National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Badlands National Park
South Dakota

Oglala Sioux Tribe Parks
and Recreation Authority
Oglala Sioux Tribe

SOUTH UNIT
BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK

FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

April 2012

Executive Summary

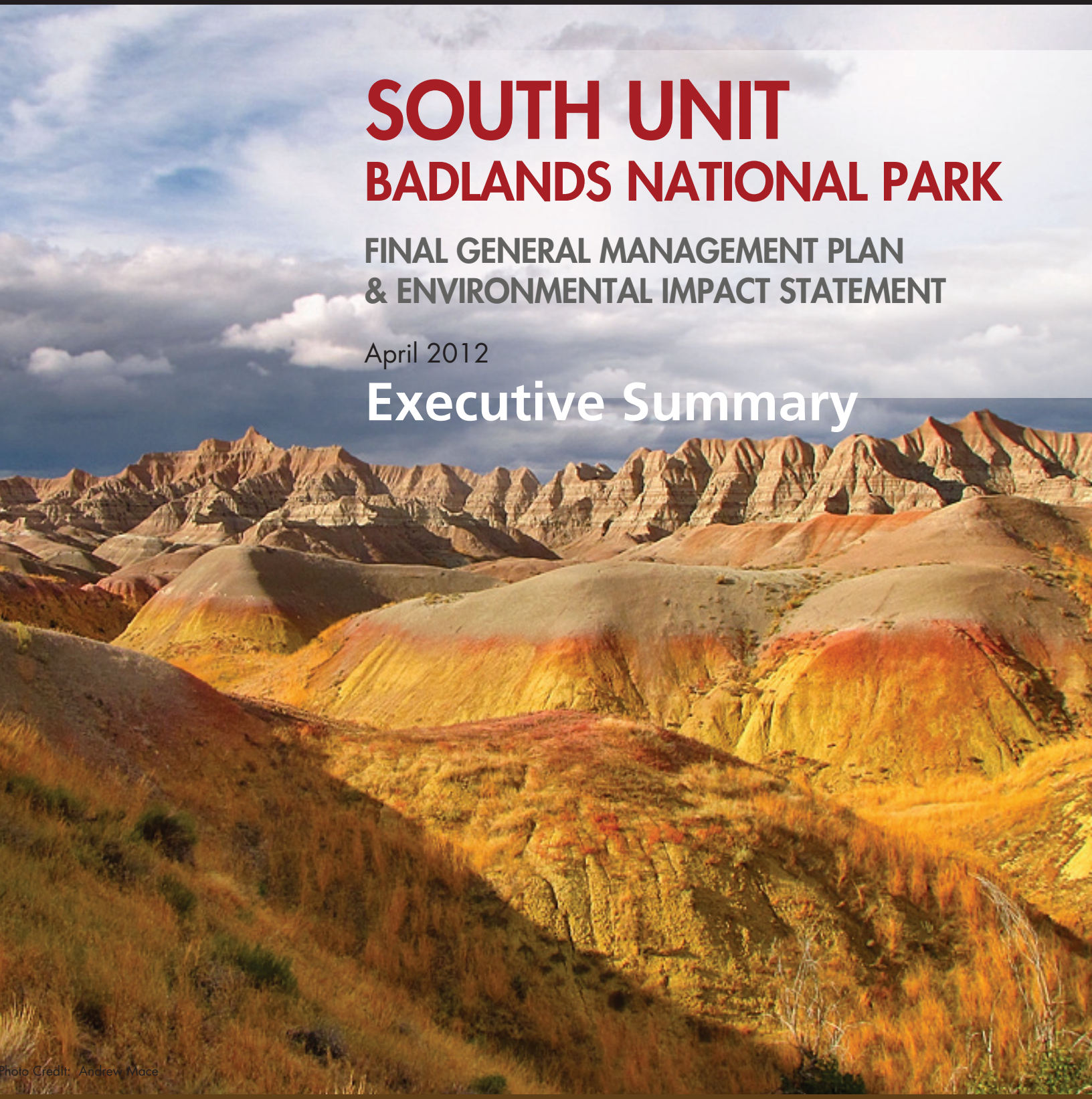


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK

Badlands National Park, established in 1939 (as Badlands National Monument) and redesignated in 1978, is located approximately 70 miles from Rapid City, South Dakota. Most of the park is bordered by Buffalo Gap National Grassland, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and private lands, primarily ranches and farms. The entire park is comprised of 242,756 acres, 64,144 acres of which have been designated as Wilderness. The South Unit, which includes the Palmer Creek Unit, consists of 133,300 acres.

PURPOSE FOR THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Park planning is a decision-making process, and general management planning is the broadest level of decision making for parks. General management plans are required for all units of the National Park System and are intended to establish the future management direction of a park.

Since 1982, the North and South Units had been managed under a *Master Plan and Development Concept Plan*, but it became clear that a new plan would be needed to address issues and concerns confronting the park in the new millennium. Accordingly, in 1999, the National Park Service (NPS) authorized the development of a new plan that would reevaluate the park's needs and desired future conditions for both the North and South Units of Badlands National Park. In 2000, the NPS held public scoping meetings as the initial stage of work on a new general management plan. In 2003, disagreements arose between the NPS and Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) regarding the conduct of paleontological activities in the South Unit, ultimately leading to a moratorium on such activities. The NPS, OST, and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) entered into formal negotiations concerning the future management of the South Unit. At that time, the decision was made to continue the planning process for the North Unit only, and to postpone the South Unit general management plan until 2006.

In late 2006, concurrently with the arrival of a new park superintendent, the OST charged a tribal agency, the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority (OSPRA), with the responsibility to work with the NPS, and the South Unit general management plan effort resumed.

