

CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 INTRODUCTION

National Park Service Planning

Under the Organic Act of 1916, the National Park Service (NPS) was established and directed to:

“...promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

The NPS uses a variety of methods and tools in carrying out this mandate to simultaneously provide for public enjoyment and protect resources. A comprehensive plan is a tool that provides NPS decision makers a means to guide future development in a responsible manner and protect the Park's resources.

The Lake Area Comprehensive Plan/Environmental Assessment (LACP/EA) was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 USC § 4321, as amended); the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (Title 40 CFR § 1500-1508, July 1, 1986); the Department of the Interior Regulations for Implementation of NEPA (Title 43 CFR Part 46, October 15, 2008) and the National Park Service's Director's Order #12, Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-making (January 8, 2001). The integration of the plan with an EA ensures (1) the NPS is informed of anticipated environmental consequences of the proposed actions and alternatives (including the no-action alternative); (2) the public is informed of potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action and alternatives; and (3) the appropriate information is available to aid in any decision on the comprehensive plan and proposed projects.

Yellowstone National Park (YNP) has developed a comprehensive plan/environmental assessment that would balance the preservation and protection of natural, cultural, and scenic resources with visitor experience in the Lake Area by setting desired future conditions for resources and visitor experience and defining boundaries, limits, and standards of where and how development and redevelopment can occur. Desired future conditions for resources and visitor experiences are based on the Lake Area's significance and fundamental resources and values. The plan would set acceptable limits of change to development that supports and helps achieve these desired future conditions. The comprehensive plan would provide a framework for decision-making that NPS staff, managers, and partners would use when developing and evaluating project proposals for this area. The framework includes suitable locations, building sizes, appropriate functions, and design standards determined to be within acceptable limits of change for the area. It is designed to provide a flexible, structured approach that allows park staff and managers to readily evaluate the impacts of different actions and then adjust decision-making depending on the impacts.

The LACP/EA evaluates the environmental impacts that could result from adoption of any of the alternatives. If either of the action alternatives is selected, projects would be evaluated for

conformity with the buildable planning zones, planning prescriptions, and design standards described in this plan as part of the Park's compliance process. Impacts assessed in this plan are for the proposed action as described in the document. Future actions would be evaluated in terms of consistency with the plan, level of impact to resources, and appropriate level of compliance, and would be documented as described in Section 1.5.7.

All projects that have the potential to affect wetlands, waters of the U.S., and/or cultural resources must go through additional steps to comply with applicable laws and policies, even if they are within the scope of this plan. This would be identified during the project evaluation process.



1.2 BACKGROUND

National park system units are established by Congress to fulfill specific purposes. A park's purpose is the fundamental building block for its decisions to conserve resources while providing for the "enjoyment of future generations" (National Park Service Organic Act, 1916). A park's significance statement describes why the park is important within a global, national, regional, and ecosystem-wide context and is directly linked to the purpose of the park.

Yellowstone's purpose and significance are rooted in the intent of its enabling legislation, subsequent legislation, and current knowledge of its natural, cultural, and scenic resources. It is important to understand the significance of the Lake Area within the context of Yellowstone National Park's significance. Yellowstone:

- Is the world's first national park.
- Preserves geologic wonders, including the world's most extraordinary collection of geysers and hot springs and the underlying volcanic activity that sustains them. Yellowstone is positioned on a "hot spot" where the earth's crust is unusually thin and magma rises relatively close to the surface.
- Preserves abundant and diverse wildlife in one of the largest remaining intact temperate ecosystems on earth, supporting spectacular biodiversity. Preserved as mostly wild and undeveloped, Yellowstone and the surrounding ecosystem serve as a benchmark for understanding nature.
- Preserves an 11,000 year continuum of human history, including archeological sites, historic structures, and National Historic Landmarks that reflect our shared heritage.
- Provides for the benefit, enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. Visitors have a range of opportunities to experience the essence of Yellowstone's wonders and wildness in a way that honors the park's value to the human spirit and deepens the public's understanding and connection to it.

Congress established Yellowstone National Park on March 1, 1872 to "dedicate and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people; . . . for the preservation, from injury or spoliation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition" (Yellowstone National Park Protection Act, 1872). Yellowstone National Park encompasses approximately 2.2 million acres (3,472 square miles) in the northwest corner of Wyoming and extends west into Idaho and north and west into Montana. It is the core of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), an approximately 18 million-acre area that includes Grand Teton National Park and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway, six national forests, three national wildlife refuges, Bureau of Land Management holdings, and additional tribal land, state land, towns, and private property.

1.2.1 Plan Location

This Comprehensive Plan looks at the development and infrastructure on the northwest shore of Yellowstone Lake (Map 1-1). The Lake Area is an important location for visitor services on the Grand Loop Road and the East Entrance Road. For the purposes of this plan, the Lake Area has been divided into six separate planning locations where the area's features and facilities are clustered: Fishing Bridge, Lake Administrative, Lake Lodge, Lake Hotel, Lakeshore, and Bridge Bay (Map1-2).

- **Fishing Bridge Location:** The Fishing Bridge location lies between Pelican Creek, the Yellowstone River, and the shore of Yellowstone Lake. This location combines wildlife habitat and scenic and cultural resources. The most significant prehistoric archeological sites in the park are at this location. The Fishing Bridge Historic District includes a National Historic Landmark Structure, the Fishing Bridge Museum, and the Fishing Bridge. The present Fishing Bridge at the outlet of Yellowstone Lake was built in 1937 but has several predecessors and a long history of human use. Other structures in the area include the Fishing Bridge General Store and the oldest service station in the park. This area also encompasses the Fishing Bridge Recreational Vehicle (RV) Park. It is the first development that visitors encounter when driving from the park's East Entrance, 26 miles away.
- **Lake Administrative Location:** The Lake Administrative location serves NPS park operations. Closed to the public, this location provides employee housing, meeting space, and maintenance facilities that serve visitor facilities and resource protection in all of the other locations (Lake Hotel, Lake Lodge, Bridge Bay, Fishing Bridge, and Lakeshore).
- **Lake Lodge Location:** The historic Lake Lodge and its attendant cabins were built as the successors to an earlier tent camp and provide a lower cost alternative to the Lake Hotel. The Lake Lodge is part of the Lake Historic District and is situated on the edge of a meadow, framing scenic views of Yellowstone Lake and the mountains beyond. The scale and location of the cabins within the Lodge Creek setting create an intimate experience for visitors. The concessions administrative area is located adjacent to the Lake Lodge cabins and provides dormitory and RV housing.
- **Lake Hotel Location:** Built in 1889 and proposed as a National Historic Landmark, the Lake Yellowstone Hotel is the oldest surviving hotel in Yellowstone and the National Park Service. From its onset, Lake Hotel influenced tourism patterns in the West and today its Colonial Revivalist architecture, lakefront location, and scenic resources are welcome attractions to visitors. This location also encompasses the cluster of historic Lake Cottages, the post office behind the hotel, and the concessions administrative functions associated with the hotel.
- **Lakeshore Location:** Along the lakeshore, a string of historic buildings, including the Lake Ranger Station, Lake General Store, Lake Service Station, and Fish Hatchery, tell the story of both tourism and conservation in this area. Historic structures populate the Hatchery Historic District, nominated for its architecture and influence in fisheries conservation practices in Yellowstone National Park and the western United States. The Hatchery structure contains original aquaria and equipment. Historic boathouses, offices, and residences provide spaces for the current fisheries operations. The Lake Clinic occupies a portion of the old hospital, a Mission 66 structure providing medical services and life flights for the east side of the park. From these locations along the lakeshore, visitors can view a wilderness setting and some of the most remote areas in the lower United States.
- **Bridge Bay Location:** This development was built in the 1950s and 1960s to provide recreational services associated with the Lake including boat rental, tour boats, docks/ boat slips, and other marina operations, as well as a campground. The NPS anticipates nominating the Bridge Bay Marina as a Historic District. The nearby Natural Bridge adds an interpretive exhibit and a bicycle trail to the visitor experience.



