



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

# Aztec Ruins National Monument New Mexico

## General Management Planning Update

February 2010



### From the Superintendent



#### **National Park Service Mission Statement**

*The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The park service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.*

#### Dear Friend of Aztec Ruins,

As many of you know, the National Park Service (NPS) has been working on a general management plan (GMP) for Aztec Ruins National Monument. The new plan will replace the existing GMP completed in 1989 and will provide long-term goals and objectives for resource management; visitor experience and educational opportunities; and facility development. It will also identify ways to partner with park neighbors, the City of Aztec, American Indian tribes, and other stakeholders. Since the GMP was first initiated, many steps in the planning process have been completed with your involvement, including public information gathering, data analysis, and alternative development to arrive at the General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for Aztec Ruins National Monument (GMP/EA).

The purpose of this newsletter is to present the NPS Preferred Alternative, also known as the Proposed Plan, for managing Aztec Ruins National Monument for the next 10 to 15 years. This alternative is one of three alternatives evaluated in the GMP/EA. The newsletter also provides the following information:

- Foundation Statements that are the basis of the GMP
- Brief description of other alternatives evaluated for the GMP
- Summary and update on the GMP planning steps
- Summary of how the GMP was developed
- Public meeting schedule for the GMP

The Proposed Plan would embrace new planning opportunities and provide resolution to issues that have arisen since the 1989 GMP was implemented, including the following:

- Expand archeological preservation activities beyond the West Ruin to other ruins within the national monument boundaries as well as consider region-wide strategies to protect related resources.

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- Manage the three overlapping cultural landscapes at the monument, based on level of importance in relation to the monument's purpose and significance.
- Expand visitor opportunities to view the East Ruin and the North Ruin, as well as to increase the depth of interpretive stories and the breadth of visitor experiences both at the monument and in the surrounding region.
- Rehabilitate and expand existing buildings to address space needs for administrative staff and for resource-related functions, such as American Indian cultural demonstrations and education sessions.
- Expand outreach and partnerships to identify and achieve common goals that protect and enhance understanding of the cultural resources and stories of the area's unique ancient Pueblo culture.

Your comments on this Proposed Plan are important. We hope that you will attend one of the upcoming public meetings on the GMP. Copies of the GMP/EA will be available at the meetings, as will forms to provide comments. You may also comment on the information in this newsletter on the internet or via mail. Please see the public meeting schedule and "How to Comment on the GMP" on page 11 of this newsletter. Your participation has been crucial to the planning process so far, and we look forward to your continued input.

Sincerely,



Dennis L. Carruth, Superintendent

## Foundation Statements

*The foundation for planning and management identifies what is most important about the monument and is a prerequisite for all subsequent planning and decision making. It helps ensure that all stakeholders, including National Park Service managers and staff, understand what is most important about the monument and that all programs and actions contribute to achieving the monument's purpose and other mandates.*



## Purpose

Each unit in the national park system is established for a specific purpose. Purpose statements convey the intent of the park's legislation, legislative history, presidential proclamations, and other enabling language that established the unit. Language in presidential proclamations that established and expanded Aztec Ruins National Monument resulted in the following purpose statement:



The purpose of Aztec Ruins is to preserve, protect, and interpret the ancient Pueblo structures and to encourage and conduct scientific research to enhance the understanding of the prehistory of the site.

## Significance

Significance statements describe the elements that distinguish Aztec Ruins as a nationally significant unit of the national park system. The statements reflect the exceptional values and resources that must be preserved and maintained to achieve the purpose of the unit.

Aztec Ruins is a reflection of the ancestral Pueblo peoples that lived here, choosing this place because of the abundance of life-sustaining elements in this riparian ecosystem, including its spiritual characteristics. The descendants of the people who built and lived in this magnificent architecture continue to follow traditions that remain intricately linked to this sacred place.





