

Saline Preservation Association

SPA

P.O. Box 1941

Lancaster, CA 93539-1941



Summer 2022

Greetings Fellow Friend of Saline Valley,

This newsletter is an update of events and happenings in Saline Valley and Saline Valley Warm Springs. Remember, for real-time news, road conditions about the springs, and all SPA meeting minutes, and previous newsletters go to the Saline Preservation Association (SPA) forum at: <http://forum.salinepreservation.org> .

SPA is a non-profit organization providing an informational conduit both between and among governing agencies and a widely dispersed community who visit the Saline Valley and its Warm Springs. SPA's goal is protection, preservation and conservation of the valley to include geology, wildlife habitat, archeology, and a traditional human presence that emphasizes responsible individual freedom of choice.

News from the National Park Service (NPS)

Submitted by Timbo Hynes, Park Liaison

The outhouse pumper truck is operational, and the plan is to have more scheduled visits but still be able to do shorter notice trips when needed. The NPS is working with the city of Bishop to be able to dump the pumper truck in Bishop. This could make the whole process a little bit easier on the equipment.

The NPS thinks an in-person meeting with SPA sounds great and shooting for the fall sounds like a plan, either in-person or virtual works for them. The NPS prefers in-person, but it is not a deal breaker if virtual means more folks can participate.

The NPS agrees with SPA on the outhouse/toilet situation. While the NPS is seeing a lot

of transportation money start to flow into the federal government and trickling down to parks it is unlikely that they could tap into that specific funding for an outhouse. The Fund for People in the Park are an amazing partner and have helped with lots of projects in the past. The NPS would need to work jointly with SPA on a proposal and possible matching funds to get where we would need to be cash wise for a project like this.

Comp host wise, the NPS puts up camp host opportunities park wide... and NPS wide on the following site... <https://www.volunteer.gov/s/>. The NPS will let SPA know when they post on there. If you are interested, we urge you to apply.

Campfires Fire Pits/Rings

Submitted by Mike Ramsey

Many of us enjoy a nice campfire.

It is likely in the future the National Park Service will want to provide some type of approved fire ring. Along with an official ring it is likely NPS will require all users to use only the designated rings. SPA will stay actively engaged with this process and work with NPS as to placement of said fire rings if or when this transpires. There is no current talk of this becoming a reality. In my opinion, it is to the benefit of all users to do our best to keep it that way.

There are some steps all users can do to help keep campfires status quo. Always bring your own wood, free of any infestations. It is illegal to gather any wood in the National Park. It should go without saying we all strive to "Leave No Trace"!

A good practice is when you arrive clean a firepit or two. Bag the cold ashes and prep them to haul out when you leave. That gets ashes out of the valley and prevents anyone from bagging possibly hot ashes. Or haul out the ashes you created. Additionally, ALWAYS use existing fire pits vs building a new one. Better yet, use a self-contained campfire such as those that use propane or wood pellets. Some folks use various types of fire pans to burn their wood in.

And for crying out loud beer cans bottles eggshells and other trash should NEVER be put in a fire pit. The better the community is about leaving no trace the better the experience is for all. And it helps keep campfire pits off the NPS radar.

Don't rely on your cell phone when you visit Saline Valley!

Submitted by Gary Kremen

People expect cell phone service to be universal, even that it works whether you have AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, major European carriers, or others less known cell phone operators. For traveling to Saline Valley, that can be dangerously wrong.

One can make a good argument that the reason to visit the Saline Valley area is to get away from being tethered to email, social media or texting. While unplugging might be good for many, there are reasons why folks who go to Saline need to communicate with the outside world. Common reasons for having communications include travel plan change, the ability to stay longer and emergencies on the outside (or inside) world.

Around the Saline Valley Area, the Trona vicinity does have a great signal depending (where you are). Death Valley has acceptable Verizon coverage around Furnace Creek but outside Furnace Creek coverage is very intermittent. As you leave Lone Pine or Big Pine, coverage gets spotty. Panamint Valley has partial coverage including at Panamint Spring Resort, which has limited Wi-Fi. On Highway 190 you get coverage in many places for AT&T. On Saline Valley Road, I always get some AT&T coverage one mile below the Lower Springs from the AT&T cell site at Cerro Gordo Peak. This includes a couple of bars of digital. Verizon does not work. I am told Verizon does have coverage on Cerro Gordo but block everything but OnStar emergencies.

