



Mojave National Preserve

2007 Business Plan



Mojave National Preserve Business Plan

Fiscal Year 2007

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Front cover: "Last Light on the Ivanpah Range"
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Inside front cover: View of Providence Mountains
from Kelso Dunes. NPS PHOTO BY CRAIG PHILLIPS

National Park Service Mission Statement

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and intrinsic values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation, and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

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Mojave Desert vegetation frames the view from
Piute Trail. NPS PHOTO BY DENNIS SCHRAMM

Introduction

The purpose of business planning in the National Park Service is to improve the ability of parks to more clearly communicate their financial status with principal stakeholders. A business plan answers such questions as: What is the business of this park unit? What are its priorities over the next five years? How will the park allocate its resources to achieve these goals? What can external stakeholders and partners do to support the park's programs and operations?

The National Park Service business planning process is undertaken to accomplish three main tasks. First, it provides the park with a synopsis of its funding history. Second, it presents a clear, detailed picture of the state of current park operations and funding. Finally, it outlines park priorities and funding strategies moving forward.

A basic methodology is applied by all parks developing business plans, although the framework allows each park to highlight certain aspects of its operations that the management team feels are especially important. Activities are organized into five program areas that describe all areas of business for which a park is responsible. This allows the park to move beyond the traditional National Park Service method of reporting expenditures in terms of fund sources, and instead report expenditures in terms of activities. As a result, the park can communicate its financial situation more clearly to external audiences.

Completing the business plan process not only enables a park to produce a powerful communication tool, but also provides park management with financial and operational baseline knowledge for future decision making.

A Message From the Superintendent



Above: Mojave National Preserve Superintendent Dennis Schramm. NPS PHOTO

Below right: Mariposa lily. PHOTO BY BEN CHEMEL

The staff and I are pleased to present this business plan for Mojave National Preserve. This is the first such document prepared for the preserve since its creation in 1994. It is intended to provide you with information about the operational requirements of this 1.5-million-acre unit of the National Park System, as well as our vision and goals for stewardship of this large expanse of protected desert ecosystem. It will also improve our ability to measure the allocation of fiscal resources against operational needs resulting in a clearer picture of our fiscal health.

As a relatively new unit of the National Park System (since 1994) the preserve base operating budget and staffing levels are still in a growth mode. Some aspects of the operation are close to the needed funding levels, while others (maintenance and interpretation, in particular) are still waiting for funding to operate their programs at the level required by the assets that we have to maintain and the visitor facilities that we operate. During the last several years, the overall federal budget has been relatively flat and achieving increases in base operations has been difficult. Therefore, we are several years behind where we should be in getting to our core operational funding levels. At the same time, we have been fortunate in the amount of donated funds we have received to acquire grazing permits and associated ranch property, as well as private land acquisitions. Several of these acquisitions have also brought the responsibility of maintaining cultural properties, housing, and other related assets. While these acquisitions have been important resource protection opportunities, they also have increased our maintenance responsibilities and costs.

We are facing unprecedented threats from external developments that require attention from our staff to ensure protection of preserve resources during these project reviews. Climate change and increases in wildfires present resource challenges that are without precedent in recent history. Mojave National Preserve manages almost 800,000 acres of critical desert tortoise habitat and is a key habitat area for its recovery. The area is also rich in cultural resources that represent a long and varied human presence in the area.

Mojave has many existing partnerships and opportunities to work in concert with our neighbors and stakeholders to achieve protection of these unique desert resources for future generations. As we continue to engage our communities and stakeholders, additional opportunities for partnerships will emerge that will further the mission of the preserve. I hope you will read this plan as a stakeholder that has a vested interest in helping protect this great resource, and you will look for and foster opportunities that will help to achieve our common goals.

Thank you for your interest and support of Mojave National Preserve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Schramm". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis Schramm
Superintendent



Executive Summary



This business plan describes the financial and operational condition of Mojave National Preserve in Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 and provides insight into the preserve's direction over the next five years. It is the result of an objective, in-depth look at Mojave's historical trends, current operations, projected financial outlook, and management priorities. The plan is intended to communicate both the challenges and opportunities that will face Mojave National Preserve in the next five years.

Overview and Financial History

The Preserve Overview section and the Financial History Appendix examine trends and fluctuations in Mojave National Preserve's annual visitation and funding.

