Pinnacles National Monument

Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment Newsletter #4 Executive Summary, October 2012



Dear Friends of Pinnacles National Monument,

It is with great pleasure that we submit to you this summary of the *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment of Pinnacles National Monument* (GMP/EA). This plan will guide our management of the monument with a 15-20 year vision for its operation and protection.

However, before the GMP/EA can be completed, it is important that we receive comments on this draft. Please take the time to review the draft and provide us with any comments you may have.

The *Draft General Management Plan* offers four alternative approaches to public use and enjoyment of the monument, protection of natural and cultural resources, and the overall management of this unique unit of the National Park System. The environmental consequences section of the document provides an understanding of the effect each alternative may have on the environment.

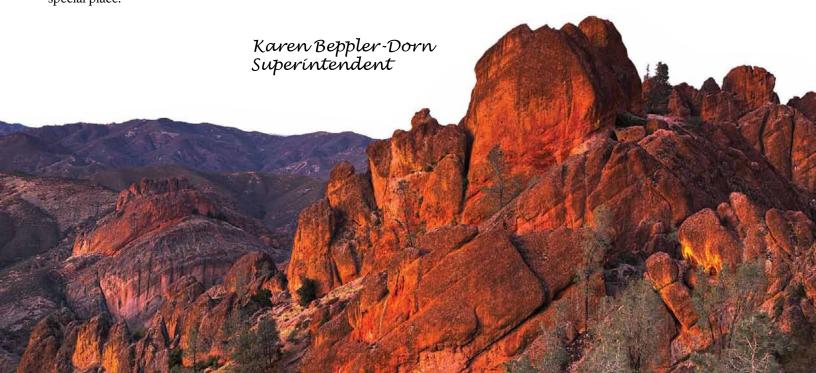
This plan represents your involvement and input into planning processes. The preferred alternative addresses concepts many of you proposed or supported.

Your input into this plan is important and will make it a better guide for the monument's future. You are invited to attend public meetings where you can discuss with the planning team any questions you may have as well as provide public comments. The meeting dates and locations are listed in the back of this newsletter. You can submit comments on the GMP/EA online through the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment System (PEPC) at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/PINN. An electronic public comment form is provided through this website. The public comment period for this draft GMP/EA will extend through January 11, 2013.

Our planning effort has benefited from your participation and involvement. We thank you for taking the time to make this the best plan possible for such a special place.



The Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment is available for public review. Please see the back page for the public meeting schedule and page 2 for how to comment on the document.



We'd Like to Hear From You!

This Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment (GMP/EA) has been distributed to agencies, interested organizations, and individuals who requested the document for review and comment. There will be several opportunities to share your thoughts and ideas with us. It is important that we receive your comments on the Draft GMP/EA.

How to Receive a Copy of the GMP

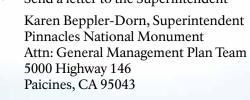
If you requested a printed copy or a CD of the full GMP (approximately 325 pages), it will be mailed to you. If you did not request a copy of the GMP and would like to receive one, limited copies will be available at the park and at the public meetings.

You can also access the GMP online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/pinn.

How to Comment on the GMP

You can provide your comments through several ways:

- Attend a public meeting (see back page for schedule)
- Fill out the electronic comment form at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/pinn (this is our preferred method of submitting written comments)





Comments will be accepted through January 11th, 2013.

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.



Introduction

Pinnacles National Monument is located in the southern portion of the Gabilan Mountains in California's central Coast Ranges. Pinnacles lies about 40 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and about 80 miles south of the San Francisco Bay Area. The monument was set aside in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt under the Antiquities Act to preserve and protect the remnants of ancient volcanic processes that formed a portion of the Gabilan Mountain Range.

