



Pinnacles National Park General Management Plan & Environmental Assessment

Finding of No Significant Impact
June 2013



Pinnacles National Park
General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment
Finding of No Significant Impact

Monterey and San Benito Counties, California

June 2013

Introduction

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the decision of the National Park Service (NPS) to adopt Alternative D: Link People and Resources, the preferred alternative, as presented in the *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment* (DGMP/EA), and the determination that no significant impacts on the quality of the human environment nor impairment of park values are associated with that decision.

When the planning process started in 2007, an environmental impact statement (EIS) was to be prepared with the GMP. However, the analysis of environmental impacts determined that there is no potential for significant effects on the quality of the human environment, nor any potential for impairment of park resources and values. No public controversy was expected, based on public comments received during the scoping process and review of the preliminary alternatives. For these reasons the NPS had determined that an environmental assessment (EA) would be prepared rather than an EIS. The planning team received a waiver to prepare an EA rather than an EIS from the Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science on September 28, 2011. A Federal Register notice was published on March 12, 2012 to inform the public that the NPS was terminating the preparation of an EIS for the GMP.

Purpose and Need for the Plan

The National Park Service has prepared a *General Management Plan* (GMP) for Pinnacles National Park to establish the park's overall management direction for the foreseeable future. Legislation establishing the National Park Service (NPS) as an agency and governing its management provides the fundamental direction for the administration of Pinnacles National Park (and other units and programs of the national park system). This GMP builds on these laws and the legislation that established Pinnacles National Park to provide a vision for the park's future.

The Selected Alternative: Link People and Resources

The actions encompassed by the selected alternative are the same as identified and analyzed in Alternative D: Link People and Resources, in the EA for the DGMP. Minor modifications based on information and comments submitted during public review of the DGMP were incorporated. The text was also edited for clarity. As described in the DGMP, the actions listed in "Actions Common to All Alternatives" are also included in the selected alternative. There are no substantial additions, nor did any of the changes result in altering the magnitude of environmental impacts. Modifications based on additional staff analysis and public review are as follows:

- Management Zones, Cultural Interpretation, Vegetation and Wildlife: Native vegetation communities and wildlife habitat, which are also recognized as important cultural resources to some traditionally associated peoples, may be modified to support important cultural landscape features. (See Attachment 1).

- West Side Facilities: The campground will likely contain site markers, fire rings, picnic tables, animal proof food storage lockers and vault toilets.
- Commercial services: In addition to current commercial activities and commercial interpretive tours, the park will also consider allowing other commercial visitor service activities consistent with the GMP and NPS service-wide policies.
- Management Zones: (Additional area guidance for the Semi-primitive Zone) If the private land south of McCabe Canyon adjacent to the wilderness boundary becomes part of the park, the area will be zoned semi-primitive and would be managed the same as McCabe Canyon watershed.

Concept

The primary focus of the approved GMP is to engage a broad range of visitors in the enjoyment, understanding, and stewardship of natural and cultural resources and values of the Gabilan Mountains ecoregion. Pinnacles will focus on ways to connect diverse audiences and resources, to acknowledge the interrelationship between natural and cultural resources, and to protect, preserve, and restore ecological communities and processes.

The key components of the selected alternative are as follows:

- Facilities will be used to support increased visitor understanding of natural and cultural resources and/or will serve management, operational, and administrative functions. On the east side, most visitor facilities will be concentrated in the campground area. A replacement East Pinnacles Visitor Center will be built in the vicinity of the current visitor center/campground store when the current structure no longer meets park needs or can be cost-effectively maintained.
- Pinnacles will connect visitors, communities, and resources in a variety of ways. New opportunities will be provided where such uses do not detract from resource or social values. New trails can be built to provide a wide variety of experiences. Interpretation and education will focus on science and history learning. There will be opportunities to learn about the significant resources of the park and the park's broader context in the Gabilan Mountains ecoregion. The park can participate in developing and staffing regional visitor and interpretation centers.
- Natural resources will be protected to a high degree and natural ecosystem functions will be restored when practicable and beneficial. Natural resources protection will be enhanced by a strong education and research emphasis.
- Cultural resources will be managed to protect and interpret their significance, connect those resources within their broader regional history, and to provide visitors with opportunities to experience and learn about the interrelationship between humans and the environment.
- The park will prepare a comprehensive boundary study to identify park needs, inventory significant resources, and to determine boundary adjustment priorities.
- The park will develop a wilderness stewardship plan and a backcountry plan and will provide guidance for wilderness stewardship activities such as cultural and natural resource protection, day use activities, climbing, commercial services (if any), infrastructure management, and backcountry camping, if any (see *Visitor Experience, Recreation*).
- The park will increase partnership efforts and outreach programs focused on regional protection of significant resources, habitat connectivity, and open rural working landscapes.

Management Actions for the Selected Alternative

Visitor Experience

RECREATION

Because the selected alternative emphasizes connecting visitors, communities, and resources, the park will provide more opportunities for individuals and groups, including schools and families. Recreational opportunities will be dispersed to reduce congestion and improve the quality of the visitor experience in park core areas.

Existing uses such as hiking, climbing, and picnicking will continue. Developed camping will be provided at the Pinnacles campground. Climbing use will continue in congruence with raptor advisory updates and voluntary closures. The park will continue to work in close coordination with the climbing community, including the Friends of Pinnacles – an organization focused on climbing. A Climbing Management Plan will be developed. Existing bolted routes will continue to be allowed where critical resources are not adversely affected.

Construction of new trails will provide a wide variety of experiences. These range from remote wilderness connections to short accessible loops and interpretive trails, and will disperse use from park core areas. New trails will provide connections between existing trails and access into areas in the park where opportunities are lacking, including the bottomlands, McCabe Canyon, and the west side. A connection to the South Wilderness trail will be constructed. Future site planning for each trail will identify specific locations and footprints and will be subject to additional environmental analysis. Visitor facilities, including trails, in the bottomlands will be developed only after park managers have determined that there will be little or no risk of spreading nonnative invasive plants from the bottomlands into uninfested areas of the park from visitor activity.

Picnic areas (new and improved facilities) will be provided on both sides of the park near visitor service areas and will include restrooms, parking, and drinking water. Existing picnic sites will be improved such as adding shade structures.

A small number of backcountry campsites will be established on a trial basis if suitable locations can be found. Backcountry campsites could be located in primitive or semi-primitive zones. Upon establishment, backcountry campsites will be closely monitored to determine whether unacceptable impacts on resources or social values are occurring. Pending this evaluation, backcountry camping could continue after the trial period if impacts are adequately mitigated. If identified within wilderness, the location of backcountry campsites, along with their specifications, will be decided by the Wilderness Stewardship Plan. Future site planning will identify specific locations and footprints and will be subject to additional environmental analysis.

A small (approximately 10-site) walk-in campground will be added on the west side to partially replace a former campground destroyed by flooding. Future site planning will identify specific locations and footprints and will be subject to additional environmental analysis (see *West Side Facilities* for additional detail).

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

Interpretation and education will focus on science and history. Interpretation of significant park resources will continue through an increase in formal programs, informal interpretation, waysides, and brochures both within and outside of the park. For example, passive interpretation, such as waysides, can be provided at the Butterfield homestead site, McCabe Canyon, and the west side mining district. The park can also participate in developing and staffing regional visitor and information centers. An expanded environmental education program, including Camp

Pinnacles, will be developed. The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan will be updated and will include new opportunities for integrated natural and cultural resources education and interpretation.

A range of “outdoor classroom” opportunities, including programming and curriculum development for a variety of audiences and locations, will provide opportunities for visitors to learn about park resources within a broader context. Opportunities for visitor involvement in science and stewardship projects will be emphasized.

The park will consider multi-use options for the Bear Gulch nature center including administration and visitor orientation.

