

NPS MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Proposal Released, Comment Period Begins

October 21, 2005 - Earlier this week, the National Park Service (NPS) released proposed updates to the policies that guide the management of the National Park System. The policies, most recently revised in 2001, are being modified to "improve their clarity and keep pace with changes in laws, regulations, socio-economic factors, and technology". The policies also aim to inform how decisions are made in protecting park resources and providing opportunities for public enjoyment of national parks.

Although the proposal released this week is decidedly more favorable in its treatment of cultural and natural resources than an earlier draft, many are still criticizing modifications to the balance between protection and public enjoyment of the National Parks. Perhaps most troubling is the elimination of existing language which states "Congress, recognizing that the enjoyment by future generations of the national parks can be ensured only if the superb quality of park resources and values is left unimpaired, has provided that when there is a conflict between conserving resources and values and providing for enjoyment of them, conservation is to be predominant."

Further review of the nearly 300 page document is necessary to evaluate additional modifications and to determine the impact of the proposed changes. A 90-day public comment period is available until January 19, 2006.