

2—ALTERNATIVES

This chapter describes the two alternatives being evaluated: Alternative A, which is the no action alternative and Alternative B, which is the proposed action by the NPS to implement improvements to the Station Camp–Middle Village. The description and evaluation of the no action alternative provides a baseline to which the action alternative can be compared. The proposed action alternative was designed with the protection of cultural resources as paramount, with added benefits such as improvement of site access, visitor use and experience (including expanded visitor knowledge through interpretation), public safety, and resource protection and management at the Station Camp–Middle Village site. Mitigation measures associated with Alternative B are summarized in this chapter. Existing condition photos, proposed views, and trail alignments are displayed in Figures 2-1. Several design elements considered but dismissed are also described in this chapter, followed by a summary of the alternatives and a summary of environmental consequences.

Development Of Alternatives And Range Of Alternatives

NPS decided to analyze two alternatives: Alternative A, the no action alternative, and Alternative B, Station Camp–Middle Village Improvements, which is also the preferred alternative. After extensive public and stakeholder involvement and coordination between partnering agencies, it was determined that the purpose and need for action (described in Chapter 1) would be accomplished through the proposed improvements in Alternative B. Scoping occurred over the course of several meetings with partners, stakeholders, and the public. The proposed action is consistent with Lewis and Clark National Historical Park’s enabling legislation and the park’s stewardship, environmental leadership, recreational experience, education, and professional excellence objectives developed as part of the NPS Centennial Initiative, as summarized in Chapter 1. The alternatives are evaluated in this document to determine their potential affect on various elements of the environment.

Alternative A—No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the 7.63-acre Station Camp – Middle Village site would remain in its current condition and configuration as displayed on Figure 2-2. Conditions at the site would remain unimproved. The site would remain in public ownership, with the ownership eventually being transferred from the State of Washington to the NPS. The NPS would provide ongoing annual maintenance (such as invasive vegetation management by hand-cutting and spot-treating with pesticides, general clean up, and general protection of cultural and natural resources to the best of the agency’s ability without physical improvements to the site). For example, invasive plant species, such as Scot’s Broom would continue to be removed and managed. The NPS management of the site would be limited to providing minimal maintenance and care due to current budget challenges. The NPS would seek to work cooperatively with the WSPRC to provide maintenance to the site. Since no physical improvements would be made under Alternative A, the ability to manage visitor use and minimize intrusion and disturbance of cultural and natural resources would be limited (without physical improvements to direct visitors to certain areas and to control their access). Wetlands on the site would remain untouched without protection or enhancement. Forest lands on and adjacent to the site to the north would remain under the ownership of the McGowan family, available for logging and potentially affecting the historic natural setting of the National Park unit.

The general public, including visitors to the area, seasonal anglers, St. Mary’s Church patrons, and US Highway 101 travelers would continue to informally access the site via the unimproved gravel pull off/ interpretive wayside and small gravel parking areas that currently exist there. Scenic views of the Columbia River and surrounding Columbia-Pacific region would remain limited from the park site. Interpretive improvements and services would be limited to the existing interpretive panel at the site and information conveyed via the internet and other park media (the park brochure and newsletter for example). The current interpretive panel at the site is limited to information about the Lewis and Clark Expedition and their journey to the Pacific Ocean.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Station Camp – Middle Village Park
Washington

On-site interpretation does not cover the full history of the site, and the NPS's ability to share the full significance of the site with visitors would be limited.

US Highway 101 would remain within its current right-of-way and configuration with one 12-foot eastbound lane and one 12-foot westbound lane at a speed limit of 55 mph and undefined and unimproved ingress, and egress, to the site. St. Mary's Church would remain as an in-holding of the park and a historic remnant of the McGowan Town Settlement. Church patrons would continue to access the site at periodic times during the year to attend services and special events.

The NPS would continue to explore potential options to project the natural and cultural resources on the site, but these could take three to five years or more to implement, and there is a concern that an unintended consequence of the protection might be greater unwanted public attention to the sensitive areas at the site.

