

**U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

Cooperating Agency: Bureau of Land Management

**CITY OF ROCKS NATIONAL RESERVE
GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN
Finding of No Significant Impact**

June 2020

City of Rocks National Reserve, Cassia County, Idaho

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the decision of the National Park Service (NPS) to adopt the preferred alternative/proposed action in the City of Rocks National Reserve General Management Plan Environmental Assessment (EA), which is Alternative B: *Preferred Alternative*. This alternative was evaluated against Alternative A: *No Action (Continue Current Management)*. These alternatives were described and analyzed in the EA. This FONSI documents the NPS determination that no significant impacts on the quality of the human environment will occur from implementation of this general management plan.

Background

The City of Rocks National Reserve GMP project began in 2009 with an accompanying EIS, pursuant to NPS Management Policies 2006. The NPS conducted public scoping in 2009 and presented draft alternatives to the public in 2011. In 2014, the planning team re-confirmed the NEPA pathway and continued to prepare an EIS, largely due to initial uncertainty about cumulative impacts from ongoing grazing.

The draft GMP/EIS (DGMP/DEIS) was released for public comment in 2015. The DGMP/DEIS described four alternatives for management of the Reserve. In 2017, the NPS prepared an internal abbreviated final GMP/EIS (FGMP/FEIS) and circulated it for internal review. In early 2018, the NPS prepared an internal full FGMP/FEIS and circulated it for internal review and approval.

In 2018 and 2019, the NPS re-analyzed the scope of the plan, public comments on the DGMP/DGEIS, and NEPA compliance associated with the plan in consideration of legal and policy guidance for general management planning and NEPA. The legal and policy guidance included CEQ regulations; Secretarial Order 3355 and associated memoranda; 516 DM 12; NPS Management Policies 2006; Director's Order #12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-Making; and the internal draft of the proposed revised Director's Order #2: Park Planning.

The revised GMP/EA is a streamlined version of the DGMP/DEIS. There were several changes between the DEIS and EA based on public and cooperating agency comments. Among these were the removal of the embedded foundation document; map clarifications about where climbing is allowed; and text clarifications about cultural resources condition assessments, opportunities for grazing buyouts, and staffing projections.

Purpose

Upon approval, the GMP will set the management philosophy for City of Rocks National Reserve for the next 15 to 20 years. It provides an updated framework for continued management of the Reserve by the NPS and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR). The GMP:

- Updates the 1996 City of Rocks National Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP)
- Fulfills the requirements of the National Parks and Recreation Act (Public Law 95-625 1978), the General Authorities Act (Redwood Act Amendment 1978), and NPS Management Policies 2006 (NPS 2006a), which require all national park units to have general management plans and to regularly update these plans
- Clearly defines resource conditions, visitor uses, and experiences to be achieved within the Reserve
- Provides a framework for Reserve managers to guide decisions about protecting Reserve resources and providing high-quality visitor experiences through management of visitor activities and facilities
- Develops a foundation for decision-making in consultation with interested stakeholders and NPS and IDPR leadership, based on analysis of the benefits, impacts, and costs of the alternatives

Legislation establishing the NPS as an agency (Organic Act of 1916) and the range of laws governing NPS management provide the fundamental direction for administration of the Reserve and other units and programs of the national park system. This GMP is intended to build on these laws and the legislation that established and governs the Reserve in order to provide a vision for the future.

The GMP analyzes alternatives for addressing desired future conditions that are not already mandated by law and policy and that must be determined through a planning process. Where law, policy, and regulations do not provide clear guidance, management decisions will be based on the GMP, public concerns, and on analyzing the impacts of alternative courses of action, including long-term operational costs. Successful implementation of the GMP will result in the long-term preservation of natural and cultural resources and an enhanced visitor experience.

Actions directed by general management plans or in subsequent implementation plans are accomplished over time. Budget restrictions, requirements for additional data or regulatory compliance, and competing priorities may delay or modify implementation of actions. Major or especially costly actions could be implemented 10 years or more into the future.

The GMP does not describe how particular programs or projects will be implemented. Those decisions are deferred to more detailed implementation planning, which will follow the broad, comprehensive planning presented in this GMP/EA. Future plans would be consistent with the approved GMP.

Need

The current 1996 CMP no longer provides adequate guidance to address the policy and operational issues now facing the Reserve. Many of the actions in the CMP have been implemented, but other actions are outdated, cost-prohibitive, or cannot be executed for other reasons, including current property ownership.

The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 and the Redwood Amendment of 1978 require the preparation and timely revision of GMPs for each unit of the national park system. The Reserve's operation plan and guidelines for management states that the GMP/EA will be kept current and revised or amended as necessary.

In 1996 when the CMP was produced, approximately 50% of the land within the Reserve was in public ownership. Today, that percentage is approximately 70%, resulting in additional planning opportunities for newly acquired parcels. The land protection plan would specify that any lands proposed for acquisition would be by willing seller only, and in full accord with Reserve legislation and NPS policies.

Visitation within the Reserve has risen from 84,164 visitors in 1993 to 142,250 in 2018. Population growth in the nearby metropolitan areas of Salt Lake City and the Pocatello/Idaho Falls area is expected to increase in the next 20 years, potentially creating more visitation and use within the Reserve. Because of increased visitation, there is a need to evaluate existing facilities.

Camping within the Reserve existed when the Reserve was established, and although many campsites at that time were closed or rehabilitated, there are lingering issues that need to be addressed, such as campsites that conflict with day use activities, safety and visual issues along the road where some campsites are located, and the need for additional toilets. Most campsites in the Reserve are located along the southern and western rim of Circle Creek Basin (known as "the Rim"). These sites offer prime views of the pinnacles comprising the "Inner City" as well as more expansive views of Granite Ridge that completes the northern encirclement of the basin. As part of the GMP, a development concept plan (DCP) has been prepared to help address these specific issues, including comprehensive assessment of the trail system with associated parking, picnicking, and trailheads ("GMP/EA, Appendix C: Rim Development Concept Plan for City of Rocks National Reserve").

Determining how to continue to accommodate these user groups is important. Several plans completed since the CMP are now due for revision, and additional plans are needed to better inform Reserve management. Among these plans are the grazing management plan, fire management plan and vegetation management plan.

Determining wilderness eligibility is also an issue that is addressed in the GMP due to the requirement in NPS management policies ("GMP/EA, Appendix K: City of Rocks National Reserve Wilderness Eligibility Study").

