



Badlands National Park – South Unit General Management Plan



Newsletter #2

Spring 2009

Results of Public Scoping – Our Public Involvement Effort

To kick off the public's involvement in the new South Unit GMP process, we reached out in a number of ways and received extensive feedback. In early spring 2008, we distributed approximately 10,000 copies of our first newsletter. We also made it available through the park's web site and the NPS PEPC website. The newsletter included a mail-back comment form. We also received numerous comments at 17 public meetings held in western South Dakota, and one in Denver, Colorado.

Dear Friends,

Late last fall, we started the public involvement process for the South Unit General Management Plan. We sent out a newsletter, posted information on our website, and held 18 public open houses. As a result, we heard from over 250 people. Many expressed specific ideas and concerns about the South Unit's future. Thanks to each of you who took time from your busy schedule to attend a meeting or drop us a line. Your input will be invaluable in helping the GMP team develop a plan that will make a lasting difference in the long-term management of the South Unit.

Inside this newsletter, you will discover the wide range of interests and concerns people have about the South Unit. Many expressed how much they value the scenic beauty of the park and the history and culture of the Oglala Lakota people. There were also comments favoring return of the land to the original owners or to the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

Please read this newsletter and find out what people have been thinking and saying about the South Unit and its future. These issues and concerns provide important insights into what park visitors, neighbors, and other agencies and organizations expect from the GMP. If you have any comments, contact the GMP team through the Badlands park website at www.nps.gov/badl

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What We Heard From You

In March 2008, approximately 10,000 newsletters were distributed to announce the beginning of the Badlands South Unit General Management Plan process. The newsletter (Newsletter #1) described the park and its resources and provided information on the draft purpose and significance of this unique national park unit.

Public open houses were held during the second and third weeks of April, in Wall and Rapid City, South Dakota, and in 13 locations on Pine Ridge Reservation. In each of these formats, the public was invited to comment on the concepts for management provided in the newsletter and to share with the team any issues or concerns to be considered in the General Management Plan.

Through comments on the National Park Service planning website, by regular and electronic mail, and at the public meetings, we obtained a variety of concerns and suggestions. The largest number of comments were recorded at the open houses. All comments were

reflective of a public that is passionate about the future of the South Unit — its resources, uses, and management. Many of those who commented provided detailed recommendations on how areas in the park should be managed, what resources are most important for protection or preservation, and what they would like to see for the future of the South Unit.

The topics addressed by the public in these comments have been organized into major topics that broadly describe the nature of the comments:

- What the public values about the park;
- Thoughts/suggestions about the proposed management concepts;
- Issue-specific statements regarding the current or future management of the park that should be addressed by the plan.
- Comments that are beyond the scope of the GMP or are more appropriate for another planning process, such as returning the Bombing Range lands to the original owners.