Alternative B—Proposed Action Station Camp—Middle Village Park Improvements

Under Alternative B, approximately 3.64 acres of the 7.63-acre site would be improved for visitor access and use. The remaining 4 acres will be retained in an undeveloped condition with intensive rehabilitation of site vegetation and management of invasive species by hand-cutting and spot-treating with pesticides. The proposed improvements would expand visitor access and awareness of the full history of the site and region. Views of the Columbia River, its confluence with the Pacific Ocean, and the surrounding cultural landscape would be maximized. The full interpretive potential of the site would be realized through additional outdoor exhibits and tribal art located at the site. Gateway signage would initiate the visitor experience upon approach to the park on US Highway 101. NPS and related roadway signs would signify a new sense of place and arrival to the new NPS unit. Proposed improvements associated with Alternative B are illustrated in Figure 2-3.

Improvements to US Highway 101 under Alternative B would include development of a formal access and circulation system, providing a means of safe ingress

and egress to the park with a left turn lane. Shoulders along both sides of the highway would be widened, to accommodate these improvements, with east and westbound travel lanes striped at 11.5 feet each. The speed would remain at 55 mph.

The proposed visitor parking area would be located in an area that is partially disturbed, in the vicinity of the existing gravel wayside pull off, to minimize new disturbance and compaction at the site. Access to the parking lot, located just west of the historic St. Mary's Church, would allow for one-way vehicular circulation with an east entry and west exit. Delineated parking of 15 angled spaces would encourage predictable and safe vehicular movements in the parking area. An additional six parking spaces could be constructed here if needed to serve future increased visitation as shown in the conceptual site plan, Figure 2-4.

Improvements would include a visitor drop off area designed to accommodate loading and unloading of two buses or larger vehicles with the intent to serve school and tour groups. The visitor drop off area would serve as a welcoming point to the site with an adjacent orientation space offering visitors an understanding of the experiential opportunities available at Station Camp–Middle Village. From the orientation space, visitors would be able to move in multiple directions to experience the park. A pedestrian path extending to the southeast from the orientation path provides access to interpretive areas via a looped pathway system culminating with an elevated overlook at the east end. Along either side of the path, a coastal prairie landscape would be re-established. Several interpretive spaces along the looped pathway would provide interpretive exhibits covering storylines of the site's history with views across the restored landscape and forested backdrop. Interpretive topics would include Native American heritage, Euro-American trade, the cultural landscape, and the natural environment. As the pathway reaches the elevated overlook terminus, visitors would be provided a prominent vantage point with sweeping views of the Columbia River and surroundings. This would be the highest elevation in the park, allowing breathtaking views over the Columbia River towards Astoria, Saddle Mountain, Fort Columbia and Cape Disappointment State Park, and the confluence of the Columbia River with the Pacific Ocean. Interpretive topics covered



at this overlook would include the Native American heritage, the McGowan town settlement, maritime heritage, and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Refer to Figure 2-4 for the Proposed Action Site Plan.

The return pathway to the parking lot passes in front of St. Mary's Church, which stands as a national historic landmark from the 1940 McGowan town settlement. This path also provides access for church patrons.

As visitors venture to the orientation area, they will be able to view elements in the western portion of the park, including another proposed elevated overlook structure with interpretive exhibits, northwest of the parking area. This elevated view platform would be accessible from the parking area and orientation space. From the elevated platform visitors would be afforded sweeping views of the cultural landscape from Station Camp – Middle Village to Saddle Mountain. Native American heritage, wetland interpretation, the McGowan town settlement, and the cultural landscape and natural environment would be featured topics in this space. Visitors would be able to follow a boardwalk and trail connection from the elevated structure toward the west, across a wetland, and toward a connection to Fort Columbia State Park, which follows an old logging road for part of the proposed route. This trail also ties into the path back to the parking area.

Development of the Fort Columbia trail connection would occur in the future, as part of Phase 2 improvements to the park. These Phase 2 improvements are included in this EA and consists of approximately 1,000 feet of boardwalk constructed on pilings, 1,950 feet of at grade trail, and a 40-foot and 10-foot boardwalk footbridge. Overall, this trail would establish a shared use path between the Station Camp–Middle Village Park and Fort Columbia State Park. The trail would include on-grade trail, segments of boardwalk, and bridges segments and would create a unique connection, stretching approximately one quarter mile between the National Park site at Station Camp – Middle Village and the State Park. This connection also opens up future opportunities to link these two sites with the Towns of Chinook and Ilwaco.

