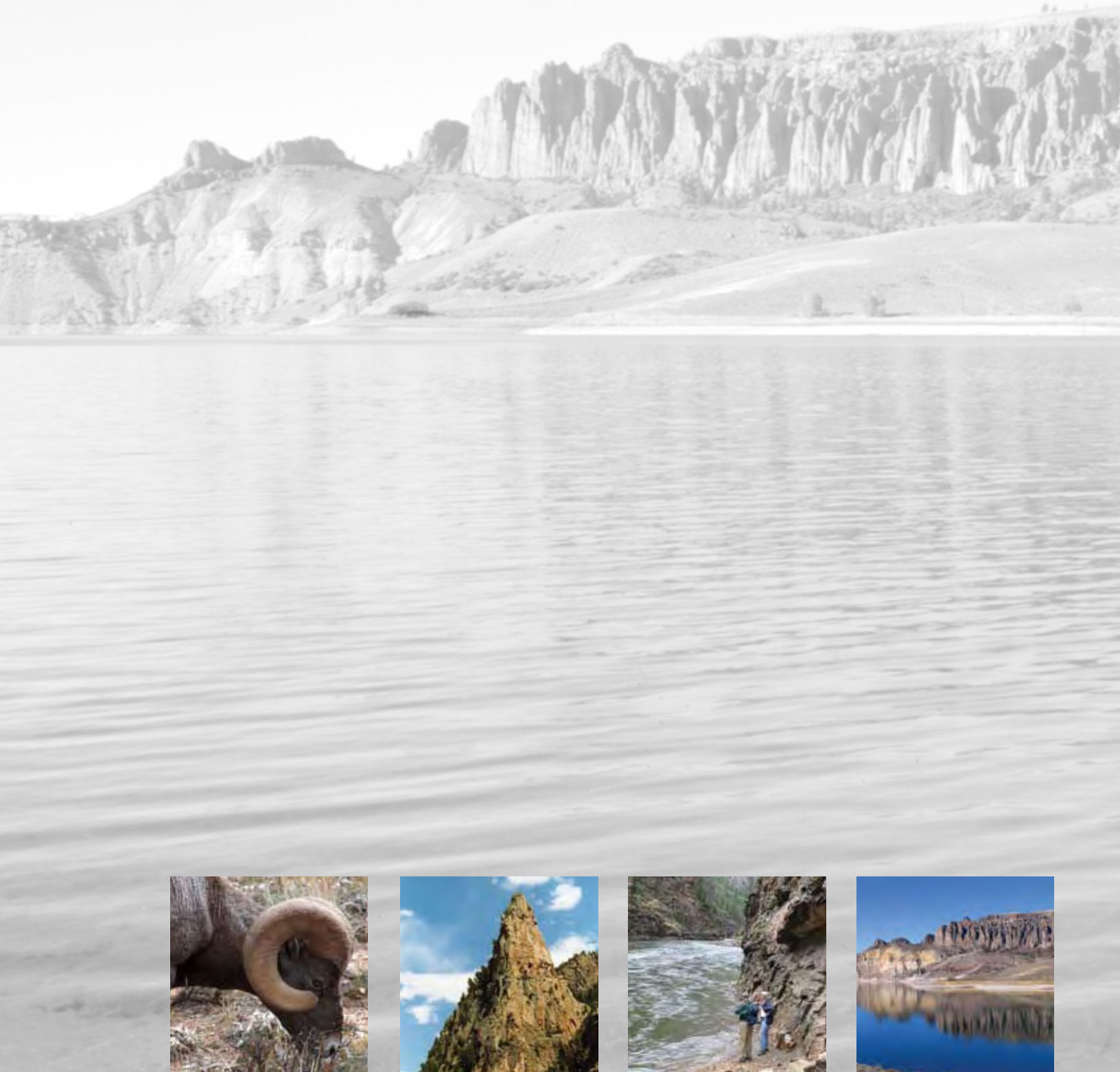


Chapter 2: Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action



ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

In response to the second and third requirements of the Resource Protection Study (RPS) congressional mandate, the study team evaluated a range of alternatives, and identified a variety of tools for conserving the important resources identified within the study area that were described under “Data Collection and Analysis” in the Purpose of and Need for Action chapter. The alternatives focus on the following seven elements.

- National Recreation Area Designation and Boundary
- Resource Conservation
- National Recreation Area Management
- Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Operations
- Other Agency Operations

- Joint Agency Management Effort (JAME)
- Estimated Costs, Staffing Requirements, and Implementation Strategy

With regards to the NRA boundary, some preliminary background information will help to describe how the alternatives were developed. Numerous alternatives were considered for adjusting the boundary that currently surrounds the NRA, to include additional lands within the NRA that were thought to be necessary and appropriate for resource conservation, as well as visitor use and enjoyment, in keeping with the mission and management goals of the NRA and the purposes of this study. In some areas, land was considered for exclusion from the NRA. Collective knowledge about Curecanti NRA, its resources, and its visitors that was gained from numerous sources throughout the study influenced the development of the boundary scenarios. Those sources included public scoping (information gathering) and workshops (including the photo assessment project); meetings with other agencies, county planners, and local, state, and federal officials;



Curecanti Needle on Morrow Point Reservoir—The National Recreation Area’s most famous geological landmark

For both alternatives in the Draft RPS/EIS, the Bureau of Reclamation and Western Area Power Administration (Western) would continue their administrative jurisdiction and responsibilities within and adjacent to the national recreation area, including construction, operations, maintenance, replacement, and additions, consistent with Reclamation law, and other applicable laws and regulations. Formal establishment of the area as an NRA under Alternative 2 would not amend or supplement existing Reclamation law applicable to the Aspinall Unit or the Uncompahgre Project. Reclamation, Western, and the National Park Service would consult with each other as necessary and appropriate. Thus, there would be no adverse impacts to Reclamation and Western responsibilities under either alternative.

meetings with surrounding private landowners; and workshops with the NRA staff.

The preliminary boundary scenarios were based on criteria that focused on important resources within the study area that were identified during the data collection and analysis phase of the study. The criteria also included enhanced visitor understanding of significant resources, expanded land-based recreational opportunities, and administrative or managerial efficiencies that could be realized through the transfer of lands among the agencies. The criteria included the following items.

- Administrative Efficiency
- Archeological/Historical Sites
- Bighorn Sheep – Overall Range
- Elk – Severe Winter Range
- Gunnison Sage-grouse (all categories)
- Heron Rookery
- Historic Railroad Feature
- Lynx, Potential Habitat
- Management Issues/Logical Boundary
- Mule Deer – Severe Winter Range
- Paleontology/Geology
- Prairie Dog – Overall Range
- Pronghorn – Winter Range
- Raptor Range
- Rare and/or Imperiled Species

- Recreation Opportunities
- Scenic Qualities from Primary Overlook, or within 3-Mile Viewshed
- Understanding of Significant Resources
- Water Quality.

The various boundary scenarios were assessed at an “Impacts” workshop. The impacts of some of the scenarios were so similar to each other, that the scenarios were not considered further. Some of the scenarios were considered impractical and/or unfeasible to implement, and were not considered further. In addition, the study team strongly considered one of the concerns that had been expressed throughout the project — that NPS should not propose anything in the study that would be forced upon private landowners against their will or desires, or that would intrude upon their property rights. Furthermore, some landowners opposed any boundary being drawn around their property to include them within a future NRA, even though they would be able to retain their property rights. These concerns strongly influenced the selection of the Proposed Action, and the dismissal from detailed consideration of some alternatives that had initially been considered.

Ultimately, the study team came to the conclusion that besides the No-Action alternative (Continuation of Existing Conditions), one other boundary scenario was considered to be reasonable, and, therefore, is fully assessed in the Environmental

Consequences chapter. That scenario is presented as Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action). The other boundary scenarios are described, along with the reasons for elimination, near the end of this chapter under the “Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Assessment” section.

For purposes of analysis during the development of alternatives, the public and private lands outside the existing NRA that were considered most important for conservation for NRA purposes, were grouped into eight “land units” according to geographical location, similarity of resource values, reasonably foreseeable activities, and land ownership. The land units are identified by the letters A through H, are shown on the map for Alternative 2, and are referenced throughout the Draft RPS/EIS. They consist of two types of land: (1) privately owned land within the Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) – Land Units A, C, D, E, and G; and (2) non-NPS agency lands that are included within the proposed NRA boundary shown in Alternative 2 – Land Units B, F, and H. Briefly defined, the COA consists of identified private land surrounding the NRA, in which the National Park Service would be authorized by Congress to work with willing landowners to conserve resources, including acquiring agreed-upon interests in land. The COA is described in more detail later in the discussion of Alternative 2, under the subheading of “Resource Conservation.”

The land units are defined below:

- Land Unit A (CO 92 COA): private lands north and south of Colorado State Highway 92 (CO 92) and Morrow Point Reservoir, including Black Mesa, Soap Mesa, Soap Creek, and Fitzpatrick Mesa
- Land Unit B (Blue Mesa Reservoir Agency): agency lands from Soap Creek east to Beaver Creek, including Dillon Pinnacles, Blue Mesa north and south shores, and Gunnison River Canyon
- Land Unit C (Gunnison River COA): private lands in the vicinity of Neversink and Riverway
- Land Unit D (Iola Basin COA): private lands in Iola Basin, and South Gunnison River Canyon
- Land Unit E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA): private lands in the vicinity of Sapinero Mesa, and Windy Point to Hunters Point
- Land Unit F (Gateview Agency): agency lands in the vicinity of Gateview Campground
- Land Unit G (West-End COA): private lands west of Fitzpatrick Mesa on the south side of Crystal Reservoir, and the area around Spring Gulch on the north side of Crystal Reservoir
- Land Unit H (West-End Agency): agency lands north and south of Crystal and Morrow Point Reservoirs

Collectively, all the land units comprise the “proposed lands” for Alternative 2, consisting of public lands recommended for addition to the NRA (the agency lands); and the lands recommended for inclusion in a COA (the private lands).

