

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



A Handbook for New Volunteers **Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



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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. 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. 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. 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.

Visitation in 2019 was 463,832. 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.



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. A background check clearance is required prior to beginning your volunteer service.

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 your 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 Host - The Visitor Center Host provides orientation and interpretation 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 a 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 the U.S. flag. Volunteers will be acting as trained sales clerks for Big Bend Natural History Association (BBNHA) including making change, 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 the visitor of rules of the campground. Duties include 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, correcting minor regulation violations and reporting more serious infractions to Law Enforcement Staff, maintaining VIP files, managing the reservation system, 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 in locating sites, answer questions and advise on Backcountry rules. Acting as the “eyes and ears of the park,” backcountry volunteers report problems to Law Enforcement Staff, report road and site conditions to park dispatch via radio or phone, assist in special operations acting as drivers to insert and extract teams, assist with river and other vehicle shuttles both inside and outside Big Bend NP. In emergencies, backcountry volunteers may help with 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 re-vegetation 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 maintenance, the recycling program and painting are a few of the many possibilities for a maintenance volunteer.

Before You Volunteer

Background clearance – All volunteers must receive background clearance prior to starting work at Big Bend. The level of clearance required depends on the job that the volunteer will be performing. If the job includes fee collection at an outlying visitor center, a higher level of clearance is required than for other volunteer positions. All clearances require a minimum of 6 weeks to complete.

Passports and travel into Mexico – U.S. and Canadian citizens can present a valid: U.S. Passport or Passport Card to cross at this Class B Port of Entry. U.S. and Canadian citizen children age of 16 and under need only present a birth certificate or other proof of citizenship. The birth certificate can be original, photocopy, or certified copy.

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). Volunteers need to wear complete uniforms when on duty. Volunteers should not wear uniforms when not on duty, especially when not in the park. Never wear your uniform in another National Park where you are not volunteering.

Since volunteers may be the only National Park Service employee that a visitor meets during their visit, the following uniform is required:

Tan shirt with a volunteer patch- long or short sleeve shirts can be checked out from the Volunteer Coordinator.

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. It is acceptable for brown shorts to be worn in warm weather, however, they are not a reimbursable item.

Nametag and green volunteer badge should be worn at all times. Hours bar recognition award can be worn with the uniform.

Plain brown belt- provided by the volunteer

Dark socks (preferably brown)- provided by the volunteer

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.

(Optional) **Volunteer hat**- volunteers can get a “baseball” hat or a full-brim hat from the Volunteer Coordinator. Hats do not need to be returned.

(Optional) **Volunteer jacket**- Tan coats and jackets are available for checkout from the Volunteer Coordinator.

(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.

Maintenance volunteers should bring sturdy leather work boots with lug soles for work around rocks and mountain slopes.

Pets –Volunteers may not keep pets in Government housing although you may keep a pet at your RV. Pets are required to be physically confined or on restraint at all times with approved devices. Pet owners are required to remove and properly dispose of fecal matter deposited by pets.

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 and a bus line serves Alpine and Fort Stockton. The nearest commercial airlines are at Midland International Airport in Midland/Odessa, and El Paso International Airport. There is a bus from the Midland airport to Alpine.

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 only 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 at:

doi.gov/workerscompensation/responsibilities-for-supervisors

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 their background check has cleared and they are 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 an Emergency Contact form before starting your work assignment. You will receive a park employee's personal vehicle sticker as part of your check in process.

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 the volunteer office for verification when you start working.

WHILE VOLUNTEERING

Hours of Duty- Volunteers occupying Government housing quarters or full RV hook-ups are required to work 32 hours per week.

Recording Your Hours- Digital timesheets are emailed at the first of every month. If you like paper timesheets, pick up a supply from the volunteer office at the start of your work season. 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, preferably by the 3rd of the month.

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:

Assuming your disagreement is with another volunteer, the first step is to discuss the issue openly and frankly with this person. This should always be done away from the visiting public and other team members. If problems persist, inform your supervisor of the problems you are having.

