



Chapter 1 Purpose and Need for the Plan





Chapter 1

Purpose and Need for the Plan

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 outstanding universal value of this park is evidenced by its purpose and significance that were defined

Glacier National Park Management Philosophy

Glacier National Park seeks to manage most of the park for its wild character and for the integrity of Glacier's unique natural heritage, while traditional visitor services and facilities remain. 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.

in the 1999 General Management Plan based on legislation, legislative history and historic trends. The General Management Plan also captured a vision for the park's future that is based on tradition, as well as the preservation of the natural and cultural resources that make the park so treasured today.

The purpose of the park is to:

- Preserve and protect natural and cultural resources unimpaired for future generations (1916 Organic Act).
- Provide opportunities to experience, understand, appreciate and enjoy Glacier National Park consistent with the preservation of resources in a state of nature (1910 legislation establishing Glacier National Park).
- Celebrate the ongoing peace, friendship and goodwill among nations, recognizing the need for cooperation in a world of shared resources (1932 International Peace Park legislation) (NPS 1999c).

The significance of Glacier National Park is the essence of the park's importance to our natural and cultural heritage:

- Glacier's scenery dramatically illustrates an exceptionally long geologic history, and the many geological processes associated with mountain building and glaciation.
- Glacier offers relatively accessible spectacular scenery and increasingly rare primitive wilderness experiences.
- Glacier is at the core of the "Crown of the Continent" ecosystem, one of the most ecologically intact areas remaining in the temperate regions of the world.
- Glacier's cultural resources reflect the history of human activities (prehistoric people, American Indians, early explorers, railroad development, and modern use and visitation) that show[s] how people have long placed high value on the area's natural features.
- Waterton-Glacier is the world's first international peace park.

The park defines **commercial services** or activities as endeavors that use park resources, including roads and trails, and that result in compensation, monetary gain, benefit or profit to an individual, organization or corporation whether or not such entity is organized for purposes recognized as non-profit under local, state or federal law. "Gain" is defined as compensation beyond actual cost.

To provide for the public's experience, enjoyment and appreciation of the park, facilities have been developed to accommodate visitors. There is a long tradition of providing these opportunities for visitors through commercial services contracts with private businesses. Years before Glacier became a national park, local residents offered visitors overnight lodging and food services at the lodge on Lake McDonald. Shortly after the establishment of the park, the Great Northern Railway sought to attract wealthy tourists to the area from the East. These visitors were promised a western experience created by the majestic landscape and accompanied by grand lodging and dining facilities, as well as recreational opportunities. Within two to three decades, the park saw a shift in the national economy and an increase in automobile travel, which brought a new kind of visitor who drove to the park and sought affordable accommodations. The National Park Service responded with the development of auto camps and motor inns.

Commercial services today continue to enhance the visitor experience of the park while reflecting the park's purpose and significance. The park still offers many of the historic accommodations and other services that were an important part of the early park experience, and has expanded visitor opportunities to include a variety of resource-oriented recreational activities such as guided photography and art seminars and bicycle tours.

Current commercial services include overnight lodging, food and beverage services, gift shops and campstores, interpretive vehicle tours and transportation, guided horseback rides and packing services, guided backpacking and day hiking, interpretive boat tours and small boat rentals, guided bicycle tours, guided photography and art seminars and guided cross-country skiing. The private businesses that provide these services operate under one of two types of authorizations with the National Park Service: *concessions contracts* or *commercial use authorizations* (CUAs — formerly incidental business permits).

Concessions contracts are issued through a competitive evaluation process. These contracts require a concessioner to provide specific services. The numbers of contracts are limited and may or may not assign facilities inside the park for the concessioner's use. Since concessioners are required to provide the services, it is incumbent on the National Park Service to ensure that there is a reasonable opportunity for the operator to earn a profit.

