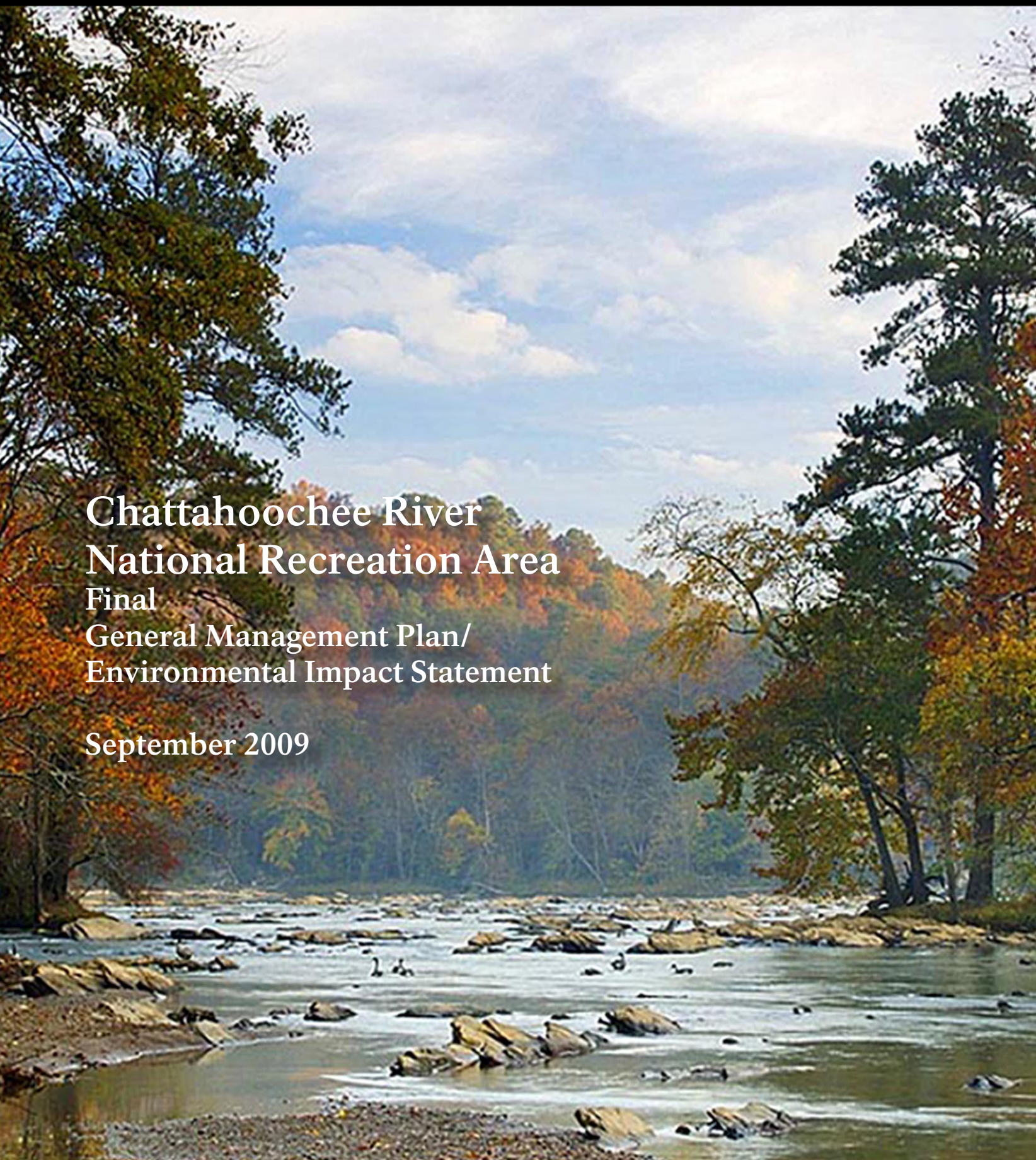
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Chattahoochee River
National Recreation Area
Georgia



Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

Final General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement

September 2009

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Atlanta, Georgia
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United States Department of the Interior
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Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area
Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement
Atlanta, Georgia

This *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* evaluates six alternatives for the future management of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. It defines the strategies that will allow for diverse visitor use of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, protect park resources, and provide for the enjoyment of the people. The National Park Service is the lead agency for this project.

