National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton National Park
Wyoming

COLTER BAY VISITOR SERVICES PLAN/ ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared a visitor services plan / environmental assessment for the Colter Bay developed area of Grand Teton National Park. The purpose of the Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan/Environmental Assessment is to guide decision making for redevelopment and restoration in the vicinity of the Colter Bay Visitor Center, a primary destination on the east shore of Jackson Lake in Grand Teton National Park.

It has become increasingly difficult to sustainably operate and maintain the visitor center due to its age, condition, and numerous critical system deficiencies. The National Park Service is also considering changes for nearby parking and vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Proposed changes will mitigate safety concerns, protect natural and cultural resources and improve visitors' experience of the area.

The visitor services plan describes three action alternatives for improving NPS visitor service facilities in the general vicinity of the existing Colter Bay Visitor Center. Alternative B, the NPS selected action and environmentally preferable alternative, will enhance the visitor experience, improve Colter Bay's rustic character, increase the long-term sustainability of facilities, and reduce the impact of the built environment on the area's natural and scenic resources as much as possible.

This finding of no significant impact and the environmental assessment (EA) constitute the record of the environmental impact analysis and decision-making process for the visitor services plan. This document records (1) a finding of no significant impact as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and (2) a determination of no impairment as required by the NPS Organic Act of 1916.

SELECTED ACTION (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

The selected action, alternative B (see attached revised selected alternative site plan), seeks to enhance the visitor experience by encouraging visitors to experience outdoor settings, improving wayfinding, and improving vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Alternative B also seeks to improve Colter Bay's rustic character, increase

the long-term sustainability of facilities, and reduce the impact of the built environment on the area's natural and scenic resources as much as possible.

Specific management actions under this alternative will include the following:

Visitor Facility. The existing visitor center will be removed and the site will be regraded, revegetated, and converted to a picnic area. A new visitor contact station will be built farther east from the lakeshore and will provide key visitor services and operational functions, including visitor information/orientation and permit services, administrative office and storage space, public restrooms, and a bookstore. Two cases containing portions of the Vernon Collection will be exhibited in the lobby of the new visitor contact station. There will also be an outdoor plaza and covered pavilion, which will include interpretive panels, an area for artist demonstrations, and space for park interpretive programs.

The new visitor contact station will meet all NPS safety standards and will be fully accessible. It will be operational only during the primary visitor season, from early May to early October. For seven months of the year the facility will be shut down (not heated) and winterized.

Vernon Indian Arts Collection. A new collections/exhibit facility will be built in the park at an alternate location to be determined in a follow-up environmental planning process. This new facility will accommodate all of Grand Teton National Park's current and anticipated future needs for museum collection storage, curation, and exhibit space, including that for the Vernon Collection. In the meantime, the park will seek opportunities for "virtual" exhibits through alternative media or interim display of parts of the collection in locations that meet NPS museum standards.

It is important to note that Laurance S. Rockefeller gave the Vernon Collection to Grand Teton National Park as a gift in 1976 with the caveat that the collection be permanently housed in the park. It is being temporarily housed and restored at the Western Archeological and Conservation Center (WACC) in Tucson, Arizona until its return to Grand Teton National Park.

Other Visitor Facilities in the Project Area. A portion of the former visitor center site will be converted to a picnic area with 8 to 12 picnic tables and vault or similar toilets (which will also serve as winter restrooms for visitors). In addition, a small paved pedestrian overlook will be established south of the picnic area, which will provide unobstructed views of Colter Bay with the Teton Range as a backdrop and serve as a focal point, gathering area, and trailhead.

Access, Parking, and Circulation. Substantial modifications will be made to vehicular circulation and parking in the Colter Bay project area. To reinforce the pedestrian connection between the visitor contact station and the lakeshore, the main roadway will be realigned north of the new visitor contact station. In general, parking areas within the project area will be separated from roads to improve traffic flow, decrease congestion, and improve pedestrian safety. The original conceptual design as described in the environmental assessment (p. 36) included a reduction in passenger

vehicle parking from 389 spaces to approximately 270 and an increase in parking spaces for RVs and vehicles towing boat trailers from approximately 38 to 55 parallel or "back-in" spaces. After reviewing public comments and further consideration by park management, the conceptual vehicular circulation and parking configuration was changed to accommodate passenger vehicle parking in front of the restaurant and grill, additional passenger vehicle parking spaces near the marina, and to make pull-through parking spaces for RVs and vehicles towing boat trailers. The total number of passenger vehicle parking spaces will be approximately 270-290 and 45-55 spaces for RVs and vehicles towing boat trailers. It is important to note that the vehicular circulation and parking described here is conceptual. The exact location of the roads and parking spaces will be determined during the design phase of this project. Regardless of these changes, the development envelope remains the same. No new area will be disturbed, and therefore, there is no change to the environmental impacts. There is no change to the cost estimate for the selected action as a result of these changes. Parking spaces for buses will remain at approximately 5, located adjacent to the visitor contact station. The general layout for the parking area nearest the marina will remain as it is, but many of the parking spaces will be reallocated to parking for vehicles towing boat trailers. Areas no longer used for parking will be closed and restored with native vegetation. To minimize runoff from the parking areas into Colter Bay (Jackson Lake), stormwater treatment will be incorporated. Walkways will be relocated and/or new walkways built to improve pedestrian circulation, provide better access for disabled visitors, and encourage visitors to walk within the Colter Bay area.

MITIGATING MEASURES

The following mitigation measures will be implemented, as needed. The measures were developed to minimize the degree and/or severity of adverse effects and are specific to the project area and to the resource issues analyzed in the plan. These measures will be applied, but may be subject to funding and staffing constraints. The National Park Service will obtain any required federal and state environmental permits required for implementing the selected action. As part of the permitting process, additional mitigation measures could be required by other agencies.

General Construction Best Management Practices

Best management practices will be implemented, as appropriate, before, during, and/or after construction of the selected action. Best management practices specific to the design cannot be proposed until the full design is complete and specifics of the proposed construction are known. The construction practices listed below are subject to change and additions during construction to mitigate impacts to resources.

- To minimize the amount of ground disturbance, staging and stockpiling areas will be located in previously disturbed sites, away from visitor use areas to the extent possible. All staging and stockpiling areas will be returned to pre-construction conditions and/or revegetated following construction. Parking areas for

construction vehicles will be limited to these staging areas, existing roads, and previously disturbed areas.

- Construction zones will be identified and fenced with construction tape, snow fencing, or some similar material prior to any construction activity. The fencing will define the construction zone and confine activity to the minimum area required for construction. All protection measures will be clearly stated in the construction specifications and workers will be instructed to avoid conducting activities, including materials staging and storage, beyond the construction zone as defined by construction zone fencing.

- Construction debris will be placed in refuse containers at least daily, and refuse will be disposed of at least weekly. No burning or burying of refuse will be allowed inside the park.

- The storage, handling, and disposal of all hazardous materials and waste will comply with applicable federal and state regulations. Provisions will be made for storage, containment, and disposal of hazardous materials used on-site. To minimize possible petrochemical leaks from construction equipment, all equipment will be monitored frequently to identify and repair any leaks and will be staged in designated areas suitable to contain leaking materials. Trained personnel will clean up and dispose of any leakage or spill from construction equipment such as hydraulic fluid, oil, or fuel. Fueling and fuel storage areas will be permitted only at approved locations and comply with park refueling guidelines.

- Fueling and fuel storage areas will be bermed and lined to contain spills. Provisions will be made (clay or plastic liners) for the containment and disposal of oil-soaked or contaminated soils.

- All construction equipment that has the potential to leave the road will be pressure washed before entering the park.

- Materials from deconstructing the visitor center, debris from new construction, and parking lot asphalt debris will be reused, recycled, or disposed of outside of the park.