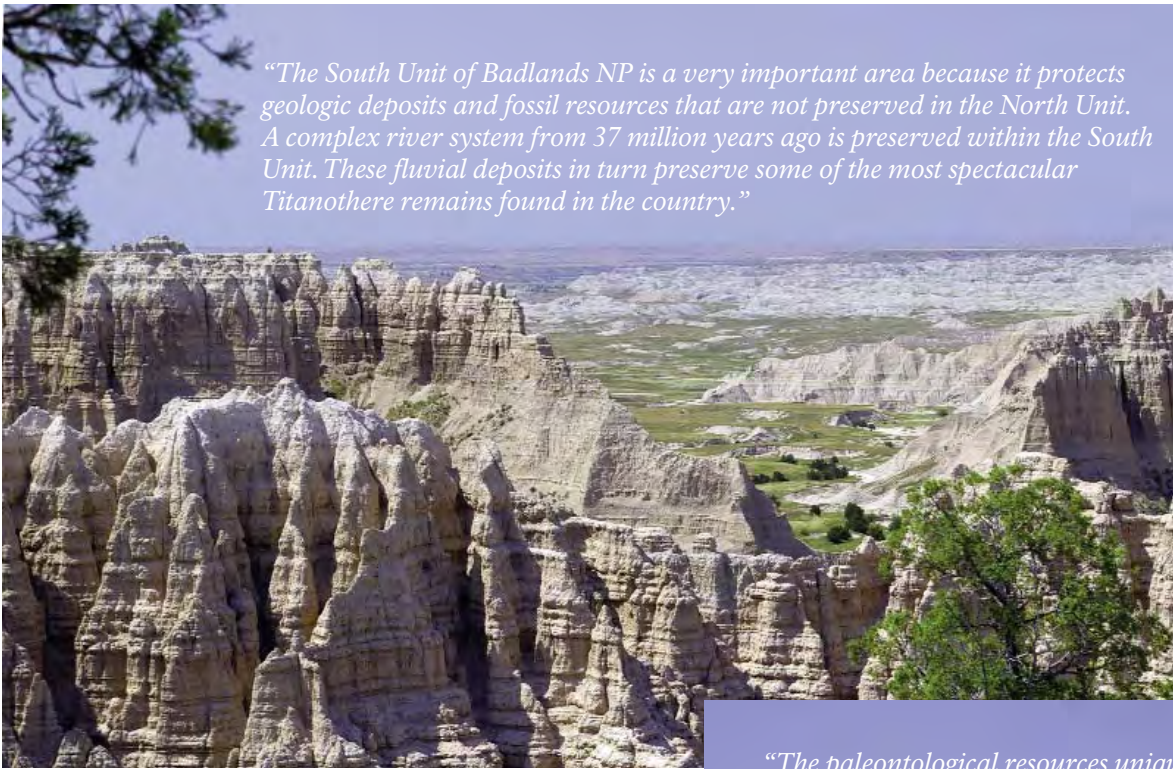
What the Public Values About the Park

The majority of the commenters expressed what they valued about the South Unit. The responses varied – there were those who appreciate the beauty and

serenity, the South Unit’s natural resources, and the fossils. Others appreciate and value the historic landscapes. Following is a sampling of comments:

“The South Unit is somewhat remote compared to the north one, at least it is not as developed. The area seems wilder, more mysterious – and I like that.”

“Incredible views of Palmer Creek and Stirk Table. Magificent sunrises and sunsets, spectacular rainbows. The incredible scenery, wildlife, and other natural resources must be protected from misuse and exploitation.”



"The South Unit of Badlands NP is a very important area because it protects geologic deposits and fossil resources that are not preserved in the North Unit. A complex river system from 37 million years ago is preserved within the South Unit. These fluvial deposits in turn preserve some of the most spectacular Titanotherium remains found in the country."

Thoughts/Suggestions About the Proposed Management Concepts

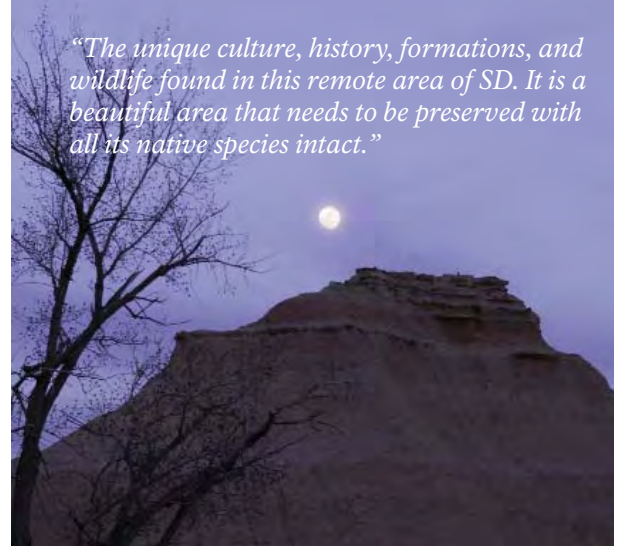
Of approximately 255 comments directly addressing the management concepts, the vast majority preferred a change from current management. In most cases, those who favored continuing current management said they preferred Concepts 2, 3, or 4, but were concerned that the Tribe would be unable to take on a financial burden, or currently lacks expertise in managing a National Park unit. There was a nearly equal number in favor of three concepts: shared management of the South Unit of Badlands National Park, creation of a new national park unit managed by the Oglala Sioux Tribe with technical assistance from the NPS, and deauthorization of the South Unit with no connection to the National Park Service. In addition, about 20 commenters suggested a gradual progression from shared management of the South Unit to eventual deauthorization at the point at which the Oglala Sioux Tribe is prepared to assume total management.

Issues to be Addressed by the Plan

Commenters identified concerns or issues to be considered during the GMP process. These concerns are grouped below in broad topics:

"The paleontological resources unique to the White River Badlands, the Badlands topography, the isolation, the wildlife."

"The unique culture, history, formations, and wildlife found in this remote area of SD. It is a beautiful area that needs to be preserved with all its native species intact."



■ Access

Issues regarding access to the South Unit were raised by many commenters who expressed passionate views and opinions. The comments ranged from broadly supporting or opposing more access into the South Unit to concerns regarding access to specific areas within the South Unit. Some commenters expressed a desire that the South Unit be accessible to all without limitation, while others were concerned about an

increase in development and the possible ramifications of increased access to the park.

■ Cultural Resources

Commenters want the cultural and historical sites protected, but want Oglala history and culture shared through interpretive programs, oral histories, and “hands-on” experiences. Spiritual and cultural preservation was a common theme.

■ Education/interpretation/training

Comments related to education and interpretation focused on methods for visitors to learn more about the history and culture of the Oglala people, and on training opportunities for Tribal members.