This general management plan provides comprehensive guidance for perpetuating natural systems, preserving cultural resources, and providing opportunities for quality visitor experiences at the South Unit. Its purpose is to ensure that park managers and the public share the same vision of how best to achieve the park's purpose and protect its resources unimpaired for future generations.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Although the South Unit *General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (South Unit GMP/EIS) provides the analysis and justification for future South Unit funding proposals, this plan does not guarantee future NPS funding. Many actions would be necessary to achieve the desired conditions for natural resources, cultural resources, visitor experience, and facilities as envisioned in this plan. The NPS or the OST will request funding to achieve these desired conditions; although both entities hope to secure this funding and will prepare accordingly, the South Unit may not receive enough funding to achieve all desired conditions.

The implementation of the approved plan also could be affected by other factors. Once the South Unit GMP/EIS has been approved, additional feasibility studies and more detailed planning and appropriate environmental documentation may be required before any proposed actions can be carried out. Additional planning and/or revisions may be needed,

depending on which alternative is implemented and what funding levels are achieved. These more detailed plans would tier off of this South Unit GMP/EIS, describing specific actions managers intend to take to achieve desired conditions and long-term goals. Some of these implementation plans are prepared for parks in response to NPS policies.

When the Record of Decision is signed, implementation would not be possible without legislation and funding. The status quo would remain in effect until both the legislation and funding are in place. In the interim, the park and tribe agree to prepare for and implement the parts of this plan that are possible and appropriate.

This GMP/EIS calls for a commitment to the NPS *Organic Act* which would include an overall general adherence to NPS policies, regulations, guidelines, and laws; and Tribal law, policies and resolutions. The combination of these could alter the management actions and practices of the South Unit in ways unforeseen at this time.

MANAGEMENT ZONES

Management zones prescribe how different areas of the South Unit would be managed and are thus focused on the future or desired conditions. Each management zone specifies complementary natural resource conditions, cultural resources conditions, opportunities for visitor experiences, and appropriate facilities, and combines these into a possible management strategy that could be applied to locations within the South Unit. As such, management zones describe the management priorities or long-term goals for various areas.

