UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

RECORD OF DECISION

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN/WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore

Wisconsin

The Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS) has prepared this Record of Decision (ROD) on the *Final General Management Plan/Wilderness Management Plan/Environmental Statement* for Apostle Islands National Lakeshore in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), its implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and NPS Director's Order 12, "Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis and Decision-Making and accompanying Handbook." This Record of Decision includes a description of the background of the project, a statement of the decision made, synopses of other alternatives considered, the basis for the decision, findings on impairment of park resources and values, a description of the environmentally preferable alternative, a listing of measures to minimize environmental harm, and an overview of public and agency involvement in the decision-making process.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the general management/wilderness management plan is to provide a comprehensive direction for resource preservation and visitor use, direction for management of the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness, including its resources and visitors, and a basic foundation for decision making for the park for the next 15 to 20 years. The plan prescribes the resource conditions and visitor experiences that are to be achieved and maintained in the park over time. The clarification of what must be achieved according to law and policy is based on review of the park's purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, and special mandates.

DECISION (SELECTED ACTION)

The National Park Service has selected alternative 2, the preferred alternative, as described in the *Final General Management Plan/Wilderness Management Plan/Environmental Statement* issued in May 2011. Under the selected action the park's current management direction will continue with some minor changes to increase the opportunities for more people to have an island experience. Preservation of natural and cultural resources will remain a top priority. The current mix of recreational activities will stay the same and the visitor experience in most of the park will stay largely as it is, and management of the wilderness area will continue largely the way it is. The Raspberry Island light station will continue to be the focal point for cultural resource interpretation and its cultural landscape would be rehabilitated consistent with plans developed but never implemented prior to the light station restoration. Wilderness management will remain consistent with current direction, with no net change in campsite numbers or trail miles, although there could be relocations. The National Park Service will continue to have visitor centers at Bayfield, Little Sand

Bay, Stockton Island, and the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center. The National Park Service will continue to be a leader in sustainable practices at Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

Key changes in the selected action include:

- Two or more light stations will be restored or rehabilitated, similar to the Raspberry Island light station, and the rest will continue to be preserved at current levels.
- If feasible, part of the Long Island light station will be rehabilitated for park staff housing to better protect and interpret the resources of Long Island.
- If life estates on Sand or Rocky Island naturally expire within the life of this plan, historically significant structures will be preserved and interpreted.
- If feasible, additional transportation opportunities will be sought to encourage visitors to come to some of the inner islands, such as Basswood or Sand islands; some additional visitor facilities will be developed on these islands, including day use areas, new trails, and campsites.
- Most of the Stockton Island campground will be relocated to Presque Isle; however, a few campsites will be maintained on the north end of the current campground.
- There will be no change in the number of public docks in the park, but some docks will be relocated, improved, or expanded.
- The Bayfield visitor center will be relocated to a new location closer to the water to improve contact with visitors and to be co-located, if possible, with the park's primary maintenance and an operations center; the park headquarters will remain in the old Bayfield County Courthouse.
- The Little Sand Bay Visitor Center, currently in poor condition and not cost-effective to renovate, will be replaced with a smaller, more sustainable structure that offers the same level of visitor services as today and honors the site's rich history. The restored fishing boat "Twilite" will be a featured exhibit.
- A new ranger station and accessible beach ramp will be developed at Meyers Beach.

Mitigating Measures/Monitoring

A variety of mitigation measures will be employed as part of the implementation of the selected alternative to avoid or minimize harm to park natural and cultural resources, wilderness, and visitor experiences. Measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm were listed in the *Final General Management Plan/Wilderness Management Plan/Environmental Statement*. These measures include best management practices for construction, conservation measures, and other known techniques from past and present work in and around the park. The mitigative measures cover air quality, soundscapes, soils, water resources (including wetlands and floodplains), vegetation, nonnative plant species, wildlife, threatened and endangered species and species of concern, hazardous materials, scenic resources, cultural resources, and visitor safety and experiences. One of the measures includes:

