

Executive Summary



Final Commercial Services Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement Glacier National Park

INTRODUCTION

Glacier National Park, a portion of Waterton Glacier International Peace Park, is a special place that is recognized for its dramatic scenery, wildlife, wildlands, history, and cultural resources. The 1999 General Management Plan captured a vision for the park's future. It is a future based on tradition and preserving the natural and cultural resources that make the park so treasured today.

The General Management Plan's overall guiding philosophy is to manage most of the park for its wild character and for the integrity of Glacier's unique natural heritage. Traditional visitor services and facilities would be retained. Visitors would be able to enjoy the park from many vantage points. Visitor use would be managed to preserve resources, but a broad range of opportunities would be provided for people to experience, understand, study, and enjoy the park. Cooperation with park neighbors would be emphasized in managing use and resources.

The outstanding universal value of this park is evidenced by its purpose and significance that were defined in the General Management Plan and are based on legislation, legislative history and historic trends. The purposes of the park are to: preserve and protect natural and cultural resources for future generations; provide the visitor with opportunities to experience, understand and appreciate the park; and celebrate peace, friendship and goodwill among nations.

The significance of the park reflects its distinctive qualities: it has an exceptionally long geologic history; it offers spectacular scenery and rare primitive wilderness experiences; it is one of the most ecologically intact temperate areas remaining; it chronicles a history of human activities that value the area's natural features; and it is the world's first international peace park.

In this unique setting of Glacier National Park, commercial services have been provided since before the park's establishment in 1910. Beginning with travel by train and horseback, and grand lodging accommodations during the early part of the century, through automobiles and motor inns in later

decades, commercial services have provided the needed support to help the park fulfill its mission and allow visitors to experience, explore and learn. But in the past 50 years, very little has changed in the types and levels of services that are provided at Glacier. It is very evident that the needs of the visiting public have evolved. Changing concessioner workforce dynamics and demographics require adaptations. Park facilities and the infrastructure that supports commercial services are aging and have deteriorated and cannot sustain continued use without improvements.

Commercial services are provided by private businesses that operate under contracts and authorizations managed by the National Park Service. These businesses play a vital role in meeting the mission of the park, providing appropriate, quality services that the Park Service could not realistically furnish.

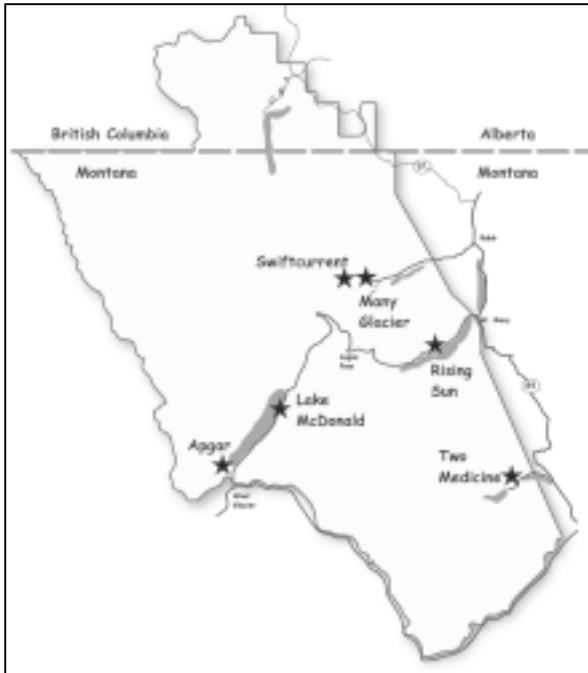
As we enter a new century, it is evident that a comprehensive commercial services plan is needed to reexamine the appropriate level and type of services that should be provided, develop a way to determine necessary and appropriate visitor services, and help plan the rehabilitation of historic hotel and motel properties around the park. This plan will provide direction for issuing new concession contracts and other commercial authorizations for the next 20 years.

It is the purpose of this *Final Commercial Services Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement* to describe the vision for commercial services in Glacier National Park and to determine the level and types of commercial visitor services that would be **necessary and appropriate** for the foreseeable future. The purpose is also to determine how to retain the well-known traditional services such as grand historic hotel lodging, family accommodations, historic boat tours and horseback trips in the backcountry since the infrastructure that supports these services has deteriorated and requires major capital expenditures to preserve and maintain. Improvements would also be necessary to add new approved services. For each developed area, the plan also considers infrastructure and site improvement alternatives related to commercial services.

The goals of this *Final CSP and Final EIS* are to:

- Determine the appropriate overall mix of necessary and appropriate commercial services.
- Establish the framework for future decisions.
- Establish the character and level of service by park area based on need, expectation, economic feasibility, and resource implications.
- Provide a clear vision and phased implementation strategy for rehabilitating the historic hotels.
- Continue a wide range of related visitor experiences.
- Provide the specific information necessary for the issuance of concession contracts.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS



To help identify issues and concerns relating to commercial services in the park, the park asked the public for comments and concerns that should be considered in this plan. A *Federal Register* notice was published on September 12, 2000 announcing the beginning of the planning process. A newsletter was distributed in November 2000 and a Web site was established to provide the public with information and an opportunity to comment during the early phases of the planning process. Open Houses were held in Kalispell, Missoula, Great Falls and Browning, Montana and in Lethbridge Alberta, Canada December 4-7. Early meetings were held with state and local agencies, as well as tribal governments to discuss concerns and issues. Approximately 226 comments were received. Additionally, because many of the comments submitted by the public about the General Management Plan were also related to this planning effort, these comments were reviewed and considered again.

The issues described below were derived from comments from the public, other agencies, tribes and park staff:

Employee housing in the park currently available to concessioners has a number of life, health and safety issues such as the presence of asbestos. The capacity is inadequate. Most of the housing is dormitory style with shared bathrooms, which limits the concessioner's ability to hire older, more experienced employees, married couples or employees with families.

Visitor/employee separation has become an issue over time. Most of the employee housing is located in the same areas where visitors recreate and relax, or is near overnight visitor accommodations as at Lake McDonald, Rising Sun, Swiftcurrent and Many Glacier. Employees often socialize late into the night or come and go at odd hours due to work shifts. Visitors and employees also often compete for the limited parking in these developed areas. This lack of separation has created a less than ideal experience for visitors and employees.



East view of Annex 2 of the Many Glacier Hotel

Vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation in the developed areas have become confusing. All of these areas were built when the park had fewer visitors and cars. There is limited parking and a lot of congestion during the peak season such as at Lake McDonald and Apgar.

Health, life safety and accessibility: many of the historic structures in the park that are operated by concessioners (hotels, motels, restaurants and employee housing) have health and life safety issues that place these structures, visitors, and employees at risk. Most renovations occurred over 40 years ago. Issues include

the presence of asbestos and pests, wiring and plumbing that do not meet code, and outdated fire warning and sprinkler systems. Additionally, most of these structures do not meet current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. There have been a few recent renovations such as portions of the Many Glacier Hotel and Lake McDonald Lodge.

The General Management Plan recommends maintaining a minimum of 500 guest rooms parkwide, not including the backcountry chalets and lodging on private lands. However, addressing health, life safety and ADA compliance issues may result in a loss of overnight rooms. Finding locations for lost rooms may require new construction in developed areas.

Floodplains are among the many natural resources in the park where the National Park Service usually avoids development; however, floodplains were not a concern in the early part of the century when most of the developed areas were selected. Therefore, most of these areas lie within 100-year floodplains, placing employees, visitors and historic structures at risk.

Sensitive natural resources such as the federally listed threatened grizzly bear, the endangered gray wolf and Canada lynx, and state listed rare plants are located in or pass through many of the developed areas or other areas in the park where commercial services are provided. Although many of the developed areas have existed for over 90 years, increased development and visitation to the surrounding areas may affect these species' behavior, cause displacement, and affect their prey base and ultimately their ability to survive. The Village Inn on the lakeshore of Lake McDonald, the horse corral in the Lake McDonald developed area, Many Glacier Valley developments and Granite Park Chalet are examples of developed areas located in or near sensitive resources.

Future Use of Granite Park Chalet: During scoping for this plan, public comments were received that asked us to revisit the future of Granite Park Chalet. They asked us to consider maintaining the option of a less expensive chalet experience at Granite Park (which would require a less complex utility system) in contrast to Sperry Chalet. These two chalets are national historic landmarks that grace the backcountry of the park. Both chalets were closed to the public in 1992 due to substandard water and sewage systems, inadequate life safety, and deteriorating facilities. A decision was reached through an Environmental Assessment in 1993 that both chalets be rehabilitated to provide full service (lodging and prepared meals). Funding was obtained to complete the full rehabilitation of Sperry Chalet, which reopened to the public in 1999. Only partial funding remained and was committed to complete some of the structural stabilization work on Granite Park Chalet. Granite Park was reopened to the public in 1996. To meet the state's requirement of generating less than 100 gallons a day of gray water, the services offered at Granite Park Chalet were modified. Under the current operation and with services provided by other concessioners in the park, it is possible to customize the chalet experience by selecting a mix of self- or full-service opportunities. In 2003, the rate was \$66 per person, per night for visitors who chose to carry in sleeping bags and food. In 2003, for an additional \$10, bedding was provided by the concessioner. For guests who do not wish to carry in food, prepackaged meals as well as some other limited food items are available for purchase at the chalet. Guests who wish only to carry personal items can make arrangements with a concessioner to deliver gear and food to the chalet. For a more full-service opportunity, the current hiking guide concession also offers a "hut hike" package that offers a hiking guide and guide-prepared meals on site.

Two chalets that are national historic landmarks grace the backcountry of the park.

During the rehabilitation of Sperry Chalet, it became evident that the time and funding needed, and impacts to resources (disturbance and helicopter supply flights) had been underestimated and not fully analyzed in the Environmental Assessment. For example, it was estimated that a total of 10

hours of helicopter flights were needed for each chalet project. By 1999, over 170 hours of helicopter time (600+ flights) had been made for the Sperry Chalet rehabilitation. It also became clear that the technology for a composting toilet system needed to be redesigned for Granite Park Chalet. This is based on the issues encountered at Sperry Chalet, some of which are still not resolved, but which the park is working on. The original estimate to complete both chalets was \$4.7 million. Sperry Chalet has cost approximately \$4.5 million to date.

The 1993 Environmental Assessment is now over 10 years old. New information is available and assumptions made in the Environmental Assessment are no longer correct. Costs have continued to rise. The cost for completing the improvements to the gray water system and toilet facilities would be substantially higher than estimated in 1993.

Commercially Guided Day Hiking: concerns were raised about the increasingly large size of guided hiking groups led by concessioners. Large groups may disturb vegetation by leaving the trail for breaks or to allow others to pass, and by occupying a large area at destinations. Large groups may impact other hikers by making it more difficult to pass and by producing unacceptable levels of noise. There are currently no limits on group size for commercial day hiking groups. Concessioner-led trips with 20 to 40 participants are not uncommon. Although concerns were raised about the National Park Service-led hikes, since they are not a commercial service, they have not been addressed in this plan.

