

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Big Bend National Park
Big Bend, Texas



A Handbook for New Volunteers

Volunteers-In-Parks Program



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Charitable Contributions Excerpt

WELCOME TO BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK!!

Big Bend National Park is located at the southern tip of Brewster County, Texas, at the “Big Bend” of the Rio Grande. Formerly Big Bend State Park in 1933, it was authorized as a National Park on June 20, 1935. Big Bend National Park was established by an act of Congress and signed into law June 12, 1944, as our 27th national park. This area is in the heart of a semi-arid region of West Texas known as the Big Bend Country. It is bounded on the south by the Rio Grande and on the north by an imaginary line between the towns of Van Horn on the west and Langtry on the east. It takes its name from the course of the Rio Grande which makes a great bend to the south between these towns, cradling the park in the lower extremity of its erratic course.

Slightly larger than Rhode Island, the park comprises 801,163 acres. The boundary covers 1,252 square miles, 118 miles of which is the Rio Grande and also the International Boundary between the United States and the Republic of Mexico. In 1978, Congress designated a 196-mile portion of the Rio Grande from the Chihuahua/Coahuila state line to the Terrell/Val Verde county line as a Wild and Scenic River. The upper 69-mile section of the 196-mile corridor is within Big Bend National Park. The highest point in the park is Emory Peak, with an elevation of 7,832 feet; the lowest elevation in the park is the point where the Rio Grande emerges from Boquillas Canyon at 1,700 feet. This is an elevation difference of 6,135 feet, or over one vertical mile.

Big Bend National Park is a nationally and internationally significant example of the finest and most scenic desert and mountain topography in the United States. This is a land of dramatic contrasts--of lofty, wooded peaks and river-swept floodplains--dominated by great expanses of Chihuahuan Desert, containing spectacular geologic features and other impressive landforms.

Complementing the distinctive topography is an unusual array of plant and animal life, corresponding in diversity to the multitude of habitat types provided by the broad elevation range. Over 1,200 species of plants (65 of cacti alone), 78 mammals, 450+ birds, 57 reptiles, 11 amphibians, and 40 species of fish have been reported in the area, including many that are endangered, threatened, or protected.

The Chisos Mountains visually dominate the central portion of the park. A compact range of rounded rocks, vertical cliffs, and deep canyons, the Chisos is the southernmost mountain mass in the continental United States and is the only mountain range totally contained within a unit of the National Park System.

This cool woodland environment, contrasting so dramatically in character with the harsh lowlands, has long been an important focal point for visitors, and a primary location of visitor services and other facilities. The network of Chisos Mountains trails receives most of Big Bend’s hiking and backpacking use. Surrounding the Chisos Mountains are vast alluvial plains, interrupted by isolated mountain masses which are considered part of the great Chihuahuan Desert. This stark landscape is the abode of an astonishing variety of plants and animals which through a variety of adaptations are able to thrive in conditions of extreme heat and dryness.

For 118 twisting miles the Rio Grande defines the southern boundary of the park. The bordering ribbon of shoreline and flood plain vegetation provides a contrast to the harsh desert adjoining the river. Three great canyons--Santa Elena, Mariscal, and Boquillas--cut through the limestone mesas within the sweeping arc of this historic river. Viewed from their rims or from the river, these canyons are among the most outstanding features in the park.

Throughout much of the park, visitors are aware of the presence of the northern frontier of Mexico. From the South Rim of the Chisos Mountains, a 200-mile sweep of American and Mexican terrain may be viewed.

The entire region, on both sides of the Rio Grande, is rich in history and cultural interest. The historic period is represented by structural ruins remaining from years of farming, ranching, and mining activity. Former military camps are also scattered through the region. Throughout the park, historic structures and use areas were frequently located in proximity to water sources. Castolon Historic District, Rancho Estelle (Sublett Farm, Stone Residence, and Dorgan Residence), Luna Residence, Homer Wilson Ranch, Mariscal Mine, and Hot Springs are properties afforded the protection of the National Register of Historic Places. The Barker Lodge, Daniels Farm House, the Glenn Springs District, and the Neville Springs Cavalry Outpost are currently under nomination. Other historic sites are being allowed to deteriorate naturally. Though not of National Register significance, these sites provide visitors with interesting “discovery sites” during their travels in the park.

There are 123 miles of paved roads, 45 miles of improved unpaved roads and 112 miles of primitive unpaved roads.

Over the last five-year period there has been an average yearly visitation of 340,673 people. The spring months of March and April are the busiest together with the Thanksgiving and Christmas/New Year’s holidays, although the park is open and visited the year round.

Big Bend National Park was designated a U.S. Biosphere Reserve in 1976 by UNESCO under their program on Man and the Biosphere. Big Bend is one of approximately 250 such areas worldwide whose ecosystem is particularly well preserved.

Visit the park’s official website at <http://www.nps.gov/bibe/> for more detailed information.

Big Bend National Park Mission Statement- The National Park Service at Big Bend National Park preserves and protects a representative area of the Chihuahuan Desert along the Rio Grande for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The park’s mission is to preserve and protect all natural and significant cultural resources and values, to provide recreational opportunities that are compatible with the protection and appreciation of park resources for diverse groups, and to provide educational opportunities to foster understanding and appreciation of the natural and human history of the region.

Park Purpose -Big Bend National Park’s purpose is threefold:

- Preserve and protect all natural and national register-eligible cultural resources and values.
- Provide educational opportunities to foster understanding and appreciation of the natural and human history of the region.

Provide recreational opportunities for diverse groups that are compatible with the protection and appreciation of park resources.

Park Significance -The park is significant because it contains the most representative example of the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem in the United States. The park’s river, desert, and mountain environments support an extraordinary richness of biological diversity, including endemic plants and animals, and provide unparalleled recreation opportunities. The geologic features and Cretaceous and

Tertiary fossils in Big Bend National Park furnish opportunities to study the sedimentary and igneous processes. Archeological and historic resources provide examples of cultural interaction in the Big Bend Region and varied ways humans adapted to the desert and river environments. The Rio Grande is life-sustaining for plants, animals, and human inhabitants beyond its banks. Along with the two Mexican protected areas for flora and fauna, Maderas del Carmen and Cañon de Santa Elena, Big Bend is now part of one of the largest transboundary protected areas in North America. More than two million acres of Chihuahuan Desert resources, along with more than 200 miles of river, are now under the national protection of the United States and Mexico



Volunteer in Parks (VIP) Program

To accomplish its important duties of preservation and education, the National Park Service relies on the efforts of many volunteers. The Volunteer-In-Parks Program was authorized by Public Law 91-357 enacted in 1970. The primary purpose of the VIP program is to provide a vehicle through which the National Park Service can accept and utilize voluntary help and services from the public. The major objective of the program is to utilize this voluntary help in such a way that it is mutually beneficial to the National Park Service and the volunteer.

Volunteers are accepted from the public without regard to race, creed, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability. Under the VIP legislation, volunteers may be recruited without regard to Office of Personnel Management regulations and are provided coverage for tort liability and work-injury compensation. Volunteers are selected to participate in the program because they can fill an identified need. They are usually individuals or members of groups with specific skills and/or interests who will perform a specific function or type of work.

Volunteering is an American tradition that over the years has made an immeasurable contribution to communities, organizations and individuals throughout the country. A recent poll found that over one-third of the American public has been or is now a volunteer. Over half of those presently involved in volunteer work are also employed in full or part-time jobs. Today's volunteers are active, dynamic, creative individuals of all ages who possess the skills, desire, patience and time to accomplish a wide variety of tasks.

