



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area

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## SHASTA BALLY SUMMIT SITE PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

### NEWSLETTER #2—MARCH 2009

At present, there are five alternatives being considered in the planning process for the future management of the telecommunications site located on the summit of Shasta Bally. Shasta Bally is well-recognized as a dominant geographic feature in the Redding area. This peak rises up from the Sacramento foothills to 6,188 feet and provides sweeping views of the Klamath Mountains, Cascade Range and the Sacramento Valley. It is for these reasons that the site is an ideal location for critical telecommunication towers for the local area. This was recognized over fifty years ago, when the telecommunications site was first constructed, before the National Recreation Area was established.

Because of the complex nature of the issues regarding the summit, the park developed the principles listed on page two to guide analysis of the alternatives. Where appropriate, these principles will be incorporated into the purpose and need for the Environmental Assessment.

Comments received from current site users and the public on the preliminary range of alternatives are summarized on page three. Of greatest concern was that precipitous termination of telecommunications operations at the site would severely compromise broadband internet, television, radio, public safety communications, and law enforcement communications.

At this stage in the process, the NPS has refined the alternatives (summarized on page three). Alternative E remains dismissed, and Alternative F is preliminarily identified as the preferred alternative.

Opportunities for continued public participation are listed on page four along with a timeline of the planning process.



*Shasta Bally telecommunications site*

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- The planning and impact analysis process and planning decisions regarding Shasta Bally summit will be made with public involvement and participation.
- National Park Service planning decisions regarding Shasta Bally summit will not compromise public safety agency and law enforcement agency communication transmissions nor will they cause television or radio stations unexpectedly to go dark or silent.
- The National Park Service recognizes the importance of state of the art telecommunications service to the public, surrounding communities, and other agencies.
- The National Park Service will carefully consider socio-economic impacts in evaluating the alternatives and analyzing potential environmental impacts.
- Rental rates for permittees will be based on fair market value for their right of way, buildings, antennas, and towers, using a professional appraisal and structured according to NPS legal policy and management guidelines.
- Permittees will be required to comply with the provisions of applicable laws and National Park Service Right-of-Way permits.
- Shasta Bally Access Road will remain open to vehicular traffic during the summer and fall seasons as it has in the past to provide opportunities for appropriate recreational activities.
- The summit of Shasta Bally has outstanding natural resources and scenic values, and the NPS is committed to conserving such sites. The mountain is very important to the whole of the park and comprises an island of high elevation habitat in a world heavily impacted by land use practices and facing an uncertain future due to changing climate.



*Shasta Bally from Sacramento River in Redding*



*Whiskeytown Lake from telecommunications site*

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## SUMMARY OF THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

### Alternative A — No Action

The No Action alternative would continue telecommunications operations within the existing disturbed area (“site”) without significant changes and without issuance of Right-of-way Permits by the NPS. However, existing tenants could not continue to operate without a permit from the NPS (36 CFR Section Part 14). Therefore, the No Action alternative is presented only for the sake of comparison with other alternatives because issuance of NPS Right-of-Way Permits is necessary.

### Alternative B — Existing permittees remain

All existing permit applicants will continue to use the site. As new technologies provide feasible options to relocate/remove the facilities, users may choose to leave the site, and at such times, site restoration to a natural condition would occur on a gradual basis.

### Alternative C — Long-term phase out

Similar to Alternative B in the short term, but phases out the site over a set time period (e.g. 20-30 years). This is the only alternative establishing a process for a sunset date to telecommunications operations.

### Alternative D — Modification

Similar to Alternative B, but allows new permittees to co-locate on existing infrastructure. This alternative allows continued use of the site, but not construction of new infrastructure.

### Alternative F — Expansion (Preferred Alternative)

Similar to Alternative D, but allows existing and new users to install new infrastructure at the site in previously disturbed areas not currently being utilized.

### Common to all Action Alternatives

The public parking area will be defined, a single trail to a rocky outcrop on the summit will be designated and signed, and wayside exhibits will be installed to provide information to the public about the site. Where economically and physically feasible, mitigation measures on tower design, building color, and alternative technologies will be implemented to reduce resource impacts. This may include camouflaging and/or replacing infrastructure with more natural-appearing structures, lowering tower height, and realigning/removing lights. Facilities will use “green” design, and operations will be sustainable.

### Alternative E - Immediate Termination (Considered but Dismissed)

Immediate termination of operations at the site would be too disruptive to the public and existing tenants.

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## SCOPING RESPONSES

The NPS received over 100 comments by the end of February 2009. About 10% of the comments were from existing site tenants and people self-identified with the telecommunications industry. The remaining comments were from the public and a few interested organizations. The NPS has reviewed the comments and is considering them as we move forward with the planning process. Several broad themes emerged from the scoping sessions and comments:

- Many comments from the public expressed concern that the site would be shut down immediately resulting in the loss of access to broadband internet, radio, television, and emergency services. Some of the public comments supported fair market value charges to pay for maintenance of the access road and to avoid subsidizing the operations on the site.
  - The tenants and agencies currently broadcasting from the summit of Shasta Bally affirmed their need to remain on this specific site because of its unique location, elevation, and power supply. They also indicated a desire to have a longer term lease with the NPS rather than the 10-year Right-of-Way permits now required. Many doubted that mitigation measures to reduce resource impacts would be feasible. A few are concerned about the cost structure for the new permit system and their share of the cost of maintaining the access road to the site.
  - Some individuals and organizations, such as the Sierra Club, responded with concerns regarding the impact of the operations to natural and cultural resources and would like to see a long-term phase out of the facilities.
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## OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE OF THE PROCESS

- Step 1 – Define purpose and need; develop preliminary alternatives Fall 2008
- Step 2 – Conduct external scoping Dec 11, 2008 - Feb 15, 2009
- Step 3 – Refine alternatives
- **Step 4 – Complete environmental screening; identify preferred alternative**  **WE ARE HERE**
- Step 5 – Prepare draft plan/environmental document
- Step 6 – Public review of draft plan/EA Spring 2009
- Step 7 – Analysis of public comment
- Step 8 – Recommend final plan/decision document for Regional Director's approval
- Step 9 – Release approved plan/decision document to public
- Step 10 – Draft Right-of-Way Permits sent to all current tenants June 2009

Written comments may be mailed to:

Superintendent, Whiskeytown NRA  
P.O. Box 188  
Whiskeytown, CA 96095

Comments may be posted online at:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov> (pick Whiskeytown NRA)  
or  
<http://www.nps.gov/whis> (choose "post comments online")

*Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment - including your personal identifying information - may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.*