

APPENDIX H

COMMENT SUMMARY REPORT

**Death Valley National Park
California, Nevada**

**National Park Service
US Department of the Interior**



SALINE VALLEY WARM SPRINGS MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Public Comment Summary Report

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CLI	Cultural Landscape Inventory
DOE	Determination of Eligibility
Homeland Act	Timbisha Shoshone Homeland Act of 2000
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
park	Death Valley National Park
PEPC	Planning, Environment and Public Comment
plan/EIS	Saline Valley Warm Springs Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SPA	Saline Preservation Association
TCP	Traditional Cultural Property
Tribe	Timbisha Shoshone Tribe
USC	US Code

INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service prepared the Saline Valley Warm Springs Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (plan/EIS) for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area located in the northwestern portion of Death Valley National Park (the park). Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) and its implementing regulations, the National Park Service (NPS) must assess and consider substantive comments on the draft plan/EIS and provide responses to concerns raised in these comments.

This comment analysis report provides a summary of the public comments received during the public review of the draft plan/EIS and includes National Park Service responses to substantive comments. On May 4, 2018, the National Park Service released the draft plan/EIS for public review and comment. The draft plan/EIS included a description of the history of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, the key issues in consideration of managing the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, the alternatives proposed, and the resources that could be affected, and an analysis of the impacts of the alternatives on these resources. The draft plan/EIS was available for public review until July 2, 2018. During the comment period, three public meetings and one webinar were held to discuss the draft plan/EIS. The public was encouraged to submit their comments on the draft plan/EIS electronically through the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Public comments were also accepted in writing at the public meetings, and by mailing and emailing comments to the park. All comments not received directly through the PEPC system were transcribed into the PEPC system for analysis (tables 1 and 2 in attachment A). A summary of the public involvement process from scoping through the preparation of the final plan/EIS are summarized in attachment B.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Primary terms used in this document are defined below.

Correspondence: A correspondence is the entire document received from a commenter. It can be in the form of a letter, email, written comment form, note card, or petition. Each piece of correspondence is assigned a unique identification number in the PEPC system.

Comment: A comment is a portion of the text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject. It could include information such as an expression of support or opposition to the use of a potential management tool, additional data regarding an existing condition, or suggestions for additional considerations in the impact analysis. Comments were determined to be substantive or non-substantive using section 4.6 of the NPS NEPA Handbook as guidance.

Substantive comment: A substantive comment is defined as a comment that does one or more of the following:

- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in the NEPA document;
- Question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of the environmental analysis;
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those presented in the NEPA document; or
- Cause changes or revisions in the proposal.

In other words, substantive comments raise, debate, or question a point of fact or analysis.

Non-substantive comment: Comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives, or comments that only agree or disagree with NPS policy, are not considered substantive. The National Park Service read and considered all substantive and non-substantive comments in the process of preparing the final plan/EIS; however, non-substantive comments do not require a response.

Concern Statement: A concern statement is a written summary that captures the concern or topic of a group of similar comments. Some groups of comments may be further separated into several concern statements to provide a better focus on the content of the comments.

Response: A response has been prepared for each unique, substantive idea or issue raised in the comments. Some responses may be reflected as edits to the text of the final plan/EIS if needed to clarify existing information or add new information.

PUBLIC COMMENT ANALYSIS

The NPS PEPC database was used to manage the comments. The database stores the full text of all correspondence and allows each comment to be coded by topic. The database produces tallies of the total number of correspondences and comments received, can sort and report comments by a particular topic, and provides demographic information on the source of each correspondence. During the public comment period, the National Park Service received 382 pieces of correspondence from 27 states, the District of Columbia, and 2 other countries.

Comment analysis is a process used to compile and combine similar public comments into a format that can be used by decision makers and the project team. Comment analysis helps the project team in organizing, clarifying, and addressing technical information pursuant to NEPA regulations. It also aids in identifying the topics and issues to be evaluated and considered throughout the planning process.

A coding structure was developed to capture the content of all the comments received and to help sort comments into logical groups by topic and issue. The coding structure was derived from an analysis of the range of topics from comments received from members of the public. Analysis of the public comments involved assigning codes to comments made in the letters, written comment forms, and PEPC comment entries. All comments were read and analyzed in the process of preparing the final plan/EIS. All substantive comments were summarized by developing concern statements. A response was prepared for each concern statement. If changes to the draft plan/EIS were warranted to address a concern, the response provides a brief summary of how the final plan/EIS was changed to address that concern. If the information requested or suggested was already included in the draft plan/EIS, the response guides readers to the appropriate location(s) within the final plan/EIS. These concerns and corresponding responses are listed in the following section.

SUBSTANTIVE PUBLIC COMMENTS WITH NPS RESPONSES

ACCESSIBILITY

Concern Statement 1: Commenters suggested the National Park Service should refrain from making changes to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area for accessibility reasons. Commenters stated that the area surrounding the soaking tubs is currently level and wheelchair accessible, and visitors help one another if necessary. One commenter suggested adding a non-metal railing to assist with accessibility.

Response: *NPS Management Policies 2006* states that “all practicable efforts will be made to make NPS facilities, programs, services, employment, and meaningful work opportunities accessible and usable by all people, including those with disabilities” (section 1.9.3). Mandates

come from laws, including the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. As stated in *NPS Management Policies 2006*, “the National Park Service will provide persons with disabilities the highest feasible level of physical access to historic properties that is reasonable, consistent with the preservation of each property’s significant historical features” (section 5.3.2).

The soaking tubs are all considered elements that contribute to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area’s potential historical significance. Access modifications for persons with disabilities would be designed and installed to least affect the features of a property that contribute to its significance. For these reasons, the text of the preferred alternative has been changed from “To the extent possible, facilities would be made accessible” to “To the extent practical, while preserving potential significant historical features, facilities would be made accessible.” Lastly, the National Park Service would consider the use of non-metal materials to assist with accessibility once a decision is made.

ALTERNATIVES

Concern Statement 2: Commenters suggested that the draft plan/EIS does not clearly state why alternative 1 is out of compliance or how health and safety is currently being compromised. Commenters stated that the plan/EIS should analyze only what is proposed to change at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area.

Response: Recreational use of water at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area raises some health and safety concerns, including the potential for exposure to pathogens in the pools such as *Legionella*, a non-fecal bacterium, and *Naegleria*, a free-living amoeba. Additional concerns include the methods to clean and treat the tubs, the dishwashing and showering stations, and the resulting gray and blackwater discharges, as well as the fluids (e.g., gasoline, lubricants) and batteries stored at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area and used for vehicle repairs. The dishwashing and shower stations have the potential to release untreated wastewater into the environment, and visitors could be exposed to hazardous chemicals from the techniques used to clean the tubs and from storage of cleaning and vehicle repair materials.

NPS Management Policies 2006 and Director’s Order 83: *Public Health* guide NPS management actions related to public health. As noted in the Director’s Order, the National Park Service must comply with federal and state regulations for human health and safety concerning the recreational use of water and wastewater, which include appropriate water quality monitoring and use and storage of hazardous materials. Because alternative 1, the no-action alternative, does not meet these requirements, it is out of compliance with state and federal regulations.

The analysis of alternatives is based on a “full and fair” evaluation of the impacts of each alternative on affected resources. The no-action alternative provides a benchmark for the decision maker to compare what would happen to the environment if current management were to continue, versus what would happen to the environment if one of the action alternatives were selected for implementation. If the National Park Service considered only those actions that would be different from current practice, this analysis would not be complete, and it would not meet the requirements of NEPA and its implementing regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] parts 1500-1508) or associated guidance related to the National Park Service.

The analysis in the plan/EIS focuses on important issues, which can be problems, concerns, conflicts, or benefits that would result if the alternatives are implemented. When describing issues

in the plan/EIS, the National Park Service did so in terms of the relationship between the potential impact of an action and the specific resource that would be affected. In this way, reviewers can compare impacts on park resources from each alternative in full, not just the impacts of what may change at the site.

Concern Statement 3: Commenters suggested that the current range of alternatives is inadequate, that the way the actions are grouped in the alternatives is confusing, and a new alternative should be developed using elements of alternatives 1, 2, and 3 that would be less restrictive than alternative 5. Another commenter suggested an evaluative and flexible process for management in which the National Park Service would manage the area adaptively based on changes at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area from implementation of the plan.

Response: The alternatives in this plan are distinguished based on differences in their approach to resolving the purpose and need for action and the environmental impacts of implementing them. All elements presented in the alternatives are considered in the range of reasonable alternatives, and the impacts of these alternative elements are evaluated in the “Environmental Consequences” chapter of the plan/EIS.

A preferred alternative is the alternative that would best accomplish the purpose and need of the plan consistent with the NPS statutory mission and responsibilities, while also considering economic, environmental, technical, and other factors. The National Park Service does not believe that a new grouping of elements from alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would present a substantively different alternative, as the elements only differ slightly across the alternatives. Additionally, the preferred alternative suggested by commenters could be a combination of elements analyzed in the plan/EIS. After reviewing public comments on the draft plan/EIS, the National Park Service decided to make some changes to the preferred alternative, including removing the need for permits, reducing the fencing, and retaining the lawn, thus making the preferred alternative less restrictive. The specifics of these changes are discussed further in the “Alternatives” chapter of the final plan/EIS and under the appropriate concern statements in this report.

As stated in the “Alternatives” chapter of the plan/EIS and described in the response to concern statement 2, the no-action alternative could result in noncompliance with federal and state regulations for human health and safety. For this reason, the no-action alternative cannot be selected as the preferred alternative. Alternative 2, the Regulatory Compliance Alternative, contains all of the elements necessary to bring the area into compliance with applicable federal and state health, safety, and environmental law, including NPS regulations and policies, while retaining much of the existing conditions at the site. Under NEPA, the National Park Service is not required to analyze every possible element or combination of elements. Further, the plan/EIS identifies the alternatives considered but dismissed, including full development of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. The dismissed alternatives are also considered part of the range of alternatives. For these reasons, the National Park Service believes the range of alternatives is sufficient under NEPA.

The National Park Service would continue to monitor the conditions at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area after a decision is made and implementation of that decision is underway and would make changes necessary to protect park resources and values. The National Park Service does not believe formal adaptive management is appropriate for this plan/EIS.

Concern Statement 4: Commenters suggested a number of implementation-level details to be included in the plan. These details include the commissioning of visitor use studies, studies on the human value of

the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, retaining a septic engineer to install a filtering system for dishwater, tracking vehicle breakdowns near the springs, establishing a forum with users and the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe (the Tribe) to share resources, making signage around the area discreet, and holding workshops on desert-specific wilderness camping. Commenters stated that the thresholds for overuse should be reconsidered or established with the help of Saline Preservation Association (SPA) but would likely be needed only for times of heavy use.

Response: The plan/EIS is an analytical document that should inform decision makers and the public of the environmental effects of the proposal and those of the reasonable alternatives. Suggestions proposed by commenters, such as retaining a septic engineer, tracking vehicle breakdowns, establishing forums, decreasing the size of signage, or holding workshops, are not generally actions subject to analysis in a NEPA document and therefore have not been added to the final plan/EIS. The National Park Service would, however, carefully consider these suggestions during the implementation of the selected action.

Based on public comment, the National Park Service decided to change some elements of the preferred alternative. The National Park Service would complete studies related to visitor use in the area rather than issuing permits or requiring visitors to register when they arrive. This is described in detail in the response to concern statement 23 and has been changed in the final plan/EIS. A goal for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area is to manage and protect the natural and cultural resources while maintaining the historic values of the site. The National Park Service would accomplish this through onsite monitoring with the help of the user groups, which would be included as an element of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The management of resources through onsite monitoring replaces that element of alternative 5 that would establish thresholds for use and overuse and has been changed in the final plan/EIS.

AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR FACILITY

Concern Statement 5: One commenter suggested phasing out the vehicle repair equipment over a 5-year period to ease visitors into a “no help” situation. Commenters suggested the NPS vehicle support facility should be downsized and cleaned up to be more environmentally and aesthetically friendly. Others recommended removing the NPS vehicle support facility, noting that visitors should not expect help from the NPS vehicle support facility and should be prepared for possible vehicle problems. Commenters stated the National Park Service should install signs alerting visitors of the dangers of traveling into the backcountry and wilderness. Commenters stated that removing the NPS vehicle support facility could adversely affect human health and safety, and this should be disclosed in the plan.

Response: All backcountry visitors should have a plan for what to do in case of an emergency. The best insurance for a safe and enjoyable trip rests with the visitors’ ability to exercise good judgment, avoid unnecessary risks, and assume responsibility for one’s safety while in the backcountry. Visitors venturing into the backcountry in Death Valley National Park, including the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, should be prepared to be self-sufficient in the case of a vehicle breakdown.

The National Park Service intends to allow the vehicle assistance facility to remain until either the current camp host leaves or 3 years from the approval of the final plan/EIS, whichever happens first. Signs, social media, and communications from user groups would be used to inform the public that vehicle assistance would no longer be available on site. The National Park Service may also post additional signage to educate visitors, to help with wayfinding, and to alert visitors of the dangers of backcountry travel. Additional signage is discussed fully in the response to concern statement 16. The impacts associated with the removal of the vehicle assistance shop

are discussed in the “Visitor Use and Experience” section of the “Environmental Consequences” chapter.

CAMPING AND CAMP AREAS

Concern Statement 6: Commenters stated the dispersed camping format at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area should remain in place and that designated campsites would restrict the number of users, eliminate group camping, and harm the community feel of the area. Commenters suggested the National Park Service should designate camping areas by physical delineation (e.g., signage, rocks) but should retain dispersed camping. Commenters believe creating designated campsites could cause more sprawl when campsites are completely occupied when visitors arrive. The overflow camping areas should allow car camping to enhance visitor safety and prevent improper food storage. Commenters suggested that the restricted camping buffer around the source springs should be 100 feet, not 200 feet as stated in the draft plan/EIS.

Response: A range of camping opportunities exists in Death Valley National Park, including developed campgrounds, remote dispersed camping along backcountry roads, and wilderness camping. The Saline Valley Warm Springs Area is a developed backcountry campground, similar to Thorndike and Mahogany Flats.

The purpose of designating camping areas is to reduce impacts from off-road driving. The Saline Valley Warm Springs Area would contain the following camping zones under the preferred alternative:

1. A designated dispersed camping area would allow visitors to camp next to their vehicles. Specific campsites would not be designated under the preferred alternative.
2. Additional camping would be allowed in an overflow camping area. The National Park Service would delineate a parking area where visitors would park their vehicles and walk to the overflow camping area. In this manner, Saline Valley Warm Springs Area would differ from other backcountry camping areas in the park, which follow the guidelines set in the 2016 Superintendent’s Compendium: “Camping in the wilderness or backcountry is permitted greater than one mile from the nearest paved road, developed area, or dirt roads that are closed to camping, provided that the camp is at least 100 feet from a flowing stream, spring, or other natural bodies of open water, and is not otherwise closed to camping.”
3. There would be areas beyond the designated dispersed camping and overflow camping zones where no camping would be allowed.

The National Park Service presumes that the overflow camping area would be needed most during high-use weekends, such as Presidents’ Day and Thanksgiving. Area use maps depicting the zones of designated dispersed camping, overflow camping, parking for overflow camping, and no camping would be posted at the campground and would be available online. Visitors should arrive at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area prepared with appropriate supplies and food storage in case they are unable to camp with their vehicles.

The final plan/EIS has been edited to clarify the use of camping zones in Table 1: Elements of the Alternatives and in the narrative of the alternatives in the “Alternatives” chapter. The impacts on visitors from reduced circulation via vehicle have been added to the “Visitor Use and Experience” section of the “Environmental Consequences” chapter.

Limiting areas where visitors can camp next to their vehicles at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area would reduce impacts on natural and cultural resources from off-road driving. Visitors should use only Warm Springs Road to access the designated dispersed camping area and when driving through the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Warm Springs Road connects to Saline Valley Road and gives visitors access to Lower, Palm, and Upper Springs. Additional text discussing the impacts of off-road driving has been added to the “Environmental Consequences” chapter in the “Soils and Vegetation,” “Wildlife,” “Cultural Resources,” and “Wilderness” sections.

The designated dispersed camping area would be delineated in some manner to be determined at the time of implementation. Although the National Park Service would engage with the user groups when identifying boundaries of the camping zones, a separate NEPA process would not be required.

The final plan/EIS has been edited to state that the camping buffer around source springs would be 100 feet. This change has been made in the description of the preferred alternative and throughout the document.

Concern Statement 7: Commenters stated proposed fire enclosures should be non-anchored, heavy, fire pans or metal boxes, and there must be enough to accommodate all campers. Other commenters think that only the communal campfire should be allowed at the site. Commenters stated safely packing out campfire ashes should be encouraged.

Response: The National Park Service would likely provide fire grates throughout the designated camping areas, similar to other developed campgrounds in the park. The grates would likely be anchored in place to reduce theft. However, the National Park Service would consider the suggestions made by commenters and other options available at the time of implementation. As stated in the plan/EIS under the preferred alternative, visitors would be required to pack out their ashes.

CHICKEN STRIP AIRSTRIP

Concern Statement 8: Commenters stated that the National Park Service should allow visitors to camp with their airplanes and that additional camping should be made available at the Chicken Strip. Commenters stated that the airstrip should not be developed but additional parking should be provided. One commenter would prefer to exclude camping on the airstrip to keep it open for landing. Commenters stated that the details of the proposed rule and why it is needed for the Chicken Strip airstrip should have been included in the draft plan/EIS. Several commenters suggested that the Taildragger Strip be reopened. Lastly, commenters suggested the Chicken Strip should be identified as primitive on maps.

Response: As stated in the “Alternatives” chapter of the plan/EIS, the preferred alternative would continue to allow camping at the airstrip and allow for additional aircraft tie downs with NPS approval. The tie downs would allow visitors to safely secure airplanes after landing at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area via the Chicken Strip airstrip. The National Park Service does not intend to develop the airstrip further at this time. Under alternative 3, the National Park Service analyzed the impacts of keeping the airstrip open but without the allowance for camping. The impacts of this action are described in the “Environmental Consequences” chapter of the document. While this element is not currently part of the preferred alternative, it is considered as part of the range of reasonable alternatives considered and analyzed in the document.

The National Park Service manages aircraft use under 36 CFR 2.17, “Aircraft and Delivery.” The proposed rule for the airstrip would authorize an exemption to 36 CFR 2.17(a)(1), which prohibits operation or use of an aircraft on lands or waters within national parks other than at locations designated pursuant to a special regulation. The modification would authorize Saline Valley Warm Springs Airfield, also known as the Chicken Strip. While the plan/EIS discloses the environmental effects of both closing and retaining the airstrip, additional information on the need for the proposed rule has been added to the “Alternatives” chapter in the final plan/EIS. The reopening of the Taildragger Strip is outside the scope of this plan/EIS and would require an additional rulemaking process as defined by 36 CFR 2.17 (a)(1); therefore, the National Park Service will not consider the reopening of the Taildragger Strip in this plan/EIS. The National Park Service would review and consider adding the Chicken Strip to primitive park maps.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Concern Statement 9: Commenters stated the comment period should have been extended and public meetings should have been held in higher visitation periods. Commenters suggested the public meetings should have been scheduled at high use times at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area and after the National Park Service has provided details on the cooperative agreement with the Tribe. Commenters stated additional meetings should have been held in Furnace Creek, Stovepipe Wells, Lone Pine, and Los Angeles.