■ Facilities/infrastructure

Comments received regarding concerns about development in the park included development of facilities either in a broad sense or in particular areas, and commercial development. Some commenters were concerned about overdevelopment of the park in the future.

There was a lot of support for development of a visitor center or other facility to feature Oglala history, culture, crafts, and a place where artwork could be sold. There was also support for a museum for fossils and cultural artifacts. Some commenters wanted to see a hotel and other tourism infrastructure, such as an amphitheater, rodeo and pow wow grounds, and a café. Others suggested improved roads, scenic drives with

overlooks, backcountry and developed campgrounds, and trails/trailheads for hiking and horseback riding. Several commenters proposed minimum development restricted to the perimeter of the South Unit.

■ Natural Resources

During the scoping process, comments were received regarding concerns or issues about preservation of resources. Natural resource-related concerns included protection of fossils and plants that are used for medicinal and spiritual purposes, reintroduction of native prairie grasses, and replacing cattle with buffalo (bison). Several commenters would like to have the resources managed under traditional Oglala ecosystem methods. Numerous comments centered on renewable energy sources 0151 — wind, geothermal, solar — and carbon credits. Other issues raised were mining, particularly of zeolite, use of pesticides and herbicides, protection of watersheds, and pollution generated from car exhaust.

■ Management/operations

Many commenters were concerned about management of the South Unit, the lack of facilities, and enforcement of regulations. A number of commenters raised concerns about law enforcement and the need for more rangers in the park. Several comments focused on a desire to see the Tribe exercise its sovereignty through managing the South Unit. There was overwhelming support for Tribal management, with a variety of suggestions for which Tribal entity (OST, OSPRA, Land Committee, or other entity) would have the management responsibility.



17 public meetings were held in western South Dakota, and one in Denver, Colorado.

Comments to be Addressed that are Beyond the Scope of the GMP or More appropriate for Another Planning Effort

A number of comments were received expressing public concern about resources or the management of the South Unit that were categorized as either being beyond the scope of the GMP process or would be better addressed under a specific resource implementation plan. These comments will be taken into account by the NPS at the South Unit for future consideration; however, these comments will not be addressed by the GMP. Topics of these comments

include tribal hunting regulations, fees, and cooperation with other agencies.

Some commenters made suggestions to change things that are not within the NPS' control. For example, cooperative programs with the Oglala Lakota College or the South Dakota School of Mines, methods for managing the South Unit under Concept 4 (where the NPS is not involved), or returning the lands to their original owners or descendants.

You can read all the comments through the Badlands website at www.nps.gov/badl

What's Next

In the coming months, a preliminary range of alternatives will be developed and analyzed. Each alternative will be developed within the context of the South Unit's legislated purpose, significance, and planning issues. Evaluating a range of alternatives enables us to compare and contrast the advantages of one course of action over another, and provides a sound approach to the decision making required by the National Environmental Policy Act. The evaluation process will also lead to a preferred alternative. These alternatives will be presented to the public for review and comment in the Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. What we heard from you will greatly assist us in these next steps.

Please note that once we have developed the preliminary and preferred alternatives, you will have opportunities to comment and contribute ideas through public open houses, the websites, and mail. We look forward to your continued interest and involvement.



Rugged country exists in places in the South Unit.

Schedule for the GMP Process

Step	Time Frame	Planning Activity	Public Involvement Opportunities
1	Completed	Initiate Project The planning team assembles and begins to identify the project's scope, customize the planning process, and establish contacts with participants.	
2	Completed	Define Planning Context and Foundation The team examines WHY Badlands National Park was established and affirms purpose, significance, and presents preliminary concepts to the public in Newsletter #1. Team members collect and analyze relevant data and public input.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the Newsletter #1. • Send us your ideas and comments. • Come to public meetings and share your ideas.
We Are Here	3	Develop and Evaluate Alternatives. Using staff and public input, the team explores WHAT the South Unit's future could look like, develops a range of alternatives, including the preferred alternative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Newsletter #2.
	4	Prepare and Publish Draft Document Publish A <i>Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> . The draft document describes the alternatives and potential impacts of implementing each alternative. Based on the impacts and public input, a preferred alternative is identified in the document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the draft document. • Send us your ideas and comments. • Come to public meetings and share your ideas.
	5	Revise and Publish Final Document The team will analyze comments by agencies, organizations, and the public, revise the plan, and distribute a <i>Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> . The final plan is approved in a published <i>Record of Decision</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the final document, including responses to substantive comments and official letters.
	6	Implement the Approved Plan After the "Record of Decision" is issued, begin implementing the plan as funding permits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay involved throughout implementation of approved plan. Let the park know what you think.



View west from Sheep Mountain in the South Unit.

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