

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Construction of Maintenance and Curatorial Facilities
Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Alaska
August 2004**

Recommended: *Mr. Pucotta for Nancy Swanton* 8-20-04
Superintendent, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Date

Approved: *Patricia Blazyn* 8/27/04
Regional Director, Alaska Region, National Park Service Date

The National Park Service (NPS) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate a proposal to construct facilities at an administrative site in Skagway, Alaska for Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (KLG0). The project will initially entail the construction of two maintenance buildings and one curatorial storage building. Three existing metal storage containers will be removed. The site of the three new buildings is currently vacant NPS land next to the existing KLG0 maintenance facility. Utility connections to the new buildings will include water, sewer, power and telephone. The project site is an NPS administrative site outside park boundaries and outside the Skagway Historic District. It has no visitor services.

The NPS has selected a modified Alternative 3, Full Lot Build-out. Modifications are noted in the Decision section and the errata sheet, Attachment A. This programmatic decision provides for the possibility of future construction on the site. Public involvement will precede any future construction. Additional structures are not currently planned.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the new structures is to provide better maintenance and storage facilities to support park operations, and to provide adequate museum artifact storage. A fully functional maintenance facility is essential for maintaining 20 historic buildings, historic landscapes, 16.5 miles of historic Chilkoot Trail, housing for 28 employees and other facilities needed to protect park resources and serve the park visitors. Storage space for equipment and supplies is currently inadequate. Curatorial storage space is needed for the park's growing archeology collections and must be temperature and humidity controlled in order to protect the artifacts. Curatorial storage space is also needed to support the park's natural resource inventory and monitoring (I&M) program. The I&M program is resulting in the collection of plant and animal specimens that

need professional curation. Three temporary metal cargo boxes need to be removed from the site; they have been there since 1995 as temporary storage. The three existing maintenance buildings on the site do not include a needed second employee bathroom, lunchroom, or drafting and records room.

ALTERNATIVES

Three alternatives were evaluated in the EA.

Alternative 1: No Action. No new construction would take place on the administrative site and the three existing metal storage containers would not be removed.

Alternative 2: Construct Three Buildings. Two new maintenance buildings would be constructed on the administrative site next to the existing maintenance buildings. A curatorial storage building would be constructed on the site. The three metal storage containers would be removed from the site.

Alternative 3: Full Lot Build-Out (*NPS Preferred Alternative*). The planned actions as described in Alternative 2 would occur and possible future construction on the site would be allowed. This programmatic alternative would allow for the possibility of multiple future projects. Future construction style and construction will be in keeping with the historic character of the community. This would help maintain architectural compatibility and improve the character of the site.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative. Alternative 1: No Action, is the environmentally preferred alternative because it would not include any new construction, land use change, increase in the footprint of development or additional energy or material use.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The EA was issued for public review and comment from March 1, 2004 to April 2, 2004. Notices of the EA were sent by mail or email to 63 stakeholders, including interested individuals, organizations and agencies. Hard copies of the EA were available at the park headquarters in Skagway and at the NPS regional office in Anchorage. The EA was posted on the park's webpage and the park issued a press release about the availability of the EA and the open comment period. Two written comments were received.

Attachment A includes NPS responses to these comments. The public comments received did not change the conclusions about the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION

The NPS decision is to select a modified Alternative 3, Full Lot Build-out with modification. Mitigating measures are incorporated into Alternative 3. These measures apply to the NPS and to any non-NPS contractors, tenants or guests occupying the property. See Attachment B for a mitigation matrix.

- Two new maintenance buildings will be constructed.
- A new curatorial storage building will be constructed.
- Three large metal storage boxes will be removed.
- A programmatic decision is approved for possible future construction of buildings or facilities on the administrative site. Another EA will not be completed for possible future construction.

Modifications.

1. If construction of additional buildings or facilities is contemplated, there will be public involvement. Early in the planning process, the NPS will broadly announce the proposal, request public comments, have an open comment period and include interested or involved individuals, agencies and organizations.
2. No housing will be built on the site. The administrative site and the buildings will not be used for overnight accommodations.

Mitigating Measures.

