



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CASA GRANDE RUINS NATIONAL MONUMENT

1100 Ruins Drive  
Coolidge, Arizona 85228



IN REPLY REFER TO:

September 9, 2008

Casa Grande Ruins National Monument proposes expanding the Monument's existing Visitor Center with the construction of a multipurpose auditorium (theater). This auditorium is proposed so that it can accommodate seating for 80-100 people to allow the Monument to adequately support high visitation periods (1,000 visitors per day) and tour buses operations which bring up to 60 visitors per bus. This capacity is also appropriate to support guest speakers and touring programs that regularly draw 100 or more attendants. Currently, the Monument's audio-visual program is presented in a small, non-ADA compliant room that seats 25-30 visitors and utilizes a large-screen television. Visitors routinely crowd into this room and stand in the lobby outside the doorway to view the film or interpretive program. The Monument regularly receives visitor complaints about lack of space and access to the film or program, as well as for the interruptive noise from the adjacent bookstore and front desk operations.

The Monument intends to use the proposed multipurpose auditorium to stage a new film, as well as to accommodate interpretive presentations and special park programs that are scheduled several times per week. Additionally, the Monument plans to integrate new technologies to provide for high definition video and cost-effective solutions for multilingual simulcast programs. These new technologies will also provide for the needs of visitors with accessibility concerns.

To facilitate this proposed expansion of the Visitor Center, the Monument plans to conduct this project in two phases. Both of these phases will utilize public scoping and compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and National Environmental Protection Act.

**PHASE 1 – Archaeological Testing:** The Monument will conduct an archaeological assessment of three adjacent locations to the existing Visitor Center. This assessment will be used to determine whether new construction could be feasible, allow for the most suitable location to be selected for the proposed construction, and to ensure that planned construction would be implemented in an appropriate manner in full consideration of cultural and archaeological resources. The areas for this proposed archaeological assessment include the south side of the Visitor Center, the east side of the Visitor Center, and the Atrium Area located within the center of the Visitor Center. In the event that during this archaeological assessment human burials or unique intact archaeological resources are identified within one or more of the areas being considered for this project, such area(s) will be deemed unsuitable for construction and those newly identified resources will be preserved intact. The Monument plans to contract with the Gila River Indian Community's Cultural Resource Management Program to conduct this archaeological assessment.

**PHASE 2 – Design & Construction:** The Monument will utilize the University of Arizona's School of Architecture to develop a series of schematic concepts and viable design alternatives for the new multipurpose auditorium addition to the existing Visitor Center. Utilizing the results from the archaeological assessment and public input, a design concept will then be selected and presented to the public. The Monument will then contract with an Architectural Firm to finalize and complete the schematic concept developed by the University. Once the design has been finalized and approved, a construction firm will be contracted to build the addition.

National Park Service staff are aware of the various concerns involved with this type of project and are giving careful attention to federal compliance processes. The existing Visitor Center has been determined eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places with local significance under criteria A and C, and the proximity of the Visitor Center to the Casa Grande and the history of the site suggest archeologically significant resources have the potential to be located within the proposed construction areas. The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office and Monument affiliated tribes will be involved throughout all planning and implementation phases of this project. Additionally, the Monument will be soliciting public comments for both phases of this project.

We welcome your comments.

Sincerely,

Jason Lott  
Superintendent  
Casa Grande Ruins National Monument