



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Finding of No Significant Impact Environmental Assessment General Management Plan

Chickasaw National Recreation Area Oklahoma

The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared a general management plan / environmental assessment (GMP/EA) for Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Oklahoma. Chickasaw National Recreation Area was authorized by an act of Congress on March 17, 1976 (Public Law 94-235). Part of Chickasaw National Recreation Area was originally set aside as Sulphur Springs Reservation in 1902, and then renamed and redesignated as Platt National Park in 1906. In 1976, Platt National Park, Arbuckle National Recreation Area, and additional lands were combined to establish Chickasaw National Recreation Area (PL 94-235). Congress established the national recreation area to protect its springs and waters, preserve areas of archeological or ethnological interest, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, protect scenic, scientific, natural, and historic values, and memorialize the Chickasaw Indian Nation. The national recreation area encompasses some 9,899 acres, of which Lake of the Arbuckles covers an average surface area of 3,127 acres.

The last comprehensive management plan for Chickasaw National Recreation Area was completed in 1979, with an amendment completed in 1994. Much has occurred since then — new facilities have been developed or are being developed, and patterns and types of visitor use continue to change. Each of these changes has implications for how visitors access and use the area, how these facilities need to be used to support those uses, how the area's resources are managed, and how the NPS staff operates the area. A new plan is needed to:

- Clearly define resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved in Chickasaw National Recreation Area.
- Provide a framework for NPS managers to use when making decisions about how to best protect national recreation area resources, how to provide a diverse range of visitor experience opportunities, how to manage visitor use, and what kinds of facilities, if any, to develop in Chickasaw National Recreation Area.
- Ensure that this foundation for decision making has been developed in consultation with interested stakeholders and adopted by the NPS leadership after an adequate analysis of the benefits, impacts, and economic costs of alternative courses of action.

The alternatives, which are based on Chickasaw National Recreation Area's purpose, significance, and special mandates, present different ways to manage resources and visitor use, and improve facilities and infrastructure at Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Concerns identified during scoping and evaluated in the environmental assessment included: potential impacts to groundwater and flows of the area springs and Vendome Well, and surface water quality; spread of nonnative species and red cedar; use and types of visitor facilities; outdated maintenance and administrative facilities; and user capacity of the area.

Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative, Alternative B, is the selected alternative for implementation. The primary focus of this alternative will be on improving selected natural and cultural resources while enhancing visitor facilities and interpretive opportunities. Compared to the other alternatives considered, this alternative will provide a high level of protection to natural landscapes and cultural resources. The alternative will continue to offer a diversity of opportunities for visitor experiences. New facilities will be constructed in previously developed areas where possible. Disturbance to sensitive areas, such as threatened and endangered species habitat and archeological sites, will also be avoided or mitigated whenever possible.

Specific actions under this alternative will include the following:

- Chickasaw National Recreation Area will actively encourage a partnership to identify approaches to manage the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer. This will include increased monitoring, additional studies, and protection of recharge areas.
- Enhanced emphasis on preservation and protection of cultural resources (historic structures, cultural landscapes, archeological resources, ethnographic resources, and museum collections) will be provided. The *Cultural Landscape Report* will provide general guidance for the treatment of historic properties within the proposed Platt National Park Historic District.
- The bison pasture will be restored to prairie and the bison herd maintained at an appropriate size. A study will be completed to determine the possibility of introducing bison from the Platt District to the Upper Guy Sandy.
- The museum collections and archives that are currently housed at Chickasaw National Recreation Area in one of the maintenance area buildings will be moved to an appropriate site.
- The Travertine Nature Center will continue to focus on resource education, providing programs to school groups and the public, and there will be additional formal programs that more fully interpret primary interpretive themes.
- Up to two additional day use picnic shelters and the addition of shower facilities will be added to the Platt District.
- The Vendome Well will be managed to reduce the discharge of groundwater during times when it is not being used or enjoyed by the public.

- Improvements will be made to the Cold Springs campground, including adding vegetation to buffer campsites, making road repairs, improving drainage and rehabilitating the restroom facilities.
- The trail link from Central Campground to Flower Park will be reinstated.
- The Central campground and restroom facilities will be rehabilitated.
- New restrooms will be constructed and fishing dock facilities will be replaced at Veterans Lake. A trail link to the Rock Creek campground will be built and the universally accessible trail around the lake will be completed.
- The possibility of adding a recreational opportunity such as a horse camp, staging area, or group campsite at Veterans Lake will be considered.
- The maintenance and administrative operations will be relocated outside Chickasaw National Recreation Area or within Chickasaw National Recreation Area, but outside the historic district. The historic structures in the existing maintenance area will be adaptively rehabilitated and reused. Some of the nonhistoric structures will be removed or replaced.
- The trail system in the Rock Creek Corridor will be maintained and upgraded. There will be additional work to address erosion problems.
- At the Lake of the Arbuckles Area, commercial operations such as boat tours, ecotours, boat rentals, bus tours, and lakeside cabin rentals may be provided if there is sufficient interest and demand. Picnic shelters and new restrooms will be added and efforts will be made to restore areas along the lake that have been adversely affected by erosion.
- The Point and Buckhorn campgrounds will be maintained and operated with the current number of campsites. However, some of the sites that do not currently have utilities will be upgraded. There will be improvements to vegetative screening between campsites and trails in these areas. Parking within the campgrounds will be redesigned to better limit impacts. New restrooms at picnic areas near the lake will be constructed. A new restroom with showers will be constructed and the entrance road to the campground will be upgraded at the Point campground. The Buckhorn campground amphitheater and electrical service will also be upgraded.
- The Guy Sandy campground will be improved. Dock area restrooms will also be improved. A picnic shelter with additional picnic sites will be provided for day users.
- There will be no changes in management of the Goddard Youth Camp. It will continue to be managed under a special use permit that recognizes compliance with NPS standards.
- The Upper Guy Sandy area will continue to be restored to natural conditions.

Other Alternatives

Two other alternatives were considered for Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Alternative A (no action) consists of the continuation of existing national recreation area management and trends, and serves as the basis for evaluating the other alternatives. Under alternative A the National Park Service would have continued to manage Chickasaw National Recreation Area as it has since the approval of the 1979 General Management Plan Supplement and the 1994 amendment. There would have been no major change in the management of Chickasaw National Recreation Area under this alternative. All facilities and resource programs would have continued as they have. With the exception of the approved and funded visitor center near Vendome Well, no new facilities would have been built.