Alternative A would continue the current management practices into the future. There would be only minor changes in resources management, visitor programs, or facilities. Alternative B would minimize development in the park and maximize the opportunity for visitors to experience solitude in natural settings that are relatively insulated from the surrounding urban conditions. This alternative would allow continued use of existing facilities, while improving resource conditions through restoration and other means. Motorized boating would not be appropriate in several zones under Alternative B. Alternative C provides for a management system where visitors would be drawn toward a system of hubs in which administrative, commercial, and interpretive facilities are located, providing visitor information, restrooms, parking lot and roads, trail heads and river access. Visitors, in lower numbers, could enjoy the extensive natural habitats and cultural resources in the undeveloped portions of the park, where activities would be focused on achieving solitude. Motorized boating would not be appropriate in several zones under Alternative C. Alternative D would expand and distribute visitor access throughout the park, including newly acquired parcels, and would provide a wide variety of visitor experiences. New facilities would be developed or existing facilities would be refurbished. Connectivity to existing neighborhoods would be optimized and expanded. Alternative E extracts some features from Alternatives C and D, such as providing for more expanded access. Substantial acreage with less hardened forms of access would be maintained, providing more opportunities for relative quiet and solitude, and motorized boating and fishing would be appropriate throughout the park. The preferred alternative, Alternative F, is similar to Alternative E providing for more expanded access, and allowing for motorized boating and fishing throughout the park, while also maintaining opportunities for relative quiet and solitude. However, Alternative F zoning allows for more facilities and more of the built environment than Alternative E. The potential environmental consequences are addressed for each alternative, including impacts to natural resources, cultural resources, transportation, and visitor and community values.

This *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* has been distributed to other agencies and interested organizations and individuals for their review. The no-action period for this document will last for 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency's notice of availability has been published in the *Federal Register*.

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SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR A GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

This general management plan and environmental impact statement is the basic guidance document for managing the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area for the next twenty years. The purposes of this plan are to specify resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved in the park and to provide the foundation for decision-making and preparation of more specific resource plans regarding park management. It represents an agreement by the National Park Service with the public on how the park will be used and managed during the plan period.

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area was authorized by an act of Congress in 1978. The boundaries of the park were expanded to total 10,000 acres in 1999.The last general management plan for Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area was completed in 1989.The metropolitan area surrounding the park has changed significantly since 1989, and the patterns and types of visitor use have also changed. This plan represents the results of a multi-year planning process that began in 1999. The geographic area covered by this plan includes 10,000 acres of land located along 48 miles of the Chattahoochee River corridor extending from Buford Dam, Lake Lanier southward, to Peachtree Creek in Atlanta.

Three key management issues have been identified for the park.

- The first key management issue is to determine the most appropriate levels of service for visitor interpretation and education in the park. Key questions include:
    - How can the park accommodate an increasing numbers of visitors and still provide effective infrastructure, such as roads, parking areas, restrooms, and river access points?
    - How can the park provide effective educational and interpretive programs for increasing numbers of visitors?
- A second key management issue is to determine suitable locations for administration and visitor facilities. Key questions are:
    - What are the most appropriate locations to support administration and operations functions while minimizing resource disturbance?
    - Should these facilities be concentrated in a few locations or spread out over a larger geographical area?
    - What is the basis for deciding where facilities should be located, and what types should be constructed?
- The third key management issue is to determine how to manage the park to allow for quality visitor experiences while protecting natural and cultural resources. The park is located in a long, narrow river corridor surrounded by developing communities and the park is therefore highly sensitive to potential effects of encroachment and use. Key issues include:
    - Water quality in streams within the park, including the Chattahoochee River, can be adversely impacted by nonpoint runoff from impervious surfaces in adjoining developed areas. Pollutants such as fecal coliform bacteria and organic compounds can

be introduced via this mechanism. How can the National Park Service maintain water quality and aquatic life in streams within the park?

- Encroachment by development can lead to creation of numerous unauthorized trails in the park from adjoining residential areas. Unauthorized trails disturb native vegetation, encourage the spread of invasive plant species, and can lead to soil erosion, especially in steeper areas. How can the National Park Service manage trails to prevent or minimize the effects of unauthorized trails?
- Increased numbers of visitors require facilities as well as education and interpretation services. Construction and operation of facilities, along with associated roads and parking areas, can affect and have affected the park's natural habitats and cultural resources. How can the park manage the construction and operation of these facilities to minimize impacts on natural and cultural resources?

