




FORT PICKENS FERRY SUPPORT FACILITIES AND SHUTTLE SERVICE

Finding of No Significant Impact August 2015


The National Park Service has selected alternative 2 for implementation, which is described on pages 19–34 of the environmental assessment. The selected alternative does not constitute an action that requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and will not have a significant adverse effect on the human environment. The selected alternative will not result in significant impacts on physical resources, water resources, natural resources, cultural resources, or other unique resources within the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, or unique or unknown risks were identified. Implementation of the selected alternative will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal actions are consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 (a) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and that they will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to Section 102 (2) (c) of NEPA.


Recommended:


Daniel Brown
Superintendent
Gulf Islands National Seashore

Date:



Approved:


Stanley Austin
Regional Director
Southeast Region, National Park Service

Date:



INTRODUCTION

This “finding of no significant impact” and the Fort Pickens Ferry Support Facilities and Shuttle Service Environmental Assessment constitute the record of the environmental impact analysis and decision-making process for the Gulf Islands National Seashore’s (the national seashore) landside facilities improvement and shuttle service implementation project. The National Park Service will implement the selected alternative, to construct facilities needed to support the ferry service and provide shuttle service in the Fort Pickens Area. The action alternative was designed to improve visitor services in the Fort Pickens Area through the following elements:

- Ferry departure queuing—A designated place for departing visitors to wait for the ferry
- Landside orientation—Wayfinding and informational signs to direct arriving visitors to the various points of interest
- Restrooms—Conveniently located facilities for visitors, particularly those who arrive and depart by ferry
- Point of sale—Location for concession operations including ticket sales, equipment rentals, and sales.
- Rental equipment pick-up/return—An area visible, but removed, from the mine storage building, where visitors could pick up and drop off rental equipment, such as bicycles
- Shuttle stops—Highly visible stops at key locations in the Fort Pickens Area (figure 4 in the environmental assessment)
- Gathering areas—Areas in the ferry landing area where large groups could gather before departing or after arriving
- Educational exhibits—Interpretive displays about the history of and resources in the Fort Pickens Area
- Food service—Simple and quick food options for ferry passengers
- Concessioner storage—Areas for the concessioner to store merchandise and items necessary for operations in the Fort Pickens Area
- Indoor and outdoor dining areas—Designated indoor and outdoor dining areas in the ferry landing area

The Fort Pickens Area is a destination for some 1 million visitors annually and is one of the largest tourist draws for the heavily tourist-dependent economy of the Pensacola and Pensacola Beach area. In addition to Fort Pickens historic sites and the fort grounds, the Fort Pickens Area provides visitors with recreational opportunities for swimming, beach activities, fishing, shelling, hiking, bicycling, camping, and educational programs focused on its diverse marine and land ecosystems.

Passenger ferry access to Fort Pickens has been proposed since 1978 as part of the first general management plan for Gulf Islands National Seashore, and the updated general management plan calls for water access to the Fort Pickens Area (NPS 2014). In addition to providing access, ferry service will enable visitors to experience the marine resources of the national seashore from the water. The landside shuttle service will provide visitors with an overall enhanced visitor

experience and mobility options to various points of interests and recreational destinations within the Fort Pickens Historic District. The proposed project also aligns well with planning efforts by the local communities. A ferry system in Pensacola Bay will provide additional travel options and alleviate traffic congestion and will be a much-desired part of the tourist-driven economy of the Pensacola metropolitan area.

This document records 1) a “finding of no significant impact” as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and 2) a determination of no impairment as required by the NPS Organic Act of 1916 (impairment finding can be found in attachment A to this “finding of no significant impact”).

NPS SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Based on the planning efforts leading up to and included in the environmental assessment, the National Park Service has identified alternative 2, the preferred alternative in the environmental assessment, as the NPS selected alternative.

The purpose of the project is to provide a high quality visitor experience in two ways: (1) providing a gateway experience through improved landside facilities near the ferry pier and (2) providing access to visitor amenities within the Fort Pickens Area. The improvements identified as part of this project are specifically targeted at supporting the Pensacola Bay ferry passengers, and are intended to inform the national seashore’s concessions contract prospectus.

Action is needed at this time because the Pensacola Bay ferry service is anticipated to begin in 2017, and facilities adjacent to the ferry pier do not provide a desirable gateway experience. The facilities immediately surrounding the ferry pier include three historic buildings, which currently function as national seashore storage facilities/workshops. There is a passenger shade shelter nearby, but the connections between the shelter, the pier, the visitor center, the restrooms, and other sites are unclear due to the lack of wayfinding and orientation. The existing public restroom facilities near the museum will serve all visitors, including ferry passengers, and these restrooms are approximately a quarter of a mile from the ferry pier. The nearest signs offering orientation to Fort Pickens can be found at the sidewalk on the opposite (southern) end of the parking lot near the ferry pier, approximately 400 feet away.

Alternative 2, which is described on pages 19–34 of the environmental assessment, best meets the project’s purpose and need. Graphics illustrating the overall proposed plan are available on pages 20-21 of the environmental assessment.

The National Park Service has selected this alternative as described in the environmental assessment for implementation. The National Park Service will phase construction and implementation of the various improvements, based on funding. Before each phase of construction begins, the National Park Service will coordinate with state and federal agencies to obtain all necessary permits and comply with relevant regulations.

REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Under alternative 2, the three historic buildings adjacent to the ferry pier will be rehabilitated to accommodate visitor services. The engineer's shop, the mine loading building, and the mine storage building will be adaptively reused to support visitor services and concessioner operations. All rehabilitation of historic buildings will follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (36 CFR 67) to limit any impacts on the historic fabric.

The engineer's shop will be used for park and concessioner storage. The existing telecommunications infrastructure will remain in its current location.

The mine loading building will be used for exhibits on the historical significance of Fort Pickens, and will include the following changes to the structure. The building will provide approximately 1,000 square feet of space for exhibits; as examples, exhibits could include wall-mounted and free-standing interpretive displays. Interpretive displays and exhibits could be informed by the historic structures reports that the national seashore is currently drafting. There will be visual access to notable features such as the crane and steel rail assembly, automobile lift, ceiling, and brick walls, as well as other notable architectural elements in the existing structure.

