

# Devils Postpile National Monument

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## General Management Plan

Newsletter 1, Summer 2009

### *Dear Friends,*

You are invited to join in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Monument and in participating in planning for the next 15 to 20 years.

Devils Postpile National Monument was established by presidential proclamation on July 6, 1911, resulting from the efforts of citizens and managers to preserve the spectacular scenery along the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River, including the Devils Postpile and Rainbow Falls. The area was threatened by a dam proposal that would have destroyed the Postpile and permanently altered this remarkable valley in the Sierra Nevada.

The years since were filled with a rich history of protection of natural and cultural resources, and enjoyment by many visitors. The National Park Service, created by the Organic Act in 1916, became the land managers of the monument in 1933. Since then much has happened. News of the geologic wonders of the columnar basalt of the Postpile, the beauty of Rainbow Falls, and stunning beauty of the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River valley and its surrounding mountains encouraged many people to visit the Monument. The early years presented many adventures and challenges to visitors, and the growth in visitation resulted in many changes such as paving the road and starting a mandatory shuttle bus season in the peak season for visitor safety and enjoyment, and to protect the resources.

Monument staff and researchers have learned much through inventory and monitoring about the significance of the monument's geologic and ecologic resources, and are exploring the historic sites and archeological resources. What has been discovered

is that this small Monument, nested within the Upper Middle Fork, is situated at an amazing crossroads of ecological diversity and cultural history.

We are at another important crossroads in terms of the future of the Monument. It is now time to chart the course for management, resource protection, and visitor use in a new general management plan that will guide us into the next century. All National Park Service areas, are required to complete this important guiding document that explores



how to preserve our fundamental and significant resources, and what are the anticipated challenges and opportunities of the next 15 to 20 years. We will explore ways to preserve quality visitor experiences, what visitor facilities and infrastructure best meet these goals, and what interpretive and educational

services can be provided to our visiting public and local communities. We will explore the importance of and the future of the San Joaquin River watershed and the interconnected flora and fauna, begin to address the challenges of climate change, and how to protect the ecological importance of the biodiversity and migratory corridors that are the life of the Monument.

Please join us in creating the future of Devils Postpile National Monument and this historic plan. This plan is the blueprint for the future, and everyone is welcomed to engage in this opportunity to contribute to safeguarding the natural and cultural heritage of this outstanding resource. Your input, coupled with NPS resource and planning expertise, monument staff, and collaboration with staff from the Inyo National Forest, will catalyze the vision for the future for this special place.

This is an opportunity of a century.

Deanna Dulen  
Superintendent  
Devils Postpile National Monument

“  
... [this is] a country  
that abounds in natural  
wonders.”

- Captain Joseph E. Caine, 1899

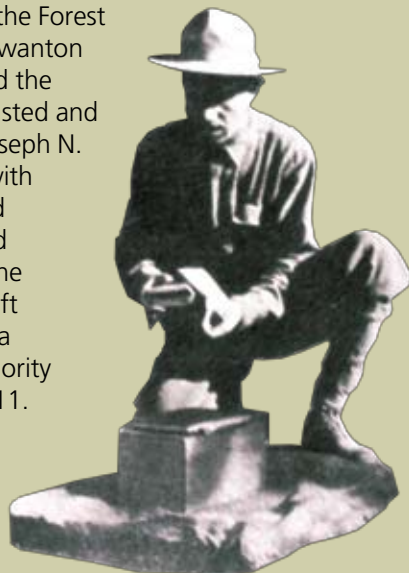


# Devils Postpile National Monument

Devils Postpile National Monument rests along the Upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The 798-acre monument preserves the columnar basalt known as the Devils Postpile, the 101-foot Rainbow Falls and other resources in this vital watershed. The Postpile is a fascinating sight in the geologic world and ranks as one of the world's finest examples of columnar jointing. Its columns tower 60 feet high and display an unusual symmetry. Just two miles downstream from the Postpile, Rainbow Falls drops an impressive 101 feet. The fall, once called "a gem unique and worthy of its name," is aptly named for the colorful rainbows that form in its mist.