- To help reduce the potential for impacts, site-specific studies of longshore sand transport will be undertaken before work would commence on building or improving boat docks. Any activities involving dredging or the placement of fill material below the ordinary high water line of Lake Superior will comply with requirements of §401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act and with other applicable state permit programs (e.g., Great Lakes Submerged Lands Act). Impacts from any potential fill or dredge activities will be assessed further, and specific mitigative measures would be identified as part of the development of a specific design and further NEPA compliance that would be prepared in conjunction with the permit process.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Three other alternatives for managing Apostle Islands National Lakeshore were evaluated in the draft and final environmental impact statements.

Alternative 1, the **no-action alternative**, describes a continuation of existing management at the park and provides a baseline for evaluating the changes and impacts of the other alternatives — the National Park Service would continue to manage Apostle Islands National Lakeshore as it has been managed since the 1989 general management plan was approved and the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness was designated in 2004. Light stations would continue to be preserved at current levels, without an effort to rehabilitate additional lights stations to the same level as the Raspberry Island light station. Decisions on life estates would continue to be made on a case-by-case basis. Visitor uses and facilities at both islands and the mainland would stay at current levels. The visitor centers in both Bayfield and Little Sand Bay would not be improved and the National Park Service would continue to pay high rental and utility fees at its current inefficient operational c enter.

Alternative 3 would focus on providing primitive, lake-oriented recreation and education opportunities, with some new and different opportunities provided. Focus would continue on maintaining and interpreting the restored Raspberry Island light station; part of the Long Island light station would be rehabilitated for park staff housing, if feasible, to better protect and interpret the resources of Long Island. A few new visitor facilities would be provided on Sand, Basswood, and Oak islands including interpretive trails and new group campsites, but there would be no new day-use facilities. The Stockton Island campground would be relocated to Presque Isle. Existing transportation opportunities would be maintained; no new ones would be developed. There would be no major change in the public docks with the exception of improvements to the Michigan Island dock. The park headquarters would remain in the Old Bayfield County Courthouse. The Bayfield visitor center would be expanded in the old courthouse and serve as the park's primary visitor contact facility. The Little Sand Bay Visitor Center would be replaced with a kiosk. A new ranger station would be built at Meyers Beach. A new park operational facility would be built at a location to be determined.

Under **alternative 4**, the emphasis would be on providing a greater variety of structured recreation opportunities for visitors. More visitor facilities would be provided in island nonwilderness areas, and mainland visitor opportunities would be expanded. Focus would continue on maintaining and interpreting the restored Raspberry Island light station; if feasible, part of the Long Island light station would be rehabilitated for park staff housing to better protect and interpret the resources of Long Island. A few new visitor facilities would be provided on Sand, Basswood, and Oak islands including interpretive trails and new group campsites, but no new day-use facilities would be developed. Most of the Stockton Island campground would be relocated to Presque Isle, except for a few campsites on the north end that would not be relocated. Existing transportation opportunities would be maintained; no new ones would be developed. Some docks, including the Michigan Island dock, would be improved or expanded for boaters; more docks possibly could be installed. The park headquarters would remain at the Old Bayfield County Courthouse and a new visitor center would be built in a new location closer to the water in Bayfield. The Little Sand Bay Visitor Center would be replaced with a new visitor contact station with improved services. A new ranger/visitor contact station and accessible beach ramp would be built at Meyers Beach, and a new park operations facility would be built at a location to be determined.

BASIS FOR DECISION

In reaching its decision to select the preferred alternative, the National Park Service considered the purposes for which Apostle Islands National Lakeshore was established, and other laws and policies that apply to the management of the park and the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness, including the Wilderness Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and NPS *Management Policies 2006*. The National Park Service also carefully considered public comments received during the planning process.

