



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Bend National Park
P.O. Box 129
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Big Bend National Park News Release

REVISED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ON MULTI-USE TRAIL IN BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

The National Park Service (NPS) proposes to construct a new multi-use trail, to include hiking and mountain biking, in Big Bend National Park. The public, organizations, and other agencies are invited to review and comment upon a revised Environmental Assessment (EA) describing and analyzing the proposal.

The current EA is a revision of an EA that was originally released to the public in March, 2011. The original EA resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), but that decision document was not published due to an unfortunate clerical oversight. In recognition of its error, the NPS is providing this revised EA for public review and comment. The revised EA provides additional details that may clarify some issues and corrects errata in the original EA.

The proposed new trail would be located northwest of Panther Junction. Approximately ten miles of trail would be constructed, in two phases, for use by hikers and bicyclists. The proposal includes creating a trailhead parking and picnic area near the Panther Junction Visitor Center, and a second trailhead along the Grapevine Hills road. The area is not within the Recommended Wilderness areas of Big Bend backcountry, which remain off-limits to mountain bikes.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide park visitors a trail-based recreational opportunity in an area of the park where none currently exists. The proposed action is in keeping with a 2002 Memorandum of Agreement between NPS and the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) that encouraged identifying mountain biking opportunities in the national parks, including new trail construction in appropriate areas. The primary objectives of the proposal are to: 1) create new recreational opportunities for park visitors, and 2) provide a trail-based recreational opportunity in the vicinity of Panther Junction.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluates three alternatives and the potential environmental impacts of each: 1) Alternative A, the No Action Alternative; 2) Alternative B, to construct a new multi-use trail for hiking and mountain biking; and 3) Alternative C, to construct a new hiking-only trail. Alternative A describes the current condition of the project area and the environmental impacts that may occur if there were no changes in the way the park currently manages the area. Alternative B describes construction and use of a new multi-use trail for hiking and mountain biking, establishing two trailheads, and construction of a new parking lot and picnic area associated with the trailhead near Panther Junction. Alternative C describes construction and use of a new hiking-only trail with the same facilities proposed for Alternative B. The EA identifies Alternative B as the preferred alternative.

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

The EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1500 et seq), and NPS Director's Order 12: *Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-making* (DO-12).

The 30-day review and comment period starts August 25, 2014, and continues through September 26, 2014. To see the Environmental Assessment, visit the National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/bibe> during the comment period.

Written comments may be submitted on the PEPC website or may be sent to:

Superintendent
Attention Multi-Use Trail
P.O. Box 129
Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834

Paper copies of the EA may be requested by writing to the same address.

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 identifying information – may be made public 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.

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