



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT

10 Organ Pipe Drive
Ajo, Arizona 85321



H4217

May 25, 2010

Re: Project scoping for management actions proposed to improve public health and safety along State Highway 85 within Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

Dear Interested Party:

The National Park Service is planning to conduct several management actions along State Highway 85 at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. The purpose of these actions is to address human health and safety concerns and in one case to address failing drainage diversion infrastructure. The proposed actions to be considered include the following.

- 1) Expanding a culvert on the west side of State Highway 85 at mile marker 58, located at the north entrance to the park, to design and construct a pullout parking area sufficient to permit southbound traffic entering the park ample opportunity to park. Numerous vehicles stop at the entrance to the park each day in order to take pictures in front of the park's entrance sign. The existing conditions at this location are unsafe have contributed to several vehicle accidents. The drainage to the north of the park's entrance sign limits the space available to pull off and causes traffic to have to slow down markedly on the highway creating unsafe conditions. The proposed expansion of this highway culvert would allow for the creation of a parking lane to accommodate recreational vehicles, and vehicles towing trailers, thus improving highway safety. All work will be completed within the ADOT right of way.
- 2) Addressing the flooding issues at the Kuakatch wash drainage that crosses State Highway 85 at mile marker 59.3. This drainage has recently deposited large volumes of sediment, and in other areas scoured the road shoulder, during heavy rain events resulting in unsafe travel conditions. The suspected cause of this recent sediment deposition is the breaching of a previously constructed man made diversion berm that is located upstream from the highway in designated wilderness.
- 3) Relocating the entrance to Alamo Canyon Campground to the north within the approximate vicinity of mile marker 65.2 along Highway 85. This action is being proposed in order to improve highway safety. The current Alamo Canyon Road intersection with State Highway 85 is partially obscured to the south by vegetation, bridge infrastructure and guard rail plus a hill that drops off to the south. This limited visibility has contributed to multiple accidents and many more near misses. Relocating the road entrance to the north will improve visibility and thereby improve public safety. All work will be completed outside of designated wilderness lands.
- 4) Establishing a horse trailer pullout located approximately at mile marker 70.2 on State Highway 85. This pullout is called for in support of the Border Patrol sponsored AJO 1 SBInet project currently being implemented in and around the monument. The National Park Service advocates for the use of horses as a wilderness friendly method of conducting interdiction operations along the border. The proposed pullout will be designed to accommodate a least two vehicles with horse

trailers as well as horse loading and off-loading activities a safe distance from the highway. All work will be completed outside of wilderness.

An Environmental Assessment will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that 1) analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates issues and impacts to park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measure to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The park encourages public participation throughout the planning process. There will be two opportunities to comment formally on the project; once during this initial project scoping and again following release of the Environmental Assessment. The park is currently in the scoping phase of these proposed projects, and invites the public to submit written suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding the proposed projects online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/orpi>.

If you are not able to submit comments electronically through this website, you may submit written comments at the address on this letterhead. Please provide comments by June 25, 2010. These comments will be considered during preparation of the Environmental Assessment. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Lee Baiza
Superintendent