The last comprehensive planning effort for Pinnacles was the 1975 Master Plan. Since then, Pinnacles has grown from 16,271 acres to over 27,000 acres. In 2006, the monument acquired the 2,000 acre Pinnacles Ranch, along with its resources, infrastructure, recreational opportunities, and management challenges. Other changes include the reintroduction of the endangered California condor and a related rise in the monument's regional and national visibility. Substantial floods have destroyed many facilities, including the camping facilities on the west side. Development of housing and maintenance facilities on the east side displaced traditional picnicking areas. There are transportation and parking challenges today, and many facilities and services are inadequate to meet visitor demand and monument operations.

Since the 1975 Master Plan, the population of Hollister, San Benito County's largest community, has more than doubled. The population of Soledad, the closest city on the west side of the monument in Monterey County, has also doubled. The region has been changing, from a quiet ranching and agricultural-based economy to a more urban and technology-based economy. A new general management plan (GMP), reflecting contemporary and future issues and challenges facing Pinnacles, is essential.

This Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment (GMP/EA) was developed in consultation with NPS staff and program managers, local communities, government agencies, California Indian tribes, stakeholder groups, and individuals. The GMP articulates a vision and overall management philosophy for Pinnacles that will guide decision-making for the forseeable future. The GMP includes management strategies for resource protection and preservation, potential visitor use opportunities, interpretation and education, use of facilities and the need for new facilities, and long-term operations and management of Pinnacles.

Photos (left, top to bottom): 1. Early car-camping at Pinnacles, ca. 1920. NPS photo. 2. Ensatina salamander. Photo by Paul G. Johnson. 3. Tribal work day, looking at soaproot. NPS photo.







Issues

The general public, NPS staff, and representatives from various organizations and county, state, and federal agencies identified issues and concerns about monument management during the scoping phase (early information gathering) for this general management plan. An issue is an opportunity, conflict, or problem regarding the use or management of public lands. Issues and concerns raised during public scoping generally involved suggestions for the types and levels of services and activities offered at the monument (particularly interpretive and educational programs). Many identified a desire to ensure a high degree of protection of the monument's sensitive resources. The GMP alternatives provide strategies for addressing these issues within the context of the monument's purpose, significance, and special mandates.

NATURAL RESOURCES

- Defined priorities and management direction for natural resources protection, research and monitoring is needed while addressing the balance between visitor enjoyment and natural resource protection. Management guidance from desired conditions, management zoning and indicators and standards for user capacity is needed.
- A comprehensive management approach is needed that addresses the desire for protection and restoration of sensitive plant and wildlife species and eradication of nonnative invasive species.
- of sensitive plant and wilding species and eradication of nonnative invasive species.

 The balance between existing historic and visitor-serving structures in wetland, floodplain and fire-prone areas, and the health of the riparian environment needs to be addressed.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Lands acquired since the Master Plan added cultural resources to the monument's responsibilities. The appropriate balance between protection of historic resources and visitor uses, resource management practices, and natural processes needs to be examined.
- Priorities and management direction for cultural resources protection, research and monitoring need to be defined. The balance between visitor use and enjoyment and resource protection also needs to be addressed. Management guidance from desired conditions, management zoning, and indicators and standards for user capacity is needed.

WILDERNESS

 Over 16,000 of the monument's 27,000 acres are in designated wilderness. A vision for wilderness preservation needs to be established that will be addressed later in more detail in the monument's wilderness plan. This includes determining the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences in wilderness and the appropriate balance of wilderness values with other public values.

CLIMATE CHANGE

 Global climate change can be expected to have direct and indirect impacts on Pinnacles National Monument, including natural and cultural resources, visitor use, facilities, administration and operations.

COLLECTIONS

 The monument has been implementing recommendations from its 2005 Museum

Management Plan. Several recommendations still need resolution including professional upkeep and improved storage of collections to meet NPS standards

and a plan for collections development following the updated Scope of Collections direction.

VISITOR USE AND FACILITIES

Changing demographics and appropriate uses and facilities to serve visitors throughout the monument need to be addressed. Specific issues include determining the desired visitor experience throughout the monument (east side, west side, High Peaks, Bear Gulch, bottomlands, campground, backcountry, ormass)

wilderness).

