

User's Guide to NPS *Management Policies* 2006

Introduction

All NPS officials and employees must be knowledgeable about the laws, regulations, and policies that pertain to their work. *NPS Management Policies 2006* is our most effective means of delivering that knowledge. *Management Policies* is the first level of policy guidance within the NPS directives system. Director's Orders and Reference Manuals (levels 2 and 3, respectively) build on the policies put forth in *Management Policies*. This document summarizes the content of *Management Policies*. When making important decisions, or if you are particularly interested in one of the topics not highlighted in the index below, the full text version should be consulted at www.nps.gov/policy/MP_2006.pdf.

What does Chapter 1 cover?

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Chapter 1: The Foundation

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 1?

Organic Act of 1916—section 1.4 describes the Organic Act of 1916, the most important statutory directive for NPS. The central concept of the Organic Act is that NPS must promote and regulate the use of national parks, monuments, and reservations so as to meet the fundamental purpose of conserving the scenery, natural resources, historic objects, and wild life contained in the park system and leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Impairment—“impairment” as it relates here is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible NPS manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values. Whether an impact meets this definition depends on the particular resources and values that would be affected. An impact is likely to constitute an impairment if it affects a resource or value that is:

- necessary to fulfill a specific purpose of the park,
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park, or
- identified as being significant in the park’s general management plan.

An impact is unlikely to constitute an impairment if it is an unavoidable result of an action necessary to preserve the integrity of park resources or values.

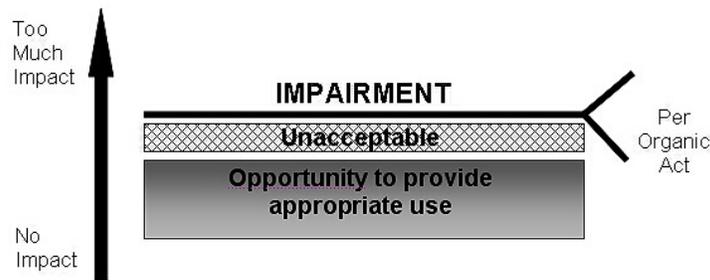
Unacceptable Impacts—the NPS will also avoid *unacceptable impacts*. Unacceptable impacts are impacts that would:

- be inconsistent with a park’s purpose or values,

- impede the attainment of a park’s desired future conditions for natural and cultural resources,
- create an unsafe or unhealthful environment for visitors or employees,
- diminish opportunities for current or future generations to experience park resources or values, or
- unreasonably interfere with park programs or activities, an appropriate use, the natural atmosphere and soundscape of the park, or NPS concessioner or contractor operations.

Appropriate Use—an “appropriate use” is a use that is suitable, proper, or fitting for a particular park or to a particular location within a park. What is appropriate may vary from one park to another and from one location to another within a park. *When proposed park uses and the protection of park resources come into conflict, the protection of resources and values must be predominant.* A new park use may be allowed only after a determination had been made in the professional judgment of the superintendent that it will not result in unacceptable impacts.

Managing for Resource Conservation



Civic Engagement—the NPS embraces civic engagement as a fundamental discipline and practice. Through civic engagement, NPS will actively encourage a two-way, continuous, dynamic conversation with the public. The goal of civic engagement is to reinforce the NPS’s and the public’s commitment to the preservation and stewardship of cultural and natural heritage resources. For more information on civic engagement and public involvement, see Director’s Order #75A.

Environmental Leadership—the NPS must set an example of environmental stewardship for others. The NPS must fully comply with the letter and spirit of NEPA and NHPA, and must continually assess the impact of its actions on natural and cultural resources so that it can identify areas needing improvement. The NPS will institute a Service-wide environmental auditing program to evaluate a broad array of NPS activities and to screen for opportunities to implement sustainable practices and demonstrate the highest levels of environmental ethic.

Information Management and Confidentiality—NPS will implement professional quality programs to preserve, manage, and integrate its information resources and make them accessible. However, in instances where providing information about specific park resources could put those resources at risk, such information will be withheld when NPS foresees that disclosure would be harmful to an interest protected by an exemption under FOIA.

Partnerships—the NPS will welcome and actively seek partnership activities with others who share NPS’s commitment to protecting park resources and values and providing for their

enjoyment. The NPS will also seek opportunities for cooperative management agreements with state or local agencies that will allow for more effective and efficient management of the parks.

American Indian Tribes—the NPS will honor its legal responsibilities to American Indian tribes as required by the U.S. Constitution, treaties, statutes, and court decisions. The NPS will pursue an open, collaborative relationship with American Indian tribes to help tribes maintain their cultural and spiritual practices and to enhance NPS’s understanding of the history and significance of sites within the parks. The NPS will maintain a government-to-government relationship with federally recognized tribal governments and will work directly with tribal government officials whenever plans or activities may affect tribal interests, practices, and/or traditional use areas. Consultations, whether initiated by a tribe or the NPS, will be respectful of tribal sovereignty. Mutually acceptable consultation protocols to guide government-to-government relationships will be developed at the park and program levels. The NPS will interact directly with tribal governments regarding the potential impacts of proposed NPS activities on Indian tribes and trust resources.

Hawaii, Pacific Islands, and Caribbean Islands—the NPS will maintain open, collaborative relationships with native peoples for whom these islands are their ancestral home.

Chapter 2: Park System Planning

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 2?

Decision-Making—decision-makers and planners will use the best available scientific and technical information and scholarly analysis to identify appropriate management actions for protection and use of park resources. Such analysis will be interdisciplinary and tiered.

