

Frequently Asked Questions

Stehekin River Corridor Implementation Plan

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

North Cascades National Park Complex
Lake Chelan National Recreation Area



WHAT IS THE SRCIP/FEIS?

The SRCIP/FEIS outlines a specific implementation plan for managing and reacting to flooding and erosion threats within the Stehekin River floodplain and its surrounding built environment. The purpose of the plan is to implement and clarify the 1995 Lake Chelan National Recreation Area (NRA) General Management Plan (GMP) in response to increased flooding and erosion over the past 15 years.

HOW IS THE SRCIP/FEIS ORGANIZED? WHAT INFORMATION IS INCLUDED IN THE DOCUMENT?

In its 7 chapters and 22 appendices, the SRCIP:

- explains the need for management action,
- outlines the management alternatives (including modifications to the Land Protection Plan (LPP) for addressing flood and erosion threats,
- identifies the affected environment and environmental consequences of these management plans, and
- outlines the process of consultation and coordination with the public and various private and public agencies.

WHAT AREAS ARE IMPACTED BY THIS PLAN?

The project area includes the lower Stehekin Valley, from High Bridge to the head of Lake Chelan, including Weaver Point. No actions are considered in adjacent wilderness which begins above about 1,640 feet in the lower valley.

WHAT ACTIONS IS THE NPS CONSIDERING FOR THE STEHEKIN RIVER VALLEY?

The NPS is considering a lot of actions for the Stehekin River Valley! Since the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires all federal actions to present alternative management scenarios, this implementation plan includes five alternatives that explore different degrees of road construction, road relocation, erosion management measures, recreational facilities, large wood management, and priorities for land exchange under a revised Land Protection Plan.

While all five alternatives are feasible, the National Park Service (NPS) has identified a preferred alternative that takes the most fiscally and environmentally sustainable approach regarding the Stehekin River, the Stehekin community, and the natural and cultural resources in the valley. Specifically, this alternative, along with alternatives 2, 3 and 4, embraces the concept of floodplain utilization to varying degrees. In this concept, floodwaters are allowed to spread out across the floodplain, rather than being constrained by dikes or levees. Construction of dikes could reduce flood damage in any one area, but would increase impacts to another part of the valley.

The five management alternatives are:

- Alternative 1, No Action: Current management practices would continue. The NPS would implement existing plans.

- Alternative 2, At-risk public facilities would be removed from the channel migration zone where possible; more high-priority land exchange/acquisition in the channel migration zone.
- Alternative 3: At-risk public facilities removed from channel migration zone in most areas; same land protection plan as in alternative 2.
- Alternative 4: At-risk facilities would be removed from channel migration zone in some areas; less high-priority land exchange/acquisition would take place in the channel migration zone.
- Alternative 5 (preferred); At-risk public facilities removed from the channel migration zone where possible; priority for land exchange/acquisition in most vulnerable areas.

ARE THERE ANY ACTIONS THAT THE NPS IS PROPOSING REGARDLESS OF WHAT ALTERNATIVE IS IMPLEMENTED?

Yes! While the alternatives propose a range of actions, there are several actions called for by the 1995 Lake Chelan NRA GMP that would be implemented by all alternatives. These include:

- Relocating/constructing the NPS maintenance compound and administrative housing to the north end of the airstrip;
- Creating a Lower Valley Trail that would connect Stehekin Landing to a) High Bridge and b) the Stehekin River Trail via a footbridge;
- Maintaining the existing erosion-protection measures along the Stehekin Valley Road and Company Creek Road (alignment maintained), including the 400-foot-long levee constructed in the 1980s;
- Maintaining grade-control structures (designed to maintain sheet flow in floodplains during large floods) at Milepost 7.0 and 9.2 on the Stehekin Valley Road and along the upper Company Creek Road.

In addition to the actions that would be common to all alternatives, there are a variety of actions that are common to Alternatives 2–5, including proactive measures to protect administrative and public facilities from the future consequences of flooding. These actions include the following:

- Installing a logjam and new grade-control structure near Milepost 2.0 (Boulder Creek) and undertaking erosion-protection measures near the river mouth, at milepost 3.8 (Frog Island), and at milepost 5.3 (Wilson Creek)(specific actions would vary for the two later locations by alternative).
- Stabilizing the raveling slope at Milepost 8.0.
- Constructing individual campsites near Rainbow Falls and group campsites at Purple Point Horse Camp, and relocating Bullion Camp (with day use continuing at the existing site).
- Restoring a three hundred foot long riparian strip along the Stehekin River at Buckner Orchard.
- Altering large wood management in lake backwater zone at river mouth.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE CALLED FOR SPECIFICALLY UNDER THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

The Preferred Alternative allows the Stehekin River the most space to utilize its floodplain and move within its natural channel migration zone over time. The primary actions of this plan involve:

- Relocating a 1.9 mile segment of the Stehekin Valley Road around McGregor Meadows,
- Protecting the road in place at three locations with erosion management structures,
- Maintaining current access to private property,
- Constructing a raft take-out near the Stehekin River mouth with realignment of access road (no motor boats), and
- Restoring a total of 9.1 acres of riparian and wetland habitat.