Response: Per the regulations under NEPA, public comment periods are required to be open for 45 days following publication of the draft plan/EIS. The National Park Service voluntarily opened the public comment period for 60 days to allow the public more time to review and comment on the draft plan/EIS. The Notice of Availability for the publication of the draft plan/EIS, which also announced the public comment period, was published on May 4, 2018, for a 60-day public comment period. Shortly before publication of the draft plan/EIS, the Department of Interior issued Secretarial Order 3355: Streamlining National Environmental Policy Act Reviews and Implementation of Executive Order 13807, “Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects,” which requires all in-progress EISs be completed by April 27, 2019. When determining whether to extend a comment period, the National Park Service considered the length of the original comment period, the time frame in which a decision is needed, and any extenuating circumstances that would warrant additional time. Because the comment period was 15 days longer than standard NPS practice and new constraints were placed on the project schedule, the National Park Service chose not to extend the comment period.

Although public meetings are not required, it is standard NPS practice to hold public meetings to present information on the draft plan/EIS and to solicit comments. The National Park Service chose to hold three open houses; one at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area on May 27, 2018, one in Ridgecrest, California on May 29, 2018, and one in Bishop, California on May 30, 2019. Additionally, the National Park Service conducted an online webinar on May 31, 2018. The meetings and webinar were announced through a press release, Facebook post, email, and on the PEPC website on May 4, 2018, providing advance notice of these meetings and webinars by three weeks. The release of an EIS and timing of public meetings is dependent on factors including review by the project team, Regional Office, NPS leadership, Department of Interior, coordination with the US Environmental Protection Agency, and publication of the notice the Federal Register. While timing of these steps may coincide with high visitation periods at parks, they often do not. The National Park Service worked diligently to prepare and release the draft plan/EIS and provided four opportunities for public involvement, including one online for those who were unable to attend a meeting in person.

Concerning the cooperative agreement with the Tribe, Death Valley National Park has and will continue to work with the Tribe to develop this agreement, separate from this NEPA process. The cooperative agreement process is discussed in detail in the response to concern statement 12.

Concern Statement 10: Commenters stated the National Park Service did not analyze the scoping period comments quantitatively; therefore, the public was not able to determine how many people were in support or in opposition to certain ideas presented by the National Park Service. Commenters stated this should be done for the draft plan/EIS comments.

Response: Public comments for scoping, alternatives development, and the draft plan/EIS were reviewed and analyzed consistent with NPS and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA guidance. Commenting is not a form of “voting” but rather a way for the public to provide substantive feedback on the critical issues, environmental analysis, reasonable alternatives, and accuracy of information the National Park Service has presented. Substantive comments raise, debate, or question a point of fact or analysis. Comments that merely support or oppose a proposal or only agree or disagree with NPS policy are not considered substantive.

CULTURAL RESOURCES AND ART

Concern Statement 11: Commenters stated the language in the draft plan/EIS regarding the cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the Tribe should be expanded; the final plan/EIS should define what low impact, ecologically sustainable traditional practices are, what tribal cultural resources are, and what impacts are currently occurring to those resources. One commenter suggested removing the language about the degradation of *puha* unless there is science to support the statement.

Response: The National Park Service cannot share all information regarding the Saline Valley Warm Springs ethnographic site¹, tribal cultural resources, impacts to those resources, or Tribal practices. Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) directs the National Park Service to “withhold from disclosure to the public, information about the location, character, or ownership of a historic resource if the Secretary and the agency determine that disclosure may (1) cause a significant invasion of privacy; (2) risk harm to the historic resources; or (3) impede the use of a traditional religious site by practitioners.” Further, section 9(a) of the Archeological Resources Protection Act states that “information concerning the nature and location of any archaeological resource for which the excavation or removal requires a permit or other permission under this chapter or under any other provision of federal law may not be made available to the public under subchapter II of chapter 5 of title 5 or under any other provision of law unless the federal land manager concerned determines that such disclosure would—(1) further the purposes of this chapter or chapter 3125 of title 54, and (2) not create a risk of harm to such resources or to the site at which such resources are located.”

The Saline Valley Warm Springs ethnographic site has cultural and historical significance derived from the historical, ethnographic, and archeological records that were documented based on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) criteria, not from a specific group’s religion. Death Valley National Park is not required to explain *puha* to the public further than already disclosed in the draft plan/EIS. Further, *puha* does not need to have science to support its existence for the

¹ In the ethnographic DOE, the area of significance is called the Saline Valley Warm Springs or the *Ko o’* Warm Springs (preferred by the Tribe). The geographic extent of the ethnographic site varies from the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area in this plan/EIS; therefore, the National Park Service is using the term “*Saline Valley Warm Springs Ethnographic Site*” to clearly distinguish the area of significance to the Tribe from the area addressed in this plan/EIS.

National Park Service to analyze effects the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area and NPS proposed actions may have on the ethnographic site to which *puha* contributes.

Concern Statement 12: Commenters expressed mixed concerns about the appropriateness of exclusive use of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area by the Tribe. Commenters suggested that the National Park Service consult with the Tribe for restoration actions, that the Upper Spring be made available to the Tribe for traditional use, and that the National Park Service should consider limiting access to Upper Spring to allow for Tribal uses. Some commenters recommended that Upper Spring be restored to natural conditions, including removal of the palm trees; however, one commenter requested that Upper Spring remain unchanged from current conditions. One commenter suggested periodic closures at Lower Spring for exclusive tribal use; however, other commenters expressed concern about the influence of the Tribe on the management of the Palm and Lower Springs and potential development of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area by the Tribe for commercial purposes. Commenters suggested the Tribe should share information as part of outreach efforts to help educate other users on the environment of the springs and the Tribe's relationship to the area. Commenters suggested the National Park Service should remove language pertaining to the cooperative agreement from the plan/EIS or state that the cooperative agreement does not exist yet. Commenters stated that the National Park Service should allow the public to provide comments on the cooperative agreement once the process begins.

Response: Saline Valley Warm Springs is identified as a special use area for the Tribe in the *2000 Final Legislative Environmental Impact Statement: Timbisha Shoshone Homeland* (NPS 2000) and the Timbisha Shoshone Homeland Act of 2000 (Homeland Act; Public Law 106-423). The Tribe has a historic relationship with the Saline Valley Warm Springs; the area has been used by the older generation of contemporary tribal members for healing and medicinal purposes. Members of the Tribe are authorized to use special use areas for "low impact, ecologically sustainable, traditional practices pursuant to a jointly established cooperative agreement between the Tribe, and the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, as appropriate" (Public Law 106-423). The National Park Service is authorized to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Tribe by the Homeland Act (Public Law 106-423) "for the purpose of providing training on the interpretation, management, protection, and preservation of the natural and cultural resources of the areas designated for special uses by the Tribe." The National Park Service is directed by the Homeland Act to accommodate access to and use of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area by the Tribe for traditional cultural and religious activities in a manner consistent with the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (Title 42 of the United States Code [USC], section 1996 et seq.). Any cooperative agreement for tribal use of the warm springs would agree with the objectives described in the plan/EIS and will comply with applicable state and federal law. Any cooperative agreement would also formally recognize the contributions by the Tribe to the history, culture, and ecology of Death Valley National Park and the surrounding area and could create a richer visitor experience through potential interactions with the Tribe.

Separate from this plan/EIS and planning process, the National Park Service has engaged in government-to-government consultation regarding a cooperative agreement with the Tribe. This process is ongoing and is not expected to be completed before a record of decision is signed for this plan/EIS.

The National Park Service would work towards restoring Upper Spring to its natural condition, cooperating with the Tribe, as stated in the plan/EIS in the "Alternatives" chapter. When implemented, the cooperative agreement could include exclusive or nonexclusive use of the Upper Spring by the Tribe at certain times. However, if exclusive use was granted to the Tribe, other visitors may be restricted from the Upper Spring exclusive use area but would still be able

to camp and use different portions of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, such as Lower and Palm Springs.

Development of the cooperative agreement would not be a public process and would not be subject to public comment, but the agreement would be a public document. The Tribe is not required to share traditional information with the National Park Service or the public; however, if the Tribe would like to share information, the National Park Service would help distribute the information to the public appropriately, as the National Park Service has done on previous occasions. Language has been added to the “Purpose of and Need for Action” chapter regarding the status of the cooperative agreement with the Tribe.

Lands held in trust for the Tribe offer the Tribe opportunities for development. The Saline Valley Warm Springs Area is not held in trust but is a special use area, as defined above, which allows for use by Tribal members for low impact, ecologically sustainable, traditional practices. Further, in the EIS process, the National Park Service considered the potential for an intensive development alternative, but this alternative was dismissed because it would not meet the purpose and need of the plan (“Alternatives” chapter). Lastly, commercial use was also dismissed as a management option for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Commercial use and development would not be included in the cooperative agreement with the Tribe.

Concern Statement 13: Commenters stated the National Park Service should wait to move forward with the plan/EIS process until the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) and Report are prepared and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has made a decision on the Determination of Eligibility (DOE) for historic resources. If this is not possible, commenters stated the National Park Service should continue to treat the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area as if it is a historic site. Further, commenters stated some of the elements of the preferred alternative would affect elements of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site and should be reconsidered. Commenters stated that as part of the section 106 process and the DOE process, the SHPO should be soliciting input from the public to make a determination on the eligibility of Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site for listing on the NRHP. Additionally, commenters stated it is incumbent on the National Park Service to make the public aware of opportunities to comment on the section 106 or DOE process.

Response: The National Park Service completed consultation with the SHPO under section 106 of the NHPA. The National Park Service sent a consultation package with the identification of historic properties (including archeological surveys and DOE documents for the historic and ethnographic sites) and the Assessment of Effect to the SHPO on February 15, 2018. Per 36 CFR 800, “Protection of Historic Properties,” the SHPO had 60 days from the time the package arrived to respond formally. The National Park Service did not receive a formal response but sent another letter in July 2018, requesting SHPO comments or concurrence by the end of August 2018. The National Park Service did not receive a formal response at the time of completing this report; therefore, in accordance with 36 CFR 800.5(c)(1), the National Park Service will proceed with the undertaking and will provide a record of the finding to the public on request, consistent with confidentiality provisions of 36 CFR 800.11(c). The National Park Service will continue to treat the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area Historic Site as eligible for listing on the NRHP for this project and future projects. A CLI and Cultural Landscape Report would be appropriate to complete in the future to provide guidance on how to maintain the cultural landscape at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area but are not necessary for completion of the plan/EIS, provided that impacts to the cultural landscape are considered.

The National Park Service will continue to seek SHPO concurrence on the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site’s eligibility via section 110 of the NHPA, which directs federal agencies to

establish a historic preservation program for the identification, evaluation, and protection of historic properties. The NRHP form and the CLI may be developed in coordination with the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups through interviews and public review. Once complete the NRHP form and CLI would be submitted to the SHPO for review and concurrence. If the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site is determined eligible for listing on the NRHP in consultation with the SHPO, Death Valley National Park would then work with the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups to submit the documentation to the National Register for listing.

The National Park Service examined the preferred alternative actions identified as potentially having adverse impacts to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site in the draft plan/EIS. The palm trees at Palm Spring are contributing features to the historical district. New South (2015) was unable to determine whether the Lower Spring palm trees date to the period of significance due to conflicting reports, so those palm trees are being treated as contributing for this undertaking. To clarify, the National Park Service would not remove the palms from Lower Spring or Palm Spring. Instead, the National Park Service would remove palm tree seedlings and replace them with native species. The native species would be compatible with the historical district and the ethnographic district, per the Secretary of the Interior Standards, to avoid adverse impacts to either district. The mature palm trees would be allowed to remain in place and would be removed after they die naturally. The lawn at Lower Spring is also considered to be a contributing element to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site. In the draft plan/EIS, the preferred alternative stated that the lawn would be removed and allowed to naturally revegetate or would be replanted with native vegetation. Under the preferred alternative, the National Park Service would retain the lawn with the understanding that it must be managed within the current footprint, thus reducing adverse impacts on the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site.

In the draft plan/EIS, the National Park Service considered a 200-foot camping buffer from the source springs, resulting in the potential for adverse effect to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site by eliminating contributing camping areas. The preferred alternative in the final plan/EIS has been revised to reduce the buffer to 100 feet from the source springs, consistent with 2016 Superintendent's Compendium. Because of this change, several contributing camping areas would not be affected at all and the impacts on other contributing areas would be greatly reduced.

The National Park Service reconsidered how it would handle existing non-historic art and the creation of new art based on feedback from Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups. Instead of removing all non-historic art and prohibiting all new art, the National Park Service would remove all non-historic art from wilderness, would allow current art to remain in non-wilderness, and would allow new art in non-wilderness but would prohibit the manipulation of natural or cultural resources for the purposes of art. The National Park Service encourages visitors to create art while in the park; however, the art should not involve manipulating natural or cultural resources, should not be a permanent fixture, and should be removed from the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area when the visitor creating the art leaves.

These clarifications and changes have been made to the final plan/EIS in the in the alternative narrative in the executive summary and in the "Alternatives" chapter. The analysis was also edited to reflect these changes.

Finally, section 106 requires that agencies provide the public with information about an undertaking and its effects and seek public comment. Section 106 encourages agencies to use their own procedures implementing NEPA to satisfy the section 106 general public outreach requirements, provided they include adequate opportunities for public involvement. The NPS

provided more than adequate opportunities for public involvement, as described under concern statement 9.

Concern Statement 14: Commenters stated the National Park Service should give equal importance to the modern cultural history, including historic residency at the site, as it does the history for the Tribe. As written, commenters suggested the draft plan/EIS does not fully capture the nature of the importance of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area as a counterculture stronghold and as a spiritual site. Commenters suggested that because the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area is dynamic, the 50-year criteria for identifying historic features is invalid. Commenters suggested the plan is deficient in that it characterized the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area as a recreational destination, rather than spiritual and cultural destination. Commenters stated the “Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources” section should be revised to include the loss of historic resources, such as recreational freedom, communal recreational experiences, and solitude experience, from the preferred alternative.

Response: The National Park Service proposes to evaluate, separate from this NEPA process, the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) in the NRHP registration form and CLI discussed in response to concern statement 13. According to National Register Bulletin 38: *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*, TCPs derive their significance from “the role the property plays in a community’s historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices.” These property types are eligible for inclusion in the NRHP because of their “association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community’s history and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community.” Based on feedback from the public and the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups, the National Park Service agrees that in this case, spiritual and artistic features of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area that have not yet reached 50 years in age could be important contributing features to the TCP.

The National Park Service acknowledges that removing all non-historic art and prohibiting all new art could adversely affect the spiritual and cultural experience that is important to Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups. Instead, based on feedback from the public and the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups, the National Park Service would remove all non-historic art from wilderness, would allow current art to remain in non-wilderness, and would allow new art in non-wilderness but would prohibit the manipulation of natural or cultural resources for the purposes of art. The ways in which existing art in non-wilderness is managed and how new art in non-wilderness may be permitted would be addressed in an MOU between the National Park Service and the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups.

The National Park Service does not believe that proposed alternative elements in the plan/EIS would result in irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources. The National Park Service has taken into account the effects the plan/EIS would have on the sense of recreational freedom, communal recreational experiences, and solitude experience on the site, and has reconsidered actions identified as potentially having an adverse effect to the proposed historic TCP and user experience. The following changes and clarifications have been made in the final plan/EIS:

- Non-historic art would be allowed to remain in non-wilderness areas and new art in non-wilderness areas would be allowed, as long as natural and cultural resources are not manipulated, the art is not a permanent fixture, and the art is removed from the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area when the visitor creating the art leaves.

- The area around source springs where camping is prohibited would be reduced from 200 feet to 100 feet to bring the camping buffer in line with the 2016 Superintendent's Compendium and to reduce the impact the buffer would have on the user experience.
- Palm tree seedlings would be removed and replaced by native species. Once the existing mature palm trees die naturally, they would be removed, by which time the native species should have matured sufficiently to provide shade to visitors.
- The lawn would be retained but would be managed so that it does not expand from its current footprint.

DISHWASHING STATIONS AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

Concern Statement 15: Commenters disagree with removal of the dishwashing system and believe the dishwashing stations are culturally important and that suggested filters are not necessary. Commenters question who would supply and maintain the filters and clean the food debris out of the filter and haul it out of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Suggestions regarding the dishwashing stations include separating wastewater from other waters and discharging into separate septic systems, consultation with a professional plumber, and moving the stations near the toilets for use of a common septic system that can be pumped at the same time.

Response: The dishwashing stations at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area generate wastewater. To comply with applicable laws, policies and regulations, the National Park Service must implement corrective actions to address wastewater from the dishwashing stations, as well as other sources including the showers and tubs.

The preferred alternative in the final plan/EIS has been changed to note that wastewater would need to be treated. Based on suggestions by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, the treatment method would be subterranean, such as a leach field or a septic system, and would be determined at the time of implementation.

The final plan/EIS is not required to include implementation-level details, such as who would supply or maintain filters or who would haul filter debris out of the area, but the results of wastewater discharge planning would determine the level of effort required to safely discharge gray water based on treatment regulations. A septic system or other subterranean solution would be handled under a separate NEPA process and would require additional section 106 consultation with the California SHPO before implementation.

EDUCATION AND SIGNAGE

Concern Statement 16: Some commenters wish to see minimal signage regarding the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area to keep the experience primitive and to refrain from advertising the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Other commenters state that signage should be increased, including signs on the roads indicating the danger of traveling in the backcountry, identifying turns for Saline Valley, and explaining protocols of Death Valley National Park. Commenters also suggested signs at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, including what is expected of visitors, what is and is not permitted at the site, information on Leave No Trace® camping, and the history of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area (both ethnographic and historic). One commenter suggested adding braille to the signage. Several commenters suggested having an interpretation plan and possible volunteer monitors that could engage with visitors.

Response: The National Park Service may post additional signage to educate visitors and to help with wayfinding. Signage would describe the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, the potential

conditions a visitor could encounter, the distance to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, what types of vehicles would be most appropriate for travel to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, and what is expected of visitors. The educational signage would intend to encourage visitors to be self-reliant and independent when visiting the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. The signage would provide clear communication and would be placed at the junctions of major roads and the turn-offs leading to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. The level of detail for signage, including content, would be decided at the time of implementation, but signs would provide enough information to set realistic expectations to allow visitors to make informed decisions and to be self-reliant in the backcountry. Additional education measures would include regular updates on the park's website, ongoing communication with the user groups and encouraging the user group representatives to engage other visitors. The National Park Service would follow the standards presented in the Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media (Harpers Ferry Center 2017) when developing interpretive media so that visitors' experiences in the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area can be safe and meaningful.

FERAL BURROS AND FENCING

Concern Statement 17: Commenters suggested fencing elements of the other alternatives should be used in the preferred alternative instead of fencing the entire developed area. Commenters stated that fencing would help to manage the burros at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Some commenters identified issues associated with the fencing options, including intrusions on the viewshed, restriction of visitor movement at the site, cost of construction and ongoing maintenance, impacts on natural and cultural resources, and potential vandalism.

