



## Dear Park Friends, Neighbors, and Visitors

First, and most importantly, I want to thank the many people who responded to newsletter #1 and the project scoping meetings in west Texas and New Mexico last year. We received many helpful comments and extensive guidance from long-standing neighbors and visitors as well as new friends and interested groups. We sincerely appreciated the time you spent communicating with us.

Over the last six months, the planning team has collected a wealth of detailed information about the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources and has studied how people access and interact with these park resources. We've analyzed the wide range of landscape resources that make up this highly diverse park and evaluated existing methods of managing all aspects of park operations. This data analysis and evaluation process was designed to improve the understanding of management problems and to provide a link to the development of planning alternatives that guide management actions in the future.

One of the key objectives in our planning process is to keep you, our interested neighbors, friends, and visitors, informed as we reach major milestones in the development of the draft general management plan (GMP). The important planning milestones that you will find described in this newsletter include

- a brief summary of the range of scoping comments
- analysis methods for evaluating existing park management
- management zoning classifications that will prescribe new management priorities
- management concepts that will frame our planning alternatives for the draft GMP

As always, we urge you to take the opportunity to respond to these milestones in the planning process. Inside this newsletter you will find a prestamped comment form that can be quickly and easily mailed back to us. For those preferring to respond via the computer, the e-mail address is [gumo\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:gumo_superintendent@nps.gov) and the web address is: [www.nps.gov/gumo/gumo](http://www.nps.gov/gumo/gumo). Thanks again for your interest in the development of this plan for the future of the Guadalupe Mountains National Park. We look forward to your continued active involvement.

Sincerely,

Ellis Richard  
Superintendent, Guadalupe Mountains National Park



## ***GMP SCOPING YIELDS A WIDE RANGE OF RESPONSES***

*The response was very strong to our GMP project scoping. We received over 150 letters and newsletter mail-back forms. About 100 people participated in our six public meetings held throughout western Texas and southern New Mexico. A variety of points of view about future visions for the park and park-management issues were offered from park neighbors, Native American tribes, community leaders, governmental agencies, and other interested groups. The comments covered a wide range of perspectives, from better resource protection to greater use of resources for the enjoyment of visitors. Although each visitor may have a different vision of the park, everyone has a common interest in its valuable resources. A successful plan must incorporate a variety of visitor use opportunities while carefully protecting the resources for future generations. We will be considering the diversity of users and preservation needs at the park as we formulate planning alternatives — the next step in the planning process.*

*The following discussion summarizes the range of issues that surfaced in the responses to the newsletter and in the meetings.*

**OVERALL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.** On the question of overall resource management priorities, some respondents sought to enhance resource protection by congressionally designating more wilderness, while others suggested that allowing agriculture (grazing), increasing prescribed fires, and providing more surface water in the park would conserve resources and enhance the habitat for native wildlife. There was an expressed concern for preserving archeological and cultural resources, particularly maintaining historic sites. Many respondents noted the need to protect the world-class geologic resources.

**USE AND ACCESS.** The most dramatic divergence of opinion was expressed on use and access within the park. Some wanted to see the development of more

facilities and access to serve a wider range of visitors, while others wanted to preserve the diverse resources and sense of solitude with stricter use regulations and access restrictions. Both the need for better developed camping facilities and provisions for greater accessibility on established trails was mentioned. Specific suggestions included more educational brochures, exhibits, trails, and ranger-led programs that would teach visitors about the park.

**SCIENCE RESEARCH.** The value of the park to science research was recognized by a number of respondents. Suggestions included the use of the park for research purposes, especially geological and paleontological research, and creating more outreach and partnership programs. Many wanted to learn about the natural and cultural resources of the park and their linkage to other regional, national, and international areas. The opportunity for more outreach and all sorts of possible partnerships was noted as a means to enhance educational programs, scientific research and energy development.



## ***DATA ANALYSES DRIVES THE PLANNING ALTERNATIVES***

*The GMP planning team has compiled extensive information concerning resource issues at the park. This information will be used extensively to formulate planning alternatives and will provide the foundation to evaluate the environmental impacts of alternatives.*

**PARK RESOURCE AND MANAGEMENT ISSUE TOPICS.** Early in the planning process, the team compiled a set of resource and management issue topics that might affect GMP planning alternatives. The list included 40 management topics spanning natural to cultural to visitor use issues. Information compiled included the topic background, existing conditions, current and potential management actions, regulatory and legal requirements, and other pertinent references. These topics have and will continue to be referenced in the planning process and will be used to determine environmental impacts.