If the issue is with a park employee, discuss it with your supervisor. ***If the supervisor is the problem, talk to the volunteer coordinator. The volunteer coordinator will bring the people involved together for a discussion of the issue. Agreement will be reached about how to proceed from this meeting forward.***

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 coordinator 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 coordinator 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 Big Bend 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 volunteer service. Violations of park regulations may be cause for removal. The volunteer uniform should be worn only during duty hours while on duty in the park in which you are volunteering under a signed volunteer agreement.

Termination of Volunteer Agreement -If, at any point, a volunteer decides to end their involvement as a park volunteer, they should notify the volunteer coordinator who will terminate their volunteer services agreement. Standards are held high for conduct as a 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 supervisor in consultation with the coordinator.

Government Motor Vehicle Operation - As a Federal representative, it is your responsibility to set an example in safe driving and to observe all driving laws. Government- owned or leased vehicles/equipment are to be used for official purposes only during duty time. Employees and volunteers are responsible at all times for the proper care, operation, and maintenance of government vehicles. Should a volunteer be found negligent, they may be held liable for damages. Use of seat belts is mandatory. If you are uncertain about the correctness of using a government vehicle, consult with your supervisor or the VIP coordinator.

Reimbursable Expenses -The following are considered reimbursable expenses: brown uniform pants, travel approved by your supervisor up to 100 miles a month to be reimbursed at a rate of \$.14 a mile, and propane for your RV. Due to liability issues, NPS would prefer that you do not drive your personal vehicle for work purposes.

Instructions for submitting reimbursement forms are as follows:

Obtain a "Claim for reimbursement for expenditures on official business". It can be found in your volunteer folder or obtained from the Volunteer Coordinator.

Fill out the highlighted areas on the form and sign under "Claimant sign here". Receipts with the store's name and address must be attached to the form. Receipts should be paper-clipped to the form.

If you are submitting a hand-written cash register receipt, the cashier must sign the receipt and mark it "PAID." Receipts for propane need to say "propane" on them, not "general merchandise". If your receipt says "general merchandise, get the clerk to write "propane" and initial it.

Fill out the "FBMS Vendor Request Form" for the first reimbursement. This will only have to be filled out once (unless you change your bank account) and turn it in with the "Claim for Reimbursement for expenditures on official business" Form # OP1164 (Rev. 11/2017)".

If you are a couple, only one person should sign the FBMS Vendor Request Form. That same individual needs to sign and submit subsequent "Claims for Reimbursement". Send both forms to the Volunteer Coordinator in the Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services for his/her signature. If you have purchased uniform pants, turn those receipts in at the beginning of your time on duty. Please collect the propane receipts and turn them in all at once near the end of your duty.

Government Property - Government property, supplies, keys, badges, ID card, radio, etc., will not be issued to volunteers 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. In your folder, you will see a Checklist for Volunteers. It tracks what was issued to you, who is responsible for issuing it to you and what you are responsible for returning. This form needs to be filled out and returned to the volunteer office. When you leave, the volunteer office is responsible for filling in the checkout portion on the back as items are returned.

Use of Government Computers – Guidance in the use of government computers and office equipment is dictated by "NPS Responsibilities for Computer Use" and the "Federal Information Systems Security Awareness and Privacy and Records Management Training (FISSA)". Completion of these courses is a requirement for use of government computers. Please contact your supervisor for more information on acquiring this certification. Downloading executable programs or files from internet sites is forbidden on government computers. Government telephones should be used for government purposes only. Any long-distance personal calls should be placed by using a telephone calling card or going to a location where your cell phone will work.

Get to know the "locals"-As you acclimate to your job and location, make an effort to get to know the NPS staff that lives in your area. Search out the local maintenance supervisor and local law enforcement rangers (permanent and seasonal). Getting to know these folks and knowing who you can turn to in the local area for help and information will make for a happier tour of duty.

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's last name.
- 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 the most appropriate NPS employee in the chain of command. 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.