**A**ztec Ruins is an integral component of 200–300 years of cultural cohesiveness and expression that occurred throughout the Four Corners region, from approximately A.D. 1050 to 1300. The site is an important aid to understanding the earlier times of the Pueblo world in this area and, along with Mesa Verde, is an integral component of the larger Chacoan system.

**A**ztec Ruins contains some of the most remarkably well-preserved ancestral Pueblo architecture in the Southwest. It is monumental in scale, both in its designed landscape as well as in its individual structures. This planned community is characterized by its symmetrical layout, its unique complex of architectural features that includes rare tri-walled structures, and its unusually well-preserved masonry and wood structures, artifacts, earthworks, and other remains from the late A.D. 1000s to 1300. Original wooden roofs still cover dozens of rooms and have enabled Aztec Ruins to become the best tree-ring-dated site in the Southwest. The high integrity and importance of the site were additionally recognized in 1987 when Aztec Ruins National Monument, along with Chaco Culture National Historical Park, were together designated a World Heritage Site.

**T**he pioneering excavations of the American Museum of Natural History provided archeological data and explanations that influenced interpretations of cultural history in the San Juan Basin for half a century and the profession as a whole. The reconstruction of the Great Kiva was an unparalleled effort in the history of Southwestern archeology.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are cultural and natural resources and related values that warrant

priority consideration in planning and management because they are critical to maintaining the monument's purpose and significance.

These resources and values can include cultural and archeological objects; natural systems, processes, flora, and fauna; stories and scenes; and their relationship to visitor enjoyment and satisfaction.

### Fundamental Resources

#### Ancestral Pueblo features

- Main Ruins Group within pre-1988 site boundary
- Archeological sites in the surrounding community
- Ancient Aztec Community cultural landscape
- Original intact structures
- Ancient roadways
- Artifacts
- Earthworks
- Original wooden roofs
- Other features and vegetation contributing to the Prehistoric Designed Landscape

Ancestral Pueblo features at Aztec Ruins are part of a much larger Four Corners regional system that includes many Chacoan and other prehistoric communities.

### Fundamental Values

- The preserved ancient structures and landscape features offer opportunities for visitors to learn about, appreciate, and make personal connections to an ancestral Pueblo community.
- Ongoing archeological research contributes knowledge to the understanding of the past.
- Opportunities to explore new methods and techniques for research and preservation of irreplaceable archeological resources.
- An opportunity to understand the continuum from ancestral Pueblo communities, to historic uses, to current management by the National Park Service.
- Many American Indians maintain strong connections to the area. Through collaboration, the National Park Service and American Indians have the opportunity to share information regarding interpretation, management, and conservation of resources. Through collaboration, American Indian oral histories and traditions may be shared at Aztec Ruins.

# General Management Plan Alternatives

In the GMP/EA for Aztec Ruins National Monument, three alternatives are presented and evaluated. Alternative 1, the no-action alternative, represents a continuation of existing conditions and management strategies at Aztec Ruins. It is included as a baseline for comparing the environmental consequences of implementing Alternatives 2 and 3, the action alternatives.



Alternatives 2 and 3, each of which is consistent with the monument's purpose, significance, and fundamental resources and values, present different ways to manage resources, visitor use, and facilities within the national monument.

Alternatives 1 and 2 are briefly described here. Alternative 3, the NPS Preferred Alternative and Proposed Plan, is described in more detail and a map is provided because it is the alternative the National Park Service desires to implement into the future. A brief summary of the environmental impacts is also provided. For further additional detail on all three alternatives and related environmental impacts, please review the GMP/EA.

## Alternative 1: No-Action

Current management practices at the national monument would continue into the future. Natural and cultural resources would be protected with an emphasis on prehistoric ruins and artifacts of the West Ruin area. Features of existing cultural landscapes would be retained, even where they overlap and conflict. Most visitors would continue to experience the visitor center and West Ruin interpretive trail. There would be no new construction of facilities, but existing facilities would be reconfigured to improve monument operations. National Park Service managers would continue to focus their efforts within the monument boundary.

