Massive Border Infrastructure Does Not Belong in Big Bend National Park

Pro-Park. Pro-Security. Non-Partisan. Now and Forever.
Stop the Destruction – and Protect the Park For the Future

Breaking News: *After a 10/2/26 evidentiary hearing where KBBW testified, Federal District Judge Kathleen Cardone issued a preliminary injunction halting all border construction and groundbreaking activity in the entire Big Bend Sector, lifting the waivers of federal law until the case is resolved on the merits. On 10/8/26, attorneys for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) filed a motion for the judge to "stay" her order and declared their intent to seek expedited Supreme Court relief if the stay is not granted. KBBW filed a a Friend of the Court brief in this suit.*

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

- Border security is strongly supported by Keep Big Bend Wild and Texans across the political spectrum.
- **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**, Texas' largest state park, and other significant landscapes in the Big Bend region.
- Big Bend National Park is a national treasure. Decisions about the border should reflect its ecological, cultural, and economic importance, as well as national security.
- Border security experts, led by a coalition of West Texas Sheriffs and elected leaders of both parties, support a secure border while opposing massive border infrastructure in the Big Bend region.
- DHS has waived all laws here that would require public involvement or analysis of the impacts to natural or cultural resources, as well as most federal contracting laws and regulations.


Boquillas Canyon © James H. Evans

- **DHS has awarded no-bid contracts totaling $7.5 billion for work in in the Big Bend Sector (517 miles), including $1.7 billion for work in the national park (118 border miles).**
- 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.

The Damage Has Already Begun – Contrary to Statements by DHS

- While the latest DHS map no longer shows a 30-foot wall in the national or state parks, it now shows **extensive vehicle barriers, new and expanded patrol roads, and buried communications lines that are not justified by DHS's own border crossing statistics.** Experience elsewhere suggests access roads, staging areas, lighting, new wells, borrow pits, power lines, and construction camps are likely, causing long-term scars well beyond the border itself.
- With no public notice, bulldozers roared into the national park in early August and carved at least 6 miles of new routes through pristine riparian forests and over mountainous terrain. Extensive staging areas are already being built inside and outside the park.
- All the while, DHS claimed there was no construction – merely survey work and design work.
- Local and national media exposed the truth, fueling **bipartisan outrage.**
- DHS was forced to backtrack, pausing construction after 11 days.
- DHS has announced it intends to resume construction soon – and is "considering" a new plan for the national park, though they have yet to reveal any new plan or seek public input on it.
- Big Bend is defined by its **vast, uninterrupted landscapes**, **dark skies, and sense of wildness**—qualities that cannot be readily restored once disrupted.


Natalie Newman

Existing Border Security in Big Bend Is Effective Without Massive New Infrastructure

- The NPS and US Border Patrol have a **long history of close, effective** cooperation in the Big Bend region.
- Patrols, aerial and ground-based wireless electronic surveillance, and coordinated response strategies **already provide robust border security in this area** without the need for extensive physical infrastructure.
- Border Patrol leadership and the Texas Governor have repeatedly noted that **terrain, remoteness, and natural barriers** make **technological surveillance** more appropriate here than barriers or other major construction.
- **Migrant crossings in the Big Bend Sector, and especially in the national park, are by far the lowest of any section of the border.** The Sector represents 26% of the southern border but less than 1% of the illegal apprehensions in the years DHS uses to justify its action. Migrant apprehensions in the national park were less than 0.02% of the total**.**
- **There is no border emergency here justifying immediate construction or the override of normal processes** that protect the national park and the public interest.
- **Security and conservation are not competing goals**; thoughtful coordination can uphold both.

Local Communities and Visitors Are Bearing 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.
- Industrial-scale construction diminishes 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.

Stopping the Current Border Construction Cannot be the End of Our Work

- While multiple lawsuits are challenging DHS' actions, the best short and long-term solution is a new federal law; the national bipartisan outcry to protect Big Bend makes that entirely feasible in the next Congress.
- American citizens need to insist that DHS work with the NPS, local governments, and all stakeholders to assure a secure border without irreparably harming the values, landscape, and livelihoods of those who love Big Bend.
- **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 facilities**.
- A **Protect Big Bend Forever Act** *could* include a provision to **rescind the existing waivers** and **prevent DHS from ever waiving the laws and building massive border infrastructure here again** without site-specific, explicit authorization by a future Congress.
- Republican and Democratic presidents since Richard Nixon have recommended and supported 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**.

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 Keep Big Bend Wild and other 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**.
- **Please support Keep Big Bend Wild** and allied groups, as there are many working to stop the destruction of Big Bend while assuring that our borders remain secure.