

Chapter 1

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

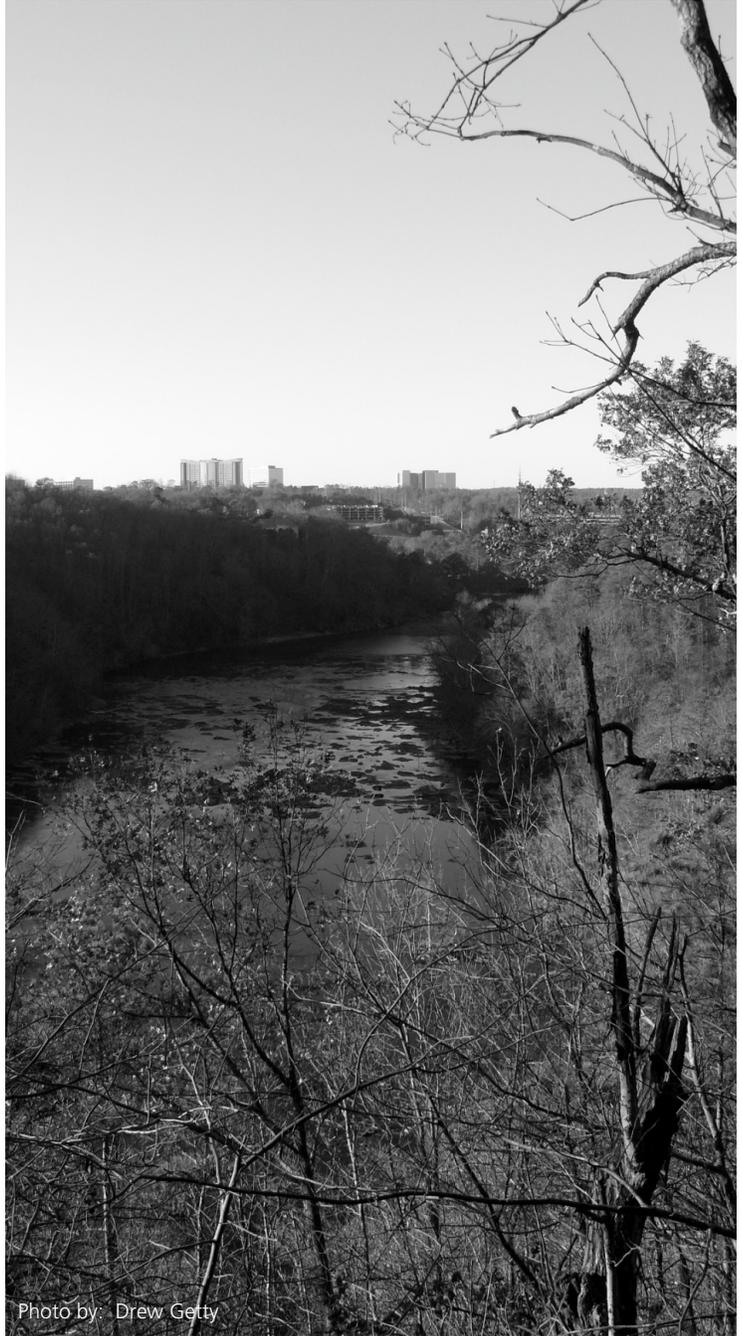


Photo by: Drew Getty

Palisades Overlook

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area
Final General Management Plan/
Environmental Impact Statement

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CHAPTER 1 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

A GUIDE TO THIS DOCUMENT

This *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* incorporates comments received and presents updated information collected during the planning, baseline and impact assessment process.

The organization of this document is in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's implementing regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Park Service's 2006 Management Policies (Chapter 2), 2004 Park Planning Program Standards and "Environmental Analysis" (DO-12).

Chapter 1: Introduction sets the framework for this document. The chapter provides a description of why the plan is being prepared and what needs it must address. It gives guidance for the alternatives that are considered, which are based on Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area's legislated mission, its purpose, the significance of its resources, special mandates and administrative commitments, servicewide mandates and policies, and other planning efforts in the area.

The chapter also details the planning opportunities and issues that were raised during public meetings and planning team efforts. This chapter concludes with a statement of the scope of the environmental impact analysis — specifically what impact topics were or were not analyzed in detail.

Chapter 2: Alternatives, Including the Preferred Alternative, begins by describing the management prescriptions and zones that were developed for Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area for future management. An overview of how the alternatives were developed and a description of each alternative is provided. Alternative A is the continuation of current management and trends in the park (or Alternative A, No Action). Alternatives B, C and D are as previously described in the May 2004 Draft. Alternatives E and F were developed based upon additional public comment subsequent to publishing the May 2004 Draft document.

Mitigation measures proposed to minimize or eliminate the impacts of some proposed actions are described just before the discussion of future studies and/or implementation plans that will be needed. The evaluation of the environmentally preferred alternative is followed by summary tables of the alternative actions and the environmental consequences of implementing those alternative actions. The chapter concludes with a discussion of alternatives or actions that were dismissed from detailed evaluation.

Chapter 3: The Affected Environment describes those areas and resources that would be affected by implementing actions in the various alternatives. The topics addressed include natural resources, cultural resources, visitor use and experience, and the socioeconomic environment.

Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences analyzes the impacts of implementing the alternatives. Each of the impact topics described in Chapter 3 "Affected Environment" are analyzed. Methods that were used for assessing the impacts in terms of the intensity, type, and duration of impacts are outlined at the beginning of the chapter.

Chapter 5: Recommendations for Future Planning Efforts provides an overview of the other plans and studies to be prepared and implemented.

Chapter 6: Consultation and Coordination describes the history of public involvement and agency coordination conducted during the planning effort. Agencies and organizations who receive copies of the document are also listed.

The **Appendixes** present supporting information for the document, along with references, and a glossary.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* presents and analyzes six alternative future directions for the management and use of Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. Alternative F is the National Park Service's preferred alternative. Potential environmental impacts of all alternatives are identified and assessed in this document.

General management plans are intended to be long-term planning documents that establish and articulate a management philosophy and framework for decision making and problem solving in the parks. General management plans usually provide guidance for a 15 to 20 year timeframe.

General management plans represent the broadest level of planning conducted by the National Park Service and are intended to provide overall guidance for making informed decisions about future conditions in national parks. The general management plan does not address site-specific projects such as trail location, education centers, boat ramps, or other structures. These types of detailed proposals are addressed in the future implementation phase of National Park Service planning by preparing National Environmental Policy Act environmental assessments that tie, or "tier" directly to the general management plan. The general management plan provides the basis for making decisions about site-specific proposals in the future, and can be used by park managers to decide what activities are appropriate for different areas of the park.

The detailed actions directed by general management plans or in subsequent implementation plans are accomplished over time. Implementation of the approved plan will depend on future funding and servicewide priorities. The approval of this general management plan does not guarantee that funding and staffing needed to implement the plan will be forthcoming. Funding for capital construction improvements is not currently shown in National Park Service construction programs. It is not likely that all potential capital improvements arising from this plan will be totally implemented during the life of the plan. Larger capital improvements may be phased over several years, and full implementation of this plan could be many years into the future.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this general management plan and environmental impact statement is to present a plan for managing the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area for the next 15 to 20 years. The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is a 48-mile-long park located in an urban and suburban area between Atlanta and Lake Lanier, Georgia. The park boundaries include 10,000 acres of land situated in a narrow corridor along the Chattahoochee River. The region map and vicinity map

(Figures 1 and 2, respectively) show the location of the park boundaries in relationship to the state of Georgia and the Atlanta region.

The approved general management plan will be the basic document for managing the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area for the next 15 to 20 years. The purposes of this general management plan are to:

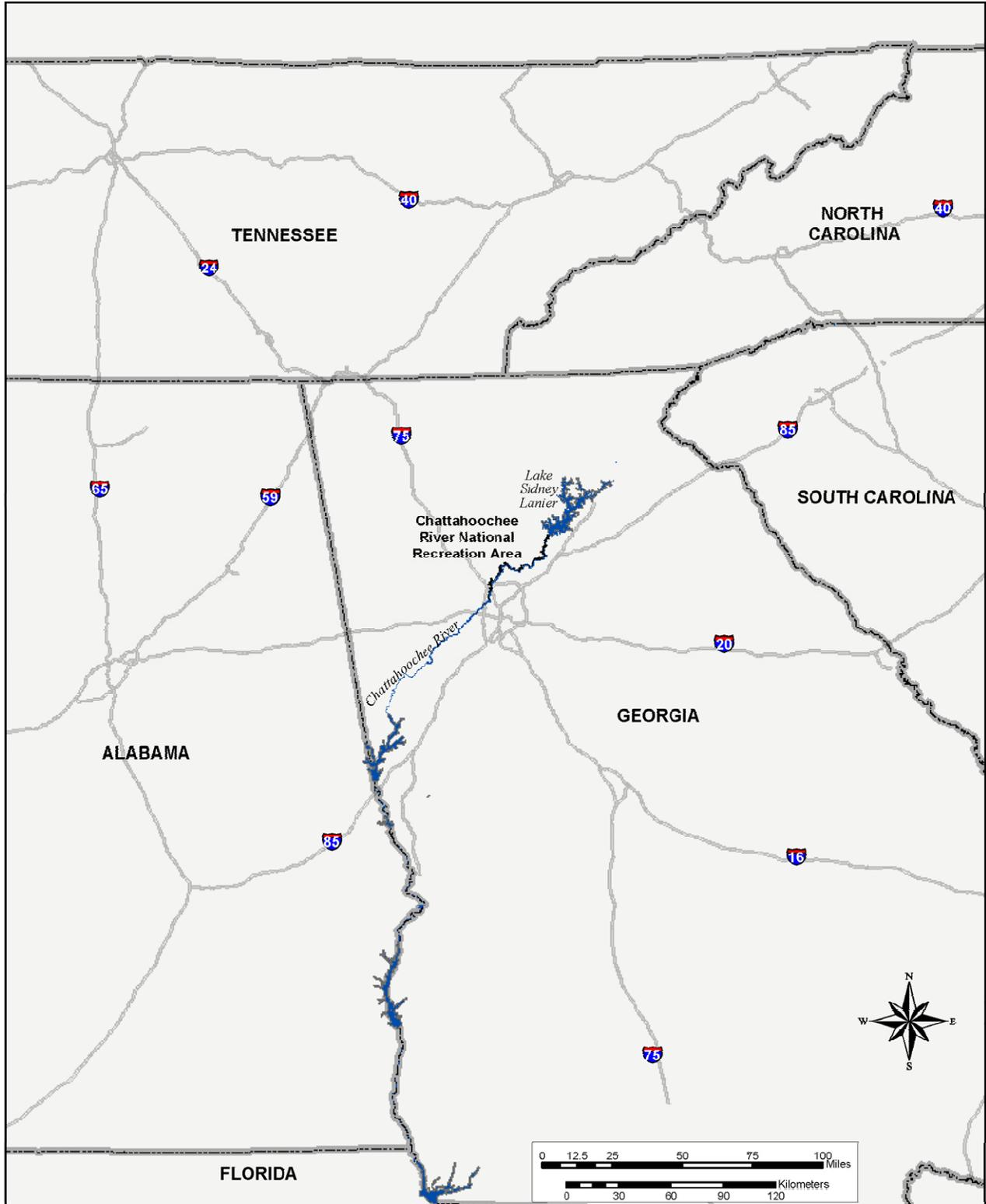
- Specify resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved in the park.
- Provide the basic foundation for decision-making regarding the management of the park.