## Alternative 2

The scope of resource stewardship would be expanded throughout the monument to both protect resources and provide visitor's with a more comprehensive understanding of monument resources.

Distractions to visitor understanding of the monument's fundamental resources and values, such as orchards adjacent to West Ruin, would be removed. Visitors would have opportunities to experience resources and stories beyond the West Ruin through additional trails and interpretative tools that would lead visitors to other areas of the monument, including the East Ruin and the North Ruin. Resource management activities, such as ruins stabilization, backfill, and research, would be expanded from the focus on the West Ruin to additional significant cultural resources within the boundary of the monument. The former Kiva Trading Post and Aztec Ruins Trading Posts would be remodeled and rehabilitated to improve administrative functions.



### Alternative 3: NPS Preferred Alternative (Proposed Plan)

Outreach and partnerships would be emphasized to demonstrate a broader understanding of the importance of community and regional context and the intertwined future of both the national monument and its surrounding environment. Aztec Ruins National Monument would strive to be woven into the fabric of the surrounding community and region, working in collaboration and partnership to achieve common goals. Such common goals could broadly include education and appreciation of shared heritage and culture, stewardship of heritage resources, archeological research and preservation, and shared environmental stewardship, in addition to furthering the specific mission of the monument.

Similar to Alternative 2, resource management activities, such as ruins stabilization, backfill, and research, would be expanded from the focus on the West Ruin to additional significant cultural resources within the boundary of the monument. However, in the Preferred Alternative, such activities would also be linked to opportunities beyond monument boundaries. Collaboration and partnership opportunities would be emphasized to further stewardship of associated cultural resources throughout the region. Greater external collaboration and understanding of regional context would inform resource management within the monument. The monument would seek to connect to larger networks of inventory and monitoring. Aztec Ruins would expend more effort to share their knowledge and seek best practices among other related National Park Service units and stewards of

related resources. Research would be encouraged not only within the monument, but throughout the greater region and Chacoan network. Through these expanded networks, the National Park Service would work with others to seek stewardship of ancient Pueblo resources throughout the region.

Increased efforts would be made to develop additional linkages to repositories with related artifacts, objects, and archives, as well as to display collections at suitable locations throughout the region.

Visitors would have opportunities to experience resources and stories beyond the West Ruin through additional trails and interpretative tools that would lead them to areas such as the East Ruin and the North Ruin and to make connections with other related resources in the surrounding region. Features that distract visitors from understanding the monument's fundamental resources and values, such as the more recent orchards, would be removed. Overlapping cultural landscapes would be managed according to a hierarchy of importance based on National Register eligibility and fundamental values. The former Kiva and Aztec Ruins Trading Posts would be rehabilitated and remodeled to improve administrative functions similar to

Alternative 2. However, in the Preferred Alternative, the Aztec Ruins Trading Post would be further expanded to include a community meeting space that would welcome collaboration and partnership activities into the monument, including educational opportunities, arts and crafts, demonstrations, and other activities relating to American Indian cultures.



