

## NATIONAL PARKS

### Yellowstone proposes upgrading cellular coverage

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Officials at Yellowstone National Park are considering upgrades to cellular service that critics say will degrade the park's core mission.

"It won't push [cellphone coverage] farther out, it just allows [the companies] to handle a higher volume of data and voice," said Bret De Young, Yellowstone's telecommunications chief.

But some allege that allowing tourists to upload selfies more quickly and live-stream their encounters with bison detracts from tangible experiences in the park.

**Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility** has long fought wireless coverage expansion in national parks. Jeff Ruch, the group's executive director, said the move would enrich corporations at the expense of tourists who hoped to escape from a technology-fueled world.

Yellowstone's current network has been flooded with data requests as smartphones and newer devices increase visitors' technological imprint in the park, said De Young. That means that calls and data may not go through even when tourists have a strong signal.

The Park Service said that upgrading its system would boost safety for park staff and visitors and lower the number of antennas on the Mount Washburn historic fire lookout (Brett French, [\*Billings Gazette\*](#), Jan. 30). — **GD**

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