The following criteria were used in making the decision to select the preferred alternative (alternative 2). The alternatives were evaluated based on how well they:

- preserved natural resources, including protection of vegetation/soils, wildlife, and coastal processes
- protected wilderness values
- preserved cultural resources, including the light stations, other historic structures/properties, archeological and Native American ethnographic resources
- told the stories of the people and resources of the Apostle Islands
- provided appropriate and desirable opportunities for recreation
- provided for efficiency in park operations, including operational functionality, administrative functionality, emergency responsiveness, and sustainability

The National Park Service believes that alternative 2 best supports the park's purposes and provides the greatest advantages of all the alternatives considered. Based on the environmental impact analysis, this alternative provides a high degree of natural, cultural, and wilderness protection while also providing improved opportunities for visitors. Alternative 2 provides the greatest advantages for protection of coastal processes, and protection of light stations, as well as improving operational functionality and improving sustainability of park operations. Alternative 2 also provided the highest advantage for administrative functionality, consolidating facilities and NPS staff in Bayfield.

FINDINGS ON IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES AND VALUES

The NPS findings on impairment of park resources and values are in the attached appendix to this Record of Decision.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferable alternative is defined as "the alternative that will promote national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act." Section 101 states that "it is the continuing responsibility of the federal government to

1. fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;

2. assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;

3. attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;

4. preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage; and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and a variety of individual choices;

5. achieve a balance between population and resource use which would permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and

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

Three of the above criteria did not make a difference in determining the environmentally preferable alternative. Criterion 1 is satisfied by all the alternatives: Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is already a national park unit, and as a trustee of this area the National Park Service would continue to fulfill its responsibilities to protect this area for future generations. The difference between the alternatives in this regard is not appreciable. Likewise, all of the alternatives being considered are intended to meet criterion 2: provide for all Americans a safe experience in a visually pleasing environment. Criterion 6 was determined to be not applicable to this plan.

When considering the remaining criteria, the environmentally preferable alternative is alternative 2, the NPS preferred alternative for Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. This alternative best satisfies the national environmental goals embodied in goals 3, 4, and 5—it provides a high level of protection of natural and cultural resources while concurrently providing for a wide range of neutral and beneficial uses of the environment. The preferred alternative maintains an environment that supports a diversity and variety of individual choices, and it integrates resource protection with an appropriate range of visitor uses and understanding.

The preferred alternative would provide more resource protection than the no-action alternative—e.g., unlike alternative 1, alternative 2 would restore/rehabilitate two light stations, relocate most of the Stockton Island campground out of an environmentally sensitive area, and address resource concerns related to the Michigan Island dock. In addition, the preferred alternative would provide substantially more opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of the park than the no-action alternative, and thus better fulfills criteria 3, 4, and 5.

Alternative 3 would provide about the same level of resource protection as alternative 2, but it would not provide as many opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of the park—e.g., not including the visitor center at the Bayfield waterfront, removing the Oak Island group campsite, not providing a universally accessible ramp at Meyers Beach, and not providing new day use areas on the islands and at Little Sand Bay would result in fewer opportunities for the public to enjoy the park and fewer individual choices compared to alternative 2. Thus, alternative 3 would not fulfill criteria 3, 4, and 5 as well as alternative 2.

Alternative 4 would also provide about the same level of resource protection as alternative 2, and would provide for more visitor use opportunities, particularly on the mainland. But alternative 4 would also have a higher potential for more impacts to natural resources in comparison with the preferred alternative—providing more docks on the islands and increasing the number of campsites would increase both opportunities for visitor use and the potential for resource impacts compared to alternative 2. Thus, alternative 4 would not satisfy criterion 3 (attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation) as well as the preferred alternative satisfies this criterion.

PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement was vitally important throughout the planning process. The National Park Service provided numerous opportunities for the public to participate in the development of the general management plan / wilderness management plan. The notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement was published in the *Federal Register* on September 3, 2004. A subsequent notice of intent appeared in the *Federal Register* on May 31, 2005, indicating that the requirements of a wilderness management plan would be incorporated into the general management plan. The public scoping comment period ran from September 3 through December 8, 2004. The planning team primarily used newsletters, press releases, the Internet, and meetings to solicit public comments and suggestions for the plan. During the course of the planning process two newsletters were sent to the agencies, organizations, and individuals on the park's mailing list, which eventually consisted of approximately 355 names. The park's Internet web site also contained information on the plan, which was updated on a regular basis. Planning documents were available for download from the park's web site and the NPS' Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) web site.

The planning team held meetings with members of the public and organizations during the course of the planning process. Five public open houses were held in the Wisconsin municipalities of Bayfield, Ashland, and Madison, and in St. Paul and Duluth, Minnesota, during the scoping period in October 2004. Eight meetings were held to discuss options for future management of the park during August 2006 at the visitor center on Presque Isle on Stockton Island and in Red Cliff, Bayfield, Odanah, Ashland, and Madison, Wisconsin, as well as in Bloomington and Hermantown, Minnesota.

A notice of availability of the draft plan was published in the *Federal Register* on September 2, 2009. Approximately 250 copies of the draft were distributed to government agencies, public interest groups, businesses, media, local libraries, and individuals. The document was also posted on the NPS planning web site for review. The public comment period ran from August 17 to November 16, 2009. Eight public meetings were held in August and September to solicit public input. Public open houses were held in Red Cliff, Bayfield, Superior, Twin Cities, Madison, Stockton Island (in the park), Odanah, and Ashland.

After the draft plan was published, NPS staff held meetings with the Bayfield city council, the mayor of the City of Bayfield, the superintendent of the Bayfield school district, the chair of the Town of Russell, and the Bayfield Heritage Association. These meetings were informational in nature and intended to answer questions from the organizations.

The planning team received 71 letters and 91 e-mail messages (although some e-mails were duplicates of letters received) during the comment period. Of the 162 comments received, 4 were from federal agencies, 3 were from state agencies, 2 were from local governments, and 11 were from special interest groups. All of the other comments were from individuals and businesses. Comments were received from across the country, but most came from the Midwest and specifically Wisconsin.

Most comments on the draft plan focused on specific issue(s) rather than expressing opinions about the preferred alternative. Fourteen substantive issues were raised during the public comment period.

Members of the planning team also consulted with agencies, organizations, and tribal governments during the planning process. Informal section 7 consultations on threatened and endangered species were held with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Green Bay office. Informal consultations also occurred with the Wisconsin Coastal Management Council regarding consistency of the preferred alternative with the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program.

On October 27, 2004, the National Park Service sent a letter to the Wisconsin state historic preservation office and to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation presenting opportunities to participate in the planning process. Throughout the planning process, each office was informed of opportunities to attend agency and public meetings and afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the newsletters. These officials also received a copy of the draft plan for review and comment.

NPS staff meet from time to time with representatives of federal and state agencies and regional and local governments (as appropriate) on topics of mutual interest and concern, such as operating the park, preserving its resources, and making it safe and enjoyable for visitors. These entities were informed of the commencement of the general management plan / wilderness management plan, and discussion topics and planning issues were welcomed, but no meetings solely focused on the plan were held with these entities. The same can be said about any special interest groups whose interests include the park or aspects of the park.

Tribal interests and concerns were fully considered in the planning process and in the development of alternatives in the plan. The following federally recognized American Indian tribes were invited by letters, dated October 27, 2004, and August 23, 2006, to meet for government-to-government American Indian consultations about the general management plan / wilderness management plan:

- Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Wisconsin
- Bay Mills [Chippewa/Ojibwe] Indian Community, Michigan
- Fond du Lac Chippewa Tribe, Minnesota
- Keweenaw Bay Indian Community of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa/Ojibwe Indians, Michigan
- Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Tribe, Wisconsin
- Lac Du Flambeau Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa/Ojibwe Indians, Wisconsin
- Lac Vieux Desert Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa/Ojibwe Indians, Michigan
- Mille Lacs Ojibwe Tribe, Minnesota
- Red Cliff Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Wisconsin
- Sokogon Chippewa Community, Wisconsin

NPS staff subsequently held two tribal consultation meetings after the draft plan was published with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Red Cliff Band on November 23, 2009, and December 14, 2009.

