



Oak Bottom Campground Redesign and Expansion Brief Description of Proposed Alternatives

Project Background

The National Park Service proposes to expand and redesign the Oak Bottom Campground at the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (NRA). Whiskeytown National Recreation Area was established in 1965 as a unit of the National Park Service. The NRA Final Environmental Impact Statement / General Management Plan (GMP) were prepared during the late 1990s and completed in 1999. One of the primary actions identified during the GMP process was the need to improve the visitor experience at Oak Bottom Campground by reducing campsite density while retaining a similar number of campsites within the area. The existing tent campground at Oak Bottom, which was originally designed as a picnic area, does not offer a high quality recreation experience due to overcrowding resulting in user conflicts. Further, the area has experienced extensive soil compaction and vegetation degradation. As designed and constructed on a low ridge and slope, the picnic area turned campground also does not adequately accommodate the growing trend of recreational vehicle (RV) camping. In 2009, the National Park Service conducted a Planning Charette which included planning and developing preliminary design alternatives for the redesign and expansion of Oak Bottom Campground. The intent of the alternatives is to improve the overall visitor camping experience by reducing the number/density of existing campsites up to 50% while maintaining a maximum number of 110 campsites in the area, redesign the existing parking lot-based Oak Bottom Recreational Vehicle Campground area; and provide additional improvements to provide modern visitor amenities.

Existing condition (No Action Alternative)

Oak Bottom Campground is the only campground located on the shoreline of Whiskeytown Lake. It is open year-round, and operated and maintained under contract with the concessionaire, Forever Resorts. The tent campground contains 100 closely spaced sites. Seventeen of the sites are located on the shoreline and boats may be moored at these sites. Each tent site has a table, fire grate, space to erect the tent, and bear-proof storage locker; a maximum of six people per campsite is allowed. There are two restrooms with flush toilets. All sites are walk-in; the distance from the parking area to campsites varies from approximately 10 to 500 feet. Some sites can accommodate back-in RVs. The tent sites are all located within an area of approximately 29.5 acres. Sites are close together (between 25 to 50 feet apart, occasionally more distance) and generally provide little to no privacy.

The RV campground contains 22 sites and is located in the large parking area near the boat launch ramp. The campground surface is asphaltic concrete and has no shade or RV designed amenities. There is a restroom in the RV campground, however individual sites do not have picnic tables, hookups, or fire grates; nearby is a dump station and a potable water source. Tents are not allowed to be erected in the RV campground.

Other facilities at the Oak Bottom Campground include a newly constructed marina providing boat mooring and rental; a small convenience store stocked with basic camping and boating supplies; a boat launch ramp located adjacent to the RV Campground; a swim beach with a large picnic area, restrooms, and showers; an amphitheater for interpretation programs and day use; and a handicapped accessible fishing pier.

The No Action Alternative will be included in the environmental assessment and serves as a baseline to compare potential adverse and beneficial project-related impacts.

Action Alternatives

The following are brief, general descriptions of three alternatives (B, C, and D) to be considered for the expansion and redesign of Oak Bottom Campground to achieve the objectives of the proposed project under the GMP.

All three alternatives would achieve a basic improvement program including:

- Improved vehicular access, circulation, and parking for cars and RVs
- New restrooms/showers located conveniently within the campground
- New campground store; larger and located adjacent to the campground
- New campground entrances
- The RV campground (currently located in the parking lot) would be reduced by the number of spaces and the spaces separated by shade trees, picnic tables, and fire grates
- Floating docks would be added to boat-in campsites
- Long-term erosion control and revegetation of existing disturbed sites and new temporarily disturbed areas
- Improved and additional walkways, paths, and lighting throughout campground area
- Amphitheater moved from current isolated location to a site near the campground
- Each new campsite would include picnic table, tent-pitching site, grill, and bear-proof storage unit
- There will be a 30-foot buffer around the shoreline of Whiskeytown Lake and the Historic Water Ditch trail

Alternative B

The alternative focuses on expansion of the existing campground onto two undeveloped peninsulas adjacent to and to the west of the existing campground. The existing campground area would be redesigned RV sites primarily, with several boat-in-campsites. The newly developed peninsulas would provide drive-in campsites, primarily used for tent camping. In this alternative, there would be approximately 50 RV sites, 29 tent sites, and 14 boat-in sites – a total number of sites ranging from 91 to 95. Development of the two peninsulas would result in the campground occupying approximately 49 acres.

Alternative C

The alternative focuses on expansion of the existing campground onto two undeveloped peninsulas adjacent to and to the west of the existing campground as well as onto the area to the northeast of the existing campground, i.e., between the present boat launch ramp and marina. The existing campground area and peninsulas to the west would be redesigned and developed as described in Alternative B. The newly developed peninsula areas would provide drive-in campsites, primarily used for tent camping. The area to the northeast of the existing campground may accommodate 1-5 additional walk-in tent sites, resulting in approximately 50 RV sites, 34 tent sites, and 14 boat-in sites – up to 98 total campsites.

Alternative D

The alternative focuses on expansion of the campground onto two undeveloped peninsulas adjacent to and to the west of the existing campground, development of the area to the northeast of the campground, i.e., between the present boat launch ramp and marina as described in Alternative C; and also includes

development of boat-in only campsites on selected sites on the shoreline of Whiskeytown Lake. Campsites would range in size to accommodate up to 6 to 8 campers, or be smaller and accommodate 2 to 4 campers. Some sites may be designated as accessible only to kayaks or canoes. Each boat-in camp area, typically containing two campsites, would include a picnic table, tent pad, fire ring, bear-proof storage unit, and toilet. These sites would be operated and maintained by the concessionaire, as would all campsites associated with the Oak Bottom Campground Expansion and Redesign Project.

In this alternative, Whiskeytown Lake may accommodate up to an additional 10 boat-in camp sites, allowing for further reduced density of the existing campground than Alternative B, and/or meeting the maximum NRA goal of 110 campsites. This alternative also achieves the action plan identified in the GMP to “designate and develop small-scale boat-in/walk-in (from lake shore) low density campgrounds at various locations on the lake shore where environmentally acceptable and economically feasible.”