The preserve's funding from all sources has grown from \$1.3 million in FY 1996 to \$5.9 million in FY 2007. From FY 2001 through FY 2007 Mojave's Appropriated Base Funding, the most stable source of funds allocated by Congress, increased at an average annual rate of 3.6 percent. When adjusted for inflation, however, this increase amounts to an average of only 1.1 percent per year.

In FY 2007 Mojave National Preserve had 541,000 visitors. In 1993, the year before Mojave was designated a national preserve, visitation to the area was estimated at 250,000. The number of visitors to Mojave National Preserve has increased 42 percent over the past decade, with sharp increases from FY 1998 to FY 2003 followed by a leveling off in the past five years. While overall

Above: Kelso Depot. NPS PHOTO

MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE FIVE-YEAR PRIORITY ACTIONS

Mojave National Preserve's management team has articulated specific actions that each program area will pursue in the next five years. These specific goals are grouped under five preserve-wide priorities:

- Engage the public in park stewardship and foster an appreciation for the ecosystems and human history of the Mojave Desert.
- Provide visitor experiences that carry out the National Park Service mission, "...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."
- Promote safety for both park staff and the visiting public.
- Protect the resources of the preserve.
- Promote energy efficiency and sustainable "green" practices in preserve facilities and management.



Lilac sunbonnet. USGS PHOTO BY DAVID M. MILLER

Many opportunities exist for the preserve to work with partners, and its management team sees these relationships as crucial to achieving the five-year goals it has articulated in this plan.

visitation has been flat recently, the population in surrounding counties is expected to double by 2030 and preserve staff is predicting an increase in visitation in the long term.

Current Operations

In FY 2007 Mojave National Preserve operated with 51.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, including seasonal employees and interagency fire personnel. An FTE is equal to 2,080 hours of work per year. The preserve spent \$3.6 million in FY 2007 for personnel salaries and benefits, and a total of \$5.9 million overall. Mojave's expenditures are grouped into seven areas: Resource Management, Interpretation and Education, Visitor and Resource Protection, Wildland Fire Management, Facility Operations and Maintenance, Management and Administration, and One-Time Charges/Non-Operations Activities.

Partnerships

Partnerships have been, and will continue to be, essential to Mojave's operation. The preserve has a strong record of working with local, regional, and federal partners on projects ranging from fire management to trail construction and maintenance to educational programs in surrounding communities and land acquisition inside the preserve's boundaries.

Volunteer groups have become an important type of partnership arrangement, with members of local and national groups donating thousands of hours to projects within the preserve each year. Since FY 2000 the volunteer program has grown rapidly, with 96 volunteers contributing 9,263 hours of work in FY 2007. This represents about one out of every twelve hours worked in Mojave National Preserve

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Critical Themes

Throughout the business planning process, several key themes appeared:

Mojave National Preserve's immense size and remote location make nearly all aspects of its operation both challenging and expensive. Fleet upkeep, contracting, and maintenance activities are all more expensive than at other national parks located closer to population centers. In addition, the remote location of Mojave National Preserve makes recruiting difficult, while its 695,000 acres of designated wilderness create challenges for law enforcement, emergency medical services (EMS), and wildland fire response activities.

Mojave's rich human history has created both opportunities and challenges for preserve operations. The area encompassed by Mojave National Preserve has been used at different times for mining, farming, cattle ranching, and railroad resupply operations. Features of these past uses—ranching facilities and the Kelso Depot, for instance—provide wonderful opportunities to educate visitors about the region's history. At the same time, the 3,500 open mine shafts throughout the preserve can present a danger to visitors that must be addressed. Mitigating some of the effects of past land uses will require significant resources for many years.

Future development will likely threaten some of the resources the preserve was created to protect. Plans to build a new airport near the northeast boundary of Mojave National Preserve to service Las Vegas, Nevada, would undoubtedly bring other commercial development. Furthermore, increased air and land traffic near the preserve may degrade its air quality, natural soundscape, and dark night sky.

Preserve management has been proactive in integrating environmental sustainability into its decision-making process. From capital investments, such as installing solar electric systems, to everyday decisions, such as purchasing "green" cleaning products, Mojave has done much to make its operations more environmentally friendly. The preserve's management team plans to carry this progress forward and has set ambitious goals for improving the energy efficiency of preserve buildings and minimizing the overall environmental impact of Mojave National Preserve operations.



Providence Mountains from Kelso Peak. NPS PHOTO