

DRAFT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN AND
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR
NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER



WELCOME!

How to use this PDF:

NAVIGATE: You can **use the bookmarks** on the left of your screen to navigate quickly through the document. Click on the “” sign to expand chapter sections. You can also use the dividers (get to them by clicking on the bold bookmarks) to jump to subchapters by clicking on an item in the list. If you lost the bookmarks window, go to View / Navigation Panels / Bookmarks.

ZOOM IN and ZOOM OUT: Use the Zoom tool at the top of your screen, or click Ctrl + + (plus) to zoom in, and Ctrl + – (minus) to zoom out on a PC, or Command + + (plus) to zoom in, and Command + – (minus) to zoom out on a Mac.



Draft General Management Plan and
Environmental Impact Statement for

New River Gorge National River

West Virginia
2009





United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
New River Gorge National River
104 Main Street, P.O. Box 246
Glen Jean, West Virginia 25846

Dear Reader:

The National Park Service is pleased to provide you with a copy of the Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for New River Gorge National River. This is an exciting time in the history of the park. The Draft General Management Plan (GMP), once reviewed and finalized, will guide the management of the park for the next 20 years.

We invite you to comment on this plan. You may do so by any one of several methods. The preferred method of comment is on the park's planning web site at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/neri>. Second, you may mail your comments to Superintendent Don Striker, New River Gorge National River, P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, WV 25846.

Whether you comment on the web site or through the mail, if you include your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The National Park Service will accept comments on the Draft GMP from the public for a period of 60 days following publication of the Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. The closing date for sending in your comments will be announced in the local media and on the park's planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/neri>. It can also be obtained by calling the park office at (304) 465-0508.

Additionally, we will hold public meetings to solicit comments on the Draft GMP during the public review period. Dates, times, and locations will be announced on the agency's planning website, <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/neri>, and in local papers.

Additional copies of the Draft GMP may be obtained by contacting the park at (304) 465-0508. CDs and a limited number of printed copies are available. We prefer that you request a CD as the printed copies are expensive to produce. The document is also available for download at the park's planning web site. Finally, the document is available for review at park headquarters at 104 Main Street, Glen Jean, WV.

We look forward to receiving your comments.

Sincerely,

Don Striker
Superintendent

**Draft General Management Plan and
Environmental Impact Statement**

New River Gorge National River

West Virginia

2009

General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

New River Gorge National River Fayette, Raleigh, and Summers Counties, West Virginia

This Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement describes five alternatives for future management of New River Gorge National River, the environment that would be affected by the alternative management actions, and the environmental consequences of implementing the alternatives.

Alternative 1 is a continuation of current management and trends. The park's enabling legislation and the existing *General Management Plan* (NPS 1982) would continue to guide park management. The NPS would manage park resources and visitor use as it does today, with no major change in direction. Improvements to visitor facilities and park operations facilities would include only projects that are already approved and fully funded. (Built aspects of this alternative would be included in the action alternatives (Alternatives 2 to 5).)

Alternative 2 emphasizes the substantial differences among subareas of the gorge, improving them to reflect their differing character, resources, and visitor experiences. Management actions would build upon the cultural resource, interpretive, and recreational opportunities of the north and south ends of the park, while retaining a primitive and remote feeling in the middle of the park.

Alternative 3 would unify the park by providing a north-south through park hike and bike trail that enables visitors to travel the park on singletrack trails at or near the river. Existing scenic roads would be enhanced. New access and facilities in the middle of the park would balance opportunities for visitors throughout the park.

Alternative 4 recognizes river gateways and the rim to river experiences that take visitors to them as the primary access points and orientation venues in the park. River gateways would be enhanced to tell gorge stories while providing improved river, trail, and recreational access. The NPS and gateway communities would work cooperatively to enhance rim to river experiences.

Alternative 5 would preserve areas for primitive recreational experiences from end to end of the park. Interspersed with these primitive areas would be cultural and interpretive resource focal areas where visitors could explore communities and other places that once populated the gorge, experience the river, and enjoy a variety of recreational experiences. A north-south through park connector composed of improved scenic roads and trails would enable visitors to travel the length of the park, visiting these areas and accessing the backcountry. Partnerships with gateway communities and improved rim to river experiences would foster links to the park as a whole and to specific cultural and interpretive resource areas within the park. Other connecting trails outside the park – made possible through partnerships – would offer visitors an opportunity to hike or bike from New River Gorge National River to the Bluestone National Scenic River, the Gauley River National Recreation Area, and other attractions in the region.

Environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the alternatives are addressed in the GMP/EIS. Impact topics include: physiography, geology, and soils; floodplains; water quality; vegetation; aquatic wildlife; terrestrial wildlife; rare, threatened, and endangered species; scenic resources; archeological resources, cultural landscapes; historic structures; ethnographic resources; cultural landscapes; historic resources; regional and local economy; communities; visitor use and visitor experience; park access; and park operations.

How to Comment on This Plan

This general management plan/environmental impact statement is available online at the New River Gorge National River web site at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/NERI> and is being distributed for public and agency review and comment for a period of 60 days. Comments can be made on-line or in the form of email and letters and must be post marked by the due date posted on the website. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. *If you want us to withhold your name and address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment.* We will make all submissions from organizations and businesses, people, and groups identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

Please comment on-line at the park website or address comments to: Don Striker, Superintendent, New River Gorge National River, P.O. Box 246, Glen Jean, WV 25846-0246; E-mail: NERI_Superintendent@nps.gov

Summary

On November 10, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed into law a bill that included a provision establishing the New River Gorge National River as a unit of the national park system. As stated in the legislation the park was established:

“for the purpose of conserving and interpreting outstanding natural, scenic, and historic values and objects in and around the New River Gorge and preserving as a free-flowing stream an important segment of the New River in West Virginia for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations”

The park encompasses land within Raleigh, Fayette, and Summers Counties and the city of Hinton and is near the city of Beckley and Fayetteville. The authorized boundary currently encompasses 72,186 acres within a 53-mile corridor along the New River that extends from the city of Hinton on the south to the upstream limit of Hawks Nest State Park on the north. Since 1978 the NPS has acquired 52,960 acres from willing sellers within the boundary and has secured conservation easements on another 164 acres.

The National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for managing New River Gorge National River to conserve its scenery, natural and historic resources, and wildlife and to provide for its enjoyment in a manner that will leave the park unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations (NPS 2006a).

Purpose and Need for the General Management Plan

This document is a draft general management plan and environmental impact statement (GMP/EIS) for New River Gorge National River. This general management plan replaces the existing *New River Gorge General Management Plan* (NPS 1982). The purpose of the GMP is to provide a decision-making framework that ensures that management decisions effectively and efficiently carry out the NPS mission at New River Gorge National River. It will guide management decision making at the park for the next 15 to 20 years.

Many considerations suggest that a new GMP is needed for New River Gorge National River. The current general management plan for the park is 25-years-old. The NPS has implemented many of its recommended actions. Some are no longer appropriate because of changing conditions and circumstances. New issues have emerged in recent years that the GMP does not address because they were not anticipated in 1982 when the plan was prepared. Also recent NPS policies related to management and planning for all national park units are not reflected in the 25-year-old GMP.

The new GMP for New River Gorge National River addresses several needs:

- it ensures that the park’s fundamental and other important resources and values are preserved and protected
- it meets NPS legal requirements for comprehensive general management planning as a guide for more specific projects, to base decisions on adequate environmental information and analysis, and to track progress toward goals
- it provides a logical trackable rationale for decision-making by the NPS that focuses first on why the park was established and what the desired future conditions of those resources should be
- it considers the concerns, expectations, and values of the public and of the remaining private landowners in the park related to land protection and management of resources and visitor experience in the park
- it ensures that management decisions by the NPS promote the efficient use of public funds and that managers are accountable to the public for their management decisions

Major Management Issues Addressed in the New GMP

The new GMP addresses the management issues currently facing the park. As part of the GMP planning process the NPS Planning Team engaged the public to assist with identifying the issues. Major management issues identified include the following:

- **Resource Management**
 - maintaining natural processes and restoring natural systems, particularly limiting future man-made forest fragmentation
 - improving water quality in the New River and its tributaries
 - protecting, preserving, and restoring – as appropriate – the park’s cultural resources
 - protecting scenic resources in and around New River Gorge
- **Visitor Experience and Visitor Use**
 - enhancing visitor orientation and understanding of the experiences the park offers
 - increasing the types of experiences visitors can have in the park
 - enhancing hiking, biking, and horseback riding opportunities
 - providing safe legal access across railroad rights-of-way
 - enhancing access to places where classic park experiences and other visitor experiences occur

- enhancing the quality of existing visitor experiences by reducing crowding and improving facilities at existing visitor use areas

- **Socio-Economic Environment**

- sustaining communities that remain within the park
- prioritizing further land protection within the park boundary
- working cooperatively with the owners of private land remaining within the park boundary

- **Partnerships**

- working collaboratively with the park's gateway communities to define and accomplish shared goals
- expanding participation in regional economic development planning efforts
- expanding collaboration with the park's other partners, such as the state parks, state and county agencies, non-profit and private partners for special projects, and organized stakeholder groups
- enhancing local appreciation of the park by conveying to the public – particularly local residents – that the NPS and the public are partners who have a mutual interest in protecting the park's forest, waters, and wildlife resources that the public has enjoyed for generations and continues to enjoy today

Overview of the Alternatives Considered

The GMP/EIS considers five alternatives for future management of the park. Each alternative assumes a different management approach to addressing the major park management issues, including the Continuation of Current Management (Alternative 1) and four action alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5).

Five broad organizing principals are inherent in each of the four GMP action alternatives:

- **Visitor Experience**

Park programs would reflect a central theme that helps visitors better understand how the park is organized, the opportunities that are available, and how to travel in the complicated network of local roads and trails in the park's rugged terrain.

- **Natural Resource Management**

Natural processes would dominate in large contiguous forest blocks that support diverse and abundant endemic and rare plant and animal communities.

■ **Cultural Resource Management**

Successful partnerships would make possible stabilization, rehabilitation, or restoration of the park's most significant historic resources; interpretation would occur at restored or rehabilitated cultural resource sites or at discovery sites.

■ **Visitor Use and Visitor Facilities**

Visitor facilities would be programmed and located to support the desired visitor experiences in the park's central theme; they would be designed to have minimal impact on park resources.

■ **Partnerships and Cooperative Actions**

NPS, gateway communities, and private landowners would work cooperatively to achieve shared goals; partnerships would achieve a seamless network of regional parks, open spaces, trails, and heritage sites in southern West Virginia that supports a vibrant tourism economy.

■ **Alternative 1**

Alternative 1 is a continuation of current management and trends. The park's enabling legislation and the existing *General Management Plan* (NPS 1982) would continue to guide park management. The NPS would manage park resources and visitor use as it does today, with no major change in direction. Improvements to visitor facilities and park operations facilities would include only projects that are already approved and fully funded. (Built aspects of this alternative would be included in the action alternatives (Alternatives 2 to 5).)

■ **Alternative 2**

Alternative 2 emphasizes the substantial differences among subareas of the gorge, improving them to reflect their differing character, resources, and visitor experiences. Cultural resources and interpretive experiences would be emphasized in themed areas in the north and south ends of the park; primitive recreation would be emphasized in the middle of the park. Throughout the middle of the park large tracts of intact forest would be managed as backcountry (68.5%) with negligible new forest fragmentation. Significant cultural resources in the north and south ends of the park resources would be restored or rehabilitated and adaptively reused; a few sites in the middle of the park would be managed as discovery sites which visitors would find and learn about as they explore remote areas of the park. Trails would connect major cultural sites in the north and south ends of the park. New visitor facilities would expand opportunities in the north and south ends of the park. NPS would provide technical assistance to gateway communities. NPS would expand participation in regional economic development efforts and cooperative efforts with the state parks, public agencies, and visitor use groups.

■ Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would unify the park by providing a north-south through park hike and bike trail that enables visitors to travel the park on singletrack trails at or near the river. Recreation, scenic experiences, and discovery of cultural resources would be emphasized along the new through park trail. Only the park's most intact and unfragmented forest tracts – dispersed throughout the park – would be managed as backcountry (43%) with negligible new forest fragmentation. Numerous cultural resources along the through park trail and in the vicinity of visitor facilities would be managed as discovery sites which visitors would find and learn about as they explore remote areas of the park which visitors would find and learn about as they explore remote areas of the park. The through park trail would connect the park from end to end; other trails would parallel the river. New visitor facilities would be added in the middle of the park. NPS would provide technical assistance to gateway communities. NPS would expand participation in regional economic development efforts and cooperative efforts with the state parks, public agencies, and visitor use groups.

■ Alternative 4

Alternative 4 recognizes river gateways and the rim to river experiences that take visitors to them as the primary access points and orientation venues in the park. Cultural and recreation resources and experiences would be emphasized in proximity to gateways and along rim to river trails and roads. Large tracts of intact forest that are not near river gateways and primary rim to river travel routes would be managed as backcountry (60.8 %) with negligible new forest fragmentation. Significant cultural resources in the vicinity of river gateways would be rehabilitated and adaptively reused; many sites along rim to river trails and near gateways would be managed as discovery sites which visitors would find and learn about as they explore remote areas of the park. Trails would connect the rim to the river and provide access to recreation and interpretive sites in the vicinity of river gateways. New visitor facilities would be added in the vicinity of river gateways. NPS and gateway communities would enter into cooperative partnerships. NPS would expand participation in regional economic development efforts and cooperative efforts with the state parks, public agencies, and visitor use groups.

■ Alternative 5

Alternative 5 would preserve areas for primitive recreational experiences from end to end of the park. Interspersed with these primitive areas would be cultural and interpretive resource focal areas where visitors could explore communities and other places that once populated the gorge, experience the river, and enjoy a variety of recreational experiences. A north-south through park connector composed of improved scenic roads and trails would enable visitors to travel the length of the park, visiting these areas and accessing the backcountry. Primitive recreation experiences would be emphasized throughout the park along the new through park

connector; river gateways and focal areas would be managed for a broad variety of interpretive and recreational experiences. Large tracts of intact forest along one or both sides of the New River throughout the park would be managed as backcountry (66.4%) with negligible new forest fragmentation. Significant cultural resources in river gateways and focal areas would be restored or rehabilitated and adaptively reused; many sites along the through park connector would be managed as discovery sites which visitors would find and learn about as they explore remote areas of the park. The through park connector would connect the park from end to end; other trails would connect the rim to the river and would provide access to recreation and interpretive sites in the vicinity of river gateways. New facilities would expand visitor opportunities in the vicinity of river gateways and in focal areas. Partnerships with gateway communities and improved rim to river experiences would foster links to the park as a whole and to specific cultural and interpretive resource areas within the park. NPS would expand participation in regional economic development efforts and cooperative efforts with the state parks, public agencies, and visitor use groups. Other connecting trails outside the park – made possible through partnerships – would offer visitors an opportunity to hike or bike from New River Gorge National River to the Bluestone National Scenic River, the Gauley River National Recreation Area, and other attractions in the region.

Boundary Adjustments

The NPS has reviewed the park boundary and made a determination that seven boundary adjustments are needed to enhance the visitor experience and to address operational issues. Collectively these adjustments would add approximately 222.2 acres to the park.

Analysis has revealed that the boundary adjustment required to protect the scenic resources in and around the gorge that are critical to fulfilling the park's purpose would be impracticable because of potential community impacts and costs. In lieu of boundary adjustments and land acquisition the NPS would seek to protect the park's scenic resources from impacts of new development on lands in and around the gorge by working with communities and private landowners. Cooperative actions would focus on land use planning that would encourage sustainable design of new development and that would reduce the impact of new development on scenic values and important resource areas.

Wilderness Eligibility Assessment

The new GMP for New River Gorge National River includes a wilderness eligibility assessment (see Appendix D). The purpose of the wilderness eligibility assessment is to evaluate all NPS lands and waters within the park boundary for their eligibility for inclusion in the national wilderness preservation system. Based on the findings of the Wilderness Eligibility Assessment the NPS has determined that park land within the current park boundary do not meet the primary eligibility criteria for

wilderness designation and are therefore ineligible for further wilderness study. Park-owned lands within the boundary of the park will therefore not be subject to wilderness preservation provisions but will be managed in accordance with the NPS Organic Act of 1906 and other laws, executive orders, regulations, and policies applicable to units of the national park system.

Hunting in the Park

During the preparation of this draft EIS, Congress in Section 7115 of Public Law 111-11, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, which was signed into law on March 30, 2009, directed that "Section 1106 of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (16 USC 460m-20) is amended in the first sentence by striking "may" and inserting "shall"." Hunting, which had been discretionary at New River Gorge until the passage of Public Law 111-11 in March 2009, is no longer discretionary but is now authorized. According to 36 CFR § 2.2(b)(4), "Where hunting or trapping or both are authorized, such activities shall be conducted in accordance with Federal law and the laws of the State within whose exterior boundaries a park area or a portion thereof is located. Nonconflicting State laws are adopted as a part of these regulations."

As part of its consideration of the hunting issue, NPS has consulted available scientific data pertinent to hunting in the park and compiled those data in an *Assessment of Hunting Impacts at New River Gorge National River, West Virginia* (Hooper et al 2006). Findings of this study indicate that hunting in accordance with applicable state regulations has not caused adverse effects on any of the species of mammals or birds that are or may be hunted and that currently occur within the park boundaries. Recent study further indicates that no evidence exists to support that position that any other species found within the park boundaries have been adversely affected by hunting. (Hopper et al 2006). Continuation of hunting in the park would therefore continue to have a negligible impact on terrestrial habitat and dependent species.

Pursuant to the park's enabling legislation and 36 C.F.R. Part 24, park managers have also consulted with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) regarding potential hunting program options. In October 2007 a newsletter was sent to 797 individuals and groups on the park mailing list outlining the hunting options under consideration at that time. Public scoping meetings to discuss potential alternatives and important issues, including hunting, were held November 6, 7 and 8th, 2007. About 300 people attended one of the three meetings.

In Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative) hunting would continue largely as it is today except for the following:

- parts of the historic Grandview State Park would be opened to limited bow hunting via a permit/ lottery system

- upland open land bird habitat would be increased by creating/restoring early successional habitat in historic resource zones (where such management is consistent with the park’s cultural landscape restoration goals)
- the NPS and WVDNR would collaboratively monitor park-specific game harvest and hunter use levels using a voluntary hunter registration/permit process and designated hunting units; this process would include distribution of information to hunters (hunt unit maps, state regulations, etc.) and a voluntary end-of-season hunter questionnaire provided by the NPS
- NPS and WVDNR would develop a cooperative game management plan specific to designated hunt units in the park that would also identify management strategies to improve hunter satisfaction and enhance outreach opportunities to both hunters and non-hunters

Continuation of hunting in the park along with the actions proposed in Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative) would have a local minor beneficial impact on wildlife habitat and dependent species.

Biking in the Park

The NPS has considered and evaluated alternative actions for expansion of biking opportunities in the park as part of the alternatives analysis in this GMP/EIS. The NPS has consulted the general public and park user groups interested in biking during development of the biking options. In October 2007 a newsletter was sent to 797 people and groups on the park mailing list outlining the biking options under consideration. Public meetings to discuss alternatives and important issues, including biking in the park were held November 6, 7, and 8, 2007. About 300 people attended one of the three meetings.

The GMP alternatives evaluated in this GMP/EIS generally propose that additional biking opportunities could occur on new trails in the park generally as follows:

- in frontcountry zones, river corridor zones, historic resource zones, and park development zones – biking could occur on a variety of trail types
- in backcountry zones – biking could occur only on singletrack trails
- in historic resource, river corridor, and park development zones – biking could occur on a limited basis on a variety of trail types

No biking would be permitted in the Endless Wall management zone.

Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative) would also include potential joint hiking and biking use of several existing and new trails. The final location of new biking trails

will be identified in the biking component of the park's new trail management plan. The plan will be prepared for the preferred alternative as a planning effort subsequent to approval of the GMP/EIS. Following completion of the plan a special regulation will be promulgated pursuant to 36 CFR Chapter 4 §4.30 adding the newly designated routes to the list of routes where biking is permitted in the Superintendent's Compendium.

Camping in the Park

Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative) would include a variety of camping facilities that would be further evaluated in a camping management plan for the park, to be developed following completion of the GMP/EIS. In Alternative 5 the NPS would develop up to four new developed campgrounds, improve existing primitive campgrounds, and add backcountry campsites along the new Through Park Connector and other park trails. The camping management plan would address a variety of camping management issues as to how these facilities would be designed and managed, such as whether backcountry camping would be designated or not designated and whether NPS would in the future charge fees for camping and institute a camping reservation system. A camping fee would enable the NPS to provide a higher level of customer service and would benefit visitors. In formulating the plan the Superintendent would be permitted to designate specific areas for camping use and/or impose local restrictions, use limits, and closures. The camping management plan would be developed with public involvement.

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences of the Alternatives

The environmental impact statement (EIS) portion of this GMP describes the affected natural, cultural, scenic, and socio-economic environment within and near the park and the anticipated impacts on the environment associated with the five GMP alternatives. Seventeen topics are addressed, including physiography, geology, and soils; floodplains; water quality; vegetation; aquatic wildlife; terrestrial wildlife; rare, threatened, and endangered species; scenic resources; archeological resources; cultural landscapes; historic structures; ethnographic resources; regional and local economy; communities; visitor use and visitor experience; park access; and park operations.

Determining environmental consequences included identifying the regulations and polices applicable to each impact topic, defining the methods used to conduct the analysis, and defining relative terms to qualify impacts, such as "negligible" or "moderate" effects for each impact topic. Analysis were performed to evaluate impacts within the park and in nearby communities and on a more regional scale in terms of cumulative impacts. Analyses involved comparing conditions that would occur with changes in management (Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5) to conditions that would occur if current management practices continued (Alternative 1). The results

are presented in Table 2.37 of the GMP/EIS and are summarized for selected impact topics below.

■ **Impacts of Natural and Scenic Resource Management Actions**

In Alternative 1 existing natural and scenic resource management actions would continue consistent with applicable laws and policies resulting in long-term minor to moderate beneficial impacts to natural and scenic resources. When compared to Alternative 1, in Alternatives 2 to 5 long-term major beneficial impacts would occur to natural, scenic, and cultural resources throughout the park as a result of managing large areas as backcountry where natural processes and features would persist largely unaltered by human-induced impacts. Areas of the park to be managed as backcountry would be as follows:

- Alternative 2 – 68.5 percent backcountry
- Alternative 3 – 43.0 percent backcountry
- Alternative 4 – 60.8 percent backcountry
- Alternative 5 – 66.4 percent backcountry

In Alternative 1 land disturbances associated with development of new visitor use facilities and other management actions would result in negligible to long-term minor adverse impacts to natural resources. By comparison Alternatives 2 to 5 would have negligible or long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts. The total estimated disturbance area associated with the alternatives would be approximately as follows:

- Alternative 2 – 190 acres
- Alternative 3 – 220 acres
- Alternative 4 – 180 acres
- Alternative 5 – 300 to 320 acres

Best management practices and mitigation measures would be used to reduce the magnitude of impacts of anticipated disturbance on the park's soils, water quality, vegetation, and wildlife.

