



# Draft Environmental Impact Statement

New Long-Term Winter Use  
Plan and EIS  
Yellowstone National Park

June 2011





# Public Meeting Agenda

- Sign-in/Open House Part One (6:30-7:00)
- Presentation (7:00-7:30)
- Open House Part Two (7:30-8:00)
- Comment Period (8:00-9:30)



# The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)



- Is a legal requirement for federal agencies, but is better described as an environmental planning process.
- Imposes analysis and public review requirements on federal decision makers.
- In this case, requires an Environmental Impact Statement.



# Why a New Plan?



- Regulation is required to allow snowmobile or snowcoach use.
- Interim plan expired at end of 2010-2011 winter season.
- Previous long-term plans rejected by courts.
- A decision is needed on the long-term direction for winter use in the park.



# New Long-Term Plan/EIS Process

- 6<sup>th</sup> NEPA process (EA or EIS) since 2000
  - Three vacated by courts
  - Two temporary plans expired
- Science Advisory Team
  - Scientific Assessment
- New Sound Modeling
- New Air Modeling



# Issues Carried Forward For Detailed Analysis

- Potential for greater than “minor” impacts
  - Air
  - Sound
  - Wildlife
  - Visitor Use and Experience
  - Health and Safety
  - Socioeconomics
  - Park operations and management



# Scoping Summary

- January 29, 2010 to March 30, 2010
- Scoping is an opportunity for the public to provide early ideas about purpose for the plan, need for the plan, objectives, and alternatives that should be considered.
- The NPS received 9,099 scoping comments. The NPS used the scoping comments to develop the draft range of alternatives.





# Alternatives

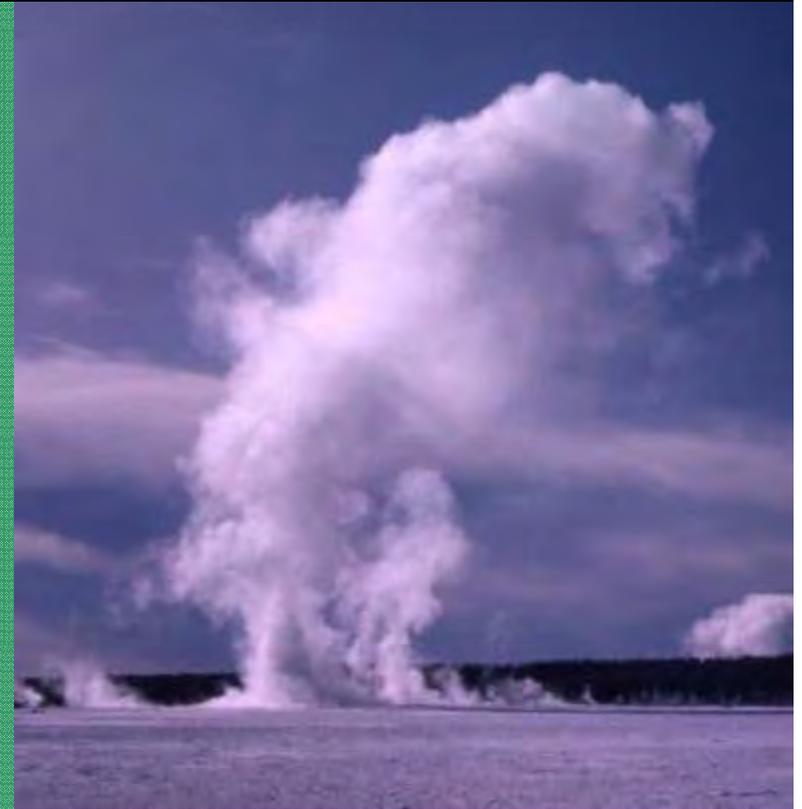
- Alternatives are different ways to solve a problem or issue.
- They provide a full range of options for decision makers.
- Draft range of alternatives released to public August 2010.
- Elements of Alternatives can be combined in the Final EIS.





## Alternatives: Considered But Dismissed

- Technical or economic infeasibility;
- Does not meet project purpose or need;
- Duplication with other, less environmentally damaging or less expensive alternatives;
- Conflict with an up to date park plan or other policy such that a major change in the plan or policy would be needed to implement;
- Too great of an environmental impact.