The mine storage building will be used for several functions: concession sales, food service, dining areas, and exhibits, and there will be the following changes to the structure. The space for concession operations could be minimized to allow for the majority of the approximately 2,000-square-foot building to be used for dining space and merchandise display. Exhibits in the mine storage building will likely be wall-mounted to maximize concessions space. Interpretive displays and exhibits could be informed by the historic structures reports that the national seashore is currently drafting. There will be visual access to notable features such as the historic mine beam, hoist, and crane; the ceiling; and the brick walls.

The three historic buildings will require utility upgrades for their intended uses. The buildings currently have electric service, and improvements will be limited to upgrading panels and rewiring buildings to current codes. The engineer's shop will be equipped with a sump pump. Site drainage will be improved by grading, construction of a concrete curb to direct stormwater, and construction of new drain inlets with a pipe outfall through the seawall and/or use of the existing outfall.

Construction of New Buildings and Structures

New Ferry Landing Area Building

Implementation will include the construction of a new building, which will provide restrooms, rental storage, and an outdoor dining area. This building will be built above a historic foundation and will be elevated to minimize breaches in the historic foundation and to lessen the risk of flood damage. The new restrooms will provide closer and more visible facilities for ferry passengers. The rental storage area will protect concessioner property when not in use. The new building will include picnic tables under a roofed structure. Construction could be phased if

funding is not immediately available. A visitor information area with a possible 6-foot kiosk may be installed near the ferry pier to assist visitors arriving by ferry in orientation and wayfinding.

Utilities for the new building will be connected to nearby existing infrastructure. Electric service will be connected from the nearby transformer. Water to the new restrooms will connect to an existing water line and be run around the building to a convenient point of entry into the building from the east. The restrooms will require a new grinder pump station be constructed, similar to the five existing grinder pumps located in the Fort Pickens Area. The grinder pump will be placed near the back of the restroom building and a 1.5-inch sewer forcemain run approximately 400 feet to the existing forcemain located across the parking lot (on the south side of the paint locker). As part of the utility construction, site drainage will be improved by grading, construction of concrete curb to direct stormwater, and construction of new drain inlets with a pipe outfall through the seawall. In an effort to minimize the risk of encountering archeological resources related to the historic rail line, the number of times the proposed utility lines cross the rail lines or the existing foundation will be minimized to the extent possible. Utility lines will be routed under the existing rail lines where present.

Interpretive Elements near Fort Pickens

The pedestrian walkway to Fort Pickens from the ferry landing area is a focal point of the site. The walkway will be in line with the historic narrow gauge rail line that ran from the mine storage and mine loading buildings through the fort gate. The walkway will be approximately 15 feet wide, approximately 10 feet wider than the historic rail line. The walkway will be constructed of a hardened surface designed to avoid damaging the historic fabric of the railroad and may be designed to express the historic rail lines. Along the walkway, the National Park Service will place interpretive signs and displays such as weaponry (cannon, cannon balls, mines, ordinance, etc.) and benches. Interpretive features will be designed with sensitivity to the integrity of the surrounding cultural resources.

The walkway is intended to strategically draw visitors directly down the ferry landing ramp and towards the fort, helping to quickly disperse visitors in an efficient and orderly manner.

Some of the existing vehicle parking along the pedestrian walkway will be reconfigured, including relocating the accessible parking spaces near the fort in order to accommodate a shuttle stop at the fort. Additionally, a light pole, electrical transformer, and dumpster will be moved away from the walkway. Final locations will be determined in later phases of design.

Restroom and Shelter near Battery 234

In the future, a new restroom facility could be constructed near the Battery 234 shuttle stop to accommodate anticipated increase in use of this beach. The new facility will consist of basic men's and women's restrooms, each with a single toilet and sink. A frost-free water hydrant will be provided near the restroom for visitor and maintenance staff use. Final design will be decided at a later date. The required utilities include water, sanitary, sewer and electric service to the comfort station. The proposed utilities will be routed along the western shoulder of the Battery 234 and Battery Cooper loop road to the intersection at Fort Pickens Road. The water will be

connected to the existing 6-inch waterline located on the south side of Fort Pickens Road. Both the sanitary sewer and electric will be bored under Fort Pickens Road with the sewer connected to the existing 3-inch sewer forcemain located on the north side of Fort Pickens Road. The electrical service will be connected to the nearest point of service, also on the north side of Fort Pickens Road.

A shade shelter may also be constructed near the shuttle stop at Battery 234. This shelter will be approximately 12 feet by 15 feet in dimension. The structure will be roofed but will not have walls.

Any wayfinding or orientation signs will be designed with sensitivity to the integrity of the surrounding cultural resources.

Campground Store Shade Shelter

A new shade shelter will be constructed adjacent to the western side of the campground store. The structure will have no walls and will be up to 18 feet by 18 feet in dimension. The shelter will provide a waiting area for shuttle passengers.

SHUTTLE SERVICE

In addition to the improvements of the ferry landing area, the concessioner will provide a shuttle service within the Fort Pickens Area (figure 4 in the environmental assessment). The national seashore will purchase a fleet of 5 electric shuttles, and 2 shuttles will provide service to 8 stops in the Fort Pickens Area in 15-minute intervals:

- Ferry landing area
- Auditorium and museum
- Battery 234
- Battery Cooper
- Battery Worth
- Worth Beach access
- Campground store
- Fort Pickens

Shuttles will comprise an electric tram unit and a passenger trailer, which together will accommodate up to 27 passengers. Passengers will be permitted to bring personal belongings on the shuttle; as such, shuttle capacity could be less than 27 passengers.

BATTERY LANGDON

The shuttles will be stored in Battery Langdon, specifically the east casemate chamber and the corridors leading to that chamber. The shuttles will enter via the existing concrete-paved driveway access to the rear (north) doors of the battery and exit through the doors facing the gulf (south). Four will typically be used each day, and one will be kept for use if one of the other four needed repairs.

At the end of each shift, drivers will be able to wash off the shuttles, if necessary, and will then park them inside Battery Langdon and plug in each vehicle. The charging will be done in-vehicle, using standard 110 volt power. A solar photovoltaics (PV) system will provide power. The solar PV system will be installed on a nearby picnic shelter. Parking for driver's personal cars will be at the adjacent picnic pavilion or at the nearby maintenance facility.