■ **Impacts of Cultural Resource Management Actions**

In Alternative 1 historic structures would be stabilized and modern structures would be removed as historic properties remaining in private ownership are acquired by the NPS, generally resulting in long-term minor to moderate beneficial impacts to historic structures, cultural landscapes, and potential ethnographic resources. In Alternative 2 cultural resource management actions would focus on treatment and interpretation of representative early settlement resources in the south end of the park, representative industrial resources and discovery sites in the north end of the park, and representative discovery sites

along trails in the middle of the park (approximately 10 sites), resulting in long-term minor to major beneficial impacts on cultural resources. In Alternative 3 cultural resource management actions would focus on stabilization and interpretation of cultural resources as discovery sites (from 30 – 35 sites), rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of early settlement farmhouses, and stabilization of remaining historic structures at Thurmond, resulting in long-term minor to moderate beneficial impacts on cultural resources. In Alternative 4 cultural resource management actions would focus on treatment and interpretation of representative coal mining, timbering, and railroading resources at or near river gateways, representative early settlement resources in the southern end of the park, representative discovery sites along trails at or near river gateways and along rim to river trails (approximately 20 to 25 sites), resulting in long-term minor to major beneficial impacts to cultural resources. In Alternative 5 cultural resource management actions would focus on treatment and interpretation of representative coal, timbering, and railroading resources at or near river gateways at Thurmond, Grandview/Prince, and Hinton, representative early settlement resources in the southern end of the park, and representative discovery sites along the through park connector, trails at or near river gateways, and along rim to river trails; collectively these actions would result in long-term minor to major beneficial impacts to cultural resources.

■ **Public Use, Enjoyment, and Experience Management Actions**

In Alternative 1, public use, enjoyment, and experience management actions would have long-term minor to moderate beneficial impacts on visitor use and experience. When compared to Alternative 1, Alternatives 2 to 5 would result in long-term major beneficial impacts to visitor use and visitor experience, as a result of the following management actions:

- in Alternative 2 new facilities and interpretive programs would be located in three themed areas of the park – the early settlement and farming area, the primitive outdoor experience area, and the industrial gorge
- in Alternative 3 new facilities and interpretive programs – including a new through park trail – would support diverse visitor experiences throughout the park
- in Alternative 4 new facilities and interpretive programs would be clustered within or near river gateways
- in Alternative 5 new facilities and interpretive programs – including a new through park connector – would emphasize a combination of

primitive outdoor experiences in the park's forest complemented by diverse opportunities for visitors in and around specific focal areas

■ **Impacts of Park Operations Management Actions**

In Alternative 1 the continuation of current management would result in a local long-term moderate adverse impact on park operations due to staffing and funding constraints, increased pressure to provide infrastructure and facilities, the unfilled need for additional partnership and collaboration, increased resource threats, and the lack of management zoning. In Alternative 1 new facilities associated with the New River Parkway once constructed by the Federal Highway Administration and the WV Department of Transportation would result in a major beneficial impact on park operations.

In Alternatives 2 to 5 the desired future conditions would better define management goals for park staff and would guide development of targeted strategies to protect and improve park resources. Active management of resources as well as strategic use of partner organizations, grants, universities, scholars, interns, and volunteers would allow park staff to better meet the park mission and goals. New sources of funding would become available as NPS works with users and visitors to create partnerships, friends groups, and other mechanisms to support park purposes. Additional funding from partnerships would be greatest in Alternatives 4 and 5 where NPS would implement more aggressive and diversified partnership programs. Addition of six areas and 212.5 acres to the park to provide for parking and access would improve the ability of rangers to manage these uses within the park. Collectively the common management actions in Alternatives 2 to 5 would result in a local long-term minor to major beneficial impact on park operations. Addition of staff for implementation of new programs would have a local short-term minor adverse impact on the park budget.

■ **Impacts of Land Protection Actions**

In Alternative 1 the NPS would continue to protect land within the park boundary as funding allows – responding to opportunities as they arise – resulting in long-term minor beneficial impacts, depending upon which properties become available in the marketplace lacking a prioritized acquisition program. In Alternatives 2 to 5 future land protection would focus on purchasing property within the park boundary from willing sellers that includes significant resources and values that are fundamental or otherwise important to the park or that are needed to enhance the visitor experience and to address operational issues. This revised approach would result local long-term moderate beneficial impacts on the park's natural and cultural resources.

■ **Impacts of Partnership and Community Collaboration Actions**

In Alternative 1 the NPS would continue to collaborate with other agencies, local communities, and private landowners in the park on a variety of resource management issues, largely on an as-needed basis, resulting in negligible to long-term minor beneficial impacts on natural and cultural resources. In Alternatives 2 to 5 the NPS would expand partnerships with local users, park neighbors, gateway communities, other agencies, private landowners in the park, and regional economic development interests, resulting in long-term minor to major beneficial impacts on natural and cultural resources, as well as on the visitor experience and park operations. Such partnerships would seek to develop a seamless network of regional parks, open spaces, trails, and heritage sites within southern West Virginia that would increase protection and enhancement of biodiversity and create a greater array of educational and appropriate recreational opportunities. The benefits of increased partnerships would be greatest in Alternatives 4 and 5.

■ **Economic Impacts**

In 2025 continuation of current park management (Alternative 1) would result in \$125,763,690 (\$2007) of visitor and NPS spending in the region, with an estimated 3,159 jobs in businesses supported by NPS-related activities.

By comparison in 2025 the total annual direct and indirect impacts from related jobs and spending of the action alternatives are estimated to be:

- Alternative 2 – \$136,823,490 (\$2007) (3,408 related jobs)
- Alternative 3 – \$142,103,590 (\$2007) (3,552 related jobs)
- Alternative 4 – \$150,763,590 (\$2007) (3,801 related jobs)
- Alternative 5 – \$161,172,490 (\$2007) (4,087 related jobs)

Agency Preferred Alternative – Alternative 5

The NPS has identified Alternative 5 as the preferred alternative to guide long-term management of New River Gorge National River. Selection of Alternative 5 as the preferred alternative is based on the analysis and findings of the GMP planning team as well as on public comments received during the planning process. The GMP planning team has determined that Alternative 5 would fulfill the NPS statutory mission and responsibilities at the park and would be advantageous when compared to Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 with respect to protecting the park's natural and cultural resources; enhancing interpretation, education, and public understanding; enhancing public use and enjoyment of the park; effectively managing the park; and, providing effective technical assistance to the park's community partners.

The Next Steps

After distribution of the Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, there will be a 60-day public review and comment period. The NPS will hold public meetings where the public will have opportunities to provide comments on management alternatives, including the preferred alternative. The public will also be able to comment on-line or in the form of email and letters, which must be post marked by the due date posted on the website. Following the comment period the NPS planning team will evaluate comments received from other federal agencies, organizations, businesses, people, and groups regarding the draft plan. It will then prepare the Final General Management Plan. The final plan will incorporate changes made in response to the comments received, as appropriate. The final plan will include letters from government agencies, any substantive comments on the draft document, and NPS responses to those comments. Following distribution of the final plan there will be a 30-day no-action period, after which the NPS Regional Director will sign a record of decision approving the plan. The record of decision will document the NPS selection of the preferred alternative. Once it is signed, the NPS will be able to proceed with implementation of management actions identified in the approved park management plan.

Implementation of the Plan

Implementation of the approved park management plan will depend on future NPS funding and servicewide priorities. Some actions will also depend upon partnership funds, time, and effort. The approval of a Final General Management Plan does not guarantee that funding and staffing needed to implement the plan will be forthcoming. Full implementation of the plan could be many years in the future.

Once the Regional Director has approved the plan, additional feasibility studies and more detailed planning, environmental documentation, and consultations would be completed, as appropriate, before the NPS can implement certain actions in the selected alternative. Future program and implementation plans, describing specific actions that managers intend to undertake and accomplish, will tier from the desired conditions and long-term goals set forth in this GMP.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need for Action

1.1	Proposed Federal Action	1-1
1.2	Purpose of the Action.....	1-1
1.3	Need for the Action	1-2
1.4	The Park’s Origin and Legislative History	1-3
1.5	Park Boundary, Size, and Ownership	1-4
1.6	New River Gorge National River Overview	1-4
1.6.1	The Park’s Regional Context.....	1-4
1.6.2	Natural Resource Overview	1-6
1.6.3	Cultural Resource Overview	1-7
1.6.4	Visitor Experience and Visitor Use Overview.....	1-8
1.7	Foundation for Planning	1-9
1.7.1	Park Statement of Purpose	1-9
1.7.2	Park Statement of Significance.....	1-10
1.7.3	Fundamental and Other Important Resources and Values.....	1-10
1.7.4	Primary Interpretive Themes.....	1-14
1.7.5	The Park’s Legislative and Other Special Mandates	1-14
1.7.6	Legislative and Policy Requirements.....	1-14
1.8	2028 Vision for New River Gorge National River	1-16
1.9	Planning Issues and Concerns.....	1-18
1.9.1	Scoping Process	1-18
1.9.2	Resource Management Issues and Concerns	1-20
1.9.3	Visitor Experience and Visitor Use Issues and Concerns	1-22
1.9.4	Socio-Economic Environment Issues and Concerns	1-22
1.9.5	Land Protection Issues and Concerns	1-25
1.9.6	Partnerships Issues and Concerns.....	1-26
1.10	Impact Topics	1-28
1.10.1	Impact Topics Retained for Further Analysis.....	1-28
1.10.2	Impact Topics Considered and Dismissed from Further Analysis.....	1-28
1.11	Wilderness Eligibility Assessment	1-39
1.11.1	Purpose of the Wilderness Eligibility Assessment.....	1-39
1.11.2	Need for the Wilderness Eligibility Assessment	1-38
1.11.3	Findings of the Wilderness Eligibility Assessment	1-40
1.12	Park Boundary Adjustment	1-41
1.13	Relationship to Other Plans.....	1-42
1.13.1	National Park Service Plans.....	1-42
1.13.2	Local Government Plans	1-51
1.13.3	Other Plans and Projects.....	1-53

Chapter 2 – Alternatives

2.1 Introduction..... 2-1

 2.1.1 Development of Alternatives..... 2-2

 2.1.2 Identification of the Preferred Alternative..... 2-3

2.2 Alternative 1 – Continuation of Current Management 2-9

 2.2.1 Overall Management Concept 2-9

 2.2.2 Management Zoning..... 2-9

 2.2.3 Visitor Experience and Visitor Orientation..... 2-9

 2.2.4 Resource Management 2-12

 2.2.5 Visitor Use and Visitor Facilities 2-14

 2.2.6 Working with Local Communities..... 2-16

 2.2.7 Land Protection..... 2-16

 2.2.8 Partnerships 2-17

 2.2.9 Area-Specific Desired Conditions and Needed
 Changes 2-18

 2.2.10 Costs..... 2-18

2.3 Management Zones Used to Develop Alternatives 2-24

2.4 Management Guidance and Actions Common to the Action
Alternatives (Alternatives 2 to 5) 2-28

 2.4.1 Management Zoning..... 2-28

 2.4.2 Parkwide Desired Conditions and Strategies 2-28

 2.4.3 Visitor Experience and Visitor Orientation..... 2-43

 2.4.4 Resource Management 2-43

 2.4.5 Visitor Use and Visitor Facilities 2-51

 2.4.6 Working with Local Communities..... 2-59

 2.4.7 Land Protection..... 2-61

 2.4.8 Partnerships 2-63

 2.4.9 Area-Specific Desired Conditions and Needed
 Changes 2-69

2.5 Alternative 2 – Themed Gorge Segments..... 2-73

 2.5.1 Overall Management Concept 2-73

 2.5.2 Visitor Experience and Visitor Orientation..... 2-73

 2.5.3 Resource Management 2-77

 2.5.4 Visitor Use and Visitor Facilities 2-80

 2.5.5 Working with Local Communities..... 2-82

 2.5.6 Land Protection..... 2-83

 2.5.7 Partnerships 2-84

 2.5.8 Area-Specific Desired Conditions and Needed
 Changes 2-85

 2.5.9 Costs..... 2-85

2.6 Alternative 3 – Through Park Trail 2-91

2.6.1 Overall Management Concept 2-91

2.6.2 Visitor Experience and Visitor Orientation 2-91

2.6.3 Resource Management 2-95

2.6.4 Visitor Use and Visitor Facilities 2-97

2.6.5 Working with Local Communities 2-100

2.6.6 Land Protection 2-101

2.6.7 Partnerships..... 2-101

2.6.8 Area-Specific Desired Conditions and Needed
Changes 2-103

2.6.9 Costs 2-103

2.7 Alternative 4 – River Gateways and Rim to River
Experiences 2-112

2.7.1 Overall Management Concept 2-112

2.7.2 Visitor Experience and Visitor Orientation 2-112

2.7.3 Resource Management 2-117

2.7.4 Visitor Use and Visitor Facilities 2-119

2.7.5 Working with Local Communities 2-122

2.7.6 Land Protection 2-123

2.7.7 Partnerships..... 2-124

2.7.8 Area-Specific Desired Conditions and Needed
Changes 2-125

2.7.9 Costs 2-126

2.8 Alternative 5 – Exploration Experiences
(Preferred Alternative) 2-134

2.8.1 Overall Management Concept 2-134

2.8.2 Visitor Experience and Visitor Orientation 2-134

2.8.3 Resource Management 2-141

2.8.4 Visitor Use and Visitor Facilities 2-143

2.8.5 Working with Local Communities 2-149

2.8.6 Land Protection 2-150

2.8.7 Partnerships..... 2-152

2.8.8 Area-Specific Desired Conditions and Needed
Changes 2-153

2.8.9 Costs 2-153

2.9 Alternatives Considered but Dismissed..... 2-165

2.9.1 Elimination of Hunting at New River Gorge National River 2-165

2.10 Biking in the Park 2-167

2.10.1 Background 2-167

2.10.2 Biking Alternatives Considered in this GMP/EIS..... 2-167

2.10.3 Public Comments Received Related to Biking Alternatives 2-169

2.10.4 Future Biking Trail Planning and Promulgation of
Special Regulations..... 2-169

2.11 Indicators and Standards 2-170

2.12 Mitigation Measures to be included as Part of Future Actions
 Implementing the Preferred GMP Alternative..... 2-172

2.13 Needed Future Plans 2-177

2.13.1 Trail Management Plan 2-177

2.13.2 Camping Management Plan 2-178

2.13.3 Resource Stewardship Strategy 2-178

2.14 Cost Comparison 2-178

2.14.1 Estimated Costs for Implementing the Plan 2-178

2.14.2 Funding for Actions Identified in the GMP 2-178

2.15 Comparison of Alternatives 2-181

2.16 Comparison of Impacts of the Alternatives..... 2-193

2.17 Consistency with the National Environmental Policy Act 2-196

2.17.1 Introduction 2-196

2.17.2 Environmentally Preferred Alternative..... 2-196

Chapter 3 – Affected Environment

3.1 Introduction..... 3-1

3.1.1 Park Setting 3-1

3.1.2 Park Significance 3-1

3.2 Natural Resources 3-2

3.2.1 Physiography, Geology, and Soils..... 3-2

3.2.2 The New River and Its Floodplains..... 3-7

3.2.3 Water Quality 3-11

3.2.4 Vegetation 3-15

3.2.5 Aquatic Wildlife..... 3-22

3.2.6 Terrestrial Wildlife..... 3-27

3.2.7 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species 3-33

3.3 Cultural Resources..... 3-34

3.3.1 Prehistoric Archeological Resources..... 3-34

3.3.2 Historic Contexts 3-36

3.3.3 Historic Archeological Resources 3-47

3.3.4 Cultural Landscapes 3-51

3.3.5 Historic Structures 3-53

3.3.6 Ethnographic Resources..... 3-57

3.4 Scenic Resources..... 3-59

3.4.1 Character of Scenic Resources..... 3-59

3.4.2 Views of Scenic Resources 3-59

3.5 Socio-Economic Environment 3-61

3.5.1 Regional Overview 3-61

3.5.2 The Park’s Community Neighbors..... 3-62

3.5.3 Land Use 3-65

3.5.4 Economic Impact of the Park 3-68

- 3.5.5 Socio-Economic Environment Concerns 3-69
- 3.6 Visitor Experience and Visitor Use 3-69
 - 3.6.1 Visitation and Visitor Use Overview 3-69
 - 3.6.2 Opportunities for Exploration, Adventure, Discovery,
Solitude, and Community 3-72
 - 3.6.3 Opportunities for Visitors with Disabilities 3-92
 - 3.6.4 Special Events and Special Uses 3-87
 - 3.6.4 Visitor Orientation, Interpretation, and Education 3-88
- 3.7 Park Access 3-91
 - 3.7.1 Road Access..... 3-91
 - 3.7.2 Trail Access..... 3-93
 - 3.7.3 Parking..... 3-93
 - 3.7.4 State-Designated Scenic Byways and Backways 3-93
 - 3.7.5 Transit Access to the Park..... 3-94
 - 3.7.6 Freight and Passenger Rail Service..... 3-94
- 3.8 Park Operations 3-95
 - 3.8.1 Operational Staffing and Funding..... 3-95
 - 3.8.2 Operations Facilities and Infrastructure 3-95
 - 3.8.3 Partnerships..... 3-98

Chapter 4 – Environmental Consequences

- 4.1 Introduction 4-1
- 4.2 Methods and Assumptions for Analyzing Impacts 4-2
 - 4.2.1 Impact Measures 4-2
 - 4.2.2 Mitigation Measures 4-2
 - 4.2.3 Methods for Analyzing Impacts and Impact
Thresholds..... 4-2
 - 4.2.4 Cumulative Impact Analysis 4-17
 - 4.2.9 Impairment Determinations 4-19
- 4.3 Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1
(Continuation of Existing Management) 4-21
 - 4.3.1 Physiography, Geology, and Soils 4-21
 - 4.3.2 Floodplains 4-23
 - 4.3.3 Water Quality 4-26
 - 4.3.4 Vegetation 4-29
 - 4.3.5 Aquatic Wildlife..... 4-31
 - 4.3.6 Terrestrial Wildlife..... 4-34
 - 4.3.7 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species 4-37
 - 4.3.8 Scenic Resources 4-41
 - 4.3.9 Archeological Resources 4-42
 - 4.3.10 Cultural Landscapes 4-45

NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER General Management Plan – Table of Contents

4.3.11	Historic Structures	4-47
4.3.12	Ethnographic Resources.....	4-49
4.3.13	Regional and Local Economy	4-51
4.4.14	Communities	4-58
4.3.15	Visitor Use and Visitor Experience	4-58
4.3.16	Park Access.....	4-60
4.3.17	Park Operations.....	4-63
4.3.18	Unavoidable Adverse Impacts.....	4-66
4.3.19	Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources	4-66
4.3.20	Relationship between Short-Term Uses of the Environment and Long-Term Productivity.....	4-66
4.4	Environmental Consequences of Alternative 2	4-67
4.4.1	Physiography, Geology, and Soils.....	4-67
4.4.2	Floodplains.....	4-70
4.4.3	Water Quality	4-73
4.4.4	Vegetation	4-77
4.4.5	Aquatic Wildlife.....	4-80
4.4.6	Terrestrial Wildlife.....	4-84
4.4.7	Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species.....	4-88
4.4.8	Scenic Resources	4-92
4.4.9	Archeological Resources.....	4-95
4.4.10	Cultural Landscapes	4-98
4.4.11	Historic Structures	4-102
4.4.12	Ethnographic Resources.....	4-105
4.4.13	Regional and Local Economy	4-107
4.4.14	Communities	4-110
4.4.15	Visitor Use and Visitor Experience	4-117
4.4.16	Park Access.....	4-120
4.4.17	Park Operations	4-125
4.4.18	Unavoidable Adverse Impacts.....	4-128
4.4.19	Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources	4-128
4.4.20	Relationship between Short-Term Uses of the Environment and Long-Term Productivity.....	4-128
4.5	Environmental Consequences of Alternative 3	4-130
4.5.1	Physiography, Geology, and Soils.....	4-130
4.5.2	Floodplains.....	4-133
4.5.3	Water Quality	4-135
4.5.4	Vegetation	4-138
4.5.5	Aquatic Wildlife.....	4-141
4.5.6	Terrestrial Wildlife.....	4-144

4.5.7 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species 4-147

4.5.8 Scenic Resources 4-150

4.5.9 Archeological Resources 4-153

4.5.10 Cultural Landscapes 4-155

4.5.11 Historic Structures 4-158

4.5.12 Ethnographic Resources 4-160

4.5.13 Regional and Local Economy 4-162

4.5.14 Communities 4-165

4.5.15 Visitor Use and Visitor Experience 4-168

4.5.16 Park Access 4-171

4.5.17 Park Operations 4-175

4.5.18 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts 4-178

4.5.19 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of
Resources 4-178

4.5.20 Relationship between Short-Term Uses of the
Environment and Long-Term Productivity 4-179

4.6 Environmental Consequences of Alternative 4 4-180

4.6.1 Physiography, Geology, and Soils 4-180

4.6.2 Floodplains 4-183

4.6.3 Water Quality 4-185

4.6.4 Vegetation 4-188

4.6.5 Aquatic Wildlife 4-191

4.6.6 Terrestrial Wildlife 4-194

4.6.7 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species 4-197

4.6.8 Scenic Resources 4-200

4.6.9 Archeological Resources 4-203

4.6.10 Cultural Landscapes 4-206

4.6.11 Historic Structures 4-209

4.6.12 Ethnographic Resources 4-212

4.6.13 Regional and Local Economy 4-214

4.6.14 Communities 4-217

4.6.15 Visitor Use and Visitor Experience 4-220

4.6.16 Park Access 4-224

4.6.17 Park Operations 4-228

4.6.18 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts 4-231

4.6.19 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of
Resources 4-231

4.6.20 Relationship between Short-Term Uses of the
Environment and Long-Term Productivity 4-232

4.7 Environmental Consequences of Alternative 5 4-233

4.7.1 Physiography, Geology, and Soils 4-233

4.7.2 Floodplains 4-236

4.7.3 Water Quality 4-239

4.7.4	Vegetation	4-241
4.7.5	Aquatic Wildlife.....	4-245
4.7.6	Terrestrial Wildlife.....	4-248
4.7.7	Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species.....	4-251
4.7.8	Scenic Resources	4-255
4.7.9	Archeological Resources.....	4-258
4.7.10	Cultural Landscapes	4-261
4.7.11	Historic Structures	4-265
4.7.12	Ethnographic Resources.....	4-267
4.7.13	Regional and Local Economy	4-269
4.7.14	Communities	4-272
4.7.15	Visitor Use and Visitor Experience	4-276
4.7.16	Park Access.....	4-285
4.7.17	Park Operations	4-288
4.7.18	Unavoidable Adverse Impacts.....	4-288
4.7.19	Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources	4-288
4.7.20	Relationship between Short-Term Uses of the Environment and Long-Term Productivity.....	4-288

