

Haleakala National Park Commercial Services Plan and Environmental Assessment Newsletter #1

Public Meetings

The public is invited to participate in two meetings with the planning team on October 17 and 18, 2006 at Hana and Pukalani, Maui, respectively. These meetings will help to define and develop the alternatives. More information about the public meetings can be found on our website at <http://planning.nps.gov/> or by calling the park at: 808-572-4445.

How to Comment

We'd like to hear from you. Please provide some feedback for us to consider in planning for Haleakala National Park's future commercial services by answering the following questions:

- What aspects of current commercial services conditions could be changed to make your experience at the park better?
- Why should this existing commercial service be changed?
- How can we best manage commercial services to protect and preserve the park for future generations while providing for current visitor use?
- What commercial services are needed to enhance park operations, visitor use, interpretation, natural and cultural resource management, and partnerships?

You can answer online at <http://planning.nps.gov/> or e-mail the park directly at hale_csp@nps.gov.

You may also mail your comments to:

Haleakala National Park
ATTN: CSP
P.O. Box 369
Makawao HI 96768

We need to receive your comments by October 31, 2006!



Haleakala National Park
P.O. Box 369
Makawao HI 96768



Haleakala National Park Maui, Hawai'i

Commercial Services Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

Newsletter #1

September 2006

The National Park Service is now planning options for long-term management of commercial service operations at Haleakala National Park. Commercial service operators currently provide a variety of visitor services, including bicycling, horseback riding, bus and van tours, guided hiking, and astronomy. About half of park visitors use these services, and depend on them to provide activities and interpretation about the park.

The goals of this planning effort include:

- *Providing a fair, balanced, long-term management strategy for commercial uses within the park;*
- *Determining what commercial services are appropriate and necessary for the park's purpose, significance, and resource base;*
- *Better protecting the unique natural and cultural resources of the park; and*
- *Ensuring that visitors have a safe, high-quality experience that enhances their understanding and appreciation of the Hawaiian ecosystems and culture protected within Haleakala National Park.*

Please take a few moments to review this newsletter and provide us with your thoughts and comments on this important effort. Mahalo for participating in planning for the future of Haleakala National Park.

Marilyn H. Parris, Superintendent
Haleakala National Park



Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) is beginning a Commercial Services Plan for Haleakala National Park. The purpose of this planning effort is to identify the appropriate role of commercial service operations at the park and to develop a framework for managing these services to provide high-quality visitor experiences and protect the unique natural and cultural resources within the park. This plan will help guide the park in managing visitor services for the next 5 to 10 years.



**Figure 1. Location of Haleakala National Park
Maui, Hawai'i**

What is a Commercial Services Plan?

The Commercial Services Plan (CSP) provides a process for establishing the types and levels of commercial activities necessary and appropriate for Haleakala National Park, and the most effective and efficient method for the NPS to use in managing those activities. The plan will cover all developed visitor use areas at Haleakala and all types of commercial services. This plan will provide a comprehensive guide for managing commercial services at Haleakala National Park for the next 5 to 10 years, and will address in detail the decisions regarding commercial activities for the park.

This effort will be consistent with the park's enabling legislation, support the purpose and significance of the park, and help achieve objectives for visitor experience and resource protection. The CSP will determine whether existing or proposed commercial activities are necessary and appropriate. An environmental assessment will be prepared that will analyze the impacts of alternatives on park visitors, the local economy, cultural and natural resources, and operations within the park.

Purpose and Significance of the Park

Haleakala National Park was formed to preserve a nationally significant portion of Haleakala Volcano and its unique native Hawaiian ecosystems and to provide opportunities for the public to access many of its geologic, scientific, and historic features. The park's purpose is to preserve the scenic character and associated Hawaiian culture, while simultaneously providing educational, inspirational, and recreational opportunities compatible with preserving natural and cultural resource values.

The park is significant because it:

- Represents highly diverse volcanic, geological and biological habitat ranging from over 10,000 feet elevation to sea level;
- Contains one of the few relatively intact remnants of a unique and disappearing Hawaiian biota found in no other place in the world, and designated as part of the biosphere reserve system;
- Includes the remote, pristine Haleakala wilderness acclaimed for its attributes of beauty, serenity and tranquility, and where visitors can temporarily retreat from civilized society;
- Contains abundant archeological and historical remains of the pre-European contact Hawaiian civilization;
- Is of religious and cultural importance to the Native Hawaiian community;
- Has many historical and cultural sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places;
- Is Maui's number one tourist destination, an integral part of the tourist-based economy of the island; and
- Provides outdoor recreational and educational opportunities unavailable elsewhere on Maui to the public.

