

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

NORTH END ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

CUMBERLAND ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

In September 2008, the National Park Service (NPS) issued an Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzing impacts associated with a proposed North End Access and Transportation Management Plan (TMP) for Cumberland Island National Seashore ("CUIS" or "the Seashore"). The TMP/EA evaluated a range of alternatives intended to meet the mandate of Public Law 108-447, which requires the NPS to transport visitors to and from the historic sites located adjacent to the Cumberland Island Wilderness. The TMP/EA also addressed other opportunities for transporting visitors at CUIS, including operation of a shuttle service on the south end of the island.

The purpose of this document is to record the decision of the NPS and to declare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act Of 1969 (NEPA).

Background

The CUIS was established by Congress as a unit of the National Park System in the Act of October 23, 1972, (Public Law 92-536, codified at 16 U.S.C. 459i et seq.). The purpose of the Seashore, as stated in Section 1 of the foregoing act, is "to provide for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of certain significant shoreline lands and waters of the United States and to preserve related scenic, scientific, and historical values." On September 8, 1982, much of the northern half of CUIS was designated as wilderness or potential wilderness to be managed as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System (Public Law 97-250, 16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.).

The island can only be reached by boat, and there are no paved roads on the island. The CUIS General Management Plan (GMP) (1984) limits visitation to no more than 300 persons per day. Most visitors travel to the island on a passenger ferry run by the Seashore's single concessionaire. Once on the island, visitors travel primarily by foot or concessionaire-provided bicycle. The backcountry and its campsites are accessible by trail networks; however, visitors must travel a considerable distance to those locations. As a result, visitation to the Seashore is primarily clustered on the south end of the island, where the concessionaire docks the boat. Areas receiving high visitor traffic include the Dungeness Historic District, Sea Camp, the Dungeness and Sea Camp docks, and the southern beach area.

Cumberland Island is traversed from north to south by a single principal roadway, a narrow historic trace known as the Main Road. Various shorter dirt tracks radiate from the Main Road, principally on the southern half of the island. The Main Road extends from the Dungeness Mansion ruins on the island's south end to the Cumberland Wharf ruins on the north end, a distance of approximately 13 miles.

Purpose and Need for the Plan

Before 2004, a large segment of the Main Road was included in the CUIS's potential and designated wilderness areas (Wilderness). Until the passage of Public Law 108-447 in 2004, only island residents having a pre-existing legal right to do so could drive on that portion of the Main Road within the Wilderness. The NPS was prevented from using motorized vehicles on this portion of the road for routine operations or most maintenance activities. In December 2004, Congress included language in the Cumberland Island Wilderness Boundary Adjustment Act (Public Law 108-447) removing the road corridor for the Main Road and two other roads (North Cut Road and the Plum Orchard Spur) from Wilderness designation. This statute also directs the Seashore to develop a plan for managing visitor access to the north end. Specifically, the statute directs NPS to:

complete a management plan to ensure that not more than 8 and not less than 5 round trips are made available daily on the Main Road north of the Plum Orchard Spur and the North Cut Road by the National Park Service or a concessionaire for the purpose of transporting visitors to and from the historic sites located adjacent to [the Cumberland Island] Wilderness.

The purpose of the TMP is to set forth a conceptual model of how the Seashore will facilitate movement among points of interest on the island by those visitors wishing to use motorized transport. The TMP is made necessary by Public Law 108-447, which directs NPS to complete a management plan to ensure that daily trips are made available to and from the historic sites located adjacent to the Cumberland Island Wilderness. The NPS has expanded the scope of the mandated plan to cover motorized transportation on the island as a whole.

Alternatives Considered

The NPS considered three alternatives in the EA process: two action alternatives and a "No-Action" alternative (see below). The alternatives are described in more detail in the EA.

Alternative 1: No-Action Alternative

Alternative 1 would continue present transportation management by relying on the existing ferry service, the rental of bicycles on the island, and the continuation of ranger-led pedestrian tours. The NPS would respond to future needs and conditions in the project area without major actions or policy changes.

