

BIG BEND Sentinel

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Our 100th Year

Marfa, Texas • TWO DOLLARS

No Alpine water rate hikes—yet

Charges to pay for new well tabled until June meeting

By GINA VERA

Residents got a reprieve from higher water rates on May 19 when the Alpine City Council voted down a measure that could have increased the base rate by as much as \$5 and the usage rate \$1 per 1,000 gallons to \$1.50 per 1,000 gallons. Rate increases still could be possible in the coming weeks, depending on city finances facing new well expenditures.

The vote was unanimous, after City Council members requested information comparing usage rates from other area municipalities and instructing city staff to bring the proposal back for a vote during the June 16 council meeting.

The council considered the rate increases after saying funds are needed to help pay for a new municipal well that is currently being dug to replace the failed Roberts Well #3 and to help fund future infrastructure projects needed after decades of delay.

Roberts Well #3 suffered a mechanical failure in late April and was later found to be structurally unsound.

The loss of Roberts Well #3 reduced the water supply to the west side of Alpine, triggering an emergency that quickly escalated from Stage 3 to Stage 4 water restrictions. On Monday, the city announced that with the addition of the Cartwright Well, it would now go to Stage 3 restrictions and possibly hit Stage 2 within seven days.

The Cartwright Well is a privately owned well from which the city will be purchasing water. The city has purchased water from this well in the past, said City Secretary Geo Calderon.

The addition of the Cartwright Well will allow the city to discontinue its shuttling of water across town by truck, lower the water restriction for residents and fill the municipal swimming pool as summer vacation starts for local children, Calderon said.

However the city is still working to dig a new well next to the

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HANNAH GENTILES

Visitors at Santa Elena Canyon in Big Bend National Park, where confusion about border barriers remains.

Billionaire's fight to acquire land near Shafter continues

Mining company intent on starting operations again

By ROB D'AMICO

Shafter

The owner of the Cibolo Creek Ranch resort north of Shafter is suing to claim the right to purchase hundreds of acres owned by the nearby silver mine, which reportedly is gearing up to begin operations again as the price of silver has surged.

Shafter is 40 miles south of

Marfa, and the resort—spanning about 30,000 acres tucked in the Chinati Mountains, six miles north of the town—abuts much of the property owned by various mining companies through the decades.

The resort's owner, John Poindexter, under the corporate name of Southwestern Holdings, filed a lawsuit in November against the previous mine owners and the new owner, Black Bear Minerals, headquartered in Australia, asserting a lease agreement he had on various plats of land gave him the “first right of refusal,” mean-

ing that he has the right to try and purchase the land first.

The land in question—hundreds of acres—isn't home to any of the mine's key operation locations.

Poindexter had previously sought to buy the entirety of the mine, including all the land where previous shafts were dug and where excavations were processed for the silver.

Sources, who wished to remain unnamed because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the matter, said the mine owner at the time, Aurcana of British Columbia, Canada, refused to even reply to his offer of \$55 million. Those sources said Poindexter's intent was to leave the land preserved with no future mining.

Poindexter, whose worth is estimated in the billions, made his fortunes producing heavy commercial trucks. He is currently restoring several of Shafter's buildings with the intent of making it a historical tourist destination.

The mine's heyday was from

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LAWSUIT PUTS SCRUTINY ON BORDER WALL

Unfair bidding practices claimed

PROPUBLICA AND THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

By SAM KARAS, PERLA TREVIZO and MISTY HARRIS

When Tommy Fisher set out to build a section of border wall in South Texas during the first Trump administration, the project quickly became ensnared in controversy. Experts raised concerns about shoddy construction and signs of erosion.

Beyond that, Fisher's company had received funding from a group called We Build the Wall, an influential conservative nonprofit that included President Donald Trump's then-political strategist Steve Bannon as a board member. Some of its leaders eventually went to prison for their involvement in the venture.

Even the president denounced the project.

“It was only done to make me look bad”

“I disagreed with doing this very small (tiny) section of wall, in a tricky area, by a private group which raised money by ads,” Trump wrote on X in response to reporting by *ProPublica* and *The Texas Tribune* in 2020 detailing problems with the wall project.

“It was only done to make me look bad,” the post continued.

But none of this stopped Fisher's company from getting subsequent border wall contracts, including from the state of Texas. And now the federal government has awarded his company over \$9 billion to build even more border wall—including a \$1.2 billion contract in the Big Bend region of Texas, where residents have continued to press for answers about the government's plans in and around one of the country's

largest national parks.

And, as during Trump's first term, Fisher's work is stirring up controversy again. A New York-based construction company has sued the Trump administration after it awarded the bulk of new Texas border wall contracts to North Dakota-headquartered Fisher Sand & Gravel and another company.

Posillico Civil Inc.'s lawsuit, filed in the Court of Federal Claims in Washington, D.C., on May 13, offers one of the first public glimpses into the procurement process along the border in Texas. The suit claims that out of the 11 prequalified vendors for the wall projects, U.S. Customs and Border Protection awarded nearly \$14 billion — about 73% of the value of the contracts—to just two: Fisher's firm and Barnard Construction, based in Montana. The work also includes wall projects around El Paso, Laredo, Del Rio and the Rio Grande Valley.

The Trump administration has come under scrutiny for awarding no-bid contracts and for the lack of transparency around its accelerated border wall construction plans, moves designed to help the president achieve his key campaign promise of securing the border.

During his first term, Trump's moves also faced criticism. A

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Herrera takes commissioner seat in runoff

Jesus “Junie” Herrera came out victorious in the only local race in Tuesday's primary runoff—the Democratic candidate for Presidio County Precinct 2 county commissioner. Since he has no Republican opposition in the November general election, he will assume te seat in January.

His opponent, Fernando Juarez, a former Presidio City Council member, withdrew in mid May after he discovered the Hatch Act prohibits federal law enforcement employees from running in partisan elections. (Juarez had left retirement to work for Homeland Security.) Ballots had been printed, Juarez's name remained on the ballot, but he would have not been able to take office if he won the runoff.

Herrera won, 189-10, by Tuesday. He had come out on top in the March 3 primary with 46.88% of the vote. Juarez got 36.95% and incumbent Margarito Hernandez, 16.37%. Without a majority there was a runoff.

Highly contested runoffs for both parties were also on the ballot. Attorney General Ken Paxton defeated U.S. Senator incumbent John Cornyn for the Republican U.S. Senate seat. In another key race, state Sen. Mayes Middleton defeated U.S. Congressman Chip Roy for the Republican nomination for attorney general.

See all runoff results at texas-tribune.org.



INSIDE: THE CLASSES OF 2026

Graduation: *Presidio High School seniors celebrate college acceptances. It was a big year. Among the high points: The cross-country team qualifying for the state championships and the “Presidio Vision 2035” competition, presenting innovative urban development concepts for the community. See yearbook portraits from Alpine, Fort Davis and Marfa as well as Presidio. Pages 5-8*



KATE BUBACZ

View from a car at Terneros Creek Saturday during the flood.

By KATE BUBACZ

Presidio

At least a dozen drivers were stranded for hours as the Terneros Creek flooded outside of Presidio Saturday evening. A severe thunderstorm passed over the interior of Big Bend Ranch State Park early afternoon on Saturday, dropping rain north of Saucedo.

Six hours after the storm, a 50-foot span of cold, fast-moving water still filled the creek bed near Casa Piedra Road, separating two

Border Patrol trucks and a half dozen residents and tourists on River Road. Many had been waiting hours to cross.

Several pickup trucks braved the crossing after watching the flood gauges, sliding sideways on hidden gravel sandbars and rocks. As darkness fell, residents left their cars and hitched rides with taller vehicles and responding maintenance crews while tourists weighed whether it was worth it

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Ruidosa adobe church makes National Trust endangered list

Washington, D.C.
The National Trust for Historic Preservation unveiled its annual list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places, which includes the historic adobe church under renovation in Ruidosa on the border.

The trust said that this year "honors the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding and the self-evident truth that all people are created equal." All 11 sites will receive a one-time grant of \$25,000 from the National Trust.

"Even as the American people prepare to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary, consequential historic places are at risk, some through intentional erasure, others from short-sighted development plans, and still others from deterioration or neglect," said Carol Quillen, president and CEO of the trust.

Each site on this year's list illustrates a different connection to the founding-era principle that *all people are created equal*. These historic places helped define, or redefine, the nation's fundamental values of equal opportunity, religious freedom, self-governance and voting, immigration and citizenship, freedom of expression and assembly, and equal access to justice. According to the trust, preservation of these sites is key to telling the full American story.

Over the coming year, each of the 11 sites will use the visibility created by this announcement as a catalyst for their own locally driven efforts to raise critical funding, rally public support, advocate for change, and permanently save these historic places.

Grant awards from the National Trust will help kickstart this urgent work, supporting preservation-based planning and brick-and-mortar stabilization.

Exact plans vary from site to site, but commonly include activities such as building and site repairs, the creation of new interpretive materials, and educational community events.

Since its debut in 1988, the list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places has galvanized support for more than 350 sites located all across the country. The annual program has proven to be a highly effective tool for local advocates to raise national awareness and to highlight the threats facing some of the country's most significant historic places.

Through preservation, revitalization, investment, land protection, and activation, these places continue to share their stories,

educate the public, and engage communities across the nation.

El Corazón Sagrado

Completed in 1915, El Corazón Sagrado de la Iglesia de Jesús (Church was a place of refuge and prayer for Mexican and Mexican American farming communities on both sides of the international border along the nearby Rio Grande River. Vacant since the 1950s, the church's traditional adobe construction has been stabilized with leadership by a nonprofit friends group, but more work is needed to reactivate the building as a community hub. Recent news that the proposed U.S. border wall may come within a few hundred yards of the church

further complicates preservation and community-building efforts.

"We've made extensive progress on our restoration efforts in the past two years," said Mike Green, president of Friends of the Ruidosa Church, the nonprofit that took the helm of preservation efforts. "This designation adds even more momentum to our work, with the ultimate goal being a community space that is the foundation for telling the history of the area."