Commercial use authorizations can be issued to authorize services, but do not require that the services be provided. The number of CUAs is currently not limited because they are not issued through a competitive evaluation process. A CUA will be issued to any qualified operator who is willing to agree to its terms and conditions. Unlike a contract, there is no assurance of an opportunity to earn a profit. Typically, no facilities are provided for the concessioner's use inside the park.

“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.

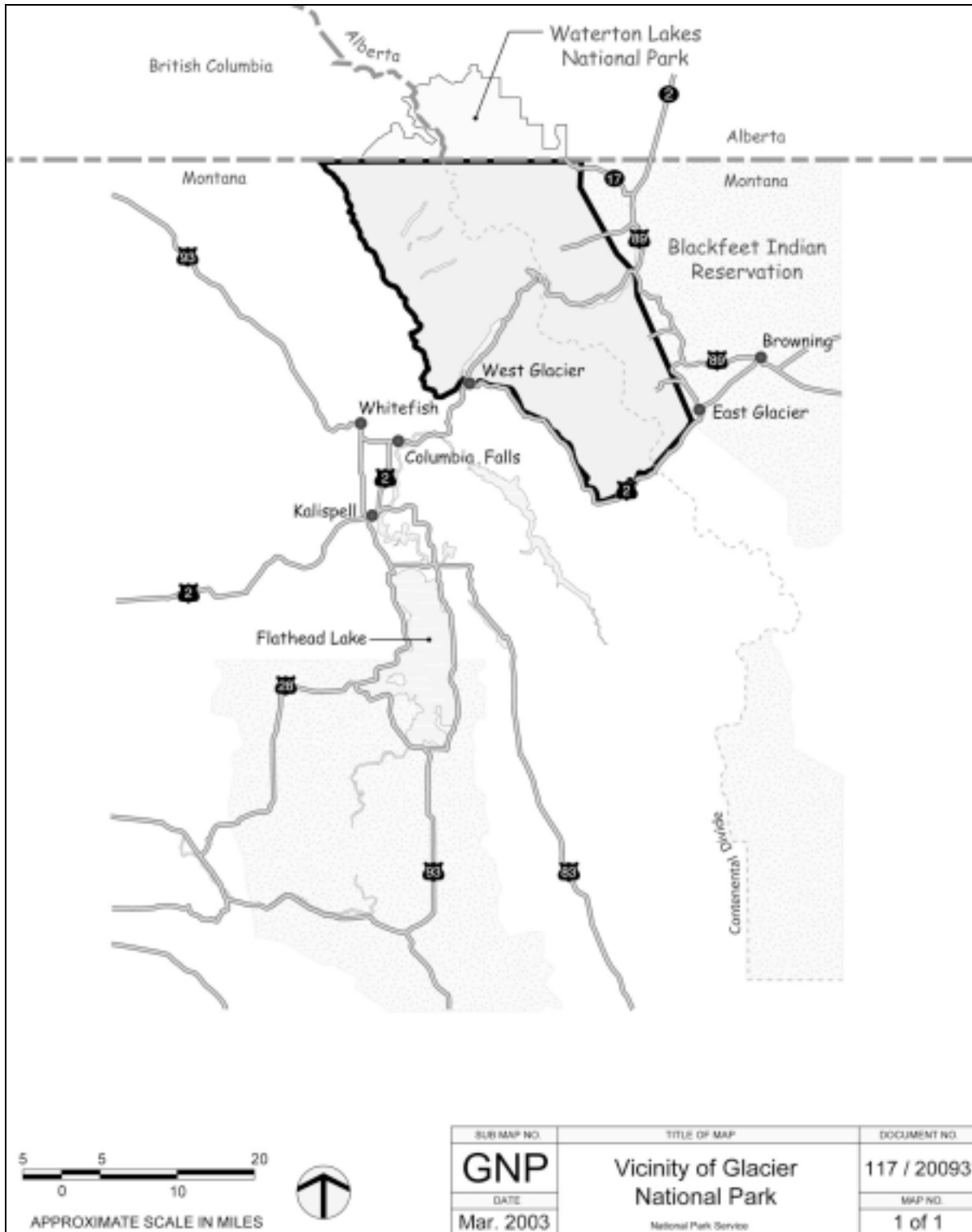
A service that is “appropriate” accomplishes all of the following:

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.