When completed, the general management plan will represent a commitment to the public by the National Park Service on how the park will be used and managed. As such, it is intended to:

- Confirm the significance of the park;
- Establish the direction and values that should be considered in planning to achieve the purposes defined in the establishing legislation of the park;
- Define management prescriptions (desired future conditions) that establish the goals of the National Park Service and the public with regard to visitor experience, natural resources, and cultural resources, including the types and locations of resource management activities, visitor activities, and development that are appropriate within each management zone;
- Determine areas to which the management prescriptions should be applied to achieve the overall management goals of the park;
- Illustrate ranges and types of appropriate management actions suitable to maintain and improve conditions;
- Assist National Park Service staff in determining whether actions proposed by the National Park Service or others are consistent with the goals embodied in the management zone where the action would occur and;
- Serve as the basis for shorter-term management documents such as five-year strategic plans, annual performance plans, and implementation plans.

Some future visitor experience, natural resource, and cultural resource conditions in the park are specified in law and policy. Others are open to debate and must be determined through planning. The alternatives in this general management plan address the resource and experience conditions that ultimately are consistent with federal laws and regulations and National Park Service policies.

The National Park Service views the public as integral team members in establishing the desired resource and experience conditions that will guide the management of the park. Measures taken by the National Park Service to include the public as a partner in general management planning for the



Regional Map

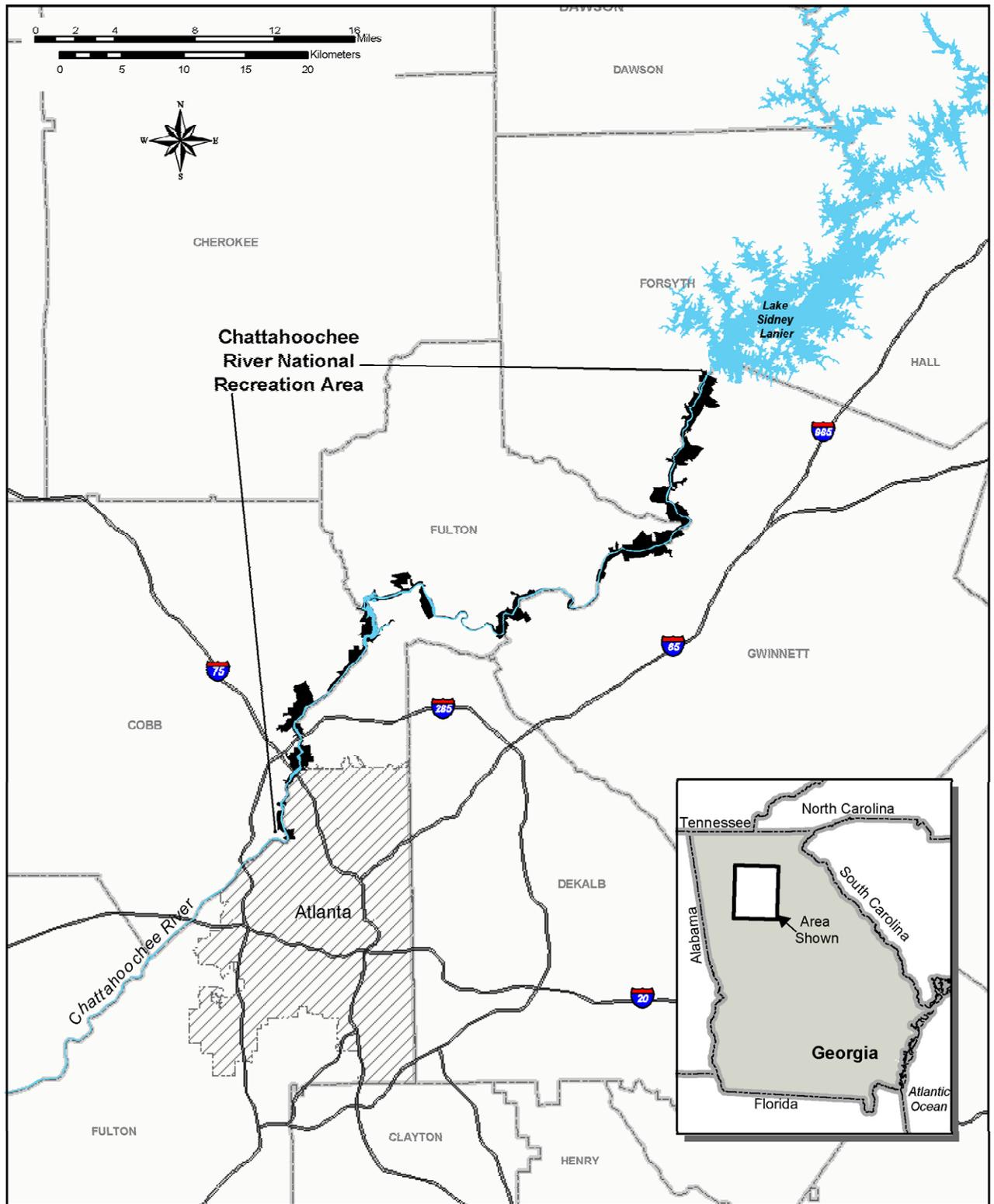
Figure 1

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

U.S. Department of the Interior - National Park Service

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Vicinity Map

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

U.S. Department of the Interior - National Park Service

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Figure 2



Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area are outlined below and detailed in Chapter 6. The National Park Service:

- Solicited public participation in the planning process and incorporated suggestions from the public into the proposed park management alternatives;
- Performed public scoping to identify important impact topics and evaluated the effects of the alternatives on those impact topics in the draft environmental impact statement;
- Invited the public to comment on the Draft General Management Plan issued in May 2004 and used that input in the revision of alternatives and preparation of this plan.

Because the general management plan does not propose site-specific actions or describe how particular programs or projects should be ranked or implemented, those decisions will be addressed during the more detailed planning associated with strategic plans, annual performance plans, and implementation plans. Such plans will be derived from the goals, future conditions, and appropriate types of activities established in this general management plan. The general management plan provides a broad-scale set of prescriptions and zones within the park that serve as a decision-making tool for the future, when site-specific proposals for various park facilities or programs are made. These future proposed activities will be evaluated in separate National Environmental Policy Act documents that will be tiered to the general management plan, allowing the National Park Service to make informed decisions that conform to the National Environmental Policy Act.

NEED FOR THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

A general management plan is needed to meet the requirements of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 and National Park Service policy, which mandate development of a general management plan for each park. The last general management plan for Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area was prepared in 1989, and many conditions in the park and surrounding area have changed since then.

The Act of October 30, 1984 (Public Law 98-568) increased the park size from 6,300 acres to 6,800 acres to protect the 48-mile segment of the Chattahoochee River and adjoining lands. President Jimmy Carter, a native of Georgia, was instrumental in initiating this expansion. In 1999, the authorized boundary of the park was expanded from 6,800 acres to 10,000 acres. The general management plan must be updated to consider these new parcels of land. This general management plan does not propose any further boundary adjustments during the life of the plan.

This general management plan provides broad direction for the park's future. It is needed to assist park managers in making purposeful decisions based on a deliberate vision of the park. In view of the rapidly developing nature of the Chattahoochee River corridor and the intense use of the park, the general management plan is a critical element in protecting the park's resources while at the same time providing for quality visitor experiences.

General management planning is needed to:

- Clarify the levels of resource protection and public use that must be achieved for the park, based on the park-specific purpose and significance, plus the body of laws and policies directing park management
- Determine the best mix of resource protection and visitor experiences beyond what is prescribed by law and policy based on the:
 - Purposes of the park
 - Range of public expectations and concerns
 - Resources occurring within the park
 - Effects of alternative management plans on existing natural, cultural, and social conditions
 - Long-term economic costs
- Establish the degree to which the park should be managed to:
 - Preserve and enhance its natural and cultural resources
 - Provide recreation
 - Accommodate urban transportation and connectivity

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PARK

In 1916, Congress passed the Organic Act, which created the National Park Service to “preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.” Thus, any management actions in the park must recognize that preserving the natural and cultural resources and values of the park is paramount, and that any visitor activities associated with “enjoyment, education, and inspiration” can occur only to the extent that they do not impair the natural and cultural resources and values for future generations.