Cultural Resources

- Prior to implementing the selected action, an appropriate mitigative strategy will be developed in consultation with the Wyoming state historic preservation officer (SHPO) and, if necessary, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Mitigation agreed upon will be outlined in a memorandum of agreement negotiated among the National Park Service, state historic preservation officer, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and consulting parties as necessary. Any mitigative documentation will be prepared in accordance with section 110 (b) of the National Historic Preservation Act, and the documentation

submitted to the Historic American Buildings Survey / Historic American Engineering Record / Historic American Landscape Survey program.

- In the unlikely event that archeological resources are discovered during construction, all work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will be halted until the resources could be identified and documented and, if the resources cannot be preserved in situ, an appropriate mitigation strategy will be developed in consultation with the state historic preservation officer and, as necessary, American Indian tribes.

- In the unlikely event that human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony are discovered during construction, provisions outlined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 will be followed. If non-Indian human remains were discovered, standard reporting procedures to the proper authorities will be followed, as will all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

- Adherence to NPS standards and guidelines on the care and display of museum collections will be maintained, including museum collection items used in exhibits in the visitor center or visitor contact station.

Natural Resources

Vegetation

- A revegetation plan will be developed for the project that will incorporate, among other things, the use of native species, plant salvage potential, nonnative vegetation and noxious weed management, and pedestrian barriers to prevent establishment of user-created trails. The plan will incorporate screening structures and parking areas. Revegetation efforts will include imitating the natural spacing, abundance, and diversity of native plant species. Natural groupings of vegetation, rocks, or other natural features will be used for screening, as appropriate. Local native species will be used and there will be no irrigation needs beyond that needed for plant establishment.

- Existing native vegetation will be salvaged and preserved to the extent possible for use in revegetating disturbed areas. Existing trees will be preserved to the extent possible.

- Construction will follow best practices for topsoil management, revegetation preparation, and revegetation.

- Disturbance zones and construction and staging areas will be fenced or clearly marked to prevent impacts to resources outside the approved construction limits.
- Pre- and post-project nonnative plant monitoring will be conducted in the project area to ensure successful revegetation, maintain plantings, and replace plants that do not survive. Invasive weed control measures will be implemented and a management plan for continual maintenance will be drafted to monitor and mitigate impacts within the first three years of construction.

- In an effort to avoid introduction of nonnative plant species, only certified weed-free materials will be used for erosion control. Any proposed materials will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis; allowable materials for erosion control may include: rice straw, straw or hay determined by NPS staff to be weed-free purchased from a certified source, cereal grain straw that has been fumigated to kill weed seed, and wood excelsior bales.

- Topsoil will be re-spread in as near to the original location as possible, and supplemented with scarification, mulching, seeding, and/or planting with species native to the immediate area. Conserving topsoil will minimize vegetation impacts and potential compaction and erosion of bare soils. The use of conserved topsoil will help preserve microorganisms and seeds of native plants.

- No vegetation will be damaged or removed without prior approval via the project documents or by park vegetation management staff.

- Construction workers and supervisors will be provided with tree pruning guidelines to minimize damage to trees during project implementation.

- Work limits, travel paths, and staging areas will be designated and enforced to mitigate impacts to vegetation. Fencing and barriers will be used as necessary to restrict contractor operations to these areas.

Wildlife and Special Status Species

- Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming office, will be completed prior to implementation of actions proposed in the selected alternative.

- Construction workers and supervisors will be informed of the potential for special status species within the work vicinity. Contract provisions will require the cessation of construction activities if a special status species was discovered in the project area, until park staff re-evaluates the project. This will allow modification of the contract for any measures determined necessary to protect the discovery.

- Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, no migratory bird, nest, or egg will be disturbed, removed, or destroyed. To minimize the potential for "taking" a nest of any protected bird species, park resource managers will survey the site before tree removal and/or ground-breaking activities commence to mitigate any potential issues in advance of site construction.

- Appropriate measures will be taken to reduce the potential for bear-human conflicts. All contractors and employees will be trained and required to comply with the park's bear management plan and food storage regulations during construction and rehabilitation activities. All project staff, trainees, and other personnel will be briefed about food storage needs and bear safety protocols. Bear-proof garbage containers will be required. Food, fuel, and other attractants

will be stored and handled to minimize potential conflicts (i.e., no food, garbage, drink, trash, or food and drink containers will be placed outside vehicles, trailers, or bear-resistant containers except during times when they are being used). All bear/human confrontations will be reported to resource management staff.

Soils

- To minimize soil erosion at the project site, erosion control best management practices, including protection measures such as sediment traps, silt fences, erosion check screens / filters, jute mesh, and hydro mulch, will be used if necessary to prevent the loss of soil. Compacted soils will be scarified and original contours reestablished.

- Excavated soil may be re-used within the project area; excess soil will be stored only in approved areas. Topsoil will be removed and returned to the same area once construction activities are completed. Live vegetation less than 3 feet in height, and limbs less than 2 inches in diameter may be incorporated as topsoil in the stockpiles. Care will be taken to ensure that topsoil and fill material are not mixed and are stockpiled in separate areas (i.e., topsoil to the right of the trench and fill to the left).

- Topsoil materials will be stockpiled in a predetermined designated area away from excavations and future work sites without intermixing with subsoils. Stockpiles will then be graded and shaped to allow unimpeded surface water drainage. Stockpiles will be temporarily seeded and periodically treated to prevent wind from scattering topsoil and to prevent the introduction of nonnative plants.

- Any fill materials will be obtained from a park-approved source approved by the park ecologist. Borrow and aggregate materials from sources outside the park will be inspected to avoid importation of nonnative plants.

- The contractors will control dust during construction by minimizing soil exposure, water spraying, and use of other dust prevention methods.

- If construction is not completed prior to a winter season, all disturbed areas and soil stockpiles will be protected from snowmelt impacts by using erosion-control best management practices and covering dirt piles with impermeable materials.

Water Resources

- To the extent possible, construction activities will be conducted during periods of low precipitation to reduce the risk of accidental hydrocarbon leaks or spills reaching surface and/or groundwater.

- Equipment will be inspected for fluid leaks, including hydraulic and oil leaks, prior to use on construction sites, and inspection schedules implemented to prevent contamination of soil and water.

- Absorbent pads, booms, and other materials will be kept on-site during projects that use heavy equipment to contain oil, hydraulic fluid, solvents, and hazardous material spills.

- Stormwater treatment will be incorporated as part of the construction plans to provide engineering methods and techniques specific to the finalized design drawings, which will minimize soil erosion and degradation in the project area during both construction and use of the area.

- In appropriate locations, storm drain inlet protection measures will be used to help prevent soil and debris (from site erosion) from entering storm drain drop inlets. Fabric barriers, straw bales, sandbags, block and gravel protection, etc., can be employed to create barriers. These barriers will be used in combination with other measures such as impoundments or sediment traps.

- Fueling and fuel storage areas will be bermed and lined to contain spills. Provisions will be made for the containment and disposal of oilsoaked or contaminated soils (clay or plastic liners). Construction equipment will be regularly inspected and maintained to prevent any fluid leaks. Contractors will promptly clean up any leakage or accidental spills from construction equipment, such as hydraulic fluid, oil, fuel, or antifreeze.

- When construction is ended prior to a winter season, all disturbed areas and soil stockpiles will be protected from snowmelt impacts.

Air Quality and Soundscapes

- Dust abatement measures will be employed to reduce airborne soil (including setting speed limits for construction vehicles in unpaved areas). Dirt and debris to be hauled away in trucks will be covered. Dust generated by construction will be controlled by spraying water on the construction site, and/or applying other chemicals or compounds to reduce dust, if necessary.

