



Walnut Canyon Study Area Special Study

Issue 2
April 2011

Coconino National Forest / Walnut Canyon National Monument Management Options Special Study

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the National Park Service (NPS), together with the City of Flagstaff and Coconino County, are conducting a congressionally mandated special study to explore management options for approximately 30,000 acres of land surrounding Walnut

Canyon National Monument. These lands in the study area are presently administered primarily by Coconino National Forest, but the overall study area boundary encompasses three sections and one partial section of State Trust Land and some privately owned lands.

The Special Study Process Includes:

Step	Status
Phase I of public involvement	Completed Summer 2010
Public Comment Summary from Phase I	Available on project Web site
Engagement with stakeholders, tribes, and other agencies	Ongoing
Examination of resources, current uses, management actions, and direction	Data collection near completion
Development and evaluation of preliminary management options	Workshop conducted with agency representative March 2011
Phase II of public and stakeholder engagement	Current Step – see Back Cover
Detailed analysis of management options	Winter 2011
Public/Stakeholder Review of Draft Special Study Report	Winter 2011
Finalize Special Study Report	Spring 2012
Submit report to Secretary's of Agriculture and the Interior	Summer 2012

The final special study report will include:

- A description of feasible management options.
- Analysis of management options and their tradeoffs on resources, recreational opportunities, social values, and local economic resources, social, and economic values.
- Public comment summary.

The Forest Service and the National Park Service will not make recommendations in this study report. The report will be sent to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretaries may forward the report's findings, along with any recommendations they may have, to Congress.

Contents

The Special Study Process	1
Management Options Workshop	2
Questions Discussed During Workshop	2
Options for Federally Managed Lands	3
Continued Management Under Forest Service	3
Management Under the National Park Service	4
Special Management Designation	6
Focused Congressional Legislation	6
Options for Arizona State Trust Lands	7
Public Meetings Schedule	8



Management Options Workshop

Representatives of Coconino National Forest, Walnut Canyon National Monument, the City of Flagstaff, Coconino County, and the Arizona State Trust recently participated in a two-day workshop to develop preliminary management options per the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (Act). The Act directs the agencies to look at options that: (1) protect resources within the study area; and (2) provide for continued public access to, and use of, the study area.

The workshop objectives were to:

- Establish a common knowledge base of existing resources, uses, and management of the study area.
- Develop a list of management options for the study area based on this knowledge base, public input, preliminary research on land designation options, and discussions among the agencies.
- Discuss the merits and tradeoffs of each of the preliminary management options.



Questions Discussed During Workshop

- At what level of government (local, state, Congress) would future land management decisions be made?
- Protect resources from development – Does development include wind farms, utilities and infrastructure, residential and commercial development, recreational facilities, and/or commercial services?
- Are public concerns regarding current management by the Forest Service about land exchanges or land disposal? Land could be exchanged to acquire lands within the study area boundary. Or is this concern about land within the study area being transferred out of federal control?
- What happens if the community wants development in the future for the tax base, residential, infrastructure, or energy development?
- Maintain use and access of the study area – Does this include all uses and access, and at current levels? Given the dynamic nature of land management, of recreation demands and levels of use, and the various factors that affect use and access, how would carrying capacity issues and user conflicts be addressed?
- Are the current study area boundaries appropriate? The study area currently includes the Flagstaff City Water Treatment Plant (special-use permit), private inholdings, and State Trust Lands.
- Arizona State Lands – Held in trust for the beneficiaries, including public education. Different mission – to maximize returns for the beneficiaries. Some of the lands are valuable from a development perspective.

The next few pages summarize the preliminary management options developed at the workshop.

Options for Federally Managed Lands

1. Continued Management Under the U.S. Forest Service — Coconino National Forest

The Forest Service currently manages the majority of the land within the study area boundary. The area contains a number of special-status species, wildlife, and cultural resources. Forest Service management balances resource protection with the multiple-use mission. Recent management projects in the area include: closing areas to firearms discharge and motorized vehicles, and conducting approximately 1,000 acres of thinning/fire fuels reduction projects (with thousands of additional acres planned, but still to be implemented). The study area includes water wells and water lines for the city of Flagstaff. There are also numerous stock tanks in the area with water rights claims pending adjudication. Grazing is allowed, and portions of three grazing allotments are within the study area.

Recreational activities include camping, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, rock climbing, and hunting. Recreational facilities include: Canyon Vista Campground (concessioner operated), the Arizona Trail, several trails connecting to the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS), and Fisher Point. Approximately 32 miles of USFS-managed hiking, biking, and equestrian trails, including the Campbell Mesa trail system and an approximately 8-mile segment of the future Flagstaff Loop Trail, will be within the study area.

