



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023-0129



D18 (GRCA 8217)

9/18/06

Dear Interested Party:

Subject: Narrowband/Digital Radio System Conversion for Grand Canyon National Park

Reference: Request for Comments on Scope of the Proposal (Public Scoping)

The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to convert all radio communications at Grand Canyon National Park (GRCA) from wideband/analog to narrowband/digital technology to be in compliance with federal regulations and policies. The park's radio system is a critical component necessary for managing and protecting park resources, in providing for public and employee health and safety, and in accomplishing all park management activities. In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the park is hereby initiating a public scoping period and asking for comments on the scope of the project, including issues and potential alternatives that the park should consider regarding the proposal.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of taking action is to comply with regulations requiring all federal agencies to adopt narrowband/digital technology by 2008. The transition to this technology is intended to create more radio spectrum available to federal users to ensure that public safety communications will meet emerging national privacy and security requirements. The conversion to a narrowband/digital radio system would also provide better services to park visitors and improve interoperability and services with other agencies.

Project Proposal

Motorola Communications, under contract with the Department of the Interior, conducted a study of current and potential radio repeater sites and prepared a design proposal for converting the radio system at GRCA to narrowband/digital technology. The proposal includes four primary sites to accomplish most of the needed communications improvements. Three primary sites are on the park's South Rim (Grand Canyon Village Emergency Services (EMS) Building, Hopi Point Fire Tower, Desert View Ranger Station) and one is on the North Rim (CC Hill near the North Kaibab Trailhead). There is an additional optional primary site (Paria) under consideration in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area on top of the Vermillion Cliffs near Lees Ferry.

The proposal also includes three secondary sites to provide important additional radio coverage to areas of the 1.2 million-acre park that the primary sites cannot reach. These include one secondary site in the park (Mt. Emma west of Tuweep), one in Kaibab National Forest north of



the park (VT Ridge), and one in Coconino National Forest south of the park (O'Leary Peak Fire Tower). There is an additional optional secondary site under consideration at Kanabownits Fire Tower in the park on the North Rim, if needed for adequate radio coverage. Figure 1 shows the location of the proposed sites.

At this point in the scoping process, it is anticipated that a combined Environmental Assessment (EA) and Assessment of Effect form (AEF) will be prepared for the sites inside the park to meet the requirements of NEPA and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended. For the sites outside the park (VT Ridge, Paria, and O'Leary), NEPA and NHPA compliance needs are being discussed with the respective agencies and may be considered separately.

Although the EA/AEF will address all relevant issues, the primary impact topics that have been identified are wilderness, cultural resources, endangered species, and visual resources. All but three of the sites are part of the park's current radio system network and have some sort of radio repeaters and antennae that would be replaced at the same site adjacent to the current equipment (see Table 1 for site-specific information). The three new sites would be CC Hill, Grand Canyon Village EMS Building, and Desert View Ranger Station. All sites have some level of human disturbance, but almost all sites would receive new towers and antennae, some sort of new shelter to protect new radio electronic equipment, and varying levels of ground disturbance (see Table 1). All sites except Mt. Emma and Paria already have road access for construction and periodic maintenance; Mt. Emma requires helicopter access. The proposal currently anticipates very limited capability to accommodate additional non-NPS electronics, such as cellular telephone, on the towers and in the shelters. All existing radio equipment would be removed from two historic buildings (Desert View Watchtower and Yavapai Museum) that are part of the park's current radio system network. Radio equipment and the park Dispatch Center would also be moved from the Park Headquarters Building to the EMS Building in Grand Canyon Village.

One of the sites (Mt. Emma) is within recommended park wilderness, and two other sites (CC Hill and Kanabownits) are adjacent to recommended wilderness. One site (Kanabownits Fire Tower) is likely to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Several sites (CC Hill, Desert View, Grand Canyon Village) are within or adjacent to a historic cultural landscape. Consultation with tribes will be conducted to identify ethnographic resources. Although a complete assessment of effects will be prepared, preliminary analysis indicates that archeological sites can be avoided. Consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service will occur to ensure compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act.

