

# Death Valley National Park Wilderness & Backcountry Stewardship Plan

National Park Service  
U. S. Department of the Interior

April 2011



## Conceptual Alternatives

Dear Friends of Death Valley:

The National Park Service is developing a combined Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan for Death Valley National Park. The purpose of the Plan is to guide the National Park Service and to make decisions regarding the future use and protection of the park's vast wilderness and backcountry lands. This planning process addresses all Congressionally-designated wilderness lands within Death Valley National Park. It also includes non-wilderness backcountry concerns, such as backcountry road corridors and campsites, backcountry cabins near roads, and non-wilderness backcountry lands.

In recognition that the decisions made in this stewardship plan have implications for others as well, the following organizations are official cooperators for this planning effort: the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe, Inyo County (CA), Esmeralda County (NV), and Nye County (NV).

In 2009, we asked for public feedback regarding values, issues and concerns about Death Valley's wilderness and backcountry resources. We heard from over 100 individuals and organizations. We've taken those thoughts along with detailed resource inventories, a recent visitor use study, and the ideas of our planning team to craft four draft alternatives. The purpose of this document is to share these draft alternatives with you and invite feedback and comments before we go onto the next step of the planning process. Your comments are important to us. While we will welcome your input throughout the planning process, your comments will be most beneficial to our planning effort if we receive them by May 1st, 2011. We prefer comments via the electronic public comment form on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment System (PEPC) at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/deva>, or by email to [DEVA\\_Planning@nps.gov](mailto:DEVA_Planning@nps.gov). During April, 2011 the PEPC web site will also have a link to interactive versions of the alternative maps. You may also submit comments in writing to: Superintendent Death Valley NP, ATTN: Wilderness Plan Comments, P.O. Box 579, Death Valley, CA 92328.

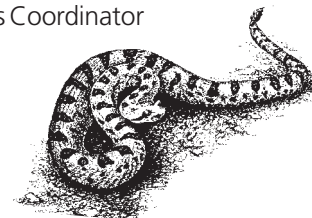
Following this review, we will refine the alternatives and complete the required environmental analysis, at which time additional opportunities will be provided for public involvement.

For more information about these alternatives or this planning process, contact Park Wilderness Coordinator Charlie Callagan, at 760-786-3282.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

Sarah Craighead, Superintendent



## Introduction to Wilderness Character

Preserving wilderness character in designated wilderness is our mission, by law and policy. The Wilderness Act and National Park Service policy both mandate preserving wilderness character:

Section 2(a) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 states that wilderness areas “shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character...”

NPS Management Policies (6.1) says, “Management will include the protection of these (wilderness) areas, the preservation of their wilderness character...”

The publication *Keeping it Wild: An Interagency Strategy to Monitor Trends in Wilderness Character Across the National Wilderness Preservation System* defines wilderness character based on the statutory language of the 1964 Wilderness Act in terms of four qualities of wilderness character that are tangible and directly link agency stewardship to the legal mandates of law and policy. These four intrinsic qualities of wilderness character are:

- **Untrammeled** – wilderness is essentially unhindered and free from the actions of modern human control or manipulation.
- **Natural** – wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization.
- **Undeveloped** – wilderness retains its primeval character and influence, and is essentially without permanent improvement or modern human occupation.
- **Solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation** – wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

At Death Valley National Park, we also recognize that cultural resources, including the ongoing relationship of the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe to the land, are important wilderness values that may contribute to wilderness character. Other important wilderness values include threatened and endangered species, endemic species, environmental extremes, geologic resources, and dark night skies.

These four universal qualities of wilderness character, combined with the unique wilderness values of Death Valley National Park, form the foundation for our planning effort.



## Significance

Death Valley National Park (originally designated a national monument in 1933) is 3,396,192 acres, the largest national park unit in the lower 48 states. The vast majority of its lands are located in the California counties of Inyo and San Bernardino, and the eastern edge of the park is located in the Nevada counties of Nye and Esmeralda. The 1994 California Desert Protection Act both enlarged the park to its current size and designated 3.1 million acres as wilderness. Another 225,000 acres is undeveloped backcountry lands, and a network of over 800 miles of backcountry dirt road corridors provide access for visitors seeking day hiking and backpacking opportunities in the expansive wilderness and backcountry areas.

Death Valley National Park is a vast landscape of extremes. Badwater Basin in the Death Valley trough is 282 feet below sea level making it the lowest point in North America and one of the hottest places on earth. From the floor of the salt pan the land slopes steeply and dramatically to the often snow covered Panamint Mountains, punctuated by Telescope Peak which rises to 11,049 feet above sea level. Sand dunes, salty creeks, alluvial fans, playas, water fluted canyons, craters, and varied mountain ranges serve to illustrate the geomorphic forces that continue to shape this rugged landscape. The Park is also a vast geologic museum, containing examples of most of the earth's geologic eras, unique paleontological specimens, and abundant mineral resources. This harsh and varied desert environment provides habitat for an amazing array of plants and animals, some of which occur nowhere else in the world. Humans have also long been a part of this rugged landscape as evidenced by extensive archaeological sites, historical sites related to prospectors and homesteaders, and the continuing relationship between this land and the Timbisha Shoshone people.

