



Curecanti National Recreation Area
Colorado

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Motorized Vehicle Access Plan / Environmental Assessment

Curecanti National Recreation Area

INTRODUCTION

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Park Service (NPS) prepared a plan and environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate several alternatives and related environmental impacts for motorized vehicle access at Curecanti National Recreation Area. The Park Service has selected alternative C, Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan, which is also the preferred alternative in this *Motorized Vehicle Access Plan / Environmental Assessment* (plan/EA) and concludes that it will not have a significant effect on the human environment. This plan/EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will provide the administered lands of Curecanti National Recreation Area (Curecanti or the recreation area) with a consistent framework for protecting park resources while managing motorized vehicle access. Motorized vehicles must be regulated in a manner that is not only consistent with applicable law but also appropriately addresses natural and cultural resource protection, potential conflicts among the various users of the recreation area, and visitor and employee safety.

A motorized vehicle access plan for Curecanti is needed at this time to

- Comply with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989 regarding ORV use, and with NPS laws, regulations, and policies to minimize impacts to recreation area resources and values
- Protect natural and cultural resources and natural processes from potential effects of motorized vehicle access
- Establish an approved plan incorporating public input that provides access for appropriate recreational opportunities
- More appropriately define snowmobile use as it relates to travel below the high water line.

BACKGROUND

Blue Mesa Dam and Reservoir, Morrow Point Dam and Reservoir, and Crystal Dam and Reservoir make up the Curecanti Unit, one of the four main units of the Colorado River Storage Project authorized by the Colorado River Storage Project Act of April 11, 1956 (Public Law 84-485). Although the area managed by NPS is known as Curecanti National Recreation Area and is administered as part of the national park system, it has never been legislatively established by Congress. Instead, the park operates under the legislative authority of 16 USC 17j-2(b) as implemented through a memorandum of agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. To address this, in June 2007, NPS

Blue Mesa Reservoir but only between the high water line and water surface level for the purpose of fishing access and boat launching. In addition, the interim plan allows for motor vehicle use on power line access routes along the south shore of the reservoir. Snowmobile access is popular in the winter months. Per the regulations in 36 CFR 7.51(c), snowmobile use at the recreation area is limited to the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir and designated access routes. Currently, law enforcement personnel at the recreation area monitor motorized vehicle use by observation because the terrain allows for an open view of the reservoir, shoreline areas, and vehicle access routes.

The Park Service is concerned about the potential for damage to archaeological resources from vehicle operation during low water events. Motor vehicles can impact wildlife, habitat, native vegetation, and soils in addition to contributing to the spread of invasive species throughout the recreation area. Protection of these natural and cultural resources is a major component of this plan/EA.

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Three alternatives were evaluated in this plan/EA including alternative A, No Action; alternative B, Designate Motorized Vehicle Access Consistent with the 1997 General Management Plan; and alternative C, Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan.

Based on the EA, public comments, and information from other agencies and in consideration of the applicable authorities, the NPS has decided to implement alternative C, Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan, the preferred alternative.

Alternative C was selected because it fully meets all objectives of the plan, best retains traditional motorized vehicle access to recreational opportunities, and provides the highest level of protection for known and unknown cultural resources. A summary of environmental effects of all of the alternatives, as presented in the plan/EA, is provided in table 1 (attached).

Under alternative C, motorized vehicle use within the recreation area will be allowed only in areas designated as open, including routes and areas above and below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir, as shown in figure 1 (attached). However, this alternative would better preserve traditional access in areas above the high water line by making a minor amendment to the 1997 general management plan by creating a Semi-Primitive/Motorized zone. This zone will be applied to routes that have been traditionally used by the public in areas where such use is prohibited by management prescriptions of the 1997 general management plan. The zone will be linear in nature and will allow NPS to maintain traditional access to recreational opportunities within the park unit and on adjacent federal lands, where appropriate. For example, this new general management plan zone will allow for travel on the power line access and associated spur routes to the shoreline on the south side of Blue Mesa Reservoir. Approximately 29 miles of traditionally used routes will be open to public motorized vehicle access under alternative C, including approximately 4.9 miles that will be transferred to NPS as recommended by the 2008 RPS/EIS.

Mileage of Motorized Access Routes: All alternatives include approximately 4.9 miles of routes on BLM/U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands that would be transferred to NPS upon Congressional approval of the 2008 *Resource Protection Study*, which is currently pending. These existing routes will be open to motorized use under BLM/USFS travel management plans and connect to existing NPS routes; however, NPS management of these routes is contingent upon Congressional action.

MITIGATING MEASURES

Mitigating measures include:

- monitoring of vehicle routes and areas,
- enforcing rules and issuing violations with warnings, citations, or arrest if necessary,
- closures of routes and areas for the protection of resources,
- 15 mph speed limit,
- Eight foot, 6 inch wheel width (track requirement),
- and education and outreach to those using the routes and areas.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The plan/EA evaluated two other alternatives in addition to alternative C, the preferred alternative:

Alternative A – No-Action Alternative

Under the no-action alternative, the interim management plan and regulations would be formalized, and all motorized vehicle routes and areas not currently designated as closed to such use would remain open. This would include a total of approximately 61 miles of routes in areas throughout the park unit. In addition, all areas below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir would remain open to public motorized vehicle access, unless closed for resource concerns. This area totals approximately 8,239 acres, 7,280 of which are considered open but not traditionally used because of access limitations caused by terrain and reservoir level. All routes and areas currently open for administrative access would remain open and legal private access would be maintained. Appropriate snowmobile use and access would continue to be provided in accordance with the recreation area's existing rule, but there would be no specific routes for reaching the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir from existing designated access points. This alternative was not selected because it would not protect cultural resources below the high water line to the same extent as alternative C.

special concern, and visitor use and experience— outweighs these negative effects. These benefits and adverse impacts are summarized and contrasted in the following few paragraphs.

