

Planning Timeframe

The general management planning process for Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is expected to take several years to complete. A summary of the process and anticipated time frame are shown in the table. We are on step two of the process, and the public will have opportunities to share ideas and comments throughout the remainder of the process.

After reviewing the comments received from this newsletter, the planning team will refine the alternative concepts. Comments from the public will help guide the team in the production of complete alternatives and development of the preferred alternative in the *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment*.

General Management Plan Process			
Step	Timeframe	Planning Activity	How You Can Be Involved
1	2007	Define Planning Context and Foundation The planning team examines why the national monument was established; affirms its purpose and significance; and begins to establish contacts with participants. Team members collect and analyze relevant information on the monument.	
We Are Here	2	Develop and Evaluate Alternatives Using staff and public input, the team explores what the monument's future should look like and proposes a range of reasonable alternatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read newsletter• Send us your ideas and comments and/or• Attend a public meeting
	3	Prepare a Draft Document <i>A Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment</i> is published. The draft document describes the alternatives and the 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 plan• Send us your ideas and comments and/or• Attend a public meeting
	4	Approve Document The planning team analyzes all comments received and prepares a "Finding of No Significant Impact."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read the "Finding of No Significant Impact"
	5	Implement the Approved Plan After the "Finding of No Significant Impact" is signed, the plan will be carried out as funding allows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with the national monument to implement the plan

How You Can Participate

The planning team welcomes your comments anytime in the planning process. Right now, we would like to hear your ideas and recommendations on the preliminary alternative concepts presented in this newsletter. Please comment through any one of the following methods:

1. Fill out the enclosed comment form and drop it in the mail.
2. Attend one of the public meetings.
3. Fill out an electronic comment form at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gicl>
4. Mail a letter to:
Superintendent
Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument
HC 68 Box 100
Silver City, NM 88061

Your comments would be most useful if recieved by
August 7, 2009

Please plan to attend our public meetings:

Tuesday, July 21, 2009
Gila Visitor Center
Free Barbeque 6:00 pm
Meeting 7:00 pm

Wednesday, July 22, 2009
Silco Theater
311 N. Bullard, Silver City, NM
Meeting 7:00 pm

General Management Plan / Environmental Assessment Newsletter No. 2 July 2009

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument • New Mexico

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to share the progress of our general management plan effort and ask for your continued help in charting the future of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. General management plans guide the long-term management of a national park system unit. This requires the development of a range of alternative future conditions and management strategies to achieve them. The plan will determine how the monument will address resource protection, visitor uses, development, and interpretation and education for the next 15 to 20 years.

The planning team has developed a set of preliminary alternatives (page 5) that describe various ways the monument could be managed for resources, visitor experience, and park operations.

This newsletter is your first opportunity to respond to the preliminary management alternatives. Your comments and suggestions will help in developing a preferred alternative that will be presented in the *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment*, available for public review and comment in early 2010.

I welcome your continued participation in this important planning effort.

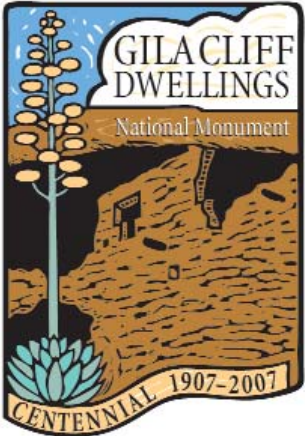
Sincerely,

Steve Riley
Superintendent

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Gila Cliff Dwellings
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Steve Riley, Superintendent
HC 68 Box 100
Silver City, NM 88061

