

Soundings

Attach 6
see pg 2

The Newsletter of the Colorado River Management Planning Process

March 1998

Public Scoping Update

The December 1997 issue of *Soundings* provided a brief summary of the public scoping workshops held in September, and of written comments received up to December. Since that time, the Planning Team has completed the first phase of the scoping comment analysis; a total of 334 letters were received and 1,023 individual summarized comments were entered into an electronic database.

The primary purposes for developing the database were: 1) to establish a list of the individuals, groups, and organizations who provided comments (written and at the workshops), 2) to determine the major issue categories and areas of concern identified by the public, and 3) to provide for the public a brief summary of issue statements, solution statements, and comments received during the scoping process. The database will serve as the primary tool for referencing specific comments submitted during the scoping process. A document, entitled *Summary of Public Comment from the 1997 Colorado River Management Plan Scoping Process* will be distributed in April.

Those who attended workshops, submitted comments or specifically requested a copy of the summary were entered into the database and will receive this mailing. If you know of others who would like to receive this newsletter and/or the summary, please contact Linda Jalbert at the address provided.

What's Next? The next step of the CRMP process includes continued public involvement in examining the issues and solutions and developing alternatives. The vacant Public Involvement Liaison position on the Planning Team has resulted in a delay of the next round of workshops. Contact Linda Jalbert with suggestions for workshop venues or locations.

River Permits Office Update

Here is a brief overview of the 1998 noncommercial permitting process: In October 1997, the top 300 people on the waiting list were notified to select launch dates for the next two years. They were able to select leftover dates from the 1998 season through April 15, 2000. Of the top 300, 252 were successful in scheduling their preferred date. The remaining 48 will have the opportunity to select dates beginning April 16, 2000. The unselected dates were then opened to the call-in process.

- Number of unselected launch dates available on a call-in basis on the first work day of January 1998: **21**
- Number of calls answered before all 21 dates were issued: **24**
- Number of hours permits office spent on phone issuing open dates: **2 hours, 10 minutes**
- Number of NPS phone lines jammed because of incoming calls to Permits office: **16** (i.e., all the lines into the Park).
- Number of hours NPS phone lines were jammed: **3**
- Number of computer-recorded calls to the River Permit Information 800 number during that three-hour period: **1500**

The process for renewing or adding new applicants to the waiting list occurred between January 1 and March 13, 1998. The River Permits Office reports the following:

- Number of Continued Interest Applications received: **5,153**
- Number of new applicants to the Waiting List: **447**
- Number of years (projected) on the waiting list for the bottom 300 applicants (based on the current system): **20.6**



sound·ing *n.*
1 an environmental probe
2 an act of measuring the depth of a body of water
3 [often pl.] an exploratory sampling, as of public opinions.

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The Wilderness Management Plan

In April Grand Canyon National Park will release for public comment the *Draft Wilderness Management Plan and Environmental Assessment*. This will be the Park's first resource protection and visitor use plan that addresses issues and provides guidelines for managing areas defined as proposed wilderness. Over 94% (1.1 million acres) of Grand Canyon National Park is proposed for immediate designation. The proposed wilderness is primarily inner canyon and rim areas and does not include the developed areas or the Cross-Canyon Corridor (i.e., Bright Angel, South Kaibab, and North Kaibab Trails). The Colorado River is proposed as "potential wilderness," and issues specific to river management are being addressed in the Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP).

The Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) incorporates the recreation management principles described in the 1988 Backcountry Management Plan, and provides direction for management of natural and cultural resources and the visitor experience within the context of wilderness policy. The management objectives of the WMP specifically address 1) the backcountry permit system, 2) monitoring natural and cultural resources and visitor experience, 3) trails and primitive roads management, 4) staff and public education, 5) regional recreation opportunities, 6) public safety, 7) research, and 8) ecosystem management.

