



Preliminary Alternatives Newsletter



Dear Friends:

We are continuing to work on the development of a new general management plan for John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, which will determine the monument's management goals for the next 15 to 20 years. This planning effort began in fall 2004, and we are approximately one-third of the way through the process. This newsletter updates our progress and seeks your views on the future of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

This newsletter presents four preliminary alternatives for managing the monument. Each alternative has a slightly different approach to cultural and natural resource management, to facilities, and to visitor opportunities in the monument. The planning team developed these alternatives based on the monument's purpose and significance, issues facing the monument, our legal mandates, and comments the public provided during the scoping period.

We would like your comments and suggestions on the preliminary alternatives presented in this newsletter. You may like some but not all of the elements of the preliminary alternatives described here, or you may like a particular concept but disagree with the actions that may be taken to translate that concept into actual visitor experiences or resource protection. Or you may have an entirely different vision on how the monument should be managed. If so, we'd like to hear from you. Your comments will help the National Park Service formulate the best possible future for the monument.

We have included a mail-in form for your comments. You may also send in comments over the internet to: <http://park-planning.nps.gov>. In addition, we will hold public open house meetings in Fossil, Dayville, and John Day in March for you to meet with us and personally comment on these alternatives. Specific meeting dates, locations, and times are found below.

Based on the public's comments, the planning team will reevaluate the alternatives, modify them as necessary, and develop a preferred alternative. Our preferred alternative may be one of the alternatives in this newsletter, it may include elements from several of the alternatives, or it may be an entirely new alternative. The draft alternatives and an analysis of the impacts of implementing each alternative will be presented in a Draft General Management Plan.

I sincerely value your input regarding the future management of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, and thank you in advance for your participation. Public communication, collaboration, and cooperation are essential to developing a successful general management plan. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions — 32651 Highway 19 Kimberly, OR 97848-9701; 541-987-2333.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim F. Hammett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jim Hammett
Superintendent

The Planning Process

Park planning is organized around three primary questions:

1. WHY was the monument established and what is its overall mission?
2. WHAT is the vision for the future (what kind of place do we want John Day Fossil Beds to be in the next 15 to 20 years?)
3. HOW do we accomplish our future vision?

Statements of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument's purpose and significance provide answers to the WHY questions and form the foundation for the general management plan. Developing a vision for the monument's future (answering the WHAT question) is the primary function of the general management plan.

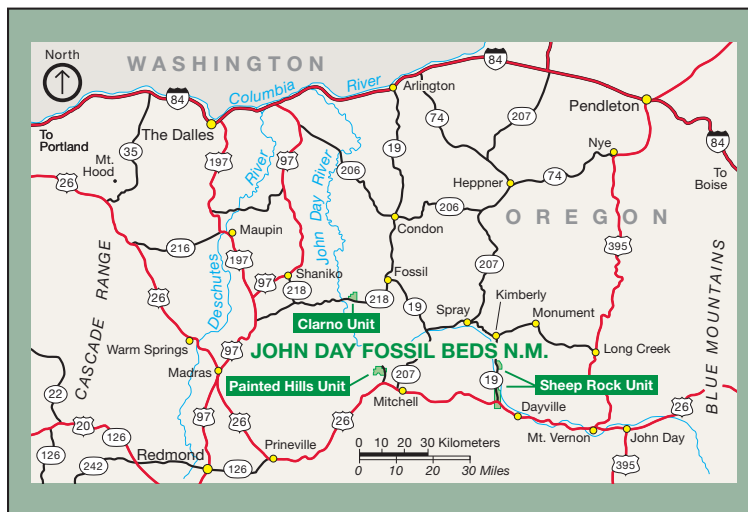
In Newsletter # 1 (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/joda>), we sent you the monument's purpose (see inset), and significance statements and asked for your input regarding management of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

We also held meetings throughout the John Day basin to solicit input from the public. During those meetings, a wide range of issues were discussed, particularly those focused on trail, fossil protection, and interpretation issues. Some members of the public expressed a desire to see more trails throughout the monument along with additional trailhead development in select locations. Other comments regarding interpretation and education issues generally centered on a desire to expand educational programs throughout the John Day basin and within the monument. Members of the public also stressed the need to better preserve monument resources, particularly the fossils and delicate landscape unique to the monument.

