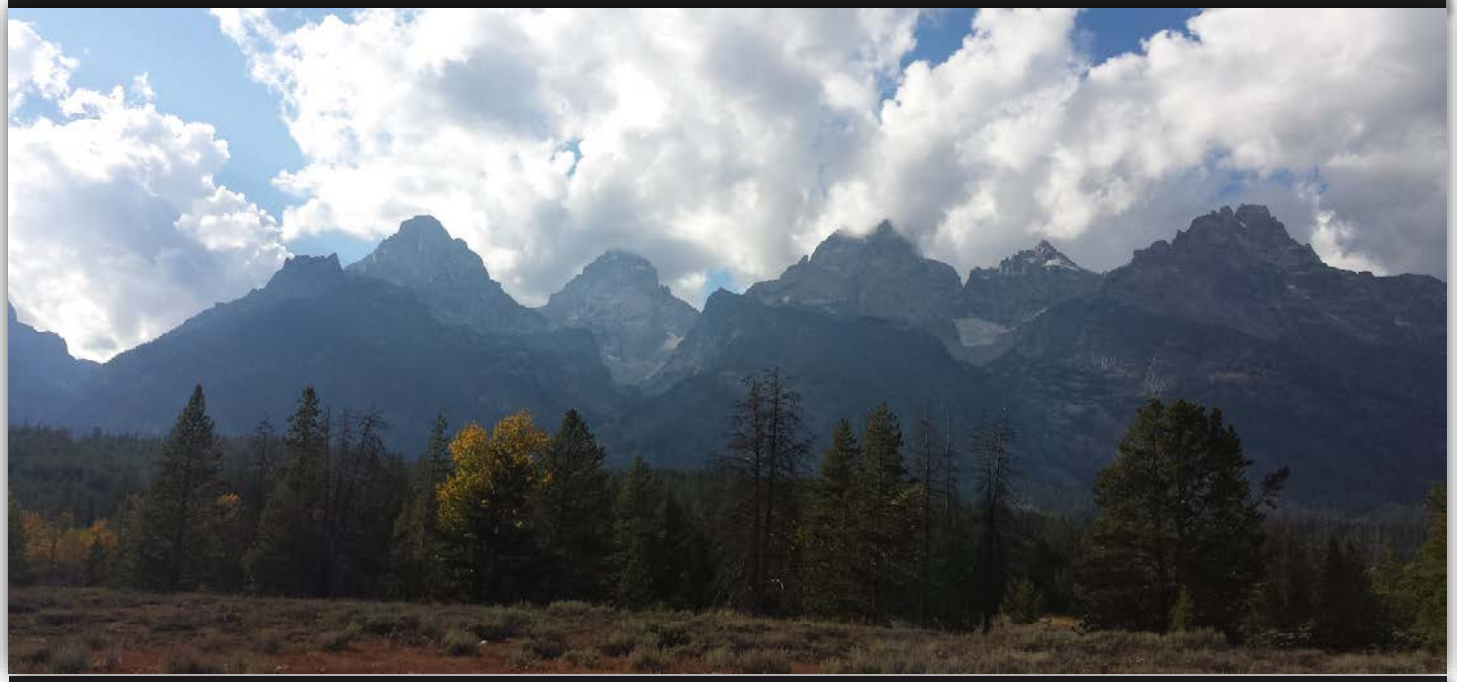
Grand Teton National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Telecommunications Infrastructure Plan and Environmental Assessment Scoping

June 2017

Greetings,

With this scoping notice, I am pleased to announce the National Park Service is developing a telecommunications infrastructure plan and environmental assessment for Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway.

The purpose of the proposed plan and environmental assessment is to address existing and future telecommunications services within developed areas of the park to meet mission critical park operations, safety and emergency services, and visitor information needs and expectations.

Scoping is designed to obtain input on issues and concerns related to the project, in order to evaluate a suitable range of alternatives, the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts and benefits, and appropriate mitigation strategies.

During the scoping period, you are invited to help us identify any issues or concerns to ensure that we identify all of the relevant issues for development of alternatives later this year.

Comments are being accepted through July 14, 2017. I need, and encourage, your participation. Thank you for your interest. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

David Vela

David Vela, Superintendent
Grand Teton National Park
John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway

Background

Grand Teton National Park and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway, hereinafter referred to together as the park, comprise approximately 334,000 acres in Teton County, northwestern Wyoming. In 2016, more than 4.8 million total visits were made to the park.