Renovation to accommodate the shuttles will include removal of debris inside the battery, upgrading the electrical service to accommodate the charging locations, modifying the non-historic doors to the casemate, and constructing a driveway from the front door to the parking lot on Fort Pickens Road. In addition, the concrete access road to the north doors of Battery Langdon will be repaired or replaced in kind. A water spigot connection will be provided at the edge of the pavement for washing the shuttles. The spigot will be connected via a 1-inch waterline to the existing 3-inch waterline located north of the road in the vicinity of the existing shelter. Wash water will only contain particulates that already exist within the Fort Pickens Area (e.g., salt and sand) because the electric shuttles will not leak fluids, and particulates in the wash water will be filtered through infiltration in the adjacent sand.

MITIGATION

Where feasible, the National Park Service will implement mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts related to the selected alternative. Although the exact mitigation measures to be implemented will depend upon the final design, approval of plans by relevant agencies, and available funding, the following is a list of actions that could take place:

- All construction activities will be conducted during daylight hours to avoid noise impacts on national seashore visitors and sensitive wildlife species who may also be sensitive to artificial light.
- In order to mitigate and minimize potential impacts on natural and cultural resources during construction, contractor employees will be instructed on the sensitivity of the general environment and their activities will be monitored by NPS staff. Corridors for construction vehicle movement will be established and defined on the ground. Staging of construction equipment will be restricted to the road corridor, parking lots, and other identified previously disturbed areas to avoid impacts on natural resources.
- The National Park Service, its concessioner, and/or its contractors will follow guidelines for avoiding impacts on special status species, including the following:
 - If construction activities are conducted during sea turtle and/or shorebird nesting season, the sea turtle and shorebird mitigation measures, as provided in the biological assessment (appendix C), will be followed.
 - Prior to the initiation of project activities all construction areas will be surveyed for the presence of wildlife and protected plant species which are at risk of impacts from construction related activities. Surveys will be conducted by a professional biologist familiar within the flora of northwest Florida and the habitats present within the construction area. Outside of shorebird nesting season, the survey areas will include all construction and mobilization areas, travel

corridors, and a 50-foot buffer to prevent unintended impacts outside construction areas. If construction activities are conducted during shorebird nesting season, the buffer will be increased to 300 feet, as provided by the FWC shorebird protection measures. All wildlife and plant surveys will be conducted by a trained biologist familiar with the fauna and flora of northwest Florida and the habitats present within the project area. Upon the identification of at risk wildlife or protected plants, a mitigation plan will be developed. Depending upon the species, mitigation may involve relocation/transplanting, establishment of a buffer around the individual or nest, or delay of project activities until the individual has vacated the area.

- Shuttle service will be limited to a maximum speed of 15 miles per hour.
- Shuttle operators will be formally trained to recognize small, cryptic species to avoid vehicular strikes.
- Inspection of buildings and construction areas for nests or special status species prior to construction activities.
- If artificial lighting is deemed necessary, acceptable wildlife-certified LED lighting and fixtures, as is commonly used on the sea turtle nesting beaches in Florida (approved by FWC and USFWS) will be utilized. New lighting fixtures will also be compliant with night sky best management practices.
- Impact on cultural resources will be avoided through implementation of the following mitigation measures:
 - Rehabilitation of the historic buildings will follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 - The National Park Service will monitor construction activities. If previously unknown archeological resources are discovered during construction, all work in the immediate vicinity (600 feet) of the discovery shall be halted until the resources are identified and documented and an appropriate mitigation strategy developed, if necessary, in accordance with pertinent laws and regulations, including the stipulations of the 2008 Programmatic Agreement Among the National Park Service (US Department of the Interior), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.
- Impacts on wetlands during construction will be minimized through implementation of the following measures:
 - Wetlands near construction areas will be delineated and avoided to the greatest extent practicable.
 - Vehicular access within wetlands during construction will be provided by vehicles generating minimum ground pressure to minimize rutting and other environmental impacts. Wooden, composite, metal, or other non-earthen construction mats will be used when needed to prevent rutting or soil compaction. The maximum width of the access zone shall be 15 feet, and all construction mats shall be removed within 72 hours of the completion of construction.
 - All disturbed areas will be returned to natural grade and revegetated using native species. The park will monitor for invasive species and eradicate, if needed.

- In areas where impacts to natural habitats are unavoidable, construction mats will be utilized, if feasible, to protect soils from disturbance by construction machinery. Habitats disturbed by machinery will be restored after construction is completed.
- Construction timing will avoid nesting season, if possible.
- Use of sand fencing, mobi-mats, and/or a boardwalk will be used to protect dune habitat from the impacts of visitors traversing the dunes. If a boardwalk is warranted, environmental compliance for such a structure will be considered at that point.
- An erosion and sediment control plan will be prepared and approved before the start of construction activities. Best management practices such as sand fencing will be used to prevent and control soil erosion during construction.
- If applicable, a stormwater management plan will be developed and all necessary permits obtained.
- If additional sand is needed during construction for grading prior to construction, the island's sand budget will be maintained, and fill will be from compatible sources. Sand will not be used from outside of the national seashore boundary and will match the native grain size and color.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The environmental assessment analyzed two alternatives in detail: the no-action alternative and one action alternative, the NPS selected alternative. The no-action alternative is summarized below.

NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under alternative 1, the no-action alternative, visitors would access the Fort Pickens Area by ferry, privately-owned watercraft, and Fort Pickens Road. Ferry operators would provide ferry service to the Fort Pickens Area using existing public facilities. The ferry dock and shade shelter are the two existing structures currently reserved for use by ferry operations. The engineer's shop, the mine loading building, and the mine storage building are currently used by the national seashore's facility management division as workshops and storage space. No improvements or developments are proposed for the area surrounding the ferry pier, and no additional visitor services would be implemented.

Upon arrival to the Fort Pickens Area, ferry passengers would disembark from the ferry vessel onto the existing ferry pier. Visitors could access the beach via ramps on the bay side of the sea wall or could continue on the pier, over the seawall, to the sidewalk between the mine loading building and the mine storage building. Ferry passengers could access the resources in the Fort Pickens area on foot or by bicycle (or similar self-propelled vehicle) which they would bring with them on the ferry or rent from a portable facility in the ferry landing area. No orientation or wayfinding information is proposed for this area as part of the selected alternative, though the national seashore could install signs and similar wayfinding information over time. The national seashore may also coordinate with the concessioner to provide orientation and wayfinding information on the ferry vessel. The nearest restroom facilities to the ferry pier would be the existing facilities on the north side of Fort Pickens and the existing facilities on the south end of the firehouse.