Public Participation—public participation will ensure the NPS fully understands and considers the public’s interests in the parks. The NPS will work cooperatively with others to improve the condition of the parks, to enhance public service, and to integrate parks into sustainable ecological, cultural, and socioeconomic systems. For more information on public participation, see [Director’s Order #75A](#).

Goal Orientation—NPS managers will be held accountable for identifying and accomplishing measurable long-term and annual goals. Park staff will monitor resource conditions and visitor experiences and plan, track, and report performance. If goals are not being met, managers will seek to understand why and take appropriate action.

Planning Elements—planning elements are part of a framework that will inform the NPS decision-making process. Elements include foundation statement, general management plan, program management plans, strategic plans, implementation plans, annual performance plans, and annual performance results

Levels of Park Planning—the order of plan development will generally flow from broad general management plans to progressively more specific implementation plans. Each level of planning has a distinct function is designed to interrelate with a minimum of duplication and confusion.

Statutory Requirements—general management plans (GMPs) will meet all statutory requirements contained in 16 USC 1a-7(b), including:

- the types of management actions required for the preservation of park resources,
- the types and intensities of development associated with public enjoyment and use of the area,

- visitor carrying capacities and implementation commitments for all areas of the park, and
- any potential modifications to the external boundaries of the park and the reasons for the proposed changes.

Environmental Analysis—environmental analysis of alternatives and public involvement required under section [102\(2\)\(C\) of NEPA](#) will be conducted at any level of planning in which the decisions to be made might constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

Wild and Scenic Rivers—potential wild and scenic rivers will be considered in planning for the use and development of a park’s water and related land resources. GMPs and other plans potentially affecting river resources will propose no actions that could adversely affect the values that qualify a river for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Wilderness—the NPS will develop wilderness studies and plans as part of the comprehensive planning framework for each park. Managers are encouraged to incorporate these studies and plans within GMPs when possible. GMPs and other plans potentially affecting eligible wilderness resources will propose no actions that could adversely affect the wilderness characteristics and values that make them eligible for consideration for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. ([See Ch.6](#))

Program Management Planning—program management plans provide a comprehensive approach for a single park program area across most of, or the entire park. Program management plans will provide comprehensive recommendations about specific actions needed to achieve and maintain the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences.

Strategic Planning—strategic planning will be conducted for NPS as a whole, and every park, program, and central office will be covered by a strategic plan. Park-related strategic plans will be consistent with the department’s overall strategic plan. Strategic plans will contain the mission statement and purpose from the foundation document, long-term performance goals, a short description of the strategies chosen to accomplish the goals, a description of how the annual goals will relate to the long-term goals, a description of the analysis used to establish or revise goals, a section that identifies the civic engagement strategy used to invoke stakeholders and communities in the development of the strategic plan, an identification of the key external factors that could significantly affect achievement of the goals, and a list of those who developed the plan.

Implementation Planning—implementation planning will focus on how to implement activities and projects needed to achieve the desired conditions identified in the GMP, strategic plan, and program management planning documents. Implementation plans may concentrate on individual projects or components of the general management plan, and they may specify the techniques, disciplines, equipment, infrastructure, schedule, and funding necessary to accomplish outcomes.

Annual Performance Planning and Reporting—each park will prepare annual performance plans articulating annual goals for each fiscal year, and annual performance reports describing the progress made in meeting annual goals.

Chapter 3: Land Protection

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 3?

Land Protection Methods—the NPS may employ a variety of methods for protecting park resources, including:

- acquisition of fee-simple real property interest,
- acquisition of less-than-fee property interests, such as easements or rights-of-way,
- and cooperative approaches, such as cooperative agreements, participation in regional consortiums, local planning and zoning processes, or other measures that do not involve federal acquisition of any interest in real property.

Land Protection Plans—land protection plans should be prepared to determine and publicly document what lands or interests in land need to be in public ownership and what means of protection are available to achieve the purposes for which the unit was created. Superintendents will ensure that land protection plans are developed and periodically reviewed and updated. A land protection plan should be simple and concise.

Cooperative Conservation—superintendents will be aware of and monitor state government programs for managing state-owned submerged lands and resources within NPS units. When there is potential for such programs to adversely impact park resources or values, superintendents will make their concerns known to appropriate state government officials and encourage compatible land uses that avoid or mitigate potential adverse impacts.

Boundary Adjustments—a national park boundary may be modified only when authorized by law. Where there is no park-specific authority, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 provides limited generic authority for three categories: technical revisions; minor revisions based upon statutorily defined criteria; and revisions to include adjacent real property acquired by donation, purchased with donated funds, transferred from any other federal agency, or obtained by exchange. As part of the planning process, NPS will identify and evaluate boundary adjustments. All recommendations for boundary changes must meet two criteria: (1) the added lands will be feasible to administer considering their size, configuration, ownership, costs, the views of and impacts on local communities and surrounding jurisdictions, and other factors such as the presence of hazardous substances or exotic species, and (2) that other alternatives for management and resource protection are not adequate.

Land Acquisition Authority—the NPS acquires lands or interests in land within parks when authorized to do so by an act of Congress or by presidential proclamation. Certain statutes provide limited system-wide authority for minor boundary changes and the acceptance of donated lands adjacent to a park's boundaries.

Land Acquisition Funding—when acquisition within a park boundary is necessary, the NPS will consider acquisition by purchase with appropriated or donated funds, exchange, donation, bargain sale, transfer, or withdrawal from public domain, or condemnation, as a last resort.

