

Massive Border Infrastructure Does Not Belong in Big Bend National Park

Pro-Park. Pro-Security. Non-Partisan. Now and Forever.



Key Message: Strong Border Security and Strong Conservation Can and Do Coexist Here

- **Border security is a widely shared value**, strongly supported by [Keep Big Bend Wild](https://www.KeepBigBendWild.org).
- **The question is not whether to secure the border, but how to do so in a way that protects one of America's most iconic national parks** and Texas' largest state park, just upriver.
- **Big Bend National Park is a national treasure.** Decisions about security infrastructure should reflect its ecological, cultural, and economic importance, as well as border security.
- **Border security experts, led by a bipartisan group of West Texas Sheriffs, support a secure border but publicly oppose massive border infrastructure in the Big Bend. Walls, vehicle barriers, and new roads are not needed to secure the border here.**
- **While specific design plans for the so-called "Smart Wall" have not been released, and probably will not be prior to construction, permanent physical barriers in the national and state parks would irreparably degrade, if not destroy, their wild character, and disconnect the "Big Bend" of the Rio Grande from the park that bears its name.**
- **While the latest map published by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) no longer shows a physical wall in the national or state parks, it now shows extensive vehicle barriers, new patrol roads, and buried communications cables. There's no indication this is a final decision – or that technological alternatives will be designed in collaboration with land managers and sheriffs to minimize impacts on these important places.**
- **DHS has awarded a \$1.7 billion contract for work in the national park. They have waived federal laws to expedite construction on both side of the park, but not yet within the park.**
- **We need to keep the pressure up to prevent them from waiving laws that protect the park!**



Existing Border Security in Big Bend Is Effective Without a Wall

- The NPS and US Border Patrol have a **long history of close, effective cooperation** in the Big Bend region.
- Joint patrols, aerial and electronic surveillance, and coordinated response strategies **already provide robust border security in this area** without the need for permanent physical barriers.
- Border Patrol leadership has repeatedly noted that **terrain, remoteness, and natural barriers** make **technological surveillance** more appropriate here than a permanent border wall.
- **Migrant crossings in the Big Bend sector, and especially in the national park, are by far the lowest** of any section of the border, raising questions about whether a wall here would meaningfully improve security. **There is no border emergency here justifying immediate construction or the override of normal processes** that protect the national park and the public interest.

A Wall Would Permanently Damage What Makes Big Bend Valuable

- Big Bend is defined by its **vast, uninterrupted landscapes, dark skies, and sense of wildness**—qualities that cannot be restored once disrupted.
- Massive walls, new roads, lights, and buried communications cables where they don't currently exist would fragment habitat for species such as **black bears, mountain lions, and migratory birds**, many of which rely on cross-border movement for survival.
- Construction would require **roads, staging areas, lighting, heavy equipment**, and possibly borrow pits, power lines, and **construction camps** for years, causing long-term scars beyond the footprint of the wall itself.

A Wall Here Would Be Costly and Inefficient

- The Big Bend region's remoteness, **rugged mountains, deep canyons, and river floodplains** make construction extremely expensive and logistically challenging.
- Flooding of the Rio Grande and its tributaries have historically **destroyed or damaged river-side infrastructure**, requiring costly repairs and creating safety hazards.
- Given the low crossing numbers, the **cost-benefit ratio** of a wall or other huge infrastructure project in this location is especially poor compared to other security investments. It is a huge waste of taxpayer money.

Local Communities and Visitors Would Bear the Burden

- Big Bend National Park and Big Bend Ranch State Park draw visitors from around the world, supporting **gateway communities** such as Terlingua, Study Butte, Marathon, Alpine, Marfa, and Presidio.
- A wall or other industrial-scale construction would diminish the parks' appeal, severely harming **local tourism economies** that rely on their wild, open character and recreation on the Rio Grande.
- There is limited water, power, and landfill capacity, as well as grocery stores and medical facilities, making the support of a 300-500 person construction camp **an almost impossible burden for the area** to handle.
- Residents and visitors alike value Big Bend as a place of **solitude, natural beauty, and freedom**—qualities incompatible with industrial-scale border infrastructure.

The Decision Should Reflect Texas Pride and National Values

- National and state parks are protected for the benefit of the American people because they represent **the best of America's natural and cultural heritage**.
- Big Bend – **"Texas' Gift to the Nation"** – is one of the most remote, pristine, and ecologically significant parks in the national park system. **Protecting it is a national responsibility**, not just a regional preference.
- **Security and conservation are not competing goals**; thoughtful coordination can uphold both.
- **A unilateral waiver of protective federal laws by the DHS Secretary violates the will of the American people!**

Your Voice Matters

- **Decision-makers respond when they hear from enough of the people they represent.**
- **Call** the office of your US Senators and House member in their DC offices, and if you vote in Texas, call Governor Abbott's office. 5Calls.Org makes it easy. Search for the "Big Bend" script. Call daily, or as often as you can!
- **Sign the petition** at change.org. Search for "Big Bend".
- **Speak up** at public meetings or virtual town halls.
- **Share information** with friends, neighbors, and community groups.
- **Post and repost media coverage and your thoughtful opinion** on social media.
- Short, respectful messages are powerful. **Avoid partisan rhetoric.**
- You don't need to be an expert—just **speak from your experience, your values, and your heart.**
- **Support Keep Big Bend Wild** and allied groups, as there are many working to stop the destruction of Big Bend.

Stopping the Wall Cannot be the End of Our Work

- The **best way to ensure the still-undeveloped portions of this extraordinary landscape (more than 4/5 of the park) are protected for future generations would be to give them the highest level of protection for public lands we can -- federal wilderness designation.**
- Wilderness would preserve the park's wild character while **not impacting any existing uses or developments.**
- While DHS can still waive the protections of other federal laws, the **higher profile would make it much more difficult for a future Administration to defy the will of the public here.**
- A wilderness law *could* include a provision to **prevent a physical wall from ever being built in the national park.**
- Republican and Democratic Presidents since Richard Nixon have recommended wilderness for Big Bend, and it's time for Congress to finally act.
- **Keep Big Bend Wild exists to protect Big Bend National Park's wild character now, and for future generations.** Please **support our efforts; it's free**, although we appreciate tax-deductible donations that will further this important work.