Figure 1-2 Lake Planning Locations

1.2.2 Brief History of the Lake Area Development

Many of the Lake Area's modern issues and concerns stem from its history. The Lake Hotel, the area's first permanent visitor-use structure, was built in 1889 and then renovated to its Colonial Revival façade, designed by architect Robert Reamer, in 1903 and 1923. The hotel formed the nucleus of what is referred to in this document as the Lake Village. This location, which embodied contemporary ideas of civilization in the midst of wilderness for early travelers, was accessed by stagecoach via the Grand Loop Road or by steamboat across Yellowstone Lake. The location soon underwent additional development to expand visitor and operational facilities. Most notable included the Fish Hatchery and its associated structures, which was instrumental in early fish conservation in the United States, and the rustic Lake Lodge, which catered to visitors who came to the park by automobile. By the 1920s, the location also featured the Lake ranger station, Lake General Store, Lake Service Station, cottages, cabins, boat docks, and various other administrative and concessioner buildings. The final major development in this location was the hospital and surrounding housing, which was completed in the early 1960s to provide medical facilities on the east side of the park.

The Fishing Bridge location was the second to be developed within the Lake Area and reflects the growing importance of the automobile in American culture after 1915. The East Entrance Road, which connected to the Grand Loop Road just north of the Yellowstone River outlet, was completed in 1903, with the first Fishing Bridge completed a year earlier. The road and bridge initially served stagecoach companies that operated in the park. However, once the automobile became the standard transportation mode, Fishing Bridge grew rapidly. In 1921, the bridge was rebuilt and the Fishing Bridge Campground established, just a year after visitation numbers furthered the construction of another general store in the area. Other buildings included a cafeteria, bathhouse, and service and auto repair stations. Approximately 250 cabins were added behind the general store between 1924 and 1942. The Fishing Bridge Museum, now a National Historic Landmark, was completed in 1931. The Fishing Bridge RV Park was constructed in 1963-1964.



Photo 1-1: Fishing Bridge Development, 1963

The Bridge Bay location, with its marina and large campground, was built in the 1950s and 1960s as part of the Park Service's Mission 66 program. The marina area, including the ranger station and general store, may be considered for nomination as a historic district, as they exemplify Mission 66 architecture and planning.

Park managers and the public engaged in a series of planning efforts during the 1980s and 1990s that resulted in many changes in the Lake Area, particularly in the Lake and Fishing Bridge locations. While early access to the Lake Hotel was by water or from the road along the lakeshore, circulation changes now direct visitors to the back of the hotel and the parking area. With no docks or formalized paths along the shoreline, which is steep and eroding, visitors have few ways to access the lakeshore. The small overlook in front of the hotel attracts visitors but is inadequate.

Meanwhile, Fishing Bridge during the 1970s was a much larger development and destination in the midst of wildlife habitat. The 1988 Fishing Bridge EIS decision document directed that cabins be removed from behind the general store and that the campground be restored to natural conditions. The historically significant Fishing Bridge museum remained on the lake-side of the road with the other components of the area's commerce and activity focused on the other side.

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the LACP/EA is to enhance visitor experience and employee living conditions while preserving the natural, cultural, and scenic resources in the Lake Area setting desired future conditions for resources and visitor experience and guiding development while minimizing impacts to resources. Comprehensive planning proposes to retain and enhance the Lake Area natural and cultural resources, the architectural mix of rustic and colonial revival styles, and the existing range of visitor experiences and opportunities. Specific needs for individual projects are described in Chapter 2 in the alternatives description.

The LACP/EA addresses the following issues and concerns:

- **Natural resources, including wildlife habitat and ecosystems need to be protected while managing visitor experience in the park. As human use and influence continues in the Lake Area, and factors such as ecological change influence resources, there is a need to protect sensitive natural resources.** This area, which encompasses rich habitat along the lakeshore, riverbeds, and meadows, supports a wide variety of wildlife, including grizzly and black bears, elk, bison, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, various amphibians, and pelicans. Whitebark pine, a USFWS candidate species, as well as a globally rare plant species are also found in this area.
- **Cultural resources, including archaeological sites, historic structures, and landscapes, need to be protected while managing maintenance to structures and underground utilities.** Many older buildings and utilities are deteriorating or have reached their maximum lifespan. Utilities such as waterlines are in need of replacement. As structures and operations are updated, they risk conflicting with the desired character of the Lake Area. Structural and operational maintenance and improvements need to occur in a manner that maintains cultural resources while also protecting natural resources and visitor experience.
- **Visitor experience, including wildlife viewing or enjoying the vistas across Yellowstone Lake, needs to provide an appropriate level of use such that the park will remain unimpaired for future generations. Determining that level is often complex and**

involves balancing many resources. There is a need to improve visitor experience along the lakeshore. Visitors are attracted to the lakeshore in front of Lake Hotel, but have limited access or accommodations for seating or walking. Steep terrain, eroding cliffs, and fluctuating water levels leave minimal physical space for vehicles and pedestrians along the water's edge.

- **Pedestrian and vehicular circulation needs a more efficient and practical configuration.** Visitors often find circulation in the Lake Hotel and Lakeshore locations confusing and frustrating. Roads and parking areas are sometimes difficult to navigate and there are insufficient pedestrian routes along the lakeshore. Improvements need to connect facilities and resources while addressing appropriate levels of use.
- **There is a need to preserve and maintain cultural and natural landscapes. Views have historically extended across the lake into remote wilderness.** Cultural landscapes are living landscapes where tree stands may decline. Meanwhile, development could inadvertently impact natural scenes of the night sky, wilderness, the forested landscape, and unobstructed views of the lake.

1.3.1 Objectives

The objectives of the Lake Area Comprehensive Plan are to:

1. Protect natural ecosystem processes, while reducing human-induced changes to the natural environment.
2. Preserve and protect cultural resources, to the maximum extent practicable, for current and future generations.
3. Ensure visitor facilities support necessary and appropriate levels of service and enhance visitor experience in the Lake Area.
4. Preserve and, where possible, improve the natural scenery and soundscapes.
5. Enhance park operations, including infrastructure, to better serve visitors and protect natural resources.

1.3.2 Fundamental Resources and Values

The qualities that are critical to achieving the park's purpose and maintaining its significance are termed Fundamental Resources and Values. Parks may also have other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the park's purpose and significance but are nevertheless determined to be particularly important considerations for planning. The following fundamental resources and values are considered important for the Lake Area and are essential components of this planning effort.

Natural Resources

Yellowstone Lake and associated geologic wonders: This large, high-elevation lake is in the center of the Lake Area and the core for one of the most significant, near-pristine aquatic ecosystems found in the United States. Beneath the lake's surface are geothermal features and processes associated with the Yellowstone caldera. At the southern edge of the Lake developed area, the stone and earth Natural Bridge has long been a destination for visitors.

Vast and diverse habitat: The intersection of lake, river, and terrestrial communities nourishes a diversity of plant and animal life. The Lake Area is the core of grizzly bear habitat in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), especially the meadows interspersed with forested areas. Habitats

include numerous spawning streams feeding the Lake and geothermal features within the Lake itself. Rare plants and wetlands are also critical in the Lake area.

