

# General Management Plan Amendment for Park Addition Lands

Newsletter Issue 1: Scoping

February 2008

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Petrified Forest National Park  
Arizona



Dear Friends,

I would like to introduce you to a new planning effort at Petrified Forest National Park. In December 2004 Congress passed and the president signed the Petrified Forest National Park Expansion Act (Public Law 108-430), which authorized the addition of approximately 125,000 acres to the national park. The act directs the National Park Service to amend the park's current *General Management Plan* (GMP) to describe how these new lands will be managed once acquired. Over the next three years, our planning team will be preparing an amendment to the park's current management plan to address management of the recently authorized expansion.

The purpose of this newsletter is not only to provide you with information about the general management plan amendment effort, but also to ask for your help. By sharing your opinions about how newly acquired lands should be managed, you can make a difference in the future of Petrified Forest National Park.

To share your ideas with us, please fill out the enclosed comment form, visit our website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>, or write to us at:

Petrified Forest National Park GMP Amendment Team  
c/o Miki Stuebe  
National Park Service Denver Service Center  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, CO 80225-0287

We will continue to keep you informed about the planning process with newsletters like this one, public meetings, and the Internet.

Thank you for your interest in Petrified Forest National Park. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Cliff Spencer, Superintendent  
Petrified Forest National Park

## Summary of Park Expansion Legislation

Until 2004, Petrified Forest National Park encompassed approximately 93,500 acres to preserve (1) large concentrations of petrified wood and diverse fossil animals from the Late Triassic period, (2) scenic landscapes of the Painted Desert, (3) rare shortgrass prairie, and (4) more than 500 archeological and historical sites that reflect a 10,000-year continuum of human history.



The Petrified Forest National Park Expansion Act of 2004 expanded the boundary of the park by an additional 125,000 acres. A congressional report in support of the act cited the park's 1993 General Management Plan, which described the enormous potential significance and value of adjacent lands. These lands include 16 miles of the 22-mile Chinle escarpment, an east-west trending series of bluffs and badlands that contains one of the world's most significant records of Late Triassic period fossils. The newly added portions of this escarpment are believed to contain significant scientific resources that surpass those already in the park. Other important additions in the expansion area are the Wallace Tank Ruins, Rainbow Forest Badlands, and Canyon Butte Ruins; the west rim of the Painted Desert; the Dead Wash petroglyphs; and 25 miles of the Puerco River riparian area.

Of the 125,000 acres added to the park, slightly more than half are currently in private ownership. Expansion of the

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### Public Open House Meeting

Holiday Inn Express  
1308 E. Navajo Blvd.  
Holbrook, Arizona 86025

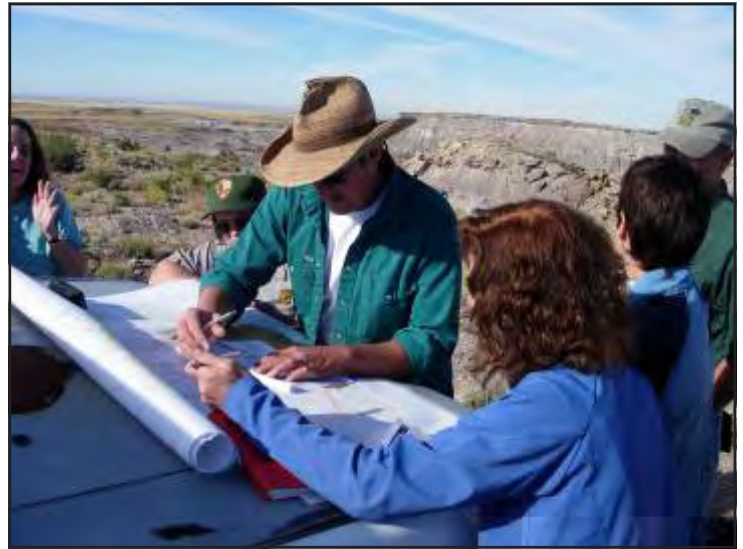
Monday, March 3, 2008  
4:00-7:00 p.m.

park boundary had broad local support, including private landowners, the city of Holbrook, the city of Winslow, the Holbrook Chamber of Commerce, Navajo County, and the state of Arizona. Forty-five percent of the lands within the expansion area are in state and federal ownership and would be transferred to the National Park Service or managed under an agreement if an acquisition plan cannot be negotiated. In May 2007, 15,228 acres of these lands previously under management by the Bureau of Land Management were transferred to the National Park Service.