- Visitor services and opportunities need to be addressed.
- Appropriate uses in different parts of the monument, potential conflicts among these uses, potential resource impacts, and visitor safety need to be addressed.
- The appropriateness of the current location/facility of the east side visitor center needs to be addressed. Law enforcement and visitor safety needs need to be identified, considering infrastructure, access, and staffing limitations. In addition, adaptive reuse of historic structures needs to be considered.
- Appropriate visitor orientation needs to be addressed, including opportunities, interpretive themes, resource education opportunities within the monument and in



gateway communities, in a manner that includes the new lands and addresses the changing demographics.

- The appropriate long term management approach for camping at Pinnacles needs to be determined. Pinnacles Campground, formerly privately owned and managed, is now within the monument boundary. The appropriate balance between protection of natural resources at the campground and visitor use needs to be explored.
- The reduction of crowding at popular locations needs to be addressed, along with opportunities for dispersal or areas where increased use is appropriate.
- Indicators and standards for user capacity to are needed to define the types and levels of visitor and other public uses that can be accommodated while sustaining the desired resource and social conditions for each management zone. Monitoring strategies will be developed to test the effectiveness of management actions and to provide a basis for informed adaptive management of public use.

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

- Access to both sides of the monument is limited by the amount of available parking. Current parking and facilities cannot accommodate peak levels of visitation. Alternatives for parking and access need to be considered and the appropriate balance between visitor access and the protection of resources needs to be determined.
- The monument's trail system provides a variety of opportunities, but does not provide access to newer lands. The enhancement of this system, including the integration of new lands and the types of abilities and uses that should be accomodated needs to be addressed, including consideration of Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), differing levels of trail difficulty and length, and equestrian use.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL FACILITIES

• The appropriate levels of development need to be determined and areas appropriate for administration and operations activities need to be identified. Removal of facilities and infrastructure, to support effective operations, improve facility condition index and invest available funds wisely, need to be examined. Long-term sustainability and cost-effective approaches to providing for office / administrative space, law enforcement operations, emergency service operations, interpretive operations, resource management, maintenance, meeting and training space, and housing need to be considered.

LAND USE AND REGIONAL ISSUES

- An examination is needed of how the monument can work with nearby communities to promote understanding of the Gabilan Mountain ecoregion and its resources and how to find common ground in regional stewardship of ecological, scenic and monument wilderness values.
- The GMP explores a range of management approaches including partnerships with surrounding neighbors, communities, local agencies, associated tribes, and organizations to protect the rural character and benefits of open working landscapes.

The GMP is based on an analysis of existing and predicted natural and cultural resource conditions, visitor experiences, environmental impacts, and costs.

It primarily provides a framework for administration and management and a vision to be realized through future actions. This document also includes an environmental assessment (EA), which considers at a general qualitative level the impacts that each of the alternatives could have on the monument environment. The EA sets the framework for future compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historical Preservation Act (NHPA) for the monument. It also assists decision makers and the public in assessing the relative merits and effects of the alternatives.



Alternatives

Four alternatives for future management of Pinnacles National Monument are presented in the GMP. The alternatives, which are consistent with the monument's purpose, significance, and special mandates, present different ways to manage resources and visitor use and improve facilities and infrastructure. These four alternatives represent the range of ideas the public and NPS staff have identified regarding natural and cultural resource conditions, visitor use and experience conditions, and management at Pinnacles National Monument.

Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, presents a continuation of current management direction and is required under NEPA. The action alternatives are Alternative B: Emphasize Backcountry Experience, Alternative C: Expand Visitor Experiences, and Alternative D: Link People and Resources (the preferred alternative).

Several other actions and alternatives were also considered, but were eventually dismissed from further analysis. These actions and alternatives, along with the rationale for their dismissal, are described near the end of Chapter 3 Alternatives.