At present, management zoning for the Reserve uses both zones and subzones and covers both private and public land. Many of the prescriptions for these are overlapping or contradictory and at times confusing for Reserve managers. A section of the Reserve at the eastern boundary was not zoned on the 1996 management zoning map and needs to be corrected.

Selected Alternative: Alternative B, Preferred Alternative

General Description

Under the selected alternative, the spectacular scenic quality, geology, biological diversity, and cultural landscape experienced by pioneers, early settlers, and contemporary visitors would be highlighted. A backcountry-type visitor experience that allows for self-discovery, self-reliance, self-determination, and the freedom to take risks would be emphasized. This alternative would encourage self-directed exploration of the Reserve's western landscape and facilitate individual discovery to evoke a powerful connection to the Reserve and its history. Visitors would be immersed in the western experience and inspired by the open landscapes and wildness of the outdoors.

Many current plans and ongoing actions were common to both management alternatives and will continue in the selected alternative.

Management Zones

Six management zones were developed by the planning team and applied to the Reserve based on the alternative concept:

1. Visitor Facilities and Access Zone
2. Transition Zone
3. Natural Zone
4. Research Natural Area (RNA) Zone
5. Historic Rural Setting Zone
6. California Trail Zone

In the selected alternative, the Visitor Facilities and Access Zone will be confined to the current developed recreational facility areas in the Reserve, such as the campsites located along the rim above Circle Creek Basin, Finger Rock, Twin Sisters, and the Juniper group campsite. It will also include the Circle Creek Overlook. Facilities for visitors, such as restrooms, parking, and picnic areas, will also be located in this zone.

The Transition Zone will be applied to an area surrounding the Visitor Facilities and Access Zone. The Transition Zone will include dispersed recreational facilities such as walk-in campsites, trails, waysides, and a proposed equestrian staging area on the west side of the Reserve to complement the equestrian staging area at Smoky Mountain Campground. This zone stretches from Bread Loaves to the California Trail corridor.

In the selected alternative, the Natural Zone will include the higher rocky elevation lands at the northern end of the Reserve surrounding the Research Natural Area (RNA) and Circle Creek Basin and those to the southeast along the flanks of Smoky Mountain.

The RNA Zone will be slightly larger in the selected alternative than in other alternatives considered to more closely follow terrain features, which will aid on-the-ground management.

The Historic Rural Setting Zone will be applied to Circle Creek Basin and the ranchlands in the southwest of the Reserve. To allow for no net loss of technical climbing, a finger of this zone will also extend north of Twin Sisters to allow for technical climbing, but will continue to exclude technical climbing on the Twin Sisters formation, in accordance with the existing ban on

technical climbing in this area. Taken altogether, the selected alternative has the largest combined Historic Rural Setting and Natural zones, which will facilitate the backcountry-type visitor experience intended in this alternative concept.

The California Trail Zone will primarily be confined to a one-half-mile corridor along the northern alignment of the California National Historic Trail, but will also be extended to include the Twin Sisters area, register rocks (rocks with inscriptions), the Salt Lake Alternate, and other California Trail-defining features, including the southern trail offshoot on the eastern side of the Reserve, in order to limit fixed-anchor climbing and maintain a less developed, rural character in these key areas. The California Trail Zone covers east-facing rock formations in order to restrict climbing and prevent viewshed impacts. West-facing routes such as The Flintstone, Picnic Dome, Sun Cup Slab, BLM Corridor, Eagle Rock, Nausea Wall, Indian Chief, BFD, or Bull Dog Wall that are bordered by the California Trail Zone fall under the adjacent Historic Rural Setting zone; therefore, climbing will not be prohibited at those formations.

Reserve Management and Operations

City of Rocks National Reserve will continue to be a unit of the national park system managed by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation under a cooperative agreement. Reserve operations (administration and maintenance) will continue to be located at the Castle Rocks State Park Administrative Unit in Almo. Cassia County will continue to oversee private uses on private lands. The Reserve will continue to work with adjacent landowners and citizens on issues of mutual concern and seek partnership opportunities with surrounding land management agencies

Natural Resources

Natural resources preservation and protection will continue to be a high priority for Reserve management. The focus of the natural resources program will continue to be on inventory and monitoring, working with the NPS Inventory and Monitoring program. As opportunities arise, Reserve staff will continue to conduct other research and resource management projects, as well as additional inventories and monitoring. Reserve staff will continue to proactively preserve features associated with the Cassia Silent City of Rocks National Natural Landmark (NNL).

Through active management, the Reserve will continue to promote and ensure long-term stewardship and preservation of natural resources. Management will be based on the significance of protecting biological diversity within the Reserve and its role in regional ecological health. Reserve staff will continue to prioritize actions that allow or restore natural processes within an ecosystem context.

Climate and Air Quality

Because southern Idaho has some of the best air quality in the continental United States, the Reserve will encourage the State of Idaho to change the designation of the Reserve from class II to class I to better protect air quality from major new sources of air pollution.

Staff will continue to minimize air pollution from Reserve operations. Current meteorological monitoring activities, such as collection of weather and climate data through the automated weather station, will be maintained. The staff will continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support climate change research, and interpret the effects of climate change.

Water Quality

The Reserve will continue to work with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the NPS Upper Columbia Basin Network Inventory and Monitoring Program (UCBN I&M), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to monitor water quality.

Geology and Soils

The Reserve will conduct an inventory of nationally significant geologic and scenic values, pinnacles, and sensitive rock features to update the Silent City of Rocks NNL findings and develop an inventory and monitoring program. The inventory will concentrate on fragile rock formations and impacts to rock surfaces from visitor activities, particularly from the use of climbing equipment and scrambling activities.

The Reserve will continue to use best management practices to mitigate soil erosion, including reducing concentrated water flow in the loose granite soils that are widespread within and beyond Reserve road corridors.

The Reserve will develop road standards for Reserve roads located on loose granite soils and work with the county to improve road maintenance standards on county-maintained roads, to better protect soils from erosion.

Vegetation and Fire

Native plant communities will continue to be preserved. The Reserve will maintain current levels of vegetation inventory and will conduct limited monitoring as needed, or as indicated by the UCBN I&M program. The invasive plant management plan will continue to be used to refine park priority areas for control of nonnative invasive plants. Staff will continue to follow the current fire management strategy of suppressing wildfires entering or originating in the Reserve with an aggressive initial response but will update the fire management plan in the future to consider a full range of fire management strategies. Fire management planning will include coordinated planning for vegetation management, identification of where and how fuels should be treated to reduce the damaging impacts of wildfire on the Reserve's natural and cultural resources, protection of visitors and infrastructure, and the reduction of wildfire impacts on adjacent communities and private land. Planning will also address mitigation of post-fire impacts to Reserve resources and infrastructure.