Chapter 5 – Consultation and Coordination

5.1	Public Involvement and Agency Coordination	5-1
5.2	Tribal Coordination	5-9
5.3	Section 106 Consultation.....	5-9
5.4	Section 7 Consultation	5-10
5.5	Draft GMP/EIS Document Review	5-10
5.6	List of Draft GMP/EIS Recipients.....	5-11

Appendices

Appendix A	Park Enabling Legislation and Mandates	A-1
Appendix B	Applicable Federal and State of West Virginia Laws and Regulations and National Park Service Policies	B-1
Appendix C	Compliance Coordination	C-1
Appendix D	Wilderness Eligibility Assessment.....	D-1
Appendix E	Boundary Adjustment Study	E-1
Appendix F	Affected Environment Data Tables	F-1

References

Acronyms

Preparers

Glossary

Index

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	Regional Location	1-5
Figure 1.2	Existing Visitor Opportunities	following 1-8
Figure 2.1	Choosing By Advantages Importance to Cost Ratios	2-8
Figure 2.2	Alternative 1 – Continuation of Current Management	following 2-10
Figure 2.3	Areas where Management Zones are Common to Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5	following 2-28
Figure 2.4	Alternative 2 Concept – Themed Gorge Segments	following 2-78
Figure 2.5	Alternative 2 – Management Zones	following 2-78
Figure 2.6	Alternative 3 Concept – Through Park Trail	following 2-94
Figure 2.7	Alternative 3 – Management Zones	following 2-96
Figure 2.8	Alternative 4 Concept – River Gateways and Rim to River Experiences	following 2-112
Figure 2.9	Alternative 4 – Management Zones	following 2-118
Figure 2.10	Alternative 5 Concept – Exploration Experiences Preferred Alternative)	following 2-134
Figure 2.11	Alternative 5 – Management Zones (Preferred Alternative)	following 2-142
Figure 2.12	Alternative 5 – Potential Connections to Community Trails	following 2-146
Figure 3.1	Geologic Cross-Section	3-2
Figure 3.2	Geologic Features and Mined Coal Areas	following 3-4
Figure 3.3	Kanawha- New River Drainage Basin	3-9
Figure 3.4	Hydrologic Features	following 3-10
Figure 3.5	Watersheds and Water Quality	following 3-12
Figure 3.6	Extent of Unfragmented Forest	following 3-16
Figure 3.7	Rare Species Diversity	following 3-18
Figure 3.8	Historic Resources	following 3-44
Figure 3.9	Vantage Points and Viewsheds	following 3-60
Figure 3.10	River Trips, River Lunch Stops, and River Camping	following 3-74
Figure 3.11	Park Access	following 3-92
Figure 3.12	Park Asset Analysis – Summary of Findings	3-97
Figure D-1	Wilderness Eligibility Assessment Overview	D-9
Figure D-2	Wilderness Eligibility Assessment – Undeveloped Areas	D-11
Figure E-1	Boundary Adjustment Alternative 1 – Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative)	E-21
Figure E-2	Boundary Adjustment Alternative 2 – Recreation Access (Preferred Alternative)	E-23

Figure E-3 Boundary Adjustment Alternative 2 – Junkyard, Canyon Rim, and Ambassador Parcel E-25

Figure E-4 Boundary Adjustment Alternative 2 – Keeney Creek Parcel E-27

Figure E-5 Boundary Adjustment Alternative 2 – Cunard Parcel E-29

Figure E-6 Boundary Adjustment Alternative 2 – Dowdy Bluff Parcel..... E-31

Figure E-7 Boundary Adjustment Alternative 2 – Polls Parcel E-33

Figure E-8 Resources in and around the Park – Views from the River..... E-35

Figure E-9 Resources in and around the Park – Other Views E-37

Figure E-10 Resources in and around the Park – Important Resources..... E-39

Figure E-11 Resources in and around the Park – Composite of Views from the River, Other Views, and Important Resources E-41

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Park Significance Statements and Related Resources and Values 1-12

Table 1.2 Primary Interpretive Themes 1-13

Table 1.3 Impact Topics Retained for Further Analysis..... 1-28

Table 1.4 Impact Topics Considered and Dismissed from Further Analysis 1-28

Table 1.5 Locations where Park Boundary Adjustments are Proposed to Add Areas to the Park..... 1-41

Table 1.6 Locations where Park Boundary Adjustments are Proposed to Delete Areas from the Park 1-42

Table 2.1 Overall Management Concepts for Alternatives 1 to 5 2-4

Table 2.2 General Comparison of Alternatives 2-4

Table 2.3 Broad Organizing Principles of the Four Action Alternatives 2-5

Table 2.4 Important Visitor Experiences (Alternative 1)..... 2-10

Table 2.5 Alternative 1 – Area-Specific Desired Conditions and Needed Changes 2-20

Table 2.6 Management Zone Summary 2-25

Table 2.7 Management Zoning Common to Alternatives 2 to 5 2-28

Table 2.8 Parkwide Desired Conditions and Examples of Changes Needed to Achieve Them 2-29

Table 2.9 Backcountry Forest Management Zoning Common to Alternatives 2 to 5 2-43

Table 2.10 Important Visitor Experiences (Alternatives 2 to 5) 2-44

Table 2.11 Backcountry, Frontcountry, and River Corridor Zones – Access Management Prescriptions..... 2-56

Table 2.12 Alternatives 2 to 5 – Area-Specific Desired Conditions and Needed Changes 2-70

Table 2.13 Important Visitor Experiences (Alternative 2) 2-74

Table 2.14 Alternative 2 – Management Zoning Summary..... 2-77

Table 2.15 Backcountry Forest Management Zoning in
Alternative 2..... 2-77

Table 2.16 Alternative 2 – Collaborative Priorities for Communities
within the Park 2-83

Table 2.17 Alternative 2 – Area-Specific Desired Conditions and
Needed Changes 2-87

Table 2.18 Important Visitor Experiences (Alternative 3) 2-92

Table 2.19 Alternative 3 – Management Zoning Summary..... 2-95

Table 2.20 Backcountry Forest Management Zoning in
Alternative 3..... 2-95

Table 2.21 Alternative 3 – Collaborative Priorities for Communities
within the Park 2-102

Table 2.22 Alternative 3 – Area-Specific Desired Conditions and
Needed Changes 2-106

Table 2.23 Important Visitor Experiences (Alternative 4) 2-113

Table 2.24 Alternative 4 – Management Zoning Summary..... 2-117

Table 2.25 Backcountry Forest Management Zoning in
Alternative 4..... 2-117

Table 2.26 Alternative 4 – Collaborative Priorities for Communities
within the Park 2-124

Table 2.27 Alternative 4 – Area-Specific Desired Conditions and
Needed Changes 2-128

Table 2.28 Important Visitor Experiences (Alternative 5) 2-136

Table 2.29 Alternative 5 – Management Zoning Summary..... 2-141

Table 2.30 Backcountry Forest Management Zoning in
Alternative 5..... 2-142

Table 2.31 Alternative 5 – Collaborative Priorities for Communities
within the Park 2-151

Table 2.32 Alternative 5 – Area-Specific Desired Conditions and
Needed Changes 2-156

Table 2.33 Park User Capacity Indicators 2-173

Table 2.34 Mitigation Measures to be Included as Part of Future
Actions Implementing the Preferred GMP Alternative 2-175

Table 2.35 Alternatives Cost Comparison (2008 dollars) 2-180

Table 2.36 Comparison of Alternatives..... 2-181

Table 2.37 Comparison of Impacts of the Alternatives 2-194

Table 3.1 New River Subreach Characteristics..... 3-8

Table 3.2 Streams with FEMA Flood Insurance Studies 3-10

Table 3.3 Vegetation Associations Likely to be Globally and/or
West Virginia State Rare 3-19

NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER General Management Plan – Table of Contents

Table 3.4	Prehistoric Chronology	3-34
Table 3.5	Historic Chronology	3-36
Table 3.6	Coal Industry Complex – Known and Suspected Cultural Resource Types	3-37
Table 3.7	Railroad Industry Complex – Known and Suspected Cultural Resource Types	3-39
Table 3.8	Lumber Industry Complex – Known and Suspected Cultural Resource Types	3-41
Table 3.9	Euro-American Settlement/Agriculture Complex – Known and Suspected Cultural Resource Types	3-42
Table 3.10	Recreation/State Parks Complex – Known and Suspected Cultural Resource Types.....	3-45
Table 3.11	Sites with Known or Suspected Historic and Archeological Resource Potential	3-48
Table 3.12	Cultural Landscapes.....	3-51
Table 3.13	Historic Structures, Historic Districts, and Site Complexes with Historic Districts.....	3-54
Table 3.14	Settlement Chronology.....	3-56
Table 3.15	Four-County Population Characteristics, 1990 to 2005/2006	3-63
Table 3.16	Communities within and near the Park	3-65
Table 3.17	Population Characteristics of Large Communities near the Park, 1990 to 2000	3-66
Table 3.18	Three National Parks in Southern West Virginia, Annual Economic Impact (2005).....	3-68
Table 3.19	Three National Parks in Southern West Virginia, Visitor Spending Breakdown by County	3-68
Table 3.20	Park Total Visitation (1984 – 2007)	3-70
Table 3.21	Seasonal Visitation (2007)	3-70
Table 3.22	New River Gorge National River – Visitor Use Statistics (1998 – 2007)	3-71
Table 3.23	Whitewater Use River Sections	3-74
Table 3.24	River Trip Summary.....	3-74
Table 3.25	West Virginia Commercial Rafting Industry Performance by River Segment, 1996 – 2007	3-75
Table 3.26	New River Outfitted Paddler Typical Trip Options	3-76
Table 3.27	Annual Estimated Private Paddler Use	3-76
Table 3.28	Campground Facilities	3-77
Table 3.29	Camping Use	3-77
Table 3.30	Developed Picnicking Facilities	3-78
Table 3.31	River Lunch Stops Heavily Used by Outfitted Paddlers	3-79
Table 3.32	Climbing Use by Area (non-commercial) (2007)	3-79

Table 3.33 Climbing Use by Outfitters (2007) 3-79

Table 3.34 NPS Official Hiking Trails (2007)..... 3-80

Table 3.35 Generalized Trail Standards (for NPS Official Trails)..... 3-81

Table 3.36 Trail Segments which Meet the Administrative Road
Standard for Bicycling..... 3-81

Table 3.37 New River Fishery 3-82

Table 3.38 Annual Trout Stocking Summary 3-82

Table 3.39 Scenic Drives..... 3-85

Table 3.40 Accessible Facilities 3-86

Table 3.41 Activities Requiring a Special Use or Commercial Use
Permit 3-87

Table 3.42 CSX Corporation Rail Lines through the Park..... 3-94

Table 3.43 Generalized Park Asset Analysis Categories 3-97

Table 3.44 Volunteers in Park Program Participation 3-98

Table 3.45 Entities that Help the NPS Carry Out Its Mission at
New River Gorge 3-99

Table 4.1 Impact Topics Retained for Further Analysis 4-1

Table 4.2 Impact Indicators and Impact Indicator Definitions..... 4-3

Table 4.3 Impact Threshold Definitions 4-9

Table 4.4 Actions Included in the Cumulative Impact Scenario 4-17

Table 4.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis – Area of Impact 4-19

Table 4.6 Alternative 1 – Site-Specific Cultural Resource
Management Actions 4-43

Table 4.7 Alternative 1 – Annual Direct and Indirect Economic
Impacts 4-52

Table 4.8 Alternative 1 – New Visitor Use Facilities (funded) 4-58

Table 4.9 Alternative 1 – Summary of Visitor-Generated Traffic
Impacts on Local Road Capacity 4-61

Table 4.10 Alternative 1 – Access Changes Needed to Achieve
Desired Conditions in Visitor Use Areas 4-63

Table 4.11 Alternative 2 – Site-Specific Cultural Resource
Management Actions 4-95

Table 4.12 Alternative 2 – Annual Direct and Indirect Economic
Impacts 4-109

Table 4.13 Alternative 2 – New Visitor Use Facilities 4-118

Table 4.14 Alternative 2 – Backcountry, Frontcountry, and River
Corridor Zone – Access Management Prescriptions
(common to Alternatives 2 to 5) 4-121

Table 4.15 Alternative 2 – Summary of Visitor-Generated Traffic
Impacts on Local Road Capacity 4-122

Table 4.16 Alternative 2 – Access Changes Needed to Achieve
Desired Conditions in Visitor Use Areas 4-124

NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER General Management Plan – Table of Contents

Table 4.17	Alternative 3 – Site-Specific Cultural Resource Management Actions.....	4-153
Table 4.18	Alternative 3 – Annual Direct and Indirect Economic Impacts	4-164
Table 4.19	Alternative 3 – New Visitor Use Facilities	4-169
Table 4.20	Alternative 3 – Summary of Visitor-Generated Traffic Impacts on Local Road Capacity	4-172
Table 4.21	Alternative 3 – Access Changes Needed to Achieve Desired Conditions in Visitor Use Areas	4-174
Table 4.22	Alternative 4 – Site-Specific Cultural Resource Management Actions.....	4-204
Table 4.23	Alternative 4 – Annual Direct and Indirect Economic Impacts	4-216
Table 4.24	Alternative 4 – New Visitor Use Facilities	4-221
Table 4.25	Alternative 4 – Summary of Visitor-Generated Traffic Impacts on Local Road Capacity	4-225
Table 4.26	Alternative 4 – Access Changes Needed to Achieve Desired Conditions in Visitor Use Areas	4-227
Table 4.27	Alternative 5 – Site-Specific Cultural Resource Management Actions.....	4-258
Table 4.28	Alternative 5 – Annual Direct and Indirect Economic Impacts	4-271
Table 4.29	Alternative 5 – New Visitor Use Facilities	4-277
Table 4.30	Alternative 5 – Summary of Visitor-Generated Traffic Impacts on Local Road Capacity	4-282
Table 4.31	Alternative 5 – Access Changes Needed to Achieve Desired Conditions in Visitor Use Areas	4-284
Table 5.1	Running List of Consultation and Public Involvement.....	5-1
Table E.1	Analysis of Views around the Park Needing Protection	E-12
Table E.2	Analysis of Important Resource Areas around the Park Needing Protection.....	E-16
Table F.1	Characteristics of Predominant Soil Types.....	F-1
Table F.2	Summary of Fecal Coliform Standard Exceedences in the New River and its Tributaries in the Vicinity of New River Gorge National River.....	F-2
Table F.3	Species of Concern in West Virginia Known to Occur in New River Gorge National River.....	F-4
Table F.4	Roads Providing Access to Park Facilities	F-9

How to Read This Plan...

The National Park Service (NPS) has developed this Draft General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement to guide management decision-making at New River Gorge National River for the next 15 to 20 years. The public and many local, state, and federal agencies have assisted the NPS with preparing the plan. This plan is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1 – Purpose of and Need for Action describes the federal action and reasons why the general management plan (GMP) is being prepared. Chapter 1 presents the park's purpose and significance statements and describes the fundamental and other important resources and values that are critical to achieving the park's purpose and maintaining its significance. This section also describes the planning process and issues addressed in the plan.

Chapter 2 – Alternatives describes, evaluates, and compares the Continuation of Current Management Alternative and five action alternatives. The Continuation of Current Management Alternative provides a baseline from which the three action alternatives can be evaluated. Desired resource conditions, opportunities for visitor experience, as well as levels of development intensity necessary to accomplish each alternative are presented. Alternative 5 is the federal agency's preferred alternative and the environmentally preferred alternative.

Chapter 3 – Affected Environment describes the existing natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources that could be potentially affected by implementing either one of the alternatives.

Chapter 4 – Environmental Consequences describes the potential impacts to the park's resource values that could result from implementing either one of the alternatives.

Chapter 5 – Consultation, Coordination, and Compliance describes the public involvement and agency coordination process that occurred during the GMP planning process. Required compliance mandates are also summarized.

Appendices provide additional supporting technical data and relevant background material cited throughout the plan.

References and Legal Citations are cited from which background and supporting documentation was obtained.

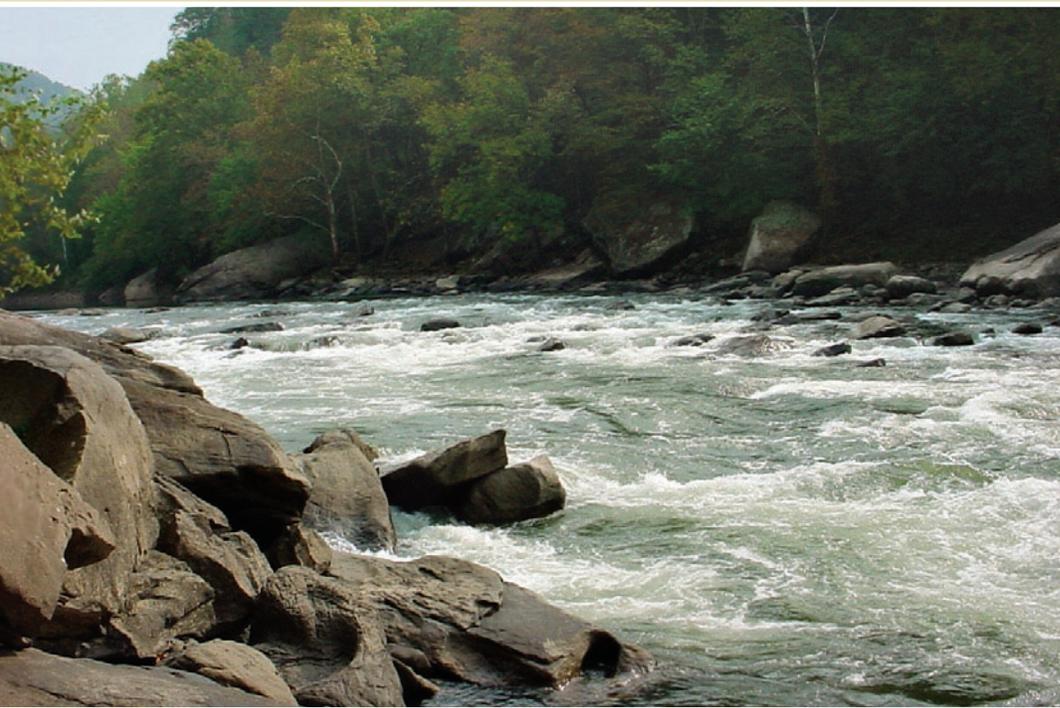


- 1.1** Proposed Federal Action1-1
- 1.2** Purpose of the Action1-1
- 1.3** Need for the Action.....1-2
- 1.4** The Park’s Origin and Legislative History1-3
- 1.5** Park Boundary, Size, and Ownership1-4
- 1.6** New River Gorge National River Overview1-4
- 1.7** Foundation for Planning1-9
- 1.8** 2028 Vision for New River Gorge National River1-16
- 1.9** Planning Issues and Concerns1-18
- 1.10** Impact Topics1-28
- 1.11** Wilderness Eligibility Assessment1-39
- 1.12** Park Boundary Adjustment1-41
- 1.13** Relationship to Other Plans.....1-42

1 Purpose and Need for Action



Flowing water – the definitive creative force of the New River Gorge.



Flowing water is the definitive force of the New River Gorge. The New River, one of the oldest rivers in the world, continues to sculpt the longest and deepest river gorge in the Appalachian Mountains.



Four coal seams that are among the best bituminous coal in the world.

Opposite side: New River at McCreery – one of the oldest rivers in the world.

1.0 Purpose and Need for Action

1.1 Proposed Federal Action

On November 10, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed into law a bill that included a provision establishing the New River Gorge National River in Raleigh, Summers, and Fayette County, West Virginia, as a unit of the national park system. The National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for managing New River Gorge National River to conserve its scenery, natural and historic resources, and wildlife and to provide for its enjoyment in a manner that will leave the park unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations (NPS 2006a).

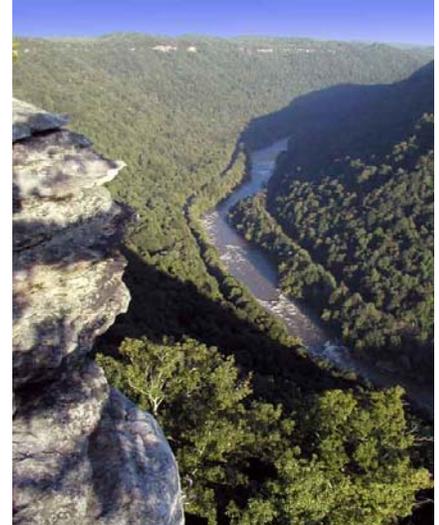
The proposed federal action considered in this environmental impact statement (EIS) is the implementation of a programmatic management framework – in the form of a general management plan – to accomplish the purposes for which New River Gorge National River was established by Congress. This general management plan replaces the existing *New River Gorge General Management Plan* (NPS 1982). It will guide management decision making at the park for the next 15 to 20 years.

The General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS) complies with all applicable statutory requirements and policies, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, and National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978. It addresses the following:

- the types of management actions required for the preservation of park resources
- the types and general intensities of development (including visitor circulation and transportation patterns, systems, and modes) associated with public enjoyment and use of the area, including general locations, timing of implementation and anticipated costs
- visitor carrying capacities and implementation commitments for all areas of the park
- potential modifications to the external boundaries of the park and the reasons for the proposed changes

1.2 Purpose of the Action

The purpose of the GMP is to provide a decision-making framework that ensures that management decisions effectively and efficiently carry out the NPS mission at New River Gorge National River. NPS managers at the park routinely make many difficult decisions about the preservation of the park's significant natural and cultural resources for public enjoyment, about competing demands for limited resources, about priorities for using available funds and staff, and about differing local and nationwide interests and views of what is most important at the park. The



New River Gorge viewed from Diamond Point ▲

decision-making framework in the park's GMP will provide the guidance to make these management choices in a manner that is consistent with the purposes for which New River Gorge National River was established by Congress as a unit of the national park system and that protects the park's fundamental and other important resources and values.

1.3 Need for the Action

Many considerations suggest that a new GMP is needed for New River Gorge National River. The current general management plan for the park is 25 years old. The NPS has implemented many of its recommendations. Some are no longer appropriate because of changing conditions and circumstances. New issues have emerged in recent years that the GMP does not address because they were not anticipated in 1982 when the plan was prepared. All recent NPS policies related to management and planning for all national park units are not reflected in the 25-year-old GMP.

The new GMP for New River Gorge National River addresses several needs:

- it ensures that the park's fundamental and other important resources and values are preserved and protected
- it meets NPS legal requirements for comprehensive general management planning as a guide for more specific projects, to base decisions on adequate environmental information and analysis, and to track progress toward goals
- it provides a logical trackable rationale for decision-making by the NPS that focuses first on why the park was established and what the desired future conditions of those resources should be
- it considers the concerns, expectations, and values of the public and of the remaining private landowners in the park related to land protection and management of resources and visitor experience in the park
- it ensures that management decisions by the NPS promote the efficient use of public funds and that managers are accountable to the public for their management decisions

The plan's outcome will be an agreement among the NPS, its partners at New River Gorge National River, and the public as what resource conditions and visitor experiences should exist at the park and how those conditions can best be achieved and maintained over time.