575-536-9461

<http://www.nps.gov/gicl>

Planning Framework

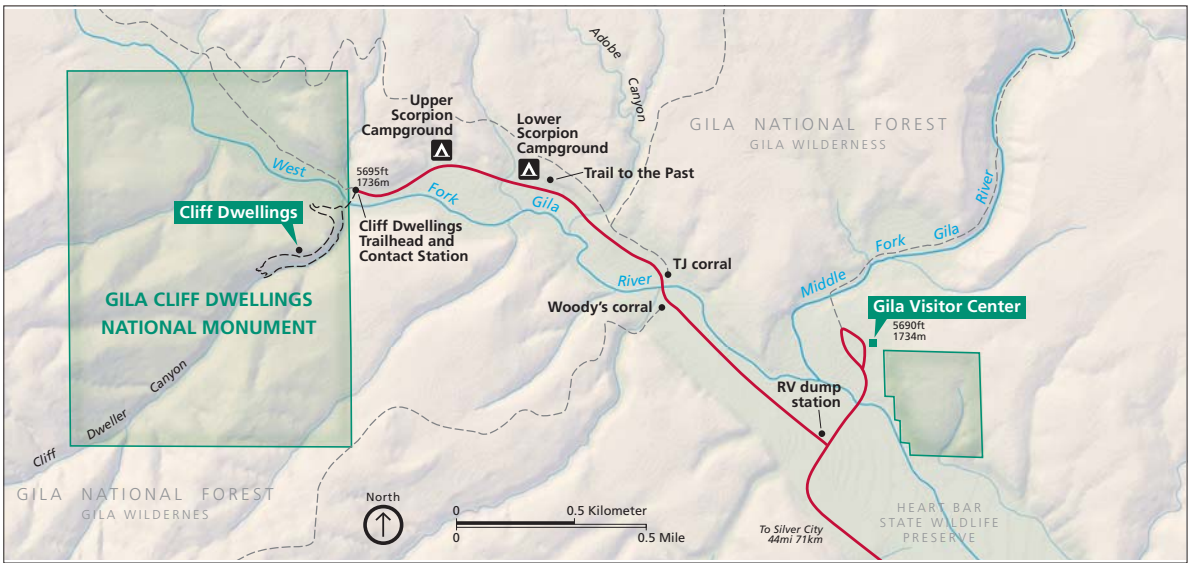
The planning framework guides the development of plan alternatives.

Monument Purpose

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument protects and interprets remnants of the entire sequence of Mogollon culture for the educational and scientific interests of present and future generations. As the only unit of the national park system established for this purpose, the monument provides visitors ways to connect with one of the three major southwestern cultures of America’s prehistoric past.

Monument Significance

- Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument protects the largest known Mogollon (Tularosa phase) cliff dwellings complex and provides the public with unparalleled opportunities to walk among well-preserved structures built by Mogollon people more than 700 years ago. Architectural features and associated artifacts, including some that predate the dwellings’ construction, are exceptionally well preserved within six natural caves of Cliff Dweller Canyon.
- The multi-component TJ unit of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument includes one of the last, if not the last, large intact Mogollon (Classic Mimbres phase) pueblo settlements. This site offers outstanding research potential because it retains unusually high integrity due to its unexcavated condition. Surface studies suggest that the TJ site was used from approximately 400 AD to 1400 AD.
- In addition to modern Pueblo people who claim cultural affiliation with the Mogollon, Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is important to other American Indians throughout the Southwest. This area is the traditional homeland of the Eastern Bands of Chiricahua Apache and remains important to their oral history, traditions, and cultural identity.
- The unique combination of caves, springs, rivers, and the resulting diversity of plants and animals in and around Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument provided an excellent location for sustaining thousands of years of human use. The cultural resources of the monument are preserved within their natural prehistoric and historic settings due to their remoteness and location within the Gila Wilderness — the world’s first designated wilderness area.



Alternative 4: Relinquish Facilities and Connect Visitors Directly with Resources

This alternative would forge more personal connections between visitors and the ancient cultures and wilderness character of the monument. This would be achieved by realigning funds and staff away from facility operations to on-site programs that provide visitors with more opportunities to experience first-hand discovery of the monument’s fundamental resources and values.

NPS staff would focus on managing natural and cultural resources and visitor experiences within existing monument boundaries including the cliff dwellings, contact station, and the TJ site. The U.S. Forest Service would fully own and manage the Gila Visitor Center, housing, utilities, and administrative offices. Both agencies would continue to operate in coordination through renewed cooperative agreements.

Key Components of Alternative 4

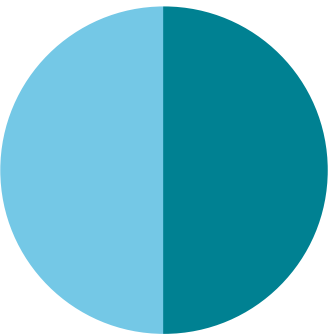
- Visitor services would be focused at the contact station and the cliff dwellings, including regular tours of the cliff dwellings.
- The TJ site would remain closed to the general public except for occasional special tours.
- NPS staff would divest its interest in all facilities (visitor center, housing, utility systems, maintenance building) except for the trailhead contact station. Gila National Forest would assume operation of the Gila Visitor Center, including interpretation and wilderness orientation. NPS administrative offices would be moved to an off-site location.
- The National Park Service would maintain the existing Cliff Dweller Canyon Trail and contact station at current level.
- NPS staff would reach out to the local community and schools through more offsite programs.
- The National Park Service would continue to provide public access and interpretation of the cliff dwellings.

