Chaco Culture National Historical Park
General Management Plan Amendment
Public Scoping Report

March 2010

Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) has begun an environmental assessment process, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), to amend Chaco Culture National Historical Park's ("park") 1984 general management plan in order to provide further direction on visitor use management. The environmental assessment will be used to determine the possible impacts, if any, on the environment from a range of reasonable alternatives that would address the project purpose, need, and objectives. As a part of this process, information has been collected from the general public and interested parties regarding the proposed project. The comments obtained during this initial phase of the project, will be used to facilitate the development of the environmental assessment (EA) in defining the major topics and issues the compliance effort will address.

Scoping Process and Public Involvement

The NPS divides the scoping process into two parts: internal scoping and external (public) scoping. Internal scoping for this project involved discussions among the NPS staff regarding the purpose and need for the project, issues, objectives, management alternatives, mitigation measures, appropriate level of documentation, and other related dialogue.

Public scoping is the early involvement of the interested and affected public in the environmental analysis process. The public scoping process helps ensure that people have been given an opportunity to comment and contribute early in the decision-making process.

One component of public scoping was the visitor use and experience survey that was conducted in the park during the summer and fall of 2009. The survey was conducted at several locations throughout the park over the course of four weeks during the months of July and October. A total of approximately 500 people participated in the survey: 350 in the summer and 150 in the fall. The survey project was designed to gather information that would help park managers better understand the public's values and preferences about the park and assist in the development of the general management plan amendment/environmental assessment. Data and conclusions from this study will be included in the EA.

On November 27, 2009 the NPS initiated the formal public scoping comment period. A scoping newsletter was developed and distributed by electronic and conventional mail in late November to the project mailing list (about 300 contacts) of government agencies, American Indian tribes, organizations, businesses, and individuals. The newsletter summarized the purpose of and need for the project, potential issues, preliminary alternatives and management strategies, and opportunities for public involvement in the NEPA process. The newsletter requested the public to convey concerns and issues related to the proposed project. News releases were distributed and notices announcing the project and the public scoping effort were published in the Farmington Daily Times (the local newspaper of record) on December 4, 11, 18, and 25, 2009. The newsletter was also posted to the National Park Service's online comment system (Planning, Environment, and Public

Comment (PEPC) located at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/chcu). The public comment period closed on December 31, 2009.

During scoping, 36 individuals, organizations, and agencies responded either by conventional mail or through the PEPC website. This report presents a summary of the comments received during the public scoping phase.

Methodology for Comment Analysis

Correspondence was received by hard copy letter via mail, or entered into the PEPC website. Letters received by postal mail were entered into the PEPC system for analysis. Each of these letters of submission is referred to as correspondence.

Each correspondence received was read and comments identified. A comment analysis process was used to compile and correlate similar comments into a format useable by decision makers and the internal planning team. All comments were considered and categorized into major topics.

Within the analysis, the term "respondent" or "commenter" refers to an individual or organization that provided a comment. The term "comments" refers to statements made by a respondent or commenter. Within each category that follows, a description is provided that characterizes the nature of the comments and the issues and concerns identified by the commenters. Since the themes and categories are not mutually exclusive, a respondent's comments could have been categorized under multiple categories depending upon the content of the submission. The use of the term "commenters" or "respondents" in the categories refers not to all commenters, but to those that expressed a particular viewpoint within that category.

Summary of Comments Received

During the comment period, 36 pieces of correspondence were received with 149 comments. The main themes reflected in the comments showed concern for cultural resources, increasing visitor education and interpretation opportunities, management options, and visitor use and experience. Several comments opposed any further development of facilities and/or infrastructure in the park, but almost an equal number supported more development in the park. There were also several comments showing concern as to whether tribal interests were being taken into consideration.

There were a number of comments regarding San Juan County's decision to pave the road into the park. Although outside the scope of this project, these comments were categorized by support or opposition to the action.

All of the correspondence came from within the United States. Nearly half of the correspondence received originated in New Mexico, while another 22% came from the neighboring states of Arizona and Colorado.

A detailed tabular summary of the comments received (Table 1) is included in this document, as well as a table detailing comments received by state of origin (Table 2).

Comments relating to visitor use and experience

The most commonly raised concerns were related to visitor use and/or experience. Approximately 45% of comments were associated with some aspect of visitor use and experience. About a quarter

of visitor experience comments reflected a desire to keep resources within the park accessible. An equal number of comments reflected a desire for tighter restrictions on visitor use and access, such as closing off sensitive areas or requiring permits for activities in the park. Almost another one-fourth of visitor experience comments reflected concern for over-crowding in the park in the future. A number of comments also showed a desire to maintain wilderness qualities, such as solitude, a pristine environment and the undeveloped nature of the park.

