

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility News Release (www.peer.org)

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PARK SERVICE WAVES WHITE FLAG ON LITTLE BIGHORN VISITOR CENTER — Lawsuit Halted Plan to Build a Theater at Base of “Last Stand Hill”

Washington, DC — Facing a lawsuit, the National Park Service today announced that it would abandon a controversial plan to build a theater expanding the visitor center on the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. Late last month, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of retired battlefield superintendents and Park Service historians contending the plan violates both environmental and historic preservation laws.

In today’s announcement, National Park Service (NPS) Regional Director Michael Snyder said about the agency plan to build an enclosed theater seating 200 people at the base of Last Stand Hill, where General George Armstrong Custer and five companies of the 7th Cavalry were wiped out:

“Sometimes you just have to admit that you didn’t do your homework as well as you might have thought. We’ve concluded that is really the case here...we’ve concluded there are other ways that we can achieve those goals without encroaching further onto the battlefield.”

“I am so pleased that Regional Director Snyder, recognizing the flaws of his approach, withdrew it altogether,” commented former NPS Chief Historian Robert Utley, the lead plaintiff in the PEER suit whose other plaintiffs include three former Little Bighorn National Battlefield Superintendents and the Custer Battlefield Historical & Museum Association as well as other notable historians. “Hopefully, he and his staff will now proceed with enlightened planning to remove intrusions from the historic landscape and implement the current General Management Plan and open an offsite facility.”

The NPS announced that it would formally withdraw the approval for construction of the visitor center expansion. The PEER suit challenged that approval as violating both the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act as well as the Service’s own Management Policies.

“Well, it looks like we will not be seeing them in court,” stated PEER Senior Counsel Paula Dinerstein, noting that the General Management Plan calls for removing the old visitor center altogether because it is a major intrusion on the historic landscape and replacing it with an off-site facility. “We and our clients will be watching closely to make sure that the Park Service takes a fresh and candid look at the options for fulfilling the vision of allowing visitors to see the entire battlefield.”

The Park Service announcement says that “In the coming weeks...specialists in interpretation and safety will work with battlefield staff in developing other approaches to providing the film and interpretive talks to park visitors.”

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[See the Park Service announcement on Little Bighorn](#)

[Look at the PEER lawsuit](#)

[Meet the distinguished plaintiffs](#)

[Find out more about the controversy](#)