." Rothrock reminded Maier that "the reservoir is charged by water from the rains and snows which fall within the 9-square-mile acreage of the Basin." Runoff, seepage underground, transpiration, and evapotranspiration affected discharge levels, as well as use by the general public. "On my last visit to the area," reported the naturalist, "I was advised that the water level had been lowered appreciably in the wells, due to the generous use of these supplies by the CCC camp." Rothrock warned that "the volume or storage capacity of the reservoir could be estimated, but so many unknown factors exist that this approach to the problem is not practicable until more geologic data are available." For those reasons, Rothrock suggested that measurements of use, recharge, and evaporation should be taken frequently, and that this process continue "during the entire period of occupancy of the CCC camp." [22]

Water quantity and overuse was a serious issue for the NPS and its geologists. More amusing

for Ross Maxwell was the rumor of a meteorite striking the Big Bend area. E.M. Flynn, a mining engineer from Toronto, Ontario, had traveled to west Texas in 1916 to search for mineral deposits. Flynn told Oscar E. Monnig of Fort Worth in 1939 that "an Old Mexican prospector whose name I have completely forgotten told me about a meteorite which he had found on the south side of the Chisos [Mountains]." The prospector brought a piece of the meteorite to Flynn, who sent it to the Smithsonian Institution for analysis. "They reported that it was a genuine meteorite," said Flynn, but could pay no more than shipping costs for its acquisition. When Flynn told the Mexican prospector that "there would be no great profit in selling it he evidently became suspicious and evasive and finally left me with the impression that the meteorite was probably across the river on the Mexican side of the line." Flynn never saw the location of the meteorite, and suggested to Monnig that "probably the only way to find the meteorite now is to get the information from some Mexican prospectors or cow punchers from that neighborhood." [23]

Maxwell pursued the meteorite story by asking several area ranchers their opinion of the tale. Robert Cartledge of Castolon and G.E. Babb of Terlingua recalled that "Flynn stayed for some time with Thomas Skaggs of Lajitas," leading both to believe that "the meteorite is in the vicinity of Lajitas." Maxwell wrote to Skaggs, who claimed no knowledge of the meteorite's location, nor was he able to reach Petra Alvarado, "the innkeeper at Lajitas," whom Babb and Cartledge suggested also might validate Flynn's story. Several other local residents, including the CCC camp caretaker, Lloyd Wade, knew of the meteorite story, but had no conclusive evidence of its location. This prompted Maxwell to hike into the Juniper Canyon area, looking for what was described as a fifteen-to-twenty ton object. "The fact that the Mexican prospector gave Flynn a piece of the meteorite," reported Maxwell, "indicates that the body was too large for a man to carry comfortably." The NPS geologist speculated that "if it is a large meteorite and struck in the loose debris of the canyon wall it probably buried itself." He also guessed that "if it struck the solid rock wall of the canyon it would probably make a scar that would show for a long period of time." [24]

Maxwell had to report that he had found "no scar of any type that might have been produced by the impact of a meteor." Hindering his investigation was the "rank overgrowth of vegetation in Juniper Canyon." This Maxwell attributed to higher precipitation levels in the basin than there had been for years. "Weeds, grass, and shrubs cover virtually all the surface," reported the geologist, "making it almost impossible to find a small meteoritic body even if one should exist." Yet the regional geologist wanted further investigation, perhaps by utilizing CCC employees when the Chisos camp reopened. The NPS should "select a few boys who have some curiosity and like to look at different kinds of rock and have a desire to prowl around to aid in the search." Maxwell also suggested more interviews with local residents. Bud Kimbel and A.R. Davis "usually work around the ranches near Marathon during the summer," said Maxwell, "and operate hunting camps or trap during the autumn and winter months." Both men had "prospected extensively in the Big Bend Country," and merited further inquiry from Lloyd Wade. Maxwell then recommended a conversation with the children of Harve Dodson, "whose ranch headquarters were at the stone cabin below the South Rim." Dodson, in Maxwell's opinion, "probably knew that locality better than anyone," and his "interest in prospecting and curiosity of different kinds of rock and mineral may have lead him to discover the alleged meteorite." Dodson's daughter, Nona, had married Pablo Baisa, a goat-herder near Marathon who had prospected on both sides of the Rio Grande. Then the CCC caretaker could inquire of the current seekers of the meteorite, among them Oscar Monnig, a Professor Goldich and his class of geology students from Texas A&M College, and Dr. E.H. Sellards, director of the Texas bureau of economic geology and the new Memorial Museum in Austin. [25]

One intriguing tangent to the Flynn story was Maxwell's discovery of other reports of meteorites in the Big Bend area. In August 1921, Lloyd Wade had been a superintendent at

the Mariscal Mine when he witnessed a meteor fall to earth. Wade told Maxwell that "there was a streak of light much brighter than the sunlight and a sizzling, popping noise." After this came "a brighter flash and an explosion." Maxwell reported that the meteor "appeared, to Mr. Wade and others around the mine who saw it, to explode and fall in the vicinity of the Elephant Tusk." Guadalupe Hernandez, in 1921 a resident of Terlingua Abaja, had been plowing his fields when he heard "a roaring noise toward the Chisos Mountains." Hernandez took this as the onset of a rainstorm, but "instead of seeing clouds, the sky was perfectly clear." Then Hernandez saw "a flash like lightning and a noise like thunder over the southern Chisos Mountains." This frightened Hernandez, who later learned that "a star had fallen, and that if he could find it, he should give it to the Priest, as everything that fell from heaven belonged to the [Catholic] Church." Maria "Dona Chata" Sada then added a story where in 1911, "while she and Juan were living in Boquillas, Mexico, they were awakened by a roaring noise and flash of light which they believed to be a meteor that appeared to strike the earth in the Chisos Mountains." Maxwell considered her story valid, as "Dona Chata does not know Mr. Flynn, nor had she heard about the meteorite described by him." Ben Ordones had told Maxwell that a "Sr. Rocdindo Morin Rodriques (now deceased) found a small meteorite several years ago near Study Butte." He had taken it to Terlingua, but local residents had no memory of this. Finally, Maxwell had searched the area with Everett Townsend, who had written in his "scout book" for October 9, 1937: "'I saw a small dark colored stone, said to be a meteorite which fell in Jake Hargus' yard a few weeks ago. Someone had broken it. It appeared to be very hard, but to contain little mineral. Quien sabe?'" [26]

More substantial research on Big Bend's scientific features occurred in the spring of 1940, when Walter McDougall made a special trip to the northern part of the future park with Omer Sperry. They went to the Dagger Flats vicinity, then to Pine Canyon, and on to the Chisos basin for a conversation with Lloyd Wade. McDougall and Sperry noted that "an abundance of rain and snow during the past winter" had made the blooming season "especially fine this spring." The NPS now recognized five distinct species of cacti in the Big Bend area (*yucca thompsoniana, yucca alata, yucca restrate*, *yucca terreyi,* and *yucca carnerosana*). The latter species "often grows 25 to 30 feet tall," reported McDougall, "and the flower cluster may be 5 feet long and a foot and a half in diameter, composed of hundreds of the large, white, bell-shaped flowers." When the *yucca carnerosana* bloomed, "Dagger Flats is one of the major scenic attractions of the entire area." This led the regional biologist to recommend that "if and when the Big Bend National Park becomes a fact, it will be necessary to maintain a secondary road to Dagger Flats in order that visitors may make a side trip to view the superlative floral display there." Similar conditions prevailed elsewhere in the area, said McDougall. "Due to the favorable weather and moisture," he reported, "the vegetation on the desert looks much better than it did three years ago [1937]." The NPS biologist remarked that "this is especially true in the southeastern part of the area where even the creosote bushes were dying from lack of water." [27]

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 13:
Endnotes

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CHAPTER 13:
A Park at Last: Land Acquisition, Facilities Development, And Border Issues in Big Bend, 1940-1944 (continued)

The thoughts of senior NPS engineer E.F. Preece, however, were more pointed and critical of the overall work of the CCC, and of the park service's plans. Preece spoke harshly in his report of April 28, 1941, of the NPS's strategy of "spraying the walls with a paint or preservative coating of some sort." This, said Preece, "has been proven so definitely unsatisfactory that it is difficult to understand why we continue to try to do something which we know will not work." Preece complained that "for years now this Service has been using every kind of material to preserve adobe ruins," only to realize that "there is not a single record of even mediocre success and an attempt to paint the adobe bricks at Big Bend will meet with no better success." The senior engineer thus recommended that "this proposal be completely abandoned." [17]

Preece further criticized the CCC's efforts to locate the visitors center and administrative headquarters below the Chisos basin. "This location," wrote the senior NPS engineer, "must be considerably hotter than the higher elevations in which the vegetation is much more varied and certainly more profuse." As the NPS needed to consider "the comfort of those who must eventually use the headquarters," he argued that their needs "should outweigh whatever indiscernible consideration dictated its presently proposed location." Preece then addressed the master plan's call for a cog railway to the South Rim. "I understand the reasons back of this suggestion," said Preece, "and certainly agree fully with them." He remarked rather sarcastically that "it must be possible for the obese lady from Iowa to visit the rim and a road scar is far too great a price to pay for this accessibility." The senior engineer then suggested replacing the cog railway with a monorail, which he believed "is completely practicable [and] will not require even the removal of vegetation in any important degree." Preece also thought that "the monorail will be simpler to operate than a cable car and should be much less expensive to maintain." [18]

Preece's remarks provoked substantial discussion among NPS architects, with Harvey Cornell responding to the NPS director's call for an explanation of the problems at the CCC camp in the Chisos Basin. Cornell disagreed with Preece's claim that the headquarters site could not support adequate vegetation, noting that "there are no other sites that would be easily accessible and still afford adequate space on reasonably adaptable terrain." He then challenged Preece on the issue of the cog railway to the South Rim. Cornell and other park designers realized that if "the usual pressure for a park road should become acute, then our preference would be for the cog railroad, but only on the assumption that one or the other would have to be provided." He preferred horse paths to the rim, and suggested that "if the bridle trails are of sufficient width, small mule carts might be adequate for those park visitors who absolutely refuse to use bridle and foot trails in the normal fashion." Cornell added that "at least this method of conveyance would be novel and would seem entirely in keeping with local precedent." As to the adobe brick controversy, Cornell told the NPS director that Lyle

Bennett had offered more elaboration of his thoughts. Bennett admitted: "'I cannot defend a job which is so far from the results intended as regards appearance.'" Yet the associate architect contended that "'it is questionable whether more supervision by this office would have greatly improved results unless someone with the experience to understand and execute the kind of work desired were available to devote full time supervision to the job.'" Cornell concluded that future construction work at Big Bend needed "the continuous direction of a supervising architect," with an example being the "arrangement followed at the Painted Desert Inn, Petrified Forest National Monument." He also reminded the NPS director that "the successful adaptation of the provincial Mexican style of architecture, with the colorful blending of native materials into a natural setting, should not be too difficult to accomplish." [19]

The merits of adobe construction at Big Bend paled in significance for NPS officials when the US Army announced plans to close CCC camps deemed non-essential to the anticipated war effort. John C. Diggs, inspector of CCC camps in Texas for the park service, asked that "Big Bend NP-1" (the Chisos facility) remain open, and that it remain connected to his office "where easy and frequent contacts will be maintained with the Texas State Parks Board and the group of people who are raising at least part of the funds to make the land purchase." The camp was spared from the Army's budget cuts, and by October 1941 the military had asked the park service to construct four adobe dwellings for the contingent of Army management personnel in the Chisos basin. Raymond Higgins, NPS field supervisor for Big Bend and other Texas CCC camps, noted that the Army's request placed the park service in a bind. "To be eligible for consideration," said Higgins, "the structure involved should be a camp building appearing on the approved standard camp plan." The Army could not order the CCC to build facilities for them in the Chisos Basin, said the field supervisor, nor did the CCC have the authority to construct dwellings outside of the camp perimeter. Higgins suggested as a solution the building of permanent structures for the Army the NPS could acquire after the war. His agency's lack of funding also compelled the Army to use its own monies, and Higgins noted that without emergency conditions, the Army would have to follow standard procedure for design, ordering materials, and acquiring the services of the CCC crew then in the basin. [20]

Late in the evening of December 26, 1941, the CCC camp experienced its most traumatic moment when the museum building, which contained the artifacts, specimens, and records of the scientific research conducted at the future NPS site, burned to the ground. Built in the spring of 1936 as a "temporary laboratory," the structure had been renovated in the summer of 1941, as Lloyd Wade had used the building from 1937 to 1941 as his living quarters while the CCC camp sat abandoned. The facility had been maintained since then by the Army, with periodic checks by camp employees to guard against fire. Then about 3:00AM on the 26th, the night watchman, Manuel Leon, noted flames leaping from the north end. "Prompt efforts to check the spread of the fire," wrote Higgins, "or to extinguish it were unsuccessful and the building and contents were completely destroyed in 10 or 15 minutes after the first was first noticed." Higgins dismissed the usual causes of combustion (faulty wiring, defective stoves or heaters, chemical storage, waste, lightning, etc.). Instead he speculated that "the fire resulted from the actions of pack rats which virtually infest the camp." The NPS field supervisor thought that "a pack rat might have brought ordinary, or 'non-safety,' matches to a storage place or nest under the building." Friction might have ignited the structure, as there had been no rain for three weeks in the Chisos Basin. All that Higgins could recommend was for the CCC to "construct all frame buildings sufficiently high from the ground to permit periodic inspections to detect and remove [pack rats'] nests and storage places from below the floor." [21]