We Invite Your Comments - The project proposal described above is a preliminary option currently under consideration and is subject to change. We invite you to contact us with any issues or concerns you may have with the project proposal at this time, to ensure that we identify all of the relevant issues and are able to develop a reasonable range of alternatives for analysis in the EA/AEF. The EA/AEF will include a detailed analysis of impacts from implementing the proposal and any other action alternatives developed based upon the issues raised, including an analysis of taking no action. After the analysis of all alternatives is complete, NPS will select a preferred alternative and will distribute the EA/AEF for review and comment, prior to making a decision.

At this time, we are initiating a public scoping period that will be open for 30 days. Comments must be postmarked or entered online by October 21, 2006. Additional information on this project and other planning efforts at Grand Canyon National Park can be found at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca>.

There are three ways to submit written comments during this public scoping period: (1) you may post comments online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> (the preferred method); (2) you may send comments via email to: rick_ernenwein@nps.gov (please be sure to include the underscore (_) between rick and ernenwein in the address); or (3) you may send comments via regular mail to:

Superintendent
Grand Canyon National Park
Attn: Office of Planning and Compliance
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023

It is the practice of the NPS to make all comments, including names and addresses of respondents who provide that information, available for public review following the conclusion of the environmental assessment process. Individuals may request that the NPS withhold their name and/or address from public disclosure. If you wish to do this, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. Commentators using the website can make such a request by checking the box "keep my contact information private." NPS will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law, but you should be aware that NPS may still be required to disclose your name and address pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety.

We appreciate your input on this project and your interest in Grand Canyon National Park. If you have any questions, please contact Rick Ernenwein, Project Planning Leader, at (928) 779-6279, or at rick_ernenwein@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

/S/

Joseph F. Alston
Superintendent
Enclosures (2)

If you would like to receive a paper copy of the environmental document for this project when it is complete, you may indicate this when commenting using the park planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> or you may contact Rick Ernenwein at the address above, at (928) 779-6279, or at rick_ernenwein@nps.gov, and one will be sent to you during the comment period. If you do not respond to this request, a paper copy of the environmental document will not be sent to you. To help us reduce costs for printing and mailing, we encourage those with computer access to review the environmental document online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca>. To ensure that all interested persons will have the opportunity to review and comment upon the environmental document, the park will notify all those who provided comments during the scoping period of the availability of the environmental document for review and comment, and will also issue a press release.

