



Backcountry Management Plan Frequently Asked Questions

Why is scoping important?

As the National Park Service (NPS) studies potential impacts on Grand Canyon National Park's (GCNP) backcountry use management, scoping allows the general public, interested groups, and agencies opportunity to participate early in development of the range of issues and Alternatives to be considered. Scoping also allows a chance to identify topics and concerns that should be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Finally, scoping helps bring forward new information useful in preparing the EIS of which the NPS may not be aware.

What is an Environmental Impact Statement?

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) guides decision makers as they seek to create policy or take action that balances human need with environmental stewardship. This formal document is used to guide a range of Alternatives for proposed actions that may have significant effect on the human environment. Standards guiding the EIS process have been established in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

How does backcountry differ from wilderness?

According to NPS Management Policies 8.2.2.4, the term backcountry generally refers to "primitive and undeveloped portions of parks. Usually these areas limit development to trails, unpaved roads, and administrative facilities."

Wilderness is a Federal designation granted by congress and the president. Wilderness character is defined in the 1964 Wilderness Act as "...an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence..." One difference between wilderness and backcountry is that motorized equipment and mechanized transport is generally prohibited in wilderness, whereas both may be present in backcountry if such uses are deemed necessary and appropriate. The Wilderness Act specifically prohibits commercial enterprise and permanent structures and roads in wilderness. Permanent structures such as shelters and cabins may be allowed in backcountry areas for public safety and resource protection purposes. Land managers have defined wilderness' primeval character as untrammelled, natural, and undeveloped land.

What is Grand Canyon National Park's wilderness status?

The Grand Canyon National Park Enlargement Act of January 3, 1975, as amended by the Act of June 10, 1975, required the NPS to prepare a Wilderness Recommendation. In September 1980, Grand Canyon National Park submitted a wilderness recommendation to the Department of the Interior, to designate 1,139,077 acres within the park as wilderness.

Four units totaling 1,143,918 acres are proposed for wilderness designation in Grand Canyon National Park. These units include 94% of the park's total area. Of this total, 1,117,457 acres are recommended for immediate wilderness designation; 26,461 are recommended for designation as

potential wilderness pending resolution of boundary and motorized riverboat issues. Represented within these units are examples of all the park's physiographic regions.

The Wilderness Recommendation has not yet been forwarded to Congress, but GCNP is prohibited by NPS Management Policies from taking any action that would diminish wilderness eligibility. Management decisions which affect wilderness will be made in expectation of eventual designation. NPS Management Policies also apply to potential wilderness to the extent existing nonconforming conditions allow.

What will the Backcountry Management Plan accomplish?

This Backcountry Management Plan is a revision of Grand Canyon National Park's 1988 Backcountry Management Plan. The new plan is not a Wilderness Recommendation; however, in compliance with NPS Management Policies, the updated plan will provide guidance for decision making in managing over 1.1 million acres (or 94% of the park) of the park's primitive, undeveloped areas, most of which is proposed for wilderness designation. The updated plan will contribute protection and preservation of the park's natural and cultural resources and values, and the integrity of wilderness character for present and future generations.

The revised Backcountry Management Plan will also evaluate existing conditions and management practices and provide a variety of visitor opportunities and experiences in a manner consistent with park purposes and preservation of park resources, values, and wilderness character.

How and when can the public comment on the plan?

The public comment period will begin **April 27, 2011**, and remain open for 60 days. Comments may be submitted by mail, online, or in person at a scheduled public meeting. The preferred method for submitting comments is through the NPS's Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) database at www.parkplanning.nps.gov/grca. Click on Backcountry Management Plan and then click on Open for Comments tab on the left side toolbar.

Mail-in comments can be sent to: Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Attn: Backcountry Management Plan, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023.

Comments may also be submitted at public meetings scheduled for May and June 2011. Meetings will take place at Grand Canyon's South Rim; and in Kanab, Utah, and Flagstaff, Arizona. Meeting dates and locations will be posted at www.parkplanning.nps.gov/grca.