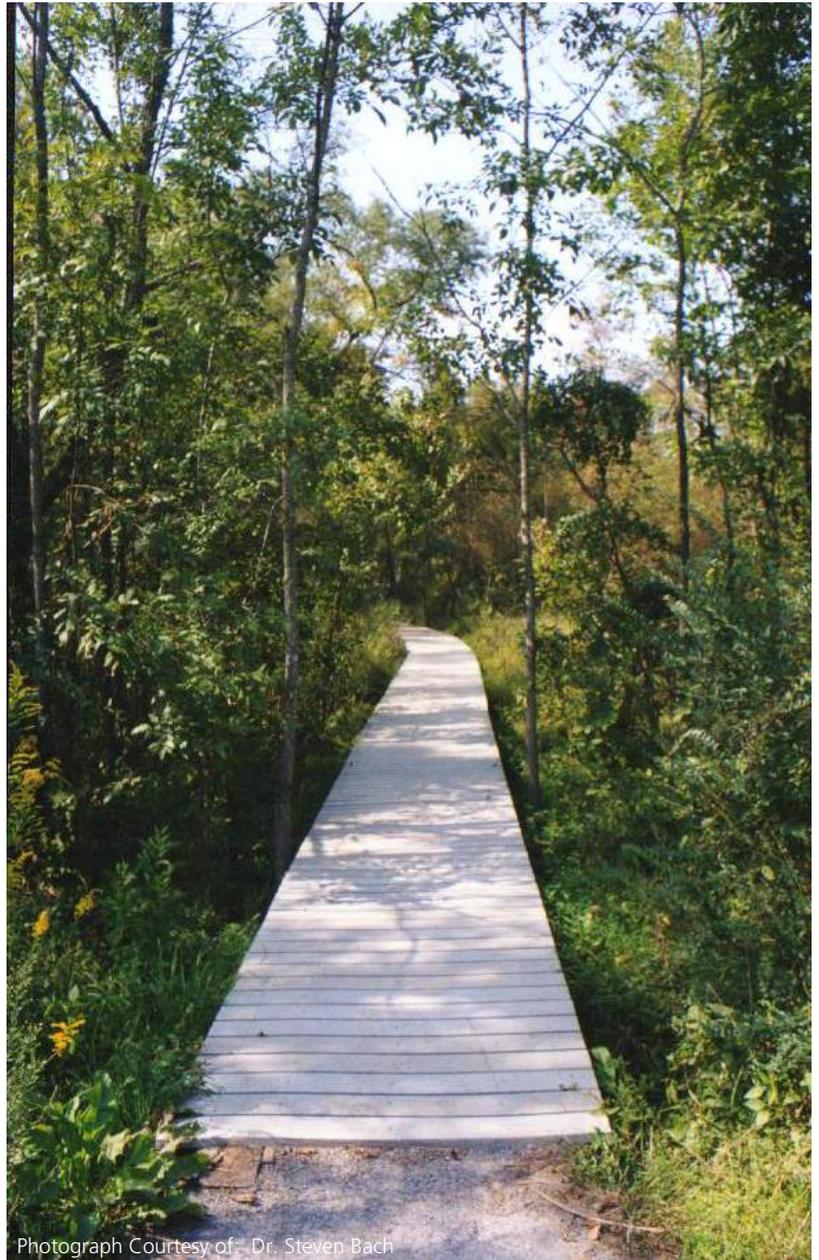

Chapter 2

ALTERNATIVES



Photograph Courtesy of: Dr. Steven Bach

Cochran Shoals

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area
Final General Management Plan/
Environmental Impact Statement

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CHAPTER 2 ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the alternatives that were developed. The formulation of alternatives was a multi-step process.

The National Park Service identified management prescriptions that potentially were applicable to the park. Each management prescription was defined by desired visitor experiences and resource conditions. These were developed based upon public input during the scoping phase of the planning process in 2002. The input provided helped establish the kinds of activities or facilities (or prescriptions) that would achieve targeted conditions.

Management zones were defined and then mapped to specific areas of the park to create three action alternatives that are evaluated in the Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement that was presented in May 2004. These action alternatives were: the Focus on Solitude Alternative, Centralized Access Alternative, and Expanded Access Alternative. These alternatives were subsequently named Alternatives B, C and D, respectively. In addition, the No Action, or Continue Current Management Alternative (Alternative A) was analyzed.

After the June 2004 publication of the Draft GMP/EIS, NPS received strong stakeholder (including the State of Georgia) and public objections to the treatment of fishing and boating as well as bicycling activities in some of the plan alternatives. In response to public comment and in consultation with the State of Georgia, the planning team made major revisions to the document including the development of two new alternatives (Alternatives E and F). Because Alternatives B, C, & D treated zoning in the river itself according to the zoning of the adjacent land, it was necessary to create a separate river zone to address the public comments in the two new alternatives.

The two alternatives were presented to the park's stakeholders and then to the general public in a series of public meetings in December 2005. Over 500 reviewers commented on the new alternatives. The planning team then developed the environmental analysis of the alternatives, updated some of the data in the original document, made other corrections and revisions suggested by public comments and estimated the costs of all the alternatives.

The National Park Service employed the Choosing by Advantages process during a workshop on September 18 & 19, 2006 to select the agency preferred alternative, which resulted in the selection of Alternative F as the preferred.

Each of these steps is described in the sections that follow. Detailed descriptions are provided for the prescriptions, management zones, and each of the alternatives.

CARRYING CAPACITY

The statutory requirement for addressing user capacity in General Management Plans was established in the 1978 National Parks and Recreation Act (16 USC 1a-7). User capacity is defined as the type and level of visitor use that can be accommodated while sustaining the desired resource and visitor experience conditions in the park. Table 1 presents a set of indicators that measure whether or not desired resource conditions and visitor experiences are being achieved and presents standards that provide limits of acceptable change for the indicators. The park would then monitor the indicators and take management action as needed to meet the standards. As park management gains knowledge

from applying and testing the indicators and standards in the field, there may be the need for revision and refinement. This would be carried out with the engagement of our partners, stakeholders, and the general public.