For Ross Maxwell, the destruction of the CCC museum had grave implications for the future of interpretative programs at Big Bend. He reported to the Santa Fe regional office that he

had devoted three years to the collection and identification of the specimens and artifacts consumed in the December 26 fire, and especially regretted the loss of the materials used in compiling his geologic map of the park area. Maxwell noted that he had spent his days collecting specimens, with his "off-duty" evenings devoted to curatorial work. He had employed four student technicians, thus managing to process some 2,225 geological specimens. "A few of the larger rock specimens," wrote Maxwell, "are only slightly damaged, but virtually all fossils, including dinosaur bones, crumble when picked up to remove from the ashes and charcoal." CCC workers tried to salvage what rocks they could, but Maxwell surmised that "it is doubtful if 2% now have value for exhibit purposes." For these reasons the NPS geologist lamented that "to place a value on the specimens is virtually impossible." Beyond the staff time and money invested in the museum, the park service now would have to conduct another series of surveys to replace the rocks and artifacts, if such could be located again. Maxwell also dismissed most potential causes of the fire, with the possible exception of arson. "There are," said the geologist, "a few people in Brewster County who are not in sympathy with the park project." He speculated that "someone might have taken this method to slap at either the Park Service or the writer." Maxwell also did not discount the possibility that "one of the [CCC] enrollees might have started the fire because of a dislike for one of the personnel." Yet a third consideration, reported Maxwell, was that "one of the enrollees is a 'fire bug.'" [22]

The implications of the Big Bend museum fire prompted NPS officials in Santa Fe to issue recommendations for all work projects within Region III. Natt N. Dodge, acting regional naturalist, suggested that all structures used "for the housing, storage, or display of museum exhibits and collections or scientific specimens shall be of fireproof construction." If this meant temporary storage off-site, Dodge preferred that to the threat of fire like that witnessed at Big Bend. He also wanted CCC supervisors to redesign their camps with fire protection as a high priority. Dodge did not want to frighten away researchers with the potential for damage to their findings, as he believed that "research is essential both to an accurate and complete knowledge of the primary values of Service areas, and to a clear and accurate interpretation of those values to the public." Dodge contended that "scientific specimens and study collections constitute as much a portion of the natural values of these areas as the scenery, the plants and animals, and the other resources" that the NPS mandate required. Thus the provision of "fireproof, weatherproof, and verminproof structures for the protection of these invaluable public collections . . . is a recognized duty of the National Park Service which must not be neglected." [23]

Two months after Dodge released his findings on fire protection, the issue became moot for Big Bend. On March 21, 1942, the NPS announced the closure once again of Camp NP-1, with "Company 3856 White Juniors" transferred out of the Chisos basin. The regional office discovered, however, that word of the abandonment did not reach Big Bend for several days, as the facility lacked telephone or radio service. This did not stop Paul V. Brown, chief of the region's division of recreation land planning, from conducting his own inquiries about facility development in the future national park. One issue that concerned Brown early in the process was reference in the region's files to "a possibility of a selection of one of the canyons within the proposed park boundary for water storage." Writing on April 15, 1942, to Earl O. Mills, planning counselor for the National Resources Planning Board (NRPB) in Austin, Brown noted that a publication of the University of Texas for the International Boundary Commission referred to "a Big Bend Dam Site in Boquillas Canyon." Brown also found mention in the minutes of the first meeting in January 1940 of the "Lower Rio Grande Basin Committee" of a "Rio Grande Water Reservoir possibility" in the same location. Further confusing Brown was any reference in NPS files to a decision by Mill's office "recommending that the National Resources Planning Board undertake a fact finding study of the Lower Rio Grande Drainage Basin. [24]

Brown's work on the Big Bend master plan led regional director Minor Tillotson to praise his findings to the NPS director in Washington. On April 28, 1942, Tillotson sent to park service headquarters Brown's report, along with his own recommendations for the Texas NPS unit. Tillotson's first consideration was "promotion of the International aspect of the area." This should begin, said the regional director, with "early establishment of a contiguous National Park south of the Rio Grande." From there the NPS and Mexico should consider "the park area on each side of the river as a single unit without too much regard for the political boundary and, as Mr. Brown states, in such a way that the two areas will serve to complement rather than to compete with each other." This would lead, in Tillotson's estimation, to "free interchange of travel between the two sections of the International Park just so far as Customs and Immigration regulations can be modified to permit." Along with this would be "maintenance of the 'border' atmosphere of old Mexico," and "retention of certain typical Rio Grande trading posts and eating places." Then the regional director encouraged Washington officials to preserve "the spirit and atmosphere of early-day Texas" at Big Bend, with "the park to be essentially a saddle and pack horse area, rather than one through which the automobile will be the principal means of transportation." For Tillotson this meant "emphasis on the development of trails and camping places rather than on high standard roads and hotels," with accommodations akin to "ranch house and frontier days type." Finally, Tillotson suggested that the NPS plan accommodations for two seasons of visitation, with summer visitors in the Chisos Basin and "the Rio Grande for the winter visitors." [25]

Brown's own narrative about planning for the new national park revealed the power of the border, the need for better relations with Mexico, and the imperatives of World War II on the park service's imagination. The regional recreation-planning chief noted that "Mexican music and the colorful characteristics of Mexico definitely have influenced the music, the dance and the art of this country." In addition, "the economic and political relationship of the two nations as well as the blending of cultural sympathies is becoming more and more of vital importance." As Brown considered Big Bend to be "in the very heart of this land of romance and frontier lure," he hoped that the NPS would make it "the particular park of the National Park System where the Mexican and Texan scene may be experienced in reality by the vacationist." He believed that this interpretation of a shared cultural frontier was inevitable, as "the area will always reflect the Mexican and Spanish influence and will serve to introduce the two people to one another." Brown speculated that "when international highways connect at the park, as should be anticipated in our planning, the gateway function of the area will be greatly enhanced." The lure of the exotic for visitors, said Brown, required the NPS to "contemplate and encourage" development of accommodations south of the Rio Grande. "The planning theme," Brown continued, "must be towards retaining that unique atmosphere which is conducive to appreciation and understanding of the wide open spaces." He also suggested that NPS planners think of "the simple primitive relationship of man to rugged lonely landscape," of the "inter-dependence and friendship between a rider and his horse," and of the "ever-welcome mountain landmarks that keep the explorer from being 'lost.'" [26]

Turning to the realities of park design, Brown noted that "our planning premise should preclude the possibility of elaborate structures and architectural intrusions." For the regional official, "only an absolute minimum of essential park roads should disturb this vastness of unperturbed nature." Brown considered it "not possible to sense the lonely magnitude of such a country from the security of an automobile on a smooth highway having known terminals." He hoped that "on the dim bridle trails between overnight camps or rest stations, it is to be expected that in some spacious grandeur of unhurried nature the park visitor will regain some of that mental poise and perspective with which to better evaluate life's purposes and social objectives." Brown conceded that Big Bend would not attract "the sensation hunters, those restless thrill seekers rushing across the country from one exploited phenomena to other spectacles and sports arenas." Big Bend "is a country that needs no exploitation, nor man's

superimposed attractions." Brown surmised that "many will come out of curiosity and in response to the prestige of a national park name." Yet "only a relatively small percentage will remain to experience a true appreciation of the fascination of the park and what it provides in the way of the proper use of leisure and recreation." [27]

The NPS planner also contemplated the visitation patterns of such a place as Big Bend, noting that "we may be influenced by [wishful] thinking in predicting that from the populous eastern seaboard a heavy winter traffic by way of New Orleans, Houston, and San Antonio will eventually flow into the Big Bend." Brown also estimated that "the Great Lakes States, including the Chicago district, will route winter tourist travel through St. Louis, Dallas, and Fort Worth into the Big Bend country in response to the appeal of such a park as planned." He hoped that "much of the winter travel will have Big Bend as its terminal objective or a scheduled stay of several days in the park." Then the NPS could anticipate that "the great population of Texas alone practically assures ample use of the cool mountains of the park during the summer months." For these reasons, Brown compiled a "travel analysis" that calculated "approximately 1000 visitors coming into the park daily during the peak of the summer tourist season." These visitors would arrive in 300 automobiles, with one out of six seeking camping facilities. "This would leave 250 families daily seeking cabin or lodge accommodations in the park," wrote Brown, "since we feel that only a very small percentage will attempt to loop through the park from the distant highways in one day without an overnight stop." Campgrounds should be built for an average stay of three nights, said Brown, with Pine Canyon "admirably suited, provided it can be connected by park roads with the Green Gulch entrance road at or near Moss Well, via Smugglers Gap." [28]

Brown's study of campgrounds in Big Bend emanated from his belief that "the average tourist has become accustomed to the use of auto camps." By recognizing this phenomenon, said the recreation land planner, "the introduction of auto camp facilities in Pine Canyon would relieve the pressure for DeLuxe cabins in the Basin and, in that event, we would reverse our estimates for campground capacity to read 250 cars per day into Pine Canyon and 50 cars per day into the Basin during the summer peak." This pattern of visitation would require "bridle trails out of Pine Canyon connecting with the South Rim trail, perhaps at Boot Springs." Brown also speculated that "visitors will desire to take auto trips to Santa Elena and Boquillas Canyons." There the NPS would need "ranch accommodations," which Brown described as "bunk house, mess hall, and sales room for local handicraft, short-orders, and drinks." He then offered as potential visitation an average of 600 to 800 in June, 800 to 1,200 in July, and 1,000 to 1,500 in August. After Labor Day, Brown anticipated a natural shift of emphasis down to the Rio Grande, leading him to suggest "that consideration be given to the locating of the center of activity in the vicinity of San Vicente and Boquillas." He believed that "the principal activity will be absorbing sunshine and the engaging in ranch type activities; such as horseback riding, plus boating and fishing." Brown looked for "some auto tours to the mountains, to Santa Elena Canyon and to the proposed Longhorn Ranch." NPS planners thus should prepare for "a daily population of 600 to 1000 during the winter." When added to his estimate of 12,000 visitors monthly in the summertime, Brown concluded that Big Bend "would have an annual attendance of at least 200,000." [29]

Once the Big Bend master plan reached Washington headquarters, NPS officials began to round out the contours of the future park site. By early June, NPS director Newton B. Drury advised Minor Tillotson that the regional office should plan for a series of roads that included a main route from Persimmon Gap to the Chisos basin by way of Grapevine Hills. Drury disliked the proposal for a main road across Smuggler's Gap to Pine Canyon, and on to Hot Springs and Boquillas. He did agree, however, that "a route be sought that passes around the eastern side of the mountains to Boquillas Crossing." These also would be "the only roads in the park built to PRA [Public Roads Administration] highway standards." Drury then wanted the regional office to remove from the park "the road from Santa Elena Canyon generally

paralleling the Rio Grande to connect with the Boquillas Crossing road." The NPS director also believed that "the desert type road paralleling the eastern boundary near the proposed Longhorn Ranch location is satisfactory." [30]

In matters of facility construction, Drury believed that "we should avoid any attempt to locate headquarters within the mountain area and that a study should be made as to the possibility of developing an oasis for headquarters along the main road system." The NPS director considered "the Grapevine Ranch site . . . to be the most obvious and feasible location." If regional officials "thought that this is not centrally located enough," wrote Drury, "and that headquarters should be nearer to the junction of the road leading into the mountains, or to the junction of the road leading to Boquillas, such a location would be given favorable consideration if adequate water can be obtained." For Drury this meant "a location 3 or 4 miles west of the junction of the road leading into the mountains," with water piped from Oak Springs some three to five miles away. The NPS director then turned his attention to visitor accommodations, stating that "the cabin area will be the only facilities provided in the mountains." Drury was emphatic in declaring that "in no circumstances should anything be planned for the present CCC campsite, and the camp itself should be removed and the roads to it obliterated, in order that the area might, at an early date, begin to restore itself." Drury then referred to the upcoming visit to Big Bend by his associate director, Arthur Demaray, who would "review the first year's estimates for administration, maintenance and protection." Demaray also would "give particular study to the tourist facilities which may be operated by the National Park Concessions Inc. " The associate director hoped to identify "what can be provided in the way of tourist accommodations in existing facilities for the first year's operation," and then offer "proposals for the development of more permanent facilities." [31]

Reference to the National Park Concessions, Incorporated (NPCI), indicated the NPS decision upon a concessionaire for Big Bend. Minor Tillotson approved of Drury's decision, writing in July of 1942 to the Texas state parks board of his friendship with W.W. Thompson, president and general manager of the Kentucky firm of NPCI. "Not only is Bill Thompson a swell fellow and an old personal friend of mine," Tillotson informed the state parks board's Frank Quinn, but he had "many years experience in the operation of the hotel properties in Mammoth Cave National Park." The park service had worked with NPCI in the 1920s and 1930s to open concession facilities in smaller and more isolated parks, especially those which would not attract bids from the major concessionaires more interested in the profits to be had from parks like Yosemite, Glacier, and Yellowstone. NPCI had entered into an agreement with the park service as a "not-for-profit" operation, with all revenues generated beyond actual expenses reinvested into the plant and equipment of NPCI's facilities. [32]