The church also was added to the Endangered Latinx Landmarks, released by Latinos in Heritage Conservation in September.

To learn more about the places on this year's list go to www.SavingPlaces.org/11Most.



SARAH M. VASQUEZ

Matachines de Santa Teresa dancers from the town of Presidio twirl outside the historic adobe church at a November Community Day in Ruidosa.

Alpine water rations eased, but rates may rise

Continued from page 1

Roberts Well #3 as a more permanent solution. The city has contracted with Skinner's Drilling and Well Service to construct the well. City officials have estimated the cost of the new municipal well at \$1 million and a loan range for the project at \$500,000 to \$1 million.

These estimates place the annual debt service between \$53,000 and \$107,859, and the monthly debt service between \$4,494 and \$8,988, said city officials.

While City Manager Henry Arredondo and multiple council members expressed support for adding \$4 to the base rate and an increase of \$1 to \$1.50 for usage, at least one council member felt it was too high.

"I wouldn't be comfortable with \$4," said Councilmember Lucy Escovedo. "It feels like a punishment." Escovedo suggested a hike of \$3 instead.

If rate hikes are approved in June, the city would need to post the increase in the newspaper and give customers 30 days' notice, said Arredondo, when questioned by Stephens regarding the process.

"So that gives us a July effective date," Stephens said.

An updated version of the City of Alpine 2025 Water Rate Study Water and System Financial Sustainability & Rate Review, conducted by Communities Unlimited—referred to by city staff Tuesday night—predicted that a \$4 rate increase would bring in an additional \$133,392 in annual

revenue.

The study also found that "the system is currently operating at a deficit, which limits the city's ability to invest in long-term projects, address system maintenance needs, and maintain sufficient reserves for emergencies." The study set the system's annual deficit at \$93,410.

"The rate study identifies existing operational deficits within the water utility system, outlines multiple rate adjustment scenarios, and concludes that additional recurring revenue is necessary to fund critical infrastructure improvements, improve emergency preparedness, strengthen reserve funding, and support eligibility for future grant and low-interest financing opportunities," said city officials in their presentation to

the council.

The study recommended increases of \$5 for the base rate and \$1 per 1,000 gallons to \$1.50 per 1,000 gallons for usage.

Under Stage 3 restrictions:

- **Outdoor watering is limited to handheld hoses or watering cans only between 6 a.m. – 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. – 10 p.m.**
- **Irrigation systems remain prohibited.**
- **Vehicle washing is only permitted at commercial car washes between noon and 5 p.m.**
- **Filling swimming pools remains prohibited.**
- **Residents are encouraged to continue checking for leaks and conserving water wherever possible.**

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PRESIDIO INTERNATIONAL



Aunque quedan ruinas en el pueblo fantasma de Shafter, la minería real ocurría al este de la Carretera 67.

Batalla multimillonaria por tierras en Shafter

Por Rob D'Amico

El propietario del complejo turístico Cibolo Creek Ranch, situado al norte de Shafter, ha interpuesto una demanda para reclamar el derecho a adquirir cientos de acres de terreno que pertenecen a la mina de plata vecina; esta última, según se informa, se está preparando para reanudar sus operaciones ante el reciente repunte en el precio de la plata.

El propietario del complejo, John Poindexter —actuando bajo la razón social Southwestern Holdings—, presentó en noviembre una demanda contra los anteriores dueños de la mina y contra su actual propietario, Black Bear Minerals (con sede en Australia). En ella, Poindexter alega que un contrato de arrendamiento que mantenía sobre varias parcelas de terreno le otorgaba un “derecho de tanteo” (o “derecho de primera opción”), lo que significa que él tiene la prioridad para intentar adquirir dichas tierras. Los terrenos en cuestión —que suman cientos de acres— no albergan ninguna de las instalaciones operativas clave de la mina.

Anteriormente, Poindexter había intentado adquirir la totalidad de la mina, incluyendo todos los terrenos donde se habían excavado los pozos originales y donde se realizaban los procesos de extracción de la plata.

Poindexter, cuya fortuna se estima en miles de millones de dólares, amasó su riqueza fabricando camiones comerciales de gran tonelaje. Actualmente se encuentra restaurando varios edificios de Shafter con el objetivo de transformar la localidad en un destino turístico de carácter histórico.

El periodo de mayor auge de la mina se extendió desde finales de la década de 1890 hasta las décadas de 1920 y 1930; sin embargo, la caída de los precios de la plata obligó a su cierre definitivo en 1942. A lo largo de las décadas posteriores, diversas compañías llevaron a cabo perforaciones exploratorias y pruebas de campo

con el fin de evaluar los yacimientos de plata existentes y descubrir otros nuevos. Aurcana adquirió la mina en 2008 e intentó reanudar las operaciones, lo que resultó en una reapertura de corta duración entre 2012 y 2013, momento en el que la caída de los precios de la plata forzó nuevamente su cierre.

En 2022, Aurcana sufrió un colapso financiero e incumplió el pago de un préstamo de 28 millones de dólares destinado a financiar su mina de plata en Ouray, Colorado, dejando en la incertidumbre el futuro de la mina de Shafter. La empresa puso activamente a la venta el emplazamiento de Shafter y, tras un intento de compra fallido por parte de una compañía canadiense, Black Bear Minerals (anteriormente James Bay Minerals) presentó una oferta exitosa.

Según los registros judiciales, los abogados de Poindexter notificaron a Aurcana, en el mes de octubre, sobre su derecho de preferencia (o primer derecho de rechazo).

Aurcana respondió que, para que dicho derecho fuera aplicable, la propiedad en cuestión debía encontrarse en estado de “abandono definitivo” —lo que implica que no se haya realizado actividad minera alguna durante 20 años—, y alegó que sí se habían llevado a cabo labores de exploración minera.

Los abogados de la parte demandante refutaron este argumento en la demanda y afirmaron no haber recibido información alguna por parte de Aurcana que probara la existencia de actividad en el terreno.

El 21 de noviembre, Southwestern Holdings solicitó ante el Tribunal de Distrito del Condado de Presidio una orden judicial —tanto temporal como permanente— con el fin de detener la venta a Black Bear Minerals. No obstante, ese mismo día se registró ante las autoridades del condado la escritura de transmisión de la propiedad a favor de Black Bear Minerals. Actualmente no hay audiencias programadas en relación con esta demanda.

Ex superintendentes de parques nacionales solicitan al DHS que no exima del cumplimiento de las leyes para la construcción del muro fronterizo

Por Sam Karas

Siete ex superintendentes del Parque Nacional Big Bend escribieron una carta al Secretario del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional (DHS por sus siglas en inglés), Markwayne Mullin, la semana pasada, implorando al gobierno federal que no exima del cumplimiento de las leyes de protección de recursos ambientales y culturales que agilizan la construcción del muro fronterizo, y que se comunique claramente con el personal del parque y la comunidad local sobre sus planes para la infraestructura de seguridad dentro y alrededor del parque. “No tiene por qué haber un conflicto entre una frontera segura, una economía local próspera y la conservación de los paisajes más salvajes e intactos de Texas y de nuestra nación”, dice la carta.

La carta se redactó en respuesta a una serie de acontecimientos recientes en la saga en curso de las mejoras de la infraestructura de la barrera a lo largo de la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México. El 11 de mayo, DHS adjudicó a Southwest Valley Constructors, filial de Kiewit, un contrato multimillonario de 1.700 millones de dólares para la construcción de un muro fronterizo en Big Bend, Texas. El 15 de mayo, la agencia eximió del cumplimiento de decenas de leyes a un tramo del río Grande, declarado río salvaje y escénico, en los Cañones Inferiores.

En una época marcada por los recortes presupuestarios y la escasez de personal en el Servicio de Parques Nacionales, este contrato de 1.700 millones de dólares representa una inversión sin precedentes y desproporcionada en el parque, especialmente en terrenos gestionados por una agencia con un presupuesto anual de alrededor de 3.300 millones de dólares y un parque cuyo presupuesto suele rondar los 9 millones de dólares. «Si se construye un muro fronterizo —u otra infraestructura fronteriza innecesaria y altamente destructiva— dentro del Parque Nacional Big Bend, constituiría el ataque más grave contra la integridad de todo el Sistema de Parques Nacionales desde la construcción de una represa en el valle de Hetchy Hetchy, en el Parque Nacional Yosemite, hace más de un siglo», proclama la carta.

Gracias a la Ley REAL ID de 2005, el secretario del DHS —un

miembro no electo del gabinete presidencial— puede eximir del cumplimiento de cualquier ley sin la aprobación del Congreso para apoyar la construcción acelerada de barreras fronterizas y carreteras en zonas con alta tasa de entrada ilegal.

Según Scott Nichol, profesor e investigador residente en McAllen, quien ha escrito extensamente sobre el muro fronterizo, este poder se utilizó con relativa moderación entre las administraciones de Bush, Obama y Biden, pero se disparó durante la presidencia de Trump, tanto en el número de exenciones solicitadas como en su alcance. “La aplicación de las exenciones y la interpretación de su alcance se han expandido repetidamente, de tal manera que los muros fronterizos ahora tienen prioridad sobre cualquier posible restricción legal, salvo la Constitución de los Estados Unidos”, escribió Nichol en un artículo titulado “El muro fronterizo sin ley”.

En el sector de Big Bend de la Oficina de Aduanas y Protección Fronteriza (CBP por sus siglas en inglés), un área que incluye el parque nacional pero que en total es más grande que el estado de California, los residentes locales han alertado sobre el uso de estas exenciones designadas para áreas de “alta entrada ilegal” en una parte del país donde, en promedio, se produce entre el 1 % y el 3 % del total de cruces ilegales.