To help readers understand the similarities and differences in management in the North and South Units, the planning team decided to keep the names of the management zones that were identified in the North Unit GMP, where possible, recognizing that the different resources in the South Unit might require modifications in the zone descriptions. Six management zones were carried over from the North Unit GMP (Natural Area / Recreation Zone, Development Zone, Semi-primitive Zone, Preservation Zone, Driving/Sightseeing Zone, and Research Zone), and the planning team added the Ceremonial Zone. To avoid overlap in intent, these zones were refined to four key zones based on the focus of the alternatives: Natural Area / Recreation Zone, Preservation Zone, Research Zone, and Development Zone.

Regardless of the title of the management zone, the NPS and the OST intend to preserve and protect natural and cultural resources to the greatest extent possible. An overview of the management zones is provided in table 1. The action alternatives presented later in this executive summary each propose a different concept for managing the South Unit; therefore, the management zones were placed in different locations or configurations on the map according to the overall focus of each alternative.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

In response to a need to increase the involvement of Tribal members in decision making for the South Unit, the NPS and the OST, within this planning process, developed concepts for structuring the management of the South Unit. Between March and May 2007, the planning team discussed a range of seven options for managing the South Unit. The seven options included four options that have been carried throughout the process (no action, shared management, NPS-affiliated area, and deauthorization) and one option that became the Preferred Management Option, Tribal National Park. Two of the seven options discussed were brought to the table by members of the Tribe's Oyate group. In reviewing these options, the team agreed that three of the seven options would fit within the four described above.

In discussing how these management options would be treated in the South Unit GMP/EIS, the planning team concluded that the decision on the management option should be determined through consultation between the NPS and the OST government. It became clear from discussions with Tribal officials and members and from public comments on the first newsletter that the final disposition of the South Unit would not be a simple decision. Sentiments

ranged from turning the management of the land back to the OST to continuing current management.

The proposed Preferred Management Option is supported by the planning team, the Badlands Superintendent, the Midwest Regional Director, the NPS Director, OSPRA, and the OST Tribal Council and President.

The Preferred Management Option would require Congressional action to re-establish the South Unit as a distinct Tribal National Park. The following summarizes the management options, including the preferred:

Option 1: Continue Current Management. Option 1, Continue Current Management, assumes that the NPS would continue to manage the South Unit as at present. The NPS would continue to be responsible for the overall administration of the South Unit and the day-to-day on-site activities, providing two full-time positions. Existing operations and visitor facilities would remain in place, concentrated at White River, and the White River Visitor Center would continue to be the principal visitor contact station in the South Unit until the Lakota Heritage and Education Center (LHEC) is built. The NPS and OST would share responsibility for operation of the White River Visitor Center, with the NPS primarily responsible for maintaining the visitor center and providing training and development of interpretive volunteers and staff. The OSPRA would be responsible for staffing the White River Visitor Center. Jointly, the NPS and OSPRA would continue to develop exhibits and provided visitor programming in the summer months.

Under the *1976 Memorandum of Agreement* currently in effect, 50 percent of the entrance fees collected at the park entrance gates in the North Unit would continue to be collected on behalf of the OST and directed to OSPRA for expenditures in the South Unit. NPS employees would continue to report to the superintendent of Badlands National Park. Tribal employees who staff the White River Visitor Center would continue to be Tribal employees responsible to the Executive Director of OSPRA.

Under the current agreement, resources would continue to be managed by the OST to perpetuate and protect the natural environment and preserve cultural resources, following the federal laws, regulations, and policies that govern units of the national park system. Hunting would still be permitted for Tribal members only, as regulated by the OST. The NPS would be responsible for implementation of the South Unit GMP/EIS.

