

Devils Postpile National Monument

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Scoping Comments Summary

Newsletter 2, Spring 2010

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Devils Postpile National Monument. The monument has been resting under a heavy blanket of snow this winter, and we are looking forward to our spring awakening and another bustling visitation season. Please consider a visit to Devils Postpile and Reds Meadow this year as there are many wonderful opportunities to enjoy here. We expect beautiful displays of summer wildflowers and fall foliage colors. Our range of interpretive programs include Postpile walks, campfire talks, evening star programs, and bird-banding demonstrations.

Last year, the National Park Service began the process of developing a general management plan (GMP) to help guide the future of the monument for the next 15 to 20 years. Over the summer months and into the fall, we asked you to share your ideas and vision for the future of the monument. Many of you attended our open houses in July and September while others provided written comments by filling out our newsletter comment form, sending us letters, or providing comments electronically. Thank you for your interest in the monument and for your many thoughtful comments and suggestions. This newsletter contains a summary of what we heard from you, as well as information about what to expect next in the GMP process.

Your input will assist us in the next phase of the planning process as we design several preliminary alternatives that will respond to the anticipated challenges and opportunities we face at the monument.

We will explore a range of alternatives for managing and preserving our diverse and significant resources and providing quality visitor experiences for current and future generations. The staff at Devils Postpile National

Monument, along with our partners and collaborators, including the Inyo National Forest, is committed to fulfilling our responsibilities as stewards of this treasured landscape.

In 2011, we look forward to celebrating the centennial of Devils Postpile National Monument and we will be sharing these preliminary alternatives with you as part of our 100-year anniversary festivities.

National Parks have been called the best idea America ever had and the tradition of protecting these places of natural and cultural significance for the public to enjoy remains strong. Please join us in helping safeguard the future of this

outstanding resource by continuing to stay involved in the GMP planning process.

As we have said before, this is an opportunity of a century.



Devils Postpile

Deanna Dulen
Superintendent
Devils Postpile National Monument

What is a General Management Plan?



Lower Rainbow Falls

A General Management Plan (GMP) will answer “What kind of place do we want this park to be?” It will serve as a guidebook for the future to help managers make decisions about how to protect resources, what levels and types of uses are appropriate, what facilities should be developed, and how people should access the park. Everything in the plan must be consistent with the park’s purpose and significance and the legislation that established the National Park Service in 1916, providing for protection of the park’s natural and cultural resources while inviting appropriate visitor use and enjoyment of the park.

The plan will not include detailed building designs or be able to guarantee funding, but it will serve as a blueprint that the NPS intends to follow for the next 15-20 years. The GMP will include an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the various alternatives will be analyzed in the EIS.

Next Steps

Many of your comments received during the public scoping period will provide the basis for developing possible scenarios (called alternatives) for the future of Devils Postpile NM. Next summer, the planning team will send you a newsletter with some preliminary alternative concepts for your review and comment as part of our centennial celebration. Evaluating one set of alternatives over another helps the planning team to compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages and provides a sound approach to decision making, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

For More Information

You can access more information about this long-range planning effort for Devils Postpile National Monument by visiting <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/depo> or by contacting the Superintendent (see back page).

How Can I Be Involved in Planning for the Future of Devils Postpile?

Your continued involvement in the planning process is critical for the successful completion of the GMP. There are two more opportunities when you can provide formal comments to the planning team—at preliminary alternatives development and on the draft GMP/EIS. In addition, you can always write or call to voice your concerns or insights and to check in on the planning process.

Here are several ways for you to participate throughout this planning effort:

- Attend public meetings and workshops.
- Access information about the GMP at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/depo>.
- Sign up on the mailing list.
- Send a letter to the Superintendent.
- Email your comments to depo_gmp@nps.gov.



Shuttle ticket window at Mammoth Mountain

What We Heard from You...



Ranger Station

Public Scoping Newsletter

Last summer, Devils Postpile National Monument announced the beginning of the General Management Plan scoping comment period by distributing a newsletter to organizations and individuals on the park mailing list. In addition, newsletters were distributed at the park visitor center, local communities, and at public meetings. The newsletter was also published and made available for comment on the National Park Service's Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Press releases announcing the public comment period were distributed to local newspapers.

