



Backcountry Management Plan

You are Invited to Participate

You can make an important contribution to the future of Grand Canyon National Park by becoming involved in the Backcountry Management planning process. The process will explore the range of resource conditions and visitor experiences that should be achieved and maintained over time.

We want to know what you value about Grand Canyon's proposed wilderness as well as any issues or concerns you have regarding how the wilderness resource is used and managed. We also want to hear what you value about the park's non-wilderness backcountry areas including Tuweep and the Cross-Canyon Corridor, as well as issues or concerns regarding how these backcountry areas are used and managed. Your comments are important to us.

How to Submit Comments

Please submit comments online at www.parkplanning.nps.gov/grca, by mail, or hand deliver to

Superintendent
Grand Canyon National Park
Attn: Backcountry Management Plan
P.O. Box 129 (1 Village Loop)
Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023

or provide comments at a public meeting.

Public Scoping Meetings

Three open house-style public scoping meetings will be held in **May** and **June** 2011 in **Grand Canyon Village**, South Rim, Arizona; **Kanab**, Utah; and **Flagstaff**, Arizona. Specific dates, times



and locations will be announced in local media and on the internet at www.parkplanning.nps.gov/grca.

These meetings will provide information on the planning process, and opportunity to interact with staff, ask questions, and submit comments and suggestions.

Note: Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be aware your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask in your comment that your personal identifying information be withheld from public review, we cannot guarantee we will be able to do so.

Backcountry Management Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Protect and preserve the park's natural and cultural resources and the integrity of wilderness character for present and future generations
- Provide a framework and programmatic guidance for consistent decision making in managing backcountry and proposed wilderness
- Provide a variety of visitor opportunities and experiences for public enjoyment, in a manner consistent with park purposes
- Provide for public understanding and support of preserving fundamental resources and values for which Grand Canyon National Park was established

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Contact Information

Submit comments to
www.parkplanning.nps.gov/grca by
selecting Backcountry Management
Plan

or to
Superintendent
Grand Canyon National Park
Office of Planning and Compliance
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023

For more information, visit
www.parkplanning.nps.gov/grca and
click on Backcountry Management
Plan



Objectives

- Define desired resource and social conditions in backcountry areas, consistent with park purposes
- Identify types and levels of uses that will and will not be allowed in backcountry, and provide reasonable access opportunities
- Develop tools to improve backcountry user group interactions including river, hiker, stock, and motorized and non-motorized users
- Provide public information to promote wilderness ethics and reduce behaviors harmful to natural and cultural resources and backcountry experiences
- Define the role of appropriate commercial services and non-commercial activities in backcountry and wilderness areas
- Ensure administrative use, park infrastructure, and research activities are consistent with NPS policies regarding wilderness management and park purposes
- Provide opportunities for traditional access by Traditionally Associated American Indian tribal members
- Monitor visitor use and park resources to preserve and maintain a wilderness experience or, where an area is not proposed for wilderness, a primitive experience

Backcountry and Wilderness

Grand Canyon National Park manages 1,169,696 acres of backcountry, 1,143,918 of these acres are proposed for wilderness designation. For this planning process, the backcountry includes all proposed wilderness areas and non-wilderness corridors within these areas, the Cross-Canyon Corridor, and the Tuweep area (see page 4).

Wilderness is a Federal designation and added layer of protection given lands found eligible for inclusion in the Federally designated wilderness system. Grand Canyon currently has *proposed wilderness* status; this status applies to wild lands studied and determined eligible as wilderness, but not formally designated by Congress. The National Park Service is mandated to manage *proposed wilderness* in the same manner as designated wilderness (NPS Management Policies 6.3.1). The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as, "An area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or habitation."

Backcountry areas not part of proposed wilderness include non-wilderness road corridors that provide access to trailheads and viewpoints in proposed wilderness, the Cross-Canyon Corridor (Bright Angel, South Kaibab, and North Kaibab Trails), and the remote, semi-developed Tuweep area.

One main difference between non-wilderness backcountry and proposed wilderness is that motorized equipment and mechanized transport are generally prohibited in proposed wilderness. In contrast, motorized uses and mechanized transport may be present in non-wilderness backcountry if uses are deemed necessary and appropriate.

Non-wilderness backcountry and proposed wilderness areas are delineated on page 4's interactive map.

Backcountry Use and Use Areas

In 2010, over 37,732 people participated in overnight backpacking trips in Grand Canyon's backcountry. These trips were completed under 11,746 permits and equaled 91,012 user nights. Approximately 4% of permits were used by commercial groups, and less than 1% by Grand Canyon Field Institute and Boy Scouts of America.

Grand Canyon's backcountry is divided into 92 overnight use areas. Each area is described by a three-digit code referencing location and camping opportunities. To the extent possible, use-area boundaries are defined according to identifiable topographic features such as ridge tops and drainages, and vary in size from several hundred to several thousand acres. Backcountry permits specify use areas included in an individual backcountry/wilderness trip itinerary.

Each use area is then categorized into one of four Management Zones or recreational Opportunity Classes: Corridor, Threshold, Primitive, or Wild. While previous planning documents used the term *Management Zone*, Opportunity Class better represents the comprehensive nature of these categories. Zone implies a physical management area, whereas the term *Opportunity Class* describes a range of conditions or settings for which an area will be managed. For example, the Corridor has ranger stations, designated campsites, toilets, running water, and a lodge with cabins at Phantom Ranch. The Corridor is managed for high use levels, and opportunities for solitude are less available due to the number of people in this area. The Primitive Opportunity Class is managed for lower use levels, does not generally have designated campsites or toilets, and one can expect to see five or fewer backpacking groups per day providing for increased opportunities for solitude.

