

October 9, 2017

Greetings Fellow '49ers,

I have urgent news to get out concerning the camping arrangements in the Furnace Creek area during this year's Encampment. Many of you come a week or so before Encampment starts and stay in Sunset Campground. This year Sunset campground will not be opening up until noon on Friday the 3rd of November. And it will have to close at noon on the 13th.

So what's going on? Below are the details I have learned about the situation.

**Music:** The Ray Parish group plans to show up on the 3rd and begin providing their wonderful entertainment as usual.

**Why is Sunset opening late:** Somewhere up higher in the Park Service a decision was made concerning a hiring practice that permitted hiring winter season temporary staff after they had finished up their temporary summer staff positions in other parks. The new practice will be to no longer call these temporary positions since the people are actually working year round. This decision just came down. And it was made effective immediately. Months ago Death Valley NPS had made plans to hire temporary staff in mid October as usual... but this has just now been cancelled by the NPS personnel office. So it is back to square one in terms of hiring for the season. And this hiring process takes no less than a few months before Death Valley will actually see the new hires.

**More about why:** It takes staff to run a campground. Janitorial and maintenance staffs are essential in order to ensure sanitation and safety. The Furnace Creek and Stovepipe campgrounds are opened and staffed already. So are many other facilities in the Park. The maintenance of these facilities must continue for the same reasons of sanitation and safety... so the existing staff is already obligated. All this leaves Death Valley NPS with no way to open Sunset.

**Please note:** Texas Springs campground and Mesquite campground are closed and will not open until this hiring issue is resolved. This will be after Encampment is over.

**What has Death Valley NPS been able to do for us?:**

First of all, they let us know as soon as they could. This gives the '49ers some time to notify folks by email and on the web site. That won't be everybody, but it is the best we can do.

The Superintendent and his staff understood the urgency of opening Sunset campground during Encampment. They looked for a creative way to get around their personnel shortfall. Because of the Memorandum of Understanding that we signed with Death Valley National Park last year, the Park now has the formal ability to make decisions that are in our mutual interest that otherwise could not be done. This relationship with the Park is based on the interpretive value our event shares with the public. The plan the Park devised will use some overtime as well as the rescheduling of staff as much as possible to enable them to **temporarily** open the

campground. This is not a small feat for a governmental agency to pull off. While none of us, '49ers and Park Service staff alike, are happy about this situation. We, the '49ers need to know that under the circumstances, Mike and his folks have gone the extra mile.

**Where to get more information:**

- 1) Continue to check for any updates via emails from the '49ers
- 2) Check the '49er website at [www.deathvalley49ers.org](http://www.deathvalley49ers.org)

**A final thought:** Hang in there, none of us have gotten this far in life without having a few detours. This is just one more. If you usually get to Furnace Creek early, you might check the Xanterra website to see if Fiddlers Camp has any sites left. Or consider stopping over at one of the other RV parks in the area. This would include ones in Shoshone, Tecopa, Beatty, Longstreet, and Lone Pine. Have a good time trying out something new... drive safe and we'll see you on the 3rd!

Thanks and Take care,

Woody