

Environmental Assessment Process Overview:

- Public Scoping
- Preparation of Plan/Environmental Assessment (EA)
- Public Review of Plan/EA
- Analysis of Public Comments
- Decision Document

Public Comments During Scoping

Your comments will help identify issues, concerns, and other alternatives to evaluate in the EA. There will be another opportunity for you to comment when the plan/EA is completed. Please post your scoping comments online at:

***[www.parkplanning.nps.gov/
SwiftcurrentBridge](http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/SwiftcurrentBridge)***

or

Send comments to:

***Superintendent Glacier National Park
Swiftcurrent Bridge EA
PO Box 128
West Glacier, MT 59936
Phone: 406-888-7901***

No public meetings are scheduled at this time..

Please provide comments by
December 10, 2012

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Glacier National Park
P.O. Box 128
West Glacier, MT 59936



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
Montana
Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park

PUBLIC SCOPING

For a Proposal to Replace
the Swiftcurrent Bridge in
Many Glacier

***ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT***



Swiftcurrent Bridge, 2011, with Swiftcurrent Lake and the historic Many Glacier Hotel in the background. NPS photo.

November 2012

Background—The Swiftcurrent Bridge was built in 1930 as part of the Babb-Many Glacier Road, which leads from Babb, MT to Glacier National Park’s scenic Many Glacier Valley. Spanning Swiftcurrent Creek at its outlet from Swiftcurrent Lake, the bridge provides the only vehicle and pedestrian access to the historic Many Glacier Hotel and is a contributing feature to the Many Glacier Hotel Historic District, which is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The final plans for the bridge’s original design were reviewed by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, which typically only reviewed plans for monuments and memorials. The 85-foot long, concrete bridge includes four stone piers and two stone abutments, which blend the structure into the landscape and reflect the NPS design philosophy of the time period. Steel handrails, a thin deck, and a low profile are also among the bridge’s important historical features, enabling uninterrupted views and preventing the structure from having the appearance of a dam. In 1942, due to erosion from winter ice, the bridge’s piers were reinforced with steel pins, new concrete, and protective steel shields. In 1958, the deck was paved and new concrete was laid over the adjacent walkways.

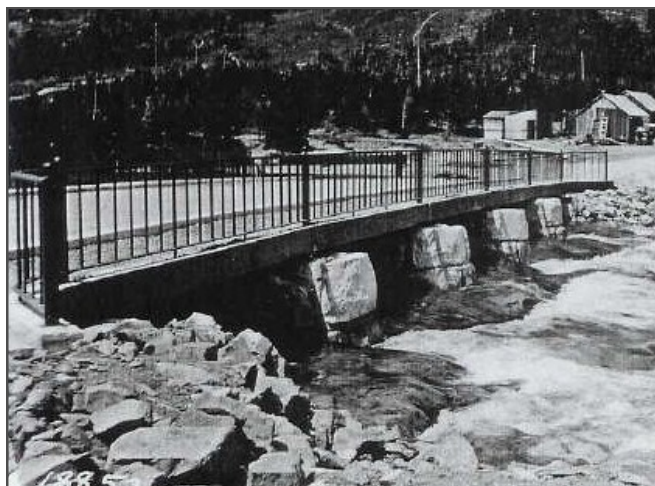
Currently, the Swiftcurrent Bridge is rapidly losing its structural integrity. The deck is severely damaged, and the abutments and piers are in disrepair. The bridge also has limited capacity to handle high water because of the four interior piers. Hydrologic issues worsen during spring break up when fragments of ice flowing off Swiftcurrent Lake are trapped by the piers. Ice break up is also resulting in more wear and stress to the piers and abutments. Additionally, utilities for sewer, water, phone, and electricity crossing the bridge are

intertwined and partially encased in conduit alongside the deck.

The park is proposing to replace the Swiftcurrent Bridge with a longer, single span bridge. The existing abutments would be replaced, and the new abutments would be located further apart. The four interior piers would be removed to improve the bridge’s hydrologic capacity. The utility conduit would be removed and utilities would be reorganized and contained to reduce safety hazards, comply with water safety regulations, and be less visible.

Replacing the bridge may also include widening the roadway. The bridge’s original railings would be retained if possible and replicated to accommodate the longer bridge. New railings would be designed to match the historic appearance of the original railings.

Replacing the historic Swiftcurrent Bridge would be an adverse effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Mitigation would be developed in consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office. The bridge’s low profile would be maintained, and the new abutments would be designed to blend with



Swiftcurrent Bridge, 1930. *Final Construction Report on Babb-Many Glacier Highway, Swiftcurrent Bridge*, Glacier National Park Archives.

the landscape. The bridge’s history and significance would be interpreted, and the park would document the structure to the standards of the Historic American Engineering Record. The project would be targeted to occur after the Many Glacier Hotel has closed for the season. The access road to the Many Glacier Hotel would be closed to all traffic during the project.

Objectives

- Improve the structural integrity and hydrologic capacity of the Swiftcurrent Bridge.
- Address improperly organized utility conduits.
- Design a visually attractive and context sensitive new bridge.
- Preserve the low profile of the roadway.
- Protect natural stream and floodplain processes.

Preliminary Alternatives

No action—do not replace the Swiftcurrent Bridge. Within approximately ten years, the bridge would no longer be structurally sound enough for motor vehicle passage.

Action —replace the Swiftcurrent Bridge.

Issues and Resources to Consider

- Historic structures.
- The long-term stability of the Swiftcurrent Bridge.
- Flood hazards.
- Water quality.
- Fisheries and other aquatic life.
- Wildlife, vegetation, and soils.
- Visitor, concessioner, and NPS access.