

Craters of the Moon National Monument



National Park Service
Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Department of the Interior



Monument Management Plan

Newsletter 1 • Spring/Summer 2002

Planning for the Future of the Monument

ON NOVEMBER 9, 2000, Presidential Proclamation 7373 expanded Craters of the Moon National Monument from roughly 54,000 acres to approximately 740,000 acres – all of it federal land. The President signed this proclamation to ensure protection of the Great Rift and associated features. The proclamation also placed the lands under the administration of both the National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), with each agency having primary management authority over separate portions. It is now time to update the current management plan to include these new lands and the directions set forth in this latest proclamation and to consider what future management direction is appropriate for the Monument. We invite you to ask yourself, what do you want the Monument to look like 20 years from now? For example, what additional facilities, if any, should be provided? How can we best protect the Monument's resources? Should access be improved?

During the next several months, we encourage you to participate in the formulation of a management plan for the

Monument. We ask you to help us craft a vision for the Monument. Your involvement is important in identifying the issues important to you. We want your help in developing strategies for future land use within the Monument. This plan, when approved, will guide management decisions for the next 15 to 20 years.

At one time, the volcanic landscape of Craters of the Moon was labeled as "barren," "bleak," or "desolate." The lava fields were considered places to be avoided. Today you are much more likely to hear the expressions "spectacular," "curious," or "fascinating" used by people who now feel this unearthly terrain offers a very unique experience. People's perceptions change with time, and now you have an opportunity to determine how future visitors will view these lands. The planning process gives all who are interested in the Monument the opportunity to find the best possible solutions. The National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management sincerely invite and encourage your participation as we work together to plan for the future of this special place.

Rick Vander Voet, Monument Manager
Craters of the Moon National Monument
Bureau of Land Management

Jim Morris, Superintendent
Craters of the Moon National Monument
National Park Service

Background

Craters of the Moon National Monument was established in 1924 by a presidential proclamation that recognized it as an area that **"contains many curious and unusual phenomena of great educational value and has a weird and scenic landscape peculiar to itself."**

Succeeding proclamations (1928, 1930, and 1962) expanded the Monument to include additional federal lands with features of scientific interest and to aid in the administration of the area.

In 1989, at the urging of local citizens, Congress directed the National Park Service to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of adding more federal lands to the Monument. The intent was to determine how a higher level of protection for the entire Great Rift could be achieved. That study concluded that this is an area of national significance as one of the longest and the deepest known open volcanic rift zones on earth.

The most recent proclamation provides protection of the entire Great Rift volcanic zone and associated lava features. It also ensures that traditional activities consistent with the overall purpose of the area will continue in the Monument.

Area Purpose and Significance

At the beginning of the planning process it is important to reaffirm the area's purpose and significance. We do this to establish a frame work within which we can evaluate all of our proposed actions and management decisions to ensure that they are consistent with the original reasons for creating a National Monument.

NPS and BLM managers have talked with the public as well as state and local governments. Managers and resource experts together developed these draft purpose, significance, and goal statements.

DRAFT PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS

Purpose statements clarify the reasons why Craters of the Moon National Monument was established.

The purposes of Craters of the Moon National Monument are to:

- Safeguard the volcanic features and geologic processes of the Great Rift.
- Provide scientific, educational, and interpretive opportunities for the public to foster an understanding and appreciation of the volcanic geology and associated natural and cultural phenomena.
- Maintain the wilderness character of the Craters of the Moon Wilderness and of Wilderness Study Areas.
- Perpetuate scenic vistas and open western landscapes for future generations.
- Protect kipukas older vegetated terrain surrounded by lava flows and other remnant vegetation areas and preserve important habitat for sage grouse.
- Continue the historic and traditional human relationships that have existed on this land for generations.

Significance statements provide details that describe the primary ideas, events, and resources that make the Monument important. By recognizing these features, we can ensure that future management, operations, and development decisions protect and enhance the very things that make the area distinctive and nationally significant.

Craters of the Moon is significant because:

- It contains a remarkable and unusual diversity of exquisitely preserved volcanic features, including almost all of the familiar features of basaltic volcanism craters, cones, lava flows, caves, and fissures.
- The Monument contains most of the Great Rift area, the deepest known land based open volcanic rift and the longest volcanic rift in the continental United States.
- Many of the more than 400 kipukas contain representative vegetative communities that are largely undisturbed by human activity. These communities serve as key benchmarks for scientific study of long term ecological changes to the plants and animals of sage brush steppe communities throughout the Snake River Plain.
- The Monument contains the largest remaining land area in the Snake River Plain that still retains its wilderness character. The

Craters of the Moon Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas in the Monument encompass more than a half million acres of undeveloped federal lands.

- The Monument is a valued western landscape of nearly 740,000 acres that are characterized by a variety of scenery, broad open vistas, and pristine air quality.
- The Monument contains abundant sagebrush steppe communities that provide some of the best remaining sage grouse habitat and healthiest rangelands on the Snake River Plain.
- Resulting from a long history of volcanic deposition, the Monument contains many diverse habitats for plants and animals.