Wildlife

The Reserve will expand wildlife inventory and monitoring activities, including developing a wildlife monitoring plan to track long-term population change and to guide wildlife management. Working with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Reserve will keep hunting and trapping at sustainable levels. In collaboration with federal, state, county, and private entities, the feasibility of reintroducing extirpated wildlife, such as pygmy rabbit, pronghorn, and peregrine falcon, could be studied.

Soundscapes and Lightscapes

The Reserve will continue to preserve its natural lightscape (the natural resources and values that exist in the absence of human-caused light). Currently, there are no permanent artificial lights within the Reserve boundary. The Reserve will work cooperatively to reduce reflective light using best management practices on adjacent state-owned lands. The Reserve will conduct an inventory of night sky quality and characteristics to develop a plan for maintaining and interpreting its night sky.

The Reserve will also prepare a soundscapes management plan to protect the natural sounds of the Reserve and reduce noise-generating activities, such as from maintenance equipment

Cultural Resources

The Reserve will continue to place a high priority on promoting and ensuring long-term stewardship and preservation of cultural resources through active management, particularly those resources associated with the California Trail, homesteading, ranching, and American Indians, as well as museum collections stored at Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument. Reserve staff will continue to conduct research and resource management projects, inventories, and monitoring, as opportunities arise, and will also work with private landowners within the Reserve. The existing historic water impoundment #1 at Circle Creek will be removed to restore the riparian area to natural conditions as seen by California Trail emigrants. Staff will continue to work closely with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to continue their traditional activities within the Reserve, including gathering of pinyon nuts.

Archeology

Reserve staff will continue to conduct archeological projects to research, assess, identify, and document resources. Surveys and testing will continue at both prehistoric and historic sites to provide information on early occupation of City of Rocks. Additional waysides and self-guided materials will be developed to promote visitor understanding of archeological resources. Future planning will include developing an archeological management plan to determine the best way to preserve and manage extant wagon traces from the California Trail era.

The Reserve will work with partners to explore establishing an archeological district to improve stewardship of prehistoric sites and isolated artifacts. The district could outline management zones for known archeological resources to ensure appropriate stewardship of such resources.

Cultural Landscapes

Reserve staff will continue to document, assess, and monitor features, such as emigrant inscriptions, trail ruts, and landscape characteristics associated with the California National Historic Trail corridor within the Reserve boundary to ensure they remain in good condition. Appropriate preservation treatments will be selected and implemented in accordance with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Secretary's Standards), with stabilization and preservation as the baseline treatment until specific treatment plans are developed. In addition, Reserve staff will work in partnership with stakeholders to clarify the route of the California Trail corridor using remote sensing technology.

Features such as remnants of homesteads, as well as archival and museum objects associated with mining, homesteading, and ranching, will continue to be maintained in good condition and appropriate preservation treatments will be carried out in accordance with the Secretary's Standards. For those features located on private land, such as the Nicholson Ranch and the Moon Homestead, the Reserve will work with existing landowners for preservation treatments, as interest and opportunities arise.

Special Uses and Designations

The Reserve will recommend that Cassia County extend its Historical Preservation Zone to encompass the entire Reserve, limiting existing landowners to one residence and land use consistent with that of 1988 and earlier. Section 36 will continue to be a state-owned parcel within the Reserve. The Reserve will update the NNL and NHL designations to encompass other significant features in the Reserve and encourage Cassia County to support national scenic byway designation for the existing City of Rocks Back Country Byway.

Grazing

Grazing will continue within the Reserve but will be reduced over time as permittees discontinue requests for permits due to changing business models or abandonment.

Although the selected alternative does not specifically include grazing buy-outs, there is nothing to preclude buy-outs originated between a private landowner and a third party, such as a conservation organization. Buy-outs are defined as compensation given to a permittee by a third party to permanently cease grazing in an allotment.

The presence of cattle on the landscape will continue, but total head and animal unit months (AUM) would be expected to decrease over time through attrition, voluntarily initiated by permittees, not Reserve management. Grazing privileges and associated AUM that are lost, relinquished, canceled or “bought-out” by third parties will be withdrawn from grazing allotments and reallocated for watershed protection and wildlife habitat.

Land acquired by the NPS where grazing is vacated by the landowner would not be made available to new grazing permittees. Instead, based on the grazing management plan and at the discretion of the superintendent, these lands may be used for authorized grazing of livestock by the remaining grazing permittees.

As opportunities arise, grazing allotments could be reorganized to achieve maximum benefits for both natural and cultural resources. As allotments are discontinued, increased protection of the California Trail Zone will be emphasized, and cattle grazing will be reduced or eliminated in the Visitor Facilities and Access Zone.

Grazing in wetland and riparian areas would continue to be systematically eliminated. Cattle would be excluded from wetland and riparian areas through a variety of means, such as by providing alternate water sources or adding fencing, as appropriate.

The grazing management plan will be updated to reflect these changes. Because implementation of the grazing management plan recommendations may affect wetlands within the Reserve, these actions would be addressed in a wetlands statement of findings, in compliance with Executive Order 11990, “Protection of Wetlands.”

Research Natural Area (RNA)

The boundary of the RNA will be refined to conform to landscape features, increasing management efficiency and encompassing a greater variety of high-quality terrain features. This expansion will add three small areas to the south and a high elevation valley to the northwest, for a total of 485 acres. Expansion of the RNA will occur in areas of steep terrain that cattle cannot easily access and will maintain grazing where grazing is currently occurring.

The RNA will continue to be managed to protect unique geologic formations, high-quality native pinyon-juniper forest, old-growth tree stands, a cougar migration corridor, and

important bat habitat. Hunting and trapping will also continue to be excluded from the RNA, consistent with NPS Natural Resource Management Reference Manual 77.

Gathering

The Reserve will continue to allow gathering of pinyon nuts, elderberries, and chokecherries for personal use only, as outlined in the Superintendent's Compendium and 36 CFR Section 2.1.

Hunting and Trapping

Hunting and trapping are allowed by legislation, under the jurisdiction of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), within certain public areas of the Reserve and within private lands in the Reserve with prior permission of the landowner. The Reserve will work with IDFG to better educate hunters and trappers about areas available within the Reserve and to establish sustainable levels of hunting

Interpretation and Education

Under the selected alternative, the Reserve will provide more self-guided booklets and brochures, as well as additional self-directed interpretive and educational opportunities at the existing visitor center, more waysides and kiosks, and more online information and social media presence.