- To reduce noise and emissions, construction equipment will not be permitted to idle excessively. Contractors will be required to work with NPS staff to devise procedures to eliminate unnecessary equipment and vehicle idling.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Because there are different approaches to achieving the purpose of the visitor services plan, the planning team investigated a range of possible management alternatives. Ultimately, four alternatives were developed, including the no-action alternative (alternative A) that describes a continuation of the park's current visitor services in the Colter Bay project area.

The no-action alternative is included as a required baseline against which to compare the action alternatives. This alternative would continue the park's current management approach to visitor services in the project area with no changes to

facilities, access, parking, or circulation. The Vernon Collection would not return to the existing visitor center.

Alternative C would focus on visitor experience, but more NPS services would be provided indoors and there would be less emphasis on maintaining or improving Colter Bay's rustic character. The Colter Bay Visitor Center would be replaced with a new visitor center in a nearby location; this visitor center would include exhibits but not a museum to display the Vernon Collection. Improvements to roads, parking areas, and pedestrian circulation would improve wayfinding and parking convenience. The overall built environment footprint would be decreased, but not to the same extent as in alternative B.

The focus of alternative D would be on making relatively few changes to the Colter Bay project area while still improving the visitor experience and operational efficiency. The primary change in this alternative would be replacing the existing visitor center with a new, larger one in the same location. The new visitor center would include a museum collection facility for the entire park and extensive Vernon Collection exhibits. Parking and walkways would be repaved, but the configuration would remain the same.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

According to the CEQ (Council on Environmental Quality) regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (43 CFR 46.30), the environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative "that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources. The environmentally preferable alternative is identified upon consideration and weighing by the Responsible Official of long-term environmental impacts against short-term impacts in evaluating what is the best protection of these resources. In some situations, such as when different alternatives impact different resources to different degrees, there may be more than one environmentally preferable alternative."

Alternative B is the environmentally preferable alternative for several reasons: 1) the selected action includes a new visitor contact station that will be more energy efficient (sustainable) in the long term (30% more energy efficient than a typical new building); 2) the selected action seeks to remove the largest amount of pavement and revegetate the areas where the pavement used to be; and 3) the selected alternative will benefit natural resources due to the reconfiguring of parking areas and roads and removal of the visitor center. While the reconfiguring of parking areas and roads and removal of the historic visitor center will have an adverse impact on cultural landscapes and historic structures, the integrity of the historic district will remain.

WHY THE SELECTED ACTION WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As defined in 40 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) 1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse—a significant effect may exist even if the agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial
No major adverse or beneficial impacts were identified that will require analysis in an environmental impact statement (EIS). No greater than moderate, adverse impacts will result to any resource from implementation of the selected action.

The actions included in alternative B will result in permanent, moderate adverse impacts to historic structures and cultural landscapes. The impacts will not diminish the overall integrity of the historic district or compromise its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Museum collections will benefit under alternative B by temporarily keeping most of the Vernon Collection at the Western Archeological and Conservation Center in Tucson, Arizona where the collection is properly cared for and stored. Beneficial impacts will be moderate and long term.

Actions included in alternative B will result in beneficial impacts to soils that are long term and moderate primarily due to the reconfiguring of roads and parking areas and restoration of natural vegetation in the project area.

Stormwater treatment and removing a portion of the parking areas and roads and revegetating these areas will reduce or eliminate the potential for any water pollution to enter Jackson Lake. Beneficial impacts to water quality will be minor and long term.

Actions in alternative B will benefit vegetation by reconfiguring parking areas and roads and revegetating selected areas with native plants. Beneficial impacts will be minor to moderate and long term.

Wildlife will benefit from the actions in alternative B. Reconfiguration of parking areas and roads, revegetation, relocation of the visitor center and rerouting the road away from the lakeshore will result in beneficial impacts for wildlife that are minor and long term.

Of the special status species found in the park, actions in alternative B are expected to have beneficial impacts that are negligible and long term for grizzly bear, and there could be beneficial impacts that are negligible and long term for gray wolves, Canada lynx, and wolverines in the area primarily due to the removal of the visitor center, installing a new, smaller visitor contact station farther from the shoreline, and rerouting the road.

The reduction in the developed footprint in the project area will benefit the rustic character and appearance of naturalness in the Colter Bay area. Beneficial impacts to scenery will be moderate and long term.

Visitor use and experience will benefit from the actions in alternative B by enhanced recreational opportunities and experiences, improved facilities and services, and improved vehicle circulation, parking, and wayfinding. Beneficial impacts will be minor to moderate and long term.

The impact of alternative B on park operations will be adverse, moderate, and short term during the construction phase due to the increase in workload for staff. However, beneficial impacts are expected for park operations from the improvements proposed in this alternative. The beneficial impacts will be negligible to moderate and long term.

Degree of effect on public health or safety

Visitor safety will remain a priority under the selected action. None of the actions proposed in the selected action will adversely affect public health or safety. Indeed, visitor safety will be improved due to decreased traffic congestion, improved visitor circulation through the reconfiguration of roads, parking areas, and pathways, and improved wayfinding signs directing vehicles and visitors on foot.

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

As described in the visitor services plan, the project area includes a portion of the national register eligible Colter Bay Village Developed Area historic district. This historic district includes both historic buildings and a cultural landscape. No major, adverse impacts to historic or cultural resources or park lands were identified for the selected action.

The project area does not contain prime farmlands, wetlands, designated wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial

None of the impacts from the actions proposed in the selected action have the potential to be highly controversial. At the conclusion of the public review and comment period on September 24, 2012, the National Park Service had received correspondence from 29 people, businesses or agencies. Given the substance of these comments, there is no evidence that the effect to the quality of the human environment will be highly controversial. Comments received related to the impacts of the alternatives were primarily focused on the Vernon Collection, alternative transportation, visitor experience, parking, costs, accessibility, the boat launch ramp, restrooms, other facilities, restoration/vegetation issues, and visitor conflicts. These concerns have been addressed through clarifications in the response to comments and associated errata sheet.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks

The anticipated effects on the human environment based on the selected action, as analyzed in the environmental assessment, are not highly uncertain or unique, nor were any unknown risks identified. The actions proposed in the selected alternative are similar to actions taken in other national park units.

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

As described in the visitor services plan, implementation of the selected action will neither result in significant adverse effects to the human environment nor set a precedent for future actions that could have significant effects. The actions are similar to other NPS redevelopment and restoration projects.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts

Implementation of the selected alternative will have no significant cumulative impacts. As described in the environmental assessment, past, present, and future actions and projects within the project area that could affect cultural and natural resources, scenic resources, visitor use and experience, and park operations include the installation of a new water main pipeline in the Colter Bay campground; decommission of the non-historic Colter Bay service station (including the removal of underground fuel tanks); replacement of the non-historic Colter Bay maintenance facility; removal and thinning of trees and tree limbs in the NPS employee housing area; replacement of water and sewer distribution lines in the Colter Bay campground; conversion of 8 to 10 campsites into fully accessible sites (meeting ABA requirements) in the campground; removal of a historic comfort station in the campground; replacement of the Colter Bay water main with a new line; and removal of about 60 trees between the historic Colter Bay Visitor Center and Jackson Lake. The cumulative impacts conclusions were reached for the following resources: moderate, permanent, adverse cumulative impacts to historic structures and cultural landscapes; minor to moderate, long-term, beneficial cumulative impacts to soils; negligible to minor, long-term, beneficial cumulative impacts to water quality; minor, long-term, beneficial cumulative impacts to vegetation; minor, long-term, beneficial cumulative impacts to wildlife; minor, long-term, adverse impacts to the four special status species; minor to moderate, beneficial cumulative impacts to scenery; minor, beneficial cumulative impacts to visitor use and experience; and minor to moderate, short- and long-term, beneficial and adverse cumulative impacts to park operations. There are no cumulative impacts to museum collections.

