

Devils Postpile National Monument
General Management Plan and
Environmental Assessment

Finding of No Significant Impact

January 2015

Devils Postpile National Monument
General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment
Finding of No Significant Impact

Madera and Mono Counties, California

January 2015

Introduction

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the decision of the National Park Service (NPS) to adopt Alternative C: Connecting People to Nature and Heritage, the preferred alternative, as presented in the *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment* (DGMP/EA), and the determination that no significant impacts on the quality of the human environment nor impairment of park values are associated with that decision.

When the planning process started in 2009, an environmental impact statement (EIS) was to be prepared with the GMP. However, the analysis of environmental impacts determined that there is no potential for significant effects on the quality of the human environment, nor any potential for impairment of park resources and values. No public controversy was expected, based on public comments received during the scoping process and review of the preliminary alternatives. For these reasons the NPS had determined that an environmental assessment (EA) would be prepared rather than an EIS. The planning team received a waiver to prepare an EA rather than an EIS from the Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science on July 23, 2013. A Federal Register notice was published on April 3, 2014 to inform the public that the NPS was terminating the preparation of an EIS for the GMP.

In addition, pursuant to NPS *Management Policies*, the superintendent's determination of no impairment to monument resources and values is attached.

Purpose and Need for the Plan

The National Park Service has prepared a *General Management Plan* (GMP) for Devils Postpile National Monument to establish the monument's overall management direction for the foreseeable future. Legislation establishing the National Park Service (NPS) as an agency and governing its management provides the fundamental direction for the administration of the monument (and other units and programs of the national park system). This GMP builds on these laws and the presidential proclamation that established Devils Postpile National Monument to provide a vision for the park's future.

The Selected Alternative: Connecting People to Nature and Heritage

The actions encompassed by the selected alternative are substantially the same as identified and analyzed in Alternative C: Connecting People to Nature and Heritage, in the EA for the DGMP. Minor modifications based on information and comments submitted during public review of the DGMP are incorporated herein. The text was also edited for clarity. As described in the DGMP, the actions listed in "Actions Common to All Alternatives" are also included in the selected alternative. There are no substantial additions, nor did any of the changes result in altering the magnitude of environmental impacts.

Concept

The primary focus of the approved GMP is to emphasize key features with national significance for resource protection and connect visitors with nature and heritage, including traditional park experiences in a natural setting.

The key components of the selected alternative are as follows:

- Additional emphasis will be placed on connections and partnerships with the Inyo National Forest and the Town of Mammoth Lakes.
- The monument will be managed as a gateway to a greater wilderness.
- Natural and cultural resources will continue to receive a high degree of protection with an increased emphasis on providing demonstrations for visitors on a range of resource management techniques to engage visitors with resource management activities and programs such as inventory and monitoring, invasive plant removal, historic preservation, and archeological investigations.
- Visitor experiences will continue to include a range of low-impact recreational opportunities that have traditionally been available within the monument such as camping, hiking, fishing, sightseeing and wildlife viewing.
- The monument will explore opportunities for increased trail connections and promote self-discovery and opportunities to connect with nature.
- Interpretation and education programs and media will emphasize themes related to corridors and connectivity as well as the role of the area as a gateway to a broader wilderness.

Management Actions for the Selected Alternative

Site Specific Management Guidance

MAMMOTH LAKES

The monument will increase its presence in the Town of Mammoth Lakes, preferably by expanding its current co-location arrangement with the Inyo National Forest on their Mammoth Lakes campus (i.e. Mammoth Welcome Center, Ranger Station, and/or Tourism building) for public contact and operational space, enhancing its current presence and relationship with Inyo National Forest staff and the operation at the Mammoth Welcome Center.

The monument will pursue leasing additional space from the U.S. Forest Service on the Inyo National Forest campus to reach a wider range of visitors and members of the local community, including school groups, by extending its operation into the shoulder seasons and winter months, when the monument is closed to vehicular traffic. The challenging road access to the monument often means the official “operating season” is from mid-June to mid-October. Providing visitor services in town will extend that season year round and reach new audiences, given Mammoth Lakes’ high winter visitation. Outdoor exhibits will also be included to provide interpretation about the monument when NPS staff are not available and will not require year-round staffing.

The additional space on the Inyo National Forest campus will also be a more appropriate location to include interpretive and educational exhibits that use new technology, such as television and computers, as opposed to the valley where the desire is to maintain a more traditional park experience in a rustic setting and the remote location makes it difficult to maintain reliable technological infrastructure, such as phone and internet access. The Town of Mammoth Lakes will also provide a more appropriate location for the use of technology in NPS

interpretive and educational programs. Adequate infrastructure to support a more high-tech experience already exists and will be easier to maintain year round.

Expanding an NPS visitor presence in Mammoth Lakes will also provide an alternative way for local people and visitors to learn about and connect with resources in the monument, bringing the monument closer to the population, and ideally encouraging more local visits to the monument itself. The monument has been looking for ways to engage more K-12 students in the monument and conservation. Opening to vehicle traffic in mid-late-June and closing often in early October makes field trips to the monument very challenging for many school groups. Expanding the monument's presence in the Town of Mammoth Lakes will provide a location for all groups, including K-12 students, to learn about monument resources, participate in activities, and have a location in which to interact with NPS rangers and volunteers.

A location in town will not only enable monument staff to reach a broader audience that is currently not served by existing programming, it will also provide opportunities for increased educational partnerships. This facility will provide a location to present educational programs and/or trainings for local educators in partnership with the Inyo National Forest.

The Inyo National Forest campus is a preferred location for an expanded NPS presence as it will create a single stop for visitors seeking information about opportunities in town, on the forest, as well as in the monument. Expanded co-location with the Inyo could also enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the interagency collaboration that has characterized the relationship between Devils Postpile NM and the Inyo National Forest. Should leasing additional space from the Inyo National Forest and adaptively reusing existing space not be feasible options, the NPS could also consider: 1) purchasing a new building in the Town of Mammoth Lakes; 2) collaboration with the Inyo National Forest to upgrade existing facilities to provide new visitor contact opportunities; or 3) explore other leasing opportunities in the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

DEVILS POSTPILE NM DEVELOPED AREA - RANGER STATION

The monument will retain the visitor contact/ranger station in the valley and improve the surrounding areas to enhance visitor services and circulation. The ranger station deck will be expanded, and a service window potentially added, to provide improved accessibility and additional outdoor space for interpretation and ranger contacts. The interior of the ranger station will continue to provide a mix of visitor services and a small amount of staff office and operations space. The building could be elevated to mitigate flood hazards, if its rustic character can be maintained. The NPS is currently undertaking a determination of eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. If the building is determined to be historically significant, these proposed changes will be designed to avoid or minimize the potential for adverse effects.

The shuttle bus stop and parking area will be redesigned to improve parking and circulation for shuttle buses, cars and pedestrians. The new site design will also consider better separating the entrance to the visitor contact/ranger station and the bus loading and unloading area, adding a modest shelter or an overhang on the bus stop, and providing space for additional visitor information and outdoor exhibits.

DEVILS POSTPILE NM DEVELOPED AREA - CAMPGROUND, PARKING, AND DAY USE AREA

The monument will continue to provide both camping and day use opportunities in the developed area of the monument. The NPS will complete a comprehensive site design or development concept plan for the campground and day use area, including the visitor contact/ranger station, parking areas, and administrative area.

The monument will maintain an overnight campground in the valley while redesigning a portion of the campground and day use area to improve riverfront access for all visitors. The campsites in Loop B, immediately adjacent to the river, will be removed. Loop B will be redesigned to accommodate walk-in users only.

If feasible, additional walk-in campsites could be sited to maintain current campground capacity. Separation between car camping, day use, and walk-in camping will be achieved through additional site planning.

