

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





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## Purpose of this General Management Plan

This document is the first General Management Plan (GMP) for Governors Island National Monument. It describes the resource conditions and visitor experiences that should exist at the National Monument over the next 20 years. It presents the National Park Service's (NPS) preferred approach to managing the National Monument and three other alternatives considered during the planning process. An environmental impact statement (EIS), which assesses the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the plan on the National Monument's resources, visitor experience, and surrounding area, is integrated into this document.

## **Background and Introduction**

For over two centuries, Governors Island has played a vital role in the defense and development of New York City. Its location in New York Harbor, a few hundred yards from the southern tip of Manhattan and Brooklyn, has influenced its use and role throughout history. Primarily shaped by the long occupation of the U.S. Army and U.S. Coast Guard, the island's stories reach far into the past.

The island's military history begins with the American Revolution. In 1776, just prior to the Battle of Long Island (also known as the Battle of Brooklyn) militia quickly fortified the island with earthworks. The island's artillery covered the retreat of the Continental Army, preventing the revolution from a swift and devastating end, but New York City remained under British occupation and their base of operations on the continent for the remainder of the conflict, a long seven years.

With American independence from Britain in 1783, New York and the nation were determined to prevent any future occupation of the city and its strategic waterways by an enemy power. Toward that end, three fortifications were erected on Governors Island in the years preceding the War of 1812 as part of an extensive coastal defense system:

- ◆ Fort Jay, a square four-bastioned fort constructed on the site of the earlier earthworks and surrounded by a *glacis*, an open field that slopes to the shore;
- ◆ Castle Williams, a circular casemated fort completed in 1811 on the island's northwest point; and
- ◆ South Battery, built as part of the larger fortification system just prior to the War of 1812—sited to overlook and protect Buttermilk Channel.

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Castle Williams and Fort Jay are among the best remaining examples of early American coastal fortifications.

During the Civil War, Governors Island held Confederate prisoners of war and Union deserters, with officers held in Fort Jay and enlisted men in Castle Williams. The army opened a recruiting station on the island, and troops from the island responded to the 1863 draft riots in New York City. After the war, Castle Williams was used as a military stockade and became the East Coast counterpart to military prisons at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and Alcatraz Island, California.

In 1878 the military installation on the island, then known collectively as Fort Columbus, became a major Army administrative center. By 1912, the Army had expanded the island from about 70 acres to 172 acres by adding landfill from New York City's subway construction. The post became headquarters of the United States First Army in 1939. The island continued to serve as an important shipment center during World Wars I and II. When the Army left in 1966, the island became home to the largest U.S. Coast Guard base in the world.

In 1985 the northern 121 acres of the island, with 62 historic structures in a campus-like landscape, were designated a National Historic Landmark District. The base's closing in 1996 concluded almost two centuries of the island's use as a federal reservation.

On January 19, 2001, President William J. Clinton established the Governors Island National Monument by Presidential Proclamation 7402. The monument consisted of Castle Williams, Fort Jay and a portion of the surrounding Parade Ground. The monument, however, remained subject to Public Law 105-33, section 9101, 111 Stat. 670 (August 5, 1997), which required the entire island, including the monument lands, to be sold with a right of first offer to the State and City of New York.

As a result, subsequent actions were taken on January 31, 2003:

- ◆ The State and City of New York each executed a consent and waiver of the right of first offer regarding Governors Island;
- ◆ A 22 acre portion of Governors Island was sold to the National Trust for Historic Preservation;
- ◆ The remainder of Governors Island (150 acres) was sold to the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (GIPEC).
- ◆ The National Trust relinquished and conveyed their 22 acre parcel to the United States of America and was accepted by the Secretary of the Interior.

On February 7, 2003, President George W. Bush issued Proclamation 7647, which included additional facilities within the monument boundaries, referenced the previous proclamation and legal island transfers, and described the basic purpose of the monument and role of the NPS.