Condemnation—condemnation is the acquisition method of last resort for the NPS. Friendly condemnations with willing sellers may be appropriate to ensure that the U.S. acquires clear title to the property in question, or to enable a court to determine the fair market value to be paid for the property. If there is no willing seller, the NPS may pursue condemnation proceedings if it is first determined that other acquisition means will not be successful, the acquisition would be consistent with any restrictions applicable to that park unit, and approval has been obtained from the Director and any other required sources.

Chapter 4: Natural Resource Management

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 4?

General Management Concepts—the NPS will manage natural resources to preserve fundamental physical and biological processes, as well as individual species, features, and plant and animal communities. The NPS will not try to solely preserve individual species (except for threatened or endangered species) or individual natural processes, but rather will try to maintain all the components and processes of naturally evolving park ecosystems.

Planning for Natural Resource Management—each park with a significant natural resource base will prepare and periodically update a long-range comprehensive strategy for natural resource management that will describe the program of activities needed to achieve the desired conditions of the park’s natural resources.

Restoration of Natural Systems—the NPS will reestablish natural functions and processes in parks unless otherwise directed by Congress. Landscapes disturbed by natural phenomena will be allowed to recover naturally unless manipulation is necessary to protect other park resources, developments, or employee and public safety.

Compensation for Injuries to Natural Resources—the NPS will use all available legal authorities to protect and restore natural resources and their environmental benefits when actions of another party cause the destruction or loss of, or injury to, park resources or values.

Studies and Collections—the NPS will encourage appropriately reviewed natural resource studies whenever such studies are consistent with applicable laws and policies. Such studies will provide a scientific and scholarly basis for park planning, development, operations, management, education, and interpretive activities. All studies in parks will use nondestructive methods to the maximum extent feasible.

Biological Resource Management—the NPS will maintain as parts of the natural ecosystems of parks all plants and animals native to park ecosystems. “Plants and animals” refers to all five of the commonly recognized kingdoms of living things. In addition to maintaining all native plant and animal species and their habitats within parks, the NPS will work with other land managers to encourage the conservation of the populations and habitats of these species outside the parks whenever possible. The NPS will strive to protect the full range of genotypes of native plant and animal populations in the parks by perpetuating natural evolutionary processes and minimizing human interference with evolving genetic diversity.

Exotic Species—exotic species (also called nonnative, alien, or invasive species) will not be allowed to displace native species if displacement can be prevented.

Threatened or Endangered Species Management—the NPS will survey for, protect, and strive to recover all species native to park system units that are listed under the Endangered Species Act. NPS will inventory, monitor, and manage state and locally listed species in a manner similar to its treatment of federally listed species to the greatest extent possible. NPS will also inventory other native species that are of special management concern to parks.

Pest Management—the NPS conducts an integrated pest management (IPM) program to reduce risks to the public, park resources, and the environment from pests and pest-related management strategies. All park employees, concessioners, contractors, permittees, licensees, and visitors on lands managed or regulated by the NPS must comply with NPS pest management policies. With specific exceptions, all prospective users of pesticides in parks must submit pesticide use requests, which will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Fire Management—fire management activities will be designed to meet management objectives for protection of resource values, life, and property, and where appropriate, for using naturally ignited and human-ignited wildland fires as management tools. Park fire management programs designed specifically to meet park resource management objectives will ensure that firefighter and public safety are not compromised. Parks with vegetation capable of burning will prepare a fire management plan that is consistent with federal law and departmental fire management policies, and that addresses the need for adequate funding and staffing to support the planned fire management program. Until a plan is approved, parks must immediately suppress all wildland fires using methods that minimize the impacts of the suppression action and the fire and are commensurate with effective control, firefighter and public safety, and protection of resource values.

Water Resource Management—the NPS will perpetuate surface waters and groundwaters as integral components of park aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Water for the preservation and management of the park system will be obtained and used in accordance with legal authorities. Park surface water or groundwater will be withdrawn for consumptive use only when such withdrawal is necessary for the use and management of the park. All park water withdrawn for domestic or administrative purposes will be returned to the park watershed once it has been treated to ensure that there is no impairment of park resources. The NPS will determine the quality of park surface and groundwater and avoid when possible the pollution of park waters by human activities within and outside the parks.

Floodplains—the NPS will aim to preserve floodplain values, minimize potentially hazardous conditions associated with flooding, and comply with the Organic Act and all other federal laws and executive orders relating to the management of activities in flood-prone areas.

Wetlands—the NPS will manage wetlands in compliance with NPS mandates and the requirements of [Executive Order 11990](#) and relevant federal laws. The NPS will act to prevent the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands, preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands, avoid direct and indirect support of new construction in wetlands unless there are no alternatives. The NPS will implement a “no net loss of wetlands” policy and will strive to achieve a goal of net gain of wetlands across the national park system through restoration of wetlands. The NPS will conduct or obtain parkwide wetland inventories to ensure proper planning regarding the management and protection of wetland resources.

Watersheds—the NPS will manage watersheds as complete hydrologic systems and minimize human-caused disturbance to the natural upland processes that deliver water, sediment, and woody debris to streams. The NPS will protect watershed and stream features by avoiding impacts on watershed and riparian vegetation and by allowing natural fluvial processes to proceed unimpeded.

