



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Hovenweep National Monument
Cortez, Colorado

Finding of No Significant Impact Goodman Point Unit Parking Lot

Background

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Park Service prepared an Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect to examine various alternatives and environmental impacts associated with the proposal to construct a public parking lot at Hovenweep National Monument. Parking for the Goodman Point Pueblo consists of a 67' x18' pull-off area along Montezuma County Road P in the public right-of-way between the NPS fence line and the road. This pull-off area is small and can safely accommodate only 2-3 vehicles. Once the pull-off area is full, visitors, monument staff and researchers must park elsewhere. For example, the large vans driven by researchers from Crow Canyon Archaeological Center cannot fit in the current parking area and they must be parked on private land further along County Road P. Vehicle traffic on County road P has increased significantly in recent years due to active oil & gas development and residential expansion in the Goodman Point area. Montezuma County is in the planning process for upgrading and surfacing County Road P. The roadbed will be raised and widened, and the ditches deepened thus making road shoulder parking more difficult.

The monument will construct a small, gravel parking lot about 2500 square feet (50'x50') within the Goodman Point Unit adjacent to its north boundary. The lot will provide parking for approximately six vehicles and will correct a safety issue which endangers monument visitors, employees, researchers, local residents and the general public. By moving the parking area away from the county road and enlarging the parking area, visitors and employees accessing the Unit will be able to park safely away from the road and its inherent safety concerns.

Selection of the Preferred Alternative

Three alternatives were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect including alternative 1 (No Action) continue to use current parking lot, alternative 2 (preferred alternative) construct parking lot 15' west of exiting Goodman Point Pueblo Trail and alternative 3 (action alternative) construct a parking lot 30' west of the existing Goodman Point Pueblo Trail. Alternative 2 is the National Park Service's preferred alternative because it best meets the purpose and need for the project as well as the project objectives to 1) provide safe, permanent parking area that meets federal and state standards, 2) provide a convenient parking location for visitors and monument staff and researchers that facilitates the monument's operations, 3) identify a site for the new parking area that minimizes impacts to the monument's resources and would not result in impairment to these resources.

Under alternative 2, the parking area will be placed 15 feet west of the existing Goodman Point Pueblo trail. The parking lot will be approximately 2500 square foot (50'X50') parking area parallel to the existing trail to the Goodman Point Pueblo plus the entrance area to the lot (~3000 sq. ft total). A 16" to 18" wide culvert approximately 24 feet long would be installed under the entrance access road.

This alternative would require that no trees be removed though other vegetation will need to be cut flush to the ground. A fabric barrier would be placed on top of the cut vegetation and the soil surface and less than 370 cubic yards of fill material would be placed on top of the fabric barrier. One inch layer of wash rock would be placed under one inch layer of gravel fill. The proposed location of this alternative would require less fill material and less overall maintenance. However, this location would potentially have a

greater impact on cultural resources in the area. Located on the east edge of the proposed parking area is the western extent of an artifact scatter. A 10' vegetative buffer would be left along the north boundary of the parking area to the existing fence to screen the parking area from the road. All gravel material will be commercially purchased and brought to the proposed site as a haul and dump operation. There will be no staging areas or borrow sources.

