national park service

july 29, 1974

GUIDELINES

FOR THE PREPARATION AND REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS AND STATEMENTS

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE GUIDELINES

for the preparation and review of environmental assessments and statements

CONTENTS

PURPOSE / 1

POLICY / 1

DEFINITIONS / 2

PROCEDURE / 5

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT COMPONENTS / 12

PURPOSE

sec. 1

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide direction for the preparation and review of National Park Service (NPS) environmental assessments and environmental statements.

These guidelines replace the activity standards published in the *Federal Register* on March 2, 1972, and the interim guidelines dated July 11, 1973; and they supplement Departmental Manual part 516 DM 2.

POLICY

sec. 2

Environmental statements will be prepared as early as possible in the decisionmaking process for all recommendations and favorable reports on proposals for: legislation significantly affecting the quality of the human environment (legislative actions); and all other major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment or major Federal actions that will result in environmental impact that is likely to be highly controversial (administrative actions). Normally, environmental statements will be prepared on new-area studies, master plans, natural-resource-management plans, and development-concept plans.

The decisionmaking process begins with the initial formulation of alternative solutions to planning problems. Whenever alternative solutions could potentially cause significant environmental impact, a written environmental assessment will be prepared, documenting the environmental analysis and incorporating the results of relevant consultations and environmental studies. After preparation of the environmental assessment, a proposal will be selected from among the alternatives. If required, a draft environmental statement will then be prepared concurrently with the plan, and it will accompany the plan through the review process.

The draft environmental statement will be circulated to interested Federal, State, and local agencies, and it will be made available to the public. Comments from these sources will be considered, and the proposal will be amended when appropriate. A final environmental statement that is responsive to the comments received will then be prepared.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT *3.a*

An environmental statement is an analytical document that conforms to section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Departmental Manual part 516 DM 2.

The environmental statement will contain:

Cover sheet

Table of contents

Summary

Description of the proposal

Description of the environment

The environmental impact of the proposed action

Mitigating measures included in the proposed action

Any adverse effects which cannot be avoided should the proposal be implemented

The relationship between local short-term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity

Any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented

Alternatives to the proposed action

Consultation and coordination with others

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT *3.b*

An environmental assessment documents the analysis of environmental impacts associated with alternative courses of action studied during the

decisionmaking process. The assessment aids in the selection of an alternative as the proposed course of action. It is also used to determine if the environmental impact associated with the selected alternative is of such magnitude that an environmental statement is required. The environmental assessment contains essentially the same kinds of information found in an environmental statement, but the assessment need not follow the same format.

The environmental assessment will contain:

Brief statement of the planning/design problem

Description of the environment

Description of alternatives and their respective environmental impacts, reflecting mitigating measures, unavoidable adverse effects, short-term/long-term relationships, and irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources, if applicable

Record of consultation and coordination with others during the planning and design process

The subject matter discussed in each section of the assessment will be similar to the subject matter discussed in comparable sections of environmental statements. The assessment should have an organization that can be easily transformed into the environmental-statement format if a statement is required.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW *3.c*

An environmental review is a written analysis undertaken by the Responsible Official indicating that he has reviewed the environmental assessment. The document indicates which of the study's alternatives is selected as the proposed course of action. The review acts as a written record of the Responsible Official's determination as to whether the proposed action will have a significant impact on the human environment and as to whether an environmental statement will be prepared.

NOTICE OF INTENT *3.d*

A notice of intent (sample appended) is an NPS letter, memorandum, or news release that notifies appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, and

the public, that the National Park Service intends to prepare an environmental statement on a particular action. The decision to prepare a statement will usually occur as a result of the environmental assessment and review.

NOTICE OF NEGATIVE DECLARATION *3.e*

A notice of negative declaration (sample appended) is an NPS letter, memorandum, or news release notifying appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, and the public, that an environmental statement is not required and will not be prepared on a particular action. A notice of negative declaration must be prepared whenever it applies to new-area studies, master plans, natural-resource-management plans, development-concept plans, concession contracts, and requests for condemnation. The notice, along with the environmental assessment and environmental review, will be made available to the public upon request.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL *3.f*

In most instances, the Regional Director (or the Director, National Capital Parks) is the official responsible for ensuring that environmental assessments and reviews are conducted, and that subsequent notices of intent and environmental statements, or notices of negative declaration, are prepared and distributed to appropriate agencies and individuals, as established by existing procedures.

DECISIONMAKING DOCUMENT *3.g*

A decisionmaking document usually is a planning document, such as a master plan, natural-resource-management plan, or development-concept plan. Planning documents are defined in the appended National Park Service *Planning and Design Process.*

REVIEW HISTORY SLIP *3.h*

A review history slip (sample appended) identifies the principal authors and reviewers of the environmental statement throughout its NPS circulation.

IDENTIFICATION OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ACTIONS REQUIRING THE PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENTS 4.a

Environmental statements are required for all major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The overall cumulative direct and indirect impact of the proposed NPS action, other related Federal actions and projects in the area, and further actions contemplated will be considered in identifying the significance of the action proposed by the National Park Service. If the overall cumulative environmental impact is judged to be either significant or highly controversial, a statement will be prepared.

The words "major" and "significantly" represent thresholds of extent of impact that must be reached before a statement is required. In determining if these thresholds have been reached, the following general criteria should be applied: If a decision will be a precedent for future decisions, or if it will commit the Park Service to future actions, the cumulative impact of which is significant, then an environmental statement must be prepared and processed. All important environmental factors that are relevant will be considered in determining the extent of impact. These important factors include the amount of land area involved; the relative significance of the resources affected; the time over which the proposal will have an impact; the magnitude and degree of controversiality; any change in the use of energy; the magnitude and degree of changes in human activity, land use, resource use, and resource-management practices; the socioeconomic well-being of park visitors and residents and of others affected; the magnitude and degree of change in the quality of air, vegetation, water, wildlife, cultural resources, and other components of the environment; the magnitude of irreversibility or irretrievability of resource commitments; and the ability of the resource to absorb impact.