The criteria that were used to determine what land surrounding the existing NRA warranted conservation for NRA purposes are shown in Table 2 for each land unit. If a resource or other criterion occurs within a given land unit, it is identified by a dot in the matrix. If the dot is highlighted in yellow, the associated criterion is considered to be a primary reason for the inclusion of the land unit within the proposed NRA boundary or the COA. More detailed descriptions of specific resources, including their significance in the Curecanti region, are provided in the Affected Environment chapter.

The appropriateness of including additional public and private lands within an expanded NRA was evaluated according to NPS *Management Policies 2006*: Section 3.5 – Boundary Adjustments, including criteria for boundary adjustments. These criteria

TABLE 2: FACTORS CONSIDERED IN ESTABLISHING LAND UNITS

Criteria	Land Unit							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	CO 92 COA	Blue Mesa Reservoir Agency	Gunnison River COA	Iola Basin COA	Sapinero /Blue Mesa COA	Gateview Agency	West-End COA	West-End Agency
Administrative Efficiency	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Archeological/Historical Sites	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Bighorn Sheep – Overall Range	•	•			•	•	•	•
Elk – Severe Winter Range	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Gunnison Sage-grouse (all categories)		•	•	•	•	•		
Heron Rookery			•					
Historic Railroad Feature			•			•	•	
Lynx – Potential Habitat	•	•			•	•		•
Management Issues / Logical Boundary	•	•	•	•	•			•
Mule Deer – Severe Winter Range	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
Paleontology/Geology	•	•			•			•
Prairie Dog – Overall Range			•	•				•
Pronghorn – Winter Range		•		•				
Raptor Range	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Rare and/or Imperiled Species	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Recreation Opportunities	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Scenic Qualities from Primary Overlook or within 3-mile Viewshed	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Understanding of Significant Resources	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Water Quality	•	•	•	•		•	•	•

Notes:

A dot indicates the criterion is present within the land unit.

The addition of **yellow highlighting** indicates that not only is the criterion present, but it is of such significance, in combination with the other criteria present, to recommend that the land unit be included within the COA or proposed NRA boundary in Alternative 2.

identify when boundary adjustments may be recommended in order to carry out the purposes of the NRA. Boundary adjustments may be recommended to:

- Protect significant resources and values, or to enhance opportunities for public enjoyment related to NRA 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 NRA resources that are important to fulfilling NRA purposes.

Further, if the acquisition would be made using appropriated funds, and is not merely a technical boundary revision, the criteria set forth by Congress at 16 USC 4601-9(c)(2) must be met. All recommendations for boundary changes must meet the following two criteria:

- The added lands would 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 exotic species
- Other alternatives for management and resource protection are not adequate.

The extent to which Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action) satisfies the boundary

adjustment criteria, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of Alternatives 1 and 2 in meeting the objectives of the RPS and the NRA mission, can be found near the end of this chapter. The complete texts for Section 3.5 of *NPS Management Policies 2006*, and 16 USC 4601-9(c)(2) are shown in Appendix C.

ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION (CONTINUATION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS)

OVERALL CONCEPT

Under Alternative 1, the National Park Service would continue to operate with an emphasis on conserving the natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources within the existing NRA (see the map for Alternative 1). Bureau of Reclamation operations would continue unaffected. NPS would continue to cooperate with Colorado Division of Wildlife to address wildlife and habitat issues, and in managing fishing and hunting within the NRA. NPS would continue to work with neighboring land management agencies to resolve resource issues of mutual concern, as staff time and funding permit. Opportunities to partner with neighboring landowners in the service of resource conservation would be limited, and would be based largely on the involvement of other agencies, and based upon their funding and priorities. NPS participation would primarily consist of providing limited technical assistance and



Development adjacent to Curecanti NRA

advice. As a result, if recent development trends on private lands surrounding the NRA continue or increase, then the resources that know no boundary between the NRA and private land, especially scenic resources, would become increasingly vulnerable to adverse impacts, and NPS would have limited tools at its disposal to mitigate the impacts.

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA DESIGNATION AND BOUNDARY

Curecanti has yet to be legislatively established; however, it is regularly listed as a unit of the national park system in *The National Parks Index*, and it has been referred to in appropriations and other congressional bills as Curecanti National Recreation Area. The area currently consists of 41,790 acres of land and waters, which belong to the following federal agencies:

- Reclamation (managed by NPS, per agreement with Reclamation) = 40,360 acres
- NPS (managed by NPS) = 1,105 acres
- U.S. Forest Service (managed by NPS, per agreement with USFS) = 325 acres

Any boundary attributed to this area is unlegislated, administrative, and subject to change, based on agreements among and between the land management agencies involved, and rarely on legislative action. Under Alternative 1, the above situation would be unchanged. Curecanti would remain an unlegislated unit of the national park system, with only an administrative boundary.

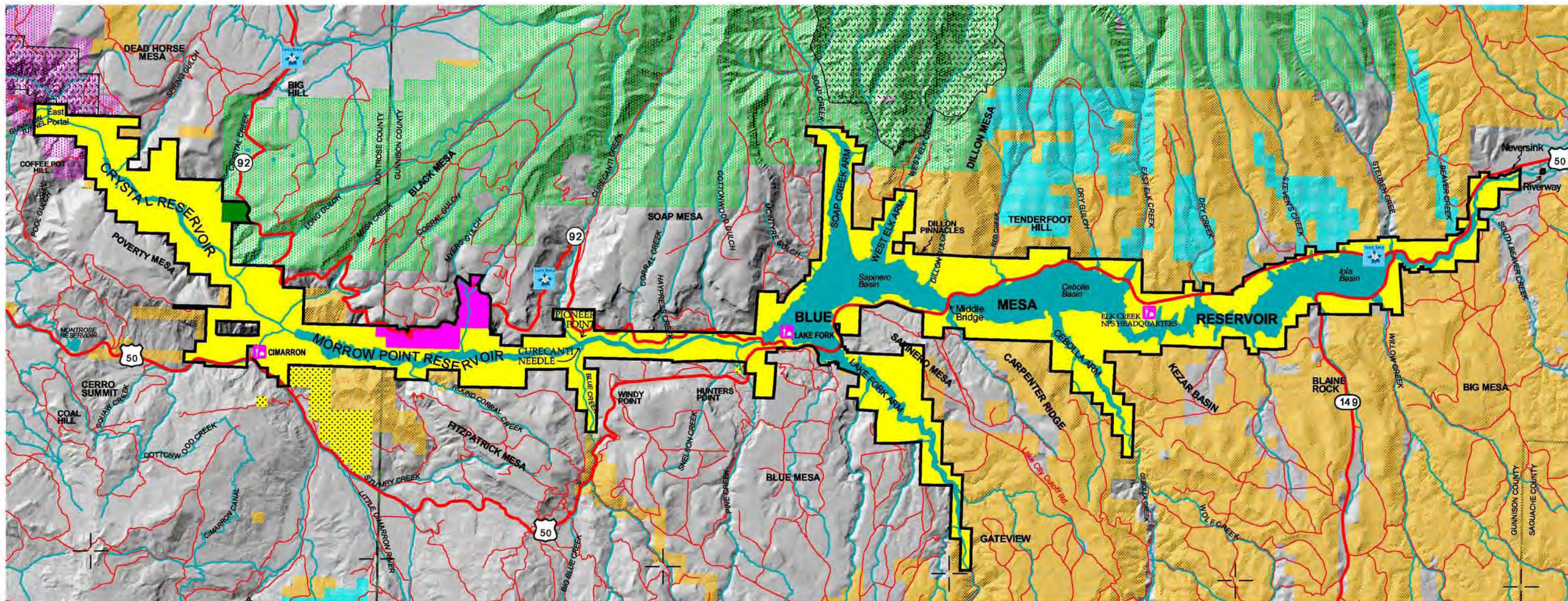
Since 1965, when NPS began administering the NRA under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Reclamation, from time to time managers made modifications to the land being administered. These administrative “adjustments” were mutually agreed upon between local agency managers, in consultation with Reclamation. However, these changes were not always reflected in the official NPS records. To rectify this situation, the RPS study team decided, as a starting point, to utilize a map that both NPS

and Reclamation had previously agreed to in writing. The title of that map is *Curecanti Unit, Upper Colorado River Storage Project, Colorado, Exhibit A, Version F (SA-CUR/7101-F)*, dated July, 1965, and commonly known as “Map F.” The study team then used this map to determine the acres agreed to, with some additional adjustments based on agreements that have been verified.

The sum total of the area being administered by NPS, as determined through this process, is 41,790 acres. This acreage differs from the total of 41,972 acres listed in the official index of the National Park Service, entitled *The National Parks: Index 2005 - 2007*, published in 2005 by the Government Printing Office. If, by passage of legislation, Congress approves the recommendations in the Proposed Action, an official legal description and map would then be prepared, and an official acreage would thus be generated, updating the acreage listed in the *Index*. However, if the proposed action is not implemented, and the area within the NRA remains essentially as it is now, Map F would be updated to reflect what NPS and Reclamation currently agree is the correct acreage, and the NPS index would be changed accordingly.

