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National Park Service  
Cultural Landscapes Inventory

2021

Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District  
Lake Mead National Recreation Area

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## Introduction

### **Cultural Landscapes in the Cultural Resources Inventory System:**

#### **The Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS)**

CRIS is the National Park Service's database of cultural resources on its lands, consisting of archeological sites, historic structures, ethnographic resources and cultural landscapes. The set of CRIS records for cultural landscapes is referred to as CRIS-CL. CRIS-CL records conform to a standardized data structure known as the Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI).

The legislative, regulatory and policy directions for conducting and maintaining the CRIS are: Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, NPS Management Policies (2006), Director's Order 28 (Cultural Resources) and Director's Order 28a (Archeology).

#### **The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI)**

The CLI is the data structure within CRIS used to document and evaluate all potentially significant cultural landscapes in which NPS has, or plans to acquire any enforceable legal interest.

Each CRIS-CL record is certified complete when the landscape is determined to meet one of the following:

- Landscape individually meets the National Register of Historic Places criteria for evaluation; or,

- Landscape is a contributing element of a property that is eligible for the National Register; or,

- Landscapes does not meet the National Register criteria, but is managed as cultural resources because of law, policy or decisions reached through the park planning process.

Cultural landscapes vary from historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes to historic ethnographic landscapes, but may also fit within more than one type. Those eligible for the National Register have significance in the nation's history on a national, state or local level, as well as integrity or authenticity.

The legislative, regulatory and policy directions for conducting and maintaining the CLI within CRIS are: *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 USC 470h-2(a)(1)). Each Federal agency shall establish...a preservation program for the identification, evaluation, and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places...of historic properties...*

*Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003. Sec. 3(a)...Each agency with real property management responsibilities shall prepare an assessment of the current status of its inventory of historic properties required by section 110(a)(2) of the NHPA...No later than September 30, 2004, each covered agency shall complete a report of the assessment and make it available to the Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Secretary of the Interior...*

*Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003. Sec. 3(c) Each agency with real property management responsibilities shall, by September 30, 2005, and every third year thereafter, prepare a report on its progress in identifying... historic properties in its ownership and make the report available to the Council and the Secretary...*

*The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, 1998. Standard 2: An agency provides for the timely identification and evaluation of historic properties under agency jurisdiction or control and/or subject to effect by agency actions (Sec. 110 (a)(2)(A) Management Policies 2006. 5.1.3.1 Inventories: The Park Service will (1) maintain and expand the following inventories...about cultural resources in units of the national park system...Cultural Landscape Inventory of historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes,... and historic sites...*

*Cultural Resource Management Guideline, 1997, Release No. 5, page 22 issued pursuant to Director's Order #28. As cultural resources are identified and evaluated, they should also be listed in the appropriate Service-wide inventories of cultural resources.*

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## General Information

### Property Level and CLI Numbers

|                                   |                                             |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>Inventory Unit Name:</b>       | Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District |
| <b>Resource Classification:</b>   | Cultural Landscape                          |
| <b>CLI Identification Number:</b> | 976202                                      |
| <b>Parent Landscape:</b>          | 976202                                      |
| <b>Inventory Status:</b>          | Complete                                    |

### Park Information

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Park Name:</b>              | Lake Mead National Recreation Area |
| <b>Alpha Code:</b>             | LAKE                               |
| <b>Park Organization Code:</b> | 8360                               |
| <b>Park District:</b>          | LAKE                               |
| <b>Region:</b>                 | Pacific West                       |
| <b>Restricted:</b>             | Yes                                |

### Landscape Description:

Las Vegas Wash Developed Area is located along the northwest extremity of the Boulder Basin area of Lake Mead in Nevada. Visitors reach the site by traveling 10 miles northeast of Henderson on Highway 146, or 13.5 miles north of Boulder City on Lakeshore Road. The site is the closest in Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) to Las Vegas, though Boulder Beach garnered more visitors in the post-war period due to its proximity to the trans-continental highway. Lake Mead NRA is in southeastern Nevada and northwestern Arizona. Comprising 1.5 million acres, the NRA follows the Colorado River corridor from Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument to just north of the cities of Laughlin, NV and Bullhead City, AZ. It includes Lake Mead and the smaller Lake Mojave, reservoirs of the Hoover Dam (1931) and Davis Dam (1942), respectively. Three of America's four desert ecosystems – the Mojave, Sonoran, and Great Basin – meet in the NRA.

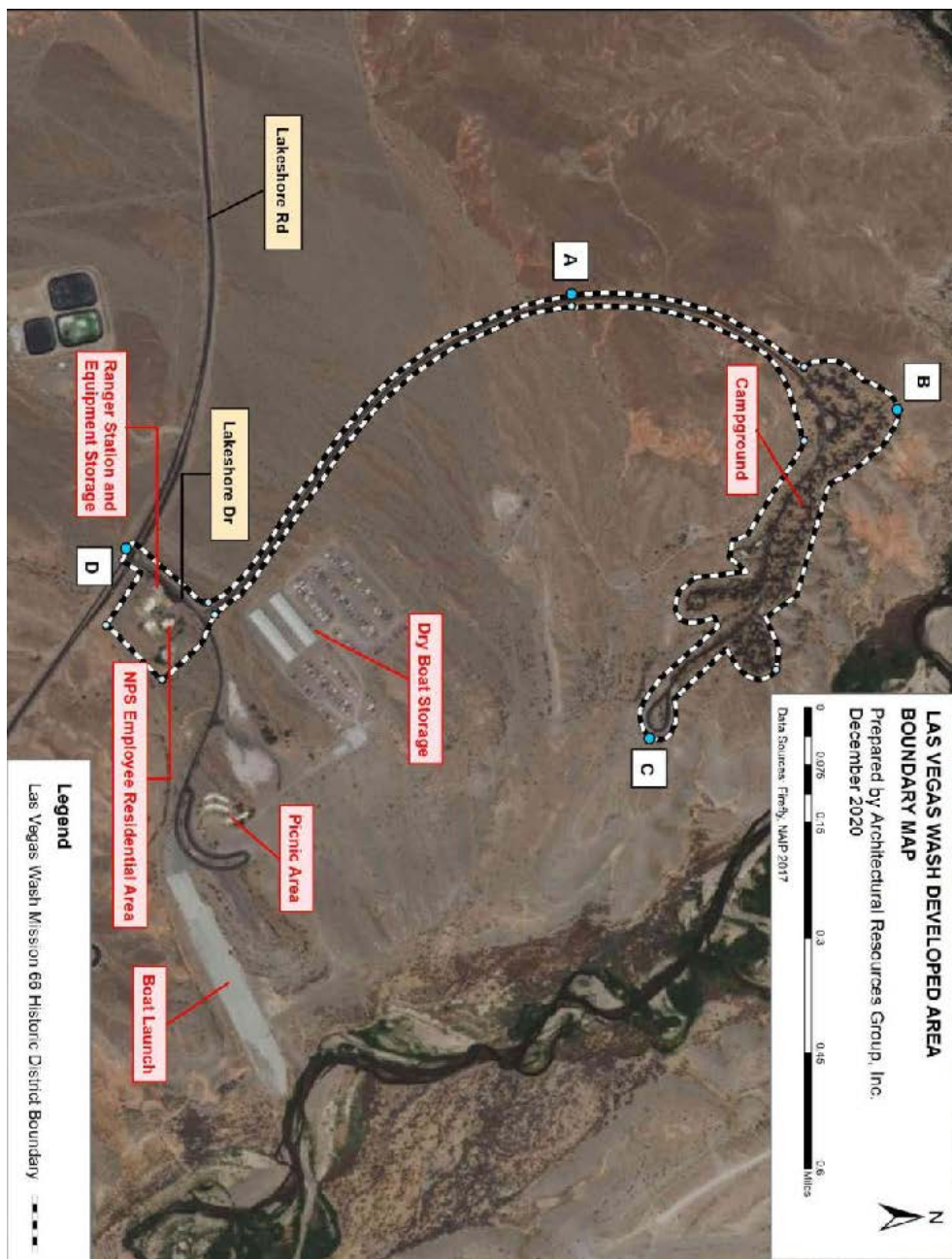
Portions of the developed area, including the picnic area and marina, have been altered since the period of significance (1960-1965) and no longer retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance and association with the Mission 66 program. However, a portion of Las Vegas Wash Developed Area, including the ranger station and equipment storage building, the residential area, and the campground represents a smaller Mission 66-era historic district.

