



Glacier National Park
CONSERVANCY



Parks Canada
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Proposed Big Bend International Park

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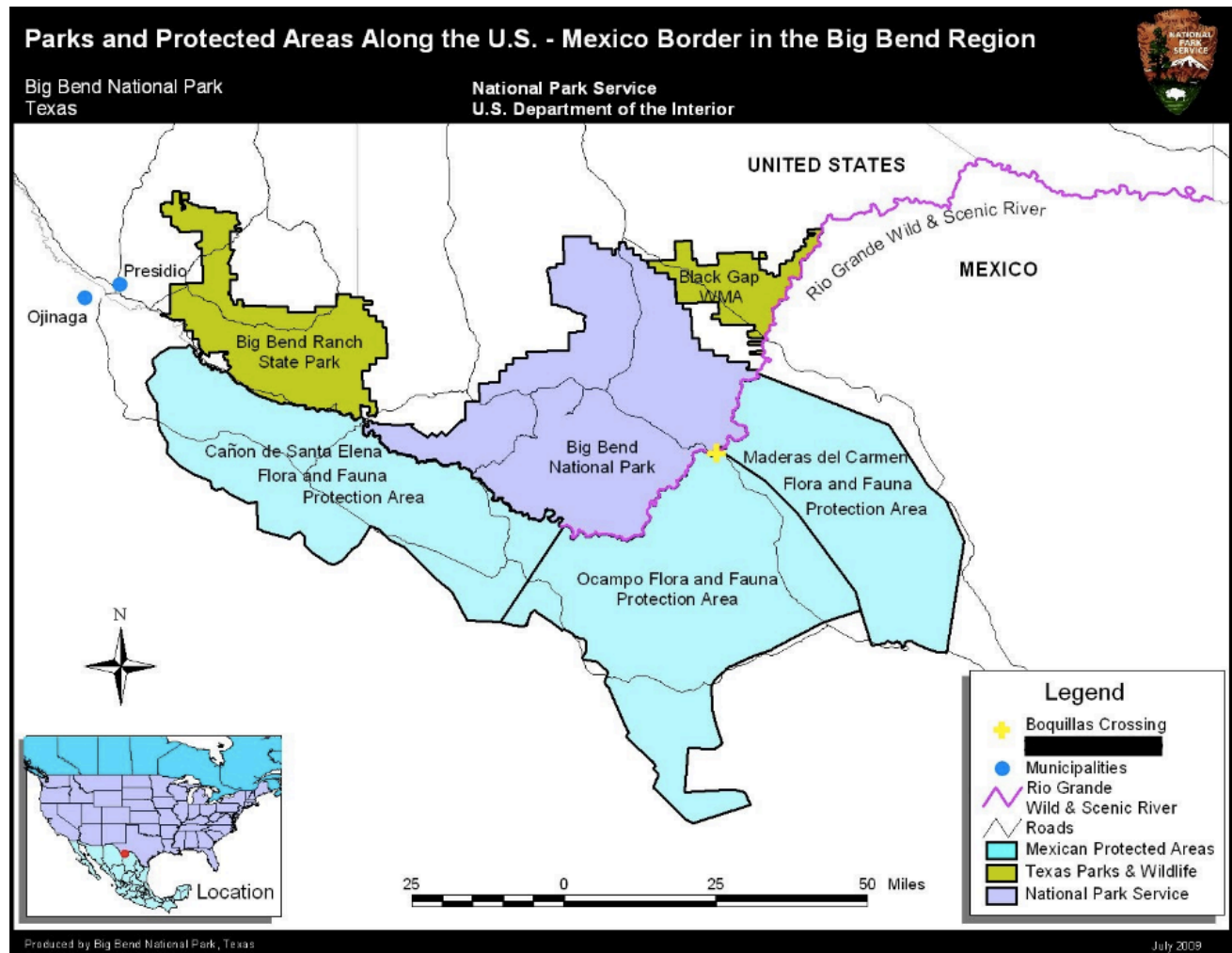
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United States and Mexico

Total Proposed Size: 3,023,671 acres / 4,724 square miles



Size: (hectares and sq/km)

1. Big Bend National Park, Texas 801,163 acres (324,219 ha)
2. Maderas del Carmen Protected Area, Coahuila 520,000 acres
3. Ocampo Natural Protected Area, Coahuila Area 826,000 acres
4. Cañón de Santa Elena Protected Area, Chihuahua 511,508 acres
5. Monumento Río Bravo del Norte in México
6. Big Bend Ranch State Park, Texas 311,000-acre
7. Black Gap Wildlife Management Area, Texas 54,000 acres

Participants in coordinating the ongoing transboundary cooperation:

National Government:

- Big Bend National Park, Texas. National Park Service

Local Government:

- City of El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

National NGOs:

- Sierra Club
- Rotary International

Local NGOs:

- Greater Big Bend Coalition

Intergovernmental organizations:

- El Paso Zoo, Texas

Objectives: This grassroots effort is calling upon the governments and the United States and Mexico to work together in establishing Big Bend International Park:

Values and importance:

1. An international park would help to call attention to the importance of protecting the entire Big Bend area and its fragile environment from development projects including new roads and pipelines. Protecting this fragile desert mountain region and its wildlife and culture is important to not only the quality of life of people who live there, but also to ecotourism which is important to the region's economy.
2. An international park would help the people of both countries build stronger partnerships along the US Mexico border which many Americans living in other parts of the country do not value as important to solving international problems. These problems include immigration and drug trafficking issues and challenges faced by Homeland Security.
3. An international park would be an example of the best our governments and people can pursue through cooperation and joint work helping the rest of the country with its perception of what a border is and what a border can be.