DRAFT GOALS

These goals are statements of desired future conditions.

- The Monument protects the geological features and the biological communities that characterize the Great Rift area.
- The public enjoys a range of recreational and educational opportunities that are compatible with protecting Monument resources.
- The Craters of the Moon Wilderness and the Wilderness Study Areas retain natural conditions and remarkable opportunities for solitude.
- The public has opportunities to learn about and appreciate the Monument's diverse history and prehistory and its important cultural resources.
- The Livestock permittees work with BLM to develop management actions to achieve sustainable, healthy, rangelands.
- The public receives efficient and coordinated services from the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

DRAFT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

What are your interests and concerns relating to the Monument? The following is the planning team's first attempt to put down on paper what we have heard so far.

Development

What kinds of Monument facilities and services will be provided apart from the existing Monument facilities?

- Are new public facilities needed in the Monument in the next 20 years?
- Will new visitor facilities be needed outside the Monument?
- What opportunities do surrounding "gateway" communities want for providing services and facilities to visitors?
- Do any facilities need to be removed?

Transportation and Access

What type of road system will be needed for travel to and access within the Monument?

- Will any roads in the monument be closed?
- Will there be any additional restrictions on travel to protect Monument resources?

- Will any roads be upgraded? Will some roads receive better maintenance?
- Will access to portions of the Monument be improved?
- What role will the counties play?

Public/Visitor Use and Safety

What will be the extent and location of public uses within the Monument?

What kinds of experiences do visitors want?

- How will recreational uses of the land be affected?
- Will visitation increase, and how will it be managed?
- How will the public know where they can hunt?
- Are there new safety concerns associated with visitor use?
- Which public services will be provided by the federal government and which by local governments or private entities? Which will be provided jointly?
- To what level will the federal government assist local governments with needs for emergency services in the Monument?
- Will the Monument boundary and NPS/BLM lands in the Monument be identified with signs?
- What opportunities will there be for enhancing understanding and appreciation of the Great Rift area?
- What kind of interpretive and educational services do visitors want?
- Which visitor activities are suitable and where can they occur?

Authorized Uses

How will the different uses in the Monument be managed?

- How will grazing be managed in the Monument?
- Are improvements needed to enhance rangeland health?
- What is the need for local material for road maintenance?
- What opportunities will there be for outfitter and guide operations and concession activities in the Monument?

Natural and Cultural Resources

How will the natural and cultural resources be protected?

- How will the more fragile and significant geological features be protected from visitor use impacts?
- What protection will be offered for cultural resource sites?
- How can the scientific value of both the plant and animal communities and geological features best be protected and understood?
- How will the introduction and spread of noxious weeds be controlled?
- Will there be new guidelines for weed, grasshopper, and predator control programs?
- How will fire management be addressed in the Monument?
- How will restoration and rehabilitation efforts be addressed on Monument lands?
- How will management actions protect resources like night sky and natural quiet, the integrity of the views, and pristine air quality?

The Monument Management Plan

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM OF NATIONAL PARK Service and Bureau of Land Management staff developed the information in this newsletter. We are eager to hear your thoughts and ideas. Your comments on the Draft Issues and Concerns are particularly valuable.



WHAT DOES THE MONUMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN DO?

THE MONUMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN:

- Provides general direction and basic management philosophy.
- Identifies resources, management, and visitor use strategies and actions.
- Can identify Monument infrastructure requirements, functions, and locations.
- Satisfies statutory and policy requirements.
- Identifies funding and staffing requirements.
- Does not guarantee funding.
- Will not solve all problems.



Are There Limits to What Can Be Done in the Plan?

Because of certain directions and legal requirements contained in the proclamations establishing and expanding Craters of the Moon National Monument, there are limits (see below) to what can be proposed within the scope of the Monument Management Plan.

Can the boundary of the monument be changed?

The boundary has been set by presidential proclamation. In the planning process we may consider recommendations for potential modest boundary modifications. The process for minor boundary adjustments includes consultations with local and federal elected officials.

Can the Wilderness or Wilderness Study Area designations be changed?

No, Congress has made it clear that these lands are managed to preserve their Wilderness character. Over 70% of the Monument is designated as Wilderness or Wilderness Study Area. Only Congress can designate Wilderness or release a Wilderness Study Area for other types of management (Wilderness is, in part, defined as an undeveloped area that retains its primeval character and appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.)

How will the plan affect off-highway vehicle use?

Proclamation 7373 closed the entire Monument to all types of cross-country vehicle travel except for very limited authorizations. The Management Plan can not undo this restriction. The Management Plan will identify how to manage existing roads and trails for off-highway vehicle use. During the planning process, vehicle travel on existing roads and trails may continue.

Where is hunting permitted in the Monument?