CONCLUSION

The National Park Service has selected the preferred alternative (alternative 2) as its general management plan / wilderness management plan for Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. Among the alternatives considered, this alternative best protects the park's cultural, natural and wilderness resources while also providing a range of quality visitor experiences, meets NPS goals for managing the park, and meets national environmental policy goals. As described in the "Mitigation" section of the plan, all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the selected alternative have been adopted. As noted in the accompanying attachment, there would be no impairment of the park's resources or values. After a review of these effects, the alternative selected for implementation will not impair park resources or values and will not violate the NPS Organic Act.

Approved:

Michael T. Reynolds _____ **Date:** 6/28/11

Michael T. Reynolds
Regional Director
Midwest Region, National Park Service

FINDINGS ON IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES AND VALUES

BACKGROUND

National Park Service *Management Policies, 2006* require analysis of potential effects to determine whether or not actions would impair park resources. The fundamental purpose of the national park system, established by the Organic Act and reaffirmed by the General Authorities Act, as amended, begins with a mandate to conserve park resources and values. NPS managers must always seek ways to avoid, or to minimize to the greatest degree practicable, adversely impacting park resources and values.

However, the laws do give the National Park Service the management discretion to allow impacts to park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purposes of a park, as long as the impact does not constitute impairment of the affected resources and values. Although Congress has given the National Park Service the management discretion to allow certain impacts within park, that discretion is limited by the statutory requirement that the National Park Service must leave park resources and values unimpaired, unless a particular law directly and specifically provides otherwise. The prohibited impairment is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible NPS manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of these resources or values. An impact to any park resource or value may, but does not necessarily, constitute an impairment, but an impact would be more likely to constitute an impairment when there is a major or severe adverse effect upon a resource or value whose conservation is:

- necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park;
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park; or
- identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents.

An impact would be less likely to constitute an impairment if it is an unavoidable result of an action necessary to pursue or restore the integrity of park resources or values and it cannot be further mitigated.

The park resources and values that are subject to the no-impairment standard include:

- the park's scenery, natural and historic objects, and wildlife, and the processes and conditions that sustain them, including, to the extent present in the park: the ecological, biological, and physical processes that created the park and continue to act upon it; scenic features; natural visibility, both in daytime and at night; natural landscapes; natural soundscapes and smells; water and air resources; soils; geological resources; paleontological resources; archeological resources; cultural landscapes; ethnographic resources; historic and prehistoric sites, structures, and objects; museum collections; and native plants and animals;
- appropriate opportunities to experience enjoyment of the above resources, to the extent that can be done without impairing them;
- the park's role in contributing to the national dignity, the high public value and integrity, and the superlative environmental quality of the national park system, and the benefit and inspiration provided to the American people by the national park system; and
- any additional attributes encompassed by the specific values and purposes for which the park was established.

Impairment may result from NPS activities in managing the park, visitor activities, or activities undertaken by concessioners, contractors, and others operating in the park. The NPS's threshold

for considering whether there could be an impairment is based on whether an action would have major (or significant) effects.

IMPAIRMENT FINDINGS

Impairment findings are not necessary for visitor use and experience, socioeconomics, public health and safety, environmental justice, land use, and park operations, because impairment findings relates back to park resources and values, and these impact areas are not generally considered park resources or values according to the Organic Act, and cannot be impaired in the same way that an action can impair park resources and values. After dismissing the above topics, topics remaining to be evaluated for impairment include soils, geologic and coastal processes, surface water quality, wetlands, floodplains, terrestrial vegetation, terrestrial wildlife, selected state and federal threatened and endangered species (i.e., piping plover and gray wolf), soundscape, archeological resources, historic structures and buildings, cultural landscapes, ethnographic resources, and wilderness resources and values.