Congress established the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area in 1978, and determined that the “natural, scenic, recreation, historic, and other values of a forty-eight-mile segment of the Chattahoochee River and certain adjoining lands in the State of Georgia from Buford Dam downstream to Peachtree Creek are of special national significance, and that such values should be preserved and protected from developments and uses which would substantially impair or destroy them.”

Legislation passed on December 9, 1999 (Pub. L. 106-154, Sec. 1, 106 Stat. 1736) expanded the park to 10,000 acres (Appendix E). This law specified:

“The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area in the State of Georgia is a nationally significant resource;

The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area has been adversely affected by land use changes occurring inside and outside the recreation area;

The population of the metropolitan Atlanta area continues to expand northward, leaving dwindling opportunities to protect the scenic, recreational, natural, and historical values of the 2,000-foot-wide corridor adjacent to each bank of the Chattahoochee River and its impoundments in the 48-mile segment known as the area of national concern;

The State of Georgia has enacted the Metropolitan River Protection Act to ensure protection of the corridor located within 2,000 feet of each bank of the Chattahoochee River, or the corridor located within the 100-year floodplain, whichever is larger;

The corridor located within the 100-year floodplain includes the area of national concern;

Since establishment of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, visitor use of the recreation area has shifted dramatically from waterborne to water-related and land-based activities;

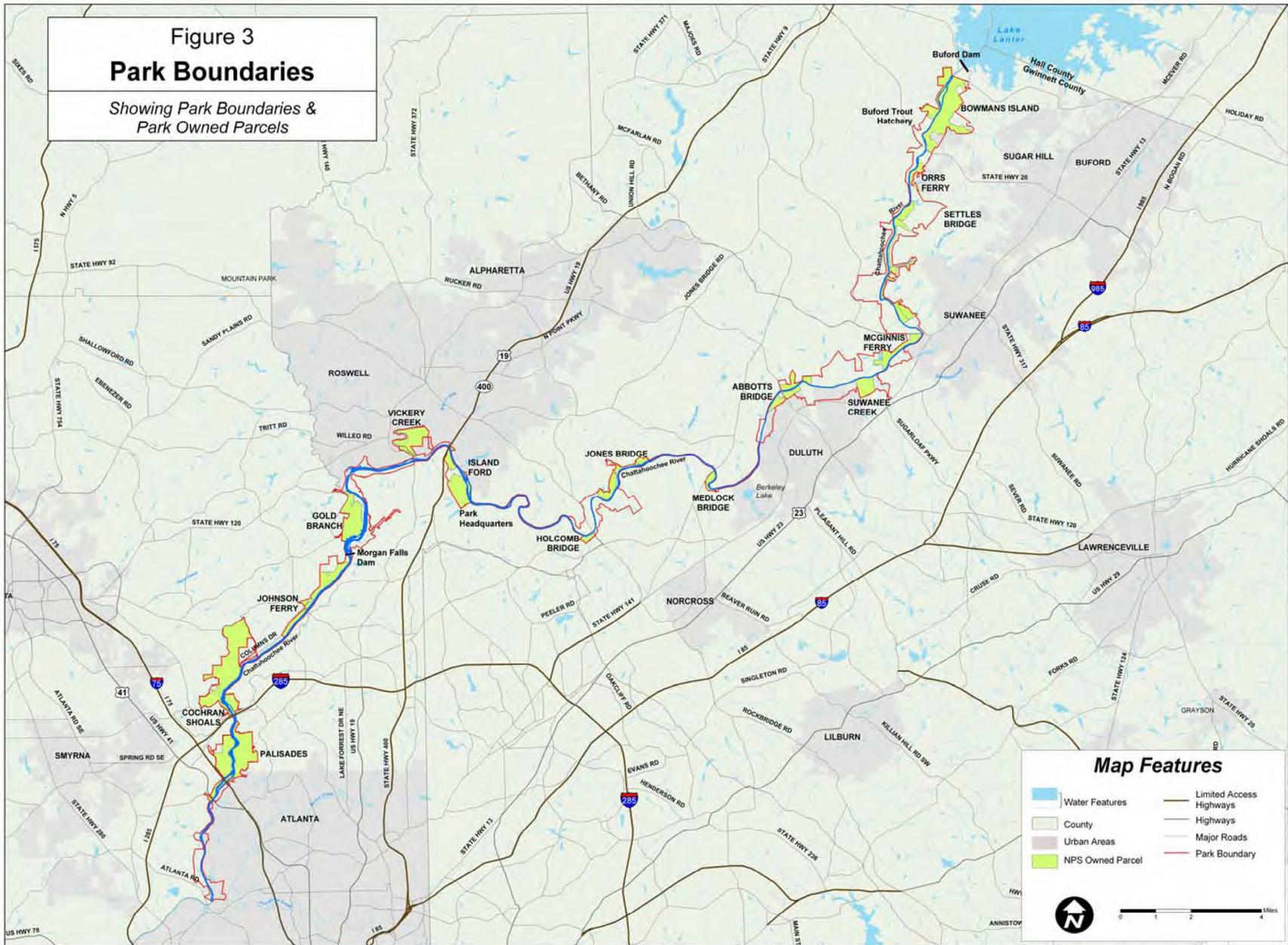
The State of Georgia and political subdivisions of the state along the Chattahoochee River have indicated willingness to join in a cooperative effort with the federal government to link existing units of the recreation area through a series of linear corridors to be established within the area of national concern and elsewhere on the river; and

If Congress appropriates funds in support of the cooperative effort described in paragraph (7), funding from the State, political subdivisions of the State, private foundations, corporate entities, private individuals, and other sources will be available to fund more than half the estimated cost of the cooperative effort.”

The expansion of the park from 6,800 acres to 10,000 acres was the result of more than 15 years of coordination by the National Park Service in cooperation with the Trust for Public Land and other organizations. The non-federal land holdings within the expanded park boundary can be acquired by the National Park Service only if the owners are “willing sellers.” The National Park Service is currently negotiating with multiple landowners regarding acquiring additional parcels. Parcels within the 10,000 acre legislated boundary that are owned by the National Park Service are depicted in Figure 3. No boundary adjustments or expansions beyond the currently authorized 10,000-acre limit are proposed as part of this general management plan.

The park boundary currently includes 15 land “units” encompassing over 5,000 acres, as well as the more than 2,000 acres of streambed, Bull Sluice backwaters, and other floodplain areas of the Chattahoochee River (personal communication, Chris Hughes, NPS 2006h). The units, shown on Figure 3, were assigned names that reflected the local community features and historical resources. The 15 units, from north to south, are:

| | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Bowman’s Island | Abbotts Bridge | Vickery Creek |
| Orrs Ferry | Medlock Bridge | Gold Branch |
| Settles Bridge | Jones Bridge | Cochran Shoals |
| McGinnis Ferry | Holcomb Bridge | Johnson Ferry |
| Suwanee Creek | Island Ford | Palisades |



The 1989 general management plan included the management of a proposed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water re-regulation dam, which was to be built a short distance below the existing Buford Dam. However, that project was never constructed and is no longer being considered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Therefore, the alternatives in this general management plan have eliminated consideration of the dam in the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

Since the 1989 plan was prepared, the Atlanta area has grown rapidly. The counties that surround the 48-mile Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (Cobb, Fulton, Forsyth, Gwinnett, and DeKalb) have been among the fastest growing in the nation. This has resulted in construction of industrial, commercial, and residential developments close to the narrow, linear park. The numbers of visitors and the variety of visitor uses have fluctuated over the years. As a result, the updated general management plan addresses problems associated with physical encroachment and increased levels and diversity of visitor use. The following is a summary of three key management issues that have been identified for the park.

The first key management issue is how to determine the most appropriate levels of service for visitor interpretation and education in the park, in view of the increasing numbers of people and types of uses. Key questions are:

- How can the park accommodate increasing numbers of visitors and still provide effective infrastructure such as drinking water, restrooms, roads, and parking areas?
- How can the park provide effective educational and interpretive programs for increasing numbers of visitors?

A second key management issue is to determine suitable locations for administration and visitor facilities. Key questions include:

- What are the most appropriate locations to support administration and operations functions, with a focus on minimizing resource disturbance?
- Should these facilities be concentrated in a few locations or spread out over a larger geographical area?
- What is the basis for deciding where facilities should be located and what types should be constructed?

The third key management issue is how to manage the park to protect natural and cultural resources and to allow for quality visitor experiences. The park is located in a long, narrow river corridor surrounded by communities and is therefore highly sensitive to potential effects of encroachment and overuse. Key issues include the following:

- Physical disturbance of soils on construction sites in areas immediately around the park can lead to soil erosion in streams within the park and the Chattahoochee River, with resulting adverse impacts on aquatic life and water quality.
- Water quality in streams within the park, including the Chattahoochee River, can be adversely affected by nonpoint runoff from impervious surfaces in adjoining developed areas. Pollutants

such as fecal coliform bacteria, trace metals, and organic compounds can be introduced via this mechanism.

- Encroachment by development can lead to creation of numerous unauthorized trails in the park created by people in adjoining residential areas. Unauthorized trails disturb native vegetation and can lead to soil erosion, especially in steeper sloped areas.
- Increased numbers of visitors require water and wastewater infrastructure as well as education and interpretation services. Construction and operation of appropriate facilities, along with associated roads and parking areas, can affect the park's natural habitats and cultural resources.

The potential solutions to these issues are reflected in the management alternatives analyzed in this general management plan and environmental impact statement. The alternatives address the adequacy and appropriateness of park services and facilities and the challenges posed by managing a large, linear park in the center of a major, metropolitan area.