The purpose of the newsletter was to:

- announce the start of the planning process;
- inform the public on participation opportunities;
- present and obtain comments on park purpose and significance statements developed through foundation planning; and
- to solicit comments on issues that the GMP should address.

The planning team encouraged the public to comment and share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns through public open houses, informal meetings, correspondence, and web sites. The newsletter contained information on the date, time, and location of public scoping meetings. September 30, 2009 was established as the close of the public comment period.

Public Meetings

In July and September 2009, the planning team held a series of public scoping open houses in California, including four meetings in Mammoth Lakes and one in Bishop. Displays and stations were set up at the start of the meetings so that attendees could have one-on-one conversations with members of the planning team. Planning team members recorded comments on flipcharts as they were received.

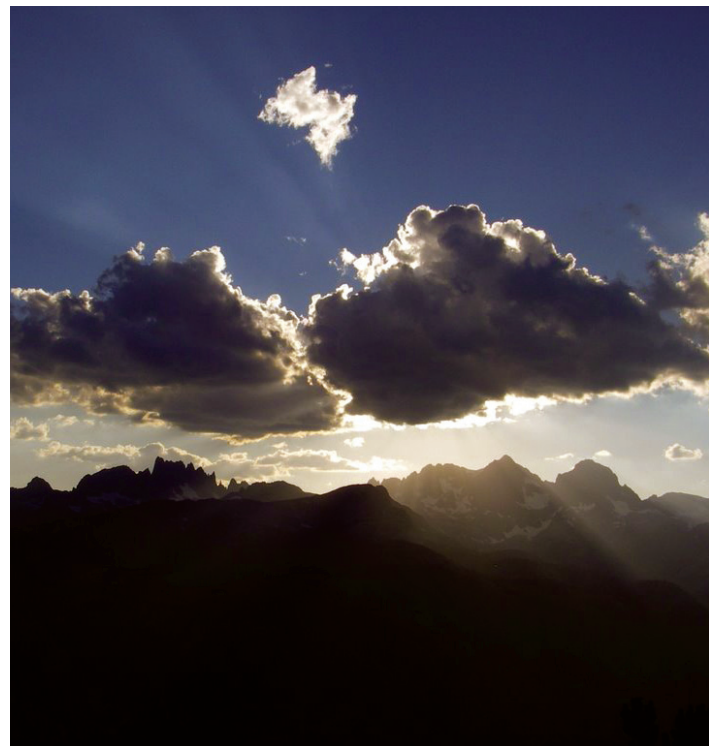
Stakeholder Meetings

Throughout the scoping period, presentations, meetings and conversations with local organizations, agencies and tribes were conducted by the superintendent and members of the planning team.

Written Comments

Devils Postpile received 17 written responses in the form of letters, emails, newsletter response forms, and web comments. These were added to the comments received at the open house meetings. Most of these comments were submitted via the comment form that was distributed through the newsletter, the park visitor center at various public and stakeholder meetings, and posted on PEPC.

The newsletter comment forms, open house flipchart comments, letters, and agency comments were all analyzed together. The comments were grouped by subject area and those topics receiving the most comments were selected for summarization.



The Minarets

Summary of Public Comments

Although space does not allow us to print every comment, the following four pages contain a summary of comments received during the public scoping period for the Devils Postpile National Monument General Management Plan. The following topics received the most comments: values, trails, level of development, the shuttle system, partnerships, American Indian issues, roads and parking, and campgrounds. A more detailed list of comments is available upon request.

Values

Many commenters highly valued attributes of the monument and valley related to wilderness, including quietness, scenic views, solitude, and remoteness. The relatively undeveloped and rustic character of the monument were cited as contributing to these values, as well as to multi-generational values held by families. Some commenters appreciated the opportunity to experience a feeling of wilderness without the effort involved in accessing more remote areas. While some commenters valued the Postpile and Rainbow Falls themselves, many commenters more highly valued the broader context in which they are placed, both in terms of heritage and wilderness.