Alternative 1 was not selected for implementation because it does not meet the purpose and need of the proposed action. Alternative 1 would not improve the gateway facilities at the Fort Pickens Ferry Area to better serve the passenger ferry service.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

In addition, several alternative elements were considered, but eliminated from further evaluation in the environmental assessment. Those items and their reason for dismissal are described below.

EXCLUSIVE USE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN THE FERRY LANDING AREA

The National Park Service considered a site plan which involved only rehabilitation of historic buildings, updated utilities, and minimal additional infrastructure to support the shuttle service. However, providing a new bathroom facility at the ferry landing area is a priority for the national seashore, as is preserving the integrity of the historic buildings. Constructing a restroom within the mine storage building would have required damage to the historic fabric in order to have a water line, a sewer line, and ventilation. Additionally, constructing a restroom in the mine storage building would have obscured the view and visitor understanding of the historic building. For these reasons, the National Park Service determined that a new building, sited within the footprint of a non-extant historic building to complement the spatial organization of the historic period would better accomplish the national seashore's goals.

FULL FOOD SERVICE

The national seashore considered including a more extensive food service operation. However, a full commercial kitchen created additional challenges within the mine storage building with regard to code and building improvements. Therefore, the National Park Service determined that food service would be limited to operations that do not require a fire suppression system.

SHADE STRUCTURE OVER FERRY PIER

The National Park Service considered constructing a shade structure over the departure queuing area of the ferry pier. This structure would have been a removable awning which would seasonally protect visitors from the sun or rain while they wait for the ferry. The historic landscape did not include such a structure; therefore, the new shade structure would have had an adverse impact on the cultural landscape. Additionally, the existing shade shelter provides both coverage and seating for ferry passengers. The National Park Service determined that a shade structure over the ferry pier would be unnecessary and detrimental to national seashore resources.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferable alternative is defined by the Council on Environmental Quality as “the alternative that would promote the national environmental policy as expressed in the National Environmental Policy Act [Section 101 (b)].” Alternative 1 would not cause any active change in the environment at the site. It would not require the construction of a new building, air conditioning in historic buildings, or the construction of a new bathroom facility near Battery 234. Although it would not meet the project’s objectives for improving landside facilities and providing new visitor services, it would result in the least disturbance to the national seashore’s existing resources. Therefore, alternative 1 was identified as the environmentally preferable alternative that least damages the biological and physical environment and that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.

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

As defined in 40 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. As described in the environmental assessment, implementation of the selected alternative will result in:

- long-term minor adverse impacts on floodplains because of flood water displacement associated with new building construction;
- short-term minor adverse impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat due to disturbance during the construction period, long-term minor adverse impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat because of disruption from artificial lighting, human activity;
- long-term minor indirect adverse impacts on special status species because of continued presence of humans, loss of small amount of degraded habitat, and low potential for mortality associated with the shuttle service;
- long-term minimal adverse impacts on cultural landscapes because of the addition of new structures, paving, and signage and the slight alteration of views and settings within the landscape;
- long-term adverse impacts on historic structures because of visual changes due to adaptive reuse of the buildings;
- long-term beneficial impacts on historic structures because they will be rehabilitated following the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation; potential adverse impacts on archeological resources if any areas are undisturbed;
- long-term beneficial impacts on site access and circulation because of the increased availability of wayfinding signs and additional transportation; and
- long-term beneficial impact on visitor use and experience because of the improvements to the ferry landing area, including new exhibits and interpretive features.

Overall, the selected alternative will have both beneficial and adverse impacts. However, as described in chapter 4 of the environmental assessment, the selected alternative will not have significant impacts on the human environment.

Degree of effect on public health or safety. The selected alternative has some risk to public safety during the time that construction activities are occurring; however, this risk is considered to be very low and will be further minimized during construction/demolition by implementing measures such as fencing and monitoring to block visitor access to the site.

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 environmental assessment and summarized below, there may be some changes in unique characteristics of the study area.

No prime farmlands, ecologically critical areas, or wild and scenic rivers are located within the project area. The selected alternative will occur primarily in previously disturbed areas, and within the footprint of existing buildings and infrastructure. Archeological resources have been documented within the project area and known resources will be avoided. No ethnographic resources, including sacred sites and Indian Trust resources, occur within the project area.

According to national seashore data, wetlands exist on the southern side of Fort Pickens Road near Batteries 234 and Cooper. However, impacts from utility trenching will disturb a total of less than 0.1 acre. The minor wetland crossing for underground utility lines qualifies for an exception from the Statement of Findings and compensation requirements, as outlined in section 4.2.1.e of NPS Procedural Manual #77-1: *Wetland Protection* (NPS 2012). Directional drilling is not practicable in the project area because of the porous and unstable sandy soils. In order to meet the exemption criteria, restoration actions and best management practices would be implemented to mitigate any potential impacts; mitigation measures are detailed above in “Mitigation.”

The selected alternative will be constructed within the 100-year coastal floodplain, however, all new construction will largely be on areas previously developed and will only displace a small volume of flood waters and primarily affect water storage. The proximity of Pensacola Bay and the Gulf of Mexico reduces the impact by providing the water storage necessary to offset the loss due to construction.

There are several historic structures associated with the selected alternative, including the mine loading building, mine storage building, engineer’s shop, and Battery Langdon. The selected alternative will result in direct changes to these historic structures; however, important character-defining features will be retained and work will follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Therefore, the selected alternative will result in both adverse and beneficial long-term impacts.