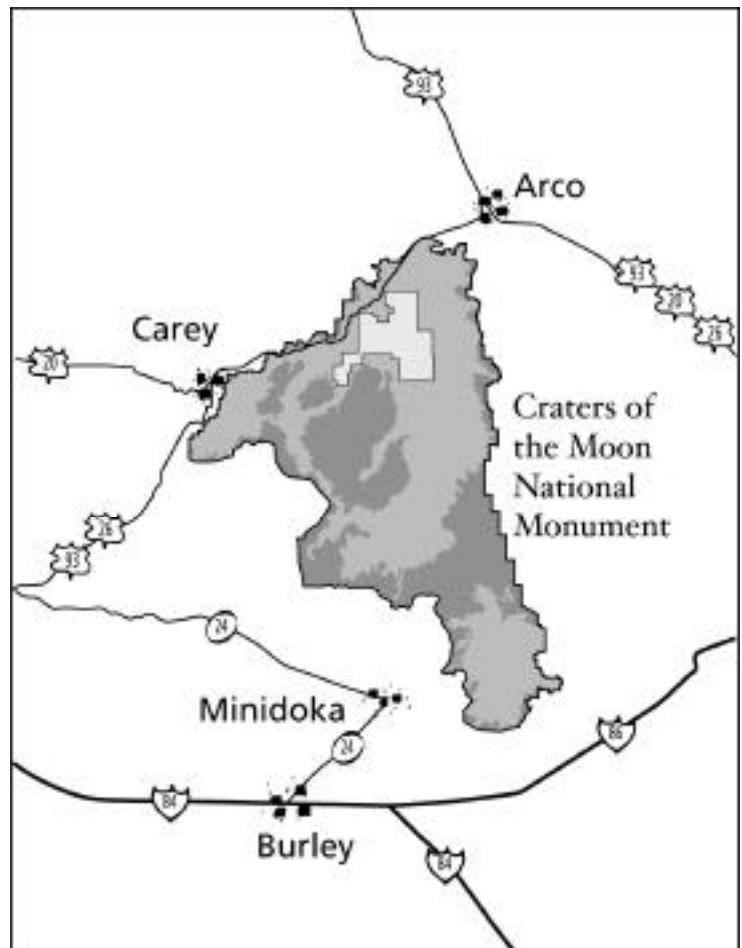
The Management Plan cannot authorize hunting on NPS lands. Only Congress has this authority. There is a bill before Congress to reopen the NPS lands in the expanded portion of the Monument to hunting. Hunting is permitted on the BLM managed portions of the Monument.

Will livestock grazing continue within the Monument?


The Management Plan will address vegetation and grazing management as well as Allotment Boundaries. Proclamation 7373 instructed the Bureau of Land Management to follow their laws, regulations, and policies in issuing and administering grazing permits on BLM land within the Monument.

Open Houses

Open Houses will be held in the following communities: Rupert, Arco, Carey, Shoshone, Hailey, American Falls, Boise, and Ft. Hall. Additional meetings and presentations may be scheduled. The dates and locations of these meetings will be announced through mailings and local media releases.



Ways You Can Participate

Schedule	Planning Activity	Public Participation Opportunities
Fall 2001 to Summer 2002 We are here! 	1. Set the Stage for Planning and Management The first step is to lay the foundation for everything that is done in the plan and, ultimately, in the Monument. Statements of Monument purpose and significance are reviewed to ensure that everything we do is consistent with the reason that the Monument was established. Issues and concerns that need to be addressed in the plan are identified. This helps to focus our work and determine the scope of the planning effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in open houses. • Read and comment on newsletter
Summer 2002 through Winter 2003	2. Gather Data and Develop Alternatives The BLM and NPS planning team will be working to better understand the resources, learn more about issues, identify opportunities for solving problems, and develop ideas for the future. Concepts for alternatives will be generated. These are broad descriptions of different resource conditions and visitor experiences that could achieve the area's purposes and maintain its significance. Management strategies for achieving these alternatives will also be developed, and the potential environmental consequences of implementing each alternative will be evaluated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in workshops. • Read and comment on second newsletter.
Spring 2003 to Fall 2003	3. Publish Draft Monument Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement The <i>Draft Plan/EIS</i> will be published for public review. Public comments on the draft will be accepted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in meetings. • Read and comment on <i>Draft Plan/EIS</i>
Fall 2003	4. Publish Final Monument Management Plan/EIS Based on public comments, appropriate revisions to the draft will be made and a <i>Final Monument Management Plan/EIS</i> will be developed.	
Winter 2003 and beyond	5. Implement Plan	

Written Comments

For those of you who are unable to attend public meetings, or who prefer to respond by mail, we have provided a mail back comment form. We hope that you will take the time to jot down your reactions to the topics presented in this newsletter that you think are important. All of the information that we receive will be assembled and used as the foundation for the planning process. Your participation is vital to the success of this project.

For general information see these websites:

www.nps.gov/crmo

www.id.blm.gov/planning/index.htm

Send comments to:

Craters of the Moon National Monument Planning Team
Bureau of Land Management, Shoshone Field Office
P.O. BOX 2 B
400 West F Street
Shoshone, ID 83352 1522

Telephone calls are welcome anytime:

NPS: 208 527 3257 ext. 106

BLM: 208 732 7200.

Comments can also be sent to ID_Craters_Plan@blm.gov.





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