# P A R K V I S I O N

The Guadalupe Mountains are globally unique geologic resources with a rich history of human interaction. These resources will be managed as wilderness and adjacent wild lands with opportunities for scientific study, visitor experience, and education consistent with resource preservation, ecosystem management, and the park's rugged character.

## *Proposed Framework for GMP Alternatives*

*The following framework for alternatives define a range of management priorities that would guide the park towards achieving the stated park vision for the future. These alternatives reflect the diverse public comments received and conform to the legislative, regulatory, and policy constraints that define the park's range of management authority and decision making.*

### **ALTERNATIVE A – NO-ACTION**

Continuation of existing park management priorities and practices.

### **ALTERNATIVE B — ENHANCED RESOURCE RESTORATION**

Resource study and restoration of environmental conditions that minimize the impacts of contemporary human use would be the focus of this alternative. Park natural settings and ecosystems would be managed to improve their function as natural systems by minimizing the impacts of human use and visitor development. Historically modified ecosystems would be more actively restored by management intervention. Areas containing cultural resources would be carefully protected from impacts of visitor use, and significant historic structures would be stabilized and restored with the minimum access required to enhance visitor understanding. Visitors would have greater opportunities to experience natural resources in an unmodified condition and in uncrowded settings.





**DEVELOPED.** This prescription would include areas with natural features, but the landscape would be highly modified and managed for visitor use. Significant cultural resources would be stabilized and protected from impacts of public use. Areas would be easily and conveniently accessed by foot, bicycle, or motor vehicle, and visitor activities could include nature study, developed picnicking and camping, and scenic viewing with frequent encounters with other visitors and staff. Potential developments could include visitor centers, surfaced trails, improved parking lots, picnic areas, developed campgrounds, and modern restrooms.



**MOTORIZED SCENIC CORRIDOR.** This prescription would apply to a moderate to highly modified and managed corridor passing through a largely natural setting. Significant cultural resources would be stabilized and could be restored for scenic viewing. The corridor would be easily accessible for automobiles, bicycles, or walkers, and visitors would experience landscapes with diverse, scenic features and frequent encounters with other people and vehicles. Potential development could include graded and surfaced (gravel or paved) roads and pullouts, parking lots, and modern restrooms.



**CULTURAL LANDSCAPES.** In this prescription natural processes would be highly modified and managed to support preservation of significant historic or cultural resources. These significant cultural resources would be stabilized and restored or rehabilitated to support public access and education. Areas could be accessed easily, and visitor activities would include resource education, picnicking, and scenic viewing. Visitors to cultural landscapes would experience a sense of the past, and encounters with others would be frequent. Potential developments could include surfaced trails, restored historic structures, and modern restrooms (within a historic context).



**RESEARCH NATURAL AREAS.** Areas in this prescription would be unmodified refuges for pristine landscape conditions and natural processes. Significant cultural resources would be protected from the impacts of human use. These limited areas would be managed as resource preserves for scientific study and thus would be off-limits to all but research personnel. No human improvements or impacts would be permitted.



**PARK OPERATIONS.** In this prescription, natural settings and processes would be highly modified and managed, and significant cultural resources would be stabilized. These limited areas would be designated for park operations and would be off-limits to visitors. Potential developments would include maintenance and administrative facilities, as well as staff housing.