Management under alternative C would have focused on the protection and restoration of natural and cultural resources. Of the alternatives considered, alternative C would have provided the highest level of protection of natural landscapes and a high level of protection to cultural resources. There would have been fewer facilities and a narrower range of visitor opportunities, although there would have been a better opportunity to experience resources in relatively natural or recovering conditions. Some roads or trails would have been removed and revegetated. Some new facilities would have been built, but generally they would have been placed outside Chickasaw National Recreation Area or in previously developed areas.

Mitigative Measures

Congress charged the National Park Service with managing the lands under its stewardship "in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations" (NPS Organic Act, 16 USC 1). As a result, NPS staff routinely evaluates and implements mitigation whenever conditions occur that could adversely affect the sustainability of national park system resources.

To ensure that implementation of the alternative protects unimpaired natural and cultural resources and the quality of the visitor experience, a consistent set of mitigation measures will be applied to actions proposed in this plan. The National Park Service will prepare appropriate environmental review (i.e., those required by NEPA, NHPA, and other relevant legislation) for these future actions. As part of the environmental review, the National Park Service will avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts when practicable. The implementation of a compliance-monitoring program will be within the parameters of NEPA and NHPA compliance documents, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permits, etc. The compliance-monitoring program will oversee these mitigation measures and will include reporting protocols.

The following mitigation measures and best management practices will be applied to avoid or minimize potential impacts from implementation of the alternative.

Natural Resources

General

- Chickasaw National Recreation Area's resources, including air, water, soils, vegetation, and wildlife, will be inventoried and monitored to provide information needed to avoid or minimize impacts of future development. Any museum collections generated by such activities will be managed according to NPS policies.
- Whenever possible, new facilities will be built in previously disturbed areas or in carefully selected sites with as small a construction footprint as possible. During design and construction periods, NPS natural resource staff will identify areas to be avoided.
- Fencing or other means will be used to protect sensitive resources adjacent to construction areas.
- Construction activities will be monitored by resource specialists as needed.
- Construction materials will be kept in work areas, especially if the construction takes place near streams, springs, natural drainages, or other water bodies.
- All food-related items or rubbish will be removed.
- Visitors will be informed of the importance of protecting Chickasaw National Recreation Area's natural resources (including paleontological resources) and leaving these resources undisturbed for the enjoyment of future generations.

Air Quality

- A dust abatement program will be implemented. Standard dust abatement measures could include: watering or otherwise stabilizing soils, covering haul trucks, employing speed limits on unpaved roads, minimizing vegetation clearing, and revegetating after construction.

Soils

- New facilities will be built on soils suitable for development. Soil erosion will be minimized by limiting the time soil is left exposed and by applying other erosion-control measures such as erosion matting, silt fencing, and sedimentation basins in construction areas to reduce erosion, surface scouring, and discharge to water bodies. Once work was completed, construction areas will be revegetated with native plants in a timely period.
- To minimize soil erosion on new trails, best management practices for trail construction will be used. Examples of best management practices could include installing water bars, check dams and retaining walls, contouring to avoid erosion, and minimizing soil disturbance.

Paleontological Resources

- Site-specific surveys will be undertaken before any ground disturbance occurs in areas believed likely to contain fossils. If important paleontological resources were identified, the National Park Service will attempt to avoid, relocate, or otherwise mitigate impacts from the actions being taken. Any specimens found and collected during construction activities will be managed according to NPS museum collection policies.
- To the extent possible, efforts will be undertaken to inform and educate visitors, students, teachers, and the public about Chickasaw National Recreation Area's paleontological resources, the reasons for protecting these resources, and the laws regarding the collection of fossils from NPS lands.

Water Resources (including Floodplains and Wetlands)

- To prevent water pollution during construction, erosion control measures will be used, discharges to water bodies will be minimized, and construction equipment will be regularly inspected for leaks of petroleum and other chemicals.
- Best management practices, such as the use of silt fences, will be followed to ensure that construction-related effects were minimal and to prevent long-term impacts on water quality, wetlands, and aquatic species.
- Caution will be exercised to protect water resources from activities with the potential to damage water resources, including damage caused by construction equipment, erosion, and siltation. Measures will be taken to keep fill material from escaping work areas, especially near streams, springs, natural drainages, wetlands, and lakes.
- For new facilities, such as campgrounds, and to the extent practicable for existing facilities, stormwater management measures will be implemented to reduce nonpoint source pollution discharge from parking lots and other impervious surfaces. Such actions could include oil/sediment separators, street sweeping, infiltration beds, and use of permeable surfaces; and vegetated or natural filters to trap or filter stormwater runoff.
- Chickasaw National Recreation Area's spill prevention and pollution control program for hazardous materials will be followed and updated on a regular basis. Standard measures could include hazardous materials storage and handling procedures; spill containment, cleanup, and reporting procedures; and limitation of refueling and other hazardous activities to upland / nonsensitive sites.
- Wetlands potentially affected by new facilities will be delineated by qualified NPS staff or certified wetland specialists and clearly marked before construction work. All new facilities will be sited to avoid wetlands, or if that is not practicable, to otherwise comply with Executive Order 11990 ("Protection of Wetlands") and regulations of the Clean Water Act.
- New structures will be located outside of floodplains whenever possible. A statement of findings for floodplains will be prepared if a new facility must be located in a floodplain.

Vegetation

- Areas used by visitors (e.g., trails) will be monitored for signs of native vegetation disturbance. Public education, revegetation of disturbed areas with native plants, erosion control measures, and barriers will be used to control potential impacts on plants from trail erosion or social trailing.
- Proposed sites for new trails, campsites, and other facilities will be surveyed for sensitive species before construction. If sensitive species were present, new developments will be relocated to avoid impacts.
- Revegetation plans will be developed for disturbed areas. Revegetation plans should specify such features as seed/ plant source, seed/plant mixes, soil preparation, fertilizers, and mulching. Salvage vegetation, rather than new planting or seeding, will be used to the maximum extent possible. To maintain genetic integrity, whenever possible native plants that grow in the project area or the region will be used in restoration efforts. Use of nonnative species or genetic materials will be considered only where deemed necessary to maintain a cultural landscape or to prevent severe resource damage, and will be approved by Chickasaw National Recreation Area's natural resource specialist. Restoration activities will be instituted immediately after construction was completed. Monitoring will occur to ensure that revegetation was successful, plantings were maintained, and unsuccessful plant materials were replaced.

- Whenever possible, specimen trees will be retained and protected from construction-related damage. Trees removed during construction will be used in trail construction, mulch, or other construction material, or will remain on-site as habitat.

Exotic Species

- Special attention will be devoted to preventing the spread of noxious weeds and other nonnative plants. Standard measures could include the following elements: ensure construction-related equipment arrives on-site free of mud or feed-bearing material, certify all seeds and straw material as weed-free, identify areas of noxious weeds before construction, treat noxious weeds or noxious weed topsoil before construction (e.g., topsoil segregation, storage, herbicide treatment), and revegetate with appropriate native species.
- If horses are permitted to stay overnight in Chickasaw National Recreation Area, they will be required to eat certified weed-free fodder.
- Efforts to control introduction and spread of nonnative animals will be implemented.

Wildlife

- To the extent possible, new or rehabilitated facilities will be sited to avoid sensitive wildlife habitats, including feeding and resting areas, major travel corridors, nesting areas, and sensitive amphibian habitat.
- Construction activities will be timed to avoid sensitive periods, such as nesting or spawning seasons. Ongoing visitor use and NPS operational activities could be restricted if their potential level of damage or disturbance warranted doing so.
- Measures will be taken to reduce the potential for wildlife to get food from humans. Wildlife-proof garbage containers will be required in developed areas (including visitor centers, picnic areas, trails, interpretive waysides, and campgrounds). Signs will continue to educate visitors about the need to refrain from feeding wildlife.
- Other visitor impacts on wildlife will be addressed through such techniques as visitor education programs, restrictions on visitor activities, and ranger patrols.

Threatened and Endangered Species and Species of Concern

Conservation measures will occur during normal operations as well as before, during, and after construction to minimize long-term immediate impacts on rare, threatened, and endangered species. These measures will vary by specific project and the affected area of Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Many of the measures listed above for vegetation and wildlife will also benefit rare, threatened, and endangered species by helping to preserve habitat. Conservation measures specific to rare, threatened, and endangered species will include the following:

- Surveys will be conducted for special status species, including rare, threatened, and endangered species, before deciding to take any action that might cause harm. In consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, measures will be taken to protect any sensitive species whether identified through surveys or presumed to occur.
- If breeding or nesting areas for threatened and endangered species were observed in Chickasaw National Recreation Area, these areas will be protected from human disturbance.

- New facilities and management actions will be located and/or designed to avoid adverse effects on rare, threatened, and endangered species. If avoidance of adverse effects on rare, threatened, and endangered species is not possible, appropriate conservation measures will be taken in consultation with the appropriate resource agencies.
- Restoration and/or monitoring plans will be developed as warranted. Plans should include methods for implementation, performance standards, monitoring criteria, and adaptive management techniques.
- Measures will be taken to reduce adverse effects of nonnative plants and wildlife on rare, threatened, and endangered species.
- No trees will be removed that are being used by bald eagles for roosting.

Noise Abatement

- Standard noise abatement measures will be followed during construction. Standard noise abatement measures could include the following elements: a schedule that minimizes impacts on adjacent noise-sensitive resources, the use of the best available noise control techniques wherever feasible, the use of hydraulically or electrically powered impact tools when feasible, and the location of stationary noise sources as far from sensitive resources as possible.
- Facilities will be located and designed to minimize objectionable noise.
- Personal watercraft users will be encouraged to use the new quieter vehicles currently being produced.

Cultural Resources

All projects with the potential to affect historic properties will be carried out in compliance with Section 106 of NHPA to ensure that the effects are adequately addressed. All reasonable measures will be taken to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects in consultation with the Oklahoma state historic preservation officer and, as necessary, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and other concerned parties, including American Indian tribes. In addition to adhering to the legal and policy requirements for cultural resources protection and preservation, the National Park Service will also undertake the following measures as required to further protect or mitigate resources potentially at risk of disturbance because of implementing proposed actions:

- All areas selected for construction will be surveyed to ensure that cultural resources (e.g., archeological, historic, ethnographic, and cultural landscape resources) in the area of potential effects are adequately identified and protected. Compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) will apply in the unlikely event that human remains believed to be Native American would be discovered inadvertently during construction. Prompt notification and consultation with the tribes traditionally associated with Chickasaw National Recreation Area will occur in accordance with NAGPRA. If such human remains were believed to be non-Indian, standard reporting procedures to the proper authorities will be followed, as will all applicable federal, state, and local laws.
- Archeological documentation will be done in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

- New facilities will be constructed in previously disturbed areas. Archeological surveys and/or monitoring, as appropriate, will precede any construction to ensure that potential impacts to archeological resources will be avoided or minimized to the greatest extent.
- As necessary, archeological monitoring will accompany ground-disturbing construction activities in areas of high resource probability or sensitivity to assist with the identification and protection of discovered resources.
- Should construction unearth previously unknown archeological resources, work will stop in the area of discovery until the resources were properly recorded by the National Park Service and evaluated under the eligibility criteria of the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with Section 106 procedures. Data recovery excavations and/or other mitigating measures will be carried out where site avoidance is not possible.
- New construction and/or alterations and rehabilitation of historic structures will be sensitively carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Archeology and Historic Preservation to ensure that character-defining features are protected.
- Vegetation screening and sensitive topographic and/or other site selection criteria will be used to minimize the visual intrusion of new construction on historic viewsheds or in historic areas.
- Ethnographic resources will be protected and mitigated by such means as identifying and maintaining access for recognized groups to traditional, spiritual/ceremonial, or resource gathering and activity areas. As practical, new developments will be screened from these areas, and conflicting uses will be relocated or timed to minimize disruptions.
- Cultural landscape rehabilitation measures might include vegetation thinning, removal of exotic species, removing noncontributing or nonhistoric structures and landscape features, and incorporating compatible designs for new construction.
- Further background research, resource inventories, and National Register of Historic Places evaluation of historic properties will be carried out where management information is lacking. The results of these efforts will be incorporated into site-specific planning and compliance documents.
- All options for preserving historic properties will be considered and evaluated. However, if historic buildings, structures, or landscapes could not be reasonably preserved, historical and architectural documentation will be completed in accordance with the standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), and/or the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS). The nature and scope of these mitigation measures will be developed in consultation with the Oklahoma state historic preservation officer, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and other concerned parties.
- No national-register-listed or eligible structure will be removed or allowed to decay naturally (molder) without prior review by recreation area and regional cultural resource specialists, including approval by the regional director and consultation with the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office. Before a national-register-listed or eligible structure is removed or allowed to molder, appropriate documentation recording the structure will be prepared in accordance with Section 110(b) of NHPA and the documentation submitted to the HABS/HAER/HALS program.
- Visitors will be educated on the importance of protecting Chickasaw National Recreation Area's historic properties and leaving these undisturbed for the enjoyment of future visitors.

