

10-23
(May 1929)
6-7410

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
~~PANAMA CANAL~~... NATIONAL PARK

FILE NO. 0-32

PART 1

PROPOSED PARKS

PANAMA CANAL

LAST DATE ON TOP

IMPORTANT

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ARNO B. CAMMERER,
Director.

10-72
PROPOSED PANAMA CANAL NATIONAL PARK.

Fulmer
MAR 14 1933

REVIEW:

The area under consideration is an island called the Barro-Colorado Island in the southern part of Gatun Lake in the Panama Canal Zone. This area is a dense tropical jungle, the island being formed by the flooding of the lake.

Suggested as a national park to Mr. Lorne W. Barclay and brought to our attention by Dr. Bryant on Sept. 22, 1932.

This area was investigated by Thos. C. Vint who submitted an adverse report on February 15, 1933, in which he states that this island is now set aside as a Wild Life Preserve and is maintained by subscriptions under the direction of the Institute for Research in Tropical America.

The following is a quotation from Mr. Vint's report:

"My recommendation is that since the area is now serving its best use under its proper designation, and its position within the Canal Zone gives it adequate administrative protection, therefore there is no need of considering it for park use."

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that this area be disapproved as a national park.

C. L. WIRTH.

APPROVED: MAR 15 1933

(Sgd.) HORACE M. ALBRIGHT

Director.

ADDRESS ONLY
FIELD HEADQUARTERS
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
409 UNDERWOOD BUILDING
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
FIELD HEADQUARTERS
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

Mr. Smith
RMH

February 15, 1933

The Director
National Park Service
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Director:

In compliance with instructions contained in your letter of October 24, 1932, I returned from Washington, D. C. to San Francisco via the Panama Canal for the purpose of making an inspection of the Barro Colorado Island in Gatun Lake which has been proposed as a National Park.

Itinerary.

I made the trip from New York to San Francisco on the Grace Line Steamer "Santa Cecilia", leaving New York at noon, December 24, and reached San Francisco at 8 A.M. January 16. The ship was a day later on its schedule and passed thru the Canal on New Year's Day, 1933, instead of December 31, 1932, per schedule. Due to the holiday, I was unable to learn much of the island or see any one connected with it during the time the ship was in port at Cristobal. The trip was made at no additional expense to the Government than returning west by rail, by making the thru journey without a stop-over. Therefore I made no arrangements for a stopover at the Canal and my inspection is limited to such observations as can be made from a boat on the regular passage thru the Canal. The channel thru Gatun Lake (see attached maps) passes quite close to the shore line and affords an opportunity to see nearly one half the entire shore of the island.

Description.

The Barro Colorado Island is in the southern part of Gatun Lake (about eight miles from Gatun, which is located at the upper end of the Gatun Locks). It is the largest island in the lake and was formed when the lake was flooded. It is a dense tropical jungle, one part of the shore line is very much the same as any other, the dense tropical foliage comes down to the water line at every point. The only break in the dense foliage was the clearing for the site of a small group of headquarters buildings.

Present Status.

The island is now set aside as A Wild Life Preserve, and is maintained by subscriptions under the direction of the Institute for Research in Tropical America.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

The area is ideally suited for its present use - A Wild Life Preserve.

It might well be compared to the "Research Reserves" we have in a number of the National Parks. Such areas have scientific values as their entire purpose. To open them for popular use would offset their major purpose. Whereas, such areas may have a place within a National Park to afford the proper protection, such an area in itself is not sufficient to establish it as a park area. A park is more than that. Its present status - A Wild Life Preserve - more accurately expresses the use and purpose of Barro Colorado Island.

Being within the Canal Zone, it can have the same protection value it would have within a National Park.

My recommendation is that since the area is now serving its best use under its proper designation, and its position within the Canal Zone gives it adequate administrative protection, therefore there is no need of considering it for Park Use.

