

GLOSSARY

Accessibility: Occurs when individuals with disabilities are able to reach, use, understand, or appreciate NPS programs, facilities, and services, or to enjoy the same benefits that are available to persons without disabilities. See also, “[universal design](#).”

Adaptive management: A system of management practices based on clearly identified outcomes, monitoring to determine if management actions are meeting outcomes, and, if not, facilitating management changes that will best ensure that outcomes are met or to re-evaluate the outcomes. Adaptive management recognizes that knowledge about natural resource systems is sometimes uncertain and is the preferred method of management in these cases. (Source: *Departmental Manual 516 DM 4.16*)

Administrative commitments: Generally, agreements between the National Park Service and other parties that have been reached through formal, documented processes (e.g., memoranda of agreement or understanding). These commitments are revocable, and are subject to renegotiation or amendment.
Administrative record: The “paper trail” that documents an agency’s decision-making process and the basis for the agency’s decision. It includes all materials directly or indirectly considered by persons involved in the decision-making process, including opinions or information considered but rejected. These are the documents that a judge will review to determine whether the process and the resulting agency decision were proper, and that future managers will use to understand the evolution of the issue(s) and how decisions were reached and made.

American Indian tribe: Any band, nation, or other organized group or community of Indians, including any Alaska Native Village, which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

Appropriate use: A use that is suitable, proper, or fitting for a particular park, or to a particular location within a park.

Archeology: The scientific study, interpretation, and reconstruction of past human cultures from an anthropological perspective based on the

investigation of the surviving physical evidence of human activity and the reconstruction of related past environments. Historic archeology uses historic documents as additional sources of information.

Archeological resource: Any material remains or physical evidence of past human life or activities which are of archeological interest, including the record of the effects of human activities on the environment. They are capable of revealing scientific or humanistic information through archeological research.

Area-specific desired condition (also called area-specific management direction and area-specific management prescription): Based on management zones, area-specific guidance about the desired resource conditions, visitor experience opportunities, and appropriate kinds and levels of management, development, and access (modes of transportation) for each particular area of the park; also the kinds of changes needed to move from the existing to the desired conditions

Asset: A physical structure or grouping of structures, land features, or other tangible property which has a specific service or function.

Asset management: A systematic process of maintaining, upgrading, and operating assets cost-effectively by combining engineering principles with sound business practices and economic theory.

Backcountry: Primitive, undeveloped portions of parks, some of which may be managed as “wilderness.”

Best management practices (BMPs): Practices that apply the most current means and technologies available to not only comply with mandatory environmental regulations, but also maintain a superior level of environmental performance. See also, “[sustainable practices/principles](#).”

Civic Engagement: As a philosophy, a discipline, and a practice, it can be viewed as a continuous, dynamic conversation with the public on many levels that reinforces the commitment of the NPS and the public to the preservation of park resources and strengthens understanding of the full meaning and contemporary relevance of these resources.

Civic engagement is the philosophy of welcoming people into the parks and building relationships around a shared stewardship mission, whereas public involvement (also called public participation) is the specific, active involvement of the public in NPS planning and other decision-making processes.

Conserve: To protect from loss or harm; preserve. Historically, the terms conserve, protect, and preserve have come collectively to embody the fundamental purpose of the NPS—preserving, protecting and conserving the national park system.

Consultation (cultural resources): A discussion, conference, or forum in which advice or information is sought or given, or information or ideas are exchanged. Consultation generally takes place on an informal basis; formal consultation requirements for compliance with section 106 of the NHPA are published in 36 CFR Part 800. Consultation with recognized tribes is done on a government-to-government basis.

Cultural landscape: A geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. There are four general kinds of cultural landscape, not mutually exclusive: historic site, historic designed landscape, historic vernacular landscape, ethnographic landscape.

Cultural resource: An aspect of a cultural system that is valued by or significantly representative of a culture or that contains significant information about a culture. A cultural resource may be a tangible entity or a cultural practice. Tangible cultural resources are categorized as districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects for the National Register of Historic Places and as archeological resources, cultural landscapes, structures, museum objects, and ethnographic resources for NPS management purposes.