Air Resource Management—the NPS will seek to perpetuate the best possible air quality in parks. The NPS will actively promote and pursue measures to protect park values from the adverse impacts of air pollution. Superintendents will take actions consistent with their affirmative responsibilities under the [Clean Air Act](#) to protect air quality-related values in Class I areas (national parks over 6,000 acres and national wilderness areas over 5,000 acres in existence on Aug. 7, 1977). Air resource management requirements will be integrated into NPS operations and planning and all air pollution sources within parks will comply with federal, state, and local air quality regulations and permitting requirements.

Geologic Resource Management—the NPS will preserve and protect geologic features and processes as integral components of park natural systems. The NPS will assess the impacts of natural processes and human activities on geologic resources, maintain and restore the integrity of existing geological resources, integrate geologic resource management into NPS operations and planning, and interpret geologic resources for park visitors. The NPS will work with U.S. Geological Survey specialists and with disaster management officials to devise effective geologic hazard identification and management strategies.

Paleontological Resources—paleontological resources will be protected, preserved, and managed for public education, interpretation, and scientific research. The NPS will study and manage paleontological resources in their paleoecological context. Superintendents will establish programs to inventory paleontological resources and systematically monitor for newly exposed fossils. Parks will exchange fossil specimens only with other museums and public institutions that are dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of natural heritage and qualified to manage museum collections.

Soundscape Management—the NPS will preserve to the greatest extent possible the natural soundscapes of parks, and will restore to the natural condition when possible those park soundscapes that have been degraded by unnatural sounds, and will protect natural soundscapes from unacceptable impacts.

Lightscape Management—the NPS will preserve to the greatest extent possible the natural lightscapes of parks, which are natural resources and values that exist in the absence of human-caused light. The NPS will protect natural darkness and other components of the natural landscapes in parks by minimizing the light that emanates from park facilities, and by seeking the cooperation of park visitors, neighbors, and local government agencies to prevent or minimize the intrusion of artificial light into park ecosystems.

Chemical Information and Odors—the NPS will preserve to the greatest extent possible the natural flow of natural chemical information and odors by preventing the release of human-generated chemicals that can block the release, deposition, or perception of natural chemicals, and human actions that disrupt or commingle the pathways through which natural chemicals are dispersed. Whenever the NPS engages in activities that disrupt the natural flow of natural chemical information or odors, it will comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies and seek to minimize harm to the environment.

Chapter 5: Cultural Resource Management

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 5?

NPS Research—the NPS will conduct a vigorous interdisciplinary program of research into the cultural resources of each park. Adequate research to support informed planning and compliance with legal requirements will precede any final decisions about the treatment of cultural resources or about park operations, development, and natural resource management activities that might affect cultural resources. A written scope of work, research design, project agreement, proposal, or other description of work to be performed will be prepared and approved before any research is conducted. Research in parks will employ nondestructive methods to the maximum extent feasible. Research conducted by NPS personnel, contractors, and cooperative researchers will be subjected to peer review both inside and outside the Service.

Independent Research—the NPS will promote relationships with individuals and organizations qualified to perform research, and encourage them to direct their research toward park management objectives and the broader contexts within which park resources exist. Research that includes taking plants, fish, wildlife, rocks, or minerals must comply with the permit requirements of [36 CFR 2.5](#). NPS facilities, collections, and assistance will be made available to qualified scholars conducting NPS-authorized research as long as park operations are not substantially impeded or park resources are not adversely impacted.

Identification and Evaluation of Resources—the NPS will conduct surveys to identify and evaluate the cultural resources of each park, assessing resources within their larger cultural, chronological, and geographic contexts. Cultural resources will be professionally evaluated and categorized to assist in management decisions about their treatment and use. Cultural resources will be evaluated for significance using the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, and those meeting the criteria will be nominated for listing.

Planning—to gain an understanding of a park’s cultural resources, the NPS must obtain baseline data on the nature and types of cultural resources and their distribution, condition, significance, and local, regional, and national contexts. Cultural resource planning and resource evaluation will include consultation with cultural resource professionals and scholars with relevant expertise, traditionally associated peoples, and other groups and individuals. Superintendents will consider the park’s cultural resources and values in all proposals for operations, development, and natural resource programs, including management of wilderness areas.

Protection and Preservation of Cultural Resources—the NPS will employ the most effective concepts, techniques, and equipment to protect cultural resources against theft, fire, vandalism, overuse, deterioration, environmental impacts, and other threats without compromising the integrity of the resources. Measures to protect or rescue cultural resources in the event of an emergency, disaster, or fire will be developed as part of a park’s emergency operations and fire management planning processes.

Compensation for Injuries to Cultural Resources—the NPS will use all available legal authorities to protect and restore cultural resources and the benefits they provide when actions of another party cause the destruction or loss of, or injury to, park resources or values.

Visitor Carrying Capacity—superintendents will set, enforce, and monitor carrying capacities to limit public visitation to or use of cultural resources that would be subject to adverse effects from unrestricted levels of visitation or use.

Cultural Soundscape Management—the NPS will preserve soundscape resources and values of the parks to the greatest extent possible to protect opportunities for appropriate transmission of cultural and historic sounds that are fundamental components of the purposes and values for which the parks were established.

Physical Access for Persons with Disabilities—NPS will provide persons with disabilities the highest feasible level of physical access to historic properties that is reasonable and consistent with the preservation of each property’s significant historical features.

Stewardship of Human Remains and Burials—marked and unmarked prehistoric and historic burial areas and graves will be identified, evaluated, and protected. Every effort will be made to avoid impacting burial areas and graves when planning park development and park operations.

