



PUBLIC SCOPING *for a proposal to* **Replace the St. Mary Entrance Station and** **Install an Aquatic Invasive Species Inspection Station**

As part of ongoing rehabilitation of the Going-to-the-Sun Road (GTSR), the roadway near the St. Mary entrance will be widened to better accommodate vehicle circulation (The plan and environmental compliance for this was completed in 2003 as part of the EIS for the GTSR rehabilitation).

New information on issues with the entrance station has resulted in the need to take a different action than was described in the road rehabilitation EIS. The park is now proposing to replace (instead of rehabilitate) the entrance station and establish an aquatic invasive species (AIS) inspection station.

ENTRANCE STATION

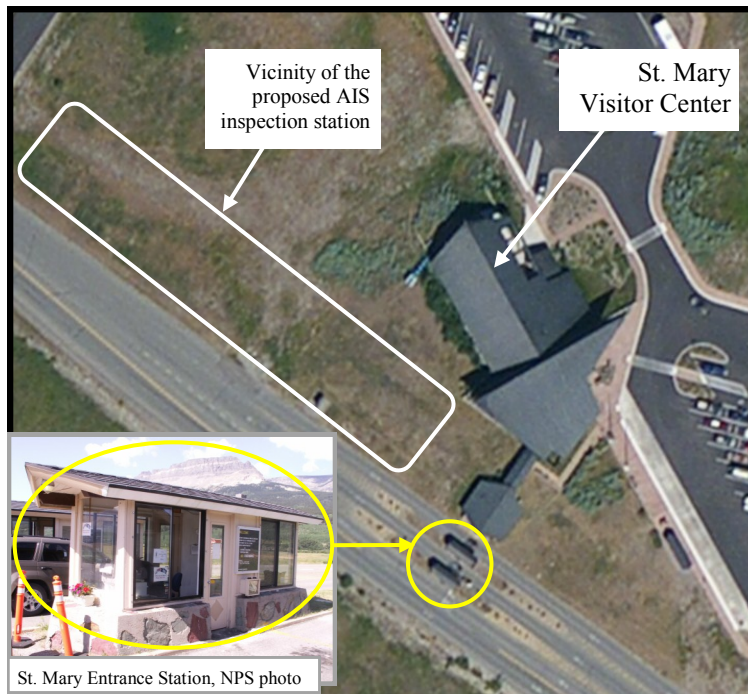
Background

The St. Mary Entrance Station was designed in 1964-65 and built in 1967-68, during the National Park Service (NPS) Mission 66 program, which was intended to improve park facilities for visitors and park employees. The St. Mary Visitor Center and Entrance Station reflect important elements of the history of park architecture and are outstanding examples of Mission 66 design by a local architectural firm. The entrance station buildings are contributing features of the 2008 designation of the St. Mary Visitor Center and Entrance Station to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

Entrance stations are important points of contact where park visitors purchase park passes, and obtain maps and other park information. In the 50 years since the existing entrance station was constructed, park visitation has increased dramatically. Vehicles entering the park are larger, and new technology has changed entrance station operations. Concerns include the following:

- Window position can cause back stress for employees.
- Wiring is retrofitted and exposed in places.
- Exiting the entrance station requires employees to step directly into traffic lanes.
- Height of eaves has been a factor in incidents of visitor vehicles hitting the structures.
- Lack of storage space.
- Windows leak.
- Internal layout of the buildings does not accommodate cash registers that meet NPS guidelines.

The park is proposing to replace the existing St. Mary Entrance Station with a new entrance station compatible in architectural design with the St. Mary Visitor Center. Construction would be concurrent with the GTSR rehabilitation in the area.

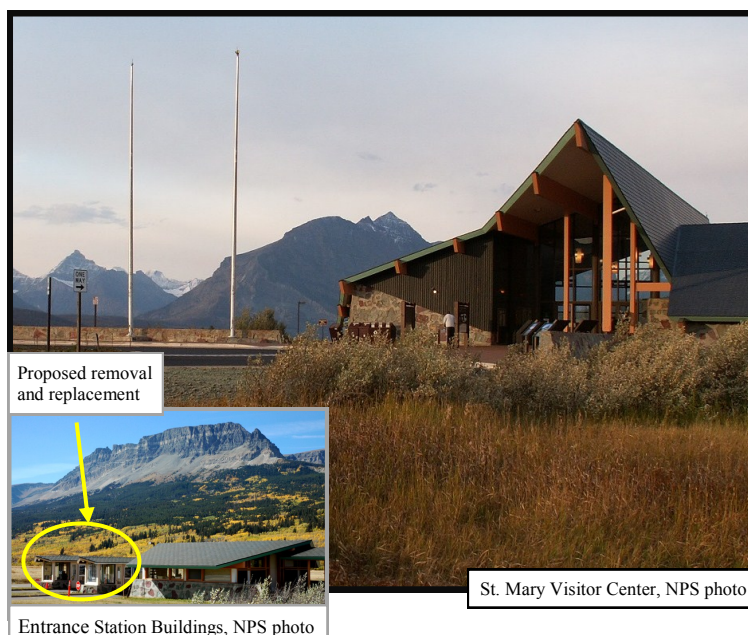


St. Mary Entrance Station, NPS photo

St. Mary Entrance Station area, showing locations of the proposed actions

Objectives:

- Provide safe and functional work environments for employees at the St. Mary Entrance Station.
- Improve vehicle access and circulation (including moving the employee inbound lane to the north side of the roadway to facilitate administrative access).
- Meet ABA Accessibility Standards.



