

# Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Nevada/Arizona

February 2015

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Dear Neighbors, Friends, and Partners:

I am pleased to announce that the National Park Service (NPS) is in the process of preparing a Foundation Document for planning and management at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. I invite you to join with us in this endeavor.

A Foundation Document involves revisiting a national park unit's core mission and significance, most important resources and values, and the interpretive themes that tell the park's important stories. Although the Foundation Document is not a decision-making document and does not include actions or management strategies, it describes a shared understanding of what is most important about the park. In this capacity, the Foundation Document will reestablish the underlying guidance for future management and planning decisions for the National Park Service at Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

Because many of Lake Mead's original NPS planning documents are dated, preparing the Foundation Document is the first step for considering the park's future planning and study needs.

Your voice is important to us. I invite you to play a role in charting the park's future by reviewing and providing comments on the draft document so that we may take your thoughts into consideration as we finalize the Foundation Document. You may submit your feedback in a couple of ways:

1. Input your comments online at:  
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=56689>
2. Fill out and mail the enclosed comment form

All comments should be submitted by February 18, 2015.

Thank you for your interest in the national treasure we call Lake Mead National Recreation Area. I look forward to continuing to work with you as we plan for its future.

Sincerely,

Patrick Gubbins  
Acting Superintendent



## PURPOSE

The purpose statement identifies the specific reasons for establishment of a particular park. The purpose statement for Lake Mead National Recreation Area was drafted through a careful analysis of its enabling proclamation and legislation and the legislative history that influenced its development. The purpose statement lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about the park.

## DRAFT LAKE MEAD NRA PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of Lake Mead National Recreation Area is to provide diverse public recreation, benefit, and use on Lakes Mead and Mohave and surrounding lands in a manner that preserves the ecological, geological, cultural, historical, scenic, scientific, and wilderness resources of the park.



## SIGNIFICANCE

Significance statements express why Lake Mead National Recreation Area's resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

## DRAFT LAKE MEAD NRA SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS

- As the first and largest national recreation area in the national park system, Lake Mead National Recreation Area is an expression of the national value of expanding outdoor recreation opportunities. It manages public access to the waters, shorelines, and surrounding lands of the park, including the largest reservoir in the United States.
- Lake Mead National Recreation Area offers dramatic scenery and a diverse array of land- and water-based recreation opportunities in close proximity to several large urban centers of the southwestern United States. With approximately seven million visitors each year, the park supports some of the nation's highest levels of water recreation and backcountry use.
- Situated in the northeastern Mojave Desert near the interface with both the Great Basin Desert to the north and the Sonoran Desert to the south, Lake Mead National Recreation Area preserves a great diversity of biological resources, intact habitat, and ecological connectivity in the region, including many endemic, threatened and endangered species and rare natural communities.
- Lake Mead National Recreation Area showcases a remarkable collection of geological and paleontological features spanning more than 1.4 billion years of earth history. These exposed features, which include bajadas, lava flows, granite plutons, boulder fields, volcanoes, fault lines, petrified wood, and other fossils, collectively provide insights into complex geologic processes and represent some of the oldest rocks in this geographic region.
- The high diversity of cultural resources found at Lake Mead National Recreation Area—both on land and submerged—remain as evidence of a 10,000-year continuum of human history in the region. . These resources represent many human themes and stories that relate to numerous Native American cultures and their adaption to and migration through the landscape, as well as European settlement, mining, ranching, exploration, and the construction of Hoover Dam.
- Lake Mead National Recreation Area contains vast backcountry and wilderness lands, including nine designated wilderness areas that cover more than 185,000 acres and several other proposed, eligible, or potential wilderness lands that encompass an additional 373,000 acres. These lands serve to preserve ecological resources and processes and provide exemplary opportunities for primitive recreation and desert solitude.
- Given its inherent association with the reservoirs and infrastructure managed by water supply agencies, Lake Mead National Recreation Area provides a focal point for scientific research and policy discussions of national importance, including: the implications of urbanization on water scarcity, the need for water use efficiency and sustainable land uses, the importance of maintaining high water quality, and the effects of climate change on the natural and human environment.

## INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from, and should reflect, park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

## DRAFT LAKE MEAD NRA INTERPRETIVE THEMES

- The striking landscapes of Lake Mead National Recreation Area awaken the human spirit with opportunities for wilderness solitude and offer millions of visitors a place for relaxation and renewal.
- The convergence of three deserts, two geographical provinces, and North America's largest inland reservoir creates a mosaic of landforms and rich, diverse, but fragile ecosystems that allows us to explore the lessons of interdependence found in the natural world around us.
- Water is life in the desert, creating diversity and prosperity that has long attracted people to this area. Over the long continuum of human activity at Lake Mead National Recreation Area, interaction with the river changed the people, changed the river, and changed the desert. This relationship continues today and into the future as new opportunities and challenges emerge.