W.W. Thompson's visit in 1942 to Big Bend did not eventuate in plans for concession facilities, as another potential occupant of the area, the U.S. Army, studied placement of a training facility in the Chisos Mountains. Bob Hamilton of the Big Bend Land Department in Alpine informed Ross Maxwell that "the Army has been after me to give them correct information about the water supply, as they have plans of placing a cavalry detachment in the CCC barracks." Hamilton knew that "Messrs. Drury and Wirth are very much against any army group moving into the old camp," but the land department was "behind the '8-ball' for reasons that I cannot place in writing." As Hamilton needed to file a water-supply statement with the Army, he asked Maxwell: "If you can gracefully give me another report that would not be so favorable it would be better for all concerned." Milton McColm, associate regional director, likewise warned Lloyd Wade "to protect the Service and your interests [as CCC camp caretaker] against any unauthorized salvage or removal of the property still under our custody and accountability." McColm had learned that the Albuquerque District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, tasked with acquisition of wartime materials and structures for use

in training centers, had targeted Fort D.A. Russell for such training, with supplies transferred to Marfa for use by the Army. [33]

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CHAPTER 14:
Endnotes

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Big Bend

Administrative History

CHAPTER 14:
Facilities and Operations At Texas's First National Park, 1944-1960 (continued)

Maxwell's superiors in Santa Fe and Washington expressed surprise at this request, while agreeing to the change of management. Conrad Wirth, now the director of the park service, told Maxwell: "It was quite a shock to me to note . . . that you are suffering from a semi-paralysis of your arm and leg." Wirth advised Maxwell "to get yourself back in good physical condition," and he hoped that "the baths, combined with complete rest and relaxation, will have you feeling fine within a short time." Regional director Tillotson recalled in mid-December seeing Maxwell in Santa Fe two months earlier, and noted that "it was very evident to all of us that you were in a much poorer physical condition than I or any of the rest of us had ever seen you." Tillotson insisted that Maxwell take the leave to go "to Hot Springs or some place where you can get clear away from the office, and anything that may have been worrying you." He believed that Big Bend had "an excellent staff," and that "you can be sure that all affairs of the park are in highly competent hands." [23]

Maxwell's sudden decline in health led the NPS to remove him a year later as superintendent, replacing the former regional geologist with Lemuel A. ("Lon") Garrison. A former chief ranger at Grand Canyon National Park, Garrison would serve two years as superintendent at Big Bend (1952-1954). His primary task would be to restore the goodwill between local residents and the park that had suffered through the turbulence of the last months of the Maxwell era. Evidence of this important task of operations came with Garrison's first annual report (fiscal year 1953), wherein "Public Relations" was the first category. "Relationships with surrounding communities," said Garrison, "have continued good throughout the year." The park hosted a series of what Garrison called "Show-Me Days," wherein communities in west Texas were invited to special tours of Big Bend. Garrison and his rangers also "visited many communities throughout the State emphasizing the value to Texas, of Big Bend National Park." One reason for the good reception to these gestures, said Garrison, was that "due to the prolonged [drought] conditions in this region, the usual economy based on stock raising is on the decline." In its place, said the superintendent, "the potentialities of the tourist business have appealed to business men in adjacent communities." [24]

As if the controversy over Maxwell's departure was not enough, Superintendent Garrison entered Big Bend in what would become the tenth year of a prolonged drought. Garrison noted "serious adverse effects on vegetation, spring flows and water table levels." Stock ponds fed by natural springs had dried up, and wells had to be dug deeper to find lesser quantities of water. "Wells at Panther Junction and the Chisos Mountain Basin," reported Garrison, "do not yield sufficient water to meet summer needs and a pump will be installed in one of the wells near K-Bar to furnish water to be hauled to the Basin." The superintendent remarked that "during May, the Rio Grande is dry, except for pools from above Santa Elena Canyon to Hot Springs." He also learned that "no crop was planted at San [Vicente] and the crop at Solis ranch was lost due to lack of water." Garrison predicted that "present conditions point toward failure of the cotton crop at Castolon, while poor range

conditions forced ranchers to feed cattle "which has made their financial situation precarious." Drought also drove wildlife further into the Chisos Mountains, where in the summer of 1953 "one lion, which persisted in molesting people . . . was destroyed." Garrison's staff also had to corral feral burros to reduce the competition of these animals with native wildlife for forage and water. [25]

In Lon Garrison's second year of his superintendency (1954), Big Bend took a major step toward addressing the concerns expressed about amenities and services with the completion of an electric power line into the park. The Rio Grande Electric Cooperative, Inc., connected Big Bend to its main line east of Alpine, with service being provided to the Boquillas ranger station and "the proposed Hacienda Rio Grande and Mexican Village development sites." In so doing, reported Garrison, the park had "eliminated 10 power generating units used by the National Park Service and permitted replacement of gasoline power units, at wells and pumps, with electric motors." Big Bend also could provide "electric lights in guest cabins and improved refrigeration" for the NPCI concession facilities. The state of Texas highway department also contributed to the improvement of services in the park, with the completion of State Route 118 from Alpine to the park's west entrance. [26]

In matters of employee housing, however, Garrison had less optimistic news to report for fiscal year 1954. "Adequate housing at planned locations," he wrote, "must be provided for Service employees without further delay to achieve desirable levels of economy and efficiency in park administration." He noted that CCC structures in place since the mid-1930s "were utilized for housing, office, warehouse and storage space." These were to be temporary, but "no program for renovation and rehabilitation was followed as funds were not provided for such a project." Since 1950, the NPS had constructed four residential buildings at Panther Junction. Fourteen employees and their families, wrote Garrison, "still occupy sub-standard quarters in the badly deteriorated CCC buildings," which the superintendent warned "cannot be maintained in even minimum acceptable condition." These "old buildings, of dried cut, highly flammable material, constitute a serious fire hazard and a constant threat to the safety of the occupants." The same could be said for the existing structures at Grapevine Hills, K-Bar, and Government Spring. [27]

What Garrison proposed was to consolidate employee housing at a central location, as "moving all but two of the employees to Panther Junction would eliminate or greatly reduce the hauling of water a distance of 12 miles to supplement the available water supply and effect an important saving." The superintendent wanted 20 new housing units at Panther Junction, two in the Chisos Basin, one at Persimmon Gap, and two at "Santa Elena Junction." He believed that "efficient park administration and protection, employee morale, health and safety, and economy of operation cannot be achieved until adequate employee housing is constructed." In the meantime, a temporary employee's house trailer and tent site had been selected at Panther Junction to initiate the plan to have most of the seasonal park employees reside there. At that moment, Garrison had seasonal rangers, fire control aides and approximately sixteen temporary laborers, truck drivers and skilled or semi-skilled employees living in tents in the Chisos Basin. Panther Junction offered a "central location where they report for work each morning." The U.S. Geological Survey had sent members of its Groundwater Branch to Big Bend, where they found that "the water available from the K-Bar Wells appears to be adequate to meet all anticipated needs at Panther Junction for the next ten years or indefinitely." Garrison also included plans for "the new service station which the Concessioner proposes to build." At the eastern and western ends of the park, Garrison could report better news. "The domestic water supply at the Boquillas ranger station and the Government Spring residence," said the superintendent, "were improved by complete cleaning and enclosure of the springs, by small concrete block houses, installation of electrically operated pumps and improved storage tanks." [28]

In January of 1955, Lon Garrison and his family left Big Bend so that he could accept an appointment in Washington, DC as chief of protection and conservation for the park service. To replace him, the park service dispatched George Miller as the park's third superintendent. Soon after his arrival, Miller could report that the Southwestern Bell Telephone Service had extended its line to Panther Junction, and by March 1955 had reached the Chisos Basin with telephone connections. "Not only does this greatly improve our communications," wrote Miller in his annual report for 1955, but it also "cuts down on our official travel costs, facilitates operations and is a real convenience to visitors." Motorola Communications and Electronics, Inc., also accepted a contract that year to install better radio service throughout the park. Yet a third achievement in Miller's first year as superintendent was completion of "one of the most distinctive water systems of the Service." No fewer that three lines of pipe ran "over very rugged terrain" to Panther Junction, reported Miller, with a 1,500-foot lift and a 500,000-gallon storage tank constituting the $150,000 project. Miller also noted that "we are planning to undertake an experiment in concentrating visitor use facilities where water is available." [29]

The year 1955 was memorable for Big Bend because of the decision to host the long-delayed park dedication. Superintendent Miller collected details of the park's operational history for media and tourism officials to distribute in advance of the November 21 ceremony. From the park's inception, Miller told F.W. Burton, chairman of the organizational committee of the Texas Tourist and Development Foundation, the NPS had expended some $4 million "for the construction of roads, trails, and other facilities — all directly or indirectly related to making the area accessible and available to the people of the country." Miller also had learned from NPS officials in Washington of the new construction program known as MISSION 66, in which the federal government planned to spend approximately $13,000,000 to develop roads, trails, parking areas, campgrounds, picnic areas, water and sewer systems, visitor centers, employee housing. Additional evidence of the scope of MISSION 66 operations was Miller's statement that "private capital in the estimated amount of two and one-half million dollars will be required for the development of overnight accommodations for the traveling public." The superintendent conceded that "a concessioner willing to spend this amount of money in the next ten years has not yet been found." Yet Miller hoped that with the increase in government funding, such a concessionaire could be found. [30]

To demonstrate the need for investment in Big Bend's infrastructure, Miller asked Burton of the Texas tourist agency whether "your organization may be in a position to help locate capital for such development." The superintendent acknowledged that few Texans came to Big Bend. As the park was "of national caliber and significance," said Miller, it was "advertised nationwide and we do have a large percentage of out-of-state visitors." He then cited visitation totals for the previous decade:

1944:	850
1945:	2,954
1946:	8,889
1947:	25,334
1948:	40,974
1949:	60,225
1950:	69,408
1951:	93,051

1952: 94,367

1953: 86,635

1954: 67,280

1955: 80,990

These numbers reflected the fact that Big Bend charged no admission fees, and until 1953 the park had no traffic counters at the entrances. "The park is presently administered, maintained and operated by a staff of 30 permanent employees," augmented by summer seasonal employees. "It is expected," Miller told Burton, that the permanent staff will more than double as the park becomes more developed, with the resultant increase in visitor travel." Then he advised the Texas tourist agency official that "under the MISSION 66 program we shall be spending over a million dollars this fiscal year on major roads, buildings and utilities." Miller's park had seen a six-fold increase in staffing since the day that Ross Maxwell had entered on duty, and the growth in facility expenditures in the first year of MISSION 66 equaled one-quarter of all funds invested in Big Bend in its first eleven years of operations. In like manner, visitation had increased exponentially, with the high point of 1952 representing an advance of a factor of 110. [31]

Miller's pride in Big Bend's accomplishments reached its apogee on November 21, 1955, when Douglas McKay, Secretary of the Interior gave the keynote address at the park's dedication. Standing before a crowd of 1,100 visitors and dignitaries from the state of Texas, the Republic of Mexico, and the NPS, McKay looked out over the landscape and declared the ceremony "a proud and memorable occasion." With the United States and Mexican flags flying together in the fall breeze, the Interior secretary apologized for the absence of "that great son of Texas and noble American, Dwight D. Eisenhower." The president had suffered a heart attack earlier that year, but McKay conveyed Eisenhower's wish to praise "this, the seventh largest of all our twenty-eight national parks." The former Supreme Allied Commander in World War II wanted the audience that day to know, said McKay, that he valued Big Bend's creation "not alone because of his very deep and sincere appreciation of the priceless value of our national parks, nor because Big Bend is in his native state." More important to the career soldier was "the fact that this park was conceived as a symbol of international peace." McKay recalled that Big Bend "was formally established on June 12, 1944, while our soldiers were fighting to establish a beachhead in France." Unfortunately, said the Interior secretary, "when peace finally came after that terrible war, it proved only temporary." Instead, "plans for this dedication ceremony had to be shelved while sons of Texas joined other American boys on the bloody battlefields of Korea." [32]

With conflict in Far East resolved, McKay could convey to the attendees the president's belief that "people of all nations seem now to look more to their hearts than to their armed might in developing plans for a peaceful world." Thus the Interior secretary found it "altogether fitting, then, that in this era of heartfelt hope, we should dedicate this great gift from the people of Texas to the people of America." McKay especially praised the work of the "International Good Neighbor Council" to resurrect the dream of an international peace park between the United States and Mexico. In a reference to the Cold War tensions still affecting world affairs, McKay reminded his audience that "the pooling and mutual sharing of great scenic treasures along those borders [between the United States, Canada, and Mexico] is an inspiring example to the troubled peoples behind the iron and bamboo curtains of the way free men and women can live in peace and friendship." As if to emphasize the challenge of peace in the postwar era, the Interior secretary noted that "the land is peaceful now, and always shall be, but it was not always so." From the volcanic eruptions of eons before, to the warfare between Indian tribes and the Spanish, to the "cattle rustlers and outlaws" of the nineteenth

century, Big Bend had a cultural legacy that marked it as unique in the NPS system. [33]

