CHAPTER 5: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The intent of the NEPA is to encourage the participation of federal and state involved agencies and affected citizens in the assessment procedure, as appropriate. This section describes the consultation that occurred during development of this plan/EIS, including consultation with stakeholders and other agencies. This chapter also includes a description of the public involvement process and a list of the recipients of this document.

HISTORY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public involvement activities for this plan/EIS fulfill the requirements of NEPA and NPS Director's Order 12 (NPS 2011a).

THE SCOPING PROCESS

The NPS divides the scoping process into two parts: internal scoping and external, or public, scoping. Internal scoping involved discussions among NPS personnel regarding the purpose of and need for management actions, issues, management alternatives, mitigation measures, appropriate level of documentation, available references and guidance, and other related topics.

Public scoping is the early involvement of the interested and affected public in the environmental analysis process. The public scoping process helps ensure that people have an opportunity to comment and contribute early in the decision-making process. For this plan/EIS, project information was distributed to individuals, agencies, and organizations early in the scoping process, and each was given the opportunity to express concerns or views and to identify important issues or other alternatives.

Taken together, internal and public scoping are essential elements of the NEPA planning process. The following sections describe the various ways scoping was conducted for this plan/EIS.

Internal Scoping

An internal scoping meeting was held at the Lake Meredith National Recreation Area Administration Building/Headquarters in Fritch, Texas, from October 16 to 18, 2007. Internal scoping involves discussions among NPS staff to decide what should be analyzed in an EIS. Personnel from Lake Meredith National Recreation Area and the NPS Environmental Quality Division attended this meeting to define the purpose, need, and objectives of the plan, identify potential issues, discuss preliminary alternatives, and define data needs.

Various roles and responsibilities for developing the ORV management plan were also clarified. The results of the meetings were captured in a report now on file as part of the administrative record. Representatives from the NPS–Washington Office / Environmental Quality Division, NPS–Southeast Arizona Group, Lake Meredith National Recreation Area, and the Louis Berger Group participated in the internal scoping meetings.

Public Scoping

Public Meetings and Comments

Public scoping efforts for this planning process focused on the means or processes to be used to include the public, major interest groups, and local public entities. Based on past experience, national recreation area staff placed a high priority on meeting the intent of public involvement in the NEPA process and giving the public an opportunity to comment on proposed actions.

The public scoping process began on June 11, 2008, with the publication of a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register (FR, Volume 73, Number 113). In support of this effort, the NPS hosted three public scoping meetings intended to initiate public involvement early in the planning stages of the plan/EIS and to obtain community feedback on the initial purpose, need, and objective statements for ORV management at Lake Meredith National Recreation Area. The meeting schedule, locations, and attendance figures follow.

- On Tuesday, July 8, 2008, a public meeting was held in Fritch, Texas, at the Sanford-Fritch Middle School Cafeteria from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Seventy-two people attended.
- On Wednesday, July 9, 2008, a public meeting was held in Dumas, Texas, at the First State Bank Community Room from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Twenty-nine people attended.
- On Thursday, July 10, 2008, a public meeting was held in Amarillo, Texas, at the Ambassador Hotel from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. One hundred fifteen people attended.

Each of the meetings began with an open house, allowing the public to circulate between information stations. Each station had display boards and other informational materials describing the project background, legislative framework such as the park's enabling legislation, the purpose of and need for the plan, objectives of the plan, and issues to be addressed in the plan/EIS. NPS staff members were available at each station to answer any questions or concerns presented by the community and to record comments. During each meeting, NPS staff members gave a brief presentation to explain the project and the NEPA process.

Each information station had a flipchart where an assigned staff person could take comments on a particular topic, or any other topic on which a community member had concerns or questions. If commenters chose not to make comments at the stations, comment sheets were provided to be completed and returned later. If attendees chose not to fill out the comment sheets at the meeting, a return address was provided on the sheets to mail to the park at a later date. Those attending the meetings were also given brochures providing additional opportunities for comment on the project, including directing comments to the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/lamr/. Comments were accepted through July 28, 2007.