Table 1. Indicators and Standards for Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

Topic	Indicator	Standard	Monitoring Exam- ples	Management Strategies
Damage to Cultural Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of unauthorized trails leading to, through, and from site. 2. General damage or defacement of historic structures, ruins, and exposed surface archeological sites not caused by natural forces. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two unauthorized trails leading to a resource site. 2. No artifacts, ruins and historic structures, or exposed surface archeological sites with evidence of damage or defacement. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Counts of unauthorized trails at a percentage of sites within each park unit. 2. Counts of unauthorized trails at all sites within each park unit 3. Quantify the evidence for attempts to remove or vandalize artifacts and surface occurring archeological deposits. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase educational efforts and revise visitor handouts to make people aware of how certain activities cause damage. 2. Institute regular resource management staff monitoring patrols. 3. Provide regular guided tours to site (requires staff presence). 4. Build physical barriers to reduce or channel access to site from trail or public viewpoint. 5. Increase number of high visibility ranger patrols in locales with highest percentage of new damage. 6. Limit number of people actually within site boundaries (requires staff presence). 7. Close site to all public use.

Table 1. Indicators and Standards for Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (continued)

Topic	Indicator	Standard	Monitoring Examples	Management Strategies
Unauthorized Trails	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Total length of all unauthorized trails in a park unit. Number of unauthorized trails branching off from designated trail system. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Unauthorized trails do not exceed 5% of total trail length in a park unit. Two intersections within 100 feet of designated trail. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Measure length of unauthorized trails in each park unit. Count number of intersections with designated trails. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase education. Clearly delineate designated trails with signs. Determine if trail leads to an area that should have an authorized trail. Increase enforcement patrols and/or block trails. Limit/permit activities that are creating most of the trails.
Visitor Experience on the River	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of reported visitor incidents on the river. Number of reported visitor accidents on the river. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Three reported incidents per quarter between designated river access points. Zero accidents related to river use. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Count number of reported incidents or complaints. Count number of reported accidents. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase education regarding river safety and use. Increase number of high visibility ranger patrols.
Visitor Experience on Land	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of reported visitor incidents on land. Number of reported visitor accidents on land. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Three reported incidents per quarter in a land unit. Zero accidents in a land unit. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Count number of reported incidents or complaints. Count number of reported accidents. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase education regarding trail safety and etiquette. Increase number of high visibility ranger patrols.
River Access	Length of time watercraft user must wait from arrival at launch until launch is available for use.	Waiting times do not exceed 10 minutes more than 10% of the time.	Clock wait times.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increased management of ramps or launches by park staff. Construct more ramps or launches. Coordinate with other agencies (local, state) for ramp/launch improvements.

Table 1. Indicators and Standards for Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (continued)

Topic	Indicator	Standard	Monitoring Examples	Management Strategies
Parking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of time (duration) parking lots are full. Number of times (frequency) parking lots are full. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A parking lot is full five hours a week. A parking lot is full twice a week. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Clock amount of time parking lot is full. Count number of times a parking lot is full. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increased management of parking lots by park staff. Expand or re-design parking lots to accommodate more vehicles. Construct more parking lots. Pursue shared off-site parking.

POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

This section defines all management prescriptions that could be applied to the park under any of the alternatives. The management prescriptions define the desired future resource conditions and visitor experiences, including the appropriate kinds and levels of management and use.

A management prescription is an approach for administering or treating the resources or uses of a specified area, based on desired outcomes. Management prescriptions include target goals or objectives for one or more resources and/or visitor experiences that are present within the prescription area. The alternatives for the park consist of multiple zones with different management prescriptions. Together, the management prescriptions within an alternative meet all goals of the park.

Different physical, biological, and social conditions are emphasized in each zone. The factors that define each management prescription are the:

- Desired visitor experience
- Desired natural and cultural resource conditions

These factors then indicate the types of park related activities or facilities that are appropriate within the zone. Facilities, as outlined in Tables 2 and 3, include all types of structures or other man-made items that facilitate visitor use. For example, the types of facilities the park supports include trails, river access facilities such as boat launches or ramps, signs, contact stations, kiosks (small structures used to convey information, some may be manned, many are not.)

Regardless of the target visitor experience or resource condition, all management prescriptions conform to park-specific purpose, significance, and mission goals and to the servicewide mandates and policies. For example, an archeological site would be protected, regardless of whether it occurs in any given zone. However, the use of that site for educational purposes could vary, depending on the management prescription assigned to the area where the resource is located. Other types of special use such as utilities rights-of-way or telecommunications facilities would be considered individually, on a case-by-case basis for each permit application in accordance with the terms of the park’s legislation,

regulations, and management planning documents (see also Chapter 1; NPS 2006f). As such, these types of uses and facilities are not included as individual prescriptions, but would individually be evaluated to ensure that unacceptable impacts are prevented and that an individual proposal would not cause unavoidable conflicts with the park's mission (NPS 2006f).

The management prescriptions identified as potentially applicable to the park are described below and summarized in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 summarizes the management prescriptions by zone that were developed for Alternatives B, C and D. The management prescriptions and zones that were developed for Alternatives E and F based upon public input are summarized in Table 3.

For Alternatives B, C and D, where two different zones appear on opposite sides of the same stretch of the Chattahoochee River, the zone with the fewest restrictions would apply to the river. Comments received subsequent to the May 2004 Draft indicated that this zoning application should be changed for several reasons, including the following: this type of zoning would cause confusion, desire to maintain use of motorized vessels in the entire park and, the desire for the river to be one zone. As a result, the river zone was created where boating and fishing are allowed in all park waterways in Alternatives E and F. Two other new zones were created in response to public input regarding the May 2004 Draft. These new zones are the historic resource zone and the rustic zone. The differences, as well as other changes resulting from public comment, are described by zone in the sections that follow.

MANAGEMENT ZONES

The prescriptions emphasize desired conditions and visitor experiences for natural resources, cultural resources, recreation areas, visitor facilities, and administration and operations areas. The management prescriptions were applied to specific areas of the park called zones. Management zoning is the method used by the National Park Service to identify and describe the appropriate variety of natural resource conditions, cultural resource conditions, and visitor experiences to be achieved and maintained in the different areas of a park. Management zones also define appropriate levels and types of facilities and development for various areas of the park. Management zones do not specify the location, design particulars, or footprint of any facility nor do they guarantee that any particular type of facility, although permitted by the zone definition, will ever be developed within that zone. No facilities of any kind will be proposed for areas that are not suitable by virtue of environmental conditions or the presence of important cultural resources. No facilities will be proposed without further site specific environmental analysis and opportunities for public review and comment. The following is a summary of each zone developed during the completion of this general management planning effort.

