

Office of the Governor

MEMORANDUM

To: Suzanne Lewis, Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park
John Sacklin, Management Assistant, Yellowstone National Park
John Keck, NPS Wyoming State Coordinator
Distribution

From: Park County, Wyoming
The State of Wyoming Planning Office

Date: January 26, 2007

RE: January 22, 2007 NPS and Wyoming Cooperating Agency (CA) Meeting, Billings, Montana

The Park County Commissioner's and the State of Wyoming Planning Office appreciated the opportunity to meet with the National Park Service (NPS) to discuss our concerns regarding the review draft of the Winter Use Plans for Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway. We also thank you for providing additional information and documentation on the YNP avalanche control program.

Due to time constraints, the specifics of our formal comments on the PDEIS were not discussed in detail. We sincerely appreciate the willingness of NPS to meet again with the CA's to further discuss our comments and cooperatively work to resolve differences. In order to continue our participation in the process and track concerns we provide the following general summary of the meeting and key issues that were raised. We accept responsibility for potential errors or omissions.

1. OPENING STATEMENTS

Opening statements were provided by the Park County Commissioners, Governor's Planning Office (GPO) staff, members of the Wyoming State Legislature, field representatives for the Wyoming U.S. Congressional delegation, staff of the Wyoming Office of Tourism, and NPS representatives.

The comments focused primarily on the proposed closure of the East Entrance in the NPS Preferred Alternative, safety issues associated with avalanche control at Sylvan Pass, and adverse impacts to the winter economy of Cody and the surrounding area. Other issues raised included winter and shoulder season tourism, commercial guiding requirements for snowmobiles, communication between NPS and local businesses, NEPA considerations, and the desire of CA's

and others to work with NPS to keep the East Entrance open. The key issues discussed are summarized below.

2. KEY DISCUSSION ISSUES

Proposed East Entrance Closure

- Unanimous opposition from Wyoming CA's and others to proposed closure of East Entrance in NPS Preferred Alternative. Concern is that decision will be disastrous for winter tourism and future opportunities to maintain or build upon the existing business infrastructure located along the North Fork Corridor between the East Entrance and Cody.
- Management decisions on adjacent USFS lands have also impacted North Fork corridor businesses and access to YNP is one of few remaining draws for winter tourism. East Entrance is unique in park and important to Wyoming residents and visitors from elsewhere in the country.
- NPS stated that decision in preferred alternative to close East Entrance is based on long-term safety concerns associated with avalanche control at Sylvan Pass. Visitor numbers and maintenance costs are secondary considerations and more of a consideration in terms of planning and risk management.
- NPS made decision last fall to use the helicopter for avalanche control missions to alleviate risk to employees having to cross avalanche chutes to get to howitzer platform. The howitzer will be used in emergency situations. Delays in avalanche control in December were related to maintenance issues with contracted helicopter. A new helicopter contractor from Missoula was brought in on a temporary basis.
- NPS stated they would be determining what level of risk is acceptable at Sylvan Pass. Since NPS maintains the pass, the risks are viewed differently than those for un-maintained areas of the park.
- NPS discussed \$30 million in investments in park facilities on east side of park, including improvements to East Entrance road and Canyon Visitor Center. Recognized the temporary hardships this created for Cody.
- NPS emphasized that no decisions have been made, this is middle of process and final decision will be in the Record of Decision (ROD).
- Given that there will always be closures of the Sylvan Pass for avalanche control or other safety considerations, NPS asked if there was an acceptable number of closures local businesses could withstand.
- NPS asked about possible study by Park County to plow road to Cooke City. Park County responded that no study is planned, that economic benefits of plowing would be realized mostly by Montana, not Park County, and that the winter experience would not be the same as traveling through East Entrance. They will work to keep East Entrance open.

Visitation Levels and Commercial Guiding Requirement for Snowmobiles

- NPS discussed that some of reductions in winter visitation and uncertainty regarding winter use in YNP are court-driven.
- CA's discussed adverse impact that commercial guiding requirement has had on visitation levels. Asked NPS to recognize there is a demand for unguided/non-commercially guided access and that it should be incorporated into preferred alternative.

3. NEXT STEP IN PLANNING PROCESS

- Additional Cooperating Agency Meeting
- Potential NPS sponsored trip to Sylvan Pass
- March, 2007: Public DEIS available for review (60 day comment period)

4. MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Name	Agency or Affiliation
<i>NPS</i>	
Suzanne Lewis	Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park
John Sacklin	Management Assistant, Yellowstone National Park
Al Nash	Chief of Public Affairs, Yellowstone National Park
John Keck	NPS, Wyoming and Montana State Coordinator
<i>NPS Consultant</i>	
Nedra Chandler	Cadence, Inc., Public Engagement and Facilitation
<i>Wyoming</i>	
Bill Brewer	Park County Commissioner
Tim French	Park County Commissioner
Marie Fontaine	Park County Commissioner
Bucky Hall	Park County Commissioner
Jill Shockley Siggins	Park County Commissioner
Mary Flanderka	Governor's Planning Office
Temple Stevenson	Governor's Planning Office
Senator Henry "Hank" Coe	Wyoming Senator
Representative Charles "Pat" Childers	Wyoming State Representative, H.D. 50
Representative Colin Simpson	Wyoming State Representative, H.D. 24

Name	Agency or Affiliation
Pam Buline	U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Field Representative, Riverton
Karen McCreery	U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, Field Representative, Cody
Michelle Volk	U.S. Representative Barbara Cubin, Field Representative, Casper
Diane Shober	Wyoming Office of Tourism
Gene Bryan	Wyoming Office of Tourism
<i>Consultant (Park Co. And GPO)</i>	
Greg Kennett	Ecosystem Research Group
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