The monument will continue to make improvements to the camping experience in Loop A through adjustments to site design, better site delineation, and continued vegetation restoration where feasible.

Day use opportunities along the riverfront will be improved. The campground redesign will provide clear delineation of specific river access points to better protect riparian areas and manage visitor access to and use of the riverfront. The monument will also relocate and redesign the day use parking lot to reduce visual impacts, enhance day use recreation near the river at defined locations, and restore riparian vegetation. The design will strive to retain existing parking capacity within the developed area to the extent feasible.

DEVILS POSTPILE NM DEVELOPED AREA - OPERATIONS AREA

The monument operations area will provide staff housing, administrative space, and other essential operational functions with an overall goal of minimizing visual and audible impacts associated with park operations. To the extent possible, staff housing will be provided in the Town of Mammoth Lakes. However, a minimum overnight staff presence will still be maintained in the operations area, commensurate with the programs and services being offered. A Housing Management Plan has been completed identifying two required occupants. The existing tent cabins, currently used by seasonal staff, could be used to house volunteers or visiting researchers.

Maintenance functions will be moved to a different location to reduce the impacts on visitor experience and resident staff. With a goal of increasing operational efficiency and collaboration between the agencies, the NPS will partner with the USFS to explore replacement of the monument's current deficient maintenance shop with a small interagency, multi-purpose facility outside of the monument in the vicinity of the Pumice Flat Campground (See Pumice Flat below). This facility will primarily serve the maintenance needs in the valley of both agencies and will replace the current small and inadequate maintenance facility in the monument. Some multi-purpose and maintenance staff office space could also be included. This facility will provide a single location to support maintenance operation needs which will be more efficient than having staff spread across multiple locations in the valley and in Mammoth Lakes. Partnering with the USFS will also provide efficiency by not duplicating the maintenance facility needs of both agencies with visitor and land management responsibility in the valley, and is consistent with NPS goals to collaborate with partners on issues that have solutions beyond park boundaries.

Finding a site within the monument where the new maintenance facility will be visually shielded from visitors and staff and will be out of the floodplain will be difficult. The size of the maintenance facility necessary to support monument operations will likely be twice the size the largest building in the monument and could seem incompatible with the rest of the scale and character of development within the monument. Other locations outside the monument but within the valley will be more suitable for such a facility, providing better access and egress for larger vehicles such as fire engines, as well as better visual screening to protect the visitor experience and scenic quality of the area.

Given its central location and relatively level terrain outside of the floodplain, Pumice Flat could provide space for the joint maintenance needs of the NPS and USFS, while retaining existing recreational opportunities such as the group camping site. The facility will be sited to provide adequate separation from the existing amphitheater. The

NPS and USFS could also explore other locations for the joint maintenance facility provided those areas are relatively level, outside of the floodplain, and preferably centrally located within the valley. Priority will also be given to previously disturbed or impacted sites.

If a mutually agreeable arrangement with the USFS cannot be negotiated at Pumice Flat or another suitable location, the monument will pursue replacement of the maintenance facility within the monument boundary, as previously planned.

Once the new facility is constructed, the current maintenance facility in the monument will be removed from the operations area. Structures visible from Devils Postpile trail that are not needed for essential NPS operations will also be removed to improve the visual quality of the area.

Cabins 1 (Superintendent's) and 5 (The Shed) will be converted to operational functions. Most administrative functions will be in Mammoth Lakes. Only those functions that can't be efficiently performed in Mammoth Lakes will occur in the monument.

DEVILS POSTPILE NM VIEWING AREAS

The monument will continue to provide visitors with quality viewing opportunities of the Postpile and maintain the general size of the viewing areas at the base and the top of the Postpile. The monument will seek to enhance the experience at the base of the Postpile through several small site improvements. Some individual waysides will be separated from the main viewing areas to reduce congestion and improve the visual quality of the area.

The monument will also provide enhanced opportunities for learning and self-discovery by providing self-guided interpretive experience along the trail to the Postpile. Expanded interpretive messages that could be told at the site include geology, scenery, and NPS and USFS collaboration in preservation of the area. The Postpile trail will be evaluated for opportunities to improve accessibility from the ranger station to the Postpile.

The monument will also maintain an area at the top of the Postpile to provide direct visitor contact with the dome, the shapes of the columns and glacial polish, while still protecting important geological resources. The trail at the top of the Postpile will be maintained in its current general alignment, with its southern connection to the Rainbow Falls trail. The monument will implement a suite of resource protection and active visitor use management measures to preserve other areas of glacial polish, such as signage and trail borders to keep people on designated trails. The monument will develop a baseline inventory and increase active protection of glacial polish of the top of the Postpile and on other glacial features in the monument to understand resource conditions and inform future management actions.

The monument will redesign the picnic area near the base of the Postpile to reduce inadvertent resource impacts, stabilize the landscape and archeological site surrounding the historic cabin ruins, and provide additional interpretation of the history of the area, including the historic cabin ruins, but with minimal infrastructure or wayside additions.

RAINBOW FALLS

The monument will strive to enhance the wilderness qualities at Rainbow Falls, promoting a greater sense of discovery and an introductory wilderness experience for visitors to the area.

The monument will generally maintain the alignment of the main trail to Rainbow Falls to continue to allow for the current volume of visitors. The monument will also explore redesigning the main Rainbow Falls trail from the

wilderness boundary to the viewing platforms in a manner that is more consistent with wilderness character. For example, the logs that line the trail could be replaced with smaller diameter logs or stones that harmonize with the surroundings. The stock trail will be realigned where necessary to separate pedestrian and stock use to reduce impacts to visitor experience. The interpretive panels at Rainbow Falls will be removed and relocated outside of designated wilderness. If possible, they will be relocated to the Boundary Creek trail junction (See Boundary Creek below).

The monument will maintain the two viewing platforms, preserving both their size and character for visitors to enjoy the views of Rainbow Falls. The monument will also maintain safe visitor access to the river at the base of Rainbow Falls. A minimum tool requirement analysis will be completed to determine the type of access most compatible with the area's wilderness character. Options include maintaining the rock and concrete stairs or removing the staircase and replacing it with a switchback trail.

Additional Program Management Guidance

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources will continue to be protected to a high degree. The monument will provide visitors with a greater connection to the natural surroundings while still protecting sensitive areas. Engaging visitors in resource management activities will be a priority, including demonstrations of resource management techniques such as inventory and monitoring. Sensitive resources will continue to be protected through both direct and indirect visitor use management practices. A direct management action might involve a regulation, such as limiting group size in certain sensitive areas. An indirect management practice could include an educational program designed to inform visitors about uses that could impact sensitive resources.

In addition, the monument will:

- Recommend that Congress designate the portions of the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River within Devils Postpile NM as a wild and scenic river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, based on the findings of the Wild and Scenic River eligibility and suitability analysis (See *Appendix E* in the Draft GMP), .
- Continue to ensure that no management actions within the monument would adversely affect the values that qualify the river for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- Develop and implement soundscape management policy that includes an emphasis on preserving natural soundscapes.
- Take actions to monitor and minimize or prevent unnatural sounds that adversely affect monument resources and values, with a focus on efforts to eliminate or minimize the intrinsic and extrinsic sounds during the early-mid morning hours when wildlife communications are often at their peak.
- Increase intra- and interagency coordination for resource management and restoration activities.
- Complete a resource stewardship strategy for the monument to guide subsequent resource management priorities.
- Establish a comprehensive monitoring program for geologic resources, emphasizing the Postpile itself.
- Develop a baseline inventory of the Postpile formation. Identify premier areas of glacial polish and ensure protection from visitor impacts while allowing other areas of glacial polish to be accessible to visitors.
- Establish a comprehensive monitoring program for hydrological resource monitoring that improves the understanding of conditions and trends.
- Establish a comprehensive monitoring program for ecological resources that improves the understanding of distribution, condition, and trends of species, communities, and processes.