- Artifacts and cultural materials will be carefully protected according to NPS guidelines and policies to minimize the risk of loss, theft, and/or disturbance.
- New facilities will be constructed in previously disturbed areas. However, archeological surveys and/or monitoring, as appropriate, will precede any construction to ensure that potential impacts to archeological resources will be avoided or minimized to the greatest extent possible.

Visitor Safety and Experiences

- A traffic control plan will be implemented, as warranted. Standard measures will include strategies to maintain safe and efficient traffic flow during road construction periods.
- Measures to reduce adverse effects of construction on visitor safety and experience will be implemented.
- Visitor safety concerns will be integrated into interpretative and educational programs. Directional signs and education programs to promote understanding among visitors will continue.
- An accessibility study will be conducted to understand barriers to recreation area programs and facilities. Based on this study, a strategy to provide the maximum level of accessibility will be implemented.

Scenic Resources

Mitigation measures are designed to minimize visual intrusions. These include the following:

- Where appropriate, facilities such as boardwalks and fences will be used to route people away from sensitive natural and cultural resources, while still permitting access to important viewpoints.
- Facilities will be designed, sited, and constructed to avoid or minimize visual intrusion into the natural and/or cultural landscape.
- Vegetative screening will be provided, where appropriate.

Sustainable Design and Aesthetics

- Projects will avoid or minimize adverse impacts on natural and cultural resources.
- Development projects (e.g., buildings, facilities, utilities, roads, bridges, and trails, etc.) or reconstruction projects (e.g., road reconstruction, building rehabilitation, and utility upgrades) will be designed to work in harmony with the surroundings, particularly in historic districts.
- Projects will reduce, minimize, or eliminate air and water nonpoint source pollution.
- Projects will be sustainable whenever practicable by recycling and reusing materials, minimizing materials, minimizing energy consumption during the project, and minimizing energy consumption throughout the lifespan of the project.

Socioeconomic Environment

- During the future planning and implementation of the approved management plan for Chickasaw National Recreation Area, NPS staff will work with local communities and

county governments to further identify potential impacts and mitigation measures that will best serve the interests and concerns of both the National Park Service and the local communities.

- Partnerships will be pursued to improve the quality and diversity of community amenities and services.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The environmentally preferred alternative is defined as “the alternative that will promote national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act.” Section 101 states that it is the continuing responsibility of the federal government to . . . :

- fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage; and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and a variety of individual choices;
- achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities; and
- enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The environmentally preferable alternative is the NPS preferred alternative for Chickasaw National Recreation Area in this GMP. This alternative satisfies the national environmental goals: the alternative provides a high level of protection of natural and cultural resources while concurrently providing for a wide range of neutral and beneficial uses of the environment. The alternative maintains an environment that supports a diversity and variety of individual choices, and it integrates resource protection with an appropriate range of visitor uses and understanding.

The preferred alternative (alternative B) surpasses the other alternatives in realizing the full range of the §101 national environmental policy goals. The no-action alternative does not provide as much resource protection as the preferred alternative — more resource impacts would have been expected in the no-action alternative. Thus, compared to the preferred alternative, the no-action alternative does not meet the following national environmental policy goals either:

- attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation
- preserve important natural aspects and maintain an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice
- achieve a balance between population and resource use

Alternative C provides for higher levels of natural resource protection; however, there would have been reduced visitor use in Chickasaw National Recreation Area compared with the preferred alternative. Thus, compared to the preferred alternative, alternative C does not meet the following national environmental goals as well:

- attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation
- maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and a variety of individual choices
- achieve a balance between population and resource use

Why the Preferred Alternative will not Have a Significant Effect on the Human Environment

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse

None of the impacts identified for the preferred alternative will result in more than a moderate level impact (although the impacts to the flows of the national recreation area's springs were identified as being beneficial but of unknown magnitude). Moderate beneficial impacts for the preferred alternative were identified for ethnographic resources, due to improvements to trail access, and museum collections, due to the addition of more space and improved conditions. But most impacts identified for the preferred alternative were negligible to minor in intensity. Most minor to moderate impacts were beneficial and included impacts to: soils due to improvements to trails, the Cold Springs campground, and shoreline restoration work around Lake of the Arbuckles, vegetation due to restoration efforts; wildlife populations due to continuing efforts to restore prairie and forest in the Upper Guy Sandy area; ethnographic resources due to water monitoring efforts; visitor experiences due to additional opportunities for visitors in the national recreation area; and national recreation area operations. Minor to moderate adverse impacts were identified to the natural soundscape in local areas due to construction and restoration activities; and to museum collections and archives due to the change in their location, causing inconvenience for researchers and staff.

Degree of effect on public health or safety

Visitor safety will remain a priority under the preferred alternative. None of the actions proposed in the preferred alternative will adversely affect public health or safety. Indeed, several of the actions will beneficially affect public health and safety, including: increasing park ranger presence in the Platt District and Lake of the Arbuckles areas, repairing roads at the Cold Springs campground, maintaining and upgrading the Rock Creek trail system, and redesigning parking in the Point and Buckhorn areas.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas

As described in the environmental assessment, Chickasaw National Recreation Area contains significant historic and cultural resources, and small wetlands along streams, springs, and other

water bodies. All of the area's springs will continue to be protected and their flows monitored for potential adverse changes. No adverse effects will occur to cultural landscapes and historic structures, and no impacts to wetlands as a result of the alternative will be expected. Although prime farmland soils exist within Chickasaw National Recreation Area, primarily along or near drainages, the preferred alternative will not adversely affect these areas — no new developments will be proposed in these areas. No wild and scenic rivers, ecologically critical areas, or other unique characteristics are within the national recreation area boundaries.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial

None of the actions proposed in the preferred alternative have the potential to be highly controversial. This is supported by the fact that the planning team received only a handful of comments in response to the draft environmental assessment.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks

Under the preferred alternative, action will be taken to control flows from the Vendome Well, which will be expected to have a long term beneficial impact on the flows of the national recreation area's springs. But due to a lack of information on the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer and the impact of the Vendome Well on the aquifer, it is not possible to predict the extent of the impact. Likewise, it is not possible to predict the potential for cumulative impacts on the flow of the springs due to actions occurring outside the national recreation area. But these actions are independent of what is being proposed in the preferred alternative. (Actions being proposed in the preferred alternative, such as encouraging a partnership to identify approaches to manage the aquifer, will be expected to help reduce the uncertainty and risks to the aquifer and the springs.)

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration

No actions are proposed in the preferred alternative that are inconsistent with the enabling legislation for Chickasaw National Recreation Area. The preferred alternative will not set any NPS precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts

As noted in the environmental assessment, there could be long term adverse cumulative impacts of unknown magnitude to the recreation area's paleontological resources and to the aquifer and the flow of the springs. However, the actions proposed in the preferred alternative will add a very small increment to the overall adverse cumulative impacts, most of which will be due to actions independent of the preferred alternative (with the possible exception of the changes in the operation of the Vendome Well, which will add a beneficial increment of unknown magnitude to the overall cumulative adverse impact). In addition, when the adverse and beneficial impacts of the preferred alternative are added to actions that have occurred, and are likely to occur, in the area surrounding Chickasaw National Recreation Area, there will be a major, long-term, adverse cumulative impact on the area's native vegetation and native wildlife

populations and habitats. But as noted in the environmental assessment, the actions in the preferred alternative will add both a small positive increment and a small negative increment to the overall impact, given how much change has already occurred to the vegetative communities and wildlife populations and habitats once present.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

As described in the environmental assessment, no significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources will be lost or destroyed as a result of the preferred alternative. Compliance with §106 of the National Historic Preservation Act was completed with a concurrence with the NPS determination of no historic properties effected by the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office on July 16, 2007.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat

No federally listed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat will be affected by the preferred alternative. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the determination of no effect on threatened or endangered species on July 13, 2007.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state, or local environmental protection law

This action violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

Impairment

In analyzing impairments in conjunction with the NEPA analysis for this project, the National Park Service takes into account the fact that if an impairment were likely to occur, by operation of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations at 40 CFR, such impacts will be considered to be major or significant. This is because the context and intensity of the impact will be sufficient to render what will normally be a minor or moderate impact to be major or significant. Taking this into consideration, NPS guidance documents note that "Not all major or significant impacts under a NEPA analysis are impairments. However, all impairments to NPS resources and values will constitute a major or significant impact under NEPA. If an impact results in impairment, the action should be modified to lessen the impact level. If the impairment cannot be avoided by modifying the proposed action, that action cannot be selected for implementation." "Interim Technical Guidance on Assessing Impacts and Impairment to Natural Resources" National Park Service, Natural Resource Program Center, July 2003.

In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the National Park Service has determined that implementation of the preferred alternative will not constitute an impairment to the integrity of Chickasaw National Recreation Area's resources and values. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the environmental assessment. The environmental assessment identified less than major adverse impacts on paleontological resources, water quantity associated with the area's springs, surface water quality, vegetation, wildlife, soundscape, archeological resources, ethnographic resources, museum collections and archives, and cultural landscapes and historic structures. This

conclusion is further based on the superintendent's professional judgment, as guided by the direction in *NPS Management Policies, 2006*. Although the preferred alternative has some negative impacts, in many cases these adverse impacts are the result of actions taken to preserve and restore other national recreation area resources and values. Overall, the plan results in benefits to national recreation area resources and values, opportunities for their enjoyment, and it does not result in their impairment.

Public Involvement

The environmental assessment was made available for public review during a 60-day period ending July 2, 2007. Public meetings were held during the comment period at the national recreation area, Sulphur, and with the Chickasaw Nation in Ada. These meetings were primarily informational in nature, with no substantive comments for the plan being expressed. Written comments were received from the Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory, and five citizens. Three of the individuals (from the same family) opposed all of the alternatives. One individual supported alternative A (no action) and opposed the preferred alternative. A few minor changes were made in the text as a result of comments and are included in the attached errata sheet. Selected public comments and NPS responses are also included as an attachment to this document.

Conclusion

The preferred alternative does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The preferred alternative will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are no more than minor to moderate in intensity. There are no significant impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended: Bruce Noble 11/6/07
Superintendent Date

Approved: Michael D. Syder 11/21/07
Intermountain Regional Director Date

Attachment 1: Errata Sheets Chickasaw National Recreation Area General Management Plan

Corrections and revisions to the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment* are listed in this section. Revisions were made in response to comments from public and agency reviews of the environmental assessment. These revisions have not resulted in substantial modification of the preferred alternative. It has been determined that the revisions do not require additional environmental analysis. Additions to the text are shown in bold and text removed is shown with strikeout. The page numbers referenced are from the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment*.

When the draft *Chickasaw National Recreation Area General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment* was written, the bald eagle was listed as threatened on the federal list of threatened and endangered species. However, as of August 8, 2007, the bald eagle was delisted-- the eagle will not longer be protected as a threatened species (although it will continue to be protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act). Thus, all references to this species being listed as a federally threatened species in the draft environmental assessment (see pages 22, 39, 43, 87, 106, 143, 152, 170, 192) should be dropped.

The national recreation area continues to refine visitor use data as new information is collected. Additional information has been collected for the recreation area since the writing of the draft plan by the University of Idaho. This data has been reviewed and has not resulted in any changes to the alternatives or impacts presented in the draft plan.

Page 34 – Under Surface Water Quality

Water quality is an important issue for Chickasaw National Recreation Area, both for visitors and NPS staff. Although the recreation area's water quality is generally considered to be good, swimming waters often test above allowable limits for contaminants, although the source of these contaminants is not known. Rock Creek and Lake of the Arbuckles are included on the Oklahoma 303(d) list of impaired waters because of elevated nutrients, siltation, and salinity. Beginning in the summer 2003, the National Park Service posted advisory notices along Travertine Creek because bacterial levels had exceeded NPS standards. **The national recreation area continues to monitor water quality and the state is scheduled to reevaluate quality in 2009.**

Page 49 – Under Introduction

It should be noted that under all alternatives, the planned and approved visitor center near Vendome Well is a "given." This facility was approved in the 1994 Amendment to the general management plan (GMP) and has been planned to be constructed in the near future. The visitor center near Vendome Well has been shown as an action under each alternative. **This facility continues to wait for funding.**

Page 102 – Under Vegetation and People

However, all areas designated as grassland in an 1871 General Land Office survey had been converted to agricultural fields. These fields remained in agricultural use until 1977 when the area became part of Chickasaw National Recreation Area. ~~However, haying operations have continued on several of the old fields.~~ (Reason for change: haying operations have ceased)

Page 123 – Under Visitor Access, Circulation and Activities

Currently there are no concession operations ~~or active incidental business permits~~ at Chickasaw National Recreation Area. **Currently there are six incidental business permits issued. These are for photography (3), guided tours (2), and boat rentals (1).**

Pages 156, 175, and 196 - Under cumulative impacts

~~A current proposal for certain ranchers drawing upon the Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifer to sell and pump water north, as the water supply for Oklahoma City is under hydrological study by the Oklahoma Board of Water Resources.~~

This proposal continues to be modified.