Monument Purpose

Purpose statements clarify the reasons why John Day Fossil Beds National Monument was established as part of the national park system and provide the foundation for the management and use of the national monument. Such statements are based on a unit's establishing legislation and legislative history, other special designations, and NPS policies.

The purpose of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument is to preserve and interpret the paleontological resources of the John Day region and the natural, scenic, and cultural resources within the boundaries of the national monument.



Development of the Preliminary Alternatives

Both the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Park Service (NPS) planning process require us to examine a range of different futures or alternative approaches for managing John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. Alternatives are an important part of responsible planning. They allow managers, users, partners, and interested citizens to come together and explore different approaches to protecting resources, managing use, directing development, and resolving conflicts within national park system units. This ensures that trends, impacts, trade-offs, and the public's ideas and concerns have been considered before a management approach is selected for the monument.

All alternatives must be consistent with the purposes for which the monument was established. The alternatives must be reasonable, and must be consistent with other existing legislative mandates (e.g., the Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act) and NPS policies.

The Preliminary Alternatives

During spring 2005, the planning team developed four preliminary alternatives for managing the monument. These preliminary alternatives are described in this newsletter. For each alternative there is a concept statement that generally describes the guiding philosophy or overall direction for that alternative. After the concept there is a general description of the management directions and actions that would be taken for natural and cultural resources, visitor experiences, access, and facilities under that alternative. At the end of this section there is a more detailed table comparing the preliminary alternatives.

Several points are important to keep in mind while reading the alternatives. These are initial ideas. The alternatives may contain some gaps and inconsistencies, and some ideas may not

be fully developed. With your input, the planning team will continue to refine the alternatives. Unless otherwise stated, all existing uses and visitor and administrative facilities would continue in the monument under all of the alternatives.

The alternatives are conceptual in nature, focusing on what resource conditions and visitor experiences should be in John Day Fossil Beds National Monument rather than on details on how they should be achieved. Thus, the alternatives do not contain details on facility designs and locations, describe specific management techniques, or identify specific trail alignments and routes. Additional feasibility studies and more detailed planning and environmental documentation will be required before developments proposed in any alternative are built.

Keep in mind that implementation of any of these alternatives depends on funding. The general management plan will establish a vision of the future that will guide year-to-year management of the monument, but full implementation of the plan could be many years in the future.

Finally, the alternatives that follow define the range of alternatives the National Park Service is considering for John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. It must be stressed that no decision has been made on which alternative the National Park Service will select as its preferred alternative. A preferred alternative will be developed once we have analyzed your comments on the alternatives and after additional analysis of the alternatives has been completed.

No Action Alternative (Current Management)

This alternative provides a baseline for evaluating changes and impacts in the other alternatives. Under the no-action alternative, the National Park Service would continue to manage John Day Fossil Beds National Monument as it has been managed since the approval of the 1979 General Management Plan. For the foreseeable future there would be no major change in the management of the national monument. All facilities and resource programs would continue as they are. The natural resource program would continue to focus on inventorying and monitoring; resource protection; and preservation, mitigation, and applied research efforts. The cultural resource program would continue to focus on protecting historic structures and landscapes, particularly in and around the Cant Ranch. The National Park Service would continue to foster partnerships with other agencies, primarily for resource stewardship and interpretive and administrative purposes. The education programs would continue to focus primarily on schools and regional organizations focused on paleontology.



Alternative A

In alternative A, the National Park Service would focus on limiting environmental impacts in all units of the monument and all phases of operation while still fulfilling the monument's mission. Sustainability of scenic, cultural, and paleontological resources would be emphasized, and environmental conditions in the monument would be restored and enhanced whenever possible.

The monument staff would lead by example in ways such as using alternative energy for monument operations, participating in local recycling programs, and minimizing irrigation water and pesticides. In an effort to minimize human impacts within the monument, visitors would be required to use existing trails. No new trails would be constructed, and social trails would be eliminated. Group sizes would be limited in the backcountry, no new monument facilities would be constructed, and existing facilities would be made more energy efficient if possible.

Some of the actions that would be taken under this alternative to protect and restore resources would include the following:

- closing the Leaf-Hill trail in the Painted Hills Unit
- restoring the cultural landscape in the vicinity of the Cant Ranch house

On a regional level, NPS staff would increase the amount of education provided outside the monument boundaries. Education programs would concentrate on issues such as preservation of monument resources and sustainability efforts within the National Park Service.