Impacto migratorio mínimo en Big Bend

En el Parque Nacional de Big Bend, que abarca 118 millas de frontera, estas cifras son aún más bajas. Datos recopilados por Bob Krumenaker, ex superintendente del parque y firmante de la carta, sugieren que las detenciones realizadas por la agencia dentro de los límites del Parque Nacional han representado un promedio del 0,02 % del total nacional durante la última década, incluyendo un gran aumento en la migración transfronteriza tras la pandemia de COVID-19. (Estas cifras no han sido confirmadas de forma independiente por el Sentinel; la CBP no divulga públicamente datos por debajo del nivel sectorial y actualmente enfrenta una demanda por su reticencia a divulgar información que justifique la aplicación de las exenciones).

En respuesta a la protesta pública contra un importante proyecto de construcción en el parque, el DHS ha aclarado algunos puntos: primero, que no se construirá ningún muro de acero de 9 metros en el Parque Estatal Big Bend Ranch, el Parque Nacional Big Bend ni el Área de Manejo de Vida Silvestre Black Gap, sino que se priorizarán “sensores y

cámaras” y barreras vehiculares de “bajo perfil”. En una reunión a puerta cerrada con funcionarios encargados de hacer cumplir la ley el 14 de mayo, funcionarios locales de CBP aclararon las declaraciones que el Comisionado Rodney Scott hizo al Washington Examiner a principios de mayo, en las que afirmaba que las obras de construcción en el parque incluirían el asfaltado de una carretera de patrulla a lo largo del río.

Un mapa en línea proporcionado por la agencia sugería que el «camino de patrulla» pavimentado seguiría la ruta de la River Road dentro del Parque Nacional; una ruta accidentada de 51 millas que el Servicio de Parques Nacionales estima que toma entre 5 y 7 horas recorrer en vehículo. Los planes de Scott para pavimentar caminos en uno de los lugares más remotos de los Estados Unidos suscitaron gran escepticismo, tanto por su impacto ambiental como porque permitirían a un mayor número de visitantes adentrarse aún más en el interior del parque, donde la respuesta ante emergencias es todavía más lenta.

Este asunto ha sido objeto de controversia desde hace mucho tiempo entre los amantes de la vida al aire libre. Edward Abbey arremetió célebremente contra la pavimentación de caminos a través de tierras públicas en su polémica obra de 1968, Desert Solitaire (Soledad en el desierto). “Hemos acordado no conducir nuestros automóviles dentro de catedrales, salas de conciertos, museos de arte, asambleas legislativas, dormitorios privados y los demás santuarios de nuestra cultura”, escribió. “Deberíamos tratar a nuestros parques nacionales con la misma deferencia, pues ellos también son lugares sagrados”.

Krumenaker, quien ha dedicado su jubilación a dirigir la organización sin fines de lucro Keep Big Bend Wild con la esperanza de proteger la mayor parte de la superficie del parque de futuros proyectos de desarrollo, sintió alivio al enterarse de que el camino pavimentado no llegaría a materializarse. “Sería como clavar un puñal en el corazón del carácter indómito del parque”, afirmó.

El Servicio de Parques Nacionales y CBP cuentan con un largo historial de colaboración para asegurar la frontera dentro del Parque Nacional Big Bend. En 2006, el DHS, el Departamento del Interior y el Departamento de Agricultura firmaron un acuerdo en el que se establecía la forma en que dichas agencias trabajarían conjuntamente para lograr el objetivo de la seguridad fronteriza en tierras públicas. Dicho acu-

erdo enfatiza la cooperación entre las partes interesadas a nivel local, estatal y federal, e insta a las tres agencias a “cooperar entre sí para identificar métodos, rutas y ubicaciones para las operaciones [de la CBP] que minimicen los impactos sobre los recursos naturales, culturales y silvestres... al tiempo que facilitan el acceso necesario [para la CBP]”.

Mientras Krumenaker ejercía como superintendente del Parque Nacional Big Bend, la CBP mantenía con el parque un acuerdo —ya extinto— que proporcionaba cierta financiación para el mantenimiento de los caminos, bajo la expectativa de que el personal del parque mantendría en buen estado las vías situadas a lo largo de la frontera para facilitar las labores de patrullaje. Incluso cuando esos fondos aún estaban disponibles, la crónica falta de personal del parque dificultaba que los equipos de mantenimiento cumplieran con su parte del acuerdo; una situación que difícilmente mejoraría a medida que la administración Trump continúa mermando al Servicio de Parques Nacionales.

La carta de los superintendentes reconoce que algunas de las carreteras necesarias para las patrullas se encuentran en “mal estado”. Durante las últimas tres décadas, el gobierno federal ha utilizado recursos militares para realizar obras viales a lo largo de la frontera, incluso durante el despliegue de la JTF-6 bajo la administración Clinton y por parte de la Guardia Nacional de Texas en 2007. La mayoría de estas mejoras fueron arrasadas por la histórica inundación de 2008 y los eventos de inundación posteriores.

Esto incluye la River Road, de la cual grandes tramos quedaron fuera de servicio durante gran parte del año pasado después de que el Departamento de Eficiencia Gubernamental despidiera a cerca del 5% del personal del parque y de que el Río Grande alcanzara un nivel de inundación crítico tras una serie de tormentas de verano. Krumenaker afirmó que los suelos blandos en el corredor fluvial y las inundaciones crónicas convierten el mantenimiento de esa carretera en particular en una labor de Sísifo. “Se necesitaría mucho dinero para pavimentarla, y sería simplemente un terrible desperdicio”, dijo.

Además de Krumenaker, la carta de los superintendentes fue firmada por David Elkowitz, Cindy Ott-Jones, Bill Wellman, John H. King, Robert Arnberger y H. Gilbert Lusk. En conjunto, el grupo acumula 259 años de experiencia al servicio del Servicio de Parques Nacionales.

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San Angelo man charged with multiple felonies after standoff with police

Alpine

Jerad Shipman, 43, of San Angelo, is still in the Brewster County Jail, charged with multiple felonies, nearly a week after allegedly kidnapping and assaulting his girlfriend and holding law enforcement officers from multiple agencies at bay from a hotel room for several hours on May 18.

Shipman initially refused police requests to leave his hotel room at the Holiday Inn Express and Suites at 2004 East Highway 90 until he could speak with an attorney, said Alpine Police Captain Felipe Fierro.

“The Texas Ranger was the one that initiated contact with him verbally at the door, and he demanded an attorney,” Fierro said. “He was able to get in touch with an attorney, and he finally did come out, willingly, and was taken into custody.”

Fierro estimated that Shipman was taken into custody about two and a half hours after law enforcement officers first asked him to leave his room and after speaking to an attorney by telephone.

Charges against Shipman include kidnapping, aggravated sexual assault, and aggravated assault, Fierro said. Shipman’s bail is set at \$1.2 million.

Agencies, including the Alpine Police Department, Brewster County Sheriff’s Department, Department of Public Safety, Homeland Security Investigation, and the Texas Rangers, responded to a call at 7:20 pm Monday, May 18, at the Holiday Inn Express and Suites when a woman in the lobby of the hotel called police, saying she had been held at gunpoint and assaulted, Fierro said.

“The officers that arrived met



Police from multiple agencies swarm an Alpine hotel as a gunman inside refuses to exit his room.

with the female complainant, stating that she had been held at gunpoint in one of the rooms, and she was able to get out and go to the lobby,” Fierro said. “And during the investigation, with the assistance of other agencies, we were able to determine that other incidents did occur.”

The woman was also choked, he said. “She was assaulted, and there was a firearm produced, so that makes it an aggravated assault and also an assault of a family member by impeding respiratory circulation, which is a third-degree felony. He strangled her.”

Fierro clarified that in these charges, people who are dating are considered family members and added that Shipman and the woman were dating.

Shipman, who was in Alpine for business, and the woman had apparently planned their meeting at the hotel. Fierro would only describe the woman as an adult and not an Alpine resident.

Aggravated sexual assault is a first-degree felony. Aggravated assault with a deadly weapon is a second-degree felony. Assault of a family member by impeding breath or circulation is a third-degree felony.

Spotty flood warnings lead to surprises

Continued from page 1

to wait or turn around for a longer drive to their destinations.

Termeros Creek reached nearly three feet of water and covered over 100 feet of River Road. Headwaters arrived at the bridge over Alamito Creek nearly 8 hours after the storm, although cresting information was not immediately available. Terlingua also experienced flash flooding, but the waters had receded by morning.

The Big Bend region has very few weather and river gauges, resulting in spotty flood warnings, unreliable weather reports and limited research data. The National Weather Service out of Midland issued flash flood warnings on Saturday for Brewster County, but not Presidio County.

The creeks and arroyos have been a longtime source of concern for many locals who are accustomed to having plans disrupted by floodwaters. A proposed border wall is causing additional anxiety, as it could impede the flow of floodwaters draining into the river. The International Boundary Water Commission and CBP have not responded to questions from local officials about hydrological studies in the area.

Marfa Council meeting cancelled

City Council meeting set for Thursday, May 28, has been cancelled due to a mistake in posting the agenda. The next meeting is scheduled for June 9 at 6 p.m. in the Casner Room, City Hall.

Former park officials concerned

Continued from page 1

Valley Constructors, a subsidiary of Kiewit, with a massive \$1.7 billion contract “for border wall in Big Bend Texas,” and on May 15, the agency waived dozens of laws for a stretch of the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River in the Lower Canyons.

In an era marked by budget cuts and staffing shortages within the National Park Service, that \$1.7 billion contract represents an unprecedented and disproportionate investment in the park, especially on land managed by an agency with an annual budget of around \$3.3 billion and a park whose budget typically hovers around \$9 million. “If a border wall—or other unnecessary and highly destructive border infrastructure—is built inside Big Bend National Park, it would be the most egregious assault on the integrity of the entire National Park System since the construction of a dam in the Hetchy Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park more than a century ago,” the letter proclaims.

Thanks to the REAL ID Act of 2005, the DHS secretary—an unelected member of the president’s cabinet—can waive any laws they want without congressional approval to support “the expeditionary construction of border barriers and roads” in areas of “high illegal entry.”