Commercially Guided Bicycle Tour Group Size and Frequency: in the past ten years, the number of operators for commercially guided tours has increased from five to 11, with an average of over 550 bicyclists coming to Glacier each summer. Group sizes can range from five to over 100. Some participants commented during scoping that restrictions on the numbers, days or hours for group bicycle tours should be set to reduce potential conflicts between bicyclists and motor vehicles. Concerns were raised about bicyclists on the road who are not affiliated with a tour group; however, as they are not commercially guided, they have not been addressed in this plan.



Entry to public showers, General Store/Motel at Rising Sun

Other Support Services for Concession Operations have been raised as a concern by the public and by current park concessioners. Hotel, motel and food service operations require laundry facilities nearby. The current concessioner uses laundry, warehouse and administrative facilities at East Glacier which are not part of the commercial services owned by the park.

Modernization or Expansion of Developments was raised as an issue by the public. Most comments urged that existing facilities should be rehabilitated, but that modernization should be kept to a minimum and developed areas should not be expanded. Public comments also stated that there should be a range of accommodations to provide for visitors from different income levels. There is a lack of shower and public laundry facilities.

The Construction Season is of concern because closing visitor facilities for rehabilitation during part or all of the visitor season may affect the visitor experience and concessioner business opportunities; however, allowing construction during the off-season might affect sensitive wildlife, including the park's threatened and endangered species.

ISSUES AND NEW SERVICES CONSIDERED BUT BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THIS PLAN

Parkwide Transit System
 Utility Upgrades and Improvements at Developed Areas
 Funding Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings
 Concessioner's Possessory Interest
 Other Services and Uses

- The Glacier Natural History Association and Glacier Institute
- Commercial Filming and Photography
- Special Events

 Commercial Air Tours
 Accessible Facilities in Campgrounds and Other Areas
 Monopolies Held by Concessioners
 Economic Opportunities for Blackfeet Tribal Members
 Paintings and Collectibles Owned by Concessioners
 Private Lands in the Park
 Rehabilitation of Campgrounds
 Non-Commercial Day Hiking Party Size

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

The process of developing these alternatives began with public scoping in December 2000 and continued with a series of workshops to develop a framework for the alternatives. All public comments were reviewed and considered. Resource information, as well as opportunities, concerns and constraints for the developed areas were also reviewed and considered. The assumptions agreed upon and used to guide the development of alternatives are: 1) the management zones criteria conceptually described in the General Management Plan; 2) a "Commercial Services Vision;" 3) the criteria for determining necessary and appropriate services; 4) a list of services that were determined to be necessary and appropriate; 5) prescriptions and standards developed for each service; and 6) objectives for developed areas.

VISION FOR COMMERCIAL SERVICES

Glacier National Park's commercial operators, or concessioners, assist the Park Service in providing for visitor use and enjoyment while at the same time preserving the park's unique resources for future generations. Through cooperation with each other and all park neighbors, concessioners offer memorable, high quality experiences that provide opportunities to understand, appreciate and enjoy the park in its classic western park setting. They ensure that visitors enjoy a reasonably safe experience, augmented by educational opportunities that expand appreciation of the park's natural and cultural resources and its role in our national heritage. Concessioners are part of the park's celebration of the ongoing peace, friendship and goodwill among nations and recognition of the need for cooperation in a world of shared resources.

Most of the commercial facilities are part of the rich cultural heritage and significance of the park — many are either national historic landmarks or are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The park's unique character and associated experiences are maintained, and necessary and appropriate services that complement the park and its individual developed areas are provided.

All commercial services in the park would:

Be Resource-Oriented

Commercial services complement, protect and preserve park resources at the same time that they facilitate and support the visitor experience. The theme, aesthetics and style of all commercial endeavors and facilities are in accord with the natural and cultural environment of the park. Their role in the visitor experience is supportive, unobtrusive and in harmony with park resources.

Rather than serving the maximum possible number of visitors, commercial services support visitation levels that are consistent with the preservation of resources and a high quality visitor experience. This level of visitation minimizes impacts to natural and cultural resources like vegetation and historic buildings. Sustainable practices are promoted such as recycling, reduced solid waste, the minimal use and safe disposal of hazardous materials, and the use of environmentally friendly building materials.

Provide Quality Service and Experiences

Historic visitor facilities are rehabilitated and provide a setting for quality service and experiences that reflect the unique historic character of the park. The architecture of other commercial structures is compatible with the geographic area. In general, architectural and site improvements reflect a strong sense of continuity, harmony and appropriateness in the built environment, and evoke a sense of place. Facilities are well designed and maintained.

Commercial services that provide guided interpretive, educational or other informational narrative would promote park themes and expand the visitor's knowledge and understanding of the park's unique qualities. Presentation should be patterned after National Park Service standards.

The quality of all visitor experience is enhanced by minimizing conflicts between all groups who use the park through facility design, allocation of use, and carefully conceived operating plans for commercial services. Facilities are designed and maintained to be barrier-free.

A variety of visitor services and accommodations serve a range of visitor needs and incomes with approximately 500-540 lodging units parkwide (excluding chalets and private services in Apgar). There is no significant change in the percentage mix of type of accommodation from the present, and services that are provided by surrounding communities are not duplicated.

Optional commercial transportation that is convenient, affordable and of high quality provides access to the park. Transportation systems provide seamless connections between the park, gateway communities and regional transportation systems. All systems service visitors with a variety of needs, and enable travelers to enjoy freedom of movement. The historic "red bus" experience is maintained as an option for touring the park.

Be Located in Well-Maintained Infrastructure

Well-maintained infrastructure and facilities support the approved level of commercial services, including employee and administrative facilities, parking, roads and utility

Commercial services complement, protect and preserve park resources at the same time that they facilitate and support the visitor experience.

systems. Historic visitor facilities are rehabilitated and all facilities maintained appropriately to extend their useful life. Housing is constructed or upgraded to meet minimum housing standards. A variety of employee housing options including dormitories, individual accommodations and efficiency apartments suitable for couples or small families is provided to enable concessioners to retain a diverse, qualified staff. Sufficient on-site housing is provided to ensure adequate staffing for visitor services. Size and location of support facilities is determined by need and potential impacts to the resources. Signage is adequate to orient and direct visitors around sites. Lighting is designed to minimize effects on visitors and protect night skies.

NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE

Criteria were established to further define “necessary and appropriate” commercial services in accordance with Title IV of the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998. The following services were determined to meet the criteria and will be continued or provided in Glacier National Park.

Existing Commercial Services Considered to Be Necessary and Appropriate for the Park

- Boat and Equipment Rentals
- Boat Tours
- Commercial Entertainment Offered Within Concession Facilities (plays, movies, concerts)*
- Emergency Road Services
- Food/Beverage/Catering Meals
- Granite Park Chalet
- Guided Art Seminars
- Guided Backpacking
- Guided Bicycle Tours
- Guided Cross-country Skiing/Snowshoeing
- Guided Day Hiking
- Guided Horseback Riding
- Guided Interpretive Vehicle Tours and Public Transportation
- Guided Photography Workshops
- Guided Rafting
- Horse Boarding
- Horse Packing Services
- Lodging
- Public Laundry
- Public Showers
- Retail/Vending/ATM
- Sperry Chalet

New or Enhanced Commercial Services Determined to be Necessary and Appropriate for the Park

- Boat Transportation (water taxi)
- Firewood Sales
- Guided Natural and Cultural History Hikes**
- Guided Underwater Diving**
- Private Vehicle Shuttle**
- Step-on Guide Service**
- Taxi Services



* Commercial entertainment outside concession facilities and other special events would continue to be regulated by management policies and special use permit requirements.

** New services that are not currently offered by commercial operators

Standards and prescriptions were developed to further describe how each necessary and appropriate service will be provided.

“Necessary and appropriate” determination is based on the Organic Act, park purpose and significance and the General Management Plan. The criteria below were developed by Glacier National Park.

A service that is “necessary” accomplishes one or more of the following:

1. Contributes to visitor understanding and appreciation of park purpose and significance.
2. Enhances visitor experiences consistent with park area philosophies.
3. Assists the park in managing visitor use and educating park visitors.
4. Is an essential service or facility not available within a reasonable distance from the park.

A service that is “appropriate” accomplishes all of the following:

1. Is consistent with the purpose and significance of Glacier National Park.
2. Is consistent with laws, regulations, and policies applicable to Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and the National Park Service.
3. Does not compromise public health and safety.
4. Does not significantly impact or impair park resources or values.
5. Does not unduly conflict with other park uses and activities.
6. Does not exclude the general public from participating in limited recreational opportunities.

The following commercial services were suggested by the public but failed to meet the necessary and appropriate criteria: commercial instruction (skill- or technique-based instruction), crystal reading, gas stations, guided dog sled services, guided fishing, guided ice climbing, guided rock climbing, horse drawn carriage rides, horse drawn sleigh rides, kennel services, marina services, and personal services (beauty shops, barber, massage). Guided motorcycle tours were initially determined to meet the necessary and appropriate criteria for consideration. However, after considerable deliberation based in part on numerous negative comments from the public, we feel that there is a real potential for tour groups of motorcycles to impact the visitor experience through heightened noise levels. This impact would violate the test of appropriateness as discussed in Chapter 1 of the *Final Commercial Services Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final CSP and Final EIS)*. This plan does not address individual motorcycles. Individual motorcycles are permitted on all park roads that are open for public motor vehicle use.

The following commercial services were also suggested but are prohibited by policy or regulation: ballooning (take-off or landing), base jumping, commercial fishing, gambling, hang gliding, heli-hiking, heli-skiing, hunting, jet skiing, parasailing, snowmobiling.

STANDARDS AND PRESCRIPTIONS

Prescriptions or standards have been described for each necessary and appropriate commercial service. The prescriptions/standards describe how concessioners can achieve Glacier National Park’s vision for providing quality visitor experience and services.

The standards are based on a comprehensive evaluation of the commercial services including opportunities beyond park boundaries. They establish specific performance expectations (for example, minimizing impacts on resources) for each type of commercial service.

MANAGEMENT ZONES

The General Management Plan divided the six geographic areas of the park into conceptual management zones that include a visitor service zone, day use zone, rustic zone and backcountry zone. This commercial services plan refines the delineation of the visitor service zones.

ALTERNATIVES FOR NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE SERVICES

The alternatives for necessary and appropriate services, and services related to the developed areas are presented below. Alternative A for both types of services is the “status quo/no action” alternative (and would be the only available choice in the absence of a plan). Actions that are common to all alternatives, as well as other alternatives and ideas that were considered but rejected are discussed at the end of the chapter.