The addition of new structures and facilities will also visually impact the cultural landscape and historic sites in the project area; however, the selected alternative will be contained within areas

which already have non-contributing structures or infrastructure and therefore will not change the significance of the cultural landscape.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. There were no highly controversial effects identified during preparation for the environmental assessment or the public review period.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. There were no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks identified during preparation of the environmental assessment or the public review period.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. The selected alternative neither establishes a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, impacts. As described in chapter 4 of the environmental assessment, cumulative impacts were analyzed by combining the impacts of the selected alternative with the impacts of four other actions that were identified as contributing to cumulative impacts on the resources addressed by the environmental assessment: Gulf Islands National Seashore beach enhancement project, construction of the ferry pier and shade structure, implementation of ferry service and issuance of a new concessions contract, and the Fort Pickens Road realignment. The beneficial and adverse impacts of these other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on resources, in conjunction with the impacts of the selected alternative, will result in both beneficial and adverse cumulative impacts; however, the overall cumulative impacts are not significant. The selected action, in combination with the cumulative actions listed above, will result in adverse cumulative impacts on floodplains, wildlife, special status species, cultural landscapes, historic structures; beneficial cumulative impacts on floodplains, wildlife, historic structures, site access and circulation, and visitor use and experience; and a potential cumulative impact, which would be neither beneficial nor adverse, on archeological resources.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect items listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other significant scientific, cultural or historic resources. As described in chapter 4 of the environmental assessment, there are several historic structures associated with the selected alternative, including the mine loading building, mine storage building, engineer's shop, and Battery Langdon. The selected alternative will result in direct changes to these historic structures; however, important character-defining features will be retained and work will follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The addition of new structures and facilities will also visually impact the cultural landscape and historic sites in the project area; however, the selected alternative will be contained within areas which already have non-contributing structures or infrastructure and therefore will not change the significance of the cultural landscape. Land disturbance associated with a number of actions has the potential for direct impacts on archeological resources within the project area; however, during this project the national seashore will avoid impacts on archeological resources and will

continue to consult with the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer in relation to the identification and evaluation of the archeological resources within the project area. There are no known ethnographic resources, sacred sites, or other significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources within the project area.

An Assessment of Effect was submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer separately from the environmental assessment on May 6, 2015. The State Historic Preservation Officer replied on May 13, 2015, and provided concurrence with the National Park Service's determination that the selected alternative constitutes an adverse effect to the Fort Pickens Historic District and agrees to continue consultation on a Memorandum of Agreement to resolve the adverse effect. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed on August 4, 2015, to resolve adverse effects, consisting of completing Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record documentation.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. As described in chapter 4 of the environmental assessment, there are several federally-listed endangered or threatened species that may be present in the project area, including nesting sea turtles, piping plover, red knot, though impacts to these species and their habitats will be limited. The selected alternative will result in impacts on special status species from the continued presence of humans in the Fort Pickens Area, and loss of a small amount of degraded habitat. Due to the relatively low speed of the shuttles and special training of shuttle operators, it is unlikely special status species mortality from shuttle vehicle strikes would occur. Though the selected alternative will result in habitat loss in the ferry landing area and near Battery 234, actions are mainly within developed areas, and the Fort Pickens Area will continue to provide a high percentage of quality habitat within the region.

As described in the environmental assessment, the National Park Service has coordinated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service, provided both agencies with the biological assessment for this project, and incorporated mitigation measures to avoid impacts on special status species, although encounters with these animals within the project area are highly unlikely. In accordance with the Endangered Species Act and USFWS recovery plans, the national seashore will continue efforts to protect special status species within the Fort Pickens Area. High-quality habitat is available within the Fort Pickens Area, and the loss of low-quality habitat will be within more developed areas, which experience the most human activity. Therefore, the actions under the selected alternative will not result in impacts on the integrity of special status species populations within the Fort Pickens Area. The National Park Service determined that this action "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" the species listed above in the biological assessment, which was transmitted on June 19, 2015.

Protection of habitats, educational efforts, and species specific mitigation measures will reduce the impacts from continued human activity within the Fort Pickens Area. Additionally, surveys will be conducted by a qualified professional prior to construction to ensure species absence within the project area. If any federally threatened or endangered species is encountered during construction activities, work will cease and consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National

Marine Fisheries Service will resume. Neither the selected alternative nor non-federal actions are likely to adversely affect federally-listed species. Therefore, the impacts of the selected alternative on special status species will not approach the level of significance.

Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law. The selected alternative violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping

As described in the environmental assessment, the national seashore distributed a press release on September 17, 2014 to notify interested parties of the project and of the public scoping open house on September 30, 2014. The meeting provided the public with information on the purpose and need for action, preliminary shuttle and ferry routes, the planning process schedule, and information on how to provide comments for consideration. A total of 71 people attended the open house.

During the public scoping period, a total of 29 correspondences were received. Comments were received during the open house on the national seashore's public comment form, entered directly in the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website, or sent via email. Comments encompassed a variety of topics, but largely fell into one of six topics: visitor access, visitor experience, park resources, feasibility, park operations, and ferry service. Commenters showed both support and opposition for parts of the selected alternative. Commenters were concerned how the selected alternative could affect natural and cultural resources. Some were unsure about the need for the shuttle bus throughout the island and thought it will detract from the experience. One commenter was concerned that the ferry could be cost-prohibitive and therefore will not be accessible to all visitors.

Public Review and Comment Period

The park held a public review period for the environmental assessment from June 19, 2015 until July 20, 2015. During this time, the public was encouraged to submit comments through the PEPC website. Comments were also accepted by postal mail, and in person at the park. Five pieces of correspondence were received during the public review period for the environmental assessment. A summary of concerns and NPS responses to the concerns are outlined in attachment B to this finding of no significant impact.

AGENCY COORDINATION

As part of the scoping effort, the National Park Service has contacted multiple state and federal agencies including the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Florida State Clearinghouse, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the

Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, and 15 affiliated tribes. These agencies were contacted again when the environmental assessment was released on June 19, 2015.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Tribal Consultation

An Assessment of Effect was submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer separately from the environmental assessment on May 6, 2015. The State Historic Preservation Officer replied on May 13, 2015 and provided concurrence with the National Park Service's determination that the selected alternative constitutes an adverse effect to the Fort Pickens Historic District. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed on August 4, 2015, to resolve adverse effects, consisting of completing Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record documentation.