Park management determines the appropriate type of authorization for each service. Changing conditions influence which type is most appropriate; therefore, these decisions will not be made in this plan. Commercial services play a vital role in meeting the mission of the National Park Service, providing appropriate, quality services to the public that the National Park Service could not realistically furnish. However, federal law requires that the National Park Service allow only commercial services and development that are considered necessary and appropriate. Sustaining these services and planning for the future are important considerations for the National Park Service in developing this plan.

There has never been a comprehensive analysis of the range and type of commercial services that are offered in Glacier National Park. The General Management Plan identified some issues that require more consideration and analysis. Historic facilities are deteriorating and require rehabilitation. Contracts for existing concessioner services are expiring and decisions about these services need to be made before new contracts can be issued. There are also requests for new services that need to be evaluated. Long-range planning is needed to ensure that commercial services continue to play a complementary role, provide quality, necessary and appropriate services to the visiting public, and keep Glacier National Park “the way it is.”

It is the purpose of this *Draft Commercial Services Plan and Draft 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 most of 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.



MAP 1-1 VICINITY OF GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

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.

Upon approval of the *Draft CSP and Draft EIS* and issuing the Record of Decision, it is the intent of the National Park Service to implement the plan by:

- Beginning the process of issuing concession contracts and other commercial authorizations for new and existing services.
- Developing construction documents for rehabilitation in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office where appropriate.
- Beginning construction and rehabilitation as funding is obtained.
- Developing schematic designs for the selected alternatives in the developed areas.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE PLAN

The public involvement process began with the publication of a notice in the *Federal Register* on September 12, 2000, announcing that a *Commercial Services Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* would be prepared for Glacier National Park. Opportunities for early public participation were provided through a series of public open houses, a newsletter released in November 2000 and a comment form available on the National Park Service's Commercial Services Plan Web site. Open houses were held in Kalispell, Great Falls, Missoula and Browning, Montana, and in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, between December 4 and December 7, 2000. Scoping comments from the public were requested by December 30, 2000.

Early meetings were held with state and local agencies and tribal governments. All comments received from the public during the General Management Plan process regarding commercial services were reviewed again.

Below is a discussion of concerns and issues that were identified during scoping and during the General Management Plan process by the public, other agencies and the park staff. These issues and concerns provided the framework for the development of alternatives and the selection of impact topics for environmental analysis.

- **Employee Housing**

The types of available concession employee housing affect the concessioner's ability to hire adequate numbers of staff to effectively operate visitor facilities. The amount and quality of current concession employee housing needs to be improved and health and life safety issues must be addressed at all locations throughout the park. Addressing these issues may result in a loss of rooms. Most employee housing offers only basic, dormitory-style amenities that are suitable for young, single employees. Few,

Opportunities for early public participation were provided

if any of the housing units have private bathrooms. None of the employee housing provides kitchen facilities, except for the caretaker housing units. This type of housing makes it difficult for concessioners to hire older, more experienced employees, married couples or employees with families. Although housing concession employees outside of the park is an option, it generates other issues, such as the lack of available land or housing for rent, as well as transportation and food service for employees who work different shifts.

- **Visitor/Employee Separation**

Visitor accommodations are not separated from concession employee housing/recreation areas at Lake McDonald, Rising Sun, Many Glacier and Swiftcurrent. Employees often socialize late into the night or come and go at odd hours due to work schedules, potentially disturbing guests in nearby accommodations. Many employee dining areas are in the main public areas. During their free time, employees often use these prime visitor areas for recreation. In addition, employees and visitors compete for parking. This lack of separation creates a less than ideal experience for visitors and employees.