The plan does not include the Furnace Creek, Scotty's Castle, Stovepipe Wells, and Panamint Springs developed areas, visitor attractions accessed directly from paved roads (e.g. Zabriskie Point), or short, graded gravel roads (e.g. Mosaic Canyon Road), developed campgrounds, paved roads, private inholdings or other non-NPS lands. It also does not include the Saline Valley warm springs and the non-wilderness lands surrounding them as this area will be addressed in the future in a site-specific plan as per direction of the Park's approved General Management Plan.

### Notice Regarding the Freedom of Information Act

*It is the practice of the NPS to make all comments, including names and addresses of respondents who provide that information, available for public review following the conclusion of the environmental assessment process. Individuals may request that the NPS withhold their name and/or address from public disclosure. If you wish to do this, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. Commentators using the website can make such a request by checking the box “keep my contact information private.” NPS will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law, but you should be aware that NPS may still be required to disclose your name and address pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety.*







## Purpose and Need

The vast wilderness and backcountry lands of Death Valley National Park provide outstanding opportunities for discovery, challenge, and self-reliance in an extreme desert landscape. The purpose of this Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan and environmental assessment for Death Valley National Park is to provide guidance for protecting and enhancing wilderness character while providing for unique visitor opportunities for quiet, solitude, and primitive adventure; and to accommodate continued use of the Park's unpaved roads, and protection of backcountry resource values.

NPS policy requires that each park containing wilderness maintain an up-to-date and approved wilderness management plan that "...will identify desired future conditions, as well as establish indicators, standards, conditions, and thresholds beyond which management actions will be taken to reduce human impacts to wilderness resources." Death Valley does not currently have an approved wilderness management plan.

NPS policy also requires that .... "Backcountry use will be managed in accordance with a backcountry management plan (or other plan addressing backcountry uses) designed to avoid unacceptable impacts on park resources or adverse effects on the visitor enjoyment of appropriate recreational experiences." Death Valley does not currently have an approved backcountry management plan.

In the park's 2002 General Management Plan, wilderness and backcountry management considerations are included but with the recognition that a separate Wilderness and Backcountry Management Plan is needed to fully identify wilderness and backcountry issues, explore management alternatives, and prescribe policies and procedures for effective stewardship. The Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan will fulfill that requirement.

## Goals and Objectives

This purpose will be achieved through advancement of the following goals...

...common to both wilderness and backcountry:

- promote safety and outdoor ethics;
- preserve natural and cultural resources;
- preserve dark night skies;
- preserve natural soundscapes;
- minimize conflicts between user groups as well as between users and sensitive resources;
- accommodate and manage commercial uses as subject to applicable laws and policies;
- preserve undisturbed areas for appropriate scientific research; and
- proactively foster an inspired and informed public and park staff who value the preservation of the park's natural and cultural resources.

...specific to wilderness:

- preserve the untrammeled quality of wilderness character by refraining from the deliberate manipulation or management of wilderness resources except as necessary to promote another quality of wilderness character or to preserve human life or to accommodate other activities in compliance with applicable laws;

- promote the natural quality of wilderness character through the thoughtful restoration and/or maintenance of natural processes and features while managing archaeological, historical and ethnographic sites in a manner that is compatible with wilderness and historic preservation laws;
- preserve and enhance the undeveloped quality of wilderness character by judicious review and, where appropriate, removal of non-conforming and/or unnecessary installations;
- provide for outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation as long as such visitor uses can be offered without degradation of significant natural and cultural resource values;
- protect Death Valley National Park's unique wilderness values such as traditional cultural uses by the Timbisha Shoshone and the vast cultural resources that serve to illustrate man's evolving relationship with the land.

...specific to non-wilderness backcountry:

- allow for continued use of backcountry roads where appropriate for multiple purposes, including;
  - to accommodate recreational access;
  - to accommodate administrative access and other authorized uses;
  - to accommodate opportunities for recreational backcountry road travel (including vehicles, bicycle, stock, foot, etc);
  - to facilitate voluntary stewardship of backcountry roads by interested publics;
  - to provide for continued roadside camping opportunities;
  - to provide for campfires where safe and appropriate;
  - and as a gateway to Wilderness.
- accommodate continued backcountry cabin use while providing for the protection of historic resources and public health and safety.
- minimizing impacts of backcountry uses on adjacent wilderness lands.

To achieve this purpose and these goals, the plan will define policies and practices for wilderness and backcountry stewardship to provide consistency and continuity in decision-making and to establish standards to measure success.





## Alternative Development Process

During 2010, our interdisciplinary planning team reviewed and considered the public comments received during initial scoping, collected and analyzed additional data about wilderness and backcountry resources, and completed a visitor use study. This information was used to develop alternative concepts for managing Death Valley backcountry and wilderness lands.