Response: Separate from this planning process, Death Valley National Park entered into an agreement with Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue, a nonprofit organization that will round up and remove 2,500 feral burros from Death Valley National Park and relocate them to offsite adoption facilities and sanctuaries. Many commenters stated that with the burro removal efforts, the fencing proposed under the preferred alternative would not be necessary. Based on public comments, the National Park Service decided to change the preferred alternative fencing to artistic fencing to surround only the source springs, as in alternative 2. These changes were made in the final plan/EIS in the alternative narrative in the executive summary and in the "Alternatives" chapter. The analysis was also edited to reflect the change in fencing.

Although the National Park Service expects the burro removal efforts to be successful, there remains a possibility of burros returning to the area since the National Park Service borders Bureau of Land Management land with different management strategies. If burros stay at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area or if burros are removed, and other burros move into the area, the fencing would help to protect the water quality of the source springs. The fencing would not keep the burros out of visitors' camps. Based on public comment, this appears to be a consequence that visitors are willing to tolerate to avoid additional fencing at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, which would affect the viewshed and other resources. The National Park Service would continue to monitor the conditions at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. If the burro removal is not successful and the burros continue to affect the resources, the National Park Service would reconsider one of the fencing options that would exclude the burros from the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area.

In addition to fencing the source springs at Lower and Palm Springs, the National Park Service would replace the fencing at Upper Spring to restrict burros and facilitate restoration. The National Park Service would consult with the Tribe to determine the type and extent of the fencing. This change has been added to the alternative narrative in the executive summary and the

“Alternatives” chapter. The analysis in the “Environmental Consequences” chapter was also edited to reflect this addition.

Concern Statement 18: Some commenters prefer that the burros be allowed to remain in Saline Valley, but if the herd must be removed, birth control or the agreement between the National Park Service and the Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue would eliminate the need for a large burro exclusion fence. Other commenters agree that the burros should be removed. Commenters believe the National Park Service should focus on an educational campaign that encourages proper food storage and that this could be accomplished through signage, pamphlets, posts on social forums, and installation of food boxes. For those that do not follow the guidelines, commenters suggested the National Park Service should issue fines.

Response: Burros are nonnative animals to Death Valley National Park that cause damage to native vegetation, spring ecosystems, and compete with native wildlife (e.g., bighorn sheep, desert tortoise) for limited resources.

In 2005, the National Park Service reduced feral burro numbers park-wide to an estimated 200-400 animals. Since that time, no burros have been removed from Death Valley National Park. Invasive burros increase their population numbers by approximately 20 percent each year, and park staff now estimate between 2,000 and 4,000 burros may occur within the park. The National Park Service proposed to install fencing to prevent burros from affecting visitors to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, either from contamination of springs and the lawn or through direct interactions, such as raiding camps and cars for food. During the public comment period, the National Park Service heard from the public that burros are a part of the experience, and they should not be fenced out of the entire area. Based on this feedback, the National Park Service has updated the preferred alternative to include only artistic fencing around the source springs at Lower Spring and Palm Spring. The fencing would be for the protection of water quality. Upper Spring was identified as an important area by Tribal Elders who asked that the fence be fixed and enlarged to protect both the cold and warm springs from burros at Upper Spring. While the National Park Service is undertaking other efforts to reduce burro numbers throughout the park and hopes to reduce burro numbers successfully, there is no guarantee of success. The National Park Service, through analysis in the plan/EIS, would revisit the discussion of fencing the entire Saline Valley Warm Springs Area if it is needed in the future should visitors or resources become affected by burros. It is worth noting that some commenters would prefer that the burros are removed from the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area.

The National Park Service would consider using signage and other methods to encourage proper food storage. Improper food storage is a citable offense.

HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY

Concern Statement 19: Commenters stated that water quality testing would most likely be expensive and difficult to complete due to the need to transport samples to testing labs. Some commenters stated that the National Park Service should conduct regular water testing and invest in signage to warn of the potential dangers of the recreational use of untreated water and to warn against consuming the spring water. Other commenters stated the National Park Service should consult with the County Environmental Health Department on waste water management practices.

Response: The National Park Service recognizes the logistic challenges presented by safely managing a remote site like the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area and is consulting with state and local authorities to craft appropriate mechanisms and best practices for compliance with

applicable public health requirements. The National Park Service would comply with NPS Director's Order 83: *Public Health* and would work with all relevant authorities having jurisdiction under the guidance of that document.

Concern Statement 20: Commenters suggested the efforts by the National Park Service to improve the natural conditions at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area could increase risks to human health and safety, namely reducing shade for camping. Another concern is the danger of flash floods; this could be reduced by restoring the diversion dams above the springs. Commenters stated that metal storage lockers or buildings should be used for bleach and any other materials that are identified as hazardous, and safety information for each substance should be available onsite. Some commenters support fencing the settling pond, but others question the need for the fencing.

Response: The National Park Service recognizes the value of shade to visitors. Based on public comment, the National Park Service would like to clarify its preferred approach to the management of the non-native palm trees around the springs. Palm tree seedlings would be removed and replaced by native species. The mature palm trees would be allowed to die naturally, and only then would they be removed. By this time, the native species should have matured sufficiently to provide shade to visitors. For additional information about management of the non-native vegetation, please refer to concern statement 29.

Flash floods would remain a risk to visitors camping in the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Installation of a diversion dam would not be consistent with NPS policy related to hydrologic features. To help mitigate the risk to visitors from flash flood events, the National Park Service would implement efforts to increase visitor awareness of the risk associated with a flash flood event and where and when to seek higher ground.

The National Park Service would consult, as appropriate, with local and state regulators related to the cleaning of the pools. Any hazardous materials, such as cleaning materials, would be stored and labeled consistent with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements. All hazardous materials associated with the vehicle repair facility would be stored according to OSHA requirements until the repair facility is removed. As noted in the plan/EIS, the National Park Service could enter into a management agreement with the Saline Preservation Association or other user groups to assist with the management of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Proper storage of cleaning materials would be part of this agreement.

The settling pond would be fenced so that its continued use is in compliance with Director's Order 83: *Public Health*.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND NPS STAFFING

Concern Statement 21: Some commenters want to see an increase in NPS presence at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, including overnight stays and the staffing of a year-round ranger, to aid the camp host in tasks such as collecting proposed camping fees. They stated law enforcement presence is important on high-use weekends and this may be of greater need following changes in the management of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. One commenter stated that an increased NPS presence would have adverse impacts on the volunteerism that is common at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area.

Response: The National Park Service would like to increase the presence of paid NPS-staff at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, to provide interpretation, public assistance, and other services. However, decisions about how to allocate park staff's time are made by park management while balancing competing needs in the entire park, which is nearly the size of the State of Connecticut.

As described in the response to concern statement 25, the National Park Service intends to enter into an MOU with the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups to help with maintenance and stewardship of the site.

NPS CAMP HOST

Concern Statement 22: Commenters submitted many implementation-level suggestions regarding the NPS camp host. Commenters stated that the current NPS camp host housing should be cleaned up but should be able to remain in place while the current NPS camp host is at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area; however, when he leaves, the trailer should be removed. Other suggestions on housing include: allowing a permanent housing structure to remain, placing the trailer on a cement pad to deter pests, placing solar panels on the roof, and installing wind-driven generators. Suggestions for a long-term NPS camp host noted that the job requires knowledge of the site, its history, and the infrastructure and that shorter-term hosts would not provide the necessary stability. Some commenters stated that the National Park Service could offer incentives, such as a salary or vacation time, to attract the right applicant. Other commenters prefer several approved NPS camp hosts that rotate every couple of months, stating that a suitable long-term host would be difficult to find and that a host with a long tenure could develop an unwarranted sense of ownership. Commenters suggested when it is time for a new NPS camp host, the National Park Service should involve the long-time users in the decision, and one commenter suggested having the new NPS camp host intern with the current camp host prior to taking over the role. Commenters stated that there should be NPS camp hosts at both Lower Spring and Palm Spring.

Response: The National Park Service would retain a year-round camp host at Lower Spring and a seasonal camp host at Palm Spring. The National Park Service may consult with the user groups when considering the camp host positions. Although choosing a camp host is a park decision and not a public process, the National Park Service would explain the hiring process to the user groups and check references of the potential camp hosts with the user groups, as appropriate.

The current NPS camp host housing would remain until either the current camp host leaves or 3 years from the approval of the plan/EIS, whichever happens first. When the current NPS camp host leaves his position, the camp host housing and the automotive repair facility would be removed. The NPS camp hosts would provide their own temporary housing, and the water feature, drainage ditch, and plumbing at Lower Spring would be retained. The National Park Service would allow for a power system that complies with applicable regulations and the cultural landscape, and the camp host would retain a government vehicle. The NPS camp hosts would be allowed personal items that comply with the park's housekeeping policy. Additionally, the term of employment for the NPS camp host would be one year with the possibility for reinstatement, but the camp host would have to reapply for the position each year. The text in the final plan/EIS regarding the Lower Springs camp host site has not been changed.

PERMITS AND FEES

Concern Statement 23: Comments questioned the need for permits given the low number of visitors. Although some commenters agreed that permits might be necessary during high-use weekends, others are concerned that permits would affect traditional uses of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area during high-use weekends when the sense of community is established among the visitors or would be a violation of user privacy. Commenters are concerned that obtaining permits would be too challenging due to the location of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, lack of connectivity, and visitors changing plans due to weather conditions. Some commenters suggested that a sign-in log be used, and other suggested that a visitor use study should be completed prior to implementing a permit system.

Response: As stated in the response to concern statement 6, the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area is a developed backcountry campground, similar to Thorndike and Mahogany Flats. Currently, these types of campgrounds in Death Valley National Park do not require visitors to obtain a permit or registration. Under the preferred alternative in the draft plan/EIS, the intention of the mandatory no-cost permit was to collect data on visitor use and distribute information on the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Currently, the NPS camp host informally collects information on visitor use. During the public comment process, the National Park Service learned that visitors often collect informal visitation data as well; however, these data do not provide the National Park Service with the consistent visitor information needed to determine visitation trends.

Based on public comment, the National Park Service changed the preferred alternative. Instead of permits or registrations, the National Park Service would gather data on visitor use patterns through formal visitor use studies, which could include ways to count visitors at both high and low use periods. These data would help the National Park Service understand current visitor use trends and impacts. The National Park Service would monitor the data collection and if it were determined that the data collected were not accurate or appropriate, the National Park Service would consider requiring visitors to register or to obtain a permit to camp at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Further, if the National Park Service were to change the requirements park-wide for developed backcountry campgrounds in the future, these changes would apply to camping at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area.

The final plan/EIS reflects this change in the alternative narrative in the executive summary and the “Alternatives” chapter. The analysis in the “Environmental Consequences” chapter was also edited to reflect this change.

Concern Statement 24: Commenters requested more information on how the funds from a proposed camping fee would be used, how this would be enforced, and how a fee would affect the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area experience for users. Commenters stated that a fee would discourage volunteerism by visitors. Commenters suggested improvements for the collection of park entrance fees. Commenters cited 36 CFR 71.9, stating that this regulation would require the National Park Service to provide potable water, trash containers, and personnel onsite to collect a camping fee.

Response: All visitors to Death Valley National Park must pay the park entrance fee. In certain areas of the park, recreation fees are also collected. National Park Service entrance and recreation fees are used for:

- facility repair, maintenance, and enhancement;
- habitat restoration and protection of resources;
- law enforcement;
- direct operating or capital costs to pay for fee collection and campground staff; and
- emergency medical services.

Specifically, Death Valley National Park has recently used fee money to fund critical projects that improve visitor services and protect natural and cultural resources in the park. Examples of this work include repairing Scotty’s Castle and restoring visitor access after a devastating storm and improving accessibility for visitors with disabilities at Dante’s View through a partnership with the Fund for People in Parks and the Death Valley Natural History Association. Death Valley National Park’s general operating budget funds most services within the park, and the National

Park Service is limited in the way fees can be used. Although user fees could be used to supplement current services, the fees would not cover all the services provided to a particular area.

To clarify, 36 CFR 71.9, “Establishment of Recreation Use Fees” would not apply to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. If a permitting system were implemented in the future at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, an overnight camping fee would be implemented in conjunction with the permit, as cost recovery for the permit system, similar to parks that charge for a backcountry permit. As stated, the National Park Service does not intend to charge a camping fee at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area or any of the other developed backcountry campgrounds, nor is a permit system being put in place at this time. However, the National Park Service could implement both permits and fees in the future for all developed backcountry campgrounds, if monitoring determines these actions are necessary.

The language in the final plan/EIS (“Alternatives” chapter) stating that overnight camping fees could be implemented is consistent with the established framework in the Death Valley National Park Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan. The National Park Service does not intend to collect fees for camping at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area at this time, but if fees were to be implemented for developed backcountry campgrounds, this change would be applied to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area as well. If fees were to be implemented, the change would not require a separate NEPA process, but the public would be invited to comment.

SITE STEWARDSHIP

Concern Statement 25: Commenters suggested that the National Park Service should negotiate another MOU with SPA for care of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. This would take much of the effort and financial strain off the National Park Service and include maintenance of the infrastructure and road, vegetation maintenance, trash collection when necessary, education of new visitors, and restoration after flood or other weather events.

Response: As stated in the plan/EIS (“Alternatives” chapter), the National Park Service intends to work with the user groups to develop agreements for stewardship of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area to include activities such as minimal maintenance of the tubs, invasive plant removal, campsite management, monitoring of conditions at Upper Spring, protection of archeological resources, maintenance of the Chicken Strip airstrip, and protection of wilderness boundaries.

SOILS

Concern Statement 26: One commenter expressed that the soil impacts caused by moving rocks to create art are overstated.

Response: The National Park Service does not agree with this statement. The plan/EIS states that moving rocks to create rock art and form road alignments “exposes soils to wind and water erosion.” This is an accurate statement. The “Types of Impacts on Soils and Vegetation” in the “Environmental Consequences” chapter clearly explains the types of impacts that can occur from activities at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, including moving rocks to create art. Walking in undisturbed areas and moving rocks from their original location to a new location can cause trampling and compaction on the soil. Moving rocks is not the only or most important activity that impacts soils, but the analysis correctly notes that this activity does alter the soil

characteristics, which can alter air and water movement in soil and the suitability for plant growth.

In reviewing the draft plan/EIS, the National Park Service determined that the impacts to archeological resources were not adequately characterized, as moving rocks could negatively impact these resources. The final plan/EIS describes these impacts under the appropriate alternatives in the “Cultural Resources” section of the “Environmental Consequences” chapter.

SUGGESTED REVISIONS

Concern Statement 27: Commenters identified certain sections of the draft plan/EIS that should be revised or elements that should be included in the final plan/EIS. These revisions included adding language regarding clothing optional recreation, including language on encouraging collaborative activities with SPA, adding the Inyo Mountains as a range surrounding Saline Valley, clarifying the springs as a “Developed Area,” adding the Bat Pool to the description of Lower Spring, clarifying what water is used for the dishwashing station, remove language referring to the Saline Valley as a campground, clarify that the palm trees were human-planted, analyze impacts to roads within the developed area of the campground, and include an example camping permit in the Record of Decision. Commenters also suggested several elements to be included in the alternatives, including adding trash cans and removing some of the trash from the site.

Response: Based on suggestions, the National Park Service made the following edit to the final plan/EIS:

- Developed Area – As stated in the responses to concern statements 6 and 23, the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area is considered a developed backcountry campground, and the final plan/EIS has been edited appropriately.

Some suggestions did not result in changes to the final plan/EIS and are explained below:

- Inyo Mountain Range – One commenter stated that the executive summary omitted the Inyo Mountains when describing the viewshed. The executive summary has been edited to remove the description of the location of the project site; however, this information is included in the “Purpose and Need” and “Affected Environment” chapters.
- Clothing Optional Recreation – Federal law and regulations do not prohibit nudity; however, they do prohibit actions that are threatening or obscene. The National Park Service encourages visitors to be respectful and use the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area as a shared public space. Public nudity can make other visitors uncomfortable and is inconsistent with tribal values. No changes to the clothing optional recreation were made in the final plan/EIS.
- Palm Trees – The draft plan/EIS states the following on page 45: “Users of the warm springs area planted palm trees to create shade for the tubs.” No changes were made in the final plan/EIS regarding the origin of the palm trees.
- Bat Pool – Several features at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area have multiple names to describe them. The Bat Pool is called “the bathtub” in the plan/EIS. A photograph of the bathtub is depicted on the divider page for the “Purpose of and Need for Action” chapter, as well as page B-11 of appendix B of the draft plan/EIS. Although the Lower Spring shower has an actual bathtub, the soaking tub called “the bathtub” by some users

is recognized as a separate feature of Lower Spring. No changes were made in the final plan/EIS; refer to appendix C of the final plan/EIS.

- Dishwashing Station Water Sources – Schematic drawings from the NPS camp host show an irrigation pipe from the cold source spring to the main Lower Spring area where it appears that it connects to a junction box; therefore, the text was not changed in the final plan/EIS.
- Campground – The National Park Service disagrees with the statement that the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area should not be referred to as a campground. As stated above, the final plan/EIS was edited to define the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area as a developed backcountry campground.
- Impacts to Roads – The preferred alternative does not propose changes to designated roads. Visitors should use only Warm Springs Road when driving through the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area; this road connects to Saline Valley Road and gives visitors access to Lower, Palm, and Upper Springs. If the National Park Service creates the designated dispersed camping area, new access roads may be created, but driving anywhere except designated road and access roads would be illegal. For these reasons, the National Park Service did not analyze impacts to roads in the final plan/EIS.
- Permits – As discussed in the response to concern statement 23, the preferred alternative in the final plan/EIS was revised to remove permits for overnight use at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area; therefore, a sample permit will not be included in the Record of Decision.
- Trash Cans and Junk Removal – As discussed in the response to concern statement 25, the National Park Service is working with the user groups to develop MOUs for site stewardship. The tasks that would be covered by the volunteers could include trash and extraneous items collection and removal at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area.

TOILET MANGEMENT

Concern Statement 28: Commenters stated that the National Park Service should pump the vault toilets as needed and another vault toilet should be added at Palm Spring. Commenters stated that requiring visitors to pack out waste is not reasonable and there is concern that some visitors would dump wag bags into the vault toilets causing issues. Suggestions include installing an additional toilet near the Wizard Pool at Palm Springs, determining ways to minimize risk from contaminating surrounding areas during flood events, decreasing odors from the toilet, blending the vault toilet buildings into the surrounding desert, and using composting toilets.

Response: Camping in the backcountry requires visitors to be self-reliant. As the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area is a developed backcountry campground, visitors should be prepared to be independent and not rely on the NPS facilities. Although the National Park Service does not require visitors to pack out human waste, visitors are encouraged to practice Leave No Trace® camping principles. The actions for toilet management were not changed in the final plan/EIS, as the preferred alternative encourages visitors to be self-reliant and allows for additional vault toilets if deemed necessary by the National Park Service.

The response to concern statement 15 explains the need for a form of subterranean system for treating wastewater, as suggested by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. Once the type of treatment system is decided, the National Park Service would determine whether the vault toilets should be tied into the septic system at that time.

The current vault toilets were selected to blend into the environment, and no changes to the toilets are planned at this time. As stated in the “Alternatives” chapter of the plan/EIS, vault toilets could be added to Lower or Palm Springs, if necessary. If the National Park Service decides to make changes to the toilet facilities, items such as minimizing risk from contaminating surrounding areas during flood events, decreasing air pollutants from the toilet, and using composting toilets would be considered.