1. The area of potential effect will be surveyed by professional archeologists using standard archeological techniques prior to construction. Cultural resource compliance (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act) will be completed for the three new buildings prior to construction. All excavation related construction activity (e.g., digging for a foundation or utility line trench) will be monitored by professional archeologists. If unknown or concealed cultural resources are encountered during any construction activity, all necessary steps will be taken to protect the cultural resources discovered and to immediately notify the KLG Cultural Resources Specialist. Further work will be suspended until the nature and extent of the newly discovered resources can be determined. All cultural artifacts recovered, and any written or photographic documentation associated with them, will be curated at the park according to standard NPS museum practices. If construction of additional buildings or facilities is contemplated, additional cultural resource surveys and Section 106 compliance will be completed for the new areas of potential effect.
2. The design of any building, addition or facility will be complementary to and compatible with the community. The style, color, roof pitch, character, height, placement and design of buildings and facilities will be compatible with the town of Skagway and the character of the neighborhood.
3. Construction activities will comply with all City of Skagway and State zoning, planning and land use regulations and ordinances and the International Building Code for the appropriate seismic zone. The site is zoned light industrial.
4. Outdoor night lighting will be kept to a minimum and will be shielded. Lighting will be directed only at target areas. Shields will prevent light from shining above the horizontal in order to protect night sky darkness.

5. Shade trees (species native to the park) will be planted as practicable in available spaces in order to enhance the site and blend in with the neighborhood.
6. There will be no underground storage tanks for fuel, toxic or hazardous materials. Hazardous substance spills will be cleaned up and remediated following appropriate Federal, State and local statutes and regulations.
7. There will be no open burning or the incineration of garbage.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

The selection of a modified Alternative 3, Full Lot Build-out, will satisfy the purpose of the project to (1) construct additional maintenance storage and work space, (2) construct curatorial storage, and (3) remove the three temporary metal storage boxes. It will also provide the programmatic environmental clearance for the possible future construction of buildings or facilities.

Construction and use activities associated with a modified Alternative 3 will result in minor negative impacts related to natural hazards and land use. However, over the long-term, this project will significantly improve park management and resource protection at KLG0.

Alternative 1: No-Action, was not selected because it would fail to satisfy the purpose or need for the project.

Though it was the *environmentally preferred* alternative, the No-Action alternative was not selected for implementation because it would not meet the purpose of the project.

Alternative 2: Construct Three Buildings, was not selected because it would not allow for possible future construction of buildings or facilities without another environmental assessment. Alternative 2 would have no increase in environmental protection over Alternative 3 but would have reduced administrative efficiency.

Environmental Consequences of a Modified Alternative 3. The NPS has determined that a modified Alternative 3, Full Lot Build-out, can be implemented with no significant adverse effects related to natural hazards and land use, and with no adverse effect to cultural resources. This is documented by the EA and summarized below. The modifications to Alternative 3 are minor and will not result in impacts.

Natural Hazards (Tsunamis and Seismic Activity). There could be natural hazards from tsunamis and earthquakes to employees working at the site. These natural hazards could also affect park supplies, equipment and museum artifacts at the site, but such items will be safer in the proposed buildings than under the existing conditions. In sum, the effects will be minor.

Cultural Resources. The area of potential effect (new building footprints) will be surveyed for evidence of cultural resources. Portions of the site not excavated by survey testing or construction could potentially contain unknown buried cultural resources, and their loss over time to the forces of rust and wood decay will continue, but the project will cause no adverse

effects to cultural resources. Museum artifacts will be better protected in the new curatorial storage building than under existing storage conditions. If construction of additional buildings or facilities is contemplated, then additional cultural resource evaluation will be completed.

Land Use. New buildings on the project site will constitute an increase in development. The land use classification will not change, but the actual use will become more concentrated. Zoning (light industrial) will not change because of the project. The project, including any future construction, will be consistent with city and state land use plans, codes, zones and restrictions. Parking congestion could increase, as less on-site parking space would be available for employees. Vehicle and machinery noise could increase with more facilities and more use of the site. Night lighting of the site could increase, however it will be shielded and downwardly directed so that there will be no significant adverse effect to visitor enjoyment of night sky darkness. The chance of a hazardous spill could increase because of more storage, use of vehicles, transfer of fuels and lubricants and use of curatorial chemicals. Less open space will be present on the site, giving the site a more industrial look. In sum, the effects to land use will be minor.

Findings. The selection of a modified Alternative 3 will not affect endangered or threatened species or their habitat. Cultural resources under the National Historic Preservation Act will not be adversely affected. There will be no significant adverse effect on floodplains managed under Executive Order 11988 or on wetlands protected under EO 11990. There will be no significant adverse effect on public health and safety. There will be no restriction of subsistence activities, as documented by the ANILCA Section 810 evaluation in the EA. There will be no significant adverse effect to unique characteristics of the area. The impacts of the proposed action are known; they were analyzed in the EA. The impacts of the proposed action are not highly controversial. The selection of a modified Alternative 3 (Full Lot Build-out) will establish a precedent for future actions (the possibility of future buildings or facilities) but there will be no significant adverse effects from those future actions. There will be no significant adverse effects from the *cumulative impacts* of other related actions. There will be no violation of any federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. There will be no *impairment* of national park resources or values under the NPS Organic Act. There will be no adverse health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations under EO 12898 on environmental justice. There will be no effect on coastal zone resources under the Alaska Coastal Management Program.