Page 203 – Under Visitor Use and Experience - Visitors would continue to engage in the same recreational activities on Lake of the Arbuckles; and Buckhorn and the Point campgrounds would be operated with their current level of facilities. ~~The Guy Sandy campground would be improved and consolidated to provide a better camping experience (albeit to fewer campers).~~ Overall, these changes would provide minor positive impacts for those visitors who enjoy a more rustic camping experience. (Reason for change: the Guy Sandy campground would have been removed under Alternative C)

Page 204 – Under Socioeconomic Environment - *Analysis*. Alternative C includes the designation of management prescriptions focused on protecting the cultural and natural landscapes that could possibly impact recreation area visitation and visitor use patterns, and subsequently have associated effects on the regional socioeconomic environment. These focus on resource protection and include the following:

- modifications and possible removals of sites/facilities in some other areas in Chickasaw National Recreation Area
- improvement of the trail system in the Rock Creek corridor ~~and provision of two or three backcountry campsites~~ (Reason for change: there were no provisions for backcountry campsites under any alternative)

Attachment 2: Responses to Selected Comments Received during the Public Review of the Draft General Management Plan

The following written and oral comments and concerns were received during the public review of the Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment. There were letters from five individuals with many of the same comments being mentioned in more than one letter. The comments have been summarized and responses given below.

Comments or Concerns	Responses
<i>Why was the cultural landscape report used as guidance for actions within the GMP?</i>	Treatment recommendations provided in the cultural landscape report provide reasoned approaches for management of the Platt Historic District in accordance with the <i>Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes</i> . They are intended to provide general guidance and thus are appropriate direction for the GMP. However, any specific treatment undertakings stemming from the recommendations will, as necessary, include more detailed planning, design and compliance efforts to ensure preservation and protection of the landscape's integrity. Similar evaluations and management approaches will be followed for other potential cultural landscapes that may be identified at Chickasaw National Recreation Area.
<i>Why does the plan place so much emphasis on the Civilian Conservation Corps era?</i>	The CCC is the most prominent force involved in shaping the present-day appearance of the Platt District. Both as a planning idea and as a physical construction, it appears to far outweigh Mission 66 changes to that landscape in overall significance. It should be noted, however, that the 1960s changes to the landscape such as the three comfort stations, nature center, parking areas, and trails may contribute to later periods of significance. Once a cultural resource inventory is completed for the entire Platt District, other significant prehistoric and historic archeological resources will be recognized and protected.
<i>The National Park Service has ignored properties that may qualify for the National Register of Historic Places and instead focuses on just a 10 year time period. Doesn't the law require that all historical time periods be considered?</i>	The NPS staff has not focused just on a ten-year time period in the history of the Platt District. The Cultural Landscape Report for the Platt Historic District begins with the national recreation area's earliest history and continues the story until 2003. Only certain properties were found to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places given that the 50- year limit must be reached to achieve National Register status. However, less than 50- year-old portions of the Platt District are integral parts of both the cultural landscape report and the general management plan. In addition, the NPS staff is seeking funding needed to conduct archeological work in order to better understand the early settlement era and the pre-European/American settlement period of this area's history.
<i>The Travertine Nature Center and the national environmental study area could be considered potential cultural landscapes.</i>	The Travertine Nature Center and the Environmental Study Area east of the center were not identified as historic properties contributing to the significance of the Platt Historic District of Chickasaw NRA. Although the nature center (dedicated in 1969) and the Environmental Study Area (also established in 1969) are located in the Antelope / Buffalo Springs portion of the district, their development occurred too recently to fall within the district's recognized period of significance which ended in 1940.

Comments or Concerns	Responses
	<p>However, as indicated in the <i>Cultural Landscape Report – Platt Historic District</i> (2004, p.248), future evaluations of the nature center and the study area may be undertaken to determine whether these properties and potential cultural landscape elements meet the criteria of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places for their association with the National Park Service’s “Mission 66” period of park development and architecture. Pending future evaluations, Chickasaw NRA will ensure the preservation of the nature center and the character-defining features of its landscape in a manner that does not diminish the integrity of these properties and the era they represent.</p> <p>If funding permits, the NPS staff plans to nominate the Travertine Nature Center to the National Register well before it turns 50 years of age in 2019. The final decision about whether the nature center qualifies for National Register listing will be made by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places in the Washington, D.C. office of the National Park Service.</p>
<p><i>Programming within the Travertine Nature Center should remain focused on nature.</i></p>	<p>NPS policy states that each park unit shall have a comprehensive interpretive plan that includes a long-range vision of the interpretive program, an annual component to implement the vision, and a reference database. The comprehensive interpretive plan is the implementation plan that defines the parkunit’s interpretive program. All interpretive activities including programming at the Travertine Nature Center are based on the comprehensive interpretive plan. The resulting interpretive program communicates – in the most effective and efficient way – Chickasaw National Recreation Area’s significances and meanings while promoting the protection and preservation of Chickasaw National Recreation Area resources.</p> <p>The Travertine Nature Center offers a wide selection of interpretive programming which support the following primary national recreation area’s interpretive themes:</p> <p>A — Chickasaw National Recreation Area's 500-million-year record of sedimentary deposition, complex hydro-geological system, and diverse flora and fauna foster enriched connections with the dynamic relationships among geology, water, and life.</p> <p>B — The attractive and intimate scale of the landscape, the wide range of recreational opportunities, the history of the freshwater and mineral springs, and the comfortable, rustic built environment of Chickasaw National Recreation Area invite an exploration of the concepts of personal and societal health and well-being.</p> <p>C — The Eastern Woodlands-Western Plains ecotone at Chickasaw National Recreation Area offers outstanding opportunities to appreciate the rich ecological relationships that nurture and sustain our civilization.</p> <p>Regularly scheduled interpretive programs that originate at the nature center include: <i>Morning Quest</i>, a ranger led nature hike (1-1/2 mile hike to</p>