Granite Park Chalet

Alternative A - Status Quo/No Action. The chalet would continue current operations. Guests would continue to have the option of preparing food that they have brought to the chalet or preparing prepackaged meals on site. Private rooms with beds would continue to be provided and bedding could be rented for an additional fee. Arrangements could also be made for a concessioner to carry food and overnight gear into the chalet. A more full-service opportunity would be available by purchasing the “hut hike” package that offers a hiking guide and guide-prepared meals on site. No potable drinking water would be provided. Waste would continue to be flown out. **Alternative B (Preferred)** would also continue to provide all the current services. However, the restrooms would be replaced and expanded, potable water would be provided, and formal or informal interpretive opportunities would be available. **Alternative C** would provide full-service dining and overnight facilities at one price like at Sperry Chalet. A new gray water system for the treatment of wastewater would be constructed and an improved toilet system installed. This alternative is consistent with the decision made in 1993 to reopen both Granite Park and Sperry Chalets with full services. **Alternative B is preferred because it** would provide a diverse range of opportunities to park visitors and retain traditional accommodations in the backcountry. Guests would be provided with options to customize their stay with a mix of self- or full-service opportunities, and with a range of associated rates. Alternative B would require a smaller gray water treatment system than would be required under alternative C and would result in less land disturbance, and fewer helicopter flights or pack trips for either construction or operational support. This alternative also strongly conforms to the criteria expressed in NEPA Section 101 for the environmentally preferred alternative in that it “preserve[s] important historic, cultural, and



natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain[s], wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.”

Public Comments on the DEIS: Of all the services explored in the *Draft Commercial Services Plan*, the future of the Granite Park Chalet generated the most interest and controversy among the public who submitted comments. Several hundred of the commentors specifically addressed this issue. Comments regarding the future of Granite Park Chalet were almost evenly divided over whether it should be returned to full service or remain as it is, with just a few more comments supporting a return to full service with all meals provided by the chalet operator. Some of the commenters appeared to be misinformed about the services currently offered, or thought that without full services, the chalet would be closed. A more complete description of the existing services offered has been added in Chapter 2 of the *Final CSP and Final EIS* under Granite Park Chalet.

Commenters in favor of full service stated that increased ease of access for the young, elderly and families would be an important part of their experience. Many commenters also fondly recalled their experiences at the chalet such as hot meals eaten with a group of strangers, camaraderie, education provided by the staff, and emergency services provided by a full-time staff available all summer. Some commenters also said that the full service chalet offered them a “wilderness” experience without the rigors and concerns of sleeping outside in bear country. Commenters in favor of retaining the chalet as it is operated today cited environmental concerns. Most who commented in favor of the preferred alternative said they would value having a lower cost chalet experience than that offered at Sperry Chalet.

Compelling arguments were presented on both sides of this issue that caused the National Park Service to re-examine the preferred alternative. A few changes have been made to the preferred alternative to address the “experience” that many said they missed now at the chalet.

Commercially Guided Day Hiking (Cultural History/Natural History/Recreational)

Alternative A - Status Quo/No Action. Commercially guided day hiking would continue in all management zones except for the North Fork. Although the client-to-guide ratio is currently regulated by an operating plan, there would continue to be no limits on group size or which trails could be used. Interpretive hikes provided by boat concessioners and National Park Service naturalists would continue. **Alternative B (Preferred)** would provide cultural and natural history hiking as well as recreational hiking in all areas of the park except the North Fork management area. Client-to-guide ratios would not exceed one guide for 11 clients. Hikes associated with the boat tours would continue to be operated with selected boat tours with group size limits of 50 for Grinnell Lake, Grinnell Glacier and Baring Falls Trails. No guided off-trail hiking, climbing, or fishing would be allowed. For commercially guided hikes, a 12-person group size would apply to trails in the backcountry zone. In the day use zone, larger commercially guided groups would be permitted on trails. The group size limits were derived from park experience, the zone prescriptions in the General Management Plan and recreational literature, and would ensure a high quality experience.

Trail	Permitted Group Size
<u>Many Glacier area</u>	
Iceberg, Red Rock, and Cracker Lakes	25
Grinnell Lake and Grinnell Glacier	35
Apikuni Falls Trail	25
Swiftcurrent Pass Trail	25
Swiftcurrent Lookout	25

Trail	Permitted Group Size
<u>Goat Haunt-Belly River area</u>	
Waterton Lake and Rainbow Falls Trails	35
<u>Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor area</u>	
Rocky Point	25
Sacred Dancing Cascade/McDonald Falls/Johns Lake ..	35
Sperry Chalet	35
Avalanche Lake	35
Highline Trail	25
Sun Point to Baring Falls	35
St. Mary Falls Trail	35
Red Eagle - Beaver Pond Loop.....	35
Boundary Trail from West Glacier to Lincoln Creek	25
Grinnell Glacier Overlook.....	25
Loop Trail to Granite Park.....	25
<u>Two Medicine area</u>	
Upper Two Medicine Lake	35
Rockwell Falls	25
Paradise Point	35
Running Eagle Falls	35

A limit of one trip per day by each commercial operator on each trail in the backcountry zone would be imposed with no limits on trips in other zones. An annual overall cap of 5,000 user days would be imposed parkwide for commercial operators. The same condition would apply to commercially guided natural or cultural history hikes. The user day cap would cover all types of commercially guided day hikes. **Alternative B is preferred because** placing limits on the size of groups hiking on trails begins to implement the General Management Plan and achieve the desired visitor experience. Hikers in the backcountry zone would have fewer encounters with other hikers than in the day use zone.

Public Comments on the DEIS: There were many comments in support of the preferred alternative. Several commenters would like to see even smaller group size limits than those proposed. One commenter wanted group size limits to apply to guided backpacking groups. Some thought the group size limits should also apply to National Park Service guided hikes. Several commenters did not want the National Park Service to reduce the number of interpretive program guided hikes it provides. There were only a few comments supporting the *status quo* alternative. There were several comments suggesting that since only one company currently has a contract with the National Park Service to provide this service, there is a concessioner monopoly and that other companies should be allowed to provide this service. These comments are addressed in the *Final CSP and Final EIS* in Chapter 2 under Guided Day Hiking and in Chapter 5 in the response to comments. After reviewing public comments, we have modified the hiking trail list under the preferred alternative to address some omissions and discrepancies, and to expand opportunities.

Guided Underwater Diving Tours

Alternative A - Status Quo/No Action. No commercially guided underwater diving tours are currently provided in the park. **Alternative B (Preferred)** would offer this service in Lakes McDonald, Sherburne and Josephine, and Swiftcurrent, Two Medicine, Pray, Lower Two Medicine, and St. Mary Lakes. All participants would be fully certified divers. No collection or removal of

materials from the waters would be allowed. **Alternative B is preferred because** it would offer a new experience and provide the visitor with increased understanding and appreciation of the park's submerged resources, purpose and significance.

Public Comments on DEIS: There were several comments opposing the addition of guided underwater diving tour services to the park; most comments stated it was an inappropriate activity, and others felt it would adversely impact park resources. Some suggested closely monitoring the tours, and some did not support underwater diving tours in the backcountry, i.e. Josephine Lake. These comments are addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Firewood Sales

Alternative A – Status Quo/No Action. Firewood sales would continue to be provided by a commercial operator in camp stores in the Apgar Village, Lake McDonald, Rising Sun, Swiftcurrent, and Two Medicine developed areas. No firewood sales by a commercial operator would occur in the campgrounds. **Alternative B (Preferred)** would offer this service in camp stores and at selected campgrounds such as Apgar, Fish Creek, Sprague, Avalanche, Rising Sun, St. Mary, Two Medicine, and Many Glacier campgrounds. Firewood would be offered for sale by one or more commercial operators. The appropriate method of onsite sales is yet to be determined. **Alternative B is preferred because** firewood sales in the campgrounds would provide a service that has long been requested by the public and could be managed in a manner that meets all the appropriate criteria.

Public Comments on DEIS: There were suggestions to require dry, seasoned firewood to reduce smoke in campgrounds, and to designate “smoke-free zones” in campgrounds; these ideas will be taken into consideration. There were a few comments supporting the addition of firewood sales as a concession in the park, with suggestions to allow the Blackfoot Tribe first priority on sales. Some commenters who were opposed to firewood sales thought the National Park Service would profit from the sales. These comments are addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Public Showers

Alternative A – Status Quo/No Action. Public showers would continue to be provided in the Rising Sun and the Swiftcurrent developed areas. The shower facilities at Swiftcurrent would also serve as restroom and shower facilities for the 26 guest cabins. Shower facilities could be expanded within existing facilities at these locations. **Alternative B (Preferred)** proposes adding shower facilities at or near campgrounds in the visitor services zones, or expanding existing public showers within existing facilities. **Alternative B is preferred because** it would expand the current level of services that are inadequate, and better meet the needs of the visiting public.

Public Comments on DEIS: One comment opposed construction of public showers, but several others supported the preferred alternative. Two Medicine, Rising Sun, Many Glacier and Apgar were cited as areas where additional showers would be desirable. This suggestion is addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Boat Tours and Transportation (Boat Taxi)

Alternative A – Status Quo/No Action. Interpretive boat tours, and boat taxi or boat transportation services would continue to be provided. Interpretive hikes would continue to be offered in conjunction with selected boat tours. A combination of boat docks and storage facilities, ticketing facilities, and housing in some areas for the concessioner employees would continue to be provided. These facilities would be upgraded to comply with life safety, accessibility and building codes, as funding is available. **Alternative B (Preferred)** includes the services and upgrades in alternative A. New services would

include tour boat pick-up at Apgar Village to replicate the original means of transportation to Lake McDonald Lodge. The present public boat dock would be extended. Vessels could also be added at Lake McDonald and Two Medicine Lake. Additional taxi services would be provided on St. Mary and Two Medicine Lakes by boat as appropriate. Tour boats would be modified as necessary to improve access for the mobility-impaired public. **Alternative B is preferred because** it provides more choices and opportunities for visitors with minimal impacts to park resources.

Public Comments on DEIS: Several comments supported the preferred alternative, although one disagreed with expanding services at Two Medicine. Some comments were against additional boat tours, rentals, and taxis. Some comments opposed the use of any motorized boats in the park, or suggested limiting motor size. One comment suggested the National Park Service limit the number of boat tours offered. These comments are addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Guided Interpretive Vehicle Tours, Taxi, Private Vehicle Shuttle, and Public Transportation Service

Alternative A – Status Quo/No Action.

Motor Vehicle Tours: Only two commercial tour or transportation operators are currently authorized to provide service on the Going-to-the-Sun Road between Lake McDonald Lodge and Rising Sun Motor Inn. No commercial operations are currently allowed in the North Fork management area with the exception of the Camas Road. Currently, tours cross the park and provide links to Waterton, Canada; East Glacier, West Glacier, and on special request, Kalispell airport. One tour company, using a combination of 15-passenger vans and rehabilitated 1930s-vintage buses, provides commentary that describes park features, history and local lore. A second tour company uses a small fleet of big picture-window tour vehicles and interprets the park from a Native American perspective. Commentaries include local lore, history and discussions about the spiritual importance the park holds to the Blackfeet Tribe.