The national seashore also consulted with the following 15 tribes:

- Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
- Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town
- Chickasaw Nation
- Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
- Jena Band of Choctaw Indians
- Kialegee Tribal Town
- Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
- Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
- Muscogee Creek Nation
- Poarch Band of Creek
- Seminole Tribe of Florida
- Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
- Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
- Tunica-Biloxi Indian Tribe

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

The National Park Service provided the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission with an opportunity to comment on the National Park Service's determination that the selected alternative may affect but is not likely to adversely affect any federally-listed endangered or threatened species. In a letter dated March 26, 2015, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission agreed that the selected alternative does not pose any significant threat to imperiled wildlife or their habitats, but did recommend that shuttle drivers be trained to be aware of, and avoid, wildlife that may be encountered on the road, and that shuttle speeds be limited to 15 miles per hour. In an email dated April 2, 2015, the US Fish and Wildlife Service provided a list of special status species that do not need to be addressed in the environmental assessment because their habitats do not exist in the project area. In an email correspondence dated June 24, 2015, the National Marine Fisheries Service reviewed the environmental assessment and had no comments or

recommendations pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act or the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act.

The National Park Service prepared a biological assessment (BA) for the selected alternative. Based on the analysis in biological assessment, the National Park Service has determined that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect federally listed species within the project area. The National Park Service submitted biological assessment to the US Fish and Wildlife Service with a letter (June 19, 2015) requesting their review and concurrence with this determination. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with a “not likely to adversely affect” determination, fulfilling section 7 consultation requirements on August 10, 2015.

Coastal Zone Management Act

In accordance with Section 307(c)(1) of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, the National Park Service prepared a consistency determination and determined that the proposed action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of Florida’s approved coastal management program. This consistency determination was based on the review of the proposed project’s conformance with the enforceable policies of the State’s coastal program found in Chapter 380 Florida Statutes, Part II. The National Park Service submitted the consistency determination to the Florida State Clearinghouse as an appendix to the environmental assessment on June 19, 2015. In a letter dated July 20, 2015, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission stated that the proposed action is consistent with Chapter 379, Florida Statutes authorities under the Florida Coastal Management Program.

Clean Water Act

In their email correspondence dated February 11, 2015, the US Army Corps of Engineers identified the only wetlands that might be disturbed during implementation of the selected alternative will be associated with utility trenching in the vicinity of Battery 234. They recommended minimizing impacts by using directional bore in lieu of open trench if feasible, implementing erosion controls as we be accomplished with any similar construction effort and upon completion of the work, re-establishing pre-project contours, elevations, and vegetative cover.

ATTACHMENT A: NON-IMPAIRMENT DETERMINATION

By enacting the NPS Organic Act of 1916 (Organic Act), Congress directed the US Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to manage units “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such a means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” (16 USC section 1). Congress reiterated this mandate in the Redwood National Park Expansion Act of 1978 by stating that the National Park Service must conduct its actions in a manner that will ensure no “derogation of the values and purposes for which these various areas have been established, except as may have been or shall be directly and specifically provided by Congress” (16 USC 1a-1).

NPS *Management Policies 2006*, Section 1.4.4, explains the prohibition on impairment of park resources and values:

While Congress has given the Service the management discretion to allow impacts within parks, that discretion is limited by the statutory requirement (generally enforceable by the federal courts) that the Park Service must leave park resources and values unimpaired unless a particular law directly and specifically provides otherwise. This, the cornerstone of the Organic Act, establishes the primary responsibility of the National Park Service. It ensures that park resources and values will continue to exist in a condition that will allow the American people to have present and future opportunities for enjoyment of them.

The National Park Service has discretion to allow impacts on park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purposes of a park (NPS 2006, sec. 1.4.3). However, the National Park Service cannot allow an adverse impact that will constitute impairment of the affected resources and values (NPS 2006, sec 1.4.3). An action constitutes an impairment when its impacts “harm the integrity of Park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise will be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values” (NPS 2006, sec 1.4.5). To determine impairment, the National Park Service must evaluate “the particular resources and values 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” (NPS 2006, sec 1.4.5).

This determination on impairment has been prepared for the selected alternative described in this “finding of no significant impact.” An impairment determination is made for resource impact topics (floodplains, wildlife, special status species, cultural landscapes, historic structures, and archeological resources) analyzed in the environmental assessment for the selected alternative. An impairment determination is not made for site access and circulation or visitor use and experience because impairment findings relate back to park resources and values. These impact topics are not generally considered to be park resources or values according to the Organic Act and cannot be impaired in the same way that an action can impair park resources and values.

FLOODPLAINS

Alternative 2 will have long-term direct impacts on the floodplain because new structures (ferry landing area building, pedestrian walkway, shade shelter, and potential restroom) will be constructed within the floodplain. Construction of the new buildings would displace a small volume of flood waters and affect floodplain functions and values, primarily water storage.

The impacts on the ability of the floodplain to absorb and store floodwaters or storm surge will be minimal and will not result in an increase in potential flood damage within the project area. The proximity of Pensacola Bay and the Gulf of Mexico reduces the impact by providing the water storage necessary to offset the loss due to construction. Impacts on the floodplain will not prohibit the national seashore from fulfilling its purposes, compromise the integrity of floodplain functions, or conflict with the national seashore's general management plan or other NPS policy. Therefore, the selected alternative will not impair floodplains.

WILDLIFE

Alternative 2 will have direct short-term adverse impacts on wildlife because of disturbance during the construction period including additional noise and human activities within localized area. Long-term direct impacts on wildlife will be due to some habitat loss and increased human activity. Long-term indirect impacts on wildlife will occur from artificial lighting installed at new building locations at the ferry landing, Battery Langdon, and Battery 234.

Actions under alternative 2 will mainly be focused within the most developed areas of the Fort Pickens Area and the vast amounts of high-quality habitat will remain largely unaffected. The increased human activity will be localized to developed areas, where wildlife is likely habituated to human activity. The national seashore will continue actions which protect wildlife from inadvertent human disturbance, and the impacts from alternative 2 will not lead to changes in diversity or habitat quality which are outside the natural range of variability. Impacts on wildlife will not prohibit the national seashore from fulfilling its purposes, compromise the integrity of wildlife communities, or conflict with the national seashore's general management plan or other NPS policy. Therefore, the selected alternative will not impair wildlife.

SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES

Alternative 2 will have long-term impacts on special status species found in the project area, including nesting sea turtles, bald eagle, piping plover, red knot, southeastern American kestrel, snowy plover, least tern, American oystercatcher, black skimmer, Godfrey's goldenaster, and Cruise's goldenaster. The impacts will be due to a loss of a small amount of degraded habitat, artificial lighting, and localized increased human activity. Alternative 2 will have direct short-term adverse impacts on special status species because of disturbance during the construction period including additional noise and human activities within localized area.

