

# Capitol Reef National Park Utah

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior



## Livestock Grazing and Trailing Management Plan - EIS Scoping Newsletter March 2015

### Dear Friends,

Livestock grazing and trailing has taken place within Capitol Reef National Park (CRNP) for decades. As a matter of fact, when Congress established CRNP in 1971 it provided for the continuation of livestock grazing and trailing, although there was a phase-out of grazing. The fundamental purpose of the national park system is to preserve unimpaired our nation's natural and cultural resources and values for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of current and future generations. While Congress may mandate and/or authorize continuation of pre-existing uses in legislation associated with the creation of a park unit, they still recognize the National Park Service must manage such uses consistent with its overarching conservation mission. CRNP assumed responsibility of the permitting and management for livestock grazing and trailing within the park from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 2010. Now we need to develop a plan to manage these activities, and this is where I need your help.

It is our goal, through this planning and Environmental Impact Statement (plan/EIS) effort, to create a cooperative, comprehensive public process that guides National Park Service (NPS) managers and our permit holders in the responsible management of livestock grazing and trailing, and is adaptable to range conditions that vary from year to year. This can only be achieved through effective communication and coordination with permit holders, other federal agencies responsible for managing livestock grazing and trailing

adjacent to the park (e.g., the BLM and U.S. Forest Service), and other partners. To this end, in April of 2014, the NPS invited federal, state, and local agencies with expertise in the management of livestock grazing and trailing to become cooperating agencies on the plan/EIS. In this capacity, they will assist us in identifying topics to be addressed in the plan/EIS, potential tools for livestock grazing and trailing management, and the effects of current and future management.

We also hope to hear from all of you as we cannot do this by ourselves and be successful. This newsletter provides background information for you to consider, as well as details about how to be involved in the early stages of this plan/EIS process. We hope you can attend one of our upcoming meetings and submit comments to help us identify what issues of concern we should address through this plan and EIS, provide feedback on the tools already under consideration, and identify additional tools so a full range of possibilities and outcomes is analyzed.

Thank you for your interest in Capitol Reef National Park.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leah McGinnis".

Leah McGinnis

*Superintendent*

*Capitol Reef National Park*



## **Why is there cattle grazing in Capitol Reef National Park?**

Grazing and trailing on public lands has a long history in the Capitol Reef area and allotments inside what became park boundaries were used before designation as either a National Monument or a National Park. When Congress established Capitol Reef as a National Park on December 18, 1971, it recognized that livestock grazing and trailing were valid existing uses and provided for grazing and trailing to continue on park lands, with an eventual phase-out of grazing. There were 19 grazing allotments within the park at that time. Continuation of these uses was granted to existing livestock grazing and trailing permit holders (permit holders), subject to appropriate management by the NPS. CRNP currently operates under Public Law 100-446, passed in September 1988, which extended grazing privileges for the lifetime of the 1971 permit holders and their children born on or before December 18, 1971. Grazing will phase out after the current generation of permit holders ceases operations in CRNP.

Today, there are two remaining grazing allotments within CRNP. The Hartnet Allotment, located in the northern part of the park is 70,760 acres and is grazed by livestock from October 15 to May 31 with up to 163 cow/calf pairs for a maximum of 1,141 animal unit months (AUMs). The Sandy 3 Allotment located in the southern part of the park is 14,982 acres and is grazed by livestock from November 1 to April 1 with up to 82 cow/calf pairs for a maximum of 410 AUMs.

Agency interpretation of the park's enabling legislation indicates Congress did not intend to phase out stock trailing along traditional routes crossing the park. Currently, eight traditional livestock trailing routes are utilized in the park, five of which are used once or twice per year. The remaining three trailing routes are only used periodically.

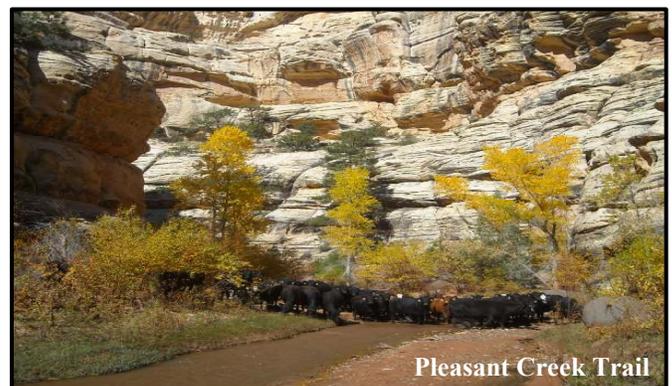


Hartnet Allotment

## **Why write a plan now?**

Prior to the establishment of the park, and for several decades thereafter, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) permitted and managed livestock grazing in the active allotments in the park. However, between 2000 and 2010, the NPS assumed responsibility for the permitting and management of the active allotments within the park, consistent with direction provided in the park's 1998 General Management Plan (GMP). While the 1998 GMP addressed potential effects of livestock grazing and trailing, it did not lay out a comprehensive approach for managing these activities in a manner that meets the NPS's fundamental mission to protect park resources and values.