Cumulative actions: Actions that, when viewed with other actions in the past, the present, or the reasonably foreseeable future regardless of who has undertaken or will undertake them, have an additive impact on the resource the proposal would affect.

Decision maker: The managerial-level employee who has been delegated authority to make decisions or to otherwise take an action that would affect park resources or values. Most often it refers to the park superintendent or regional director, but may at times include, for example, a resource manager, facility manager, or chief ranger to whom authority has been re-delegated.

Desired condition (also called management direction and management prescription): A park's natural and cultural resource conditions that the National Park Service aspires to achieve and maintain over time, and the conditions necessary for visitors to understand, enjoy, and appreciate those resources.

Developed area: An area managed to provide and maintain facilities (e.g., roads, campgrounds, housing) serving visitors and park management functions. Includes areas where park development or intensive use may have substantially altered the natural environment or the setting for culturally significant resources.

Ecosystem: A system formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with their physical and biological environment, considered as a unit.

Ecosystem management: A collaborative approach to natural and cultural resource management that integrates scientific knowledge of ecological relationships with resource stewardship practices for the goal of sustainable ecological, cultural, and socioeconomic systems.

Enabling legislation: The law(s) that establish a park as a unit within the national park system.

Environmental assessment (EA): A brief NEPA document that is prepared, with public involvement, (a) to help determine whether the impact of a proposed action or its alternatives could be significant; (b) to aid the NPS in compliance with NEPA by evaluating a proposal that will have no significant impacts, but may have measurable adverse impacts; or (c) as an evaluation of a proposal that is either not described on the list of categorically excluded actions, or is on the list, but exceptional circumstances apply.

Environmental impact statement (EIS): A detailed NEPA analysis document that is prepared, with extensive public involvement, when a proposed action or alternatives have the potential for significant impact on the human environment.

Environmentally preferred alternative (or environmentally preferable alternative): Of the action alternatives analyzed, the one that would best promote the policies in NEPA section 101. This is usually selected by the IDT members. CEQ encourages agencies to identify an environmentally preferable alternative in the draft EIS or EA, but only requires that it be named in the ROD.

Ethnographic resource: A site, structure, object, landscape, or natural resource feature assigned traditional legendary, religious, subsistence, or other significance in the cultural system of a group traditionally associated with it.

Existing infrastructure: The systems, services, and facilities currently in a park unit, including buildings, roads, trails, power equipment, water supply, etc.

Final plan: A final plan, or final GMP, is a document that usually includes a discussion of the purpose and need for the GMP, a description of NPS mandates and policies that affect the park, a description of the preferred alternative (the actual plan), a description of appropriate mitigation measures, and relevant appendixes (e.g., references, preparers, index). A final GMP is prepared after the ROD or FONSI is approved and a notice is published in the *Federal Register*. It describes only the selected alternative without all the accompanying compliance parts included in the EIS or EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI): A determination based on an EA and other factors in the public planning record for a proposal that, if implemented, would have no significant impact on the human environment.

Foundation statement: A statement that begins a park's planning process and sets the stage for all future planning and decision-making by identifying the park's mission, purpose, significance, special mandates and the broad, park-wide mission goals. Incorporated into a park's GMP, but may also be produced as a stand-alone document for a park.

Fundamental resources and values: Those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management because they are critical to achieving the park's purpose and

maintaining its significance. A fundamental value, unlike a tangible resource, refers to a process, force, story or experience, such as such as an island experience, the ancestral homeland, wilderness values, or oral histories.

Gateway community: A community that exists in close proximity to a unit of the national park system whose residents and elected officials are often affected by the decisions made in the course of managing the park, and whose decisions may effect the resources of the park. Because of this, there are shared interests and concerns regarding decisions. Gateway communities usually offer food, lodging, and other services to park visitors. They also provide opportunities for employee housing, and a convenient location to purchase goods and services essential to park administration.

General management plan (GMP): A plan which clearly defines direction for resource preservation and visitor use in a park, and serves as the basic foundation for decision making. GMPs are developed with broad public involvement.

Geologic resources: Features produced from the physical history of the earth, or processes such as exfoliation, erosion and sedimentation, glaciation, karst or shoreline processes, seismic, and volcanic activities.