A virtual museum will be developed to provide public access to a portion of Pinnacles’ museum collections.

Facilities

New facilities will be used to support increased visitor understanding of natural and cultural resources, while other facilities will continue to serve management, operational, and administrative functions in the park. Structures that do not contribute to the historical significance of the park and are not useful for park operations will be removed. These can include fencing, temporary structures in the bottomlands and McCabe Canyon, buildings 14, 7, and 207 in Bear Gulch, and the facilities being replaced at Chaparral.

EAST SIDE FACILITIES

A replacement East Pinnacles Visitor Center (approximately 3,800 sf) and a replacement campground store will be built in a previously disturbed area in the vicinity of the current visitor center/campground store building to replace the current structure when it no longer meets park needs or cannot be cost-effectively maintained. The current building was not designed for multiple functions occurring in the same space. It has structural deficiencies and public health concerns. The replacement visitor center and a picnic area will be designed to provide better separation between day use visitors and campers, improving visitor experience. A replacement east side entrance station will be constructed along Route 146 between the park entrance and visitor center to improve visitor orientation and circulation. Future site planning will identify specific locations and footprints for these structures and will be subject to additional environmental analysis.

The Pinnacles Campground area will be reconfigured to protect sensitive resources, and to improve operations and visitor experience. Reconfiguration could include removing campsites from sensitive areas and adding new campsites in more suitable areas. Group sites will be improved and could be used for environmental education programs. The swimming pool will be retained. The amphitheater will be relocated to an accessible location, appropriate for group use, and away from sensitive habitat.

Construction of additional parking to meet the needs of the campground, visitor center, and day use will be considered in facility and site plans.

The park’s headquarters will initially remain in Bear Gulch, although some functions could be relocated or moved to other facilities. Parking capacity in Bear Gulch will remain unchanged. If Bear Gulch headquarters buildings are heavily damaged or lost (e.g. fire or flood), headquarters will be rebuilt outside of Bear Gulch in a suitable location in the frontcountry zone (for example, on the bench across the road from the Pinnacles campground). The park will also consider the potential for shared or leased administrative office space outside the park. As needed, existing utilities, including the Bear Gulch sewer system, will be replaced. A site plan will be prepared for the Moses Spring parking and picnic area to improve natural hydrologic conditions and habitat functions.

At the Ben Bacon Ranch Historic District, the Bacon House could be adaptively reused as office space for park staff and/or researchers. Other historic structures (such as the barn, etc.) could also be adaptively reused. The Butterfield Homestead will be preserved and managed for cultural landscape values that showcase the historic homesteading period. Rehabilitation for historically compatible modern use is also possible (see *Natural Resources* below for additional guidance on visitor facilities at the bottomlands).

The Bear Valley School building will be rehabilitated and interpretation about its significance will be provided. Opportunities for the community to use Bear Valley School could be available (see *Cultural Resources* for additional detail).

Enhanced small-scale amenities will be provided at shuttle stops where practicable, and could include shade structures, visitor information, and water. Shuttle stop facilities will be designed to blend with the park environment.

Maintenance facilities will remain at Chalone. Most housing will also continue to be located in the Chalone area. If expanded programs and mission changes occur, the park may need to complete an updated Housing Needs Assessment to further evaluate housing needs for the park.

Existing park entrance roads will be maintained. If administrative roads are no longer needed, they could be removed, re-contoured, or used as trails. McCabe Road will be used by administrative vehicles only. A public trail and administrative road will continue to provide access to the bottomlands.

A shuttle service with stops at the visitor center, Bear Gulch, campground, and other major sites will continue to be used to reduce congestion and carbon emissions from visitor vehicles. The park will also continue to pursue environmentally friendly shuttle vehicles and operations.

WEST SIDE FACILITIES

The west side will be managed to retain a natural and quiet character, while providing for increased visitor services and safety. Existing administrative facilities, including housing, will be maintained.

New trail connections will be developed, including a trail to link the new visitor contact station with the existing trail system. Improved picnic sites will include shade structures. A small (approximately 10-site) walk-in campground will be provided (possibly at Jawbone Canyon, across from the overflow parking area, although other locations would also be considered). The campground will likely contain site markers, fire rings, picnic tables, animal proof food storage lockers and vault toilets. As with other development projects, archeological surveys will be completed to help determine appropriate siting for these facilities. Future site planning will identify specific locations and footprints and will be subject to additional environmental analysis.

At Chaparral, the existing parking lot, picnic area, comfort station, and road, which currently are located in flood-prone areas, will be removed and relocated to appropriate areas within the frontcountry zone. The relocation areas could include the overflow parking area and the area near the new visitor contact station. Restoration efforts started during construction of replacement west side facilities (visitor contact station, entrance station, maintenance facility, and housing) will continue, including removing decommissioned facilities from flood-prone areas, as well as recontouring and revegetating former building footprints and other disturbed areas. West side facilities will also be designed to accommodate potential shuttle service.

The North Chalone Peak Fire Lookout will continue to be stabilized, however rehabilitation for administrative adaptive reuse could occur contingent upon funding. If funding for rehabilitation cannot be found within

approximately five years after the GMP has been approved, the park will plan for the removal of the fire lookout in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). If removed, interpretation of its significance will be provided at North Chalone Peak.

Sustainability and Carbon Footprint

The park will plan for the removal or relocation from flood prone areas of facilities that do not contribute to the historical significance of the park and are not being used for park operations. Natural processes will be restored in these areas where feasible. New or replacement building footprints will be compact, using previously disturbed areas where possible and minimizing impacts on ecological components and processes. Pinnacles will take measures to reduce energy use (carbon emissions) through park operations and to increase energy and fuel efficiency using sustainable facility design, fuel efficient vehicles and other means, such as by expanding shuttle use during peak visitation periods.

Natural and Cultural Resources (Combined Resource Management)

Pinnacles will continue to follow existing laws, policies, guidelines, and approved park plans in coordinating and balancing the management of natural and cultural resources. Park management will acknowledge that humans and the landscape are inseparable; that the environment has been shaped for thousands of years by human use. This knowledge will inform the park's environmental history and restoration actions where appropriate. Relative significance or sensitivity of resources will be analyzed and management balanced accordingly. Pinnacles will continue to implement and expand long-term monitoring programs, baseline studies, inventories, and research. The park will complete the resource stewardship strategy planning effort which began in 2012 and update the plan as necessary.

Pinnacles will work cooperatively with surrounding neighbors, communities, local agencies, associated tribes, and organizations to protect the rural character and benefits of open working landscapes. Pinnacles will seek to increase the involvement of traditionally associated peoples in research and protection of resources with traditional cultural meaning and value. Pinnacles will document and interpret the influences of traditionally associated peoples on the landscape with active engagement of these traditionally associated peoples.

Museum collections will be managed according to the current Museum Management Plan.

Visitor access in certain areas will continue to be managed, based on long term monitoring, to protect sensitive resources.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources, including ecological communities, watershed values, sensitive wildlife populations, geologic features, water quality, air quality, natural quiet, and natural darkness, will be protected to a high degree and natural ecosystem functions will be restored when practicable and beneficial. Natural resources protection will be enhanced by a strong education and research emphasis.

Much of natural resources management will mirror current actions. Pinnacles will continue existing natural resource management activities, including bat and raptor monitoring, re-establishment of the California condor, and removal of nonnative invasive species.

Extirpated native species, such as Foothill yellow-legged frogs, could be re-established at Pinnacles. Geologic resources and processes will continue to be highlighted and protected.