The twentieth century had a different story to tell, thought McKay, as "peace came to this wild country when free men settled down and learned under democracy to live with one another as neighbors." The Interior secretary cited "Captain Everett Ewing Townsend" as one of "the early teachers of the virtues of law and order and the principles of good neighborliness." To the longtime rancher and public servant, said McKay, "all of us are forever indebted for the part he played in paving the way for the establishment of Big Bend National Park." Townsend's foresight, and that of Horace Morelock and Amon Carter, declared McKay, was evidenced by the fact that "only 28 of the 181 areas in the National Park System can bear that proud title [of national park]." The Interior secretary also praised the citizens of Texas, who "did not ask Uncle Sam to acquire the land." Once the NPS opened the gates to Big Bend, "it was not easy or comfortable to visit this beautiful wilderness area." Yet from a base of 850 visitors in its first year, predicted McKay, "ten years from now — in 1966 — the number of visitors to Big Bend will approximate 500,000, according to our National Park Service experts." Such visitation patterns could threaten the serenity of the Chisos Basin, said the Interior secretary, and "to permit this to happen would be a desecration." Yet McKay comforted his audience by intoning: "It shall not happen. That I can promise." [34]

Then McKay offered a breathtaking synopsis of the planning process that the park service had in mind for Big Bend. "The rugged beauty of the Chisos Mountains," he declared, "will be preserved by restraining over-development." The former automobile dealer from Salem, Oregon, conceded that "of course, the facilities now here must be improved and modernized." Yet "park planners feel . . . the construction of roads and the developed area in the Basin has progressed just about as far as it can without harming the scenery." Instead "future plans contemplate the establishment of an attractive village in an oasis near the river in the vicinity of Hot Springs." "Here the Park's principal visitor accommodations would be concentrated," said McKay, with "motels, cabins, stores and other visitor facilities . . . created and operated by park concessioners." Once the NPS installed "roads, water and sewage facilities and public campgrounds," it then would build "a spur road [to] take visitors to the spectacular Mariscal Canyon area." Yet another development was contemplated "for the Santa Elena Canyon area with provision for expansion to meet the growing needs of the future." [35]

This grand scheme for Big Bend comprised part of the larger MISSION 66 initiative, so called "because we hope to reach its objectives in 1966 when the National Park Service will celebrate the golden anniversary of its establishment by Congress." McKay claimed that "in my long career as a public official [including service as mayor of Salem, Oregon, and governor of Oregon], no duty has been more rewarding or brought me more personal satisfaction than that of exercising stewardship over the parks in which our people find enjoyment." He declared MISSION 66 "one of the most important developments in the entire history of the National Park Service," especially in light of his discovery upon taking office in 1953 that "the Park Service was attempting to take care of almost 50 million visitors in a park system developed to handle about half the number." Since the peak of CCC and New Deal construction, "the demands of World War II, the Korean War and the cold war had forced curtailments all along the line." [35]

McKay then placed Big Bend's MISSION 66 improvements within the context of system-wide efforts to rejuvenate the park service. The NPS budget had increased under the Eisenhower administration some 40 percent (to $45 million), making Big Bend's $1 million allocation for fiscal year 1956 eight percent of the entire NPS increase. McKay emphasized that "we have encouraged concessioners to make substantial improvements toward improving and expanding the facilities they operate." He also noted proudly that "we have added new land to the system every year." MISSION 66 reflected what the secretary called "aggressive

action . . . to put the park system in shape to meet future demands which are clearly foreseeable." Mindful of the congressional mandate "that the park areas must be preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people," McKay seized the opportunity at Big Bend's dedication to remind his audience that "the thought of rationing use of our parks is repugnant to me." Americans, however, "must face the hard truth that visitor enjoyment is impaired by masses of people who crowd to the same spot to see the same view at the same time." Warning that "rationing the beauty of our national parks might be the only solution if we stood still," the Interior secretary nonetheless concluded that "we can reject such a suggestion only because we are moving forward" in parks like Big Bend. [36]

Little did Douglas McKay or his audience at the 1955 park dedication realize that MISSION 66 would mark the high point of facilities development at Big Bend for decades to come. When Superintendent Miller prepared his annual report for fiscal year 1956, he could note that the president's Bureau of the Budget had approved of "construction of twenty badly needed residences at park headquarters, the completion — except for bridges — of a surfaced road to the Rio Grande Village area, and an initial development at the Graham Ranch site that will provide the much needed facilities for the visiting public." The administration had rejected the NPS's original request for $18 million in MISSION 66 funds for Big Bend, settling on the lesser figure of $13 million. This renewed interest in the park crossed over to land acquisition, where in August 1956 the NPS purchased the 1,420-acre J.W. Gilmer property at San Vicente for $50,000. In addition, Miller could report the acquisition of the 500-acre Don Thomas ranch at Solis, which cost the NPS $40,145. Still remaining as in-holdings were the Ulice Adams property, some 640 acres south of Boquillas Canyon, and the 320 acres owned by the Tinsley family of Spokane, Washington. Finally, Big Bend reacquired acreage used by the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) for a tracking station. [37]

For the next generation, planning at Big Bend rarely encompassed new structures, roads, bridges, or visitor accommodations. A pattern that Big Bend shared with other parks that benefited from MISSION 66 largesse was a slow decline in the upkeep and maintenance of their facilities. This was attributable to two factors: the creation in the 1960s and 1970s of many more units of the NPS (up to 370 by the year 2000), many of them historic sites with building rehabilitation as their primary need. In addition, there was a sense by 1965 that parks like Big Bend had received their share of support. Visitation rarely peaked above 350,000 for the remainder of the century (a far cry from Douglas McKay's prediction in 1955 of one-half million by 1966). Not until the early 1990s would the NPS (at its historic planning conference in October 1991 in Vail, Colorado) develop a plan to address park needs left languishing for three decades and more. In the meantime, Big Bend would face a future not recognized by Douglas McKay and his audience on that sunny day in 1955, with brand-new buildings and an optimism to match.





Figure 19: Rio Grande Village Store

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CHAPTER 15:
Maintaining Big Bend: Operations, Planning, and Personnel Issues, 1960-2001 (continued)

By 1975, the NPS had prepared a revised master plan that incorporated much of the debate and thinking about Big Bend since the early 1970s. Planners noted the decline in visitation by mid-decade (191,200 visitors, or a loss of 22 percent), even as "a large corporate land subdivision and sale is in progress . . . along the northern boundary of the park." These lands "are being sold primarily as recreation sites," wrote NPS planners, "and hunting is expected to be an important activity." Future guests to such facilities might use railroad service from Alpine to the park area, while "increased use of private aircraft suggests the wisdom of an airstrip near the park." The 1975 plan did recognize criticisms about the Muzquiz-Boquillas road, suggesting instead the La Linda bridge alternative. "Such a route would also provide much better access into the Sierra del Carmen-Fronteriza Range," said the planners, and could become "a principal feature of Mexico's proposed companion park." The planners preferred to leave border crossings at Santa Elena and Boquillas as they were, as "the residents of the Mexican agricultural villages along the park boundary use both park roads and concession services in the Rio Grande Village and Castolon areas." [17]

One feature of park planning that had not changed in the 1970s was the call for reduced dependency on the Chisos Basin for visitor and park use. The planners wanted no more automobile traffic in the basin than the existing 1975 levels, but agreed that the "Dallas huts will be replaced with modern units on a unit-for-unit basis," with "all new units . . . located within the existing impacted areas." Panther Junction would become the preferred site for visitor contact. "The location presents excellent opportunities for horseback rides into the surrounding foothills of the Chisos Mountains," wrote the planners, and "trails could be developed to connect with the existing trail network at the higher elevations." Rio Grande Village, in the estimation of the 1975 plan, would "become a major park visitor-use development." This site had sufficient water and land to form a "green-oasis" for visitors. Castolon would become a "secondary park use area," with "many of the amenities found at Rio Grande Village." History would be Castolon's primary emphasis, and "extreme care must be taken to integrate new structures with the old, while designing all facilities to fit within the regional scale." The planners included a call for "a river management plan . . . to establish the river's carrying capacity for float-trips, define appropriate types and extents of use, determine an appropriate number of commercial operators, and outline other necessary management practices and controls." [18]

By addressing these facility issues, the planners believed that Big Bend could solve its most serious problems of resource management. While conceding "the impossibility of turning back the ecological clock," future resource programs should attempt "re-establishing, where feasible, the dynamic natural scene as viewed by the first European visitor." The planners praised "the reintroduction of pronghorn in 1947 and 1948 and the apparently successful reintroduction of Montezuma quail in 1972." The next step for Big Bend's natural resource efforts, said the NPS planners, was that "the turkey and the desert big horn sheep should re-

established in their former habitats." Park officials also should maintain vigilance about the grasslands, and "the historical role of fire in the ecology of the grassland and upper Chisos forests should be investigated." Once "the role of this natural agent is defined," said the planners, "and public property is not endangered, naturally occurring wildfires should be allowed to run their course." [19]

Should the NPS be permitted to implement these ideas, concluded the 1975 planning document, the NPS could make great strides to preserving the wilderness conditions that had prevailed centuries ago. Echoing the words of Walter Prescott Webb four decades earlier, the planners wrote that "Big Bend National Park provides an opportunity for a desert experience unequalled in quality or quantity in its region and the Nation." As had previous generations of NPS planners and scientists, the 1975 document called for "sound land-use practices, effective water utilization, and establishment of a companion park in Mexico" as the "major priorities for the continued qualitative use of the park." Then the planners reminded the NPS that "every encouragement should be given to the development of the park in Mexico by that government." They believed, as had commentators as diverse as Roger Toll, Everett Townsend, and Daniel Galicia in the 1930s, that "physically, the outstanding resources in the Big Bend National Park landscape are matched, and in some cases excelled, by the outstanding resources in Mexico south of the Rio Grande." The "facilities, developments, and wild areas for the two parks," wrote the NPS team, "would be planned to complement one another, to heighten the visitor's understanding of the region's plant and animal life and wildlife, and to better interpret the relationships between the Rio Grande watershed and all the people who inhabit it." [20]

Adoption of the draft master plan for Big Bend did not come easily in the 1970s, even after several revisions and inclusion of criticisms from both the preservation and development perspectives. Then in August 1975, Roland H. Wauer, chief scientist for the Southwest Region of the NPS (and previously the chief naturalist at Big Bend), delivered a paper to the Southwest Region superintendents' conference in Santa Fe. Wauer, like David Jones in 1967, placed the NPS in the context of a land-user in Big Bend as he narrated "a chronology of the environmental evolution of the Chisos Mountains and vicinity." When the CCC closed its camp in 1942 in Big Bend State Park, there remained about 4,500 square feet of building space; a number that had grown by 1975 to 115,126 square feet. In addition, said Wauer, NPCI had added 22,624 square feet for its operations. Visitation to the park had compounded what the NPS's chief scientist called "man's demands upon this unique environment." From 3,205 people in 1945, said Wauer, the numbers had grown in five years to 70,325, to 80,990 in 1955, and 163,550 by 1966 (the year, said Wauer, "when new facilities were completed that were intended to offer adequate visitor facilities for several decades into the future"). When the new master planning process began in 1973, visitation had leaped to 281,320. Wauer argued that "the National Park Service was not the first landlord within the Big Bend, but we are likely to be the last." The NPS "did not inherit a virgin area, but one that had been badly abused over the years." The chief scientist noted that "we started out to restore the natural environment and for the most part succeeded," as "nature has a way of healing itself if we let well enough alone." But Wauer confessed that "we made gross errors." In his mind, "I will always be ashamed that the Park Service developed Cattail Falls Canyon, placed a radio repeater station on top of Emory Peak, constructed two sewage lagoons in the Lower Basin, and are now building a sewage treatment plant nearby." [21]

Wauer then took issue with the conclusions of the March 1975 master plan, especially its call for new construction at Castolon, Rio Grande Village, and Panther Junction. "These are redundant areas," claimed the regional chief scientist, "where some development will not appreciably add to the total impacts within the environments of floodplain, desert and grassland." He praised the plan's call for removal of facilities in the Chisos Basin, as "these actions are huge pluses for resources protection." Wauer saw as an intractable dilemma "the

continuation of natural processes, while seemingly insurmountable pressures for more development continue;" a circumstance that the chief scientist said "we must live with in this case for many years to come." Speaking rhetorically, Wauer asked "in retrospect, how wonderful it would have been if the Park Service could have inherited virgin wilderness and then had the foresight to learn about the resources and their relationships prior to committing ourselves to development." He then emphatically declared: "But it was too late! It is now a battle between the protectionists and the developers." Quoting the famed naturalist Aldo Leopold, Wauer closed by reminding the region's superintendents of the lessons of Big Bend. "It was Leopold who said, 'The first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all of the pieces.'" For Wauer, "today's extremes are tomorrow's lifestyle." Thus the NPS "must use the tools at hand if we are going to really win the battle of preservation of our resources." Big Bend, if it taught anything in its three decades of existence, reminded its former chief naturalist that "we must do more than just insulate the natural processes from the impact of modern man." [22]

Having the regional chief scientist weigh in on the 1975 master plan did not augur well for Big Bend's planning process. At the same time, operations deteriorated within the park under superintendent Joe Carithers. By the summer of 1976 (five years after Carithers's appointment), the Southwest Region had to send a review team to document charges of mismanagement and racism. This process echoed the problems of a generation earlier, when Ross Maxwell's actions came under increasing scrutiny, leading to his removal and departure from the park service. Four regional officials (Robert Bendt, Jose Cisneros, Emil Matic, and Charles Budge), joined with Dennis Hill of the NPS's Mather Training Center to conduct a series of interviews and site inspections in August 1976. From that would come a scathing indictment of Carithers's management, removal of nearly all of his top assistants, and the need for new directions in a park already under siege in the battle between preservation and development. [23]

