

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
AMONG THE
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, AND GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
FOR MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE AMARGOSA RIVER
BASIN AND ADJACENT AREAS, CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA**

I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is among the following United States Department of the Interior bureaus: Bureau of Land Management (hereinafter referred to as BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (hereinafter referred to as FWS), National Park Service (hereinafter referred to as NPS), and United States Geological Survey (hereinafter referred to as USGS).

BLM, FWS, and NPS have responsibilities for managing land and natural resources in the Amargosa River Basin and adjacent areas within the Death Valley Regional Ground Water Flow System (hereafter referred to as the Area of Concern) of California and Nevada. BLM administers large tracts of public land within this area. FWS manages the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and protects a number of plant and animal species endemic to the area. NPS provides stewardship over Death Valley National Park, including the Devils Hole detached unit. USGS conducts research and collects data to provide scientific information used by the other bureaus to make informed resource-management decisions.

Ground-water discharge at a number of localized areas within the Area of Concern sustains unique phreatophytic, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems. Although relatively small in areal extent, these ecosystems are the only habitats within the surrounding arid desert region for endemic plants and animals, many of which have been listed as endangered, threatened, or sensitive species. These ecosystems also provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to the region. Several reaches of the Amargosa River are eligible for inclusion within the National Wild and Scenic River System. Nine BLM and NPS wilderness units are within the Area of Concern. The newly designated Old Spanish Trail National Historic Trail also traverses the region. BLM, FWS, and NPS are concerned about the impacts regional population growth, land and ground-water development, and recreational use will have on these ecosystems. A coordinated, comprehensive science program is needed to determine the effects these impacts will have on the natural resources managed by the bureaus within the Area of Concern.

The purpose of this MOU is to improve coordination, cooperation, and communication between bureaus on efforts to conserve and manage water resources and water-dependent resources within the Area of Concern. Interagency cooperation will enhance natural resource management and planning efforts by addressing issues on a consistent regional scale and increasing the efficiency in which Bureaus utilize manpower and resources.

II. GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

The geographic scope of this MOU corresponds to an area of the Death Valley Regional Ground-Water Flow System generally bounded on the west by Death Valley National Park, on the east by the Spring Mountains and Nevada Test Site, on the north by Sarcobatus Flat and Oasis Valley, and on the south by Interstate 15.

III. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES:

Signatory bureaus want to achieve greater cooperation and coordination on natural resource issues within the Area of Concern. It is envisioned that the bureaus can work with each other and external agencies, organizations, entities, and stakeholders to manage natural resources using a proactive regional approach. The overall goal is to protect the health and vigor of sensitive local ecosystems while allowing for sustainable economic development of desert communities and recreational use of the area.

IV. AUTHORITIES AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS:

Applicable Authorities

Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended
National Park Service Organic Act (39 Stat. 535, 16 U.S.C. 1)
Proclamation of January 17, 1952 (Proc 2961, 66 Stat. C. 18. 17 Fed. Reg. 691) making Devils Hole a detached component of Death Valley National Monument
California Desert Protection Act of 1994
National Wildlife Refuge System Administrative Act of 1966
National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997

Applicable Bureau Plans

California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980, as amended
Amargosa Vole Recovery Plan of 1990
Recovery Plan of 1990 for Endangered and Threatened Species in Ash Meadows
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Recovery Plan of 2002
Bureau of Land Management Las Vegas Resource Management Plan
Southern Nevada Mesquite Woodland Habitat Management Plan

Future management plans for the area will be incorporated as each is approved and implemented.

V. INTER-BUREAU COORDINATION AND COOPERATION:

Each bureau will make efforts to:

- Facilitate conservation planning and management actions using an ecosystem perspective and adopt policies tailored to protect Federally-administered resources within the Area of Concern.
- Develop consistent protocols and methods for scientific research and resource monitoring.
- Share scientific information and data and adopt standardized models and analytical methods.
- Identify and develop proposals and work plans for joint projects.
- Share resources, to the extent possible and practical, to implement projects and work plans developed under this MOU.
- Cooperate in developing budget requests and pursuing funding opportunities to implement projects and work plans developed under this MOU.
- Participate on a standing management oversight committee, which will meet at least once annually to coordinate activities and facilitate actions prescribed under this MOU.
- Conduct periodic meetings among staff specialists, as necessary, to coordinate actions on regional water-resources issues and facilitate actions prescribed under this MOU.

VI. EXTERNAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION:

Natural-resource management, conservation planning, and related scientific research conducted with an ecosystem perspective requires significant coordination and cooperation with other agencies, entities, and stakeholders having interests within the Area of Concern and adjacent areas within the Death Valley Regional Ground-Water Flow System. Signatory bureaus will work with these external groups to identify solutions that allow sustainable economic development to coexist with the protection of sensitive ecosystems. Signatory bureaus also will work to develop unified positions on issues of concern to facilitate consistent negotiations with external groups.

VII. PRINCIPAL CONTACTS:

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United States Geological Survey
Nevada District
Dan Bright
Chief, So. Nevada Hydrologic Studies
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Henderson, NV 89074
Ph: (702)564-4500

National Park Service
Death Valley National Park
J.T. Reynolds
Park Superintendent
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Death Valley, CA 92328
Ph: (760)786-3240

VIII. FUNDING

Bureaus shall use their best efforts to secure funding to implement projects approved under this MOU. Project funding and implementation will be described under separate project-specific agreements between bureaus. Performance under this MOU depends upon the lawful appropriation, authorization, and allocation of funds. All bureaus agree to develop efficient means for transferring funds among said parties to implement projects conducted under this MOU.

IX. AGREEMENT PERIOD:

This MOU is effective as of the last date of signature by the agency representatives listed under Section XII. This MOU will be in effect for a period of five years from the

execution date. The agreement period may be extended by mutual consent of all participating bureaus by attaching a written amendment to this document.

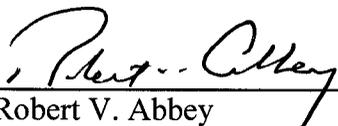
X. TERMINATION:

Any bureau may terminate its participation in this MOU by issuing a written notice to the other agencies not less than thirty (30) days prior to the effective date of termination.

XI. MODIFICATIONS:

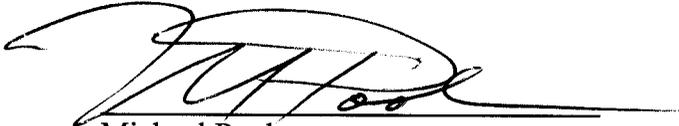
The terms of this MOU may be modified upon mutual consent of all bureaus by attaching a written amendment to this document.

XII. SIGNATORIES:



Robert V. Abbey
Bureau of Land Management
Nevada State Director

2.2.04
Date



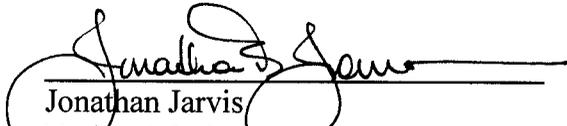
Michael Pool
Bureau of Land Management
California State Director

12/19/03
Date



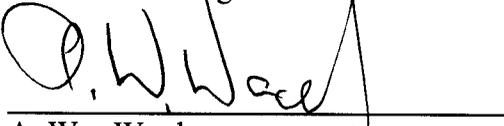
Steve Thompson
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Nevada/California Operations Manager

1/14/2004
Date



Jonathan Jarvis
National Park Service
Pacific West Regional Director

1/20/2004
Date



A. Wes Ward
United States Geological Survey
Western Regional Geologist

23 Jan 04
Date