GEOGRAPHIC AREA COVERED BY THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area includes a maximum of 10,000 acres of land distributed along a 48-mile, linear corridor between Peachtree Creek, Atlanta, and Buford Dam. The vicinity and regional maps (Figures 1 and 2) show the area covered by this general management plan. The park includes the original 15 units as well as the newly acquired land.

PLANNING DIRECTION OR GUIDANCE

Park Mission

The primary purpose of the original Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area was to recognize the unique geological features associated with the Palisades area south of Johnson Ferry. The cliffs in the area were formed by geological processes (continental drift) associated with the Brevard Fault. The original park, established in 1978, included an area primarily in the vicinity of these cliffs, which form an imposing rampart overlooking the Chattahoochee River. The cliffs, together with the surrounding native forested uplands and river bottom areas along the 48-mile river corridor, were determined to be a unique resource worthy of national park status. There are a broad range of cultural resources present in this area, including a major Native American rock shelter, Civil War sites, and industrial mill sites.

The purposes of the park as defined by the most recent legislation are as follows:

- “To increase the level of protection of the open spaces within the area of national concern along the Chattahoochee River and to enhance visitor enjoyment of the open spaces by adding land-based linear corridors to link existing units of the recreation area;
- To ensure that the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is managed to standardize acquisition, planning, design, construction, and operation of the linear corridor; and
- To authorize the appropriation of Federal funds to cover a portion of the costs of the Federal, State, local, and private cooperative effort to add additional areas to the recreation area so as

to establish a series of linear corridors linking existing units of the recreation area and to protect other open spaces of the Chattahoochee River corridor.”

In addition, the House Report states, “the National Recreation Area is ‘not’ intended to provide playing fields, highly developed recreation centers or many other worthwhile programs offered by these agencies. Rather, the river and the associated lands are to be the resource base upon which the National Park Service can function to provide opportunities consistent with national park operations.”

As part of this general management plan, the following formal statement of the purpose of the park was developed:

“The purpose of Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is to lead the preservation and protection of the 48-mile Chattahoochee River corridor from Buford Dam to Peachtree Creek, and its associated natural and cultural resources, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”

Creating this purpose statement was the first step in the development of this general management plan. The statement forms the basis for all subsequent steps in the planning process.

Park Significance. The significance of the natural and cultural resources in Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is summarized in the statements that follow. This information was used in the planning process to ensure that the park’s natural and cultural resources are protected in accordance with the governing laws, regulations, policies, and mandates.

Geological Significance. The park’s entire 48-mile-long corridor runs along the Brevard Fault Zone, which forms the Chattahoochee River channel. Typically, rivers meander and change course over time. Because it is essentially “locked” in place by the fault, the Chattahoochee River is one of the oldest and most stable river channels within the United States.

The Brevard Fault is a major geological feature extending for more than 320 miles. It forms, in part, the dividing line between two physiographic provinces: the Appalachian Mountains and the Piedmont Plateau. The steep and rocky Palisades section of the park is generally considered to be the best location along the entire Brevard Fault Zone to view and study this major geologic feature.

Biological Significance. The park contains a diverse assemblage of relatively undisturbed mesic hardwood floodplain, bluff, and ravine forests; seasonally and temporarily flooded bottomland forested wetlands; and emergent and scrub-shrub wetlands.

The mixed habitat types within the old and stable Chattahoochee River channel form a biological link with the Appalachian Mountains. This has resulted in high biodiversity within the park. For example, more than 950 species of plants exist within the park, including species associated with both the southern piedmont and mountain habitats. This number of plants is one of the highest within the national park system. It is especially noteworthy that this unusually high level of biodiversity is located in an area accessible to a large metropolitan population.

The diverse habitats in the park support numerous rare plants and animals, including both aquatic and terrestrial species. This includes several species defined as special status by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These species warrant special regulations to assist their long-term survival and protection.

Significance of Cultural Resources. The park vicinity has been occupied by humans since the Archaic period, approximately 8,000 years before Christ (B.C.). Some of the park's remaining prehistoric features include fish weirs, rock-shelters, quarries, and prehistoric occupation sites. In addition, the park contains numerous Woodland Period sites along the river corridor (1000 B.C. –1000 A.D.), as reported in the 1989 General Management Plan (NPS 1989). The Woodland period (1000 B.C. to 1000 A.D.) is one of the least investigated periods of Georgia prehistory and represents an area of potentially high archeological significance and research potential for the park. There are no similar counterparts in the region.

The park contains approximately 197 archeological sites (NPS 2005a). These sites, and the more than 14,000 associated archeological artifacts, document the historical and prehistoric use and cultural adaptation of the early cultures, up to and including the Creek and Cherokee Nations. The Chattahoochee River is considered to have been the transitory border between these two great cultures.

The park also contains numerous historic archeological sites and standing structures, including Civil War sites, pre-Civil War home sites and farmhouses, at least 10 early ferry crossings, and pre-Civil War paper mill and woolen mill sites. The mills are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Recreation Significance. The park constitutes an important outdoor recreation resource to several million people located in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The park's greenspace and the river improve the quality of life by serving as a sanctuary and by providing a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities such as hiking, nature viewing, paddling, bicycling, boating, and fishing. The Chattahoochee River is inhabited by approximately 15 species of game fish.

The park provides a scenic river corridor with opportunities for natural solitude and seclusion within relatively undisturbed forests, wetlands, bluffs, ravines, and open water areas. The opportunity is enhanced by the proximity to a major metropolitan area.

Mission Goals

This section defines in broad terms the ideals that the National Park Service is striving to attain, as they apply to Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

Special Mandates and Administrative Commitments

Special mandates and administrative commitments refer to park-specific requirements. These formal agreements often are established concurrently with the creation of a park. The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area does not have any special mandates that would affect this general management plan and future planning activities.

Servicewide Mandates and Policies

As with all National Park Service units, management of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is guided by numerous congressional acts and executive orders in addition to the enabling legislation. Many of the laws and executive orders that guide park management, with their legal citations, are listed in Appendix A. These include the 1916 Organic Act creating the National Park Service, the General Authorities Act of 1970, and the Act of March 27, 1978, relating to the management of the national park system. Others have much broader application, such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, Executive Order 11988 addressing

flood plain protection, Executive Order 11990 addressing the protection of wetlands, and Executive Order 13112 that established the National Invasive Species Council. An overview of these and other laws and regulations is provided in Appendix B.

The National Park Service has established policies for all units under its stewardship. These are identified and explained in the National Park Service guidance manual *Management Policies 2006* (NPS 2006f).

These service-wide legal mandates and policies can be categorized as:

- Natural resource management requirements
- Cultural resource management requirements
- Visitor experience and park use requirements
- Special use management requirements

The alternatives considered in this document incorporate and comply with the provisions of these mandates and policies. Desired conditions prescribed by servicewide mandates and policies, and the corresponding regulatory and legal sources of each, are summarized in the sections that follow. Detailed inventories or steps to be taken to implement management policies will be developed in individual management plans and stewardship strategies. These are identified in Chapter 5, “Recommendations for Future Planning Efforts.”

The National Park Service is required to comply with these established laws and mandates. Consequently, this general management plan does not consider whether it is appropriate to protect endangered species, control exotics species, improve water quality, protect archeological sites, provide for handicapped access, or conserve artifacts, since these actions are required.

Natural Resource Management Requirements. Categories included under natural resource management requirements include air quality, water resources, geologic resources, native species, and wildfire.

Air Quality – Current laws and policies require that the following conditions be achieved in the park:

| Desired Conditions | Sources |
|--|---|
| Air quality in the park meets national ambient air quality standards for specified pollutants. | Clean Air Act <i>NPS Management Policies</i> |
| Park activities do not contribute to deterioration in air quality. | Clean Air Act <i>NPS Management Policies</i> |

The National Park Service cannot control air quality within the metropolitan Atlanta area regional airshed, which encompasses the park. Therefore, the park must cooperate with regional agencies and the United States Environmental Protection Agency to monitor air quality and to work toward air

quality improvements. The National Park Service will take the following kinds of actions to meet legal and policy requirements related to air quality in the park:

- Conduct air quality monitoring in conjunction with regional air quality agencies.
- Participate in regional air pollution control planning efforts.
- Review permit applications for major new air pollution sources that could affect the park.
- Conduct park operations in compliance with federal, state, and local air quality regulations.
- Coordinate with local and federal agencies to promote regional trail and pedestrian linkages to the park.

Water Resources – Current laws and policies require that the following condition be achieved in the park.

| Desired Condition | Source |
|---|--|
| Surface waters and groundwater are protected or restored such that water quality as a minimum meets all applicable federal and Georgia water quality standards. | Clean Water Act Executive Order 11514 NPS Management Policies State of Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act (OCGA 12-7-1) The Metropolitan River Protection Act (OCGA 12-5-440) Georgia Planning Act of 1989 (OCGA 12-2-8) |
| NPS and NPS-permitted programs and facilities are maintained and operated to avoid pollution of surface waters and groundwater. | Clean Water Act Executive Orders 12088; 13423 NPS Management Policies Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act (OCGA 12-7-1) The Metropolitan River Protection Act (OCGA 12-5-440) Georgia Planning Act of 1989 (OCGA 12-2-8) |
| Natural floodplain values are preserved or restored. | Executive Order 11988 Rivers and Harbors Act Clean Water Act NPS Management Policies Georgia Planning Act of 1989 (OCGA 12-2-8) NPS 77-1 |

| Desired Condition | Source |
|---|---|
| The natural and beneficial values of wetlands are preserved and enhanced. | Executive Order 11990 Rivers and Harbors Act Clean Water Act NPS Management Policies NPS 79-1 |

The National Park Service will continue to take the following kinds of actions to meet legal and policy requirements related to water resources:

- Continue to support the goals of the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District as they relate to the Chattahoochee River watershed and its tributaries and continue to participate in regional programs as a partner.
- Continue to work closely with other agencies in assuring proper monitoring, inspection, and repair of sanitary sewers in and adjacent to the park to reduce the impacts of these structures. Sewer spills pose a potential threat to water quality, aquatic resources, aesthetic quality, and visitor safety in the park. In addition to wastewater concerns, review of water withdrawal permit applications is an important consideration. Coordinating agencies include, but are not limited to, the:
 - Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division
 - Cobb County, Gwinnett County, Forsyth County, Fulton County and DeKalb County governments
 - Local city governments
 - Atlanta Regional Commission
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 - Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District
- Support the investigation and mitigation of artificially accelerated streambank erosion and stream bed incision and their effects on natural riparian habitats.
- Apply best management practices to all pollution-generating activities and facilities in the park, such as maintenance and storage facilities and parking areas.
- Minimize the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemicals and manage them in accordance with National Park Service policy and federal regulations.
- Promote greater public understanding of water resource issues in the park and encourage public support for and participation in improvements in the Chattahoochee River watershed.

