



## Preliminary Alternatives for the Draft Wilderness Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are planning for the future of eight wilderness areas in Lake Mead National Recreation Area and adjacent BLM lands. A wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement will establish a framework for long-term management of these areas. A draft wilderness management plan / environmental assessment was published in April 2010; however, the draft wilderness management plan / environmental assessment was not approved due to concerns expressed by American Indian tribes and climbers regarding the use of the Spirit Mountain and Bridge Canyon wilderness areas.

We have subsequently agreed to prepare a revised wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement to address management of all eight of the wilderness areas. This revised wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement will provide accountability and consistency for the management of the wilderness areas. As part of the overall planning process, we have begun to develop preliminary alternatives. This newsletter identifies three preliminary alternatives for managing the wilderness areas to ensure resource protection, sensitivity to cultural resource values and high-quality visitor experiences in the future. A range of climbing management options is also included in the newsletter.

We would like to hear your comments and suggestions on these preliminary alternatives and climbing management options. Please send your comments via the internet at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Click on Lake Mead National Recreation Area and then "Wilderness Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement" to leave your comments. You can also mail comments to Lake Mead National Recreation Area, c/o National Park Service, Denver Service Center – Planning, P.O. Box 25287, Denver, CO 80225-0287. Please comment before April 12, 2013.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your

personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you have any questions on this planning process, please contact Greg Jarvis, Project Manager, National Park Service at the above address (telephone: 303-969-2263) and Mark Tanaka-Sanders, Wilderness Planner, Bureau of Land Management, 4701 North Torrey Pines, Las Vegas, NV 89130 (telephone: 702-515-5039).

Public communication, collaboration, and cooperation are essential to developing a successful wilderness management plan. Thank you for your time and effort to help us plan for the future of the Lake Mead and adjacent BLM wilderness areas.

Sincerely,

William K. Dickinson, Superintendent  
Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Timothy Smith, District Manager  
Southern Nevada District Office

### You are invited...

Please come to a public open house:

Monday, March 18th 4:00 – 6:00 PM	Tuesday, March 19th 4:00 – 6:00 PM	Thursday, March 21st 4:00 – 6:00 PM
Mohave Community College, Room 2 3400 Highway 95 Bullhead City, AZ	Boulder City Library, large meeting room 701 Adams Boulevard Boulder City, NV	James Gibson Library, large meeting room 100 W Lake Mead Pkwy Henderson, NV



## Background

Many of the nation's outstanding natural areas are preserved as congressionally designated wilderness. Both the National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are dedicated to protecting and interpreting the resources and values associated with wilderness. This wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement covers the Jimbilnan, Pinto Valley, Black Canyon, Eldorado, Ireteba Peaks, Nellis Wash, Spirit Mountain, and Bridge Canyon wilderness areas. These areas were studied for their wilderness qualities and potential inclusion in the national wilderness preservation system as early as 1979 and were officially designated as wilderness in 2002. Three of these areas—Eldorado, Ireteba Peaks, and Spirit Mountain—are co-managed by the NPS and BLM.

Work first began on the wilderness management plan in 2005 as an environmental assessment. This plan was published in April 2010. Few public comments were submitted on the wilderness management plan / environmental assessment and no comments were received, restoration activities, management of wildlife guzzlers, user capacity, and the establishment of several new hiking routes proposed in the preferred alternative. The wilderness

management plan / environmental assessment indicated that rock climbing and scrambling are allowed *without* the placement of fixed anchors in designated wilderness areas in Lake Mead National Recreation Area and on the adjacent BLM lands. However, climbers and American Indian tribes raised major concerns on the management alternatives for the Bridge Canyon and Spirit Mountain wilderness areas. Particular sensitivity involves the use of fixed anchors (e.g., bolts, hangers, chains, pitons) within the Spirit Mountain Wilderness, as Spirit Mountain is considered a sacred area by several tribes and is a designated traditional cultural property (TCP). Tribal consultations indicate the use of fixed anchors within the traditional cultural property is not compatible with the cultural values of the tribes and conflicts with their heritage and self-identity as a community.

Other concerns were raised about how to manage visitor use in portions of Spirit Mountain Wilderness, the use of fixed anchors in wilderness areas, and prohibiting development of new climbing routes that use fixed anchors. Due to these issues, this plan was never finalized.

