

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Stehekin River Corridor Implementation Plan (SRCIP)
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

What is the SRCIP/DEIS?

The SRCIP/DEIS 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 General Management Plan* in response to increased flooding and erosion over the past 15 years.

How is the SRCIP/DEIS organized? What information is included in the document?

In its 7 chapters and 18 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 many 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 four 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 four alternatives are feasible, the National Park Service (NPS) has identified a Preferred Alternative that the NPS believes 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 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) which would reduce flood damage in any one area during the largest events. The four alternatives are:

Alternative 1 (No Action): Current management practices would continue. The NPS would implement existing plan.

Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative): At-risk public facilities would be removed from the channel migration zone where possible; more high-priority land acquisition in the channel migration zone.

Alternative 3: At-risk public facilities removed from channel migration zone in most areas; same land acquisition as in Alternative 2.

Alternative 4: At-risk facilities would be removed from channel migration zone in some areas; less high-priority land acquisition would take place in the channel migration zone.

Are there any actions that the NPS is proposing regardless of what alternative is implemented?

While the alternatives propose a range of actions, there are several actions called for by the 1995 *Lake Chelan National Recreation Area General Management Plan* 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 (Wilson Creek and Frog Island will be protected but specific actions vary by alternative) 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 2–4, including proactive measures to protect administrative and public facilities from the future consequences of flooding. These actions include:

- Installing a logjam and new grade-control structure near Milepost 2.0 of the Stehekin Valley Road (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 of the Stehekin Valley Road.
- 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 300-foot long riparian strip along the Stehekin River at Buckner Orchard.
- Altering large wood management in the lake backwater zone at the river mouth.

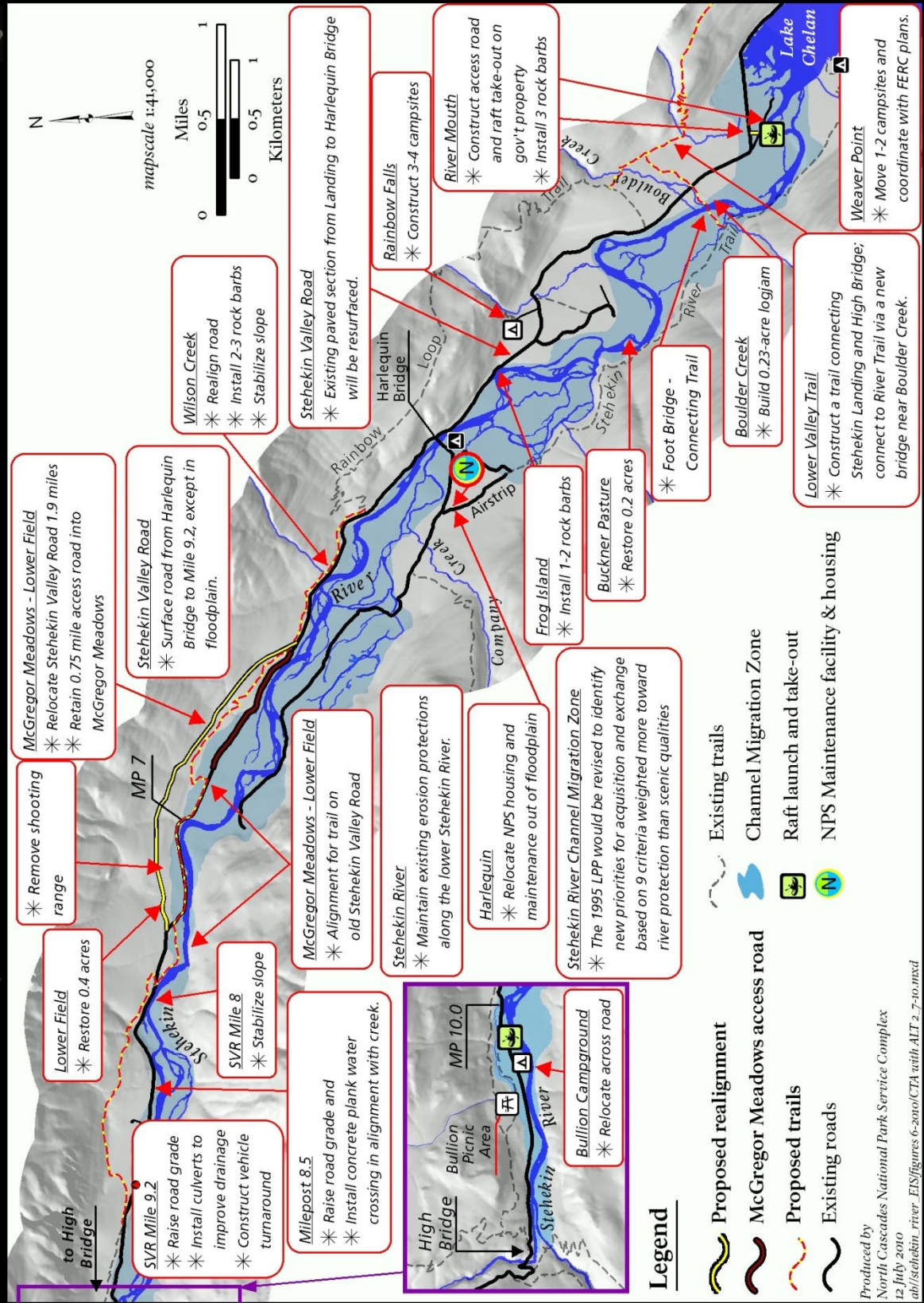
What actions are called for specifically under the Preferred Alternative?