“I value the remoteness and undeveloped nature of Devils Postpile.”

Level of Development and Rustic Character

Many commenters identified the current rustic character of the built environment as a key value. Commenters requested that any new structures proposed by the plan be consistent with the look and feel of the current built environment, and several expressed concern that the monument might overdevelop the area. The comments did not include any requests for new buildings in the monument, but did recognize the need to maintain facilities as they are. When asked how they would like to see the monument in 20 years, most commenters expressed a desire to keep things exactly as they are. Accordingly, while making some trails more accessible was an identified need, commenters cautioned the monument to avoid paving any trails.

“As a person who is currently in a wheelchair, my backpacking days are behind me and it is wonderful to get that wilderness feeling in an accessible spot.”

“Keep the place as rustic, small, undeveloped, beautiful, natural, peaceful as possible. I love it the way it is.”



Rainbow Falls

Campgrounds

Many commenters highly valued the campgrounds in the valley and at the monument. Most of their comments focused on the desire to keep the campgrounds small and relatively undeveloped, although at least one commenter wanted to see additional amenities for large RVs. Banning RVs was also supported by some. Most commenters did not want to see significant changes in the campgrounds, although some new ideas included making a new walk-in campground near the ranger station, separating RVs and tents, and providing more small-scale amenities such as fish cleaning stations and water spigots.

“Please keep the Reds Meadow Resort, campgrounds, Pack Station, and Mineral Shower Bathhouse in place with no changes.”



Trails

Many of the comments related to trails valued the diversity of trail experiences and connections available in the area. Some recommended specific projects, such as trails that connect shuttle stops, Sotcher Lake trail improvements, a mountain biking trail from Mammoth Lakes to Reds Valley, a new trail to Rainbow Falls on the west side of the river, a bridge at Minaret Falls, and a Soda Springs interpretive trail. Several commenters asked that the current “rustic” trail experience be maintained.

“Cooperate between agencies in opening and closing trails, signing, and structures in wilderness.”

Several commenters expressed concern about the impacts of horses on trails, as well as the development of unplanned “social” trails and their effects on riparian areas. Cooperation between agencies, jurisdictions, and organizations like the San Joaquin River Trail Council was identified as an important component of trail management. Several commenters, in particular, called on land managers to improve the accuracy and graphic consistency of trail signs throughout the planning area.

“I like the primitive campgrounds. The historic character of these campgrounds should be preserved at all costs.”



Devils Postpile Campground

Roads and Parking

Several of the comments related to roads requested more convenient access for personal vehicles, including cars, recreational vehicles (RVs), and motorcycles. Others felt that current restrictions on private vehicles protected the valley experience and the road. Some

“Re-paving the road into Reds Meadow Valley is an important issue.”

commenters were concerned that the road into Reds Meadow was deteriorating and identified repaving and future planning dollars as issues. Some concern was expressed about the parking areas, primarily that they blend in with the natural environment and that they are not allowed to grow in size. One commenter requested that the main monument parking lot become a campground.

“[The monument] needs to establish the amount of cars that [parking] lots can take to guard against incremental growth.”

Shuttle System

Commenters expressed both support and dissatisfaction with the shuttle system. Those who supported it valued it for reducing traffic and pollution in the valley, protecting a difficult-to-maintain road, and safety.



“Overcrowding and pollution of the valley would have been an issue, but the shuttle is a wonderful idea.”

Others saw the system as a hassle, especially for locals, anglers, and families with young children. Some recommended improvements to the system included more interpretation and information on the buses, improved shuttle stops (including trails), a higher frequency of trips, and the use of buses that better match the historic and rustic character of the valley.

“[The] shuttle was not convenient for a 20 minute visit to the monument.”

“Devils Postpile is quiet, remote, largely car-free, natural, unhurried. It’s like stepping back in time, providing an experience that has been lost in so many parks.”



