



Preliminary Alternatives Newsletter

Dear Friends,

The Ozark National Scenic Riverways Roads and Trails Management Plan / Environmental Assessment (R&T plan) serves as an important milestone for improving the system of roads and trails at Ozark National Scenic Riverways (National Riverways or Riverways). The goal of the R&T plan is to ensure access to a variety of locations and experiences while protecting the Riverways’ fundamental resources and values. This newsletter presents three preliminary alternatives to resolve a wide range of management issues associated with roads and trails throughout the park.

In Fall 2015, we invited you to share your initial thoughts, concerns, and ideas for further improving and managing park roads and trails. In addition to reading the first newsletter, some of you participated in our open house events in Eminence, Van Buren, Salem, and Sunset Hills, Missouri, or submitted comments via letters, comment cards, and the National Park Service (NPS) website. Hundreds of you expressed very specific ideas and concerns about the park’s roads and trails and your visions for future management. We thank you for your many comments. This scoping information was instrumental in helping us develop a range of preliminary alternatives.

At this time, we would like to hear your ideas on the preliminary alternatives before we proceed further with development of the R&T plan. Your comments will help us refine these options and guide development of a preferred alternative. It is important to note that we have not identified a preferred alternative or analyzed the impacts of the preliminary alternatives at this stage. Once fully developed, one of these alternatives could be selected as the National Park Service preferred alternative; or a new alternative could emerge that combines elements from some or all of the preliminary alternatives.

As we move forward planning for the improvement of the roads and trails system at Ozark National Scenic Riverways, I encourage you to stay connected and be an active participant in this planning process. In this newsletter, you will find a number of ways to contact us and access information. With your continued interest and support, we will develop a plan that enhances your experience of the National Riverways while protecting its unique resources and values for generations to come.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the development of the Roads and Trails Management Plan. We hope to hear from you soon.

Larry Johnson, Superintendent
Ozark National Scenic Riverways

Why Is A Roads And Trails Plan Needed For Ozark National Scenic Riverways?

The National Riverways is a special place within the national park system where 134 miles of clear, free-flowing, spring-fed waterways and the region’s karst landscape support an amazing variety of natural features and abundant cultural resources reflecting ancient life in the Ozark Highlands. The free-flowing Current and Jacks Fork Rivers also provide excellent recreational opportunities.

The National Riverways currently contains a mix of designated and undesignated access points, roads, traces, and trails, which has resulted in unauthorized uses that are impacting park resources and the quality of visitor experience. For instance, the Riverways currently includes a network of 23 miles of designated equestrian trails, which cross both NPS-managed and non-NPS land inside and outside the park’s boundary. Formalized management agreements with neighboring landowners are needed to ensure continued public access to that network. More than 90 miles of undesignated equestrian trails have been created by users since development of an earlier Roads and Trails Study in 1991. This spread of user-created trails affirms the popularity of horseback riding in and around the Riverways. In addition, since 1991, over 39 miles of undesignated roads and traces have been created by

unauthorized off-road vehicle use. These informal, unauthorized roads and traces have impacted natural and cultural resources, including increased erosion and sediment-loading into waterways, as well as potential impacts to water quality, wildlife, and archeological sites. They have also made navigation in some areas difficult and confusing for park visitors, and demonstrate the need to more proactively manage roads and trails within the park.



The existing network of both designated and undesignated roads and trails impact park operations and visitor safety as well. For example, in some areas, there are multiple roads and trails (many undesignated) leading to the same general destination. Undesignated roads and trails can create longer response times for law enforcement personnel and more complex search and rescue operations. Closing some of the redundant undesignated roads could improve visitor experience, visitor safety, and allow for more investment in visitor facilities.

The purpose of the R&T plan is to address these issues and, ultimately, to improve this system of park roads and trails to ensure that it provides safe access to a variety of locations and experiences and also protects the park’s fundamental resources and values.



Plan Objectives

As the National Park Service develops the R&T plan, a variety of management options are being considered to ensure appropriate opportunities for visitors to use, experience, and enjoy the park’s roads and trails system, while also protecting the National Riverways’ nationally significant resources and addressing the issues mentioned above. Specific objectives of the R&T plan are outlined below.

Cultural Resources

Designated roads, trails, recreation areas along the river, and river crossings would be located to protect important cultural areas sensitive to human impacts, and to avoid archeological sites, American Indian sacred sites, sensitive historic sites, and cultural landscapes.

Natural Resources

Designated roads, trails, recreation areas along the river, and river crossings would be designed and located to minimize adverse impacts to water quality and important vegetation and wildlife communities, make use of existing disturbed areas, help restore heavily impacted and environmentally sensitive areas, and direct trail use to areas with suitable soils.

