



## LAKE MCDONALD LODGE PARKING PROJECT

Dear Friends,

Glacier National Park is designing additional parking for visitors, concession employees, and Red Buses at two sites within the Lake McDonald Lodge developed area. Additional parking for the area was called for in the park's *Commercial Services Plan* of 2004. The project area was analyzed in the EIS for the plan and would occur in previously disturbed locations. We invite your comments regarding new resource issues or concerns, and we appreciate your interest in Glacier National Park.

Chas Cartwright  
Superintendent

### Background and Need for Project

Built in 1914 on the east shore of Lake McDonald, Lake McDonald Lodge was one of the first sites to provide visitor services in Glacier National Park (GNP). The lodge is now a national historic landmark, and Lake McDonald Historic District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Today, the Lake McDonald Lodge developed area is one of the most heavily used recreation sites in the park, providing park visitors with numerous services and recreational opportunities, including lodging, food service, retail, boat and Red Bus tours, boat rentals, horseback riding, and hiking, among others. The area is also a busy shuttle stop and one of the destination points for GNP's transit system.

In 2004, GNP completed the *Final Commercial Services Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement* and *Statement of Findings*. The plan identified a number of actions for the Lake McDonald Lodge developed area, including improvements to guest accommodations, employee housing, and parking.

The Lewis Dorm was constructed in the winter of 2008-09, and construction of a new employee dorm and employee dining room east of Jammer Joe's is scheduled for the winter of 2010-11

(Figure 1). To consolidate employee housing and improve safety, the *Commercial Services Plan* also called for the removal of five dormitory buildings that were built on a 100-year floodplain for Snyder Creek. Three of these buildings, including Boys' Dormitories 1 & 2 and Jammer Dorm, have been moved from Area 1 to Area 2 and rehabilitated in lieu of building an additional dorm. The site once occupied by the Boys' 1 Dorm has been used for parking since the spring of this year. The other two buildings, Johnson and Hydro dorms, have not yet been removed and are scheduled for demolition this fall (Figure 1).

Inadequate parking for visitors, concession employees, and the Red Buses has long been an issue at the Lake McDonald Lodge developed area. In the *Commercial Services Plan*, the National Park Service (NPS) decided to provide additional parking in Area 1, but the plan did not identify a specific location. In 2009, park staff identified two locations for the new parking south of Snyder Creek at the former dorm sites (Figure 1). The park hopes to construct the new parking areas during the summer of 2011.

At this time, the NPS does not find it necessary to do an environmental assessment for the project since the actions fall within the scope identified by the *Commercial Services Plan*, and because the affected area was analyzed in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement* (FEIS) and the *Statement of Findings*. The park is nonetheless conducting public scoping to determine if there are any additional resource concerns that have not been considered.



Johnson and Hydro Dorms and proposed site of new parking east of Loop Road- NPS photo

