

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Mormon Row Historic District Management Preferred Alternative
Grand Teton National Park

Introduction to and Purpose of the Project

The Mormon Row area was incorporated into Grand Teton in 1950. It is composed of six homesteads, the remnants of a once much larger community dating back to early 1900s. Mormon Row is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a rural historic district. The National Park Service prepared an environmental assessment titled, Mormon Row Historic District Management Alternatives and Environmental Assessment. The purpose of the project was to address such issues as deterioration of historic structures and lack of interpretation. The EA analyzed the impacts associated with 5 alternatives that would provide visitor-oriented infrastructure and interpretive facilities in the historic district.

Alternatives Considered

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and subsequent amendments require some level of preservation of the historic district. For this reason, the environmental assessment did not include a "no action" alternative.

The EA proposed five alternatives, which ranged from no development to a fully developed visitor facility and interpretive program. The park did not name a preferred alternative, but choose instead to offer a broad range of alternatives and solicit public input for the most appropriate treatment for the historic district. Alternative 1 proposed removal of selected structures, preservation of a representative core of buildings, and the cultural landscape features would be removed. Alternative 5 proposed retention of all the structures including restoration of some interiors and a fully staffed personal interpretation program. Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 proposed stepped levels of development building from Alternative 1 to the full level as presented in Alternative 5.

Public Involvement

The public review period for the environmental assessment lasted 60 days, ending September 13, 1999. Approximately 242 parties received copies of the document. Media services received a press release, generating short articles in regional newspapers and announcements on local radio stations.

The park received 118 comment letters. There were no comments stating that the EA was a flawed or poorly done document. In all, most responses supported a fully stabilized and preserved historic district, informative interpretation that does not impact the landscape, and well-hidden parking and infrastructure. There was a strong interest in keeping the rural and "abandoned" farmstead feel to the area while accommodating necessary improvements.

The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance commented that the document should have been part of an overall DCP for the east side of the park, but otherwise supported the preservation and interpretation goals.

Other Agency Comments

All appropriate local, state and federal agencies received a mailing regarding the EA. The agencies were provided either the complete document or a shortened version with an invitation to request the complete document. The information or comments provided by those who responded were utilized in developing the park's preferred alternative.

The park mailed the United States Fish and Wildlife Service a copy of the EA, but did not receive a response. The EA states that park biologists "have reviewed each alternative and determined that there would be no effect on threatened and endangered species" (p. 44-45). Under the Final ESA Intra-Service Consultation Handbook (March, 1998), "[w]hen the project leader determines that the proposed action will have 'no effect,' ...the intra-Service consultation /conference process ends. Concurrence from the ESO is not required...."

The National Park Service provided the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) documentation in support of a finding of no historic properties adversely affected in the area of potential effects in accordance with 36 CFI Part 800 regulations for implementation of Sec. 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The responded with support of alternatives 4 and 5.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Dept. questioned the adequacy of the wildlife impacts as presented in the document. The park believes that the impact analysis is sufficient.

WYG&F noted that there is a sage grouse lek within a quarter-mile of the Heniger Homestead, the northernmost homestead on Mormon Row. The sage grouse is specie of special concern; however it is not listed as threatened or endangered. The lek is utilized in April and May, which is a time of low visitation for all areas of the park. As a mitigation measure, park staff would monitor the area, and if increased visitor impacts adversely affected the lek, a seasonal wild life closure, signage, and increased patrols would be implemented for the area.

It is not anticipated that any of the proposed development would impact elk or bison migration. The elk reduction hunt in the fall takes place at a time of low visitor use for the park in general and some of the proposed infrastructure development would be an aid in the management of the hunt. No reduction in the areas open to hunting would be required with by the preferred alternative.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

After review of the public comments and the environmental analysis, the park chose to create a preferred alternative (referred to as the "proposal" in the Finding paragraph below) that takes elements from Alternatives 2 through 4. This preferred alternative is a management plan that would preserve and interpret the remaining structures and selected cultural landscape elements of the Mormon Row Historic District. It would locate visitor support infrastructure so that it would not interfere with the scenic qualities of the area. A site map and description of the action plan for the structures, visitor infrastructure, and interpretive plan is attached.

Finding

The proposal does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement. The proposal will not have significant impact on the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are minor and temporary in effect. There are no unmitigated adverse 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; known ethnographic resources; or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, cumulative effects or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the preferred alternative will not violate any federal, state or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended:

(for) Jack Neckels 3/27/00
Jack Neckels, Superintendent, Grand Teton National Park Date

Approved:

Karen Wade 4/19/00
Karen Wade, Director, Intermountain Region Date

INTERMOUNTAIN FIELD AREA COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION

This form is to be attached to all documents sent to the Regional Director for signature (Finding of No Significant Impact, Statement of Findings, Record of Decision).

All activities were carried out in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality Guidelines (40 CFR *et seq.*), the Department of Interior Manual (Part 516), and NPS-12, *National Environmental Policy Act Guideline*. All other appropriate compliance procedures (§106 of National Historic Preservation Act, §7 of Endangered Species Act, §404 of Clean Water Act, American Indian Religious Freedom Act, etc.) were also followed and completed.

As shown on the attached review checklist, all required procedural steps are complete.

Park: GRAND TETON

Project #: _____

Project

MORMON ROW HISTORIC DISTRICT INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Title:

Park/Document Preparer

MICHAEL JOHNSON, CULTURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIST, 03/23/00

GREG KENDRICK, TEAM LEADER

Name

Date

HISTORIAN, ROCKY MOUNTAIN SUPPORT OFFICE, NPS DENVER

Title

Superintendent

(for)

SE PL/A

3/27/00

Date

REVIEW CHECKLIST

Project MORMON ROW HIST. DIST. INTERP. PLAN Date _____

- ✓ Information included, no further action necessary
0 Information missing, needs to be included
? Unsure if information is included, add if not
N/A Not applicable

FONSI

Describe proposed action and alternatives considered

✓

Reference EA

✓

Identify environmentally preferable alternative and explain why not selected as proposal, if appropriate

✓

Following the list of significance criteria, provide explanation of mitigating measures (if mitigation reduces effect) and synopsis of effects

✓

Public involvement results shown

✓

All other required compliance (e.g. §106, §7, §404) is referenced and is complete

✓

FONSI includes the following paragraph:

✓

Negative environmental impacts that could occur are minor and temporary in effect. There are no unmitigated adverse 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, known ethnographic resources, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

Concludes with statement that the project does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and that an EIS will not be prepared

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