Preferred Alternative

The National Park Service has not yet developed a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative will be designated after we obtain public input and conduct a decision-making analysis. It will be described in the *Draft General Management Plan*. The NPS preferred alternative could be one of the preliminary alternatives shown in this newsletter or it could be made up of parts from one or more of the preliminary alternatives.

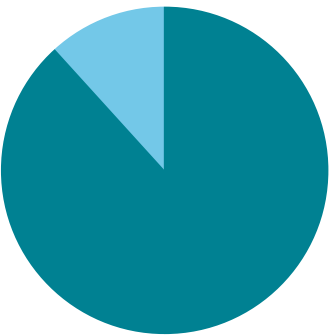
Relative Management Responsibility

Alternative 1



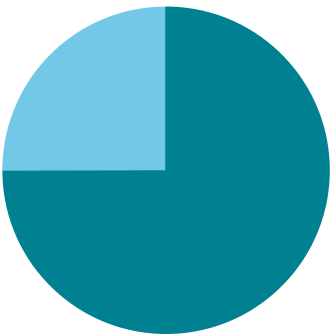
Joint management of facilities, resources, and visitor services – as currently managed.

Alternative 2



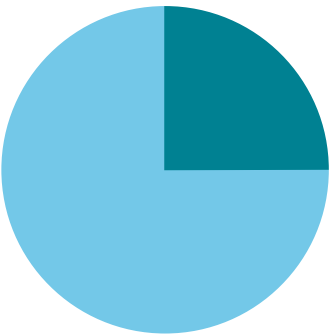
National Park Service has primary management of all facilities, land, and services in the upper valley above the Heart Bar Ranch.

Alternative 3



National Park Service has primary management of all facilities except campgrounds and trailheads. Forest Service retains current land.