Option 2 (The Preferred Management Option): Tribal National Park. Under the Preferred Management Option, Congress would designate the South Unit as the first "tribal national park." Federal law applicable generally to units of the National Park System, including the NPS *Organic Act* and federal environmental and historic preservation laws like the *Endangered Species Act*, the *National Environmental Policy Act* of 1969, and the *National Historic Preservation Act* of 1966, would continue to apply to the park and would apply to the actions of the OST in managing the park. In cases where tribal law is inconsistent with, or conflicts with, federal law, federal law would control, except where the legislation establishing the new park expressly provides otherwise. The NPS envisions that mechanisms or processes would be in place to allow for citizen involvement in park management decisions and for legal recourse for alleged violations of applicable law.

This option would ensure that the Oglala Lakota people manage, own, and operate their lands for the educational and recreational benefit of the general public, including both Tribal and nontribal visitors and residents. Once construction of the Lakota Heritage and Education Center is complete, it would be the primary visitor contact area for the park and an important component of the visitor experience. Until the Lakota Heritage and Education Center is operating, the White River Visitor Center

would be the primary visitor contact area for the park. The OST would be responsible for training and development of staff and volunteers with technical assistance from the NPS, if requested.

A new agreement would be established between the OST and the NPS to clarify the administrative and procedural details necessary for the full transition of park management from direct NPS oversight to the OST. Upon execution of the new agreement, the *1976 Memorandum of Agreement* would be replaced. The new agreement would contain a staffing plan, organizational plan, and business plan prepared by the OST with the assistance of the NPS. When completed, the agreement would be submitted to the OSPRA board, the OST Council and President, and the Regional Director of the Midwest Region for concurrence, before routing to the NPS Director for approval by the Secretary of the Interior.

The Tribal National Park would be identified by signs featuring the OST logo and the NPS arrowhead. The park would be funded by federal appropriations and entrance fees. The Tribal National Park would receive an annual funding appropriation from Congress to manage and operate the park and would also be allowed to compete for monies and technical assistance within the established NPS allocation process. Technical assistance could include interpretation, resource protection, and development of the Lakota Heritage and Education Center. Additionally, the Tribal National Park would be authorized to implement an entrance fee with the provision that those funds would be used for park operations.

At the start of the transition, experienced NPS employees would staff administrative and resource positions, mentoring Tribal members in managerial and other skills through on-the-job and in-service training and other professional developmental programs. As the Tribal members develop the necessary skills, they would step into the positions previously held by NPS employees and assume responsibilities for park operation. Tribal members would receive on-the-job training, would have access to NPS servicewide training as well as relevant training opportunities outside the NPS, and would have opportunities to take relevant training and coursework outside the NPS at local or regional institutions of higher education, funded by NPS. Ultimately, staff of the Tribal National Park would be OST members. As soon as practicable, the park would be wholly under Tribal management.

Resources would be managed to perpetuate and protect the natural environment and to preserve cultural and historic resources and values, following the ordinances and resolutions established by the OST and the laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to units of the National Park System. Hunting would be permitted for Tribal members only as regulated by the OST. The OST would be responsible for implementation of the South Unit GMP/EIS.

Under the Preferred Management Option, federal environmental and historic preservation laws (such as NEPA and NHPA) would remain in force. The NPS envisions mechanisms would be in place (a partial waiver of sovereignty from OST) to allow for citizen involvement and legal recourse pertaining to these laws. Federal law would take precedence in all cases where there is a conflict between tribal law, ordinance or resolution and federal law, and legislation would be written to specify the exceptions where tribal law would prevail and specify a method to address changing conditions and new issues as they arise.

The Preferred Management Option would require Congressional action to reestablish the South Unit as the first Tribal National Park.

Option 3: Shared Management. Under option 3, the NPS and the OST would share responsibility for the day-to-day on-site management of the South Unit within Badlands National Park. Associated visitor

activities would be managed jointly under terms and conditions of a new agreement. The Tribe would assume more direct control over the operation and management of the South Unit than currently. Existing operations and visitor facilities would remain concentrated at White River, and the White River Visitor Center would continue to be the principal visitor contact area in the South Unit until the LHEC is built. The NPS and the OST would share responsibility for managing the visitor center and for training and development of staff and volunteers. In order to facilitate a strong partnership, the NPS would provide training and funding to the OST to assume tasks and positions necessary for shared management of the South Unit. NPS employees would work side-by-side with OST employees.