Visitor access in certain areas will continue to be managed, based on long-term monitoring, to protect sensitive resources. Seasonal closures will continue at Bear Gulch Cave and in raptor nesting areas to protect threatened and sensitive species. Visitor facilities, including trails, in the bottomlands will be developed only after park managers have determined that there will be little or no risk of spreading nonnative invasive plants from the bottomlands into uninfested areas of the park from visitor activity. Consequently, partial opening or seasonal visitor use may be employed depending on whether selected areas of the bottomlands have been determined to have high priority invasive species under control or when priority invasive plant seeds or other plant propagules are less likely to be dispersed.

Restoration will include removal of structures that do not contribute to the historical significance of the park and are not useful for park operations (see first paragraph under *Facilities* for details).

A high degree of restoration of natural processes will be provided. Priority will be given to areas likely to receive the greatest ecological benefit, including the bottomlands and riparian areas along Sandy Creek. Pinnacles will continue to control nonnative species, including feral pigs and highly invasive nonnative plants. Nonnative invasive vegetation will continue to be treated or removed in the bottomlands. Revegetation will occur using native species of local genetic stock whenever possible.

Pinnacles will continue to implement its current Fire Management Plan. Fires will be managed to protect structures, lives, and property, and to achieve desired resource conditions. Fire management will include adaptive management. Fire management activities will also continue to be coordinated with cultural resources identification and protection.

Pinnacles will continue particulate, ozone, and visibility monitoring at the east entrance. Placement of additional air quality monitoring equipment could occur based on NPS Air Quality Division recommendations.

The selected alternative will link people to park resources through a strong science/resource communication program that will enhance public and staff understanding of significant park resources. Increased cooperation with universities and other scientific and educational institutions and organizations will boost research opportunities and information sharing, as well as allow better integration of knowledge in actions to protect park resources. As available, facilities will be provided for scientists, scholars, and other researchers to work collaboratively with the park. Maintaining relationships with communities and neighbors to find common ground will be a priority for expanded preservation and protection of regional geologic, watershed, and open space resources.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources will be managed to protect and interpret their significance, to connect these resources to a broader regional history, and to provide visitors with opportunities to experience and learn about the interrelationship between humans and the environment.

Cultural resources will be documented and assessed for significance in accordance with existing policy. Features/landscapes eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places will be nominated.

Pinnacles will develop long-term treatment strategies for significant cultural resources (archeological sites, historic buildings, structures and landscapes). Appropriate treatments for cultural resources, including adaptive reuse of historic structures, will be applied, although the nature of the use may vary. For example, a Historic Structure Report for the Ben Bacon House will be prepared to document the physical history of the building and to determine appropriate preservation treatments, including adaptive reuse.

Policy-required baseline studies, such as historic structure reports and a historic resource study will be completed. Identification studies, site condition assessments, and long-term preservation strategies will be planned and completed. One or more traditional association (ethnographic) studies will be completed.

Pinnacles will conduct regular monitoring of significant cultural resources (e.g. archeological sites, historic structures, and cultural landscapes) for protection and preservation. This will include providing staff and volunteers with guidelines (e.g. monitoring form) and training (knowledge of resources).

Management of cultural landscapes will be balanced with natural resources objectives, park operations needs, and visitor use.

In addition, the park will enhance the cultural resource management program to expand understanding and guide management of resources, which include: Native American archeological and ethnographic resources; archeological, structural and landscape resources representing exploration and homesteading by Spanish, Mexican, and American colonizers and settlers; development of the park by NPS and Depression era programs such as the CCC; later NPS Mission 66 buildings and structures; archives and museum collections; and other resources. The program will improve professional care and management of museum archives.

Actions associated with historic structures on the east side will be the same as noted under *East Side Facilities*. Structures that do not contribute to the historical significance of the park and are not being used for park operations can be removed. See first paragraph under *Facilities* for details. Actions associated with the North Chalone Peak Fire Lookout are noted under *West Side Facilities*.

The Bear Valley School property was included within Pinnacles National Park in 2010. As a result, the NPS will prepare a nomination of the school building to the National Register of Historic Places. The NPS will also complete a Historic Structure Report to document the physical history of the building and to determine appropriate preservation treatments. Using donated funds to the extent possible, the Bear Valley School building will be rehabilitated as a partnership project and interpretation about its significance will be provided. Opportunities for the community to use Bear Valley School could be available.

Historic mining resources will be protected and interpreted in the Chaparral/west side area.

Visitor access to collections will be increased through development of interpretive museum displays and a virtual museum.

Climate Change

Pinnacles will continue to support, encourage, and conduct scientific research related to understanding the effects of climate change on park resources and/or the broader region, including coordinating efforts with other agencies. The park will strive to accomplish goals from the Climate Friendly Action Plan.

Wilderness

The Pinnacles Wilderness was first designated in 1976; it has been renamed the Hain Wilderness in January 2013. The park does not have an existing wilderness stewardship plan. The park will develop a wilderness stewardship plan and will provide guidance for wilderness stewardship activities such as cultural and natural resource protection, day use activities, climbing, commercial services (if any), infrastructure management, and backcountry camping (if any). This plan will follow the guidance developed and articulated in the NPS *Wilderness Stewardship Planning Handbook* and Director's Order 41 (2013). A backcountry management plan will also be developed; this

plan may be combined with the wilderness stewardship plan. Several backcountry areas will be managed according to wilderness standards (see *Management Zones: Primitive and Semi-primitive zones*).

Pinnacles will continue to follow national wilderness requirements and policies (e.g. management interventions considered only when necessary to manage the site as wilderness, avoid or minimize use of aircraft or motorized equipment, Leave No Trace™ education and interpretation, etc). Protection or restoration of resource values within designated wilderness could continue to include stewardship activities required for maintaining or recovering wilderness, including management of historic properties, infrastructure management including fencing out and/or controlling nonnative species. Visitor use opportunities for solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation will continue to be provided in wilderness.

Commercial Services

The park will continue to work with a cooperating association to provide bookstore sales in the East Pinnacles Visitor Center and West Pinnacles Visitor Contact Station. The Pinnacles Campground will remain and will be reconfigured to protect sensitive resources, and to improve operations and visitor experience (see *East Side Facilities* for more details). The park has an existing concession contract for camping, limited convenience and grocery items that expires in April 2018. After this contract expires, the park will consider authorizing a new concession contract for camping, limited convenience and/or grocery items, firewood sales, bicycle rental, climbing gear sales, wireless internet services and other recreational activities consistent with the GMP and NPS service-wide policies.

The park will also consider allowing commercial interpretive tours and other commercial visitor service activities consistent with the GMP and NPS service-wide policies. If commercial services in support of visitor experiences in wilderness are considered in the future, the determination of extent necessary will also be addressed in the wilderness stewardship plan.

Park Operations

Headquarters will remain in Bear Gulch, although some functions can be moved to other facilities and could also be rebuilt elsewhere. The park will consider the potential for shared or leased administrative office space outside the park (see *Facilities* for more details).

Partnerships, Regional Cooperation, and Outreach

Park staff will continue to participate in community outreach activities including attending local meetings and special events. The park will engage communities, volunteers, universities, Native American groups, the Pinnacles Partnership friends group, and other organizations in resource protection, education, research, and interpretation.

Pinnacles will participate in efforts to work with government agencies, ranchers, cattleman's associations, land trusts, rangeland conservation coalitions, and individual citizens to support common objectives for open spaces that provide habitat connectivity, dark night skies, clean air, and livelihoods for its neighbors. For sites outside the park that are related to the purpose and significance of Pinnacles, new partnerships/agreements with schools, affiliated tribes, surrounding agencies, and gateway communities will be developed to increase regional resource protection and to provide new educational and interpretive opportunities. The park will partner with gateway communities and other agencies to provide wayfinding and interpretation. The park could participate in developing and staffing regional visitor and interpretive centers. Park staff will seek increased local community involvement in management actions and issues. The park will seek to increase interagency cooperation and tribal involvement in resource protection and restoration.

Opportunities for the community to use Bear Valley School could be available.

