

# **Balancing the Mandates**

## An Administrative History of Lake Mead National Recreation Area



**By**

**Hal K. Rothman  
and Daniel J. Holder**

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*Photographs follow page 94.*



## FOREWORD

An administrative history describes and analyzes the establishment and subsequent management of a national park. It strives to place the park's management within its historic context, and in doing so to illustrate how the purpose of the park and its management by the National Park Service have changed over time. In this way, administrative histories help us to understand why a national park exists, what forces have shaped it, and what decisions agency managers have made to ensure its preservation for and enjoyment by the American public. The public purpose of national parks, as symbols of our natural and cultural heritage, is a compelling theme, and one that administrative histories bring to light. While dedicated to documenting the development of park programs and issues, these studies also underscore the deeper meanings of national parks—their underlying democratic ideal and what they say about us as a nation by what we choose to preserve. Ultimately, an administrative history brings a historical perspective to the political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental issues surrounding park management, and thus allows us to appreciate the decisions facing current and future managers.

Each administrative history is unique and adds to our understanding of national park history. No one knew this better than Hal K. Rothman, who prepared this history of Lake Mead National Recreation Area. In addition to this study, Rothman authored numerous studies on the management of national parks, as part of both his academic pursuits and his public history consulting firm. With unbridled enthusiasm and energy, Rothman was the leading scholar on national parks, bringing to bear on any subject his deep knowledge of park history and a keen interest in engaging the public with his studies. As Hal liked to say, no park had an administrative history until he'd written it. Hal had many plans for future studies on national parks, including a centennial history of the National Park Service, but unfortunately, Hal passed away in 2007 at the age of forty-eight, succumbing to the effects of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. Studies such as this administrative history, which was completed well before he fell ill, are part of Hal's contribution to national park and Park Service history.

David Louter  
History Program Manager  
National Park Service  
Pacific West Region  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For much of its history, Lake Mead National Recreation Area was an anomaly in the national park system. As the first national recreation area, it pioneered conventional recreation for the National Park Service in a time when the agency remained focused on the uplifting qualities of the national parks. As a result, the agency stumbled in conceiving a management structure for Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The park served as a remote destination through the 1960s for travelers who engaged in pursuits that the agency often regarded as the purview of state parks and other similar recreation spaces. Only when the American public began to regard its parks in a different fashion did Lake Mead attain a status parallel to national park units. Much of that transformation followed 1980.

Lake Mead National Recreation Area reflected a number of the major issues facing the park system. Not only did the agency fail to come to grips with the purpose of national recreation areas for nearly forty years after the founding of the park in 1936, but Lake Mead also endured one of the most vexing transitions that can occur to national parks. It began as a remote destination, a place to which people came to stay for extended periods and to engage in their favorite outdoor activities. A combination of changing U.S. recreation patterns and the growth of the region around the park led to the addition of a powerful day-use component in visitation. In this respect, Lake Mead National Recreation Area came to mirror the remote national parks—the Yellowstones and the Yosemite—at the same time that it reflected the conditions at newer parks, such as Golden Gate and Gateway national recreation areas.

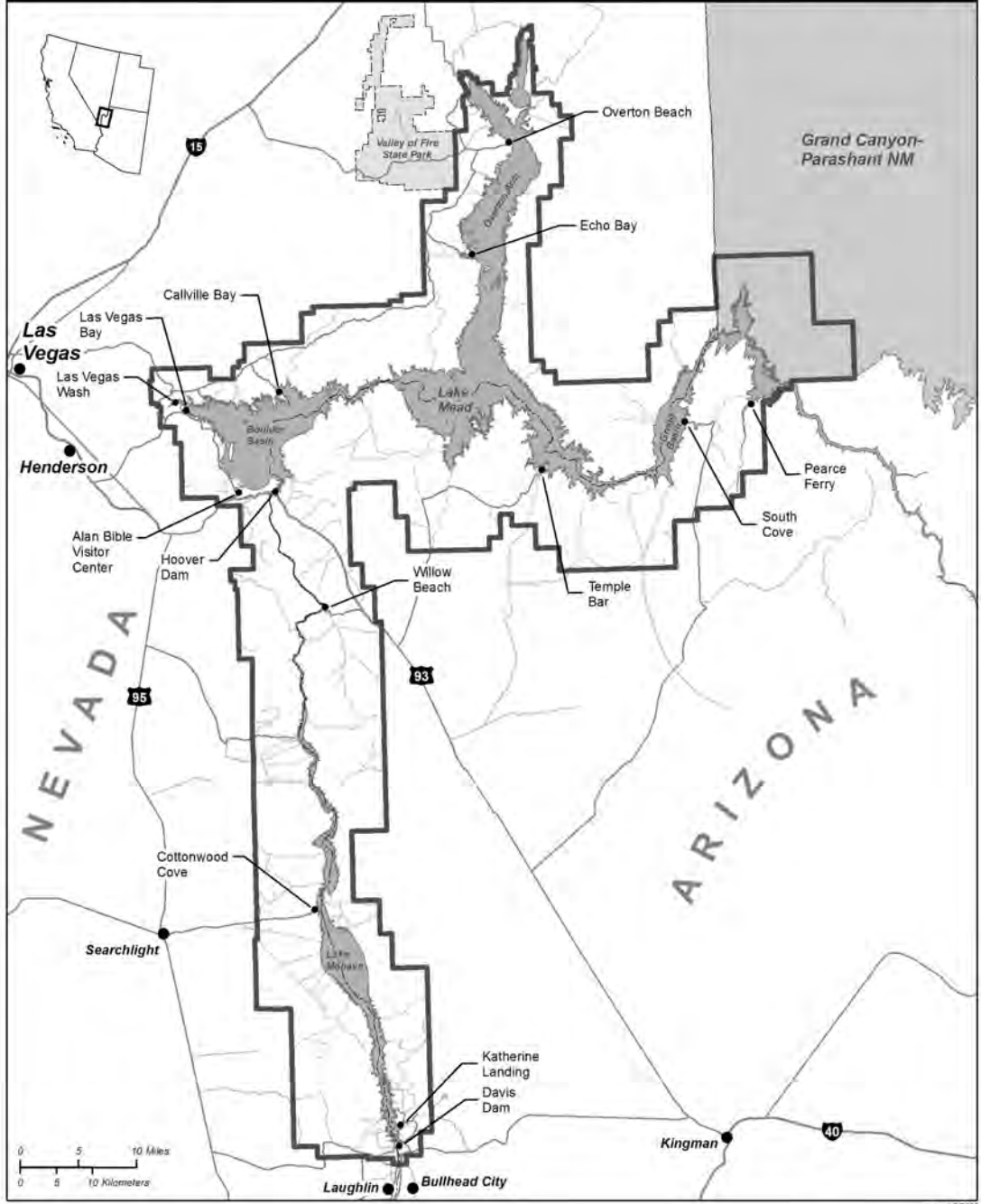
The heyday of Lake Mead National Recreation Area followed 1980, and particularly the appointment of Alan O’Neill as superintendent in 1987. O’Neill brought a more flexible vision to the park system, molded from his experience in the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. He and his successor, Bill Dickinson, were able to meld the Park Service vision of resource stewardship with close attention to the demands of ever-increasing visitation at Lake Mead. They built a staff that understood both agency obligations and the importance of keeping resource protection at the top of agency goals. By the early 2000s, Lake Mead National Recreation Area had become a much-admired park where personnel anticipated and fashioned the solutions to agency-wide issues. A process had taken place that brought the park closer to agency norms and made those norms respect Lake Mead’s unique goals and objectives.

Successes in this arena were reflected in a number of areas. The emphasis on resource management, a longtime agency goal, revealed closer ties to conventional agency ideals. The effort to eliminate lease arrangements and long-term residencies in the park articulated the stronger sense that the park truly served the public, not special interests. Cross-boundary relationships with other federal agencies, state agencies, Native American governments, and nongovernmental organizations all spoke to the growing need for regional management by all land managers. Alan O’Neill’s departure to found Outside Las Vegas, a public-private foundation aimed at the further integration of land management options in the Las Vegas

Valley, suggested how powerful the trend toward cooperation had become.

Yet, the park faced an ongoing series of issues that required vigilance. Lake Mead National Recreation Area's resources faced an onslaught of visitation, inholdings, and lease arrangements within the park that created controversy. The rapid growth of the Las Vegas Valley continued to affect the park. As was the case at many parks in the national system, the financial resources available to Lake Mead were often insufficient to meet its obligations. The result required an ongoing pastiche of management creativity that spoke volumes about national park management in the twenty-first century.

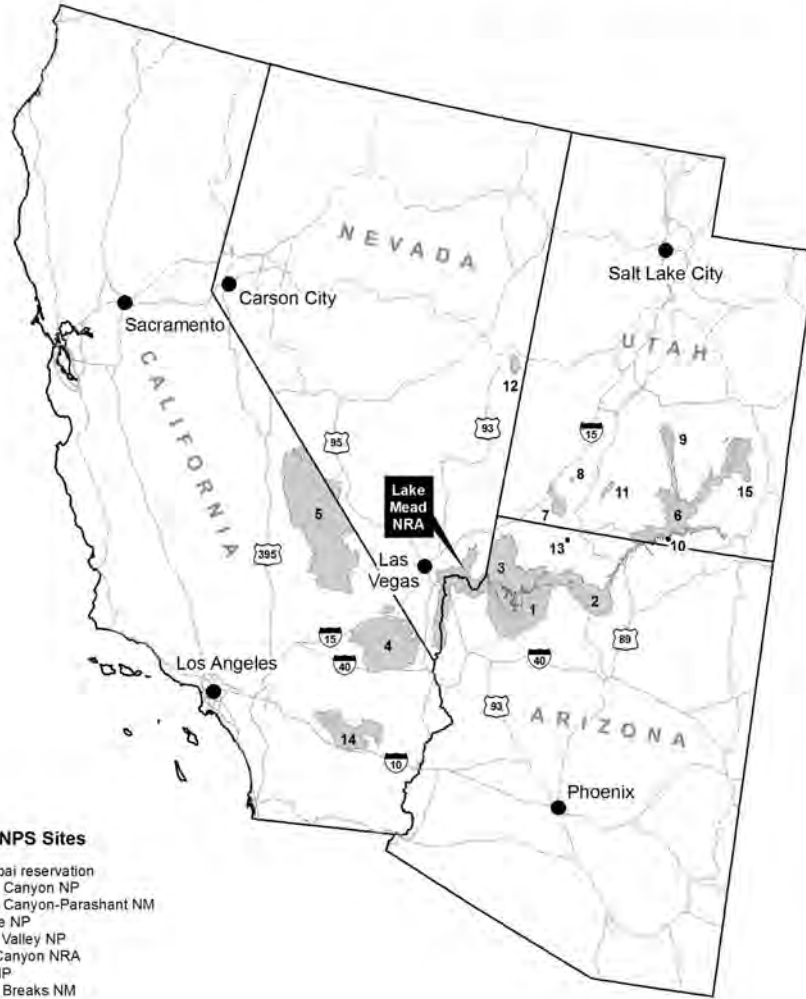




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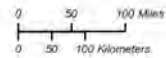


### NATIONAL PARK LANDS SURROUNDING LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



**NPS Sites**

- 1. Hualapai reservation
- 2. Grand Canyon NP
- 3. Grand Canyon-Parashant NM
- 4. Mojave NP
- 5. Death Valley NP
- 6. Glen Canyon NRA
- 7. Zion NP
- 8. Cedar Breaks NM
- 9. Capitol Reef NP
- 10. Rainbow Bridge NM
- 11. Bryce Canyon NP
- 12. Great Basin NP
- 13. Pipe Spring NM
- 14. Joshua Tree NP
- 15. Canyonland NP



## CHAPTER ONE

### **BEFORE THE PARK**

Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) is a product of the human ability to transform the physical environment. Without Hoover Dam and the artificial Lake Mead that defines the southern boundary between Nevada and Arizona, the national recreation area would be what it had been for the length of human memory, a collection of canyons that flanked the Colorado River as it cut its way to the Gulf of California and the Pacific Ocean. An industrial culture changed that reality, as twentieth-century Americans who believed in their ability not only to harness nature, but also to control it for their purposes, created a technological achievement with grand social implications. The fabricated lake in the desert that resulted has become a recreational playground for millions of visitors each year.

For the National Park Service (NPS), Lake Mead National Recreation Area became its primary test for implementation of a new philosophy, one for which support of the agency's founders, Stephen T. Mather and Horace M. Albright, might well be characterized as lukewarm. At Lake Mead, the Park Service first attained responsibility for recreation and then learned to manage this unwieldy obligation. As the first national recreational area in the United States, Lake Mead National Recreation Area has had an enormous impact on the Park Service, shaping the agency's approach to recreation for more than three decades. At this park, the agency first downplayed its recreational responsibilities, then learned to integrate them with the sacerdotal and scenic parks to which the agency gave priority. The rise of recreation after World War II and the Park Service's efforts at Lake Mead gave the agency an opportunity, as recreation became an increasingly important theme in U.S. society. A dramatic increase in use transformed Lake Mead NRA from a recreational destination to a regional weekend spot that catered chiefly to area residents on day trips. This latter model, once of little interest to the Park Service, became a valued strategy as the NPS had to grapple for its position among competing agencies and with a recalcitrant public. Unsure of the value of recreation in its worldview, the Park Service experimented at Lake Mead. When it recognized the value of recreation, it used the park as model for the development of similar programs throughout the nation.

The charge the Park Service received at Lake Mead in 1936 was an unusual one for the agency. By the 1930s, the Park Service was two decades old, and well into a process of clearly defining national parks and national park areas as places of cultural as well as natural significance. Since the nineteenth century, U.S. citizens closely tied the national parks to their self-image as "Nature's Nation." The embrace of Yellowstone, Yosemite, Mount Rainier, and the Grand Canyon attested to a vision of monumental scenery for national parks, of visual areas that were national in their scope and reach. After the arrival of Mather, who became the National Park Service's first director in 1916, this trend continued and even

gained credence within the fledgling agency.<sup>1</sup> By the time construction started on Hoover Dam, called Boulder Dam when work began in 1931, the Park Service had clear ideas about what constituted national caliber scenery. It certainly did not include man-made lakes and the areas around them.

Nor was there much else in the early history of the Colorado River's Black Canyon to suggest that this desolate area would become a vibrant recreation area, drawing visitors from around the globe. Native Americans living in the area before white explorers arrived spent centuries adapting to its harsh environment. The Patayan, Basketmaker-Pueblo, and Southern Paiute cultures survived within the bounds of what became Lake Mead National Recreation Area, but only after developing subsistence economies suited to the Mojave Desert's intense heat, sparse ground cover, and scarce water. Desert cultures moved throughout the region seasonally to maximize their access to extremely limited resources. All of the groups who lived in the region could only sustain small populations that spread out over large areas. The density of Native Americans was as low as one person in thirty to forty square miles, powerful testimony to the sparseness of resources.<sup>2</sup> Between 6000 BC and 1800 AD, desert cultures survived and occasionally flourished in the canyon country surrounding the Colorado River. The permanent settlements of the Basketmaker-Pueblo and the "seasonal round" subsistence gathering patterns of the Patayan and Southern Paiute cultures did not significantly alter the fragile desert ecosystem they inhabited, allowing them centuries of continuous habitation.

Americans first encountered this unforgiving environment in the 1820s, when trappers and traders such as Peter Skene Ogden and Jedediah Smith explored the area. Spanish forays into the Great Basin ended with the Dominguez-Escalante expedition in 1776 that reached the Green River; after 1776, this desolate and remote region attracted little attention from Spanish authorities. Yet trade led to the development of trails. Nearby, the Old Spanish Trail passed through what later became known as the Las Vegas Valley; in 1830-1831, George C. Yount and William Wolfskill traveled the route in its entirety. Early white explorers ventured into the Black Mountains and Colorado River area, but systematic exploration of the region did not begin until the late 1850s.

By that time, part of the wave of missionary expeditions Brigham Young sent out to create the Mormons' planned state of Deseret reached the area. Communities established by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stretched through southern Utah, ever after known as "Mormon Dixie," beyond the Colorado River in the south and to San Bernardino in the west. Young planned de facto colonization of the Great Basin; his representatives seemingly occupied every water hole, well, and wet spot in the desert. One of those was a little oasis called "Las Vegas," the meadows, by the Spanish. In 1855, Young appointed

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 33-47; Ronald A. Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984), 18-42; Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 50-80.

<sup>2</sup> James C. Maxon, "The Desert Cultural Tradition," Lake Mead NRA fact sheet, September 1970, Lake Mead NRA archives; J. C. Maxon, "The Southern Paiute People," Lake Mead NRA fact sheet, June 1971, Lake Mead NRA archives.

William Bringham to lead an expedition to the Las Vegas Valley and establish a mission there. The route to San Diego had been buttressed by a \$25,000 government appropriation to build a road from Salt Lake City to the California border, and regular mail service began in 1854. Young hoped that the community, then technically in New Mexico Territory, would not only provide supplies along the trail, but would also help extend Mormon influence to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>3</sup>

Utah's hold on its far edge soon became complicated by tension between the Mormon leadership and the United States. In mid-July 1856, frustrated by nearly a decade of bad relations between Utah and the federal government, an exasperated President James Buchanan dismissed the officials of the Utah Territory, who were essentially the hierarchy of the Latter-day Saints Church and included church leader Brigham Young, and replaced them with gentiles. The climate had disintegrated so badly that one British observer noted that the Mormons regarded the United States "pretty much as the states regarded England after the War of Independence." Insurrection loomed. Utah Mormons clamored against the change and threatened the safety of the new officials. In December, Buchanan requested that units of the U.S. Army be sent to Utah to protect his officials and assure the enforcement of federal law. Young perceived the action as an invasion of Deseret; the Mormons felt that they were to be persecuted again, as they had been in Missouri and in Nauvoo, Illinois. Young issued a call for all loyal Mormons to return to Salt Lake City and defend the faith.<sup>4</sup>

Even as the conflict between the United States and Deseret grew more rancorous, exploration in the region continued both as science and as imperial destiny. Lieutenant Joseph Christmas Ives, often credited as the first Anglo-American to explore the Colorado River above Fort Yuma, California, received a government appropriation in 1857 to assess the possibility of steam navigation on the Colorado River. After only one week, his ship, *Explorer*, ran aground, but Ives and his men managed to reach the head of Black Canyon, the future site of Hoover Dam, before they abandoned the boat and went overland.<sup>5</sup> In 1869, the most significant government-sponsored exploration of the Colorado River basin began under the direction of the one-armed Major John Wesley Powell. The Civil War veteran turned professor went on to become the most important American natural scientist of the nineteenth century, as well as the preeminent explorer of the U.S. West. With financial backing from the Smithsonian Institution, Powell spent three years exploring and mapping the length of the Colorado River. Powell's expedition gave the most notable features along

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<sup>3</sup> Russell Elliott and William D. Rowley, *History of Nevada*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 33; Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Elliott and Rowley, *History of Nevada*, 55-61; William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 306-16.

<sup>5</sup> David O. Woodbury, *The Colorado Conquest* (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1941), 28; Robert W. Frazer, *Forts of the West: Military Forts and Presidios, and Posts Commonly Called Forts, West of the Mississippi River to 1898* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965); Elliott and Rowley, *History of Nevada*, 33; Moehring, *Resort City in the Sun Belt*, 1-3.

the river, including Black Canyon and Boulder Canyon, their Anglo-American nomenclature.<sup>6</sup>

Powell's fantastic accounts of the Colorado River basin's raging rapids, narrow canyons, and extreme environment captivated the U.S. public and left an indelible impression on all who contemplated settling the region. Most important, Powell presented a vision of the arid West's environmental realities. His famous 1878 report envisioned an agrarian Southwest economy that relied on irrigation on a scale previously beyond comprehension. Powell wanted to redirect the desert's wild rivers as a way to transform the arid West into an agriculturalist's paradise. Unlike the earlier explorers who looked at the Colorado River as a possible avenue for commercial navigation, Powell regarded the river's waters as a source of transformative economic and social power.<sup>7</sup>

As head of the U.S. Geological Survey from 1881 to 1894, Powell held a powerful position that helped him to implement his vision of using the Colorado River for agricultural purposes. The idea of an arid wasteland transformed by modern science and technology resonated in U.S. society, articulating the era's primary values and seeming to represent the continent's conquest by the intrepid American people. Prior to the 1890s, rudimentary irrigation techniques with roots in Spain's Iberian Peninsula, typically consisting of ditches and acequias, tapped small streams to irrigate local agricultural efforts along the Colorado River or to support mining operations. Even for boosters of southwestern development, rechanneling the raging Colorado River seemed an impossible dream. The drainage basin covers about 243,000 square miles, almost ten percent of the continental United States. During the 1890s, the combination of technology and expertise needed to achieve Powell's dream of taming the wild rivers of the West became available. By the turn of the century, development of the steam shovel, rail transportation, concrete and structural steel construction, and improved excavation technologies and business management techniques finally brought that dream within reach.<sup>8</sup>

Along with new technology and management expertise came a large pool of experts, hydraulic engineers prominent among them, who trooped across the arid West in search of dam sites and canal routes. These engineers often worked for private development companies such as Charles Robinson Rockwood's California Development Company. Founded in 1896, the California Development Company conceived the first of many attempts to bring the vast water of the Colorado to Southern California's parched but fertile Imperial Valley. The Imperial Valley, just north of the Mexican border, was a developer's dream. The temperate

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<sup>6</sup> Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 531-39; Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the American West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), 42-60; Donald Worster, *A River Running West: The Life of John Wesley Powell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-75.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted in Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 133; John Wesley Powell, *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States, With a More Detailed Account of the Lands of Utah*, facsimile of the 1879 ed., with an introduction by T. H. Watkins (Harvard, Mass.: Harvard Common Press, 1983).

<sup>8</sup> Stephen J. Pyne, *How the Canyon Became Grand: A Short History* (New York: Viking Press, 1998), 1-33; Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 57-66; David G. McCullough, *The Path between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977).

climate there allowed farmers to grow crops throughout the year. An ancient delta created hundreds of thousands of acres of land that needed only water to be impressively fertile.<sup>9</sup> The only barrier to settlement of this potential agricultural paradise was annual rainfall of less than three inches.

At the start of the twentieth century, Southern California was the nation's future, a land of prospects, potential, and enormous dreams all waiting for a consistent and reliable supply of water. Western agriculture boomed in the 1890s, and if settlers could resolve the challenges of aridity, Southern California seemed slated to serve as the forefront of an emerging far-western agricultural economy. Rockwood regarded the challenge as his own, and before 1901, his company built a canal that diverted the Colorado River more than sixty miles west into the Imperial Valley. A highly speculative real estate project, the Imperial Valley development became the prototype for Southern California. When water could be found—begged, borrowed, stolen, or otherwise captured—the region could grow, and the Imperial Valley provided proof of this potential. The California Development Company's canal brought settlers to the Imperial Valley almost as fast as it brought water. In 1901, the valley boasted 1,500 homesteaders ready to plant their crops and make the desert bloom. By 1904, more than 7,000 people lived in this newly important setting in American agriculture.<sup>10</sup>

The California Development Company was an entirely commercial enterprise and only in an ancillary fashion did it consider social engineering as one of its goals. Devoted to encouraging settlement and providing the water that made that objective possible, the company's primary concern was profit, not long-term solutions to the complex problems associated with large-scale water diversion and irrigation. Initial success came quickly, but the company could not sustain it. The first four years of the development confirmed the hopes of Southern California irrigation boosters, and the Imperial Valley blossomed into a patchwork of fields producing fertile crops that ripened throughout the year. This initial success seemed to prove that development could convert even the harshest western arid land from desolate waste to garden. But the always unpredictable Colorado River reasserted itself after several years of steady flow, quickly tempering the optimism of the first years. In 1904, during dramatically increased flows, the river burst out of its canal banks and inundated most of the Imperial Valley.<sup>11</sup>

In response to this disaster, settlers in the valley and boosters, politicians, and developers clamored for more precise and reliable methods for controlling the river. As did many Americans at the time, they believed that they could use technology to harness nature

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<sup>9</sup> Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 143; Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 21-25; Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 127.

<sup>10</sup> Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 227-32, 20; Barbara Vilander, *Hoover Dam: The Photographs of Ben Glaha* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Norris J. Hundley, Jr., *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 119-200; Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*, 122-138.

completely, to make the river flow as readily as water from a faucet. Advocates of the Imperial Valley and Southern California development in general envisioned an improved canal system. The only debate focused on who should develop the improved canal, the private sector or the government.

During the Progressive era, the federal government left a stronger imprint on American daily life than at any time before the twentieth century. A combination of desire for development, efficiency to prevent scarcity, and concern for a common good permeated U.S. society and reached into the lives of Americans. Federal and state agencies wholeheartedly assumed new obligations. Government routinely allocated public resources for projects designed to improve the lot of Americans, and irrigation was primary among them. The loudest voice favoring a federal role in large-scale irrigation on the Colorado River belonged to Arthur Powell Davis, John Wesley Powell's nephew and director of the new U.S. Reclamation Service. The federal government created the agency to reclaim the arid West for settlement by the sort of yeoman farmers that Thomas Jefferson once envisioned as the backbone of the American Republic, but who were rapidly diminishing in number as the twentieth century began.<sup>12</sup>

The Reclamation Act of 1902, the piece of legislation that put the federal government in the business of irrigating land across the arid West, became one of the catalytic pieces of western resource legislation. Passed on June 17, 1902, after a bitter political fight that pitted eastern and midwestern opponents of expanded western agriculture against western boosters, the law created Davis' Reclamation Service, later renamed the Bureau of Reclamation. Discussions in Congress culminated with a drawn-out debate about the federal government's role as a funding source for expensive water projects for private landowners. Despite powerful allies, opponents of the act were at odds with prevailing trends in U.S. politics. Representative Francis G. Newlands, a Democrat and a tenacious supporter of federal control of reclamation and a strong booster of his adopted state of Nevada, introduced the Reclamation Act and shepherded it through the political process. The Silver State stood to benefit greatly from reclamation legislation. Declining population prompted some to call for the decommissioning of Nevada as a state, and Newlands hoped that irrigation projects would attract hordes of settlers to farm the state's new wetlands. In 1901, Newlands allied his effort with eastern conservationist and head of the Division of Forestry, Gifford Pinchot, a close confidant of newly elected President Theodore Roosevelt. Although from different political parties, Newlands and Roosevelt shared the bipartisan Progressive belief that the government could use science and technology to advance the goals of efficiency and fairness.<sup>13</sup>

The idea of large-scale federally controlled reclamation projects in the American West fit neatly within the parameters of Progressive conservation, the set of ideas championed by

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<sup>12</sup> Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); Hundley, *The Great Thirst*, 203-4; Hal K. Rothman, *Saving the Planet: The American Response to the Environment in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 34-59.

<sup>13</sup> Donald J. Pisani, *To Reclaim a Divided West: Water, Law, and Public Policy, 1848-1902* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 322; William D. Rowley, *Reclaiming the Arid West: The Career of Francis G. Newlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 35-99; Hundley, *The Great Thirst*, 115.



Roosevelt that promoted centralized management of resources by experts. The Reclamation Act solidified the federal government's position as the purveyor of western water development. National water projects encouraged westward expansion, eased population pressures in the eastern United States, conserved water, and helped agricultural development, all objectives of Roosevelt's administration and well within the wide boundaries he set for government intervention in daily life. The newly created Reclamation Service developed water storage and delivery systems for seventeen western states. It quickly became the agency of choice for the nation's best engineering students. In an era in which the public good was paramount, the students recognized that the effort to bring water to the desert offered the greatest challenge for their field. By 1924, the agency could boast of twenty-seven western water projects completed or under way.<sup>14</sup>

Not all western proponents of development supported federal reclamation projects. The city of Los Angeles found itself a competitor with the Reclamation Service because of its never-ending quest for an adequate water supply. Beginning in the early-twentieth century, Los Angeles officials circumvented federal authority to secure valuable watersheds for the city's exclusive use. Before 1900, the city relied on the Los Angeles River and artesian wells to supply its modest population. The city population topped 100,000 by 1900, and it became clear that natural sources would not be sufficient for both the urban population and the agricultural demands of surrounding farms. Nor could the artesian wells accommodate future growth. The city was aware that the Reclamation Service was surveying the Owens River Valley, north of Los Angeles in the interior of the state, for a project that would become the centerpiece of the federal reclamation program in California. Under the supervision of the director of the Los Angeles Department of Water, William Mulholland, city agents and corrupt Reclamation Service representatives set out to corral the water of the Owens Valley for Los Angeles.<sup>15</sup>

Through the use of dubious methods, including bribery and subterfuge, the city bested the federal government and secured all the water rights in the Owens Valley. The incident caused serious embarrassment to the young Reclamation Service, not through complicity, but because of serious omission: ignorance of the city's intentions and failure to control agency employees who aided in the Owens Valley water rights grab. In an age when government bureaus tended to act as arbiters, skilled locals and devious employees bested a young federal agency just starting to carve out its mission. The Owens Valley incident hurt the image of the Reclamation Service as it tried to define a clear role for itself among the many earnest federal agencies of the Progressive era.

After securing Owens Valley's water rights, Los Angeles lobbied in Washington to obtain the right-of-way for an aqueduct required to bring the water to the city. In 1906, President Roosevelt sided with the city, invoking the axiom of the Progressives, the greatest

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<sup>14</sup> Vilander, *Hoover Dam*, 5; Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*, 115-20.

<sup>15</sup> Hundley, *The Great Thirst*, 139-61; Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*, 54-87; Starr, *Material Dreams*, 156-58; Robert Gottlieb, *A Life of Its Own: The Power and Politics of Water* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 75-109; Margaret Leslie Davis, *Rivers in the Desert: William Mulholland and the Inventing of Los Angeles* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 1-115.

good for the greatest number over time, and ruling that the best use of the resource was for Los Angeles to use the water.<sup>16</sup> Under Mulholland's direction, work crews constructed a 200-mile aqueduct across desert and mountains to bring the water south. For the Reclamation Service, the lesson of the Owens Valley incident compelled a rethinking of the role of western cities in the plan to harness the West's limited water resources. When Newlands proposed his reclamation bill in 1902, he, like Powell and others before, assumed that independent farmers working toward a southwestern agrarian republic would be the main customers of the newly captured and diverted water. During the first decades of the twentieth century, an explosion in western migration and urban growth in the Southwest redistributed regional demography to urban areas. After Owens Valley, the renamed Bureau of Reclamation focused a large amount of its energy on catering to the West's emerging urban metropolises.

After World War I, the Bureau of Reclamation struggled to create a clear mission in a rapidly changing region. The government tasked Arthur Powell Davis, the bureau's director during this tumultuous time, with mapping out projects and defending the bureau from political attack. Davis and the bureau felt pressure from political opponents, who pointed to the small quantity of acreage cultivated in reclamation projects as evidence that the bureau failed to fulfill the mandate of the Reclamation Act. Davis was a longtime advocate of large-scale multipurpose projects that simultaneously provided flood control, irrigation, water storage, and hydroelectric power generation. Specifically, Davis wanted the bureau to focus future development on the Colorado River and undertake a showcase project that would redeem the bureau and answer both critics and constituents with one massive effort.<sup>17</sup>

The road to such a project, the taming of the wild Colorado River, led through Congress. The Colorado River involved a number of state jurisdictions, and the financial burdens of such a project demanded federal participation. In April 1922, after several years of field surveys and engineering studies, two California Republicans, Congressman Phil Swing and Senator Hiram Johnson, introduced the first of a series of legislation known as the Swing-Johnson, or Boulder Canyon, bills. The legislation called for a large dam at Boulder Canyon and the construction of an All-American Canal to bring the Colorado River waters to the Imperial Valley and Southern California. The bill also proposed a large hydroelectric plant to generate sufficient revenues to pay for the cost of dam construction and maintenance. The project meshed with the bureau's new focus on multipurpose undertakings. When completed, the dam would provide massive storage, hydroelectricity, urban water, water for irrigation, and flood control. The Boulder Canyon bills were unprecedented in financial scope and social impact, and they represented a convergence of agency goals and constituent demands.<sup>18</sup>

Passage of the Boulder Canyon Bill was a major victory for the promoters of Southern California's development. While California rejoiced, the fact that the Golden State had legally expropriated the water of the Colorado River, a crucial and scarce regional resource,

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<sup>16</sup> Hundley, *The Great Thirst*, 153.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 203-9.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph E. Stevens, *Hoover Dam: An American Adventure* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 2-27. The Swing-Johnson bills led to the spending of more than \$160 million in 1927 dollars alone for construction of Hoover Dam and its reservoir.

shocked the six other western states in the Colorado River basin – Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada. Fear of exploitation by outside interests ran deep in the American West. Residents of the river basin states resisted the notion that California alone could claim the Colorado River, and they were determined to maintain their hold on at least some of its water. The debate over the division of the Colorado River took on national significance when the U.S. Supreme Court decided that the doctrine of “prior appropriation” applied to states in the landmark case of *Wyoming v. Colorado* (1922). Although the *Wyoming v. Colorado* decision encouraged states to share crucial water resources, the notion of “first in time, first in right” became enshrined in law. Colorado River basin states needed to stake their claims quickly or risk California rightfully expropriating the river simply by making the first claim. All of the states involved in the struggle over the Colorado River realized that compromise was an essential prerequisite for regional growth.<sup>19</sup>

On November 24, 1922, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, creation of the Colorado River Compact achieved that compromise. Although Arizona initially refused to approve the measure, the other six states agreed to divide the waters of the Colorado River between the upper basin members of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and most of New Mexico, and the lower basin members of California, Nevada, Arizona, and a piece of northwestern New Mexico. In effect, the compact set aside the doctrine of prior appropriation and reserved the river water for future use. The compact ensured that the upper basin states, developing at a much slower rate than California, could bank their share of the Colorado River for future needs. In return, the upper basin states stopped their campaign to block the Boulder Canyon Dam project. The Colorado River Compact facilitated an uneasy truce among the Colorado River states and removed the last serious political barrier to the construction of the largest dam ever considered at that time.

After the Colorado River Compact signing, Congress passed a revised Boulder Canyon Project Act that included federal funding for dam construction, and President Calvin Coolidge signed the legislation in December 1928. In the heady days of the great economic upswing of the 1920s, even the conservative Coolidge and the incoming Hoover administration could support an enormous public works project that used technology for efficient resource management. Herbert Hoover, a former mining engineer, built his career on the implementation of such thinking. However, by the time the government sought construction contracts for the dam, the United States faced entirely different circumstances that changed the project’s justification but not its necessity. The stock market crash of 1929 transformed the nation’s economic outlook. With more than one quarter of the U.S. workforce unemployed during the Great Depression, public works projects such as Boulder Dam provided a small piece of the puzzle of recovery as well as obvious regional economic advantages. Every viable construction company in the West sought the contract. A group of western firms that included McDonald & Kahn and Bechtel of the San Francisco Bay Area in California, Morrison-Knudsen of Idaho, Kaiser Paving Company of Oakland, California,

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<sup>19</sup> Hundley, *The Great Thirst*, 209-13; Norris Hundley, Jr., *Dividing the Waters: A Century of Controversy between the United States and Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 1-25; G. Michael McCarthy, *Hour of Trial: The Conservation Conflict in Colorado and the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 3-10.

Utah Construction Company of Utah, and J. F. Shea and Pacific Bridge of Portland, Oregon, joined forces, incorporating as Six Companies on February 19, 1931, to bid for the Boulder Canyon Dam contract. The Bureau of Reclamation awarded the contract to the consortium on March 4, 1931.<sup>20</sup>

The construction demands of the Boulder Canyon Dam project, which was moved to Black Canyon to ease some of the construction difficulties, were unprecedented in scope and complexity. The project's first eighteen months required teams to blast four huge diversion tunnels three-quarters of a mile long through the rock walls of the canyon—two on the Nevada side, two on the Arizona side. This phase of the project alone, which rerouted the Colorado River away from the dam site, was considered a remarkable and almost impossible engineering feat. With the river diverted, the job of building the dam itself began. Thousands of workers scrambled over rock cliffs clearing debris while others labored to dig down to bedrock to begin pouring the dam foundation. Working conditions were incredibly dangerous. Rock falls, extreme heat, and myriad other dangers plagued workers. Still, with unemployment at record levels during the Great Depression, the relatively high-paying construction jobs lured thousands of job seekers to Boulder City, where many were forced to camp around the new town built and run by the federal government. While the rest of the country suffered the economic dislocation of the Great Depression, southern Nevada experienced an economic boom. Nearby Las Vegas had been left destitute by the Union Pacific's removal of the railroad shops in 1927. The dam provided a new lifeline by paving the way for the town to become a center of gambling after Nevada made the practice legal in 1931.<sup>21</sup>

By 1933, the walls of Black Canyon were clean enough to support the dam's flanks, giant cofferdams flanking the construction site were completed, and crews began building the dam's foundation. In June 1933, the foundation was finished and wooden concrete forms received the first of more than 66 million tons of concrete.<sup>22</sup> Looking down into the excavated depths of Black Canyon, it seemed inconceivable that a dam could rise almost to the rim and stop the waters of the Colorado River. However, the engineers were confident, and by pouring concrete twenty-four hours a day for two straight years, they completed the project on March 23, 1935. Hoover Dam was not only an engineering feat of epic proportions, but a monument to collective labor: the entire construction of the dam was completed in an astonishingly short three years. By 1936, the reservoir was slowly filling, and the massive hydroelectric plant began to produce electricity.

The public instantly hailed Hoover Dam as one of the wonders of the world and the greatest man-made structure on the planet. No less stunning than the dam was the massive reservoir that began filling the parched desert canyons of southern Nevada and northwestern Arizona. The Colorado River emerged from its journey through southern Utah and northern

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<sup>20</sup> Gerald Nash, *The Federal Landscape: An Economic History of the Twentieth-Century American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 19, 24-25; Stevens, *Hoover Dam*, 26-45.

<sup>21</sup> Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*, 131-36; Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt* 13-40.

<sup>22</sup> Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 210-11, Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*, 134.

Arizona at the Grand Wash Cliffs of extreme northwestern Arizona. From there, it wound its way through the Colorado Plateau and down through the open lands to the west until it entered Black Canyon, where Hoover Dam impounded its waters. The reservoir, which became known as Lake Mead after the Bureau of Reclamation commissioner Elwood Mead, formed between the dam and the mouth of the Grand Canyon. It eventually reached a length of 115 miles. Arms of the lake reached up into Colorado River tributary valleys. The longest of these, the Virgin River Valley, extended for thirty miles from the lake's main body. The reservoir created more than 550 miles of scenic shoreline, distinguished by Native American sites, natural vistas, and beaches. Visitors who came to view the dam gazed in awe at the crystal waters of Lake Mead lapping up against the stark canyon walls composed of volcanic materials. Few sights in the American West compare with the surreal juxtaposition of a massive body of captive cool water in the midst of the Mojave, the country's driest and hottest desert.<sup>23</sup>

The blue waters of Lake Mead presented federal government agencies with a variety of management options. The Bureau of Reclamation designed Hoover Dam as a multipurpose project. In statute, the dam's functions were limited to flood control, irrigation, and power generation. Few of its designers or builders would have included recreation as one of its purposes. Only after dam construction was under way and visitation increased did the government recognize that the public might see the lake as an opportunity for recreation. As a result, the Bureau of Reclamation approached the Park Service for guidance in administering recreation in the region, only to find that the Park Service had already begun to study the area's possibilities. In June 1929, when Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur visited the area to determine whether to house the dam workers in Las Vegas or to build a new government town, he also requested that the Park Service assess the future Lake Mead for its potential as a national park.<sup>24</sup>

In 1929, the Park Service was an aggressive agency reaching its first peak in the federal system. Only thirteen years old, the agency had successfully transcended the inherent geographic limitations of its first decade. Until the late 1920s, it had been limited to federal lands in the West, but with the 1920s addition of eastern national parks—Shenandoah, Great Smoky Mountains, and Mammoth Cave—it began to achieve first parity and then dominance in its always contentious relationship with the United States Forest Service. Its early leaders worked to build a support base in Congress. The agency remained confined by the limited purpose of its holdings and its intellectual loyalty to the idea of national parks as markers of U.S. culture. National parks and national monuments, the only two categories the agency administered, had powerful symbolic connotations in the country's culture. When the ascendant director of the agency, Horace M. Albright, sought to broaden the park system, he largely focused on the addition of historic sites, places in the national memory that could

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<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of the Navy, *Lake Mead Comprehensive Survey of 1948-49* (February 1954), II-16-28. II-17; John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961), 369.

<sup>24</sup> Emerson Knight, Guy D. Edwards, and Alfred C. Kuehl, *Report on Boulder Dam National Recreational Reserve, Nevada and Arizona: Master Planning Objectives and Principles* (San Francisco: National Park Service, 1936), 2, ACC #4530, Lake Mead NRA archives; Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt*, 14-15.

further extend the geographic reach of the young agency. Recreation without a patriotic or at least an affirmative purpose was not yet a Park Service responsibility. The traditional agency emphasis preserved scenic natural vistas of world-class status. The Park Service did not want to demean that vision by taking on less-than-spectacular natural areas, and a man-made lake such as the one formed by Hoover Dam was inherently suspect. Although the Park Service had experience with tourists, it did not fashion itself as the government's recreation agency. Seeing itself within the context of a Progressive-era vision of culture and society, the agency had yet to reach beyond the conceptual limitations it established at its 1916 founding.<sup>25</sup>

By 1929, Park Service personnel were skilled at evaluating potential park areas. A decade of surveys, ideas, and catch phrases that swayed the agency and its congressional supporters culminated in a systematic procedure for adding areas to its holdings. The agency assembled a number of expert evaluation teams, made up of skilled leaders who understood the agency and its objectives and who were intensely loyal to the first two Park Service directors, Mather and Albright. The suggestions for new park candidates often came from outside the agency, typically from members of Congress or interested citizens, making the evaluators crucial if the agency was to maintain its professional objectives and standards. These evaluation teams commanded respect; they could shape the results of the process by the very language they used to describe the areas they investigated.<sup>26</sup>

The area behind the proposed dam was of instant interest to the Department of the Interior. A series of initial surveys led to a December 7, 1929, Park Service report by E. W. Sawyer that recommended a Virgin National Park of about 8,000 square miles between the Colorado and Virgin rivers and a Zion National Park that included the proposed Boulder Dam reservoir. The Bureau of Reclamation initially opposed a Park Service presence in the area, deftly pointing to the very obligations the Park Service laid out for itself. Department of the Interior interest and the Bureau of Reclamation's desire to keep the Park Service out inspired greater NPS interest. A plan for public use of the dam and the surrounding region seemed a likely consequence of the sparring.<sup>27</sup>

Even with reasons for interest in establishing a presence in the region, the Park Service's response to the Sawyer report evinced little enthusiasm. On January 6, 1930, Director Albright recommended against the establishment of a national park or monument in the area. The chief ideologue of the early Park Service, Albright followed closely the objectives that had guided the agency since its founding. He was dubious about the inclusion of a man-made lake in the national park system and did not see pure recreation without spiritual uplift as a function of his agency. Instead, he continued to envision the parks as *fin de siecle*

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 56-58, 120-27, 263-66; Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 94-104, 120-27, 196-200; Horace M. Albright as told to Robert Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-1933* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers Press, 1986), 243-47.

<sup>26</sup> Albright as told to Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service*, 130, 227, 256-60.

<sup>27</sup> Knight, Edwards, and Kuehl, *Report on Boulder Dam National Recreational Reserve, Nevada and Arizona*, 2.

cultural affirmation, seeing the preservation of nature as a reflection of U.S. accomplishment and wisdom. In this context, as Albright tried to fill out the park system for all time—as he regarded his charge as director—there was no room for an artificial lake and the purely recreational property around it.<sup>28</sup>

Despite Albright's qualms about a reservoir with relatively little scenic or historic importance in the national park system, pressure from higher officials in the department compelled additional study of the region. On February 20, 1930, Guy D. Edwards, an assistant engineer with the Park Service, examined the area and recommended a "National Recreation Area" in a report to Secretary of the Interior Wilbur. The idea of a recreation area provided a possible compromise solution for a site that did not fit within the established parameters of national parks and monuments. A presidential proclamation, signed in April 1930, withdrew 4,212 square miles in Arizona and Nevada "for classification and pending determination as to the advisability of including such lands in a national monument."<sup>29</sup> Even the powerful and tendentious Albright could not resist the wishes of his superior, the secretary of the interior.

Under duress, Albright again sent his evaluators into the field to assess the possibilities of the lake from this new perspective. Roger W. Toll, superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, led a team to the region. By 1931, Toll had become the primary inspector of potential park areas, the most trusted man in the agency for evaluating the values of recommended inclusions. Along with Minor R. Tillotson, superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park, and Preston P. Patraw, superintendent of Bryce Canyon National Park, Toll inspected the withdrawn area along the Colorado River between May 16 and 26, 1932. The report delivered Albright the rationale he needed. "It is an accepted policy to prohibit the construction of reservoirs in existing National Parks," Toll opined. "To base the establishment of a National Park upon a reservoir would not only be fundamentally undesirable, but would establish a precedent that might endanger existing National Parks."<sup>30</sup>

Despite his reservations, Toll did recognize that the area was attractive and the lake had possibilities. In his view, three potential areas of interest seemed likely. Visitors might enjoy inspecting the dam and power houses, using the recreational opportunities on the reservoir, or visiting the surrounding area, which included Valley of Fire State Park and Lost City, an Anasazi ruin near Overton, about seventy-miles north of the dam. The area should be "made available to visitors," Toll observed, but he concluded that it was

undesirable to give national park or national monument status to any area connected with the Hoover Dam or the reservoir to be formed by the dam. The scenery in this portion of the withdrawn area does not possess national interest. Neither the dam nor the reservoir offer suitable basis for a national park or monument.

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<sup>28</sup> Knight, Edwards, and Kuehl, *Report on Boulder Dam National Recreational Reserve, Nevada and Arizona*; Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 13-22; Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 162-86.

<sup>29</sup> Knight, Edwards, and Kuehl, *Report on Boulder Dam National Recreational Reserve, Nevada and Arizona*, 2; Executive Order no. 5339, April 30, 1930; Roger W. Toll, *An Inspection of Withdrawn Areas along the Colorado River* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1932), Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>30</sup> Toll, *An Inspection of Withdrawn Areas along the Colorado River*, 2-6; Roger W. Toll to Director, June 16, 1932, Archiva 551, Lake Mead NRA archives.

Even though national caliber scenery could be found within the withdrawal, in Toll's estimation, it duplicated the features of Grand Canyon National Park and was not a necessary addition to the park system. Toll's perspective reflected fidelity both to the original conception of national park areas and to the standards that Albright sought for the park system. The Park Service believed it could control its own destiny by controlling the process of including areas in the national park system.<sup>31</sup>

Albright's commitment to principles derived from the agency's roots remained strong, but the political reality of the 1930s subsumed their application. The Park Service sought to retain the prerogatives it earned during the 1920s, but it lacked the political power and influence to persuade the Interior Department. Even though Albright was a lifelong Republican, a loyal member of the Hoover administration, and a shrewd, adroit leader whose power was at its zenith, the agency still had to work to impress its values on even the best of its friends. On June 28, 1932, Louis D. Cramton, special attorney to the secretary of the interior, described the area around Hoover Dam and made his own recommendations. Cramton, a former Michigan congressman who had served as head of the House Appropriations Committee, was a longtime park advocate whose close relationship with the agency dated from Stephen T. Mather's exploratory trips to the West in the late 1910s and early 1920s. When Cramton lost his House reelection bid in 1930 in the aftermath of the stock market crash, he moved into the Hoover administration and continued his career as a park advocate.<sup>32</sup> Despite the recommendations of Park Service insiders, who consistently opposed a national park at Lake Mead, the Hoover administration and the Department of the Interior remained interested in establishing tourism and recreation as part of the long-term development of Hoover Dam and the surrounding region.

The Department of the Interior's impetus for development kept the Park Service on the political defensive. In May 1932, Bureau of Public Roads Engineer W.R.F. Wallace recommended the development of major roads throughout the Lake Mead area. The Bureau of Public Roads was a valuable ally of the Park Service, sometimes leading the agency toward development of an area. During the first decade of the Park Service, its mission and that of the road bureau often coincided; the Park Service sought to bring people to the parks and, with the advent of the automobile, the Bureau of Public Roads provided the means. In most situations, the Park Service worked toward development and utilized parallel agencies to help in the process, but the Park Service remained ambivalent about the idea of a national recreation area dominated by a recently constructed utilitarian engineering project.

Finally, on February 28, 1933, after nearly a full year of pressure, the adamant Albright relented. "As experts in the handling of tourist travel, guiding and informing visitors, and providing other facilities," he wrote, "we will provide those services for the Reclamation Service and the Secretary of the Interior in the Boulder Canyon Area."

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<sup>31</sup> Toll, *An Inspection of the Withdrawn Areas along the Colorado River*, 2-3.

<sup>32</sup> Donald C. Swain, *Wilderness Defender: Horace M. Albright and Conservation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 188; Albright as told to Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service*, 257-60; Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, 175-76, 232-42; Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 103.



Albright's capitulation was not unilateral. He followed the Toll report, which recommended cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation in visitor services. As late as 1933, Albright simply restated Toll's position without committing to direct Park Service administration of the new lake area.<sup>33</sup>

Albright's decision occurred in a new political context, as the Hoover administration ended and Franklin D. Roosevelt ascended to the presidency. Herbert Hoover had accentuated his powerful proconservation sentiments during his final months in office. At Albright's behest, and buoyed by the fine survey work of the agency, Hoover used the Antiquities Act of 1906 to proclaim several lame-duck national monuments at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, White Sands, and Death Valley. Notable in its absence was the area behind the dam being built in Black Canyon, suggesting that in its waning days the Hoover administration closely followed Albright's opposition to man-made facilities. The new Roosevelt administration evinced different principles. Even though Albright developed a close relationship with the new president before he left the agency in August 1933, he could not sway the new chief executive. The activist Roosevelt regarded public lands far differently than did the outgoing Park Service director. Public lands became conduits for employment in one of Roosevelt's formulations of a response to economic turmoil, melding conservation and labor policy.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), one of Roosevelt's first ideas after he took office, was the pinnacle of his aim to combine conservation and labor policy. A few weeks into the presidency, Roosevelt proposed that an army of unemployed men be sent to perform basic work on federal and state land. They worked in forestry, prevented soil erosion, and helped with flood control projects. As it developed, the CCC became a central institution of the New Deal, one of the ways in which the government put people to work and helped them see a positive future in an otherwise dismal economic time.

The CCC took single men between eighteen and twenty-five and gave them hard physical work in the forests, parks, and public lands of the nation. CCC workers were counted among the fortunate during the Great Depression years, as they at least had jobs. The young men lived in military-style barracks, worked six days a week for a dollar a day, all but five dollars of which was sent home to their families each month. CCC crews built roads, trails, firebreaks, structures, and a range of other necessities and amenities on public land. The work camps became common on public lands throughout the nation, especially in the West. A number were located in southern Utah and southern Nevada, providing labor for projects on national park and state park lands, as well as on other public holdings.<sup>34</sup>

Roosevelt's views about public lands became immediately clear, as his administration implemented new policies from inauguration day. The Hoover administration had been friendly to conservation, but his training as an engineer heavily influenced the former president's vision and it placed considerably high value on land use. Roosevelt took a broader view, seeing protection as an objective even on lands that Hoover reserved. On March 3,

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<sup>33</sup> Knight, Edwards, and Kuehl, *Report on Boulder Dam National Recreational Reserve, Nevada and Arizona*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Rothman, *Saving the Planet*, 54-61; Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 206-32.

1933, the last day of Hoover's presidency, he signed an executive order that established a bird refuge in the Boulder Canyon area, introducing another federal agency into the area. The United States Biological Survey (USBS) received administrative control. The Biological Survey was closely allied with the Park Service, but its emphasis on species preservation added a dimension beyond the reach of most 1930s Park Service managers. The Park Service was sympathetic to the USBS. In the 1930s, when the wildlife biologist George M. Wright elevated the profile of the natural sciences in the Park Service that employed him, the two agencies shared common objectives. In Boulder Canyon, the introduction of the bird refuge indicated a more active government posture and was a harbinger of the involvement of many different agencies from the Department of the Interior. The Park Service may have been able to control its future during the Hoover administration, but under Roosevelt, the power of centralized government and the reach of all federal land management agencies and their obligations extended considerably.<sup>35</sup>

The Park Service faced a conundrum. As the agency acknowledged the potential recreational appeal of a reservoir behind the dam, it simultaneously deflected efforts to assign administrative responsibility to itself. On a February 27, 1935, Louis Schellbach III, a museum technician with the Park Service Division of Education, visited a CCC camp at Boulder State Park, near Overton in northern Clark County, for an inspection tour. In the Park Service's capacity to assist state parks, he reported on a proposal to create Boulder Dam State Park.<sup>36</sup> Schellbach recognized that despite confusion about which agency would administer the area around the lake and what its classification would be, the public clearly wanted to see the area. The visitor's book in the one-room temporary museum in Overton contained more than 2,000 entries when Schellbach visited. Several of these visitors were prominent scientists and researchers, leading Schellbach to conclude that the area had strong potential for developing what he called "recreational, inspirational, and educational" features that appealed to a wide spectrum of visitors.<sup>37</sup>

With this observation, Schellbach recrafted the state park proposal into something the Park Service could accept without compromising its principles. Schellbach focused on the ways in which the new reservoir and its environs were similar rather than different from other park areas. He utilized the region's cultural resources, already well catalogued, to argue for more than recreation in the man-made area. Following Schellbach, a series of experts toured the area around the dam and the still-filling reservoir.

Park Service interest stemmed from the political diminishment of the agency's autonomy and the impact of New Deal programs on the national parks. By the mid-1930s,

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<sup>35</sup> Richard Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government: The Controversy over Executive Reorganization, 1936-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 1-27; Donald C. Swain, "The National Park Service and the New Deal," *Pacific Historical Review* 41 (August 1972): 312-32.

<sup>36</sup> Louis Schellbach III, "Report on an Inspection Trip to Proposed Boulder Dam State Park" (Berkeley: Field Division of Education, National Park Service, 1935), Southwest Museum of American Indian, Los Angeles, CA, and a digital copy at Lake Mead NRA.

<sup>37</sup> Schellbach, "Report on an Inspection Trip to Proposed Boulder Dam State Park," 4; Thomas R. Cox, "Before the Casino: James G. Scrugham, State Parks, and Nevada's Quest for Tourism," *Western Historical Quarterly* 24 (August 1993).

the political climate had shifted significantly since the initial inquiries about managing the reservoir. After Albright left the agency in 1933, Arno B. Cammerer, one of the Park Service's assistant directors, succeeded him. Cammerer had been with the agency since its founding, carrying out the directives of Mather and Albright and implementing the policies these two visionaries put forward. He lacked his predecessors' imagination, and the Park Service hit the first of its swoons. Much of the inspiration and drive went out of agency leadership with Cammerer's ascension. Worse, Harold L. Ickes, the irascible and powerful secretary of the interior, detested Cammerer and hammered away at the new director's resolve. The Roosevelt administration viewed federally supported recreation and development on the nation's lands as an important component of the New Deal. Developing new types of parks outside the traditional categories of national park and national monument became government policy and Cammerer lacked the standing or the backbone to resist. New Deal programs and the remarkable amount of federal dollars available for park projects made fighting the New Deal not only futile but also counterproductive. There were also Park Service employees such as Conrad L. Wirth, a landscape architect, who advocated parkways and recreation over the traditional goals of the agency and went on to become director of the Park Service in 1953. Even if Albright, who watched disapprovingly from his new post as vice president and general manager of the United States Potash Company, thought the agency had abandoned its ideals, the Park Service moved toward acquiescing to involvement at Lake Mead.<sup>38</sup>

The Park Service recognized the political implications of resistance to agency policy and accelerated its claims to the Boulder Dam reservoir. The agency sent specialists to affirm the viability of the national recreation area, and the other Department of the Interior inspectors assessed the existing infrastructure. On October 19, 1935, the geologist Edwin D. McKee, a naturalist at Grand Canyon National Park, outlined natural features of interest in the region, pointed to educational possibilities, and provided general recommendations for accommodating increasing numbers of visitors. Other agencies contributed to the Park Service's program. In December, Harry B. Hommon, sanitary engineer with the United States Public Health Service who had inspected many national parks, produced a report entitled "Water Supply, Sewage and Refuse Disposal at the Boulder Dam National Recreation Area." In 1936, Cammerer and the Park Service followed the powerful Ickes, embracing at least the concept of recreation. At Ickes's behest, on June 22, 1936, Congress allocated \$10,000 for a study of Boulder Dam's recreational potential. The agencies outlined the project as a joint Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation effort.<sup>39</sup>

Congressional funding and a partnership agreement were important steps toward designating the Lake Mead region as the nation's first national recreation area, a new type of federally managed public resource. Later in 1936, the Park Service and the Bureau of

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<sup>38</sup> Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 237, Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diaries of Harold L. Ickes*, Vol. II: *The Inside Struggle* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 584; Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 162-71.

<sup>39</sup> Knight, Edwards, and Kuehl, *Report on Boulder Dam National Recreational Reserve, Nevada and Arizona*, 3; Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, 45; William C. Everhart, *The National Park Service* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 33.

Reclamation formalized a memorandum of agreement. It assigned maintenance responsibility for Boulder Dam and support facilities in Boulder City to the Bureau of Reclamation, while the Park Service assumed responsibility for recreational areas on Lake Mead and along its shoreline. The 1936 memorandum provided the basic management plan until the complete transfer of Lake Mead NRA (as it was renamed in 1947) to the Park Service in 1964. The following year, the Park Service and the Office of Indian Affairs signed a similar agreement that provided for cooperation and coordination of development in the portion of the Hualapai Indian Reservation included in the recreation area.<sup>40</sup> Despite internal skepticism and Albright's continuing specter, the Park Service was officially in the recreation business and Boulder Dam NRA quickly became a test case for the agency's expanded mission.

The agreement outlined important divisions of authority that compromised Park Service autonomy, dividing the land by use. The Park Service accepted authority for all lands that were not directly related to the dam's operation, while the Bureau of Reclamation retained jurisdiction over reservations around the dams and the federal housing and office buildings in Boulder City. More significantly, the agreement stipulated that storage, release, and utilization of water were the area's dominant consideration, assigning the Park Service and its concerns to a secondary position. The Bureau of Reclamation retained the authority to resolve any controversy unilaterally. For any decision the Park Service made, from building a new structure to granting a concession, the agency needed permission from the Bureau of Reclamation. Even the most obvious of its obligations were subject to Bureau of Reclamation approval.<sup>41</sup> The agency did not receive a park; instead, it obtained a license to operate a recreational park inside a Bureau of Reclamation reserve. The terms of the agreement compounded the lack of enthusiasm for recreation within the Park Service.

Boulder Dam NRA was significant not only because it was the first federal recreation area of its kind, but also because it represented an important expansion of the Park Service's mission. Following the 1936 agreement between the Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, Congress accentuated the new emphasis by passing the Park, Parkway, and Recreation Study Act of 1936. The law and the establishment of Boulder Dam NRA broadened the Park Service's mission beyond the scenic national parks that dominated agency focus before 1933. This legislation placed the Park Service as the lead agency in recreation and made it the conduit for federal aid to state and county recreation projects. The act's provisions directed the agency to study all federal lands with recreational potential except those administered by the Department of Agriculture. The new responsibilities left

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<sup>40</sup> Memorandum of Agreement between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation Relating to the Development and Administration of the Boulder Canyon Project Area, Aug. 29, 1936, Lake Mead NRA archives. Secretary of the Interior H. L. Ickes approved and signed the memorandum on October 13, 1936. Arthur E. Demaray signed for the Park Service and Acting Commissioner R. F. Walter signed for the Bureau of the Reclamation; James C. Maxon, compiler, *Legislative History of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area: A Preliminary Study* (Boulder City, Nev.: National Park Service, 1972), 5, File L1417, "Orig. of Leg. Hist.," Lake Mead NRA archives; Cooperative Agreement between the National Park Service and the Office of Indian Affairs Relating to the Development of the Boulder Dam Recreation Area, Nov. 5, 1937, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>41</sup> Memorandum of Agreement between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation Relating to the Development and Administration of the Boulder Canyon Project Area, Aug. 29, 1936, 1-5.

many of the most ardent people in the agency dismayed and more than a little uncomfortable.<sup>42</sup>

Agency planning of the new recreational area reflected that complicated ambivalence. Beginning with the Special Planning Group Proposal for Boulder Dam National Recreation Reserve in 1936, Park Service staff members sought conventional park features in the new national recreation area as a way to make the park fit existing models and to assuage the agency and its “greenbloods,” the service’s term for career NPS people. The study focused attention on recreation, but its authors clearly understood that even a “National Recreation Area” could not easily fit in the park system without an effort to construe its merits in traditional agency terms. The report emphasized the value of scenery at Lake Mead, concluding with a strong plea for maintaining and accentuating the area’s natural features. “We consider that certain grand elements of nature are intrinsically of a sacred character which all thoughtful persons would agree should be held inviolate,” Emerson Knight, the lead author, opined.

We believe that certain features are more valuable in their natural state as viewed by the tourist, than if they were scarred and commercialized by the hand of man. We have emphasized in this report the value of holding intact such areas, for instance, the west end of Lower Grand Canyon, without any development whatsoever.<sup>43</sup>

Even as it fashioned a national recreation area, the Park Service hewed to its preservationist sentiments.

The emphasis on scenic qualities permeated Park Service acquisition efforts even after three years of the New Deal. Roosevelt’s programs extended the Park Service’s ability to secure resources, and the agency became quite skilled at finding ways to package places for inclusion in the system on its own terms. Despite the coming of representative area national monuments such as Organ Pipe and Joshua Tree, new parks without stunning scenery or historic value of some kind remained anomalies, sometimes lucrative ones, in the system. Even the ability to grab bountiful resources for development through the CCC and other federal programs did little to persuade the agency that it should accept its newly broadened mission. Successful interagency cooperation, planning and development, and enthusiastic visitor responses belied significant difficulties in integrating a recreation mission into the park system. The assimilation effort gave the agency power, but few in the Park Service regarded resources as an unmitigated advantage. The resulting changes in the parks made the new mission hard to swallow for some.

A focus on recreation and nontraditional development and management plans gave the Park Service another tool in its growth campaign. By the mid-1930s, the Park Service had developed a reputation for active pursuit of new lands at the expense of other agencies. Some agencies fought back, others cringed when the Park Service appeared on the horizon. Under the Park, Parkway, and Recreation Study Act, the Park Service received authority to work

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<sup>42</sup> Foresta, *America’s National Parks and Their Keepers*, 45; Arthur Carhart, “Outdoor Recreation Literature: A Survey,” *ORRRC Study Report 27*, 118.

<sup>43</sup> Knight, Edwards, and Kuehl, *Report on Boulder Dam National Recreational Reserve, Nevada and Arizona*, 69.

with other federal offices, a tool the agency valued and its opponents feared. The mandate to lead in recreation foreshadowed cooperative agreements such as the one with the Bureau of Reclamation. When such an arrangement provided the agency with an advantage, the Park Service's skill and enthusiasm for acquisition showed through. The new circumstances enhanced the growing Park Service advantage over its primary rival for land, the U.S. Forest Service. In the debate over the primary value of disputed lands, the Park Service could use cooperative agreements to circumvent the more prosaic foresters.<sup>44</sup> The new responsibility for developing and managing recreation resources gave the Park Service wider latitude in defining its mission and in claiming land.

Early administrative efforts at Boulder Dam NRA focused on building an infrastructure for visitors and planning for future recreational use. Under the direction of Superintendent Guy D. Edwards, the Park Service engineer who served during the crucial years of Lake Mead's development between 1936 and 1942, the recreation area benefited greatly from cooperative agreements with the Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided crucial labor services during the 1930s and early 1940s. On November 18, 1935, the CCC began construction on its first project in the region, the Boulder City Airport. Eventually the CCC built three runways, two 6,200-foot long and the third 4,000-foot long. CCC projects inside Boulder Dam NRA included preparation of beaches for recreation by clearing away brush and spreading tons of sand and fine gravel. Crews worked continuously as the lake water level rose and fell from a combination of changing amounts of rainfall and releases to accommodate downstream users. The attempt to maintain a recreation area next to a man-made lake was novel because none of the natural rhythms that managers depended on in other shore settings was relevant to management. Planners and laborers both seemed to learn by trial and error. Water levels rose more than thirty feet during beach improvements, which inundated much work and kept CCC crews on the move to stay ahead of the rising reservoir.<sup>45</sup> Enrollees also built swimming and diving floats, portable comfort stations, dressing rooms, picnic tables, and all of the supporting facilities that lakeshore visitors required.

Between 1936 and 1942, Hemenway Wash on the western edge of Lake Mead became the focus of intensive development. Early in 1940, the agency began to construct a permanent beach. Since 1935, Park Service observers recognized the advantages of the location near Boulder City. "Hemenway Wash will doubtless be the station serving the greatest number of tourists for recreation purposes," Emerson Knight, Guy D. Edwards, and Alfred C. Kuehl observed in their 1936 report. "The area is topographically suited to development." Hemenway Wash was accessible from Boulder City, the dam, and the burgeoning town of Las Vegas, making it the perfect place to locate initial recreational services. In addition to the beach, construction projects at Hemenway Wash included public campgrounds and lodge and cabin developments, with accompanying shade trees, water and

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<sup>44</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 134; Hal K. Rothman, "'A Regular Ding-Dong Fight': Agency Culture and Evolution in the Park Service-Forest Service Dispute, 1916-1937," *Western Historical Quarterly* 26 (May 1989): 141-60.

<sup>45</sup> Boulder Dam NRA, Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1942, Lake Mead NRA archives; Boulder Dam NRA, Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1940, 2, 4.

sewage systems, vegetation, irrigation, and electrical systems. In anticipation of future heavy leisure traffic on the water, the 1940 annual report for Boulder Dam NRA highlighted the completion of the boat landings and a residence for boat pilots. CCC enrollees accomplished all of this work.<sup>46</sup>

Infrastructure projects dominated the recreation area's early development activities. With more than 600,000 visitors annually by 1940, handling motor vehicles became an early priority. CCC enrollees built facilities for vehicular management, including traffic check stations on the Kingman Highway west of Boulder City and on the road to the Hemenway Wash beach and the newly completed boat landing. Boat management drew equal attention. Along with public docking facilities, navigation aids constructed along Lake Mead helped boaters find their way around the steadily rising reservoir. Besides providing for the needs of visitors interested in water recreation, the Park Service assisted archeological researchers. Archeological investigations around the reservoir dovetailed nicely with Park Service efforts to implement a traditional interpretation program at the park. Interpretation had become one of the crucial ways the Park Service defined itself, and the new national recreation area could only benefit from an interpretation program. It would help the park attain legitimacy with those who scorned it. Edwards understood that while most visitors were drawn to the lake by recreational opportunities, many expected interpretation of human and natural history similar to that found at national parks and monuments. In 1940, workers completed relief models of Boulder Dam NRA and installed them in the museum in Overton, along with exhibits highlighting archaeology and representative insect, animal, and plant species of the region.<sup>47</sup>

By 1941, after five years of work, CCC crews had completed an entire range of infrastructure projects throughout the recreation area. In most places, only landscaping remained unfinished, but such activity was crucial to the park's public presentation. Landscaping efforts around the Park Service's administration building in Boulder City were extensive. Workers blasted bedrock to a level grade, hauled in fresh earth for plants, installed concrete walks and steps and sprinkler systems, and planted trees and shrubs. At Overton, the CCC camp concluded the first stage of development of a beach there. The Park Service assisted the Forest Service in construction of a 20,000-cubic yard levee for flood control in Moapa Valley and helped develop a nursery of 10,000 trees for park landscaping.<sup>48</sup>

Construction barely met the dramatically increasing visitation totals. During 1941, 761,512 visitors passed through Boulder Dam NRA entrance stations, an increase of 215,064 visitors from 1939 totals. Although many of those either visited just the dam or merely drove across the dam and through the area, 25 percent—nearly 200,000 people—stopped and used recreational facilities. The Park Service ascertained several reasons for the exceptional increases. The reservoir approached its high-water mark, and officials anticipated

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<sup>46</sup> Knight, Edwards, and Kuehl, *Report on Boulder Dam National Recreational Reserve, Nevada and Arizona*, 39; Boulder Dam NRA, Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1940, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Boulder Dam NRA, Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1940, 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

that news of reaching maximum capacity would attract national press attention and inspire increased visitation. Better highways into the area, national publicity because of ongoing interest in Boulder Dam and its symbolic importance as an engineering accomplishment, and dependable air service to the Boulder City Airport also contributed to higher visitation expectations.<sup>49</sup>

Yet, the Park Service remained in a difficult position at the new recreation area. The boundaries of the area were not clearly defined, a situation that usually favored the Park Service. During the 1930s, the agency was at a zenith as a land acquisition agency. Honed in the fierce battles of the 1920s and suddenly well beyond its adversaries in government and public favor in the 1930s, the agency had sharp acquisitive skills. Some Park Service personnel also felt a need to shore up support for Lake Mead within the agency. Even after the New Deal, the traditional mindset to national parks remained pervasive. An effort to expand the park for what agency traditionalists called the “right reasons” began. On October 7, 1938, Park Service Director Arno B. Cammerer recommended an addition to Boulder Dam National Recreation Area to include the scenic values of the land in question. That year, Congress sought to reduce the size of the Grand Canyon National Monument to mollify regional grazing interests.<sup>50</sup> Cammerer believed that expanding the boundaries of Boulder Dam NRA might solve conflicts between grazing interests and the parks. He recognized that the recreation area designation permitted mining, grazing, and other kinds of use that were generally forbidden in national parks and discouraged in national monuments. In some situations, that versatility could be an advantage. It also helped the recreational area gain status within the agency.

By 1945, however, the 1936 agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation had hamstrung the Park Service. It presented so many drawbacks that management of Lake Mead seemed impossible. The Park Service never handled well having subordinate status to other agencies. Agency personnel took great pride in wearing the service green and regarded the Park Service’s mission as special and apart from other agencies. Ever in search of autonomy, the agency began a long push for independent status for Lake Mead. On January 20, 1945, Ben H. Thompson, chief of the Park Service’s Branch of Lands and architect of its expansion strategies, saw little reason to extend park boundaries if the agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation remained satisfactory to the agency. But if “public lands are to be classified for their dominant value, and are to be administered by the agency having the dominant interest,” he observed, “reconsideration of the boundaries becomes important.” Thompson set up a straw man, a circumstance that anyone loyal to the agency could only interpret his way. He relied on traditional agency practices as the rationale for administering the park. Boulder Dam National Recreation Area’s primary value came as a “cultural resource of great scenic, educational, and recreational importance,” a markedly different rationale than the agency offered a decade earlier. Thompson framed his report as political strategy. He anticipated a bid for Park Service control and renegotiation of the Bureau of Reclamation

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<sup>49</sup> Boulder Dam NRA, Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1941, 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> Arno Cammerer to Harold Ickes, Oct. 7, 1938, S3B, 711, T Archiva, ACC #4514, Lake Mead NRA archives.



agreement. With Thompson's report as a cudgel, the Park Service lobbied to rewrite the basic agreement. In 1947, the Bureau of Reclamation agreed to transfer jurisdiction of the new lands surrounding the new dam being built to the south, Davis Dam, and the lake that would come up behind it, called Lake Mohave, to the Park Service.<sup>51</sup>

Also in 1947, Boulder Dam returned to its original name of Hoover Dam. Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, Coolidge and Hoover's secretary of the interior, initially named the dam for Herbert Hoover in 1930. Out of antipathy for the failings of the Hoover presidency, the Roosevelt administration renamed the project "Boulder Dam" in 1933.<sup>52</sup> The post-World War II Republican Congress, headed by the acerbic Robert Taft of Ohio, despised Franklin D. Roosevelt, and as a posthumous tweak after the president's death in 1945, they returned the dam to its original name. On August 11, 1947, Boulder Dam National Recreation Area became Lake Mead NRA. Although the name change had little to do with the Park Service's push for autonomy, it did allow people to think of the area in a new way, subtly furthering the idea of an independent park.

The new name did little to resolve internal agency questions about recreation. The appointment of Newton B. Drury of the Save-the-Redwoods League as Park Service director in 1941 enunciated preservation as an agency theme, pushing recreation to the background as World War II limited public access to such activities. Only after the war ended and the agency refashioned itself under Conrad L. Wirth, the landscape architect who became director in 1953, did a new, more clearly defined national recreation area category emerge. The bifurcated management at Lake Mead NRA posed problems from its inception. Legislation to create an independent, more clearly defined Lake Mead NRA under Park Service jurisdiction would require more than a decade of bipartisan effort.

Efforts to redefine Lake Mead's status began in the early 1950s, when Senator Alan Bible, D-NV, and Representative C. Clifton Young, R-NV, led a drive to give the Park Service more control over the recreation area than provided for under the 1936 cooperative agreement. At a public hearing of the Subcommittee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee held in Boulder City on September 21, 1953, the Park Service articulated its point of view. "Although our relationship with the Bureau of Reclamation has been splendid and much has been accomplished under the present cooperative agreement," the statement diplomatically explained, "the importance of the Area now and in the future seems to justify its definition by Congress." Lake Mead had provided the Park Service many challenges. It inaugurated a new category for the Park Service, which by the 1950s acquired new importance as an agency expansion strategy under Wirth. The Park Service's junior position

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<sup>51</sup> Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 190-91; Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, 243-311; Ben H. Thompson, "Report to Mr. M. R. Tillotson, Regional Director, National Park Service, Region Three, Santa Fe, New Mexico: Concerning the Boundaries of Boulder Dam National Recreational Area" (Santa Fe: National Park Service, 1945), S3B 711 T Archiva, ACC #4514, Lake Mead NRA archives; "NPS Statement Prepared for Presentation at a Hearing of the Sub-Committee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Boulder City, Nevada, Sept. 21, 1953," BL1417, "Lake Mead Legislation, Part I," Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, CA (hereafter NARA-LN).

<sup>52</sup> S.J. Res: 45, Senate Report 55, March 17, 1947.

in the relationship with the Bureau of Reclamation complicated an already convoluted management situation. The success of Lake Mead NRA during the 1940s, when it briefly became the nation's most visited park area and consistently ranked in the top three, persuaded Park Service officials and sympathetic legislators that the time for a new arrangement at Lake Mead had arrived.<sup>53</sup>

The Park Service sought to change the fundamental nature of its relationship with the Bureau of Reclamation. The original boundaries of the withdrawn national recreation area, established by agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation in 1936, reflected only the needs of that agency. By the 1950s, Park Service officials argued, the enormous popularity of Lake Mead and Hoover Dam as tourist attractions created new circumstances and demanded a change in park management. Under Wirth, the agency embraced recreation as a mission, and following the director's lead, the Park Service sought administrative control to meet recreational needs. This position was quite different from the 1930s, and it reflected changes in the agency and in public expectations of national parks.

Acquisition posed another contentious issue between the two government bodies. The 1936 agreement did not allow the Park Service to acquire additional lands for any purpose without permission from the Bureau of Reclamation. In these circumstances, Park Service officials argued, the Bureau of Reclamation's mandate might not permit acquisition for purposes other than reclamation, leaving the Park Service unable to fulfill its recreational mission. Inholdings, deeded lands inside park boundaries, remained a constant problem for the Park Service. Only independence from the original agreement offered a solution, agency personnel asserted. Nor could the agency defend Lake Mead against nearby development that might have little potential to impede the Bureau of Reclamation's mission, but might be incompatible with recreational use.<sup>54</sup> The combination of factors doomed the original operating relationship at Lake Mead NRA, and Park Service officials made a persuasive case for restructuring it.

By the time the Park Service lobbied for an independent park unit on the lands surrounding Hoover Dam, national recreation areas had become an important category within the agency. After World War II, the nation faced a crisis in recreational space, and the combination of pent-up demand for leisure and new wealth possessed by many Americans propelled hundreds of thousands to search for places to enjoy the outdoors. This group became an important constituency for federal agencies, which scrambled to accommodate the public's needs. The situation was so dire that author Bernard DeVoto recommended closing the national parks if the federal government did not give them the resources needed for proper management. Congress responded with enthusiasm. In 1956, MISSION 66, a ten-year

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<sup>53</sup> "NPS Statement Prepared for Presentation at a Hearing of the Sub-Committee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Boulder City, Nevada, Sept. 21, 1953"; "Boulder Dam National Recreation Area Tops Bonafide National Parks," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Nov. 8, 1946; "NPS Statement Prepared for Presentation at a Hearing of the Sub-Committee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Boulder City, Nevada, Sept. 21, 1953," Exhibit A, "Summary of Travel For The Calendar Years 1937-1952."

<sup>54</sup> Conrad L. Wirth to Rep. Clifton Young, Jan. 18, 1956, BL1417, "Lake Mead Legislation, Part I," Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

capital development program to rejuvenate and improve the system in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 founding of the Park Service, received unqualified congressional support. Development of existing parks and the addition of new ones became goals not only for the agency, but for Congress and the public as well. Congress established the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) in 1958 in response to the urbanization of the nation and the lack of recreational opportunities for much of the American public.<sup>55</sup>

Despite continuing NPS ambivalence about its de facto dominance in recreation, the number of recreation areas under its administration grew after the inclusion of Boulder Dam NRA. Beginning in 1946, the agency began to administer other parks around man-made reservoirs. Coulee Dam NRA in Washington was added in that year, and following 1952, a range of recreation areas joined the system in the subsequent fifteen years. Shadow Mountain in Colorado, Glen Canyon in Arizona, and Bighorn Canyon in Montana and Wyoming, all behind newly built Bureau of Reclamation dams, typified the new areas. Under Wirth's administration and with an increasing perception that the nation lacked sufficient outdoor recreation, recreational parks took on growing importance for the Park Service.

The long-neglected mission became a ticket to greater access to federal funds and resources as well as a way to develop the new post–World War II constituency for outdoor recreation. Although historic ambivalence toward recreation pervaded the agency's labor force, the Wirth administration championed recreational areas, parkways, and other obviously designed park landscapes. Again, there was tension within the Park Service. Wirth's strategy got the agency what it most needed—resources—but many who cherished the Park Service's ideals felt that the emphasis compromised what was best about the agency.

The change in emphasis for the Park Service turned on politics no matter how persuasive the logic, and in the postwar era, the state of Nevada lined up for its share of federal spending. On January 26, 1956, Senator Bible, a player in the group of western senators and congressional representatives known as the “water buffaloes” for their reliance on federal projects for their states and districts, introduced Senate Bill 3055. Bible reiterated Representative Young's earlier proposal for the creation of an independent Lake Mead NRA managed by the Park Service. Bible believed reorganization was necessary for a variety of reasons. “For many years,” he wrote, “areas with outstanding recreational potential have not been developed. Growing populations in the western areas are demanding improved recreational facilities which they deserve.”<sup>56</sup> A western politician tied to the coalition that Lyndon B. Johnson had built in the 1930s, Bible understood that park construction brought jobs and recreation and that tourism attracted out-of-state dollars to his state. The improvement of recreational facilities at Lake Mead ensured that the tourism industry in southern Nevada and western Arizona could further develop the region's ongoing postwar boom in travel.

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<sup>55</sup> Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, 171; n.a., *Our Fourth Shore: Great Lakes Shoreline Recreation Study* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1959), 2-14; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 180-212.

<sup>56</sup> S.3055, Jan. 26, 1956; Sen. Alan Bible, “Establishment of Recreational Facilities in Certain Reservoir Areas,” *Congressional Record* (May 5, 1955): 4859-60.

Although Boulder City seemed distant from the growing city of Las Vegas to the northwest, the forces that reshaped Las Vegas made the need for independent recreation-based administration of the park even more pressing. By the early 1950s, Las Vegas was in the middle of a major construction boom and was well on the way to becoming the nation's capital of leisure. Developers had built a dozen large hotels along the Las Vegas Strip by the middle of the decade, bringing gamblers and tourists to the city and reinventing Las Vegas yet again. The little supply depot for Hoover Dam construction and recreation area for dam workers became "Sin City," a national tourist destination for certain types of American. The hotels sought to cater to everything that their patrons sought, and one dimension of leisure was outdoor recreation. Las Vegas hotels often chartered boats on Lake Mead for their prized guests. In addition, the growth of Las Vegas from a city of 8,000 people in 1940 to more than 127,000 in 1960 began the transformation of Lake Mead from a remote recreational park to one with all the characteristics of later urban national recreation areas such as Golden Gate in the San Francisco Bay Area and Gateway in New York. Local residents used the lake on a daily basis, offering an enormous challenge to park managers accustomed to an overnight constituency.<sup>57</sup>

Park Service staff supported the legislation for an independent recreation area and sought to improve the area's position within the agency by securing a new designation. They proposed a series of different names, including Desert Lakes National Recreation Park and Southwest National Recreation Park. Park Service officials wanted to designate the area a "park" instead of an "area." National parks especially enjoyed cachet, and Lake Mead's advocates sought to improve the status of the area with the name change. While agency officials felt sure new nomenclature would make the area more attractive to the public, only the legislative process could yield the desired results. Wirth observed that "the recognition and designation of the area as a recreation area of significance to the Nation as a whole—based on its own merits—and including adequate authority to provide for its management as a National Recreation Area, instead of continuing to base that designation and management on a reclamation withdrawal" was the best answer to the quandary created by the 1936 agreement.<sup>58</sup>

Political supporters of the legislation rarely shared the agency's concern about nomenclature, but they possessed a strong commitment to securing the new status for the park. During the 1950s, the bill's authors concentrated their efforts on fine-tuning the legislation to encompass the numerous idiosyncrasies of Lake Mead NRA. A strong consensus in Congress about the need for legislation to clarify the management of Lake Mead gave the bill a solid chance of passage. In July 1956, the new secretary of the interior, Fred A. Seaton, announced his support for S. 3055. In January 1957, Charles A. Richey, Lake Mead NRA superintendent, discussed further modifications of the legislation with Wirth. Richey remained concerned about mining leases, electric rates, and boundary changes. The most serious problem with drafts of the Lake Mead legislation to date, Richey argued, was the

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<sup>57</sup> Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt*, 43-71.

<sup>58</sup> Superintendent, Lake Mead, to The Director, June 30, 1955, BL1417, "Lake Mead Legislation, Part I," NARA-LN; Conrad Wirth to Rep. Clifton Young, Jan. 18, 1956,.

failure to resolve the questions that surrounded mining leases. He insisted that satisfying powerful mining interests was crucial and recommended tabling the legislation to avoid defeat.<sup>59</sup> Richey recognized that what might seem to be minor points in the legislation could generate enough controversy to weaken chances for passage of the Lake Mead bill and prolong administrative limbo.

Later that same month, Senator Bible introduced a revised version of the Lake Mead bill, S. 1034, in the Senate. The bill provided definite and workable boundaries and shifted the revenues and fees received at the park to the general fund of the U.S. Treasury. Patterned after the proposed draft submitted to Congressman Clifton Young in December 1955, it included specific provisions for boundaries and provisions for mineral leasing. Despite these careful modifications, the bill failed to pass during the congressional session. Bible introduced a new Senate Bill 1084 on February 7, 1957. This version of the Lake Mead bill addressed issues of mineral leasing. Earlier bills modified mineral leasing procedures within the recreation area and inspired opposition from miners. S. 1084 permitted mineral leasing to continue under the terms of the 1936 agreement. During the 1950s, the government renegotiated the one-sided agreements of an earlier era with the Hualapai Indians. The Hualapai Tribal Council supported the idea of the recreation area with certain stipulations. They wanted, as a tribe, to retain mineral rights to their lands, to be permitted to hunt and fish as they chose on their own land, and to receive payment for all activities on their lands.<sup>60</sup>

As regional and national officials worked out the details of reorganizing the operations at Lake Mead, the legislative effort intensified. On February 16, 1959, Nevada Senator Howard Cannon joined Bible in presenting a new version of the Lake Mead legislation. Senate Bill 1060 differed from its predecessors by the addition of a section providing for the appointment of a U.S. commissioner for the recreation area on the same terms under which U.S. commissioners operated in national parks. This designation allowed a more complete law enforcement response than park staff could provide as visitation rose. Also as part of the legislation, the Bureau of Reclamation planned to cancel its withdrawal of all lands that were not essential to the operation of the dam, effectively nullifying the existence of Lake Mead NRA. S. 1060 entered the ongoing legislative debate about Lake Mead and the fine points of including new recreation designations within the existing framework of the park system. Like the bills that preceded it, S. 1060 generated debate and further research but failed to resolve the issue. The Bureau of Budget recommended Congress withhold action on the bill until the much-anticipated recommendations of the president's Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission became public.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Charles A. Richey to The Director, Jan. 4, 1957, L1417, Lake Mead NRA archives; Secretary of the Interior to James E. Murray, July 5, 1956, L1417, "Lake Mead Legislation Pt. 1," NARA-LN.

<sup>60</sup> To: The Director, From: Superintendent, Lake Mead, Subject: Superintendent's Annual Report, June 7, 1957, File A26, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Maxon, *Legislative History*, 10; Resolution No. 47-55 of the Governing Body of the Hualapai Tribe of the Hualapai Reservation, Nov. 17, 1955, BL1417, "Lake Mead Legislation, Part I," NARA-LN.

<sup>61</sup> Maxon, *Legislative History*, 12; "Addendum to Statement of Charles A. Richey, to the Public Lands

By 1963, the long process of granting Lake Mead NRA full status in the national park system neared final resolution. Between 1961 and 1963 the Lake Mead legislation went through several significant revisions. In May 1961, sponsors introduced S. 1836, which further clarified jurisdiction over hunting, fishing, and trapping. It became the prelude to the final bill. In 1963, Congress considered “Providing an Adequate Basis for Administration of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Ariz., and Nev., and for other purposes,” introduced as H. 4010 in the House of Representatives and S. 653 in the Senate.<sup>62</sup>

The bill moved through the congressional legislative process, and the interior and treasury departments both reviewed the measure and provided Congress with their perspectives. Interior officials objected to the revocation of the Bureau of Reclamation withdrawals that established the national recreation area. Under its interpretation, departmental solicitors believed the bill did not adequately protect the land as recreational space. “The existing uncertain status of these public lands is not conducive to development of the full recreation potential of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area,” opined Assistant Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver. He feared that passing the Lake Mead bill set important precedents for federal land management. The treasury department also voiced its own reservations about provisions in the Lake Mead legislation. Under the proposal, the interior department received jurisdiction over boating, and treasury officials questioned whether this superceded the authority of the U.S. Coast Guard.<sup>63</sup>

In late 1963, passage of the Lake Mead legislation became imminent. After comments from other legislators, Representative Walter Baring, D-NV, introduced a revised version of the Lake Mead bill, H. 4010, on February 21, 1963. Baring’s bill was the companion to S. 653. It differed only in the addition of a clause authorizing an appropriation as much as \$1.2 million for the acquisition of remaining inholdings. After resolving grazing and mining issues by continuing the prerogatives allowed in the 1936 agreement, the money to purchase inholdings removed the final obstacle to passage of the Lake Mead bill.<sup>64</sup> On October 8, 1964, Public Law 88-639 established the new Lake Mead NRA under the sole jurisdiction of the Park Service.

The law created a new park, different from its predecessor under the Bureau of Reclamation. The park did not change names but it did run by a new set of rules and regulations, established for the Park Service and to its specifications. The 1936 agreement had created a partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation that worked much to the disadvantage of the Park Service. Early management agreements divided authority and responsibility. During their long relationship, the Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation

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Subcommittee, Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs,” April 10, 1963, L1417, “LAME Legislative History,” NARA-LN.

<sup>62</sup> “Providing an Adequate Basis for Administration of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Ariz., and Nev., and for other purposes,” S.rp. 380, 88<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess.

<sup>63</sup> John A. Carver to Hon. Henry M. Jackson, April 9, 1963, in “Providing an Adequate Basis for Administration of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Ariz., and Nev., and for other purposes,” S.rp. 380, 88<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess.; Maxon, *Legislative History*, 14.

<sup>64</sup> HR 4010, 88<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., Dec. 13, 1963.

generally balanced their dual responsibilities, and cooperation marked the 1930s and 1940s. Hoover Dam and Lake Mead were unprecedented projects for both agencies, and the situation required flexibility and adaptability as managers, administrators, and all levels of federal employees in the area struggled to understand the dynamics of managing a massive man-made structure and reservoir as a recreational and tourist site as well as a water project. By the 1950s, the existing arrangement no longer met park needs, and after a decade of effort, the government created Lake Mead NRA as an independent park with full status in the park system. After October 8, 1964, the modern history of the park began, and it inaugurated a series of new trends within the National Park Service.





## CHAPTER TWO

### **ADMINISTERING LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA**

From its founding in 1936, Lake Mead National Recreation Area has been central to the Park Service's conception of managing and maintaining national recreation areas. As the first of the category, Lake Mead NRA was inherently a pilot program, an attempt to explore the possibilities of a kind of park that the Park Service approached with considerable ambivalence until recreational areas became important parts of the agency's larger growth strategy. Lake Mead NRA's functions changed as the traveling public developed new tastes and as the Park Service recrafted its strategy to maximize its constituency. The park initially provided recreation for the traveling public, a function that seemed congruent with the loosest definition of the national park system's ideals and principles during the 1930s and 1940s. At Lake Mead NRA, this initial mission became only one among many over time, compelling changes in the park's legal designation as well as in its administration. Southern Nevada's changing demography forced adjustments in park administration as the growth of a proximate urban population provided an ever-increasing constituency of local users who regarded the park as a location for daylong excursions.

The Park Service created and honed its recreation management policy at Lake Mead NRA. By 1946, the agency managed four national recreational areas: Boulder Dam NRA, Shasta NRA, Millerton Lake NRA, and Coulee Dam NRA, today called Lake Roosevelt NRA. All of these reservoir-based parks required facilities for the public. As the first national recreation area and the first Park Service attempt to manage a man-made reservoir as a public park, Lake Mead NRA held considerable significance. Other parks looked to its management strategies and facilities development programs as they fashioned their own future. After World War II, the Park Service moved from a reactive management to a system of integrated planning. During the late 1940s, Park Service officials confronted the challenges of adjusting to a booming postwar economy and dramatically changing patterns of public travel and recreation. The national demand for recreation increased tremendously, and new financial gains transformed the public's expectations. Facing this new set of demands, the Park Service looked for models on which to pattern agency policy.

Lake Mead NRA provided the best and most enduring vision of how the agency could administer recreation. In the mid-1950s, the agency's interest in recreation grew, leading to the transformation of the national park system. This change in direction stemmed from a number of sources. Conrad L. Wirth, who became NPS director in 1953, was a landscape architect who prized development and accessibility; the public demanded recreational facilities in the postwar era, and the Park Service responded with its unerring instinct for developing public support; and the federal government determined that recreation would become a national priority as the country moved away from wartime sacrifices. For the old "greenbloods," the first two generations of NPS people committed to the values of Mather's

and Albright's agency, the emphasis on recreation above the larger goal of cultural affirmation that defined the earlier era posed a psychic problem. Even as they struggled to grasp the changes, the park system embraced a utilitarian mission, and its acquisitions reflected its new emphasis. Between 1964 and 1972, the federal government added twenty-seven new areas to the five existing national recreation areas. These included national seashores and lakeshores, as well as areas designated as national recreation areas. Until the early 1970s, when the Park Service established Golden Gate and Gateway national recreation areas, the only real model for recreational management in the park system remained Lake Mead NRA. Even staff at these new parks closely followed Lake Mead developments. Lake Mead's model bridged the issues of the two differing types of national recreation areas. The national park system contained recreation areas such as Lake Powell NRA, a remote destination where visitors came for days at a time, and places including Golden Gate NRA, where local and day use dominated. Lake Mead NRA was the only recreation area that started as one kind of park and became another. Its patterns of administration, management, and development helped define Park Service national recreation policy. As a result, the park has also become central to understanding another of the primary dilemmas of national park management: how to change policy when existing dictates no longer met the needs of the public who used the park.<sup>65</sup>

The changes began well before the park attained independence from the Bureau of Reclamation in 1964. By the mid-1950s, Lake Mead NRA had become something different from what its planners expected, a park that served both an urban public and destination vacationers. At 1,951,928 acres spread across two states, Lake Mead NRA was the fourth-largest national park area. Second in size in the lower forty-eight states only to Yellowstone National Park, the park presented the agency with unique challenges. It lacked the monumental scenery that characterized so many natural national parks, had little of the historic claim of national battlefields, and in an age when most people still considered deserts as wastelands, had few pretensions of beauty or even the representative natural features of parks such as Joshua Tree National Monument. The existing practices designed for urban parks and the great natural parks did not serve well at the man-made lake in the desert.

The new demands on Lake Mead NRA required innovative management strategies and approaches in nearly every aspect of supervision. A man-made recreational area was new to the Park Service in 1936, and the park's topography combined to make administration even more difficult. Lake Mead NRA, still called Boulder Dam National Recreation Area at the time, was an elongated, narrow park carved from the shoreline of the lake formed by Hoover Dam. Its more than 130,000 surface areas covered a vast area, much of which was entirely undeveloped. Without paved roads or trails and other rudimentary infrastructure, early park managers faced difficult circumstances. The park's headquarters was far away and difficult to reach from remote parts of the park, and communications were nonexistent. The park's geography, its small staff, and the restrictive terms of the agreement with the Bureau of

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<sup>65</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1985), 68-75; Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 237-314; Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 50-80.

Reclamation posed tremendous challenges to its managers. A decentralized park resulted. Many smaller, distant ranger stations functioned with considerable autonomy, leading to the creation of a number of “park-within-a-park” situations. While decentralization allowed quick response to local needs, it also permitted deviation from agency norms, and, in cases that involved local interests, encouraged a level of accommodation that regional office officials often did not approve.<sup>66</sup>

Lake Mead NRA offered an extraordinary number of recreational opportunities and the Park Service’s efforts focused on accommodating visitors’ interests. Early studies indicated that the public regarded the park as an oasis in the desert. Agency reports of the late 1930s outlined plans for beach development, cabins, campsites, and boat docks to serve such constituencies. These improvements sufficed prior to 1945, but following World War II, significant changes in the patterns of outdoor recreation took place. During and after the war, California and Nevada experienced large population increases, as wartime industries attracted countless workers and their families to southern California. Las Vegas and southern Nevada also began to grow as a result, providing an increasingly large urban market for the park’s recreational amenities. Afforded only limited resources, possessed of a diverse and difficult to traverse landscape, and facing rapidly changing patterns of visitor use, park managers developed new management strategies throughout the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>67</sup>

After 1945, Americans generally became more affluent and enjoyed a dramatic increase in their leisure time. World War II provided the first real opportunity for widespread economic prosperity up and down the socioeconomic spectrum, continuing into the 1950s. Many Americans who had never owned property found themselves holding the keys to their own homes, a large number in the new suburbs that dotted the Southwest. Economic growth during the 1950s averaged more than 4 percent annually. Inflation remained below 2 percent, and unemployment stayed less than 5 percent. The Gross National Product nearly doubled during the 1950s. Median family income rose to \$5,657 by the end of the decade. Higher incomes and low unemployment translated to increased opportunity for leisure, consumer spending, and much greater interest in recreation and travel. After fifteen years of depression and war, Americans suddenly had money and access to a huge array of consumer goods and leisure-time options. Many chose outdoor recreation. They took advantage of improved camping equipment, readily available military surplus gear, outdoor sports supplies, more powerful motor boats, water skis, and other recreational products. Outdoor recreation became an important aspect of 1950s consumerism as well as a marker of membership in the postwar middle class.<sup>68</sup> It helped people translate their rural roots into their new suburban reality.

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<sup>66</sup> National Park Service, “NPS Statement Prepared for Presentation at a Hearing of the Sub-Committee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Boulder City, Nevada, Sept. 21, 1953,” “Lake Mead Legislation, Part I,” BL1417, Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, CA (hereafter NARA-LN).

<sup>67</sup> Roger Lothin, *Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 64-170; Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-1970* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1989), 33-77.

<sup>68</sup> Eric Goldman, *The Crucial Decade – and After: America 1945-1960* (New York: Random House,

The increased interest in outdoor recreation contributed to the public's changing perceptions of the National Park Service. Even if the agency did not always agree, most Americans valued national parks for their recreational opportunities as well as for their inspirational qualities, and they sought to make use of the many and varied prospects that the park system offered. Changes in cultural conceptions of leisure in the 1950s produced pressures for accommodating increased recreation in the national parks. The development of Lake Mead NRA as the model for national recreation areas reflected the changing symbolism of the national park system. While the agency may have gotten into the recreation business reluctantly in the 1930s, by the 1950s the public seemed to have an unlimited enthusiasm for recreation in the national parks.<sup>69</sup>

The ascent of Wirth to the Park Service directorship in 1953 provided the agency with the ideal person to respond to the public's increasing demands for recreation. The son of the man who had run the vaunted city park system of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Wirth entered the national agency in 1933 at the start of the New Deal and became the leading champion of parkways and recreation areas in the park system. The architect of the \$1 billion MISSION 66 program that renovated and constructed park facilities in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the Park Service's founding, Wirth brought a utilitarian focus that dramatically increased the importance of the few national recreation areas and made possible the addition of many more.<sup>70</sup>

At the same time, the dramatic growth of southern Nevada altered the prewar assumptions of park administration at Lake Mead NRA. As World War II ended, a new economic regime appeared in Las Vegas in the guise of men like Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel and Morris B. "Moe" Dalitz, spurring the growth of Las Vegas and the wartime community created in its shadow, later named Henderson. A population burst that lasted for more than fifty years followed. Las Vegas was home to 8,422 people in 1940. The population of the combined Las Vegas-Henderson standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA) reached 48,283 in 1950. By 1960, 127,016 people called the area home. Las Vegas began to stretch south toward Henderson, while small, war-industry-based Henderson reached toward the lake.<sup>71</sup> Nothing compelled growth in the desert as did water, and the new generation of Las Vegans became willing consumers of the lake's amenities.

The U.S. interstate highway system and the explosive growth of the auto industry were

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1960), 4-5, 12-15; Michael Schaller, Virginia Scharff, and Robert Schulzinger, *Present Tense: The United States since 1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1992), 125-130; Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the U.S. since 1945* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1997), 15-26; David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 173-79.

<sup>69</sup> Ronald A. Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984), 45-47.

<sup>70</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 358-61; Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 241; Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 140-54.

<sup>71</sup> Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt*, 270; Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 287-320; Hal Rothman, *Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1-35.

also key to the booming suburban and consumer economies of the 1950s. During the decade, Americans grew to love their automobiles with a passion that reflected not only their new prosperity but also the sacrifices of the Great Depression and World War II. Nine out of ten suburban families owned one car and some owned more. The combination of affluence and greater leisure time meant that Americans could use their cars for more than the drive to work. The automobile culture of the 1950s fostered new interest in the national parks as millions of visitors used personal transportation to visit park areas. Across the nation, park lands and forest campgrounds overflowed with visitors, and federal agencies scrambled to keep up with demand. The decade strained the park system in an unprecedented manner.<sup>72</sup>

Visitation patterns revealed distinct constituencies for the park system. Traditional national parks, such as Yellowstone and Yosemite, long had been destinations for travelers who planned extended summer vacations or long weekend stays. They often traveled with children and saw their experience as a validation of being American. Lake Mead NRA represented a newer trend in the postwar years, a democratization of the travel experience and its passage from serving well-off Americans at soul-lifting parks to the middle of U.S. society looking for recreation. Lake Mead NRA's visitors came for shorter stays, weekends or overnight, and a significant portion came during the day and departed as the sun set. They relied on the new interstate highways and the pervasive sense of mobility in postwar America, a feeling that became ensconced in the heart of the American imagination. The automobile freed travelers and allowed them to fix their own schedule. Managers at the park faced different demands as a result. The huge influxes of weekend and short-term visitors who came and went as they pleased and spent most of their time in the water and on boats presented administrative challenges that were far more complex than those associated with earlier users. Besides administering activities such as boating, fishing, and swimming, park managers had to plan and maintain facilities for peak visitations on weekends and national holidays, a decidedly different responsibility than in national parks that faced a summer full of people.

The development of Boulder Dam NRA in the 1930s and 1940s anticipated increased public utilization, but managers could hardly have prepared for the revolution in water sports that followed World War II. During the 1950s, boating became a national pastime and demand for docks and facilities skyrocketed. Before 1945, only the wealthy could enjoy private watercraft in significant numbers. In the postwar period, the new financial resources of the well-off middle class combined with lowered manufacturing costs to expand rapidly the number of boat owners. Sales of powerboats and water-skiing equipment grew exponentially during the 1950s. The era's consumer ideals made a powerboat in the driveway an important symbol of middle-class prosperity, especially in California and the Southwest. Many Americans who fled the crowded cities and headed to the new suburbs that sprang up after World War II wanted to enjoy the fruits of national and personal success. Being closer to the outdoors became an important measure of that way of life. Developers built many suburban projects of the late 1940s and 1950s around existing bodies of water or newly constructed

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<sup>72</sup> James J. Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 294-326; Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, 47-58; Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Viking Press, 1997), 1-37.

reservoirs with many opportunities for boating and recreation. The demand for space on public waters also increased dramatically. For those who could not afford to live in these new posh subdivisions, federally controlled lakes and reservoirs provided an alternative. Americans aimed their cars, Airstream trailers, and boats toward parks such as Lake Mead NRA.

Throughout the 1950s, Lake Mead NRA remained one of America's most popular outdoor recreation playgrounds and consistently rated among the top three most visited national park areas. The lake's popularity reflected the changing desires of the public, and the park's facilities were as overrun as any in the park system. Author Bernard DeVoto's vitriolic article, "Let's Close the National Parks," published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1953, best captured the acute overuse. DeVoto contended that the conditions had grown so bad that the government should shut down these bellwether institutions of American democracy if it could not adequately protect them. Intense recreational use of Lake Mead NRA led to strategies to minimize the impact of visitors on park resources. The experience of managing a recreation area with considerable motorized traffic on the lake, on the roads around it, and even in the air, provided important lessons for mitigating the impact of recreation.<sup>73</sup>

Changing agency perspectives also contributed to more sophisticated management techniques. Beginning in 1945, the Park Service moved toward more integrated park management, increasingly relying on science and agency scientists to guide management decisions. Prior to the 1940s, the agency's primary concern had been constructing facilities. Landscape architects played an enormously important role in the Park Service through World War II, their efforts culminating in "parkitecture," the protoenvironmental rustic style that characterized New Deal construction in the parks. As the G.I. Bill funded college educations for thousands of veterans, the agency capitalized on the increasing availability of new graduates to add science specialists to its staff and to manage resources in accordance with scientific standards. The Leopold Report of 1963, ostensibly an assessment of the situation of wildlife in the park system, solidified the position of scientific management in the agency, giving the discipline of ecology a much greater claim on policy than ever before. As the 1960s continued, Lake Mead recognized the management of natural and cultural resources as an integral part of its mission, as significant as the management of visitation that dominated the first thirty years of the park system's history.

From its establishment, Lake Mead was regarded by the Park Service as an anomaly. In the hierarchy of the Park Service, national recreation areas ranked near the bottom. Even after the ascent of Wirth and his emphasis on recreation and accessibility, most agency officials still believed national recreation areas were less worthy of national park status than national parks and other categories that had inspirational as well as recreational attributes. Wirth struggled to communicate his vision beyond his immediate circle, with limited success. He encountered resistance from advocates of the agency's traditions, spurring a number of struggles between the director's closest associates and personnel in the field. Such clashes led Wirth to develop a very small circle of confidants, often limited to those who carpooled with him. Even after a decade of his leadership, the rank and file in the Park Service regarded Lake

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<sup>73</sup> Bernard DeVoto, "Let's Close the National Parks," *Harper's Magazine* 207 (October 1953): 49-52.

Mead National Recreation Area and other recreation areas as a means to an end, a necessary compromise that helped the agency expand its audience but simultaneously detracted from its primary mission. The initial enthusiasm for Park Service entry into recreation in the 1930s stemmed from the recognition that such an area provided a venue through which to attract the enormous amounts of money that came from New Deal programs. Wirth's enthusiasm resulted from his personal perspective and the presence of MISSION 66, another infusion of capital for development.<sup>74</sup> Circumstances, not affection, drove agency interest before the 1960s. This reality had a dramatic impact on the development of the park.

The Park Service remained vexed by the management of national recreation areas. The agency could not decide if national recreation areas were full-fledged park areas or some other kind of entity. At some units, the Park Service willingly leased sites for vacation homes, a decision that diminished the recreation areas in the eyes of most agency line staff. Since William Randolph Hearst sold his lease of Grandview Point in the Grand Canyon to the government during the 1930s, the agency worked to keep new leases out of the system. They smacked of undemocratic privilege, twisting the ideals for which the parks stood. Inholdings, deeded lands inside park boundaries, were a different question. Inholdings and leasing in the early days had been part of the Park Service's strategy for building relationships with prominent supporters, but after World War II, the agency recoiled from the practice of offering deeds or leases inside park boundaries. Especially in highly visible national parks, inholdings and exclusive leases were perceived as elitist. As the Park Service moved away from its elite roots and became more egalitarian, new leases stirred controversy. Only in national recreation areas did the practice continue without challenge. The Park Service had to tolerate existing arrangements, but it did not support new leasing in its primary national parks. Allowing the continuation of leasing in national recreation areas demonstrated how most agency personnel saw these areas as different from national parks.<sup>75</sup>

At Lake Mead NRA, the question of leasing vacation property set up a measurement of the crucial distinction between national recreation areas and national parks. In 1945, Regional Director Minor R. Tillotson advocated allowing the leasing of some vacation home sites within the park's boundaries. Tillotson recognized that the decision might define Lake Mead NRA in a negative manner, but he equivocated on whether a national recreation area merited the protection routinely given the national parks and monuments.<sup>76</sup> Tillotson's uncertainty demonstrated a crucial dilemma for the agency at Lake Mead NRA and placed the park on an important fault line. Despite its shortcomings from a traditional Park Service perspective, Lake Mead offered many park qualities and was far superior to other recreational areas foisted on the agency as a result of the New Deal. Until the Park Service decided whether a national recreation area was a full-fledged park, any decisions made at Lake Mead

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<sup>74</sup> Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 1-15; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 138, 333-34; Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, 47-58.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 382-84; John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961), 233-34; 1946 Annual Report, Secretary of the Interior, 342-43 [repository unknown].

<sup>76</sup> M.R. Tillotson, Memorandum for the Director, May 31, 1945, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

NRA not only served as a model, but also offered primary evidence of the value of the park in the Park Service's worldview.

The entire debate illustrated that Lake Mead National Recreation Area retained a diminished status in the park system, which placed the park's managers in a complex situation. Park superintendents stressed the parallels between Lake Mead NRA and the other national parks in an effort to attain the always elusive credibility in the eyes of their peers. They pointed out that travelers to the park originated from all over the country and in the region, but because the park's archaeological and historical features were away from the main roads, proportionately fewer visitors reached them. As visitation numbers rose, the park became even more central to the agency's future in recreation. Superintendents played the role of seers in swaying their colleagues. "It seems to me that the Service's responsibility in connection with this area is great," Superintendent George F. Baggley observed in 1949, "and our success or failure here will affect the entire Service."<sup>77</sup> Lake Mead clearly defined what a national recreation area would become in the park system and pointed to a dimension of the agency's future that many still ignored.

The Park Service could not achieve consensus about its goals for Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The park did not fit any of the models the agency typically used to evaluate its activities. From the conventional agency perspective, it confounded NPS logic. Increasing visitation always required a response from the agency; but many of the passersby were only marginally interested in the features the Park Service managed, making Lake Mead National Recreation Area a far less likely candidate for an infusion of agency resources. Hoover Dam and the park entertained more than one million people each year after 1945, but park officials noted that few came specifically to the lake and its amenities. In 1945, 95 percent of visitors surveyed said that they came to the area to see Hoover Dam. The Park Service counted as visitors everyone who drove through the park, excepting employees of the various government bureaus in the vicinity. In 1947, the park's annual report revealed that 1.175 million people visited the park, "even though many of the visitors merely saw the Lake, the Dam and canyon scenery as they drove through."<sup>78</sup>

This tacit admission of reality illustrated another enormous difference between parks and recreation areas. People made a conscious decision to visit destinations such as Yellowstone and its peers. At Lake Mead NRA, many simply traveled the road on their way to somewhere else. Ever more vexing for agency in the business of promoting nature, the public regarded the "scenic and scientific features of the area of secondary interest," Tillotson noted, "while the man-made features are primary." Statistics such as this worried Tillotson, as efforts to prepare the recreational facilities at the lake went forward in anticipation of increased future use.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Memorandum for the Director, June 28, 1949, 201, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum for Regional Naturalist Dodge, Nov. 25, 1946, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; "Memorandum for the Director," June 5, 1947, Lake Mead NRA files, NARA-LN.

<sup>79</sup> Memorandum for Regional Naturalist Dodge, Nov. 25, 1946, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Memorandum for the Director, June 5, 1947, Lake Mead NRA files, NARA-LN.



Nor was the Park Service enthusiastic about recreation as one of its management objectives. The agency still struggled with how to manage what remained to many an inconsequential responsibility better handled by other agencies. By 1950, the federal government transferred to the states thirty-one of the thirty-seven recreational demonstration projects that had been under Park Service administration in 1942 and part of another. According to Secretary of the Interior Julius A. Krug, recreation lacked the “distinctly national significance” crucial to the Park Service’s vision of itself.<sup>80</sup> At recreational areas, patterns of public land ownership bore no logical relationship to recreation. Public demands for use and actual public use did not await development. People came to the lake to swim, boat, and relax, whether the Park Service or any other agency offered facilities or not.

The confusion about the park’s purpose left the Park Service vulnerable to charges of poor management at national recreation areas. In a section titled “Recreational Areas Lag in Development,” the 1947 annual report of the secretary of the interior noted that the Park Service’s remaining four recreational areas—Lake Mead, Shasta, Millerton Lake, and Coulee Dam—all faced the following:

Pressing problems of safe and adequate water supply, proper sanitary facilities, adequate camping facilities, waterfront structures, roads, trails, concession contracts, water patrol, lifeguard service, and, in general, the provision of competent and sufficient staffs to control public use and to assure proper protection of the public.

On at least one level, the agency sought to dispense with recreation areas; on another, it assiduously sought adequate resources to manage such areas if it was to keep them. If the agency could get resources for recreation, it would learn to apply them. If not, the Park Service had spent more than thirty years perfecting visitor service, but recreation had never been one of its goals. Without capital to support recreation, the agency’s interest was unlikely to increase.<sup>81</sup>

Public demand for using the lake put increased pressure on the Park Service to develop recreational facilities. Efforts to complete visitor facilities intensified after July 18, 1947, when agency authority expanded to include Lake Mohave, formed by the construction of Davis Dam to the south of Hoover Dam. The revision of the original memorandum of agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation added approximately 126,720 acres to Lake Mead NRA. The two agencies slightly modified the agreement again on August 15, 1947, changing the boundaries of Boulder City, just four days after Boulder Dam NRA became Lake Mead NRA.<sup>82</sup> The expansion of the Park Service’s domain compelled extending infrastructure throughout a considerably larger area. This instantaneously recreated every issue in the park’s history: the need for resources to allow the Park Service to fulfill its mission, the limits of

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<sup>80</sup> 1947 Annual Report, Secretary of the Interior, 338-39.

<sup>81</sup> 1947 Annual Report, Secretary of the Interior.

<sup>82</sup> “NPS Statement Prepared for Presentation at a Hearing of the Sub-Committee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Boulder City, Nevada, Sept. 21, 1953”; Glenn O. Hendrix, “The Master Plan of Recreation Developments for Lake Mohave Lake Mead Recreation Area,” November 1953, Lake Mead NRA archives; George F. Bagley to James G. Carroll, Sept. 16, 1949, Lake Mead NRA archives.

effective management in an enormous area without much higher levels of staffing, and the problem of persuading agency leadership that recreation was an important Park Service mission.

The addition of new lands led to characteristic Park Service efforts to expand Lake Mead's boundaries. The transfer of Davis Dam was a pivotal moment. The Park Service used the opportunity to push away from the Bureau of Reclamation and its overriding authority. If it could establish areas to which the Bureau of Reclamation had no claim, the Park Service could begin to muster a claim for autonomy for Lake Mead National Recreation Area from that powerful agency. In October 1947, park staff investigated Valley of Fire State Park, about fifty-five miles north of Las Vegas, to assess it as a national park area. Its qualities for independent status did not impress the Lake Mead officials who made the trip. They concluded that if the state park merited inclusion in the national park system, the Park Service should include it in Lake Mead NRA rather than establish it as an independent national monument. While the reports discounted the national significance of Valley of Fire, observers noted that the area "does have a certain appeal for visitors to Lake Mead" and might serve as a substitute for Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks, about three hours away in southern Utah, for those pressed for time. The observers' lukewarm enthusiasm for Valley of Fire indicated ambivalence not only about the area but also about whether an essentially second-tier scenic feature merited inclusion in Lake Mead NRA. Valley of Fire enjoyed local significance, but in the reviewers' estimation, it simply was not of the caliber of desert national parks such as Zion and Bryce Canyon.<sup>83</sup>

Nor had the Park Service yet defined the characteristics that it sought in national recreation areas. In its 1948 annual report, the agency reaffirmed the differences between national recreation areas and other park areas. National recreation areas were "generally of local or regional rather than national importance," the report averred, and the agency needed a different set of regulations to manage their development. Outdoor recreation was their primary function, leading to the construction of "facilities for games, sports, and other recreational activities not normally found in the national parks where suitable and where there is a demonstrated need." Loosely following the axiom of the founder of the U.S. Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot, "the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run," the agency established priorities for national recreation areas based on visitor demand. The Park Service was willing to permit hunting, grazing, and mining in national recreation areas, all of which government regulations banned in the national parks, as long as the activities followed conservation standards and complied with state laws.<sup>84</sup> The explicit recognition in the late 1940s that national recreation areas were fundamentally different from traditional national parks and required a different set of planning guidelines was an important step toward creating clear management and administrative guidelines at Lake Mead NRA.

Until 1949, the general rules and regulations of the Park Service served as the basis of administration at Lake Mead. The agency formulated those laws for national parks and

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<sup>83</sup> John E. Kell, "Reconnaissance Report Valley of Fire Area Near Overton Nevada," October 1947, ACC #4527, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>84</sup> 1948 Annual Report, Secretary of the Interior, 353.

monuments, and they served well at Lake Mead NRA only as long as the park's recreational constituency remained small and mirrored the traveling patterns of visitors to the national parks. With the facilities constructed during the New Deal, Park Service personnel easily managed and entertained the few visitors who left the main road and came to Lake Mead. Only after World War II, when the deluge of visitors hit, did the agency need to revise its standards and practices. In 1949, the agency finally recognized clear differences in constituency and mission and designed a set of rules specifically for Lake Mead NRA and its local situation. Superintendent George Baggley noted that the administrative details of managing a national recreation area transcended the immediate situation at Lake Mead. Baggley determined that "planning, administration, and development should be commensurate with the character and use which the public is making of these recreational areas."<sup>85</sup> As a result of his experience at Lake Mead, Baggley was prescient about the area's significance and what it portended for American recreation and the perception of national park areas.

Nomenclature continued to hamstring the development of Lake Mead National Recreation Area. "National recreation area" was simply lower on the list of agency priorities than other designations, a reality made clear by the post-World War II planning process. In an effort to solve the problem, when the Park Service prepared draft legislation for U.S. Representative Clifton Young to give the park more autonomy in 1955, officials argued for a change in the park's title to "national recreation park." The change in designation connoted greater importance for Lake Mead NRA, the designation "park" in the title carrying considerably more cachet among the public and throughout the Park Service. The agency clearly valued its parks more highly than recreational areas, and the public still retained its powerful reverence for the idea of a "national park."<sup>86</sup>

The Park Service invested considerable effort in the attempted name change. In January 1956, NPS Director Conrad Wirth laid out the advantages of the bill to Representative Young. Wirth observed,

The principal effect of the bill would be the recognition and designation of the area as a recreation area of significance to the Nation as a whole—based on its own merits—and including adequate authority to provide for its management as a National Recreation Area, instead of continuing to base that designation and management on a reclamation withdrawal.<sup>87</sup>

Wirth neatly tangled two issues of importance to the agency, autonomy and national significance, that had never before been linked at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. As the Park Service sought independent management of Lake Mead NRA, it simultaneously pushed for a status more conducive to NPS goals.

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<sup>85</sup> Superintendent George Baggley, Memorandum for the Director, June 10, 1949, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>86</sup> Memorandum to the Director from the Superintendent, Lake Mead, Aug. 29, 1955, File L1415, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>87</sup> Conrad L. Wirth to Rep. Clifton Young, Jan. 18, 1956, BL1417, "Lake Mead Legislation, Part I," Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

The legislative push also gave the Park Service an opportunity to clarify its practices and exert greater control over uses of the park. Lake Mead NRA Superintendent Charles A. Richey raised the issues of concessioner agreements for the recreation area. Richey worried that without adequate incentives and favorable lease terms, concessioners would not operate in the area. Providing boat tours, groceries, lodging, and restaurants, concessioners were crucial to the long-term success of Lake Mead NRA.<sup>88</sup> Richey also strongly urged that the bill contain specific provisions pertaining to the distribution of resources and income from Hoover Dam and its power plants. The park wanted to be able to buy power from the dam at the same below-market rates as other southern Nevada entities, but the Bureau of Reclamation refused to acquiesce. Bureau officials believed that southern Nevada received cheap power by law because it was home to the dam; it granted the Park Service no such status. NPS officials regarded this position as further proof that the Bureau of Reclamation regarded the Park Service as a second-class citizen at Lake Mead NRA.<sup>89</sup> Since management questions at Lake Mead were unique and many derived from the park's connection to the massive dam and power-producing facility nearby, the park sought to turn the situation into political advantage.

As the Park Service strove for greater autonomy, grazing served as a wedge issue in the agency. Nowhere was the difference between traditional national parks and national recreation areas starker than in grazing policy. Grazing in designated national parks occurred only in situations of national emergencies and even then was extremely controversial. At Lake Mead NRA, national recreation area status mitigated objections. Simply put, no one in the Park Service thought that the area deserved the protection extended to national parks. When regional stockmen expressed concern that new legislative definition of the area might impinge upon their grazing rights, the Park Service worked to alleviate their apprehension. Richey articulated the Park Service's view of the difference in the park's status. "Some of your colleagues may have confused the land use policies of the National Parks and National Monuments with those of national recreation areas administered by this service," Lake Mead's superintendent told Senator Alan Bible. "Your bill would clearly authorize certain multiple uses, such as grazing, as they have been administered in the past."<sup>90</sup> Richey wanted to assure everyone that the Park Service did not view national recreation areas as sacrosanct. In exchange for the support of key groups and individuals, the agency would not fight multiple uses, trading one objective, autonomy, for another, equal status in the park system.

As the Park Service pushed for independent status at Lake Mead NRA, the agency sought to redefine the park's boundaries. Between 1958 and 1964, a flurry of legislative activity allowed the Park Service to redraw boundaries in anticipation of autonomy. This was a two-pronged process that eliminated some lands from NPS jurisdiction and added others. On September 2, 1958, the passage of Public Law 85-900 (72 Stat. 1726) provided for the

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<sup>88</sup> Charles A. Richey to Director, Feb. 1, 1956, L1416, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Charles A. Richey to Sen. Alan Bible, April 21, 1960, L1417, "Lake Mead Bill," Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

disposition of some federal land in Boulder City, with most of it quitclaimed to the city just as officials completed incorporation. The Park Service retained two properties in perpetuity: the 2.12-acre headquarters building site, and the 13.18-acre warehouse facility.

Larger legislative changes affected the context in which NPS managers conceived of recreation. By 1960, the Park Service was in the midst of a revolution in management that elevated scientific objectives; at the same time, federal agencies wrestled with new regulations that limited management prerogatives. The Reservoir Salvage Act of 1960, Public Law 86-5231 (16 U.S.C. 469), provided for archaeological salvage in areas that would be affected by dam construction. In no small part resulting from the institutionalization of archaeology that accompanied the New Deal and the post-World War II Colorado River Storage Project that planned a seven-dam chain along the Colorado River, this act set standards for the management of future recreation areas and reservoirs. Another piece of legislation, the Wilderness Act of 1964, Public Law 88-577 (78 Stat. 890; 16 U.S.C. 1121-1136), compelled the Park Service to fashion techniques for managing parks with these new restrictions.<sup>91</sup> These acts shaped future national recreation areas by providing specific guidelines for use and preservation of wilderness during and after construction of dams.

At the local level, the Park Service worked to extend its efforts in Boulder City to elsewhere in the park. In 1961, the long process of defining park boundaries approached resolution with the passage of Public Land Order 2324. Dated April 6, and effective October 6, 1961, it restored 90,707 acres that lay just east of Lake Mohave to the public domain. The measure was a sop to local interests and articulated the Park Service's crafty avoidance of prolonged and ultimately self-defeating debate with locals. Most of the excised lands contained inholdings sold to absentee owners by mail. This presented the Park Service with a potentially damaging land-exchange process in which the agency would have to give up good land for the worthless land people purchased from mail-order swindlers. In the end, the agency decided that simply removing the area from Park Service jurisdiction was the best solution. It permitted the agency to manage a park, not a collection of possible developments of second homes on land that lacked utility service.<sup>92</sup>

Lake Mead and Hoover Dam provided an ideal setting to work out land management issues and to experiment with new methods for administering federal lands that extended historic management practices. Because of the Park Service's limited authority in the area, interagency cooperation had been a hallmark at Lake Mead since 1936. The boundaries of the park bordered on a number of state and federal agency holdings. Cooperative agreements and understandings were crucial tools of management, and the cooperation that complicated cross-boundary management issues required a measure of administrative sophistication that exceeded that of most park areas. The Park Service's junior status to the Bureau of Reclamation created initial difficulties, for the agency was accustomed to being in the lead at

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<sup>91</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 191-242; Paul Fagette, *Digging for Dollars: American Archaeology and the New Deal* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), 97-132; Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 145-50; Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?*, 58-63.

<sup>92</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1961.

its other park units. It had fewer problems adjusting its boundaries at national parks and monuments, where legislation delineated its authority in an explicit manner. As the agency assumed greater management responsibility of Lake Mead, it increasingly resolved issues to its satisfaction.

Housing problems in Boulder City had been one of the most persistent points of contention between the Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation at Lake Mead. The Bureau of Reclamation established Boulder City as a federal reserve for workers at Hoover Dam under its administration. It served as the housing authority in Boulder City, but without enough units or sufficient funds to build new housing, its efforts fell short. Especially during the 1940s, housing remained scarce and the two agencies grappled for very limited space. The housing problem became acute in 1949 when the approximately 700 federal employees in Boulder City sought the 370 federally owned quarters. The Park Service long insisted that the Bureau of Reclamation favored its employees when it assigned housing. Despite discussions between the two agencies, the housing crisis persisted. In 1950, Park Service managers complained that the lack of new housing “has adversely affected employee morale and increased the difficulty of employing competent help.” The situation was even worse at Overton to the north and Davis Dam to the south, where no government housing existed. Nor were there prospects for future construction.<sup>93</sup> Despite the tension surrounding housing, the complicated division of management usually worked well. Most of the interagency tension focused on the day-to-day concerns of living in a remote area with very limited resources.

As the Park Service expanded its vision of what Lake Mead could be, its need for cooperative projects underwent a parallel amplification. During the late 1950s, the Park Service redefined the nature and management of Lake Mead, and the relationships that underpinned long-term cooperation evolved beyond participation in limited projects such as Forest Service assistance on road building or Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) work on beach facilities. Throughout the decade, the Park Service rewrote documents guiding cooperative efforts with a host of federal and state agencies. As federal officials crafted and revised Lake Mead’s legislation, the Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management often met to address aspects of supervision. Grazing and mining, of concern to both the Park Service and Bureau of Land Management, became a focus of these joint efforts. To coordinate safety and rescue plans for water recreation at the reservoirs, Park Service officials held discussions with the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as with military search and rescue teams from nearby March Field and Nellis Air Force Base. As concerns about water safety arose, park staff met with state officials from Arizona, Nevada, and the United States Public Health Service to discuss the possible pollution of Lake Mead by drainage from Las Vegas Wash.<sup>94</sup> Such policies suggested that the survival not only of Lake Mead National Recreation Area but also of other federal management policies depended on interagency cooperation.

Visitor safety on Lake Mead and Lake Mohave became a key concern for park management, and the Park Service learned to depend on other agencies’ expertise in keeping

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<sup>93</sup> Memorandum for the Director, June 12, 1950, B85, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>94</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1956.

boaters unharmed. Personnel from the game and fish divisions of both Arizona and Nevada helped patrol the park's waterways. Lake Mead superintendents were generally very pleased with the level of cooperation from the U.S. Coast Guard, especially after negotiations eased concerns about areas of jurisdiction and authority. In 1956, the Coast Guard increased its presence at Lake Mead, establishing an auxiliary unit and setting up a mobile boarding unit for checking motorboats for adherence to regulations. With considerable civilian boat traffic on the reservoir, the Park Service relied on the Coast Guard to supplement its own fleet of patrol craft with safety training and to patrol heavily used portions of the reservoir.<sup>95</sup> The Coast Guard also contributed funds for projects that promoted water safety. In one instance in 1958, the Park Service installed 200 reef markers, paid for by the Coast Guard.

The effects of variations in the level of the reservoir became another ongoing concern for the Park Service. The lake's height fluctuated wildly during spring, when snowmelt from the Rocky Mountains cascaded down the riverbed. Aside from man-made changes in levels caused by demands from downstream users or variations in power demands, drought remained a consistent threat. Lake levels remained very low throughout the mid-1950s. By 1954, the lake level dropped 132 feet below the high-water mark and remained just above that minimum in subsequent years. Instead of being at or near the water line, boat ramps, roads, sanitary facilities, marinas, and other concessions were as much as 300 hundred feet from the new shoreline. Boating charts became obsolete as low water levels exposed new reefs and rock hazards throughout the lake. The Park Service had to mark each new hazard, expending countless hours of staff time. The reservoir also experienced extreme fluctuation after 1964, when Lake Powell, upstream from Lake Mead, released water from the Glen Canyon Dam.<sup>96</sup>

Park Service officials at Lake Mead NRA also faced difficult management problems that they had to resolve with the resources available to them. Accustomed to managing large scenic areas, managers found the responsibility of administering an ill-defined recreational area with an endless stream of visitors thrust upon them. The park's administrators spent much time trying to define their position within the agency. They had to explain their particular needs to others in the agency more accustomed to addressing the problems of national parks and monuments. The persistent movement of park areas between different NPS regions further complicated recognition of the particular problems of Lake Mead NRA. As park officials became comfortable with one set of regional office administrators, they often had to work with new ones in another regional office. Misunderstandings about the differences between national recreation areas and national parks impeded the potential benefits of working with non-Park Service groups and federal legislators interested in protecting home-state interests.<sup>97</sup> Lake Mead NRA administrators learned different ways to manage constantly evolving responsibilities.

Chief among the park's administrative issues was the lack of adequate staffing. The

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<sup>95</sup> To: The Director, From: Superintendent, Lake Mead, Subject: Superintendent's Annual Report, June 7, 1957, A26, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>96</sup> Charles A. Richey to The Director, May 23, 1955, A26, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>97</sup> Secretary of the Interior to Senator Ernest McFarland, June 26, 1946, B200, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

park's personnel allocations were rarely sufficient to cover its vast and difficult-to-reach outposts, a challenge compounded by the huge numbers of visitors requiring differing amounts of staff attention. Recruitment of park rangers for outposts was also difficult; families usually needed schools and other amenities, and single men, the most likely candidates for remote postings, did not always perform with the consistency that agency officials demanded. In most parks, rangers mainly kept sightseers on the roads so they could see the vistas, or they accompanied visitors on guided tours. Lake Mead personnel had to monitor boaters and swimmers and protect them from harm, a more comprehensive level of visitor service that required additional staff with specialized training. Administrators constantly requested more staff, reiterating earlier warnings that the area, because of its massive size, required a larger than average allotment of rangers. In an instance that typified the pattern, a decrease in rangers in 1952 led to a warning that the distances within the park made it likely that rangers would be unable to manage the entire area.<sup>98</sup> Even such dire predictions did not generate greater allocations.

The widely dispersed ranger stations and Lake Mead's diverse demands led to a decentralized management structure. Central administrators at the park headquarters delegated responsibility to staff members positioned in key locations throughout the park. In this, Lake Mead NRA mirrored practices more common in agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service than elsewhere in the Park Service. The Forest Service managed millions of acres spread out over vast areas with a much smaller staff, and it allowed managers at the grassroots great leeway with policy.<sup>99</sup> The Park Service embraced a stronger central tradition. The decentralization at Lake Mead NRA, where rangers at remote stations often had to address issues without significant input from park headquarters, presented a variation on the agency's primary patterns of management. Despite the difference in management objectives, the Park Service found itself more willing to bend to local variation at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. This pattern was later reflected across most of the national recreation areas, enhancing the argument that national recreation areas were somehow different from the main policy objectives of the park system.

For park superintendents, the differences in the demands of management required marked flexibility. Guy D. Edwards, an engineer, became Lake Mead's first superintendent in December 1936 and managed the recreation area during its tumultuous early years. In forging cooperative efforts, Edwards played an integral role in shaping the tenor of relationships with the Bureau of Reclamation. In 1942, Robert H. Rose, a longtime veteran of southwestern parks, became superintendent, serving until May 1946. Guy Edwards returned during Rose's last year and the two men jointly managed the park during most of 1946. George F. Baggley followed Rose, arriving in 1946 and beginning the process of creating the legislation that redefined park boundaries and responsibilities. Baggley played a key role in negotiations with Nevada's federal legislators as they worked for the new Lake Mead legislation. Charles A.

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<sup>98</sup> Emerson Knight, "Boulder Dam National Recreational Area: Primary Objectives that Should Govern Its Preservation and Use," Oct. 20, 1935, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>99</sup> Hal K. Rothman, ed., *I'll Never Fight Fire with My Bare Hands Again* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 1-17.



Richey followed Baggley in 1954, serving for fifteen years and presiding over the park's first enormous transformation. During Richey's tenure, Congress passed the 1964 bill that redefined the park's status, and Lake Mead NRA experienced much greater day use that resulted from population growth in southern Nevada. By the time Richey stepped down in 1969, succeeded by Roger W. Allin, the park had completed its initial phase of development. The first generation of Lake Mead superintendents all faced similar challenges. They sought definition, not only of Lake Mead's boundaries but also of its relationships with other agencies. Circumstances forced them to develop management policies that worked in a complicated and constantly changing environment.<sup>100</sup>

Each of Lake Mead NRA's superintendents found themselves managing in a multitiered situation where public interests, political pressures, and divided responsibilities with other federal, state, and private agencies consumed much of their energy. The range of managing authorities and the differences in their missions and goals led to conflicting objectives for the same resources. In most national parks, the Park Service worked closely with one or two other agencies sharing a common boundary. From its arrival in southern Nevada, the Park Service shared jurisdiction over lands inside and outside the park, and the Bureau of Reclamation was not its only partner. As the reservoir filled, it flowed into Arizona and bumped against federal lands administered by other agencies, including the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Administrators managed in two state jurisdictions, Arizona and Nevada, another of the complicating circumstances at Lake Mead NRA.

Nor did the Park Service have its own facilities at the park. Initially the Park Service made use of existing Bureau of Reclamation projects and infrastructure resources. The original Park Service office in Boulder City opened in 1935 on block 40A, one block south of the modern park administration building. From it, the agency supervised and planned CCC activities during Lake Mead's establishment. When the agency first administered the Boulder Dam Recreational Area, it used an office located in the old CCC building on the Nevada Highway. In October 1937, the Park Service moved to the former hospital building, obtained from Six Companies Inc., the conglomerate that built Hoover Dam. One wing of this structure housed a museum. When World War II began, the military needed hospital beds, and the building reverted to its former function. The Park Service moved into office space in the basement of the Bureau of Reclamation building and operated Lake Mead from that location in 1943 and 1944. In 1944, the U.S. Army gave a former base in Boulder City, Camp Williston, to the Park Service, and personnel moved their offices into a newly remodeled space. The growth of the Park Service presence at Lake Mead after the war necessitated yet another move. A February 18, 1952, contract with Kennedy Construction Co. provided for a new headquarters building on the corner of Nevada and Wyoming highways in Boulder City. Park Service office space remained a constant concern, but the new building provided not only additional space but also a greater sense of autonomy from the Bureau of Reclamation.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> "History of Lake Mead National Recreation Area: A Brief Chronology," fact sheet, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>101</sup> Memorandum for the Press, Feb. 26, 1952, Lake Mead NRA archives. Camp Williston occupied two

At Lake Mead, administrators developed a structure to administer the recreation area by strategically locating limited resources. With a small initial ranger staff in the 1930s and 1940s, superintendents Edwards, Rose, and Baggeley carefully spread labor resources as they authored a succession of often-impassioned requests for more staff support. In June 1947, only four rangers, one motorboat patrol officer, one district ranger, and one chief ranger served the entire park. Decentralization and the creation of management districts followed. Edwards first recognized the need for management districts at Lake Mead, and the addition of Davis Dam accentuated the urgency. The new dam's location more than fifty miles from headquarters required a separate ranger district, which the Park Service established for Davis Dam on October 16, 1948.<sup>102</sup>

Contact stations spread throughout the park provided another way to manage the widely scattered features. The stations were one of the earliest park priorities, with the Boulder Beach contact station planned as soon as work crews built the first campgrounds in 1940. By 1953, ranger contact stations were in use in Boulder Beach, and proposed for Las Vegas Wash, Overton Beach, Temple Bar, Willow Beach, Searchlight Ferry, and Fire Mountain. Later construction of small visitor facilities at Overton Beach, Echo Bay, Boulder Beach, Callville Bay, Las Vegas Bay in Nevada and at Temple Bar in Arizona allowed increased visitor contact with uniformed staff at most of the primary recreational attractions. The park also maintained contact stations on Lake Mohave at Cottonwood Cove in Nevada and at Katherine Landing and Willow Beach in Arizona. Contact stations offered high visibility for the Park Service at points throughout Lake Mead.<sup>103</sup>

The construction of Lake Mead NRA's contact stations was one dimension of a systemwide Park Service effort to expand facilities dramatically to accommodate the increase in visitors in the postwar decade. Throughout the system, the agency assured that visitors knew they were in a national park area by using physical symbols such as contact stations and signage. The park's multiple entry points and location on a major highway made such identification at Lake Mead NRA difficult. With its main administration buildings located in Boulder City, away from the main locations the public sought, Lake Mead NRA resisted easy solutions not only to accentuate the Park Service's presence but also to physically control the park's visitors. Park staff had to travel from the headquarters in Boulder City to the park to respond to emergencies.

The exponential increase in visitation reflected the primary national trend of the 1950s. Parks all over the United States experienced much higher visitation numbers than ever before and the impact led to serious management problems. Overcrowding, environmental degradation, access, law enforcement, and other pressing needs inspired an

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city blocks in Boulder City, and the city's high school now is located on part of the former base.

<sup>102</sup> Superintendent's Annual Report for 1948, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>103</sup> *Field Report, Plans and Design Division, Boulder Dam National Recreation Area, December 1939 – January 1940*, B90, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; "Concession Data Prepared for House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Sept. 21, 1953, L1417, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; "Development Concept Plan Amendment: Willow Beach Lake Mead National Recreation Area Arizona/Nevada," Lake Mead NRA archives.

outpouring of support for national park areas. Lake Mead was a secondary beneficiary, seen as different than Yellowstone or Yosemite, but it was still part of the park system and entitled to the protection offered this status. In a typical example, in 1951, Lake Mead NRA recorded 2.052 million visitors, a figure that soared to 2.19 million by 1958 and to 4.597 million in 1961. When Bernard DeVoto argued in 1953 that the government should close the national parks if it was not going to fund them adequately, the uproar he created helped inspire the single largest national park development plan in system history. MISSION 66, a ten-year capital development program, created a windfall of funds.<sup>104</sup>

At the same time, the Park Service sought to assert preeminence in outdoor recreation. Recreation became an important social issue in a more prosperous and increasingly urbanized postwar society. Secretary Stewart Udall's Department of the Interior assumed responsibility for providing recreational opportunities to the public. Americans wanted to have it all, and for the first time, they expected not only leisure time but also facilities in which to enjoy recreation. Until Wirth assumed the directorship, the agency resisted recreation, but the need for a strategy to make the system grow and the desire to placate Congress to continue the huge allocations for Park Service capital development compelled agency interest. In spite of its history, the Park Service seemed the logical agency to manage recreation, but resistance was entrenched. Even Wirth's enthusiasm was not sufficient to overcome internal opposition and persuade the department of the interior to cede recreation to the Park Service. Udall held to an earlier view of the value of the park system. His preservationist tendencies, expressed clearly in his 1963 bestseller, *The Quiet Crisis*, illustrated his leanings, a perspective that led him to regard national parks as places of reverence rather than recreation. Udall's vision of the national parks curtailed agency prerogative.<sup>105</sup> At the moment when the Park Service was best prepared and most inclined to manage recreation, Udall supported the establishment of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) in the Department of the Interior. He shifted recreation management to the new agency.

Public recreation remained a sore point with the Park Service. Recreation offered a ready-made constituency for the agency, but to purists in the service, recreational areas diluted the stock—in the timeworn phrase—of the national parks. The NPS had been intermittently involved in recreation management since the New Deal, but its efforts never became a central focus of the agency. The Park Service also encountered resistance from other federal agencies that claimed the turf. NPS battles with the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service over recreation were legendary, but only with the creation of BOR did resistance come from within the Department of the Interior. BOR took recreation away from the Park Service. This typical contest of mission and constituency compelled aggressive Park Service action. Faced with a much larger agency in its own department that claimed its mission, BOR immediately sought distance from the better positioned Park Service, exasperating Director Wirth and other politically supple leaders of the Park Service. Federal officials chose a former Forest Service employee as BOR's first administrator, and BOR used

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<sup>104</sup> Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, 58-62; Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 546-60; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 205-10.

<sup>105</sup> Stewart Udall, *The Quiet Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963).

its resources to support recreation in nearly every federal agency—except in the Park Service.<sup>106</sup>

As one of the nation's most popular recreation areas, Lake Mead NRA benefited greatly from the expanded support for recreation and recreational facilities provided in MISSION 66. Lake Mead NRA also benefited from the Park Service's increased interest in superseding BOR and retaining its position as primary purveyor of public recreation. Beginning in the late 1950s, the park shared in the windfall that was MISSION 66. Budget inadequacies in 1955 forced park rangers to undertake maintenance work besides their normal duties. The annual report for that year regarded construction of ninety new signs as "the greatest improvement made in this Area during the past year." Under MISSION 66, the park received considerable new funding for road development and enough money for the significant expansion of facilities, infrastructure, and new equipment to help accommodate increased visitation. Facility improvements began slowly in 1956, when roads, campgrounds, water and sewage systems, and launching ramps received funding.<sup>107</sup>

MISSION 66's appropriation hit in force in 1958, as Lake Mead received \$384,000 for road improvement and \$402,155 for buildings and utilities. The key appropriation for future development was the construction of commercial electric power lines into four development sites – Cottonwood Cove, Echo Bay, Las Vegas Bay, and Willow Beach. The appropriations continued and the availability of funding delighted the visiting public and park managers. During 1959, Lake Mead received \$280,700 for building and facility construction and another \$354,000 for roads and trails; the next year, the park spent \$134,000 on road and trail construction and maintenance, and \$338,000 on buildings and utilities. Aiming at satisfying the public demand, most of the park funding went to building new campgrounds and the associated comfort stations and water and sewage systems. The park's supervisory civil engineer noted in May 1960 that "although facilities are still behind the public demands, new improvements have made it possible to accommodate larger numbers of people than ever before."<sup>108</sup>

The building trend continued with vigor throughout the first half of the 1960s. By 1961, expenditures for new construction of buildings and utilities exceeded \$250,000, and roads and trail construction topped \$49,000. The highlight of the year's burst of improvement came with the construction of six residences, five comfort stations, four picnic shelters, one utility building, and an ancillary visitor center. In addition to meeting public demands for camping needs, the Park Service used its cooperative agreements to improve fishing within the park. In 1962, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finished the fish hatchery

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<sup>106</sup> Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, 64-65; Udall, *The Quiet Crisis*; James Bailey, "The Politics of Dunes, Redwoods, and Dams: Arizona's 'Brothers Udall' and America's National Parklands, 1961-1969" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1999); Hal K. Rothman, "'A Regular Ding-Dong Fight': Agency Culture and Evolution in the Park Service-Forest Service Dispute, 1916-1937," *Western Historical Quarterly* 26 (May 1989): 141-60.

<sup>107</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1955, 1956.

<sup>108</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961; To: Superintendent, From: Supervisory Civil Engineer, May 12, 1960, A26, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

at Willow Beach.<sup>109</sup> That same year, more than \$243,000 was obligated for new buildings and utilities, and an additional \$172,000 for new roads and trails. The explosion in funding in 1962 culminated with the awarding of a contract to build a new visitor center at Temple Bar. In 1963, the park spent \$729,000 on new buildings and utilities and \$778,000 for new roads and trails. The centerpiece was the award of a contract to build an 8.75-mile road, the first portion of the road between Las Vegas Wash and Echo Bay.<sup>110</sup>

One of the great hopes of Park Service employees at Lake Mead was that the largesse of MISSION 66 would finally resolve the problems of housing. During the late 1940s, staff housing exasperated agency officials. The 1947 annual report of the secretary of the interior allowed that Park Service employees throughout the nation needed at least 600 dwellings, a number far exceeding available resources. The report listed Lake Mead as one of the parks in most dire need of adequate housing. A report issued two years later noted that

improvement of housing accommodations for National Park Service employees in Boulder City has been infinitesimal despite the concentrated effort made on the department level for greater consideration. Employee morale has suffered in many instances and the subject is irritable to all.<sup>111</sup>

In a park that stretched more than seventy miles in length, roads became not only the single most important component of the infrastructure, but also a clear measure of success in providing access. Roads had been the priority since shortly after Lake Mead's founding. In September and December 1936, the Bureau of Public Roads conducted studies of the regional highway system and offered a proposal to construct a highway around Lake Mead.<sup>112</sup> The Park Service sought the best location for a road that allowed access to the reservoir's scenic and recreational resources. Siting a road by a man-made lake presented a range of challenges. Besides a remote location and difficult topography, Lake Mead presented other construction problems. The level of water in the lake fluctuated seasonally and drainage patterns made many areas prone to flooding, making the task of locating and constructing roads around Lake Mead very difficult. The Bureau of Public Roads offered two initial proposals for routes near and around the lake. One connected Overton, at Overton Arm's northern end, with Boulder City, either through Las Vegas or by a direct route. This fifty-five to sixty-five mile route passed within one mile of Valley of Fire, adding another potential attraction in which the Park Service retained interest. The second called for a road following an existing wagon trail about fifty miles in length that reached from Overton to the old site of Pearce Ferry, near the park's extreme eastern edge.<sup>113</sup> Both passed through large uninhabited areas and had difficult terrain.

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<sup>109</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1960, 1961.

<sup>110</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1962, 1963.

<sup>111</sup> 1947 Annual Report, Secretary of the Interior, 328-9; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1949.

<sup>112</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Bureau of Public Roads, District 2, "Report of Reconnaissance for Proposed Highway within the Boulder Dam Recreational Area," September 1936, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

Road construction at Lake Mead NRA took place within the context of regional arterial development. In the late 1930s, America's "Mother Road," Route 66, neared completion, reaching its terminus at Santa Monica Pier in California in 1938. It became the basis for a regional road network that put Lake Mead NRA in the path of transcontinental highway traffic. The most important road development for access to Lake Mead came with the April 1938 opening of the Kingman highway. After the route opened, motorists easily reached the recreation area from either of the two primary continental highways, U.S. 91, which linked Los Angeles and Las Vegas, and the transcontinental U.S. 66. The new Kingman road offered a graded, hard-surfaced highway that used Boulder Dam as its bridge across the Colorado River.<sup>114</sup>

The establishment of a recreation area did not transfer existing infrastructure to the managing federal agency. The roads that traversed the recreation area before the Park Service arrived remained in state or federal control. Parts of U.S. highways 93 and 95 and parts of state roads, including 166, 167 and 169, all lay inside the boundaries of Lake Mead NRA. The heaviest traffic use occurred on Lakeshore Drive, Nevada 166, a two-lane paved highway built between 1941 and 1943 that paralleled the southwestern shoreline of Lake Mead's Boulder Basin. It came into being as part of a plan to build roads along the lake rim from Boulder City along the south and west side of Lake Mead to Overton at the lake's north end.<sup>115</sup> The lakeshore road was a significant enough engineering feat that later it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Other than a realignment in the 1940s to move the road closer to the lake to protect a forty-inch water main that provided water to Henderson, the road remained in its original state until the end of the 1990s, when a massive widening project took place.

Between 1938 and 1958, road building and improvement dominated Lake Mead's capital expenditures, and work crews constructed most of the park roads. In November 1938, the park planned the Hemenway Wash Beach road. The project illustrated the differences in building roads in a national recreation area instead of a national park. The assumption underlying the road-planning process was different at Lake Mead National Recreation Area; instead of scenic tour, it was a delivery system for the beach. Yet the idea of a scenic route was so deeply imbedded in Park Service planning that preserving scenic values became part of the design. NPS planners designed the road to Hemenway Wash to protect portions of the landscape, assuring that the route would lessen any impact on the environment and the vistas of the lake.<sup>116</sup>

World War II halted road construction and expansion, and work did not resume in earnest until the late 1940s. Access to the park remained the primary objective of postwar road construction. After 1945, the Park Service proudly pointed to development of infrastructure at the recreation area, an objective more easily achieved than in a traditional

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<sup>114</sup> Department of the Interior, Memorandum for the Press, April 23, 1938, B319, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>115</sup> Historic American Engineering Record, Lakeshore Road, HAER no. NV-22, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>116</sup> Memorandum for Superintendent Edwards, Nov. 18, 1938, B200, Lake Mead NRA files, NARA-LN.

national park. Because of the roads' expenses, legislators in charge of releasing funds to the Park Service kept a close watch on even the most mundane aspects of road development at Lake Mead. In February 1946, park officials highlighted road development as a special achievement of the Lake Mead NRA, but cited World War II as the cause of cancellation of many road projects. The agency could point to the completion of many stretches of pavement, including a road from Overton to Lake Mead, one from Boulder City to Hemenway Wash, another from Hemenway Wash to Las Vegas Wash, a state highway to the Las Vegas Wash, the Eldorado Canyon road, and roads to Pearce Ferry. But the agency said that future road activities would have to wait until it revised and completed prewar projects. In January 1946, the Park Service assigned all road maintenance responsibilities to the Nevada district of the recreation area, relieving the Arizona office of a partial assignment. A February 1946 letter from Park Service Director Newton B. Drury to Congressman Richard Harless, D-AZ, explained the status of Lake Mead roads at that point and elaborated on the Park Service's commitment to completing projects interrupted by the war before starting new ones.<sup>117</sup>

By 1947, the federal government resumed consideration of major road expansions. A report published that year, *Route Study of Proposed Additions and Improvements to Major Road System, Boulder Dam Recreational Area, Nevada and Arizona*, outlined new plans for Lake Mead. By March 1947, projects interrupted by war were completed and funds became available for improvements to roads. A series of new projects, including the extension of the harbor roads at Boulder Harbor, Las Vegas Wash, and Overton, began. The lack of signage for the newly renamed Hoover Dam and Lake Mead NRA on state and federal roads generated agency concern. Park Service officials complained that "more than a million visitors come to see Hoover Dam and Lake Mead Recreational Area each year; yet, there are few signs on the highways to tell them they are approaching one of the most-visited areas in the United States."<sup>118</sup> The lack of resources and poor interagency cooperation remained ongoing complaints among the staff at the park.

Between 1947 and the mid-1950s, Lake Mead's road building and improvement programs continued. Ongoing problems with drainage and flood preparation and concerns about access to remote areas and preservation of environmental conditions and scenic values became more significant issues. The combination of fluctuating reservoir levels, seasonal downpours, and the proximity of roads to the shoreline guaranteed ongoing drainage problems and constant repairs. Rainfall in the Lake Mead area averaged less than four inches per year, but it typically came suddenly, in cascading torrents, and the resulting runoff caused serious flash floods that undermined roadways. The Hemenway Wash region proved

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<sup>117</sup> Hillary A. Tolson to Sen. Carl Hayden, Feb. 25, 1946, B200, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Charles C. Morris to Mr. G. L. McLane and W. H. Smith, Jan. 30, 1948, B200, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Newton Drury to Richard Harless, Feb. 5, 1946, B200, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>118</sup> E. E. Erhart, Federal Works Agency, Public Roads Administration, Division Seven, *Route Study of Proposed Additions and Improvements to Major Road System, Boulder Dam Recreational Area, Nevada and Arizona*, 1947, B96, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Memorandum for the Press, March 14, 1947, B200, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Memorandum for the Chief Ranger from William F. V. Leicht, Aug. 26, 1947, B200, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

particularly vulnerable, and maintenance remained ongoing. MISSION 66 renovation money helped alleviate the problem, but road maintenance and renovation continued to be a primary emphasis of park management. Generations of visitors saw the orange barrels that indicated highway construction or renovation as they drove through Lake Mead.

The changing nature of new technology also began to affect the park at this time, leading to greater management responsibility. Off-road recreation illustrated a major problem of 1950s recreation. Lake Mead welcomed visitors but wanted them to experience the lake in specified ways, a common agency strategy throughout the park system. New technologies, such as off-road vehicles, allowed visitors to move beyond the control of park rangers at a sometimes exorbitant cost to the park's resources. In a desert environment, fragile native vegetation damaged by vehicles took years and sometimes centuries to regenerate. In a park devoted to recreation and use, the situation left managers in a quandary. When they responded from a Park Service perspective, they encountered a public that viewed the national recreation area strictly for recreational ends. The public did not regularly express or experience the inspiration the Park Service wanted them to feel.

In the desert environment, few concerns superseded the fundamental need for adequate water supply and sewer systems. MISSION 66 would expand and improve these crucial infrastructure items in many areas of Lake Mead. In 1958, the park installed new water and sewage systems at Cottonwood Cove, Willow Beach, Temple Bar, Las Vegas Wash, and the Boulder Beach campground extension. The Park Service also had commercial electric lines constructed into Cottonwood Cove, Echo Bay, Las Vegas Bay, and Willow Beach, which facilitated the operation of water and sewage systems.

Visitor waste also posed an enormous problem. In 1960, the park sought to find a strategy for addressing the garbage that boaters left throughout the park. The growth in park uses compounded their impact on resources. The agency undertook education programs aimed at encouraging boaters to bring out their trash as one of the remedies. Park staff recognized that in the end, the responsibility for cleanup was theirs; "public opinion and pressure," the 1961 annual report predicted, "will eventually force lake shore clean-up by the Service." Three decades later, the agency still struggled with this responsibility, relying on the growing significance of local environmental groups to assist in ongoing cleanup of park resources. By 1961, the Park Service completed water system and sewage improvements at Boulder Beach, Las Vegas Wash, and Cottonwood Cove. The agency installed a new and vastly improved sewage disposal system that same year at Cottonwood Cove.<sup>119</sup>

Another aspect of MISSION 66 at Lake Mead focused on the development of expanded facilities. Building the park infrastructure in the desert proved a significant challenge; construction required innovation and adaptation. The brutal climate doomed most traditional techniques at Lake Mead; finite resources made innovation difficult. Facilities at the park required careful maintenance and management to insure that the far-flung resources did not deteriorate from the intense heat, strong winds, and fluctuating reservoir. Budget shortfalls often compounded the problem by cutting back maintenance allocations, forcing the park to run equipment until it failed. This became an ongoing problem at Lake Mead that has

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<sup>119</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1957, 1960, 1961.



persisted throughout its history.

By the early 1960s, MISSION 66 had succeeded in providing the resources necessary to accommodate America's growing appetite for outdoor recreation at Lake Mead NRA and many other parks. The Park Service, long reluctant to embrace recreation, now reshaped its mission to include not only national recreation areas, but also national seashores and lakeshores and other designations that emphasized recreation as well as, and sometimes in place of, the cultural affirmation and spiritual uplift emphasis so important before World War II. As the public came to see outdoor recreation as a primary form of experience, the agency's attitude toward Lake Mead NRA and the new urban recreation areas such as Golden Gate NRA in the San Francisco Bay Area and Gateway NRA in New York reflected the Park Service's strategic as well as ideological objectives.<sup>120</sup>

By the 1970s, Lake Mead no longer seemed to be an isolated outpost in a remote desert. High levels of visitation had taken even the most optimistic supporters of Lake Mead NRA and the national recreation area concept by surprise. The park routinely ranked among the top three in park system visitation. The dramatic increases in numbers began in the 1950s, when millions of Americans enjoyed a standard of living that permitted increased leisure time. Government highway programs, affordable cars, and new boats presaged growth in the number of visitors at Lake Mead. As early as 1952, Lake Mead NRA ranked third in park system visitation with 1,946,706 visitors, trailing only Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway, both in the much more densely populated eastern United States. By 1960, Lake Mead visitation reached 4,597,615, nearly three times the number recorded at the beginning of the 1950s. During the 1960s, the trend continued at an increase of 5 percent each year. More Americans aimed their automobiles and boats toward Lake Mead for a week or a weekend of motor-powered recreation.<sup>121</sup>

The rise of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the gasoline crisis brought on by the oil embargo of 1973 provided a sharp reminder that Lake Mead was still dependent on travelers with access to cheap gasoline and surplus income. The oil crisis and subsequent economic recession of the 1970s changed U.S. vacation patterns as the optimism and prosperity of postwar America vanished. Americans turned their attention toward staying afloat in an uncertain economic climate. Lines formed at service stations and people waited hours just to get a few gallons of gasoline. Gas-guzzling cars and boats became liabilities for most Americans. Families put on hold vacations to far-flung national parks, which had been at the heart of the middle-class experience in the 1950s and 1960s. American families began what became a twenty-three year struggle against the stagnation of wages and

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<sup>120</sup> Hal K. Rothman, *Saving the Planet: The American Response to the Environment in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000); Hal K. Rothman, *The Park That Makes Its Own Weather: An Administrative History of Golden Gate National Recreation Area* (San Francisco: National Park Service, 2000), 42-44.

<sup>121</sup> National Park Service, "NPS Statement Prepared for Presentation at a Hearing of the Sub-Committee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Boulder City, Nevada, September 21, 1953"; Charles A. Richey to Lou LaPorta, April 5, 1961, L1414, "Lake Mead Legislation, 1961-64," Lake Mead NRA archives.

the rising cost of goods and services.<sup>122</sup> The economic situation during the 1970s created a new set of management challenges for Lake Mead NRA, increasing the trend toward local and short-term use and accelerating the transformation from remote area to semi-urban recreation area.

By the 1970s, Lake Mead NRA had fully erased its pre-1964 history as a junior partner to the Bureau of Reclamation. The transformation was rapid and comprehensive, following closely the change in statutory authority. By 1965, the park was independent in law, a full-fledged unit of the national park system, and its managers had access to greater work power and funding. The Park Service was thrilled to be rid of the dominating interagency management relationship, free to pursue its own goals for national recreation areas. The recreation area's basic infrastructure was complete, and procedures and management strategies for maintaining control over the vast lands of Lake Mead were in place.

The role of national recreation areas in U.S. culture had begun to change. Despite being managed in a fashion separate from national parks and other areas with more iconic nomenclature distinctions, national recreation areas enjoyed a large, growing, and increasingly important constituency. Even after the creation in the early 1960s of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, which usurped recreation management responsibilities from the NPS, the Park Service recovered with parks following the model of Lake Mead NRA. As the 1970s began, the park had a clear role: it served both day-use and destination visitors in unimagined numbers and provided them not only with recreation but with conventional national park experiences as well.

This bifurcated responsibility slowed park administration. Throughout the 1970s and most of the 1980s, the park lacked resources and staff to meet its myriad obligations. Despite the number of talented park professionals who chose to make their careers there, Lake Mead National Recreation Area became known as something of an agency dumping ground. The park offered many opportunities for agency staff, for it was heavy with operations, law enforcement, and the other kinds of issues that helped promote people in the agency. Yet few made Lake Mead National Recreation Area their first choice and the lack of enthusiasm for the park's resources showed. The efforts of superintendents did little to alleviate the growing torpor, and as the growth of Las Vegas increased in intensity, park managers found their resources threatened. The park lacked sufficient perspective to counter the changes, the range of tools and funds to meet the demand, and the fealty to mission to overcome its predicament.

Into these circumstances, Alan O'Neill arrived as superintendent late in the 1980s. He began his career in 1966 as a planner for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. In 1981, the Reagan administration abolished this bureau, by then renamed the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS), and transferred its functions to the Park Service. O'Neill, then the acting regional director for HCRS, had close ties with the Park Service. Seeing the change as a "new beginning," O'Neill decided he had to "get green." He moved to Glacier National Park as an assistant superintendent and stayed more than five years, serving as acting

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<sup>122</sup> Rothman, *Saving the Planet*, 158-60; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 633-36.

superintendent.<sup>123</sup>

While at Glacier, O'Neill first visited Lake Mead National Recreation Area as a member of an evaluatory panel. He was "dumbfounded" when he arrived, he recalled more than fifteen years later. "It just didn't seem like they understood what business they were in." The park was driven by operations. The sheer intensity of the work dictated what the park undertook each day. Nor did Lake Mead's staff have the "kind of respect for place that you would expect," he said, the level of pride in their park common throughout the agency. From O'Neill's perspective, such an image, strategy, and the constraints they created served neither the park nor the visiting public. When Lake Mead's superintendency came open, he considered the challenge not only of running the park, but also of reshaping its vision. It was a rare professional opportunity, a chance to redefine an area and to implement the management objectives and techniques he had learned in twenty years of government service.<sup>124</sup>

When O'Neill arrived in 1987, he came with the full support for any changes he sought to make. Regional director Stanley Albright granted O'Neill the freedom to make any changes he thought necessary, running a small risk. O'Neill had not come up entirely through the Park Service and many in the agency remained suspicious of such people. Albright recognized that O'Neill had the combination of vision and skill for leadership in a park that sorely needed it. If any residual discomfort existed, he looked beyond it to see the results of O'Neill's plans.

O'Neill brought the techniques of modern organizational management to a park that before his arrival had largely run as a seat-of-the-pants operation. During his first month, he brought in consultants and began a strategic planning process. "We really had to be clear about what it is we do," O'Neill recalled of the time. "What do we see as our vision for the future? What values do we want to guide that process?" In a two-and-one-half-day period, Lake Mead's staff engaged the issues in a clear-headed fashion that offered the beginning of a vision of what the park stood for and how it should operate. From this core meeting, the ideas emanated throughout park personnel. "I wanted it to be their vision, too," O'Neill remembered. "I didn't want to come down and force a vision on them." He focused on reversing the reactive model of management that had been standard. The idea that Lake Mead was overwhelmed and reactive was in O'Neill's estimation, "an excuse. They were sitting there waiting for the next emergency." He asked a different question: "what do we do to plan for it instead?"<sup>125</sup>

In this respect, O'Neill created a new image of Lake Mead. It was not, as the phrase went, "just a recreation area." Instead, O'Neill fashioned Lake Mead National Recreation Area as a full-fledged member of the park system. Its legislative history, boundary issues, resource base, including 1.3 million acres of land, created a much more complex management situation than what existed at many conventional national parks. Lake Mead's problems

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<sup>123</sup> Alan O'Neill, interview by Hal K. Rothman, Jan. 11, 2002 [repository unknown].

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

included those of the traditional national parks but many more as well. He set up a series of three-day camp-outs so that park staff could experience the resource. They went all over the park to see it first hand. The park brought in speakers to explain Lake Mead to its own staff, to accentuate the significance of the desert, to help staff care about the resource. “Let’s look at this in a different way,” O’Neill suggested as he made Lake Mead’s constraints into virtues, into a proving ground for a park staff that came to envision itself among the best in the nation. “All of a sudden, [everyone] felt more a part of something.”

The strategic planning process was a turning point at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The effort fashioned the park in a realistic manner. Lake Mead and its shoreline were not natural and could not be promoted in that manner. They were recreational features in the clearest way. The remaining 1.3 million acres demanded more intensive stewardship and management, and the quality of the visitation experience rather than number served became an important measure of management. Recognizing the need to build up the park’s capability, O’Neill went to U.S. senators Harry Reid (D-NV) and John McCain (R-AZ) for assistance. Congressional add-ons quickly followed, giving the park a more ample resource base, sometimes at the expense of harmony with other areas in the park system and even among units within the park.

After 1991, when the Park Service sponsored an important conference at Vail, Colorado, which created the Vail Agenda, O’Neill found the agency supportive of his goals for Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The Vail Agenda promoted resource protection as the primary objective of Park Service management and pointed out a potential void in leadership training and succession in the agency. O’Neill translated the Vail Agenda to a local level and implemented an annual reassessment of Lake Mead’s strategic plan. This in turn spurred the park’s leadership program. “I thought that leadership was a personal thing,” O’Neill recalled. “It was hard for us to do something top-down. We needed a bottom-up process.” That, he believed, was how to change the organization. Collaborative skills, both within the park and outside its boundaries, were crucial. Utilizing Stephen R. Covey’s program, “the 7 habits of highly effective people,” O’Neill led his staff toward collaborative management and leadership. “We all learned leadership together,” O’Neill remembered fondly.<sup>126</sup>

The strategy led to an egalitarian approach to management that yielded impressive results. “Let’s not look at the organizational chart,” O’Neill philosophized about the approach. He told his staff, “you are leaders equally.” Lake Mead National Recreation Area staff began to stand out when they participated in agency task forces. They took leadership roles in these activities, chairing committees and commissions and attracting much positive attention for the park. At the same time, the approach helped broaden the skills of park staff, who applied their skills in a larger setting and earned respect. It also improved Lake Mead’s status within the national park system and enhanced the options of park staff when it came time to compete for positions at other parks. The Park Service began to view Lake Mead National Recreation Area differently, helping to overcome any remaining stigma.

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<sup>126</sup> *National Parks for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Vail Agenda: Report and Recommendations to the Director of the National Park Service from the Steering Committee of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1992; O’Neill, interview).

Centered on the idea of providing leadership, O'Neill created a park that served its own needs and those of the rest of the system as well. As the impact of O'Neill's leadership model became widely recognized in the system, other parks began to ask that Lake Mead National Recreation Area staff come to assist in their programs. O'Neill committed as much as 18 percent of the park's base budget to support of the region and the Park Service, before reducing that enormous share to 15 percent. "That was our responsibility to the whole," O'Neill remembered. He allocated employment positions within the park to support his leadership. "We were able to create a bunch of oddball positions," he recalled. "No one [in the park system] had a leadership development director." Within a few years, implementing this philosophy transformed Lake Mead, creating a context in which staff members continually developed new skills and were able to facilitate their spread in the park system, and enhancing the position of Lake Mead National Recreation Area in the agency. It also gave the park "control of its destiny," O'Neill recalled, creating the ability to plan and shape response to the increasingly complicated questions that faced the park.<sup>127</sup>

The process continued after O'Neill departed to head the Outside Las Vegas Foundation late in 2000. O'Neill left a strong imprint on the park; "I think Alan O'Neill came here seeing this park in ways people had not seen it before," observed Kent Turner, the resource management chief, and his planning and implementation changed the park in many positive ways. O'Neill and his successor, Bill Dickinson, fostered a vision for the park. O'Neill "got the process rolling in this park," Dickinson recalled.<sup>128</sup> By the time Dickinson assumed the superintendent's position in 2000, Lake Mead National Recreation Area envisioned itself the premier water recreation area in the West.

Lake Mead National Recreation Area's management issues were more complex than most other parks, because of both the history of the park and the encroaching urban presence of the Las Vegas megalopolis. As a remote park area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area had long provided the infrastructure within park boundaries, a situation common among parks far from urban areas. Much of the construction of facilities had been completed in the 1950s, leaving the park with a physical plant that by 2000 was as much as forty years old. The task of upgrading the systems made twenty-first century management an enormous challenge, especially with the changing demands on the park as a result both of urban sprawl and of the increased use of Lake Mead.

By 2001, the park had become an important component of a regional network. This was an evolving process that demanded even more of the people of Lake Mead National Recreation Area. As a major piece of a regional recreational and environmental complex, the park had become an important fulcrum for change. Its management required levels of involvement that were new and sometimes daunting. Dickinson recognized that "the old ways of doing business just are not going to work." The park needed more "people involved externally, we have to have more agreements [with neighboring stakeholders], more contracts, more people in the park that are trained to facilitate or manage alternative work

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<sup>127</sup> O'Neill, interview.

<sup>128</sup> Kent Tuner, interview by Hal K. Rothman, Jan. 23, 2002 [repository unknown]; Bill Dickinson, interview by Hal K. Rothman, Jan. 23, 2002 [repository unknown].

forces, and more people with expertise in finding alternative sources of support,” he observed. Managing Lake Mead National Recreation Area had become as complicated as leading a major company. The range of management issues in 2002 far exceeded the imagination of anyone who had run the park when it was a remote destination for visitors from other states. “Huge changes have occurred, but still need to occur,” Dickinson noted. “When you realign a park like Lake Mead, where its patterns have institutionalized over fifty years, it’s very hard to change.”<sup>129</sup>

The operational complexity of Lake Mead National Recreation Area is unlikely to diminish. Enormous visitation, a land mass almost 1,500,000 acres in size, and the ever-growing cities just beyond park boundaries are constant challenges. These characteristics guarantee that the trends of the past twenty years, the emphasis on interagency and stakeholder cooperation, the need for evermore resources to meet growing demand, and the issue of compliance with environmental regulation will continue to shape park management. In 2002, Lake Mead National Recreation Area’s issues dwarfed those of even the largest remote parks. “The biggest fear is that we don’t have the capacity to take advantage of the opportunities,” Dickinson observed.<sup>130</sup>

Under O’Neill and Dickinson, Lake Mead National Recreation Area had become skilled at solving its own problems. The move toward partnerships, the ability to utilize outside federal and state programs, and the recognition of the need for clear priorities among obvious needs opened the way to a kind of sophisticated management that anticipated the needs of the new century. After a long history outside the mainstream, Lake Mead National Recreation Area became one of the places where the Park Service learned to operate in the realities of the twenty-first century.

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<sup>129</sup> Dickinson, interview.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER THREE

### “PEOPLE MANAGEMENT”:

#### THE PUBLIC AND LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

When external circumstances forced Lake Mead National Recreation Area upon the National Park Service in 1936, they helped lay the basis for a different and broader interpretation of the national park system. An unlikely venture for the agency during the 1930s, Lake Mead proved a harbinger of the rapidly increasing importance of outdoor recreation and recreational tourism in a dramatically changing American West. Lake Mead NRA began as an experiment for the Park Service. The agency knew little of recreation in the 1930s and respected the concept even less. However, the political forces aligned in favor of agency participation in the joint agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation were overwhelming and the advantages of accepting the area were too great to forgo. As a result, the Park Service found itself engaged in a management endeavor that compelled it to understand the needs of a new kind of patron, the recreational visitor.

Outdoor recreation in the United States came to prominence in the 1920s. It reflected the self-centered and even self-indulgent spirit of the age best exemplified in the New York Yankees baseball star, George Herman “Babe” Ruth. Ruth swatted monstrous home runs with an alacrity that made him stand out even in the flamboyant 1920s as he overate, gained considerable weight, and became an icon of heroic indulgence. At the same time, George Herbert Leigh-Mallory sought to conquer Mount Everest, spurring an international surge of interest in mountaineering. Another outside activity, snow skiing, became the sport of choice for many in the American elite.

Car camping became a fad, as the new paved roads that crisscrossed the nation gave ordinary travelers opportunities they had never before experienced. Early in the twentieth century, most of the streets and roads in the U.S. were made of dirt, brick, or cedar blocks. Built for horse, carriage, and foot traffic, they were usually poorly cared for and typically too narrow to accommodate automobiles. With the increase in automobile production, private turnpike companies under local jurisdiction began, and government highways such as Route 66, completed in 1934, followed. By the 1930s, a constituency for recreation that had not existed a decade before became a fixture on the American landscape.<sup>131</sup>

The Park Service had little experience with such travelers. By the 1930s, the agency had become very skilled at providing for visitors from the upper-middle class or the privileged few who accepted the near-sanctity of national parks and who embraced a value

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<sup>131</sup> Robert M. Crunden, *From Self to Society, 1919 to 1941* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972); Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 119-46; Warren Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

system shared by the Park Service's leaders. These were not the people who typically came to the new recreation area on the Arizona-Nevada border. Lake Mead NRA introduced the agency to a new kind of visitor, a prototype for post-World War II travelers and the people who came to dominate annual visitation tallies. Such visitors were less concerned with the cultural dimensions of their experience and more interested in recreation for its own sake. Their numbers at Lake Mead NRA increased with abandon after 1945, augmenting the enormous number of people who wanted to see the dam. The weight of this new group demanded that the park refocus its energies to accommodate them.

Changes in regional demography also spurred new patterns of visitation at Lake Mead. In 1940, nearby Las Vegas had only a little more than 8,000 people. World War II began a sixty-year expansion of population, and newcomers to the region brought expectations about parklands that southern Nevada did not fulfill. The lack of local and state parklands that scarcely had been apparent when the population was small became pronounced and then acute. As the regional population grew and recreational resources in the nearby communities of Las Vegas, Henderson, and Boulder City remained constant, the national recreation area became an outlet for local users. This use transformed the park and its relationship with its visitors. In 1964, Lake Mead NRA was a classic national recreation area, a rural destination that experienced a great deal of day use. Regional population growth spurred a process that turned it into a day-use park with a healthy component of destination visitors.

After 1964, Lake Mead NRA became the preferred recreational area not only for the residents of greater Las Vegas, who topped 270,000 by 1970, but for the guests of the growing casinos and hotels of the Las Vegas Strip as well. Many of the larger casinos sponsored excursions to the lake in the 1950s and 1960s; in the 1970s, some, such as Caesars Palace, kept pleasure boats for the use of preferred guests. Such visitors came for the day, using the park's resources and typically returning to the comfort of their hotels at the end of the day. Local residents who worked in the flourishing casino industry often came to the recreation area on their days off, some to boat, others to swim, and still more to fish in solitude so close to the neon of the Strip. Such day users rapidly outnumbered traditional visitors, the ones who came to camp at the park for a week. In this, they transformed the idea of a national recreation area. Instead of providing long-term recreation, such areas involved more conventional types of park use—if in far-more spectacular setting than the average city park.<sup>132</sup>

The situation that developed at Lake Mead NRA compelled the Park Service to reassess its policies for handling visitors. The agency's first directors, Stephen T. Mather and Horace M. Albright, assiduously cultivated a national constituency, leading to a pattern of accommodation of visitors that preservationists and competing federal agencies disdained. The emphasis on visitors and visitation became a major component of the agency's twenty-five year battle with the United States Forest Service that ended only after World War II. The Forest Service often held up its self-described "pure" version of recreation as an antidote to what it perceived as Park Service commercialism. The spread of personal automobiles

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<sup>132</sup> John L. Smith, *Running Scared: The Life and Treacherous Times of Casino Mogul Steve Wynn* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1996); Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas 1930-1970* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1989), 13-49.



allowed many more people to travel, and the Forest Service was fundamentally uncomfortable with the result—a considerably larger number of visitors to national forests and other federal lands under its control. The Park Service pointed to its own expertise in visitor service and the Forest Service’s parallel absence of experience when the two agencies grappled for administrative control of federal lands. From its struggles with the Forest Service, the Park Service learned how to go head to head with other federal agencies.<sup>133</sup> For more than a decade after 1945, the Park Service still defined itself with the tools it acquired in besting the Forest Service. At Lake Mead NRA, that pattern proved insufficient.

The addition of the national recreation area did not resolve the Park Service’s quandary about recreation. The agency had always been ambivalent about managing the artificial reservoir behind Hoover Dam. Initial area inspections in the 1930s did little to dispel the agency’s predisposition to treat the land surrounding the reservoir as a sideshow for the dam’s engineering marvels. At best, Park Service officials anticipated, the lake might attract some of the visitors who flocked to see the dam. When Roger Toll argued in his 1932 inspection report that the lake was not worthy of park or monument status and that the Bureau of Reclamation should maintain it under its own authority, he simply echoed the ideals established during the first fifteen years of Park Service history. Although agency directors gladly accepted funding to study proposed recreational development at nontraditional areas such as Boulder Dam, few in the Park Service leadership regarded any long-term involvement in multiuse areas as being in the agency’s best interest.<sup>134</sup>

Toll’s analysis of Lake Mead’s possibilities revealed the rigidity of the idea of national parks even in the 1930s. By the time he reviewed the new reservoir, Toll had already evaluated more than twenty possible park areas, a number of them in southwestern deserts. The 1930s provided an ideal opportunity to expand the Park Service’s mission, a prospect that began as Albright officially took command of the agency from Mather in 1929. Albright’s primary emphases did not include recreation. Under his leadership, the term “national significance,” an adherence to the pantheon of U.S. ideas and ideals, took on greater importance, only relinquished when the agency could gain clear political objectives from looking past the concept. Even though Lake Mead’s reservoir contained legitimate attractions and Toll thought the responsible agency should make all of the area’s features available to visitors, to him a reservoir simply did not measure up to Park Service standards. No matter how intriguing some of the area’s natural features were, Toll echoed the agency’s dominant currents when he observed that he could not understand how “engineering projects or other works of man ... form a proper basis for a National Park.”<sup>135</sup>

Lake Mead posed an ongoing dilemma for the Park Service. Prior to its commitment

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<sup>133</sup> Hal K. Rothman, “‘A Regular Ding-Dong Fight’: Agency Culture and Evolution in the Park Service-Forest Service Dispute, 1916-1937,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 26 (May 1989), 141-61.

<sup>134</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 174-76; Roger W. Toll, *An Inspection of Withdrawn Areas along the Colorado River* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1932), Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*; Horace M. Albright as told to Robert Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-1933* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers Press, 1986), 1-77.

at Boulder Dam, the agency routinely opposed the construction of reservoirs in existing national parks as an affront to the ideals of U.S. society. National parks were the work of the deity, Park Service leaders believed, and as human achievements of dubious aesthetic value, reservoirs paled in comparison. Adding an artificial reservoir to the park system had little appeal. By the 1930s, external circumstances began pushing for a change in those ideals. The New Deal linked development and growth, and the agency acquired not only Lake Mead but also a large number of demonstration recreational areas, as well as responsibility for state parks and other recreational programs throughout the nation. Despite the new commitments, agency involvement at Lake Mead was easy to justify because the Bureau of Reclamation remained the agency with primary responsibility. According to the 1936 memorandum of understanding establishing the cooperative effort, the Park Service role’s was limited to recreation, to “aid in development of secondary or incidental objectives,” as one agency report observed.<sup>136</sup> A Park Service presence at Lake Mead generated considerable discussion within the agency, but the debates faded in importance as the agency signed agreements and addressed the management of this prototype arrangement.

The Park Service accepted only a limited role in the initial cooperative agreements, with managing visitors to dam structures, supervising campgrounds and franchises, and interpreting natural history covering the entire spectrum of agency responsibility. In 1935, as the agency sought to assess its new obligations, NPS Inspector Emerson Knight and a Park Service team visited the reservoir. The following year they presented a detailed set of recommendations for what was then called the Boulder Dam National Recreation Reserve. The three-man team aligned with the small minority in the 1930s Park Service who placed a premium on preservation, stating their leading priority was to “spare no pains in retention of precious and priceless pristine wilderness conditions and values.” They observed, “this can only be accomplished by holding development to lowest minimum and combating selfish interest, both public and private.”<sup>137</sup> Although consistent with Park Service standards for national park management, the report gave the reservoir a significance that Roger Toll and others had not granted it. When the Park Service decided that it should develop Lake Mead as a national recreation area, the decision created a murky hole in agency thinking about new areas. After 1935, the twinned questions of the preservation of the park’s resources and the needs of visitors dominated the planning process.

Despite ongoing reservations about a larger recreational role for the Park Service, the agency endeavored to create a park worthy of inclusion in the national park system after it received administrative responsibility for the new national recreation area in 1936. Day-to-day management concerns regularly superseded broad questions about the Park Service’s role in outdoor recreation as Lake Mead provided services to ever-larger numbers of visitors who

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<sup>136</sup> Toll, *An Inspection of Withdrawn Areas*.

<sup>137</sup> Emerson Knight, Guy D. Edwards, and Alfred C. Kuehl, *Report on Boulder Dam National Recreational Reserve, Nevada and Arizona: Master Planning Objectives and Principles* (San Francisco: National Park Service, 1936), ACC #4530, Lake Mead NRA archives. For an assessment of the general tone of NPS thinking in the 1930s, see Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 10-57; and Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 43-46, 108-13.

shared few of the agency's aesthetic predispositions. The Park Service proceeded as it often had during the 1930s, using resources available through federal programs, such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW), and the ECW's successor, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). It conducted an ongoing assessment of potential uses by visitors to determine its needs.

Developing a basic infrastructure provided the greatest challenge for meeting visitor needs at the new recreation area. The construction of water and sewage systems for the major campgrounds typified the Park Service's early development programs. In 1937, an "Investigation of Water Development, Boulder Dam Recreational Area" gave estimates of the cost of developing Hemenway Wash. Park managers could not yet ascertain future visitor demand, and even agency observers could not reach a consensus about the Wash. Some anticipated as many as several thousand visitors at one time, a number that no one in 1937 believed the park could easily sustain.<sup>138</sup>

The Park Service worked to demonstrate that it could manage Lake Mead for the public. A 1938 press release extolled the virtues of Boulder Dam and the unending recreational opportunities that the reservoir afforded, boasting,

Here is a country of dry, somber, strange mountains, deserts and canyons, the dam has backed up the water of the Colorado River to form brilliant, blue Lake Mead. ... It has become the center of a potentially great recreational region, and the fame of the engineering marvels of Boulder Dam draws visitors from all over the world.<sup>139</sup>

Those who enjoyed the desert found the appeal of the area for recreation more and more apparent. Once considered a desolate wasteland, Lake Mead quickly gained a reputation as a desert wonderland. The fantastic juxtaposition of a shimmering blue lake surrounded by stark, bone-dry desert enhanced Lake Mead's reputation as a place to see.

Despite the history of cooperation in the Park Service–Bureau of Reclamation relationship at Lake Mead, the two agencies grappled because they applied conflicting missions to the same resource. After the reservoir completely filled, the fluctuating lake levels became a source of ongoing interagency discussion. High lake levels encouraged recreation, but energy and agricultural needs often drew water levels down so far that they caused wildly varying conditions for recreational users. After the Bureau of Reclamation released water for power or agricultural needs, campgrounds at the reservoir's edge one night might suddenly perch upon sediment-caked wasteland, hundreds of feet from the new waterline in the morning. The varying water levels routinely left boat docks distant from the reservoir. Both agencies recognized that multiple uses required a firm agreement about lake levels. Their shared resource affected how each agency fulfilled its obligations, and differing missions made tension a regular feature of the working relationship.

Such debates foreshadowed the park system's later transformation as it sought to

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<sup>138</sup> Report to F. A. Kittredge, Regional Director, Region Four, "Investigation of Water Development, Boulder Dam Recreational Area," Associate Engineer, Bernard F. Manbey, Oct. 16, 1937, B98, Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, CA (hereafter NARA-LN).

<sup>139</sup> Department of the Interior, Memorandum for the Press, Jan. 23, 1938, B319, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

balance the competing demands of recreation with the agency's mandate of resource management. The conflict became the single most demanding issue for the Park Service. As its holdings grew exponentially after World War II and the expectations of growing numbers of visitors changed, the agency faced ongoing repetition of the circumstances it experienced at Lake Mead NRA in many other places in the park system. The Park Service's Lake Mead experience created a certain foresight the agency would not otherwise have possessed; if park managers throughout the system looked to a national recreation area for solution, they often found that Lake Mead had given them good precedents. During the tumultuous postwar period, Lake Mead became a proving ground for evolving management strategies that balanced expanded recreation with creative resource protection and that foreshadowed the increased demand for recreational activities in the major national parks.

Visitation at Lake Mead NRA accelerated rapidly after World War II, far exceeding even optimistic Park Service predictions, but the rapid growth in numbers did not reflect the changes in use that followed. Most park personnel looked at the growth and believed that the vast majority of visitors would continue to visit the dam and might make a quick stop at the lake. Visitor use statistics between the 1930s and the late 1940s supported this assumption, but close observers noted a much higher-than-anticipated level of visitation to the lake itself. By the end of the 1930s, visitation to the recreation area began a forty-year upward spike. In 1947, Lake Mead and Hoover Dam recorded 1,171,736 visitors, of which 367,152 visited the lake and used Park Service facilities. Although the number of visitors to the national recreation area was substantial, the park remained a secondary destination for most travelers. Lake Mead Superintendent George Bagglely remained unsure of how to evaluate visitation. "It is not presently possible to say what portion of the visitors come here to see the Recreation Area and what portion come here to see the Dam," Bagglely observed in 1947, "since it is a spectacular and well-known landmark, whereas the Recreation Area is as yet not widely known."<sup>140</sup> Even at the 1940s end, Lake Mead NRA's potential as a visitor destination remained unclear.

During the following decade, Lake Mead NRA became one of the premier visitor destinations in the national park system, forcing a change in management strategies. However, before the Park Service could respond to new demands, it had to assess accurately the new patterns of visitor use. New check stations and closer monitoring of travelers around Lake Mead enabled park managers to collect comprehensive data for recreation use and dam visits. As the visitation numbers climbed, making sense of them became progressively more difficult. Hemenway Wash and Lakeshore Drive, the parts of the park nearest the dam and Boulder City, continued to experience the greatest visitation, with 1,934,143 visitors during 1954. Superintendent Charles Richey attributed the imbalance to "heavy day-use because of the swimming beaches," confirming the area's oldest pattern visitation. More significant was the increased use of the remote areas, with one, the Mohave District, recording 49,849 visitors. Other remote parts reported similar rates of use; Upper Mohave logged 32,298, Upper Lake Mead, 37,948, and Overton, 58,456. These visitors were different from the users at Boulder Beach. They tended to "remain overnight or for several days," Richey indicated,

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<sup>140</sup> George Bagglely to Andrew H. Hepburn, June 3, 1947, B98, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

“either as tent campers, trailer campers, or motel and hotel guests.” He recognized that the park had long been underestimating overnight stays out of ignorance of the pattern discovered in the southern parts of the park. “It is our considered opinion,” Richey averred, “that camping use of the Recreation Areas as a whole is a least twice as large as our records indicate.”<sup>141</sup>

By the mid-1950s, Lake Mead NRA administrators understood that the traveling public used the area in a much more comprehensive way than previously realized. The 1954 visitation patterns demonstrated that Hoover Dam was not the only reason tourists visited Lake Mead. The public reached even the park’s most remote areas, in spite of very limited development and difficult access. The vast landscape and remote nature of Lake Mead NRA challenged managers to monitor use closely, especially when visitors used the distant areas in unanticipated ways. As the boating industry and boating recreation grew during the 1950s, visitors engaged in new types of water recreation and even slept in boats on the lake. It became even more difficult to determine how many people were in the park at any given time. “We know that thousands of visitors spend one or more nights aboard their own chartered boats in the course of the year,” Richey wrote the Sierra Club’s David Brower, “but no count is yet possible.”<sup>142</sup>

Although the Park Service did not clearly recognize or fully support Lake Mead’s management needs, park superintendents attempted to work out the area’s problems with the resources they could obtain. As agency officials began to understand that the extent of the area’s use in the 1950s was only a prelude to a deluge, planning efforts took shape. In November 1953, the park completed a master plan of recreational development at Lake Mohave, the reservoir below Hoover Dam created by the construction of Davis Dam.<sup>143</sup> Prepared by the landscape architect Glenn Hendrix, the plan called for an expansion of existing recreational facilities, already hopelessly overcrowded and obsolete. Lake Mohave, which had not yet experienced the dramatic increase in visitation that dogged the Boulder District to the north, stood to benefit from this proactive stance. Development there could anticipate demand.

The 1953 Lake Mohave plan echoed many of the recommendations of past, present, and future use presented by the 1953 *Lake Mead Recreational Report*, issued by the Lake Mead Recreational Area Committee earlier in the year. Organized in May 1951, the committee was a response to regional community groups, such as the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, that pressured the Park Service to revise regulations that they felt restricted public access and jeopardized the regional tourist industry. Local groups often actively pressured the federal agency, and the ones in southern Nevada had particular interest in their nearby park. Community groups and regional legislators recognized that Lake Mead was a vital economic resource and objected to its second-class treatment within the Park Service. In Las Vegas, supporters saw the park as a major attraction for their town and wanted both

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Glenn O. Hendrix, “The Master Plan of Recreational Developments for Lake Mohave, Lake Mead National Recreation Area,” November 1953, Lake Mead NRA archives.

better physical access to the lake and faster, more comprehensive development of facilities to accommodate the traveling public.<sup>144</sup>

The management and resource reports of the 1950s highlighted a generation-old primary issue at Lake Mead NRA: ever-growing visitation and a parallel lack of facilities to accommodate that expansion. Managers regarded facilities development to cope with increased visitation as their first priority, but equally important in their view was to gain an understanding of changing patterns of recreation and recreation technology. At Lake Mead, recreation most often meant water activities, a dimension of the outdoor experience that recorded huge growth in the decades following World War II. Boating, waterskiing, fishing, and other similar activities grew exponentially. Waterskiing and boating were both transformed by lighter weight materials and technological innovations that made them more accessible to the public. By the mid-1960s, Lake Mead had established a growing popularity, and water-based activities were its focal point.

During the late 1950s, Park Service efforts to assure better response to the public took on new significance at Lake Mead NRA. By 1960, the park had divined better methods for communicating with visitors and more readily met the demands of their ever-growing numbers. In turn, this permitted more comprehensive management of the park’s resources, better balance between resource protection and recreation, and a more thorough understanding of Lake Mead’s resources. The benefits of the new management strategy quickly became apparent when new federal regulations and programs aimed at enhancing public access to federal recreation resources placed new demands on the park and its staff.

Lake Mead NRA benefited from the growing national interest in outdoor recreation. In 1960, the park filed an “Inventory of Designated Non-Urban Public Outdoor Recreation Areas” with the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC). Established by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1958, ORRRC studied public recreation programs at the federal, state, and local levels. ORRRC focused on lakeshores, seashores, urban parks, and wilderness areas.<sup>145</sup> By 1960, in a change from its roots that stemmed from the need to defend turf and from the capital development resources made available by programs such as MISSION 66, the Park Service considered itself the leading authority on American recreation. It asserted itself as the federal agency that should have the most direct say in evaluating recreation and recreation areas.<sup>146</sup>

ORRRC represented a direct threat to Park Service dominance in recreation, and the

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<sup>144</sup> “Specific Recommendation of the Lake Mead Recreational Area Committee for the Development of the Shores of Lake Mead, Lake Mohave, and the Colorado River Encompassed in the Lake Mead Recreational Area,” B267, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Maxwell Kelch, Chairman Lake Mead Recreational Area Committee to Richard D. Searles, Undersecretary of the Interior, Aug. 9, 1952, B267, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>145</sup> Lake Mead NRA, “Inventory of Designated Non-Urban Public Outdoor Recreation Areas,” Form ORRRC INV. NO. 1, Dec. 13, 1960, B267, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 194-95.

<sup>146</sup> Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 169-204; Ronald A. Foresta, *America’s National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984), 62-63.

Park Service actively tried to gain control of the commission. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall named Park Service supporter Laurence S. Rockefeller chairman of the new commission, but otherwise Park Service involvement in commission activities was limited. Conrad Wirth, the Park Service director, loudly claimed that without MISSION 66 and the extensive surveys and recreation development work by the agency, the federal government would never have conceived ORRRC, but few paid any heed. Recreation had become more important to Americans, and always keen to find ways to expand its public support, the Park Service sought to counter the threat from the ORRRC. With MISSION 66 in full swing in the early 1960s, the Park Service sought to enhance arguments for its primacy by developing several new recreational areas and by trumpeting a number of recreational programs. Still, the ORRRC continued to exclude Wirth and the agency from the decision-making process. In April 1962, the final ORRRC report called for significant changes in the management of outdoor recreation in the United States and for the creation of a new bureau to manage the nation’s recreation resources. The formation of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) significantly limited the future Park Service role in recreation development.<sup>147</sup>

Despite the reduced role in national recreation that ORRRC portended for the Park Service, agency development and planning continued in earnest at existing areas such as Lake Mead NRA. The growth in visitation before 1960 was only a prelude to a pattern of ever-higher numbers. Visitation at Lake Mead began another era of dramatic increase, from 2.25 million in 1960 to 9.34 million in 1990. The growth in visitation reflected changes in U.S. patterns of recreation as well as changes in regional demographics. Not only did Americans enjoy the outdoors more frequently and possess a much more enticing array of equipment and machinery, more of them lived in the states around Lake Mead NRA. Even with the enormous growth in U.S. population, Nevada and Arizona outstripped the national rate of increase. By 1991, Lake Mead NRA led the park system in backcountry visits, a statistic that would have astounded those who had once assumed that swimmers and boaters would comprise the vast majority of park visitors. Most backcountry visitors originated in surrounding states, testimony to the changing demography of the Southwest. By the 1990s, in response to such trends, the park evolved into a regional recreational park that served many purposes. Growth in southern Utah, southern Nevada, southern California, and Arizona underpinned the transformation.

Between 1960 and the 1990s, the Sunbelt—the group of southern and southwestern states beginning in Florida and stretching to California—became central to U.S. society, supplanting the Northeast as the country’s most powerful region. From 1960 until 2008, no elected American president claimed origins in any other region, and the Sunbelt’s continual population growth served as the primary catalyst of the new obsession for warm-weather roots that national political candidates displayed. The vast numbers that granted political power came at a price. As millions of people relocated to the Sunbelt states in search of new economic opportunities and quality of life, those states, and California in particular, became beholden to the nation’s defense industry. The Sunbelt earned the sobriquet “GunBelt,” as federal defense spending that began during World War II transformed the entire region’s

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<sup>147</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 194-95; Foresta, *America’s National Parks and Their Keepers*, 62-63.

economy during the more than forty years of the Cold War. The millions who came in search of high-paying work transformed the region's demography.<sup>148</sup>

This constellation of influences created a ring of substantial cities all within a day's drive of Lake Mead NRA. Las Vegas, Phoenix, and greater Los Angeles all experienced phenomenal increases in population between 1940 and 1990. Minuscule Las Vegas, 8,000 people in 1940, topped one million in 1995; Phoenix grew from 121,000 in 1940 to 2.122 million fifty years later. The Los Angeles basin became the second-largest American metropolis, with 14.5 million residents in 1990, a remarkable expansion from the less than 2.9 million who lived there in 1940.<sup>149</sup> A de facto constituency for southwestern recreation appeared that had not existed before World War II.

The newcomers stressed every dimension of regional infrastructure, a pressure especially reflected in recreation. The Southwest had long been the U.S. dreamscape, the place where Americans went to discover their culture and gently distance themselves from the mainstream, but most of them had overlooked it as a pleasure ground. Pueblos and reservations, Navajo rugs and turquoise jewelry all had their appeal, but as a place to get out into nature, the Southwest's summer heat meant that only the hearty could undertake an expedition before widespread air conditioning. The diehards, such as Charles Bernheimer, a wealthy industrialist who became the first person to circumvent Navajo Mountain in northeastern Arizona in an open vehicle in 1924, came, but their numbers were few. Before 1945, the region could be very hard on travelers who were unaccustomed to being away from the comforts of hotels. The growing numbers of postwar residents could undertake activities their predecessors struggled to attain in the comfort of air-conditioned cars and big trucks, powerboats, and soft sleeping bags. The premium on vacation time and on leisure as a measure of achievement, and the growing affluence of the middle class, brought visitors in ever-growing numbers to places such as Lake Mead NRA.

Charles Richey, Lake Mead superintendent from 1954 to 1969, faced the onslaught of visitors and their new accouterments and fashioned the park's response. He had little in the way of precedent to guide him, for the Park Service remained better at acquiring recreational land than developing it even during the Wirth administration. Even in the 1960s, the agency template for recreational management was undeveloped. Richey started at the beginning. He formulated policy by observing his visitors and noting their needs, pushing for visitor information services at all recreation areas to address significant outdoor recreation issues and themes. The visitor centers constructed and staffed at national recreation areas served different purposes than at traditional parks. "Visitor Centers may, as a general principle, be needed more in large recreation areas than in some of the parks," he noted in 1964, "because of the diversity of visitor interests, the different recreational use patterns during the several

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<sup>148</sup> Ann Markusen, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell, and Sabina Deitrick, *The Rise of the GunBelt: The Military ReMapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ann Markusen and Joel Yudken, *Dismantling the Cold War Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Michael Schaller, Virginia Scharff, and Robert Schulzinger, *Present Tense: The United States since 1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1992), 262-64, 604-6.

<sup>149</sup> Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993).



seasons, and the varying age groups that we have to serve during these seasons.”<sup>150</sup>

Richey also knew from experience that having a large lake as a primary recreational resource created special problems for the agency. Adverse weather conditions left thousands of visitors who came to use the lake with little to do. Richey anticipated that boredom would lead to problems with crime, drinking, or destruction of park resources. A substantial visitor center complex could help alleviate the problems associated with beached boaters, he thought. “During periods of heavy use when waters are dangerous for pleasure boating we have found that the visitor will take part in almost any type of organized activity,” Richey observed. “We need facilities around which to center such activities.” The demand for recreational facilities other than the lake increased with rising visitation rates. “As our individual developed areas grow larger from increasing use, there is more need for some type of building where we can house organized recreational activities to meet this and other needs,” Richey noted.<sup>151</sup>

Expanded visitor services and information at Lake Mead’s key entry points offered a way simultaneously to educate visitors and introduce them to park rules. Superintendents at Lake Mead NRA lobbied for a substantial visitor center in Boulder City to “orient the visitor, to inform him of what facilities are available, to introduce him to the country around him and its specially noteworthy features,” as Richey wrote, “to tell him of recreation opportunities, and to get him back outdoors—and into the area—with a bit more understanding than he had when he entered the building.”<sup>152</sup> Richey became an early proponent of technology as a technique for communication with diverse and far-flung audiences, arguing in 1964 that all NPS visitor centers should utilize the latest technology and insisting that the Boulder City visitor center should include detailed information aimed specifically at recreational users. With this stance, Richey recognized that not all information fell under the heading of “interpretation,” an important innovation in an agency that still struggled with its roots as a communicator of cultural messages. At Lake Mead, weather and storm information and tips for boaters caught in storms were essential. Variable weather often created very dangerous conditions on the lake; the opportunity to warn people was limited, and Richey recognized an obligation to recreational users that involved their safety as well as their education.

Richey’s arguments for enhanced visitor centers and traveler services at Lake Mead National Recreational Area reflected the frustration experienced by a generation of superintendents and regional supporters of the park. The recreation area never received financial support commensurate with its visitation numbers. Although the park consistently reported some of the park system’s highest numbers of visitors, funding and support for services often fell far short at Lake Mead NRA. During MISSION 66, Lake Mead received a disproportionately small amount of the available funding, a situation that angered Nevada Senator Alan Bible. Bible was a second-tier “water buffalo,” far less important than Texas

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<sup>150</sup> Charles A. Richey to Regional Director, Southwest Region, Feb. 26, 1964, B203, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Colorado Representative Wayne Aspinall (who headed the House Appropriations Committee and used his power like a club), and even New Mexico Senator Clinton P. Anderson. Despite his lack of influence, Bible could pen vociferous prose when the political process slighted his constituency. "If this most comprehensive 10-year program of protection, improvement and development of the Nation's park system is to be carried out," Bible stormed in 1964, "then it seems fund allocations should be made more on the Recreation Area with its crying need for facilities would seem properly to qualify for a larger share of funds." With his position and perspective, Bible did not understand why the area remained low on the list for facilities funding. "I do not need to tell you that the Lake Mead NRA was the second most popular Park Service facility in the country last year with its 2,675,371 visitors," he thundered at NPS Director Conrad Wirth. "I believe you agree that this 2,000,000 acre recreation area has not been developed as much in the last 20 years as public demands call for."<sup>153</sup> Even after more than two decades of unqualified success as a public recreation area, Lake Mead still received second billing to the traditional national parks. The role of national recreation areas within the Park Service remained an open question in the early 1960s.

Water recreation clearly demanded the most development. It was the coming trend at Lake Mead, the greatest source of use that Senator Bible demanded be accommodated. The Nevada Agricultural Experiment Station's 1966 report, "Water Based Recreation in Nevada: Mead and Mohave," affirmed what Lake Mead managers already knew. Boating and water sports had gained popularity and appealed to an increasingly wide spectrum of the American public.<sup>154</sup> Recreational boating and waterskiing, along with fishing and water-based sightseeing, had dramatically increased in popularity. Manufacturers of personal watercraft provided an endless array of boats that appealed to consumers with ordinary budgets. Increased interest in boat racing as a spectator sport illustrated the growing appeal of water sports. Not only did people enjoy the water, they also enjoyed watching specialized craft in intense competition. Hydroplanes raced on Lake Mead as early as 1959, and by the 1980s, the lake was the home of several annual speedboat races. When the Las Vegas Silver Cup Unlimited Hydroplane Races took place at Lake Mead in September 1987, more than 137,608 people watched. That same year, the lake entertained six other boat races and two personal watercraft races.<sup>155</sup> Even the most optimistic reports on the expansion of the boating industry, and of water recreation in general, underestimated the extent of the popularity of water sports in the second half of the twentieth century.

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<sup>153</sup> Sen. Alan Bible to Conrad Wirth, Feb. 17, 1956, B104, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>154</sup> George A. Myles, "Water Based Recreation in Nevada: Mead and Mohave," Agriculture Experiment Station, Max C. Fleischmann College of Agriculture University of Nevada, December 1966, B267, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>155</sup> "Addendum to Statement of Charles A. Richey, Superintendent, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Before Subcommittee on Public Lands of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, on S. 1060, on March 3, 1959," L1417, Lake Mead archives, NARA-LN; James C. Maxon, compiler, *Legislative History of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area: A Preliminary Study* (Boulder City, Nev.: National Park Service, 1972), File L1417, "Orig. of Leg. Hist.," Lake Mead NRA archives; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1988, 16.

While boating's popularity soared, swimming remained the most popular form of recreation at Lake Mead NRA. Its appeal was irresistible to tourists who came to see Hoover Dam and made a side trip down to the inviting blue waters of Lake Mead. Beginning with the Depression-era CCC work crews, Park Service managers at Lake Mead provided the necessary services and facilities. By the 1950s, maintaining order at the swimming beaches required considerable time and effort. The park implemented rules to assure the safety of swimmers and beachgoers who competed with boaters for space in the water.<sup>156</sup> Because of the popularity of water activities, road traffic became another serious concern. Thousands of visitors congregated on the most popular beaches, leaving their cars on any unoccupied piece of land. The Park Service constructed a system of beach berms to keep cars away from bathers. Although swimming seemed an easy-to-manage, low-impact activity, the number of swimmers at Lake Mead often stretched Park Service resources. Providing even the most basic access to and management at swimming beaches around the reservoir became a complicated task. Citizens and community leaders from the region often complained that there were not enough swimming areas, and they requested new beaches and new access roads to existing beaches. While cognizant of the public desire for expanded access, a succession of park superintendents worked to balance beach access with the impact of bathers on the lake.

The impact of access mounted as larger numbers of visitors engaged in more activities in the park. Between 1950 and the 1980s, visitors explored nearly every acre of the lake and its shore and availed themselves of every conceivable recreational activity that they could try in a large and diverse park. From cliff diving to parasailing, to fishing and hunting, to boating and camping, Lake Mead visitors took advantage of the opportunities the area offered and eventually invented new activities while maintaining the oldest of undertakings. Fishing became popular as soon as the reservoir began to fill in the 1930s. In response to increasing public interest, concessioners established and ran fishing camps at key locations on both the Arizona and Nevada sides of the lake. The Willow Beach fishing camp became one of the most popular.<sup>157</sup> Like beaches, fishing camps required a full array of facilities such as water and sewage disposal, all of which mandated NPS participation.

Not satisfied with the wide array of possibilities already existing at Lake Mead NRA, enterprising local and regional groups lobbied for more extensive development. After the close of World War II, the American Legion's Boulder City Post No. 31 proposed construction of a golf course at Lake Mead as part of an effort to assist returning veterans "regain their normal health and mental composure." Although golf course construction did not meet with approval in the 1940s, area groups subsequently revived the idea several times. Local officials in Boulder City and Clark County consistently supported a golf course, but Park Service managers at Lake Mead were not enthusiastic. In a recreation area, a golf course seemed outside of agency purview. The Park Service still felt uncomfortable about recreation, and while it might sanction an occasional golf course in an area labeled as a national park or monument, in a recreation area, a golf course would have made a travesty of the agency's claim to be different from a local parks department. The agency was more stringent in a

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<sup>156</sup> Boulder Beach Swimming Beach to Chief Park Ranger, Jan. 31, 1968 [repository unknown].

<sup>157</sup> "Willow Beach Fishing Camp," May 1, 1951, B212, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

recreation area precisely because the designation lacked the cachet that characterized national parks. Pressure for a golf course continued. In 1968, Clark County proposed issuing bonds to build one within Lake Mead's boundaries. Acting Superintendent C. E. Johnson held the line: the park, he asserted, "strongly opposes any development other than public campgrounds and picnic areas."<sup>158</sup> While Park Service managers willingly embraced the doctrine of multiple use at Lake Mead, they also followed agency policy. As a result, they consistently stopped short of supporting the level of development suggested by regional boosters, who treated the recreation area as a municipal asset and tourist attraction.

The differences of opinion stemmed from the distance between local objectives and those of the Park Service. By 1968, when outside groups proposed the golf course bonds, the Park Service had carved out an idea of what recreation should look like in the Park Service. Agency officials believed they could differentiate their recreation from common, ordinary activities and offer renewal of the spirit as well. This included boating, hiking, swimming, but typically excluded activities such as golf, shuffleboard, and other games. This was a clumsy formula in a nation increasingly devoted to its own pleasure, one that spoke to much different expectations than those of recreationalists. In part, it stemmed from the agency response to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in the early 1960s; in equal part, Conrad Wirth's emphasis on recreational space and parkways furthered the agency's push. Even more, the changing demands of the public softened NPS resistance. Accommodation with recreational demands reflected agency principles, that recreational activities should allow people direct connection with nature and provide the possibility for enlightenment. Local boosters sought golf courses for an entirely different reason, as a way to bring travelers and their dollars into their communities. The Park Service could accommodate recreation, but golf did not fit the agency's definition of recreation.

Off-road vehicle use added a new dimension to the already complex issues of access and preservation at Lake Mead. As did personal watercraft, off-road recreation vehicles reflected postwar prosperity. Soldiers returning from World War II fondly remembered the rugged little jeeps that performed so well all over the world and began buying surplus military models in the 1940s and 1950s. The former military vehicles became a feature of open space throughout the West, especially in the deserts of eastern California. Dune buggies, dirt bikes, and other all-terrain vehicles evolved because of public interest in jeeps. In the minds of off-road enthusiasts, Lake Mead NRA was an ideal location for off-road recreation, and they came as they always did to Lake Mead, in greater and greater numbers each year. By 1953, the effect of four-wheeled vehicles on the regional environment caused concern. Off-road vehicles scarred the landscape with trails and roads as they created the access that enthusiasts sought. As more visitors used the same paths, a system of unofficial roadways, known as social roads, became visible on the park landscape. "There is a tendency to develop additional points of contact along the lake shore," George Bagglely observed in 1953. "If apprehended while traveling across country or in the act of establishing new turn-off points from the main highways, people should be advised that our policy does not permit promiscuous driving or

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<sup>158</sup> Robert Rose to Don Ashbaugh, Oct. 16, 1945, B91, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Lake Mead NRA, Memorandum: Possible Municipal Golf Course, Aug. 12, 1968, B254, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

random travel."<sup>159</sup> Off-road recreation presented a clear case of how difficult it was to balance multiple-use recreation with preservation on federal lands.

Access to remote areas remained one of the persistent issues of multiple use at Lake Mead. The vast area made a comprehensive network of roads throughout the park an impossible goal, while varying shore conditions limited lake access. The answer was in the air. Airplanes had become a mainstay in the interior western states well before 1940. The combination of open space and vast distance made aircraft an attractive alternative to surface transportation. The Park Service recognized the advantages of a network of dirt airfields in the 1940s. Airstrips at Lake Mead provided access for concessioners and visitors and also allowed rangers and park employees who worked at remote sites to reach their stations more readily. The remote Shivwits Plateau required a ten-hour trip over bad roads. Park staff estimated that airplanes would reduce travel time to ninety minutes. No wonder park superintendents uniformly agreed with George Baggley, who believed "such air strips are desirable for official use."<sup>160</sup>

Finding carriers for the park's remote parts proved difficult. Air service had been crucial to the development of southern Nevada and the construction of Hoover Dam. Major carriers vied to serve the massive project, with Trans World Airways (TWA) establishing passenger service to the Boulder City Airport as part of its transcontinental schedule as early as 1938. TWA once even maintained a regular run to Pearce Ferry. Despite this initial interest, after 1945 the routes to outlying park areas were too small and not sufficiently lucrative as the air travel market expanded. Jet service further crimped the market, and service in the Lake Mead area soon devolved to charter services and small regional or local carriers. Other than Las Vegas, the airport at Boulder City was the only paved landing in the Lake Mead area, but the several dirt landing strips built within the park continued to serve remote areas. The Park Service sanctioned airstrip construction and supported their use, registering charter companies and concessioners. In 1952, a concessioner constructed a strip to serve the Lake Katherine area, but such construction was indicative of small-scale operations and equally minuscule aspirations. Others built strips at Echo Bay, Meadview, Shivwits Plateau, Cottonwood East, and Cottonwood Cove. Some of these lasted only a short time as use patterns changed and Lake Mead rewrote concessioners' leases.<sup>161</sup>

Other private companies and individuals assumed that they could construct airstrips on their own without permission from the Park Service, leading to instances of tension. In 1960, the proprietor of the River Valley Resort, below Davis Dam, built an airstrip inside park boundaries without authorization. The Federal Aviation Administration advised Lake Mead that landowners were free to build airstrips without permits, and suggested that having the airstrip removed was a violation of park rules. Other private concerns developed airstrips after following the permitting process. One group constructed a county airstrip at Temple

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<sup>159</sup> George F. Baggley to Chief Ranger, May 25, 1953, B197, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>160</sup> George F. Baggley, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Sept. 8, 1948, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>161</sup> Harvey H. Cornell, Lyle E. Bennett, J. R. Lassiter, Memorandum for the Regional Director, April 5, 1949, B91, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

Bar to serve fishermen’s camps on the Arizona side of the lake.<sup>162</sup>

Transportation fueled concessions, easily the most complicated and vexing issue at Lake Mead NRA. The Park Service could not provide millions of visitors with food, lodging, and other visitor services, and concessioners filled that void. In the first decades of Park Service history, concessions served as a focal point for Mather and Albright, both of whom recognized that dependable and professional concessions operations were essential to the agency’s goals. Seeing in standardized service an advantage for the agency, Mather favored near-monopoly conditions among concessioners, replacing local with national concerns wherever necessary, and sometimes simply because it was possible. Long-term leases to commercial contractors often allowed concessioners wide latitude in their use of Park Service property.<sup>163</sup> The decision to enact such leases created controversy when concessioners overstepped their limits. A carnival-like atmosphere prevailed near some national parks. At Lake Mead, where its status as a national recreation area determined that recreation superseded other management concerns since the establishment of the park, the nature of concessions generated less controversy than at national parks. Still, a considerable amount of tension remained.

Concessioners were essential especially at Lake Mead NRA, for the agency could not serve such a broad area on its own. An initial concession contract closely followed establishment of the recreation area. In 1937, the Grand Canyon–Boulder Dam Tours Company contracted to provide services at Lake Mead and the dam, although slow ticket sales foreshadowed the concessioner’s eventual financial collapse. The tour company proposed to have a staff member dress in a boatman’s uniform circulate and hand out brochures describing the tour service to tourists on top of Hoover Dam. The Bureau of Reclamation rejected the proposal, wishing to keep the Park Service’s operation entirely separate from its own. Other businesses proved more successful, and by 1949 subconcessioners supplied a variety of services. Continental Hotels Systems offered housing and lodging at Lake Mead Lodge. The Lake Mead Boat Company managed boating operations at Boulder Beach, Las Vegas Wash, and Overton Beach. Desert Highways ran the Boulder City Airport, Riddle Scenic Tours offered air taxi service, Standard Oil Company and Standard Stations provided gas and oil service, and TWA offered commercial air transportation. Murl Emery operated boat rental service at Searchlight Ferry below Hoover Dam, Flother and Henry operated board rental and guide service at Willow Beach, and Clyde Lee ran a concession stand near Boulder Beach.<sup>164</sup> Despite its reliance upon private businesses for visitor services, the Park Service also participated on a limited basis in developing options

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<sup>162</sup> Gilbert Wenger, District Park Ranger, Memorandum to Chief Park Ranger, Lake Mead, Feb. 4, 1960, B267, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Memorandum Report, From Chief Ranger, Feb. 12, 1960, L38, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>163</sup> Robert Righter, *Crucible for Conservation: The Creation of Grand Teton National Park* (Niwot, Colo.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982); Sellers, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 43-45; Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*, 50-81.

<sup>164</sup> Superintendent George Baggeley, Memorandum for the Director, June 28, 1949, 201, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Dennis McBride, “Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours, Inc.: Southern Nevada’s First Venture into Commercial Tourism,” *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 27 (Summer 1984): 92-108

for visitors. In an unusual instance in 1938, it initiated a regional tour package, adding Death Valley and Boulder Dam to tours that originated in Las Vegas.<sup>165</sup>

Heavy demand assured cooperation between local businesses and the Park Service. In 1944, Boulder City officials, park staff, and agency officials proposed the first formal concession policies for Lake Mead. The recreation area was desperate for facilities. The park needed hotels, lodges, lunch stands, and other structures to accommodate visitors, and only policies that gave potential investors security would allow development to proceed.<sup>166</sup> One of the most liberal leasing arrangements in the park system resulted, further testimony to agency ambivalence about the area as well as to the difficulty of securing viable concessions in remote, relatively obscure parks.

In the communities that surrounded Lake Mead, little debate surfaced about the larger question of allowing private companies to operate on Park Service lands. Community leaders and Park Service administrators eagerly expanded concessions and worried that without a concentrated effort to bring in new concessions, the area could not support the level of visitation it had already experienced. Concessioners were the linchpins of such development. They were willing to invest resources that the park lacked. As the Park Service planned development on Lake Mead and along the Colorado River below Boulder Dam, it became clear to those who lived and worked in the area that only extensive support from concessioners could make such improvements worthwhile. Overton, Pearce Ferry, Temple Bar, Las Vegas Wash, Willow Beach, Eldorado Canyon, and other places all needed concession operations that adequately served visitors.

As visitation to Lake Mead increased after World War II, the market became too large for the small concessioners that operated there before the war. They could not meet the demands of the public, and they lacked the capital to improve existing facilities to accommodate increased visitation and changing patterns of use. In a 1944 response to Nevada U.S. Senator Patrick “Pat” McCarran about complaints against boat mooring services, NPS Director Newton B. Drury blamed wartime shortages for the problems, adding that adequate services for recreational users of Lake Mead required improved harbor development planning.<sup>167</sup> The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* echoed Drury’s request, pointing out that fishing camps, boat docks, and other facilities run by the Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours Company could not keep pace with rising levels of use. A replacement process that encouraged larger vendors, similar to the strategy that Stephen T. Mather implemented in the 1910s and 1920s, began.

The question of facilities and concessions became more significant after 1945, when the nature of development broadened because of local entreaties. Area users of Lake Mead were eager for the Park Service to increase services and facilities, both for the use of the local community and as an incentive for expanding tourism to the region. Park managers considered constructing a clubhouse for the Boulder City Sportsmen Association on the

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<sup>165</sup> Toll, *An Inspection of Withdrawn Areas along the Colorado River*, 41.

<sup>166</sup> Robert Rose, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Aug. 19, 1944, B91, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>167</sup> Newton Drury to Sen. Pat McCarran, Aug. 21, 1944, B104, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

lakefront instead of building more emergency shelters for public use. By the mid-1940s, the Park Service had not yet established limits on private and public development inside a national recreation area. Proposals such as the one from the Boulder City Sportsmen Association indicated that both the community and the Park Service negotiated the rules for recreational development largely at the local level.<sup>168</sup>

In addition to pressure from private sportsmen and outdoor recreational enthusiasts, the Park Service received many requests for expanded development from regional community leaders. By the mid-1940s, local boosters recognized that Lake Mead and Hoover Dam represented a valuable asset to the local economy. Widespread support for development followed. In 1945, the Boulder City Chamber of Commerce urged the Park Service to build an amusement park, more accommodations, and an expansion of boating facilities at Lake Mead.<sup>169</sup> In an effort to maintain the close local relations that characterized the park, and providing additional proof that the Park Service did not give national recreation areas much credence, the agency sought to oblige. Although the amusement park was never constructed, more extensive facilities for boating represented a compromise.

The Park Service used its aspirations for the park to press for upgraded concessions. Acting NPS Director Hillory Tolson promised Edward P. Carville, Nevada's U.S. senator in 1945, that changes at Lake Mead were high on the agency's list of priorities. Tolson insisted that the Park Service has "been deeply concerned about our inability to get appropriate facilities installed in this area," compelling the agency to rely on concessioners. The park had little supervisory influence over the concessioners under the lax rules it established in 1936, making it difficult to upgrade facilities. During World War II, the Park Service informed Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours that it expected improved service in peacetime and Tolson echoed the sentiment as the war ended. Contractual arrangements with Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours were under review, and the agency prepared to find a new vendor.<sup>170</sup>

Tolson's aggressive posture made concessions management at Lake Mead a primary concern in 1946. Park Service frustration with Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours, which had not prepared for the coming season, accelerated. The crowds grew each day throughout the spring and they clamored for boat rides to the dam. The Park Service recognized the problem at the beginning of the season. On February 12, 1946, park rangers observed that the company had only one small powerboat, with a capacity of eleven persons, to handle the traffic. The concession's limitations excluded visitors in droves.<sup>171</sup> Since the Mather administration, the Park Service had pressured its concessioners to provide quality service.

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<sup>168</sup> Robert Rose, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, March 12, 1945, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>169</sup> "C.C. Preparing Resolution Urging Provision of Lake Boats, Docks, Facilities," *Boulder City News*, Nov. 10, 1945.

<sup>170</sup> Hillory Tolson to Sen. E.F. Carville, Dec. 14, 1945, B104, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; John D. Coffman to Congressman John R. Murdock, Feb. 11, 1946, B104, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>171</sup> Guy Edwards, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Feb. 26, 1946, B104, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.



Facing radical growth in demand for boating at the lake, the agency needed better service from Grand Canyon–Boulder Dam Tours. The company required considerable capital to invest in more boats, but like many small companies, it lacked the financial resources. Several new landing docks at key locations such as Hemenway Wash, work barges for private boat maintenance, refreshment stands at all boating areas, and machine shops were also essential to support concession operations. Most important, the company needed a building in which to base activities.

Lake Mead NRA also needed lodging. Unlike many prominent units in the park system, Lake Mead NRA did not have a hotel of any significance. In a lodging system that included the Ahwahnee in Yosemite and El Tovar on the Grand Canyon's rim, the absence of significant accommodations sent signals to the public about the low status of Lake Mead NRA in the park system. The major national parks all had hotels and lodges, many of which dated from the beginning of the twentieth century, and to local boosters, no real park was complete without one. Although Boulder City offered some accommodations, they were mostly roadside motels. The few constructed during the 1930s reflected that era's motor-court style, while the typical style of the rash of postwar construction was boxier and more generic. Both attested to the prevalence of democratized travel, but they also reflected the limitations of existing park services.

The lack of a signature hotel facility made Lake Mead NRA's second-class status more pronounced, drawing negative attention to the park and its unfulfilled possibilities. In 1946, a newspaper story suggested that a group of investors, including Bing Crosby's brother, planned to build a multimillion-dollar, 250-room resort at Lake Mead. According to the story, the Park Service had ceded to the group property rights to a half-million acres, a number so large as to be preposterous. Within a year, the investor group had dropped any plans for development.<sup>172</sup> The media interest in the development suggested a new level of attention for Lake Mead NRA, commensurate with its growing visitation. It also pointed to the strength of the local rumor mill's hyperbole.

The prospect of creating a comprehensive visitor service operation at Lake Mead NRA attracted other possible vendors. Between 1946 and 1949, a series of proposals became public. Some were little more than unrealistic thinking, but others were legitimate overtures for improving the existing system. In 1947, the Las Vegas Army Air Field sought a site for an army rest and relaxation camp on Lake Mead. Although not a commercial concern, the military sought to establish facilities at the lake exclusively for its personnel. In response to ongoing Park Service reports that existing concessions remained inadequate, some local businesspeople, including representatives of the Union Pacific Railroad, which had lodges in other national parks, proposed a major development at Lake Mead. These investors discussed the project with congressional representatives and Park Service officials who appeared willing to listen to almost any option for improvement.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> "Resort Planned for Lake Mead," *Arizona Republic*, Aug. 1, 1946; McBride, "Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours, Inc."

<sup>173</sup> George F. Baggley, Memorandum for the Files, March 5, 1948, B197, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; George F. Baggley, Confidential Memorandum for the Director, Jan. 19, 1949, B92, Lake Mead files,

As these proposals for improving lodging facilities were being made, the existing arrangement for boating operations run by Grand Canyon–Boulder Dam Tours Company became untenable. By 1949, a raft of complaints by the public and the Park Service about concessions reflected discontent with the vendor, but little improvement in conditions and facilities followed. The company was not responsive to outside entreaties. Grand Canyon–Boulder Dam Tours ignored Park Service requests to invest in facilities and otherwise upgrade its services. The 1949 Lake Mead *Master Plan* noted the company’s lack of compliance with agency requests. Frustration with the Lake Mead concessioners reached its apex later in 1949, when the company requested an expansion of Lake Mead Lodge’s bar area in Boulder City. Exasperated, the Park Service informed the company that it could not improve the bar until it built the other facilities at the lake that the Park Service had already requested.<sup>174</sup>

In 1952, the Park Service finally took action against Grand Canyon–Boulder Dam Tours. The agency waited so long as a result of contractual restrictions as well as from its recognition that a poor concession operation was better than none at all. The director ordered Regional Director Minor R. Tillotson to review all aspects of Lake Mead’s tour operations since the end of World War II, including Park Service requests for improvements, and to provide a list of all desired expansions of facilities and services.<sup>175</sup> Tillotson’s list became a key support document to Park Service action against the Grand Canyon–Boulder Dam Tours Company. This was the last chance, government officials warned. If the company would not undertake mandated improvements, the agency intended to pursue action to terminate the concession arrangement. The Park Service proceeded in no uncertain terms. Superintendent Bagglely listed many grievances against Grand Canyon–Boulder Dam Tours and the actions that the company immediately needed to take to continue their operation. An agency memo formally demanded improvements at Lake Mead. If the concessioner did not comply, it faced cancellation of its contract.<sup>176</sup> Bagglely added that he could not understand why the concessioners did not take advantage of the excellent opportunities at Lake Mead NRA.

The most pressing concession concern in 1952 remained the construction of a large lodge to accommodate the growing number of park visitors. The Park Service had lost faith in Grand Canyon–Boulder Dam Tours as the concessioner, and it wanted a new operator. If the concessioner could not offer the park adequate services, it was unlikely to raise the capital to build the hotel the Park Service wanted at Lake Mead. Agency officials assumed that they held an important prize in the expanding leisure industry. The chance to build and operate a new and better lodge at Lake Mead, they hoped, would attract new, more

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NARA-LN.

<sup>174</sup> Cornell, Bennett, and Lassiter, Memorandum for the Regional Director, April 5, 1949; George F. Bagglely to Regional Director, Region Three, July 25, 1949, B84, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>175</sup> To Regional Director, Region 3, from Acting Director, June 10, 1952, B104, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>176</sup> George F. Bagglely to Regional Director, Region Three, Aug. 5, 1952, B104, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

dependable, and better-financed concessioners.<sup>177</sup> Baggley adamantly supported a change in vendors; he was one of a succession of Lake Mead superintendents forced to deal with the frustrating lack of compliance by the Grand Canyon–Boulder Dam Tours Company. Despite a united front of public and agency pressure, no way to motivate the company to expand its services seemed evident.<sup>178</sup>

The pressure to expand and improve services also came from intense public criticism. Throughout the late 1940s and the 1950s, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, never favorable to federal agencies, published stories that highlighted the inability of Lake Mead administrators to engineer effective concession agreements. The newspaper repeatedly denigrated agency efforts to secure new vendors, found existing facilities lacking, and questioned the agency’s competence. In one particularly unflattering article, the newspaper pointed to Lake Mead NRA’s failure to provide facilities for local clubs. The Park Service had a long history of not tangling with the local press in most circumstances, and Baggley followed this policy. He tried to use the criticism to attain greater agency commitment to new concessioners and marked increases in development. The piece “indicates the temper of some of the services clubs in this locality,” he told Tillotson. “I anticipate that we shall have further repercussion from it in the near future.”<sup>179</sup>

Its setting and circumstances gave Lake Mead NRA problems typical of areas that did not share the label of national park. Its lack of significance within the national park system did not lend it a claim to a visible share of limited agency resources. Most of its use came from daily visitors who brought much of their own supplies, limiting the viability of concessioners. During the late 1940s and 1950s, the park thwarted public criticism of its facilities development program by reminding anyone who would listen that the government did not provide adequate funding to expand or improve facilities. Nor were suitable concessioners available. Because of its location and the slow recognition of its assets by the travel industry, no national concessioners appreciated Lake Mead’s available opportunities. The circumstances forced the Park Service to instead deal with local concessioners, precisely the ones who lacked the capital to match the demands of the traveling public, until enough public pressure led to a congressional appropriation for the development of Lake Mead NRA.

The absence of a concessioner that could afford to invest the required capital continued to plague the park. “We have made every effort to clear up this concession difficulty and bring about a situation which would insure adequate public service,” Baggley noted in 1954. “To do this it was necessary to find someone who was willing and able to put money into it and also would be willing to obligate themselves to a real program of improvement.”<sup>180</sup> New concessioners at Boulder Beach, Overton, and Las Vegas Wash were the first signs of change.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> The tour company went through a series of new owners and attempts at recapitalization until its corporate existence collapsed in the early 1960s. McBride, “Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours, Inc.”

<sup>179</sup> George Baggley, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, May 7, 1947, B89, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; “Move Started to Improve Lake Facilities,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, May 6, 1947.

<sup>180</sup> George Baggley to Wayne Kirsh, Feb. 9, 1954, A2439 xG14115, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

Better financed than their predecessors and tuned to the new ethos of the postwar era, such entities sold goods that people found appealing and offered the most modern equipment for sale or rent. Other developments in the offering greatly contributed to making the park more attractive.

Concessions were part of the larger battle of Lake Mead's improvement, first successfully addressed by the Park Service's most comprehensive capital development program, MISSION 66. Beginning in 1956, it provided Lake Mead NRA with more than \$664,600 for buildings, utilities, and other facilities, fundamentally altering the park's realities.<sup>181</sup> Hefty federal funding attracted new concessioners with far greater access to capital. They intended to take advantage of the growing recreation market and eventually greatly improved the visitor situation at Lake Mead. Travel companies finally looked past the park's limited infrastructure and recognized the potential for profit. As had been true throughout the history of the national park system, the Park Service attracted new bidders with low lease fees and promises of federal help with development. In order to upgrade facilities, the government invested considerable money and offered a valuable operation for rates well below the market price.

Concessioners at Lake Mead paid for their operations on a percentage basis. Operators who provided housing and food paid 3/4 of 1 percent of gross revenues; operators with stores, transportation, or boat rental paid 1.5 percent; operators who ran shops paid 3 percent; and concession operators with a combination of services paid on a sliding scale. The Park Service considered its rates reasonable, although concessioners typically played up the inherent physical and financial risks of doing business at Lake Mead. "There is no way accurately to estimate the additional cost to concessioners due to the fluctuation of the water level but for those with boat facilities it is considerable," observed Charles Richey in 1956. "The moving of docks, moorings and shore facilities is very costly as compared with areas in which stationary activities can be built. All equipment must be specialized which is more expensive to start with and is also much more susceptible to damage from storms than a solid installation."<sup>182</sup> Despite these obvious obstacles to attracting concessioners, by the late 1950s consistently high levels of visitation dramatically improved concessioners' profit potential. In 1966, another cash infusion from the government, this time a total of \$465,000 awarded for a new visitor center, comfort stations, and several residences at Lake Mead, helped make park facilities compatible with usage. Visitors spent more time in the park after the completion of the new visitor center.<sup>183</sup> After years of conflict and controversy, the concession issue had begun to move toward resolution.

During the 1960s, the development of Lake Mead's facilities continued, and public outcries for improved services and facilities became less strident. Following the lead of state and local governments, the Park Service became skilled at providing the public with services

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<sup>181</sup> Conrad Wirth to Congressman Clifton Young, March 5, 1956 [repository unknown].

<sup>182</sup> Charles Richey to Chief, Lower Colorado River Survey, Sept. 5, 1956, B270, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>183</sup> National Park Service press release, "Construction Contract Awarded for Lake Mead National Recreation Area," June 9, 1966, file DPL-WS-7:104, Lake Mead NRA archives.

that met the needs of day-use constituencies and were comparatively inexpensive to develop and maintain. Campgrounds that doubled as picnic areas, better beaches with more parking, and other facilities gave the Park Service more credibility with its many visitors. Its ongoing attention to the needs of local residents as well as those of visitors enhanced Lake Mead NRA's reputation in southern Nevada and northwestern Arizona.

By the 1960s, the Park Service served two distinct constituencies, day users and destination visitors, with one inadequate set of resources. Throughout the postwar era, each decision that supported the desires of one constituency necessarily impeded the other. When the Park Service ordered that its concessioners develop facilities, it inherently put pressure on limited resources such as beaches. With the available resources, the Park Service could not adequately serve both constituencies. This pushed the agency to rely on concessioners to an even greater degree, and that reliance had the potential to impinge on agency goals such as the development of resource management and, later, environmental protection. In this, the agency tacitly ceded some measure of administrative prerogative in the process of trying to serve its diverse and often conflicting constituencies.

Yet tension about concessions remained a fixture at the park. In 1952, the Park Service issued a press release of a business opportunity for a trailer camp called Lakeshore Village. This policy allowed concessioners to operate trailer villages within park boundaries, each of which presented ongoing management problems and required specially tailored rules and regulations. In a philosophy that dated from the immediate postwar era, the Park Service encouraged these developments as ways to secure outside investment in facilities in the recreation area. Lake Mead National Recreation Area remained remote and it needed concessioners; the trailer villages provided a way to encourage investment in the park. Most residents in that era used a vehicle to pull their trailers. They typically stayed a short time at any one area, less than two weeks on average, sometimes leaving their trailer in a convenient parking place for the remainder of the year. While perhaps not an optimal way to increase visitation, such use was compatible with park goals in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>184</sup>

Despite strict limits on the trailer camps that prohibited long-term residence, over time these temporary residents turned into semipermanent and even permanent dwellers at Lake Mead. The trailers grew from smaller travel trailers, which the Park Service expected, into fixed mobile homes, which in turn grew larger over time. The concessioners administered the trailer village, and in some circumstances, they were not sufficiently diligent about managing their guests. Residents surreptitiously converted some of the trailers into permanent abodes. Some retired in the trailer village, a clear violation of the terms of their agreement. In the park system, regulations only permitted park and concession employees to live within park boundaries. Although the concessioners were ostensibly responsible for the communities, enforcement of park rules fell to the Park Service. Unaccustomed to managing transient communities inside its areas, the park invested considerable time and attention in the issue. If the park's goal was to "reduce the footprint," as Alan O'Neill often argued, reconciling trailers and park policy was difficult. There was no legal basis for permanent residence in the park, but a strong sentiment existed with residents of the trailer village that

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<sup>184</sup> Alan O'Neill, interview by Hal K. Rothman, Jan. 12, 2002 [repository unknown]; Kyra Thibodeau, interview by Hal K. Rothman, Jan. 30, 2002 [repository unknown].

the sites had become "their" land.<sup>185</sup>

In the 1990s, the trailer parks became an even larger problem. "Once you get into it, then you're into it," O'Neill observed. During his tenure as superintendent, the parks were "a nightmare to administer." No matter how closely the Park Service observed the camps, distinguishing permanent residents from temporary residents was an onerous task. The park lacked staff necessary to monitor the trailer villages, and the circumstances left them with a set of rules that clearly excluded permanent stays but no consistent ways to distinguish violations. Residents used one of the trailers as a hospice, a fact detected when park rangers had to respond to a series of deaths of unrelated people at the same address. Other occupants rented out their trailers in violation of the terms of the contract with the concessioner. In one case, Lake Mead staff uncovered an attempt to create a timeshare arrangement for a trailer. "All of these uses," Kyra Thibodeau, chief of Concessions Management, observed in 2002, "are inappropriate unauthorized activities." The responsibility for such monitoring fell to the concessioners, but most were not prepared to confront paying constituencies over Park Service rules. In the end, the agency functioned like a "town manager," O'Neill recalled, leading to endless discussions about the problem. The park worked closely with concessioners to resolve the issue. Countless hours of ranger time were devoted to this issue, tasking personnel away from other pressing park management concerns.<sup>186</sup>

Long-term leases also gave some residents a proprietary feeling about public land. In the 1930s and 1940s, Lake Mead often granted twenty-five year leases for vacation cabins, with park supervisors periodically extending the leases. The practice continued into the 1960s. By the mid-1960s, the policy had begun to fall out of fashion at national parks, but agency officials still considered it acceptable for recreation areas. Such leases gave Lake Mead NRA a population that worked neither for the park nor for the concessioner. The length of the leases created in the park de facto inholdings, people who felt that federal property belonged to them. They inaccurately considered themselves owners of the land, permanent citizens with property rights, and they found government efforts to regulate their buildings and other activities presumptuous. Similar controversies erupted over trailers located inside park boundaries. In 1960, when Lake Mead began to hold meetings with concessioners over proposed trailer village regulations, the Park Service encountered opposition over its move to exert control.<sup>187</sup> Even though the trailer parks resembled small towns more than campgrounds, some long-term residents resented the Park Service's efforts to manage public health, provide police services, handle sewage, and collect garbage. Most semipermanent residents simply did not want government oversight.

Katherine Landing became one of the fulcrums of conflict over the rights of lessees. Park Service attempts to remove long-term residents there were fraught with complex legal and political questions. The agency initially offered leases when it was certain that little commercial development in the region would follow; the leases and the park's growth seemed

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<sup>185</sup> O'Neill, interview; Thibodeau, interview.

<sup>186</sup> Thibodeau, interview.

<sup>187</sup> Jerry B. House, Memorandum Report: Meeting with Concessioners re Proposed New Trailer Village Regulations, March 1, 1960, B267, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

unconnected, occurring in separate spheres. During the late 1950s, Katherine Landing became popular with the vacationing public as part of a general rise in use of the lake; in September 1958, boaters moored more than 1,236 vessels on Lake Mead, more than the agency felt it could manage safely. By 1960, development pressure reached Katherine Landing, and the agency began to reassess policy. As lessees saw the development, they began to feel that they were entitled to the same prerogatives as purchasers of nearby private lands. An ongoing struggle that pitted the Park Service against its lessees resulted. Its latest manifestation occurred in early 2000, when the Park Service again tried to raise the below-market cost of the vacation cabin sites at Temple Bar, Stewart's Point, and Katherine Landing.<sup>188</sup>

When the government and residents could not discern the blurry distinction between long-term and permanent occupancy, hard feelings resulted. At other places with long-term lease cabin arrangements, friction between the Park Service and the residents became common. Two such places were Stewart's Point, on the Nevada shore of the Overton Arm, and Temple Bar, three-quarters of a mile from the Temple Bar Resort on the Arizona shore.<sup>189</sup> At these locations, as well as at trailer sites at Boulder Beach, Las Vegas Wash, Callville Bay, and Echo Bay, the residents drifted into all-year living arrangements instead of the seasonal ones authorized under their permits. No matter what residents believed, vacation cabin homes were a private use of public lands, and the Park Service could not permit such activities to inhibit legitimate public uses. The prospect of government intervention dismayed leaseholders who had spent decades living around Lake Mead and who were reluctant to consider surrendering property that they considered their homes.

By the late 1960s, Park Service officials recognized that they faced a dilemma of enormous proportions. Long-term leases and trailer arrangements were not in the best interest of Lake Mead NRA, but they had proven useful to the agency at some points in its history. During the late 1940s and the early 1950s, when vacationers signed most of the Lake Mead lease agreements, the Park Service had not fathomed Lake Mead NRA's value as a recreational resource. In this void of policy, private individuals became de facto residents with the tacit support of Park Service officials looking for new constituencies to support management goals.<sup>190</sup> This led to an aggressive leasing policy; between 1953 and 1965, the government leased 137 cabin sites, each for the term of twenty-five years. In the mid-1970s, as the first leases approached time for renewal, nervous leaseholders, many who considered themselves landowners, argued for extensions or lifetime leases of their sites. Despite a policy directive in 1977 that forbade the transfer of leases and made returning all lands in the park to public recreation a primary goal, at Temple Bar the agency accommodated the lessees with life tenure. Residents could own the cabins but not the land underneath, and the Park Service

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<sup>188</sup> Herman Raney to Alfred Kuehl, July 25, 1967, Lake Mead NRA archives; Superintendent to Regional Director, June 22, 1960, B254, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Chief Ranger, Memorandum Report, Oct. 7, 1958, L3431, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>189</sup> Lake Mead NRA, "Vacation Cabin Site Policy," January 1982, Concession records, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>190</sup> Lake Mead NRA, "Briefing Statement: Vacation Cabin Sites," April 21, 1978, Concession records, Lake Mead NRA archives.

would take possession and remove the cabins upon the death of the owner.<sup>191</sup> At other locations, the government offered leaseholders renewable five-year extensions. Even after the policy change in 1977, Park Service managers willingly granted extensions, effectively passing one of the most difficult issues to subsequent generations of Park Service administrators.

The park worked on strategies to gradually reduce and eventually eliminate vacation home leases in the park even as it grappled with the trailer parks. Elimination of leases required the conversion or renewal of leases with life tenancy, meaning that when the original lessees passed away or their leases expired, the park reacquired control of the land. This gradual process moved slowly. Each year the park acquired three to five leases. Conversely, it did provide a solution to the problem, allowing the agency to see an end to vacation home cabin leases in the park. Future concession contracts were likely to write out the trailer parks. This presented a problem, for the trailer communities already blatantly disregarded Park Service rules, and it seemed likely that the removal of elderly trailer park residents from inside the park would generate negative publicity. Yet Lake Mead National Recreation Area had to do something. Neither vacation home leases nor trailer parks were appropriate for national parks in the twenty-first century; by 2002, conflict over the implementation of Park Service rules appeared imminent. The park’s position was clear. It was not a mobile home park. It was a national recreation area.<sup>192</sup>

Marinas around Lake Mead became another focal point for changing management philosophies during the 1960s and 1970s. Between the 1930s and 1960s, scarcity defined marina concessions and marina facilities. During those decades, the Park Service scrambled to secure concession agreements and expand facilities to accommodate as many boaters as possible. A continuing problem was the variable reservoir level, which might swamp existing facilities only a few months after dropping away to leave them hundreds of feet from the water. Despite the unpredictable lake levels, Lake Mead officials consistently pushed for improved boating facilities, recognizing the sport’s popularity with the public and its importance to the park. Beginning in the 1950s, public demand for marinas grew consistently. Lake Mead NRA managers worked with concessioners to assure that they updated and expanded facilities as the park assessed the environmental impact of this growth. Boulder Beach became the focus of the expansion of marina facilities and services. Easily accessible from Lakeshore Drive, and only a seven-mile drive from Boulder City, the Boulder Beach marina complex on the west shore of Boulder Basin experienced the heaviest traffic.

Government intervention eventually quelled the marina boom. After the 1960s and the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1970, a growing concern with environmental issues and federal mandates that required compliance tempered the enthusiasm

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<sup>191</sup> Lake Mead NRA, “Vacation Cabin Site Policy,” January 1982. Lake Mead NRA, “Fact Sheet: Vacation Cabin Sites,” Concession records, Lake Mead NRA archives; To: Files, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, From: Chief, Concessions Management, March 16, 1992, Concession records, L30, Lake Mead NRA archives; Alan O’Neill to William Lamb, Jan. 30, 1988, Temple Bar Concession records, L30, Lake Mead NRA archives; Roger Ernst to Sen. Bennett, May 9, 1960, L1417-DH, Lake Mead legislation, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>192</sup> O’Neill, interview; Thibodeau, interview.



for unfettered development of marinas. Once the environmental assessment and environmental impact statement became requirements, the possibility of any undertaking on federal land became significantly more cumbersome and often frighteningly more expensive. Park Service regulations limited profit margins, significantly curtailing the interest in marina concession operations.<sup>193</sup> Investors for projects such as marinas became harder to find.

When concession contracts for Boulder Beach and other marinas came up for renewal in the 1970s, Park Service officials made every effort to rewrite leases and comply with newer, more stringent federal environmental regulations. NEPA offered the Park Service a tool to help bring concessioners into compliance with agency goals; the regulations served as a weapon for park managers with recalcitrant vendors in all kinds of situations. At Lake Mead NRA, where the Park Service faced great difficulty implementing its goals, the new law added force to agency desire. The Boulder Beach marina was already very large in the 1970s, and Park Service officials recognized that no additional environmental impact resulted from reissuing leases. The acceleration of population growth in the Las Vegas area, the installation of the new Nevada State Fish Hatchery one mile north of Boulder Beach, and ongoing increases in visitation presented greater challenges than renewal of the leases.<sup>194</sup> Similar considerations of balancing the constantly expanding demand with environmental regulations became a feature of marina management throughout the park. Marinas at Las Vegas Wash, Callville Bay, Echo Bay, Overton, and Temple Bar all required environmental assessments when concession contracts came up for renewal. None of these areas presented as much concern as Boulder Beach, but each required careful evaluation to determine how to expand to meet demand without compromising the environmental integrity of an area.

By the 1960s, Lake Mohave faced similar development pressure. Not as easily accessible or as well known as Lake Mead, Lake Mohave developed at a considerably slower rate. During the 1950s, demand for services to match those found at Lake Mead grew. The Park Service signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bureau of Reclamation in 1950 to provide for management of recreational facilities and concession agreements at Lake Mohave.<sup>195</sup> A 1953 *General Development Plan* for Lake Mohave called for the development or expansion of facilities at Willow Beach, Searchlight Ferry, Petroglyph Canyon, Fire Mountain, Christmas Tree Pass Campground, Katherine Vacation Homesites, and Cottonwood Vacation Homesites.<sup>196</sup> At some of these sites, basic services were either in place or easily expanded. Other sites, such as Fire Mountain, were completely new developments designed by Park Service landscape architects. At all of the Lake Mohave locations, agency personnel conducted a thorough review and laid out plans for immediate needs and future

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<sup>193</sup> Lake Mead NRA and Western Regional Office, National Park Service, “Environmental Appraisal,” 1973, L7617, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Thibodeau, interview.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>195</sup> Glenn O. Hendrix to Regional Director, Region Three, Feb. 25, 1953, B90, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; U.S. Department of the Interior, Memorandum of Agreement between the Bureau of Reclamation Region 5, and the National Park Service, Region Three, for Preparation of Plans for Recreational Development of Davis Dam Reservoir Area, April 17, 1950 [repository unknown].

<sup>196</sup> Hendrix to Regional Director, Region Three, Feb. 25, 1953.

growth.

Demand for expanded facilities was particularly high at Searchlight Ferry, Cottonwood Landing, the Eldorado Fishing Camp, and Katherine Landing. Development in the Katherine Landing area during the 1950s was extensive. A concessioner constructed a large trailer camp with cabin sites, along with a store and café. During site development, concessioners requested permission to develop an extensive sewer system and sewage disposal facility. The concessioner needed it to accommodate the growing number of recreational vehicle trailers, a precursor of a significant shift in the way Americans traveled. "There are 3 to 4 times as many visitors in trailers as there are in camps. We see no trend which will reduce this ratio," Associate Regional Director Hugh M. Miller observed in 1953.<sup>197</sup> The sales of travel trailers increased dramatically during the 1950s, as did those of all recreational vehicles. Demand for facilities that could accommodate these vacation homes on wheels soon outstripped existing facilities. Building and maintaining trailer villages became essential for concessioners at Lake Mead and Lake Mohave. Because these trailers required more services as well as features such as sewage and electrical connections, concessioners could charge more for short- and long-term lease and rental fees.

While the popularity of travel trailers increased, the demand for traditional campsites also remained high because of the overall increases in visitation to the lakes above and below Hoover Dam. Cottonwood Cove and Katherine Landing grew into eclectic mixed-use areas that reflected the changing dynamic in recreational travel during the 1950s. Concessioners expanded Lake Mohave campgrounds at Cottonwood Cove and Katherine Landing during the decade. Both locations provided cabins and other lodging for those who were not interested in trailers or camping, and so these locations evolved to offer a combination of traditional camping, cabins, lodging, and trailer villages. Along with Willow Beach, the two locations offered marina facilities to accommodate travelers who wanted to take advantage of Lake Mohave's superior fishing opportunities and calm waters.

The public's seemingly insatiable appetite for water recreation and boating drove the demand for marina facilities at both Lake Mead and Lake Mohave. Concessioners recognized that tourists would pay to ride on almost anything that would float. Except for a short period in 1942, when boating operators suspended operations because of the war, boating services were always available at Lake Mead. Opportunities for private individuals to use watercraft of every conceivable description abounded. As the variety of personal watercraft available to the public increased dramatically during the 1950s, the public responded with enthusiasm. Surplus military gear, including life vests, rubber rafts of all sizes, and inner tubes, provided a great deal of the equipment for this new boating enthusiasm.<sup>198</sup>

Because of the variety of watercraft and the infinite ways that the boating public could use them, water and boating safety became a constant concern at Lake Mead NRA. Inspecting the thousands of boats and other vehicles that entered Lake Mead was an impossible task for the Park Service. Few agency employees had the expertise to make

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<sup>197</sup> Hugh M. Miller to Director, Region Three, Feb. 12, 1953, B91, Lake Mead NRA files, NARA-LN.

<sup>198</sup> Charles A. Richey to Superintendent, Natchez Trace, "Water Recreation," Jan. 7, 1965 [repository unknown].

adequate judgments about the safety of a craft or the competence of its operator. Cooperative agreements with the U.S. Coast Guard helped provide much needed safety checks. The Coast Guard retained responsibility for enforcement of boating laws, and after 1945, the Coast Guard based a representative at the lake.<sup>199</sup>

Nor did the Park Service have any way to contend with the boundless enthusiasm of the new recreational public. When a couple floated down the Colorado River all the way to Hoover Dam wearing only life preservers and expressions of joy just after World War II, the Park Service was in a quandary. Officials could not classify such activities within their models of visitor behavior. They concluded that as long as the individuals were only a threat to themselves, the agency would not interfere. Most boating and water recreation enthusiasts at Lake Mead NRA engaged in more conventional pursuits, but the safety of boaters on an immense body of water with thousands of very remote places provided a constant concern. The unpredictable weather at Lake Mead threatened even safety-conscious boat operators on day trips. They too could find themselves swamped by sudden high winds and waves. In 1952, the Park Service started monitoring radio traffic to rescue boaters in distress and advocated providing weather information.<sup>200</sup>

Boating safety at Lake Mead involved more than checking boats and boaters. The variable nature of the reservoir presented special hazards to lake users. Rising and falling levels made underwater obstacles appear and disappear. Floating debris from rising water caused by spring runoffs endangered boaters and water skiers. The Park Service worked assiduously to remind the public of the dangers. "A motorboat or outboard craft striking any of the larger pieces [of debris] could easily be capsized or sunk. Only caution and constant vigilance on the part of boat operators can prevent such possible accidents," one 1950s press release warned. The extreme danger to individual operators helped motivate attempts to provide professionally run boat tours such as the paddlewheel tour boat to Hoover Dam.<sup>201</sup> Regattas were another way to increase boater awareness of safety and to provide a more controlled environment for boating on Lake Mead. Between 1937 and 1950, regattas became a regular feature at Lake Mead. Strongly supported by chambers of commerce and other local boosters of Lake Mead recreation, the regattas were popular events for boaters and spectators.<sup>202</sup>

The Colorado River provided enticing opportunities for water recreation. Once considered a pursuit only for adventurers and explorers, river rafting became a mainstream

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<sup>199</sup> Memorandum for Acting Superintendent Rose, March 6, 1945 [repository unknown]; Memorandum for the Director from M. R. Tillotson, July 6, 1942, B97, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Coffman to Congressman Murdock, Feb. 11, 1946.

<sup>200</sup> Guy Edwards, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, July 2, 1946, B100, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Memorandum for the Press, Feb. 14, 1952, B85, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>201</sup> George Baggley, Memorandum for the Press, May 2, 1952, B85, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Lake Mead Resort and Lake Mead Ferry Service, d.b.a. Lake Mead Cruises, Concessions records, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>202</sup> Guy D. Edwards, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, March 14, 1946, B89, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

tourist activity in the 1950s and 1960s. Below the dam, private companies offered raft trips to tourists looking for whitewater adventure rather than the more placid sailing on the lake. Companies also offered whitewater rafting trips through Lower Granite Gorge and inside Grand Canyon National Park.<sup>203</sup> Private operators who offered whitewater trips presented a serious management problem for the Park Service when they traversed several jurisdictions during a single trip. Rafting outfits might have permits in one area but not another, creating considerable confusion within the Park Service about what its regulations allowed these operators to do.<sup>204</sup>

Whitewater rafting operations raised another crucial management issue—increased human impact on the recreation area. The proliferation of private rafting guide services meant that more and more people were entering areas that had previously experienced very little use. The impact on park resources was often catastrophic. Not only were desert soils fragile and easily damaged, but visitors often left a trail of trash, bottles, tire tracks, and rubble. Litter collection and removal was difficult and expensive in remote areas, and the environmental impact of travel in canyon ecosystems all too often was dramatically evident. Backcountry travel of all kinds placed a heavy burden on the desert. Increased access to remote areas that resulted from rafting and other guided tours raised serious questions about the long-term viability of activities that placed severe stress on park environments.

The human impact at Lake Mead was most noticeable in the campgrounds and developed areas. As concessions offered everything a visitor might want, the packaging endemic in U.S. society seemed to find its way to roadsides and picnic areas in the park. If litter collection in the backcountry was difficult, in the heavily trafficked areas it was ubiquitous. Garbage cans were always full and often overflowing; latrines and other facilities needed constant cleaning. Such high levels of use required infrastructure such as garbage and sewage systems able to handle the capacity of a small city. Road and building construction altered native environments, as did the addition of trees and vegetation to campgrounds. One of the most consistent requests from visitors was for more shade trees.

The most obvious impact on the environment came from the massive man-made reservoir that drew visitors to the area. After the initial inundation of the Black Canyon, environmental impact from the lake came from adjusting lake water levels. Fluctuations of water on Lake Mead had a negative impact on the lakeshore environment. When the waters receded, a bathtub ring of dead vegetation remained; often an entire year passed before plants grew back. In the interim, the park expended countless resources in cleaning up such areas in an effort to limit the impact on visitor experience. Managing a man-made environment on the shores of a man-made lake proved a complicated and expensive task.

The increase in visitation and the growth of regional populations made law enforcement another of the dominant activities at Lake Mead NRA. By the late 1960s, the Park Service generally shifted toward people management. Especially after the famous Stoneman Meadows incident in Yosemite National Park on July 4, 1969, the agency tried to

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<sup>203</sup> R. Bruce Waddington to Professional River Outfitters, Inc., Dec. 12, 1990, C3823 (GRCA-8214), Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>204</sup> Mark P. Sleight to Bruce Waddington, Nov. 14, 1990, Lake Mead NRA archives.

be sensitive to the demands of a changing public. National recreation areas and urban parks demanded a different kind of law enforcement than did remote national parks. Heavily used recreation areas were much more prone to suffer from crime and accidents associated with public drunkenness or drug use than the more traditional parks. After two generations of almost no criminal activities in Lake Mead, the democratization of travel meant the patterns of crime in the park system increasingly mirrored those in larger society. Between 1966 and 1970, violent crime and major offenses at the national parks rose from 2,300 to 5,900, an increase that almost perfectly matched the increase in the national crime rate. As early as the 1940s, Lake Mead officials realized that visitor control on crowded beaches and waterways required greater investment in law enforcement. Park officials in the mid-1940s requested additional funding to provide for a “Necessary Reservation Patrol Service Performed by the National Park Service for the Boulder Dam Project.”<sup>205</sup>

The new emphasis on law enforcement permeated park management. In 1948, Lake Mead NRA officials worked to expand contact stations and in some cases relocate buildings to heavily trafficked locations better suited for patrol and law enforcement use. In 1949, Lake Mead established a new ranger district with headquarters at Davis Dam to administer park responsibilities in the Davis Dam addition. Park officials assigned a district ranger there on October 18, 1949. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, Lake Mead managers understood that urban demands and urban problems would shape recreation management in the postwar era. By 1952, Lake Mead NRA annual reports featured a list of accidental deaths, injuries, backcountry accidents, suicides, petty crimes, incidents of drunkenness, and even murder. Complaints of lawlessness at areas such as Las Vegas Wash and Boulder Beach were common. Park rangers found themselves spending much of their time working with sheriffs and other law enforcement officials to address persistent reports of crime.<sup>206</sup>

Lawlessness at Lake Mead NRA steadily increased during the 1960s and 1970s. Park officials who once worried about petty vandalism and crude language from visitors now faced shootings, rapes, and suicides. In some situations, the tensions of the time entangled Park Service personnel, sometimes with tragic results. In 1970, Leland Lamoreaux, a seasonal ranger who also taught in the Henderson schools, shot and killed a Boulder City teen. The shooting stemmed from a Memorial Day altercation at Boulder Beach. The youth, Theodore Goodwin, refused to remove a vehicle from the beach, swore at the ranger, and when asked to stop, walked away. Lamoreaux told him to halt, and when Goodwin refused, the ranger attempted to draw his weapon. The gun discharged, hitting the youth in the back. He died two days later. The incident caused an uproar in the community. People were not accustomed to seeing park rangers as law enforcement officers. The ranger faced a murder charge, and the case received sensational coverage by the press. Many contended that the National Park Service was at fault for permitting a ranger to carry a weapon without training in law enforcement. Ultimately, the courts acquitted the ranger, but the trial prompted much

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<sup>205</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 208-9; Robert Rose, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Feb. 17, 1945, BD 0-20, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>206</sup> George Bagglely, Memorandum for Regional Director, Region Three, Jan. 23, 1948, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; George Bagglely, Memorandum for the Director, June 10, 1949, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; George Bagglely to Regional Director, Region Three, May 29, 1952, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

discussion about firearms policy. Afterwards, the Park Service provided more training for rangers before authorizing them to carry weapons, and the agency gained a greater understanding of the difficulty of people management in an open society.<sup>207</sup>

Park Service emergency response procedures also developed at Lake Mead NRA. The park required development of search and rescue techniques and of infrastructure and personnel to deal with emergencies. The cooperative agreement with the U.S. Coast Guard was an early step to provide for emergency response as well as a model for other water recreation areas around the nation.<sup>208</sup> Throughout the 1950s, the Coast Guard and Park Service designed a water safety system that provided widespread coverage of Lake Mead’s massive surface. The program became a model for interagency cooperation.

Lake Mead closely linked efforts to improve search and rescue responses to the push to enhance water safety and provide better law enforcement. Despite their best efforts, Lake Mead managers often found themselves underprepared for the level of crime associated with dramatic increases in visitation. By the mid-1970s, visitation at Lake Mead approached seven million. In 1970, there were 5,359 offenses and incidents in the park and 20 fatalities, of which 13 were accidental deaths, 6 were natural deaths, and 1 was a suicide. Between 1970 and 1985, visitation rates remained relatively consistent, in a range of greater than six million, but death rates and general crime rates climbed as they did throughout U.S. society. In 1980, a particularly deadly year, 42 people lost their lives at Lake Mead: 25 accidental deaths, 11 natural deaths, 3 suicides, and 2 murders.<sup>209</sup> Statistical analysis of incidents at Lake Mead indicated that virtually every type of crime existed and in numbers similar to that found in a small city. Park rangers stationed at Lake Mead dealt with arson, assault, burglary, drug offenses, rape, and weapons violations along with more mundane camping, fishing, or boating violations. The 1960s cultural revolution inspired many younger Americans to search for themselves in remote natural areas such as national parks. Lake Mead became a favorite destination for counterculturalists who brought drugs to the park and often set up illegal long-term squatter camps in places such as Hemenway Wash.

The law enforcement activities at Lake Mead NRA attracted national attention and recognition. The park was a supposed dumping ground for victims of “hits,” contract murders that in mythic lore were associated with organized crime’s control of Las Vegas. Some instances of organized crime–related death in the park did occur; some accidental deaths were purported to be carefully concealed executions. Lake Mead’s rangers received national media attention in 1987 when rangers there involved in catching a fugitive recreated their efforts for the television show *Unsolved Mysteries*. In 1998, an evaluation of Lake Mead’s law enforcement unit led to national recognition for its leadership in law enforcement.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> “Park Ranger Must Stand Trial on Murder Charge,” *Las Vegas Sun*, July 7, 1970.

<sup>208</sup> Robert Rose, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Oct. 30, 1945, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Merritt Barton, Regional Council, Memorandum: Lake Mead, Responsibilities of the U.S. Coast Guard and their Relationship to the Responsibilities of the National Park Service, Oct. 30, 1952.

<sup>209</sup> Lake Mead NRA Case Incident Statistics [repository unknown].

<sup>210</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1988; United States Department of the Interior, Office of Managing Risk and

Between the 1960s and 1990s, Lake Mead officials developed a sophisticated law enforcement and public safety program able to deal with the problems associated with an urban park visited by millions each year. Over the years, park rangers dealt with every conceivable legal issue and needed to adapt to changes in U.S. culture. Drug offenses and drug interdiction became a focal point for law enforcement beginning in the 1960s. Lake Mead's remoteness made it attractive for individuals who wished to avoid attention while they manufactured, used, or sold illegal drugs. The Park Service discovered methamphetamine labs hidden in remote areas of the park where illegal activity might go unnoticed for long periods, posing a major environmental problem along with its criminal implications. The chemicals used to manufacture the drug were highly toxic, and illegal drug lab operators cared little about their proper disposal. The toxic residue was often left in place or dumped, killing wildlife and native vegetation, and necessitating horrendous cleanup operations not only at the lab site but in the surrounding areas as well.

On the beaches around the lake, alcohol use and drug use contributed to increasing incidents of accidents and petty crime. In remote areas, rangers also spent a great deal of time searching for poaching crews who harvested cactus for sale in urban areas. Poaching crews also illegally hunted park animals for sport and profit. The Park Service designed Lake Mead for recreation, but rangers who worked in the area increasingly resembled an urban police force spending their time rounding up criminals rather than entertaining visitors around a campfire.

Lake Mead NRA's visitor management responsibilities remained more complex than those at other units in the park system. "In Boulder Basin, it is hard to get away from it," O'Neill observed of the enormous people management responsibility at Lake Mead National Recreation Area.<sup>211</sup> The combination of its national recreation area designation and the urban nature of its problems combined to foreshadow the issues that vexed the park system as a whole after 1970. In response, Lake Mead took the lead in changing management policies, but often those policies worked best only at similar parks to Lake Mead NRA. The result was a model for people management that reached its apex of significance before 1975 and became increasingly anomalous in the park system, especially after the creation of Golden Gate and Gateway national recreation areas. Those two parks served as another model for urban national recreation areas. On Lake Powell behind the Glen Canyon Dam, Glen Canyon NRA served as the prototype for destination recreation areas. Lake Mead NRA became a hybrid with the concerns of both urban recreation areas and destination recreation areas, but without other parks to follow its lead. Instead, it came to borrow from the more specific management strategies of more specialized peers.

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Public Safety Law Enforcement and Security Team, Law Enforcement Policy Compliance Evaluation, May 1998 [repository unknown].

<sup>211</sup> O'Neill, interview.







Figure 1. Lake Mead National Recreation Area includes Lake Mead (created by Hoover Dam) and Lake Mohave (created by Davis Dam). The recreation area covers approximately 1.5 million acres of land straddling the border between Nevada and Arizona. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 2. Elwood Mead, Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, 1924-1936. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 3. Arthur Powell Davis, Director of the Bureau of Reclamation, 1914-1923. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 4. Herbert Hoover, President of the United States, 1929-1933. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 5. After World War II, Americans flocked by the thousands in their new Airstream trailers to places such as Lake Mead. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 6. Before the American public turned to water recreation following World War II, pleasure boats like this one from the El Rancho Hotel were among the primary users of the park's lake resources. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 7. Celebrities followed the public and often came to Lake Mead for recreation. The movie and television star Fred McMurry was one of thousands of Americans who have fished the reservoir's waters. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 8. Lake Mead provides countless water recreational opportunities. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 9. Park planners often worked with scale models of the park in an effort to effectively manage its many dimensions. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 10. Vehicles had access to Hoover Dam through the U.S. Government Construction Railroad tunnels. Built in 1931, the railroad aided in the construction, maintenance, and repair of Hoover Dam. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 11. View of the Boulder Beach campground after World War II. Courtesy of the National Park Service.





Figure 12. The Gold Strike Inn was a fixture on the park's boundaries, typical of the kinds of uses that required constant vigilance by the National Park Service. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 13. The trailer village at Boulder Beach, like similar facilities throughout Lake Mead, became a source of considerable conflict as residents took advantage of their position to turn seasonal residencies into illegal permanent accommodations. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 14. The multifaceted nature of the park's obligations led numerous people to conceive of the park as their own. Many of them became squatters in makeshift accommodations on park lands. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 15. Close interaction between the park and the public led to protests by constituencies affected by park decisions. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 16. The Lost City Museum near Overton reflected early cultural resource management principles. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 17. Recreational use such as boating grew in popularity after World War II, leading to crowding at the lake entrances. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 18. Las Vegas Bay ca. 1950. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 19. The Park Service responded to increased demand with the development of new facilities throughout the park. In 1962, the Park Service constructed the dock at Boulder Beach to accommodate increased visitation. Courtesy of the National Park Service.





Figure 20. A park worker cleans up at Boulder Beach after Memorial Day in 1950. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 21. Roadside litter near Boulder Beach symbolized one of the park's primary management issues. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 22. The Alan Bible Visitor Center was built to support the growing number of visitors to the park. Courtesy of the National Park Service.

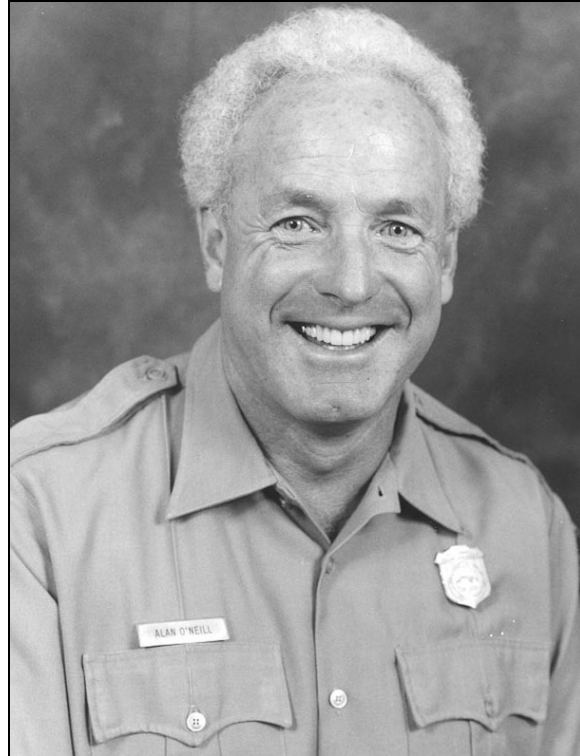


Figure 23. Alan O'Neill served as Lake Mead superintendent for 13 years, leaving to serve as executive director of the Outside Las Vegas Foundation. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 24. Former Assistant Superintendent William Dickinson replaced Alan O'Neill as Lake Mead superintendent in January 2001. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 25. In 1974, the Nelson Landing area was devastated by the worst flood in park history. This photo from the air, taken within days of the tragedy, reveals the destruction of the little community.



Figure 26. Commercial raft companies provided one of the many types of concessions at the park. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 27. Driven by ever-growing numbers of boaters, marinas abounded throughout the recreation area. Courtesy of the National Park Service.





Figure 28. The park often had to respond to boating emergencies, such as this one involving the El Rancho yacht, seen underway in an earlier photograph. Courtesy of the National Park Service.





Figure 29. Search and rescue functions became increasingly important as the number of visitors to the park grew. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 30. People management required bold reminders of the dangers of the lake. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 31. Keeping a supply of fish high in Lake Mead required frequent stocking of the reservoir with fry. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 32. Lake Mead teemed with fish, such as the bass shown here. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 33. Tamarisk is one of the many invasive plant species that threaten not only the native ecology but also cultural resources within the park. Tamarisk has had a heavy impact on the historic town site of St. Thomas, as seen in this picture of a structure foundation. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 34. The spectacular desert bighorn sheep came to symbolize the park's battle to protect native species. Courtesy of the National Park Service.





Figure 35. The listing of the desert tortoise as an endangered species in 1989 allowed the park to consolidate many of its natural resource management issues. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 36. The Le Conte's thrasher has been identified as a species of conservation concern throughout its range due in part to its low population density and to a lack of knowledge concerning its habitat requirements. Courtesy of the National Park Service.





Figure 37. Other natural resource concerns at Lake Mead include the relict leopard frog (top left), peregrine falcon (top right), and razorback sucker (bottom). Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 38. Despite the public's affection for burros, they remained a long-standing threat to other species and to the park's natural and cultural resources. Disturbances such as burro trails affect archaeological sites by displacing or destroying artifacts. Courtesy of the National Park Service.



Figure 39. Growing populations of burros have led to periodic burro roundups. Captured burros were often kept in pens until they could be transported to adoption. Courtesy of the National Park Service.





Figure 40. Lake Mead provides some of the most beautiful sunsets in the nation. Courtesy of the National Park Service.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MANAGING LAND IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

From the moment of its establishment, Lake Mead National Recreation Area was a hybrid among the national park system's units. Most significantly, the Park Service played little role in selecting the lands that became the park. Equally telling, the agency lacked complete administrative jurisdiction, instead initially functioning merely as manager of recreation-oriented features under the aegis of the Bureau of Reclamation. The complicated and convoluted situation created difficulties for managers, but even more, it hurt the perception of the park's value within the agency. Park Service officials neither appreciated nor respected the concept of national recreation areas. As a result, the agency moved slowly to resolve Lake Mead issues. Its lack of enthusiasm assured lesser emphasis on the recreation area's management and allowed the Park Service to table, defer, or simply overlook jurisdictional issues that in other settings it would have moved quickly to solve.

These underlying problems stemmed from the park's creation by another and sometimes competing agency. Instead of the typical national park area creation pattern, in which Park Service officials worked with sympathetic congressional representatives to withdraw lands of national importance, Lake Mead came into being because of an interagency agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation, which retained legal authority for the lands included in the national recreation area. The bureau established the initial park boundaries from lands withdrawn for the construction and maintenance of Hoover Dam and its reservoir, making a fortuitous accident of any relationship between Lake Mead's boundaries and the Park Service's obligation to manage recreational features. The Park Service functioned as a lessee and the Bureau of Reclamation assumed the role of landlord. The circumstances stymied management for more than two decades and provided a continuing impetus for ongoing attempts to resolve land and boundary issues.<sup>212</sup>

With the 1964 passage of the Lake Mead Act (Public Law 88-639), the Park Service attained full authority over the lands it had managed for twenty-eight years and finally won control of Lake Mead National Recreation Area's destiny. The legislation resulted from Park Service efforts to establish coherent administrative policies for the newly significant national recreation area category. In post-World War II America, recreation became a valued commodity. Becoming its primary purveyor offered the agency political advantage. The Park Service, always keen to expand its domain and adept at politics, capitalized on the nascent opportunity. After the agency determined that recreation helped it serve a broadening public, it shifted energy once focused on other types of park issues to national recreation areas in general. The oldest and most established of national recreation areas, Lake

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<sup>212</sup> "Statement Explaining Proposed Legislation: S. 1060," L1417, Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, San Bruno, CA (hereafter NARA-SB).

Mead National Recreation Area served as a primary example of transformed agency management. Creating boundaries that gave the agency control signified the Park Service's claim to be the lead agency in recreation. The new emphasis had internal advantages as well. As the agency developed a clear and consistent land policy at Lake Mead, the park found it could address ongoing administrative concerns with greater certainty.

Establishing these distinct physical boundaries remained the primary management issue prior to 1964. Three decades earlier, at the beginning of its relationship with the Bureau of Reclamation, the Park Service served as the junior partner. It lacked administrative authority, and its status compelled it to accept nearly any land offered by its more powerful and influential counterpart. Cooperation was the era's dominant feature, but the circumstances dictated that park and agency officials subsume their goals to those of the Bureau of Reclamation. In this respect, Lake Mead differed from the patterns the Park Service established elsewhere. In most of its units, the agency was the sole authority within park boundaries. It controlled ingress and egress to its park, dictated the limits of behavior by visitors, and made primary resource management decisions. In the 1940s the Park Service became more assertive with the Bureau of Reclamation, seeking to develop a program instead of simply accepting everything its counterpart offered. Without administrative jurisdiction, however, the Park Service lacked the means to compel the Bureau of Reclamation and its other neighbors to recognize the validity of its objectives.

Complicating the scenario even further, the Park Service regarded Lake Mead NRA as an experiment. As late as 1964, agency officials at the national level treated its issues as inconsequential in comparison to national parks such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and even Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Even in the 1950s, as recreation emerged on the Park Service's horizon, Lake Mead NRA did not seem central to agency aspirations. Over time, Lake Mead managers realized that as long as the Park Service's status in the region remained unclear, the agency addressed its obligations at a disadvantage. To avoid interagency conflict and to resolve issues of use and access, the park needed clear, marked, and accepted boundaries.

Following 1936, the Park Service's cooperative management agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation governed boundary issues at Lake Mead. Agency officials moved forward with development programs with an eye to greater autonomy. By the mid-1940s, Park Service officials eagerly anticipated the clarification of their responsibilities at the national recreation area. The agency's politically perceptive Washington office positioned the Park Service to either acquire full responsibility at the park or divest itself of its partial responsibility. In 1945, Ben H. Thompson, chief of the Branch of Lands, dissected the problems that stemmed from the cooperative agreement. He recognized that if the Park Service continued in the existing agreement at Lake Mead, it could do little to improve its position. The Bureau of Reclamation drew Lake Mead's initial boundaries to protect the Boulder Canyon Project, and during the first decade at the recreation area, the bureau's needs remained constant. The situation created a trap for the Park Service, an easy way to continue the status quo without furthering the agency's larger objectives. The Park Service only received land that the Bureau of Reclamation had excised; independently it could not introduce any of its typical strategies to grow its role. The Bureau of Reclamation recognized

the Park Service's predicament and attempted to mollify it. In an effort to maintain the relationship, it often withdrew additional lands at NPS request. Thompson found this model limiting and detrimental. "If the problem is approached from the angle that public lands are to be classified for their dominant value and are to be administered by the agency having the dominant interest, reconsideration of the boundaries becomes important," he insisted.<sup>213</sup>

Thompson's observation suggested more than the typical interagency power play at which the Park Service excelled. He echoed the consensus of park staff, Las Vegas and Boulder City boosters of Lake Mead, and Nevada politicians such as the powerful U.S. Senator Patrick McCarran. All sought new legislation for Lake Mead that defined simultaneously the park's physical boundaries and administrative responsibilities, modifying the relationship between the Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation. The Department of the Interior regarded the Park Service as the agency best equipped to administer the national recreation area, not as the "Cinderella of the Bureau of Reclamation but as the agency having the dominant interest in the Area," in Thompson's words. Until the Park Service received legislative authority over the lands it managed, Lake Mead's ability to serve the public remained secondary to the Bureau of Reclamation's other responsibilities. Single-handedly, Thompson initiated a change in the agency's perspective at Lake Mead. Despite its lack of legal authority, the Park Service began to set its own agenda, a catalytic step that yielded great results over a long period.<sup>214</sup>

The drive for greater administrative control at the national recreation area remained closely linked to the broadening of Park Service responsibilities after World War II. The heady postwar climate increased the Park Service's importance both as a marker of belonging in U.S. society and as a source of public outdoor experience. After the 1951 departure of Director Newton B. Drury, the agency looked to serve a broader public than the traditional agency constituency. With the appointment of Conrad L. Wirth, a landscape architect who entered the Park Service during the New Deal and remained committed to concepts such as parkways and recreation throughout his career, Lake Mead NRA increased in importance. While it lacked the lofty idealism public culture associated with the national parks, Lake Mead provided an outlet for Americans who simply wanted to be outdoors. Americans who were not inclined to embrace culture could belong by enjoying recreation in a national park area. As the agency's focus shifted to meet the demands of a new era, its ability to control its destiny at places such as Lake Mead became crucial to its future.

The construction of Davis Dam represented the first chance to articulate the new changes that Thompson set in motion. A major physical change to the region, the new dam and its reservoir offered real advantages for the Park Service. Not only would the Park Service administer more land, it might attain something closer to autonomy than the agency experienced in the environs of Hoover Dam. The Park Service quickly supported a broadened role at the new dam. More than 75 percent of the land in the Davis Dam addition was already inside the boundaries of the national recreation area. Creating one administrative unit for

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<sup>213</sup> Ben H. Thompson, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Jan. 20, 1945, S3B, 711 T Archiva, ACC #4514, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

both man-made lakes made considerable sense. The new lake also eliminated one major Park Service concern at Lake Mead. Because of different Bureau of Reclamation requirements, the water level of Lake Mohave would fluctuate much less than Lake Mead. This made it easier to maintain stable levels of vegetation along the shoreline, an aesthetic advantage that pleased the public. This also dispensed with many ongoing problems that resulted from changing water levels, such as dock and waterside facilities left dry by the changing levels of water. Less fluctuation also made the new lake more appealing for boating and fishing.<sup>215</sup>

The addition of the lake made considerable fiscal sense. Even though recreation had yet to attain primary status in the Park Service, little opposition to the transfer surfaced. In February 1947, Acting NPS Regional Director E. T. Scoyen added his support, arguing for changes in the interagency agreement that would give the Park Service greater control. In the original 1936 agreement, revenues paid to the park went directly to the Colorado River Dam fund, set up to pay back the cost of the dam. Scoyen proposed that the Park Service receive lease, license, and permit funds from the new area. In May 1947, NPS Director Drury officially requested modification of the original agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation. On July 18, 1947, Drury and Commissioner of Reclamation Mike Straus signed a cooperative agreement adding the Davis Dam addition, approximately 126,730 acres, to the park.<sup>216</sup>

In a complicated way, the Bureau of Reclamation's easy acquiescence revealed how powerful it had become. Once the bureau might have balked at the transfer of recreational facilities associated with a dam, but in 1947, it approached the zenith of its power. Under Straus and his successor, Floyd Dominy, the Bureau of Reclamation became the most powerful, politically sophisticated federal agency outside of the Department of Defense. Building dams throughout the West, it cared little about administering ancillary functions in the aftermath of construction.<sup>217</sup> Its emphasis elsewhere left the Park Service an opening.

The Park Service also used the new climate to address questions involving nearby state and local lands. During the 1930s and World War II, Nevada recognized the primacy of federal spending of all kinds in the state. From Hoover Dam to the Nellis Gunnery Range, federal spending dictated the direction of state employment and revenue. Officials in both Nevada and Clark County recognized Lake Mead's value as a source of federal investment and tourism revenue. Federal management also offered the state a way to dispense with expensive management responsibilities. Between the mid-1930s and mid-1940s, the period of greatest uncertainty about Lake Mead's borders, the Park Service faced numerous requests from the state and Clark County to modify boundaries to include or exclude areas. As was typical at the time, when the Park Service saw local interests pushing for inclusion of features, park

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<sup>215</sup> George F. Bagglely, Memorandum to the Regional Director, Region Three, Jan. 23, 1947, B81, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>216</sup> E. T. Scoyen, Memorandum for the Director, Feb. 3, 1947, B200, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Newton B. Drury, Memorandum for the Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation, May 29, 1947 [repository unknown]; George F. Bagglely, Memorandum for the Director, May 12, 1948, B85, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>217</sup> Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 161-263; Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 1-16.



officials tended to shy away from projects. In January 1939, Nevada offered land to Boulder Dam National Recreation Area, but the Park Service expressed little enthusiasm for the transaction. The proposed addition adjoined the park, but inaccurate or inconclusive surveys worried park officials. Even more, the agency felt that a proposal for a nearby state park, on the boundary of the proposed Davis Dam addition, constituted duplication of NPS efforts and possible diminishment of the Park Service's mission.<sup>218</sup> Agency culture dictated a careful approach when outside interests sought to reshape the features of even a national recreation area. Local governments typically had very different goals than the Park Service, lobbying for boundary modifications that favored tourism and recreational opportunities for southern Nevadans. The Park Service usually was able to stave off efforts to give it lands that would require the agency to expend resources that agency leaders felt were the obligation of state and local governments.

A proposal to add Valley of Fire State Park to the national recreation area after 1945 proved more controversial. Valley of Fire, an area of petroglyphs, mountains, and desert formations about thirty-five miles north of Las Vegas, was exactly the kind of area that always perplexed the Park Service. It offered stunning desert scenery as well as significant examples of rock art, but it had a muted claim to national significance. Theoretically, inclusion in a national recreation area should have posed no intellectual problem, and in May 1945, the Park Service seemed eager to attain separate monument status for the tract. Nevada's strong antifederal tradition posed the greatest obstacle to transfer. The Nevada legislature could not assign state land to the federal government easily, but in June 1947, Superintendent George F. Bagglely announced the Park Service was ready to add Valley of Fire to the national recreation area. A handwritten response on Bagglely's letter showed another perspective. "Why?" wrote Acting Regional Director Milton J. McColm. "If it can't stand on its own feet, we should not take it. Why grab more land we cannot fully justify?"<sup>219</sup>

Questions about proposed expansions such as Valley of Fire reflected a tension between Park Service values and instincts, much exacerbated by the role of national recreation areas within the park system. Lake Mead was immense in size and perennially underfunded, a substantial management challenge on its best days. Adding lands a considerable distance not only from the lake, but from the park's management apparatus as well raised a series of difficult questions. The combination of visitor demands for resources and emphasis on recreational pursuits created pressures on the Park Service to compromise its standards. The addition of land was always an advantage from the agency's perspective, but after the war, management questions loomed progressively larger. The agency had not fully accepted recreation as one of its functions, and with a park that posed problems for the agency's dominant philosophy, the addition of new lands that were hard to construe as nationally significant elicited challenges within the Park Service. Some in the agency questioned whether such additions diluted the stock," in the phrase of the era.

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<sup>218</sup> Frank A. Kittredge, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Jan. 23, 1939, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>219</sup> Robert Rose, Memorandum for the Director, Region Three, May 16, 1945, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; George F. Bagglely, Memorandum for the Director, Region Three, June 17, 1947, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB. Quotation is from handwritten response in margin of this letter.

The Park Service and the new Bureau of Land Management (BLM), formed from the merger of the General Land Office and the U.S. Grazing Service in 1946, met to solve management issues for the newest proposed addition to Lake Mead NRA. Throughout the time when the 1936 agreement governed NPS–Bureau of Reclamation interaction, all major decisions, even those that only concerned recreation, required cooperation. Despite ongoing concern about the addition of Valley of Fire, on March 14, 1950, the Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bureau of Land Management reached a tripartite agreement to administer the Nevada state park. Three months later, the agencies decided that since the Bureau of Reclamation was no longer a party to the Valley of Fire agreement, it no longer needed to participate in the decision-making process.<sup>220</sup> This small step gave the Park Service its first management obligation in the Lake Mead area independent of the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Valley of Fire addition provoked continued controversy within the Park Service. McColm remained the primary opponent. He regarded it as a bad precedent, preferring instead the creation of a separate Valley of Fire Recreation Area, administered jointly with Lake Mead NRA. The agency had offered “only an agreement as to agency function and not one of change of land status,” he observed, and as a result, the addition as proposed did not offer the agency sufficient strategic advantage. Despite McColm’s reservations, the new status of Valley of Fire became official in a 1950 “Memorandum of Agreement Between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management,” with 30,080 acres becoming the Valley of Fire Unit of Lake Mead NRA.<sup>221</sup>

Despite McColm’s objections, response to the new arrangement in the region was generally positive. Nevada state agencies and civic leaders had been strong proponents of the transfer of jurisdiction, and the codification of the area within Lake Mead NRA gave the state another claim on federal resources for park management. Nevada had never shied away from securing federal dollars to fund what were essentially state projects. Postwar southern Nevada still grappled with ways to create an economic future and federal dollars loomed large. Nor did the state have the mechanisms for managing far-flung state parks. Only later in the 1950s, as the state began to assemble the infrastructure to operate its vast expanse, did the transfer come under attack. In March 1954, the newly constituted Nevada State Park Commission questioned the transfer. Bagglely marshaled a strong defense, reporting that the Park Service acted with the support of the local and regional community. He noted that the earlier Nevada State Park Commission had strongly supported the transfer as early as the mid-1930s. The concurrence of state and local government officials suggested that federal administration of former state lands offered an important economic and social advantage as

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<sup>220</sup> Newton B. Drury to Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation, March 14, 1950, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; George Bagglely to Regional Director, Region Three, June 13, 1950, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the U.S. since 1945* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1997), 68-71.

<sup>221</sup> Milton J. McColm to Mr. Patraw, June 22, 1950, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Memorandum of Agreement between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management Relating to the Administration of the “Valley of Fire” Area as Part of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, 1950, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

the Las Vegas area struggled to reshape its attractions.<sup>222</sup>

Between the 1940s and the 1960s, the Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management, and state and local governments engaged in ongoing discussions about Lake Mead NRA's boundaries. Most followed a pattern common with government agencies during the era. Federal departments generally acquired much land during the New Deal and World War II. Communities and even individuals could not generate sufficient revenue from their lands, and transfer to the federal government often resulted not only in lieu payments to local and state government but also in federally funded development. One example was the wartime Basic Magnesium, Inc., facility, a magnesium processing plant that created the material for light alloy airplane wings in what became Henderson, Nevada. During and after the war, federal largesse provided an economic backbone by providing funds for the company.

At Lake Mead NRA, most such discussions involved land that did not fit Park Service plans or for which the agency could not find commercial economic users. In 1949, the Park Service reached an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Land Management that allowed the transfer of acreage between Las Vegas Wash and Boulder City. The park's new boundaries asserted the primacy of its recreational mission, and the transfer did not impede miners and others from proceeding with their activities. Questions of access defined most other interagency boundary issues. In one of many instances, on March 3, 1955, the Park Service asked Bureau of Land Management officials for a right-of-way across BLM land so that the Park Service could build an access road to Echo Bay.<sup>223</sup> Such convoluted interagency land adjustments amounted to an added administrative burden for the Park Service. Expansions, deletions, and modifications worked their way not only through the Park Service bureaucracy, but often through several other federal bureaucracies as well.

By the mid-1950s, the Park Service had begun to escalate the comprehensiveness of its planning process. In March 1954, Director Wirth articulated a more sophisticated agency approach to planning. Boundary studies needed to address all land uses, not just recreation as at Lake Mead NRA. The park's multiuse nature meant that a number of constituencies merited attention as the park planned its expansion. "There may be some question as to just what purpose we should have in mind in attempting to draw the exterior boundaries," the Park Service director pondered, but he believed that the "objective is to delineate an area whose over-all purpose is for recreation, even though there may be other dominant purposes within portions of the area."<sup>224</sup> In the best Park Service tradition, Wirth cautioned Lake Mead administrators not to define their mission too narrowly, urging instead that they leave the door open for later expansion. Boundary recommendations remained a crucial part of any future legislation.

For Lake Mead NRA, Wirth's rejoinder meant reassessment of priorities. By 1954,

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<sup>222</sup> George F. Baggley to L. T. Hoffman, March 5, 1954, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>223</sup> Superintendent George Baggley, Memorandum for the Director, June 10, 1949, B202, Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, CA (hereafter NARA-LN); A. C. Stratton to Morris E. Udall, Oct. 9, 1952, B202, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>224</sup> Conrad Wirth to Regional Director, Region Three, March 19, 1954, L18R, Lake Mead NRA archives.

readjustment of Lake Mead boundaries had taken place, with more than 319 sections deleted from the park and 65 added. Bagglely believed that the additions and deletions were consistent with Park Service policy for national recreation areas. When Lake Mead personnel considered boundaries, they looked at the park through the lens of recreation. In their assessment, other functions paled in significance. The superintendent and park staff had come to think of the park almost solely in recreational terms. They did not recognize the possibility to establish significant wildlife habitats with the boundaries; nor did they see scenic vistas that matched their conceptions of the national park system.<sup>225</sup>

During the 1950s, as efforts to produce legislation that would transfer Lake Mead to the Park Service stepped up, NPS officials and legislative supporters urged resolution of lingering boundary issues. No more opportune time to resolve such questions seemed likely, and boundary resolution became a crucial aspect of the effort to secure autonomy from the Bureau of Reclamation. Most congressional bills included redrawing of park boundaries, most often to simplify administration and to create better access for visitors.

Conflicting public support for additions and withdrawals complicated the process of defining boundaries. Following World War II, the Park Service and every other federal agency began considering public opinion as they went through the decision-making process. Over time, most agencies lost their ability to manage by principle and found that public opinion played an ever-larger role in their decisions. As Lake Mead tried to resolve its boundary issues, it faced growing pressure from a range of nongovernment sources at precisely the time that public opinion loomed as a larger influence on agency policy. Each encounter with the public drew the agency farther from decisions based on its perception of its needs and closer to ones based on the demands of local and regional populations. In this sense, Lake Mead NRA foreshadowed a process already under way, a blurring of the lines between national park and local economic desires.<sup>226</sup>

While support for Lake Mead legislation crested in the surrounding region, significant opposition often centered on administrative jurisdiction of park lands. The counties around the park were typically poor and sparsely populated, with local governments possessing only the most limited opportunity to tax. At the time, federal lands did not pay any taxes into state coffers, an oversight since rectified. From some counties' perspectives, taking land from the tax rolls made the presence of a federal park a net loss. This sentiment was particularly true when visitors, who paid local and state sales taxes, lodging tax, gasoline tax and other taxes, were few in number. As visitation to a park grew, the local objection to untaxed land diminished. At Lake Mead National Recreation Area, the numbers of visitors remained small, and opposition from the counties around the park stiffened. Park expansion cost counties money they could not afford to lose, officials insisted, and they fought expansion. On January 5, 1959, Mohave County, Arizona, supervisors expressed their opposition to Senate Bill 1060 (which proposed giving Lake Mead NRA full status in the

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<sup>225</sup> The Superintendent of Lake Mead to Regional Director, Region Three, Aug. 30, 1954, file L18, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>226</sup> Correspondence from Secretary of the Interior to Senator Murray, Sept. 1, 1959, L1417, "L.M. Legislation," Lake Mead NRA archives; Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?*, 58-63.

Park Service) and added protests against the withdrawal of any more land around Hoover Dam.<sup>227</sup> The Park Service, they thought, should confine recreation to the two reservoirs and the immediate area around them. Envisioning private homes on the lakefront and new commercial opportunities, the supervisors wanted the remainder of the land returned to the public domain and sold by public auction to businesses and individuals. Some legislators even sought to have land opened to homesteading, a decision that in the 1950s required congressional action. The Mohave County supervisors did not yet recognize the economic benefit that accrued from national park areas. They regarded public land as an obstacle to economic growth, not as an asset.<sup>228</sup>

Mohave County's stance revealed how regional support of Park Service policy depended on the agency's commitment to concomitant private development. In the rural West, the federal government was most welcome when it furthered private ends, especially when it promoted private enterprise. In typical fashion, Mohave County supervisors insisted that if the Park Service could not support rapid development, then the agency should hand the land over to those who could. In most national parks, the agency's larger agenda would have overcome such local concerns. The agency upheld the significance and position of national parks and remained sufficiently powerful to quell local resistance. As Lake Mead NRA continued to grope for identity, purpose, and a place in the park system, local boosters had considerably greater influence on policy decisions.

Well aware of the importance of public sentiment, the Park Service took such criticism seriously. The agency modified its position, attempting to sway such groups if the supervisors added "some corrective amendments" to the legislation that would give Lake Mead full status in the national park system. When a *Mohave County Miner* article supported the county supervisors, insisting the legislation raised the danger that the secretary of the interior would enjoy arbitrary administrative power over park boundaries, the Park Service held a number of public forums to explain the ways the legislation restricted the agency's actions.<sup>229</sup> Even after the legislation was passed, the agency still had to persuade local constituencies that failed to recognize how recreation transformed the regional economy. Rather than curtailing opportunities, as the county supervisors expected, the national recreation area eventually provided a range of opportunities for local people.

With the passage of Public Law 88-639 in 1964, the Park Service not only solved its boundary issues and attained autonomy from the Bureau of Reclamation, it also received authority to make land exchanges to acquire inholdings. The ability to trade other federal lands for private holdings within the park simplified acquisition issues and gave the park a new strategy for keeping local constituencies content with its administration. After 1964, boundary issues became less important, greatly reducing the administrative challenges

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<sup>227</sup> Mohave County Board of Supervisors to Roger Ernst, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Jan. 5, 1959, L1417, "L.M. Legislation," Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Jerry B. House, Acting Superintendent, Memorandum Report, Meeting with Mohave County Board of Supervisors, Dec. 7, 1959, L1417, "Lake Mead Bill," Lake Mead NRA archives; *Mohave County Miner*, Dec. 10, 1959.

associated with them.<sup>230</sup>

The 1964 legislation closed an era in Lake Mead's quest for manageable boundaries. Prior to the mid-1960s, the Park Service spent much energy divesting itself of lands not suited to its purposes. After passage of the Lake Mead legislation, park managers devoted much of their time to land acquisition, to rounding out the park boundaries for recreational, resource management, and other purposes. Lake Mead had to acquire so many tracts that park managers devised a system for both the sale and acquisition of lands in and around the park. A real estate officer became an important part of that strategy. In July 1965, Lake Mead Superintendent Charles Richey asked the regional director for permission to fill this position.<sup>231</sup> In 1966, the park received authorization to hire a realty specialist to handle land acquisition.

Hiring a realty specialist served as tacit acknowledgment that Lake Mead NRA was different from other parks. Few large park areas experienced the degree of confusion about boundaries; most such disputes had been resolved early in national park history, when fewer people populated the areas surrounding the national parks and when the economic advantage of such land to private owners was much harder to discern. The manner of Lake Mead National Recreation Area's creation contributed to the complexity, as did the terms of the cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation, but more than any other factor, recreation and the changing nature of American travel dictated the incongruities. A park realty specialist could concentrate on the two-pronged process of disposing of unwanted land and consolidating agency holdings in key areas. The Park Service's history with local landowners throughout the country remained a source of trouble. An organized campaign, led by a designated agency member, had the potential to quiet the fierce controversies that accompanied land acquisition at places as diverse as Shenandoah National Park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and Jackson Hole National Monument. By June 1966, six months after the hiring of its first realty specialist, Lake Mead had identified and contacted almost 90 percent of inholding landowners and begun negotiations on fifteen properties.<sup>232</sup>

With the legislative status of Lake Mead NRA assured, managers turned to devising a clear plan for consolidating park boundaries. The 1964 legislation neither eliminated the problem of unwanted lands within the area nor provided the park with ideal parameters. Into the 1970s, divestiture and acquisition remained a core feature of planning. Lake Mead administrators excised lands that did not fit the mission of the recreation area as they tried to acquire private land near the highest-use areas. A key part of the park's master planning was a series of boundary revisions all designed to "preserve the integrity of the area, prevent adverse development, and insure access by the public," as a 1970 boundary study suggested.

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<sup>230</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1965; Land Acquisition Plan, Lake Mead NRA, April 1980, L1415, "Land Plan," Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>231</sup> Charles A. Richey to Regional Director, Southwest Region, July 6, 1965, B255, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>232</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1966; Robert W. Righter, *Crucible for Conservation: The Creation of Grand Teton National Park* (Niwot, Colo.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982), 103-25; Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

This conceptualization indicated that Lake Mead NRA had evolved from the purely recreational ethos of earlier stages.<sup>233</sup>

Inholdings became a cornerstone of the acquisition program. In 1970, more than 10,157 acres within the park's boundaries remained in private control.<sup>234</sup> Most predated the formation of Lake Mead NRA, or the Park Service had obtained them during the 1930s and early 1940s, when individuals filed private claims, typically for mining, within the park. Inholdings were more common at Lake Mead NRA than at many parks, as a result both of the predominance of mining claims and of the lesser emphasis in the Park Service on acquiring such holdings in a national recreation area. Initially, the agency did not regard inholdings as a significant problem at Lake Mead, for the lesser status of national recreation areas made such a complicated acquisition program a lesser concern.

After World War II, inholdings posed an ever-greater problem throughout the national park system. As more visitors came to the park system, private lands threatened the integrity of many parks. The Park Service had grappled with private ownership as early as the 1920s and some of the most significant national parks contained private lands. Even the oldest and most prized national parks—Yellowstone and Yosemite—grappled with inholdings. Property owners besieged the Grand Canyon and Grand Teton national parks, iconic symbols of what national parks should be, over holdings within their boundaries. Private ownership all too often became a catalyst of inappropriate development and sometimes became a consistent threat to agency values and aesthetics. By the 1950s, the agency had devised a strategy that included persuading owners to accept life tenancy in return for donating their land, exchanging park lands for other federal lands elsewhere, and in rare cases, purchasing lands outright. The Park Service became unrelenting about inholdings, seeing private ownership as an affront to the ideals of national parks. The agency developed a rigidity that won it few friends, especially in the rural West.

As with many aspects of park management in the later twentieth century, Lake Mead NRA became a test case for the Park Service's response. As visitation increased after World War II and some inholders reaped large profits from their location inside a popular national recreation area, the Park Service developed a more aggressive approach to acquisition. Before autonomy at Lake Mead, park officials prepared for eventual acquisition of inholdings. In October 1958, Superintendent Charles Richey devised a plan to acquire all privately owned holdings within the park. During 1964, the Park Service received as much as \$1.2 million to buy the estimated 33,000 acres of private land within Lake Mead NRA.<sup>235</sup> However, the recreation area provided the Park Service with more leeway to experiment with alternative actions, and the agency could introduce ideas and concepts that might raise the hackles of constituencies at the major national parks. Park supporters around the country might be

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<sup>233</sup> Team Captain Terry Savage, "Master Plan Study of Boundary Revisions, etc. Lake Mead National Recreation Area," Dec. 24, 1970, L1417, "Boundary Adjustments," Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>234</sup> *Lake Mead National Recreation Area General Management Plan* (1986), Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>235</sup> Charles A. Richey to Mr. R.V. Perry, Oct. 3, 1958, B254, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 64-69.

apoplectic about an inholding at the Grand Canyon, and landowners there were likely to have close ties to their political representatives. At Lake Mead NRA, the Park Service could operate in relative stealth.

Lake Mead's status as a recreation area dominated by the lake's man-made feature further complicated questions of private development. Many in the Park Service wondered if a fight over the integrity of an artificial reservoir was worth expending the agency's political capital. Especially during Wirth's tenure, some vehemently argued that inholdings in a national recreation area were less worthy of agency attention than at other categories of park areas. Superintendents at Lake Mead National Recreation Area loudly disagreed, but this problem foreshadowed the difficulties of Park Service managers who took charge of urban and greenline parks in the 1970s and 1980s. By 1981, the national park system contained 4,422,000 acres of private lands. Managing the primary example of a modern urban recreation park forced the Lake Mead staff to work out the issue of inholdings in a changing park system several decades ahead of the rest of the agency. The lessons learned at Lake Mead NRA became the basis for later guidelines.<sup>236</sup>

Land acquisition created issues with other government entities as well as with private owners. Between 1959 and 1964, Richey worked to purchase or exchange not only private inholdings, but state-owned lands inside the park as well. Neither Nevada nor Arizona were affluent states and both often sold off excess holdings. Such sales raised cash and dispensed with obligations, a dual advantage for both states. Watching aggressive state action elsewhere, the Park Service feared that the states would lease or sell inholdings without considering the impacts on Lake Mead. The situation seemed urgent, and in January 1965, Richey stepped up his efforts, asking for more emphasis on state-owned lands within the park. "We were concerned that Arizona or Nevada might attempt to lease their state-owned lands in the recreation area on development leases," Richey noted, "and we wanted to avoid all possible involvements which would make later acquisitions of the land extremely difficult." Utah had used the creation of Glen Canyon NRA as a way to derive considerable revenue from otherwise economically worthless lands near the new park. That recreation area created a need for commerce near Lake Powell, created by Glen Canyon Dam, and Utah filled its coffers with the proceeds without regard for Park Service desires. Richey feared a reprise near Lake Mead.<sup>237</sup>

While land acquisitions made sense to the Park Service, agency plans could easily fall by the wayside when powerful political forces followed contrary agendas. In May 1965, congressional protests, especially from Colorado Representative Wayne Aspinall, the powerful king of the "water buffaloes"—the cabal of western legislators known for delivering federal projects to their districts and states—slowed land exchanges. Aspinall's motives as

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<sup>236</sup> Ronald A. Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984), 248-50.

<sup>237</sup> Charles A. Richey to Regional Director, Region Three, May 22, 1959, B254, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; "House Okays Lake Mead's Land Buying," *Las Vegas Sun*, Aug. 4, 1964; Charles A. Richey to Regional Director, Region Three, Jan. 18, 1965, L54, Lake Mead NRA archives; David K. Sproul, "Rainbow Bridge National Monument: Administrative History," draft version (National Park Service, June 2000), 136.



head of the House Appropriations Committee were always part of a larger political game to assure that his western Colorado district received a disproportionate share of congressional largesse. Park staff did not recognize the skilled politician's larger agenda and felt singled out. They thought that Aspinall held up their plans because they lacked financing for needed appraisals.<sup>238</sup>

Nevada and the rest of the western states' long tradition of professing allegiance to individualism contributed to the negative sentiment about land acquisition. Many in the region regarded government as an intruder, even though the West remained the part of the nation most dependent on federal spending. Nevada in particular had been so poor that encouragement of private development had become state folklore, and many responded emotionally instead of rationally when questions about private development's role surfaced in a national recreation area. Lake Mead NRA's history with concessioners also contributed to negative attitudes toward land acquisition for the park. During its early years, the park had a succession of superintendents who enticed reliable vendors by granting wide latitude for private development. Private ownership or leasing arrangements for vacation homes and cabins, both considered appropriate uses at the time, headed the list. Projects such as Lake Mead Homesites, developed in the 1930s to provide private ownership for vacation homes around the lakeshore, were common. Legislation such as the "Act to Provide for the Purchase of Public Lands for Homes and Other Sites," which became law in 1938, aided individuals interested in purchasing land parcels.<sup>239</sup> Most local boosters and regional politicians seemed to agree that the sale or lease of federal lands around Lake Mead was crucial to providing public access and encouraging greater travel to the area.

Since its arrival at Lake Mead, the Park Service expressed concern about the long-term consequences of private development. In May 1939, Newton B. Drury, the president of the Save-the-Redwoods League who later became Park Service director, argued against granting access to lands for a leased lodge or cabin site on national park land. A permit to one group opened the door to every other that sought similar privileges, he thought. Public use, not private prerogative, should be the agency's management goal. "Our experience has been that, when private use of land of an exclusive nature is permitted within a Government reservation, such use tends to open the door to further expansion of private land use which is difficult to restrict," Drury cautioned.<sup>240</sup>

The most ardent preservationist ever to hold the agency director's position when he ascended to the post two years after that statement, Drury saw national parks as a public trust and adamantly opposed privatization in any form. A staunch defender of parkland of any designation, he found leases problematic, for they led to more intensive uses from which lessees developed proprietary feelings about public land. This transformation of lessee

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<sup>238</sup> Charles Richey, Memorandum Report, May 4, 1965, B255, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>239</sup> Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*, 1-15; Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 1-27; Richard G. Lilliard, *Desert Challenge: An Interpretation of Nevada* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 34-79; "An Act to Provide for the Purchase of Public Lands for Homes and Other Sites," June 1, 1938, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>240</sup> Newton Drury, Memorandum for the Acting Director, May 31, 1939, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

sentiment long vexed the Park Service, and Drury did not intend to allow it to fester during his tenure. Lake Mead NRA was more problematic than most parks. Lessees could live in their cabins all year, becoming a de facto permanent population. The rest of the public could easily regard them as receiving preference, especially when the agency sought to limit the number of leases within the park. To Drury, the scenario led to only one conclusion: criticism of the Department of the Interior and the Park Service.<sup>241</sup> He proved clairvoyant at Lake Mead.

Drury's prescient articulation of leasing problems did little to resolve the internal tension in the Park Service about a national recreation area's role. While no one with significant national park experience would have argued for leases in Yellowstone National Park, other nomenclatural designations remained less clearly defined. Nor had the agency become any more clear about its possibilities at Lake Mead NRA. "We want to live with the area for a while, to determine how it should be administered and developed for the maximum public benefit," Lake Mead Superintendent Robert Rose wrote to a potential vacation home investor on August 27, 1945.<sup>242</sup> Rose was cautious in his explanation of the possibility of private land ownership. Even with Drury's adamant stance against it, the politics of western land meant that Rose could not rule out the continued possibility of private leasing of federal lands at Lake Mead.

The questions continued throughout the subsequent decade. Park superintendents faced a difficult task in reconciling evolving perceptions of national recreation areas, precedents for existing inholdings, and changing patterns of use and development demands. Rose's successor as superintendent, Guy Edwards, faced a dramatic increase in questions about specific policies after a 1946 *Arizona Wildlife-Sportsman* magazine article urged Americans to take advantage of 1930s legislation that permitted the leasing of public lands. Park Service policy toward vacation homes remained nebulous throughout the mid-1940s, but resistance to private leases of homesites crumbled as public demand increased. On May 31, 1946, Regional Director Tillotson questioned the Park Service's existing policies about vacation sites within Hoover Dam's administrative boundaries, where the agency administered leasing for the Bureau of Reclamation. He noted that the federal government did not consider the dam a unit of the Park Service and that other recreational areas, including Lake Texoma, Shasta, and Millerton Lake, offered leasing. Tillotson wondered: "Can we consistently defend one policy at one recreational area and an entirely different one at another. ... Are we in business at Boulder Dam for the purpose of preserving the area according to national park standards, or to make it available for recreational use?"<sup>243</sup> Lake Mead's uncertain status within the park system muddled the private land question and contributed to a back-and-forth policy that was confusing not only to the interested public but also to successive generations of park managers. The policy seemed too fluid; no precedent armed the agency with a defense against

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<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>242</sup> Robert Rose to Mr. O. King, Aug. 27, 1945, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>243</sup> Guy D. Edwards, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, May 22, 1946, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; J. W. Faulkner, "Arizona's Shore Line," *Arizona Wildlife-Sportsman* (May 1946); M. R. Tillotson, Memorandum for the Director, May 31, 1946, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

uses it did not want.

Throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s, private development remained a central management concern and observers could only characterize the Park Service's position as inconsistent. In April 1950, Drury backed off after pressure from Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman, with whom he had begun to fight over the Echo Park Dam Project, the great battle over a proposed Colorado River Storage Project dam inside Dinosaur National Monument. Eventually Drury's resistance to Chapman's plans for Echo Park Dam led to his dismissal as director, but in 1950, the battle raged between the two leaders. In the end, Drury grudgingly acquiesced at Lake Mead, allowing the leasing of certain areas as long as "the leasing of vacation cabin sites on recreational lands ... will not interfere with the development of the areas and the facilities for the general public."<sup>244</sup> Following that directive, Tillotson and Bagglely attempted to develop a consistent policy for vacation sites. As part of this effort, Park Service officials met with their Bureau of Reclamation counterparts and developed a policy that would allow for the leasing of home sites. The Bureau of Reclamation had no funds for surveys or studies, compelling the Park Service to finance preparatory work at a time when its resources were already spread thin. Bagglely included three sites within Lake Mead—Boulder Beach, Overton, Temple Bar—and aimed for a fourth in the initial program, possibly an area below Hoover Dam on the new reservoir, Lake Mohave.<sup>245</sup>

Bagglely moved ahead with his plan for the administration of Lake Mead's lease agreements. He favored direct leases, which let individuals build their own home or allowed a contract with a developer who would receive a lease after completing necessary preparatory work. Bagglely expected individuals as well as developers to submit proposals, for their developments would be similar to those of concessioners. By October 22, 1952, the park approved building codes for vacation home sites, modeled on the language used at Lake Texoma National Recreation Area. Under the plan, the terms of leases extended to twenty-five years with a provision for renewal and were limited to individuals and family members. Developers could not lease land; they could only develop land for lessees. The lease cost \$35 a year. Regulations prohibited leases within 300 feet of the reservoir's high-water mark, effectively eliminating lakeside homes, since the Park Service considered lake frontage as too valuable as public recreation and too vulnerable to fluctuation in lake levels for private use.<sup>246</sup>

Growing national interest in recreation contributed to widespread land speculation in Lake Mead NRA. By the mid-1950s, speculation was rife. Superintendent Charles Richey argued that the "private land situation is getting entirely out of hand."<sup>247</sup> The prospect of vacationland made urban dwellers giddy, and unscrupulous owners sold desert land as if it were

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<sup>244</sup> Newton Drury to Regional Director, Region Three, April 12, 1950, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>245</sup> George Bagglely, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, May 4, 1950, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*; "Proposed Operating Procedures for Handling Homesite Leases and Management of Homesite Units in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area," Dec. 11, 1952, B93, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>247</sup> Charles Richey to Mr. Miller, Feb. 16, 1959, L1415, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

the swamplands of 1920s south Florida. Companies advertised and sold ordinary desert land, twenty or thirty miles from Lake Mead, as prime lakeshore real estate. The concept that land once considered totally worthless had climbed in value from \$1.50 an acre to more than \$100 an acre shocked Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation officials. More than 3,000 people bought land under these false pretenses. Most thought that they purchased land with utilities and other services near the water when the land they bought was completely undeveloped land and a considerable distance from any shoreline.

One development, Lake Mohave Ranchos, became emblematic of the era's land swindles. The company became a problem for Lake Mead's managers in 1959 when it announced its plans to develop a large housing tract on the west side of Lake Mohave, across the lake from Cottonwood Cove. The development company owned 36,000 acres adjacent to park boundaries, held options on 85,000 more, and it sought even more land. Faced with the prospect of a city on park boundaries, Superintendent Charles Richey worked quickly to mitigate the impact of the developer's plans. With help from the Bureau of Land Management, he blocked land exchanges between the company and the government and persuaded the state and private owners not to sell or exchange their land.<sup>248</sup>

To attain their goals, the developers needed cooperation from Lake Mead. They worked at a relationship with the Park Service, seeking to mute agency opposition. On June 11, 1959, company officials paid a courtesy call on Richey. The company had already sold 2,700 of its 10,000 lots. The developers had completed one house, had two more under construction, and expected completion of another twenty by the end of the summer. The company claimed to have constructed 120 miles of road and sought to persuade the Park Service to build a boat landing at Cottonwood Cove for use of its residents. The dock, they believed, would make their lots more desirable.<sup>249</sup>

Richey resisted their entreaties and continued to sound the alarm within the agency. In 1960, he expressed concern about the fast pace of development at Cottonwood Landing, the name the company gave to the project across from Cottonwood Cove. People from around the nation inundated Richey and Regional Director Thomas J. Allen with requests for information about the property and its relationship to Lake Mead NRA. For snowbound Americans, the Lake Mohave Ranchos advertisements claiming that even those of modest means could "enjoy the freedom of Outdoor Living" in the desert were very seductive.<sup>250</sup> The goals of the Park Service and those of the private sector ran hard against one another.

Lake Mohave Ranchos was not the only major development in the vicinity during this time. The Golden Valley Land Company also brought national attention to Lake Mead. On May 22, 1959, developers advertised in *Look* magazine and received considerable interest from buyers in eastern states. The Golden Valley Land Company had no comprehensive plan to support its advertising campaign and the park closely monitored its activities. The consequences of land deals such as those offered by the Mohave Ranchos and the Golden

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<sup>248</sup> Charles Richey to Mr. Miller, Feb. 16, 1959, B255, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>249</sup> Jerry House to The Superintendent, June 11, 1959, B255, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>250</sup> Regional Director, Region Three, to Mrs. S. H. Huntington, March 3, 1961, B254, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Lake Mohave Ranchos advertisement, "Mohave," L1425, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

Valley Land Company led even the prodevelopment Mohave County Commission to express concern about the impact of fraud on legitimate development. Lake Mead National Recreation Area continued its efforts to reign in developers. After reading these companies' claims, Richey sought the U.S. Post Office's opinion about the legality of the advertisements. Although agents of the postal service investigated and found the developer's actions to be fraudulent, regulations required them to wait for consumers to file formal complaints before initiating prosecution. When the inevitable complaints followed, a federal case against the Mohave Ranchos representatives resulted. On March 15, 1963, a court convicted three Lake Mohave Ranchos officers of mail fraud.<sup>251</sup>

In the face of rampant land speculation and chaotic vacation home development, Lake Mead officials felt the public viewed the park with as much suspicion as it did developers. Officials sought to upgrade facilities as a counter to developers' promises. Even after five years of MISSION 66 funding, the poor condition of recreation facilities inside Lake Mead's boundaries embarrassed the agency. Poor access to lots and inadequate access roads remained a major problem. Lot owners demanded boat-launching ramps to service cabin areas, confusing the Park Service's and the concessioner's obligations, and a wide constituency remained unhappy with the concessioner's launching ramps. In addition, law enforcement had become an emerging problem. As visitation grew and residents became more numerous, rangers dealt with the increasing incidence of break-ins, vandalism, and petty crime in remote areas. All of these issues highlighted the ongoing problem of a lack of planning in development. Lake Mead National Recreation Area remained simultaneously a day-use area and a destination resort, forcing the agency to manage two separate and often contradictory populations with different demands. By the mid-1960s, the agency had not implemented guidelines for the architectural style of cabins or other basic community planning elements, such as access, sewage, and crime prevention. Many Park Service cabins and camping structures had not been designed for the desert environment of southern Nevada and required constant maintenance.

All these problems added up to a significant management responsibility that required considerable investment of agency labor. At Lake Mead, staff personnel spent their time on leases, terminations, billings, and problem management associated with the cabin sites, drawing them away from more conventional park management obligations. Understaffed as always, Lake Mead National Recreation Area struggled to meet park goals and continue its real estate leasing program. The burden led personnel to question the decision to open the area to private leasing. Lake Mead's managers felt that even though they counted millions of visitors annually, they spent much of their time running a resort community for the few.<sup>252</sup> The presence of unscrupulous speculators added to managers' concern. They looked at their own land management policies to find strategies to better service landholders and protect the park.

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<sup>251</sup> Charles Richey to Regional Director, Region Three, May 22, 1959; Charles Richey to Mr. Hal Hardy, U. S. Postal Inspector, July 28, 1959, B255, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; "Grand Jury Indicts 3 Men On Lake Mead Mail Fraud," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, March 15, 1963.

<sup>252</sup> Charles Richey, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Southwest Region, March 6, 1964, B271, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

Commercial development on park boundaries posed another set of problems. The Gold Strike Inn, a massive development planned for a twenty-acre parcel of Sullivan Mining Claims property along the approach to Lake Mead National Recreation Area on Nevada Highway 466, generated unique difficulties. As was common with many of the proposed developments, the owners offered to sell the parcel to the Park Service for three to four times its appraised value. As often occurred, managers could not determine whether the development proposal was genuine or whether it was simply a ruse to elevate the price of land at the entrance to the park. With the Gold Strike Inn, regulations hamstrung the Park Service. Federal agencies were typically limited to the appraised value of land when they bought from private parties. Although the development obtained a gaming license, guaranteeing incompatibility with the Park Service definition of park uses, Congress failed to recognize the threat and did not allocate funds to complete the purchase. The Gold Strike Inn became a feature of the road leading from Lake Mead into Las Vegas, a fixture in local consciousness and an emblem of the competing versions of recreation that made the Silver State different. The property remained open for forty years, until the casino burned in a June 1998 fire. Partners of Mandalay Bay Resorts later acquired the land. When the casino reopened late in 1999, its operators renamed it the Hacienda, after the hotel that the company had torn down to make way for the enormous Mandalay Bay resort in Las Vegas.<sup>253</sup>

After 1970, the agency aggressively sought to curtail private development within Lake Mead's boundaries. The master plan released that year contained provisions specifically aimed at reorganizing boundaries to prevent private entities from usurping public prerogative. The Park Service committed itself to assuring an adequate land base for efficient administration of the recreation area. It sought to retain the waterfront for public use and to prevent adverse impacts such as pollution, sewage disposal, and additional unsightly utility corridors.<sup>254</sup> Acquisition became a strategy in support of those agency goals, and by the 1970s, Lake Mead's managers used land purchases and disposals to help shape a park with boundaries that reflected the evolution of management philosophy.

In July 1974, Superintendent William Briggles intensified efforts to buy out inholdings in an effort to preserve Lake Mead's future integrity. Park Service Director Ronald H. Walker proposed increased funding for land acquisition at Lake Mead NRA. Walker had run Richard Nixon's 1972 reelection campaign, and the president rewarded him with appointment to the NPS directorship, the office's first blatant politicization. Walker had little park experience and he seized on the situation as a way of demonstrating to the Park Service that he appreciated the concerns of longtime staff members. During the early 1970s, several proposed commercial developments showed the potential to do great damage to the integrity of Lake Mead. Developers located one such plan for development of residential units at Meadview on the rim of the lower part of the Grand Canyon, in full view of anyone

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<sup>253</sup> Charles Richey to The Director, April 5, 1963, L1417 "Lake Mead Bill," Lake Mead NRA archives; To: The Director, From: Superintendent, Lake Mead, April 5, 1963, Lake Mead NRA archives, L1417; Robert Macy, "Gold Strike Inn Destroyed by Predawn Blaze," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, June 16, 1998; Dave Berns, "Gaming Chips: Hacienda Owner Bafflingly Mum About Retooled Property," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Nov. 15, 1999.

<sup>254</sup> *Lake Mead National Recreation Area Master Plan* (1970), Lake Mead NRA archives.

on the Colorado River. This, the Park Service insisted, “detracted from the aesthetic enjoyment of the scene.” Such subdivisions might block public access to the lake and threaten places such as Cottonwood Cove and Katherine's Landing along Lake Mohave. Acquiring inholdings took on urgency in response to the acceleration of development. Walker increased Lake Mead's land-acquisition funding to \$7 million, a substantial increase from the \$1.2 million allotted in the park's previous legislation.<sup>255</sup> The accompanying legislation targeted 5,081.2 acres of inholdings, which left 10,464.91 acres inside the park in private hands.

Growing pressure from developers led to increased interest in Lake Mead's master planning process during the 1970s. Development, inholdings, exchanges, leases, and questions of access and infrastructure demanded an organized response from the Park Service. Too often, the agency found itself responding on a case-by-case basis, a typical predicament in fast-growing regions but one that put park values at risk. The Park Service solution had always been better planning, and the agency embarked on a program that culminated with Lake Mead's 1970 master plan. During the 1970s, the Park Service professionalized many of its procedures, in no small part as a response to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other federal statutes. The agency also began to manage in a proactive fashion, to plan its responses in advance of the actual issue. Proactive management resulted from both statutory obligation such as NEPA and the trend toward better planning in U.S. businesses.<sup>256</sup>

Between 1974 and 1979, the tension over inholdings and development increased. An extensive review of Lake Mead's inholdings took place, followed by several major proposals for land acquisition planning. The 1980 *Land Acquisition Plan* was the culmination of a newly energized planning process. Federal stature pushed the agency to plan in new ways, allowing it to craft a comprehensive strategy for park management. The land acquisition plan became the first step in implementing such a policy. Aimed at both Park Service personnel and the public, it explained the terms of policy in a clear fashion, delineated expectations, and illustrated the agency's new stance. At Lake Mead, the Park Service was committed to eliminating inholdings by any available means. The park could receive lands by purchase, exchange, or donation. In the boldest articulation of its new position yet, if a landowner refused to cooperate, the Park Service reserved the right to pursue condemnation under eminent domain statutes.<sup>257</sup>

By the 1970s, the last vestiges of Lake Mead NRA's status as a remote area disappeared when growth in greater Las Vegas reached toward the park. As development in southern Nevada gained momentum, the park faced an increasingly complicated regional environment. People streamed to Las Vegas at a stunning rate after 1945. From 127,000 in 1950, the city grew to almost 400,000 by the late 1970s. Housing subdivisions sprouted, first west of I-15, then as Herman “Hank” Greenspun's development, Green Valley, began in the late 1970s, toward Henderson and Lake Mead. Because Las Vegas was an idiosyncratic

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<sup>255</sup> Memorandum Director, National Park Service to Legislative Counsel, July 8, 1974, L1425, “Holdings (Other than Federal),” Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>256</sup> Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?*, 58-63.

<sup>257</sup> United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service Lake Mead National Recreation Area, *Land Acquisition Plan* (Oct. 15, 1979), Lake Mead NRA archives.

community that primarily catered to tourists and whose residents were peculiarly avid in their search for amenities, master-planned communities became a common feature in the Las Vegas Valley. So did resorts that aimed at both wealthy Las Vegans and affluent tourists.<sup>258</sup>

One of the choice tracts belonged to J. Carlton Adair, an actor, hotel owner, and Las Vegas area developer who controlled substantial holdings in and around Lake Mead and along the Las Vegas Wash. Dealing with Adair often put the Park Service in the position of solving a short-term problem by creating a new long-term issue with negative implications. In July 1966, Adair, acting as president of his Port Holiday Authority, relinquished 160 acres of prime land inside the recreation area in exchange for 2,175 federal acres, mostly outside park boundaries. As an articulation of policy, the exchange was a wise move. It helped resolve inholdings within Lake Mead and removed potential commercial development from the lakeshore. At the same time, it gave a developer control of valuable land outside park boundaries that he could develop without any input from the Park Service.<sup>259</sup> In the short term, the exchange was a success; over time, the exchange's impact opened a Pandora's box that had far-reaching implications for the lands just beyond park boundaries.

Adair's dreams of development far exceeded that of any prior efforts near Lake Mead. He planned "a \$320 million city," covering 320 acres, a new artificial lake with thirteen miles of shoreline, and a 165-foot-high tower to supply the water needed by his community. An air-conditioned shopping mall, major resort hotels, a country club with an eighteen-hole golf course and boat club, water skiing, fishing, horseback riding, tennis, floating homes, and a zoo were all part of Adair's conception. If completed as proposed, Lake Adair would be home to 34,652 people living in apartments, mobile homes, single-family homes, townhouses, and hotels.<sup>260</sup>

Adair's proposals were grandiose even for a development on the outskirts of 1960s Las Vegas. The closest sizeable community, Henderson, remained a blue-collar industrial town, and gaming rather than conventional resort-style recreation made Las Vegas attractive. The desert city of Las Vegas did not offer many upscale attractions. The city opened its first shopping center, the Boulevard Mall, in 1967, its university remained a subsidiary of the University of Nevada, Reno, until 1968, and it lacked a white-collar professional class. Nor did greater Las Vegas attract retirees in significant numbers during the 1960s. As a result, the market Adair envisioned did not yet exist, and his development went bankrupt. One of his successors followed him into bankruptcy as well, and only after Transcontinental Properties bought the development in 1990 did the proposed project transform into a high-end resort community, Lake Las Vegas.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 269-322; M. Gottdiener, Claudia Collins, and David Dickens, *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City* (New York: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 323-47.

<sup>259</sup> Lake Adair/Port Holiday/Pacific Malibu/Lake at Las Vegas, "Geology – Land Boundaries," Park Ranger files, Lake Mead NRA archives; Alan O'Neill, interview by Hal Rothman, Jan. 12, 2002 [repository unknown].

<sup>260</sup> Lake Adair/Port Holiday/Pacific Malibu/Lake at Las Vegas, "Geology – Land Boundaries."

<sup>261</sup> Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-1970* (Reno: University of Nevada



Despite master planning efforts, boundary disputes and land issues continued to be a problem throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s. In one instance, on May 8, 1975, park managers campaigned to resolve a host of land and boundary issues. Lake Mead NRA sought permission to institute condemnation hearings to acquire .43 acres of Mohave County land within the Desert Rose subdivision. After the failure to purchase property for the park's estimate of fair value, the legal acquisition of the Desert Rose land was just one of many in an attempt to complete major boundary adjustments. The use of eminent domain, always controversial, was even more so in rural Arizona and Nevada.<sup>262</sup> To many individuals it presented the specter of a powerful federal government confiscating private property.

Railroad lands became a key part of the 1975 boundary readjustment planning. In September 1975, Lake Mead administrators sought to condemn lands held by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway's land company. The railroad's vast holdings were dispersed across the West and were complicated for government agencies to assess. The company acquired most of the lands in the nineteenth century, when it was building the railroad line. State and federal governments granted railroad companies alternating square miles of land to provide financing for track construction. The railroads could sell, keep, and develop the lands, or do as they pleased with them. The Santa Fe's holding included 71,826 acres inside what would become Lake Mead and the Grand Canyon. In November 1975, the Park Service attempted to acquire the mineral rights of the land company of Santa Fe Railway that remained within the recreation area; the Park Service had already received the surface rights to these tracts. To facilitate a quick resolution, the regional office sought condemnation of all railroad lands in Lake Mead. Despite repeated efforts to speed up the transaction, negotiations with Santa Fe company officials and lawyers dragged on for several years. The railroad declined to discuss purchase price of the contested lands that the Park Service considered "worthless." At one point the Park Service offered the railroad \$1,000 as "just compensation," but the railroad refused the offer. Without the ability to offer a sizable sum and knowing the railroad would not decide to give the land to the government, the agency had only the power of eminent domain to achieve its ends. By 1980, these tracts were involved in litigation, as part of program park officials described as "modest."<sup>263</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, Lake Mead managers continued their attempts to resolve boundary and land issues. The 1970 master plan had concluded that Lake Mead NRA needed

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Press, 1989), 235-39; Peter Wiley and Robert Gottlieb, *Empires in the Sun: The Rise of the New American West* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 191-216; Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 287-327; Monica Caruso, "Lake Las Vegas Resort Could be the First of Many," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, May 11, 1998.

<sup>262</sup> Joe Brown to Solicitor, May 8, 1975, L1425, "Holdings (Other than Federal), 1975," Lake Mead NRA archives; James P. Fleetwood, Memorandum, Proposed Land Acquisition and Boundary Change, L1425, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>263</sup> Lyle H. McDowell to Associate Director, Park System Management, Sept. 2, 1975, L1425, Lake Mead NRA archives; Howard Chapman to Superintendent, Lake Mead, Nov. 26, 1975, L1425, Lake Mead NRA archives; John Davis, Memorandum, Waiver of Outstanding Reserved Mineral and Railroad Construction Rights, Nov. 2, 1979, L1425, Lake Mead NRA archives; Land Acquisition Plan, Lake Mead NRA, April 1980, L1415, "Advanced Planning," Lake Mead NRA archives; Lands Inventory (in-house draft), Lake Mead NRA, June 1982, L1415, "Land Acquisition Planning 1982-83," Lake Mead NRA archives.

to rid itself of excess and contested boundary lands. On September 9, 1975, Superintendent William Briggie issued his overall report on the boundary revision and land acquisition program. The report addressed Hualapai Wash, Katherine Landing–Bullhead City, Overton Arm, and Teddy Bear Cholla Forest. Briggie concluded that deleting parts of Lake Mead for the enlargement of the Grand Canyon would be advantageous for the recreation area. The eastern edge of Lake Mead NRA abutted Grand Canyon National Park, and the terrain was similar. The land would remain under NPS jurisdiction, while allowing Lake Mead NRA to acquire additional property and remain below the statutory size limit included in the 1964 reestablishment legislation. By the early 1980s, the Park Service had largely accomplished such goals, excepting only the number of claims in litigation.<sup>264</sup>

During 1975, the Park Service pushed hard for resolution of a long list of land conflicts. Lake Mead managers pursued a number of contested properties within the park but encountered strong public resistance. At Katherine Mine, the Park Service attempted to condemn a parcel of land, but exact ownership of the deed was uncertain and the presumed owners resorted to legal maneuvers to block the sale. In this case, the present owners claimed the water system on the property was supplying the residences at Katherine Resort, a contention supported by the Arizona Corporation Commission. After a bankruptcy judgment against the owner in 1965, the government voided the claim. A decade later, lawyers argued that the law protected the “water company” as a utility and that the company could claim prior property improvements as their own, allowing them to develop the property. The Park Service successfully demonstrated that the contested water system was not the company’s work, depriving them of the presumption of privilege in utility law. After much legal maneuvering, the Park Service backed down and allowed the owners to retain control of the property, deciding that the value of acquiring the water utility was not worth the bad feelings such an acquisition would surely create.<sup>265</sup> The Park Service recognized that it was likely to prevail in court, but with assurances from the utility owners that they would maintain the property, the park gave up its claim. Dealings with inholders, especially corporations that held mineral or utility rights in addition to land ownership, forced the agency into unusual circumstances. Simple exchanges, purchases, or condemnations were rare during the contentious 1970s. The seemingly simple goal of consolidating key holdings while removing undesirable lands proved much more complex than the 1970 *Master Plan* indicated.

The Park Service also worked with other federal agencies to add and delete sections of the park. On January 3, 1975, sponsors introduced Senate Bill 1296. It later became law as the Grand Canyon National Park Enlargement Act, which consolidated into the park the former Grand Canyon and Marble Canyon national monuments, portions of the Kaibab National Forest, and the portion of Lake Mead NRA that remained on the Shivwits Plateau, including the area around Snap Point. In October 1975, Lake Mead managers sought to acquire Bureau of Land Management lands containing large portions of Teddy Bear Cholla

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<sup>264</sup> William Briggie to Regional Director, Region Three, Sept. 9, 1975, L1425, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>265</sup> Walter Williams, Realty Specialist to Chief, Division of Land Acquisition, Western Region, Oct. 2, 1975, L1425, Lake Mead archives; Walter Williams, Realty Specialist to Chief, Division of Land Acquisition, Western Region, Sept. 19, 1975, L1425, Lake Mead NRA archives.

Forest.<sup>266</sup>

Also significant during this benchmark year, Park Service officials at Lake Mead made headway in their efforts to exchange parklands for other property owned by Arizona. On November 13, 1975, the Park Service considered an Arizona proposal to exchange all Arizona state land within national parks for other federal lands, including acreage at Katherine Landing and Temple Bar. For the Park Service, Arizona's cooperation was novel. The offer was the state's first attempt to try to create logical jurisdiction with federal agencies. Previous attempts with Arizona met with limited success. "We are very encouraged by the State's proposal," Regional Director Joseph C. Rumburg announced. "Every effort should be made to take advantage of their offer."<sup>267</sup>

Park Service officials were excited about the prospects of a major land exchange with Arizona, until Superintendent Briggie warned the Regional Office that the exchange might not solve all its issues. Lake Mead had recently acquired the Desert Rose subdivision and Meadview subdivision lands to protect threats of visual intrusions if owners had developed them, he cautioned, and it faced a similar threat at Temple Bar if the park included those lands in an exchange program with Arizona. Lake Mead officials eventually rejected the proposed land exchange with the state because they felt that it could mean that the state could sell areas "too open and visible to the Lake to permit their development," to private developers in the future. The Washington, D.C., office of the Park Service affirmed the park's decision. In the end, there were no major land exchanges between Arizona and the Park Service.<sup>268</sup>

In other circumstances, land exchanges with Arizona became possible. Many of the Park Service's boundary modification goals in the 1980s and 1990s involved state land, and Arizona figured prominently in the negotiations. With a number of parks, the state always had a way to bring the Park Service and other federal agencies to the negotiating table. On March 20, 1985, the Park Service, the Arizona State Land Department, and the Arizona office of the Bureau of Land Management met in Phoenix, Arizona, to discuss a possible exchange of parkland for lands of equal value owned by the state. The Arizona land consisted of inholdings within several national park areas in Arizona, including Lake Mead NRA. The Park Service pursued the exchanges with Arizona in an effort to eliminate State Trust Lands located within national park areas in Arizona.<sup>269</sup>

By the early 1980s, an exchange for the state lands seemed imminent, but an outside obstacle remained. The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) held an injunction that was in effect against all Interior Department agencies whose lands were under withdrawal. In 1981,

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<sup>266</sup> William Briggie to Mr. John Boyles, Oct. 17, 1975, L1525, Lake Mead NRA archives; Public Law 93-620.

<sup>267</sup> Acting Regional Director, Region Three to Lake Mead Superintendent, Nov. 13, 1975, L1425, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>268</sup> William Briggie to Regional Director, Region Three, Nov. 24, 1975, L1425, Lake Mead NRA archives; Howard Chapman to Mr. Andrew L. Bettwy, Dec. 15, 1975, L1425, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>269</sup> Sally K. Fairfax and Jon Souder, *State Trust Lands: History, Management, and Sustainable Use* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 188-216.

this included a portion of the Lake Mead NRA. The federal parties could not complete the exchange with Arizona until the government resolved the ongoing litigation with the NWF.<sup>270</sup> In January 1989, a court order lifted the injunction. A decision by the Arizona Supreme Court in June 1988 ruled that the state could only dispose of the trust lands by public auction. Arizona put the issue on a ballot in the 1990 elections and voters rejected it, again delaying the exchange with the Park Service. Agency officials believed that the next general elections in Arizona would include a proposal to authorize exchange of state lands, but no referendum on the question followed.<sup>271</sup> The Arizona State Trust Lands exchange situation remained an open question as late as January 1999.<sup>272</sup>

By the 1990s, Lake Mead NRA had attained control of its boundaries and was well into the excruciating process of securing every inholding, lease, and right-of-way. All who addressed the question recognized that boundaries and related land issues were endemic at Lake Mead NRA, and there were so many different issues that complete and permanent resolution was impossible. The park expected to fight an ongoing series of skirmishes, always gaining, but clearly it faced a problem of mythical dimensions. It would not be hard for land managers to liken their task to that of Sisyphus, ever destined to push a rock up a hill, never to reach the top.

The boundary situation at Lake Mead NRA after 1964 reflected two sets of agency issues. Parks created after the first two decades of the twentieth century very often faced enormous boundary resolution problems. Prior uses of the land intruded on later park uses, a reality that became a daily issue as the Park Service established units such as Golden Gate NRA and Guadalupe Mountains National Park in the late 1960s and 1970s. The agency constructed both units from existing lands with other uses, leaving the agency to face new relationships fraught with ongoing problems, a situation with which Lake Mead's staff was intimately familiar. The experiences at Lake Mead National Recreation Area were crucial as the agency found itself with more parks with a wide array of landowners and stakeholders within and around their boundaries.

At Lake Mead NRA, the changing perception of the park's meaning exacerbated that circumstance. The Park Service contributed to the situation with easy acquisition terms for long-term vacation cabin leases as late as the 1950s, effectively tying the hands of future managers. While the agency lacked the resources and the political influence to succeed in thwarting Lake Las Vegas or even the Gold Strike Inn, prescient management a few decades sooner might have eliminated an entire array of management headaches. Until the Park Service managed national recreation areas as other parks in the system, an idea that did not become policy until the 1970s and took even longer to translate into practice, staff at Lake

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<sup>270</sup> Department of the Interior, National Park Service Western Region, "103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statements," Lake Mead National Recreation Area Land Exchanges with Arizona, January 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>271</sup> Department of the Interior, National Park Service Western Region, "103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statements," Lake Mead National Recreation Area Land Exchanges with Arizona, January 1992.

<sup>272</sup> Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Briefing Paper: Arizona State Trust Lands Exchange, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

Mead NRA found their best professional instincts held captive to a set of standards that stemmed from earlier in the park's—and the agency's—history. Park staff could be forgiven any sense that the task of constructing the national recreation area's boundaries was eternal.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The National Park Service's primary obligation is resource management, a mandate derived from the organic legislation that founded the agency and from Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane's 1918 letter that remains the basis of park management.<sup>273</sup> From the agency's inception, park managers administered natural and cultural resources, codifying the activities in the term "resource management" after 1970. In the large natural parks, this activity generally meant protecting features from overuse and the degradation that often followed. In historical settings, it emphasized preserving the past's physical and natural fabric. These obligations were clear and forthright, defined by the agency's overall mission and the organic legislation of each individual unit. In 1936, when NPS began managing the area that became Lake Mead National Recreation Area, this new park had no place in the clear-cut thinking of the early Park Service. In 1918, when the agency shaped its policy, the world easily divided into sacred (natural and historical) and profane (ordinary) space. National recreation areas were neither and both. The Park Service did not conceive of recreation as one of its obligations. As a result, when the agency established national recreation areas, sentiment for resource management of any type within their boundaries was substantially weaker than the prevailing standard at other park categories.

National recreation areas also offered another complication to the organic philosophy of national parks. As was the case at Lake Mead National Recreation Area, many national recreation areas were not natural at all, but artificial reservoirs that changed the environment around them and often inundated important cultural resources beneath their waters. Archaeological salvage projects at both Lake Mead and Lake Powell, to the east along the Arizona-Utah border, were enormous undertakings that provided substantial information about the prehistoric past before rising water permanently covered archaeological sites. Even with their appealing vistas, such parks were not "nature" by the agency's definition.<sup>274</sup> The process that filled the deep canyons that flanked the Colorado River with the water stored behind Hoover Dam inexorably transformed the surrounding region. As a result, when the agency embraced the 1963 Leopold Report with its vision of national parks as vignettes of primitive America, national recreation areas became not only unusual but paradoxical as well.

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<sup>273</sup> Robert Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 111-13; Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature In the National Parks* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 56-57, 89-90; Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 105-8; Horace M. Albright and Marian Albright Schenk, *Creating the National Park Service: The Missing Years* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 274-85.

<sup>274</sup> William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1 (January 1996), 1-29, provides the best example of making the idea of nature problematic.

Neither natural nor inherently cultural, such areas needed definitions before the Park Service could manage them.

That definition process posed problems for the Park Service, especially during the environmental revolution that took place in U.S. society during the 1960s. For a range of reasons, “natural” came to mean authentic in a culture that feared its imminent plasticity. Faux nature, created by human endeavor, seemed an inadequate substitute no matter how beautiful a scene it created. Lake Mead was stunning; its blue waters flowing against the brown of the filled canyons surrounding it made for a powerful contrast, but 1960s environmentalists disparaged its man-made origins. The result created a dilemma for the Park Service, one that pitted its instincts and principles against ongoing service to the mainstream constituency that provided it with cachet and the votes in Congress to sustain its budget.

Because of both its human construction and the nebulous position national recreation areas long held in the national park system, resource management at Lake Mead NRA became a complex activity that often uncomfortably juxtaposed different objectives. The remarkable number of visitors and the natural and cultural resource obligations at Lake Mead NRA revealed one of the major difficulties inherent in the bifurcated “preserve for the future” and “make available for present use” missions of the Park Service. Governed by a complex array of federal statutes that made ever-more demands on park staff, Lake Mead NRA consistently sought to reconcile conflicting dimensions of its mission with its statutory obligations.

At its 1916 founding, the Park Service regarded its mission as the management and promotion of the large national parks, a position that necessitated an embryonic form of what later became called resource management. Although later generations often looked back in wonder at decisions made during the first two decades of agency history, early park managers treated natural resources with a care and concern born out of the knowledge of their day. The agency developed a basis for managing natural resources, especially after the efforts of George M. Wright, who established a wildlife survey program with his own money. He became the primary champion of wildlife management before his 1936 death in an automobile accident outside Deming, New Mexico.<sup>275</sup>

In the 1930s, the Park Service added significant historic resources to its responsibilities. The reorganization of the federal government in 1933 moved Civil War, Revolutionary War, and other national battle sites to the agency and the Park Service found itself with responsibility for many of the most important icons of U.S. history. Director Horace M. Albright had been planning for this eventuality for almost a decade, and he and his successors pounced on the opportunity to present Gettysburg, Shiloh, Yorktown, and other places that resonated in the nation’s memory. Besides the obvious advantages, historical sites granted the Park Service national reach. Although the agency acquired a number of national parks in the East in the 1920s, historic sites gave the agency an entirely new sphere that its primary competitor, the Forest Service, could not match. By the end of the 1930s and especially after the development of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, a primary marker of U.S. history, the Park Service managed a broad array of what would

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<sup>275</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 113-15, 127-31; R. Gerald Wright, *Wildlife Research and Management in the National Parks* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 15-22.



become cultural resources.<sup>276</sup>

After 1945, Park Service management of historic, cultural, and natural resources became specialized. Scientific principles became the basis for natural resource management decisions as the agency capitalized on the availability of newly minted college graduates to professionalize its staff, and scientists became increasingly significant to the agency and its direction. The Leopold Report of 1963 solidified the position of scientific management in the agency, giving the discipline of ecology a much greater position in policy. At the same time, urban renewal led to efforts to preserve the past, and legislation that required protective action of historic resources followed. Historians, archaeologists, and others who specialized in cultural resources found greater opportunity within their areas of expertise. By the mid-1960s, the Park Service committed itself to professional management of natural and cultural resources.<sup>277</sup>

The high point in resource management development came in the 1960s and 1970s, as the Leopold Report reoriented Park Service priorities, and the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1970 compelled specific agency actions. After NEPA's enactment, the Park Service shared statutory obligations with every other federal agency. During the window in time initiated by passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 and brought to a close with the reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act in 1978, U.S. society determined to save parts of its natural resources for all time. This era of affluence and possibility influenced the Park Service in dramatic ways. It combined with the agency's professionalization to create an emphasis on resource management that made it the primary focus at many parks.<sup>278</sup>

After 1970, the Park Service subjected cultural resource management to a specific set of dictates, most of which derived from the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, amended in 1974 and 1980. The demands of this set of laws and regulations, different from NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, and other legal mechanisms that governed natural resources management, created a parallel structure that mandated two essentially separate administrative structures for the different types of resources. Statutory obligations such as compliance with sections 106 and 110 of the amended National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and later the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1977, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, and a host of other laws and rulings, demanded constant attention from park managers. Demand for compliance "was set in law and we were not necessarily aggressively implementing the law," former Lake Mead Superintendent Alan O'Neill recalled. The

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<sup>276</sup> Hal K. Rothman, "'A Regular Ding-Dong Fight': Agency Culture and Evolution in the Park Service-Forest Service Dispute, 1916-1937," *Western History Quarterly* 16 (May 1989): 141-61; Ronald A. Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984), 35-47, 129-35.

<sup>277</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature In the National Parks*, 214-16; Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, 133-36, 148-62; Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 1-14.

<sup>278</sup> Hal K. Rothman, *Saving the Planet: The American Response to the Environment in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 158-83.

situation “brought out the fact that we had no one to deal with it.”<sup>279</sup> Such activities at Lake Mead NRA also consumed an enormous proportion of park resources even as visitation grew astronomically and budgets remained constant.

In this process of professionalization, and especially assisted by the decision implemented in the late 1970s to manage all park resources according to the same standards, cultural and natural resource management attained greater significance at Lake Mead NRA. Prior to NEPA and the National Historic Preservation Act, the park devoted most of its resources to managing visitors as befit the expectations of a national recreation area. The agency’s new emphasis on resource management and implementation of the new statutes demanded a response from Lake Mead. With a constant base of resources, the park had to find ways to do much more with the same funding. The lack of clear definition of a national recreation area did not obviate statutory obligations, but it did compel a rapid evolution of management policies.

National recreation areas inherently negotiated the narrow and ever-changing boundary between established legislation, which emphasized recreation, and the increasingly prominent agencywide goal of protecting resources for future generations. Lake Mead’s managers originally focused on recreation, and policies that controlled the development of visitor facilities served as de facto protection for park resources. This was a time-honored strategy within the Park Service. The lack of infrastructure and development had historically protected remote national park areas. Initial park planning recognized and articulated this position. “To resolve to do all possible and spare no pains in retention of precious and priceless pristine wilderness conditions and values” was the agency’s goal, wrote Emerson Knight, a Park Service inspector, in 1935. “This can only be accomplished by holding development to lowest minimum and combating selfish interest, both public and private”<sup>280</sup> Early park managers tried to balance development of recreational resources with resource protection. Limitations on development became their standard strategy.

Defining preservation as a limit on future development trapped park managers in an unusual role. Instead of aggressively trying to acquire and then manage resources—the most common approach throughout the park system—the Park Service at Lake Mead shied away from management responsibilities that were not part of recreation. In 1945, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it would abandon plans for a wildfowl refuge in the area, Park Service Director Newton Drury argued against taking on responsibility for the refuge. “We were attempting to confine our activities in the Recreational Area to the development and administration of recreation,” Drury told the Fish and Wildlife Service. “We have delegated other land use administration, for which we had become responsible under agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation, through interbureau agreements with the

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<sup>279</sup> Alan O’Neill, interview by Hal Rothman, Jan. 12, 2002 [repository unknown]; Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the U.S. since 1945* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1997), 109-31.

<sup>280</sup> Emerson Knight, Inspector, Region VIII, “Boulder Dam National Recreation Area Primary Objectives That Should Govern Its Preservation and Use,” U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Oct. 20, 1935, Lake Mead NRA archives.

Fish and Wildlife Service and the Division of Grazing.”<sup>281</sup> Drury’s comments reflected the consensus of the time that national recreation areas were fundamentally different from other national parks. Although this position made perfect sense in the context of the 1930s and 1940s, the failure to define clearly a resource management mission for recreation areas caused serious problems for later managers.

Throughout the 1940s, the Park Service and its managers at Lake Mead consistently kept recreation in the forefront of park planning and development. When personnel proposed the Valley of Fire addition in 1947, an agency report evaluated the proposal on its recreational value alone; concerns about preservation of natural and cultural resources were secondary.<sup>282</sup> Later discussions about the Valley of Fire continued to reflect the emphasis on recreation at the expense of natural resources, accentuating the distinction between national recreation areas and other categories of park nomenclature.

During the 1950s, recreation attained new significance in the Park Service. Increased affluence, public demand, and the ascendance of landscape architect Conrad L. Wirth to the directorship of the agency inaugurated MISSION 66. A program of intensive capital development throughout the park system, MISSION 66 meant new visitor centers, roads, campgrounds, and other infrastructure development. It seemed like a throwback to the days of the New Deal, except that the Park Service built the structures in 1950s post office-style instead of the more dramatic, labor intensive, and rustic parkitecture of the New Deal era. Yet, MISSION 66 transformed the park system for a new time, and Lake Mead NRA, its historic mission of recreation newly cast as significant to agency goals, was among the beneficiaries. At Lake Mead, the program financed road projects, marina development, and other recreational infrastructure expansions that were likely to bring more people and simultaneously increase visitors’ impact upon park resources.<sup>283</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, Lake Mead’s emphasis on recreational development closely mirrored the primary trend in the Park Service. The agency long wavered between an emphasis on promotion and a parallel focus on protection, and the recreation-centered management philosophy at Lake Mead represented the manifestation of one end of that spectrum. As the 1950s ended, the long era of emphasis on facility construction drew to a close, superceded, if briefly, by the transformation of the agency’s demography and the new interest in scientific management that came to dominate agency thinking.<sup>284</sup>

The 1963 Leopold Report became the catalytic moment in this process. Authored by a team headed by A. Starker Leopold, son of the renowned environmentalist Aldo Leopold, the report was uncompromisingly critical of Park Service natural resource management. Widely

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<sup>281</sup> Newton Drury, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Dec. 17, 1945, B91, Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, San Bruno, CA (hereafter NARA-SB).

<sup>282</sup> John E. Kell, “Reconnaissance Report Valley of Fire Area Near Overton Nevada,” October 1947, 711 N Archival ACC # 4527, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>283</sup> Charles A. Richey to Mr. Lou F. LaPorta, April 5, 1961, L1414, “Lake Mead Legislation, 1961-64,” Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>284</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 211-32; Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?*, 58-63.

reported in the popular press, the Leopold Report was the call to arms for those who favored redirecting Park Service management emphasis away from visitor comfort and amenities and toward scientific management of the national park area's natural resources. The report highlighted the agency's fundamental tension between its different mandates, and it strongly recommended that the Park Service work toward a management system where ecological values and natural resource preservation guided park policy.<sup>285</sup>

One of the most quoted phrases from the Leopold Report posed peculiar problems at Lake Mead NRA. The authors advocated national parks as "vignettes of primitive America," an idealistic and arguably nonsensical phrase that suggested that the agency's primary obligation was to preserve places that human beings had not impacted. Although few places in the United States had experienced no human intrusion, Lake Mead NRA was distinctly the creation of human endeavor. A result of the dam and full of drowned canyons and even vacated submerged communities, the lake and its environs were anything but natural under the Leopold Report's definition. The report's emphasis foretold a redefinition of Lake Mead's obligations and, ultimately, of its status in the park system.

The Leopold Report provided the catalyst for park management philosophy. It compelled a number of reforms in Park Service policy, a shift in direction after a decade of Wirth's leadership, the development of elaborate parkways and other similar areas, and a reevaluation of MISSION 66's massive imprint on the aesthetics of park facilities. The Leopold Report influenced management throughout the park system, beginning the arduous process of eliminating the differences in policy between different types of units. If the agency was to fulfill the resource management mandate articulated in the report, some of its time-honored distinctions required new scrutiny. The Park Service could easily change its policies, but the bedrock attitudes they embodied presented a challenge for advocates of national recreation areas.

For the people who administered Lake Mead NRA, the change in agency emphasis and perception demanded a new assessment of Park Service policy. The Leopold Report and the subsequent growing concern over environmental impacts on natural and cultural resources moved park managers to assign new significance to resource management. For the first time, the park's planners granted resource protection the same gravity they gave recreation. This new emphasis had two simultaneous repercussions at Lake Mead NRA: it increased the significance of natural and cultural resources, and it highlighted a powerful shift not only in how personnel managed the park, but also in how managers and even the agency as a whole treated Lake Mead and other national recreation areas. Since the 1930s, managers and the public regarded recreation as the primary and even sole value of those areas. Most of those involved in early planning at Lake Mead recognized water recreation at the massive reservoir as the primary public interest. With the evolving significance of scientific management within the agency, they balanced this long-standing predisposition with the management of cultural and natural resources.

Once park planners and agency officials looked anew at Lake Mead NRA, they recognized that despite its designation as a national recreation area, the park teemed with

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<sup>285</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 214-17.

important cultural and natural resources. Preserved by the region's aridity, the desert hid paleontological remains, archaeological ruins, and historic structures. The Colorado River and its reservoirs harbored a range of plants and animals, many scarce and some endangered. Park visitors could sometimes see desert bighorn sheep atop the ridges and near the water. Rare desert plant communities abounded. The park contained submerged cultural resources, boats and at least one World War II airplane, as well as the vacated communities hidden beneath the lake. Recreation was only one part of a complex of meaningful natural and cultural resources.<sup>286</sup>

From 1935 until 1980, archaeology dominated cultural resource efforts at Lake Mead, and archaeological salvage and presentation dominated agency efforts. Because of the actions of Frank "Boss" Pinkley, and New Deal programs that primarily employed archaeologists, archaeology became a priority throughout the Southwest.<sup>287</sup> The Park Service treated it with special significance. During their initial visit to Lake Mead, Park Service inspectors concluded that a long and complex human history existed around the future park site, but the construction of the dam made a rapid evaluation of that history essential. As the time to fill the reservoir neared, archaeological resources were in increasing danger of inundation. The Park Service needed a strategy if it was to save the park's prehistoric past.

One dimension of the strategy that emerged involved collecting artifacts before the canyons filled and countless prehistoric sites ended up underwater forever. By the mid-1930s, M. R. Harrington of the Museum of the American Indian completed a decade-long series of excavations in the area. Under Harrington's direction, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers scoured the region for artifacts to display in the museum planned for Lost City, originally the Boulder Dam Park Museum and later the Lost City Museum, near Overton. The CCC archeological expeditions practiced an early form of salvage archaeology, attempting to retrieve as many artifacts as possible from areas that the rising waters of Lake Mead would submerge. Workers collected at least 2,249 artifacts in 1933 and 1934, providing the basis for an impressive interpretation of prehistory by the day's standards.<sup>288</sup>

The efforts to save prehistoric artifacts faced one of the major problems of the first half of the twentieth century. The CCC workers who salvaged the items were not the first to search the area. A generation or more of Anglo-American settlement led to much exploration and excavation. The region's cultural resources were "terribly vandalized by pot hunters," park technician Louis Schellbach lamented, leaving them in horrid condition and destroying the contextual relationships that archaeologists relied upon after Alfred V. "Ted"

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<sup>286</sup> Carole McClellan, David A. Phillips, Jr., and Mike Belshaw, *The Archeology of Lake Mead National Recreation Area: An Assessment*, Publications in Anthropology, no. 9 (Tucson: Western Archaeological and Conservation Center, 1980).

<sup>287</sup> Pinkley headed the Southwestern National Monuments Group of the Park Service from Casa Grande National Monument in Arizona until his death in 1940.

<sup>288</sup> Louis Schellbach, "Report on an Inspection Trip to Proposed Boulder Dam State Park" (Berkeley: Field Division of Education, National Park Service, 1935), 12-17, Southwest Museum of American Indian, Los Angeles, CA, and a digital copy at Lake Mead NRA. For more on New Deal era archaeology and the federal role in it, see Paul Fagette, *Digging for Dollars: American Archaeology and the New Deal* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 19-96.

Kidder's articulation of stratigraphy at Pecos Pueblo. The astute Kidder often noted the evidence of pothunter activities in the sites he dug, using them to explain the enormous discrepancies he encountered, but Kidder usually had both the time and a plethora of information from which to draw his conclusions. Harrington faced time pressures as well as a relative paucity of source information, both of which contributed to an urgency about archaeological research.

Harrington set the standard that subsequent researchers followed. In 1939, Park Service archaeologists visited Hoover Dam to evaluate archaeological and paleontological sites. Before the establishment of the national recreation area, the CCC opened three camps in 1933 and 1934 and the agency added two camps in the park in 1936. The CCC teams applied a considerable amount of effort to documenting archaeological sites. Dr. Remington Kellogg, curator of mammals at the U.S. National Museum in Washington, D.C., supervised crews working at Rampart Cave. His 1939 "Brief Special Report on Boulder Dam National Recreation Area" highlighted the cave's paleontology. He recommended a strategy later called conservation archaeology, protecting resources by leaving them in place. Universities should conduct future research at the cave, Kellogg insisted, for the site contained a wealth of data on the southwestern sloth. He also believed that petroglyphs on Atlatl Rock were among the park's most significant cultural features and that they justified the inclusion of this area in the national recreation area. Despite Kellogg's prescient observations, recreation remained the focus of park management.<sup>289</sup>

Kellogg recognized that the CCC work represented an important start toward cultural resource management at the new national recreation area. He found much of the considerable interpretive work in museums satisfactory and praised existing cultural exhibits that included the excavations of caves and covered sites along the Colorado River above and below Hoover Dam. Kellogg singled out the Willow Beach excavations, archeological exhibits in the National Park museum at Boulder City, and the Moapa Valley Pueblo exhibits at the Nevada state archaeological museum at Overton for their special condition.<sup>290</sup>

Cultural resource protection at Lake Mead still hinged on one unrelenting factor, the reservoir's rising waters. In 1939, the water level had not yet reached its apex, and the lake continued to approach areas containing significant cultural resources. The Park Service struggled to find personnel to excavate and record information before the water reached the sites. A 1939 report echoed the sentiment of its predecessors when it urged the agency to rapidly locate and remove significant artifacts or, at a minimum, record and photograph such sites before the reservoir submerged them. This rudimentary cultural resources management procedure raced against time, all those involved recognized, and the park's cultural record depended on its ability to marshal resources and act quickly.<sup>291</sup>

Archaeology dominated cultural resources management even after rising waters filled

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<sup>289</sup> Remington Kellogg, "Brief Special Report on Boulder Dam National Recreation Area," Nov. 6-10, 1939, Lake Mead NRA archives; John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1985), 195.

<sup>290</sup> Kellogg, "Brief Special Report on Boulder Dam National Recreation Area."

<sup>291</sup> McClellan, et al, *The Archeology of Lake Mead National Recreation Area*.

the lake. During the early 1940s, investigation and stabilization of sites remained the focus of cultural resource activity. Park Naturalist Robert Rose and Junior Park Archeologist Gordon C. Baldwin supervised summer researchers and CCC crews who conducted archeological work around Lake Mead. In the spring and summer of 1941, scientists trained CCC crews to examine, record, and store potsherds, and the work teams recorded twenty-nine sites. Although investigators made some headway in investigating sites, the work progressed slowly while Lake Mead rose. Higher reservoir levels washed away work camps at the excavation sites from one season to the next. Crews then had to start over each spring. After the United States entered World War II and the federal government closed down the CCC camps, labor to conduct major archeological excavations or even basic surveying became scarce. As a result, cultural resource activity at Lake Mead suffered from a worker shortage as the reservoir inundated unexplored valleys and destroyed unrecorded resources.<sup>292</sup>

Cultural resources and interpretation became closely intertwined in the 1940s. During 1942, Regional Archeologist Erik K. Reed concluded that archaeological research had created a clearer picture of the area's prehistory. Reed and acting Lake Mead superintendent Robert Rose agreed that the best way to convey this growing body of information was to construct wayside exhibits and a museum near one of the popular beaches. Park Service personnel also developed new ideas for combining recreation and interpretation. Reed suggested that boat trips to notable archeological sites provided a logical extension of interpretation at Lake Mead.<sup>293</sup> Melding boating with cultural interpretation made sense because of the number of sites on small flats and benches between the lake's edge and the base of thousand-foot-high cliffs.

Locating and stabilizing sites that were extraordinarily remote and precariously located on a reservoir prone to wild fluctuations in water level became one of the major challenges of cultural resource management at Lake Mead. The park archaeologist Gordon Baldwin discovered many such sites, including well-preserved campsites, rock house rings, cave dwellings, and mesal pits. They provided much insight into prehistoric life in the region but faced a continuous threat from changing lake levels. Without the available CCC labor, curtailed as the war began and finally terminated in 1942, the Park Service needed to find a source of workers if it was to record and preserve such locations.<sup>294</sup>

Despite considerable effort by Park Service archeologists and CCC workers, crews could not excavate many significant archaeological sites before the waters of Lake Mead covered them forever. The agency's cultural resources management structure was small and, during

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<sup>292</sup> Boulder Dam NRA, Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1942; Gordon C. Baldwin, "Preliminary Report Concerning Archeological Work in the Boulder Dam National Recreation Area," March 27, 1941, Lake Mead NRA archives; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942*, 110-14.

<sup>293</sup> Erik K. Reed, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Sept. 24, 1942, B270, Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, CA (hereafter NARA-LN).

<sup>294</sup> Gordon C. Baldwin, "Prehistoric Man and the Colorado River: Part I – Archeology of the Lower Colorado River Basin," (n.d.), Lake Mead NRA archives; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942*, 110-32

the New Deal, largely focused on the newly acquired historical parks such as Civil War battlefields. The work power shortage during World War II, coupled with the vast size of the park, made a comprehensive review of cultural resources impossible. At Lake Mead NRA, park personnel felt strongly about protecting their resources, but they could only watch as the sites they valued disappeared beneath the rising waters. The Park Service learned much from the otherwise discouraging situation at Lake Mead. The circumstances provided an object lesson that taught the agency much about rapid responses. Better planning became a priority in an effort to assure that future staff and consultants had sufficient time for exploration before permanent changes in the physiognomy of park areas occurred. Inundation by water projects posed a great threat to neighboring national park units, and the agency tried to create a structure that gave more notice when such projects affected park areas.