DEVELOPED ZONE (ALTERNATIVES B, C, D, E AND F)

The developed zone would provide access and the "built environment" to support a wide variety of recreational and educational opportunities. This zone would be characterized by a relatively high density of people in a relatively urbanized setting. The opportunity for solitude would be low, but the potential for educational opportunities would be high. This area would be characterized by the highest proximity to basic facilities such as buildings, roads, parking lots, and paved trails.

Table 2. Management Prescriptions – Alternatives B, C, & D

CATEGORY	NATURAL AREA RECREATION ZONE	NATURAL ZONE (FORMERLY URBAN PRIMITIVE)	DEVELOPED ZONE	RIVER SOLITUDE ZONE (FORMERLY PRISTINE RIVER ZONE)	CULTURAL RESOURCE ZONE
TYPES OF ACTIVITIES					
Day hiking	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Trails	Yes
Off-road Bicycling	Yes, on designated trails only	No	Yes, on designated trails only	No	No
Picnicking	Yes	Yes, no facilities	Yes	Yes, no facilities	No
Fishing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, from river only	No
Equestrian	Yes, existing trails only	No	Yes	No	No
Scientific research	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, limited activities only	Yes
Canoeing, rafting, kayaking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, on river only	Yes
Habitat restoration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Motorized Vessels (No personal watercraft, or PWCs, allowed)	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Types of Facilities					
Trails	Yes, unpaved trails only	Yes, primitive trails only	Yes	No	Yes
River Access Facilities (ramps, step-downs, boardwalks, docks, etc.)	Yes	Yes, existing only – no new river access facilities	Yes	No	No
Visitor & Admin. Facilities	Yes, limited in size & impact	Yes, existing only – no new visitor & admin. facilities	Yes	No	Yes
Parking areas	Yes	Yes, existing only – no new parking areas	Yes	No	Yes
Picnic areas	Yes	Yes, existing only - no new picnic areas	Yes	No	No
Restrooms	Yes	Yes, existing only – no new restrooms	Yes	No	Yes
Roads	Yes, limited access roads	Yes, existing only – no new roads	Yes	No	No
Bridges	Yes, non-motorized vehicles & pedestrians	Yes, foot bridge only	Yes	No	No
Kiosks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Under Alternatives B, C, & D, there is not a separate zone type for the river itself. Where two different zones appear on opposite sides of the same stretch of river, the zone with the fewest restrictions would apply to the river.

Table 3. Management Prescriptions – Alternatives E & F

CATEGORY	NATURAL AREA RECREATION ZONE	NATURAL ZONE (FORMERLY URBAN PRIMITIVE)	DEVELOPED ZONE	RIVER ZONE	HISTORIC RESOURCE ZONE	RUSTIC ZONE
Types of Activities						
Day hiking	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes
Off-road Bicycling	Yes, on designated trails only	No	Yes, on designated trails only	N/A	No	Yes, on designated trails only
Picnicking	Yes	Yes, no facilities	Yes	Yes, no facilities	Yes	Yes, no facilities
Fishing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Equestrian	Yes, existing trails only	No	Yes	N/A	No	No
Scientific research	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canoeing, rafting, kayaking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Habitat restoration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Motorized Vessels (No PWCs allowed)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A
Types of Facilities						
Trails	Yes, unpaved trails only	Yes, primitive trails only	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes, primitive trails only
River Access Facilities (ramps, step-downs, boardwalks, docks, etc.)	Yes	Yes, existing only, no new river access facilities	Yes	Yes	Yes, existing only, no new river access facilities	Yes, step-downs, boardwalks, docks, viewing platforms only
Visitor & Admin. Facilities	Yes, limited in size & impact	Yes, existing only, no new visitor/admin. Facilities	Yes	N/A	Yes, appropriate within cultural context	No
Parking areas	Yes	Yes, existing only, no new parking areas	Yes	N/A	Yes, appropriate within cultural context	Yes, existing only – no new parking
Picnic areas	Yes	Yes, existing only, no new picnic areas	Yes	N/A	Yes, appropriate within cultural context	No
Restrooms	Yes	Yes, existing only, no new restrooms	Yes	N/A	Yes, appropriate within cultural context	Yes, existing only – no new restrooms
Roads	Yes, limited access roads	Yes, existing only, no new roads	Yes	N/A	Yes, appropriate within cultural context	Yes, existing only – no new roads

Table 3. Management Prescriptions – Alternatives E & F

CATEGORY	NATURAL AREA RECREATION ZONE	NATURAL ZONE (FORMERLY URBAN PRIMITIVE)	DEVELOPED ZONE	RIVER ZONE	HISTORIC RESOURCE ZONE	RUSTIC ZONE
Types of Facilities						
Bridges	Yes, non-motorized vehicles & pedestrians	Yes, foot bridge only	Yes	Yes, existing vehicular bridges and bridges supportive of non-motorized use –	Yes, appropriate within cultural context	Yes, bridges supportive of non-motorized use - appropriate
Kiosks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, appropriate within cultural context	Yes

N/A: Not Applicable

Visitor Experience

In this zone, visitors would have convenient access to public park buildings and facilities and ample opportunity for social experiences, with a high probability of encountering other visitors or park staff. The developed zone would act as a core area for services, transportation, information, and facilities. Visitors of all ages and athletic ability would be able to use outdoor skills and experience introductory-level park adventure and education, degree of challenge or risk associated with these activities would be low. Facilities would provide a strategically attractive option for users to fulfill short park visits.

Resource Condition or Character

Resources in the developed zone may be modified for visitor and park operational needs. Visitors and facilities would be intensively managed for resource protection and visitor safety. These changes would be instituted in a manner harmonious with the natural environment. The developed zone would thus consist of a built environment with high levels of impervious surface and developed areas for park facilities. The area would be predominantly natural, but the sights and sounds of people would be clearly evident as visitors experience the park.

Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities

A wide variety of activities would be allowed in the developed zone. Appropriate activities would include day hiking, off-road and street biking, horseback riding, jogging, picnicking, nature and cultural resource observation, interpretative activities, fishing, canoeing, rafting, kayaking, and boating.

Types of acceptable facilities in this zone would include trails, visitor center, administrative facilities, parking areas, boat ramps, scientific research areas, restrooms, roads and bridges, visitor contact stations and kiosks, and interpretive centers.

Should the park receive requests for telecommunications facilities, the location of such facilities would be considered appropriate in the developed zone if they do not interfere with the park's mission, nor cause unacceptable impacts on park resources, values or purpose (see also, Chapter 1; NPS 2006f).

NATURAL AREA RECREATION ZONE (ALTERNATIVES B, C, D, E AND F)

The concept of this zone is to allow certain types of active recreation in a relatively undisturbed natural environment. The number of visitors in this zone would be relatively high, so the opportunity for experiencing solitude would be moderate as compared with the natural zone. Unpaved trails would be appropriate in this zone, as would activities such as off-road bicycling in designated areas.

Visitor Experience

The natural area recreation zone would be essentially natural, but would experience a relatively high amount of visitor use. At certain times of day or season, opportunities for solitude would occur, but in general the probability of encountering other visitors would be moderate to high. The degree of isolation and feeling of closeness to nature would be low to moderate, limited by the presence of other people. The outdoor challenge for visitors in this zone would be moderate and greater than in the

developed zone. Access to this zone would be relatively easy. A high diversity of experiences would be possible in this zone, with a moderate amount of facilitation by the National Park Service.

Resource Condition or Character

This zone would require a moderate to high degree of management to protect visitors and resources within this zone because of the large numbers of users in a natural setting. Some portions of the natural environment could be modified for trails and other uses, but the overall setting would consist of natural habitats. There would be a low tolerance for natural resource degradation, and resources would be managed to maintain natural conditions free of exotic vegetation to the extent practicable. Any trails or other facilities would harmonize with the natural environment. The sights and sounds of people would be clearly evident.

Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities

A wide variety of activities would be appropriate in the natural area recreation zone, but with specific restrictions. Appropriate activities would include day hiking, off-road bicycling on trails and street bicycling, picnicking, nature observation, interpretative activities, scientific research, fishing, and boating. Unpaved trails would be designed to accommodate a variety of exercise/recreational pursuits that may vary from activities on foot to those on bicycle and horseback, however horseback riding would be appropriate on existing equestrian trails in this zone. Facilities in the natural area recreation zone would be minimal to support the activities described above, including restrooms, kiosks, rain shelters, and picnic tables. Access roads, parking and river access facilities would also be considered appropriate in this zone.

NATURAL ZONE

(ALTERNATIVES B, C, D, E AND F, WITH DIFFERENCES NOTED)

The natural zone was referred to as the urban primitive zone in the May 2004 Draft. The zone was renamed to reflect public sentiment that the park is located in an urban setting and the word primitive was not appropriate. Based upon this input, the zone was renamed the natural zone.

Motorized boating would not be considered appropriate in the natural zone for Alternatives B, C and D. Based upon public and agency feedback, the river zone was created and applied to Alternatives E and F, making fishing and boating (motorized and non-motorized) appropriate activities throughout the park, in all waters. Note that for Alternatives E and F, the prescription for motorized vessels in the natural zone and all zones other than the river zone reads, "not applicable" in Table 2 to reflect this difference.

The natural zone would provide a relatively undisturbed environment that visitors interested in nature and natural settings could enjoy. Few people would be encountered in this zone, and hiking and nature observation would be appropriate activities on unpaved trails. The concept of this zone is to allow visitors to experience a relatively natural environment with a relatively low probability of encountering many people during a given visit to the park.

Visitor Experience

In the park's natural zone, opportunities for closeness to nature, tranquility, and the application of outdoor skills would be common. The level of encounters with other visitors and staff would be low.

Visitors would need an average degree of outdoor skills and would employ a moderate variety of these types of skills during their stay in the park. This zone would feel farther away from comforts and conveniences than the developed zone. Visitors would be able to have a large variety of outdoor experiences.

Resource Condition or Character

A moderate level of management would be provided for resource protection and visitor safety in the natural zone. National Park Service tolerance for resource degradation due to visitor use in this zone would be very low. Habitats would be restored and maintained in as natural a condition as possible. Subtle onsite controls and restrictions could be present, such as trail markers or restrictions on off-trail use. The area would be predominantly natural, and the sights and sounds of people would be infrequent.

Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities

A variety of experiences would occur in the natural zone. Appropriate activities would include day hiking on unpaved trails, nature observation, interpretative activities, fishing, and scientific research. The use of motorized vessels would be considered appropriate in Alternatives E and F, but not under Alternatives B, C and D. Existing facilities would be maintained in this zone.

RIVER SOLITUDE ZONE (ALTERNATIVES B AND C ONLY)

The river solitude zone was referred to as the pristine river zone in the May 2004 Draft. The zone was renamed to reflect public sentiment that the park is located in an urban setting and the word, "pristine" was not appropriate. Therefore, the zone was renamed the river solitude zone.

The concept of the river solitude zone is to provide visitors with an experience as close to a natural, undisturbed river corridor as possible. Trails would not be allowed in the core of this area, and access would primarily be by boat (non-motorized). In recognition of the fact that the park is located in a rapidly developing corridor, this zone is expected to be relatively limited in extent. As the areas surrounding the park develop, encroachment on this zone may occur. This area would provide a comparatively high degree of solitude and enable visitors to appreciate the natural values of the Chattahoochee River environment.

Visitor Experience

This would be a special limited access part of the park that would allow visitors to float down a relatively undisturbed section of the Chattahoochee River. This area would allow visitors to feel very close to nature, even in an urban setting. This would require strict preservation of a portion of the river corridor habitats on both sides of the river, so that modern development would not be noticeable in the river viewshed wherever possible; thus, the degree of isolation would be very high. This zone would provide a good opportunity to experience solitude and tranquility in an urban setting, which would be a highly valued experience for many. The degree of challenge or risk would be high since no facilities and few park staff would be present, and the visitor would need to know how to apply outdoor skills. Visitors would therefore need a high degree of self-reliance. The possibility of encountering other visitors would be lower in this zone compared to others.

