

D5027(YELL)

xD18

JUN 15 2004

Mr. Don L. Klima  
Director, Office of Federal Agency Programs  
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
12136 West Bayaud Avenue, Suite 330  
Lakewood, Colorado 80228

Dear Mr. Klima:

Thank you for your letter dated June 2, 2004, regarding the cell tower located adjacent to the Old Faithful developed area of Yellowstone National Park. I appreciate the issues and concerns discussed in your letter. The park has been reviewing the administrative record and the current conditions in which the cell tower exists today and would like to share the findings with you.

The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) approved in November 1999 specified that under the preferred alternative (Alternative D), the National Park Service would permit the construction of a monopole cell tower adjacent to an already disturbed area that is the location of an underground water storage tank and that the cell site would consist of a "monopole tower extending not more than 10 feet above the existing tree tops." In addition, the FONSI states, "the tower would be camouflaged to appear in texture and color as the surrounding burned tree snags," and that "the 12 x 24 equipment shelter would be hidden from public view from the developed area by placement on the backside of a hill." And finally, the FONSI states, "the building color would blend with the natural surroundings, an antenna boom will be placed near the top of the tower and will support two cellular antennas 8' in length, no dish type antennas will be placed on the monopole, a 20' x 45' fence of 8' in height will be used to secure the site and the site is accessed via an existing road."

I, along with the Deputy Superintendent, personally inspected the site and have determined that the conditions that exist today at the location are different than those that existed in November 1999. Today, very few trees exist immediately adjacent to the cell site. In reviewing the administrative record, it would appear that the "surrounding burned tree snags" have been blown or fallen down and additional trees that may have been in the area were removed during maintenance work relating to the water tank. Today, a 100-foot tower exists, including the two cellular antennas 8 feet in length. The trees at a

distance of approximately 130 feet from the tower are representative of those standing in the area are between 65 to 70 feet in height. Trees further away than 130 feet are taller and the few remaining charred trees in the area closest to the tower are approximately 60 feet high. The tower has not been painted or camouflaged. The equipment building was constructed in a location hidden from public view on the backside of the hill and painted an appropriate color. No dish type antennas exist on the tower. The fence has not been constructed, as security needs have been met with the placement of a locked gate on the existing road that accesses the site.

The National Park Service agrees that it is important to identify means by which we continuously improve our methods and practices to ensure no adverse effects on the historic districts and resources of the park. Therefore, we will be taking the following actions: determine the effect of removing an additional 20 feet of the tower on (1) the visual impact of the site, and (2) the health and safety service levels for the public and the park. Given the lack of "surrounding burned tree snags," determine whether or not to camouflage the tower to improve the visual quality of the site. We will also determine the best methods by which to further improve the visual quality of the area through examining the existing road and disturbed area where the underground water storage tanks are located.

In closing, we do not believe that the tower was constructed inconsistent with the design proposed by Alternative D, we do recognize that there is a continuous need to examine how we manage changing conditions in relation to administrative processes and procedures and to communicate those findings with all of our stakeholders. To that end, I look forward to updating you, the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office and others on our progress in implementing actions to continuously improve the visual quality of this site.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Lewis  
Superintendent

cc:

Mr. Alan Stanfill, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
Mr. Richard Currit, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office  
Mr. John Keck, Wyoming State Coordinator  
Director, Intermountain Region  
Director, WASO  
YELL Administrative Officer  
YELL Division of Planning, Compliance and Landscape Architecture