Historic property: A district, site, structure, or landscape significant in American history, architecture, engineering, archeology, or culture; an umbrella term for all entries eligible for or included in the National Register of Historic Places

Human environment: Defined by CEQ as the natural and physical environment, and the relationship of people with that environment (1508.14). Although the socioeconomic environment receives less emphasis than the physical or natural environment in the CEQ regulations, NPS considers it to be an integral part of the human environment.

Impact: The likely effect of an action or proposed action upon specific natural, cultural or socioeconomic resources. Impacts may be direct, indirect, individual, cumulative, beneficial, or adverse. (Also see Unacceptable impacts.)

Impact topics: Specific natural, cultural, or socioeconomic resources that would be affected by

the proposed action or alternatives (including no action). The magnitude, duration, and timing of the effect to each of these resources is evaluated in the impact section of an EA or an EIS.

Impairment: An impact that, in the professional judgment of a responsible NPS manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values and violate the 1916 NPS Organic Act's mandate that park resources and values remain unimpaired.

Implementation plan: A plan that focuses on how to implement an activity or project needed to achieve a long-term goal. An implementation plan may direct a specific project or an ongoing activity.

Indicators of user capacity: Specific, measurable physical, ecological, or social variables that can be measured to track changes in conditions caused by public use, so that progress toward attaining the desired conditions can be assessed

Issue: Some point of debate that needs to be decided. For GMP planning purposes issues can be divided into "major questions to be answered by the GMP" (also referred to as the decision points of the GMP) and the "NEPA issues" (usually environmental problems related to one or more of the planning alternatives).

Life cycle costing (analysis): An accounting method that analyzes the total costs of a product or service, including construction, maintenance, manufacturing, marketing, distribution, useful life, salvage, and disposal.

Management concept: A brief, statement of the kind of place the park should be (a "vision" statement)

Management zone: A geographical area for which management directions have been developed to determine what can and cannot occur in terms of resource management, visitor use, access, facilities or development, and park operations. Each zone has a unique combination of resource and social conditions and a consistent management direction. Different actions are taken by the NPS in different zones.

Management zoning: The application of management zones to a park unit. The application of different type of zones and/or size of zones will likely vary in different alternatives.

Management direction (also called desired condition and management prescription): A planning term referring to statements about desired resource conditions and visitor experiences, along with appropriate kinds and levels of management, use, and development for each park area.

Manager: The managerial-level employee who has authority to make decisions or to otherwise take an action that would affect park resources or values. Most often it refers to the park superintendent or regional director, but may at times include, for example, a resource manager, facility manager, or chief ranger to whom authority has been re-delegated.

Mitigation: A modification of a proposal to lessen the intensity of its impact on a particular resource. Actions can be taken to avoid, reduce, or compensate for the effects of environmental damage.

Museum object: A material thing possessing functional, aesthetic, cultural, symbolic, and/or scientific value, usually movable by nature or design. Museum objects include prehistoric and historic objects, artifacts, works of art, archival material, and natural history specimens that are part of a museum collection. Structural components may be designated museum objects when removed from their associated structures.

National Park Service Organic Act: The 1916 law (and subsequent amendments) that created the National Park Service and assigned it responsibility to manage the national parks.

National park system: The sum total of the land and water now or hereafter administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service for park, monument, historic, parkway, recreational or other purposes.

Native American: Pertaining to American Indian tribes or groups, Eskimos and Aleuts, and Native Hawaiians, Samoans, Chamorros, and Carolinians of the Pacific Islands. Groups recognized by the federal and state governments and named groups with long-term social and political identities who are defined by themselves and others as Indian are included.

NEPA process: The objective analysis of a proposed action to determine the degree of its impact on the natural, physical, and human environment; alternatives and mitigation that

reduce that impact; and the full and candid presentation of the analysis to, and involvement of, the interested and affected public—as required of federal agencies by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

New use: A use that has not previously taken place within a particular park, or that has taken place previously and been discontinued due to public disinterest or as a result of a management action.

Notice of availability: The notice submitted to the *Federal Register* stating that a draft EIS or final EIS is ready for distribution to the public.