Soils

Soils are an important resource of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, affecting where native vegetative communities occur, and affecting the area's productivity, drainage patterns, erosion, and structural support for facilities such as trails in the park. Soils generally take thousands of years to develop. Soil degradation can affect plants and wildlife, as well as the visitor experience. Under the preferred alternative most of the park's soils would not be affected by the actions in the alternative. Some soils would be eroded and lost, and soil properties would be altered due to construction of new facilities on the islands and mainland, affecting no more than about 25 acres. Increased visitor use in localized areas on some popular islands, such as Basswood and Sand, would also affect a relatively small amount of soil. On the other hand, the establishment and monitoring of user capacity indicators and standards in the preferred alternative should help reduce the expansion of campsites and prevent soil erosion throughout the islands. Because of the slight adverse impacts and the overarching beneficial effects compared to the no-action alternative, the preferred alternative would not result in impairment.

Geological and Coastal Processes

Geologic and coastal processes are fundamental elements of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. They are the natural forces of water and wind that have largely shaped the park over time, and continue to shape the park's coastal features, including its cliffs and sandscapes. The preferred alternative would not affect most geologic and coastal processes operating in the park. Some erosion of the park's sandscapes and shorelines due to people trampling vegetative cover on beaches and sandspits and climbing up and down lake banks would occur in a few popular, localized areas. Existing boat docks also would continue to affect coastal processes, affecting the movement of sand along the coastline in relatively small, localized areas. However, the preferred alternative also would have some slight beneficial impacts in localized areas: the relocation of most of the Stockton campground and the rehabilitation of several docks would help reduce visitor and dock impacts on several island shorelines and sandscapes compared to the no-action alternative. With these beneficial impacts, and just a few relatively low level adverse impacts on coastal processes, the preferred alternative would not result in impairment.

Surface Water

Lake Superior's clean waters are one of the park's fundamental resources. The lake's clean water supports the park's natural ecosystems and is important for recreational activities, including fishing,

boating, swimming, wading, and kayaking. The preferred alternative would generally not affect the park's surface water quality. As in alternative 1, some low-level, isolated water quality impacts would occur due to visitor use. Some low-level, localized impacts also would occur due to the rehabilitation of docks. The level of these impacts would not constitute an impairment of park resources and values.

Wetlands

The park's wetlands are an important ecosystem. They contain unique flora and fauna species and add a considerable amount of ecological diversity to the park. Alternative 2 would not affect the vast majority of the park's wetlands. As in the no-action alternative, some adverse localized impacts would occur due to people occasionally walking through the wetlands. Because there would be only slight adverse impacts, the preferred alternative would not result in impairment.

Floodplains

The park has only a few streams with floodplains. The preferred alternative would not affect these floodplains, except for a few people walking into the floodplains. These isolated, minimal impacts would not result in impairment.

Terrestrial Vegetation

One of the park's primary natural resources is its vegetative communities. Rare plant communities, such as dune/lagoon complexes, old-growth stands, and cliff communities, are one of the fundamental resources of the park. Healthy, native terrestrial vegetation is necessary to fulfill the purposes for which the park was established and is key to the natural integrity and enjoyment of the park. The vast majority of the park's vegetation would not be affected by the preferred alternative. Several adverse impacts would occur in localized areas. Some vegetation would be lost or altered due to new developments, but no more than about 25 acres of vegetation would be affected. Increased visitation on some islands would result in the disturbance of vegetation. As in all of the alternatives, there would be the potential for the introduction and spread of nonnative invasive species in the park. But none of these impacts would likely affect the integrity, distribution, or presence of native plant communities in the park. Beneficial impacts would occur in several localized areas in the preferred alternative due to vegetation restoration actions, the application of user capacity indicators and standards, and increased NPS presence on Long Island and Meyers Beach. With these beneficial impacts, and just a few relatively low-level adverse impacts on vegetation, the preferred alternative would not result in impairment.