Pinnacles National Park and Parque Nacional Quebrada del Condorito in Argentina will continue a sister park relationship to exchange information and resources regarding common themes at both parks. The primary theme for this agreement is the conservation of the California condor and the Andean condor. Other benefits from this collaboration include weed management, rare species reintroduction, trail and infrastructure development, work with indigenous peoples, visitor use management, youth engagement, and habitat improvement and neighboring landowner cooperative programs.

Boundary Adjustments

The park will prepare a comprehensive boundary study to identify park needs, inventory significant resources, and to determine boundary adjustment priorities. The park will consider administrative boundary changes to acquire lands from willing sellers adjacent to the boundary. The park will seek to acquire inholdings within the boundary if/when they become available from willing sellers.

Management of Specific Areas

Bottomlands

The bottomlands will be managed to explore the interrelationships between natural resources and multiple layers of human history and culture, ranging from homesteading to Native American traditional practices. The natural ecosystem, including native plant communities such as oak savanna, will predominate. Historic structures can be adaptively reused as noted above under East Side Facilities. The bottomlands will offer a variety of visitor use opportunities, including immersion in the historic and natural settings, interpretation of cultural resources, and service learning. A range of trail experiences, lengths, and accessibility will be provided, including between the campground and the Butterfield Homestead. Road access between the campground and the bottomlands will serve hikers and bicyclists. Visitor facilities in the bottomlands will be developed only after park managers have determined that there will be little or no risk of spreading nonnative invasive plants from the bottomlands into uninfested areas of the park from visitor activity.

Pinnacles Campground Developed Area (East Side)

The Pinnacles Campground developed area will provide a wide range of new visitor experiences including a replacement East Pinnacles Visitor Center when the current building no longer meets park needs or can be cost-effectively maintained. A new day use area and facilities to serve groups will be developed. The campground area will be reconfigured to protect sensitive resources. Campground amenities will be retained, including replacement of the campground store. Future site planning will identify specific locations and footprints and will be subject to additional environmental analysis. New trails will improve visitor dispersal and provide new opportunities to experience these areas.

West Side

The west side will be managed to retain a natural and quiet character, while providing for increased visitor services and safety. At Chaparral, the existing parking lot, picnic area, comfort station, and road, which currently are located in flood-prone areas, will be removed and relocated to appropriate areas within the frontcountry zone. Former facility footprints will be restored. New trail connections will be developed. Improved picnic sites will include shade structures. A small (approximately 10-site) walk-in campground will be added as described under *West Side Facilities*.

Bear Gulch, Condor Gulch, and Chalone

Headquarters will remain in Bear Gulch, although some functions can be moved to other facilities. Structures that do not contribute to the historical significance of the park and are not being used for park operations can be removed. These structures include buildings 14, 7, and 207 in Bear Gulch. Condor Gulch structures will be adaptively re-used. New opportunities to experience the CCC cultural landscape will be implemented, possibly including passive external interpretation of the Condor Gulch structures or some Bear Gulch structures. Visitor information will also continue to be provided at the Bear Gulch Nature Center. The Chalone area will continue to be used for maintenance, emergency operations, and staff housing. In addition, a site plan for the Moses Spring parking and picnic area will evaluate opportunities to improve natural hydrologic conditions and habitat functions.

High Peaks

Visitor use activities will remain essentially unchanged. High Peaks trails will be zoned semi-primitive to allow for periodic higher use by individuals and groups while maintaining wilderness values. New trails throughout the park will help disperse use from the High Peaks.

McCabe Canyon

The watershed will be managed to promote natural processes, research, long-term monitoring, education and interpretation, and ethnobotanical practices. Education and interpretation will focus on the interrelationships between natural resources and layers of human history. New trails will be provided away from sensitive resources. Park staff will work with traditionally associated people to provide interpretation and incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into resource management, in conjunction with other management techniques.

Bear Valley School

Using donated funds to the extent possible, the Bear Valley School building will be rehabilitated as a partnership project for education/interpretation purposes and compatible community use. External interpretive features will be added. Facilities such as a small new comfort station, day use parking area, picnic area, and utilities could be constructed but will be designed and sited to not detract from the historical setting and would be done in consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer. A small new building for office space for partners or agency staff could also be constructed.

Management Zones

Management zones describe a range of desired conditions for resources and visitor experiences and/or management approaches to be achieved and maintained in particular areas of Pinnacles National Park. Each zone includes the desired conditions for resources and the types of activities and facilities that are appropriate in that management zone. The management zones are consistent with the park's purpose, significance, and special mandates. Five management zones have been used in Pinnacles National Park: primitive, semi-primitive, frontcountry, cultural interpretation, and special research. The majority of the park is included in the primitive and semi-primitive zones. The developed zone includes paved roads, existing visitor facilities such as the visitor center and visitor contact station, the Pinnacles Campground, and administrative facilities. The special research zone includes the area managed for condor research and other areas landlocked by this area. The management zones have been applied to park lands to identify an area's predominant use and desired future conditions. The management zone descriptions and the approved zoning for the selected alternative are included in Attachment 1: Management Zones and Selected Alternative Map. The following description identifies the locations and details for the application of management zones.

Primitive Zone:

The primitive zone includes the following areas:

- Designated wilderness areas where visitors can experience solitude, natural sounds, and a sense of remoteness.
- The area between Highway 146, Highway 25, and McCabe Canyon
- The area north of McCabe canyon excluding a 1,000-foot corridor centered on an unpaved road in the northern part of the park.
- Remote lands in the northwestern portion of the park landlocked by wilderness except for a small isolated area in the northwest corner of the park where unpaved road access occurs.
- Popular trails within wilderness in park core areas are excluded. A 1,000-foot corridor centered on these trails is also excluded from this zone.
- Most of the southern half of the park, except for the North Chalone Peak trail, North Chalone Peak area, portions of the South Wilderness trail, and the area east of the South Wilderness trail.

Semi-primitive Zone:

The semi-primitive zone includes the following areas:

- The upland area east of the bottomlands to provide trails and other recreation opportunities.
- The McCabe Canyon watershed to provide visitor use opportunities, including trails.
- If the private land south of McCabe Canyon adjacent to the wilderness boundary becomes part of the park, the area will be zoned semi-primitive and would be managed the same as McCabe Canyon watershed.
- Unpaved roads, including a 1,000-foot corridor centered on an unpaved road in the northern part of the park and a small isolated section of the park in the northwest corner that includes unpaved road access.
- A 250-foot corridor west of the Highway 146 frontcountry zone.
- Popular trails in the park core, including 1,000-foot corridors centered on Juniper Canyon, Rim, Condor Gulch, Bear Gulch, Bench, Old Pinnacles, and Balconies trails.
- Other trails including the North Wilderness Trail section from Old Pinnacles intersection to Willow Spring, North Chalone Peak, South Chalone Peak and South Wilderness Trail.
- All areas near Bear Gulch, Condor Gulch, and Chalone outside wilderness.
- Lands surrounding developed areas on the west side and other potential high use areas, including areas outside designated wilderness.
- A 500-foot corridor north of the double gates and overflow parking areas that is zoned as frontcountry on the west side.
- Chaparral areas not zoned frontcountry to provide visitor opportunities including trails.
- The North Chalone Peak area and surrounding area outside wilderness.
- The area south of the condor enclosure area and east of the South Wilderness trail outside wilderness.
- Note: Any designated wilderness within this zone is subject to all wilderness requirements and policy.

Frontcountry Zone:

The frontcountry zone includes the following areas:

- A 500-foot corridor centered on Highway 146 on the east side.