Originally part of Yosemite National Park, in 1905 the Devils Postpile formation, Rainbow Falls, and the Minarets were removed from Yosemite's boundaries due to pressure from mining interests. The area then became part of the Sierra Forest Reserve, under management of the nascent U.S. Forest Service. Soon after, the Forest Service received an application for a permit to build a dam on the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River at the site of Devils Postpile. The intent was to blast the formation of the Postpile for raw material to create a rock fill dam that could be used to support local mining operations.

Walter Huber, district engineer for the Forest Service, regarded the proposal as "wanton destruction of scenery" and enlisted the support of District Forester F.E. Olmsted and University of California Professor Joseph N. LeConte to evaluate the situation with the hope of denying the permit and protecting the area. Their combined efforts, along with the support of the Sierra Club, resulted in President Taft signing the enabling legislation for a national monument under the authority of the Antiquities Act on July 6, 1911. The monument was ultimately transferred to the national park system in 1933.



Walter Huber, U.S. Forest Service



Rainbow Falls

## What is a General Management Plan?

A General Management Plan (GMP) will answer "What kind of place do we want this park to be?" It will serve as a guidebook for the future to help managers make decisions about how to protect resources, what levels and types of uses are appropriate, what facilities should be developed and how people should access the park. Everything in the plan must be consistent with the park's purpose and significance and the legislation that established the National Park Service in 1916, providing for protection of the park's natural and cultural resources while inviting appropriate visitor use and enjoyment of the park.

The plan will not include detailed building designs or be able to guarantee funding, but it will serve as a blueprint that the NPS intends to follow for the next 15-20 years. The GMP will include an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the various alternatives will be analyzed in the EIS.

## Steps in the GMP Planning Process



### Foundation Planning

Document why the monument was established, what is significant about the monument and what are its most important resources.



### Public Scoping

Identify goals and issues that need to be addressed in the planning process.



### Data and Resource Analysis

Collect data and analyze existing conditions of the monument.



### Develop Alternatives

Outline different possible futures for the monument and determine what actions are needed to accomplish these goals.

### Prepare/Distribute Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

Prepare and distribute the draft plan for public, agency, and other stakeholder review.