## Previous General Management Planning Efforts

The 1993 *General Management Plan* provided broad management direction for the park and described a proposed boundary expansion of 97,800 acres. The *General Management Plan* was revised in May 2004 due to changing circumstances, new information, and new policies. The 2004 *General Management Plan Revision* addressed only specific aspects of the park's management, and much of the 1993 plan remains valid. As with the 1993 plan, the 2004 plan revision did not address management

of the proposed new lands because there was no legislation in place to support such actions. It was not until the Petrified Forest National Park Expansion Act was passed in December 2004 that this authority was granted to the National Park Service.



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## The Current General Management Plan Amendment Planning Effort

The new general management plan amendment will establish the overall management direction (for the next 15 to 20 years) for lands added to the Petrified Forest National Park in 2004. Among the topics to be addressed in the planning process are protection of natural and cultural resources, appropriate range of visitor uses, impacts of visitor uses, adequacy of park infrastructure, visitor access to the expansion lands, education and interpretive efforts, and external pressures on these lands.

A range of reasonable alternatives for managing the expansion lands, including a no-action alternative and a preferred alternative, will be developed. This new amendment will include an environmental impact statement that will evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives.

### Preliminary Issues and Opportunities

One of the first steps in amending a general management plan is the scoping or “discovery” phase, in which the NPS planning team gathers preliminary ideas about what the plan should address. The planning team would like to hear your thoughts about the topics below and any other issues and opportunities that you think should be considered.

- protection of sensitive paleontological, archeological, and natural resources
- recreation opportunities
- desired visitor experiences
- information, education, and interpretive programs or services
- facility development
- maintaining, improving, or removing existing access routes, facilities, and other infrastructure
- scientific research and education
- priorities for acquisition of private lands





# Foundation for Planning and Management

In July 2006 the National Park Service completed a *Foundation for Planning and Management* for the expanded Petrified Forest National Park. This foundation document was developed in preparation for the GMP amendment effort and provides essential guidance for decisions to be made about the park. The foundation document includes a purpose statement, significance statements, and fundamental and other important resources and values, among other elements.

## Purpose

*The park purpose is the specific reason for establishing a particular park. Statements of the park's purpose are grounded in a thorough analysis of the park's legislation (or executive order) and legislative history.*

The purpose of Petrified Forest National Park is to preserve, protect, and provide opportunities to experience globally significant Late Triassic paleontological resources, nationally significant archeological sites, scenic and natural resources, including the Painted Desert, and to foster scientific research and public understanding and appreciation of park resources.

## Significance

*Park significance statements express why the park's resources and values are important enough to warrant national park designation.*

- The Late Triassic fossil floras and faunas preserved at Petrified Forest National Park are globally significant because they provide a distinct record of diverse terrestrial ecosystems of approximately 214 and 225 million years ago. The park contains one of the largest and most colorful deposits of mineralized wood in the world. These extensive and remarkable paleontological resources illustrate variability, regional changes in plants and animals (including early dinosaurs) through place and time, lead to discoveries of important new species, and provide other insights that influence the world's

research and knowledge of Late Triassic terrestrial biotas.

- Petrified Forest National Park contains some of the best exposures of Late Triassic terrestrial rocks and strata in the world. The Chinle Formation in the park preserves a variety of strata that represent



ancient sedimentary environments (rivers, floodplains, lakes, swamps, soils, etc.) and their relationships to each other. The current landscape formed by geologic processes is integral to the paleontological resources, prehistoric and historic travel corridors, the movement and distribution of modern flora and fauna, and scenic sculpted badlands, including the Painted Desert.

- Petrified Forest contains the largest example of a recovering native grassland in the southern Colorado Plateau region. This semidesert shortgrass prairie and semidesert shrub steppe preserves habitats for a variety of flora and fauna and provides refuge for several animals of concern such as pronghorn and prairie dogs.
- Petrified Forest National Park contains a complex array of archeological resources, including petroglyphs that illustrate a 10,000-year continuum of human land use. Subtle but challenging landforms influenced human movements on both north-south and east-west routes from prehistoric times to the present, affecting regional patterns of settlement, trade, and

migration. Shifting cultural boundaries in this area created a high diversity of cultural sites and features that are still important to modern American Indians of the region.