Nonpersonal interpretive media will be expanded and there will be less emphasis on staff presence, guided programs, and tours.

An unstaffed kiosk will be constructed at Bath Rock to improve orientation for visitors and to provide self-guided materials about the Reserve. Emphasis will be on visitor preplanning through the internet, electronic media, and community outreach, as well as by using self-guided exhibits and interpretive materials within the Reserve.

Reserve staff will continue to work with other organizations that use the Reserve as a place to teach, including colleges and universities (such as geology and recreational programs), nonprofit organizations (such as the National Outdoor Leadership School, Boy Scouts of America and Girl Scouts USA, the Access Fund, and the Oregon- California Trail Association), environmental organizations, and educational institutions.

Interpretive Programs

Reserve staff would continue to conduct a variety of interpretive programs and special events and provide educational materials and activities for visitors, including arranging for guest speakers. Land use activities and features associated with mining, homesteading, and ranching, such as the privately-owned Nicholson Ranch and the Moon Homestead sites, would continue to be interpreted to the public on a limited basis as opportunities arise. The Reserve would also develop a long-range interpretive plan based on the interpretive themes in the City of Rocks National Reserve Foundation Document.

The Reserve will incorporate more diverse voices and stories in its interpretive programming, including tribal perspectives and involvement. Reserve neighbors will be encouraged to participate in interpretation and will be given opportunities to tell their stories about the Reserve. Interpretation will also incorporate information provided by researchers studying the Reserve's resources and stories.

The selected alternative will support an extended outreach program to schools and other educational organizations that will inspire more students to visit, experience, and learn about the Reserve's spectacular scenic quality, geology, biological richness, and cultural landscape.

New programs will be pursued to bring additional educational opportunities to the Reserve and local community. These programs will link with partners to encourage self-expression and connection to the Reserve's resources through art, photography, and writing. This alternative will also emphasize off-site interpretation such as the Parks as Classroom program, where park rangers visit area schools and lead programs on Reserve and regional cultural and natural resource topics.

Youth

Activities for youth will continue to be available. Reserve staff will continue to sponsor student internships, Junior Ranger programs, first-time experience programs and the Youth Conservation Corps program, in addition to holding other special events and programs. Winter and summer youth day camps will also continue to be provided, pending available staffing and funding.

Visitor Experience / Visitor Use

Recreational Opportunities

Visitors will predominantly experience the Reserve on their own, using self-guided waysides and interpretive materials.

Traditional recreational activities such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, birding, and climbing will continue to be accommodated at the Reserve. Activities with the potential to disturb nesting wildlife, such as climbing, will continue to be occasionally limited through seasonal closures.

Trails

There will be new trail connections, including a new trail for hiking, bicycling, and equestrian users between the California Trail hiking trail, near Nicholson Ranch, and the Tea Kettle Trail. This new trail will allow visitors to explore signature rocks and the California Trail corridor without having to drive, walk, or bike along the road.

A new trails management plan will consider modifications for trail improvements within the Reserve and explore the creation of new trail connections in partnership with adjacent land management agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. New trail connections will include a possible link to Castle Rocks State Park and the USFS Independence Lake area.

Equestrian Staging

An equestrian staging area will be developed on the west side of the Reserve to give riders easier access to west side trails, improve safety and reduce resource degradation from trailer parking along the county road. Day-use parking will be provided near the Bread Loaves intersection. This development will be located out of the California Trail viewshed in a concealed, flat area and will connect to the North Fork Trail for equestrian users. Planned development could include a loop road spur off City of Rocks Road with parking for three to five horse trailers. This location will be close to existing water and restrooms. Signage will be minimal and no additional facilities will be provided.

If additional studies show the Bread Loaves area is not suitable for this use, Elephant Rock is another potential site for an equestrian staging area. A staging area could be sited behind Elephant Rock off the unpaved road spur. This area provides good drainage and concealment of vehicles from the California Trail viewshed.

The above sites were identified in a preliminary site suitability analysis in 2005. Specific locations will be further explored and analyzed in an implementation plan following this GMP and in close consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

Commercial Visitor Services

Commercial guides and outfitters would continue to provide rock climbing and horseback riding services to visitors. The overall type and level of permitted guides and outfitters currently operating within the Reserve would be maintained, with consideration of new uses on a case-by-case basis.

Visitor and Administrative Facilities

Reserve staff would maintain the existing array of waysides, kiosks, exhibits, and vault toilets within the Reserve and would replace or add to these as needed to support existing or planned operations.

Campsites

In the selected alternative, camping in the Reserve will be reconfigured to address resource impacts, and visual and safety issues. Most campsites in the Reserve are located along the southern and western rim of Circle Creek Basin (known as “the Rim”). These sites offer prime views of the pinnacles as well as more expansive views of Granite Ridge, which completes the northern encirclement of the basin.

The Rim Development Concept Plan (DCP) for City of Rocks National Reserve makes recommendations to convert some campsites to picnicking or day use parking, some for closure and rehabilitation, and some added. Implementing the DCP will improve resource protection, enhance camping facilities, reduce user conflicts, and increase visitor safety with no net loss of campsites currently within the Reserve. Some specific changes described in the DCP include accessible trails, better delineation of parking and traffic flow, closure and restoration of poorly-sited campsites, installation of new campsites and a vault toilet, and new wayside exhibits.

Visitor Services

The IDPR would continue to provide administrative and visitor contact services on state land outside of the Reserve.

Reserve Roads

Access for motorized and non-motorized transportation would continue to be provided on existing Reserve-managed roads, such as Circle Creek Overlook Road and Logger Springs Road.

The Reserve will develop a turnaround area adjacent to USFS-managed land at the north end of the one-lane, unpaved Logger Springs Road which connects to the Sawtooth National Forest from City of Rocks Road. A designated turnaround will allow visitors to access expansive views and to safely reverse direction without having to back down the road or continue into the national forest to turn around.

Cassia County Road Network

Cassia County owns and maintains the two unpaved county roads—City of Rocks Road and Twin Sisters Road—through the Reserve that are part of the designated City of Rocks Back Country Byway. The NPS and the IDPR would continue to work cooperatively with the county on visitor safety, signage, and information.

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and dirt bikes are allowed on county roads and Reserve roads, including Logger Springs Road (owned by the NPS), which accesses USFS land north of the Reserve. The NPS and the IDPR would also continue to work with the Cassia County to maintain jurisdictional county roads within the Reserve, as needed.