Since Summer 2003, NPS has offered guided and self-guided tours of the National Monument and surrounding historic district and, in collaboration with GIPEC, has sponsored public programs and special events on the island. NPS and GIPEC are securing public funds to maintain, repair and rehabilitate their respective historic structures and, guided by the transfer documents, are cooperating in the development of Governors Island for the benefit of the people of New York and the United States.

This Final General Management Plan (GMP) sets forth a vision for the development and operation of Governors Island National Monument over the next 20 years. Like the creation of the National Monument itself, this vision is the product of a process that integrates the aspirations of the public with the unique capabilities of the NPS to provide for the preservation and public enjoyment of the National Monument.

## National Parks of New York Harbor

Governors Island National Monument is one of the parks within the National Parks of New York Harbor (NPNH), an initiative the NPS created to enhance the identity, visibility, and public support for the parks in the New Jersey–New York metropolitan area. Its mission includes collaboration with other parks and organizations in the area in the care and appropriate use of all historic, recreational, and natural resources, and to promote the national park system.



The National Parks of New York Harbor.

## Foundation for Planning

The “Foundation for Planning” for the National Monument expresses the purpose and significance of the National Monument, its key interpretive themes, and other critical guidance for managing the unit, such as the Quitclaim Deed, that specifies conditions the NPS and GIPEC must comply with in managing and redeveloping the island. It defines many of the critical parameters for the GMP and subsequent plans.

### *Purpose*

Governors Island National Monument was established to preserve and protect Castle Williams and Fort Jay and to interpret them and their role in the defense of New York Harbor and the nation. The island provides an opportunity to educate the public about the evolution of coastal defense and military communities as well as the harbor’s rich history and ecology.

### *Significance*

Governors Island has long been a strategic location in one of the country’s most important harbors. The National Monument includes two of the finest examples of defensive structures from the First and Second American Systems of Coastal Fortifications. The surrounding National and New York City Historic Landmark District, and the greater island provide the context for understanding the evolution—over more than two centuries—of American defensive strategies and the growth of the U.S. Army as a professional federal force. The forts’ historic defensive technologies and proximity to and views of Lower Manhattan present an opportunity to

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reflect on the events of September 11, 2001.

Governors Island's forts highlight the Second American System that constructed a dozen defensive structures around New York Harbor, and up and down the East and West Coasts. As part of this harbor defense system, Governors Island's forts have been credited as successfully deterring British forces from attacking New York during the War of 1812. Fort Jay is an enclosed square fortification of French design with four bastions and a ravelin, surrounded by a dry moat and *glacis*. Constructed over remnants of earlier British and Continental Army earthworks on the island's highest point, Fort Jay is one of the largest and best preserved examples of its kind in the country. Castle Williams is a nearly circular red sandstone and granite fortification commanding the island's northwest point, merely 600 feet from the walls of Fort Jay. The Castle is the first American-designed fort with casemated gun emplacements, and its innovative design served as a prototype for seacoast fortification for decades.

Later in the 19th-century, their original defensive designs obsolete, the forts served new purposes—primarily as barracks and prisons—as Governors Island grew to become one of the most important military headquarters in the eastern United States, continuing these functions through the Army's departure in 1966, and to the end of the Coast Guard's tenure in 1996.

## Key Interpretive Themes

Connecting people to places is the role of interpretation. Interpretive themes provide the broad framework for all interpretive programming, such as public tours, park publications and special events. The themes are derived from a park's purpose and capture the essence of its significance. Interpretation reveals meaning, and interpretive themes link universal, human experiences that transcend time and culture with a park's stories and tangible resources.

### ***Place in the National Experience***

Castle Williams and Fort Jay on Governors Island represent an important early effort to protect and defend the country through a system of strategically placed coastal fortifications, an effort that continued beyond the life of the forts until the end of the island's military career.

