

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Glacier National Park
Montana



Finding of No Significant Impact

Construction of New Hay Storage and Feeding Facility

September, 2004

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
CONSTRUCTION OF NEW HAY STORAGE AND FEEDING FACILITY
GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
WEST GLACIER, MONTANA**

In Glacier National Park, stock is used to support much of the work conducted in the backcountry. Some programs that regularly receive supplies or assistance from stock operations include: trail crews, backcountry rangers, lookouts, revegetation crews, and maintenance of backcountry structures. The park maintains 55-60 head of stock in a given year. Currently, the hayloft of the West Glacier barn is the primary storage and dispersal point for hay storage. Hay arrives at the barn in five-ton stacks of 70 lb. bales and is lifted by conveyor up from the delivery truck and hand stacked. It must then be hand loaded from the barn down to feeding areas or onto a flatbed truck for delivery to other parts of the park.

This project is a proactive measure that targets both health and safety issues and park efficiency. The proposed hay storage structure will reduce the number of times bales are handled, thereby reducing recurrent back injuries. Glacier National Park has one of the highest rates of injury in the National Park Service and back injuries are among the most frequent. In addition, the proposed structure will be large enough to store an entire year's supply of hay and will eliminate a frequent problem of wet weather damaging recently delivered hay before it can be stored or transported elsewhere in the park.

Poor ventilation and dusty conditions within the existing barn also present health hazards. Hay handlers have experienced acute respiratory problems from the enclosed conditions. In addition, the presence of mice and their waste within arriving hay and the barn present a potential health hazard. The open-air design of a new hay storage area will reduce respiratory problems and the risk of contracting air-borne viruses such as Hantavirus.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The National Park Service's preferred alternative is to construct an open-sided hay storage and feeding structure that is 32' x 64' with an 18-foot ceiling. Along the sides of the storage area will be 10 foot wide feeding areas. The overall footprint will be 64' x 52'. This area will be large enough to store an entire year's worth of hay and allow park employees to deliver hay to other parts of the park without having to rely on the availability of the hay vendor or be subject to inclement weather. Under current operations, the hay is often dampened by wet weather before it can be stored properly or transported elsewhere in the park, occasionally resulting in spoiled hay that must be discarded.

The structure's width will have free-spanning trusses as a ceiling and be covered by metal roofing with a brown or dark green roof to blend in better with the vegetation. Half trusses will extend below the roof and will be attached to the sidewalls below the eaves of the main roof. Treated posts will be used for the framework. They will be set on concrete piers (approx. 32) that are drilled and poured approximately three feet below grade. A concrete floor will be poured throughout that will have no slope under the storage area and a slight outward slope under the feeding areas.

The location for this project is just below the existing West Glacier horse barn and above the horse pasture. This area is currently part of the corral which will still have adequate space for the

stock and will not require expansion. The design of the new structure will allow a mechanism on the delivery truck to load and unload hay without employees having to handle the 70-lb. bales. Trucks will access the new facility by an existing dirt road into the corral. An 8' high metal gate will be installed across the open front of the structure to keep deer and elk from accessing the hay. The open-air design of the new hay storage area will reduce the risks of contracting air-borne diseases such as Hantavirus, and the ability for hay to be machine stacked in five-ton increments will reduce recurring back problems.

Mitigation Measures

- The roof will be of a brown or dark green color to blend in with the surrounding forest.
- Immature lodgepole pines will be planted every five feet along the existing western fence line of the corral. Expecting 50% mortality, a tree will survive every 10 feet.
- Work will begin no earlier than one hour after sunrise to minimize disturbance to wildlife and end before 7 p.m.
- Feeding or disturbing wildlife will be prohibited.
- If previously unidentified cultural resources are identified during construction activities, work will cease in the immediate vicinity of the identified resources until Section 106 procedures are complete.
- Additional mitigation measures may be identified as the project proceeds.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

A No Action Alternative was considered as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Under this alternative, no new hay storage facility would be constructed and the existing storage area within the barn would continue to be used. Hay would continue to be delivered on an as-needed basis.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying the criteria suggested in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), which is guided by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The CEQ provides direction that the “environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA Section 101”:

1. fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
2. assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
3. attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
4. preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
5. achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities; and

6. enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The Preferred Alternative will best achieve criteria 2, 3, 5, and 6 by providing safer conditions for employees and reducing the number of hay delivery trips. The proposed project will use a previously disturbed area to provide a beneficial and more efficient means of managing the hay needed for park operations. The project does not conflict with, or address, criteria 1 and 4. It does not change environmental conditions since the site is already disturbed, nor does it impact cultural diversity. The No Action Alternative conflicts with criteria 2 and 3 by not providing for health and safety. It does not address criteria 1, 4, 5, and 6. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is the environmentally preferred alternative.