Wildlife: Wildlife thrives within the diverse habitat along the northern shores of Yellowstone Lake. Visitors have the opportunity to see grizzly and black bears, bison, moose, deer, otters, eagles, pelicans, osprey, and elk. Amphibians also thrive in the numerous wetlands near the Lake Area.

Night Sky and Natural Soundscapes: The Lake Area provides an ideal place to view the sky and listen to natural soundscapes. The undeveloped views across the lake at night create a setting for viewing the dark night sky.

Native Fisheries: Historically, the Lake Area was the core of the Yellowstone cutthroat trout fishery which shipped 310 million cutthroat eggs across the U.S. and elsewhere from 1901 to 1956 (Varley 1981). In the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, Yellowstone cutthroat trout are considered a keystone species, upon which many other species depend. At one time, bears fished streams extensively in the spring and visitor services were managed to decrease bear/human conflicts. Due to various reasons including lake trout and whirling disease, the Yellowstone cutthroat trout population has been greatly diminished. The restoration of native cutthroat trout is an ongoing project in Yellowstone Lake and was recently evaluated in the Native Fish Conservation Plan/EA.

Outstanding natural scenery: Unobstructed views across the lake to the Absaroka Mountains provide a visual portal into a vast wilderness that is for the most part, ecologically intact and nearly devoid of human development. The natural features of this picturesque setting are a major component of the experience and many structures were sited to take advantage of them.

Cultural Resources

Extensive Human History: The lake's geomorphology and prehistoric popularity provides a complex record of seasonal human use over a long time span and is some of the most significant prehistoric archeology in the park. The archaeological record in the lake area reveals an 11,000-year pattern of use.

Lake Yellowstone Hotel (a proposed National Historic Landmark): The Lake Hotel was built in 1889. It is the oldest surviving hotel in any national park. The Lake Hotel began as a plain building, with a flat-faced front and yellow clapboard exterior. In 1903-04, however, it was extensively redesigned by architect, Robert Reamer, who transformed the early Westlake style Lake Hotel building into a prominent work of Colonial Revival style.

Lake Lodge: The Lake Lodge was designed by Robert Reamer and constructed in 1923 to cater to an increase of visitors touring the park in private automobiles. The Lake Lodge was sited at the edge of a meadow, framing views of Yellowstone Lake with the signature "park-itecture" of the period. Serving as intermediate style lodging for visitors, the lodge and cabins provided more rustic, less expensive accommodations.

Lake Fish Hatchery Historic District: These buildings, which include the hatchery, three residences, two office buildings, and other support buildings, are significant for their architecture and for their role in the conservation policies of the NPS and fisheries conservation nationwide. Some of these structures currently serve fisheries operations.

Lake Ranger Station: Built in 1923, this building was designed as a combination ranger station and community center and includes an octagonal-shaped community room with a central stone fireplace. The design reflected the views of early NPS officials, such as first NPS director Stephen Mather and YNP superintendent Horace Albright, about the combined role of rangers in educating the public and protecting park resources.

Lake General Store: In 1919, concessioner Charles Hamilton began construction of a new store facing the Yellowstone Lake. This rustic structure originally featured a porch railing structure composed of “knotty” logs. One surviving rustic feature is the stone face on the foundation making the building feel more rustic and rooted in the landscape. The Lake General Store provides services to both hotel and lodge visitors.

Fishing Bridge Museum National Historic Landmark: The last of four trailside museums planned and designed by architect Herbert Maier, the Fishing Bridge Museum was completed in 1931 and illustrates the NPS’s rustic design concept. Built of native rock and stone, it was designed to reflect the beauty of nature itself. It became a prototype of rustic architecture in parks all over the nation and was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1987, including the caretaker’s residence and amphitheater. The Museum was originally intended to serve visitors staying in the adjacent auto camp, providing visitors with information on Yellowstone.

Fishing Bridge: Originally built in 1902, it was a rough-hewn corduroy log bridge with a slightly different alignment than the current bridge which was built in 1937. The Fishing Bridge was historically a popular place to fish; however, it was closed to fishing in 1973. Since that time, it has become a popular place to walk across the Yellowstone River, observe fish, and enjoy unobstructed views up and down the river. It is one of the few places where native Yellowstone cutthroat trout can be observed during their spawning activities.

Bridge Bay Marina: The marina represents a unique architectural example of east coast marina village architecture in a western national park. NPS anticipates this property will be determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Visitor Experience

Visitor activities: Visitors can experience the wild character of the Lake through ranger-led programs, sight-seeing, wildlife viewing, boating, fishing, walking along the lakeshore, and hiking both short and long trails.

Lake access: Visitors access the lake via several points including the Bridge Bay Marina, the lakeshore behind the Fishing Bridge Museum, or along the road in front of the Lake Hotel.

Range of Visitor Accommodations and Services: A range of visitor accommodations and services are available to meet a diversity of visitor needs including the hotel, cabins, stores, campgrounds, fuel, amphitheaters, and marina.

1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

The LACP/EA is consistent with past plans but does seek to modify guidance from the 1988 and 1993 Fishing Bridge/Lake Development Concept Plans. The relationship will be further discussed in the No Action Alternative in Chapter Two.

Yellowstone National Park Master Plan (1974)

The Master Plan strived to balance human impacts and preservation of park natural, cultural, and scenic resources by developing objectives for General Management, Resource Management, Visitor Use, and Interpretation. It provided recommendations for resource protection and development of facilities, accommodations, and support services that occur in individual developed areas.

“Current planning proposes to ultimately relieve congestion and eliminate accommodations and services from this existing developed area [Fishing Bridge] in order to facilitate restoration of critical wildlife habitats at Yellowstone Lake's outlet.” p. 17

“The area from the mouth of the Yellowstone River at Lake to one mile downstream is superb ecological environment and should be restored to natural conditions. Consideration should be given to the development of an interpretation and information facility for visitor enjoyment of the stream wildlife. A system of walking paths and overlooks would be developed in conjunction with the proposed visitor wildlife information center on the north shore of the lake.” p. 31

EA/Development Concept Plan for Grant Village (1982)

The plan included the proposal to construct approximately 700 visitor lodging units with 2.5 to 3 acres of additional parking, a registration office, a restaurant complex including a gift shop and a store featuring camping supplies. Support facilities proposed included: dormitories for 275 concessioner employees, 50 additional trailer sites for concessioner employees, housing for 40 YACC members, housing for National Park Service employees and a multi-purpose building containing recreation and possibly food-service facilities for employees. Also included in the plan were construction of trails among new facilities, rerouting trails north of the visitor center, and reengineering of two road intersections to eliminate traffic circulation problems are also included. Approximately 300 visitor lodging units were eventually constructed at Grant. The Grant Village DCP was completed because the 1974 Master Plan recommended that fragile thermal areas at Old Faithful and West Thumb as well as the prime wildlife habitat of the Pelican Valley-Fishing Bridge area be converted to predominantly day use while "Grant Village will become a major development containing several classes of accommodations". In 1975, all but 23 of the 285 cabins were removed from the Fishing Bridge location. Of the 23, five cabins remain and are used by concession employees. Grant Village was not constructed to replace Fishing Bridge, but began in the late 1950s when it was intended that Grant Village would become a supplemental visitor service area. It was determined later, during preparation of the 1974 Master Plan, that Grant Village could instead replace comparable facilities in the Park (i.e., Old Faithful, Fishing Bridge, West Thumb).