The Southwest region had received complaints about the management of Big Bend for several years. Making the review of Carithers's operations more difficult was his connection to the upper echelons of NPS management, and his presumed relationship with important Democratic party officials like Arizona senator Morris Udall and his brother, former Interior secretary Stewart Udall. A preliminary review of Big Bend's activities in July 1976 led SWR officials to suspect problems not only with the superintendent, but his assistant superintendent, chief ranger, chief of maintenance, and administrative officer. Regional director Joseph Rumburg (himself a young park ranger at Big Bend in the early 1950s) went to the park in early August, and agreed that a complete review was in order. He then asked the review team to address concerns with park maintenance, resource management, employee development, and external programs and activities. [24]

Upon arrival at Big Bend, the team began with assessment of external affairs. They found that Carithers and his staff did little with the surrounding communities. "It is, therefore, little wonder," wrote the team in August 1976, "that 49% of the articles and 47% of the space given to Big Bend in the 'Alpine Avalanche' were concerned with park development and planning, mostly negative in nature." The team then remarked about the lack of standards for employees' appearances, including adherence to NPS regulations for uniforms. In matters of law enforcement, "a great deal of thought is to be given," said the review team, "to de-emphasizing of the wearing and displaying of weapons and other defensive equipment by the RM [resource management] and VP [visitor protection] personnel." The team disliked the lack of planning by park staff in matters of "search and rescue, backcountry management, river management, and resource management." There was no documented safety program at Big Bend, as "safety appeared to be of concern to employees but not of too great a concern with park management." Rules of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) were not applied, and the team discovered that "safety meetings, tailgate sessions, safety films, etc., are not being held or shown as they should be." Training in first aid had

been requested by staff, but not provided. This laxity had spread to all areas of maintenance, leading the team to report that "the general appearance of the park is one of wide-spread neglect in maintenance of all facilities." From planning to inventory of supplies and equipment to "personal performance standards," the team found that "maintenance is managed by crisis," and that employees were frustrated and unmotivated. [25]

The language used by the review team consistently emphasized the shabby state of affairs at Big Bend. At the Panther Junction visitors center and park headquarters, paint had faded, restrooms were unclean, and even the American flag needed replacement. In the Chisos Basin (the object of much discussion in the master planning process), the team declared that "the overall appearance of those facilities that we are responsible for maintaining are a disgrace to the Service." Restrooms and campground facilities showed that "there has been no scheduled preventative maintenance for several years." The same applied to the hiking trails in the basin, while the road into the Chisos Basin was the worst in the park. Erosion, poor drainage, overgrown vegetation, and obstructed signage plagued all park roads, and the review team surmised that employees put up whatever color of sign that they had at their disposal. [26]

Employee moral contributed to the sad state of resource management at Big Bend; a condition that the review team agreed "was a chronic problem." Staff would be kept in remote locations for too long, leading to jobs that the reviewers considered "dull and repetitive." In addition, employees faced "supervisory neglect" in the field. "Supervisory contact is limited to radio conversations," leading to "a two-sided problem: management is not aware of the problems and employees are made to feel alienated from the organization." Maintenance supervision suffered from a heavy reliance upon seasonal employees with little experience, and the "increasing chronological age" of the permanent staff. This created what the team called "a drain on available manpower as a result of required annual leave, furloughs, and in some cases, extended sick leave." The average maintenance worker was 50 years of age, with 18 percent eligible for immediate retirement and 40 percent facing the same situation within five years. "As a result," wrote the review team, "the work force is rapidly losing the stamina to do the maintenance work necessary to maintain operations at standard." The review team especially disliked the lack of minority employees throughout the park, with the maintenance crew "predominantly minority," and only one permanent ranger being Latino. [27]

Given these concerns at Big Bend, the NPS had to make changes in management that underscored what Jose Cisneros would recall as the 1970s' political nature of park management. Gene Balaz would be named as assistant superintendent, charged with improvement of operations and maintenance. When superintendent Carithers refused the offer of a position in the regional office in Santa Fe, SWR director John Cook then had to remove him and his supervisory personnel. Issues of maintenance improved with the appointment of Robert Haraden in 1978 as superintendent, as Haraden had come to the NPS in the 1950s with a degree in engineering from the University of Maine. Gene Balaz would recall in a 1996 interview his efforts to advance the cause of employee morale at Big Bend, and the improvement of facilities such as the 250,000-gallon water-storage system in the Chisos Basin for the concessions. Bob Haraden also worked to reestablish good community relations in west Texas (not unlike the efforts in the early 1950s of superintendent Lon Garrison when he replaced Ross Maxwell). [28]

With the dawn of the 1980s, the planning process at Big Bend had nearly reached a halt. Russell Berry, acting superintendent, and Wayne Cone, acting SWR director, admitted in January 1980 that the NPS could not complete the park's master plan begun ten years before. Caught between new environmental standards and local opposition to changes in park operations and boundaries, the master planning team decided instead to release in August

1979 one of the new documents connected to the planning agenda: a final environmental statement (FES). Visitation had rebounded at Big Bend by the close of the decade (a reported 300,000 in 1978), and the NPS claimed that "park use patterns are fairly well established." They had hoped "to develop the park for the visitor in a way that interprets park values and, at the same time, preserves the natural and historical environment." One feature of the master plan that had not existed when the process began inn 1970 was congressional designation of the Rio Grande as a "wild and scenic river." Because of the separation of management, the WSR would not be included in the 1980 master plan for Big Bend. [29]

While the 1980 plan could not initiate action, the team did attempt suggestions for new park operations that once again blended the preservation and development concepts debated throughout the 1970s. Panther Junction would continue to be the focus of visitor orientation and interpretation. To alleviate crowding in the Chisos Basin and avoid such overuse in other areas of the park, the plan called for the NPS "to encourage development of privately owned campgrounds, trailer villages, motel units, and other visitor facilities on lands adjacent to the park." At the same time, the park should "provide park accommodations and camping facilities, along with supportive facilities" in the Basin. This meant that "visitor accommodations and other facilities in the Basin will be upgraded and made safer, and human use of the area -particularly horse use and employee quarters — will be redirected to reduce environmental impacts." For the Rio Grande Village, the planners described its future as a "major use area, such as the Chisos Basin is now." No details were given of the expansions for the village, but the plan hoped that this would "spread park visitation more evenly through the year, as well as more evenly throughout the park." Castolon required that the NPS "move very slowly . . . in such a way as to avoid intrusion into the historic scene." [30]

In a reference to the ongoing debate over wilderness status, the plan called upon the park service to preserve the natural resources of Big Bend through "management of 533,900 acres of the park as though it were wilderness." A stretch of the Persimmon Gap-Panther Junction road was to be rebuilt according to current NPS standards for drainage and surfacing. The plan then called for "relocation underground of all or most of the present 110 miles of electric and telephone lines which are aboveground." The park also should remove "18.75 miles of unnecessary roads to conform to the wilderness designation," restore "where feasible" an "historic vegetational system," and offer "alternative transportation planning when visitor pressures increase." Fire management also needed attention, as "natural caused fires, in specific delineated locations, will again be allowed to influence the natural ecosystem as long as they do not damage private property or Federal structures, or threaten protected species." This would be accomplished through "prescribed burning," with "test plots in the grasslands and research from other Park Service areas with similar ecosystems" used as models. Restoration of the Montezuma quail and desert big horn sheep should proceed, said the planners, and archaeological resources required inventorying. Finally, the plan called upon the NPS to monitor "environmental factors to evaluate consequences of development and to determine carrying capacities." [31]

The 1980 plan paid careful attention to the contentious issue of Chisos Basin facilities, even though earlier discussions had generated much controversy. The fifteen "Dallas huts" would be removed, and replaced with "an equivalent number of motel units" to maintain the capacity of 68 overnight guests. The park service should move the bulk of concessionaire housing into the lower Basin, reducing by half the number of employees residing in the upper Basin from the maximum of 65 to 35 on average. The NPCI store in the upper Basin should become a ranger station, allowing the NPS to remove the modest facility dedicated to that purpose. NPCI's grocery store also should be moved to the lower Basin, and the Chisos Remuda taken out of the Basin altogether. The campground also would need attention, with one group campsite closed to reduce occupancy by about 1,000 visitors per year. The park

service had not given up on the idea of complete restoration of the Basin to pre-1935 conditions, however, as the 1980 plan called for "long-range plans (perhaps 40 years hence) for converting the Basin to day-use, including consideration of the removal of automobiles and replacement with a bus-type or other public transportation system from a parking are outside the Basin." [32]

The planners acknowledged that Panther Junction needed much more development to accommodate future park use. "The overall effect," said the 1980 plan, "will be to approximately triple the present developed acreage of about 30," including the search for a more stable water supply. The NPCI compound would hold some 30 employees, while the park service would need to house an additional 40 of its staff members. An "NPS operations center" would include "office space for the U.S. Magistrate, U.S. Post Office, medical clinic, detention cell, and communications-dispatch facilities." In addition, the plan envisioned an "NPS employees recreation building." This structure would consist of a general recreation room and gymnasium, as well as an outside swimming pool, a wading pool, and bathhouse. Water supplies would be stored in a new 500,000-gallon structure to augment the existing 150,000-gallon facility. Visitors could expect development at Panther Junction of a 50-unit motel, lodge, three campgrounds, a trailer court, and a *remuda* and horse trails. All of this would require more water piping, surfacing of roads, and hiking trails. [33]

Without implementing the 1980 master plan, Big Bend had to make do with the limited resources available to all national parks in the budget-conscious decade of the 1980s. In 1984, an unsigned report on "Natural Resource Protection" outlined the problems that cost cutting had wrought upon the infrastructure and operations of Big Bend. The park had grown to 741,118 acres of land with the addition of the Harte-Hanks ranch on its northern boundary. "Today, 40 years after the establishment of Big Bend National Park," wrote the SWR employee, "a critical look at this question of 'impairment' shows some disturbing trends." The reviewer attributed Big Bend's problems in part to its sheer size: 324 miles of gravel and paved roads, and 276 miles of trails. Big Bend shared its northern and western boundaries with 45 private landowners, and 118 miles of the southern and eastern boundary were shared with Mexico. The reviewer contended that "there is a clear and unmistakable indication that the park's natural and historical resources are being impaired at what appears to be a slowly increasing rate." One such feature was removal of cactus "as the demand for desert vegetation for home landscaping throughout the Southwest increases." H.A. Harrington visited Big Bend in 1984 to write an article for *The Cactus and Succulent Journal.* Outside of Study Butte on the park's west side, Harrington discovered "the most disgusting sight to that point: in a flat area behind a small grocery store/gas station lay enormous loads of collected plants, all freshly dug and in flower." He estimated the number to be "12 stacks, measuring 20 to 30 feet long each, by 5 to 10 feet wide, by 3 to 4 feet high." Harrington concluded that "there is strong evidence to suggest that many of these specimens are being taken from the park; nearby and adjacent ranches are virtually denuded of certain cactus specimens." [34]

The NPS reviewer then turned to an age-old problem at Big Bend: the trapping and poaching of wildlife. "There is a large and continuing demand for animal furs and live reptiles," said the report. While the reviewer did not know the extent of these operations, the NPS official did note that "in two recent cases (1983 and 1984), furs valued at over $60,000 were seized by State and Federal authorities immediately adjacent to the park." In 1979, "17,000 assorted pelts valued at over $1,000,000 were confiscated by Federal authorities at a ranch which is adjacent to the park's northeast boundary." The reviewer had "strong evidence" to prove that "many of these pelts were taken from the park." Equally problematic was the seizure of snakes and lizards. "The demand for certain species is high," said the reviewer, "and some specimens are sold for prices up to $1000." Unfortunately for the park service, "the Chihuahuan Desert of the Big Bend is an especially attractive source for reptile collectors, since specimens are much more numerous than near large population centers where collecting

has been taking place for a number of years." Big Bend in particular had rare species, such as the Trans-Pecos Rat Snake and the Gray-banded King snake that poachers found highly valuable. [35]

Trapping and poaching shared space in Big Bend with yet another historic resource problem: trespass livestock from Mexico. The 1984 review lamented the fact that NPS programs to restore the denuded grasslands and eroded stream banks now confronted an increase of illegal grazing. "Some of the trespass is deliberate," the report stated, while "some is accidental, but with no real efforts made by the Mexican people to prevent the activity." This the reviewer attributed to "a definite lack of an adequate feed source on the Mexican side of the river caused by severe overgrazing and a prolonged drought." The reviewer had observed that "many animals are literally starving to death." The report did note that "the problem along the park boundary which borders ranches in the United States is similar but not nearly as significant as along the river." This condition occurred because of "livestock crossing into the park through downed or damaged fences." [36]

While not as extensive as natural resource damage, limited funding for law enforcement put the park's historic resources in jeopardy as well. "Recent surveys indicate that many of the best and most significant of these sites," said the 1984 report, "have suffered serious damage from vandals, collectors, and 'pot hunters.'" A major factor was their proximity to travel corridors. "Most sites are within a reasonable distance of roads or the river," said the reviewer, "and thus are accessible to most visitors." The reviewer could only comment that "as damage or pilfering of these irreplaceable resources occur, remedial action most often cannot be taken." [37]

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CHAPTER 16:
Endnotes

[1] Edward Abbey, *One Life at a Time, Please* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988), 127, 129, 135, 141.

[2] Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks,* 165-66, 173.

[3] Interview with Curtis Schaafsma, Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe, NM, August 7, 1996.