- Identify species that would be most at risk to local extinctions due to a warming climate and monitor their distribution and abundance in the monument.
- Monitor and mitigate, where possible, the pressures of climate change and other stressors on native vegetation and wildlife.
- Develop adaptation strategies to respond to climate change.
- Ecologically restore, enhance and protect meadows, riparian areas, wetlands and sensitive habitats to the greatest extent possible.
- Ecologically restore, enhance and protect native biota communities by prevention, early detection and removal of invasive species
- Inventory and evaluate facilities that could discharge into water sources, mitigate threats to water resources and hydrologic processes, and remove or upgrade facilities that do not meet water quality standards.
- Inventory and evaluate facilities that affect habitat and native biota and mitigate, remove or upgrade to minimize impacts.
- Collaborate with the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and other stakeholders to develop and implement best management practices to minimize impacts to water quality in the watershed.
- Actively pursue inventory, research, monitoring, and study of hydrologic influences in the watershed, in partnership with the Inyo National Forest, in order to improve understanding of the influences that affect the monument's resources and to enhance management and protection of those resources.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The documentation and protection of cultural resources will continue. Interpretation of cultural resources will be enhanced and focused on the broader human history of the valley as a travel corridor, telling the stories of prehistoric, historic, and current uses of area. Demonstrations of cultural resource projects, such as archeological investigations, will be used to engage park partners and visitors. Additional visitor contact space in Mammoth Lakes could provide new opportunities to display museum collections.

The monument will consider additional and intra-agency co-location opportunities for museum collection storage, preferably on the eastern side of the Sierra at Manzanar National Historic Site or Death Valley National Park. Public access to museum collections will be provided through rotating interpretive displays at the new interpretive location in Mammoth Lakes, as well as via online and virtual options.

In addition, the monument will:

- Increase interagency coordination for cultural resource preservation strategies and treatment.
- Continue to work to improve communication and collaboration with interested American Indian tribes.
- Continue to facilitate traditional and contemporary American Indian uses consistent with agency policies and federal regulations.
- Research and inventory ethno-historic tribal uses of traditional plant, animal, water, and mineral resources to improve understanding of traditional uses.
- Actively pursue consultation, special studies, and historical research to determine National Register eligibility of monument cultural resources, such as the Postpile Cabin ruins, the Ranger Station, Mammoth Pass Trail, and potential cultural landscapes.
- Integrate more cultural resource information into ongoing interpretation and education programs.

- Maintain active tribal consultation program for identification and evaluation of natural and cultural resources with cultural and religious significance to traditionally associated American Indian tribes and groups, as well as recommendations for management.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The monument will continue to participate in NPS, interagency, and regional efforts to understand the effects of climate change on resources, assets, and visitor opportunities and develop adaptation strategies for the monument and watershed to address anticipated changes to resources and infrastructure. The monument will continue to implement its Climate Action Plan.

The monument will also increase opportunities for visitors to engage in hands-on and distance learning opportunities pertaining to climate change research being conducted in the monument.

In addition, the monument will:

- Continue to reduce carbon emissions, conserve water resources, and increase energy and fuel efficiency whenever and wherever possible.
- Emphasize and prioritize sustainable or green facility design for any new construction, retrofitting, and upgrading of facilities to the greatest extent possible.
- Consider influences from a changing climate in the decision process when replacing facilities due to damage or loss.
- Integrate the principles, goals, and objectives of the NPS and PWR Climate Change Response Strategy and Action Plans into management and operations. Ensure that actions promote ecosystem and landscape resilience within and beyond park boundaries throughout the watershed.
- Monitor, mitigate, and develop adaptation strategies where possible to address the pressures of climate change and other stressors on native vegetation and wildlife
- Participate in regional ecosystem efforts to restore native species and ecosystem processes, and/or develop adaptation strategies for responding to climate change where appropriate.
- Work with other public and private land managers, including the state of California, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and others to develop cross-jurisdictional plans for conservation of populations and habitats of species that share common areas or migrate into and out of the monument whenever possible.
- Continue to participate in NPS, interagency, and regional efforts to understand the effects of climate change on natural and cultural resources, natural processes, recreation demands, operations and facilities and develop adaptation strategies for the monument and watershed to address anticipated changes to resources and infrastructure.

WILDERNESS

The monument will continue to preserve wilderness character in designated wilderness. Providing an outstanding introductory wilderness experience for visitors will be the priority. Enhancing opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, as well as minimizing development within or visible from wilderness will contribute toward this goal. Specific changes described above under Rainbow Falls will be designed to enhance these wilderness qualities. The monument will refrain from building new trails in wilderness, except for the purpose of resource

protection (e.g. rerouting). Signs will be limited; primarily small mileage marker or orientation signs at trail junctions. Naturalness, solitude and the untrammled quality of designated wilderness will also be preserved.

In addition, the monument will:

- Continue to preserve the qualities of wilderness character in areas of designated wilderness.
- Continue to manage key locations in the monument and valley as a launching point to a greater wilderness, highlighting, protecting, and maintaining significant wilderness trails including the John Muir Trail and Pacific Crest Trail.
- Continue the current policy of no overnight camping in designated wilderness within the monument.
- Use indirect visitor use strategies when possible in designated wilderness, but direct management strategies and other techniques, such as limiting group size or rerouting trails, would be implemented when needed.
- Encourage scientific research, but in designated wilderness manage consistent with preservation of wilderness character, minimum requirements analysis and agency policy.
- Ensure that research installations in wilderness are not highly visible or detract from wilderness character.
- Promote collaboration and a joint planning effort for any future wilderness planning with the Inyo National Forest.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVER

The monument recommends the portion of the Middle Fork San Joaquin River that flows through the monument as suitable for designation as a wild and scenic river. See *Appendix E: Wild and Scenic River Eligibility and Suitability* in the Draft GMP for the full analysis.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Visitors will continue to enjoy the range of recreational experiences that have traditionally been available within the monument, with an increased emphasis on self-discovery and opportunities to connect with nature.

Traditional, low-impact recreation such as camping, day-hiking, backpacking, fishing, private stock use, bird watching, wildlife viewing, bird watching, and sightseeing will continue to be available.

The monument will partner with the USFS and others to create an interagency multi-modal trail plan, exploring opportunities for increased connectivity to locations within and outside of the watershed. The plan will examine the potential for new or enhanced trails, accessibility, trailheads, and parking, as well as new opportunities for a variety of trail users, including hikers, stock users, and bicyclists.

The monument will partner with the USFS, to the extent possible, to provide a higher level of personal ranger contact in campgrounds throughout the valley, improve visitor experience in campgrounds, and remove sites from sensitive areas where possible.

In addition, the monument will:

- Continue to work to maintain high quality viewsheds.
- Maintain natural darkness within the monument relatively free from light pollution
- Continue to provide a range of traditional visitor experiences, including hiking, camping, picnicking, fishing, wildlife viewing, and equestrian use.

- Continue to use the superintendent’s compendium, which can be updated annually, to document other management decisions related to recreational activities as appropriate, such as group size limits, winter access, campfires, and boating and floatation devices. Compendium restrictions and changes would be accompanied by required public notice.
- Continue to work on an interagency basis to ensure impacts from ongoing winter use are minimized and mitigated and that such use conforms to the respective agency regulations and policies.
- Implement a monitoring program of indicators and standards developed to manage visitor capacity and a quality experience.

INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, AND INFORMATION

Interpretation, education, and information will continue to be guided by the Long Range Interpretive Plan. The monument will emphasize information and orientation strategies that facilitate visitor connections to resources within and outside of the monument, especially wilderness. As a gateway or introductory wilderness experience for many visitors, the monument will continue to use techniques, programs, and media conducive to preserving wilderness character and a traditional, rustic built environment within the monument. As described above under Mammoth Lakes, enhancement of the NPS presence in the Town of Mammoth Lakes will allow the monument to explore more high-tech techniques, programs, and media outside of the valley. The visitor contact station, along with potential use of the USFS cabin at Pumice Flat (See Pumice Flat below), will expand the monument’s ability to deliver educational programming in multiple locations and in different seasons. This presence in town will enable the monument to reach audiences with diverse backgrounds and needs, including those who do not actually visit the monument.

In addition, the monument will:

- Improve public education and signage about boundary awareness and visitor safety to reduce conflicts.
- Synchronize long range interpretive planning between the NPS and USFS in order to create an integrated visitor experience and interpretive messaging that recognizes agency differences while providing clarity to visitors.
- Continue to partner with the USFS, Mammoth Mountain, the Town of Mammoth Lakes, and other organizations, agencies, and tribes on trail connections, signage, and interpretation.
- Collaborate with the USFS to develop integrated or consistent valley-wide design standards for signage that would use the style of rustic architecture and complement the natural setting, while preserving agency identity.
- Collaborate with the USFS to create a more distinct and inviting sense of arrival to the valley by improving signs along Hwy 203 and creating a more distinct entrance sign in the vicinity of Minaret Vista.
- Continue to develop environmental education opportunities for minority or at risk groups as a means of investing in future generations of citizens and resources.

LEVEL AND CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT

No major new facilities will be constructed in the monument, aside from replacement facilities due to damage or loss, or small, sensitively designed improvements. New facilities could include new trails and picnic areas, primarily within the existing footprint of the developed area. The monument will adopt design guidelines that help to provide a consistent visitor experience across boundaries, preserve wilderness character, and protect the traditional and rustic style of infrastructure that harmonizes with the natural setting.

In addition, the monument will:

- Reduce intrusion of existing buildings and infrastructure on views through screening and other techniques that could include less reflective materials, paint colors that blend with the natural landscape, and minimized lighting.
- Sensitively design and site new facilities or infrastructure in order to limit impacts on visual and scenic resources.
- Maintain and enhance traditional, natural design characteristics of facilities, exhibits, signs, and infrastructure.
- Ensure that facilities are sustainable, modest in scale, and sensitively sited to protect resources.
- Design facilities in the style of rustic architecture that complements the natural setting.
- Develop design standards guidelines to maintain and enhance traditional, natural design characteristics of facilities, exhibits, signs, and infrastructure. The monument would strive to create consistent valley-wide design standards in collaboration with the USFS.
- Explore new employee housing opportunities in Mammoth Lakes, including evaluating options for leasing or providing potential future government housing.
- Work with the USFS to evaluate and improve shared utilities, such as water and sewer systems. Evaluate strategies to reduce loading on the existing sewage infrastructure.
- Ensure that installation of new infrastructure for communications and scientific research is compatible with wilderness character and the monument's rustic character.

TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

The monument will improve delineation of parking in the day use area and campground, particularly around sensitive riparian areas to halt the gradual growth of parking areas through encroachment. As described above, a comprehensive site design or development concept plan (DCP) will be completed for the campground and day use area.

In addition, the monument will:

- Ensure that roads continue to provide safe visitor access and emphasize opportunities for protecting and viewing scenery and wildlife and promoting tranquil visitor experiences.
- Collaborate with the Inyo National Forest to identify long-term improvements in shuttle operations for visitors.
- Work on an interagency basis to increase safety zones around areas of high concentrations of visitors to improve safety and minimize visitor conflicts. Areas would include Rainbow Falls trail, Devils Postpile trail, bus stops, crossing zones, and other locations as necessary.
- Collaborate with partners to develop a plan to address overcrowding of parking areas during busy fall weekends.
- Invest in maintenance of current NPS road.
- Collaborate with the USFS on exploring and supporting funding opportunities for maintenance of the Reds Meadow Valley road.

FACILITIES, INCLUDING EMPLOYEE HOUSING

Some facilities within the monument will be removed, with a net loss in the number of assets (See Devils Postpile NM Developed Area above). The monument will continue to co-locate facilities with the USFS to enhance operational efficiency of agencies managing the watershed. As described above, under Mammoth Lakes, the monument will seek to enhance its presence at the Inyo National Forest campus. This additional space will serve administrative office space needs as well as visitors.

The monument will strive to partner with others in Mammoth Lakes (e.g. Mammoth Mountain, USFS, and other partners) to meet short-term housing needs above the monument's minimum required occupancy, with a goal of increasing housing availability for most seasonal and temporary employees in Mammoth Lakes. The USFS and NPS could partner to explore opportunities for an interagency dorm if adequate housing for seasonal and temporary employees is not available in the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

CONCESSIONS OPERATIONS AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES

No concessions operations will be added to the monument. The monument will continue to allow appropriate commercial uses, under permit. Commercial services in designated wilderness will be limited to the extent necessary to realize the recreational purposes of wilderness. Consistent with this extent necessary determination (See *Appendix C* in the Draft GMP), commercial stock day use at Rainbow Falls may continue at levels up to those currently permitted by the U.S. Forest Service from their trailhead (1444 day rides per season, plus additional day rides as authorized by the forest supervisor from a forest-wide pool of 256 day rides) in realization of the purpose of wilderness. Commercial rides that begin on the Inyo NF and pass through the monument to other destinations outside the monument, most notably overnight trips, will also be allowed to continue. Some commercial uses in non-wilderness will be considered, subject to consistency with park purposes and environmental compliance.

OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

The monument will expand its efforts to form and participate in partnerships that help introduce people to the monument and the valley, particularly those that connect visitors with nature and wilderness. Civic organizations, trail-related organizations (such as Mammoth Lake Trails and Public Access Foundation, Pacific Crest Trail Association, and Friends of the Inyo), American Indian tribes, Mammoth Mountain, and the Town of Mammoth Lakes are examples of potential partnerships.

The monument will seek to expand its use of the Service First authority to form lasting, creative, and meaningful agreements with the USFS for collaborative management of the monument, valley, and watershed to increase operational efficiency and provide consistent, high-quality experiences for visitors to the watershed.

The monument will:

- Use Service First authority to formalize and potentially expand the partnership with the Inyo National Forest and institutionalize strong interagency collaboration and coordination in cross-boundary resource and recreation management at a landscape scale.
- Partner with entities in Mammoth Lakes (including the USFS) for additional housing needs for seasonal and temporary employees.
- Partner with traditionally associated American Indian tribes and groups to further educational opportunities for tribal youth, expand ecological and historic preservation activities, interpret monument history and ongoing cultural connections, and develop opportunities for traditional and religious non-recreational access and cultural use.

- Continue to develop environmental education opportunities for minority or at risk groups as a means of investing in future generations of citizens and resources.

RESEARCH AND RELATED FACILITIES

The monument will:

- Continue to support and encourage scientific research and study consistent with NPS policies and use the best available science in decision-making.
- Participate fully in partnerships that increase scientific understanding of climate change and effects.
- Seek research opportunities with agency and academic partners to improve understanding of effects of climate, disturbance events, insects, and pathogens on trends in forest condition.
- Collaborate with sister agencies, partners and the public to develop, test, and appropriately apply climate change related models and tools to PWR activities, communication, and landscape-level and park-specific priorities.
- Continue to obtain information and data that would help managers accomplish park management objectives provided for in law and planning documents and provide information that can be used in public education.
- Work with the USFS and other federal agencies to create a short- and long-term research plan and strategy/agenda to identify research needs for the monument and the greater watershed, helping streamline the process for prioritizing and granting permits for research.
- Work with the USFS to facilitate research by working with partners in the community to provide housing and facilities in Mammoth Lakes for visiting researchers.
- Consider interagency review measures and processes for permitted research and science activities when research activities cross agency boundaries.
- Ensure research activities follow permit and review procedures, with required documentation for evaluating permit requests, timely review of requests, and curation of resultant specimens and reports in the monument's museum collections.
- Ensure that park staff, researchers and park partners have access to monument archival resources to support ongoing research
- Research related facilities and instrumentation will be located and designed to minimize their impact on resources and their visual intrusion on the traditional national park visitor experience.