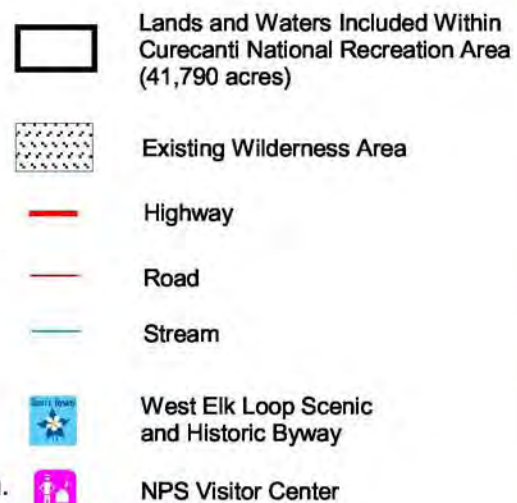
RESOURCE CONSERVATION

The National Park Service would have no legislated authority or available sources of funds to work with willing landowners outside the NRA to use a range of resource conservation tools, including, but not limited to, technical assistance, conservation easements, and, to some extent, fee simple acquisition. If a landowner were to be interested in conserving resource values on his or her property, NPS could provide only limited technical assistance. A landowner would be encouraged to contact other government agencies or land trusts for possible assistance or potential funding. NPS would continue cooperative efforts to maximize the success of partnerships wherever possible. Examples of land trusts include:



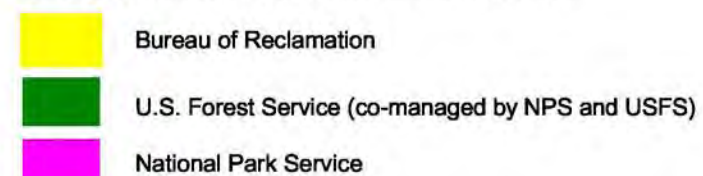
ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION (CONTINUATION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS)

This alternative would include approximately 41,790 acres within the existing National Recreation Area (NRA) boundary. The National Park Service (NPS) would continue to manage the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the NRA, and associated facilities, pursuant to Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) law, NPS law, the 1965 Memorandum of Agreement between NPS and Reclamation (1965 MOA), and other applicable laws and regulations. Reclamation would continue to manage the dams, reservoirs, power plants, access roads, and other related facilities, pursuant to Reclamation law, the 1965 MOA, and other applicable laws and regulations. There would be no Conservation Opportunity Area; and no lands would be transferred between NPS and other federal or state agencies. Compared to Alternative 2, NPS would be limited in its ability to work in partnership with adjacent private landowners in the service of resource conservation.

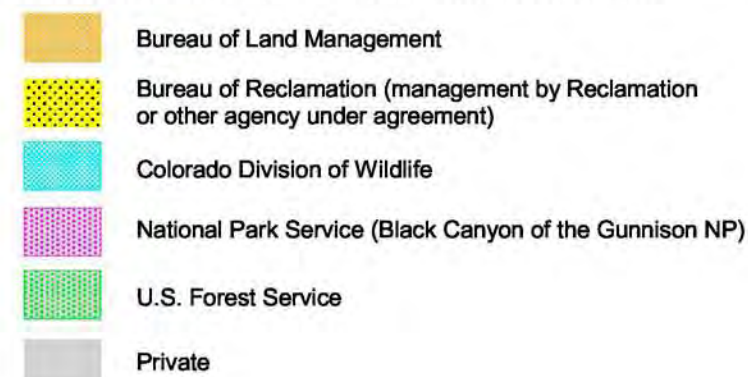


EXISTING LAND STATUS

Lands Within the National Recreation Area



Lands Surrounding the National Recreation Area



ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION (CONTINUATION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS)

RESOURCE PROTECTION STUDY CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

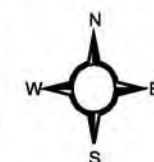
Gunnison and Montrose Counties, Colorado

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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NPS Disclaimer information: Property boundaries shown on this map are intended for study purposes only, and are not intended to be definitive regarding land ownership. County and agency land records will be used to verify ownership and definitively locate property lines and boundaries.



- Local land trusts, such as Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy or Black Canyon Land Trust
- State or regional land trusts, such as Colorado Open Lands
- National land trusts, such as The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, or the Trust for Public Lands

NPS would continue to communicate and cooperate with those who hold private mineral/mining rights within the NRA, in order to provide appropriate measures to minimize impacts of development and operations that now exist, or might exist in the future. Rights would be purchased only if the owner would be willing to sell. However, since funds might not be available to purchase those rights, even if an owner wanted to sell, other resource conservation tools would be employed, such as identified in the *Toolbox of Incentives for Resource Conservation* in Appendix A.

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT

The National Park Service would continue to manage the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the NRA and its associated facilities, pursuant to Reclamation law, NPS law, the 1965 MOA between NPS and Reclamation, and other applicable laws and regulations. However, under this alternative, the permanence of NPS as the manager of said resources would not be assured. Operational and maintenance agreements with Reclamation and other agencies would continue and be revised or updated, as necessary.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION OPERATIONS

The Bureau of Reclamation would continue to operate and maintain the three dams, reservoirs (Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal), power plants, access roads,

and other related facilities, to meet the purposes of the Colorado River Storage Project (CRSP), and the East Portal area to meet the purposes of the Uncompahgre Project; pursuant to Reclamation law, the 1965 MOA, and other applicable laws and regulations. Reclamation and its managing entities, and Western Area Power Administration (Western), would continue to have unrestricted access to their lands, land interests, and facilities. They would continue to operate, maintain, replace, and expand said facilities pursuant to their authorities to accomplish their missions.

Reclamation lands that are currently outside of the NRA would be managed in accordance with applicable Reclamation law, as amended or supplemented, and other applicable federal laws and regulations. Reclamation would work with appropriate agreed-upon managing agencies to ensure that its lands and their associated uses and resources are managed in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations, and in accordance with agreements between Reclamation and the other agencies.

OTHER AGENCY OPERATIONS

The National Park Service would continue to manage certain lands under an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, including Ponderosa Campground. This agreement would, from time-to-time, be updated and revised. NPS would also continue to coordinate efforts and issues with BLM, CDOW, and USFS on adjacent agency lands; however, no additional transfer of lands would be anticipated.

JOINT AGENCY MANAGEMENT EFFORT (JAME)

As an on-going result of this RPS, the National Park Service has invited land management agencies with lands surrounding the NRA, and other federal and local government agencies, to work in partnership to address resource management issues that extend outside the NRA. These agencies include the BLM, Reclamation, Colorado

Department of Transportation (CDOT), CDOW, Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), USFS, Western, and Gunnison and Montrose Counties. Under Alternative 1, this group would continue to meet to tackle resource issues on a thematic basis that are common to each agency. The agencies mutually agreed to work on issues pertaining to invasive plant species (i.e., weeds) as the first challenge of the JAME.

NPS would work with county planners and planning commissions to identify issues that affect, or potentially affect, the NRA. Whenever possible, solutions would be sought to mitigate impacts to resources.

ESTIMATED COSTS, STAFFING REQUIREMENTS, AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Estimated Costs

To implement Alternative 1, there would be no additional costs beyond what is currently incurred, and what is expected to be incurred, by the government, because existing conditions would continue. Curecanti NRA and adjacent Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park are jointly managed by the same superintendent and managers. The amount authorized for 2006 NPS operations (also known as ONPS) at Curecanti NRA is \$3,036,800. It is expected that this budget would be adjusted annually to cover cost-of-living increases and may be subject to other adjustments (for example, additional funding due to increased homeland security threats, or special assessments). As is currently the case, the ONPS budget may be supplemented with fee receipts and special project funds. Other annual sources of funding, that vary from year to year, include “soft” money, such as Repair/Rehab, and Cyclic Maintenance.

For direct comparison to the estimated costs of Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, the estimated cost to implement actions related to this study for Alternative 1 is \$500,000. This money would need to be

spent on missing and corrective surveys, posting, and some fencing along the existing administrative NRA boundary, even if the Proposed Action is not implemented. Under Alternative 1, there would be no additional recurring annual costs.

In the past, there have been instances where land has been acquired at fair market value to add to the NRA. Requests for congressional funding were made in those instances. This may continue to occur in the future, but to a significantly lesser extent than under Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action). Due to the uncertainty of those occurrences, and relatively low costs involved, no estimates are given for that potentiality.

Staffing Requirements

Currently, Curecanti NRA is operated by a staff of 53 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Staffing requirements would not change under Alternative 1, because existing conditions of NRA operations would continue.

Implementation Strategy

The strategy to implement Alternative 1 is for NPS to continue operating as it does now. The NRA would continue to work as much as existing funding and staffing permits in partnership with neighboring private landowners, land management agencies, county planners, land trusts, and others, to implement tools and to meet the goals and objectives of resource conservation in the Curecanti area. However, this would be to a significantly lesser extent than under Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action).

ALTERNATIVE 2: PROPOSED ACTION

OVERALL CONCEPT



NPS would cooperate with and assist private landowners to conserve resources surrounding Curecanti NRA

Under Alternative 2, it is recommended that Congress legislatively establish Curecanti NRA with a new boundary, and that the 1965 MOA between the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the National Park Service (NPS) be revised accordingly. Reclamation operations would remain essentially the same as under Alternative 1; and NPS would manage lands within the NRA that it currently administers, as well as lands proposed for inclusion in the NRA from neighboring agencies. In addition, NPS would expand its efforts to conserve the natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources on certain lands surrounding the NRA, in partnership with willing landowners (see the map for Alternative 2). This would be accomplished by the following primary actions:

- Recommend that Congress establish a National Recreation Area, with a legislated boundary that includes agreed-upon additional lands now managed by adjacent federal and state agencies.

- Revise the 1965 MOA between NPS and Reclamation, and continue to work closely with Reclamation in the management of the NRA to ensure

that Reclamation and its managing entities and the Western Area Power Administration (Western), continue to accomplish their missions.

- Designate a Conservation Opportunity Area, consisting of identified private land surrounding the NRA, in which the National Park Service would be authorized by Congress to work with willing landowners to conserve resources, including acquiring agreed-upon interests in land.
- Work cooperatively with private landowners to implement a variety of tools for resource conservation, which would include but not be limited to providing technical assistance, encouraging and/or acquiring conservation easements, and to some extent, acquiring land in fee simple.
- Manage the NRA such that the natural, cultural, and scenic resources are conserved; and that water-based and land-based opportunities for recreation are made available to the public.

- Continue to work cooperatively with neighboring agencies in a Joint Agency Management Effort to resolve resource and visitor-use management issues of mutual concern. NPS would continue to cooperate with CDOW to address wildlife and habitat issues, and in managing fishing and hunting within the NRA.

One of the greatest differences between Alternatives 1 and 2 lies in the relationship between the National Park Service and surrounding private landowners. In recognition of the benefits of partnerships, and the potential impacts on natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources likely resulting from development of adjacent lands, under Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action), NPS would make a more concerted long-term effort to establish partnerships with neighboring landowners and others in the service of resource conservation.

If the recommendations in Alternative 2 are enacted, NPS would be given authority by Congress to formally work with landowners within a newly created COA, consisting of certain private lands, with the purpose of encouraging conservation of resources important to the NRA. Numerous incentives and tools for resource conservation would be made more readily available to landowners. With congressional authorization and subject to competing demands from other NPS units, there would be more opportunity for funds to be made available for acquisition of fee title or conservation easements from willing landowners in the COA; and additional funding would be provided for NPS to assist landowners in taking advantage of other incentives and tools.

