



Las Vegas Boat Harbor, Inc.
490 Horsepower Cove Road
Lake Mead National Recreation Area
Boulder City, NV 89005

December 1, 2022

In response to the Lake Mead NRA – Sustainable Low Water Access Plan / EA – dated November 2022. Las Vegas Boat Harbor, Inc has responded with this official response to the five questions posed. <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=124787>

- 1. Given the current water levels and future projections, what experiences in Lake Mead National Recreation Area are most important to you? What kind of experiences do you want future visitors to have when they come to the park?**

Lake Mead National Recreation Area is a destination for millions of visitors from all over the world to experience this unique ecosystem of the American Southwest. From recreational motorized boating to kayaking and paddle boarding to hiking the myriad of trails and landscapes to experiencing and observing native flora and fauna, Las Vegas Boat Harbor has been a champion and promoter of this magical land for over 65 years, in close partnership with the National Park Service. Our commitment to visitors is the same as it has been over these many, many years: To give everyone the opportunity to explore, engage, and make lifelong memories of our lake and our lands we have called home, and will continue to call home.

- 2. Given your response to Question #1 regarding important experiences for you and future visitors, what barriers might get in the way of enjoying or visiting Lake Mead National Recreation Area? What barriers might prevent you from achieving your desired experiences?**

Given the rapidly changing conditions and challenges of the environment due to climate change and increasing usage of our waters, the concern of Las Vegas Boat Harbor in the near term and long term is continuing the ease of access to all aspects of the park as has been the norm for decades, most specifically in relation to recreational motorized boating. Functional launch ramps, not just at one location but at multiple locations, are absolutely critical to the continued enjoyment of Lake Mead NRA. Anecdotally, we can confirm hundreds, even thousands of conversations had with visitors, both first time and long time, where concerns about the viability of the launch ramps is their greatest concern. People do not know if they can bring their family to Lake Mead NRA and enjoy the lake in the same manner they did in their youth. There is uncertainty in the local boating community, and this affects hundreds of thousands of visitors not just in the Las Vegas Valley, but all over the world. If there is no clear plan in place from the National Park Service to address these concerns, people will simply find other recreational activities to pursue in other venues. The worst-case scenario would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This cannot happen for a myriad of reasons from economic to quality of life to the continuing mission of the National Park Service to educate and promote public lands for all to use.

3. Please provide input on the preliminary management concepts. What do you recommend the planning team consider, to address barriers and/or key issues, given the rapid decline in water levels?

First and foremost, access to Lake Mead National Recreation must be one of the driving forces in all decisions moving forward. Primary among these is the continued maintenance and operation of multiple launch ramps. Quite simply, if people are unable to launch their vessels safely and in an approved manner governed by the National Park Service, they will not come. Visitors with boats kept in any of the four marinas or storage facilities on Lake Mead will be forced to find other options for boat storage and usage. The majority of larger vessels lack trailers to remove them from water. Eventually, these vessels will become in a state of such disrepair that feasible alternatives for their removal will be very difficult and cost prohibitive. With this in mind, it is imperative NPS commits to and executes a plan that will maintain lake access for all.

While functional launch ramps are a necessity, of equal importance is the continued operation of the multiple concessions located within Lake Mead NRA. There are multiple facets required for successful operations. Access to potable water is one of these necessities, as they are a critical part of multiple aspects of all concessions, including functional toilet facilities for visitors, and continued operation of food and beverage facilities. Restaurants are among the most commonly used services on Lake Mead and guests rely on them as a reprieve from hot summer days or to enjoy pleasant autumn afternoons in the company of friends. Restaurants are also a source of revenue for concessionaires and steady employment for many. Along with restaurants are retail stores at marina facilities, which provide a very necessary service for visitors for a variety of needs. It is impossible- in fact, illegal- to operate food and beverage facilities without potable water access. Lake Mead NRA must commit to continued access to potable water for all concessionaires.

With regard to facilities and infrastructure, concessionaires have and continued to maintain and improve facilities even in the face of ever-changing conditions and an uncertain future. Such is our commitment to the millions of visitors to our park. As such, it is imperative NPS continues their commitment to visitors and concessionaires on the maintenance and improvement of park infrastructure and facilities under their control. These include the previously mentioned launch ramps, but it also extends to access roads, parking lots, beach access, campground access, hiking and biking trails, and various toilet and cleaning facilities, including functional and maintained sewer operations, throughout the park. Without the continuous maintenance and improvements necessary of these vital aspects, visitors will stop visiting Lake Mead NRA.

Of course, all of the aforementioned items fall under the greater umbrella of full marina, campground, and other concessions currently operating on Lake Mead. For the millions of visitors to continue enjoying all Lake Mead NRA has to offer, the NPS must continue to act as partners in good faith with concessionaires. Based on the proposals for management concepts, Concept 1 is the only viable option moving forward and all future decisions the NPS makes regarding the future of Lake Mead NRA as a destination for millions of visitors must be made with the goal of committing to this management concept. Anything less must be considered a failure.

4. What actions is the park currently taking to manage these issues that you'd like to see continue?

While the frustration of having only one functional launch ramp on Lake Mead is shared by thousands of visitors and the concessionaires, including Las Vegas Boat Harbor, commendation must be mentioned on the efforts NPS has made in 2022 to maintain and improve facilities at Hemenway Harbor given rapidly changing conditions. It is easy to criticize and second-guess these efforts; we will do no such thing here. Las Vegas Boat Harbor has a unique understanding of the laborious efforts required to keep facilities in ideal operating conditions, and the continuing improvements are appreciated and should be continued without any delay.

5. Other thoughts you'd like to share with the project team?

For the sake of transparency, these issues afflicting Lake Mead National Recreation Area are deeply personal for Las Vegas Boat Harbor. We are a family-owned and operated business with ties to this lake and community for over 65 years. Our livelihood and ambitions have been tied directly to Lake Mead and they will continue to be. But we are not alone here. It is not just the marinas who are affected by these decisions. There are thousands of people who work at these facilities and related businesses, men and women with families and dreams and ambitions of their own, worried about coming to their job one day, and finding out they'll no longer have one. There are all the small businesses all over the Las Vegas Valley and Boulder City who count on visitors continuing to explore Lake Mead and all it has to offer. Restaurants, cafes, boat repair shops, boat sales and accessories facilities, hotels and RV parks, bicycle stores, hiking tours, tour coach operators. These are, overwhelmingly, comprised of hard-working Americans doing what they can to get that piece of the American Dream. These are our neighbors and friends. All these decisions are what help them strive for something more, or could potentially shatter those ambitions. Las Vegas Boat Harbor has been among the most enthusiastic supporters and promoters for everything that makes Lake Mead National Recreation Area such a special and unique place for millions of people the world over, and we have been a proud partner on this mission with the National Park Service. As such, we ask the National Park Service to consider this and the millions of people who stand to be affected should access to our treasured lake become nothing more than a memory.