Our volunteers are, without a doubt, Very Important People! Each year more than 120,000 volunteers donate over 4,000,000 hours of service in the U.S. national parks. Our volunteers come from every state and nearly every country in the world to help preserve and protect America's cultural and natural heritage for the enjoyment of this and future generations. Young and old alike give of their time and expertise to assist our paid staff in achieving our national mission.

Volunteers can be utilized in any and all parts of the park management system. All levels and types of skills can be utilized and almost any type of work can be performed as long as it is work that:

1. Would not otherwise get done during a particular fiscal year because of funding or personnel limitations.

Or

2. Allows paid employees to accomplish work that would not otherwise get done during a particular fiscal year because of funding or personnel limitations.

And

3. Does not result in the displacement of any paid employees.

Commitment -We rely on volunteers at Big Bend National Park. The enjoyment and pride that volunteers gain from being part of the team is immeasurable. Should you decide become a volunteer, we ask that you make a commitment to the volunteer program.

Simple ways to help Big Bend National Park have a consistent high-quality volunteer program:

- Commit to working on a regular schedule within a specified timeframe. Knowing that we can count on you enables us to plan a consistent program for our visitors.
- Let us know when as soon as possible, for whatever reason, you will not be coming to work.
- Communicate with us by updating address, email and phone number when necessary.
- Record your hours worked so that we can accurately report volunteer hours park-wide and recognize your work for annual awards.
- Attend special training, workshops, and fieldtrips when applicable.

Volunteer Opportunities -Park volunteers participate in virtually every aspect of the operations at Big Bend National Park. Below are some positions commonly filled by volunteers. This list is not meant to limit the possibilities for VIP opportunities, but rather to offer a general overview. All volunteer positions that include a housing subsidy require 32 hours a week of volunteer service.

Visitor Center Interpreter - The Visitor Center Interpreter provides interpretation and orientation to visitors by answering visitor questions, providing brochures, maps and details on Big Bend National Park and writing backcountry hiking, camping and river permits. This includes operating the Visitor Center and opening and closing on time. While the visitor center is open, duties include: fee collection, selling entrance and annual passes, running A/V equipment, housekeeping, posting information on bulletin boards, and raising and lowering U. S. flag. Volunteer will be acting as a trained sales clerk for Big Bend Natural History Association (BBNHA) items including making change and completing credit card transactions and stocking and reordering merchandise from BBNHA office as needed. Balancing both the fee collection and BBNHA registers at the end of the day will be required.

Campground Host - The Campground Host greets visitors, assists in locating sites, answers questions, and advises of rules of the campground by giving every visitor a rules/map handout. Duties include correcting minor regulation violations and reporting more serious infractions to Law Enforcement Staff, picking up litter in Campground and reporting all maintenance needs to Law Enforcement Staff, recording and reporting to park dispatch weather and campground statistics daily via radio or phone, maintaining VIP files and assisting with ranger files, assisting with fee collection operations including reservation system, counting of fees, maintaining fee collection supplies and updating information kiosk. Occasionally campground host may be asked to assist with river and other vehicle shuttles both inside and outside Big Bend NP and assist with medical incidents, traffic control, search and rescue, and other emergency service incidents.

Back Country Hosts - Back Country Hosts patrol Backcountry campsites, greet visitors, assist locating sites, answer questions and advise on Backcountry rules. Other duties include correct minor regulation violations and report others to Law Enforcement Staff, report road and site conditions to park dispatch via radio or phone, maintain Backcountry files and assist with ranger files. Occasionally you may

assist with feeding and care of park livestock, livestock round-ups, special operations acting as drivers to insert and extract teams, river and other vehicle shuttles both inside and outside Big Bend NP, medical incidents, traffic control, search and rescue, and other emergency service incidents.

Science and Resource Management - Volunteers, on a part-time, short-term or full-time basis, can help with restoration and revegetation projects, weed management, database processing and analysis, filing, inventory and monitoring of species or collections, transcribing oral histories, cataloging, planting native plants, library management, environmental monitoring and many other projects.

Maintenance - The Maintenance Division is responsible for a wide variety of duties in the park. Grounds and housing maintenance, building and trail construction and maintenance, the recycling program and painting are a few of the many possibilities for a maintenance volunteer.

Volunteer Bill of Rights - At Big Bend National Park, volunteers can expect to be treated as valuable, useful members of the team. To help accomplish great things, all of the staff members agree to the following beliefs about the Volunteer-In-Parks program and the volunteers who give of their time. VIPs have:

- ★ The right to be treated as a co-worker, not just free help.
- ★ The right to suitable assignments with consideration for personal preferences, temperament, life experience, education and work history.
- ★ The right to know as much about the organization as possible: its policies, people, and programs.
- ★ The right to proper job training.
- ★ The right to continuing education on the job as follow-up to initial training, information on new developments, and training to prepare for greater responsibility.
- ★ The right to sound guidance and direction by someone who is experienced, well-informed, patient and thoughtful, and who has the time to invest in giving guidance.
- ★ The right to a place to work: an orderly, designated place, conducive to work and worthy of the job to be done.
- ★ The right to a variety of assignments, and increasing levels of responsibility and challenge.
- ★ The right to be heard, to have a part in planning, to feel free to make suggestions, and to have respect shown for opinions.
- ★ The right to recognition in the form of day-to-day expressions of appreciation, by being treated as a bonafide co-worker, and awards.

Before You Volunteer

Passports and travel into Mexico – Land travelers must have a valid U.S. passport or a U.S. citizenship document accompanied by acceptable photo identification, such as a state or military issued ID in order to regain entry into the United States. U.S. citizens do not require a visa or a tourist card for tourist stays of 72 hours or less within "the border zone," defined as an area between 20 to 30 kilometers of the border with the U.S., depending on the location. U.S. citizens traveling as tourists beyond the border zone or entering Mexico by air must pay a fee to obtain a tourist card, also known as an FM-T, available from Mexican consulates, Mexican border crossing points and Mexican tourism offices. Please refer to <http://travel.state.gov> for more information. The closest legal border crossing into Mexico from Big Bend is at Presidio.

Uniform Standards and Appearance -As an individual representing the National Park Service, one should strive to look professional and approachable. This implies not only good grooming but also a neat, identifiable uniform. When volunteers are in positions of public contact, they are held to the same uniform standards as paid staff. Please be aware that volunteers are *not* allowed to wear any portion of the “green and gray” National Park Service uniform that is identifiable as such (jackets, shirts, hats, belts, etc. anything with the NPS patch). Since volunteers may be the only National Park Service employee that a visitor meets during their visit, the following uniform is required:

- (1) **Khaki shirt with a volunteer patch**- long or short sleeve shirts can be checked out from the Volunteer Coordinator.
- (2) **Dark chocolate brown pants or jeans**- to be purchased by the volunteer. The park will reimburse the volunteer for the purchase of two pairs of brown pants (up to \$40 each) their first year, and one pair of brown pants per year for returning volunteers. Since brown pants are hard to find, there are some jeans and trousers available for volunteers to borrow for the length of their commitment. Check with the Volunteer Coordinator to go through the park’s collection.
- (3) **Nametag and green volunteer badge** should be worn at all times. Hours bar recognition award can be worn with the uniform.
- (4) **Plain brown belt**- provided by the volunteer
- (5) **Dark socks** (preferably brown)- provided by the volunteer
- (6) **Brown or black shoes**- hiking boots or walking or exercise shoes are provided by the volunteer. No open-toed shoes or sandals of any kind.
- (7) (Optional) **Volunteer hat**- volunteers can get a “baseball” hat or a “fishing”(floppy) hat from the Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers may keep the hats when they are finished their commitment
- (8) (Optional) **Volunteer jacket**- Khaki coats, jackets or fleece are available for checkout from the Volunteer Coordinator. Fleece jackets can be worn for warmth in the visitor centers as long as the nametag and volunteer badges are pinned on the outside.
- (9) (Optional) **Dark brown sweaters or vests** can be purchased at the volunteer’s expense. The park will provide patches to be sewn on the left sleeve of sweaters. Nametags and green volunteer badges must be pinned on the outside.
- (10) (Optional) Volunteers who work in the winter may wear additional thermal layers underneath the volunteer shirt.

