



Jenny Lake Renewal Plan / Environmental Assessment



Dear Friends,

The National Park Service is reviewing trail conditions and related facilities in the Jenny Lake area and preparing a long-range plan for renewal in one of the most popular day-use areas in the park. The nodes that will be considered in planning include: 1) South Jenny Lake, 2) Hidden Falls/Inspiration Point, 3) String Lake Outlet, and 4) Jenny Lake Overlook. The long-range plan will be accompanied by an environmental assessment.

The desired conditions we will be considering when developing the plan include: retaining the rich historic character of the area; expanding interpretation of Jenny Lake's cultural history, natural resources, and wilderness values; preserving and enhancing the natural resources; improving route finding; and improving the overall visitor experience.

Please review the information in this scoping letter to learn more about the Jenny Lake Renewal planning effort. To share your thoughts, ideas, and concerns with us, please comment electronically via this website. This website will also include regular updates on the project, including public involvement opportunities. Your comments will be most helpful to us if we receive them by September 15, 2012. Please include your mailing address if you wish to receive future mailings related to this planning effort.

Thank you for your interest in Grand Teton National Park. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Mary Gibson Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive.

*Mary Gibson Scott, Superintendent
Grand Teton National Park*

Project Background

The historic Jenny Lake area is one of the most popular day-use areas in the park, attracting approximately 1.8 million park visitors each year. Situated at the base of the majestic Teton Range, it is located approximately 16 miles north of Grand Teton National Park's southern boundary. Both visitor information and services are provided in the Jenny Lake area in addition to access to numerous trails.

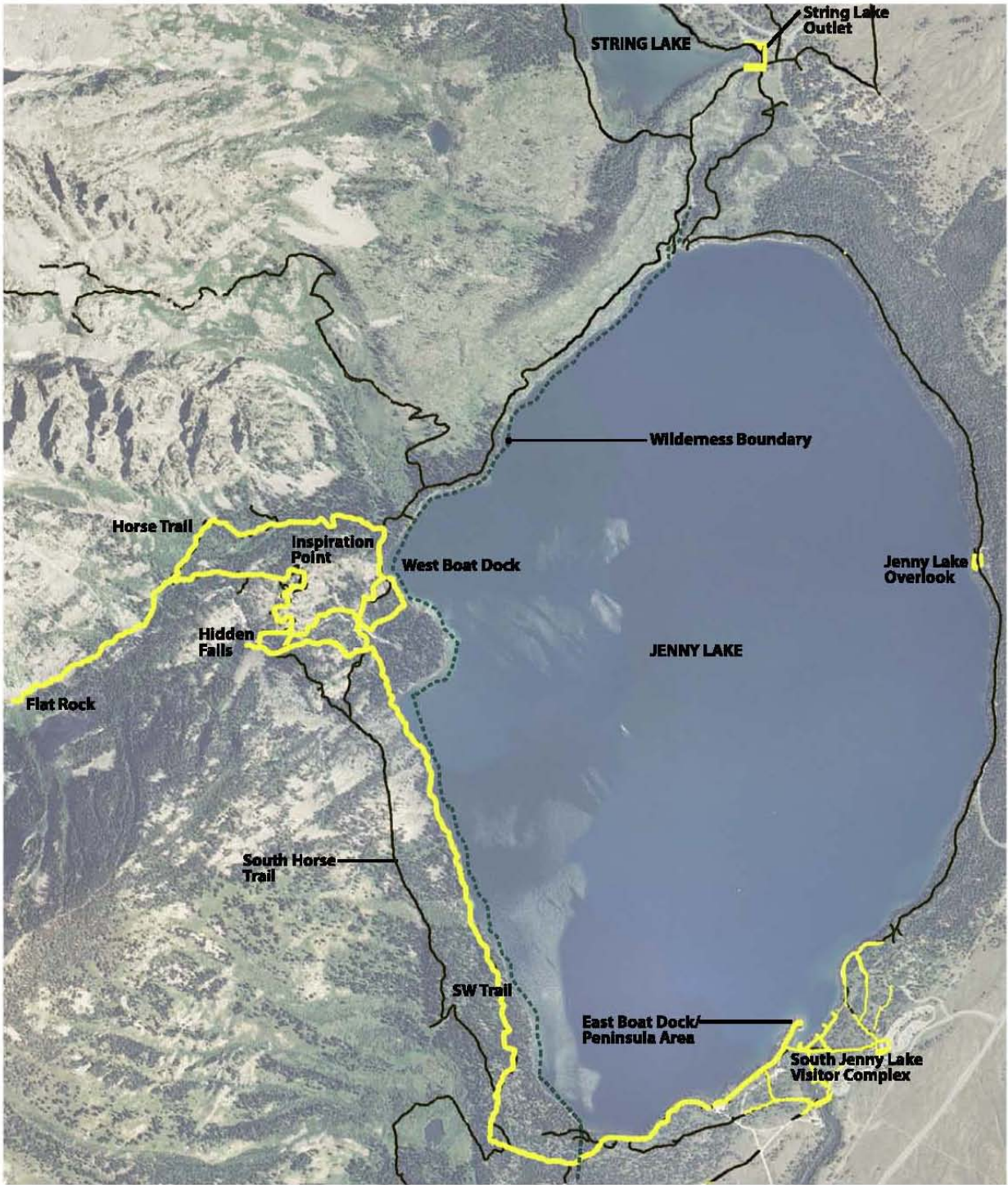
The Jenny Lake area has a rich cultural history dating back thousands of years. There are currently three properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places located in the Jenny Lake Area: Jenny Lake Boat Concession Facilities, the Jenny Lake Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp, and the Jenny Lake Ranger Station. Portions of the trail are considered historic but have not been formally documented as such.