[4] Interview with Reece Sholley McNatt, Alamogordo, NM, December 18, 1996; interview with Francisco Grano, Marathon, TX, January 18, 1997.

[5] Interview with Joe Rumburg, Green Vallez, AZ, May 31, 1996; interview with Bob Smith, Three Rivers, CA, September 7, 1996; interview with Henry "Hank" Schmidt, Sun Valley, AZ, December 10, 1996; interview with Roy and Louis Pitcock, Graham, TX, November 28, 1997.

[6] Lemuel A. Garrison, *The Making of a Ranger: Forty Years with the National Parks* (Salt Lake City, UT: Howe Brothers, 1988), 231-32.

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[10] Interview with Chuck McCurdy, Santa Fe, NM, August 22, 1997; interview with Monte Fitch, Grand Junction, CO, August 27, 1997.

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[12] Interview with Doug and Doris Evans, Big Bend National Park, TX, October 18, 1996.

[13] Ibid.; interview with Garner Hanson, President, NPCI, Cave City, KY, September 19, 1997.

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[15] Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks,* 211-12, 214-15.

[16] Ibid., 233-34, 244.

[17] Interview with Frank Deckert, Superintendent, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Carlsbad, NM, September 20, 1996.

[18] Interview with Vidal Davila, Chief, Sciences and Resource Management Division, BIBE, September 5, 1997.

[19] Interview with Rick Lobello, Director, Carlsbad Caverns Nature Association, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, NM, August 18, 1999.

[20] Interview with Robert Haraden, Seeley Lake, MT, July 24, 1996.

[21] Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks,* 263-64, 281.

[22] Interview with Keith Yarborough, Department of Geography, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, TX, January 17, 1997.

[23] Interview with Tom Alex, Chief Archaeologist, Sciences and Resource Management Division, BIBE, October 18, 1996.

[26] Robert Haraden interview, July 24, 1996; interview with Jim Carrico, Study Butte, TX, January 16, 1997; telephone interview with Jim Liles, Buffalo National River Recreation Area, Harrison, AR, August 21, 1997.

[27] Interview with Val Beard, County Magistrate, Brewster County, Alpine, TX, August 26, 1998. For an analysis of the controversy surrounding the Davis Mountains study, see Michael Welsh, *A Special Place, A Sacred Trust: Preserving the Fort Davis Story* (Santa Fe: National Park Service, 1996), 243-252.

[28] Interview with Robert Arnberger, Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, AZ, June 3, 1996; Keith Yarborough interview, January 17, 1997.

[29] Interview with Jose Cisneros, Superintendent, BIBE, August 21, 1997, August 25, 1998; interview with Vidal Davila, August 25, 1998; interview with Jose Cisneros, Santa Fe, NM, May 6, 1999; interview with Tom Alex, October 18, 1996.

[30] Mariscal Mine Program, BIBE, August 20, 1997; Arthur R. Gomez, *A Most Singular Country: A History of Occupation in the Big Bend* (Provo, UT: Charles Redd Center, 1990), 127-29.

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CHAPTER 16:
"What a Beautiful Laboratory Big Bend Was!": Resource Protection and Management At Big Bend National Park, 1944-200 (continued)

Big Bend had many issues to address in the 1970s that limited an aggressive campaign for natural and cultural resource management. Cross-border traffic in narcotics, contraband, and immigration occupied much staff time, and augmented the image of the park as a "Wild West" site. Frank Deckert came to the park in 1975 as chief naturalist, and saw how visitors avoided the desert environment in favor of the mountains and Rio Grande. Deckert spoke in a 1996 interview of his efforts to create the "Three-Parks-in-One" concept, with visitors encouraged to experience the triangle of river, desert, and mountain terrain. During his five-year tenure as chief naturalist (1975-1980), Deckert also witnessed the return of peregrine falcons to the Chisos Mountains, and visitor confrontations with bears and mountain lions. One facet of park ecology that occupied Deckert's time was research on the history of fires in the Big Bend area. "The basin had a major fire once every 100 years," said Deckert, "and minor ones every 25 years." He took special note of the 1980 "Laguna Meadows" fire. Even as it scorched many of the native grasses, both landscape and animals returned after several years of absence. [17]

Deckert also worked to bring to the park dedicated young ranger-naturalists who would implement the new federal policies on natural resource management, as well as inspire visitors with innovative programs and activities keyed to an appreciation of Big Bend's complexity and richness. Vidal Davila would arrive at the park in 1977 to work in the naturalist division, which he recalled 20 years later as having one natural resource specialist. Davila, a graduate of Texas A&M University and one of the few Spanish-speaking NPS staff, "participated in the first controlled burn in the park." He also conducted in his seven years at the park (1977-1984) "a survey of springs, vegetation and wildlife, and peregrine falcons along the Rio Grande." Davila also accepted in 1982 an assignment to conduct "the first baseline survey of cultural resource structures" at the park. Because of his other obligations (among them service as an interpreter of Spanish for the law enforcement division), Davila devoted many of his off-duty hours to the site inspections and document research. "Management was surprised at the extent of cultural resources," Davila recalled in 1997 (not long after his return to the park as its chief of the division of sciences and resource management). He had identified 428 structures that had survived the ravages of time and the NPS policy of destruction. "San Vicente and Boquillas had ruins," Davila remembered, "but the areas were devoid of vegetation." He also remarked about the "many sites along the River Road [that had been] bulldozed." He concluded that, according to NPS policy at the time, "the old *jacales* and buildings had no place in the early setting of Big Bend National Park." The result was the loss of awareness that "various groups had lived a hard life, and did as well as they could." Davila especially admired the remnants of the Mariscal mine, which taught him of "the hard life for miners." The company had "hired many Mexicans, and was very isolated." [18]

Davila shared a commitment to promotion of ecological and cultural awareness at Big Bend with another of Frank Deckert's employees, Rick Lobello. First as a student of Barton Warnock at Sul Ross State College, then as a park ranger-naturalist from 1979-1981, Lobello and "the rangers were very enthusiastic about teaching protection of nature." During his time at the park, Big Bend won the Garrison Gold award one year for the best interpretative staff in the Southwest Region, an honor named for former Big Bend superintendent Lon Garrison and highly prized for its recognition of excellence among the 40-plus park units within the region. "Older rangers had shown slides with their talks," Lobello remembered, but "the younger rangers wanted to reach the visitors." Visitors found this level of enthusiasm appealing, as "Big Bend had fan clubs of regulars who stayed a week." Certain staff members became so visible that the interpretative programs "included the name of the ranger [giving the talk or tour] because of their popularity." Lobello credited much of this improvement to the work of Frank Deckert, who "created a family atmosphere and gave staff opportunities to try new things." Lobello would leave Big Bend in 1981, only to return five years later as the director of the Big Bend Natural History Association (1986-1992). In this capacity, Lobello would champion the restoration of the Mexican wolf to the park premises; a program that engendered much controversy when a similar effort was undertaken in 1995 in Yellowstone National Park (and which upon review was not instituted at Big Bend). [19]

The work of Deckert, Davila, Lobello, and their colleagues was augmented in 1976 by the designation of Big Bend as part of the "Man in the Biosphere" program of the United Nations. Robert Haraden, superintendent from 1978-1980, recalled in 1996 that "this was to show the link of man to nature." There would be a "core area of totally protected land [the park itself]," then "a buffer zone where man uses land so as not to harm the core part." This effort was problematic, given the uses of the park and the surrounding area in the past. Haraden noted "trespass from cattle and horses" from Mexico and neighboring American ranches. "Several days a month," Haraden continued, "a plume of smoke drifted down from Carlsbad." There had been a professor from the University of Texas at Austin who had found "a pterodactyl fossil with a 42-foot wing span at the western edge of the park," prompting Haraden to request a paleontology study. He also found trappers on park land taking thousands of animals for their skins. The Adams ranch was reported to be a central clearinghouse for such activity; a condition that Haraden verified when he visited there. The superintendent found between 3,000 and 5,000 animal skins drying on fences at the ranch, and asked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to investigate. Their officers discovered that Mexican hunters brought pelts from inside the park to the Adams ranch, and USFWS agents confiscated some 17,000 skins in a raid. [20]

Coincident with Haraden's work in resource management was publication of former Big Bend naturalist Roland Wauer's *"State of the Parks-1980: A Report to Congress."* Wauer, who served at the time as the NPS's chief naturalist in Washington, claimed, in the words of Richard Sellars, that "although many threats resulted from activities within the parks, more than half come from external sources, such as commercial and industrial development and air and water pollution." Wauer asked Congress for "a comprehensive inventory of natural resources, programs to monitor changes in the park's ecology, individual park plans for managing the resources, and increased staffing and training in science and natural resource management." But the political climate for expanded park studies changed in the fall of 1980 with the presidential election of Ronald Reagan. Committed to a reduced role for government in people's lives, fewer taxes, and an end to 1960s-era programs of social welfare and environmental regulation, the Republican Reagan replaced the Democratic administration of Jimmy Carter with officials like James Watt as secretary of the Interior. Watt, founder in 1979 of the Mountain States Legal Foundation (a Denver-based advocate for more usage of the West's natural resources), called quickly for a moratorium on new park lands, preferring to spend the limited funds at the NPS's disposal on what Sellars called "the upgrading of existing park facilities." [21]

This rapid reversal of fortunes for the park service had its effects on Big Bend. Keith Yarborough, professor of geography at Sul Ross State University, recalled how the "Man-in-the-Biosphere" program suffered from a lack of focus and funding. Yarborough, who had first visited Big Bend in 1957 as a student at Texas Western College (later to become the University of Texas at El Paso), called the program "very important, and little-understood." Created by the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), its goal was "to have a central core of research, a buffer to protect it, and the outside world beyond." If the biosphere project worked, "research filters out to create a wisely run economy." Big Bend always was to be its "core area, but has never spread its research." Yarborough did note that Mike Fleming, who came to Big Bend in 1981 to work in the sciences and resource management division, did create a "science research data base" to account for the fact that "the park gets 80 to 100 researchers annually, but has never had a research center." [22]

Robert Haraden's successor as park superintendent, Gilbert Lusk, would devote a good portion of his five-year tenure at Big Bend to improving management and research functions in science. He also became determined to elevate the status of cultural resources in the park, as evidenced by his commitment to better relations along the border between the United States and Mexico. Tom Alex came to Big Bend in 1981 as part of this new initiative, working as the staff archaeologist. Alex learned quickly that "no archaeology studies had occurred between the 1930s and late 1960s and early 1970s." Until passage of the National Historic Preservation Act, said Alex, "there was no concerted effort . . . to stop artifact-hunting, or to save buildings." At first, Alex worked on surveys of park power lines and highway construction. Yet his travels around Big Bend revealed that "the Chisos infrastructure sits on one of the most important archaeological sites in the park." Earlier examinations of Big Bend's archaeological resources focused on caves (Erik Reed in the 1930s), or open sites in the desert (T.N. Campbell in 1965). Alex would build upon their research by examining sites with carbon-dating techniques, concluding that human habitation in the Chisos Basin stretched back some 9,000 years. "Repeated occupation of the same site is unusual for west Texas," Alex remarked in 1996. The Big Bend archaeologist further noted: "This site is unusual in that only two or three other sites in west Texas exhibit repeated occupation spanning from Paleo-Indian to the Historic Periods." [23]

Lusk and his successor, Jim Carrico (1986-1991), also dealt with the initiatives promoted by local landowners to donate land to the park (and the subsequent backlash by other ranchers against these acquisitions). Houston Harte, publisher of the *San Angelo Standard-Times*, owned a large ranch on the northern boundary of Big Bend (the Harte-Hanks ranch), and he began inquiries in the late 1970s with park officials about a donation or purchase by the NPS. Jim Liles, chief ranger at Big Bend from 1977-1983, recalled in a 1997 telephone interview the delicate nature of these negotiations. The recent debacle over wilderness designation, which Liles recalled was promoted by the Wilderness Society office in Denver, made local ranchers both aware of the benefits of federal acquisition of their ranches (if they were in financial straits), and of the potential for more public "land-grabs," as the Sagebrush Rebellion rhetoric of the era claimed. The Harte-Hanks property (also called "Panther Ranch), recalled Bob Haraden, had been offered to the Nature Conservancy, but the latter "never got back to Harte." Since the 67,000 acres "would be a donation of adjacent land, it didn't need legislation," thought Haraden. Then "Tiny" Phillips, owner of the nearby Rosillos Ranch, approached park officials with an offer to sell his 28,000 acres. He was dying of cancer, and hoped to see resolution of the transaction before his death. Unfortunately for the park, Phillips sold his land for $1.7 million to the Pitcock brothers (Roy and Louis) before Congress could appropriate the monies for purchase. [26]

