

Lassen Volcanic Park Visitors Center

Location: Mineral, California
Client: National Park Service
Size: 15 acres
Cost: \$4.5 Million
Status: 2002-2003

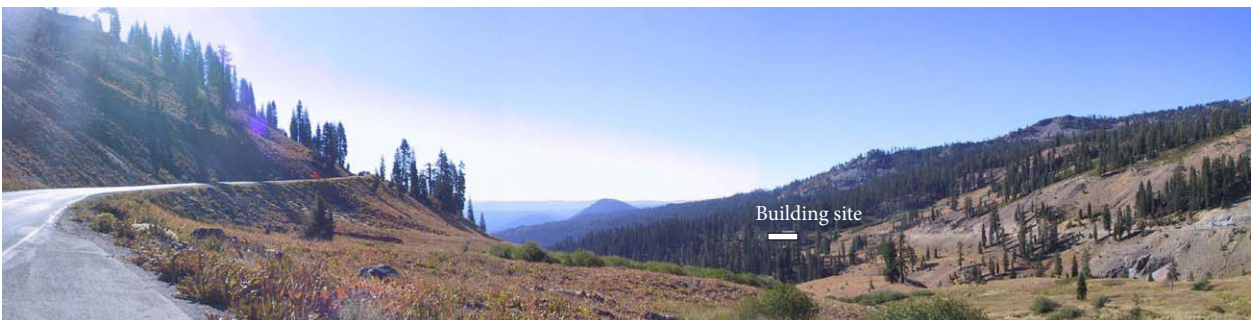
Though it is one of the earliest National Parks, spanning more than 160 square miles in northeastern California, Lassen Volcanic National Park never had a formal visitors center. Viridian Landscape Studio teamed with SMP Architects and park staff to develop site plans that responded to the contours of the site, allowing the proposed Visitor Center to capitalize on expansive views of the valley and mountains beyond. Minimizing disturbance to fragile landscape habitats as well as restoring habitats in new construction areas was a critical aspect of the design process. The sitework involved retrofitting an existing parking area to provide over 125 parking spaces, creating an outdoor path system with exhibit areas that could also function as winter vehicle access and drop-off, and creating an outdoor amphitheater. Three alternative building schemes with three distinct site plans were developed for this 11,000-square-foot visitors center and 4,000-square-foot park ranger station within a fixed budget of \$4.5 million.



Alternative site plan for curved two-story building scheme minimizes grading while providing ADA-accessible paths and entries, along with an outdoor exhibit landscape of mountain meadow habitats and winter vehicular drop-off at entrance.



Fragile landscape habitats near the site include dry meadows with flowering mule's ear (upper left); and pine mat manzanita (upper right); forest ground covers (lower left) and wet meadows (lower right). Mountain views near the site (far right).



The site design takes advantage of the dramatic vistas, but does not dominate the landscape when viewed from distant vantage points along the historic park drive.