- The lower portion of the Ben Bacon Ranch Historic District, the area east to the existing unpaved road access to private property, the campground and bench area west of Highway 146, and the entrance of McCabe Canyon (includes the development in the bottom of McCabe Canyon to approximately 1,200 feet from the park road). This area allows for flexibility in siting facilities and a range of visitor use opportunities, including cultural interpretation and recreation, such as trails.
- A 500-foot corridor centered on existing paved roads and structures in the Bear Gulch, Condor Gulch, and Chalone areas.
- A 500-foot corridor centered on Highway 146 on the west side from park entrance to overflow lot, and other paved roads and structures.
- The double gates area, including a 500-foot corridor along existing unpaved roads, and Jawbone Canyon ridges to allow for a small walk-in campground on the west side.
- A 500-foot corridor along the South Wilderness trail/administrative road trail to junction with the road from the condor enclosure area, and up to the enclosure area boundary.

Cultural Interpretation Zone:

The cultural interpretation zone includes the following areas:

- The northern half of the Ben Bacon Ranch Historic District extending 1,000 feet up each drainage.
- The Bear Valley School area.
- (Please note that interpretation of cultural resources can occur in other zones as appropriate.)

Special Research Zone:

The area managed for condor research is zoned as special research.

User Capacity

Park staff will continue to monitor social and resource indicators, evaluate current conditions against established standards, and take appropriate steps to ensure the park’s user capacity is not exceeded.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures are the practicable and appropriate methods that would be used to avoid and/or minimize harm to the park’s natural and cultural, wilderness, and socioeconomic resources. These mitigation measures have been developed based on existing laws and regulations, best management practices, conservation measures, and other known techniques from past and present work in and around Pinnacles National Park.

The GMP provides a management framework for the park. Within this broad context, the following measures will be used to minimize potential impacts from the implementation of the alternatives. These measures will be applied subject to funding and staffing levels. Additional mitigation measures will be identified as part of implementation planning and for individual projects to further minimize resource impacts.

Wilderness Values

Minimum Requirement/Minimum Tool Process

The Wilderness Act directs that agencies administer wilderness to preserve wilderness character. The purpose of the minimum requirement/minimum tool process is to avoid or reduce the effects of management on wilderness character and values. It provides a method for developing, evaluating, and selecting the actions that will be the least intrusive on wilderness character and values, while allowing for the administration of the wilderness. The concept is applied to all management actions, programs, and activities within Pinnacles National Park that might affect wilderness and potential wilderness (wilderness study areas).

The minimum requirement/minimum tool concept is applied as a two-step process. The first step (minimum requirement) is used to determine whether a proposed management action is appropriate and necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness, and to determine that it will not cause unacceptable impacts on wilderness resources and character, in accordance with the Wilderness Act. The second step (minimum tool) is used to analyze the techniques and types of equipment needed to ensure that impacts on wilderness resources and character are minimized. If the project is found to be appropriate and necessary, then a management method (tool or technique) is selected that will result in the least amount of impact to the wilderness resources and character.

The minimum requirement/minimum tool process provides a formal method to develop alternative ways to take action in wilderness with fewer effects on wilderness character and wilderness resources. The process assists NPS managers in determining an appropriate means to protect wilderness values. The environmental compliance for any/all proposals for intervention in wilderness will include the park's draft minimum requirement/minimum tool determination in the proposal's EA or EIS released for public review so that comments or concerns will be considered in the decision-making process.

Management and Protection of Natural Resources

Air Quality

- Minimize NPS vehicle use and emissions, secure fuel efficient vehicles, and employ the best available control technology.
- Encourage the public and commercial tour bus companies to employ transportation methods that reduce emissions.
- Encourage employee carpooling and strive to accommodate employee work schedules to maximize carpooling ability.
- Implement a no idling policy for all government vehicles.
- Coordinate and consolidate trips to town and to west side facilities with parkwide communication system to accomplish multiple tasks and carpooling, when possible.
- Implement sustainable practices in park operations and building designs that reduce energy demands, thus reducing air pollution emissions.
- When feasible and if physically able, staff should consider hiking in lieu of driving to accomplish work. Park management will devise effective means of getting from Chaparral to the West Pinnacles Visitor Contact Station until a connector trail is constructed.
- Strive for carbon neutral status in the park by reducing greenhouse gas emissions while increasing appropriate carbon sequestration.

Natural Sounds

- Implement standard noise abatement measures during park operations, including: scheduling to minimize impacts in noise-sensitive areas, using the best available noise control techniques, using hydraulically or electrically powered impact tools when feasible, and locating stationary noise sources as far from sensitive resources as possible.
- Locate and design facilities to minimize above ambient noise.
- Avoid idling motors when power tools, equipment, and vehicles are not in use.
- Reduce use of mechanized leaf blowers and use hand tools (brooms, etc.) instead.

Dark Night Skies (Lightscapes)

- Replace existing outdoor lighting in the park with fixtures that do not contribute to nighttime light pollution.
- In frontcountry zones, install energy-efficient lights equipped with timers and/or motion detectors so that light is only provided when needed to move safely between locations.
- In frontcountry zones, use low-impact lighting, such as diffused light bulbs, and techniques such as downlighting to prevent light spill and to preserve the natural lightscape.
- Work with towns and cities within area of light pollution influence for ordinances to protect night skies from light pollution.

Hydrologic Systems, Water Quality, and Wetlands

- Implement erosion control measures as appropriate, including minimizing unnatural discharge to water bodies, and regularly inspecting construction equipment for leaks of petroleum and other chemicals to prevent water pollution; and avoiding the use of heavy equipment in a waterway.
- Wash heavy equipment prior to use in or near water bodies.
- Use bio-lubricants (such as biodiesel and hydraulic fluid) in construction equipment.
- Develop and implement a spill plan and acquire supporting equipment.
- Integrate runoff management and mitigation systems into the designs of larger parking areas near water resources.
- Develop sediment control and prevention plans and implement best management practices, for projects that could impact water quality.
- Delineate wetlands and avoid all impacts (to the extent possible) to these sensitive environments.
- Conduct project activities near wetlands in a cautious manner to prevent damage from equipment, and related to erosion, siltation, etc. Apply protection measures during projects.
- Consult with NPS Water Resources Division regarding the wetlands Statement of Findings process for any potential wetland impacts.
- Avoid development in Regulatory Floodplains (generally the 100-year floodplain). Consult with NPS Water Resources Division regarding the floodplains Statement of Findings process for any action potentially in a floodplain. Obtain appropriate permits with California Water Board and Army Corps of Engineers.

Soils

- Build new facilities on soils suitable for development.
- Minimize soil erosion by limiting the time that soil is left exposed and by applying other erosion control measures, such as erosion matting, silt fencing, and temporary sedimentation basins in construction areas to reduce erosion, surface scouring, and discharge to water bodies, while implementing the park's noxious weed control program. Once work is completed, revegetate construction areas with appropriate

native plants in a timely period according to revegetation plans. Establish and follow Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan as appropriate for construction projects.

Vegetation

- Monitor areas used by visitors (e.g., trails, campsites) for signs of native vegetation disturbance. Use public education, revegetation of disturbed areas with native plants, erosion control measures, and barriers to control potential impacts on plants from erosion or social trails.
- Develop revegetation plans for disturbed areas and require the use of genetically appropriate native species. Revegetation plans should specify species to be used, seed/plant source, seed/plant mixes, site-specific restoration conditions, soil preparation, erosion control, ongoing maintenance and monitoring requirements, etc. Salvaged vegetation should be used to the extent possible.
- Continue to implement a noxious weed control program. Standard measures could include the following elements: use only weed-free materials for road and trail construction, repair, and maintenance; ensure equipment arrives on site free of mud or seed-bearing material; certify all feed as weed-free for administrative pack stock; identify areas of noxious weeds pre-project and treat noxious weeds or noxious weed topsoil before construction (e.g., topsoil segregation, storage, herbicide treatment); when depositing ditch spoils along the roads, limit the movement of material to as close as possible to the excavation site; scrupulously and regularly inspect areas that serve as introduction points for invasive plants (campgrounds, staging areas, maintenance areas, and corrals); revegetate with genetically appropriate native species; inspect rock and gravel sources to ensure these areas are free of noxious weed species; and monitor locations of ground-disturbing operations for at least three years following the completion of projects.