## Objectives of the Project

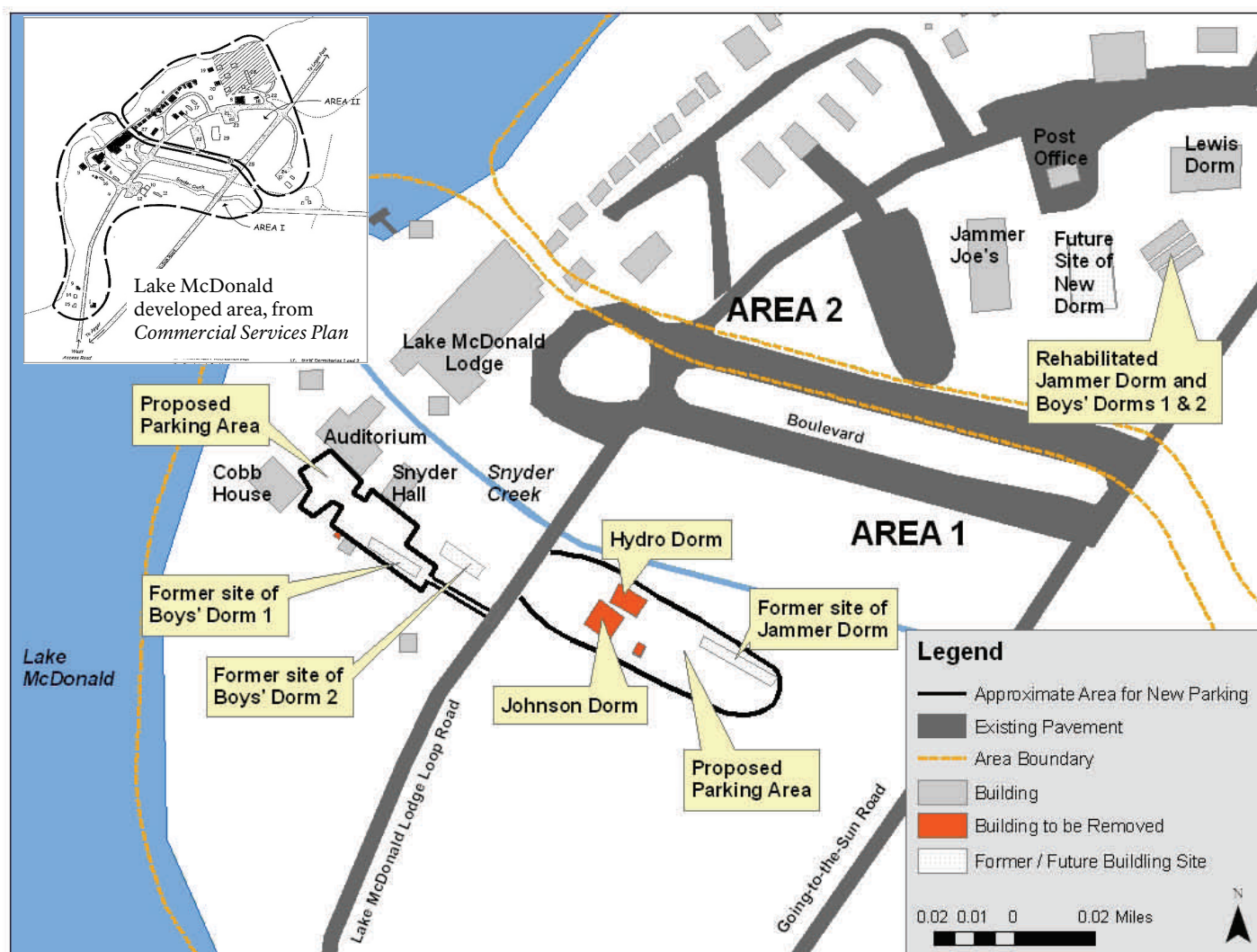
- Provide more parking at the Lake McDonald Lodge developed area.
- Complete actions called for in the *Commercial Services Plan*.
- Concentrate parking in areas that have previously been disturbed.

## Project Design

The disturbed sites where the Johnson, Hydro, Jammer, and Boys' 1 dorms were located would be redesigned and developed into parking for visitors, employees, and Red Buses. The Boys' 2 dorm site would be restored with native vegetation.

Two separate parking areas would be constructed. One would be west of the Lake McDonald Lodge Loop Road in the vicinity of Snyder Hall, Cobb House, and the auditorium/recreation hall; and the other would be east of the loop road where the Hydro and Johnson dorms are currently located (Figure 1). Snyder Hall, Cobb House, and the auditorium/recreation hall would remain.

The parking area east of the loop road would provide 7 spaces for Red Buses and 47-49 spaces for passenger cars; Red Buses and passenger cars would have separate designated parking. Approximately 0.08 acre would be disturbed in addition to the area already disturbed by the dorms and from years of informal parking. The total disturbed area would be 0.6 acre and would not exceed the amount identified in the *Commercial Services Plan*. Three large Rocky Mountain maples would be removed, two of which



**Figure 1:** Lake McDonald Lodge developed area, illustrating locations and approximate configurations of the proposed parking developments. Areas 1 and 2 are as shown in the *Commercial Services Plan*. (Scale is approximate.)



are old and in decline. The parking area would include at least two vegetated islands.

The parking area west of the loop road currently provides spaces for approximately 20 vehicles. The area would be redesigned to provide 24 passenger car spaces and would disturb an additional 0.02 acre (approximately). A gate would be installed to prevent unauthorized parking at the lakeshore. One large, declining Rocky Mountain maple and one or two mature western red cedars would be removed. Over 0.05 acre (2500 square feet) would be revegetated between Snyder Creek and the new parking area at the former Boys' Dormitory 2 site.

Both parking areas would be gravel or permeable pavement to allow for drainage and filtering.

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### **Resource Impacts Identified in *Commercial Services Plan/FEIS* and *Statement of Findings***

The *Commercial Services Plan/Draft Final Environmental Impact Statement* underwent extensive environmental analysis and public review. The scoping process began in September of 2000; approximately 650 comments were received and the *Record of Decision* was signed on August 20, 2004. The area affected by the current project was analyzed in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement* (FEIS); impact topics included natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources (NPS 2004a).