1.4 The Park's Origin and Legislative History

President Jimmy Carter signed legislation establishing New River Gorge National River on November 10, 1978 (P.L. 95-625) (see Appendix A). As stated in the legislation the park was established as a unit of the national park system:

“for the purpose of conserving and interpreting outstanding natural, scenic, and historic values and objects in and around the New River Gorge and preserving as a free-flowing stream an important segment of the New River in West Virginia for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations”

The earliest discussion regarding creation of a park to protect the New River and its gorge began in the late 1950s. Some residents of communities near the park believed that a national park designation for the park was needed to protect the park's resources and would at the same time enhance the area's tourism appeal with potentially significant economic benefits to southern West Virginia.

While there was strong local support of a new national park in the region, the real effort to protect the New River came as a result of a major conservation effort upstream on the river in Virginia and North Carolina. The controversy focused on a series of proposed pump storage dams on the river. Many West Virginians were strongly opposed to the proposed dams because they would have significantly altered river flows downstream. In 1974, this effort led to the formation of the West Virginia Chapter of the National Coalition to Save the New River and to creation of the New River Gorge National Park Committee. These groups were subsequently instrumental in promoting public support for the 1976 addition of the New River in North Carolina to the National Wild and Scenic River System, bringing to an end the proposals for energy development projects on the river upstream.

The conservation effort then turned to the West Virginia section of the New River. A number of key community leaders emerged from the existing river conservation groups. Working together for another two years they built the support needed for the park in the local communities along the river leading ultimately to creation of New River Gorge National River.

Subsequent to the original 1978 enabling legislation a number of additional pieces of legislation further defined the NPS mission at New River Gorge National River and provided for several minor boundary adjustments (see Table A.1 in Appendix A).

1.5 Park Boundary, Size, and Ownership

New River Gorge National River is located in the Appalachian Mountains of southern West Virginia (see Figure 1.1). The park encompasses land within Raleigh, Fayette, and Summers Counties and the city of Hinton and is near the city of Beckley and Fayetteville.

The authorized boundary for New River Gorge National River currently encompasses 72,186 acres within a 53-mile corridor along the New River that extends from the city of Hinton on the south to the upstream limit of Hawks Nest State Park on the north. The park includes most of the 62,000 acres identified in the park's 1978 enabling legislation plus land added through four subsequent Congressionally-authorized boundary adjustments. In 1986, Congress authorized addition of 10 acres for constructing the Glen Jean Headquarters Complex (P.L. 99-590). Other modifications made in 1988, 1996, and 2002 were made to protect scenic resources and to facilitate better park management (P.L. 100-534, P.L. 104-333, and PL 107-356). Since 1978 the NPS has acquired 52,960 acres from willing sellers within the park boundary and has secured conservation easements on another 164 acres.

1.6 New River Gorge National River Overview

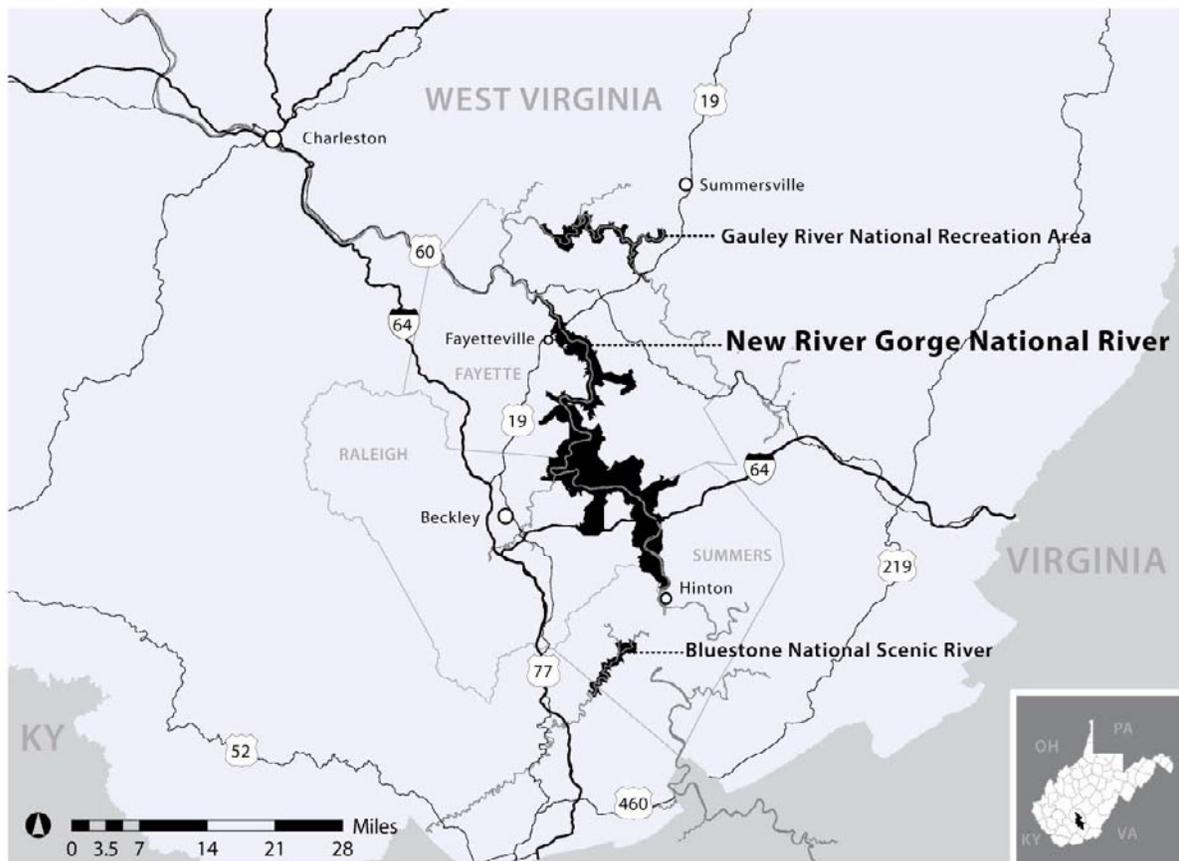
1.6.1 The Park's Regional Context

New River Gorge National River is located in the Appalachian Mountains of southern West Virginia (see Figure 1.1). Nine mountain counties compose the southern West Virginia region, including Raleigh, Mercer, Fayette, Greenbrier, Monroe, McDowell, Nicholas, Wyoming, and Summers. The park encompasses land within Raleigh, Fayette, and Summers Counties and adjoins the cities of Beckley and Hinton and the town of Fayetteville. Beckley is the largest city in the region and is its major economic and cultural center. Major roads providing access to the region converge in Beckley, including the West Virginia Turnpike (I-77/I-64), U.S. Route 19, and Interstate 64 (I-64). Both U.S. Route 19 and I-64 pass through New River Gorge National River just outside of Beckley.

Southern West Virginia has undergone considerable change in recent years. Through the early to mid 20th century the region boomed as mining companies brought in workers to mine the rich coal deposits of the Kanawha, New River, Pocahontas, and Winding Gulf coal fields. New towns grew up and the region prospered. By the mid 20th century the more accessible coal deposits were exhausted and the coal industry began its decline. As jobs in the mining industry declined so did the region's population. Struggling to maintain its communities and quality of life, the region in recent years has sought to develop new industries, with a major effort aimed at capitalizing on the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and recreation potential to become a major tourist destination in the Appalachian Mountains.

Figure 1.1

Regional Location



New River Gorge National River WEST VIRGINIA



National Park Service US Department of the Interior

Despite its industrial heritage southern West Virginia remains “wild and wonderful”. Much of the area is densely forested rugged terrain, with free-flowing streams and rivers that cut through the Appalachian plateau forming some of the most beautiful river canyon scenery in the eastern United States. The New River flows north through the region converging with the Gauley River to form the Kanawha River at Gauley Bridge in Fayette County. The Greenbrier River is a major tributary to the New River. Recreation opportunities are extensive within a network of public recreation lands and natural areas. Three national park units, ten state parks, and nine state forests are located within the region. Sections of the Monongahela National Forest lie at its eastern edge in Greenbrier and Nicholas Counties. The Gauley River and the New River offer some of the best whitewater paddling opportunities in the United States.

Many cultural heritage sites tell the stories of the region’s industrial and social history. Six counties are within the National Coal Heritage Area, recognized as of

national historical significance for its contribution to the industrialization of the United States. Two national scenic byways – the Coal Heritage Trail and the Midland Trail – wind through the mountains and valleys.

1.6.2 Natural Resource Overview

New River Gorge National River is located in the Kanawha section of the Appalachian Highlands. The dramatic New River Gorge – over 1000 feet deep – is the most prominent physiographic feature at the park. Other outstanding geologic features in the park include exposed cliffs, rock cities, massive boulders, rock overhangs, and unusual formations caused by spheroidal weathering. Coal-bearing sediments, exposed throughout the gorge, were mined historically yielding some of the best bituminous coal in the world.

The New River which flows north through the park is one of the oldest rivers in the world. River flow is regulated by the Bluestone Dam which is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood control, recreation, and low flow enhancement. Despite general flow moderation, infrequent highly localized severe flooding continues to occur on the New River and its tributaries.

Baseline water quality data and ongoing monitoring of the New River indicate that water quality is generally satisfactory for water contact recreation such as swimming, boating, and fishing, although it is adversely impacted by fecal coliform contamination. Because of occasional fecal coliform concentrations in excess of water quality standards, the state of West Virginia has designated the New River and many of its tributaries as impaired, based on state water quality standards. Contamination is largely the result of improper treatment and disposal of domestic waste from private land within the watershed outside the park boundary.

Aquatic habitats in the New River and its tributaries support a diversity of fish. The New River within the park is one of the most important warmwater fisheries in West Virginia and is one of the most heavily fished areas in the eastern United States. The native fish fauna is distinct from those of the rest of the Ohio River system, with relatively few native species and a high degree of fish whose ranges are restricted to the local area.

The expanse of mixed mesophytic forest that covers most of the park is part of the largest remaining area of midatlantic forest in the world. Much of the forest remains largely unfragmented by roads, trails, utility corridors, or developed areas. These large blocks of unfragmented forest are largely intact natural landscapes and are globally significant because of their combined expanse and because they provide significant critical habitat for neotropical migratory birds, especially for wood warblers. Many rare vegetation communities are included within the large unfragmented forest blocks. Most mammalian wildlife species found in West Virginia are present in the park.

Within the park, there are occurrences of two mammal species federally-designated as endangered and one mammal species federally-designated as a species of special concern.

1.6.3 Cultural Resource Overview

Five historic contexts provide a framework for describing and understanding the cultural resources within the boundaries of the park: 1) historic development of the New River coal field, 2) historic development of the railroad industry, 3) historic development of the lumber industry, 4) Euro-American settlement/agriculture, and 5) development of recreation/state park resources.

Many of the park's cultural resources are the ruins of the New River communities – mostly "ghost towns" today – where the thousands of miners and their families worked and lived in the gorge during its industrial heyday from 1873 to 1930. These communities and related industrial sites now abandoned and generally in ruins, are largely historical archeological sites.

Notable historic structures within the park include industrial buildings related to coal mining and railroading and the communities that housed the people who worked the mines, cut the timber, and operated the railroad. Notable structures also include the farmsteads and community buildings built in the gorge by the early settlers and their descendents prior to and during the period of industrialization. Four historic districts in the park are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Eight individual properties are listed on or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Only one resource – the Nuttallburg Coal Mining Complex and Town Historic District – has been determined by the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer to be of national significance.

The park's cultural landscapes are the geographic areas – including both cultural and natural resources – that are associated with the historic events and activities in the park's past and/or with the people who have lived and worked in the park and that are integral to its significance. People and groups who are traditionally associated with the park include the descendents of distinct ethnic groups who migrated to the New River Gorge region and intermingled over time and established unique relationships with the landscape. These are the descendents of Euro-American frontier families, African American families, immigrant miners, and the federally recognized Shawnee Tribe. Preliminary investigations suggest that the most significant ethnographic resource for the park's traditionally associated people is the landscape of the mixed mesophytic forest and associated watersheds in association with the collective memory – the stories – that animate and are animated by the landscape.

Archeologists have recorded 342 archeological sites in the park. Based solely on the number of identifiable components found at the sites, it appears that Prehistoric

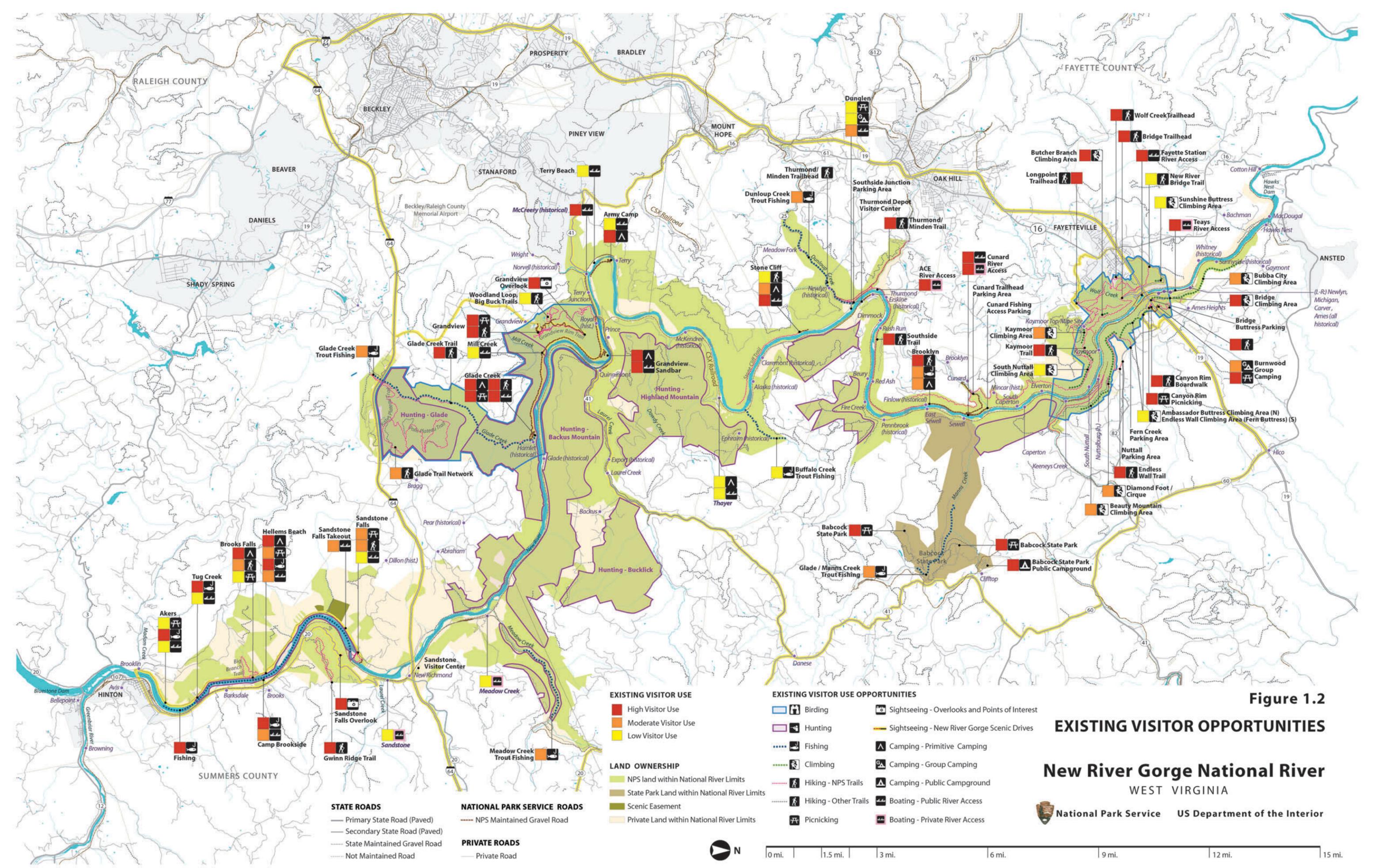
occupation in New River Gorge peaked during the Late Archaic (3000 – 1000 B.C.). The most common sites utilized by prehistoric residents were open habitations and rock shelters. None of the sites have been determined eligible for or nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

1.6.4 Visitor Experience and Visitor Use Overview

In 2007 approximately 1.18 million people visited New River Gorge National River, mostly during the summer months. The dramatic New River Gorge landscape and the whitewater recreation opportunities of the New River attract most first-time visitors to the park. Those new to the park quickly discover that within the spectacular gorge landscape and along the river are hidden the remains of dozens of towns that tell the stories of West Virginia's coal, lumber and railroading industries that flourished in New River Gorge during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. For most visitors the spectacular terrain of the gorge, the free-flowing New River, and the tranquil setting – interspersed with the remnants of the gorge's human history – offer appealing opportunities for a variety of recreation and learning experiences.

A few experiences at New River Gorge are "classic" because they showcase the park's most significant natural and cultural resource (see Figure 1.2). These experiences occur in a few specific places where visitors go most often – where they know they will most easily experience the best of the gorge and typically where the NPS has facilitated access and provides visitor services and interpretation. From Canyon Rim, visitors experience dramatic rim-to-river views of the gorge, the New River Bridge, and the broader Appalachian Plateau. At Grandview, visitors have a traditional family recreation experience, including picnicking, playing, hiking, and outdoor theatre. The site also provides access to spectacular rim-to-river views in the Turkey Spur area. Sandstone Falls provides visitors the opportunity to experience the sights, sounds, and smells of the river. A boardwalk enables visitors to get very close to the river at the site of the park's largest waterfall. At the Sandstone Visitor Center visitors obtain information about the park – its resources and stories and the experiences available. The Endless Wall Trail takes visitors along the cliff top to Fern Point, Diamond Point, and numerous vantage points from which they experience the open expanse of the gorge and spectacular views of the Appalachian Plateau and the New River some 1000 feet below. Visitors learn about the park's industrial heritage at Kaymoor and Nuttallburg. Along the Fayette Station Road visitors can experience travel through the gorge as it was before the New River Bridge was built in 1977, winding down to the bottom of the gorge, crossing the river on a narrow bridge, and winding back up the gorge wall to the rim. At Thurmond visitors learn about the history and culture of New River Gorge during its industrial heyday.

The New River attracts paddlers of all abilities seeking the thrill, exhilarating rush, and social bonding of the whitewater experience. Some of these visitors are



- EXISTING VISITOR USE**
- High Visitor Use
 - Moderate Visitor Use
 - Low Visitor Use

- LAND OWNERSHIP**
- NPS land within National River Limits
 - State Park Land within National River Limits
 - Scenic Easement
 - Private Land within National River Limits

- STATE ROADS**
- Primary State Road (Paved)
 - Secondary State Road (Paved)
 - State Maintained Gravel Road
 - Not Maintained Road

- NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ROADS**
- NPS Maintained Gravel Road
- PRIVATE ROADS**
- Private Road

- EXISTING VISITOR USE OPPORTUNITIES**
- 🐦 Birding
 - 🏹 Hunting
 - 🎣 Fishing
 - 🧗 Climbing
 - 👤 Hiking - NPS Trails
 - 👤 Hiking - Other Trails
 - 🍷 Picnicking
 - 🏠 Sightseeing - Overlooks and Points of Interest
 - 🚗 Sightseeing - New River Gorge Scenic Drives
 - 🏕️ Camping - Primitive Camping
 - 🏕️ Camping - Group Camping
 - 🏕️ Camping - Public Campground
 - 🚤 Boating - Public River Access
 - 🚤 Boating - Private River Access

Figure 1.2
EXISTING VISITOR OPPORTUNITIES

New River Gorge National River
WEST VIRGINIA
National Park Service US Department of the Interior



extreme adventurers who paddle the Class IV rapids of the lower gorge in rafts and kayaks. Most are outfitted paddlers riding the river with experienced guides in organized commercial trips. Increasingly families are making guided and unguided river trips with teenage children or in family flotillas, preferring the more gentle rapids of the upper gorge. Collectively the whitewater paddlers – including the outfitted paddlers who ride with commercial outfitters and the private paddlers who ride on their own – compose one of the largest groups of visitors to the park. In 2007 approximately 124,620 outfitted paddlers and 31,470 private paddlers – or over 13 percent of all park visitors – floated the New River.

Many visitors to the park seek opportunities to camp in the frontcountry and backcountry as part of a variety of outdoor experiences. Camping use is greatest from May through September. Campsites are generally full on weekends from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Visitors enjoy opportunities for picnicking at developed NPS facilities and at undesignated picnic sites in both the frontcountry and the backcountry.

The hard sandstone walls of New River Gorge offer some of the best climbing opportunities in the eastern United States and in recent years has become one of the most popular climbing areas in the country. Climbers most heavily use the Nuttall Sandstone cliffs which extend for five miles upstream and three miles downstream of the New River Bridge.

Approximately 76 miles of official NPS trails provide visitor access to the park's frontcountry and backcountry areas. Portions of nine trails are open to bicycles, providing access to a variety of places such as overlooks, the New River, and historic sites in the lower gorge.

Fishing is one of the most popular activities on the New River. Its fish diversity makes the New River an excellent warm-water fishery. Spring and fall are the best times of the year to fish the New River, when the water is cooler and most fish species are more aggressively feeding.

New River Gorge National River when combined with the Bluestone National Scenic River and the Gauley River National Recreation Area forms the largest public hunting area in southern West Virginia. Hunting is permitted within most of the New River Gorge National River, but is restricted from the former Grandview State Park area and other high use areas. Much of the land still in private ownership within the park boundary is leased to private hunting clubs and is restricted to club member use only.

For those who visit the park by private vehicle or bus there are a number of driving opportunities on roads that provide access to the park's scenic resources, as well as take visitors to points of interest where other experiences are offered. Scenic drives in the park follow along the rim, along the river, and from the rim to the river.



▲ *Fundamental Resources – Geologic and hydrologic features such as sandstone boulders that help create rapids in New River Gorge*



▲ *Fundamental Resources – Rare and endangered species such as the Virginia big-eared bat*



▲ *Fundamental Resources – Panoramic views such as the view from Dowdy Bluff*

1.7 Foundation for Planning

The *New River Gorge National River Foundation for Planning* (NPS 2009) provides the basic guidance for management decisions made at the park. It is a formal statement of the park's core mission that summarizes what is most important about the park. The *Foundation for Planning* is composed of six elements: 1) the park's statement of purpose, 2) the park's statement of significance, 3) the park's primary interpretive themes, 4) the park's fundamental and other important resources and values, 5) the park's legislative mandates and other special mandates, and 6) general legislative and policy requirements

The GMP Planning Team developed the *Foundation for Planning* early in the GMP planning process. It incorporates data collected in preparation for developing the GMP as well as input from the public and government agencies received during project scoping (see Section 1.9 below).