Wildlife

- Employ techniques to reduce impacts on wildlife, including visitor education programs, restrictions on visitor and park activities when warranted, and law enforcement patrols.
- Implement a wildlife protection program. Standard measures will include project scheduling (season and/or time of day), project monitoring, erosion and sediment control, fencing or other means to protect sensitive resources adjacent to project areas, disposing of all food-related items or rubbish, salvaging topsoil, and re-vegetating.
- Implement measures to reduce adverse effects of nonnative plants and wildlife on native species and wildlife habitat.
- Protect and preserve critical habitat features, such as nest and granary trees, whenever possible.

Special Status Species

- Mitigation actions will occur during normal park operations as well as before, during, and after projects to minimize immediate and long-term impacts on rare, threatened, and endangered species. These actions will vary by project area, and additional mitigation measures may be added depending on the action and location. Many of the measures listed for vegetation, wildlife, and water resources will also benefit rare, threatened, and endangered species by helping to preserve or minimize impacts on habitat.
- Conduct surveys and monitoring for special status species as warranted.
- Locate and design facilities/actions/operations to avoid or minimize impacts on special status species habitat. If avoidance is infeasible, minimize and mitigate for adverse effects as appropriate and in consultation with technical experts.

- Minimize disturbance to special status species and migratory bird habitat through spatial and temporal planning.
- Develop and implement restoration and/or monitoring plans as warranted. Plans should include methods for implementation, performance standards, monitoring criteria, and adaptive management techniques.

Cultural Resources

The protection of Pinnacles National Park's cultural resources is essential for understanding the past, present, and future relationship of people with the park environment and the expressions of our cultural heritage. The park will pursue strategies to protect its cultural resources, including museum collections and archeological, historic, ethnographic, and archival resources, while encouraging visitors and employees to recognize and understand their significance. The strategies will allow the integrity of the park's cultural resources to be preserved unimpaired. They will also ensure that Pinnacles National Park is recognized and valued as an outstanding example of resource stewardship, conservation education and research, and public use.

Archeological Resources

- Archeological surveys will precede ground-disturbance required for new construction or removal of eligible historic properties. Known archeological resources will be avoided to the greatest extent possible. If national register-eligible or-listed archeological resources could not be avoided, an appropriate mitigation strategy will be developed in consultation with the state historic preservation officer and associated tribes.
- If unknown archeological resources are discovered during project work, work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will be halted until the resources could be identified, evaluated, and documented and an appropriate mitigation strategy could be developed, if necessary, in consultation with the state historic preservation office and associated tribes.

Historic Structures/Buildings

- All project work relating to historic structures/buildings will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines and recommendations of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings*. Typical mitigation measures for historic structures/ buildings include measures to avoid adverse impacts, such as rehabilitation and adaptive reuse, designing new development to be compatible with surrounding historic properties, and screening new development from surrounding historic resources to minimize impacts on cultural landscapes and values.
- Adaptive reuse is often the best strategy to ensure that buildings remain in good condition. When not being adaptively used, the best approach for preserving these structures is regular preservation maintenance, which ensures that roofs and walls as well as supporting structural elements are maintained in a sound, weather-resistant condition. An example of adaptive reuse is using historic structures to house park operations.
- Historic structures will be maintained or stabilized until appropriate maintenance can be undertaken.
- Benign neglect will not be considered an appropriate management strategy.
- No national register-listed or –eligible structure will be removed or allowed to decay naturally without prior review by park and region cultural resource specialists, including approval by the NPS regional director and consultation with the state historic preservation office. Before a national register-listed or –eligible structure is removed, appropriate documentation recording the structure will be prepared in accordance with Section 110(b) of the National Historic Preservation Act, and the documentation will be

submitted to the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)/Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) or Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) program.

- Historic structures that have been included within wilderness will be protected and maintained according to the pertinent laws and policies governing cultural resources using management methods that are consistent with the preservation of wilderness character and values.
- Laws pertaining to historic preservation remain applicable within wilderness but must generally be administered to preserve the area's wilderness character (16 USC 1133(a)(3)). The responsible decision-maker will include appropriate consideration of the application of the provisions of the Wilderness Act in analyses and decision-making concerning cultural resources.

Cultural Landscapes

- All project work relating to cultural landscapes will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines and recommendations of the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. Typical mitigation measures for cultural landscapes include measures to avoid adverse impacts, such as designing new development to be compatible with surrounding historic properties and screening new development from surrounding cultural landscapes to minimize impacts on those landscapes.
- Adaptive reuse is the best strategy to ensure that landscapes remain in good condition.

Values, Traditions, and Practices of Traditionally Associated Peoples

- Also known as ethnographic resources, these resources and values will be protected through the identification of traditionally associated groups and documentation of their values, traditions, and practices. This will be done in collaboration with members and representatives of the groups themselves where possible. The culturally appropriate guardianship of these resources will include consultation with the public that use or may use them, incorporating their suggestions into management decisions to the fullest extent possible.

Museum Collections

- Mitigation measures related to museum collections consist of conservation of a collection through proper storage, handling, and exhibit of objects as specified in the *NPS Museum Handbook* and NPS Director's Order No. 24, NPS Museum Collections Management.
- A Curator-of-Record will provide professional oversight for the Pinnacles NP museum operations.

Scenic Resources

Mitigation measures are designed to minimize human-made visual intrusions. These include the following:

- Where appropriate, use facilities such as boardwalks and fences to route people away from sensitive natural and cultural resources while still permitting access to important viewpoints.
- Design, site, and construct facilities to minimize adverse effects on natural and cultural resources and visual intrusion.
- Provide vegetative screening, where appropriate.

Socioeconomic Environment

During the future planning and implementation of the approved management plan for Pinnacles National Park, the National Park Service will seek input from tribes, local communities, and county governments to further identify potential impacts and mitigation measures that will best serve the interests and concerns of both the National Park Service and the local communities.

Sustainable Design and Aesthetics

- Sustainable practices will be used in the selection of building materials and sources and building location and siting. Design standards specific to the park will be developed in all repair, rehabilitation, and construction projects.
- Projects will use sustainable practices and resources whenever practicable by recycling, reusing, and minimizing materials, minimizing energy consumption during construction, and reducing energy needs throughout the lifespan of the project.
- As required by Management Policies (NPS 2006), new buildings will be designed to meet a minimum silver LEED standard.

Implementation of the General Management Plan

Once the GMP planning process is completed, the selected alternative would become the new management plan for the park and would be implemented in phases. More detailed planning and environmental documentation may be completed, as appropriate, before some of the actions would be carried out. The park's strategic plan, business plan, and annual work plans would help develop priorities that would determine how best to implement the GMP.

Other Alternatives Evaluated

Three other alternatives were considered for Pinnacles National Park. Alternative A, No Action (Continue Current Management) served as the basis for evaluating and comparing the other alternatives. Under alternative A, the National Park Service would have continued to manage Pinnacles National Park as it has since the approval of the 1975 Master Plan. Existing natural resource management activities would have continued, including the raptor monitoring program, re-establishment of the California condor, and removal of nonnative invasive species. Cultural resources would have continued to be documented as needed, but the park would continue to lack in-park cultural resource expertise. Current recreational opportunities, including hiking, camping, picnicking, rock climbing, and viewing scenery would have continued. Existing facilities and trails would have been maintained. The current level of interpretive and limited educational programming would have continued.