### ***Place in the Local and World Communities***

New York City's emergence as a nationally and internationally important city elevated Governors Island's stature, command, and responsibilities, offering those stationed on the island enormous influence on local and global issues.

### ***Place in the Environment***

Governors Island—as part of the natural environment of New York Harbor, with its rich and intricate ecosystem of bays, estuaries, rivers, islands, and other geographical features—is an ideal place to observe and study the important role that natural systems and humans play in the development and evolution of New York Harbor and surrounding metropolis.

## Special Mandates

Proclamations made by Presidents William J. Clinton (2001) and George W. Bush (2003) established the National Monument and provide the fundamental direction for its operation—to preserve and protect the historic forts for the benefit of present and future generations. A Quitclaim Deed contains specific guidance for the National Monument and the rest of the island. The deed also binds the NPS and GIPEC to the Governors Island Preservation and Design Manual which was developed by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) in consultation with the New York City Planning Department, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

The historic fortifications, Fort Jay (1794–1809) and Castle Williams (1807–1811), including their associated features such as the *glacis* and covered defile (below grade walkway), are the National Monument’s most prominent fundamental resources. They are outstanding examples of First and Second American Systems of Coastal Fortifications. The forts are listed individually as New York City and National Historic Landmarks. Fundamental resources also include archeological resources and the cultural landscape, which extend beyond the boundary of the National Monument and include the surrounding 121-acre National Historic Landmark District designated in 1985.

## Summary of the Alternatives

Based on the Foundation for Planning, and in consideration of public interests expressed during the planning process, several management alternatives were developed. All construction and staffing proposals in the alternatives are contingent on NPS funding limitations and priorities, and would be implemented over the life of the General Management Plan. Alternative D—Harbor Partnership was identified as the NPS preferred alternative and the environmentally preferred alternative, as defined by NPS policy and the National Environmental Policy Act.

### **Alternative D—The Harbor Center (the NPS Preferred Alternative)**

*Develop the National Monument as the Harbor Center—a hub of activities and jumping off point for visitors wanting to explore New York Harbor.*

Working with other harbor-related organizations—national parks and local, regional, national and international civic, educational and research organizations—the NPS would develop a range of activities in Fort Jay and Castle Williams that interpret the key themes of the island and greater harbor. The park would collaborate and coordinate on harbor-related programs on and off Governors Island that would help visitors understand the forts’ military significance, the island’s strategic location, and the ongoing ecological conservation efforts for the harbor and the re-visioning and re-development of the waterfront.

The Monument would become a primary stop on harbor ferry tours. Programs would include specialized boat tours of the harbor, educational programs that

explore the harbor's history and ecology.

A variety of programs, exhibits, and special events would be available in both forts. These activities would use the harbor to describe the island's history and significance, and the interplay over time between the harbor and the city's health and economy.

Fort Jay would house harbor research, offices and temporary lodging for NPS-sponsored fellowship and residency programs; and be the setting for harbor-related seminars and workshops.