### Landscape Hierarchy Description:

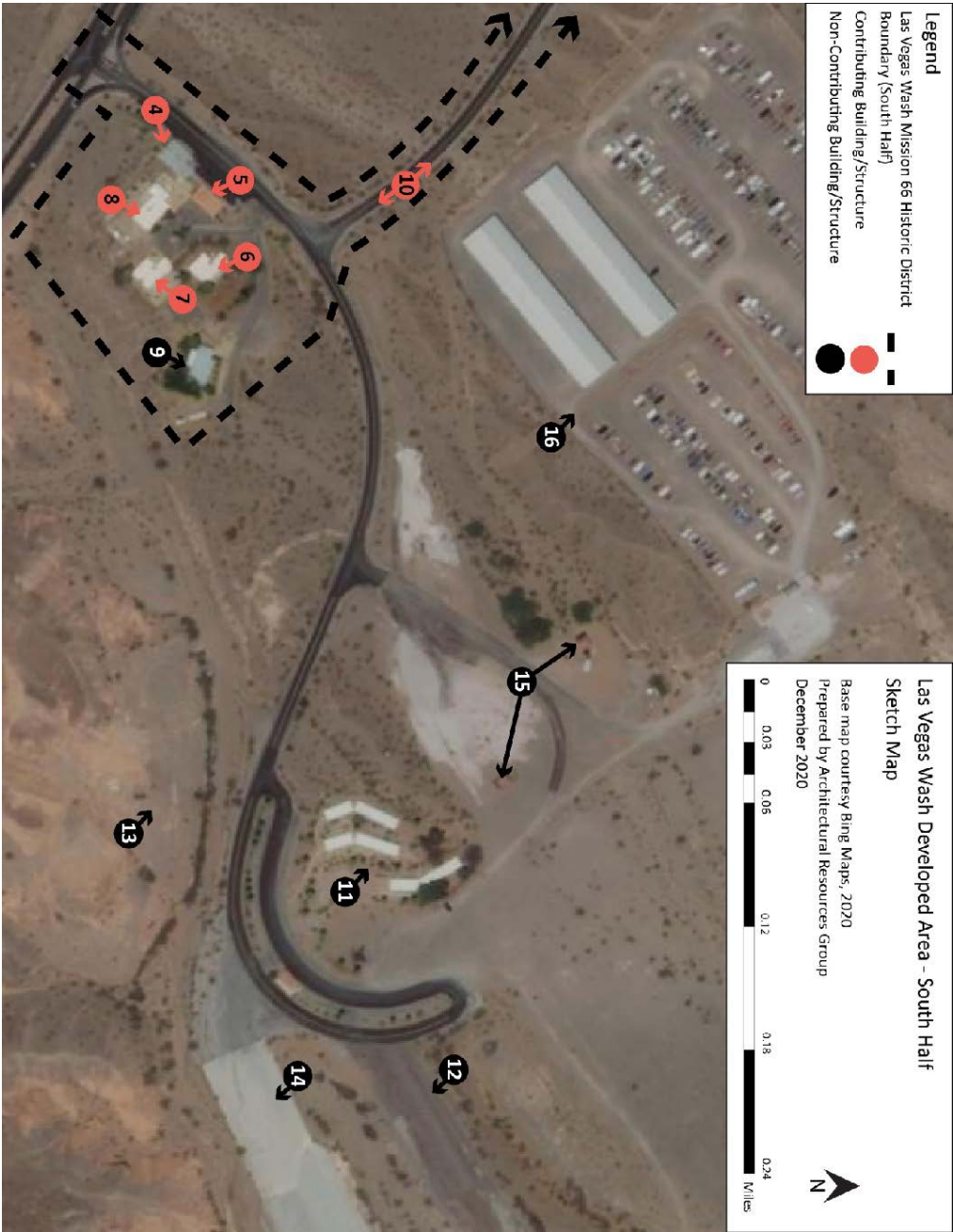
### Landscape Type:

Other Names:

## Site Plan



Boundary Map



Sketch map





Sketch map 2

## Concurrence Information

### Concurrence Status:

|                                                 |            |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Park Superintendent Concurrence:</b>         | Yes        |
| <b>Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence:</b> | 04/27/2021 |

### Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

The DOE for the historic district was converted to a CLI by regional staff in 2021.

## Geographic Information

### State and County:

| State  | County |
|--------|--------|
| Nevada | Clark  |

**Size (Acres):** 46.22

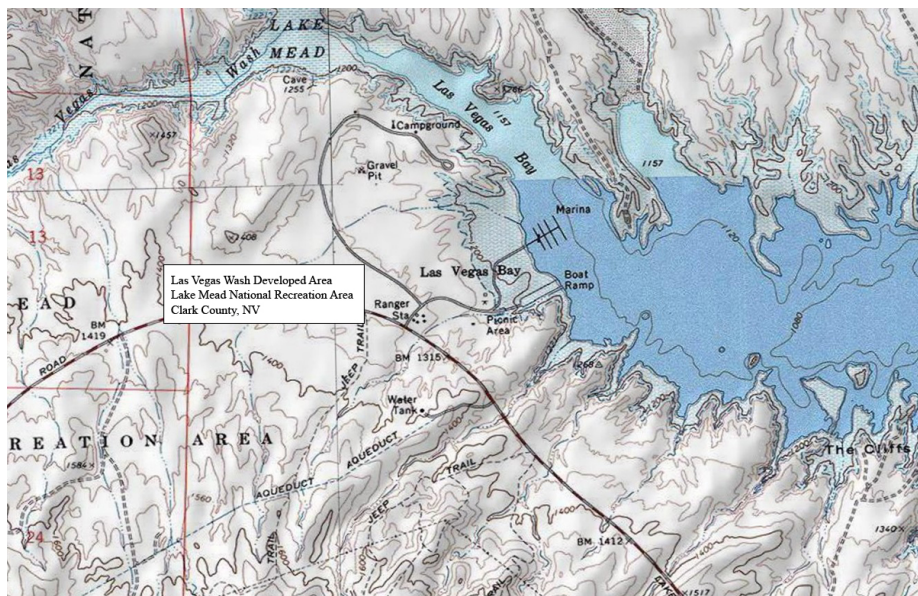
**Land Tract Number(s)**

### Boundary Description:

The boundary encompasses the extent of those resources at Las Vegas Wash that still retain sufficient integrity to convey their association with the Mission 66 program.



**Location Map:**



*Location map*

**Regional Landscape Contexts:**

## Management Information

### General Management Information

**Management Category:** Should be Preserved and Maintained

**Management Category Date:** 08/27/2021

### Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

The Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District meets criteria for Category B - Should be Preserved and Maintained. The historic district meets National Register criteria, is compatible with the park's legislated significance "for the benefit and inspiration of the people," and has a continuing purpose that is appropriate to its traditional use or function.

### Management Agreements:

**Legal Interests:**

**Type of Interest:** Fee Simple

**Narrative:**

**Located in managed wilderness?:** Unknown

### **Adjacent Lands Information**

**Do Adjacent Lands Contribute?**    No

**Adjacent Lands Narrative:**



## National Register Information

### National Register of Historic Places

**Documentation Status:** SHPO Documented

**Documentation Narrative Description:**

The determination of eligibility of Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District at Lake Mead National Recreation Area has received SHPO concurrence.

**Eligibility:** Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination

**Concurrence Eligibility Date:** 04/27/2021

**Concurrence Narrative:**

**Significance Level:** Local

**Contributing:** Individual

**Classification:** District

**Statement of Significance for National Register of Historic Places:**

Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. As described under its evaluation against National Register criteria, it meets the characteristics outlined in the National Park Service Mission 66 Era Resources Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) for Mission 66 historic districts.

The historic district is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A at the local level for its association with Mission 66 development in Nevada's national parks. Established in 1936, Lake Mead NRA lacked adequate facilities and infrastructure prior to the 1950s. Mission 66 transformed the recreation area into a regional recreation destination with modern services and amenities. Developed areas were the most important element of Mission 66 plans at Lake Mead, providing residents of Southern California, Nevada, and Arizona with new recreational opportunities. Las Vegas Wash was one of several Mission 66 developed areas within the park. Though parts of the developed area lack sufficient integrity to convey their association with Mission 66, the area included within the boundary of the historic district retains integrity and represents an intact collection of Mission 66 development.

The historic district is also eligible under Criterion C at the local level for its representation of Park Service Modern architecture and NPS planning during the Mission 66 period. Mission 66 redefined what types of facilities national parks would need to serve the public, and these new ideas were reflected in the creation of developed areas. Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District reflects the planning and design concepts that were established for Mission 66 developed areas, and contributing properties embody the Modern design aesthetic employed throughout the national park system during Mission 66.

The Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District's period of significance is 1960-1965, reflecting the time period during which all the developed area's resources associated with the Mission 66 master plan were constructed.