The Coconino National Forest Management Plan states that no land exchanges will occur unless the purpose is **to acquire land within** management area 37 (MA 37) through exchange of lands of national forest elsewhere. This means that the Forest Service may possibly trade lands elsewhere to acquire inholdings within MA 37, but that no USFS lands within MA 37 would be

exchanged in order to acquire lands or resource interests outside MA 37. This is the strongest management policy that can be made at the local Forest Service level. Although a future change in policy is technically possible, once such a policy is adopted, future changes are unlikely and could only be implemented through a management action subject to public involvement. Final decisions regarding changes to the Forest Plan, after public involvement, are under the authority of the forest supervisor, while actual land exchanges can only be authorized at a higher level, by the regional forester. Anything more restrictive with respect to limitations on land exchanges or disposal would require congressional action.

Under Forest Service management:

- Access is virtually anywhere along the boundary, and at this time, free.
- Multiple use is supported.
- Management plans and actions balance resource protections with use.
- Land exchange is used as a tool for multiple purposes and the majority of the time it is used to acquire parcels of high value from a resource perspective and bring those into the national forest system, or to make small logical boundary realignments. This decision stays at the local level.
- Cannot trade for State Trust Lands.
- Forest Service can accept donated land.



2. Management Under the National Park Service

Absent direct congressional action, areas considered for addition to the national park system must possess nationally significant natural, cultural, or recreational resources; be a suitable and feasible addition to the system; and require direct NPS management instead of protection by some other governmental agency or by the private sector.

The National Park Service has established criteria for national significance, suitability, feasibility, and management alternatives. A proposed unit will be considered nationally significant if it meets all four of the following standards:

- It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource.
- It possesses exceptional value, illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage.
- It offers superlative opportunities for recreation, for public use and enjoyment, or for scientific study.
- It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of the resource.

To be suitable for inclusion in the system, an area must represent a natural or cultural theme or type of recreational resource that is not already adequately represented in the national park system or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity.

At this time, the National Park Service is completing resource surveys and their required analysis on national significance; therefore, the viability of these options has not been determined.

A. New Unit of the National Park Service

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area's natural systems and/or historic settings must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resources and to accommodate public use.

The National Park Service is responsible for managing areas to provide for public enjoyment in a way that will

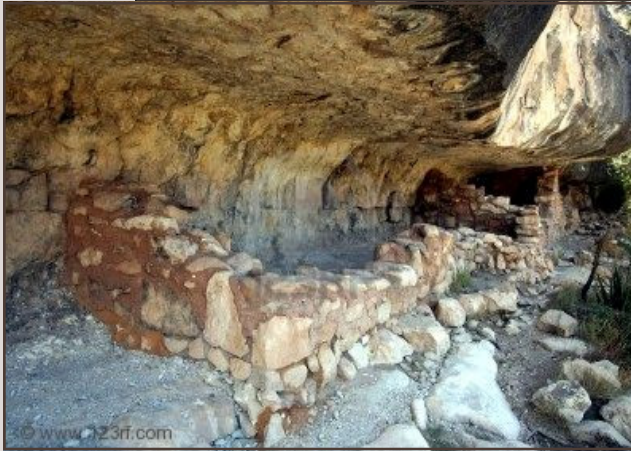
leave resources "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." National Park Service designations that may be appropriate for the study area include:

- National Park: are generally large natural areas having a wide variety of attributes, at times including significant historic assets. Hunting, mining, and consumptive activities are not authorized.
- National Monument: are generally landmarks, structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest situated on lands owned or controlled by the government.
- National Preserve: are areas having characteristics associated with national parks, but in which Congress has permitted continued public hunting, trapping, oil and gas exploration, and extraction.
- National Recreation Area: twelve NRAs in the system are centered on large reservoirs and emphasize water-based recreation. Five other NRAs are near major population centers. Such urban parks combine scarce open spaces with the preservation of significant historic resources, and important natural areas in locations that can provide outdoor recreation for large numbers of people.

B. Boundary Adjustment to the Existing Walnut Canyon National Monument

A boundary adjustment can be made to an existing park system unit. A boundary adjustment study is usually appropriate only when the resources being considered are directly related to the purposes of an existing unit of the national park system. The boundary of a national park may be modified only as authorized by law. For many parks, such statutory authority is included in the enabling legislation or subsequent legislation that specifically authorizes a boundary revision.

The National Park Service identifies and evaluates boundary adjustments that may be necessary or desirable for carrying out the purposes of the park system unit. Boundary adjustments may be recommended to:



Walnut Canyon Ruins

2. Management Under the National Park Service (continued)

- Protect significant resources and values, or to enhance opportunities for public enjoyment related to park purposes.
- Address operational and management issues such as the need for access or the need for boundaries to correspond to logical boundary delineations such as topographic or other natural features or roads.
- Otherwise protect park resources that are critical to fulfilling park purposes (NPS *Management Policies* 2006).

