

Finding of No Significant Impact

Stehekin Winter Ferry Landing Improvement Lake Chelan National Recreation Area Washington

The National Park Service has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to assess potential impacts (and appropriate mitigation) resulting from a proposal to construct a universally accessible docking facility at the Stehekin Landing, Lake Chelan National Recreation Area.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to improve passenger safety and experience by providing year-round universal access (in compliance with American with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines) at the Stehekin Ferry Landing for all passengers traveling via the commercial ferry system. An important but secondary purpose is to improve passenger circulation and freight handling.

Selected Alternative

The NPS' decision is to implement Alternative II by installing a fixed walkway located atop the western bulkhead of the existing boat launch/winter Ferry Landing. Construction is scheduled to begin during low water conditions in late November or early December 2010 and will be completed in June 2011.

This alternative has been simplified from Alternative II as described in the EA by reducing the number of mooring piles from 16 to 10 and replacing the portable wedge structure (intended to provide a mobile flat surface) with a series of stationary flat landings incorporated into the walkway. The width of the walkway will also be reduced from 18 to 17 feet. These changes will reduce the overall footprint of the facility but still maintain universal access. They were made in response to further engineering refinements and insightful comments received during the public comment period. No other modifications to the Selected Alternative as presented in the Environmental Assessment have been made.

Other Alternatives Considered

The Environmental Assessment considered two other alternatives:

Alternative I. No Action—Continue Current Management. The No Action Alternative would involve no changes in the current configuration of the winter Ferry Landing. The existing facilities, including the boat launch and bulkheads, would continue to be managed and maintained in their present configuration. Use of the Ferry Landing would continue at current levels and barriers that currently limit access from the commercial passenger ferry to the Ferry Landing during low-water periods from October through May would remain in place. The winter Ferry Landing would continue to remain noncompliant with Americans with Disability Act Accessibility Guidelines for universal access.

Alternative III. Fixed Walkway with Moveable Floating Dock. Alternative III would involve installing a fixed ramp walkway with moveable floating dock to provide a universally accessible route between the commercial passenger ferries and the winter Ferry Landing during low lake

levels typical from October through May each year. The floating dock would be repositioned along the fixed walkway as lake levels change. In summer the ferries would bypass the winter Ferry Landing and moor at the normal ferry docking location.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Alternative II, the Selected Alternative, is the Environmentally Preferred Alternative because providing universal access would (a) improve the human environment by promoting the health, safety and quality of the visitor experience, including the overall quality of life for those who live in the valley and/or own property in the area; and (b) enhance the diversity and variety of human choices with only negligible to minor and generally short-term impacts to the biological and physical environment.

Alternative I. No Action—Continue Current Management would not be the environmentally preferred alternative because it would perpetuate the substandard conditions that preclude universal access. Alternative III. Fixed Walkway with Moveable Floating Dock would also not be the Environmentally Preferred Alternative because the floating dock would result in longer-term impacts to the biological and physical environment compared to the Selected Alternative.

Alternatives Considered but Rejected

Several conceptual designs were proposed throughout the planning process beginning in 2004. These designs were considered but rejected because they were complex structures that imposed more substantive adverse impacts on the natural environment and the aesthetic character of the Stehekin Landing. These designs also placed a greater burden on NPS staff due to the increased operational and maintenance requirements. The two alternatives presented in the EA evolved from an effort to reduce the number of impacts associated with some of those earlier designs.

Agency Consultation

Informal consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding potential effects to federally listed species concluded on March 15, 2010. The USFWS concurred with the NPS' determination that there would be *No Effect* on bull trout (federally threatened) because the species is extirpated from Lake Chelan and that there would be *No Effect* on other federally listed wildlife species because these species would not be present in the vicinity of the Ferry Landing.

Consultations with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) determined in February 2010 that Sections 10, 401 and 404 permits would be required. ACOE staff also provided guidance for best management practices and mitigation measures associated with pile driving and in-water work.

Consultations with the Chelan Public Utility District (PUD) regarding land ownership and regulations in the project area determined in December 2009 that the project area is not under PUD ownership. However, the selected alternative will require a license from Chelan PUD to "Occupy Project Waters" within their flowage easement.

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was consulted in December 2009 to discuss permit requirements and fees. DNR confirmed the NPS would be required to add the new structure to the existing lease for the Stehekin Marina in order to occupy the bed of Lake Chelan below the 1,079' natural lakebed with pilings and the related walkway structure.

Public Involvement

Public scoping for this project began at a conceptual level during the General Management planning process for the Lake Chelan General Management Plan. in 2003 with a series of meetings with park staff, local residents, and various business owners to consider transportation options and conceptual design alternatives for the Stehekin Landing area. This planning process included public meetings in Chelan on October 20, 2003 and in Stehekin December 1, 2003. The NPS used the public input received following those meetings to formulate conceptual design alternatives for transportation in the valley, including the dock and landing area. Those design alternatives were presented at a public meeting in Stehekin in May 2004 to obtain additional input.

Funding provided in 2009 enabled further engineering refinement from the proposals refined during public scoping and those specific designs were used to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA was released for 30-day public review from March 2, 2010 through April 2, 2010. A complete copy of the EA was mailed to 206 organizations and individuals. In addition to direct mailing availability of the EA was announced via electronic mail, posted on the North Cascades website (<http://www.nps.gov/noca/parkmgmt/ferry.htm>) and a news release was sent to approximately 200 news media, organizations and park affiliates. Articles describing the project were published in print and online in the Wenatchee World, the Chelan Mirror, the Tacoma News Tribune and GoLakeChelan.com. The latter website also posted an interview from the superintendent describing the project and other NPS efforts to provide universal access in Stehekin.