4. International park designation would send a message to the people of both countries and the world that the entire region is an important conservation area worthy of care and support from citizens of both countries. If the federal governments of both countries would come together and recognize the value of declaring the entire region an international park, it would not only help not only help conserve the area, but also help boost the economy on both sides of the border through ecotourism. Promoting the economy would have the added benefit of helping with the socio-economic needs of many impoverished people living in and near the area.

5. Big Bend International Park could be managed using the world's first international park at Waterton Glacier International Park on the U.S. and Canada border is a perfect model for a U.S.-Mexico International Park. Border security requires that international travelers have all required documents as they cross into either country. Both countries retain their own sovereignty and both parks are administered separately.

6. The name of the International Park could be Big Bend International Park, Big Bend-Rio Bravo International Park or any name that the two countries could agree on. National Park status would not be required of the Mexico protected areas and their current management plans or names would not have to change.

7. Park managers would have a mandate of international support at both federal government levels in Washington, DC and Mexico City to work jointly on many issues, such as search and rescue, publications, ranger-led activities, exotic weed management, wildlife issues, research projects and native plant restoration.

8. The establishment of the international park would not require new international bridges and crossings or that new lands be acquired.

9. Creating a giant international park would help both countries better address key issues such as water and air quality, control of invasive species, wildlife protection and management of wildland fire. The park would become a permanent monument and symbol of peace between the U.S. and Mexico, one that will celebrate the friendship between the two countries and be a meeting ground where the people of both countries and citizens from all parts of the world could come together to learn about each other's culture while coming to better understand the natural world that they all share.

10. The next step to establish this now 80 plus year proposal for both countries would be for the Presidents of the United States and Mexico to jointly declare the area as an International Park with the support of the land management agencies involved. Legislation may not be required since the lands that could be included already have protected status. The International designation could be a symbolic gesture by Presidential orders in the US and Mexico.

Aspects of transboundary cooperation: Nature conservation; Ecosystem based management; Watershed management; Scientific research; Tourism; Firefighting; Search and rescue; Anti-poaching activity

Stage in the process: Grassroots advocacy only.

Official Protected Area Designation: National Park (US), State Park (Texas), Wildlife Management Area (Texas) Protected Area (Mexico)

The Catalyst: In 1988 the Governor of Coahuila, Mexico invited staff of Big Bend National Park to visit the Maderas del Carmens. At that time the 1935 proposed Big Bend International Park for the most part had disappeared from the conservation radar screens of both the United States and Mexico. One of the members of the Big Bend National Park staff who visited the Maderas del Carmen was Rick LoBello, a member of Rotary International. In 1997, inspired by a US/Mexico delegation of government officials who visited the Waterton-Glacier International Park and learned of how Rotary International was a key player in establishing the world's first International Park, a bi-district committee of Rotarians from New Mexico, West Texas and five states in Northern Mexico formed a Rotary International Peace Park Educational Initiative. This Rotary Committee was dedicated to completing the 1935 proposed Big Bend International Park. On November 7, 1998 a Rotary District 5520 (New Mexico and West Texas)/4110 (Chihuahua, Coahuila, Aguascalientes, Zacatecas and Durango) Rotary Peace International Peace Park Dedication Ceremony was held at Chamizal National Memorial in El Paso. Dignitaries in attendance included Rotary International President James L. Lacy, Superintendent of Big Bend National Park Jose Cisneros, Lic. Enrique Provencio Durazno, Presidente Institute Nacionale de Ecologia, SEMARNAP, Dr. Glen Coulter of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park Association and Mayor of El Paso Carlos Ramirez.

The best kept conservation secret in the United States is how Big Bend National Park was never meant to be a national park on the US side of the border only. The original agreement signed in El Paso, Texas on November 24, 1935 called for the creation of a US/Mexico International Park.

The long proposed Big Bend International Park with Mexico was very close to the heart of President D. Roosevelt who died before it could be established. In 1944 he said "I do not believe that this undertaking in the Big Bend will be complete until the entire park area in this region on both sides of the Rio Grande forms one great international park."

History: The current initiative was enabled by park staff at Big Bend National Park and later by members of Rotary International living in New Mexico, West Texas and the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Zacatecas, Durango and Aguascalientes in Mexico. Leadership provided by the Greater Big Bend Coalition with the assistance of the El Paso Sierra Club Group, Forgotten Frontiers and the El Paso Zoo is keeping the dream alive in the United States. Efforts are underway to solicit support in Mexico.

Barriers, challenges, obstacles, or constraints: The greatest barrier to the current effort is the lack of public information regarding communications between the US and Mexico regarding the possibility of creating an international park. The biggest challenge in 2016 is elevating the official international status of the project and getting the project back on conservation radar screens for the Department of the Interior in the US and National

Commission of Natural Protected Areas in Mexico.

The Governance and Management Structures

- **Cooperative relationship:** An International Park Agreement signed between government officials in the US and Mexico in El Paso, Texas on November 24, 1935.
- **Legal basis for cooperation:** On October 24, 2011 Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Mexican Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada today announced a working plan that identifies the next steps for the continued coordination between the two countries in the protection and preservation of the transnational Big Bend/Rio Bravo region – North America’s largest and most diverse desert ecosystem.
- **Governance structure:** None at this time.
- **Cooperative management arrangement:** None at this time.

Results: An extensive timeline of achievements since the current grassroots effort began in 1997 can be found at <https://greaterbigbend.wordpress.com/international-park-timeline/>

Lessons Learned: Key lessons learned include the importance of networking with a broad base of stakeholders and developing relationships with elected and government officials.

For More Information

<http://www.greaterbigbend.org>

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