Any arrangement made between NPS and a landowner would be on a cooperative basis. Potential long-term benefits would include enhanced resource conservation throughout the Curecanti area; property enhancement and financial and tax benefits for landowners; enhanced enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation for visitors to the NRA; an enriched local economy; and a sustained high

quality of life for local residents and all who visit the Curecanti area.



Reaching out to the public, a first step in creating partnerships

Alternative 2 embraces the philosophy of the Department of the Interior's former Secretary – the Four Cs: Communication, Consultation, and Cooperation, all in the service of Conservation. It also embraces the guidance of *NPS Management Policies 2006*, a summary of which follows (the full citations are available in Appendix C).

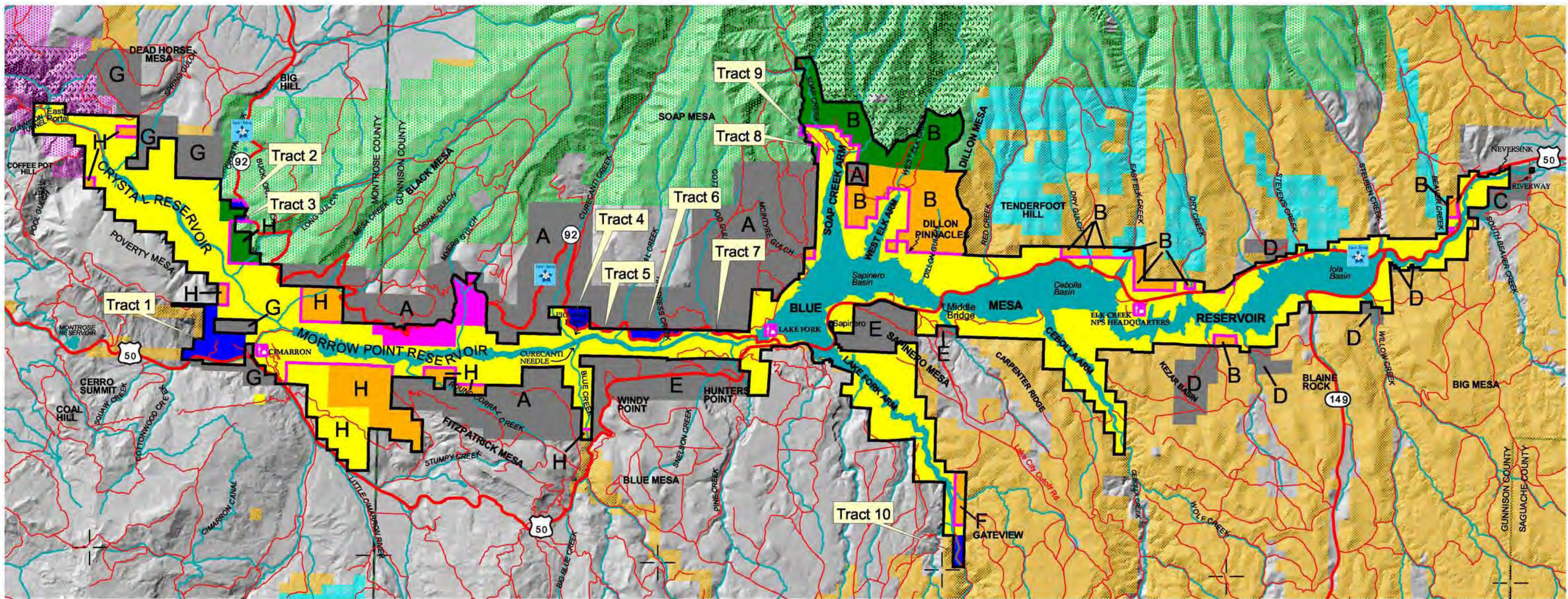
1.6 Cooperative Conservation Beyond Park¹ Boundaries

Cooperative conservation beyond park boundaries is necessary as the National Park Service strives to fulfill its mandate to preserve the natural and cultural resources of parks unimpaired for future generations. . . . Cooperative conservation activities are a vital element in establishing relationships that will benefit the parks and in fostering decisions that are sustainable. . . . The Service will also seek to advance opportunities for conservation partnerships.

4.1.4 Partnerships

The Service will pursue opportunities to improve natural resource management within parks and across administrative boundaries by pursuing cooperative conservation (with agencies and landowners). . . . The Service recognizes that cooperation . . . can accomplish

¹ In this context, the word “park” is a generic term for any unit of the national park system, be it a national park, a national monument, national historic site, national battlefield, national parkway, national seashore, national recreation area, or some other designation.



ALTERNATIVE 2: PROPOSED ACTION

This alternative would include 51,830 acres inside a legislated National Recreation Area (NRA) boundary, and 24,300 acres outside the boundary in a Conservation Opportunity Area (COA).² The proposed boundary would include the lands and waters within the existing NRA, with the immediate addition of 10,120 acres of mutually agreed-upon federal and state agency lands, less 80 acres of lands to be immediately deleted from the NRA.³ The 34,420 acres of COA and immediate additions are defined in this study as the "Proposed Lands." The National Park Service (NPS) would manage the natural, cultural and recreational resources of the NRA, and associated facilities, pursuant to Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) law, NPS law, including new legislation establishing the NRA, a revised Memorandum of Agreement between NPS and Reclamation (revised MOA), and other applicable laws and regulations. Reclamation would manage the dams, reservoirs, power plants, access roads, and other related facilities, pursuant to Reclamation law, the revised MOA, and other applicable laws and regulations. The ability of NPS to work in partnership with adjacent private land owners in the service of resource conservation would be greatly enhanced, compared to Alternative 1.

1. All acreages are approximate.

2. COA Defined: An area of private land surrounding the NRA where NPS would be authorized by Congress to use various tools to partner with neighbors to conserve resources. One of the many tools would be acquisition of interests in land, including fee simple, conservation easements, and access rights-of-way from willing sellers. NPS would be authorized to amend the NRA boundary to include properties that lie within the COA, if and when they are acquired.

3. Land adjustments with other agencies: Immediately upon passage of legislation, the following Proposed Lands would be added to the NRA — 5,840 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land; 2,640 acres of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land; 1,500 acres of Reclamation withdrawn land; and 140 acres of Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) land that would be managed by CDOW until such time that NPS can acquire it via exchange for federal lands. Ten "Tracts" have been identified for potential deletion from the NRA (refer to Alternatives Chapter for details). The immediate net addition to the NRA would be 10,040 acres.

- Proposed Curecanti National Recreation Area (NRA) Boundary (51,830 acres)
- Existing NRA (41,790 acres)
- Existing Wilderness Area
- Highway
- Road
- Stream
- West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway
- NPS Visitor Center

LAND EXTERNAL TO PROPOSAL

- Bureau of Land Management
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- National Park Service (Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP)
- U.S. Forest Service
- Private

"PROPOSED LANDS" DESCRIBED BY LAND UNIT

- A. Highway 92 COA (private lands)
- B. Blue Mesa Reservoir (agency lands)
- C. Gunnison River COA (private lands)
- D. Iola Basin COA (private lands)
- E. Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA (private lands)
- F. Gateview (agency lands)
- G. West-End COA (private lands)
- H. West-End (agency lands)

PROPOSED LAND STATUS

- Bureau of Land Management land to be transferred to NPS
- Bureau of Reclamation land, most of which remains within or is added to the NRA
- Colorado Division of Wildlife land to be acquired by NPS in exchange for mutually agreed-upon federal land
- National Park Service land remaining within the NRA
- U.S. Forest Service land to be transferred to NPS
- Ten "Tracts" of land proposed for deletion from NRA boundary subject to necessary approvals (see details for each Tract in Alternatives Chapter).
- Conservation Opportunity Area (private)

ALTERNATIVE 2: PROPOSED ACTION

RESOURCE PROTECTION STUDY CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

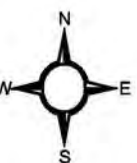
Gunnison and Montrose Counties, Colorado

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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NPS Disclaimer information: Property boundaries shown on this map are intended for study purposes only, and are not intended to be definitive regarding land ownership. County and agency land records will be used to verify ownership and definitively locate property lines and boundaries.



ecosystem stability and other resource management objectives when the best efforts of a single manager might fail. In addition, the Service will seek the cooperation of others in minimizing the impacts of influences originating outside parks by controlling noise and artificial lighting, maintaining water quality and quantity, eliminating toxic substances, preserving scenic views, improving air quality, preserving wetlands, protecting threatened or endangered species, eliminating exotic species, managing the use of pesticides, protecting shoreline processes, managing fires, managing boundary influences, and using other means of preserving and protecting natural resources.

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA DESIGNATION AND BOUNDARY

The “Proposed Lands” — Land to be Added to the Existing NRA, and the Conservation Opportunity Area

Under Alternative 2, it is recommended that Congress officially establish Curecanti as a National Recreation Area (NRA), with a legislated boundary. The new NRA would initially include 51,830 acres within its boundary. Outside and surrounding the NRA, 24,300 acres of private property would be designated as a Conservation Opportunity Area. Following the initial establishment of the new NRA boundary, as agreements are reached with neighboring land owners and agencies, the total acreage within the NRA would change over time by adding newly acquired land from willing landowners, by exchanging NRA land for private COA land, or by transferring agreed-upon land between NPS and other agencies. The COA and the proposed NRA boundary, including involved agency lands, are shown on the Alternative 2 map.

Upon passage of NRA legislation, the new boundary would immediately encompass the lands and waters within the existing NRA (41,790 acres), plus 10,040 net acres of mutually agreed-upon public lands that would be added to the NRA, but which would be administered by the National Park Service. The additional land would include

Reclamation lands (1,500 acres), BLM lands (5,840 acres), and USFS lands (2,560 net acres, consisting of 2,640 acres added, and 80 acres deleted). In addition, authority would be provided to include approximately 140 acres of CDOW land that would be managed by CDOW until such time that NPS can acquire it through an exchange for federal lands.