Actions under alternative 2 are mainly within the most developed and previously disturbed areas, which experience the most human activity. Though a small amount of low-quality habitat will be

lost, the Fort Pickens Area will continue to provide a high percentage of quality habitat within the region. In accordance with the Endangered Species Act and USFWS recovery plans, the national seashore will continue efforts to protect special status species within the Fort Pickens Area. Impacts on special status species will not prohibit the national seashore from fulfilling its purposes, compromise the integrity of special status species communities, or conflict with the national seashore's general management plan or other NPS policy. Therefore, the selected alternative will not impair special status species.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Alternative 2 will have long-term adverse impacts on cultural landscapes because of the addition of new structures and facilities, including a ferry landing area building, pedestrian walkway, shade shelter, and potential restroom. In the engineers wharf area, these impacts will be from a new building, changes in grade, and changes in transportation pattern. In the Battery 234 area, the impacts will be from a new share shelter and a possible new restroom facility. In the Battery Langdon area, the impacts will be due to a new hardened path and repairing of existing concrete path for the shuttle service. These new features will visually alter the historic setting in certain locations within the project area.

Actions under the selected alternative will be contained within areas which already have non-contributing structures or infrastructure, such as the shade shelter and restroom near Battery 234, which will be constructed adjacent to an existing parking lot. The new building at engineers wharf will be constructed above an historic foundation, in similar dimensions of the historic structure. All new walkways will be constructed over existing paths or be of materials compatible with the landscape. Impacts on cultural landscapes will not prohibit the national seashore from fulfilling its purposes, compromise the integrity of cultural landscapes, or conflict with the national seashore's general management plan or other NPS policy. Therefore, the selected alternative will not impair cultural landscapes.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Alternative 2 will have long-term adverse and beneficial impacts on historic structures in the project area including mine loading building, mine storage building, engineer's shop, and Battery Langdon due to the adaptive reuse of the buildings. In the ferry landing area, the mine loading and mine storage buildings will be rehabilitated for new uses of visitor services. New climate control systems, utility lines, and doors would be installed, as well as a raised floor in the mine storage building and a sump pump in the engineer's shop. Battery Langdon will be rehabilitated for the shuttle system which will require cleaning and stabilization of walls and floors, the installation of electrical conduits, and the construction of two driveways. These changes will alter the historic interiors of the buildings to improve visitor services. These buildings will change and increase their usage, which could result in degradation to some elements and materials due to more exposure to visitors and new uses.

Under the selected alternative, important character-defining features will be retained and work will follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Any penetrations to the

walls for utility or exhibit installations will be small, and the translucent plastic window coverings will be removable. The rehabilitation of the historic buildings will result in a long-term beneficial impact as the floors and walls will be cleaned and stabilized, historic roofs will be repaired, climate control will protect historic interiors from degradation, and flooding will be minimized. Impacts on historic structures will not prohibit the national seashore from fulfilling its purposes, compromise their integrity, or conflict with the national seashore's general management plan or other NPS policy. Therefore, the selected alternative will not impair historic structures.

ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Alternative 2 has the potential to result in adverse impacts on archeological resources due to land disturbance if measures to identify and avoid archeological resources are not undertaken. These impacts will be associated with a number of actions such as walkway construction, re-grading, building construction, driveway repairs, and utility line installation. A new building in the ferry landing area will be partially built above an historic foundation, requiring a small number of penetrations in the historic foundation.

Archeological resources are well documented and measures to identify and avoid archeological resources will be carried out during the selected alternative. Additional archeological surveys will be completed within the project area prior to implementation of the selected alternative in any areas not previously tested for archeological resources. The new building in the ferry landing area will be elevated over the historic foundation to minimize the number of required penetrations. Installation of utility lines in the ferry landing area, Battery 234 area, and Battery Langdon area will be done in previously disturbed areas to minimize impacts of archeological resources. The national seashore will continue to consult with the Florida State Historic Preservation Office in relation to the identification and evaluation of the archeological resources in the area. Impacts on archeological resources will not prohibit the national seashore from fulfilling its purposes, compromise their integrity, or conflict with the national seashore's general management plan or other NPS policy. Therefore, the selected alternative will not impair archeological resources.

REFERENCES

National Park Service (NPS)

- 2006 *Management Policies 2006*. National Park Service, US Department of the Interior.
- 2014 Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. Gulf Islands National Seashore. July 2014.

ATTACHMENT B: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

On June 19, 2015, the National Park Service (NPS) released the Fort Pickens Ferry Support Facilities and Shuttle Service Environmental Assessment (EA) for public review and announced its availability with a press release. This environmental assessment presents the NPS's proposal to improve landside facilities near the ferry pier and implement a shuttle service within the Fort Pickens Area. Additionally, an email was sent to 484 people on the national seashore's mailing list, and a postcard was sent to 487 people. The National Park Service also sent 27 electronic copies of the environmental assessment to members of the public who requested it. It was available to the public on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website (PEPC) at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/guis>. Comments were requested during the 32-day review period, which closed July 20, 2015.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Primary terms used in the document are defined below.

Correspondence: A correspondence is the entire document received from a commenter. This includes letters, emails, and comments entered directly into PEPC.

Comment: A comment is a portion of the text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject. It could include such information as an expression of support for or opposition to an alternative, additional data regarding the existing condition, or questions related to the impact analysis.

Concern: Concerns are statements that summarize the issues identified.

Response: Responses are statements that summarize how the errata have been composed to address the concern. In some cases, the requested information may already be present within the document, and the response will direct the reader to the appropriate location.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

A total of 5 pieces of correspondence were received during the public comment period, including four pieces of correspondence from members of the public and one piece of correspondence from a tribe. All correspondences were entered directly into PEPC.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida's Tribal Historic Preservation Office submitted a letter of correspondence stating they had no comments regarding the project at this time. The office requested to be informed in the event that any archeological, historical, or burial resources are discovered during the execution of the undertaking.

Many comments were on items that are outside the scope of this EA and therefore did not require changes to the EA text. These include comments regarding the current conditions and future of Fort Pickens Road, concessions operations, impacts of the ferry service, and the hurricane evacuation plan.

PUBLIC AND AGENCY CONCERNS & RESPONSES

The NPS has summarized questions and comments into the concerns below. Comments that address topics outside the scope of this project are not assigned concerns nor responses.