Alternative 2: North End Access

Alternative 2 would provide motorized trips to the north end of the island that would also incorporate a shuttle service. The trips would use a combination of the Main Road, Plum Orchard Spur, and North Cut Road. Trips would originate at the Dungeness Dock, Sea Camp, or the Plum Orchard Dock. Operation of vehicles would be restricted to the aforementioned roads and no beach driving would be allowed as part of the guided trips. The guided trips would be tailored around the historic and/or natural resources of the island's northern area. The shuttle service would drop-off and pick-up visitors at specific locations, such as trailheads, to provide better accessibility.

Alternative 3: Island Mobility

Alternative 3 calls for an integrated transportation plan to fulfill the congressional mandate of Public Law 108-447, as well as increase visitor access opportunities. It incorporates the north end access in Alternative 2 and offers a separate south end-only shuttle service. Implementation of this alternative would provide access to multiple destinations at both the southern and northern ends of the island. No beach driving would be allowed as part of the motorized trips/shuttle service. The south end shuttle service would provide access to the beach at Dungeness Crossing, with the Stafford or Little Greyfield crossings used as alternatives in the event of high water or other safety issues preventing reasonable access at Dungeness. The shuttle would likely be a single vehicle on an unscheduled route through the various points of interest on the south end. Alternative 3 is designed to provide access to the north end of the island while also providing connections to destinations on the south end, particularly for visitors with mobility challenges.

The environmental consequences of the three alternatives were assessed using the following impact topics:

- Natural Resources (vegetation, wetlands, threatened and endangered species, fish and birds/wildlife);
- Physical Environment (air, water, soil/geology, and noise);
- Cultural, Historic and Archaeological Resources;
- Socioeconomic Environment (community character, and Seashore neighbors);
- Visitor use/experience;
- Wilderness; and
- CUIS operations.

Section 4 of the EA provides a detailed description of the environmental consequences of each alternative. Indirect and cumulative impacts were assessed, as was the possibility of impairment to Seashore resources and values.

Alternatives Considered but Dismissed

The following alternative was considered by the project team but was dismissed from further analysis as being infeasible:

Comprehensive Island Mobility: This alternative would provide the same integrated transportation plan set forth in Alternative 3, but would also allow beach driving as part of island trips.

This alternative was rejected as infeasible primarily because of beach driving potential impact to 13 special status species, including: bald eagle, piping plover, Wilson's plover, least tern, American oystercatcher, peregrine falcon, gull-billed tern, black skimmer, red knot, wood stork, loggerhead sea turtle, leatherback sea turtle, and green sea turtle. Mitigation measures, which included avoiding the beach during sensitive times, were considered but determined infeasible. Given the extensive array of potentially affected special status species and their widely varying habits and

nesting behaviors, it was determined that beach driving would have to be curtailed for most of the year to protect all potentially affected species.

In addition, this alternative was deemed by the planning team to be inconsistent with the Seashore's enabling legislation and its existing GMP, both of which call for generally managing the island in such a way that it is permanently preserved in its primitive state.

Selected Alternative

After additional review of the alternatives and consideration of comments received from the public, various agencies, and interested stakeholders, the NPS has decided to implement a revised version of Alternative 3 to serve the transportation needs of CUIS. The revised Alternative 3 contains some changes from the original Alternative 3, together with further specificity to better define the proposed actions.

The principal differences between the original and the revised Alternative 3 can be summarized as follows:

The original Alternative 3 called for incorporation of a shuttle service that would stop for day-hikers at the various intersections of wilderness trails and road corridors on the north end of the island. Under the revised Alternative 3, the NPS will *not* implement such a shuttle service. Public comments and consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has prompted NPS to conclude that a north-end shuttle would degrade the wilderness character of the Cumberland Island Wilderness and increase the possibility of disturbance to special status species, especially shorebirds. To protect these resources and values, while providing additional visitor access to the Cumberland Island Wilderness, the revised Alternative 3 would still allow day-use hikers to leave tours, but only at two locations. Specifically, day-use hikers could leave tours at Plum Orchard and The Settlement. These stops are located at some distance from the beach and the wilderness boundary, but close enough to allow hikers to access trails.

The full description of the selected alternative, Revised Alternative 3, is as follows:

Revised Alternative 3: Island Mobility (selected alternative)

Revised Alternative 3 will provide motorized trips to the north end of the island. Trips could originate at the Dungeness Dock, Sea Camp, or the Plum Orchard Dock. The trips will use a combination of the Main Road, Plum Orchard Spur, and North Cut Road. In the High Point – Half Moon Bluff Historic District the tours will use the High Point Candler Road and Old Clubb Road (aka the Settlement Loop Road). Operation of vehicles will be restricted to the aforementioned roads and no beach driving will be allowed as part of the guided trips.

