

Salt Creek Boardwalk Replacement

Death Valley National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Project Background

The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to replace Salt Creek Boardwalk in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

A flash flood destroyed the 0.5-mile accessible boardwalk, damaged the access road, obliterated the parking lot, and damaged the vault toilet beyond repair on August 5, 2022. The flood left broken pieces of infrastructure as far away as a mile downstream in designated Wilderness.

The NPS proposes to replace the boardwalk, toilet, and interpretive signs as well as repair the parking lot and entry road to maintain accessible viewing opportunities while simultaneously protecting the Salt Creek pupfish and its fragile habitat.

Issues and Concerns

The extensive riparian corridor along Salt Creek represents a rare example of desert plants associated with alkali sinks. Salt Creek is the only habitat for the Salt Creek pupfish (*Cyprinodon salinus* ssp. *salinus*), which is a species of high concern in the State of California. These fish have evolved to live in salty water with temperatures ranging from 43-104° F (6-40° C).

Spring-fed creeks in the desert have attracted people to their banks beginning with the Timbisha Shoshone. Since 1976, the Salt Creek Boardwalk has provided visitors the opportunity to easily view the endemic Salt Creek pupfish. The site is a key location for children on curriculum-based field trips.

Signs at the parking lot and boardwalk required people to stay on trail, but some people disregarded this and walked in the creek or trampled sensitive plants like pickleweed on the creek banks.



Salt Creek Pupfish
NPS photo

What Repairs are Needed?

The NPS is proposing a replacement boardwalk about 0.5-mile long, but it cannot be reconstructed in the former alignment because flooding substantially changed the creek channel and topography. The park is currently investigating potential boardwalk alignments along the new creek channel and designing alternatives considering style, construction methods, materials, visitor experience, and resource protection.

In addition to rebuilding the boardwalk, supporting infrastructure will also be repaired or replaced. The Salt Creek Boardwalk parking lot will be re-established, the vault toilet replaced, and the one-mile access road will be repaired to standards established for a low clearance, 2-wheel-drive vehicle. Lastly, segments of the destroyed boardwalk that washed downstream will be removed and discarded; some of the debris is in designated Wilderness.



*Remnant of Salt Creek Boardwalk after flooding
NPS photo*

Participation

Your ideas, concerns, issues, suggestions, and potential topics for consideration are important to us as we develop this project. The NPS is asking for public input on the proposed action and potential alternatives, environmental issues that should be addressed, and considerations regarding visitor experience. The NPS and FHWA will use this feedback when starting the design process in late March.

Please share your written comments by **March 21, 2023** via one of the following methods:

- **Online through the Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/DEVASaltCreek1>.** This is the preferred method.
- **Mail your comments posted marked by March 21 to:**

*Superintendent
Death Valley National Park
ATTN: Salt Creek Boardwalk Replacement
P.O. Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328*



*Salt Creek Boardwalk before flooding
NPS photo*



*Bridge over Salt Creek after flooding
NPS – Abby Wines*