

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Katmai National Park and Preserve
Alaska



Finding of No Significant Impact

Brooks Camp Picnic Area Improvement

August 2010

Recommended: *Ralph Moore* *8/4/10*
Superintendent, Katmai National Park and Preserve Date

Approved: *[Signature]* *8/6/10*
Acting Regional Director, Alaska Date

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Brooks Camp Picnic Area Improvement Katmai National Park and Preserve, Alaska August 2010

The National Park Service (NPS) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate a proposal to improve the Brooks Camp picnic area within Katmai National Park and Preserve (KATM), Alaska.

The NPS has selected Alternative 2: Improve Picnic Area and Preserve Historic Log Cache, the preferred alternative, with mitigating measures.

ALTERNATIVES

Two alternatives were evaluated in the EA.

Alternative 1: No Action

Under the No Action alternative, the Brooks Camp picnic area would not be improved. A picnic shelter would not be constructed within the project area. The historic log cache would not be relocated to the existing picnic area. An interpretive wayside explaining the importance of the Brooks Camp historic structures and a wayfinding exhibit directing visitors to various locations would not be installed. A restroom/storage cache building would not be constructed.

Alternative 2: Improve Picnic Area and Preserve Historic Log Cache (NPS Proposed Action)

Under the Proposed Action, a picnic shelter and restroom/storage cache facility would be constructed near the existing Brooks Camp picnic area and visitor center during the summer of 2010. The Brooks Camp historic log cache would be relocated to the picnic area. The picnic area and restroom/storage cache facility would eventually be relocated to the south side of the Brooks River when day-use operations are no longer required on the north side of the river. The historic log cache and other Brooks Camp historic structures would eventually be relocated to the Beaver Pond Terrace area south of the Brooks River when the site has been developed.

Picnic Shelter

The picnic shelter will be approximately 20 feet in length by 12 feet in width and accommodate two to four fully accessible picnic tables. The shelter will be constructed of prefabricated logs within the existing picnic area.

Approximately 600 square feet of vegetation, including four to six trees, may be cut and removed to accommodate the new shelter. Ground disturbance will be limited within the Katmai Ash layer, which was deposited in June of 1912 from the eruption of the Novarupta Volcano.

Restroom/Storage Cache Facility

A divided restroom and storage cache building approximately 16 feet in length by 18 feet in width will be constructed of prefabricated logs. A wood deck approximately 3 feet in width will be installed on the front and back sides of the facility. The restroom will be of similar design as the existing restrooms located at the Brooks Campground and Brooks Falls Trailhead and would allow for easy access during waste pumping operations. The building will be protected from wildlife damage by a solar-powered

electric fence of similar design currently used on the Brooks Falls Trailhead restroom facility. The building may be equipped with skylights, solar tubes, and/or electrical lights.

Approximately 600 square feet of vegetation may be cut and removed to accommodate the restroom and storage cache building. Two 1,000-gallon vault tanks (each tank approximately 6.5 feet by 6.5 feet by 4.5 feet) will be installed under the restroom facility (approximately 380 cubic feet of subsurface disturbance). A portion of this depth may occur below the Katmai Ash layer. Waste will be pumped from the tanks annually in the fall during camp shutdown operations and transported to the existing VTTS Road waste disposal area on the south side of the Brooks River. The existing pit toilet outhouse located adjacent to seasonal park housing will be removed and the pit will be filled with weed-free soil, sand, or gravel.

Historic Log Cache

The Brooks Camp historic log cache will be relocated to the picnic area. The cache will be placed atop a set of log supports as it was constructed in the 1950s or positioned near ground level. A wayside may be installed within the picnic area to interpret the importance of the Brooks Camp historic structures.

Relocation of Facilities

The picnic area and restroom/storage cache facility will eventually be relocated to the south side of the Brooks River when day-use operations are no longer required on the north side of the river. The historic log cache and other Brooks Camp historic structures will eventually be relocated to the Beaver Pond Terrace area south of the Brooks River after the site has been developed. This site was selected as the preferred alternative in the 1996 *Brooks River Area Development Concept Plan*.

Mitigating Measures

Employee and Visitor Safety, Soundscape, and Visitor Experience

The proposed project will be conducted by NPS staff and/or contractors in a safe manner. Excavation and transport equipment will be operated only by qualified personnel. Brooks Camp management staff will be informed in advance of scheduled project activities. This information will be used to inform the park staff, visiting public, and commercial service operators about construction activities within the project area.

Water Quality

To protect surface and ground water quality, proposed activities associated with the installation and maintenance of the vault toilet tanks will follow all required NPS and ADEC mitigations. The restroom facility will be located at least 150 feet away from the Brooks Camp drinking water wells.

Soils and Vegetation

Ground disturbance will be limited to the picnic shelter and restroom/storage cache building construction areas. Revegetation efforts will take place concurrently with construction activities. Wherever possible, mats of ground cover and shrubs will be salvaged and used to revegetate disturbed areas.

For all ground-disturbing project components, efforts will be made to avoid introduction of non-native species into the area. Excavation, backfilling, and revegetation will be accomplished with a combination of hand tools and heavy equipment. Cut trees may be used as campground firewood. Brush and other organic debris will be removed from the project area.