Mitigation Measures

- A vegetative buffer will be left along the monument boundary and the boundary of the parking area to screen the parking area from the road.
- All vegetative material only within the proposed parking area will be hand cut flush to the soil surface with no ground disturbance.
- The only ground disturbance outside the parking area will be removing and/or installing metal T-post fencing around the new parking area.
- A new fence will be installed around the perimeter of the lot with a "Y" gate in the southeast corner to permit foot traffic to access the current adjoining trail.
- In the unlikely event cultural resources materials are inadvertently discovered during the project, all construction activities will be halted until the materials can be analyzed and recovered by NPS archeologists. The state historic preservation officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, will be consulted as necessary, according to §36 CFR 800.13, Post Review Discoveries. If needed, formal §106 compliance will be conducted prior to resuming construction. In the unlikely event that human remains are discovered during construction, provisions outlined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) will be followed.
- The parking area will be identified and may be fenced with construction tape or some similar material prior to construction activity. The fencing will define the construction zone and confine activity to the minimum area required for construction.
- The NPS will gain Montezuma County approval for installation of the culvert under entrance access road, if monument maintenance personnel install culvert.
- To reduce the impacts of monument personnel on natural and cultural resources personnel and equipment will stay within the proposed parking lot boundary as much as possible while constructing the parking area.
- Safety signs will be placed 200 feet before the intersection of the parking lot entrance and county road stating "Trucks Entering Road".
- Construction equipment will be placed as a barrier to the parking lot during non-work periods to prevent entrance to the construction area.
- Revegetation efforts will strive to reconstruct the natural spacing, abundance, and diversity of natural vegetation using native species. All disturbed areas will be restored as nearly as possible to pre-construction conditions shortly after construction activities are completed. Weed control methods will be implemented to minimize the introduction of non-native species.
- A stop sign will be installed at the intersection of the parking lot and county road when the parking lot is completed.

Alternatives Considered

A total of five alternatives were considered for this project, including three that are analyzed in the Environmental Assessment and two that were dismissed prior to analyzing them in the Environmental Assessment /Assessment of Effect. The three alternatives that are evaluated in the Environmental Assessment /Assessment of Effect include Alternative 1 (No Action) continue to use current parking lot, alternative 2 (preferred alternative) construct parking lot 15' west of exiting Goodman Point Pueblo Trail and alternative 3 (action alternative) construct a parking lot 30' west of the existing Goodman Point Pueblo Trail, as discussed in the previous section.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Alternative 2 (construct parking lot 15' west of exiting Goodman Point Pueblo Trail) is the environmentally preferred alternative. The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying the six criteria

suggested in §101 the National Environmental Policy Act. According to these criteria, the environmentally preferred alternative should 1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; 2) assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; 3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; 4) 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; 5) achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and 6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Alternative 2 is the environmentally preferred alternative because it best addresses these six evaluation factors. Alternative 2 would provide a safe place for visitors and staff to park, while minimizing environmental impacts to the extent possible. As a permanent facility, the new parking lot would be used by future generations. This alternative would be more aesthetically and visually pleasing as large species of vegetation such as juniper and pinyon pine trees would not be removed and the parking lot would have a visual buffer from the county road by utilizing a ten foot wide vegetative barrier. This alternative would also support a more diverse vegetative habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. Cultural resources on site may be impacted but impacts will be negligible to minor.

Why the Preferred Alternative Will Not Have a Significant Effect on the Human Environment

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

The preferred alternative would result in negligible to minor adverse impacts to archeological resources. All surface artifacts from site 5MT16787, both historic and prehistoric, were collected from within the APE, and Crow Canyon archeologists determined through testing that no subsurface material of a historic or prehistoric nature is present. The amount and type of artifacts that would have been impacted by the preferred alternative are not significant and the preferred alternative would have negligible to minor, adverse, site-specific, long-term impacts.

In the preferred alternative there will be a removal of vegetation within a 2500 square foot area for the parking lot would cause a change in current cultural landscape patterns. However, a 10 foot wide vegetative buffer would remain between the county road and parking area and would provide a screen that could diminish the intensity of adverse impacts of a potential cultural landscape. Vegetation would remain in place around the 2500 square foot parking lot and the public may not see the parking area when driving along County Road P. The addition of gravel for the parking area surface would be visually perceivable when hiking along the adjacent trail and would have long-term minor adverse impacts. The construction of the parking lot may also have an adverse impact to a potential cultural landscape because of construction equipment, grading, and gravelling activities but this would be short-term and temporary. Overall, impacts to a potential cultural landscape would be minor, adverse, site-specific, short and long-term.