Treatment of Cultural Resources—with some differences by type, cultural resources are subject to several basic treatments: preservation in their existing states, rehabilitation to serve

contemporary uses consistent with their integrity and character, and restoration to earlier appearances by removal of later additions and replacement of missing elements. Preservation of cultural resources in their existing states will always receive first consideration.

Archeological Resources—archeological resources will be maintained in situ, unless the removal of artifacts or physical disturbance is justified by research, consultation, preservation, protection, or interpretive requirements.

Submerged Cultural Resources—historic shipwrecks and other submerged cultural resources will be protected, to the extent permitted by law, in the same manner as terrestrial archeological resources.

Cultural Landscapes—the treatment of a cultural landscape will preserve significant physical attributes, biotic systems, and uses when those uses contribute to historical significance. Biotic cultural resources, including plant and animal communities associated with the significance of a cultural landscape, will be duly considered in treatment and management.

Ethnographic Resources—ethnographic resources are the cultural and natural features of a park that are of traditional significance to traditionally associated peoples, such as contemporary park neighbors and ethnic or occupational communities that have been associated with a park for two or more generations and whose interests in the park's resources began before the park's establishment. The NPS must be respectful of these ethnographic resources and carefully consider the effects that NPS actions may have on them.

Sacred Sites—the NPS will, to the extent practicable, accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by religious practitioners from recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives, and avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites. In consultation with the appropriate groups, the NPS will develop a record about such places and identify any treatments preferred by the groups.

Museum Collections—the NPS will collect, protect, preserve, provide access to, and use objects, specimens, and archival and manuscript collections in the disciplines of archeology, ethnography, history, biology, geology, and paleontology to aid understanding among park visitors, and to advance knowledge in the humanities and science.

Chapter 6: Wilderness Preservation and Management

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 6?

Assessment of Wilderness Eligibility—all NPS-administered lands, including new units or additions to existing units since 1964, will be evaluated for their eligibility for inclusion in the national wilderness preservation system. NPS lands will be considered eligible for wilderness if:

- they are at least 5,000 acres or of sufficient size to make practicable their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, and if
- the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by humans,
- the area is undeveloped and retains its primeval character and influence without permanent improvements or human habitation,
- the area generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of human work substantially unnoticeable,
- the area is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions, and

- the area offers outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Wilderness Resource Management—the NPS will take no action that would diminish the wilderness eligibility of an area possessing wilderness characteristics until the legislative process of wilderness designation has been completed. Until that time, management decisions will be made in expectation of eventual wilderness designation. All management decisions affecting wilderness will apply the concept of “minimum requirement” for the administration of the area regardless of wilderness category. The only exception is for areas that have been found eligible, but for which, after completion of a wilderness study, the NPS has not proposed wilderness designation. However, those lands will still be managed to preserve their eligibility for designation.

Wilderness Management Planning—the superintendent of each park containing wilderness resources will develop and maintain a wilderness management plan or equivalent planning document to guide the preservation, management, and use of these resources. The wilderness management plan will identify desired future conditions as well as establish indicators, standards, conditions, and thresholds beyond which management actions will be taken to reduce human impacts on wilderness resources.

Minimum Requirement—the minimum requirement concept is a documented process used to determine if administrative actions, projects, or programs undertaken by the NPS or its agents and affecting wilderness character, resources, or the visitor experience are necessary, and if so, how to minimize impacts. The minimum requirement concept will be applied as a two-step process that determines (1) whether the proposed management action is appropriate or necessary for administration of the area as wilderness and does not cause a significant impact to wilderness resources and character in accordance with the Wilderness Act, and (2) the techniques and types of equipment needed to ensure that impacts on wilderness resources and character are minimized.

Monitoring Wilderness Resources—In every park containing wilderness, the conditions and long-term trends of wilderness resources will be monitored to identify the need for or effects of management actions. As appropriate, wilderness monitoring programs may assess physical, biological, and cultural resources and social impacts.

Wilderness Use Management—the NPS will encourage and facilitate those uses of wilderness that are in keeping with the definitions and purposes of wilderness and do not degrade wilderness resources and character. When resource impacts or demands for use exceed established thresholds or capacities, superintendents may limit or redirect use. Leave-no-trace principles and practices will be applied to all forms of recreation management within wilderness, including commercial operations.

Chapter 7: Interpretation and Education

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 7?

Interpretive and Educational Programs—every park will develop an interpretive and educational program that is grounded in park resources, themes related to the park’s legislative history and significance, and park and Service-wide mission goals. The intent will be to provide each visitor with an interpretive experience that is enjoyable and inspirational within the context

of the park's tangible resources and the meanings they represent, and to make each visitor aware of the purposes and scope of the national park system.

Interpretive Planning—GMPs and comprehensive interpretive plans (CIP) will serve as the backbone of interpretive and educational program planning and direction. The CIP process will guide park staff in defining themes, determining desired visitor experience opportunities, identifying challenges, and recommending which stories to tell, how to tell them, and how to reach specific audiences. The life span of a CIP will be 7-10 years.

Personal Services—personal interpretive services feature contact with visitors. Personal services will provide opportunities for diverse audiences to enjoy and connect to parks and nurture future stewards of America's national heritage. Park staff will help visitors have a safe, meaningful, and satisfying park experience; help them decide how to spend their time in the park; and inform them about the wonders that await their discovery.