In 2010, CRNP requested funding for an EIS to develop and ultimately implement a plan to manage livestock grazing and trailing, which is considered a major federal action subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). CRNP received funding to begin this process at the end of 2013 and began initial discussions about the livestock grazing and trailing management plan/EIS at that time. The BLM Richfield Field Office, State of Utah Public Lands Policy Coordination Office, Emery County, Garfield County, and Wayne County are all participating as formal cooperating agencies who will lend their expertise for this plan. The NPS will also be coordinating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the Utah State Historic Preservation Office throughout the planning process.



Pleasant Creek Trail



## Objectives

The following objectives elaborate upon the purpose of taking action. They are meant to guide the NPS and permit holders in their mutual understanding of the outcomes expected for the plan to be a success.

- ◆ Contribute to the conservation and recovery of special status species including plants, animals, and critical habitat listed under the Endangered Species Act; and plants/animals considered sensitive by the NPS.
- ◆ Create conditions which promote a diversity of native vegetation associations.
- ◆ Reduce the potential for the introduction and spread of non-native species.
- ◆ Create conditions which support self-sustaining, diverse native riparian and wetland systems.
- ◆ Reduce the potential for adverse impacts on water quality and hydrologic processes of streams, springs, and springbrooks.
- ◆ Create conditions which allow for geomorphic processes to occur and properly functioning soil types and structures to be represented, including biological soil crusts.
- ◆ Create conditions needed to support viable, self-sustaining populations of native wildlife, including migratory birds, and their habitat.
- ◆ Reduce the potential for impacts to archaeological and historic resources.
- ◆ Reduce the potential for impacts to visual resources, soundscapes, and other aspects of visitor use and experience.
- ◆ Improve visitor understanding of the history and status of livestock grazing and trailing in the park.

## Purpose of and Need for Action

The purpose of developing a Livestock Grazing and Trailing Plan is to:

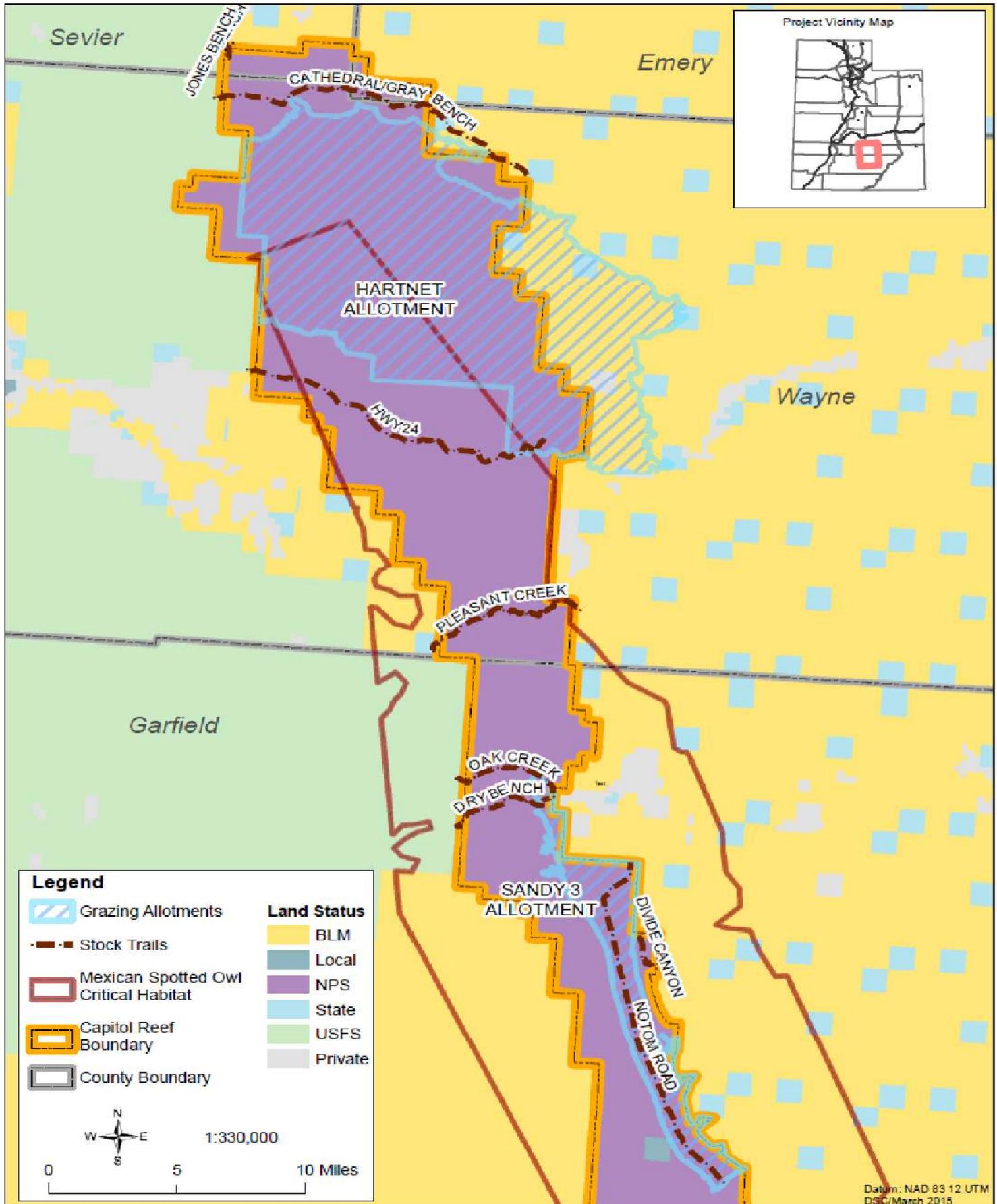
- ◆ Provide guidance and tools to the NPS and permit holders, which promote the shared conservation and stewardship of the natural resources, ecological processes, and cultural resources of Capitol Reef National Park through the long-term management of livestock grazing and trailing at the park.

