



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Big Bend National Park News Release

BEST LIGHTING PRACTICES PARTNERSHIP EXTENDS LIGHTING BENEFITS AT BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

Big Bend National Park recently completed the first phase of a partnership project to improve exterior lighting throughout the park. The first-phase accomplishments included dramatic improvements to the exterior lighting at the Panther Junction Visitor Center and the Panther Junction Service Station.

The project was accomplished through the Best Lighting Practices Grant. This program, funded and technically supported by Musco Lighting and facilitated by the National Park Foundation, provides the Denver Service Center the necessary resources to define and document standards for best lighting practices within the National Park Service. The Best Lighting Practices efforts intend to improve the quality of lighting, minimize the energy consumption, provide adequate lighting, and reduce the night sky pollution.

Best Lighting Practices uses nine criteria to appraise a best lighting practice. These are:

- 1) Proper aesthetic rendering of the-target area or object;
- 2) Create safe environments;
- 3) Mitigate the impact of lighting on the night sky;
- 4) Minimize spill and glare;
- 5) Control the impact of lighting on ecological issues such as plants, animals, geology, etc.;
- 6) Curtail the impact of lighting on historic and cultural resources;
- 7) Minimize the costs of procurement;
- 8) Save energy through the use of efficient light sources and fixtures as well as through the use of proper controls; and
- 9) Lessen maintenance costs.

The newly installed night sky-friendly lighting at the Panther Junction's visitor center entrance uses LED lighting with shielded fixtures. By focusing the light on the intended target and shielding the source from the observer's eye, a superior lighting environment is created even at substantially lower lighting levels. As a result, lighting at the Center's entrance, for example, has been reduced from 480 watts to 6 watts and the light sources are un-noticeable just beyond the entrance area.

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The overall exterior lighting at Panther Junction Main Headquarters and the nearby service station provides a 98% energy reduction. The new lighting allows the visitor to easily access the after-hours maps and information available at the visitor center entrance while also allowing park staff to safely access the parking areas and building entrances.

The next phases of the project will be the Chisos Basin developed area, interior lighting improvements to the Panther Junction visitor center exhibits and the Persimmon Gap Visitor Center exhibits.

Big Bend National Park has among the darkest and most dramatic night sky vistas in the lower 48 states, and is an excellent place for astronomers of all experience levels to enjoy the night sky. In addition, many visitors to the park enjoy the increased visibility of the night sky as a resource and experience in and of itself. With the newly installed night sky friendly lighting this important resource will remain available and more accessible for years to follow.

Big Bend National Park Superintendent Bill Wellman stated, "I am extremely pleased with the first phase results of the partnership and with the partners who came together to improve this important park resource. I also wish to thank our park's maintenance employees, who provided expertise and services that helped this project become a reality."

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