For purposes of this study, and found throughout the text, primarily with reference to Alternative 2 – the Proposed Action, the term “proposed lands” refers to 34,420 acres of land outside the existing NRA that are considered important for resource conservation, public recreation, and scenic values, in keeping with NRA and NPS goals and objectives. The proposed lands include the following lands that were just described (less the 80 acres of USFS lands that would be deleted from the NRA), specifically:

Public lands recommended to be transferred from other agencies to NPS to be included within the proposed NRA boundary immediately upon recommended passage of legislation that would establish the NRA (10,120 acres);

Private lands that are recommended to be included within the Conservation Opportunity Area, outside and adjacent to the proposed NRA boundary (24,300 acres).

All Reclamation lands, land interests, water and water interests, and facilities, whether within or outside of the NRA, would be retained under Reclamation jurisdiction for the operation, maintenance, and replacement of and additions to its projects. Management of various uses, as well as resources by other agencies, on Reclamation lands would be in accordance with Reclamation law, as amended and supplemented, and agreements with other agencies. Reclamation would have the ability at all times to construct, operate, maintain, and replace its facilities, including additions thereto. This ability includes access to all its lands, land interests, water and water interests, and facilities.

NPS would be given the authority to remedy inadvertent encroachment issues. Such remedies could include lease arrangements, buying and selling real property at fair market

value, or exchange. If such actions affect Reclamation land, NPS and Reclamation would coordinate efforts to resolve encroachment issues.

Lands to Be Deleted from the Existing NRA

A total of 1,243 acres of land have been identified for potential deletion from the existing NRA. These acres are shown as ten different “tracts” on the Alternative 2 map. As this study defines proposed lands, for clarity of discussion, especially in the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences chapters, these deletions are not included in the term “proposed lands.”

In addition to the previously mentioned 80 acres of USFS land that would immediately be deleted from the NRA to be managed by USFS as part of the Gunnison National Forest, potential, eventual deletions would include 800 acres to BLM, and 363 acres that might be exchanged for private COA lands, on a willing landowner basis. These BLM- and COA-related deletions are Reclamation lands, and would be subject to a finding by Reclamation that such lands are no longer needed for Reclamation projects.

The locations of the tracts that might be exchanged for COA lands, and perhaps some additional tracts (subject to Reclamation concurrence), and the number of acres exchanged, would be identified in a land protection plan (LPP) that would be produced as one of the requirements of implementation of the Proposed Action. However, as mentioned, at least 363 acres of NRA land on the north side of CO 92, between Curecanti Creek and Blue Mesa Dam, have already been identified as being appropriate to exchange for private COA lands. These are shown as Tracts 4 through 7 on the Alternative 2 map.

Until such time that Reclamation revokes the lands that would be transferred out of the NRA to the BLM, NPS would consider entering into an agreement with BLM to manage those tracts. However, the 80 acres of land being recommended for deletion to be managed by USFS is not Reclamation land, and that deletion could occur as soon as NRA

legislation is passed and agreements between NPS and USFS are revised.

New NRA legislation should allow some flexibility for NPS managers to accomplish land exchanges with the identified tracts and with such tracts that might be identified in the future. If these potential exchanges were to occur, it would reduce the cost of acquiring interests in land that are shown later in the cost estimates for this alternative.

The ten tracts of land that are identified on the Alternative 2 map for potential deletion from the existing NRA consist of the following lands:

Tract 1: 680 acres to BLM, subject to Reclamation revocation

Tract 2: 42 acres to USFS, upon passage of NRA legislation

Tract 3: 21 acres to USFS, upon passage of NRA legislation

Tract 4: 162 acres to private interest, in exchange for COA land, subject to Reclamation revocation, and negotiation with landowner

Tract 5: 11 acres to private interest, in exchange for COA land, subject to Reclamation revocation, and negotiation with landowner

Tract 6: 159 acres to private interest, in exchange for COA land, subject to Reclamation revocation, and negotiation with landowner

Tract 7: 31 acres to private interest, in exchange for COA land, subject to Reclamation revocation, and negotiation with landowner

Tract 8: 3 acres to USFS, upon passage of NRA legislation

Tract 9: 14 acres to USFS, upon passage of NRA legislation

Tract 10: 120 acres to BLM, subject to Reclamation revocation.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Conservation Opportunity Area

A COA would be created outside, and adjacent to, the proposed NRA boundary. It would be comprised of 24,300 acres of private land where the National Park Service would be authorized by Congress to use resource conservation tools to partner with neighbors to conserve resources and values identified as important to the NRA. A variety of conservation tools, ranging from technical assistance to conservation easements to fee-simple acquisition, would be available to implement on these private lands subject to the willingness of the landowner to participate. It is currently envisioned that 2,400 acres would be necessary to acquire in fee simple; and 8,100 acres would be placed under conservation easement. However, it would be necessary to produce a land protection plan to establish land priorities, to determine which conservation tools are likely to be applied and where, and to make recommendations about what lands and/or land interests should be acquired from willing sellers.



Using conservation easements to conserve land adjacent to the NRA is an important tool of Alternative 2

The National Park Service would be authorized by Congress to negotiate with landowners and to seek necessary funding to implement these tools on properties within the COA. Some of the conservation tools may be implemented through NRA-based funding; some may be achieved through special project funds; and some may be accomplished through partner matches and other agency or

foundation grants. Land and conservation-easement acquisitions would be funded through the NPS Land Acquisition Ranking (LARS), in competition with the demands of other NPS units. No such authority would exist for lands outside the COA (with the exception of some technical assistance, if funding and staff were available). The National Park Service would be authorized by Congress to amend the proposed NRA boundary to include properties within the COA that are acquired in fee simple.

As an alternative to NPS ownership of conservation easements, land trusts and other conservation partners may be willing to acquire conservation easements, either by purchase or donation, as well as hold and monitor such easements. NPS would be willing to facilitate third-party acquisitions of conservation easements, which would serve to achieve resource conservation goals within the COA.

Resource Conservation Tools

An LPP would be developed to identify priorities and methods, or tools, for resource conservation within the COA. The LPP would meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate potential environmental and social impacts, and to provide opportunity for public review and comment prior to implementation.

Resource conservation tools that would be available for implementation under this alternative are summarized below. These tools are described more comprehensively in an NPS booklet titled *Toolbox of Incentives for Resource Conservation: A Handbook of Ideas for Neighbors in the Curecanti Area*, which is included in Appendix A. This toolbox identifies present and potential methods that can be employed to encourage Curecanti area neighbors to work in partnership to manage their lands for more effective resource conservation. Some of the incentives in this toolbox would require further analysis by NPS officials and, in some cases, would require congressional or legislative authorization and appropriation of funds.

Technical Assistance — NPS is currently able to provide a limited amount of environmental education and technical assistance to landowners. Under Alternative 2, NPS would be able to provide a broader range of assistance, such as:

- Offer, to a greater extent, advice regarding resource management and conservation measures, or directing individuals to appropriate sources of information
- Offer, to a greater extent, advice on siting and design considerations for aesthetically and environmentally sensitive development
- Offer, to a greater extent, jurisdictional advice, such as referring property owners to the appropriate government or organizational entity
- Offer, to a greater extent, advice on the location of wetlands, the need for permits, and ways to enhance wetlands habitat
- Provide information about various resource conservation practices, including those involving conservation easements and land trusts
- Provide assistance to obtain funding for worthwhile projects through government grants, such as U.S. Department of Agriculture cost-share grants to install animal waste-treatment units to promote cleaner surface water and groundwater, and state and federal funding to conserve habitat for endangered species.

General Agreements — General agreements and memorandums of understanding set the stage for short-term and long-term commitments in cooperative assistance, usually benefiting all parties involved. Agreements would be consistent with NPS and Reclamation law, regulations, and policies, and must be consistent and compatible with the purposes of the Reclamation projects.

- Examples include cost-sharing on projects that mutually benefit the parties, or understandings on how

certain activities or operations can occur. One party might agree to certain restrictions in return for other benefits, including technical assistance, labor, and/or materials needed to accomplish a project that would be of benefit to the property owner and NPS. Projects could include those that conserve wildlife and habitat, or those that reduce impacts to viewsheds.

- Agreements are especially useful if a conservation easement or fee simple acquisition is agreed upon, but funds are not yet available to implement. General agreements and memorandums of understanding clarify policies or procedures and can serve as the basis for cooperation among two or more parties. They are most likely to be useful for land owned by state or local governments, private nonprofit organizations, and other federal agencies, and by individuals or corporations who are supportive of NRA purposes, as well as resource-conservation initiatives. They may be terminated whenever any of the parties to the agreement wish, with proper notice.

Incentive Payments – Payments are made to property owners and other entities that enter into contracts to conserve or enhance recreational, cultural, and natural resources through a variety of grant programs, including those of NPS, US Fish and Wildlife Service, CDOW, and others.

Acquisition of Conservation Easements or Other Property Rights – In this program, NPS, another agency, or a land trust, acquires an interest in the property on a willing-seller basis, for conservation purposes. The types of tools used include acquisition of conservation easements or deed restrictions, mineral rights, and/or rights-of-way. Activities that are not in conflict with the purposes of the easement or deed are generally allowed, while specific restrictions ensure that uses of the property remain compatible with the conservation purposes spelled out in the easement or deed. Although the landowner continues to pay

property taxes, there may be significant income tax and estate tax benefits to the landowner.

Purchase and Retained Use and Occupancy — In this scenario, NPS would buy the property from a willing seller at fair-market value, and the owner would be allowed to remain on the property until death (life estate), or some other agreed-upon time period, such as 25 years. Life estates impact valuation, and appraisals are lowered using an actuary table on life expectancy. Since the owner would no longer be paying property taxes, the federal government may provide payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILT) to the county.

Fee Simple Acquisition — NPS acquires all rights or interests in the land on a willing-seller basis. Since the owner would no longer be paying property taxes, the federal government may provide PILT to the county. Acquisition could occur through a variety of methods, including:

- The landowner could be paid a fair-market-value price from sources of funding that might include congressional appropriations, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); donated monies; or third party grants.
- Land could be exchanged between the property owner and a federal or state agency. For example, the LPP might identify lands to be exchanged in return for lands to be acquired.
- The landowner could donate land to the National Park Service, or sell land at a discount, and, in turn, receive certain tax advantages.