It is ordinarily appropriate and more meaningful to draft an environmental statement on the decisionmaking, or planning, document in which an action is initially formulated. By doing this, it is possible to assess early in the decisionmaking process both the environmental effects of a number of individual actions in a given park area, and the overall impact of a chain of contemplated projects. Certain actions that will not necessarily cause significant environmental impact will cause environmental impact that is highly controversial. Any action that will cause highly controversial impact that is not included in some other environmental statement will be discussed in a statement prepared specifically for that project.

The sequential order of planning described in the National Park Service *Planning and Design Process* will usually be followed in the preparation of planning documents. An environmental statement, if required, will normally be prepared concurrently with each plan.

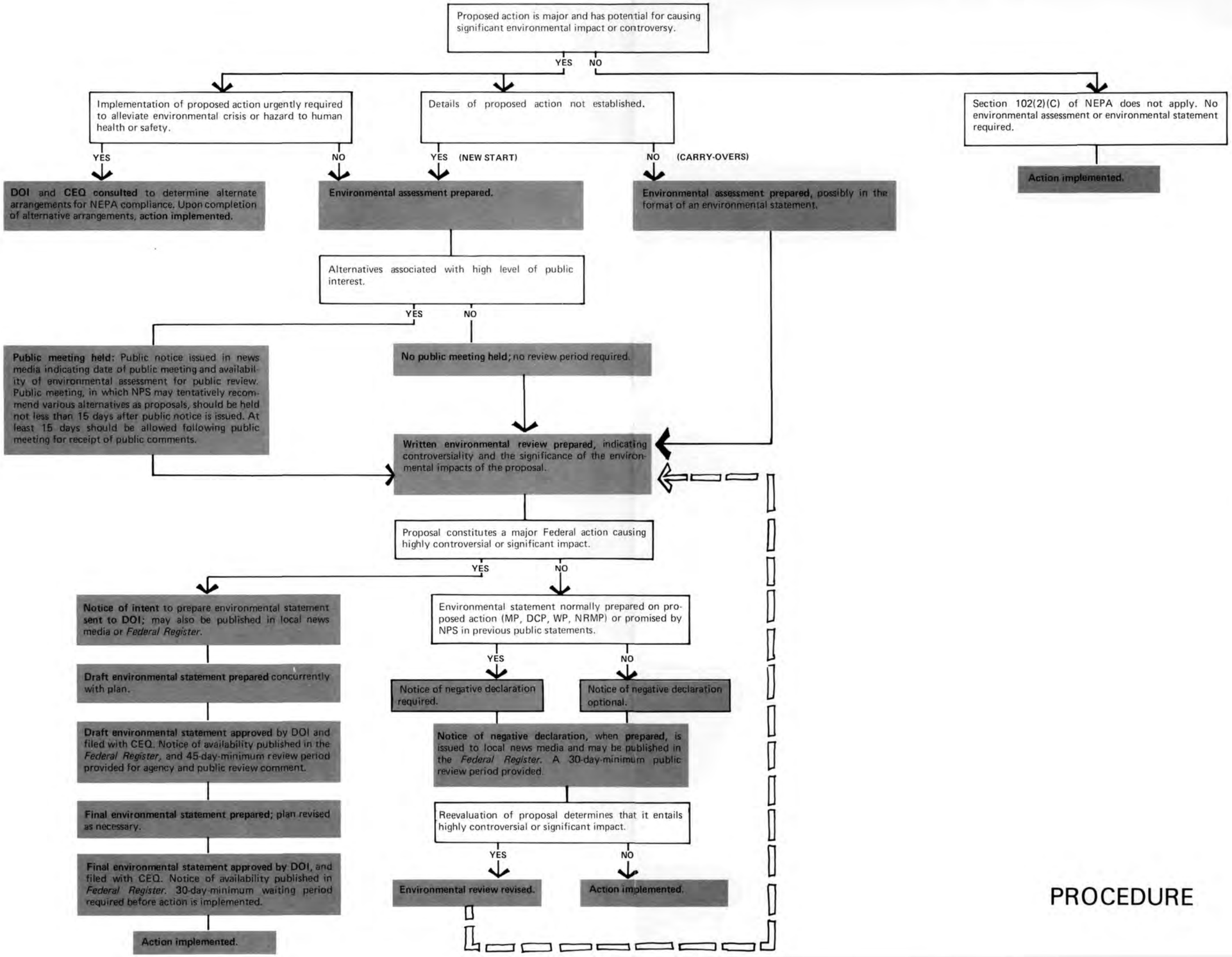
It is sometimes necessary to enter the planning and design process out of normal sequence, perhaps to correct a condition causing environmental harm or threatening visitor safety. It is sometimes also desirable to enter the process out of sequence, perhaps to propose needed minor actions, to provide replacement facilities, or to add a small element to a larger development. In such circumstances, the potential environmental impact of the action must be assessed, the significance of the action must be determined, and an environmental statement must be prepared whenever the cumulative environmental impact is significant.

COORDINATION IN THE PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS *4.b*

Before major plans are prepared, personnel from the Denver Service Center and the Regional Office will define the planning problems and agree on a course of action for their solution. The planning and/or design directive documents this agreement and outlines the scope, magnitude, and duration of the work to be done. It also contains a summary of the preliminary management objectives for the park, a review of any work to date, and an analysis of planning needs, including delineation of required information.

Analysis of environmental impact will begin concurrently with the planning effort. As alternative solutions to the various planning problems are developed, environmental information relevant to evaluating the impacts of these alternatives will be acquired. When sufficient information to enable objective analysis of environmental impact has been secured, a written environmental assessment will be prepared. The environmental assessment will describe the planning alternatives, their environmental impacts, and public involvement, consultations, and relevant environmental information.

Environmental assessments will be prepared on actions that could potentially cause highly controversial or significant environmental impact. Based on an overview of all actions affecting the environment, the Responsible Official may determine that many plans, projects, and operational decisions have negligible potential to cause controversial or significant environmental impact and therefore do not require preparation of environmental assessments.


