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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BAT CAVE RESTORATION

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, ARIZONA

[02/11/95]

Grand Canyon National Park proposes to close the Bat Cave and restore the natural setting in the Bat Cave area. An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared and circulated for public comment on January 13, 1995, with the comment period closing February 10, this date was later extended to April 24. Two alternatives were considered for this undertaking, they were: A. Proposed Action: Remove Towers and Rehabilitate the Impacted Area, and B. No Action: Do Not Change Current Administrative Actions for the Area.

The park received letters from 34 interested parties concerning the EA. Concerns expressed in the letters are summarized below:

- * Eighteen respondents were supportive of proceeding with the Proposed Action.
- * Fourteen respondents were opposed to proceeding with the Proposed Action.
- * Two respondents expressed no opinion about implementation of the Proposed Action.

Several concerns were raised by respondents, all but two of these concerns resulted from the proposed removal of the towers. There were no specific objections to closing Bat Cave to visitation. The concerns were categorized into generalized groups and are listed below with responses.

HISTORICAL SITE - Several responders objected to removal of the towers because they consider them to be historically significant. The park received information including newspaper articles on construction and operation of the tramway, information that the cable was the longest ever constructed at that time, comments that the towers provide a monument "to greed, and in this case, stupidity", and accusations that the NPS is removing the towers before they are eligible to be determined historically significant.

Response - The NPS has consulted with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office which rendered the opinion that the Proposed Action "should have no effect on any National Register listed or eligible property." The towers are not of exceptional nor innovative construction, rather they are of conventional construction that was typical of its time and is still in use today. Removal of the towers to restore the quality of wilderness was identified in the 1980 Wilderness Recommendations sent to Congress; the Proposed Action echoes

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this recommendation and seeks to implement it as one of a series of wilderness restoration projects within the park.

BAT STUDIES - The second major area of concern is the feeling that not enough scientific study had been conducted prior to undertaking the project. Comments request that study be done to count the number of bats within the cave, to identify if other species of bats might share the cave, how the towers or their removal might affect bat behavior, and doubt that visitation actually disturbs the bat population.

Response - The NPS has consulted with bat experts at Arizona Game and Fish and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, both on-site and through correspondence; in addition, several respondents identified themselves as scholars of bats and bat behavior. All experts have agreed that removal of the towers is the appropriate action for the good of the bats. Recommendations are for the action to occur in the fall or winter when the population is lowest and nursery activity is absent. The number of bats or possibility of other species is not an issue in determining if the action should be done.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY - A few of the respondents find the towers as an opportunity to provide educational and interpretive information to other individuals or to groups on river trips. Comments stated that the towers provide a frame of reference for discussion on the Bat Cave Mine, mining in Grand Canyon National Park in general, or the "ridiculous and inappropriate projects developers can come up with".

Response - The NPS acknowledges that education and interpretation are important aspects of river trips, however, there are several locations and opportunities to provide that experience. Removal of the towers from the recommended wilderness area is also important and can be used as an educational point.

ECONOMIC EFFECT TO HUALAPAI - A few respondents expressed concern that removal of the towers might damage the tourist industry being developed by the Hualapai Tribe.

Response - This issue was not considered as significant since the towers proposed for removal are within the park boundaries and the Hualapai have towers on the rim that remain on their reservation, adjacent to where they are developing their tourist industry. Removal of the towers in the park will not affect the economy of the Hualapai tribe.

MONEY BETTER SPENT ELSEWHERE - One respondent requested that the funds for this project be "better utilized elsewhere".

Response - Restoration of wilderness values is a high priority for some land managing agencies and is in direct conformance with the NPS Management Policies. It happens that this is a very low budget project that is being accomplished through partnershiping with the Navy and the NPS.

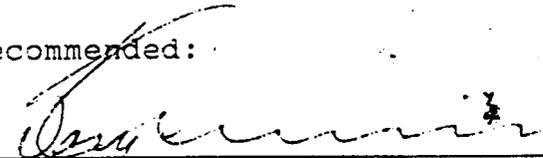
NOT IN CONFORMANCE WITH MOHAVE COUNTY RESOLUTION - One respondent stated the Proposed Action was not acceptable because the NPS violated the Draft Interim Public Land Use Policy for Mohave County.

Response - The NPS is not under the jurisdiction of this draft interim policy.

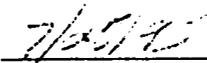
None of the public comments surfaced significant issues not already addressed in the EA. The above responses clarify points addressed in the EA or address non-significant issues raised by a respondent.

Based on the analysis in the Environmental Assessment, the nature of the comments received during the extended public review period, and the potential foreseen for the mitigating actions to reduce or eliminate adverse effects, the National Park Service has determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the human environment. Therefore, the proposal will be implemented and an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Recommended:

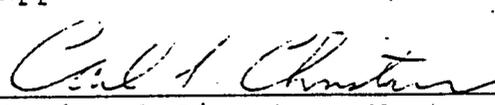


Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park

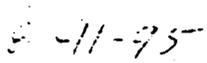


Date

Approved:



Acting Regional Director, Western Region



Date

IMPACT / MITIGATION MATRIX

PARK: GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

PROJECT: BAT CAVE RESTORATION

IMPACTS

1. The project will remove the existing tram towers on NPS land Ly Bat Cave.

2. Removal of the towers could provide a short-term impact on the bats and/or their environment.

3. River users may continue to hike to Bat Cave and disturb the bats.

4. The action will leave the tower debris along the river.

PRESCRIBED MITIGATION

1. The existing status of the towers, as well as the actions of their removal, will be documented for archival records. Responsibility - Grand Canyon Science Center.

2. Tower removal will occur in the Fall, a season recommended by State bat experts, when colony population is at its lowest. Measures described in the EA will be used to reduce acoustic vibration. The minimal effective charge will be used to topple the tower and footings will be left in place. Responsibility - Grand Canyon Science Center.

3. Trails to the cave will be obliterated and revegetated. Signs will be posted closing area and providing an interpretative message. Responsibility - Grand Canyon Science Center.

4. An agreement has been reached between the NPS and Navy to remove debris on rafts. All debris will be hauled down river from the Bat Cave area to Meadview and then removed to proper deposition within two months following demolition of the towers. Responsibility - Grand Canyon Science Center.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK
P.O. BOX 129
GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA 86023-0129

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L76 (GRCA 8219)

SEP 25 1995

Mr. Richard Quartaroli
P.O. Box G
Flagstaff, Arizona 86002-0958

Dear Mr. Quartaroli:

Thank you for your interest in Grand Canyon National Park and for responding to the Bat Cave Restoration Environmental Assessment last spring. After reviewing the comments we have decided to proceed with the proposed action of removing the Bat Towers. We prepared a Finding Of No Significant Impact which was signed by the Western Regional Director on August 11. A copy is enclosed for your information.

We anticipate removal of the towers this fall in a joint effort between park staff and the US Navy.

Sincerely,

for

Robert L. Arnberger
Superintendent

Enclosure