Wilderness management issues that overlap river management primarily relate to the interactions of user groups, the types of visitor experience provided, and application of the Minimum Requirement Policy as it pertains to administrative use. The WMP and current CRMP describe standards for types of desired visitor experience on a spatial and seasonal basis. The Wilderness Plan outlines standards for a variety of experiences through *use-area zoning*; the CRMP currently defines standards for various types of experience on a *seasonal* basis. Use-area zones distribute the allocation of total use for the wilderness areas, whereas allocation of river use is distributed by season. (For example, those seeking a backcountry experience that requires route-finding and solitude will likely travel in the more remote areas of the wilderness; those seeking a longer river trip with little or no contact with other river trips or backcountry visitors, will likely travel in winter months.)

The concept of use distribution by zoning for river users may also be an alternative evaluated during the review of the CRMP.

Park policy on administrative use of wilderness, or "minimum requirement" will be consistent in the Wilderness and Colorado River Management Plans, (as well as the Fire Management Plan). The guiding principle of the Minimum Requirement Concept is to select the minimum "tool" or administrative practice necessary to achieve wilderness management objectives with the least impact on wilderness character and resources. The WMP establishes a minimum-requirement decision process by which administrative actions will be evaluated based on these criteria.

The Wilderness Management Plan provides guidance and describes strategies for meeting policy and mandates set forth by the Wilderness Act and the National Park Service Organic Act. In light of the high demand and public value of the Grand Canyon wilderness, providing for a range of opportunities and activities while protecting natural and cultural resources and wilderness character and values is challenging. The WMP will provide Park staff with the framework for meeting identified wilderness management goals and objectives.

Sounding Board

In each issue of *Soundings* we address a question posed at the Scoping Workshops. The question for this issue is:

Q. What is the definition of potential wilderness, and what are the effects of wilderness designation?

A. In 1980, after a decade-long wilderness study and public review, the Park Service identified most of Grand Canyon National Park as suitable for immediate wilderness designation. The study also identified approximately 121,000 acres that would qualify as wilderness once temporary incompatible conditions were resolved. For example, some lands were privately owned or subject to grazing or mineral leases. The NPS felt these potential wilderness areas did not qualify as wilderness until the property was acquired and the leases expired. Motorboat use precluded recommending the river corridor for immediate wilderness designation (USDI 1980).

While only Congress can designate wilderness, it may, through wilderness legislation, authorize the Secretary of the Interior to designate "potential" wilderness as full-fledged wilderness once the temporary incompatible condition is gone.



Soundings is published by Grand Canyon National Park

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If you signed in at a public workshop, you will receive future copies of *Soundings* automatically.

The Planning Process and Timeline

Phase One

•Identify Planning Team	August 1997
•Develop Public Involvement Plan	August 1997
•Conduct Public Workshops	September 1997
•Conduct Comment Analysis	October 1997—January 1998
•Report to Public on Workshops/Scoping	December 1997
•Compile Summary of Public Comment	March 1998

Phase Two

•Involve Public in Developing Alternatives	March 1998—September 1998
•Draft Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) Distributed	March 99
•Public Involvement on Draft Plan	April 99

Phase Three

•Release Final Plan	January 2000
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For now, all Grand Canyon wilderness is "proposed" wilderness and, as required by the Wilderness Act and *NPS Management Policies*, the Park Service must manage these areas as if they were designated wilderness until Congress acts. The Park Service is specifically required to manage its "proposed potential" wilderness as it would manage designated wilderness to the extent that nonconforming uses allow.

In wilderness, agency intervention should be the minimum level necessary to effectively protect wilderness values including wilderness experience. Development, with minor exceptions such as trails and toilets, is prohibited. In potential wilderness, such as the river corridor, the agency should protect wilderness values to the extent nonconforming use of motors allows.

USDI, National Park Service. 1980. *Wilderness Recommendation, Grand Canyon National Park*. Memorandum to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, from the Director, National Park Service. Dated September 11. Copy on file at the Grand Canyon National Park Science Center.