Alternative B

In alternative B, the National Park Service would focus on gaining a greater understanding of all the monument's resources through research. NPS staff would actively seek and distribute knowledge of the monument's fundamental resources through partnerships with local, regional, and national organizations.

In this alternative NPS staff would be more likely to approve the excavation of paleontological sites for research purposes. Research facilities might also be expanded, along with the scope and size of the monument's collections. To expand monument collections, staff would seek more partnerships with other research institutions and museums while expanding the permanent and volunteer research staff at the monument.

Among the actions that would be taken under alternative B are the following:

- opening the Hancock mammal quarry for researchers in the Clarno Unit
- developing a new geo-loop trail for visitors in the Clarno Unit
- closing the Leaf-Hill trail in the Painted Hills Unit

Any new facilities constructed, such as trails and trailheads, would be developed with the goal of providing better access to research sites. Expanding interpretive programs at locations such as the mammal quarry may take place, and the public would be provided better access to important research areas that are now difficult to access or are unpublicized.

Alternative C

In alternative C, the National Park Service would focus on emotionally and intellectually connecting the visitor to the resources of the monument. The visitor would have exceptional opportunities to experience and enjoy the monument, and visitor opportunities would be the focus of most management actions. Additional facilities such as trails, bridges, and access roads would be constructed to provide greater access to select destinations in the monument. The number of interpretive programs and facilities would also be increased to better connect with the diverse groups traveling to the monument. One way of doing so would be to open up the world-renowned mammal quarry to researchers and allow the public to visit and see ongoing archeological work in the quarry. Other means of expanding interpretation would be to increase the number of rangers in the monument that could answer visitor questions and provide interpretation away from monument resources that are difficult for some visitors to access.

Specific actions that would be taken under alternative C include the following:

- developing a geo-loop trail and an Indian Canyon trail for visitors in the Clarno Unit
- establishing a NPS kiosk/office in the Clarno Unit
- providing longer trails and/or loop trails in the Painted Hills Unit
- establishing a pedestrian bridge across the John Day River in the Sheep Rock Unit
- developing trails to Butler Basin and along the John Day River in the Sheep Rock Unit
- rehabilitating the barn in the Cant Ranch and opening it to visitors





Preliminary Alternatives Matrix

	NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C
Concept	Current Management	Focus would be on leading by example, particularly in environmental stewardship, including limiting environmental impacts, restoring and enhancing environmental conditions, maximizing sustainability of operations, and preserving all resources (scenic, natural, cultural, and paleontological).	Focus would be on a quest for additional knowledge in a wide range of subjects that relate to the monument's purpose.	Focus would be on the visitor experience — connecting visitors emotionally and intellectually to resources, and providing more opportunities for visitors to enjoy the monument.
Monument-wide	Continue to conduct NPS education/ interpretive activities concerning the environment and paleontological and geological resources.	Conduct more NPS education activities concerning the environment, paleontological and geological resources, and sustainability, focusing on web-based teaching.	Encourage more publications, and conduct more outreach to other researchers, parks, and agencies.	Conduct more NPS educational activities concerning the environment, paleontological and geological resources, and sustainability, focusing on web-based teaching.
	Maintain existing research program and facilities.	Maintain existing research program and facilities.	Maintain research facilities and expand research program.	Maintain existing research program and facilities.
	Maintain existing trails; visitors could continue to go off trails in areas that are vegetated.	Maintain most existing trails; require visitors to use designated trails; allow backcountry use on designated trails only.	Maintain most existing trails; require visitors to use designated trails; allow backcountry use on designated trails only.	Maintain existing trails; visitors could continue to go off trails in areas that are vegetated.

