

## **Promises, Promises**

### **Yellowstone False Cell Coverage Assurances**

Yellowstone's cell system was approved with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=111&projectID=12023&documentID=2675> for its Wireless issued on April 20, 2009. Here is what the FONSI stated:

- “[The preferred alternative] will allow cell phone access in all major developed areas while keeping to a minimum any spillover of service into the backcountry areas of the park.” (p. 11)
- “The NPS considers the Wireless Plan/EA as a crucial step in ensuring that cell coverage remains limited in Yellowstone National Park... The preferred alternative only allows cell phone coverage in the primary developments of the park...” (p. 21)
- “Cell phone coverage would not be promoted or available along park roads outside developed areas, or promoted or available in any of the backcountry. While it is possible for some of these areas to gain coverage due to spillover of the signal, it is not the intent of the alternative. Guidelines and criteria established in the Plan/EA will help to minimize spillover as much as possible.” (p.21)
- “The park will work in the future to minimize the existing spillover coverage.” (p.27)
- “... limiting cell service was one of the primary means for the Wireless Communications Services Plan to protect park resources and visitor experience. Allowing cell phone service only in developed areas of the park that maintain overnight lodging accommodations (hotels and cabins) helps to meet this important objective by concentrating cell coverage in areas where the most visitors (both day and overnight) could benefit without introducing safety concerns such as cell phone usage along the roadways.” (p. 35)
- “The preferred alternative does not provide increased cell service to cover road corridors, the Grand Loop Road or entrance roads. Cell service was not proposed for the roads, recognizing that there may be a potential delay for roadside emergency service if needed.” (p.40)

In the press release announcing this approval, Yellowstone Park assured the public that –

- “The plan restricts towers, antennas, and wireless services to a few limited locations in the park, in order to protect park resources and limit the impact on park visitors.”
- “Under this plan, cell towers would not be allowed in recommended wilderness, in campgrounds, or along park road corridors.”
- “No cell phone service will be allowed in the vast majority of Yellowstone.”