Management zones are a component of the alternatives. They describe a range of desired conditions for resources and visitor experiences and/or management approaches to be achieved and maintained in particular areas. These zones form the basis for the alternatives and depending on the action alternative are applied to different geographic areas of Pinnacles. The five management zones are primitive, semi-primitive, frontcountry, cultural interpretation, and special research. Each zone description includes a zone concept, desired natural and cultural resource conditions, visitor experience, facilities, access and transportation.

Alternative A, No Action, (Continue Current

Management) would continue existing management, programming, facilities, staffing, and funding at current levels. The "no action" alternative provides a baseline for evaluating changes and impacts in other alternatives.

Resource Management: Existing natural resource management activities would continue, including the raptor monitoring program, re-establishment of the California condor, and removal of nonnative invasive species. Cultural resources would be documented as needed; however, Pinnacles would continue to lack in-park cultural resource expertise, resulting in continued dependence on regional staff to assist the monument in maintaining a minimum level of cultural resource management and compliance.

Visitor Experience: Current recreational opportunities, including hiking, camping, picnicking, rock climbing, and viewing scenery would continue. Current interpretive services would be provided. Limited education programs would continue as funding allows.

Facilities: Existing facilities and trails would be maintained.

Alternative B, Emphasize Backcountry Experience,

would provide visitors with high quality backcountry experiences, including solitude, quiet, and immersion in natural settings. Natural and cultural resources and visitor use opportunities would be managed in an integrated fashion for protection, restoration, and maintenance of natural and cultural resources and backcountry experiences, in cooperation with the surrounding communities and neighbors.

Resource Management: Natural resources protection would emphasize conserving and restoring natural functions, protecting watershed values, and protecting sensitive wildlife areas with a focus on providing visitors with a backcountry experience where natural processes predominate. Cultural resources would continue to be protected.



Condor. Photo by Gavin Emmons © 2011.

Actions

Common to All

through legislation.

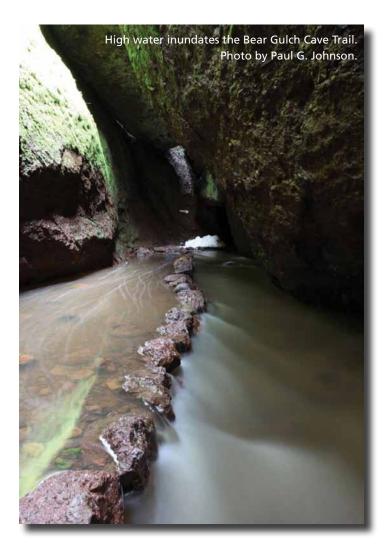
four alternatives the existing monument boundary would be maintained, and would include potential future minor administrative

Alternatives

are management actions or guidance that would apply to all the alternatives. This section is included before the detailed descriptions of the four alternatives. Under all the monument and are not being used for monument operations could be removed.

Visitor Experience: Visitors would be provided with a range of high quality backcountry experiences, including opportunities for solitude within natural settings. Visitor use would be dispersed. Traditional recreational uses would continue. Some new trails would be built to provide access to new areas within the monument including the newly added lands. Small scale interpretive and educational facilities and guided programs would be provided. Formal interpretation and education would be focused on wilderness values.

Facilities: Facilities would be minimized and located in existing developed areas. On the east side, facilities would be concentrated in the campground area. A small new visitor center would be constructed to replace the current visitor center/campground store when the current structure reaches the end of its useful life. There would be an emphasis on determining whether infrastructure located in the primitive zone should be removed. The Chaparral parking lot, North Chalone Peak, the bottom-lands and riparian areas along Sandy Creek would be restored. The Moses Spring area would also be studied to determine how to improve natural functions.

