

## SPA BOD Meeting minutes –5/5/13

The SPA Board of Directors met on May 5, 2013, via SKYPE conference. John Runkle, President of SPA, convened the BOD conference at 9:00 a.m. PST. Present for the conference were: John Runkle, John Dukes, Rick Brower, and Tom Ganner. The purpose for the conference consisted of review of notes and agenda items for the upcoming meeting between SPA Board members and the National Park Service at Furnace Creek on May 7, 2013.

Tom Ganner pointed out that the purpose of the meeting is to introduce SPA to the new administration of the National Park Service in Death Valley, and that the agenda used for last year's meeting with the previous administration could likely be used again in the time allowed for this meeting. There are specific agenda items proposed by Rick Brower that have merit but might not fit into the allotted time provided for the meeting. Items that should be addressed include SPA's use of the forum to help address issues that arise that may be potential points of friction between NPS rules/policies/management plans & procedures and visitors to the Springs, in other words, we can answer a lot of questions posed on the SPA forum site, that way DVNP will not have to deal with minor issues that are being constantly revisited. This should be included as a component of Agenda item 5a (The establishment of an online forum as one of SPA's contributions to the valley in the recent past.) Rick Brower also suggests the Board consider ADA issues and it was agreed that this is an item for future ongoing discussion within the Board, but not be included in the current agenda proposal to the NPS for May 7.

It is agreed by all Board members that an immediate concern for inclusion in the agenda is the need for pumping the vault toilets, particularly at Palm Springs, where the vault is so full it has required the camp host to lock the facility. SPA has recently made efforts to locate a company it can contract to pump the facility, but without success. It is suggested that SPA offer to contribute funds to the NPS for the purpose of using their personnel and equipment to pump the facility. The SPA membership has indicated a willingness to make contributions toward such a fund. John Dukes will continue to research possible options for contracting a company to pump the vaults. Tom Ganner will update the proposed agenda to include these items for discussion.

The Board discussed the question of reimbursement expenses incurred by Board members in traveling to Furnace Creek. If approved by the board, travel expenses to meetings with DVNP in places like Furnace Creek or equal, may be reimbursed for mileage and, if needed, an overnight stay at a motel, by the following (email) method.

- a) Board member provides proof of mileage, a copy of text from Google Maps showing approx mileage and time will suffice. , This mileage reimbursement will be at the defined Government rates (currently \$0.565 / mile).
- b) Board member provides name and location of Motel. This accommodation will be reimbursed at the defined Government rates (Currently \$77 / night).
- c) On receipt, the Board member will receive PayPal re-imbusement from SPA funds as appropriate via email.

The Board agrees to continue to seek a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the NPS as part of the proposed agenda, and John Dukes will carry a copy of the historic MOU to Furnace Creek.

Rick Brower will request his wife attend the meeting to act as scribe and record notes of the meeting.

Tom Ganner will not be able to attend the meeting, but will provide a background letter of introduction of himself that Board members present at the meeting can read and deliver.

The conference was adjourned at 10 p.m., PST.

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## Notes on DVNP-SPA Summit, Tuesday May 7th 2013

Location: Furnace Creek, Death Valley National Park, California. The meeting commenced at 1:00pm in the main Visitor's Center, present for DVNP; Kathy Billings - Superintendent, Cheryl Chipman - Public Information Officer, Mike Cipra - Environmental Protection Specialist, Kelly Fuhrmann - Chief of Resources Management.

for SPA; John (Oregon) Runkle - Pres. John (English) Dukes - vP, (Ranger) Rick Brower, Timothy (Timbo) Hines and as (Maj.) Tom Ganner - Sect. was in AK, acting as secretary, Ursula , thanks Ursula.

Each SPA and DVNP participant gave a brief history of themselves and their relationship to the Saline Valley. An introductory letter from Mjr. Tom was read. This was followed by a brief review, by SPA, of the history of Saline Valley with regard to culture and protocols and the SPA website. The DVNP appreciates that there is an organization that represent the Saline Valley, that it has a website and, is pleased with the information shared there. Kathy was interested in knowing that SPA is a legitimate not-for-profit 501C(3) organization. Kathy has been with the NPS for more than 24 years, in all 4 deserts, Great Basin National Park and Mojave National Preserve.

There was a inconclusive conversation regarding the condition of the South Pass. There was no mention of repairs to be made or otherwise.

Discussion continued regarding the public comment period for the Management Plan, there were approximately 540 comments received. Most of the comments came from SPA members and/or from pilots (RAF) who fly in to use the springs. Scoping of the Management plan has been completed but with the new Park Superintendent arriving, the plan had been put on hold. With the new park superintendent's arrival the park will commence drafting alternatives, those alternatives will be shared with the public once they are developed, probably in the late fall.

Ms. Blair Davenport, DVNP Cultural Resource Manager, would like to see old history data, stories and other information about the culture, back to 1940's including photos of the springs in order to determine if improvements fall into cultural landscape or not.

There was some discussion on the definition of cultural landscape. Later Mike provided the link -

[http://www.nps.gov/cultural\\_landscapes/LandscapesFAQ.html](http://www.nps.gov/cultural_landscapes/LandscapesFAQ.html)

Rick identified some of the sources to facilitate access to historical photos and will assist by supplying them to Ms. Davenport.

There was a lengthy discussion in regards to the 3 outhouses. SPA was informed that the problem would be resolved within the next 1-2 weeks; and in fact they were pumped out on the day of the meeting.

The discussion continued; Right now, if all 4 outhouses are full it takes 2 trips. No outside contractors really want to do the job as it is too far and too hard to get to the springs. Alternatives were suggested by SPA such as adding a toilet. There was talk of moving one of the toilets from Warm Springs to Palm Spring (since the ones up there seem to fill faster), possibly bringing in porta-potties during the high-use times. DVNP was wondering if the toilets are filling faster due to increased use of the springs. SPA felt that use has not increased. Rather it is a matter of no longer being able to dig a new hole as was done in the past. When a hole was full we just moved the outhouse.

DVNP thought that maybe the toilets need to be pumped twice a year, but during the planning process of the new management plan, no major infrastructures changes can be made. However, priorities can be set in the ongoing planning process.

Mention was made that (to reduce fill) George and Rhea at Palm Spring are burning toilet paper. DVNP indicates that cannot continue for health reasons.

DVNP expressed concern over camping area expansion and people camping outside of the allowed boundaries. The concern is not so much that people are camping out of the boundaries but rather vehicles are driving out of the wilderness boundaries and into wilderness, causing damage.

Various comments were made on how the natural landscape keeps camping in check and SPA's observations were that it is not expanding. Some ideas were tossed around, one, that seemed to have the least impact, was to post a map of suggested camping area boundaries so as to not increase impact of land use.

SPA asked if it can post info on the bulletin board at the springs. The DVNP will need to see the posting information first. Nothing can be posted without their and/or Lee Greenwell's approval.

The ongoing request for an MOU will be discussed after the new management plan is completed, the old MOU is defunct.

The sunrise pool can be patched, but cannot be ornamented with rocks collected from a nearby wash: It is against park rules to collect and/or move natural resources: Which hopefully will also end the moving of rocks to block access to existing trails of the previous eras.

The mention of "following the law" was brought up several times by the DVNP. It was made very clear by Park Superintendent Billings that Park Rules, Policies, Doctrines, are Law. Her intent is to do right for the resources and the visitor experience.

The meeting was friendly and understanding on both sides with a group photo at the conclusion.

