



## Repair Flood-Damaged Eureka Valley Road

### Friends and Neighbors,

The National Park Service (NPS) will soon begin a planning effort at Death Valley National Park (the Park) to repair flood-damaged unpaved roads and camping area in southern Eureka Valley.

As you know, Eureka Dunes are very special! They are designated as a National Natural Landmark because of their height, beauty, and endemic species.

Illegal off-road driving is of high concern near Eureka Dunes. When roadways are not repaired, visitors may be unsure where they can drive and can more easily take vehicles off-road.

This project is also proposing to rehabilitate Eureka Dunes Primitive Campground, enhancing recreational opportunities and reducing visitor impacts on sensitive natural and cultural resources.

The Park wants to develop a series of proposed actions to repair roadways, remove and prevent off-road vehicle tracks, reconfigure visitor use areas, and enhance visitor services. This newsletter includes information regarding this project and key points for public participation.

We invite you to participate in the planning process by submitting your ideas to help inform proposed actions to Repair Flood-Damaged Eureka Valley Road. We would like to hear any thoughts you feel are relevant and important for this planning process and we encourage you to stay connected and be an active participant in this planning process.

Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

Mike Reynolds

Superintendent, Death Valley National Park

### Key Points for the Plan:

- Repair South Eureka Valley road, including engineering roadways to prevent off-road travel, fix sand traps, grade at proper depths and harden against future floods, re-establish road prisms, and increase signage.
- Rehabilitate flood-damaged and visitor-caused overuse at Eureka Dunes and reconfigure the current developed area to separate day and overnight use areas, with clearer delineations to prevent disturbances.
- Prevent resource damage by enhancing visitor services and regulating types of use throughout the area.

The NPS intends to officially start the review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in April 2026.

At this time, the NPS is unsure if the NEPA analysis will result in Categorical Exclusions or an Environmental Assessment (EA). If these proposed actions result in an EA, there will be another opportunity for public input later this year.

Implementation would start in 2027.

# Examples of Flood-Damaged Roads and the Impacts



Flood-damaged narrow roadway at Eureka Valley.  
NPS/Jeremy Stoltzfus



A 'sand trap,' deep sand in Eureka Road  
NPS/Jeremy Stoltzfus



Vehicle tracks in Wilderness on Eureka Dunes  
NPS

## Flood-damaged unpaved roadways

South Eureka Valley Road provides access to Eureka Dunes from Big Pine – Death Valley Road. It continues past the dunes to Dedeckera Canyon, becoming Steel Pass Road connecting to Saline Valley Warm Springs. The road is adjacent to Congressionally-designated Wilderness and surrounded by natural and cultural resources.

Flood events, particularly Hurricane Hilary in 2023, heavily damaged the road and caused it to be closed for nearly a year. Temporary repairs allows the road to reopen. Issues remain that still need to be addressed to protect Park natural and cultural resources and deliver a safe visitor experience.

## Illegal actions from flooded roads, damaged roads, or unclear delineation or regulations

Below to the left, we see a new “roadway” created by visitors through native vegetation either because the location of the road was unclear, difficult to find, or was too challenging for their vehicle or lack of skill and an illegal route was taken.

This area also suffers from visitors creating their own fire rings, campgrounds, and human waste areas. While some of these may be malicious intent, it is more likely that the area doesn’t have sufficient visitor services when visitation is increased due to area flooding and other closed locations to prevent these illegal actions from taking place.



Illegal off-road vehicle at Eureka Valley.  
NPS/Amber Laird



Illegal/Out of bounds camping.  
NPS/Amber Laird



Human waste and paper.  
NPS/Amber Laird

# Background Issues & Planning Ideas

The following are long-term management needs that have been identified for this project:

- The roadbed is in extremely poor condition. Road edges are deteriorated, below grade in some areas, above grade in some areas, or nonexistent.
- Drainage control issues exist for portions of the roadways and campground, resulting in periodic flooding and maintenance issues.
- Narrow travel lanes on the roads force large vehicles to drive over berm edges or off the roadway entirely, particularly when passing flood debris, flood damage, or another large vehicle.
- Illegal visitor activity like out-of-bounds camping and off-road driving caused soil compaction and damage to natural and cultural resources.
- Flooding exacerbated existing sand traps in the road, causing additional off-road damage when visitors attempted to drive around the sand traps, resulting in multi-lane, visitor-created, driving lanes outside of the established road corridor.



Compaction/Erosion of large area, encroaching wilderness boundary.  
NPS/Amber Laird

## Alternatives Under Consideration

The NPS is considering a variety of preliminary proposed actions to help meet the long-term management needs noted to the left.

The NPS proposes to:

- Add aggregate material to soft sections of the road,
- grade the road at proper depth and angle for hardening against any future flooding,
- install berms at appropriate height and width for shoulders and preventing off-road driving,
- re-establish road prisms,
- fix sand traps, and
- install signage.

Given the extent of the flood damage and overuse at Eureka Dunes Primitive Campground, the NPS proposes upgrades including:

- more or larger toilets,
- demarking and/or moving the dune trailhead,
- adding fire rings and picnic tables to meet increased visitation,
- delineating campsites more clearly,
- better separating and signing day-use areas from overnight areas,
- restoring vegetation and soils impacted by out-of-bounds camping, and
- adding signs at the wilderness boundary and restoration areas.

The current management strategy includes unscheduled ranger patrols, temporary road fixes, and visitor self-regulation.

The current strategy and the proposed actions would be analyzed under NEPA processes to determine impacts. The public are encouraged to submit feedback make additional proposals.



Off-road tracks adjacent to Eureka Valley Road.  
NPS/Brent Smith

# Resource Impacts from Off-Road Driving

Driving off-road in sandy places may not seem like a big deal. After all, it's windy here and the sand will cover the tracks, right?

Sand dunes in northern Death Valley National Park are the only habitat of several endemic plants: Eureka Dunegrass, Eureka Dunes Evening Primrose, and Shining Milkvetch. These rare plants can be damaged by off-road driving, even just from soil compaction of their roots.

In areas without sand, tracks can last for many years, leaving a visible scar affecting future visitors' experience.

About 93% of Death Valley National Park is Congressionally-Designated Wilderness and off-road driving is prohibited in order to preserve wilderness character.



Eureka Dunegrass.  
NPS

## Questions for Public Consideration



Foot steps on top of dune with striped mountains in background.  
NPJamie Jirele

1. What suggestions do you have for Eureka Valley Road?
2. What suggestions do you have for Eureka Valley Primitive Campground?
3. What other comments do you have about the preliminary proposed actions?

We invite you to respond to these questions online and we welcome your additional ideas, questions, concerns, suggestions and potential topics for consideration.

Comments can be made at this link through April 6, 2026:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/EurekaPlanning>

## Planning Process

The design and NEPA processes are expected to occur concurrently where design can be done to avoid negative impacts, and design can help determine if the NEPA documentation should be a CE or an EA.

- Pre-NEPA work to inform design – April 2026
- 30% or Schematic design – September 2026\*
- NEPA Pathway determined and begins – October 2026\*
- Anticipated Implementation – 2027\*

\*Dates are approximate and subject to change.