## Why We Are Preparing A Revised Plan /Environmental Impact Statement

Due to the issues raised by climbers and American Indian tribes in the wilderness management plan / environmental assessment, the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management agreed to prepare a revised wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement for the following reasons. There is a need to determine

- how to manage rock climbing in the wilderness areas, particularly the placement or removal of fixed anchors for rock climbing activities
- the amount of visitor use that should be permitted versus the level of cultural resource protection that should be provided
- the use of climbing equipment (including climbing chalk) near sensitive cultural resources (e.g., petroglyphs and pictographs)



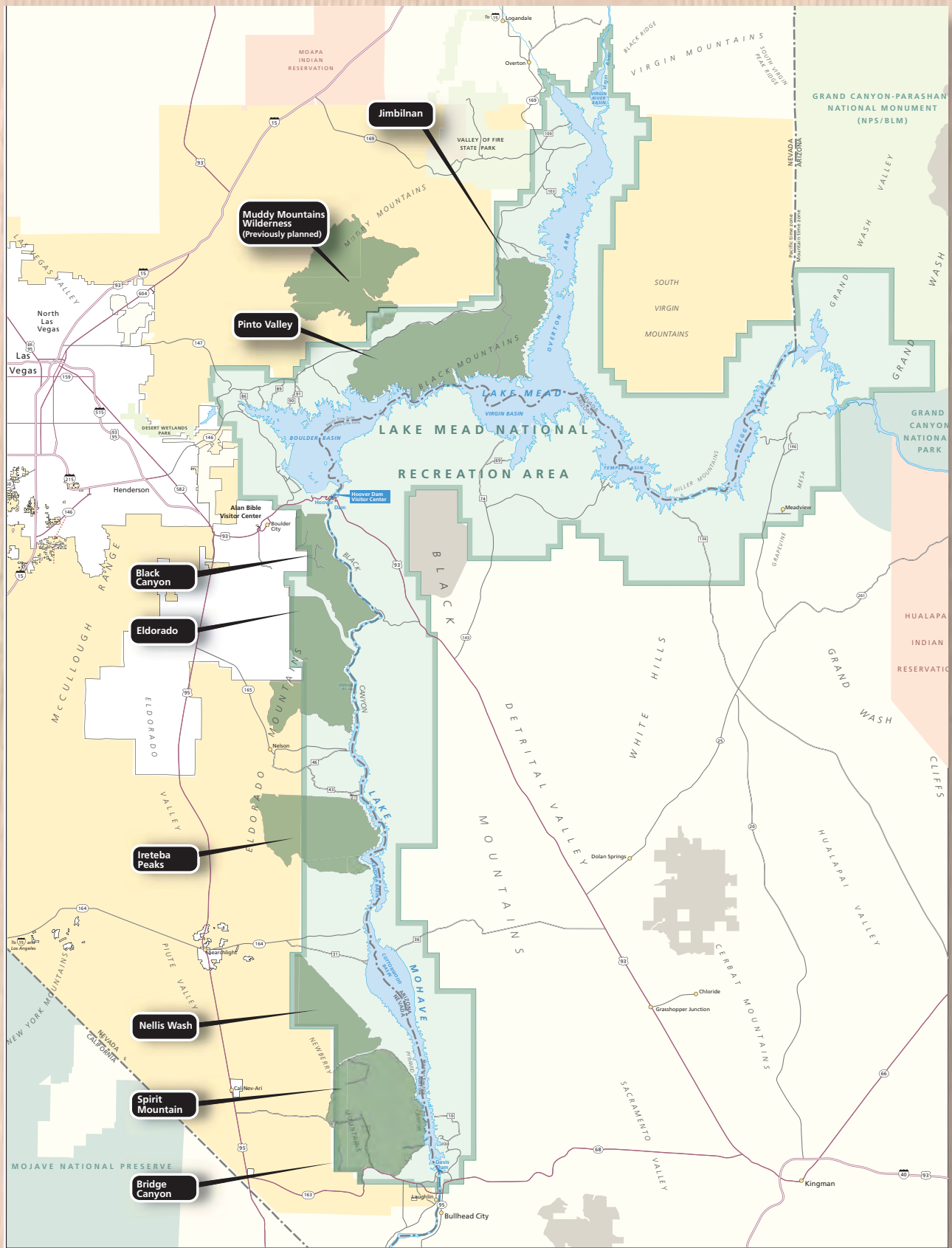
## Protecting Wilderness Character

The revised wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement will provide more opportunities for public input in addressing the unresolved wilderness issues mentioned in this newsletter. In addition, this revised wilderness

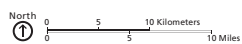
management plan / environmental impact statement will focus more on protecting wilderness character, which guides the management and use of NPS and BLM wilderness (see the text box).