Management Zones

The management zones will be applied to monument lands to identify an area's predominant use and desired future conditions. Specific boundaries of the management zones are provided in the attached map. The management zones are explained in further detail in Appendix A. The following description identifies the locations and details for the application of management zones. Zoning applications outside of the monument boundary on U.S. Forest Service lands are recommendations only.

Front Country Zone

The front country zone applies to the following areas:

- A 400 foot corridor centered along Reds Meadow Road.

- A 400 foot corridor around roads in developed areas in Reds Meadow Valley including:
 - The Devils Postpile NM entry road, campground, ranger station and adjacent day use area, and the NPS operations area
 - Minaret Vista
 - U.S. Forest Service campgrounds
 - Pumice Flat
 - West shore of Sotcher Lake
 - Reds Meadow Resort
- In some developed areas where roads and parking lots are directly adjacent to wetland/meadows, these areas are included in the sensitive resource management zone. This includes areas in Agnew Meadows and Minaret Falls campgrounds.
- Portions of Wildland Urban Interface Zones, on U.S. Forest Service lands, when those portions occur outside of designated wilderness areas or sensitive resource management zones.

Sensitive Resource Management Zone

The sensitive resource management zone applies to the following areas:

- A 200 foot corridor centered on the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River from Upper Soda Springs Campground to Lower Rainbow Falls.
- Wetland/meadow areas in Reds Meadow Valley. Areas include Soda Springs, Agnew Meadows, and the wet meadow areas west of Pumice Flat and south of Minaret Falls Campground.
- The east side of Sotcher Lake, from the access trail on the east to where the creek/drainage enters and exits the lake is included in this zone.

Portal Zone

The portal zone applies to the following areas:

- All non-wilderness areas with the exception of frontcountry and sensitive resource management zoned areas. This includes the Postpile viewing area.
- In designated wilderness:
 - A 100 foot corridor centered on the Pacific Crest Trail from the Agnew Meadows pack station to the monument where it merges with the John Muir Trail. Wilderness areas west of this corridor extending to the frontcountry and sensitive resource management zoned areas.
 - A 100 foot corridor around the John Muir Trail from Minaret Falls, through the monument, to the frontcountry zone at Reds Meadow Resort. The 100 foot corridor continues east of the frontcountry zone to where the trail enters wilderness again.
 - The area bounded by Minaret Falls, the John Muir Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail, and the monument's northern boundary.
 - A 100 foot corridor centered on the trails to Rainbow Falls and Lower Rainbow Falls, including the Rainbow Falls viewing areas and stock trail. Also includes areas between the stock trail and main trail to Rainbow Falls.
 - A 100 foot corridor centered on Kings Creek trail within the monument.

- Areas within the monument extending east of the Pacific Crest/John Muir Trails to the sensitive resource management zone along the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River.
- South of the Pacific Crest/John Muir Trails within the monument, a 100 foot buffer extending west of the sensitive resource management zone along the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River from John Muir Trail to Lower Rainbow Falls.
- Rainbow Falls main trail and stock-use trail outside of the frontcountry zone.

Natural Zone

The natural zone applies to the following areas:

- All other designated wilderness areas not zoned portal/transition.

Boundary Modifications

The NPS will seek a minor boundary adjustment to the monument that will include the main trail corridor connecting Devils Postpile and Rainbow Falls, for the purpose of simplifying and consolidating management of this high-use trail, incorporating the entire stretch of the river between the northern and southern boundaries of the monument, and including additional areas of the Postpile geologic formation. The monument will continue to provide access on trails within this area as they are part of an extensive trail network that supports popular visitor opportunities and provides important access to a larger landscape and recreation experience beyond the monument. The monument will also strive to maintain the John Muir Trailhead parking lot which provides an efficient access point to this popular area. No additional facilities are included in the boundary adjustment. See *Appendix B* of the Draft GMP for a more detailed analysis and recommendation.

Considering the watershed’s nationally significant resources, its scenic grandeur, and its history of protection, the monument recommends that a complementary USFS National Monument be established to include the entirety of the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River watershed. Under such a designation, the USFS would continue to manage the new monument under USFS laws, regulations, and policies, without impacts to currently permitted activities or existing designations. Working in collaboration, Devils Postpile National Monument and the new USFS national monument could provide visitors an integrated experience, highlight nationally significant resources throughout the watershed, and increase the public visibility of the watershed.

User Capacity

Park staff will continue to monitor social and resource indicators, evaluate current conditions against established standards, and take appropriate steps to ensure the park’s user capacity is not exceeded.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures are the practicable and appropriate methods that would be used to avoid and/or minimize harm to the monument’s natural and cultural, wilderness, and socioeconomic resources. These mitigation measures have been developed based on existing laws and regulations, best management practices, conservation measures, and other known techniques from past and present work in and around Devils Postpile National Monument.

The GMP provides a management framework for the monument. Within this broad context, the following measures will be used to minimize potential impacts from the implementation of the selected alternative. These measures will be applied subject to funding and staffing levels. Additional mitigation measures will be identified as part of implementation planning and for individual projects to further minimize resource impacts.

Management and Protection of Natural Resources

Air Quality

- Minimize NPS vehicle use and emissions and employ the best available control technology.
- Encourage public and commercial tour bus companies to employ transportation methods that reduce emissions.
- Encourage employee carpooling and strive to accommodate employee work schedules to maximize carpooling ability.
- Implement a no idling policy for all government vehicles.
- Coordinate and consolidate trips to town and other locations with monument wide communication system to accomplish multiple tasks and carpooling, when possible.
- Implement sustainable practices in monument operations and building designs that reduce energy demands, thus reducing air pollution emissions.
- Strive for carbon neutral status in the monument by reducing greenhouse gas emissions while increasing carbon sequestration through improved forest health management.

Natural Sounds

- Implement standard noise abatement measures during monument operations, including: scheduling to minimize impacts in noise-sensitive areas, using the best available noise control techniques, using hydraulically or electrically powered impact tools when feasible, and locating stationary noise sources as far from sensitive habitat and concentrated visitor use areas as possible.
- Locate and design facilities to minimize above-ambient noise.
- Avoid idling motors when power tools, equipment, and vehicles are not in use.
- Implement a soundscape management policy that will the predominance of natural sounds unimpacted by operational, visitor, and recreational uses.

Dark Night Skies (Lightscapes)

- When outdoor lighting is needed, install energy-efficient lights equipped with timers and/or motion detectors so that light would only be provided when it is needed to move safely between locations.
- Use low-impact lighting, such as diffused light bulbs, and techniques such as downlighting to prevent light spill and to preserve the natural lightscape.

Hydrologic Systems, Water Quality, and Wetlands

- For projects requiring ground disturbance, implement erosion control measures as appropriate, including mitigating unnatural discharge into water bodies. Regularly inspect construction equipment and vehicles for leaks of petroleum and other chemicals to prevent water pollution. Avoid the use of heavy equipment nearby and/or within wetlands or riparian habitat.
- Wash (off-site from the monument) heavy equipment and vehicles prior to use in or near water bodies.
- Use bio-lubricants (such as biodiesel and hydraulic fluid) in construction equipment.
- Develop and implement a spill prevention and response plan and acquire supporting equipment.