- **Vehicle and Pedestrian Access and Circulation**

All of the developed areas were built when the park had fewer visitors and cars. Parking is limited and congestion occurs in these areas during the peak season. For example, Apgar and Lake McDonald are not well-designed for pedestrians. Pedestrian access to the lakeshore at Apgar is not well-defined and private property boundaries are not clearly marked. In some areas, public access to facilities is gained by passing by or through utility and maintenance areas. Lake McDonald Lodge, which historically received arriving visitors by boat, was originally oriented toward the lakeshore, with support buildings located at what has become the front access to the hotel. This change in arrival has resulted in a mix of development and roads that are confusing to first-time visitors.

- **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 on 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 the developed areas.

- **Floodplains**

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**

Many of the developed areas contain a number of sensitive natural resources, including federally listed wildlife (the bull trout, Canada lynx, gray wolf, grizzly bear and bald eagle), wetlands and

state listed rare plants. These areas, which are within the visitor services zone, are important habitat for some of the threatened and endangered species. They are also important winter and spring range for elk, deer and bighorn sheep, who provide food for some threatened and endangered species.

Although many of the developed areas have existed for 90 years or more, increased development and visitation to the surrounding areas may affect these species' behavior, cause displacement, affect their prey base, and ultimately affect their ability to survive. There are commercial services located in or near sensitive resource locations; the Village Inn on the shore of Lake McDonald, the horse corral near Lake McDonald Lodge and Granite Park Chalet are examples.



USFWS Photo by Lou Ray Parker

- **Future Use of Granite Park Chalet**

During the General Management Plan process and scoping for this plan, the public expressed interest in revisiting the future of the Granite Park Chalet. Many participants supported maintaining the option of a less expensive chalet experience at Granite Park (which would require a less complex utility system) in contrast to the services provided at Sperry Chalet. The two chalets are national historic landmarks and 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 and returned to providing 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 was obtained to complete some of the structural stabilization work on Granite Park Chalet. Granite Park was reopened to the public in 1996 with limited services.

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, based on the issues encountered at Sperry Chalet, some of which are still not resolved. The original estimates to complete both chalets were for \$4.7 million. We have spent approximately \$4.5 million on Sperry Chalet, and Granite Park Chalet is not yet complete.

Under the current operation and with services provided by other concessioners in the park, visitors can customize their visit to the chalet. In 2003, the rate was \$66 per person per night for visitors who chose to carry in sleeping bags and food. For an additional \$10, guests are provided bedding by the concessioner. For guests who don't wish to carry in food, prepackaged meals as well as 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 with a hiking guide and guide-prepared meals. In contrast, Sperry Chalet offers one option for \$155 per person per night (2003 rates).

The 1993 Environmental Assessment is now over 10 years old. New information is available and assumptions made in the EA are no longer correct. Costs have continued to rise. Costs 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 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.

- **Commercially Guided Bicycle Tours/Group Size and Frequency**

Concerns were raised about the increasingly large size of commercially guided bicycle tour groups on the Going-to-the-Sun Road, the frequency of multiple groups on the road at the same time and the hazards of conflict with motor vehicles on the narrow road. Rest stops by large bicycle groups, parking for support vehicles, and the slower moving uphill bicycle traffic compete for road access and limited parking along the road. In the past ten years, the number of commercially guided tour operators has increased from 5 to 11 with an average of over 550 bicyclists visiting Glacier National Park each summer. Some participants commented during scoping that restrictions on the numbers, days or hours for group bicycle tours should be set to reduce potential conflicts.

- **Other Support Services for Concession Operations**

Support services are lacking, namely laundry facilities, warehousing and administrative offices for hotel, motel and lodge operations in the park. The concessioner that operates most of the overnight facilities in the park provides these functions from Glacier Park Lodge in East Glacier. Although Glacier Park Lodge is owned by the current concessioner, it is not part of the concession operation of Glacier National Park. A new concessioner may need to locate other facilities.

