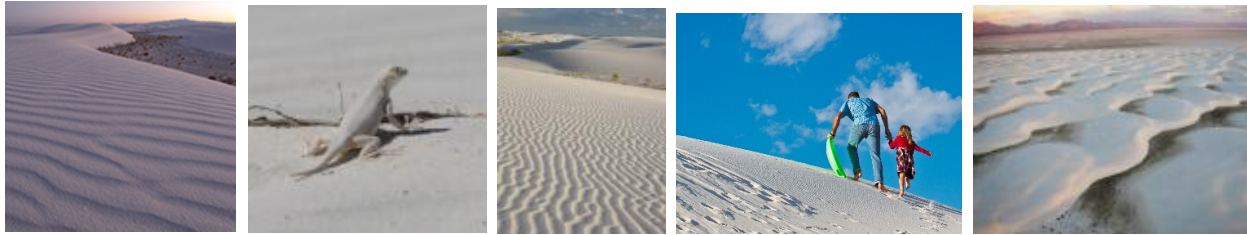


U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich

White Sands National Park Establishment Act

#WhiteSandsNP



CREDIT: National Park Service

“Everyone who visits White Sands marvels at its remarkable geology, spectacular scenery, and outstanding recreation experiences. Since I introduced White Sands National Park legislation last year, the broad regional support we’ve received demonstrates the endless opportunities this designation would offer to communities and local businesses across southern New Mexico. By elevating White Sands National Monument to a national park, we can help boost the local economy and ensure the monument receives the recognition it deserves, while enhancing the military mission at White Sands Missile Range. I am pleased to continue working with a strong coalition of community leaders and local officials who have worked for years to turn White Sands into a national park. With their help and support from Senator Udall and Representative Torres Small, I’m confident we can build the momentum in this congress to establish our state’s second national park.”

– U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich

White Sands National Park Establishment Act

U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) is introducing the White Sands National Park Establishment Act to designate White Sands National Monument as our newest national park. The stunning gypsum dunefield—the largest in the entire world—is not just a breathtaking backdrop for unforgettable family adventures. It also holds world-renowned culturally and biologically significant resources that are worthy of recognition as a national park.

History and economic impact

Since White Sands National Monument was established in 1933, it has attracted visitors from around the world. For the last two decades, White Sands has seen more visitors than any other National Park Service site in New Mexico—an average of more than half a million people each year. In 2017, well over 600,000 people visited, spending \$31.7 million in the local economy, with over 98 percent of that coming from non-local visitors.

The “Find Your Park” campaign celebrating the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016 contributed to record numbers of Americans and international visitors visiting our national parks. With this increased awareness, it is an ideal time to promote the status of White Sands. Increased visitation to White Sands National Park will be a major boost to the local economy in Alamogordo, Otero County, and all of southern New Mexico. A recent study conducted by Headwaters Economics found that making White Sands a national park could increase visitation by 21 percent each year and create \$7.5 million of additional annual tourism spending.

Elevation from National Monument to National Park

Because White Sands is already managed by the National Park Service, visitors to the new national park would experience no change in management. Entrance fees and access would stay the same. However, becoming a national park would immediately bring new attention and prominent inclusion in global and domestic travel materials. More international and out-of-state visitors would bring in more revenue, allowing for even better resource protection, interpretation, and visitor services.

Recent discoveries in White Sands

Although the monument has been the subject of immense interest for researchers over the last century, recent significant discoveries make White Sands even more deserving of national park status.

- ✦ White Sands was recently designated as a Mega-Track site for all the Pleistocene (Ice Age) mammal tracks unearthed and documented there. The monument has largest collection fossilized tracks in gypsum in the world and the largest concentration of tracks in the Americas from that period. Tracks have been found from dire wolves, saber-toothed cats, woolly mammoths, ancient camels, and more.
- ✦ Human tracks have been discovered, too. White Sands received global attention just last week when scientists announced the finding of the only known prints demonstrating humans interacting with an Ice Age mammal, a giant ground sloth.
- ✦ This and other evidence found in the last decade—including thousands of hearth sites preserved in ways found nowhere else—show that humans have lived in and around the dunefield as far back as 11,700 years ago.
- ✦ New species and subspecies of insects, reptiles, mammals, and others groups are being discovered in White Sands every year. These animals rapidly adapted to the unique dunefield conditions within less than 10,000 years, as did many of the plants found in the monument. Many species in the monument are found nowhere else on Earth.
- ✦ Scientists in many disciplines continue to conduct groundbreaking research in White Sands, and have made new advances in understanding – from the hydrological processes that help maintain the dunefield to microorganisms in the soil to new techniques for space exploration.

Working with the military

During the development of his legislation, Senator Heinrich worked closely with the Department of Defense to ensure the bill will enhance the missions at southern New Mexico's important military installations. Existing agreements between the military and the National Park Service to protect use of critical airspace and testing grounds for White Sands Missile Range, Holloman, and Fort Bliss will remain in place.