1.7.1 Park Statement of Purpose

Park purpose statements convey the reasons for which the park was set aside as a unit of the national park system. They are grounded in a thorough analysis of park legislation and legislative history, and provide fundamental criteria against which the appropriateness of general management plan recommendations, operational decisions, and actions are tested.

The purposes of New River Gorge National River are to:

- preserve an important free-flowing segment of the New River
- preserve, protect, and conserve outstanding resources and values in and around the New River Gorge, including geologic and hydrologic features, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, historic and archeological resources, cultural heritage, and scenic character
- provide opportunities for public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the park's natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources and values

1.7.2 Park Statement of Significance

Park significance statements describe why the park’s resources and values are important enough to warrant national park designation. They accomplish the following: 1) they describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and national park systemwide context, 2) they are directly linked to the purpose of the park, 3) they are substantiated by data or consensus, and 4) they reflect the most current scientific or scholarly inquiry and cultural perceptions, which may have changed since the park’s establishment.

Six statements express why the resources and values of New River Gorge National River are important enough to warrant national park designation (see Table 1.1).

1.7.3 Fundamental and Other Important Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are the park’s attributes – its features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, opportunities for visitor enjoyment, or others – that are critical to achieving the park’s purpose and to maintaining its significance. **Other important resources and values** are the other park attributes that are important, although they are not related to the park’s purpose and significance. Table 1.1 presents the statements that describe the fundamental and other important resources and values of New River Gorge National River. Together – the fundamental resources and values and the other important resources and values – are what warrant primary consideration during planning and management or that are important to park management and planning.



Fundamental Resources – Recreation experiences such as rock climbing and rappelling ▲



Fundamental Resources – Historic structures such as Commercial Row at Thurmond ▲



Fundamental Resources – Hydrologic features such as the falls at Dunloup Creek ▲

Table 1.1 Park Significance Statements and Related Resources and Values

Significance Statements	Related Fundamental Resources and Values and Other Important Resources and Values
<p>Statement 1</p> <p>Flowing water is the definitive creative force shaping the geologic features of the New River Gorge. The New River, one of the oldest rivers in the world, continues to sculpt the longest and deepest river gorge in the Appalachian Mountains.</p>	<p>Related Fundamental Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Geologic processes and the features they have created that exemplify the geology of the Appalachian Plateau, including sandstone and shale exposures over 1000 meters high (representing more than 100 million years of geologic time), house-sized boulders scattered from rim to river, plant and invertebrate fossils, steep channel drop-offs, and coal seams composed of some of the best bituminous coal in the world
<p>Statement 2</p> <p>The waters of this free flowing segment of the New River system contain a mosaic of hydrologic features and aquatic habitats, support a unique aquatic ecosystem, and nourish a riparian zone that supports rare plants, animals, and communities.</p>	<p>Related Fundamental Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a variety and density of riverine hydrologic features and processes unparalleled in the Eastern United States, including pools, backwaters, glides, runs, shoals, riffles, torrents, cascades, chutes, rapids, and waterfalls ■ a highly productive aquatic ecosystem that includes distinct assemblages of native fish (many found nowhere else), mussels, crayfish, macroinvertebrates, and a broad array of other aquatic life, including rare amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals ■ the riparian zone is the most biologically diverse part of the park, and contains globally rare communities and essential habitat for several rare species <p>Other Important Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ other aquatic/wetland resources, including vernal pools, wetlands, ephemeral streams, and seeps that provide habitat for rare species ■ clean water that supports healthy aquatic and riparian environments
<p>Statement 3</p> <p>New River Gorge National River lies at the core of a globally significant forest, contains the most diverse flora of any river gorge in central and southern Appalachia, and provides essential habitat for endangered mammals and rare birds and amphibians.</p>	<p>Related Fundamental Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ rare expanse of unfragmented and varied forest types ■ a diverse mosaic of habitats occurring over a large elevational gradient that supports forty identified plant communities containing at least 1,342 species and 54 rare plants ■ abundant and diverse breeding populations of birds that spend part of their lives in the tropics but depend upon the unfragmented forests here for breeding, especially wood warblers, vireos, and thrushes <p>Other Important Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ clean air

Table 1.1 Park Significance Statements and Related Resources and Values (continued)

Significance Statements	Related Fundamental Resources and Values and Other Important Resources and Values
<p>Statement 4</p> <p>New River Gorge National River contains a large, outstanding, and representative group of historic places that testify to the experiences of those diverse people who settled and developed this part of Appalachia between the 19th and mid-20th centuries.</p>	<p>Related Fundamental Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ rare historic colliery structures and coke ovens of unmatched integrity, such as at Nuttallburg and Kaymoor, and the historic structures and ruins associated with more than 50 company owned towns ■ railroad depots, rail yards, rail grades, steel and timber trestle bridges, railroad equipment, archeological sites and associated towns, like Thurmond, developed to support the railroad ■ rare surviving examples of subsistence farms, such as Trump-Lily and Richmond-Hamilton <p>Other Important Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ former community sites, homesteads, and other places in the park where the ancestors of families long associated with the New River lived and worked and where their living descendents today have traditional associations and land-based ties ■ the knowledge and cultural values of the families long associated with New River Gorge who have traditionally used the waters of the New River system, the aquatic plants and animals that inhabit those waters, and the native terrestrial plants and animals in and around New River Gorge ■ the history and archeology associated with the park's lumbering industry, Civilian Conservation Corps-era state parks, and Native Americans
<p>Statement 5</p> <p>New River Gorge National River has diverse and extraordinary scenic resources and views accessible to visitors from the river, rocky overlooks, trails, and rural roads throughout the park.</p>	<p>Related Fundamental Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ panoramic views of the New River, its gorge, and the other landforms shaped by the New River as it cuts through the Appalachian Plateau ■ cultural landscapes that reflect settlement and industry influenced by a rugged and isolated setting <p>Other Important Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ natural visibility and lightscape, both in daytime and at night
<p>Statement 6</p> <p>New River Gorge National River provides visitors with exceptional opportunities for exploration, adventure, discovery, solitude and community.</p>	<p>Related Fundamental Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ experience and enjoyment visitors derive from the direct interaction with the outstanding scenic, natural, and cultural resources through a variety of recreational activities <p>Other Important Resources and Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ experience of a tranquil setting characterized by largely natural sounds



▲ *A Rugged Land, A Rugged People – Living History at Fayette Station*

1.7.4 Primary Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are the most important ideas, concepts, or stories to be communicated to the public about the park. At New River Gorge National River there are six primary interpretive themes (Table 1.2). These themes relate directly to the park’s purpose and significance. They connect the fundamental resources and values that contribute to the park’s significance with relevant ideas, meanings, concepts, contexts, beliefs, and values. The themes provide the framework for interpretation at the park, drive what is appropriate in the park, and provide the basis for the park’s educational programs. Park managers take these themes into account when setting priorities for events and activities. The themes also provide direction for planners and designers of the park’s exhibits, publications, and audiovisual programs.

Table 1.2 Primary Interpretive Themes

Primary Interpretive Theme
<p>■ The New River and Geologic Processes</p> <p>The ancient New River and its tributaries, together with the forces of geological processes, continue to sculpt the gorge, shape the landscape of its watershed, and reveal a sequence of rock layers that serve as windows into time.</p>
<p>■ Ecological Diversity, Uniqueness, and Abundance</p> <p>With its mosaic of varied, unique, and unbroken habitats, and the quality of its air, water, and night sky, the lands and waters in and around the New River Gorge are sanctuary for a remarkable array of native plants and animals.</p>
<p>■ Barrier, Corridor, and Refuge</p> <p>Through time, the New River Gorge has been: a barrier to travel, economic prosperity, and communication; a corridor for navigation, migration, and exploitation; and a refuge for both people and wildlife.</p>
<p>■ Exploitation</p> <p>The industrialization of America came at a cost; New River Gorge is a reminder not only of the exploitation of resources, but also the exploitation of people in an age of unrestricted capitalism.</p>
<p>■ A Rugged Land, A Rugged People</p> <p>Whether securing sustenance or extracting wealth from this rugged land, the people of New River Gorge developed a culture of hard labor, perseverance, and faith just to maintain a lifestyle that was devoid of luxury or ease.</p>
<p>■ Evolving Ethics and Changing Perceptions of the Land</p> <p>Over time, human perceptions of the value of the land in and around the New River Gorge have shifted dramatically from a challenging wilderness to be conquered and exploited to a treasured wildness to be enjoyed and protected for future generations.</p>

1.7.5 The Park's Legislative and Other Special Mandates

A number of legislative mandates and other special mandates provide additional direction as to how the park is to be managed (see Appendix A, Tables A.1 and A.2)

Several federal and state natural resource management programs have also designated the New River and its associated wildlife and habitat as areas of special management interest (see Appendix A, Table A.3), including the following:

- Nationwide Rivers Inventory – Rivers with Outstandingly Remarkable Values (National Park Service, 1982)
- Nationally Significant Wildlife Ecosystem (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1977)
- Resource Category 1 Habitat (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1986)
- High Quality Stream (State of West Virginia, 1986)
- Protected Stream (State of West Virginia, 1969)
- American Heritage River (Executive Order 13061, 1998)
- Aquatic Resource of National Importance (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2007)

These designations generally require elevated review of federal and state actions that have the potential to impact significant river-related resources and values. They also generally mandate avoidance or minimization of impacts on special resources.

1.7.7 Legislative and Policy Requirements

The *NPS Management Policies* (NPS 2006a) and a number of federal laws, acts, and executive orders vital to the NPS mission also guide management of units of the national park system (see Appendix B). Collectively these policies and servicewide laws define the conditions desired in national parks and ensure that parks are managed in accordance with national regulations consistently applied to all parks in the system. In addition the laws of the state of West Virginia apply to management of some resources at New River Gorge National River (see Appendix B).

New River Gorge National River
Envisioning the Future

What is a vision statement?

- The vision for New River Gorge National River describes what the park will be like in 20 years.

How was the vision crafted?

- Accomplishing the park’s purpose is the primary essential quality expressed in the vision of the park’s future.
- The vision also reflects the goals and desires for the park’s future expressed by the many parties involved in the GMP planning process who have an interest in how the park is managed.

How will we use it?

- By embracing the vision of the park’s future the NPS and others – the private landowners in the park, its local community neighbors, its partners, and the general public – will share an understanding as to what the essential qualities of the park will be in the future.
- Working together the NPS and others will use this vision as a guide to articulate the specific goals, objectives, and actions needed to make the vision a reality over the next two decades.

1.8 2028 Vision for New River Gorge National River

■ **Overview**

In 2028 New River Gorge National River lies at the heart of a protected network of natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources that epitomizes the rugged grandeur and heritage of the Appalachian Mountains in southern West Virginia. Natural processes, natural beauty, and history combine at the park to create a spectacular opportunity for the people of the United States and the world to understand and enjoy the country’s most dramatic Appalachian Mountain river gorge. Managed with maximum use of natural resource restoration and historic preservation partnerships, the park is relevant to its users, and the public appreciates the park’s significance and stature as a unit of the national park system.

■ **Natural Resources**

The park’s natural resources – once exploited during the industrialization of America – have recovered. The park is an oasis of wildness in the eastern United States and is a model for other places coming back from past industrial uses. The New River runs free-flowing for 53 miles through the park, changing from a river coursing gently through a wide valley to a wild river pounding through the lower New River Gorge, carved over 1,000 meters into the rocks of the Appalachian Plateau. The waters of the New River and its tributaries – no longer impaired by man-induced pollutants – support a highly productive aquatic ecosystem. Within the gorge the largely unbroken expanse of forest supports diverse plants and wildlife native to the river gorges of the Appalachians. Rimrock areas, cliffs, dark forest seeps, and riverside flatrock areas support rare ecological communities. Abundant and diverse breeding bird populations flourish in the forest canopy.

■ **Cultural Resources**

Remnants of the park’s past - hidden within the forest – tell the stories of former life in the Appalachian Mountains. Creative partnerships have made it possible to stabilize, rehabilitate, or restore the most significant historic resources. In the gentle terrain of the upper gorge are restored and rehabilitated early European farmsteads. Within the gorge is a wealth of historically significant abandoned places, some in ruins and some stabilized and rehabilitated, where people worked and lived during the late 18th and 19th centuries, supplying the coal and lumber that helped fuel American industry.

■ **Scenic Resources**

The park’s setting – both dramatic and tranquil – inspires visitors in many ways. From overlooks, trails, and the river there are stunning views of natural lands – rugged forest, deep gorges, the river, mountain streams, and outstanding rock formations. The lack of modern intrusions adds to the drama of the park’s scenery.

■ **Visitor Experience**

Visitors to the park enjoy the many high quality experiences it has to offer – to explore history, to seek adventure, to feel solitude, to be challenged, and to share life experiences with others. Park facilities and programs reflect a central theme that helps visitors better understand how the park is organized, the opportunities that are available, and how to travel in the complicated network of local roads and trails in the park’s rugged terrain. Visitor facilities support desired experiences and are designed and located with minimal impact on park resources. Interpretive and educational programs are expanded to increase visitor understanding and appreciation of the park’s resources.



Scenic views – such as from the Brooks Falls overlook – are protected

■ **Regional Partnerships**

Throughout the region recreational opportunities are enhanced and the visitor base is growing. Solid partnerships exist between the National Park Service, the park’s neighboring communities, the Coal Heritage Area, regional economic development interests, and other state and federal agencies. Visitor programs are coordinated to tell complementary stories of the region’s heritage, such as the uniquely American industrial stories related to coal mining, railroading, and lumbering, as well as the story of post-industrial recovery. A network of scenic roads and trails connects the region’s attractions. Visitors stopping at attractions are informed about other places of interest and the programs offered throughout the region.



Cultural resources tell the stories of former life in the gorge, such as town life at Thurmond

■ **Local Partnerships**

Ecosystem restoration and smart growth strategies are in place in the park’s neighboring communities. The National Park Service’s inventory, monitoring, and recovery programs for native species contribute to community efforts to restore and maintain healthy ecosystems. Land use planning technical assistance from the National Park Service helps its community partners accomplish long-term goals that are compatible with the park’s purpose.



The New River offers diverse opportunities for visitor use and enjoyment

The park’s neighbors understand and appreciate its significance as a unit of the national park system. Local citizens are proud to have the National Park Service as a neighbor and assist in showcasing their heritage. The park’s volunteer program is popular; all ages can participate in meaningful ways to benefit resources and visitors.



Partnerships with local communities – such as Hinton – help to accomplish shared goals

1.9 Planning Issues and Concerns

1.9.1 Scoping Process

The NPS began project scoping in February 2004 when the Project Agreement and list of potential GMP issues were developed. The NPS initiated the public scoping process with a series of stakeholder meetings held during the week of June 28th, 2005. Scoping has been ongoing since that time, both internally with the NPS staff and externally with federal, state, and local agencies and with the general public (see Table 5.1). Objectives of the scoping process are to get information regarding:

- the issues related to management of the park
- the range of management alternatives that should be considered in the GMP to address those issues
- the types of impacts that should be used to evaluate and compare alternative management actions

Scoping activities included:

- identification of issues and impact topics
- review of other related projects and NEPA documents
- preparation of a public involvement plan
- identification of consultation and coordination required with other interested agencies and organizations
- development of a schedule for NEPA compliance which allowed for adequate time to prepare and distribute alternatives under consideration for public review and comment prior to selection of the preferred alternative
- initiation of required consultation with federal and local agencies

External scoping included a variety of public involvement activities beginning early in, and continuing throughout, the GMP planning process:

- the NPS hosted a series of stakeholder meetings involving approximately 40 people and groups during the week of June 27th, 2005 at the park headquarters in Glen Jean, West Virginia
- the NPS hosted public meetings on January 24, 25, and 26, 2006 to provide information about the GMP planning process and foundation for planning and to gather public comments
- the NPS issued a notice of intent to prepare the GMP in the *Federal Register* on January 30, 2006
- the NPS hosted public meetings on March 14, 15, and 16, 2006 to gather public comment related to issues at the park and future visions for the park

- the NPS hosted public meetings on May 9, 10, and 11, 2006 to present the resource analysis findings and to gather public comment about desired visitor experiences in the park
- the NPS hosted public meetings on July 25, 26, and 27, 2006 to gather public comment on a range of preliminary alternative concepts for future management of the park
- the NPS hosted public meetings on November 6, 7, and 8, 2007 to again gather public comment on alternatives for future management of the park – including a fifth alternative developed subsequent to the July 2006 public meetings
- the NPS issued press releases prior to each of the five public meetings on January 11, 2006, March 3, 2006, May 3, 2006, July 20, 2006, and October 22, 2007; each press release was faxed and emailed to eight television/radio stations and to local newspapers in Beckley, Fayetteville, Charleston, Summersville, Hinton, and Bluefield; public meeting announcements were placed in the *Fayette Tribute*, the *Register-Herald* (Beckley), and the *Hinton News*
- the NPS mailed newsletters to interested parties two weeks in advance of each set of public meetings
- the NPS made newsletters and announcements of upcoming events available electronically on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) web site (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/neri>), which provided opportunities for the public to review the planning team's findings and allowed the public to submit comments electronically through the PEPC system

Project scoping identified a wide range of issues and concerns relevant to management of New River Gorge National River. They fall into four general categories, as follows:

- issues and concerns that are appropriately addressed by the GMP
- issues and concerns that are addressed by servicewide law or policy guidance
- issues and concerns that will be addressed in future site specific detailed implementation plans
- issues and concerns that are beyond the scope of the GMP or future implementation plans

The *GMP/EIS Scoping Report* (NPS 2006b) summarizes the full range of issues and concerns identified during the GMP scoping process from June 2005 through September 2006. Section 1.9.2 below provides a discussion of the most significant of the issues and concerns falling into the first category of those that are

appropriately addressed by the new GMP. Management concerns are also summarized below in Chapter 3 for each topic addressed in the description of the park's affected environment.

Appendix B summarizes the servicewide laws and policies that guide how the NPS routinely manages units of the national park system. These address the issues and concerns raised during scoping that fall into the second category listed above.

1.9.2 Resource Management Issues and Concerns

■ Maintaining Natural Processes and Restoring Natural Systems

Since the middle of the last century the park environment has generally been recovering from the industrial activities that occurred in the park during the heyday of the coal mining, lumbering, and railroading in New River Gorge. While the park's forest and wildlife populations are recovering, there are present today forces in the ecosystem that threaten natural succession back to the healthy native mixed mesophytic forest community that existed prior to the arrival of European settlers and industrialists who cleared the primeval forest. Threats include fragmentation by roads, new residential development, and other human disturbances (both historic and present day), the introduction of non-native species, exotic pests, deer over-browsing, timber harvesting, fire (both wild and human-induced), and air pollution. Moderation of flood flows by Bluestone Dam also threatens the long-term viability of rare plant communities along the New River that are dependent upon periodic flooding.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) identifies how the NPS should limit future man-made forest fragmentation and restore areas fragmented by past development, 2) describes what the role of fire should be in maintaining forest communities, 3) provides options for maintaining rare riparian communities that are dependent upon periodic flooding, 4) identifies strategies for removal of non-native species and for treatment of exotic pests, and 5) identifies how the NPS should approach restoring important extirpated species and protecting threatened and endangered species and their habitat.

■ Water Quality Management

At the GMP community meetings members of the public most frequently identified poor water quality in the New River and its tributaries as the most important management issue facing the park. The state of West Virginia has designated the New River as "impaired" for its entire length in the park because of occasional fecal coliform concentrations in excess of water quality standards (WV DNR 2006). The state has also designated several tributaries to the New River as impaired. Probable human-caused sources of the contamination include residential and municipal development, wastewater discharge, farming, and livestock grazing outside the park, as well as recreational use inside the park.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) identifies how the NPS would partner with its community neighbors to address regional water quality management issues, and 2) identifies management actions that the NPS would take to address water quality impacts of recreational use inside the park.

■ **Cultural Resource Management**

The park's cultural resources require further documentation and evaluation to assess appropriate management actions. Many of the park's historic archeological sites, historic structures, and cultural landscapes have not been evaluated to determine their historic significance. There is no documentation of the park resources that traditionally associated people and groups currently use or used historically in the park. Additional archeological research is needed to document unidentified prehistoric archeological sites and to fully understand the significant sites investigated in previous field studies.

Many historic ruins and standing structures throughout the park are threatened by continued deterioration and loss due to weathering, decay, vandalism, salvage, and the destructive effects of rapid and dense vegetation growth. Appropriate management actions are needed to protect the park's most significant resources, to possess a high level of integrity, and to be intrinsically important to the park's mission. Stabilization and adaptive reuse of some of the park's most significant resources – such as standing structures at Thurmond – may require considerable investment for rehabilitation or restoration because of lead and asbestos contamination.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) establishes the extent to which the NPS would protect, preserve, or restore the cultural resources in the park, and 2) describes how the parks cultural resources would be interpreted.

■ **Protecting Scenic Resources in and around the Gorge**

One of the three elements of the park's purpose is to conserve outstanding resources and values in and around the New River Gorge. The potential for new development on private land within the park boundary and outside the park boundary threatens the ability of the NPS to protect these resources and values, particularly its ability to protect the park's outstanding scenic resources. The public has expressed considerable concern regarding the impacts of new development on the park's outstanding scenic resources. Viewshed studies indicate extensive areas in the park vicinity where new development – if it should occur in the future – could be visible from the park and could potentially impact the park setting and visitor experience. Addition of these areas to the park is impracticable because of potential community impacts and cost.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) identifies areas outside of the park boundary that are critical to the park's purpose but whose acquisition is

impracticable, and 2) describes how the NPS would cooperate with its local community partners and private landowners to minimize future adverse impacts on the park associated with potential development of these areas.

1.9.3 Visitor Experience and Visitor Use Issues and Concerns

■ Experiencing the Park and Visitor Orientation

Most visitors to New River Gorge National River experience few of the recreation opportunities the park has to offer and do not hear many of the stories that the park has to tell. Only about 25 percent of the park's visitors spend more than five hours in the park (Manni et al. 2005). Forty percent of park visitors stop at Canyon Rim Visitor Center (including the New River Bridge Overlook) and the Sandstone Visitor Center, after which the majority move on and do not visit other sites within the park. Twenty percent of visitors go to Grandview for day-use activities and to attend Theatre West Virginia and approximately 13 percent are paddlers on commercial river trips or private paddlers whose visits are generally confined to the river corridor (NPS 2008a). Crowding occurs at some sites – such as the most popular river accesses and overlooks – while much of the park receives light visitor use.

Reasons why visitors spend so little time in the park – or are there primarily for one purpose – are that they frequently do not understand what the park has to offer. Also, the park is so physically and thematically complicated that it is hard to understand, making planning a visit difficult. Many of the special places where its diverse stories are or can be told and its many recreation opportunities are hidden in the rugged terrain of the river gorge accessed via a complicated network of winding mountain roads.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) identifies where visitors would go in the park to hear its stories and experience the many recreation opportunities it offers, 2) identifies the types and levels of visitor activities that the park would accommodate while still protecting park resources and promoting stewardship, and 3) describes the general ways and degrees to which the park would tell all the park's stories through interpretive and educational programs.