- **Modernization or Expansion of Developments**

Important defining features of the park are its natural environment and historic rustic character. The public commented that existing facilities should be rehabilitated, but that modernization or expansion should be kept within the developed areas. Additionally, the public stated that there should be a range of accommodations available to offer options for visitors from different income levels.

- **The Construction Season**

Closing visitor facilities for rehabilitation during part or all of the visitor season may affect the visitor experience and concessioner business opportunities; but allowing construction during the off-season might affect sensitive wildlife, including the park's threatened and endangered species.

- **Shower and Laundry Facilities**

The existing shower facilities at Rising Sun and Swiftcurrent are heavily used throughout the summer season. There are no public showers inside the park on the west side, although there are public showers approximately six miles from the park entrance. This distance is an inconvenience for some visitors who do not have transportation. There is only one public laundry facility inside the park on the east side at Swiftcurrent.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT AND INVOLVEMENT AFTER RELEASE OF THE DRAFT COMMERCIAL SERVICES PLAN AND DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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 many 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 correct misinformation or offer new alternatives and issues not addressed in the draft plan. We have responded to comments that contained substantive comment in Chapter 5 Consultation and Coordination.

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 numbers proposed for group size on guided hikes, guided underwater diving, guided horseback rides and some of the proposals at the developed areas. Public comments are summarized below.

Granite Park Chalet

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. A few more comments supported full service. Some of the commenters appeared misinformed about the services currently offered at Granite Park, 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 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 a “hiker shelter” cited environmental concerns. Most who commented in favor of the hiker shelter said they would value having a lower cost alternative to Sperry Chalet.

Compelling arguments were presented on both sides of this issue that caused the team 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. A more complete description of the services offered has been added to the discussion in Chapter 2.



Some commenters asked the National Park Service to establish more hostels or chalets throughout the park. The National Park Service has included converting some facilities at Swiftcurrent to hostel-style accommodations in the preferred alternative.

Commercially Guided Day Hiking

There were many comments in support of the preferred alternative, placing limits on group sizes for commercially guided day hikes. Several commenters would like to see even smaller group size limits than those proposed. 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 in the park in favor of commercially guided hikes. 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. Some comments also noted omissions and discrepancies and made some suggestions to expand opportunities on some trails. These comments were addressed in Chapter 2 under Guided Day Hiking and in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Guided Underwater Diving Tours

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 impact park resources. Some wanted the tours to be closely monitored, and some did not support underwater diving tours in the backcountry, i.e. Josephine Lake. These comments were addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Firewood Sales

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 the option to offer firewood sales thought the National Park Service would profit from the sales. These comments were addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Public Showers

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 was addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Boat Tours and Transportation (Boat Taxi)

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 were addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

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

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 would like new commercial services to 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 for the long term.

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 were addressed in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Horseback Riding, Horse Packing and Horse Boarding Services

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 to allow for horseback rides in the Two Medicine Area. See Chapter 2 under Horseback Riding and the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Commercially Guided Bicycle Tours

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 under Commercially Guided Bicycle Tours and in the response to comments in Chapter 5.

Commercial Step-On Guide Services

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 National Park Service has determined that guided motorcycle tours do not meet all the criteria for “necessary and appropriate.”

Developed Area Alternatives

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 such as lack of employee parking. A few comments requested hostel accommodations on the east side of the park. These requests will be considered in more detail during the design and implementation phases. The preferred alternative for Many Glacier was modified to address parking. Of those who commented, several opposed the proposed increase from 512 to 540 total rooms available in the park. 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. A few commenters opposed any use of the Stewart Motel site for visitor or employee accommodations at Lake McDonald. 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. Some comments supported vista clearing or weed control. Many of these comments are outside the scope of this planning effort.