A new agreement would be negotiated and the *1976 Memorandum of Agreement* would be replaced. The new agreement would determine how expenses in the South Unit would be funded. In order to bring greater attention to the resources and opportunities at the South Unit, additional park signs would be placed along the major roads (I-90; US 385; Routes 73, 44, and 79; and BIA Route 2) to direct visitors into the South Unit. NPS employees would report to the superintendent of Badlands National Park. Tribal employees staffing the White River Visitor Center would be Tribal employees responsible to the South Unit manager.

Resources would be managed to perpetuate and protect the natural environment and preserve cultural resources, following the laws governing activities of the NPS and ordinances and regulations established by the OST. Hunting would still be permitted for Tribal members only, as regulated by the OST. The NPS and the OST would be responsible for implementation of the South Unit GMP/EIS.

Option 4: Affiliated Area. To show the track of the administrative history, option 4 has been included, even though it is similar to the preferred option. In option 4, the South Unit of Badlands National Park would be managed solely by the OST as an affiliated area of the national park system. The OST would be responsible for the administration and the day-to-day on-site operations. Existing operations and visitor facilities would remain in place, concentrated at White River, and the White River Visitor Center would continue to be the principal visitor contact station in the South Unit. Until the LHEC is built, the OST would be responsible for operation of the visitor facilities and services. The NPS would provide technical expertise and policy guidance as requested. Interpretive activities and visitor education would be directed by the OST, with technical assistance from the NPS, as requested. Technical assistance could include design and content of brochures, exhibits, and interpretive programs.

At the reestablishment of the South Unit as an affiliated area—separate from Badlands National Park—the *1976 Memorandum of Agreement* would be replaced, resulting in loss of entrance fee revenue. The OST, as the managing entity, would be required to find and develop its own funding sources for operation of the South Unit Affiliated Area, and could choose to implement an entrance fee for access and use of the Affiliated Area. Staff of the affiliated area would be employed by the OST. The OST, working in conjunction with other state and federal agencies, could place signs along the major roads (I-90; US 385; Routes 73, 44, and 79; and BIA Route 2) to direct visitors into the Affiliated Area.

Resources would be managed to perpetuate and protect the natural environment and preserve cultural resources, following the ordinances and regulations established by the OST and the laws and policies pertaining to units of the national park system. Hunting would be permitted, as regulated by the OST. The OST would be responsible for implementation of the South Unit GMP/EIS.

Option 4 would require Congressional action to reestablish the South Unit as an affiliated area of the national park system.

Option 5: New National Park. To show the track of the administrative history, option 5 has been included even though it is similar to the preferred option.

Under option 5, Congress would reestablish the South Unit as a distinct national park, a distinct new unit of the national park system, managed by the OST under the administration of the NPS. The unit would be managed in a way consistent with the laws and policies of the NPS and guided by the Tribal laws and resolutions of the OST. The OST would be responsible for the administration and the day-to-day on-site operations. The OST would be responsible for operation of the visitor facilities and services. The LHEC would be the primary visitor center contact area for the park and an important component of visitor experience. The OST would be responsible for training and development of staff and volunteers. Technical assistance from the NPS would be available if requested, as funding permits.

A new agreement would be established between the OST and the NPS to clarify administrative and procedural details necessary for the management of the distinct national park as a unit of the national park system. The agreement would also contain a park staffing plan, organizational plan, and business plan that would be prepared by the OST in close coordination with the NPS. When completed, the agreement would be submitted to both the OST Tribal Council and the regional director of the Midwest Region for concurrence before routing to the NPS Director for approval.

