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Great Sand Dunes National Park

Colorado National Parks

GSD National Monument Mission 66 Progress Memorandum

Harold P. Schaafsma

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3. Public Facilities. Accommodations for overnight guests must be provided for. An adequate lodge would induce many visitors who prefer this type of lodging to more fully enjoy the area.

Campgrounds will of a necessity have to be expanded and new sites selected.

4. Utilities. Electricity must by all means be brought in from its present terminus, which is but seven miles from the residential center.

Water has been covered.

5. Personnel. An adequate staff, consisting of a clerk, two rangers and a maintenance man in addition to the superintendent should be an objective for the immediate future. At present, it is virtually impossible to make patrols to remote parts of the monument. Research and investigations are also impossible with the present work load and lack of help.

(3). Record of Public Use Patterns

Visitors rarely remain within the area for more than one day at a time. Camping is possible and popular. Heavy weekend use of the picnic facilities is made by residents of the San Luis Valley. A steady increase in annual visitation has been recorded for the past several years. A number of visitors would avail themselves of overnight lodging and meal service if available.

(4). Interpretation

A museum staffed with a trained naturalist would fill a much needed gap in the present interpretive program. Great Sand Dunes is rich in historical background; the Indian has left his visible mark as far back as Folsom man. Southwestern Monuments Association sales alone amount to almost a thousand dollars a year and a naturalist could relieve personnel from the time consuming task of handling this item. Much study can be done on the dunes themselves; their relationship to plants and animals.

(5). Development and Operating Plan:

Improved roads will bring an anticipated 100,000 visitors to the area within a few short years, perhaps before Mission 66 is materialized. Immediate steps must be taken to plan for this increase in visitation by providing personnel, facilities, overnight accommodations and an interpretive program. Development of additional camping and picnic sites require the acquisition of private inholdings at an early date. A museum with a trained naturalist in attendance is needed at the present time. Additional roads and trails are warranted as visitation increases.

(SIGNED)

Harold F. Schaafsma
Superintendent

In Reply to
A98-CP

GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL MONUMENT
Alamosa, Colorado

July 11, 1955

To: The Director
From: Superintendent, Great Sand Dunes
Subject: Mission 66, Progress and Procedures

(1). Area Significance

The Great Sand Dunes, highest-piled mass of inland sand dunes in the United States, are located in the San Luis Valley of southcentral Colorado, famed for its agriculture and many artesian wells. Nestling at the foot of the towering, snowcapped peaks of the Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) Mountain Range, these colorful dunes contrast vividly with their towering mountain-range background.

San Luis Valley is the largest intermountain valley in Colorado. Nearly 4,000 square miles in area, and 7,500 to 8,000 feet in elevation, this ancient valley is bordered and hemmed in on the east by the Sangre de Cristo Mountains (maximum peak, Sierra Blanca, 14,363) and on the west by the less abruptly-rising and formidable La Garita and San Juan Range.

(2). Inventory of Area Problems

Future development is contingent upon a number of problems, most of which may be solved by adequate funds. Treatment and breakdown as follows:

1. Water. Due to the complexity of water rights, it is difficult to determine without due process of law where future water is to be obtained. Acquisition of all water rights to Mosca Creek is one answer. A Mr. Frank Wellington now has a filing on Mosca Creek but has never used same during the present superintendent's tour of duty. The purchase of his 160 acres should receive top priority as his property is one of the most chosen sites for future resort or lodge development by the National Park Service.

It is believed that a sufficient amount of underground water may be obtained by drilling as most sub-water is found at shallow depths within the area.

2. Quarters. New quarters must be provided for additional increase in personnel. Immediate consideration should be directed to quarters for an additional ranger as the Superintendent is the only permanent employee. With travel over 26,000 in 1954, it is only too evident the burden of administration is only accomplished with 14 to 16 hours of duty.