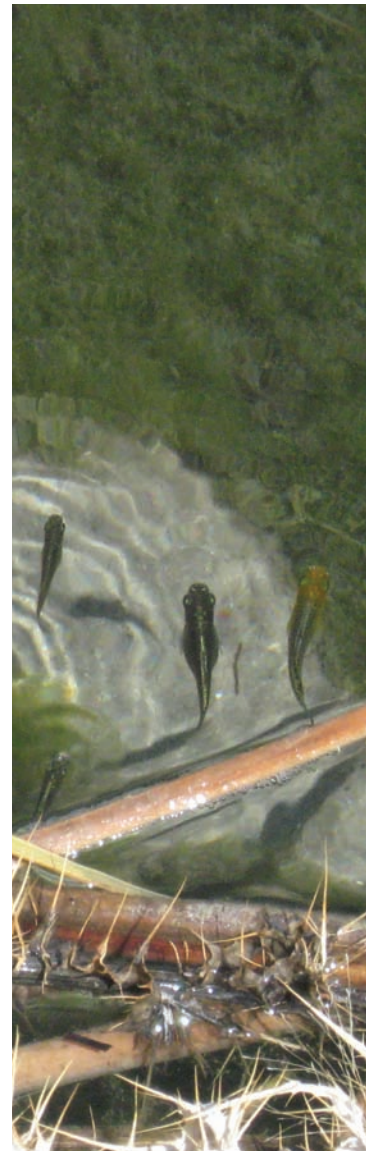
As part of this process, we defined four management zones for the park, which generally identify how different areas could be managed to achieve resource preservation, provide for recreational access and use, and serve operational purposes. The four zones are: Unconfined Wilderness Zone, Backcountry Exploration Zone, Backcountry Corridor Zone, and a Managed Use / High Use Zone Destination Zone. Once defined, management zones were then used to delineate various areas of the park according to guidelines offered by each alternative management concept.

We have developed four draft alternatives for you to consider. The no action alternative (Alternative 1) is defined as the continuation of existing management practices. This “no action” alternative is required by law to be considered during the planning process. It sets a baseline of existing impacts continued into the future against which to compare impacts of the other alternatives. The action alternatives must all be consistent with the various laws, regulations, and policies that guide management of this park unit, including the 1994 California Desert

Protection Act, the 2000 Timbisha Homeland Act, and the 2002 General Management Plan. In addition, all alternatives for management of wilderness lands in the park would protect the four qualities of wilderness character as required by the Wilderness Act: undeveloped, untrammeled, preserving natural conditions, and offering opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. There are three action alternatives identified as Alternatives 2, 3, and 4.

These alternative concepts, draft management zones, and specific topics are described further in this newsletter and we are now seeking your feedback. Following public comment, the planning team will refine the alternative concepts, including management zoning, and further define the implementation details of how these alternatives would address on-the-ground management issues. We will then share the outcome in a Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan and Environmental Assessment, which we expect will be ready for review in early 2012. Following public review of that document, and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Offices and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, we expect to finalize the plan and issue a decision document in late 2012, thus concluding the four year planning process.

Cost estimates will eventually be developed to account for both capital expenditures and recurring costs. Such cost estimates will be available in later public review documents. However, at this stage only the relative costs are shown in the form of dollar signs where one dollar sign is less than two dollar signs, etc.



Unconfined Wilderness Zone	Backcountry Exploration Zone	Backcountry Corridor Zone	Managed Use / High Use Destination Zone
	Resource Stewardship / Resource Condition		
<p>Highly focused protection and preservation but may have less active management of natural processes or resources.</p> <p>Highly focused protection and preservation but may have less active management of intact physical/abiotic resources. Restoration of biophysical processes may be appropriate and managed with active NPS oversight. Restoration may be active or passive in nature. Any restoration activity needs to take place in accordance with the Wilderness Act.</p> <p>Scientific research is encouraged but strictly managed within this zone. Very low tolerance for research installations.</p> <p>Cultural resource management in this zone would focus on inventory and condition assessments. Preservation treatments would be considered on a site by site basis.</p>	<p>Exotic species (plant and animal) would be controlled and contained to mitigate impacts to resources and visitor use. Resource protection would be balanced with providing visitor use opportunities. There would be a moderate tolerance for human disturbance of natural resources. Sensitive resources would be provided the maximum protection possible.</p> <p>Restoration of biophysical processes may be appropriate on a site by site basis, particularly to mitigate the impacts created by human use.</p> <p>Scientific research is appropriate and encouraged especially if not impacting safety, visitors, and resources.</p> <p>Cultural sites are a primary visitor attraction in this zone. Cultural sites would be protected from impacts of visitor use and to mitigate safety hazards.</p> <p>Park lands identified as proposed for wilderness by Senate bill 138 fall within the Backcountry Exploration Zone. If eventually designated as wilderness they would fall within the Unconfined Wilderness Zone.</p>	<p>This is similar to Backcountry Exploration Zone but with more resource stewardship activities due to more visitation and resulting impacts.</p> <p>There would be some tolerance for impacts to resources.</p> <p>Restoration of biophysical processes may be appropriate on a site by site basis.</p> <p>Scientific research is appropriate and encouraged especially if not impacting safety, visitors, and resources.</p> <p>Cultural sites are a primary visitor attraction in this zone. Cultural sites would be protected from impacts of visitor use and to mitigate safety hazards. There would be opportunities to educate the public on preservation of cultural resources.</p>	<p>Exotic species (plant and animal) would be controlled and contained to mitigate impacts to resources and visitor use. Resource protection would be balanced with providing visitor use opportunities. There would be a moderate tolerance for human disturbance of natural resources. Sensitive resources in high use areas would be provided the maximum protection possible.</p> <p>There would be moderate tolerance for disruption to biophysical processes, but where those processes are significantly altered/impacted, restoration activities would be undertaken to mitigate impacts of human use.</p> <p>There would be a high tolerance for research activities that do not significantly impact recreational or resource values of sites. In wilderness, installations would rarely be appropriate. Research that can only be conducted in wilderness or is important to informing management of park wilderness resources may be permitted. In backcountry, temporary installations that are not highly visible or intrusive would be appropriate. Research of all types would be expected to occur within this area (social sciences, etc.). There would be opportunities to interpret scientific research to visitors.</p> <p>Cultural sites are the primary attraction at many high use areas. Cultural sites would be managed by the NPS to protect them from the impacts of visitor use and to mitigate safety hazards. There would be opportunities to educate the public about cultural resources.</p>