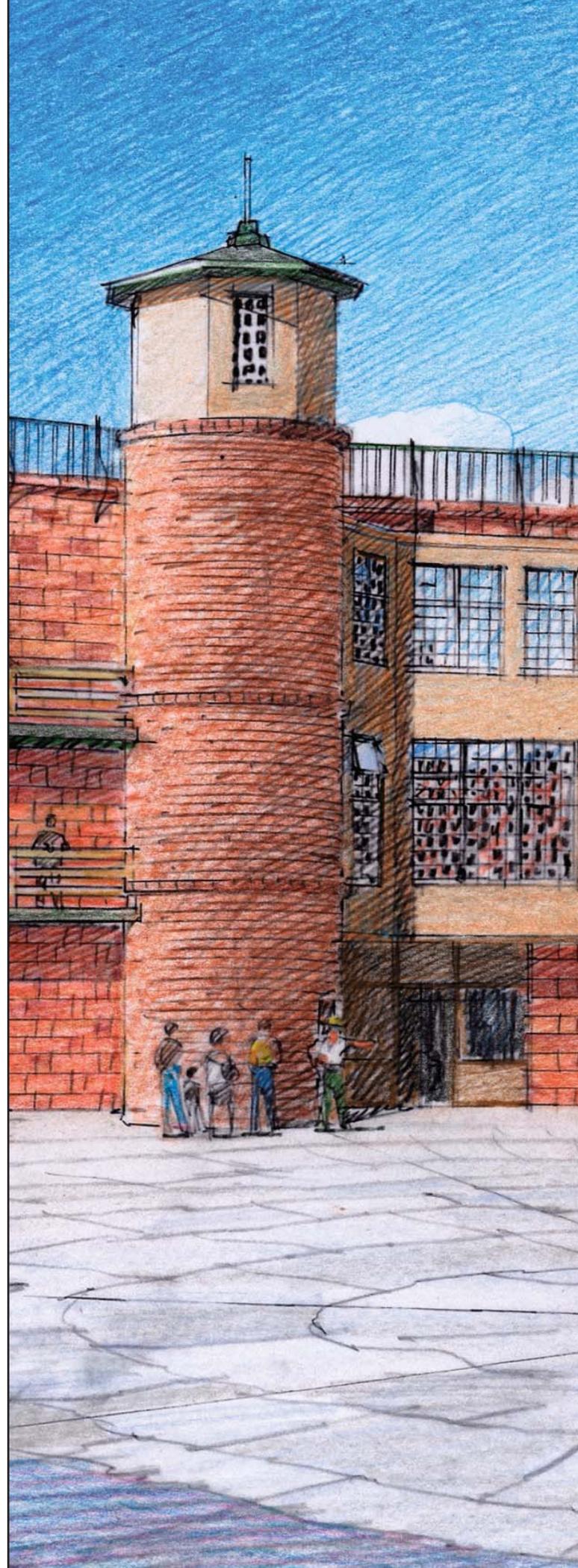
Castle Williams would be the island's main exhibit and interpretive center, showcasing multimedia programs and interactive exhibits that explore local, national, and global topics associated with Governors Island and New York Harbor.

#### **Alternative A—No Action**

*NPS continues current management practices and plans with no major new actions.*

This alternative reflects current park management practices and establishes a baseline for the comparison of all other alternatives, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

NPS would preserve its dock and historic buildings and grounds and provide for public enjoyment of the National Monument based on existing federal laws, regulations, and policies. As funds



Right: Conceptual rendering of NPS actions under all action alternatives: *Castle Williams is rehabilitated as the island's exhibition and history center; building, courtyard and roof are open for programs and public use year-round.* By Peter Roper.



become available, the NPS would:

- ◆ Repair and maintain the National Monument's dock, historic structures and cultural landscape to stabilize and prevent further degradation of these resources and to remove public safety hazards;
- ◆ Abate hazardous materials in the forts to permit safe and healthy access to their courtyards and interior spaces by staff, maintenance contractors and visitors;
- ◆ Demolish Buildings S-251 and 513 and Parking Area 504 to remove non-essential and unhealthy and unsafe structures;
- ◆ Landscape demolition areas;
- ◆ Install a floating dock to provide for guaranteed access to the National Monument for emergency, operational and visitor purposes.

Public programming and access would remain limited in the short-term with seasonal interpretive and educational programs. As funding becomes available and over time, the NPS would expand the season to allow visitors year-round access to the cultural landscape and eventually fort interiors after hazmat abatement.

Ferry transportation to the National Monument and larger island would continue to be provided by GIPEC and private ferry operators. The NPS would continue existing agreements with GIPEC and other organizations for operations, public programs and long-term planning.

**Common to All "Action" Alternatives**  
*The "Action" alternatives—B, C, and D—share numerous objectives and would seek to accomplish the following broad goals:*

◆ **Preserve the National Monument's historic resources for the enjoyment of present and future generations.**

Management would make historic preservation of Fort Jay and Castle Williams its highest priority.