■ Hiking and Equestrian Use

Many park users feel that the park's trail system does not provide a diversity of trail types that enables different visitor experiences for people of all ages and physical conditions. The park does not have a clearly defined opportunity for a multi-day backpacking trip. Many of the park's official trails are administrative roads which hikers do not find appealing to use. Equestrian use of trails is limited to one trail.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) identifies generally where new official hiking trail connections should be provided, 2) determines if equestrian use should be expanded and, if so, where it is appropriate in the park, and 3) describes how

the NPS could cooperate with its community neighbors and other agencies to provide trail connections outside the park.

■ **Biking**

Park users express strong interest in expanding opportunities for biking – particularly mountain biking. NPS policy permits bicycles only on state roads and the park’s official roads unless a special rule is promulgated allowing bicycles in other areas. Future expansion of the bike trail network to include biking would require preparation of a bike plan and promulgation of a special rule by the park superintendent.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) identifies where in the park additional biking trails should be considered, 2) what types of trails would be constructed (i.e., designated versus undesignated trails, tread surface type, etc.), and 2) identifies how the NPS would cooperate with biking user groups to plan, develop, and maintain trails.

■ **Hunting**

During the preparation of this draft EIS, Congress in Section 7115 of Public Law 111-11, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, which was signed into law on March 30, 2009, directed that “Section 1106 of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (16 USC 460m-20) is amended in the first sentence by striking “may” and inserting “shall”.” Hunting, which had been discretionary at New River Gorge until the passage of Public Law 111-11 in March 2009, is no longer discretionary but is now authorized. Title 36 CFR § 2.2(b)(4) provides: “Where hunting or trapping or both are authorized, such activities shall be conducted in accordance with Federal law and the laws of the State within whose exterior boundaries a park area or a portion thereof is located. Nonconflicting State laws are adopted as a part of these regulations.”

Management guidance is needed to ensure that the hunting program meets park and user needs.

■ **Pedestrian Access across Railroad Rights-of-Way**

The CSX Mainline runs at the river level through the entire park on river right as well as on river left¹ from Cunard downstream. Frequent freight and coal trains move daily on the Mainline through the park. The only legal pedestrian and vehicular access that currently exists across the CSX right-of-way exists is where public roads cross the tracks. At many locations in the park visitors frequently illegally cross the CSX right-of-way on foot to reach the river, exposing them to potential injury from passing trains.

¹ *River Left (RL)* – includes the shoreline and adjacent upland on the left side of the New River when looking downstream
River Right (RR) – includes the shoreline and adjacent upland on the right side of the New River when looking downstream

Management guidance is needed that identifies where in the park actions should be taken to provide legal pedestrian access across the CSX right-of-way to the river.

■ **Access and Parking**

Many visitors perceive road access to the park to be poor and limiting to their park experiences. Limited road access is largely the result of the difficulty in building and maintaining safe roads in the gorge. Many locations within or adjoining the park used by visitors for access have no formal parking facilities or do not have adequate parking to meet visitor demand more than 80 percent of the time. Parking is particularly problematic at river access sites and at trailheads used for climbing areas.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) identifies what areas in the park would be opened for public access by new roads and/or by improvements to existing roads, 2) describes how additional parking would be provided at functionally obsolete facilities and where new parking facilities are needed, 3) describes options for innovative transportation solutions that could provide alternate means to get visitors to sites that cannot accommodate additional vehicular access, and 4) identifies sites outside of the park boundary where visitor parking facilities are needed to enable safe visitor access to popular sites within the park.

■ **Other Visitor Facilities**

The public has expressed a strong desire for enhanced facilities and new day use areas for their activities throughout the park. Primary among the visitor facility issues are the following:

- crowding at river accesses and on the river occurs on peak visitation days as a result of outfitted paddler trip logistics
- the supply of drive-to camping and non-designated primitive campsites generally does not meet demand
- camping facilities are not available in the vicinity of climbing areas
- there are not enough opportunities for picnicking at the river level
- comfort stations are not available or are inadequate to meet demand in many visitor use areas
- visitors with disabilities would like better access to the park

Management guidance is needed that: 1) describes the general types, sizes, and locations of public or private facilities that would support park activities and visitor experiences, and 2) describes the potential partners who could assist the NPS with providing additional visitor facilities.

1.9.4 Socio-Economic Environment Issues and Concerns

■ Sustaining Communities within the Park

Since establishment of the park the NPS has acquired properties within the park boundary from willing sellers as funding has allowed. Acquisition has occurred in all areas of the park, ranging from the most remote locations to rural settlements to larger communities. In some locations the NPS has acquired entire communities, buying property from willing sellers, and then removing structures, except where they are historically significant or can be efficiently used to support park operations. The result is that some communities in the park have disappeared, today leaving only a few small communities and named settlement areas within the park boundaries.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) determines if the practice of acquiring property within the park's communities should continue, 2) – if a decision is made to no longer acquire property in communities – describes how the NPS will partner with its neighbors inside the park to preserve community character and quality of life in a manner consistent with the park's purpose, and 3) describes how the NPS will manage the land that it owns within these communities.

1.9.5 Land Protection Issues and Concerns

■ Land Protection Priorities

The NPS currently responds to all private property owners who express interest in willingly selling their property to the federal government for park purposes. In some years land acquisition funds and staff capacity to complete real estate transactions have not kept pace with landowner interests in selling property.

Management guidance is needed that identifies private properties in the park that should be given high priority for negotiation and acquisition because they: 1) include significant resources and values that are fundamental to the park, 2) are properties which could be used for needed visitor use facilities, and/or 3) are properties which could be used to enhance park operations and management.

■ Stewardship of Private Land Remaining within in the Park Boundary

In general there is a need for better cooperation and communications between the NPS and private landowners who live in the park. Private landowners have concern regarding the future use of their property, and possible government interference with what they can do with their land. Conversely, some property owners have made changes to their properties since the park's establishment that have had adverse impacts on resources that are fundamental to the park's purpose.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) identifies elements of a stewardship program designed to enhance cooperative working relationships between the NPS

and the remaining private landowners in the park, and 2) identifies the types of private properties in the park where the stewardship program should be focused.

1.9.6 Partnerships Issues and Concerns

■ Gateway Community Partnerships

Partnerships between the NPS and its gateway community neighbors have the potential to benefit both parties. The counties and incorporated cities in the park vicinity make management decisions that directly and indirectly affect the park's resources and the experiences that visitors have. These relate to overall community development, public investments in the transportation system, and the provision of facilities and services, such as water supply, storm drainage, and wastewater management. The NPS has technical skills and experience that are of use to local communities in dealing with the issues and challenges they face. Similarly the park can benefit from successful local resource management programs that enhance environmental conditions – such as water quality management – and from thoughtful land use planning and implementation of smart growth strategies for the lands adjoining the park and the places where park visitors stay while visiting the park.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) generally describes the types of technical assistance that the NPS could provide to its neighboring community partners, and 2) identifies the areas adjoining the park or that provide access to the park that are of interest because they already impact or have the potential to impact park resources or the visitor experience.

■ Regional Tourism Partnerships

Many public and not-for-profit organizations in southern West Virginia share an interest in conservation of the region's natural and cultural resources. For some the mission strictly relates to conservation of resources, for others the interests are focused on recreational use of resources or educational programs related to resources. For many organizations their mission is to revitalize the region's economy through growth of the tourism industry. By cooperatively working together these entities – including the National Park Service – could more effectively and efficiently accomplish their disparate yet overlapping conservation, interpretive, education, and economic development goals. The National Park Service and the three parks that it owns and operates in the region is one of the most significant entities present in the region, and its parks are the major economic generator within the tourism economy.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) generally describes how the NPS could partner with the public and not-for-profit organizations in the region, 2) identifies the potential new attractions within the park that could be considered in the future, such as commercial lodging facilities and adaptive reuse of rehabilitated historic

buildings, 3) and generally identifies actions that would promote growth in park visitation.

■ **Other Partnerships**

While many partnerships help the NPS accomplish its mission at the park the possible benefits of expanded and new partnerships are diverse. The parks volunteer program could be greatly expanded, particularly through the park's newly created friends group. Partnerships with the two state parks and other state agencies having management interests and responsibilities in the park (such as the West Virginia Department of Highways (WV DOH), Department of Environmental Protection (WV DEP), Department of Natural Resources (WV DNR), and State Historic Preservation Office (WV SHPO)) could help accomplish mutual goals. Several user groups have offered assistance with planning, developing, and maintaining visitor facilities in the park.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) identifies the general resource management and visitor programs that could benefit from increased volunteer participation, 2) describes the shared goals of state management entities and the NPS that would benefit from enhanced partnering, and 3) identifies user groups with technical skills and institutional capacity to assist with providing appropriate visitor facilities.

■ **Local Appreciation of the Park**

Congress established New River Gorge National River as a unit of the national park system to conserve its scenery, natural and historic resources, and wildlife, while at the same time providing for its enjoyment in a manner leaving it unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. Many park users – from the local area and from the region – do not appreciate the NPS mission at the park and do not understand the mandate that the NPS has to protect resources and to enforce NPS management policies regarding activities within the park. Many feel that rather than making park resources more accessible, the national park designation and the ensuing park management by the NPS has created barriers to public use and enjoyment of those resources. Residents complain that since the park was created and land acquired by the federal government they are no longer able to do many things that were previously permitted or ignored by landowners.

Management guidance is needed that: 1) makes the park more relevant to local users, 2) enhances local understanding of the park's resources and their significance, 3) communicates to the public that NPS management and enforcement actions are aimed at protecting the resources that the public has enjoyed for generations and continues to enjoy today at the park, and 4) describes strategies for generally promoting environmental stewardship in the community.

Table 1.3

New River Gorge National River
Impact Topics RETAINED for Further Analysis

Topics

- Physiography, Geology and Soils
- Floodplains
- Water Quality
- Vegetation
- Aquatic Wildlife
- Terrestrial Wildlife
- Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species
- Scenic Resources
- Archeological Resources
- Cultural Landscapes
- Historic Structures
- Ethnographic Resources
- Regional and Local Economy
- Communities
- Visitor Use and Visitor Experience
- Park Access
- Park Operations

Table 1.4

New River Gorge National River
Impact Topics DISMISSED from Further Analysis

Topics

- Wetlands
- Ecologically Critical and Unique Natural Areas
- Air Quality
- Natural Visibility
- Lightscape and Night Skies
- Soundscapes
- Prime Farmland and Unique Soils
- Hazardous or Toxic Contaminants
- Climate Change
- Energy Requirements and Conservation Potential
- Natural and Depletable Resources
- Wilderness
- Wild and Scenic River Resources
- Park Museum Collections
- Indian Trust Resources
- Indian Sacred Sites
- Environmental Justice

1.10 Impact Topics

1.10.1 Impact Topics Retained for Further Analysis

Understanding the consequences of making one management decision versus another is important to evaluating the GMP alternatives. As a result NPS GMPs are typically accompanied by an environmental impact statement (EIS) that identifies and analyzes the anticipated impacts of alternative management actions on resources and on park visitors and neighbors. This GMP/EIS includes an analysis of the potential impacts of four action alternatives and the no action alternative, which is a continuation of current management. The alternatives are described in Chapter 2. To focus the environmental analysis, the issues identified during scoping were used to derive a number of impact topics. Impact topics are park resources and values that could be affected, either beneficially or adversely, by implementing any of the alternatives under consideration. Selection of the impact topics retained for analysis is based on federal laws, regulations, Executive Orders, NPS Management Policies (NPS 2006a), NPS staff knowledge of the park and the issues and concerns expressed by the public and other agencies during the GMP scoping process. Chapter 3 – Affected Environment contains a thorough description of the resources and values related to the impact topics retained for the impact analysis. Chapter 4 – Environmental Consequences – provides a detailed analysis of the impacts of the actions associated with the five alternatives under consideration.

1.10.2 Impact Topics Considered and Dismissed from Further Analysis

Not all impact topics are relevant to all parks or to all management decisions. As a result, impact topics are divided into two groups – those for which impacts of the alternatives are evaluated in detail and those which are dismissed from detailed analysis. Impact topics are dismissed from detailed analysis if they are found to be not relevant to the evaluation of GMP alternatives because either: 1) implementing the alternatives would have no effect or a negligible effect on the resource or condition, or 2) the resource or condition does not occur in the park. Following is a discussion of the impact topics dismissed from detailed analysis in this GMP/EIS, with the rationale for dismissal.

■ **Wetlands**

All wetlands in units of the national park system are protected and managed in accordance with Executive Order 11990, “Protection of Wetlands”; NPS Director’s Order 77-1, “Wetland Protection”, and its accompanying handbook (NPS 2002d); and *NPS Management Policies* (NPS 2006a). This guidance requires the NPS to protect and enhance natural wetland values, and requires the examination of impacts on wetlands. It is NPS policy to avoid affecting wetlands and to minimize impacts when they are unavoidable.

Wetlands in New River Gorge National River generally include the following:

- permanently flooded riverine and lacustrine wetlands within the channel of the New River
- numerous scattered temporarily or seasonally flooded wetlands within the floodplain of the New River, including riverine wetlands, palustrine forested wetlands, palustrine scrub-shrub deciduous wetlands, and palustrine emergent wetlands
- numerous scattered permanently and semipermanently flooded palustrine wetlands in diked/impounded and excavated areas generally located in upland areas that have been mined
- a few scattered palustrine forested wetlands, palustrine scrub-shrub deciduous wetlands, and palustrine emergent wetlands in upland areas
- Kates Branch wetland, located at the Kates Branch spring in the Glade Creek watershed, is a locally significant wetland composed of palustrine emergent seasonally flooded wetland and palustrine scrub-shrub/palustrine forested broad leaved seasonally flooded saturated wetland influenced by beaver activity. Within the Kates Branch wetland are several species of rare plants, including many that reach their southernmost or northernmost distributional limits within the wetlands (Eye 1981).

No adverse impacts to the park's wetlands are anticipated under any of the GMP alternatives. Areas that may include wetlands would be surveyed and wetlands delineated and mapped prior to project design to ensure that any development undertaken by the NPS would not affect these areas. No uses of water originating from wetlands are proposed. The wetland impact topic has been dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Ecologically Critical and Unique Natural Resources**

CEQ NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1508.27(3)) require federal agencies to assess the effects of their actions on ecologically critical areas. Ecologically critical places and unique natural features in the park include habitats of rare, threatened or endangered species. These habitat areas will be addressed in this GMP/EIS under the "Endangered or Threatened Plants and Animals and Habitat" impact topic.

Ecologically critical places in the park also include the aquatic habitat of the New River, which has been designated "Resource Category 1" by the US Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to its mitigation policy (46 CFR 7656-7663). This will be addressed in this GMP/EIS under the "Aquatic Wildlife and Habitat" impact topic.

■ **Air Quality**

The 1963 Clean Air Act, as amended (42 USC 74-1 *et seq.*) requires federal land managers to protect park air quality. *NPS Management Policies* (NPS 2006a)

address the need to analyze air quality during park planning.

Review of air quality data for the New River Gorge National River region reveals the following:

- New River Gorge National River is designated an air quality attainment area and a Class II Clean Air Area. This designation establishes a limit on the allowable increase in sulfur dioxide and particulate matter concentrations, effectively preventing additional pollutant-emitting industrial development in the park vicinity. Because the park is within a Class II Clean Air Area, NPS is not required to conduct air quality or visibility monitoring within the park.
- The closest ambient air quality monitors to the park are located in Greenbrier County (for daily maximum hourly ozone – O₃), Charleston (for monthly average sulfur dioxide – SO₂), and Beckley (for particulates – PM_{2.5}). Concentrations of ozone, sulfur dioxide and particulates recorded from 2000 to 2003 at these monitors revealed concentrations below the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (Aldehoch 2003).
- Monitoring data recorded in Babcock State Park since 1983 indicate that sulfate concentrations and atmospheric deposition of sulfate have decreased over the past 20 years, there has been no overall trend in concentration and deposition of nitrate, and there has been a slight increase in concentration and deposition of ammonium (Mahan 2005). Monitoring data recorded in Eggleston since 1989 show a slight increase in dry nitrogen deposition and no trend in dry sulfur deposition (Mahan 2005).

All the GMP alternatives would have local short-term negligible adverse impacts on air quality caused by fugitive dust from soil erosion and disturbance during construction and maintenance of park facilities. These impacts would be mitigated through requirements for contractors and NPS maintenance personnel to apply water and dust control agents at construction sites. GMP Alternatives 1 through 5 would have local long-term negligible adverse impacts on air quality caused by increased local traffic during peak visitation periods. Because both short-term and long-term adverse impacts would be negligible, the air quality impact topic has been dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Natural Visibility**

Natural visibility enhances the extent to which visitors can experience the park's scenic resources. At New River Gorge natural visibility remains quite high despite problems with regional haze elsewhere in the state. Photographic monitoring data collected at Grandview from 1995 to 2000 indicate that summer exhibits the poorest visibility, with slight, moderate, and considerable haze intensities occurring 43 percent, 20 percent, and 17 percent of the time, respectively (Mahan 2005).

Visibility is best in winter, with slight, moderate, and considerable haze intensities occurring 64 percent, 4 percent, and 1 percent of the time, respectively (Mahan 2005). (Weather concealed views the remainder of the year.)

Data from regional haze monitoring sites nearest to the park have revealed similar findings. The nearest sites – located at Dolly Sods Wilderness Area (WV), James River Wilderness Area (VA), and Linville Gorge Wilderness Area (NC) – exhibit patterns of poorer visibility in summer and higher visibility in winter and spring. Reduced visibility at these sites is generally the result of extinction (the light lost over distance due to scattering and absorption of gases) due to increases in ammonium sulfate (Aldehoch 2003).

Under the Clean Air Act, as amended (42 USC 74-1 *et seq.*), Congress has established a national goal for visibility to prevent any future impairment and to remedy any manmade impairment of visibility in Class I areas resulting from manmade air pollutants. As this time, New River Gorge National River is not designated a Class I area under the Clean Air Act. Consequently the park is not subject to the regional haze rule adopted pursuant to the Clean Air Act (40 CFR Part 51, July 1, 1999) and is not included in the national visibility monitoring program known as the Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments (IMPROVE) program.

All the GMP alternatives would have local short-term negligible impacts on visibility caused by fugitive dust from soil erosion and disturbance during construction and maintenance of park facilities. These impacts would be mitigated through requirements for contractors and NPS maintenance personnel to apply water and dust control agents at construction sites. GMP Alternatives 1 through 5 would have local long-term negligible impacts on visibility caused by increased local traffic during peak visitation periods. Because both short-term and long-term impacts would be negligible, the natural visibility impact topic has been dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Lightscape and Night Skies**

NPS Management Policies (NPS 2006a) require the NPS to preserve to the greatest extent possible, the natural darkness and other components of the natural lightscape. The natural lightscape is composed of the natural resources and values that exist in the absence of human-caused light.

Lightscape and night sky baseline assessment information is not available for New River Gorge National River. However predictive modeling of night sky conditions at the park in 1992 revealed a 5.72 mean Shaaf Class for the entire park and a Shaaf Class of 6 in 76.4 percent of the park (Albers et al. 2001). This indicates that in 1992 most of the park was characterized by relatively pristine night sky conditions

(Shaaf Class 7 = pristine) and that artificial lighting from nearby developed areas affected a relatively small portion of the park.

All the GMP alternatives would have long-term negligible impacts on the park's lightscape and night skies. For all GMP alternatives future management of the park will comply with NPS management policies to protect natural darkness and other components of the natural lightscape. The NPS will restrict the use of artificial lighting to those areas where security, basic human safety, and specific cultural resource requirements must be met. Minimal-impact lighting techniques will be used including shielded light fixtures to prevent light spill over and use of low-intensity lights. Artificial lighting, when used, will be shielded to prevent the disruption of the night sky, subterranean processes in the park's abandoned mines, physiological processes of living organisms, and other natural processes. The NPS will also seek the cooperation of park visitors, neighbors, and local government agencies to prevent or minimize the intrusion of artificial light into the night scene of the park's ecosystem. Therefore lightscape and night skies impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ Soundscapes

NPS Management Policies (NPS 2006a) require the NPS to preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the natural soundscapes of parks. These encompass all the natural sounds that occur in parks, including the physical capacity for transmitting those natural sounds and the interrelationships among park natural sounds of different frequencies and volumes. The NPS is also required to restore to the natural condition wherever possible those park soundscapes that have become degraded by unnatural sound (noise), and to protect natural landscapes from unacceptable impacts.

Measurements of baseline acoustic conditions are not available for New River Gorge National River. In general natural ambient sound levels are very low in most areas of the park, except in the New River vicinity where high levels of natural sounds emanate from rapidly moving water. Human-made sounds originating in the park emanate from park operations, visitor activities, and traffic on park roads. Where land within the park remains in private ownership human-made sounds are associated with various residential landowner activities. Other extraneous sound generators in the park include traffic on public roads – particularly I-64 and US Route 19 – and train traffic on the CSX Corporation's rights-of-way.

All the GMP alternatives would have a short-term negligible adverse impact on the park's natural soundscape. Construction activities associated with planned new or modified facilities or transportation projects would generate temporary unwanted construction-related sound that would be direct and short-term in nature and concentrated in areas near construction sites. In accordance with normal construction practice, noise-generating construction equipment would be equipped

with effective noise control devices. All equipment would be properly maintained to ensure that no additional unwanted sound would be generated. The park would further prevent and/or minimize unwanted construction sound by managing its intensity, frequency, magnitude, and duration in any one place on any particular day.

All the GMP alternatives would also have long-term negligible adverse impact on the park's natural soundscape caused by increased traffic. While the mix of vehicles using park roads or vehicle speeds would generally remain unchanged, there would be some minor shifts in traffic patterns and local increases in traffic volumes in some areas of the park. These shifts and increases would not likely result in measurable long-term sound impacts. Therefore the soundscape impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ Prime Farmland and Unique Soils

CEQ NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1508.27) require federal agencies to assess the impacts of their actions on soils classified by the US Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as prime farmland or unique soils. Prime farmlands are defined as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is also available for these uses. Unique farmlands are lands other than prime farmland that are used for the production of specific high value food and fiber crops.

The NRCS has classified several soil series within the park as prime farmland; no soil series within the park are classified by the NRCS as unique soils. Prime farmland soils include the following soil types: Lily loam (LIB), Gilpin silt loam (GaB and GIB), Shouns silt loam (ShB), Meckesville (McB), Kanawha fine sandy loam (Ka), Ashton fine sandy loam (As), Pope (Po), and Rayne silt loam (RaB). These soils occur on small nearly level areas on ridgetops and on the floodplain and terraces of the New River generally upstream of Meadow Creek. Agricultural use in these areas is limited to a number of small farms along River Road in the vicinity of Sandstone Falls. Many areas have been irreversibly converted to nonagricultural uses or severely disturbed as a result of railroad development and mining-related activities.