Curriculum-Based Education Programs—curriculum-based programs will be designed to link classroom learning with experiences in the parks. Programs will complement school curricula by matching a group's educational objectives with park resources.

Nonpersonal Services—nonpersonal services are interpretive media that do not require the presence of staff. They can reach large audiences and must maintain a consistent quality of presentation over time. Used in conjunction with personal services, nonpersonal services will provide opportunities for visitor information, orientation, and personal connections to park resources.

Interpretive Competencies and Skills—all interpretive services should be provided by highly trained personnel who have access to a continual supply of current information from research programs and other sources. All employees who provide interpretational services will be required to meet the NPS's national standards of interpretation and education. The NPS will develop a web-based distance learning and credentialing platform based on the interpretive development program to teach interpretive and educational skills and competencies and test for knowledge of those skills and competencies.

Requirements for All Interpretive and Educational Services—efforts will be made to ensure that interpretive and educational programs are available to all people and consider the special needs of children, senior citizens, non-English speaking visitors, persons with disabilities, and the economically disadvantaged. Parks should thoroughly integrate resource issues and initiatives of local and Service-wide importance into their interpretive and educational programs. These programs will be based on current scholarship and research about the history, science, and condition of park resources, and on research about the needs, expectations, and behavior of visitors. Evaluation is necessary to ensure that the NPS interpretation and education program is cost-effective and financially accountable. All uses of historic weapons in parks will strictly comply with the Historic Weapons Demonstrations Safety Standards in Reference Manual 6. Battle reenactments and demonstrations of battle tactics that involve exchange of fire between opposing lines, the taking of casualties, hand-to-hand combat, or any other form of simulated warfare are prohibited in all parks.

Interpretive and Educational Partnerships—the NPS will increase the effectiveness and accountability of park interpretation and education activities by collaborating with volunteers, cooperating associations, concessioners, and other partners to provide interpretive and educational services that adhere to Service-wide standards.

Volunteers-in-Parks—interpretation and education operational capacity will be increased in parks by actively pursuing volunteers and dedicating NPS staff time to coordinate volunteer programs in parks.

Cooperating Associations—the NPS will continue to nurture its relationship with nonprofit organizations that support park programs. [Cooperating associations](#) may provide publications and other items that enhance the interpretive story, allow visitors to explore particular interests, and enable them to take the park story home through their purchases.

Chapter 8: Use of the Parks

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 8?

Appropriate Use—appropriate forms of visitor enjoyment emphasize appropriate recreation consistent with the protection of the park. The NPS will only allow uses that are appropriate to the purpose for which the park was established and can be sustained without causing unacceptable impacts. Recreational activities and other uses that would impair a park’s resources, values, or purposes are prohibited by law. Superintendents must continually monitor all park uses to ensure that unanticipated and unacceptable impacts do not occur.

Visitor Use—the NPS will provide opportunities for forms of enjoyment that are uniquely suited and appropriate to the superlative natural and cultural resources in the parks. The primary means by which NPS will actively foster and provide for appropriate visitor use will be through its interpretive and educational programs. In addition to structured activities, NPS will, to the extent practicable, afford visitors opportunity for inspiration, appreciation, and enjoyment through their own personal experiences.

Recreational Activities—the NPS will monitor new or changing patterns of use or trends in recreational activities and assess their potential impact on park resources. There is a broad range of recreational activities that support the federal policy of promoting health and fitness, but not all such activities will be appropriate or allowable in all parks, and that determination must be made on the basis of park-specific planning. New forms of recreational activity will not be allowed within a park until a superintendent has determined that it will be appropriate and will not cause [unacceptable impacts](#). Superintendents will develop and implement visitor use management plans and take action to ensure that recreational uses of the park are consistent with its authorizing legislation or proclamation and do not cause unacceptable impacts.

Use of Motorized equipment—to preserve or restore the natural quiet and sounds, superintendents will evaluate and manage how, when, and where motorized equipment is used by all who operation equipment in the parks, including park staff. Uses and impacts associated with the use of motorized equipment will be addressed in park planning processes. To meet its responsibilities under [EO 13693](#), the NPS will develop and implement a strategy to reduce its vehicle fleet’s annual petroleum consumption. [EO 11644](#) governs off-road motor vehicle use in national parks. Unless otherwise provided by statute, the provisions of this order must be applied whenever there is a proposed use of an off-road motor vehicle. Snowmobiles are a form of off-road vehicles governed by EO 11644, and in Alaska also by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Visitor Safety and Emergency Response—the saving of human life will take precedence over all other management actions. While there are limitations on its ability to eliminate all hazards, NPS and its concessioners, contractors, and cooperators will seek to provide a safe and healthful

environment for all visitors and employees. The NPS will develop a program of emergency preparedness at the Washington headquarters, regional and park levels. As one element of the emergency operations plan, or as a separate document, each park must have an oil and chemical spill response management plan.

Recreation Fees and Reservations—the NPS may charge a recreation entrance or expanded amenity use fee at parks when authorized by law. Such fees may provide for the support of the overall management and operations of parks, but they are not intended to offset the operational costs associated with a park.

Tourism—the NPS will support and promote appropriate visitor use through cooperation and coordination with the tourism industry.

Law Enforcement Program—park law enforcement activities will be managed by superintendents as part of a comprehensive, interdisciplinary effort to protect resources, manage public use, and promote public safety and appropriate enjoyment. All park employees will be trained to recognize, observe, and record criminal acts and illegal activities.