◆ **Offer visitors multiple and varied opportunities to explore and understand the National Monument.**

Public access to the National Monument would be convenient and affordable. Dock 102 would have a new contact station which would serve as an information and orientation center; Building 140 would continue to be another welcoming center with a bookstore.

◆ **Operate the National Monument as part of the larger island.**

The NPS would cooperate with organizations, including GIPEC, to make Governors Island an educational and civic resource of special historic character, and a recreational and open-space resource for the people of New York and the United States.

In each alternative, the combination of preservation and programming activities would make the National Monument a major New York City and Harbor attraction, drawing local visitors back repeatedly and drawing national and international audiences.

**Alternative B—The History Center**  
*Develop the Governors Island History Center located in Castle Williams and Fort Jay.*

In addition to the common actions, the NPS would rehabilitate historic Castle Williams, Fort Jay and the cultural landscape, permitting visitors and NPS staff access to all areas of the National Monument. Visitor services and experiences would be concentrated within the National Monument boundary.

The Governors Island History Center would act as the focal and starting point for visitors exploring the island's history. The History Center would be located in Fort Jay and Castle Williams, and offer a variety of activities.

Castle Williams would host regular and changing programs, permanent and temporary exhibits, audiovisual presentations, lectures and special events. Visitors could explore the fort's massive casemates, peer through cannon embrasures, and climb to the rooftop for stunning views of New York Harbor.

Visitors could recreate on Fort Jay's expansive *glacis*, explore special features of the fort, such as the ammunition magazine, and visit barracks that reflect the officers' and enlisted men's domestic lives.

Visitors would explore the National Monument on their own or through ranger-led tours. The National Monument's key themes would be interpreted from the perspective of the forts, using these powerful and tangible elements as the jumping-off point for telling the island's history. As in all the

alternatives, visitors could explore other parts of the island on their own.

**Alternative C—Island Collaborative**  
*Develop a range of activities in the National Monument's historic forts and at key locations—interpretive nodes—around Governors Island in coordination with on- and off-island partners.*

NPS interpretive and educational programming would be coordinated with other activities offered to visitors on the island. Working in close cooperation with GIPEC, island tenants, and other organizations, the NPS would develop an island-wide system of "interpretive nodes"—information stations which may include kiosks, waysides and other interpretive media—that reflect the National Monument's key themes, important information and orientation. These nodes would be located at all island ferry landings, along paths and at key locations of interest. Ranger-led tours of the forts and historic district would supplement these self-guided explorations.

In this alternative, rehabilitation activities by NPS would focus on the forts' exteriors, basic infrastructure and key interior features. To help meet its goals for preservation, the NPS would establish leases with compatible nonprofit organizations, who would rehabilitate and occupy some portions of Fort Jay and Castle Williams. However, the NPS would retain those key portions of the forts necessary for year-round public programming, visitor access and park operations.

## Summary of Estimated Costs to Implement the Alternatives

Two categories of costs are estimated for each alternative: one-time costs and annual operating costs. More detailed descriptions of these categories are in Chapter 2. These figures are for planning and comparison purposes only and represent gross costs. The figures are in 2006 dollars.

It is anticipated that any capital improvements, staff and operational costs will be phased over the life of this plan. The implementation of the approved plan will depend on future funding and Servicewide priorities. The approval of a GMP does not guarantee that funding and staffing needed to implement the plan will be forthcoming. Full implementation of the GMP could be many years into the future.