Construct Dormitories to Replace Existing Employee Housing at the Old Faithful and Lake Areas EA/FONSI (1983)

This EA approved the construction of a 50-room dormitory in the Lake Area to replace existing employee cabins.

Lake Hotel Access EA (1987)

This EA proposed to bring arriving visitors to the front of the historic Lake Hotel and return primary guest orientation/registration to this area. The rear of the hotel would be used for secondary visitor drop off and hotel access from the improved parking area. The service entry at the back of the hotel would be separated from the guest entry. Architectural modifications and landscaping would improve the appearance of the hotel and grounds as viewed from the west side and the rear.

Final Environmental Impact Statement/Development Concept Plan for Fishing Bridge Developed Area (1988)

This plan addresses the Fishing Bridge development and its effects on important resources in the area, especially grizzly bears. It proposed actions to reduce grizzly bear deaths and human injuries in the area. In consultation prior to this EIS, the USFWS had expressed concerns about “(1) the level of human-caused grizzly bear mortality attributable directly or indirectly to the Fishing Bridge development; and (2) human displacement of grizzlies from prime habitat in the Fishing Bridge/Pelican Valley area due to high levels of human use associated with Fishing Bridge.” The 1988 EIS attempted to address these concerns by removing development in the Fishing Bridge area and adopting additional visitor use restrictions. Specifically the EIS proposed:

- Removal of the 310-site NPS campground at Fishing Bridge
- Removal of the auto repair shop, service station, and photo shop
- Removal of all employee and concessioner housing (with exception of housing on second floor of general store)
- Removal of the Fishing Bridge contractor's camp, helipad, and ball field and restoration of the site to natural conditions
- Obliteration of all informal trails radiating from any remaining camping facilities at Fishing Bridge and the placement of signs at campground perimeters advising occupants that the areas beyond the campground are closed
- Assignment of a special patrol to the perimeters of any remaining camping facilities at Fishing Bridge from 10:00 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. to discourage bears from entering the campground
- Restriction of the Fishing Bridge sewage treatment plant road to administrative vehicle use only (public foot travel would continue to be permitted to use the Howard Eaton Trail)
- Removal of the Turbid Lake road in Pelican Valley
- Removal and relocation of all trails and backcountry campsites that are in prime grizzly bear habitat in Pelican Valley (including the Turbid Lake trail and six backcountry campsites in Pelican Valley) would continue to be accessible on the Pelican Valley trail and the campsites would be relocated outside prime grizzly bear habitat.
- Restriction of Pelican Valley to day use only for all but horse parties until the above removals and relocations are accomplished
- Closure of Pelican Valley to off-trail travel.
- Closure to human use during the spawning season of areas surrounding all spawning streams tributary to Yellowstone Lake that are used by grizzly bears
- Park staff would continue to monitor bear-human conflicts at the remaining Fishing Bridge facilities and, if high levels of conflicts continued, additional measures including removal of other facilities would be considered.

Since 1988, a majority of the actions were completed. The only items not completed were the removal of the auto repair shop, service station, Fishing Bridge housing, and the helipad. With the grizzly bear population increase and the low human caused mortality rate in the park, and specifically the Fishing Bridge Area, conditions indicate that removal of the employee housing at Fishing Bridge may no longer be a priority.

Parkwide Road Improvement Plan/EA (1992)

The purpose of this plan is to preserve and extend the service life of principal park roads, enhance their safety, and continue access to Yellowstone National Park and its features.

Final Environmental Assessment/Development Concept Plan for Lake/Bridge Bay (1993)

This plan proposed no new visitor-use developments in the Lake/Bridge Bay Area, except a potential fish hatchery museum. It stated that new visitor facilities should only be constructed as replacements for existing structures that are no longer serviceable. Administrative buildings would also primarily be replacements of older facilities, minimizing the need to increase the development footprint. The plan also evaluated moving the service and auto repair stations and employee housing from Fishing Bridge to the Lake Village and Lake Administrative Area.

Grizzly Bear Management Plan (1994)

The objective of this plan is to preserve and maintain the processes affecting the genetic integrity, distribution, abundance, and behavior of the black and grizzly bear populations within the park. The plan emphasizes preventative management as the first step toward solving bear management problems and provides guidance and direction to park employees responding to bear management situations. Guidance in the plan states that direct manipulation of bears or their habitat will be kept to a minimum.

Fishing Bridge Fuel Storage Replacement FONSI (1998)

This FONSI amends the 1993 Lake – Bridge Bay DCP EA, which identified a new location for the service station. It proposed replacing the fuel storage tanks at Fishing Bridge to meet EPA guidelines while the park’s commercial services plan and EIS is being developed (which would address the future of service stations in the park as a whole).

YNP Long-Range Interpretive Plan (2000)

This plan provides visitor experience goals, primary interpretive themes and follows with recommendations. The Interpretive Plan provided the LACP/EA fundamental resources and values for visitor experience.

YNP Strategic Plan (2005)

This strategic plan reexamined the park’s fundamental mission and took a fresh long-range view, in concrete terms, of what results or outcomes are needed to more effectively and efficiently accomplish that mission.

Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy (2007)

The purpose of the strategy is to “describe and summarize the coordinated efforts to manage the grizzly bear population and its habitat to ensure continued conservation in the Greater Yellowstone Area; specifically the population, habitat, and nuisance bear standards to maintain a recovered grizzly bear population for the foreseeable future; document the regulatory mechanisms and legal authorities, policies, management, and monitoring programs that exist to maintain the recovered grizzly bear population; and document the commitment of the participating agencies” (p. 5). The strategy mandates no net loss of grizzly bear habitat from the 1998 baseline and no change in developed areas within Bear Management Units, with some exceptions for administrative and maintenance needs.

Draft Cultural Landscape Inventories for Lake Historic District, Fishing Bridge Historic District, and Lake Fish Hatchery Historic District

Currently under review, these inventories for the Lake Village, Fishing Bridge, and Lake Fish Hatchery historic districts are the basis for a recent determination of eligibility of cultural landscape features and patterns to be included in these districts.

Native Fish Conservation Plan EA/FONSI (2011)

The primary purpose of this plan is the restoration of Yellowstone cutthroat trout in Yellowstone Lake, but it also addresses native fish management throughout the park. Various lake trout suppression efforts were adopted, including gillnetting, piscicide use, electroshock, and angling. The LACP/EA assumes that because of the Native Fish Conservation Plan, native fish will return to the spawning streams of Yellowstone Lake.

Winter Use EIS (2012)

The park and the National Park Service (NPS) have issued a 'One-Year Rule' for this winter season (Dec. 15, 2011 to mid-March 2012) to allow more time to address significant public comments about the proposed plan for long-term winter-use management of the park. Yellowstone received nearly 59,000 comments about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) during a 60-day comment period that closed on July 18, 2011. The goal had been to have a new long-term final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and rule in effect for winter use by December 2011. However, after reviewing the public comments, the NPS wants to analyze some issues in greater detail, including:

Variable preset use limits (differing levels of snowmobile/snowcoach use on different days)

- Air quality and sound modeling assumptions
- Proposed "best available technology" (BAT) for snowcoaches
- Adaptive management framework for emerging technologies
- Sylvan Pass avalanche operations and costs
- Opportunities for non-commercially guided access

Accordingly, the NPS has issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Record of Decision (ROD), and published a Final Rule that selected the 'transition year' portion of the preferred alternative. Under the one-year rule, use levels and restrictions will be the same as the interim rule that has governed use over the past two seasons. The rule allows for up to 318 commercially guided BAT snowmobiles and up to 78 commercially guided snowcoaches per day into Yellowstone this winter. The rule continues to provide for motorized oversnow travel on the park's East Entrance road over Sylvan Pass.