Notice of intent: The notice submitted by the NPS to the *Federal Register* that an EIS will be prepared. For a GMP it notes that the NPS is beginning work on developing a GMP/EIS, identifies a contact person in the NPS, and describes the agency’s scoping process.

Other important resources and values: Those attributes that are determined to be particularly important to park management and planning, although they are not related to the park’s purpose and significance

Paleontological / paleoecological resources: Resources such as fossilized plants, animals, or their traces, including both organic and mineralized remains in body or trace form. Paleontological resources are studied and managed in their paleoecological context (that is, the geologic data associated with the fossil that provides information about the ancient environment).

Park: Any one of the hundreds of areas of land and water administered as part of the national park system. The term is used interchangeably with “unit,” “park unit,” and “park area.”

Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) System: An online database designed to facilitate the project management process in conservation planning and environmental impact analysis. It assists NPS employees in making informed decisions with regard to a number of compliance issues throughout the planning, design, and construction process.

Policy level issues: The potential for some resources or values to be detrimentally affected by discretionary management decisions intended to achieve conditions consistent with the park’s purpose

Potential boundary modifications: The description of areas or resources that meet criteria for boundary adjustments, along with the rationale for an adjustment

Potential management zone: General guidance about an integrated set of resource conditions and associated visitor experiences that could be applied to various locations throughout a park

Preferred alternative: The alternative an NPS decision-maker has identified as preferred at the draft EIS stage. It is identified to show the public which alternative is likely to be selected to help focus its comments.

Preserve: To protect from loss or harm; conserve. Historically, the terms preserve, protect and conserve have come collectively to embody the fundamental purpose of the NPS—preserving, protecting and conserving the national park system.

Preservation (cultural resources): The act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity, and material of a historic structure, landscape or object. Work may include preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, but generally focuses upon the ongoing preservation maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new work.

Primary interpretive themes: The most important ideas or concepts to be communicated to the public about a park

Professional judgment: A decision or opinion that is shaped by study and analysis and full consideration of all the relevant facts, and that takes into account

- the decision-maker’s education, training, and experience
- advice or insights offered by subject matter experts and others who have relevant knowledge and experience
- good science and scholarship; and, whenever appropriate,
- the results of civic engagement and public involvement activities relating to the decision.

Projected implementation costs: A projection of the probable range of recurring annual costs, initial

one-time costs, and life-cycle costs of plan implementation

Public involvement (also called public participation): The active involvement of the public in NPS planning and decision-making processes. Public involvement occurs on a continuum that ranges from providing information and building awareness, to partnering in decision making.

Purpose: The specific reason(s) for establishing a particular park

Record of decision (ROD): The document that is prepared to substantiate a decision based on an EIS. It includes a statement of the decision made, a detailed discussion of decision rationale, and the reasons for not adopting all mitigation measures analyzed, if applicable.

Sacred Sites: Certain natural and cultural resources treated by American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians as sacred places having established religious meaning, and as locales of private ceremonial activities.

Scoping: Internal NPS decision-making on issues, alternatives, mitigation measures, the analysis boundary, appropriate level of documentation, lead and cooperating agency roles, available references and guidance, defining purpose and need, and so forth. External scoping is the early involvement of the interested and affected public.

Significance: Statements of why, within a national, regional, and systemwide context, the park's resources and values are important enough to warrant national park designation.

Significantly: A subjective interpretation of the intensity of impact, in several contexts, of the proposed action or alternatives.

Soundscape (natural): The aggregate of all the natural, nonhuman-caused sounds that occur in parks, together with the physical capacity for transmitting natural sounds.

Special mandates: Legal mandates specific to the park that expand upon or contradict a park's legislated purpose

Stakeholders: Individuals and organizations that are actively involved in the project, or whose interests may be positively or negatively affected as a result of the project execution /completion. They may also exert influence over the project and its results. For GMP planning purposes, the term

stakeholder includes NPS offices/staff as well as public and private sector partners and the public, which may have varying levels of involvement.

Standards: The minimum acceptable condition for an indicator of a desired condition

Stewardship: The cultural and natural resource protection ethic of employing the most effective concepts, techniques, equipment, and technology to prevent, avoid, or mitigate unacceptable impacts.