## Environmental Consequences of the Alternatives

The GMP describes the affected environment—the existing natural, cultural and socioeconomic resources that would be affected either directly or indirectly by implementation of any of the alternatives—and evaluates the consequences of implementing those alternatives. Impact topics eliminated from further analysis because they are not present in the Governors Island National Monument, or will not be affected by any of the alternatives, include prime and unique agricultural lands; vegetation; wetlands; floodplain and 100-year coastal flood; wild and scenic rivers; wildlife and their habitats; rare, threatened, endangered or special-concern species and their habitats; geology, topography and soils; ethnography and ethnographic resources; Indian Trust resources; environmental justice; soundscape and noise management; lightscape/night sky; and National Monument non-historic resources, which include Building S-251, and Building 513, and Dock 102; historic resources not within the National Monument; and traffic, parking and transportation.

| <b>Summary of Costs</b> (in millions, rounded to nearest million) |              |                       |                         |                                  |
|---|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
|   | A: No-Action | B: The History Center | C: Island Collaborative | D: The Harbor Center (Preferred) |
| One-Time Costs  | \$12 - 15    | \$46 - 56             | \$38 - 46               | \$50 - 60                        |
| Annual Operating Costs  | \$6 - 7      | \$10 - 13             | \$10 - 12               | \$11 - 13                        |

Impact topics that were analyzed include cultural resources within the National Monument: historic structures, the cultural landscape, archeological resources, and collections and archives; natural resources: air quality, water quality, aquatic life and their habitats; the visitor experience; administration and operation; and the socioeconomic environment.

A summary of the environmental consequences of the alternatives is provided in the table below.

| <b>Summary of Environmental Consequences</b>     |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | A: No Action  | Common to All Action Alternatives                                   | B: The History Center                                       | C: Island Collaborative                                     | D: The Harbor Center (Preferred)                            |
|  | NEPA/106  | NEPA/106  | NEPA/106  | NEPA/106  | NEPA/106  |
| Historic Structures                              | minor beneficial impacts / no adverse effect                                  | moderate beneficial impacts / no adverse effect                     | moderate beneficial impacts / no adverse effect             | moderate beneficial impacts / no adverse effect             | moderate beneficial impacts / no adverse effect             |
| Cultural Landscape                               | minor adverse impacts / no adverse effect                                     | moderate beneficial impacts / no adverse effect                     | moderate beneficial impacts / no adverse effect             | moderate beneficial impacts / no adverse effect             | moderate beneficial impacts / no adverse effect             |
| Archeological Resources                          | negligible to minor adverse impacts / no adverse effect                       | minor to moderate adverse impacts / adverse effect                  | minor to moderate adverse impacts / adverse effect          | minor to moderate adverse impacts / adverse effect          | minor to moderate adverse impacts / adverse effect          |
| Collections and Archives                         | minor adverse effect / no adverse effect                                      | moderate to major beneficial impacts / no adverse effect            | major beneficial impact / no adverse effect                 | major beneficial impacts / no adverse effect                | major beneficial impacts / no adverse effect                |
| Air Quality                                      | negligible  | negligible  | negligible  | negligible  | negligible  |
| Water Quality                                    | minor negative short-term / minor beneficial long-term                        | minor negative short-term / minor beneficial long-term              | minor negative short-term / minor beneficial long-term      | minor negative short-term / minor beneficial long-term      | minor negative short-term / minor beneficial long-term      |
| Aquatic Life and Their Habitats                  | minor negative short-term / negligible beneficial long-term                   | minor negative short-term / negligible beneficial long-term         | minor negative short-term / negligible beneficial long-term | minor negative short-term / negligible beneficial long-term | minor negative short-term / negligible beneficial long-term |
| Visitor Experience                               | minor to moderate adverse short-term / minor to moderate beneficial long-term | minor adverse short-term / major beneficial long-term minor adverse | short-term / major beneficial long-term minor adverse       | short-term / major beneficial long-term minor adverse       | short-term / major beneficial long-term                     |
| Administration and Operation (increase/decrease) | minor increase  | major increase  | major increase  | major increase  | major increase  |
| Socioeconomic Environment                        | negligible beneficial   | minor beneficial  | minor beneficial  | minor beneficial  | minor beneficial  |