## Alternative 1 (No Action): No Snowmobile/Snowcoach Use



- Alternatives are compared to No Action (the baseline) to determine both beneficial and adverse effects.
- The park would not issue a new regulation allowing over-snow vehicles (OSV).
- Interim regulation expired at the close of the 2010/1011 season; no public use of over-snow vehicles (OSV) would be permitted in Yellowstone.
- Only non-motorized winter access into the park (on foot, ski, and snowshoe) would continue.



## Elements Common to all “Action” Alternatives

- Best Available Technology would be required for snowcoaches by the 2014/2015 winter season.
- The interim plan limits 318/78 would be in place during the first year of implementation (transition year).
- The road from the North Entrance to the Northeast Entrance would remain open to private and commercial wheeled vehicles.
- Up to 50 snowmobiles per day would be allowed on the route to Cave Falls—in addition to the snowmobile limits in each alternative.





## Alternative 2: Continue Snowmobile/Snowcoach Use at 2008 Plan Limits

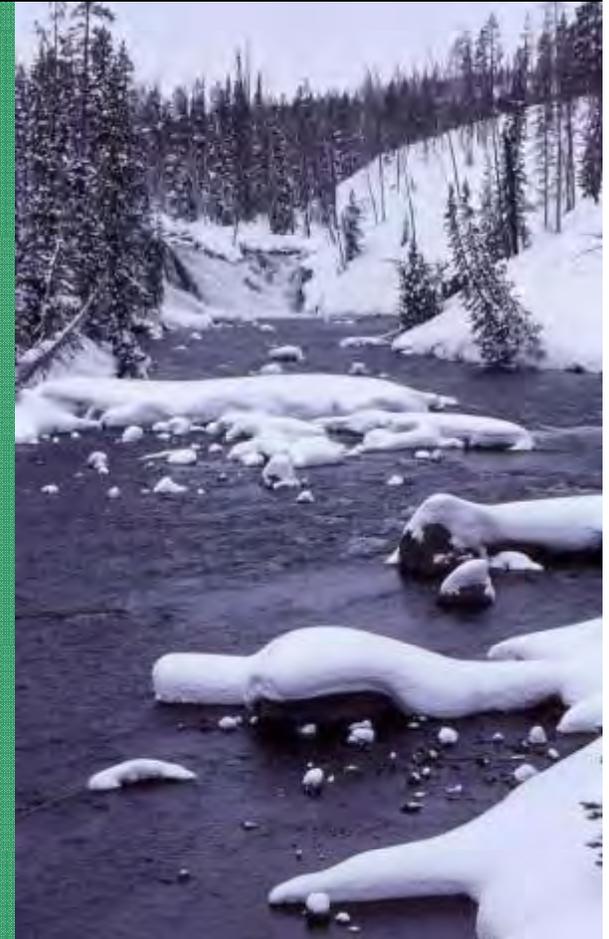


- Up to 318 snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches per day.
- All OSV requirements under the interim plan would continue, including entry only with commercial guides, restrictions on hours of operation, and only snowmobiles that meet “Best Available Technology” (BAT) requirements.



## Alternative 3: Return Snowmobile/Snowcoach Use to 2004 Plan Limits

- Up to 720 snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches per day.
- All OSV requirements would continue, the same as under alternative 2.





## Alternative 4: Mixed-Use: Snowcoaches, Snowmobiles, and Wheeled Vehicles (Road Plowing)



- Roads from West Yellowstone and Mammoth Hot Springs to Old Faithful would be plowed for park access for up to 100 wheeled, commercial, multi-passenger vehicles (buses and vans).
- South Entrance road would be groomed for use by up to 30 snowcoaches and 110 snowmobiles per day.
- East Entrance to the park (Sylvan Pass) would be closed to OSV use. Non-motorized winter access would continue.