**National Register Significance Criteria:**

- A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history
- C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values

**National Register Criteria Consideration:**

**National Register Periods of Significance (with Historic Context Themes):**

**Time Period:** CE 1960 - CE 1965

**Area of Significance:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Architecture

**Area of Significance Category:** Entertainment - Recreation

**NRIS Information:**

**State Register Documentation:**

**National Historic Landmarks:**

**National Historic Landmark?** No

**Theme:**

**Contributing:**

**NHL ID:**

**NHL URL:**

**Date:** 04/27/2021

**Statement of Significance for National Historic Landmark:**

**World Heritage Site:**

**World Heritage Site?** No

**Category:**

**WHS ID:**

**WHS URL:**

**Date:** 04/27/2021

**Is Resource within a designated National Natural Landscape:** No

## Physical History:

### Pre-History and Early Settlement of the Colorado River's Black Canyon

The area that would become Lake Mead was originally occupied by the Patayan, Basketmaker-Pueblo, and Southern Paiute tribes who had spent centuries adapting to the Mojave Desert's harsh environment. Between 6,000 BC and 1800 AD native peoples "survived and occasionally flourished in the canyon country surrounding the Colorado River."<sup>26</sup> Though Spanish expeditions to the Great Basin had occurred in the 1770s, it was not until the late 1850s that Euroamerican exploration of the region began in earnest. Following a brief occupation of the region by Mormon missionaries in the mid-1850s, government-led explorations of the Colorado River commenced in the 1860s, most notably led by Major John Wesley Powell. In 1869, Powell received funding from the Smithsonian Institution for the exploration and mapping of the Colorado River. The result of his three-year-long expedition was a report describing the tremendous potential the Colorado River held as a water source for agricultural development in the western United States.<sup>27</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, agriculture in the West was rapidly expanding. Before 1901, the California Development Company, a private company founded in 1896, had constructed a canal, diverting water from the Colorado River to the Imperial Valley and attracting thousands of homesteaders eager to plant crops in the region. The success of the company's canal was short lived, however, due to canal failure and subsequent flooding of the valley in 1904. In response, valley settlers, politicians, and developers looked for more reliable methods for controlling the river. The Progressive Era (1890s to 1920s) represented a period of widespread political reform, during which the federal government played a significant role in shaping the everyday lives of Americans. As such, "the idea of large-scale federally controlled reclamation projects in the American West fit neatly within the parameters of Progressive conservation..."<sup>28</sup> The creation of the U.S. Reclamation Service (later the Bureau of Reclamation) through the Reclamation Act of 1902 established the federal government's status as the purveyor of western water development.<sup>29</sup>

On November 24, 1922, the Colorado River Compact, an agreement between California, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Arizona to share the waters of the Colorado River, was created to ensure the upper basin states, which were developing at a much slower rate, could hold their share of the river waters for future needs. With the signing of the Colorado River Compact, the (revised) Boulder Canyon Project Act was signed in 1928; the act included federal funding for dam construction.<sup>30</sup> On March 4, 1931, the Bureau of Reclamation awarded the Boulder Canyon Dam contract to a consortium of six western-based companies, including McDonald & Kahn and Betchel (San Francisco Bay Area in CA), Morrison-Knudsen (ID), Kaiser Paving Company (Oakland, CA), Utah Construction Company (UT), J.F. Shea (Portland, OR), and Pacific Bridge (Portland, OR). In 1936, Hoover Dam opened and began producing electricity and was instantly hailed as "one of the wonders of the world and the greatest man-made structure on the planet."<sup>31</sup> The resultant reservoir, comprising 550 miles of scenic shoreline, was named Lake Mead after Bureau of Reclamation commissioner Elwood Mead.

## Expanding the National Park Service Mission: The Creation of National Recreation Areas

Lake Mead NRA was created during a time when the NPS began to undergo dramatic changes in its mission and responsibilities. During the 1930s, and largely with money from New Deal programs, the NPS sought to expand the park system and make it more “accessible to and popular with” the American public.<sup>34</sup> To this end, the agency delved into the business of recreation management. In 1934, the NPS began a preliminary study of the nation’s recreational needs. That same year, Congress authorized federal agencies to work with states to develop recreation areas, and the NPS assumed a leadership role in these efforts. The NPS successfully pushed for the development of recreational demonstration areas, sites that the agency would develop with campgrounds, boating facilities, and hiking trails, which would then be turned over to state and local governments. The agency also began studying the recreational potential of Lake Mead at this time. In 1936, after intensive lobbying by the agency, Congress authorized the Park, Parkway, and Recreational Area Study Act, which allowed the NPS to conduct a more comprehensive survey of the country’s recreational needs. The study determined that there was a great demand for recreation facilities in the U.S., and the NPS had positioned itself to lead the way in acquiring and managing lands for recreation.<sup>35</sup>

In 1936, the NPS, through an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation, began managing the first national recreation area in the United States—Lake Mead NRA. The agency soon took the lead in recreation planning for other reservoirs, such as Lake Roosevelt, created by Grand Coulee Dam in Washington State. That same year, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 7496, which granted the NPS authority over 46 new recreation sites. By 1946, the NPS managed four recreation areas with reservoirs, and the management strategies they employed had been developed at Lake Mead NRA. However, these recreation areas were not designated as units of the national park system. Recreation areas generally were viewed as lacking historic, scenic, and scientific significance, and were therefore not worthy of inclusion in the national park system, which included only national parks and national monuments at this time.

The expansion and changes that occurred within the NPS during the 1930s were hotly contested. As historian Richard Sellars points out, “only twenty-three years after a bitter nationwide controversy over destruction of Yosemite National Park’s Hetch Hetchy Valley by construction of a dam and reservoir, the Park Service became a willing participant in the management of Boulder Dam (later Lake Mead) National Recreation Area.”<sup>37</sup> Many saw recreation area management as a dilution of the agency’s mission and a conflict with the idea that the parks protected primal nature. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, who served between 1933 and 1945, acknowledged the growing public demand for recreational facilities, but wanted to reinforce the distinction between national parks and other types of park facilities. He worried about overdevelopment in existing national parks in the pursuit of recreational facilities, as well as the impact of incorporating recreational areas such as reservoirs into the national park system. Secretary Ickes explained his opposition by stating, “An artificial lake is not a lake, after all. It is all right in a State park. But that is a different sort of thing.”<sup>38</sup> Conservationist Newton Drury, who would become NPS Director in 1940, warned that the NPS was becoming “a glorified playground commission.”<sup>39</sup> The National Parks Association lobbied for separate management of recreation areas. Some, however, including landscape architect Conrad Wirth (who directed all of the Civilian Conservation Corps work in national parks, and who participated in the 1934 recreation survey) were enthusiastic supporters of recreation areas.<sup>40</sup> By the early 1950s, despite significant opposition, the NPS mission had been expanded and diversified to include recreational facilities. In 1964, Lake Mead became the first recreational area to obtain status as an official NPS unit within the national park system.

## Lake Mead NRA: The Oasis in the Desert

Only limited development occurred at Lake Mead in the 1930s and 1940s. Like other national parks, Lake Mead NRA benefitted from Emergency Conservation Work and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) relief projects during the Great Depression. In 1936, the NPS established a CCC camp at



Hemenway Wash. Hemenway was the area closest to Boulder City, and it was easily accessible from Las Vegas. The CCC worked on projects in the Hemenway Wash area until 1942, and the site became the most developed part of the recreation area. By 1942, the site contained a small campground, an improved beach, utilities, landscaping, and some employee housing, in what would later become known as Boulder Beach Developed Area.<sup>42</sup> In the late 1940s, the NPS extended and modestly improved the dirt-surfaced, narrow, and often winding roads that lead to lakeshore harbors at Boulder Beach, Las Vegas Wash, and Overton. However, the recreation area was vast, second in size only to Yellowstone, and the new developments and improved roads only provided access to a small portion of Lake Mead.

The postwar trends that led to overcrowding at national parks across the nation were particularly pronounced in the southwestern United States, including at Lake Mead NRA. The population of the cities and counties within a day's drive of the recreation area skyrocketed during this time. Between 1940 and 1950, the population of Clark County, Nevada nearly tripled, increasing from 16,414 to 48,289, then to over 127,000 by 1960. Los Angeles County's population increased by 50 percent between 1940 and 1950, to over 4,151,000.<sup>43</sup> The City of Phoenix, only 250 miles from the recreation area, also grew tremendously during the postwar period; between 1950 and 1960, the city's population quadrupled to almost 440,000. Rising numbers of cars in these areas spurred increased visitation to Lake Mead. By the early 1950s, Californians owned more automobiles than residents of any other state, and Nevada became one of three states with the largest increase in automobile ownership during the early 1950s.<sup>44</sup>

The public thought of the recreation area as an oasis in the desert, and the lakes, along with Hoover Dam, drew throngs of visitors. Public interest in the dam and in Lake Mead had been high even before the postwar travel boom; a one-day survey of the dam in 1940 drew 25,000 spectators.<sup>45</sup> Newspapers and magazines publicized the new reservoir during the late 1930s and 1940s, characterizing it as "a desert playground."<sup>46</sup> Throughout the 1940s, public demand for facilities and services at Lake Mead grew, but low budgets, combined with the end of the federal relief programs of the 1930s, meant that the NPS invested little in the recreation area. Furthermore, since the NPS considered recreation areas inferior to national parks, development at Lake Mead remained a low priority.<sup>47</sup> Fishing was the most popular recreational activity at the NRA in the 1940s, and concessioners operated fishing camps at Eldorado Canyon, Searchlight Ferry, and Willow Beach on Lake Mohave and Pearce Ferry on Lake Mead. Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours opened a 36-room motel called Lake Mead Lodge at Boulder Beach in 1941, and the NPS operated a few facilities (such as a campground) at Boulder Beach. However, the recreation area remained largely undeveloped, with few points of access and very limited amenities.

