

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE
RELOCATION OF LAKE MEAD CRUISES FACILITY
BOULDER BASIN, NEVADA
LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA**

INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service (NPS), Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA), has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that evaluates the no-action and two action alternatives for the temporary relocation of Lake Mead Ferry Service, Inc. (Lake Mead Cruises), within the Boulder Basin developed area of Lake Mead, Nevada.

Lake Mead NRA is located in southeastern Nevada and northwestern Arizona. Lake Mead Cruises is located at approximately mile 4.5 on Lakeshore Scenic Drive, ½ mile northwest of Lake Mead Marina. The overall project area is located in the Boulder Basin development zone, as designated in the Lake Mead NRA *General Management Plan*, 1986.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Tour vessel operations and recreational services are currently being threatened by the rapid decrease in the water elevation of Lake Mead. The dropping water elevations have greatly diminished the size and depth of the harbor in which Lake Mead Cruises operates its tour vessel services. Based on current lake level predictions from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), it is estimated that, in order to continue tour vessel operations, the landing must vacate its current position in Boulder Harbor by the end of April 2003.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternatives analyzed included: Alternative A: No Action; Alternative B: Relocate to Horsepower Cove (management- and environmentally-preferred alternative); and Alternative C: Relocate to SCUBA park. The alternative site locations were developed based on availability of utilities, access to the site, amount of available space on the land and on the water, level of land-based construction that would be necessary to accommodate the facility, and water levels and underwater gradients.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that will promote NEPA, as expressed in Section 101 of NEPA. This alternative will satisfy the following requirements:

- Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- Assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;

- Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable or unintended consequences;
- Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and,
- Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Alternative B is the environmentally preferable alternative because overall it would best meet the requirements in Section 101 of NEPA. It is more beneficial than closing the facilities as it would meet the beneficial uses requirement, to allow for the continued balance between population and resource use to permit a wide sharing of life's amenities. It would allow for the preservation of resources, while providing an environment that supports diversity and individual choice. It would assure, through the continuation of visitor services, for all generations, a safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surrounding.

MITIGATION AND MONITORING METHODS

Mitigation measures are specific actions designed to minimize, reduce, or eliminate impacts of alternatives and to protect Lake Mead NRA resources and visitors. Monitoring activities are actions to be implemented during or following construction. The following mitigation related to relocating the Lake Mead Cruises facilities will be implemented under the selected alternative, and are assumed in the analysis of effects for this alternative.

Water Resources

- Best management practices will be incorporated into all marina operations.
- Appropriate permits will be obtained from the state of Nevada to ensure the protection of water resources.

Air Quality

- Dust control measures will include watering the road and parking areas during grading operations, and could include applying a dust palliative to control dust.

Cultural Resources

- Park Archeologist Steve Daron conducted a reconnaissance survey of the project area for Alternatives B and C on February 18, 2003. The project areas for both alternatives have been previously disturbed by beach development activities and no cultural resources were located.

- The NPS has consulted with the appropriate Native American groups as required by the various laws, regulations, and executive orders.
- Should unknown cultural resources be uncovered during construction, work will be halted in the discovery area, the site will be secured, and the recreation area will consult according to 36 CFR 800.13 and, as appropriate, provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. In compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, the NPS will also notify and consult concerned tribal representatives for the proper treatment of human remains, funerary objects, and sacred objects should these be discovered during the course of the project.

Visitor Use and Experience

- Alternative locations will be selected for displaced recreationists. The public will be notified of the new location by press releases and through local news media.

Public Safety

- Navigational markers and no-wake areas will be established around the Lake Mead Cruises facility once it is relocated to Hemenway Harbor. Security, public notification, and a park ranger will assist with the actual move to protect the public.

The following matrix summarizes the mitigation measures required for the selected alternative.