The NPS will consider opportunities for ownership or management of the county roads through the Reserve to provide maintenance assistance to Cassia County and to ensure county road maintenance practices contribute to NPS road standards and character. The standards will include maintaining these roads to ensure a park-like feel, a safe, scenic driving experience, and maintaining the character of the cultural landscape using the historic road alignment to the extent possible. This would include keeping the roads through the Reserve unpaved. In addition, the NPS and the IDPR will promote opportunities to improve engineering, erosion control, and dust abatement.

The NPS and the IDPR will work with Cassia County to lower speed limits along county roads within the Reserve to improve visitor experience and safety.

The Reserve will also increase efforts to partner with the county to better control water flow off county roads, specifically to encourage water to disperse rather than concentrate, thereby reducing the potential for gullying and erosion.

Partnerships

The Reserve will develop partnerships with adjacent land managers and private landowners to extend trail connections and provide a continuum of recreational experiences. These could include trails that connect to the USFS- and BLM-managed lands and Castle Rocks State Park.

Environmental Sustainability

The NPS and IDPR will prioritize energy efficiency, conservation, and sustainability associated with any new development and continue to partner to reduce energy use and to undertake other practices that would contribute to making the Reserve more environmentally sustainable. The Reserve will pursue implementation of energy efficiency actions outlined in its climate action plan, and will follow sustainability guidelines set forth in the NPS Green Parks Plan.

Reserve Boundary

The existing Reserve boundary would be maintained. No boundary modification is proposed at this time.

One-Time Costs Associated with Levels of Development

One-time facility costs include costs for the design, construction, rehabilitation, and restoration of facilities including visitor facilities, roads, and parking. Other one-time costs include the anticipated costs of new programs, studies, and plans. The anticipated one-time costs for the selected alternative are approximately \$2,311,000. They include such costs as development of an equestrian staging area, reconfiguration of the Reserve's campsites, additional kiosks, a turn-around on Logger Springs Road, and additional waysides and kiosks.

These costs are based on general "Class C" estimates for site development and construction. These estimates are generally prepared without a fully defined scope of work. They are general in nature and representative of a broad-based vision rather than focused on specific details. Additional comparative detail can be found in the 2015 DGMP/DEIS, which described the

relative costs of four alternatives, including the no-action alternative and the selected alternative described here (with the addition of actions outside of the Reserve boundary that are no longer considered in the GMP/EA).

The implementation of the approved plan will depend on future NPS funding levels and service-wide priorities, as well as partnership funds and efforts. The approval of a general management plan does not guarantee that funding and staffing needed to implement the plan will be forthcoming. Full implementation of the plan could take many years.

Action Plans, Studies, and Agreements

A number of specific action plans, studies, and agreements will be developed to implement the selected alternative. Some of these items will require additional special project funding or increases to the operating base funding. Plans for actions with potential to affect the environment will require formal analysis of alternatives in compliance with the NEPA, NHPA, and related laws. Such documents will reference and be tiered to this plan.

The following plans and studies will be undertaken as funding allows: resource stewardship strategy; vegetation management plan; updated fire management plan; geologic inventory; expanded wildlife monitoring; acoustical monitoring; soundscapes management plan; night sky inventory and planning; archeological management plan; condition assessment and treatment plan for features associated with the California Trail corridor within the Reserve boundary; grazing plan update; climbing management plan update; condition assessment for pictographic and petroglyphic features; ethnographic study in partnership with local tribes; long-range interpretive plan; trails management plan; and an implementation plan for new equestrian camping.

Rationale for the Decision

Based on the analysis presented in the EA, the NPS selected Alternative B, the NPS proposed action/preferred alternative because it best meets the project's purpose and need. The selected alternative consists of all actions described as the proposed action/preferred alternative in the EA. Actions in the EA's preferred alternative are largely the same as described in the 2015 draft general management plan (DGMP) and draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) preferred alternative, except that actions outside of the Reserve boundary, such as proposed changes to Smoky Mountain Campground, were removed.

Other Alternatives Considered

One other alternative was considered in the EA. Alternative A, No Action (Continue Current Management) served as the basis for evaluating and comparing the preferred alternative. Under Alternative A, the NPS and IDPR would have continued to manage the Reserve as it has since the approval of the 1996 comprehensive management plan. Existing natural resource management activities would have continued, including control of nonnative invasive plants and wildlife inventory and monitoring. Cultural resources would have continued to be documented and protected. Current recreational opportunities, including hiking, camping, picnicking, rock climbing, horseback riding, hunting, trapping, and viewing scenery would have continued. Existing facilities and trails would have been maintained. The current level of interpretive and educational programming would have continued. Grazing would have continued to be allowed in those management zones identified as appropriate for grazing in the 1996 comprehensive

management plan and would have been maintained at current levels. Alternative A would have continued to rely on the management zoning established in the same 1996 plan.

Summary of Preliminary Options Considered and Dismissed

The following actions were considered during the planning process but were rejected as allowed by National Environmental Policy Act regulations at 40 CFR 1502.14 (a). Rationales for the dismissal of each action can be found in the GMP/EA, Appendix D: Actions Considered But Dismissed.

- Technical Rock Climbing on the Twin Sisters Rock Formation
- Boundary Expansion
- Actions outside the Reserve Boundary
- Eliminating the Research Natural Area
- Immediately Eliminating Grazing
- Relocating Camping along the Rim
- Providing Backcountry Standards
- Removing Existing Camping from Certain Areas
- Removing Fixed Climbing Routes in the Research Natural Area Zone
- Eliminating Recreational Motorized Use in the Reserve
- Eliminating Employee Housing
- Developing a Replacement Visitor Center within the Existing Reserve Boundary
- Retaining the Circle Creek Impoundment

Other Alternatives Considered in the Draft GMP/EIS but Dismissed

The Draft GMP/EIS presented two additional alternatives containing some of the options considered but dismissed, as listed above. Alternative C: A Stage for Stewardship focused on encouraging research and promoting knowledge of the Reserve's resources and its broader ecological context. Grazing would have been eliminated and a boundary expansion was proposed. In most other respects, the alternative was similar to the selected alternative. Alternative D: Treasured Landscapes Inspiring Stories focused on telling the stories of the Reserve through more formal and structured recreational opportunities and programs. The alternative also considered a boundary expansion.

Mitigation Measures Incorporated in the Selected Alternative

Mitigation Measure	Responsible Party
Soils	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refrain from taking gravel, sand, and materials from within the Reserve for road maintenance or construction—these materials would come from a nearby source and would be mineralogically and petrologically compatible with native rock in the Reserve.• Locate construction staging areas where they would minimize new disturbance of area soils and vegetation.	Project Manager Chief of Resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize ground disturbance to the extent practicable during construction of new or modification of existing facilities. • Minimize driving over or compacting root zones. • Use mats or plywood to minimize soil compaction impacts when working in wet areas. • Salvage topsoil from excavated areas for use in recovering source area or other project areas. • Windrow topsoil at a height that would help to preserve soil microorganisms (below three feet). • Reuse excavated materials where possible in the project area. • Revegetate project areas through native seeding and planting. • Import weed-free clean fill and store imported or excavated topsoil and fill in a weed-free area, covered by weed cloth to prevent contamination. • Identify clearing limits to minimize the amount of vegetation loss. • Clear and grub only those areas where construction would occur. • Prepare and approve a hazardous spill plan or spill prevention containment and control plan, whichever is appropriate, before construction begins. 	
Water Resources: Hydrology and Water Quantity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate staging and stockpiling areas away from surface water resources. • Continue to fence out sensitive areas—such as riparian areas and other wetlands—from grazing allotments. • Install construction fencing around, adjacent to, or near wetland and/or riparian areas to be protected or use other erosion protection measures to minimize sedimentation. • Minimize soil disturbance and revegetate disturbed areas as soon as practicable. • Use vegetable-based hydraulic fluid in heavy equipment. • Minimize the creation of impervious surfaces. • Evaluate dams on lands acquired by the National Park Service to determine whether these areas can be restored. • Exclude cattle from riparian areas through a variety of means, such as by providing alternate water sources or adding fencing, as appropriate. 	Project Manager Chief of Resources
Water Resources: Water Quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify livestock grazing permits to exclude wetlands and riparian areas. • Develop only water sources that do not directly modify wetlands or change the timing, distribution, or amount of water supply to wetlands on public lands. • Improve erosion control best management practices along roadways in the Reserve. • Encourage permittees to lessen impacts on wetland and riparian areas and areas of concentrated use. 	Project Manager Chief of Resources
Water Resources: Wetlands	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid adverse impacts on wetlands and riparian areas when constructing buildings or other facilities on publicland. • Complete jurisdictional wetland surveys for potential impacts associated with trails and avoid impacts on the extent possible. • Refrain from increasing animal unit months by continuing to reallocate animal unit months to existing permittees, including family members, if grazing allotments are vacated within the Reserve. • Delineate wetlands to determine site hydrologic, soil, and vegetation characteristics when work is proposed near springs and riparian areas. 	Project Manager Chief of Resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage permittees to lessen impacts on riparian zones and areas of concentrated recreational use, and to implement other actions called for by the 2008 draft grazing management plan. 	
Vegetation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and delineate construction limits to prevent expansion of construction operations into undisturbed areas. Minimize construction limits and areas to be cleared where possible. Salvage plant material prior to construction from areas to be disturbed. Restore staging and other temporarily impacted areas following construction. Align trails to climbing routes and continue to take into consideration climbing route access to minimize the development of social trails. Continue to develop and contain staging areas for climbers to limit spillover impacts into adjacent undisturbed areas. Conduct a baseline study of social trails and user-created trails. Continue to place barriers in front of social trails at campsites, day-use areas, and other necessary locations to restore area natural resources. Increase education about staying on trails if monitoring standards are exceeded for social trails. Take appropriate preventative measures, such as increasing signage about trails, creating natural barriers and erosion control measures, brushing out areas, closing off areas if needed, and formalizing trails to minimize impacts from social trails. <p>Mitigation measures for preventing the spread of noxious weeds include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Import only freshly exposed subsurface materials when materials are imported from outside the Reserve. Wash all vehicles prior to commencing construction projects. Cover stored soil and rock, as appropriate, to prevent exposure to noxious weed seed. Separate salvaged weed-contaminated soil from weed-free soil and use the contaminated soil for subsurface fill. Conduct annual monitoring for potential weed infestation using early detection/ rapid response eradication techniques. Identify and control nonnative plant species infestations prior to construction <p>Measures that could be used to minimize the number of dog depressions dug at climber staging areas include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase dog owner education. Redesign fences at staging areas. Determine whether a permit should be required to bring dogs to the Reserve. Restrict dogs at climber staging areas. Restore impacted sites. <p>Measures that would be used to minimize impacts from grazing and livestock trailing include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the physiological needs of plants through manipulation of grazing by: 1) delaying initial grazing until range readiness, 2) allowing adequate leaf area to remain after a grazing period, 3) allowing adequate time between grazing periods to permit replenishment of leaf area and vigor, and 4) allowing adequate leaf area and time late in the growing season for replenishment of vigor and bud development (Reserve 2008b). Periodically rest grazing areas, allowing plants to reproduce, either through seed production or vegetatively (Reserve 1996b: p.15). 	<p>Project Manager</p> <p>Chief of Resources</p>

Wildlife	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct site-specific surveys for wildlife in proposed construction areas. • Continue to monitor climbing routes to limit impacts on wildlife, such as nesting raptors, including enacting seasonal closures as necessary. • Continue to prohibit artificial modification of rocks for climbing, such as the introduction of glued hand-holds or removal of jutting or sharp edges. • Continue to require permits for use of portable electric drills to create bolted sport climbing routes. • Use information gained from inventory and monitoring of wildlife to improve management. • Avoid impacting key wildlife habitat sites, such as nesting or denning areas, from construction projects. • Minimize the degree of habitat removal (vegetation clearing) by delineation of construction limits. • Limit the effects of light and noise on wildlife habitat through controls on construction equipment and timing of activities, such as limiting construction to daylight hours to the extent practicable. • Ensure that construction personnel at work sites do not provide human food to wildlife. • Maintain proper food storage and dispose of all food waste promptly. • Schedule construction activities with seasonal consideration of wildlife life cycles to minimize impacts during sensitive periods (for example, nesting). • Employ, monitor, and maintain erosion control measures at construction sites to minimize sediment inputs to aquatic habitats. • Engineer trails and trail stream crossings to facilitate aquatic organism passage and to maintain ecological connectivity. • Employ spill prevention measures to prevent inadvertent spills of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, antifreeze, and other toxic chemicals that could affect wildlife. • Conduct additional environmental impact analysis prior to undertaking actions associated with development proposals in this plan. • Conduct surveys to determine whether sensitive, rare, threatened, or endangered species occur—if evidence of these species is found, actions would be modified to avoid impacting species or known habitat. • Continue to monitor climbing routes to limit impacts on wildlife, such as nesting raptors. • Determine whether special-status plant species are present in the area during the planning process for proposed actions in this plan—if special-status species occur in area, botanists would develop site-specific mitigations to ensure no adverse effects would occur. • Conduct additional consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service if listed species are later found in proposed project areas. • Defer grazing from the mountains by grazing lower elevations, which would probably promote the growth and persistence of native shrubs, grasses, and forbs needed by sage-grouse for seasonal food and concealment, especially during the nesting period. This would also be expected to improve habitat for other sensitive sagebrush-obligate species. This conservation measure is recommended in the Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho (Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee 2006: p. 4–61). • Maintain residual herbaceous vegetation at the end of the grazing season, as expected through monitoring, and adhere to utilization standards to contribute to nesting and brood-rearing habitat during the coming nesting season. This conservation measure is recommended in the Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho (Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee 2006: p. 4–61). 	Project Manager Chief of Resources
Archeological Resources and Cultural Landscapes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to increase the inventory and monitoring program for archeological resources, including conducting surface and subsurface testing 	Project Manager