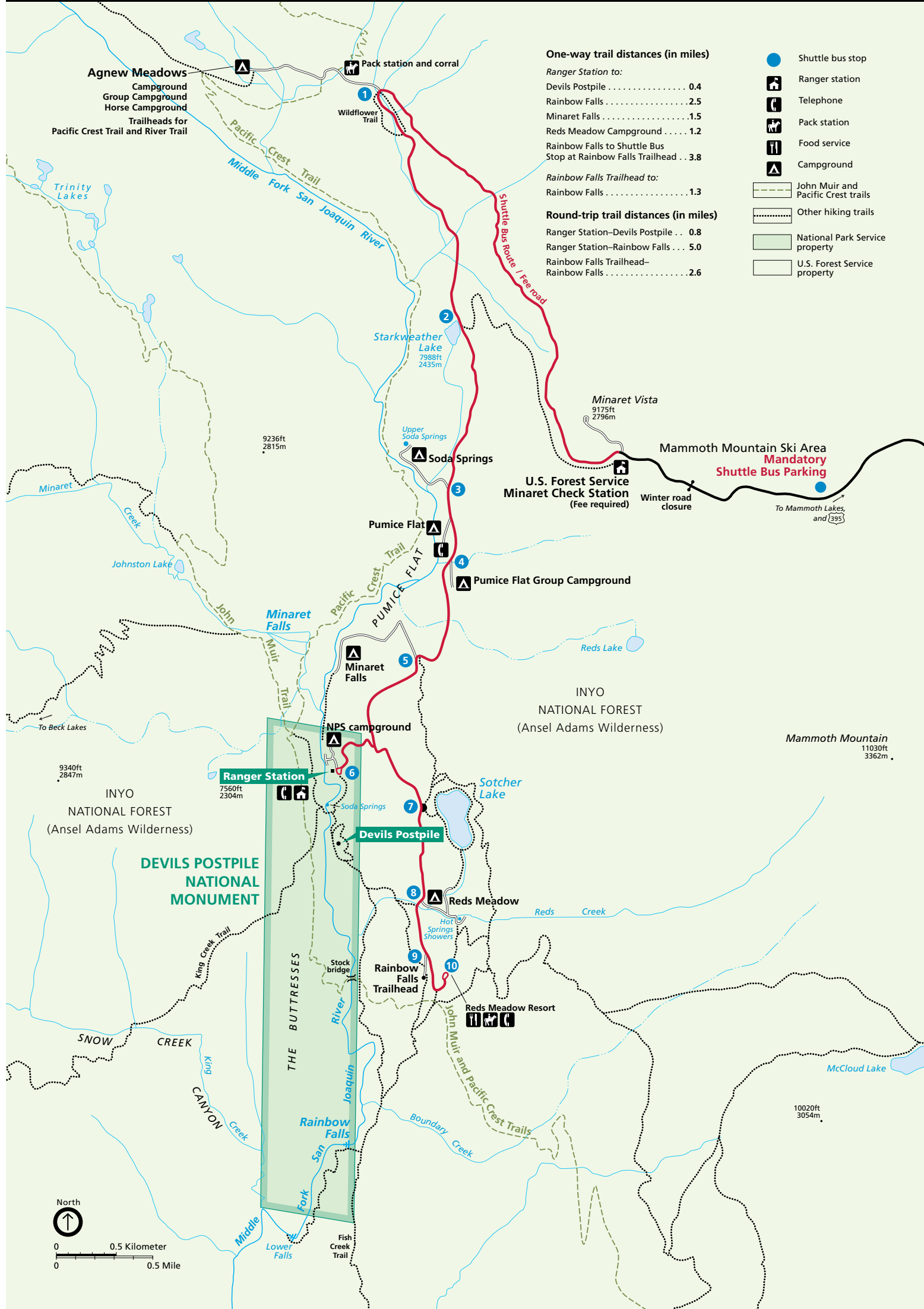


### Prepare Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

Analyze comments, respond to comments, and revise the draft plan.



# Devils Postpile National Monument Park Map





# Developing a Foundation for the General Management Plan

Planning and park management are based on a shared understanding of the park’s purpose, significance, resources and values. This shared understanding serves as a foundation for everything we do at the park.

The following park purpose and significance statements were developed by park staff based upon park legislation and an analysis of park resources. Please let us know if we have accurately captured what is most significant about Devils Postpile National Monument.

## Park Purpose

Devils Postpile National Monument preserves and protects the glacially exposed columns of the Devils Postpile, the scenic Rainbow Falls, and the wilderness landscape of the upper Middle Fork San Joaquin River in the Sierra Nevada for scientific value, public interest, and inspiration.

## Park Significance

- Devils Postpile is one of the world’s finest examples of columnar jointing, displaying volcanic rock columns polished by glaciers and revealing a mosaic of polygons on its dome shaped top.
- Devils Postpile National Monument is nested in the second largest contiguous designated wilderness in the lower 48 states that includes three national forests and three national parks in the Sierra Nevada.
- For a small area, Devils Postpile National Monument supports and maintains unusually rich ecological diversity reflective of its location at the intersection of three biogeographic regions. The physical setting and context create exceptional opportunities for scientific study and shared learning.
- Devils Postpile National Monument provides a traditional national park experience in a rustic setting that promotes learning and intimate (time-honored) visitor experiences that include enjoying the sights and sounds of nature.
- The establishment of Devils Postpile National Monument provides compelling insight into the history and evolution of national parks and national forests, beginning in the early years of the public lands conservation and preservation movement.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

**Distinct landscape features:** The Postpile, Rainbow Falls, and other geologic features that provide textbook quality evidence of volcanism, glaciation, and mountain building forces of plate tectonics.



Middle Fork San Joaquin River

**Upper Middle Fork San Joaquin River (corridor):** A free flowing river, mineral springs, wetlands, riparian areas and other water-dependent features and communities sustained by naturally functioning, unpolluted surface and ground water system.

**Component of a larger ecosystem:** Being a functional part of three converging biogeographic regions affected by dynamic physical processes that influence a diverse and evolving biota.

**Opportunities for science and learning:** Opportunities for scientific study and shared learning about past, present and future environmental conditions and connected biogeophysical processes.

**Body of Knowledge:** A body of knowledge and material evidence documenting the Monument’s natural and administrative history, cultural significance, and topographic importance in the Sierra Nevada ecoregion.

**Natural Soundscapes and Visual Quality:** Natural soundscapes, dark night skies, clean air, clear water, and unspoiled natural vistas.