Taxi Service: Current taxi services would continue to be provided to destinations within the park under authorizations from the National Park Service. However, taxi services are not allowed in the North Fork, on the inside North Fork Road, or on sections of the Going-to-the-Sun Road between the Lake McDonald and Rising Sun developed areas. They are allowed on the Camas Road. Pre-existing contractual agreements preclude this type of service by other than a concessioner in the above-mentioned section of the Going-to-the-Sun Road. No administrative facilities are currently provided in the park.

Private Vehicle Shuttle: Commercial shuttling of private vehicles is currently not provided in the park.

Public Transportation Service: Current shuttle services would continue with point-to-point transportation between Many Glacier Valley and along the Going-to-the-Sun Road. The service consists of two 15-passenger vans, which are operated from morning until early evening between July 1 and early September. Headways (time between buses) would continue to range between two and three hours. The service connection to the Many Glacier area would continue to be very limited. Alternatives for shuttle services will be identified and analyzed in a separate parkwide transit plan.

Alternative B (Preferred).

Motor Vehicle Tours: Services would continue to be provided throughout the park with the exception of the North Fork management area. Tours would be allowed on the Camas Road.

Taxi Services: Operations would continue as in alternative A until contractual agreements expire. At that time, operating restrictions would be changed to allow expansion of services.

Private Vehicle Shuttle: The commercial shuttling of private vehicles would provide transportation of a park visitor's private vehicle to a designated location or trailhead to facilitate a hiking trip that begins and ends at different locations. Commercial shuttling of private vehicles could be provided to trailheads and designated locations in the Two Medicine, Many Glacier and Going-to-the-Sun Road

corridor management areas. This service would not be provided in the North Fork management area. No administrative facilities would be provided in the park.

Public Transportation Service: A parkwide transit system would be provided. Alternatives for shuttle services will be identified and analyzed in a separate parkwide transit plan. **Alternative B is preferred because** it would better meet the public's tour and transportation needs in and around Glacier National Park. It would provide more flexibility for visitors who choose long distance hikes.

Public Comments on DEIS: Several comments were received in support of increasing shuttle services in the park. One comment suggested the shuttle service should be better advertised. Several comments supported the development of a parkwide transportation plan including cars, shuttles, and bicycles. Some comments supported a separate transportation contract and improved quality for guided tours, and one commenter would like the National Park Service to allow other concessioners to operate bus tours in the park. One commenter suggested that new commercial services should be required to participate in the park shuttle system, one suggested limiting parking hours at Logan Pass, and one requested improved parking at the Iceberg Lake trailhead. One commenter opposed allowing commercial shuttling of private vehicles for hikers to congested areas, and some suggested a fee for driving private vehicles in the park which would subsidize a shuttle bus. These ideas will be taken into consideration as the park develops a public transportation service for the rehabilitation of the Going-to-the-Sun Road and after the road has been rehabilitated.

Some comments requested the National Park Service move ahead quickly with the rehabilitation of the Going-to-the-Sun Road. The National Park Service is pursuing funding for this project. The EIS process was complete as of November 5, 2003, when the Record of Decision was signed. A few comments opposed the use of tax dollars to attempt early opening of the road. The National Park Service does not intend to open the road earlier than it historically has been opened. The road-opening plan has not changed; the National Park Service will continue to try to open the road in early June.

Many comments supported limits on vehicle size and numbers, and would like the park to promote alternative means of transportation. One comment supported allowing private vehicle shuttling to the North Fork and one was opposed to motor vehicle tours in the North Fork. Some commenters suggested a mandatory shuttle. These comments are addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Horseback Riding and Horse Packing Services

Alternative A - Status Quo. Apgar, Lake McDonald and Many Glacier stables would provide horseback riding and packing services to the public. "Drop trip" packing services would continue to be provided to backcountry campsites where horse traffic is permitted.

Current client-to-guide ratios, party size limits and limits on stock held at each stable would be maintained. Employee housing would continue to be provided at each stable. There would be upgrades to comply with life safety, accessibility and building codes, as funding is available. **Alternative B** would provide the services in alternative A with the exception of the Apgar stables, which would be maintained



as a base for packing operations. However, no trail rides would originate from that location.

Alternative C (preferred). In addition to stables at Apgar, Lake McDonald, and Many Glacier, guided trail rides would be provided in the Two Medicine areas. No facilities would be constructed or installed to facilitate the Two Medicine rides inside the park. All stock would be maintained outside the park and delivered to and from the park each day that rides are scheduled where appropriate. Rides would be limited to the following trails: Dry Fork, Two Medicine (Mt. Henry-Scenic Point), and Autumn Creek-East Glacier Trails. These rides would occur only in July, August, and September. Rides would be limited to one trip per day per trail, trail conditions permitting, with a total group size of ten horses including the guide. **Alternative D** would continue to operate stables at Many Glacier and Apgar as described in alternative A. Lake McDonald stables would be removed, the rides up the valley discontinued, and the site used for trailhead parking and a stock-loading ramp. Commercial rides and packing would be permitted to Sperry Chalet from this location. Additional housing could be constructed at the Apgar stables and the corral at Apgar could be enlarged to accommodate 45 horses. A modified **alternative C is the preferred because** it would continue the historic, guided horseback trips from the Apgar, Lake McDonald and Many Glacier areas. It would also permit limited guided trips on the Dry Fork Trail to Oldman Lake from the Entrance Station, and over the Mt. Henry Trail from Two Medicine to East Glacier. There would be no stop at Scenic Point. Other day trips could include riding up the Mt. Henry Trail from East Glacier to Fortymile Creek, and up the Autumn Creek-East Glacier Trail to the ridge on Dancing Lady Mountain. Only one trip per day, per trail, would be allowed, July through September, with a maximum party of 10 riders. Weed seed-free hay must be fed to the horses being used, and access would be dependent upon trails being sufficiently dry to prevent degradation. No major streams would be impacted and all these trails were chosen for their present suitability under dry conditions. This alternative would increase visitor choices and return some historic guided horse opportunities to the East Glacier and Two Medicine areas that were discontinued in 1970. It would also provide opportunities for expanded cultural and natural interpretation, and could provide a business opportunity on the east side of the park. Although there would be additional impacts associated with increased horse use including encounters with hikers, increased waste from horses on trails, erosion, trampling of vegetation, and weed spread, these effects would be mitigated in part by small, infrequent parties, use of weed seed-free hay, careful monitoring of trail conditions and readiness, and intensified trail maintenance.

Public Comments on DEIS: A few commenters supported the preferred alternative for horseback riding, and a few supported Alternative B, which removes rides from Apgar. One comment was against any horse use in the park. A few commenters would like to see increased horseback riding opportunities on the east side of the park and a few suggested removing horse rides and the stable from the Lake McDonald area. The National Park Service has modified the preferred alternative in Chapter 2 of the *Final CSP and Final EIS* to allow for horseback rides in the Two Medicine Area. Also see the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Commercially Guided Bicycle Tours

Alternative A - Status Quo/No Action would continue to provide this service on paved roads in the visitor service zone of all management areas in the park. These services would also continue to be provided in the rustic zone at the Apgar Lookout, the 1913 Ranger Station, and the Cut Bank area. Off-road bicycle use would continue to be prohibited. There would continue to be no limits on group size, number of groups per day, or number of operators. Other conditions of operation would continue to be designated in a commercial permit. No administrative facilities are currently provided in the park. **Alternative B (Preferred)** would maintain the conditions outlined in alternative A, but would limit the commercial group size and the number of commercially guided groups that could cross the Going-to-the-Sun Road per day. **Alternative B is preferred because** it would improve safety by

reducing the potential conflicts between commercially guided riders and motorized vehicles. Because commercially guided bicycle tours can range from groups of five to 100 cyclists, the limits on the size would be selected to ensure a quality visitor experience and avoid conflicts between motorized vehicles and bicycles. An allocation system would be developed to distribute opportunities among different commercially guided bicycle tour groups. This does not affect private use of bicycles in the park.

Public Comments on DEIS: Many comments were received opposing the proposed limits to group sizes for commercially guided bicycle tours, or opposing any restrictions on bicycling. Several comments supported these limits, a few recommended mentioning the current restriction on hours for bicycles on the Going-to-the-Sun Road, and some comments suggested adding bike lanes to the road. Some comments wanted the National Park Service to allow bicycle or motorcycle use on designated trails. These comments are addressed in Chapter 2 of the *Final CSP and Final EIS* under Commercially Guided Bicycle Tours and in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Commercial Step-on Guide Services

Alternative A - Status Quo/No Action. No commercial step-on guide services are currently provided in the park. **Alternative B (Preferred)** could provide these services. A step-on guide would ride along with individuals in their own vehicles and give an interpretive tour of the park. These services would be provided only in areas of the park that are unrestricted to commercial tour operations, and would not be authorized in the North Fork management area. **Alternative B is preferred because** it offers the public a necessary and appropriate visitor experience that is not currently provided.

Public Comments on DEIS: Several comments were received in support of the preferred alternative to allow commercial step-on guide service in the park, and some comments were against this new service. The preferred alternative, to allow this service, has not changed.

Guided Motorcycle Tours

Public Comments on DEIS: Many comments were received opposing the addition of guided motorcycle tours in the park as a new service. The tours were considered inappropriate and unnecessary in the park, and concerns were raised about the noise associated with this type of service. Several commenters suggested regulating noise by requiring quiet mufflers. A few comments supported the addition of this service. After considerable deliberation, the National Park Service feels there is a real potential for tour groups of motorcycles to impact the visitor experience through heightened noise levels. Because of these concerns, the park service has determined that guided motorcycle tours do not meet all the criteria for “necessary and appropriate” as described in Chapter 1 of the *Final CSP and Final EIS*.

Apgar Village Developed Area. The goal is to maintain the rustic village atmosphere. As identified in the General Management Plan, a full range of visitor services in the Apgar Village would be provided by a combination of the National Park Service, concessioners and/or private businesses.

The overall objectives for the Apgar developed area are to:

1. Comply with life safety, accessibility and building codes.
2. Reinforce and maintain village character.
3. Promote pedestrian use of the area and separate vehicle circulation from pedestrian circulation.
4. Enhance visitor experiences by improving:
 - Existing visitor services,
 - Scenic views and pedestrian use of the shoreline,
 - Orientation, information, and interpretive opportunities,
 - Sense of arrival.
5. Provide pedestrian access to the future site of the Discovery Center.
6. Stabilize the Lake McDonald shoreline and improve visitor access.

