

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mojave National Preserve
2701 Barstow Road
Barstow, California 92311



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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Mojave National Preserve California



Your Input is Requested!

Because of your interest in Mojave National Preserve, we are requesting your input regarding preliminary alternatives for the Water Resources Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (plan/EIS). Your participation is vital to our planning process. These alternatives were developed with input received during public scoping.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

How to Comment

Submit written comments electronically to:

http://parkplanning.nps.gov/mojave_water

Or by mail to:

Mojave NP Superintendent
Water Resources Management Plan
2701 Barstow Road
Barstow, California 92311

The comment period for preliminary alternatives will be open from **October 22, 2012** to November 20, 2012 (30 days). All comments must be postmarked by November 20, 2012 .

Before submitting your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment -including your personal identifying information - may be made publicly available at any time. Personal identifying information includes, but is not limited to, your address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Comments made by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations, will not be accepted.

Timeframe	Event	Involvement Opportunity
Summer/Fall 2013	Release of Draft Water Resources Plan DEIS for 60-day public review and comment period	Attend a public meeting and submit comments by a variety of methods
Spring 2014	Release of Final Water Resources Management Plan/EIS incorporating changes from DEIS public comments	Review Final EIS/EIR documenting the alternative selected for implementation
Fall 2014	Record of Decision released	



NPS Mission and the Range of Alternatives

The mission of the National Park Service is to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein. . .by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” (NPS Organic Act of 1916). Units of the National Park System are both remnants of the past and living laboratories of the “ecological, biological, and physical processes that created the park and continue to act upon it”. The NPS recognizes that natural processes and ecosystems are dynamic and ever-changing, and allows for such change in ways that are minimally influenced by human actions. Designated wilderness represents the highest ideal of this philosophy—that minimal or no human intervention in an area will “preserve its natural conditions” so that it “generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.” However, as specified in the NPS Management Policies 2006, as anthropogenic stressors increasingly jeopardize protected areas, intervention may be undertaken. The Water Resources Management Plan recognizes that intervention may be necessary to mitigate human-caused impacts and restore natural functions. It will identify when and where intervention would occur, and determine the minimum intervention necessary at Wilderness sites.

Purpose of the Plan/EIS

The purpose of the Water Resource Management Plan/EIS is to develop a comprehensive strategy and identify techniques for managing water resources in a changing environment to ensure the preservation of wildlife, historic, wilderness, and recreation values in a diverse desert ecosystem.

Need for Action

The Mojave Desert is a water-scarce environment in which native plants and animals are adapted to survive with limited free-standing water and through extended droughts. A variety of natural and developed water sources exist on the landscape including natural springs, developed springs, wildlife guzzlers, and wells. Many developed water sources are essential for wildlife conservation, historical significance, or preserve operations, while others may not be necessary.

There is considerable uncertainty about the role of these waters and their management in the face of regional habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and climate change. There is no comprehensive strategy to manage water resources on the Preserve. A water resource management plan is needed to:

- Identify a proactive, consistent, Preserve-wide approach to managing developed and undeveloped water sources;
- Identify management interventions that are appropriate and necessary to sustain native wildlife populations, habitat, and biodiversity;
- Provide a framework for applying experimental management and adapting to changing conditions and increased knowledge over time;

- Reconcile resource management and protection needs with NPS policies;
- Provide guidance as the Preserve responds to threats of external development; and
- Improve coordination between the Preserve, California Department of Fish and Game, other desert NPS units, and stakeholders.



Alternative 1 – No Action

Water resources would be managed on a case by case basis, including responses to external proposals. The current management of water provisioning structures would continue.

Alternative 2 – Minimal Intervention

Alternative 2 emphasizes the arid environment of the Mojave Desert with low rainfall and limited free-standing water. Native species are adapted to survive in a water-scarce environment and through extended droughts. The overall management philosophy emphasizes minimal intervention from water

developments and water provisioning. Outcomes include:

- Native species of plants and animals that are water-stress tolerant and are adapted to survive extended periods without rain would be favored.
- Wildlife abundance, density and distribution would shift with strong responses to extreme drought; species dependent on free-standing water would be reduced. Desert bighorn sheep populations may be smaller and more variable, have lower herd productivity, or have smaller ranges.
- Potential impacts to wildlife or other resources from removing developed water sources would be acceptable up to a predefined limit. For example, bighorn may be less connected and fluctuate more, but would not be allowed to fall to a population level that risks extirpation.
- Some water structures would be preserved as historical artifacts, but in wilderness most would be dismantled and the site restored to a more natural state.
- The removal of water provisioning installations in designated wilderness would emphasize the values of undeveloped and untrammeled wilderness. Water provisioning would be considered only in rare cases to avoid unacceptable impacts. bighorn may be less connected and fluctuate more, but would not be allowed to fall to a population level that risks extirpation.

Alternative 3 – Expanded Intervention

Alternative 3 emphasizes rapid changes to the Mojave Desert due to anthropogenic effects of climate change and habitat loss. Wildlife migration and habitat use are increasingly restricted by human development. This alternative expands intervention to augment existing habitat within the Preserve and to maintain and/or develop connections between the Preserve and surrounding habitat. Outcomes include:

- Water developments and water provisioning may be necessary to maintain sufficient habitat within park boundaries for viable wildlife populations. Water developments would be strategically placed to optimize habitat connectivity and establish new populations of desert bighorn sheep.
- Historical water developments would be improved by the presence of water, and structures would be routinely maintained.

- This approach emphasizes the wildlife values of wilderness. Water provisioning installations would be maintained to improve habitat and would be relocated only if such action did not adversely affect bighorn population size or distribution.



Alternative 4 – Strategic Intervention

Alternative 4 emphasizes the importance of undeveloped wilderness, active wildlife conservation to counteract anthropogenic change, and a balance between conflicting values and mandates. Large national parks are increasingly important to wildlife as human developments encroach on habitat outside of protected areas. People increasingly seek out wilderness areas to experience nature untrammeled by man. The overall management philosophy would combine minimized wilderness intrusion with maximized conservation to achieve self-sustaining native wildlife populations. Outcomes include:

- Strategic use of artificial water sources based on designations (e.g., wilderness, critical habitat), habitat types, natural water source availability, and conservation needs of target species.
- Reduced water provisioning to promote a primitive, sustainable wildlife-habitat dynamic in targeted areas; increased water provisioning in other areas for improved habitat connectivity or to support vulnerable wildlife populations. Water developments would be distributed to maximize wildlife conservation and reduce impacts to wilderness.
- Historical water developments outside wilderness areas would be maintained. Water developments that are necessary in wilderness for wildlife sustainability would be maintained with non-mechanized tools; others would be moved to comparable non-wilderness sites.