



Foundation Document Overview

Chamizal National Memorial

Texas



Contact Information

For more information about the *Chamizal National Memorial Foundation Document*, contact: cham_superintendent@nps.gov or 915-532-7273 or write to: Superintendent, Chamizal National Memorial, 800 South San Marcial Street, El Paso, TX 79905

Purpose



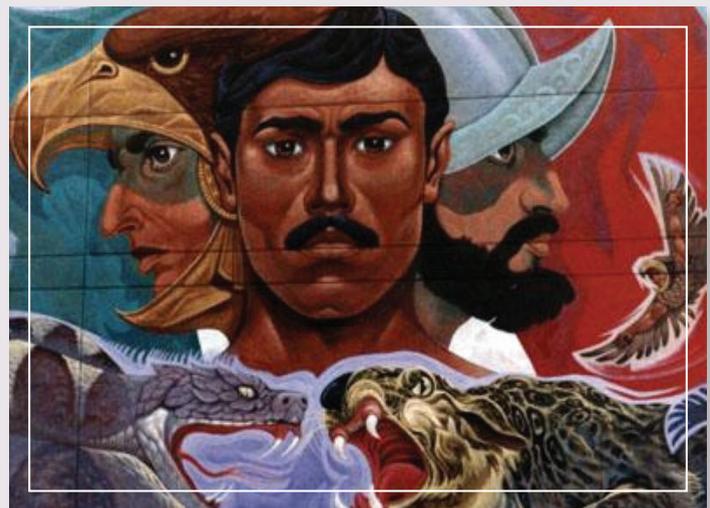
CHAMIZAL NATIONAL MEMORIAL commemorates the diplomatic resolution of the century-long international boundary dispute between the United States and Mexico in the border region of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. The memorial fosters goodwill and mutual respect between the peoples of both nations and provides a center to celebrate creative cultural exchange.



Significance

Significance statements express why Chamizal National Memorial resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

1. Chamizal National Memorial, and its Mexican counterpart, Parque Público Federal el Chamizal, symbolize successful diplomatic negotiations between two neighboring nations. The long-lasting impacts of the Chamizal Treaty are still evident today on the course of the river, the lives of the people, and the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem.
2. Chamizal National Memorial provides the opportunity for cultural connections among the people of the world's largest binational metroplex.
3. Chamizal National Memorial is a living memorial to the Chamizal Treaty that provides urban spaces in which to enjoy a range of recreational and cultural activities, including those representing the cultures of the borderlands.
4. Chamizal National Memorial, situated on what once was a part of Mexico's Cordova Island, facilitates visitor understanding and appreciation of the border geography, history, and engineering related to the Rio Grande / Rio Bravo. The northern boundary of the memorial is delineated by the fence posts of the historic international boundary, which serve as the last physical reminder of the Chamizal land dispute and its resolution.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **The Grounds**
- **Boundary Monuments and Fence Posts**
- **Successful International Diplomacy: The Story of Chamizal**
- **Oral Histories**
- **Cultural Exchange**
- **Partnerships**



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from, and should reflect, park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all park significance statements and fundamental resources and values.

- Chamizal National Memorial provides insight into the evolution of the continuing relationship between the United States and Mexico from armed conflict in 1848 to cooperation to resolve differences diplomatically in 1963.
- A number of factors, including a change of political climate and the personalities of the individuals involved, set the stage for the resolution of a 100-year-long boundary dispute between the United States and Mexico.
- The Chamizal Convention, a multinational, state, and local effort, provided many diplomatic, societal, and economic benefits, but did not come without a price.
- Chamizal National Memorial stands as a reminder of what goodwill and cooperation can accomplish by providing an avenue for understanding and enrichment to transcend barriers of race, ethnicity, and language.
- The selection of a natural, meandering river as an international boundary led to conflict and resolution that still impacts the river, the lives of the people, and the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem.



Description

Chamizal National Memorial is located in El Paso, Texas, just north of the United States–Mexico border. El Paso and its international neighbor, Ciudad Juárez in the Republic of Mexico, make up one of the world’s largest international border metroplexes, which is home to more than 2.5 million people. The 55-acre memorial is in the northeastern portion of what was once part of Mexico’s Cordova Island. The United States acquired this section of land under the terms of the Chamizal Convention (Treaty), signed in August 1963 between the United States of America and the United Mexican States (Public Law 88-300).

Congress authorized the establishment of the memorial in 1966 to formally commemorate the diplomatic settlement of the Chamizal area issue and celebrate cross-cultural friendship and goodwill. The memorial is a tribute to the peaceful resolution of a century-long boundary dispute

between the United States and Mexico. The dispute was triggered by the erratic meandering of the Rio Grande, which created a fierce land ownership controversy. By ratifying the Chamizal Treaty, the river was constrained within a concrete channel, which now acts as a permanent border between the two nations. More than 5,000 people residing in the disputed area were relocated at the expense of both governments. In addition, a portion of the former Mexican land now in the United States was set aside to provide cultural and recreational use and tell the story of the Chamizal issue and its resolution.

The place of the Chamizal settlement in the annals of international law is well-documented. The 1911 case was arbitrated by the Hague and Canada; its rejection by the United States and its final resolution 60 years later is regularly cited in academic and professional journals around the world.



When memorial construction was completed in 1974, the entire 55-acre unit was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Since then, the memorial has hosted some of the region’s most celebrated cultural events. Annual productions, such as the Siglo de Oro International Drama Festival and the City of El Paso’s Music Under the Stars, draw international, multicultural audiences that continue to embrace the spirit and diversity not only of the border cultures, but various other traditions as well.