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

After applying the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) criteria of adverse effects (36 CFR Part 800.5, Assessment of Adverse Effects), the National Park Service concluded that implementation of the selected action will have an adverse effect on historic structures and cultural landscapes. The Colter Bay Village developed area, which includes the visitor center and cultural landscape patterns and features in the project area, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. The adverse effect will result from removal of the historic visitor center and substantial changes to cultural landscape patterns and features, such as spatial organization and circulation. While there will be an adverse effect, it will not be a significant effect and it will not diminish the overall integrity of the historic district nor compromise the listing of it on the national register. The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the NPS determination of adverse effect by letter dated May 8, 2012.

A memorandum of agreement, in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800.6, Resolution of Adverse Effects, was negotiated between the National Park Service and Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer and was signed on February 5, 2013. The memorandum of agreement stipulates how the adverse effects to the historic structure (visitor center) and cultural landscape will be mitigated, including:

1. Completing a full set of Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Level III documentation of the Colter Bay Visitor Center.
2. Developing interpretive materials to be displayed/distributed within the Colter Bay Village historic district and on the park website.
3. Developing guidance on best preservation practices in the Colter Bay Village developed area to be followed by the park and the Grand Teton Lodge Company (concessionaire).
4. Completing a Cultural Landscape Inventory of the Colter Bay Village developed area.
5. Consulting with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum, Teton County Historic Preservation Board, and Alliance for Historic Wyoming for the design of the future Colter Bay visitor services facility since it will be built in a historic district.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat

No federally listed threatened or endangered species are known to exist at Grand Teton National Park. There are four special status species that may occur in the project area as identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Park Service determined that the selected action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect grizzly bear, gray wolf, Canada lynx, and wolverine. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination in their letter dated October 15, 2012. There is no critical habitat in the project area.

Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law

The actions under the selected action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement for this planning process included the National Park Service distributing a newsletter to the public to seek input on the preparation of the visitor services plan and releasing the visitor services plan / environmental assessment for public review and comment. The planning team and park staff developed the visitor services plan alternatives based on public comment and the mission, purpose, significance, and fundamental resources and values of the park.

Public scoping for the visitor services plan began on October 21, 2010, with the distribution of a scoping newsletter to the project mailing list (about 200 contacts including 18 traditionally associated tribes) and the availability of the scoping newsletter on the Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. A press release regarding initiation of the Colter Bay visitor services plan effort was issued on December 6, 2010, and a notice announcing the project and the public

scoping effort was published in the *Jackson Hole News & Guide*. The comment period for the scoping newsletter ended on January 7, 2011. A total of 12 pieces of correspondence were received with 26 comments during this comment period. Topics and issues raised by the public included the disposition of the Vernon Collection, public access and access for people with disabilities, changes to trails, the area layout, and general improvements needed for the area.

The visitor services plan / environmental assessment was made available for public review during a 42-day period from August 14 to September 24, 2012. A letter announcing the comment period and the availability of the document for review was mailed to the project mailing list (including the 18 tribes) as well as the park's core mailing list (470 contacts). In addition, the document was posted on the PEPC website. A hardcopy of the visitor services plan / environmental assessment was mailed to 18 contacts on the project mailing list including the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Twenty-seven contacts on the project mailing list received a copy of the plan on CD. A news release was distributed on August 14, 2012 and a notice announcing the public review of the visitor services plan / environmental assessment were published in the *Jackson Hole News & Guide* on August 15, 2012. Correspondences from 29 people, organizations, and agencies were received during this time period.

Comments on the visitor services plan / environmental assessment included support and opposition to the preferred alternative, support for the other alternatives, concern over the removal of parking spaces, suggestions on how to incorporate bicycle use and paths into the plan, concerns over the Vernon Collection returning to the park and in a location other than Colter Bay, questions about costs, recommendations about circulation and parking design, and concerns about the visitor experience. A summary of all substantive comments received and corresponding responses can be found in *Responses to Substantive Comments*.

CONCLUSION

As described above, the selected action in the Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan/ Environmental Assessment does not constitute an action meeting the criteria that normally require preparation of an environmental impact statement. The selected action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Environmental impacts that could occur are limited in context and intensity, with both adverse and beneficial impacts that range from localized to widespread, short to long term, and negligible to moderate. There are no unmitigated adverse effects 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 impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action 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 project and thus will not be prepared.

Approved: _____ 2/25/13

Regional Director, Intermountain Region Date

ERRATA SHEETS
VISITOR SERVICES PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

Corrections and revisions to the Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan / Environmental Assessment are listed in this section. Revisions were made in response to comments from public and agency reviews of the environmental assessment. These revisions have not resulted in substantial modification of the selected action. It has been determined that the revisions do not require additional environmental analysis. The page numbers referenced are from the Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan/ Environmental Assessment dated July 2012.

TEXT CHANGES

"Other Important Resources and Values," page 9, under "Other Cultural Resources," first bullet replace *natural* with *national.*

"Table 1. Impact Topics Retained for or Dismissed from Detailed Analysis," page 24, under "Other" add *Scenic Resources (Retained)* in the "Impact Topic" column, under the "Rationale" column add *Grand Teton National Park is world renowned for its spectacular scenery and views. Protection of the park's scenic resources is part of the park's purpose and is important to the significance of the park. Scenic resources are also one of the park's fundamental resources and values. This project has the potential to affect the scenery and views from Colter Bay. Any actions that affect the park's scenic views would be of concern to NPS managers, visitors, and the public,* under the "Relevant Law, Regulation, or Policy" column add *Enabling legislation (Grand Teton National Park Act of 1950); NPS Organic Act; NPS Management Policies 2006.*

Alternative maps on pages 32, 35, 39, and 43 remove "For NPS Internal Review – FOIA Exempt" above scale bar.

"Access, Parking, and Circulation," page 36, second paragraph, last two sentences, change to *Passenger vehicle parking would be reduced from 389 spaces to approximately 270-*290*. Parking spaces for RVs and vehicles towing boat trailers would be increased from approximately 38 spaces to* 45-*55; these spaces would be* ~~*parallel or "back-in"*~~ drive-through *spaces.*

"Cumulative Impact Analysis Scenario," page 104, second column, first sentence, replace text *205* with *2005.*

Page 143, first column, second paragraph, first sentence change to *The number of passenger parking spaces would be reduced from the existing 389 spaces to approximately 270-*290 *spaces.*

Page 143, first column, second paragraph, third sentence change to *The number of oversized parking spaces would increase from the existing 38 spaces to approximately 45-55 spaces to better meet demand.*

"Agencies and Organizations Receiving a Copy of this Document," pages 164, first column under "State Agencies," last line, replace *Wyoming Office of Federal Land Policy* with *Wyoming Governor's Policy Office*. Second column, first line, remove *Wyoming State Clearinghouse*.

"Agencies and Organizations Receiving a Copy of this Document," pages 165, under "Organizations and Businesses," first column remove *National Wildlife Foundation*. Second column, replace *The Art Association* with *The Art Association of Jackson Hole* and remove *Wyoming Heritage Society*. In alphabetical order, add *Alliance for Historic Wyoming*, *Craighead Beringia South*, *Craighead Institute*, and *National Parks Conservation Association*.

"Agencies and Organizations Receiving a Copy of this Document," pages 166, second column, under "Media," replace *Planet Jackson Hole* with *Jackson Hole Weekly*.

RESPONSES TO SUBSTANTIVE COMMENTS

Substantive comments to the visitor services plan / environmental assessment centered on 14 topics: (1) accessibility, (2) alternative transportation, (3) the boat launch ramp, (4) life cycle costs, (5) parking, (6) other facilities, (7) project costs and funding, (8) restoration, (9) restroom facilities, (10) specific circulation and parking design recommendations, (11) tree removal, (12) the Vernon Collection, (13) visitor conflicts, and (14) visitor experience. In some cases these comments are not substantive, but the proposed action the comment is referring to warrants further explanation. The topics, which are addressed below, resulted in no changes to the text of the environmental assessment.