Impact Topic	Mitigation Required under the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B)	Responsible Party
Water Resources	Best management practices will be incorporated in all marina operations.	Project Manager
Air Quality	Dust control measures will include watering the road and parking areas during grading operations, and could include applying a dust palliative to control dust.	Project Manager
Cultural Resources	Should unknown cultural resources are uncovered during construction, work will be halted in the discovery area, the site will be secured, and the recreation area will consult according to 36 CFR 800.13 and, as appropriate, provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. The NPS will notify and consult concerned tribal representatives for the proper treatment of human remains, funerary objects, and sacred objects should these be discovered during the course of the project.	Cultural Resource Specialist
Visitor Use and Experience	Alternative locations will be selected for displaced recreationists upon relocation of Lake Mead Cruises. The public will be notified of the new location by press releases and through local news media.	Project Manager
Public Safety	Navigational markers and no-wake area will be established around the Lake Mead Cruises facility once it is relocated to Hemenway Harbor. Security, public notification, and a park ranger will assist with the actual move to protect the public.	Project Manager

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Following the implementation of the mitigation and monitoring measures, the environmental consequences of implementing the preferred alternative are as follows:

Water Resources

Components of the concession operations at any marina, especially those associated with fueling and boat maintenance, can create minor to moderate impacts on water quality within the marina area. Impacts can include the potential for fuel spills, potential for releases from sewage or gray water holding tanks, and higher concentrations of gasoline derivatives such as PAHs, benzene, and MTBE. Selected testing to date of selected high use areas, including marinas, have shown that while such compounds have been detected, they do not exceed state or Clean Water Act standards.

The NPS provides guidance on best management practices for the handling of fueling areas and boat maintenance for concessioners and the boating public. Public education and implementation of best management practices reduces the risk of spills. However, spills can still occur and create moderate to major impacts in the spill area. Marinas generally create localized and minor increases in nutrient loading due to their attraction of waterfowl, gulls and fish, as well as the provision of a substrate to grow algae.

Lake Mead Cruises operates only four tour vessels out of its facility, therefore, it is not considered a marina where concentrated use occurs. Risks to water quality onsite are primarily from boat fueling and fuel spillage. These risks are minimized because of state requirements, the use of trained employees to fuel vessels, and utilizing best management practices.

Cumulative Effects: This proposal does not increase the cumulative impacts upon Boulder Basin from marina and boating operations. Essentially, the existing level of use at the current Lake Mead Cruises location would be relocated to the selected area. The result is no net increase in boating or fueling activity, but transfer of the focus of that activity from one location to another. Since Lake Mead Cruises is only adding four tour vessels to the Horsepower Cove location, the cumulative number of boats in the basin and general distribution of boats would remain the same or similar.

Conclusion: Detectable, localized impacts on water quality will likely occur in the new facility location. Marinas, by definition, concentrate a certain level of boating use, and may have localized nutrient loading from gulls, ducks, and carp. However, existing marinas on Lake Mead and within the Boulder Basin have been proven to operate within state water quality standards and standards within the Clean Water Act. Detectable amounts of contaminants that may be found in the vicinity of marinas do not exceed standards, and are localized impacts. The relocation of Lake Mead Cruises facility and operations will not result in impairment of water quality.

Floodplains

The proposed location will have no effect on floodplain values. The proposed area is not located within a flood zone (or does not provide for overnight use in a flood zone). The

marina is functionally dependent upon being located in the water within the reservoir inundation zone.

Cumulative Effects: The proposed location will have no cumulative effects on floodplain or wetland values.

Conclusion: The proposal complies with executive orders for floodplain management and does not impair floodplain values.

Air Quality

Ongoing maintenance, including grading road and parking areas, will continue to result in local and temporary fugitive dust. Newly graded roads could be treated with dust palliative to reduce dust emissions. Localized increases in hydrocarbon emissions could occur in the direct area of the facility.

Cumulative Effects: Fugitive dust does occur at the site due to the increased vehicular traffic caused by the relocation of the Las Vegas Boat Harbor. Additional vehicle and bus traffic will occur due to the relocation of Lake Mead Cruises. However, a road has been designated with barriers, through the parking lot, to focus the traffic and prevent travel through the entire parking area. In addition, speed limits have been posted to reduce the dust caused from high-speed traffic.