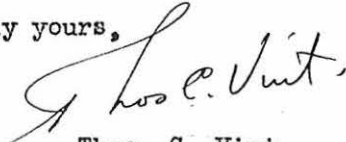
The Canal.

The Panama Canal is an outstanding feature in the list of things to see in this world. In its way it has a drawing value or tourist attraction values equal to those of The Grand Canyon, The Yellowstone or The Yosemite. Seeing it is a life time experience. It belongs in a different list than the National Parks, as it is a monumental exhibit in the works of the hand of man, whereas the National Parks contain monumental exhibits of the Natural. It would lead the list of such things as the Boulder Dam - The City of Washington, which are features of National accomplishment and compare as "things to see in a lifetime" - with the natural features in National Parks.

The movement on foot which places the Boulder Dam as a tourist attraction under the administration of the National Park Service might after a trial there, be extended and include The Panama Canal, and the City of Washington. Such a relationship is the only one I could see for the National Park Service in the Canal Zone. I do not feel that serious thought should be given that until some experience has been had on the arrangement proposed at Boulder Dam. The thought is introduced in these comments merely to show the only possible apparent place for the Park Service at the Panama Canal.

As to Barro Colorado Island itself, it is ideally suited to its present use and purpose, - A Wild Life Preserve. That is not sufficient to make it a Park Area; to attempt to make it more, would result in the defeat of its present purpose and would undoubtedly bring a result which would accomplish neither its present or enlarged purpose satisfactorily.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "T. C. Vint". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "C".

Thos. C. Vint,
Chief Landscape Architect.

Encl.

CANAL ZONE BIOLOGICAL AREA

May 8, 1944.

MR. HENRY L. STIMSON,
Secretary of War,
War Department,
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

A meeting of the Directors of the Canal Zone Biological Area should be held some time before the end of the present fiscal year.

Ordinarily presence of a majority of the Directors, with representatives of those who can not attend, is sufficient. This year, however, it seems desirable that a full attendance be had if possible. The reason for this is that certain questions of policy affecting the use of Barro Colorado Island have recently come up and on which I hesitate to pass judgment without consideration by the entire Board.

While I do not think the meeting need take more than half or three-quarters of an hour at the most I realize that you, Secretary Ickes and Secretary Wickard are extremely busy men and that it might be inconvenient for some or all of you to attend at a time I might designate. Since I think that the other members of the Board can accommodate themselves to a time convenient to you three, I suggest that you let me know the time and place in late May or early June which will be likely best to suit your convenience. I am sending copy of this letter to Messrs. Ickes and Wickard and, also for their information, to the other members of the Board. The meeting can, of course, be held as usual in my office in the National Academy of Sciences if that is most convenient. The only times at which, so far as I know, I have fixed engagements that can not be broken are Wednesday, May 24th, and June 1 - 6 inclusive.

For your information, I would say that the policy questions which have arisen are concerned with war research and development problems of a tropical or jungle character in which the Army, Navy or OSRD are interested and for which Barro Colorado Island seems almost ideally suited. If undertaken they will, however, involve facility, construction and types of work different from any heretofore employed. They do not, however, appear to be inimical to the permanent purposes of the Area. My own present feeling is that, if this can be assured so that we are satisfied that the primary conditions for which Congress set aside the Area are not jeopardized, the requests should be acceded to, both in furtherance of the war effort and the main purposes of the Area.

If this is done, we should require, I think, that the following conditions be met:

1. All work undertaken should be with the general approval of the Area in order to insure against damage to it.
2. Occupancy should be temporary and at the sole discretion of the Area.
3. Buildings or other structures and experimental areas should be with

the approval of the Area as to character and location.

4. At the termination of use, all facilities shall become the property of the Area or at the election of the Area be removed by the using agency.

Sincerely,

(SGD) FRANK B. JEWETT

Frank B. Jewett,
Chairman, Board of Directors

Copy to Secretary C. R. Wickard
Secretary H. L. Ickes
Other Members of Board.