

Chapter 1

Introduction

Minidoka Internment National Monument was designated the 385th unit of the National Park System by presidential proclamation on January 17, 2001. Minidoka Internment National Monument, hereafter referred to as the national monument, was established to preserve the historic features and interpret the history of the former Minidoka Relocation Center, which held 13,000 Nikkei (Japanese American citizens and legal resident aliens of Japanese ancestry) from Washington, Oregon, California, and Alaska during World War II. The national monument contains 72.75 acres of the 33,000-acre historic camp. As a new unit of the National Park System and to comply with the Proclamation 7395, the National Park Service (NPS) is required to develop a general management plan for the national monument. The general management plan outlines how the national monument will be developed and managed over the next 15-20 years.

Minidoka Internment National Monument is a nationally significant site related to human and civil rights and American history. Minidoka's unique resources are the thousands of diverse individual stories from people throughout the United States who were forever changed by their experiences at Minidoka. The site still evokes vivid memories and strong emotions from Nikkei who were incarcerated there some 60 years ago. Today, these personal stories present a mosaic of perspectives as to how this stark chapter of American history relates to current events, civil and Constitutional rights, and American ethnic issues. For Nikkei at Minidoka and the other War Relocation Authority (WRA) Centers, the internment and incarceration was the central event in their community's history; however, the experiences of injustice, hardship, and endurance illustrate an American story common among millions of immigrants, their descendents, and American Indians. The significance of Minidoka relates to a unique experience during a particular time towards a particular people, as well as to how civil and

Constitutional rights must be protected for all Americans across all times.

The stories and cultural landscape of Minidoka Internment National Monument are inextricably tied to Idaho's agricultural history and development. The large-scale reclamation project conducted by the Bureau of Reclamation in the pre-war period was intentionally selected as an ideal location for the camp during World War II. The undeveloped land was cleared and tilled, and irrigation water was brought to the area. During the three-year incarceration, internees effectively transformed the high desert landscape into agricultural lands and rolling greenery. Following the decommission of the camp, the Minidoka Relocation Center lands were subdivided and settled. The homesteading community continues to farm the former Relocation Center lands to this day.

Minidoka Internment National Monument is also a World War II home front site. The unique experiences of Nikkei during World War II at Minidoka il-

*A funeral ceremony
for Minidoka's
fallen soldiers.
Circa 1944.
National Archives.*



The railroad that carried internees to Minidoka during World War II. Reflection of a former internee returning to the site during the Pilgrimage. June 2003. NPS Photo

illustrate how global events had rippling effects on nations, communities, and individuals throughout the world. The suffering, injustice, and persecution experienced by Nikkei who were forcibly removed from the West Coast and held under military confinement at Minidoka and other similar sites is unique; however, the commonality of hardship during wartime can be universally understood. Therefore, the national monument is thematically tied to other World War II sites, such as Manzanar National Historic Site, Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park, Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial in California; USS Arizona Memorial in Hawaii; Aleutian World War II National Historic Area in Alaska; War in the Pacific National Historical Park in Guam; and the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Purpose of the General Management Plan

The purpose of this document is to articulate a vision and overall management (GMP) philosophy for the national monument that will guide decision-making by current and future management teams during the next 15 to 20 years. This document formalizes management strategies for resource protection, visitor use and facilities, education and interpretation, operations and management, and development of the national monument. Successful implementation of the GMP will result in the development of the new park unit, the preservation of cultural resources, and the enhancement of visitor experiences and appreciation. The plan addresses

National Park Service (NPS) responsibilities at the national monument and provides guidance for the development of this new NPS unit.

The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-625), requires the preparation and timely revision of general management plans for each unit of the national park system. The NPS management policies call for each GMP to "...set forth a management concept for the park [and] establish a role for the unit within the context of regional trends and plans for conservation, recreation, transportation, economic development, and other regional issues..." Congress has also specifically directed (16 U.S.C. 1a-7[b]) the NPS to consider, as part of the planning process, the following:



Dorothy Hirai, a former Minidoka internee, and Ron James look through the 1943 Minidoka yearbook. June 2002. NPS Photo.

