

Greetings friends,

Time for some updates on happenings at the springs!

Many members have asked where we are with respect to the issuance of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement that will eventually lead to the Saline Valley Warm Springs Management Plan being developed by the Park Service.

In the fall, the Park Service asked SPA to invite its "old-timer" members to participate in a survey being conducted by an independent group of anthropologists (New South Associates) contracted by the NPS to gather data and historical perspective on the cultural and historical landscape of the Warm Springs area. A call was sent out to the membership and the response was great. Those who were not asked to participate in a sit-down interview were given questionnaires and surveys to allow our input in identifying the cultural resources of the Springs that the Park says it wants to protect. A team from New South Associates spent several days camping at the springs interviewing folks and collecting data toward compiling a report to the Park.

Meanwhile, we did get word that Chief Ranger McKinlay Jones addressed the Sierra Club's Desert Committee in Shoshone recently, and stated that the Park Service will release the Saline Valley Warm Springs DEIS in the fall, and that the park expects "significant pushback" from the groups that have traditionally used the area. SPA contacted the Park to ask about this statement, and the reply is: Ranger McKinlay-Jones and I (Jonathon Penman-Brotzman) spoke about the "significant pushback" statement. She wants to clarify that this was in response to a large number of public comments that preferred the "no action alternative" in the preliminary alternatives and not in regards to any park decision in the draft EIS. The park is just now developing a range of alternatives for the draft EIS that may look similar, but not identical, to those in the preliminary version. There is no identified preferred alternative at this time.

Update on the Environmental Impact Statement:

The park just completed another internal chapter review and is still on track to release the draft for public comment later on this year—exact date to be determined.

So Meanwhile stay tuned and we will see how the DEIS looks later this year. SPA will certainly let its membership know when this draft is available.

We did get a request from the Park Service that I would like to forward to you now (previously disseminated on the forum):

Could you help us spread a word from the Chief Ranger regarding improvements? At this time no improvements like picnic tables, etc should be made by the public. Things like picnic tables are welcome as long as they are portable and are removed after use.

The story behind the request was that one of the members of the visitor community brought new picnic tables into the Lower Springs as the traditional tables had been removed to the lawn area, and potlucks were getting challenging. The new tables were painted (along with other woodwork in the area) to match the traditional décor. The Park removed the new tables, and declined a request by SPA on behalf of the donor to reconsider their decision to remove the tables, but the old tables have been returned to their original location.

President's Day was a grand event with perfect warm (hot) weather and large crowds. Perhaps the best softball game ever was played between the Skins and the Misfits ending in a tied game at 23-23. Team captains decided to not go into overtime given the heat of the day. MVP went to Scott and Pam, who graciously traveled into Saline on the day of the game (a one-day visit only) for the sole purpose of fulfilling their traditional roles as umpire and scorekeeper.

On Tuesday, an entourage of Park personnel, including the interim Superintendent came through and visited both Lower Warm Springs and Palm Springs, and commented on how spotless and clean the area was after such a large crowd. Kudos to the community!

On January 24, the SPA board had its annual meeting, and following is a transcript of that meeting:

Saline Preservation Association
Board of Directors Meeting

Meeting called to order on January 24, 2015, at 9:10 a.m. via Skype. Directors present included John Dukes, John Runkle, and Tom Ganner.

Also present was Paul Sieving, who was nominated to the board by John Runkle. The motion was seconded by Tom Ganner, and the board unanimously voted to approve Paul Sieving to the Board of Directors. It was agreed to update the SPA website to reflect the change and include director titles on the contact page.

The Board discussed the SPA Forum policy of allowing unregistered guests to post to the forum. It was decided to change the permissions on the forum to allow unregistered guests to be able to view posts on the forum, but to require registration to be able to post to the forum. Tom Ganner indicated he would look into how to make those changes. (Those changes have subsequently been made.) It is also approved that all board members be made administrators of the Forum for the purposes of monitoring forum activity.

The Board discussed changing the Association by-laws

The Board has approved and directed Tom Ganner to include the Association FEIN number on the SPA website on behalf of donors for tax advantages.

The Board agrees to hold annual meetings during the first quarter of each calendar year.

The Board has become aware of the possibility of the Palm Springs Camp Hosts (Georg and Ria) not returning next year. John Runkle will be traveling to the springs shortly and will inquire as to how SPA can help resolve any issues that would prevent their return the following season.

Tom Ganner will send an inquiry to Jonathan Penman-Brotzman, Environmental Protection Specialist (Compliance) with the DVNP, to inquire as to the disposition of the park to a recent requests by SPA to reconsider the recent donation of picnic tables to the Lower Warm Springs. This will also be a good opportunity to request a copy of the report being prepared by the anthropologists contracted by the DVNP to study historical and cultural landscape of the Saline Valley