



## Death Valley National Park News Release

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### Death Valley National Park confronts off-road driving problem

DEATH VALLEY, CA—Visitors from across the region and around the world took advantage of the December holiday week to visit Death Valley. Unfortunately, a few of these drove off established roadways onto pristine dry lake beds and other fragile areas, leaving behind tracks that are visible for years, even decades. The famous Racetrack playa was among the areas damaged, as was Badwater. This is a problem that builds on itself, since once tracks are established, others drivers tend to follow.

Off-road driving at the Racetrack is particularly aggravating to those who appreciate Death Valley. This remote dry lake bed was named in the early days of the park both for its shape, and for the mysterious tracks that are left by rocks sliding across the surface under specific weather conditions. While only a few have driven onto the Racetrack lake bed, the tracks they left are spoiling the view for many.

With two incidents in the last several months, park managers are adopting new strategies to prevent additional incursions. Although the area is already posted with both regulatory and informational signs, additional Carsonite posts will be added along the shoreline. Large regulatory signs will be posted along both entrances to the area to ensure that everyone visiting the area gets the message. An attempt will be made to soften the existing tracks by pumping water onto the most heavily damaged areas. Additionally, the park is recruiting for volunteers to help protect the Racetrack by spending time at the site providing visitor education. Check Death Valley Facebook for more information about this volunteer opportunity.

Although the Racetrack is beloved, many areas in the park are suffering from similar damage. On January 11, volunteer college students from Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia, raked out tracks left at Badwater, one of the parks most frequently visited areas. While whoever drove onto the Badwater playa left their tracks in only a minute or two, this group of twelve students spent the better part of a day attempting to reverse damage. This is just one example of a problem that many volunteer groups address at Death Valley every year. Without their efforts, visitors would see vistas spoiled by tracks in many more areas.

Park rangers note that all visitors are required to keep their vehicles on established roads. If you see someone driving or parked beyond the road shoulder, report it immediately to any ranger or visitor center, or call Park Dispatch at 760-786-2330.

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