



# SACRAMENTO PEAK OBSERVATORY

Fact Sheet

NSF Environmental Impact Statement and Section 106 Consultation for Proposed Changes to Sacramento Peak Observatory Operations

## Sacramento Peak Observatory Operations

### What is the Proposed Action?

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is conducting a scoping meeting to obtain public input on the scope of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to study proposed changes to operations at the Sacramento Peak Observatory. A range of preliminary proposed alternatives is being considered for evaluation in the EIS. These preliminary proposed alternatives, which will be refined through public input, include the following:

- Continued NSF investment for science-focused operations (No-Action Alternative)
- Transition to full operations with interested parties for solar astronomy research
- Transition to partial operations with interested parties, and decommissioning or mothballing of facilities not proposed to be used
- Mothballing of facilities limited to basic maintenance
- Deconstruction and site restoration

### What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the potential environmental consequences of proposed actions on the environment prior to making final decisions. The NEPA review process is intended to provide the public with an opportunity to comment and provide input on those issues to be analyzed during the NEPA process. On July 5, 2016, NSF announced the beginning of the scoping process and solicitation of public comments to identify issues to be analyzed in an EIS. The purpose of the public scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis, including identification of viable alternatives. Additional opportunities for public participation will be available at other junctures during the process.

### What is Section 106?

NSF also intends to initiate consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to evaluate potential effects on historic properties as a result of the proposed action. Section 106 of the National

Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to consult with interested parties and the State Historic Preservation Officer regarding potential effects of their proposed actions on significant historic properties.

### Who owns, funds, and manages the Sacramento Peak Observatory?

Sacramento Peak is located within the Lincoln National Forest in the Sacramento Mountains (Otero County, New Mexico). Established by the U.S. Air Force via a memorandum of agreement with the U.S. Forest Service in 1950, the facility was transferred to NSF in 1976. NSF and the U.S. Forest Service executed a land use agreement, signed in 1980, to formalize this transfer and the continued use of the land for the observatory.

NSF owns and funds the Sacramento Peak Observatory and, as a federal agency, is responsible for NEPA compliance. NSF has contracted with CH2M HILL, an environmental consultant, to prepare the EIS.

### EIS Timeline

**Scoping comment period: July 5 through August 5, 2016**

- *Public meeting July 21, 2016 at 6:00 pm at the New Mexico Museum of Space History*

**Draft EIS target: Winter 2016**

- *45-day public comment period on Draft EIS*
- *Public meeting on the Draft EIS*

**Final EIS target: Summer 2017**

**NSF Record of Decision target: Fall 2017**

### How to Submit Comments

Scoping comments will be accepted through August 5, 2016 and may be submitted during the public meetings or by the following methods:

**Email:** [envcomp-AST-sacpeak@nsf.gov](mailto:envcomp-AST-sacpeak@nsf.gov)

**Mail:** Ms. Elizabeth Pentecost, National Science Foundation, Division of Astronomical Sciences, Suite 1045, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22230.

**Additional information will be posted throughout the EIS process at [www.nsf.gov/AST](http://www.nsf.gov/AST).**



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## Site Plan