This study recognizes that the availability of federal funds for acquiring interests in land may be limited. However, many of the goals and objectives of Alternative 2 would still be achievable through the application of other tools that could be used to provide incentives to willing landowners for conserving resources.

Water rights would be specifically addressed as a condition of each sale, exchange, and/

or donation. In general, water rights are appurtenant to the land, unless specifically stated otherwise. Land exchanges between Bureaus of the United States simply affect how a particular parcel of land is administered, and all existing water rights remain the property of the United States. Water rights associated with land exchanges or purchases with the State of Colorado, as well as private landowners, would become the property of the United States, unless language in the sale or exchange states otherwise. Note that in Colorado, Instream Flow Rights, whether on federal, state, or private land, can only be held by the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

Private Land Use within the NRA

As in Alternative 1, NPS would continue to communicate and cooperate with those who hold private mineral/mining rights within the NRA in order to provide appropriate measures to minimize impacts of development and operations that now exist, or might exist, in the future. This would also be done with those who might hold such rights in the COA. Although the NPS would be managing a congressionally designated NRA under Alternative 2, there may still be insufficient funds available to purchase those rights if the owner were willing to sell. However, more emphasis and funding would be available to implement other resource conservation tools, such as those identified above and in the *Toolbox of Incentives for Resource Conservation* in Appendix A.

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT

Under this alternative, it is recommended that Congress legislatively establish Curecanti NRA with a new boundary, and that the 1965 MOA between NPS and Reclamation be revised (revised MOA). The National Park Service would manage the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the NRA, and its associated facilities, pursuant to Reclamation law, NPS law, including the new NRA legislation, the revised MOA, and other

applicable laws and regulations. The new MOA would further define the administrative jurisdiction, roles, and responsibilities of Reclamation and its managing entities, NPS, and Western within the NRA. Under this alternative, the permanence of NPS as the manager of these resources would be assured. NPS would, as necessary, revise any operation and maintenance agreements between it and other agencies, including Reclamation, BLM, and USFS, to reflect management changes resulting from legislative establishment of the NRA.



Morrow Point Reservoir boat tour

In order to successfully implement the proposals in Alternative 2, it would be necessary to hire an FTE employee to

oversee the associated operations into the future. The duties and required skills of such a “partnership liaison” are described later in Alternative 2 under “Staffing Requirements.” In addition, as interests are acquired in private property, an additional FTE would be required to monitor and manage those lands.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION OPERATIONS

The Bureau of Reclamation would operate and maintain the three dams, reservoirs, (Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal), power plants, access roads, and other related facilities, to meet the purposes of the CRSP; and the East Portal area, to meet the purposes of the Uncompahgre Project; pursuant to Reclamation law, the revised MOA, and other applicable laws and regulations. Reclamation, and its managing entities, and Western, would continue to have unrestricted access to their lands, land interests, water and water interests, and facilities. They would continue to operate, maintain, replace, and expand said facilities pursuant to their authorities to accomplish their missions.

Reclamation lands currently outside of, but contiguous with, the current NRA, would be added to the NRA until such time as Reclamation determines that the lands are no longer necessary for project purposes. Pending such a determination, those lands would be administered by Reclamation and NPS for their respective purposes in accordance with Reclamation law, as amended and supplemented, other applicable federal laws and regulations, and an MOA between Reclamation and NPS. Upon such a determination that the lands are no longer necessary for Reclamation project purposes, the lands may be retained within the NRA under NPS management, or deleted from the NRA and transferred to another agency, or otherwise be disposed of, as allowed by law.

OTHER AGENCY OPERATIONS

NPS would coordinate with BLM, USFS, and CDOW to evaluate operations pursuant to the transfer of lands identified under Alternative 2. NPS may enter into new, or revised, agreements with any or all of these agencies to define responsibilities and cooperative efforts arising out of legislative establishment of the NRA. NPS would also continue to coordinate efforts and issues with BLM, USFS, and CDOW on adjacent agency lands, such as might occur through participation in the JAME, described below.

NPS would work with CDOW and BLM to explore the potential land exchange for state-owned land identified in Alternative 2. In the event that such an exchange is implemented, it may be possible to extinguish one or more agreements between NPS and CDOW.

In the event that NPS acquires private land within the COA in the vicinity of Mesa Creek (the NE¼ of Section 33, and the N½ of Section 34, and the NW¼ of Section 35, all in Township 49 North, Range 6 West, NMPM), it is recommended that land south of CO 92 (about 260 acres) be included within the NRA, and the land north of CO 92 (about 300 acres) be transferred to the administration of the USFS for inclusion within the Gunnison

National Forest. At that time, NPS would request that a small parcel of land (about 26 acres) south of CO 92 on Mesa Creek, now within the Gunnison National Forest, be transferred to the NRA (said parcel is located in the SW¼ SW¼ of Section 26, and the SE¼ SE¼ of Section 27, all in Township 49 North, Range 6 West, NMPM). It is recommended that the south right-of-way line of CO 92 in this area be the NRA boundary, but only if, and when, the land within the COA in this location is acquired from a willing seller. The recommendation is made for the future (and not shown on the Alternative 2 map for immediate implementation), because until such time as the COA land might be acquired in this area, it would be more efficient for this 26-acre parcel to be continued to be managed as a contiguous tract of the National Forest, instead of as a detached tract of the NRA.

JOINT AGENCY MANAGEMENT EFFORT

As described in Alternative 1, NPS and other federal, state, and local agencies would continue the JAME to address resource issues, such as noxious weeds, that are common to each agency.

NPS would be more proactive in working with County Planners and Planning Commissions. NPS would encourage Gunnison County to evaluate a potential Special Geographic Area to complement the efforts of partnership within the COA. NPS would also encourage Montrose

County, upon revision of their Master Plan, to establish a conservation overlay zone that includes the NRA and COA. Such a zone could be used to guide development decisions in that area.

ESTIMATED COSTS, STAFFING REQUIREMENTS, AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Estimated Costs

The total cost of implementing Alternative 2 would occur over many years into the future, and it would depend primarily on the willingness and the degree of participation of private landowners in the effort, and the types of tools employed to conserve resources. Many factors contribute to the total cost of implementation. Perhaps the greatest, single, cost element would be acquiring interests in land, such as fee simple acquisition and conservation easements. Those costs are very uncertain because of numerous unpredictable and variable factors, such as:

- The number of landowners willing to participate
- Determination by a land protection plan (LPP) of priorities of land to conserve, and appropriate conservation tools
- Change in fair market value of property
- Availability of funds for acquisition of interests in land
- The time between property appraisals and availability of funds
- The interest and assistance from other parties, such as land trusts and conservation organizations
- Future changes in federal and state tax and estate laws that might affect landowners' decisions to sell or donate land or conservation easements.

The relatively high anticipated cost of acquiring interests in



Agency cooperation and COA tools will help conserve agrarian values in the future

land is a major reason that other tools are being considered to work in partnership with landowners to conserve resources, so that goals and objectives can be realistically achieved. Therefore, it would be necessary to develop an LPP early in the process to set priorities on which parcels of land are most important to conserve, and which tools would be adequate in each case. At that time, requests for funds for those parcels of land for which monies are required would be considered through the NPS land acquisition ranking system (LARS) in light of competing demands from other NPS units. Potential sources of funding are listed in the “Implementation Strategy” section of this chapter, below. However, to the greatest extent possible, NPS would pursue tools of a partnership nature with willing landowners, conservation organizations, land trusts, and other agencies, including matching grants and similar cost-sharing efforts, that could result in lower direct costs to NPS, while still satisfying resource conservation goals and objectives, as well as landowner goals and objectives.

In order to arrive at an estimate of the direct costs for acquiring interests in land, assumptions have been made on the number of acres that might be identified in a future LPP for conservation easements and fee simple acquisition, all of which would be consummated only if land owners were willing to participate. The most likely scenario is that a relatively small percentage of the 24,300 acres of private land in the COA would be so managed. Current thinking is that approximately one tenth (2,400 acres) would eventually be acquired in fee simple, and approximately one third (8,100 acres) would eventually be placed under conservation easements. There is a potential for some NRA lands to be exchanged for private COA lands, subject to landowner agreement. This would reduce the cost of acquiring interests in land, shown on the following pages (see also the discussion of potential deletions from the NRA in the section on National Recreation Area Designation and Boundary, earlier in this chapter).

Because of the uncertainty in predicting future property values, the estimated costs per acre of land used in the calculations are based on current market values (see a discussion of Property Values in the Affected Environment chapter, under Neighboring Private Lands and Landowners within the Proposed Lands). Future market values could be greater or less than those used in the calculations. For fee simple acquisition of land within Gunnison County, a median value of \$2,750 per acre was used; and within Montrose County, \$1,000 per acre.

For conservation easements, or CEs, a factor of 60% of the fee simple value was used to come up with \$1,650 per acre in Gunnison County, and \$600 per acre in Montrose County. However, with increased interest and activity from regional and national land trusts and other conservation organizations, the costs of acquiring CEs could be reduced because of additional matching funds, increased emphasis on discounted sales of CEs, and increased emphasis on donations of CEs. In such cases, third parties would likely be the holders and monitors of CEs, and federal acquisitions would be combinations of donations, tax incentives, and bargain sales. Because of these factors, it is estimated that acquisition of the CEs in the COA would be 50% of face value of the CEs; or \$825 per acre in Gunnison County and \$300 per acre in Montrose County.

Because of the many unknowns that influence the cost of acquiring interests in land, including donations and third party involvement, and what interests would eventually be acquired, the estimated costs to the government are presented as a range. Since most of the land in which NPS might be acquiring an interest would probably be located in Gunnison County, the land values for Gunnison County were used in the calculations. Thus, \$2,750 per acre was used to calculate the high range for fee simple acquisition, and \$825 per acre was used to calculate the high range for CEs. The low range was determined by assuming that up to 2,500 acres of the most important land in the COA in which NPS feels it should

acquire an interest would at least come under conservation easements at approximately \$825 per acre.