WHY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As defined in 40 CFR Section 1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

There will be no impacts on wetlands, floodplains, federally listed threatened and endangered species, prime and unique farmlands, cultural resources (including historic buildings and structures, cultural landscapes, ethnographic resources, and museum collections), proposed wilderness, visitor use, or environmental justice. Impacts to soils and vegetation will be negligible to minor, long-term, and adverse from the removal of a few small pine trees. Impacts to wildlife, special status species, water resources, the Wild and Scenic River corridor, air quality, natural soundscapes, and socioeconomics will be negligible to minor, temporary, and adverse. These impacts will result from temporary construction activities. There will be a minor, long-term, adverse impact to visual resources from Apgar Lookout due to a new structure being visible from this location, but there will be no effect on visual resources from all other areas of the park. There will be a long-term, moderate, beneficial impact to the health and safety of park employees because the new structure will diminish the risk of Hantavirus and reduce the frequency of recurring back problems. There will also be a minor, long-term, beneficial impact to park operations by creating a larger hay storage area that will allow employees to deliver hay to other parts of the park without having to rely on the availability of the hay vendor or be subject to inclement weather, while requiring less manual handling of hay bales.

Degree of effect on public health or safety.

There will be a long-term, moderate, beneficial impact to the health and safety of park employees because the new structure will diminish the risk of Hantavirus and reduce the frequency of recurring back problems. These changes will not be noticeable to the public.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetland, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The project site does not have any unique characteristics. It is located approximately 250 feet outside of the Wild and Scenic River corridor of the Middle Fork of the Flathead River which is approximately 1,500 feet away.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

None of the letters received during scoping or the EA public review period raised issues that would suggest this project would be highly controversial.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment is highly uncertain or involves unique or unknown risks.

There are no effects to the human environment that are either highly uncertain or that involve unique or unknown risks.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The action does not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The action will not act in conjunction with other actions to produce cumulatively significant impacts.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The existing barn was constructed in 1963 and is not historic. No historic buildings and structures, cultural landscapes, or museum collections are in the project area. The area has been adequately surveyed, no identified and/or unevaluated resources exist, and the probability of discovering historic properties is highly unlikely. Only previously disturbed ground will be affected by the proposed project. However, if cultural resources are discovered during construction the project will be halted until the resources can be evaluated by an archeologist. The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council have been contacted during scoping. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Historic Preservation Department did not express any concerns with the project unless previously undisturbed ground was impacted. No response was received from the Blackfeet Tribe.

For Section 106 purposes, the park will document a “no historic properties affected” finding in its annual report to the State Historic Preservation Office in accordance with the *Programmatic Agreement among the National Park Service (Glacier National Park), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer for Management of Historic Properties in Glacier National Park*.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.

The project area is not known to be used by any federally-listed species; therefore, the park has determined that there will be no effect to federally listed species. The US Fish and Wildlife Service received a copy of the EA and notification of our determination. Further consultation is not necessary.

Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law.
The action does not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the National Park Services has determined that implementation of the proposal will not constitute an impairment to Glacier National Park's resources and values. This conclusion is based upon a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the *Construction of a New Hay Storage and Feeding Facility Environmental Assessment*, the public comments received, relevant scientific studies, and the professional judgment of the decision maker, guided by the direction in *NPS Management Policies* (December 27, 2000). Although the project has some negative impacts, in all cases these adverse impacts are the result of actions taken to preserve and restore other park resources and values. Overall, the plan results in benefits to park resources and values, and opportunities for their enjoyment.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public scoping was conducted for 28 days starting July 13, 2004. On this date, letters were sent to the park's mailing list for EAs, and various federal, state, and local agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Blackfeet and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Indian Tribes. A press release was issued on July 20, 2004 announcing scoping.

Three email comments were received during scoping. One email supported the proposed project to reduce the exposure of employees to Hanta virus. The State Historic Preservation Office stated that they had no immediate concerns regarding the project, but they would wait to see drawings and photos before commenting further. The Tribal Preservation Office of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes had no concerns regarding the project as long as it occurred within existing disturbed areas. A letter was received stating support for the project and another letter stated they had no substantive comment.

The EA was mailed to the park's mailing list and interested publics on August 11, 2004, and a press release was issued on the same day announcing the availability of the EA. The EA was placed on a 30-day public review. Comments were accepted through September 20, 2004. The document was made available on the park's website. Copies of the EA were sent to appropriate federal and state reviewing agencies and the Blackfeet and Confederated Salish-Kootenai tribes. One comment was received during this public review period, in support of the project.

A press release will be released announcing the availability of the FONSI. A copy will be sent to all commenters, and it will be placed on the park's web site.

CONCLUSION

The proposal does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The proposal will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are minor. There are no unmitigated adverse impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is not necessary. The park will document a “no historic properties affected” finding in its annual report to the State Historic Preservation Office in accordance with the *Programmatic Agreement among the National Park Service (Glacier National Park), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer for Management of Historic Properties in Glacier National Park*. Concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office is not required and no further Section 106 analysis is required. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

The action will not result in major, adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation and proclamation of Glacier National Park; (2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park; or (3) identified as a goal in the park’s general management plan or other relevant National Park Service planning documents, there will be no impairment of the park’s resources or values.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended: /s/ Michael O. Holm 9/28/04
 Superintendent Date

Approved: /s/ John T. Crowley 9/29/04
 Intermountain Regional Director Date