According to Scott Nichol, a teacher and researcher based in McAllen who has written extensively about the border wall, this power was used relatively sparingly between the Bush, Obama and Biden administrations but exploded under Trump, both in the number of waivers filed and their scope. “The application of waivers and the interpretation of their scope has repeatedly expanded, such that border walls are now privileged over all potential legal constraints short of the U.S. Constitution,” Nichol wrote in a paper called “The Lawless Border Wall.”

In Custom and Border Protection’s (CBP’s) Big Bend Sector—an area that includes the national park but is in total larger than the

state of California—locals have raised the alarm about the use of these waivers designated for areas of “high illegal entry” in a part of the country where, on average, between 1% and 3% of total illegal crossings take place.

In Big Bend National Park, which spans 118 miles of border, those numbers are even more meager. Data compiled by Bob Krumenaker, a former superintendent of the park and a signatory of the letter, suggests that agency apprehensions within National Park boundaries have constituted an average of 0.02% of nationwide totals over the past decade, including a large post-COVID spike in cross-border migration. (These figures have not been independently confirmed by *Sentinel*—CBP does not publicly release data below the sector level and is currently being sued over its hesitancy to release information justifying the invocation of the waivers.)

No steel wall in the park

In response to a public outcry against a major construction project in the park, DHS has clarified a few points: first, that there would be no 30-foot steel wall built in Big Bend Ranch State Park, Big Bend National Park or the Black Gap Wildlife Management Area, instead prioritizing “sensors and cameras” and “low-profile” vehicle barriers. At a closed meeting with law enforcement officials on May 14, local Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials clarified statements made by Commissioner Rodney Scott to the Washington Examiner earlier in May that construction work in the park would include paving a patrol road along the river.

An online map provided by the agency suggested that the paved “patrol road” would follow the route of the River Road in the National Park, a rough 51-mile route that the National Park Service estimates takes around 5-7 hours to drive. Scott’s plans to pave roads in one of the most remote places in the United States raised a lot of eyebrows, both for its environmental impact and because

it would allow a larger number of visitors to travel deeper into the interior of the park, where emergency response is even slower.

The issue has long been controversial for outdoorspeople. Edward Abbey famously inveighed against the paving of roads through public land in his 1968 polemic *Desert Solitaire*. “We have agreed not to drive our automobiles into cathedrals, concert halls, art museums, legislative assemblies, private bedrooms and the other sanctuaries of our culture,” he wrote. “We should treat our national parks with the same deference, for they, too, are holy places.”

Krumenaker, who has been spending his retirement leading the nonprofit Keep Big Bend Wild in hopes of protecting most of the park’s acreage from future development, was relieved to hear that the paved road wouldn’t come to fruition. “It would be a knife in the heart of the wild character of the park,” he said.

The National Park Service and CBP have a long history of working together to secure the border in Big Bend National Park. In 2006, DHS, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture signed an agreement laying out how the agencies would work together toward the goal of border security on public land.

That agreement emphasizes cooperation between local, state and federal stakeholders and urges all three agencies to “cooperate with each other to identify methods, routes and locations for [CBP] operations that will minimize impacts to natural, cultural and wilderness resources ... while facilitating needed [CBP] access.”

While Krumenaker was serving as superintendent of Big Bend National Park, CBP had a now-defunct arrangement with the park that provided some funding for road maintenance with the expectation that park staff would keep roads along the border in good condition for patrols. Even when that funding was still in place, the park’s chronic understaffing made it difficult for maintenance

crews to fulfill their end of the bargain—a situation unlikely to improve as the Trump administration continues to chip away at the National Park Service.

The superintendents’ letter acknowledges that some of the roads needed for patrols are in “poor condition.” Over the past three decades, the federal government has used military resources for road work along the border, including during the Clinton administration’s JTF-6 deployment and by the Texas National Guard in 2007. Most of these improvements were wiped out by the historic flood of 2008 and subsequent flooding events.

That includes the River Road, large stretches of which were out of commission for much of last year after the Department of Government Efficiency laid off around 5% of park staff and the Rio Grande hit a major flood stage after a series of summer storms. Krumenaker said that the soft soils in the river corridor and chronic flooding make maintaining that particular road a Sisyphean effort. “You’d need a lot of money to pave it, and it’d just be a terrible waste,” he said.

Besides Krumenaker, the superintendents’ letter was signed by David Elkowitz, Cindy Ott-Jones, Bill Wellman, John H. King, Robert Arnberger, and H. Gilbert Lusk. Between them, the group has 259 years of experience serving in the National Park Service.

They believe that public engagement and common sense is key to meeting DHS’s border security needs without squandering taxpayer money. “If you issue a waiver [to fast-track wall construction] that will not be possible,” the superintendents wrote. “The unique, nationally significant landscape, natural resources, and cultural heritage of Big Bend National Park, one of the nation’s crown jewels, will be irreparably damaged, and we fear that any sense of commitment to shared stewardship of the nation’s borderland between your agency and the one we devoted our careers to will be as well.”

—SAM KARAS

ALPINE HIGH SCHOOL

Congratulations to Big Bend graduates

GRADUATES across the tri-county area are beaming with joy as they celebrate their hard-earned diplomas this week, marking the culmination of years of dedication. Surrounded by tight-knit communities, these seniors are eagerly looking forward to the next steps in their journeys.

The school year at Alpine High School was highlighted by community-wide spirit events, including the homecoming parade and “Pink Out” cancer awareness games. On the field, Varsity football showed their resilience with standout efforts from key players like Dae Hardwick, peaking with match ups against rivals like Odessa Compass Academy and Wellington.

Aaron Hardwick was named the Alpine High School Teacher of the Year. The year concluded with high energy at the annual Prom and the creative Class of 2026 Senior SignOff video project-produced by student Abraham Pando. Graduates walked the stage on Friday, May 22.



OCOTILLO YEARBOOK

Alpine grads throw their mortarboards in the air after graduating Friday.

LAILA ALANIZ	JOSÉ APOLINAR	AYDEN ARAUZA	DAVID BACA	MIGUEL BATRES	SYE BEHAN	LANDON BRUTTOMESSO
AIYANNA CAMERON	NEVAEH CARRASCO	KAROLINA CASTILLO	MAKENZEE DE LEON	SETH DUTCHOVER	ROMEO FISH	ROBERT FLORES
CLEGG FOWLKES	ADAM GARCIA	JULIAN GARCÍA	EZICIO GUILLEN	COLT HALE	DAE HARDWICK	KODY HAWKINS
EMYLIANA HERNANDEZ	PAOLA HERRERA	GERALDINE HINOJOSA	T.J. HUERTA	DANE JEFFRESS	ISAIAH JIMENEZ	ANDREA JOHNSON
BRIANNA JOHNSON	JACK JUETT	PEYTON KINKADE	TARYN KLOCKMAN	A.J. LLANEZ	ARIK LLANEZ	ZEVRI LLANEZ
JARRED MARTÍNEZ	ALYSSA MITCHELL	NAIDA MORRIS	LEON MUCHARRAZ	JUAN MUÑOZ	JOEL MUÑOZ	IZABEL ORTIZ
MARIANA PALAZUELOS	RYANNA PINEDA	MATTHEW PITTS	J.P. PRIETO	ALEC RAMOS	KEALIE REAGAN	RAUL RENTERÍA
TERESA RITZI	MACKENZIE SANCHEZ	VIANNEY SANTOS	COLLETTE SHARRON	LILLY STEWART	MEGAN STRUTHERS	EMILY SWEAT
CONNOR TALLEY	KELTON TARRANT	TRINITY VEGA	DEIDRA VILLAREAL	DYLAN WANG	TONI YBARRA	

FORT DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL

At Fort Davis, a small community comes together to support students

AUTUMN MONTHS featured a spirited Homecoming, the unique student-crafted floral designs of the Floral Design class, and a cultural Dia de Muertos Festival hosted in the school library. A community “Senior Spotlight” campaign, highlighting each graduate’s academic achievements, high school memories, and future collegiate or career goals kicked off graduation day. Graduation was held on May 22.



JAYDEN BILLINGSLEY



RICARDO CHI



DOUG COMER



MAISIE CORBIN



ELSA DAMM



PAITYN ESCOBEDO



ELIANA GRANADO



JOCELYN HAMILTON



ARMANDO HERRERA



CAIL HINOJOS



QUINN MARTIN



YSLA SALCIDO



JUSTIN TRUSSELL



FORT DAVIS ISD

Fort Davis seniors pose for a pre-graduation at the school.

Congratulations to the graduates of the Big Bend high schools!

Wishing you success wherever your path takes you.

—From your local bankers at Big Bend Banks



MARFA HIGH SCHOOL

Shorthorns celebrate milestones and art partnerships

THE MARFA YEAR kicked off in the autumn with high-spirited Homecoming court announcements and an open house. The varsity volleyball team quickly became a standout and won the District Championship.

The spring semester brought unique collaborations, including a specialized senior memory-making day hosted at the Chinati Foundation, as well as a group of ambitious seniors earning dual-credit credentials directly through Odessa College.



MARFA HIGH SCHOOL
Marfa students at this year's All Sports Banquet & Awards



SAMUEL ESTRADA

Samuel Estrada is the son of Andrea and Thomas Estrada and the grandson of Brenda Garcia. Throughout Sammy's high school career, he has participated in golf and UIL. In addition to school, Sammy has been employed at Livingston's feed store, Cochineal, and Water Stop.

After graduation, Sammy will attend Western Technical College for Welding and Diesel mechanics.



AVA FLORES

Ava Lola Flores is the daughter of Luis and Lori Flores, and sister of Kaci Lee Flores and Timothy Paul Flores. Ava proudly serves as president of the National Honor Society, president of Student Council, and class president. She is also an active member of One Act Play, where she won All Star Cast at district. She has competed in multiple sports throughout high school, including volleyball, softball, track, cross-country, basketball, and golf.

In athletics, Ava has earned numerous honors. In volleyball, she was recognized as Newcomer of the Year, Setter of the Year, and Most Valuable Player two years in a row. In basketball, she earned First Team All-District honors.