Geologic Resources –Current laws and policies require that the following condition be achieved in the park.

| Desired Condition | Source |
|--|--|
| Include Brevard Fault and associated cliffs in original park area | Park enabling legislation |
| Maintain natural soil resources and processes in as natural a condition as possible, except where special management considerations are allowable under policy. Areas of special management considerations are determined through management zoning decisions in this general management plan. | Park enabling legislation NPS Management Policies |
| Retain soils classified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service as prime or unique farmland soils. | Council on Environmental Quality 1980 memorandum on prime and unique farmlands |

Soils in some portions of the park are adversely affected by accelerated erosion, compaction, and deposition caused by human activities. The National Park Service will take the following kinds of actions to comply with legal and policy requirements:

- Survey areas of the park with soil resource problems and take actions appropriate to specific management zones to prevent further artificial erosion, compaction, or deposition and to restore original contours, as practical.
- Avoid disturbance of prime farmland soils.
- Participate in interagency efforts to reduce artificial erosion from accelerated runoff and streamflows, in conformance with “Water Resources,” above.
- Apply best management practices to problem areas of soil erosion and compaction in a manner that stops or minimizes erosion, restores soil productivity, and re-establishes or sustains a self-perpetuating vegetative cover.

Native Species – Current laws and policies require that the following conditions be achieved in the park.

| Desired Condition | Source |
|---|--|
| Federal- and state-listed threatened and endangered species and their habitats are protected and sustained. | Endangered Species Act Official Code of Georgia Annotated (OCGA) 12-16-1 Georgia Environmental Policy Act NPS <i>Management Policies</i> |
| Populations of native plant and animal species function in as natural condition as possible except where special management considerations are warranted (such as trout stocking programs). | Executive Order 13112 Park enabling legislation NPS <i>Management Policies</i> |
| Native species populations which have been severely reduced in or extirpated from the park are restored where feasible and sustainable. | Executive Order 13112 Park enabling legislation NPS <i>Management Policies</i> |

| Desired Condition | Source |
|---|--|
| <p>Invasive plant species are reduced in numbers and area, or are eliminated, from the natural areas of the park. In the park, these include Chinese privet, English ivy, kudzu, Japanese honeysuckle, and other species.</p> <p>The National Park Service will continue to coordinate with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division regarding the release and management of trout within park boundaries.</p> | <p>NPS <i>Management Policies</i> Executive Order 13112 Aquatic Plant Control Act Park enabling legislation NPS <i>Management Policies</i></p> |

The park contains the oldest and most extensive protected areas of native vegetation in the Atlanta metropolitan area. However, because the park is more than 48 miles in length and extremely narrow, the potential for adverse impacts of encroaching development on native animals and vegetation is high. The park will continue to coordinate with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources regarding the trout stocking program, and the emphasis on native species in this section does not imply that trout would be removed from the park. The National Park Service will take the following actions to comply with legal and policy requirements related to native terrestrial and aquatic species (exclusive of trout).

- Conduct further inventories of plants and animals in the park. Use these inventories as a baseline against which to regularly monitor the distribution and condition of selected species, including indicators of ecosystem condition and diversity, rare or protected species, and invasive species. Modify management plans based on the results of monitoring.
- Encourage and support active and diverse research that contributes to management knowledge of native species in the park.
- Implement measures to restore native species and natural habitats where appropriate. For example, protect and restore natural aquatic and floodplain habitats in the park where they can be sustained, including freshwater springs and ephemeral wetlands.
- Continue to coordinate with Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division to manage the stocked trout fisheries within the park.
- Continue to participate in regional ecosystem-level undertakings to restore native species, such as the regional Biosphere Program.
- Limit plantings of nonnative species to noninvasive plants that are appropriate for cultural resource or historic zones or operational needs.

- Control or eliminate invasive plants and animals, exotic diseases, and pest species where there is a reasonable expectation of success and sustainability. Base control efforts on the potential threat to:
 - Legally protected or uncommon native species and habitats
 - Visitor health or safety
 - Scenic and aesthetic quality
 - Common native species and habitats
- Provide interpretive and educational programs on preservation of native species.

Fire Management – Current laws and policies require that the following conditions be achieved in the park.

| Desired Condition | Source |
|---|--|
| Fire management procedures in the park will be in accordance with the approved Fire Management Plan. Fire management procedures could include techniques such as prescribed burns, fuel reduction, and similar methods. | NPS <i>Management Policies</i> Director’s Order #18 |

Large wildfires in the park, if they were to occur, could pose a threat to residences and commercial development adjoining the park and would produce unacceptable levels of air pollution. To prevent such fires, the National Park Service may take the following kinds of actions to comply with fire management legal and policy requirements.

- Suppress all wildfires as quickly as possible.
- Maintain a cooperative agreement with the various local fire departments for wildfire suppression in the park.
- Consider limited controlled burns for natural resources management.

Cultural Resource Management Requirements. Categories included in cultural resource management requirements include the following: archeological resources, historic structures and districts, cultural landscapes, ethnographic resources, and collections. Coordination was conducted with American Indian Tribes (Creek and Cherokee Nations) to identify any concerns and issues regarding places of traditional cultural importance (ethnographic resources) in the park. The existing literature and park records were also investigated to determine whether these resources exist in the park. No ethnographic resources have yet been identified to date.

Many of the historic structures in the park form an integral part of a larger cultural landscape. For this reason, the discussion of historic structures and landscapes in this document has been combined. (The term “historic properties” as defined in 36 CFR 800 refers to any cultural resource, including archeological resources that are eligible for the National Register.)

Archeological Resources – Current laws and policies require that the following conditions be achieved in the park.

| Desired Condition | Source |
|---|--|
| <p>Archeological sites are identified and inventoried, and their significance is determined and documented.</p> <p>Archeological sites are protected in an undisturbed condition unless it is determined through formal processes that disturbance or natural deterioration is unavoidable, or that removal of artifacts or physical disturbance is justified by research or interpretive requirements.</p> <p>In those cases where disturbance or deterioration is unavoidable, anticipated adverse effects to the site are mitigated. Such mitigation commonly consists of recordation and data recovery by archeologists who meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards. Mitigation could also include other measures such as site burial.</p> | <p>National Historic Preservation Act Executive Order 11593 Executive Order 13007 Archeological and Historic Preservation Act Archeological Resources Protection Act <i>Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation</i> (1983) Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement among the NPS, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and National Council of State Historic Preservation Officers (NPS 1995a) <i>NPS Management Policies</i> Director’s Order #28: Cultural Resource Management Guideline (June 11, 1998) Director’s Order #28A: Archeology 36 Code of Federal Regulations 800 National Environmental Policy Act Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act National Parks Act of August 25, 1916 The Antiquities Act of 1906</p> |

While there has never been an official National Park Service archeological overview and assessment completed for the park, there have been several systematic assessments of the park cultural resources (O’Grady and Poe, 1980; Parsons 2001b; NPS 2005a), including predictive models for cultural resources. Studies completed in the park have generally focused on assessing sites prior to ground-disturbing activities such as road widening, bridge building, trail building, and boat ramp improvements. Researchers have evaluated the park as a whole to determine the presence of prehistoric and Civil War-era artifacts. Occasional sites, such as rock shelters were noted, and Civil War gun positions and possible picket posts were recorded. There are 100 known archeological sites in the park that are sufficiently significant to warrant nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NPS 2005a). Actions that the National Park Service will take to meet legal and policy requirements related to archeological sites include:

- Survey and inventory archeological resources, document their significance and nominate to the National Register those that seem to meet Register criteria.
- Treat all archeological resources as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places pending the concurrence of the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer or a formal eligibility determination by the Keeper of the National Register if the National Park Service and the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer do not agree on a site’s eligibility.
- Protect all archeological resources determined eligible for listing or listed on the National Register of Historic Places and consult with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

and the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act.

Review and assess all proposed undertakings that could affect archeological resources to ensure that all feasible measures are taken to avoid disturbing resources, minimize damage to them, or recover data that otherwise would be lost.

Historic Structures, Districts, and Landscapes – Current laws and policies require that the following conditions be achieved in the park for cultural landscapes and for historic structures, such as buildings, bridges, roads and trails.

| Desired Condition | Source |
|---|--|
| <p>Historic structures and landscapes are inventoried and their significance and integrity are evaluated under National Register criteria.</p> <p>The qualities of historic structures and landscapes that contribute to their actual listing or their eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places are protected in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s standards, unless it is determined through a formal process that disturbance or natural deterioration is unavoidable.</p> | <p>National Historic Preservation Act 36 Code of Federal Regulations 800 Executive Order 11593 Archeological and Historic Preservation Act <i>Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation</i> (1983) Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement among the NPS, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and National Council of State Historic Preservation Officers (NPS 1995a) <i>NPS Management Policies</i> <i>Director’s Order #28: Cultural Resource Management Guideline</i> (June 11, 1998)</p> |

Many of the historic structures in the park exhibit deterioration due to their age and a lack of systematic preservation maintenance. The National Park Service will take the following kinds of actions to meet legal and policy requirements related to historic properties.