The park requires robust and reliable communications to meet the needs of the agency, including park operations and emergency services for this high volume of visitors. However, most of the developed areas of the park currently have limited and/or antiquated fiber optic and wireless telecommunications infrastructure that is unreliable and/or has low networking speeds.

Since 2013, the park has been receiving right-of-way permit applications for installation of fiber optic cable network and wireless telecommunications facilities, some of which involved duplicate services and locations. In October 2013, representatives from Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks, cell phone and fiber optic providers, and the National Park Service Intermountain Region met to discuss various telecommunications issues. At that time the park supplied utility providers with a summary of existing telecommunications infrastructure within the park, anticipated requirements, and other information to address future park telecommunications needs. The park requested that the providers work together to develop one proposal that would meet the needs of the park, as well as the utility providers' requests. In April of 2015, the park received the right-of-way permit application that initiated this planning process.

By addressing the park's telecommunications requirements and responding to the permit application together, the park believes the result will be a more holistic plan that meets the park's telecommunications needs for the next 20+ years while protecting the park's resources and responding to visitor expectations.

Need for the Plan

The telecommunications infrastructure plan is needed to upgrade inadequate and outdated telecommunications services required to effectively meet mission critical business operations, including safety and emergency services, resource protection, and visitor services.

The fiber optic lines currently serving most of the developed areas in the park have been installed piecemeal over the last 20 years. Some fiber was direct buried without conduit, leaving sections at a high risk of exposure and subsequent damage. There is also very little documentation concerning line location, leading to inadvertent damage to lines, and subsequent network outages. For example, the summer of 2014, the north district of the park experienced a 45-day network outage after fiber optic line was damaged during maintenance activities. This disruption adversely affected park as well as concessioner operations. The condition of the park's telecommunications infrastructure also results in unreliable cell phone coverage within developed areas of the park, affecting National Park Service employees and concessioners and park visitors.

This project would address needs, such as:

- Improving emergency services provided by the National Park Service and its federal/county partners, including fire, law enforcement, health and safety, and emergency medical response (including 911 emergency system coverage).
- Expanding capacity, reliability, and reach of telecommunications in developed areas to support park operations, including park administration, visitor protection and services, research and education, concessioner operations, and facility maintenance.
- Providing cellular high speed wireless voice and data coverage at strategic developments across the park to further enable the National Park Service mission by providing information to visitors via park-developed educational websites, interactive mobile applications, and other on-line tools that inform and connect park visitors to the park and its resources and that respond to visitor expectations.
- Enhancing resource monitoring and research-related communications equipment (i.e., wildlife, seismic, air quality, noise, weather, streamflow, and photographic/video) that exist to transmit data to park staff, universities, government agencies, and the public.
- Securing broadband internet and cellular service within the park units and partner/concessioner facilities and housing areas, vital for recruiting and retaining the next generation of employees.

Proposal

The plan will consider potential design and locations of proposals received to date, appropriateness of facilities, and any telecommunication infrastructure needs the park anticipates within the next 20+ years.

The proposal includes installation of a fiber optic cable network and wireless telecommunications facilities at strategic developed locations within the park and potentially connecting to Yellowstone National Park's south entrance. The focus would be on developed areas in the park that currently support critical operations and/or see a high volume of park visitors. Examples of these areas include Moose, South Jenny Lake, Jackson Lake, Signal Mountain, and Colter Bay.

Fiber optic line would be installed underground adjacent to existing park roads and would have future expansion capacity built in. Additional lateral fiber optic lines would be connected to the main lines to provide upgraded infrastructure to park administrative and concessioner use facilities.

Potential wireless telecommunications facility locations, each containing a tower and equipment buildings, will be considered and analyzed in the environmental assessment. The potential wireless telecommunications facility locations would be based on the following criteria: proximity to key National Park Service operation locations; service demand; proximity to existing power; and proximity to existing developments. Each wireless telecommunications facility would be capable of supporting wireless installations for up to four major broadband wireless telecommunications systems providers, to accommodate all of the major wireless providers without additional infrastructure.

Attention will be directed toward minimizing viewshed impacts and effects on other natural and cultural resources. Photographic simulations of two of the locations being considered are shown below.

The National Park Service will consider a no action alternative and one or more other alternatives that are suggested during the scoping period, as appropriate.