CLARNO UNIT				
	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C
Resource Management	Maintain official trails and remove undesig­nated trails (social trails) on an ad hoc basis. Continue to monitor water quality of Pine Creek.	Maintain official trails and remove undesig­nated trails. Conduct a study to determine if well water use is affecting Pine Creek.	Maintain official trails and remove undesig­nated trails. Conduct a study to determine if well water use is affecting Pine Creek.	Remove undesig­nated trails and maintain official trails Monitor water quality of Pine Creek.
Hancock Mammal Quarry	Do not open the Hancock mammal quarry.	Do not open the Hancock mammal quarry in an effort to preserve resource.	Open up and research the Hancock mammal quarry (for researchers only).	Open up the Hancock mammal quarry to researchers and allow the public to visit the quarry.
Visitor Use Management	Continue to permit large groups on an ad hoc basis.	Encourage large organized groups (e.g., Oregon Public Lands Institute, university groups) to go to other sites outside the monument on public lands in an effort to protect resources.	Continue to permit large groups on an ad hoc basis.	Continue to permit large groups on an ad hoc basis.
Trails, Trailheads, Parking Areas, and Roads	Maintain existing designated trails, trailhead, parking area, and road.	Maintain existing designated trails, trailhead, parking area, and road; eliminate undesig­nated trails.	Maintain existing designated trails, trailhead, parking area, and road; eliminate undesig­nated trails. Establish geo-loop trail for visitors with trailhead and parking area south of the Hancock Field Station.	Maintain existing designated trails, trailhead, parking area, and road; eliminate undesig­nated trails Establish geo-loop trail for visitors; develop new road past the Hancock Field Station with a parking area and trailhead within easy walking distance (less than 1 mile) of the Hancock tree. The trail to the tree would be universally accessible. Develop Indian Canyon trail, which would connect to the geo-loop trail.
Other Facilities	Maintain existing facilities.	Maintain existing facilities.	Maintain existing facilities. Build facility to protect and interpret the mammal quarry.	Maintain existing facilities. Construct a kiosk/office at the picnic area.

PAINTED HILLS UNIT				
	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C
Resource Management	Continue to focus on monitoring and protecting resources, limiting the spread of nonnative species, and minimizing visitor impacts.	Same as alternative A plus: Return picnic area to native condition (limited watering to no water). Restore the Bridge Creek riparian area in conjunction with a minor boundary change.	Continue to focus on monitoring and protecting resources, limiting the spread of nonnative species, and minimizing visitor impacts.	Continue to focus on monitoring and protecting resources, limiting the spread of nonnative species, and minimizing visitor impacts.
Visitor Use Management (Leaf Hill)	No change in public access to Leaf Hill.	Discourage public access to Leaf Hill.	Discourage public access to Leaf Hill.	No change in public access to Leaf Hill.
Trails, Trailheads, Parking Areas, and Roads	Continue to maintain facilities.	Remove Leaf Hill trail, trailhead, and parking area to prevent future resource impacts. Continue to maintain other facilities.	Remove Leaf Hill trail, trailhead, and parking area to prevent future resource impacts. Continue to maintain other facilities.	Continue to maintain all facilities, including the Leaf Hill trail, trailhead, and parking area while addressing fossil impacts. Provide longer trails/loop trail(s) past Leaf Hill to allow visitors to recreate and connect to resources. In cooperation with Wheeler County, pursue paving the road from the monument entrance to Painted Cove, including the Painted Hills overlook spur. Redesign the Painted Hills overlook and the parking area.
Other Facilities	Continue to maintain facilities.	Continue to maintain facilities.	Continue to maintain facilities.	Continue to maintain facilities. Provide shade structures at the picnic area.



SHEEP ROCK UNIT				
	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C
Management	<p>Continue to maintain the cultural landscape (includes the area south of barn and corrals, lawn, parking area, and upper and lower orchards).</p> <p>Continue to irrigate fields.</p> <p>Continue to monitor riparian areas, protect resources, limit the spread of nonnative species, and restore native species.</p>	<p>Restore the Cant Ranch cultural landscape to the historical scene (includes area south of barn and corrals, lawn, parking area, and upper and lower orchards).</p> <p>Continue to irrigate fields, and emphasize and promote conservation efforts relating to maximizing efficiency of water use in the fields.</p> <p>Enhance riparian areas and restore biological/hydrological functions of the John Day River (remove dikes, pull out rock barbs).</p>	<p>Continue to maintain the cultural landscape.</p> <p>Conduct study to examine alternative treatments to various irrigated fields, such as planting native grass in the fields and not irrigating (collect data, investigate; could be long-term study).</p> <p>Continue to monitor riparian areas, protect resources, limit the spread of nonnative species, and restore native species.</p>	<p>Continue to maintain the cultural landscape.</p> <p>Continue to irrigate fields, and emphasize and promote conservation efforts relating to maximizing efficiency of water use in fields.</p> <p>Continue to monitor riparian areas, protect resources, limit the spread of nonnative species, and restore native species.</p>
Trails, Trail-heads, Parking Areas, and Roads	Continue to maintain facilities.	Continue to maintain facilities.	Continue to maintain facilities.	<p>Continue to maintain facilities plus:</p> <p>Provide trails along ditch/ John Day River in Cant Ranch area.</p> <p>Provide trail from paleontology center into Butler Basin.</p> <p>Provide self-guided walk in Cant Ranch area, with waysides.</p> <p>Provide a pedestrian bridge across the river in the historic district to provide visitor access to lands east of the river.</p>
Other Facilities	Continue to maintain facilities.	Continue to maintain facilities.	Continue to maintain facilities.	<p>Add picnic facilities in the paleontological center area.</p> <p>Provide a new restroom facility at Cant Ranch, near the ranch house.</p> <p>Rehabilitate the barn so visitors can safely enter for an interpretive experience.</p>