All recommendations for boundary changes must meet the following two criteria:

- The added lands will be feasible to administer considering their size, configuration, and ownership; costs; the views of and impacts on local communities and surrounding jurisdictions; and other factors such as the presence of hazardous substances or nonnative species.
- Other alternatives for management and resource protection are not adequate.

Under National Park Service Management:

- The lands within the national park system unit boundary are generally preserved for future generations.
- Land exchange would require an act of Congress.
- More access control (more limited access), relative to current conditions.
- Higher resource protection goals; therefore, could be more limits on use.
- Cannot accept land donation, unless the land is already within the congressionally established boundary of the park system unit.
- A boundary adjustment would likely include only a portion of the study area.

“The park purpose for Walnut Canyon is to protect ancient cliff dwellings and associated resources that are of great ethnographic, scientific, and educational interest, and to properly care for and manage the cultural and natural resources of historic, social, and scientific interest within Walnut Canyon National Monument” (Walnut Canyon National Monument GMP 2007).

3. Special Management Designation

Congress can designate “special management areas” within the national forest system. Nearly one hundred of these special management areas have been established on federal lands. The legislation establishing each special management area is unique, but the designations generally fall into the following categories: national monuments, game refuges, scenic areas, recreation areas, and other protected areas.

Legislation establishing the special management areas asserts the importance of the area. While most acts creating special management areas express similar purposes for designation, there are subtle differences between designation types. For example, the preservation of scenic and natural resources is prioritized in the designation of scenic and other protected areas. Recreation is protected, but not prioritized. On the other hand, legislation setting aside recreation areas usually includes specific provisions to protect appropriate recreational uses within the area while also asserting resource protections. In each case, when Congress withdraws the lands comprising the special management area, it does not usually provide explicit language (but can) barring the Forest Service from exchanging lands. Most of the focus is on the

legislative provision to consolidate lands within the special management area. Even if the legislation was silent on this issue, an area’s specific land management plan may outline the circumstances for retention or exchange of land within or adjacent to the area’s boundary.

The most likely special management designation for the lands considered in this study area are “National Conservation Area,” “National Scenic Area,” and “National Recreation Area.”

A special management designation could address the following issues:

- Land acquisition/disposal/exchange – could raise this action to requiring an act of Congress if language is contained in enabling legislation. This could preclude land exchanges that are deemed necessary to meet local goals.
- Would not change status of State Trust Lands.
- The public could provide input into the language contained in the enabling legislation, but it is ultimately written by Congress.



4. Focused Congressional Legislation

Congress could write legislation for focused specifications for land management, i.e., restriction on land disposal. No concrete examples for this scenario were discovered during the research phase of this study.

Congressional restrictions could:

- Land disposal — could raise this action to requiring an act of Congress if language is in enabling legislation. This could preclude land exchanges that are deemed necessary to meet local goals.
- Would not change the status of State Trust Lands.
- The public could provide input into what the legislative specifications contain, but it is ultimately written by Congress.