All throughout the Reagan era (1981-1989), the NPS struggled to accommodate pressures

from environmentalists to expand the ecological base of national parks, as well as satisfy budget officials unhappy with plans for increased land purchases. Into this mix of interests in the late 1980s came the Davis Mountains study, which exacerbated public distrust of the federal government in general, and Big Bend National Park in particular. Brewster County magistrate Val Beard noted in a 1998 interview that "the opposition to the Davis Mountains study grew because of the secrecy." Several ranchers in the Davis Mountains north and west of Big Bend had approached U.S. Representative Ronald Coleman (D-TX) in 1988 about the potential for federal purchase of their lands (not unlike the arrangements underway for the Harte-Hanks property). Coleman had the NPS undertake a $100,000 study of the acquisition of ranches in the area as part of a ranching heritage park. "Coleman had no idea of what he was getting into," said Beard, as "he had done no investigations." Public sentiment was stirred by the formation of the "Trans-Pecos Heritage Association," led by Ben Love, whose property adjoined Big Bend on the north. Beard recalled how the Harte-Hanks plan had bothered county officials, as it removed acreage from the property tax rolls and made Brewster County 25 percent federally owned; a striking statistic in a state (Texas) that had entered the Union in 1845 with no federal control of its 256,000 square miles. The outcry at public meetings forced the park service to reject any efforts to establish the Davis Mountains ranching park, but the bitterness and distrust would endure for the remainder of the twentieth century, and affect attempts to add the Christmas Mountains and Chinati Mountains to the park. [27]

Under the cloud of the Davis Mountains study, park superintendents Robert Arnberger (1990-1994) and Jose Cisneros (1994-1999) chose different directions in their efforts at resource management. Arnberger, the son of a prominent NPS official (Leslie Arnberger), devoted a good deal of his time to external affairs, delegating to his staff the operations of the park. Among the more contentious issues facing Arnberger was his decision to remove an "eyesore" from the Chisos Basin: the old gasoline station and store. Arnberger also included law enforcement within the purview of the resource managemet division, spreading the workload among rangers without additions to the staff or budget. The Pitcock brothers, Roy and Louis, would remark in 1997 about the irony of Arnberger wanting an airstrip at K-Bar ranch, so that he could fly out of the park to attend NPS meetings elsewhere in the country (all this while the park service studied limitations on commercial aircraft in national parks). Keith Yarborough also lamented Arnberger's lack of commitment to scientific research, noting that the superintendent had downgraded the "chief scientist" at the park to the rank of "scientist," and how "scientific research has not been fostered as it should." [28]

Given the preceding half-century of resource management issues and controversies, it was nonetheless surprising in 1994 when the new superintendent, Jose Cisneros, came to Big Bend with a desire to elevate cultural resource issues to the plane of nature and science. A native Texan and fluent speaker of Spanish, Cisneros had spent his early career in human resource management for the NPS's Southwest region, and later as superintendent at such cultural parks as Bandelier National Monument, San Antonio Missions National Cultural Park, and Gettysburg National Historical Park. His own love of history and culture, combined with his assignments over the preceding two decades, had instilled in Cisneros the realization that Big Bend had much cultural history and tradition. Monies were not available in 1994 for a wide range of cultural resource studies, so Cisneros instructed his staff "to find ways to do this ourselves." Using funds saved from salaries, and by campaigning with regional and national NPS offices, Cisneros and his division chiefs began a process of studies in archaeology (in conjunction with Sul Ross State University), historic preservation, and interpretative programming that told the tale of Big Bend's many uses.

As Cisneros looked back in 1999 on his five years of management at Big Bend, he recalled how he found that "the Barker lodge was run down, as was K-Bar and the Hot Springs." He had "no problem with how natural resource programs were run," and reallocated funds to hire

a wildlife biologist and vegetation specialist. By 1998, the park had acquired its first-ever grants for rehabilitation of historic structures, with the first task being the motel units at Hot Springs, and the second target the store at Castolon. Work also was accomplished at K-Bar ranch (which was used for student research housing), the Alvino House at Castolon, and the Daniels Ranch along the Rio Grande near Boquillas. Cisneros also worked with Sul Ross to expedite funding for the seven-year, $1 million archaeological survey overseen by Tom Alex and Bob Mallouf (the latter the director of the SRSU program). Alex noted how the monies allowed survey crews to work on what he called a "predictive capability" strategy. Given the park's 804,000 acres, and the lack of any definitive assessment of cultural resources, Alex and Mallouf (formerly the director of the Texas office of archaeology in Austin) used Global Informational System (GIS) mapping to identify fifteen percent of park lands suggestive of the larger whole. The survey crews then worked over these sites carefully, seeking "environmental stratification, and how soils, geology, and hydrology influenced habitation." When completed, the crews would have walked over every inch of 5,000 acres, and could suggest the scale and scope of land use from that sample. [29]

Of all the cultural resource work accomplished under the Cisneros superintendency, perhaps none symbolized more the new directions that the park would take than the $40,000 study of the Mariscal Mine. Cisneros continued the efforts of superintendent Jim Carrico to raise the funds necessary to hire specialists in architectural preservation, historical research, and cultural resource management. Eric Delony, director of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a partner with the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) in the study of structures and their uses, organized a team of graduate students from around the country. They assisted park staff from Big Bend and the Southwest Support Office (SSO), one of whom was Arthur Gomez, chief of historical programs for the SSO. In the mid-1980s Gomez had been hired by park superintendent Gilbert Lusk as part of the latter's efforts to expand cultural resource awareness. Gomez produced from that research initiative *A Most Singular Country: A History of Occupation in the Big Bend* (1990). One tale told by Gomez was the scale and scope of mining for quicksilver at the Mariscal facility, and Gomez would join the research team in the late 1990s to bring to light the importance of the massive structure astride the River Road. [30]

When Jose Cisneros departed from Big Bend in the spring of 1999, he noted that continuation of the momentum for cultural resource management would depend as always on the willingness of the superintendent and staff to give this dimension of park operations their due. Yet Cisneros's vision of stories told about human use of the park already had their effect on the interpretation that visitors received. Programs by the interpretive staff included historic structures, important figures, and key controversies in park resource management. In this manner, Big Bend National Park could thus serve as a reminder of the journey of understanding taken by the NPS since the 1940s to determine whether scenery, ecology, or cultural landscapes would be the window through which the public saw the land. Research on that story, begun with such foreboding in the depths of the 1930s depression and Dust Bowl, would vacillate throughout the second half of the twentieth century between the extremes of preservation and development, and the shortchanging of basic science in the nation's parks. Few superintendents had tried to bring cultural resources to the forefront at one of the NPS's "nature" parks as had Jose Cisneros. Yet the door had been opened for future superintendents and staffs to examine the reasons why Edward Abbey would consider Big Bend one of his "objects of desire," and how nature and culture combined for a new vision of America's national parks.





Figure 21: Chisos Basin Store and Registration Office (1950s)

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Endnotes

[1] Simonian, *Defending the Land of the Jaguar*, 111, 113, 128.

[2] Interview with Julio Carrera, Director, Maderas del Carmen Protected Area, SEMARNAP, Big Bend National Park, TX, April 10, 1999; Interview with Carlos Marin, Chief Engineer, International Boundary and Water Commission, El Paso, TX, August 26, 1998.

[3] Jameson, *The Story of Big Bend*, 121; Interview with Etta Koch, Alpine, TX, September 21, 1996; Interview with Reece Sholley McNatt, Alamogordo, NM, December 18, 1996.

[4] Interview with Curtis Schaafsma, Santa Fe, NM, August 7, 1996.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Interview with Joe Rumburg, Green Valley, AZ, May 31, 1996.

[7] Interview with Bob Smith, Three Rivers, CA, September 7, 1996.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Interview with Monte Fitch, Grand Junction, CO, August 27, 1997; Jameson, *The Story of Big Bend*, 123; Interview with Russell Dickenson, Seattle, WA, January 28, 1997.

[11] Russell Dickenson interview, January 28, 1997.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Monte Fitch interview, August 27, 1997.

[14] Interview with Chuck McCurdy, Santa Fe, NM, August 22, 1997; interview with Karen and Eldon Reyer, Santa Fe, NM, August 6, 1996.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Interview with Henry (Hank) Schmidt, Sun City, AZ, December 10, 1996.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Interview with Bill Wendt, Midpines, CA, September 6, 1996.

[20] Interview with Stanley C. Joseph, Groveland, CA, September 6, 1996.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Interview with Jim Milburn, Vice-President, NPCI, Cave City, KY, September 19, 1997; interview with Dudley Harrison, County Magistrate, Terrell County, Fort Davis, TX, June 7, 1997.

[23] Interview with Garner Hanson, President, NPCI, Cave City, KY, September 19, 1997; interview with Robert Arnberger, Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, AZ, June 3, 1996.

[24] Interview with Mike Fleming, Science and Resources Management Division, BIBE, September 23, 1996; telephone interview with Jim Liles, Superintendent, Buffalo River National Recreation Area, Harrison, AR, August 21, 1997.

[25] Interview with Steve Frye, Chief Ranger, Glacier National Park, MT, July 25, 1995.

[26]Ibid.

[27] Jim Liles interview, August 21, 1997; Rick LoBello interview, August 18, 1999; Frank Deckert interview, September 20, 1996.

[28] Frank Deckert interview, September 20, 1996; Keith Yarborough interview, January 17, 1997; Gene Balaz interview, May 31, 1996; John Cook interview, August 1, 1996.

[29] Jose Cisneros, Superintendent, BIBE, August 21, 1997; Rick LoBello interview, August 18, 1999; Gene Balaz interview, May 31, 1996.

[30] Robert Haraden interview, July 24, 1996; Gene Balaz interview, May 31, 1996; Jim Liles interview, August 21, 1997.

[31] Ibid.

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CHAPTER 17:
From Good Neighbors to Armed Camps: Mexico, the United States, and Big Bend National Park, 1944-1980 (continued)

Bill Wendt would recall his exposure to the river in 1959 as the Santa Elena sub-district ranger as the start of a career in international park affairs. Upon his arrival at Big Bend, Rod Broyles issued Wendt "a pistol and ammo without law enforcement training." He then acquired along the border what he called "*campesino* Spanish"; a skill that would serve him well while on duty. "Santa Elena," recalled Wendt in 1996, "was part of the 'ejido system' of colonizing empty areas of Mexico." He realized that "there was just enough land to make farming pay." His duties included "a lot of first aid," as well as patrol with Mexican customs officers "who were rotated out every sixteen days." "Fight victims" received medical care at the Santa Elena sub-district, and Wendt remembered repairing "a Mexican customs official who had shot off his own finger in target practice." "Law enforcement at Santa Elena was lonely," Wendt remembered. He worked with the Greene brothers on river patrols, where "they shot and burned trespass animals in the hoof-and-mouth season." Wendt faced the same issues as his predecessors with candelilla wax. "There was a lot of candelilla trade in the park," he noted, "and it generated cash money." Wendt came to realize that "it is an individual decision by staff to work with the border," and that he had to resolve international issues with little guidance from park administration. [19]

The border that Stan Joseph encountered in his three-year tour as superintendent (1960-1963) reflected two decades of NPS efforts to control trespass stock grazing and candelilla production (both legal before 1944). In a 1996 interview, Joseph would remember that on his arrival "Hugh White [mayor of Alpine and owner of a motel] and others introduced [him] to Glen Garrett of the Texas Governor's Good Neighbor Commission." This group had formed when "lodging and accommodations were denied to Mexicans." While this gesture indicated goodwill among local merchants, "the peace park idea had quieted" by 1960. Whatever discussions had existed in the 1950s to mimic the Glacier-Waterton international peace park would not return for another generation. Local personalities like Paul Forschheimer "wanted a joint educational program between Big Bend and Mexico," recalled Joseph, while the venerable rancher Hallie Stillwell "said that the Hot Springs had to be restored." Then Joseph accidentally learned of the scale and scope of the candelilla wax controversy while visiting with Jim Casner in his automobile dealership. "Casner Motor Company supplied sulphuric acid for the candelilla trade," said Joseph, because "Mexico put a 100 percent tax on the export of candelilla." Mexicans would process the wax in the park, then haul it back by mule south of the border. The day that Joseph met with Casner, the Chevrolet dealer received a telephone call that a rail car in the Alpine railyards was leaking 3,000 gallons of sulphuric acid. Casner had to leave to oversee the cleanup. Joseph later learned that Casner had asked permission to harvest lechuguilla in the park, and had pursued the idea all the way to the office of Interior secretary Douglas McKay (himself a Chevrolet dealer from Oregon), but to no avail. [20]

Superintendent Joseph's exposure to the border itself would remain in his mind long after his departure. Early in his tour, Joseph and his wife crossed over to Boquillas on the tram. "Boquillas was a fluorspar center then," he recalled, and "smugglers crossed by signal lights." When local residents "got the flu, the NPS asked the Lions' Club of Alpine to give inoculations and blankets," as well as "polio shots." Joseph found that Santa Elena "was very similar, but was less developed [than Boquillas] with fewer bars, [and] no fluorspar mining." Santa Elena farmers "pumped water out of the Rio Grande into ditches," said Joseph, while they crossed the river to Castolon to collect their mail. "The contrast between Castolon and Santa Elena was stark;" a situation compounded by the presence nearby of Texas Rangers. The latter "questioned the NPS's jurisdiction in the 'wetback period' [a term for the 1950s concern for immigrants swimming the Rio Grande to avoid detection]." Joseph also recalled that "smuggling was known," and that the Rangers "felt that they had to use force to stop the well-armed mule trains." [21]