- Complete a systematic survey, inventory, and evaluation of historic and cultural landscape resources under National Register criteria in compliance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- Submit the inventory and evaluation results to the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer for concurrence. Complete National Register nomination forms for eligible properties, and submit to the Keeper of the National Register for review and listing on the National Register.
- Determine the appropriate level of preservation for each historic property formally determined to be eligible for listing or actually listed on the National Register, subject to the Secretary of the Interior’s standards.
- Implement and maintain the appropriate level of preservation for such properties.
- Analyze character-defining features of the landscape(s) as well as design elements, such as materials, colors, shape, massing, scale, architectural details, and site details of historic structures in the park. These cultural resources could include such features as bridges, trails, roads and intersections, curbing, signs, picnic tables, and embayments. Use this information to guide rehabilitation and maintenance of sites, structures and landscapes to ensure that

future park developments are compatible with the historic character in scale, design and materials.

- Complete analyses of historic structures to identify those potentially eligible for listing in the National Register and to assist in future management decisions regarding their treatment.
- Complete cultural landscape inventory (ies) to identify landscapes potentially eligible for listing in the National Register and to assist in future management decisions for landscapes and associated features, both cultural and natural.
- Update the National Park Service’s List of Classified Structures and the Cultural Landscape Database.

Museum Collections– Current laws and policies require that the following conditions be achieved in the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area.

| Desired Condition | Source |
|--|---|
| <p>Museum collections are organized for public and research use. The collection is maintained to document and support the park’s resource management and interpretive programming.</p> <p>Historic properties are inventoried and their significance and integrity documented.</p> | <p>NPS Management Policies</p> <p>Director’s Order 24: Museum Collections Management</p> <p>Antiquities Act of 1906</p> <p>Historic Sites Act of 1935</p> <p>Management of Museum Properties Act of 1955</p> <p>National Historic Preservation Act of 1966</p> <p>Endangered Species Act of 1973</p> <p>Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979</p> <p>Native American Graves protection and Repatriation Act of 1990</p> <p>National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998</p> |

The park’s museum planning documents include a Scope of Collections Statement developed in 1986 (NPS 2005a). This states that the museum collection should be maintained to document and support the park’s resource management and education and outreach (interpretive) programming efforts. Natural resource specimens located within the park boundary must be accessioned and catalogued into the park’s museum collection. The types of collection will illustrate the phenomena of nature and man’s influences along the river corridor in the park. The museum collection preserves those features of the park that cannot safely be left onsite, and serve the needs of staff and visitors.

Visitor Experience and Park Use Requirements – Current laws and policies require that the following conditions be achieved in the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area.

| Desired Condition | Source |
|---|---|
| Visitor and employee safety and health are protected. | NPS <i>Management Policies</i> |
| Visitors understand and appreciate park values and resources and have the information necessary to adapt to the park environments. Visitors have opportunities to enjoy the park in ways that leave park resources unimpaired for future generations. | NPS Organic Act Park enabling legislation NPS <i>Management Policies</i> |
| Park recreational uses are promoted and regulated. Basic visitor needs are met in keeping with the park purposes. | NPS Organic Act Park enabling legislation Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations NPS <i>Management Policies</i> NPS Ban on Personal Watercraft |
| To the extent feasible, facilities, programs, and services in the park are accessible to and usable by all people, including those with disabilities. | Americans with Disabilities Act Architectural Barriers Act Rehabilitation Act NPS <i>Management Policies</i> |

Regulations governing visitor use and behavior in units of the national park system are contained in Title 36 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations). These regulations have force of law and include a variety of use limitations, such as limits on commercial activities. The following two regulations are especially pertinent to planning for the park because of issues raised by the public during scoping:

- Pets must be crated, caged, restrained on a leash (6 feet long or less), or otherwise physically confined at all times (36 Code of Federal Regulations 2.15).
- Bicycles are prohibited except on roads, parking areas, and designated routes (36 Code of Federal Regulations 4.30).

The National Park Service will take the following kinds of actions to meet legal and policy requirements related to visitor experience and park use:

- Provide opportunities for visitors to understand, appreciate, and enjoy the park.
- Ensure that all park programs and facilities are accessible to the extent feasible.
- Continue to enforce the regulations in 36 Code of Federal Regulations.

These laws, regulations, and policies leave room for judgment regarding the best mix of types and levels of visitor use activities, programs, and facilities. The alternatives presented and evaluated in this draft general management plan represent three approaches to visitor experience and park use.

Special Use Management Requirements – Special park uses refer to the use of National Park Service lands for non-park purposes. There are two instruments that may be used to authorize a special park use: (1) a special use permit, or (2) a right-of-way permit.

The special use and/or right-of-way permit addresses an activity that takes place in the park and provides a benefit to an individual, group or organization; requires written authorization and some degree of management control from the National Park Service in order to protect park resources and the public interest; is not prohibited by law or regulation; and is neither initiated, sponsored, nor conducted by the National Park Service.

A special use permit is issued by the park superintendent to an individual or organization to allow the use of National Park Service administered resources and to authorize activities under 36 CFR Part 1-7. The special use permit is designed to impose conditions to manage the activity and prevent impairment or degradation of resources, to obtain the signature of the permittee agreeing to the conditions, and to establish a written account of the special use for the administrative record. Those activities may include but are not limited to agricultural grazing, special events, specimen collection for research, distribution of printed material, commercial photography, or public assembly.

A right-of-way permit is the instrument issued by a regional director to authorize any new utilities, including water and sewer conduits and telecommunication facilities, on National Park Service lands. This includes those utilities not owned by the National Park Service, but which serve the National Park Service and/or National Park Service concession facilities. The authority for issuing a right-of-way permit is found in the legislation and policy documents listed in the right-hand column of the table below.

Current laws and policies require that the following conditions be achieved in the park with regard to the management of special uses.

| Desired Condition | Source |
|---|---|
| Park resources or public enjoyment of the park are not denigrated by nonconforming* uses. Telecommunication structures are permitted in the park to the extent that they do not jeopardize the park’s mission and resources. No new nonconforming* use or rights-of-way are permitted through the park without specific statutory authority and approval by the Director of the NPS or his/her representative and only if there is no practicable alternative to such use of NPS lands. | Telecommunications Act 16 United States Code 5 16 United States Code 79 23 United States Code 317 36 Code of Federal Regulations 14 NPS <i>Management Policies</i> <i>Reference Manual # 53, Special Park Uses</i> (NPS 2000b) |

*Nonconforming in this context means any structure or use which is not part of the park infrastructure, administrative facility inventory, or an operational, interpretive, or maintenance activity.

The park has ongoing special use concerns associated with the presence of sanitary sewer lines, natural gas transmission lines, and water supply lines within the boundaries. Combined sanitary and storm water sewers periodically discharge raw sewage into the Chattahoochee River during storm events. The water resource section of Chapter 3 describes the types of actions that the National Park Service will take to meet legal and policy requirements related to sanitary and combined sewers as well as other types of discharges.

Telecommunication Facilities - A new special use concern at the park involves the management of requests for the installations of telecommunications facilities on National Park Service lands. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 (47 USC 332 note) directs all federal land management agencies to process, in good faith, applications from a Federal Communications Commission licensee or from an agency regulated by the Department of Commerce through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Unlike other nonconforming uses, the National Park Service is legally obligated to permit telecommunication infrastructure within the park if such facilities can be structured to avoid conflict with the park's mission. Should the proposal cause unavoidable conflict with the park's mission, the permit will be denied (NPS 2006f). The National Park Service anticipates receiving multiple applications for telecommunication installations within the park.

The National Park Service will take the following kinds of actions to meet legal and policy requirements related to the use of park lands for telecommunications infrastructure:

Determine appropriate locations and stipulations before permitting telecommunication infrastructure on park lands. The goal will be to ensure that telecommunications facilities are located where they would have the least impact on park resources and values, are not located in scenic, historic, and/or sensitive areas integral to the park's mission, ensure visitor and neighbor safety, and the quality of visitor experiences are protected while endeavoring to respond positively to applications. Maximum potential for future co-location would also be considered. Sites and stipulations will be based in part on the management zoning established in this general management plan. For the purposes of this general management plan, telecommunications facilities would only be appropriate in the "developed zone" and would be subject to fulfill compliance and assessment requirements for the entire footprint of the new facilities and will not result in unacceptable impacts (NPS 2006f).

PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

Decision Points

Decision points were generated for the park by soliciting comments at six public meetings held throughout the corridor during the fall of 2000, and through input from various stakeholder groups and the general public during the review of the 2004 Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement document. Decision points are statements that specify a range of possible future conditions in the park, based on public input. The decision points are used as the basis for developing the alternatives in the environmental impact statement for the general management plan.

A variety of issues and concerns were identified by the general public, park staff, and other agencies for this general management plan. Additional information on issues identification is provided in Chapter 6, "Consultation and Coordination." Some of the comments were outside the scope of this general management plan. Some concerns identified during scoping are already prescribed by law, regulation, or policy, or would be in violation of such requirements. These types of issues are discussed in the preceding section, "Servicewide Mandates and Policies." Because they are mandatory requirements, these matters are not subject to the decision making process presented in this general management plan.

Other issues identified during scoping were at an operational or developmental level of detail. Such issues are most appropriately associated with the park's five-year strategic plan or annual

implementation plans. Those plans will be based on the resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved in the park that are established in the final general management plan.