### Wilderness Character

*Wilderness character is the fundamental concept in the Wilderness Act of 1964 and is broadly defined in section 2(c) of the act. The Wilderness Act speaks of wilderness as a resource in itself. A wilderness, in contrast to those areas where humans dominate the landscape, is defined by the qualities comprising its wilderness character. Wilderness character encompasses a combination of biophysical, experiential, and symbolic elements as described by four principal qualities: natural, undeveloped, untrammeled, and having outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.*



- Designated Wilderness Areas
- Lake Mead National Recreation Area
- Bureau of Land Management



## OVERVIEW

**WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
 Lake Mead National Recreation Area  
 United States Department of the Interior  
 Bureau of Land Management  
 National Park Service  
 DSC • 602



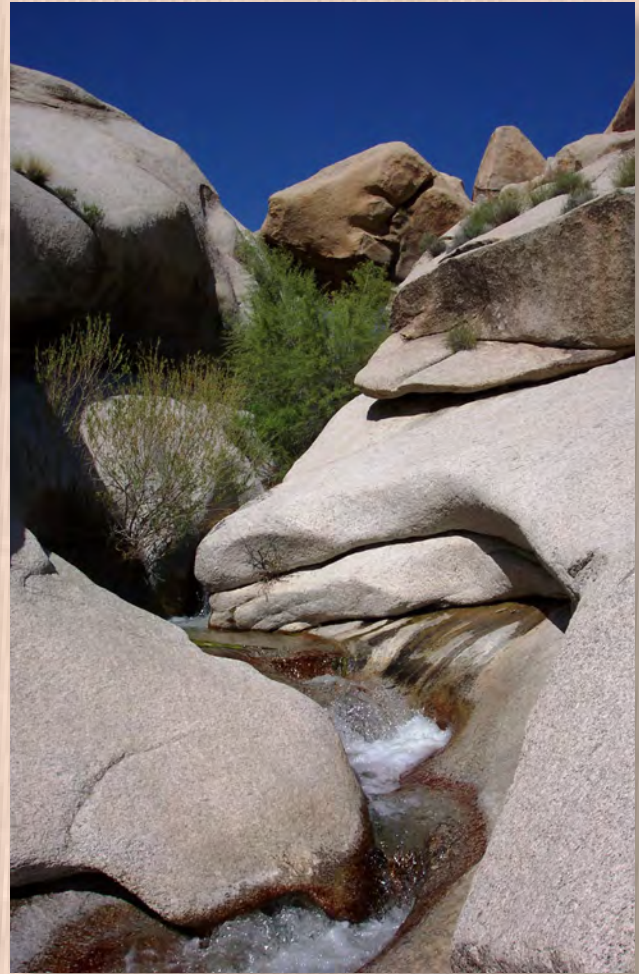


# The Preliminary Alternatives

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NPS, and BLM policies require that the wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement examine alternative approaches for managing the wilderness areas. Evaluating these alternatives allows managers, visitors, partners, tribes, and interested citizens to explore different ways to protect resources, manage use, and resolve conflicts. This ensures that trends, impacts, tradeoffs, and the public's ideas and concerns have been considered before a management approach is selected for the wilderness areas.

This newsletter presents three preliminary alternatives that represent a range of options for how the wilderness areas can be managed to ensure resource protection and high-quality visitor experiences in the future. Potential climbing management options are separated from the preliminary alternatives. After gathering public input (please see page 1 of this newsletter, which discusses how to comment on the wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement) those climbing options that best meet the purpose of the wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement would be included in the agencies' preferred alternative. As you review the alternatives, let us know if these concepts represent your desired conditions and experiences for the wilderness areas.

The three preliminary alternatives primarily focus on different ways to provide visitor access into and within the wilderness areas and to manage visitor use. Each alternative would emphasize resource preservation and enhancement of wilderness character. Each of the alternatives is consistent with laws and NPS and BLM policies governing wilderness. It is important to stress that no decisions have been reached on which of these preliminary alternatives will be the agencies' preferred alternative.