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

- **Parkwide Transit System**

This system is necessary and appropriate in the park but is not included in this planning effort. The rehabilitation schedule of the Going-to-the-Sun Road (GTSR) will take eight years to complete. As part of the *GTSR Plan/Final EIS*, a temporary transportation system on the road will ensure public access to the park during the road’s rehabilitation. It will also provide the opportunity for

the park to experiment with different buses, schedules and incentives. Depending on their success, various features could be part of a more permanent system after the rehabilitation effort is complete. It was also recognized that planning a system that would not be implemented for many years is not realistic. The industry is constantly changing and there may be an opportunity to connect with a regional transportation system that has not yet been developed by the surrounding areas. Therefore, a more permanent parkwide transit system will be addressed at a later time.

- **Utility Upgrades and Improvements at Developed Areas**

The utility systems (water, wastewater and fire protection) at Apgar, Two Medicine, Lake McDonald, Rising Sun and Many Glacier require upgrades and improvements that are not analyzed in this plan. These improvements are being designed and analyzed individually for these areas as funding is obtained. The Apgar water and fire service was analyzed in an environmental assessment released in the spring of 2002 and a finding of no significant impact was signed in May 2002. Construction is underway.

- **Funding Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings**

Some of the public is willing to pay a use fee to support funding the rehabilitation, others are concerned that increased park fees, other services and lodging would become unaffordable to some of the visiting public. Although comments have suggested using either private funds or a percentage from concessioners' revenues to finance rehabilitation, many support use-tax revenues to avoid private interest investments by concessioners. While funding is critical to the implementation of this plan, actual funding mechanisms will be determined outside of this planning effort.

- **Concessioner's Possessory Interest**

Concessioners acquire ownership interest (referred to as "possessory interest") in park facilities through investments in the original construction or improvements. By law and contract, if they are not selected for the succeeding concession contract, or if the facilities are removed, the concessioner is entitled to compensation for their possessory interest from the government or a successor concessioner. During scoping, suggestions were made that the government should buy out the concessioner's possessory interest. This buy-out would reduce the initial investment any potential competitors would need to make when competing for the new contract and increase the likelihood of a broader field of qualified applicants. While this suggestion has merit, the decision to seek and the ability to obtain funding to buy out possessory interest would occur outside the scope of this planning effort.

Another issue raised during scoping was the fear that the concessioner's possessory interest was being increased by government investment in improvements to the Many Glacier Hotel. The current concession contract requires that the value of the possessory interest be adjusted downward in an amount equal to the investment made by the government, thereby reducing the value of the possessory interest. For example, if the government invested \$2 million in improvements, the concessioner's possessory interest would be reduced by \$2 million. These issues would be determined by contract, funding allocations or other actions at management's discretion and are considered outside the scope of this plan.

- **Other Services and Uses**

The services listed below were determined to be necessary and appropriate in the park. However, they are not discussed under this plan because their activities are not considered commercial services for the purposes of regulation under concessions contracts or commercial authorizations.

They operate under separate operating agreements.

- **The Glacier Natural History Association and Glacier Institute** operate under cooperative agreements with the National Park Service. The goals of these cooperating associations are consistent with the purposes and values of the park and with park policy.

The Glacier Institute achieves these goals by offering educational programs that encompass natural and cultural history topics. These programs enhance the quality of the visitor experience and promote appreciation (and therefore protection) of park resources. The Glacier Natural History Association also promotes visitor understanding and appreciation of the park's mission and values by the publication and sale of books and other educational materials about the park. (The proceeds from sales support the park mission.)