The Comment Analysis Process

Comment analysis is a process used to compile and correlate similar public comments into a usable format for decision makers and the plan/EIS interdisciplinary planning team. Comment analysis assists the team in organizing, clarifying, and addressing technical information pursuant to NEPA regulations. It also aids in identifying the topics and issues to be evaluated and considered throughout the planning process.

A comment analysis report was prepared to summarize concern statements as well as the full text of all comments corresponding to the appropriate concern statement. All scoping comments were considered to

be important as useful guidance and public input to the public scoping process. With regard to developing the plan/EIS, comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives, those that only agree or disagree with NPS policy, and those that offer opinions or provide information not directly related to the issues or impact analysis were considered non-substantive comments. Non-substantive comments can provide background for a draft or final EIS but do not require a specific response. Although the analysis process attempts to capture the full range of public concerns, the content analysis report should be used with caution. Comments from people who chose to respond do not necessarily represent the sentiments of the entire public.

Of the 180 comments received during public scoping, 77 were related to alternative elements; 24 to the affected environment at the national recreation area; 63 to preliminary management concepts; 3 to the national recreation area's purpose and significance; and 4 to the impact of the proposal and alternative elements. Nine comments were miscellaneous.

Public Scoping on the Preliminary Range of Alternatives

In the spring of 2010, Lake Meredith National Recreation Area released a range of preliminary alternatives for the plan/EIS for public review and comment. The draft range of alternatives, which was developed in part with the input received during public scoping, was presented in a brochure that was available locally at the park and on the NPS PEPC website (http://parkplanning.nps.gov/lamr). In addition, brochures were mailed to a list of park stakeholders. The public was invited to submit comments on the scope of the planning process and potential alternative elements from April 7 through May 19, 2010.

The NPS held meetings to inform the public about the preliminary alternatives for the plan/EIS. The dates, locations, and attendance figures follow.

- On April 20, 2010, a public meeting was held in Fritch, Texas, at the Sanford-Fritch Schools Business Office from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Thirty-three people attended.
- On April 21, 2010, a public meeting was held in Dumas, Texas, at the First National Bank from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Seventeen people attended.
- On April 22, 2010, a public meeting was held in Amarillo, Texas, at the Ambassador Hotel from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Forty-six people attended.

Each of the meetings was conducted in the same format as the earlier public scoping meetings, except the information provided and the discussions focused on the range of alternatives.

All comments were reviewed and analyzed in the same manner as previously described. During the comment period for the preliminary range of alternatives, 31 pieces of correspondence were received, containing 121 comments. Pieces of correspondence were received at the public meeting (on flipcharts), entered directly into PEPC by the commenter, or received through the mail.

Public Review of the Draft Plan/EIS

After the EPA's release of the Notice of Availability to prepare the draft plan/EIS, a 60-day public comment period was open between January 25, 2013, and March 26, 2013. This public comment period was announced online (www.parkplanning.gov/lamr), in newspaper articles, and through press releases.

The draft plan/EIS was made available through several outlets, including the NPS PEPC website (http://parkplanning.nps.gov/), hardcopies at the recreation area's headquarters, and by request through

the mail. After reviewing the draft plan/EIS, the public was encouraged to submit comments about the draft plan/EIS through the NPS PEPC website, by postal mail sent directly to the recreation area, delivered in person directly to the recreation area, or at public meetings. Written comments were accepted during the public meetings on comment forms and on flip charts.

Two public meetings were held in March 2013 to provide information about the plan and the alternatives considered, continue the public involvement process, and obtain input on the draft plan/EIS for ORV use at Lake Meredith. The public meetings held during the public comment period for the draft plan/EIS are listed below:

- March 19, 2013: Ashmore Inn and Suites in Amarillo, Texas (33 attendees).
- March 20, 2013: Sanford-Fritch Schools, Business Office, in Fritch, Texas (19 attendees).