Specific actions are outlined on the last page of this document.

WHAT IS THE CHANNEL MIGRATION ZONE AND HOW WILL THIS ZONE BE MANAGED UNDER THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

The channel migration zone is the area where the active channel of a stream is prone to movement over time. Since this area is threatened by the natural shifts within the river system, the NPS would consider the channel migration zone the effective floodplain and remove administrative facilities from it, including the maintenance facility, some housing, and parts of the road. Some segments of the road and campgrounds would remain in the CMZ, and would be protected at Wilson Creek and Frog Island by new erosion management measures that involve the installation of rock barbs, logjams, and/or bioengineering.

Alternatives 2-5 also embrace the concept of floodplain utilization to varying degrees. In this concept, floodwaters are allowed to spread out across the floodplain, rather than being constrained by dikes or levees. Floodplain utilization would reduce flood damage in any one area during the largest events.

WITH THE ROAD REROUTED AROUND MCGREGOR MEADOWS, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE OLD STEHEKIN VALLEY ROAD AND ACCESS TO PRIVATE LAND?

Between Milepost 5.7 and Milepost 7.5, the Stehekin Valley Road will be rerouted out of McGregor Meadows to a more sustainable location on a prominent bench above the floodplain. This route generally follows that of the first road in the valley. An access road for private landowners will be maintained between Milepost 5.7 to the last private residence at Milepost 6.5, but may be periodically closed by flooding and flood damage. A new 1000 ft long access spur off the reroute would provide access to McGregor Meadows. From Milepost 6.8 to 7.5, the road will be rehabilitated to a trail. A total of 13 acres of forest habitat will be cleared by the construction of the new road around McGregor Meadows, while about 9.6 acres along the former route will be restored.

UNDER THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE, CAN LANDOWNERS REMOVE WOOD FROM THE STEHEKIN RIVER?

Under certain conditions near the river mouth, yes. For agency-permitted erosion management and riparian restoration, landowners could use NPS-collected woody debris from the tops of some logjams within the Lake Chelan backwater zone (1/4 mile from the head of the lake up the Stehekin River). NPS would remove this wood if it posed a threat to the Stehekin Valley Road or water quality by flooding drain fields. The National Park Service could also consider manipulating logjams within this zone. To prevent a net loss of woody debris along the river, wood removed from these sections could only be used for erosion management and/or restoration projects within the channel migration zone.

HOW DOES THIS PLAN ADDRESS EMERGENCY CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH LARGE FLOODS FOR STEHEKIN VALLEY RESIDENTS?

While the National Park Service relies on the lead of Chelan County during emergency flooding situations, NPS staff are willing and able to assist with on the ground emergency response such as warnings, evacuations, and sandbagging. Private landowners and residents are encouraged to check the national weather service for information on severe storms at <http://www.weather.gov/>.

Under alternatives 2-5, the NPS would work with private landowners on a case-by-case basis to evaluate alternative routes if access to private property were compromised by river encroachment. The NPS would make new exchange lands available through the revised Land Protection Plan.

HOW MIGHT LAND EXCHANGE PRIORITIES CHANGE UNDER THIS NEW PLAN?

Using management actions such as land exchange or land acquisition from willing sellers, the revised LPP encourages relocating private property in the channel migration zone (not just the floodplain) to land outside this threatened area. Due to this shift in priorities, some lands available for exchange in the 1995 Land Protection Plan will no longer be available, including the Lower Field. There is also increased emphasis placed on clustering new development in areas away from the river, despite potentially being visible to the public.

The LPP criteria used to identify NPS lands for potential exchange are weighted more toward removing private development from the floodplain in Alternatives 2 and 3 than in Alternative 4. In the preferred alternative (5) the NPS focuses on the sites most at risk from being damaged by flooding, including those areas near the river in the two most unstable reaches: McGregor Meadows and the river mouth.

In the SRCIP the NPS proposes approximately 29.4 acres available for exchange located on landforms about the river, including stable portions of alluvial fans in the lower valley.

WHAT NEW RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE CREATED BY THE PLAN?

Recreational opportunities, including camping, rafting, and trails, associated with the Stehekin River would be enhanced. In the preferred alternative, the Lower Valley Trail, leading from the landing to High Bridge, would be constructed with fewer miles of new trail (4.6 miles) since the trail would use some former roadway (1.9 miles). New group camping sites would be located at Purple Point Horse Camp to replace the group campsite at Harlequin when it is seasonally flooded. Three or four new individual sites would also be located near Rainbow Falls, and Bullion Camp would be relocated downstream and across the road to mitigate safety concerns associated with hazard trees (though day use would be retained). A new raft takeout would be provided near the Stehekin River mouth, which would require a new small parking area and a new 300-foot-long access road off of the Stehekin Valley Road. Because the shooting range is located along the proposed Lower Field reroute, it would be closed and restored. No replacement shooting range would be constructed.

