



Project Scoping

July 2010

Arches National Park is seeking public input for a Climbing and Canyoneering Management Plan

Arches National Park is soliciting public comments regarding the development of a Climbing and Canyoneering Management Plan. Preliminary scoping was initially conducted in 2007 after unusual climbing activities raised public interest and concern about issues associated with technical rock climbing. Since then, canyoneering activity has also grown in the park to such a degree that the National Park Service (NPS) must now consider whether additional management of canyoneering is needed to protect park resources and values.

Arches National Park is beginning work on a management plan to determine what impacts climbing, canyoneering, and associated activities, commercial and noncommercial, have on the park, and to consider whether the NPS should further manage or limit those activities. Issues identified to date include effects on natural and cultural resources, increase in use levels, the development of new routes, use of fixed hardware, designation of climbing/canyoneering routes, development of approach trails, visual impacts and the effects of climbing/canyoneering on visitor safety and experiences.

A climbing/canyoneering management planning effort will consider a full range of alternatives to protect resources, visitors and visitor experience that may be impacted by recreational climbing activities. This plan will comply with the Organic Act of 1916, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Arches National Park General Management Plan, and Wilderness Act of 1964. Arches National Park will seek to involve as many individuals as possible who have an interest in or concerns about climbing activities at Arches.

The NPS encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process during which the public has two opportunities to formally comment on the project; once during initial project scoping and again following release of the Environmental Assessment. We are currently in the scoping phase of this project, and I invite you to voice your ideas, comments, or concerns in this effort. These comments will be considered during preparation of the Environmental Assessment. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Sincerely,
Kate Cannon, Superintendent
Arches National Park*

Goals

- Protect and conserve the park's natural and cultural resources and values, and the integrity of wilderness character for present and future generations.
- Ensure that recreational uses and activities in the park are consistent with its authorizing legislation or proclamation and do not cause unacceptable impacts on park resources and values.

Objectives

- Protect natural resources, especially sensitive, threatened, or endangered plants, animals, and ecological communities;
- Provide opportunities for forms of visitor enjoyment that are uniquely suited and appropriate to the natural and cultural resources found in the park.
- Engage the climbing community in cooperative stewardship of natural resources and the climbing/canyoneering experience;
- Build a foundation of data (status of natural resources, climbing/canyoneering routes and use patterns, and visitor effects on resource values) as a basis for future decision making
- Provide a framework for a climber education program;
- Provide a clear decision-making framework and action timetable;
- Initiate a continuing planning process that responds to new data and changes over time;
- Assure regular monitoring of use and resources.

Resources and Concerns

Initial internal project scoping identified the following resources and other concerns for consideration in the environmental assessment (EA):

- Geology and soils
- Vegetation
- Cultural Resources
- Water Resources
- Wildlife and species of special concern
- Visitor use and experience
- Visual Resources
- Park operations
- Wilderness
- Socioeconomics

Overview of Process

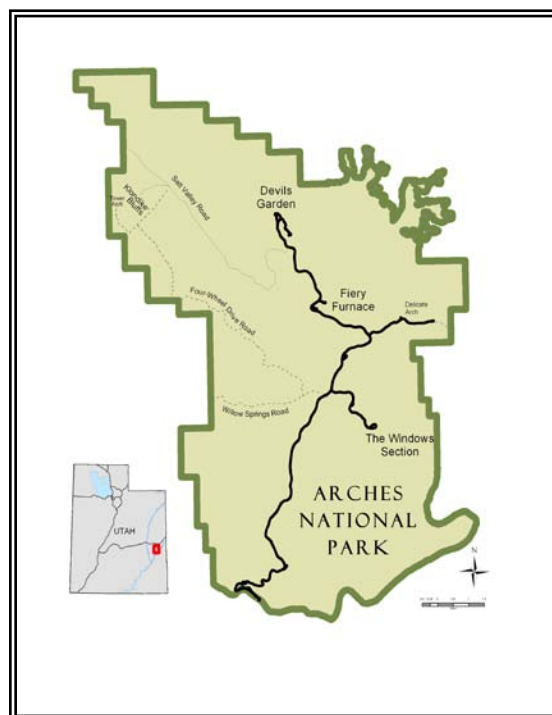
Project milestones include (*indicates opportunities for public comment):

- Public scoping period*
- Preparation of EA
- Public review of EA*
- Analysis of public comment
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision.

Issues/Alternatives

The following are some additional issues that have been identified through internal and preliminary project scoping:

- Continue with current management
- Define Arches NP climbing ethics
- Sport climbing
- Establishment of new routes via a permit system
- Establish trail systems to and through routes
- Commercial guiding for rock climbing and canyoneering
- Establish use levels for each activity via a permit system
- Bouldering
- Installation/Replacement of bolts, anchors, and software
- Rock grooving
- Group size limits
- Rescue considerations



What does the scoping period mean? Scoping is done in the initial phase of a project to seek input from a variety of sources. The input is used to identify issues, areas requiring additional study, and topics that will be analyzed in the EA process. This is an opportunity for you to provide us with your suggestions, comments and concerns regarding this climbing and canyoneering plan.

A public workshop will be conducted during the scoping process. You are also invited to participate in a public workshop where park staff will be available to provide information and answer questions about the planning process. A public press release will announce a date and location for when a public workshop will be conducted in Moab, Utah.

Is scoping my only opportunity to comment on the project? No, once the EA is developed, the document will be made available for public review for a 30-day period.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you have any ideas to share about issues/concerns, or are there any issues/concerns about the project that you think we should consider?
2. What are some alternatives we should consider?
3. Do you have another comments and suggestions for us to consider in the environmental assessment?

How Do I Comment on this Project?

The preferred method to submit your comments is online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/arch> . Click on **Climbing and Canyoneering Management Plan (PEPC ID 31985)**.

Please provide all comments by **August 10, 2010**. If you wish to be added to the park's mailing list for future correspondence, please indicate that in your response.

If you are unable to submit comments electronically through this website, then you may also submit written comments to *the National Park Service, Attention: Planning and Compliance 2282 S. West Resource Blvd, Moab, UT 84532*.