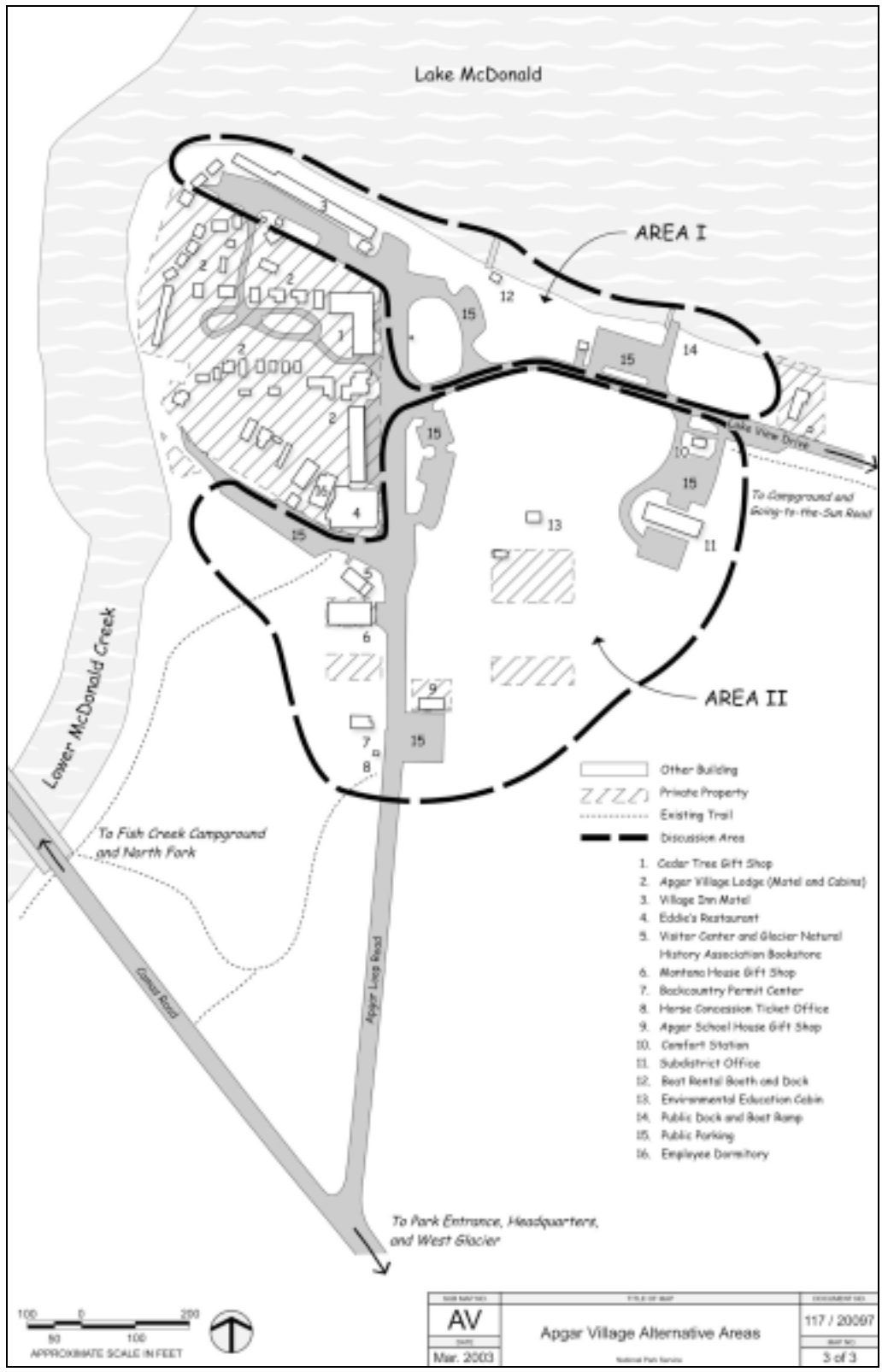


Many of the commercial services at Apgar are provided by private landowners on private lands within the boundary of the park rather than by National Park Service concessioners. The alternatives only address commercial development and services on federally owned land, and do not propose changes to privately held lands. The National Park Service believes that the scope and level of existing commercial facilities, with the additions considered in the alternatives, are adequate to meet the visitor needs of that area.

Alternative A (status quo/no action) would retain all existing services and facilities, but address life safety, accessibility and building code deficiencies. Improvements would provide another 25+ years of useful life. This alternative is also a component of alternatives B and C. **Alternative B (Preferred)** would retain all the existing services and make improvements to the Village Inn. It would maintain the village character and continue to support a wide variety of commercial services offered by National Park Service concessioners and private landowners. Parking would be consolidated and expanded off of the main roadway. This would improve the lake views, and provide better oversized vehicle parking, and pedestrian and vehicle circulation. Pedestrian and bicycle trails would be improved. **Alternative C** would retain all the existing services and include most of the improvements described in alternative B. In addition, the Village Inn would be removed and replaced in a different location away from the lakeshore. Landscaping, trails and seating areas would be added in its place, providing better public access to the shoreline.

Most of the proposed actions above would occur in Areas I and II, shown in Map ES1.

The preferred alternative is B because removal of the Village Inn would not guarantee improved views across the lake and the costs of rebuilding the lodging at a new site compared to the benefits do not justify the expense. Although for many years the National Park Service has considered moving the Village Inn back from the lake and restoring the lakeshore, analysis indicated that this action might have adverse effects that were not apparent years ago. The inn provides a buffer for wildlife that use Lower McDonald Creek.



MAP ES1 APGAR VILLAGE ALTERNATIVE AREAS

Lake McDonald Developed Area. The goal is to maintain the historic character of this historic district and the Lake McDonald Lodge. As identified in the General Management Plan, a full range of visitor services would be provided by concessioners.

The overall objectives for the Lake McDonald developed area are to:

1. Comply with life safety, accessibility and building codes.
2. Preserve and maintain the historic resort character.
3. Promote pedestrian use of area; separate vehicle, pedestrian, and equestrian circulation.
4. Enhance visitor experiences by improving:
 - Existing visitor services,
 - Scenic views and use of the shoreline,
 - Orientation, information and interpretive opportunities,
 - Sense of arrival,
 - Separation of guest and employee activities.
5. Improve employee housing and recreation.
6. Provide adequate parking



Alternative A (status quo/no action) would retain all existing services and facilities, but address life safety, accessibility and building code deficiencies. Standard, high and deluxe overnight accommodations would continue to be provided in hotel, motel and multiunit cabins. Most employee housing would be provided on site. Improvements would provide another 25+ years of useful life. This alternative is also a component of alternatives B and C. **Alternative B** would retain services similar to the current operation. Facilities would be adapted to expand the types of overnight accommodations also to include hostel (budget), motel (standard), rustic lodge and multiunit cabins (high and deluxe). The exterior of the Coffee Shop would be modified to architecturally blend with the site. The historic Garden Court, and Cobb and Snyder Dormitories would be converted to guest accommodations to provide a broader range of experience. Substandard employee housing would be replaced with new housing that is outside of flood-prone areas and that better separates guest and employee activities. The Stewart Motel would be converted to employee housing. Additional support facilities for the lodge would be constructed. Site improvements and parking would emphasize pedestrian circulation throughout the site and provide more green space. **Alternative C (Preferred)** would make changes similar to those in alternative B, with a slight increase in the number of overnight accommodations. This alternative would better consolidate employee housing, which would be removed from the flood-prone areas. It would emphasize pedestrian circulation and improve the visitor's experience by providing a central parking area to better orient guests to the area. The Coffee Shop would be replaced with a new restaurant, and the Stewart Motel and Annex would be replaced with a new motel.

Most of the proposed actions above would occur in Areas I and II, shown in Map ES2.

The preferred alternative is C because it would best accomplish the goals for the area by: 1) consolidating employee housing and functions in one area and removing them from flood-prone areas; 2) replacing the historically incompatible Coffee Shop with a building more suited to the scene, and allowing more flexible use of the site to improve parking and relocate employee housing; 3) improving the range of visitor accommodations by converting existing structures to lower cost hostel and a few deluxe guest accommodations; and 4) replacing the Stewart Motel with an upgraded facility that makes better use of the site, is compatible with the historic district and is more economical than a costly remodel of the existing strip motel buildings. Both alternatives B and C improve the sense of arrival to the lodge by consolidating parking away from the boulevard, but alternative C offers more flexibility to address parking and circulation needs at the location.



MAP ES2 LAKE MCDONALD ALTERNATIVE AREAS

Rising Sun Developed Area. The goal is to provide a full range of visitor services at Rising Sun as stated in the General Management Plan, and to preserve the historic values (such as the historic auto camp).

The overall objectives for the Rising Sun developed area are to:

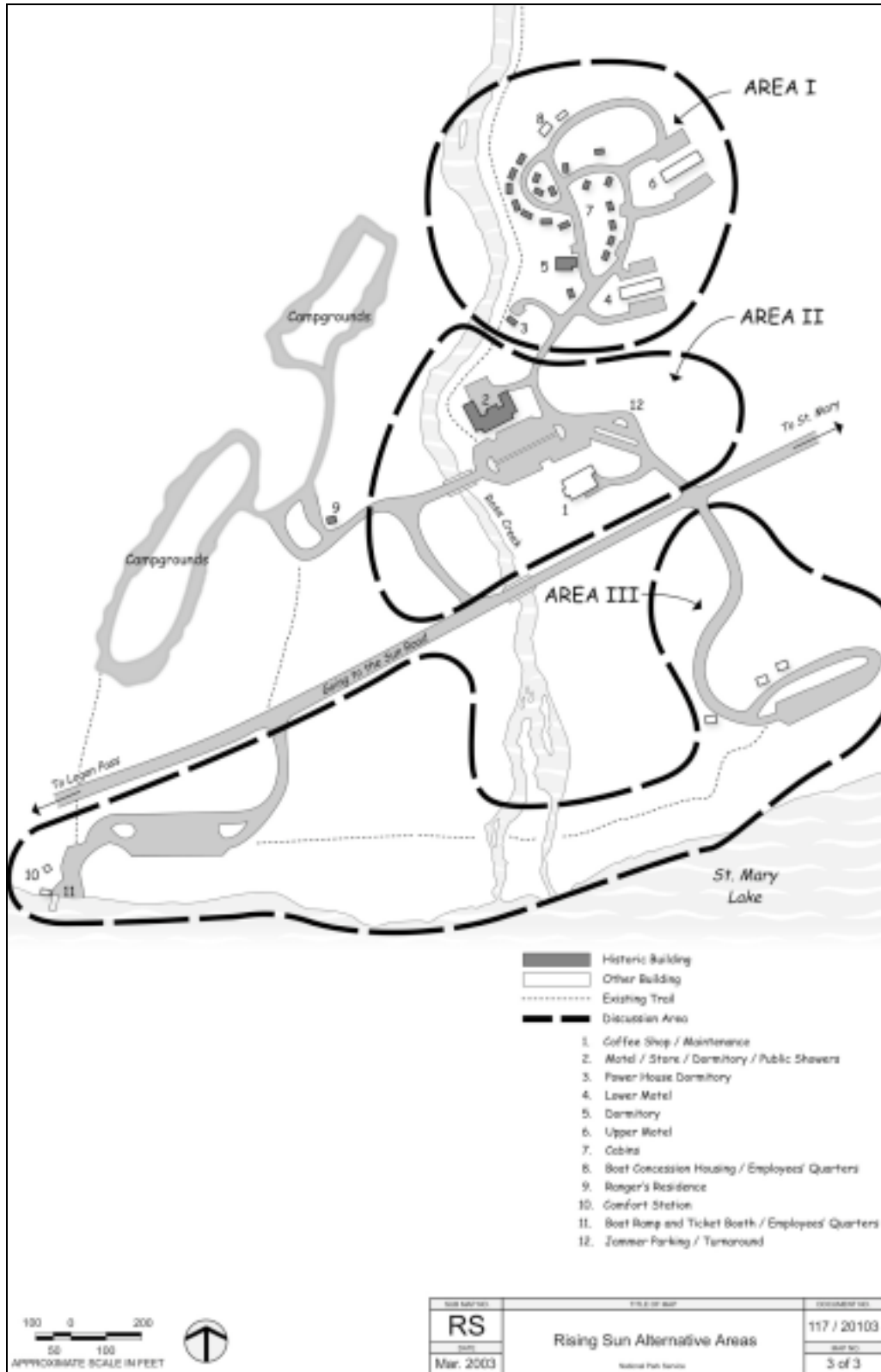
1. Comply with life safety, accessibility and building codes.
2. Reinforce and maintain the historic auto camp character.
3. Promote pedestrian use of the area and improve pedestrian circulation.
4. Enhance visitor experience by improving:
 - Existing visitor services,
 - Orientation, information and interpretive opportunities,
 - Separation of guest and employee functions.
5. Improve employee housing and recreation.
6. Protect historic structures from flood and erosion.
7. Relocate guests and employee overnight use out of the 100-year floodplain.