USDI, National Park Service. 1988. *Management Policies*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

Around the Bend

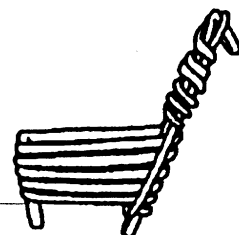
Lake Mead Management Plan

Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) is currently preparing a Lake Management Plan. The Plan will include the section of the Lower Colorado River Gorge below Separation Canyon in Grand Canyon National Park. Some of the issues identified for this area of the Colorado River and Lake Mead include: limited campsites

and protection of natural and cultural resources on Hualapai and Park lands, jet boat tours and tow-out services, increasing numbers of personal watercraft in Grand Canyon National Park, and take-out facilities. Grand Canyon National Park is working with the Lake Mead NRA planning team to prepare management alternatives for the area below Separation Canyon and within Grand Canyon National Park.

Simulation Modeling of River Use

The word must be out! Since the initiation of the CRMP revision process the Park has received inquiries and proposals to develop a computer-simulation model to address alternatives to use patterns and distribution in the river corridor. The 1989 CRMP identified the use of a model for launch scheduling and addressing congestion at attraction sites and exchange points. Monitoring programs conducted from 1990 to 1992 enabled the Park to collect information on visitation at popular attraction sites, use of campsites, and trip encounters during river travel. This information showed a correlation between launch scheduling and encounter levels, especially at attraction sites. Modifications to commercial launch scheduling were then made which are believed to have reduced encounter levels at some popular sites. The Park hopes to approve a computer-simulation research proposal within the next few months. When this occurs, interested persons will have the opportunity to provide input and assist in developing alternatives.





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web site at:
[www.nps.gov/grca/
colorado](http://www.nps.gov/grca/colorado)

History of the Grand Canyon Wilderness Recommendation

The 1964 Wilderness Act instructed the Secretary of the Interior to review all roadless areas of at least 5,000 acres in the National Park System, and to submit a suitability report of these areas for classification.

- 1970** The NPS released for public review a wilderness study report. The study recommended phasing out motorized use on the Colorado River, and closing the network of fire roads on the North Rim to qualify these areas for wilderness.
- 1971** The NPS issued a Final Draft Wilderness Recommendation that excluded the river corridor because of the planned continued use of motors on the river. The North Rim was excluded because of the perceived need for roads.
- 1973** The NPS released another version of the recommendation that included the "potential wilderness" classification for Grand Canyon National Monument and the North Rim. The NPS set the river use allocation at 1972 use levels and initiated the Colorado River Research Program to address management of recreational use and resource protection for the river.
- 1975** The Grand Canyon National Park Enlargement Act of 1975 passed and required a new wilderness recommendation accommodating the enlarged Park.
- 1976** The NPS issued a preliminary wilderness proposal that included the river corridor as "potential wilderness."
- 1977** The NPS Director signed a Final Wilderness Recommendation which included the river corridor and North Rim as suitable for immediate wilderness designation. The NPS sent the recommendation to the Legislative Counsel where it was held in abeyance pending completion of a Colorado River Management Plan.
- 1979** The NPS released the Draft Colorado River Management Plan and Environmental Statement. The proposal included the phase-out of motorized use. The plan was approved.
- 1980** The NPS submitted a revised wilderness recommendation that included the river corridor as "potential wilderness."
- 1981** An amendment to the Department of the Interior Appropriations Bill resulted in abandonment of the river plan. The NPS revised the first Colorado River Management Plan to include an increase in overall use, establish a launch scheduling system, and provide for continued motorized use.
- 1989** The NPS updated the CRMP. The Plan established a resource monitoring program, and allowed a slight increase in noncommercial launches (not user-days). The Plan also established a fee structure for the noncommercial permit system.
- 1993** The NPS transmitted the Final Wilderness Recommendation to the Director. This update, consistent with the 1980 Wilderness Recommendation, included 94% of the Park for immediate designation, and retained the status of the river corridor as potential wilderness.
- 1995** The NPS begins work on a Wilderness Management Plan, and completes public scoping.
- 1997** The NPS initiated the CRMP revision process. The proposed date for a final plan is in 2000.
- 1998** The NPS releases the Draft Wilderness Management Plan for public comment.

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