Visitor Use and Experience

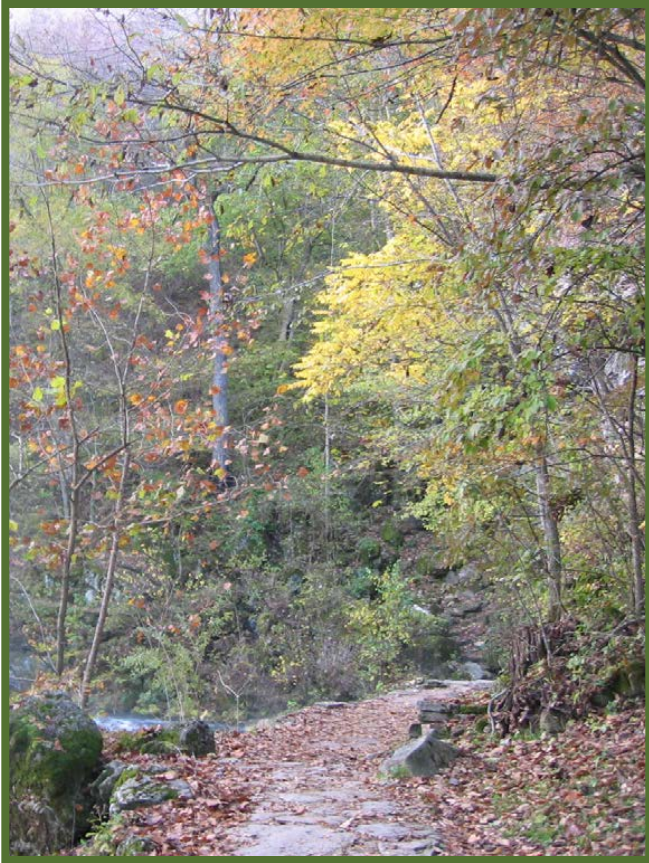
Designated roads, trails, recreation areas along the river, and river crossings would provide access to a variety of opportunities at clearly defined locations in the park with minimal duplication. Appropriate access would facilitate the education and interaction of visitors with natural resources, cultural landscapes, and historic sites. Trails would be designed and managed to help minimize conflicts between user groups and to enhance visitor safety. Where possible, the trail system might connect to trails on adjacent lands, creating an integrated network for the enjoyment of visitors.

Park Operations

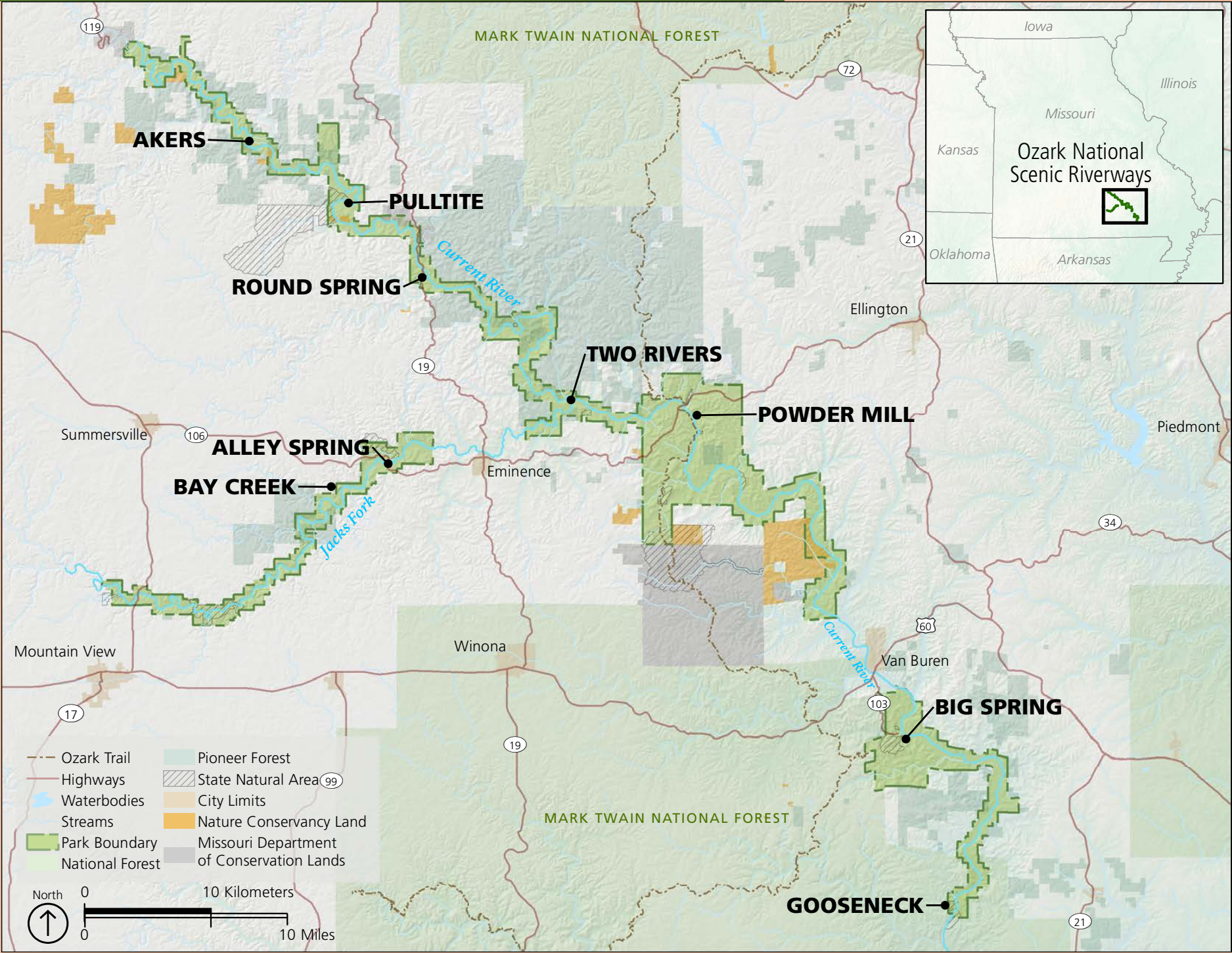
Designated roads, trails, recreation areas along the river, and river crossings would be designed and located to maximize the efficiency of maintenance, interpretation, resource management, visitor safety and visitor experience staffs while minimizing financial costs to the park. The park will strive to maintain flexibility to manage and protect natural and cultural resources as needed.