No major developments would occur in any of the GMP alternatives in areas of undisturbed prime farmland soils. Recreational facilities such as trails could be built in floodplains and on ridgetops that contain prime farmland soils; however, these facilities would typically be located in areas that are not currently used for agriculture and the total area of prime farmland soil that would be converted to trail surface or otherwise irreversibly converted to nonagricultural uses would be negligible. Therefore the prime farmland and unique soils impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Climate Change**

Climate change refers to any significant changes in average climatic conditions or variability for an extended period. Recent reports by the US Climate Change Science Program, the National Academy of Sciences, and the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provide evidence that climate change is occurring and will accelerate in the coming decades. While climate change is a global phenomenon, it manifests differently depending on regional and local factors.

Predictive climate change information for West Virginia and specifically for the geographic area of New River Gorge National River is limited. The effects of climate change in the state are expected to be variable based on elevation and other factors. Generally, it can be anticipated that climate change induced effects will include increased average temperatures and higher precipitation. Considering that the majority of West Virginia is forested, the most substantial changes can be expected to occur to the forest vegetation and the species and biological processes that depend upon them. State-specific and regional predictions related to climate change and its potential environmental effects are discussed below.

Climate change will affect New River Gorge National River and areas of the northeast United States resulting in direct impacts to the ecosystem, agriculture, forestry, fishing, tourism, and other outdoor activities, such as recreation dependent on water quantity and snowfall. Historic climate trends in the northeast show an overall decrease in the number of average days with snow on the ground, an increase in average temperature, and varying changes in precipitation depending on the specific area of the region. Computer models designed to predict trends in climatic condition suggest that the recently observed trends will continue. These trends are expected to result in warmer winters and longer and hotter summers. Some models project more frequent occurrence of intense extreme weather events. These changing conditions could result in intensified flood events, changes in stream flow, more frequent and severe storm damage, and increased fire activity.

Environmental impacts of climate change in the northeast could manifest in a multitude of ways. A change in average temperatures of even 4.5 degrees over the next century could change the forested habitats of the region. The extensive forests of the northeast which provide important roles in carbon storage, wildlife habitat function, tourism, and forest-dependent industries could be affected significantly. Climate models suggest that one of the region's major forest types – maple/beech/birch – is very likely to be completely displaced by more southern forest types. With the changing climatic factors and subsequent environmental components it is projected that forest pest species and weedy plant species will be better suited to take advantage of the changing conditions and place further pressure on these important habitats. More severe weather patterns could lead to changing river and stream flows, lead to increased erosion, and create challenges

for management of recreational activities and park facility functions. Climate change could also affect the visitors' park experience in a variety of ways, including:

- changing character of fall foliage with a change in the forest type
- changes in wildlife activities, such as fishing and bird watching
- longer summer season
- shorter winter recreation season
- changes in river hydrology affecting river recreation and aquatic resources
- increasing frequency and intensity of severe storms

Climate change is a far-reaching and long-term issue that will affect the park, its resources, visitors, and management beyond the scope of this GMP/EIS and its 15-20 year timeframe. Although some effects of climate change are considered known or likely to occur, many potential impacts are unknown. Much depends on the rate at which temperature will continue to rise and whether global emissions of greenhouse gases can be mitigated before serious ecological thresholds are reached. Climate change science is a rapidly advancing field and new information is being collected and released continually. Because the drivers of climate change are largely outside park control, the NPS alone does not have the ability to prevent climate change from happening. The full extent of climate change impacts to resources and visitor experience is not known, nor do managers and policy makers yet agree on the most effective response mechanisms for minimizing impacts and adapting to change.

With these pressing challenges there are three general management concerns upon which individual parks should focus:

- external changes affecting internal resources and management (how a park is different now, and how it might be different in the future as a result of global climate change)
- internal decision-making and how it affects external/global process such as a park's individual contribution to climate changing factors such as our carbon footprint and what park managers are doing to reduce it (see Energy Requirements and Conservation Potential below)
- educating park visitors on the topic of climate change and bringing together groups to address issues in a meaningful way to address potential impacts at a local and national level

More specifically at New River Gorge National River the NPS would work directly on climate change issues by participating in the Climate Friendly Parks (CFP) program to learn more about the issues the NPS faces and utilize the Climate Leadership In the Parks (CLIP) tool with the goal of identifying, quantifying, and reducing the

park's greenhouse gas emissions. The park would need to continue to assess the effects that climate change is already having on the park ecosystems, as well as effects scientists expect to see in the future. Many of the indicators being used in the NPS vital signs monitoring program would be useful in documenting changes in the parks ecosystem with climate change. The CLIP tool and other programs that are developed as NPS continues to improve understanding of this challenge would assist with taking action to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, including emissions associated with facilities, visitation, and business practices. As the park learns more concerning the specific impacts of climate change managers would formulate adaptive management strategies and actions that may enhance the resilience of the ecosystem. Examples could include working with other land management agencies to ensure that migration corridors are established or enhanced that would facilitate the opportunity for bird and other mobile species to move northward or to higher elevations while the southern regions continue to warm and forest environments change and biomes shift with the changing climate.

An additional component of the park's response to climate change would be education. While incorporating the best scientific knowledge available the park would develop interpretive materials and programs to explain to the public how climate change is affecting the national parks and changes that scientists expect in the future, as well as to highlight steps underway by the NPS to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It would become increasingly important for NPS to develop strategies to incorporate current and emerging knowledge about the potential affects at the local level while working with visitors and communities to be as prepared as possible to address them.

The issues presented above and the general framework of how the park would move forward to address them, are common to all the GMP alternatives. As a result the global warming impact topic was eliminated from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Energy Requirements and Conservation Potential**

NPS Management Policies (NPS 2006a) require the NPS to conduct its activities in ways that use energy wisely and economically.

Management actions in all GMP alternatives would comply with NPS sustainable energy design and energy management requirements. Any facility development, whether it is a new building, a renovation, or an adaptive reuse of an existing facility, must include improvements in energy efficiency and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for both the building envelope and the mechanical systems that support the facility. Maximum energy efficiency should be achieved. Energy-efficient construction projects should be used as an educational opportunity for the visiting public. All projects that include visitor services facilities must incorporate Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards to achieve a silver rating.

In all GMP alternatives the facilities, vehicles, and equipment would be operated and managed to minimize consumption of energy, water, and nonrenewable fuels. Full consideration would be given to the use of alternative fuels. Alternative transportation programs and the use of bio-based fuels would be encouraged, where appropriate. Renewable sources of energy and new developments in energy-efficiency technology, including products from the recycling of materials and waste, would be used where appropriate and cost-effective over the life cycle. However, energy efficiencies would not be pursued if they will cause adverse impacts on park resources and values.

Because of these commitments to energy conservation and sustainability energy requirements and conservation potential was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Natural and Depletable Resources**

NPS Management Policies (NPS 2006a) require the NPS to apply principles for sustainable design throughout the national park system. Sustainability is the concept of living within the environment with the least impact on the environment. The objectives of sustainability within the NPS are to design facilities to minimize adverse effects on natural and cultural values, to reflect their environmental setting and to maintain and encourage biodiversity; to operate and maintain facilities to promote their sustainability; and to illustrate and promote conservation principles and practices through sustainable design and ecologically sensitive use.

Through use of sustainable design concepts all of the GMP alternatives would conserve natural resources and would not result in a substantial loss of natural or depletable resources. Therefore the natural and depletable resources impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Wilderness**

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the National Wilderness Preservation System to include federal lands found through wilderness eligibility assessment and study to possess wilderness characteristics. The Act mandates a policy for the enduring protection of wilderness resources for public use and enjoyment. Based on the findings of the Wilderness Eligibility Assessment for New River Gorge National River (see Section 1.11 and Appendix D) – completed in coordination with this GMP planning process – the NPS has determined that all park lands within the current park boundary do not meet the primary eligibility criteria for wilderness designation and are therefore ineligible for further wilderness study. Therefore the wilderness impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Wild and Scenic River Resources**

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act establishes a system of rivers that possess outstanding scenic, recreational, geological, cultural, or historic values, and

maintains their free-flowing conditions for future generations. The New River was found to possess several characteristics making it eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, including wildlife, cultural, recreational, and geological outstandingly remarkable values. The New River, however, has not been recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System nor designated a Wild and Scenic River. Management actions included in the GMP alternatives would not adversely impact the values that potentially qualify the New River for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Therefore the wild and scenic river resources impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Park Museum Collections**

NPS Management Policies (NPS 2006a) require the NPS to collect, protect, preserve, provide access to, and use objects, specimens, and archival and manuscript museum collections in the disciplines of archeology, ethnography, history, biology, geology, and paleontology to aid understanding among park visitors, and to advance knowledge in the humanities and sciences. The museum collections at New River Gorge National River pertain to the areas of history, archives, archeology, and natural history. The *House Report 109-80* (NPS 2008) and the *Collection Management Plan, New River Gorge National River* (NPS 2004) provides recommendations related to collection documentation, archives and manuscript collections, archeological collections, collections storage, museum environment, security and fire protection, staffing, and programming and funding sources. Implementation of these recommendations is included as part of GMP Alternative 1 – Continuation of Current Management and is also common to the four action alternatives (GMP Alternatives 2, 3, 4 and 5). These actions would result in a major long-term beneficial impact on the park's collection. Therefore the park museum collections impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Indian Trust Resources**

Secretarial Order 3175 requires that any anticipated impacts to Indian Trust Resources from a proposed project or action be explicitly addressed in environmental documents. There are no Indian Trust resources within the boundaries of New River Gorge National River. None of the land within the park is held in trust by the Secretary of the Interior for the benefit of Indians due to their status as Indians. Therefore the Indian Trust Resources impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Indian Sacred Sites**

The Native American Graves Protection Act (25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.) and Executive Order 13007, "Indian Sacred Sites" require managers of federal lands to avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of Indian sacred sites. Because there are no federally-recognized Indian Tribes associated with New River Gorge National

River, there are no sacred sites as defined by Executive Order 13007 with the boundaries of New River Gorge National River. Therefore the Indian sacred sites impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

■ **Environmental Justice**

Executive Order 12891, “General Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations,” requires all federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental impacts of their programs and policies on minorities or low-income populations or communities.

According to the most recent US Census data (U.S. Census 2000), minority and low-income populations as defined in E.O. 12891 reside in Summers, Raleigh, and Fayette Counties, in the vicinity of New River Gorge National River. These groups were fully included in public scoping. No issues or concerns specific to these populations were identified as a result of public scoping. No management actions under any of the alternatives evaluated in the GMP/EIS are directed at minority/low income populations nor are any of the potential effects of the alternatives believed to have disproportionate effects on minority/low income populations. For these reasons the environmental justice impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this GMP/EIS.

1.11 Wilderness Eligibility Assessment

NPS Management Policies (NPS 2006a) require that all lands and waters within the national park system be evaluated for their eligibility for inclusion within the national wilderness preservation system. If lands are determined eligible for wilderness, they must be managed in accordance with a wilderness management plan that ensures that their wilderness character is preserved. If needed, the wilderness management plan would be included as an action component of the park’s new GMP.

1.11.1 Purpose of the Wilderness Eligibility Assessment

The new GMP for New River Gorge National River includes a wilderness eligibility assessment (see Appendix D). The purpose of the wilderness eligibility assessment is to evaluate all NPS lands and waters within the park boundary for their eligibility for inclusion in the national wilderness preservation system. To be eligible for wilderness designation lands and waters must: 1) be at least five thousand acres in size (or a sufficient size to make practicable their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition), and 2) possess wilderness characteristics as identified in the Wilderness Act of 1964. Characteristics that generally qualify an area for wilderness eligibility include the following:

- the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by humans, where humans are visitors and do not remain

- the area is undeveloped and retains its primeval character and influence without permanent improvements or human habitation
- the area generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of human work substantially unnoticeable
- the area is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions
- the area offers outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation

Lands that have been logged, farmed, grazed, mined, or otherwise used in ways not involving extensive development or alteration of the landscape may also be considered suitable for wilderness designation if, at the time of assessment, the effects of these activities are substantially unnoticeable or their wilderness character could be maintained or restored through appropriate management actions.

1.11.2 Need for the Wilderness Eligibility Assessment

The wilderness eligibility assessment is needed for the following reasons:

- to comply with *NPS Management Policies* (NPS 2006a) requiring that all NPS lands and waters be evaluated for their eligibility for inclusion in the national wilderness preservation system
- to notify the public of its intentions to conduct the assessment and publish a determination that lands are either “eligible” or “ineligible” for further wilderness study
- to ensure that the park’s new GMP includes management recommendations for visitor experiences and resource conditions that are consistent with preservation of wilderness resources and wilderness character, if determined appropriate

1.11.3 Findings of the Wilderness Eligibility Assessment

Based on the findings of the Wilderness Eligibility Assessment for the park (see Appendix D) the NPS has determined that park land within the current park boundary do not meet the primary eligibility criteria for wilderness designation and are therefore ineligible for further wilderness study. Park-owned lands within the boundary of the park will therefore not be subject to wilderness preservation provisions but will be managed in accordance with the NPS Organic Act of 1906 and other laws, executive orders, regulations, and policies applicable to units of the national park system.

1.12 Park Boundary Adjustment

As part of the GMP planning process the NPS reviews the park boundary and – if appropriate – makes recommendations for potential boundary adjustments.

Boundary adjustments may be made for the following purposes:

- to protect significant resources and values
- to enhance opportunities for public enjoyment related to the park purposes
- to protect park resources critical to fulfilling the park’s purposes
- to address operational and management issues

The NPS has completed a boundary study to identify the need for a boundary adjustment for these purposes and to consider all alternatives in lieu of a boundary adjustment that would protect the park’s resources and/or address management issues (see Appendix E).

■ **Boundary Adjustments to Address Operational and Management Issues**

Findings of the Boundary Study have concluded that seven boundary adjustments are needed to enhance the visitor experience and to address operational issues (see Table 1.5 and Appendix E). Collectively the seven proposed boundary adjustments would add approximately 222.2 acres to the park.

Findings of the Boundary Study have also indicated that there are three areas where it would be appropriate to delete certain privately-owned lands from the park (see Table 1.6 and Appendix E). Collectively the three proposed boundary adjustments would delete approximately 75.4 acres from the park.

■ **Actions Recommended to Protect Significant Resources and Values**

The park’s enabling legislation states that one element of the park’s purpose is “to conserve outstanding resources and values in and around the New River Gorge” (PL 95-625 Section 1101). The legislation further states that “the Secretary shall on his own initiative, or at the request of any local government having jurisdiction over land located in or adjacent to the gorge area, assist and consult with the appropriate officials and employees of such local government in establishing zoning laws or ordinances which will assist in achieving the purposes of this title” (PL 95-625 Section 1104).

The potential for new development on private land threatens the ability of the NPS to conserve outstanding resources and values in and around the gorge. The public has expressed considerable concern regarding the impacts of new development on these resources and values.

Viewshed and natural resource studies indicate extensive areas in the park vicinity where new development – if it should occur in the future – would be visible from the

Table 1.5

**New River Gorge National River
Locations where Park Boundary
Adjustments are Proposed
to Add Areas to the Park**

- **Junkyard** (61 acres) – Located south of Burma Road; addition would provide parking for trail access to Junkyard rock climbing area and a potential alternative location for a climber campground
- **Canyon Rim** (8 acres) – Located near Canyon Rim Visitor Center; addition would bring federally-owned property within boundary as well as provide protection for Canyon Rim Visitor Center
- **Ambassador** (13 acres) – Located on Fayette Station Road; addition would provide parking for trail access to Ambassador Buttress and Fern Buttress rock climbing areas
- **Keeney Creek** (34 acres) – Located near Winona; addition would protect Keeney Creek rail grade trestles and provide parking for trail access to the Nuttallburg Visitor Use Area
- **Cunard** (10 acres) – Located near top of Cunard Access Road; addition would provide satellite parking for future boater shuttle system
- **Dowdy Bluff** (92 acres) – Located between Dowdy and Slater Creeks in Highland Mountain area; addition would provide parking and trail access to hunting and backcountry areas
- **Polls** (4.2 acres) – Located on north side of Polls Branch Road; addition would provide parking access to Kates Branch/Polls Branch trails

Table 1.6

New River Gorge National River
Locations where Park Boundary Adjustments are Proposed to Delete Areas from the Park

- **City of Fayetteville** (37 acres) – Site of the city’s water treatment plant; deletion would remove city municipal facilities from the park
- **Kaymoor Top** (0.4 acre) – Site of two privately-owned structures; deletion would move the park boundary from its current location where it bisects the two structures
- **Gatewood Road** (two parcels totaling 38 acres) – Site of a private sewage treatment facility; deletion would correct a mapping error

park and would potentially impact the park setting, the visitor experience, and important resource areas (see Appendix E). Addition of these areas to the park is impracticable because of potential community impacts and cost. In lieu of boundary adjustments and land acquisition the NPS would seek to protect park resources from impacts of new development on these lands by working with communities and private landowners. Cooperative actions would focus on land use planning that would encourage sustainable design of new development and that would reduce the impact of new development on scenic values and important resource areas (see Section 2.4.5 below).

1.13 Relationship to Other Plans

Various public agencies and governmental bodies have recently completed plans or have projects underway that directly and/or indirectly relate to New River Gorge National River. The NPS has also completed plans for a number of sub-areas within the park and for management of park resources.

1.13.1 National Park Service Plans

The following includes plans for which NPS has completed final plans/NEPA compliance documents and for which a NEPA decision document (Record of Decision or Finding of No Significant Impact) has been approved.

■ **New River Gorge National River General Management Plan**

The *New River Gorge General Management Plan* (NPS 1982) established a comprehensive 10- to 15-year management strategy for the 62,000-acre New River Gorge National River authorized by Congress in the park’s 1978 enabling legislation. The GMP provided a comprehensive strategy to guide management of the park and described the actions to be taken related to management zoning, resource management, visitor use, development of park facilities, and land protection. Existing development described in GMP Alternative 1 (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2) is based upon the direction established in the 1982 GMP, as amended through subsequent plans as described below.

■ **Land Protection Plan**

The final *Land Protection Plan – New River Gorge National River* (NPS 1984) identified tracts of land considered essential to management of the park and that the NPS would acquire immediately should they become available. The Land Protection Plan (LPP) identified local zoning as the recommended method of protection, supplemented by easements, as the recommended method of protection for the remaining land within the park boundary.

Following adoption of the LPP local zoning was not been implemented in Raleigh or Summers County and the public was not receptive to the use of easements. As a result in 1988 the NPS Mid-Atlantic Regional Director approved a memorandum

summarizing the need for NPS to rely more heavily on other land protection measures, including fee acquisition, and establishing principles for determining deviations from the approved LPP (NPS 1988a). Since 1988 the land acquisition priorities at the park have remained constant and the method of protection has shifted almost entirely from an emphasis on cooperative agreements, zoning, and easements to fee acquisitions. Three boundary changes (1988, 1996, and 2002) and fee acquisitions have resulted in a park unit with approximately 72,189 total acres of which approximately 70 percent is in federal ownership.

■ **Strategic Plan**

The *Strategic Plan for New River Gorge National River* (NPS 2006e) is a five-year plan that is reviewed and revised every three years. It contains the park's mission statement, annual goals, long-term goals, actions needed to accomplish long-term goals, and external factors that could affect goal accomplishment.

■ **Canyon Rim and Burnwood**

The *Canyon Rim/Burnwood Development Concept Study/Environmental Assessment* (NPS 1988a) identified the Canyon Rim site on the east side of US Route 19 as the park's primary location for visitor contact for interpretation and information and the Burnwood site on the west side of US Route 19 as a location for an environmental education and park operations facility. The NPS has implemented the recommendations for the Canyon Rim site as planned, including the Canyon Rim Visitor Center and related facilities. At the Burnwood site trails, picnic facilities, water supply, and wastewater treatment facilities were generally built as planned. The environmental education center and operations facility are currently in design. A research room for the park's core unexhibited collections will also be added to the site in the future through a separate planning activity.

■ **Fayette Station**

The *Environmental Assessment - Fayette Station: Designs for Parking Areas and Comfort Stations* (NPS 1995c) identified Fayette Station as the primary outfitted paddler and private paddler access take-out on the Lower New River. Improvements recommended at the Middle Beach included parking, circulation enhancements, and a comfort station. Other facilities recommended included a new upstream day use area and development of parking at the Cole site to support use of the Middle Beach and the upstream day use area. The NPS has implemented the recommendations for the Middle Beach area. The upstream day use area has not been developed. The Cole site was acquired. The NPS has been unable to acquire adjacent private property needed for a pedestrian connection to the river and has been unable to secure an agreement with the CSX Corporation for access under or over the railroad right-of-way.

■ **Teays Area**

The *Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment – Teays* (NPS 1995b) addressed several management issues in the Teays area of the lower gorge. Actions taken as a result of the plan include reconstruction of the Fayette Station Bridge (for one-way vehicular use and pedestrian use), improvements to WV Route 82 (including designation as a one-way road), improvements to the Wolf Creek and Fern Creek trailheads, improvements to the Ajax Mine pullout and Bridge Buttress parking area, and demolition of the Laing House. NPS has not yet made recommended improvements to the New River Bridge trailhead. As indicated in the plan, a seasonal shuttle system was operated in the late 80s and early 90s. Shuttle operation was discontinued after the Fayette Station Bridge was replaced and vehicle traffic across the river resumed. The shuttle concession now operates only for special events.

■ **Nuttallburg**

The *Nuttallburg Visitor Use Area Implementation Plan/Environmental Assessment* (NPS 2008c) identified Nuttallburg as the focal point within the park for interpretation of early 20th century coal mining technology in the New River Gorge and its association with Henry Ford. Recommended improvements are currently in design. They include stabilization and preservation of key cultural features on the site, rehabilitation of major town road traces, installation of interpretive media and vault toilets, construction of four small parking facilities, and provision of trails through improvement to existing trails and abandoned railroad rights-of-way.

■ **Kaymoor**

The *Kaymoor Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment* (NPS 1992b) identified management actions for treatment of historic structures, land protection, and visitor access, use, and safety at the Kaymoor Mine and town sites. Actions taken as a result of the plan included stabilization of the powder house and Low Moor fan house, survey of site for hazardous materials and ensuing clean-up, construction of new stairs from the bench to the bottom, improvements to the bench level access road, acquisition of land for a trailhead, construction of the Kaymoor top trailhead and parking area, and placement of wayside exhibits and portable toilets at the new trailhead. Some structures were found to be in extremely poor condition and potentially hazardous to the public. These were demolished rather than stabilized as planned, including the head house, processing plant, and power house. Other actions not implemented include fencing the clean-up site and the CSX railroad right-of-way as well as coordination with WV DNR to establish a hunting safe zone.

■ **Cunard**

The *Cunard Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment* (NPS 1990a) identified actions to improve the function and visitor experience at the Cunard river access. Most of the plan's recommendations have been implemented.