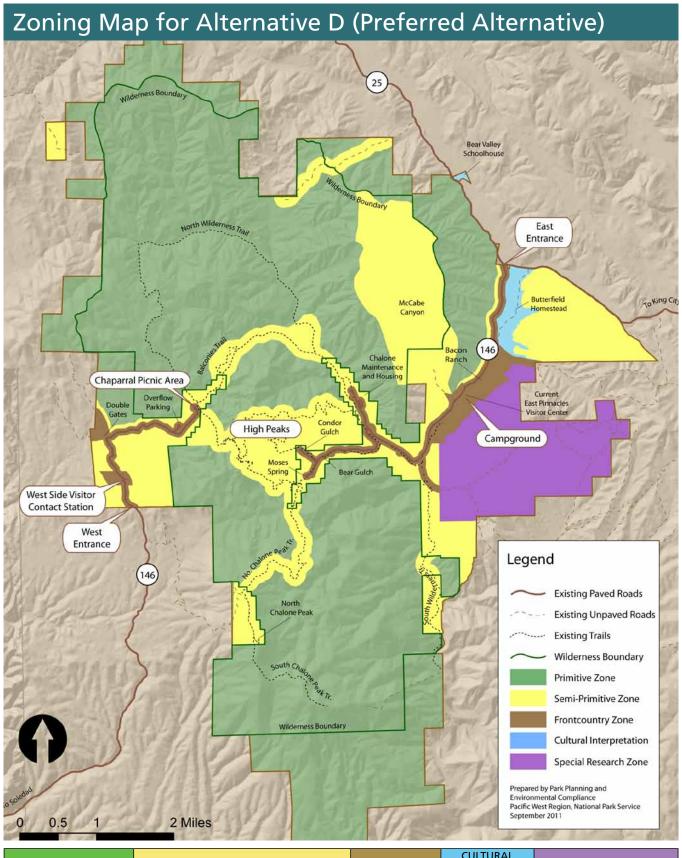




Alternative C, Expand Visitor Experiences, would provide an expanded array of visitor use opportunities, including recreation, interpretation, and education. Opportunities would be provided on the new lands and other areas that receive lower visitor use. A greater diversity of activities and groups would be encouraged.

Resource Management: Natural resources protection would emphasize the importance of a natural setting and resource integrity for the visitor experience. Cultural resources would be protected and managed with a focus on providing visitors with opportunities to experience the broader history of the region.

Visitor Experience: Pinnacles would reach out to a broad audience by offering a wider range of recreational opportunities and learning experiences. New visitor uses like equestrian use and backcountry camping would be provided where such uses do not detract from resource or social values. New trails would be built to provide a wide variety of experiences. Additional interpretive and educational facilities and guided programs would also be provided. The monument would increase partnership efforts and outreach programs focused on visitor use stewardship opportunities.



PRIMITIVE	SEMI-PRIMITIVE	FRONTCOUNTRY	CULTURAL INTERPRETATION	SPECIAL RESEARCH
primarily to preserve the four qualities of wilderness character; untrammeled, naturalness, undeveloped,	designated wilderness, this zone is managed, like the Primitive Zone, to preserve the four qualities of wilderness character, but can	visitor access, education, recreation, and	focused on the preservation, protection, and interpretation	This zone is managed to protect and promote research that improves the survival of the federally endangered California condor and to
unconfined recreation.		well as park	,	provide areas for undisturbed research.

Facilities: Facilities would be focused on supporting an expanded array of visitor use opportunities. A larger visitor center would be constructed between the campground and Highway 25 entrance to replace the current visitor center/campground store when the current structure reaches the end of its useful life. On the east side, most visitor facilities would be concentrated in the campground area.

Alternative D, Link People and Resources (preferred alternative), would engage a broad range of visitors in the enjoyment, understanding, and stewardship of natural and cultural resources and values of the Gabilan Mountains ecoregion. Pinnacles would focus on ways to connect diverse audiences and resources, to acknowledge the interrelationship between natural and cultural resources, and to protect, preserve, and restore ecological communities and processes.

