



Death Valley National Park News Release

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Road Reconstruction Planned for Scotty's Castle

DEATH VALLEY, CA – The landscape, historic buildings, utilities and road at Scotty's Castle were heavily damaged by an extreme flash flood event in late 2015. The National Park Service is seeking public comment on a proposed project to reconstruct Bonnie Clare Road, which was destroyed by the flood and is still closed to the public.

On October 18, 2015, Grapevine Canyon in northern Death Valley National Park was drenched by about 3 inches of rain in 5 hours. This storm caused a flash flood of 3,200 cubic feet per second, or about one-third the volume of the Colorado River in Grand Canyon. Grapevine Canyon is normally dry, with only a small spring-fed creek.

In the months just after the flood, the National Park Service (NPS) removed mud from inside historic buildings and reestablished temporary utilities. Permanent repairs to Jubilee Pass (connecting Badwater to Shoshone, CA) were completed last summer. The popular Artists Drive and Harmony Borax Works reopened in mid-March after repairs.

The flash flood devastated Bonnie Clare Road, better known as Scotty's Castle Road. The flood washed away about 70% of the pavement and many flood protection structures. In places it left cuts over 8 feet deep across the road.

Ironically, Bonnie Clare Road was reconstructed only 4 years ago. However, the 2015 flood was so massive that it changed the shape of the canyon's flood channel. Future floods will take a different path than the 2013 road was designed for, so redesigning the road is necessary.

The NPS and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose reconstructing 7.6 miles of Bonnie Clare Road from the Ubehebe Crater Road intersection to the park boundary. This section of road is currently closed to the public. This project restores access to the park from Tonopah and Beatty via US-95 and NV-267.

The reconstructed road would have two 10-foot-wide paved travel lanes, each with a 1-foot shoulder. The road would generally follow the alignment of the pre-flood road, with some modifications as needed to elevate the road above the new flow line of Grapevine Canyon. The

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reconstructed road would be designed to minimize impacts on the canyon walls, accommodate channel movements associated with a 5- to 10-year flood event, lower traffic speeds in the canyon, and minimize impacts on archeological and ethnographic resources.

For approximately one mile from the spring to Scotty's Castle, utility lines will be buried under the road pavement in a 3-foot wide by 6-foot deep trench. The trench will be under the road pavement, keeping these utilities out of the riparian zone in the canyon and increasing protection from flood events. The NPS and FHWA are also preparing the design for the repair and fortification of a dirt berm that protects the spring collection gallery, chlorination facility, and reservoir tanks.

Construction staging and material storage areas are proposed in the existing paved parking lot at Scotty's Castle, near the Nevada/California state line, and within the existing disturbed areas along the existing road alignment.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act to provide the decision-making framework that 1) analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates issues and impacts on park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The NPS invites the public to provide input on the proposed Bonnie Clare Road project. Comments received during the scoping period will be used to help define the issues and concerns to be addressed in the EA. Comments must be received by April 14, 2017. Comments can be submitted online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/deva> or by mail to:

Death Valley National Park
ATTN: Bonnie Clare Road Reconstruction
P.O. Box 579
Death Valley, CA 92328

Commenters should be aware that their entire comment – including personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While commenters can ask that their personal identifying information be withheld from public review, the NPS cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Planning is also underway for repairs of the buildings, grounds, and landscape at Scotty's Castle. Public comments will be sought on those projects soon.

-www.nps.gov/deva-

Death Valley National Park is the homeland of the Timbisha Shoshone and preserves natural and cultural resources, exceptional wilderness, scenery, and learning experiences within the nation's largest conserved desert landscape and some of the most extreme climate and topographic conditions on the planet. About two-thirds of the park was originally designated as Death Valley National Monument in 1933. Today the park is enjoyed by about 1,300,000 people per year. The park is 3,400,000 acres – nearly as large as the state of Connecticut. Learn more at www.nps.gov/deva.

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Reconstruct Bonnie Clare Road
— Bonnie Clare Road
— Death Valley National Park Boundary

