

SPA Board meet and greet with Death Valley National Park Service – 11-18-16
Meeting was held at the National Park Visitor Center, Furnace Creek, CA

SPA Board Directors present:

John Runkle, President
John Dukes, Vice President
Michelle Hamilton, Secretary
Bonneau Dickson, Director
Timbo Hynes, Park Liaison
Mike Ramsey, Director

National Park Representatives present:

Mike Reynolds, Park Superintendent - mike_reynolds@nps.gov
Karen McKinlay-Jones, Chief Ranger – karen_mckinlay-jones@nps.gov 760-786-3245
Jonathan Penman-Brotzman, Protection Specialist – jonathan_brotzman@nps.gov 760-786-3227
Abby Wines, Management Assistant – abby_wines@nps.gov 760-786-3221
Nicole Bernard, Backcountry Ranger – nicole_bernard@nps.gov 760-786-3260

2:30 p.m. Meeting starts with a round table introductions

1. Mike Reynolds tells the board how much he loves this area. His goal is relentless communication. He stresses this throughout the meeting. He told us Death Valley National Park was formed in 1994. They have the fewest employees per acre as far as funding. They underwent a major set back by the 2016 flood costing the park \$35 million. They also saw a 60% increase in park visitors over the “super bloom”. He also mentioned that the park views Saline Valley as the 4th most visited place in the park. He commended all of us for keeping the springs so clean and in such nice shape.
2. John Runkle brings up the need for an additional restroom at the upper springs. There is a lot of discussion about this. The Park Service let SPA know that they had put out a contract to pump the restrooms with no bidders. They are still interested if SPA could find someone, that person/company would need to contact Mike Reynolds. At that point the Park Service would send contract specs and put it out to bid again.
3. John Runkle then brought up the need for maintenance of the volcano tub and the sunrise tub. The Park Service said that they saw no problem to this and Jonathan Penman-Brotzman said they had a form for park improvements which he would forward to the Board and they could use it for maintenance projects for the springs. SPA would make sure to have Lee as camp host approval as well.
4. Nicole Bernard brought up that they were still seeking a camp host for the upper springs. The Park Service felt it was important for Lee to have the help of another host. Especially for times he might be out of the valley. Karen McKinlay was of the opinion that Lee and many of their camp hosts are having a tougher time dealing with some of the visitors. She said some of them are just weirder and many are not prepared. For example during the super bloom many visitors bought tents on their way out to the desert and then expected the camp host to put them up. The Park Service liked the job that Lee performs.
5. Abby Wines takes care of the volunteers and she brought up that Saline is the best maintained place. We all told her about the website and the way that we manage the place and take care of it. She would like it if we could track the # of people and # of hours that are spent doing this.

6. Jonathan Penman-Brotzman is in charge of the Saline Valley Warm Springs Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. 22 years ago when Death Valley National Park was first formed there was a mandate that the Park provide this plan. This has been a 22 year project and the plan has to cover all cooperating agencies, BLM, Inyo County, and Timbisha Shoshone tribe. In addition they tried to include all user groups such as hot springs visitors, off road organizations, pilots, environmentalist to name a few. He would like one person from SPA to touch base with him once a month to ensure the Park Service kept their goal of relentless communication. It was decided that Timbo as our park liaison would contact him once a month. He also stressed that we should not fret over the management plan and there would be “no dramatic change from the way it is”.

7. It was brought up by the Park Service of the users to Saline Valley what percentage of them did SPA represent? We couldn't answer that.

4:00 p.m. Meeting adjourned

After the meeting there was discussion about creating a business card promoting the Saline Preservation Association website and Michelle Hamilton was tasked with creating the cards for board approval.