The national park would be identified by signs featuring the OST symbol and the NPS arrowhead. There would be signs along the major roads (I-90; US 385; Routes 73, 44, and 79; and BIA Route 2) to direct visitors into the Tribal Park. The national park would no longer receive a percentage of the entrance fee gate receipts collected in the North Unit of Badlands National Park, but would have a separate entrance fee for the national park. This revenue, along with a separate annual funding appropriation from Congress, would be used to manage and operate the national park. In addition, the national park could compete for funds and technical assistance within the established NPS fund and technical assistance allocation process.

The site superintendent/manager, who would report to the Midwest Regional Director, would be selected by the OST and would be responsible for both the administration and the day-to-day on-site activities at the national park. The Tribal national park manager would be responsible for management of the park consistent with the terms and conditions of the agreement.

Resources would be managed to perpetuate and protect the natural environment and preserve cultural resources, following the ordinances and regulations established by the OST and the policies pertaining to units of the national park system. Hunting would be permitted for Tribal members only, as regulated by the OST. The OST and the NPS would be responsible for implementation of the South Unit GMP/EIS.

Option 5 would require Congressional action to reestablish the South Unit as a distinct Tribal National Park managed by the OST under the administration of the NPS.

Option 6: Deauthorization. In option 6, the South Unit would be deauthorized by Congress, and the management of the land returned to the OST. The former site would be managed in whatever manner the OST selected, and the OST would be responsible for all costs associated with the management and operation of the former South Unit. The *1976 Memorandum of Agreement* would be replaced and funding assistance from the NPS would cease. Funding would be the responsibility of the

OST. The South Unit would no longer be a component of the national park system. The effect on the LHEC project is unclear.

Option 6 would require Congressional action to deauthorize the South Unit.

Option 7: Oglala Sioux Tribal Park
Option 7 provides for the eventual deauthorization of the South Unit and return of its management to the OST as a Tribal Park. In this option, the NPS would provide increased training and education of OST members over an established period of time, with the ultimate goal of having the OST manage the unit as a Tribal Park. In order to provide for the training and development of future Tribal Park employees, the OST and/or the NPS could establish programs with local and regional colleges, as well as local high schools, to allow OST members to be educated and trained in all aspects of resource management. This option would also allow OST members access to NPS training programs.

The implementation of this option would begin with the execution of an agreement, reviewable on an annual basis, between the NPS and the OST that establishes clear decisions and achievable benchmarks for each party in terms of training and educational opportunities and practical experience in park management. As benchmarks are achieved, additional management responsibility would shift to the Tribe as site manager. Opportunities for funding would come from the OST and the NPS working in concert. The agreement document would provide for preferential hiring of enrolled Tribal members. The effect on the LHEC project is unclear.

Option 7 would require Congressional action to deauthorize the South Unit as a part of Badlands National Park.

THE ALTERNATIVES

This final *South Unit General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (South Unit GMP/EIS) presents four resource and visitor experience alternatives for the future management of the South Unit of Badlands National Park. The four alternatives presented here embody the range of input from the public and the National Park Service with regard to visitor experience/access, natural resource management, cultural resource management, user capacity, and facilities management and development at the South Unit. The alternatives describe how natural and cultural resources and visitor uses will be managed. The alternatives consist of alternative A, the No-Action Alternative (continue current management); alternative B (expand interpretive opportunities); alternative C (focus on resource protection/preservation); and alternative D, the preferred alternative (protect resources while expanding interpretive experience).

Regardless of which management option is selected, both parties (NPS and OST) agreed that the resource and visitor experience alternatives are reasonable and should be addressed as an issue separate from the management options. In essence, whoever is ultimately responsible for managing the South Unit will be responsible for seeing that the direction specified in the final South Unit GMP/EIS is carried out accordingly.

The No-Action Alternative (Alternative A)

The No-Action Alternative primarily reflects current conditions and activities at the South Unit. This alternative is provided as a baseline against which to compare the action alternatives. Management zones, which are prescriptive (that is, they describe desired conditions for the future), would not be applied for the No-Action Alternative. Resource management and visitor experience would remain much as they are now.

