



We need your input!

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking your input on the Free-Ranging Cat Management Plan and associated environmental assessment for San Juan National Historic Site (the park). This plan would address the free-ranging cat population within the park to improve the safety of its visitors and employees, protect park resources and reduce impacts to native wildlife species associated with free-ranging cats, alleviate nuisance issues, align the visitor experience with the purpose of the park, and bring the park into compliance with existing authorities for invasive species.

This plan would only address the free-ranging cat population within the boundaries of the park and would not address cats within Old San Juan or other areas outside the jurisdiction of the NPS.

The NPS will be accepting public comments on the Free-Ranging Cat Management Plan from **August 7 through September 5, 2023**. You can submit your comments electronically or by mail.

Electronically: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/PaseoCatPlan>

Mail: SAJU Superintendent
Attn: Paseo Cats
501 Calle Norzagaray
San Juan, PR 00901

PUBLIC MEETING

Please join us for an in-person, hearing-style meeting to discuss the Free-Ranging Cat Management Plan.

Meeting Information:

August 23, 2023, 6:00 to 8:00 pm AST
Sheraton Old San Juan Hotel
100 Brumbaugh Street
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00901



Representing 500 years of history and the importance of the island's strategic location in the Caribbean, San Juan National Historic Site preserves, protects, and interprets the oldest and largest Spanish fortification system in the United States.

- San Juan National Historic Site Foundation Document, 2013



The NPS planning team developed the proposed action (the original proposed action, alternative 2) and presented it to the public during the public scoping period through a newsletter and public meetings. In response to public comments, the NPS created an additional alternative (the revised proposed action, alternative 3), which the NPS has identified as the preferred alternative. The environmental assessment analyzed these two action alternatives for free-ranging cat management at the park, as well as alternative 1: no action. This newsletter presents a brief summary of the three alternatives analyzed.

Please see the Free-Ranging Cat Management Plan Environmental Assessment, located on the project's website (<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/PaseoCatPlan>) for the full description of the alternatives, the baseline conditions of the resources, and a discussion of the potential impacts of the alternatives.

Alternative 1: No Action

The no-action alternative would not change the current management direction or level of management intensity. The NPS would continue working with Save a Gato (or another animal welfare organization) on the management of free-ranging cats through the trap-neuter-return (TNR) program. The ultimate goal of the no-action alternative would be the reduction of free-ranging cats by natural attrition, such that feeding stations would no longer be needed.

The TNR program started in 2005, and the cat population at the park has grown from the initial estimate of 120 cats to nearly 200 cats.

The no-action alternative provides a basis for comparison, but the NPS is unable to select this alternative for implementation because it violates NPS regulations and policies related to invasive species, wildlife, and feeding animals within the park.



Alternative 2: Original Proposed Action

The NPS would enter into an agreement with an organization(s) or agency(s) performing removal (herein “removal agency”) for the management of free-ranging cats.

Cat Removal. The removal agency could use one or more strategies (i.e., live trapping, denning, habitat modification, exclusion devices, repellents) to remove the free-ranging cats from the park. The cats would be relocated for potential adoption or humanely euthanized if warranted due to health or behavioral concerns or lack of space at animal welfare facilities.



Feeding Station Removal. All feeding stations would be gradually removed as trapping and removal efforts progress.

Monitoring and Additional Removal Efforts. Following removal of the feeding stations, monitoring would be performed to inform future management needs, including additional removal efforts. If there is a sustained presence of cats, the removal agency would return to the park to conduct additional removal efforts. It is anticipated that multiple removal efforts would be needed.

Alternative 3: Revised Proposed Action (NPS Preferred Alternative)

In response to public scoping comments, the NPS developed a new alternative, allowing an animal welfare organization additional time to trap and remove the cats from the park. Alternative 3 would be carried out in accordance with an implementation plan developed by the NPS, which would include the 6-month timeline for cat and feeding station removal, permit and reporting requirements, and basic guidelines for management of the cats, including compliance with Puerto Rico animal welfare and invasive species laws.

Continued Trapping and Removal Efforts and Removal of Feeding Stations. An animal welfare organization would manage activities to trap and remove cats from the park within a 6-month period, while continuing to provide food to the cats during removal efforts. Cat relocation would be in accordance with the implementation plan and could include euthanasia, similar to current practices. During this time, the animal welfare organization would gradually remove the feeding stations with all feeding stations within the park removed by the end of a 6-month period. No cats – whether trapped in the park or elsewhere – would be returned to or released in the park.

Post-feeding Station Removal Monitoring. Following removal of the feeding stations, the park would monitor to confirm that the continued trapping and removal of feeding stations has been effective, such that there is no cat colony within the park after the 6-month period of feeding station removal efforts. This monitoring would inform future management needs (including removal).

Additional Removal Activities. If the monitoring indicates that a sustained presence of cats remains or a new cat colony is becoming established, a removal agency would be employed to remove the cats. It is anticipated that multiple removal efforts would be needed.



How to Comment

Your comments and input are important to our planning and environmental review process. You can submit your comments on the Free-Ranging Cat Management Plan and associated environmental assessment electronically or by mail.

The 30-day comment period ends on **September 5, 2023**.

Electronically: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/PaseoCatPlan>

Mail: SAJU Superintendent
Attn: Paseo Cats
501 Calle Norzagaray
San Juan, PR 00901



Comments will not be accepted in any other way than those specified above. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. Please note that your entire comment, including your personal information, may be made publicly available at any time. You can request that we withhold your personal identifying information from public view, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Join Us for a Hearing-Style Meeting

The NPS is hosting a hearing-style meeting on August 23, 2023 from 6 pm to 8 pm at the Sheraton Old San Juan Hotel, located at 100 Brumbaugh Street, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00901 (see map below). Park staff will be available to answer questions. Participants will have an opportunity to speak at the meeting, but participants should be aware that they must submit written comments (methods described above) for those comments to be analyzed as part of this planning process.