## Summary of Proposed Plan

KEY ACTIONS	ALTERNATIVE 3: PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
<b>OVERALL MANAGEMENT OF MONUMENT</b>	Expand the primary emphasis of resource management and visitor experience beyond West Ruin, to include East Ruin, North Ruin, and other areas in the monument. Place a greater emphasis on outreach and partnerships that demonstrate a broader understanding of the importance of community and regional context and the intertwined future of both the monument and its surrounding environment.
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	Holistically manage natural and cultural resources within monument boundaries while seeking to collaborate and partner in stewarding resources within the region.
<b>Archeological Resources</b>	<p>Within the monument, expand archeological preservation activities beyond West Ruin to include more areas throughout the monument, especially at East Ruin and North Ruin. Activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory and monitoring</li> <li>• Ruins stabilization</li> <li>• Backfilling and fill level adjustment</li> <li>• Research that emphasizes minimum impact</li> </ul> <p>Beyond the monument boundaries, engage in networks for regional inventory and monitoring; share knowledge and best practices; and encourage research sharing of information throughout the Southwest.</p>
<b>Cultural Landscapes</b>	<p>Establish a hierarchy of importance among the overlapping cultural landscapes at the monument to resolve issues that arise when goals are in conflict.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Prehistoric Designed Landscape</i> — eligible for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and fundamental resource — maintain and enhance.</li> <li>• <i>Historic Designed Landscape</i> — eligible for NRHP — protect features.</li> <li>• <i>Historic Vernacular Landscape</i> — not eligible for NRHP — remove features that directly conflict with Prehistoric Designed Landscape. Orchards would be removed. Other features may be left in place and considered for removal only if there is a compelling management reason.</li> </ul> <p>Complete a vegetation and cultural landscapes management plan.</p>
<b>Museum Collections</b>	<p>Place collections at the Hibben Center, Western Archeological and Conservation Center, or Northern Arizona facility per the Park Museum Collection Storage Plan.</p> <p>Continue to evaluate collections for potential additions to public display.</p> <p>Develop additional linkages to related repositories throughout the region.</p>
<b>VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<p>Expand visitor opportunities beyond the visitor center and self-guided trail to West Ruin to include North Ruin and East Ruin.</p> <p>Provide additional opportunities for education and outreach in the greater region.</p>
<b>Visitor Access</b>	<p>Continue using visitor center as gateway to and first stop within national monument.</p> <p>Monument remains primarily a day-use area, with occasional evening programs. Potential for more evening programs at the new cultural activities center.</p>

KEY ACTIONS	ALTERNATIVE 3: PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
<b>Interpretation and Education</b>	<p>Visitor center continues to be central to interpretation and education. However, improve visitor center exhibits and expand interpretation to include unexcavated resources, cultural landscapes, collections, preservation activities, and current research.</p> <p>Visitor experience close to the resource expands from West Ruin to East Ruin and North Ruin.</p> <p>Place additional emphasis on visitors to the monument understanding the greater context of Aztec Ruins.</p> <p>Encourage visitors to visit related regional prehistoric sites.</p> <p>Expand interpretation opportunities as a result of increased collaboration and partnerships with American Indian tribes and others.</p> <p>Ensure that education and outreach is a staff priority.</p> <p>Foster interaction between tribes, partners, and the surrounding community through the new cultural activities center.</p>
<b>Trails</b>	<p>Continue to maintain the West Ruins Trail (0.4 mile).</p> <p>Construct a new loop interpretive trail (1.5 miles) to East Ruin and North Ruin from West Ruin.</p> <p>Consider and evaluate other trails that may eventually connect with future regional trails outside the monument.</p>
<b>FACILITIES</b>	<p>Generally maintain existing facilities (structures, roads, parking areas, and picnic area). To improve monument operations, remodel and rehabilitate Kiva Trading Post and Aztec Ruins Trading Post and remove one other existing structure.</p>
<b>Structures</b>	<p>Visitor center — continue to maintain historic character and use as a visitor center with some staff offices.</p>
	<p>Administration trailer — remove.</p>
	<p>Aztec Ruins Trading Post — rehabilitate and expand to serve as administrative headquarters and as a cultural activities center that welcomes collaboration and partnership activities into the monument.</p>
	<p>Kiva Trading Post — rehabilitate and adaptively use for cultural resources offices, workspace, and a wet lab.</p>
	<p>Maintenance complex — continue to maintain and use for offices, storage, garage space, and a staging area.</p>
<b>OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<p>Continue current relationships with associated American Indian tribes, local and state governments, neighboring National Park Service units, and others to share information, and to identify and reach mutual goals related to the ancestral Pueblo culture. Emphasize outreach, partnerships, and collaborating with others to achieve common goals.</p> <p>Recognize the importance of community and regional context.</p>