The plan is needed because as of 2010 the NPS assumed sole responsibility for managing livestock grazing and trailing in CRNP, and the park lacks a comprehensive, collaborative approach to address potential impacts to:

- ◆ Soils, vegetation (upland and riparian, including native forage used by livestock), aquatic systems, and wildlife and its habitat;
- ◆ Habitat for and populations of species of concern, including plants and animals listed under the Endangered Species Act;
- ◆ Cultural resources such as archeological sites and historic properties, including those protected under the National Historic Preservation Act.



Left to Right: CRNP seeks to protect vegetation that is used by both wildlife and livestock; to protect species of concern and their habitat, such as the Last Chance *Townsendia aprica* ; and to protect cultural resources, such as structural sites.



# Livestock Grazing and Trailing Management Practices and Tools under Consideration

The NPS has met with other agency technical specialists, our permit holders, and our cooperating agencies during early phases of this plan/EIS process to identify potential practices and tools for managing livestock grazing and trailing at Capitol Reef National Park. These practices and tools include, but are not limited to:

## ***Collaboration and Communication***

We recognize coordination and communication with stakeholders is critical to our success. We look forward to hearing from you on how we can:

- ◆ More effectively coordinate with permit holders and adjacent land managers on overall administration of livestock grazing and trailing in the park;
- ◆ Collaborate with permit holders on the investments needed in labor and/or range improvements to implement the plan; and
- ◆ Expand visitor education efforts regarding the history and status of livestock grazing and trailing activities in the park.

## ***Adaptive Management and Phased Implementation of Actions***

Under any alternative, the NPS would work with permit holders to:

- ◆ Adaptively manage timing, duration, intensity, and distribution of livestock grazing and trailing, based on collaborative, short- and long-term monitoring of desired conditions for key resources and range conditions.
  - ◇ Key resources and range conditions identified for monitoring to date include: listed plant and animal populations and habitat, vegetation communities, extent of biological soil crust, riparian ecosystems, climate conditions such as precipitation totals, rangeland health, and forage use.

## ***Grazing Management***

Potential livestock grazing management practices and tools identified to date consist of both active livestock management (e.g., ongoing, “hands-on” activities and adjustments before, during and after the grazing season) and constructed range improvements (e.g., fencing), including adjustments to:

- ◆ Timing (season of use) of grazing
  - ◇ Consider adjustments in the Hartnet Allotment to minimize grazing during the growing season for native forage and sensitive plants.

*These practices and tools, summarized above, will be evaluated along with others identified through public scoping to create alternatives for a long-term management plan/EIS for livestock grazing that promotes the shared stewardship of resources.*

*We encourage you to submit your thoughts not only on the practices and tools, but how they might be combined into alternatives. We are also seeking your input on key resources, associated desired conditions, and relevant indicators which should be a part of the monitoring program and adaptive approach.*

- ◆ Intensity of grazing (utilization)
  - ◇ Consider revising current animal unit month stocking rates, last updated 25 years ago, based on U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service Ecological Site Descriptions and U.S. Department of the Interior stocking rate factors.
- ◆ Distribution of livestock
  - ◇ Consider fencing to protect sensitive resources.
  - ◇ Provide livestock access to water at locations outside the critical ecological footprint of sensitive hydrologic resources.
  - ◇ Explore the use of supplements and imported feed to encourage livestock to use areas away from sensitive resources.
  - ◇ Consider active management of livestock through herding and/or developing pastures combined with pasture rotation strategies.