Resource Condition or Character

This zone would be restored to and maintained at its natural state to the extent practicable. In an urban park, this translates into a relatively high degree of management for exotic species of plants and a high degree of protection of the resources from degradation by human uses. There would be zero tolerance for resource degradation in this zone. The management focus of this alternative would be on the natural environment.

Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities

The types of allowable experiences in this zone would include nature observations, limited river-based interpretative activities, use of non-motorized vessels, and fishing from the river only. Viewing would be allowed only from the river. Boat take-outs and put-ins would be allowed above and below this zone. Trails would only occur along the perimeter of this zone, away from the river. No constructed facilities of any type would be appropriate in this zone.

CULTURAL RESOURCE ZONE (ALTERNATIVES B, C AND D ONLY)

This zone was established with the specific goal of protecting cultural resources within the park, while allowing the public to enjoy and understand the value of these resources. The number of visitors to cultural resource zones would be moderate, but variable, depending on the type of resource and location. Opportunity for solitude and enjoyment of the natural environment would also be variable in this zone.

Visitor Experience

This zone would be a clearly defined area that includes archeological or historic resources. This zone could include individual sites already listed on the National Register of Historic Places or, in the future, could include formally designated cultural landscapes. Limited access would be provided for visitors to observe and learn about the resources, with the primary objective to protect the resource and to maintain its character. Additional goals would be to rehabilitate resources according to National Park Service guidelines and to protect the rehabilitated resource in the future.

This zone would be managed to restore features that were originally associated with the resource in accordance with National Park Service policies. This might require habitat manipulation to achieve similar plant communities that were present historically (such as crops associated with a farmstead, or a landscape associated with a former mill site) . However, development of park facilities in this zone would be in context with the historical or archeological resources while allowing for an optimal visitor experience. Natural resources would be protected where consistent with cultural resource values.

The probability of encountering other visitors would be moderate. The visitor would experience a variable degree of isolation and feeling of closeness to nature, depending on where the resource is located. The outdoor challenge and diversity of experience for a visitor in this zone would be low.

Resource Condition or Character

This zone would require a high degree of management to protect visitors and resources because of the potentially high numbers of users in the vicinity of identified and highly sensitive cultural resources.

The natural community could be altered to the degree necessary to restore or maintain the character of identified cultural resources, and there would be a low tolerance for resource degradation.

Some portions of the natural environment within this zone could be modified for trails and other uses that could include impervious surfaces. Any trails or other facilities would harmonize with the cultural and natural environment where practical. The sights and sounds of people would be clearly evident, but variable.

Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities

A more limited variety of activities would be allowed in this zone in order to protect identified cultural resources and values. Appropriate kinds of experiences would include day hiking, nature observation, interpretative activities, scientific research, canoeing, rafting, kayaking, and use of non-motorized vessels. Facilities in this zone would include trails, restrooms, kiosks, and opportunities for interpretive activities. All facilities and uses within this zone would be consistent with the inherent cultural resource values.

HISTORIC RESOURCE ZONE (ALTERNATIVES E AND F ONLY)

This zone was established as a result of public input on the May 2004 Draft. The historic resource zone is the same as the cultural resource zone with regard to the visitor experience and intended character with a few exceptions. The types of activities that differ are picnicking, fishing, and use of motorized vessels which would be considered appropriate in the historic resource zone. In addition, the Chattahoochee River is zoned within the river zone in Alternatives E and F, where boating and fishing activities are appropriate.

Facilities such as visitor and administration facilities, picnic areas, roads, and bridges would be considered appropriate as long as they were developed in the context of the historic resource. In addition, existing river access facilities would be maintained.

RUSTIC ZONE (ALTERNATIVES E AND F ONLY)

The rustic zone was established as a result of public input on the May 2004 Draft. The rustic zone is a land-based zone that would provide a relatively undisturbed environment that the visitor interested in nature and natural settings could enjoy. Based upon public input, off-road bicycling would be an appropriate activity on unpaved trails in the rustic zone. The concept of this zone is to allow visitors to experience a relatively natural environment with a relatively low to moderate probability of encountering other visitors during a given visit to the park.

Visitor Experience

In the park's rustic zone, opportunities for closeness to nature, tranquility, and the application of outdoor skills would be common. The level of encounters with other visitors and staff would be low. Some trails may be considered more popular than others and the likelihood of encountering other visitors would be expected to be moderate on certain trails. Visitors would need an average degree of outdoor skills and would employ a moderate variety of these types of skills during their stay in the park. Depending on the skill level of the individual, the degree of challenge could range from moderate to high. This zone would feel farther away from comforts and conveniences than the

developed zone, and access would be somewhat limited. Visitors would be able to have a large variety of outdoor experiences.

Resource Condition or Character

A moderate level of management would be provided for resource protection and visitor safety in the rustic zone. National Park Service tolerance for resource degradation due to visitor use in this zone would be low. Habitats would be restored and maintained in as natural a condition as possible. Subtle onsite controls and restrictions could be present, such as trail markers or restrictions on off-trail use. The area would be predominantly natural, and the sights and sounds of people would be infrequent.

Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities

A variety of experiences would occur in the rustic zone. Appropriate activities would include day hiking on unpaved trails, off-road bicycling, nature observation, fishing, and scientific research. No new facilities would be constructed such as new roads, paved boat ramps, restrooms, or parking areas. There would be less of the built environment, where visitor and administrative facilities and formal picnic areas would not be appropriate.

RIVER ZONE (ALTERNATIVES E AND F ONLY)

This zone was established as a result of public input on the May 2004 Draft. The concept of the river zone is to provide visitors with a river experience to fish, boat and recreate on the Chattahoochee River. Access would primarily be by boat ramps and step down facilities for canoes, rafts, kayaks and motorized vessels (personalized watercraft are not allowed). This zone would provide a moderate degree of solitude on stretches of the river and enable visitors to appreciate the natural values of the Chattahoochee River environment. Boating and fishing are appropriate in all park waterways within the park under Alternatives E and F.