Semi-Developed

This Opportunity Class applies to Tuweep, a remote area accessible by vehicle, (approximately 1% of use areas). The park's 1995 General Management Plan states that Tuweep "...should continue to provide uncrowded, semi-primitive experiences that are dominated by nature and solitude." The area is semi-developed and includes a campground with designated sites, composting toilets, and a ranger station. The campground has 10 sites for a maximum of 65 people.

Corridor

The Cross-Canyon Corridor (approximately 3% of use areas) is a developed inner-canyon area with campgrounds and facilities. The Corridor is not included in proposed wilderness. The Bright Angel, South Kaibab, and North Kaibab Trails provide access to developed areas, and act as thresholds to wilderness use areas. The smallest Corridor campground use limit is 40; the largest is 90.

Threshold

This Opportunity Class applies to approximately 26% of use areas. Threshold use areas are managed for moderate to high use levels relative to wilderness. Camping can be in

designated sites or at-large, depending on use area.

Composting toilets exist at most areas, or may be installed if required to deal with unacceptable human waste concentrations. The smallest Threshold use area limit is six; the largest 40.

Primitive

This Opportunity Class applies to approximately 47% of use areas. Primitive areas provide a more isolated and remote experience, and are managed for low to moderate use. Camping is at-large except in very rare cases where campsites may be temporarily designated for resource protection. Toilets are not common and are installed only as a last resort to correct human waste problems. Other structures are generally not permitted except temporary structures that are not visible and do not leave permanent impacts, such as those in Tanner use area. The smallest Primitive use area limit is 12; the largest 29.

Wild

This Opportunity Class applies to approximately 23% of use areas. Wild areas are mostly remote and provide the greatest opportunities for solitude. No structures of any kind, including toilets, are permitted. The maximum number of overnight users permitted per Wild use area is 12.

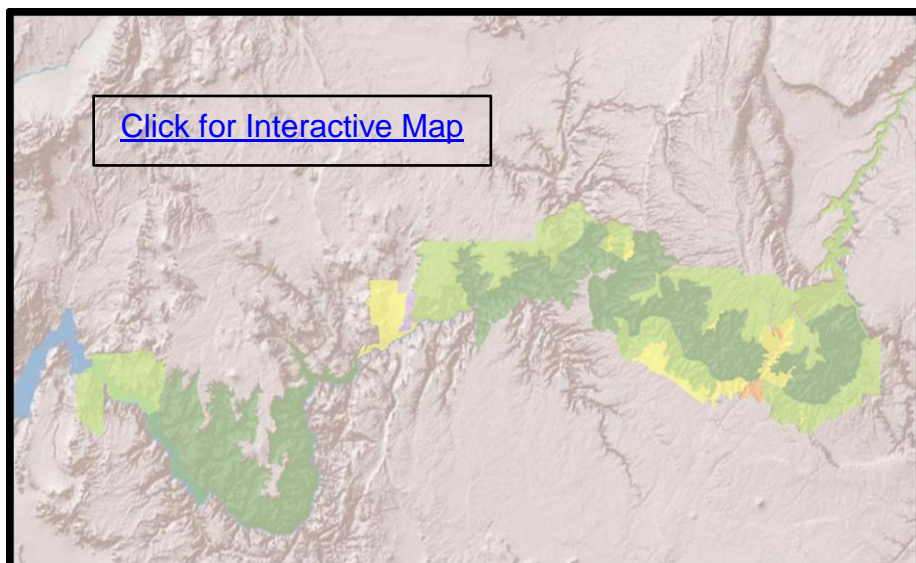


What Will Be Addressed in the Plan?

Some identified backcountry planning issues include

- The role of commercial services and non-commercial activities in backcountry and wilderness
- Appropriate types and levels of recreational uses
- Backcountry bicycling opportunities in the park and on adjacent lands
- High demand for backcountry permits in the Cross-Canyon Corridor and other use areas
- The backcountry permit reservation system
- Impacts to natural resources such as vegetation trampling, wildlife disturbance, and water quality
- Impacts to cultural resources such as archeological site disturbance
- Human waste management
- Illegal taking of park resources such as poaching wildlife
- Ideas submitted during the public scoping process

To access an interactive map of the park, click the map below or go to www.parkplanning.nps.gov/grca. The map can be found in the newsletter under Documents or directly under Links. This map provides an orientation to the park, Backcountry Opportunity Classes, proposed wilderness areas, roads, campsites, adjacent lands and more.



What's Next?

After public scoping has ended, park planners will analyze ideas and concerns submitted by the public, traditionally associated tribes, and affected agencies. Comments will be carefully considered as topics to be addressed in the Backcountry Management Plan.

The NPS expects issues other than those listed in this newsletter to be identified during the scoping process. Various ways to address these issues and manage the park's backcountry and wilderness will be developed during the Alternatives stage of the planning process. Public scoping comments will help develop Alternatives which will then be fully analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Analysis of Alternatives will disclose anticipated impacts to park resources and visitor experience. All Alternatives analyzed in the EIS need to meet plan goals and objectives.

The public will have a second opportunity to comment during the planning process when the Draft EIS is released for public review.

Planning Schedule