The NPS also convened public meetings in Chelan on March 18, 2010 and in Stehekin on March 19, 2010. Approximately 10 people attended each of the public meetings. Many questions regarding the design and operations of Alternative II, the preferred alternative, were answered during the meetings. All of the comments received during the meetings pertained to Alternative II. Of those comments, seven commenters expressed the need for a complete accessible route to Stehekin which includes the other docking locations (Field's Point and Lucerne) and the commercial ferry. Six of the commenters expressed concern for maintaining the aesthetic character of the landing and preservation of the viewshed from the area. Five commenters expressed concern for safety issues associated with the recreational uses of the area (swimming, small boat docking). Two were in support of the design's separation of passengers, freight and vehicles. One commenter expressed the need for protected freight storage. The NPS also received two non-substantive comments via e-mail. Each comment expressed support for the project and indicated no concerns.

Environmental Consequences of the Selected Alternative

As documented in the EA, the NPS has determined that the Selected Alternative will not have significant adverse effects on the resources and values of Lake Chelan NRA. In addition, none of the CEQ significance criteria will be triggered by this action. Potential impacts on water quality, fish, wildlife, prehistoric and historic cultural resources, recreation/visitor use and NPS management and operations are summarized as follows:

Water Quality and Fish – There will be negligible to minor, short-term adverse impacts to water quality and fish caused by agitating the bottom sediments and noise during pile driving. There will be *No Effect* on bull trout (federally threatened) because the species is extirpated from Lake Chelan.

Wildlife - There will be *No Effect* to federally listed wildlife species. Other more common species will experience negligible to minor adverse and short-term impacts primarily during construction.

Prehistoric Cultural Resources – The selected alternative will have no direct adverse effect to the physical integrity of a prehistoric site that is eligible for listing on the National Register. However, during construction, the impacts from noise on “feeling and associations” of the pictograph site will be negligible to minor given the large distance between the site and the Ferry Landing.

Historic Cultural Resources – The selected alternative will have no direct adverse effect to the physical integrity of the Golden West Historic District. However, the action will have minor cumulative adverse effects to the rustic vernacular style of the District by introducing modern craftsmanship and materials within the immediate viewshed of the historic district.

Recreation and Visitor Use – There will be moderate beneficial impacts to mobility impaired persons by providing universal access at the Ferry Landing for all residents and visitors. This action will have negligible to minor adverse cumulative impacts to the rustic visual character of the Ferry Landing area.

NPS Management and Operations – This action will impose a minor additional long-term maintenance burden on NPS staff in winter, primarily with respect to snow removal.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures are intended to lessen or avoid potential impacts from implementation of the Selected Alternative. The following mitigation measures will be employed during construction:

- *Timing of Construction:* To the greatest extent possible, construction will be done during low water levels in winter 2010 through spring 2011 to avoid impacts to water quality and visitor use. Responsibility: the NPS and the contractor(s) who will be conducting the work.
- *Construction Staging Area:* The primary staging area for supplies and equipment will be at the summer barge landing, several hundred feet north of the project site.
- *Pile Driving:* To reduce noise and potential harm to fish, a wooden wedge will be placed between the pile and impact hammer when driving the piles. Responsibility: the NPS and the contractor(s) who will be conducting the work.
- *Shade Reduction:* Overwater structures in shallow areas can inhibit light transmission, alter fish behavior, and provide cover for fish predators. The use of fiberglass grating as decking material along the walkway will minimize shading and enhance light transmission.
- *Sediment Control:* To minimize impacts to water quality from stirring up sediment, a silt curtain will be placed in water to contain turbid water. Additional measures such as erosion control fencing will also be used above water as needed to contain exposed soils. Responsibility: the NPS and the contractor(s) who will be conducting the work.
- *Habitat Improvement:* To mitigate impacts on aquatic and terrestrial habitat, the near shore habitat of an area near the project site will be enhanced through installation of native plants. Responsibility: Stehekin District Natural Resources Specialist in coordination with the Plant Ecologist.
- *Unanticipated Discoveries of Cultural Resources:* Should construction unearth potential cultural resources, work will immediately cease and the site will be evaluated by an

archeologist. No further work will commence until tribal and state consultations are fulfilled. Responsibility: the NPS and the contractor(s) who will be conducting the work. The park Archeologist in coordination with the Stehekin District Natural Resources Specialist will be responsible for evaluation of any resources encountered and for ensuring appropriate consultations before work continues.

Impairment Disclosure

The impacts documented in the EA, and summarized above, will not affect resources or values key to the natural or cultural integrity of the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. Nor will the impacts alter opportunities for public enjoyment of Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. Therefore, the proposed action will not violate the NPS' Organic Act of 1916 or related provisions of law.

Conclusion

Based on information contained in the Environmental Assessment as summarized above, the National Park Service has determined that the proposed actions do not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. This determination is based upon the environmental analysis, the ability of the mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate adverse impact, and the minimal yet favorable nature of public comments on this project. The proposed action is not without precedent, nor is similar to an action which normally requires an environmental impact statement. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. This project will serve to ensure universal access for passengers arriving and departing the Stehekin ferry landing with minimal adverse impacts on the human environment.

Recommended: <S> Palmer L. Jenkins 4/23/2010
Superintendent, North Cascades National Park Date

Approved: <S> Patricia Neubacher 5/7/2010
Acting Regional Director, Pacific-West Region Date