

Kalaupapa National Historical Park General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

Questions and Answers

November 15, 2018

For specific questions, concerns, and NPS responses about the GMP, please see Appendix G in the GMP/EA entitled "Draft GMP/EIS Public Review Summary, Public Concerns, and NPS Responses." The public's concerns and suggestions have helped to shape the present GMP/EA.

Additional questions and concerns:

Question: Why is the project changing to an EA?

Answer: The GMP was initially accompanied by an environmental impact statement (EIS) pursuant to NPS policies at that time. Current NPS policies and practices do not require an EIS for a GMP when no significant impacts are anticipated from the plan.

Kalaupapa NHP and the State of Hawai'i agency partners are actively engaged in transition planning for the Department of Health's departure, which implicates the operations of the Kalaupapa Settlement and future use and treatment of the historic building and facilities. In addition, other government agencies, non-profit entities, and stakeholders are invested in the long-term stewardship and future of the Kalaupapa Settlement and want to play a role in planning for the area. It is premature to make decisions about the preservation treatments for the buildings at this time and without collaborative planning and firm commitments from partners and others.

Question: What has changed from the old EIS to the new EA?

Answer: The GMP guidance is very similar to what was presented previously, however there are changes.

Guidance for buildings, facilities, and costs have been removed from the GMP and will be addressed through NPS park operations, facilities management, and cultural resources. Managing buildings and facilities are part of ongoing park operations. The NPS has responsibilities to care for the buildings under the enabling legislation, the Organic Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and through the lease with the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands.

The GMP/EA addresses public concerns raised during the review of the draft GMP/EIS. Based on the extensive public comments received on the draft GMP/EIS, changes have been made to the GMP and are reflected in this GMP/EA. Examples of changes include: removal of the boundary proposal for the North Shore Cliffs, a recommendation to develop a community-based advisory group for the park, and specifically stating that Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa is a partner with a long-term role at Kalaupapa.

The document is substantially more concise, includes two alternatives instead of four, and meets current Department of the Interior NEPA guidelines. Other sections of the draft EIS may be published or presented on the web, such as the "Historical Background" and sections of the Foundation chapter.

Question: How we're adjusting the process to recognize and reflect public input?

Answer: During the review of the draft GMP/EIS, the NPS was asked to do hold another public comment period. The release of the GMP/EA includes a 30-day public comment period and final opportunity to provide comments.

This GMP/EA addresses public concerns about a lengthy document. It is a more concise and focused document, rather than the larger one.

The NPS intends to have a final decision, in the form of a Finding of No Significant Impact, early in 2019. This will allow the NPS and partners to move from planning to collaborative implementation.

Question: What will visitor use look like in the future?

Answer: The guidance in this GMP/EA is consistent with what was presented in the draft GMP/EIS. The GMP/EA allows for changes to visitor regulations in the long-term, including allowing children to visit Kalaupapa with adult supervision and removing the 100 person per day visitor cap while continuing to limit the number of visitors per day through new mechanisms.

An orientation for first-time visitors would be required, and there could be a mechanism developed for frequent / repeat visitors. There would still be an entry pass system for limited areas beyond the Kalaupapa Settlement in order to properly account for people for health and safety reasons. The current facility capacity at Kalaupapa is estimated to be approximately 300 full-time people and would guide future visitor capacity.

Additional visitor studies and planning would be undertaken to further understand capacity, implement actions in the plan, and engage the public. The goals for visitor experience are to provide opportunities for reflection of the story and stewardship to the 'aina.

Question: Will the age restriction go away?

Answer: The NPS recognizes the sensitivity of this issue for patients, descendants, the topside Molokai community, stakeholders, and the general public.

As long as the Kalaupapa Patient Advisory Council directs, children will not be allowed within Kalaupapa National Historical Park in the near term. At present, patients have differing views about whether children may be allowed at Kalaupapa, with some who strongly support restricting children and some who strongly support allowing children.

Children have the ability to connect with places and personal stories, especially to other children who were sent to Kalaupapa, and could greatly benefit from organized educational group visits to Kalaupapa as well as youth service programs. Children could learn about stewardship and malama ka 'āina. Children are allowed at other national park units which tell difficult and complex histories (such as Flight 93 in Pennsylvania and Big Hole Battlefield in Montana) as well as remote and physically challenging sites with steep trails (such as Grand Canyon National Park and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park).

As stated in the preferred alternative, "In the long term, the age restriction would be lifted to allow visitation by children, though this policy would be periodically reevaluated and could be changed." The NPS considered changing the age limit to allow only older children, however decided that elementary school children and parents of young children should be allowed. The NPS is concerned about safety for children, and the change would be phased in over time and could include restrictions related to the trail if deemed necessary.

Question: Were the Kalaupapa patients consulted on this plan?

Answer: Special attention was given to include the patient community in the GMP planning process. In preparation for the GMP, the NPS consulted with the patient community in 2007 and conducted scoping interviews with 28 patient residents at Kalaupapa and at Hale Mōhalu, Leahi Hospital, O'ahu. The interviews were conducted jointly by NPS and Department of Health staff. The patients were asked questions about the future of Kalaupapa. The interview results illustrated that the patients had diverse opinions. Sometimes the patients wished to remain anonymous or did not allow public release of the interview. In these cases, their names were not attached to the interview and the interview was anonymous.

Public scoping meetings were also held in Kalaupapa so that patients could attend. Patient concerns and thoughts were considered and/or incorporated into the GMP. In addition, three patients were included on the GMP planning team. The NPS also provided regular updates on the GMP to the Kalaupapa Federal Advisory Commission which is comprised primarily of patients.

The NPS continues to consult with patients on park projects in Kalaupapa. Any consultations and interviews authorized by patients for public release are available by contacting the museum curator at Kalaupapa NHP.