The potential solutions to these issues are reflected in the management alternatives analyzed in this general management plan and environmental impact statement. The alternatives address the adequacy and appropriateness of park services and facilities and the challenges posed by managing a large, linear park in the center of a metropolitan area.

ALTERNATIVES

Six alternatives were developed to provide different approaches for addressing the issues. The National Park Service developed four alternatives (A, B, C and D) and presented these preliminary alternatives to the public in the May 2004 Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement. Based upon feedback regarding these alternatives, additional meetings were conducted, and two new alternatives (E and F) were developed and analyzed. The actual cost of implementing the approved general management plan will ultimately depend on future funding and servicewide priorities over the life of the plan, as well as the ability to partner with other agencies or groups. The approval of a general management plan does not guarantee that funding and staffing needed to implement the plan will be forthcoming. Funding for capital construction improvements is not currently shown in National Park Service construction programs. It is not likely that all potential capital improvements arising from this plan will be totally implemented during the life of the plan. Larger capital improvements may be phased over several years, and full implementation of the general management plan could be many years into the future. Additionally, the National Park Service is required to maintain all new or acquired assets in a good condition so they do not fall into disrepair. New and/or expanded assets will only be provided relative to the National Park Service's ability to maintain those facilities in good condition.

Alternative A

Alternative A, No Action, consists of a continuation of existing management patterns into the future, and provides a baseline for comparing and evaluating the changes and impacts of the other action alternatives. Under Alternative A, the park would be maintained and managed using the current management strategy. There would be no major changes in resources management, visitor services, interpretive programs, or facilities. There would be no increase in the level of public/private partnership activity the park would conduct due to staffing and funding limitations. Limited construction and continued maintenance would consist of repair and maintainenance of roads, boat ramps, trails, parking lots, and buildings.

Overall, because park staff resources are limited, interpretive activities would be minimal. The park is currently experiencing problems with soil erosion, sedimentation of streams from surrounding development, excessive growth of invasive species of plants, and increased adverse effects from unauthorized trails. In addition, cultural resources are being degraded through physical disturbance. In this sense, the park is not in compliance with all applicable National Park Service policies, mandates, and regulations. Implementation of Alternative A would result in a continuation of these problems and of non-compliance in some instances.

The overall effects of the Alternative A on natural resources would lead to gradual long-term reduction of the value of natural and cultural resources in the park, as a result of less effective resource and trail management.

Alternative B

Alternative B, Focus on Solitude, would implement management programs to minimize development in the park and maximize the opportunity for visitors to experience solitude in natural settings relatively insulated from the surrounding urban conditions, particularly in newly acquired areas. This alternative would involve reducing or minimizing recreational sites and facilities within the newly acquired areas of the park, but would allow continued use of existing facilities. Alternative B would redirect visitation patterns to provide experiences in a relatively natural area with few visitors. Motorized boating is not appropriate in several zones in Alternative B. This alternative would have the following specific features:

- Visitors would experience the natural environment, wherever feasible, through a system of non-paved walking trails, primitive areas of beauty, and locations along the riverbanks defined as river solitude zones where no trails or structures would be allowed near the river. Areas designated as river solitude zones could be viewed from the river in non-motorized vessels.

- This alternative would allow few new facilities to be constructed within park boundaries. Additional access could be provided by partnering with public and private entities. Newly acquired areas (from willing sellers, assuming funding is available) would be managed to provide maximum resource protection and solitude for visitors. River use would be encouraged through canoes, rafts, non-gas motorized vessels, and other recreation opportunities. Visitors would be provided with a quality experience in a wide variety of environments available in the park, with an emphasis on environmental education. Through various public/private partnering efforts, the visitor experience would be highly facilitated through learning.

- Parcels added to the park under the newly expanded boundaries would remain in, or be restored to, a largely natural state. Areas with significant cultural resources would be managed to protect values in accordance with Section 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Limited facilities would be added; for example, small gravel parking lots, primitive trails, and interpretive signage.

Alternative C

In this alternative, visitors would be drawn toward a system of relatively developed hubs in which administrative and interpretive facilities are located. Hubs, at a minimum, would provide visitor information, restrooms, parking lot and roads, trail head, and access to the river; such facilities would

be minimized outside hubs. The hubs would be placed at strategic locations (north, central and south) along the 48-mile-long park to optimize visitors' experience and understanding of the park. Motorized boating would not be appropriate in several zones in Alternative C. This alternative would have the following features:

- Visitors' experience would be focused on the interpretive activities and other facilities available in the hubs. Visitors, in lower numbers, could enjoy the extensive natural habitats and cultural resources in the undeveloped portions of the park. Visitor activities in natural areas outside the hubs would be focused on achieving solitude in an urban environment.