Proposed action is major and has potential for causing significant environmental impact or controversy.
YES
NO
Implementation of proposed action urgently required to alleviate environmental crisis or hazard to human health or safety.
Details of proposed action not established.
Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA does not apply. No environmental assessment or environmental statement required.
YES
NO
YES (NEW START)
NO (CARRY-OVERS)
DOI and CEQ consulted to determine alternate arrangements for NEPA compliance. Upon completion of alternative arrangements, action implemented.
Environmental assessment prepared.
Environmental assessment prepared, possibly in the format of an environmental statement.
Action implemented.
Alternatives associated with high level of public interest.
YES
NO
Public meeting held: Public notice issued in news media indicating date of public meeting and availability of environmental assessment for public review. Public meeting, in which NPS may tentatively recommend various alternatives as proposals, should be held not less than 15 days after public notice is issued. At least 15 days should be allowed following public meeting for receipt of public comments.
No public meeting held; no review period required.
Written environmental review prepared, indicating controversiality and the significance of the environmental impacts of the proposal.
Proposal constitutes a major Federal action causing highly controversial or significant impact.
YES
NO
Notice of intent to prepare environmental statement sent to DOI; may also be published in local news media or Federal Register.
Environmental statement normally prepared on proposed action (MP, DCP, WP, NRMP) or promised by NPS in previous public statements.
YES
NO
Draft environmental statement prepared concurrently with plan.
Notice of negative declaration required.
Notice of negative declaration optional.
Draft environmental statement approved by DOI and filed with CEQ. Notice of availability published in the Federal Register, and 45-day-minimum review period provided for agency and public review comment.
Notice of negative declaration, when prepared, is issued to local news media and may be published in the Federal Register. A 30-day-minimum public review period provided.
Final environmental statement prepared; plan revised as necessary.
Reevaluation of proposal determines that it entails highly controversial or significant impact.
YES
NO
Final environmental statement approved by DOI, and filed with CEQ. Notice of availability published in Federal Register. 30-day-minimum waiting period required before action is implemented.
Environmental review revised.
Action implemented.
Action implemented.

PROCEDURE

The environmental assessment will be made available to the public. A public meeting may be held, and an appropriate period of time will be reserved for public comment.

Following receipt of public comments, the Responsible Official will select a proposal from the various planning alternatives. He will then prepare an environmental review summarizing the proposal, indicating the significance of its environmental impact, and evaluating its controversiality. The Responsible Official will specify in the environmental review whether or not an environmental statement is needed.

If the proposal will cause significant impact on the human environment or impact that is likely to be highly controversial, the Responsible Official will issue a notice of intent, announcing that the National Park Service intends to prepare an environmental statement on the proposal. Conversely, if the impact of the proposal is not highly controversial or significant, the Responsible Official will issue a notice of negative declaration, announcing that an environmental statement is not warranted and will not be prepared.

The draft environmental statement, if required, will be prepared concurrently with the plan. It will contain a complete discussion of the proposal, its interrelationship with other projects, and its environmental impact. The analysis of the impacts of the various alternatives discussed in the environmental assessment will be reiterated.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS AND STATEMENTS *4.c*

Washington Office *4.c.(1)*

The *Division of Environmental Quality* will be responsible for NPS policy formulation and guidance in implementing NEPA, including:

Ensuring that various regional and field offices establish administrative procedures for efficient, meaningful application of environmental analyses early in the decisionmaking process.

Providing assistance to responsible officials when needed, including coordination of the training of personnel involved in the review and preparation of environmental statements.

Participating in and coordinating substantive Washington Office review of environmental statements to ensure compliance with NEPA.

Advising the *Assistant Director, Development,* concerning projects that are precedent setting or highly controversial, or that require coordination between various NPS units, to ensure a prudent course of action and compliance with NEPA.

Professional Services personnel will be responsible for ensuring that their regional counterparts are kept fully informed as to procedures for compliance with existing mandates and Executive orders, so that compliance can be properly reflected in NPS environmental statements.

The *Director, Legislation,* will be responsible for maintaining close coordination with his regional counterparts to ensure adherence to precedures outlined herein for timely preparation of environmental statements whenever they are required on legislative proposals.

The *Director, Park System Management,* will be responsible for:

Providing staff for policy review of appropriate environmental statements, especially environmental statements on master plans and natural-resource-management plans.

Assisting the Responsible Official to comply with the procedures outlined herein in order to produce timely and meaningful environmental statements for land acquisition, park management, and actions associated with concession contracts.

Regional Offices *4.c.(2)*

Generally, the Regional Director will be the management official responsible for programming and preparing environmental assessments and statements. His responsibilities include:

Ensuring that environmental assessments and reviews are conducted at the earliest feasible time, prior to rendering decisions on all NPS actions that will potentially cause significant environmental impact.

Ensuring compliance with existing NPS policies, guidelines, and activity standards in preparing environmental assessments and statements.

Ensuring that notices of intent and environmental statements are prepared and distributed at the earliest feasible time in the decisionmaking process, and that their internal and external review is coordinated.

Ensuring that those who prepared and reviewed environmental assessments and statements are identified on the review history slip.

Ensuring, for those actions not requiring the preparation of an environmental statement, that environmental assessments, environmental reviews, and notices of negative declaration are timely and available to the public.

Preparing environmental assessments and statements on natural-resource-management plans and on programs confined to the Regional Offices.

Reviewing environmental assessments and statements, and preparing review comments for transmittal.

Programming, assisting in the preparation of, and reviewing the resource basic inventory.

Analyzing current procedures for NEPA compliance and recommending to the Division of Environmental Quality any program to improve those procedures that involve Professional Services in the decisionmaking process.

Denver Service Center *4.c.(3)*

The Manager, Denver Service Center, will be responsible for:

Ensuring that preparation of environmental assessments and environmental statements is coordinated with the preparation of the decisionmaking documents prepared in the Denver Service Center.

Providing the Responsible Official with an environmental assessment and environmental statement for which he can take full responsibility for procedural compliance.

Ensuring that the Park Superintendent and Regional and Service Center Professional Services personnel agree, before the planning process is initiated, on the scope of the action that is subject to environmental assessment.

Ensuring that there is adequate coverage in environmental assessments and statements to comply with all pertinent statutory or Executive requirements, such as the National Historic Preservation Act and Executive Order 11593.

An environmental statement documents the analysis of environmental impacts of proposed major Federal actions that have a significant impact upon the human environment or that are highly controversial. The term "environmental statement" refers to both the draft environmental statement (DES) and the final environmental statement (FES).

The format of the environmental statement, as found in Departmental Manual part 516 DM 2 and elaborated upon herein, will be strictly followed in order to facilitate review during the NPS decisionmaking process and review by other agencies and the public. Exceptions to the format should be cleared in advance through the Division of Environmental Quality.

