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Managers of Death Valley National Park in California are seeking public input regarding future use of the park's Stovepipe Wells Village. One of the park's proposals is to change the Stovepipe Wells airstrip into a dedicated night sky viewing area due to the prohibitive maintenance expense of repaving the runway. This is due to the park's perceived lack of visitation to the strip, combined with a growing interest in attendees in night-sky astronomy. With this change, the airstrip is in danger of closing entirely to light aircraft visitation.

The Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF) believes that pilot activity and stargazing can successfully co-exist with minor changes to existing infrastructure, and we are urging members to submit comments to the park in support of both pastimes.

Death Valley National Park is more specifically proposing the following change (the following text was captured from the park's official Facebook page):

Night Sky Viewing to Replace Airstrip: night sky viewing events in the park regularly attract over 250 people, and very few people use the airstrip at Stovepipe Wells. The park proposes changing the airstrip into a place where astronomical societies can set up and camp with their large telescopes, while providing an opportunity to experience the park's spectacular dark skies. The Furnace Creek Airport, 18 miles away, would still be available for small planes.

If the Park Service does not receive at least 400 comments from the pilot community regarding Stovepipe Wells, they will ignore the pilot's input. **WE NEED YOU TO COMMENT BEFORE DECEMBER 23.**

Additional details and comment submission form can be found at the following link:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=297&projectID=72747&documentID=107887>

The RAF suggests the following talking points for members who wish to comment:

Pilots support stargazing. This is a very successful combination of compatible pastimes. This has been proven at Havana, Illinois, where fly-in stargazing events draw many campers both by air and car. The Blue Canyon airport at Nyack, in Tahoe National Forest is another perfect example.

Current facilities at Stovepipe Wells are at about 1/2 mile hike away. The airstrip will see a significant increase in visitation should facilities such as a dedicated camping area, as well as

toilets be provided to visitors to the airport.

- At 3,260 x 65 ft and a significant existing visitors area, there is ample room for both activities at Stovepipe.

- Providing for under-wing camping at the airstrip helps disperse usage, and puts no additional strain on the NPS campground.

- Its daylight use by small planes minimizes impact to campers and star gazers.

- This airport has historical value, having been established in 1948.

- Stovepipe Airstrip provides another feasible way to access this special land. For many, driving to Stovepipe Wells represents a huge investment of time, and access by small plane opens up that opportunity.

Thank you in advance for your support of this RAF Call to Action! The RAF will be following up with final comments on our website in the near future.

Questions may be directed to CA State Liaisons Rick Lach: rlach@theraf.org and/or Katerina Barilov: kbarilov@theraf.org.