- Visitor services would be expanded while simultaneously maintaining greenspace throughout the park by coordinating public/private partnerships at carefully selected centers (hubs) of the park.

- The opportunity for instituting National Park Service education and interpretive programs, visitor services, and connectivity at key regional locations would be enhanced. This alternative would allow the National Park Service to concentrate limited resources into hub areas. This alternative would discourage expanded new entrances to the park and would encourage National Park Service supervision, education, and monitoring where use is greatest.

- The visitor experience would be more gregarious, with more opportunity for socializing and involvement in group activities and less opportunity for solitude in the vicinity of the hubs. However, the opportunity for solitude would still exist at park locations outside the hubs. A nine-mile river solitude zone would be established between McGinnis Ferry Road and Highway 20 that would provide visitors with the opportunity to experience the river in a relatively natural condition.

- Motorized vessels (gasoline-driven motors) would be defined as an appropriate use in the upper portion of Bull Sluice Lake. Bull Sluice Lake is the only lake within the 48-mile park, providing a unique recreation opportunity for the use of motorized vessels.

Alternative D

In this alternative, expanding and distributing access throughout the park, including newly acquired parcels, would provide diverse types of visitor experiences. New facilities would be developed or existing facilities would be refurbished. Connectivity to existing neighborhoods would be optimized, providing similar visitor experiences throughout the park. This alternative would have the following specific features:

- Because this linear park is located adjacent to the most densely developed neighborhoods and business communities of the metropolitan area, access to the park could be expanded in the future for current and new visitors.

- The National Park Service could expand visitor experiences to local visitors and day use visitors from business parks and neighborhoods and would provide trail linkages to city- and county-funded and supervised parks.

- Trails from existing and proposed developments would be managed to encourage use by an expanded group of visitors. This would require a higher level of self-help and individual reliance from a wide range of sources.

- A proactive National Park Service outreach program would de-emphasize solitude and emphasize a more social, community-based group experience. Expanding uses and access would require a redefinition of gathering spaces surrounding the national park, which would be used for picnics, celebrations, neighborhood meetings, and family walks. Visitor experience would be characterized as one of convenience and personal attachment.

- Facilities for the park would be necessarily distributed throughout the 48 miles, based on availability of resources and local community support to serve a greater and more diverse population of residents. This alternative would have the potential to strengthen community involvement in environmental protection of the park and its resources. Local self-help education and voluntary public/private partnerships could enhance park stewardship.

Alternative E

Alternative E was developed by extracting some features of both Alternatives C and D and by creating new zone types and management prescriptions that responded to public criticism of the May 2004 Draft. Alternative E provides expanded access to the park while at the same time maintains substantial acreage with less "hardened" forms of access (such as new developed parking and roads, trails and structures you would expect with the built environment), and therefore potentially more opportunities for relative quiet and solitude. Under Alternative E boating and fishing would be appropriate throughout the park wherever possible, and in accordance with State laws and private property rights.

Visitor experience would focus on the interpretive activities and other facilities available in the developed zones, as well as enjoyment of the natural habitats and cultural resources in the remainder of the park in other zones. Increased opportunities for partnering with local organizations and agencies would provide for increased stewardship of park resources. The opportunity for instituting National Park Service education and interpretive programs, and visitor services would be enhanced.

Alternative F, the Preferred Alternative

Alternative F, like Alternative E, was developed by extracting some features of both Alternatives C and D and by creating new zone types and management prescriptions that responded to public criticism of the May 2004 Draft. Alternative F provides more opportunities throughout the park for "hardened" types of access and facility development, such as boat ramps, paved trails, parking areas, and restrooms where zoned appropriate. Under Alternative F boating and fishing would be appropriate throughout the park wherever possible, and in accordance with State laws and private property rights.

Alternative F provides opportunities for the National Park Service to expand use to local visitors and increase connectivity to neighboring communities through trail linkages, partnering, and expanded interpretive, education and outreach activities. Like Alternative E, the increased reliance on cooperative efforts with local organizations and agencies would be necessary to enhance the levels of connectivity, avoid resource degradation, and increase resource protection through educational outreach activities.