Photo Simulation of 80' Stealth Flagpole Towers with Interior Antennas and Equipment Shelter at Jackson Lake Lodge (view to the east from the lodge)

Photo Simulation of a 80' Unipole Tower with Interior Antennas and Equipment Shelter at Signal Mountain (view to the west)

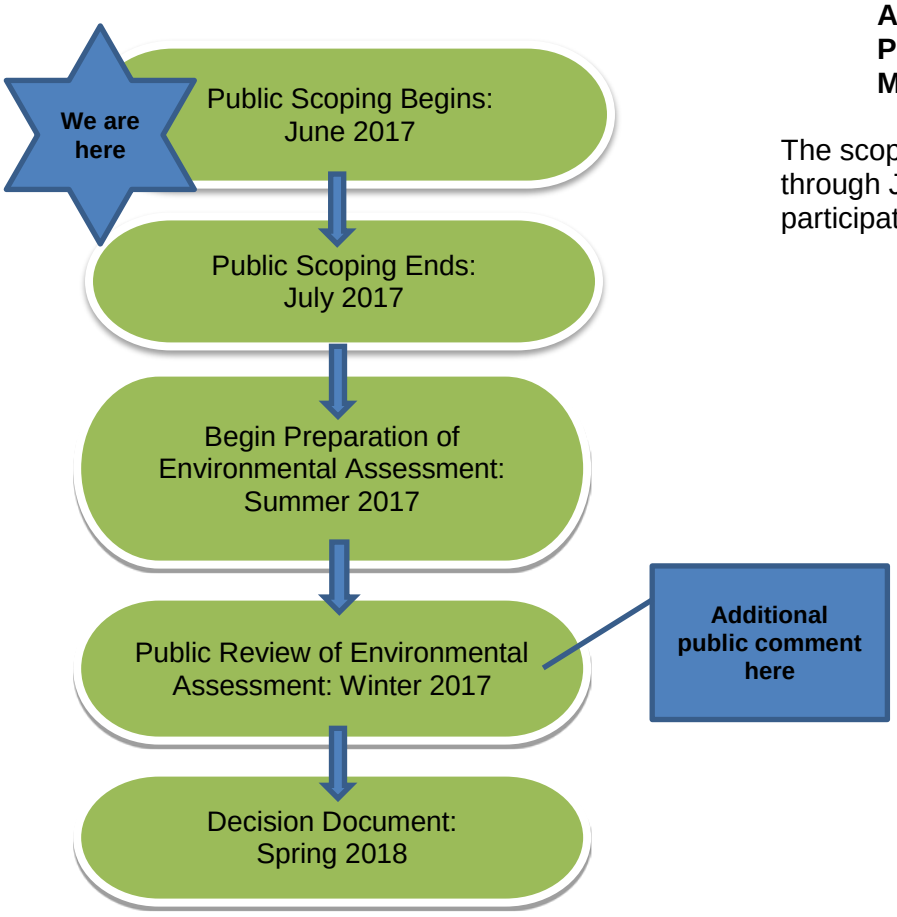
Scoping and Issues to be Addressed

During the scoping period, the National Park Service is seeking input from the public and agencies on relevant issues, potential alternatives, concerns, opportunities, or topics that should be addressed during the planning effort.

The expected result will be to provide long-term guidance for the issues listed below. Consultations with stakeholders and the public during public review periods may add to this list of issues and opportunities. Preliminary impact topics that have been identified in the environmental assessment include:

- Health and human safety
- Park operations
- Cultural resources
- Soils and vegetation
- Wildlife
- Wilderness
- Visitor use and experience, and
- Visual resources

Steps in the Planning Process



Get Involved

Your involvement in the planning process is critical for the completion of a successful plan. The public scoping period for this project will run 30 days, during which time public comments are encouraged. An additional opportunity for public involvement will be provided later in the planning process, including an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the environmental assessment when it is released later this year. Below are the ways in which you can learn more about the park's Telecommunications Infrastructure Plan and Environmental Assessment and/or provide comments:

Online via:

https://parkplanning.nps.gov/Telecommunications

By mail to:

Grand Teton National Park
Telecommunications Plan EA
Attention: Margaret Wilson
P.O. Drawer 170
Moose, WY 83012

The scoping period will run from June 14, 2017 through July 14, 2017. Thank you for your participation.