After the war, visitation boomed as it did at national parks across the nation. Several new highways provided easy automobile access to Lake Mead NRA. U.S. Highway 93 had been extended from Southern California to Las Vegas and Hoover Dam in the late 1930s. Route 66 through Kingman, Arizona, provided a southeastern gateway to the Lake Mead area. In 1957, Interstate 15 offered an easy automobile route from the rapidly growing metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Salt Lake City. Comfortable winter temperatures meant that the public could use park facilities year round. Furthermore, advances in boating equipment since the end of World War II resulted in more people owning boats and water sports equipment. The popularity of water skiing and pleasure boating grew tremendously; administrators noted that the number of boats on the lake had exploded. In addition, the Outdoor Writers of America ranked Lake Mead as one of the best freshwater fishing lakes in the nation in 1953. Annual visitation to Lake Mead increased to 2,051,000 in 1951, more than triple the amount that visited 11 years earlier.<sup>48</sup> By 1952, Lake Mead ranked third in visitation among NPS units, only behind Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway. By 1961, the number of visitors had increased to 4,597,000.<sup>49</sup>

Once at the NRA, however, services and amenities were inadequate. Small contact stations served the public at Boulder Beach, Overton, and Katherine Landing, but other areas lacked any kind of information center.<sup>50</sup> Boulder Beach campground, which was the only campground served with potable water and modern comfort stations, frequently overflowed. The park's seven other existing campgrounds lacked utilities. Nonetheless, these campgrounds had become some of the most heavily used in the national park system by the mid-1950s. Boater and swimmer safety was compromised due to the lack of NPS staff to patrol and monitor activities on the water. The lack of parking lots meant that drivers simply drove their cars onto beaches and parked, often endangering sunbathers. Overnight accommodations near the park were scarce and frequently full. Boat ramps and park roads were unpaved. As visitation grew, the NPS urged concessioners to expand their

facilities, but the lack of utilities hampered concession development since concessioners were reluctant to build facilities that could not be serviced. Most park developments had been built simply because there was existing road access, so they were not necessarily sited in locations that could best serve the public's needs.<sup>51</sup>

Local business groups, chambers of commerce, and Nevada politicians all clamored for additional development. In 1945, the acting NPS director assured Nevada senator Edward Carville that the agency would prioritize development at the recreation area. Senator Pat McCarran also complained to the director about the lack of boating facilities during this time. In 1956, Senator Alan Bible demanded to Director Wirth that the NPS build additional water sports facilities at Lake Mead NRA. The Boulder City American Legion drew up plans to build and operate a concession golf course, while the town's chamber of commerce lobbied for a hotel, boating facilities and an amusement park. The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported on the need for additional public amenities at Lake Mead, especially concession buildings such as a lodge.

Park support services were also insufficient. Employee housing was a particular problem, and administrators reported that staff suffered from low morale as a result. A Department of the Interior report concluded that Lake Mead NRA was one of the parks in most need of staff housing.<sup>53</sup> Nearby Boulder City was a government town, but most housing was occupied by Bureau of Reclamation employees. There was no government housing at all in the northern and southern parts of the recreation area. Safety was compromised because rangers had to travel long distances to respond to incidents outside their stationed locations. The park also lacked utility areas and maintenance buildings.

Roads, too, did not meet the park's needs. The park used exiting roads that followed old routes across the Colorado River. However, several roads were cut off with the creation of Lake Mead and Lake Mojave. The remaining spurs were used for lake access, which meant that facilities had sprung up with no logical development scheme. Only Boulder Beach and Las Vegas Wash were connected within the recreation area's boundaries; if a visitor wanted to reach all of the public use areas in 1960, the task would have required 1,200 miles of driving. The NPS classified many of these roads as "truck trails"—unpaved and often rough. Planners considered the desert and water scenery unparalleled, yet the landscape was largely inaccessible to autoists.

## The National Park Service and Mission 66

The National Park Service's Mission 66 program had a tremendous impact on Lake Mead NRA. National park budgets had been cut drastically during World War II, and they remained at pre-World War II levels through the early 1950s due to the Korean War and the emphasis on Cold War defense spending. Existing facilities were often in poor repair, since many structures had been closed during the war.<sup>55</sup> These poor conditions were compounded by the flood of visitors who inundated national parks as soon as war rationing and travel restrictions ended in 1945. Yet, park budgets had remained at or below prewar levels.<sup>56</sup> Conrad Wirth, who had become NPS Director in 1951, summed up the problem in a 1956 speech, explaining, "In a large part visitors to the national parks today are not finding the satisfaction that they have a right to expect."<sup>57</sup> Wirth pointed out that in 1955, America's national parks hosted 50 million visitors in a park system designed to accommodate only half that, and with fewer staff than the agency employed at the onset of the war. Wirth had inherited the difficult task of managing a national park system with severely deteriorated conditions and rapidly growing visitation. Furthermore, outdoor recreation had grown in popularity during the postwar period, and the public now expected national parks to provide recreational facilities. Wirth became the first NPS Director to embrace the challenge of recreation management, and he concocted a far-reaching plan for upgrading the country's national parks.<sup>59</sup> His plan, which became known as the Mission 66 program, would accommodate the estimated 80 million people who were anticipated to visit national parks by the 50th anniversary of the National Park Service in 1966. Ten years, he felt, struck the right balance between unacceptable short term planning and planning too far into the future. For older parks like Yosemite, Crater Lake, and Grand Canyon, this meant redevelopment, with upgrades to existing infrastructure and some new buildings, such as visitor centers. For parks like Lake Mead NRA, created in 1936 but left for the most part undeveloped, the Mission 66 program would provide the first large influx of funding and the opportunity to create and implement park-wide planned development.<sup>60</sup>

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, an avid supporter of public works projects, personally endorsed the Mission 66 program, and in the spring of 1956, Congress indicated a willingness to go along with the \$700 million budget for the ten-year program by increasing the agency's budget for fiscal year 1957 to \$68 million (up from \$32 million in 1955). Further increases led to annual budgets of over \$100 million by 1962. Mission 66 proved to be the most effective means of increasing NPS appropriations since New Deal "emergency spending" legislation.<sup>61</sup>

Mission 66 did not conclude in 1966 as the NPS intended. Though by 1966, Congress had spent about \$1 billion nationwide on land acquisition, new staff and training, and construction projects in national parks under the program, there were still many projects that remained incomplete. As a result, the NPS initiated the program's third and final phase, "Parkscape USA" (1967-1972). In addition to completing program projects that were underway or planned in 1966, new parks, with an emphasis on national scenic riverways and trails, were introduced and incorporated into the national park system under Parkscape USA. The end of Parkscape USA coincided with the 100th anniversary celebration of Yellowstone National Park.<sup>62</sup>

Under the Mission 66 program, the national park system grew by 70 park units, and the agency added entirely new categories of parks, including national recreation areas and national seashores. The NPS constructed or improved thousands of miles of roads and hundreds of miles of trails, as well as thousands of structures for visitor services or NPS support. Many parks received adequate water, sewer, and electric service for the first time. As historian Ethan Carr points out, "By the end of Mission 66, even the most remote parks enjoyed basic utilities, a visitor center, a maintenance yard, and standard housing for employees."<sup>63</sup> The Mission 66 program had reinvented the national park system as well as the NPS itself in order to meet the demands of postwar American society.

## Basic Elements of Mission 66 Park Development

Mission 66 architecture represented a departure from earlier styles in the national parks. During the previous major era of development in the 1920s and 1930s, architects designed rustic structures

modeled after older hotels in the parks or inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement. By the 1950s, however, Modern architecture had emerged as the dominant aesthetic. NPS architects designed buildings that adapted various strains of postwar American modernism while also being mindful of the programmatic and aesthetic requirements of national parks.<sup>64</sup> They used contemporary structures such as ranch houses as points of reference. Postwar park architecture made full use of steel, concrete, prefabricated elements, non-traditional fenestration, and climate control.<sup>65</sup> Mission 66 buildings were utilitarian, functional, and without the historical references found in the preceding NPS Rustic style. Architects designed each visitor center individually. At Lake Mead NRA, all ranger stations also reflected their own unique designs. In contrast, employee residences, comfort stations, utility buildings, and other smaller/secondary buildings were often based on standardized designs to limit costs.<sup>66</sup>

In order to provide centralized visitor services as well as expanded employee housing and support services, the NPS created new developed areas. By concentrating visitor services in a developed area, set away from sensitive natural features and historic sites, planners sought to mitigate the impact on resources as a whole.<sup>67</sup> Each development usually contained three to four discreet functional areas: visitor services, visitor accommodations (including picnicking and camping), employee housing, and park support services. These functional areas typically were located in two distinct zones: visitor services and park support. Park support areas such as housing and maintenance yards typically were separate and screened from public view. Modern roads allowed vehicular access between these sites. Eight developed areas were constructed at Lake Mead NRA during Mission 66.

Implementing these plans meant revamping park road systems, and automobile travel emerged as a driving force behind park planning and design.<sup>68</sup> Mission 66 planners were charged with upgrading outmoded roads that had been designed for less traffic and had become badly congested, while simultaneously minimizing the impact of roads in sensitive areas.<sup>69</sup> Park roads were widened, resurfaced, regraded, and realigned to accommodate the larger, faster, and more numerous vehicles of the postwar era. Planners also reconfigured parking lot design, layout, and flow. Increased vehicular traffic also influenced building placement and the design of some buildings, such as employee residences with attached carports.

