

The Trailhead Register

First Edition
Fall 2006



The Comprehensive Trail Management Plan Newsletter of Mammoth Cave National Park



A New Path for Trail Management at Mammoth Cave NP



Dear Park Friends –

This year we have begun to prepare a comprehensive trail management plan for Mammoth Cave National Park, factoring in public comment throughout the process. A public meeting on June 29 commenced a two-week public comment period on the scope of what issues should be included in the plan.

Your response has been very helpful. More than 100 people attended the initial meeting and 94 written comments were received from hikers, horse users, bicyclists, backpackers, and other interested stakeholders.

Based on comments from the public and park staff, I have selected the four basic areas that the overall trail plan will address – visitor use issues; facility issues, maintenance issues; and administrative issues. Now, park staff will begin to draft the comprehensive trail management plan, preparing several alternatives along with a draft Environmental Assessment (EA). The draft alternatives will be presented to the public for comment.

This newsletter includes excerpts from the six-page scoping statement and a tentative timeline of the planning process. To view the entire scoping statement, please go to <http://www.nps.gov/macal/parkmgmt/planning.htm>. To obtain a paper copy contact Ranger Larry Johnson at (270)758-2150, by email at l_wayne_johnson@nps.gov, or by mail at Mammoth Cave National Park, P.O. Box 7, Mammoth Cave, KY 42259.

By working together, we can come up with a plan that provides better protection for park resources and better serves all park visitors. Thank you for your involvement in this planning process, and I look forward to hearing from you again during the next public comment period.

Patrick H. Reed
Park Superintendent



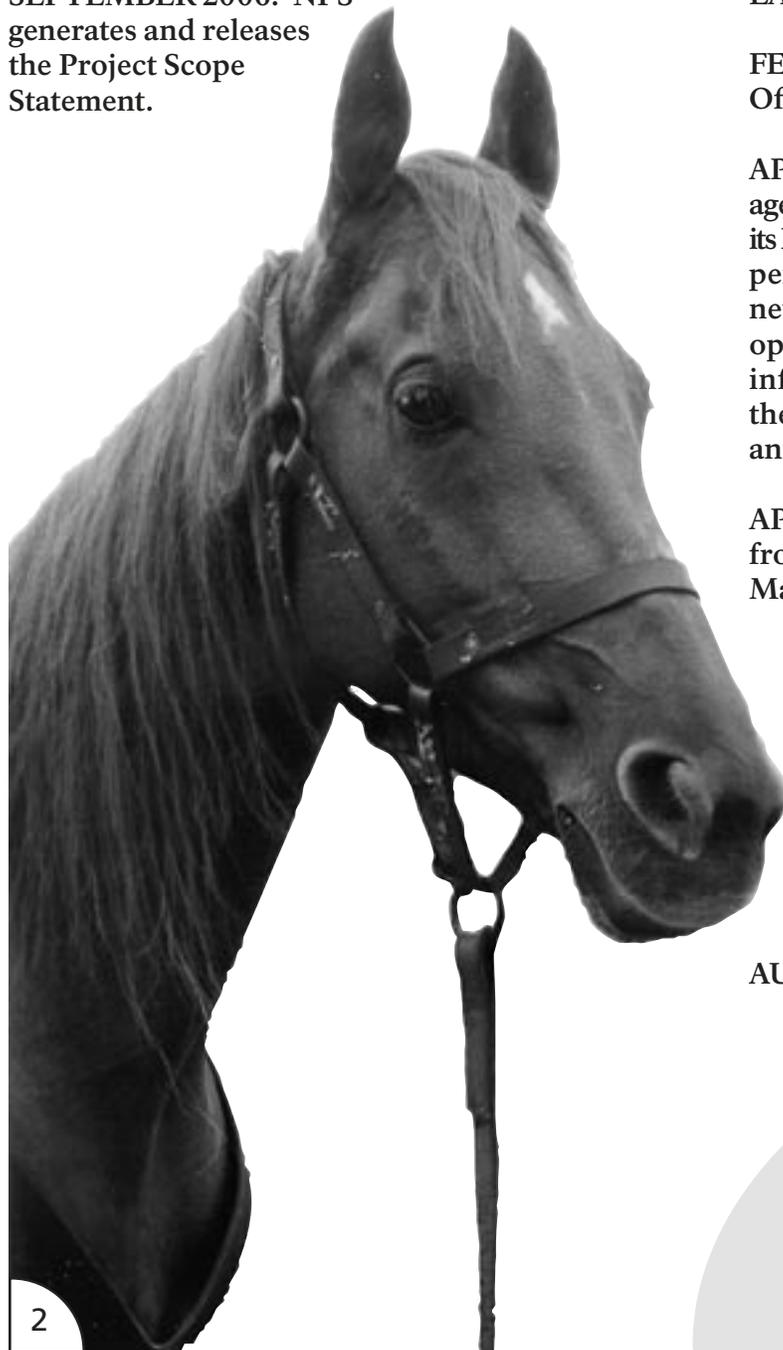
Proposed Timeline

JUNE 29, 2006: NPS holds Public Scoping Meeting to identify issues and explore the scope of issues associated with trail management.