Based on public comments and agency concerns, three decision points were identified. This general management plan focuses on addressing these decision points, which are summarized as follows:

Should present practices of management, preservation, and protection of natural and cultural resources be maintained, or should these management, preservation, and protection practices be expanded in volume, type, and scope?

This decision point was developed in response to concerns expressed by the public regarding the potential impacts of projected increased future development and increased visitor use on the park. This decision point was developed in recognition of the rapidly developing nature of the areas surrounding the park, and the park's mandate to prevent impairment.

Natural and cultural resources within the park, including the Chattahoochee River, are threatened by the effects of encroaching development and increased public use. Encroachment can adversely affect water quality and aquatic life of streams within the park as a result of soil erosion and stormwater runoff from impervious areas developed outside park boundaries. Trails weaving into the park created by new developments in areas adjoining the park can eliminate valuable riparian habitat along the Chattahoochee River and cause soil erosion. Sewage spills pose a potential threat to water quality and aquatic resources in the park, including the Chattahoochee River. Encroachment can also lead to physical disturbance of natural habitats and cultural resources within the park. Increased park use can also adversely affect cultural resources which has already occurred at some locations in the park.

Expanding management activities to increase the level of protection for natural and cultural resources will require funding and analysis of alternative means of accomplishing funding objectives. Associated cost will depend on the specific level of protection required or proposed. This decision point provides the initial step that recognizes the need for added protection and the associated costs.

Should the park enhance visitor access and use with associated facilities, or should the park restrict use and access to selected areas?

This decision point was developed in response to public comments indicating a desire for increased access to the park, especially trails. Other possible ways of increasing access could include new facilities such as boat ramps, interpretive centers, restrooms, parking areas, and roads. The park is used by approximately 2.5 million people each year, and is ranked 30th in the nation for visitor use (NPS 2006a). Although the Organic Act directs the National Park Service to allow visitors the opportunity to enjoy the natural and cultural resources in the park, it also specifies that these same resources cannot be impaired by these types of activities and projects. This decision point was used to develop management alternatives that defined a range of levels of access that would allow the public to enjoy and experience the natural and cultural resources within the park while protecting these same resources.

Should the park widen its circle of influence, or should the park restrict its focus to activities within park boundaries?

This decision point explores the issue of whether the National Park Service should actively seek to partner with surrounding governments and organizations to enhance, protect, or restore park values, or should the National Park Service continue with its current management practices. This decision point was developed because, as a narrow corridor heavily influenced by adjoining development, the park might be more effectively managed if the surrounding local governments and stakeholder organizations were involved. The park is currently managed primarily on an internal basis, with limited input by the surrounding city and county governments or stakeholder organizations. Current management coordination with surrounding governments and other groups primarily involves negotiation of utility easements, property acquisitions, or review of projects that adjoin the park and are collocated along the river corridor and that might impact park resources directly or indirectly. Increased partnering with surrounding governments and stakeholder organizations implies that the park would receive support from these organizations.

Impact Topics – Resources and Values at Stake in the Planning Process

Specific resources and values, called impact topics, focus the planning process and the assessment of potential consequences of the alternatives. The following four criteria were used to determine park resources and values:

- *Resources cited in the establishing legislation for the park.* The establishing legislation for the park is included in Appendix E. A summary of relevant elements of the legislation is provided in the sections “Park History and Use Relative to Management Planning” and “Park Purposes.”
- *Resources critical to maintaining the significance and character of the park.* The section “Park Significance” describes the defining features of the park that were used to establish the resources that are critical to maintaining its significance and character.
- *Resources recognized as important by laws or regulations.* Appendix A provides a list of many important congressional acts and executive orders that guide the management of all National Park Service facilities, including the park. A summary of some of the relevant elements of these acts and orders is provided in the section “Servicewide Mandates and Policies.”
- *Values of concern to the public during scoping and development of the general management plan.* The National Park Service conducted an extensive public information and scoping program to acquire input from the public and from other agencies. This helped the National Park Service develop alternatives and identify resources and values of high interest in the park.

These criteria were applied to a set of impact topics/National Environmental Policy Act resource categories by checking off which were applicable. This approach helped establish each impact topic as a resource or value at stake in the planning process. A more detailed description of each impact topic and the effects of each of the proposed management alternatives are described in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

Natural Resources. A major reason for establishing the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area was to protect its natural resources and its abundant natural scenery, which are particularly valuable because the park lies within a large metropolitan area. The following summarizes each type of natural resource in the park and the corresponding, relevant regulatory and legal framework.

Water Resources and Aquatic Resources – The establishing legislation for the park specifies that the Chattahoochee River, including the bed of the river, and its tributaries are essential resources to be protected. In addition, many federal laws and executive orders protecting the nation’s waters apply to the Chattahoochee River watershed.

As the park’s name suggests, the Chattahoochee River is fundamental to the park’s character. The vegetated river corridor and its tributaries represent a unique natural resource in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Even though the developing urban areas surrounding the park affect water quality and quantity, the Chattahoochee River and its tributaries are inhabited by numerous species of native fish and other aquatic species, as well as the stocked trout fisheries maintained by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division. The importance of the Chattahoochee River as a central scenic and recreational attraction in the park was reaffirmed by numerous public comments and by the approximately 2.5 million visitors to the park each year.

Wetlands and Floodplains – These are included in the discussion of water resources in “Servicewide Mandates and Policies.” Wetlands and floodplains are regulated by legislation and executive orders because of their value as biological resources and their contributions to flood control, respectively.

Wetlands are located along the Chattahoochee River floodplain and at seeps (places where water trickles out of the ground to form pools) along the lower slopes of the valley walls and along tributaries. The floodplains along the Chattahoochee River and major tributaries support mature mesic southern bottomland hardwood forests as well as a variety of forested, scrub/shrub, and emergent wetland types. These sensitive habitats have unusually large numbers of plant and animal species and contribute significantly to the biological diversity of the park. For example, over 980 species of plants have been identified within the park boundaries. The 48-mile corridor is located in an area where the ranges of northern and southern species overlap, adding to the overall diversity of the area.

Terrestrial Ecological Species – The statements of park significance include several references to the forest’s contribution to the park’s character. The rich southern mesic hardwood forests within the boundaries of the park comprise an essential component of the landscape and scenic qualities of the park, buffer the park from the surrounding urbanization, and provide habitat for wildlife and plant species. During scoping, many comments were received about the value of the native forests and the need to maintain them.

Native animals represent an important park resource that captures the public’s imagination. During scoping, many people commented on the value of seeing wildlife in the park, especially in contrast to the surrounding urban environment. The white-tailed deer, the largest and most conspicuous mammal, was the most frequently mentioned. Recreational birding also was identified as a popular park activity. Birding is especially popular, for example, in the wetlands at the Cochran Shoals unit.

Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species – The Endangered Species Act and *Management Policies* (NPS 2006f) requires the protection of rare species and their habitats. The Chattahoochee River National

Recreation Area provides habitat for several federally endangered and threatened species and a large number of species of plants and animals listed by the Georgia Natural Heritage Program.

Prime and Unique Farmlands –In 1980, the Council on Environmental Quality directed that federal agencies assess the effects of their actions on farmland soils classified by the Natural Resource Conservation Service as prime or unique. Prime farmland soil has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oil seed crops and is available for these uses (i.e., it is not urban or developed land nor is it under water). Unique farmland is land that is used for the production of high value food crops, such as fruits, vegetables and nuts. A number of the soil types in the park have been classified as prime farmlands; however, no unique farmland has been identified within park boundaries. Given the historic regional farm practices sustained in the area, and the existence of prime farmland within the park corridor, this topic was recognized as an impact topic.

Cultural Resources. The park’s archeological resources and historic structures and sites are recognized as exceptional because they illustrate significant aspects of the historic development of the area from prehistoric times to the present. Historic features such as the Sope Creek Mills and the Hyde Farm help define the significance and character of the park and are protected by multiple legislative, executive, and National Park Service policies.

These historic features also form an integral part of the park’s cultural landscapes, which reflect the relationship between what is natural and what is man-made. According to the Secretary of the Interior’s guidance document (1996), a cultural landscape is “a geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein) associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.

Archeological Resources - The park contains approximately 197 known archeological sites (NPS 2005a). These sites, and the more than 14,000 associated archeological artifacts, document the historical and prehistoric use and cultural adaptation of the early cultures, up to and including the Creek and Cherokee Nations. The Chattahoochee River is considered to have been the transitory border between these two great cultures.

Of the recorded sites there are numerous historic archeological sites and standing structures, including Civil War sites, pre-Civil War home sites and farmhouses, at least 10 early ferry crossings, and pre-Civil War paper mill and woolen mill sites. The mills are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Historic Buildings, Structures, Landscapes, and Objects - Cultural landscapes reflect the relationship between what is natural and what is man-made. According to the Secretary of the Interior’s guidance document (1996), a cultural landscape is “a geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein) associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.”

A cultural landscape inventory documents the qualities and attributes of a cultural landscape that make it significant and worthy of preservation. The goal of the National Park Service is to locate and evaluate cultural landscapes and provide information on their location, historical development, characteristics and features, and management to assist park managers in planning, programming, and recording treatment and management decisions.

Seven cultural landscapes have been identified as having sufficient integrity to be considered potentially eligible for the National Register. These landscapes include the Island Ford complex, Sope Creek Mill complex, Scribner Cemetery area, Collins/Yardum homesite area, Hyde Farm/Power House, Rogers Homestead, and the Allenbrook/Ivy Mill Complex.

Local and Regional Transportation. Local and regional transportation was identified as an impact topic primarily because of concerns expressed during scoping. Many members of the public identified the value of both paved and unpaved trails and expressed a desire to have an expanded trail system. The scoping comments pointed out that trails should be effectively linked to the various local communities located along the 48-mile park.