The Park Service will begin the Supplemental (S)EIS process in January 2012. It intends to have a final SEIS, ROD, and a long-term regulation in place before the start of the 2012-2013 winter season.

Other Planning Documents

This LACP/EA also references other planning documents and operating procedures for Yellowstone National Park including: Yellowstone Sign Standards (1992), Yellowstone Revegetation Guidelines (2002), and Yellowstone Lighting Guidelines (2004).

1.5 LAKE AREA COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

1.5.1 Defining Area Significance

As Yellowstone National Park plans for the future of the Lake Area, a shared understanding of what resources and values warrant primary consideration is helpful in achieving the park's purpose. The purpose and significance of Yellowstone National Park are described in Section 1.2. These statements explain the specific reasons the park was established and express why the park's natural, cultural, and scenic resources and values are important enough to warrant national park designation. The significance statement for the Lake Area tiers off of the park's significance statement and describes both visitor experience and natural, cultural, and scenic resources and values that are important to preserve in this part of the park. The Lake Area's significance statement:

While protecting park resources, the Lake Area balances appropriate visitor experience and retains what is significant for the future of this portion of Yellowstone National Park. Visitors to the Lake Area, comprised of Lake Village, Fishing Bridge, and Bridge Bay, experience the grandeur and changing conditions of Yellowstone Lake, which highlights views across the water into one of the most remote areas in the continental United States. The intersection of lake, river, and terrestrial communities provides a complex diversity of plant and animal life, including the Yellowstone cutthroat trout and grizzly bears. This wealth of resources has provided connections, both ancient and current, to human occupation and inspiration for over 11,000 years. More recently, this area plays an ongoing and important role in the interpretation of the park's history, including the evolution of tourism, fisheries management, and wildlife conservation. The Lake Area provides three distinct visitor destinations, all connected to the beauty of the lakeshore and the surrounding habitat.

Central to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and surrounded by wilderness, the Lake Village offers tranquility and serenity to visitors seeking respite, often in the grand Lake Hotel, a proposed National Historic Landmark. The Village's combination of cultural and natural resources is the key to its identity; here the visitor enjoys scenic views across the Yellowstone Lake while embraced in a historic setting. The Fish Hatchery and boathouses, Lake Hotel, ranger station, and Lake Lodge form a string of historic architectural structures, telling the long story of tourism and conservation in the area.

Situated on the northern shore of Yellowstone Lake, the Fishing Bridge spans the Yellowstone River, providing visitors with excellent fish and wildlife watching. This development includes a historic amphitheater and a National Historic Landmark, the Fishing Bridge Museum, which serves as visitor education center and bookstore. The Fishing Bridge General Store offers goods and services to visitors coming in from the Park's east entrance as well as those staying at the Fishing Bridge RV Park.

South and slightly west of the Lake Village development, the Bridge Bay Campground and Marina serve yet other visitors—those wishing to camp or boat. In addition to evening interpretive programs at the amphitheater, visitors enjoy water activities departing from the marina, where some dock their private vessels.

1.5.2 Surveying and Mapping Area Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Resources

Resource information is used in three ways for the Lake Area Comprehensive Plan: (1) it increases knowledge of fundamental resources and values in the area, which then contributes to establishing desired resource conditions, (2) it gives geographic boundaries for resources that may require special compliance, and (3) it provides specific information to define acceptable limits of change.

Resource survey maps provide valuable information for all park staff, empowering them to actively protect resources. Project proponents will be required to use the most up to date resource maps and describe how their proposals will affect resources. Projects not analyzed in this EA can also use these maps during the NEPA process. There are some resource sites that are not shown in this plan due to their sensitive nature. This information may be revealed through the project evaluation process.

It is important that these maps maintain accuracy. Because resources are dynamic and conditions change over time, resource inventories within the Lake Area should be updated every ten years, or as needed.

1.5.3 Establishing Desired Future Conditions for Resources and Visitor Experience

The desired future conditions for fundamental natural, cultural, and scenic resources and values and visitor experience should be achieved while considering changes to the area. The following five desired future conditions, and strategies for accomplishing those conditions, are critical for planning within the Lake Area:

1. **Dynamic natural ecosystem processes associated near the outlet of Yellowstone Lake continue and remain intact without additional human-caused interference or manipulation.**
 - Wildlife habitat is retained and diverse; abundant native wildlife (including bears, bison, birds, fish, etc.) continue to inhabit the Lake Area. **Broad strategies include:**
 - Diverse aquatic communities, including spawning streams, are preserved to help maintain native fisheries, amphibians, etc.
 - Ongoing efforts to prevent non-native species establishment continues with eradication efforts directed at multiple species.
 - Geologic, hydrologic, and hydrothermal resources on land and underwater continue to be protected.
 - The vegetation communities of forest, meadows, wetlands, and sagebrush steppe remain intact, including mixed age class of forests.
 - In order to promote a healthy ecosystem, fuels reduction is well integrated with other natural resource values, visitor experience, and cultural landscape values.
 - The area behind the Fishing Bridge General Store is restored with native vegetation.
 - The Lake Area continues to provide research opportunities for scientific exploration and discovery including archeology, biodiversity, and geology.
 - Federal and state listed threatened and endangered species and their habitats continue to be protected and sustained.
 - Natural landscaping within the development should maintain an environment of fire protection, aesthetics, and wildlife management.

2. Cultural resources and the features/patterns that contribute to their significance and integrity continue to be preserved and retained to the maximum extent possible.

Broad strategies include:

- Visitors continue to experience the Lake Hotel as an iconic National Park Service structure, prominent on the shore of Yellowstone Lake, in its historic setting.
- The rustic Lake Lodge overlooking Yellowstone Lake from across a meadow is preserved.
- The historic Fishing Bridge Museum NHL and the Fishing Bridge General Store are preserved and continue to provide visitor services along the historic East Entrance Road.
- The historic Grand Loop Road, which connects the Fish Hatchery complex, the Lake Hotel, general store, and ranger station remains intact and is enhanced
- Unobstructed views across the lake remain intact and vegetation continues to partially screen development from the lake.
- The record of archaeological resources of the area is protected and rich human history interpreted.
- Ethnographic resources will be identified and appropriately managed.
- Visitors continue to enjoy and experience a sense of place provided by rustic and grand architecture and cultural landscape within a wilderness landscape.
- Design standards are used to ensure new facilities and changes to existing buildings are compatible with the existing development. Guidance from §106 NHPA and the Secretary of the Interiors Standards is followed.
- Historic buildings and features are maintained to the maximum extent possible

3. The existing range of visitor services, the recreational and educational opportunities to experience the lake and the historic character of the Lake Area, and the geologic features near the outlet of Yellowstone Lake are preserved for the benefit, enjoyment, education, and inspiration for this and future generations. Broad strategies include:

- Visitors of all ages and abilities enjoy a diversity of opportunities to experience and connect with the lake, which is dominated by natural processes, cultural heritage, and natural scenery.
 - Wildlife viewing, including large mammals, in their natural setting is enhanced.
 - Unique geologic and other natural features viewed from roads, overlooks, trails, and boats are interpreted.
 - Opportunities exist to experience the wildness of Yellowstone Lake through multiple means including boating, viewing, and hiking.
 - Visitors continue to enjoy fishing, camping, and ranger programs.
- Existing range of visitor services remains intact and is preserved. Visitors easily find adequate facilities that support their stay and exploration of the area including: suitable accommodations, dining, retail services, fuel service, camping, and marina services.
- Way-finding around the Lake Area is easy to understand beginning with a sequence of arrival.
- The character, sights, and sounds of the natural and historic setting are preserved.
- Educational opportunities to learn about natural and cultural resources are enhanced.
- Visitors feel inspired by the tranquility and experience the natural quiet and sounds of the lake.