Proposed removal and replacement

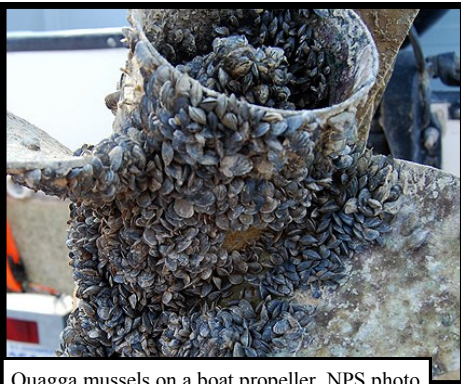
Entrance Station Buildings, NPS photo

St. Mary Visitor Center, NPS photo

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) INSPECTION STATION

Background

AIS are non-native aquatic organisms that can cause serious impacts to lakes, rivers, and wetlands, potentially affecting entire ecosystems, human health and the economy (e.g., local tourism and property values). Nationwide, AIS cost billions of dollars annually for ongoing response measures and in ecological damage. The park is especially concerned about quagga and zebra mussels, and Eurasian watermilfoil, an invasive weed. Once these invasive organisms infest a lake, they multiply quickly. AIS infestation of park waters would have catastrophic effects on park ecosystems (more information is available at <http://www.nps.gov/glac/planyourvisit/ais.htm>).



Quagga mussels on a boat propeller, NPS photo

To address this threat, the park began an AIS inspection program in 2010. Montana began an inspection program in 2009, and Alberta and British Columbia joined these efforts in 2013. Currently, the park has four inspection stations that visually inspect boats coming into the

park to determine if they are transporting invasive species. So far, the park's program has been successful in preventing AIS from becoming established in park waters. Throughout the Crown of the Continent, agencies at the local, state, federal and provincial levels are working together to track the movement of boats that have been infested.

There are challenges associated with inspecting boats. Since mussels range in size during their lifecycle (from microscopic up to about two inches in length), they can be concealed by even minor road grime. Currently, visitors are required to arrive with clean, drained, dry boats. But during travel, wet roads, wind, and other conditions can deposit light road grime on a boat. As a result, about 10% of boats arriving at park inspection stations require rinsing prior to inspection.

The park is proposing to establish an AIS inspection station near the St. Mary entrance. The AIS inspection station would be west of the entrance station, adjacent to the inbound lane, and away from the roadway and other hazards. The inspection station would include the capacity for lightly rinsing boats within a hardened, non-porous depression (at least one foot lower than the roadway), large enough to accommodate a vehicle and boat trailer. A drain system would contain the dirty rinse water to avoid contamination of park waters.

Objective:

- Prevent AIS from entering park waters.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 106

The Montana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has preliminarily concurred with the park's determination that replacing the entrance station and installing an AIS inspection station would have an adverse effect on the St. Mary Visitor Center (under Section 106) but would not affect the visitor center's eligibility for listing on the NRHP. Under the proposed action, the park would prepare a Memorandum of Agreement with the SHPO to mitigate the adverse effect.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The park has determined that removing the entrance station would have only minor adverse impacts to cultural resources (under NEPA) since it would not affect the St. Mary Visitor Center's eligibility for listing in the NRHP. There would not be impacts to other park resources. The park therefore believes the project could be categorically excluded and does not require the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA). The NPS is conducting scoping to determine if there is any new information or additional concerns that the park is not aware of which might result in the need for an EA. Scoping is also underway so the public can comment on the anticipated determination of adverse effect, from the SHPO, under Section 106 of NHPA.

Issues to Consider

- Visitor and employee safety
- Impacts to cultural resources—including the St. Mary Visitor Center and Entrance Station and the Going to the Sun Road
- Impacts to park operations
- Impacts to visual resources
- Protection of park waters

Why should you comment during public scoping?

**Your comments will help identify
issues and concerns.**

Post your comments online at:

[www.parkplanning.nps.gov/
StMaryEntrance](http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/StMaryEntrance)

Or send your comments to:

Superintendent, Glacier National Park
Attn: St. Mary Entrance Station Replacement
PO Box 128
West Glacier, MT 59936

**Please provide comments
by August 3, 2015**