VEGETATION

Concern Statement 29: Commenters stated the lawn and palm trees are misrepresented in the draft plan/EIS as invasive. They stated the palm trees and the grass species are nonnative, but they are not invasive, as they are not outcompeting native species, they are not spreading, and they are not having a negative effect on the environment. Some commenters minimized concerns about the invasiveness of palm trees, stating that they are easily controlled and contained. Commenters objected to the comparison in the draft plan/EIS of palm trees to tamarisk, which are harder to control and more damaging to the natural habitat. Commenters suggested tamarisk removal should continue to occur at the park and site. Commenters stated the plan/EIS should be revised to adequately describe the difference in controlling palm trees and tamarisk; palm tree control is successful at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, whereas tamarisk spread is nearly impossible to control. Various suggestions were made to study and evaluate the invasiveness of these species and their impacts on the habitat.

Response: Death Valley National Park has five species of introduced palm trees that are generally recognized as two different groups: date palm trees from Africa and fan palm trees from Southern California and Mexico. Although the introduction of these species occurred relatively recently and was well documented, there is a common misconception that fan palm trees are native to Death Valley National Park, but they are not. Historically, the closest palm trees to Death Valley were found and restricted to remote springs and seeps in the Colorado Desert in springs along the San Andreas Fault near the Salton Sea and east into southern Arizona; however, the California fan palm (*Washingtonia filifera*) has been widely distributed as an ornamental species, especially to the various missions throughout California. Readily grown from seed, the California fan palm has been transported well beyond its native range with great success. Consultation with the Tribe in Death Valley confirms that these trees were introduced, and that there are no traditional uses for palms or palm fruits by the Tribe. Finally, there are receipts and photographs in the Death Valley National Park archives that document the introduction of palm trees.

Within Death Valley National Park, palm trees have spread from their original planting locations, and each year the National Park Service spends money to control population numbers. Through the public comment period, the National Park Service has heard the value of the palm trees and the shade they produce for visitors of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Based on this feedback, the National Park Service would like to clarify the actions of the preferred alternative. Palm tree seedlings would be removed and replaced by native species. The existing mature palm trees would be allowed to remain at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area until they die naturally, and only then would they be removed. By this time, the native species should have matured sufficiently to provide shade to visitors. Retaining palm trees at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area increases the operational maintenance required to prevent the spread of these species to other springs and riparian sites. In addition to humans spreading palm trees, birds and coyotes have been shown to be long distance dispersers of the seeds. Due to the remote nature of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area and limited staffing of the National Park Service, the National Park Service would enter into an MOU with the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups for the control and removal of palm tree seedlings. Implementation details would be defined in

the MOU. If the National Park Service and user groups are unable to prevent the spread of palm trees to new sites, the National Park Service would reserve the management responsibility to remove mature palm trees and replace them with native species. In all cases, the National Park Service would plan the plantings of native species so that they would provide shade as the palm trees die naturally and are removed. Under this scenario, native species would be selected for maintenance and potential to produce shade for visitors.

Additionally, and in response to public comments, the National Park Service would retain the lawn. The National Park Service understands the value of the lawn to users of the springs and believes that removal of nonnative Bermuda grass would be more destructive to the environment than leaving it in place at this time. The footprint of the lawn at the time the decision document is signed would define the footprint moving forward. Maintenance of the lawn to prevent its spread would also be included in the MOU with the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area user groups.

Upper Spring would be restored to a natural state and remove the palm trees and Bermuda grass. The fence would be increased in size to protect both the warm and cold springs at this location.

The final plan/EIS reflects these changes and clarifications in the alternative narrative in the executive summary and the “Alternatives” chapter. The analysis in the “Environmental Consequences” chapter was also edited to reflect this change.

Concern Statement 30: Commenters stated that the palm trees should be retained at Lower Spring and Palm Spring, as well as the lawn at Lower Spring. Rationale for retaining the palm trees and lawn include the importance of these features to the experience, the shade offered by the trees, and the expense of removal of these features. Various suggestions were offered for maintaining the palm trees. Some commenters suggested planting cottonwood trees for shade in place of the palm trees, while others stated that cottonwood trees would require ongoing, regular maintenance and are not recommended. Commenters suggested planting “mule palm trees” and planting native grass in place of the current Bermuda grass. Other commenters stated the National Park Service should consider the habitat the palm trees provide for bats.

Response: NPS Management Policies 2006 defines nonnative species as those “that occupy or could occupy park lands directly or indirectly as the result of deliberate or accidental human activities.” Unless a nonnative species is maintained to meet an identified park purpose, NPS policy is to manage the species, up to and including eradication. An invasive species is defined as, “a non-native organism whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human, animal, or plant health,” according to Executive Order 13751, “Safeguarding the Nation from the Impacts of Invasive Species.” Executive Order 13751 requires federal agencies to take steps to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species and to support efforts to eradicate and control invasive species that are established. Death Valley National Park recognizes all palm tree species and five of the six grass species at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area as invasive species.

The National Park Service appreciates the public comments regarding vegetation at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Based on these comments, the National Park Service decided to revise the preferred alternative to allow the lawn to remain; the current mature palm trees would remain, as stated in the draft plan/EIS. The National Park Service would work with the user groups to create an MOU (see response to concern statement 25) for management of the lawn and palm trees. The MOU would place most of the responsibility of maintaining the palm trees and the lawn on the user groups. This would require trimming the existing palm trees, removing young palm trees, and maintaining the lawn to prevent spread into areas beyond what exists

currently. The National Park Service would continue to monitor the resources at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area and would take steps to remove these nonnative invasive species if management goals are not met.

Although the current mature palm trees would be allowed to remain, the National Park Service would remove palm tree seedlings and plant native species that would provide shade when mature. These trees would be planted while the existing mature palm trees are still alive to allow the native trees time to mature and provide shade. The National Park Service would determine the best species to plant during implementation of the plan; the species would be chosen based on the amount of shade they would provide and the amount of maintenance they would require. The current palm trees likely provide habitat for bats and birds in the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. This would also be factored into the decision when choosing native tree species.

The final plan/EIS reflects these changes in the alternative narrative in the executive summary and the “Alternatives” chapter. The analysis in the “Environmental Consequences” chapter was also edited to reflect this change.

Concern Statement 31: Commenters suggested the siphon hose from Burro Spring to the adjacent riparian area should remain, as removing the water source would kill the mesquite trees. Commenters stated this line of native mesquite and associated understory vegetation provides habitat for various wildlife (e.g., migratory birds, coyotes, bobcats), provides a large area of shaded camping locations, and acts as a windbreak. Commenters suggested replacing the hose with a permanent pipe, installing a screen over the trough to deter burros and other habituated wildlife, and installing a valve to control water use.

Response: Based on suggestions from the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board that hydromodification should be avoided, the National Park Service would retain this element of the preferred alternative and remove the hose from Burro Spring upon implementation. The hose from Burro Spring to the wildlife trough modifies the natural flow of water. The line of mesquite trees associated with Burro Spring has been established for approximately 20 years. The mesquite trees are likely to persist at the site because they are already established, and the trees grow a very long taproot and an extensive lateral root system for obtaining water. For these reasons, no changes have been made to the final plan/EIS regarding this issue.

REFERENCES

Harpers Ferry Center Accessibility Committee

- 2017 Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media, Version 2.3. May.

National Park Service

- 2000 *Legislative Environmental Impact Statement: Timbisha Shoshone Homeland*. November.

- 2006 *Management Policies 2006*. National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

New South Associates (New South)

- 2015 Saline Valley Warm Springs Assessment of Eligibility, Death Valley National Park. October.

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ATTACHMENT A

Public Comment Content Summary Tables

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TABLE 1: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS BY COUNTRY

Country	Number of Correspondences	Percentage of Correspondences
United States	380	99.5%
Italy	1	0.3%
Thailand	1	0.3%

TABLE 2: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS BY STATE

State	Number of Correspondences	Percentage of Correspondences
California	274	71.7%
Nevada	29	7.6%
Arizona	8	2.1%
Colorado	7	1.8%
Washington	7	1.8%
Oregon	6	1.6%
Utah	6	1.6%
Idaho	4	1.0%
Maine	3	0.8%
New Mexico	3	0.8%
Alaska	2	0.5%
Illinois	2	0.5%
Indiana	2	0.5%
Montana	2	0.5%
Ohio	2	0.5%
Pennsylvania	2	0.5%
Texas	2	0.5%
Florida	1	0.3%
Georgia	1	0.3%
Massachusetts	1	0.3%
Michigan	1	0.3%
New Jersey	1	0.3%
New York	1	0.3%
North Carolina	1	0.3%
South Carolina	1	0.3%
Virginia	1	0.3%
Washington, DC	1	0.3%
West Virginia	1	0.3%
Unknown	8	2.1%
Total	380	99.5%

TABLE 3: CORRESPONDENCE COUNT BY CORRESPONDENCE TYPE

Type of Correspondence	Number of Correspondences
Web Form	319
Letter	48
E-mail	9
Park Form	5
Other (Newspaper Article)	1
Total	382

TABLE 4: CORRESPONDENCE COUNT BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

Organization Type	Number of Correspondences	Percentage of Correspondences
Conservation/Preservation	4	1.0%
Federal Governmental	1	0.3%
Recreational Group	25	6.5%
Town or City Government	3	0.8%
Tribal Member	2	0.5%
State Government	1	0.3%
Unaffiliated Individual	345	90.3%
University	1	0.3%

TABLE 5: CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY CODE

Code	Description	Number of Correspondences
NS1110	Alternative 1 - No-Action Alternative: Supports	80
NS1210	Alternative 2 - Regulatory Compliance Alternative: Supports	6
NS1310	Alternative 3 - Community Engagement Alternative: Supports	2
NS1420	Alternative 4 - Restoration Alternative: Opposes	4
NS1410	Alternative 4 - Restoration Alternative: Supports	2
NS1520	Alternative 5 - Preferred Alternative: Opposes	6
NS1510	Alternative 5 - Preferred Alternative: Supports	16
NS1610	Alternative Developed by Saline Preservation Association: Supports	55
AL4000	Alternatives: New Alternatives or Elements	14
AL2000	Alternatives: Range of Alternatives	5
LE1000	Comments Pertaining to Law Enforcement and NPS Staffing	6

TABLE 5: CORRESPONDENCE DISTRIBUTION BY CODE

Code	Description	Number of Correspondences
AS1100	Comments Pertaining to Accessibility	7
AU1000	Comments Pertaining to Auto Repair Support Services	62
CA2000	Comments Pertaining to Campfires	26
CA1000	Comments Pertaining to Camping Areas	54
RC1200	Comments Pertaining to Clothing Optional Recreation	5
NE2000	Comments Pertaining to Consultation and Coordination	5
CM1000	Comments Pertaining to Cooperative Management with the Tribe	20
CR1400	Comments Pertaining to Cultural Resources	25
DW1000	Comments Pertaining to Dishwashing Stations/Wastewater Management	32
ES1000	Comments Pertaining to Education and Signage	15
FE1100	Comments Pertaining to Fencing and Burro Management	124
LM1400	Comments Pertaining to Hazardous Materials	3
HS2000	Comments Pertaining to Human Health and Safety	5
NP4000	Comments Pertaining to National Park Service/Park Mission	1
PS1100	Comments Pertaining to Permit/Fee System	91
PN1000	Comments Pertaining to Purpose and Need	3
RW1000	Comments Pertaining to Recreational Water Usage	6
ST2000	Comments Pertaining to Resource Stewardship	21
AR1100	Comments Pertaining to the Bat Pole and Other Art	28
LM1300	Comments Pertaining to the Management of the Chicken Strip	23
MN1000	Comments Pertaining to the Management of the Warm Springs	15
CR1300	Comments Pertaining to the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe	35
TM1000	Comments Pertaining to Toilet Management	23
VE1000	Comments Pertaining to Vegetation	108
CH1000	Comments Pertaining to VIPs and Camp Hosts	22
CR1100	Cultural Resources: Affected Environment	6
CR1200	Cultural Resources: Impact of Alternatives	3
ED1000	Editorial	9
NS1000	Nonsubstantive	53
OS1000	Out of Scope	11
RF1000	References - General Comments	7

TABLE 6: HOW COMMENTERS HEARD ABOUT THE DRAFT PLAN/EIS AND COMMENTERS PREFERRED METHOD OF NOTICE		
Source	How Commenters Heard about the Draft Plan/EIS	How Commenters Would Prefer to be Notified
Blog	8	10
Email - NPS	33	130
Email - Other	45	61
Facebook	57	54
Newsletter	11	41
Newspaper	6	21
Other	43	12
Other Social Media (e.g. YouTube)	3	23
Other Website	34	13
Park Website	9	47
Public Meeting	31	33
Radio	0	11
Standard Mail	6	22
Twitter	0	10

ATTACHMENT B

Summary of Public Involvement for the Plan/EIS

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SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FOR THE PLAN/EIS

Public involvement is a key component of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) process. Public involvement is imperative in a project such as the plan/EIS. Traditionally, the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area was used by the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe (the Tribe), and the site is identified as a special use area for the Tribe. Development of the area by visitors began in the 1940s and continued through the 1990s, though the area was not incorporated into the national park until 1994. Tribal Elders have intimate first-hand knowledge of the natural state of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, as it was used for healing and medicinal purposes. The visitors to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area have a thorough understanding of the features of the site because maintenance of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area has been mostly volunteer-based and completed by the people who visit for recreational and cultural purposes.

Through the public input process, the National Park Service was able to communicate with the public to determine the factors of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area that are most important to continued use that would also protect the resources of the park. It should be noted that the National Park Service invited comments from all sources during the public comment period, including the general public, the cooperating agencies (the Tribe, Inyo County Board of Supervisors, and Bureau of Land Management, Ridgecrest Field Office), state and federal agencies, and non-governmental agencies. A summary of the public involvement process from scoping through the preparation of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Final Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (plan/EIS) is provided in this appendix.

PUBLIC SCOPING

On May 29, 2012, the National Park Service released the Public Scoping Newsletter for the plan/EIS to the public for review and comment. The newsletter included a description of the purpose and need, project description and background, project objectives, and a list of issues and impact topics. A Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register on June 5, 2012. The public scoping period was open through August 6, 2012.

The National Park Service held three public meetings from Tuesday, June 12 to Thursday, June 14, 2012 in Bishop, California; Ridgecrest, California; and Victorville, California. Each scoping meeting began at 5:00 PM with an open house format. NPS staff was on hand to visit with meeting attendees and to answer questions. A total of 46 individuals attended the public scoping meetings in California. The public were able to submit their comments on the project by submitting a written comment at one of the meetings, by electronically submitting comments through the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website, and by mailing or emailing comments to the park.

NATURE OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

Over 540 pieces of correspondence were received during the public scoping period, resulting in 1,714 substantive comments. The substantive comments are in excess of the pieces of correspondence because some correspondence contained multiple comments. The PEPC website listed six topic questions to prompt responses from the public. The public comments received were in response to those questions, as well as from observations on other issues pertaining to the management at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. The topics that received the majority of the comments were in response to the questions presented and include expressions of opinion on appropriate recreation activities, feral burro population, management of the Chicken Strip airstrip, and management of camping at the springs.

Commenters strongly expressed the desire for most activities at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area to continue, including soaking in the tubs, clothing optional recreation, camping, and use of the Chicken

Strip airstrip. Commenters advocated for continuation of the volunteer-based, self-maintained maintenance and recreation because they feel that this has been working since development of the first soaking tubs. Those that commented on clothing optional recreation support the opportunity, even if they did not practice it. Most who commented on camping at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area were in favor of continued dispersed camping but did not want to see expansion into wilderness areas. Many commenters wrote in support of retaining the Chicken Strip airstrip as one of the few remaining backcountry airstrips.

PUBLIC ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT

Following the analysis of the public scoping comments, the NPS planning team and cooperating agencies worked together to create four action alternatives that were designed to address the issues identified during the public scoping process. The National Park Service considered options for all the elements of the alternatives to ensure that a full range of alternatives was available for analysis. Ultimately, the National Park Service developed four action alternatives—the minimum action alternative, the community engagement alternative, the recreation management alternative, and the restoration alternative; a no-action alternative was also included.

On January 23, 2014, the National Park Service released the Alternatives Development Newsletter containing descriptive narratives of the five alternatives, as well as a table that compared the elements of the alternatives. The public was originally given a 60-day period to submit comments on the preliminary alternatives through March 28, 2014, but the National Park Service issued a 30-day extension and accepted comments through April 27, 2014.

During the comment period, three public meetings were held at different locations to discuss the preliminary alternatives. The meetings were held on Tuesday, February 4 through Thursday, February 6, 2018 in Death Valley, California; Lone Pine, California; and Ridgecrest, California with a total of 78 attendees. The meetings were open house format, and each began at 4:00 PM. NPS staff were on hand to discuss participants' issues and concerns. The public were encouraged to submit comments using the same manner as described above.

NATURE OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

During the public review period, 774 pieces of correspondence were received, resulting in 1,704 substantive comments. The comments were again supportive of continuation of the current activities at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area, including use of the Chicken Strip airstrip and the soaking tubs, clothing optional recreation, and continued volunteer-based management and maintenance of the site. The correspondences provided input on many elements of the alternatives. The following were common thoughts on the elements presented in the preliminary alternatives:

- Dishwashing stations should not be removed.
- Dispersed camping with vehicle parking at the campsite should continue.
- The NPS automobile repair facility should remain.
- The NPS camp host positions should be rotating positions.
- Existing art should be allowed to remain, and new art should be allowed.
- Commenters sought more information on ethnographic and historic cultural landscapes.
- Permits and fees are not warranted.
- The palm trees should not be removed.

PREPARATION OF THE DRAFT PLAN/EIS

The National Park Service carefully considered all comments when editing the preliminary alternatives and creating a preferred alternative. Due to similarities, the community engagement alternative and the recreation management alternative were combined to create one alternative, a refined community engagement alternative. The preferred alternative is very similar to the community engagement alternative but management of the Chicken Strip airstrip, the area proposed for fencing, and the use of food storage boxes differs slightly from the community engagement alternative.

In completing the alternatives used to analyze impacts in the draft plan/EIS, the National Park Service responded to public comments by making several changes to the action alternatives that retained the developed features at the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area. Based on public comments received during alternatives development, the following changes were incorporated into the preferred alternative for the draft plan/EIS:

- Dishwashing stations would remain with an added filtration system to catch food debris.
- The NPS camp host position would have a one-year term. The host could be reinstated beyond one year but would have to reapply for the position.
- The vault toilet at the camp host area would not be relocated. Additional vault toilets could be installed at Lower Spring or Palm Spring, if necessary.
- Native tree species that would provide shade for visitors would be planted. These trees would be mature by the time the existing palm trees die naturally.

Some elements of the alternatives were not changed in response to public comment due to the need of the National Park Service to comply with federal and state regulations. For example, the National Park Service must comply with federal and state regulations for human health and safety concerning the recreational use of water and wastewater. The automobile repair facility, the unfenced settling pond, and other resources present potential sources of risk to human health. Therefore, the automobile repair facility would be removed, the settling pond would be fenced, and fencing would be installed to protect resources from feral burros.