- Universal, safe access to the lake, or viewing areas where access is not possible, is provided.
 - Operational and administrative facilities, and other development that is necessary to support the desired visitor experience and management/maintenance of resources, do not impede natural processes.
4. **The predominately natural scenery and soundscapes of the area are preserved and improved. Broad strategies include:**
- Historic views are preserved, including the views of the lake from the hotel and lodge as well as views from the lake and roads to the hotel.
 - Structures and buildings are blended into the landscape with vegetation.
 - Administrative areas and utilities are screened from visitor views.
 - Predominately natural scenery of the area remains intact and is preserved.
 - Predominately natural soundscapes of the area remain intact and are preserved.
 - Opportunities to experience the area's spectacular dark night sky remain intact and enhanced.
 - The experience of natural sounds, wind, and stillness associated with the lake are preserved.
5. **Necessary park and concessioner operations will be enhanced to better serve the visitor and protect the area's natural resources. Broad strategies include:**
- Employee housing is consolidated in safe, desirable housing options.
 - Year-round staff have year-round facilities.
 - Working conditions are improved and made more efficient with proper facilities, such as emergency services and office buildings.
 - Utilities that meet the needs of park and concessioner operations.
 - Sufficient storage facilities for NPS and concession's operations.

1.5.4 Establishing Acceptable Limits of Change

While desired future conditions for resources and visitor experience provide guidance for what the park would like to achieve in the Lake Area, acceptable limits of change define how project proponents can achieve those desired future conditions. Acceptable limits of change are guiding principles that define what kind, where, and how much development and redevelopment can occur in the Lake Area without resulting in unacceptable impacts to natural, cultural, and scenic resources and visitor experience. This EA is a vehicle for determining the acceptable limits of change for the Lake Area, which are comprised of three distinct components—buildable planning zones, planning prescriptions, and design standards.

1.5.4.1 Component 1: Buildable Planning Zones

Five types of land-use classifications are defined within the developed areas as buildable planning zones where potential changes may take place. They provide guidance for balancing the level of resource preservation and protection with visitor experience that will be emphasized while considering changes to visitor services, facilities, and utilities. They are based on and are to be used with mapped resource inventories (see Chapter 3).

Buildable planning zones delineate areas that are suitable for development. The five different buildable zones are: (1) Natural, (2) Historic, (3) Circulation, (4) Development, and (5) Administrative. Figure 1-2 describes these zones, showing how they are depicted on the maps for Alternatives B and C.

- **Natural** zones are adjacent to or surrounding developed areas or roads where emphasis is placed on preserving predominantly natural scenery and/or historic views. This zone accommodates utilities, trails, and boardwalks that do not obstruct views or scenery. The zone covers most of the area within the planning boundary. Projects within the natural zone should remain at a resource impact threshold equal to or less than a “minor adverse impact,” as defined under each impact topic in Chapter 4.
- **Historic** zones are areas within existing historic districts where development changes can occur, provided they follow the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. It is important to note that not all of a historic district is zoned as “buildable.” In order to preserve those historic building and circulation patterns that contribute to the integrity of the district, some portions of a historic district are not zoned as buildable. These include important views, existing building cluster arrangements, and certain natural features such as meadows. Development and redevelopment of buildings, roads, parking areas, and trails can occur where zoned, in certain sections of the historic district, in a way that maintains historic integrity. Emphasis is placed on guiding limited changes and improvements while preserving the historic integrity of buildings, structures, roads, parking areas, trails, and other landscape features and patterns.
- **Circulation** overlay zones apply to vehicular circulation that includes major roads, parking areas, and pedestrian pathways. Changes to these areas may occur, but must adhere to the design standards of the underlying zone; i.e., roads within historic zones must address design standards for that zone. Circulation should always emphasize a park-like driving experience

Development and administrative zones are more suited for future development than other zones because they mostly avoid sensitive natural or cultural resources and are not within historic districts.

- **Development** zones are areas where projects mostly associated with visitor services can occur, such as buildings and parking areas. Emphasis is placed on providing or improving facilities and utilities in a way that complements the natural and cultural setting.
- **Administrative** zones are areas that are typically not viewed or visited by the public, are dedicated to operations activities, and are not intended as part of the visitor experience. Emphasis is placed on providing appropriate support facilities such as buildings, parking, storage, etc., while screening these areas from visitor views and access.

Using Resource and Zoning Maps in the LACP/EA: Maps showing the location of natural, cultural, and scenic resources are shown in Chapter 3. These resource maps can be compared to the zoning maps found in Alternatives B and C in Chapter 2. Impacts resulting from situations where certain zones overlap natural and cultural resources are discussed in Chapter 4.

1.5.4.2 Component 2: Planning Prescriptions

Planning prescriptions further define the acceptable limits of change within a particular zone by identifying the development footprint (how much) and primary function (what kind) of changes that could occur to the built environment without unacceptable impacts to natural, cultural, and scenic resources. They are shown in Appendix C.

Each location has its own set of planning prescriptions that are based on (a) existing functions, (b) available space for new development, and (c) desired future conditions for visitor experience and resources.

Examples of Existing Single-Building Footprints	
Lake Hotel	179,124 ft ²
Lake Lodge	29,878 ft ²
Lake Hotel Cottages	308 ft ²
Lake Ranger Station	2,400 ft ²
Lake General Store	5,356 ft ²
Fishing Bridge General Store	19,881 ft ²

Maximum Change in Development Footprint: Development footprint is the square footage of buildings (at ground level), roads, and paved parking in the developed portions of the Lake Area. This planning prescription defines the most any road, building, or parking area can change in size and determines the maximum size of any new construction.

It is important to note that if existing buildings, roads, and paved parking are removed, they can be replaced by similar-sized facilities at no net-gain in development footprint, as long as they fall within the other components for acceptable limits of change. For example, if a dormitory is removed in the Lake Area, that square footage is “banked” and project proponents can use that square footage as part of their allotted footage when they build a new dormitory.

Primary Functions: Different types of facilities have different potential to impact natural, cultural, and scenic resources and visitor experience. For example, visitor facilities near spawning streams may impact grizzly bears. The primary function defines the appropriate use of a space, be it roads, parking lots, or buildings, within the developed area, thus minimizing use conflicts between resources.

Methodology for Determining Projects and Development Footprint

Projects and associated development footprints for each action alternative propose different ways to achieve desired future conditions for visitor experience in the Lake Area. Projects and their corresponding development footprints were determined through public and staff input and resource surveys in order to achieve the following guiding principles:

- a) Meet the purpose and objectives of the LACP/EA (Chapter 1).
- b) Achieve desired future conditions for natural, cultural, and scenic resources and visitor experience (Chapter 1).
- c) Prevent unacceptable impacts to resources through the use of recent resource surveys (Chapter 3).
- d) When impacts are unavoidable, disclose these impacts and mitigation measures (Chapter 4).

Public and Staff Input: During the comprehensive planning process, park staff and partners and the public identified resource, visitor use, and operational issues and needs critical for meeting the desired future conditions at the Lake Area. See Table 2-1 for a list of projects that were proposed to address issues and needs and consequently meet desired future conditions.

