

Capulin Volcano National Monument

General Management Plan Newsletter

May 2008

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service



Dear Friends,

Work on the General Management Plan (GMP) for Capulin Volcano National Monument has resumed. Building upon previous efforts, national monument staff and other National Park Service planners and specialists are undertaking a fresh look at the pertinent issues and factors concerning the future of the national monument. We encourage you to inform us of particular issues or concerns you may have that can help guide long-term NPS management of the monument.

GMPs are required for all units of the national park system and are intended to chart the direction of a park's management over a period of about 15 to 20 years. The GMP will provide a vision for long-term management and will set the direction for any more narrowly focused planning that may follow. However, it will not include specific facility designs, resolve all issues, or guarantee funding for the actions proposed in the approved plan.

The planning process encourages creative interaction and the sharing of insights among the core planning team, national monument staff, the monument's partners and neighbors, and the general public. All management decisions that arise from the process must be firmly grounded in NPS servicewide laws and policies; the monument's mission, purpose and significance; and any special mandates and constraints established specifically for the monument.

An environmental assessment (EA) will be prepared in conjunction with the GMP to address the potential impacts that may result from implementation of the alternative actions identified



in the plan. The GMP / EA process ensures that decisions are based on the best available data and information; an analysis of the natural, cultural, and social impacts of a range of planning alternatives; attention to long-term economic costs; and consideration of public interests and concerns.

Please take time to review this newsletter and the enclosed summary of issues that we heard from you earlier in the planning process. Also, please provide us with any additional issues and concerns that you may have at this point. The information you provide will be important as we begin to reformulate the planning alternatives. The development of the draft GMP alternatives is presently targeted for 2009, and we will inform you of opportunities to attend public meetings and provide input on the alternatives at that time.

We look forward to your input and involvement as we chart the course for managing this important national monument. Please mail your comments on the enclosed response form, or drop them off at Capulin Volcano National Monument headquarters. You may also submit your comments online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cavo>. If you have any comments or questions at any time, please feel free to contact us at

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Sincerely,

Christopher Moos
Superintendent
Capulin Volcano National Monument



Purpose Of This Newsletter



This newsletter contains a review of the legislation that supports the national monument's establishment, and statements affirming the monument's purpose and significance that distinguish it within the NPS system. It also presents a summary of the comments previously received from the public largely in response to draft alternatives presented in a newsletter issued in 1999. Because

we are resuming the GMP planning process following a lengthy delay, we wish to receive any additional comments from the public that may have arisen over the last several years as a result of changed conditions and perceptions, or new issues facing the national monument.

Park Purpose

The purpose of a unit of the national park system is derived from its authorizing legislation and reaffirms why the area was set aside for protection and visitor use. Purpose statements provide the foundation for all decisions regarding the management and use of the park. The purpose of Capulin Volcano National Monument is to:

- Protect the cinder cone and related volcanic features.
- Preserve the scientific, educational, and scenic values of Capulin Volcano.
- Provide for the understanding and enjoyment thereof by the public.

Park Significance

The significance of the monument is summarized in statements that capture the essence of Capulin Volcano's importance to the nation's natural and cultural heritage, and that recognize the importance of the unique volcanic resources in the area.

- Capulin Volcano is a classic cinder cone and striking example of a recently extinct volcano.
- Capulin Volcano is part of the geologically diverse Raton-Clayton Volcanic Field, the easternmost volcanic field in North America.
- With an historic road to the rim, Capulin Volcano is one of the most accessible cinder cones in the United States for scientific investigation, education, and enjoyment.
- The dramatic view from the top of the volcano provides people with an exceptional opportunity to connect with and understand the geological and cultural landscape.

Legislative Intent

Before Capulin Volcano was a national monument, it was considered to be of such "great natural curiosity" that the General Land Office Commissioner in 1891 withdrew the mountain "from settlement, entry or other disposition under any of the public land laws, until such time as Congress may see fit to take action touching the same or until otherwise ordered by competent authority."

On August 9, 1916 President Woodrow Wilson declared Capulin Mountain a national monument to preserve "a striking example of recent extinct volcanoes... of great scientific and especially geologic interest" [Presidential Proclamation No. 1340 (39 Stat. 1792)].