- **Commercial Filming and Photography:** Commercial filming and photography projects are examined to ensure that no adverse resource or public value impacts will occur before a permit is issued. The National Park Service ensures that these services do not unduly conflict with other park uses or with activities outside the park, nor do they preclude the public from enjoying recreational opportunities. Nature films and photography can complement the fundamental experiences of park visitors and serve to interpret and educate the public about park resources.
- **Special Events:** Special events are defined as recreational activities that are proposed as organized events or events that involve commercialization, advertising, or publicity by participants or organizers. They are managed in accordance with the criteria and procedures in NPS-53, Special Park Uses.
- **Commercial Air Tours**
These tours are not addressed in this plan. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulates aviation throughout the United States, including the airspace above national parks. Legislation requires that the FAA (in cooperation with the National Park Service) prepare Air Tour Management Plans for each park area that has scenic air tour activity (National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000, P.L. 106—181). It remains the intent of Glacier National Park as stated in the General Management Plan to ban scenic tours over the park. Furthermore, scenic air tours do not meet necessary and appropriate criteria.
- **Accessible Facilities in Campgrounds and Other Areas**
The public expressed an interest in having more accessible restrooms and visitor facilities throughout the park. While improving accessibility of facilities in the park remains a goal for park management and these improvements are taking place as funding allows, non-commercial facilities are beyond the scope of this plan.

The Natural History Association also promotes visitor understanding and appreciation of the park's mission and values

- **Monopolies Held by Concessioners**
There was some public concern about assigning the rights to only one concessioner for providing specific services. When the National Park Service establishes a concession opportunity, it evaluates the financial feasibility of the opportunity given the capital investment required and the obligations assumed under the contract. The limited nature of some opportunities makes more than one concession contract economically infeasible. The park must also manage resource impacts. Decisions related to the appropriate number of

operators are therefore considered beyond the scope of this planning effort and will be made during the contract development process.

- **Economic Opportunities for Blackfeet Tribal Members**

The high unemployment and limited economic opportunities on the Blackfeet Reservation that borders Glacier National Park to the east are of particular concern. However, while many of the services that are identified in the plan are potential business opportunities for the park's neighbors, the National Park Service does not have the legal authority to contract exclusively with any one population for these services. While the park will continue to provide employment opportunities to individuals and concessioners will continue to be encouraged to hire locally, developing economic opportunities specifically for the Blackfeet Tribe is beyond the scope of this planning effort.

- **Paintings and Collectibles Owned by Concessioners**

The current primary concessioner in Glacier National Park owns many works of art from the early days of the park and displays them in the hotels and motels around the park. Concern was raised during scoping that these works should be inventoried and acquired by the National Park Service so that the works remain in the park. While the National Park Service is interested in ensuring that these privately owned works remain in the park, any agreements to acquire or establish a tie with the works are beyond the scope of this planning document. Pursuant to the current contract, all personal property owned by the concessioner (including these works of art) would be transferred to the next concessioner at the end of the current contract.

- **Private Lands in the Park**

Currently, there are commercial activities occurring on privately owned lands within Glacier National Park. There is the potential for change on these lands, and for more commercial activities and related building, particularly in the Apgar area. Commercial activities on private lands are not considered to be concessions and are subject to different permitting regulations. Private land use changes are reviewed under different regulations and policy, and fall under the guidance of the Land Protection Plan (NPS 1985b). Because of these differences, it was decided that commercial activities and building on private lands would fall outside the scope of this planning effort.

- **Rehabilitation of Campgrounds**

The campgrounds located throughout the park (many of which are in developed areas discussed in this plan) require rehabilitating and updating. Because campgrounds are National Park Service rather than commercial service facilities, these needs will be addressed by the park under its cyclic and routine maintenance as money becomes available.

- **Day Hiking Party Size**

Party size determinations for the general public on trails and party sizes of National Park Service naturalist-led hikes are beyond the scope of this planning effort because these activities are not commercial services. They would be addressed upon the revision of the Backcountry Management Plan.

IMPACT TOPICS CONSIDERED

Impact topics were selected based on the issues identified during scoping and the need to evaluate the potential effects to resources of concern. Impact topics that were selected for detailed analysis include: water quality, floodplains, soils, vegetation, wildlife including aquatic species, threatened and endangered species, natural sound, air quality historic, archaeological and ethnographic resources,

visual resources, regional and local communities, the Blackfeet and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, visitor use and experience, energy consumption and landowners in and adjacent to the park boundary. Background information on these topics is discussed in Chapter 3, Affected Environment and the potential impacts to these resources are discussed in Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences.

IMPACT TOPICS DISMISSED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Four impact topics were dismissed from further consideration in the *Final CSP and Final EIS* because there would be negligible or no impact. Impact topics that were dismissed are wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, prime and unique farmlands and environmental justice. For additional information about the reasons for this decision, see Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences.

SUMMARY OF RELATED PLANS AND PROJECTS

The following plans and projects are either planned, have begun or are completed. They are described to provide a better understanding of park development activities.

- **General Management Plan for Glacier National Park** (NPS 1999). This plan was completed in 1999 and provides overall guidance and direction for the park.
- **Assessment of Condition and Historic Contexts of Facilities at Seven Concessioner Locations in Glacier National Park** (NPS 2002c). This report provides an architectural/engineering assessment of all the facilities in each area. It includes an historic structures analysis for the Many Glacier, Swiftcurrent, Two Medicine, Lake McDonald and Rising Sun areas; and an overview of the cultural landscape at the Many Glacier, Swiftcurrent and Two Medicine areas.
- **Cultural Landscape Report for the Going-to-the-Sun Road** (Renewable Technologies, Inc. 2002). This report includes the cultural landscape overview for Lake McDonald and Rising Sun.
- **Rehabilitation of the Many Glacier Hotel.** Stabilization of the Many Glacier Hotel, Phase I, began in the fall of 2001. Phases I and II were funded to stabilize the foundation, begin rehabilitating the exterior of the building (siding, windows, door and roofing) and improve fire egress. Phase II began in fall 2002 and Phase III began in fall 2003. Additional work (Phases IV-VII) is still needed to complete the exterior and address rehabilitating the interior of the building, remaining code compliance issues, accessibility and life safety issues. These additional phases have not yet been funded.
- **Boat Dock Improvements.** A currently funded project continues the park's efforts to replace aging boat docks. In 2003, an upgrade to the dock and access trail at Lake McDonald Lodge, and improvements at Apgar's public dock were begun. The docks are being designed to allow better access for the disabled. Additional docks will be upgraded as funding allows.
- **Going-to-the-Sun Road Rehabilitation.** The Record of Decision for the Going-to-the-Sun



Road Rehabilitation Plan was signed in November 2003.

- **North Fork Study Area: Management Plan** (NPS 1992). This plan provides management and development needs for the North Fork area. It states:

Concession operations in the North Fork area will be limited to the existing backcountry guide service, and there will be no increase in the scope or level of this service.

Maintaining the existing guide service is important because the North Fork backcountry is an integral part of backcountry tour experiences in the park, which generally involve long routes that may cross through the North Fork area. Expanding concession operations is considered unnecessary and inappropriate given the area's tradition of self-sufficient visitor use.

Since this plan was determined to be consistent with the General Management Plan (NPS 1999), the commercial services plan does not consider more concession services in the North Fork.

- **West Side Discovery Center.** The General Management Plan made the decision to construct a West Side Discovery Center to provide information and education to park visitors as they enter the west side of the park. The park is seeking funding to begin the design and construction process. The site design prepared as part of this plan for Apgar assumes the West Side Discovery Center will be located north of the T intersection as described in the General Management Plan, between Apgar Village and Apgar campground.
- **Ongoing Concession Facility Improvements.** The repair and maintenance of concession facilities will continue. However, the level of capital improvements is limited to available funding by the concession contract or other funding sources available to the park.
- **Lake McDonald/Park Headquarters Wastewater Treatment System Rehabilitation and Water System Rehabilitation for Park Headquarters and Apgar.** These projects began in the summer of 2003.
- **Wilderness and Backcountry Management Plan (updated 2003).** This plan provides specific guidance for managing Glacier National Park's backcountry and recommended wilderness.
- **Improvements to Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation** will begin in fall of 2004 in Apgar.

This page intentionally left blank.