Alternative F was selected as the preffered alternative by a decision making system called "Choosing by Advantages". The fundamental rule in this decision-making system is that sound decisions must be based on the importance of advantage. Alternative F was selected because it best balances the park's need to provide high-quality visitor experiences and protect park resources. This alternative addresses public comments and concerns received. Alternative F, the preferred alternative, would provide the greatest total advantage of the six alternatives.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The process of determining environmental consequences included identifying the regulations and policies applicable to each impact topic, and then defining the methods to conduct the analysis. Impact thresholds for each impact topic are defined in terms of negligible, minor, moderate and major; and whether they would be short-term or long-term and adverse or beneficial effects. Cumulative effects were also assessed. The impact analysis compared future conditions under potential new types of management practices (action alternatives) to future conditions that would occur if current management practices were to continue unchanged (Alternative A, No Action). The following is a summary of effects. All future development projects are subject to compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act and other appropriate laws and regulations. Future project environmental reviews will be site specific and address cultural and natural resources, visitor experiences and park operations.

Impacts of Alternative A: The overall effects of Alternative A would lead to gradual long-term reduction of the value of natural and cultural resources in the park, as a result of less effective resource and trail management in comparison with the action alternatives. Because park staff resources are limited, interpretive activities would not increase. The park is currently experiencing problems with soil erosion, sedimentation of streams from surrounding development, excessive growth of invasive species of plants, and excessive use of unauthorized trails. In general, long- and short-term, minor to moderate, adverse effects to water resources would occur under Alternative A from minimal construction and maintenance of park facilities, the effects of increasing visitor use, staffing constraints, and the lack of implementation of resource stewardship strategies and other studies. Long and short-term, moderate, adverse effects to wetlands, floodplains, and terrestrial ecological resources would occur. Rare, threatened and endangered species would continue to be protected; however, without conducting additional survey work, effects to these species could occur, resulting in long-term, minor, adverse effects.

Long-term, minor to major, adverse effects to archeological resources would result from natural causes, inappropriate visitor use, development activities outside the park, and a lack of information about the locations and significance of archeological sites. Avoidance and other mitigation measures would help reduce adverse effects of new park construction, and long-term, minor benefits to sites would result from visitor education, ranger patrols, and protection from large development projects. In addition, few of the historic buildings, structures, landscapes and objects in the park would be afforded enhanced protection and preservation treatment and a corresponding adverse effect to the cultural landscape. If the historic resources are not monitored, maintained or receive increased levels of protection and preservation, Alternative A would have long-term, minor to major, adverse effects on historic buildings, structures, landscapes and objects in the park.

Under Alternative A, the majority of transportation effects would be localized to park entrances and short and long-term, adverse effects would be negligible. The overall effects on the availability, management, and connectivity of trails would be long-term, minor to moderate, and adverse.

Alternative A would have an overall long-term, moderate, adverse effects on visitor experiences and the traditional character of the park since no new programs, facilities or related increase in park staff levels would be expected to occur. Although the continued availability of existing recreational opportunities throughout the park would result in a beneficial effect, the majority of comments received expressed a preference for a more facilitated park experience with expanded access and more diverse recreational opportunities. Therefore, the effects of Alternative A on recreation would be long-term, moderate, and adverse. Park operations would become increasingly difficult to implement resulting in less effective park management. Alternative A would have a long-term, moderate, adverse effect on park operations.

Impacts of Alternative B: Alternative B would focus on providing visitors the maximum amount of opportunity to experience the natural features of the park, but with relatively few access points along the 48-mile corridor. Alternative B would have long-and short-term, minor, beneficial effects on water resources, aquatic resources, wetlands, and floodplains resulting from control of surface runoff, greater emphasis on habitat restoration and increased educational opportunities, and implementation of a resource stewardship strategy, fisheries management plan, integrated trail system study, and flow studies. Water resources in general would continue to be more heavily influenced by urban development surrounding the park than by activities in the park. Alternative B would have long-and short-term, minor to moderate, beneficial effects on terrestrial ecological resources and rare, threatened and endangered species due to a lesser amount of construction activity than under Alternative A, a greater emphasis on habitat restoration, increased educational programs, and development and implementation of resource stewardship strategies that include measures to control invasive species.