Accessibility

COMMENT:
Full accessible pedestrian accommodation to and from [Jackson Lake] from [Colter Bay] is important.

RESPONSE:
Under the selected alternative, walkways will be relocated and/or new walkways will be built to provide better access for disabled visitors in the project area. All circulation, parking, and visitor facility improvements will comply with federal accessibility standards.

Alternative Transportation

COMMENTS:
Why was multi-modal transit infrastructure not included in any of the alternatives? To ensure sustainability is thoroughly implemented throughout CBV [Colter Bay Village] and GTNP [Grand Teton National Park], a bus shuttle and other alternative transportation (e.g. bicycles, etc) should be included in any preferred alternative.

...the bicycle mode of access should be better addressed and incorporated in the final decision to best meet the purpose and need...

Consideration of a Bike Share program for the Colter area would be highly beneficial for the Colter area. Please include a plan in this EA decision to conduct a bike share feasibility study for the developed Colter area.

The NPS stated the future Colter Area plan (now this EA) would address the specific pathway connections to the Grand Teton Pathway System.... The final decision must address the important aspect of Colter area bicycle and pedestrian pathway connectivity in the final decision on Colter Bay EA.

The access, parking, and circulation should be improved in the decision with a thoughtful inclusion of bicycle accommodation. This should include bike parking at logistical locations, and to define Colter-area pathways that connect Colter developed

area and access corridor housing and lodging, and also which connect to the future Grand Teton Pathway system proposed from Colter Bay to the Town of Jackson…

…page 93 that "Travel by foot and bicycle is encouraged, but not always practical given the dispersed layout of the area." But besides these positive general statements, there is inadequate discussion of this issue tied to actual proposed improvements. This should be corrected in the final decision. The public should have a better idea what the NPS proposes to do, what specific actions that are measurable are planned, including bicycle access and facilities.

A good portion of the congestion in Colter Bay Area is due to vehicular traffic. It would be beneficial to have clearly marked and obvious trails and bike paths from the campground to encourage pedestrian and bike use to the Visitor Center and concessions.

RESPONSE:
The National Park Service developed several goals in the Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan that incorporate multi-modal transit, including (1) improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation; minimize traffic congestion, (2) improve access for people with disabilities, (3) improve wayfinding for visitors, and (4) update facilities in ways that encourage visitors to explore the Colter Bay area on foot, leaving behind their parked cars. Within the plan's selected alternative, access by bicycle in the Colter Bay developed area would be encouraged. One way to achieve this is to construct or improve the pathways leading to and within the Colter Bay developed area. Improving these pathways will enable overnight visitors to park their vehicles in the nearby RV campground and cabin areas and utilize the pathways by foot or bicycle to access the main Colter Bay developed area. Improving pedestrian and bicycle access from these overnight areas should reduce the number of cars parking in the main Colter Bay parking area.

Where appropriate, roads within the project area will be designed and signed to accommodate bicycles as well as motor vehicles. In addition, specific circulation and parking designs will include improvements to multi-modal transportation infrastructure, including bus-stop areas, bicycle racks, and enlarged restroom facilities to accommodate visitors arriving by buses. The National Park Service may consider the feasibility of a bicycle sharing system in the future after parking and circulation improvements have been made to the Colter Bay area.

COMMENTS:
The Colter Bay EA decision should plan ahead for a commercial bike shop in the developed area, managed by the concession operator.

There should be a description of public transit plans that connect, or may connect, to Colter Bay developed area… Potential connections to START, other public and employee transit services, and LINX should be developed and included in the final decision.
RESPONSE:

Commercial services, such as a bike shop, and public transportation opportunities in the Colter Bay area fall outside the purpose and need (i.e., the scope) of this visitor services plan and therefore, are not considered as part of this plan. Commercial services and public transportation opportunities may be considered in future planning efforts.

Boat Launch Ramp

COMMENT:
The only area which may need more thought is the boat launch ramp. Currently it appears that hikers will still need to cross this congested area to access the trailhead for the Swan Lake/Heron Pond loop [Trail]. It would help to move the launch to another part of the shoreline, if possible, and to make the entrance to the trailhead more accessible and obvious to visitors. It would help to landscape the area leading up to the trailhead with natural vegetation so that the transition from the cement parking lot onto the trail was not so abrupt.

RESPONSE:
The boat launch ramp, in its current location at the south end of the marina parking area, provides the best access to the lakeshore. Relocating the boat launch ramp would require extensive modifications to the lakeshore, vehicle circulation, and parking areas. Through improved parking and pedestrian wayfinding, access to hiking trails within the Colter Bay area will be greatly enhanced. Specific improvements, including landscaping, will be determined during the engineering and architectural design phase of the implementation of this plan.

Life Cycle Costs

COMMENT:
Table A-2 is a 40 year life cycle cost estimate. Unfortunately, it does not include the costs of a separate museum building to allow for an honest comparison between the alternatives.

RESPONSE:
Alternatives B and C project the 40-year life cycle costs for a new museum collection/exhibit facility at an alternate park location as approximately $4,330,000 (see Table A-2). This figure assumes that this facility would be built at a site within the park that already has road access, parking, and utility service. As stated in Table A-1 on page 171, alternative D includes replacing the existing visitor center with a new visitor center in the same location at a cost of $12,400,000.

Parking

COMMENTS:

Please improve the parking but do not cut the number of spaces so severely as this does not truly consider an increase in visitation.

Why would the park service want to reduce parking?

I have concerns with any plan that will reduce the amount of parking in the Colter Bay area.

...some roadway and sidewalk repaving or repair should be done, but major changes in the area are unnecessary.

I have rarely seen weekends where the parking lots were not at least 80% to 95% full with the exceptions of the first of the season or the closing weekends of the summer. To reduce parking spaces would create parking shortages for visitors in the peak time frames.

There has been many a weekend where we have had trouble finding a place to park when we only bring a car.

Comments on page 37 [of the Visitor Services Plan / Environmental Assessment] leaves me with the impression that Alternative B will result in fewer passenger vehicle parking spaces near the marina and trail head. My experience during the summer is that it is often difficult to find parking for passenger vehicles in this area. My recommendation is that there be no significant reduction of single vehicle parking in this portion of the development.

Why has personal vehicle parking been eliminated from the restaurant and grill operation? ...alternative B eliminates all personal vehicle parking within 200 ft for the restaurant and grill operation and leaves less than half of the current spots for the marina operation. ...parking availability is currently quite limited most any day of the week from mid-June through late August – this design does not seem feasible or practical.

RESPONSE:

Under Alternative B, the number of passenger vehicle parking spaces would be reduced from 389 to approximately 270-290 and the number of oversized spaces (to accommodate recreational vehicles and vehicles with trailers) would be increased from 38 to approximately 45-55. These numbers represent the number of recommended parking spaces in the year 2031 based on the observation that only 80% of the total parking spaces were used during July 2011 and a 1% increase per year in visitation to Grand Teton National Park is expected over the next 20 years.

Upon approval of this plan and when funding is secured, the National Park Service will begin the detailed architectural and engineering design phase of this planning effort. The National Park Service may make changes to specific parking areas and

the number of parking spaces provided in the selected alternative in order to meet the specific needs of various vehicle types and Colter Bay destinations (e.g. visitor contact station, general store, restaurant, and marina). The National Park Service will also take into consideration how each of the parking areas are currently used and will make minor modifications to the selected alternative site plan (see attached revised selected alternative site plan) as appropriate.