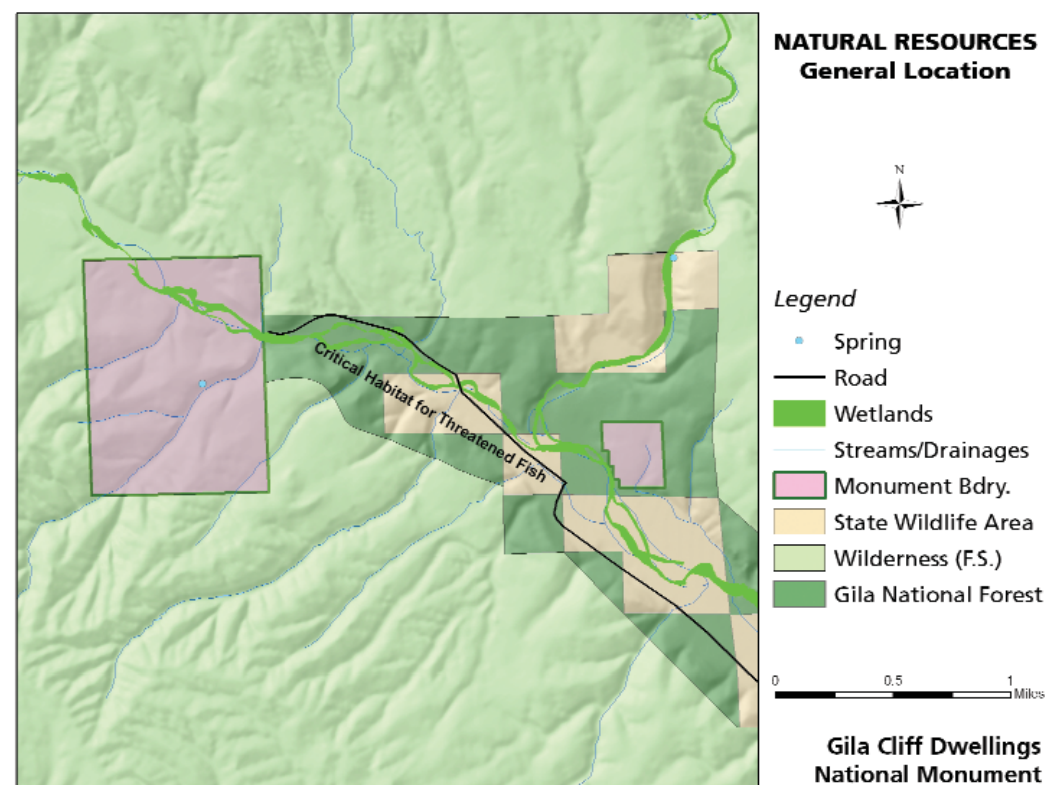
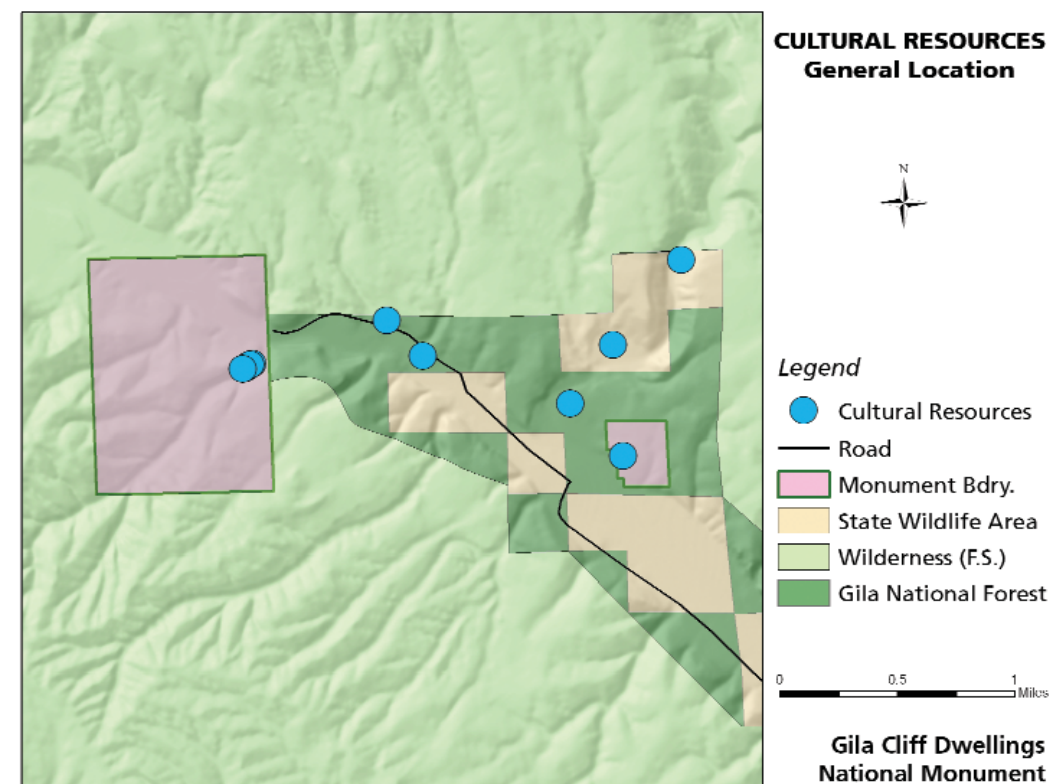
Alternative 4



National Park Service has responsibility for resources and visitors on NPS land only. Forest Service has primary management responsibility of all other facilities, resources, and services.

National Park Service

U.S. Forest Service



The NPS planning team is required to develop and analyze alternative ways to achieve the desired future conditions while meeting the monument's stated purpose and protecting its national significance and fundamental resources and values. The planning team considered suggestions from the public and NPS staff to develop the four preliminary alternatives summarized here. The alternatives are not final and may change based on comment from the public and NPS professionals. They are being distributed to all who are interested so that the National Park Service can benefit from broad review and comment.

Alternative 1: No Action

The no-action alternative would continue existing management practices. The National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service would continue to have a cooperative agreement for intertwined facilities, landownership, and operations. The monument staff would continue to focus on providing visitor services and experiences at the visitor center and cliff dwellings. Cultural and natural resources would continue to be preserved, and research would be conducted as opportunities arise. This alternative would maintain resource management activities and visitor services at current levels. Projects that have received funding would continue.

Key Components of Alternative 1 (No Action)

- The cliff dwellings would continue to be open to the public as currently managed.
- The TJ site would remain closed to the public except for occasional special tours or research.
- Monument visitor services and opportunities would remain focused in the visitor center/museum, the cliff dwellings, and at the contact station.
- The Cliff Dweller Canyon Trail would continue to be maintained by the National Park Service.
- Trails, including the West Fork Trail through the monument, campgrounds, and other facilities outside monument boundaries would continue to be maintained by the Forest Service.
- There would be continued difficulty finding funding to maintain facilities that the National Park Service uses to serve the public, such as the visitor center and contact station, because of the current joint agency management.
- Visitor center exhibits would be rehabilitated, broadening the interpretation and understanding of monument resources.