DARREN CAMPOS

Darren Campos is the son of Janet and Johnny Campos. Throughout Darren's high school career, he has participated in basketball, track, football, and cross-country. In addition to school, Darren has been employed at the St. George Pool and Cochineal. After graduation, Darren will attend Angelo State University to get a degree in kinesiology to pursue his dreams of becoming a coach or physical therapist.



KAREN CONTRERAS

Karen Contreras is the daughter of Laura Castillo Galván. During Karen's high school career, she has participated in soccer and weight lifting. In addition to school, Karen has been employed at Buffalo Wild Wings and Dollar General. After graduation, Karen will attend Northern Arizona University to pursue a degree in anatomy and become qualified in mortuary science to be a mortician.



ISMAEL "JOANGEL" DAVILA

Joangel is the son of Cassie Dominguez and Jesus Dominguez. Throughout his high school career, he has participated in the National Honor Society, Yearbook, Marfa Blooms, Science Fair, and UIL academic competitions. He competed at the Regional Science Fair his sophomore, junior and senior years, advancing each time to the state competition. He received first place in Chemistry in regional Academic UIL. He also attended the Regional Visual Art Scholastic Event in Odessa in 2024. In addition to school, Joangel has been employed at The Get Go for 1.5 years. After graduation, Joangel will work toward his goal of becoming an electrical engineer.



MANUEL DOMINGUEZ

Manny Dominguez is the son of Chris Dominguez and grandson of Aurora Dominguez. Throughout high school, Manny has participated in football and track. Alongside his time in school and sports, he has worked at Dairy Queen and with the City Park. After high school, Manny plans to earn his CDL and crane operating license so he can pursue a career in the oil fields or in truck driving. He was awarded a full scholarship from Workforce Solutions to pursue his CDL. Manny would like to sincerely thank his family and coaches for always being there for him and supporting him every step of the way.



PIPER DONALDSON

Piper Donaldson is the daughter of Cory and Lizzy Donaldson. She plans to attend the University of Texas at San Antonio to study public health before applying to medical school and pursuing a career in psychiatric care. During high school, Piper participated in the State Science Fair and the State History Fair for three consecutive years and advanced to University Interscholastic League Regionals twice. She has also been a proud member of Marfa Blooms for the past three years and a member of the National Honor Society. Piper would like to thank her friends, family, teachers, and her beloved cat Floki, whose love and companionship mean the world to her.



AMAYA GOMEZ

Amaya is the daughter of David and Rachel Gomez. Amaya is a member of the National Honor Society and has also served as class treasurer during her junior and senior years. She is the Class of 2026's valedictorian. Amaya has participated in volleyball, cheer, and basketball all four years of high school as well as track and softball for three years. She has also participated in golf and has advanced to regionals in her junior and senior years.

Amaya has also participated in the science fair, where she advanced to the state competition her sophomore, junior, and senior years. This year, her project, about cell reaggregation in sponges, won her a \$1000 scholarship.



CHRISTOPHER HUERTA

Chris Huerta is the son of Evette Torres. Throughout Chris' high school career, he has participated as a manager in football and basketball. He was also a Shorthorn reporter during his freshman and senior years. In addition to school, Chris has been employed at Stripes. After graduation, Chris will attend Angelo State University to get his degree in communications.



DYLAN IBARRA

Dylan Ibarra is the son of Arali Macías. Throughout high school, Dylan has participated in basketball, track, golf, boxing, football, Young Life, UIL academic competitions, Pastoral Juvenil, and the Engineering Science Fair. As a coordinator in Pastoral Juvenil at San José Church in Camargo, he attended multiple state-level congresses and leadership events.

Academically, Dylan maintains a 3.7 GPA and ranks third in his graduating class. In boxing, he competed at the national level, won two state tournaments, and earned a record of 17 wins and 1 loss, with 12 victories by technical knockout. In golf, he qualified for regionals with an average score of 95.



MESSIAH LICON

Messiah Licon is the daughter of Denise Valerio and Jesus Licon Jr. During her high school career, Messiah has been actively involved in numerous organizations and activities that have helped shape her into the person she is today. She participated in Student Council all four years, proudly serving as vice president during her senior year. She was also a member of the National Honor Society, competed in UIL, participated in journalism throughout all four years of high school, and was involved in Marfa Blooms during her senior year. Academically, Messiah dedicated herself to excellence and leadership and was awarded salutatorian of the Class of 2026.



RAVEN MARTINEZ

Raven Mia Martinez is the daughter of Rosemary and Ruben Martinez. Throughout her high school career, Raven has been very involved at Marfa High School as a member of the National Honor Society and the Student Advisory Committee for four years. She has also been part of UIL Accounting, Science Fair, and One-Act Play. Raven has been a dedicated multi-sport athlete, competing in volleyball, basketball, softball, cross-country, track, cheer, and golf. Throughout her high school career, she has earned many athletic honors. In her freshman year, she received Second Team All-District in volleyball, Basketball Newcomer of the Year, was a regional qualifier in track and golf, and was named Softball Offensive Player of the Year.



MAVERICK MILLIGAN

Maverick Milligan is the son of Lauren Martinez. Throughout Maverick's high school career, he participated in football. His accolades included going number 4 in the State, winning Offensive MVP, and winning first team All District. In addition to school, Maverick is an avid horseman. He currently has a permit and is pursuing a PRCA Pro Rodeo Card. Maverick has been employed at Marfa Method where he is doing an apprenticeship in carpentry. After graduation, Maverick will attend TSTC in New Braunfels where he will learn pipefitting and plumbing and become a certified plumber. He was awarded a \$1000 scholarship to pursue this path of work.



AYVEN PIPPEN

Ayven Phippen is the son of Luis Phippen and Felicia Irvin. Throughout Ayven's high school career, he has participated in varsity football and basketball, Young Life, and academic UIL competitions. He advanced to State Science Fair his sophomore, junior, and senior years, winning a \$3000 scholarship in 2025 for his project, "Composting for Green Energy." He has also been a Shorthorn reporter and participated in yearbook. In addition to school, Ayven was employed at Cochineal for 1 year. After graduation, Ayven will attend the University of Texas in San Antonio and work toward a career in biology. He would like to become an ecologist and study how living organisms interact with each other and their physical environments.



RICARDO "ISAIAH" RAMOS

Ricardo "Isaiah" Ramos is the son of Rosa Melendez. Throughout Isaiah's high school career, he participated in powerlifting during his freshman and sophomore years, served as vice president of the National Honor Society, qualified for the State Science Fair three years in a row, earning 2nd place at regionals each year, worked as a high school news reporter for all four years, showcased his talent as an artist, and served as CEO of Marfa Blooms. In addition to school activities, Isaiah worked as a dishwasher at Angel's Restaurant and now works at Marfa Dairy Queen. After graduation, Isaiah plans to attend Sul Ross State University to pursue a degree in Criminal Justice and hopes to build a career in law enforcement.



ALEJANDRO RODRIGUEZ

Alejandro Rodriguez is the son of Claudia Rodriguez. He learned the value of hard work from his mother, Claudia, who always pushed him to chase his dreams and never give up. Throughout high school, Alejandro stayed busy year-round, competing in football, basketball, cross-country, track, and golf. Every sport taught him something different—football gave him toughness, basketball taught him teamwork, cross-country and track built endurance, and golf showed him patience and focus. In the fall, Alex will attend Sul Ross State University to study kinesiology and pursue his dream of becoming a coach to inspire future athletes the same way his coaches and his mother have inspired him.



SARA SALGADO

Sara is the daughter of Jose Raul Salgado and Norma Alicia Salgado. Throughout Sara's high school career, she has participated in Folklorico, National Honor Society, Young Life, One Act and Marfa Blooms. In addition to school, Sara has been employed at Cochineal throughout her senior year and was employed at Dairy Queen throughout her freshman, sophomore and junior years. After graduation, Sara will attend The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley where she plans to major in communications and minor in business management. Although Sara is not completely sure where her studies will take her, she knows she wants to pursue a meaningful career that allows her to help others.



GARRY "GOPHER" WEBB

Garry Webb is the son of Summer and Clay Webb. Gopher moved to Marfa High in 2024 and has participated in football, basketball, and track. He is a member of the National Honor Society and 4-H. In his free time, Gopher is a beekeeper and lives and works on a ranch. After graduation, Gopher plans to attend the San Antonio Fire Academy to become a firefighter.



ASAEL ZUBIA

Asael is the son of Ernesto and Florcita Zubia. Throughout Asael's high school career he has participated in football, basketball, golf, one-act play, UIL, Science Fair, and National Honor Society. Asael has worked at ABR Construction and Marfa RenTools, and after graduation, he will attend Southern Careers Institute, where he'll study and work to become an electrician and expand his expertise.