Design of the park has followed a guiding principle to minimize impacts and honor the sensitivity of the site's heritage. Context sensitive design

methods and low impact development features would be implemented to minimize effects to the site and surrounding environmental resources. The pervious pavement parking area would infiltrate stormwater, recharge the ground water, and during high volumes it would convey drainage towards the wetland. Boardwalk treatments throughout the park would be designed to minimize effects to wetlands and preserve the natural environment as much as possible. Invasive vegetation management and treatment would remove unwanted plant species, and re-establish native plantings. Design of path alignments have been shifted and adjusted to avoid sensitive cultural features associated with the site.

Mitigation Measures For The Proposed Action

Proposed mitigation measures and best management practices for the proposed action, Alternative B, are summarized below:

- Pervious pavement is being used in the parking areas to decrease the total square footage of impervious surfaces on the site.
- Boardwalks and pathways will be used in order to focus pedestrian traffic in specific areas preserve the function and integrity of on-site wetlands.
- Clean, culturally sterile fill material will be brought from an off-site, approved source, therefore limiting excavation on the site in order to protect existing cultural resources.
- The staging and material stockpiling will be limited to existing cleared areas.
- Best management practices for construction, including but not limited to, construction equipment kept in good, working condition, and appropriate temporary erosion control measures in place to control stormwater runoff.
- All work will comply with agency required permits and their conditions.

Project Design Elements Considered But Dismissed From Further Analysis

Major Realignment of US Highway 101. Previous alternatives that proposed a major realignment of



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U.S. Department of the Interior

Station Camp – Middle Village Park
Washington

US Highway 101 northward to create a waterfront park have been dismissed. These include alternatives analyzed prior to the start of construction of the highway relocation project discussed in Chapter 1, as well as more recent adjustments to the highway alignment considered as part of the current project design. Major realignment will not support attaining the goals identified in the purpose and need and are not desirable due to the concerns of potential effects to cultural resources, as well as cost considerations.

More Extensive Park Development

Broader, more extensive plans for park development were analyzed during the conceptual design phase of the project. Through various planning and design discussion meetings, internal and external scoping meetings, and discussions with local stakeholder groups, it was determined that the level of site development should be minimized to that proposed under Alternative B, the proposed action. Guiding principles and project goals were kept in mind during these planning and design meetings. Elements vetted through the design process but dismissed included additional parking at the east end of the park, additional parking at the proposed parking area, a tertiary pathway system, and a US Highway 101 side bus drop off. Evaluation of a westbound bus drop off along the highway was vetted by the project team and the WSDOT. It was not considered a feasible option due to pedestrian safety concerns and the lack of deceleration and acceleration transition space.

The potential for an additional informal pathway system offset from the main interpretive path system, allowing visitors to experience more of the site with interpretation at specific locations, was dismissed. The project team in consultation with Chinook Tribe representatives decided to eliminate the tertiary pathway system due to concerns related to visitor intrusion in or near sensitive cultural resource areas. Development of additional visitor facilities, such as a restroom building/contact station was also dismissed due to concerns related to excavation because it does not support attaining the goal set forth in the purpose and need to protect cultural resources.

Table 2-1: Summary of Alternatives

Elements	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B
Park Entrance/Formalizing Safe Park Access, Ingress and Egress	No	Yes
Gateway Treatments/Formal NPS Signing Program	No	Yes
Park Improvements (Visitor Access, Paths, Viewpoints, Wayfinding/Signs)	No	Yes
Interpretation	Limited to current Lewis and Clark Expedition interpretation	Yes – Interpretation of a full spectrum of historical and cultural influences and stories
Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation	Limited	Yes
Trail Connection to Fort Columbia State Park	No	Yes
Traffic Calming/Safety/ Access	No	Yes
Stormwater Management and Water Quality Features	No	Yes
Preservation and Protection of Cultural Resources	Yes	Yes
Active Management of Site Vegetation and Ecosystems	Yes	Yes



Rehabilitation to a More Natural Landscape <i>(Return to Historical Setting)</i>	No – Rehabilitation may occur in the future but would not be initiated before property transfer to the NPS.	Yes
Preservation of Partnerships and Cooperative Management Approaches	Limited	Yes
Meets Purpose and Need	No	Yes

NPS Preferred Alternative

Alternative B, the proposed action, was selected by the NPS as the preferred alternative. This selection was made based on how Alternative B protects cultural resources on the site while interpreting and improving the site for the enjoyment of visitors. Although Alternative B imposes environmental impacts, the EA has determined that any potential adverse impacts would be negligible to minor. The EA also has determined that Alternative B would result in several areas of positive effects, including soil stability and protection, water quality improvements and protect cultural resources.

