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Environmental Impact Statement General Management Plan Development Concept Plan

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Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site Powell County, Montana

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION**

**Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site
Environmental Impact Statement for a General Management Plan and
Development Concept Plan**

Three alternatives, which provide for the preservation of historic resources and for visitor use, have been examined for Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site. The proposed action emphasizes management of the park as a working ranch. The rehabilitation and adaptive use of historic structures will be given priority. Consolidation of administrative, maintenance, and curatorial storage functions in the park proper will be provided, where feasible. The National Park Service (NPS) will pursue cooperative ventures and boundary expansion to protect historic scenes surrounding the park, including the acquisition of easements. While interpretation will focus primarily on the frontier, open-range cattle era (c. 1860s to 1890s), it will secondarily include conditions and events leading up to this period (for example, available grasslands, Public Domain, and so forth) and subsequent evolution of cattle ranching up to the mechanized feedlot operations of the 1930s and beyond. Initial visitor contact will include a full range of orientation, information, and interpretive services, media, and facilities. Personal service programs such as guided tours and special activities like demonstrations and costumed interpretation (as staffing levels permit) will be balanced with exhibits, audiovisuals, and other interpretive media to enhance visitor experience, awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

The environmental consequences of the proposed action and other alternatives are fully disclosed in this draft environmental impact statement. Also included are the results of public involvement and consultation/coordination that have been conducted thus far.

Address Comments to:

Superintendent
Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site
P.O. Box 790
Deer Lodge, Montana 59722

SUMMARY

The purpose of this *Environmental Impact Statement/General Management Plan/Development Concept Plan* is to define overall management strategies concerning park operations, visitor use and access, natural and cultural resource management, and general development at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site. Important resource, interpretive, management, and external use issues and alternatives to address the issues are presented along with potential environmental consequences of implementing each alternative.

In June 1988 the National Park Service purchased, in fee, 1,059.85 acres of land, including several dozen historic buildings/structures, and a cultural landscape representative of the mechanized feed lot operation of cattle ranching. The 1980 *GMP* for Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site recommended that a detailed study be conducted to determine use and improvement actions, following fee purchase. This plan answers that need.

THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A proposed action and two alternatives, including a no-action alternative, have been analyzed.

The overall intent of the proposed action is to manage the park as a working ranch, giving priority to rehabilitation and adaptive use of historic structures over new construction and consolidation of administrative, maintenance and curatorial storage functions on park lands, where feasible.

Under the proposed action, the NPS will pursue cooperative ventures to protect historic landscapes surrounding the park, including donation or acquisition through purchase of scenic easements of approximately 1,100 acres to the west of the park, in order to guarantee that existing uses of these lands are retained. The NPS will seek authorization to expand park boundaries to include these lands. In cooperation with the city of Deer Lodge, the NPS will work toward minimizing impacts from development to the east and south boundaries of the park, through the implementation of city land-use zoning. The NPS will work closely with the USDA-Forest Service and the Montana State Prison to insure that lands within the jurisdiction of these agencies, in the west middle- and background of the park, be managed in a manner that will continue to provide a quality experience for park visitors.

Cultural resource management will emphasize the preservation and use of historic structures and grounds through rehabilitation, restoration and adaptive use. Proposed uses for the 88 buildings/structures are presented in table 1. Curatorial storage

requirements will be met through construction of a 10,000 square-foot facility, on the 11-acre tract near the park's southern boundary, where the construction will have no effect on historic scenes. Acquisition of the original Warren household furnishings and records will be pursued for use in future programs interpreting the ranch's later years. The feasibility of instituting a leasing program for the east feedlot, to help interpret the mechanized feedlot operation, will be studied. Eight landscape types associated with the ranch's historic use have been identified and each will be managed to represent a specific time period of ranch history. These landscape types and their associated time periods are described more fully in the "Cultural Resource Management" section of this plan and in the park's resource management plan.

Natural resource management will support the park's primary purpose of preserving and interpreting a working ranch. To this end, gopher management, noxious weed control programs, a vegetation injury assessment, agricultural use plan, entomology studies, resource inventories, a water resource management plan scoping report, and soils analysis will all need to be completed. Pest management for the museum collection and the ranch house will take into consideration the interrelationship of the various pests and will follow the principles of integrated pest management. The NPS proposes to acquire a 35.76-acre parcel of Union Pacific Railroad land, in order to preserve a remnant of shortgrass prairie native to the Deer Lodge Valley.

The park will continue to be managed as a day-use area. Interpretation will focus on visitor awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the frontier, open-range cattle era of roughly the 1860s through the 1890s. Conditions and events prior to this time period, and subsequent evolution of cattle ranching up to the mechanized feed lot operation, will also be interpreted using the eight landscape types and associated time periods mentioned previously. Self-guiding brochures, wayside exhibits and/or uniformed or costumed park staff will help to provide visitors with a vicarious ranching experience. Interpretation of modern (1950s - 1970s) ranch operations, pioneering work in artificial insemination, selective breeding, and conservation is planned. The large first floor of the Red Barn will be adaptively rehabilitated and developed as a visitor center, where a wide range of orientation, information, and interpretive materials and services will be available, including an information lobby/desk, a 2,000 square-foot exhibit hall, a 60-seat AV theater, and a sales area for interpretive literature. This facility will help visitors to plan their visit and will provide them with a comprehensive overview so they can more fully understand, experience, and enjoy the historic ranch. Support facilities will include public rest rooms, interpretive staff offices, library, preparation room, and cooperating association office and storage area. There are long-range plans for a variety of other buildings or parts of buildings (for example the Dairy [HS 9] and the basement of the main ranch building), which are now being used for maintenance, curatorial, and other administrative purposes, to be restored, refurnished, and interpreted to further the visitors' understanding of the ranch and cattle industry.