**Wilderness portal:** With over 90% of Devils Postpile National Monument designated as wilderness with internationally recognized trails (John Muir Trail, Pacific Crest Trail), it is an entryway to exploration, understanding, and appreciation of wilderness character and values. Experiences range from a glimpse to an immersion into the vast Sierran wilderness.

**Rustic Experience:** Visitors are offered a time honored park experiences in a setting that emphasizes the enjoyment of natural sights and sounds and promotes a sense of place.



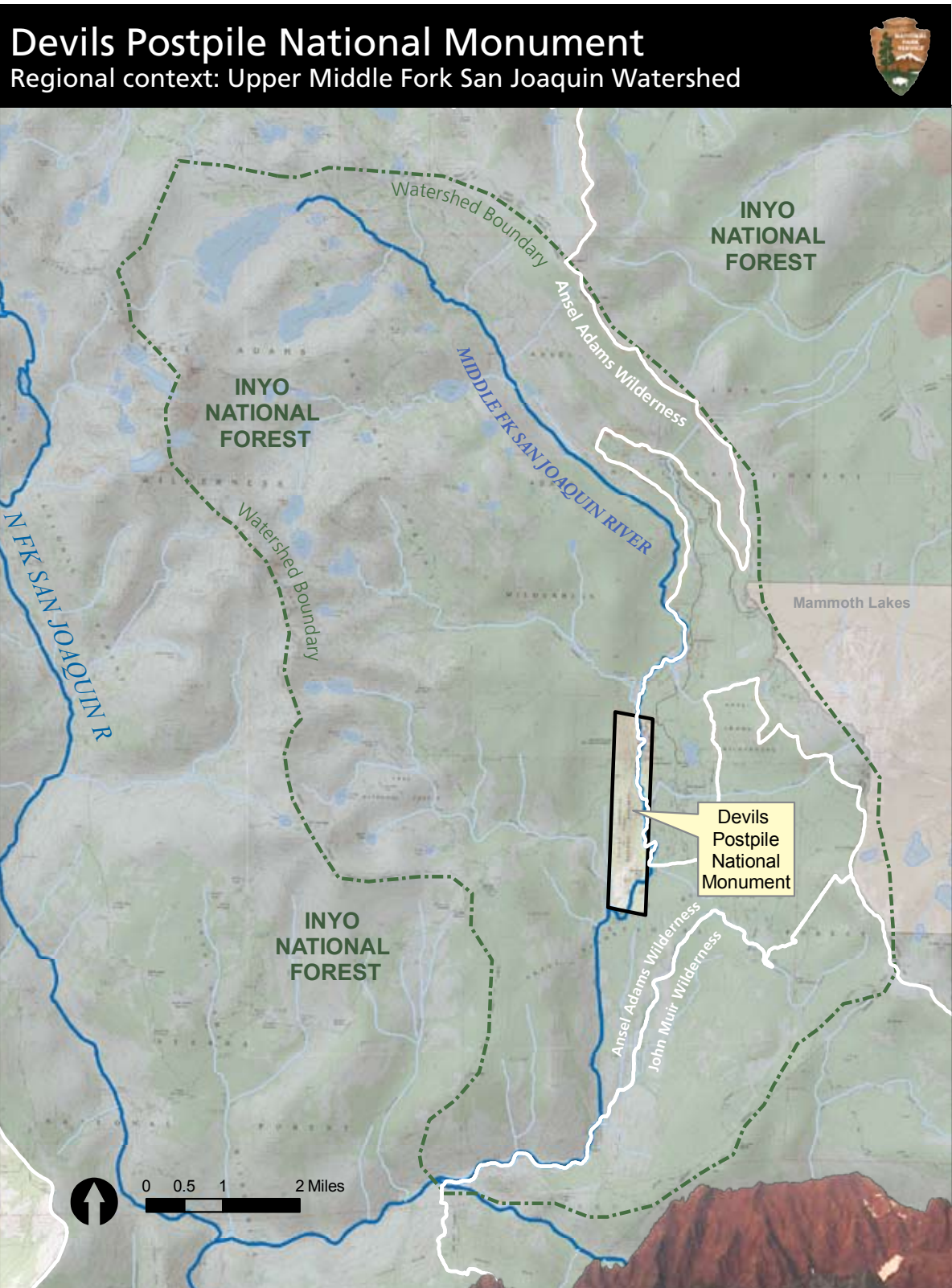
Devils Postpile



Rainbow Falls



# Collaboration with the Inyo National Forest



One of the guiding principles for Devils Postpile National Monument is that the seamless management of the monument and surrounding national forest provides a quality visitor experience and enhanced resource protection. Working cooperatively and in close collaboration can enhance agency effectiveness, resource management, and public service and at the same time maintain park and forest resources and facilities.