General management plans for the preservation and use of each unit of the national park system, including areas within the national capital area, shall be prepared and revised in a timely manner by the Director of the National Park Service. On January 1 of each year, the Secretary shall submit to the Congress a list indicating the current status of completion or revision of general management plans for each unit of the national park system. General management plans for each unit shall include, but not be limited to:

measures for the preservation of the area's resources;

indications of 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

identification of an implementation commitment for visitor carrying capacities for all areas of the unit; and

indications of potential modifications to the external boundaries of the unit, and the reasons therefore.

The need for the GMP is to comply with Presidential Proclamation 7395 of January 17, 2001. The Proclamation states, "To carry out the purposes of this proclamation and to interpret the internment

and incarceration of Nikkei during World War II, the Secretary of the Interior, through the NPS, shall prepare a management plan for the National Monument within three years of this date."

It is the policy of the NPS to prepare or revise a GMP for units of the national park system about every 15 years; this document constitutes the national monument's first GMP. This plan will address the many issues that have arisen since the national monument's designation.

Planning Process

The formal planning process began in the spring of 2002 with "a notice of intent" to prepare a general management plan and environmental impact statement for the national monument. The NPS organized an interdisciplinary planning team of NPS professionals and subject matter experts to guide the development of the general management plan and environmental impact statement throughout the four-year planning process.

An extensive level of public involvement was deemed necessary for the success of this planning project, given the nature and sensitivity of the national monument's history, the speed in which the national monument was established, as well as the national monument's remote location. Public involvement methods included *Federal Register* notices, news releases, public meetings and workshops, presentations and meetings with interested publics, newsletter mailings, and website postings.



Harue Ninomiya and Shea Aoki, former Minidoka internees, visiting Minidoka during the Pilgrimage. June 2003. NPS Photo. (Top)



Joseph Kamikawa and Kennie Namba, World War II veterans and former Minidoka internees, visiting Minidoka during the Pilgrimage. June 2004. Courtesy of Cliff and Jean Dickey © (Bottom)



Kay Endo, a former Minidoka internee, visiting Minidoka during the Pilgrimage. June 2003. NPS Photo. (Top)



Visitors at Minidoka during the Pilgrimage. June 2003. NPS Photo. (Bottom)

Preceding the formal planning process, NPS staff conducted informational meetings about the national monument with Nikkei organizations, community organizations, various governmental entities, potential stakeholder groups, and individuals during the spring, summer, and early fall of 2002. Approximately 50 meetings were held in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and Alaska during this time, and approximately 1,000 people were contacted. The purpose of these initial meetings was to help characterize the scale and extent of the planning process.

The NPS invited the public to provide comments during three formal public planning stages. The first stage, called Scoping, was intended to identify and define issues, concerns, and suggestions to be addressed during the planning process. Nine public workshops were held in Idaho, Washington and Oregon in November 2002; 250 people provided comments in workshops, and another 225 people provided written comments. The second stage, called Draft Alternatives, was intended to present the public with preliminary draft alternatives and invite comments on these alternatives. These draft alternatives were developed to address the specific issues and concerns that were raised by the public during the Scoping phase. Eleven public workshops were held in Idaho, Washington, and Oregon in July and August 2003. 215 people provided comments in the workshops, and another 50 people provided written comments. In June 2005, the *Minidoka Internment National Monument Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact*

Statement was released to the public along with a “notice of availability” published in the *Federal Register*. The third stage, called Public Review of the draft GMP/EIS, was intended to present the public with the draft GMP/EIS for formal review and comment. Ten public workshops were held in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and California and July and August of 2005. 213 people attended the workshops, and another 159 letters were received by the NPS during the comment period.

In June 2006, the *Minidoka Internment National Monument Abbreviated Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* was released to the public along with a “notice of availability” published in the *Federal Register*. The abbreviated final included substantive public comments and NPS responses.

In September 2006, a “record of decision” was signed by the Pacific West Regional Director and published in the *Federal Register*. This action marked the completion of the planning process and approved this general management plan.

The public’s comments and recommendations were the foundation of this general management plan, represented in the national monument’s purpose, significance, interpretive themes, and the plan’s actions.

Issues Addressed

The major issues identified during the scoping process are addressed in this general management plan. The complete list of issues is described under

the “Planning Issues and Concerns” section in chapter two of the draft GMP/EIS document. A summary the issues addressed in the plan include:

Cultural Resources

- The number and extent of physical cultural resources on the site is limited, and a range of preservation treatments should be considered.
- Personal histories are intangible cultural resources that need immediate attention.
- Barracks (the internees’ living quarters) are significant physical features that accurately depict the internees’ experiences at Minidoka. The lack of barracks and their original locations within the national monument is a significant concern.