JUNE 29-JULY 14, 2006: NPS requests public comment for the scope of issues.

AUGUST 2006: NPS analysis of existing management documents; compilation and review of public comments regarding the scope of trail management issues.

SEPTEMBER 2006: NPS generates and releases the Project Scope Statement.



OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2006: NPS develops a draft plan with alternatives, and identifies a Draft Preferred Alternative regarding issues identified in the Project Scope Statement. Simultaneously, the park develops a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA). The first newsletter is distributed.

JANUARY 2007: The online PEPC (Planning, Environment, and Public Comment) site is set up to display the Project Scope Statement.

FEBRUARY 2007: NPS park staff review the Draft EA over a 21-day period; comments are incorporated.

FEBRUARY 2007: NPS staff in the Southeast Regional Office review and comment on the Draft EA.

APRIL 2007: The Draft Comprehensive Trail Management Plan including a Preferred Alternative and its EA are released for a 60-day public comment period and posted on the online PEPC site; a newsletter is distributed. NPS holds a public meeting/open house to report on status, exchange additional information, and accept written comments on the Draft Comprehensive Trail Management Plan and EA.

APRIL-MAY 2007: NPS accepts written comments from the public via the PEPC website and U.S. Mail.

JULY 2007: NPS compiles public comments; the final Comprehensive Trail Management Plan and EA are prepared; a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is submitted to the Regional Director; a newsletter is distributed; and the final Comprehensive Trail Management Plan and EA are released to the public.

AUGUST 2007: Implementation phase begins.

REMEMBER...

When using the trails, don't forget to tell someone where you're going – and be sure to sign in at the trailhead register.

Scope of the Project

Excerpts from the Project Scope Statement for the Mammoth Cave National Park Comprehensive Trail Management Plan, SUMMER/FALL, 2006:

"...The purpose of this plan is to make an overall assessment of the trail system to guide the management and use of park trails for the next 10-15 years...an ever-increasing number of visitors regularly utilize the park trails and backcountry for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and bicycling.

"When Mammoth Cave National Park was established, the intention was to provide for use and enjoyment of the surface area in addition to the famous cave below. One of the purposes for creating the park was to '...insure a great recreational ground...where...thousands of our people may find...the most delightful outdoor recreation in...traversing the picturesque and rugged hills and valleys and great forests of the region included in the proposed park area."

"...In 2005, park management called on each of the three primary backcountry user groups (the Mammoth Cave Equestrian Trail Riders Association, the Bowling Green League of Bicyclists and the Mammoth Cave Chapter of the Sierra Club) to form a single coalition, the Mammoth Cave Backcountry Summit Council, in order to facilitate communication and exchange information directly with each other and the NPS regarding backcountry issues at the park. This group has since met semi-annually, and has found common ground on a number of issues, including enhancing resource protection and supporting the maintenance and sustainability of all trails in the park. This Summit Council has also participated in several backcountry trail workdays, where members from all groups worked together with the NPS on a variety of trail projects.

"...the Superintendent initiated this Comprehensive Trail Management Plan in the spring of 2006, in order to make an overall assessment and updated plan for the management of the trail system in the park...A total of 94 written comments were received during this meeting and the comment period that followed: 59 from the horseback-riding community, 15 from the bicycling community, and 20 from hikers/backpackers. These individual responses essentially were a



Visitors enjoy the new overlook platform on Dixon Cave Trail. The trail has a new spur leading to a trailhead at the picnic area.

reflection of the submitter's orientation. The horseback riders stated they wanted all existing trails on the north side of the river, including Sal Hollow, open to horses and be maintained adequately (they are also opposed to sharing trails with bikes, and prefer to see bikes restricted to the south side of the river). The bikers stated they want to keep Sal Hollow open to biking, would like to see it remain closed to horses, and have additional single-track trails be considered on the south side of the river. The hikers generally stated the importance of continuing to provide opportunities for hikers and backpackers, and stressed the importance of maintaining existing trails and protecting the park as a natural area. A common theme among the comments was an emphasis on seeing the park service adequately maintain existing trails and facilities.

"...After analyzing these public comments, divisional inputs, and previous documents, four key issues have been identified as primary areas to be addressed, and which will form the basis for the scope of this plan:

visitor use issues, facility issues, maintenance issues, and administrative issues. A more specific set of management questions relating to these issues was also identified. The intent of the Comprehensive Trail Management Plan is to fully address the four primary “scope” issues, along with the management questions. The plan will delve into much greater detail in evaluating the status, goals, and needs of all the trails in Mammoth Cave National Park.”



Riders on the Mammoth Cave Railroad Bike & Hike Trail.



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