Volunteers should not store excess food or their recycling outside their RV's where wildlife can smell it. All of these items should be inside the RV or in a bear box.

Desert heat can kill you. While hiking carry one gallon of water per person per day (and the park recommends electrolyte replacement), wear long pants, a hat, long-sleeved shirt and sunscreen. Take a flashlight, map, compass and if available, a park radio or SAT phone. A spot locator is available for checkout from Dispatch.

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 put an old blanket, extra clothing, WATER, a flashlight, and emergency food supplies in your vehicle. 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.

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 and use a flashlight.

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. 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) –

For Emergencies, Call dispatch at 432-477-1186 during operational hours.

Dispatch Non-Emergency 432-477-1187

- 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. Learn where first aid kits are kept before an emergency occurs. All visitor centers have AEDs available for use.
- Any time that you 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 or Emergency Services Manager.
- The ambulance resides at Panther Junction and it can take significant time for a driver and medic to be located and travel to the necessary location.

Lost and Found - Articles which are found must be turned in to the nearest visitor center or Park Headquarters. Unclaimed articles turned in by park visitors are the property of the Park after a minimum of 30 days if not claimed by the owner. For every lost or found item with a value of \$10.00 or more that is reported or turned in, a Lost and Found Report Form 10-166 must be filled out. This form is available at all visitor centers. If an item is found, fill out the form, attach the white copy to the item and route it to Panther Junction. If you are at an outlying visitor center, fill it out and turn it in to the lost and found box at that visitor center. Articles turned in are disposed of as public property.

Visitor Comments - From time to time people have comments or complaints about various issues. Please listen politely and report the complaint or comment to your supervisor in person or via email. Please give the visitor a comment form to fill out to either send or route to the Park Superintendent. Comment forms are located at all Visitor Centers.

Life in the Big Bend Community

Telephone: Telephones can be obtained for volunteer RV sites at Big Bend from Big Bend Telephone Company, Alpine, at the occupant's expense. Call their toll free number (1-800-592-4781) for installation and monthly charges in Big Bend National Park. Cell phones work at Panther Junction and a few other spots in the park.

Internet: DSL internet service is available through Big Bend Telephone Company. You may call their toll free number at: 1-800-592-4781. Wireless internet hot spots are located at Panther Junction Visitor Center, Chisos Basin Lodge, Rio Grande Village store, Castolon Visitor Center.

ATM: ATM - Chisos Mountain Lodge, Rio Grande Village Store, Panther Junction gas station and West Texas National Bank, Study Butte.

Television: The only option is your own satellite dish.

Mail and Freight Services – A United States Post Office is located at Panther Junction Headquarters. Hours: Window is open Monday through Friday: 8:00 - 11:00 AM and 12:00 – 3:00 PM. Volunteers are encouraged to get a post office box to receive mail during their time at the park. For information, call the postmaster at 432-477-2238 or go by the post office.

UPS and FedEx: Both deliver to the park, but packages may not be received in a timely manner. The UPS shipping address is 1 Alsate Drive, Big Bend National Park, TX 79834.

Here is how your shipping label should look for proper delivery of online orders:

Joe Smith VOLUNTEER-RGV
1 Alsate Dr.
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

Jane Jones VOLUNTEER-Castolon
1 Alsate Dr.
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

Mike Brown VOLUNTEER – Chisos Basin
1 Alsate Dr.
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

Bill Smith VOLUNTEER-Panther Jct.
1 Alsate Dr.
Big Bend National Park, TX 79834

There is no overnight mail or delivery out of the park. The Post Office cannot accept or send UPS or Fedex package. There is no scheduled FedEx pickup service; UPS pickup must be pre-arranged.

Laundry facilities (for volunteer use only) are available at all locations with the exception of Persimmon Gap. Check with your supervisor.

Medical Services - Big Bend Memorial Hospital is located on Hwy 118 North in Alpine (104 miles). Terlingua Medics, located in Study Butte, provide emergency medical care to So. Brewster County.