The NPS also prioritized other projects that would either modernize park facilities or provide accommodations and recreational facilities. Accommodations, or the lack thereof, were a particular problem; rangers frequently found visitors sleeping on the ground or in their cars before Mission 66. The NPS developed policies to encourage new concession lodging, and the agency sought to provide free or low-cost options such as car and trailer campgrounds. The NPS added 17,782 campsites in new or expanded campgrounds under Mission 66, so that visitors of modest means could afford to vacation in the park. Concessioners were encouraged to build or expand trailer villages, and a total of 584 new comfort stations were added to provide visitors with modern sanitation. The agency also built ranger stations, picnic areas and shelters, boat launches, and bathhouses in order to serve visitor needs.<sup>70</sup>

The Mission 66 program had a considerable impact on the types of concessioner overnight accommodations built in parks after World War II. In pre-Mission 66 developments, lodging accommodations may have included a large singular hotel, like the Ahwahnee in Yosemite, and/or several individual cabins. During Mission 66, these facilities were supplemented with new motel-type units that could more efficiently provide for larger numbers of tourists and their automobiles. New lineally designed motel buildings, often with centralized registration lobbies, provided modern conveniences demanded by the postwar traveling public. Old cabins were rearranged in rows, and in some cases, new units were constructed in lodge areas.<sup>71</sup>

The NPS also sought to remedy deficiencies in employee housing and maintenance areas through Mission 66. Maintenance areas were critical for supporting the new, modern buildings and roads, and the agency built 218 new maintenance or utility buildings during this time. Utility areas were located out of public view, and were often near, but separate from employee residential areas. These areas included a shop, typically a rectangular building of standard design, as well as a paved yard enclosed by a wall or fence. Employee housing had long been insufficient both in quantity and quality of housing stock—most park housing had been built in the 1920s and 1930s, and sometimes lacked electricity and running water. The Mission 66 program intended to bring employee living standards up to par with what was available in a modern suburb (including streets and sidewalks). Architects designed standardized house plans, which were then used to build single-family residences and small-scale multi-family units during Mission 66. By 1966, the agency had built 743 single-family and

496 multi-family residences.

#### Mission 66 at Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Mission 66 brought a large infusion of capital, labor, and development to Lake Mead NRA, and for the first time, park planners were able to comprehensively address area development, management, and recreation planning. The NPS developed the first comprehensive master plan implemented at the NRA under Mission 66. While existing plans, such as the 1953 Lake Mohave Master Plan, were taken into consideration, the NPS reevaluated these plans and tailored them to fit the goals of the Mission 66 program.<sup>73</sup> The first large appropriations came in 1958, when the park received \$384,000 for roads and \$402,155 for buildings and utilities. Spending reached its peak in 1963 at Lake Mead, when the NPS spent \$729,000 on buildings and \$778,000 on roads and trails.<sup>74</sup> Eight developed areas, consisting of both public facilities and NPS and concessioner support facilities, were constructed along the shores of Lake Mead and Lake Mohave during Mission 66 and continuing through the 1970s under Parkscape USA. Boulder Beach, Echo Bay, Las Vegas Wash, Callville Bay, and Temple Bar developed areas were located along the shores of Lake Mead. Cottonwood Cove, Willow Beach, and Katherine Landing were located along the Lake Mohave shoreline.

The Mission 66 plan for Lake Mead NRA imparted similar patterns of development and circulation at each developed area. A highly visible and easily accessible visitor center or ranger station marked the entrance to the developed area. A long, paved access road, leading from a main road or highway toward the lake, ended at or near the boat launch and marina. Spur roads along the way led to distinct functional areas—NPS employee housing and utility/maintenance areas, concessioner public use and maintenance areas, and campgrounds. The configuration of each developed area was determined principally by the terrain and shape of the shoreline in each location. The designed landscapes at each area also shared common characteristics. These were characterized by geometric forms and paving patterns as well as the use of exotic vegetation (oleander, fan palms, olive, African sumac, and eucalyptus, among other species). Park planners considered trees and shrubs, which provided privacy screening and shade, an integral part of Mission 66 development at Lake Mead NRA. <sup>75</sup> The park installed irrigation systems to water the new vegetation.<sup>76</sup>

The NPS sought to provide new facilities that would meet the demands of the public at Lake Mead NRA, particularly boaters and other water sports enthusiasts. To this end, park planners included new paved boat ramps, swimming beaches (segregated from boating areas for safety), new and improved roads, picnic shelters, and parking areas in their plans. The NPS sought to modernize and enlarge existing campgrounds and construct new campgrounds with campfire circles that could accommodate 200 guests for interpretive talks. Planners wanted to provide better visitor orientation and information through a new visitor center at Boulder Beach. They intended to build ranger-information centers at the smaller developed areas; these buildings would provide information to visitors and have at least one interpretive exhibit. Picnic facilities were to be upgraded or built. The NPS also sought to provide services to visitors who wanted to engage in hiking, rockhounding, and/or nature study, through better visitor information and orientation, interpretive signage, nature trails, and campfire circles.<sup>77</sup> In order to facilitate cohesive, logical development of the recreation area, road building became a priority under Mission 66. New roads would cut travel time for staff and search and rescue teams, and improved circulation patterns would facilitate park administration and use. Projects such as the road between Las Vegas Wash and Echo Bay opened previously inaccessible areas to the public. The NPS also sought new roads, in part, in order to make the park's desert and water landscapes more accessible to auto sightseers. They hoped these roads would give visitors "a feeling of solitude and an acquaintanceship with nature."<sup>78</sup>

Employee housing was another priority. With increased staff and one of the largest parks in the system, the NPS thought it was necessary for both safety and practical reasons to build modern employee housing at each developed area.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the NPS believed these sites needed multiple multi-family units for seasonal employees. Park planners sought to provide multiple housing units clustered together, so that rangers' families would not feel isolated or unprotected when the employee was on duty.<sup>80</sup>

As with parks throughout the national park system, planners made new concession facilities a key

part of the development plan at Lake Mead NRA. At the recreational area, the NPS wanted the existing concessioners to expand or improve their marina and overnight facilities, and they wanted new concession developments at Echo Bay, Katherine Landing, Fire Mountain, and Callville Bay. The agency pushed concessioners to expand and improve trailer villages, since four times as many campers used recreational vehicles than tents. Overnight accommodations were frequently full, and the NPS hoped new accommodations would be built in eleven different locations, including all of the developed areas. Once the NPS installed new utilities, such as modern water and sewer systems and electricity, they expected that concessioners would invest in these new facilities. Concessioners, however, had trouble borrowing adequate capital to expand due to government contract restrictions.<sup>81</sup>

The NPS prioritized recreational development at Lake Mead, but park planners had to balance the public's need for recreational facilities and other accommodations with the challenges of the desert environment. The harsh climate and steep topography of the area surrounding Lake Mead NRA produced unpredictable and dangerous conditions such as seasonal downpours, flash floods, and severe high winds. The rugged terrain limited patterns of development. Most developed areas had a single access road; the NPS took this into account and designed road and utility systems that would serve both concession and NPS facilities. Fluctuating water levels (due to variable energy and agricultural needs) on Lake Mead also posed challenges. For example, early Mission 66 plans included new marina facilities at Boulder Beach, but falling water levels left the location with inadequate water depth. Alternate plans were made to build the marina at nearby Hemenway Harbor, which was a less desirable location, but during the course of planning, water levels rose, and the Boulder Beach site again came into favor. Planners predicted that visitors might come to favor Lake Mohave over Lake Mead, since there was less fluctuation in water levels, as well as calmer winds and better harbors.<sup>82</sup>

Like Mission 66 buildings at national parks across the nation, the new buildings at Lake Mead NRA embraced modern architectural trends. A subdued modernism, based on the use of typically non-standard concrete masonry units (often tinted red to blend in with the desert landscape), metal decking, I-beams, stamped metal channels and large expanses of glass for material expression, defined the Mission 66 building aesthetic throughout the park. Yet, the manner in which the materials were used varied from developed area to developed area. The variation was most evident in the custom designs for each of the visitor centers and ranger stations.

The Mission 66 program transformed Lake Mead NRA from a relatively undeveloped recreation area with few points of access into a recreational mecca for visitors and residents of the southwestern U.S. The program converted rustic fishermen's camps into full service developed areas with overnight accommodations, restaurants, marinas, campgrounds, and trailer parks. The NPS created new developed areas, expanded existing facilities, and connected previously isolated locations with improved, paved roads. Echo Bay, for example, was a barren spot with no road access, but during Mission 66, the NPS turned the location into a full-service facility with a motel, trailer village, campground, employee housing, restaurant, and store. Employee housing was built in all of the developed areas, and most of the developed areas received new campgrounds (with modern comfort stations and utilities), utility buildings, and either a visitor or ranger information center. The NPS installed new water and sewer systems at five of the sites and strung commercial electric lines into Cottonwood Cove, Echo Bay, Las Vegas Bay, and Willow Beach.<sup>83</sup>

Implementation of the Mission 66 program and the intensified efforts leading to the designation of Lake Mead NRA as a unit of the National Park System were intertwined. While the NPS had managed Lake Mead NRA since its inception, the recreation area was not officially an NPS unit until 1964. Conrad Wirth identified the passage of legislation to formally establish Lake Mead National Recreation Area as one of his top priorities during Mission 66. In 1959, Wirth submitted a report to the Secretary of the Interior that linked the successful implementation of Mission 66 at the recreation area to Senate Bill 1060, which would give permanent status to Lake Mead NRA.<sup>84</sup> Twenty-eight years elapsed between the creation of the first National Recreation Area and designation of this area as the first of its kind in the national park system. On October 8, 1964, Lake Mead National Recreation Area officially became a National Park Service unit. Congress established official boundaries, ended the shared management arrangement with the Bureau of Reclamation (the bureau continued to operate Hoover Dam), and granted legislative authority to the NPS.