Steele Pass and Lippincott Mining Road / Hunter Mountain Road / Ubehebe Crater does not have any cell coverage.

I have found two good ways to improve a cell signal in spotty areas. The first is to get out of your car and walk around. The second is to get a cell phone booster with a good external antenna like those made by Wilson or WeBoost. I have found these can be the difference between no signal and some signal. Also note that many times you can't get voice or data but texting works as texting uses a different communications protocol.

The Saline Valley camp host usually has a cell phone with a booster that can be used for emergencies only.

If you have an amateur radio license (I am K9GAK) I am told but have never used (even though I do keep the equipment with me). SPA President John Runkle (KI7OXY) and Secretary Michelle Hamilton (K7SOC) also have amateur radio licenses. There is a VHF/UHF repeater that covers the Saline Valley floor.

If you explore canyons or remote areas not on the main Saline Valley paths I recommend traveling in pairs with GRMS, FRS or CB radios as those radios are cheap.

Always working communications in Saline Valley include a Garmin InReach, Iridium Satellite Phone or the like. I always travel with them but they require a subscription and setup before you leave.

So, in summary, do not rely on your cell phone when you come to the Springs.

Donkeys, Donkeys, Donkeys - Where have you gone?

Submitted by Fred Dickson

Yes, as you might have noticed there are less of them around the camps. Say 15 years ago they wouldn't even come into the camp area as they were skittish around humanoids. Then that changed as folks began to feed them as pets. They are so "cute", right? Over time the inside of the Lower Springs became a "barn yard" with poop everywhere. An attempt was made to keep them off the lawn with a stacked fence with room for humans to squeeze through. Didn't last long before the donkeys figured out how to suck it in and hold their breath to get through after observing the way the humans did it! Then not even the lawn was safe from donkey poop.

Our partner at the Park Headquarters were aware of this problem as it is well known that there are no predators around to control their numbers. So, the "herd grew". Well, the park frowned on the idea of just shooting the critters so they found the "Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue" folks <https://donkeyrescue.org> who would come save the situation by rounding the critters up. To do this they put up a temporary fence corral with a bale of hay at the far end, and all the donkeys behaved by walking in one-by-one single file. All these donkeys went down to Furnace Creek to get their veterinarian physicals, visas, and clearance papers for the trip to Texas where they are to be adopted by loving families. Problem: two were missing at the roundup, a female, and a male.....

Why we encourage people to sign up as members of SPA

Submitted by Bonneau Dickson

While in Saline Valley, you may have been approached and encouraged to sign up as a member of the Saline Preservation Association (SPA). This may have been merely verbal, or it may have been someone (usually Bonneau Dickson) carrying a signup sheet on a clipboard.

Why is it important to be a member of SPA? The answer is that the more members we have, the more clout we have with the National Park Service to leave Saline Valley per our mission statement. During the four-year wrangle with the National Park Service in the

making of the Environmental Plan for Saline Valley, we got about 95 percent of what we wanted. They were impressed by the number of members that we had. We have approximately 700 members and we would like to have even more in the future.

There are two types of membership—non-voting and voting. If you give us only your name and an email address, you are a non-voting member. If you also give us a postal address, you are a voting member. This is a tax requirement for our 501 (c) (3) nonprofit status. We never mail anything so we will not junk up your mailbox. We also will not junk up your email inbox with a barrage of messages. We typically will send out about four emails per year.

So sign up and ask your friends to sign up too. All you have to do is send an email to membership@salinevalleypreservation.org

Saline Preservation Association (SPA) Meeting Minutes

Submitted by Michelle Hamilton

April 30, 2022 @ 9:04 a.m. John Runkle called the meeting to order, seconded by Mike Ramsey via Zoom

- Meeting with the NPS

SPA members feel a face-to-face meeting with the NPS would be better than Zoom. Timbo said he would initiate a meeting for October. Superintendent Mike Reynolds has been on a temporary assignment and Rob is the “acting” contact. Timbo will verify SPA’s contact and set up a meeting. Among discussion items is getting the NPS to put pumper trucks on a schedule verses an as needed crises mode.