Comments or Concerns	Responses
	<p>Antelope and Buffalo Springs); <i>Discover Nature</i>, a formal ranger talk interpretive program (30 minute interpretive presentation); informal ranger talks on the floor of the nature center highlighting a natural feature of the national recreation area (15 minute roving contacts); night hikes (1-1/2 mile hike studying nocturnal activity); nature films; area orientation video; and school visits to the nature center for ranger led presentations. Special interpretive events and outreach activities originate out of the nature center and have included, e.g.: Bald Eagle Days in January, Winter Lecture Series, NPS Week, The Great Outdoors Family Workshop, Outdoor Women Workshops, Territory Tellers Storytelling event, Murray County Association Poetry Reading Event.</p> <p>There are no substantial changes planned regarding the use of the Travertine Nature Center and it is logical that the nature center remain the central location for personal and non-personal services such as interpretive talks, guided walks, films, demonstrations, education programs, and as an outlet for sales of the Western National Parks Association. The Travertine Nature Center would continue to focus on resource education, providing programs to school groups and the public, and there would be additional formal programs that more fully interpret primary interpretive themes. However, the nature center concept is not a static interpretive device, but continues to evolve as the NPS staff seeks to communicate in the most effective and efficient way the significances and meanings of Chickasaw National Recreation Area resources.</p>
<p><i>New exhibits are needed at the Travertine Nature Center.</i></p>	<p>The nature center over its life history since 1969 has functioned in a zoo-like manner where a significant number of live animals and plants have been held and placed on exhibit. At present, the nature center currently features nine live animal exhibit areas with a combined total of 25 live animal species; 12 taxidermy or model exhibit areas; several individual animal taxidermy mounts; a 12'x20' native habitat diorama; a touch table; numerous live potted plant specimens; birdfeeders; reading table with magazines; puppet stage; a discovery room with live animal exhibits; a library; bookstore; staff office space; storage area; and visitor auditorium with audio-visual equipment.</p> <p>In 2005 the nature center received seven new interpretive and information modules, with a total of 15 informational and interpretive panels. These modules were designed for the national recreation area's proposed visitor center, but due to the indefinite postponement of construction of this facility they were placed on display at the nature center in 2005. The material content of these exhibits make these exhibits suitable for use at the nature center. Other than the native habitat diorama placed on exhibit in 2003, there had not been any other new significant interpretive exhibits at the nature center. The new interpretive and informational modules and the native habitat diorama have been well received by the visiting public and nature center staff routinely receives positive comments from the visiting public about the exhibits. Most recently, in May, 2007 a new exhibit was introduced to the floor of the nature center, a full-size bison taxidermy mount.</p> <p>For the Travertine Nature Center to more fully interpret the national</p>

Comments or Concerns	Responses
	recreation area's primary themes, new exhibits are desirable at the nature center to augment existing exhibits. Live animal, diorama, and taxidermy animal mounts and model exhibits will continue to be used at the nature center. Exhibits interpreting the non-living part of the natural world need to be developed. Greater emphasis will be placed on interpreting the national recreation area's water resources, and geological and hydro-geological resources. The stream flow of Travertine Creek underneath the nature center building structure presents a unique opportunity to interpret the area's water resources, which were the impetus for the creation of this park, and continue today as the principal reason for the area's national significance.
<i>The National Park Service appears to be planning substantial changes in the use of the nature center. Why?</i>	The Travertine Nature Center has operated in a relatively consistent manner over the last few decades. No substantial changes are planned for the facility. However, much of its operational identity to local residents, the visiting public, and the NPS staff flows from the interpretive program's use of captive animals. This practice defines, in large measure, the identity of the entire interpretive program of Chickasaw National Recreation Area. It is, therefore, paramount that this practice be studied in depth to better articulate reasons for its continuation (in present or updated form), the potential benefits derived from it, and the potential risks associated with such activity. As a result, the identity of the interpretive program bears re-examination and program re-evaluation will occur as a normal part of the area's operations and evaluation.
<i>Changes to the exterior appearance of the nature center will lessen its chances of being listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the future.</i>	No substantial changes to the exterior appearance of the nature center are planned. Project funding has been requested to rehabilitate exterior building elements yet retain the integrity of this important building so it will easily qualify for the National Register of Historic Places.
<i>At what point in time will the nature center become 50 years old, thus allowing it to be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places?</i>	The nature center will technically become eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2019, 50 years after its construction. However, less than 50 year old properties can be listed in the national register provided that a case for "exceptional significance" can be made. If funding permit, management officials at Chickasaw National Recreation Area are committed to nominating the nature center to the national register before it becomes 50 years old. The final decision about whether the nature center possesses the exceptional significance necessary to be listed before turning 50 will be made by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places in the Washington, D.C. office of the National Park Service.
<i>Why was the history of the Travertine Nature Center and the environmental study area ignored in the general management plan?</i>	The history of this building and landscape was not ignored. It fully recognized that the 1960s era buildings and landscapes need to be preserved and need to be evaluated using national register criteria.
<i>The legislative history of the environmental study area is not mentioned.</i>	The Environmental Study Area resulted from a program initiative of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, but is no longer an active program initiative of the National Park Service. The Travertine Nature Center will continue to be the center for resource education with outdoor

Comments or Concerns	Responses
	educational opportunities conducted throughout the entire national recreation area. The value of this area of the national recreation area will be recognized appropriately in future planning.
<i>What is the future management of the environmental study area?</i>	The management of the area known as the environmental study area will be guided by the management prescription presented in the general management plan. This area has been included in the historic/cultural prescription due to the high number of cultural features found in the area. The management of the area will be in accordance with the historic district and any additional recommendations that may be provided in the future after the additional Mission 66 era changes have been evaluated on their own merits.
<i>The general management plan really only focuses on preserving a 10-year period in the history of the Platte District. Why?</i>	The GMP calls for the preservation of significant cultural resources throughout the national recreation area regardless of a time period. This includes archeological sites that are hundreds of years old as well as potentially significant "Mission 66" era facilities. While most of the national recreation area's prehistoric and historic resources may have been identified, many more will be identified in the future as more cultural resource inventories are completed.
<i>Designating the Platt District as a national historic landmark is really going to prevent any recreational activities from taking place in this part of the national recreation area in the future.</i>	Management decisions will have to be made in the future about what types of recreational activities are appropriate in the Platt District, but if and when the national historic landmark is approved the designation will not put an end to recreational activity in this area of the national recreation area. All existing recreational activities will continue and additional recreational activities can be approved provided that natural and cultural resources are protected.
<i>What will happen regarding the former road to Buffalo and Antelope Springs?</i>	A portion of the former roadbed that once provided public vehicular access to the Antelope and Buffalo Springs is largely intact including historic stone culverts. Cedar trees will be removed from the former road corridor and from other areas within the Antelope and Buffalo Springs area. This former road corridor portion will be used to provide maintenance access to the Buffalo Springs comfort station and other historic and non-historic structures in the area as well as function as a fire break. This former road will not be used for public vehicular access.
<i>Why not consider using the old road to Antelope and Buffalo Springs as an access road for the disabled?</i>	With proper maintenance, the existing trail will provide access to the springs for the disabled. Both human and electrically-powered wheel chairs can also be used on this trail to travel close to the springs. The rehabilitation of Buffalo Springs comfort station will allow universal access to sanitary facilities and thus allow users to extend their stay at the springs.
<i>Is the plan to convert a former national recreation area road into a fire break really just an effort to reopen the road to Buffalo Springs to vehicular traffic?</i>	When cedar trees are removed from the former road, it will serve as a fire break as well as an access for maintenance vehicles. General public vehicular access will not be allowed to use this access road.

Comments or Concerns	Responses
<i>Is the approved visitor center being located in the 500 year floodplain?</i>	Although the proposed location for the new visitor center is located within the 500 year flood plain area, considerations have been incorporated into the design and layout of the structure to raise it above the designated flood zone. This action is consistent with NPS floodplain management guidelines.
<i>The reduction of eastern red cedar is incomplete and what have been the impacts on archeological resources from its removal?</i>	Archeological surveys are performed prior to any cedar removal, or prescribed fire projects. Extreme care is taken to avoid known archeological sites. During the "Golf Course" project, several artifacts were collected for accessioning into the museum collection. The area remains under protection and violations of laws and policies will be prosecuted. Cedar removal will continue as funding becomes available.
<i>Why are cedars being removed along Highway 177, while other portions of the national recreation area have many untouched cedars?</i>	The cedars that have been removed along Highway 177 just happen to be the most visible to the public. Since 2001, the area's staff have mechanically treated and removed 611 acres throughout the national recreation area. The areas include: Buckhorn, Veterans Lake, the multi-use trail south of Veterans Lake, the Upper Guy Sandy Hunting Area, the sewage treatment facility, the Goddard Youth Camp Area, and an area adjacent to the Arbuckle Dam Overlook. In addition, cedars have been treated with prescribed fire on over 2,000 acres throughout the national recreation area.
<i>Why continue to have a buffalo herd at Chickasaw National Recreation Area? Isn't that job best left in the hands of places like Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge or Yellowstone National Park?</i>	The bison in the national recreation area have been an important part of the cultural landscape, and cultural experience since 1923 when they were originally brought to Platt National Park. Perpetuating natural bison herds is better accomplished by other parks and agencies (e.g., Yellowstone and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). However, the area's herd is small and not considered to be in a natural state. The herd is managed as an interpretive exhibit that displays a snapshot of the past. Previous discussions about the removal of the herd have been met with tremendous public opposition. The option to relocate the herd to the Upper Guy Sandy area on a temporary basis would facilitate the rehabilitation of the historic pasture, and enable prairie restoration under natural conditions in the Upper Guy Sandy area. If the decision were made to move forward, the herd would only be rotated to the area during non-hunting seasons. None of the current hunting opportunities would be decreased.
<i>What would future studies include regarding introducing bison to the upper Guy Sandy Area?</i>	The preferred alternative for the general management plan states that a study will be done to determine the possibility of establishing an additional bison herd at upper Guy Sandy. This study would include analyses of the feasibility, cost of facilities needed, and environmental impact of a possible introduction prior to taking any action.
<i>Why does the general management plan include no recreation plan when the park unit is a national recreation area?</i>	The GMP contains a great deal of information about recreational activity including hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, boating, etc. The National Park Service does not write general recreation plans for its national park units. The GMP, however, does in fact provide general guidance for recreation (e.g., see the management prescriptions.) In addition, the GMP will serve as the foundation for future site-specific recreational planning that could occur if needed.

Comments or Concerns	Responses
<i>What was the process of the document being changed from an environmental impact statement to environmental assessment?</i>	A notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement was published in the <i>Federal Register</i> on September 23, 2002. The National Park Service determined that an environmental assessment rather than an environmental impact statement was the appropriate environmental documentation for the general management plan in late 2005. The notice of termination of the environmental impact statement was published in the <i>Federal Register</i> on January 30, 2006. This was done in accordance with NPS policy after public scoping and public input on the preliminary alternatives yielded only a minimal amount of public comments with no major controversy and there was no potential for significant impact by any alternative.
<i>Why was there no public input into the three alternatives in the general management plan?</i>	Extensive public input has been accepted at various points in the GMP process including during the public scoping phase, the preliminary alternatives stage and during the draft plan/environmental assessment.
<i>Why publish notices in the Federal Register when nobody reads it?</i>	Publishing notices regarding planning in the <i>Federal Register</i> is NPS policy. Publishing notices in the <i>Federal Register</i> provides official notice of the document's existence and its contents.
<i>Why didn't the general management plan provide more details about existing deficiencies in the national recreation area maintenance area?</i>	The core of the maintenance area, originally constructed in the 1930s, was designed to provide adequate maintenance facilities for the 800-acre Platt National Park. It is, however, too small an area to provide adequate space for buildings, equipment, and material storage to meet the functional needs of the 10,000-acre Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Through the years, many deficient and inadequate buildings were added to the area. Unfortunately, this rough piece of ground can only accommodate a disjointed, constricted, inefficient, and poorly functioning facility. A flatter and larger area is needed to provide an efficient and fully functioning maintenance facility. Recognition of the fact that the facility is no longer viable for the current national recreation area's operation is recognized by all levels of the national recreation area's management. Consideration would given to adding administrative offices to these facilities at the time of design.
<i>How can the national recreation area manage new responsibilities with existing staff levels?</i>	Providing increased services can be accomplished by first identifying core national recreation area operations and visitor needs, then redirecting NPS staff to those needs. In addition, the plan recommends an increase of three FTE. However, these positions are not guaranteed and are dependent upon funding. The park will continue to seek funding for additional staffing as opportunities permit.
<i>What are the national recreation area's plans for tornado safety?</i>	Severe weather safety is a major public safety concern for the employees and visitors of Chickasaw National Recreation Area. The National Park Service supports the National Weather Service's recommendation to monitor changing weather conditions, move out of the path of severe weather and move to an inside room if no storm shelter is available. Storm shelters are very limited throughout Murray County, so it has been identified that new structures would be constructed to withstand severe weather and serve a dual purpose as a public shelter. Future facilities identified in this plan include restroom upgrades, a visitor center, and maintenance facility.

Comments or Concerns	Responses
<i>Why isn't the national recreation area patrolled on horseback any longer?</i>	The Visitor and Resource Protection Division has historically managed the horse patrol program for law enforcement patrol operations. In 2004, an internal program review identified that this program was not operating within National Park Service standards pertaining to employee safety training and stock handling. The costs associated with bringing this program into compliance were prohibitive. Based on this cost, the program was disbanded for a saving of over \$17,000 annually. The need for the mobility of ranger patrols in the Platt District to conduct enforcement activities and public contacts in this congested area remains a priority for the staff. To meet this demand, a bike patrol program has been established. The program was initiated for \$2,000.00 and operates annually for approximately \$500.00. This is a tremendous savings when compared to the cost of the horse patrol program.