



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park

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Grand Canyon News Release

Release date: Immediate

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Date: October 23, 2008

National Park Service releases Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Grand Canyon's Fire Management Plan

Grand Canyon, Ariz. – Grand Canyon National Park Superintendent Steve Martin today announced the availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) (Fire Management Plan). Although the Federal Register notice states the National Park Service (NPS) will accept comments on the DEIS from the public for 60 days after the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability (October 23, 2008), the NPS made a decision to extend it to 90 days, beginning today, October 23.

The NPS is preparing this document in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as amended, to update the current Fire Management Plan, which was approved in 1992 and last revised in 2008.

Between 1993 and 2006, more than 115,800 acres burned in Grand Canyon National Park. Seventy eight percent of those acres were burned using prescribed (46,459) and naturally-ignited fires managed for resource benefits (46,433). Twenty-two percent (22,942) of the total acres burned were suppression fire. The fire effects monitoring program allows fire managers to evaluate the effectiveness of prescribed and wildland fire-use activities, and adapt future practices as needed to better meet resource management objectives.

After more than 15 years of proactive fire management, progress toward restoring natural fire regimes to the park is measurable, but far from fully achieved. In many areas within the park, multiple fire treatments will be needed to restore desired ecological conditions.

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The DEIS evaluates a no-action alternative (Alternative 1) and four action alternatives designed to implement NPS fire policies, accommodate new scientific information and accomplish revised program goals and objectives within Grand Canyon National Park . Program goals and objectives include: 1) protecting human health and safety and private and public property; 2) restoring and maintaining park ecosystems in a natural, resilient condition; 3) protecting the park's natural, cultural, and social values; 4) promoting a science-based program that relies on current and best-available information; and 5) educating, informing, consulting, and collaborating with tribes, stakeholders, and the public. The DEIS examines the environmental impacts of each of the alternatives outlined in the document.

The NPS has identified Alternative 2, the Mixed Fire Treatment Program, as the preferred alternative. This program would continue the current direction of Grand Canyon's Fire Management Program with a few changes to better meet goals and objectives stated in the DEIS. The current program generally prescribes low severity fire as the means to achieve objectives for ecological restoration. Changes would include use of new Fire Management Units that better reflect management opportunities and constraints, expansion of a Wildland-Urban Interface treatment program involving manual and mechanical fuel-reduction methods in developed areas and a mixed severity fire program. The preferred alternative would continue use of suppression, wildland fire use, prescribed fire, and manual fuel-reduction treatments. A complete description of all of the alternatives can be found in the DEIS.

The document will be posted online later today and will be available for review at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca> by clicking on the Fire Management Plan, and the scrolling to "Open for Public Comments." People who cannot or do not wish to obtain the document online may request a paper copy or a CD by calling Edward Bennett, Environmental Protection Assistant at Grand Canyon National Park, at 928-638-7695.

Public meetings will be held in Kanab, Utah; and in Tusayan and Flagstaff, Arizona. The exact dates, facility locations and times of the meetings will be announced shortly.

Comments must be posted online or postmarked no later than Wednesday, January 21, 2009. People are encouraged to post their comments online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca>. Comments can also be mailed to: Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, Attention: Office of Planning and Compliance, P.O. Box 129 (#1 Village Loop), Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023.

For additional information, please contact Chris Marks, Deputy Fire Management Officer, at 928-638-7820 or at Christopher_Marks@nps.gov.

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