Concern 1: One commenter asked if the wood shelves in the engineer's shop are a historic feature.

Response 1: The wooden shelves in the engineer's shop are not a historic feature; however, the shelves are free-standing and have no impact on the historic fabric of the building.

Concern 2: One commenter asked why alternative 2 does not include floor adjustments in the mine loading building similar to those proposed in the mine storage building.

Response 2: The mine storage building is lower in elevation than much of the surrounding area, including the mine loading building. Rain events cause flooding in the mine storage building several times a year. The 6–8 inch elevation in the floor of the mine storage building will prevent the building from flooding during the majority of rain events. Because it is at a higher elevation, the mine loading building is not susceptible to the same flooding risk.

Concern 3: One commenter asked about the impacts on NPS operations associated with the adaptive reuse of the engineer's shop, the mine loading building, and the mine storage building.

Response 3: NPS operations would be relocated to existing facilities which can accommodate the functions currently housed in the engineer's shop, mine loading building, and mine storage building.

Concern 4: One commenter suggested two changes to alternative 2: additional stops along the shuttle route and displaying information that would be on the kiosk on the ground instead. The commenter specified additional shuttle stops could be added "to connect to nature trails and the Florida National Scenic Trail and the Langdon facilities." The commenter noted that orientation information should be "mapped out on a ground display" to avoid the intrusion of the upright kiosk on the historic district.

Response 4: Many options were considered in the development of the action alternative. The shuttle route was developed for the operational time of the rechargeable battery, and the stops were designated by national seashore staff. If demand is great enough, additional stops along the existing route could be added in future; no additional stops have been incorporated into the selected alternative. Design and construction of the information kiosk would be completed in

coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer under the Memorandum of Agreement, as needed, in order to minimize intrusion on the cultural landscape.

Concern 5: One commenter felt that the preferred alternative would result in severe impacts on the cultural resources in the ferry landing area.

Response 5: As noted on page 68 of the environmental assessment, impacts of the alternatives were assessed using the Council on Environmental Quality definition of “significantly” (1508.27), which requires consideration of both context and intensity. The corresponding sections on the environmental consequences on the cultural resources in the project area can be found on pages 81–89. Additionally, the National Park Service has consulted with the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer and 15 affiliated tribes.

Concern 6: One commenter said that the environmental assessment does not provide an estimate of the ferry capacity and noted that this information affects site access and circulation and visitor use and experience.

Response 6: As stated on page 70 of the environmental assessment, ferry vessels would accommodate up to 150 passengers.

Concern 7: One commenter asked about the interpretation of the historical context of the ferry pier area.

Response 7: As noted in the environmental assessment (page 19 of the EA), the mine loading building will include interpretive displays. While the designs and content of these displays have not been established yet, educational exhibits will include information on the history of the Fort Pickens Area.

Concern 8: One commenter asked about the reasonableness of the adaptive reuse of the mine storage building. This comment questioned if one point of egress is safe and whether one concessioner staff member would be sufficient.

Response 8: Visitor safety is of the utmost importance to the National Park Service; however, the National Park Service does not feel that the proposed concessioner operations within the mine storage building would pose any risk to public safety.

The number of concessioner employees used to staff the mine storage building would be at the discretion of the concessioner, in coordination with the national seashore, but at least one person is expected to operate this building.

Concern 9: One commenter asked about the design of the proposed new building in the ferry landing area and the design of the historic building over which the new would will be constructed,

Response 9: The design of the proposed new building has not yet been completed, but the new building would house a public restroom, concessioner storage, and a shaded outdoor dining area. As noted in the “Alternatives/Elements Considered but Dismissed from Further Analysis” section of the environmental assessment (page 39 of the EA), the national seashore considered a site plan which did not involve new building construction in the ferry landing area. However, to preserve the integrity and interpretation of the mine storage building while providing the convenience of a public restroom in the ferry landing area, a new building would better accomplish the national seashore’s goals. This building would be designed to be compatible with the cultural landscape but will not mimic the original design of the historic building.

Concern 10: One commenter asked how trash and recycling would be managed under the action alternative.

Response 10: The concessioner will be responsible for managing trash associated with the concession operations (including food service and the new restroom). Outside of the ferry landing area, visitors will be required to take their trash with them as is currently the practice in the Fort Pickens Area.

Concern 11: One commenter asked in which “NPS Zone” the ferry landing area is managed and how the national seashore’s general management plan prescribes treatment of this area.

Response 11: The national seashore’s general management plan does not prescribe management zones. The general management plan prescribes management plans for different areas of the national seashore, one of which is the Fort Pickens Area. This environmental assessment is consistent with the national seashore’s general management plan, as noted in “Previous and Related Planning Studies” (page 6 of the EA).

Concern 12: One commenter asked whether it is possible that proposed new buildings may not be constructed and noted that this phrase should be repeated elsewhere.

Response 12: This language has been updated to “when the new building is constructed” in the errata (attachment C). The National Park Service intends to build the new building in the ferry landing area to improve visitor experience, but as noted on page 28 of the environmental assessment, construction is dependent on available funding.

Concern 13: One commenter asked if the proposed action will generate a need for more public docks.

Response 13: The National Park Service does not anticipate that there will be an increased public desire for additional docks for public use.

ATTACHMENT C: ERRATA

The following changes shall be incorporated into the Environmental Assessment:

PAGE 26

The last sentence of the first bullet should be removed.

PAGE 46

The bullet under “Mine Storage Building (same as above, plus the following)” should read:

The mine storage building would be adversely affected by the installation of the elevated floor. However, the floor would prevent flood damage to the first 6–8 inches of the interior walls.

PAGE 57

The “Amphibians” section of Table 4 should be removed.

PAGE 58:

The first sentence should be revised to read:

Lastly, habitat for the burrowing owl is not located within the study area.

PAGE 86

The second to last sentence of the first paragraph should be revised to read:

The floor level of the mine storage building would be elevated 6–8 inches to help avoid impacts of future floods.

PAGE B-6

The last sentence should read:

When the new building is constructed, service would be connected from the nearby transformer.

PAGE D-5

The last sentence of the second paragraph under “New Ferry Landing Area Building” should read:

When the new building is constructed, service would be connected from the nearby transformer.