The guided trips will be tailored around the historic and/or natural resources of the island's northern area. Select guided tours may access the beach on the north end at the North Cut Road Crossing (aka Candler Beach Road Crossing), where vehicles will stop west of the primary dune line and visitors may take a managed walk out to the beach.

Day-use hikers will be allowed to leave the tours at only two locations, Plum Orchard and The Settlement. These stops are located at some distance from the beach and the wilderness boundary, but close enough to allow hikers to access trails.

Revised Alternative 3 also will offer a separate south end only shuttle service. This service will provide access to multiple destinations at the southern end of the island. No beach driving tours will be allowed as part of the south end motorized trips/shuttle service. The south end shuttle service will provide access to the beach at Dungeness Crossing, with the Stafford or Little Greyfield crossings used as alternate access points in the event of high water or other safety issues preventing reasonable access at Dungeness. The shuttle will likely be a single vehicle on an unscheduled route through the various points of interest on the south end.

Revised Alternative 3 is designed to provide access to the north end of the island while also providing connections to destinations on the south end, particularly for visitors with mobility challenges.

The NPS has selected Revised Alternative 3 for implementation because it fulfills the congressional mandate of Public Law 108-447, while providing certain important advantages, including:

- Increased visitor access to the cultural and ecological resources of CUIS, which are now accessible only on a very limited basis;
- Improved mobility and visitor access at Sea Camp, the beach area, and the cultural resources on the south end of CUIS; and
- Increased health and safety benefits to groups with mobility limitations or that are not prepared for the island's primitive conditions.

Mitigation and Minimization Measures of the Selected Alternative

Social Environment

To minimize potential impact to the social environment of CUIS from the selected alternative, the TMP shall be implemented with the following conditions:

- Develop a buffer, probably vegetation, in The Settlement area between the reserved estate residence and the adjoining First African Baptist Church and Alberty House. The buffer will help minimize the effect on the Seashore neighbor of increased visitation in the area. The design for the buffer should be done in coordination with the neighbor and must be compatible with both the historic landscape and the island environment.

Natural Resources

To minimize potential impact to the natural resources of CUIS from the selected alternative, the final TMP shall be implemented with the following conditions:

- Manage visitor activity adjacent to the Plum Orchard Mansion pond to prevent disturbance of wood storks and other wading birds. Ideally, the number of visitors directly adjacent to the pond should be controlled. If necessary, fencing could be designed to complement and blend with the historic cultural landscape. If fencing is not feasible, then a screen/barrier using natural vegetation should be developed to prevent access to the pond.
- The NPS staff will monitor known bald eagle nest locations annually to determine if eagles are present. If visitor use patterns of these areas change significantly as a result of the Preferred Alternative the following actions should be considered. 1) Allow nest sites to go unregulated if human presence is outside the 330-foot buffer recommended by the USFWS National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines for non-motorized recreation and human entry. 2) Install signs posting a no entrance zone if NPS determines substantial visitor activity is present in these areas. A 330-foot buffer would be used as recommended by the USFWS National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines for non-motorized recreation and human entry. Resource management staff must weigh the benefits of not posting nest sites and having these areas remain relatively unknown, versus the potential for drawing more attention by posting signs that may act to advertise the presence of nests and tempt hikers to locate (and thus disturb) the site(s).
- Develop an educational program for concession staff and Seashore interpretive staff involved in trips that focuses on Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species identification and proper actions when species are encountered. Provide refresher training for staff on a regular basis and ensure that new personnel receive training promptly.
- The NPS staff will monitor trip activities on a regular basis for compliance and potential impacts to T&E species and natural resources in general.
- Evaluate the need for a slower speed limit on the Main Road from the Greyfield Inn entrance to Stafford Mansion to reduce the potential for gopher tortoise strikes. The current island-wide speed limit is 25 mph. This may be sufficient for vehicle operators to identify tortoises and other wildlife in the road and take preventative measures before a collision occurs.
- The NPS staff will monitor visitor use of the beach north of Stafford Campground. Providing better access to north-end trails near Plum Orchard and The Settlement has the potential to place more visitors on the beach in this area relative to present use levels. Accesses include Willow Pond Trail, Duck House Trail, South Cut Road, and North Cut Road. As with the rest of the beach this northern section contains valuable nesting, feeding, and loafing habitat for a variety of shorebirds, including Federal and State listed species, and should remain as undisturbed as possible.
- Specific to north end tours, vehicle trips which provide tour participants access to the beach on the North Cut/Candler Beach Road may be suspended during certain times of the year. The Seashore's resource managers will make this determination based on the presence of nesting pairs or colonies of shorebirds, their proximity to the beach access point, and the