Under the selected alternative, the National Park Service will construct new and rehabilitate existing roads, sidewalks, and pathways. All circulation, parking, and visitor facility improvements will comply with federal accessibility standards.

Other Facilities

COMMENT:
It would help to consider moving the shower area to the campground and consolidating the gift shop and the grocery store into one building to reduce congestion.

RESPONSE:
The gift shop, grocery store, and shower facility are operated by a park concessioner. Although this plan does not address commercial service facilities at Colter Bay, reconfiguring circulation, parking, and wayfinding will improve visitor access to these facilities.

Project Costs and Funding

COMMENT:
$9.5 million is being spent on this new building.

RESPONSE:
The cost of the new visitor contact station under the selected alternative is approximately $3.3 million. The cost of the entire project under the selected alternative is approximately $9.5 million. This includes improvements to circulation and parking within the project area; site work and utilities; demolition of the existing visitor center; interpretive exhibits; new overlook, picnic area, and vault (or similar) toilets; and improved computer operations hub. Appendix A (page 171) breaks down the costs of the selected alternative.

COMMENT:
Where will the funding for any of the alternatives come from?

RESPONSE:
Approval of this plan will not guarantee that the funding to implement it is forthcoming. The selected alternative was developed with the expectation that federal budgets would be constrained for the foreseeable future. Individual elements of the selected alternative may be implemented over time as funding becomes available.

Funding for the selected alternative may not arrive all at once, and may be partially obtained through partners, donations, or other non-NPS federal sources.

COMMENTS:
There is no meaningful cost comparison between plans because only Alternatives A and D account for the cost of housing the Vernon Collection…

Yet this plan fails to consider any estimated costs related to the construction of a new facility for the Vernon Collection and park collection as a whole…

RESPONSE:
On page 172, row 2 of Table A-2. *40-Year Lifecycle Cost Estimates for the Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan* lists the cost of a new museum collection/exhibit facility for the Vernon Collection as $4.3 million under alternatives B and C. This is the approximate cost to exhibit and store the collection at a facility within the park and outside of the Colter Bay area.

Restoration

COMMENT:
…the area proposed for restoration is mostly pavement. It would be years before any of it could be opened for use without restoration fencing, etc., and decades before any of the area actually looked like part of the intact system… Additionally, if the footprint reduction is too great, the proposed restoration will create a situation where visitors park on vegetation (both killing it and spreading weed seeds).

RESPONSE:
Several mitigation measures are provided in the visitor services plan to ensure vegetation restoration efforts are successful. The National Park Service realizes that restoration efforts will take several years, especially within paved areas. The reduction in the number of standard parking spaces and the increase in the number of oversized spaces were determined in 2011 through surveys conducted by Stephen F. Austin University and the Federal Highways Administration. These parking space changes account for a 1% increase per year in visitation over a period of 20 years. During the detailed architectural and engineering design phase, the National Park Service may make small revisions to the number of parking spaces provided in the selected alternative in order to meet the needs of various vehicle types and Colter Bay destinations (e.g. visitor contact station, general store, restaurant, and marina).

Restroom Facilities

COMMENTS:
I strongly urge the Park to maintain year-round public restrooms at the Colter Bay Visitor Services Area, preferably within the new Visitor Services Contact Station.

The parking studies highlight the fact that NPS does not predicate parking planning based on peak usage so why would they predicate restroom planning based on peak usage?

RESPONSE:
Restroom planning at Colter Bay is not based on peak usage. The National Park Service has determined that the existing restrooms at the Colter Bay Visitor Center (approximately 525 square feet) are inadequate to accommodate large pulses of visitors arriving by bus. Under the selected alternative, the size of the new restroom facilities at Colter Bay will increase to approximately 1,000 square feet, which also includes the installation of a vault (or similar) toilet facility for use during the winter season. Providing a separate toilet facility will reduce water and energy costs and increase sustainability when the visitor contact station is not open to the public.

COMMENT:
If the NPS... is not planning to exhibit the collection [at the Colter Bay Visitor Center] then the entire museum basement could be remodeled into restrooms, which would be more adequate.

RESPONSE:
The existing basement level of the Colter Bay Visitor Center does not meet accessibility requirements. Modifying the basement level for restrooms would require extensive improvements, such as accessible pathways and ramps or the installation of an elevator within the visitor center. These modifications would not be cost effective. The existing restrooms next to the visitor center would remain until a replacement facility is constructed.

Specific Circulation and Parking Design Recommendations

COMMENTS:
I... would suggest that you consider a roundabout rather than the dangerous T intersection that you have in your current plans for Alternative B.

Revise the preferred alternative design of the eastern half of the marina parking lot (half closest to the marina). Larger vehicles, such as recreational vehicles, should utilize pull through parking spaces versus parallel parking or pull-in parking. In addition, a wider turning radius should be added on each end of the marina parking area to enable larger vehicles to negotiate the corners. The marina parking lot design in Alternative C is more suitable for these larger vehicles.

Ensure each of the three main access roads is wide enough for larger vehicles to travel in each lane. Also ensure all turning radiuses and parking spaces are wide enough to accommodate these large recreational vehicles.

At a minimum, the Y in the road should be moved farther south on the road to allow for the planned parking to be available for the restaurant.

RESPONSE:
The National Park Service will take into account these detailed recommendations during the architectural and engineering design phase of implementing the selected alternative. Improving vehicle circulation is a proposed action in the selected alternative.

Tree Removal

COMMENT:
We recommend that the park attempt to reduce the number of trees that are removed during the reconstruction process.

RESPONSE:
The National Park Service will make every effort to only remove the trees necessary to implement the selected alternative.

Vernon Collection

COMMENTS:
...it appears that NPS desires to retain virtually all of the Vernon Collection in Arizona.

...very concerned that NPS has removed the Vernon Collection from Wyoming with scant plans or funding to bring it back to Wyoming.

I understand that the David T. Vernon Collection of American Indian Art is not part of this plan, but I would hope that you will move diligently to have the complete collection brought back to Wyoming and displayed as Mr. Rockefeller had requested.

I... feel the Vernon Collection should be returned to the park either at Colter Bay and/or the Craig Thomas Center.

I find it disturbing that there are no immediate plans to return the David T. Vernon Collection to [the] park.

If the Vernon collection was mandated in the donation to be located in Grand Teton National Park how can it be left out of the equation for another time?

Returning the collection to Wyoming expeditiously should be of primacy in the Colter Bay plan.

I strongly recommend that the new facility [for the Vernon Collection] be located in an already developed site that already has year-round access.

Why do the planning conditions not allow for the future consideration of a new Vernon Collection museum location...in CBV [Colter Bay Village]?

Where else in GTNP [Grand Teton National Park] would the Vernon Collection Museum be placed where it wouldn't be located in a designated floodplain? We understand the other location under consideration for the collection is at the Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center in Moose which would put this valuable collection of irreplaceable cultural and historic artifacts in the Snake River floodplain.

It would be best to retrofit the current storage building being used by the Natural History Association for the collection... It would be best to... set up a rotating display of portions of the collection at a time within the Craig Thomas Visitor and Discovery Center.

The plan is lacking in documented evidence or discussion of the reasons to move the Vernon Collection from Colter Bay.

RESPONSE:
The Colter Bay Visitor Center does not meet current NPS museum standards for preservation, display, and interpretation of the Vernon Collection. The situation is dire enough that the entire Vernon Collection has been moved to the NPS Western Archeological and Conservation Center in Tucson, Arizona, for critical conservation treatment and temporary storage until a facility that meets NPS museum standards is available within the park. A small number of durable Vernon Collection items that have undergone conservation treatment have been returned and are being displayed in a small exhibit at the Colter Bay Visitor Center.