Other people value the park corridor for the opportunity to promote nonmotorized and less polluting alternatives to automobiles, especially bicycle use. Public comments reflected the desire to increase use of off-road bicycles and other walking trails in the park through development of an interconnected trail system. Other people expressed concern about the effects of increased off-road bicycling on erosion and water quality.

Visitor and Community Values. In reviewing the range of comments received, the following topics appear to capture the values expressed by the public.

Traditional Park Character and Visitor Experience – The significance statements presented near the beginning of this general management plan reflect the importance of the overall visitor experience in defining the park’s character. Frequent scoping comments were concerned with protecting the park’s natural qualities, not only for the ecological resources, but for its restorative value to people as a place of natural beauty and escape from the nearby urban setting. Scenery, opportunities to learn about the natural world, natural quiet, and the ability to hear natural sounds were often highlighted. There was near unanimity that the natural character should be preserved and protected from disturbance from development.

People also emphasized the traditional, familiar character of the park’s recreational features and their desire to see this character maintained. While many said that park facilities need repair and improved maintenance, the public appeared to be mostly satisfied with the range of recreational opportunities offered by the park. Upon review of the 2004 Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement, additional comments regarding the ability to fish and boat throughout the park, and increased opportunities to bicycle in the park were voiced. Other comments emphasized:

- The lasting value of the park as a gathering place for family and friends.
- The importance of shared experiences such as walking, picnicking, bicycling, horseback riding, and participating in other activities that have become associated with the park.
- Individual and physically challenging recreation such as biking, boating, fishing, jogging, and hiking.
- The historic resources present within the park and their appreciation by the public.

Community Character – Community character also was identified as an impact topic during scoping. Most of those who commented described the park as a major asset to the quality of life in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The scenic and recreational amenities are much appreciated, and many said that

proximity and access to the park were important factors in their choice of neighborhoods. A number of people who identified themselves as park neighbors also stressed that their neighborhoods could be affected by changes in park experiences.

Issue Topics Considered but Dismissed

As described in the “Consultation and Coordination” section, the identification of issues and development of alternatives evolved through a series of meetings and other opportunities for public input. However, not all issues raised by the public are included in this general management plan.

As the National Park Service learned more about public concerns, the alternatives were modified to more effectively address the public’s comments. This evolution resulted in the elimination from further consideration of some possible management actions that were proposed early in the process. Other issues raised by the public were not considered because they:

- Were not feasible
- Are already prescribed by law, regulation, or policy
- Would be in violation of laws, regulations, or policies

The following is a discussion of the impact topics and a rationale for eliminating them from further consideration. The decisions regarding categorization of the issues were made by a National Park Service planning team based upon review of public comments and best available data.

Air Quality – The United States Environmental Protection Agency has established primary and secondary national ambient air quality standards or criteria pollutants under the provisions of the Clean Air Act. Twenty counties surrounding the park including Cobb, Gwinnett, Fulton, and Forsyth counties are collectively designated as a marginal eight-hour ozone nonattainment area. During scoping, members of the public expressed concerns over threats to air quality from heavy traffic in the Atlanta Region. Poor regional air quality has the potential to adversely affect biotic resources, cultural resources, and visitor health and experiences. The National Park Service would continue to cooperate with local agencies to monitor air quality, yet it cannot change the regional conditions. Providing opportunities for park linkages through trails is a consideration under all alternatives. In comparison to the regional air quality concerns there would be negligible to minor effects that would result from park actions taken under any alternative. This impact topic was eliminated from further consideration.

Groundwater Quantity: Implementation of a particular management alternative would not have any impact on groundwater quantity, either positive or negative. Groundwater quantity is affected by various physical, geological, and hydrologic factors outside the control of park management.

Groundwater Quality: Facilities would be required to comply with appropriate design, build, and operating specifications and procedures. There would be negligible impacts to groundwater quality. Groundwater quality is affected by factors such as transportation- or industrial-related spills of hazardous chemicals or industrial and commercial operations outside of park boundaries.

Special Status Species that do not occur in the Park: Management alternatives would have a negligible affect on rare, threatened, or endangered species in areas outside the park or in

neighboring states. The park provides temporary habitat for some migratory species of protected animals from other states and from outside the park boundaries, but habitat for these species within the park would be preserved under any alternative selected, even with varying degrees of fragmentation. Therefore, this issue does not merit further analysis.

Physiography/Topography: Alternative park management activities could result in some ground disturbing activities related to construction of parking lots, buildings, and roads. However, these activities would result in negligible impacts to topography or physiography within the park boundaries.

Climate: None of the management alternatives would result in climate modification.

Wild and Scenic Rivers: The Chattahoochee River is not a federally-designated Wild and Scenic River, and therefore no impacts would occur.

Museum Collections: The museum collection at the park includes objects ranging from an herbarium collection numbering in the hundreds, to macroinvertebrate specimens and cultural heritage objects found in structures acquired by the National Park Service. The macroinvertebrate specimens, numbering over 1,000, were consolidated in the park's Water Quality Lab in 2005. A freshwater mussel survey of the park has also been completed and specimens are included in the park's museum. Specimens housed at the Savannah River Ecological Laboratory in Savannah, Georgia include small-mammal and fish inventories as well as a herpetological survey. The majority of the park's archeological collection is housed in the Southeast Archeological Center in Tallahassee, Florida. The park has no collections that fall within the scope (funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony) of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. A Regional Museum Storage Plan approved May 2006, recommends that all long-term collections be moved from the park. In addition, under all alternatives, a Collections Management Plan would address collections for the park in a comprehensive manner.

Any activities associated with any of the proposed alternatives in the future would include environmental assessments tiered to this document and specific effects regarding museum collections would be evaluated at that time, such as collection of natural history specimens or cultural history artifacts related to additional survey work. Each of the proposed alternatives is estimated to cause negligible to minor effects and be similar in nature. Therefore, this impact topic was dropped from further evaluation.

Indian Trust Resources: Designated Indian Trust Resources do not exist within the park and therefore would not be impacted by any management alternative.

Sacred Sites: No Native American sacred sites have as yet been identified within the park. Project-specific consultation has been initiated with potentially interested Tribes; however, this has not led to the identification of any sacred sites in the park, and no formal study to identify such sites has been carried out. At this time it is not possible to assess potential impacts to sacred sites by any of the management alternatives. Any activities proposed in the future would include environmental assessments tiered to this document and potential sacred sites, should they be identified in the future, would be evaluated at that time. No impacts to known sacred sites are predicted at this time.

Ethnographic Resources: Some places of traditional cultural importance may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as traditional cultural properties because of their association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that are rooted in that community's history and are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community. Few traditionally associated peoples retain ties to resources in the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area today. Contemporary representatives of the Cherokee Nation, which is the present-day federally recognized tribe most likely to have an affiliation with the park, claim no remaining connection with the park. Cherokee representatives believe the lands along the river between Lake Lanier and Standing Peachtree are farther south than the Trail of Tears segment involving their ancestors (NPS 2005a). Other descendant groups may be associated with the park. However, such descendants of ferryboat captains, fishermen, mill workers, or others, have not established claims or groups that connect them to sites or resources within the park. Additional research may identify links to contemporary groups, such as descendants of the above and of resort lodge owners or visitors, churches that used the river for baptisms, farm families, etc. Any activities proposed in the future would include environmental assessments tied to this document and potential ethnographic resources, should they be identified in the future, would be evaluated at that time. No impacts to known ethnographic resources are predicted at this time.

Noise: The largest noise generator in the vicinity of the park is traffic. The alternatives considered would result in negligible impacts to the overall traffic patterns or volumes projected to occur in the areas surrounding the park. Traffic in the area would continue to increase, as described in the transportation section of Chapter 4, regardless of whether any of the management plan alternatives are instituted.

Socially or Culturally Disadvantaged Populations: Executive Order 12898 regarding "Federal Actions to address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." requires, as of February 11, 1994, that each federal agency make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health effects of its programs, policies, or activities on minority or low-income populations. The order applies to all federal actions that require National Environmental Policy Act documentation, and has three general objectives: 1) focus the attention of federal agencies on the human health and general environmental conditions in minority and low-income communities with the goal of achieving environmental justice; 2) foster nondiscrimination in federal programs that could substantially affect human health or the environment; and 3) give minority and low-income communities greater opportunities for public participation on matters relating to human health and safety.

An assessment of the alternatives assessed during the planning process determined that there would be no discernable adverse effects upon any minority or low-income population or community. Environmental justice was dismissed as an impact topic, and the following is a summary of the rationale for this conclusion:

Although there are minority and or low-income populations in the vicinity of the park, implementation of the plan would not result in any identified effects specific to any minority or low-income population or community. Development of new park facilities that might occur under any of the alternatives would occur in compliance within prescribed zones located throughout the 48-mile park corridor. Adverse human health or socioeconomic effects on minority or low-income populations or communities are not projected anywhere along the park corridor.

Impacts on the socioeconomic environment are expected to be negligible and would not alter the character of any local community in a negative way. Connections or increased access to the park at any location along the 48-mile park will have a beneficial effect on the social and economic resources in these areas.

The park staff and planning team actively solicited public participation as part of the planning process and gave equal consideration to all input regardless of age, race, income status, or other socioeconomic or demographic factors.

Energy Resources: Implementation of the alternatives would involve varying use of energy resources, but these impacts would be minor in nature and would result in negligible impacts to regional energy resources.

Public Health and Safety: The National Park Service is charged with providing a safe and healthy environment within the park boundaries. This would be required under any management alternative and does not require additional analysis.

Natural or Depletable Resource Requirements & Conservation Potential: The management alternatives would result in the negligible depletion of natural resources and would not adversely affect potential conservation of natural resources within the park.