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Interior

Death Valley National  
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## Death Valley News Release

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### Saline Valley Warm Springs Go Dry

The popular warm springs in Saline Valley have stopped flowing. Reports of the natural warm water spring drying up hit the park August 12, 2005. The National Park Service site volunteer reported the incident and subsequent visits by park resource staff have confirmed that the flow of water has stopped. The National Park Service acquired Saline Valley and its resources as part of the California Desert Protection Act passed in 1994. "This spring has been known to stop flowing in the past", states Superintendent JT Reynolds. These warm springs are part of a multifaceted hydrothermal system. In general, cooler surface waters are moving downward in the ground. These waters come into contact with a heat source at some undetermined depth below the surface. As the waters become heated, they take on energy and are then moved upward back to the surface. The warm springs here represent the surface discharge of this hydrothermal system.

The waters are saturated with minerals they have absorbed on their circuitous route. They are super-saturated in respect to calcium carbonate, a component of lime and cement. The waters are continually depositing calcium carbonate wherever they contact the rock. This process leads to the tightening and closing of the fractures along which they move. The recent loss of flow is probably due to a water course being closed. It is a natural function of this type of feature. The water will seek to reopen its pathway or will open a new one at some point in time. We can only wait for nature to take its course and return this spring to its normal volume. In the meantime, it is inappropriate to intervene in this natural event. We all need to wait on nature to take its course and return the spring flow. No efforts should be made to redirect the water flow from other springs or to build any new water containment structures.

The natural hot springs are considered a sacred site to the local Timbisha Shoshone Indian Tribe. The area has also been a popular "soakers" hot spot for locals since the 1960s. Prior to the Park Service management of the area, groups of private individuals dug out pools around the springs to soak in. With time large concrete tubs or spas were built near the natural spring and the outflow water was piped into these man-made pools. Eventually palm trees and even a grassy lawn area were built near the pools. This little

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man-made oasis has become one of the most sought after hot spots for those who seek out natural hot springs.

The Death Valley National Park General Management Plan calls for a site specific management plan to be developed that will direct any future development and resource management of the springs. This plan has not been drafted yet so current management calls for no additional man-made structures or improvements to existing structures or the alteration of the natural resources in and around the springs until the site plans are completed.

Visitors who are seeking the hot springs experience in Saline Valley can still do this. There is one other developed spring just a few hundred yards above the dry spring, but with fewer soaking tubs. Use of the upper springs and camping in the area will still be allowed. The park will not allow the alteration of the natural landscape or the building of structures to divert water to the dry soaking tubs. The Park Service will continue to monitor and document the condition of the spring and surrounding area. "Each natural event that occurs in the park gives us more clues to understanding the mysteries of this special place," explains Superintendent Reynolds.

For more updated information please check the park's web site at [www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva) or call the park's information phone line at 760-786-3200.

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