Alternative A (status quo/no action) would retain all existing services and facilities, but address life safety, accessibility and building code deficiencies. Standard overnight accommodations would continue to be provided in motel and two-unit cabins. Most employee housing would continue to be provided on site. Improvements would provide another 25+ years of useful life. This alternative is also a component of alternatives B and C. **Alternative B** would continue current services with some adaptation of buildings and new construction to address life safety issues. The current character of the historic auto camp would be retained. Employee housing and guest accommodations would be removed from flood-prone areas and consolidated, allowing for the adapted use of the General Store/Motel building with expanded public showers and other support services. Consolidating employee housing and recreation facilities near the Lower Motel would provide better separation of guest and employee activities. New cabins would be provided to replace the accommodations removed from the General Store/Motel building. The boat ticket office would be relocated outside of the lake's high water zone. **Alternative C (Preferred)** would continue the current services and include many of the adaptations proposed in alternative B. Further separation of guest and employee activities would be provided by adaptive use of existing dormitory facilities, and new construction of replacement housing and guest accommodations outside the floodplain near the motel. The restaurant capacity and types of overnight accommodations could be expanded to include a few high standard accommodations with the majority remaining at the standard level. Boat concessioner housing would be relocated near the Lower Motel.

Most of the proposed actions above would occur in Areas I and II, shown in Map ES3.

The preferred alternative is C because it would provide the best separation of employee and guest functions and create the most flexibility for accommodating a variety of employee housing and recreational needs at the site. It would improve safety by removing both guest and employee overnight accommodations from the floodplain. It also provides additional cabin-style accommodations that would enhance the auto camp character. Restaurant capacity would be increased to better serve guests.



MAP ES3 RISING SUN ALTERNATIVE AREAS

Two Medicine Developed Area. The goal is to preserve the culturally significant resources and provide traditional recreational and visitor services. In accordance with the General Management Plan, the developed area would remain small and would not provide all services.

The overall objectives for the Two Medicine developed area are to:

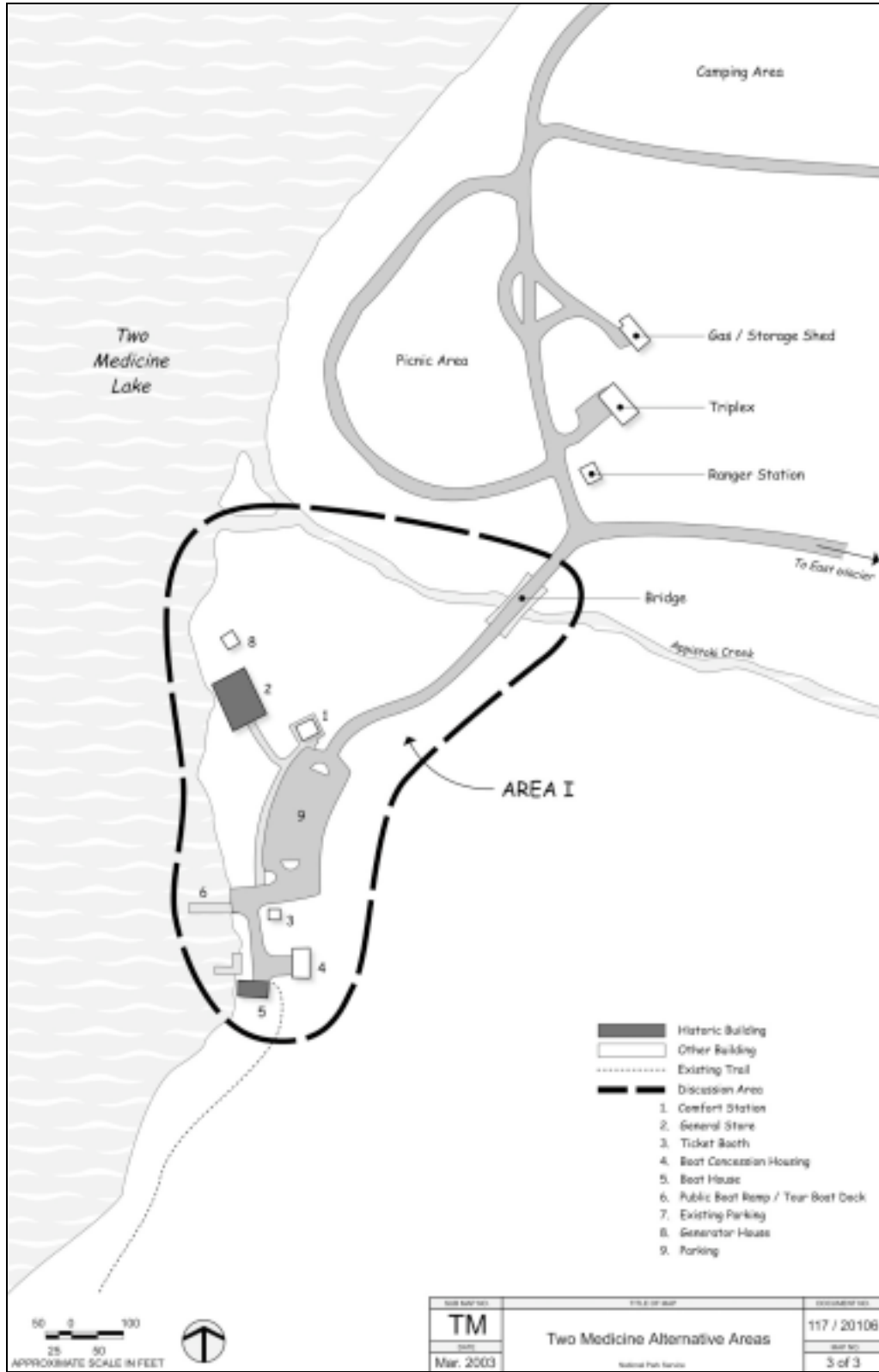
1. Comply with life safety, accessibility and building codes.
2. Reinforce and maintain the historic and architectural character, and the cultural landscape.
3. Promote pedestrian use of area.
4. Enhance visitor experiences by improving:
 - Existing visitor services,
 - Scenic views and experiences along the shoreline,
 - Orientation, information, and interpretive opportunities,
 - Sense of arrival.

Alternative A (status quo/no action) would retain all existing services, address life safety, accessibility and building code deficiencies. Improvements would provide another 25+ years of useful life, and the existing comfort station would be modified to be more compatible with the other historic buildings at Two Medicine. **Alternative B (Preferred)** would continue to provide a traditional rustic experience for visitors at Two Medicine. In addition to actions described in alternative A, parking would be removed from the Two Medicine Lake viewshed. The historic character of the General Store's exterior and the historic landscape would be restored. A defined service parking area and service drive would be added to the General Store area. The existing comfort station would be removed and a new one would be designed to be compatible with the area's historic architecture. It would not be in the direct view of arriving visitors, thus greatly enhancing the arrival experience. An accessible trail would be constructed between the General Store area and the campground.



Most of the proposed actions above would occur in Area I, shown in Map ES4.

The preferred alternative is B because it would result in an improved historic scene and sense of arrival for visitors entering the area. In addition, construction of a pedestrian trail and bridge to the campground would improve visitor safety and provide a more scenic approach to the lake.



MAP ES4 TWO MEDICINE ALTERNATIVE AREAS

Many Glacier Developed Area. The goal is to maintain Many Glacier as a separate developed area from Swiftcurrent and provide traditional visitor and support services for both the National Park Service and concessions operation. In accordance with the General Management Plan, the significant historic resources such as the grand hotel would be preserved and continue to be used for visitor services.

The overall objectives for the Many Glacier developed area are to:

1. Comply with life safety, accessibility and building codes and standards.
2. Reinforce and maintain the historic and architectural character, and the cultural landscape.
3. Promote pedestrian use of area, and improve pedestrian circulation.
4. Enhance visitor experiences by improving:
 - Visitor services,
 - Historic setting and atmosphere,
 - Scenic views and vistas,
 - Orientation, information, and interpretive opportunities,
 - Sense of arrival,
 - Separation of guest and employee functions.
5. Improve employee housing and recreation.