The FEIS found that construction activity for facility improvements called for by the *Commercial Services Plan* could have short-term, adverse impacts ranging from negligible to moderate to most resources, including wildlife, threatened and endangered species and species of concern, natural sounds, air quality, visual resources, and visitor use and experience.



Snyder Creek and auditorium building - NPS photo

The FEIS determined that unimpeded water flow from the removal of the dormitories would have minor beneficial, long-term impacts to the Snyder Creek floodplain. Expanded parking in Area 1 could increase run-off and non-point source pollution from parked vehicles, but drainage control measures would mitigate these concerns, resulting in a minor adverse impact on water resources.

The FEIS found that the plan would have a negligible beneficial impact to soils and vegetation from the restoration of previously disturbed areas, and minor adverse impacts to vegetation from the removal of trees and understory plants.

The FEIS also determined that facility development south of Snyder Creek could have long-term moderate impacts to wildlife from a reduction of mature western red cedar/black cottonwood forest type. Vegetation restoration following removal of the dorms could have some negligible, long-term beneficial impacts to species of concern and threatened and endangered species, including Canada lynx, grizzly bears, and gray wolves. The analysis determined that habitat loss from parking lot and road improvements north of Snyder Creek and disturbances from an increased human presence with new employee housing would have minor long-term effects on threatened and endangered species and species of concern. Sediments and pollutants in water runoff from an expansion of paved areas could have minor to moderate, adverse, localized and long-term impacts to the threatened bull-trout.

The FEIS found that formalized parking in Area 1 combined with other actions would constitute new developments within the Lake McDonald Lodge Historic District, resulting in long-term, moderate to major adverse impacts to cultural resources. No impacts to the Blackfeet and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes were identified. The FEIS determined that visual resources would undergo moderate long-term, site-specific, adverse and beneficial impacts from the development of facilities and parking areas, and that long-term visitor use and experience would generally be positively impacted by improved visitor services and less traffic congestion.

In a separate analysis, the Water Resources Division of the NPS prepared a Statement of Findings (SOF) addressing facility maintenance and development that would occur under the *Commercial Services Plan* on three floodplains, including Snyder Creek

(NPS 2004b). The SOF found that effects from new parking lots and other facilities would “have minimal impact on increased flooding”, and that the plan combined with existing developments would have a minor adverse cumulative impact to floodplains and hydrology. The SOF was signed in 2004 with the *Record of Decision* and still covers actions identified by the *Commercial Services Plan*, including the development of additional parking.

The proposed parking project would not increase the level of impacts beyond that determined by the SOF or the FEIS. One or two mature western red cedars and four Rocky Mountain maples, including three that are old and in decline, would be removed. The area once occupied by Boys’ Dorm 2 would be restored with native vegetation typical of a cedar hemlock community. These plantings would provide productive habitat as well as screening along the creek and between the lodge and the parking area. Vegetated islands would add visual interest, and the additional parking for visitors would benefit visitor use and experience. Hard-packed surfaces at existing parking areas south of Snyder Creek would be replaced with gravel or permeable pavement, allowing for better drainage and filtering of pollutants.

The sites for this project are within the area analyzed

in the FEIS and the SOF, the impact determinations have not changed as a result of the project design, and no new information has been identified that would warrant additional environmental analysis or resource concerns.

#### References:

- National Park Service (NPS). 2004a. Final commercial services plan and final environmental impact statement, Glacier National Park. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Glacier National Park, West Glacier, MT.
- . 2004b. Statement of findings: Proposal to maintain, rehabilitate and construct National Park Service and concession facilities at Rising Sun, Many Glacier, and Lake McDonald developed areas. In *Final commercial services plan and final environmental impact statement, Glacier National Park*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Glacier National Park, West Glacier, MT.



Red Buses parked east of Loop Road - NPS photo

### Your Participation

Because of your interest in Glacier National Park, we are informing you of this upcoming project and requesting your input regarding concerns or comments. We will review your comments to ensure we are addressing all resource issues and to determine whether additional environmental compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act is required. Please send comments to the address below. No public meetings are scheduled at this time.

***Please provide comments by November 8, 2010***



Former Boys’ Dorm 1 site - NPS photo

#### How to Comment:

*Post on the Internet at:*

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/parkHome.cfm?parkId=61>

*OR send to:*

***Superintendent Glacier National Park***

***Lake McDonald Lodge Parking***

***PO Box 128***

***West Glacier, MT 59936***

***Phone: 406-888-7901***