

DRAFT

National Park Service  
Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program  
Strategic Plan

Institutional Scope - National Park Service

The activities of the Adaptive Management Program occur within the confines of two areas administered by the National Park Service (NPS); Grand Canyon National Park and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. All activities recommended for implementation in NPS areas must adhere to the various laws and management policies that relate to management of federal lands, and more specifically to NPS Lands.

The management of the national park system and of NPS programs is guided by the Constitution, public laws, treaties, proclamations, Executive Orders, regulations, and directives of the Secretary of the Interior and the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. NPS policy must be consistent with these higher authorities, and with appropriate delegations of authority.

Of great importance are the NPS Organic Act of 1916, the General Authorities Act of 1970 and the 1978 amendments to this act (the Redwoods Amendment). Although the Organic Act and the Redwoods Amendment use different language, they define a single standard for the management of the national park system. National Parks have two primary purposes; first and foremost to conserve park resources and values, and second, to provide for the enjoyment of park resources and values by the people of the United States. By enjoyment, it is meant to encompass all the people of the United States not just those who visit parks. It also includes benefits such as scientific knowledge and inspiration as well as other forms of enjoyment. However, resource preservation is the umbrella under which enjoyment may occur.

Management Policies 2001 is the basic Service-wide policy document of the National Park Service, and is the highest of three levels of guidance documents in the NPS Directives System. Interim updates or amendments may be accomplished through Director's Orders (the second level of the Directives System). The most detailed and comprehensive guidance on implementing Service-wide policy is found in "level 3" documents, which are usually in the form of handbooks or reference manuals issued by associate directors. These documents provide NPS field employees with a compilation of legal references, operating policies, standards, procedures, general information, recommendations, and examples to assist them in carrying out Management Policies and Director's Orders. (These NPS guidance documents are available online at: <http://www.nps.gov/refdesk/policies.html>.)

Given the scope of its responsibilities for the resources and values entrusted to its care, the Service has an obligation to demonstrate leadership in environmental stewardship. The NPS must lead by example, not only for visitors, other government agencies, the private sector, and the public at large, but also for a worldwide audience. The core, or primary, responsibility of NPS managers is to preserve park resources and values without impairment. The service cannot conduct or allow activities in parks that would impact park resources and values to a level that would constitute impairment, unless directly and specifically provided for by legislation or by the proclamation establishing the park.

The impairment that is prohibited by the laws and policies governing NPS areas is impact that, in the professional judgement of the responsible NPS manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values. Whether an impact meets this definition depends on the specific resources or values affected; the severity, duration, and timing of the influence; the direct and indirect effects of the influence; and the values and purposes for which a particular park unit was established. However, the laws do give the NPS the management discretion to allow impacts to park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purposes of a park, so long as the impact does not constitute impairment. In making a determination of whether there would be impairment, the responsible NPS manager must use his or her best professional judgment.

The NPS has established a tiered process for planning and decision making. General management plans (GMP) are the first of these three tiers. The GMP focuses on why the park was established, and what management prescriptions (i.e., resource conditions, visitor experiences, and appropriate types of management actions) should be achieved and maintained over time. The GMP takes the long view, which may project many years into the future when dealing with the time frames of natural and cultural processes. Park staffs continuously re-evaluate the adequacy of the park's GMP through strategic planning and in the process may also identify the need for a new or revised GMP. Developing action plans for dealing with complex, technical, and sometimes controversial issues often requires a level of detail and thorough analysis beyond that appropriate at the GMP or strategic plan levels. Implementation planning provides this level of detail and analysis. Park resource management plans, river management plans, and wilderness management plans are examples of implementation plans. Any decisions calling for actions having the potential to significantly affect the human environment require a formal analysis of alternatives, in compliance with the National Environmental Compliance Act and related legislation, including the National Historic Preservation Act. In cases of doubt as to the impact of activities on park resources, the Service will decide in favor of protecting the resources.