

Pinnacles National Park

West Side Trail Construction

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Public Scoping, Summer 2015



Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking your input on a project to construct two new trails within Pinnacles National Park. Both trails would be built on the west side of the park and would begin at the West Side Visitor Contact Station. We are currently conducting planning and design work and preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze impacts of the proposed actions.

The NPS is in the public scoping phase of the study process. It is called “scoping” because with your input, we are determining the “scope” or overall approach to the project. The initial comment period for this project has started, and will extend through July 25, 2015.

This newsletter provides an overview of the study process and some preliminary trail routes under consideration by the NPS. I invite you to share your ideas and comments about the project. Please join us for a public meeting on the project on **Wednesday, July 8, 2015**. You may provide your thoughts at the public meeting or comment online at <http://parkplanning/nps.gov/westsidetrails> or by mail. Page 5 of this newsletter contains additional information on the meeting and how to comment.

We look forward to hearing from you! Your participation is a key component of this process.

Sincerely,

Karen Beppler-Dorn
Superintendent

Proposed Action

A one mile accessible loop trail would be built from the West Side visitor contact station. The trail would overlook the Lyons Homestead, traverse several vegetation communities and have an overlook that views the High Peaks rock formation. The trail would have pull outs for resting, interpretive panels, and a self-guided trail map.



Another hiking trail (approximately 1.2 miles) would connect the visitor contact station with the Chaparral Area. This connector trail would start from a point on the accessible trail, descend through Jawbone Canyon, and end at the overflow parking lot or Chaparral area. From there, visitors could take the existing one mile trail to the other trailheads at Chaparral to hike back to the visitor contact station.

The project would also make some minor improvements to wayfinding and interpretive signage at the Chaparral Day Use Area. Orientation information spread out throughout the area would be consolidated in one location and a redundant section of trail in a floodplain would be removed and restored.

Purpose and Need for the Project

The purpose of the proposed project is to enhance the overall visitor experience for the public by providing safe and sustainable trails as well as interpretative opportunities about the park's wide range of physical, natural, and cultural resources.

Approximately 60,000 visitors enter Pinnacles National Park from the west side each year. A new visitor contact station was completed in 2012, which provides visitor orientation to the park and some limited interpretative opportunities. However, this visitor contact station is located approximately two miles away from the trailheads at the Chaparral Day Use Area. Visitors parking at the visitor contact station have no way of accessing hiking trails within the park. The road that connects the visitor contact station and Chaparral Area is a one lane curvy road without shoulders that is unsafe for hiking.

This project also provides an opportunity to create an accessible trail that can interpret adjacent ranching history, traverse several vegetation communities, and provide spectacular views that are currently not available to the public. There are no other accessible trails in the park that provide a comparable experience. Lack of consistent and consolidated signage at the Chaparral Area trailheads results in confusion for visitors and lost hikers. Improvement of trailhead signage and layout would better serve visitors in this area.

In addition, the Pinnacles National Park General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (approved June 2013) stated that new trail connections will be developed on the west side of the park, including a trail to link the new visitor contact station with the existing trail system.

Issues to Consider

Benefits of the project are expected to far outweigh its negative effects. However, projects still have the potential to affect the human environment if not planned and designed carefully. The following preliminary issues will be analyzed in the EA. Are there any other issues we should consider?

- Remnants of historic ranches, as well as archeological resources are present in the project area. Careful design of the trails is needed to avoid effects to these resources.
- Portions of the trail are either seen from the High Peaks Wilderness or are within wilderness.
- Trail construction requires removal of vegetation and displacement of soils.
- The connector trail would have several stream crossings, and protection of water quality is important.