Under Alternative B, establishment of cultural resources zones, minimizing facilitated recreational activities, and changing visitor use patterns would benefit cultural resource sites. Development of resource stewardship strategies and collections management plan, inventory and preservation of sites, increased visitor education and interpretation, and enhanced site monitoring and ranger patrols all would contribute to long-term, moderate benefits to archeological resources. Some long-term, negligible to minor, adverse effects on archeological resources would result from development, visitor use and natural processes. Long-term, negligible to minor, adverse effects on some historic resources located outside of the cultural resource zones. The majority of the park's historic structures, buildings, objects, and landscapes would gain long-term, major benefits from placement in cultural resource zones, minimal development within the park, increased monitoring and ranger presence, rehabilitation and adaptive use/reuse, and enhanced interpretation leading to increased stewardship.

It is likely that motorized vehicle patterns in the park would continue to exhibit patterns and problems similar to those described for Alternative A, with projected long-term, negligible, and adverse effects. Long-term, negligible, beneficial effects on the availability, management, and connectivity of trails would occur since fewer new trails would be constructed compared to Alternative A, but an integrated trail system study and an increased level of partnering with local governments and organizations would be implemented.

Regarding the visitor experience overall, Alternative B would result in a long-term, moderate to major, beneficial effect on visitors who value solitude and isolation, and a long-term, moderate to major, adverse effect on visitors who value more varied, active recreational experiences and supportive facilities. Alternative B would have long-term, moderate, beneficial effect on traditional character and experiences by providing an emphasis on improving resource conditions and education programs. The effect of Alternative B on park operations would be long-term, negligible, and beneficial, largely due to the limited amount of development and the emphasis on a less facilitated visitor experience.

Impacts of Alternative C: Under this alternative, visitors would be drawn to a system of hubs and five developed zones distributed along the length of the 48-mile park corridor. This alternative would allow for increased educational opportunities for visitors through centralized facilities and access to resources and information from park rangers. Visitors would still have ample opportunity to experience solitude and other similar activities in natural areas between the hubs.

In general, Alternative C would have the potential for a greater amount of construction than Alternative A; however, these impacts would be offset somewhat by centralization of services and construction in hubs; implementation of a resource stewardship strategy, fisheries management plan, an integrated trail system study, and flow studies; and the increased educational opportunities and partnerships. The overall effect on water resources, aquatic resources, aquatic resources, wetlands, floodplains, and terrestrial ecological resources is long- and short-term, negligible, and adverse.

Alternative C would have long-term, negligible, adverse effects on rare, threatened and endangered species due to the combined effects of an intermediate amount of land disturbance centralized in hubs as compared with Alternative A, the emphasis placed on educational programs, expanded species inventories, and implementation of a resource stewardship strategy, which would address invasive species control and management.

Effects on archeological resources and cultural landscapes, historic buildings, structures and objects from natural processes and visitor use and from facility construction would be long-term, negligible to minor, and adverse. Alternative C would also result in long-term, moderate to major benefits from the establishment of cultural resource zones, implementation of collections management plan and resource stewardship strategies, concentration of development in the hubs following survey and analysis of the area of potential effect, rehabilitation and adaptive use of structures, increased monitoring and ranger presence, focused visitor use in hubs, and increased interpretation and education resulting in improved stewardship.

Alternative C would have a long-term, minor to moderate, adverse effect on vehicular transportation. Effects on trails would be long-term, minor to moderate, and beneficial in terms of availability, management, and connectivity of trails since more facilities would be feasible under Alternative C, and an integrated trail system study would be completed. In addition, an increased level of partnering with local governments and organizations would improve trail connectivity and resource stewardship.

The effect of Alternative C on visitor experience would be long-term, minor to moderate, and beneficial since both a facilitated experience and opportunities for solitude would be offered. Overall, this alternative would have a long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial effect on the recreational opportunity for the majority of park visitors. However, Alternative C is likely to have a long-term, moderate to major, adverse effect on visitors who prefer a wider range of access and motorized boating throughout the entire 48-mile corridor.

Alternative C would have a long-term, major, beneficial effect on maintaining the traditional character and experiences in the park. The overall effect on park operations would be long-term, moderate, and beneficial, largely due to the efficiency of providing centralized services in hubs.

Impacts of Alternative D: Alternative D would have a greater relative amount of land disturbing activity and more access in comparison to Alternative A. These impacts would be offset somewhat by implementation of a resource stewardship strategy, fisheries management plan, an integrated trail system study, and flow studies; and the increased staffing, educational opportunities, and partnerships afforded under this alternative. The overall effect on water resources, aquatic resources, wetlands and

floodplains is long- and short-term, minor, and adverse. The effects to terrestrial resources would be long and short-term, minor to moderate, and adverse; and long-term, negligible to minor, adverse effects on rare, threatened or endangered species primarily because visitor use would be expanded and distributed throughout the park.