- Integrate runoff management and mitigation systems into the designs of parking areas near water resources.
- Develop sediment control and prevention plans and implement best management practices for projects that could impact water quality.
- Delineate wetlands and avoid all impacts (to the extent possible) to these habitats. Where impacts are unavoidable follow appropriate law and policy to mitigate loss.
- Conduct project activities near wetlands in a cautious manner to prevent damage from equipment, and related to compaction, erosion, siltation, etc. Apply protection measures during projects.
- Consult with NPS Water Resources Division regarding the wetlands Statement of Findings process for any potential wetland impacts.
- Avoid infrastructure development in frequently-inundated floodplains and adjacent to wetland and riparian habitat.
- Reduce and reuse wastewater

Soils

- Site new facilities on soils suitable for the type and scale of development proposed.
- Minimize soil erosion by limiting the time that soil is left exposed and by applying other erosion control measures, such as erosion matting, silt fencing, and temporary sedimentation basins in construction areas to reduce erosion, surface scouring, and discharge to water bodies.
- Require all project managers to implement the monument's invasive plant management prevention and treatment program.
- Once work is completed, revegetate construction areas with appropriate native plants in a timely period according to revegetation plans.

Vegetation

- Monitor areas used by visitors (e.g., trails, campsites) for signs of native vegetation disturbance. Use public education, revegetation of disturbed areas with native plants, erosion control measures, and barriers to control potential impacts on plants from erosion, trampling or social trails.
- Minimize size and number of staging areas, overflow parking and operational impacts to vegetation by delineating these areas and revegetating if necessary.
- Develop revegetation plans for disturbed areas and require the use of genetically appropriate native species. Revegetation plans will specify species to be used, seed/plant source, seed/plant mixes, site-specific restoration conditions, soil preparation, erosion control, ongoing maintenance and monitoring requirements, etc. Salvaged vegetation will be used to the greatest extent possible.
- Implement the monument's invasive plant prevention, treatment and management plan focusing on prevention and rapid response. Standard measures could include the following elements: use only weed-seed-free materials for road and trail construction, repair, and maintenance; ensure equipment arrives on site free of mud or seed-bearing material; certify all feed as weed-free for administrative pack stock; identify areas of invasive or nonnative plants pre-project and treat any populations or infested topsoil before construction (e.g., topsoil segregation, storage, herbicide treatment); when depositing ditch spoils along the roads, limit the movement of material to as close as possible to the excavation site; scrupulously and regularly inspect areas that serve as introduction points for invasive or nonnative plants (campgrounds, staging areas, maintenance areas, and corrals on nearby sites); revegetate with genetically appropriate native species; inspect rock and gravel sources to ensure these areas are free of invasive and nonnative plant species; and monitor locations of ground-disturbing operations for at least three years following the completion of projects.

Wildlife

- Employ techniques to reduce direct human impacts to wildlife, including visitor education programs, proper food storage, restrictions on visitor and park activities when warranted, development and use of best management practices for management activities (including construction), permit conditions, temporary and/or permanent closures of sensitive sites, and law enforcement patrols.
- Implement measures to reduce adverse effects of nonnative plants and wildlife on native species.
- Protect and preserve critical habitat features, such as riparian areas, wetlands, nesting sites, roosting sites and migration corridors, whenever possible.

Special Status Species

- Mitigation actions will occur during normal park operations as well as before, during, and after projects to minimize immediate and long-term impacts on rare, threatened, and endangered species. These actions will vary by project area, and additional mitigation measures may be added depending on the action and location. Many of the measures listed for vegetation, wildlife, and water resources will also benefit species that are rare, threatened, endangered and /or of management concern by helping to preserve or minimize impacts on habitat.
- Conduct surveys and monitoring for special status species as warranted.
- Locate and design facilities/actions/operations to avoid or minimize impacts on special status species habitat. If avoidance is infeasible, minimize and mitigate for adverse effects as appropriate and in consultation with technical experts.
- Minimize disturbance to special status species, nesting, and migratory bird habitat through spatial and temporal planning.
- Develop and implement restoration and/or monitoring plans as warranted. Plans should include methods for implementation, performance standards, monitoring criteria, and adaptive management techniques.

Management and Protection of Cultural Resources

- Pursue strategies to protect cultural resources, including museum collections and archeological, historic, ethnographic, and archival resources, while encouraging visitors and employees to recognize and understand their value.
- In accordance with NPS management policies, protect and maintain cultural resources that have been included in wilderness according to the pertinent laws and policies governing cultural resources, using management methods that are consistent with the preservation of wilderness character and values (6.3.8). These laws include the National Historic Preservation Act, the Archeological Resources Protection Act, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and Executive Order 13007 that addresses government-to-government consultation.
- Avoid adverse impacts to properties determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. If adverse impacts could not be avoided, mitigation will be developed in consultation with SHPO, tribes, and other consulting parties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800, the implementing regulations for the National Historic Preservation Act.

Archeological Resources

- Known archeological sites will be periodically monitored to track their condition, identify any new or emerging threats, and identify any treatment measures necessary for their preservation and protection.
- Consultation with traditionally associated American Indian tribes and groups will help inform managers of the traditional cultural and religious significance of these resources.

- Archeological surveys will precede ground-disturbance required for new construction or other management activities. Known archeological resources will be avoided to the greatest extent possible.
- If previously unknown archeological resources are discovered during any project work, work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will be halted until the resources could be identified, evaluated, and documented and an appropriate mitigation strategy could be developed, if necessary, in consultation with the state historic preservation office and associated American Indian tribes and groups.
- If previously unknown archeological resources are discovered as a result of natural processes, these resources will be documented, added to the monument's inventory, stabilized where feasible and appropriate, and included in the periodic monitoring program.

Ethnographic Resources

- Maintain active tribal consultation program for identification and evaluation of natural and cultural resources with cultural and religious significance to traditionally associated American Indian tribes and groups, as well as recommendations for management.
- Consult with tribes and groups regarding monument undertakings with the potential to affect resources of cultural and religious significance to ensure tribal perspectives are understood, and adverse effects are avoided or minimized.

Historic Resources

- Documented historic sites, structures, buildings and landscapes will be periodically monitored to track their condition, identify any new or emerging threats, and identify any treatment measures necessary for their preservation and protection.
- Cyclic maintenance, periodic repair, and rehabilitation of historic buildings, structures, and landscapes will be undertaken in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties in order to protect and maintain the integrity and significance of the resources.

Scenic Resources

- Design, site, and construct facilities to minimize adverse effects on natural and cultural resources and visual intrusion.
- Provide vegetative screening, where appropriate.

Socioeconomic Environment

- During the future planning and implementation of the approved management plan for Devils Postpile National Monument, National Park Service staff will pursue partnerships with tribes, local communities, and county governments to further identify potential impacts and mitigating measures that will best serve the interests and concerns of both the National Park Service and the local communities.

Sustainable Design

- Sustainable practices will be used in the selection of building materials and sources and building location and siting. Design standards specific to the monument will be developed in all repair, rehabilitation, and construction projects.
- Projects will use sustainable practices and resources whenever practicable by recycling, reusing, and minimizing materials, minimizing energy consumption during construction, and reducing energy needs throughout the lifespan of the project.
- As required by Management Policies (NPS 2006), new buildings will be designed to meet a minimum silver LEED standard.

- As stated in the Devils Postpile Climate Friendly Parks Action Plan, the monument will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing energy efficiency in all park buildings and housing, utilizing alternative energy sources when possible, and reducing transportation-related emissions through behavioral change.

Wilderness

The Minimum Requirement / Minimum Tool process provides a method for developing, evaluating, and selecting the actions that will be the least intrusive on wilderness character and values. The concept is applied to all management actions, programs, and activities within Devils Postpile National Monument that might affect wilderness. The minimum requirement / minimum tool concept is applied as a two-step process. The first step (minimum requirement) is used to determine whether a proposed management action is appropriate and necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness, and a determination that it would not cause unacceptable impacts on wilderness resources and character, in accordance with the Wilderness Act. The second step (minimum tool) is used to analyze the techniques and types of equipment needed to ensure that impacts on wilderness resources and character are minimized. If the project is found to be appropriate and necessary, then a management method (tool or technique) is selected that would result in the least amount of impact to the wilderness resources and character.