Ranger Program

American Indian Issues and Resources

Commenters expressed a desire to see more cooperation between the monument, the Inyo National Forest, and the tribes of the region. Commenters were concerned with a lack of knowledge of American Indian resources in the valley, and the disconnectedness of American Indians, particularly youth, with the monument. New strategies to connect American Indians with the monument through

“Think about including Native Paiute language on signs, as well as native art in signs and displays.”

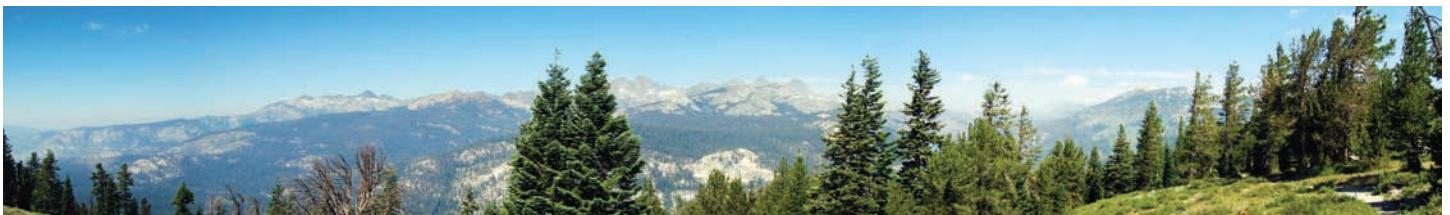
educational programming, easier access, and employment opportunities were identified, along with requests for opportunities to hold group events and engage in traditional practices. Other issues included making consultation meaningful and inclusive of other tribes and incorporating native place names and stories into monument interpretation and information.

Partnerships

Interagency coordination, particularly between the Devils Postpile National Monument and the Inyo National Forest, in the planning process and the management of the planning area was highly valued by commenters. Commenters also identified tribes, local communities,

“Both agencies [National Park Service and the US Forest Service] bring different capacities to cooperative maintenance. Capitalize on this.”

the Mono Lake Committee, the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory, Mammoth Mountain, Friends of the Inyo, Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access (MLTPA), local bicycle clubs, and the San Joaquin River Trail Council as potential partners for management or information sharing. Providing a seamless experience for visitors and improving maintenance throughout the valley were identified as important goals of interagency coordination.



“[The monument should] have a goal of an integrated and jurisdiction-transparent experience for visitors and the community.”



Minaret Vista, Inyo National Forest

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DEVILS POSTPILE NATIONAL MONUMENT

General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement
Newsletter #2, Public Scoping Comment Summary, Spring 2010

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GMP Project Web Site:
*For current information and to provide
comments directly online:*
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/depo>

Park Web Site:
For general information about the park:
<http://www.nps.gov/depo>

E-mail: depo_gmp@nps.gov

General Management Plan Schedule

Estimated Time Frame	Planning Activity	Public Involvement Opportunities
Summer 2009	Conduct Public Scoping Identify goals and issues that need to be addressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review newsletterSend us your ideas and concerns using the response formParticipate in public workshops and voice your ideas and concerns about the future of the monument and meet the planning team
2010	Develop Preliminary Alternatives Based on results of public scoping, develop a draft outline of different possible futures and strategies for the monument.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review public scoping comment newsletter
2011	Public Review of Preliminary Alternatives Solicit comments on preliminary alternative visions for the monument's future from the public, monument partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review preliminary alternatives newsletterSend us your written comments on the range of alternativesParticipate in public workshops to learn more about proposed draft alternatives
2012	Prepare and Distribute Draft GMP/EIS Revise alternatives based on comments. Prepare and distribute a Draft GMP/EIS, including identification of a preferred alternative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review Draft GMP/EIS or summary newsletterSend us your written comments on the Draft GMP/EISParticipate in public workshops and voice your ideas and concerns
2013	Prepare and Distribute Final GMP/EIS and Implement the Approved Plan Revise and update the Draft GMP/EIS based on comments and prepare and distribute Final GMP/EIS. Issue a Record of Decision and implement the plan as funding allows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review the Final GMP/EIS.Work with the monument to implement the plan

We are currently at this step

Devils Postpile National Monument Centennial Celebration!