## Alternative 5: Transition to BAT Snowcoaches Only

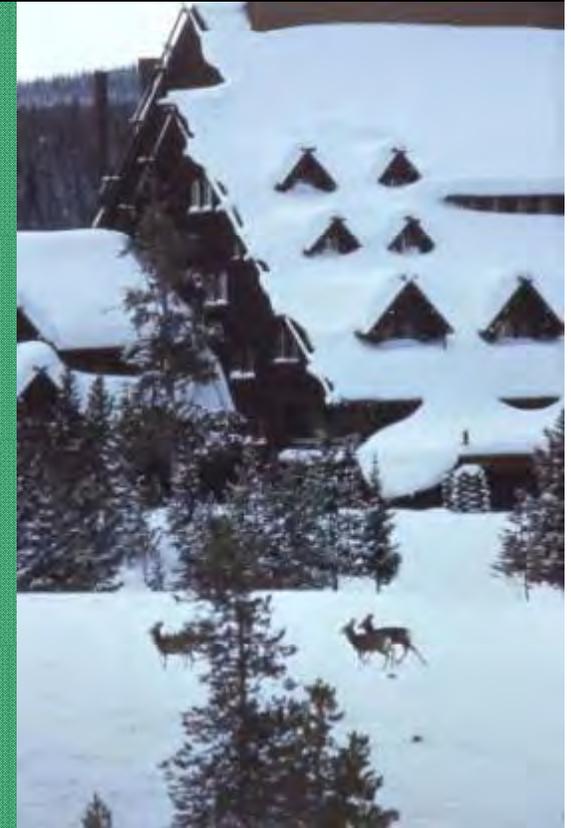


- Initially allows up to 318 snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches per day.
- Beginning in the 2014/2015 season, snowcoaches would replace snowmobiles within a five-year period (depending on snowcoach user demand or, at the park's discretion).
- Snowcoach numbers would be allowed to increase to 120 per day, with a corresponding decrease in the number of snowmobiles during the five-year phase-out period.
- All snowcoaches required to meet BAT by 2014/1015 season.



## Alternative 6: Implement Variable Management

- Season limit of up to 32,000 snowmobiles and 4,600 snowcoaches, and a daily limit of up to 540 snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches.
- Times and places for higher and lower levels of use, including additional opportunities for undisturbed skiing and snowshoeing.
- Up to 25 percent of snowmobile entries would be available for unguided or non-commercially guided use.





## Alternative 7 (Preferred Alternative): Provide a Variety of Use Levels and Experiences for Visitors

- Winter 2011/2012 would be a transition year allowing the limits under the interim plan- up to 318 snowmobiles and 78 snowcoaches.
- Variable daily schedule beginning 2012/2013.
- Schedule set one year in advance of season.
- Snowmobile use between 110 and 330 per day.
- Snowcoach use between 30 and 80 per day.
- Average of 254 Snowmobiles and 63 snowcoaches per day.



## Alternative 7 (Preferred Alternative): Provide a Variety of Use Levels and Experiences for Visitors

- Approximate seasonal limits:
  - 1/2 of days at up to 330 snowmobiles and 80 snowcoaches per day
  - 1/3 of days at up to 220 snowmobiles and 50 snowcoaches per day
  - 1/6 of days at up to 110 or 148 snowmobiles and 30 or 80 snowcoaches per day
- All requirements under the interim plan would continue
  - Commercial guide
  - Hours of operation restrictions
  - BAT requirements for snowmobiles



## Alternative 7 (Preferred Alternative): Provide a Variety of Use Levels and Experiences for Visitors

- Additional Requirements:
  - BAT would be developed for snowcoaches by the 2014/2015 season
    - 73 decibel limit when operating at full speed.
    - Must meet model year 2010 EPA gasoline or diesel emission standards.
  - NO<sub>x</sub> limit for snowmobiles would be implemented for the 2014/2015 season.
  - All OSVs must enter the park by 10:30 a.m.