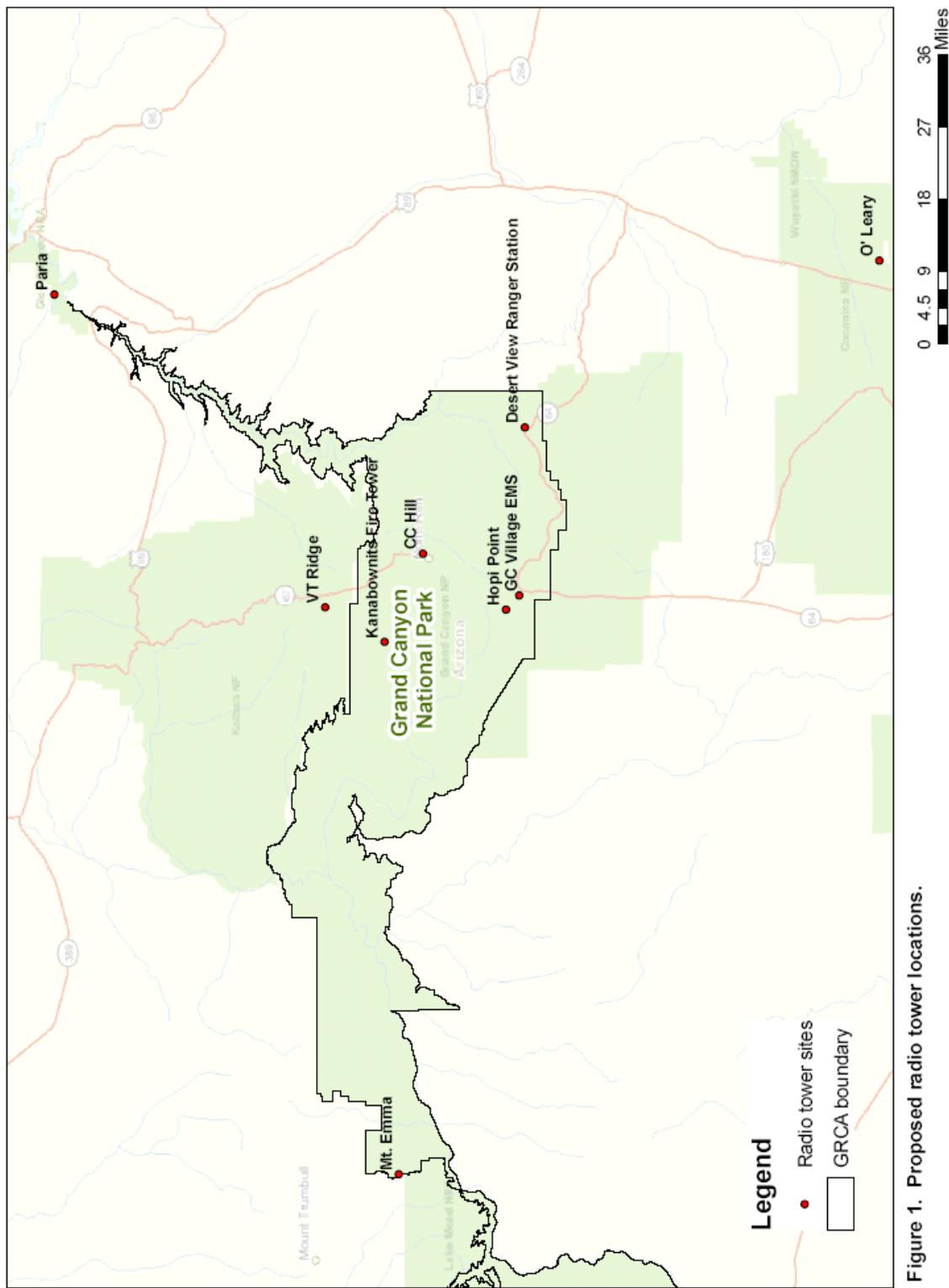


Figure 1. Proposed radio tower locations.

Table 1. Proposed Radio Project Site-Specific Information

Sites		Location	Shelter	Tower and Antennae	Power
Grand Canyon Village Emergency Services (EMS) Building Primary Site (GRCA)	Current Situation	At Park Headquarters Building.	None at EMS Building. Equipment and Dispatch Center inside of headquarters building.	None at EMS Building. Multiple antennae on roof of headquarters building (no tower).	Commercial at headquarters building.
	Proposal	Move all equipment and Dispatch Center to New Emergency Services (EMS) Building at Clinic.	Equipment and Dispatch Center will be inside new EMS building. Fence around tower may be needed for safety.	One 60 ft self-supporting lattice tower with concrete anchor (10ft X 10ft, 4 feet deep). Approx. current number of VHF and UHF antennae; however, up to three 4 ft diameter microwave dishes added.	Commercial at EMS building.
Hopi Point Fire Tower Primary Site (GRCA)	Current Situation	Shelter and two poles near fire tower for NPS equipment (also inside fire tower). Additional three poles and building with non-NPS equipment	All NPS equipment in small shed (approx. 8ft X 8ft X 8ft). Non-NPS radio equipment in existing cabin.	Two wooden NPS poles, multiple federal agencies' antennae. Three connected wooden non-NPS poles with numerous non-NPS antennae. Several non-NPS dishes attached to fire tower.	Commercial at nearby pole.
	Proposal	Consolidate all NPS and non-NPS equipment in new NPS shelter and tower adjacent to current NPS shelter and poles. However, some non-NPS equipment may not be able to be accommodated.	New 12ft X 16.5ft X 10.5ft modular shelter on concrete pad adjacent to current NPS shed. Remove all non-NPS equipment from cabin, move to new NPS shelter on a space-available basis. Fence around tower may be needed for safety.	One 60 ft self-supporting lattice tower with concrete anchor (10ft X 10ft, 4 feet deep). Approx. current number of VHF and UHF NPS antennae, including up to three 4 ft diameter microwave dishes. All non-NPS antennae would be moved to NPS tower on a space-available basis, and all non-NPS poles removed. No effect on dishes attached to fire tower.	Commercial at nearby pole.
Desert View Ranger Station Primary Site	Current Situation	On top of Desert View Watchtower.	No shelter. Box inside Desert View Watchtower.	No tower, 2 antennae attached to top of Watchtower.	Commercial at Watchtower.