Some employees do not wear the uniform and should bring serviceable work clothing. Trail crew workers, firefighters, and maintenance employees should have sturdy leather work boots with lug or vibram-type soles for work around rocks and mountainslopes. Shoes with canvas, rubber, nylon, Gore-tex, or lightweight uppers may not offer enough protection, and are not permitted for performing maintenance work. We recommend heavy denim or khaki trousers, work shirts of durable material and leather gloves.

Pets –(Excerpt from Management Directive 7) Temporary employees or volunteers generally may not keep may not keep pets in Government housing. The only exception to this policy will be for those employees assigned to a single-family residence who do not share the residence with other employees. Arrangements must be made with your supervisor in advance of your arrival if you wish to bring a pet. A maximum of three pets are allowed per permanent residence, excluding apartments, duplexes, and dormitories. In apartments or duplexes, a maximum of one pet is allowed per permanent residence. No pets are allowed in dormitory housing. Pets are required to be physically confined or on restraint when located at their residence and on physical restraint when away from their residence. Fence construction for pet confinement requires pre-approval from the Chief, Facility Management Division, to ensure compatibility with current structures.

Pet owners are required to remove and properly dispose of fecal matter deposited by pets at locations other than the primary residence in an appropriate refuse container. Seasonal/temporary personnel (VIP's, SCA's, contractors, etc.) may not have pets in Government quarters unless they are living in other than park -owned quarters.

Transportation to and from Big Bend - Transportation from your home to the park and return is at your expense. You must have transportation to your daily work location.

You will need a vehicle in Big Bend. There is NO commercial transportation available in the park or to the park. Amtrak, Greyhound bus lines, and chartered planes are available in Alpine and Fort Stockton. The nearest commercial airlines are at Midland International Airport in Midland/Odessa, and El Paso International Airport. Rental cars can be procured in “neighboring” towns.

Major park roads are paved and are open and in good condition year round. In Southwest Texas, there are two major road hazards--wildlife crossings and small creeks and washes which cannot be crossed for short periods of time after a heavy rain.

WHEN YOU START VOLUNTEERING

Check-in Procedure – Every individual volunteer must fill out and sign the Volunteer Service Agreement for Natural Resources Agencies in order to officially become a volunteer and be covered for work injury compensation and liability. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have a parent sign the Parental Agreement section of the form. If volunteering with a group, the group leader must sign the form and provide a list of all participants.

Volunteers receive the same protection as NPS employees under the Federal Employees Compensation Act (5 USC, Chapter 81) and the Federal Tort Claims Act (28 USC, 2671-2680) and are considered to be Federal employees for those purposes only. These two acts provide the following protection

- **FEDERAL EMPLOYEES COMPENSATION ACT:** VIPs are entitled to first aid and medical care for on-the-job injuries as well as hospital care when necessary. When travel is necessary to receive medical care, transportation may be furnished and the travel and incidental expenses associated with it may be reimbursable. When death results from an on-the-job injury, burial and funeral expenses, not to exceed \$800, may be paid. In addition, other compensation benefits may be approved by the Office of Workers Compensation Programs on a case-by-case basis.
- A VIP who suffers an on-the-job injury and desires to file a claim for compensation should contact his or her immediate supervisor. The supervisor is responsible for helping the VIP obtain and complete the proper forms and must certify the authenticity of the claim. The supervisor then submits the claim to the servicing personnel office for processing. (Specific information on this procedure and process, including information on the various forms that are required, can be found in the 1992 NPS publication Supervisors Guide to Helping the Injured Employee. This publication should be available from your Administrative Officer or Personnel Specialist.)
- **FEDERAL TORT CLAIMS ACT:** This act provides a means whereby damages may be awarded as a result of claims against the National Park Service for injury or loss of property or personal injury or death caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of any employee of the NPS while acting within the scope of his or her office or employment under circumstances where the

NPS, if a private person, would be liable for the claimant in accordance with the law of the place where the act or omission occurred. Since VIPs are considered employees for the purpose of this act, they are offered the protection of the Act for personal liability as long as they are within the scope of their assigned responsibilities.

Because of the visibility of VIPs, it is imperative that they be properly signed up and operating under written job descriptions that contain specific information on the type of work they are assigned to do. This is necessary in case questions arise about whether a VIP was acting within his or her assigned responsibilities.

You will also fill out the Emergency Contact form before starting your work assignment. You will receive a park employee's personal vehicle sticker either at the Entrance Station or from Claudia Armberger at the Interpretive Office which will allow for free access into the park.

Required Identification –If you will be operating a Government vehicle, you will be required to have a valid state motor vehicle operator's license and present it to your supervisor for verification when you start working.

WHILE VOLUNTEERING

Hours of Duty- Volunteers occupying quarters or full RV hook-ups are required to work 32 hours per week. Other tours of duty are arranged by the supervisor.

Recording Your Hours- When you begin your volunteer experience, we will create a folder for you to be kept near your work area. Inside this folder is your time sheet. Keeping track of your hours on the time sheet is your responsibility and enables us to document the total number of hours contributed by volunteers in each work area. This helps us receive funding for our Volunteer Program and helps you on your way to recognition and awards Timesheets need to be turned into the Volunteer Office on a monthly basis.

Performance – Full-time volunteers may receive a performance plan from your supervisor. This plan will identify critical results expected and indicators of successful performance. Both you and your supervisor share responsibility for ensuring that performance expectations are understood. You should receive a minimum of one performance review during your employment if the length of appointment is sufficient. This is a critical discussion to help you perform your job successfully. In addition, you should initiate discussion of performance issues with your supervisor if needed or desired. Failure to meet performance expectations will result in termination.

Grievance Procedure-At Big Bend National Park we endeavor to make volunteering a wonderful and rewarding experience. If circumstances arise that make volunteering at the site less than enjoyable, it is important that you follow the program grievance procedure.

You should use the following guidelines and steps in addressing grievances:

Discuss openly and frankly any disagreements with another team member. This should always be done away from the visiting public and other team members. Most personal problems can be dealt with in this manner.

If problems persist, inform your supervisor of the problems you are having. If the supervisor is unable to find a solution, he or she will contact the volunteer manager. At any time volunteers may come to the volunteer manager and talk openly if they feel uncomfortable talking to their supervisor.

The volunteer manager will bring the people involved together for a discussion of the issue. Agreement will be reached about how to proceed from this meeting forward.

We would appreciate your filling out the Feedback Form included in your registration packet and turning it into the Volunteer Office before you leave.

Equal Opportunity – EO laws ensure the right of all people to be protected from discrimination in employment regardless of race, sex, color, creed, age, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, or non-disqualifying handicap conditions. It is your responsibility to conduct yourself with other employees in a manner which encourages cooperation and teamwork. Remarks or gestures which are of a discriminatory or harassing nature are not productive. If you feel you have been discriminated against, please contact your supervisor or the volunteer manager immediately.