Alternative B (Emphasize Backcountry Experience) would have focused on high quality backcountry experiences, including solitude, quiet, and immersion in natural settings. Natural resource protection would have emphasized conserving and restoring natural functions, protecting watershed values, and protecting sensitive wildlife areas with a focus on providing visitors with a backcountry experience where natural processes predominate. Cultural resources would have continued to be protected, with some increased staff capacity to bolster ongoing efforts. As in the other action alternatives, visitor use would have been dispersed and traditional recreational uses would have continued. Some new trails would have been built to provide access to new areas within the park, including newly added lands. Small scale interpretive and educational facilities and guided programs would have been provided. Formal interpretation and education would have been focused on wilderness values. Facilities would have been minimized and located in existing developed areas. On the east side, facilities would have been

concentrated in the campground area. A small replacement visitor center would have been constructed to replace the current visitor center/campground store when the current structure no longer meets park needs or can be cost-effectively maintained. There would have been an emphasis on determining whether infrastructure located in the primitive zone should be removed. The Chaparral parking lot, North Chalone Peak, the bottomlands and riparian areas along Sandy Creek would have been restored. The Moses Spring area would also have been studied to determine how to improve natural functions.

Alternative C (Expand Visitor Experiences) would have expanded the array of visitor use opportunities, including recreation, interpretation, and education. Opportunities would have been provided on the new lands and other areas that receive lower visitor use. A greater diversity of activities and groups would have been encouraged. Natural resources protection would have emphasized the importance of a natural setting and resource integrity for the visitor experience. Cultural resources would have been protected and managed with a focus on providing visitors with opportunities to experience the broader history of the region. Pinnacles would have reached out to a broad audience by offering a wider range of recreational opportunities and learning experiences. New visitor uses like equestrian use and backcountry camping would have been provided. New trails would have been built to provide a wide variety of experiences and disperse visitor use. Additional interpretive and educational facilities and guided programs would also have been provided. The park would have increased partnership efforts and outreach programs focused on visitor use stewardship opportunities. Facilities would have been focused on supporting an expanded array of visitor use opportunities. A larger visitor center would have been constructed between the campground and Highway 25 entrance to replace the current visitor center/campground store. On the east side, most visitor facilities would have been concentrated in the campground area.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The environmentally preferable alternative is “the alternative that promotes the national environmental policy expressed in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Sec. 101(b)).” After the environmental consequences of the alternatives were analyzed, each alternative was evaluated to see how well the goals from NEPA section 101(b) were met. Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act states that it is the continuing responsibility of the federal government to

1. fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
2. assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
3. attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
4. preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage; and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and a variety of individual choices;
5. achieve a balance between population and resource use which would permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities; and
6. enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The Council of Environmental Quality states that the environmentally preferable alternative is “the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best

protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources (46 FR 18026 – 46 FR 18038).” According to the NPS NEPA Handbook (DO-12), through identification of the environmentally preferable alternative, the NPS decision-makers and the public are clearly faced with the relative merits of choices and must clearly state through the decision-making process the values and policies used in reaching final decisions.

The environmentally preferable alternative for Pinnacles National Park was determined to be alternative B: Emphasize Backcountry Experience. This alternative best satisfied the national environmental goals—it provided the highest level of protection of natural and cultural resources while concurrently providing for a wide range of neutral and beneficial uses of the environment. This alternative would have maintained an environment that supported a diversity and variety of individual choices, while integrating resource protection with an appropriate and preexisting range of visitor uses and understanding.

This alternative surpassed the other alternatives in realizing the full range of the Section 101 national environmental policy goals.

Alternative D, *Link People and Resources* (the selected alternative) was also determined to meet many of the criteria at nearly the same level as alternative B. In addition, the enhancement of educational opportunities, research, and restoration of resources under the selected alternative will result in a better understanding of the park’s resources, thus better equipping the park to fulfill criteria 3, 4, and 5.

Why the Selected Alternative Will Not Have a Significant Effect on the Quality of the Human Environment

The NPS has determined that the selected alternative can be implemented with no significant adverse effects on natural resources, cultural resources, wilderness character, visitor opportunities, access and transportation, socioeconomics, or park management and operations. This determination is based on the environmental impact analysis published in the draft GMP which examined the effects of alternatives A-D.

As defined in 40 CFR § 1508.27, significance of impacts is determined by examining the ten criteria below.

IMPACTS THAT MAY BE BOTH BENEFICIAL AND ADVERSE. A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT MAY EXIST EVEN IF THE FEDERAL AGENCY BELIEVES THAT ON BALANCE THE EFFECT WILL BE BENEFICIAL.

The NPS evaluated the potential environmental consequences of each alternative related to the following topics: natural resources, cultural resources, wilderness character, visitor opportunities, access and transportation, socioeconomics, and park management and operations. A range of both adverse impacts and beneficial effects is associated with the actions in the selected alternative.

Visitors would benefit from a replacement east side visitor facility and day use area, as well as an expanded trail system, providing access into new areas. Natural resources, cultural resources, and NPS operations would benefit greatly from increased staffing in these program areas, visitor dispersal due to an expanded trail system, more efficient use of park buildings, and increased restoration efforts. Negligible to moderate adverse impacts were also identified for many of these actions. Long-term impacts are primarily localized as a result of development and an increased potential for inadvertent visitor-related impacts. These impacts would be mitigated through monitoring, careful siting, restoration, the user capacity program, and other measures. Many of the impacts identified were short-term in nature, resulting primarily as the result of construction activities for new trails and replacement facilities.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE PROPOSED ACTION ADVERSELY AFFECTS PUBLIC HEALTH OR SAFETY.

The selected alternative will not adversely affect public health or safety. Several of the actions will benefit public health and safety, including the addition of ranger staff, enhanced visitor education and interpretation, and replacement of the East Pinnacles Visitor Center.

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA SUCH AS PROXIMITY TO HISTORIC OR CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARK LANDS, PRIME FARMLANDS, WETLANDS, WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS, OR ECOLOGICALLY CRITICAL AREAS.

Pinnacles National Park contains many historic and other cultural resources and ecologically sensitive areas. These types of resources are among the values that the selected alternative would enhance and protect through increased staffing, restoration activities, and interpretation and education. No significant adverse impacts to these resources resulting from any of the action alternatives have been identified.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH EFFECTS ON THE QUALITY OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT ARE LIKELY TO BE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL.

No highly controversial effects, resulting from actions proposed in the alternatives, were identified during either initial public scoping, preparation of the environmental assessment, or during the public review.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON THE QUALITY OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT ARE HIGHLY UNCERTAIN OR INVOLVE UNIQUE OR UNKNOWN RISKS.

There were no highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks identified during either the preparation of the environmental assessment or the public review period.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE ACTION MAY ESTABLISH A PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE ACTIONS WITH SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OR REPRESENTS A DECISION IN PRINCIPLE ABOUT A FUTURE CONSIDERATION.

The selected alternative neither establishes a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. Future actions not addressed in the GMP would require additional environmental impact analysis and, if different than the GMP, amendment to the GMP.

WHETHER THE ACTION IS RELATED TO OTHER ACTIONS WITH INDIVIDUALLY INSIGNIFICANT BUT CUMULATIVELY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS. SIGNIFICANCE EXISTS IF IT IS REASONABLE TO ANTICIPATE A CUMULATIVELY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT. SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS CANNOT BE AVOIDED BY TERMING AN ACTION TEMPORARY OR BY BREAKING IT DOWN INTO SMALL COMPONENT PARTS.

