

species. Alternative 2 would provide more opportunities to permanently protect significant resources from irreversible and irretrievable commitments in the long term through new funding and conservation programs.

- **Unavoidable Adverse Impacts.** This analysis assesses the impacts of management policies. Because no specific action or alteration of resources is suggested under either alternative, it is not possible to identify specific unavoidable adverse impacts.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The "environmentally preferred" alternative is the one that best protects, preserves and enhances historic, cultural and natural resources, and that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment. The environmentally preferred alternative is not the same as the agency or NPS "preferred" alternative. The NPS has not identified a preferred alternative because the actions identified in each alternative are local, state and private actions, not NPS actions. The NPS will identify a preferred alternative in the final EA after analyzing public and agency responses to the draft alternatives.

The environmentally preferred alternative must meet the criteria spelled out in NEPA, section 101(b). Alternatives 1 and 2 both provide opportunities to meet NEPA requirements to protect the environment for succeeding generations. However, under Alternative 1, population and growth pressures with limited funding available for conservation may result in long-term impacts to resources that represent important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage. Further, without an ecosystem management approach, development in the long term could result in habitat fragmentation and an eventual degradation of the study area's species diversity. Alternative 2 provides additional opportunities for long-term sustainable management, locally-initiated environmental stewardship, and conservation of nationally significant resources. Alternative 2 is identified as the environmentally preferred alternative because, if pursued, it could better meet all of the criteria outlined in NEPA, Section 101(b).

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 101(b)

It is the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means to improve and coordinate Federal plans, functions, programs, and resources to the end that the Nation may -

- Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and variety of individual choice;
- Achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
- Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources. (National Environmental Policy Act, Sec. 101(b), [42 USC §4331])

Goals of the Alternatives

The following section compares the potential beneficial and adverse impacts of the alternatives based on the goals established for all alternatives in the Feasibility Study. The goals were developed by the study team based on the public input received. They represent values that appeared to be shared by the majority of the respondents in the various public input opportunities throughout the study process.

Protect significant natural and cultural resources.

Under Alternative 1, significant natural and cultural resources would continue to receive their current level of protection and management. In the near term, existing laws and regulations would continue to protect natural resources from degradation on a project by project basis. Habitat enhancement and restoration efforts to protect specific species or ecosystems other than those by large public land managers would be individual without coordination. In the long term, increased pressure from population growth and rising land values near the Urban