In addition to the direct costs of acquiring interests in land, there are a number of other cost items that would be incurred with the implementation of Alternative 2 that are more predictable. These include a land protection plan; land appraisals tied to acquisition of land and conservation easements; environmental assessments to determine, among other things, the presence of hazardous materials; associated closing costs, such as title commitments and recording fees; surveys for the proposed NRA boundary; marking, or “posting” the entire boundary; fencing about one-fourth of the boundary in selected areas; and specific implementation plans to determine necessary and appropriate resource management, interpretation, and visitor use and understanding on newly acquired lands. These are one-time expenditures that are expected to occur during implementation of Alternative 2.

Other costs that would occur on an annual basis are for staffing that would be required to implement Alternative 2. One dedicated position would be needed to serve as a “partnership liaison” between the NRA and its neighbors to implement the study’s recommendations over the long term. The anticipated duties of that position are described later in this chapter under Staffing Requirements. In addition, as new lands are added to the NRA, work would be required associated with the management of those lands, and new facilities that might be constructed on them for visitor use and resource conservation. This work would be spread over all divisions of the NRA. Personnel required to fill the dedicated position and to perform the additional work associated with managing new lands are estimated to be the equivalent of two full-time employees.

Estimated Costs of Implementing the Proposed Action: The estimated costs of implementing the Proposed Action are shown below. The figures include the direct costs of acquiring interests in land, and the expected

costs of establishing the initial proposed NRA boundary, as well as incorporating changes to the boundary that might reasonably occur.

- One-Time Costs:
 - Acquiring interests in land from willing private landowners within the COA = \$2,000,000 to \$13,283,000
 - Fee Simple Acquisition (High Range): 2,400 acres @ \$2,750/acre = \$6,600,000
 - Acquisition of Conservation Easements (High Range): 8,100 acres @ \$825/acre = \$6,683,000
 - Land Protection Plan = \$150,000
 - Land Appraisals, Environmental Assessments, and Closing Costs = \$300,000
 - Boundary Surveys and Posting = \$800,000
 - Boundary Fencing = \$240,000
 - Specific Implementation Plans for New Lands = \$200,000
- One-Time Costs = \$3,690,000 to \$14,973,000**

- Recurring Annual Costs: In addition to the One-Time Costs shown above, as the Proposed Action becomes fully implemented, there will be an annual cost of \$160,000 for the equivalent of two full-time employees, as shown below.
 - Upon initiation of implementation — an additional full-time NRA staff “partnership liaison” position, at \$80,000 per year
 - Upon acquisition of sufficient interests in land — the equivalent of one additional full-time employee for resource and visitor management and protection, interpretation, construction and maintenance, and administration associated with the management of newly acquired interests in land, at \$80,000 per year

This study recognizes that the availability of federal funds for acquiring interests in land may be limited. However, many of the goals and objectives of Alternative 2 would still be achievable through the application of other tools that could be used to provide incentives to willing landowners for conserving resources.

Management Requirements

Partnership Liaison — A new “partnership liaison” position would be added to the NRA staff to implement the Proposed Action, and to oversee and sustain its operation into the future. That person would need to have a wide range of knowledge, skills, and abilities in order to perform a broad variety of duties associated with the position. The duties and qualifications associated with the position would include the following.

- Perform as the NRA liaison with private landowners, adjacent land-management agencies, regional and national land trusts, conservation organizations, county planners and officials, and other neighbors and stakeholders
- Write and implement a land protection plan
- Work with private landowners to implement the tools of resource conservation, including negotiations leading to acquiring interests in land
- Coordinate appraisals and environmental assessments
- Implement boundary surveys, marking and posting, and fencing
- Write grant proposals
- Monitor conservation easements
- Provide and/or coordinate technical assistance to neighboring private landowners in the areas of natural, historical, and archeological resource

conservation and enhancement, especially preserving and improving natural habitat, and conserving water quality; planning, siting, and design considerations for development; and protecting life and property from wildfire

- Coordinate the JAME
- Coordinate the development and implementation of specific implementation plans for new lands

NRA Operations — As more interests in land are acquired over time from other government agencies and from willing private landowners, there would be an increasing requirement for NRA staff in the following areas of operations:

- To monitor and conserve the natural and cultural resources on those lands
- To coordinate the administration of grazing permits that exist on lands transferred to the NRA
- To provide for additional recreational and interpretive opportunities, and the safety of NRA visitors
- To construct and maintain the necessary and appropriate facilities for resource conservation and visitor use, such as fencing and trails
- To provide administrative support for technical assistance to neighbors.

Eventually, this work would require the equivalent of one additional FTE, shared among all five operating divisions at the NRA: Resource Stewardship and Science; Interpretation, Education, and Technology; Visitor Protection and Fee Collection; Facility Management; and Administration.

Implementation Strategy

Alternative 2 would be implemented over a period of many years. NRA staff is currently making some efforts in partnering with other land management agencies, county planners, land trusts, and, to a lesser extent, private landowners, to identify and achieve goals related to resource conservation in the Curecanti area. However, the real benefits of Alternative 2 would

not occur until the study's recommendations have been approved, legislation is enacted, additional staff is hired, required funding is appropriated, and the proposed actions and appropriate tools of resource conservation are implemented. The greatest amount of implementation is expected to occur within the first ten years of congressional approval of this study's recommendations.

The following actions would be required to fully implement Alternative 2.

- Congress would need to approve the recommendations in this study and establish the following:
 - Official designation of Curecanti National Recreation Area, with a new legislated boundary
 - Authorization for NPS to manage the NRA
 - Approval of the COA concept
 - Authorization for NPS to work with willing landowners to employ tools of resource conservation in the COA, including acquisition of interests in private property
 - Approval of NPS to adjust the proposed NRA boundary accordingly, when appropriate interests in land are acquired.
- There are three levels of specificity of management direction and legislative language associated with the recommendations of this RPS: (1) the RPS and associated Report to Congress, or Report; (2) proposed legislation; and (3) a revised MOA between NPS and Reclamation.
 1. This RPS document presents the intent of the proposed legislation that would create the NRA. The Report to Congress, which will be written jointly by Reclamation and NPS, will identify issues that need to be addressed in the legislation. Although these issues are discussed to a certain extent in the RPS, they

will be addressed in more detail in the body of the Report to Congress.

2. The legislation would specify the management responsibilities of Reclamation and NPS within the new NRA. The legislation should show the same level of specificity as the Report. Both NPS and Reclamation would have opportunities to review and provide input into the legislation. Although it is not known as of yet who would prepare such legislation, it is anticipated that NPS would be the preparing agency.
 3. A new MOA between NPS and Reclamation, and coauthored by both agencies, would be written to describe, in detail, the responsibilities of the two agencies regarding the administration and management of the NRA. The preparation of a new MOA would be mandated by the legislation. It is expected to be similar to the existing 1965 MOA between the two agencies, wherein the following responsibilities would continue:
 - a. NPS would manage the natural, cultural, and recreational resources, and associated facilities.
 - b. Reclamation would manage all facilities associated with Reclamation projects.
 - c. In areas where management responsibility overlaps, the two agencies would work together, when necessary, to resolve conflicting uses with full respect for the legislative mandate of the other agency. The ability to operate the Aspinall Unit and Uncompahgre Project for their authorized purposes would be given priority.
- The NRA must assign someone on staff to serve as a “partnership liaison”. This

may require hiring one FTE, and would require an increase in ONPS funding.

- Consultation and coordination in the service of resource conservation must be increased between the NRA and its neighbors.
- An LPP must be developed to identify land conservation priorities and to define the “tools” of resource conservation appropriate for each parcel of land.
- Land appraisals and environmental assessments must be completed for lands that might be acquired.
- Agreed-upon interests in land must be acquired. In some cases, private landowners may agree to donate or exchange land or interests in land. Where that is not the case, and purchase is required, sources of funding might include the following:
 - The Land and Water Conservation Fund
 - Line-item appropriations
 - Federal and State grants
 - NPS cost-share program
 - Nonprofit organizations and friends of the NRA
 - Private sector donations
 - Third-party entities, such as land trusts and conservation organizations.
- Boundary surveys must be completed, and the new boundary marked, posted, and fenced, where necessary.
- Additional staff must be hired to manage additional lands in which interests are acquired.
- Resource data for newly acquired lands must be obtained and analyzed in preparation for a new GMP or implementation plan.
- A new general management plan or implementation plan must be written for the NRA to determine

how newly acquired lands would be managed, where new resource-based recreational and interpretive opportunities would be provided, and what developments would be necessary and appropriate to provide for those opportunities.

FINDINGS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES REGARDING THE STUDY’S RECOMMENDATIONS

In the course of conducting the RPS, numerous findings and guiding principles were identified that need to be emphasized and carefully considered when implementing the study’s recommendations, especially regarding new NRA legislation that might be enacted, and revised or new agreements among Reclamation, NPS, and/or other agencies. Many of those findings and principles relate to laws, policies, regulations, and the missions of the two agencies, by which Reclamation and NPS must operate. Some of these apply equally to Reclamation and NPS, as Federal agencies within the DOI. However, some of these are unique to each agency, since they have different missions. These important findings and principles are summarized below.

- The Uncompahgre Project and the Aspinall Unit of the CRSP, their associated facilities, lands, water, and other resources, and their use by the public, are significant public benefits within, and adjacent to, the NRA.
- The majority of the lands currently within the NRA, and some currently outside of it, were withdrawn or acquired for Reclamation purposes, including the Uncompahgre Project and the Aspinall Unit of the CRSP.
- The current presence of NPS within, and administration of, most of the NRA for recreation and other purposes is pursuant to and subject to Reclamation law, as amended and supplemented, which generally requires that such

administration be consistent or compatible with the primary purposes of all Reclamation projects. Thus, Reclamation has existing legal rights within and adjacent to the NRA that predate and take precedence over NPS's rights or uses.