## ***ALTERNATIVE C — ENHANCED EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES***

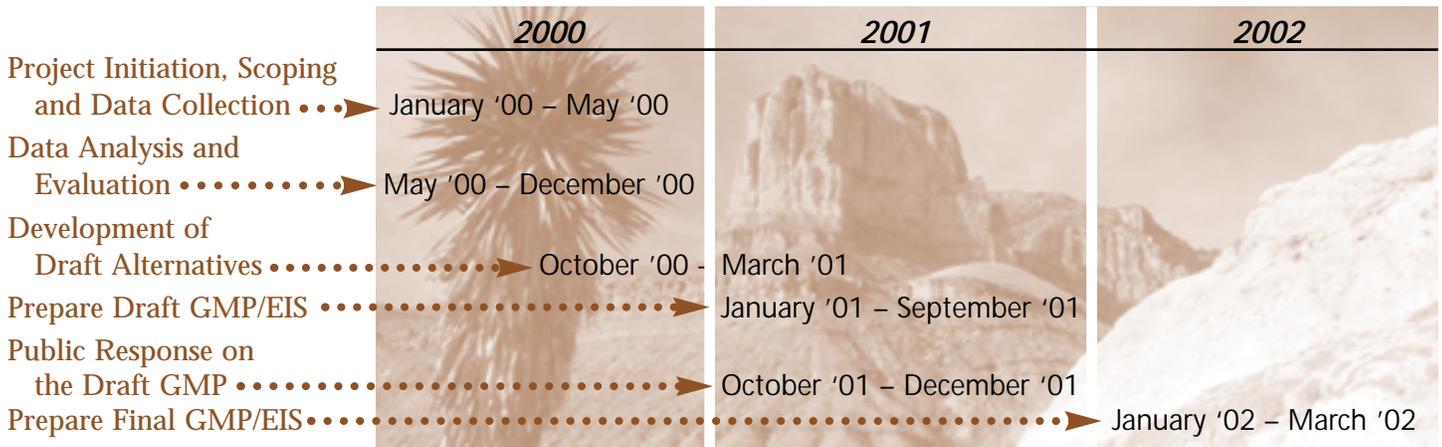
This alternative would emphasize improving ecosystem management of altered park environments while providing expanded opportunities for visitor experience and education. Enhancing overall ecosystem health and function would be a higher priority for resource management versus restoration of specific historically modified areas or elements of the park. Park natural settings would be protected by concentrating impacts of use in developed facilities. Cultural resources would be protected by carefully managing levels of use and providing appropriate visitor improvements for planned use. Historic structures would be restored and accessible to visitors if possible. A wider range of day use experiences and educational opportunities would be available, and visitors would have an opportunity to access more nonwilderness areas of the park by improved roads or trails.

## ***ALTERNATIVE D — ENHANCED OPERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS***

This alternative would emphasize a more integrated ecosystem management achieved through stronger park operational relationships with surrounding landowners and other interests. Priorities for resource management would include developing compatible land management practices with the BLM, USFS, and landowners. Park natural settings would become less distinct from surrounding lands, and overall ecosystem management would be improved with coordinated management actions at a larger scale. Cultural resources would be protected both within and outside park boundaries through partnerships and joint management agreements. Historic structures, landscapes, and practices could be preserved through lease or other use agreements. Visitor experience and educational opportunities could be enhanced by facilities or services provided by partners inside and outside the park boundaries.

### **PLANNING PROCESS TIMELINE**

*The development of the general management plan will take approximately two years to produce including collecting information, analyzing data, writing the draft document and reviews by the public and other agencies.*



**LANDSCAPE UNITS.** The planning team identified 13 "landscape units" within and contiguous with the park boundaries to provide a descriptive framework for examining resource conditions and visitor experience opportunities throughout the park. Refer to the map and descriptive key to see the wide range of different landscape characteristics in the park.

**GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS).** The planning team has compiled a digital computer database containing geographic information on a number of sensitive resources and built facilities within the park. GIS data layers include roads, trails, campgrounds, utility lines, vegetative communities, caves, wetlands, archeological sites, and historic structures, among others. GIS data layers can be overlain, compared, contrasted, manipulated, and analyzed in different ways to highlight areas that may contain important resources. Other areas can be identified that may be suitable for future operational or visitor use.



**MCKITTRICK CANYON** - Canyon walls up to 2,000 feet high surround a perennial stream corridor with special vegetation and abundant wildlife that also includes historic structures and outstanding scenic and scientific opportunities