Visitor Experience

The river zone would allow visitors to feel close to nature, even in an urban setting, which is a highly valued experience for many. The degree of challenge or risk would be high since access points along the river are strategically placed along the 48 mile corridor, and few park staff would be present. The visitor would need to know how to apply outdoor skills including safe boating, swimming, and have a high degree of self-reliance. The possibility of encountering other visitors would be moderate in this zone and would be expected to vary according to location along the Chattahoochee River. The visitor may fish, boat and recreate in the river zone in accordance with State law and private property rights.

Resource Condition or Character

This zone would be restored and maintained at its natural state to the extent practicable. In this urban setting, this translates into a relatively high degree of management for exotic species of plants and a high degree of protection of the resources from degradation by human uses and development actions outside the park. There would be low tolerance for resource degradation in this zone, with access to the river via trails, step-down ramps for hand-carried boats, boat access ramps, boardwalks, and docks where appropriate. The sights and sounds of people would be expected along these access

points and would vary according to location along the river corridor. The management focus of this alternative would be on the natural environment and enjoyment of the river experience.

Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities

The types of appropriate activities in the river zone would include nature observation, limited river-based interpretative activities, scientific research, boating, and fishing. The facilities and services would be related to the river experience and would include boat ramps into the river; step-down facilities into the water for canoes, rafts and kayaks; and boardwalks and docks where appropriate.

FORMULATION OF ALTERNATIVES

The following six alternatives are considered in this general management plan:

Alternative A: Continue Current Management or No Action Alternative

Alternative B: Focus on Solitude Alternative

Alternative C: Centralized Access Alternative

Alternative D: Expanded Use Alternative

Alternative E

Alternative F: Preferred Alternative

The management alternatives in this general management plan have been developed according to guidelines provided in *Director's Order No. 12*. The five action alternatives embody the range of what the public and the National Park Service want to see accomplished with regard to visitor experience, natural resource conditions, and cultural resource conditions. They are based on outcomes, or actual conditions on the ground, as expressed by the management prescriptions. Implementation of any of the management alternatives would be allowable under the existing laws, regulations, policies, and mandates of the National Park Service. Alternative A, which is defined as continuing the current park management practices into the future, is provided in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act guidelines.

The following is a summary of the detailed steps used to develop the alternatives:

Written public comments were received at six separate meetings held in each of the four counties that encompass the park and two local cities in the project area during the fall of 2000. All public meetings were announced in the newspaper and through posting in area libraries and other public places. The public submitted comment cards that were provided by the National Park Service. Over 200 written comments were received.

Comments were initially sorted by topic and the following issue categories resulted: (1) Access, (2) Facility Needs, (3) Ecology, (4) Impacts, (5) Use, (6) Boundaries, (7) Trails, (8) Outreach, (9) Private Property, (10) Transit, (11) Fisheries/Fishing, (12) Enforcement, and (13) Restoration.

The organized comments were reviewed by the National Park Service planning team, then further sorted into the following categories per the requirements of National Park Service planning guidelines: (1) things that cannot be done because they are inconsistent with existing

laws or National Park Service policies; (2) actions that must be done because they are mandated by existing laws, regulations, policies, or mandates; (3) interests or concerns that have been raised that are appropriate to consider in a general management plan; and (4) actions that are more appropriately addressed by other types of plans, such as an implementation plan.

A set of decision points was developed from the smaller set of comments carried forth for consideration in the general management plan. Decision points are generalized statements that describe a range of possible future conditions in the park.

The resources within the park that are at stake and which could be impacted by implementation of a general management plan alternative were identified, and a determination regarding whether they could be impacted was made. If the answer was yes, then these were carried forward into the list of impact topics to be considered in this document. Topics that were not determined to be affected were not carried forward.

This information was used to develop a range of desired future conditions, or prescriptions, for the park. These were developed without mapping or relating the prescriptions to features on the ground in the park.

A set of management alternatives was then developed by applying the prescriptions to zones on a map.

The draft management alternatives were tested to make sure that there were clearly defined differences as required by the National Environmental Policy Act and National Park Service Management Policies 2006 (NPS 2006f). A set of final management alternatives was developed in a series of workshops held by the planning team.

The draft management alternatives were then applied to zones on maps as National Environmental Policy Act alternatives. One map was created for each management alternative. Alternative A was also mapped using the information contained in the 1989 General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

The Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement was issued in May 2004. During the 60 day public comment period for the May 2004 Draft, many concerns were raised regarding recreational opportunities for fishers, boaters, bicyclists and others in terms of access and type of use. Based upon the level of concern, additional meetings were held with stakeholders during the fall of 2005. The National Park Service, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, developed two new alternatives, Alternatives E and F.

A newsletter was published in November 2005 and three public meetings were conducted in December 2005 to discuss the new alternatives. An additional thirty day comment period closed January 2006.

The Supplemental Draft General Management Plan was issued in June 2008, and comments were accepted until December 1, 2008. All alternatives (A through F) are analyzed in this document. Responses to comments are provided in Chapter 6.

The formalized description of the management alternatives as developed and adopted during the National Park Service planning process is presented in the paragraphs that follow. Each management alternative takes into

consideration National Park Service mandates as well as laws and policies, and provides for appropriate levels of protection of the resources in accordance with these laws and policies. The planning team followed this premise during the development of each alternative.

VISITATION, LAND ACQUISITION, AND FACILITIES

Current annual visitation at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is approximately 2.5 million visitors. This visitation is confined to the river and the acreage currently owned by the National Park Service. The park has the authority to acquire land within its boundary and the General Management Plan establishes management zoning for areas within the authorized boundary that are not now owned by National Park Service should funding become available to acquire land from willing sellers.