Sexual Harassment Policy -Sexual harassment is defined as verbal comments, gestures, and physical contact of a sexual nature that are deliberate or repeated and unsolicited. Sexual harassment is also defined as unwanted sexual advances and requests for sexual favors.

It is the policy of Big Bend National Park to adhere to Federal guidelines and Bureau policy relating to sexual harassment. As Federal employees and volunteers, we have a responsibility for maintaining high standards of conduct in the work place; therefore, sexual harassment will not be tolerated or condoned. Every effort should be made by managers, supervisors, and employees to ensure that all employees and volunteers work in an environment free from sexual harassment. If you feel you have been sexually harassed, please contact your supervisor or the volunteer manager immediately.

Ethics and Standards of Conduct - As a condition of public service, you are expected to adhere to the fundamental principles of ethical behavior, as defined in the Federal Government Executive Order 12674 . Seek advice from your supervisor, or the Human Resources Officer, about any potential conflict of interest or situation that may create the appearance of impropriety.

Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in both their official and private lives in such a manner as to reflect credibility upon the National Park Service and Glacier National Park. As public servants, you are expected to present a neat, clean appearance at all times. In general, your actions on and off the job which violate precepts of decency and/or acceptable behavior may be cause for termination of employment. Violations of park regulations may be cause for removal. The Park Service uniform or official uniform items will be worn only during duty hours and traveling to and from work. Standards of conduct also address outside work or employment while a person is a government employee. Generally, outside work is permitted as long as it does not prevent an employee from devoting his/her primary interest and energy to the official duties and there is no conflict or apparent conflict of interest created. Specific questions regarding ethics or conduct should be addressed to the Human Resources Office.

Termination of Volunteer Agreement -If, at any point, a volunteer decides to end their involvement as a park volunteer, they should notify the volunteer manager who will terminate their volunteer services agreement. Standards are held high for conduct as an employee or volunteer for the National Park Service. If a volunteer is found incapable of successfully completing their duties, this agreement may also be terminated by the Volunteer manager in consultation with the supervisor.

Government Motor Vehicle Operation - As a Federal employee, it is your responsibility to set an example in safe and careful driving. You are expected to observe all driving laws. Observance of traffic regulations will protect employees and visitors alike. Seat belts must always be worn! Government owned or leased vehicles/equipment are to be used for official purposes only during duty time. Employees are responsible at all times for the proper care, operation, and maintenance of government vehicles. Misuse of a government vehicle may result in disciplinary action. A Board of Survey is held any time damage to government property occurs. Should an employee be found negligent, they may be held liable for damages. A defensive driving course may be required of you early in the season. Always STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN before taking off in a vehicle.

USE OF SEAT BELTS IS MANDATORY

Reimbursable Expenses -The following are considered reimbursable expenses: brown pants for uniform, travel approved by your supervisor and subject to a variable reimbursement rate, propane for your RV. Instructions for submitting reimbursement forms are as follows:

1. Obtain a "Claim for Reimbursement for Volunteer Expenses" (Form 10-67). A supply of these forms is kept in the form rack in the mailroom at headquarters, or may be obtained from the Volunteer Coordinator or Division Clerk Claudia Arnberger. **THIS IS A 2-SIDED FORM.**
2. Fill out the form and **sign and date it**. Receipts with the vendor's name and address must be attached to the form. If you are submitting a cash register receipt, the cashier must sign the receipt and mark it "PAID."
3. Send the form to the Volunteer Coordinator (Angelina Yost) in the Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services for her signature.
4. You will receive a notice when your reimbursement form has been submitted for processing. Please allow at least a week for the paperwork to be processed.
5. In your next convenient trip to Panther Junction, please see Mark Garcia-Prats, Supply Technician, to receive your check. Call Mark ahead of time [ext 117] to make sure he is in the office – his schedule varies. You must see him in person to sign for your check.
6. Each check written to you has a draft charge, so try to save receipts until a reasonable amount can be paid to you (at least \$20 if possible).
7. **Please turn in your FINAL reimbursement form at least one week before you leave the park.** If you do not plan ahead for your reimbursements, you create more work for the administrative staff by making them mail your paperwork and check in two separate mailings. Please avoid this unless there are extenuating circumstances. Thank you!

Government Property - Government property, supplies, keys, badges, ID card, etc., will not be issued to employees without proper authorization. You may be held financially responsible for loss of, or damage to, government property assigned to you. Government property may not be used for personal projects.

Use of Government Telephones & Computers - Employees on non-duty time are allowed limited use of office equipment for personal uses that involve only negligible expense to the Government (such as electricity, sheets of paper, ink, and ordinary wear and tear) and do not interfere with official business. Office equipment includes copy machines, computers, printers, and fax machines.

In accordance with the Departmental Internet Acceptable Use Policy, and with supervisory approval, as well as completion of Internet Security Training, employees are allowed to engage in the following activities: 1) Access job-related information during working hours to meet the requirements of their jobs; 2) Retrieve non-job-related information to develop or enhance Internet-related skills – similar to allowing library use on personal time. Employees who do not require access to the Internet as part of their official duties may not access the Internet using departmental facilities under any circumstances, with the exception of OPM’s USAJOBS website for employment information; 3) Make some personal purchases through the Internet, but only during non-duty time. When making such purchases, employees must have purchases sent to a non-government address.

Employees on non-duty time are allowed to use government e-mail systems and computers for limited personal use with the following restrictions: 1) cost to the government must be negligible; 2) use is for personal point-to-point communication only – no mass mailings or broadcast transmissions, or receipt/transmission of attached files, etc.; 3) employee must not represent themselves as acting in an official capacity; 4) use caution when giving out their government e-mail address for personal purposes, particularly when “registering” at various Internet sites.

Examples of improper use of government equipment include: 1) loading personally-owned software on government machines, or attaching personally-owned hardware/peripherals to government networks or hardware; 2) use of color copiers & printers when printing in color, due to high associated costs; 3) use for illegal activities (e.g., gambling) or any activities that are inappropriate or offensive to co-workers or the public (e.g., sexually explicit sites); 4) downloading of executable programs or files from Internet sites; 5) making purchases for personal commercial gain activity; 6) use for outside fund-raising activities; 7) use of live stream or “push” technology from the Internet – which could strain the network and significantly slow communications, inhibiting DOI employees from conducting official business.

Personal use of government telephones during duty hours is allowed if necessary and in the interest of the government. Purely personal calls (not in the interest of the government) may occur on a limited basis, with the employee ensuring that all charges are at their own expense. Such use must not adversely affect the performance of employee’s official duties; must be of reasonable duration and frequency; and could not have reasonably been made during non-duty hours. Employees may not make purely personal long-distance calls expecting to reimburse the government later. A pay phone is available at Panther Junction Headquarters for employee use.

Library Policy - The more you learn about the history of this unique place, the more you can share with the public. We encourage you to use the interpretive library as much as possible. The library and its contents are invaluable and precious. Some of the books are difficult if not impossible to replace.

- Please follow the rules and regulations below to help us maintain our collection:
- Only officially signed-up volunteers, seasonal and permanent staff may check books out of Big Bend National Park Interpretive Library.
- All books are due back in 30 days from date of check out.
- To check a book out: PRINT your name and date on the checkout card in the back of the book and place the card in the wooden box on the window ledge, filed alphabetically by author..
- When you return a book, place it in the tray on next to the window ledge. We will reshelve it. The White Oral History Binders on the top of the bookcase cannot be taken from the library. Books that have not yet been catalogued cannot be checked out.
- You are responsible for the books you check out. If the book is lost or damaged beyond repair, then you will be liable for the cost of replacing it.