Unconfined Wilderness Zone	Backcountry Exploration Zone	Visitor Experiences	Backcountry Corridor Zone	Managed Use/High Use Destination Zone
Visitors would very rarely encounter other parties, and group sizes most likely would be small. Visitor/access would be much less restricted. Encounter rates are extremely low.	Encounter rates would be low.	Encounter rates would be moderate though somewhat higher than in the Backcountry Exploration zone.	Encounter rates may be high and group sizes may be large.	
Opportunities to experience solitude, dark night sky, natural sounds, and clear skies are high.	Quality of the natural soundscape would be moderate to high during the day and high at night. There would be a moderate to high opportunity for solitude and self-reliance.	Quality of soundscape would be low to moderate during the day and high at night.	Quality of the natural soundscape would be low during the day and high at night. Minimal opportunity for solitude and self-reliance.	
Recreational facilities such as trails and signs are minimal.	Recreational facilities might include roads, existing cabins, some signs, potential for campfire facilities, roadside pullouts for camping, and trailheads.	There would be a moderate opportunity for solitude and self-reliance.	Roads may be frequent in backcountry. Trails would be NPS defined. There would be low tolerance for social trails. New trails may be created to provide a variety of recreational experiences and to protect sensitive resources.	
Volunteer stewardship activities might be allowed and would be closely monitored by the NPS. Types of activities could include but not be limited to archeological studies, site restorations, debris removal, and invasive weed management.	Volunteer stewardship would be encouraged under NPS direction. Activities might include road maintenance, cabin maintenance, exotic removal, resource restoration/closures.	Recreational facilities would be similar to Zone C but with the potential for more facilities due to higher visitation and potential for different type of facilities.	Human waste management would be considered. NPS created signs and waysides would be frequent in backcountry. NPS wayfinding signs would be infrequent but allowed in wilderness. Campsites may be designated.	
Visitor use restrictions are low to moderate.	Visitor use restrictions are low to moderate.	Volunteer stewardship would be encouraged under NPS direction. A wide variety of activities may be available.	Volunteer stewardship would be encouraged under NPS direction. A wide variety of activities may be available.	
Visitor education is primarily obtained prior to travel into this zone. NPS-provided visitor education is primarily through off-site or remote delivery methods.	Visitor education is focused on minimal health and safety (hantavirus, hazardous mines). Wayfinding and waysides are closely scrutinized in this zone and is not appropriate in most cases.	Visitor education is appropriate and waysides and wayfinding signs are appropriate in this zone.	Visitor use restrictions would be moderate to high to protect resources and reduce conflicts between uses.	
				Resources would be actively interpreted. Ranger led tours, waysides, and signs would be appropriate.

Unconfined Wilderness Zone	Backcountry Exploration Zone	Backcountry Corridor Zone	Managed Use /High Use Destination Zone
Administrative uses/actions			
No tolerance for new permanent communication/utility installations. Need for existing installations are re-evaluated by NPS and removed when no longer necessary or appropriate.	There would be a low tolerance for permanent installations that benefit Death Valley NP, temporary installations may be appropriate.	There would be a low to moderate tolerance for permanent installations that benefit Death Valley NP, temporary installations may be appropriate.	There would be a high tolerance for existing installations and a moderate tolerance for new communications installations in backcountry. There would be no tolerance for utilities and communication installations in wilderness.
Debris removal is not a priority but is managed on a case-by-case basis.	Moderate to high degree of emphasis for continued removal of debris that detracts from visitor experience or is impacting resources.	High degree of emphasis for continued removal of debris that detracts from visitor experience or is impacting resources.	High degree of emphasis on removing debris that detracts from visitor experience or is impacting resources.

# Concepts and details for each Alternative

## Alternative 1: No Action

This alternative would continue existing management practices, resulting in current resource conditions and visitor opportunities, the logical progression of probable trends over time. It is required as a baseline against which the other alternatives can be compared. Without the guidance of a Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan, there would not be a clear focus for setting priorities for management actions or visitor use. Management would continue to tend to be reactive to the needs of the moment rather than being proactive toward specific goals. A map of the No Action alternative is not included in this document.