## ***Trailing Management***

Livestock trailing management strategies identified to date focus on adjusting the distribution, intensity, and duration of these activities in the park, with minimal constructed improvements, including:

- ◆ Continue trailing on current routes and work with permit holders and adjacent land managers to promote shared stewardship of park resources by:
  - ◇ Encouraging alternate, shifted, or seasonal use of existing routes where possible.
  - ◇ Exploring the establishment of a suitable duration and number of livestock associated with trailing as part of the permit review process.
  - ◇ Fencing cultural resources susceptible to impacts from livestock trailing (e.g., petroglyphs and pictographs, dwelling and artifact sites).
  - ◇ Fencing sensitive natural resources temporarily as trailing occurs

## Impact Topics for the EIS

The NPS uses impact topics as headings to help organize the discussion of environmental issues (e.g., specific problems, concerns, conflicts, obstacles, or benefits) and the environmental effects of alternatives under consideration in an EIS. Based on discussions among the NPS, cooperating agencies, and other agency specialists, impact topics have been identified for those resources, or elements of resources, which have the potential to be affected either negatively or positively by current grazing and trailing management practices, or by future management actions that may be implemented as part of the plan. These include the following:

- ◆ Soils and biological soil crusts
- ◆ Vegetation (both upland and riparian)
- ◆ Water resources (both permanent and intermittent)
- ◆ Special status species (including plants, animals, and critical habitat listed under the Endangered Species Act, and NPS sensitive plants and animals)
- ◆ Wildlife and wildlife habitat including migratory birds
- ◆ Cultural resources
- ◆ Visitor use and experience
- ◆ Socioeconomics



*We look forward to your feedback on the issues you believe we should focus on for each of these impact topics, as well as any additional impact topics we should consider.*

## NEPA and Where We Are in the Process

The NPS is preparing this plan/EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires federal agencies to analyze impacts to the environment for any major federal action. Milestones in the NEPA process and an anticipated timeline are as follows:

<b>March to May 2015</b>	<b>Notice of Intent to Prepare Livestock Grazing and Trailing Management Plan/EIS; Public Scoping Period Begins; Public Scoping Meetings</b>	<b>WE ARE HERE</b>
<b>May 2015</b>	Public Scoping Period Concludes NPS Reviews Public Scoping Comments and Gathers Information Needed to Prepare the EIS	
<b>2015–2016</b>	Develop Alternatives, Analyze Impacts, and Write Draft Plan/EIS	
<b>Late Spring 2016</b>	Draft Plan/EIS available for Public Review and Comment (60 days)/Public Meetings on Draft Plan/EIS	
<b>2016–2017</b>	NPS Prepares Final Plan/EIS and Selects the Alternative to be Implemented	
<b>Spring 2017</b>	NPS Issues Record of Decision for Livestock Grazing and Trailing Plan	

# Public Meetings and Webinar Schedule

Scoping is the first step to involve the public in the planning process. Scoping provides opportunities for identifying public concerns early and focusing the analysis on the important issues. Because the plan/EIS will analyze complex ecological, cultural, and social issues, your participation is encouraged and needed.

The NPS will hold two in-person meetings and one online “webinar” during the scoping period. The in-person meetings will follow an open house format and consist of several stations where different aspects of the project will be presented. There will be an opportunity to speak with NPS staff at the stations. The NPS will also host an online webinar for those who cannot attend an in-person meeting, but want to learn more about the project. The webinar will include a brief presentation and an opportunity to ask questions of NPS staff.

## Public Meeting Schedule

April 1, 2015 6–8 p.m.	Wayne County Community Center 605 South 350 East Bicknell, UT 84715
April 2, 2015 6–8 p.m.	Hanksville Town Hall 30 South Highway 95 Hanksville, UT 84734



## Online Webinar

Please check the website, [http://parkplanning.nps.gov/care\\_lgtmp\\_eis\\_scoping](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/care_lgtmp_eis_scoping), for more information on the webinar schedule and how to register.

## How to Comment



Submit comments electronically at: [http://parkplanning.nps.gov/care\\_lgtmp\\_eis\\_scoping](http://parkplanning.nps.gov/care_lgtmp_eis_scoping) (preferred method).



Submit comments in person at a public meeting to NPS staff.



Submit written comments to the park’s office or by mail to this address:

Superintendent  
Capitol Reef National Park  
HC 70 Box 15  
Torrey, UT 84775

Please submit comments no later than May 15, 2015.

*Please include your full name and address with the comments, so we may add you to our mailing list for future notices about this process. Before including an address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment including your identifying information may be made publicly available. While you can ask us to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.*





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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