The key impacts associated with implementing the No Action Alternative would be in the areas of paleontological, ethnographic, and scenic resources, as well as park operations. Adverse impacts to paleontological resources would be caused primarily by the continued illegal removal of fossils from the South Unit by visitors and collectors, continued livestock trampling of fossils, and continued weathering

and accelerated mass wasting (landslides). Alternative A would have the potential to result in long-term moderate adverse impacts on ethnographic resources due to continuing current management and access. Scenic resources would be adversely impacted due to community and commercial scale renewable energy development on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, which could have major adverse impacts on the scenic resources of the South Unit. Lack of a clear plan and management zones would lessen the effectiveness of existing staff and volunteers over time. This would result in adverse, long-term, moderate impacts to park operations.

Alternative B

Alternative B primarily focuses on restoration with expanded access and opportunities for visitors to the South Unit. Opportunities include interpretation of natural, cultural, and paleontological resources. Approximately 89 percent of the lands within the South Unit would be designated as Natural Area / Recreation Zone, which would represent the basic core or center of the park and the Palmer Creek Unit. This zone would include primitive campgrounds, backcountry patrol/equestrian facilities, and access by paved and unpaved pedestrian and horseback riding trails. Approximately 11 percent of the lands located along the western and southern border of the park would be designated as Development Zone. Developments such as small wayside parking areas and related facilities by design would be carefully tucked into the landscape so not to become obtrusive. Less than 1 percent of the park would be designated as Research Zone, located in the north central part of the park. Within this zone visitors would experience a highly controlled environment and possibly very limited opportunities to experience the value this zone offers.

The key impacts associated with implementing this alternative would be in the areas of wildlife, paleontological, archeological, and ethnographic resources, and visitor access and experience. Initiation of active restoration programs and integrated weed management strategies on disturbed areas would increase the amount of native habitat available to wildlife. Beneficial impacts to paleontological, archeological, and ethnographic resources would be caused primarily by the reduced illegal removal of these resources from the South Unit by visitors and collectors and increases in public education opportunities and inventories. Improvement of visitor access under alternative B would come from improvement of the local roads, construction of new parking lots, guided and unguided tours to the backcountry, increased camping opportunities, and improved signage on surrounding roads. The increase in the number of outlets where visitors could obtain information and the dispersed locations of these outlets would substantially improve visitor experience. There would be more opportunities throughout the park and vicinity for visitors seeking to drive/sightsee, hike, camp, and/or picnic, creating beneficial effects on such visitors. A clear plan of action and increased staff to implement those actions would result in highly effective park operations and coordination of partners and volunteers to protect resources and serve visitors.

Alternative C

Alternative C primarily focuses on preservation, protection, and restoration of natural and cultural resources. Access would be limited primarily to the perimeter of the South Unit of Badlands National Park. Opportunities include interpretation of natural, cultural, and paleontological resources. Approximately 21 percent of the lands within alternative C would be designated as Natural Area / Recreation Zone. This zone would be located on the southwest corner of the park and the Palmer Creek Unit. This zone would include primitive campgrounds, backcountry patrol/equestrian facilities, and access by unpaved pedestrian and horseback riding trails. Approximately 2 percent of the lands would be designated as Development Zone, which is located on the southeast side of the park. Approximately 77 percent of the park lands would be designated as Preservation Zone.

The key impacts associated with implementing this alternative would be in the areas of paleontological, archeological, and ethnographic resources, visitor access and experience, socioeconomics, and park operations. Beneficial impacts to paleontological, archeological, and ethnographic resources would be caused primarily by the reduced illegal removal of these resources from the South Unit by visitors and collectors and increases in public education opportunities and inventories. By improving access in the South Unit, alternative C would produce a beneficial effect on visitor access. The improvement in access would come from improvement of the local roads, guided tours into the backcountry, construction of new parking lots, increased camping opportunities, the development of interior pedestrian trails, and improved signage on surrounding roads. The increase in the number of outlets where visitors could obtain information and the dispersed locations of these outlets would substantially improve the visitor experience. A clear plan of action and increased staff to implement those actions would result in highly effective park operations and coordination of partners and volunteers to protect resources and visitors.