Stan Joseph's assessment of the border's role in park operations held true until the end of the 1960s, when the U.S. Congress in 1968 passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. While it would be another decade before the Rio Grande flowing through Big Bend would receive such a designation, the interest in river use by rafters gained momentum with publicity surrounding Lady Bird Johnson's 1966 trip. By decade's end, Jim Milburn, then the director of Big Bend's concessions for NPCI, would join with Glenn Pepper on one of his first float trips on the Rio Grande. Milburn, eventually to become in the late 1990s president of NPCI, recalled in a 1997 interview that Pepper "had an old school bus, and filled his rafts with propane tanks." When Milburn first came to Big Bend in 1963, he saw that "there was no volume of river traffic." Hindering this activity was the fact that "access to the river was bad." Then the rise of environmental consciousness, and the initiative to create protected wilderness areas in the United States, gave devotees of river rafting more reason to promote wild-and-scenic status for Big Bend in the 1970s. Yet that decade also witnessed what might be called the low point of border relations, with the rise of narcotics traffic, more incidents of trespass stock and wax production, and ever-growing migration of Mexicans north of the river to seek employment. [22]

With no small sense of irony, NPCI president Garner Hanson recalled in a 1997 interview that the decade of the 1970s witnessed the apogee of the "wild West" promotion. For NPCI, the park, and tourism officials in Brewster County, the "outlaw, *bandido*, and cowboy image drew visitors." Even the "wax trade and drugs . . . added to the mystique of Big Bend," recalled the longtime park concessions president. That perspective would attract and repel NPS employees, compounding the ongoing problems of managing a large park unit with limited resources. Rob Arnberger, superintendent at Big Bend from 1990 to 1994, noted in a 1996 interview that he first had traveled to the park in 1973 "on a narcotics detail." As a young law enforcement ranger (and the son of a prominent NPS official), Arnberger knew something of the cultural complexity and environmental challenge posed by Big Bend. Yet Arnberger, like so many of his park service peers in the 1970s, recalled how he thought that he had "entered the macho world of the border" to work with customs agents. "There had been shootings and drug smuggling," and Arnberger thought that he had returned to "the Texas Ranger days." Even though the United States remained ensnared in the conflict far away in Vietnam, Arnberger found at Big Bend "Army units that dug foxholes and waited for drug smugglers." In a way, Big Bend had reverted to the tension and ethnic distrust that had marked the border in the first decades of the twentieth century; only this time the improvement of transportation and communications masked the real issues of poverty, distance, isolation, and violence that would fester as the decade advanced. [23]

In 1971 the NPS selected as superintendent Joe Carithers, whose legacy at Big Bend would be the deterioration of park operations and the collapse of good-neighbor relations with Mexico. Until his removal by Southwest region director John Cook in 1978, Carithers

oversaw a park that several of his staff remembered as riddled with "paranoia," in the words of Mike Fleming, who worked from 1981 to 1996 in the park's science and resources management division. Jim Liles, chief ranger at Big Bend from 1977 to 1983, recalled in 1997 that the border's effect upon Carithers was palpable. "Joe Carithers was consumed by the smuggling of drugs," said Liles, as he "had a propensity for the romantic aspects of Big Bend." The controversial superintendent "lived in the past," said Liles. He had "been with the last cavalry unit at Fort Riley [Kansas], and saw himself as 'an old cavalry guy.'" Liles learned that Carithers had admired "Big Bend's role in the 1916 Mexican Revolution, and the arrival of the air corps at Johnson's Ranch." In addition, the superintendent "liked the border raids and the Indian wars." While on duty, said Liles, "Joe was involved in a continual struggle with outlaws." Carithers "wore a gun, and got all excited when customs agents were 'on the chase.'" During his tenure at Big Bend, "Customs took over patrol functions, and hassled people at night." This behavior Liles attributed to the fact that "Joe had little park management experience." He had worked previously for the National Parks and Conservation Association, and then had been selected in the late 1960s by NPS director George Hartzog "to head the NPS's Operations Evaluation office in Washington." [24]

Getting a first-hand look at the level of tension in Big Bend during Carithers's administration was Steve Frye, hired in 1975 as a seasonal law enforcement ranger. Frye would serve one year at Big Bend, leaving for a career that led by the time of his 1996 interview to the position of chief ranger at Glacier National Park. He recalled that "the drug trade was significant in 1975, and the NPS did not solve the drug traffic." In Frye's estimation, "there was a hell of a lot of drugs coming across the border." Stationed at the Castolon ranger district, Frye would learn that "dealers 'leaked' information to rangers about mule trains crossing the river." They then "would cross at another site." While Frye and his fellow rangers made "some major busts of El Caminos [a popular Chevrolet automobile modified for use as a pickup truck] with false beds filled with marijuana and some cocaine," the real concern was that "dealers had 'central distribution points' in Mexico." In shipping their cargo north through the park, the dealers sometimes engaged in arguments "that spilled over into the park." Frye, like ranger Bob Smith a generation before him, would recall that he "drove a youth from Santa Elena to Alpine who had been shot in the stomach for cheating a dealer." His most dramatic moment in border law enforcement, however, occurred when he joined the other Castolon rangers to cross the river into Santa Elena. While there one day, Frye "saw the *federales* haul someone down the street and shoot him." Their explanation to the terrified citizens was that "he was a drug dealer." This prompted in Frye an "overriding concern" about "how cheap life was." He also recalled that "there was a reward in Mexico for a U.S. law enforcement officer's badge." The amount varied between $100 and $125, which Frye characterized as "a year's income" along the border. He was "not sure that the Mexican outlaws would carry out these threats," as the latter seemed like "a 'cat-and-mouse' game." [25]

In matters of resource protection on the border, Frye heard "a lot about candelilla theft," though he "never made any busts." Another resource utilized by local residents was what Frye called the "sale of bat guano." Finally, Frye engaged in the longstanding Big Bend tradition of impounding trespass stock along the river. He joined "the first round-up on horseback of Mexican cattle in years." The crew included "DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration], Customs, and other agents." Frye, sitting in a coffee shop on a July day near the Canadian-U.S. boundary, still could recall vividly a border far to the south, where the search party "swept up the River Road area near Boquillas, and rounded up 100-125 horses, cows, and bulls." From there the NPS took the animals to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's corrals in Presidio, where local Mexican ranchers had to go to reclaim their stock. [26]

This degree of anxiety about drugs, contraband, and trespass stock contributed to a series of

incidents in the mid-1970s at Big Bend that led in 1978 to Carithers' dismissal. Jim Liles was told of Carithers' "unwarranted fear . . . that the outside world was dangerous." Both Carithers and his assistant superintendent, Gene Balaz, "feared going down to the river, and into Mexico," said Liles. Rick LoBello, a young ranger in the late 1970s at Big Bend, heard from veteran rangers that "there was concern over terrorist attacks on NPS sites in 1976 during the Bicentennial [the 200th anniversary of America's creation]." LoBello and other staff received training to respond to such situations. Then a tragic incident marred the reputation of Big Bend even more: the shooting on the river of an undergraduate student from Sul Ross State College in a failed drug operation. Jim Liles and Frank Deckert would recall twenty years later that the young man had been arrested by law enforcement officials for making his own illegal purchase. Then the U.S. Customs Office enlisted his aid as part of his plea agreement to help capture drug dealers on the Rio Grande. One night, an undercover Customs agent and the college student, who had no experience in undercover activities, met with drug dealers along the road to San Vicente Crossing in the park. Earlier, other Customs agents had positioned themselves in the brush near the river. However, as the deal was being made, the agents near the river got into a gunfight with horseback riders who appeared in the dark. When the shooting began, in the words of Frank Deckert, "one of the drug dealers spooked, pulled out a pistol and shot and killed the Sul Ross student." Deckert the next day flew to the area by helicopter with Customs agents to take aerial photos as they recreated the crime scene. As if to add insult to injury, recalled Jim Liles, soon after this incident the popular late-night television talk-show host, Johnny Carson, invited onto his "Tonight Show" a "major drug-dealer-turned informant" to reveal secrets of his trade. "Carson asked if he would say where the border was the easiest to cross," Liles remembered, "and the informant said Big Bend National Park." Not surprisingly, said Liles, "all of this made Carithers paranoid." [27]

The superintendent's anxieties reached their peak when stories surfaced of an encounter on the river between NPS rangers (including Joe Carithers) and Mexican herders with trespass stock. Several park employees of the 1970s recalled how the superintendent believed, as Frank Deckert learned in October 1975 from chief ranger Al Trulock, that "the Mexicans had automatic weapons, and that a 'revolution' was imminent." Keith Yarborough echoed this observation, recalling in 1997 that "Carithers had hand grenades and automatic weapons" of his own. The superintendent also liked to travel around the park wearing a sidearm, and Gene Balaz, assistant superintendent at Big Bend from 1976-1978, mentioned a ranger known as "Two-Gun" because he "put extreme pressure on wax camps to run them off." Then Carithers' behavior attracted the attention of NPS officials in the Santa Fe regional office and headquarters in Washington, DC. John Cook, in 1976 an associate director of operations at headquarters, learned of "a shooting of Mexican nationals by Big Bend rangers," and he sent a Washington official to the park to investigate. The following year, when Cook became director of the NPS's Southwest Region (SWR), Carithers shocked SWR officials when he waded out into the Rio Grande, firing his pistol at Mexicans fleeing their trespass stock. Two decades later, Cook would recount in an interview how outraged he and his staff (including Hispanic officials like SWR personnel director Jose Cisneros) became. Cook sent his deputies to Big Bend to investigate, and then flew to the park with Cisneros in 1978, where they "removed all supervisory personnel except [chief naturalist] Frank Deckert [who would return to Big Bend in 2000 as park superintendent]." Carithers, whose career in the NPS (and his connection to Big Bend) had begun in the 1960s while working for the NPCA, was then offered a "desk job" in Santa Fe. He refused, and left the park service soon thereafter. [28]

For John Cook, the regional staff, and park employees, the departure of Joe Carithers did not end the difficulties that the border posed. Jose Cisneros, who would return to Big Bend in 1994 as its first Hispanic superintendent (and also the first native Texan to hold that position), remarked rather acidly that "Big Bend in the 1970s was a 'plantation,' with Anglo leadership and Mexican-American employees living in trailers." Cisneros agreed that "there were

problems with drug interdiction," but believed that "Big Bend was a 'virtual armed camp.'" Rick LoBello remembered how Mexicans came to the park's visitors' center for their *permisos* (authorizations to cross the river), and how "this caused some tensions" with the Anglo staff. But for Gene Balaz, Carithers's temporary replacement as superintendent, stopping the drug traffic consumed most of his time. "Dope deals were being done in park campgrounds," recalled Balaz, while "backcountry roads and the River Road had been the route for carnuba wax smugglers." In addition, "marijuana came across [the river] on horseback." Since the Southwest region, in Balaz's estimation, "offered little support," his park "had to go it alone." Balaz coordinated an "interagency interdiction force," using officers from the newly established DEA, even though Balaz (a seasoned park ranger) considered them "primarily office people." He was surprised that "the Border Patrol did not want to deal with drugs," and thus accepted the Customs Service's offer of "eight officers . . . to put pressure on transfer points." Balaz noted that "the interdiction force needed manufactured housing, utilities, and a radio network." Beyond that, the team required a "working relationship with the National Park Service;" all of which Balaz extended to them, with the result that "drug incidents fell 75 percent after one year of action." [29]

Needless to say, the new superintendent, Robert Haraden, came to Big Bend in 1978 facing a host of issues related to the border. Stopping in Santa Fe to meet regional director John Cook, Haraden would remember two decades later that Cook "wanted to reduce the law enforcement image." For the regional office, Big Bend's rangers "came on too strong, and there was a shootout at the park." Cook wanted Haraden to rebuild Big Bend's infrastructure that had suffered during the Carithers superintendency, yet continue the campaigns against "drugs, cattle, 'wetbacks,' etc." But the issue that surfaced even as Haraden acquainted himself with Big Bend was the designation of the park's stretch of the Rio Grande as a "wild and scenic river." Discussions had begun on this designation in the last six months of Gene Balaz's tenure as acting superintendent, and accelerated as Haraden took command of the park. Jim Liles recalled how his first major task upon arrival at Big Bend in 1977 was to respond to "a notice from the Texas governor's office to start the Wild and Scenic River program." U.S. Representative Bob Krueger (D-TX) had been a major sponsor of the designation, while "the Texas Explorers Club pushed protection of the lower canyons [of the Rio Grande]." From Liles' perspective, "the whole WSR issue was political." He believed that "Krueger was persuaded by river constituents [landowners] to shelve the [1978] wilderness proposal for Big Bend in exchange for not opposing the WSR." Aiding in this strategy, said Liles, was the realization that "the governor would support the WSR if the wilderness designation were dropped." Liles attended what several park officials and local residents recalled as a "bad public meeting" in Marathon, where NPS regional planning chief Doug Faris and others learned of the bitter reaction that echoed the late 1970s land-use movement known as the "Sagebrush Rebellion." [30]

When Bob Haraden left Big Bend in 1980 to become superintendent of Glacier National Park, he would lament that "it became a disappointment when the park service did not buy land away from the river." There would be "no place to camp along the wild and scenic river," even thought "the WSR idea was to preserve unique rivers." Then Haraden recalled a revealing feature about border relations in the 1970s: "There were no negotiations with Mexico." Haraden recalled that "there had been talk of a 'peace' or 'companion' park with Mexico," and he had attended several meetings with Mexican officials on this matter. But by 1980, the border with Mexico meant to the United States a zone of conflict more like the early twentieth century, and the faith of Franklin Roosevelt and Lazaro Cardenas 40 years earlier to make their two nations more friendly was nothing but a dream. [31]



Figure 22: NPCI Chisos Mountains Lodge Lobby (NPSCI Photo, 1960s)

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Endnotes

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