## Alternative 2:

To fulfill the intent of maximizing outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, visitor services, and park operations and management would be conducted in a focused manner that minimizes the imprint of modern humans within the wilderness. There would be no new or very limited new infrastructure and facilities in the backcountry. Consistent with this alternative, the following new facilities or management activities are identified:

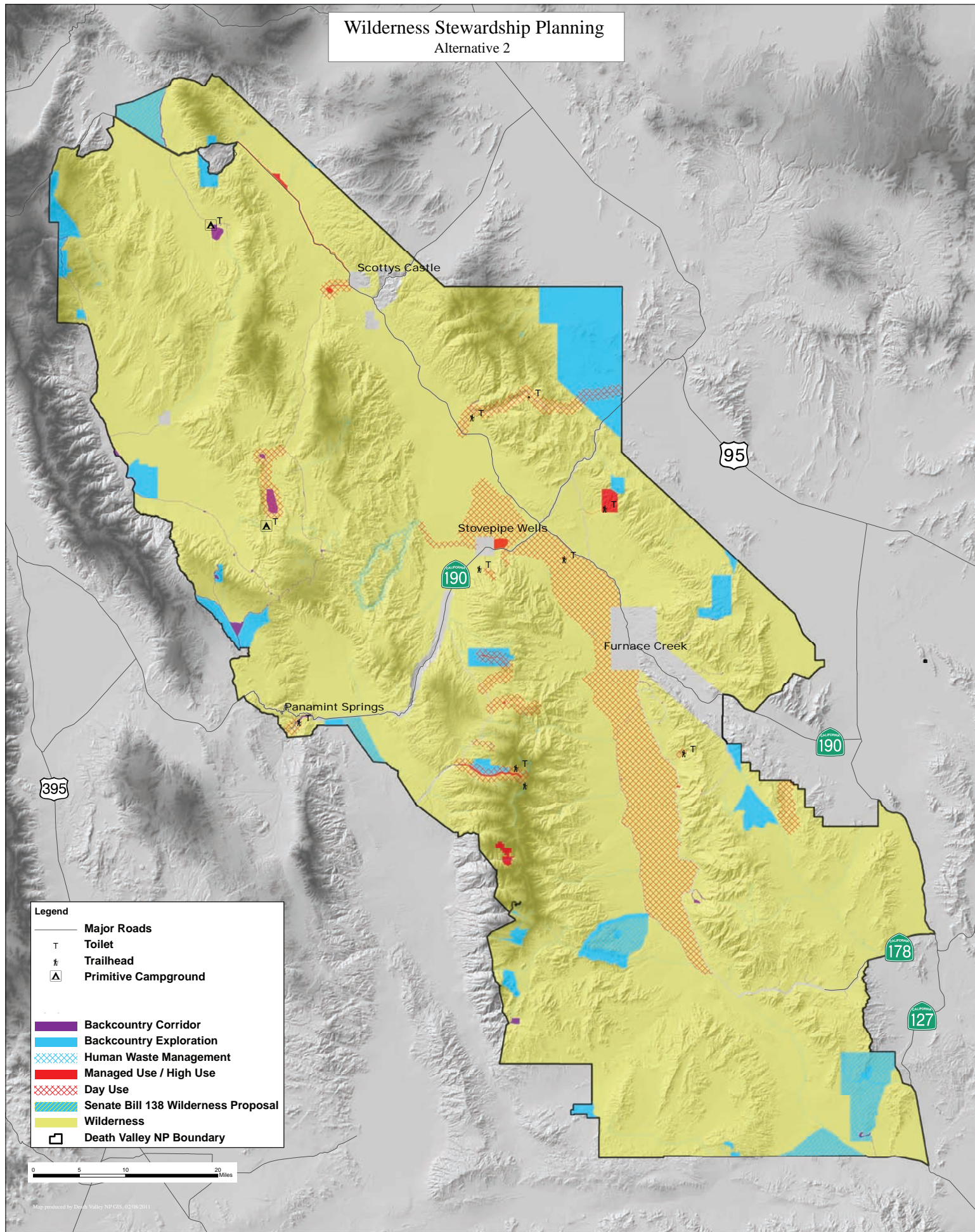
- Formalize existing primitive campgrounds at Eureka Dunes and Homestake Dry Camp.
- No designated roadside camping corridors.
- No new backcountry group sites.

- No new trailheads or designated trails/routes.
- No or very limited new signs.
- No campfires except in firepits in designated campgrounds; no fuel wood collection.
- A pack-it-out requirement would be imposed for human waste management along the Cottonwood Canyon/Marble Canyon hiking Loop during periods of high use. New vault toilets are proposed at Leadfied and at the Keane Wonder, Mosaic Canyon, and Darwin Falls trailheads.
- Continue evaluation and stabilization of existing backcountry cabins. Where appropriate, facilitate and formalize volunteer cabin stewardship activities.
- Voluntary wilderness permits issued in visitor center for free; except mandatory permit system for Cottonwood/Marble loop.
- Wilderness overnight use group size limit: 12 individuals.
- Backcountry dispersed overnight use group size limit: 12 individuals in no more than 4 vehicles (unless authorized under a Special Use Permit).
- Stock party dispersed overnight use group size limit: 12 beating hearts.
- Relative cost to implement: \$
- Unconfined Wilderness Zone: 3,101,219 acres
- Backcountry Corridor Zone: 8,229 acres
- Backcountry Exploration Zone: 211,163 acres
- Managed Use / High Use Zone: 8,261 acres





