National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Death Valley National Park

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Death Valley News Release

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Death Valley National Park Environmental Assessment Released for the Proposed Reestablishment of Towne Pass Material Site #218

The National Park Service (NPS) has released an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a proposal to reopen the Towne Pass Material Site #218 for borrow and spoil use by Death Valley National Park and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Caltrans previously used this site to extract sand and gravel for road maintenance purposes when the site was managed by the Bureau of Land Management. In 1994, the passage of the California Desert Protection Act transferred this and other lands to the National Park Service for inclusion in Death Valley National Park. Caltrans is primarily responsible for the costly maintenance of State Route 190. Importing borrow materials from outside of Death Valley National Park is associated with high costs and runs the risk of introducing non-native plant species into the Park environment. The proposed action would significantly reduce the costs of maintaining and repairing State Route 190, a major thoroughfare through the Park.

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment is to examine road maintenance needs for State Route 190 within Death Valley National Park. Two alternatives were derived from issues arising during the park planning process, and from other issues applicable to road maintenance and repairs within the Park in conformance with National Park Service and park policy. The No Action alternative provides a baseline description of the current conditions by which to compare the impacts of the proposed action(s). The Proposed Action presents California Department of Transportation's proposal to reactivate the Towne Pass Materials Site #218 for borrow and spoil use. The Proposed Action is identified as the Preferred Alternative. All comments received during the public review period will contribute to the final determination of a selected alternative.

The EA has been distributed to government agencies and public libraries. It is posted on the Death Valley National Park website, http://www.nps.gov/deva or http://parkplanning.nps.gov/parkHome.cfm?parkID=297. Copies are available upon request – see the address below. The NPS is interested in all comments regarding each alternative and its potential impacts to the natural and cultural resources of Death Valley National Park. The EA will be available

for public review for 30 days. Those wishing to provide comments should submit them in writing via mail or email to no later than March 23, 2007 to:

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