COVER SHEET *5.a*

The cover sheet will indicate the type of statement, the title of the proposal, the name of the NPS office that prepared the statement, and the title and signature of the Responsible Official (DES) or of the Director of the National Park Service (FES). Upon Departmental clearance, the Department of the Interior will affix a statement number and date.

TABLE OF CONTENTS *5.b*

SUMMARY *5.c*

The summary will be prepared as described in 516 DM 2.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL *5.d*

This section will comprise a clear and succinct description of the proposed action or recommendation, and the projected time-frame for the proposal's implementation.

The elements of the proposal will be described in sufficient detail and contain sufficient technical data to permit environmental impact assessment by decisionmakers, commenting agencies, and the public.

The description will include a discussion of the interrelationships between the proposed action and other completed, ongoing, or proposed Federal and non-Federal actions that may contribute to cumulative environmental impact. The relationship between the proposed action and the policies,

plans, and constraints of other Federal, State, and local governmental agencies should be discussed whenever such a relationship exists.

Graphics, maps, and sketches will be included in the description of the proposal.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT *5.e*

This section will contain a general description of the total environment in which the proposed action will occur, and a succinct and specific description of those elements of the existing environment that will be affected by the proposal. Also included will be a description of the environment as it would probably exist if the proposal were not implemented.

The degree of detail should be commensurate with the scope and expected impact of the proposed action, and should reflect the amount of information needed to make the decision required to implement the proposed action. Voluminous highly technical and specialized data should be avoided; they can be adequately summarized and incorporated by reference. Information not necessary to describe the environment and to assess environmental impact should not be included, because it tends to remove focus from relevant issues. Maps, diagrams, analyses, and interpretation of technical data and other relevant information required to permit an assessment of the environmental impact of the proposal by the public and commenting agencies will be included.

Descriptive information about park areas, usually found in the resource basic inventory, will cover, when appropriate, such environmental factors as soils, geology, topography, vegetation, climate, wildlife, and cultural resources. The existing socioeconomic environment of park visitors, employees, inholders, and other users will also be described, if affected by the proposal. An inventory of cultural resources listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and a description of all cultural resources will also be included in this section, as will a description of existing development and other manmade facilities.

Similar information about areas outside parks will be acquired and described when appropriate. Sufficient information must be included to put the proposal in regional perspective. Specific components of the region's ecological, cultural, and socioeconomic environments that will affect or be affected by the proposal will be described in sufficient detail to enable impact assessment. This description will include a discussion of present and

projected land uses, population, economic development, transportation systems, and other relevant factors.

Ecological, jurisdictional, legislative, and other constraints on management, development, interpretation, and use of park lands or resources should also be included when appropriate.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED ACTION *5.f*

The probable beneficial and adverse impacts that the proposed action will impose upon the human environment will be described and analyzed in this section. Primary emphasis should be placed upon those components of the environment most obviously affected by the proposed action.

Direct or primary consequences, as well as indirect or secondary consequences, of the proposed action will be analyzed, as they affect the environment both within and outside NPS jurisdiction.

The analysis of environmental impact should, in most cases, be topically organized according to the affected components of the environment, such as air, water, soils, and cultural resources. When impacts interrelate, or when they will produce secondary or indirect consequences, they will be reiterated under each appropriate topic, with appropriate cross-referencing.

Conclusions without an adequate factual or analytical base, as well as justificatory statements, will be avoided. Magnitude of impacts will be quantified whenever possible. When impacts defy quantification, their magnitude will be discussed generally.

Care should be taken to analyze the cumulative effect of the proposed action as it is compounded by the effects of interrelated projects.

In the case of cultural resources, criteria of effect – as defined in the *Code of Federal Regulations* (title 36, part 800), and published in the *Federal Register* dated February 19, 1974 – will be applied to determine the extent of impact upon cultural resources.

MITIGATING MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED ACTION *5.g*

This section will discuss those specific actions, research projects, special studies, monitoring systems, salvage operations, and other recommended

measures inherent in the plan or proposal that are required, or may be required, in order to lessen negative environmental effects of the proposed action. Emphasis will be placed upon significant measures taken to offset or lessen major negative effects.

The scope, time-frame, and other information needed to describe the mitigating measures will be included.

This section must include a discussion of mitigating measures taken to comply with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Executive Order 11593, and with State and Federal air- and water-quality requirements if appropriate.

ANY ADVERSE EFFECTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED SHOULD THE PROPOSAL BE IMPLEMENTED *5.h*

This section will briefly summarize those adverse effects of the proposed action that are not mitigated, or are only partially mitigated, by other measures included in the proposal, especially those consequences adverse to the goals set out in section 101(b) of NEPA. The relative importance and magnitude of the adverse effects, as they pertain to the various components of the human environment, must be discussed.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USES OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY *5.i*

This section will contain a brief overview of the extent to which the proposed action involves trade-offs between short-term environmental gains and long-term losses, or between short-term environmental losses and long-term gains. The discussion will also indicate how the proposed action will preclude future options for using and deriving benefit from man's environment.

"Short-term" and "long-term" do not refer to any fixed time periods; they should be viewed in terms of the various significant ecological and geophysical consequences of the proposed action.

Local short-term uses of the environment usually relate directly to the proposed action, and continue as long as the proposed action is in effect.

The immediate and cumulative impact caused by implementation of the proposed action, as well as the cumulative impact of similar actions both proposed and implemented, must be evaluated with respect to the long-term productivity of the environment. Special attention should be given to effects upon ecological interrelationships, and to long-term hazards to human health and safety.

ANY IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES WHICH WOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE PROPOSED ACTION SHOULD IT BE IMPLEMENTED *5.j*

This section will reiterate those impacts resulting from commitments of resources that impair the resources' integrity or the options for their future use. The commitment may have irreversible consequences, such as destruction of an archeological site during highway construction; or it may have irretrievable consequences, such as denial of various types of visitor use due to another kind of proposed land use, which can be reversed in the future. Many actions have both irreversible and irretrievable consequences.