Alternative C would result in long-term beneficial effects as a result of closing 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes. Although alternative C will result in localized, long-term, negligible adverse effects on archeological resources along open routes and areas, closing 7,280 acres below the high water line to motor vehicle use that are not traditionally used will not affect archeological resources because no known sites are located in this area. Direct impacts to archeological resources could occur if motorized vehicles drive over and/or near archeological sites. Alternative C will result in potential impacts to eight sites within the Curecanti Archeological District, and one site at the Dickerson Pit along or near open routes and areas. Six sites will incur long-term minor adverse impacts from continued use of the route; two sites will see reduced adverse impacts (i.e., long-term minor beneficial impacts) as a result of partial closure of routes.

Because 7,280 acres below the high water line at Blue Mesa Reservoir not traditionally used due to difficult access will be officially closed to motorized vehicles, impacts to soils will be long-term beneficial along the closed routes, which will be allowed to recover or will be rehabilitated if funding is available. Establishing and enforcing vehicle width requirements and educating visitors about driving below the high water line will contribute to these beneficial impacts. Adverse impacts to soils will be short term and long term, moderate, and generally localized to areas open to motorized vehicle access. However, the impacts will occur in fewer areas, because 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes will be closed as compared to alternative A.

There will be long-term beneficial effects on paleontological resources as a result of closing 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes. Closing 7,280 acres below the high water line that are not traditionally used will not affect paleontological resources because none are in this area. However, there could be localized, long-term, negligible adverse effects on paleontological resources along open routes and areas.

Closing 7,280 acres below the high water line at Blue Mesa Reservoir will remove the potential for impacts to vegetation from motorized vehicle access in these areas. As a result, although these areas are not traditionally used, there will be long-term beneficial impacts to vegetation associated with closed routes and areas. Establishing and enforcing vehicle track width requirements and educating visitors about driving below the high water line will contribute to these beneficial impacts. Localized, short- and long-term, negligible to minor adverse impacts on vegetation could occur in areas open to motorized vehicles. However, the impacts will occur in fewer vegetation types, because 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes will be closed as compared to alternative A. These closed areas will be allowed to recover or will be rehabilitated if funding is available.

Official closure to motorized vehicles would occur for 7,280 acres located below the high water line at Blue Mesa Reservoir. This area is not traditionally used because of difficult access. As a result of the closure, there will be long-term beneficial impacts to wildlife and habitat along the closed routes, which will be allowed to recover or will be rehabilitated if funding is available. This will contribute to beneficial impacts by

remaining area below high water will be closed to vehicular use to protect known and unknown resources, including cultural sites. Pedestrian access will be permitted in these areas, outside of resource closures. Further discussion of protections afforded to these unique historic and cultural resources is presented in the plan/EA.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial

The recreation area used the best available information to thoroughly assess impacts to a wide range of natural and cultural resources in the plan/EA. The proposal to develop a comprehensive motor vehicle access plan for Curecanti National Recreation Area is publicly advantageous, because it retains traditional motorized vehicle access while providing protection to cultural resources; and the anticipated effects of such a plan are not expected to generate any controversy. No public response was received that indicates that there are any controversial environmental effects.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks

No highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks are associated with implementation of alternative C. The risks to the quality of the human environment associated with alternative C will be negligible.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration

As concluded in the plan/EA, alternative C will not have any significant environmental effects; nor will it set a precedent for future actions. The plan does not represent a decision in principle regarding the use of motorized vehicles in national park units, nor does the plan establish a precedent for the NPS to follow in crafting future plans for the management of motorized vehicle access in other park units. Servicewide, the impacts from management of motorized vehicle access are evaluated within the unique constraints and circumstances that exist within each park unit.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts

Cumulative effects were analyzed in the plan/EA and no significant cumulative impacts were identified.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources

No impacts to eligible or listed historic structures or districts will result from alternative C. Neither the D&RG Railroad Narrow Gauge Pratt Truss Bridge (listed in the National Register) nor the associated historic railroad cars (listed in or eligible for the National

also occur by allowing closed routes to recover or actively rehabilitating them if funding is available.

Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law

Alternative C violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws, as detailed in the plan/EA.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public was invited to comment during the initial public scoping for the plan/EA that ran from June 5, 2008 to July 11, 2008. During the scoping period, two public scoping open houses were held (June 24, 2008 and June 25, 2008) in Montrose and Gunnison, Colorado. Park staff and other NPS specialists were on hand to answer questions and provide additional information to meeting participants. Meetings were organized in a format that allowed the public to browse informational posters, interact with park staff, and listen to a brief presentation. The public was offered a variety of opportunities to provide feedback or submit questions, including flip charts, comment forms (and drop box), and pre-addressed comment forms for postal delivery. Participants were given information regarding the NPS web-based comment forum, Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC), and were encouraged to submit their comments electronically using this system. The addresses for submitting comments were printed on all news releases and the project brochures for the benefit of people who could not attend the open houses, but still wanted to provide comments.

Seven people attended public meetings (three in Montrose and four in Gunnison) and provided NPS with two pieces of correspondence. An additional seven pieces of correspondence were received by mail or electronically through PEPC and email.

After reviewing and categorizing all of the comments within each correspondence received during initial public scoping, 57 comments were identified and coded appropriately. Of these, 53 comments were considered substantive. The substantive comments received addressed alternative elements (including new alternatives or elements, separating visitor uses, providing educational/interpretation information, designating routes and areas to protect resources, temporary and seasonal closures, snowmobile access, restricting 'play areas', parking, and access for the mobility-impaired); reasonably foreseeable future cumulative actions; impacts from snowmobile use; and issues associated with natural resources, cultural resources, and visitor use.

Representatives from the following Tribes were consulted during development of this plan: Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray, and Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. No comments were received from Native American tribes.

The public scoping process continued with the release of an Alternatives Brochure on April 16, 2009. The brochure was available locally at the recreation area, on the recreation area's website (http://www.nps.gov/cure/parknews/orv_ea.htm), and on the NPS PEPC website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cure>). In addition, brochures were mailed to local agencies, government offices, organizations, local libraries, landowners,

threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

The preferred alternative does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Based on the foregoing, NPS has determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Approved:

John Wessels
John Wessels
Intermountain Regional Director

7/10/12
Date

ATTACHMENT 1

FIGURE 1.A: DESIGNATE MOTORIZED VEHICLE ACCESS AND AMEND 1997 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (PLATE A)

Map 6a - Alternative C: Designate Motorized Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend 1997 General Management Plan (Plate A)

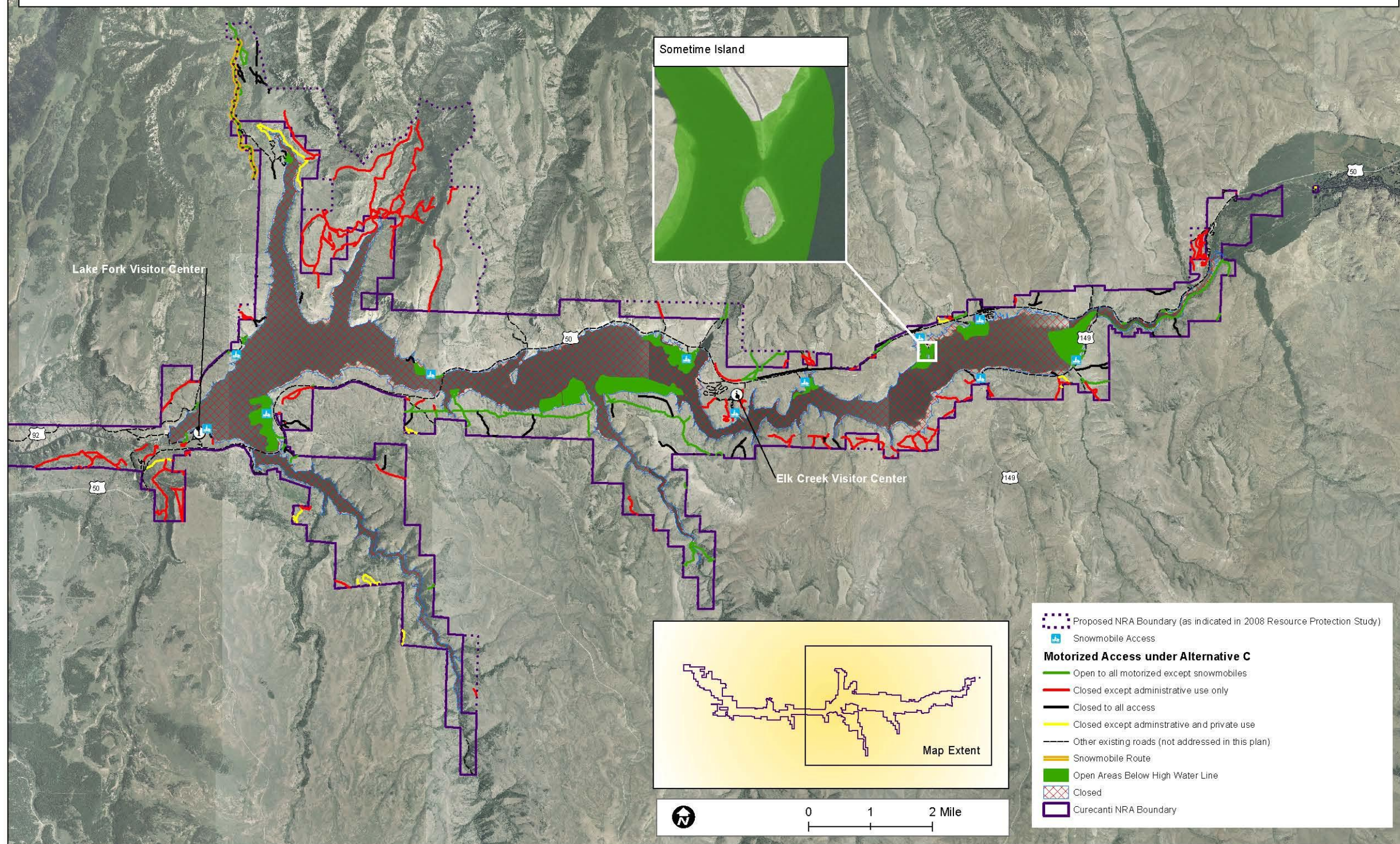
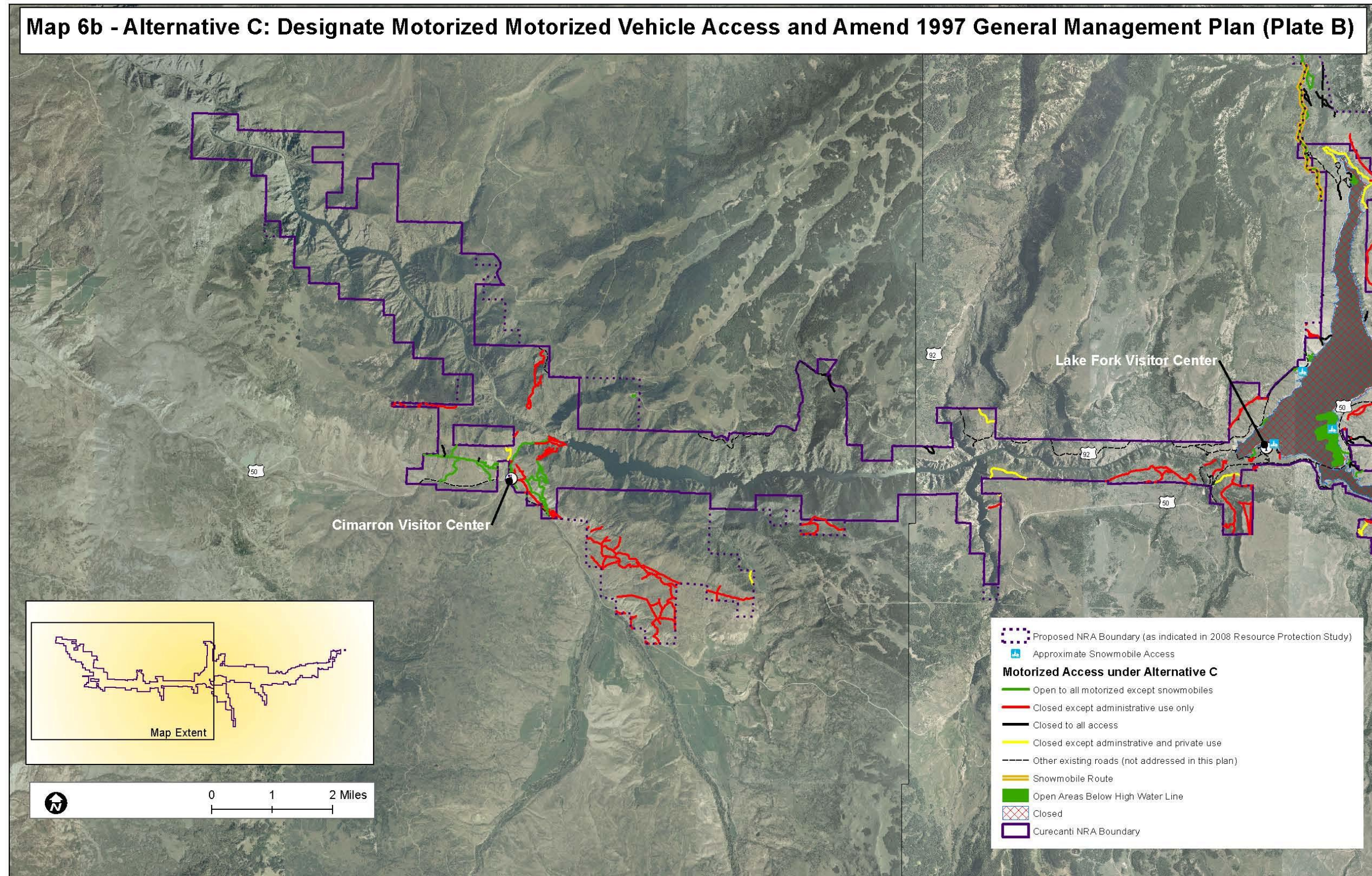


FIGURE 1.B:

DESIGNATE

MOTORIZED VEHICLE ACCESS AND AMEND 1997 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (PLATE B)

Map 6b - Alternative C: Designate Motorized Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend 1997 General Management Plan (Plate B)



APPENDIX A: NON-IMPAIRMENT DETERMINATION

In addition to determining the environmental consequences of implementing the preferred and other alternatives, *NPS Management Policies 2006* (NPS 2006a, section 1.4) requires analysis of potential effects to determine whether the preferred alternative would impair a park's resources and values. The preferred alternative for managing off-road motorized vehicle access at Curecanti National Recreation Area is alternative C.

The fundamental purpose of the national park system, established by the *Organic Act* and reaffirmed by the *General Authorities Act*, as amended, begins with a mandate to conserve park resources and values. National Park Service (NPS) managers must always seek ways to avoid, or to minimize to the greatest degree practicable, adverse impacts on park resources and values. However, the laws give the NPS the management discretion to allow impacts on park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purposes of the park. That discretion is limited by the statutory requirement that the NPS must leave resources and values unimpaired unless a particular law directly and specifically provides otherwise.

The prohibited impairment is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible NPS manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values [*NPS Management Policies 2006* (NPS 2006a)]. Whether an impact meets this definition depends on the particular resources that would be affected; the severity, duration, and timing of the impact; the direct and indirect effects of the impact; and the cumulative effects of the impact in question and other impacts.

An impact on any park resource or value may, but does not necessarily, constitute impairment. An impact would be more likely to constitute impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is

- necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park, or
- key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park, or
- identified in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents as being of significance.

An impact would be less likely to constitute impairment if it is an unavoidable result of an action necessary to preserve or restore the integrity of park resources or values and it cannot be further mitigated.

Impairment may result from visitor activities, NPS administrative activities, or activities undertaken by concessioners, contractors, and others operating in the park. Impairment may also result from sources or activities outside the park.

on a local or statewide level, for which the NPS has stewardship responsibility. Four sites would suffer long-term minor adverse impacts from continued use of the route, whereas there would be reduced adverse impacts (i.e., long-term minor beneficial impacts) at two sites as a result of partial closure of routes.

Despite some beneficial effects from other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, cumulative impacts to archeological resources would be minor to moderate and adverse (impacts would be noticeable to readily apparent, and would affect few resources over a scattered area). These impacts would be the result of recreation and management occurring on adjacent lands including ORV use on nearby U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, BLM resource management plans in the area, and energy development and mining. Actions within the park that have contributed to these impacts include development of recreational facilities, ongoing recreational use, livestock grazing, and other development within the park. Actions directly related to alternative C would not have measurable contributions to cumulative impacts on archeological resources.

There would be no impairment of archeological resources under alternative C because impacts, including cumulative effects, would affect only a few archeological resources. Additionally, these resources are spread throughout the recreation area, thereby dispersing and adverse impacts. There would be no change to the cultural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals. Additionally, there would be beneficial impacts to archeological impacts that would be protected under closures in the preferred alternative. Because long-term adverse impacts of the preferred alternative on archeological resources would be no greater than minor, and the contribution to overall adverse cumulative impacts would be limited, there would be no impairment of archeological resources under alternative C.

Historic Structures and Districts

The conservation of cultural resources is a specific aim documented in the 2008 *Resource Protection Study/EIS* (NPS 2008a), which applies directly to the protection of historic structures and districts.

The history of the Gunnison Valley is tied closely to the history of western Colorado. The Denver and Rio Grande (D&RG) Railroad, later renamed the Denver and Rio Grande Western (D&RGW) Railroad, was the most successful narrow gauge railroad to traverse the Rocky Mountains. The town of Gunnison served as a rail stop for supplying nearby mining towns such as Crested Butte and for the ranching communities in the Gunnison valley. Evidence of mining, ranching, and logging during the late 19th century, which coincides with construction associated with the D&RGW Railroad, exists at the recreation area.

The Narrow Gauge Pratt Truss Bridge of the earlier D&RG Railroad northeast of the historic town of Cimarron was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 as the last remaining structure representing the narrow gauge railroad. The Truss Bridge meets National Register criterion A for broad patterns of history and criterion C for engineering. The truss or steel deck span bridge was installed in 1891. The area of significance is

Use of routes proposed to be open under alternative C would have no impacts on potential cultural landscapes.

Effects from other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions would be negligible. These impacts would be the result of recreation and management occurring on adjacent lands including ORV use on nearby U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, BLM resource management plans in the area, and energy development and mining. Actions within the park that have contributed to these impacts include development of recreational facilities, ongoing recreational use, livestock grazing, and other development within the park.

There would be no impairment of cultural landscapes under alternative C because impacts, including cumulative effects, would be at the lowest levels of detection with neither adverse nor beneficial consequences. As a result, there would be no change to the integrity if the cultural landscapes of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.

Vegetation

Vegetation is a foundational component of the scenery and natural resources identified in the recreation area's significance statement. Most of the vegetation consists of sagebrush and native grasses with some hardwood tree and shrub species in the wetter drainage areas. Blue Mesa Reservoir is a deepwater impoundment with vegetative communities existing below the high water line composed primarily of herbaceous species that become inundated on a periodic basis when the reservoir fills. Established motorized vehicle access routes are generally devoid of vegetation due to use over the years. In addition, motorized vehicles can potentially impact native vegetation communities in the recreation area by spreading the seeds of invasive species. Invasive or noxious weeds present a potential threat to the ecosystems of national park units throughout the country and control or eradication of these species is often extremely difficult and expensive.

Under the preferred alternative, short-term and long-term, negligible to minor and adverse effects on vegetation would result from implementation of ORV management actions. Impacts would be short term below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir because of the seasonal fluctuations in reservoir levels. Impacts above the high water line would be long term because of the lengthy recovery period for vegetation found in arid environments. Under the preferred alternative, approximately 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes would be closed. Approximately 7,280 acres of area not traditionally used below the high water line would also be closed. Removing the potential for plant damage and loss associated with motorized vehicle access in aspen forest, Douglas-fir woodland/forest, canyon woodland, rock spirea sparsely vegetated rock outcrop, and wet herbaceous vegetation types would have long-term beneficial effects for these plant communities. Further, the NPS would establish and enforce vehicle track width requirements that would reduce the potential for motorized vehicles to have impacts on vegetation along existing routes that remain open. Vegetation would begin to recover as impacts from motorized vehicles were minimized. Closed areas would be allowed to recover or would be rehabilitated if funding is available. In addition, closing use areas

vehicle collisions and disturbance of those species that use the habitat at the shoreline edge. In addition, NPS would establish vehicle track width requirements that would reduce the potential for motorized vehicles to have impacts on wildlife habitat along existing routes that remain open.

Over the long term, benefits to wildlife would occur from closure of 32 miles of motorized access routes and approximately 7,280 acres of area below the high water line. Establishing and enforcing rules regarding motorized vehicle use in the recreation area would help reduce species mortality and disturbance, which would contribute to beneficial impacts. Beneficial effects would also result from educating visitors about vehicle-wildlife collisions, speed limits, and restricted areas within the park. These beneficial long-term impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat of alternative C would only slightly offset some of the adverse cumulative impacts from past, present, and future grazing, ORV use, and land development. As a result, overall cumulative effects would continue to be short term and long term, negligible to minor, and adverse.

There would be no impairment of wildlife or habitat under alternative C because species populations impacted by motorized vehicle access off roads would most likely recover from adverse impacts in less than a year, although it could take longer for impacted habitat to recover. Locally, along open routes and areas, habitat fragmentation would continue to be apparent and species mortality could occur, but overall, populations would remain stable in the recreation area. Additionally, closure of some routes and areas would benefit species. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of wildlife in the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.

Species of Special Concern

The species of special concern found in the recreation area include Gunnison sage-grouse and adobe thistle. Although closure of existing access routes could have long-term beneficial effects to both of these species, motorized vehicles can potentially introduce or spread invasive species with the potential to compete with adobe thistle. The operation of motorized vehicles has the potential to cause impacts to the Gunnison sage-grouse as a result of vehicle noise (contributing to disturbance or displacement); habitat damage caused by vehicle use off of established roads; or vehicle-wildlife collisions (causing injury or mortality).

Under the preferred alternative, impacts to Gunnison sage-grouse and adobe thistle would be long term, minor, localized, and adverse along open routes and areas. The impacts would result from motorized vehicle access in areas that support Gunnison sage-grouse or adobe thistle producing disturbance and displacement of individual Gunnison sage-grouse; potential vehicle collisions that could cause injury or mortality; habitat modification, destruction, and fragmentation; damage to plants; erosion, which can cause further loss of vegetation; effects on soil productivity that could affect natural recovery; and the potential for the introduction or spread of invasive plants, which can outcompete native vegetation.

Over the long term, benefits from closures would accrue to soils along the closed routes and below the high water line. Establishing and enforcing vehicle width requirements would reduce the potential for motorized vehicles to have impacts on soils outside existing routes, which would also contribute to beneficial impacts. Beneficial effects would also result from educating visitors about driving below the high water line, how to avoid getting stuck, and how to dig out without causing major soil damage. These beneficial long-term impacts on soils would only slightly offset some of the adverse cumulative impacts from past, present, and future grazing, ORV use, and land development. As a result, overall cumulative effects would continue to be short term and long term, moderate, and adverse.

There would be no impairment under alternative C because, although there would be readily apparent measurable disturbance to soils, impacts would be localized around existing routes and would not be severe in nature. Additionally, soil condition would improve where closures are in place. Impacts to soils below the high water line would be temporary in nature. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.

Paleontological Resources

The area surrounding and including Curecanti contains geologic formations from the Jurassic and Cretaceous Periods that have a strong potential for containing fossils of extinct life forms. They include dinosaurs, plants, fish, termites, crocodiles, turtles and maybe a few early mammals. One recent study resulted in the discovery of the remnants of a 140-million-year-old *Allosaurus* within the recreation area (NPS 2008a). A 2005 paleontological survey resulted in six genera of dinosaurs tentatively identified in the recreation area (NPS 2008b). A strong possibility exists that similar fossil evidence will be found at the recreation area. Because these sensitive paleontological resources are known to exist along the shorelines of the reservoirs, they are potentially susceptible to impacts from motorized vehicle use in these areas. Under the preferred alternative, a negligible level of long-term adverse effects on paleontological resources would result from implementation of ORV management actions. Direct impacts to paleontological resources could occur if motorized vehicles drive over and/or near paleontological sites. Therefore, some fossils could be lost due to a medium probability of impact from ground-disturbing activities associated with motorized vehicle access. Some of the 32 miles of routes that are closed under this alternative are near paleontological sites. The closing of these previously open routes would limit the areas in which motorized vehicles are authorized to travel. As a result, visitors would be less likely to drive over paleontological resources, which could break or exposed the paleontological resources.

Over the long term, there would also be beneficial effects as a result of closing 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes. Alternative C would ultimately protect paleontological resources by reducing the level of disturbance from ORV use. Although cumulative impacts to paleontological resources would be minor to moderate and adverse (impacts would be noticeable to readily apparent, and would affect some fossils over a relatively large area) from actions such as ORV use on nearby lands and development and grazing within the

CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

MOTORIZED VEHICLE ACCESS PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

ERRATA

The following changes were made to the *Motorized Vehicle Access Plan Environmental Assessment* for Curecanti National Recreation Area (October 2010) to correct minor statements of fact and update information. The changes described here were made as a result of public review of the document. Additions are shown with underline text, and deletions with strikethrough text.

CHAPTER 2

Elements Common to All Alternatives, Monitoring and Enforcement (page 41).

The following change was made to more accurately reflect when condition assessments would be conducted on cultural sites.

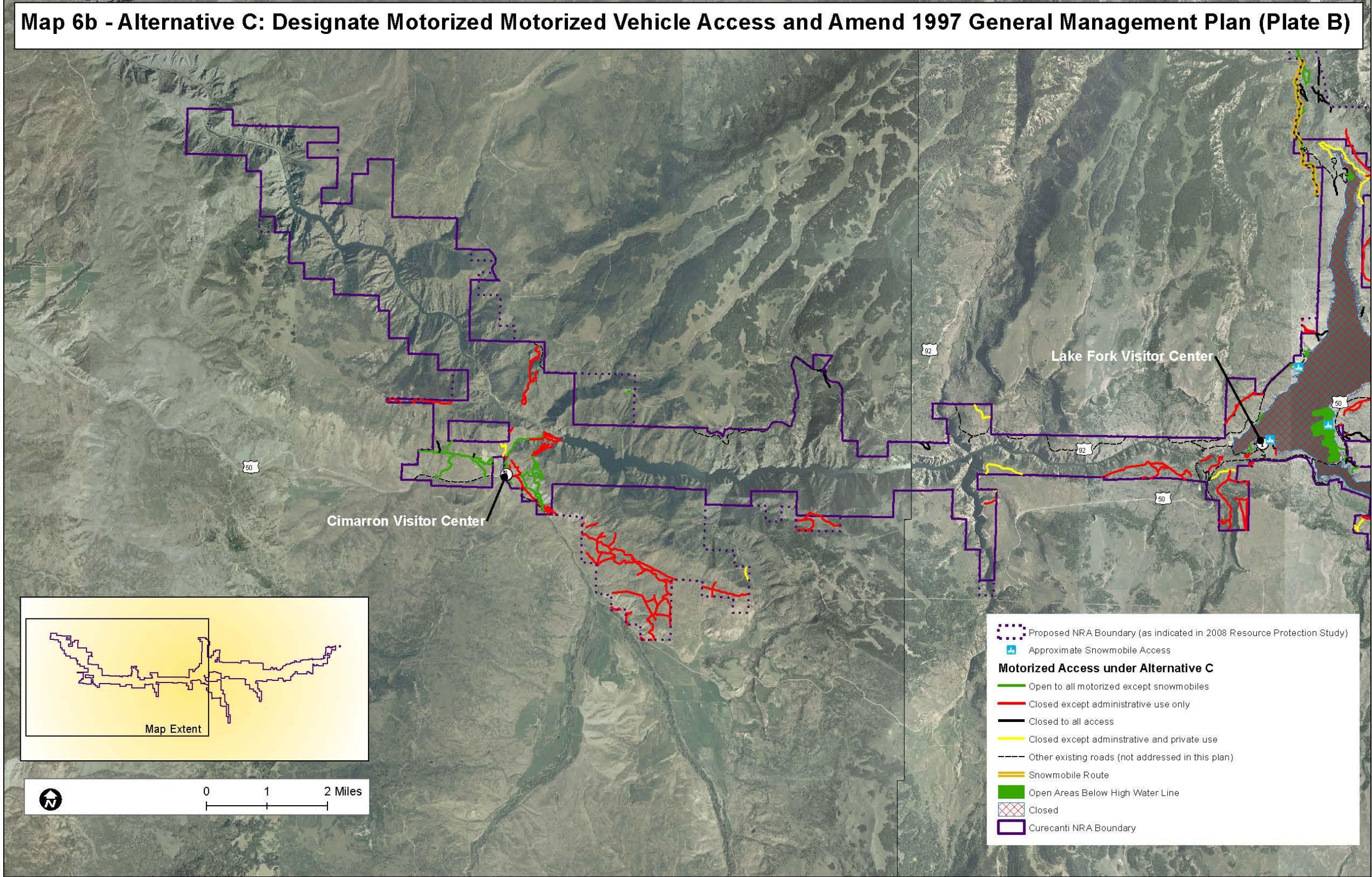
Monitoring/Enforcement: Per the interim management plan, all areas within Curecanti National Recreation Area would continue to be routinely monitored by law enforcement rangers as part of existing resource protection and education programs. Motorized vehicle access would be closely monitored and violations would be addressed with verbal warnings, citations, or arrest, especially during periods of seasonal closures pursuant to 36 CFR 1.5. Vehicle tracks in unauthorized areas would be promptly mitigated to avoid repetitive use by others. Traffic counters would be used to gauge vehicle use and visitation. Condition assessments would be conducted to determine what routes, if any, need maintenance because they have become impassable. Condition assessments would be conducted for cultural sites every 5 to 15 years, or when lake levels allow, and would provide information for resource management decisions related to motorized vehicle access.

Elements Common to All Alternatives, Mileage of Motorized Access Routes (page 42).

The following editorial change was made in the discussion of motorized access routes.

Mileage of Motorized Access Routes: All alternatives include approximately 4.9 miles of routes on BLM/USFS lands ~~to that would~~ be transferred to NPS upon Congressional approval of the 2008 Resource Protection Study, which is currently pending. These existing routes would be open to motorized use under BLM/USFS travel management plans and connect to existing NPS routes; however, NPS management of these routes is contingent upon ~~speculative due to the requirement~~ for Congressional action.

MOTORIZED VEHICLE ACCESS AND AMEND 1997 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (PLATE B)



Map 6a - Alternative C: Designate Motorized Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend 1997 General Management Plan (Plate A)

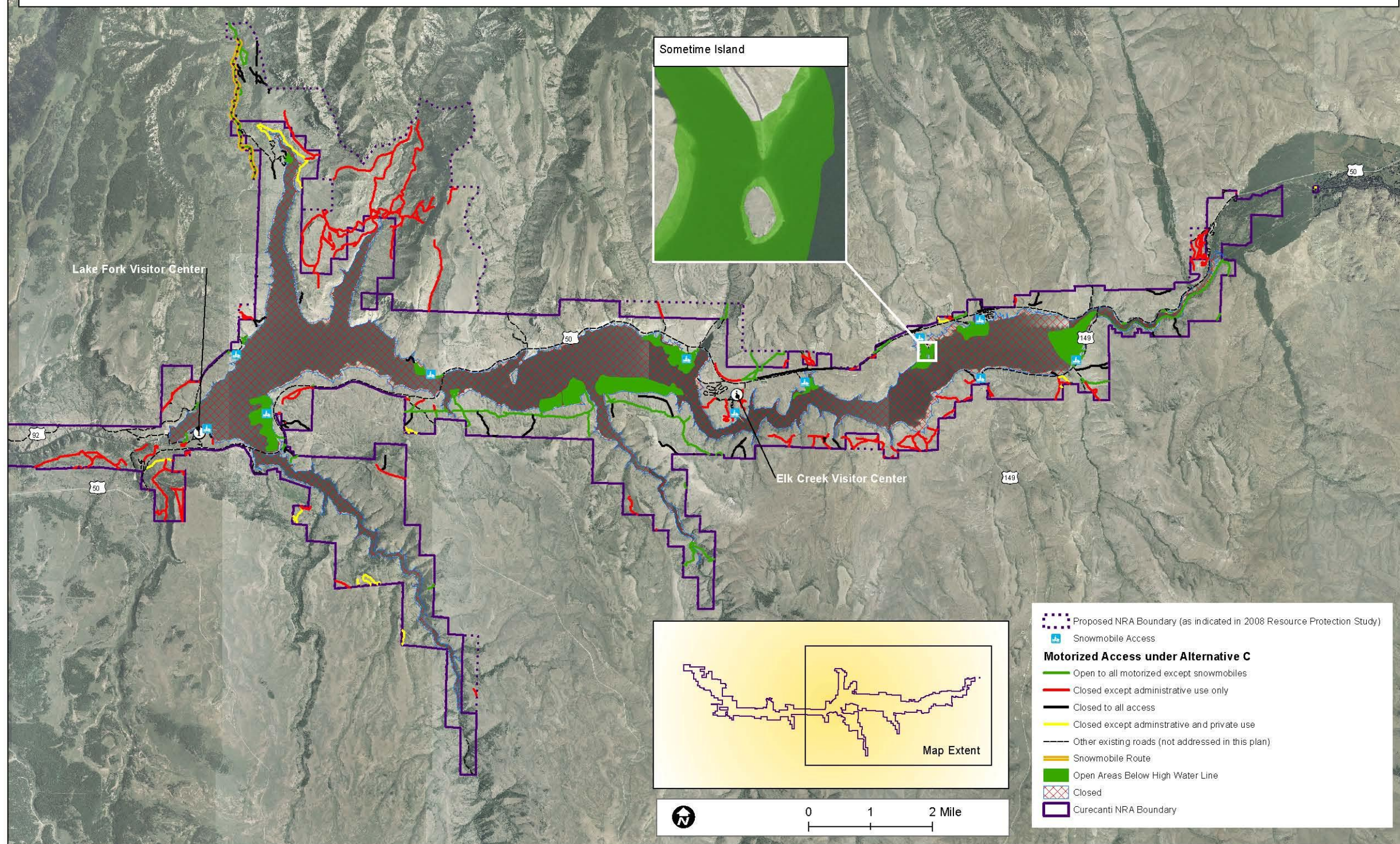


FIGURE 1.B:

DESIGNATE

ATTACHMENT 1

FIGURE 1.A: DESIGNATE MOTORIZED VEHICLE ACCESS AND AMEND 1997 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (PLATE A)