The NPS hereby finds that the selected alternative, a modified Alternative 3, Full Lot Build-out, does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an environmental impact statement is not required and will not be prepared for the project.

ATTACHMENT A

NPS RESPONSES TO PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ERRATA for the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park EA for Construction of Maintenance and Curatorial Facilities

This attachment amends the subject environmental assessment (EA) and provides NPS responses to substantive comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The NPS received two comments: one from a private individual (PI) and one from an organization, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA).

Comment 1, PI: Would the new buildings obstruct the view of the mountains from my home?

Response 1, NPS: *The new curatorial storage building will be placed so that it will not significantly affect the view of the mountains from this neighbor's home.*

Comment 2, PI: If the buildings were used for housing, there should be another comment period.

Response 2, NPS: *No housing will be built on the site. The administrative site and the buildings will not be used for overnight accommodations. If the construction of additional buildings or facilities were contemplated, there would be public notification during the early planning stages. Future buildings would not be constructed without public involvement, including that of interested and affected agencies, organizations and individuals.*

Comment 3, PI: What is meant by "full lot build-out?"

Response 3, NPS: *"Full lot build-out" means that any part of the lot could be used for possible future construction. The NPS could propose to construct buildings, building additions or facilities on any portion of the site. Planning would include public involvement, cultural resource (Section 106) compliance, and following State and local zoning, codes, and regulations. Full Lot Build-out is a programmatic alternative allowing for multiple future projects, as yet unplanned. A new EA would not be needed for possible future construction.*

Comment 4, PI: Skagway does have zoning requirements; the site is classified Light Industrial.

Response 4, NPS: *The City of Skagway and State planning and land use regulations and ordinances apply to the project site. The property is zoned light industrial.*

Comment 5, NPCA: If the site is used for housing, park staff should receive training on tsunami evacuation procedures.

Response 5, NPS: *No housing will be built on the site. The administrative site and the buildings will not be used for overnight accommodations.*

ERRATA

This errata section provides clarifications, modifications or additional information to the EA and to the selected alternative, Alternative 3. These amendments do not significantly change the analysis of the EA and, therefore a new or revised EA is not needed and will not be produced.

1. The City of Skagway and State planning and land use regulations and ordinances apply to the project site. The site is zoned light industrial. [**correction**]
2. If the construction of additional buildings or facilities were contemplated for the project site, there would be public notification during the early planning stages. Future buildings would not be constructed without public involvement, including that of interested and affected agencies, organizations and individuals. [**modification**]
3. No housing will be built on the site. The administrative site and the buildings will not be used for overnight accommodations. [**modification**]
4. The project cost would be the same for Alternative 2 or 3, approximately \$637,000. The project is dependent on the 2005 fiscal year Congressional budget appropriation for NPS line item construction projects. [**additional information**]
5. The construction of the three new buildings will be done by a private contractor, so there is no way of knowing how many local people will be hired or how much will be spent on locally purchased supplies. [**additional information**]
6. The cultural resource compliance (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act) will be completed for the three new buildings prior to construction. Additional cultural resource surveys and Section 106 compliance will still be needed if any future construction on the site is undertaken. [**clarification**]

ATTACHMENT B

MITIGATION MATRIX

for

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park for Construction of Maintenance and Curatorial Facilities

This attachment presents the mitigating measures for the subject environmental assessment (EA), the critical milestones and the responsible party for implementing each measure.

MITIGATING MEASURE	CRITICAL MILESTONE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Protect cultural resources by completing field surveys and 106 compliance	Prior to digging on the project site	Project manager or Contracting Officer's Representative (COR)
Protect cultural resources by monitoring excavation by archeologist	During digging, trenching or other ground disturbance	Project manager or COR
Maintain architectural design compatibility with Skagway Historic District	Prior to final approval of building designs	Project manager or building designer
Clean up hazardous material spill	If a spill occurs	Chief of Maintenance or supervisor responsible for spill
Protect night sky natural darkness by shielding outdoor lighting	Prior to final approval of building or facility designs	Project manager or building/facility designer
Plant shade trees in order to blend with and enhance neighborhood	After building construction	Project manager
No underground storage tanks on the site	During initial design of any future facilities	Project manager
No open burning on the site	During initial design of any future facilities	Project manager
Assure future public involvement	At the earliest stages of planning for any future buildings or facilities on the site	Project manager