Resource Management: Natural resources would be protected to a high degree and natural ecosystem functions would be restored when practicable and beneficial. Natural resources protection would be enhanced by a strong education and research emphasis. Cultural resources would be managed to protect and interpret their significance, connect those resources within their broader regional history, and to provide visitors with opportunities to experience and learn about the interrelationship between humans and the environment. The monument would increase partnership efforts and outreach programs focused on regional protection of significant resources, habitat connectivity, and open rural working landscapes.

Visitor Experience: Pinnacles would connect visitors, communities, and resources in a variety of ways. New opportunities, such as backcountry camping, would be provided where these uses do not detract from resource

or social values. New trails could be built to provide a wide variety of experiences. Interpretation and education would focus on science and history learning. There would be opportunities to learn about the monument's significant resources and its broader context within the Gabilan Mountains ecoregion. The monument could participate in developing and staffing regional visitor and interpretation centers.

Facilities: Facilities would be used to support increased visitor understanding of natural and cultural resources and/or would serve management, operational, and administrative functions. On the east side, most visitor facilities would be concentrated in the campground area. A new visitor center would be built in the vicinity of the existing visitor center to replace the current visitor center/campground store when the current structure reaches the end of its useful life.

Environmental Consequences

The potential effects of the four alternatives are analyzed for impacts to visitor use, natural resources, wilderness, cultural resources, NPS operations, and the socioeconomic environment. This analysis is the basis for comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives. Impacts are described in terms of whether they are beneficial or adverse. If adverse, their intensity and duration are described. In addition, cumulative impacts are described. Cumulative impacts result from the incremental (i.e., additive) impact of an action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of who undertakes such actions. Finally, conclusions for each topic area are provided, comparing each action alternative to the no-action alternative.



SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

The following discussion summarizes the impacts of all alternatives considered, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Impacts from Alternative A

Implementation of alternative A would generally result in minor to moderate adverse impacts on natural and cultural resources from continued activities associated with visitor use, infrastructure maintenance, and NPS operations. Continuing resource management activities would result in long-term benefits to resources. Impacts to wilderness qualities would continue to be minor to moderate. Some existing impacts on the untrammeled and the undeveloped qualities of wilderness, such as the pig fence and reservoir, also have a beneficial effect on the natural quality of wilderness. Implementation of alternative A would not substantially change visitor services or programs and a full spectrum of recreation opportunities would continue resulting in overall long-term benefits to visitor use and opportunities. The monument would continue to face minor to moderate impacts to operational efficiency and efficacy. This alternative would also contribute minor adverse impacts to the socioeconomic environment, along with beneficial impacts.

Impacts from Alternative B

Alternative B would provide the monument with a wilderness and backcountry focus, resulting in numerous beneficial impacts for visitors seeking natural quiet and solitude and for natural resource management. Visitors would benefit from an expanded trail system, providing access into new areas, and a replacement east side visitor facility and day use area. Natural resources, cultural resources, and NPS operations would benefit greatly from increased staffing in several program areas. Adverse impacts to cultural resources would result from removal of the North Chalone Peak fire lookout. Wilderness qualities would

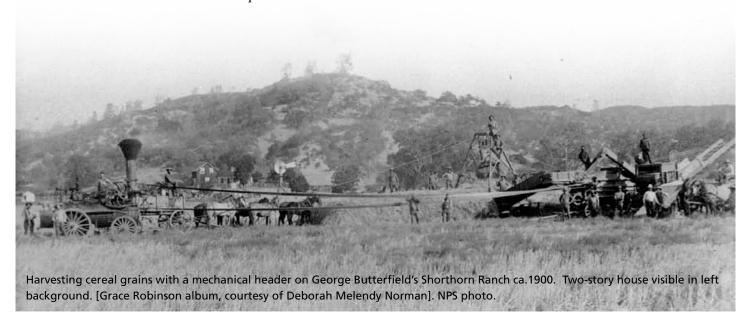
benefit, especially due to the removal of some development and more opportunities for solitude as more areas are zoned for such purposes. Visitors would also experience some adverse impacts from removal of two parking areas.