On May 4, 2018, a Notice of Availability for the draft plan/EIS was published in the Federal Register, beginning the comment period that would extend through July 2, 2018, resulting in a 60-day comment period, 15 days longer than the required 45-day comment period for EISs. The National Park Service received several requests for the comment period to be extended. However, because of the issuance of Secretarial Order 3355: *Streamlining National Environmental Policy Act Reviews and Implementation of Executive Order 13807*, “Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects,” which requires all in-progress EISs be completed by April 27, 2019, the National Park Service chose not to extend the comment period.

The National Park Service held three open houses between Sunday, May 27 and Wednesday, May 30, 2018 in the following locations: the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area; Ridgecrest, California; and Bishop, California. Additionally, the National Park Service conducted an online webinar on May 31, 2018. The meetings and webinar were announced through a press release, Facebook post, email, and on the PEPC website on May 4, 2018, providing advance notice of these meetings and webinar. There were 140 attendees at the open house meetings and 34 people that attended the webinar.

The public was encouraged to submit their comments on the draft plan/EIS as stated for public scoping. The National Park Service received 382 pieces of correspondence, which resulted in 789 substantive

comments. Topics that rose to importance for many commenters included the management of the palm trees and lawn, the burro exclusion fencing, the permit and fee system, the removal of the NPS automobile repair facility, the cooperative agreement with the Tribe, art and other aspects of cultural resources, and the camping restrictions.

PREPARATION OF THE FINAL PLAN/EIS

The National Park Service is required to respond to the substantive comments on the draft plan/EIS captured in concern statements. The National Park Service carefully considered the overarching public comments when determining where to make changes to the plan/EIS. Some points were clarified in the final plan/EIS to ensure that the public fully understands the elements (e.g., camping zones, management of the palm trees). However, other elements of the preferred alternative were changed solely based on the public comments. Instead of issuing overnight camping permits, the National Park Service would conduct visitor use surveys to gather information on visitor use trends and impacts. (It should be noted that as a developed backcountry campground, the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area is subject to management changes, such as implementation of overnight camping permits and fees, that would affect all developed backcountry campgrounds in the park.) The public commented with the need to retain the lawn at Lower Spring as a gathering place. Due to this and the inclusion of the lawn as a contributing element of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site, the National Park Service would retain the lawn, but it must be maintained in its current footprint. The public was concerned about the impacts from large scale fencing, as described in the draft plan/EIS. Due to this and the agreement with Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue (in a process separate from this plan/EIS) to round up and remove 2,500 feral burros from Death Valley National Park, the National Park Service would only install fencing around the source springs to protect the water quality, as described for alternative 2. Commenters disagreed with the removal of all non-historic art and the prohibition of new art in non-wilderness, saying that some of the art is historic despite being less than 50 years old, and that creating art is part of the cultural the Saline Valley Warm Springs Area experience. Therefore, the National Park Service would allow all art (as of January 31, 2019) to remain in non-wilderness areas and new art in non-wilderness areas would be allowed, as long as natural and cultural resources are not manipulated, the art is not a permanent fixture, and the art is removed from the site when the visitor creating the art leaves.

As with the preparation of the draft plan/EIS, the National Park Service cannot make some changes requested by the commenters because of the need to comply with state and federal regulations. The National Park Service would close the automobile repair facility when the current NPS camp host leaves or in 3 years, whichever comes first. Young palm trees would be removed and replaced by native species to provide shade when the existing mature palm trees die naturally. Camping zones would be established to prevent further damage to resources from off-road driving.

Commenters requested that the National Park Service delay finalizing the plan/EIS until after the cooperative agreement with the Tribe was completed and requested to be involved in the development of the cooperative agreement. The National Park Service is authorized to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Tribe by the Timbisha Shoshone Homeland Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-423). Development of the cooperative agreement would not be a public process and would not be subject to public comment, but the agreement would be a public document once complete. The National Park Service has engaged in government-to-government consultation regarding a cooperative agreement with the Tribe. This process is ongoing and is not expected to be completed before a record of decision is signed for this plan/EIS.

One change to the preferred alternative would be made based on suggestions by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. The National Park Service would install some type of subterranean system (e.g., leach field, septic system) for treating wastewater from the dishwashing stations. Additionally, the National Park Service has proposed a special regulation to allow the use of the Chicken Strip airstrip to

continue to be used. The proposed rule would authorize an exemption to 36 CFR 2.17(a)(1), which prohibits operation or use of an aircraft on lands or waters within national parks other than at locations designated pursuant to a special regulation. The modification would authorize the use of the Chicken Strip airstrip.

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ATTACHMENT C

Agency and Organization Correspondence

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AMARGOSA CONSERVANCY

July 2, 2018

Superintendent Mike Reynolds
Death Valley National Park
PO Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328

Via Electronic Transmission, Planning, Environmental and Public Planning Comment page

RE: Saline Warm Springs Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Superintendent Reynolds:

The Amargosa Conservancy, based in Shoshone, CA, is a small place-based conservation organization representing a few hundred members. Standing up for the wilds, waters and communities of the Amargosa Basin and Eastern Mojave is our mission. We understand that water is a precious thing in the desert and do what we can to be careful stewards of the approximately 1 million acres of the Amargosa River drainage basin and adjacent areas in CA and NV.

We thank you for the opportunity to participate in this process, as responsible management in one area of the desert encourages responsible management throughout the desert. The Organic Act of 1916 established the Park Service as an organization whose “purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” We understand it is a delicate balance in a delicate landscape to provide access and preserve the resource so that future generations have the same access that we are privileged enough to have. We hope our comments can be of use in meeting all objectives responsibly.

The call for comments asked for input in three areas: natural and cultural resources management, administrative operations, and managing visitor use. We will address each area.

Natural and Cultural Resource Management

There has to be a baseline to help inform management and consistent monitoring to know if there is an alteration in state. We recommend regular water quality sampling of the springs, especially looking for bacteria that could be harmful to visitors and/or wildlife. There should also be a monitoring procedure to determine if changes in human visitation are affecting the wildlife. Wildlife cameras could accomplish this objective if placed discreetly and in places that would not violate visitor privacy at the springs. We would also like to see biological and hydrological studies conducted to set a baseline of the resources that the hot spring area contains, and then a monitoring plan after the initial surveys have been completed.

We request that when altered conditions are found the park pursue restoration efforts. We would like to see restoration practices that are scientifically supported and informed by Traditional Ecological Knowledge from indigenous stewards of the land. Consultation with the Timbisha-Shoshone Tribe should be an integral part of any and all actions in Saline Valley. We cannot speak for the Tribe but encourage an agreement that facilitates tribal access to both the upper and lower springs for traditional uses. We understand that this might come in conflict with other users and suggest that compromise is sought, but recognize that tribal access may necessarily be exclusive access at certain times. It is important that the restoration of the natural and cultural (including living cultures with deep ancestral roots) be interpreted via signs and brochures to help all users understand actions informed by both the best science and

traditional values.

Invasive species should be a consideration and data point in all surveys. As far as the non-native vegetation, we again encourage multi-party meetings to determine actions that will benefit the land and the land users. However, we believe it is important, no matter what is decided for current areas, that areas that don't have exotic species remain pristine. The vegetation surveys will provide this information, and monitoring and maintenance can ensure it remains this way.

Burros in Death Valley National Park are an invasive species that require special attention. We commend the recent efforts of the Natural Resource staff in finding partners and management strategies to address this threat to other resources, especially fragile water resources and the isolated riparian oases they support. We heartily support the park's efforts to keep the burro population managed holistically throughout the park and not by fencing particular areas. Fencing areas to exclude burros is treating a symptom and not a cause. The Saline Valley and its resources are too broad an area to effectively micro-manage with fencing (and the constant maintenance that entails). Please keep up the work to keep this species out of the park and away from delicate resources.

The Saline Valley Warm Springs have a strong and unique modern cultural history. Visitors to the area experience a sub-culture that is unique to water holes of the western US deserts. People travel from all over the world to experience this bizarre and special little set of springs in a remote desert valley. This is a true expression of American culture, history, and values, and these cultural traditions and settings deserve acknowledgement and protection in their own right. While we understand that pristine areas ought to stay pristine, there is a well-developed footprint to the Saline Valley modern cultural area. Any management plan for the area should be considerate of the culture and historical uses of the springs - both modern and ancient. We request that the current footprint be honored and not whitewashed from the record. That the palm trees and "lawns" be allowed to stay. These areas are impacted, but also loved for what they have become. We fully support "freezing" the footprint and making sure it does not expand. We do not want to see these springs lose functionality - ecologically or traditionally, both ancient and modern.

Managing Visitor Use

As cities expand and people seek the quiet and peace of the desert, visitation to harsh, empty, beautiful areas increases. Park visitation sets a new record every year. Saline Valley visitation is no exception, except that there aren't survey data sets that reflect this. There need to be some basic systems in place to track visitor use - how many people actually visit the area? How many stay for a night? How many stay for longer? How much longer?

Disposing of waste in the desert is a difficult thing and we support efforts to manage food, trash, and human waste to avoid detrimental effects on wildlife. While wag bags are not usually thought of for front-country areas, they could be a very effective strategy in Saline Valley. We also recommend designated camping areas and fire pits, well-marked roads, and available maps for those who choose to explore Saline Valley. All of this would need to be accompanied by interpretive materials outlining the unique susceptibility of the desert to damage and the importance of Leave No Trace principles.

Administrative Operations

We acknowledge that no action takes place in a vacuum and all of the work to protect the natural and cultural resources and keep recreational uses sustainable has a cost to it. There would need to be resource staff to complete surveys and monitoring, interpretive staff to create materials and signage, and law enforcement staff (especially at first) to help explain and enforce changes. One strategy to help cover costs would be a self-serve pay station. Another might be Saline Valley specific merchandise at the gift shops.

Death Valley National Park also has a history of welcoming effective volunteer stewardship groups and working with the community in Saline Valley, these relationships and consultation with the Timbisha-Shoshone Tribe may provide the on-the-ground support needed to implement the actions necessary to keep Saline Valley “unimpaired for the use of future generations.”

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to include our voice in the future of such a valuable desert area. We appreciate the continued public outreach and ability to comment on the EIS. Please let us know if there is anything else we can provide to help achieve the objectives above.

Respectfully,

Tanya Henderson
Executive Director
Amargosa Conservancy

CC:
Mike Reynolds
Abigail Wines
Michelle Hamilton (Saline Preservation Association)
Chris Clarke & David Lamfrom (National Parks Conservation Association)

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

State of California - Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Inland Deserts Region
787 N. Main Street., Suite 220
Bishop, CA 93514
www.wildlife.ca.gov

June 26, 2018

Mike Reynolds, Superintendent
Death Valley National Park
Attn: Saline Valley Management Plan Comments
PO Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328

Subject: Draft Saline Valley Warm Springs Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Saline Valley Warm Springs Draft Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (Plan/EIS) prepared by Death Valley National Park (DVNP). The Plan/EIS assesses strategies for managing uses of the Saline Valley Warm Springs area by evaluating five potential alternatives ranging from no action, to restoration of the site to natural conditions with minimal recreational use.

CDFW owns the 520-acre Saline Valley Ecological Reserve located approximately seven miles southwest of the Plan/EIS area, and entirely within the boundaries of Death Valley National Park. This Ecological Reserve includes much of the seasonally dry salt lake, salt marsh, a spring, and upland habitats. The property is managed to provide optimal benefits for fish, wildlife, plants, and for the use and enjoyment of the public. Due to the adjacency of the Ecological Reserve to the National Park, and proximity to the Warm Springs project area, we share a number of management considerations that are discussed in the Plan/EIS and encourage continued coordination going forward.

CDFW appreciates the attention given to the need for control of nonnative vegetation and wildlife species. Of particular concern to CDFW are the impacts of feral burros, particularly within sensitive riparian and wetland habitats in Saline Valley and adjacent canyons, including habitat for the Inyo Mountains slender salamander. CDFW supports efforts by DVNP to achieve the stated “no burro or wild horse” goal. Until that goal is met, CDFW would like to encourage DVNP to repair the burro enclosure fence surrounding the spring and marsh located on federal lands which at the present time is in very poor repair and not serving its intended function. CDFW may be able to assist such work by providing staff time or materials towards the project.

The aggressive invasive woody plant species Tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*) has been the focus of many years of cooperative management efforts with CDFW, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Lake Meade Exotic Plant Management Team, and DVNP. Tamarisk provides lower wildlife habitat value and can displace native vegetation through a number of mechanisms including increased fire danger and increased soil salinity. Tamarisk infestations are particularly damaging to wetlands such as those present on the Ecological Reserve due to the plant's ability to quickly outcompete native vegetation, high

water consumption, and establish deep roots altering groundwater levels. CDFW would like to encourage continued management efforts to eradicate this species at known locations and surveys to detect new populations.

As public visitation to Death Valley National Park continues to increase, the impacts of recreational users have become more pronounced as well. Specifically, an increase in user created fire rings, off road vehicle travel, and trash have been noted at the Ecological Reserve. In 2013 a wildfire started when a vehicle overheated after becoming disabled, ultimately burning 11 acres on both DVNP and CDFW lands including much of the sensitive salt marsh area. CDFW encourages DVNP to increase efforts to provide visitor education designed to minimize these types of user impacts.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Plan/EIS. Please contact Alisa Ellsworth, Acting Environmental Program Manager with questions regarding this letter at (760) 872-1173 or Alisa.Ellsworth@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,
Alisa Ellsworth
Environmental Program Manager (Acting)
Inland Deserts Region

cc: CHRON

CALIFORNIA FOUR WHEEL DRIVE ASSOCIATION

July 1, 2018

Mr. Mike Reynolds
Superintendent, Death Valley National Park Service (NPS)
P.O. Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328

Dear Superintendent Reynolds:

These comments are submitted on behalf of the California 4 Wheel Drive Association (Cal4Wheel) and its membership. Cal4Wheel represents clubs and individuals within the state of California that are part of the community of four-wheel drive enthusiasts. These comments are directed to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Draft Management Plan and EIS. This document shall not supplant the rights of other Cal4Wheel agents and organizational or individual members from submitting their own comments and the agency should consider and appropriately respond to all comments received to this Draft Management Plan and EIS.

While the main focus of Cal4Wheel is to protect, promote, and provide for motorized recreation opportunities on public and private lands, many of our members participate in multiple forms of recreation; including but not limited to hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, horseback riding, bicycle riding, and gem and mineral collection.

We recognize the positive health and social benefits that can be achieved through outdoor activities. We also recognize that motorized recreation provides the small business owners in the local communities a significant financial stimulus. And, our members are directly affected by management decisions concerning public land use.

Our members subscribe to the concepts of: 1) public access to public lands for their children and grandchildren; 2) condition and safety of the environment; and 3) sharing our natural heritage. The general public desires access to public lands now and for future generations. Limiting access today deprives our children the opportunity to view the many natural wonders of public lands. The general public is deeply concerned about the condition of the environment and personal safety. They desire wildlife available for viewing and scenic vistas to enjoy. They also want to feel safe while enjoying these natural wonders. Lastly, the public desires to share the natural heritage with friends and family today as well as in the future. How can our children learn and appreciate our natural heritage when native species are allowed to deteriorate and historic routes are routinely blocked or eradicated from existence?

Cal4Wheel supports the concept of managed recreation and believes it is prudent and appropriate management to identify areas where off-highway vehicle use is appropriate. Such use must be consistent with the public lands management plans, the Plan Standards, and all other requirements found in the Plans, as well as state and federal regulations. Recreation, especially recreation off of paved or gravel roads, is the leading growth in visitors to public lands. Improvements in the planning processes help minimize conflicts and potential resource damage while providing for recreation access to public lands.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Protection Act at 42 United States Code section 4371 et. seq. ("NEPA") and its implementing regulations, including 40 Code of Federal Regulations section 1501.7 and 1508.25, this letter is submitted for consideration to determine the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts that require in-depth analysis in the Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS"). The comments are extensive, but the complexity and importance of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Draft Management Plan

and EIS compel a thorough review of the potential environmental consequences associated with implementation of the project as proposed.

As you know, the Management Plan/EIS for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Draft Management Plan and EIS must comply with the provisions of the NEPA and its implementing regulations. Those regulations expressly provide that the Scoping must evaluate direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, as well as alternatives to the proposed project that “...would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment.” 40 C.F.R. Â§1502.1, 1508.25 (b)(2) and (c).

Cal4Wheel believes the proposed Plan should be in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Management Plan/EIS has Alternatives in regard to the proposed NPS management of Saline Valley. Alternative 5 is considered by NPS to be the “preferred alternative”. The NPS stated in their Information Meeting that Alternative 5 was an option and that other Alternatives may be considered. Cal4Wheel believes, many of the proposed issues in Alternative 5 would have an adverse impact to the unique recreational, social, ethnic-historic and cultural experience of Saline Valley. Cal4Wheel seeks to preserve the unusual degree of magic, freedom and ownership people feel when visiting Saline Valley.

Listing for Historic Preservation

The Historical Section of the Draft Management Plan/EIS notes that: “As of September 2017, consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), tribes, and the public are ongoing; however, the park is treating the Saline Valley Warm Springs Site as eligible for listing in the NRHP, as previously stated. The historic DOE also recommended that a Cultural Landscape Inventory and possibly a Cultural Landscape Report be prepared for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site (New South 2015),” (page 62).

Cal4Wheel strongly encourages the NPS to wait until a Cultural Landscape Inventory and Report are prepared, and determination is made about formal status under NRHP, before finalizing the Draft Management Plan/EIS. Many of the components of Alternative 5 specify plans to remove those very features that are core to the cultural experience of what exists today, and upon which such a determination rests.

Feral Burros and Proposed Fencing

Cal4Wheel shares the concerns stated in the Draft Management Plan/EIS about the feral burros. However, we believe that this problem can be successfully done WITHOUT the need for an expensive fence around the entire area. Cal4Wheel supports artistic fencing around the source pools and settling pond, Alternative 2. Rather than removing the Burro Spring and killing the native mesquite trees, Cal4Wheel would install a heavy screen over the Burro Spring trough, leaving the siphon hose in to water the mesquite. This would effectively keep most water sources away from the burros. Cal4Wheel does not want to put fencing around the tubs themselves as proposed in Alternative 3 as that would take away from the “Saline Experience”.

Additionally, Cal4Wheel feels that fencing the entire area as proposed in Alternative 5, would harm native non-burro wildlife. The fence would also be subject to possible vandalism, not to mention flash flooding, which would leave dangerous fence debris in the environment. This could create a long term hazard if NPS lacked funding to adequately remove and/or maintain the fence. NPS stated during informational meetings, the difficulty of acquiring maintenance funding. The addition of the fences as proposed in Alternative 5 will become a maintenance resource drain.

To keep people from feeding the burros, Cal4Wheel recommends an aggressive educational campaign, similar to other educational campaigns concerning feeding the bears in other NPS managed areas.

Cal4Wheel urges the NPS to give a priority to relocating/removing the habituated burros at the Warm Springs. Feral burros elsewhere in Saline Valley are not habituated and avoid humans.