Safety Policy - Safety comes first, every job, every time. As a volunteer, part of your training will focus on safety. Learn the procedures for using the telephones and the radio, and know how to call for help when necessary

Safety isn't just about calling 911 when an accident occurs. It's about taking care of YOU! If you feel unsure about the safety of any task you have been asked to do, tell your supervisor immediately. No one is expected to put themselves at risk AT ANY TIME. We don't want anyone to be hurt, and we don't believe accidents are acceptable.

If You Are Injured - If you are injured while volunteering at Big Bend National Park you need to report the accident immediately to your supervisor. If your supervisor is not available report the accident to any NPS employee. You will need to help fill out form CA-1, (Employee/Volunteer Notice of Injury) with your supervisor as soon as possible. If medical treatment is required your supervisor will need to fill out form CA-16 (Authorization for Examination and/or Treatment) within 48 hours of the initial treatment. If at all possible the form CA-16 should accompany you to the treatment facility.

Safety Precautions while at Big Bend National Park: Drive within the posted speed limits and watch constantly for javelina, deer and rabbits grazing along the highway shoulders.

Desert heat can kill you. While hiking carry one gallon of water per person per day, wear long pants, a hat, long-sleeved shirt and sunscreen. Take a flashlight, map and compass.

Check backcountry road conditions before leaving, especially during the rainy season. Avoid dry washes during the rainy season and do not try to drive across low-water crossings if they are running. If your vehicle is stuck, any assistance is miles away and will be very costly..

Let someone know WHERE you are going and WHEN you plan to return. If you are lost or a long distance from the main highway--STAY WITH, OR CLOSE BY YOUR CAR. It is always a good idea to take along an old blanket, extra clothing, WATER, a flashlight, and emergency food supplies. Plan your long trips to allow time to return to the paved roads before dark.

An important element of work in a backcountry setting is self-reliance and personal preparedness. Accordingly, park personnel (including volunteers) are expected to assume a high degree of responsibility for their own safety, commensurate with the nature of activities they undertake. While safe practices and procedures will be emphasized in all aspects of the backcountry work, employees are ultimately responsible for their own safety.

A safe and successful backcountry trip is dependent upon good situational awareness and the ability to anticipate, detect and act upon problems encountered (risk management). Discretion and judgment are key elements of this process.

What is Situational Awareness?

Situational Awareness is the ability to identify, process, and comprehend the critical elements of information about what is happening around you. It is dependent upon the accuracy of one's perception of the current environment. Loss of situational awareness increases the potential for human error.

The loss of situational awareness usually occurs over a period of time and will leave a trail of clues. Factors that reduce situational awareness include the following:

Confusion
Lack of attention to surroundings
Departure from established policy or procedure
Failure to meet objectives or follow plans
Ambiguity
Fixation or preoccupation
Insufficient communication
Fatigue or stress
Task overload
Task underload
Group mindset
“Press on regardless” philosophy
Failure to recognize degrading conditions, such as weather

Pay attention to current and changing conditions. Listen to your gut feelings or inner voice! What is your physical and mental status? Are you properly clothed and equipped for your trip? Observe your surroundings. Watch your footing. Evaluate current and changing weather. Regularly communicate your status. Good situational awareness requires constant attention and processing of all the objective and subjective information that surrounds you. Situational awareness is an essential element to managing risk.

Practice Risk Management

Risk management is a process that begins with effective situational awareness. Risk management helps ensure that critical factors and risks associated with backcountry travel and activities are identified and considered during the decision making process. This proactive process must precede action.

Risk management should include the following five steps:

Identify hazards (steep or loose slope ahead, flash flood potential)

Assess hazards (Will weather conditions and temperatures allow for the performance of the job? Is the river level too high for the skill level of personnel? Does terrain exceed my skill and ability? Is my footwear adequate? Could an uncontrolled fall result in serious injury?)

Make decisions (Do benefits outweigh potential costs? Do the benefits of going down the slope outweigh those of finding an alternative route? Should I turn around?)

Implement controls (Are controls in place for identified hazards? Has the best route been identified? Do other reasonable routes exist? Is my safety equipment ready? Have I contacted Dispatch and advised of my plan to cross a hazardous area? Have I asked for status checks until clear of the hazard?)

Evaluate (Re-evaluate your decision. Is it still a good decision? Are conditions different than anticipated? Reassess. Change the plan if necessary!)

Fire danger is always a consideration at Big Bend. Wood or ground fires are prohibited, and exercise caution in the use of gas stoves, charcoal grills and cigarettes. Smoking is prohibited on all trails in the Chisos Mountains.

Never feed any of Big Bend's wildlife. Report all bear or mountain lion sightings. Venomous snakes, scorpions, spiders and centipedes are all active during the warmer months. Wear shoes or boots at night instead of sandals. Watch where you walk and place your hands.

Swimming is not recommended at any location in Big Bend National Park.

Security - Big Bend National Park shares the border with Mexico for 118 miles. This is a remote region.

Visitors should be aware that drug smuggling routes pass through the park. If you see any activity which looks illegal, suspicious, or out of place, please do not intervene. Note your location. Call 911 or report it to a ranger as quickly as possible.

Each year hundreds of people travel north through the park seeking to enter the United States. It is possible you could encounter an individual or small group trying to walk through the park with little or no water. Please do not stop, but instead, note your location and immediately call 911 or contact a ranger as soon as possible. Lack of water is a life-threatening emergency in the desert.

Emergencies (Medical and otherwise) - If an emergency occurs:

- Call Dispatch at 477-1187 during operational hours. After operational hours call 911.
- Summarizes the situation. State what the emergency is, and where you are.
- DO NOT exceed the level of your current training and certification. If you do administer CPR you should always use a mouth barrier and wear rubber gloves to reduce the possibility of infection by fluid borne pathogens. Pocket masks and gloves can be found in park first aid kits. You should learn where first aid kits are kept before an emergency occurs.
- Any time that you may come into contact with blood or other bodily fluids, you should wear rubber gloves, even if it is just to put on a bandage.
- Always think of your safety first and then worry about the patient (or other situation).
- Remember, the goal is to stabilize the situation until qualified emergency personnel can take over. If you have any questions about this, please contact the Chief Ranger.

Lost and Found - Articles which are found must be turned in to the nearest ranger station or Park Headquarters. Unclaimed articles turned in by park visitors are returned to the finder after a minimum of 60 days if not claimed by the owner. Finders of lost articles should leave their name and address when turning in an article. Government employees and their families are not permitted to claim articles which they find. Such articles are disposed of as public property.

Visitor Comments - From time to time people have comments or complaints about various issues. Please politely listen, take down relevant information, and report the complaint to your supervisor. Comment forms are located at the Visitor Center.

Life in the Big Bend Community

Activities at Big Bend - Big Bend residents have an opportunity to participate in a variety of activities within the park. Because of our isolation, we must depend upon our own resourcefulness for diversion. We hope you will share your talents and join us in making life in Big Bend even more enjoyable.

A Community Library and Weight Room is located near the school. You will need to see Mark Garcia-Prats for a key for the door. There are no "set" checkout/ return dates for borrowing books. You can donate books to the library at any time.

A Combination Tennis, Basketball, and Volleyball Court (lighted) is located near the school, and is available on a first come, first served basis. The playground equipment on the school grounds may be used after school hours. There is also a quarter-mile track near the school.

Desertsports in Terlingua offers mountain bike rides on most Sundays for riders of different levels. Contact them at: (432) 371-2727 directly for more details.