# Aztec Ruins National Monument

New Mexico

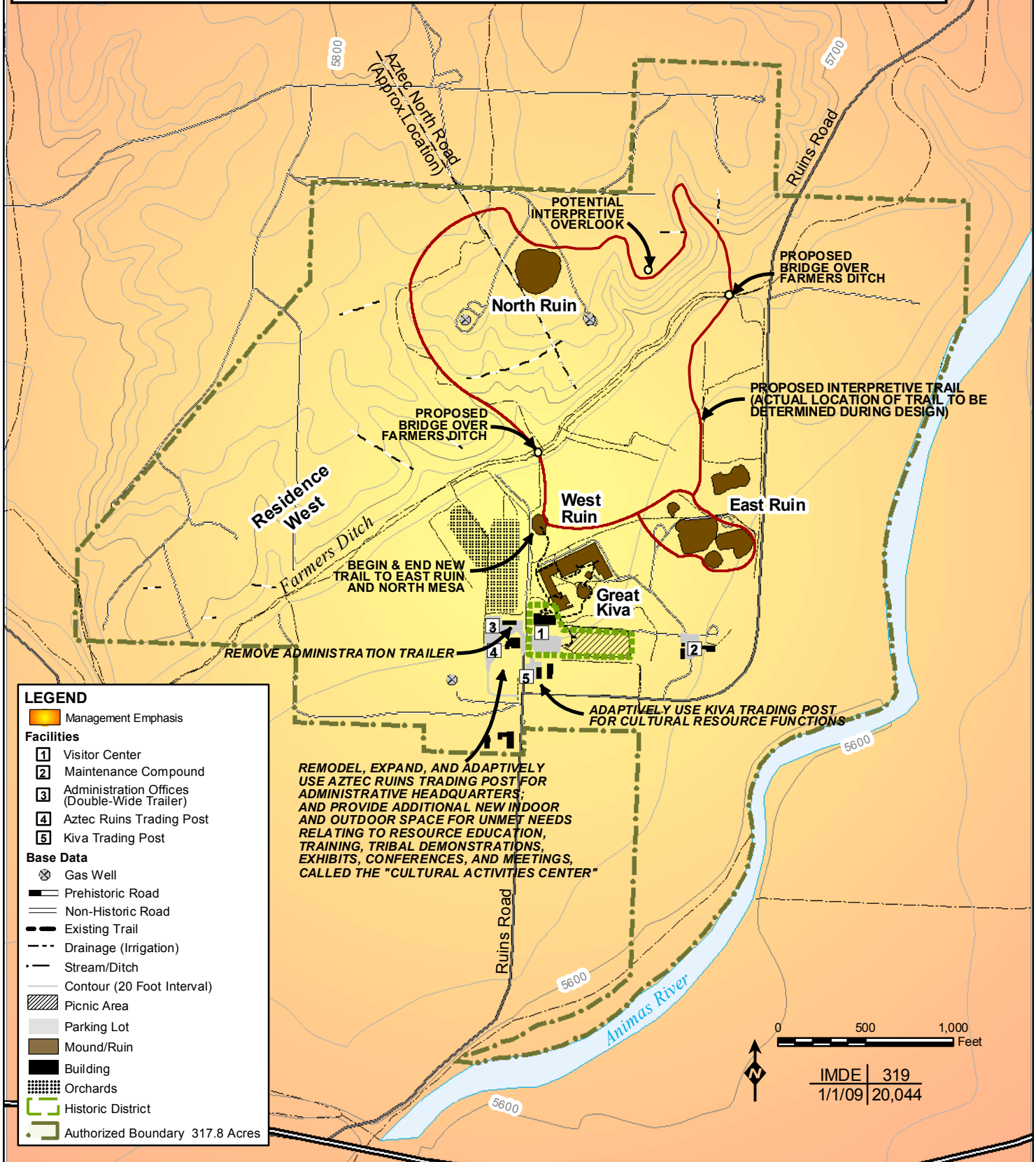
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## Alternative 3

### ALTERNATIVE 3: Preferred Alternative

**OVERALL MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS:** The emphasis on resource management and visitor experience extends beyond the national monument into the surrounding region. It involves greater focus on outreach and partnerships outside the monument with a broader understanding of the importance of regional context. Enhanced functions occur within the monument, including a new cultural activities center and new administrative facilities.