Commitments of esthetic, cultural, socioeconomic, ecological, and recreational resources, as well as commitments of commercial resources, will be discussed in this section if applicable.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION *5.k*

This section will describe and analyze the probable environmental impacts of those reasonable alternatives to the proposed action that involve alternative uses of available resources. This section is particularly important when conflicts concerning the possible uses of resources are unresolved.

Any alternatives that would produce significantly less adverse environmental effect or significantly more beneficial environmental effect should be rigorously explored and objectively analyzed.

Each analysis must contain: a brief description of the alternative action; a description of the environment it affects; and a topically organized discussion of its environmental impacts, reflecting mitigating measures, unavoidable adverse effects, short-term and long-term effects upon environmental productivity, and irreversible and irretrievable resource commitments, if applicable.

The alternative of no action or of postponement of action pending further study will always be discussed. Alternatives beyond the authority of the National Park Service will be discussed if appropriate.

Maps or other exhibits will be used to illustrate alternatives when appropriate.

Information discussed in other sections of the environmental statement should be judiciously referenced to avoid making this section unduly repetitious.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION WITH OTHERS *5.1*

Consultation and Coordination in the Development of the Proposal and in the Preparation of the Environmental Statement *5.1.(1)*

This section will include a brief discussion of the important consultations that occurred during the evolution of the proposal and the environmental statement. All Federal, State, and local agencies, and other organizations and individuals consulted during development of the proposal and the environmental statement should be indicated. When applicable, this section will briefly summarize public meetings held in conjunction with either the environmental assessment or the proposal and its environmental statement.

Important environmental impacts discussed during consultations should also be indicated whenever conflicts are apparent or whenever these issues remain unresolved. If consultations resulted in formal agreements, the substance of the agreements should be presented. Coordinating mechanisms already existing or proposed should be described.

Specifically discussed must be consultation made in compliance with legislation, Executive orders, and other agency guidelines.

Coordination in the Review of the Draft Environmental Statement *5.1.(2)*

This section in the draft environmental statement will indicate the procedures to be followed in disseminating the statement, and will list those agencies, organizations, and individuals who will be requested to review the document. Upon preparation of the final statement, this section will be expanded to indicate who commented on the draft. Copies of comments received should be appended to the statement. All major comments received must be addressed in this section; they should be summarized and responded to in a comment/response format. The source of major comments will be identified by agency, organization, or individual name. Other comments received will be summarized, and a general response provided. Unresolved conflicts that remain between those commenting and the National Park Service must be clearly identified in the responses.

APPENDIXES

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE *PLANNING AND DESIGN PROCESS*

NOTICE OF INTENT (sample)

NOTICE OF NEGATIVE DECLARATION (sample)

REVIEW HISTORY SLIP

national park service

PLANNING & DESIGN PROCESS

INTRODUCTION / PLANNING / DESIGN / REVIEWS

Introduction

The two main goals of planning and design for our national parks are to preserve the environment and to lay the groundwork for the development of facilities. These objectives are often in conflict, and only by careful planning and design can both be achieved.

The National Park Service has developed a step-by-step, flexible planning and design program that ensures compatability and compliance of management programs, public-use activities, and construction of facilities serving the public, with the resource and with the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act. This program can be applied to any project, large or small. It incorporates sociological, ecological, and environmental principles. The sequenced steps are sufficiently flexible to allow for their independent use, thus satisfying both the general and the specific design needs of park management. It is important to recognize that the process is not closed or "tunnel-like," but can be entered into at any point necessary to achieve the objective of a particular situation. Similarly, the process can be abandoned once the desired goal has been reached.

Throughout the process, periodic reviews and evaluations by management ensure high-quality planning and design, as well as compliance with the demands of good park management. Each park manager is responsible for ensuring orderly, timely programming of planning and design activities, while the planner ensures that suitability of the environment and the impacts of proposed actions are thoroughly evaluated prior to forwarding any proposal.

Planning and design activities are multidisciplinary team efforts with the full involvement of park managers and concessioners. As appropriate, each team consults with representatives of Federal, State, and local governments; public members representative of conservation groups, tourist agencies, and other organizations; and interested individuals.

Although both planning and design for the National Park Service are one process, are interrelated, and may even be performed by the same person or team, there are two basic functions – *PLANNING* and *DESIGN*.

Planning

Planning, the first phase of the process, is conceptual and broad in scope, and deals with entire regions or parks, or portions thereof. It originates with a Development/Study Package Proposal prepared by park personnel, and ends with a report, a Master Plan, an Action Plan, or whatever is necessary to guide the orderly management, public use, and development of the park.

This phase falls into two categories: Pre-Authorization Planning for areas that have been proposed as additions to the National Park System, and Post-Authorization Planning for existing areas and those newly added to the National Park System. Both types are normally preceded by a reconnaissance study, which is a preliminary meeting or consultation between management and professional services personnel, when potential problems are identified, appropriate actions determined and agreed upon, and professional service proposals initiated. Reconnaissance studies will vary in style and duration and may be as simple as a telephone conversation or as complex as a field analysis by a team of experts.

Pre-Authorization Planning develops the data required by Congress when legislative proposals are being evaluated for incorporating new areas into the National Park System. It is a carefully sequenced procedure, in which each step should be completed before the next begins (although in practical application there is much overlap and simultaneous action), and it functions as follows:

A **New Area Significance Study** evaluates the proposal in terms of its merit to the National Park System. New areas entering the System must meet certain established criteria, and the most important one is that of national significance; i.e., does the area represent an exceptional value or quality that illustrates or interprets our natural or cultural heritage? National recreation areas must also meet criteria established by the President's Recreation Advisory Council.

A **Basic Resource Inventory** serves a most important function in that it must provide adequate socioeconomic, cultural, and ecological data to evaluate the suitability of the resource for management under the alternatives available to the Service, and to provide the planner

sufficient detail to objectively classify the land and prepare environmental assessments. The inventory provides those preparing planning documents with background information about other work at the site, cites relevant studies in the area, and outlines for the planner and designer the basic constraints of the environment, thus ensuring that any eventual development will incur only minimal maintenance cost and environmental impact.

A **Preliminary Statement of Management Objectives** defines the purpose of the park, its management category, and the objectives for its management, and is based in part on data in the Basic Resource Inventory. Normally, these statements are prepared by the park manager, evaluated as a part of the planning study, and submitted separately from, or as a part of, the draft Master Plan.