Alternative D would provide more protection, monitoring, and interpretation of archeological sites than Alternative A and would have long-term, moderate benefits on archeological sites by establishing cultural resource zones; by increasing monitoring, numbers of rangers, and education programs; and by implementing resource stewardship strategies and collections management plans. However, this alternative would result in more visitors in sensitive areas and higher potential for site deterioration and loss from inappropriate recreational uses and vandalism. Implementation of this alternative would have long-term, direct and indirect, moderate adverse effects on archeological resources.

Effects of Alternative D on cultural landscapes, historic buildings, objects and structures would be long-term, direct and indirect, minor to moderate, and adverse due to increased numbers of recreational facilities and means of access into the park that could result in damage to structures and sites. Introduction of modern developments into the historic landscape also would have minor to moderate adverse effects. Long-term, indirect and direct, moderate beneficial effects of protection and preservation would accrue from development of cultural resource zones, rehabilitation, reuse, adaptive use of historic structures, implementation of resource stewardship strategies and collections management plans, and increased monitoring and ranger presence.

Transportation and traffic problems in the park and surrounding area would continue to increase under any of the alternatives, since traffic and transportation patterns and characteristics are largely controlled by factors outside the park. Overall, Alternative D would have a direct, long-term, moderate, adverse effect on transportation and traffic in the park and surrounding area, due to traffic congestion.

Alternative D would have a direct, long-term, moderate, beneficial effect on the availability, management, and connectivity of trails since more new trail construction would be appropriate, an integrated trail system study would be implemented, and an increased level of partnering would be coordinated to improve trail connectivity with surrounding local and county parks when compared to Alternative A.

Alternative D would cause a range of effects to the visitor experience and recreational opportunities. There would be a long-term, moderate to major, adverse effect on visitors who value solitude and isolation, and a long-term moderate to major, beneficial effect on visitors who value a more facilitated park experience and more diverse recreational opportunities. The traditional character of the park would be maintained under Alternative D through changes in management policy resulting in a long-term, major, beneficial effect on traditional character and experiences in the park. However, this alternative also has a simultaneous potential for having a long-term, minor to moderate, adverse effect on traditional park character, since a higher degree of isolation and solitude, experiencing the natural river environment, and similar values, would not be as achievable as compared to Alternative A.

Impacts of Alternative E: Alternative E would have a greater relative amount of land disturbing activity and more access with support facilities in comparison to Alternative A. The effects of these activities and uses would be offset somewhat by implementation of a resource stewardship strategy, fisheries management plan, an integrated trail system study, and flow studies; and increased staffing, educational opportunities, and partnerships. The overall effect on water resources and aquatic resources would be long- and short-term, negligible to minor, and adverse. Although the rationale

may differ for the intensity and duration of effects to wetlands and floodplains, terrestrial ecological resources, and rare, threatened or endangered species, the findings are the same as reported for Alternative C, that are previously described.

Adverse effects on archeological resources from natural processes, visitor use, and development of new facilities, would have long-term, direct and indirect, negligible to minor, adverse effects on archeological resources because mitigation measures would help reduce potential for site damage. Establishment of historic resource zones with additional ranger presence and monitoring, new educational programs, and implementation of resource stewardship strategies and collections management plans would have long-term, direct and indirect, moderate to major benefits to archeological resources.

Implementation of Alternative E would help protect and rehabilitate and reuse buildings, structures, landscapes, and objects within the historic resources zones. Increased ranger presence, monitoring, interpretation, and implementation of a resource stewardship strategy and a collections management plan would have long-term, moderate to major, beneficial effects in preserving these resources for the future compared to Alternative A. Effects from visitor use and natural processes would be long-term, negligible to minor, and adverse.

The dispersed nature of the access in Alternative E and lack of hubs would result in transportation related effects the same as described for Alternative D. In addition, the same level of partnering and enhanced trail connectivity would result in the same levels of intensity and duration of effect as Alternative D.