Implementation of the General Management Plan

Once the GMP planning process is completed, the selected alternative will become the new management plan for the park and will be implemented in phases. More detailed planning and environmental documentation may be completed, as appropriate, before some of the actions will be carried out. The monument's annual work planning effort will help develop priorities that determine how best to implement the GMP.

Other Alternatives Evaluated

Two other alternatives were considered for Devils Postpile National Monument. Alternative A (The No Action Alternative) served as the basis for evaluating and comparing the other alternatives. Alternative A was the "no action" alternative and assumed that existing management, programming, facilities, staffing, and funding would generally continue at their current levels. A no action alternative is required by the National Environmental Policy Act and is a baseline for comparison in evaluating the changes and impacts of the other alternatives. The emphasis of alternative A was to protect the values of Devils Postpile National Monument without substantially increasing staff, programs, funding support, or facilities. Resource preservation and protection would have continued to be a high priority for the management of the monument. Staff would have continued to work with the Inyo National Forest on projects of mutual interest, on a case-by-case basis. Management of visitor use and facilities would generally have continued under existing levels and types of services and regulations. Existing visitor facilities, such as buildings, structures, roads, parking areas, camping areas, and trails, would have been maintained. Most administrative facilities would also have been maintained with the exception of the monument's inadequate maintenance building which would have been replaced.

Alternative B (Watershed Emphasis) proposed a greater emphasis on managing and promoting visitor understanding of the monument's place in the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River watershed. Resource management and visitor programming would have emphasized watershed values, natural processes, and adaptation of infrastructure/systems to a changing environment. Science and learning opportunities would have been directed toward watershed issues and increasing visitor understanding of the broad importance of the watershed. Enhanced orientation to the watershed would have been provided through improvements outside of

the watershed. Minaret Vista was identified as an ideal location for those improvements. Alternative B generally envisioned slightly less development in the monument than currently exists. This alternative included a proposal to remove overnight camping from the monument and converting the operation to day-use only.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The environmentally preferable alternative is defined as “the alternative that will promote national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act.” Section 101 states that it is the continuing responsibility of the federal government to . . .

- fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- 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
- 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 preferred 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 identified for Devils Postpile National Monument was alternative C: Connecting People to Nature and Heritage, the selected alternative. This alternative best satisfied the national environmental goals by providing 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 range of visitor uses and understanding.

Both of the action alternatives (alternative B: Watershed Emphasis and the selected alternative) would have provided a high level of protection of natural resources, although the selected alternative provides a slightly higher level of protection for cultural resources. In addition, the selected alternative provides a wider range of visitor opportunities than alternative B, thus better fulfilling criteria 3. The selected alternative will also provide the greatest educational and research opportunities to foster better understanding of the monument’s resources, therefore better equipping the monument in fulfilling NEPA criteria 3, 4, and 5.

Alternative A, No Action, while accurately describing the current management direction and best efforts of the staff, failed to satisfy the NEPA requirements outlined above when compared to the action alternatives. A shortage of funding, staff, programs, facilities, and services limited the monument’s effectiveness in achieving NEPA criteria 1, 4, and 6.

Why the Selected Alternative Will Not Have a Significant Effect on the Quality of the Human Environment

The NPS has determined that the selected alternative can be implemented with no significant adverse effects on natural resources, cultural resources, wilderness character, scenic resources, visitor opportunities, socioeconomics, or monument operations. This determination is based on the environmental impact analysis published in the draft GMP which examined the effects of alternatives A-C.

As defined in 40 CFR § 1508.27, significance of impacts is determined by examining the ten criteria below.

IMPACTS THAT MAY BE BOTH BENEFICIAL AND ADVERSE. A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT MAY EXIST EVEN IF THE FEDERAL AGENCY BELIEVES THAT ON BALANCE THE EFFECT WILL BE BENEFICIAL.

The NPS evaluated the potential environmental consequences of each alternative related to the following topics: natural resources, cultural resources, wilderness character, scenic resources, visitor opportunities, socioeconomics, and monument operations. A range of both adverse impacts and beneficial effects is associated with the actions in the selected alternative.

Visitors would benefit from a reconfigured day use and campground area, trail planning, and an expanded visitor service presence in Mammoth Lakes. Natural resources, cultural resources, and NPS operations would benefit greatly from increased staffing in these program areas, a greater focus on interagency management, a watershed management approach, an interagency maintenance facility, and increased restoration efforts. Negligible to moderate adverse impacts were also identified for some of these actions. Long-term impacts are primarily localized, as a result of development. Many of the impacts identified were short-term in nature, resulting primarily as the result of construction activities for trail work and facility improvements. These impacts would be mitigated through monitoring, careful siting, restoration, the visitor capacity program, and other measures.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE PROPOSED ACTION ADVERSELY AFFECTS PUBLIC HEALTH OR SAFETY.

The selected alternative will not adversely affect public health or safety. Several of the actions will benefit public health and safety, including the addition of ranger staff, enhanced visitor education and interpretation, and improvements to maintenance operations.

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA SUCH AS PROXIMITY TO HISTORIC OR CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARK LANDS, PRIME FARMLANDS, WETLANDS, WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS, OR ECOLOGICALLY CRITICAL AREAS.

Devils Postpile National Monument contains both cultural resources and ecologically sensitive areas. These types of resources are among the values that the selected alternative would enhance and protect through increased staffing, restoration activities, and interpretation and education. Recommendation of the Upper Middle Fork San Joaquin River for wild and scenic designation will benefit river-related resources. No significant adverse impacts to these resources resulting from any of the action alternatives have been identified.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH EFFECTS ON THE QUALITY OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT ARE LIKELY TO BE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL.

No highly controversial effects, resulting from actions proposed in the alternatives, were identified during either initial public scoping, public review of the preliminary alternatives, preparation of the environmental assessment, or during the public review of the draft GMP.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON THE QUALITY OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT ARE HIGHLY UNCERTAIN OR INVOLVE UNIQUE OR UNKNOWN RISKS.

There were no highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks identified during either the preparation of the environmental assessment or the public review period.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE ACTION MAY ESTABLISH A PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE ACTIONS WITH SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OR REPRESENTS A DECISION IN PRINCIPLE ABOUT A FUTURE CONSIDERATION.

The selected alternative neither establishes a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. Future actions not addressed in the GMP would require additional environmental impact analysis and, if different than the GMP, amendment to the GMP.

WHETHER THE ACTION IS RELATED TO OTHER ACTIONS WITH INDIVIDUALLY INSIGNIFICANT BUT CUMULATIVELY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS. SIGNIFICANCE EXISTS IF IT IS REASONABLE TO ANTICIPATE A CUMULATIVELY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT. SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS CANNOT BE AVOIDED BY TERMING AN ACTION TEMPORARY OR BY BREAKING IT DOWN INTO SMALL COMPONENT PARTS.

Other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions were analyzed for their potential to contribute to cumulative impacts in association with implementation of the selected alternative. The selected alternative seeks to ameliorate the adverse effects associated with proposed actions so that the overall level of cumulative impact under each impact topic would either be arrested or would decline compared to the no action alternative. The effects of the selected alternative would comprise a very small component of these cumulative impacts, given the size and scope of the landscape within and surrounding the park. Overall, the impacts of the selected alternative, combined with the negligible to major adverse impacts from other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, would not result in a significant cumulative adverse effect.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE ACTION MAY ADVERSELY AFFECT DISTRICTS, SITES, HIGHWAYS, STRUCTURES, OR OBJECTS LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES OR MAY CAUSE LOSS OR DESTRUCTION OF SIGNIFICANT SCIENTIFIC, CULTURAL, OR HISTORIC RESOURCES.