likelihood that increased levels of human disturbance may negatively impact nesting success.

- The NPS staff will monitor visitor use of the trails north of Stafford Campground. Visitation in these areas is currently minimal and it will be necessary to monitor any potential impacts to the trails and immediate environment from increased use.
- The NPS staff will monitor the beach for nesting American oystercatcher pairs, least tern colonies, and other species of concern. Informational signs and rope barriers will be used to identify nesting areas and restrict access when and where necessary to protect the species of concern.
- Staff involved in the annual sea turtle nest monitoring and protection project will continue to maintain records of disturbances to nest sites. A database will be developed to evaluate trends in human disturbance potentially related to implementation of the Selected Alternative. Mitigation in the form of increased visitor education efforts and nest protection measures will be necessary to maintain a reduced pedestrian presence/disturbance around nest sites.
- Transportation services within the TMP may be modified on a seasonal or emergency basis to protect species of concern or to address unacceptable impacts to Seashore resources.
- No activity will generally occur from dusk to dawn, so artificial lighting would not be required, eliminating night time light and noise disturbances.
- In the event of high water in intermittent wetlands at the Dungeness Crossing, the south end shuttle will use Little Greyfield Crossing or Stafford Crossing to provide beach access.

Cultural Resources

To minimize potential impact to the cultural resources of CUIS from the selected alternative, all work is subject to the following conditions:

- The NPS staff will monitor trip activities on a regular basis for conduct and potential impacts to historic structures and features, archeological sites, and cultural resources in general. If necessary, additional conditions will be developed to eliminate potential impacts.
- If the Rayfield Chimneys are part of a trip, the lone standing chimney and other prominent features will be cordoned off (fence, barricade) to discourage visitors from disturbing the fragile structures.

Wilderness Resource and Values

To minimize potential impacts that the selected alternative may have on users of the adjacent Cumberland Island Wilderness, the final TMP shall be implemented with the following condition:

- Develop an educational program for concession staff and CUIS interpretive staff involved in trips that explains what congressionally designated Wilderness is, provides an understanding of the type of experience sought by typical Wilderness users, and describes methods for minimizing impacts to the Wilderness experience. Provide refresher training for staff on a regular basis and ensure that new personnel receive training promptly.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Of the three original alternatives described above, Alternative 3 was identified as environmentally preferred in the EA. In light of the changes to Alternative 3 described herein, as well as the mitigation and minimization measures required by this FONSI, the NPS hereby determines that Revised Alternative 3 is the environmentally preferred alternative.

The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying criteria set forth in NEPA, as guided by regulations issued by the CEQ. The CEQ regulations provide direction that “[t]he environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s Section 101(b). Generally this means the alternative which causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment. It also means the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.” This includes alternatives that:

- Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- Assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities; and
- Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The NPS has determined that Revised Alternative 3 is the environmentally preferred alternative because it surpasses alternatives 1 and 2 in realizing the fullest range of NEPA goals. Revised Alternative 3 is sensitive to the enabling legislation of the Seashore while providing visitor access to natural and cultural resources throughout the island. It attains the widest range of beneficial uses

of the environment by visitors, without resulting in resource degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences. It likewise supports diversity and variety of individual choice while preserving important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage. In addition, revised Alternative 3 achieves a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities. Accordingly, revised Alternative 3 is the environmentally preferred alternative.