Mail and Freight Services – A United States Post Office is located in the Administrative Building at Panther Junction.

U.S. Post Office Mailing Address:
P. O. Box 20
Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834

Hours: Monday through Friday: 8:00 - 12:00 AM and 3:00 – 4:30 PM

Incoming mail is available at the post office Monday through Saturday after 2:30 p.m. All outgoing mail must be posted by 12:00 noon. There is only one delivery and one pickup each day. There is no house or rural delivery, and mail must be collected at the post office. Basin residents can arrange for mail pick-up at the Basin store.

To obtain a mailbox:

For temporary residents: Fill out an application and turn it in to the post office. Box rental fee is \$40.00 per year, or \$20 for six months. If you are here for less than 6 months, your fee will be refunded at the end of your term of service.

For short-timers: Have mail sent General Delivery, Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834.

UPS and FedEx: Both deliver to the park, but packages may not be received in a timely manner. **Contact Mark Garcia-Prats (477-1117) at headquarters if you expect to receive a delivery from either company so that it is not returned to the sender. Mark will let you know when the package arrives via email.** You must call UPS to make arrangements for personal pickups. Call (800) 858-4108, 1 day in advance with the weight and dimensions. The Post Office cannot accept or send UPS or Fedex packages. Most mixups with packages occur during the first few weeks of your arrival. Keep in mind that many volunteers come through this park during the course of a year. It is your responsibility to let Mark know that you are expecting something. There is no scheduled FedEx pickup service in the park.

The Kitchen in the Panther Junction headquarters building contains a microwave, refrigerator, stove, and coffee pot. It's a great convenience and should always be kept clean.

The Bulletin Board on the wall at the back door of the headquarters building contains a variety of information: Ride share, want ads, don't want ads, party announcements, thank you notes, Terlingua Moon newspaper, etc.

Schwan's: You'll know you're an official Big Bend resident when your freezer is full of Schwan's products!! Schwan's delivers to Castolon, Panther Junction and the Basin every other Monday, and delivers to Rio Grande Village every other Thursday.

Due to lightning storms, wind, and sometimes for no apparent reason, the electricity tends to blink on and off fairly often. Attaching surge protectors to all your major appliances, computers, etc. is a very good idea.

Churches —Catholic, Methodist and Baptist churches are located in Marathon. Big Bend Baptist Church is located in Terlingua.

Medical Services - Big Bend Memorial Hospital is located on Hwy 118 North in Alpine. There are several physicians in Alpine who work in their individual offices and are associated with the hospital.

-A medical clinic is located in Marathon.

-Memorial Hospital is located in Fort Stockton.

-An ambulance is maintained by the park and is available for any emergency.

-Terlingua Medics, located in Study Butte, provides emergency medical care to So. Brewster Co.

Concessioners - Forever Resorts Inc., operates all lodging and eating facilities in Big Bend National Park. The Chisos Mountains Lodge in the Basin provides the only dining facilities in the park. Limited grocery supplies, are for sale at the Basin, Rio Grande Village, and Castolon stores, and at the Panther Junction service station. You can usually get a loaf of bread, carton of milk, box of cereal, canned foods, ice cream, luncheon meats, etc. Gasoline, propane, and diesel fuel are available at Panther Junction. Propane tanks can be filled at Rio Grande Village, but it is not available on weekends. Call the RGV store to make sure someone can dispense propane before going there.

Special Information - The distance to the "corner store" precludes sending the kids on their bikes; therefore, a supply of groceries should be brought with you in sufficient amount to tide you over until the first shopping safari can be planned and executed.

Our community is composed of employees and their families of not only the NPS, but others such as concessioners, U.S. Border Patrol, Postal Service, San Vicente School personnel, and volunteers. The interdependence of families caused by the isolation, proximity and similarity of work carries definite responsibilities for all residents.

Shopping and Services on the "OUTSIDE"-All of the following towns and cities are accessible via paved highways. As usual in the Southwest, there are numerous dips and water crossings.

Due to distance, it is a good idea to call ahead to various establishments to get their hours of operation. Hours vary by season for many businesses.

Marathon: 70 miles from Panther Junction, population 500. By way of north entrance road, Highway 385. Small grocery stores, post office, cafes, motel, hotels, garage and service stations, beauty shop, book store, art galleries, churches, clinic, grade and high school.

Churches: Catholic, Methodist, Baptist (all on the same street)

Beauty Shop: Laverne's (owned and operated by Laverne Avery)

Book Store: Front Street Books, owned and operated by Mike and Jean Hardy. This store offers a 10% discount on all sales to all Big Bend National Park and Marathon residents. Lots of natural and Texas history, fiction, new and used books on tape, used and new books, magazines, newspapers, etc., and will order anything.

Cafes/Restaurants: The Gage Hotel, the Oasis, Coffee Shop.

Alpine: 100 miles from Panther Junction, estimated population 6,200. May be reached via Highway 118 or Highway 385. A community hospital, doctors, dentists, chiropractors, banks, savings and loan, post office, courthouse, movie theater, several motels, restaurants, library, golf course, churches, grade school, high school and Sul Ross State University. Pharmacies, variety stores, hardware stores, auto parts and dealers, lumber, furniture, and several clothing stores. Barber and beauty shops, dry cleaning establishments and laundromats. There are a few small grocery stores plus a Food Basket and Baeza's, liquor stores, health food store and thrift shops.

Terlingua/Study Butte/Lajitas: The Study Butte Store usually has fresh vegetables and fruit, and a small selection of groceries. There is also a health food store, bank, a beauty shop, and a liquor store. The bank is closed from 11am to 2pm. Terlingua Auto (Archie's) will service your auto. Desert Sports has lots of your biking needs. Lajitas has a golf course and restaurants, and the Lajitas Trading Post has a limited selection of groceries.

Swimming Pools: *Terlingua Longhorn Ranch Motel:* \$1.00 per person. (call ahead)

Fort Davis: Some specialty shopping, interesting areas to visit nearby are Davis Mountains State Park, Fort Davis National Historic Site, and McDonald Observatory. Fort Davis is 26 miles northwest of Alpine.

Fort Stockton: 128 miles from Panther Junction. Good shopping with many of the same services as Alpine. Sears catalog store, several variety stores, banks, grocery stores, WalMart, and restaurants.

Midland/Odessa: 222 miles from Panther Junction. Good shopping and airport.

DISTANCES FROM PANTHER JUNCTION

ABILENE - 392 MILES

ALPINE - 100 MILES

AUSTIN - 474 MILES

CARLSBAD CAVERNS NP - 305 MILES

DALLAS - 559 MILES

DEL RIO - 253 MILES

EL PASO - 329 MILES

FORT DAVIS - 128 MILES

FORT STOCKTON - 127 MILES

GUADALUPE MTNS NP - 275 MILES

HOUSTON - 610 MILES

LAJITAS – 41 MILES

LUBBOCK - 358 MILES

MARATHON - 69 MILES

MARFA - 131 MILES

MIDLAND - 242 MILES

PRESIDIO - 108 MILES

SAN ANGELO - 300 MILES

SAN ANTONIO - 406 MILES

STUDY BUTTE - 24 MILES

TERLINGUA - 28 MILES

VAN HORN - 200 MILES

Communications

Telephone: Telephones can be obtained for all residences from Big Bend Telephone Company, Alpine, at the occupant's expense. You may call their toll free number (1-800-592-4781 or commercial 432-837-3393) for installation and monthly charges in Big Bend National Park. Their web address is: <http://www.bigbend.net/> Most cell phones don't work in the park.