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

John Runkle would verify SPA’s MOU was still in good standing. It is a 5-year document and was signed by him in 2018. At the very least, this needs to be brought up when SPA meets with the NPS.

- Reimbursement requests

SPA members unanimously voted that any reimbursement requests for under \$100 be approved by the Treasurer via a request from the member.

- Financial Reports

The SPA Treasurer will email all SPA Board members a Financial Report quarterly. These reports are available to the public if they request them. Donations will be thanked individually and not listed by person within the Financial Report. Who donates to SPA is not public information since many donors want to remain confidential.

- Grant Sources

Timbo and Michelle stated grant requests needed to be coordinated and/or initiated by the NPS. The primary funding issue is the installation of another pit toilette at the Palm Springs.

- Netting to cover the Crystal Tub

SPA paid for netting to cover the Crystal Tub, and this has not been done. Michelle mentioned visiting the springs and inquiring as to where the netting was and why it had not been installed.

- Chip in the Sunrise Tub

Michelle read an email regarding a 1.5” chip by the water source in the Sunrise tub. Mike said there are materials to repair the chip in the shed at Saline Valley. These materials were purchased by SPA, but need a two-day time to cure, during which time the Sunrise tub would need to be drained and un-usable. Michelle mentioned visiting and reporting back on the chip. There is not a sense of urgency, but it should be looked at.

- Camp Hosts

SPA is pleased with Dave Barton and Tim Stevens. There have been a few complaints to SPA over Tim Stevens, but nothing that is aggregates. It was brought up that Bristol and Scott wished to host the Palm Springs during the Fall and SPA should see if they are still interested and maybe inquire to the NPS whether this is something they would like.

- SPA Facebook Page

There are 3 Facebook Pages covering topics of Saline Valley. The SPA website gets little traffic but does have an important role in Road Conditions and should remain. There was talk of a SPA Facebook page, but no SPA member stepped forward to initiate that. Coordination between the SPA website and the other 3 Facebook Pages should be provided to ensure users are getting the message.

- SPA Newsletter

Currently the SPA newsletter is emailed about once a year. All agreed a message should be emailed a couple times a year. Emphasis was given that Michelle was not to write the newsletter and that each member of SPA should contribute. Since SPA met for the first time in a long time, a newsletter needed to be sent out in May.

- How often should SPA meet

SPA members felt they should meet more often. Zoom seems to be the best way to accommodate this and Gary has a premier Zoom account. SPA scheduled its next meeting for July 13th at 8:30.

- Fire Rings

SPA discussed some inquiries from users about fire rings. SPA does not have a position on fire rings and will make a part of the newsletter encouraging users to not create

new fire rings. Visitors should clean cold fire pits upon arrival to the springs and haul their ashes out when they depart.

- **Roadways**

Another issue that should be in the newsletter. Just an encouragement of campers to stay in the established camping areas. Be aware Saline Valley is surrounded by Wilderness Areas and to be mindful of those boundaries.

- **John's wishes to step down as SPA President**

John let the Board know that he wished to step down as President of SPA by the end of 2022. He does not want to remain on the Board. He loves Saline and will continue to support SPA in its efforts. He recommended Mike take his place if he was interested. Mike did say he was interested in the position.

Further discussion needs to be done to get a new SPA Board Member, if Mike were to be President who would take over as Treasurer. This discussion will be decided at the July 13th meeting.

John adjourned the meeting at 10:22 a.m. and Mike seconded it.

SPA Board Members

(OJ) John Runkle, President
(Flipper) Michael Ramsey,
Vice President/Treasurer
(Red Molly) Michelle
Hamilton,
Secretary/Membership

(Timbo) Tim Hynes, Park
Liaison
Bonneau Dickson, Director
(Farmer) Fred Dickson,
Director
Gary Kremen, Director

*SPA is an eligible 501(c)(3) Nonprofit. 100% of all donations go towards the maintenance and continuance of Saline Valley.

Membership to SPA is free, just email your name and email information to www.membership@salinepreservation.org.

If you want to donate to SPA using PayPal or a Credit/Debt Card click on the donate bottom at the bottom of the [SPA Website](#)

You can also donate by sending a check or cash to:
Saline Preservation Association
PO Box 1941
Lancaster, CA 93539-1941