A **Planning Directive** is a contractual agreement to acquire professional services, as well as a planning guide and basic planning reference. It is prepared by the Denver Service Center professional support personnel, after they and the park management have jointly evaluated the problem and decided on a course of action. The Planning Directive establishes for all concerned a clear understanding of the scope, magnitude, and duration of the work to be undertaken, and it serves as a guide for reviewing the work while it is in progress. The Planning Directive includes a short, concise summary of the planning assumptions about an area and the conclusions based on those assumptions, together with planning recommendations, an analysis of planning needs, and a review of the work to date. The basic planning assumptions should be sufficiently detailed to convey a clear understanding of the planning to all who must follow the directive.

Directives also contain estimates of manpower, time, and costs to do the planning recommended in the directive. Regional Directors and the Denver Service Center personnel will find this a useful tool for establishing responsibilities, for programming and scheduling, and for management, which will derive from it information concerning the time required to complete the project.

A **Master Plan** identifies and evaluates alternative plans for land use, development, and public use of the proposed area. Such considerations identify and evaluate feasible alternative courses of action for protection, development, interpretation, and public use of the area under study, and consider the environmental impacts of these management alternatives.

As a minimum, such a study includes: a discussion of the background and purpose; the reason for protecting the area; a description of the study area and the physical, economic, and social aspects of the region affecting the proposal; an analysis of the resource, present uses, and ownerships; the environmental limitations; and a recommended course of action.

All Master Plans for new areas are accompanied by Environmental Statements, as required under the National Environmental Policy Act. Moreover, when historic properties are involved, the State Historic Preservation Officer must be consulted pursuant to Section 106, Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Following this, the plan is presented to the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

In the formulation of this analytical document, the planning process allows for consideration of the resource suitability as established in the Basic Resource Inventory, and the study of alternatives and their impacts as a result of land acquisition and management concurrent with development of Master Plan concepts. This procedure allows the National Park Service to evolve a management directive that will maximize environmental protection, and equally important, evolve developments that are environmentally compatible.

The Master Plan and its Environmental Statement, along with the Legislative Support Data, provide the basis for those such as the President, the Congress, and the public to fully assess the overall proposal on their own.

Legislative Support Data is required for new areas or for alterations to existing areas. Based on the Master Plan, it is detailed and quantitative information of the kind necessary for the evaluation and support of legislation and usually consists of the following information:

a development schedule — a 5-year program for the development and construction of facilities within and serving the park;

a land acquisition plan — including details about landownership; an appraisal of the value of private land; a tax loss statement; and a financial priority land acquisition program, with a land use plan, a boundary description, and a description of grazing, mineral, and timber values;

graphic arts – including maps (regional, boundary, general development plan, and general landownership), photographs, and graphs that visually describe the proposal;

miscellaneous data – additional information that may vary from project to project but that is essential to Congress when evaluating the proposal. This might include, but not be limited to, fact sheets about visitation statistics, special resource problems, and cooperating associations; and

staffing and operations programs – prepared by the Regional Office, this includes a 5-year staffing summary and an estimate of the personal services program necessary to operate the project for 5 years.

Post-Authorization Planning is a sequence of procedures that ensures an orderly post-authorization operation. In order to maximize the benefit from available public services and construction funds, each step in the procedure should be completed before the next begins. These procedures also provide for objective analysis of alternative management approaches in those circumstances that warrant taking steps to alleviate potential environmental hazards before initiating specific action. The post-authorization planning sequence is as follows:

The **Basic Resource Inventory** is programmed for periodic updating, thus assuring the inclusion and consideration of contemporary socioeconomic, historical, and ecological data of relevance in the planning process.

A **Preliminary Statement of Management Objectives,** prepared by the park superintendent, defines the purpose of the park, its management category, and the objectives for its management.

A **Planning Directive** is prepared by the Denver Service Center staff and park managers, supported by any special studies or reports that may be necessary. The studies should be designed to serve a specific management problem and may be in the areas of ecology, transportation circulation and networks, economics, or engineering feasibility. They may precede or follow the preparation of the Master Plan.

The **Master Plan** is the Pre-Authorization Plan adjusted to meet the demands of the authorizing legislation. It is accompanied by an

Environmental Statement prepared concurrently with the Master Plan. Section 106, Historic Preservation Act of 1966, applies to such Master Plans. This provides meaningful consideration in the decision-making process of the environmental constraints as evaluated in the Basic Resource Inventory and the feasible management alternatives, *prior* to completion of the plan. A well-prepared and documented Master Plan provides accurate information concerning the purpose of the park area, its resource value, its relationship to regional environs, the population it will serve and how, the objectives of management, land classification, concepts of visitor use and interpretation, and an overall plan for its management and development.

Action Plans describe in detail how the concepts in the Master Plan are to be accomplished. Some will be prepared by the Denver Service Center, and others by the Regional Office or park staff, with the assistance of the Denver Service Center when necessary.

The Action Plans and the Master Plan on which they are based form a **Comprehensive Plan** that must be adaptable for any needed revision and updating. Obviously, the nature of the documentation that comprises the Comprehensive Plan varies considerably depending upon the size and complexity of the park, but it is a flexible, dynamic source of information for management. Action Plans can be categorized as follows:

A **Resource Management Plan** (for natural and cultural resources) is a strategic planning document and a key factor in good management and preservation of the resource. As a minimum, it includes a land classification scheme (from the Master Plan), a statement of resource management concepts (also from the Master Plan), a description of the proposed methods for managing the resources of each land class, the expected impact of these methods, mitigating measures such as proposed research, and consideration of management alternatives and their impacts for each land class. This procedure will identify problems that require additional study and result in supplementary data for the Basic Resource Inventory. The Resource Management Plan is prepared by the Regional Office or the park staff, and must be supplemented by an Environmental Statement. Also, Section 106, Historic Preservation Act of 1966 must be observed.

A **Wilderness Plan** is required for all areas designated for study by Congress in the Wilderness Act of 1964 and subsequent legislation. Wilderness Plans are prepared by the Denver Service Center, and must be supplemented by Environmental Statements.