The GMP for Devils Postpile presents opportunities for additional collaboration and coordination with the Inyo National Forest to develop desired conditions for facilities, transportation, and the overall visitor experience as well as resource management issues related to the upper Middle Fork San Joaquin River watershed, biodiversity, and climate change.

The GMP will not address issues related to wilderness use on the Inyo National Forest, nor will it address carrying capacity or user capacity issues for Forest Service lands.



Sotcher Lake, Inyo National Forest



Garnet Lake, Inyo National Forest



# What are the Opportunities and Challenges that Face Devils Postpile National Monument?

Devils Postpile National Monument has many decisions to make in the next decades, and the monument has never had a comprehensive management plan. The monument is home to diverse resources, is set in a dynamic landscape, and is enjoyed by many visitors.

There will be several opportunities throughout the GMP process to share your thoughts and ideas with us. The planning team has identified some preliminary issues that we think may be valuable to consider in this planning effort. Please let us know if you have thoughts, ideas, and concerns about what should be addressed in the general management plan.



Soda Springs Meadow

## Preliminary Issues

### Visitor Opportunities and Experiences

*What types of visitor experiences, activities, and facilities should be available in different areas of the monument?*

Visitors are offered time honored park experiences in a setting with unspoiled natural vistas that emphasizes the enjoyment of natural sights and sounds and promotes a sense of place. With over 90% of Devils Postpile National Monument designated as wilderness with internationally recognized trails (John Muir Trail, Pacific Crest Trail), it is an entryway to exploration, understanding, and appreciation of wilderness character and values. Experiences range from traditional day use activities to an immersion into the vast Sierran wilderness.



### Wild and Scenic Rivers

*Does the upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River possess outstandingly remarkable values that make it eligible for designation as a Wild and Scenic River?*

NPS Management Policies 2006 requires eligibility assessments be conducted for rivers and river segments in the national park system. The upper Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River is a free flowing river surrounded by mineral springs, wetlands, riparian areas and other water-dependent features and communities sustained by a naturally functioning, unpolluted surface and ground water system.



### Coordination of Facilities and Services in the Valley

*What are the opportunities for the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service to coordinate services and facilities in the valley as well as in the town of Mammoth Lakes?*

Devils Postpile National Monument and the Inyo National Forest have a shared responsibility and interest in management of public lands in this area and work as partners to provide visitor services and manage resources. Both agencies recognize it is in the best public interest to coordinate many aspects of the management of visitor services, shuttle bus operations, visitor information, resource protection strategies, and emergency response.



### Natural and Cultural Resource Protection

*How can Devils Postpile sustain the activities needed to insure viability for its important natural and cultural resources, provide for future stewardship opportunities, and promote scientific investigation?*

The monument is a functional part of three converging biogeographic regions affected by dynamic physical processes that influence a diverse and evolving biota. Distinct landscape features that include the Postpile, Rainbow Falls, and other geologic features provide textbook quality evidence of volcanism, glaciation, and mountain building forces of plate tectonics. The monument also provides opportunities for scientific study and shared learning about past, present and future environmental conditions and connected biogeophysical processes.

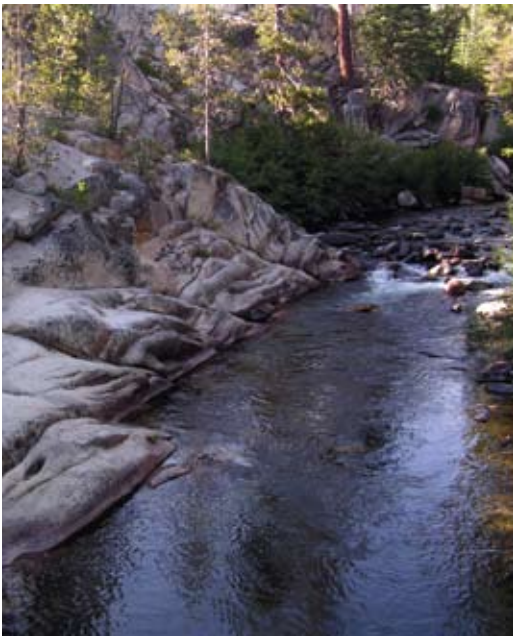
### Climate Change

*How should the monument respond to the effects of global climate change and what actions could be taken to reduce the monument's carbon footprint?*