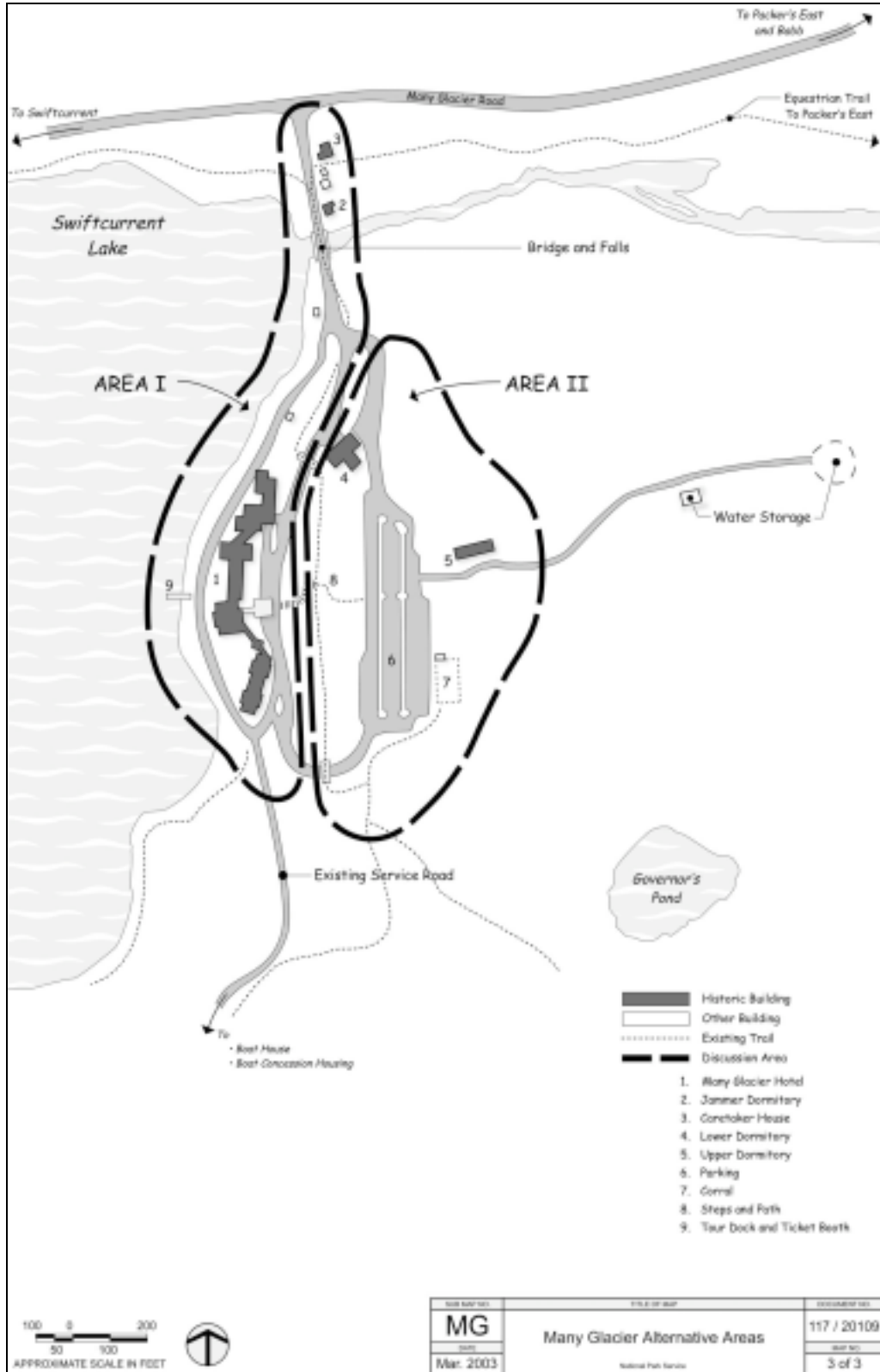


Alternative A (status quo/no action) would retain all existing services and facilities, but address life safety, accessibility and building code deficiencies. Standard, high and deluxe overnight accommodations would continue to be provided in the hotel. Most employee housing would be provided on site. Improvements would provide another 25+ years of useful life. This alternative is also a component of alternatives B and C. **Alternative B** would continue to provide guests with a railway-era grand resort hotel experience. All current services and types of accommodations would be retained. Historic features such as the stairwell in the lobby would be restored and retail services would be relocated. Most space used for employee housing within the hotel would be reclaimed for guest use. The approach to the hotel and the service drive along the lakeside would be landscaped to reinforce the hotel's cultural character and improve the visitor's arrival experience. Employee housing would remain in existing dormitories with improvements, and new outdoor recreation facilities would be provided. Additional employee housing would be provided at Swiftcurrent. There would be some improvements to trails and parking to enhance the visitor's arrival experience, improve accessibility and maintain historic character. Utility systems to support the facilities would be improved.

Alternative C (Preferred) would continue all current services and incorporate most of alternative B. Better separation of employee and guest activities would be provided by relocating employee recreational facilities from the hotel and converting the Lower Dormitory to guest accommodations. The types of available accommodations would remain similar to currently available types. Converting the dormitory would provide the potential for some additional standard, high or deluxe units. New employee housing, parking and recreational facilities would be constructed near the Upper Dormitory, with some additional housing needs accommodated at Swiftcurrent developed area or outside the park.

Most of the proposed actions above would occur in Areas I and II, shown in Map ES5.

The preferred alternative is C because it would provide the best separation of guest and employee functions and create a greater range of types of guest accommodations. It would also improve the sense of arrival to the hotel and enhance the visitor experience by removing employee recreational facilities from the hotel. Alternative C restores much of the hotel lobby to its historic appearance.



MAP ES5 MANY GLACIER ALTERNATIVE AREAS

Swiftcurrent Developed Area. The goal is to maintain Swiftcurrent as a developed area separate from Many Glacier, and provide traditional visitor and support services for both the National Park Service and the concessions operation. In accordance with the General Management Plan, significant resources such as the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn would be preserved and continue to be used for visitor services.

The overall objectives for the Swiftcurrent developed area are to:

1. Comply with life safety, accessibility and building codes.
2. Reinforce and maintain the historic auto camp character and enhance historic experience.
3. Promote pedestrian use of the area with separate circulation for vehicles.
4. Enhance visitor experiences by improving:
 - Visitor services,
 - Orientation, information, and interpretive opportunities,
 - Sense of arrival,
 - Separation of guest and employee functions.
5. Improve employee housing and recreation.



Alternative A (status quo/no action) retains all existing services and facilities, and addresses life safety, accessibility, and building deficiencies as funding allows. Both budget and standard guest accommodations would be retained. Improvements would provide another 25+ years of useful life. This alternative is also a component of Alternatives B and C. **Alternative B (Preferred)** would continue all the existing services, however the historic auto camp cabin experience would be enhanced. All overnight guest accommodations would be provided in cabins (budget/hostel and standard type accommodations). Additional cabins would be added to fill in existing cabin circles and new circles would be created where the employee bath house and motel currently exist. One cabin ring may be converted to hostel accommodations. Employee housing and other employee functions would be better separated from the guest activities by concentrating those functions in the existing motel area. Improvements to parking would enhance the sense of arrival and provide for safer wildlife viewing and interpretation areas. Public shower facilities would be expanded. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation would be improved to promote safety and better navigation throughout the area. **Alternative C** would retain all the existing services and the current mix of cabin and motel guest accommodations. A few additional cabins would be added to fill in cabin circles and a new motel added near the existing motel to replace the motel that is converted to employee housing. Both budget and standard accommodations would be retained. Concentrating new and existing employee housing and recreation facilities on the east side of the complex would attain the best separation of employee and guest activities. Improvements to parking would enhance the sense of arrival and the cabin circle concept. Safer wildlife viewing and interpretation areas would be created. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation would be improved to promote safety and better navigation throughout the area.

Most of the proposed actions above would occur in Areas I and II, shown in Map ES6.

The preferred alternative is B because it provides good separation of guest and employee functions and expands the guest experience by offering more cabin-style accommodations, some with private bathrooms and a hostel accommodation on the east side. These new units would replace the “mid-range” or standard accommodations currently provided in the motel. This alternative could accommodate some employees currently housed in the Many Glacier area and provide a variety of housing to accommodate different needs of employees.



MAP ES6 SWIFTCURRENT ALTERNATIVE AREAS

Public Comments on DEIS: Several comments supported the preferred alternatives for the developed areas, and some supported the other alternatives. Many comments and suggestions were received regarding specific design and service-related issues. These will be considered during the design and implementation phases. Of those who commented, several opposed the proposed increase in total rooms available in the park from 512 to a ceiling of 540. Several comments were received opposing the proposed extended operating seasons for the developed areas, citing concerns about increased competition for business during the shoulder season and the potential to impact park resources. A few comments requested improvements in the concessioner's recycling program. These comments are addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Comments on Other Issues

Several comments were received opposing scenic air tours, snowmobile use, and motorized watercraft use in the park. One comment asked the National Park Service to consider using pack stock instead of helicopter flights to deliver supplies. Some comments were received regarding additional trail opportunities and making more trails accessible, expanding campgrounds, discontinuing seasonal trail closures, and supporting limits on overnight parking at Logan Pass. Some comments opposed the location of the book sales in the Logan Pass Visitor Center. One comment requested the new visitor center proposed in the General Management Plan be located in West Glacier rather than Apgar. One commenter suggested the National Park Service determine the ecological carrying capacity for each proposed commercial activity. One commenter requested the National Park Service remove all commercial services including roads and buildings, to preserve the entire park as wilderness. Other comments included allowing ice fishing, kennel services, allowing bids from foreign countries for road work, expanding campgrounds and trail systems, installing pit toilets on the Highline Trail at Haystack, and fast-tracking the Going-to-the-Sun Road rehabilitation. These comments are all addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5. Several commenters supported vista clearing or weed control. Many of these comments are outside the scope of this planning effort.

ACTIONS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES

Below is a description of actions that are common to all of the alternatives considered in the commercial services plan. The actions include necessary and appropriate commercial services that remain the same regardless of the alternatives and mitigation requirements that would be adhered to for all construction and operation actions.

Operating dates for six developed areas. Under all of the action alternatives, a new range of operating dates are proposed. Table ES-1 Typical and Proposed Operating Dates for Concession Facilities shows the typical and proposed range of operating dates for concession facilities at each developed area. The typical dates were determined by using an average of opening and closing dates over the last 10 years.

TABLE ES-1 TYPICAL AND PROPOSED OPERATING DATES FOR CONCESSION FACILITIES

Developed Area	Typical Operating Dates	Proposed Operating Dates	Change in Weeks
Rising Sun	6/10 – 9/17	3 rd week in May – end of Sept.	5 weeks
Many Glacier	6/7 – 9/15	Beginning of June – 3 rd week in Sept.	2 weeks
Swiftcurrent	6/12 – 9/15	Beginning of June – 3 rd week in Sept.	3 weeks
Two Medicine	5/30 – 9/9	3 rd week in May – end of Sept.	4 weeks
Apgar	5/22 – 9/26	Beginning of May – end of October	8 weeks
Lake McDonald	5/31 – 9/29	Mid May – 3 rd week in October	5 weeks

The proposed ranges of dates are the outside dates that the concession facilities could operate. Facility condition, funding, wildlife activity, staffing and weather may require shorter operating seasons which would be determined on a year-to-year basis within these time frames. None of these dates apply to services that are independent of facilities, such as road-based tours, day hiking, etc.

The operating dates for Granite Park and Sperry Chalets would continue to occur between July 1 and mid-September, depending on weather, etc.