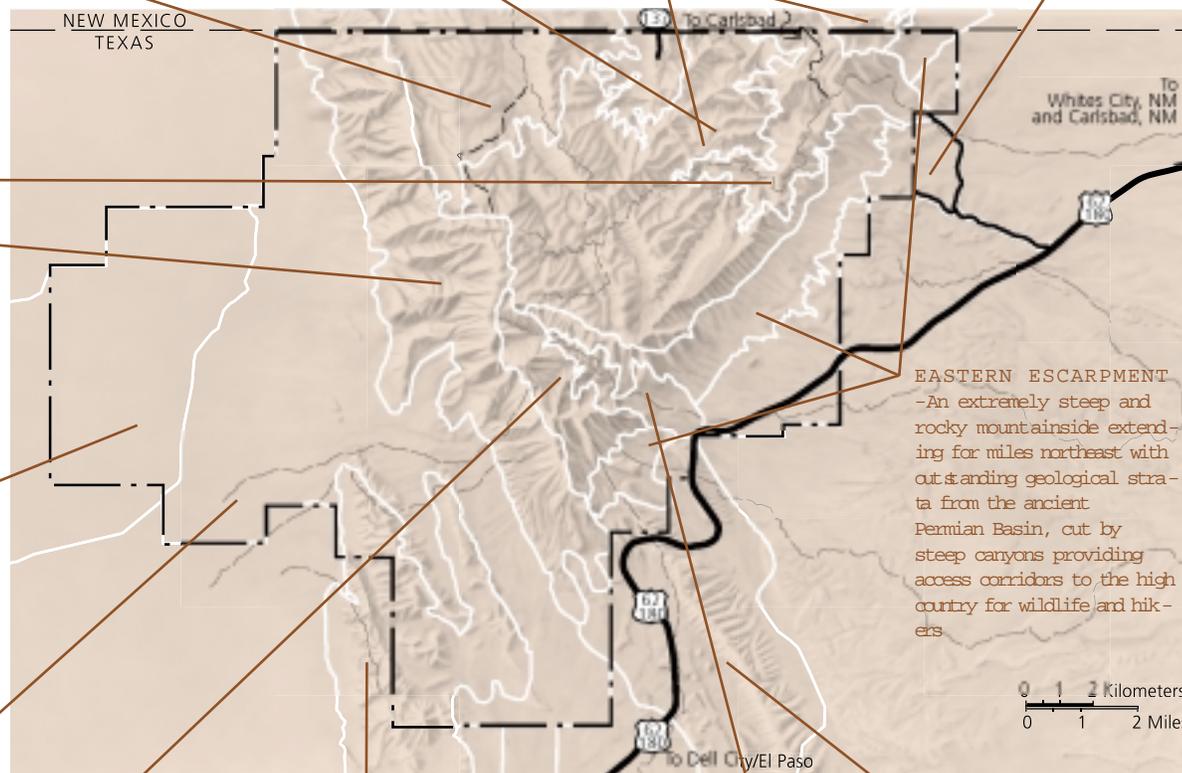
**BASIN AND RANGE** - An upland area of more gently rounded hills covered in grassland, mountain laurel, juniper, and Great Basin conifer woodland hunted by coyotes, foxes, and badgers in some of the most isolated sections of the park

**DOG CANYON** - A secluded, forested canyon and spring on the north side of the park with a wide range of wildlife species (including bear and cougar), former homesteads, mines, native rock art, middens, and flaking sites

**MOUNTAIN HIGH COUNTRY** - A scenic highland wilderness of steep hills and valleys containing an exceptional ancient relict forest of conifer and aspen and a wide variety of wildlife and decaying remnants of former cattle ranching operations

**EAST ALLUVIAL UPLANDS** - Uplands at the foot of the mountain escarpment where multiple springs and seeps critical to the survival of both wildlife and humans are found as well as historic and contemporary structures

**WESTERN ESCARPMENT** - Dramatic 2,000-foot sheer vertical cliffs, created by a large fault, include spring-fed hanging plant and animal environments and significant paleontological resources in this largely inaccessible area of the park



**SAND DUNES** - Low-lying, active, and stabilized white gypsum dunes, stabilized red quartzose dunes, and stabilized lakeshore ridge dunes form a stark sculpted landscape with prehistoric human remains and historic trails and water wells

**GUADALUPE PEAK** - Includes the highest peaks in Texas with world-class geological formations, a 500-year-old stand of Douglas fir trees, and a steep and rocky trail climbing 3,000 feet to a summit with an unforgettable 360-degree view

**PATTERSON HILLS** - A low series of rugged hills projecting into the panorama of the Western Escarpment holding a wide diversity of Chihuahuan desert vegetation with minimal access and no water or facilities

**PINE SPRINGS CANYON** - The upper reach of the canyon contains the unique geographic feature Devil's Hall and opens out to the Pinery stage stop ruins and the park's major headquarters, visitor use and park operations area

**EASTERN ESCARPMENT** - An extremely steep and rocky mountainside extending for miles northeast with outstanding geological strata from the ancient Permian Basin, cut by steep canyons providing access corridors to the high country for wildlife and hikers

**GUADALUPE PASS** - Guadalupe Pass between the mighty El Capitan and the Delaware Mountains is a crossroads in time with Native American rock art and habitation sites, a historic stagecoach trail, and a contemporary interstate highway

**BAJADAS** - A broad alluvial apron cut by deep arroyos from this rugged desert environment of typical Chihuahuan desert grassland with low shrubs and cacti, including the historic Williams Ranch landscape and abandoned drilling and well sites