Under the preferred alternative, the proposed project would clear approximately 2500 square feet of native vegetation and cover all soil within the parking lot area with wash rock and gravel. This action would destroy biological soil crusts, compact soils and cause a loss of native vegetation and habitat within this site. Storm water runoff, although infrequent, can cause minor to moderate soil erosion in areas devoid of vegetation. Intrusion by personnel and equipment constructing the parking area may cause long-term, direct impacts to the soil within and minimum short-term impacts around the parking lot edge. Effects could include compaction of soil and disturbance to upper soil profiles and these effects to soil

would be detectable in some areas and moderate. To reduce the impacts of monument personnel on soils, crews and equipment would stay within the parking lot boundaries as much as possible when spreading the gravel surface. Fill material that has eroded off the parking area has the potential to impact additional soil productivity around the parking area. Overall soil productivity impacts would be minor to moderate, adverse, site specific and short to long-term.

Under this alternative, construction activities would result in minor impacts to vegetation. The establishment of a new parking area would have short to long term adverse impacts to the vegetation within the 2500 square foot proposed parking area. A large amount of big sagebrush along with rubber rabbitbrush and western wheatgrass would be removed. It is anticipated that this alternative would not require larger vegetation such as juniper and pinyon pine trees to be removed. Additional minor temporary adverse vegetation impacts during the construction of the parking area, and for the access of construction equipment may occur. As a result of the construction of a new parking area, there could be a higher likelihood of the transport of exotic species from vehicles and visitors. Impacts to vegetation would be minor, adverse, and long-term within the actual parking lot and minor, site-specific and short-term in the surrounding area.

Under the preferred alternative, constructing a new parking area would have a moderate beneficial impact to visitor use and experience. The new parking area would provide a safe, permanent and convenient parking area for visitors, researchers and monument staff and facilitate the monument's operations. This alternative would provide a parking area that is off the county road right-of-way, that is aesthetically pleasing, and that is minimally intrusive. Constructing a new parking area could also have adverse minor impacts to visitor use and experience given that this site may become an "attractive nuisance" for nonresource related use since it is located in a rural residential area. During the construction phase, visitors may also be adversely impacted by the dust, loud machinery and have greater difficulty in accessing the Goodman Point trail but it would be minor and short-term. Therefore this alternative would have minor to moderate, beneficial and adverse, site-specific, short and long-term impacts on visitor experience and use.

Under the preferred alternative, maintenance crews would likely have a lighter work load than if alternative 1 was selected. The location of this site provides a more level surface requiring less gravel fill material to construct the parking area. This would in turn reduce the amount of work to maintain the parking lot after the construction phase. Erosion issues would be minor. Sign implementation and maintenance would be negligible. Impacts to maintenance operations would be minor, adverse, site-specific and short to long-term. Constructing a new parking area could become an "attractive nuisance" for nonresource related use since this site is in a rural residential area. Ranger patrols to this location may need to be increased if nuisance issues arise and impacts to law enforcement operations would be minor, adverse, site-specific, and long-term. The construction of a new parking lot under the preferred alternative would provide a safe location for monument employees and researchers to park and would be moderate, beneficial, site-specific and long-term.

The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety

The Preferred Alternative will have an overall beneficial effect on public health and safety, particularly for the researchers, staff and visiting public that will regularly use the new parking lot. The new parking lot will minimize many of the current unsafe conditions associated with parking on the road shoulder thereby providing a safer experience.

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

The Preferred Alternative will not impact unique characteristics of the area including park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas because these resources do not exist in the project area. The Preferred Alternative will impact the archeological and cultural landscapes in the area as discussed previously and later in this document.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial

Throughout the environmental process, the proposal to construct a new parking lot at Goodman Point was not highly controversial, nor is the effects expected to generate future controversy. Four comments were received from the public during the initial scoping for this project but no comments were received on this Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect document during the 30 day open comment period.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks

The effects of constructing a new parking lot are fairly straightforward and do not pose uncertainties. The environmental process has not identified any effects that may involve highly unique or unknown risks.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration

The Preferred Alternative is not expected to set a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

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 on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

Cumulative effects were analyzed in the Environmental Assessment /Assessment of Effect, and no significant cumulative impacts were identified.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Minor adverse effects may occur to archeological resources. The amount and type of artifacts that may be impacted by the preferred alternative are not significant and the preferred alternative could have negligible to minor, adverse, site-specific, long-term impacts. A letter dated June 10, 2009 from the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office confirms the determination of *no adverse effect* under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

An email from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service dated February 27, 2009 indicated that there are no records of threatened or endangered species in the project area, and that no further consultation under §7 of the Endangered Species Act is necessary. A letter was sent to Colorado Division of Wildlife but they did not respond. A species lists was retrieved from the Colorado Division of Wildlife website and three state listed species have been known to occupy HOVE. It was determined after a wildlife survey by an NPS wildlife biologist that there is no evidence of any state-listed species or threatened and endangered species within the project area or vicinity.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment

The action will not violate any Federal, state or local environmental protection laws.