Increases in hydrocarbon emissions will not have any net effect or cumulative effect because the relocation of the facility is from one area of Boulder Basin to another area; thus, there will be no increase of the number of boats in use.

Conclusion: There will be minor to moderate impacts to air quality as a result of increased dust in the project area and increased traffic in the new marina location. There will be no impairment to air quality as a result of the impacts associated with this alternative.

Cultural Resources

The project area for this alternative does not contain cultural resources. There are known locations of prehistoric and historic mining in the Mojave desert scrub habitat upslope from the shoreline locations of the facilities. All existing roads into the site are well away from these known areas. Ground disturbing impacts are generally below the high water line. The history of use in the recreation area indicates that foot traffic would not increase significantly in desert areas away from the marina, as the visitors of interest in those locations is towards the shore and water.

There are no submerged cultural resources offshore from this location.

Cumulative Effects: There will be no cumulative impacts to cultural resources under this alternative.

Conclusion: There will be no impact and no impairment to cultural resources based on the impacts associated with this alternative.

Recreation Resources

Boulder Beach has a history of recognized use zones, which have been discussed in the *Lake Management Plan and final Environmental Impact Statement*. This alternative places the Lake Mead Cruises facility in the Horsepower Cove area, a traditional personal watercraft area. Water skiers have long used the water surface area adjacent to the wall of Promontory Point. While none of these areas was zoned for exclusive use, the acknowledgement of these zones by traditional users have worked in general to separate activities and user conflicts. The placement of the facility in this location will have a negative effect on those who have traditionally used the Ski Beach and Horsepower Cove location. However, since Las Vegas Boat Harbor is already in place at this location, and no additional beach space will be lost to the facilities, and no additional water surface will be required for the wakeless harbor, it is considered a minor adverse impact.

While this is a negative impact, sufficient areas exist nearby for a continued quality recreation experience. Crowding of the area by other vessels will be mitigated in part by the wakeless harbor. Mitigation could include the marking of a harbor entry channel that guides general boating traffic entering and exiting the harbor away from available personal watercraft and water skiing areas.

Cumulative Effects: There are no cumulative effects as they relate to the total boat use in the Boulder Basin. However, traditional users of the general area, familiar with the uses of Ski Beach and Horsepower Cove would need to adapt to the presence of both Las Vegas Boat Harbor and the Lake Mead Cruises facility. Only a small additional shoreline area would need to be closed to other visitors. The Lake Mead Cruises facility would be located within the existing buoy line for the Las Vegas Boat Harbor. Sufficient areas still exist for recreational use in the general vicinity, and sufficient area abound in the entire Boulder Basin and other portions of Lake Mead.

Conclusion: There will be minor impacts to those visitors who have used, or expect to utilize, the Horsepower Cove and Ski Beach areas for shoreline activities, such as personal watercraft use and swimming. These visitors will be displaced to elsewhere in the recreation area.

Visitor Experience and Public Safety

Traditional users of the Horsepower Cove area will need to adjust their activities to avoid the marina and harbor area.

Cumulative Effects: There is a cumulative effect to the users who have lost part of their traditional use areas to the Las Vegas Boat Harbor, and who will lose additional space under this alternative. However, there will still remain adequate space for a spectrum of recreation activities that recognizes the traditional uses in the area. Cumulative effects are not significant. There are adequate areas within Boulder Basin to accommodate the various user populations. There is no net change in the number of boats in the basin.

Conclusion: This alternative will result in mixed impacts to visitor experience. Some visitors will experience beneficial results as they will be able to experience a boat trip on Lake Mead. Some visitors will experience minor to moderate negative impacts from displacement from their original recreational use area.

Socioeconomic Resources

Lake Mead Cruises will pay for the move and utility upgrade, causing short-term negative impacts. However, in the long-term, this alternative will positively impact the operators of Lake Mead Cruises as they will be able to continue operations.

Cumulative Effects: There is a significant positive cumulative effect compared to the no action alternative. The operators of Lake Mead Cruises will be able to continue their business, supplying a valued service to the area.