The determination of where the Vernon Collection will be located involves a two-phase approach. The National Park Service decided to first study whether or not to return the collection to Colter Bay by completing the visitor services plan. Since the National Park Service has determined that the collection will not return to Colter Bay, the National Park Service will determine another location within Grand Teton National Park, including the Moose area. This second phase, or the phase that will determine where the Vernon Collection will be located in the park, will be accomplished through additional public scoping and the completion of an environmental assessment. The National Park Service is committed to completing this second phase within 2 to 4 years and returning the Vernon Collection to a permanent home in the park within the next 10 years.

COMMENT:
It may also be useful to consider housing the collection outside the park at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson, or the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, WY.

RESPONSE:
The Vernon Collection was donated by Laurance S. Rockefeller with the caveat that the collection remain in Grand Teton National Park. The collection will be returned to the park when a suitable facility meeting NPS museum standards is constructed. In the meantime, the National Park Service will temporarily exhibit portions of the Vernon Collection at the Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center beginning in 2013 along with what is currently on display at the Colter Bay Visitor Center.

Visitor Conflicts

COMMENT:
Just thinking about picnic areas and swimming areas, always closely associated. One seems to go with the other, like the swim beach/picnic area already at Colter Bay… So, the plan calls for an expanded picnic area to be developed along another area of Jackson Lake shoreline, in front of Colter Bay Marina, on the location of the present Visitor Center. Aren't we (the park) setting ourselves up for undesired visitor conflicts???

RESPONSE:
The new picnic area described in the selected alternative will primarily serve visitors who wish to take a short walk from the main Colter Bay parking area. This new picnic area will serve as an alternative to the Swim Beach picnic area and will be designed to avoid any possible visitor conflicts. Visitors will continue to use the walkway/trail system adjacent to the new picnic area for access to the Colter Bay lakeshore.

Visitor Experience

COMMENTS:
The plan should address how to improve the visitor experience, not just the facilities. I do not believe making visitor facilities smaller is the correct solution.

The NPS should provide the same sort of visitor services and experiences in the Colter Bay area as are provided at Moose.

…the plan is… reducing by a large measure, the National Park Service human and interpretative footprint in Colter Bay Village, a very popular and much visited portion of the park.

A full service Visitor Center is needed to serve the number of day use and overnight visitors.

Good park management calls for putting staff and facility resources where the visitor needs are located.

What is the logic behind replacing a facility that doesn't meet the "criteria" to house the collection if the collection is not even going to be housed at the site any more?

In reviewing the VSP [Visitor Services Plan] I also discovered there is no planned space for a permit office in the NPS preferred alternative.

Why are outdoor exhibits and two display cases sufficient to replace a visitor center that used to house a significant museum collection? …why wouldn't you want a quality interpretive experience for visitors at Colter Bay?

A full service Visitors Center is needed to serve the number of day use and overnight visitors.

RESPONSE:
The plan specifically addresses how visitor experience is improved through enhancements to recreational opportunities and experiences; relocation of facilities and services; and changes to vehicle circulation, wayfinding, and parking.

In addition to housing the Vernon Collection, the existing visitor center provides interpretive services to park visitors. Under the selected alternative, the Vernon Collection will be housed at another location within Grand Teton National Park. Even with the collection relocated, the National Park Service will continue to provide interpretive and backcountry permitting services at the new visitor contact station as described under the selected alternative.

The smaller visitor contact station will be more sustainable. The selected alternative will enable both park visitors and rangers to interact more effectively. Interpretative rangers will be present in the contact station and roving about the area to meet and greet park visitors and provide personal services. Regularly scheduled ranger-led interpretive programs at Colter Bay will continue.

COMMENTS:
Why did the NPS authorize clear-cutting of all trees in front of the observation deck in the last two summers if the NPS alternative is to remove the building from the site entirely?

...we were told that our collection was being moved temporarily to Tucson so that our museum could be renovated, not raised.

RESPONSE:
Minimal improvements to the Colter Bay Visitor Center included the rehabilitation of its interior and the removal of beetle-killed or infested trees for safety and minor viewshed enhancements. The visitor center was minimally rehabilitated in 2012 in order to extend the life of the facility until funding is obtained to replace it. Rehabilitating the visitor center to meet NPS museum standards proved far too costly to implement.

COMMENTS:
Does the new building have to be called a visitor contact station? Can't it still be a Visitor Center??

Why is the [Colter Bay Village] Visitor Center being downsized to a Visitor Contact Station? National Park Visitors are drawn to "visitor centers" to find opportunities to learn about the natural and cultural resources. Also, this change will eliminate all visitor centers in the North District [of the park]. With only a visitor contact station, travelers along the North Park Road likely will not realize the significance of Colter Bay Village and unfortunately drive by one of the iconic cultural and natural resource experiences in GTNP [Grand Teton National Park].

RESPONSE:
Within the Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan, the term "visitor contact station" was used purely to differentiate the facility from a "visitor center." The three primary differences between the two types of facilities are purpose, function, and size. Specifically, the primary purpose of the smaller Colter Bay visitor contact station will change from being a Vernon Collection museum to an orientation, information and permitting facility. In addition, design features of the visitor contact station and outdoor wayside exhibits will enable park visitors to obtain information and permits quickly and then experience the park's natural and cultural resources. In accordance with the NPS Intermountain Region's visitor center strategy the park is looking to provide critical visitor services in innovative, cost effective ways. The proposed visitor contact station takes advantage of technology and empowers visitors to find the information they need from self-service kiosks and exhibits. This non-traditional approach efficiently meets basic visitor needs.

COMMENT:
It may be helpful to include a covered awning with seating over an outdoor display area, so that ranger talks can be held rain or shine since the building will no longer contain an auditorium.

RESPONSE:
Under the selected alternative, the new visitor contact station will include an outdoor plaza and covered pavilion to accommodate certain functions that were formerly inside the existing visitor center. These functions will include interpretive panels, artist demonstrations, and park interpretive programs. Seating and other specific details regarding the outdoor covered pavilion will be considered during engineering and architectural design phase of implementing this plan.

Appendix—Nonimpairment Finding

NPS *Management Policies 2006* (section 1.4) requires analysis of potential effects to determine whether proposed actions will impair a park's resources and values. The fundamental purpose of the national park system, established by the NPS Organic Act of 1916 and reaffirmed by the General Authorities Act, as amended, begins with a mandate to conserve park resources and values. NPS managers must always seek ways to avoid, or to minimize to the greatest degree practicable, adverse impacts on park resources and values.

However, the laws do give the National Park Service the management discretion to allow impacts on park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purposes of the park. That discretion is limited by the statutory requirement that the National Park Service must leave resources and values unimpaired unless a particular law directly and specifically provides otherwise.

The prohibited impairment is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible NPS manager, will harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values (NPS *Management Policies 2006*). Whether an impact meets this definition depends on the particular resources that will be affected; the severity, duration, and timing of the impact; the direct and indirect effects of the impact; and the cumulative effects of the impact in question and other impacts.

An impact to any park resource or value may, but does not necessarily, constitute impairment. An impact will be more likely to constitute impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is

- necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park
- identified in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents as being of significance

An impact will be less likely to constitute impairment if it is an unavoidable result of an action necessary to preserve or restore the integrity of park resources or values and it cannot be further mitigated.

Impairment may result from visitor activities; NPS administrative activities; or activities undertaken by concessioners, contractors, and others operating in the park. Impairment may also result from sources or activities outside the park.

Impairment findings are not necessary for visitor experience, socioeconomics, public health and safety, environmental justice, land use, and park operations because impairment findings relate back to park resources and values.