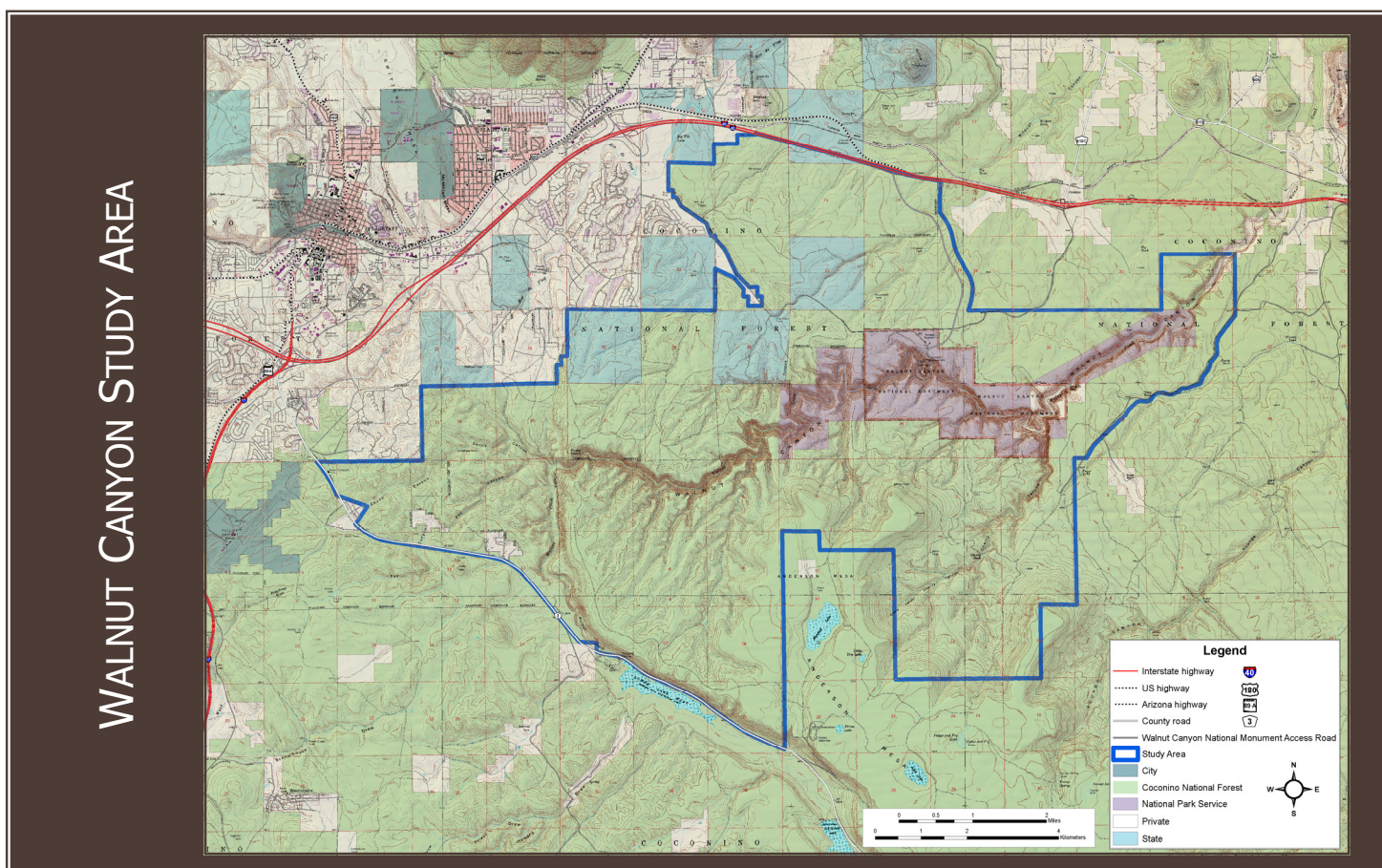
Options for Arizona State Trust Lands

Arizona State Trust Lands within Study Area Boundary – Sections 22, 28, and a Portion of 10

The Arizona State Land Department is the Trustee for over 9 million acres of State Trust Land. Its mission is to manage these lands to maximize revenues for its 13 beneficiaries, a fact that distinguishes it from the way public lands, such as parks or national forests, may be used. While public use of trust land is not prohibited, it is regulated to ensure compensation to the beneficiaries for its use and protection of the land. The department cannot exchange lands, but it can, however, sell or lease lands at auction. The value of Trust land is established by appraisal and approved by the State Land Department Board of Appeals. The Land Department would work cooperatively with the federal government in its acquisition of State Trust Land, and for an agreement on the appraised value.

Arizona State Trust Lands Adjacent to and Within the Study Area Boundary – Sections 20 and 30

Sections 20 (adjacent to) and 30 (within) the study area boundary have high development potential due to their location and proximity to infrastructure. The Arizona State Land Department as Trustee would consider allocating portions of these sections for a buffer along the eastern and southern boundaries within each section. Sections 20 and 30 may be disposed of at the allowed density at the time of auction, with a conservation easement as a requirement of sale. This would add value to each section and the adjoining land, and be consistent with the Trust's mission. The county and city are currently updating the regional plan and are looking at the State Trust Lands to meet their needs.



Participate in the Study!

Public Meetings and 60-day Public Outreach Period : May 10 — July 10, 2011

Your input will continue to play an important role in this special study. We look forward to hearing from you. Please attend an Open House and share your

ideas and comments. A brief presentation will be conducted at 5:30 p.m. at each of the meetings.

Comments will be accepted through July 10, 2011. Please attend an Open House and share your ideas, concerns, and comments.

Date	Location	Address	Time
May 23, 2011	Flagstaff City Hall Chambers	211 West Aspen Avenue	4:00 – 7:00 p.m.
May 24, 2011	Sinagua High School – Commons	3950 East Butler Avenue	4:00 – 7:00 p.m.
May 26, 2011	Cromer Elementary School – Commons	7150 Silver Saddle Road	4:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Throughout the Special Study, information will be posted online (<http://www.walnutcanyonstudy.org>).

HDR, Inc.

ATTN: Walnut Canyon Study Area Special Study

9563 South Kingston Court, Suite 200

Englewood, CO 80112