PRESIDIO HIGH SCHOOL



MA ALINA CALPO AFINGWAN



EFRAIN LUJAN AGUILAR



VALERIA AGUILERA



PAULINA PEREZ ALARCON



LEANNAH MAIRI AMARO



D'ANTHONY L. ARANDA



ABRIL VAZQUEZ ARAUJO



ADRIEL ARROYO ARMENDARIZ



MARILY ARMENDARIZ



JOSE LUJAN BARAJAS



MA AUDI CHRISTI LIM BONHOC



ANNA KARMEN CARRASCO



DAVID CARRASCO



CAROLINA LARES CARRASCO



ALY ISAAK CATAÑO



ADRIAN BAEZA CHAVEZ



RENATA RAMOS CHAVEZ



DEVANNY ALVARADO



DEBANHI MENA DOMINGUEZ



CHRISTIAN LEE ESPARZA



JARED FRANCIS



RICARDO HERNANDEZ FRANCO



JAN ELIZAH GABISAN GALLEGO



ISAIAS GAMBOA



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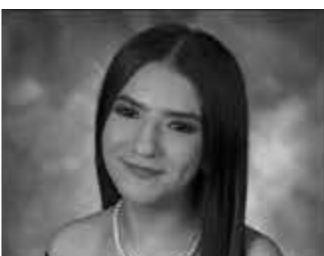
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GLORIA VALENZUELA HINOJOS



IAN MARTIN HOLGUIN



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AZUCENA LOPEZ



JOSHUA SANCHEZ LOPEZ



ERIC LOZANO



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JAYDEN TINO MARTINEZ



ANDRES JAVIER MATA



RANDY AGUILAR MEDRANO



CAMILA ALEJANDRA MIRELES



GRECIA MARYAN MOLINA



NATALIE MICHELLE



JAILENNE MORALES



CARL ANDREI MORALES



JAVIER SAENZ MORALES



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EDUARDO NATERA



EMMANUEL AVILA



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TIANNA BAILON OLIVAS



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NANCY LARA OLVERA



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ALVIN URIEL SALAZAR ORTEGA



LUISA MARIETTA PADILLA



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ALAN A. SAMANIEGO PANDO



ARANZA PANDO-ALVAREZ



ISAIAS PIZARRO



AMERICA LOYA RAMIREZ



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CROSSWORD

007
By Jake Halperin

5/28

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Edited by Taylor Johnson

ACROSS

1 Relative by marriage

6 Super Bowl org.

9 Floor covering

12 New Zealand language in which "waka" means "canoe"

13 Futbol cheer

14 Polynesian Disney princess with a pet pig

16 "Choosing not to join

18 "Der Ring des Nibelungen" and "Odyssey," e.g.

19 Ronan, to Mia Farrow

20 Consumed

22 Uprising

26 Massachu- setts home to Hampshire College

27 "Pesto ingredient

29 Section of a timeline

30 Alluded to

31 Campus sports grp.

33 Maryland athlete, for short

37 And others: Abbr.

38 "From long ago

39 Ohio border lake

40 Job-related move, for short

41 Qatar's capital

42 Back half of a vinyl

43 "Just so you know" letters

45 "Quick look

47 Turndown

50 Lavish homes

51 Fresh start

52 Deity

53 Oust, as a tenant

54 "Vast blue expanse

60 Heats up in the microwave

61 Flee

62 "How low can you go?" competition

63 Golfer's peg

64 Tunneling insect

65 "In a bit"

DOWN

1 "if u ask me ..."

2 Brief slumber

3 Parking place

4 Nickname that drops "stottle"

5 "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" actress Kate

6 Morning's end

7 Seasonal illness

8 "They can do what they want"

9 When it ____ , it pours

10 Not edited, as a film

11 Shocked reaction

14 Suffix with centi- or kilo-

15 *Performs surgery for

17 Reliable choice

21 Up a lap, say

22 "Copy that"

23 Mexican grilled corn dish topped with cotija cheese

24 Crucial

25 *Famous room in the West Wing

26 What a mocktail doesn't have

28 Tipster's offering

32 EGOT winner

34 Cynthia of 2024's "Wicked"

35 Bus passenger

36 Social equals

38 Lyrical poet

42 "Do me this favor ..."

44 Circular Mongolian tents

46 "Let's hustle!"

47 Vaudeville show

48 Two-wheeler with a pedal assist mode

49 Spanish for "now"

51 Would-be tenant's consideration

52 Decorous dude

55 Kind of joke that may be written on a coffee mug

56 Secretive org.

57 911 responder

58 Civil War prez

59 For love money (for anything, to a Brit)

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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5/21

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www.upuzzles.com

SUDUKO

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

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AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thursday May 28

Boxing at Maintenant
7:30am-9:00am
Maintenant
1825 Rabbits Rd.
Marfa, TX

Meditation
6:00pm, free and open to all
Marfa Public Library
Community Room
Marfa, TX

Skyline Drive Geology Tour
9:00am-11:00am
Davis Mountains State Park
Park Rd 3
Fort Davis, TX

Friday May 29



Legacy of the CCC Hike
9:00am-11:00am
Davis Mountains State Park
Park Rd 3
Fort Davis, TX

Desert Snakes and Creepy Crawlies
2:00pm-3:00pm
Davis Mountains State Park
Park Rd 3
Fort Davis, TX

Live Music: Hall's Last Call Band
6:30pm-9:30pm
Alcove Social
211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

HWY 90 Music Series: Phil Hamilton
7:30pm-9:30pm
Gage Hotel
102 NW 1st St, Highway 90W
Marathon, TX

Saturday May 30

Water is Life
9:30am-10:30am
Big Bend Ranch State Park
Terlingua, TX

Live Music: Lindsey Bruner with Pete Westfall
7:00pm-10:00pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Sunday May 31



Boxing at Maintenant
9:00am-11:00am
Maintenant
1825 Rabbits Rd.
Marfa, TX

Open Mic Night: Music
5:00pm-8:00pm
Alcove Social
211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Tuesday June 2

Too-Early Tuesdays Sunrise Hiking at CDRI
8:00am
Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center & Botanical Gardens
43869 State Highway 118
Fort Davis, TX

Meditation
6:00pm, free and open to all
Marfa Public Library
Community Room
Marfa, TX

Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families (ACA) Meeting
6:00pm-7:00pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
101 E Washington St
Marfa, TX

Shafter mine plan goes to court

Continued from page 1
the late 1890s and through the 1920s and 1930s, but declining silver prices forced it to close in 1942. Through the decades, various companies did exploratory drilling and testing to gauge existing silver deposits and discover new ones. Aurcana acquired the mine in 2008 and made an attempt to start operations again, resulting in a short-lived reopening of the mine from 2012 until 2013, when declining silver prices again forced a closure.

In 2022, Aurcana had a financial meltdown and defaulted on a \$28 million loan intended to fund its silver mine in Ouray, Colorado, leaving the future of Shafter's mine uncertain. The company actively listed the Shafter site for



ROB D'AMICO

A small museum in Shafter outlines the mining history in the area.

sale, and after one unsuccessful purchase by a Canadian company, Black Bear Minerals (formerly James Bay Minerals) made a successful offer.

According to court records, Poindexter's attorneys informed Aurcana of its first right of refusal in October. Aurcana responded that for that right to exist, the property in question would have to be in "final abandonment," meaning no mine activity had

OBITUARY

Fixture of local music scenes, Alpine grad

JEFF COWELL passed away after a short illness on May 7, 2026. Born in Alpine on August 1, 1959, he was a graduate of the Alpine High School Class of 1977 and a fixture of both the Austin and Alpine music scenes.

He is preceded in death by his loving parents, Joanna and Lee Cowell, both of Alpine. He is survived by his three siblings: Stephen, Shanna, and Lacie Cowell.

Arrangements are pending, please contact Stephen Cowell at scowell@att.net for more information. Thanks go out to the staff at the ICU of St. David's Round Rock for their care and support.



CLASSIFIEDS AND PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF INTENT TO SEIZE ABANDONED MOTOR VEHICLE
Notice is hereby given that the Presidio County Sheriff's Office has taken the following described vehicle into custody pursuant to the authority granted under the Texas Transportation Code, Section 683.011, and/or Section 683.031:

- 1). YEAR UNKNOWN, NO VIN, 16 INCH, DOUBLE AXLE HOMEMADE TRAILER
- 2). YEAR UNKNOWN, YAMAHA MOTORCYCLE/OFF-ROAD MOTORCYCLE, MODEL CODE YAM5HP0124, PARTIAL VIN ONLY

Said vehicle is being held for the Presidio County Sheriff's Office at 320 N. Highland, Marfa, Texas 79843, (432) 729-4308

To the last known registered owner/lien holder of the above-described vehicle:

You have the right to reclaim this motor vehicle not later than the 20th day after publication of this notice, on payment of all towing, preservation, and storage charges resulting from placing the vehicle into custody.

Failure to exercise your rights to reclaim the vehicle within the time provided constitutes a waiver of all rights, title, and interest in the vehicle and is a consent to the sale of the abandoned motor vehicle at public auction, or use for the Sheriff's Office purposes as provided for by the Texas Transportation Code Section 683.014 or Section 683.016.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

The Presidio Independent School District is accepting "Seal Bids" for Student Accident Athletic/Activity Insurance for school year 2026-2027. Bids will be accepted until June 09, 2026, at 3:00p.m. CST. Prospective bidders may secure further information and specifications from Carmen Rubner at crubner@presidio-isd.net. The **Presidio ISD** reserves the right to reject any and/or all bids and to waive all formalities and irregularities in bidding. The Sealed Bids will be publicly opened on June 10, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. CST. However, the bids will not be publicly exposed. Any bid received thereafter will not be considered and will be returned to the proposer unopened. Facsimiles will be accepted prior to

the specified deadline. **Presidio ISD** reserves the right to postpone, to accept or to reject any or all bids as it deems to be in its best interest and to waive formalities and reasonable irregularities in proposing. **BID MUST BE ADDRESSED TO:**

Presidio ISD Superintendent's Office
ATTN: Carmen Rubner
P.O Box 1401
701 East Market Street
Presidio, Texas 79845
crubner@presidio-isd.net
432-229-4228/fax
Plainly Marked: Bid - Student Accident Athletic/Activity Insurance

CITY POSITIONS

The City of Presidio is calling out for Letters of Interest from the public for one seat to the City of Presidio City Council Unexpired Term (one-year).

Open Until June 5, 2026 at 5pm

Must be a registered voter of the municipality and reside at said city for at least six- months, pursuant to Texas Local Government Code Section 22.032.

Please submit your Letter of Interest to the address below:
City of Presidio
City Secretary
P.O. Box 1899
Presidio, TX 79845

Physical Address: 507 W. O'Reilly St., Presidio, Texas
Or email to: bornelas@presidiotx.us

NOTICE OF JOB OPPORTUNITY
MEANS RANCH CO. LTD.

Jackie W. Means, Partner –
Email: jackie@meansranch.com
Telephone: 915-828-3547
1553 Moon Ranch Rd., Valentine, Texas 79854

Personal Care Aide
40 Hrs/Wk
\$11.33 / hour

- Administer bedside or personal care, such as ambulation or personal hygiene assistance.
- Care for individuals, providing companionship, personal care, or help in adjusting to new lifestyles.
- Prepare and maintain records of client progress and services performed.

taken place for 20 years, and it claimed there had been mine exploration. The plaintiff's attorneys disputed that in the lawsuit and claimed they have received no information from Aurcana to prove it was active on the land.

