



Preparation of an Environmental Assessment/Initial Study for Reconstruction of Bonnie Clare Road



Newsletter
March 2017

Background

The National Park Service (NPS), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration Central Federal Lands Highway Division (FHWA), is considering reconstructing the Bonnie Clare Road within Death Valley National Park (park) from its intersection with Ubehebe Crater Road to the park boundary at the Nevada-California border. Bonnie Clare Road serves as an access point for the northeastern portion of the park and is the most direct route of travel for visitors coming from Nevada. It provides access to the Grapevine and Last Chance mountain ranges in the park, which includes historic Scotty's Castle, Ubehebe Crater, Mesquite Spring, and several backcountry sites.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act, the NPS is preparing an Environmental Assessment/Initial Study (EA/IS) for the project. The public scoping process for the EA/IS has begun and comments are invited through April 14, 2017. The EA/IS will analyze a range of alternatives to meet project objectives, evaluate issues and impacts on park resources and values, and identify mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.



Purpose of and Need for the Project

The purpose of the proposed project is to reestablish a safe, sustainable, resilient, and efficient driving route from the Nevada Beatty entrance to the North Highway (CA 190). The proposed project is needed because the majority of this section of Bonnie Clare Road was damaged or destroyed in October 2015, when the area experienced a major rainstorm and subsequent flash flood. The flood destroyed approximately 70% of the road. Bonnie Clare Road is currently closed to the public until the road can be reconstructed.



Options Under Consideration

Preliminary options that have been identified for reconstruction of the road include reconstructing approximately 7.6 miles of the road from milepost (MP) 33.5 northeast to MP 40.9. The reconstructed road would have two 10-foot wide paved travel lanes, each with a 1-foot shoulder. From the existing water intake facility to Scotty's Castle (approximately 1.5 miles), a water line and utility lines would be placed beneath one travel lane of the road. The water line and utility lines would be placed in a 3-foot-wide by 6-foot-deep trench likely beneath the south bound travel lane. The NPS and FHWA are also preparing the design for the repair and fortification of a dirt berm that protects the water intake facility. The reconstructed road would generally follow the alignment of the pre-flood road, with some modifications as needed to elevate the road above the new flow line of Grapevine Canyon. The reconstructed road would be designed to avoid impacts on the canyon walls, accommodate channel movements associated with a 5- to 10-year flood

event, lower traffic speeds in the canyon, and minimize impacts on archeological and ethnographic resources. Also under consideration is not reconstructing the road (the no action alternative).

Next Steps

Park staff encourage public participation throughout the planning process. There will be two opportunities to comment formally on the project – one starting now during initial project scoping and again following release of the EA/IS. Comments received during the scoping period will be used to help define the issues and concerns to be addressed in the EA/IS, while also assisting with analyzing the different alternatives. The EA/IS will analyze a range of alternatives to meet project objectives and evaluate potential impacts on park resources such as visitor use and safety, cultural resources, special status species, wetlands, floodplains, and other important park resources.

How to Comment

Comments must be received in writing by close of business on April 14, 2017. Comments can be submitted or online by visiting:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/deva>.

Comments may also be sent to the following mailing address:

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



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. Although you can ask in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, NPS cannot guarantee we will be able to do so.

Keep Informed

For updates and information about the process, press releases, newsletters, planning documents, and the EA/IS when completed, please visit our website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/deva>.



Reconstruct Bonnie Clare Road

-  Bonnie Clare Road
-  Death Valley National Park Boundary

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Miles

