



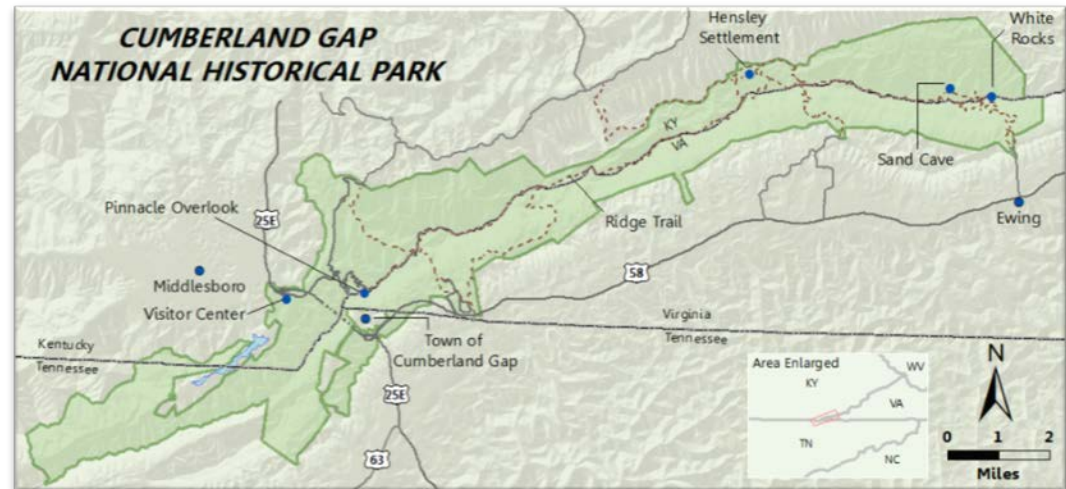
## Purpose and Need/Background

The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to develop a Fire Management Plan for Cumberland Gap National Historical Park (the park) in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia.

The **purpose** of the action is to allow for the use of unplanned ignitions for multiple objectives, including resource benefits, and to incorporate approximately 4,000 acres of land acquired by the park into the new Fire Management Plan.

The existing Fire Management Plan does not allow for managing unplanned ignitions for multiple objectives, including resource benefits. Fires have been prevented and suppressed for the last 70 to 90 years on most public lands, which has greatly affected forest health and wildlife. Without the natural process of fire, pines and oaks are unable to reproduce. As older trees become vulnerable to drought and insects, these forest types are changing. Fire-dependent forests of pine and oak are being replaced by fire-intolerant species, such as maple and beech, resulting in a loss of a wide variety of plants and animals that depend on fire-maintained habitat. There is a **need** to re-establish the natural fire regime and park native plant and animal communities, while at the same time protecting visitors, facilities, and resources within and adjacent to the park.

The park is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the effects of the proposed project on the human environment and provide an opportunity for public input in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).



The park was established in 1940 and presently consists of approximately 24,000 acres, of which 14,000 acres are proposed wilderness. The park is recognized primarily for its historical and cultural significance, as well as its vast natural resources and recreational value. The park attracts an estimated 900,000 visitors annually.

## Objectives

Internal scoping has defined the following objectives for the Fire Management Plan/EA:

1. Comply with NPS wildland fire policy directives and Director's Order 18, Wildland Fire Management;
2. Incorporate the use of wildland fire for multiple objectives into the fire management toolbox available to the park; and
3. Incorporate new lands into the Fire Management Plan.

## Overview of the Process

(Bold text indicates current step in the planning process.)

Step 1. Define objectives and formulate concepts for alternatives.

**Step 2. Initiate public scoping (closes February 3, 2016).**

Step 3. Refine alternatives and analyze environmental impacts.

Step 4. Prepare Draft Environmental Assessment.

Step 5. Public review of Draft Environmental Assessment.

Step 6. Analysis of public comments.

Step 7. Prepare Fire Management Plan and release Final Decision Document.

## Alternatives to be Evaluated

**No Action Alternative:** Under this alternative, the park would maintain the status quo with regard to wildland fire management and the Fire Management Plan would not be revised/updated.

**Proposed Action:** Revise/Update the Fire Management Plan to include the use of wildland fire for multiple objectives as a potential resource management tool and incorporate new lands. The Proposed Action would also include continuing the use of prescribed fire and mechanical treatments within the park.

## Resources and Issues

Initial internal scoping identified the following resources and other issues for consideration in the Environmental Assessment for the Fire Management Plan:

Air Quality	Special Status Species
Archeological Resources	Transportation
Cave and Karst Features	Utilities
Cultural Resources	Vegetation
Historic Structures	Visitor Use and Experience
Proposed Wilderness	Water Resources
Recreation	Wildlife

## Questions for the Public to Consider Include:

1. Are there any other resources or issues with the project you think we should consider?
2. Are there any other alternatives you think we should consider?
3. Do you have any comments or suggestions you think we should consider?

**Please submit comments on the proposed Fire Management Plan by February 3, 2016.**

Submit comments to:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cuga>

(click on project name)

If you would prefer to submit a written response, please do so at:

Superintendent, Cumberland Gap NHP  
Attn: Fire Management Plan  
91 Bartlett Park Road  
Middlesboro, KY 40965

## Will there be other opportunities to comment on the project?

Yes. Once the Draft Environmental Assessment is developed, it will be made available for public review. A public meeting will be held during the public review period to receive additional comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment.

In addition, a public meeting may be held if responses to this initial public scoping notice indicate a need for one.

If you wish to be added to the park's mailing list for this and other announcements, please indicate that in your response.