Strategic plan: A Service-wide, 5-year plan required by GPRA (5 USC 306) in which the NPS states (1) how it plans to accomplish its mission during that time, and (2) the value it expects to produce for the tax dollars expended. Strategic plans serve as "performance agreements" with the American people.

Superintendent: The senior onsite NPS official in a park. Used interchangeably with "park superintendent," "park manager," or "unit manager."

Sustainable design: Design that applies the principles of ecology, economics, and ethics to the business of creating necessary and appropriate places for people to visit, live in, and work. Development that has a sustainable design sits lightly upon the land, demonstrates resource efficiency, and promotes ecological restoration and integrity, thus improving the environment, the economy, and society.

Sustainable practices/principles: Those choices, decisions, actions and ethics that will best achieve ecological/ biological integrity; protect qualities and functions of air, water, soil, and other aspects of the natural environment; and preserve human cultures. Sustainable practices allow for use and enjoyment by the current generation, while ensuring that future generations will have the same opportunities.

Traditionally associated peoples: Social cultural entities such as tribes, communities, and kinship units exhibiting a continued identity and associated with a specific park, area, or resource

Traditional cultural property (TCP): A property associated with cultural practices, beliefs, the sense of purpose, or existence of a living community that is rooted in that community's history or is important in maintaining its cultural identity and development as an ethnically distinctive people.

Traditional cultural properties are ethnographic resources eligible for listing in the National Register.

Unacceptable impacts: Impacts that, individually or cumulatively, would

- be inconsistent with a park’s purposes or values, or
- impede the attainment of a park’s desired future conditions for natural and cultural resources as identified through the park’s planning process, or
- create an unsafe or unhealthful environment for visitors or employees, or
- diminish opportunities for current or future generations to enjoy, learn about, or be inspired by park resources or values, or
- unreasonably interfere with
 - park programs or activities, or
 - an appropriate use, or
 - the atmosphere of peace and tranquility, or the natural soundscape maintained in wilderness and natural, historic, or commemorative locations within the park, or
 - NPS concessioner or contractor operations or services.

Unit: See “[park](#).”

Universal design: The design of products and environments to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

User capacity (also called carrying capacity): The types and levels of visitor and other public use that can be accommodated while sustaining the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that complement the purpose of the park. The NPS has adopted this term in preference of the term *visitor capacity*, which does not include all public use.

Value analysis/value engineering: An organized, multi-disciplined team effort that analyzes the functions of facilities, processes, systems, equipment, services, and supplies for the purpose

of achieving essential functions at the lowest lifecycle cost consistent with required performance, reliability, quality, and safety.

Visitor: Anyone who physically visits a park for recreational, educational or scientific purposes, or who otherwise uses a park’s interpretive and educational services, regardless of where such use occurs (e.g., via Internet access, library, etc.).

Visitor experience: The perceptions, feelings, and reactions a person has while visiting a park. Examples of visitor experiences include: a sense of being immersed in a natural landscape; a feeling of being crowded; a feeling of being in an area where the sights and sounds of people and vehicles are predominant; having a sense of challenge and adventure; or a perception of solitude and privacy.

Waiver (of policy): An exemption from a particular policy provision. A waiver may be granted only by the director of the National Park Service or a higher authority (e.g., the Secretary of the Interior).

Wilderness (designated): Federal land that has been designated by Congress as a component of the national wilderness preservation system.

Wilderness (eligible, study, proposed and recommended): Federal lands that have been found to possess wilderness character based on the criteria specified in the Wilderness Act. The four categories reflect different stages of the wilderness review process, and all are managed to preserve the wilderness resources and values that make them eligible for wilderness designation. Differences in the management of these categories are specified in Chapter 6.

Wilderness (potential): Federal lands that are surrounded by, or adjacent to, lands proposed for wilderness designation but that do not themselves qualify for designation due to temporary, nonconforming uses or incompatible conditions. Potential wilderness is a subset of the other wilderness categories (it can be eligible, study, proposed, recommended or designated potential wilderness).

Zone: See “[management zone](#).”