Food and Services - Bring a supply of groceries with you in sufficient amount. VIPs have access to a communal freezer at all locations.

Concessioners - Forever Resorts Inc, operates a lodge and restaurant at Chisos Basin. Very limited groceries are available at the Chisos Basin, Rio Grande Village, and Castolon stores, and Panther Junction service station. Gasoline, propane tanks, 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 Rio Grande Village store to make sure someone can dispense propane before going there (432-477-2293). The Panther Junction Gas Station will switch out the smaller propane tanks for you (leave your empty, pick up a full tank).

Neighboring Communities

Terlingua/Study Butte: (24 miles from Panther Junction) The Cottonwood Store has a remarkably good selection of groceries. Terlingua also has a laundromat, gas station, hardware store with limited hours, bank, restaurants, churches, bars and a liquor store. The bank is closed from 11am to 2pm.

Marathon: 70 miles north of Panther Junction, population 500. Small grocery stores, post office, cafes, motel, hotels, garage and service stations, beauty shop, book store, art galleries, churches, clinic.

Alpine: 104 miles from Panther Junction, estimated population 6,200. Services include a hospital, doctors, dentists, chiropractors, banks, courthouse, grocery stores, motels, restaurants, library, golf course, churches, Sul Ross State University, pharmacies, variety stores, hardware stores, auto parts, lumber, furniture, clothing stores, barber and beauty shops.

Fort Stockton is 128 miles from Panther Junction and has the closest WalMart.

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

The Bulletin Board on the wall at the back door of the headquarters building contains a variety of information: Ride share, items for sale, upcoming social events are posted there.

A Combination Tennis, Basketball, and Volleyball Court (lighted) is located near the school, and is available on a first come, first served basis. There is also a quarter-mile track near the school.

Brown-outs are common at Big Bend and unplugging appliances during periods of high winds and thunderstorms and the use of battery backups and surge protectors is recommended.

RECYCLING

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

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

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

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

Chisos Basin: Recycle containers at campground.

Follow the instructions posted at the Panther Junction recycling center for more information! This is what is accepted:

White Paper

Newspaper

Magazines/Catalogs

Paperboard

Cardboard

Aluminum Cans (ONLY aluminum beverage cans. *No aluminum foil, pie tins, cat food cans*),

Steel Cans-it is best to not include the lids as they fall out of the cans and cause trouble for staff

Plastics (ONLY #1 and #2 plastics) Please remove ALL lids and bottle caps

Clear glass (All colors of glass, *rinsed, with lids and any attached plastic removed*).

KITCHEN GREASE AND USED OIL FROM VEHICLES: Accepted only at the recycle building at the Panther Junction Maintenance Yard.

Glossary of Terms

Like all organizations, Big Bend National Park has a jargon that is not always easily understood. 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.

BIBE: An abbreviation for Big Bend National Park

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

BOL-Visitor and Resource Protection term meaning “Be on the lookout for “.

BP- Border Patrol

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

Division Chiefs: The heads of the different divisions in the park.(Maintenance, Interpretation, Administration, Visitor and Resource Protection, Science and Resource Management).

Furlough: Lay-off period for some employees.

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.’

LE: Law Enforcement Division which is now called “Visitor and Resource Protection Division”

Lieu Days: Days off for staff.

NPS: National Park Service

PJ – abbreviation for Panther Junction

PGAP – abbreviation for Persimmon Gap

POE – Port of Entry –the official name for the US Border Crossing to Boquillas, Mexico, located with the boundaries of Big Bend National Park.

Radio: not walkie-talkie.

RGV: Rio Grande Village

R&R: Rules and Regulations

SAR: Search and Rescue

SCA: Student Conservation Association whose members volunteer for 3-6 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/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”.

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

VC: Visitor Center.

VIP: Volunteers-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).

VaRP: Visitor and Resource Protection Division (old name is Law Enforcement).

VUA-Visitor Use Assistant; official title for the employees who staff the entrance stations