Environmental Compliance

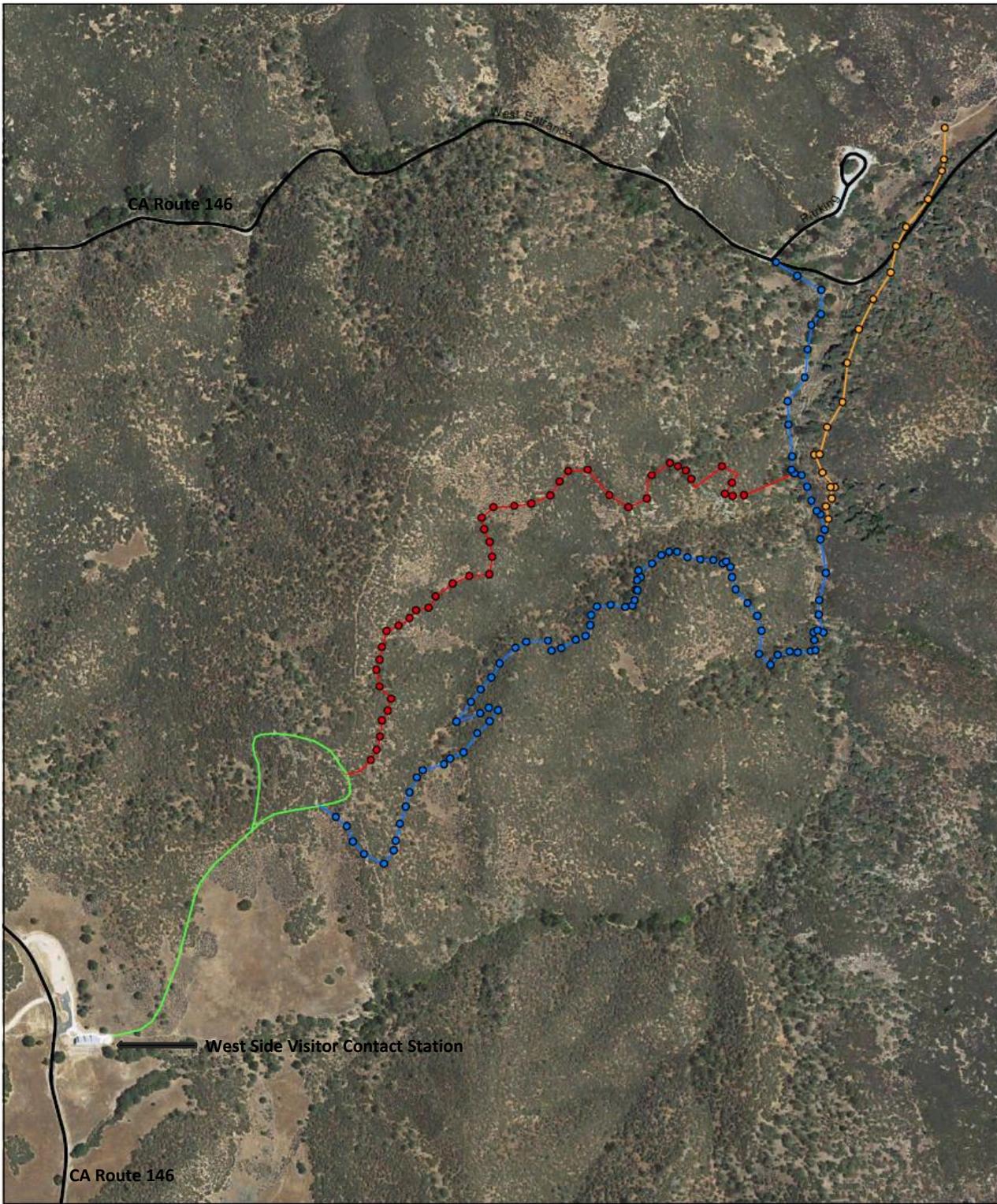
The NPS, like all federal agencies, is required to implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before making decisions that could impact the human environment. NEPA requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions.



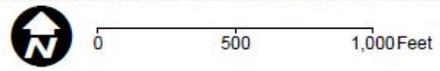
NEPA also requires agencies to involve the public in their decision making. The first opportunity for public involvement is the public scoping process, which is where we are now. During scoping, we request public input on the project to ensure that reasonable alternatives are considered early in the process.

We will analyze the alternatives and their effects in an Environmental Assessment (EA). When this document is completed, it will be released to the public for review. After public comments are resolved, and if the project won't result in significant effects, a decision document is signed and the project may proceed.

Project Location and Alternatives Map



- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Jawbone (GPS points) | Preliminary Trail Alignment Alternatives |
| ● Alternate Route 1 | ~ Route 1 |
| ● Alternate Route 2 - Preferred | ~ Route 2 |
| ● Alternative Route 3 | ~ Route 3 |
| ~ Accessible Trail | ~ Paved Road |



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Project Timeline

- June - July 2015: Public Scoping
- Summer-Fall 2015: Alternatives development
- Fall-Winter: EA preparation, including the analysis of impacts to resources
- Spring 2016: Release of EA to the public for review and comment
- Spring-Summer 2016: Analysis of public comments, preparation of a decision document and completion of construction documents
- Fall 2016: Construction begins

How to Comment

Do you see problems, concerns or opportunities related to the proposed project that we should know about? What alternatives should we consider?

Please tell us what you would like the park to consider. The NPS website, listed below, has been set up to receive your input. The site will also provide updates about the project's progress and other related documents. Please provide comments by **July 25, 2015**. You may provide comments in the following ways:

1. Attend the Public Scoping meeting on Wednesday, July 8, 2015, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., in the Mission Room of the Soledad High School, which is located at 425 Gabilan Drive, Soledad, CA.
2. Submit comments electronically on the NPS planning website:
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/westsidetrails>
3. Send a letter or write comments on the form on page 6. Comments may be sent to:
National Park Service, Attn: Karen Cantwell
Pinnacles West Side Trail Construction Project
333 Bush Street, Suite 500
San Francisco, CA 94104-2828

Please note: Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment — including your personal information — may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can request that we withhold your personal identifying information from public view, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.