It is also assumed (based on historical trends that may or may not continue into the future) that any new visitor access facilities, on newly acquired lands or previously undeveloped park lands, would result in an overall increase in park visitation. Potential facilities, under any alternative, for undeveloped park owned lands would include the following:

Bowmans Island (eastern section) – primitive trails, interpretive kiosk

Orrs Ferry – unpaved trails

Settles Bridge – restroom, unpaved trails

McGinnis Ferry – primitive trails, interpretive kiosk

Suwanee Creek – primitive trails

Abbots Bridge (northern section) – unpaved trails

Holcomb Bridge – parking, unpaved trails

Johnson Ferry North (upper section) – unpaved trails

Hyde Farm – trails

Island Ford (western section) – primitive trails

The National Park Service is committed to the planning, design and operation of facilities using sustainable practices/principles, including the use of pervious paving systems. These types of systems and other efficient technologies will be considered for each project while taking into consideration social, economic and environmental benefits. Sustainable practices/principles will be considered in accordance with National Park Service Management Policies (NPS 2006) and executive orders. These practices and principles are planning and design considerations and will be addressed during implementation with site specific conditions in mind.

Planning for future facilities, including trails, includes environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and other laws and regulations. Future project environmental reviews will be site specific, and address number, location, and cultural and natural impacts as well as park operations (i.e. maintenance, management, enforcement, safety and use) and have opportunities for public input. Visitor experiences, including potential use conflicts are included in the environmental review process.

PARTNERING

Each of the action alternatives promotes partnering as a means to increase park stewardship, increase knowledge and protection of park resources, improve park conditions, improve visitor experiences, and support the park in meeting its mission. Partnering opportunities would be sought to help defray costs for projects or programs. These partnerships would be identified by additional National Park Service staff who would focus on the realization of productive partnerships. This would include the expansion and reinvigoration of existing partnerships as well as the possible creation of new partnerships. Examples would include partnerships with educational institutions to conduct research projects to meet park resources management needs; partnerships with private and public entities for sharing parking and/or comfort stations (outside the park) to provide visitor services and allow access to the park; partnerships with other agencies for potential new river access facilities under joint management; expanded partnering with local fishing groups to address river clean ups, research, water quality and aquatic resource education. These types of partnering opportunities would be made possible by newly proposed dedicated staff to promote such activity. Should partners and in many cases funding sources not be identified, some of the projects would not be undertaken. The success of increased partnering would be linked to the willingness of partners to participate, the capabilities of partners to team on projects or provide services, and the potential for partners to provide support funding. The role of partnering under each management alternative is described in the sections that follow. Current meetings with park stakeholders and partners would be expected to continue several times a year under each alternative.

ALTERNATIVE A: CONTINUE CURRENT MANAGEMENT OR NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

National Environmental Policy Act guidelines require an assessment of the impacts of Alternative A, which is defined as continuing the current park management practices into the future. Current management practices, policies, or park programs— such as maintenance, law enforcement, and operational practices – would continue to be implemented with no major changes. Limited construction and continued maintenance would consist of repair and maintenance of roads, boat ramps, trails, parking lots, and buildings. Current resources management programming would remain unchanged from the present level. Such programming includes preserving historic ruins, mills, archaeological resources, and wetlands; removing invasive species; river bank preservation; and water quality monitoring.

Visitor services such as environmental education, search and rescue, interpretation (on and off site), concessions, facility planning and maintenance (restrooms/ water fountains), and access to the river would remain unchanged. Existing partnerships would be expected to continue at existing levels. Stakeholders and partners would be invited to the park for updates about park activities several times a year. There would be no increase in the level of public-private partnership activity the park would conduct due to staffing and funding limitations.

Visitors would have a wide variety of experiences in the park, such as hiking, fishing, and boating. The goal would be to protect resources through regulatory compliance and National Park Service policies.

The strategy of Alternative A would provide limited development, principally to expand park access within the authorized boundary at the request of local governments and stakeholders on their terms but in compliance with National Park Service mandates for environmental protection; cultural, historic and natural preservation; recreation; and education. However, the park is currently not in full

compliance with all of these requirements. Continuation of past practices would therefore imply that the park would continue to be out of compliance.

A map of Alternative A, the Continue Current Management/No Action Alternative is depicted as Figure 4.