Overflights and Aviation Uses—the NPS will take all necessary steps to avoid or mitigate unacceptable impacts from aircraft flights over park lands. NPS will work cooperatively with the FAA and national defense and other organizations to ensure that authorized aviation activities affecting park units occur in a safe manner and do not cause unacceptable impacts.

Use by American Indians and Other Associated Groups—the NPS will develop and implement its programs in a manner that reflects knowledge of and respect for the cultures of American Indian tribes or groups with demonstrated ancestral ties to particular resources in parks. The NPS will regularly and actively consult with American Indian tribal governments and other traditionally associated groups regarding planning, management, and operational decisions that affect subsistence activities, sacred materials or places, or other resources with which they are historically associated.

Special Park Uses—a special park use is an activity that occurs in a park area and provides a benefit to an individual, group, or organization rather than the public at large; requires written authorization and some degree of management control from the NPS; is not prohibited by law or regulation; is not initiated, sponsored, or conducted by the NPS; and is not managed under a concession contract. Each request to permit a [special park use](#) or renew authorization of an existing use will be reviewed and evaluated according to the terms of applicable legislation, regulations, and management planning documents.

Mineral Exploration and Development—mineral exploration and development may be allowed in parks only when prospective operators demonstrate that they hold rights to valid mining claims, federal mineral leases, or nonfederally-owned minerals. All people who conduct mineral development within parks must conform with applicable statutes, regulations, and NPS policies.

Collecting Natural Products—collection of natural products for personal use or consumption is governed by NPS general regulations in [36 CFR 2.1](#) and [36 CFR Part 13](#). A superintendent may designate certain fruits, berries, nuts, or unoccupied seashells that can be gathered by hand for personal use or consumption upon a written determination by the superintendent that such an activity will not adversely affect park wildlife or the reproductive potential of a plant species or otherwise adversely affect park resources.

Consumptive Uses—consumptive uses of park resources may be allowed only when they are specifically authorized by federal law or treaty rights; specifically authorized pursuant to other

existing rights; authorized grazing activities; or traditional visitor activities that are authorized in accordance with NPS general regulations. As a rule, a superintendent may not allow consumptive use of park resources by any particular group to the exclusion of others.

Natural and Cultural Studies, Research, and Collection Activities—studies, research, and collection activities by non-NPS personnel involving natural and cultural resources will be encouraged and facilitated when they otherwise comport with NPS policies. Scientific activities involving fieldwork or specimen collection, or that have the potential to disturb resources, the visitor experience, or park operations require a permit issued by the superintendent.

Social Science Studies—the NPS will facilitate social science studies that support the NPS mission by providing an understanding of park visitors, the nonvisiting public, gateway communities and regions, and human interactions with park resources. The data and information acquired through scientific activities conducted in the parks will be made broadly available to park managers, the scientific community, and the public, except where legal restrictions apply.

Leases—in accordance with [36 CFR Part 18](#), the NPS may enter into a lease for the use of any park property, historic or nonhistoric (except for nonhistoric land), if the appropriate regional director makes the determinations listed in section [8.12 of Management Policies 2006](#).

Chapter 9: Park Facilities

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 9?

Facility Planning and Design—the protection of each park’s resources and values will be the primary consideration in facility development decisions. Facilities for visitor use and park management will be consistent with each park’s authorizing legislation and approved planning documents. The NPS will meet its facility development needs in a cost-effective manner. The NPS will issue and update guiding principles for sustainable design to be applied throughout the national park system.

Accessibility—the NPS will design, construct, and operate all buildings and facilities so they are accessible to and usable by people with disabilities to the greatest extent reasonable, in accord with all applicable laws, regulations, and standards.

Construction—the NPS will incorporate sustainable principles and practices into design, siting, construction, building materials, utility systems, recycling of all unusable materials, and waste management. Construction sites will be limited to the smallest feasible area. Ground disturbance and site management will be controlled to prevent undue damage to vegetation, soils, and archeological resources and to minimize air, water, soil, and noise pollution.

Maintenance—a regular, periodic inventory and condition assessment of park assets will be performed to identify deficiencies and to ensure the cost-effective maintenance of all facilities. In carrying out its maintenance responsibilities, the NPS will acquire environmentally preferable and energy-efficient products and will strive to meet and exceed any Department of the Interior affirmative acquisition goals that are established.

Utilities—energy, water, and wastewater systems will be sited outside the park boundaries whenever possible. In-park utilities will be as unobtrusive as possible and have the least possible resource impact. The NPS will use municipal or other utility systems outside parks when economically and environmentally practicable and may participate in cost-sharing with

municipalities and others in meeting park utility needs. The NPS will use the least polluting power supply options.

Waste Management—the NPS will implement solid and hazardous waste management practices that integrate waste reduction, reuse, and recycling programs to minimize the generation and disposal of solid and hazardous waste at and from NPS sites. The NPS will:

- make every reasonable effort to prevent or minimize the release of contaminants on, or that will affect, NPS lands or resources,
- take all necessary actions to control or minimize such releases when they occur,
- identify, assess, and take response actions as promptly as possible to address releases and threatened releases of contaminants into the environment.

Energy Management—the NPS will conduct its activities in ways that use energy wisely and economically. Park resources and values will not be degraded to provide energy for NPS purposes. All facilities, vehicles, and equipment will be operated and managed to minimize the consumption of energy, water, and nonrenewable fuels. The NPS will give full consideration to the use of alternative fuels.