Interpretation and orientation at developed areas. Orientation to the area and interpretation opportunities would be improved at each of the developed areas and would include improved signage, interpretive displays, and/or interactive interpretation.

Upgrade facilities at developed areas. Facilities would be upgraded and maintained to comply with life safety, accessibility and building codes as funding allows. Utility improvements are not analyzed in this document.

Some services would be provided that have no alternatives:

Boat rentals. Small boat rentals would continue to be provided by the boat tour concessioner at Two Medicine and Swiftcurrent Lakes, and Lake McDonald. The boat tour concessioner could provide rental of fishing equipment at its existing facilities. No other alternatives are considered because there has been no demonstrated demand for expanded services.

Guided backpacking services. Commercially guided backpacking services would continue to be provided parkwide. Group size, locations for overnight camping, and number of backcountry permits issued per season would continue to be limited and regulated by a National Park Service operating plan. No guided off-trail hiking or climbing would be allowed. No other alternatives are considered for this service. Backcountry campsites are limited and allocation of a larger percentage of these sites to commercially guided trips would further restrict the sites available to visitors without a guide.

Equipment rental, childcare and commercial entertainment. These services would be accommodated within existing facilities at the developed areas based on the prescriptions and standards.

Sperry Chalet. Sperry Chalet would continue to provide private overnight guest accommodations with full services (accommodations, bedding, meals, and housekeeping services). The chalet would continue to be accessible by foot or horse traffic only.

Guided rafting. Commercially guided rafting would continue to be provided on the Middle and North Forks of the Flathead River under the conditions of a permit issued by the U.S. Forest Service under the authority of the Wild and Scenic River Act.

Emergency road services. Commercial emergency road services would continue to be provided in the visitor service and rustic zones in the park. The park would



continue to maintain a list of eligible operators and, if no request were made for a particular operator, operators would continue to be called on a rotational basis to provide service.

Guided cross-country skiing/snowshoeing. Commercially guided cross-country skiing and snowshoeing services would continue to be provided in all management areas and across all zones with the exception of the North Fork management area, where these services could continue to be provided only along the visitor service zone. Client-to-guide ratio and party size limits would continue to be determined by a commercial authorization.

Guided photography and art seminars. Commercially guided photography and art seminars would continue to be provided across all zones in all management areas of the park except the North Fork management area. Services in the North Fork visitor service zone would continue to be limited to the area south of the Camas Road. Off-trail activities would continue to be prohibited. Guided photography and art seminars would continue to be provided to capture images of park resources using skills learned elsewhere.

Catered meal services. Commercially catered meal services would continue to be provided in designated picnic areas for special events, groups, or meetings under the conditions of a special use permit or in concession-operated facilities by an authorized concessioner.

Mitigation. The following mitigation measures would be adhered to during any construction and/or operation of the commercial services as appropriate. These measures are in addition to any other federal, state or local permits, and requirements and provide specific protection guidelines to preserve the spectacular beauty and unique natural environment of the park.

- **Water Quality:** Mitigation measures to protect water quality at construction sites would be: construction of barriers, removal of hazardous waste materials immediately, containment of construction debris, disposal of volatile wastes and oils, and following a hazardous spills plan.
- **Soils:** Measures include those described for water quality, as well as conservation of topsoil. Matting to stabilize soil would prevent erosion before revegetation. Construction activities would be scheduled if possible when effects on soil compaction and erosion would be minimized. Seasonal trail closures may be used to reduce or eliminate erosion resulting from early season use of trails.
- **Vegetation:** Revegetation plans would be developed using native species. Landscaping would be compliant with the park's interim genetic guidelines for restoration projects. A noxious weed abatement program would be implemented, and base course and fill materials would be selected for compatibility with native soils. Construction would be confined to specified limits, and scheduled if possible when effects on vegetation would be minimized. Horse concessioners would use certified noxious seed-free hay and noxious weed-free summer pasture areas. Seasonal trail closures may be used to reduce or eliminate vegetation damage.
- **Wildlife:** Construction activities would be scheduled when effects on wildlife would be minimized, and appropriate action plans would be established to free animals caught in excavations. Concessioner guides would be trained in safety and proper behavior around wildlife; construction areas would be kept clean and refuse disposed of regularly to reduce wildlife contact or exposure. Seasonal trail and area closures would reduce adverse impacts from an extended visitor season.
- **Natural Sound:** Construction activities would be scheduled to minimize noise impacts.

- **Air Quality:** The best available clean fuel technology would be used to minimize emissions. Dust abatement measures would be implemented from first disturbance through revegetation.
- **Historic Resources:** Rehabilitation, modern facilities and new development would follow “The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.”
- **Archeological and Ethnographic Resources:** If archeological resources were discovered during construction, activities at those specific sites would cease and appropriate measures would be taken to determine the extent and importance of the resources. Surveys would be conducted where necessary.
- **Scenic/Visual Resources:** Building materials would be sustainable and visually compatible with the landscape or the historic district. Vegetative screening would be provided where applicable.
- **Energy Consumption:** Energy consumption would be mitigated by applying energy conserving technologies in the design of new facilities. Sustainable and energy efficient building materials and components, as well as best-available fuel technology would be used during construction.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The effects of each alternative were assessed for direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on selected natural, cultural and socioeconomic resources. Impacts are described in terms of intensity (negligible, minor, moderate or major), context (site-specific, local or regional), duration (short-term or long-term) and type (adverse or beneficial). Cumulative impacts are defined as the “impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future action regardless of what agency (federal or nonfederal) or person undertakes other actions.” (40 CFT 1508.7) To assess cumulative impacts, other past, ongoing or reasonably foreseeable future actions that could have an impact were identified. None of the alternatives resulted in impairment of park resources.

The impact topics addressed include water quality; floodplains; soils; vegetation; wildlife; aquatic resources; threatened and endangered species; species of concern; natural sound; air quality; historic, archaeological and ethnographic resources; visual resources; regional and local communities; energy consumption; and landowners in and adjacent to the park. These topics were selected based on federal laws, regulations and executive orders, National Park Service management policies, knowledge of resources, and concerns expressed by the public. Impact topics dismissed from further analyses were wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, prime and unique farmlands and environmental justice.

Alternative A (Status Quo/No Action) was characterized by existing conditions and ongoing activities, and provides the baseline for evaluating the changes and environmental impacts of the action alternatives. All impacts were analyzed assuming that mitigation measures would be implemented.

Impacts from the range of all of the alternatives would occur within the existing developed areas, along existing trails and roadways or in lakes and rivers where activities currently occur. Impacts would range from short-term, negligible to moderate, adverse impacts from construction activities on water quality, air quality, soils, vegetation, wildlife, floodplains, natural sound, historic resources, visual resources,



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energy consumption, and landowners in the park. After the rehabilitation of historic structures is complete, the effects on historic resources would be positive, moderate to major and long-term. The construction of new guest and employee facilities, as well as new parking lots, would cover an overall area of 14 to 20 acres parkwide (depending on the alternative) and would cause unavoidable minor, long-term adverse impacts on soils, vegetation and wildlife habitat. There would be no effects on archaeological and ethnographic resources, the Blackfeet and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes or sacred resources. Impacts would be positive, negligible to moderate and beneficial on socioeconomic resources that include visitors, visitor experience, and local and regional communities.

Extended operating seasons for concession facilities in the developed areas were also analyzed. The generation of additional business and the benefits of added concession services would result in positive impacts on visitors and regional and local economies. There would be minor negative, long-term impacts on natural sound, vegetation and soils during the extended seasons. There would be minor to moderate impacts on wildlife. Visitors who are accustomed to visiting the park early in the spring and later in the fall might be negatively impacted for the long-term by the increased activity.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The formal scoping period for the *Final CSP and Final EIS* began with the publication of the “Notice of Intent” in the *Federal Register* on September 12, 2000. As part of the process, a scoping newsletter was made available to the public in November 2000, a Commercial Services Plan Web page was established, and five open houses were held in December 2000. The newsletter introduced the *Commercial Services Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*, explained what commercial services are and what the plan will do, and reviewed decisions reached in the 1999 General Management Plan regarding commercial services. The newsletter also introduced the Commercial Services Plan Web page and invited the public to attend public open houses. Individuals or groups were invited to share comments, concerns, and ideas by using the online response form or mailing comments to the park by December 30, 2000. Meetings were also held with the Blackfeet Tribal Council, private landowners in Apgar and special interest groups. Open houses were held in December 2000 in Kalispell, Missoula, Great Falls and Browning, Montana and Lethbridge, Canada. Approximately 227 people attended these meetings.

A total of about 226 comments were received from the public during the scoping period. Seventy comments were received from individuals, 80 form letters were received, two written comments were submitted at the open houses, and 74 comments were received from the online comment form.

Agency coordination is essential for the identification of potential environmental impacts of a project and its alternatives. It also provides information regarding other agency planning efforts and proposed plans for a project area that contributes to the analysis of cumulative impacts. Agency coordination was accomplished through correspondence, telephone communication, and review of project-related materials. Formal letters of invitation were sent to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

The *Draft Commercial Services Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement* was released to the public in May, 2003 for a 60-day review period. Comments were initially due July 30th, but due to the extreme fire season in and around the park, the comment period was extended until August 15th. Public open houses and hearings were held during the month of June in Kalispell, Missoula, Browning

and Great Falls, Montana and in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. Approximately 70 people attended these meetings.

By the end of the comment period, Glacier National Park had received approximately 430 written comments, including transcripts of the testimony heard at the meetings, and comments received by telephone and email. No form letters were received. Every letter, email and transcript was numbered and read by members of the park staff. Substantive comments, as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act, are those that question either the range of alternatives or the accuracy of the information in the document, or comments that offer new alternatives and issues not addressed in the draft plan or that correct misinformation. We have responded to comments that contained substantive comment in Chapter 5 of the *Final CSP and Final EIS*.

Most of the comments received were supportive of the Plan and preferred alternatives, with some notable exceptions. The services and preferred alternatives that drew the heaviest comment were the future of Granite Park Chalet, guided motorcycle tours, commercially guided bicycle tours, the group size proposed for commercially guided day hikes, guided underwater diving, guided horseback rides and some of the proposals at the developed areas.

CONCLUSION

This *Final Commercial Services Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement* will be made available to the public for 30 days as notification of the National Park Service's intentions. After 30 days, a Record of Decision will be prepared and released that describes the National Park Service's decisions regarding this planning effort.

Upon issuing a Record of Decision, it is the intent of the National Park Service to implement the plan by:

- Issuing new concessions contracts and commercial authorizations for necessary and appropriate services,
- Developing schematic site designs for six developed areas using the selected alternatives,
- Developing construction documents for rehabilitation of facilities in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, where appropriate,
- Beginning construction and rehabilitation as funding is obtained and where sufficient review of the impact has occurred.

This commercial services plan begins to implement the General Management Plan for Glacier National Park, providing a framework to improve the visitor experience in tandem with preserving the unique character of Glacier National Park.



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