## Summary of Environmental Impacts

In Alternative 1, some ongoing activities would result in continued adverse impacts within the monument. Because preservation activities for archeological resources would remain focused on West Ruin, some negligible to minor adverse impacts would continue to archeological resources such as East Ruin and North Ruin. Retention of the orchards and other features of the Historic Vernacular Landscape would also result in moderate, adverse impacts to the primary landscape in the monument, the Prehistoric Designed Landscape. Retention of the orchards would also result in long-term, minor to moderate, adverse impacts to native vegetation regimes and local wildlife. Visitor's experience of the monument would continue to be limited to the West Ruin and they would not experience other ruins within the monument. Retention of the Administration trailer, the orchards, and other recent features would continue to degrade the prehistoric scene. The existing Administration trailer would continue to provide insufficient space for monument staff and compromise safety resulting in long-term, moderate, adverse impacts.



In Alternatives 2 and 3, the adverse impacts of Alternative 1 would be addressed through new and beneficial opportunities. Preservation activities would be expanded throughout the monument resulting in long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial impacts to archeological resources. New trail construction from the West Ruin to East Ruin and North Ruin would provide new visitor opportunities to explore and learn about the resources within the monument. Removal of the pear and apple orchards within the Prehistoric Designed Landscape would benefit both native vegetation and native wildlife. Removal of the Administration trailer and rehabilitation of the Aztec Ruins and Kiva Trading Posts would improve monument operations. In Alternative 3, addition of the new cultural activities center and new partnership and outreach opportunities would result in many long-term, beneficial impacts on park operations by improving community relationships, augmenting staff with volunteers, and strengthening visitor services and protection of resources.



## How the GMP was Developed

### Plan Initiation

The GMP planning process began with a public newsletter published in 2003 that announced the GMP and solicited general public feedback about the monument. In the fall of 2003, public and tribal information meetings were conducted in various locations in New Mexico to gather specific issues and concerns related to the monument and its future management. During this same period, a visitor survey was undertaken to gather information on visitor characteristics, including feedback on their experience at Aztec Ruins. A subsequent newsletter in early 2004 summarized the public and tribal comments from the 2003 newsletter and the information meetings, and presented the results of the visitor use survey. Information that is foundational in the planning process — purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, and primary interpretive themes — was also presented in this 2004 newsletter.

### Alternatives Development

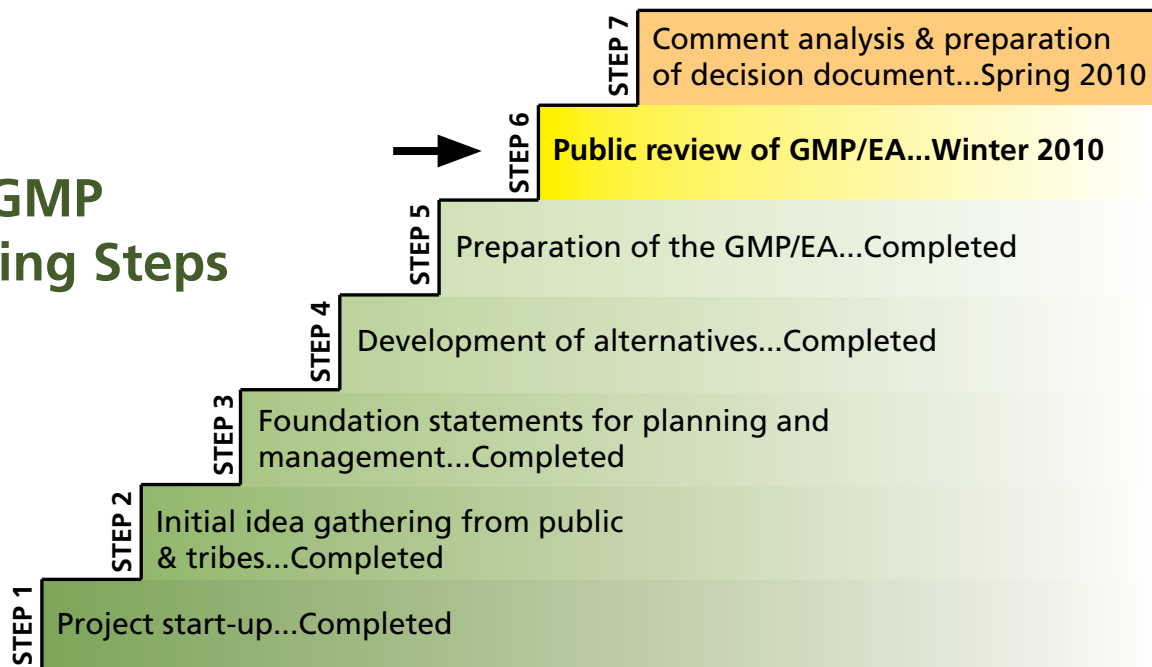
The two action alternatives were developed during a series of workshops conducted in 2004 with monument staff, tribal representatives, and other monument stakeholders. In these workshops, participants were involved in reviewing the key issues and concern, analyzing natural and cultural resources, and reviewing the foundation information. This exercise also resulted in the