<p>as necessary to document the potential for archeological resources or to understand the presence, extent, and/or significance of archeological resources found.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halt work in the discovery area should unknown archeological resources be uncovered during project implementation. The Reserve Cultural Resources Program Manager would be contacted, the site secured, and the Reserve would consult according to 36 CFR 800.11 and, as appropriate, provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. In compliance with this act, the National Park Service would also notify and consult concerned tribal representatives for the proper treatment of human remains, funerary, and sacred objects, should these be discovered. • Document and avoid previously unidentified archeological sites and prepare a determination of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places for potentially eligible sites. • Relocate work to a nonsensitive area if archeological resources are encountered during proposed construction activities. In conducting site testing and documentation, the emphasis would be on taking actions that would avoid further disturbance to the site. • Track the number of incidents (by complaints, reports to rangers, and ranger observation) of graffiti, ground disturbance, damage to structures, and loss of historic fabric to assess resource condition and the level of visitor use impacts on cultural resources. To ensure that minimal incidences occur, visitor education and enforcement of Reserve regulations would continue and closure of particularly vulnerable areas would be considered, such as by using fencing where appropriate. Increased patrols and ranger presence would also be considered for high-use areas where cultural resources are known to exist. • Continue to survey recreational resource areas (such as hiking trails, climbing routes) to avoid impacts on archeological resources. • Continue to conduct consultation with American Indian tribes. As appropriate, under the National Historic Preservation Act, additional consultation would also occur as specific plans are developed. • Survey areas proposed for fires for the presence of archeological resources prior to the development of fire plans (and subsequent environmental impact analysis). Post-burn surveys would also be conducted. • Refrain from allowing ground-disturbing activities in known sensitive archeological resource sites. • Consider the location and extent of known sensitive archeological resources in the decision to use fire. • Include the Reserve archeologist, historians, and other resource specialists (as applicable) in the multidisciplinary planning and fire suppression process to prevent damage to known sensitive resources. Conduct reconnaissance surveys after prescribed fires and wildfires in areas where surface vegetation has been removed to locate potential archeological resources and landscape features. • Refrain from constructing fire lines in the vicinity of known archeological resources. 	Cultural Resources Program Manager
Visitor Experience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the number of complaints related to day and overnight visitor conflicts. If more than three complaints occurred per day, over time management strategies could increase staff presence to guide visitors to appropriate locations, updated maps, and increased education about day-and overnight-use designations. • Monitor and manage the number of vehicles parked in undesignated areas to gain a better understanding of damage to vegetation and soils, minimize safety hazards, reduce crowding and visual impacts on the City of Rocks Back Country Byway, and to ensure compliance with parking regulations. 	Project Manager Chief of Interpretation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Cassia County to manage undesignated parking along Cassia County roads. If necessary, the National Park Service would determine if additional parking is needed outside of the county right-of-way. • Monitor the number of vehicles in undesignated areas during peak-use days (such as weekends and holidays) following the Cassia County transportation study and parking area redesign. No vehicles would be allowed to overflow from the designated parking areas onto Reserve roads. On county roads, no more than three vehicles could exceed designated parking areas. If these numbers were surpassed, management strategies for county roads could include increased work with county officials and public education. Additional management strategies for Reserve roads include educating partners, installing temporary signs, adding parking bumpers to clearly designate parking spaces, increasing available parking where appropriate, and issuing parking citations if necessary. • Increase education about the importance of staying on trails if the number of social trails emanating from visitor use areas rises above a monitoring standard. • Employ appropriate preventative measures to reduce the number of social trails, such as increasing signage about trails, creating natural barriers and erosion control measures, brushing out areas, closing off areas if needed, and formalizing trails. • Provide improved pre-trip information for the Reserve and for nearby camping facilities. • Encourage camping during nonpeak times such as mid-week. • Place informative signs at the entrance, fee stations, or at the visitor center when the campsites are full. • Monitor the number of groups waiting in line for climbing routes to ensure that visitors are having high-quality experiences and that resources are not being damaged by high-intensity use. • Encourage climbers to wait for climbs in existing disturbed areas, or provide information about similar routes in other areas of the Reserve. • Rove climbing areas to encourage dispersed use on similar climbing routes in various areas of the Reserve. • Continue to manage climbing routes to avoid impacts on natural and cultural resources, including nesting birds and archeological sites. 	
Scenic Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Cassia County to implement the Cassia County Historic Preservation Zone and design guidelines. • Design additional development to minimize impacts on the viewshed(s). • Identify and enhance opportunities for visitors to experience these viewsheds where possible. 	Project Manager Chief of Interpretation
Special Designations: Grazing and Livestock Trailing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use permits to ensure that use is consistent with the RNA purpose of being managed for nonmanipulative geologic or biological research and education. • Consider planting vegetation to screen modern intrusions from the cultural landscape, such as recreational vehicles at Smoky Mountain Campground. • Conduct condition assessment updates for the cultural landscape inventory (approximately every six years) to describe the current condition of the landscape and to identify any potential preventable adverse impacts. • Develop an archeological treatment plan for stabilization of California Trail ruts and other features associated with the California Trail corridor. • Remove nonhistoric fences within the California Trail corridor. • Continue to relocate power lines outside of the California Trail viewshed. • Photo-document emigrant inscriptions. 	Project Manager Chief of Interpretation

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to remove bolts from the inscription rocks unless removal would result in damage to the rock—where it is not possible to remove anchors, remaining hardware would be camouflaged. | |
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Why the Selected Action Will Not Have a Significant Effect on the Human Environment

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

Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial: No major adverse or beneficial impacts were identified in the environmental assessment that require analysis in an environment impact statement.