Transportation Systems—the NPS must find transportation solutions that will preserve the natural and cultural resources in its care while providing a high-quality visitor experience. The NPS will participate in all transportation planning forums that may result in links to parks or impacts on park resources. Depending on a park unit's size, location, resources, and level of use, the NPS will emphasize and encourage alternative transportation systems, including buses, trains, ferries, trams, and preferably, nonmotorized modes of access to parks.

Road Systems—park roads will be well-constructed, sensitive to natural and cultural resources, reflect the highest principles of park design, and enhance the visitor experience. Park road designs are subject to [NPS Park Road Standards](#), which are adaptable to each park's unique character and resource limitations. The NPS will not permit the public or private construction of new roads for access to inholdings unless specifically authorized by law.

Trails and Walks—trails and walks will serve as management tools to help control the distribution and intensity of use. All trails and walks will be situated, designed, and managed to reduce conflicts with automobiles and incompatible uses, allow for a satisfying park experience, allow accessibility by the greatest number of people, and protect park resources.

Visitor Facilities—the NPS will limit visitor facility development to that which is necessary and appropriate. The NPS will encourage the development of private sector visitor services in gateway communities to contribute to local economic development, encourage competition, increase choices for visitors, and minimize the need for in-park facilities.

Overnight Accommodations and Food Services—overnight facilities and food services will be restricted to the kinds and levels necessary and appropriate to achieve each park's purposes. Types of overnight accommodations may vary from unimproved backcountry campsites to motel- or hotel-type lodging, as appropriate.

Management Facilities—where authorized by Congress, management facilities will be located outside park boundaries whenever the management functions being served can be adequately supported for that location. When management facilities must be located inside the park, they will be located away from primary resources and features of the park and sited to as not adversely affect park resources or values or detract from the visitor experience. Historic

properties will be used to the maximum extent practicable, provided the use will not adversely affect their significance.

Commemorative Works and Plaques—the NPS will discourage and curtail the use and proliferation of commemorative works except when Congress has specifically authorized their placement, or there is compelling justification for the recognition, and the commemorative work is the best way to express the association between the park and the person, group, event, or other subject being commemorated.

Chapter 10: Commercial Visitor Services

What are the most important policies and concepts in Chapter 10?

Commercial Visitor Services Planning—commercial visitor services planning will identify the appropriate role of commercial operators in helping parks to provide opportunities for visitor use and enjoyment. This planning will be integrated into other plans and planning processes. A park commercial services strategy must be in place to ensure that concession facilities and services are necessary and appropriate, financially viable, and addressed in an approved management plan.

Concession Contracting—concession services will be authorized under concession contracts unless otherwise authorized by law. The term of a concession contract will generally be 10 years or less, although the Director may award a contract for a term of up to 20 years. Proposed concession operations must be economically feasible and supported by a feasibility study prepared by a qualified individual.

Concession Operations—an operating plan will be an exhibit to the contract and will describe operational responsibilities authorized in the contract between the concessioner and the NPS. The NPS will review and update the plan annually in accordance with the contract terms. Concession operations will be regularly evaluated to ensure that park visitors are provided with high-quality services and facilities that are safe and sanitary and meet NPS environmental, health, safety, and operational standards.

Merchandise—the NPS will approve the nature, type, and quality of merchandise to be offered by concessioners. Priority will be given to sale items that foster awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the park and its resources and that interpret those resources. Each concession operation with a gift shop will have a mission statement based on the park’s concession service plan or general management plan. Merchandise must be available at a range of prices, and theme-related merchandise manufactured or handcrafted in the U.S.—particularly in a park’s geographic vicinity—will be encouraged.

Artifacts and Specimens—a park superintendent may prohibit of some items for retail sale because the merchandise is locally sensitive or inappropriate for sale. The sale of original objects, artifacts, or specimens of a historic, archeological, paleontological, or biological nature is prohibited.

Risk Management Program—concession contracts require each concessioner to develop a risk management program that is:

- appropriate in scope to the size and nature of the operation,
- in accord with the [Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1970](#) and the NPS concession risk management program, and
- approved by the superintendent.

Concessioners are responsible for managing all of their operations to minimize risk and control loss due to accident, illness, or injury.

Insurance—concession contracts will identify the types and minimum amounts of insurance coverage required of concessioners to:

- provide reasonable assurance that concessioners have the ability to cover bona fide claims for bodily injury, death, or property damage arising from an action or omission of the operator,
- protect the government against potential liability for claims based on the negligence of the operators, and
- enable rapid repair or replacement of essential visitor facilities located on park lands that are damaged or destroyed by fire or other hazards.

Concession Facilities—all buildings under a concession contract are U.S. government/NPS owned structures and are part of the overall facility inventory at each park. Responsibilities for maintenance, environmental management, and other operational issues must be included in each concession contract.

Concessioner Employees and Employment Conditions—Concessioners will comply with all applicable laws and regulations relating to nondiscrimination in employment and the provision of services to the public.

NPS Employees—NPS employees may not receive concessioner goods or services at a discount unless it is in connection with official business, is to the government's advantage, and is provided for under the terms of a concession contract. Employees may accept reduced rates or discounts offered by the concessioner when the same reduced rates or discounts are available to the public.

Commercial Use Authorizations—commercial use authorizations may be issued only to authorize services that (1) are determined to be an appropriate use of the park; (2) will have minimal impact on park resources and values; and (3) are consistent with the purpose for which the unit was established, as well as all applicable management plans and park policies and regulations. The maximum term for any commercial use authorization is two years in length.