At Lake Mead NRA, the policy of better planning and exploration paid rapid dividends. In 1947, just before the Park Service changed the park's name from Boulder Dam to Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation officials met to draft a plan to investigate and record cultural resources in the valley that Davis Dam's completion would submerge. The resulting agreement called for the Bureau of Reclamation to provide \$9,000 for a Park Service-directed archeological investigation. Preliminary research revealed that archeological sites and historic ruins were common in the area. After the reservoir filled with water, other resource-laden areas would be inaccessible. The park hoped that the agreement would allow archaeological crews to explore the sites in the area before the water rose.<sup>295</sup>

Archeological investigations of the Davis Dam area preceded the agreement between the two agencies, but earlier work by Gordon Baldwin led to the presumption that there was much more to do. In 1949, archeologist Carr Tuthill of the Museum of Man in San Diego completed an archeological survey of the Lower Davis Dam area. Baldwin's earlier surveys of the Davis Dam area focused on the area from Willow Beach to Cottonwood Island, about twenty miles above the site of Davis Dam. Tuthill's expedition focused on areas on both sides of the Colorado River, what would become Davis Dam, where Baldwin had not explored. Tuthill also organized the study of a cave in the area excavated by students from University of Arizona.<sup>296</sup>

The 1949 archeological surveyors very quickly discovered why earlier investigations had been so limited. The canyons along the Colorado River were hazardous and travel there was difficult and time-consuming. High cliffs, treacherous rapids, and lack of roads made the task of evaluating cultural resources very difficult. "We managed to get to every area, but at considerable wear and tear on shoes, skin and tires," Tuthill reported.<sup>297</sup> It was hard work,

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<sup>295</sup> Memorandum of Agreement Between the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Park Service, July 15, 1947, Lake Mead NRA archives; Memorandum for the Director from Superintendent Bagley, May 12, 1948, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>296</sup> Erik K. Reed, Memorandum: Report of San Diego Museum on Davis Dam Archeological Survey, Sept. 2, 1949 [repository unknown]; Superintendent George Bagley, Memorandum for the Director, June 10, 1949, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.



undertaken with increasing urgency as the dam neared completion.

The work seemed urgent because of the previous decade's experience, but the results were decidedly different. After braving crumbling trails and blistering heat, Tuthill concluded that the area's cultural material was significant in neither quantity nor quality. He surmised that early agricultural peoples had little reason to settle the area permanently. Archeological finds near Davis Dam supported the supposition that habitation had been sporadic and temporary. Tuthill's report identified lithic sites with no architectural features, lithic sites with house rings, pottery, sand dune camps, trail shrines, and buried hearths. Even these sites were small, scarce, and scattered. "None of them warrant excavation or further survey," Tuthill concluded. "It is our belief that there are no archeological sites in the area we covered whose loss will be felt by the flooding of the lake."<sup>298</sup> Anxiety over potential loss let archaeologists collect enough information to make the determination that the resources were not truly significant. It was a bittersweet assessment. Although crews surveyed the resources, a result that had not occurred as Lake Mead filled, the survey results did not significantly advance the understanding of regional prehistory. It should be noted that Tuthill specialized in prehistoric Puebloan cultures and was probably not familiar with the prehistoric cultures of this area.

Although Tuthill was disappointed with the results of the Davis Dam survey, he recognized that Baldwin's earlier work provided the basis for interpretation and preservation. His report recommended the use of future cultural resource management allocations to study, catalogue, and display the materials already collected. Tuthill decided that work crews had gathered the best artifacts from the Davis Dam area and that the care of those objects took precedence over subsequent fieldwork. Tuthill's recommendation ran counter to the dominant sentiment in the archeological profession, but it fit nicely within the parameters of the Park Service's ability to fulfill its mission in cultural resources management.

Tuthill's recommendation reflected an important reality at the newly renamed Lake Mead NRA. Salvage archaeology remained the park's dominant form of cultural resources management. Faced with the potential of inundation and already possessing important collections, Tuthill's recommendation let the agency determine to make do with what it had. A generation of exploration revealed that the park possessed enough significant artifacts to explain regional prehistory. In a perfect world, archaeologists could have continued to collect data, but by the late 1940s, the agency could reasonably anticipate that significant new findings in the immediate area were unlikely. As a result, the park's attention turned to the proper presentation of material already recovered.

The Lost City Museum in Overton became the primary venue for the Park Service to present its interpretation of regional prehistory. Constructed in 1935 by CCC crews under the direction of the Park Service, the museum presented the story of Pueblo Grande de Nevada, the Lost City, Nevada's most spectacular and extensive Anasazi ruin. As work crews completed Boulder Dam and the reservoir's parameters took shape, it became clear that water was likely to cover parts of the Lost City complex. A joint endeavor between federal

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<sup>297</sup> Carr Tuthill, "An Archeological Survey of the Lower Davis Dam Area," 1, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>298</sup> Tuthill, "An Archeological Survey of the Lower Davis Dam Area," 3.

and state agencies, the museum became a concerted effort to preserve resources that would be lost. The building and facilities were the property of Nevada. The large collection of artifacts from Lost City recovered between the early 1920s and 1939, when the waters of Lake Mead finally reached the site, belonged to the Park Service.<sup>299</sup>

The initial excavation of the Lost City mirrored Nevada's ongoing search for economic engines. In 1900, the state was in danger of losing statehood. Its population, never large, had dwindled since the late-nineteenth century, and calls to return Nevada to territorial status grew louder and more frequent. The 1902 Reclamation Act, which was supposed to create a class of yeoman farmers in Nevada and the other western states, was a solution proposed by Nevada's U.S. representative, Francis Newlands, but even the prospect of nearly free irrigated land did not help repopulate the Silver State. By 1915, prizefighting and divorce had become important economic mainstays in Nevada, but railroad interests continued to dominate. Neighboring states such as Arizona and New Mexico enjoyed considerable economic success with tourism that was closely associated with the railroads, and Nevadans needed to look no farther than the Grand Canyon to see the potential economic results. In the 1920s, under Governor James G. Scrugham, Nevada began promoting the Lost City ruins as part of a program of creating a tourist economy in the sparsely inhabited and economically bereft state.<sup>300</sup>

After the initial digs at Lost City, conducted by the Heye Foundation in the 1920s, Scrugham's state government invested heavily in the ruins. John and Fay Perkins of Overton discovered the five-mile-long Pueblo and Basketmaker complex in 1924. They found an area rich with artifacts and well-preserved ruins. Nevada legislators quickly sponsored further excavations. Between 1924 and 1926, extensive work took place at the site and it became famous for the quality of Virgin Anasazi artifacts and ruins. Additional excavation and surveys by the Park Service followed in the 1930s as the New Deal developed, contributing to the importance of the ruins. The reservoir intruded, turning Lost City into a curiosity. Some ruins remained above the water, but visitors could only reach the site by boat.<sup>301</sup>

In the following half century, changing population distribution and patterns of travel made the Lost City Museum an afterthought for most park visitors. A lack of resources hampered efforts to present its story to the public. Beginning in 1935, Nevada operated the museum, but its funds were always limited. Visitors might arrive at the museum only to find it closed during regular operating hours. Researchers who visited expressed concern that the artifacts, some of the best collected in the region, were not receiving proper curatorial care. In the late 1940s, a move to transfer responsibility for the museum to the Park Service or to close the museum and relocate the artifacts to Boulder City gained momentum. However,

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<sup>299</sup> Ronald F. Lee to Patrick McCarran, March 9, 1953 [repository unknown]; Margaret M. Lyneis, "The Main Ridge Community at Lost City: Virgin Anasazi Architecture, Ceramics, and Burials," *University of Utah Anthropological Papers* 117 (1982), 1-2.

<sup>300</sup> Richard G. Lilliard, *Desert Challenge: An Interpretation of Nevada* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 290-306; Gilman M. Ostrander, *Nevada: The Great Rotten Borough, 1859-1964* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), v-xi, 132-48; Thomas R. Cox, "Before the Casino: James G. Scrugham, State Parks, and Nevada's Quest for Tourism," *Western Historical Quarterly* 24 (August 1993).

<sup>301</sup> Lyneis, "The Main Ridge Community at Lost City," 1-2.

Overton enjoyed economic advantages from the museum and fought to keep it. Officials lobbied the state government to increase funding and maintain control of the collections, but Nevada never committed ongoing resources. In 1951, administration of the museum shifted to the Park Service, but by then the demands of recreation near Boulder City, almost seventy miles away, relegated the Lost City Museum to a lesser position among competing Lake Mead NRA priorities.<sup>302</sup>

Archaeological investigation also tapered off at Lake Mead. The initial period of intense activity, when work crews uncovered many of the most significant artifacts, ended as World War II began. Following the war, little work took place at the Lost City complex for more than thirty years. In 1980, Margaret Lyneis of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and a crew collected artifacts from the surface and mapped existing structures. Their work led to a comprehensive synthesis of Lost City archaeology as well as more detailed work on the Main Ridge Community. Lyneis returned with a new crew in 1987 and continued the fieldwork.<sup>303</sup>

By the 1980s, an important shift in cultural resource management philosophy had taken place in the Park Service. Outside forces diminished archaeology's primacy. In part a response to the disastrous reconfiguration of U.S. cities that resulted from urban renewal in the 1960s, historic preservation became a new measure of the nation's commitment to the past. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was the first major step toward assuring the protection of the past's fabric. The legislation created the

National Register of Historic Places, and with the addition of revisions in 1974 and 1980, the act provided a set of statutory obligations that federal agencies had to meet. As a result, historic preservation in the United States received more attention than ever before. The Park Service found itself in the forefront of this new movement. Resulting statutory obligations that stemmed especially from the act's 1974 and 1980 revisions forced an enormous commitment of agency resources. Meeting the legal obligation to evaluate all structures more than fifty years old to determine if they met the criteria for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places demanded a new set of priorities from the agency.<sup>304</sup>

The National Register had become the single most important indicator of historic preservation status in the United States. Although the law could not prevent the destruction of historic places, it did provide listed places the presumption of significance even if inclusion did not assure preservation. Government personnel established State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) in every state, and federal agencies scrambled to meet the new obligations. The burden on the Park Service was particularly strong. With fifty years of age as the register's base standard for chronological eligibility, the agency found itself with thousands of

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<sup>302</sup> Cox, "Before the Casino"; Assistant Regional Director to Regional Director, Nov. 28, 1951, B91, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Arno B. Cammerer, "Building a Playground at Boulder Dam," *The Reclamation Era* (November 1938), 222-24.

<sup>303</sup> National Register Nomination, Lake Mead NRA archives; Lyneis, "The Main Ridge Community at Lost City."

<sup>304</sup> Charles B. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust* (Chancellorsville: University of Virginia Press, 1982).

structures and sites among its holdings that required evaluation.

At Lake Mead NRA and its other units, the Park Service had to adjust its cultural resources management standards and allocate resources in new ways to meet the 1980 revision's statutory obligations. National Register nominations had not been a priority at Lake Mead before 1980; after the revisions of sections 106 and 110 of the amended National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, they emerged as one of the most important cultural resource activities. The park expected most contract work to provide a determination of eligibility and, if the initial criteria were met, a National Register nomination. In one of many instances, when Lyneis worked at Lost City, one of the expectations was a National Register nomination. No one doubted either the complex's eligibility or significance, but listing properties had not been a priority until statute made it one. In 1982, after the federal government accepted Lyneis's nomination, Pueblo Grande de Nevada, the Lost City, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>305</sup>

Although Section 106 compliance demanded much of Lake Mead's staff, listing properties fulfilled only one dimension of the park's cultural resources management mission. President Richard Nixon's Executive Order 11593 added urgency to federal agencies' efforts to identify historically significant properties. Beginning in the 1980s, Lake Mead NRA nominated a wide variety of cultural resources to the National Register. In part, the park's responses stemmed from the requirements of the amended National Historic Preservation Act. Equally, they were part of the growing emphasis on cultural resource management and the ever-present need to demonstrate the recreation area's significance. The revised act required that the Park Service evaluate a multitude of properties in the park. Most were archaeological; a smaller number were historical in character. Properties more than fifty years of age qualified for evaluation, and experts assessed them based on their significance.

From an archaeological perspective, regional prehistory had clear limitations. Most of the sites inside park boundaries only added piecemeal information to regional archaeology. Lost City provided the primary exception, but other locations also offered region-wide significance. The more than 200 panels of petroglyphs in Grapevine Canyon paralleled Lost City in their contribution to the understanding of southwestern prehistory. The variety of rectilinear style petroglyphs led archaeologists to deduce that during an extended period the area was a major regional center for trade and religion.<sup>306</sup>

Other archaeological features of the park were eligible for the register, but presented a local story. Surveyed extensively in the 1970s, the Grand Wash archeological district contained a variety of cultural resources. The more than 200 locations in the district consisted of lithic procurement and reduction sites. As became typical of Lake Mead NRA National Register nominations concerning prehistory, the Grand Wash nomination classified the district's significance as local. Its importance and that of most other regional sites

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<sup>305</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Lost City, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>306</sup> National Register of Historical Places Inventory–Nomination Form, Grapevine Canyon Petroglyphs, Lake Mead NRA archives; McClellan, et al., *The Archeology of Lake Mead National Recreation Area*, 39, 62-64.

derived from the way these artifacts and ruins represented one segment of a larger settlement and land-use pattern in the region. The artifacts and ruins of Grand Wash District were most notable because of their abundance and exceptional condition.<sup>307</sup>

Lake Mead NRA contained countless other prehistoric sites that agency personnel needed to assess for possible inclusion on the National Register. Most of those sites mirrored Grand Wash archeological district in significance; a number of smaller archeological sites at Echo Bay, Overton Beach, and Temple Bar were eligible at the local level of significance. Local significance was always the most difficult level of register inclusion for the Park Service. The situation at Lake Mead NRA exacerbated the ongoing issue of the status of national recreation areas. A site of local significance might be easy to propose at a park devoted to prehistory such as Chaco Culture National Historical Park or even at Yellowstone or Yosemite national parks, where local significance connoted national significance. At a national recreation area, local significance made a property eligible but simultaneously affected the perception of cultural resources. Without properties that touched the national imagination or even connected to larger regional constructs of prehistory in important ways, the park faced a conundrum. Although Lake Mead NRA contained 222 National Register sites and eligible properties, few of those provided the opportunity to accentuate the significance of park prehistory to the traveling public.

A more compelling case existed for improving historic resource management at Lake Mead NRA. Possessed of the most important engineering project of the first half of the twentieth century—Hoover Dam—and including structures from the earliest years of American mining, the park contained important dimensions of regional and national cultural history. Most of it was eligible for the National Register by the early 1980s, just after the most important amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act inaugurated the push to determine eligibility. The park contained three distinct historic areas—the Homestake Mine, the Willow Beach Gauging Station Complex, and the Horse Valley (Waring) Ranch—that reflected different dimensions of historical use. Together they offered a historical overview of Anglo-American use of the region.<sup>308</sup>

Its association with Hoover Dam made the Willow Beach Gauging Station Complex the park's most historically significant feature. It consisted of a small square metal room suspended on a vertical cliff approximately fifty feet above the water that provided data on the Colorado River flow below the dam. Designed and constructed in 1935, it included a cable tramway, a catwalk, and trail approach. The gauging station helped illustrate the complexity of the dam's workings, as its very unusual construction provided an example of the type of innovative engineering required to build and then monitor a massive reclamation project like Hoover Dam. The station's association with the dam enhanced greatly its importance.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Grand Wash Archeological District, Lake Mead NRA archives; Nomination, Grand Wash Archeological District, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>308</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Homestake Mine, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>309</sup> Howard H. Chapman, Memorandum, “Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places: Willow Beach Gauging Station, Lake Mead,” Jan. 16, 1986, Lake Mead NRA archives.

The Homestake Mine also offered a largely intact historical setting. An excellent example of an early-twentieth-century gold and silver mine, the Homestake had been one of the earliest mines in the Newberry Mining District. U.S. soldiers first mined the Newberry Mountains in the 1860s, and mining continued in a cyclic pattern. The Homestake's starts and stops illustrated the pattern of the era's mining industry. Remote and inaccessible, Homestake was well preserved. Nothing other than natural elements typically disturbed the site, and with its historic integrity intact, the case for inclusion on the National Register was strong.<sup>310</sup>

The Horse Valley (Waring) Ranch offered another dimension of regional economic life. In 1984, park personnel nominated the ranch to the National Register because of its significance in early-twentieth-century cattle ranching on the Shivwits Plateau. A wealth of vernacular log ranch, structures, and outbuildings that were largely original marked the site. Its owners never electrified the buildings, and in the 1980s, kerosene lamps still illuminated the interiors.<sup>311</sup> This combination of historic fabric and remote setting left an intact historical *mise-en-scene* that was both significant and visually compelling.

Another dimension of the broadening emphasis on cultural resources after 1970 was the recognition of the significance of cultural landscapes in the park system. Early in the decade, the Park Service embraced the concept, and Lake Mead NRA presented countless opportunities for its implementation. As did national recreation areas, cultural landscapes experienced a complicated history in the park system. Agency personnel conceived the original national parks as devoid of humans, tributes to a prehuman nature. The idea persisted in the park system that locations people inhabited were not sufficiently significant for national park status. As late as 1963, when ecology was on the rise in the park system and the Leopold Report, with its image of parks as "vignettes of primitive America," dominated agency thinking, cultural landscapes remained secondary to the Park Service's traditional mission. The move to broaden the agency's mission to include recreation shifted the focus from landscapes without people to landscapes that could serve proximate people. The concept evolved further, from a description of a landscape to a way to analyze and categorize landscape resources.

By the early 1970s, cultural landscapes became a consideration for the Park Service, and the agency had codified its policies. In the mid-1990s, NPS-28, the governing book for cultural resource management, included cultural landscapes among its categories of resources. The idea evolved into a sort of organic theory, arguing for the historicity and significance of showing the evolution of landscapes of human and natural interaction. The Cultural Landscape Assessment Inventory and Management System (CLAIMS) developed a four-stage documentation process, with each stage providing progressively more information. By the late 1990s, cultural landscape designation had become an important strategy to support resource management. CLAIMS and cultural landscapes made the Park Service significantly

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<sup>310</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Homestake Mine.

<sup>311</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Horse Valley Ranch, Lake Mead NRA archives.

more able to preserve and protect inhabited landscapes within park boundaries.<sup>312</sup>

One of the fastest ways to increase the perceived significance of cultural resources at Lake Mead NRA was to accentuate cultural landscapes. From the 1930s, the park's cultural resource management suffered in no small part because of the unit's designation as a national recreation area. Only in the 1970s did the Park Service begin to manage every category of unit by the same standards, and many personnel still felt that cultural resource management in national recreation areas was less significant than at other kinds of parks. The introduction of the idea of cultural landscapes contributed not only to an elevation of the significance of cultural resources, but equally to a reevaluation of Lake Mead's resources. Human habitation of the area was sparse perhaps, but especially along the Colorado River, it dated back as much as 7,000 years. Despite the 1980 passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and President Jimmy Carter's lame-duck proclamation of national monuments throughout Alaska that same year, expansion of the park system seemed limited to historic properties in the lower forty-eight states. For the Park Service at the onset of the 1980s, cultural landscapes presented important opportunities.<sup>313</sup>

Lake Mead NRA contained an array of historic resources that the Park Service could consider as cultural landscapes, and following the amended NHPA in 1980, the park moved to codify such designations. Cultural landscape status helped promote the collective significance of pieces of the historic fabric that alone might not merit inclusion on the National Register. In a park that had struggled with making the case for its cultural significance since its founding, managers finally found success with the National Register process. Successful nominations of cultural landscapes asserted the importance of the park's cultural past, simultaneously enhancing the significance of its resources and of the national recreation area, a feat that no number of individual National Register sites alone could achieve. By the 1990s, the park determined that cultural landscapes formed an important part of its future management plans.<sup>314</sup>

Yet, Lake Mead National Recreation Area lacked the administrative structure to manage these complicated new demands. Cultural resource management had not been a focus at the park. The park did not even have a close relationship with the state historic preservation offices in Arizona and Nevada. One park specialist, Bill Burke, single-handedly addressed these responsibilities for more than a decade as part of his job responsibilities. By the end of the 1980s, the compliance burden became too great and the park hired its first cultural resource specialist, Leslie Peterson.

This broadening of the reach of cultural resources management led to a number of intricate plans at Lake Mead. Tasi Springs was an oasis along the Pearce Ferry Road that became the key feature in its immediate region. It served as a watering spot for travelers and later became the focus of a regional cattle industry. Near Grand Wash, the spring and its

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<sup>312</sup> Ric Borjes, interview by Hal K. Rothman, May 15, 2000, copy in possession of the author.

<sup>313</sup> Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 172-75.

<sup>314</sup> *Lake Mead National Recreation Area Resource Management Plan* (1994), 36-45, Lake Mead NRA archives.

environs provided one of the most important possibilities for cultural landscape designation in the park. In 1978, agency personnel tendered a draft nomination form; between the late 1970s and 1994, when Lake Mead's new *Resource Management Plan* emphasized its importance, little took place. Only when cultural landscapes became an important resource in cultural resource management did the springs receive additional attention.<sup>315</sup>

The idea of cultural landscapes provided an important opportunity to manage cultural resources as well as to accentuate their significance. Categorization by themes such as mining, transportation, and ranching allowed largely local resources to jointly contribute to regional significance. The thrust of resource management planning mirrored the historic orientation of desert life. In the remote desert of Lake Mead NRA, few endeavors could survive without cooperation. Linking these disparate features to add historic significance mirrored the kinds of relationships that sustained life in the region. Cultural landscapes and interrelated activity soon formed an important dimension of cultural resource management for Lake Mead NRA.

The patterns of Anglo-American settlement in the region also contributed to the growing importance of cultural landscapes. The park fell within "Mormon Dixie," the area into which the Mormon settlers of Utah expanded in the nineteenth century as they sought to extend their domain. Although Mormon settlement generally withered after it crossed the Colorado River, many of the early settlers along the river were church representatives. Settlements such as St. Thomas and Callville, river crossings at Bonneli's Landing and Pearce Ferry, and early roads such as the Pearce Ferry Road all reflected Mormon influence. Some ranching sites on the Shivwits Plateau also revealed Mormon influence, providing the park with an important thematic strand to link some of its more disparate historic features. The Mormon Church left behind a major influence in the Lake Mead NRA region, and the new management emphasis gave the park a better opportunity to articulate its significance.<sup>316</sup>

New federal statutes also impelled Lake Mead to address the simmering issue of Native American ownership and use of the park. As was the case with many national park areas, Lake Mead NRA included land reserved to Native Americans as well as land they claimed by right of historic use. Before the 1960s, the agency largely ignored or dismissed such claims. The Park Service served its visiting public ahead of the native people on most of its lands.<sup>317</sup> After 1970, growing national interest in Native American issues prompted not only closer management of native issues and redress of real and perceived injustice, but also closer attention to the historical roles of native people in the region. Lake Mead NRA commissioned a study, David Ruppert's *Lake Mead National Recreation Area: An Ethnographic Overview*, in 1976, which sought to provide ethnographic context for archaeological interpretation, to ascertain the territorial boundaries of the indigenous peoples in the area, and to provide a comprehensive cultural bibliography. With the 1977 passage of

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<sup>315</sup> Michael Belshaw, "National Register of Historic Place Inventory - Nomination Form, Tasi Springs," March 6, 1978, Lake Mead NRA archives; *Resource Management Plan*, 46

<sup>316</sup> *Resource Management Plan*, 45-46.

<sup>317</sup> Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians and National Parks* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998), 1-16; Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1-35.



the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Ruppert's report became a prescient planning document that seeded the Park Service's response to the new statute at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The act required reenvisioning the relationship between the Park Service and Native American people throughout the national park system. By 1981, a draft Native American relationships policy that committed the Park Service to greater concern for native peoples and their issues circulated. Lake Mead NRA began to seek ways to implement the new objectives not only with the Hualapai, the native people of the immediate region, but also with the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT), Yuman-speaking tribes along the Colorado River. In an ongoing series of meetings, the park sought to foster improved relationships with Native Americans.<sup>318</sup>

Strengthening the relationship progressed slowly, as Native Americans remained suspicious of the Park Service's motives. After more than 100 years of contact with the outside world during which they received few benefits and after 50 years of being simultaneously ignored and pushed aside in park planning, their reticence was understandable.<sup>319</sup> Before the 1970s, the Park Service's interest in modern Native Americans had not been great, and in the new climate, the agency needed to make gestures to show its good faith. Some decisions, such as the renaming of Custer National Battlefield as Little Bighorn National Battlefield in the 1990s, involved high drama and enormous symbolic implications. In other circumstances, far quieter but equally meaningful gestures opened communication in new and important ways.

At Lake Mead NRA, one such gesture—the designation of Spirit Mountain as a traditional cultural property, a sacred place for Native American peoples—became a symbolic step of vast significance. Discussions with CRIT highlighted the significance of Spirit Mountain, also known as Newberry Mountain and located in the southern part of the park about ten miles from Laughlin, Nevada. At Christmas Tree Pass in the Newberry Mountains, a long tradition of decorating trees had become part of regional folklore. One year, Alan O'Neill counted more than 600 decorated trees in Christmas Tree Pass. Each year, the trees became more elaborate and even extreme, O'Neill recalled. The bawdiness of some of the decorations was outright offensive and, combined with other backcountry impacts such as spur roads and unregulated camping, pushed the Park Service into action.<sup>320</sup>

The Park Service took on a cleanup of the Newberry Mountains, but the project began from a natural resource perspective. Unauthorized camping proved a problem and the Park Service set out to limit off-road vehicle use. Typically, the agency used telephone poles or railroad ties to block the entrance to such areas. In the Newberrys, this seemed like the best solution. However, the introduction of these barriers encroached on a number of cultural

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<sup>318</sup> David Ruppert, *Lake Mead National Recreation Area: An Ethnographic Overview* (Tucson: Western Archaeological and Conservation Center, 1976); John G. Herron, "Lake Mead-Indian Relationships Consultations: A Preliminary Report" (Branch of Cultural Resources, Alaska/Pacific Northwest/Western Team, Denver Service Center, 1982) [repository unknown].

<sup>319</sup> Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 3-6, 133-39; Keller and Turek, *American Indians and National Parks*, 1-15.

<sup>320</sup> O'Neill, interview

properties, inspiring the interest of CRIT. Their interest was compelled by two distinctly separate dimensions of the Park Service's actions: first that the agency cared enough to try to manage the area, which inspired the respect of CRIT, and second, that the agency's management did not take cultural practices and locations into account. Nevertheless, it did bring Native Americans, including Hualapai, Yavapai, and Mojave, as well as CRIT, into discussions with the Park Service about cultural issues.<sup>321</sup>

Beginning in the early 1990s, Lake Mead made plans to assess the site's spiritual significance from a Native American perspective. Involving the native peoples of the region, the Park Service spent a lot of time listening to Indian concerns; the ensuing dialogue led to a new management plan. The plan closed all the spur roads and left open only the main road, and also eliminated overnight camping, another ongoing concern for native peoples. The park began restoration work, involving the various peoples "so that they could see what we were doing," O'Neill recalled. The effort to preserve ecological diversity appealed to the various groups as well; the agency worked to protect the plants essential for ceremonies, healing, and other activities. The dialogue continued, leading to a growing sense that the Park Service and Native Americans shared the same goals in the Newberry Mountains. In 1995, a Tierra Environmental Services report acknowledged the vast significance of the mountains to Native Americans of the lower Colorado River and recommended that future research occur with the concurrence of the affected peoples.<sup>322</sup> The agency had moved toward an important constituency, meeting statutory guidelines for management at the same time.

This level of sensitivity and concern set the stage for an ongoing relationship. By the time the park completed its *Resource Management Plan* in 1994, the designation of Spirit Mountain as a cultural property had become an objective for Lake Mead. In 1999, Spirit Mountain attained traditional cultural property designation through the National Register process, the first time that the government had used such designation in Nevada. This achievement confirmed the commitment of the park to an ongoing and reciprocal relationship with its Native American neighbors.<sup>323</sup>

In the aftermath of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, the first piece of federal legislation devoted strictly to archaeological preservation since the Antiquities Act in 1906, archaeology attained new significance in cultural resources. A combination of a new emphasis and new standards propelled considerable research. Loosely tied to Section 106 compliance, which required the assessment of federal undertakings on historic properties, Richard Ervin's 1986 *Lake Mead Developed Areas Survey* provided an archaeological assessment of the areas most likely to undergo development. Two earlier studies had begun the process, and Ervin's work completed a broad-based assessment of developed areas in the park. This record helped mitigate the park's compliance obligations,

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<sup>321</sup> O'Neill, interview.

<sup>322</sup> *Resource Management Plan*, 45; Tierra Environmental Services, *Native American Research Plan for the Spirit Mountain Study Area of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area* (San Diego: Tierra Environmental Services, Inc.) [repository unknown].

<sup>323</sup> *Resource Management Plan*, 59; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1999, 9.

smoothing the road toward development.<sup>324</sup>

In this respect, the burdens of compliance led to greater integration of archaeology into specific dimensions of cultural resource management. Before 1980, archaeological research had progressed largely as a function of scientists' interest. They initiated their own projects, sought outside funding or sometimes agency support, and generally pursued their own questions. The Park Service often made funding available and encouraged researchers to undertake projects to achieve agency goals, but researchers' own sense of their sites' value and the work they undertook governed the progress of the work and often its scope and scale. By the early 1990s, the park gave money to universities, including the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, to fund park staff such as the archaeologist Steve Daron. Compliance had created a different set of obligations, requiring a systematic response from the Park Service. Lake Mead National Recreation Area's small resource management staff propelled the park into contractual arrangements geared directly toward statutory objectives and aimed at specific results. "They'd pool all their projects and call WACC," the Western Archaeological and Conservation Center in Tucson, Steve Daron remembered, "and somebody would come up and take care of it."<sup>325</sup> In this respect, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act and the revised NHPA made archaeological research conform more directly to agency objectives.

By the time agency personnel completed the *Resource Management Plan* in 1994, the park's cultural resources management program faced significant challenges. Lake Mead identified a dwindling resource base as one of its major problems, followed by a lack of planning. Much of the park's archaeological and historic past remained inaccessible; teams had surveyed less than 1 percent prior to the plan. Approximately 85 percent of the park's historic properties were included on the List of Classified Structures. Five archaeological sites and districts were listed on the National Register and five historic areas were in the process of nomination. The park's collections, housed at the Western Archaeological and Conservation Center in Tucson as well as at the park, offered much important baseline data. To achieve full compliance, the park needed long-term preservation and management plans for resources in the field and housed in collections. The limited existing baseline data, a legacy of the historic position of national recreation areas in the park system, was barely adequate in some circumstances and wholly insufficient in many more. Shortages of personnel and a lack of funding stood in the way of meeting statutory and policy obligations.<sup>326</sup>

In its *Cultural Resources Management Plan*, the park identified clear goals and objectives. Compliance with sections 106 and 110 topped the list of immediate objectives, with efforts to find partners who could supply much-needed resources a close second. In the longer term, the plan recommended an expanded cultural resources database with oral history interviews, sustained ethnographic investigations, an updated List of Classified Structures and a *Historic Resource Study*, and the initiation of a parkwide inventory of cultural landscapes.

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<sup>324</sup> Richard Ervin, *Lake Mead Developed Areas Survey* (Tucson: Western Archaeological and Conservation Center, 1986).

<sup>325</sup> Rosie Pepito, interview by Hal K. Rothman, Jan. 23, 2002 [repository unknown]; Steve Daron, interview by Hal K. Rothman, Jan. 23, 2002 [repository unknown].

<sup>326</sup> *Resource Management Plan*, 60.

Long-term objectives included becoming an active facilitator of regional research and moving toward more sophisticated resource management by integrating cultural and natural resource needs whenever possible. Programs such as revegetation offered an opportunity to restore natural features but possibly threatened archaeological and architectural features. Integrated planning allowed for both cultural and natural resources to be fully considered in such circumstances.<sup>327</sup>

By 1997, when Rosie Pepito arrived at Lake Mead to become program manager for cultural resource management (CRM), CRM had reached an initial level of maturity. The park had only recently transferred cultural resource responsibilities from interpretation to resource management. One specialist, Leslie Peterson, who Lake Mead had hired as an interpreter and then moved to the position of park archaeologist in the early 1990s, handled most CRM responsibilities. Compliance obligations finally required comprehensive Park Service attention and the existing system, with cultural resource management as an offshoot of interpretation, no longer sufficed. The days of “‘saying we had no resources and doing the best we could’ were over by then,” Superintendent Alan O’Neill insisted, forcing adjustments in management. Peterson “‘had basically created a cultural resource program here,” Pepito recalled, and driven by compliance, the park needed someone with primary responsibility for CRM. As Pepito arrived, Lake Mead supervisors transferred Peterson from an archaeologist to a program manager.<sup>328</sup>

The development of Lake Mead’s CRM program followed. Compliance again loomed large; the park’s incredible array of projects all generated compliance work and demanded more than a piecemeal response. The nationwide programmatic agreement that accompanied the reorganization of the Park Service in 1994-1995 made compliance the responsibility of superintendents instead of regional offices; this spurred greater interest at the park level throughout the system. At Lake Mead, the quantity of necessary work was so great that some of it needed to be done in-house. The park augmented staff with seasonals, new staff hired through universities, and Student Conservation Association interns. Inventory and stabilization of properties on the List of Classified Structures took a prominent role, facilitated by multipark teams that brought in additional expertise. Shared positions with the Grand Canyon and WACC helped add specialist skills for collections management. By early 2000, a comprehensive CRM program was flourishing and CRM remained a growth area in park management.<sup>329</sup>

Natural resources management suffered from constraints similar to cultural resources. Before the 1960s, the Park Service fashioned the purpose of national recreation areas in a narrow way, and natural resource management was not prominent among agency objectives. As a result, only rudimentary organizational structures existed, leaving natural resource management in national recreation areas as a reactive and piecemeal activity until statutory requirements demanded more comprehensive agency action. After NEPA, the Park Service

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<sup>327</sup> *Resource Management Plan*, 62.

<sup>328</sup> O’Neill, interview; Pepito, interview; Daron, interview.

<sup>329</sup> Pepito, interview; Daron, interview.

applied assets to its new obligations, and the park received an additional benefit: new agency policy required personnel to manage Lake Mead NRA in the same way as every other park area, finally providing a policy basis for the ongoing diminution of the differences between categories of park areas.

Natural resource management practices at Lake Mead NRA differed from those at national park areas because recreation shaped agency policy at the park during its first three decades. Fishing and other sport activities required different management than conventional Park Service activities. Few in the park system thought of animals as “game” instead of “wild life.” The man-made lake further complicated the agency’s position. The Park Service had encouraged sport fishing in the national parks since its inception; one of Horace M. Albright’s most prized moments was fishing in Yellowstone with President Calvin Coolidge, and a parade of sportsmen fished the national parks during the first two decades of the agency’s history. The Park Service maintained hatcheries in many of the larger parks to restock the supply. The agency’s purported “wilderness park,” Olympic National Park, consistently underwent stocking. By the mid-1930s, the agency had permanently established as many as thirty nonnative species in park waters.<sup>330</sup> Even if Albright repeatedly insisted that the parks harbored only native species, stocking the parks with nonnative species for sport fishing seemed entirely consistent with the early Park Service ethic.

Lake Mead offered an opportunity not only to broaden the number of people fishing in the park system, but also to stock its waters with sport species. Because the reservoir was not natural, some questioned whether fishermen would find native fish in the lake. This concern opened the way for systematic stocking by the Park Service. When the waters rose behind Hoover Dam, a bass hatchery near Las Vegas populated the lake. In 1935, it planted 14,835 largemouth black bass; during 1937 and 1938, personnel added another 340,000 bass along with 35,000 bluegills. Reports described the fishing as “phenomenal,” and it certainly pleased locals. An early study by Park Naturalist Russell K. Grater confirmed the success of the fish introductions and sought a strategy to maintain the quality of fish in the lake. Even with Grater’s suggestions, within a few years reports of malnourished fish became common. John Cole, the fishing writer for the *Boulder City News* first raised the issue in 1939, and by 1941, he made fish management an issue for the Park Service. The recently drowned canyons did not provide adequate feed for the fish that came down the river, Cole maintained, and some action was necessary to preserve the quality of angling in the lake. Cole allowed that state agencies managed fish better, often locating hatcheries nearby to stock their lakes. The Park Service sought to quiet Cole and then attempted to enlist the Fish and Wildlife Service to study the problem. Fish and Wildlife agency studies contradicted Cole and his observational data. Although trout introduction had not yet reached the level the agency desired, by 1943, the park naturalist Gordon Baldwin could claim that Lake Mead was “rapidly becoming known as one of the best large-mouth bass fishing places in the world.”<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 80-82; Horace M. Albright as told to Robert Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-1933* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers Press, 1986), 197-214.

<sup>331</sup> Russell K. Grater, “Preliminary Report on Study of Fish Problems on Lake Mead,” Aug. 14, 1940,

Maintaining the fishing program required ongoing management, and keeping an adequate supply of fish required more intricate stocking than existing facilities could provide. In 1945, the Fish and Wildlife Service began plans for a fish hatchery along the shoreline with the support of the Park Service and reached an agreement with state and county agencies. In 1947-1948, the agency introduced 343,000 rainbow trout between Hoover and Davis dams alone, while the Fish and Wildlife Service introduced 100,000 more, and the states of Nevada and Arizona also added similar numbers. In 1948, the Park Service could claim that fishing and camping in Lake Mead were “at their best now.”<sup>332</sup>

By the mid-1930s, the Park Service found itself in the fish management business. In 1936, the agency assessed its fish-stocking program for the first time and determined that it would no longer stock nonnative species in national parks.<sup>333</sup> Since park personnel still treated national recreation areas differently in the late 1940s, stocking the man-made reservoir at Lake Mead with exotic fish posed less of a problem. Yet that decision came with a hidden cost: it diminished Lake Mead NRA’s claim on peer status in the park system. The combination of being a man-made lake and programs such as nonnative fish stocking combined to accentuate the difficult position; to purists in the agency, it further diminished the park. Until agency attitudes changed, Lake Mead remained outside Park Service norms.

Also telling was the distribution of fish species in the reservoir. By 1950, three native species, the razorback sucker, the Colorado squawfish, and the bonytail, competed with eleven introduced species in a pattern that not only tampered with the agency’s perception of real nature at the park but also that mirrored the replacement of species in the Americas. Throughout North America and especially in its deserts, where scarce species adapted to narrow niches, Old World species often overwhelmed natives.<sup>334</sup> The problem was less compelling at Lake Mead, for it was a man-made lake, but it took natural resource management in the park further away from the primary patterns of agency management.

Fishing in the national parks remained a controversial subject in the Park Service. Under Director Newton B. Drury, it was anathema, an activity that the agency could barely tolerate even in lesser areas. With the ascent of Conrad L. Wirth to the directorship in 1953, the Park Service accorded recreational activities such as fishing greater significance, but fishing still remained suspect. In new policy guidelines for natural areas issued in 1954, the agency made fishing “subordinate to the primary purpose of preservation,” a stance that the

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B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; John Cole, “Just Fishin’,” *Boulder City News*, Feb. 28, 1941; John Cole, “Just Fishin’,” *Boulder City News*, March 14, 1941; Guy Edwards, Memorandum for the Director, March 27, 1941, B99 “Section III: Fishing,” Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Gordon B. Baldwin, “Report on Bass Fishing on Lake Mead,” July 21, 1943, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>332</sup> Robert H. Rose, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Oct. 9, 1945 [repository unknown]; Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Press Release, Dec. 8, 1945; Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Press Release, May 6, 1948; Memorandum of Agreement, 1946 [repository unknown].

<sup>333</sup> Wright, *Wildlife Research and Management in the National Parks*, 55.

<sup>334</sup> Orthello L. Wallis, “The Status of the Fish Fauna of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Arizona-Nevada,” *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society* 89 (1950): 84-92; Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900 A.D.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

agency had long articulated but had only implemented with any seriousness after 1945. Part of the parks' new recreational focus, new regulations allowed fishing, but in a more curtailed fashion. The agency ceased to stock nonnative species, but continued to allow fishing of abundant native fish. Hatcheries for native species continued to flourish near parks, but the ethos had clearly changed. By the mid-1950s, fishing had become a privilege regulated for new purposes by the park system.<sup>335</sup>

Fish management remained more complicated at Lake Mead NRA. The park fell under the recreational management scheme, a strategy that offered considerably less protection for native species. State and federal agencies had populated Lake Mead with nonnative species for more than two decades and the Park Service lacked jurisdiction over nearby state hatcheries. The emphasis on sport fishing was so great that the park recorded 819,000 angler visits in 1962, representing almost 40 percent of visitation. Nor did the pleas of park staff for management directed toward natural species receive much support elsewhere in the agency.<sup>336</sup> Lake Mead NRA retained its emphasis on recreation and into the 1960s did not receive the protection granted the park system's natural areas.

Grazing presented a similar concern at Lake Mead NRA. The Park Service had long abhorred cattle and sheep operations, an opposition that marked agency natural resource policy before prohibitions of such operations were codified by law. Regulations prohibited grazing in national parks except in cases of national emergencies, and even though grazing occurred in the parks during World War I, the agency successfully resisted the practice during World War II. Policy was nowhere near as stringent for national recreation areas. Agency rules permitted grazing rules in the national recreation area. Little land in Lake Mead was suitable for extensive grazing, and in its vast expanse, grazing animals had considerable impact. A 1945 report to the regional office pointed out that most of Lake Mead's desert areas remained unlikely candidates for grazing while cattle operators were successfully running animals atop the Shivwits Plateau. Operations did not interfere with tourism because of the grazing sites' remote locations. The report's author, Ben Thompson, believed that "when tourist use of the Plateau conflicts with grazing in certain limited areas, it seems probable that grazing will have to be excluded from those limited areas." Agreements with the Grazing Service, later part of the Bureau of Land Management, governed the activity, once again resulting in a practice in which the Park Service shared management with another agency. The result was an ongoing situation in which certain members of the public received what amounted to special privileges; of all the federal agencies, critics blasted the Bureau of Land Management the most for being "captured" by its constituencies. The Park Service became complicit if not always culpable in private use of public resources.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> "A Revised Fishery Policy for the Natural Areas of the National Park System," June 17, 1954 [repository unknown]; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 163-64.

<sup>336</sup> Supervisory Park Naturalist to Park Superintendent, Jan. 16, 1957, B272, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Annual Fisheries Resources Narrative Report, 1961 [repository unknown].

<sup>337</sup> Ben H. Thompson, "Report to Mr. M. R. Tillotson, Regional Director, National Park Service, Region Three, Santa Fe, New Mexico: Concerning the Boundaries of Boulder Dam National Recreation Area" (Santa Fe: National Park Service, 1945), S3B 711 T Archiva, ACC #4514, Lake Mead NRA archives;

For a park of vast size, Lake Mead NRA was host to relatively few commercial animals. By all accounts, the grazing was sparse at best and the lack of year-round sources of water other than the Colorado River and the artificial lakes further limited grazing's viability. The grazing that did occur was often in the park's most remote parts. In 1958, thirty-five permit holders grazed 4,889 cattle; two other operators ran 8,330 sheep. One-hundred-sixty-one horses also grazed in Lake Mead. When asked, Superintendent Charles Richey doubted actual use reached anywhere near the number permitted. Fourteen years later, in 1972, the numbers were not substantially higher.<sup>338</sup> By any account, grazing was a marginal activity at Lake Mead NRA, but it did further accentuate the differences between the park and the rest of the national park system.

Conventional natural resource management in the park system followed a different set of imperatives. Because of the influence of George M. Wright, early Park Service natural resource management focused on wildlife surveys. Although Wright died in 1936, before his full influence could be felt, the programs he began contributed to a dramatic increase in wildlife management throughout the late 1930s. A protoecological emphasis for the national parks and monuments resulted, but agency personnel generally restricted this emphasis to national parks and large natural national monuments, the areas central to the Park Service worldview. Except in an unusual circumstance, the country's only national recreation area was unlikely to receive such attention.<sup>339</sup>

In the late 1930s, the emphasis on resource management surfaced at Boulder Dam NRA because of feral burros. No issue vexed natural resource management in the desert more than burros. An exotic species that became prevalent as it escaped human control, feral burros were a detrimental presence in desert regions. The Park Service had already grappled with the question of the animals at Grand Canyon National Park, where beginning in 1924, hunters eradicated almost 1,200 burros in a five-year period. To resolve the burro question and to assess its impact on other species at Boulder Dam NRA, the Park Service undertook an intensive survey. That effort produced a "Preliminary Report on the Status of Wild Burro, Bighorn and Deer in the Boulder Dam National Recreation Area" in 1939.<sup>340</sup>

The report's findings were compelling. Burros were everywhere, it disclosed, engaged in an effort to take over the park. They competed for food, in some ways threatening both deer and desert bighorn sheep. Russell K. Grater opined that the abundance of water that resulted from the filling of the reservoir and the designation of the site as a national recreation area helped the desert bighorn sheep achieve steady if slow population increases. But the impact of burros still had the potential to be a detriment to more highly valued species. The burros

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Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?*, 69-73; Wright, *Wildlife Research and Management in the National Parks*, 10, 21.

<sup>338</sup> Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region 3, NPS [repository unknown]; Region Grazier, Region 9, Grazing Service, Nov. 6, 1945 [repository unknown]; Grazing, 1958 Calendar Year; Transcript of Hearing March 3, 1959 [repository unknown]; Summary of Livestock Grazing, 1972 [repository unknown].

<sup>339</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 91-110.

<sup>340</sup> Russell K. Grater, "Preliminary Report on the Status of Wild Burro, Bighorn and Deer in the Boulder Dam National Recreation Area," October 1939, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.



had supporters as well as detractors, surprising Grater. Some regarded the burro as a “vital part of the historical background in this region,” Grater mused, and demanded protection for these historic creatures. He respected their point of view, advocating a “plan of control, but not a program of extinction.” After the great burro shoot of the 1920s at the Grand Canyon and contemporaneous with a similar survey at Death Valley National Monument, the Park Service was wary of the outcry that would likely follow an eradication program.<sup>341</sup>

Even with all the care the Park Service invested in managing burros, the animals became the primary natural resource management issue over the following decade. No matter what the Park Service attempted, it could not resolve the issue to everyone’s satisfaction. Publicity about burro control questions prompted a public outcry. Some outside the agency wanted to open Lake Mead up to burro hunts; others wanted to protect the animals. Every newspaper article about burros complicated the Park Service’s attempts to proceed without attracting too much attention. Jurisdictional disputes ensued, and reorganization of the Park Service’s scientific bureau made the task even more difficult. Burros crossed between jurisdictions, giving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Arizona and Nevada game bureaus, and the Park Service all legitimate claims on management. Each agency approached the issue from a different perspective. When the Department of the Interior transferred the Park Service’s biologists to the Bureau of Biological Survey in 1940 and removed their primary position on the issue, it weakened the Park Service’s claim to scientific management of the issue. Lake Mead itself contributed to keeping the question in front of the public. In 1942, the park’s annual wildlife report offered a population census, commenting on the numbers of each species, their location, and their visibility. In November 1943, Lake Mead sought the appointment of a full-time wildlife ranger, further accentuating the different management needs of Lake Mead National Recreation Area.<sup>342</sup>

For most of the remainder of the 1940s, the Park Service struggled with burro management at Lake Mead. The animals became a major issue, for their management spoke volumes about the Park Service’s intentions at the recreation area. Solutions, especially ones that pleased all the interested parties, were difficult to find. The agency lacked widespread information about the burros, and the agency’s authority also was in question. Grater’s preliminary study piqued Park Service interest, but it made clear that subsequent research was imperative. The combination of World War II and the transfer of Park Service biologists made research money and scientific personnel difficult to secure. As the 1940s ended, the park found itself making decisions based on decade-old information.

In these circumstances, the Park Service reconsidered its burro management techniques. In 1948, the park contemplated a wild burro hunt, with the agency issuing permits to qualified hunters. Regional Director Minor R. Tillotson quickly terminated the idea; if it continued, he reasoned, it could be considered a systemwide precedent for the postwar era. Recognizing that

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 6; “For Immediate Release,” National Park Service, Region III, Feb. 25, 1939, B319, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>342</sup> Guy D. Edwards, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region III, Dec. 23, 1940, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Annual Wildlife Report for Boulder Dam National Recreation Area, 1942 [repository unknown]; Robert H. Rose, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Nov. 2, 1943, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB ; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 82, 92.

other forms of control were expensive, Tillotson wavered. He considered an exception for the newly renamed Lake Mead NRA precisely because it was a recreation area. Hunting was already permissible there, and Tillotson was ambivalent about controlled hunting of burros. Despite the inevitable bad publicity and confusion about the purpose of national park areas that would follow, conventional eradication was not necessarily a bad idea. It solved one problem, the proliferation of burros, but easily ignited new issues.<sup>343</sup>

In the end, the Park Service found a way out of its dilemma. It implemented a limited program of taking burros under careful guidelines. The agency granted permission to capture burros for pack use. Lake Mead's husky wild burros made much better pack animals than their scrawny domesticated cousins. Capture by trained outfitters offered the Park Service an alternative that simultaneously appeased communities near the park and permitted the reduction of park burros without the negative publicity that accompanied eradication. The agency issued a number of collecting permits, but the burros were far more difficult to capture than outfitters anticipated. As late as 1950, only one outfitter, Mark Swain, a hunter-photographer from Boulder City, succeeded in capturing any burros and even he fell one short of his limit of ten.<sup>344</sup>

The combination of bad publicity associated with burro eradication and the sheer difficulty of their capture combined to create an endemic problem for Lake Mead NRA. Although the Park Service left exotic management to the discretion of Lake Mead personnel precisely because it did not consider national recreation areas to be national parks, superintendents pursued exotic species with consistent if not always zealous fervor. From the 1950s until 1980, burro captures continued, controlled by park permits and under its auspices. Until 1971, when the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act became law, such activities occurred in conjunction with agencies that managed adjacent land, but passage of the law made the Park Service the only federal agency that could eliminate burros. As a result, Park Service goals and practices no longer coincided with those of surrounding land managers, and different policies governed adjacent lands as the burros happily trod wherever they chose. Lake Mead's boundary was not fenced and burros came and went. In the park, they were an exotic species that personnel could remove; outside its boundaries, they were protected. Numerous problems resulted, most often when hunters accidentally killed burros for which they had no license or when permit-holders violated the regulations of adjacent agencies. Sometimes the hunters captured animals on state instead of federal land; other times, they violated state regulations that governed the transportation of livestock. Most such issues were local and individual and required only a little attention from the Park Service. At the same time, the burro population inside park boundaries grew, presumably at the expense of the native and more highly valued desert bighorn sheep.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> George F. Bagglely, Memorandum for the Regional Director, June 4, 1948, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; M. R. Tillotson, Memorandum for the Superintendent, Lake Mead, July 9, 1948, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; George F. Bagglely, Memorandum to Regional Director, Region Three, Dec. 7, 1949, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>344</sup> Bagglely, Memorandum to Regional Director, Dec. 7, 1949; Estye I. Reed, "Nimble as Goats, Nevada's Wild Jacks Have Eluded all but One Attempt to Catch Them," *Denver Post*, April 30, 1950.

The shift in U.S. values toward environmental awareness and the increasing tendency of even Park Service supporters to question agency resource management decisions meant that by the middle of the 1970s, “burro shoots,” the colloquial term for eradication by gunfire, came under government scrutiny. California first passed legislation protecting feral burros in 1957, and the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 further protected feral animals on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service land, exempting the Park Service because of the Leopold Report’s recommendations. Organizations such as the Fund For Animals (FFA) advocated other means of animal removal. While in some situations the FFA succeeded in safely removing animals, hunting exotic species remained an integral part of natural resources management policy in the park system.<sup>346</sup>

By the 1980s, exotic species management had become a flashpoint for the Park Service. The 1963 Leopold Report that defined resource management proposed that the park system preserve “vignettes of primitive America,” and by the 1980s, the agency had a firm policy of ridding parks of exotic animals and plants. In most parks, such management took place quietly, but eliminating large and visible animals provided a more complicated scenario than plant removal. Eradication programs had a long and checkered history in the park system. After the Grand Canyon experience with burros in the 1920s, the Park Service established removal or eradication as the dominant policies for exotic species. Desert parks long relied on eradication programs for feral species such as burros; as the 1970s began, full-scale programs to remove nonnative species became a common feature in the park system. During the following three decades, the standard established by the Leopold Report held.

When Lake Mead NRA undertook a burro management program in the late 1970s, it did so against the backdrop of FFA efforts at Grand Canyon National Park and Bandelier National Monument. The Grand Canyon’s box canyons allowed FFA teams to capture countless burros and remove them to protected federal lands, but at Bandelier the burros routinely escaped the open-ended canyons and frustrated their pursuers. Eventually, the FFA declared victory and left Bandelier. Armed Park Service teams then carried out an eradication program during a destructive fire that made the burros an easy target.<sup>347</sup> As Lake Mead NRA planned its program, these two models with totally differing outcomes served as object lessons.

The relationship between the Park Service and the FFA held particular interest for Lake Mead. Bordering the park, Grand Canyon became the focal point of the burro

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<sup>345</sup> Assistant Regional Director to Superintendent, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, June 23, 1952, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Chief Ranger S. J. Keefe, Memorandum, Burro Permits, March 1, 1962, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN, provides one of countless examples.

<sup>346</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 258-61; Hal K. Rothman, *On Rims and Ridges: The Los Alamos Area since 1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 277-81; Rothman, *The Greening of Nation?*, 53-64; Edwin L. Rothfuss, Tim Coonan, Shirley Harding, and Naomi L. Hunt, *An Administrative History of the Removal of Feral Burros from Death Valley National Monument*, March 1990, DEVA Catalogue 633 [repository unknown]; Michael Wolfe, “The Wild Horse and Burro Issue, 1982,” *Environmental Review* 7 (Summer 1983): 179-92; A. Starker Leopold, S. A. Cain, C. M. Cottam, et. al., *Wildlife Management in the National Parks* (Washington, D.C.: Advisory Board on Wildlife Management, 1963).

<sup>347</sup> Rothman, *On Rims and Ridges*, 277-81.

controversy, and much of the activity at Grand Canyon occurred under court jurisdiction. A group of burros, estimated at twelve in 1980 and called the Grand Wash Cliffs herd, crossed into Lake Mead NRA from the east, and their management became a joint endeavor between the two parks. Grand Canyon officials sought Lake Mead's permission to fence a reasonable estimate of the boundary line along natural features for speed and efficiency. Fencing seemed a far better alternative than eradication, even though shooting burros was legal in Lake Mead and on Nevada state acreage. The combination of FFA and the uproar over burro shoots at Bandelier National Monument persuaded Lake Mead officials to avoid a burro shoot. Although removal became the park's primary strategy, ongoing efforts failed to diminish the burro population significantly. Limited resources, the stunning reproduction rates of the species, and the inability to limit ingress and egress compelled cooperative management.<sup>348</sup>

The park's burro management plan engendered controversy with other agencies. When the FFA teams left the Grand Canyon after 1980 and asserted that there were no burros left, Lake Mead NRA officials discovered that a few burros remained on their side of the boundary line with Grand Canyon. Adjacent BLM lands contained considerably more burros, and because of a lack of fencing, the animals wandered between the two jurisdictions. On one side of the boundary, BLM regulations protected them; on the other side, the Park Service considered them a nuisance subject to removal. The two agencies attempted to cooperate until 1988, when the BLM suspended the burro management plan because it refused to concede that the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act exempted Park Service lands. "There were shouting matches," recalled Resource Management Chief Kent Turner. Action on the question was urgent. At that time, Lake Mead estimated as many as 2,000 burros remained inside its boundaries. "It was terrible," Alan O'Neill recalled. "They were eating us out of house and home." A year later, after a summit meeting at the Oliver Ranch near Red Rock, Nevada, Park Service and BLM officials reached an interim agreement. The listing of the desert tortoise as an endangered species in 1989 also assisted the process. It produced what Turner called "the handwriting on the wall" for high-impact species such as burros. The combination of the factors led to "the beginning of resolution," O'Neill recalled. Lake Mead anticipated initiating a burro management plan and attaining compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act in 1990-1991.<sup>349</sup>

Lake Mead's establishment of a formal resource management division in 1991 allowed greater attention to burro management along with other resource issues. A \$250,000 addition to the base budget for resource management permitted the park to implement more comprehensive strategies and to fund research to provide baseline wildlife data. The new emphasis provided support for studies of the burro undertaken in cooperation with the park unit at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. By 1993, the partnership had produced a "Review and Annotated Bibliography of Feral Burro Literature," an initial step in

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<sup>348</sup> Gary Kruiger to Jerry Wagers, Nov. 12, 1980 [repository unknown]; Acting Superintendent, Lake Mead National Recreation Area to Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Nov. 21, 1980, L1415, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>349</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1988, 19; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1989, 9; O'Neill, interview; Kent Turner, interview by Hal Rothman, Jan. 23, 2002 [repository unknown]; David Darlington, *The Mojave: A Portrait of the Definitive American Desert* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1996), 290-97.

understanding the burros' effects on the park. The impact of burros was obvious and Lake Mead needed to act.<sup>350</sup>

Following the leadership model that O'Neill worked to establish, Lake Mead entered into agreements for removal. This was both the result of conscious strategy and an attempt to avoid the rancor that surrounded burro removal at other parks. At both Death Valley and Grand Canyon, bad publicity and the threat of lawsuits preceded resolution and made compromise difficult. At Lake Mead National Recreation Area, O'Neill sought to avoid those pitfalls, bringing advocates into the process early. Collaboration resulted as Park Service found ways to accommodate burro advocates. "We just took an incredibly deep breath," O'Neill recalled. "because at any point someone could have hauled us into court." Recognizing that complete elimination of burros from the park was beyond reach, O'Neill's goal was to "zero out the burro population in most areas" with the cooperation of advocacy groups. Between 1995, when the participants approved the plan, and 2001, cowboy roundups and helicopter captures took out more than 1,500 burros. In a few joint use management areas that overlapped BLM lands, Lake Mead was willing to endure a very small number of burros. In the end, more than 90 percent of the park was free of burros; the remaining acres held small numbers. "It was far more successful than we expected," O'Neill remembered.<sup>351</sup>

Lake Mead NRA also engaged in the removal of exotic flora such as tamarisk and other noxious plants. Exotic plant eradication offered few of the social problems that animal removal inspired, as few among the public strongly identified with salt cedar or other opportunistic xeric plants. Tamarisk, or salt cedar, had invaded the beaches at Lake Mead, and beginning in the 1970s, the agency moved to eradicate this aggravating plant. At Five Springs in the Newberry Mountains in 1975, park personnel cut the plants and treated their stumps with Silvex, a herbicide that slowed but did not eliminate regrowth. In 1980, a bulldozer removed tamarisk from Telephone Cove North and South on the Arizona side of the reservoir. At one location, the plant resprouted, but the public drove over the new growth so often that it did not survive. At the other site, eradication was unsuccessful. In 1983, the agency began more systematic approaches to removal, trying four different strategies: thinning and pruning, clear-cutting, slashing and burning, and standing burns. No single method produced success, but the park found that repeated applications of any of them reduced the growth. In another effort, work crews destroyed 400,000 square feet of tamarisk with chainsaws on a beach near Cottonwood Cove in 1986.<sup>352</sup>

The persistent plant continued to vex park management. In 1988, Lake Mead and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, began a joint eradication effort. Crews used chainsaws to cut the existing growth and began using a propane torch to eliminate any regrowth on a monthly basis. The propane torch seemed to solve the problem of regrowth, but it also started a

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<sup>350</sup> Charles L. Douglas, and Thomas L. Hurst, *Review and Annotated Bibliography of Feral Burro Literature* (Las Vegas: Cooperative National Park Resources Study Unit, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, 1993); Lake Mead Annual Report, 1991, 12.

<sup>351</sup> O'Neill, interview; Turner, interview.

<sup>352</sup> *Draft Vegetation Management Plan, Lake Mead National Recreation Area* (December 1992), 85-86 [repository unknown].

number of fires. Places without densely packed vegetation avoided the problem of burning other plants, and by the fourth flaming, the tamarisk ceased to grow. The park also tried a different herbicide, Garlon 3A, and found that a combination of burning and preventive chemicals provided the best results. The park continued its effort with a new burn plan in 1991, and salt cedar, while not eradicated, became controlled within the park.<sup>353</sup>

Park personnel designed the removal of exotic species and flora to promote native species, and at Lake Mead NRA, the desert bighorn sheep was the most treasured one of the native species. Early research into the bighorn presence in the park proceeded slowly. Activities in the first years after Lake Mead's founding concentrated on infrastructure development, and World War II limited resources available for management. In 1942, Lake Mead personnel estimated 500 desert bighorn sheep lived within park boundaries but candidly admitted that the number was merely a guess. The lack of resources limited the park's ability to undertake much fieldwork. Even after the appointment of acting park naturalist Gordon Baldwin as wildlife ranger, Lake Mead could not really undertake research. It initiated no wildlife studies as managers decried the lack of personnel and resources. As late as 1947, the park knew little more than it did at the beginning of the decade, repeating the head count of 500 with little more information to substantiate it.<sup>354</sup>

Desert bighorn sheep did not respect park boundaries any more than any other mobile species, and so multijurisdictional cooperation became essential to efficient management. By the late 1950s, the Park Service had met with federal and state agencies to initiate procedures for animal management. In 1957, the participants agreed that burros were encroaching on the desert bighorn sheep, that the filling of Lake Mohave inundated some of the best grazing area for the bighorn, and that escaped domestic sheep might have caused a reduction in the bighorn population. Park officials recognized that they did not have sufficient information to make the best management decisions about the desert bighorn sheep, but Lake Mead did not possess resources to devote to the issue. Yet the actions established a pattern of cooperation, and the park and other entities continued to cooperate. The second Desert Bighorn Sheep Council meeting convened in April 1958, beginning a series of annual meetings designed to address ongoing concerns.<sup>355</sup>

The different agencies shared a common responsibility but their goals diverged. The Park Service treated desert bighorn sheep as a display species, while agencies such as Arizona Fish and Game and the Nevada Division of Wildlife viewed them as a commodity they could manage for sustained yield for hunters. The federal and state agencies disagreed about the treatment of the animals, often advocating different policies for removal, relocation, and accessibility, yet their interaction showed respect for differences in perspective. Since the

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<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-8; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1988, 19; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1991, 33.

<sup>354</sup> Annual Wildlife Report for the Boulder Dam National Recreational Area, 1942; Rose, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Nov. 2, 1943; Wildlife Observation Report for 1947, Lake Mead Recreational Area, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>355</sup> Supervisory Park Naturalist, Memorandum: Bighorn Sheep Meeting, Las Vegas, NV, May 2, 1957, May 10, 1957, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Park Naturalist to Supervisory Park Naturalist, Memorandum: Yuma Bighorn Conference, April 21, 1958, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

agencies needed one another, they compromised, furthering one of the primary venues of interagency interaction. When tension flared, as it often did, hunting of the desert bighorn sheep provided the source.<sup>356</sup>

Hunting provided an ongoing flashpoint in Lake Mead's relationship with surrounding agencies and constituencies. To many westerners, hunting was a birthright, part of living in a sparsely populated region that as late as the 1950s was still close to the rural past. The Park Service adamantly opposed hunting in national park areas. Parks were for education and recreation, the agency averred, and as early as 1918, the Park Service prohibited hunting in national parks. If animals had to be shot, the Park Service dispatched rangers for the task. The activity was supposed to appear to be a chore, not a sport. Only when it deemed population reduction of a species as essential would the Park Service even consider hunting permits for the public in national parks. Even under intense but episodic pressure from western constituencies, such as the 1944 resolution of the Western Association of Game and Fish Commissioners to allow hunting in national parks under state-issued licenses, the Park Service did not relent. At Lake Mead NRA, even the lesser status of a national recreation area did not cause any weakening in the agency's position. In 1939, Park Service Solicitor George A. Moskey held to that principle after inquiries from the Union Pacific Railroad about making the park accessible to hunters.<sup>357</sup>

By the late 1940s, pressure on Lake Mead to permit hunting arose anew from several quarters. Local groups chastised Lake Mead for not allowing hunting in the new Lake Mohave-Davis Dam addition and the always antigovernment *Las Vegas Review-Journal* took up the hunters' cause. Park Service Director Newton B. Drury, the most openly preservationist director of the agency's first fifty years, held to existing policy, but when Conrad L. Wirth took over in 1953, he championed the cause of recreationists, including hunters. Wirth permitted hunting in national recreation areas and, because of the overpopulation of elk, at Grand Teton National Park. Because of an agreement with game and fish officials in Nevada and Arizona, Lake Mead NRA agreed late in 1951 to open to hunting two areas, one area near Overton and a larger area south of Boulder City and adjacent to Davis Dam.<sup>358</sup>

Hunting presented an important safety issue for Lake Mead. The Park Service sought to protect its visitors by keeping hunting away from areas frequented by bathers, boaters, people fishing, and other recreational visitors. Typically, the agency barred hunting within one mile of the shoreline of the lake, restricting even larger areas where visitor use was

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<sup>356</sup> Lawrence Powell to Charles A. Richey, June 1, 1962, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Charles A. Richey to R. J. Smith, June 6, 1962, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; R. J. Smith to Charles A. Richey, July 11, 1962, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>357</sup> George A. Moskey, Memorandum for the Supervisor, Boulder Dam National Recreation Area, Nov. 24, 1939 [repository unknown]; John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 598; Wright, *Wildlife Research and Management in the National Parks*, 46-47.

<sup>358</sup> George Bagglely, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Nov. 4, 1947, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; "Hard to Understand," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Nov. 3, 1947; Memorandum for the Press, Oct. 12, 1951, B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 180.

heavier. To avoid controversy with state game officials, Lake Mead insisted that closures resulted from public safety concerns, not the desire to protect game. Although the health of bighorn populations remained an issue, the Park Service could not persuade local communities that protection was a viable reason to deny citizens a permit to hunt.<sup>359</sup>

After 1951, the Park Service did not bend any more. Hunting was a significant step away from conventional agency policy, one more marker of the differences between national recreation areas and other park areas, but the agency had a long history of defending its prerogatives against local pressure. If the Park Service had to permit hunting in Lake Mead, it would, but it would only do so under its own terms. Agency officials refused to allow local desires to dictate national policy, but neither did the agency have sufficient research on population size and habits to make decisions on any scientific basis.<sup>360</sup> The Park Service financed a number of studies and closely followed the work of scholars who studied the bighorn. If the Park Service lacked resources to support its own research, it could certainly follow other scholars and use their work.

By the early 1960s, public pressure on Lake Mead had shifted, and hunting became more difficult to retain. In 1961, Lake Mead suggested tightening park hunting regulations, protecting larger areas, and having the states' game and fish departments issue fewer hunting permits. The park's stance initiated a decade-long struggle. Arizona and Nevada advocated greater opportunities to hunt within national park boundaries. The Park Service, in turn, successfully presented the expansion of visitation and the growing number of visitors to Lake Mead as the primary reason to curtail hunting, not only close to the shoreline, but also in the growing number of areas heavily visited or under development away from the reservoir. State sport hunting supporters and the public agencies acting on their behalf responded with pressure, but Superintendent Charles Richey refused to back down.

The Colorado River Wildlife Council, formed in the 1950s as part of the effort to manage wildlife resources jointly, became a constituent of hunting interests, passing a resolution in favor of hunting in 1964. By 1965, relations between the Park Service and the supporters of hunting interests deteriorated and Arizona Game and Fish Director Wendell Swank called Richey "over zealous" about hunting regulations and beseeched Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to remove the superintendent. An Arizonan but a staunch conservationist, Udall had little sympathy for the hunting argument. He surprised Swank when he suggested that hunters only target excess population, an argument that the Park Service dared not risk. Udall's firm resolve brought the two sides together. The Park Service again held firm in refusing to open the triangle area, between Willow Beach and Hoover Dam and U.S. 93-466 and the Colorado River. The park was prepared to relent and allow hunting up to the highway, but the game and fish people refused this compromise, assuring park

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<sup>359</sup> "New Areas Opened to Hunting by National Park Service at Lake Mead," Press Release, Sept. 4, 1952, B88, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; H. K. Buchner, "The Bighorn Sheep in the United States: Its Past, Present, and Future," *Wildlife Monograph* 4,(1960).

<sup>360</sup> Chief of Interpretation to Regional Director, Region Four, April 4, 1954 [repository unknown]; Superintendent, Lake Mead to Regional Director, Region Three, May 11, 1954, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.



representatives that the issue was not dead.<sup>361</sup>

The 1965 controversy intertwined two very different issues. On one level, the battle was a very typical state-federal dispute, aggravated by the fact that the two states bordering Lake Mead issued hunting permits for use within park boundaries, but the park had complete jurisdiction over where hunters could go. Even the complaint to Udall was typical; state agencies and individuals often pressured federal agencies by writing to the political appointee in charge of the department. Lake Mead's growth in visitations called the question. With more people on the beaches, on the roads, on boats, and in the area generally, public safety had developed into an enormous concern. The Park Service rightly feared a firearms accident while the game and fish people stubbornly held to patterns of an earlier time, when far fewer park visitors made it possible for individuals to fulfill their desires without affecting anyone else. Lake Mead reflected the future well ahead of the rest of southern Nevada. Its situation had already passed from a wide-open individualistic world to the more crowded and regulated world that soon followed.

Yet the Park Service needed cooperative relations with state fish and game agencies to carry out its assigned mandates, and any level of rancor had an impact on the relationships. While retaining the ability to forbid hunting, Lake Mead managers chose to facilitate a compromise. They allowed hunting by permit within the triangle area in one circumstance: when an employee of the Arizona Game and Fish Department accompanied the hunter and was accountable for his behavior. While the decision could be construed as capitulation, it also reflected the need to maintain and bolster an ongoing relationship with state agencies. Park Service officials slyly anticipated that the move would hamstring the state agencies; none would want to invest the workpower to accompany hunters. Arizona's game and fish department had earlier granted five permits for bighorn hunting on the assumption that Lake Mead would open the area. The park's initial decision stunned that state agency. The compromise allowed Arizona to cater to its constituency, albeit at expensive cost in workpower.<sup>362</sup>

The agreement soon yielded dividends, for it began discussions between the two agencies about coordinating wildlife management plans. The Park Service had delineated an agenda for wildlife management in national recreation areas, and the agency offered it as a model. The two agencies worked more closely together in 1966, continuing the arrangement without the rancor that marked 1965.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Charles A. Richey to Sidney Welsh, June 28, 1961 [repository unknown]; Robert Sharp to Robert A. Jantzen, Aug. 11, 1964, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Charles A. Richey to Wendell Swank, Oct. 6, 1965, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Wendell Swank to Charles Richey, Sept. 16, 1965, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Wendell Swank to Stewart Udall, Oct. 28, 1965, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Wendell Swank to Director, National Park Service, Oct. 29, 1965, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Chief Park Ranger, Memorandum: Meeting with Arizona Game and Fish Department, Bighorn Sheep Hunt, 1965, Nov. 1, 1965, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>362</sup> Wendell G. Swank to Director, Oct. 29, 1965; "An Agreement between the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Lake Mead National Recreation Area Regarding Bighorn Sheep Hunting in Certain Areas of the Recreation Area for the 1965 Season," B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>363</sup> Chief Park Naturalist to Assistant Superintendent, Oct. 31, 1966, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Wendell Swank to Charles A. Richey, June 23, 1966, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Superintendent,

By the mid-1960s, shifting public use patterns made the agreement to allow hunting in the triangle area anachronistic. The area between Willow Beach and Hoover Dam had become one of the focuses of visitor interest in Lake Mead. Each year more people came to the beaches, more traveled on boats along the lake, and by the end of the 1960s, hiking had become a popular pastime. Each of these activities meant more people in the area and made even the supervised discharge of firearms an increasing threat to public safety. The Park Service faced a dilemma: it needed Arizona Game and Fish as a partner for its activities, but accommodating one of that agency's more fervent desires, bighorn hunting in the triangle, had become increasingly difficult.

