

Little Ash Springs Management Plan

Proposed by Friends of Pahranaagat Valley

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Rendering by Sam Lytle, CivilFX.com

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Introduction

We are the Friends of Pahranaagat Valley Corporation, and we want to improve and re-open Little Ash Springs.

We are a pending non-profit made up of residents who seek to “serve, preserve, and enhance” our valley. We’re contemplating other projects as well, but Little Ash is currently our main focus. This unique site has been enjoyed by Pahranaagat Valley’s residents, as well as visitors, for generations, and we want our children and grandchildren to have the chance to enjoy it as well.

In recent years Little Ash became extremely popular, receiving more and more visitors, but it was not properly managed. Our group was formed in response to concerns about overcrowding and misuse of the site. It became almost impossible for locals to enjoy Little Ash due to the overcrowding as well as sanitation concerns. Currently the Bureau of Land Management Caliente Field Office has placed a temporary closure on the facility for two years, citing safety concerns. A padlocked Little Ash means lost recreational opportunities for locals and tourists and lost revenue for local businesses, particularly R Place across the street.

Friends of PV saw an opportunity to create a management plan that improves the site for recreation, manages visitors so it is not overcrowded or overused and protects the natural environment of the spring. We have met monthly over the past couple years and have had several meetings with the BLM, state and county officials and the public. We have created an initial concept and are now in the process of moving it to a full-fledged plan to propose to the public and the BLM.

Part of our plan would include having improvements made to the Little Ash Springs site and then have our group manage the site with the hope that down the road we will be able to have the site and some of the surrounding land transferred to Lincoln County. Sam Lytle, a civil engineer and founder of Civil FX has created an impressive 3D video visualization of the general direction we desire to go with Little Ash Springs.

BLM officials have provided helpful feedback as we have met with them. They acknowledge the need to resolve the Little Ash problem. When we’re dealing with public lands, the process is slow and options are weighed against impact to the environment and wildlife. The Caliente Field Office applied for and received a grant to create a management plan and environmental assessment for the site. Basically this plan will decide the fate of Little Ash. The BLM will hire an environmental consultant to analyze a series of options, one of them being our detailed proposal. From there the local field manager will make a decision on which option the BLM will pursue.

Friends of PV is playing a key role in this process. We are confident and excited that the plan we are creating will balance local needs with environmental concerns to make an enjoyable and well-managed site that will be an asset to our county.

We desire and welcome your feedback. We want to make sure the plan we create is something the community can get behind. Information on how you can get involved is at our website - FriendsofPV.org.

Present Status and Problems



Aerial rendering of Little Ash in its current state. Sam Lytle, CivilFX.com

Little Ash Spring has been officially closed since the summer of 2013 with the Bureau of Land Management, Caliente Field Office citing public health and safety concerns.

Before this closure, there were concerns about area cleanliness and safety, enforcement of rules, and overcrowding.

Garbage left by people using Little Ash was not collected as often as was needed and broken glass littered the ground. Oftentimes garbage ended up in the water and floated downstream.

The garbage problem attracted disease carrying pests such as cockroaches, raccoons and mice.

Dog waste littered the grounds and dogs were allowed to swim in the water.

The garbage problem, disease carrying rodent problem and what people themselves were putting into the water is a concern because local residents are so dependent on the quality of the water as it flows down through the valley for flood irrigation.

Ash Springs is the home of the endangered White River Spring Fish and other sensitive species. Lack of management puts such species at risk.

People often stayed overnight (which is not permitted) and disregarded parking signs.

Little Ash itself is a small area that fills up quickly. Many people who wished to enjoy the spring were unable to because there was no parking or space to swim.

Site Management Objectives

In consultation with the Pahranaagat Valley community, and with input from the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Nevada Fish and Wildlife, and other interested parties, objectives for the management and use of Little Ash Springs include objectives for the spring itself, as well as the BLM managed land directly north of the spring. These objectives are:

To ensure the preservation of the spring, and protect the entire hydrologic system and the purity of the spring water.

To maintain healthy ecological systems.

To protect endangered and sensitive species that inhabit the spring including the White River Springfish, Pahranaagat Naucorid bug, Grated Tyronia and Pahranaagat Pebblesnail.

To protect and maintain the natural diversity of plants and animals in and around the spring.

To identify significant cultural resources and ensure their protection.

To promote public understanding and appreciation of the spring's natural features, geological and hydrological resources, and ecological communities.

To foster public awareness of and education about the spring's history and unique ecological systems.

To add interpretive walking areas around the spring with raised boardwalks.

To facilitate continued human use of the spring for "pool soaking."

To improve the area north of the spring for visitor use, including improved road access, parking, and new outdoor recreational facilities.

To ensure that facilities for visitor and administration use are compatible with natural and cultural resource values and that park roads and other transportation systems provide safe, efficient public access in a manner consistent with the protection of resource values.