Comments relating to management options

Approximately one third of all comments received were concerning some type of management option, especially those detailed in the scoping newsletter. Several respondents showed support for management of large groups by requiring reservations and/or limiting the size of groups. Approximately 10% of commenters mentioned reservations and/or permitting in the park. There was slightly more support than opposition to requiring some type of reservation or permit to visit the park. Approximately 11% of respondents commented on guided tours, three-quarters of which showed support for guided tours. Few commenters mentioned charging an entrance fee or fees for guided tours, but all were in support of charging fees.

Comments relating to cultural resources

Approximately 19% of all comments received expressed concern for impacts to the cultural resources of the park. These comments concentrated on the sensitivity of the sites within the park. Comments included suggestions for protecting the cultural resources such as increased staff at sites, increased visitor education provided by the park, closure of sensitive areas, management of large groups, limiting development in the park and limiting visitation.

Comments relating to visitor education and interpretation opportunities

Approximately 16% of all comments received showed support for more visitor education and/or interpretation in the park. Comments regarding education were mostly showing support for education with the purpose of protecting the resource (i.e. reinforcing the significance and sensitivity of the resources, enforcing regulations, and promoting Leave No Trace principles). Several comments showed support for more interpretation in the form of ranger-led walks, expanded exhibits and increased programming.

Detailed Account of Comments Received

Table 1: Number of Comments Received Categorized by Topic

Code	Code Description	Number of Comments
CR101	Cultural Resources - comment reflects concern for cultural resource impacts	29
ED101	Education - comment reflects a desire for increased visitor education (Leave No Trace, etc)	12
FE101	Fees - comment supports additional or increased fees	4
FE102	Fees - comment opposes additional or increased fees	0
FI101	Facilities & Infrastructure - comment opposes further development in the park	10
FI102	Facilities & Infrastructure - comment supports more development in the park	8

GE101	General - comment of a general nature (compliment, personal story, etc)	35
GM100	Group Management - comment reflects a desire for general management of groups	9
GM101	Group Management - comment reflects a desire for management of groups through reservations/permits	2
GM102	Group Management - comment reflects a desire limiting the size of tour groups	2
GT101	Guided Tours - comment supports requiring guided tours	12
GT102	Guided Tours - comment opposes requiring guided tours	4
IN101	Interpretation - comment reflects a desire for interpretive opportunities in the park	12
NR101	Natural Resources - comment reflects concern for natural resource impacts	4
RD101	Road - comment supports paving the road	4
RD102	Road - comment opposes paving the road	14
RE101	Recreation - comment reflects a desire for expansion of current visitor uses and access	1
RE102	Recreation - comment reflects a desire for tighter restrictions on visitor use and access	16
RP101	Reservations & Permitting - comment supports a reservation or permitting system to gain access to the park	9
RP102	Reservations & Permitting - comment opposes a reservation or permitting system to gain access to the park	6
ST101	Staffing - comment reflects a desire for more staff in the park	5
TR101	Tribes - comment reflects concern that tribal interests are not being considered	8
VE101	Visitor Experience - comment reflects a desire to keep the park the way it currently is	8
VE102	Visitor Experience - comment reflects a desire to maintain wilderness qualities (solitude, pristine environment, undeveloped nature, etc)	11
VE103	Visitor Experience - comment reflects concern regarding over-crowding in the park	14
VE104	Visitor Experience - comment reflects a desire to keep resources within the park accessible	16

Table 2: Comments Received by State of Residence

Organization	Commenter	State
Le Moyne College	Sharp, Len	NY
Friends of Chaco	Baker, Sally	ME
	Kept Private	NJ

Burst Electronics Inc	Hamlin, Brad	NM
	Kept Private	NM
	Pelton, Rinda	NM
	Kept Private	NM
Zuni High School	Carter-North, John	NM
Zuni High School	Lee, Leanne	NM
	Washburn, Dorothy K.	NJ
Nageezi Navajo Nation Chapter House	Chavez, Ervin	NM
	Condie, Carol J.	NM
Chaco Alliance	Wright, Anson	OR
	Kept Private	NM
Friends of Chaco	Raab, Joyce M.	NM
San Juan Citizens Alliance	Eisenfeld, Mike	NM
	Cox, Gary A.	CO
San Juan Public Lands	Coleman, Julie	CO
	Lennartz, Barbara	UN
	Botnick, Phil & Ann	NC
	Bull, Jon & Caroline	IL
	Carter, Anne	NV
	McNall, Shirley	NM
	Wilshusen, Richard	CO
	Yoder, Donna	AZ
	Mathien, F. Joan	NM
	Turner, Christy G	AZ
	Jacobs, Julie A.	NM
	Lekson, Stephen H.	CO
	Ferguson, T.J.	AZ
	Baker, Pamela	UT
National Parks Conservation Association	Nimkin, David	UT
	Gilpin, Dennis & Kelley	AZ
Getty Conservation Institute	Neville, Agnew	CA
	Kayser, David W.	NM

| Plateau Sciences Society | Link, Martin | NM |