WHAT RESOURCES WOULD BE IMPACTED UNDER THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

In assessing the feasibility and sustainability of each alternative, the SCRIP/FEIS core team analyzed each alternative's impact on a variety of resources, from land use and water resources to vegetation, wildlife, cultural landscapes, and visitors' experiences (and much more). In drafting the environmental impact statement, the NPS also analyzed: unavoidable adverse impacts, relationships between short-term use of the environment and enhancement of long-term productivity, irretrievable and irreversible commitments of resources, and cumulative effects.

Under this analysis, the preferred alternative would have several major, long-term, beneficial impacts on important resources in Lake Chelan NRA. Primarily due to the removal of the NPS maintenance facility, housing, and 1.9 miles of roadway from the floodplain in McGregor Meadows, these benefits would be evident in land use, soils and vegetation, hydraulics and streamflow, water quality, wetlands, floodplains, NPS operations, and storage of hazardous materials. Most of the negative impacts of the preferred alternative are associated with short-term disturbances to land use, vegetation and soils, water quality, and wildlife during construction of the new road around McGregor Meadows and construction of new NPS facilities. The reroute includes the possibility of disturbing a nesting site for northern spotted owls, although no nesting activities have been observed since 2007.

HOW WILL CONSTRUCTION IMPACT VISITOR SERVICES?

Road construction and paving is anticipated to occur over the summer and fall seasons of 2014 and 2015. At times traffic will be constricted to one lane or the road may have to be closed entirely in some sections for several hours. Weekend and night work is not anticipated, but may occur upon the superintendent's approval.

Construction of new maintenance and housing facilities is scheduled for later. New recreational facilities that are not yet funded will be built after 2015.

HOW MUCH MONEY WILL IT COST TO IMPLEMENT THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

North Cascades National Park Service Complex estimates that the preferred alternative will cost approximately \$10 million (this does not include the cost for relocating the maintenance and housing facilities).

WHAT IS MY (THE PUBLIC'S) ROLE? HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Throughout the planning process, the NPS has invited public participation in the planning effort through a variety of public meetings and comment forms. On about July 16 the NPS is releasing a Final SRCIP and EIS, and will present this to the public at meetings in Stehekin August 6, and Seattle August 7. When this date is confirmed, the NPS will prepare a news release and mail the SRCIP/FEIS and LPP to interested parties.

The FEIS will be available for public review for 30 calendar days from the date of the Notice of Availability published in the Federal Register by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Following this 30 day period, the National Park Service and Federal Highway Administration will each issue a separate Record of Decision, which will identify the Responsible Officials' Selected Alternative and discuss the rationale for their decisions.

The Plan/FEIS will be mailed directly to those on the project mailing list. The document will be available for downloading on the project website and on CD-ROM. Copies will also be available for review at park headquarters in Sedro-Woolley, the main visitor center in Newhalem, and at the Golden West Visitor Center in Stehekin.

It is late in this planning process, but the public can still get involved in a variety of ways:

- Read the SRCIP/FEIS online (www.nps.gov/noca/parkmgmt/srcip.htm) or request a hard copy or compact disc (CD) of the plan (call 360-854-7205 or e-mail noca_superintendent@nps.gov).
- The Plan/FEIS will also be available on the project website and as part of the NPS Planning Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) database (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/noca>). At the PEPC website, click on the 'Stehekin River Corridor Implementation Plan' link; then click on 'Documents and Links,' then click on the 'Stehekin River Corridor Implementation Plan/EIS' link, which will bring up the Plan/FEIS and an on-line comment form.
- Attend a public meeting: Meetings are scheduled for Stehekin August 6, and Seattle August 7. The Stehekin meeting will be held at 7:00pm at the Golden West Visitor Center, and the Seattle meeting at 7:00pm at the Klondike Visitor Center.
- Send comments: Written comments must be submitted in writing and postmarked no later than 30 days after publication of the Notice of Filing. All comments should be addressed to: Superintendent, ATTN: Stehekin River Corridor Implementation Plan/FEIS, North Cascades National Park Complex, 810 State Route 20, Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284. Reviewers are encouraged to submit comments on-line at the PEPC web site (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/noca>).

All comments received will be available for review at the North Cascades NPS Complex headquarters.

Individual respondents may request that the NPS withhold their home address from public disclosure, and such requests will be honored to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which the NPS would withhold from the administrative record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish to withhold your name and/or address from the record, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. Anonymous comments will not be considered. As always, the NPS will make all comments from organizations, or businesses, and from individuals who represent officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

WHEN WILL THE NPS FINALIZE THE PLAN?

After a 30-day no action period following release of the plan and official notification on the Federal Register, the NPS will prepare a Record of Decision. The Regional Director in San Francisco will decide whether or not to sign a record of decision sometime in early fall 2012. If approved, implementation of the plan will begin in 2013 with some actions, and continue for a decade or more.

Major Actions Proposed in Alternative 5 (Preferred) Stehekin River Corridor Implementation Plan EIS

