

protesting a decision will be described at that time.

Greg Thomsen,

Field Manager, El Centro Field Office.

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BILLING CODE 4310-40-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

Notice of Intent To Extend Concession Contract for Services at Olympic, Big Bend, Mammoth Cave, and Isle Royale National Parks and Blue Ridge Parkway

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Park Service Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998, notice is hereby given that the National Park Service intends to extend the concession contract authorizing continued food and beverage, general merchandise, automobile service, transportation, marina, gift shop, and overnight accommodations at Olympic, Big Bend, Mammoth Cave, and Isle Royale National Parks and Blue Ridge parkway. The extension will be for a term of not more than 3 years. This extension is necessary to avoid interruption of public services while the National Park Service evaluates the long-term needs of each park. This extension will be for a 3-year period beginning September 21, 2002. This notice is pursuant to 36 CFR Part 51, § 51.24(a).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The current concession contract for these parks expired on September 20, 2002. This contract is unique in that when it was executed in 1982, all parks were covered under one authorization. The extension will allow for individual park contracts to be developed, a prospectus to be released and a new, long-term contract awarded.

Information about this notice can be sought from: National Park Service, Concession Program Manager, 1849 C Street, NW., (2410), Washington, DC 20240 or call 202/513-7156.

Dated: September 23, 2002.

Richard G. Ring,

Associate Director for Park Operations and Education.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

National Park Service

Bureau of Land Management

[NM-02-930-1610-DS-005G]

Notice of Availability of Draft Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail, and proposed amendments to the Taos, Mimbres and White Sands Resource Management Plans, New Mexico.

SUMMARY: The National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management announce the availability of the *Draft El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*. The plan provides alternative visions for managing the trail between El Paso, Texas, and San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico. This plan also addresses Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendments to the BLM's Taos, White Sands, and Mimbres RMP's related to protection of scenic values.

Added to the National Trails System in October 2000, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (Royal Road of the Interior) National Historic Trail (NHT) recognizes the primary route between the colonial Spanish capital of Mexico City and the Spanish provincial capitals at San Juan de Los Caballeros (1598-1600), San Gabriel (1600-1609) and then Santa Fe (1610-1821). The NHT, as designated, extends 404 miles from El Paso, Texas, to San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico.

This draft CMP/EIS focuses on the NHT's purpose and significance, issues and concerns related to current conditions along the NHT, resource protection, visitor experience and use, and long-term administrative and management objectives. Elements of the proposed plan have been developed in cooperation with federal, state, and local agencies as well as nonprofit and non-governmental organizations—the entities that will form the core of partnerships with the NHT. Community meetings were held in Alcalde, Española, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Socorro, Truth or Consequences, Sunland Park and Las Cruces, New Mexico, as well as in El Paso, Texas. Meetings were held with several North American Indian Pueblos.

The plan provides a range of alternatives for management direction for the NHT, addressing management of BLM-administered lands within the Las Cruces, Socorro, Albuquerque and Taos Field Offices as well as opportunities on other federal, tribal, state, local or private lands. Issues addressed in the draft plan include three statutory requirements (recreation, interpretation and protection of historic values), as well as integration with tribal and community plans, visitor services, education, scenic values and international interests. The following alternatives are discussed in the draft plan:

Alternative A—This is the no-action alternative, which serves as the baseline for evaluating the changes and impacts of the other action alternatives. Under Alternative A, federal agencies would continue to manage their lands (through which the trail passes) based upon their existing management plans. There would be no overall administration or coordination of the NHT. There would be no effective coordination of the activities of an NHT association, private landowners, and federal, state, and local agencies. There would be no directed cooperation that would result in resource protection. Current visitor and recreational activities commemorating or interpreting the trail would continue.

Alternative B—Collaborative efforts by NHT administration and partners would be directed toward the protection of trail resources (historical, cultural, and natural) on both private and public land. Active stewardship and certification priorities would protect threatened trail resources. A coordinated visitor experience along El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro NHT would be provided and structured to promote public understanding and appreciation of NHT-related resources. An auto tour route would be established. Existing recreational opportunities that are not trail-related, but provided by private landowners and various agencies and organizations would continue.

Alternative C (preferred alternative)—An ambitious program of resource preservation and visitor use would be implemented under this alternative. Trail administration and partners would work cooperatively to provide coordinated programming and activities that integrate themes, resources, and landscapes at certified sites on private land or protected sites on public land. Resources that best illustrate the trail's significance would be identified and protected on both public and private land (high-potential sites and segments). Certification priorities would be placed