The primary impact topics identified in the environmental analysis and documented in the environmental assessment included: physical resources (soils and geology, water resources – hydrology, water quality, and wetlands), biological resources (vegetation and wildlife), cultural resources (prehistoric and historic archeology, and cultural landscapes), visitor experience (access, transportation, visitor use opportunities, and scenic resources), and special uses and designations (grazing and livestock trailing).

Degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety: The selected action would not adversely affect public health or safety.

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 analyzed in the environmental assessment, there will be no significant effects on park lands, including prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The City of Rocks National Historic Landmark District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and all work proposed in the selected alternative has been analyzed under National Historic Preservation Act regulations. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurs with the course of action and actions will be implemented with intent to avoid adverse effects as each undertaking is consulted on.

Degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial: No highly controversial effects were discovered during the preparation of the environmental assessment.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks: No highly uncertain or unique or unknown risks were discovered during the preparation of the environmental assessment.

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: The selected alternative neither establishes a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by

terming an action temporary or breaking it down into small component parts: The selected alternative is not related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources: The selected alternative will not adversely affect any historic districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. The Idaho SHPO concurred with the selected alternative and found that the “broad guidance” of the GMP did not warrant an official recommendation or programmatic agreement. Instead, SHPO will work with the Reserve on further consultation regarding any individual undertakings that have the potential to affect historic properties.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973: There will be no adverse effects to endangered or threatened species or critical habitat because these do not exist within the park.

Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection laws: As demonstrated by the analysis in the environmental assessment, the selected alternative is compliant with all federal, state, and local environmental protection laws.

Public Involvement

Public Scoping and Review of the Preliminary Alternatives

Public scoping was held between September and October 2009 and included five workshops in five Idaho locations. Additional stakeholder meetings were held on September 23, 2009, in Burley, Idaho, and on October 22 in Ketchum, Idaho. Twenty-seven comments were received from individuals or organizations and were used to identify a range of issues informing the development of alternatives. Public review of the preliminary alternatives was conducted on April 26, 2011 in Almo, Idaho. More than 150 individuals or organizations provided comments regarding concerns and preferences that helped shape the selected alternative. More detailed summaries of public scoping and alternatives review are in Appendix J: DGMP/DEIS Public Review Summary, Public Concerns and NPS Responses in the GMP/EA.

Public Review of the DGMP/DEIS

Public review of the DGMP/DEIS occurred between April and May 2015 with a comment period and through two public meetings held in two locations, with 25 people participating and approximately 13 written comments received. A summary of the public review of the DGMP/DEIS and NPS responses to public comments on the DGMP/DEIS is included in Appendix J: DGMP/DEIS Public Review Summary, Public Concerns and NPS Responses in the GMP/EA.

Agency and Tribal Consultation

Idaho State Historic Preservation Office

In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the NPS provided the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) of Idaho an opportunity to comment on the proposed undertaking and the area of potential effects associated with this project).

After the release of the DGMP/DEIS in April 2015, the NPS submitted a copy of the document to SHPO with cover letter dated April 23, 2015 requesting review and comment. SHPO responded with a comment letter dated June 22, 2015 concurring with the selected alternative.

On December 22, 2016, the NPS submitted a letter to the Idaho SHPO requesting review of the Area of Potential Effect and concurrence on the DGMP/DEIS “no adverse effect” determination. The Idaho SHPO expressed full support for the selected alternative but stated that they don’t “typically provide a Section 106 recommendation regarding project effect for GMPs.” The SHPO nevertheless expressed full support for the selected alternative and the planning team’s proposed language to describe Section 106 compliance in the decision document in a January 17, 2017 letter. When the DGMP/DEIS was streamlined to become an environmental assessment, no new proposals were added, and the document retains the “broad guidance” perspective relied on by the SHPO to support the selected alternative.

Due to the programmatic nature of the GMP and the progression of federal undertakings which may stem from the plan, the NPS cannot yet assess specific effects of future undertakings on historic properties. As implementation of the GMP selected alternative is carried out, the NPS will conduct Section 106 compliance for undertakings and continue to consult with the Idaho SHPO, ACHP, Native American tribes, and other consulting parties as necessary on the effects of each undertaking on historic properties. Therefore, the NPS has determined that historic properties will not be adversely affected by the development or planning process for the selected alternative.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service / National Marine Fisheries Service

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act, the NPS contacted the USFWS database to confirm that no federally listed species and no habitat occurs in the park. Because there are no federally listed species that occur in the park, there would be no effect on listed species or their habitat and there is no requirement for additional consultation under the Endangered Species Act.

Government to Government Consultation

In September 2009 during the initial scoping period for the GMP, formal consultation was initiated with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes associated with City of Rocks. Between 2009 and 2015, informational materials were mailed, and contacts were made in consultation with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. Details of the contacts between 2009 and 2015 can be found in the GMP/EA (Chapter 5: Consultation and Coordination). In 2015, the planning team sent the DGMP/DEIS for review and comment and in 2016, meetings between the NPS and the tribes were held.

The NPS has provided responses to the concerns raised during the public comment period and at tribal consultation meetings in the GMP/EA (Appendix J: DGMP/DEIS Public Review

Summary, Public Concerns and NPS Responses). In some cases, changes were made to the GMP text as part of the response to comments.

In December 2016, a request for review on the NPS finding of no adverse effect from the preferred alternative was sent to each tribe. No further comments were received.

Finding

On the basis of the information contained in the EA as summarized above, the NPS has determined that implementing the selected alternative is not a major federal action nor is it an action without precedent or similar to an action that normally requires an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The conclusions of non-significance are supported by the conservation planning and environmental impact analysis completed and the capability of listed mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate impacts. No adverse effects to cultural or historical resources will occur; and there are no unacceptable impacts. This determination also included due consideration of the minor nature of agency and public comments. Therefore, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, an EA will be released instead of an EIS, and the project may be implemented immediately.

Recommended:



June 26, 2020

Wallace F. Keck

Date

Superintendent, City of Rocks National Reserve

Approved:

Woody Smeck

Date

Acting Regional Director, National Park Service, Interior Regions 8, 9, 10, and 12.