Improvements to the access road included widening, some paving, and addition of drainage structures, pull-outs, and guardrails. Parking was added at Cunard top for private vehicles and at the river for private and commercial vehicles at the river. Access to the Brooklyn area was enhanced by improving the railroad right-of-way. The existing raft slide was replaced and two new slides added. An accessible combined toilet/changing facility was constructed and interpretive waysides placed adjacent to it. Improvements to the Brooklyn area included a fishing boat launch, private parking, three walk-in primitive campsites, a portable toilet, and a trailhead for the Brooklyn-Southside Junction trail. Despite these improvements the river access experiences crowding and circulation and parking deficiencies during peak periods of visitor use, particularly affecting private paddlers.

Additional improvements to the Cunard access road were completed in late 2007 to correct damage caused by slides, to increase its capacity, and to reduce the potential for future slide damage.

■ **Glen Jean**

The "Glen Jean Headquarters Site Development Plan" (NPS 1986) identified Glen Jean as the site of the new park headquarters. The plan recommended construction of a new park headquarters building, operations facility, and maintenance facility. It also included acquisition and adaptive reuse of the Bank of Glen Jean for park offices. The Post Office and two of five existing commercial structures were to be retained. The new NPS facilities recommended in the plan have generally been implemented, although the actual site plan, size, and use of the various structures changed during final design. All of the existing commercial structures were acquired by the NPS and none were retained as originally recommended.

■ **Thurmond**

The *Thurmond Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment* (NPS 1992c) proposed to preserve and interpret the Thurmond area as part of the regional railroad network from 1873 to the present. The plan called for installing protective fencing in the rail yard to ensure visitor safety; establishing interpretive programs and media; improving the Thurmond-Minden hiking trail and developing a new trail to Cunard; and; developing park operations and support facilities and public use areas at Southside Junction. The NPS has implemented all of these recommendations with a few minor changes during final design. Lack of a formal agreement with the CSX Corporation regarding a rail line crossing required a change to design of the parking area at Southside Junction.

The 1992 plan for Thurmond also recommended that all remaining structures in the rail yard and commercial areas be purchased, preserved, and adaptively used to interpret the town's significance. Since completion of the plan several primary structures were lost, including the engine house (due to fire) and several CSX structures (due to demolition). As a result the NPS reconsidered the design options

for the site in an amendment to the Thurmond Plan (NPS 2000). The amended plan scaled back the 1992 plan goals but did not substantially change the emphasis on preservation and interpretation. As recommended in the plan the depot has been restored and adapted for use as a visitor center. The structures on commercial row have been stabilized but the interior rehabilitation to date has been minimal. The NPS has acquired and stabilized 20 residential structures and the retaining has been repaired. Access remains limited to the CSX bridge which has only a single lane for both vehicles and pedestrians. Discussions with WV DOH have not yet identified specific alternatives for constructing a new bridge or for upgrading the existing structure to improve access.

■ **Stone Cliff**

The *Stone Cliff Site Development Plan/Environmental Assessment* (NPS 1990c) proposed development of a boat launch and day use facility at Stone Cliff, a site used since the early 1970s for outfitted paddler access. At the existing access site the plan recommended development of 20 pull-through parking spaces, a drop-off staging area for outfitted and private paddlers, a comfort station with changing rooms, and facilities for day-use recreation activities. It also recommended continuation of existing primitive camping and revegetation of disturbed areas using native seed. The NPS has implemented all of the recommended actions within the previously existing access site. However plans to develop a comfort station and additional picnic facilities upstream of the main parking area were abandoned, as was the widening of the road to access the sites of the additional facilities. The road was closed to vehicular use and designated the Stone Cliff Trail for hikers/bikers. These actions were eliminated in response to concerns of resource management agencies regarding potential impacts to significant aquatic habitat and species.

■ **Middle Gorge Area**

The *Middle Gorge Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment* (NPS 1994a) identified management actions for balanced land and water activities in the middle gorge extending from below Glade Creek downstream to above Stone Cliff.

- **Mill Creek** - Recommended actions that have been implemented include: access road and parking area graveled, launch site graveled, and campsites eliminated at day-use site but informal walk-in camping occurs on the beach upstream of the launch site. Recommended actions not implemented include: no toilets provided and structures remain in disrepair and are not stabilized or removed.
- **Quinnimont** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: the historic church retained and Prince Depot identified as the central location for interpreting Prince and Quinnimont. Recommended actions not implemented include: historic structures other than the church removed, no fire or burglar alarms installed, and no waysides added.

- **Grandview Sandbar** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: access road graded and graveled, primitive campsites designated, picnic facilities and toilets provided, park designated; spur roads defined, primitive lunch area retained, frequent ranger patrols implemented, and brochure on camping rules provided. Recommended actions not implemented include: none.
- **Prince Brothers' Store** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: structure stabilized. Recommended actions not implemented include: fire and burglar alarms not installed.
- **Royal** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: none. Recommended actions not implemented include: no signage added, no parking developed, no trail to river improvements, and no interpretation of old town site.
- **McCreery** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: launch ramp stabilized, portable toilets provided, and crowding reduced by making Terry Beach accessible to private boaters. Recommended actions not implemented include: railroad bridge not acquired, recommended traffic pattern changes not implemented (because bridge not acquired), no changing stations or utilities provided, and no parking or access road paved.
- **Terry Beach** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: buildings on federal property removed. Recommended actions not implemented include: public road not closed to public use.
- **Army Camp** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: residential access road improved, primitive campsites designated to separate day and night users, toilets and picnic tables provided, parking designated, spur roads defined, frequent ranger patrols implemented, and brochure on camping rules provided. Recommended actions not implemented include: no wayside exhibits developed.
- **McKendree Hospital** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: none. Recommended actions not implemented include: no vegetation cleared, no access road drainage improvements, no parking added, no picnic sites added, no signage installed, no trail developed, and no interpretive waysides added.
- **Thayer** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: river access property acquired, boat launch added, day use picnic area developed, portable toilets provided, walk-in campsites developed, and church stabilized. Recommended actions not implemented include: no alarms installed and not wayside exhibits provided.

- **Campsite for Boaters** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: site and road acquired by the NPS, road not used, and primitive camping continues uncontrolled. Recommended actions not implemented include: none.
- **McKendree Road** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: minor road improvements made by state to repair flooding damage. Recommended actions not implemented include: road not adequately improved to enable use as a scenic two-way route, no vista clearing, no picnic sites added, and no wayside exhibits provided.
- **Trails** – Recommended actions that have been implemented include: none. Recommended actions not implemented include: through park trail not developed.

- **Grandview**

The *Grandview Development Concept Plan/Interpretive Prospectus/ Environmental Assessment* (NPS 1999) proposed to expand or improve visitor use facilities and the infrastructure at Grandview and to hire additional staff to enhance the education program and to maintain/protect the new facilities. Recommendations included development of a new visitor contact station, public restrooms, and an environmental education facility located near the main entrance. Improvements were also proposed for the Cliffside Amphitheatre to be funded jointly by the NPS and Theatre West Virginia. The operations center was to be screened and possibly moved toward the pond with a possible separate access for maintenance traffic. Additional picnic shelters and redesign of Shelter 1 were recommended. Major improvements were recommended in the vicinity of the Turkey Spur overlook, including more and safer access, relocation of parking to a new parking area 1700 feet from the overlook, and closure of the access road to vehicles in the area between the new parking area and the overlook. A few new connector trails were identified as well as a possible trail connection to the river. Recommended infrastructure improvements included connection to the municipal sewer system (or construction of on-site collection and treatment system), possible burying of the 12 kilovolt power line, and possible upgrading of an administrative road to provide river access from Grandview.

Currently the trail system remains the same and has not been expanded. The parking area and roads have been resurfaced and striped. A sewage treatment facility has been constructed to treat waste from the theatre but the remainder of the park facilities remain on septic systems; an upgrade and eventual connection to a municipal line is still anticipated. The administrative road to the river has been upgraded and repaired to continue use by administrative vehicles and to permit river access by hikers/bikers; no plans are being considered to upgrade the

administrative road to permit vehicle use by visitors. No action has been taken to bury the 12 KV power line.

■ **Glade Creek Area**

The *Glade Creek Development Concept Plan/Interpretive Prospectus* (NPS 1990b) was based on a concept that recreational uses could be accommodated in the Glade Creek area, including both vehicle-supported uses and backcountry uses. The plan recommended that the Glade Creek Access Road (WV Route 22) be retained for access to the Glade Creek Trail, and that two trailheads be developed each with parking and a vault toilet. A number of improvements were recommended for the Glade Creek Trail including drainage devices and a footbridge and elimination of vehicles from the I-64 bridge service road. Road improvements were proposed for Shoreline Road from Royal to the mouth of Glade Creek, including repairs to Mill Creek bridge and installation of a crossing gate at the CSX right-of-way; five drive-in campsites and a vault toilet were recommended along the road at the mouth of Glade Creek. The Mary Ingles Trail was proposed through the entire Glade Creek area with five walk-in campsites and a vault toilet along the trail east of Glade Creek. The Plumley Mountain Trail was proposed to be converted to a hiking/horse trail, with development of a trailhead. The Uplands Trail was proposed to be developed using portions of existing jeep roads for hiking and horseback riding, also with development of a trailhead.

Currently both the trailheads and parking have been developed on the Glade Creek access road, although neither has a vault toilet; the footbridge has been constructed across Glade Creek and the I-64 bridge service road is closed to motor vehicles. Shoreline Road from Royal to Glade Creek has been improved for vehicle access; the warning gate has not been installed at the CSX crossing; five drive-in campsites and a vault toilet have been constructed downstream of the mouth of Glade Creek and a boat launch and five walk-in campsites have also been constructed. The Mary Ingalls Trail has not been developed because several parcels along the proposed route near I-64 are privately owned; a boat access and walk-in campsites along the proposed trail have been developed downstream of the site proposed in the plan. Plans for the Plumley Mountain Trail and trailhead have not been implemented because use of the proposed trailhead would require crossing two parcels of private property; this access has not been acquired due to an unresolved adverse possession claim to the property at the proposed trailhead location. The Uplands Trail has not been implemented because land suitable for development as a trailhead is private property located outside the park boundary. The trail segment from Bragg to the park boundary remains a state road. However, a segment of the proposed trail – known as the Polls Branch Trail – is currently accessible to hikers from the upper Glade Creek trailhead.

■ **New River Gorge National River Climbing Management Plan**

The *New River Gorge National River Climbing Management Plan Environmental Assessment* (NPS 2005a) presents a strategy for responding to the increasing visitor use, resource impacts, and user conflicts associated with rock climbing in the park. The plan's objectives are: to create a management tool that addresses resource protection and visitor use related to climbing activities; to build partnerships with climbers, climbing groups and commercial organizations in managing climbing in the park; to provide guidance on managing commercial and group use; and, to maximize input from the public and the climbing communities throughout the planning process. The plan recommends use of a variety of approaches and tools to manage climbing, including education and outreach efforts, improvements to facilities, and the use of new and existing trails. It provides for a balance between recreational use and resource protect. Climbing activities will be managed to a greater degree than prior to the plan's adoption to ensure that resources are protected and that climbers continue to have opportunities for a high quality experience.

■ **New River Gorge National River Water Resource Management Plan**

The *Water Resources Management Plan, New River Gorge National River, Gauley River National Recreation Area, Bluestone National Scenic River, West Virginia* (Purvis 2002) provides a comprehensive description of the park's water resources, describes the water resource issues facing the park, and formulates management actions that address those resource issues. The plan identifies 11 water resource issues, categorizes each as a high, medium, or low priority, and identifies management actions to address each issue.

■ **New River Gorge National River Vista Management Plan**

The *Vista Management Plan, New River Gorge National River* (NPS 2005b) defines a concept and establishes site specific strategies to preserve, re-establish, and maintain important vistas within the park. The plan's purpose is to identify the key vistas to maintain and enhance within the park, to provide management guidance that will improve the visitors' experience at each of the key park vistas, and to establish direction and guidance for reducing maintenance at each vista while preserving its characteristics. Vista plans are included for 20 high priority vistas in the park.

■ **New River Gorge National River Integrated Pest Management Plan**

The *Integrated Pest Management Plan – New River Gorge National River, Gauley River National Recreation Area, Bluestone National Scenic River* (NPS 2003a) identifies the management actions needed to reduce risks to the public, park resources, and the environment from pests and pest-related management strategies. Integrated pest management procedures are used to determine when to control pests and whether to use mechanical, physical, chemical, cultural, or biological means. Action plans are included for specific 24 pests at the park.

- **Park Museum Storage Plan**

House Report 109-80 accompanying the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Act of 2006 required the NPS to report recommendations and findings describing a servicewide approach to museum collections storage. For New River Gorge National River, the report recommended:

- move infrequently used collections to the multi-park shared facility at Appomattox Courthouse with adjustments regarding which objects based upon an evaluation of condition, size, and/or site significance
- develop an on-site facility as a research room for the core unexhibited collections that meets NPS standards and consolidates curatorial functions with other administrative operations out of the floodplain, with a cost and space savings from storing infrequently used collections at Appomattox Courthouse

- **New River Gorge National River Collection Management Plan**

The *Collection Management Plan, New River Gorge National River* (NPS 2004a) provides the park with a tool to assist park managers in prioritizing the needs of its curatorial program. Recommendations are provided related to collection documentation, archives and manuscript collections, archeological collections, collections storage, museum environment, security and fire protection, staffing, and programming and funding sources. The plan indicates that as soon as possible the collection now housed at the Glen Jean Bank – which is located within the 25-year floodplain – should be moved to storage facilities that are not susceptible to flooding. Ultimately all of the park's collections stored in four locations in the park are to be housed in one facility. The plan also outlines steps the park can take to improve its curatorial program, the highest priorities of which are to dedicate one full-time curator/collections manager to the park and to hire a term museum technician with training in archives.

1.13.2 Local Government Plans

- **Fayette County Comprehensive Plan**

Fayette County completed and adopted the *2001 Comprehensive Plan – Fayette County, West Virginia* (Fayette County 2001) as “an advisory tool for ensuring that the growth of Fayette County is managed in an orderly and rational manner”. The plan designates five districts plus an overlay planned unit development district.

Central Service District. The plan identifies the US Route 19 corridor between Mount Hope and Hico as the Central Development Service District (including land within the park on the north side of US Route 19 only); this area is expected to continue to serve as the principal residential, commercial and industrial center of the county and should accommodate the majority of the projected future county growth.

Rural/Agricultural Conservation District. Within the Development Service District the existing larger historic settlement areas serve as regional activity centers, including Mount Hope, Oak Hill, Fayetteville, Montgomery, and Gauley Bridge. Rural/agricultural conservation districts compose the bulk of the remaining area within the county; the plan intends to maintain and conserve rural character and farmlands within these areas by limiting development to residential uses, with landowners given several options to determine permitted densities based on sliding-scale or density bonus formula options.

Community Centers. Existing villages and crossroad settlements within the Rural/Agricultural Conservation District serve as community centers for rural residential development and provide for commercial services for the surrounding rural areas; the designated communities centers within and adjacent to the park include Ansted, Thurmond, and Meadow Bridge. These communities are expected to remain small in physical area and population, to continue to provide limited highly localized commercial services and employ opportunity, and to maintain a “unique sense of place” as identified by their existing character, scale, density and architectural style.” If these communities have water and sewer service it is to be designed to serve existing development and not to extend into adjacent undeveloped rural areas.

Highway Corridor District. The highway corridor district encompasses land within 1,000 feet of the US Route 19 and 60 rights-of-way or anything within view from the route (whichever is greater). The plan recommends that the county implement requirements to protect and improve visual appearance in these corridors by adopting design guidelines for buffering, landscaping, lighting, signage, and structures.

Resource Conservation District. Land areas along all tributary streams compose the rural conservation district. These areas include wetlands that are adjacent to tributary streams as well as floodplains, stream valleys, steep slopes, and soils with development constraints. Suitable land use in these areas is described as passive recreation and low density residential development that is designed to protect sensitive natural features.

■ **Raleigh County**

The *Raleigh Country Comprehensive Plan* (Raleigh County 1997) includes a set of generalized goals and objectives and short plan statements related to housing, community attitudes, solid waste, recreation facilities, economic development, land use, water and sewer, public safety, education, and transportation. The plan recognized that diversification of the local economy, development of new jobs, and improvements in the quality of the county’s housing were needed (in 1997) to maintain a stable population and avoid the severe out migration being experienced in the county. Some of the significant recommended plan actions included: adoption of a building code (now in effect), zoning ordinance (now in effect), and subdivision regulations (now in effect); expansion of industrial parks to attract industry not related to the coal industry; removal of dilapidated structures; and new

construction and renovation of water and sewer systems. The plan also states that the county will cooperate with the NPS.

- **Summers County 2020 Plan**

In 2002 Summers County adopted the *Summers County 2020 – A Community Shared Vision* (Summers County 2002) that outlined the county's a long-range plan focused on laying the foundation for sustainable community and economic development within the county. The Vision identified both short- and long-term goals related to economic development, land use and infrastructure, tourism development, community image, and education. Several goals directly or indirectly have relevance to New River Gorge National River. Among the actions related to tourism development are advocating for construction of the New River Parkway (see Section 1.10.3 below) and support for the ongoing initiative to restore Camp Brookside in the park. The land use and infrastructure actions include establishment of a county planning commission, development of a land use management plan, completion of a countywide sewer feasibility study, extension of public water and sewer to all feasible areas of the county.

- **City of Hinton Strategic Plan**

The *Hinton 2010: Planning for the Future – 2005 Strategic Plan* (WVUES 2005) presents a strategic vision for the city of Hinton's future. The plan includes a mission statement, an analysis of existing conditions in the city, a set of goals, and specific approaches or strategies that must be implemented to accomplish each goal. A major component of the strategic plan is creation of a cultural district encompassing the Old Hinton Commercial District between WV Route 20 (Summers Street)/ Commercial Street and Maple Avenue between 2nd and 10th Streets. Most of this area is located within the authorized boundary of New River Gorge National River. The plan identifies projected components of the district, suggesting uses for the train depot, the freight depot and other properties that would be in a mix of public and private ownership. A proposed Hinton Green Space Park is suggested for much of the area within the boundary of New River Gorge National River.

1.13.3 Other Plans and Projects

- **New River Parkway Plan and Land Management System**

The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT), Division of Highways (DOH) proposes to construct a 10-mile segment of the New River Parkway from Interstate 64 to Hinton, West Virginia. Much of the right-of-way will be within New River Gorge National River. A final environmental impact statement (US DOT 2003) and record of decision (US DOT 2004) have been completed for the project and final engineering design plans are currently in preparation. As part of the project the WV Division of Highways has identified proposed boat and river access, overlook, trailhead, and multiple use facilities, which will be constructed in conjunction with the parkway. In addition a land management system (LMS) will be implemented

within 500 feet on either side of the parkway centerline. The LMS will include land use regulations and performance standards that will help to ensure that areas within the parkway corridor are protected and managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies set forth in the *New River Parkway Master Plan* (NEPA 1992). The New River Parkway Authority (NRPA) will be responsible for certifying that all new development within the corridor is designed in compliance with the LMS. Raleigh and Summers Counties are required to adopt and enforce the development LMS standards and certification process.

■ **West Virginia Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan**

West Virginia makes improvements to roads throughout the state in accordance with a statewide transportation improvement plan (STIP). The STIP is a multi-year plan that is updated periodically through amendments. The current STIP is for Federal Fiscal Years (FY) 2006 to 2008 (WV DOT 2005 and 2005 – 2006). A new STIP for FY 2008 to 2013 is available for review in draft form (WV DOT 2007).

Planned highway improvements to state and federal roads within the park identified in the 2008 to 2013 STIP (WVDOT 2007) include routine maintenance to the New River Bridge, resurfacing of I-64, reconstruction of the New River bridges at Thurmond and Prince (WV State Route 41), and reconstruction of the Dunloup Creek Bridge (WV County Route 25) (WV DOT 2005, 2005 – 2006, and 2007). Construction of the New River Parkway on river left from above Sandstone to Hinton, including a bridge across the New River, is anticipated as soon as funding is committed.

■ **National Coal Heritage Area Strategic Management Action Plan**

The *National Coal Heritage Area Strategic Management Action Plan* (PBQD 2000) identifies the actions to be taken to preserve and interpret the National Coal Heritage Area (NCHA). The mission of the NCHA is to preserve, protect, and interpret historic, cultural, and natural resources associated with West Virginia's coal mining heritage to help stimulate tourism and economic development, thereby improving the quality of life for the region's residents. The plan establishes goals to guide the growth of the NCHA that provide direction for many initiatives to be implemented in four phases over 10 years. One goal is to develop cooperative partnerships which nurture capable project sponsors and viable grass roots organizations that build human, technical, and financial capacity and support plan implementation within the NCHA region.

New River Gorge National River is entirely within the 11-county NCHA. The NCHA plan recognizes that the NPS plays a significant role in development of the NCHA and in achieving its mission through technical assistance, planning guidance, and encouragement of sustained partnerships with federal and state agencies, and local and regional organizations. Canyon Rim Visitor Center is recognized in the plan as one of the four existing centers in a major transportation corridor within the NCHA. Thurmond is recognized in the plan as a destination center related to several of the NCHA interpretive themes. All action alternatives considered in the New River

Gorge GMP propose to strengthen and enhance the connections between the park and the NCHA (see Section 2.4.9 Regional Tourism Partnerships below).

■ **Fayette County Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan**

The *Fayette County Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan* (Fayette County 2005) identifies wastewater management solutions to address water quality problems in Fayette County designed to achieve water quality standards to protect public health and safety, as well as to protect the tourism industry vital to the county. Solutions focus on upgrading and expanding the existing sewer system and developing cluster systems to serve villages throughout the county, where needed, and repairing and upgrading individual onsite systems. Community cluster systems are recommended in the park vicinity at Jodie, Brooklyn/Cunard, Winona, Summerlee, Bachman, and Lookout. Package plant replacements are recommended at numerous locations in the park vicinity, including Thurmond Depot, Babcock State Park, and the New River Gorge campgrounds. Wastewater management issues associated with recreational use of the river were recognized as a major source of pollutant loading.

Initial implementation efforts are identified as the Winona cluster system, funding for improvements to 120 on-site systems, and elimination of storm sewer overflows and infiltration and inflow issues at one of the county's wastewater treatment facilities. The plan also recommends implementation of a public outreach program to educate outfitters and recreational users about proper wastewater management.

■ **Dunloup Creek Final Watershed Plan**

Flooding along Dunloup Creek has been a long-term, recurring problem causing damage to residences, small businesses, and numerous other structures – including the Park Headquarters Complex in Glen Jean. Findings of the *Dunloup Creek Final Watershed Plan* (USDA NRCS 2007) recommend a voluntary buy-out as the preferred action to reduce flood-related problems for threatened properties within the 100-year floodplain. Private properties within the floodplain would be acquired, restored to natural conditions (including removal of all structures), and maintained in perpetuity as natural floodplain (USDA NRCS 2007).