The area's trails provide abundant opportunities for hiking along the valley floor as well as more strenuous hikes into Grand Teton National Park's backcountry. The trails on the west side of Jenny Lake are in an area of Recommended Wilderness.

The recommendation that the area be officially designated as wilderness was transmitted to Congress in 1978. In accordance with law and policy, these lands are managed in the same manner as designated wilderness, so that if they become Designated Wilderness, their wilderness character is preserved.

The key nodes to be addressed in the plan are linked by the Jenny Lake Loop Trail system (Figure 1). For decades, visitors to the Jenny Lake area have gathered in limited use areas and on narrow trails creating crowding and severe deterioration of the main trail corridors and viewing areas. In many areas, the trails were built in the 1930s and were not designed to accommodate today's large number of visitors. Examples of issues in the project area include: poor drainage and steep pitches resulting in continuous erosion; overcrowding on trails and viewing areas resulting in trampled vegetation and bare ground; challenging route finding in the frontcountry and backcountry areas; and very limited interpretation of the rich cultural and natural history. These conditions substantially reduce the quality of the visitor experience as well as degrade the resources.





Jenny Lake Renewal Project

Grand Teton National Park August 14, 2012



Project Area

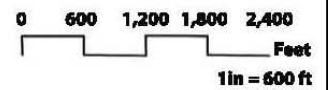


Figure 1. Key nodes for the Jenny Lake Renewal Project.

Issues and Opportunities

This project will completely renew the Jenny Lake trail system, Inspiration Point and Hidden Falls overlooks, and make improvements in the South Jenny Lake Visitor Complex, Jenny Lake Overlook (on the scenic loop), and String Lake Outlet. Specific conditions that need to be addressed for each of these key nodes are identified below.

South Jenny Lake Visitor Complex:

South Jenny Lake provides visitor services, including a visitor center, campground, store, and concessioner activities. There is an extensive network of pedestrian pathways between the parking lot, lake, campground, and multiuse pathway. The area can be difficult to find one's way around due to redundant and poorly signed pedestrian walkways leading to the Jenny Lake trail, boat dock, and other facilities. Specific conditions to be addressed at this node include:

- Difficult route finding with confusing trail junctions, poorly designed trailheads, and user created trails
- Confusing concessioner boat launch staging
- Crumbling asphalt and retaining walls on frontcountry trails
- Failing Exum Bridge
- User created trails
- Erosion, compacted soil, and bare ground
- Non-native vegetation
- Outdated water and wastewater system