Land and Water Rights Acquisition Schedules establish priorities for acquisition of land and water rights (including inholdings) that have been identified in the general development, land classification, and land acquisition sections of the Master Plan. Land and Water Rights Acquisition Schedules are established by Regional Offices in compliance with the authorizing legislation and expected appropriations.

An **Interpretive Plan** describes the methods for accomplishing the proposals for interpretation and visitor orientation in the Master Plan. It is prepared by the Denver Service Center, with input from the interpretive media specialists at the Harpers Ferry Center.

The **Development Concept Plan,** prepared by the Denver Service Center or Regional Office, is a schematic representation of a developed area, showing circulation, allocation of space, and utilities networks. Sketches may be included to illustrate design concepts and relationships for specific types of facilities. The Development Concept Plan includes a supporting narrative describing the several development elements proposed, their function and scope, and their relation to the site.

An Environmental Statement and observance of Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 are basic requirements in preparing a Development Concept Plan, to ensure a timely and meaningful consideration of the suitability of the resource, as well as all reasonable development alternatives and their impacts.

The Development Concept Plan does not consider the proposed development in isolation, but as part of *all* development within a park area. Engineering design capacities for each facility within a developed area and the relationship of a developed area to others within the park allow the planner to estimate relative capacities and therefore provide for proper visitor distribution.

A **Concession Management Plan** normally prepared by the Regional Office is based on the Master Plan estimate of visitor services demands and should define the total, long-range concessioner-operated facilities and programs. It provides the basis for year-to-year contract renewals, as well as specific concession prospectuses.

Programming Action Plans – The programming of Action Plans is performed in a number of ways, depending on the nature of the plan.

Some, such as Legislative Support Data, Wilderness Plans, and Land and Water Acquisition Schedules, must be programmed to comply with legislative schedules and requirements. Action Plans that establish the operational requirements needed to implement Master Plan concepts should be programmed *as soon as possible* after concurrence in the Master Plan concepts. The following sequence is preferred:

Resource Management Plans, recommended research study proposals, and professional service proposals;

An Interpretive Plan;

Concession Management Plans; and

Development Concept Plans.

It should be noted that for small and non-complex areas, the Master Plan, Interpretive Plan, and Development Concept Plan, and their accompanying Environmental Statements should be programmed concurrently. For major areas, no Interpretive Plan will be prepared for the park as a whole. Rather, overall interpretive concepts will be part of the Master Plan, and Interpretive Plans and Development Concept Plans for specific developed areas should be programmed concurrently.

Once these steps have been completed and approved, Comprehensive Designs are programmed and the construction drawings prepared. Most development-related Action Plans and Design Plans require at least 3 years of preparation before construction begins:

First year – Interpretive Plan and Development Concept Plan

Second year – Comprehensive Designs

Third year – Construction Drawings

It should be emphasized that much more than a construction program must result from *comprehensive* planning. In fact, park planning, by the very nature of the resource it treats, should be characterized by its paucity of development proposals. Hence, park plans also provide guidance for resource management, historic preservation, visitor-use programs, public and congressional relations, publications and educational services, land acquisition, and all other facets of park operations.

Design

Design, the second phase in the process, involves architects, engineers, interpretive designers, landscape architects, and other professionals who develop comprehensive designs, construction drawings and specifications, and other materials necessary for the development of the facility. Development/Study Package Proposals are prepared for each operating unit that is part of the Service's construction program.

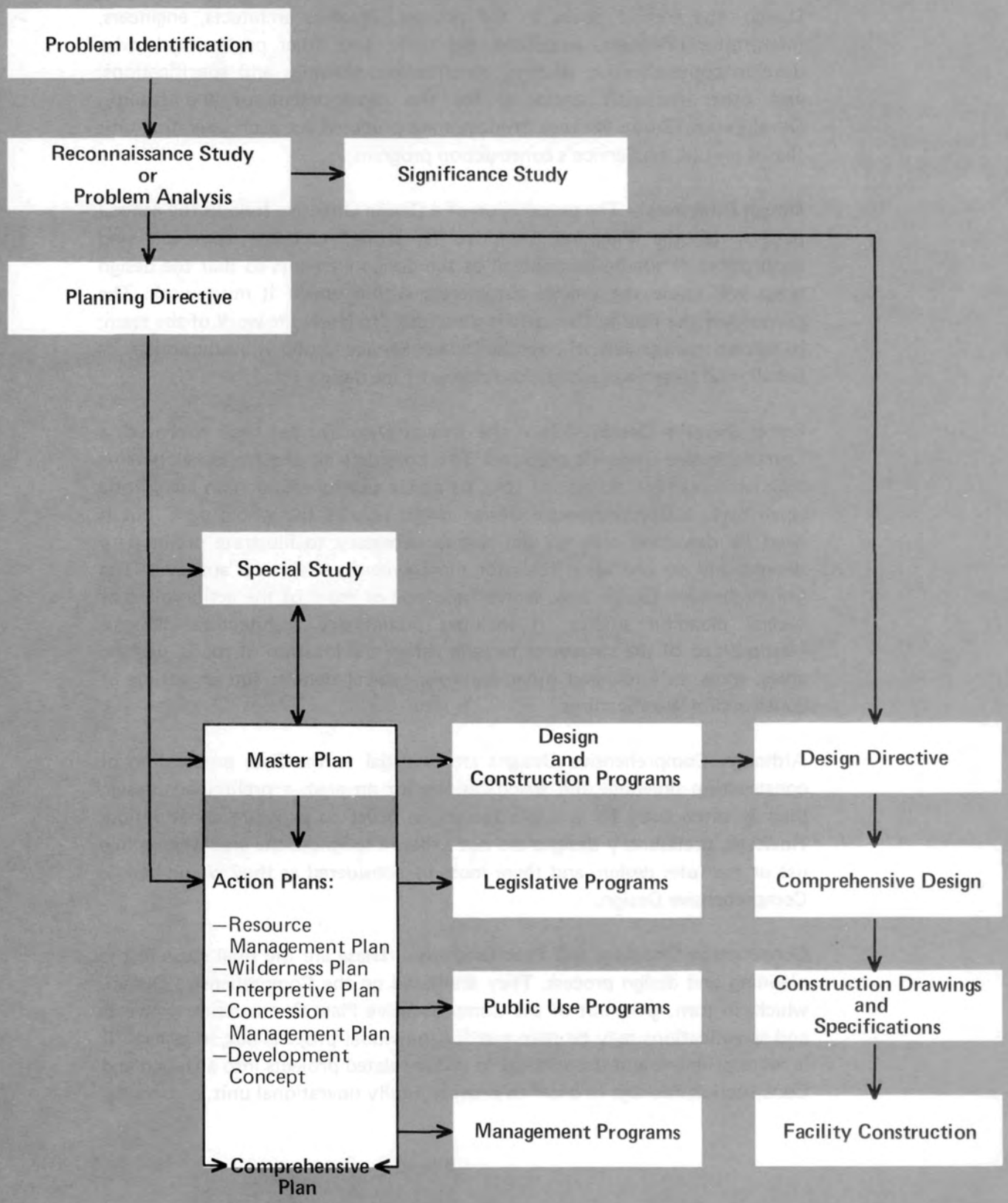
Design Directives – The preparation of a Design Directive follows the general pattern of the Planning Directive in scope, content, approval, and application. It should describe all of the design elements so that the design team will know the precise parameters within which it must work. The purpose of the Design Directive is threefold: to guide the work of the team; to inform management of how the Denver Service Center will function on its behalf; and to serve as a basis for reviews of the design.