The proclamation was amended September 5, 1962 with Public Law 87-635 to "preserve the scenic and scientific integrity of the Capulin Mountain National Monument...and to provide for the enjoyment thereof by the public..." This law also stated that the monument would be administered in accordance with the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act, which states that the fundamental purpose of its parks, monuments, and reservations is to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

To "more accurately describe the true nature of the monument" (Congressional Record, House of Representatives, June 1, 1987), the name was changed from Capulin Mountain to Capulin Volcano by Public Law 100-225 (101 Stat. 1547) on December 31, 1987.



Summary Of Previous Comments

The following summarizes public comments that were received previously by the national monument regarding the GMP. The comments came from a variety of sources including public meetings, mail-in comments, park surveys, meetings and correspondence with the superintendent at the time, and also from NPS regional staff. The majority of the comments addressed

questions posed in "La Boca" – General Management Plan Newsletter #3 (July 1999). Some comments were in response to a survey regarding the formulation of purpose and significance statements for the national monument.

The following two actions were initially considered in the development of planning alternatives but were subsequently found to be infeasible and were dismissed from further consideration in the 1999 newsletter.

1). *Remove the volcano road and restore the natural condition of the cinder cone. This action was found to be infeasible because:*

- Views from the rim are an essential means for visitors to understand the monument's significance. Few visitors would be willing or able to hike to the top.
- The process of removing the road would be costly and may damage the cinder cone.
- Preliminary investigations indicated that redesign of culverts and other reclamation techniques may work to control erosion.

2). *Provide camping for the general public. This action was found to be infeasible because:*

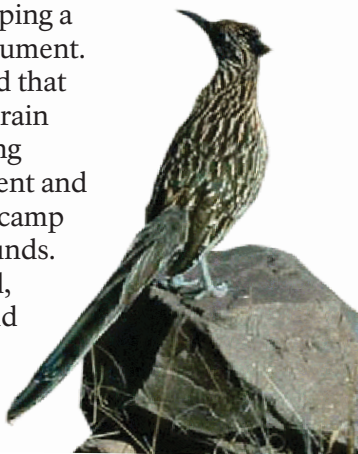
- Camping would be limited and not likely to meet demand as a consequence of the monument's relatively small size.
- The benefit of a small campground would not justify NPS development or maintenance costs.
- Several public and private campgrounds are available in the area. An NPS campground may compete with area campgrounds and limit future incentives to develop these facilities outside the monument.

The following issues and topics were raised by the public:

Shuttle In response to increasing visitation to the monument during the late 1990s, NPS managers had proposed developing a shuttle service to transport visitors from the visitor center to the summit of the volcano. Although many public respondents supported a shuttle operation, visitation since 2000 has declined; at this time there is no need for a shuttle.

Rim and Crater Trails The comments indicated a strong desire to keep the volcano rim trail intact. Retention of the crater trail was also strongly supported. There were also a few comments requesting that the rim trail be made accessible in conformance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Camping in the Park Comments regarding this topic were largely in response to the planning team's decision to dismiss the idea of developing a campground inside the monument. Most responders understood that a new campground would strain NPS maintenance and staffing requirements at the monument and that visitors have options to camp at nearby regional campgrounds. A few people felt that a small, primitive camping area would be acceptable if its purpose was to support educational research.



Trail at the Base of the Volcano Many supported the development of a trail at the base of the volcano, perhaps following the existing fire road or located elsewhere. The intent of this trail is to make it possible for visitors to circumnavigate the volcano. Ideas expressed for visitor use of the fire road included converting it to a primitive hiking trail and/or allowing bicycle use.



Interpretation Most comments supported increased visitor interpretation. However, several expressed the need to interpret topics other than geology. Appropriate topics could include cultural history, historic land use, and the flora and fauna of the area.

Trail from the Base to the Summit A few comments were in response to an alternative proposal to develop a trail from the base of the volcano to the summit or rim. While some favored construction of such a trail, others indicated that it could increase erosion of the cinder cone and could impact wildlife and vegetation as well.



Boundary Expansion Relatively few comments were received concerning boundary issues. The Capulin National Monument Advisory Committee's 1995 report respected then Congressman Bill Richardson's wishes to not expand the park boundary; therefore the boundary will not be changed by the GMP.

Road Erosion Although comments were received on the need to prevent further damage to the cinder cone from road erosion, no comments supported removing the road.

Improvements at the Summit There were several comments in favor of improving facilities at the summit, including a request to make the facilities at the top accessible in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Changes to Viewshed Several comments identified views of and from the volcano as having great scenic value. Air quality, visibility, and visual intrusions such as cell towers and billboards were identified as particular concerns.

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