



COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES

Colorado River Indian Reservation

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September 28, 2015

Sent Via E-mail and United States Mail

National Park Service
Attn: Joe Watkins
Office of Tribal Relations and American Cultures
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Washington, DC 20005
Email- joe_watkins@nps.gov
Submission@omb.eop.gov
madonna_baucum@nps.gov

Re: Gathering of Certain Plants or Plant Parts by Federally Recognized Indian Tribes for Traditional Purposes, RIN 1024-AD84

Dear Mr. Watkins,

The Colorado River Indian Tribes ("Tribes") submits the following comments on the National Park Service's proposed rule to permit agreements between the National Park Service ("NPS") and federally recognized Indian tribes to allow the gathering and removal of plants or plant parts from park lands by designated tribal members for traditional purposes.

As a matter of background information, the Colorado River Indian Tribes is a federally recognized Indian tribe comprised of over 4,200 members belonging to the Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi, and Navajo tribes. The almost 300,000-acre Colorado River Indian Reservation sits astride the Colorado River between Blythe, California and Parker, Arizona. The ancestral lands of the Colorado River Indian Tribes' members, however, extend far beyond the Reservation boundaries. Therefore, given our history, it is important the NPS recognizes and respects that tribal gathering of plants for traditional cultural and spiritual purposes predates the establishment of park boundaries.

Although the NPS may have good intentions in proposing agreements with tribes, we are concerned about some of the proposed rule's procedures. First, the tribal request for an agreement is to include a description of the traditional association that the Indian tribe has to the park area, a brief explanation of the traditional purposes to which the gathering and removal activities will relate, and a description of the gathering and removal activities that the Indian tribe

is interested in conducting. *See Sec 2.6(c) Tribal Request.* Again, we understand that the NPS is attempting to document agreements with tribes, however, reducing the foregoing information and practices to a few written words goes against our oral traditions. Second, the proposed rule requires the Superintendent to determine that a proposed gathering is a traditional use of the park area by the Indian tribe. *See Sec. 2.6(d) Criteria for Entering Into Agreement.* It is unclear what framework the Superintendent will follow in making this determination. How can a Superintendent decide what is considered to be a traditional and sacred use of a plant? Also, what qualifications does a Superintendent have to make such a decision? In sum, in recognizing that tribal gathering and removal of plants predates the establishment of park boundaries, we are hopeful that the NPS will also be respectful of traditional cultural and spiritual beliefs and values in establishing the proposed rule.

Thank you for your consideration of the Colorado River Indian Tribes' comments on the proposed rule. We look forward to receiving any revisions to the proposed rule based upon our comments and other input that the NPS receives.

Sincerely,

COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES

 **ACTING**

Dennis Patch
Chairman

Cc: Tribal Council of the Colorado River Indian Tribes
Attorney General, Colorado River Indian Tribes
Colorado River Indian Tribes Museum
Mohave Elders Committee