# Wilderness Stewardship Planning Alternative 2





### Alternative 3:

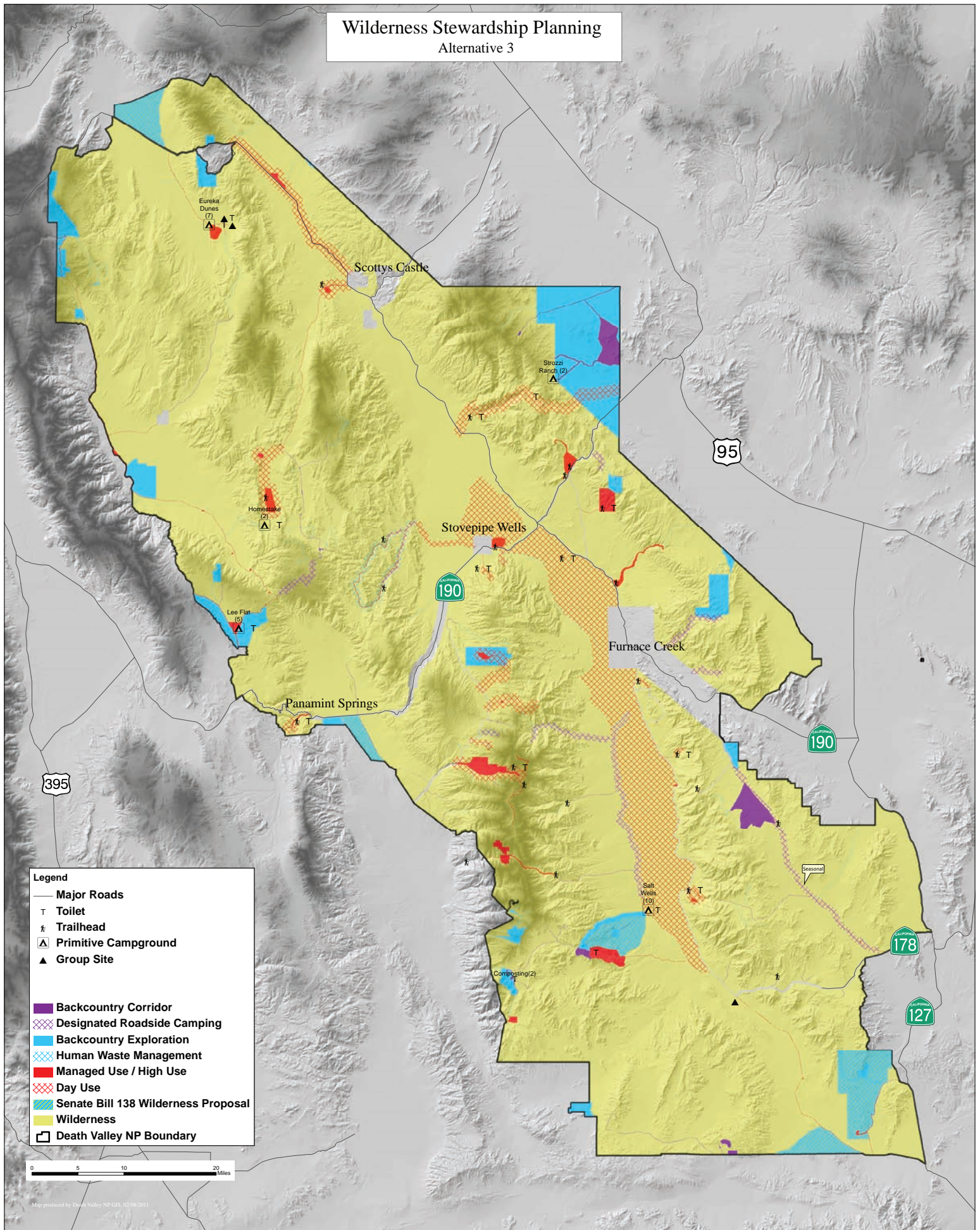
Outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation would still occur for self-reliant visitors, but there would be more opportunities for those with less experience or less time. The park would seek opportunities to partner with neighboring land management agencies to provide improved access between the park and adjacent public lands. Where appropriate, new infrastructure and facilities could be developed in backcountry locations to enhance visitor opportunities. Visitor services and park management operations, including field activities, education, outreach, and interpretive programs would likely increase from current levels. Consistent with this alternative, the following new facilities or management activities are identified:

- Formalize existing primitive campgrounds at Eureka Dunes and Homestake Dry Camp. Add primitive campgrounds at Lee Flat, Salt Wells, and Strozzi Ranch.
- Camping would be limited to a specific number of designated roadside camping sites at Echo Canyon, Hole in the Wall, Greenwater Valley (seasonally closed in spring), Cottonwood Canyon, Marble Canyon, Trail Canyon, Wood Canyon, Hunter Mountain, West Side Road, and Monarch Canyon roads.
- Formalize the two backcountry group camping sites at Eureka Dunes and add one at Ashford Junction.
- Formalize trailheads at Fall Canyon, Ubehebe Crater, Mosaic Canyon, Mesquite Flat Dunes, Salt Creek, Keane Wonder Mine, Darwin Falls, Natural Bridge Canyon, Telescope Peak, and Wildrose Peak. Establish new trailheads at Death Valley Buttes, Corkscrew Peak, Ubehebe Peak, Indian Pass, Hanaupah canyon, Surprise Canyon(with BLM)-Johnson Canyon, Dantes View, Cottonwood Canyon, Marble Canyon, Sidewinder/Willow Canyons, Virgin Springs Canyon, and Greenwater Canyon. Establish/mark designated routes or trails at each trailhead.
- Install trailhead signs at all formal trailheads; directional signs at Fall Canyon Trail, Sidewinder Canyon Trail, Willow Canyon Trail, Corkscrew Peak Trail, Cottonwood/Marble Loop crossover, Johnson Canyon/Panamint Pass Trail, Backcountry Road Corridor (orange roads) junctions; warning signs at Darwin Falls upper falls, Keane Wonder/Chloride Cliffs, Steele Pass North and South.
- Fires allowed in firepits in designated sites and in fire pans in dispersed sites, no fuel wood collection.
- Upgrade the vault toilet at Homestake Dry Camp, one new vault toilet each at Lee Flat and Salt Wells primitive campgrounds, and one vault toilet at the Eureka Dunes group sites and at Leadfield. One new vault toilet each at the Keane Wonder, Mosaic Canyon, Darwin Falls and Sidewinder/Willow Canyon Trailheads. One vault toilet or rehab septic at Warm Springs Camp, three new composting toilets at Butte Valley cabins, and pack out human waste management along the Cottonwood/Marble Canyon hiking loop.
- Continue evaluation and stabilization of existing backcountry cabins. Where appropriate, facilitate and formalize volunteer cabin stewardship activities. Warm Springs and Butte Valley cabins under NPS administration for researcher use, education groups, and cabin stewardship volunteers (12 months).
- Mandatory permits (available online and on site at trailheads and at visitor center) for dispersed and designated camping permits for a small user/administrative fee (amount to be determined).
- Wilderness overnight use group size limit: 15 individuals.
- Backcountry dispersed overnight use group size limit: 16 individuals in no more than six vehicles (unless authorized under a Special Use Permit).
- Stock party dispersed overnight use group size limit: 12 beating hearts.
- Relative cost to implement: \$\$\$
- Unconfined Wilderness Zone: 3,094,784 acres
- Backcountry Corridor Zone: 18,278 acres
- Backcountry Exploration Zone: 181,036 acres
- Managed Use / High Use Zone: 26,730 acres





# Wilderness Stewardship Planning Alternative 3





## Alternative 4:

This wilderness and backcountry stewardship alternative would recognize and protect the premier wilderness and backcountry resource values of the park while providing for a wider range of visitor experiences and opportunities in specific locations. Some areas along paved and unpaved maintained road corridors would be managed for those visitors who want to experience the wilderness and backcountry but may need additional services, facilities, and/or direction or who may be unable to make a lengthy time commitment. The majority of the wilderness, backcountry, and backcountry road corridors would be managed for self-directed exploration as well as self-reliant and challenging travel.

Consistent with this alternative, the following new facilities or management activities are identified:

- Formalize existing primitive campgrounds at Eureka Dunes and Homestake Dry Camp and add primitive campgrounds at Lee Flat, and Salt Wells.
- Camping would be limited to a specific number of designated roadside camp sites at Echo Canyon, Greenwater Valley (seasonally closed for tortoise protection), Hunter Mountain, West Side Road, Cottonwood Canyon, Marble Canyon, and Trail Canyon roads.
- Formalize backcountry group site at Eureka Dunes and add a group site at Ashford Junction.
- Formalize trailheads at Fall Canyon, Ubehebe Crater, Mosaic Canyon, Mesquite Flat Dunes, Salt Creek, Keane Wonder Mine, Darwin Falls, Natural Bridge Canyon, Telescope Peak, and Wildrose Peak. Establish new trailheads at Death Valley Buttes, Ubehebe Peak, Surprise Canyon (with BLM)-Johnson Canyon, Dantes View, Cottonwood Canyon, Marble Canyon, Sidewinder/Willow Canyons, and Virgin Springs Canyon. Establish/mark designated routes or trails at each trailhead.
- Trailhead signs at most trailheads used to access trails greater than two miles length; directional markers at Fall Canyon Trail, Sidewinder/Willow Canyon Trails, Cottonwood/Marble Loop crossover, Johnson Canyon/Panamint Pass Trail, Backcountry Road Corridor (orange roads) junctions; warning signs at Darwin Falls upper falls,

