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## Categorical Exclusion Form

**Project:** Lake Cell Tower

**PEPC Project Number:** 43426

**Project Description:**

This CE is being prepared to address a minor change to the 2008 Wireless Communications Services Plan (WCSP) and to amend the 2009 FONSI that indicated the park would issue a notice in the Federal Register. Environmental Assessments and Federal Register notices for telecommunications right-of-way permits are required for projects where an agency did not previously analyze the alternatives, evaluate the potential impacts, and identify mitigation measures. Because alternatives, impacts, and mitigation measures were analyzed in the 2008 WCSP/EA and subsequent FONSI, no Federal Register notice is required by NPS policy and therefore will not be prepared. The Lake cell tower was the only cell tower approved in the FONSI for the 2008 WCSP/EA, therefore no future Federal Register notices on this topic are anticipated. This project would construct a cellular telephone site in the Lake/Fishing Bridge area consistent with the decision made in the April, 2009 FONSI for the YELL WCSP/EA. The cell site would provide cell service to the Lake and Fishing Bridge developed areas. The proposal received from Verizon Wireless to construct a site was reviewed to determine if the scope of the project, affected resources, and impact analysis are the same as described in the original documents. The park's I.D. team determined that there are minor differences in the project proposal, but the effects of these changes are less than measurable.

Changes to the plan include an additional 10' of tower height, which would put the finished tower approximately 30' above the tree canopy. Approx. 0.45 miles of trenching within the existing admin. development would also be required and was not addressed in the plan. Current standard engineering practices support 15' of separation between tenants on a tower to avoid RF interference. Four tenants; two cellular companies, one NPS land mobile radio, and one NPS LAN, are expected to reside on the tower. Standard practices would support a tower with 60' extending above the canopy to avoid interference and signal blocking. The NPS is requiring all tenants to manage with the minimum separation of 10' to preserve aesthetic resources and facilitate collocation, equating to a final tower 30' above the existing tree canopy.

This project entails the construction of a cell site adjacent to the buried water tank site located on the hill above the Lake govt./admin. area. The site adjacent to the water tank site was selected because of its proximity, access to utilities, road access, ability to be screened. The site would have minor visual impact and keep spillover coverage into the backcountry at a minimum. The project would include construction of a 100' tall metal lattice tower, an equipment bldg., installation of a backup electric generator, and installation of an underground cable from an existing CenturyLink junction box to the proposed tower location. The cable would be installed beneath or directly adjacent to existing dirt and paved road in the admin. area.

The NPS flew weather balloons and raised a crane to 100' at the proposed site to evaluate the potential visual impacts from the tower. These efforts demonstrated that a 100' tower would not be visible from the three historic districts in close proximity. The tower would be partially visible from one location along the historic Grand Loop road, although it would be one half mile from the road at that location and visible only through a break in the trees. The existing CenturyLink microwave tower near the junction was rejected due to lack of structural integrity, adequate height, and excessive spillover in the backcountry.