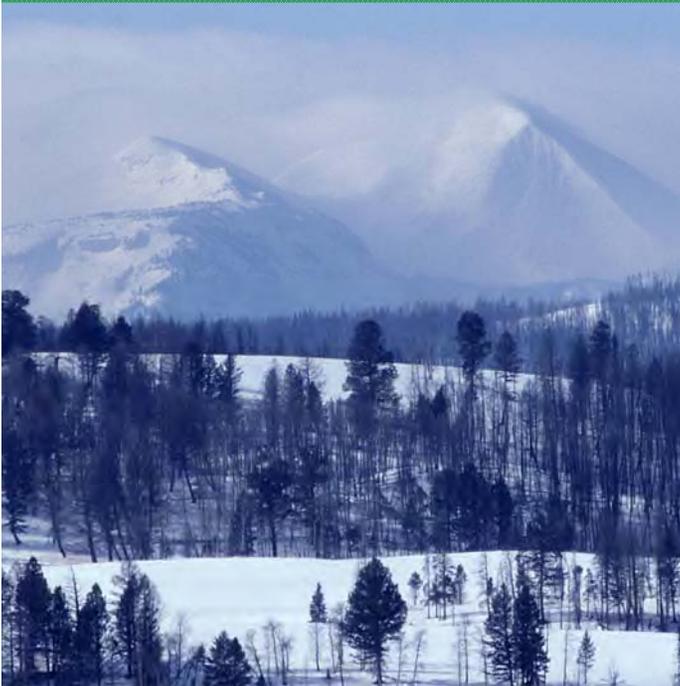


## Alternative 7 (Preferred Alternative): Provide a Variety of Use Levels and Experiences for Visitors

- Additional Elements:
  - Daily entrance allocations can be shared among entrances.
  - Sylvan Pass would be open, and managed in accordance with the Sylvan Pass Working Group agreement.
  - For the last two weeks of the season OSV use would end at the West Thumb Parking Area and at the South Canyon Rim Drive in order to allow for additional non-motorized use on the east side of the park.



# How to Provide Comments During the Comment Period



- Accepting comments tonight orally, to the court reporter, on comment cards, or flipcharts.
- You can submit comments directly on-line on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at:  
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/YELL>



# How to Provide Comments During the Comment Period

- **Mail written comments to:**

Yellowstone National Park  
Winter Use Draft EIS  
P.O. Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190

- **Hand deliver comments to:**

Management Assistant's Office  
Headquarters Building  
Mammoth Hot Springs  
Yellowstone National Park, WY





# Substantive Comments

- Not a Vote
- Purpose, Need, Objectives
- Range of Alternatives
- Elements of Alternatives/Preferred Alternative
- Impact Analysis
- Additional Studies/Data



## Next Steps

- Proposed Regulation
- DEIS Comment Period closes July 18, 2011
- Review and Consider Comments
  - Revise EIS, including preferred alternative
  - Respond to Comments



# Project Schedule

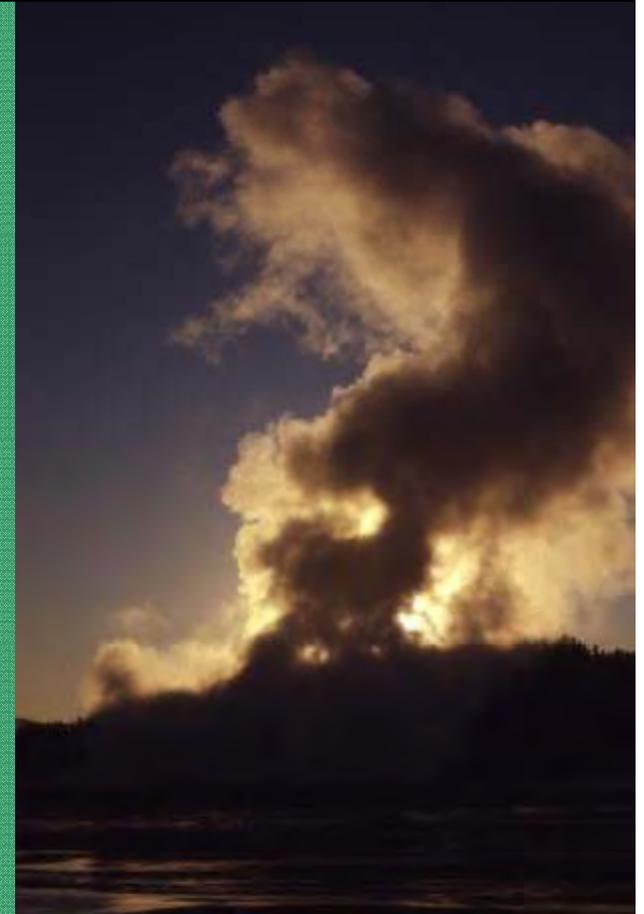
- Draft EIS on Public Review:  
May 6 – July 18, 2011
- Final EIS: October/November 2011
- Issue Record of Decision: December 2011
- Decision Implemented and Regulation Issued:  
December 2011





## For More Information:

- NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment Web Site (PEPC):
  - PEPC: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/YELL>
  - Select “Winter Use Plan/EIS”
- Yellowstone’s Winter Planning Web Page:
  - [www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/winteruse.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/winteruse.htm)





Thank You for  
Participating in this  
Winter Use Planning  
Process