Education and Interpretation

- Interpretation should be factually accurate and intellectually compelling for all visitors; it should bring to life historical and personal stories related to Minidoka.
- The people, events, and sites related to the internment and incarceration of Nikkei are numerous, diverse, and complex. The people directly affected by these events are widespread throughout the United States and abroad.
- There is a wide range of personal experiences, opinions, controversial thought, and information on the subject. Information

originates from a diversity of individuals and organizations, including accepted scholarly publications, historical personal accounts, government documents, and written material representing personal opinions. It is not possible to describe a ‘typical’ experience or perspective.

- Highly charged debates over the rationale and causes of the internment and incarceration of Nikkei during World War II continue to reflect intense passions and diverse perspectives on the subject. There

The fenceline at Minidoka Relocation Center. Circa 1943. Painting by Kenjiro Nomura. Courtesy of George and Betty Nomura.





Superintendent Neil King providing information to the public at Minidoka. June 2002. NPS Photo. (Top)



Takako Yoda and Cherry Kinoshita, former Minidoka internees, provide comments during a public workshop. August 2003. NPS Photo. (Bottom)

"I want every school child and every adult to know about the camps."

-Public comment

currently exists a body of controversial thought and information that is in conflict with much of what recognized scholars agree as historically accurate in the depiction of the internment and incarceration story.

- Interpreting and experiencing the essence of the entire 33,000-acre historic site on the 72.75-acre national monument poses challenges.

Visitor Use and Facilities

- The national monument's remote location, historical significance, and existence is relatively unknown by the general public.
- The NPS needs to determine appropriate levels and general locations of facilities and services.
- The NPS needs to identify ways to provide diverse visitor experiences.

Partnerships and Outreach

- A range of active and sustainable partnerships and outreach strategies need to be considered as integral to the general management plan.

Access, Circulation, and Parking

- The NPS is concerned with visitor safety, visitor experience, and traffic flows in relation to Hunt Road's present use and functions. The NPS needs to better understand local access and user needs.

Boundaries and Adjacent Lands

- The national monument does not include any of the internees' residential areas or the camps agricultural fields, and outlying areas.
- The NPS needs to consider the Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) adjacent visitor services area and east end site parcels and the American Fall's Reservoir Irrigation District #2 operations on these lands.
- The national monument's boundary with the North Side Canal poses issues related to potential conflicting land uses, visitor use, and public safety.
- Public and private access issues, such as roads, driveways, and utility rights-of-way need to be addressed.
- The historic Minidoka Relocation Center landfill contains important cultural resources. It is 1 mile northwest of the national monument on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public land.

Operations and Management

- Given its isolated location, the national monument will need an on-site presence in the immediate future for the protection of historic resources.
- The NPS should address the lack of local utilities and community services, such as the availability of water, fire protection, and emergency medical services to the national monument.

- The national monument's name, Minidoka Internment National Monument, presents some confusion and disagreement among the general public.

Terminology remains one of the most controversial and emotional aspects related to this entire chapter of American history. There is a lack of consensus on the appropriate use of terminology to describe the U.S. government's wartime policy toward Japanese resident aliens and Japanese Americans living on the West Coast – people simply can not agree as to the 'best' or most appropriate word or phrase.

Historians, scholars, institutions, organizations and individuals have proposed a variety of terms to describe the events, places, and the people who were a part of

this history. The word "internment" is problematic for many and scholars historians, scholars, and individuals who assert that the camps administered by the War Relocation Authority were not "internment camps." "Internment camps" were, legally speaking, Department of Justice camps generally run by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. They maintain that "internment" is a legal term that describes the imprisonment of civilian enemy aliens during wartime, which is different than imprisoning all Nikkei (Japanese Americans and legal residents of Japanese ancestry). They suggest that the word "internment" misinterprets what occurred at Minidoka and leads to confusion.

Additionally, some people are confused by the term "national monument."

*Entrance to
Minidoka
Relocation Center.
Circa 1944. Densho
Project.
Mitsuoka
Collection.*