Appropriate Use, Unacceptable Impacts, and Impairment

Sections 1.5 and 8.12 of NPS *Management Policies* underscore the fact that not all uses are allowable or appropriate in units of the National Park System. The proposed use was screened to determine consistency with applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and policies; consistency with existing plans for public use and resource management; actual and potential effects to park resources; total costs to the Park Service; and whether the public interest would be served. An administration building is a common and vital structure in most park units. Proper location, sizing, as well as construction materials and methods will ensure that unacceptable impacts to park resources and values will not occur. The proposed administration building is consistent with the park's general management plan and other related park plans. With this in mind, the NPS finds that a parking lot is an acceptable use at Hovenweep National Monument.

The impact threshold at which impairment occurs is not always readily apparent. Therefore, the Service applies a standard that offers greater assurance that impairment will not occur. The Service will do this by avoiding impacts that it determines to be unacceptable. These are impacts that fall short of impairment, but are still not acceptable within a particular park's environment. Park managers must not allow uses that will cause unacceptable impacts; they must evaluate existing or proposed uses and determine whether the associated impacts on park resources and values are acceptable. Because the application of mitigating measures is expected to be successful in ensuring that no major adverse impacts would occur and that satisfactory reclamation of the disturbed area is expected to be achievable, implementation of the preferred alternative would not result in any unacceptable impacts.

In analyzing impairments in the NEPA analysis for this project the NPS takes into account the fact that if impairment were likely to occur, such impacts would be considered to be major or significant under CEQ regulations. This is because the context and intensity of the impact would be sufficient to render what would normally be a minor or moderate impact to be major or significant. Taking this into consideration, NPS guidance documents note that "Not all major or significant impacts under a NEPA analysis are impairments. However, all impairments to NPS resources and values would constitute a major or significant impact under NEPA. If an impact results in impairment, the action should be modified to lessen the impact level. If the impairment cannot be avoided by modifying the proposed action, that action cannot be selected for implementation." "Interim Technical Guidance on Assessing Impacts and Impairment to Natural Resources" National Park Service, Natural Resource Program Center, July 2003.

In addition to reviewing the definition of "significantly" under the NEPA regulations, the NPS has determined that implementation of the preferred alternative would not constitute an impairment to the integrity of Hovenweep National Monument's resources or values as described by NPS *Management Policies* (NPS 2006 § 1.4). This conclusion is based on the NPS's analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed action as described in the Environmental Assessment /Assessment of Effect the public comments received, relevant scientific studies, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker guided by the direction in 2006 NPS *Management Policies*. The EA identified less than major adverse impacts on historic, cultural and natural resources. Although the plan/project has some negative impacts, in all cases these adverse impacts are the result of actions taken to preserve and restore other park resources and values. Overall, the plan results in benefits to park resources and values, opportunities for their enjoyment, and it does not result in their impairment.

Public Involvement

The Environmental Assessment /Assessment of Effect document was made available for public review and comment during a 30-day period ending June 26, 2009. To notify the public of this review period, a press release was mailed to stakeholders, affiliated Native American tribes, interested parties, and newspapers. Copies of the document were sent to certain agencies and interested parties; made available in local repositories; and posted on the internet. No comments were received during this review period.

Conclusion

The Preferred Alternative does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Preferred Alternative would not have a significant effect on the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur would be negligible, minor, or moderate in intensity. There would be no significant impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action would not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, the National Park Service has determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Approved: _____

Michael D. Snyder

Michael D. Snyder
Director, Intermountain Region, National Park Service

7/12/05

Date