### Las Vegas Wash Developed Area

Las Vegas Wash Developed Area is located along the northwest extremity of the Boulder Basin area of Lake Mead in Nevada. Visitors reach the site by traveling 10 miles east of Henderson on Highway 146, or 13.5 miles north of Boulder City on Lakeshore Road. The site is the closest in Lake Mead NRA to Las Vegas, though Boulder Beach garnered more visitors in the post-war period due to its proximity to the trans-continental highway.<sup>85</sup> The NPS found the site's gently sloping, open terrain especially suitable for development, and considered Las Vegas Wash to have the best beach on Lake Mead.<sup>86</sup>

The facilities at Las Vegas Wash in the late 1940s and early 1950s were minimal and included an unpaved access road to the lakeshore harbor, and four picnic shelters and four bath house buildings built by the NPS in 1949.<sup>87</sup> Grand Canyon-Boulder Dam Tours, Lake Mead National Recreation Area's primary concessioner at the time, began boating operations at Las Vegas Bay under the name Lake Mead Boat Company in the 1940s.<sup>88</sup> Concessioner operations included a dock, boat rentals, fuel service, a snack stand, and trailer parking. Vehicular access was via an oiled road, there were no utilities, and drinking water had to be brought in from off site. Despite the lack of amenities, day trippers from Las Vegas and other nearby communities visited Las Vegas Wash for boating, swimming and picnicking.<sup>89</sup>

Concessioner operations at Las Vegas Wash changed hands several times in the 1940s and 1950s, but the NPS awarded the concession contract to Bob and Betty Gripenotog in 1957, and the family operated the marina facilities there for over four decades. By the late 1950s, the marina and concession facilities included "five old wooden cottage trailers, an office, a shop, a store, storage space, and a fifty-foot dock, plus refreshments, boat rentals, tackle sales, and a fuel station."<sup>90</sup> The Gripenotogs soon constructed boat slips and the facility's first restaurant.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the popularity of the site for picnicking, boating, and swimming, Mission 66 development plans for Las Vegas Wash were relatively modest. The NPS proposed construction of a new access road providing more direct access to waterfront facilities, a ranger station, employee residences, an equipment storage building, a campground, improved picnicking facilities, comfort stations, and a boat repair and storage area for the concessioner. The Mission 66 plan documents also note that the concessioner proposed a trailer village and overnight facilities as part of the new development, but these were never constructed.<sup>92</sup>

To facilitate new Mission 66 development at the site, the NPS installed electrical lines, and constructed new water and sewage systems at Las Vegas Wash in 1958.<sup>93</sup> Two picnic shelters (#332 and #333) were constructed in the picnic area in 1959, and the NPS completed the access and campground roads plus two H-plan residences in the residential area (#316 and #317) in 1960.<sup>94</sup> A third residence was constructed in the residential area in 1961 (#325) and the NPS added a comfort station (#319, not extant) to the picnic area.<sup>95</sup> Additional development in 1961 included a new boat repair building (#399, not extant), built by the concessioner, and two campground comfort stations (#328 and #330), built by the NPS.<sup>96</sup> In 1965, the concessioner built a 209-slip marina facility and the NPS completed the Ranger Information Station (#315) and maintenance building (#320).<sup>97</sup> The parking area above the boat launch (shown in the 1959 working drawing for the Las Vegas Wash Beach & Marina Development) was constructed between 1969 and 1980.<sup>98</sup>

Note: Previous documentation refers to the Las Vegas Wash Bridge, "one of two Mission 66 bridges extant in the park." However, no bridge was evident within the developed area when the site work was completed and no other reference to the bridge was found during the research process for this DOE.

Las Vegas Wash Developed Area has undergone several alterations since its development under the Mission 66 program. A fish cleaning station was installed near the picnic area c.1980.<sup>99</sup> In 1981, NPS work crews removed the eastern half of the picnic area (including all of the oleander screen plantings) and modified curb cuts within the original curved parking lot to provide for additional parking and vehicular access at the site.<sup>100</sup> In 1983, NPS constructed a 400-foot by 400-foot parking lot behind the fish cleaner closest to the picnic area.<sup>101</sup> The NPS installed a new courtesy dock at Las Vegas Wash in 1984, and worked with the Youth Conservation Corps to establish an interpretive cactus garden at the Las Vegas Wash Ranger Station.<sup>102</sup> The concessioner constructed two rectangular-plan warehouse buildings and a parking lot northwest of the picnic area in 1985 for boat

and trailer dry storage. A second parking lot was added to the northwest of the warehouse buildings c.1990, and a fuel station added c.2000.<sup>103</sup> A second fish cleaning station was installed in 1987, in the parking area northwest of the existing fish cleaner.<sup>104</sup> A fourth residence was constructed in the residential area in 1992. Additional post-Mission 66 concessioner development included marina expansion in the 1980s and 1990s:

[The concessioner] added slips in 1981, and by 1984, the site contained a 595-slip marina, a restaurant and lounge, a gas dock, a concession maintenance building, 35 rental boats, a 3,500 square foot store, and 200 spaces of dry boat storage. The marina expanded again in the late 1980s (the [concessioner] installed the first covered dock on the lake), and in 1994, the marina contained 745 slips and 300 spaces of dry boat storage. At this time, the marina was called the Las Vegas Bay Marina. <sup>105</sup>

The marina struggled with falling water levels in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which required them to periodically reposition anchors and docks to meet the water.<sup>106</sup> Thirty feet of land was exposed for each foot the water fell. In addition, the Las Vegas Bay delta was increasing due to erosion and threatened to choke the harbor. As a result, all marina facilities were removed from the site in 2002 and relocated twelve miles south to Hemenway Harbor, where they remain today.<sup>107</sup> The NPS paved and extended the boat ramp in the late 1980s and again between 2000 and 2004.<sup>108</sup> Following removal of the marina, the NPS replaced the Mission 66 era comfort station at the picnic area with a new comfort station and constructed a third picnic shelter in 2003. NPS had added a second comfort station at the picnic area parking lot in 1999. Additional paving and amenity improvements (accessible pathways, drinking fountains) appear to have been completed in the early 2000s.<sup>109</sup> The NPS replaced the two Mission 66 comfort stations in the campground in 2003. In 2013, NPS made \$200,000 of improvements to the first two loops of the Las Vegas Wash campground, installing new native plants and an underground irrigation system.<sup>110</sup> All original boat repair and storage facilities (including boat repair building #399) south of the picnic area were cleared from the site between 2010 and 2013; only the concrete slab foundations remain.



## Uses

### Functions and Uses:

| Major Category | Category         | Use/Function | Historic | Current | Primary |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|----------|---------|---------|
| Government     | Government-Other |              | Yes      | Yes     | Yes     |

### Public Access:

### Associated Ethnographic Group

Ethnographic Study Status:

Ethnographic Narrative:

## Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

### Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

Located along Lakeshore Drive, about 10 miles northeast of Henderson, Nevada, Las Vegas Wash Developed Area overlooks the upper arm of Las Vegas Bay. The developed area is bound on the north by Las Vegas Wash and on the south by Lakeshore Road and sparsely vegetated hilly terrain. The campground is at the northern end of the developed area, and the remainder of the development is situated to the south, near and adjacent to the former boat launch and marina facilities. Screening and shade plants were introduced during Mission 66 throughout the developed area and include species such as oleander, fan palms, olive, and eucalyptus trees.<sup>1</sup> Las Vegas Wash lies within the Mojave Desert.

The developed area contains facilities operated by both the NPS and a concessioner. NPS facilities include a ranger office and information station, an equipment storage and maintenance building, an employee residential complex, a picnic area with picnic shelters and comfort stations, two fish cleaning stations, and a campground with comfort stations. A modern dry boat storage facility is operated by a concessioner. Access roads and parking within the developed area are maintained by the NPS.

Vehicular access to the developed area is via Lakeshore Road to Lakeshore Drive, which is a paved, two-lane road that extends northeast from Lakeshore Road before curving southeast and then north again around the picnic area. Lakeshore Drive provides access to the ranger office and information station, the equipment storage and maintenance building, the residential development, the picnic area, the former marina and boat launch area, and the former boat repair and storage site. It also provides access to the modern dry boat storage facility on site. Las Vegas Campground Road extends northwest from Lakeshore Drive near the ranger office and information station; from there it follows a gradual curve leading to the campground at the north end of the developed area.

Included within the boundary of the Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District, from north to south, are the campground, the ranger office and information station, the equipment storage and maintenance building, and the residential area. Following are descriptions of the resources within the Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District boundary.