In comparison with Alternative A, Alternative E would provide visitors with a lower relative potential for experiencing solitude and isolation, and an expanded opportunity for more diverse, active forms of recreation experiences such as motorized boating, bicycling, horseback riding, and walking and hiking. The result would be a long-term, moderate, adverse effect on visitors who value solitude and isolation, and a long-term, moderate to major, beneficial effect on visitors who value a more facilitated park experience.

Alternative E would have a long-term, moderate, adverse effect on visitors who value more passive, less diverse forms of recreation and a long-term, moderate to major, beneficial effect on visitors who value more diverse opportunities for recreation (such as bicyclists, boaters and those who fish), increased park access points, and a more social experience.

The traditional character of the park would be maintained under Alternative E through changes in management policy resulting in a long-term, major, beneficial effect on traditional character and experiences in the park. However, this alternative also has a simultaneous potential for having a long-term, minor, adverse effect on traditional park character, since a higher degree of isolation and solitude, and similar values, would not be as achievable as compared to Alternative A.

Effects on park operations would be similar to Alternative D, however there would be less facility development compared to Alternative D, and overall there would be a long-term, negligible, beneficial effect on park operations due to strengthening of park partnerships, implementation of stewardship strategies, other plans, and increased staffing levels.

Impacts of Alternative F, the Preferred Alternative: Alternative F would have a greater relative amount of land disturbing activity and more access with support facilities in comparison to Alternative A. The effects of these activities and uses would be offset somewhat by implementation of a resource

stewardship strategy, fisheries management plan, an integrated trail system study, and flow studies; and increased staffing, educational opportunities, and partnerships. Although the rationale may differ for the intensity and duration of effects to natural resources (including water resources and aquatic resources, wetlands and floodplains, terrestrial ecological resources, and rare, threatened or endangered species), the results are the same as reported for Alternative D, that are previously described.

Protection of cultural resource sites within historic resource zones, implementation of a collections management plan and resource stewardship strategy, use of mitigation measures to reduce potential effects of development, increased ranger presence and site monitoring would have long-term, moderate to major, beneficial effects in preserving archeological resources for the future. Natural processes and construction activities associated with implementation of Alternative F would have long-term, indirect and direct, minor, adverse effects on archeological resources. Implementation of Alternative F would help protect and rehabilitate and reuse buildings, structures, landscapes, and objects within the historic resources zones. Increased ranger presence, monitoring, interpretation, and implementation of a resource stewardship strategy and a collections management plan would have long-term, moderate to major, beneficial effects on preserving these resources for the future compared to Alternative A. Effects from visitor use and natural processes would be long-term, minor, and adverse.

The same transportation effects as those described under Alternative D are applicable to Alternative F. Approximately 66 percent of the park would be zoned in a maner that is readily accessible to visitors and zoned for a more facilitated experience, which is a level similar to Alternative D. The dispersed nature of access and lack of hubs would also result in transportation effects the same as described for Alternative D. The same level of partnering to enhance trail connectivity throughout the park would also be the same as that described for Alternative D. In addition, off-road bicycling would be appropriate on designated trails in the developed zone, natural area recreation zone, and rustic zone, which is comparable to Alternative D. Individual preferences as to where these zones occur may result in differences in opinion regarding the benefits of Alternatives E and F.

In comparison with Alternative A, Alternative F would provide visitors with a lower relative potential for experiencing solitude and isolation, and an expanded opportunity for more active forms of recreation experiences such as motorized boating, bicycling, horseback riding, and walking and hiking. The result would be a long-term, moderate to major, adverse effect on visitors who value solitude and isolation, and a long-term, moderate to major, beneficial effect on visitors who value more facilitated experiences and park use.

The traditional character of the park would be maintained under Alternative F through changes in management policy resulting in a long-term, major, beneficial effect on traditional character and experiences in the park. However, this alternative also has a simultaneous potential for having a long-term, minor to moderate, adverse effect on traditional park character, since a higher degree of isolation and solitude, and similar values, would not be as achievable as compared to Alternative A.

The effects of Alternative F on park operations are the same as described for Alternative E above.

NEXT STEPS

The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* includes letters from governmental agencies, any substantive comments on the supplemental draft document, and National Park Service responses to those comments. Following

distribution of the *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* and a 30-day no-action period, a record of decision approving a final plan will be signed by the National Park Service regional director. The record of decision will document the NPS selection of an alternative for implementation. With the signed record of decision, the plan can then be implemented, depending on funding and staffing. (A record of decision does not guarantee funds and staff for implementing the approved plan.) The Park must compete with other units of the National Park system for limited implementation funding.