Conclusion: The alternative has a favorable impact on socioeconomic resources.

Recreation Area Operations

The recreation area planning, resource and maintenance staff has been and will continue to be involved in planning and compliance review for this facility relocation. The recreation area staff and concessioner will coordinate the development of certain infrastructure, such as utilities, to facilitate the move of the privately held marina facilities. However, the NPS will not be required to compensate the marina operator for the loss of its business.

Cumulative Effects: This environmental assessment only discusses the temporary moving of the facility until such time as long-term planning can be completed and/or water levels increase. In addition, predictions for continued falling lake levels may necessitate the moving of additional marinas on Lake Mead. The recreation area is committed to completing a *General Management Plan* amendment in the near future that will discuss the permanent location for this marina, as well as potential needs to move other marinas should the lake levels continue to fall.

Conclusion: There will be a cost to the recreation area of continuing the upkeep of the shoreline facilities, such as road access, restrooms, and parking area, to the Horsepower Cove area for the Lake Mead Cruises and Las Vegas Boat Harbor facilities. Since this is necessary with or without the relocation of Lake Mead Cruises, it will be a negligible impact.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping for this environmental assessment was conducted through press release notifications between January 9 and February 8, 2003. One comment letter was received during that period in support of the proposed relocation. Public notice of the availability of this environmental assessment was published in local newspapers, and on the Lake Mead NRA Internet Web site (<http://www.nps.gov/lame>). Individuals and organizations could request the environmental assessment in writing, by phone, or by e-mail. The

environmental assessment was circulated to various federal and state agencies, individuals, businesses, and organizations on the park's mailing list for a 30-day public review period. Copies of the environmental assessment were also made available at area libraries. Approximately 75 copies of the EA were distributed for public review. Five comment letters were received on the EA during the 30-day comment period that extended from February 28 to March 30, 2003. One letter was from the Las Vegas Boat Harbor, and expressed support for the relocation of Lake Mead Cruises to Horsepower Cove. Four letters were from the state of Nevada Division of Wildlife, Water Resources, Historic Preservation Office, and Division of Environmental Protection. None provided substantial comments, however, the Water Resources and Division of Environmental Protection require permits for the project, as noted in the EA and below, prior to the relocation of Lake Mead Cruises to Horsepower Cove.

CONSULTATIONS AND PERMITTING

Lake Mead Cruises, Inc. will obtain the following required permits, prior to the commencement of project activities; including permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 10, the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, and the Nevada State Health Division.

The Lake Mead NRA staff will notify and consult with concerned tribal representatives for the proper treatment of human remains, funerary, and sacred objects, should these be discovered during the course of this monitoring project.

BASIS FOR DECISION

The NPS selects Alternative B because it will allow for the preservation of resources, while providing an environment that supports diversity and individual choice. It is more beneficial than closing the facilities as it would meet the beneficial uses requirement, to allow for the continued balance between population and resource use to permit a wide sharing of life's amenities. It would assure, through the continuation of visitor services, for all generations, a safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surrounding.

IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES OR VALUES

The effects of the preferred alternative will not impair park resources or values necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the park's enabling legislation. Impacts documented in the EA and summarized above will not affect resources or values key to the natural and cultural integrity of the park or alter opportunities for enjoyment of the park. The preferred alternative will not impair park resources and will not violate the NPS Organic Act. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the impacts described in the environmental assessment, the agency and public comments received, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker in accordance with NPS *Management Policies, 2001*.

CONCLUSION AND BASIS FOR DETERMINATION

Based on the analysis completed in the EA, the capability of the mitigation measures to reduce, avoid, or eliminate impacts, and with due consideration of public response, the

NPS determined that there are no cumulative, indirect effects, or connected actions with the potential for significant impacts. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required, and the selected action may be implemented as soon as practical.

I find that the preferred alternative does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.9), an environmental impact statement will not be prepared for this project.

Recommended:

William K. Dickinson, Superintendent
Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Date

Approved:

Jonathan B. Jarvis
Regional Director, Pacific West Region

Date