Threatened, Endangered, and Species of Special Concern

Construction activities will not take place if Steller's eiders (*Polysticta stelleri*) are present within the project area. No trees and shrubs will be cut or removed between April 10 and July 15 in order to protect migratory nesting birds, particularly those birds that are considered species of special concern that may

nest within the project area: olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus borealis*), blackpoll warbler (*Dendroica striata*), and gray-cheeked thrush (*Catharus minimus*) nesting sites.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

To reduce possible negative impacts on brown bears and other wildlife within and immediately adjacent to the project area, project activities will be coordinated between the park management divisions responsible for implementing the project and protecting wildlife and visitors. Equipment and materials will be properly secured when not in use to prevent wildlife damage.

Cultural Resources

To ensure that the proposed project complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), consultation with descendants of local native Alaskans of the Katmai area will occur.

An archaeological investigation will be completed before the project is implemented. Archeologists will survey one or more vault toilet locations. The selected location will have no adverse effect on archeological resources. During the survey, the excavation will be photographed. Artifacts, faunal material, and other samples will be collected, accessioned, and cataloged in accordance with standard NPS curatorial procedures. If a suitable underground vault toilet location cannot be identified without adversely affecting archeological resources, the toilet will be installed in a suitable location on an above-ground gravel pad.

The picnic shelter and restroom facility will be located, screened, and constructed of compatible materials, construction, and scale to avoid adversely affecting the historic setting of the Brooks Camp ranger station and visitor center.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The EA was issued for public review and comment for 31 days between June 23 and July 23, 2010. Notices of the EA were sent by mail and email to 117 government agencies, tribal entities, interest groups, and individuals. The EA was posted on the NPS *Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC)* website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>.

Three written comments were received. None of the comments were substantive. The public comments received did not change the conclusions in the EA about the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION

The NPS decision is to select Alternative 2, Improve Picnic Area and Preserve Log Cache, along with mitigating measures.

Rationale for the Decision

The selected actions will satisfy the purpose and need of the project better than the No Action alternative because the existing picnic area does not provide adequate shelter from inclement weather, public toilet facilities are not suitably located near the Brooks Camp visitor center and picnic area, and the historic log cache is currently not being preserved to adequately convey the historic activity associated with the establishment of Brooks Camp in the 1950s.

The improved facilities will serve current visitation needs and meet accessibility standards on the north side of the Brooks River. Installing a picnic shelter within the existing Brooks Camp picnic area will provide day-use visitors an accessible place to prepare and consume food. Combining the existing food and gear caches into one centrally located structure near the visitor center will enable visitors to easily drop off or gather food and gear immediately after arriving or before departing Brooks Camp. Elevating the historic Brooks Camp log cache on a platform will help protect the structure from wood rot and wildlife damage. The historic log cache will become a restored part of the cultural landscape associated with the historic Brooks Camp ranger station and visitor center.

Significance Criteria

The selected alternative will not have a significant effect on the human environment. This conclusion is based on the following examination of the significance criteria defined in 40 CFR 1508.27.

(1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

The EA determined that impacts will range from moderately negative to moderately beneficial.

(2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The selected action will be beneficial to public health and safety by providing a sheltered picnic area, bear-resistant food and gear storage, and a toilet facility that meets public health standards.

(3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The project area is located within the Brooks River Archeological District National Historic Landmark and adjacent to the historic Brooks Camp ranger station and visitor center, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The NPS consulted with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding the proposed picnic area improvements. NPS cultural resources staff conducted a site investigation of the project area and discovered no eligible archeological resources. The picnic shelter and vault toilet will be compatible in material, construction, size, and scale to the historic setting of the Brooks Camp ranger station and visitor center.

(4) The degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

Based on public comments, the effects presented in the EA are not highly controversial.

(5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The effect of the selected action does not have significant elements of uncertainty or involve unique or unknown risks.

(6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent of future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The selected action was evaluated in the EA on its own merits, and in relation to its location, need, and affected resources. Each such proposal is evaluated independently, and decisions regarding this project do not set precedence of policy, practice, or operations for any future proposal.

(7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into smaller component parts.

The selected action is related to other individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Past, present, and future management actions will continue to impact park resources within and adjacent to Brooks Camp. These impacts are related to proposed and previously approved projects described in the EA.

(8) Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

The project area is located within the Brooks River Archeological District National Historic Landmark and adjacent to the historic Brooks Camp ranger station and visitor center, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The NPS consulted with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding the proposed picnic area improvements.

The selected action will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. NPS cultural resources staff conducted a site investigation of the project area and discovered no significant or National Register-eligible archeological resources. The picnic shelter and vault toilet will be compatible in material, construction, size, and scale to the historic setting of the Brooks Camp ranger station and visitor center.

(9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The project area contains no proposed or listed endangered or threatened species or critical habitat.

(10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The proposed action is consistent with Federal, State, and local laws.

FINDINGS

The levels of adverse impacts to park resources anticipated from the selected alternative will not result in an impairment of park resources that fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or that are key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park.

The selected alternative complies with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. There will be no restriction of subsistence activities as documented by ANILCA, Title VIII, Section 810(a) Summary Evaluation and Findings.

The National Park Service has determined that the selected alternative does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an environmental impact statement is not needed and will not be prepared for this project.