Why the Selected Alternative will Not Have a Significant Effect on the Human Environment

Consideration of the effects described in the EA, and a finding that they are not significant, is a necessary and critical part of this FONSI, as required by 40 CFR §1508.13. Significance criteria are defined in 40 CFR § 1508.27. These criteria direct NPS to consider direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed action, as well as the context and intensity of impacts:

Context. This measure of significance considers the setting within which an impact was analyzed in the EA, such as the affected region, society as a whole, affected interest, and/or a locality. The selected alternative affects only the immediate local area, in terms of resources, employees, and/or visitors. Therefore, any possible impact is limited to this level of least significance.

Intensity. This measure of significance refers to the severity of impacts, which may be both beneficial and adverse, and considers measures that will be applied to minimize or avoid impacts. As directed by 40 CFR § 1508.27, intensity is evaluated by considering the following factors:

Impacts that may be both Beneficial and Adverse

The selected alternative will have no or negligible impacts on soils, geology and topography, or wetlands. Impacts to the socioeconomic environment, visitor use and experience, education and interpretation and CUIS operations are likely to be minor to moderate, long-term and beneficial. Impacts to wilderness, community character and Seashore neighbors, soundscape, cultural resources, air quality, water quality, vegetation and wildlife, special status species, and visitor use and experience will be minor to moderate, long term and adverse. Based on the EA analysis, the selected alternative would not result in significant impacts on the human environment.

Degree of Effect on Public Health and Safety

Implementation of the selected alternative will allow visitors to obtain safe access to the north end of the island. It will also improve access and mobility for elderly and other mobility challenged visitors. The selected alternative will thus have important long-term benefits for public health and safety.

Unique Characteristics of the Geographic Area such as Proximity to Historic or Cultural Resources, Park Lands, Prime Farmlands, Wetlands, Wild and Scenic Rivers, or Ecologically Critical Areas

Lands at CUIS contain ecologically critical wildlife habitat, wetlands, and historic and archaeological sites. By following the alignment of the existing roadways, these unique areas will be avoided. The selected alternative will follow the existing alignment and stay within the existing footprint of the Main Road, Plum Orchard Spur, North Cut Road and other existing roadways on the north and south end of the island. Moreover, measures will be implemented to mitigate and avoid impacts to transient or variable resources that may exist or could occur, such as birds and other wildlife, and inadvertent contact with previously unknown archaeological resources (see previous discussion of mitigation measures). Based on the EA findings, it has been determined that there will be no significant impacts to unique characteristics in the immediate vicinity or regionally. There are no other unique characteristics of the geographic area that are affected by the selected alternative.

Degree to which Effects on the Quality of the Human Environment are Likely to be Highly Controversial

Department of the Interior regulations implementing NEPA provide that the term "controversial" refers to "circumstances where a substantial dispute exists as to the environmental consequences of the proposed action and does not refer to the existence of opposition to a proposed action, the effect of which is relatively undisputed." 46 CFR § 46.30. In this sense, NPS' original preferred alternative generated controversy regarding a proposed north-end shuttle service. A number of commenters argued that the analysis in the EA underestimated the impacts that the proposed shuttle service would have on wilderness character at CUIS. This issue is now moot given that the selected alternative (revised Alternative 3) does not include a north-end shuttle.

It is acknowledged that the tours in the selected alternative will have effects on the Cumberland Island Wilderness. However, these effects have been assessed in the EA and the errata sheets attached hereto, and there is no substantial dispute as to what those effects will be. Therefore, the effects from the selected alternative are not likely to be highly controversial.

Degree to which the Possible Effects on the Human Environment are Highly Uncertain or Involve Unique or Unknown Risks

The effects of the selected alternative are relatively straightforward and easily predicted. The tours and associated activities would occur within the existing roadway footprints and other previously disturbed areas. Vehicle trips and human activity are already taking place within the area of the proposed activities associated with the TMP. The risks from this planned action can be estimated based on prior similar activities that are currently occurring on a smaller scale. The selected alternative attempts to compensate for these risks by including specific mitigation that protects as much as possible the natural processes of Cumberland Island. It has been determined that the extent and degree of uncertainty regarding impacts or unique or unknown risks is not significant.

Degree to which the Action Establishes a Precedent for Future Actions with Significant Effects or Represents a Decision in a Principle about a Future Consideration

Nothing in the proposed action establishes a precedent that would result in significant effects in the management of CUIS or any other areas in the National Park System. Travel on the island will be

changed to include vehicular transportation and will expand visitation on the northern end of the island. However, the selected alternative would not change the 300 person a day visitation limit. This limitation provides for a continuation of the existing natural character of the island, free from extensive development and intensive visitor use.