Terrestrial Wildlife

Like vegetation, wildlife is one of the park's primary natural resources. Healthy, native terrestrial wildlife is necessary to fulfill the purposes for which the park was established and is key to the natural integrity and enjoyment of the park. Important bird habitat, including resting areas for migratory birds and nesting areas for summer residents including colonial birds, is a fundamental resource of the park. Most wildlife in the park would not change as a result of the actions in the preferred alternative. No actions would affect areas known to be important for breeding, nesting, foraging, or key migration routes. No actions would interfere with feeding, reproduction, or other activities necessary for the survival of wildlife species. Some adverse impacts to individuals would occur in a few localized areas. Approximately 25 acres of wildlife habitat would be lost or altered, with some wildlife being displaced from the areas. Increased visitation on several islands would have about the same effect as the no-action alternative with regard to changes in wildlife behavior (e.g., some animals would be attracted by visitors feeding them or areas where there is food and garbage). Some animals also would continue to occasionally be injured or killed by motor vehicles in

the mainland unit. On the other hand, the preferred alternative would have several beneficial effects in localized areas due to habitat restoration efforts, increased NPS presence at Meyers Beach and Long Island, and the relocation of most of the Stockton Island campsites out of key bear habitat. With these beneficial impacts, and just a few relatively slight adverse impacts on wildlife, the preferred alternative would not result in impairment.

Threatened and Endangered Species (Piping Plover and Timber Wolf)

The Endangered Species Act requires federal agencies to ensure that their activities would not jeopardize existence of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat of such species. Designated critical habitat for piping plovers is one of the important resources of the park. The preferred alternative may affect, but would not be likely to adversely affect the park's piping plover and wolf populations. No new actions would occur in the preferred alternative that would adversely affect piping plovers in the park. As in all of the alternatives, visitor use on the island beaches would continue to have the potential to disturb plovers. But with increased NPS presence on Long Island and the continuation of other protection measures (e.g., temporary closures of nesting sites), adverse impacts would be expected to be slight. No actions in the preferred alternative would affect the area's overall wolf population and habitat. As in all of the alternatives, rare encounters between wolves and people could affect the behavior of a few wolves in the area. None of these low-level, localized impacts would result in impairment.

Natural Soundscape

The Apostle Islands' natural soundscape (sometimes call "natural quiet") is one of the resources that make this park a special place. The natural soundscape is an important element affecting opportunities for solitude, which in turn affects the park's wilderness values and the "island experience" — two fundamental values of the park. Natural soundscapes of the park are also key elements in providing opportunities for recreational use and enjoyment of the park and in protecting the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness — two of the purposes of the park. Under the preferred alternative nearly all of the park would remain relatively quiet. Some localized adverse noise impacts would occur in a few isolated areas due to the construction and use of new facilities on the islands and mainland. As in all of the alternatives, some localized impacts also would occur in a few localized areas, particularly in developed areas of the mainland and islands, due to visitor use and NPS maintenance and management activities. However, none of these slight, localized impacts would result in impairment.

Wilderness Character

About80% of the land area of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is congressionally designated wilderness. The park's wilderness character consists of four principal qualities: natural; undeveloped; untrammeled; and outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. The park's wilderness values are one of the fundamental values of the park, and the protection of wilderness character is one of the purposes of the park. The preferred alternative would not affect most of the park's wilderness area: in most of the wilderness area, visitors would be able to find outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation in what most people would perceive to be a natural landscape. A few slight adverse impacts to the four wilderness character qualities would occur in this alternative, as in all of the alternatives, due to the continuing requirement to obtain a permit to camp in wilderness and clustering of campsites, which would affect some visitors' perception of solitude. On the other hand, the preferred alternative would have a slight beneficial impact due to the relocation of the Oak Island group campsite out of the wilderness area. The slight adverse impacts of the preferred alternative would not constitute impairment.