In the late 1960s, Lake Mead responded to the public's changing values. The environmental revolution sent millions of Americans into the outdoors, and the experience many sought was a gentle nature, filled with animals to admire. In 1966, the Park Service began to create a more viable environment in which to view the bighorn, further pulling its management objectives away from those of surrounding agencies. The park planned a Bighorn Sheep Trail to facilitate visitor observation, a decision compelled by increasing public interest in the herds. Such decisions pulled Lake Mead NRA closer to the realm of the rest of the national park system and further from state agencies such as Arizona Game and Fish. In 1968, the agency's new policies coalesced. In response to an effort to permit the trapping of a River Mountains desert bighorn sheep herd, Chief Park Naturalist Douglas B. Evans observed: "This herd is an important recreational resource for visitors in the Boulder Beach area. They should be given all possible protection."<sup>364</sup>

After NEPA's implementation in 1970, natural resource management proceeded in close concert with statutory obligations. The new regulations about federal conduct in the environment prompted several changes in Park Service policy. In 1975, the agency moved to manage all its areas in the same way, ending the distinctions between different kinds of areas that had been codified in the mid-1960s in disparate management practices for natural, historic, and recreational park areas. At the same time, after 1977, the agency eliminated the practice of assigning parks to a single category, recognizing that singular management practices for each did not do justice to the range of resources included in individual areas in the system.<sup>365</sup> At Lake Mead NRA, this decision furthered the patterns of management that had been developing in the 1960s, with the increasing emphasis on conventional visitors and the gradual diminishing of hunting options. The combination of NEPA and policy changes within the agency made natural resource management at Lake Mead NRA much more a reflection of larger Park Service trends.

The transformation of management policy in the 1970s allowed the Park Service to

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Memorandum: Meeting with Dr. Wendell Swank and Staff of Arizona Game and Fish, June 16, 1966, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1966.

<sup>364</sup> Chief Park Naturalist, Memorandum: Proposed Bighorn Sheep Trail, Oct. 31, 1966, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Douglas B. Evans to Acting Superintendent, Aug. 1, 1968, B273, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>365</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1985), 89-90; Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?*, 110-17.

treat Lake Mead NRA as it did any other national park, monument, battlefield, or seashore. The new policy diminished the stigma of recreation within the Park Service, and Lake Mead NRA became subject to the same rules and regulations as Yellowstone and Grand Canyon. The new status meant considerable difference in the goals of park management. For much of Lake Mead's history, natural resource management had meant administering the regional environment for the enjoyment of boaters, bathers, people fishing, and hunters. Beginning in the late 1970s, park management took a broader range of natural resource issues at Lake Mead NRA into account.

By the late 1980s, Lake Mead had embarked on a planning process to bring resource management up to both congressional and agency standards. When Superintendent Alan O'Neill arrived in 1987, the park had only one resource management person. O'Neill's reinvigoration of the park transformed resource management. Congressional add-ons helped support resource management, and the resources led to the planning that was the hallmark of O'Neill's tenure. In 1989, scoping sessions to assess the recreation area's needs took place. The research group found more than thirty outside influences that had the potential to degrade park resources, twenty-two existing conditions that did not meet agency standards, and noted that more than thirty basic park inventories were lacking.<sup>366</sup> After almost sixty years as a recreational unit, Lake Mead NRA finally received the same kind and type of planning as did other areas in the park system.

The promotion of Kent Turner to chief of resource management in October 1990 inaugurated a new era in resource management. Turner arrived at Lake Mead National Recreation Area as the assistant chief ranger in 1989, and until his promotion, the entire area of resource management consisted of only three staff members. A series of reasons led to the creation of the new division. Throughout the 1980s, resource management divisions developed throughout the national park system; Lake Mead National Recreation Area was late to the process. At the same time, a Regional Office operations review of the park in 1989 recommended the creation of a resource management division. The new division both got the park in line with the rest of the system and strengthened Lake Mead's focus on resource management.<sup>367</sup>

Described by O'Neill as a "workhorse, not a show horse," Turner quickly implemented a comprehensive resource management strategy. "Quietly and behind the scenes," O'Neill observed, "the park developed a strong program with an ample funding base." Funding rose from \$100,000 per year to more than \$1 million in a very few years, making possible an entire array of programs that could never have been contemplated before. The initial priorities came from the strategic planning process. "First do no harm," became the credo. The park was losing resources in a range of areas. Active cattle grazing, 2,000 burros in the park, illegal off-road vehicle use, and other problems abounded. The first steps were reactive and low cost: "what could we do for \$5,000 that somebody ten years from now would say: 'thank God they did that,'" became the initial yardstick. At one spring that stock watering had damaged, the park reached an agreement that allowed it to fence the spring and pipe

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<sup>366</sup> *Resource Management Plan*, 7-8

<sup>367</sup> O'Neil, interview; Kent Turner, interview.

water outside the fence to the animals. Despite these quick actions, most of the major problems required long-term planning.<sup>368</sup>

This continuing process demanded the comprehensive planning at which the Park Service excelled, but the agency had rarely applied such efforts to Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Base increases for riparian restoration in 1993 and for burro management in 1994 revealed the increase in significance of the park's resources not only within the agency but with Congress as well. Senator Harry Reid of Nevada helped secure these appropriations at a rare time, and through an interpretation of congressional intent, the park was able to retain both the base appropriations and \$360,000 of professionalization money. This windfall gave the park a total of seven new positions—a second wildlife biologist, a restoration specialist, a GIS specialist, a range conservation specialist, and a general resource manager among them—as well as the base appropriation for burro management. As a result, Lake Mead National Recreation Area was able to accelerate the development of its resource management programs. Censuses of animals and other baseline data followed preparation for a full-fledged resource management plan.<sup>369</sup>

The 1994 *Resource Management Plan* established natural resource management priorities far different from any previous version at Lake Mead. The document appeared to be more than a mere resource management plan; it was simultaneously a call for the collection of baseline data and the assessment of the park's current condition. Issues that park personnel believed needed immediate action included the impact of feral burros, effects of current and past cattle grazing, current and past soil surface disturbances, disruption of desert springs and riparian areas, potential disruption of groundwater and surface water, revegetation and soil restoration needs, endangered species management for the desert tortoise (already the subject of a complicated agreement in the Las Vegas Valley) and attendant concern for declining razorback sucker populations. The park also sought the development of water monitoring and aquatic resources program, and facilities for assessing threatened and endangered plant and animal species, including Endangered Species Act issues such as the desert tortoise, desert bighorn sheep, bald eagles, and bear paw or bear poppy management.<sup>370</sup>

Most striking about the 1994 *Resource Management Plan* was its tone in both natural and cultural resources management. The plan sought to “allow natural ecological processes to dictate the character of the recreation area's ecosystems in the natural zones and to the extent possible in other zones of the park.” Cultural resources also received new treatment. Again the absence of baseline data hamstrung the park's response. Collecting data and utilizing the park's collections, including those housed at the Western Archaeological and Conservation Center in Tucson, Arizona, provided an avenue to understand the park's history. Emphasis on the historic period grew out of the plan, with mining and CCC activities

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<sup>368</sup> Turner, interview; O'Neill, interview.

<sup>369</sup> Turner, interview.

<sup>370</sup> *Resource Management Plan*.

taking the forefront in CRM activities.<sup>371</sup>

The departure from historic practice in the *Resource Management Plan* was more than symbolic. It suggested new dimensions in management for the man-made lakes, a new fealty to the principles of the Park Service and the rest of the park system. After not being thought of a resource management park as late as the 1980s, the implementation of new strategies reversed the perception of the park. By the end of the 1990s, Lake Mead National Recreation Area was considered a leader in resource management, a major step that resulted from a combination of emphasis, the application of resources, and changes in the perception by park staff. After more than a half-century of ambiguity concerning its position in the system, Lake Mead National Recreation Area had finally come into its own. The Park Service has managed the unit as a peer area since the 1960s, and federal statutes have acknowledged it as a peer since the 1970s. The *Resource Management Plan* put an official stamp on the new status. It was proof that Lake Mead NRA was now considered a “real” national park in terms of resource protection and preservation. The quality of the resource management program, “one of the very best in the park system,” O’Neill averred in 2002, demonstrated the success.<sup>372</sup> The elevation of resource management to the same central role at Lake Mead NRA as everywhere else in the national park system completed a long progression for the park adjacent to Hoover Dam.

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<sup>371</sup> *Resource Management Plan*, 1-5.

<sup>372</sup> O’Neill, interview.



## CHAPTER SIX

### GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT INTERACTION

Lake Mead National Recreation Area sits amid a complicated array of federal, state, and local jurisdictions, each of which has an impact on activities. The park's most important partners have always been and remain other government agencies. In fact, Lake Mead was born of such interaction, with its establishment resulting from an agreement between two federal agencies. Its primary location in Nevada, the state with the largest percentage of federal land of any in the union, has prompted a greater degree of interaction with other federal agencies than is common elsewhere in the park system. Many of the park's most important operations have also involved cooperation with state, local, and regional entities in both Nevada and Arizona.

While the need for cooperative effort has remained constant during the park's operation, the Park Service's relationship with outside agencies shifted dramatically after Congress rewrote the park's underlying legislation in 1964. As in every other dimension of park management, the Park Service played a junior role in its external affairs during the twenty-eight years following Lake Mead's 1936 establishment. The park's power in interagency relations increased after 1945 and became a viable force before the 1964 legislation, but true autonomy and independent action only came in the new legal structure's aftermath. The Park Service's most important relationship at Lake Mead has been with the Bureau of Reclamation, which initially controlled the acreage operated by the Park Service. After the 1964 legislation, the Park Service gained direct control over the land and the resources it managed and was able to redefine its administrative agenda with greater clarity. Other federal agencies, especially the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), played important roles in shaping Park Service policy, and the 1964 legislation had similar impacts on their relationship with the park. State government agencies, such as Arizona Game and Fish and Nevada Division of Wildlife, have shared a stake in park policy, and a range of multigovernment entities, such as the Southern Nevada Water Authority, also have had consistent interaction with Lake Mead NRA. Nongovernmental organizations also play a key role in influencing park operations.

Lake Mead NRA needed partners for structural reasons uncommon in the rest of the national park system. In administrating its other units, the Park Service sought to forge its own way. It operated by a set of principles different from other federal land management agencies, for it alone typically served national rather than regional and local constituencies. That management independence at Lake Mead depended on receiving adequate resources, a circumstance impeded by the Nevada unit's status as a national recreation area. Park Service personnel usually deemed those areas deemed less worthy of agency attention than other designations until the 1970s. As a result, the cooperative nature of relationships with other federal agencies at Lake Mead NRA resulted from more than proximity. It equally followed

the patterns of funding within the Park Service. Each year, Lake Mead NRA's budgetary allotment typically did not provide the park the resources to meet its management goals. As a result, these circumstances strengthened the ties between the park and its nearby partners.

Lake Mead NRA has as complex a set of intergovernmental relations as any unit in the national park system. While many of these relationships are two-party agreements that address a specific issue, an increasing number draw in several agencies at different levels of government to resolve a host of concerns. In many ways, the variety of agreements and the range of participants in them reflect the complicated nature of management when the federal government creates park areas within previously established land use designations. At Lake Mead NRA, as at urban and semi-urban national recreation areas, the Park Service functions as just one of many influences on regional land use. Other agencies hold adjacent and sometimes overlapping jurisdiction and share missions and constituencies with the Park Service. Those missions can and do differ, leading to turf battles and political maneuvers that often masquerade as solutions to real issues. In general, cooperation worked best when the various agencies faced a mutual threat, rather than when the actions of one agency provided it an opportunity to extend its own authority.

Other agencies played a key role in defining the national recreation area's boundaries. While the majority of the Park Service's boundary adjustments surrounding the two reservoirs involved the Bureau of Reclamation, changes to external borders required liaison with the Bureau of Land Management or the U.S. Forest Service, the two agencies that controlled most of the land surrounding Lake Mead. Such negotiations required even more complicated negotiations, for the Park Service could not accept such lands without including in the discussions the Bureau of Reclamation, which retained ultimate authority for the region. Lake Mead's expansion efforts between 1936 and 1964 required many meetings among federal and sometimes state land managers near the park.<sup>373</sup>

The Park Service persisted in its desire to reshape Lake Mead's boundaries to meet agency needs. In 1938, Director Arno B. Cammerer forwarded a proposal to the secretary of the interior to add lands of scenic and scientific value, to shift acreage used mainly for grazing from Grand Canyon National Monument to Lake Mead NRA, and to simplify and clarify the park boundaries established in 1936. The Park Service sought additional land around Las Vegas Wash, where the expanding reservoir spread beyond the park's boundary as waters piled up behind Boulder Dam. Cammerer proposed the addition of a buffer strip about 2.5 miles wide.<sup>374</sup> The Park Service had already earned a reputation throughout the federal government for never being satisfied with its boundaries, and its efforts did not catch competitors unaware. In typical fashion, the agency aimed to extend its boundaries until it served all possible agency purposes, a goal eventually achieved.

The Park Service push emanated from the 1936 agreement that failed to resolve the question of which agency administered exactly what land around the reservoir. The original

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<sup>373</sup> Memorandum to Legislative Counsel, Office of the Solicitor, from Director, National Park Service, March 1, 1957, File L1417, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>374</sup> Memorandum to the Secretary, Oct. 7, 1938, S38, 711, T Archiva, ACC #4514, Lake Mead NRA archives.



discussions left the Bureau of Reclamation in control of the areas necessary to operate and maintain Boulder Dam, assigning the remainder of the withdrawn land to the Park Service for recreational purposes. This arrangement ceded to the Park Service a large region that surrounded the small area adjacent to the lake. Accepting the agreement as policy further hindered the limited Park Service options, as Ben Thompson of the NPS pointed out in 1945. With predominant value as a measure, Thompson pointed out that the Bureau of Reclamation had a “negative interest” in withdrawn lands without direct value to the dam.<sup>375</sup>

Thompson picked an opportune moment to challenge the Bureau of Reclamation’s dominance at Lake Mead. In the immediate postwar years, the Bureau of Reclamation emerged as the handmaiden and sometimes the catalyst of power in Congress. Especially after the ascent of Floyd Dominy to bureau chief in 1954, the Bureau of Reclamation carried out an enormous agenda of dam building in conjunction with the rise of the “water buffaloes,” the collection of western congressional representatives and senators who assured their continued elections by bringing enormous federal development projects home to their districts and states. Lyndon B. Johnson used this kind of federal pork barreling to aid his rise through the Senate and then to the presidency. The careers of western politicians as important and diverse as Wayne Aspinall of Colorado, Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico, and Alan Bible of Nevada depended on the federal projects they secured for their states. Dominy could facilitate such projects and he became the equal of most legislators, a power broker in his own right. The Bureau of Land Management, a new enthusiastic agency, found itself responsible for millions and millions of dollars in federal water projects.<sup>376</sup> Land management at Lake Mead NRA quickly fell low on its list of management priorities.

In addition to seeking to rethink Lake Mead’s boundary issues, Thompson also sought to expand Park Service authority over activities such as mining and grazing within its boundaries. The area’s park characteristics were “unquestionably its dominant potentialities,” Thompson believed. “It is a region famous for scenery. It is not a region for cow pastures or for mining.” Greater agency control offered the opportunity to make the national recreation area conform more closely to park system standards. Quick resolution of the many mining claims and other reservations and an end to other agencies’ jurisdiction on the lands withdrawn by the Bureau of Reclamation could set the stage for the wholesale application of Park Service standards. Park resources of real significance were at stake at Lake Mead, Thompson insisted, explaining,

Their salvation cannot be achieved under the old familiar national park pattern but must be worked out under a less restrictive type of reservation in which it is our responsibility to achieve and maintain the proper relationship between the dominant and subordinate uses. This is an opportunity which we cannot afford to muffle. The degree of success with which we work out the

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<sup>375</sup> Ben H. Thompson, “Report to Mr. M. R. Tillotson, Regional Director, National Park Service, Region Three, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Concerning the Boundaries of Boulder Dam National Recreation Area” (Santa Fe: National Park Service, 1945), S3B 711 T Archiva, ACC #4514, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>376</sup> Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); John McPhee, *Encounters with the ArchDruid* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971).

protection and best use of the park resources in this Area may well determine for the indefinite future whether the conservation of public lands for cultural purposes is to be a continuing function of the Federal Government or whether it ended with the establishment of Jackson Hole National Monument.<sup>377</sup>

In the Jackson Hole National Monument controversy of the 1940s, the Park Service acquired a new park area near Grand Teton National Park over the objections of not only local residents but also Wyoming's congressional delegation. The agency coveted the land for the park for years, and during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the monument. The uproar was instantaneous; the Forest Service, which previously administered the land, fomented a regional revolt, and even part-time regional residents, such as the actor Wallace Beery, became involved. In protest, Beery illegally drove a herd across the new monument. The Park Service did not arrest him largely because of his fame. In the end, the state of Wyoming sued to overturn the monument proclamation and lost, but between 1945, when Roosevelt handed down the decision to create the monument, and 1979, when Jimmy Carter established the Alaskan national monuments, no president established a new national monument without the prior concurrence of Congress.<sup>378</sup> When Thompson warned of a Jackson Hole National Monument-like situation in 1945, he highlighted one of the era's primary threats to the Park Service's autonomy.

During the same time, the Park Service also formed relationships with other partners. One of the earliest interagency agreements at Lake Mead joined the Park Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in an effort to develop the recreational lands near the Hualapai Indian Reservation east of the park. The federal government established the approximately 900,000-acre reservation in 1883, but the Hualapai were far from the main corridors of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century settlement. During the 1930s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs sought ways to raise funds from Indian lands, and an agreement with the Park Service followed. The document, approved on November 11, 1937, assigned responsibilities to the two agencies. As was typical at the time, it failed to provide for direct tribal participation in the management of reservation lands. Both government agencies were to coordinate development on lands abutting or within the reservation. They were to avoid duplication of projects involving archeological investigations, wildlife management, and mineral resource protection, as well as facilities and infrastructure development.<sup>379</sup> Such an arrangement required integration of planning between the two agencies, a novel idea at the time that has become standard practice since then.

Overlapping boundaries and responsibilities to different stakeholders led to turf battles

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<sup>377</sup> Thompson, "Report to Mr. M. R. Tillotson."

<sup>378</sup> Robert W. Righter, *Crucible for Conservation: The Creation of Grand Teton National Park* (Niwot, Colo.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982), 103-25; Hal K. Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 214-22.

<sup>379</sup> Cooperative Agreement between the National Park Service and the Office of Indian Affairs Relating to the Development of the Boulder Dam Recreation Area, Nov. 5, 1937, Lake Mead NRA archives. For more on the situation of Native Americans in the 1930s, see Lawrence C. Kelly, *The Assault on Assimilation: John Collier and the Origins of Indian Policy Reform* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983); and Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 250-310.

among the various state and federal agencies, a reality when bureaus shared not only authority over lands but also mission and sometimes constituency. Most such conflicts occurred on paper, when the players grappled over stretches of lands that were already in governmental hands but over which they all sought control. Seemingly trivial, such small conflicts often had much larger ramifications, for they could temporarily or even permanently sour the spirit of cooperation essential to managing the diverse resources of Lake Mead and its environs. On the highest level, federal agencies had no better allies than one another, but the level of tension between them could preclude the interagency endeavors necessary to fulfill all of their obligations.

Interagency cooperative efforts resulted in permanent changes to Boulder Dam National Recreational Area soon after its establishment. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), an arm of the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), played as significant a role in infrastructure development at Boulder Dam as it did in much of the rest of the park system. The recreation area typically housed two CCC camps throughout the Great Depression. In addition to assignment to construction projects, many of the CCC personnel were involved in other projects, such as archeological work below Hoover Dam in anticipation of Davis Dam's construction. Before World War II ended the labor program, CCC workers and Bureau of Reclamation teams, as one of a host of projects, added to the park's recreational capabilities by increasing the capacity of Boulder Beach's campgrounds. The CCC camps finally closed at Lake Mead during summer 1943. By early August, all CCC supervisory and technical personnel were off duty and unavailable for projects. U.S. Army personnel had to assist Lake Mead's staff, already depleted by enlistments and wartime commitments, in completing the final stages of the CCC undertakings.<sup>380</sup>

Interagency cooperation also led to dramatic changes in Lake Mead's road infrastructure. In 1943, two factories built to support the nation's war effort, Basic Magnesium, Inc., in Henderson, and the Manganese Ore Company, south of Hoover Dam, needed a connecting road to transfer materials. The route that wartime administrators preferred ran through the national recreation area, and the federal government quickly authorized it. Crews and equipment provided by the U.S. Forest Service handled the actual construction through the recreation area's lands. Officials of the Nevada Highway Department, which represented the Public Roads Administration, the agency responsible for federal road projects, supervised the effort. The crews completed the road, one of several built inside Lake Mead to meet wartime demands, by the end of the year.<sup>381</sup>

While cooperation between the Park Service and agencies such as the CCC and the Forest Service often proved directly beneficial to Lake Mead, other relationships were not as smooth. The inability to resolve boundary issues often complicated the relationship between the Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation. As the situation weighed on both agencies,

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<sup>380</sup> Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, May 2, 1942, B93, Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, San Bruno, CA (hereafter NARA-SB); Memorandum for the Director, Annual Report – Fiscal Year 1943, Dec. 9, 1943, B87, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

the separation of agency personnel hardened into mutual disaffection. A 1949 Park Service report noted that the number of staff members involved in cooperative efforts was “rather limited,” explaining that the Bureau of Reclamation had not assigned any officials to work with the Park Service. The boundary problem was not the only source of interagency conflict: the shortage of housing in Boulder City remained a more immediate source of friction. Housing became a crucial issue that often impeded cooperation in other areas. In the city that it built and ran for administration of Hoover Dam, the Bureau of Reclamation controlled housing. Park Service employees, forced by the park’s location to take whatever government housing was available, were rarely pleased with the limited choices offered. From their secondary position at Lake Mead, Park Service officials regarded housing as the definitive issue, the one that best revealed the Bureau of Reclamation’s intentions toward cooperation. Criticisms of the policy that governed the assignment of housing to non-Reclamation staff abounded. In 1947, the Park Service announced plans for a federal housing conference in Boulder City. “This is a most encouraging proposal,” an agency memo suggested. “The morale of the Government agencies here, other than the Bureau of Reclamation, has been damaged by the Bureau’s unfair allocation of houses.”<sup>382</sup> Although the meeting took place, no resolution was attained.

Three years later, the situation between the two agencies had not improved and the friction reached the Department of the Interior’s highest echelons. Newton B. Drury, the Park Service’s director, unleashed a flood of complaints in 1950 about the Bureau of Reclamation. After again complaining about the Bureau’s mishandling of local housing, Drury revived an old complaint about the bureau’s wartime takeover of the hospital building in Boulder City and the resulting loss of Park Service administrative offices. He also attacked the Bureau’s “quick seizure” of the hanger built by the U.S. Navy at the Boulder City airport, “even though the interbureau agreement specifies that the Park Service shall carry the responsibility for the airport.”<sup>383</sup> The two agencies, thoroughly unequal in power, approached a feud.

Although the 1936 agreement defined generalized boundaries between the Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, it failed to offer guidelines for other land management decisions between the agencies. This encouraged unilateral and sometimes cavalier decision making by all parties. In February 1949, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Land Management together agreed to redraw the recreation area’s boundaries, removing a large tract between Las Vegas Wash and Boulder City, releasing the land to allow mining and other activities. The following year, the Park Service ignored input from the Bureau of Reclamation in the discussions about the inclusion of Valley of Fire in Lake Mead NRA. Despite federal plans for Valley of Fire, Nevada decided early in the 1950s to retain the area for a state park. Not all the interactions proved to be failures, especially when senior agency officials could see the benefits accruing to joint action. A 1952 example of cooperative

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<sup>382</sup> George F. Baggley to James G. Carroll, Bureau of the Budget, Sept. 16, 1949, B91, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Minutes of Staff Meeting, Aug. 29, 1947, B80, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>383</sup> Newton B. Drury to Secretary of the Interior, April 14, 1950, D2215 “LAME,” Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

endeavors had funding from the Bureau of Reclamation allowing the organization of planning crews to survey the area surrounding the newly created Lake Mohave for suitability as recreational sites. This project expanded the Park Service's mission of providing visitor services on Bureau of Reclamation lands by relieving the bureau of the responsibility.<sup>384</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, Lake Mead NRA continued to deal with stronger outside agencies, and among the successful cooperative endeavors were a host of failed ventures. The park was unable to make its desires a primary objective of joint planning in many situations. In other projects, financial limitations precluded strong agency action. In 1950, the Bureau of Public Roads completed field surveys for a 3.7-mile road from Arizona State Highway 68 near Davis Dam to the Katherine Development Site and for the improvement of 5.3 miles of Route 6 between Boulder City and West Gate of Hoover Dam under an existing cooperative agreement. Three years later, Lake Mead NRA and the Mohave County Board of Supervisors planned to resume work on the Bonelli's Landing–Temple Bar cutoff road, a project started and interrupted the previous year. The county had primary responsibility for financing the roadwork. The Park Service promised to supply men and equipment to help, but placed a ceiling of \$1,000 on its contribution.<sup>385</sup>

The question of state authority over routes through Lake Mead NRA arose at different levels within the Park Service in 1954. Director Conrad L. Wirth wanted to know why Nevada refused to shoulder the entire cost of construction for roads leading to and from Lake Mead when Arizona eagerly accepted this responsibility. Later in the year, Nevada's recalcitrance again raised questions within the Park Service. The state insisted on joint maintenance of a road leading to Hoover Dam, agency officials complained, when Arizona was willing to fully maintain its portion of the road south of the dam. The Park Service resisted the state's insistence on it assuming obligation for road maintenance, arguing that it collected no fees or gas tax revenues from the through road and officials did not see why the agency should be forced to pay to maintain it.<sup>386</sup> Again, the secondary position of the agency hampered its ability to persuade other entities of its perspective.

To reduce boundary issues as a source of ongoing tension, the Park Service devised an administrative method of delineating areas of "dominant interest." For park planning purposes, Wirth divided Lake Mead into three classes of land use in 1954. One category focused on the Bureau of Reclamation's water storage project and its associated facilities, another offered only recreation opportunities, and a third combined primarily recreational functions with other compatible uses, such as mining and grazing. When the Park Service drew the boundaries it coveted for the recreation area, Wirth wrote, "I believe the objective is to delineate an area whose over-all purpose is for recreation, even though there may be

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<sup>384</sup> Memorandum for the Director, June 10, 1949, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Regional Director to Superintendent, June 13, 1950, B92, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1952.

<sup>385</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1951; Superintendent to Assistant Superintendent, Dec. 15, 1953, B197, Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, CA (hereafter NARA-LN).

<sup>386</sup> Conrad Wirth to Francis Du Pont, Commissioner, Bureau of Public Roads, Feb. 16, 1954, B202, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; The Superintendent, Lake Mead, to Chief, Western Office, Division of Design and Construction, July 16, 1954, B202, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

other dominant purposes within portions of the area.” He recommended including within the area not just the water but “the related canyons and landmarks that form the intimate setting of the reservoirs” as well.<sup>387</sup>

Grazing on the arid and rough landscape was a vestige of the old Nevada and Arizona that persisted, and federal agencies, seeing their interests more congruent, typically functioned with cooperation when managing this activity. Grazing management by the federal government was a tension-fraught activity that signaled to local people that they no longer controlled lands they once used and that they would have to share them with other kinds of users. The Bureau of Land Management, founded in 1948 by combining the General Land Office, the Grazing Service, and other federal agencies, was the Park Service’s primary partner in grazing. The powerful Pat McCarran, U.S. senator from Nevada, emasculated BLM at its birth, and it remained weak for more than two decades, the best example of the social scientists’ hypothesis about agencies captured by their constituencies. The Bureau of Land Management was also a partner in an interbureau agreement established by the Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation in 1943 and modified the following year. The three agencies, working at times with local law enforcement agencies, served as a combination of a police force and early alert system for grazing violations and illegal use of park and other federal lands. In 1947, Frank Groves, Lake Mead’s acting superintendent and refuge manager, conferred with Clark County Nevada Sheriff Glen Jones to elicit his cooperation concerning cattle trespassing in the Overton Refuge. Continuing problems concerning animals led to a series of meetings between the Park Service and BLM in 1955 to discuss grazing issues as well as burro intrusions. Three years later, Clark County and Lake Mead cooperated on the installation of fences along their common border, with the Bureau of Land Management paying for the materials.<sup>388</sup>

Friendly relationships with other federal agencies were easier to maintain when the central issue was working toward satisfying public needs in a visible fashion. Fire control was the most straightforward cooperative endeavor among agencies facing a common enemy. The federal government’s policy of swift and total eradication of fires, in force for most of the twentieth century, helped bring typical antagonists to cooperation. Fire fighting also became a likely way to engender further cooperative efforts. Representatives from the Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, the U.S. Army, and the Clark County Sheriff’s Office discussed a cooperative agreement for battling area fires in 1946, with a preliminary outline drafted the following year. Lake Mead NRA, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Air Force, represented by Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, renewed a cooperative fire suppression agreement in 1950. Five years later, in a joint operation between federal and local governments, Lake Mead and Boulder City held a controlled burn of grasslands near the municipal sewage disposal plant. Despite their long-running boundary disputes, the Park

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<sup>387</sup> Conrad Wirth to Regional Director, Region Three, March 19, 1954, L18R, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>388</sup> Memorandum To Files from Superintendent, July 12, 1960, L1417, Lake Mead NRA archives; Minutes of Staff Meeting, Lake Mead Recreational Area, Aug. 29, 1947; To Superintendent from Acting Chief Ranger, June 4, 1956, Annual Report of the Activities of the Protection Division, July 1, 1955 to May 31, 1956, A26, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1957.

Service and the Bureau of Land Management signed a revised cooperative agreement for fire protection on the Shivwits Plateau in April 1958. The plan included permission for the Park Service to build a fire camp and administrative headquarters on BLM land. Efforts to create a “cooperative Forest Fire Control” led to a 1959 meeting in Las Vegas. Agencies represented included the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, Nellis Air Force Base, and Lake Mead Naval Base. A cooperative program resulted, with the agencies pledging to assist one another in fire fighting, reporting, and associated activities.<sup>389</sup>

Since World War II, Lake Mead and the U.S. Army enjoyed a beneficial relationship. During the war, soldiers and airmen used the area for work and play, with Park Service personnel assisting in military training activities in addition to their traditional park duties. Looking for relaxation, more than 53,000 service members visited Lake Mead during the first ten months of 1942, most visiting from the newly constructed base near the park. In the spring of that year, the army established the Desert Training Center, with facilities across southern California and Nevada, and organized the Fourth Armored Division, stationed about seventy miles south of Boulder City. In the absence of available civilian housing near the new bases, the families of the soldiers swarmed to Boulder City and the park’s Hualapai Lodge. Military authorities called upon Lake Mead’s staff to help plan desert marches, conduct intelligence training, locate potential gunnery and anti-aircraft ranges, and select bivouac spots for small detachments and larger units of 1,000 men.<sup>390</sup>

Law enforcement typically brought close cooperative efforts on policing projects even before the 1964 legislation gave Lake Mead NRA full autonomy over its operations. Before 1945, the park relied upon its own staff for most law enforcement activities, cooperating in a few instances with the Boulder City Police Department, the Clark County Sheriff’s Office, and the Nevada State Highway Patrol. Increasing park visitation by the late 1950s prompted more attention to law enforcement. In one instance, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents conducted law enforcement training for all members of the park’s protection division in 1959. Members of the Boulder City Police Department also attended. As part of an effort to expand cooperation, the park sponsored a pair of meetings in 1960 with county sheriffs, state highway patrols, justices of the peace, the U.S. commissioner assigned to the park, state and county attorneys, state fish and game departments, and juvenile authorities.<sup>391</sup> By 1964, the mechanisms to support cooperative law enforcement among the many jurisdictions were

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<sup>389</sup> Annual Forestry Report, Dec. 31, 1946, Lake Mead NRA archives; Annual Forestry Report, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, 1950, Report 6A1, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1952; To: Assistant Superintendent from Chief Park Ranger, May 15, 1950 [repository unknown]; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1960.

<sup>390</sup> Statement for the Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, Aug. 19, 1943, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Memorandum for the Director, March 17, 1943, Memorandum for the Director, Aug. 14, 1943, and To the Director, From the Superintendent, April 2, 1951, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>391</sup> Annual Report of the Activities of the Protection Division, July 1, 1955 to May 31, 1956, June 4, 1956, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Data Preparatory to Superintendent’s Annual Report 10A8, May 21, 1959, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1959, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN; Superintendent’s Annual Report 10A8, May 16, 1960, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

in place.

Cooperation focused on issues of mutual concern, and population growth was one area that spurred cooperative efforts. As southern Nevada began to fill with people after World War II, the Park Service and other federal agencies found themselves facing waste management issues from within and beyond park boundaries. The Park Service could not handle the issue alone. The number of jurisdictions and the nature of the problem demanded a regional response. In 1951, representatives from Arizona, Nevada, and the U.S. Public Health Service met with Lake Mead officials to discuss the possible pollution of Lake Mead by drainage from the Las Vegas Wash, one of the earliest examples of interagency cooperation in environmental issues.<sup>392</sup>

Recreational boating on park waters provided another area where agencies cooperated smoothly and efficiently. Primary responsibility for boating safety on Lake Mead and Lake Mohave rested with the park's protection division, but other state and federal agencies cooperated in education, navigational assistance, and search and rescue missions. Beginning in 1952, the U.S. Weather Bureau provided current weather conditions and 24-hour predictions for Lake Mead. It also sent immediate notification of changes in weather that might involve storms or winds greater than nineteen miles an hour on the lake. The Bureau of Reclamation supplied a similar range of information, regularly relaying lake elevations, river data, and water temperatures to Lake Mead staff.

As more boats appeared on the reservoir after World War II, boating safety became a significant concern, and its management sorely taxed park resources. Early patrol efforts at Lake Mead consisted of a few park rangers in small powerboats monitoring water traffic and standing by to assist in emergencies. The Park Service initially turned to the U.S. Lighthouse Service, which was made part of the U.S. Coast Guard in 1939, for advice about navigational beacons and buoys. After years of installing the aids as quickly as agency funds permitted, the Park Service sought more direct assistance. The Coast Guard played a limited role in search and rescue activities during the immediate postwar period, and early in the 1950s, the two agencies sought to draft a more formal arrangement to guide their future relationship. Jurisdictional questions hampered a full-fledged agreement. The Coast Guard initially maintained only a limited presence on the lake. The Park Service still possessed primary responsibility for enforcing its own regulations, and it did not consider a formal cooperative agreement that covered only search and rescue operations worth the effort. Embracing its limited role, the Coast Guard simply provided literature for boaters and inspected boats as late as 1955.<sup>393</sup>

The arrangement proved inadequate in dramatic and tragic fashion. Eight boating fatalities occurred in 1956, an astronomical number for Lake Mead's reservoirs, illustrating the need for closer and more comprehensive cooperation between the two agencies. As the

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<sup>392</sup> To Assistant Superintendent Lewis from Director, National Park Service, March 19, 1954, File L7423R, NARA-LN; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1952.

<sup>393</sup> To Assistant Superintendent Lewis from Director, National Park Service, March 19, 1954; Regional Counsel to the Regional Director, Oct. 30, 1952, B80, Lake Mead NRA files, NARA-SB; To Superintendent from Acting Chief Ranger, June 4, 1956, Annual Report of the Activities of the Protection Division, July 1, 1955 to May 31, 1956.



boating season ended in 1956, the Coast Guard and Lake Mead NRA forged a stronger working relationship aimed at reducing accidents. Inspections of boaters increased. The establishment of a Lake Mead chapter of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, civilians with the mission to improve boating safety using federal standards, helped bring safety concerns to the public's attention. The Coast Guard also created a Mobile Boarding Team for checking motorboats throughout the Eleventh Coast Guard District, which included Lake Mead. The cooperative efforts quickly paid off. The park did not record any boating fatalities in 1957. The two agencies continued to cooperate on boating safety, and the Coast Guard increased its law enforcement activities.

Cooperation with the Coast Guard illustrated one of the most salient features of Lake Mead NRA. Park Service staff and resources were not equal to every task the park faced, placing a premium on cooperation with outside organizations. Specialized cooperation, when another agency provided personnel and expertise that the Park Service lacked, as occurred between the Park Service and the Coast Guard, was essential. In these circumstances, the Park Service aggressively sought cooperative relationships as a result of its own inadequacies. However, that process could impair the agency's ability to function autonomously.<sup>394</sup>

When the missions of nearby agencies overlapped with the Park Service's plans, more complicated interaction often resulted. Agencies could find themselves intertwined in responsibilities that in some situations they believed they could handle more efficiently if they were independent. In one instance, the Bureau of Reclamation provided a working fund totaling \$9,000 to the Park Service in 1948 to cover expenses for an archeological investigation into sites Lake Mohave would soon inundate. Lake Mead's naturalist and a crew worked on the project until the following January, when an audit by the General Accounting Office (GAO) invalidated the transfer of funds as a violation of bureau regulations. The Bureau of Reclamation had an independent archaeological staff, GAO officials noted, and as a result, the accounting agency forced an end to the Park Service's fieldwork at Bureau of Reclamation expense. Recreational matters could also spark interagency problems. At a February 1960 conference with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers concerning the placing of docks, buoys, and other obstructions in navigable waters, Lake Mead officials learned that the Corps of Engineers, as the park reported tersely, "has never been given the authority to delegate the responsibility of approving these placements." This meant that all of the recreation area's structures in the reservoir's navigable waters were technically unapproved by the Corps and thus illegal, a situation that exposed the federal government to considerable liability in case of a boating accident involving the reservoir's boating facilities.<sup>395</sup> Such questions of bureaucratic feasibility and competence dogged interagency cooperation. Lake Mead NRA, with its many competing interests, was no exception.

Wildlife management provided an easier venue for cooperation among agencies. Animals were blissfully unaware of competing jurisdictions and they frequently crossed

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<sup>394</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1957; To Superintendent from Chief Ranger, Data Preparatory to Superintendent's Annual Report 10A8, May 21, 1959, NARA-LN.

<sup>395</sup> Memorandum for the Director from Superintendent Bagley, May 12, 1948, Lake Mead NRA archives; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1960, NARA-LN.

boundaries. Most agencies shared an investment in their survival, and the animals' needs contributed to a context in which government organizations closely worked with one another. Management of the spectacular desert bighorn sheep provided one of the most important and complicated areas of cooperation. No species was more important to Lake Mead; nor did any other one so vex management efforts.

Prized by the nation as one of the premier symbols of its wilder past, the desert bighorn sheep posed a significant management problem. Although the sheep crossed from Lake Mead to adjacent Grazing Service (later, Bureau of Land Management) and Bureau of Reclamation land, the intransigence of these agencies and a lack of funding for protection programs made achieving wildlife management objectives a difficult problem. In 1945, both the Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service planned to develop the area around Blue Point and Rogers Springs, the former to build a recreational lodge and the latter a waterfowl refuge. Lake Mead NRA concentrated on the development and administration of its recreational areas, and passed its responsibilities for wildlife protection to the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Grazing Service. Lack of an adequate water supply derailed both plans. Two years later, the park expressed concern about protection for the sheep after the Fish and Wildlife Service's abandonment of the waterfowl refuge.<sup>396</sup>

Wildlife management policies differed from agency to agency, and developing an interagency strategy was extremely complex. During an informal conference held in 1954, representatives from Lake Mead NRA, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Nevada Fish and Game Commission agreed on the need for more study of the desert bighorn sheep population within the park, but they differed sharply over other aspects of the subject. Both the state officials and the Fish and Wildlife representatives urged the agencies to take measures to control predators that might be feeding on the sheep. National Park Service officials did not recognize predators as a significant problem. Frank Groves, director of the Nevada Fish and Game Commission, refused to contribute if researchers restricted the study to desert bighorn sheep, but he expressed willingness to support a study program that included other big-game species. The Park Service representatives eyed such a stance with suspicion, regarding it as a pretext for increased hunting. Lake Mead Superintendent George Baggley was "not at all sure but that any studies which might be made by either the state or the Fish and Wildlife Service would be used to support the policy of hunting."<sup>397</sup>

Programs to manage other animal species fared much better, but differences of opinion among agencies continued to hamper cooperation. Exotic species such as burros provided a bellwether issue for cooperative resource management. Introduced into what would become Lake Mead by prospectors in the 1880s, burros multiplied with terrifying speed. Most federal agencies saw the animals as feral competitors with native species such as desert bighorn sheep and desert tortoises, and their leaders generally agreed on the need for removal. Even before the 1964 legislation strengthened the Park Service's hand in managing Lake Mead, the

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<sup>396</sup> Newton Drury, Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Three, Dec. 17, 1945, B91, Lake Mead files, NARA-S.

<sup>397</sup> Wildlife Conservation Report for 1947, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Memorandum to Regional Director, Region Three from The Superintendent, Lake Mead, May 11, 1954, File N1427, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

agency worked with other agencies on the burro problem, which posed a threat to a number of agencies rather than an opportunity for one to extend authority. Burro removal was always controversial. The Park Service opted to defer quietly to the Nevada Fish and Game Commission in 1941, arranging to have state personnel eliminate burros that were competing with desert bighorn sheep within the recreational area. “The work is to be carried out in such a manner that no one but themselves and their immediate supervisors will know anything about it,” a Park Service memo read, “so there will be no question of publicity.” Eliminating burros was easier to discuss than to accomplish, and this exotic species remained an ongoing problem. Throughout the 1950s, Lake Mead officials worked with their BLM counterparts on the common burro problem.<sup>398</sup>

The Park Service also needed cooperative partners for endeavors to support other kinds of recreation. Fish for the man-made lakes were a critical recreational amenity. The agency sought to supervise the development of fish culture in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries. Planners envisioned fishing as the primary recreational attraction at Lake Mead, and from 1935 through 1941, the cooperative effort initially paid handsome dividends as fishermen praised the quantity of bass and other fish they caught. After that opening golden period, sportsmen began to complain that the number of fish, as well as their “gameness,” had declined significantly. Concerned with the loss of a primary recreational attraction, the Park Service agreed to a cooperative study of the reservoir with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation. In November 1941, fish experts began their surveys. Joining federal investigators in the study were representatives from Clark County, Boulder Tours Inc., and the Nevada Fish and Game Commission. Three years later, Lake Mead negotiated with the fish and game commissions of Arizona and Nevada to create a carp removal program, seeking to eradicate a species that threatened many of the game fish in competition for resources. The negotiation process went on for several months before negotiators forwarded a preliminary draft of a proposed contract to the two states’ attorneys general.<sup>399</sup> Again, circumstances such as resource protection provided an easy venue for different entities to work together.

Lake Mead NRA also sought to broaden the base for cooperation with state agencies in avian and fish management. Late in 1949, the park reached a four-way agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the two bordering states that gave the federal fish agency the lead role in the technical development of fisheries on the Colorado River and at Lake Mead NRA. Park officials also sought a mechanism that allowed the two states to develop a boundary fishing license for anglers who crossed state lines while fishing. The following year, the Nevada Fish and Game Commission (which became the Nevada Department of Fish and Game in 1979) assigned one full-time employee to fishery studies at Lake Mohave. When

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<sup>398</sup> Memorandum for Mr. Cabalane, Nov. 21, 1941, File B99, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Annual Report of the Protective Division, July 1, 1955 to May 31, 1956 [repository unknown].

<sup>399</sup> Roger W. Toll, *An Inspection of the Withdrawn Area Along the Colorado River*, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1932), Lake Mead NRA archives; James W. Moffett, “A Preliminary Report on the Fishery of Lake Mead,” U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, n.d. [repository unknown]; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1945.

rising waters completely filled Lake Mohave, provisions of the agreement became obsolete. The Park Service agreed to continue the spirit of the accord, either with a new formal agreement or under an informal operating arrangement. The benefits to Lake Mead NRA's recreational value to the public, as well as "the relation of fishing to the complete biology of the area, hunting, law enforcement, and general protection over the area," the park superintendent observed, made the proposal an advantage for the park. Another joint project received consideration in 1952, when the Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Nevada game officials discussed a winter feeding area and hunting area for migratory wildfowl and quail that the agencies would build near Overton.<sup>400</sup>

Creation of Lake Mohave altered the fishing conditions in Lake Mead NRA. The new reservoir stabilized Lake Mead's water level and it received a year-round inflow of cool water inflow, but the fish stock suffered. A cooperative effort to restore fishing quality began when the Clark County Convention Authority provided research funds to the Nevada Fish and Game Commission. As an outgrowth of that initial interest, Lake Mead officials initiated a cooperative effort with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to begin construction of a trout hatchery on Lake Mohave in 1958. That same year, Arizona planted 91,000 six- to nine-inch fish; Nevada planted 119,000; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service planted 154,000 more. The park's protection division cooperated with the officers of both states and of the Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition to the fish plantings, Lake Mead rangers and agents from Nevada Fish and Game joined and conducted four creek checks at various harbors. To supplement the state efforts for fish maintenance at Lake Mohave, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced plans in 1960 to begin a hatchery at Willow Beach within two years. By 1963, the hatchery produced what the Park Service boasted were "several catchable fish species" as well as fingerlings for Lake Powell in Glen Canyon NRA.<sup>401</sup>

Common issues such as wildlife aided interagency cooperation, but throughout the 1950s the uncertain lines of boundary authority between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Park Service continued to foster an atmosphere of unease between the agencies. The tense situation worsened in 1956, when the Bureau of Reclamation attempted to reduce its land holdings to a small ring surrounding Lake Mead. This move would have eliminated much of the recreational area's acreage, and under the existing arrangement, the Park Service had little recourse to resist. Testifying before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in March 1959, Lake Mead Superintendent Charles Richey observed that the Bureau of Reclamation's primary authority left the Park Service with "somewhat questionable jurisdiction" over the recreation area's land. Legislation authorized the Park Service to administer surface uses but prevented it from acquiring or disposing of land without Bureau of

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<sup>400</sup> Bagglely to Carroll, Bureau of the Budget, Sept. 16, 1945; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1951; Bagglely to Thomas Kimball, Arizona Game and Fish Commission, Jan. 23, 1951 [repository unknown]; Federal Aid in Fish and Wildlife Restoration Preliminary Project Statement Development, March 13, 1952, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB.

<sup>401</sup> "Final Environmental Statement, FES 72-26, Proposed Construction and Operation, By State of Nevada, of Salmonid Fish Hatchery Within Lake Mead National Recreation Area," Aug. 14, 1972, L7617, EIS, Fish and Game, Trout Fishery Hatchery, Park Ranger files, Lake Mead NRA archives; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1958; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1959; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1960.

Reclamation permission. The Park Service, Richey said, remained hampered by the fact that the federal government established its boundary lines for Bureau of Reclamation purposes.<sup>402</sup> Richey's observations illustrated the continuing difficult feat of managing Lake Mead NRA. The Park Service lacked the authority to implement its mission but had responsibility for resources, visitors, and activities. Cooperation was essential, even if the agency had to play a secondary role in some relationships.

The Bureau of Reclamation and the Park Service improved their relationship by the end of the 1950s, and they worked together on boundary issues as the Park Service began its transformation into an equal partner at Lake Mead. A memorandum of agreement written late in the 1950s authorized a land transfer from the Bureau of Reclamation to accommodate construction of a new road to a development on Echo Bay. The bureau eventually transferred the sections of land to the Park Service, but even before the exchange, the two agencies agreed to cooperate on special use permits and rights-of-way.<sup>403</sup> The cooperation may not have signaled new equality in the relationship, but it did point the way to a more balanced future.

The Park Service's growth in significance at Lake Mead was gradual, but by 1964, the agency had made strides toward becoming an equal partner. The Bureau of Reclamation became concerned with increasing demands on the water system supplying Boulder City and called a conference in April of that year. Lake Mead officials there learned that Boulder City's water needs threatened to overload the pumps that fed the system. Lake Mead NRA had been receiving about ten times its allotment, which until then had not been a concern to the suppliers. Bureau of Reclamation officials proposed joint action instead of making a unilateral decision, as it had on many occasions earlier, including the incident when it forced the Park Service out of the Boulder City hospital building. The Bureau of Reclamation offered to build a new reservoir to serve Boulder City and urged the Park Service to proceed with construction of a new set of water intakes for its water system and its own new reservoir at Boulder Beach. Edgar Blair, the supervisory civil engineer at Lake Mead, recommended Park Service implementation of the suggested upgrade "unless we want to run the risk of a major disaster to existing campground planting."<sup>404</sup> The discussion seemed to be among equals, a giddy feeling for the Park Service after almost thirty years of second-class status.

The construction of the Northshore Road illustrated the Park Service's difficulties before 1964 and the way in which the new legislation changed relationships with other agencies. In anticipation of the park's new status, discussions for building a new road across Bureau of Land Management property had stalled. A memo dated January 29, 1963, advised Park Service officials that if Congress did not transfer the lands in question in the immediate

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<sup>402</sup> Charles F. Richey, testimony before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, March 3, 1959 [repository unknown].

<sup>403</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation Relating to the Administration of Certain Public Lands as a Part of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, n.d. [repository unknown].

<sup>404</sup> Memo Report, from Supervisory Civil Engineer, April 28, 1964, File D5039, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

future, they should commence negotiations for a special use permit under the existing system to avoid construction delays. Park Service officials considered filing for the permit. In March, the agency contemplated having the land for the route classified under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, but officials decided against seeking a withdrawal. Expected protests about a withdrawal might jeopardize the proposed Lake Mead legislation, park agency officials believed. More research by Park Service staff members revealed that a 1930 executive order already withdrew the lands sought, and as a result, officials proposed initiating construction with only a special use permit. High-level agency leaders concurred, and Lake Mead's superintendent proposed in April that regional officials ask the Washington office to contact the Bureau of Public Roads and secure a small plat for the local Bureau of Reclamation office to assist the permit process. Two months later the agency changed tactics when the Park Service suggested that a cooperative agreement with the BLM provide the right-of-way for the Northshore Road. The secretary of the interior soon approved the recommendation and authorized negotiations. Talks between the two agencies continued for several nerve-racking months, as the Park Service feared that publicity might derail congressional approval of Lake Mead's new administration bill.<sup>405</sup>

Lake Mead NRA's relationship with other agencies underwent a profound change in October 1964. With passage of Public Law 88-639, the Park Service suddenly became a full management partner with the Bureau of Reclamation, with each agency assigned specific areas of responsibilities around Lake Mead. As recently as 1957, the Park Service could still observe that since the Bureau of Reclamation's requirements set the national recreation area's boundaries, "their relationship to recreation features and development are largely accidental." Passage of the 1964 act authorized the Park Service to administer Lake Mead "for general purposes of public recreation, benefit and use." Formally boosting Lake Mead's status within the Park Service, the legislation instructed the secretary of the interior to administer Lake Mead "comparable to his general administrative authority relating to areas of the national park system."<sup>406</sup>

Three weeks after Congress approved Public Law 88-639, the agency switched tactics and began promoting traditional Park Service values in the negotiations for land to build the Northshore Road. The Bureau of Land Management suddenly received requests for its acreage based on scenic values, not solely for usefulness as a travel corridor. An October 28, 1964, memo noted the planners' omission of one particular section in the park's northern part, the west end of Bowl of Fire, hailed as the "most spectacular part." Two months later, the regional office recommended to George B. Hartzog, director of the National Park Service, that he cancel all proposed withdrawals and that the park, using its new authority, aggressively pursue 1,080 acres still sought as part of the Northshore Road corridor. The park needed a new justification; the requested lands were too remote from the road to be withdrawn under the pretext of their usefulness for travel. The regional office soon found that it "need

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<sup>405</sup> Summary of Correspondence, North Shore Road Right of Way, July 16, 1965, File, "Boundary Revisions," Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>406</sup> National Park Service Boundary Status Report, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Jan. 18, 1957 [repository unknown]; Public Law 88-639, 88<sup>th</sup> Cong., S.653, Oct. 8, 1964.

only advise BLM whether and to what extent they should proceed with withdrawal, BLM will hold case open until studies completed.” Instead of citing bureau regulations about why lands could not be set aside for the road, BLM officials instead reported that they could initiate a protective withdrawal for lands outside Lake Mead, if the Park Service thought it was necessary, even if it was for the preservation of natural areas or roadside tracts.<sup>407</sup> The nature of the interagency relationship had quickly become very different, with the BLM responding to NPS requests.

Within a year of Public Law 88-639, the Park Service took additional steps to codify its position and sought new boundary adjustments in direct response to agency needs and values. In October 1965, the agency proposed a total of 2,080 acres in three tracts for addition to Lake Mead to protect scenic values along the Northshore Road. The Park Service sought the largest single tract to provide scenic views of Valley of Fire, while it sought a second addition solely to protect the scenic setting of the north end of Pinto Valley. The Park Service also recommended the deletion of 2,240 acres within the Hualapai Reservation from Lake Mead’s boundaries, citing the land’s unsuitability for recreational purposes. Park Service values became the norm for justifying boundary changes, as illustrated in a June 1970 discussion concerning addition of land in the Christmas Tree area. Douglas Evans, Lake Mead NRA’s acting superintendent, justified the addition to the director of the Western Region of the NPS by noting the need to protect the area’s “intrinsic natural values” and the “opportunities for public enjoyment.”<sup>408</sup>

Lake Mead’s new status shifted the operating limits of several existing conditions. Grazing interests were among the more vocal groups that attacked the 1964 legislation, arguing that Park Service policy favored the gradual elimination of all grazing. Although not quite as strident as opponents anticipated, the Park Service was able to make unilateral decisions about grazing policy. The existing interbureau agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Land Management remained in effect, but the Park Service forged its own grazing policies. Assistant Secretary of the Interior Roger Ernst sought to ease the concerns expressed by Senator Wallace Bennett about grazing in 1960, telling the Utah Republican that if the Park Service’s unwritten commitment to the continuation of existing grazing practices was insufficient, if required the Park Service would submit draft legislation stipulating to the continuation of grazing. The Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management gradually became the key players in Lake Mead’s grazing policies, with Lake Mead assuming responsibility for on-site management and final decisions. BLM staff handled most administrative duties. In 1989, the bureau financed a grazing study at the Gold Butte allotment to help future joint efforts.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Summary of Correspondence, North Shore Road Right of Way, July 16, 1965.

<sup>408</sup> Memorandum to the Secretary of the Interior from the Assistant Director, Oct. 20, 1965, L1415 5LR, Lake Mead NRA archives; Evans to Western Region director, June 9, 1970, L1417 LAME Boundary Adjustment, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>409</sup> Roger Ernst to Sen. Bennett, May 9, 1960, L1417-DH, Lake Mead legislation, Lake Mead NRA archives; 101<sup>st</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statement, Dec. 28, 1988, Lake Mead NRA archives; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1989.

Most state agencies, wary of Park Service policy in wildlife management and unwilling to cede state authority to federal agencies, resisted broader cooperation, especially after the 1964 legislation allowed the Park Service to implement natural resource management comprehensively. Pressure from private organizations, including the Nevada and Arizona desert bighorn sheep societies and the Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, reinforced the state groups' stance. Historically, both states maintained control over the animal populations with little or no input from the federal park or its managers. Lake Mead allowed the Nevada Division of Wildlife and the Arizona Game and Fish Department to trap and remove desert bighorn sheep from the park to reestablish herds since 1969 and 1984, respectively. Both states also conducted "trophy" hunts for the animals on Park Service lands and established hunting permit numbers, bag limits, and seasons without consulting the Park Service.<sup>410</sup>

There were some successful cooperative ventures over common concerns, including a joint effort with Nevada game officials and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that caught a professional hunting guide illegally killing a desert bighorn sheep in 1978. In another instance, the agencies coordinated the construction of a fence and cattle guard near Grapevine Mesa, close to Meadview, to protect the sheep as well as public camping grounds and an airstrip. Lake Mead NRA also worked with the Bureau of Land Management and the Arizona Game and Fish Department in similar ventures.<sup>411</sup>

Cold War concerns about military matters helped force cooperative efforts in the name of national security after 1945, but the relationship between Lake Mead and the Department of Defense reflected the disparate power of the different entities. Military personnel continued to use the lands around Lake Mead for a variety of purposes after World War II ended, but not all Department of Defense requests to use the park were acceptable to the Park Service. In 1951, Hughes Aircraft Company sought to lease lakefront property for a U.S. Navy aircraft testing program. The Park Service politely rejected the proposal, saying it did not want to start a precedent for commercial use of the reservoir, even for national defense purposes. The military, however, did make use of the reservoir for national defense purposes. The Air Force used Lake Mead during 1958 for parachute jumping and airplane landings, and large air-sea rescue planes based at Williams Air Force Base utilized the reservoir to practice water landings about twice a month.<sup>412</sup>

The military also supported civilian activities at the park. Lake Mead received significant help from Defense Department agencies during search and rescue missions. The Park Service discovered in 1951 that the army's aerial photographs were helpful in locating facilities at Boulder Beach for master plan use. In an example of the growing cooperation and the Park Service's gratitude for it, Superintendent George Bagley wrote a note of appreciation to Nellis Air Force Base on May 3, 1954, thanking the aircrews that conducted aerial searches during the previous months. Lake Mead also called on the U.S. Navy for help,

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<sup>410</sup> Superintendents Annual Report, 1987, "File A2621, LAME," Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>411</sup> Briefing statement, National Park Service, Western Region, 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Issue Briefing Statements, January 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>412</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1958.



seeking in 1954 to get the agency's Hydrographic Office to help map the reservoir. In 1954, after park rangers reported that off-duty airmen from Nellis Air Force Base consistently disturbed the peace at Las Vegas Wash, the park suggested that stationing two military policemen at the beach on weekends to monitor military personnel would help the ranger staff.<sup>413</sup>

The spirit of cooperation required occasional adjustments to Park Service policies. Military aircraft were a staple of search and rescue missions at the reservoir, with rangers often flying aboard military craft during rescue flights because of their intimate knowledge of Lake Mead's vast and remote backcountry. In a 1956 servicewide directive, the Air Force halted the practice of allowing civilians to accompany such missions. In spite of their status as federal employees, the new rules also barred park rangers. After protests from the park, the military reversed its position the following year. In the spirit of reciprocal cooperation, the park allowed airplanes from Hamilton Air Force Base in California to practice landings on Lake Mead. In another assist of the park's enforcement activities, thirty-three commissioned and noncommissioned officers of the Lake Mead Base Marine Detachment helped park personnel provide law enforcement during the Sahara Cup Races in October 1959.<sup>414</sup>

Burro management also benefited from the park's new status. By 1980, Lake Mead forged a cooperative management plan for burros with the Las Vegas and Arizona Strip Bureau of Land Management districts. In 1989, interim interagency agreements were in place with two of the three BLM offices adjoining Lake Mead. The park expected a Park Service burro management plan the following year. Throughout the 1980s, the two agencies cooperated as they removed hundreds of burros from the Arizona side of the park. In 1988, the removal program expanded to include lands in Nevada. Lake Mead teamed up with BLM and the Arizona Game and Fish Department to undertake a burro census study in 1991 on the park's eastern lands, and the three agencies continued a joint planning initiative for the Black Mountains area. A year later, a disagreement concerning the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act forced suspension of interagency cooperation. BLM contended that the legislation applied to Park Service lands, which shifted responsibility for burro management planning to NPS. The Park Service maintained that it retained that authority, leaving the two offices with a suspended program and only a willingness among personnel to work toward reestablishing cooperation.<sup>415</sup>

Superintendent Alan O'Neill's philosophy of leadership also played a significant role in building relationships with peer agencies. O'Neill worked to develop trust between the many federal agencies in southern Nevada, using the decentralized nature of the Park Service and the autonomy it granted him as superintendent to provide support for interagency programs.

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<sup>413</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1954; To Assistant Regional Director Cornell from Regional Landscape Architect, Oct. 8, 1951, Lake Mead files, NARA-SB; Baggeley to Operations Officer, Nellis Air Force Base, 1954, and Baggeley to Commanding Officer, Nellis Air Force Base, May 11, 1954, File L3431, Lake Mead files, NARA-LN.

<sup>414</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1957; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1959.

<sup>415</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1988.

As BLM, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Park Service worked more closely together, the relationship among them became progressively more important. O'Neill insisted that the Park Service hear the other agencies and try to respond to their needs and desires. In the end, he felt certain that his decade had fostered a climate of trust among the agencies. After the creation of the Parashant National Monument in January 2000, Kent Turner believed that the joint Park Service and BLM management of the monument worked because of the decade of effort initiated by O'Neill.<sup>416</sup>

The Park Service also began looking beyond government for cooperative ventures, in one instance using the specialized resources of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, to produce a 1993 bibliography on feral burro literature. It also initiated a relationship with The Nature Conservancy to conduct a plant survey and habitat analysis to support Lake Mead's burro management program. Government units did not abandon interagency agreements. The Park Service entered into a memorandum of understanding with BLM to continue the cooperative management program while allowing for inclusion of Lake Mead's planning documents then in the drafting process.<sup>417</sup>

Cooperation reached a new level in the late 1980s, when the Park Service sought to foster a truly regional management concept. After more than a decade of forging separate agreements to maintain the quality of fishing, Lake Mead crafted a fisheries management plan that offered the most comprehensive cooperative effort to date. The document called upon the Nevada Division of Wildlife, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation "to prepare a uniform plan" for fish management. The park also focused attention on a non-game fish when in 1990 it formed an interagency group to increase the federally listed endangered razorback sucker fish populations in Lake Mead. Personnel relocated naturally spawning razorbacks to a backwater pond to avoid the lake's sport fish, which routinely devoured the fish. Not immediately productive, the group planned in 1991 to move the operation to a larger cove.<sup>418</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, Lake Mead NRA continued its cooperative efforts in the development of fishing, signing a memorandum of understanding with the Arizona Game and Fish Department in 1998 for construction and maintenance of boating and fishing facilities. The state agency agreed to provide support for applications submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as to provide financing to build and maintain boating and fishing access projects, under the provision that it retain authority over the approval of all plans. The Park Service also agreed to maintain public access to all developed facilities and allowed Arizona to assume operation and maintenance if the Park Service ever became unable to

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<sup>416</sup> Alan O'Neill, interview by Hal Rothman, Jan. 12, 2002 [repository unknown]; Kent Turner, interview by Hal Rothman, Jan. 23, 2002 [repository unknown].

<sup>417</sup> Park Ranger files, Lake Mead NRA archives; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1988; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1989; 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Briefing Statements, Burro Management Program, January 1992, Burro.360, Lake Mead NRA archives; Charles L. Douglas and Thomas L. Hurst, *Review and Annotated Bibliography of Feral Burro Literature* (Las Vegas: Cooperative National Park Resources Study Unit, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, 1993); *Lake Mead National Recreation Area Resource Management Plan*, (1994), Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>418</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1989; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1991.

continue its maintenance of the structures.<sup>419</sup>

Concerns over maintaining Lake Mead's recreational appeal and guarding the safety of the boating public continued to ensure collaboration between state and federal agencies. In 1986, Lake Mead and the Coast Guard signed a new cooperative agreement pledging coordinated actions to support the lake's navigational aids and to share the costs of purchasing, installing and maintaining the buoys, lights and markers. Two years later, the Park Service agreed to a coordinated campaign with the Nevada Division of Wildlife to produce plastic bags with boating safety and anti-litter messages. Seeking to resolve flooding problems at six of Lake Mead's developed areas, the Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation signed a memorandum of understanding in 1988 to coordinate construction of flood-control structures. The Park Service updated its 1990 agreement with the Nevada Division of Wildlife and a similar document approved with the Bureau of Reclamation in 1988 to craft a new cooperative agreement in 1997 for rehabilitating Lake Mead's recreational facilities. In return for the Park Service's restoration of a launch ramp, floating and shoreline restrooms, fish cleaning stations and the Boulder Beach picnic area, the other two agencies agreed to contribute a total of \$1.49 million over two years.<sup>420</sup>

Interagency cooperation on law enforcement issues continued without change after the 1964 legislation. Lake Mead developed and maintained a close relationship with local law agencies, including municipal police forces and county sheriffs' offices. By 1988, Lake Mead, under the terms of a host of memorandums of understanding and other formal agreements, provided radio dispatch services to the Bureau of Land Management's Southern Nevada Law Enforcement Rangers, the Hoover Dam Police Department, and the U.S. Marshals Service. The park also was responsible for communication with Emergency Medical Service dispatch, structural fire responses, and initial responses on local wildfires. That same year, the Park Service forged an interagency agreement with the Bureau of Land Management, under which the bureau provided \$45,452 for law enforcement dispatch services and also provided wildland fire dispatch services for the park through BLM's Las Vegas Interagency Communications Center. Lake Mead's dispatchers also provided communication services to the U.S. Forest Service, the Nevada Division of Wildlife, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary, as well as for government aircraft operating around the park.<sup>421</sup>

As drugs became more of a concern for American society after the 1960s, their production and distribution grew into a major concern for park management. Throughout the

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<sup>419</sup> Memorandum of Understanding with the Arizona Game and Fish Commission for Construction and Maintenance of Boating and Angling Access Facilities, No. 1443MU 8360-98-001, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>420</sup> Cooperative Navigational Aids Agreement, Agreement 76-02, file "A44, Lake Mead/U.S. Coast Guard," Park Ranger files, Lake Mead NRA archives; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1988; Memorandum of Agreement between the Bureau of Reclamation, Nevada Division of Wildlife and National Park Service for Rehabilitation of Public Recreations Facilities at Lake Mead National Recreation Area, File "A44," Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>421</sup> Department of the Interior, Office of Managing Risk and Public Safety, Law Enforcement and Security Team, Law Enforcement Policy Compliance Evaluation, 1998, Park Ranger files, Lake Mead NRA archives.

1960s and 1970s, Lake Mead NRA was a favorite site for airdrops of contraband, and park personnel later discovered drug laboratories within Lake Mead's boundaries. Representatives of Lake Mead NRA, U.S. Customs, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and local sheriffs' offices carried out a joint interagency effort in 1992. Units of the U.S. military, including the 6<sup>th</sup> Army, authorized to conduct civil operations through Operation Alliance, assisted in the antidrug operations. One of the more visible signs of the program's effectiveness was a reduction in drug trafficking inside the park, especially in the Katherine area.<sup>422</sup>

The new legislation in 1964 also marked the beginning of Lake Mead's new relationship with the Hualapai tribe and their reservation that lay adjacent to the park's eastern boundary. The Bureau of Indian Affairs had long represented the Hualapai in their relationship with the Park Service, but S. 1060 authorized direct dealings with the Native Americans. The legislation authorized the inclusion of the canyon portion of the Hualapai Reservation within Lake Mead's boundaries, subject to the approval of the tribal council. Regulations written for Native American, not Park Service, land governed mineral and property leasing rights. Park Service regulations concerning hunting and fishing did not constrain tribal members on the Hualapai lands. Six years after legislation changed Lake Mead's authorization, the park had established a policy of taking a long view of its relations with the Hualapai. Noting that tribal leaders would likely oppose any inclusion within the recreation area's boundaries, Roger W. Allin, Lake Mead's superintendent, instead recommended that "as time goes on and traditional viewpoints are modified by younger minds, it is possible the Indians might come to view a closer association with the National Park Service as desirable." To help that process, he suggested that the Park Service promote and partially finance developments on the reservation. This policy came to fruition in the 1990s, when the Clinton administration issued a government-to-government memorandum to all agencies that reconfigured agency/tribal relationships. Lake Mead National Recreation Area was officially permitted to work with local tribal governments in a federal nation-to-native nation manner.<sup>423</sup>

Less than thirty years after passage of the landmark legislation that gave Lake Mead a substantial underpinning of authority that revamped its relationship with other federal agencies, the park had matured into an organization that could afford to look ahead to its needs. In 1989, the staff at Lake Mead offered the regional director their vision of the park's future. Central to the concept was the acquisition of lands from the Bureau of Reclamation and other land management agencies possessing significant scenic value and sited to protect Lake Mead's values. The *Five-Year Strategic Plan – Statement for Management* identified 170,000 acres adjacent to Lake Mead that should be considered for inclusion. Included in the list were the Newberry Mountains, Cholla Forest, River Mountains, Bowl of Fire/Bitterspring Valley, and Joshua Tree Forest/Grand Wash Cliffs/Grapevine Mesa. By 2000, more than 85

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<sup>422</sup> Superintendent's Accomplishments, October 1991 – September 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>423</sup> "Statement Explaining Proposed Legislation," L1417, "LAME Legis Hist," Lake Mead NRA archives; Director, Southwest Region From Superintendent, Lake Mead, April 23, 1970, File L1417, Lake Mead NRA archives. 1970.

percent of the park's boundaries were planned. Cooperative resource management efforts, conservation easements, and an array of other planning mechanisms allowed the agency to exercise control over its boundaries with the cooperation of its neighbors. "There's a strong compatibility around our boundaries," Superintendent Bill Dickinson observed in 2002, indicating the importance of relations with neighboring agencies, communities, and stakeholders. Creating common vision with neighboring agencies and stakeholders became a priority.<sup>424</sup> No longer content merely to administer recreational opportunities on lands belonging to another agency, Lake Mead had transformed itself into an equal partner with other state and federal agencies, one quite capable of crafting and maintaining its relationships in order to fulfill the mandates of the National Park Service.

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<sup>424</sup> Bill Dickinson, interview by Hal Rothman, Jan. 23, 2002 [repository unknown]; To Regional Director, Western Region, from Superintendent, Lake Mead, Aug. 22, 1989, File D18, Lake Mead NRA archives.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THREATS TO THE PARK

Over the last two decades of the twentieth century, no national park unit has experienced as rapid a transformation of lands beyond its borders as Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The phenomenal growth of greater Las Vegas, from 463,087 people in 1980 to 741,459 in 1990 and to more than 1.4 million in 2000, has demanded new approaches in almost every area of park management. As a result not only of people visiting the park, but also of greater numbers living near and on its boundaries, every dimension of Lake Mead operations has taken on different characteristics. From its origins as a tourist destination, remote from major population centers, Lake Mead has been transformed into an urban national park area by changing regional demographics and visitor usage. Lake Mead faces the challenge of upholding the values of the national park system in an urban setting while federal dollars become scarcer. That fiscal reality makes it difficult to maintain existing facilities and limits opportunities that proposed acquisitions will come to fruition. In a region with a decided libertarian cast to its politics, in which government is not only resented by local and regional power and the media but is less powerful than other forces such as developers, Lake Mead has found itself challenged by regional growth and by the fundamental malleability of local and county governments.