To establish rules and regulations for pool soaking, use of interpretive walking areas and use of recreational site facilities.

To establish hours of operation for the site.

To establish a fee structure for visitor use of the site.

To provide the necessary resources and staff to both promote the site as a visitor attraction and ensure rules and regulations are followed.

In order to effectively accomplish these objectives, Friends of PV is designating the site into two management areas: natural and site development.

The Natural areas include the spring, water way and water banks. These are managed to conserve natural resources and processes while accommodating visitor uses and experiences that do not adversely affect the natural systems.

The Development areas support site management, operation and services as well as recreational opportunities to site visitors.



Proposed changes to Little Ash. Rendering by Sam Lytle, CivilFX.com

Proposed Site Management Program

Natural Areas

Spring

The spring at Little Ash currently feeds into a man-made pool down to a natural pool and then the water heads south to “Big Ash” and then on through Pahranaagat Valley. The source of the spring serves as habitat for an endangered species and several sensitive species. Humans have swum at little Ash for centuries, though overuse by humans can possibly adversely affect the species native to the spring. Rights to the water are primarily owned by ranchers and residents of Pahranaagat Valley for agricultural use.

This plan balances the desire and mandate to protect the endangered and sensitive species of the spring, while continuing the long-established history of human recreational enjoyment, without degrading the quality or flow of the water.

The plan proposes that:

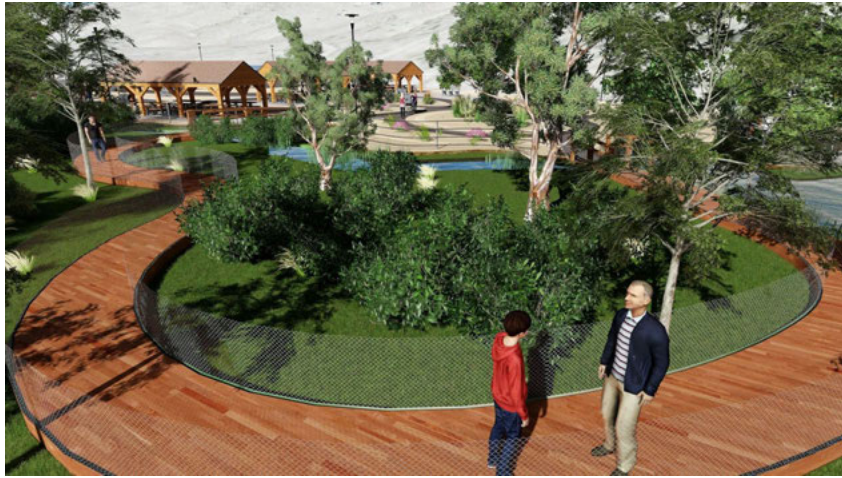
1. The existing man made pool be repaired and three additional pools be added. The four pools will be filled by the spring water and flow down the valley as it has for centuries.
2. Humans be allowed to “soak” in the man-made pools only.
3. Occupancy restrictions be placed in the man made pools to minimize any impact being made on native species at the spring.



Rendering by Sam Lytle, CivilFX.com

Interpretive Walking Area

The surrounding pool and the water flowing south on the property has a variety of vegetation. This plan proposes keeping this area undisturbed, while providing ways for visitors to enjoy the natural ecosystem created by the spring. To achieve this, raised boardwalks and bridges with railings will be constructed that allow visitors to walk through this natural area without disturbing plants, animals and water banks. Interpretive signage will also be created educating visitors about the native species, plants, the spring itself and other interesting facts about the area.



Rendering by Sam Lytle, CivilFX.com

Site Development Areas

Road Access

Currently the access road to Little Ash goes through private property. This plan proposes that a new road be created that goes through public land and connects further north on Highway 93. This takes traffic further away from the spring and connects with parking that will be further north of the area. It also avoids any private property right-of-way issues.

Entry Gate/Pay Area

An entry gate and toll both will be constructed south of the parking area and serve as the only entrance to the site. This will be managed by an employee and visitors will be expected to pay the appropriate fee or present a pre-paid pass in order to enter the site. *(Rendering by Sam Lytle, CivilFX.com)*



Parking Facilities

A new parking area will be designated on public land directly north of the Little Ash parcel. This parking area will be large enough to park approximately 40 standard vehicles as well as four larger vehicles such as buses or recreational vehicles.

Pavilion Area

Three pavilions will be constructed that can accommodate approximately 20 people each. These will be placed northeast of the property just south of the existing restroom facilities.



Rendering by Sam Lytle, CivilFX.com

Playground/Recreation Area

A jungle gym, volleyball pit and basketball court will be constructed at the northwest portion of the property.



Rendering by Sam Lytle, CivilFX.com

Restroom

Existing pit toilet restrooms will remain and be expanded to better meet the needs of the area.

Changing Facilities

A changing area will be constructed on the south end of the property near the soaking pools.