identification of partnership opportunities to help implement the alternatives in the GMP/EA. Preliminary alternatives were reviewed and commented on by the public during a workshop in May 2004. The NPS Preferred Alternative, or Proposed Plan, was selected during a subsequent workshop when the potential impacts, both beneficial and adverse, were identified by NPS staff and monument stakeholders. The advantages of each alternative were weighed in relationship to the issues to be resolved and desired future conditions for the monument.

### EA Preparation

Following alternative development, the impacts of each alternative on the human environment were determined. Because no significant impacts were identified with the three alternatives, an environmental assessment (EA) was prepared. Although the original intent was to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) with this GMP, as announced in a Federal Register notice on October 8, 2003, and via the first newsletter, the lack of significant impacts justified a waiver from an EIS. This waiver was approved by the National Park Service and printed in the Federal Register on April 15, 2009.

## GMP Planning Steps



## How to Comment on the GMP

This newsletter and the GMP/EA are being distributed for public and agency review for a comment period of 60 days that commences on February 8, 2010. Open houses will be conducted by the National Park Service to present the NPS Preferred Alternative and to solicit public comment. The locations and times of these workshops are listed in the public meeting schedule. Copies of the GMP/EA will be available at these meetings. You may also access the GMP/EA online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/azru> or request a copy of the GMP/EA by calling or writing the superintendent's office at Aztec Ruins National Monument:

**Dennis L. Carruth, Superintendent**  
**Aztec Ruins National Monument**  
**84 County Road 2900**  
**Aztec, NM 87410-9715**  
**505-334-6174, ext. 222**

Comments on the NPS Preferred Alternative outlined in this newsletter or on the full GMP/EA may be provided at the public workshops, online, or via mail to the superintendent. Online comments should be entered on the National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) Web site: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/azru>. Click on "General Management Plan;" then in the left column, click on "Open for Public Comment." Finally, follow the directions for entering comments. Written comments may also be mailed to the superintendent before the end of the 60-day comment period.

The National Park Service will consider all comments to verify that an EIS is not needed and to draft a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the final plan. The FONSI will be sent to the Intermountain regional director for approval and signature.

### *Schedule of Public Meetings*

Date	Time	General Location	Details
Wednesday February 24, 2010	12:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Farmington, New Mexico	<b>Farmington Museum &amp; Visitor Center at Gateway Park</b> 3041 E. Main Street Farmington, NM
Thursday February 25, 2010	5:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Aztec, New Mexico	<b>Visitor Center Aztec Ruins NM</b> #84 County Road 2900 Phone: 505-334-6174