Communities

The park’s network of designated roads, trails, and recreation facilities will reflect the importance of the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers to communities and the surrounding region, both in terms of economy and lifeways.



Ozark National Scenic Riverways Roads and Trails Plan Study Area



Preliminary Alternatives

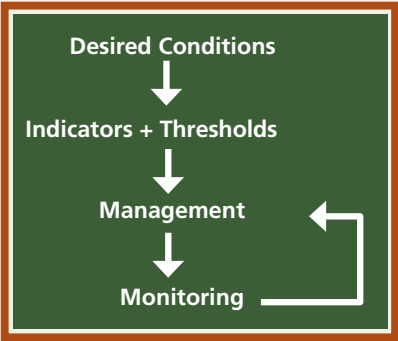
Based on the purpose and need for the R&T plan and the above objectives, the NPS developed three preliminary alternatives that were consistent with management zoning and desired conditions outlined in the 2014 General Management Plan (GMP). The first alternative (Alternative A) is the “no-action” alternative, which reflects a continuation of current management practices within the Riverways established in the GMP. The other two alternatives are the action alternatives. The action alternatives were developed based on public and stakeholder input and feedback, as well as NPS staff expertise. Each represents alternative approaches to roads and trails management throughout the Riverways and represents the diversity of suggestions received during the scoping process.

Each action alternative includes specific adaptive strategies that would only be implemented when necessary to protect resources and visitor experience. Not all strategies in this plan would be implemented immediately.

Indicators, Thresholds, and Monitoring

Because resource stewardship and visitor experience are so interrelated, a visitor use management framework is being developed as part of this plan. This framework includes the use of indicators and thresholds to track changes in resource and social conditions so that conditions can be assessed over time. It also provides a sound methodology for establishing the kinds and amounts of visitor use that the Riverways can accommodate. As part of the planning process, the NPS will establish indicators and thresholds to monitor how well the proposed management strategies are meeting desired conditions currently being developed for the R&T plan, as well as those previously defined in the Riverways’ GMP. In some cases, park managers may choose to implement certain management strategies (referred to as adaptive strategies) only when certain triggers or thresholds are met.

Desired conditions are statements of aspiration that describe resource conditions, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services that an agency strives to achieve and maintain in a particular area. Indicators are specific resource or experiential attributes that can be measured to track changes in conditions so that progress



toward achieving and maintaining desired conditions can be assessed. Thresholds are minimally acceptable conditions associated with each indicator.

Visitor Capacity

Another key component of the preliminary alternatives is the establishment of visitor capacities for trail use in the park. Visitor capacities define the maximum amounts and types of use that an area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining desired conditions. Visitor capacities, which could vary by season and/or specific areas of the park, will be established in key areas, along with implementation techniques that will directly manage the amount and time of visitor access.

Please note that the NPS planning team is in the early stages of developing indicators, thresholds, and visitor capacity. The specific details relevant to these planning elements will be available for public review as part of the draft plan and environmental assessment.

Alternative A – No Action (Current Management)

Under Alternative A, park management would focus on continuation of the management direction established in the GMP. The existing system of designated roads, trails, and river crossings would continue to be provided, along with opportunities for traditional recreation activities such as hiking, horseback riding, and hunting.

Undesignated roads and trails, as well as undesignated recreational areas, would be closed and restored to natural conditions. No new roads, trails, or associated facilities would be established. Horseback riding in the National Riverways would be limited to currently designated horse trails, as well as state and county unpaved roads. Use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs) would continue to be limited to county roads. This alternative would allow for the least number of trails and designated recreation areas along the river. Additional information related to this alternative is provided in the table below.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, opportunities for traditional recreation activities such as hiking and horseback riding would be expanded. The existing designated trail system would continue to be provided. The park would designate 34.9 miles of new trails located on NPS fee lands within the park’s jurisdictional boundary. Some undesignated trails and closed roads would be converted into designated trails. In other areas, such as the upper Current River, some of the trails would require new alignments to minimize potential impacts to sensitive park resources. Mountain biking would

be allowed on some park trails, but not on the Ozark Trail among others. Undesignated trails would be closed and restored to natural conditions.

All undesignated roads would be closed and restored to natural conditions, including roads identified for closure in the 1991 Roads and Trails Study that have not been closed to date. In addition, there would be a moderate reduction in designated road mileage including a reduction of about 20.5 miles of NPS-administered roads as well as approximately 2.5 miles of park-owned roads and traces in primitive zones.

The number of undesignated river crossings and vehicle fords would be reduced to minimize potential impacts to water quality and sensitive species. Use of ATVs and UTVs would continue to be limited to county roads.

Alternative C

Under Alternative C, opportunities for traditional recreation activities such as hiking and horseback riding would be expanded. The existing designated trail system would continue to be provided. The park would designate 50.5 miles of new trails on NPS fee lands within the park’s jurisdictional boundary. A number of additional trails would extend beyond the park’s jurisdictional boundary, and would be dependent on partnerships and cooperative agreements with neighboring landowners. In other areas, such as the upper Current River, some of the new trails would be aligned to minimize potential impacts to sensitive riparian resources. Undesignated trails would be closed and restored to natural conditions. Mountain biking would be allowed on some park trails as well as a segment of the Ozark Trail (not including the Round Spring Spur).

All undesignated roads would be closed and restored to natural conditions, including roads identified for closure in the 1991 Roads and Trails Study that have not been closed to date. In addition, there would be a smaller reduction in designated road mileage including a reduction of about 8.5 miles of NPS-administered roads as well as approximately 2.5 miles of park-owned roads and traces in primitive zones.