The park resources and values that are subject to the no-impairment standard include cultural resources (historic structures and cultural landscapes), natural resources (vegetation and wildlife), and scenic resources. Impairment findings are not necessary for visitor use and experience or park operations because impairment findings relate to park resources and values, and these impact topics are not generally considered park resources or values according to the NPS Organic Act and NPS *Management Policies 2006*. They cannot be impaired in the same way that an action can impair park resources and values. Therefore, the only impact topics retained for analysis are cultural, natural and scenic resources.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Colter Bay Village developed area is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district with 188 contributing historic structures and 13 contributing cultural landscape characteristics; the Colter Bay Visitor Center is one of the historic structures in the district. Within the project area of the preferred alternative, special organization and circulation are the contributing cultural landscape characteristics. The removal of the Colter Bay Visitor Center and changes made to the parking area, roads, and vehicle and pedestrian circulation in front of the Colter Bay Visitor Center will result in permanent, moderate, adverse impacts.

A memorandum of agreement, in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800.6, Resolution of Adverse Effects, was negotiated between the National Park Service and Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer and was signed on February 5, 2013. The memorandum of agreement stipulated how the adverse effects to the historic structure and cultural landscape will be mitigated including:

1. Completing a full set of Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Level III documentation of the Colter Bay Visitor Center.
2. Developing interpretive materials to be displayed/distributed within the Colter Bay Village historic district and on the park website.
3. Developing guidance on best preservation practices in the Colter Bay Village developed area to be followed by the park and the Grand Teton Lodge Company (concessionaire).
4. Completing a Cultural Landscape Inventory of the Colter Bay Village developed area.
5. Consulting with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum, Teton County Historic Preservation Board, and Alliance for Historic Wyoming for the design of the future Colter Bay visitor services facility since it will be built in a historic district.

The overall proposed actions to historic structures and cultural landscapes will not result in impairment to cultural resources because the actions will not diminish the

overall integrity of the historic district or compromise its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

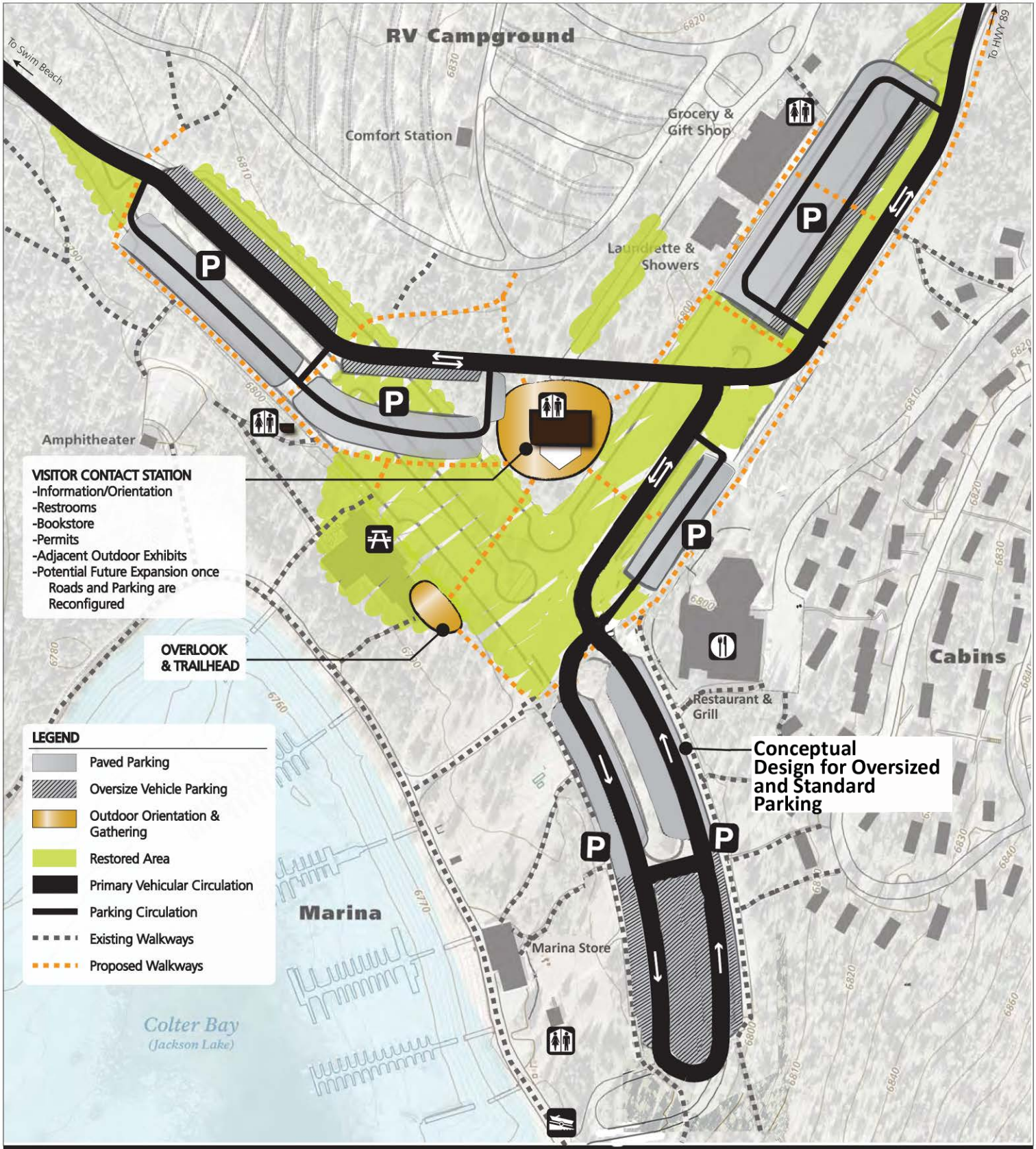
NATURAL RESOURCES

Although Colter Bay is a developed area and has relatively low ecological integrity, it still supports vegetative communities and wildlife, including birds, mammals, and amphibians, and several special status species, as seen in the area. The land near Jackson Lake is an important wildlife travel corridor. The preferred alternative will result in the loss of some vegetation and wildlife habitat in a small area due to the construction of new facilities (e.g., visitor contact station, a new overlook/trailhead), and there will be the potential for the introduction of some nonnative plant species. But no prime wildlife habitat will be lost due to the preferred alternative, such as areas important for breeding, nesting, or foraging. There will be no effect on wildlife in the area during the winter. The preferred alternative will result in the restoration of some vegetation and wildlife habitat in the Colter Bay area due to the reconfiguration and removal of roads, parking areas, and the visitor center. Building the new replacement visitor contact station farther from the shoreline and rerouting the road will also enable individual animals to more easily use the shoreline as a travel corridor. Implementation of mitigation measures will also help avoid, reduce, and minimize potential adverse impacts to vegetation and wildlife. Although the preferred alternative will have some slight adverse impacts on vegetation and wildlife, there will be many more beneficial impacts on vegetation and wildlife in the area. Because there will be mostly beneficial impacts, the preferred alternative will not result in impairment to the park's natural resources (vegetation and wildlife).

SCENIC RESOURCES

The preferred alternative will change the developed footprint in the Colter Bay area, including removing the existing visitor center, separating parking areas from the main roadway, realigning the road north of the new visitor contact station, restoring portions of the parking area and roadway to native vegetation, and moving the main access to the lakefront. All of these actions will improve views, reduce visual intrusion of the developed area and minimize foreground distractions, provide a greater opportunity to visually connect with the Jackson Lake waterfront and the Teton Range beyond, and enhance the rustic character and appearance of naturalness of the Colter Bay area. Because the preferred alternative will result in only beneficial impacts to the park's scenery, there will be no impairment to scenic resources.

In conclusion, as guided by this analysis, good science and scholarship, advice from subject matter experts and others who have relevant knowledge and experience, and the results of public involvement activities, it is the Superintendent's professional judgment that there will be no impairment of park resources and values from implementation of the preferred alternative.



SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan

Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming

Revised January 2013