The effects of global climate change are anticipated to include changes in local weather patterns, temperature and precipitation trends, wildfire frequency, distribution of plants and animals, and increased insect and pathogen infestations. Pro-active planning and management can help the monument adapt to these changes and their effects on monument resources, operations, and visitors.







Middle Fork San Joaquin River



Soda Springs Meadow



Ranger Station



Educational Program

# General Management Plan Schedule

Estimated Time Frame	Planning Activity	Public Involvement Opportunities
Summer 2009	Conduct Public Scoping  Identify goals and issues that need to be addressed  <i>We are currently on this step. See times and dates of meetings on the next page of this newsletter.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review Newsletter</li><li>Send us your ideas and concerns using the response form by September 30th, 2009.</li><li>Participate in public workshops and voice your ideas and concerns about the future of the monument and meet the planning team.</li></ul>
2010	Develop Preliminary Alternatives  Based on results of public scoping, develop a draft outline of different possible futures and strategies for the monument.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review newsletter</li><li>Send us your ideas and concerns using the response form</li><li>Participate in public workshops to learn more about proposed draft alternatives.</li></ul>
2011	Prepare and Distribute Draft GMP/EIS  Revise alternatives based on comments from the public, monument partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.  <i>Devils Postpile National Monument Centennial Celebration!</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review draft GMP/EIS or summary newsletter</li><li>Send us your written comments on the draft GMP/EIS</li><li>Participate in public workshops and voice your ideas and concerns.</li></ul>
2012	Revise GMP/EIS and Prepare a Final GMP/EIS  Revise and update the Draft GMP/EIS based on comments and prepare and distribute Final GMP/EIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review the Final GMP/EIS.</li></ul>
2013	Distribute and Implement the Approved GMP/EIS  Prepare and issue a Record of Decision and implement the plan as funding allows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Work with the monument to implement the plan.</li></ul>



Minaret Vista, Inyo National Forest



Invasive Plant Control



Superintendent  
Devils Postpile NM  
P.O. Box 3999  
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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™



## DEVILS POSTPILE NATIONAL MONUMENT

General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement  
Newsletter #1, Public Scoping, Summer 2009

### Contact Information

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Amanda Kaplan, Acting Project Manager  
Pacific West Regional Office  
Phone: 206-220-4150

**GMP Project Web Site:**  
For current information and to provide  
comments directly online:  
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/depo>

**Park Web Site:**  
For general information about the park:  
<http://www.nps.gov/depo>

**E-mail:** [depo\\_gmp@nps.gov](mailto:depo_gmp@nps.gov)



## You're Invited to an Open House!

Come and meet the planning team, learn more about the general management plan and planning process, and most importantly, discuss your ideas and concerns for the future of Devils Postpile. Please attend one or more of these workshops. We look forward to seeing and hearing from you!



Devils Postpile

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>July 8th</b>  | 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.<br><b>Town of Mammoth Lakes Town Council Chambers</b><br>437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite Z<br>Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546<br><i>(Located at Minaret Village Shopping Center by Von's Grocery, 2nd floor, above Elegant Bath &amp; Kitchen)</i> |
| <b>July 9th</b>  | 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.<br><b>Mammoth Lakes Library Conference Room</b><br>400 Sierra Park Road<br>Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546<br><i>(Located near the intersection with Meridian Blvd)</i>  |
| <b>Sept 9th</b>  | 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.<br><b>Town of Mammoth Lakes Town Council Chambers</b><br>437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite Z<br>Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546<br><i>(Located at Minaret Village Shopping Center by Von's Grocery, 2nd floor, above Elegant Bath &amp; Kitchen)</i>    |
| <b>Sept 10th</b> | 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.<br><b>Mammoth Lakes Library Conference Room</b><br>400 Sierra Park Road<br>Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546<br><i>(Located near the intersection with Meridian Blvd)</i>  |