Non Native Vegetation

Cal4Wheel opposes the removal of the lawn and palm trees. Cal4Wheel agrees the palm trees and lawn are nonnative, but they are NOT invasive as they are confined to the “cared for” location. While the palms may not be native to this area, they are naturalized and are present in desert regions across California, (and in fact are an integral visual aspect of the NPS Furnace Creek Visitor's Center. The Draft Management Plan / IES (page 81) attempts to compare containing the spread of palm trees to containing the spread of salt cedar (tamarisk). Tamarisks are invasive, and should be removed. Palm trees are containable.

The lawn is a central gathering place for the users of the Warm Springs. It is the heart for socializing, potlucks, sharing road and other safety information, educating new visitors about the warm springs, and other important connections. The lawn provides major benefits and will not spread, because there is no water elsewhere. The lawn and palm trees are clearly part of the ethnic-historic experience of Saline Valley.

Cal4Wheel would propose a program monitoring palm tree development in Saline Valley and would eradicate those trees if they were to be discovered in other parts of Saline Valley. Cal4Wheel would also apply the same attention to the lawn. Cal4Wheel is not opposed to the removal of the palm trees at what NPS refers to as the upper fenced springs and strongly supports the removal of tamarisk.

Camping Permits

Cal4Wheel is strongly opposed to the proposed requirement of a permit prior to arriving at the Saline Valley. During the NPS Informational meetings it was said there was not a specific permitting plan. There are too many unanswered questions, including: who will enforce this permitting system, who will administer the permits, how to obtain them and do they meet basic cost-benefit analysis.

If a permit system is implemented, Cal4Wheel requests permits be free, easily accessible online, and onsite for the visitors of the Saline Valley that come out and decide to stay or those that plan their vacation around visiting Saline Valley.

Camping Areas

Cal4Wheel strongly supports Camping Areas in Alternative 2, unrestricted dispersed camping areas and strongly opposes designated camping. Currently campers chose sites when they arrive based on site-specific needs, the weather and wind conditions, their particular vehicle type, and accessibility to various amenities such as pools or lawn. Cal4Wheel supports defining camping boundaries, but assigning campsites is not workable.

Cal4Wheel is opposed to the increasing the distance from camping 100 feet to 200 feet from the source springs. Current NPS rule of, “no camping within 100 feet of a source springs” should remain the adopted policy.

Campfires

Cal4Wheel supports the NPS Campfires section, as proposed in Alternative 3 NPS-provided fire enclosures, grates, grills or fire pans. Given a choice of the aforementioned, Cal4Wheel supports non-anchored, heavy NPS fire pits. Additionally, the presence or absence of a provided fire-pit should not be equated to de-facto “designated” camping spots.

Toilet Management

Cal4Wheel supports the Toilet Management section as proposed in Alternative 3 requiring the pumping of vault toilets on an “as needed” basis. Cal4Wheel also highly recommends the addition of another vault toilet at the Palm Springs.

Vehicle Assistance

Cal4Wheel would propose this alternative be changed to Emergency Vehicle Assistance and remain during the tenure of the current camp host. Cal4Wheel would encourage the NPS to clearly post signage at the end of pavement that there is no emergency vehicle assistance beyond this point and high-clearance/four wheel drive recommended beyond this point

Dishwashing Stations

Cal4Wheel supports dishwashing stations. However, we feel the need for filters to be unnecessary as filters do not address any issues brought up in the management plan. Cal4Wheel supports signage warning visitors the dishwashing water is non-potable. Cal4Wheel will encourage the use of biodegradable dishwashing liquids. Additionally, the presence or absence of a provided dishwashing station should not be equated to de-facto “designated” camping spots.

Co-Management with Timbisha Shoshone

Cal4Wheel understands the NPS and Timbisha Shoshone are working on a co-management plan. NPS stated at four Informational Meetings held over the last week of May that the co-management plan would not supersede the Draft Management Plan/EIS. Neither Cal4Wheel nor any Cal4Wheel member has been included in the co-management plan and its content, scope, and/or interaction within the Draft Management Plan/EIS. Therefore, it's difficult to comment on this issue. The Draft Management Plan/EIS states,

“The waters of the warm springs in Saline Valley are a source of *puha* for the Tribe, a life force energy.”

Within this context, Cal4Wheel supports Nonnative vegetation section of Alternative 3, only as it pertains to the upper springs. This would return the Upper Springs to its natural state. This might allow traditional use of the Upper Springs by the Tribe.

In Summary

In closing, the proposed scoping must evaluate the initial intent based on current factors and not rest on the assumption that past factors and their impacts are current today. Careful consideration must be given to the cumulative impacts on public access and recreation opportunity in the region in addition to the cumulative impacts of the continued loss of recreation opportunity in the region.

Cal4Wheel encourages the NPS to embrace the public policy underlying NEPA which favors protecting

the balance between humans and the environment by establishing a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment.

The agency has a responsibility to consider reasonable alternatives that would not only protect the species and their environment, but would also minimize the adverse impact on humans and the human environment.

The Management Plan/EIS has four Alternatives in regard to the proposed NPS management of Saline Valley. Alternative 5 is considered by NPS to be the “preferred alternative”. The NPS stated in their Information Meeting that Alternative 5 was an option and that other Alternatives may be considered. Cal4Wheel believes, many of the proposed issues in Alternative 5 would have an adverse impact to the unique recreational, social, ethnic-historic and cultural experience of Saline Valley. Cal4Wheel seeks to preserve the unusual degree of magic, freedom and ownership people feel when visiting Saline Valley.

Alternative 5, as modified by comments within this letter, provides for continued access in a manner that balances the needs of all desert users, local communities, and other public agencies, by focusing on implementation strategies that promote and support active partnerships. The alternative responds to concerns and provides guidance to minimize damage to resources, minimize harassment of wildlife, and minimize conflicts consistent with increased emphasis on current and historic use patterns, destinations, issues, and plans, where appropriate.

Cal4Wheel believes that cumulative effects of other planning efforts within and adjacent to the proposed planning area be determined and analyzed as part of the cumulative effects impacting the planning area.

The agency has a responsibility to disclose and analyze reasonable alternatives that would identify the impact of human actions on the environment. As part of that analysis, current literature review is an important tool. The study, Quiet, Nonconsumptive Recreation Reduces Protected Area Effectiveness, Sarah E. Reed¹ & Adina M. Merenlender from Department of Environmental Science, Policy & Management, University of California, Berkeley, CA, USA provides a review of protected areas around the world that were created with the goals of preserving biodiversity and providing nature-based recreation opportunities for millions of people. This dual mandate has guided the management of the majority of the world's protected areas, but there is growing evidence that quiet, non-consumptive recreation may not be compatible with biodiversity protection.

Cal4Wheel appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important plan. We are eager to assist land managers to formulate balanced and enforceable land use plans and we hope these comments have been helpful in beginning your journey. We understand comments such as these are not as clear or concise as they could be. Please do not hesitate to contact John Stewart, (619) 508-8840 if you have any questions or require clarification.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Stewart
Natural Resources Consultant
California 4 Wheel Drive Association

FRIENDS OF THE INYO

July 2, 2018

Mr. Mike Reynolds
Superintendent, Death Valley National Park Service
P.O. Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328

Re: Saline Warm Springs Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Superintendent Reynolds:

Friends of the Inyo is a Bishop, CA based grassroots conservation organization with over three decades of experience with public lands and wildlife in the Eastern Sierra and west Mojave within Inyo and Mono Counties. We represent over 800 members, many of who reside in the Eastern Sierra and recreate regularly in Saline Valley. An active stewardship partner with the Park, we recruit volunteers and carry out work such as the effacement of vehicle trespass at the Racetrack. We have a shared mission with the Park Service to advocate for natural resources management and sustainable recreation in remote areas of the park such as Saline Valley.

Timbisha-Shoshone

The Saline Valley Warm Springs have become an important place for many different people. Friends of the Inyo recommends that any management plan include reasonable access to the springs for the native population of the region. This community's cultural, spiritual, and practical connections to this area span millennia rather than decades. Friends of the Inyo has a long-standing relationship with the Timbisha-Shoshone tribe. While we of course cannot speak for the tribe, we know from discussions with tribal staff and members that the springs are culturally important to the tribe. We also understand that it is a priority of the Park to address traditional usage at the springs. Unfortunately the current user group culture is sometimes at odds with traditional Timbisha Shoshone uses of the springs. To address this unfair situation, we recommend managers consult with the Timbisha-Shoshone Tribe when making decisions regarding restoration of the upper springs. We encourage an agreement that facilitates tribal access to both the upper and lower springs and advise that to achieve this it may be necessary to close the springs to general public use at certain times of the year. We request the tribe be an integral part of the planning process and their use and connection to this important site be recognized and incorporated. Education and outreach to the general public of this issue and the history of springs should also be incorporated in the management plan.

Non-native Species Management

We understand the issue of non-native species such as planted grass and palm trees is a divisive one among the public and subject to interpretation of historical significance. The park must manage invasive species to be consistent with natural resource management prescriptions and objectives, however care should be taken to incorporate recreation and visitor experience. Particularly with respect to the existing palm trees, we do not recommend replacing them with cottonwood trees. Cottonwoods require ongoing and regular maintenance and are short-lived species, both of which will place financial burden on an already lean Park budget. There is also a liability issue with cottonwoods as they shed branches and limbs over time. A complete inventory of other invasive species in the area and an assessment of whether or not palms are negatively impacting the springs should be conducted. If consistent with tribal wishes, the palms at the upper springs should be removed to help restore those springs to their natural condition. Regardless of the park's course of action on non-native species, the EIS must clearly explain what actions will take place, with what methods, along with a timeline and follow up monitoring.

Burro Management

We commend the Park for their efforts on Burro management and the Park's acknowledgment that the population at the springs needs to be addressed. We support the timely implementation of gatherings and follow up monitoring. It does not seem financially feasible to fence the entire recreational area of the springs and park resources are likely better spent in other areas of management of the springs. The situation with the current host feeding burros must be remedied immediately to facilitate effective burro management.

Recreation Management

Due to the extreme popularity and increasing use of the springs, a visitor use study is needed to document how many people actually visit and camp, and how long they stay. We support efforts to manage human waste, food, and trash storage to avoid wildlife interactions. At Chicken Strip we suggest visitors pack out human waste or use wag bags. We remain concerned that visitor use is at a critical level now with many visitors staying past required time limits, creating overcrowding of campsites and overuse of associated facilities. A mandatory permit system would be ill advised given the site's remoteness, however a sign-in log should be maintained and hosts should check for a Park pass. It may be possible to implement a self-serve pay station in the future to help cover management costs. We recommend designated camping areas delineated by roads and signposts with maps and other user education targeted at regulatory, health & safety, compliance and Leave No Trace practices. These would include NPS sanctioned fire pits with host enforcement of no new individual fire rings or campsites.

Volunteer stewardship groups do an excellent job of caring for the springs and surrounding area but park managers must oversee, enforce and partner to limit growth, impact, and harm to wildlife, vegetation and other natural resources. Law enforcement presence may be necessary on busy holidays and weekends. We also recommend that no commercial activities take place within the valley.

We thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the EIS and for your continued public outreach on this important management plan. Please reach out to us if we can be of any assistance in the planning process or with implementation of the plan.

Respectfully,

Jora Fogg
Policy Director
Friends of the Inyo

INYO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

June 26, 2018

Saline Valley Management Plan
Mike Reynolds, Superintendent Death Valley National Park
PO Box 579
Death Valley, CA 923282

Dear Superintendent Reynolds,

The Inyo County Board of Supervisors would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Saline Valley Management Plan and accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Statement. We believe that Saline Valley Warm Springs is a unique and special place with cultural importance to Inyo County. We have encouraged Death Valley National Park (DVNP) to keep it as such throughout this planning process by requesting as little change to it as possible.

We have reviewed the draft documents and respectfully submit the following comments.

â€¢ We are in support of the Preferred Alternative and appreciate DVNPs attention to concerns we submitted on the previous Saline Valley Management Alternatives Newsletter including:

- o Retaining the dishwashing stations, with the addition of filtration systems to capture food debris.
- o Consulting with the Office of Public Health regarding an approach to water quality monitoring.
- o Clarifying what constitutes historic/non-historic artwork and adding that artwork will be reconsidered for historic and/or culturally important designations as it hits the 50-year age requirement.
- o Allowing for the continued use and maintenance of the Chicken Strip.

â€¢ We encourage you to consult with the County Environmental Health Department on waste water management practices and water quality monitoring approaches.

â€¢ A more in depth analysis of the cultural significance of the artwork at the warm spring's site and the area surrounding it should be conducted, with regard to its importance as examples of "hippie" art, and in defining the warm springs as a special place with connections to the 'hippie' and 'beat' movements.

â€¢ The Preferred Alternative should be changed to include, at the least, a pared down version of the auto repair shop that can offer simple services such as tire repair and replacement and emergency fuel provision. Although we agree that people should understand the environment they are entering when they chose to go to the Saline Valley and be prepared for it, we also know that mishaps and accidents can still happen. Since the area is utterly remote, a small mishap or accident can have severe consequences, therefore, at least some services are appropriate.

APPENDICES

Any proposed fencing should be constructed to blend into the surrounding landscape and not cause visual impacts to the visitor experience at the warm springs.

We encourage you to keep the lawn at the lower springs' area as it is unlikely it will spread into other areas due to the lack of water; or, to find a native grass species with similar traits to replace it.

As the palm trees at the lower spring die off, instead of waiting for natural revegetation, plant a native tree species to replace them for the shade that they provide in the area.

Again, we would like to extend our thanks to Death Valley National Park for providing the County the opportunity to comment on the Draft Saline Valley Management Plan and DEIS.

Sincerely,

Dan Totheroh, Chairperson,
Inyo County Board of Supervisors

LAHONTAN REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD

Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Draft Management Plan, Death Valley National Park, Inyo County

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Lahontan Region (Water Board) staff received a Notice for a Public Scoping Meeting for developing an Environmental Impact Statement for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Draft Management Plan (EIS) for the above-referenced plan (Plan) on May 7, 2018. The Death Valley National Park Service is lead agency under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, California Code of Regulations (CCR), title 14, section 15096, responsible agencies must specify the scope and content of the environmental information germane to their statutory responsibilities. Water Board staff, acting as a responsible agency, has prepared these comments to help guide the environmental review process in an effort to protect water quality and hydrological resources, and ultimately, the beneficial uses of waters of the State. We encourage Death Valley National Park to take this opportunity to integrate elements into the Plan that: (1) support “Low Impact Development” (LID); and (2) reduce the effects of hydromodification. Our comments are outlined below.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Saline Valley Warm Springs Draft Management Plan is an overarching policy document that will guide decisions of future growth and development, infrastructure, and conservation of natural resources in the Saline Valley at Death Valley National Park. Given the conceptual, long-term nature of the plan, the EIS provides a general overview of the potential impacts of proposed alternatives; subsequent and focused environmental review will occur as individual projects are proposed to implement elements of the Plan.

WATER BOARD'S AUTHORITY

All groundwater and surface waters are considered waters of the State. Surface waters include streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands, and may be ephemeral, intermittent, or perennial. All waters of the State are protected under California law. State law assigns responsibility for protection of water quality in the Lahontan Region to the Lahontan Water Board. Some waters of the State are also waters of the U.S. The Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) provides additional protection for those waters of the State that are also waters of the U.S.

The Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region (Basin Plan) contains policies that the Water Board uses with other laws and regulations to protect the quality of waters of the State within the Lahontan Region. The Basin Plan sets forth water quality standards for surface water and groundwater of the Region, which include designated beneficial uses as well as narrative and numerical objectives which must be maintained or attained to protect those uses. The Basin Plan can be accessed via the Water Board's web site at

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water_issues/programs/basin_plan/references.shtml.

RECOMMENDED ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE IN THE PLAN

We recognize the effort put forth by Death Valley National Park to incorporate policies and objectives of watershed management into one comprehensive programmatic Plan for the Saline Valley Warm Springs. We encourage Death Valley National Park to take this opportunity and incorporate into the Plan elements and strategies that support LID and reduce the effects of hydromodification.

1. The foremost method of reducing impacts to watersheds from development is LID, the goals of which are maintaining a landscape functionally equivalent to predevelopment hydrologic conditions and minimal generation of non-point source pollutants. LID results in less surface runoff and potentially less impacts to receiving waters, the principles of which include:

• Maintaining natural drainage paths and landscape features to slow and filter runoff and maximize groundwater recharge;

• Reducing compacted and impervious cover created by development and the associated road network; and

• Managing runoff as close to the source as possible.

LID development practices that maintain aquatic values also reduce maintenance costs and benefit air quality, open space, and habitat. Vegetated areas for storm water management and infiltration onsite are valuable in LID. We encourage Death Valley National Park to incorporate these strategies into the Plan.

2. Hydromodification is the alteration of the natural flow of water through a landscape (i.e. lining channels, flow diversions, culvert installations, armoring, etc.). Disturbing and compacting soils, changing or removing the vegetation cover, increasing impervious surfaces, and altering drainage patterns limit the natural hydrologic cycle processes of absorption, infiltration, and evapotranspiration, and increases the volume and frequency of runoff and sediment transport. Hydromodification results in stream channel instability, degraded water quality, changes in groundwater recharge processes, and aquatic habitat impacts. Hydromodification also can result in disconnecting a stream channel from its floodplain. Floodplain areas provide natural recharge, attenuate flood flows, provide habitat, and filter pollutants from urban runoff. Floodplain areas also store and release sediment, one of the essential processes to maintain the health of the watershed. Information regarding hydromodification can be accessed online at http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/stormwater/hydromodification.shtml.

We encourage Death Valley National Park to establish guidelines and develop mitigation measures that will help to avoid hydromodification. The guidelines should include maintaining natural drainage paths of streams and creeks and establishing buffers and setback requirements to protect channels, wetlands, and floodplain areas from encroaching development.

3. In addition to utilizing LID methods and preventing hydromodification, we encourage Death Valley National Park to separate municipal wastewater (shower, bathtub, dish washing sink, and camp host shower) from other waters and to discharge the municipal wastewater into a separate septic system.

PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

A number of activities that will be implemented by individual projects under the Plan have the potential to impact waters of the State and, therefore, may require permits issued by either the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) or Lahontan Water Board. The required permits may include the following.

1. Streambed alteration and/or discharge of dredge and/or fill material to a surface water, including water diversions, may require a CWA, section 401 water quality certification for impacts to federal waters (waters of the U.S.), or dredge and fill WDRs for impacts to non-federal waters, both issued by the Lahontan Water Board.

2. Land disturbance of more than 1 acre may require a CWA, section 402(p) storm water permit, including a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Construction Storm

Water Permit, Water Quality Order (WQO) 2009-0009-DWQ, obtained from the State Water Board, or an individual storm water permit obtained from the Lahontan Water Board.

3. Water diversion and/or dewatering activities may be subject to discharge and monitoring requirements under either NPDES General Permit, Limited Threat Discharges to Surface Waters, Board Order R6T-2014-0049, or General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges to Land with a Low Threat to Water Quality, WQO-2003-0003, both issued by the Lahontan Water Board.

Project proponents should consult with Water Board staff early on should implementation of individual projects result in activities that trigger these permitting actions. Information regarding these permits, including application forms, can be downloaded from our web site at <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/>.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft EIS. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me at (760) 241-7305 tiffany.steinert@waterboards.ca.gov or Jan Zimmerman, Senior Engineering Geologist, at (760) 241-7376 Jan.zimmerman@waterboards.ca.gov. Please send all future correspondence regarding this Project to the Water Board's email address at Lahontan@waterboards.ca.gov and be sure to include the Project name in the subject line.