Archeological Resources

The preservation and protection of the park's outstanding collection of resources, including archeological resources, is one of the purposes of Apostle Island National Lakeshore. Sixty-six recorded prehistoric and historic sites are known in the park and are a fundamental resource of the park. These resources include American Indian hunting and fishing camps, farmsteads, logging camps, fish camps, and historic shipwrecks. Some of the actions in the preferred alternative (e.g., the development or relocation of campsites, construction of new day-use areas, trails and other NPS facilities) have the potential to affect archeological resources because of ground disturbance.

Archeological resources are key to the cultural integrity of the park. In consultation with the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Officer and affiliated tribes, the National Park Service would ensure that archeological assessments and surveys are carried out for all areas of potential effect proposed for development. The National Park Service would also ensure that archeological resources unexpectedly discovered during construction are avoided and preserved in situ to the greatest extent possible, or if that is not possible the resources would be adequately mitigated by data recovery or other means. However, because no known archeological sites would be disturbed by actions proposed by the preferred alternative, and the National Park Service would follow the above measures to avoid or adequately mitigate impacts to discovered sites, there would be no impairment as a result of implementation of the preferred alternative.

Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes

The preservation and protection of the park's outstanding collection of resources, including historic structures and cultural landscapes, is one of the purposes of Apostle Island National Lakeshore. One hundred and fifty-eight of the park's historic structures are listed in the List of Classified Structures (LCS) and 17 of these (including a renowned array of light stations) are also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the iconic lighthouses, other significant historic sites and structures include those associated with 19th century brownstone quarries, farmsteads, commercial fishing and logging camps, and tourism and recreation development during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of the historic sites and structures also have associated cultural landscapes. Many of these resources are fundamental resources of the park.

Actions proposed by the preferred alternative consist of stabilization, rehabilitation, and restoration of several of the park's light stations and other historic properties (e.g., farmsteads, fishing and logging camps, tourism and recreational sites). Associated cultural landscapes would also be preserved and partially restored in some instances. All preservation treatments would be conducted in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties,* and no actions are proposed that would adversely affect the historical integrity of significant properties or introduce incompatible new development within the viewshed of historic structures and sites.

Historic structures and cultural landscapes are key to the cultural integrity of the park. However, because no historic structures or cultural landscapes would be adversely impacted by actions proposed by the preferred alternative, and the National Park Service would follow all appropriate standards and guidelines for the treatment of these historic properties, there would be no impairment as a result of implementation of the preferred alternative.

Ethnographic Resources

The preservation and protection of the park's outstanding collection of resources, including ethnographic resources, is one of the purposes of Apostle Island National Lakeshore. The ethnographic resources associated with the Ojibwe homeland, such as ethno-botanical resources and the stories of the Ojibwe cultural connections, are a fundamental resource of the park. Although

no known ethnographic resources have been identified that could be adversely affected by actions proposed by the preferred alternative, some of the actions (e.g., the development or relocation of campsites, construction of new day-use areas, trails and other NPS facilities) have the potential to affect ethnographic resources because of ground disturbance or incompatible development and visitor use. NPS staff would continue to consult with the Ojibwe and other affiliated tribes as appropriate to identify potential ethnographic resources and to ensure that resources are not inadvertently disturbed by NPS development or proposed visitor use activities.

Ethnographic resources are key to the cultural integrity of the park. However, because no known ethnographic resources would be adversely impacted by actions proposed by the preferred alternative, and the National Park Service would continue to permit traditional tribal access and appropriate uses within the park in accordance with NPS policies and applicable laws, there would be no impairment as a result of implementation of the preferred alternative.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as guided by this analysis, good science and scholarship, advice from subject matter experts and others who have relevant knowledge and experience, and the results of public involvement activities, it is the superintendent's professional judgment that there would be no impairment of park resources and values from implementation of the preferred alternative.