Impacts from Alternative C

Implementation of alternative C would result in many beneficial impacts to visitors. The expanded trail system, new access opportunities, and east side facilities described in alternative B would also be provided in this alternative. In addition, equestrian opportunities, west-side camping, and backcountry camping would increase the breadth of opportunities available to visitors. Natural and cultural resources would benefit from increased staffing and restoration efforts, but minor to moderate adverse impacts would occur with the addition of new facilities throughout the monument. Wilderness could benefit from the provision of backcountry camping opportunities and new access opportunities. This alternative brings the greatest amount of disturbance due to new construction and access, creating the greatest amount of long-term and short-term adverse impacts to resources.

Impacts from Alternative D

Adverse impacts resulting from the implementation of alternative D would be very similar to alternative C with some key differences. Equestrian uses would not occur, eliminating the adverse and beneficial impacts associated with this activity. Also, removal of the North Chalone Peak fire lookout could occur under this alternative, with the same impacts as described in alternative B. The beneficial impacts resulting from new opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation due to backcountry camping and enhanced access, increased staffing in multiple programs, and improved visitor facilities on the east side would be nearly the same as those described under alternative C.





Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The environmentally preferred alternative is "the alternative that promotes the national environmental policy expressed in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Sec. 101(b))." After the environmental consequences of the alternatives were analyzed, each alternative was evaluated to see how well the goals from NEPA section 101(b) are met. Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act" states that it is the continuing responsibility of the federal government to

- 1. fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- 2. assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- 3. attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- 4. preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage; and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and a variety of individual choices;
- achieve a balance between population and resource use which would permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
- 6. enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The Council of Environmental Quality states that the environmentally preferable alternative is "the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources (46 FR 18026 – 46 FR 18038)." According to

the NPS NEPA Handbook (DO-12), through identification of the environmentally preferable alternative, the NPS decision-makers and the public are clearly faced with the relative merits of choices and must clearly state through the decision-making process the values and policies used in reaching final decisions.

The environmentally preferable alternative for Pinnacles National Monument is Alternative B: Emphasize Backcountry Experience. This alternative best satisfies the national environmental goals—it provides the highest level of protection of natural and cultural resources while concurrently providing for a wide range of neutral and beneficial uses of the environment. This alternative maintains an environment that supports a diversity and variety of individual choices, and it integrates resource protection with an appropriate and preexisting range of visitor uses and understanding.

This alternative surpasses the other alternatives in realizing the full range of the Section 101 national environmental policy goals.

Alternative D, Link People and Resources, the preferred alternative, also meets many of the criteria. The enhancement of educational opportunities, research, and restoration of resources at the monument would result in a better understanding of the monument's resources, thus better equipping the monument in fulfilling criteria 3, 4, and 5.

Implementation

The implementation of the proposed action will depend on future funding, NPS priorities, and partnership efforts. The approval of a GMP does not guarantee that funding and staffing needed to implement the plan will be forthcoming. Full implementation of the GMP could be many years into the future.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

How to Comment	2
Introduction	3
Alternatives	6
Environmental Consequences	9
Environmentally Preferable Alternative	11

Public Meeting and Community Events Schedule

Please join us at one of our public meetings to learn more about the GMP, talk with park staff, and share your comments.

Community BBQ/Potluck and Presentation

November 13, Tuesday, 5:30 – 8:00 PMPM Paicines: Jefferson School, 221 Old Hernandez Rd.

Community breakfast with PINN Superintendent Karen Beppler-Dorn

November 14, Wednesday, 7:30 – 9:00 AM Tres Pinos: Flap Jacks, 6881 Airline Hwy.

Presentation and Open House

November 14, Wednesday, 6:00 – 8:00 PM Hollister: San Benito County Library, Barbara Room, 470 5th St.

Presentation and Open House

November 15, Thursday, 6:30 – 8:30 PM Soledad: Soledad High School, Mission Room, 425 Gabilan Dr.