Tiffany Steinert
Engineering Geologist

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Monday, July 2, 2018

Superintendent Mike Reynolds
Death Valley National Park
P.O. Box 579,
Death Valley, CA 92328

Superintendent Reynolds;

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments on behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) on the Saline Valley Warm Springs Management Plan EIS for Death Valley National Park.

NPCA is America's only private, non-profit advocacy organization solely dedicated to protecting and enhancing America's national parks. NPCA was founded in 1919 and today has over 1,000,000 members and active supporters, including more than 100,000 in California and Nevada. We have two field offices in the California desert that work to protect the natural and cultural resources of Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park, Sand to Snow and Mojave Trails national monuments, and the Mojave National Preserve.

We resubmit our original comments from August 7, 2012 for consideration, as they are still applicable to this process. Death Valley National Park is required through the Organic Act, its enabling legislation, and its management documents to preserve unimpaired this unparalleled landscape and the life and resources found here for future generations. All management decisions made in the unique and beautiful Saline Valley must be primarily viewed through the lens of how to best protect this timeless landscape into the future.

We ask that park managers consider our previous comments as NPCA's substantial contribution to this process, but we are writing this letter to highlight some key points we want to reinforce.

- We request that park managers move forward on the restoration of the upper springs, and to consult with the Timbisha-Shoshone Tribe on their participation in restoration, and potentially for limiting access to the upper spring to allow for tribal uses. If the tribe determines they want access to the lower hot springs, a conversation about how that can happen should move forward. NPCA does not speak for the tribe, nor do we here presume to represent their thoughts on this issue. However, we understand that Saline Valley, including the spring system, holds importance to the Tribe and we request that they be brought in fully to develop a plan for their use and connection to this important site. The Saline Valley Warm Springs have become an important place for various communities who have a long and meaningful connection to this place. That connection must not exclude the original inhabitants of this region, whose cultural, spiritual, and practical connections to the Warm Springs span millennia rather than decades.

- We request that park managers significantly increase their efforts to manage invasive species throughout the valley. Burros, palm trees, and other invasive plants must be effectively managed. We recognize that the palm trees are perceived to be a part of the historic landscape and, on a very practical level, are important for shade. We encourage park managers to look at practical solutions like replacing palms with cottonwood trees, or at minimum, starting a volunteer program to monitor springs in the region to ensure invasive species are not spreading from the site. Burros are becoming an increasingly serious issue across the California desert, and park managers should introduce a park-wide strategy to deal with feral burros,

including those that frequent the area of the springs. We believe palms at the upper springs should be removed to help restore those springs to their natural condition.

- The National Park Service should implement studies and analysis to understand visitation at Saline Valley overall. No one really knows how many people visit, camp, or use the various facilities at the springs. There is thus an insufficient understanding of the true impacts of status quo practices. A food and waste management plan should be implemented to avoid training coyotes and other species to depend on human food and trash. The disturbance footprint of the site will continue to grow if the true scope of visitation is not understood. We recommend that park managers develop a plan to address future site disturbance and future visitation. This has the potential to become unmanageable in the future if left unchecked. There are advantages to having a self-regulating community that effectively cares for the site. Park managers can work in partnership with this community to limit growth, impact, and harm to wildlife, and the site.

- We also recommend that no commercial activities take place within the valley.

Thank you for your consideration. We are happy to further discuss any of the issues raised in this letter or our previous letter.

Sincerely,

David Lamfrom
California Desert and Wildlife Programs Director
National Parks Conservation Association
dlamfrom@npca.org

August 4, 2012

Superintendent Sarah Craighead
Death Valley National Park
PO Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328

This letter is intended to provide stakeholder input on the Death Valley National Park Saline Valley Warm Springs Management Plan EIS. National Parks Conservation Association's (NPCA) comments are public and intended to ensure that this process implements mission-driven and stakeholder-inclusive action, while carefully considering, minimizing or eliminating impacts to natural and cultural resources that may result from actions taken. Comments are being submitted to comply with the review period ending August 7, 2012.

NPCA is dedicated to the protection and enhancement of National Parks for current and future generations. NPCA currently has membership and support of over 700,000 individuals including 100,000 individuals in California. NPCA strives to uphold the protections provided to the resources and recreational opportunities within and directly affecting Death Valley National Park by law through the California Desert Protection Act of 1994, National Parks Organic Act of 1916, and the Endangered Species Act. NPCA currently manages three field offices in the Mojave Desert, including the Mojave Field Office in Barstow, CA and the Joshua Tree Field Office in Joshua Tree, CA.

Decisions made by Death Valley National Park must be consistent with its stated mission to protect resources unimpaired for future generations. Within that framework, Death Valley must provide

recreational access and promote safety, within reason and to the extent that those decisions do not impair natural and cultural resources. Saline Valley Warm Springs were added to Death Valley in the 1994 California Desert Protection Act. Due to their remote and beautiful location, these springs have gained a following of dedicated bathers and adventure travelers who negotiate difficult dirt roads to enjoy the deep quiet, brilliant night skies, and landscape-level views uniquely afforded by these manipulated warm to hot springs. The popularity of these springs is well-known, and groups have arisen to protect access to them and to connect new users to this resource.

NPCA understands and respects the value of this location to those who use it. This unique resource is also valuable to the Timbisha Shoshone tribe, who has a cultural connection to lands now protected within Death Valley National Park, and to the springs specifically. Also, these water sources could be important to local species and could harbor harmful bacteria known from other hot and warm springs in the Mojave desert. Death Valley is presented with the difficult job of balancing recreation, access, cultural use, and natural resource protection in a location that includes manipulated water sources, buildings, roads, parking, and an air strip. Within that context, NPCA recommends the following:

- Death Valley works in partnership with local groups to understand the usage of this remote resource. Questions arise such as: how many people use these springs? Are they purchasing park passes to visit? Does the park or groups on site assume any liability for visitors? Is there a carrying capacity for visitation to this site? And what uses are appropriate (i.e. RV vs. tent camping?)
- Death Valley regularly samples the springs for harmful bacteria. If a safety issue is present, it is incumbent upon the park to ensure that notification is posted.
- Death Valley strategically place wildlife cameras in areas surrounding the springs. This is not intended to violate privacy, and these could be placed away from the springs to determine if springs are being used by both people and wildlife. A survey of springs and seeps in the vicinity of this site should be part of any analysis, as the proximity of alternate water sources directly correlates with its importance to species that reside in or travel through this area.
- Death Valley provides access for Timbisha Shoshone tribal members to the springs for cultural uses-if requested by the tribe. Ideally dates could be planned in advance to provide notification to other users. Alternately, dates could be chosen in partnership with the tribe and could correspond to dates of cultural significance.
- Death Valley conducts biological and hydrological surveys in the areas to identify sensitive species, important corridors, and baseline flow data. Identification can protect these resources from unintended damage. After these surveys are completed, alternatives developed should indicate to the public how the park intends to protect resources and water flow while allowing continued access.
- Death Valley examines the current footprint of this recreational site and determines if it is being utilized in the best possible way. Should parking be restricted? Should camping take place only in designated areas? Is the air strip safe, of reasonable size, and does it impact visitor experience?

NPCA appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on this process. We encourage the park to develop and present to the public an EIS that examines existing infrastructure and its condition, an understanding of natural resources on site and adjacent, an examination of liability, an understanding of current visitation and proposed future visitation, consultation with the Timbisha Shoshone, and any safety issues that may be present. NPCA does not seek to inhibit access to this site, but we do ask Death Valley to carefully consider and present alternatives that do not expand existing infrastructure and that protect important resources consistent with the park's creation.

Feel free to reach out with any questions,

Respectfully,

David Lamfrom
California Desert Program Manager
National Parks Conservation Association

SALINE PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

Saline Preservation Association (SPA)
P.O. Box 1941
Lancaster, CA. 93539-1941
www.safineyreservation.org

June 15, 2018

Mr. Mike Reynolds
Superintendent, Death Valley National Park Service (NPS)
P.O. Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328

Dear Superintendent Reynolds:

The Saline Preservation Association (SPA) is a 503(c)(3) non-profit organization providing an informational conduit as well as advocacy between and among governing agencies and the widely diverse community who visit the Saline Valley and its Warm Springs. SPA is deeply committed to the preservation of the area as well as good relationship with concerned stakeholders. SPA has approximately 1,400 members, who visit Saline Valley from almost every state in the United States as well as international locations. Our organization is diverse with respect to race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry age, veteran status, disability and military service.

The SPA Board (7 elected members) has read the Draft Management Plan I Environment Impact Statement (EIS), attended all NPS Informational meetings, and vetted the following comments through the SPA membership. SPA commends the NPS recognizing Saline Valley Warm Springs Site as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), however the NPS should continue the current planning process until a Cultural Landscape Inventory and Report are prepared as recommended by the Determination of Eligibility (DOE).

The Draft Management Plan / EIS have 1 through 4 Alternatives in regard to the proposed NPS management of Saline Valley. Alternative 5 is considered by NPS to be the “preferred alternative”. The NPS stated in their Information Meeting that Alternative 5 was an option and that similar to the Draft Management Plan / EIS other Alternatives may be considered. SPA believes, many of the proposed issues in Alternative 5 would have an adverse impact to the unique recreational, social, ethno-historic and cultural experience of Saline Valley. SPA has created its own SPA Alternative (attached) that incorporates components of Alternatives 1, 2 and 3. SPA seeks to preserve the unusual degree of magic, freedom and ownership people feel when visiting Saline Valley. This directly correlates to contribution, self-sufficiency, and the desire to help out when things need to get done.

Listing for Historic Preservation

The Historical Section of the Draft Management Plan / EIS notes that: “As of September 2017, consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), tribes, and the public are ongoing; however, the park is treating the Saline Valley Warm Springs Site as eligible for listing in the NRHP, as previously stated. The historic DOE also recommended that a Cultural Landscape Inventory and possibly a Cultural Landscape Report be prepared for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site (New South 2015),”(page 62).

SPA strongly encourages the NPS to wait until a Cultural Landscape Inventory and Report are prepared, and determination is made about formal status under NRHP, -before finalizing the Draft Management Plan / EIS. Many of the components of Alternative 5 specify plans to remove those very features that are core to the cultural experience of what exists today, and upon which such a determination rests.

Feral Burros and Proposed Fencing

SPA shares the concerns stated in the Draft Management Plan / EIS about the feral burros. However, we believe that this problem can be successfully done WITHOUT the need for an expensive fence around the entire area. SPA supports artistic fencing around the source pools and settling pond, Alternative 2. Rather than removing the Burro Spring and killing the native mesquite trees, SPA would install a heavy screen over the Burro Spring trough, leaving the siphon hose in to water the mesquite. This would effectively keep most water sources away from the burros. This is outlined in the SPA Alternative, Feral Burro Access. SPA does not want to put fencing around the tubs themselves as proposed in Alternative 3 as that would take away from the “Saline Experience” and “wild feral burros” would not venture to a water source with people in them.

Additionally, SPA feels that fencing the entire area as proposed in Alternative 5, would harm native non-burro wildlife. The fence would also be subject to possible vandalism, not to mention flash flooding, which would leave dangerous fence debris in the environment. This could create a long term hazard if NPS lacked funding to adequately remove and/or maintain the fence. NPS stated during informational meetings, the difficulty of acquiring maintenance funding. The addition of the fences as proposed in Alternative 5 will become a maintenance resource drain.

To keep people from feeding the burros, SPA will initiate an aggressive educational campaign, similar to the successful campaign that stopped people from feeding the bears in the Mammoth area. SPA proposes to absorb the costs of pamphlets, bumper stickers and posting “don't be an ass, don't feed our burros,” on the forum and email that message out to the SPA members.

SPA urges the NPS to give a priority to relocating the habituated burros at the Warm Springs. There are only about 10 of them. They would be easy to capture and easy to find homes for since they are so domesticated and accustomed to people. Our experience is that feral burros elsewhere in Saline Valley are not habituated and avoid humans. We think that it is unlikely that they will invade the Warm Springs area.

Non Native Vegetation

SPA strongly opposes the removal of the lawn and palm trees. This includes the living state as well as after they die. SPA agrees the palm trees and lawn are nonnative, but they are NOT invasive. Both palm trees and lawn cannot survive without regular water. To date there is no evidence of palms or lawn anywhere else in Saline Valley. Planting other types of trees would negatively change the look, feel, and ecosystem at the Warm Springs. There are no native tree species which could be substituted for the palm trees that will provide equivalent benefits. The palms may not be native to this area, but are naturalized and are present in desert regions across California, (and in fact are an integral visual aspect of the NPS Furnace Creek Visitor's Center. The Draft Management Plan / IES (page 81) attempts to compare containing the spread of palm trees to containing the spread of saltcedar (tamarisk). Tamarisks are invasive, and should be removed. Palm trees are containable.

The lawn is a central gathering place for the users of the Warm Springs. It is the heart for socializing, potlucks, sharing road and other safety information, educating new visitors about the warm springs, and other important connections. The lawn provides major benefits and will not spread, because there is no

water elsewhere. The lawn and palm trees are clearly part of the ethno-historic experience of Saline Valley.

SPA would propose a program monitoring palm tree development in Saline Valley and would eradicate those trees if they were to be discovered in other parts of Saline Valley. SPA would also apply the same attention to the lawn. SPA is not opposed to the removal of the palm trees at what NPS refers to as the upper fenced springs and strongly supports the removal of tamarisk.

Camping Permits

SPA is strongly opposed to the proposed requirement of a permit prior to arriving at the Saline Valley. During the NPS Informational meetings it was said there was not a specific permitting plan. There are too many unanswered questions, including: who will enforce this permitting system, who will administer the permits, how to obtain them and do they meet basic cost-benefit analysis. If the goal of the permit is to “keep track” of visitors and “impart park regulations” SPA would work with NPS on visit censuses and informational signs about regulations.

If a permit system is implemented, SPA wants to ensure permits stay free, easily accessible online, and onsite for the visitors of the Saline Valley that come out and decide to stay or those that plan their vacation around visiting Saline Valley. Online permitting is challenging as much of the Park does not have cell service. SPA has kept visitor counts for 10 years and would argue that even during high use times there was always enough camping space available.

SPA is strongly opposed to any future permit fee. This would undermine the very stewardship visitors have in Saline Valley. By imposing a fee, visitors are now “renting” their space in Saline Valley. The expectation would be that the NPS is now the landlord and responsible for the care and maintenance of Saline Valley. Does NPS expect the users to pay a fee and donate items, time and effort for its upkeep? SPA believes this would create a problem where one currently does not exist. Saline Valley has existed for decades at no cost, by the volunteers that visit it. Further, a fee could discriminate against many of the long time users that lack the recourses to pay such a fee, but are willing to donate time and effort for its maintenance. SPA would also bring attention that an NPS permit fee could violate 36 CFR 71.9 (attached), which specifically forbids the collection of a fee unless the NPS provides potable water, refuse containers, and someone onsite to collect the fees.

Bottom line, don't make Saline Valley a developed campground, don't impose a fee.

Stewardship of Recreation Elements by NPS Partners

SPA supports the component of Alternative 3 “Stewardship of Recreation Elements by NPS partners”. From 2001 to 2006 SPA had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Death Valley National Park. SPA would like to negotiate another MOU concerning the Saline Valley Warm Springs area. This would focus on keeping the Saline Valley Warm Springs as close as possible to the current experience, minimal maintenance of tubs and campsite maintenance.

Camping Areas

SPA strongly supports Camping Areas in Alternative 2, unrestricted dispersed camping areas and strongly opposes designated camping. Currently campers chose sites when they arrive based on site-specific needs, the weather and wind conditions, their particular vehicle type, and accessibility to various amenities such as pools or lawn. SPA supports defining camping boundaries, but assigning campsites is not workable. Please keep the camping as it is - it works.

SPA is opposed to the increasing the distance from camping 100 feet to 200 feet from the source springs. During all of the NPS Informational meetings the issue of camping no closer than 200 feet from the source springs was brought up. At all of the NPS Information meetings, the NPS stated this was a “misprint” and the NPS meant to stay with its current rule of, “no camping within 100 feet of a source springs”. SPA would like something in writing to assure them that the no camping within 100 feet of a source springs (NPS current policy) will continue.

Campfires

SPA supports the NPS Campfires section, as proposed in Alternative 3 NPS-provided fire enclosures, grates, grills or fire pans. Given a choice of the aforementioned, SPA supports non anchored, heavy NPS fire pits. SPA will work with NPS for the removal of fire pits that are not NPS-provided, as well as to educate the user community.

Toilet Management

SPA supports the Toilet Management section as proposed in Alternative 3 requiring the pumping of vault toilets on an “as needed” basis. SPA also highly recommends the addition of another vault toilet at the Palm Springs. This could be accomplished for the price of the proposed fence around the entire area. The fence as stated above is unnecessary, but another vault toilet for the Palm Springs should be an NPS priority.

Vehicle Assistance

SPA would propose this alternative be changed to Emergency Vehicle Assistance and remain during the tenure of the current camp host. SPA would encourage the NPS to clearly post signage at the end of pavement that there is no emergency vehicle assistance beyond this point. This may encourage visitors to be self-sufficient. That said, having Emergency Vehicle Assistance is a health and safety issue and its removal should be considered in that context.

Dishwashing Stations

SPA supports dishwashing stations. However we feel the need for filters to be unnecessary. Filters do not address any issues brought up in the management plan. However, if that is what is required to continue having dish washing stations, filters would be acceptable. SPA supports signage warning visitors the dishwashing water is non-potable. SPA will encourage the use of biodegradable dishwashing liquids.

Co-Management with Timbisha Shoshone

SPA understands the NPS and Timbisha Shoshone are working on a co-management plan. NPS stated at four Informational Meetings held over the last week of May that the co-management plan would not supersede the Draft Management Plan / EIS. Neither SPA nor any SPA member has been included in the co-management plan and its content, scope, and / or interaction within the Draft Management Plan / EIS. Therefore it's difficult to comment on this issue. The Draft Management Plan / EIS states,

“The waters of the warm springs in Saline Valley are a source of *puha* for the Tribe, a life force energy.”

In this context, SPA supports Nonnative vegetation section of Alternative 3, only as it pertains to the upper springs. This would return the Upper Springs to its natural state. This might allow traditional use of the Upper Springs by the Tribe.

In Summary

The maintenance of the Saline Valley has been done successfully by volunteers, in cooperation with a volunteer Camp Host, for decades. Each visitor to the Saline Valley has understand that he/she is a volunteer, with the responsibility of policing the area, observing guidelines for proper food storage and disposal of trash, and helping with the cleaning of the pools and outhouses. The more the NPS relies on explicit rules and regulations, the less likely visitors will feel that the Warm Springs are their responsibility to be maintained on a voluntary basis. If visitation increases owing to expanded publicity and recognition of the Saline Valley as a National Park destination, newly arrived visitors, uninformed about the tradition of volunteerism, may take the attitude of “let the government take care of it, “rather than taking responsibility for minimizing their individual impact. Signage and rules and permits cannot accomplish as much as the traditional culture of cooperation and mutual responsibility that has characterized the Saline Valley throughout its history.