The threats that plague Lake Mead NRA stem from a combination of circumstances: attempts to maintain an aging infrastructure with a park budget declining in inflation-adjusted dollars, the ever-increasing numbers of visitors, the city of Henderson's rapid expansion and, closer to park boundaries, the growth of Boulder City and the Clark County Commission's inability to regulate growth. Combined with the massive overall growth of Clark County, the remarkable increase in vehicle miles traveled not only in the Las Vegas Valley but also in automobile traffic to it, these other factors create never-ending pressure on Lake Mead, its resources, and its ability to fulfill its mission. Park officials have long recognized their dilemma. As early as 1990, Superintendent Alan O'Neill recognized that "we are under heavy pressure to both to provide for enhanced activities and, at the same time, to control conflicting uses."<sup>425</sup>

Systemic pressures have worsened Lake Mead NRA's precarious position in southern Nevada. Increasing visitation has strained every unit of the Park Service. The federal government's continued unwillingness to fund necessary maintenance requests has left beleaguered NPS personnel falling behind in the efforts to preserve and protect their facilities. Since 1992, Lake Mead's budget reflected a parallel slide, with each dollar available diminished by inflation, park staff fighting to keep its aging infrastructure from falling further into disrepair, and the ever-increasing costs of coping with the mandates of new

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<sup>425</sup> Superintendent's Accomplishments, October 1990–September 1991, Lake Mead NRA archives.

federal and state regulations. In fiscal year 1998, Lake Mead's operations and maintenance budget was short of its projected need of \$24.4 million by more than \$8 million, a factor compounded by the impact of more than nine million visitors annually on the park.<sup>426</sup>

Although 1930s planners conceived of it as a remote park, Lake Mead NRA has become one of the most urban of national park areas, closer in mission and audience to units such as Golden Gate and Gateway national recreation areas than Yosemite or Yellowstone national parks or even Glen Canyon NRA at Lake Powell. Nearby Boulder City has remained a small town, but the surrounding region has grown at a stunning speed. Within thirty minutes of Las Vegas by automobile and on the border of the rapidly growing city of Henderson, which at 200,000 people became the second-largest city in Nevada in 1999, Lake Mead NRA has undergone a transformation with vast implications for management.

Nothing had greater impact on Lake Mead NRA than the growth of greater Las Vegas. Spurred by a constellation of economic, social, demographic, and cultural factors, the desert metropolis grew at a rate unprecedented in twentieth-century American history. Beginning with the opening of the Mirage Hotel and Casino on New Year's Eve 1988-1989, Las Vegas entered a new phase, the Mirage phase, grander than any in its past. Impresario Steve Wynn, the liquor distributor who morphed into the progenitor of a Las Vegas that melded gaming and entertainment, kicked it off. The Mirage cost \$630 million, about \$500 million more than any previous casino, and needed to clear \$1 million a day to pay its mortgage. The edifices built since then—Excalibur (1990), Luxor (1993), Treasure Island (1993), MGM (1993), the Hard Rock Hotel (1995), the Stratosphere Tower (1996), Monte Carlo (1996), New York, New York (1996), Bellagio (1998), Mandalay Bay (1999), Venetian (1999), Paris Las Vegas (1999), and the Aladdin (2000)—took a city of midsize hotels and turned it into a 120,000-hotel room paradise of enormous properties. It became a metropolitan area of 1.4 million people with twice the number of hotel rooms of New York City or Los Angeles. In the space of a decade, Las Vegas had gone from gambling to gaming to tourism to entertainment as well as from 19 million to 36 million visitors annually. A good percentage of them visited Lake Mead NRA during their stay in southern Nevada.

At the same time, changes in the fundamental nature of U.S. society began the long road to making Las Vegas part of a broader national mainstream. The cultural liberalization of the United States—from a place where Baptist preachers piled rock 'n' roll records on Friday night bonfires and television executives opted to show Elvis Presley only from the waist up, to the far more individually oriented culture of personal choice—created the context for the rise of leisure and the transformation of socially unacceptable “gambling” into recreational “gaming.” Las Vegas had perfected the service economy long before the rest of the nation encountered it, and the decline of the “Rust Belt” made the city one of the few places where working-class people could earn a decent wage and live comfortably. The rise of entertainment as a form of commodity increased the cachet of the city. From Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis, Jr., to the Hard Rock Hotel, the city showcased the reflection of the baby boomers' nostalgia for their own youth, and Las Vegas became even more sophisticated at reflecting back the desires of the public. The power of unions in southern Nevada also became

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<sup>426</sup> Simran Chopra and Danielle Dahlby, “The Business Plan Initiative: Lake Mead National Recreation Area,” 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.



more significant, as Las Vegas became the “Last Detroit,” the final place where unskilled workers could make middle-class wages and claw their way toward the American dream. These new migrants to southern Nevada also partook of the opportunities at Lake Mead NRA.

Las Vegas’s fundamental malleability is the root of its success as a purveyor of the low-skill, high-wage service economy and the catalyst for the increased demands on Lake Mead. A postindustrial construction of capitalism has emerged, with industrial and manufacturing labor becoming globalized. With nearly a century’s head start over the rest of the nation in offering people what they demand, and in a culture that insists that the act of buying something makes the purchaser the center of the story, Las Vegas has a strategy to export. In the transformation to entertainment mecca, Las Vegas leads all others, despite the relatively low levels of education and skill in much of its workforce. Perfecting the smile on the face, creating a city that continually implodes its past, pursuing a set of themes that have replaced the desert of the Sands and the Dunes with the Italy of the Venetian and the Bellagio as well as the tiny towns of the Orleans, Paris Las Vegas, and New York, New York, the city of Las Vegas has reached an astonishing maturity. That status portends much greater demand for Lake Mead NRA.

The migrants of the period following 1985, the start of an ongoing fifteen-year period in which Las Vegas has remained the nation’s fastest-growing metropolis, constitute loose categories. There are the grafted upper-middle-class residents, who see in Las Vegas an opportunity to do better than they did elsewhere, and who come with the idea that they are making a stop on the career road and will not stay long. Most come for a job and the job alone; for many, Las Vegas is another stop on the corporate road, the place where business is happening now and the place where they can make their mark, make it fast, and move on to something better.

The professionals who came to experience greater independence than they could elsewhere were another dimension of the grafted upper middle-class. Until the 1990s, Las Vegas always lacked professionals. There were never enough teachers, doctors, architects, or even attorneys. For the longest time, membership in the American professional classes demanded a degree of conformity that excluded Las Vegas for the most talented. Changing culture, a more maverick approach to life for many professionals, and the marvelous opportunities of an unfettered economy eventually made Las Vegas heaven for professionals—especially physicians, architects, and attorneys—in the 1990s.<sup>427</sup>

A wide middle class, including workers in the service sector, also flocked to the desert community. The broadest group, they hailed from cities and the middle-class inner and outer suburbs, boasting the broadest set of origins, much less education than the grafted upper-middle class, and a wide array of semi-skills. Some see Las Vegas as their kind of place. “I thought about all that money floating loose in this town,” remarked one car salesman who hailed from Florida, “and knew I had to be here.”<sup>428</sup> Some come to work in the hotels and casinos. Many more come to work in the construction trades; the Oregon, Idaho, and

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<sup>427</sup> Hal K. Rothman, *Beyond Neon: How Las Vegas Shed Its Stigma and Became the First City of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>428</sup> Geoff Reese to Hal Rothman, May 31, 2000 [repository unknown].

Montana license plates on pickup trucks parked at work sites are everywhere. Some think that they will truly be the one who hits Megabucks, the multimillion-dollar progressive slot machine jackpot that captures the regional imagination every time it tops \$10 million. These “something for nothing suckers” think that developers built the hotels along the Strip with other people’s losses, not theirs, and they cling with fervent faith to their myth of instant victory and the redemption they suppose it embodies.

Las Vegas also recycled people, usually those fleeing one or another of the versions of the scrap heap of postindustrial economic history. These members of the wide middle class come to Las Vegas in droves when the economic demise of industries in other places propels them outward, when industries deaccession thousands of workers, when people’s personal failings get them in trouble, and when they just plain want to flee. Las Vegas is the court of last resort, the last place to start over, to reinvent yourself in the same way that the city does, time after time. For some it works; for some, it does not, but they keep coming and keep trying.

All of these people require homes, parks, school, and roads. All of them wanted the amenities of home, and many wanted more than they left behind. The pressure on the regional landscape was remarkable. By the late 1990s, more than 20,000 housing starts per year were common, and a beltway around the city was more than half complete. New housing developments sprang up north, west, east, and even south, toward Lake Mead NRA. Many newcomers became users of the national park, many more visited it accompanying friends and family who came to Las Vegas, and the park quickly felt the tremendous weight of their new demands as well as their impact on the regional economy. One direct effect was the booming cost of contract bids, as the federal government was forced to compete with well-heeled public and private housing, road and building construction projects in Henderson, Las Vegas, and the rest of Clark County. With developers possessing large sums of money and far more susceptible to time pressure and a growing number of large contractors in the region overwhelmed by existing work, the Park Service often found that it had to pay a premium price to secure contracts for buildings and construction work. It found itself unable to compete even with other branches of local government, in particular the aggressively progrowth Henderson and its well-connected mayor, Jim Gibson, elected in 1998.

Budgetary problems affected Lake Mead’s other departments just as thoroughly as it did the maintenance and construction units. Between 1995 and 1998, despite increased visitation and problems sparked by adjacent urbanization, Lake Mead’s protection division lost five permanent ranger positions and six seasonal ranger positions. A 1998 Department of the Interior audit of the park’s law enforcement division highly praised the staff’s efforts and recommended that the park request additional funding to fill thirty-four additional law enforcement positions to meet minimal standards. At the same time as the rangers faced financial limitations, Lake Mead’s interpretation division registered similar budget setbacks. In 1998, less than 3 percent of all visitors had personal contact with the interpretation staff. Because of its financial condition, Lake Mead cut back visitor center hours and closed eight of the nine visitor contact stations or staffed them with volunteers. Staffing levels throughout the park were at 50 percent of projected need, and the park reported a shortfall in investment needs of more than \$209 million. The park identified \$3.25 million in land

acquisition priorities and \$6.5 million in outstanding mineral interests, all within the park's boundaries, that it lacked the resources to acquire.<sup>429</sup>

In an attempt to compensate for decreasing budgets, Lake Mead has long sought to supplement its paid staff with volunteer help and partnerships in keeping up with maintenance standards. The park established the Community Action for Lakes Mead and Mohave (CALM) in 1991 to form alliances between the Park Service and individuals, businesses, and organizations interested in donating goods or time. In its first year of operation, CALM coordinated the donation of \$300,000 in cash and matching services to Lake Mead. The following year, the park established a volunteer program manager position to oversee its 372 volunteers. Despite the good intentions and heroic number of hours contributed to the park by this outside assistance, volunteer workers could not overcome the shortage of NPS staff. In fiscal year 1998, volunteers worked more than 108,000 hours for Lake Mead, yet the park only accomplished 58 percent of its defined minimal acceptable standards in maintenance operations. Lake Mead's distinction of being the only park with a union agreement that includes collective bargaining for its wage grade employees complicated its staffing problems. The prospect of adequate financing for all the staff positions needed at Lake Mead remained uncertain in 2000.<sup>430</sup>

In light of the prospect of inadequate federal funding for Park Service areas, Lake Mead NRA considered the economic benefits of imposing an entrance fee. Some user fees, such as those for camping, were already collected, and since the mid-1980s, the Park Service had discussed the prospect of an entrance fee. A study conducted at Lake Mead before agency officials submitted a formal proposal in September 1988 indicated a favorable cost-benefit ratio. A June 1990 meeting demonstrated mixed public reaction to an entrance station system, with most people supporting a fee proposal if the revenue went directly to the park or the Park Service instead of the U.S. Treasury. In part as a response to the demand for construction service and materials throughout the Las Vegas Valley, estimated building costs for the nine entrance stations jumped to \$5.5 million in 1992 from the \$2.4 million estimate provided in 1988. The higher cost included the actual fee-collecting structures, and housing for the attendants stationed in remote areas. Although Hoover Dam served as the most visible entry point to the park, fee stations were necessary at each of the park's entrances. Lake Mead also projected the need to hire 44.75 full-time employees to collect the fees. The park received funds from the national fee program in 1995 and 1996 to complete the design of the project's first phase. By January 1999, Congress had not appropriated any money to pay the estimated \$5.5 million for the four Phase I stations, but after considerable wrangling, the money was found. During summer 2000, the entrance fee stations opened. The park's estimated staffing requirements also increased, to 53 full-time employees. With the fee set—\$5 for a vehicle and \$3 for a person on foot for a five-day pass—Park Service estimates put the return to the park at around \$4 million the first year, with annual operating costs

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<sup>429</sup> Chopra and Dahlby, "The Business Plan Initiative," 8.

<sup>430</sup> Superintendent's Accomplishments, October 1990–September 1991; Chopra and Dahlby, "The Business Plan Initiative"; Superintendent's Accomplishments, October 1991–September 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives.

projected at \$700,000.<sup>431</sup>

The park faced other ongoing funding issues. Concession services, long a significant source of revenue, were disrupted when Congress considered revising the Concessions Policy Act and limited the Park Service's authority to sign long-term concession contracts. In November 1998, Public Law 105-391 suspended the writing of any new concession contracts until the Park Service approved implementation procedures for the new legislation. Lake Mead had twelve active contract authorizations in place in January 1999, with the seven expired contracts providing services under annual interim letters of authorization. The lack of contracts prevented concession operators from preparing long-range plans for their facilities and did little to encourage them to invest in their operations. An increasing number of park visitors faced the prospect of declining services.<sup>432</sup>

The centerpieces of the park, Lake Mead and Lake Mohave, continued to be the primary attraction for more than nine million visitors each year, and the Park Service sought to maintain, if not improve, water resources. As regional growth accelerated, the park planned for its impact, but lack of funding again posed obstacles. The Park Service financially supported the *Lake Mead Carrying Capacity Study* in 1980, examining boating use and capacity limits for the two reservoirs. The 1986 *General Management Plan* used the data to calculate maximum marina size needed at each developed area. Lake Mead added an environmental planner to its staff in 1990 in the hope of completing a *Statement for Management* and initiating a *Lake Management Plan*. The following year, reorganization of responsibilities decreased the number of ranger districts from seven to four, freeing up a position that allowed the park to hire a Water Activities Specialist to add lake management capability. That same year the park began research for its *Lake Management Plan*, as Superintendent Alan O'Neill observed, "the largest-carrying capacity study ever done in the National Park Service."<sup>433</sup>

The park continued proactive management of its water resources. After an analysis of launch rates and another carrying capacity study during 1993-1994, park personnel undertook a separate environmental document examining lake-wide boating use, capacity limits, and marina development. Lake Mead NRA conducted a visitor survey in the same years, seeking to identify concerns that park officials had to address to preserve the recreational environment. The survey included 3,300 interviews and 1,500 questionnaires that visitors could mail back. Its responses indicated five major areas of public concern:

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<sup>431</sup> 101<sup>st</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statement, "Implementation of Entrance Fee Program," Dec. 28, 1988, Lake Mead NRA archives; 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statement, "Entrance Fee Program," January 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives; Briefing Statement, "Entrance Fee Program," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>432</sup> National Park Service Briefing Paper, "Concessions Contract Management, Lake Mead NRA," January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>433</sup> National Park Service, Development Concept Plan Amendment, Final Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the General Management Plan, Willow Beach, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Arizona/Nevada. Denver: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1994, Lake Mead NRA archives; Superintendent's Accomplishments, October 1990-September 1991; Superintendent's Accomplishments, October 1992-September 1993 Lake Mead NRA archives.

resource protection; future facility and service needs; boating and shoreline conflicts; sanitation and litter issues; and funding and staffing needed to manage the reservoirs' future recreational use.<sup>434</sup>

Among the major structures used by the boating public were the eleven launching ramps located across the recreation area, built between the 1940s and 1968. Six years of drought brought Lake Mead's water level in 1992 down to 1,167 feet, 33 feet below typical elevation and the lowest level since the early 1970s. The low water level sparked two areas of related concerns for boaters. Severe cracks, uneven settlement, and warping marked the ramps, made of asphalt and under water for twenty years. By 1992, park staff had closed one ramp and partially closed another two because of deterioration and silting. Low water levels rendered other visitor facilities, including boat docks, courtesy docks, boat pump outs, water intakes and utility lines, and marina facilities unusable. Lake Mead personnel had to reset a host of navigational aids because of newly exposed hazards. In 1992, in response to the boat launching ramp deterioration, Lake Mead proposed replacing the asphalt ramps with concrete ones and extending the ramps to the lowest lake elevation projected by the Bureau of Reclamation. The park estimated the new structures, with a width of 105 feet, would run from the lake level at the time of construction to a water level elevation of 1,200 feet and would cost \$3.3 million.<sup>435</sup>

The park's water resources also offered potential conflicts between allotment and use. The drought that brought lake levels down from 1986 to 1992 raised the possibility of future dry seasons affecting water availability. The Las Vegas Valley Water District filed 146 water rights applications with Nevada's state engineer by 1992, seeking a total of 860,000 acre feet of water from four counties—Clark, Lincoln, Nye, and White Pine—with about 800,000 acre feet coming from groundwater aquifers. Although the move was part of a larger attempt to attain a larger share of the lake and the district later withdrew the applications, the water district's actions still posed a threat to the park.<sup>436</sup> Some aquifers fed springs inside Lake Mead NRA. The National Park Service expressed concern that increased use of the underground water systems might reduce or eliminate spring flows in Lake Mead, endangering riparian vegetation and wildlife. While the reallocation of water resources that Las Vegas achieved in 2000 did not threaten the park, the expected continued population increase in the Las Vegas Valley presented a clear threat to the region's water supplies.<sup>437</sup>

The population upsurge in Las Vegas that began in the 1980s and became a tidal wave within a decade forced a dramatic reassessment of the local water situation. For most of its

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<sup>434</sup> Chopra and Dahlby, "The Business Plan Initiative."

<sup>435</sup> "Launch Ramp Reconstruction," and "Low Water Impacts Caused by 6-year Drought," 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statements, National Park Service, Western Region, January 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>436</sup> Jon Christensen, "Las Vegas Seeks Watery Jackpot in Northern Nevada" and "Las Vegas Wheels and Deals for Colorado River Water," in *Water in the West*, ed. Char Miller (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2000), 223-35.

<sup>437</sup> National Park Service Briefing Paper, "Las Vegas Valley Water District Rights Applications," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

history, the underground springs that gave the valley its name fed Las Vegas. In Spanish, “Las Vegas” means “the meadows,” and the water that percolated to the surface there had been the attraction for human beings since time immemorial. As late as 1940, water seemed plentiful in the Las Vegas Valley, but the population growth that started with World War II and continued unbroken soon demanded new supplies. Area residents created a water district in 1947 to bring water from Lake Mead. On September 22, 1955, Las Vegas received the first water in its new pipeline from the reservoir. This pipeline too was soon insufficient to meet demands, and a new round of water infrastructure development began. In 1982, the Southern Nevada Water Project completed a pipeline that let Las Vegas take its full legal share of Lake Mead water. By that time, the artesian wells that long sustained the valley still pumped, but pipes that wound their way to all parts of the city diverted the water before it reached the surface.<sup>438</sup>

Patricia Mulroy, a visionary governmental leader of the sort rarely seen in Nevada or anywhere else in the West, provided a solution to the region’s water problems. As general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority, Mulroy intuited the future a full decade ahead of the rest of the West. In the 1980s, she recognized that the nation lacked the political will and public support necessary to build new dams and pipelines for water delivery. The era of dam-building was over. It had gone the way of “water buffaloes” such as Representative Wayne Aspinall, the archetypical western congressman who brought home the bacon by tying his vote to the inclusion of projects in his home state, and government officials such as former Bureau of Reclamation commissioner Floyd Dominy, who made those projects happen. The ending of the era of federally financed dam construction was one of the environmental movement’s great successes, a battle linked to Sierra Club leader David Brower’s regret at exchanging the designated sacred space of Dinosaur National Monument for the profane, or at least unexplored, space behind the Glen Canyon Dam. Environmentalists continually opposed dam building, and after 1974, the federal agencies and the political representatives who staked their careers on water project development lacked the combination of political power and wherewithal to build new ones.<sup>439</sup> More water would have to come from redistribution of existing sources rather than the creation of new storage projects. Mulroy recognized the future of water meant reallocation, and reallocation guaranteed that those who could use changes in the existing structure to their advantage would become the big winners. Yet, reallocation was a hard sell to the public, an alteration of the status quo sure to enrage its beneficiaries. Circumventing them required a certain genius.

The innovation required a declaration of war, but as it turned out, it proved only a feint. In 1989, Mulroy and the Las Vegas Valley Water District she headed fired a salvo designed to inflame rural Nevada. The district laid claim to 805,000 acre-feet of water in twenty-six valleys, some of which were as far as 250 miles from Las Vegas. Mulroy claimed

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<sup>438</sup> Eugene Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 211-51.

<sup>439</sup> Mark Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); Norris J. Hundley, Jr., *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

water rights for the Virgin River, a stream that started near Zion National Park and wound its way to Lake Mead. Because the Virgin River was not navigable in the nineteenth-century sense of the word, the Colorado Compact had never included that water source in its allotments among the states that made up the agreement. This was more than a declaration of war. Despite Mulroy's promise that she did not want to "wipe out" rural Nevada, those counties regarded the water grab as social genocide. When the water district began the costly studies that would lead to an environmental impact statement, rural Nevada had no choice but to take the effort seriously.<sup>440</sup>

It turned not to be a fight at all, but the prospect of one brought other, more powerful, more recalcitrant, and newly vulnerable beneficiaries of the Colorado River to the table. A western water fight served nobody's purpose except the ones who did not have enough water, as any astute observer knew. Worse, it could shed light on the absurd and archaic arrangements that made fortunes for some and left others dry. The Colorado Compact had become an anachronism that stemmed from a time when agriculture and ranching operations reigned supreme in most of the West and when the cities were neither big enough nor sufficiently independent of the rural economy to grapple with farmers and ranchers. Even the vaunted Bureau of Reclamation, the great western dam-building agency that wielded power like a club, had fallen on hard times. Nevertheless, the compact created a water oligarchy. As long as no one looked too closely and small-town congressional representatives bartered their votes in statehouses and Congress, the rural West kept its federally subsidized prize. A great big battle over water in Nevada would do much more damage than finding a way to give a little bit of water to cities to preserve their larger prerogative of subsidized water for no apparent economic purpose.

Mulroy had something to offer her opponents. She could envision a solution to the entire lower basin dilemma that would only cost a few hundred thousand acre-feet of water each year. First, she consolidated her power by converting her opponents. Instead of building a dam and piping water to Las Vegas, she told the state engineer at a hearing on the Virgin River claim, all the Southern Nevada Water Authority wanted was to let the Virgin River flow. Rather than dam the river and create a huge fight not only with rural Nevada, but with regional and national environmental groups as well, Mulroy proposed letting the river go where it has since the government built Hoover Dam: into Lake Mead. From there, two pipelines would take it to the Las Vegas Valley. Environmentalists were thrilled because Mulroy did not want to build a dam. Communities along the Virgin River were equally excited. Not only did they get water from the deal, but Mulroy's arrangement gave them seats on the Southern Nevada Water Authority board, a place from which they could negotiate their future from a position of relative power. Pulling all of this off required "major rethinking" up and down the Colorado River, Mulroy reminded the public, but it was a start.<sup>441</sup>

The grease for this wheel was cash, the real gold Las Vegas had to offer. Water has

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<sup>440</sup> Jon Christensen, "Build It and the Water Will Come," in *The Grit beneath the Glitter: Tales from the Real Las Vegas*, ed. Hal K. Rothman and Mike Davis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>441</sup> Hal K. Rothman, "Urban Oasis: Las Vegas' Cash Keeps it Lush . . . and It Should," *Urban Ecology* 9(February 2001).

never been a paying proposition in the West. Of all the reclamation projects in the region, only one, in Carlsbad, New Mexico, ever paid for itself and that was because the federal government took over a failed private project that built most of the necessary infrastructure before it folded. For a long time, the fundamental lack of economic logic simply did not matter. Farmers and ranchers controlled the statehouses in the interior West and had well-placed representatives in Washington, D.C. This power guaranteed that no one seriously tried to cut the federal appropriations that covered the shortfalls from the water sales that fed agriculture and ranching. The “law of the river” was really just oligarchic control by a well-placed and wealthy few defending their appropriated privileges. That changed first when the cities of the interior western states grew and overwhelmed the rural areas and then after the Microchip Revolution, a set of changes as great as the Industrial Revolution itself, altered the social meaning of American crops and natural resources. The fiction became harder and harder to sustain, and when Mulroy knocked, even people who probably hated her recognized that she brought a few more years of coverage for them by providing a solution that quieted down the issue. Even President Bill Clinton’s secretary of the interior, the Arizonan Bruce Babbitt, once an opponent of Las Vegas’s water grab, turned around. “Las Vegas needs an expanded water supply from the Colorado River,” he announced in 1998.<sup>442</sup>

Mulroy also fixed the other side of the equation. Once the extra water for Las Vegas was in Lake Mead, it still had to get to Las Vegas. The answer was an expansion of water delivery systems, a “second straw” as it became known, to accompany the pipeline completed in 1982. The project cost almost \$2 billion, about what a dam and pipes from rural Nevada would have cost. It had the added advantage of being large enough to carry any future allotments of water beyond Nevada’s 300,000 acre-foot limit set in the 1927 compact. As always, the question became paying for the project. The most palatable way in Nevada was regressive taxation, the sales tax. That way, the refrain went, the 36 million visitors each year helped subsidize the cost to locals. The measure passed in 1998 despite a combination of populist, environmentalist, and senior citizen opposition.

The redirection of water resources alleviated one important threat while creating other newer ones. By rescinding its claim on underground water, Las Vegas no longer threatened springs in Lake Mead. Conversely, the deal Mulroy orchestrated made the lake, the park’s primary resource, into the water source for another growing community along the Colorado River. In essence, the park exchanged one kind of problem, the drying up of its springs, for another, the industrial use of its resource by the fastest-growing city in the United States.

Another of the side effects of Lake Mead NRA’s proximity to Las Vegas is its attractiveness as a long-term vacation site. Park Service policy limited the length of stay at the 850 long-term trailer sites near the shores of Lake Mead and Lake Mohave. Regulations designated the trailer villages for recreational rather than residential occupation, but countless people sought to stay for extended periods. In January 1999, Lake Mead addressed the growing problem of people who made their trailer homes into permanent residences at the park’s seven long-term trailer villages. The unwillingness of the concession operators who managed the sites to enforce Park Service rules compounded the park’s problem. Lake Mead

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<sup>442</sup> Christensen, “Build It and the Water Will Come.”



did not design or maintain the recreation area's infrastructure, including water, sewage, and electric systems, to accommodate use of trailer village sites as permanent habitation. To return the trailer sites to their intended recreational purpose, recreation area officials mandated a limit of 180 occupation days in any calendar year. The park enforced the limit immediately on all new site rental agreements and at the end of a five-year phase-in period for existing rental agreements.<sup>443</sup>

Lake Mead has also been forced to change its fiscal policies concerning the recreation area's vacation cabin sites. Originally authorized under the Reclamation Project Act of 1939 and amended in 1950, the cabins were very attractive for vacationers. The park offered twenty-five year leases on cabin sites, with leaseholders returning the lands to the Park Service at the end of the lease. Between 1953 and 1965, private citizens leased 137 vacation cabin sites, and the 1964 enabling legislation for Lake Mead confirmed earlier authorization for the leases. Upon expiration of the original leases, the Park Service usually granted five-year extensions. As part of the extension process, the Park Service mandated an appraisal to set the lease rates, which the agency could only change at the time of extension. Laws required the lease rates to provide a fair market return to the federal government for the private use of public lands. The original annual lease fees, established by the Bureau of Reclamation, were \$35. By 1968, the Park Service's annual fees were \$120 at Stewart's Point, \$180 at Temple Bar, and \$315 at Katherine, and the 1986 fees were set at \$549, \$585, and \$765, respectively.<sup>444</sup>

The minuscule leasing fees required reappraisal. In the 1980s, the Park Service and Lake Mead aimed to ascertain a more appropriate fee level. Despite repeated efforts, between 1986 and 1996 agency personnel could not accomplish the park's goal of appraising the cabin sites at realistic levels. Initially, no vendors responded to a solicitation for appraisal services. When park staff did locate a qualified vendor, Lake Mead could no longer find the funds to pay for the appraisals. As a result, fees remained constant. The government approved lease extensions to 1995 and then to 2000 at the 1986 lease rate, a bargain as both the cost of living rose and the demand for recreational space increased.

A 1995 General Accounting Office (GAO) audit determined that the 1986 appraisal process was severely flawed, as the appraiser used an approach to value that highlighted return on investment instead of emphasizing a fair return to the government on the rental rates charged. The GAO recommended an immediate reappraisal of the vacation cabin sites, based on a fair return to the government. On July 3, 1996, the revised appraisal fixed annual leases rates at \$2,340 at Stewart's Point, \$2,880 at Temple Bar, and \$3,240 at Katherine. In January 1999, Lake Mead requested an update in appraisal information before setting rates

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<sup>443</sup> Briefing Paper, "Trailer Village Length-of-Stay Limit, Concessioner-Operated, Long-Term Sites," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives; Information sheet, "Long-term Trailer Villages Visitors within Lake Mead National Recreation Area," Nov. 2, 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>444</sup> National Park Service Briefing Paper, "Cabin Site Lease Rate Increases at Temple Bar, Stewart Point, and Katherine Landing," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives; National Park Service Briefing Paper, "Vacation Cabin Lease Site Fees, at Temple Bar, Stewart Point, and Katherine Landing," February 2000, Lake Mead NRA archives.

for the 2000-2005 interval. Park officials met with vacation cabin tenants and other interested parties to explain the appraisal process and hear residents' complaints. The updated appraisals set annual lease rates at \$1,860 at Stewart's Point, \$2,200 at Temple Bar, and \$2,460 at Katherine. The lessees expressed concerns that the increase would hamper their ability to continue using their personal property built on the cabin sites, and the Katherine Vacation Cabin Site Association contracted with an attorney to assess its options.<sup>445</sup>

Another manifestation of the same kind of issue, road and highway traffic, continued to vex the park. As the nearby population and visitation to the park increased, traffic to and through Lake Mead NRA grew at a parallel rate. Because of park visitors and an increase in the number of casinos in Laughlin, the state of Nevada upgraded Highway 163 between Highway 95 and Davis Dam. The renovation turned the two-lane highway into four lanes and by 1990, crews were at work inside Lake Mead's boundaries. U.S. Highway 93, the road that crossed Hoover Dam, had been a long-standing source of traffic concern for government agencies. The Bureau of Reclamation had sought an alternate route for the increasing numbers of cars and trucks since 1967. A contractor completed an initial study of alternate routes in October 1990, considering nine routes. The bureau deleted six of the alternatives for environmental, fiscal, regulatory, and other reasons, and reclamation agency staff initiated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The bureau abandoned the project before finishing the EIS because of limited funding, and the project languished for several years until the Federal Highway Administration agreed to revive it and act as lead agency. A Boulder City group, Citizens Against Unsafe Traffic In Our Neighborhoods, urged consideration of a route twelve miles below Hoover Dam on Lake Mohave. The Park Service opposed the recommendation because it bisected the park through a potential wilderness area and divided bighorn sheep habitat. By 1999 the government rejected the Willow Beach option and associated agencies were studying the three earlier alternatives: Promontory Point, approximately 1,000 feet upstream from Hoover Dam; Sugarloaf, about 1,500 feet downstream; and Gold Strike Canyon, about 1 mile downstream.<sup>446</sup>

The possibility of a new road illustrated another of the ways in which growth impinged on Lake Mead. The proximity to urban Las Vegas and its millions of visitors was an advantage in terms of increased visitation and public support, but the region's demands easily and likely always threatened park values. Again, circumstances forced the park to respond as one of many stakeholders in a complicated situation. Again, decisions made by local, regional, state, and even national entities, which spent little time considering the needs of Lake Mead NRA, limited the park's ability to shape its future independently.

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<sup>445</sup> Briefing Paper, "Cabin Site Lease Rate Increases at Temple Bar, Stewart Point, and Katherine Landing," January 1999; James P. Morris to Kyra Thibodeau, Jan. 29, 1999, Concession Management files, Lake Mead NRA archives; Alan O'Neill to Terri Frear, President, Katherine Vacation Cabin Site Association, April 8, 1999, File L30, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>446</sup> 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statement, "Nevada State Highway 193 Relocation," and "Colorado River Bridge-Hoover Dam," January 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives; National Park Service Briefing Paper, "Hoover Dam Bypass, Colorado River Bridge," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

Besides the sheer number of automobiles clogging area roads, the recreational vehicles used by large numbers of visitors and the boats pulled by trucks and automobiles put additional stress on regional highways. The park's roads and bridges, already deteriorated from years of service and too narrow for larger vehicles, faced continued decline in quality. Northshore Road, the principal north-south access route for Lake Mead, and Lakeshore Drive, which runs along Boulder Basin's southern boundary, began the new century in the middle of reconstruction projects, with renovation costs running into the millions of dollars per mile. The completed Lakeshore Road made travel considerably easier, but its two lanes foretold a time when the road could no longer manage the quantity of traffic that sought it.<sup>447</sup>

Growth also meant more threats to Lake Mead's natural resources, as the increase in people in the vicinity and users affected wildlife, plant life, and other park attributes. The federal government has recognized the natural beauty of Lake Mead since at least 1935, when Park Service Inspector Emerson Knight penned a series of suggestions for preserving the area. His initial recommendation was "to do all possible and spare no pains in retention of precious and priceless pristine wilderness conditions and values."<sup>448</sup> As the region filled with people, few others regarded Lake Mead NRA primarily for its scenic values. When new national laws such as the Wilderness Act of 1964 mandated federal response, Lake Mead's staff faced another situation that illustrated not only the difficulties of managing the park in the greater Las Vegas area but also the problems of managing a national recreation area within the park system. One management scheme had to accommodate competing values and uses, but not all uses could easily coexist. The Park Service found itself in the position of mediating disputes between different kinds of constituencies, one of the most difficult circumstances for agency managers.

The changing nature of U.S. politics and the inability of the Park Service to respond to the demands of the newly energized public were equal contributors to the agency's difficulty with the idea of wilderness. Lake Mead NRA's recreational development was tightly concentrated around the water level, leaving thousands of acres of land in a wilderness condition within the park's boundaries. The perception that the Park Service opposed the Wilderness Act for expedient reasons hurt the agency's credibility with the environmental community, and subsequent establishment of designated wilderness areas within existing parks after 1964 caused problems for the agency and its constituencies. The Park Service dragged its feet while the public clamored for more reserved land. New parks that lacked national significance garnered much local support, but agency activists and their friends in environmental organizations criticized their creation. Questions about the distribution of the Park Service budget emerged. The agency's crown jewels, the old-line national parks such as Yosemite and Yellowstone, had to vie for resources to maintain their declining physical facilities while millions of dollars were spent on new parks of—at least in the old Park Service's estimation—questionable value. Some parks were clear pork-barrel boondoggles;

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<sup>447</sup> National Park Service Briefing Paper, "Northshore Road and Lakeshore Road Reconstruction," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>448</sup> Emerson Knight, "Boulder Dam National Recreation Area: Primary Objectives that Should Govern Its Preservation and Use," Oct. 20, 1935, Lake Mead files, National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, CA (hereafter NARA-LN).

others, such as Lake Mead NRA, still battled the stigma of earlier generations of Park Service personnel. Responding to a concerned but sometimes hostile public created a different tenor within the agency.<sup>449</sup>

The management of wilderness areas was even more complicated at Lake Mead NRA than at most parks. Even though federal law required assessment of roadless areas larger than 5,000 acres, few regarded Lake Mead as the location of wilderness. The area was recreational in character and the widespread perception of wilderness was of heavily timbered, high-elevation land; the recreation area's stark desert landscape was jarring to that image. With a wilderness review in 1974 under the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) process, the Park Service proposed designating 409,000 acres as wilderness. The president's transmittal of the park's survey to Congress recommended deferring action, pending a study of western power needs by the Bureau of Reclamation. When that study was completed, the Park Service initiated a second wilderness review. This study identified 418,000 acres as suitable for wilderness and 262,000 acres as potential wilderness additions. It also recommended the 83,980 acres of the Shivwits Plateau as potential wilderness, despite the fact that the Santa Fe Railway mineral rights encumbered the land. The Park Service shelved the review in 1979, before the public comment period. As of 1999, the Park Service had yet to complete a wilderness proposal for Lake Mead.<sup>450</sup>

Two of the most significant threats to Lake Mead come from outside its borders and remain outside the control of the National Park Service. Air and water pollution, among the more visible symbols of an industrial society, assure that visitors to any part of Lake Mead NRA or any unit of the Park Service never really leave the outside world behind. The Park Service entered into a cooperative effort with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) during 1992 to monitor the discharge of the Mohave Generating Plant, in Laughlin, Nevada, about fifty-five miles south of Boulder City. Southern California Edison Company operates the coal-fired plant, built in the early 1970s and widely acknowledged as one of the worst emitters of pollution in the Southwest. The EPA-NPS project monitored the plant's impact on the Class I airshed of Grand Canyon National Park, with four of the monitoring stations based inside Lake Mead NRA. The station recorded plumes of yellow-brown emissions from Mohave Generating Plant flowing into the park when the predominant south wind was blowing, affecting the park's visibility.<sup>451</sup>

Las Vegas's air quality problems also threatened Lake Mead NRA. The Las Vegas Valley was in a continual state of "non-attainment," the EPA's designation for places with substandard air quality. Two different factors contributed to the problem: carbon monoxide from automobile and truck exhaust, and particulate matter, which resulted from tearing up

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<sup>449</sup> Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the U.S. since 1945* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1997), 57-63.

<sup>450</sup> National Park Service Briefing Paper, "Lands Suitable for Wilderness Within Lake Mead NRA," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, February 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>451</sup> 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statement, "Mohave Generating Plant," January 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives; John Freemuth, *Islands under Siege: National Parks and the Politics of External Threats* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 1-16.

the desert for development. Air quality problems reflected success in other economic areas, but for Lake Mead they posed a threat not only to recreational values, but to public health as well. The Park Service carefully monitored Las Vegas Valley's air quality situation.

Financial shortfalls and overcrowding threatened Lake Mead NRA's most important characteristic, the quality of the water held back by Hoover and Davis dams. With more than 950 miles of shoreline, Lake Mead faced increasing shoreline litter and sanitation problems, a result of inadequate maintenance budgets and increasing numbers of boaters. In 1987, the park spent \$205,745 picking up 27,718 bags of litter, with 10,590 bags picked up along the lakeshore.<sup>452</sup> Clearly, the public contributed to the fouling of the resource they so enjoyed.

A less visible, but more dangerous concern stemmed from the Las Vegas Wash. The wash daily dumped 120 million gallons of treated sewage effluent into Lake Mead. Incoming waters from urban runoff and shallow groundwater, discharged from across the entire Las Vegas Valley, also pour into the reservoirs, bearing such contaminants as pesticides, heavy metals, perchlorate, and endocrine disrupters. Analysts expect this flow to increase to 260 million gallons a day by 2020. Clark County's 1.4 million residents draw their water from Lake Mead, with the intake of the two "straws" about six miles downstream from the wash. During the 1990s, the Bureau of Reclamation studied the plume-carrying wastewater from Las Vegas Wash and found that on occasion it reached the water intake. In 1994, conditions exposed people in the valley to unacceptable levels of cryptosporidium, a parasite that contaminated water. Lake Mead NRA organized a water quality forum in 1999 to identify water quality issues, coordinate research, and build a consensus on how to deal with the threat. The park partially revised and strengthened its standards for water quality to include some Park Service concerns. The forum and another interagency group, the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee, assisted Lake Mead in establishing a water resources management strategy.<sup>453</sup>

A more visible and direct threat stemmed from the floods that periodically damage park property and endanger visitors and staff. The most tragic example to strike Lake Mead came on September 14, 1974, when a flash flood destroyed the Eldorado Canyon area, killing nine people. Many of the park's developed areas, built in the alluvial fans adjacent to the reservoirs, are at risk from flash flooding. The flood hazard is most severe in the Willow Beach area, with Cottonwood Cove, Katherine Landing, and Temple Bar also at significant risk. Callville Bay and Echo Bay are the only developed areas in Lake Mead built away from the flash floodplains. The 1986 *General Management Plan* estimated flood mitigation work would cost \$19 million, and Lake Mead entered into a memorandum of understanding in 1987 with the Bureau of Reclamation for cooperative efforts on building canals, diversionary structures, and other flood control structures. The park received funding in fiscal years 1989,

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<sup>452</sup> Chopra and Dahlby, "The Business Plan Initiative"; National Park Service Briefing Paper, "Litter," Dec. 28, 1988, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>453</sup> National Park Service Briefing Paper, "Water Quality of Lake Mead-Las Vegas Wash/Bay," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, February 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives; Superintendent Alan O'Neill, FY99 Accomplishment Highlights, Lake Mead NRA archives; Letter to Chief, Water Resources Division, From Leslie Krueger and Larry Martin, Dec. 17, 1996, File L54 Water Matters, Water Rights, Compacts, Park Ranger files, Lake Mead NRA archives.

1990, and 1991 to develop plans to reduce the flooding dangers at Willow Beach and Cottonwood Cove. The park reduced concession facilities at Willow Beach in 1999 until it could complete adequate mitigation efforts. An increase in visitation to Cottonwood Cove late in the 1990s has sparked a demand for more services in the area, but the park cannot satisfy such requests until flood protection structures are in place. In 1999, Lake Mead turned to the regional office and the Federal Highway Administration for financial help in repairing facilities after a flood, a mechanism likely to be used again in the future.<sup>454</sup>

A growing national acceptance of the rights of Native Americans led to Park Service recognition of nonwhite cultural values and an increased willingness to approve nontraditional uses for Park Service lands. The park finally won approval to hire a cultural resources management specialist in 1992, with responsibility for evaluating needs and setting long-term goals for Lake Mead. In addition, Lake Mead assigned a specialist to the task of opening a dialogue with the seven tribes affiliated with the Lower Colorado River. After the Native American Religious Freedom Act in 1978, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act in 1979, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, cultural resource management had become an interactive process with native peoples.

At Lake Mead NRA, the designation of Spirit Mountain on the park's southern boundary as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) is the result of years of these negotiations. Many Indian peoples, including the Yuman-speaking Colorado River tribes, considered it a sacred site, and both the Park Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) already protected Spirit Mountain. Management boundaries of the two agencies divide the site, with Lake Mead designating its zone on the mountain's eastern edge a Historic/Archeological Zone with Outstanding Natural Feature and Environmental Protection subzones, and BLM reserving its section to the west as a Traditional Lifeway Area.<sup>455</sup>

Working with affiliated Native American groups during development of Lake Mead's *General Management Plan* (GMP) in the early 1980s led to federal recognition of Spirit Mountain as the most sacred site along the Colorado River for the Yuman-speaking groups. The GMP incorporated Indian concern into site management. An increase in visitation and recreational activities on Park Service lands, in conjunction with possible mining development and construction of communication towers on BLM property, fueled efforts to protect Spirit Mountain. The two federal agencies entered into collaborative consultations with the Indian groups, leading to nomination of the site as a Traditional Cultural Property to the keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. The protective process did not include state agencies, and the Nevada Division of Wildlife, which controls hunting designation for the Eldorado South Hunt Unit, an area including the Spirit Mountain TCP

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<sup>454</sup> 101<sup>st</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statement, "Flood Mitigation," Dec. 28, 1988, Lake Mead NRA archives; To Regional Director from Superintendent, Lake Mead, Sept. 24, 1974, D18, Lake Mead NRA archives; Lake Mead Annual Report, 1987; 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statement, "Flood Mitigation," January 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives; Briefing Statement, "Flood Mitigation and Protection of Facilities," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives; Superintendent Alan O'Neill, FY99 Accomplishment Highlights.

<sup>455</sup> Briefing Paper, "Spirit Mountain (Avikwa'ame) Traditional Cultural Property (TCP)," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives; Superintendent's Accomplishments, October 1992-September 1993.

landscape, reopened the area to desert bighorn sheep hunting in 1998. By January 1999, the Park Service was working on vegetation restoration of former roads and campsites, with a tribal monitor designated by the tribes evaluating its efforts. Future Park Service activities within the area are subject to review by the tribal groups. In his fiscal year 1999 report, Superintendent Alan O'Neill reported that "Spirit Mountain was designated a Traditional Cultural Property, the first such designation in the state of Nevada." In addition to the specific Spirit Mountain issue, by 1999 Lake Mead initiated work on a memorandum of understanding between the national recreation area, Grand Canyon National Park, and the Hualapai Nation "to resolve a host of difficult issues."<sup>456</sup>

The federal government also considered plans to preserve evidence of a much older native presence in the region. The Shivwits Plateau, about seventy miles south of St. George, Utah, and on Lake Mead NRA's eastern border, holds artifacts at least 12,000 years old. Following a 1998 visit, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt proposed designating the area as a national monument, but ownership problems complicated the designation. Besides the Park Service and Bureau of Land Management lands, the Santa Fe Railway held title to every other section, granted by Congress during the construction and expansion of its system. Landowners have returned most of these private parcels to the public domain, but the subsurface mineral rights on 64,000 acres remain in private hands. In addition to its cultural resources, the Shivwits Plateau is home to deer, wild turkeys, desert bighorn sheep, bats, and more than 200 bird species. Designation as a national monument would prohibit mining and residential development and protect the area's natural solitude and isolation, while allowing hunting and ranching to continue. As of January 1999, the Park Service had not taken an official position on the proposal, but national monument status would likely generate protests from mining and grazing interests and could affect Lake Mead's development along its eastern border. A presidential proclamation, signed January 11, 2000, established Parashant National Monument, granting federal protection to lands on the northern edge of the Grand Canyon.<sup>457</sup>

Mineral rights remain a concern throughout Lake Mead NRA. Regulations issued August 10, 1955, permitted mining on recreation area lands under lease permits from the Bureau of Land Management, and the 1964 legislation enabling the park authorized mineral leasing activities. The Sierra Club obtained an injunction in 1984 barring all leasing activities until development of a *Minerals Management Plan*, a document completed in 1988. The park's *General Management Plan* of 1986 prohibited mineral leasing on Shivwits Plateau. By 1992, there were only two mining applications on file with Lake Mead, with one in the Katherine area denied because the federal government deemed it incompatible with the park's recreational mission. One of the major mineral rights holders within Lake Mead at the end of the century remained the Santa Fe Railway, which in January 1999 retained about 59,000 acres of reserved mineral rights, including acreage on the Shivwits Plateau. Lake Mead

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<sup>456</sup> Ibid.; Superintendent Alan O'Neill, FY99 Accomplishment Highlights; Briefing Paper, "Virgin River Conservation and Restoration," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>457</sup> Briefing Paper, "Shivwits National Monument Proposal," Prepared for Regional Director, Pacific West Region, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

established priorities among its acquisition objectives for Santa Fe land, a list that includes the Shivwits Plateau acreage, two sections near Meadowview, Arizona, overlooking Greggs Basin, and several sections near the south end of Lake Mohave. Santa Fe has indicated a desire to sell its mineral holdings, but as of January 1999 the government has not established an appraisal or estimate for the rights. Wilderness proponents favor Park Service acquisition of all mineral rights.<sup>458</sup>

The park's financial shortfalls have also affected natural resources management, although strong park leadership and dedicated Park Service staff members have helped overcome some of the financial hurdles. Roundups of wild burros took place throughout the 1990s, and the capture of 750 burros in 1997 pushed the park close to the levels prescribed by its *Burro Management Plan*. Lake Mead's latest wildlife management efforts reflect the Park Service's increasing professionalization of its support staff. In 1998, park personnel conducted bat and frog surveys, a peregrine falcon survey, and a Southwest Willow Flycatcher survey on Lake Mohave, as well as a burro census of the entire Black Mountain ecosystem. The following year, research teams performed surveys of peregrine falcons, bats, tortoises, and wintering bald eagles. As part of the park's monitoring system, personnel captured and banded 463 birds from 31 species. Lake Mead also offered its expertise to outside agencies, providing resource management and research to areas beset by growing human populations, where units of the national park system did not have the species protection in place. In January 1999, the park provided help to Clark County for development of a multispecies conservation plan.

These developments took place in the context of a comprehensive reassessment of Lake Mead NRA's mission. In 1997, Superintendent Alan O'Neill debuted the park's strategic plan for the years 1998-2002. Replete with the language of stewardship and protection, the document also illustrated the problems the park faced. The park was part of the larger region and had to take its needs and desires into account. Park leaders needed to be represented in any kind of community meeting that affected park resources. This alone was a daunting commitment of staff time and energy, for accompanying the growth of the Las Vegas Valley was an interminable number of meetings, hearings, public forums, media calls, and the entire array of public functions that federal law requires.<sup>459</sup>

This dimension of the strategic plan suggested one of the key ingredients of successful management. National recreation areas grew significantly in number beginning in the 1960s and gradually evolved into an integral part of the park system. Yet conventional park management techniques and strategies did not always suffice for parks such as Lake Mead NRA. Agency officials from Washington, D.C., to the park needed a measure of flexibility not always necessary at other kinds of areas. Especially in the West after the advent of the

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<sup>458</sup> Lake Mead Annual Report, 1955; 101<sup>st</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statement, "Mineral, Oil/Gas Leasing and the Mineral Management Plan," Dec. 28, 1988, Lake Mead NRA archives; 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress Issues Briefing Statement, "Mineral Leasing and the Mineral Management Plan," January 1992, Lake Mead NRA archives; Briefing Paper, "Santa Fe Reserved Mineral Rights," Prepared for the Regional Director, January 1999, Lake Mead NRA archives.

<sup>459</sup> Lake Mead National Recreation Area Strategic Plan 1998-2002 (FY98 Annual Performance Plan), Sept. 30, 1997, Lake Mead NRA archives.



“wise use” movement, which advocated greater utilization of federal lands and greater access for off-road vehicles and other similar activities, the park faced contentious observers with agendas of their own. In an age when the agency did not always successfully fend off outside interests, the “wise use” movement was a possible threat to park values.

Lake Mead NRA’s other basic complication, its role as an urban park for the Las Vegas Valley, also challenged Park Service management practices and ideas. In this function, Lake Mead NRA was much like a city or state park, a place for sheer recreation apart from the travails of daily life. Even the new Park Service, reconceived as a more inclusive entity, was fundamentally uncomfortable in this role. The agency’s entire history suggested that state and local entities were well equipped for such responsibilities, but Lake Mead’s unique history of land ownership guaranteed federal administration of some kind. The result was a park that people enjoyed, but that did not always seem to them to be a national park area.

Americans have a distinct and sometimes peculiarly circumscribed view of what national parks should be. Many of the features of Lake Mead NRA more than meet that standard; to much of the public, many of the activities that go on in the park simply do not. The paradox of management at Lake Mead NRA is balancing these conflicting and seemingly irreconcilable points of view.



## APPENDIX A

### Lake Mead Superintendents

Guy D. Edwards (Military furlough) <sup>460</sup>	Dec. 1, 1936	April 30, 1942
Robert H. Rose	May 9, 1942	April 22, 1946
Guy D. Edwards <sup>461</sup>	Jan. 23, 1946	Oct. 13, 1946
Ben H. Thompson (Acting)	Oct. 15, 1946	Nov. 23, 1946
George F. Baggley	Nov. 24, 1946	Aug. 31, 1954
Charles A. Richey	Sept. 23, 1954	Jan. 24, 1969
Roger W. Allin	April 29, 1969	Jan. 23, 1971
Glen T. Bean	Jan. 24, 1971	Jan. 5, 1974
William J. Briggley	Feb. 17, 1974	April 10, 1976
Jerry D. Wagers	Aug. 1, 1976	Dec. 20, 1986
Gary E. Bunney (Acting)	Dec. 21, 1986	Aug. 30, 1987
Alan O'Neill	Aug. 31, 1987	Oct. 2000
William K. Dickinson	Dec. 12, 2000	Through the present <sup>462</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Edwards supervised administration of Lehman Caves National Monument from Dec. 16, 1938 through July 1, 1953, and Nov. 1, 1954 through Jan. 1, 1958.

<sup>461</sup> Following Edward's return from military service, he and Rose served concurrently as superintendents from Jan. 23, 1946 through May 22, 1946.

<sup>462</sup> Dickinson was still serving as superintendent at the time this book was completed in 2010.

## APPENDIX B

### Park Visitation

Year	Total Travel	Cumulative Total
1937	552,128	552,128
1938	533,914	1,086,042
1939	649,624	1,735,666
1940	668,027	2,403,693
1941	844,733	3,248,426
1942	338,778	3,582,204
1943	214,190	3,801,394
1944	263,533	4,064,927
1945	587,436	4,652,363
1946	1,165,369	5,817,732
1947	1,426,831	7,244,563
1948	1,654,004	8,898,567
1949	1,423,552	10,322,119
1950	1,798,280	12,120,399
1951	2,053,619	14,174,018
1952	1,946,706	16,120,724
1953	2,220,940	18,341,664
1954	2,112,724	20,454,388
1955	2,675,371	23,129,759
1956	2,672,774	25,802,533
1957	2,955,257	28,757,790
1958	3,190,580	31,948,370
1959	3,390,574	35,338,944
1960	2,254,185	37,593,129
1961	2,219,960	39,813,089
1962	2,688,745	42,501,834
1963	3,349,565	45,851,399
1964	3,462,580	49,313,979
1965	3,594,065	52,908,044
1966	3,720,485	56,628,529
1967	4,102,335	60,730,864
1968	4,751,795	65,482,659
1969	5,614,940	71,097,599

Year	Total Travel	Cumulative Total
1970	4,897,135	75,994,734
1971	4,570,229	80,564,963
1972	4,888,636	85,453,599
1973	5,534,315	90,987,914
1974	5,939,533	96,927,447
1975	6,219,220	103,146,667
1976	6,948,611	110,095,278
1977	6,529,848	116,625,126
1978	6,879,870	123,504,996
1979	6,378,341	129,883,337
1980	5,145,699	135,029,036
1981	5,406,184	140,435,220
1982	5,565,467	146,000,687
1983	6,128,254	152,128,941
1984	6,504,206	158,633,147
1985	7,204,295	165,837,442
1986	8,034,542	173,871,984
1987	8,392,419	182,264,403
1988	8,629,895	190,894,298
1989	8,803,414	199,697,712
1990	8,893,495	208,591,207
1991	8,751,312	217,342,519
1992	9,343,549	226,686,068
1993	9,265,520	235,951,588
1994	9,913,705	245,865,293
1995	10,195,546	256,060,839
1996	9,689,997	265,750,836
1997	8,837,742	274,588,578
1998	9,106,793	283,695,371
1999	9,351,237	293,046,608
2000	9,072,545	302,119,153

## APPENDIX C

### Memorandum of Agreement between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, 1936

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
AND THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION RELATING TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND  
ADMINISTRATION OF THE BOULDER CANYON PROJECT AREA.

WHEREAS the Bureau of Reclamation is charged with the responsibility for the construction, operation and maintenance of the Boulder Canyon Project, and

WHEREAS a large area of land has been withdrawn for the purposes of the project in accordance with the first form of the withdrawal authorized by Section 3 of the act of June 17, 1902 (32 Stat. 88), the exterior limits of which area are marked in blue on the attached map marked "Appendix A," and which area as so indicated or as it may hereafter be altered by the proper authority is herein designated as the Boulder Canyon Project Area; and

WHEREAS a large number of visitors used the lands and waters of the Boulder Canyon Project Area for purposes of recreation; and

WHEREAS the National Park Service has an organization experienced in administering areas devoted to recreational uses; and

WHEREAS the National Park Service has authority and funds for the administration, protection and maintenance of the recreational activities of the Boulder Canyon Project Areas and for the construction and improvement of roads and trails therein (Public No. 741, 74<sup>th</sup> Congress);

NOW, THEREFORE, the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, do hereby mutually agree as follows:

#### ARTICLE I

##### GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The Bureau of Reclamation shall retain complete jurisdiction and authority over and responsibility for Boulder Dam, all engineering works connected therewith and the territory immediately adjacent thereto. The Bureau of Reclamation shall also retain jurisdiction and authority over and responsibility for Boulder City and all activities therein located. The National Park Service shall have jurisdiction over the remainder of the Boulder Canyon Project Area, including the airport on the outskirts of Boulder City, and shall have authority over and responsibility for all activities conducted or to be conducted thereon. The agreed territorial division of authority and jurisdiction between the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Park Service is more definitely shown on the maps which are made a part of

this agreement and attached hereto as “Appendix A” and “Appendix B.”

2. It is mutually understood that the Boulder Canyon Project was constructed for the storage, release and utilization of water, and that the accomplishment of those purposes is to be the dominant consideration in the administration and utilization of the Boulder Canyon Project Area as a whole. The Bureau of Reclamation shall retain, therefore, complete and exclusive control of the flow and utilization of water at the Dam as well as of all public access to the Dam and the engineering works connected therewith. Likewise the Bureau of Reclamation shall retain the right to determine any controversy which may arise because of conflict between the recreational uses of the Boulder Canyon Project Area and the uses of the project for storage, release and utilization of water, and the National Park Service agrees to accept such determination, subject to the right to request the Secretary of the Interior to consider and adjudge the propriety of the determination made by the Bureau which determination shall remain effective unless and until it is reversed by the said Secretary.

3. Prior to making any new development or granting any concession, lease, license or permit, which, because of its nature or location, will affect directly or indirectly Boulder City or Boulder Dam or any established business or activity at either the City or the Dam, the National Park Service shall secure the approval of the Bureau of Reclamation. Likewise, before making any new development or granting any concession, lease, license or permit at Boulder City or Boulder Dam, which will affect directly or indirectly the recreational and tourist facilities on the remainder of the boulder Canyon Project Area, the Bureau of Reclamation shall secure the approval of the National Park Service. If either the Bureau of Reclamation or the National Park Service, as the case may be, refuses to grant its approval, and if the difference of opinion between the two cannot be resolved informally by them, the development shall not proceed or the concession, lease, permit or license shall not issue, but the difference of opinion may be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior for consideration, after which such action shall be taken as is determined to be proper by said Secretary. It is understood and agreed that the provisions of this paragraph shall not be operative where the proposed action affects the storage, release and utilization of water, in which case the provisions of paragraph 2, above, shall control.

4. The income from all leases, licenses, or permits issued by the National Park Service within the Boulder Canyon Project Area will be deposited in a special deposit account for payment to the Bureau of Reclamation for the benefit of the Colorado River Dam Fund pursuant to the Act of December 21, 1928 (45 Stat. 1057).

## ARTICLE II

### FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Subject to the territorial limitations and other provisions contained in Article I hereof, the National Park Service shall:

1. Prepare all plans for the development of recreational facilities including roads and trails, supervise the construction of such facilities or, if found desirable, undertake and prosecute the construction of such facilities.

2. Advertise for, evaluate and approve or reject all bids or contracts for the installation or construction of recreational facilities.

3. Negotiate and enter into contracts, with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, with private individuals, partnerships or corporations for supplying necessary public services related to the recreational use of the area, including the use of the Lake Mead for boating, canoeing, bathing and sight-seeing; and to prescribe and enforce reasonable rates and standards for the supplying of such services. No contract shall be entered into which shall extend for a period more than 20 years, except that such contracts may be renewable for additional periods of not more than 20 years in the discretion of the National Park Service.

4. Supervise and operate, or enter into a contract with private individuals, partnerships or corporations for the operation of the Boulder City Airport.

5. Establish and enforce policies regarding the occupation or leasing of lands of the area for any purpose not related to the construction or operation of Boulder Dam and related works, including the reservoir, and Boulder City. It is understood that mining and grazing shall be permitted under the control and supervision of the National Park Service.

6. Make and enforce such rules and regulations for recreational use of the area and for the safety of those who make use of it as may appear necessary or desirable.

7. Make and enforce rules and regulations for the conservation of any historic or archeological remains, and for control of all archeological excavation and historic or archeological research and, in its discretion, establish a museum or museums or adopt other means of displaying the archeological, historical, plants, animal, and mineral resources of the area.

8. Establish and maintain ranger, educational, life guard and other special services as may be necessary for the safe and full use of the area for recreational purposes.

9. Control all public transportation on the area, whether by land or water or air, except such transportation as the Bureau of Reclamation may require for the performance of its functions.

10. Coordinate its activities with those of the Bureau of Biological Survey for the conservation and protection of wildlife within the area.

11. Extend to the Bureau of Reclamation advice and counsel in connection with any park, resort, or recreational development within the limits of Boulder City, whether intended primarily for use by residents of the City or the visiting public.

### ARTICLE III

#### FUNCTIONS OF THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Subject to the territorial limitations and other provisions contained in Article I hereof, the Bureau of Reclamation shall:

1. Operate Boulder Dam and reservoir and incidental engineering works for the proper storage, release, protection and utilization of water.

2. Operate and administer Boulder City. This power shall include authority to make and enforce all rules and regulations necessary for government of the City and maintenance of law and order and shall include the power to control all activities within the City, whether recreational or otherwise, and to issue leases, permits or licenses therefore.

3. Consult with the National Park Service on all matters in connections with the development or administration of Boulder City which relate to the establishment of parks or



other recreational facilities, or which may in any way affect the development, administration or use of the remainder of the boulder Canyon Project Area for recreational purposes.

4. Provide, in so far as it can without additional expense, facilities in Boulder City to accommodate the administrative personnel of the National Park Service located on the Boulder Canyon Project Area.

5. Establish and enforce rules and regulations governing public access to Boulder Dam and the engineering works appurtenant thereto, and for the control of traffic on the roads providing immediate access to the Dam and its appurtenant engineering works.

6. Provide, directly or by contract, such skilled guide and lecture service at the Dam as may be necessary to give the visiting public the important facts regarding it, including the history of its construction, and coordinate such educational activity with any related educational service which may be established elsewhere in the area by the National Park Service.

7. Establish and, in cooperation with the National Park Service, enforce such limits of approach to the Dam by water as may be necessary either for its efficient functioning or for the safety of the public.

ARTICLE IV  
TERMINATION

This agreement shall remain in force until otherwise directed by the Secretary of the Interior, in the exercise of his discretion, or until the enactment by Congress of legislation inconsistent herewith.

Signed this 29 day of August, 1936.

(Sgd.) A. E. Demaray,  
Acting Director, National Park Service

(Sgd.) R. F. Walter,  
Acting Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation

Approved: October 13, 1936

(Sgd.) H. L. Ickes,  
Secretary of the Interior

## APPENDIX D

### Enabling Legislation, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, 1964

Public Law 88-639  
88<sup>th</sup> Congress, S. 653  
October 8, 1964  
An Act

78 STAT. 1037.

To provide an adequate basis for administration of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Arizona and Nevada, and for other purposes.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.* That, in: recognition of the national significance of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, in the States of Arizona and Nevada, and in order to establish a more adequate basis for effective administration of such area for the public benefit, the Secretary of the Interior hereafter may exercise the functions and carry out the activities prescribed by this Act.

Sec. 2. Lake Mead National Recreation Area shall comprise that particular land and water area which is shown on a certain map, identified as “boundary map, RA-LM-7060-B, revised July 17, 1963,” which is on file and which shall be available for public inspection in the office of the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. An exact copy of such map shall be filed with the Federal Register within thirty days following the approval of this Act, and an exact copy thereof shall be available also for public inspection in the headquarters office of the superintendent of the said Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to revise the boundaries of such national recreation area, subject to the requirement that the total acreage of that area, as revised, shall be no greater than the present acreage thereof. In the event of such boundary revision, maps of the recreation area, as revised, shall be prepared by the Department of the Interior, and shall be filed in the same manner, and shall be available for public inspection also in accordance with the aforesaid procedures and requirements relating to the filing and availability of maps. The Secretary may accept donations of land and interest in land within the exterior boundaries of such area, or such property may be procured by the Secretary in such manner as he shall consider to be in the public interest.

In exercising his authority to acquire property by exchange, the Secretary may accept title to any non-Federal property located within the boundaries of the recreation area and convey to the grantor of such property any federally owned property under the jurisdiction of the Secretary, notwithstanding any other provision of law. The properties so exchanged shall be approximately equal in fair market value: *Provided*, That the Secretary may accept

cash from or pay cash to the grantor in such an exchange in order to equalize the values of the properties exchanged.

Establishment or revision of the boundaries of the said national recreation area, as herein prescribed, shall not affect adversely any valid rights in the area, nor shall it affect the validity of withdrawals heretofore made for reclamation or power purposes. All lands in the recreation area which have been withdrawn or acquired by the United States for reclamation purposes shall remain subject to the primary use thereof for reclamation and power purposes so long as they are withdrawn or needed for such purposes. There shall be excluded from the said national recreation area by the Secretary of the Interior any property for management or protection by the Bureau of Reclamation, which would be subject otherwise to inclusion in the said recreation area, and which the Secretary of the Interior considers in the national interest should be excluded therefrom.

Sec. 3. The authorities granted by this Act shall be subject to the following exceptions and qualifications when exercised with respect to any tribal or allotted lands of the Hualapai Indians that may be included within the exterior boundaries of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area:

(a) The inclusion of Indian lands within the exterior boundaries of the area shall not be effective until approved by the Hualapai Tribal Council.

(b) Mineral developments or use of the Indian Lands shall be permitted only in accordance with the laws that relate to Indian lands.

(c) Leases and permits for general recreational use, business sites, home sites, vacation cabin sites, and grazing shall be executed in accordance with the laws relating to leases of Indian lands, provided that all development and improvement leases so granted shall conform to the development program and standards prescribed for the Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

(d) Nothing in this Act shall deprive the members of the Hualapai Tribe of hunting and fishing privileges presently exercised by them, nor diminish those rights and privileges of that part of the reservation which is included in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

Sec. 4. (a) Lake Mead National Recreation Area shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior for general purposes of public recreation, benefit, and use, and in a manner that will preserve, develop, and enhance, so far as practicable, the recreation potential, and in a manner that will preserve the scenic, historic, scientific, and other important features of the area, consistently with applicable reservations and limitations relating to such area and with other authorized uses of the lands and properties within such area.

(b) In carrying out the functions prescribed by this Act, in addition to other related activities that may be permitted hereunder, the Secretary may provide for the following activities, subject to such limitations, conditions, or regulations as he may prescribe, and to such extent as will not be inconsistent with either the recreational use of the primary use of that portion of the area heretofore withdrawn for reclamation purposes:

- (1) General recreation use, such as bathing, boating, camping, and picnicking;
- (2) Grazing;
- (3) Mineral Leasing;
- (4) Vacation cabin site use, in accordance with existing policies of the

Department of the Interior relating to such use, or as such policies may be revised hereafter by the Secretary.

Sec. 5. The Secretary of the Interior shall permit hunting, fishing, and trapping on the lands and waters under his jurisdiction within the recreation area in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations of the United States and the respective States: *Provided*, That the Secretary, after consultation with the respective State fish and game commissions, may issue regulations designating zones where and establishing periods when no hunting, fishing, or trapping shall be permitted for reasons of public safety, administration, or public use and enjoyment.

Sec. 6. Such national recreation area shall continue to be administered in accordance with regulations heretofore issued by the Secretary of the Interior relating to such areas, and the Secretary may revise such regulations or issue new regulations to carry out the purposes of this Act. In his administration and regulation of the area, the Secretary shall exercise authority, subject to the provisions and limitations of this Act, comparable to his general administrative authority relating to areas of the national park system.

The superintendent, caretakers, officers, or rangers of such recreation area are authorized to make arrests for violation of any of the regulations applicable to the area or prescribed pursuant to this Act, and they may bring the offender before the nearest commissioner, judge, or court of the United States having jurisdiction in the premises.

Any person who violates a rule or regulations issued pursuant to this Act shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and may be punished by a fine of not more than \$500, or by imprisonment not exceeding six months, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

Sec.7. Nothing in this Act shall deprive any State, or any political subdivision thereof, of its civil and criminal jurisdiction over the lands within the said national recreation area, or of its rights to tax persons, corporations, franchises, or property on the lands included in such area. Nothing in this Act shall modify or otherwise affect the existing jurisdiction of the Hualapai Tribe or alter the status of individual Hualapai Indians within that part of the Hualapai Indian Reservation included in said Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

Sec. 8. Revenues and fees obtained by the United States from operation of the national recreation area shall be subject to the same statutory provisions concerning the disposition thereof as are similar revenues collected in areas of the national park system with the exception, that those particular revenues and fees including those from mineral developments, which the Secretary of the Interior finds are reasonably attributable to Indian lands shall be paid to the Indian owner of the land, and with the further exception that other fees and revenues obtained from mineral development and from activities under other public land laws within the recreation area shall be disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the applicable laws.

Sec. 9. A United States commissioner shall be appointed for that portion of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area that is situated in Mohave County, Arizona. Such commissioner shall be appointed by the United States district court having jurisdiction thereover, and the commissioner shall serve as directed by such court, as well as pursuant to, and within the limits of, the authority of said court.

The functions of such commissioner shall include the trial and sentencing of persons

committing petty offenses, as defined in title 18, section 1, United States Code: *Provided*, That any person charged with a petty offense may elect to be tried in the district court of the United States, and the commissioner shall apprise the defendant of his right to make such election, but shall not proceed to try the case unless the defendant, after being so apprised, signs a written consent to be tried before the commissioner. The exercise of additional functions by the commissioner shall be consistent with and be carried out in accordance with the authority, laws, and regulations, of general application to United States commissioners. The provisions of title 18, section 3402, of the United States Code, and the rules of procedure and practice prescribed by the Supreme Court pursuant thereto, shall apply to all cases handled by such commissioner. The probation laws shall be applicable to persons tried by the commissioner and he shall have power to grant probation. The commissioner shall receive the fees, and none other, provided by law for like or similar services.

Sec. 10. There are hereby authorized to be appropriated, not more than \$1,200,000 for the acquisition of land and interests in land pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

**Approved October 8, 1964**

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORT No. 1039 accompanying H. R. 4010 (Comm. on Interior & Insular Affairs).

SENATE REPORT No. 360 (Comm. on Interior & Insular Affairs).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

Vol. 109 (1963): Aug. 2, considered and passed Senate.

Vol. 110 (1964): Aug. 3, considered and passed House, amended, in lieu of H. R. 4010.

Sept. 28, Senate concurred in House amendment.



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