**Landscape Characteristic: Spatial Organization**

**Campground (Contributing Site)**

The campground is located at the north end of the developed area, accessed from Las Vegas Campground Road, which curves west and north from Lakeshore Drive. The entrance is sited at the west end of the campground, where it meets the access road. Built between 1960 and 1961, the campground comprises a central asphalt-paved road with secondary paved loop roads. The campground was originally constructed with 84 sites and retains this number today. Each site has a paved parking spur and a non-historic but compatible concrete picnic table and metal fireplace. No landscape planting plan exists for the campground; however, the screen plantings found throughout the campground are characteristic of Mission 66 campgrounds within Lake Mead National Recreation Area and include oleanders, fan palms, eucalyptus, and olive trees.

The campground contains two non-historic comfort stations (522 and 523), built 2003 and 1990, respectively. All concrete paving around the comfort stations was replaced at the time of new construction. Campground signage upgrades and road resurfacing have been completed as needed. In 2013, the first two loops of the campground (sites 1-7 and 59-84) underwent a \$200,000 that included planting of new native trees and shrubs, and installation of an underground drip irrigation system.<sup>2</sup> Historic aerial photographs show that the campground amphitheater, which is located just north of the second campground loop, was constructed between 2000 and 2004.<sup>3</sup> An unpaved path from the campground provides access to the amphitheater, which consists of 14 simple wood benches set in a gravel-covered clearing overlooking Las Vegas Wash.

Although the campground has been altered with the removal of its original comfort stations and has undergone less significant changes such as repaving and replacement of original campsite amenities, the campground retains its overall layout (paved loop road with campsites on either side), campsite parking spurs, and most of its original plant privacy screening (primarily oleander with olive and eucalyptus). It retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance as a contributor to the Mission 66 historic district.

**Landscape Features:**

| Feature Name | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|--------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Campground   | 192050         | Contributing         |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |

**Landscape Characteristic: Buildings and Structures**

**Ranger Office and Information Station, Equipment Storage/Maintenance Building (Contributing Buildings)**

The Ranger Office and Information Station (ranger station) and Equipment Storage and Maintenance Building (maintenance building) were constructed by Del & Del Construction Co. for the NPS in 1965. They are two separate structures, designed and built under the same plan, and linked by a concrete block screen and retaining wall. The ranger station (originally building 315, now 540) faces Lakeshore Drive to the northwest, and the maintenance building (originally building 320, now 541) faces the residential area to the southeast. The design uses the natural topography of the site to conceal the maintenance building and utility area from public view and access.<sup>5</sup>

The ranger station is accessed by a small asphalt-paved parking lot to the east of Lakeshore Drive. Mission 66 era designed landscape features at the front of the ranger station include a concrete terrace with integrated planting areas, a flagpole, covered walkways, and a concrete sidewalk running the length of the parking area, along the base of the concrete block screen wall. Original concrete work in these areas is has a pinkish tint, is rectilinear in design, and has alternating brushed and smooth concrete finishes. Most of the original concrete work remains intact, though a

section near the flagpole appears to have been removed for installation of an accessible ramp from the parking lot (date unknown). A raised planting bed enclosed by red-tinted concrete masonry units (CMUs) (8" x 8" x 16") extends from the west corner of the ranger station. No planting plan was found for the ranger station, but what appear to be original plantings around the building include oleander, an olive tree, and fan palms. An entry in the 1984 Superintendent's Annual Report notes that the Youth Conservation Corps established an interpretive cactus garden with etched aluminum signs in the ranger station planting beds that year; the existing signage and some of the current plantings may be more recent.<sup>6</sup> A modern concrete block privacy wall extends from the southwest wall of the ranger station and then extends southeast and east to screen a portion of the residential area.<sup>7</sup>

The ranger station is L-shaped in plan and comprised of two volumes under the same flat roof. The main volume houses the ranger and information station, and a secondary volume houses two public restrooms (men's and women's). Covered walkways link the two volumes, and the walkway between the ranger station and the restrooms leads to a rear balcony providing access to the utility and residential area. A ribbed metal fascia encloses the roof eave line, and squared metal posts support the roof extensions that shelter the exterior walkways. The roof is clad in asphalt roll roofing and has open soffits exposing the steel roof decking. Exterior walls are of red-tinted CMUs (6" x 4" x 16") laid in a stack bond pattern. Decorative CMU screen walls built with open center flue blocks are set at the front planting bed (1) and in the central covered walkway (2). Fenestration consists of aluminum framed, fixed-plate glass windows and doors; selected frames feature jalousie windows. A new drinking fountain/bottle fill station was installed on the wall between the restroom doors in 2015, and the restroom doors themselves were replaced in 1970, but overall, the ranger station remains largely intact to its original design.

A 108-foot CMU screen wall extends from the northeast end of the ranger station, stepping down along the edge of the parking lot to meet the decline in elevation. The sections are varied for visual interest and include sections with 6" x 8" x 16" open center flue blocks and 8" x 8" x 16" CMU walls with random inset blocks. Some modification to the screen wall is apparent in the two screen wall sections closest to the ranger station. Three and four rows of additional CMUs were added here (date unknown) using like materials; however, the new blocks lack the red tint present in the original CMUs. This screen wall sits on top of a retaining wall that forms the rear wall of the maintenance building to the southeast.

The maintenance building and residential area are accessed via a short spur road from Lakeshore Drive, just northeast of the ranger station parking lot. The road branches to the right to access the maintenance building/yard and original housing area. The left branch provides access to a fourth residence (Residence 504).<sup>9</sup> As originally constructed, the maintenance building was a four-bay open structure with a flat metal roof supported by structural steel columns set on concrete piers. Five steel beams support the roof structure, and the building measures 31-feet x 54-feet. Since the ranger station and maintenance building complex was completed in 1965, a small utility building was inset into the southernmost bay (date unknown). It has an unglazed metal entry door, metal wall cladding, one multi-pane wood sash window, and sits on a concrete slab foundation. Low, red-tinted CMU walls partially enclose both ends of the maintenance building, which is surrounded by an open, gravel-covered yard facing the residential area. Aside from the utility building insertion, the maintenance building appears largely as it did upon completion in 1965.

#### NPS Residences 501 and 502 (Contributing Buildings)

The NPS employee residential area is located southeast of the ranger station and maintenance building. The area comprises a collection of four single-family residences accessed by short spur roads that extend from Lakeshore Drive. The three residences constructed around the main residential access loop (501, 502, 503) were constructed as part of the original Mission 66 development. A fourth residence (504) was constructed in 1992 along a separate spur road to the north and east of this original development. Though research did not locate a planting plan for the residential area, oleander, fan palms, eucalyptus, creosote, Mexican paloverde, and olive trees around the three original residences appear to date to the Mission 66-era. A rocky berm along the western side of Residence 501 appears to be an original site feature as it is visible in completion report photographs for the equipment storage building. The residential loop road currently surrounds a central island (not original) with a fire hydrant, an asphalt curb, and a eucalyptus tree; only a fire hydrant was noted here in the original plan drawings. NPS records show that an asphalt curb (235 LF) was installed in the residential area in 1994, and that the road was resurfaced in 2000.

Constructed in 1960 as Buildings 316 and 317, NPS Residences 501 and 502 are located in the center of the residential area, between Residences 503 and 504. These one-story, H-plan residences are identical in design and plan and are largely unaltered from original construction. Residences built to the same plan were also constructed at Boulder Beach and Cottonwood Cove (all appear extant). Original plan drawings for these distinctive residences show "Newcomb" as the last name of the Western Office of Design and Construction designer. This is likely architect Robert Newcomb who also designed the Temple Bar Visitor Center and other visitor centers within the western region.<sup>11</sup>

The three-bedroom, two-bath, concrete brick and frame residences at Las Vegas Wash have flat roofs (unknown roofing material) and attached carports. Their primary façades face northwest, and the carports attach to the north corner of each residence. Wood posts support the flat carport roofs, which shelter the concrete parking slab and kitchen and utility room entrances; the carport roof also extends to cover a portion of the concrete walk leading to the main front entry door. Exterior walls are finished in a combination of vertical-groove wood hardboard siding and (8" x 4" x 16") red-tinted concrete bricks measuring. The brick is set in a running bond pattern and clads the northeast and southwest facing walls; hardboard covers the remaining wall surfaces. Most of the original steel frame windows (primarily fixed or one-over-one double hung) with white factory finish appear intact, though non-original screens cover some window openings, obscuring a clear view. Residence 501 has replacement doors at the main and kitchen entrances, but retains its original flush wood door at the utility room entrance. All original entry doors have been replaced with unglazed panel doors at Residence 502. The rear sliding glass door at Residence 502 is intact, but at Residence 501 this door has been replaced with a set of French doors. Both residences have a back yard with compatible, but non-original, concrete patios and walkways. A shared basketball court borders the rear yard of each residence.

#### NPS Residence 503 (Contributing Building)

Residence 503 (originally Residence 325) is located behind the ranger station and is the westernmost residence within the original Mission 66 residential area. Built in 1961 according to a standard plan, this one-story, three-bedroom, and three bath residence is rectangular in plan with a flat roof with wide eaves and wood fascia (roof cladding unknown) and stucco-clad exterior walls. The primary façade faces northeast, and a carport attaches to the building's west corner, sheltering the primary entry door (not original). The carport is enclosed at either side with vertical wood board screens and at the rear by an enclosed storage area with vertical-groove wood panel walls (all original). All window openings are covered with non-original dark window screens. Alterations completed in 2011 include replacement of all (8) original windows with new vinyl windows, and installation of two new exterior doors (carport and rear patio doors).<sup>12</sup> Two windows at the southeast elevation appear to have been infilled at an unknown date. A chain link fence encloses the residence's rear yard, and concrete slab paving at the rear patio and the carport were replaced in 2011.<sup>13</sup> The CMU block walls and gravel ground covering at the front of the residence also appear to have been recently installed.