Why is a Commercial Services Plan Needed?

The facilities at Haleakala National Park were originally designed to accommodate 350,000 visitors; today the park currently receives an average of 1.7 million visitors per year. Services provided to accommodate these visitors include a variety of out-of-park operators who bring in tours and groups. Approximately 63 commercial use providers are currently authorized, which include road-based tours and buses to the Summit Area and Kipahulu; hiking, biking, and horse tours; and astronomy group users. The park's cooperative association, the Hawaii Natural History Association, operates three outlets within the park, one at each of the visitor centers.

The Summit area of the park often receives over 1,000 visitors at sunrise, with increasing impacts on natural and cultural features of the park and visitor use and experience. This increase in visitor use has resulted in concentrated trampling of threatened and endangered plant species, increased social trailing resulting in accelerated erosion, and introduction of non-native species.



Figure 2. Crowding during Sunrise at the Summit Area

As visitation has increased over the past decade, parking capacity at the Summit Area is being exceeded. Private vehicles are turned away from filled parking areas on a regular basis. The number of oversized commercial tour vehicles is exceeding the number of designated parking areas. Commercial tour bus capacity has increased, adding to the parking pressures. With increased parking congestion, there is an increased concern for public health and safety.

Other NPS concerns include the degradation of park trails resulting from commercial horse and hiking tours. Trails are located in fragile alpine ecosystems and they do not hold up well under excessive use, resulting in increased and unnatural erosion. Horse and human waste are not being removed from trails and disposed of properly. In addition, visitor's wilderness/solitude experience on backcountry trails is being negatively affected by large groups using the trails.



Figure 3. Horses and Hikers on Sliding Sands Trail

At Kipahulu, issues concerning commercially led hiking groups involve overcrowding on trails and off-trail use. This results in trampling of sensitive vegetation and increasing soil erosion and formation of unauthorized social trails. Traffic on the dedicated horse trail in this area also presents safety concerns as the deep soils combined with very high rainfall causes deep trenching and slippery conditions that at times endanger the horses and riders. Also, visitors entering the stream and pools at Kipahulu to swim have been injured, and the NPS discourages the general visitor from entering these pools and narrow areas.



Figure 4. 'Ohe'o Gulch at Kipahulu

Where Are We in the Planning Process?

The NPS has established a planning team consisting of the park resource and management staff, Pacific West Region commercial services planners, and contractors. The planning team has begun to establish a framework for the plan based on the park's legislated mandate, mission, and goals presented in this newsletter. The framework will lead managers through a process to determine appropriate commercial services to be provided while managing and protecting park resources.

We are asking you to provide input on existing conditions, issues and concerns, and goals for the project through this newsletter and in upcoming public meetings to be held October 17 and 18. This is a crucial and important step in the planning process, as it establishes the basis for the plan. After the framework is developed with public input, alternatives will be developed.

A second newsletter will be released and public workshops will be held to get your input on the draft alternatives. Once the alternatives are finalized, an impact analysis will be conducted and the environmental assessment will be released for public review and comment. Following revisions of the draft plan based on public comments, a final Commercial Services Plan will be published. The table below briefly summarizes the process for preparing the CSP and your opportunities to participate.

Planning Activity		Public Involvement Opportunity
Summer 2006  WE ARE HERE	Initiate project and conduct scoping on issues and concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read this newsletter and join the mailing list. • Attend public meetings in October 2006. • Provide comments via letter, at our web site, or at a public meeting.
Fall and Winter 2006/2007	Develop draft alternatives and conduct scoping on those alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the alternatives newsletter to be distributed to the mailing list. • Obtain important background information on the website. • Provide oral or written comments at meetings, or comment via letter or our website.
Summer or Fall 2007	Publish the Draft Commercial Services Plan and EA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become familiar with the draft plan by attending public meetings and by reading the draft plan and environmental assessment • Provide oral or written comments at meetings, or comment via letter or our website.
Fall 2007	Document decision and publish final plan and EA	