Undesignated river crossings and vehicle fords would be reduced from current levels to minimize potential impacts to water quality and sensitive species. Use of ATVs and UTVs would continue to be limited to county roads.

Please see a comparison of Alternatives A, B, and C in Table 1 on pages 4 and 5.



Table 1. Comparison of Alternatives

Park Resource or Activity	Alternative A	
Road mileage	<p>Zero (0) miles of new road would be proposed. No change to the network of 226.1 miles of designated roads (based on existing GIS mapping) would occur. Undesignated roads and traces would be closed and restored to natural conditions. Motor vehicles would continue to be allowed only on designated roads. Approximately 2.5 miles of park-owned roads and traces in primitive zones would be removed and replaced with hiking trails.</p> <p>Total miles of designated public roads: 210 miles. The following is a breakdown of road mileage by jurisdiction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS public use: 56.5 miles County & State: 153 miles 	<p>All undesignated roads closure in the 1991 Road Closure Plan. Motor vehicles would be allowed on park-owned roads and traces. Total miles of designated roads by jurisdiction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPS public use: 56.5 miles County & State: 153 miles <p>All designated roads would remain open to motor vehicles.</p>
Trail mileage	<p>Zero (0) miles of new trail would be proposed. The existing 23-mile network of designated horse trails and 49 miles of designated hiking trails would continue to be provided. Existing designated trails that do not meet trail classification standards may be rehabilitated or rerouted, as needed, on a case-by-case basis. All non-designated trails would be restored to natural conditions. Approximately 10.8 miles of new hiking trail associated with the planned Round Spring Spur of the Ozark Trail (permitted under a separate environmental assessment) is currently under construction.</p>	<p>The existing 23-mile network of designated horse trails and 49 miles of designated hiking trails would continue to be provided. Existing designated trails that do not meet trail classification standards may be rehabilitated or rerouted, as needed, on a case-by-case basis. All non-designated trails would be restored to natural conditions. Approximately 10.8 miles of new hiking trail associated with the planned Round Spring Spur of the Ozark Trail (permitted under a separate environmental assessment) is currently under construction.</p> <p>Alternative B includes a new 10.8-mile hiking trail (the Ozark Trail) within the park boundary. The following trails would be provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiking-only trails Trails where horse use is permitted Trails where motor vehicle use is permitted <p>In some areas, there would be no trails. This would be to connect visitors to the park's natural resources. Some informal trails and trails would be restored, particularly within the undeveloped areas of the park.</p>
Balancing new trails with rehabilitation of existing designated trails	<p>No new trails are proposed in this alternative. Existing designated trails that do not meet trail classification standards may be rehabilitated or rerouted, as needed, on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>The park would develop a trail management plan. The initiation and funding, resources (equipment, personnel, etc.) for trail development, partner/assist with trail development, and respect to new trails would be considered. Because of the park's infrastructure. Because of the park's infrastructure, seek supporting partner resources.</p>
Introduction of mountain biking	<p>No change to allowed uses on any designated trails. No introduction of mountain biking on designated trails. Mountain biking would continue to be allowed on park roads.</p>	<p>Mountain biking would continue to be allowed on park roads. Mountain biking would continue to be allowed on park roads.</p>
Number of horse trail river crossings	<p>Seven designated horse trail river crossings would continue to be available to trail users. Horses would be permitted to cross the river only at designated crossing points.</p>	<p>The seven existing, designated horse trail river crossings would be maintained. Informal, unauthorized crossings would be closed. The National Riverways Program would be used to identify potential crossings of currently designated trails.</p>
Number of designated recreation areas along river	<p>The existing 89 designated recreation areas would continue to be provided. River access would be allowed only at designated access points. The National Park Service would continue to evaluate these areas on a case-by-case basis for closure or designation.</p>	<p>The National Riverways Program would be used to identify potential crossings of currently designated trails. The National Riverways Program would be used to identify potential crossings of currently designated trails.</p>
New horse staging areas, parking areas, and trailheads	<p>No new horse staging areas, parking areas, or expansion of existing areas. No new trailheads.</p>	<p>Any new horse staging areas, parking areas, or expansion of existing areas would be considered. The National Riverways Program would be used to identify potential crossings of currently designated trails.</p>
Vehicular access to gravel bars	<p>Designated campsites or camping areas may be established on some gravel bars that are accessed by licensed vehicles. Visitors using motorized and nonmotorized watercraft could continue to camp on gravel bars as long as that campsite was 0.5 miles from any designated campsite and more than 50 feet from a designated river access point. (Additional information on gravel bar access can be found on page 75 of the 2014 GMP/EIS).</p>	<p>Visitors using motorized vehicles would be allowed to access gravel bars as that campsite was 0.5 miles from any designated campsite and more than 50 feet from a designated river access point. A designated camping area would be established for individuals accessing gravel bars. Flexibility to limit access to gravel bars would be provided to enhance visitor experience, enhance visitor safety, and be allowed in designated areas. Driving onto and camping on gravel bars would be provided at some locations.</p>

The 2015 NPS Capital Investment Strategy specifies that parks will focus investment on our highest priority assets, including cultural treasures, mission-critical infrastructure, visitor facilities and facilities that support natural resource protection, to which the park has also made a commitment for long-term maintenance.