- The area of Petrified Forest National Park has been a research laboratory for more than 150 years for paleontology, more than 100 years for archeological study, and more recently for other sciences. Research provides opportunities for education at many levels.
- Petrified Forest National Park provides, on a variety of levels from easy to challenging, unparalleled opportunities for visitors to experience a colorful and scientifically important petrified forest in its natural setting; archeological resources illustrating people living in demanding environments; the expanse, wildness, and solitude of the Painted Desert; and opportunities to see pronghorn and other wildlife of the shortgrass prairie.
- The exceptionally clear air and expansive, colorful landscapes at Petrified Forest National Park create distinctive scenic vistas.
- Petrified Forest National Park is the first national park to have lands designated as part of the national wilderness preservation system, and offers opportunities to experience an unusual variety of resources in an undeveloped setting, as well as exceptional challenge and solitude.

## Fundamental and Other Important Resources and Values

*Fundamental resources and values warrant primary consideration during planning and management because they contribute to significance and are critical to achieving the park's purpose.*

### Paleontological Resources

- Late Triassic terrestrial plant and animal fossils in the Chinle Formation
- petrified wood deposits in a natural setting
- the fossils and petrified wood that will continue to be preserved for scientific study (the museum collection), including more than 80 holotypes (as of 2007) of extinct plants and animals (a holotype is the specimen used to describe a particular species)

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## Ancient Landscape of the Chinle Formation

- preserved depositional environments
- erosional properties
- widespread exposures
- erosional processes and resulting features — such as buttes, mesas, and hoodoos
- significant deposits of Late Triassic terrestrial plant and animal fossils

## Natural Diversity

- a diversity of flora and fauna, including shared characteristics of three ecological regions (Great Basin, Sonoran, and Great Plains)



- ecological values — structure and composition, function, health, and recovery — owing to the lack of recent grazing relative to other areas of shortgrass prairie
- ephemeral water resources (washes, seeps and springs, tanks, tinajas, depressions), which are critically important for flora and fauna
- riparian areas, which are critically important for refuge and habitat
- some of the cleanest air in the country

## Archeological Resources

- Evidence of ongoing use and occupation spans Paleo-Indian culture to modern American Indian culture. Resources include hunter/gatherer sites and early large pithouse villages with an outstanding collection of the earliest pottery in the region. Evidence also illustrates the interaction between people and their environment — for example cultural landscapes, use and trade of petrified wood as lithic material, and human relationships to ephemeral sources of water. Examples of archeological resources that are on

the National Register of Historic Places include Agate House Pueblo, Puerco Ruins and petroglyphs, Flattops site, and Twin Buttes Archeological District.

- The park encompasses thousands of documented petroglyphs and hundreds of pictographs of high integrity. Many petroglyphs are related to sociopolitical boundaries of the overlapping cultures, and also include a wide variety of solar calendars, which illustrate human interaction with the landscape and an awareness of astronomy (thus the importance of dark night skies). Examples of petroglyphs that are on the National Register of Historic Places include Painted Desert Petroglyphs and Ruins Archeological District, Newspaper Rock Petroglyphs Archeological District, and Puerco Ruins and Petroglyphs.
- The area is a crossroads of trade routes, as evidenced by one of the most diverse arrays of ceramics in the U.S., as well as the presence of marine shell, obsidian, and varied architectural styles.
- The cultural significance of this landscape extends from ancestral peoples through modern day native peoples (Hopi, Zuni, Navajo, and Apache), and relates to concepts of homeland and ancestral territory.

## Scientific Research and Education

- paleontological resources, both in their natural setting and in the museum collection
- archeological resources, both extant (described above) and in the museum collection, including an extensive type sherd collection
- archives and historic photographs in museum collection
- history of the sciences of archeology and paleontology — remains of camps, historic collections, archives of journals and field notes, photos; includes work by Muir, Spier, Camp, Hough, Fewkes, Ward, Walker, and Ash
- access to in situ resources and the museum collection that has made past and ongoing study possible

## Visitor Opportunities

- petrified wood deposits in a natural setting
- archeological resources
- designated wilderness
- shortgrass prairie ecosystem



## Scenic Vistas

- erosional processes that shape the landscape, and geomorphological features including the mesas, buttes, badlands, lava flows, washes, and tinajas
- various ecosystems, such as shortgrass prairie, shrub steppe, riparian, and badlands
- cultural landscapes
- the renowned, colorful Painted Desert
- dark night sky
- visibility — can see more than 100 miles — vast, expansive, open, and unobstructed views