Overall, protection of historic structures and sites would be improved through the selected alternative.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE ACTION MAY ADVERSELY AFFECT AN ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES OR ITS HABITAT THAT HAS BEEN DETERMINED TO BE CRITICAL UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT OF 1973.

Increased restoration, interpretation and education, and habitat protection would provide mostly beneficial effects to threatened and endangered species and habitat. With mitigation, as described above, proposed actions are not likely to affect special status species. Reconfiguration of the campground and day use area and construction of a joint maintenance facility would both require further environmental analysis during planning that would precede implementation, with more specific section 7 analysis. The selected alternative would not significantly affect federally endangered or threatened species.

WHETHER THE ACTION THREATENS A VIOLATION OF FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL LAW OR REQUIREMENTS IMPOSED FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

The selected alternative would not violate federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

Public Engagement and Agency Coordination

Public Engagement

Public involvement and consultation efforts were ongoing throughout the process of preparing this Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. Public involvement methods included conducting public meetings and workshops, holding stakeholder meetings, distributing newsletters, posting planning information on appropriate websites, published Federal Register notices, posting information at the monument, and sending press releases. Public involvement is a necessary and important part of the planning process that provides valuable information. Consultation and coordination among the agencies, American Indian tribes, and the public were vitally important throughout the planning process. The public had two formal avenues for participation in the development of the draft plan: participation in public meetings and opportunities to provide comments on

information presented in newsletters. Public comments were also welcomed at any time throughout the GMP planning process.

The Devils Postpile National Monument GMP planning team initially launched the GMP planning process in 2009. The official public scoping period was initiated on June 15, 2009 and closed on September 30, 2009. In July 2011, the park released preliminary management concepts for public review. Comments on the preliminary management concepts were received through September 30, 2011.

In August 2014, the Draft GMP and Environmental Assessment (DGMP/EA) was released for public review, with the review period ending on September 30, 2014. The executive summary newsletter, announcing the comment period and public meeting, was sent to all organizations and individuals on the GMP mailing list, with instructions for accessing the full document online via the National Park Service's Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Hard copies of the full draft were sent to those individuals and organizations who requested them, as well as to consulting agencies and organizations. Approximately 325 copies of the newsletter and 68 copies of the printed full draft were mailed out. Another 400 copies of the newsletter and 125 copies of the printed full draft were handed out (or made available on request) to park visitors, stakeholders, and public meeting attendees. An email with links to the document on PEPC was sent out to 739 individuals and organizations who had expressed preference for receiving GMP updates via email.

Press releases announcing the availability of the document and asking for public comment were sent to five local newspapers and radio stations, as well as to local chambers of commerce, the public library, and community bulletin boards for posting. The Mammoth Times published an editorial encouraging comment on the Draft GMP during the comment period. Announcements were also made on the monument's website and on the monument's facebook page and twitter feed. Two stakeholder meetings were held in Mammoth Lakes that included presentations made to the Mono County Board of Supervisors and the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Two site visits were conducted at the monument for associated tribes. Two meetings were held for tribal members in Bishop and Big Pine. Four outreach sessions were conducted at the monument to inform visitors about the Draft GMP and ask for public comment. Comments on the DGMP/EA were received through September 30, 2014 via PEPC, email, and mail. The newsletter, email, and press releases also contained information on the public meeting.

On August 20, 2014 a public meeting was held at the Mammoth Lakes Library in Mammoth Lakes, California. The purpose of the meeting was to present the DGMP to the public and to record their comments. In addition to public meetings, briefings were given during local municipal meetings.

Agency Consultation

The Endangered Species Act of 1963, as amended, authorizes federal agencies to enter into early consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to ensure that any federal action would not jeopardize the existence of any listed species or destroy or adversely modify its habitat. During the preparation of this plan, NPS staff initiated consultation with the Sacramento U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office in June 2009 to determine what threatened and endangered species should be considered during preparation of the EA. During the public review period for this EA, additional consultation with the USFWS occurred with the same office to affirm concurrence with the determinations of effect on listed or proposed species.

In accordance with 2008 Programmatic Agreement and NPS Management Policies (2006a) the NPS has used the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to document compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for the Devils Postpile General Management Plan. To this end, the NPS instituted early scoping with agencies, tribes, and interested public, coordinated planning milestones in consideration of both

the NEPA and NHPA processes, included historic preservation issues in the alternatives development and impact analysis presented in the Environmental Assessment, and articulated the results of this analysis using methods and terminology appropriate to both the NEPA and the NHPA. In June of 2009, the NPS notified the California SHPO of the agency's intent to prepare a GMP, and invited representatives of the SHPO to participate in the scoping process. In December of 2009, the NPS provided resource reports (available at the time) as background information about historic properties on monument lands. In January 2010, the NPS notified the SHPO pursuant to 36 CFR 800.3(b) of the agency's intent to use the NEPA process to document compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA. In December of 2013, the NPS provided SHPO with the most current documentation on potential historic properties, the 2013 Administrative History and Historic Resource Study. During the public review period for the EA, the SHPO was again consulted, with no objections.

The park and planning team also met regularly with the U.S. Forest Service throughout the planning process. In addition, members of Congress, and state and local agencies and public officials were provided with periodic project updates and their input was sought.

Native American Consultation

The NPS consulted with traditionally associated American Indian tribes and groups in developing the GMP. These include the federally recognized Benton Paiute Reservation, Big Pine Paiute Tribe, Bishop Paiute Indian Reservation, Bridgeport Indian Colony, Fort Independence Indian Reservation, Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Indian Reservation, and North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians; and federally non-recognized the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Piute Indian Community and the North Fork Mono Tribe. During the public scoping period NPS staff invited several American Indian groups to meet to discuss the general management planning process underway and any concerns they might have about protecting, preserving, and managing Devils Postpile National Monument's resources (September 11, 2009). A second open house was held on September 16, 2011 to initiate consultation on the preliminary alternatives. A third open house was held on August 19, 2014 to receive input on the draft GMP.

Comment Summary

The planning team received 27 written and electronic comment letters. Agencies, organizations, and businesses that submitted comments include: Inyo National Forest, Friends of the Inyo, Reds Meadow Resort, Mono County Supervisors, Town of Mammoth Lakes, Range of Light Group (Sierra Club), Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation, National Parks Conservation Association, Mono Lake Committee, Mammoth Lakes Recreation, and the Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association.

Overall, most commenters supported the preferred alternative's approach for visitor and resource management. Many commenters supported the alternative's focus on partnerships, particularly with other agencies and recreation-related organizations. Some commenters expressed concerns about retaining capacity within the monument campground and removal of interpretive signage from Rainbow Falls. Several commenters suggested specific partnership opportunities, trail connections or designations, and operational needs to be considered by the monument. Designation of the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River as a wild and scenic river and continuation of commercial stock use in the monument were widely supported.

All comments and NPS responses to those comments are fully documented in the project's administrative record (which is accessible on the PEPC website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/depo>). Minor edits and text corrections to the DGMP/EA derived from public comments are documented in Errata, prepared as a technical attachment to the EA.

Conclusion

Based on the environmental analysis as documented in the EA, together with the capability of the mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, or eliminate impacts, and with due consideration for the nature of public comments, the NPS has determined that the approved plan is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are not significant and no impairment of park values and resources would occur. There are no unacceptable impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial environmental consequences, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the selected alternative will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an environmental impact statement is not required for this general management plan and thus will not be prepared. Plan elements, programs and other activities can be implemented as soon as practicable but not sooner than 30 days following the date of the approval of the General Management Plan.

Recommended:

Deanna M. Dulen

Deanna M. Dulen, Superintendent

January 13, 2015

Date

Approved:

Christine S. Lehnertz

Christine S. Lehnertz, Pacific West Regional Director

01/26/2015

Date