



Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility

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To the Plaintiffs in the Little Bighorn Visitor Center expansion lawsuit:

As you have probably heard, the National Park Service has abandoned its plan to expand the Visitor Center at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. I have attached the Park Service's and PEER's press releases on this decision.

We had written to Michael Synder, Regional Director of the Intermountain Region of NPS repeatedly, asking for that the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), which cleared the way for the Visitor Center expansion, be withdrawn, or that we receive assurances that no further action would be taken without full compliance with environmental and historic preservation laws. We received only noncommittal responses that further review was underway, with no commitment to withdraw the FONSI or to complete required environmental and historic preservation consultations prior to taking action. Therefore, we filed our complaint on July 31, 2008. On August 18, 2008 we received a telephone call from Mike Snyder, who told us that the FONSI would be withdrawn the next day.

We were most pleased that not only was the FONSI withdrawn, but the project, in the Park Service's own word, was "abandoned." No door was left open to resurrect any project that would alter the exterior walls of the Visitor Center, and there was a promise of public participation and environmental compliance with regard to any proposal for interior changes to the building. We congratulate all of you on a complete victory, which we have no doubt was due primarily to the fact that your distinguished group of historians and former park service officials had such strong convictions on the issue that you were willing to file suit.

The one thing that the Park Service did not commit to was to pursue implementation of the General Management Plan to relocate the Visitor Center off-site. This could not have been achieved in the lawsuit, which could only have stopped the expansion proposal, since it was a challenge to legal compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act in connection with that proposal. However, we are well aware that this is the ultimate goal. We hope that all of you will remain active in furthering this goal, and PEER would be happy to assist in any way we can toward that end.

It has been a pleasure to work with all of you in this successful endeavor. I know that I also speak for Luke Head, our summer intern who worked on this case and has since headed back to law school. I look forward to possible collaboration in the future, and also hope that you will consider becoming members of PEER.