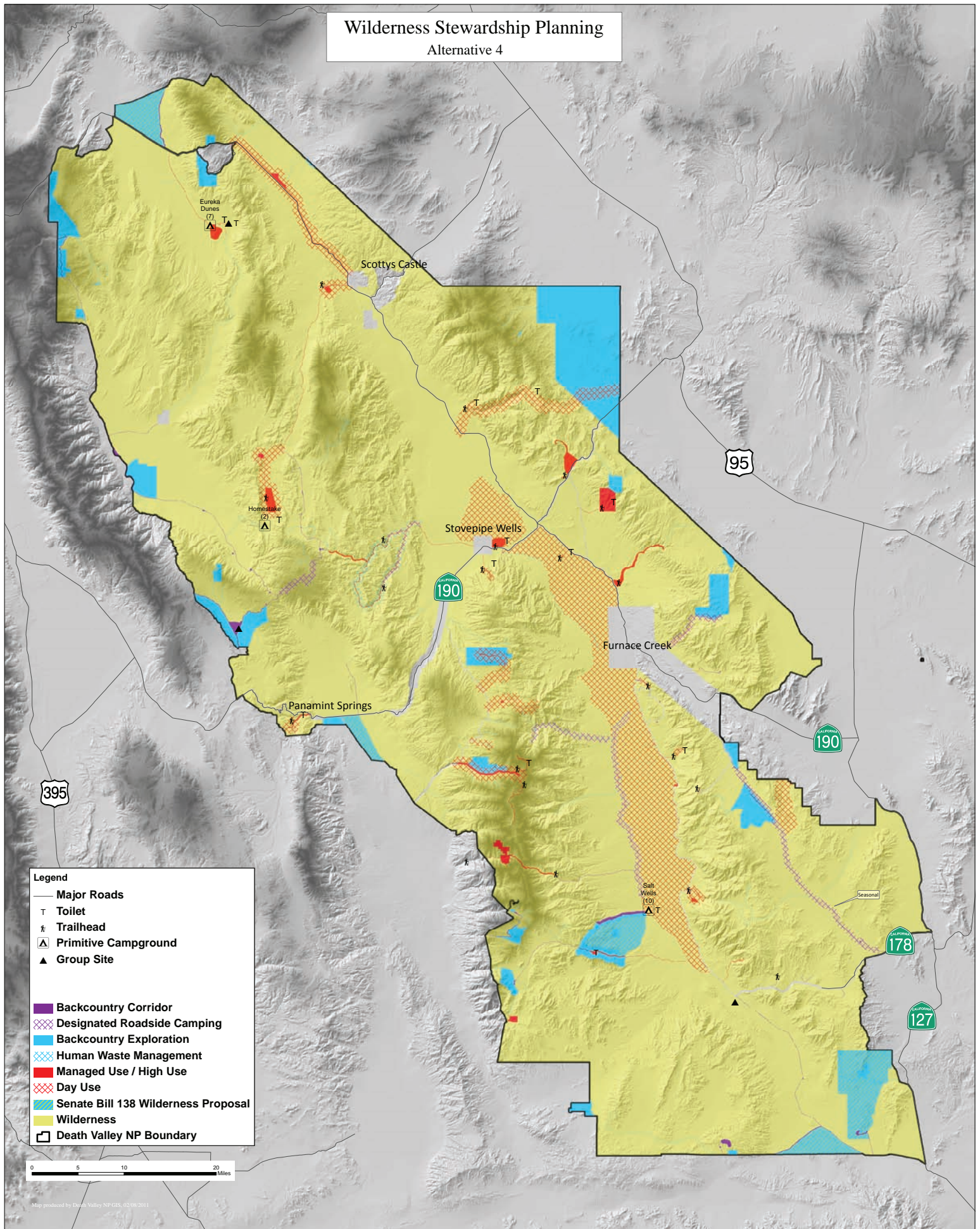
Keane Wonder/Chloride Cliffs, Steele Pass (North and South).

- Fires allowed in firepits in designated sites, no fuel wood collection.
- Upgrade the vault toilet at Homestake Dry Camp, add one new vault toilet at Salt Wells primitive campground, and one vault toilet at the Eureka Dunes group sites and at Leadfield. One new vault toilet each at Keane Wonder, Mosaic Canyon, and the Darwin Falls Trailheads. One vault toilet or rehab septic at Warm Springs Camp, three pack it in/pack it out at Butte Valley cabins, and pack out human waste management at Cottonwood/Marble Canyon loop.
- Continue evaluation and stabilization of existing backcountry cabins. Where appropriate, facilitate and formalize volunteer cabin stewardship activities. Warm Springs and Butte Valley cabins (three months fall +three months spring) under NPS administration for researcher use, education groups, and cabin stewardship volunteers.
- Mandatory user permits (available online and on site at trailhead and at Visitor Center) for dispersed wilderness camping for free; designated camping permits for a small fee (amount to be determined).
- Wilderness overnight use group size limit: 12 individuals.
- Backcountry dispersed overnight use group size limit: 12 individuals in no more than four vehicles (unless authorized under a Special Use Permit).
- Stock party dispersed overnight use group size limit: 12 beating hearts.
- Relative cost to implement: \$\$
- Unconfined Wilderness Zone: 3,094,396 acres
- Backcountry Corridor Zone: 5,757 acres
- Backcountry Exploration Zone: 202,285 acres
- Managed Use / High Use Zone: 18,310 acres





# Wilderness Stewardship Planning Alternative 4





Death Valley National Park  
Conceptual Alternatives Newsletter  
PO BOX 579  
Death Valley, CA 92328

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300



***Thank you for your interest in Death Valley National Park!***