Though Residence 503 has undergone some changes including window and door replacement, window infill, and repaving, the residence retains several original features and materials (rectangular plan, flat roof with wide eaves and wood fascia, stucco exterior walls, carport storage and enclosures). The building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic appearance as a Mission 66 residence and contributes to the historic district.

#### 9. NPS Residence 504 (Non-Contributing)

Residence 504 is located east of the other residences and accessed via a separate short spur road from Lakeshore Drive. Generally rectangular in plan, the one-story, single-family residence faces northeast and has a side gable roof clad in composition shingles. Built in 1992 to replace an earlier structure on the site (built c.1970), the residence appears to have undergone recent exterior and site upgrades. Exterior walls are clad in stucco and the windows are covered with dark screens. A garage attaches to the west end of the residence and the primary entrance is centered on the north façade.

Residence 504 was constructed outside of the period of significance and does not contribute to the Mission 66 historic district. A chain link fence encloses the residence's rear yard, and concrete slab paving at the rear patio and the carport were replaced in 2011.<sup>13</sup> The CMU block walls and gravel ground covering at the front of the residence also appear to have been recently installed.

Though Residence 503 has undergone some changes including window and door replacement,

window infill, and repaving, the residence retains several original features and materials (rectangular plan, flat roof with wide eaves and wood fascia, stucco exterior walls, carport storage and enclosures). The building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic appearance as a Mission 66 residence and contributes to the historic district.

9. NPS Residence 504 (Non-Contributing)

Residence 504 is located east of the other residences and accessed via a separate short spur road from Lakeshore Drive. Generally rectangular in plan, the one-story, single-family residence faces northeast and has a side gable roof clad in composition shingles. Built in 1992 to replace an earlier structure on the site (built c.1970), the residence appears to have undergone recent exterior and site upgrades. Exterior walls are clad in stucco and the windows are covered with dark screens. A garage attaches to the west end of the residence and the primary entrance is centered on the north façade.

Residence 504 was constructed outside of the period of significance and does not contribute to the Mission 66 historic district. A fence encloses the residence's rear yard, and concrete slab paving at the rear patio and the carport were replaced in 2011.<sup>13</sup> The CMU block walls and gravel ground covering at the front of the residence also appear to have been recently installed.

Though Residence 503 has undergone some changes including window and door replacement, window infill, and repaving, the residence retains several original features and materials (rectangular plan, flat roof with wide eaves and wood fascia, stucco exterior walls, carport storage and enclosures). The building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic appearance as a Mission 66 residence and contributes to the historic district.

Comfort Stations 522 and 523 (Non-Contributing Buildings)

Comfort stations 522 and 523, constructed in 2003 and 1990, respectively, replaced Mission 66 standard-type comfort stations built in 1961 in the same locations (328 and 330).<sup>4</sup> The buildings are identical. They are one story in height with hipped roofs covered in clay tile roofing. Their walls are built of tan-colored concrete masonry units (CMUs) laid in an alternating common bond and stacked bond pattern. Restrooms entrances are screened by CMU privacy walls. Fenestration includes flush metal doors and small sliding metal windows. Concrete paving and curbing around and adjacent to the comfort stations appears to date to the 1990/2003 construction.

As the campground comfort stations were built after the historic district's period of significance, they do not contribute to the historic significance of the district.

NPS Residence 504 (Non-Contributing)

Residence 504 is located east of the other residences and accessed via a separate short spur road from Lakeshore Drive. Generally rectangular in plan, the one-story, single-family residence faces northeast and has a side gable roof clad in composition shingles. Built in 1992 to replace an earlier structure on the site (built c.1970), the residence appears to have undergone recent exterior and site upgrades. Exterior walls are clad in stucco and the windows are covered with dark screens. A garage attaches to the west end of the residence and the primary entrance is centered on the north façade.

Residence 504 was constructed outside of the period of significance and does not contribute to the Mission 66 historic district.

**Landscape Features:**

| Feature Name                           | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Ranger Office and Information Station  | 192053         | Contributing         | 1169555             |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Equipment Storage/Maintenance Building | 192054         | Contributing         | 1169556             |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| NPS Residence 501                      | 192055         | Contributing         | 1169557             |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| NPS Residence 502                      | 192056         | Contributing         | 1169558             |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| NPS Residence 503                      | 192057         | Contributing         | 1169559             |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Comfort Station 522                    | 192051         | Non contributing     | 1169560             |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Comfort Station 523                    | 192052         | Non contributing     | 1169561             |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| NPS Residence 504                      | 192058         | Non contributing     | 1169562             |                       |                  |                    | No               |

**Landscape Characteristic: Circulation**

Circulation (Contributing)

Lakeshore Drive and Las Vegas Campground Road were completed in 1960 and are the principle access roads within the Las Vegas Wash Developed Area. Though the roads appear to have been repaired and repaved in kind over time, the alignments remain the same.

As these access roads remain generally the same as originally constructed, they are considered to contribute to the historic district.

**Landscape Features:**

| Feature Name              | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Lakeshore Drive           | 192059         | Contributing         | 055652              |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Las Vegas Campground Road | 192060         | Contributing         | 1169554             |                       |                  |                    | No               |

### **Landscape Characteristic: Natural Systems and Features**

Natural systems and features are the natural aspects that have influenced the development of a landscape. Located along Lakeshore Drive, about 10 miles northeast of Henderson, Nevada, Las Vegas Wash Developed Area overlooks the upper arm of Las Vegas Bay and is surrounded by sparsely vegetated hilly terrain. NPS considered Las Vegas Wash to have the best beach on Lake Mead. The coarse alluvium of the soil and desert climate were augmented with irrigation during Mission 66. Screening and shade plants cultivated during the period contrast with the sparse native vegetation that surrounds the developed area.

The developed area is sited in the Mojave Desert and experiences mild winters and hot summers.

#### **Hydrology**

Upon construction of the Hoover Dam on September 30, 1935, Lake Mead was created from the Colorado River. It includes four large connected basins that cover the deep canyons and their steep walls along the historic Colorado River channel. Inflows to the reservoir are primarily received snowmelt from Wyoming, Colorado, and the Utah Rocky Mountains via the Colorado River and three smaller tributaries. Outflow from the reservoir releases through Hoover Dam, located off of the southwestern arm of Lake Mead, and serves the states of Nevada, Arizona, California, and Mexico. The elevation of the water level in Lake Mead varies, but the average from 1939 to 2003 has been 1,176 feet. The area receives an average of five inches of rainfall annually.

#### **Landforms**

Lake Mead National Recreation Area spans two physiographic provinces, the Basin and Range and the Colorado Plateau. The area is characterized by alternating northward trending mountain ranges and intervening wide basins with low relief. The Colorado River has cut deep canyons through the mountain ranges where the historic river channel is bordered by steep, high-relief walls composed primarily of Precambrian to Tertiary Igneous and metamorphic rocks. Following the completion of Hoover Dam, the waters of the Colorado River began backing up, filling the narrow canyons and flooding the adjacent basins as the waters rose.

#### **Flora**

Flora within the Mojave Desert includes endemic species, as well as species from the Great Basin and Sonoran Deserts. Due to the extreme cold and heat from winter to summer, few plant species are endemic to the Mojave Desert as compared to the Sonoran. Creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) is common in valley floors, lower bajadas, and alluvial fans. Other common vegetation includes burroweed (*Ambrosia dumosa*), Mojave yucca (*Yucca schidigera*), various cacti, and assorted desert shrubs and annuals including . ocotillo, teddy bear cholla, buckhorn cholla, beavertail cactus, and Joshua tree. The sparseness of the vegetation and the type of vegetation leaves an open landscape that remains today. The light vegetation likely made road building an easier prospect, but meant that wooden building materials were limited and had to be moved in from long distances. In a response to the sparse low-growing native vegetation, Mission 66 landscape designs brought exotic species into the developed area to provide a more lush setting for visitors.



## Condition

**Assessment Interval (Years):** 6

**Next Assessment Due Date:** 09/23/2027

### Condition Assessment and Impacts

**Condition Assessment:** Fair

**Assessment Date:** 09/23/2021

**Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:**



## Bibliography and Supplemental Information

**Bibliography:**

| Citation Author | Citation Title                                  | Year of Publication | Citation Publisher | Citation Type | Citation Location | Citation Number |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                 | Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District DOE | 2021                |                    |               |                   |                 |



**Landscape Documents:**



**File Name:** Las Vegas Wash\_100% Proof.pdf  
**Caption:** Las Vegas Wash Mission 66 Historic District  
**Alt Text:**  
**Date:**  
**Attachment Type:**  
**Source:**  
**Version:**



**File Name:** NVSHPO to LAKE\_20210427.pdf

**Caption:** SHPO Concurrence Letter

**Alt Text:**

**Date:**

**Attachment Type:**

**Source:**

**Version:**