On November 21, Southwestern Holdings filed for a temporary and permanent injunction in Presidio County District Court to stop the sale to Black Bear Minerals. However, the deed transferring the property to Black Bear Minerals also was filed with the county that day. No hearings are currently set in the lawsuit.

Black Bear Minerals CEO Dennis Lindgren did not respond to a request for comment, but he did speak in a trade publication video in February asserting the company was still moving forward on opening the mine and that "all major permits are officially confirmed and in place." While he didn't detail which permits, a variety of permits are required by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for mining operations.

An attorney at Braun & Gresham, representing the plaintiff, declined to comment on the lawsuit.

"Because we have been preparing the site, we are hitting the ground running," Lindgren said in a March video. "We're turning a historical asset into a modern permanent project that is ready to deliver... We set out with a vision for Shafter. Today with the permits in hand and the site ready, that vision is becoming a reality."

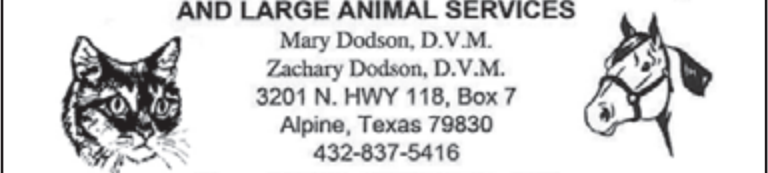


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SAINT GEORGE
MARFA
HAPPY HOUR
SERVED DAILY
3 PM - 5 PM





**ALPINE SMALL ANIMAL PRACTICE
AND LARGE ANIMAL SERVICES**
Mary Dodson, D.V.M.
Zachary Dodson, D.V.M.
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Alpine, Texas 79830
432-837-5416
Mon. - Fri. 7:45 - 12:00 & 1:30 - 5:30
after hours - emergency 432.837.5416





**THE
LINCOLN
HOTEL**



Chose one of our 14 Marfa-style courtyard homes in the heart of town. Full kitchens. The Lincoln Hotel. 105 West Lincoln Street. Marfa, Texas 79843. Book on our site thelincolnmarfa.com for the best rate.



Lawsuit says Trump gave wall contracts without ‘competitive opportunities’

Continued from page 1
2020 investigation by ProPublica and the Tribune found that the government was awarding contracts before acquiring titles to the land, leading to millions of dollars in costs related to delays. A review of federal spending data by the news organizations also revealed how the first Trump administration had made hundreds of contract modifications, increasing the cost of the border wall project by billions.

The administration has shown no signs of slowing down: The U.S. Department of Homeland Security secured \$46.5 billion to build the border wall in 2025, thanks to the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

Having prequalified contractors is not uncommon, as the system is structured to help the government move through projects quicker, but it is not meant to remove competition, said Charles Tiefer, a leading authority on federal contract law and former member of the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

DHS “is picking contractors for loyalty and from confidence that they will do its bidding, rather than, as every other administration has done, picking contractors for best value,” Tiefer said, referring to reports that then-Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem awarded a \$220 million ad campaign contract to a firm she had connections to. In response to ProPublica’s reporting, DHS said the department “has no involvement with the selection of subcontractors” and that it doesn’t control or weigh in on who contractors hire.

“They got huge blank checks”

“They got huge blank checks, and they want to write them as fast as possible,” Tiefer said.

The White House declined to comment for this story. A CBP spokesperson said in a written statement that the bidding process has been fair. “Contracts awarded are based on the contractor’s qualifications to perform the work in a timely manner and at prices deemed fair and reasonable,” the spokesperson wrote, saying neither CBP nor DHS have an affiliation with We Build the Wall.

An attorney for Posillico declined to comment. The company has previously built 43 miles of federal wall in South Texas and also won a contract to construct sections of Gov. Greg Abbott’s state border project. The state project experienced many of the same construction delays and cost overruns as Trump’s border wall.

Posillico alleges in the lawsuit

that it incurred “substantial bid preparation and proposal costs” drawing up plans for federal solicitations that were “not genuine competitive opportunities.”

While these are just allegations, Scott Amey, a contracting expert and general counsel at the watchdog group Project on Government Oversight, said border wall contracts have long been controversial and raised questions on what the government is getting for the cost, as well as the political connections of some of the contractors. Amey closely followed border wall procurement during the first Trump administration.

“There’s a cost, and ethics and contracting questions that all come up whenever you mention anything with the border wall,” Amey said.

Representatives for Fisher Sand & Gravel and Barnard did not respond to requests for comment. Barnard has filed as an intervenor in the case, meaning it isn’t a party in the suit but wants to participate.

Although the vast majority of the new funding is going to Fisher and Barnard, several other companies got smaller percentages of the contracts: Spencer Construction LLC; Granite Construction Co.; and Southwest Valley Constructors, which recently won another \$1.7 billion contract for barrier construction in and around Big Bend National Park. Representatives for the other companies did not respond to a request for comment for this story.

Posillico’s lawsuit claims that the contracts issued to the other companies went beyond the original scope of wall construction work the federal government told bidders it was seeking.

In CPB’s Big Bend Sector project, for example, contractors were ultimately required to install cattle fencing and cattle guards – something Posillico’s lawsuit contends was not what the government originally asked of potential contractors. Had the government been clearer on the scope, the lawsuit argues, the company may have had a better chance of winning a contract.

As part of the new scope of work, winning contractors, including Fisher Sand & Gravel, will also have to work with the International Boundary and Water Commission, the federal agency that administers treaties around the Rio Grande and the physical border with Mexico.

Fisher has previously clashed with the commission. In 2019, the commission filed a lawsuit claiming Fisher had violated a binational water treaty between the U.S. and Mexico after the company constructed fencing in South Texas. The investigation

by ProPublica and the Tribune found that a 3-mile stretch of border wall Fisher built on the banks of the Rio Grande was at risk of collapsing if not fixed. The company also built a segment of border wall in Sunland Park, New Mexico, without following proper procedures. Both projects involved We Build the Wall, the nonprofit.

In the end, four of the nonprofit’s top leaders, including Bannon, were arrested on fraud and other charges connected to the fundraising scheme. Three men, including an Air Force veteran, were convicted and sentenced to prison. Trump pardoned Bannon, who was awaiting trial.

Fisher and the government reached a settlement in 2022 in which Fisher Sand & Gravel agreed to conduct quarterly inspections, maintain an existing gate and keep a \$3 million bond for 15 years or until the property was transferred to the government to cover expenses in case the structure failed.

“The rules don’t really apply”

The Posillico lawsuit offers a rare peek behind the veil at the high-dollar world of border wall construction, an industry that has sprung up over the past 10 years in response to Trump’s recurring campaign promise to build a wall.

The procurement process has been especially obscure around border wall contracting, thanks to Noem waiving dozens of laws regulating financial transparency and competitiveness in government contracting for the entire southern border. That act marked the first time in American history these waivers were applied to all 1,954 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border.

In its lawsuit, Posillico made explicit that it did not contest the use of waivers to expedite construction of the wall.

For residents of border communities, the waivers have meant that DHS has released very little information detailing the massive infrastructure projects coming to their communities. This spring, the Center for Biological Diversity filed two lawsuits in federal court related to border wall construction in the Big Bend area, specifically over DHS’ failure to respond to a series of Freedom of Information Act requests for documents related to the project and challenging the agency’s authority to waive laws without Congress’ approval. The government has not filed answers to the complaints yet, with a deadline of June 1 for the FOIA complaint and early June in the congressional authority lawsuit.

In the Posillico lawsuit, DHS moved to seal documents in the

case, including any depositions or affidavits; Judge David A. Tapp signed off on the motion.

In the absence of publicly posted requests for proposals and direct communication from Washington, residents in the Big Bend region have been relying on an online map posted by CBP that says it tracks contracts as they’re awarded.

Lines on the map have shifted dramatically over the past few months, raising questions about what the government actually plans to build. The agency briefly took the map down altogether, around the same time that protests about the possibility of a physical wall in Big Bend National Park reached a fever pitch. When the map was restored to the website, it appeared to show a mix of “vehicle barriers” and “patrol roads” planned instead of steel walls within park boundaries.

Fisher Sand & Gravel is currently slated to build a wall-related project in Big Bend Ranch State Park, bordering the national park to the west, though it hasn’t publicly released any plans for what alternate border barriers might look like. Landowners in communities adjacent to the park are still gearing up to face eminent domain challenges from the federal government.

Barnard is working on a project outside the parks. Documents in Posillico’s lawsuit revealed that CBP has flagged sections of wall in Hudspeth, Jeff Davis and Presidio counties for “fast-track” construction by the company. To support that work, a pecan farm near the small ranching community of Lobo has started clearing a swath of land for a 500-person camp and petitioning the local water conservation district for approval to use agricultural well water for the project.

Amey, the contracting expert, said the Trump administration seems to want to make the exception the rule, considering controversial practices like Noem’s decision to award the huge border ad contract and the fact the government has waived so many contracting rules to accelerate the wall’s construction.

“It seems as if this administration, especially this time around, has decided that the rules don’t really apply,” he said.

This article is co-published with ProPublica and The Texas Tribune as part of an initiative to report on state and federal efforts to restrict local control.

Editor’s note: Sentinel editor Rob D’Amico was a board member of the Friends of the Ruidosa Church. He abstained from the vote the nonprofit took to become a plaintiff in the lawsuit and has resigned from the board.

Tickets now on sale!

Sentinel

CENTENNIAL CONCERT

JIMMIE DALE GILMORE AND GUESTS - 8:00 PM SATURDAY JUNE 20, 2026 - SAINT GEORGE HALL, MARFA



Sign up for updates on all the activities around our 100th anniversary:
www.bigbendsentinel.com/centennial

Get tickets at Eventbrite
Search for Sentinel Centennial Concert or scan this barcode!