Resource Surveys: Some surveys revealed resources that may require additional compliance and that restrict the extent to which the development footprint could expand. Resource surveys, such as a scenic resource analysis and historic district evaluations, also inform restrictions that preserve contributing features and patterns.

The action alternatives present a range of projects and development footprints within buildable planning zones and are assessed in Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences.

1.5.4.3 Component 3: Design Standards

Design standards, the third planning component, ensure that changes to facilities take into consideration important natural and cultural resource principles for specific locations within the Lake Area. These standards define character-defining features to be retained when designing facilities, including building character, height, appearance, setting, and layout. They are also important mitigating measures for natural, cultural, and scenic resources. Design standards are referenced in Figure 2-5 and can be found in their entirety in Appendix C.

Design standards are more flexible in some locations than in others. For example, there is greater flexibility in facility design in administrative zones than in historic zones, because these areas are not seen or accessed by the public. Additionally, design standards are not the same for every historic zone because different historic districts reflect different historic significance, periods of history, and physical features. For example, the standards for Lake Hotel and Lake Lodge historic zones differ considerably; those for Lake Lodge reflect its historic rustic architecture, informal character, and meadow location, while those for Lake Hotel reflect its historic Colonial Revival architecture, formal character, and lake-side location. Design standards identify these differences.

Design standards can also act as mitigation measures for impacts to natural, cultural, and scenic resources. They include:

- Important revegetation techniques
- Standards for preserving dark skies
- Fire management guidance
- Links to Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
- Sustainable development guidance
- Character and key concept illustrations.
- Standards for setting, layout, character, scale/size, methods, surroundings, roof design, openings, materials and color.

These standards illustrate and preserve the natural, historic, and scenic integrity of the Lake Area. They follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, and help achieve desired future conditions for scenic resources and historic settings. Unlike planning zones and prescriptions, design standards do not differ between action alternatives; they consistently address desired future conditions for historic and scenic resources regardless of the proposed level of change. They are used as mitigating measures for all action alternatives. It is important to note, however, that consultation for §106 assessment of effect would be ongoing and completed for projects as appropriate.

1.5.5 Planning Strategies

Planning strategies have been developed for the Lakeshore location, which propose additional concepts to illustrate proposed actions. The strategies identify key design ideas involving the proposed pedestrian walkway along the lakeshore. The strategies are referenced in Chapter 2 and can be found in their entirety in Appendix B.

1.5.6 Evaluating Future Projects

Once the LACP is adopted, park staff, managers, and partners would follow the guiding principles of acceptable limits of change to design and evaluate projects and ensure that proposals meet resource protection regulations and policies.

Project Approval Process: Park Staff would use a Project Application Form provided through the park's compliance office to evaluate project proposals. In areas where a comprehensive plan is in place, the form provides an electronic link to a short project application that references the planning components. A project proponent would first consult the established desired future conditions and planning prescriptions. Subsequently, resource survey maps would be checked for all resources that could be affected by their project. Projects may be implemented with the approval of the superintendent if they fall within the scope of the acceptable limits of change.

Acceptable Limits of Change Planning Components

Acceptable limits of change consist of three components: planning zones, planning prescriptions, and design standards. Together with desired future conditions, acceptable limits of change guide development in the Lake area.

1 Buildable Planning Zones

Buildable planning zones show where changes in development can take place. The plan uses five types of buildable zones to determine the type of resource protection and visitor experience to be applied to services, facilities, and utilities. The zones and their application are explained in this section. Refer to **Figures C-3 to C-8** of the plan for more detail.



Administrative Zones are areas that are typically not viewed or accessed by visitors, are functional, and are not intended as part of the visitor experience. Emphasis is placed on support facilities for visitor use and resource protection.



Development Zones are areas where recent development has already occurred and future building can occur. Emphasis is placed on providing or improving facilities in ways that compliment the existing setting.



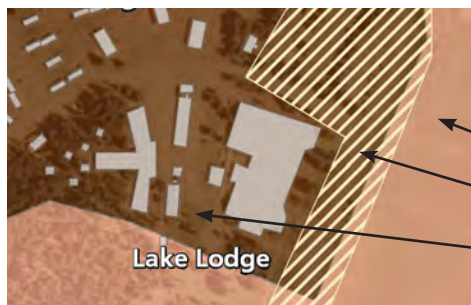
Historic Zones are areas within or adjacent to existing historic districts where changes in development may occur. Emphasis is placed on guiding limited changes and improvement while preserving historic integrity.



Natural Zones are adjacent to, or surrounding, developed areas or roads where underground utilities, boardwalks, or trails may occur. Emphasis is placed on preserving predominantly natural scenery and resources, cultural resources, and/or historic views.



Circulation Overlay Zones are paved roads or parking areas that are part of the developed area where changes may occur. Emphasis is placed on preserving historic character and providing a park-like experience for visitors. Design standards for the underlying zone will apply.



Planning zones vary in size, shape, and relationship to each other at each location.

Surrounding Natural Zone
Circulation Overlay Zone
Historic Zone

Figure 1-3a Lake Planning Components

Acceptable Limits of Change

Planning Components

2 Planning Prescriptions

The LACP/EA provides for balancing resource protection with visitor experience, including reduction, replacement, and new development footprint. Planning prescriptions identify the primary functions (visitor services, housing, etc.) of the development footprint (square footage of buildings, roads, and pavement) that can take place within a particular planning zone. Additionally, design standards provide guidance for the size of an individual building within a location.

Zone	Selected Action		
	Maximum Change In Development Footprint	Primary Functions	Projects
Any one of the Five Buildable Planning Zones within a Location	Maximum Change in Development Footprint describes the proposed net gain of square footage for buildings and paved parking at ground level*	Primary Functions describes the types of uses for facilities in this location	Identifies projects evaluated for NEPA compliance
*Note: This Plan/EA provides for reduction, replacement, and new development footprint. Changes to historic properties require compliance with Section 106 of NHPA. Changes to floodplains, wetlands, and other waters of the U.S. require compliance with applicable law and policy.			

3 Design Standards

Design standards are the specific guidelines that will be applied to facilities and infrastructure constructed, renovated or removed within the planning zones. The design standards are defined by both the type of planning zone and the location within the Lake area.

Any one of the Five Buildable Planning Zones within a Location	Description	This element describes current facilities and operations at this location.
	Primary Objectives	This element describes design objectives for this location.
	Setting	This element describes design limits for building orientation, excavation, and vegetation management for all buildings and landscapes in this location.
	Layout	This element describes design limits for spatial configuration of buildings in their setting, separation for visual screening, setbacks, and proximity to features in the landscape such as access roads or significant views.
	Scale, Size	This element describes design limits for scale, size, height, and building clustering in this location.
	Site Features	This element describes design limits for site development features in this location, such as walkways, barriers, signs, night lighting, and vegetation.
	Site Work and Restoration	This element describes design limits for restoration of disturbed landscape areas in this location.
	Design and Construction Methods	This element describes design methods, materials, technologies, and building codes applicable to this location.
	Roof Design	This element describes design limits including pitch, material types, and load-bearing requirements for roofs in this location.
	Materials	This element describes design limits for type, purpose, architectural character, and detailing of materials in this location.
	Color	This element describes design limits for color range, historic color selection, type of finish, durability, and reflectivity of colors used in this location.

Figure 1-3b Lake Planning Components

1.5.7 Continued Responsibility for Resource Protection beyond the LACP/EA

Responsibility for resource protection would not end once a project is evaluated using the planning components. Section 106 NHPA consultation of effect with SHPO and ACHP, Section 7 of the Threatened & Endangered Species Act, Section 404 Clean Water Act, and other aspects of environmental compliance continue as the project is better defined.

