

United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
601 NEVADA WAY
BOULDER CITY, NEVADA 89005

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L3031 (LAME-RM)

November 6, 2013

Sondra Rosenberg, PTP
Nevada Department of Transportation
1263 South Stewart Street
Carson City, Nevada 89712

Dear Ms. Rosenberg:

It has come to our attention that the current planning study for Interstate 11 includes two alternatives that would cross Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA), a unit of the National Park System. The affected area includes Lakeshore and Northshore Roads, the River Mountains, and the Boulder Basin of Lake Mead. Much of this area is designated as an Environmental Protection Subzone by our General Management Plan, due to the presence of some of the most sensitive habitat in the region, including that for the desert tortoise and bighorn sheep. In addition, the Boulder Basin receives approximately half of the park's 7 million annual visitors, and the area's natural setting, including the viewshed and soundscape, is an important component of the visitor experience.

The Organic Act of 1916 directs the National Park Service "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations" (16 USC 1). A major transportation corridor through Lake Mead NRA would have significant impacts on the resources we are mandated to protect and therefore is inconsistent with both the mission of the National Park Service and the General Management Plan of Lake Mead NRA.


Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 states that the Federal Highway Administration "may approve a transportation program or project requiring the use of publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, State, or local significance, or land of an historic site of national, State,

or local significance (as determined by the Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction over the park, recreation area, refuge, or site), only if

1. there is no feasible and prudent alternative to using that land; and
2. the program or project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from the use” (49 USC 303).

As other feasible alternatives using existing transportation routes have already been identified, the use of National Park Service land is not warranted for this project. Other than the previously approved Boulder City Bypass, lands within Lake Mead NRA should not be included as part of future planning efforts for Interstate 11. Our staff is available to provide input or additional information as needed. Please feel free to contact Environmental Compliance Specialist Michael Boyles at (702) 293-8978 with any future inquiries.

Sincerely,


for William K. Dickinson
Superintendent

cc: Michael Kies, Arizona Department of Transportation