

# **GMP Dynamic Sourcebook - Appendix J: Choosing by Advantages and Environmentally Preferred Alternative**

## **J.3 The Environmentally Preferred Alternative - Examples**

### **Example 2**

The environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act. In the National Park Service, the environmentally preferred alternative is identified by (1) determining how each alternative would meet the criteria set forth in section 101(b) and (2) considering any inconsistencies between the alternatives analyzed and other environmental laws and policies (DO 12, 2.7E). Section 101 states that " ... it is the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to

- (1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations
- (2) assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings
- (3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences\
- (4) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and, wherever possible, maintain an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice
- (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities
- (6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources." (Criteria 6 was determined to be not applicable to this planning effort.)

Taken as a whole, the preferred alternative (alternative 2) would best satisfy the five remaining goals and is the environmentally preferred alternative. The preferred alternative would enhance the park's ability to carry out its mission through developmental and programmatic activities while limiting the amount of new environmental impacts from development and use. Current visitor experiences would still be available but with a greater depth and range, and there would be increased opportunities for both recreational diversity and learning about park resources. Buildings would be adaptively used for new functions thus maximizing visitor opportunities without expanding the developed areas. Thus the preferred alternative would satisfy national goals 2, 3, 4, and 5 to a high degree, ensuring for the long- term that visitors coming to the park see an esthetically and culturally pleasing area, providing a wide range of opportunities for visitors to learn and enjoy the area with minimal adverse impacts, while preserving and enhancing the understanding and preservation of the park's important natural and cultural resources and fulfilling the Park Service's responsibilities as trustee of the environment (goals 1 and 4).

Alternative 1, the no-action alternative, would continue to preserve important cultural and natural resources (goals 1 and 4), although it would not enhance the Park Service's ability to achieve these goals to the same degree as under the preferred alternative. Educational, informational, and research opportunities would remain limited by lack of facilities and programs and would thus not fulfill goals 2, 3, 4, and 5 as well as the preferred alternative.

Alternative 3 would provide the greatest range and flexibility in visitor recreational opportunities, thus meeting goals 2, 3, 4, and 5. However, alternative 3 would not have the emphasis on both research based educational opportunities and recreational diversity that the preferred alternative would offer. Providing these opportunities and associated new facilities would also result in more extensive and dispersed resource impacts and a greater likelihood that resource management would become more reactive rather than proactive in addressing issues. Thus this alternative would not provide as great a degree of protection for resources (goals 1 and 4) compared to the preferred alternative.

Alternative 4 would provide the highest degree of protection for the park's natural and cultural resources, primarily by removing nonhistoric facilities and restoring areas to more natural conditions, expanding resource management programs and data collection, and generally preserving cultural resources at the highest level possible, with preservation of historic fabric a priority. Thus goals 1 and 4 would be best served by this alternative. Although some visitor opportunities would be enhanced, particularly nonmotorized opportunities, overall there would be a narrower range and fewer opportunities for all visitors to fully enjoy the park and its resources (goals 2, 3, 4, and 5) compared to the other alternatives.