Any Management Plan must seek to encourage a continuing spirit of volunteerism and individual responsibility.

Sincerely,

John Runkle
President, Saline Preservation Association

Attached 36 CFR 71.9
Attached SPA Alternatives

Cc: Mike Ramsey, SPA Treasurer
Michelle Hamilton, SPA Secretary
Tim Hynes, SPA Director
Fred Dickson, SPA Director
Gary Kremen, SPA Director
Bonneau Dickson, SPA Director

TABLE ES-1. ELEMENTS OF THE ALTERNATIVES

Notes:

The highlighted cells in this table show the elements that were used to create the SPA preferred alternative.

There are two elements without a shaded cell (Chicken Strip airstrip and feral burro access); for these elements, the preferred alternative incorporates actions that are not entirely captured in any of the other alternatives.

Items identified in this table as NPS-provided, such as fire enclosures, would be distributed as funding allows.

Items in italics in this table are mitigation and/or restoration efforts required under each alternative. Users, volunteers, and park staff could engage in further restoration efforts under NPS management; however, the actions identified in this table are the minimum actions required under each alternative.

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA Preferred Alternative to Recommend
Recreation					
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park entrance fee applies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park entrance fee applies Overnight camping fee could be implemented in the future and would include an independent public process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park entrance fee applies; campground host(s) check compliance Overnight camping fee could be implemented in the future and would include an independent public process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park entrance fee applies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park entrance fee applies
Camping Permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permit not required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory no-cost permit system modeled after the Visitor Use Permit system proposed in the <i>Death Valley National Park Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan</i> (appendix E) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory no-cost permit system modeled after the Visitor Use Permit system proposed in the <i>Death Valley National Park Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan</i> (appendix E) A sign-in log would be maintained for campers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory no-cost permit system modeled after the Visitor Use Permit system proposed in the <i>Death Valley National Park Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan</i> (appendix E) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permit not required A sign-in log would be maintained for campers

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA Preferred Alternative to Recommend
Camping Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No designated camp areas Unrestricted dispersed camping, including car camping in backcountry area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No designated camp areas Unrestricted dispersed camping, including car camping in backcountry area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dispersed camping within designated camp areas defined by appropriate elements, such as delineation of roadways or signposts, with area use maps posted at the campground and online No camping within 200 feet of source springs Designated overflow walk-in camping areas with defined parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dispersed camping No camping within 200 feet of water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No designated camp areas Unrestricted dispersed camping, including car camping in backcountry No camping within 100 feet of source springs
Campfires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> User-created fire rings NPS-provided fire enclosures, grates, or grills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove user-created fire rings at campsites Retain communal fire ring at Lower Spring Encourage the use of NPS-provided fire enclosures, grates, grills, or firepans Visitors to haul out ash and charcoal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove user-created fire rings at campsites Retain communal fire ring at Lower Spring Encourage the use of NPS-provided fire enclosures, grates, grills, or firepans Visitors to haul out ash and charcoal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of all fire enclosures and fire rings No campfires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove user-created fire rings at campsites Retain communal fire ring at Lower Spring Encourage the use of NPS-provided fire enclosures, grates, grills, or firepans Visitors to haul out ash and charcoal
"Chicken Strip" Airstrip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airstrip open for use Camping allowed at airstrip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airstrip open for use; special regulation pending Camping allowed at airstrip Visitors required to pack out waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airstrip open for use; special regulation pending No camping allowed at airstrip Allow for additional airplane tiedowns with NPS approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of the airstrip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airstrip open for use; special regulation pending Camping allowed at airstrip Visitors required to pack out waste Allow for additional airplane tiedowns with NPS approval

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA Preferred Alternative to Recommend
Stewardship of Recreation Elements by NPS Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of MOU with RAF for maintenance of the Chicken Strip airstrip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of MOU with RAF for maintenance of the Chicken Strip airstrip MOU with user group for minimal maintenance of tubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of MOU with RAF for maintenance of the Chicken Strip airstrip MOU with user group for minimal maintenance of tubs Agreement with user groups that may include activities such as invasive plant removal; monitoring of Upper Spring; campsite management; and protection of archeological resources and wilderness boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract with organizations for specified services related to protection of natural and cultural resources Chicken Strip airstrip removed from MOU with RAF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of MOU with RAF for maintenance of the Chicken Strip airstrip MOU with SPA for minimal maintenance of tubs Agreement with user groups that may include SPA for activities such as invasive plant removal; monitoring of Upper Spring; campsite management; and protection of archeological resources and wilderness boundaries
Natural Resources					
Resource Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with resource stewardship throughout the park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with resource stewardship throughout the park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish thresholds on use and overuse of the area Monitoring and response whereby actions would be taken by park management to restrict use of the springs if damage to natural and cultural resources is observed Implementation of restoration measures, such as removing the water diversion piping at Burro Spring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish thresholds on use and overuse of the area Monitoring and response whereby actions would be taken by park management to restrict access to the springs if damage to natural and cultural resources is observed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with resource stewardship throughout the park

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA Preferred Alternative to Recommend
Nonnative Vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal control of nonnative plants (e.g., trimming and hand pulling of young nonnative invasive palms is accomplished by volunteer camp host) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove nonnative invasive palms from Upper Spring As nonnative invasive palm trees age and die at Lower Spring and Palm Spring, allow the area to naturally revegetate Nonnative plant control by National Park Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of nonnative invasive palms from Upper Spring As nonnative invasive palm trees age and die at Lower Spring and Palm Spring, allow the area to naturally revegetate Nonnative plant control by National Park Service Remove the lawn and allow the area to naturally revegetate or replant with native vegetation Engage tribes to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of all nonnative species, including the lawn at Lower Spring Restoration with native species in natural distribution patterns Engage tribes to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of nonnative invasive palms from Upper Spring Minimal control of nonnative plants (e.g., trimming and hand pulling of young nonnative palms by volunteers and camp host)
Feral Burro Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal control (e.g., fencing to exclude feral burros from lawn at Lower Spring) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artistic fencing to surround the source springs at Lower and Palm Springs to prevent access to the water sources by feral burros 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension of the artistic wooden fencing around the tubs, source springs and riparian areas at Lower and Palm Springs to prevent access to water sources and vegetation by feral burros 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of fencing around the warm springs area at the wilderness boundary to prevent access by feral burros 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal control (e.g., fencing to exclude feral burros from lawn at lower Spring) Artistic fencing to surround the source springs at Lower and Palm Springs to prevent Access to the water sources by feral burros

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA preferred Alternative to Recommend
Habituated Wildlife and Food Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education to prevent deliberate or inadvertent feeding of wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate food storage would be encouraged through on-site and online outreach to users Camp host(s) would encourage users to keep all food safely and securely stored in vehicles Education (including signage) to prevent deliberate or inadvertent feeding of wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate food storage would be encouraged through on-site and online outreach to users Camp host(s) would encourage users to keep all food safely and securely stored in vehicles or food storage boxes Education (including signage) to prevent deliberate or inadvertent feeding of wildlife Installation of food storage box(es), if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education to prevent deliberate or inadvertent feeding of wildlife 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate food storage would be encouraged through on-site and online outreach to users Camp host(s) would encourage users to keep all food safely and securely stored in vehicles Education (including signage) to prevent deliberate or inadvertent feeding of wildlife Implement "don't feed our burros" campaign
Cultural Resources					
Archeological Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS monitoring Monitoring by NPS-trained site stewards Increased education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS monitoring Monitoring by NPS-trained site stewards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS monitoring Monitoring by NPS-trained site stewards Increased education
Historical Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the warm springs area as an area of historical significance for recreational users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the warm springs area as an area of historical significance for recreational users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the warm springs area as an area of historical significance for recreational users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Documentation of and mitigation for the effects on elements of the proposed Saline Valley Warm Springs Historic Site</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the warm springs area as an area of historical significance for recreational users If necessary, preparation of MOU with SHPO for any adverse effects to cultural resources

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA Preferred Alternative to Recommend
Ethnographic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the warm springs area as an area of ethnographic significance for the Tribe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the warm springs area as an area of ethnographic significance for the Tribe Consultation with tribes to identify and maintain ethnographic resources (e.g., native vegetation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the warm springs area as an area of ethnographic significance for the Tribe Consultation with tribes to identify and maintain ethnographic resources (e.g., native vegetation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the warm springs area as an area of ethnographic significance for the Tribe Consultation with tribes to identify and maintain ethnographic resources (e.g., native vegetation) Removal of all development and restoration to natural and ethnographic landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the warm springs area as an area of ethnographic significance for the Tribe Consultation with tribes to identify and maintain ethnographic resources (e.g., native vegetation)
Bat Pole and Other Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and manage National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible art Restrictions on artwork not actively enforced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and manage NRHP-eligible art Non-historic artwork removed from wilderness No manipulation of natural or cultural resources (to include disturbance and collection) for the purposes of art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and manage NRHP-eligible art Non-historic artwork removed from wilderness and backcountry area No manipulation of natural or cultural resources (to include disturbance and collection) for the purposes of art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove all artwork, including the bat pole Ongoing monitoring to prevent installations of new artwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and manage NRHP-eligible art Non-historic artwork removed from wilderness and backcountry area No manipulation of natural or cultural resources (to include disturbance and collection) for the purposes of art
Infrastructure					
Vehicle Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued vehicle repair by camp host 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove vehicle support facility Emergency vehicle assistance should not be expected by the visiting public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove vehicle support facility Emergency vehicle assistance should not be expected by the visiting public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of vehicle repair support facility Emergency vehicle assistance should not be expected by the visiting public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued vehicle repair by current camp host Sign-age that emergency vehicle assistance should not be expected by the visiting public

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA Preferred Alternative to Recommend
Lower Spring Camp Host Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain permanent housing, water feature, drainage ditch, plumbing, solar array, government vehicles and personal items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain permanent housing, water feature, drainage ditch, plumbing, and personal items with housekeeping policy¹ Allow for power system that complies with applicable regulations and cultural landscape Retain government vehicle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove permanent housing; host would provide temporary housing Retain water feature, drainage ditch, plumbing, and personal items with housekeeping policy¹ Allow for power system that complies with applicable regulations and cultural landscape Retain government vehicle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove all elements of the camp host site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain permanent housing, water feature, drainage ditch, plumbing, and personal items with housekeeping policy¹ Allow for power system that complies with applicable regulations and cultural landscape Retain government vehicle
Toilet Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS maintenance staff pumps vault toilets once or twice a year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS maintenance staff or contractors pump vault toilets once or twice a year Encourage visitors to pack out waste Education on the benefits of packing out waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vault toilets pumped as needed by NPS maintenance staff, by contractor, or by cooperative agreement with user group Encourage visitors to pack out waste Education on the benefits of packing out waste Additional toilets could be added to Lower Spring or Palm Spring, if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of vault toilets Visitors required to carry out human waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vault toilets pumped as needed by NPS maintenance staff, by contractors, or by cooperative agreement with user group Encourage visitors to pack out waste Education on the benefits of packing out waste Additional toilets must be added to Palm Spring.

¹ Housekeeping policy: The grounds of the camp host site would be kept clutter free. The camp host would not make improvements to the camp host site and would not have more than two vehicles at the camp host site. As this is not a permanent residence, all items at the camp host site should be removable within a two-day notice. There should be no evidence of the host once he or she completes the camp host assignment.

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA Preferred Alternative to Recommend
Dishwashing Stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dishwashing stations would be retained Signage at sinks to indicate water is non-potable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain dishwashing stations and add filtration systems to catch food debris Signage at sinks to indicate water is non-potable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain dishwashing stations and add filtration systems to catch food debris Signage at sinks to indicate water is non-potable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of dishwashing stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain dishwashing stations and add filtration systems to catch food debris Signage at sinks to indicate water is non-potable
Settling pond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfenced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fence settling pond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fence settling pond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of settling pond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fence settling pond
Maintenance of Tubs, Roads, and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No expansion related to tubs² Upper Spring would remain undeveloped² Water diverted from source springs to soaking tubs, showers/bathtubs, and dishwashing sinks; all uses have dedicated piping directly from the source springs Users/camp host(s) maintain plumbing infrastructure and tubs under NPS oversight Maintenance of Warm Springs Road by users / camp host using large tires or other road drag 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No expansion related to tubs² Upper Spring would remain undeveloped² Water diverted from source springs to soaking tubs, showers/bathtubs, and dishwashing sinks; all uses have dedicated piping directly from the source springs Users/camp host(s) maintain plumbing infrastructure and tubs under NPS oversight Maintenance of Warm Springs Road by National Park Service in accordance with guidelines for four-wheel drive high clearance roads³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No expansion related to tubs² Upper Spring would remain undeveloped² Water diverted from source springs to soaking tubs, showers/bathtubs, and dishwashing sinks; all uses have dedicated piping directly from the source springs Users/camp host(s) maintain plumbing infrastructure and tubs under NPS oversight Maintenance of Warm Springs Road by National Park Service in accordance with guidelines for four-wheel drive high clearance roads³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All development and modifications would be removed and the site restored No water diversion Maintenance of Warm Springs Road by National Park Service in accordance with guidelines for four-wheel drive high clearance roads³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No expansion related to tubs² Upper Spring would remain undeveloped² Water diverted from source springs to soaking tubs, showers/bathtubs, and dishwashing sinks; all uses have dedicated piping directly from the source springs Users/camp host(s) maintain plumbing infrastructure and tubs under NPS oversight Maintenance of Warm Spring Road by National Park Service in accordance with guidelines for four-wheel drive high clearance roads³

² As per the 2002 GMP

³ As described in the Death Valley National Park Wilderness and Backcountry Stewardship Plan

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA Alternative Preferred Alternative to Recommend
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tubs would not be altered to increase accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To the extent possible, facilities would be made accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To the extent possible, facilities would be made accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All facilities would be removed and the site restored. The site would be accessed in the same manner as all backcountry sites in the park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To the extent possible, facilities would be made accessible.
Management					
Camp Host	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-time camp host at Lower Spring Seasonal camp hosts at Palm Spring Continue with current camp host term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camp host(s) will be present Continue with current camp host term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camp host(s) will be present Camp host term would be one year/season with possible reinstatement; host must re-apply annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No camp host 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camp host(s) will be present Continue with current camp host term
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some signs on campground boards Camp host disperses information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education through various media focused on regulatory, health and safety, and compliance information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education through various media focused on regulatory, health and safety, and compliance information Interpretive program to include signs on campground boards and engagement by camp host on topics such as potential for flooding, Leave No Trace® camping practices, resource protection, visitor safety, relationship with the Tribe, and history of Saline Valley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal outreach and education as appropriate for undeveloped backcountry area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education through various media focused on regulatory, health and safety, and compliance information Interpretive program to include signs on campground boards and engagement by camp host and SPA on topics such as potential for flooding, Leave No Trace® camping practices, resource protection, visitor safety, relationship with the Tribe, and history of Saline Valley

Management Elements	Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Regulatory Compliance Alternative	Alternative 3: Community Engagement Alternative	Alternative 4: Restoration Alternative	SPA Preferred Alternative to Recommend
State and Federal Regulations					
Recreational Water Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No water quality testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with the Office of Public Health to develop an approach for water quality monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with the Office of Public Health to develop an approach for water quality monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tubs would be removed and water from source springs would not be used for recreation purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with the Office of Public Health to develop an approach for water quality monitoring
Hazardous Materials Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and storage on-site not compliant with regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and storage would meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and storage would meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of all hazardous materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and storage would meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations

Cornell Law School

CFR › Title 36 › Chapter I › Part 71 › Section 71.9

36 CFR 71.9 - Establishment of recreation use fees.

§ 71.9 Establishment of recreation use fees.

(a) Recreation use fees shall be established by all outdoor recreation administering agencies of the Department of the Interior in accordance with the following criteria:

- (1) The direct and indirect cost to the government,
- (2) The benefit to the recipient,
- (3) The public policy or interest served,
- (4) The comparable recreation fees charged by other Federal agencies, non-Federal public agencies and the private sector located within the service area of the management unit at which the fee is charged,
- (5) The economic and administrative feasibility of fee collection, and
- (6) Other pertinent factors.

(b) With the approval of the Secretary of the Interior recreation use fees may be established for other types of facilities in addition to those which are listed below.

(c) Types of recreation facilities for which use fees may be charged:

Tent, trailer and recreation vehicle sites ¹

¹ Provided, That in no event shall there be a charge for the use of any campsite and adjacent related facilities unless the campground in which the site is located has all of the following: Tent or trailer spaces, drinking water, access road, refuse containers, toilet facilities, personal collection of the fee by an employee or agent of the bureau operating the facility, reasonable visitor protection, and simple devices for containing a campfire (where campfires are permitted).

Group camping sites ^{1 2}

² The administering agency may establish a group use rate in lieu of the above "Group Camping Sites" recreation use fee in accordance with the criteria set out in this section provided such rate is not less than \$3.00 per day per group. Such a group use rate may constitute either a special recreation permit fee or a recreation use fee as determined by the administering agency.

Specialized boat launching facilities and services ³

US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

June 28, 2018

Mike Reynolds, Superintendent
Death Valley National Park
Attn: Saline Valley Management Plan Comments
PO Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Management Plan Project, Death Valley National Park. (CEQ# 20180074)

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Saline Valley Warm Springs Management Plan Project, Death Valley National Park Project. Our review is provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

Based on our review of the DEIS, we have rated Preferred Alternative 5 as Lack of Objections (LO) (see enclosed "Summary of Rating Definitions"). EPA supports the National Park Service's proposal to restore natural resources in the project area and protect public health through actions such as water quality monitoring, management of nonnative species, and promotion of Leave No Trace practices at the springs.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to review this DEIS, and looks forward to reviewing the Final EIS when it is released. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or have your staff contact James Munson, the lead reviewer for this project. Mr. Munson can be reached at (415) 972-3852 or Munson.James@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Martyn Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Section
Enforcement Division

Enclosure: Summary of the EPA Rating System
cc via email: Kelly Daigle, National Park Service

SUMMARY OF EPA RATING DEFINITIONS*

This rating system was developed as a means to summarize the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) level of concern with a proposed action. The ratings are a combination of alphabetical categories for evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposal and numerical categories for evaluation of the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ACTION

“LO” (Lack of Objections)

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

“EC” (Environmental Concerns)

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

“EO” (Environmental Objections)

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

“EU” (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potentially unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

ADEQUACY OF THE IMPACT STATEMENT

Category “1” (Adequate)

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category “2” (Insufficient Information)

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category “3” (Inadequate)

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

*From EPA Manual 1640, Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment.

XLADV

I run an online adventure motorcycle community and we have an event in DV each Nov staying at Panamint Springs but frequently will ride out for the day to the springs. I've been there maybe 15 times and camped three times overnight.

Since they graded the road a few years ago it's obvious the springs have seen a dramatic increase in use and problems have cropped up. The beauty of the springs is in part to what volunteers have made it but I do see a need for some improvements.

I think the fencing for the burros is a good idea. I'm not crazy about the permitting process for camping but understand. Consider then adding fire rings and picnic tables for each site. The park should be collecting more in park pass fees but I know they don't now. Camp hosts could be “enforcing” that.

What I really don't like hearing is the removal of the palm trees and grass lawn. Sure they're non-native but it's not clear to me what harm they inflict and consideration should be given to the purpose they serve.