Additionally, the legislation will complete a land exchange between the Army and the National Park Service that they have been working on since the 1970s to simplify management, ensure invaluable cultural resources are better protected, and provide new capabilities at the missile range and the new national park.

Support for White Sands National Park Establishment Act

Ron Griggs, State Senator, District 34

“The White Sands National Monument is a special place. If anywhere deserves the national park designation, it does.”

Richard Boss, Mayor, City of Alamogordo

“As a resident and the Mayor of Alamogordo, the gateway to White Sands, I am very excited about the possibility White Sands National Monument may become White Sands National Park. I believe this designation change would bring a significant increase in economic activity in and around Alamogordo. We are very fortunate to have this natural wonder in our backyard. Visitors from around the world will become more aware of White Sands with the ‘park’ designation. I want to personally thank US Senator Martin Heinrich and NM Senator Ron Griggs for their commitment to this possible designation change.”

Nora Barraza, Mayor, Town of Mesilla

“The Town of Mesilla has worked successfully to grow the economic benefit of outdoor tourism to our community, continues to recognize the importance of tourism as one of the cornerstones of our local economy, and desires to pursue new opportunities to increase tourism. That is why I and the Board of Trustees support the White Sands National Park Establishment Act.”

Ken Miyagishima, Mayor, City of Las Cruces

“The City Council and I urge Congress to pass the White Sands National Park Establishment Act because it will improve the economy of not only Las Cruces but the entire region, help our military do its important job, and highlight our incredible public land resources. I am happy to support efforts that strengthen our economic foundation by enhancing quality of life for Las Cruces residents and attracting others to visit the community we are so proud to call home.”

Margaret Trujillo, Mayor, Village of Tularosa

“Tularosa is rich in history, culture, livestock and amazing food. Turning White Sands National Monument into a National Park would not only bring more attention - and tourism - to the region and our quaint village, but also help preserve this beautiful area and highlight for all the history it contains. I hope the national park name inspires more locals and visitors alike to embrace their White Sands.”

GB Oliver, President and CEO, Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce

“The Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors enthusiastically supports the White Sands National Park Establishment Act. We appreciate the extraordinary amount of time and consideration Senator Heinrich has dedicated to crafting legislation that brings benefit not only to Alamogordo and its business community, but our military partners as well. It is a rare thing in today’s political climate, when legislation is written in a way where there are no losers. The Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce wishes to extend our sincere appreciation to Senator Heinrich for having accomplished this feat.”

Jake Redfearn, 2019 Chair, Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce

“The Greater Las Cruces Chamber proudly supports the change of designation of White Sands Monument to White Sands National Park. This new designation will provide a tremendous

economic catalyst for our region. Providing new exposure to our area while enhancing the military mission is truly a ‘win-win.’”

Joe Bullington, Chairman, Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee

“As long-time advocates for the White Sands Missile Range and the other military bases in our region, we appreciate the thorough and conscientious process employed by Senator Heinrich and his local staff in working through considerations for the designation change legislation. Their efforts included a wide range of inputs and viewpoints regarding the designation of White Sands National Park and its continued strong partnership with WSMR that will benefit our region, the State of New Mexico, and our nation.”

Carrie Hamblen, Executive Director, Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce

“The Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the White Sands National Park Establishment Act. We’ve learned through experience that ‘thoughtful stewardship’ of our public lands is important to local business’ triple bottom line. We know that protecting and highlighting our unique resources allows us to make a living from them – often in creative ways – and White Sands is a spectacular and fascinating place that both neighbors and visitors from across the globe are awed by. I look forward to ensuring that the increased interest generated by White Sands National Park translates not only to enhanced visitor experiences but healthier local economies and stronger businesses.”

Lorenzo Alba, Chair, Las Cruces Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

“When the opportunity to not only stimulate the economy through tourism and the hospitality industry, but to also promote the wonderful outdoor resources and beauty of our great state come our way, we must show support and must be a part of the action. The White Sands National Park Establishment Act is sure to boost our regional economy and bring much needed business opportunities for Las Cruces businesses.”

Jeff Swanson, Chairperson, Southern New Mexico Public Lands Alliance

“Southern New Mexico Public Lands Alliance members believe that our public lands must be kept in public hands. Therefore, we enthusiastically stand with Sen Heinrich and all our leaders who labor to upgrade White Sands National Monument to National Park status. This move will enhance the local economies, better serve tourists, and deepen the connection between citizens and this unique environment.”

White Sands National Park Establishment Act also has the support of the Alamogordo City Commission, the Mescalero Apache Tribal Council, the Village of Tularosa Board of Trustees, the Las Cruces City Council, the Town of Mesilla Board of Trustees, the Otero County Economic Development Council, the National Parks Conservation Association, and the Friends of the Organ Mountain Desert Peaks.