Preferred Alternative (Alternative D)

The Preferred Alternative focuses on restoration with expanded access and opportunities for visitors. Opportunities would include interpretation of natural, cultural, and paleontological resources. The preferred alternative would promote understanding of Oglala history, culture, and land management principles through education and interpretation. Visitor activities would be focused in a developed front country area that would provide a variety of opportunities around the perimeter while the interior of the South Unit would be managed as backcountry. Natural resources management would focus on surveys and research to provide data to support future restoration, interpretation, and educational activities. Cultural resources management would focus on protection and preservation of historical, spiritual, and ceremonial sites and materials.

In addition to the White River Contact Station, a visitor contact station would be developed on the west side of the South Unit. Approximately 90 percent of the lands within the park would be designated as Natural Area / Recreation Zone. This zone would include primitive campgrounds, backcountry patrol / equestrian facilities, and access by unpaved pedestrian and horseback riding trails. Approximately 10 percent of the lands would be designated as Development Zone, which is located on the western and southern of the park and includes the White River area on the southeast corner of the park. Less than 1 percent of the park would be designated as Research Zone, located in the north central part of the park. Within this zone visitors would experience a highly controlled environment and possibly very limited opportunities to experience the value this zone offers due to restrictions imposed.

The key impacts associated with implementing this alternative would be in the areas of paleontological, archeological, and ethnographic resources, visitor access and experience, socioeconomics, and park operations. The effects on paleontological resources under alternative D are anticipated to have a major beneficial effect. Illegal fossil collecting should decrease as a result of increased law enforcement. Fossils would continue to be present throughout the park, and the park staff would continue to protect, interpret, and provide opportunities for scientific research on paleontological resources. Alternative D would have the potential to result in beneficial effects on ethnographic resources due to increased inventory and protection, and the addition of appropriate interpretation. By improving access in the South Unit, alternative D would produce a beneficial effect on visitor access. The improvement in access would come from the construction of two new entrance stations, improvement of the local roads, guided tours into the backcountry, construction of new parking lots, increased camping opportunities, the development of interior pedestrian trails, and improved signage on surrounding roads. The increase in the number of outlets where visitors could obtain information and the dispersed locations of these outlets would substantially

improve the visitor experience. There would be slightly more opportunities throughout the park for visitors seeking to drive/sightsee, hike, camp, and/or picnic, creating beneficial effects on such visitors. A clear plan of action and increased staff to implement those actions would result in highly effective park operations and coordination of partners and volunteers to protect resources and serve visitors.

THE NEXT STEPS

This final *General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* includes letters from governmental agencies, substantive comments on the draft document, and NPS responses to those comments. Following distribution of the final plan and a 30-day no-action period, a Record of Decision will be signed by the national park superintendent and the NPS regional director documenting the NPS selection of an alternative for implementation.

Although this final GMP/EIS provides the analysis and justification for future Badlands National Park proposals, this plan does not guarantee future NPS funding. Many actions would be necessary to achieve the desired conditions for natural resources, cultural resources, recreational opportunities, and facilities as envisioned in this plan. The NPS will seek funding to achieve these desired conditions; although the new park hopes to secure this funding and will prepare accordingly, it may not receive enough funding to achieve all desired conditions. Badlands National Park managers will need to continue to pursue other options, including expanding the service of volunteers, drawing upon existing or new partnerships, and seeking alternative funding sources, including the philanthropic community. Even with assistance from supplemental sources, park managers may be faced with difficult choices when setting priorities. The GMP/EIS provides the framework within which to make these choices.