A total of 52 meeting attendees signed in during the two meetings. The meetings were conducted in an open house style, in which displays were stationed around the room and members of the public were able to ask questions. Recreation area staff members were available at the meetings to answer questions and provide additional information to attendees. Participants were encouraged to provide comments at the meeting on flip charts or on comment forms. Participants were encouraged to provide comments after the meeting using the NPS PEPC website, comment card, or posted letter.

During the public comment period, 116 pieces of correspondence were entered into the PEPC website. Some members of the public entered comments directly into the PEPC website. The NPS or its contractor uploaded hardcopy letters and comment forms sent to the NPS.

Once the correspondences were entered into PEPC, each was read and specific comments within each correspondence were identified. One hundred and ninety six individual comments were derived from the correspondences received. During coding, comments were classified as substantive or non-substantive. A substantive comment is defined in the NPS Director's Order 12 Handbook as one that does one or more of the following (NPS 2001, Section 4.6A):

- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information presented in the EIS;
- Question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of the environmental analysis;
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those presented in the EIS; and/or
- Cause changes or revisions in the proposal.

As further stated in the Director's Order 12 Handbook, substantive comments "raise, debate, or question a point of fact or policy. Comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives, or comments that only agree or disagree with NPS policy, are not considered substantive." Non-substantive comments offer opinions or provide information not directly related to the issues or impact analysis. Non-substantive comments were acknowledged and considered by the NPS, but did not require responses. Substantive comments were grouped into issues and "concern statements" prepared for responses. Members of the NPS planning team responded to the concern statements, and these responses are included in "Appendix B: Public Comment Summary Report."

This final plan/EIS will be posted on the NPS PEPC website (http://parkplanning.nps.gov/lamr) and copies will be distributed to agencies, organizations, elected officials, and other entities or individuals who requested a copy. The publication of the EPA Notice of Availability of this final plan/EIS in the Federal Register will initiate a 30-day wait period. After the wait period, the Record of Decision documenting the selection of an alternative to be implemented will be signed. After the NPS publishes a

notice in the Federal Register announcing the availability of the signed Record of Decision, the implementation of the alternative selected in the Record of Decision can begin.

OTHER CONSULTATION

Consultation and coordination with local and federal agencies and various interest groups was conducted during the NEPA process to identify issues or concerns related to protected species management within the recreation area.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The NPS began coordination with the USFWS in 2009. After a series of informational consultation meetings, the NPS submitted a biological assessment to the USFWS Arlington Texas Ecological Services Field Office and requested formal consultation on November 25, 2013. The Arlington Texas Ecological Services Field Office provided the NPS with a draft biological opinion on April 9, 2014, and a final biological opinion on April 24, 2014 (USFWS 2014). See attachment 1 of appendix B.

Texas Historical Preservation Office

On July 1, 2014, the NPS sent a letter to the Texas Historical Preservation Officer requesting concurrence that there would be no adverse impacts to historic properties from implementation of the proposed action. The Texas Historical Preservation Officer provided concurrence on July 23, 2014. See attachment 1 of appendix B.

Tribal Consultation

The tribes listed in the section “Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals Consulted” were sent a Notice of Intent letter to initiate government-to-government consultation under Executive Order 13175. Of the 10 letters sent, no responses were received. These tribes were also contacted as part of government–to-government consultation when the draft plan/EIS was released. No comments were received from the Tribes on the draft plan/EIS.

AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED

The following governmental, tribal, and private groups and individuals were consulted in the development of this plan/EIS.

