



SACRAMENTO PEAK OBSERVATORY

Fact Sheet

NSF Environmental Impact Statement and Section 106 Consultation for Proposed Changes to Sacramento Peak Observatory Operations

Sacramento Peak Observatory Operations

What is the Proposed Action?

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the National Science Foundation (NSF) has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of proposed operational changes due to funding constraints at the Sacramento Peak Observatory in Sunspot, New Mexico. The Draft EIS alternatives include the following:

- Continued science- and education-focused operations by interested parties with reduced NSF funding
- Transition to partial operations by interested parties with reduced NSF funding
- Mothballing of facilities (suspension of operations in a manner such that operations could resume efficiently at some future date)
- Demolition and site restoration
- Continued NSF investment for science-focused operations (No Action Alternative)

What is NEPA?

NEPA requires federal agencies to consider the potential environmental consequences of proposed actions prior to making final decisions. The NEPA review process is intended to provide the public with an opportunity to comment and provide input on those decisions.

On July 5, 2016, NSF announced the beginning of the scoping process and solicitation of public comments to identify issues for analysis in an EIS. The purpose of the public scoping process was to determine relevant issues that influenced the scope of the environmental analysis, including the identification of viable alternatives.

On February 8, 2018, NSF announced the beginning of a 45-day public comment period to solicit comments from the public on the Draft EIS. It is anticipated that, in the summer of 2018, the Final EIS will be ready for review. No decision will be made until at least 30 days following the issuance of the Final EIS.

What is Section 106?

NSF has initiated consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to evaluate potential effects on historic properties as a result of the proposed action. Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to consult with interested parties and the State Historic Preservation Officer regarding potential effects on historic properties.

Who owns, funds, and manages the Sacramento Peak Observatory?

NSF owns and funds the Sacramento Peak Observatory and, as a federal agency, is responsible for NEPA compliance.

Sacramento Peak is located within the Lincoln National Forest in the Sacramento Mountains (Otero County, New Mexico). Established by the U.S. Air Force through a memorandum of agreement with the U.S. Forest Service in 1950, the facility was transferred to NSF in 1976. NSF and the U.S. Forest Service executed a land use agreement, signed in 1980, to formalize this transfer and the continued use of the land for the Observatory.

EIS Timeline

Draft EIS Public Comment Period:

45-day comment period starts February 8, 2018 and ends March 26, 2018

Public Meeting on Draft EIS: February 28, 2018

Section 106 Public Meeting Target: Spring 2018

Final EIS Target: Late Summer/Early Fall 2018

NSF Record of Decision Target: Fall 2018

How to Submit Comments

Comments will be accepted through March 26, 2018, and may be submitted during the public meeting or by:

Email: envcomp-AST-sacpeak@nsf.gov

Mail: Ms. Elizabeth Pentecost, National Science Foundation, Division of Astronomical Sciences, 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Suite W9152, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

Additional information will be posted throughout the EIS process at www.nsf.gov/AST.



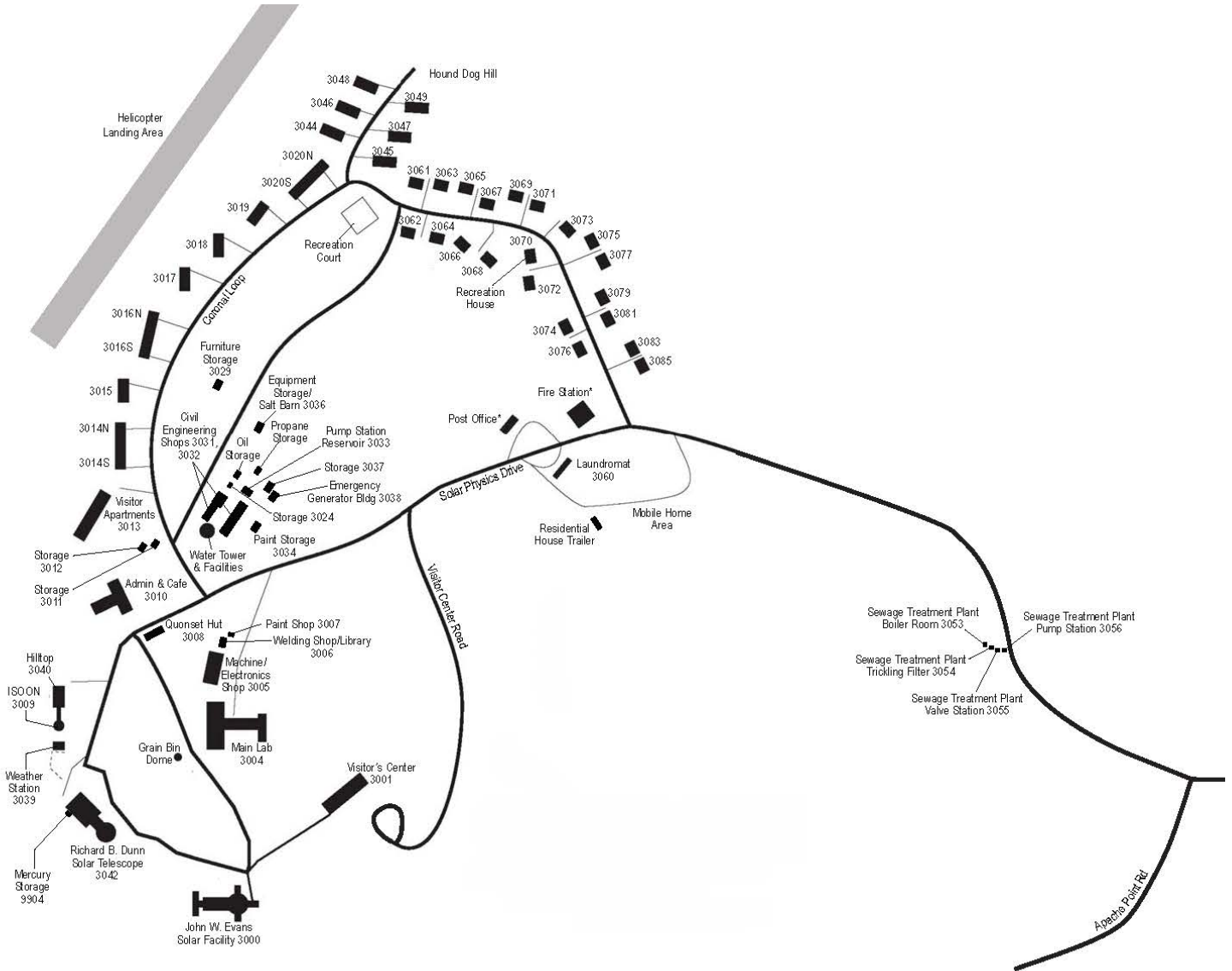
National Science Foundation

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Site Plan



NOTES:

* Post Office and Fire Station not owned by NSF