## Alternative A – No Action

Alternative A provides a baseline for evaluating changes and impacts in the other alternatives. In this alternative, the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management would continue to provide minimal management of the eight wilderness areas as has been the case since the wilderness areas were established in 2002. In this alternative, NPS and BLM managers would continue managing visitors as they have in the past, relying on approved plans.

For the foreseeable future, there would be no major change in the management of the wilderness areas. NPS and BLM managers would continue to protect and maintain current natural and cultural resource conditions in the areas, and provide for appropriate high-quality visitor experiences. Existing visitor uses (e.g., hiking and rock climbing) would continue. Dispersed access into the areas would continue. The agencies would not change access to or within the wilderness areas, nor would they change current efforts in educating visitors about the areas.



# The Preliminary Alternatives



## Alternative B

This alternative would provide more opportunities for visitors to access most of the wilderness areas compared to alternative A, with particular attention to the Bridge Canyon, Spirit Mountain, and Pinto Valley wilderness areas. The agencies would provide a variety of opportunities for appropriate wilderness activities, including provisions for both day users and overnight users. Additional efforts would be made to educate the public about the presence of the wilderness areas and the opportunities that are available, as well as appropriate behaviors and uses in these areas.

Entry to the wilderness areas would be improved through the establishment of access points at various locations. These access points would generally consist of small vehicle parking areas, informational kiosks, and/or signs. Dispersed use would continue to be encouraged, while the establishment and maintenance of official routes would concentrate use in some areas. A total of approximately 25 miles of routes would be officially designated in the wilderness areas in this alternative.

Increased attention would be given to management activities in the Bridge Canyon, Spirit Mountain, and Pinto Valley wilderness areas to ensure their values are protected and unacceptable impacts do not occur. Natural and cultural resource management would primarily focus on restoration of disturbed areas, long-term inventory and monitoring, and mitigation of disturbances by people where appropriate.

## Alternative C

Like alternative B, alternative C would improve wilderness access at various points. However, this alternative would provide more user facilities than alternative B. New trailheads on the wilderness boundaries would be established and a total of approximately 44 miles of routes would be officially designated in the wilderness areas in alternative C.

As with alternative B, dispersed use would continue to be encouraged, while the establishment and maintenance of official routes would concentrate use in some areas. Natural and cultural resource management would primarily concentrate on restoration of disturbed areas, long-term inventory and monitoring of natural and cultural resources, and mitigation of disturbances by people where appropriate.





# Rock Climbing Management Options

Climbing is a legitimate wilderness activity. However, the placement of fixed anchors is generally prohibited in order to protect the undeveloped quality of wilderness areas. Tribal consultations have also indicated the use of fixed anchors within the Spirit Mountain traditional cultural property and surrounding areas is not compatible with the cultural values of the tribes and conflicts with their heritage and self-identity as a community. Given the sensitivity of this issue and potential impacts associated with the proliferation of fixed anchor use, the NPS and BLM would appreciate your feedback on the following climbing management options suggested for the wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement. These options will eventually be integrated with the three alternatives described above.

## Under all alternatives

- traditional climbing, including the use of removable anchors, would continue to be allowed
- new, intensively bolted routes would not be allowed
- only hand-drilled bolting would be permitted—power drills would be prohibited
- an appropriate setback distance of at least 50 feet from sensitive cultural resources (e.g., petroglyphs and pictographs) would be applied to all scrambling and climbing activities
- the agencies would work with interested members of the public to develop criteria for the removal of selected bolt-intensive routes
- criteria to maintain separation of climbing routes would be developed

## General wilderness

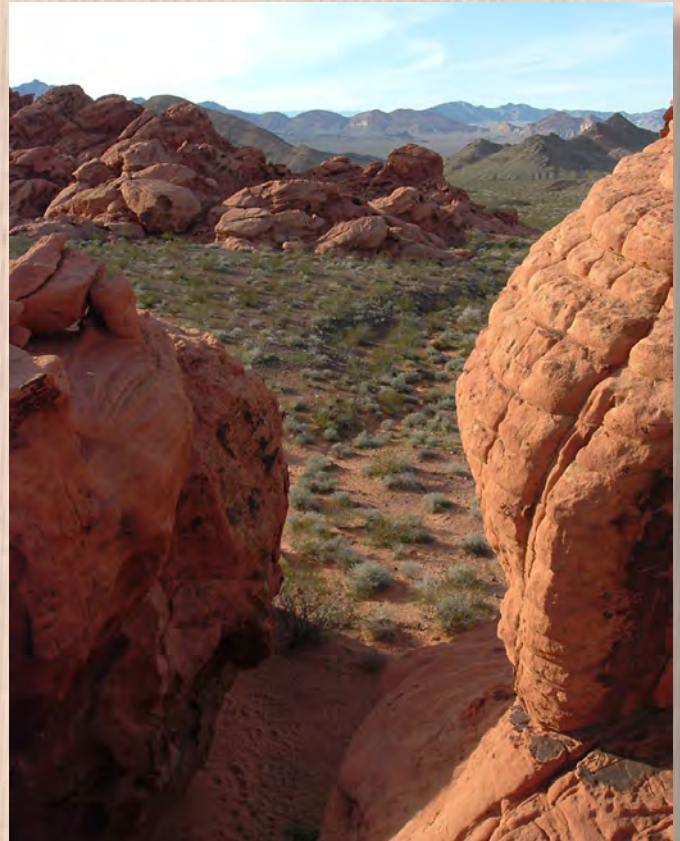
- replacement of anchors and additional fixed anchors would be allowed on a limited basis
- removal of selected bolt-intensive routes would be considered (e.g., separate existing bolt-intensive routes to create less intensive, less obtrusive use of fixed anchors)

## Areas with cultural resources

- replacement anchors and additional fixed anchors may be allowed after consultation with tribes
- removal of selected bolt-intensive routes would be considered

## Within the Spirit Mountain traditional cultural property

- fixed anchors would be removed
- replacement anchors and new fixed anchors would not be authorized





## Next Steps

After public review of the preliminary alternatives and rock climbing management options, and analysis of the impacts of the alternatives, the NPS-BLM planning team will identify a preferred alternative. A draft wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement will then be prepared and distributed to the public for review and comment. After analysis of public comments on the draft document, a final wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement will be prepared.

The planning process is expected to be completed by 2015. The NPS regional director for the Pacific West Region and the BLM Nevada state director are the approving officials who will sign the record of decisions. The plan will then be implemented by the agencies.

Public open house events to obtain comments and suggestions on the wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement are scheduled to be held in southern Nevada at the following times:

Monday, March 18th 4:00 – 6:00 PM Mohave Community College, Room 2. 3400 Highway 95, Bullhead City, AZ

Tuesday, March 19th 4:00 – 6:00 PM Boulder City Library, large meeting room, 701 Adams Boulevard, Boulder City, NV

Thursday, March 21st 4:00 – 6:00 PM James Gibson Library, large meeting room, 100 W Lake Mead Pkwy Henderson, NV

## Schedule

Planning Process for the Wilderness Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement		
Estimated Timeframe	Planning Activity	Public Involvement Opportunities
Winter 2012–Spring 2013	<b>Preliminary alternatives</b> – Develop and evaluate a range of options for how the wilderness areas can be managed to ensure resource protection, enhance wilderness character, and provide quality visitor experiences in the future.	Read this newsletter and send your comments via the internet at <a href="http://parkplanning.nps.gov">http://parkplanning.nps.gov</a> . Click on Lake Mead National Recreation Area and then “Wilderness Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement” to submit your comments; or mail your comments to Lake Mead National Recreation Area, c/o Denver Service Center – Planning, P.O. Box 25287, Denver, CO 80225-0287. Attend an open house in Southern Nevada (see above).
Spring 2013–Winter 2014	<b>Prepare and publish the draft wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement</b> – Review public, partner, government, and other comments from interested public.	Review the draft wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement and provide comments. Public open house events will be held in Henderson, Nevada, and Laughlin, Nevada, on October 2 and 3, 2013.
Winter 2014–Fall 2014	<b>Revise, prepare, and publish the final wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement</b> – Analyze comments, prepare responses to comments, revise draft document, distribute to the public.	
Winter 2014–2015 and beyond	<b>Implement the approved plan</b> – Prepare and issue “record of decision,” and implement the plan as funding allows.	Work with the Lake Mead National Recreation Area staff, public, partners, and interested public to implement the final wilderness management plan / environmental impact statement.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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