NPS curatorial functions and USDA-Forest Service administrative offices will be moved to the facilities to be constructed on the 11-acre tract near the park's southern boundary. Under this proposal, the new visitor center and administrative offices in the adaptively rehabilitated Red Barn will be fully accessible to visitors and employees alike, including associated parking, walkways, and rest rooms. The new curatorial/USDA-Forest Service facilities will be fully accessible to employees and researchers. Interpretive media planning and production will strive for maximum accessibility to all exhibits, audiovisuals, and publications for persons with visual, hearing, learning, and physical disabilities.

Under the proposed action, the park's headquarters will remain in the city of Deer Lodge until the Red Barn is rehabilitated for adaptive use, at which time the administrative function will be moved to the barn's second floor. The cow shed (HS 13) will provide 8,300 square feet for maintenance storage and remaining maintenance functions will be accomplished out of the existing maintenance shop. Site security will be provided via fire detection, fire suppression, and/or intrusion alarms. The mobile home in the home ranch complex, which is now used as a staff residence, will be removed, and the Warren residence will be used as an employee residence, when it becomes available. The park will continue to rely on the city and county for primary fire protection. Historic vehicular circulation routes in the ranch will be retained for emergency and administrative access to all buildings, structures, and visitor-use areas. Twenty FTEs (three additional) are required to implement the proposal, and annual operations and maintenance costs associated with the proposal are approximately \$600,000.

Development is planned to take place in three phases, details of which are provided in the "Development Priorities and Costs" section of the plan. Class "C" estimates indicate the need for \$6,030,500 to accomplish the items planned for Phase I of the construction. The construction planned for Phase II requires \$2,846,000, and \$1,257,000 are required for the historic structure repairs called for in Phase III. Total development costs for the proposal are estimated to be \$10,133,500.

The no-action alternative (alternative B) would continue existing programs, development, and trends, requiring 17 FTEs and an annual operating budget of about \$475,000.

Alternative A emphasizes management of the park as a working ranch, while minimizing non-historic uses. All non-historic uses, such as administration, most maintenance, curation, and visitor services, would be removed from the park's historic zone, and all new construction would occur outside of the historic zone. Administrative programs would move to the new visitor/administrative complex at HS-64. This alternative emphasizes the preservation of historic structures and grounds through rehabilitation and repair. Curatorial storage requirements will be met through construction of the new facility. Use of historic structures would be limited to historically accurate uses and activities. The ranch's historic landscape would be managed to represent the same time periods illustrated in the proposed action. Actions described in the proposed action regarding natural resource management also apply to this alternative. The NPS would

seek an expansion of boundaries to incorporate NPS lands outside of the present boundary and the cultural landscape west of the park. Interpretation would focus on the entire span of cattle operations. Initial functions of the contact station would be limited to site orientation. Actual interpretation would occur on site. A variety of time periods would be interpreted through a sequencing of visitor tours. Costumed interpretation and demonstration programs would be emphasized, including use of non-historic ranch equipment and livestock. Park housing would be removed and staff would be required to find housing in the city of Deer Lodge. Implementation of this alternative would require 26.7 FTEs, with associated annual operation and maintenance costs of \$945,000. Development and rehabilitation costs for this alternative are estimated to be \$6,872,000.

IMPACTS

Impact areas selected to analyze the potential consequences of the proposed action and the two alternatives include land protection, management zoning, surface water flows and effect of development on water quality, flash floods, 100- and 500-year floodplains, disturbance of Beaverell series soils, upland pasture and vegetation, soil compaction, trampling and crushing of vegetation, temporary soil erosion, loss of wildlife habitat, air quality deterioration due to increased auto emissions, construction and other dust, construction noise, rehabilitation/restoration of historic buildings and structures, museum collection management and protection, effect on one known aboriginal archeological site and on buried historic objects, enhancement of visitor services and interpretation, effect on local economy and on other agencies, and effect on efficiency of administrative and maintenance functions.

Implementation of the proposed action, which calls for the maintenance, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic buildings and structures to support adaptive use for park operations, interpretation and visitor use, will contribute to their long-term preservation. Use of the Warren residence for park housing should enhance abilities to fund preservation and maintenance requirements and contribute to their long-term preservation. Use of the ranch's historic entrance for access to the Red Barn visitor center parking lot will provide better site orientation and a historic approach to the ranch. Location of the visitor center parking lot in an area historically used by Warren for parking during cattle sale days, should augment the ranch's historic scene. Alternative A would limit use of historic structures and buildings to historic uses. Funding and resources necessary for preservation could be more difficult to attain when adaptive uses are not considered. Under alternative A, opportunities for visitors to view the ranch from a historic perspective would not be provided. Under the no-action alternative, curatorial storage would continue to be below standard, lack of building maintenance would result in continued natural deterioration of buildings and structures, and degradation of the historic scene would continue, with retention of the on-site trailer used as a ranger residence. Detailed summaries of the alternatives and their impacts are shown in tables 3 and 4.