Fencing

Fencing will be placed around the Little Ash property with the only point of entry/exit being the entry gate/pay area. Fencing will also be placed around the soaking pools with a gate in order to manage the number of people in the pools.

Signage

Signs will be placed throughout the area indicating site rules and use instructions.

Operating Procedures & Rules

On-Site Management

One to two employees as well as volunteers will manage the site and be on the premises during regular operating hours. Management responsibilities will include:

- Managing site entry and charging fees.
- Cash depositing and keeping accurate records of income and expenditures.
- Managing soaking pool occupancy and overall site occupancy, making sure the pools and site never exceed designated maximum occupancies.
- Custodial services - keeping area and all facilities clean.
- Assist with site promotions and community outreach.

Hours of Operation

Little Ash Springs will maintain a specific hours of operation. Visitors may not enter the site outside of these designated hours. The following are proposed hours of operation for Little Ash Springs:

- Spring/Summer (April-September): 7 a.m. - 11 p.m.
- Fall/Winter (October-March): 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Site Procedures/Rules

- A maximum occupancy for the site (80 people).
- No overnight parking or camping.
- No glass containers.

- If any rules are broken, the local authorities will be called and you will be fined!
- Read and obey all posted rules and instructions given by the site staff.
- For the comfort and safety of all of our guests, smoking is only permitted outside the main gate.
- All bags, backpacks, and packages are subject to inspection prior to entering the park. As a reminder, for the safety of our guests the following items are not permitted inside. Weapons, sharp objects, hazardous items or materials, or any other item that may be perceived as a weapon.
- In keeping with the family atmosphere of the site, inappropriate actions such as offensive or profane language and/or gestures as well as unruly behavior including horseplay will not be tolerated.
- Actions, language, behavior or conduct that interferes with a family atmosphere will result in the ejection of the offending person without refund or any other compensation. This includes but is not limited to: Offensive clothing, profanity, vulgar gestures, running, spitting, fighting and line breaking.

Soaking Pools Procedures/Rules

- A maximum occupancy for the pools. (1 swimmer per 15 square feet of surface area for pools less than 5 feet deep.)
- Bathing suits are required to enter the pools.
- Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.
- People with chemical hair products (hair spray, gel, mousse, etc.) or lotions or other topical skin products may not enter the water.
- Guests with open sores, colds, diarrhea or other contagious conditions may not enter the water.
- Swimsuit policy: Clothing and bathing suits must be appropriate for a family-friendly environment. Clothing depicting illegal substances, profanity, or gang affiliation is prohibited.
- No pets in the water.

Pavilion Procedure/Rules

- Pavilions may be reserved for events.
- Same family-friendly rules as above.

Local Management

This plan proposes Friends of Pahrnagat Valley handle the management of Little Ash Spring as it remains under public ownership. Initial capital improvements will be funded through federal grants administered by the BLM as well as fundraising efforts by Friends of Pahrnagat Valley.

This funding will be used for:

- Fencing

- Boardwalks, bridges, plant and wildlife information kiosks
- Changing area
- Pavilion and picnic tables with shade
- Parking area
- Fee booth
- Reconstruction of soaking pools
- Lighting for night time use

Collected fees and funding used for site management will be handled by Friends of Pahranaagat Valley.

Once Little Ash has shown that it is financially sustainable, the Little Ash Springs site as well as about 30 additional public acres north of the site will be transferred to Lincoln County through existing legal mechanisms.

The Friends of Pahranaagat Valley website will have information under the Little Ash Springs tab giving details about the area, an events calendar, phone number, and other important information to accommodate those who visit Little Ash.

Fee Structure

In order to pay for employees and maintenance costs, there must be adequate revenue. This is the proposed fee structure:

- Monday-Thursday and Non Holidays
 - Park entrance fees:
 - Swimmer: \$6.00
 - Non-Swimmer: \$3.00
- Friday-Sunday and Holidays
 - Park entrance fees:
 - Swimmer: \$8.00
 - Non-Swimmer: \$4.00
- Year Pass Holders- \$100.00 a year for your immediate, dependant family members 18 and under.
- Pavilion Reservations: \$10.00/hr.
- Senior Discounts - 50%
- School Discounts - 50%

Estimated Operating Budget

To estimate a yearly operating budget for Little Ash, the following assumptions were made.

- Little Ash will be open 349 days per year - 179 summer days and 170 winter days.
- Fifteen percent of visitors will be seniors or educational groups.
- Half of visitors will be swimmers and half will be non-swimmers.
- Average summer occupancy will be 50 percent.
- Average winter occupancy will be 25 percent
- 300 year passes will be sold.

Under these assumptions it is estimated Little Ash will receive revenue of \$80,245 in one year.

Estimated yearly expenses includes the cost of paying two full-time employees as well as maintenance costs, liability insurance, and contingencies for other miscellaneous expenditures. Total estimated yearly expenses are \$69,025.

See Phase 1 Ash Springs Revenue