FEDERAL AGENCIES

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service, River, Trails, and Conservation Assisting Program, Santa Fe, New Mexico

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Texas Historical Commission

AFFILIATED NATIVE AMERICAN GROUPS

- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Caddo Nation of Oklahoma

- Comanche Nation
- Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe of Oklahoma
- Delaware Nation of Oklahoma
- Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Jicarilla Apache Nation
- Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma
- Mescalero Apache Tribe
- Wichita and Affiliated Tribes

ORGANIZATIONS/OTHER

- High Plains Off-road Association
- Oklahoma Cross Country Racing Association
- Texas Off-road Association (TORA)
- Wildlands CPR
- Libraries, newspapers, and other media

CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATES

- U.S. Senator John Cornyn
- U.S. Senator Ted Cruz
- U.S. Representative District 13 William “Mac” Thornberry

LIST OF PREPARERS AND CONSULTANTS

Name	Title	Experience	Responsibility
National Park Service, Lake Meredith National Recreation Area			
Robert Maguire	Superintendent	Thirty-two years with the NPS, 11 of those years as Chief Ranger; has worked at 9 national parks and monuments throughout the country. BS in Park and Recreation Administration from Colorado State University	Overall review and development of the plan/EIS
Cindy Ott-Jones	Former Superintendent	Thirty-three years with the NPS, 9 of those years as a national park superintendent; has worked in 9 national parks and monuments throughout the country BS in natural resource management from Kansas State University	Overall review and development of the plan/EIS
Arlene Wimer	Chief of Resource Management	Twelve years with the NPS, 5 years as an independent biological monitor for the state of Texas in the oil and gas industry BS in biology, MS in environmental science	Overall review and development of the plan/EIS, with emphasis on natural and cultural resources
Paul Jones	Chief Ranger	Responsible for oversight of the law enforcement program at Lake Meredith National Recreation Area and Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument; has over 14 years in the ranger ranks with the NPS, 5 of those years as Chief Ranger; worked in five national parks and monuments throughout the country Degree in engineering and criminal justice	Park operations, law enforcement, document review
National Park Service, Environmental Quality Division			
Lindsay Gillham	Project Manager/ Environmental Protection Specialist	Twelve years of NEPA experience BS in natural resources recreation tourism; JD	Project management, document review, NEPA compliance
National Park Service, Intermountain Region			
Chris Turk	Former Regional Environmental Coordinator	Thirty-three years in the NPS BAAS in biological sciences	Regional coordination and review of documents.

Name	Title	Experience	Responsibility
The Louis Berger Group			
Lori Fox, AICP	Project Manager / Senior Planner	Master's in community planning; BS in environmental planning	NEPA compliance, document oversight and review, development of purpose, need, objectives, and alternatives, review of resource specialist sections
Nancy Van Dyke	Senior Consultant / Quality Assurance / Quality Control	MS in environmental sciences; BA in biology and geography	Quality control review
Jacklyn Bryant	Former Deputy Project Manager	MS in watershed sciences / water resources planning and management; certificate in international development; BS in natural resources management	Resource specialist, soundscapes
Josh Schnabel	Environmental Planner	MA in geography; BA in sociology	Soils and water quality
Megan Blue-Sky	Environmental Planner/GIS	BA in geography	Visitor use and experience / health and safety; Lake Meredith National Recreation Area management and operations; mapping
Lia (Peckman) Jenkins	Former Environmental Scientist	BS in biology and BA in Spanish	Wildlife and wildlife habitat; threatened and endangered species / species of concern
Lucy Bambrey	Former Senior Archeologist	MA in anthropology; BA in sociology; paralegal certificate	Archeological resources
David Plakorus	Environmental Planner	Master's in urban and regional planning; MBA; BA in history	Vegetation
RTI International			
Carol Mansfield	Senior Economist	PhD in economics	Socioeconomic analysis
The Final Word			
Juanita Barboa	Technical Editor	Twenty-four years editing, documentation, and formatting experience	Editing/Formatting
Sherrie Bell	Technical Editor / Document Designer	Twenty-four years editing, documentation, and formatting experience	Editing/Formatting