LETTERS

7 park superintendents make their case for open security process

*The Honorable
Markwayne Mullin Secretary
United States Department
of Homeland Security*

Dear Secretary Mullin:

WE WRITE to you today as former superintendents and a former deputy superintendent of Big Bend National Park, with 259 collective years of National Park Service (NPS) experience, to urge you to reject the waiver of federal laws that would allow physical barriers and roads as well as related border security infrastructure to be built inside the park in the absence of environmental or cultural compliance or public involvement.

If a border wall—or other unnecessary and highly destructive border infrastructure—is built inside Big Bend National Park, it would be the most egregious assault on the integrity of the entire National Park System since the construction of a dam in the Hetchy Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park more than a century ago.

We all agree that we need a secure border at Big Bend. Collectively, we have spent decades working with the Border Patrol and local law enforcement leaders to ensure so. But a physical wall, additional paved roads, vehicle barriers, or other large scale infrastructure projects within the park are not the way to accomplish this.

The fact is that the rugged terrain, natural barriers, isolation, and distance from highways in Mexico are the reasons this area already has, by far, the lowest level of illegal activity of the entire border—and the entire Big Bend Sector, which your most recent waivers have invoked. The Sector, and the national park in particular, are not an area of high illegal entry, which is a prerequisite for your invoking the waiver.

And we're not alone in our opposition. When a wall through Big Bend was proposed in February, there was a visceral, bipartisan outcry against the insult of an unnecessary, ridiculously expensive 30-foot steel wall whose one-size-fits-all approach makes no sense

in West Texas. Five Big Bend area sheriffs have publicly made that point, as have the 14 judges that represent all of Texas' border counties. Forty-six state legislators have said the same, and more than 130,000 Americans have signed an online petition.

We also have grave concerns that installing vehicle barriers, building new patrol roads, and paving any existing unpaved roads in the park's remote backcountry are unnecessary for border security and also very harmful to what people care about in the national park. Not only is there no risk of vehicles crossing the river in these locations, but the landscape would be altered forever for minimal improvements to security, if any. It would require massive infrastructure installation and significant terrain modification to cross dozens of desert washes subject to flash flooding, and it would be vulnerable to damage in future flash floods. It would likely be a significant visual intrusion and almost certainly damage the plants, animals and iconic desert beauty.

The diminishment of the area's wild character, impeded access to the Rio Grande for recreation, and loss of opportunities to experience the darkest night sky in the nation if the infrastructure were lighted, would cause tremendous damage to the area's economy, which is highly dependent upon tourism.

Installing buried or above-ground communications or power cables along backcountry roads in the park would also damage the landscape, require expensive and frequent maintenance, and is technologically unnecessary as communications with sensors can continue to be done wirelessly. If wireless communications need to be improved, there are far less obtrusive means to accomplish that.

It is for this reason we urge you to not issue any waivers of environmental or historic preservation laws, and to offer your proposals, with alternatives, for public review and input. If upgrades to the existing robust electronic sensor system are needed and can be accomplished as unobtrusively as the existing installations, we have no con-



GREG L. DAVIS

Border Patrol Agents patrolling the Rio Grande with an old, but efficient means of transportation—on horseback.

cerns with that. As the existing system is a collaborative effort of the Border Patrol, the NPS, and county sheriffs, so should be any improvements—and no waivers are necessary, as the existing systems work. The federal agencies have a long and successful history of working together in support of both agency missions, as required by the still-valid 2006 Memorandum of Understanding between Homeland Security and the land management agencies regarding cooperative national security on federal borderlands.

The Border Patrol used to provide funding to the NPS to maintain park roads patrolled by their agents that are stationed in the park. That no longer occurs, and with the erosion in park staffing since early 2025, we acknowledge that some of those roads are in poor condi-

tion. With no need for a waiver, that funding could be resumed or enhanced to assure that the existing unpaved roads in the park near the border are restored to the condition both agencies agreed to years ago.

There does not need to be a conflict between a strong border, a thriving local economy, and conservation of the wildest, most intact landscapes of Texas and our nation. If Customs and Border Protection would engage the public, local elected officials, sheriffs, and the National Park Service, we are absolutely confident that we can find a solution to realistically improve border security at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer.

But if you issue a waiver that will not be possible. And the unique, nationally significant landscape, natural resources, and cultural heritage of Big

Bend National Park, one of the nation's crown jewels, will be irreparably damaged, and we fear that any sense of commitment to shared stewardship of the nation's borderland between your agency and the one we devoted our careers to will be as well.

Sincerely,

BOB KRUMENAKER
*Superintendent 2018 - 2023,
and Chair, Keep Big Bend Wild*

DAVID ELKOWITZ
*Deputy Superintendent
2019 - 2022*

CINDY OTT-JONES
Superintendent 2012 - 2017

BILL WELLMAN
Superintendent 2006 - 2012

JOHN H. KING
Superintendent 2003 - 2006

ROBERT ARNBERGER
Superintendent 1991 - 1994

H. GILBERT LUSK
Superintendent 1981 - 1986

Fomenting fear about border is a lie

*Dear Customs
and Border Protection,*

STOP this mad pretense that there is a crisis in the Big Bend border region. You know it as well as I do that the real crisis is that our current president wants to line the pockets of his cronies and will destroy anything and anyone to do it. Wave all rules, destroy economies, kill wild animals, take people's land—is that how the game works just so the rich get richer and Trump can be king?

The Big Bend Sector is secure and you know that too. The U.S. Border Patrol does an excellent job out here and is aided by our equally competent local law enforcement agencies. Between them and the treacherous landscape on both sides of the longest segment of the U.S. border with Mexico as an impediment to travel, we have the lowest crossing rate of anywhere—minuscule, hardly anyone wants to cross here.

But you seem to want to foment fear in the rest of America saying that we are in imminent danger, which is a lie (and you know it).

And the idea that you are planning vehicular deterrents is absurd. Why? Are the cartels providing 4x4 trucks to everyone that does make it north across the Chihuahuan Desert to the Rio Grande? I don't think so!

Pay your Border Patrol agents a good wage, one that compensates for the harsh life along the border and where their spouse will have trouble finding a job. Provide excellent training, equipment, housing and benefits. But don't mess with a beautiful, austere, sacred landscape. No wall, no wire, no "improved" roads, no nada.

This is America, keep her wild and free!

Respectfully,

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Zeke & Elizabeth

Artist’s tintype portraits takes photos into the realm of fine art

Macartney’s work centerpieces a weekend devoted to local artists

TO HEAR Carolyn Macartney talk about how she creates her tintype portraits, you’d think she was relaying some kind of recipe for a complex chemical compound that could either explode, or maybe just knock you unconscious—after all, ether is involved.

It’s a purely analog photography technique dating to the late 1800s that relies on collodion with light-sensitive silver crystals that ultimately produces a positive image on an aluminum sheet. The results are stunning images that seem to live in a metallic realm with beautiful glitches resulting from the process itself—strange markings that appear on their own.

Macartney will be displaying her tintypes, created in 2022 to 2024, portraying stark images of Marfa residents, as part of the Marfa Untitled Studio Tour (MarfaMUST) Artists Weekend, with an opening on Thursday, May 28, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at New Star Marfa, 301 W. Dallas Street.

The MarfaMUST’s Artist Weekend will showcase local artists with exhibits, talks and other events throughout the city on Friday through Sunday.

A former Marfa resident, Macartney moved to Joshua Tree, California, to be a tad closer to civilization that allows for the simple things, like easy repairs of your washing machine, doctor visits and other conveniences, while still living in a high desert environment.

She recalls how she became enamored with the tintype format. “I shot a lot of portraits in black and white film, and I would do all my own printing. Then when like everybody else, I got to digital, I kind of lost my enthusiasm for photography because I didn’t quite like the digital outputs.”

“I was working in the medium of tintype photography because it is painterly and expressive, and because I wanted to return to an analog form of shooting portrait photography,” she says. “The inherent foibles of the chemistry and the monochrome image serve to abstract the image out of the ordinary and into the realm of fine art.”

Unlike pushing a button to apply a filter on your phone, her work is tactile—wet plates, the smell of ether, and a deliberative process that needs to be quick and precise. “It’s 100% labor-intensive,” she says. “It’s a process, and there are loads of mistakes that happen. So that’s why you see all sorts of swirls and all in the portraits. It’s very organic looking, which is a big part of the beauty. You’re not after perfection. I don’t think you can get perfection.”

Marfa residents will recognize a lot of the subjects in her work, but they communicate the being of a person that’s more intentional, and sometimes a bit eerie to this viewer.

Macartney, like most portrait photographers, also chalks up the unique looks to her personality and moments in time. She said a friend once remarked to her, “It can’t be the technology. It can’t be the methodology. It can’t be the tintype process. It must be how you see Marfa people.” “And I really liked that,” Macartney said, “I thought that’s such a gift that he gave me to say that. And that’s how I see those people, because Marfa’s full of a lot of really wonderful people.”

She might add “patient” to “wonderful” since her models sat for her with a head brace behind them to ensure the long exposure for the photos needed has as little movement as possible.

Macartney was also known as “the sign painter,” after spending much of her time in Marfa and the Big Bend painting business signs. (The Sentinel cafe logo is her work.) You can’t wander or drive around Marfa without her creations popping up on buildings and windows. For Macartney, it wasn’t only a stable course of income. It was a chance to collaborate with “amazing designers” to bring signs and logos to life.

Macartney says as much as she loved Marfa, it strained her to deal with the social demands of knowing so many people—and all of them knowing so much about what was happening with each other. Now she has the gift of being a visitor (she will be here for the weekend events) and watching others view her portraits of friends who surrounded her world.—**ROB D’AMICO**



Carolyn Macartney was known as “the sign painter” in Marfa.

See the full MarfaMUST Artist Weekend schedule at marfamust.org and [@marfamust](https://twitter.com/marfamust).



Mia V. in chair



Ingrid S. with hands