Bridge to east boat dock



User created trail at South Jenny Lake

Hidden Falls / Inspiration Point:

Jenny Lake Boating brings visitors from the South Jenny Lake complex to the west shore boat launch each year. From there, visitors are encouraged to explore Hidden Falls, Inspiration Point, and Cascade Canyon, all which are located in the park's Recommended Wilderness. Combined, these destinations see over 200,000 visitors annually from June to September and are heavily impacted due to this extensive use. Massive erosion and denuded soils have created tripping hazards and other unsafe walking conditions for visitors resulting in many injuries each summer, as well as degradation of natural resources. Specific conditions to be addressed at this node include:

- Confusing trail junction and boat launch staging
- Trail drainage issues causing serious erosion
- Rugged trail conditions (exposed rock / roots)
- Aging bridges
- Heavily impacted Hidden Falls viewing area
- Cascade Canyon Horse Trail does not meet current day trail standards (steep grade)
- Erosion, compacted soil, and bare ground



West boat launch staging



Rugged trail conditions on the way to Hidden Falls/
Inspiration Point caused by erosion



Trail conditions near the west boat launch

String Lake Outlet:

The String Lake Outlet area is one of the park's most popular trailheads with access to Jenny and Leigh Lakes, and Paintbrush, Hanging, and Cascade Canyons.

Specific conditions to be addressed at this node include:

- Erosion, bare ground, and compacted soil
- User created trails
- Unnecessary asphalt patches



String Lake Outlet



Bare ground along the String Lake Outlet area



Social trails and compacted and eroded shoreline along the String Lake Outlet

Jenny Lake Overlook:

Nestled on the east side of Jenny Lake, the overlook offers a spectacular view of the lake, Teewinot Mountain, and Cascade Canyon. While there, many visitors wish to access the lakeshore and begin the descent along the paved trail. Unfortunately, the asphalt is beginning to degrade and major structural retaining walls are failing. These walls support both the trail and parking lot above and are critical to the sustainability of this overlook. Specific conditions to be addressed at this node include:

- Failed retaining walls
- User created trails
- Erosion, bare ground, and compacted soil
- Steep trail grades



Social trails leading in both directions from the base of the lake access trail at Jenny Lake Overlook



View from Jenny Lake Overlook

Goals of the Plan

To reduce the impacts described above the Park has developed a series of goals that will be used to develop the rehabilitation plans for the key nodes around Jenny Lake:

- Resource protection: Restore, protect, and enhance the resources of the Jenny Lake area.
- Route finding: Implement a user friendly system to better facilitate visitor safety, circulation, and access.
- Trail character: Create a safe and sustainable trail system while maintaining its historic character.
- Interpretation: Facilitate intellectual and emotional connections to cultural and natural resources.
- Visitor experience: Create connections for visitors that foster a sense of wilderness stewardship.

Commenting on the Plan

Scoping is done in the initial phase of a project to seek input from a variety of sources. Scoping provides you an opportunity to give us your suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding this area of the park as we begin developing the plan. The input will be used during preparation of the EA to identify issues, areas requiring additional study, and topics to be analyzed.

If you wish to comment on the project, you may submit your comments on this website, or you can submit written comments to: Grand Teton National Park, Attention: Margaret Wilson, P.O. Drawer 170, Moose, WY 83012.

You may respond anonymously or you may include your name, address, and e-mail address (if applicable) in your comment. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The following are a few ideas to keep in mind as you develop your comments on this proposal:

1. Do you have any ideas to share about issues/concerns, or are there any issues/concerns about the project that you think we should consider?
2. Are there any alternatives that you think should be considered?
3. Do you have any other comments and suggestions for us to consider in the EA?

The deadline for comments is September 15, 2012.

After the public scoping period has ended, park planners will analyze ideas and concerns submitted by the public and other affected public agencies. Those comments will be carefully considered as topics to be addressed in the Jenny Lake Renewal plan.