## Wilderness Character

- petrified wood deposits in a natural setting, other paleontological resources, petroglyphs, archeological sites, shortgrass prairie, and the colorful Painted Desert
- lack of trails and demanding environment offer challenge and contribute to opportunities for solitude
- dark night sky
- natural soundscape





## Other Important Resources and Values

*The following historic resources are not fundamental to achieving the park's purpose and significance, but they represent an important continuation of cultural trends and are of national significance.*

- The 35th Parallel Route is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and roughly follows a prehistoric trade route. Resources include the Beale Camel Trail, the Whipple Expedition route, immigrant routes to California, the Santa Fe Railroad, Route 66, stage stops, and Interstate 40.
- Early tourism and national monument designation (in 1906) are other important historic themes.

Important resources include New Deal projects of the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration, the NPS Mission 66 design initiative, and the proposed Little Colorado River National Heritage Area. Related resources that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places include the Painted Desert Community Complex Historic District and the Painted Desert Inn (also a national historic landmark). The Rainbow Forest historic landscape has been determined eligible for listing in the national register.

- Ranching, as illustrated by the Ortega and Paulsell ranches, is of local importance and contributes to the national story of ranching history.



## Frequently Asked Questions

***Why amend the park's General Management Plan now, when most of the expansion lands are still privately owned?***

The Petrified Forest National Park Expansion Act of 2004 directs the National Park Service to amend the park's *General Management Plan* to establish management direction for the expansion lands. This management direction will apply to these lands after they are acquired by the National Park Service from private landowners. One advantage to developing management direction for lands before they are acquired is that management can be considered holistically. If the management plan was updated each time an individual parcel was acquired, management could be disjointed. Planning in advance of land acquisition allows for consideration of the big picture.

***How does this planning effort relate to the previous general management planning efforts completed for the park?***

This amendment will not undo or invalidate previous planning efforts, but rather will incorporate management direction for newly acquired lands into the overall management direction already developed for the park.

***Will the general management plan amendment include a wilderness study?***

One of the primary criteria for wilderness suitability is federal ownership. Since most lands within the park expansion area are still in private ownership, most land would be found ineligible at this time. Because of this, it makes more sense to conduct a wilderness study when a substantial portion of the private lands have been acquired. Because this could take several years, a

wilderness study will not be completed as part of this amendment.

Existing wilderness areas within the national park will not be affected by the new amendment. However, these wilderness areas will be taken into consideration as management options are developed for the adjacent expansion lands.

***What about lands owned by the state and federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management that are within the park's expansion area?***

The Petrified Forest National Park Expansion Act of 2004 directs the National Park Service to acquire state property (about 34,000 acres) located within the expansion boundary. The act specifies that the state-owned lands could be managed by the National Park Service under an agreement with the state if an acquisition plan cannot be negotiated.

The 2004 legislation also directs the secretary of the interior to transfer about 15,500 acres of Bureau of Land Management land located within the park's expansion boundary to the National Park Service. On May 18, 2007, Public Land Order No. 7675 transferred administrative jurisdiction of these public lands from the Bureau of Land Management to the National Park Service.



Planning Activity		Approximate Time Frame	Public Involvement Opportunities
➔ 1	<b>Scoping: Identify planning issues and opportunities (We are at this step)</b>	Early 2008	Attend public scoping meeting. Reply to newsletter.
2	Develop Alternative Management Concepts: Identify a range of future visions or management concepts for the park expansion lands.	Mid 2008	
3	Develop Preliminary Alternatives: Develop the management concepts from Step 2 into full preliminary alternatives. Consider different aspects of these alternatives before selecting or crafting a preferred alternative.	Late 2008	
4	Select Preferred Alternative and Prepare Draft General Management Plan Amendment / Environmental Impact Statement: Prepare draft plan describing the management alternatives and impacts; distribute to the public.	2009	Provide written comments on the Draft GMP Amendment. Attend public meetings and provide comments.
5	Revise and Prepare Final General Management Plan Amendment/ Environmental Impact Statement: Analyze comments, prepare responses to comments, revise draft document to create final document, distribute to the public.	2010	
6	Implement the Approved Amendment: Prepare and issue "Record of Decision" and implement the amendment as funding allows.	2010 and beyond	Stay involved throughout implementation of the approved amendment.