Other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions were analyzed for their potential to contribute to cumulative impacts in association with implementation of the selected alternative. The selected alternative seeks to ameliorate the adverse effects associated with proposed actions so that the overall level of cumulative impact under each impact topic would either be arrested or would decline compared to the no action alternative. The effects of the selected alternative would comprise a very small component of these cumulative impacts, given the size and scope of the urban landscape within and surrounding the park. Overall, the impacts of the selected alternative, combined with the negligible to major adverse impacts from other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, would not result in a significant cumulative adverse effect.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE ACTION MAY ADVERSELY AFFECT DISTRICTS, SITES, HIGHWAYS, STRUCTURES, OR OBJECTS LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES OR MAY CAUSE LOSS OR DESTRUCTION OF SIGNIFICANT SCIENTIFIC, CULTURAL, OR HISTORIC RESOURCES.

Overall, protection of historic structures and sites would be improved through the selected alternative. One historic structure, the North Chalone Peak Fire Lookout, could be removed if funding for rehabilitation cannot be found after approximately five years. The lookout is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the history of fire protection, and Criterion C as the oldest surviving example of the California Department of Forestry's revised 809R design. Removal would result in an adverse effect

under Section 106, requiring development of a Memorandum of Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

When removal of the lookout was presented to the public as a preliminary alternative, the concept did not generate controversy. The park subsequently added the potential for rehabilitation of the fire lookout into the preferred alternative. When the Draft GMP was released, several individuals, including from a local historical society, expressed interest in working with the park to preserve the fire lookout.

The remote lookout is difficult to access and maintain. Relatively few visitors hike to the structure. Removal and restoration could provide beneficial impacts to surrounding resources, including designated wilderness from which it is easily seen. The remote lookout is located within the High Peaks Trail System, part of the East Entrance Historic District, but does not contribute to the significance of that district. In discussions with the State Historic Preservation Officer, it was determined that the significance of the lookout could be interpreted on-site without the structure in place. Given these factors, the potential removal of the lookout is not considered a significant impact under the National Environmental Policy Act. If removal does become necessary, additional environmental compliance would first be completed as appropriate.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE ACTION MAY ADVERSELY AFFECT AN ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES OR ITS HABITAT THAT HAS BEEN DETERMINED TO BE CRITICAL UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT OF 1973.

Increased restoration, interpretation and education, and habitat protection would provide mostly beneficial effects to threatened and endangered species and habitat. Proposed actions are not likely to affect California condors or California tiger salamanders. Impacts on California red-legged frogs would be minor to moderate in intensity, due to the direct and indirect effects of facility placement in and near riparian habitat. These projects would require further environmental analysis during planning that would precede implementation. The selected alternative would not significantly affect federally endangered or threatened species in the park.

WHETHER THE ACTION THREATENS A VIOLATION OF FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL LAW OR REQUIREMENTS IMPOSED FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

The selected alternative would not violate federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

Public Engagement and Agency Coordination

Public Engagement

Pinnacles National Park initially launched the GMP planning process in 1998 and completed public scoping. During the development of preliminary alternatives, the NPS decided to postpone the planning process until acquisition of the Pinnacles Ranch property, which would expand opportunities associated with the park. The GMP process was reinitiated in the summer of 2005. Following the acquisition of the Pinnacles Ranch property in March 2006, the park conducted additional preliminary scoping that summer. In August 2008, the park released preliminary management concepts for public review. Comments on the preliminary management concepts were received through February 2008.

In October 2012, the Draft GMP and Environmental Assessment (DGMP/EA) was released for public review, with the review period ending on January 11, 2013. The executive summary newsletter, announcing public meetings, was sent to all organizations and individuals on the GMP mailing list, with instructions for accessing the full document online via the National Park Service's Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Hard copies or CDs of the full draft were sent to those individuals and organizations who requested them, as well as to

the consulting agencies and organizations (listed in Chapter 6 of the DGMP/EA). Approximately 500 copies of the newsletter, 170 copies of the printed full draft, and 40 CDs of the full draft were mailed out. Another 250 copies of the newsletter, 250 copies of the printed full draft, and 200 CDs were handed out to park visitors, stakeholders, and public meeting attendees. Copies were also distributed to NPS staff at the park, region, and in Washington D.C. The newsletter was also translated into Spanish and 100 copies were distributed at meetings and at the park visitor centers. An email with links to the document on PEPC was sent out to 365 individuals and organizations who had expressed preference for receiving GMP updates via email.

A link to the PEPC site was also provided on the park's website. Press releases announcing the availability of the document and asking for public comment were sent to fifteen local newspapers and radio stations, as well as sixteen local chambers of commerce for posting on community bulletin boards. The *Gilroy Dispatch*, *San Benito County Today*, and *King City Rustler* newspapers published articles about the Draft GMP/EA comment period. Announcements were also made on the Friends of Pinnacles webpage, the Pinnacles Partnership Facebook page, the Mud 'n Crud outdoors forum website, and the Monterey County Weekly calendar. Comments on the DGMP/EA were received through January 11, 2013 via PEPC, email, and mail. The newsletter, email, and press releases also contained information on public meetings.

Between November 13th and 15th, 2012, four public meetings were held in local communities, including Paicines, Tres Pinos, Hollister, and Soledad. The purpose of the public meetings was to present the DGMP to the public and to record their comments. In addition to the public meetings, briefings were given during local rotary and chamber of commerce meetings. The park met with Pinnacles Partnership on November 10 prior to the public meetings.

Agency Consultation

The NPS conducted Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to determine what threatened and endangered species in San Benito and Monterey counties should be considered during preparation of the EA, and to ensure that any federal action would not jeopardize listed species or destroy or adversely modify their habitat. As mentioned earlier, impacts on California red-legged frogs would be minor to moderate due to the direct and indirect effects of facility placement in and near riparian habitat. These projects would require further environmental analysis and consultation with USFWS that would precede implementation. The NPS conducted Section 106 consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to take into account the effects of the GMP actions on properties either listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The NPS consulted with the SHPO on several occasions throughout the planning process, including discussions on options for the North Chalone Peak fire lookout. The selected alternative includes the recommendations of the SHPO. The park and planning team also met with the Bureau of Land Management, members of Congress, and state and local agencies and public officials to provide them with project updates and to seek their input.

Native American Consultation

During the public scoping period park staff invited several Native American groups to meet to discuss the GMP planning process underway and any concerns they might have about protecting, preserving, and managing the park's resources. The planning team met with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, a state recognized tribe, several times throughout the planning process to receive input on issues and ideas that should be considered in the GMP.

Comment Summary

The planning team received 92 written and electronic comment letters. Six transcripts of comments made at public meetings and local rotary and chamber of commerce meetings are also included in the analysis. Agencies and

organizations that submitted comments include: Access Fund, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, Soledad Historical Society, The Nature Conservancy, American Mountain Guide Association, Friends of Pinnacles, Hoya Mountaineers, City of Soledad, Pinnacles Partnership, and Soledad Community Health Care District.

Overall, many commenters supported the selected alternative's approach for resource protection, visitor use dispersal, visitor service improvements, additional visitor opportunities, and cultural resources protection. Some commenters expressed concerns about the level of development, the potential for higher visitor use due to designation as a national park, and removal of facilities, including the Chaparral parking lot. Interest in raising funds to rehabilitate the fire lookout was expressed by several commenters.

A summary of public comments and NPS responses to those comments is available on the PEPC website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/pinn>. Minor edits and text corrections to the DGMP/EA derived from public comments are documented in Errata, also available on PEPC.

Conclusion

Based on the environmental analysis as documented in the EA, together with the capability of the mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, or eliminate impacts, and with due consideration for the nature of public comments, the NPS has determined that the approved plan is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are not significant and no impairment of park values and resources would occur. There are no unacceptable impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial environmental consequences, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the selected alternative will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for this general management plan and thus will not be prepared. Plan elements, programs and other activities can be implemented as soon as practicable but not sooner than 30 days following the date of the approval of the General Management Plan.

Recommended:


Karen Beppler-Dorn, Superintendent June 20, 2013
Date

Approved:


Christine S. Lehnertz, Pacific West Regional Director 6/26/13
Date