Internet: Numerous broadband internet service plans are available through Big Bend Telephone Company. You may call their toll free number at: 1-800-592-4781. The web address is: <http://www.bigbend.net/>

BBNHA has made remote access available to volunteers and seasonal employees at Chisos Basin and Panther Junction housing area. Volunteers need to contact the Volunteer office in order to gain access to the Panther Junction system.

ATM: ATM - the lobby of the Chisos Mountains Lodge and West Texas National Bank, Study Butte.

Television: There is no cable service or regular reception of TV service in the park. Park personnel who want TV service must purchase their own satellite dish.

Radio: Radio reception is variable. There is an FM station located in Terlingua - KYOTE 100.2 and NPR-Marfa 93.5 FM. Satellite radio is an option you may want to look into. For information and a map of the area- Alpine Chamber of Commerce at (432) 837-2326.

RECYCLING

Big Bend National Park has one of the best recycling programs in the nation!! Please RECYCLE!

Locations of recycling containers:

The main recycling center is in the Recycling Building at the Panther Junction Maintenance yard.

Headquarters at Panther Junction: By the back door to the building.

Castolon: Recycling trailer at residential area. Recycle containers at campground.

Rio Grande Village: Recycling trailer outside fence at Maintenance Yard, containers at campground.

Basin: Recycle containers at campground.

White Ledger Paper Includes: Xerox paper (white only), notebook paper, cover letters from junk mail, dot-matrix computer paper, **any high quality white paper

Newspaper: Includes: Newspapers!

Magazines/Catalogs Includes: Bound magazines and catalogs, no newspaper or junk mail. *Bound reports consisting of high quality white paper (such as the Federal register) may go with white ledger.*

Paperboard: Includes: Cereal & cracker boxes, front/back to notebooks and legal pads, 6-pk beer cases, shoe boxes, etc. *Any non-corrugated cardboard.*

Cardboard: Includes: Corrugated cardboard ONLY (no paperboard) and *brown paper bags!*

Aluminum Cans Includes: **ONLY** aluminum beverage cans. *No aluminum foil, pie tins, cat food cans.*

Steel Cans Includes: Steel cans, aluminum foil, pie tins, cat food cans, metal lids from glass jars/juice, spray cans (empty). *No scrap metal [there is a scrap metal yard in the maintenance area].*

Plastics Includes: **ONLY** #1 and #2 plastics (check form number with arrows around it). *No plastic bags, styrofoam peanuts, oil (motor) containers. Rinse containers and remove lids!!*

Clear glass Includes: Clear glass only. *Please rinse bottles and jars and remove lids.*

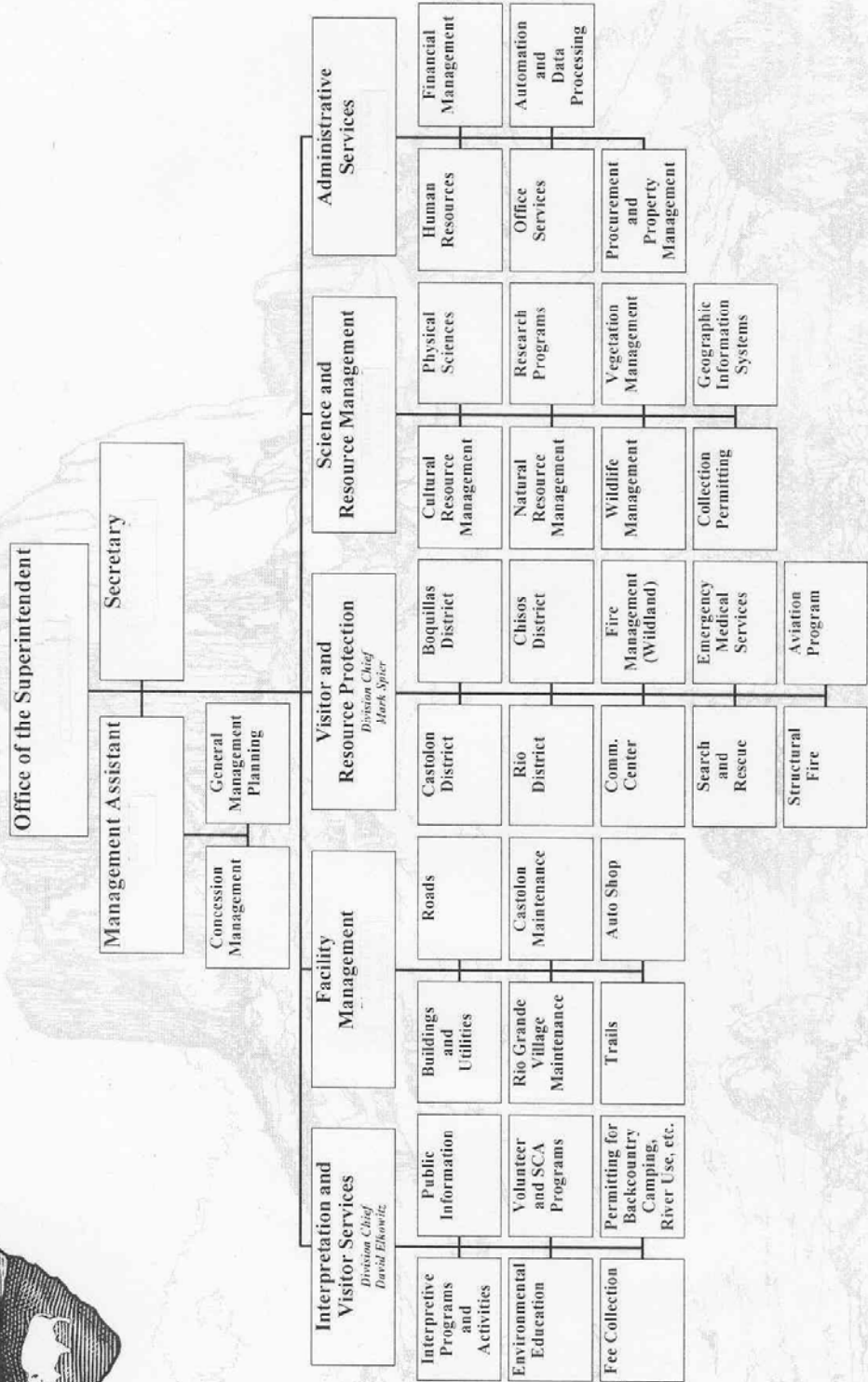
Brown glass Includes: Brown glass only. *Please rinse bottles and jars and remove lids.*

Green glass Includes: Green glass only. *Please rinse bottles and jars and remove lids.*

KITCHEN GREASE AND USED OIL FROM VEHICLES: THESE ITEMS CAN ONLY BE ACCEPTED AT THE RECYCLE BUILDING AT THE MAINTENANCE YARD AT PANTHER JUNCTION.



Big Bend National Park



Glossary of Terms

Like all organizations, Big Bend National Park has a jargon that is not always easily understood. When dealing with the public, try to minimize jargon. However, for your own use (and entertainment) the following glossary contains the definitions to a few mysterious terms that are used at Big Bend. If there is something you think should be added please let us know for the next edition of the handbook.

A

B

BIBE: An abbreviation for Big Bend National Park

BBNHA: Big Bend Natural History Association – Non-profit association that operates the bookstores in the park

BP- Border Patrol

C

CFR : Code of Federal Regulations. The regulations that govern the uses of the park.

D

Division Chiefs: The heads of the different divisions in the park.(Maintenance, Interpretation, Administration, and Curation).

F

Furlough: Lay-off period for some employees.