For example, in the natural zone, exact locations and development footprint for utilities are not shown because their designs are dependent upon projects selected in the future. The plan suggests that all projects within the natural zone remain at a resource impact threshold equal to or less than a “minor adverse impact,” as defined under each impact topic in Chapter 4. These projects would be documented through the Yellowstone environmental compliance process.

Additional Environmental Compliance: Yellowstone National Park is responsible for meeting applicable environmental compliance processes that are required by law and policy after a project is proposed and designed, even if it falls within the limits of acceptable change for the LACP/EA. Project proponents must follow the established Yellowstone environmental compliance process, which is included at the end of the project approval form.

Although the zones, prescriptions, and design standards provide direction for future development within historic districts using guidance from the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, this plan and Environmental Assessment only partially fulfills the requirements of Section 106 of the NHPA.

Sustainable, environmentally-friendly, universally accessible designs achieve conservation stewardship and high-quality visitor services. Environmentally sustainable building practices and designs mitigate impacts to local resources, as well as those within a larger geographic context. For example, hard surfaces that restrict infiltration of precipitation can be mitigated through options such as utilizing permeable surfaces. Stormwater drainage can be managed to return water to vegetation through grading design.

Replacement footprint rather than additional footprint is encouraged, for example, replacing trailers with multiplex housing units. This encourages the reinvestment of park staff, time, and money into improving the condition of the park’s assets. It also lets the park concentrate efforts on core services at core locations during peak visitation periods while maintaining essential services.

1.6 PUBLIC SCOPING

Scoping is a process used to determine the breadth of issues and alternatives to be addressed in an environmental assessment. For the LACP/EA, Yellowstone staff conducted scoping with the public and interested and affected organizations and agencies, including meetings with associated tribes of Yellowstone National Park. NPS staff members were also consulted as the plan/EA was developed. Scoping helped to refine the LACP/EA’s purpose and need and determine likely issues, concerns, and resource impact topics (i.e., resources that could be impacted by the implementation of a given course of action or alternative).

Public scoping for the Lake Area Comprehensive Plan/EA began on July 6, 2010, with a news release and mailing to interested parties asking for participation in identifying issues and concerns. Scoping

letters were mailed out to 168 interested individuals, organizations, or agencies. Scoping was also announced through the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Public meetings were held in the Lake Area; Cody, Wyoming; and Bozeman, Montana. Scoping ended on August 6, 2010. The park received comments from 22 individuals, organizations, or agencies in nine states. A list of scoping letter recipients as well as the scoping letter is included in Appendix A. Respondents were generally supportive of comprehensive planning for the Lake Area, with common themes being:

- Improve circulation, both pedestrian and vehicular,
- Keep the Lake Area natural; serenity and tranquility need to be preserved,
- Sustainability of resources needs to be considered,
- Enhance the visibility of the night sky,
- Protect soundscapes,
- Install night sky friendly lighting, and
- Expand the bike trails.

1.7 IMPACT TOPICS

1.7.1 Topics Retained for Further Analysis

Impact topics for this plan were identified on the basis of: (1) federal laws, regulations, and orders; (2) NPS Management Policies 2006; (3) NPS staff knowledge of natural, cultural, and scenic resources at Yellowstone National Park; and (4) comments received during public scoping. The impact topics that received further analysis in this EA are listed below. For each of these topics, the baseline conditions within the affected project area are described in Chapter 3, Affected Environment. This information was used to analyze impacts on the current conditions of the project area in Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences, which provides analysis for direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts for each of the three alternatives.

- Geology and Soils
- Wetlands
- Vegetation and Rare Plants
- Water Resources/Water Quality
- Wildlife
- Special Status Species
- Climate Change
- Archeological Resources
- Ethnographic Resources
- Historic Structures
- Cultural Landscapes
- Visitor Use and Experience
- Scenic Resources (includes night skies)
- Natural Soundscapes
- Human Health and Safety
- Park Operations

1.7.2 Topics Dismissed from Further Analysis

Air Quality

The National Park Service has a responsibility to protect air quality under both the 1916 Organic Act and the Clean Air Act. The 1963 Clean Air Act, as amended (42 USC 7401 et seq.) requires federal land managers to protect park air quality while the National Park Service 2006 Management Policies address the need to analyze air quality during park planning. The Clean Air Act requires superintendents to take actions consistent with their affirmative responsibilities to protect air quality related values in Class I areas. Class I areas include all National Park Service units designated as national parks with more than 6,000 acres and all national wilderness areas with more than 5,000 acres that were in existence on August 7, 1977, and any other area redesignated as Class I by the governing state or Native American authority. The act also establishes a national goal of preventing any future and remedying any existing man-made visibility impairment in Class I areas. Yellowstone National Park extends into five counties in three states, including Park and Teton in Wyoming, Park and Gallatin in Montana and Fremont in Idaho. None of the five counties have air pollution levels that persistently exceed the national ambient air quality standards and/or designated as in nonattainment status (EPA, 2011). Impacts on air quality would be short-term and negligible in a local and regional context.

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice analyses determine whether a proposed action would have “disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects...on minority populations and low-income populations.” The National Park Service and other federal agencies have determined that a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and low-income populations means an adverse effect that would result in either of the following two scenarios: (1) The effect is predominately borne by a minority population and/or a low-income population; and (2) The effect will be suffered by the minority population and/or low-income population and is appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effect that will be suffered by the non-minority population and/or non-low-income population. No aspect of any alternative of the Lake Comprehensive Plan would result in disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low income populations; therefore environmental justice is not considered in this environmental assessment.

Floodplains

NPS Management Policies (2006) Section 9.1.1.5 Siting Facilities to Avoid Natural Hazards states, “The Service will strive to site facilities where they will not be damaged or destroyed by natural physical processes.” The policies state that natural hazard areas include floodplains and park development that is damaged or destroyed by a hazardous or catastrophic natural event will be thoroughly evaluated for relocation or replacement by new construction at a different location free from natural hazards.” The Lake Survey Area is outside of the 100 year and 500 year floodplain. Due to topography and hydrological regimes, it has been determined that the survey area is outside of the 500-year floodplain. None of the proposed project locations fall within 100 or 500 year floodplains.

Hydrothermal Resources

None of the projects identified in this plan will affect hydrothermal resources; therefore, hydrothermal resources were rejected as an impact topic. No hydrothermal resources exist in the project area.

Prime and Unique Farmlands

In August 1980, the Council on Environmental Quality directed federal agencies to assess the effect of their actions on farmland soils classified as prime or unique by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Prime or unique farmland is defined as soil that produces general crops such as common foods, forage, fiber, and oil seed; unique farmland produces specialty crops such as fruits, vegetables, and nuts. Prime and unique farmlands were dismissed as an impact topic because none of the soils in the Lake Area are classified as prime and unique farmlands.

Wilderness

In Yellowstone, 2,022,221 acres (91% of the park) are considered wilderness; the remaining 9% is administrative facilities, developed areas, and roads. Wilderness areas in the park are classified as "recommended" for wilderness designation (2,016,181 acres) or "potential" wilderness (6,040 acres) (NPS 1971). NPS Management Policies (2006) state that all wilderness categories, including suitable, study, proposed, recommended, and designated, shall be managed for the preservation of wilderness characteristics and that NPS management decisions pertaining to lands qualifying as wilderness will be made in expectation of eventual wilderness designation. All management decisions affecting these areas are to apply the concept of "minimum requirements." The project area does not fall within the proposed wilderness area, nor does it affect the proposed wilderness area.