

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ON

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Construct Wireless Telecommunication Facilities at Hickory Cabin Fire Tower Site

Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky

BACKGROUND

The wireless telephone signal strength within the park is not sufficient to provide reliable wireless telephone communication coverage. The use of cellular telephones by the public, park staff, researchers, concessionaires, and contractors working within the park is increasing. Cellular telephone users would benefit from improved telecommunication services for their safety and security, personal, and business needs. The public should have increased capability to call for help using their wireless mobile telephones and in the near future enhanced 911 services should provide additional safety by locating wireless telephone users who are lost or injured. The primary purpose of the proposal is to provide improved telecommunications to enhance the health, safety, and security of park visitors and employees as well as those people who commute through the park or live and commute in the area immediately north of the park.

The health, safety, and security needs are indicated by specific incidents in recent years. In 2002, there were 35 Emergency Medical Service (EMS) incidents in the park involving 47 victims and an additional 16 Search and Rescue (SAR) incidents involving 22 victims. In 2003, there were 13 EMS incidents involving 17 victims and an additional 7 SAR incidents involving 14 victims. On June 8, 2002, a camper became unconscious at a backcountry campsite. The camper's only companion had to hike out to call for help. The patient was left alone for several hours. On November 15, 2002, a horseback rider suffered a possible heart attack. Another rider had to go for help. It took several hours to locate, treat, and stabilize the patient. In August 2004, a Park Ranger came upon a two fatality motor vehicle accident on the Houchins Ferry Road and had to leave a third victim who was critically injured lying in the road to drive to the top of the hill to call for assistance. Even though many people would realize other benefits from the proposed cellular telephone tower, the primary need for effective communications for both park users and the park staff is health, safety, and security not mere convenience.