Comprehensive Design – Once the Design Directive has been approved, a Comprehensive Design is prepared. This considers all physical developments planned for a park developed area, or usable portion of such an area. For a small park, a Comprehensive Design might involve the whole park, but it need be described only to the degree necessary to illustrate preliminary designs and to provide a basis for management review and approval. The Comprehensive Design may evolve from one or more of the action plans or special planning studies. It includes preliminary architectural designs; relationships of the structures to each other; the location of roads, parking areas, trails, utilities, and other features; typical details; and an outline of construction specifications.

Although Comprehensive Designs are essential to the final preparation of construction drawings and specifications for an area, a preliminary design plan is often used for a single facility in order to expedite construction. However, preliminary designs are not a reason to ignore the area-wide public use or the total design, and these must be considered as they would be in a Comprehensive Design.

Construction Drawings and Specifications – These are the final steps in the planning and design process. They are based on the Comprehensive Design, which, in turn, grew out of the Comprehensive Plan. Construction drawings and specifications may be prepared for individual projects but, in general, it is more efficient and economical to group related projects into a Design and Construction Package in order to provide a fully operational unit.

planning and design process



Reviews

The Planning and Design review process is a series of working and formal reviews coordinated and scheduled by the Manager of the Denver Service Center.

The **Planning and Design Coordinating Committee** is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the end product meets management requirements and the high standards of the National Park Service.

The Regional Director of the Region in which the project is located, and the Managers of the Denver Service Center and the Harpers Ferry Center serve on this committee, along with planning and design consultants. The Manager of the Denver Service Center serves as chairman and is responsible for preparing agendas and coordinating all aspects of the meetings. The committee's principal purposes are to coordinate planning and design activities of the Denver Service Center, the Harpers Ferry Center, and the Regional Offices; evaluate and review all planning and design; provide a forum at which the various stages of the planning and design process can be presented to management for its review and approval; and review the Environmental Statements related to each project.

Most projects will reach the Planning and Design Coordinating Committee in final working-draft form, ready to go to the Regional Directors for consideration and approval. In some instances, however, it may be desirable to request the committee to review a project at some preliminary stage. Plans will be presented by the person most responsible for their preparation.

Approval of all reports, directives, Master Plans, Action Plans, Comprehensive Plans and Designs, and draft Environmental Statements that comprise the planning and design process is the responsibility of the Regional Directors. The only exception is that the Manager of the Denver Service Center approves construction drawings and specifications in cases where they are consistent with the Comprehensive Design previously approved by the Regional Director. Similarly, significant plans, produced by Regional Offices, park personnel, consulting architects and engineers, and other Federal agencies for the National Park Service, must follow this review and approval procedure and be recommended by the park superintendent and the Manager of the Denver Service Center, and approved by the Regional Director.

September 1973

Denver Service Center

National Park Service

United States Department of the Interior

Sample Format - Notice of Intent
(Adapt for either letter and/or news release)

_____
(Date)

_____
_____
_____
(Name, address)

Dear_____
(Name)

This announcement is to provide public information that the National Park Service will prepare a draft environmental statement on the following action:

_____
(Official project or plan name)

_____
(Location, address of unit of National Park System)

_____
(Purpose of Project or plan)

If you or your organization needs additional information or wishes to provide information for consideration during preparation of the statement, please advise the Regional Director, National Park Service, 655 Parfet, Lakewood, Colorado. Telephone inquiries should go to the Environmental Coordinator of this office, telephone 303-234-4942.

Sincerely yours,

_____
(Regional Director)

(Optional - News release enclosed)

Sample Format - Notice of Negative Declaration
(Adapt for either letter and/or news release)

_____
(Date)

_____
_____
_____
(Name, address)

Dear_____
(Name)

After making an environmental review of _____
(Name of project or plan)
_____, the National Park Service has decided not to prepare an environmental statement.

An environmental assessment and review is on file and available for inspection at the Regional office, National Park Service, 655 Parfet, Lakewood, Colorado, upon request. The assessment considers the nature of the resource(s), available alternatives, their impacts, mitigating values, adverse effects, a brief description of the alternative selected as the proposed action, and any additional considerations providing a basis for the conclusion that an environmental statement is not needed.

The National Park Service will proceed with the (Project or plan).

_____
(Regional Director)

News release enclosed)

DSC 2/27/74

Review History

Unit of the National Park System _____

☐ Environmental Assessment ☐ Master Plan

☐ Draft Environmental Statement ☐ Development Concept Plan Area _____

☐ Final Environmental Statement ☐ Other _____

Prepared by: Name _____ Date

Title _____

Office _____ _____

Service Center:	Name	
Team Captain	_____	_____
Team Manager	_____	_____
Historic Preservation	_____	_____
Chief, Division of Planning	_____	_____
Scientist	_____	_____
Environmental Specialist	_____	_____

Regional Review:
(Title)

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Transmitted to WASO by Region: _____

Publication services were provided by the graphics and editorial staffs of the Denver Service Center, July 29, 1974. NPS 819

United States Department of the Interior / National Park Service