Sites		Location	Shelter	Tower and Antennae	Power
(GRCA)	Proposal	Move all equipment to Desert View Ranger Station in residential area.	New 12ft X 16.5ft X 10.5ft modular shelter on concrete pad adjacent to Ranger Station. Fence around tower may be needed for safety.	One 60 ft self-supporting lattice tower with concrete anchor (10ft X 10ft, 4 feet deep). Approx. current number of VHF antennae, although one or two microwave dishes would be added.	Commercial at EMS building.
CC Hill Primary Site (GRCA)	Current Situation	None.	None.	None.	Commercial available near site.
	Proposal	All new shelter, tower, antennae and equipment in previously impacted area.	New 12ft X 16.5ft X 10.5ft modular shelter on concrete pad. Fence around tower may be needed for safety.	One 150 ft self-supporting tower with concrete anchor (17ft X 17ft, 4 feet deep). Approx. 2 VHF and 2 UHF antennae, including up to three microwave dishes.	Commercial with new trenching.
Paria Optional Primary Site (Glen Canyon National Recreation Area)	Current Situation	No Grand Canyon equipment – currently only Glen Canyon equipment on top of Vermillion Cliffs about 500 ft. from existing powerline in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.	Approx. 6ft X 6ft X 6ft box.	No tower, one 12ft antenna attached to shelter box.	Solar.
	Proposal	Replace tower and shelter to accommodate both Grand Canyon and Glen Canyon equipment adjacent to current tower/shelter. Extend powerline and access road to repeater site.	Approx. 8ft X 8ft X 8ft modular shelter on rock pylons adjacent to current shelter.	One 45 ft articulated pole tower attached to shelter (no guy wires or concrete pad). Approx. 2 VHF and 2 UHF antennae (no dish).	Commercial from pole to be constructed at site.

Sites		Location	Shelter	Tower and Antennae	Power
Mt. Emma Secondary site (GRCA)	Current Situation	At top of Mt. Emma near park boundary in recommended wilderness.	Two small boxes (approx. 2 ft X 2 ft X 4 ft each) at base of tower.	25 ft tower with guy wires, 2 antennae.	Solar.
	Proposal	Replace all equipment adjacent to current location.	New 6ft X 8ft X 8ft modular shelter on rock pylons adjacent to current tower.	One 40 ft articulated pole tower attached to shelter (no guy wires or concrete pad). Approx. current number of VHF antennae (no dish).	Solar.
VT Ridge Secondary site (Kaibab National Forest)	Current Situation	Along powerline adjacent to road in Kaibab National Forest.	Approx. 10ft X 10ft X 10ft brick shelter on concrete pad.	Approx. 75ft tower with guy wires, several antennae (no dish).	Commercial at nearby pole.
	Proposal	Replace all equipment adjacent to current location.	New 8ft X 8ft X 8ft modular shelter on same size concrete pad adjacent to current shelter. Fence around tower may be needed for safety.	One 100 ft self-supporting lattice tower with concrete anchor (12ft X 12ft, 4 feet deep) (no guy wires). Approx. current number of VHF antennae (no dish).	Same.
O'Leary Peak Secondary site (Coconino National Forest)	Current Situation	Equipment attached to fire tower in Coconino National Forest.	Approx. 8ft X 10ft X 8ft shed on concrete pad adjacent to fire tower.	Antenna attached to fire tower. 1 VHF antenna (no dish).	Solar.
	Proposal	Replace equipment at same location.	Use existing shelter.	Replace in-kind at same location on fire tower, 1 VHF antenna (no dish).	Solar.
Kanabowitz Optional site (GRCA)	Current Situation	Equipment attached to fire tower in park adjacent to recommended wilderness.	Box in fire tower.	Antenna attached to fire tower. Approx. 1 VHF antenna (no dish).	Solar.
	Proposal	Replace equipment on fire tower at same location.	Replace box with new cabinet in fire tower.	Antenna attached to fire tower. Approx. 1 VHF antenna (no dish).	Solar.