Alternative 2: Expand Resource Protection and Visitor Experience

This alternative would emphasize and expand high-quality visitor services and experiences by providing more comprehensive interpretation of the Gila Headwaters area and its 2,000 years of human occupation. Additional archeological and historic sites would be protected by the National Park Service, and new services would be developed to enhance visitor understanding of the broader natural and cultural context of the area.

A rigorous research program and partnering with affiliated tribes would be initiated. This would support interpretive and educational services integrated within the unique wilderness setting and foster environmental and heritage stewardship.

To consolidate natural and cultural resource protection activities, visitor services, and monument operations, NPS staff would seek to acquire additional important resources, visitor amenities, and management facilities in the West Fork Valley. Acquisition of the nonwilderness land would be accomplished through equitable land trades among the agencies involved and possible outside parties.

The National Park Service would take the lead in providing management of nonwilderness visitor experiences (including trails, interpretation, campgrounds, etc.) and natural and cultural resource management through consolidation of land through exchanges and stronger agreements for cooperation. The U.S. Forest Service would focus on managing wilderness.

Key Components of Alternative 2

- Additional cultural heritage sites would be interpreted.
- Visitor capacity of the cliff dwellings would be defined and implemented to ensure quality visitor experience opportunities and minimize resource deterioration.
- The TJ site would remain unexcavated but would be studied for possible tours.
- Commercial outfitters/guides would be encouraged to provide interpretive trips on horseback or foot.
- NPS staff would reach out to the local community and schools through more off-site programs.
- NPS staff would seek to acquire nonwilderness land (USFS, state) through land trades in the West Fork Valley surrounding the monument (approximately 800 acres) to improve NPS management efficiency and visitor services.
- Visitor center exhibits would be rehabilitated, broadening the interpretation and understanding of monument resources.
- More ranger-led and self-guided interpretive programs would be offered to the public.
- No change to current recreational opportunities in the area would occur.

Alternative 3: Consolidate Facilities Needed for NPS Management

Alternative 3 would enhance the visitor's understanding and enjoyment of the Gila Headwaters' natural and cultural heritage by providing a more unified management approach to the Cliff Dwellings and TJ units of the monument. This would be achieved by assuming full management responsibility for the visitor center, contact station, and other facilities to provide more cohesive educational and research programs, while maximizing the operational efficiency of the monument.

USFS staff would continue to manage the land and other natural and cultural resources within the valley, as well as trailheads and camping. Both agencies would continue to operate in coordination through renewed cooperative agreements.

Key Components of Alternative 3

- Visitor services and opportunities would remain focused in the visitor center/museum, the cliff dwellings, and at the contact station.
- The TJ site would remain closed to the general public, but would be studied for possible tours.
- NPS staff would seek to acquire the facilities it currently uses and maintains but does not own (i.e., visitor center, housing, maintenance facility, contact station).
- NPS staff would continue to provide public access and interpretation of the cliff dwellings.

Issues to be Addressed

Major issues (concerns, challenges, and opportunities) facing the monument were identified by the public, cooperating agencies, and NPS staff for the General Management Plan.

- There is a long-standing need to identify and analyze various options for long-term management of the monument, adjacent land, and facilities for more cohesive management of the upper Gila River valley (e.g., Service First, NPS management, USFS management, etc.).
- There is a need to address long-range needs of both the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service to ensure that monument and adjacent wilderness resources are properly managed and interpreted, and that visitors will depart the area educated, satisfied, and with a positive view of both agencies.

- The protection and interpretation options for TJ Ruin and long-term direction for its management have not been addressed.
- There is a need to distinguish these cliff dwellings from others in the Southwest. The Mogollon were not the Ancestral Puebloans (Mesa Verde, etc.). This is not well publicized.
- The Park Service should broaden interpretation to include other related features in the area.
- There is a need to address the infrastructure, future staffing, and visitation needs.
- There is a need for continued archeological studies to yield new information and help make the site relevant to today's world.
- There is a need to honor and interpret contemporary connections with affiliated tribes.

Development of Preliminary Alternatives

The **alternatives** in a general management plan are different possible approaches to managing the monument while upholding the purpose and significance for which it was established. Each of the alternatives has an overall management concept and a description of how different areas of the monument would be managed over the next 15-20 years.