Whether the Action is Related to Other Actions with Individually Insignificant but Cumulatively Significant Impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact to the environment.

The selected alternative will result in additional daily vehicle trips on specific roads on the island, with associated environmental impacts. These impacts will be over and above the impacts that are already occurring from trips by island residents, their guests, and NPS personnel. However, even with these additional trips, cumulative impacts will be minor to moderate. Thus, there are no significant cumulative impacts associated with the selected alternative.

Degree to which the Action may Adversely Affect Districts, Sites, Highways, Structures, or Objects Listed or Eligible for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or may Cause Loss or Destruction of Significant Scientific, Cultural or Historic Resources

The NPS, as a Federal land-holding agency, is required to locate, inventory, and nominate properties to the NRHP, and to exercise caution to protect such properties under Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act* (16 U.S.C. § 470). The site of the proposed action has been surveyed and examined and several historic and archaeological resources eligible for listing on the National Register have been identified on the island.

Projects that have the potential to affect culturally significant structures or features may develop from this TMP. However, before any such projects are implemented, specific plans and details will be coordinated with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer. Project-specific assessments and Section 106 compliance procedures will be completed prior to any activities related to historic features, structures, landscapes, archeological sites, or ground disturbance. There will be no loss or destruction of major cultural, archaeological, or historical resources as a result of the TMP when implemented utilizing the selected alternative.

Degree to which the Action May Affect a T&E Species or Critical Habitat

Historical review and field observations were performed to identify the presence of T&E species or potential habitat for these species. Fourteen (14) federally listed species are known to exist on and around Cumberland Island. The potential for minor, negative impacts T&E species may occur as a result of implementing revised Alternative 3. In cases where potential impacts were determined to be more than minor, the project will also include mitigation measures to reduce these impacts to minor or negligible. Therefore, the NPS finds that the revised Alternative 3 may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, any T&E species at CUIS. The CUIS TMP as implemented under revised Alternative 3 will be in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS has concurred with this determination by letter dated March 20, 2009, a copy of which is attached hereto.

Whether the Action Threatens a Violation of Federal, State, or Local Law or Requirements Imposed for the Protection of the Environment

The selected alternative for the CUIS TMP (revised Alternative 3) does not threaten a violation of any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Impairment

In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the NPS has determined that implementation of the selected alternative will not constitute an impairment to the CUIS's resources and values. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the site-specific EA, public comment, relevant scientific studies, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker guided by the direction in *NPS Management Policies 2006*.

Public Involvement

The EA was released for public review in September 2008. Availability of the EA was announced through local and regional news media, targeted mailings to stakeholders and through the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cuis>. Public meetings were held on September 23 and 24, 2008, in Atlanta, Georgia and on September 30, 2008, in St. Marys, Georgia. During the meetings, an overview of the plan was presented and attendees were able to submit written comments. Eight comment cards were generated from the meetings, which had a total of 63 attendees.

A total of 383 comments were received by the NPS during the EA comment period. Comments were received for and against Alternative 3 (NPS' preferred alternative). The majority of comments were from individual citizens, but comments were also submitted by organizations such as The Georgia Conservancy and The Cumberland Island Conservancy, Inc. Substantive comments outlined objections to Alternative 3 and set forth alleged deficiencies in the analysis supporting Alternative 3 as the NPS' selected alternative. Based in part on consideration of these substantive comments, the NPS has made revisions to its original preferred alternative and has chosen Revised Alternative 3 as the selected alternative.

Conclusion

The selected alternative for the CUIS TMP (Revised Alternative 3) does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The CUIS TMP will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Some long-term adverse environmental impacts will likely occur, but will be minor to moderate. There are no unmitigated adverse impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, cumulative effects or elements of precedent were identified. Implementation of the CUIS TMP will not violate any Federal, State or local environmental protection laws.

Based on the forgoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended: Aleta E. Knight
Acting Superintendent, Cumberland Island
National Seashore

04/14/09
Date

Approved: Daniel
Regional Director, Southeast Region

5-1-09
Date