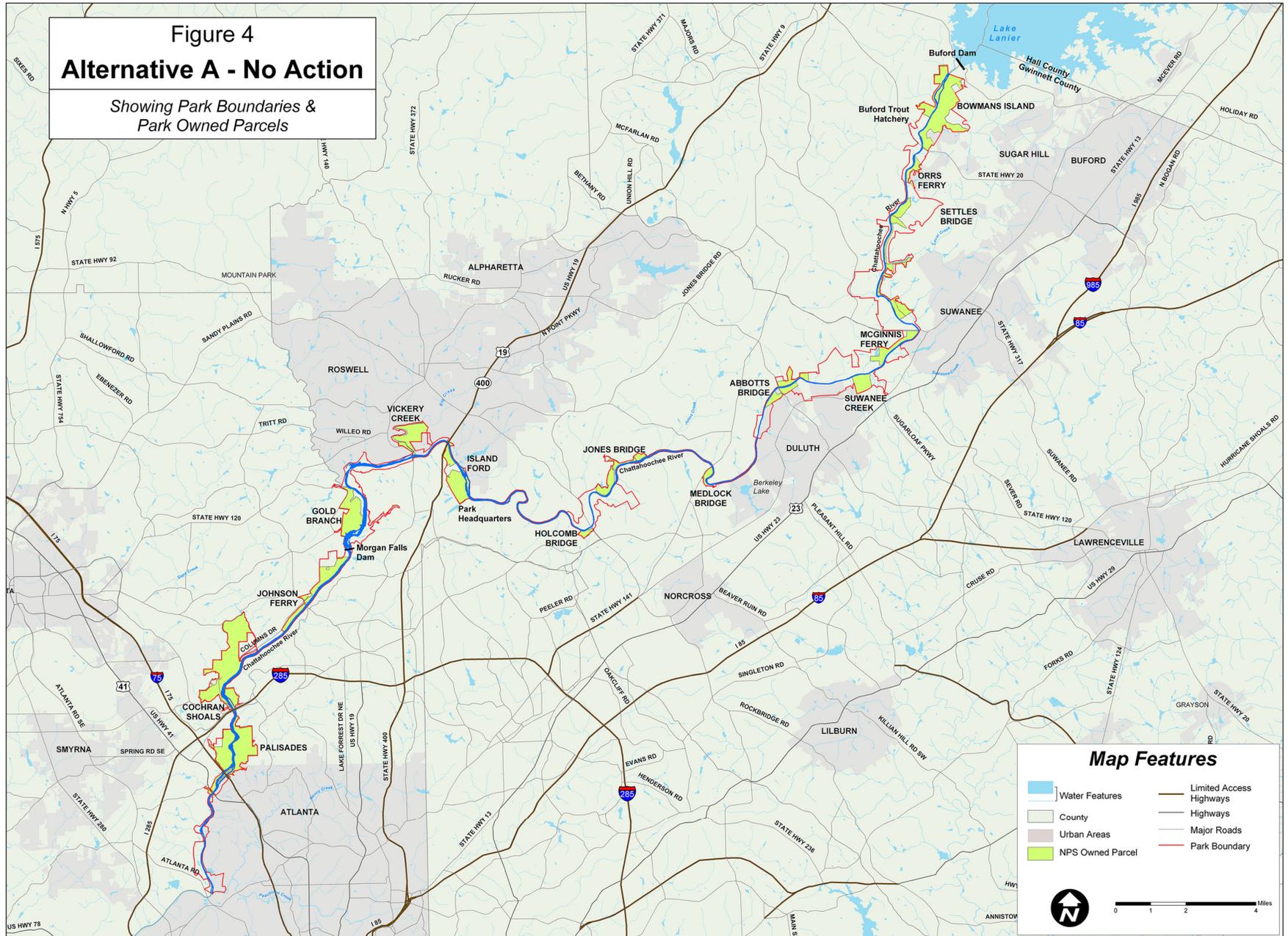
ALTERNATIVE B: FOCUS ON SOLITUDE ALTERNATIVE

Under the Focus on Solitude Alternative, hereafter referred to as Alternative B, management programs would be implemented that would minimize development in the park and maximize the opportunity for visitors to experience solitude in natural settings. This approach would involve reducing or minimizing recreational sites and facilities within the newly acquired areas of the park, but would allow continued use of the existing facilities in the original named units to adhere to present practices. Some areas subject to heavy use would be allowed to continue in this manner, with the option to improve conditions through various means; for example, by changing visitor use patterns to mitigate potentially adverse impacts on natural and cultural resources. Newly acquired areas (from willing sellers, assuming funding is available) would be managed to provide maximum resource protection and solitude for visitors. It is also assumed (based on historical trends that may or may not continue into the future) that any new visitor access facilities, on newly acquired lands or previously undeveloped park lands, would result in an overall increase in park visitation. The focus on solitude in the newly acquired areas would redirect visitation initiatives to having an experience in a relatively natural area, create sanctuary locations along the river, and insulate visitors from the urban conditions that surround the park.

As a rapidly expanding city of the 1990s, Atlanta has been highly successful in developing commerce, business, and growth, but has not been as effective at controlling nonpoint sources of water pollution, maintaining good air quality, and providing a suitable amount of parks and greenspace to serve the expanding communities. Recognizing the crowded urban environment surrounding the park, this alternative offers a respite from active lifestyles in the area.

Not unexpectedly, solitude is listed as the most desired visitor experience in the 1989 and 1994 visitor surveys for the park. Visitors are predominantly seeking a peaceful natural setting for observing wildlife, forests, the river, and cultural and historic scenes. This alternative would provide for this experience in newly acquired portions of the park as well as in those areas of the park where this is currently possible.

Under Alternative B, visitors would experience the natural environment wherever feasible. This would be provided through a system of unpaved walking trails, primitive areas of beauty, and locations along the riverbanks defined as river solitude zones allowing no structures of any kind and only limited trails located away from the river. Areas designated as river solitude zones could be viewed from the river in non-motorized vessels. Trail access would, however, be provided in other areas of the park under other planning prescriptions. These areas would provide visitors with solitude during day hikes.



This alternative emphasizes planning representative of “un” development, in that any construction of park facilities that violates minimum standards for preservation of natural habitat, aesthetic beauty, and cultural and historical resources would be inappropriate. The basis for this alternative is that the park corridor along the Chattahoochee River would be a green buffer or oasis from the busy life of urban Atlanta.

This alternative would allow only minimal growth within park boundaries. Certain targeted locations within the existing park framework could also be returned to a natural state. Newly acquired additions, (from willing sellers) along the park corridor, would remain in the more natural state. Additional access could be provided by partnering with public or private entities such as office parks, apartment complexes or public parks that abut Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area lands. Other types of partnering would be pursued to increase the level of education about park resources. Unpaved trails would provide internal linkages to various existing facilities and gateways within the park. River use would be encouraged through canoes, rafts, and non-motorized vessels in the river solitude zone, and recreation opportunities such as fishing, bird watching, research, education, and preservation would be emphasized. No new paved roads would be built under this alternative.

In this alternative, visitors would receive a quality experience in the wide variety of environments available in the park, with an emphasis on environmental education. The visitors experience would be highly facilitated through learning. Targeted facilities within existing developed areas would be restored to a more natural condition. For example, parking lots and buildings would be removed in select areas.

Parcels added to the park under the expanded boundaries would remain in, or be restored to, a largely natural state. Areas with significant cultural resources would be managed to protect values in accordance with Section 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Limited facilities would be added, for example, small gravel parking lots, primitive trails, and interpretive signage.

The distribution of zones under Alternative B is shown in Figure 5. The zones applied to Alternative B include the natural area recreation zone, cultural resource zone, natural zone, river solitude zone, and developed zone.

ALTERNATIVE C: CENTRALIZED ACCESS

The Centralized Access Alternative, hereafter referred to as Alternative C, provides for a management system where visitors would be drawn toward a system of hubs in which administrative, commercial, and interpretive facilities are located. Hubs, at a minimum, would provide visitor information, rest rooms, parking lots and roads, trail heads, and river access. Additional trailheads and parking lots would be minimized outside hubs. The hubs would be placed at strategic locations along the 48-mile-long park to optimize visitor experience and meet the challenges of the linear shape of the park.

Visitor experience would focus around interpretive activities and other facilities available in the hubs. Visitors, in lower numbers, could enjoy the extensive natural habitats and cultural resources in the undeveloped portions of the park, where activities would be focused on achieving solitude in an urban environment.

The majority of the park would be managed in its natural state, with access provided primarily via the hubs. Levels of visitor use within the developed hubs would be relatively high, and a wide variety of experiences would be possible.