The NPS has determined that implementation of the no action alternative, Alternative A, would limit the agency’s ability to fully preserve and protect natural and cultural resources. Also Alternative A would not provide opportunities to enhance and improve visitor experience and enjoyment at the site.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Alternative A (No Action) is determined to be the environmentally preferred alternative as no development action would occur on the site. Although a no action alternative is often times the environmentally preferred alternative, there are many positive effects to the implementation of Alternative B.



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Station Camp – Middle Village Park
Washington



Photo 1: View southwest from east end of project site along north side of US Highway 101.



Photo 2: View looking northwest on the east side of US Highway 101 just south of the gravel parking area.



Photo 3: View looking southwest across the site from the eastern culvert.



Photo 4: Southern face of the St. Mary's Church.



Photo 5: View of cut and treated Scot's broom following the vegetation treatment process.

FIGURE 2-1a
Existing Study Area Photographs





Photo 6: View south from approximate elevation and location of northwest overlook structure (Alternative B).



Photo 7: East-facing view of St. Mary's Church and Bachelor Quarters building (to be removed in Alternative B).

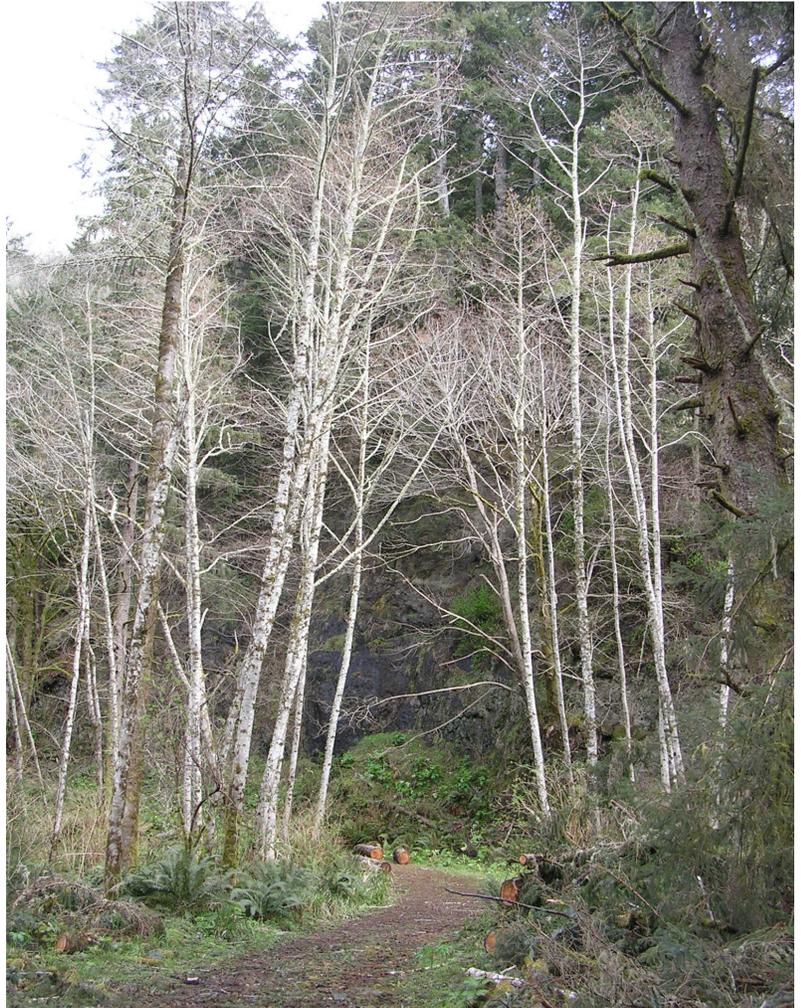


Photo 9: Lowland section of private logging road to fort Columbia State park.



Photo 8: View east along proposed path alignment to Fort Columbia State Park on private logging road.



Photo 10: Forested wetland downslope of the upland Fort Columbia trail alignment.

FIGURE 2-1b

Existing Study Area Photographs



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Station Camp – Middle Village Park
Washington