I

Interpretation: The act of educating the public about the park. A division of the staff in the park who engage in education. Often abbreviated to ‘interp.’

L

LE: Law Enforcement or Visitor and Resource Protection Division

Lieu Days: Days off for staff.

M

N

NPS: National Park Service

P

PJ – abbreviation for Panther Junction Headquarters

PGAP – abbreviation for Persimmon Gap

R

Radio: not walkie-talkie.

RGV: Rio Grande Village

S

SAR: Search and Rescue

SCA: Student Conservation Association whose members volunteer for 3 months

Seasonal: an employee who has been hired for up to six-month's employment. An emergency seasonal is an employee hired for a maximum of 120 days.

Shuttle: the delivery of personnel and equipment to and from a put-in or take out site on the river or at a trail head.

ScRM- abbreviation for Science and Resource Management Division

Superintendent: The person in charge of the park.

SOP-Standard Operating Procedures, as in "SOP Manual".

T

Term: an employee hired for up to four years, however the funding for these jobs is often year-to-year.

V

VC: Visitor Center.

VIP: Volunteer-in-Parks (See Volunteer).

Volunteer: An invaluable part of the team that helps the National Park Service and its partners do more than it could alone (see VIP).

VP – Visitor and Resource Protection (used to be Law Enforcement)

VaRP- same as above

VUA-Visitor Use Assistant; official title for the workers who staff the entrance station booths

APPENDIX

Excerpts from IRS Publication 526— Charitable Contributions For use in preparing Tax Returns

- Big Bend National Park is a qualifying organization based on the fact that it is a division of the United States government and is a Public Park.

Page 5: Publication 526

Out-of-Pocket Expenses in Giving Services

Although you cannot deduct the value of your services given to a qualified organization, you may be able to deduct some amounts you pay in giving services to a qualified organization. The amounts must be:

- Unreimbursed,
- Directly connected with the services,
- Expenses you had only because of the services you gave, and
- Not personal, living, or family expenses.

Table 2 contains questions and answers that apply to some individuals who volunteer their services.

Table 2. Volunteers' Questions and Answers

If you do volunteer work for a qualified organization, the following questions and answers may apply to you. All of the rules explained in this publication also apply. See, in particular, *Out-of-Pocket Expenses in Giving Services*.

Question	Answer
I do volunteer work 6 hours a week in the office of a qualified organization. The receptionist is paid \$6 an hour to do the same work I do. Can I deduct \$36 a week for my time?	No, you cannot deduct the value of your time or services.
The office is 30 miles from my home. Can I deduct any of my car expenses for these trips?	Yes, you can deduct the costs of gas and oil that are directly related to getting to and from the place where you are a volunteer. If you do not want to figure your actual costs, you can deduct 14 cents for each mile.
I volunteer as a Red Cross nurse's aide at a hospital. Can I deduct the cost of uniforms that I must wear?	Yes, you can deduct the cost of buying and cleaning your uniforms if the hospital is a qualified organization, the uniforms are not suitable for everyday use, and you must wear them when volunteering.
I pay a babysitter to watch my children while I do volunteer work for a qualified organization. Can I deduct these costs?	No, you cannot deduct payments for child care expenses as a charitable contribution, even if they are necessary so you can do volunteer work for a qualified organization. (If you have child care expenses so you can work for pay, get Publication 503, <i>Child and Dependent Care Expenses</i> .)

Car expenses. You can deduct unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses, such as the cost of gas and oil, that are directly related to the use of your car in giving services to a charitable organization. You cannot deduct general repair and

maintenance expenses, depreciation, registration fees, or the costs of tires or insurance.

If you do not want to deduct your actual expenses, you can use a standard mileage rate of 14 cents a mile to figure your contribution.

You can deduct parking fees and tolls, whether you use your actual expenses or the standard mileage rate.

You must keep reliable written records of your car expenses. For more information, see *Car expenses* under *Records To Keep*, later.

Travel. Generally, you can claim a charitable contribution deduction for travel expenses necessarily incurred while you are away from home performing services for a charitable organization only if there is no significant element of personal pleasure, recreation, or vacation in the travel. This applies whether you pay the expenses directly or indirectly. You are paying the expenses indirectly if you make a payment to the charitable organization and the organization pays for your travel expenses.

The deduction for travel expenses will not be denied simply because you enjoy providing services to the charitable organization. Even if you enjoy the trip, you can take a charitable contribution deduction for your travel expenses if you are on duty in a genuine and substantial sense throughout the trip. However, if you have only nominal duties, or if for significant parts of the trip you do not have any duties, you cannot deduct your travel expenses.

Contributions You Cannot Deduct

There are some contributions you cannot deduct. There are others you can deduct only part of.

You cannot deduct as a charitable contribution:

1. A contribution to a specific individual,
2. A contribution to a nonqualified organization,
3. The part of a contribution from which you receive or expect to receive a benefit,
4. The value of your time or services,
5. Your personal expenses,
6. A qualified charitable distribution from an individual retirement arrangement (IRA),
7. Appraisal fees,
8. Certain contributions to donor advised funds after February 13, 2007, or
9. Certain contributions of partial interests in property.

Value of Time or Services

You cannot deduct the value of your time or services, including:

- Blood donations to the Red Cross or to blood banks, and
- The value of income lost while you work as an unpaid volunteer for a qualified organization.

Personal Expenses

You cannot deduct personal, living, or family expenses, such as the following items.

- The cost of meals you eat while you perform services for a qualified organization, unless it is necessary for you to be away from home overnight while performing the services.
- Adoption expenses, including fees paid to an adoption agency and the costs of keeping a child in your home before adoption is final. However, you may be able to claim a tax credit for these expenses. Also, you may be able to exclude from your gross income amounts paid or reimbursed by your employer for your adoption expenses. See Form 8839, Qualified Adoption Expenses, and its instructions, for more information. You also may be able to claim an exemption for the child. See *Exemptions for Dependents* in Publication 501 for more information.

Out-of-Pocket Expenses

If you render services to a qualified organization and have unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses related to those services, the following three rules apply.

1. You must have adequate records to prove the amount of the expenses.
2. You must get an acknowledgment from the qualified organization that contains:
 - a. A description of the services you provided,
 - b. A statement of whether or not the organization provided you any goods or services to reimburse you for the expenses you incurred,
 - c. A description and a good faith estimate of the value of any goods or services

(other than intangible religious benefits) provided to reimburse you, and

- d. A statement that the only benefit you received was an intangible religious benefit, if that was the case. The acknowledgment does not need to describe or estimate the value of an intangible religious benefit (defined earlier under *Acknowledgment*).
3. You must get the acknowledgment on or before the earlier of:
 - a. The date you file your return for the year you make the contribution, or
 - b. The due date, including extensions, for filing the return.

- **Car expenses.** If you claim expenses directly related to use of your car in giving services to a qualified organization, you must keep reliable written records of your expenses. Whether your records are considered reliable depends on all the facts and circumstances. Generally, they may be considered reliable if you made them regularly and at or near the time you had the expenses.

Your records must show the name of the organization you were serving and the date each time you used your car for a charitable purpose. If you use the standard mileage rate of 14 cents a mile, your records must show the miles you drove your car for the charitable purpose. If you deduct your actual expenses, your records must show the costs of operating the car that are directly related to a charitable purpose.

See *Car expenses* under *Out-of-Pocket Expenses in Giving Services*, earlier, for the expenses you can deduct.

These are excerpts from a 23 page document and are merely an attempt to summarize the taxes laws governing service work at Big Bend National Park. The entire document may be found at www.irs.gov. Search for Form 526.