Table 1. Comparison of Alternatives	
Alternative B	Alternative C
<p>would be closed and restored to natural conditions, including roads identified for Roads and Trails Study that have not been closed to date.</p> <p>Motor vehicles would be allowed only on designated and signed roads. Approximately 2.5 miles of park-owned roads in primitive zones would be removed and replaced with hiking trails.</p> <p>Designated public roads: 189 miles. The following is a breakdown of road mileage by jurisdiction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPS: 36 miles • State: 153 miles <p>Roads would be classified based on use.</p>	<p>All undesignated roads would be closed and restored to natural conditions, including roads identified for closure in the 1991 Roads and Trails Study that have not been closed to date.</p> <p>Motor vehicles would continue to be allowed only on designated and signed roads. Approximately 2.5 miles of park-owned roads and traces in primitive zones would be removed and replaced with hiking trails.</p> <p>Total miles of designated public roads: 201 miles. The following is a breakdown of road mileage by jurisdiction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPS public use: 48 miles • County & State: 153 miles <p>All designated roads would be classified based on use.</p>
<p>A network of designated horse trails and 49 miles of designated hiking trails would be provided. Existing designated trails that do not meet trail classification standards would be closed, rehabilitated or rerouted, as needed, on a case-by-case basis. All undesignated trails would be restored to natural conditions. Approximately 10.8 miles of new hiking trail associated with the planned Round Spring Spur of the Ozark Trail (permitted under a separate environmental assessment) is currently under construction.</p> <p>A total of 34.9 miles of new trail (excluding the planned Round Spring Spur of the Ozark Trail) would be developed within the park jurisdictional boundary. Trail use along these trails would be provided as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking-only trails: 12.4 miles • Trails where horseback riding and hiking are allowed: 14.6 miles • Trails where mountain biking and hiking are allowed: 7.9 miles <p>There would be additional equestrian and hiking trail access to key discovery sites to enhance the history and important stories of the National Riverways.</p> <p>Some closed roads would be converted into designated trails. Some new trails, particularly within the upper Current River, would require new alignments to avoid impacts to sensitive resources.</p>	<p>The existing 23-mile network of designated horse trails and 49 miles of designated hiking trails would continue to be provided. Existing designated trails that do not meet trail classification standards would be closed, rehabilitated or rerouted, as needed, on a case-by-case basis. All undesignated trails would be restored to natural conditions. Approximately 10.8 miles of new hiking trail associated with the planned Round Spring Spur of the Ozark Trail (permitted under a separate environmental assessment) is currently under construction.</p> <p>50.5 miles of new trail (excluding the planned Round Spring Spur of the Ozark Trail) would be developed within the park jurisdictional boundary. Trail use along these trails would be provided as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking-only trails: 15.8 miles • Trails where horseback riding and hiking are allowed: 21 miles • Trails where mountain biking and hiking are allowed: 13.7 miles <p>Under this alternative, the park would cooperate with neighboring landowners to designate additional trail mileage outside of the park’s jurisdictional boundary to provide connectivity to adjacent lands and opportunities for recreational trail use. New trails within the Riverways boundary, when coupled with new trails (designations) outside the boundary, would expand the number of opportunities for long-distance trail experiences in the area.</p> <p>Some informal trails and closed roads would be converted into designated trails. Some new trails, particularly within the upper Current River, would require new alignments to avoid impacts to sensitive resources. In some areas, there would be additional equestrian and hiking trail access to key discovery sites to connect visitors to the history and important stories of the National Riverways.</p>
<p>The park would develop a 5-7 year funding strategy for construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of trails. The initiation and sequencing of trail and restoration projects would proceed according to available funding, resources (equipment, trail crews, etc.), and the availability of user groups and organizations to partner/assist with trail development and restoration efforts. Additionally, future capital investments with respect to new trails would be balanced with existing and ongoing investment needs tied to existing trail infrastructure. Because of limited funding available to build and maintain new trails, the park would seek supporting partner and/or grant funding for all new trail projects.</p>	<p>The park would develop a 5-7 year funding strategy for construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of trails. The initiation and sequencing of trail and restoration projects would proceed according to available funding, resources (equipment, trail crews, etc.), and the availability of user groups and organizations to partner/assist with trail development and restoration efforts. Additionally, future capital investments with respect to new trails would be balanced with existing and ongoing investment needs tied to existing trail infrastructure. Because of limited funding available to build and maintain new trails, the park would seek supporting partner and/or grant funding for all new trail projects.</p>
<p>Motor vehicles would continue to be allowed on park roads. The National Riverways would allow mountain biking on the Nature Trail at Pulltite and Old Tram Road to Big Spring, and a segment of the Ozark Trail.</p>	<p>Mountain biking would continue to be allowed on park roads. In addition, the National Riverways would allow mountain biking on the Nature Trail at Pulltite, Old Tram Road to Big Spring, and a segment of the Ozark Trail.</p>
<p>Designated horse trail river crossings would continue to be provided. Eight additional crossings would be designated on the upper Current River to direct use away from dozens of informal, unauthorized crossings. Horses would continue to be required to cross the river only at designated crossing points. All stream crossings may be evaluated to address resource impacts.</p> <p>The National Riverways would seek opportunities to partner with neighboring landowners within the park to identify potential options for keeping trail loops on one side of the river. Additional rerouting of currently designated trails may be necessary to further protect sensitive park resources.</p>	<p>The seven existing designated horse trail river crossings would continue to be provided. Nine additional crossings would be designated on the upper Current River to direct use away from dozens of informal, unauthorized crossings. Horses would continue to be required to cross the river only at designated crossing points. All stream crossings may be evaluated to address resource impacts.</p> <p>The National Riverways would seek opportunities to partner with neighboring landowners within the park to identify potential options for keeping trail loops on one side of the river. Additional rerouting of currently designated trails may be necessary to further protect sensitive park resources.</p>
<p>The park would designate 78 recreation areas along the 134-mile river corridor. River access would be allowed only at designated river access points. Potential future updates to a river use management plan may necessitate that the number of recreation areas along the river be changed.</p>	<p>The National Riverways would designate 86 recreation areas along the 134-mile river corridor. River access would be allowed only at designated river access points. Potential future updates to a river use management plan may necessitate that the number of recreation areas along the river be changed.</p>
<p>New horse staging areas, parking areas, or trailhead would be placed at an appropriate distance from the river to the extent feasible to protect sensitive resources such as riparian zones. Additional horse staging areas, parking areas, and trailheads proposed are noted below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 New hiking trailhead (in the middle Current River area) 0 New parking areas (in the middle Current and upper Current River areas) 2 New horse staging areas (to accommodate equestrians in the upper Current River area). A horse camp would be considered. 	<p>New horse staging areas, parking areas, or trailhead would be placed at an appropriate distance from the river to the extent feasible to protect sensitive resources such as riparian zones. Additional horse staging areas, parking areas, and trailheads proposed are noted below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 New hiking trailhead (in the middle Current River Area) 0 New parking areas (in the middle Current and upper Current River areas) 2 New horse staging areas (to accommodate equestrians in the upper Current River area). A horse camp would be considered.
<p>Motorized and nonmotorized watercraft could continue to camp on gravel bars as long as they are at least 0.5 miles from any designated campsite and more than 50 feet from a designated river access point. Licensed vehicles would be allowed to access and park on the Logyard gravel bar and at Two Rivers. These sites would be managed for individuals accessing their campsites by vehicle. Gravel bar camping at Two Rivers would be allowed in designated campsites. The National Riverways would retain the flexibility to limit access to or close the Logyard gravel bar to vehicle access to improve safety, reduce crowding, enhance visitor experience, and protect water quality. Driving onto and camping on other gravel bars would not be permitted. Walk-in camping opportunities would be provided at some gravel bars formerly accessible by vehicles.</p>	<p>Visitors using motorized and nonmotorized watercraft could continue to camp on gravel bars a minimum of 0.5 miles from any designated campsite and more than 50 feet from a designated river access point. Licensed vehicles would be allowed to access and park on the Logyard gravel bar and at Two Rivers. These sites would be managed for individuals accessing their campsites by vehicle. Gravel bar camping at Two Rivers would be allowed in designated campsites. The National Riverways would retain the flexibility to limit access to or close the Logyard gravel bar to vehicle access to improve safety, reduce crowding, enhance visitor experience, and protect water quality. Driving onto and camping on other gravel bars would not be permitted. Walk-in camping opportunities would be provided at some gravel bars formerly accessible by vehicles.</p>

²The 2015 NPS Capital Investment Strategy specifies that parks will focus investment on our highest priority assets, including cultural treasures, mission-critical infrastructure, visitor facilities and facilities that support natural resource protection, to which the park has also made a commitment for long-term maintenance.



Management Strategies Common to All Alternatives

While each alternative represents varying strategies related to roads and trails management, there are some strategies that will not vary by alternative. These strategies are considered “common to all” and ultimately serve to protect the park’s resources and values. They are considered practical, common sense approaches to park management and are grounded in NPS policy and mandates and are likely to be employed under any future management scenario as noted below.

Restoration – Roads, trails, recreation areas, and river crossings that are not part of the designated system would be restored to natural conditions. During implementation, park staff would determine the exact strategy needed based on factors such as the likelihood that vegetation would naturally recover and the extent of the existing human impacts. Restoration would be contingent on funds and staff time. A strategy for construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of trails would be outlined in a 5-7 year funding strategy.

Temporary trail closures – Periods of heavy or sustained precipitation often lead to flooding, saturated soils, and muddy conditions along park trails. Use of park trails during these time periods can lead to rutting, trenching, braiding, social trail creation, and widening of tread. The inundation of some areas with water during flooding also presents serious threats to visitor safety. During or after periods of heavy precipitation, the park would implement temporary closures on a case-by-case basis to protect trails, improve visitor safety, and reduce negative resource impacts.

Trail management corrective measures – In the instance that resource thresholds are exceeded in a given area, the park would implement corrective measures to minimize resource impacts, which may include trail closures for extended periods of time, requiring trail permits, or other management actions.

Rerouting of certain portions of designated trails – The NPS would continue to perform minor reroutes of existing trails where necessary to protect natural and cultural resources and improve the user experience. Such actions would be conducted in a manner consistent with NPS Directors Order 12; Section 3.3 (c).

Vehicle Fords – Currently there are several vehicle fording sites on the Current River, Jacks Fork River, and major tributaries. While the plan does not propose

to close any of those crossings associated with any county’s road network, the NPS will continue to evaluate NPS roads that cross streams to determine their necessity. The NPS will also explore best management practices to mitigate resource impacts tied to stream crossings and will cooperate with county commissioners on their implementation. Such mitigation measures may include bridges, hardened low water crossings, culverts, or closures.

Signage for roads, trails, river crossings, and recreation areas – Designated roads, trails, river crossings, and recreation areas would be clearly and consistently signed for visitors on maps, on the ground, and in park informational materials, in order to assist visitors with trip planning and reassure visitors that they are on a designated facility. These signs would display commonly used symbols and icons based on widely accepted sign standards. Vehicular travel will be limited to designated and signed roads only.

Sustainable trail principles – All new trails and reroutes of existing trails would be constructed according to the design parameters outlined in the Design Parameters Section of the Trail Management Handbook (USFS – FSH 2309.18, 2008) and would use sustainable trail techniques outlined in the Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook (USFS, 2007).

Maintenance of trails – Trails would be maintained according to the specified trail class (for example, Class 5 trails would be more frequently maintained than Class 2 trails). Factors such as flooding, storm damage, and use levels may require modifications to the trail maintenance schedule.

Alignments for new trails – New trail alignments would be based on GIS mapping analysis, study of overhead imagery, and some field observations. Final trail alignments would be determined on the ground, which may result in minor adjustments to the trail corridors shown on the preliminary alternative maps. The final alignments for trails would be reviewed by the park’s natural and cultural resources experts to ensure impacts to sensitive resources are minimized. If any sensitive resources are discovered during trail construction, that work would cease and the area would be surveyed in more detail so that impacts can be avoided or minimized and/or an alternate route can be established.

Accessible trails – The park has two trails which are accessible to persons with disabilities: Alley parking lot to Alley Mill and Big Spring parking lot to Big

Spring. These trails provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to have a variety of experiences in different parts of the park, and to see some of the park’s most outstanding resources. A new 1/4-mile accessible trail may be considered from the parking lot to Blue Spring. The National Park Service would work with the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Missouri Natural Areas Committee as needed to implement this trail. The park staff will continue to look for other opportunities to develop accessible trails in the park, particularly with respect to any trails in the upper Current River under alternatives B and C. Hardened surfacing of accessible trails may be necessary in some areas.

Designated and undesignated roads and trails – Maps of preliminary alternatives (refer to http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OZAR_RTplan) depict the designated system of roads, trails, recreation areas, vehicle fords, and trail river crossings for each alternative. Any locations not shown on the maps are undesignated. All designated roads and trails would be marked with appropriate signage. Easement roads and private roads within the park’s boundary may not provide public access. Public access would be at the discretion of the easement holder or private landowner. ATVs and UTVs would continue to be allowed only on county-owned roads (not park roads). All undesignated roads and trails would be removed and restored.

Volunteers – Where possible, the park staff would work closely with volunteers to fund and/or assist with trail construction, development, and maintenance and restoration projects. The National Park Service would enter into formalized agreements with organized groups as necessary.

Water trails – If local communities/partners are interested, the National Riverways would support formal designation of a portion of the upper Current River as a “National Water Trail” (e.g., Tan Vat to Round Spring). The water trail would make use of existing facilities and sites for parking, river access, and camping. This designation would bring further recognition of the upper Current River’s unique qualities, and potentially, assistance with resource stewardship projects, securing additional technical assistance and funding for planning and facility improvements along the water trail, and national promotion and visibility.

Please see a comparison of Alternatives A, B, and C in Table 1 on pages 4 and 5.

How to Comment

Ozark National Scenic Riverways is asking for feedback on the preliminary alternatives from November 17, 2017 to December 15, 2017.

During this period, the public is encouraged to comment on these alternatives and identify any issues or concerns. In particular, the NPS seeks input on the specific elements associated with each alternative. Please keep in mind when commenting that the unique content of comments received, rather than the number of times a similar comment was heard, is what will be most helpful as we refine the alternatives.

There are a number of ways to participate in this process and make your voice heard. You may submit your comments electronically at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website (http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OZAR_RTplan).

Once on the website, select “Open For Comment” to review the document and provide your thoughts on the preliminary alternatives.

You can also mail your comments to the planning team at park headquarters:

Attn: Roads & Trails Planning Team
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Ozark National Scenic Riverways
PO Box 490
Van Buren, Missouri 63965



What Is PEPC?

Public involvement is a critical part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) project planning and development process. To provide information and collect public input, the NPS Planning Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website is used for many planning projects.

Planning information, updates, meeting notices, and documents can all be found on a park’s PEPC site. When documents are open for public comment, comments from individuals, civic groups, public agencies, and governing bodies can be submitted on the site. PEPC allows NPS staff to gather and consider public comments in a cost-effective and timely manner.

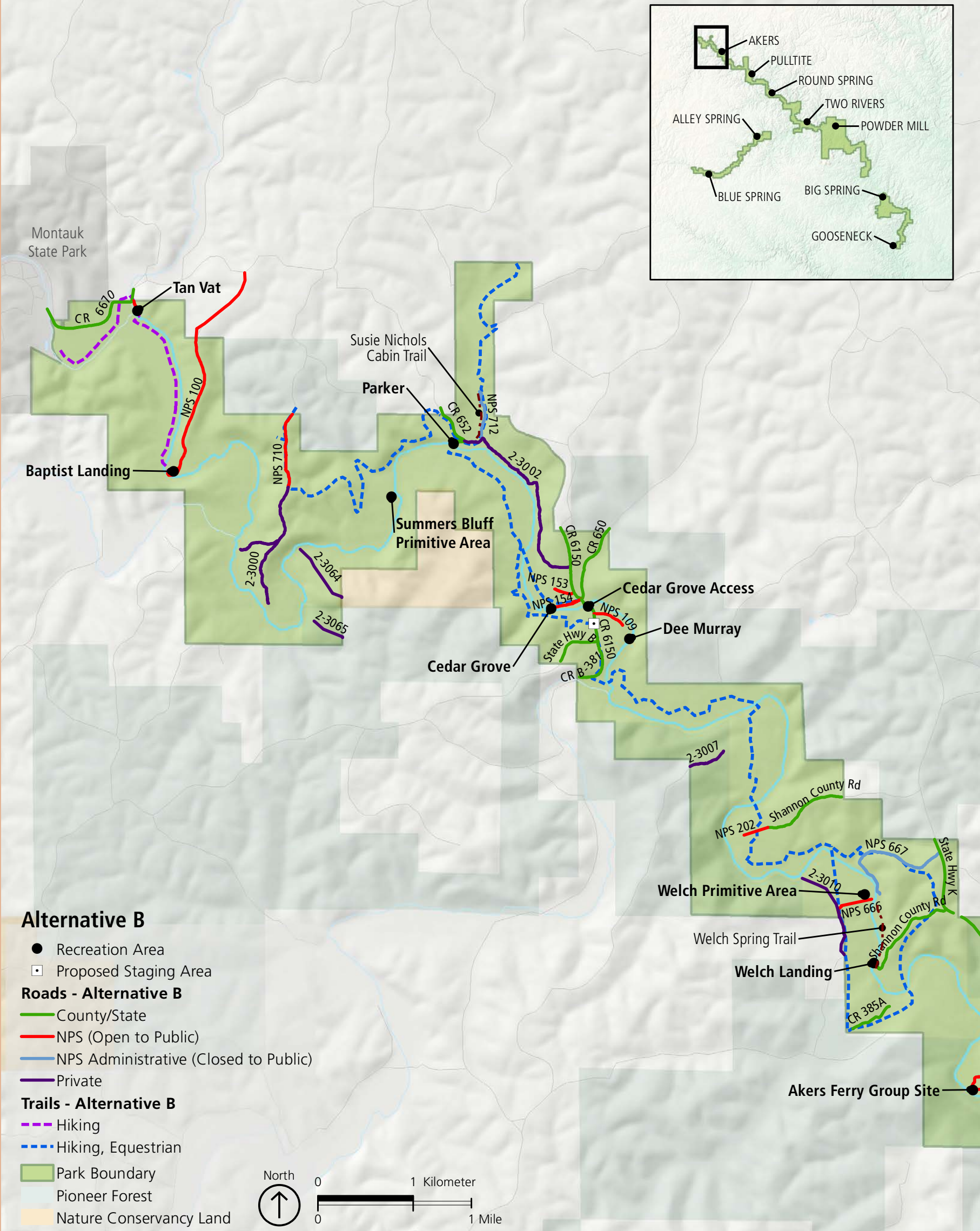
Comments are stored in a secure database as part of the official administrative record for the plan. Public comments and the names of those making comments may be released to the public at the end of the comment period in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

A specific PEPC site for the roads and trails plan has been created for this planning effort. Check it out at: (http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OZAR_RTplan).

The public can view detailed maps of the preliminary alternatives in PEPC, at park headquarters, and at the following libraries:

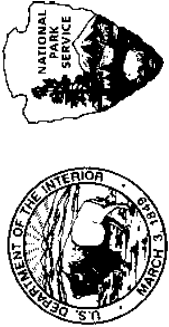
- Birch Tree City Library – Birch Tree, MO
- Carter County Public Library – Van Buren, MO
- Doniphan Public Library – Doniphan, MO
- Ellsinore Public Library – Ellsinore, MO
- Eminence Public Library – Eminence, MO
- Grandin Branch Library – Grandin, MO
- Mountain View Public Library – Mountain View, MO
- Reynolds County Library– Ellington, MO
- Rolla Public Library – Rolla, MO
- Salem Public Library – Salem, MO
- Poplar Bluff Public Library – Poplar Bluff, MO
- Texas County Library – Summersville, MO
- Winona Public Library – Winona, MO

Sample Road and Trail Alternative Map



ATTN: ROADS & TRAILS PLANNING TEAM
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
OZARK NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAYS
PO Box 490
VAN BUREN, Missouri 63965

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300



FIRST-CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
PERMIT NO. G-83

Next Steps In The Planning Process

The planning team will analyze comments on the preliminary alternatives to determine possible changes and to help inform the selection of the NPS’s preferred alternative. The preferred alternative is the alternative the agency believes would best accomplish the purpose and need of the R&T plan while fulfilling other legal, environmental, and economic factors.

The preferred alternative may be a combination of management strategies from the range of preliminary alternatives, rather than simply identifying one of the alternatives as the agency’s preferred approach. Comments on the specific management strategies within each alternative will help inform this decision.

After the analysis and identification of a preferred alternative, the range of alternatives will be presented in the environmental assessment for public review. Public comments on the environmental assessment will be considered for further refinements before the R&T plan is finalized and approved.

The table on the lower right corner of this page provides an updated planning schedule, including opportunities for public input.



Ozark National Scenic Riverways Roads and Trails Management Plan Updated Planning Schedule and Opportunities to Provide Input

Milestone	Targeted Schedule	Opportunities for Public Input
Public Scoping	October 2015 — November 2015	Thank you for your input! The public scoping report was released in February 2016 and is available at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OZAR_RTplan
Analyze public comments and develop a range of preliminary alternatives (note: delay due to severe flooding within the park in April 2017)	Winter 2015 — Fall 2017	
Public review of the range of preliminary alternatives	November 17, 2017 — December 15, 2017	Review the preliminary alternatives newsletter and provide your comments at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OZAR_RTplan
Analyze public comments and prepare the draft roads and trails management plan / environmental assessment	Spring 2018 — Winter 2018	
Public review of the draft roads and trails management plan / environmental assessment	Spring 2019 — Summer 2019	Review the draft plan and provide your comments at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OZAR_RTplan
Analyze public comments and prepare and sign decision document	Fall 2019 — Winter 2019	Stay up-to-date on the planning process by visiting the website at: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OZAR_RTplan



Thank you for your interest in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways Roads and Trails Management Plan!