## FUNDAMENTAL RESOURCES AND VALUES

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

### DRAFT LAKE MEAD NRA FUNDAMENTAL RESOURCES AND VALUES

- **Abundant Land and Water Recreation.** The park offers abundant opportunities for a wide range of land- and water-based recreational pursuits. Frontcountry settings offer swimming, beach lounging, boating, sailing, kayaking, fishing, hiking/walking, bicycling, picnicking, as well as car, tent, and recreational vehicle camping. Backcountry settings offer opportunities for self-reliant and self-directed adventures in boating, river rafting, boat tours, self-contained camping, hiking, backpacking, 4x4 travel on approved roads, climbing and canyoneering, swimming, SCUBA diving, fishing, wildlife watching, and hunting.
- **Opportunities to Appreciate Spectacular Scenery.** The park offers opportunities to appreciate spectacular visual resources including: deep canyons, dry washes, sheer cliffs, near and distant mountain ranges, the variable reflection and motion of the lakes, colorful soils and rock formations, mosaics of visual texture provided by different vegetation, and appealing contrasts between rugged desert landscapes and vast water bodies.
- **Riverine and Reservoir Ecosystems.** The park includes riverine and reservoir ecosystems of the Colorado River system, including open water, shoreline environments, and outstanding water quality at the heart of the park.
- **Groundwater.** The park contains groundwater resources of sufficient quality and quantity to support springs as well as the specialized aquatic and riparian habitats they provide.
- **Diverse Array of Geologic Features and Processes.** The park encompasses a diverse array of geologic features and dynamic geomorphic and hydrogeologic processes that give rise to iconic landforms, resilient ecosystems, rich mineral resources, and important paleontological finds.
- **Functional Desert Habitats.** The park preserves resilient and ecologically functional native plant and animal assemblages within diverse terrestrial desert habitats.
- **Species of Conservation Interest.** The park hosts populations and protected habitat for plant and animal species of conservation interest, including federally listed species and their critical habitats, species protected under conservation plans in lieu of listing, species that are new to science, and ecologically rare and endemic species.
- **Lands with Wilderness Character.** The park contains nine designated wilderness areas (185,080 acres) that possess the following qualities of wilderness character: untrammeled, undeveloped, natural, outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, and other features of value. The park also contains another 91,963 acres of proposed wilderness, 264,615 acres of eligible wilderness, and 16,816 acres of potential wilderness that may possess these same qualities of wilderness character. These wilderness lands provide both easily accessible and challenging wilderness experiences for park visitors in rugged desert terrain. The wilderness lands also protect large tracts of important habitat and critical water sources for range-wide benefits to many different plant and animal species.





- **Science and Research.** The park provides abundant opportunities for applied and empirical research, including the scholarly studies of social science, natural and cultural resources, and physical and biological processes, including climate change. These opportunities include the preservation, curation, and use of park archives and collections.
- **Cultural Landscapes and Historic Structures.** The park contains intact historic structures and cultural landscapes. The historic structures include buildings, roads, railroads, and a variety of other structures constructed to serve past human activities, such as agriculture, ranching, mining, and the construction of Hoover Dam. Cultural landscapes include both natural elements (such as land forms, soil, and vegetation) and cultural elements (such as archeological sites and historic structures and submerged resources) that reflect human adaptation and use of the natural environment. Identified potential cultural landscapes within the park relate to the Puebloan occupation, historic mining and settlement, and park development.
- **History and Cultural Anthropology.** The park helps preserve exemplary stories, places, and other resources associated with Native Americans and their traditional practices, early European and European American exploration, settlement, farming, religious activities, mining, ranching, and government activities that influenced the environment.
- **Archeology.** The park includes well-preserved archeological sites (including submerged sites) that contribute to our understanding of the human ecology throughout the Holocene. Prehistoric archeological sites range from prehistoric surface artifact scatters to deeply stratified multicomponent sites, pueblo ruins, and rock art sites. Historic archeological sites range from trash scatters and early mining and ranching sites to town sites and complex industrial sites associated with the construction of Hoover Dam.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Planning Activity	Approximate Timeframe
Public input on draft Foundation Document	Feb. 3-18, 2015
Review and analyze public comments and finalize Foundation Document	Spring 2015
Park uses Foundation Document to prioritize and begin future planning needs	Summer 2015 and beyond
Public input sought on future planning needs	Summer 2015 and beyond

## WAYS TO COMMENT AND PROVIDE INPUT

Comments on the draft Foundation Document are welcome and will be accepted during the 15-day public review and comment period from February 3-18, 2015. There are a couple ways to submit comments.

You may submit your comments electronically only on the NPS planning website ([http://parkplanning.nps.gov/LAKE\\_Foundation](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/LAKE_Foundation)). To submit a comment, select "Comment on Document" from the left menu.

You may also submit written comments by returning the enclosed comment form by February 18, 2015.

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 publicly available at any time. Although 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.

## Comment Form

Lake Mead National Recreation Area  
Nevada/Arizona  
February 2015

National Park Service  
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Use this form to give us your ideas and opinions. Attach additional sheets if needed. Mail to Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Foundation Document Comments, 601 Nevada Way, Boulder City, Nevada 89005. You may also submit comments online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=56689>. Please submit your comments by February 18, 2015.

1. *Park Purpose.* Does the draft purpose statement capture why you think Lake Mead NRA was made a National Park Service unit?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. *Significance Statements.* The draft significance statements describe what is unique about Lake Mead NRA. Do they capture what you feel is most important?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. *Interpretive Themes.* Do the draft interpretive themes capture what the American people should know about Lake Mead NRA?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. *Fundamental Resources and Values.* The draft fundamental resources and values (FRVs) are the ideas and concrete resources that merit primary consideration for protection and management by the National Park Service. Do they capture what you think is most valuable?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Please share any additional comments or suggestions for us to consider as we refine the draft Foundation Document.