

January 12, 2011

National Park Service  
Denver Service Center-Miki Stuebe, DSC-P  
12795 West Alameda Parkway  
PO Box 25287  
Denver, CO 80225-9901

Re: Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan/ Environmental Assessment

The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance appreciates the opportunity to submit our comments on the Colter Bay Visitor Services Plan/Environmental Assessment. Our membership consists of some 2,000 residents and visitors who spend time in local forests and parks, and who have strong connections with those lands and services. On behalf of these park visitors we offer these comments.

The existing Colter Bay center is obviously inadequate to the casual observer and visitor using the various facilities there. The potential for attracting and fulfilling visitor needs is much greater than what currently is realized. We support all attempts in this EA to identify those needs that could be better addressed with a more efficient and attractive building. The crowds that now fill the space during most summer days could be better accommodated. A better-designed building can enhance the services that the park offers the public.

Recognizing that the park does not intend to extend the seasonal use at Colter Bay, and that this EA only addresses the Colter Bay visitor center and not any of the concession facilities, we believe that there are several considerations that should be included in this study. The existing road and parking system is very difficult to figure out and does not allow easy access to any of the building sites. One of the options that should be looked at is the relocation of the visitor center across the road to the north and away from the bay-shore. This move and redesign of the road would improve foot and vehicle traffic, and make the center more accessible. A better-integrated pathway system in combination with the redesigned road and parking areas will also improve circulation and the visual and aesthetic qualities of the area.

Once in the building, visitors should be able to easily find the services and activities they came for or be presented with information that will encourage them to engage in those programs and activities offered. Interpretive programs and the David T. Vernon Collection of American Indian Art should be highlights of this center. This world-class collection should be shown in conjunction with the Native American presentations that are offered throughout the summer. Since this visitor center is closed during the winter months, the EA should look at alternatives to housing parts of this collection elsewhere in the park during those months or through the whole year. It is our understanding that there are additional works of art that belong to Grand Teton National Park, and this EA should take into account the possibility of a future space to house some or all of the Vernon Collection along with these other art pieces. The Vernon Collection deserves the best in curatorial care and display with the intention to present to the public the history and rare artifacts of these early inhabitants of North America.

The Conservation Alliance sees this project as an opportunity for the park to improve their work toward their mission, and for the public to experience additional areas of Grand Teton National Park.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Louise Lasley, Public Lands Director  
Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance