



National Park Service  
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White Sands  
National Monument

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## White Sands News Release

For Immediate Release

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### White Sands will Reduce Monument Hours after Labor Day

Alamogordo, NM. White Sands National Monument will open at 8 a.m. and close approximately one hour after sunset from September 3 through December 31, 2013. The monument will continue to offer visitor services and planned programming within the new operating hours. The new hours reflect changes in monument staffing and a reduction in the monument's budget in 2013. For example, monument staff found that they were not able to safely provide adequate coverage for the operating hours of 7 a.m. – 10 p.m. during summer months.

Average annual visitation for the monument is 450,000, which is the highest visitation of all the National Park Service sites in New Mexico. Seventeen permanent and approximately 10-15 seasonal employees make sure the visiting public has access to the monument. The staff ensures facilities are clean and in working order; conducts interpretive programs and staffs the visitor center; provides emergency services such as medical, law enforcement, and search and rescue; manages the cultural and natural features; and performs variety of administrative functions. "To carry out these necessary and mandated functions in the safest and most effective manner the decision was made to reduce monument hours. Making these small changes in operational hours will better ensure that we have the staff to provide visitor and employee safety while meeting the mission of the National Park Service," stated Superintendent Marie Frias Sauter.

Visitors interested in entering the monument before 8 a.m. may request an early entry permit or register to backcountry camp in the monument. Applications for early entry must be received by the monument at least seven days in advance of the requested date. Visitors interested in backcountry camping will need to obtain a backcountry camping permit at the visitor center. The visitor center is open 9 a.m.–5 p.m. with extended hours during the summer. For more information regarding these options, visit <http://www.nps.gov/wlsa/parkmgmt/earlyentry.htm>.

Specific monument and visitor center hour and a detailed park closure schedule may be downloaded from <http://www.nps.gov/wlsa/planyourvisit/hours.htm>.

[www.nps.gov/wlsa](http://www.nps.gov/wlsa)