Management Zones

As part of the general management plan, management zones will be developed. Management zones identify how different areas of the monument could be managed to achieve a variety of resource conditions and visitor experiences. Each management zone specifies a particular combination of resource conditions, visitor experiences/activities, and appropriate development. Different actions would be taken by the National Park Service in different management zones with regard to the types and levels of uses and facilities. The planning team is developing a set of zones that would be appropriate at John Day Fossil Beds, and they will be presented in the Draft General Management Plan. In addition, the alternatives presented in the draft plan will be mapped using these zones to be used as a guide for future monument conditions and management.



User Capacity

General management plans are required to include identification of and implementation commitments for visitor carrying capacities (referred to here as user capacity) for all areas of the monument. The National Park Service defines user capacity as the type and level of visitor use that can be accommodated while sustaining the quality of monument resources and visitor opportunities consistent with the purposes of the monument. It is not necessarily a set of numbers or limits, but rather a process involving monitoring, evaluation, actions (managing visitor use), and adjustments to ensure that monument values are protected. There are three principal components that relate to determining the user capacity for a national park system unit:

- ecological or physical capacity, which includes the capabilities of the natural and cultural resources to sustain visitor use without unacceptable damage
- social capacity, which includes the ability of visitors to enjoy and appreciate these resources without undue interference by other visitors
- NPS management, which includes the efforts that have been or can be applied to the monument to mitigate unwanted impacts. This component relates to the management of things such as roads, parking areas, buildings, trails, and visitor information.



The first step in user capacity decision-making process is defining desired resource conditions, visitor experience conditions, and general levels of development and management for different areas of the monument (all of which are described in the management zones). The second step is determining which resource and/or social conditions related to visitor use (called indicators) will serve as triggers for determining if conditions are deteriorating to an unacceptable level (called standards). These user capacity indicators and standards are being developed and will be included in the Draft General Management Plan. The last steps in the user capacity decision-making process, which continues indefinitely, are monitoring the selected resource and/or social indicators, and taking action if the conditions are approaching unacceptable levels (the standards).

Monday
March 6, 2006
6:30 - 8:30 PM

Integrated Services Building,
401 4th Street
Fossil, Oregon

Tuesday
March 7, 2006
6:30 - 8:30 PM

Dayville Community Hall
Dayville, Oregon

Wednesday
March 8, 2006
6:30 - 8:30 PM

Malheur Forest Supervisor's Office,
413 Patterson Bridge Road
John Day, Oregon

You're invited...

If you live in the area, the planning team intends to arrange three open houses the week of March 6, 2006. We welcome your comments and suggestions on the preliminary alternatives presented in this newsletter. We hope to see you at one of the meetings listed below.



Schedule

	Planning Activity	Dates	Public Involvement Opportunities
1.	Set the stage for planning: Reaffirm purpose, significance, and mission of the monument; determine issues and concerns.	Fall 2004 to Winter 2004	Attend public meetings and voice your ideas/ concerns using a response form.
2.	Develop preliminary management alternatives: Identify a range of reasonable alternatives for the monument's future, assess their effects, analyze public reactions, and select a preferred alternative.	Winter 2004 to Spring 2006	Provide comments on the initial alternatives using a response form. Attend public meetings and provide comments.
3.	Prepare and publish Draft General Management Plan: Prepare draft describing the alternatives and impacts; distribute to the public.	Summer 2006 to Summer 2007	Provide written comments on the draft document. Attend public meetings and provide comments.
4.	Implement the approved plan: Prepare and issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) if applicable, and implement plan as funding allows.	Fall 2007 and beyond	Stay involved throughout the implementation of the approved plan.

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