



IN REPLY REFER TO:

# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Big Bend National Park  
Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River  
P.O. Box 129  
Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834-0129

(S5815)

August 18, 2014

## Memorandum

To: Files

From: Superintendent *COJ*

Subject: Compendium Closure Prohibiting the Use of Unmanned Aircraft

The launching, landing or operating unmanned aircraft from or on lands and waters administered by the National Park Service within the boundaries of Big Bend National Park and the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River is prohibited, except as approved in writing by the superintendent, pursuant to the authority granted to park superintendents in 36 CFR 1.5.

### Definition:

The term "unmanned aircraft" means a device that is used or intended to be used for flight in the air without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the device, and the associated operational elements and components that are required for the pilot or system operator in command to operate or control the device (such as cameras, sensor, communication links). This term includes all types of devices that meet this definition (e.g., model airplanes, quad copters, drones) that are used for any purpose, including for recreation or commerce.

### Justification:

There is an increased use of unmanned aircraft throughout the United States and these unmanned aircraft have been observed in and around areas administered by the National Park Service. Three particular instances involving unmanned aircraft inside national park sites (Zion National Park, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, and Grand Canyon National Park) have specifically led to the disruption of visitor experiences and disruption of natural wildlife behaviors.

Currently, there are no park regulations pertaining specifically to unmanned aircraft. There are only regulations governing manned aircraft in national park sites. Therefore, the National Park Service will be evaluating the effects that unmanned aircraft have on the fundamental resources and values the agency is mandated to protect. The use of unmanned aircraft may interfere, disturb, or may not be compatible with a wide variety of values found within Big Bend National Park and the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River.

This prohibition of use of unmanned aircraft is necessary for the maintenance of public safety and for the protection of environmental and scenic values, viewshed, solitude, wilderness values, and geological, natural, and cultural resources, as well as the avoidance of conflict among visitor use activities and visitor experience.

The closure will remain in effect until further notice.