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

Specific actions are outlined in the diagram below:

Major Actions Proposed in Alternative 2 (Preferred) Stehekin River Corridor Implementation Plan Draft EIS



What is the 1995 Land Protection Plan?

All NPS units that contain private or other nonfederal land within its authorized boundaries are required to complete a Land Protection Plan (LPP) in order to document which of these lands would advance park purposes through public ownership, what means of protection are available and appropriate to achieve park purposes, and assign an acquisition priority (low, moderate, or high) for each private land parcel. The 1995 LPP was developed in conjunction with the 1995 *Lake Chelan National Recreation Area General Management Plan*, with the expectation it would be updated if and when conditions changed. In the 1995 LPP, acquisition priorities for each private land parcel were based on a set of criteria that included the size of the tract and presence of wetlands, high flood influence areas, riparian communities, and high visual sensitivity areas related to each tract. Potential exchange lands were identified that would permit a private land owner to exchange lands with the NPS. Since 1995 two land exchanges have occurred.

Why is an update of the 1995 Land Protection Plan necessary?

Conditions have changed. Three large floods in the Stehekin Valley (1995, 2003, 2006) have highlighted the need to remove development out of the Stehekin River channel migration zone. New criteria have been developed to set acquisition priorities for each private land parcel that place priority on those lands that lie within the channel migration zone, particularly if those tracts have structures, along with a number of other natural and cultural resource concerns. As such, the new LPP has a revised list of priorities (low, medium, or high) for potential acquisition for each private land tract. Similarly, potential NPS land for exchange has been reevaluated and a revised list of exchange lands (totaling 24 acres) has been developed. These potential exchange lands are out of the Stehekin River channel migration zone. Some of the exchange lands are the same as offered through the 1995 LPP. Unchanged from the 1995 LPP is the reliance on county zoning regulations, an approach of acquisition or exchange through a willing buyer/willing seller basis, and the types or methods of protection techniques, such as purchase, easements, exchanges, zoning, etc. The draft LPP is available for public review as part of the *Stehekin River Corridor Implementation Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement*.

What is the channel migration zone and how will this zone be managed under the Preferred Alternative?

Alternatives 2-4 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. 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. The roads would be protected at Wilson Creek, Frog Island, and Boulder Creek by new erosion management measures that involve the installation of rock barbs, logjams, and/or bioengineering.

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. From Milepost 6.8 to 7.5, the road will be rehabilitated to a trail as a section of the Lower Valley Trail. A total of 18 acres of forest habitat will be cleared by the construction of the new 0.8 miles of road around McGregor Meadows, while 9 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 landowners will be able to remove wood from the Stehekin River. For agency-permitted erosion management, landowners could apply for a permit to remove woody debris from the tops of some logjams within the lake backwater zone (1/4 mile from the head of the lake up the Stehekin River) 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 2-4, 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 Land Protection Plan 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 Land Protection Plan 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.

The NPS has approximately 24 acres available for exchange located on landforms above 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 hiking opportunities, 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 of the existing area 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 the Stehekin Valley Road. Because the shooting range is located along the proposed Lower Field reroute, it would be closed and the site restored to its natural condition. No replacement shooting range would be constructed.

What natural and cultural resources would be impacted under the Preferred Alternative?

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 2012 and 2013. 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 approval of the park superintendent.

Construction of new maintenance and housing facilities is scheduled for 2013-2015. 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 implementation of the Preferred Alternative will cost approximately \$28 million.

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. Now, the NPS is calling upon the public one final time. This final formal public comment period closes December 11, 2010.

You, the public, can get involved in a variety of ways:

- **Read the SRCIP/DEIS** online at www.nps.gov/noca/parkmgmt/srcip or request a hard copy or compact disc (CD) of the plan (call 360-854-7205 or e-mail noca_superintendent@nps.gov).
- **Provide electronic comments** at www.nps.gov/noca/parkmgmt/srcip
- **Send a letter** to the Superintendent (e-mail noca_superintendent@nps.gov, mail North Cascades NPS Complex, 810 State Route 20, Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284-1239, or fax 360-856-1934).
- **Attend a public meeting:**

Stehekin	<u>October 19</u> 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. Golden West Visitor Center
Wenatchee	<u>October 20</u> 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Supervisor's Office, 215 Melody Lane
Seattle	<u>October 21</u> 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, 319 Second Avenue South
- **Attend a site visit**

<u>September 29</u> – Look at some of the proposed actions along the Stehekin River
<u>September 30</u> – Walk the proposed road reroute at McGregor Meadows
Both site visits meet at the Golden West Visitor Center at 9:00 a.m.

When will the NPS finalize this draft plan?

After the public review and comment period closes on December 13, 2010, the NPS planning team will evaluate comments from other federal agencies, tribes, organizations, businesses, and individuals regarding the SRCIP/DEIS and revised Land Protection Plan. The NPS will respond to substantive comments in the final plan. The planning team will then incorporate appropriate changes to produce a final Implementation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, expected for completion in 2011. A Record of Decision, which provides final plan approval, is anticipated in Summer 2011.