- Reclamation operations along the three reservoirs under the CRSP Act continue to provide recreational and scenic values that support legislative designation of the area as the Curecanti NRA. Any legislation for the NRA should allow that situation to continue, without any additional limitations on Reclamation's operational capabilities.
- The prior intent of the DOI was that contiguous Reclamation lands along the Gunnison River upstream of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park (BLCA) were to be administered by NPS for recreational and other purposes pursuant to Reclamation law. The 1965 MOA between Reclamation and NPS provided for such management on Aspinall Unit lands pursuant to Section 8 of CRSPA, and allowed for the future inclusion of additional acquired or withdrawn lands. For example, in 1978, Uncompahgre Project lands in the East Portal area were added to the MOA and the NRA. However, the 1965 MOA did not address future deletion of lands from the NRA, nor were there appropriate supplemental agreements to address the management of deleted lands by another federal agency. A revised MOA should address both the addition and deletion of lands to and from the NRA, as well as the management of deleted lands by another federal agency, or disposition thereof to private, state, or other ownership.
- Both BOR and NPS have differing missions and management directives within, and adjacent to, the NRA. The current management agreement between Reclamation and NPS

should be updated to better reflect the roles and responsibilities of the respective agencies.

- There are numerous and varied existing legal rights on lands within the study area that may affect management of the NRA. These rights either need to be recognized and honored, or they need to be acquired through appropriate means. Either way, these rights will affect management of the NRA. These rights include, but are not limited to, reserved mineral rights (such as the Dickerson decomposed granite pit), transmission rights-of-way (Western, Gunnison County Electric Association, Qwest Communications, and others), and access rights (Lake Fork Cove and Blue Mesa Village subdivisions, Sapinero, and others).

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS

This study's Proposed Action recommends that Congress enact legislation regarding the official designation of Curecanti NRA. The study team has identified the following considerations to be of paramount importance in drafting any such legislation.

- Congress should designate the area identified in the proposed action as the "Curecanti National Recreation Area."
- Any such NRA designation and associated legislation should protect Reclamation's ability to meet its mission, including project operation, maintenance, replacement, and land addition or expansion, if and when necessary, on all of its lands within and adjacent to the NRA. Reclamation's ability to meet its mission and to conduct project-related operations on any of its lands should not be diminished or hindered as a result of the designation of the area as an NRA. Likewise, any such NRA

designation and associated legislation should provide NPS reasonable and appropriate authority to meet its mission within and adjacent to the NRA, provided that Reclamation's prior authority to meet its mission on the same lands is not diminished or hindered in any way.

- Any such NRA designation and associated legislation should allow for future adjustments to the proposed NRA boundary that are mutually acceptable to Reclamation, NPS, and other affected Federal and State agencies.
- Any legislation establishing the NRA should provide for coordinated management through an agreement between Reclamation and NPS that identifies their respective roles and responsibilities. This legislation should be relatively broad and not overly specific on how the NRA is to be managed. Other documents would go into more detail describing how the NRA should be managed. These documents would include a new MOA between Reclamation and NPS, and a revised NPS GMP or implementation plan for the NRA.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED ASSESSMENT

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA BOUNDARY

Boundary Alternative A

This alternative was not presented in the Fall 2003 newsletter, but was considered early in the alternatives development process. Alternative A would have created a legislative boundary of 51,830 acres, including the existing NRA lands (41,790 acres) and agency land transfers (10,040 acres net), as

described in Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action). However, unlike Alternative 2, a COA comprised of private land is not identified. Thus, there would be no congressionally approved authority for NPS to work cooperatively with landowners to apply conservation tools within a designated area.

This alternative was dismissed from further consideration, because it did not adequately address the mandate from Congress to "identify practicable alternatives that protect the resource value and character of the land within and surrounding the Curecanti National Recreation Area."

Boundary Alternative B

This alternative was introduced as Alternative 3 in the Fall 2003 newsletter. It would have created a legislated boundary of 59,380 acres.² In addition to land transferred from other agencies, as described in Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action), a COA would have been designated that includes 7,550 acres of private land within the legislated NRA boundary, and 16,750 acres of private land outside the NRA boundary. Lands within the legislated boundary would have included:

- 41,790 acres of existing NRA lands
- 10,040 net acres from other agencies
- 7,550 acres of private land.

This alternative was dismissed from further consideration, because the range of possible future actions and potential impacts under this alternative are not substantially different from those of Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action). Because the lands transferred among the agencies and the extent of the COA are the same, the location of the boundary is the only major difference. The only differences in impacts associated with the boundary location appeared to be varying landowner perceptions of government control among the alternatives, whereas, in effect, landowners would have the same control over what happens to their property in all alternatives.

² The acreages shown here differ from those in the Fall 2003 newsletter. As a result of input received from the newsletter and further analysis by the study team, the acreages have been adjusted to be consistent with the current recommendations.

Furthermore, comments received in response to the Fall 2003 newsletter indicated that there is a perception that this alternative would have greater adverse impacts on private landowners than Alternatives 1 or 2.

Boundary Alternative C

Identified as Alternative 4 in the Fall 2003 newsletter, Boundary Alternative C would have created a legislative boundary of 76,130 acres³. It would have included lands transferred from other agencies (same as in Alternative 2) and the entire COA of 24,300 acres of private land. Lands within the legislated boundary would have included:

- 41,790 acres of existing NRA
- 10,040 acres of land from other agencies
- 24,300 acres of private land.

As described in Boundary Alternative B, this alternative was dismissed from further consideration because the range of possible future actions and potential impacts are not substantially different from those of Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action). Furthermore, as in Boundary Alternative B, comments received in response to the Fall 2003 newsletter indicated that there is a perception that this alternative would have greater adverse impacts on private landowners than Alternatives 1 and 2.

Boundary Alternative D

This alternative was not presented in the Fall 2003 newsletter. It would have created a legislative boundary of 76,130 acres, including land transferred from other agencies and the 24,300 acres of private land identified as important to the NRA for resource conservation. However, in this alternative, the 24,300 acres of private land would not be identified as a Conservation Opportunity Area. Rather, it would be designated for fee simple acquisition by NPS on a willing-landowner basis.

This alternative was dismissed from further consideration, because it is expected to be prohibitively expensive. In addition, based on comments received on alternatives that were included in the Fall 2003 newsletter, it is expected that Boundary Alternative D would be perceived as having the greatest adverse impact on private landowners of all alternatives. Thus, it is not a practicable alternative as required by legislation authorizing the study.

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT

Different scenarios for management of the NRA have been considered throughout the planning process, none of which would affect the boundary alternatives. These scenarios include management of various sections of the NRA by various agencies other than NPS, including BLM, Reclamation, USFS, and Colorado State Parks. These alternative management scenarios were dismissed from further consideration for the following reasons:

- BLM, Colorado State Parks, and the USFS provided input during consultation and stated that they are not interested in directly managing the NRA.
- Reclamation manages its facilities, reservoirs, lands, land interests, water and water interests in the area, to meet CRSP and Uncompahgre Project purposes, and it has contracted with NPS for management of recreation and certain other resources on Reclamation lands within the NRA. NPS, under a current agreement with Reclamation, already manages the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the NRA and is interested in continuing to do so.

³ The acreages shown here differ from those in the Fall 2003 newsletter. As a result of input received from the newsletter and further analysis by the study team, the acreages have been adjusted to be consistent with the current recommendations.

THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action) is also the Environmentally Preferred Alternative. The reasons are stated below.

The Environmentally Preferred Alternative is defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) as the alternative that best meets the following criteria or objectives, as set out in Section 101 of the *National Environmental Policy Act*: (1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; (2) ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; (3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; (4) preserve important natural, cultural, and historic aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, whenever possible, an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choice; (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use that would permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and (6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

According to the “Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ’s National Environmental Policy Act Regulations” (40 CFR 1500-1508), Federal Register Vol. 46, No. 55, 18026-18038, March 23, 1981: Question 6a), “Generally this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment. It also means the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.”

This discussion also summarizes the extent to which each alternative meets Section 102(1) of the *National Environmental Policy Act*, which asks that agencies administer their own plans, regulations, and laws so that they are consistent, to the fullest extent possible, with the policies outlined above.

Alternative 1 would satisfy to some extent the majority of the six requirements detailed above. However, Alternative 1 would not give NPS the authority or funding to acquire interests in land, or to implement other resource conservation tools with willing landowners. Some private lands surrounding the NRA would likely be developed within the next 5 to 10 years, potentially resulting in impacts to multiple resources or scenic vistas, depending upon the location of the property. Thus, Alternative 1 would not ensure aesthetically pleasing surroundings, prevent degradation of the environment, or achieve a balance between population and resource use that permits a wide sharing of amenities. Alternative 1 would not be the Environmentally Preferred Alternative because of the potential impacts of development on visitor enjoyment, natural, cultural, and historic resources, and other opportunities in the NRA. For this reason, Alternative 1 is not preferred from an environmental perspective.

Alternative 2 would more completely satisfy the six requirements through establishment of the COA. Under this alternative, NPS would be authorized to support landowners in voluntary implementation of resource conservation tools; to seek partnerships with landowners; or to fund acquisitions and additions to the NRA. NPS would work closely with local counties, neighboring land management agencies, and other organizations, to reach the common goals of resource conservation and public recreation. These efforts, in combination with the COA, would help sustain the economic benefits of the NRA, while helping to ensure the preservation of important natural, cultural, and historic aspects of our national heritage, including preservation of a renewable energy resource, and to maintain an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choices.

Based on the analysis associated with the RPS at Curecanti NRA, Alternative 2 is considered the Environmentally Preferred Alternative by best fulfilling NPS responsibilities as trustee of sensitive habitat; by ensuring safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally

pleasing surroundings; and by achieving a balance between population and resource use that would permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.

EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROPOSED ACTION MEETS BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT CRITERIA

NEED AND OPPORTUNITY

As stated in the opening section of this chapter, NPS *Management Policies 2006* lists five conditions or reasons for when NPS may recommend boundary revisions. The first three criteria focus on the need and opportunity for boundary adjustment, based on the quality and character of the resources adjacent to the current NRA on lands that may be transferred or acquired. Boundary adjustments may be appropriate for any one or more of these three criteria listed. The remaining two criteria focus on the suitability and feasibility of NPS undertaking the boundary adjustment.

Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action) provides the opportunity for Federal lands to be transferred among agencies and for the acquisition of private land, if a landowner is interested. All the land units within the proposed lands have significant resources or opportunities for recreation, as well as for visitor understanding. Land Units B (Blue Mesa Reservoir Agency), F (Gateview Agency), and H (west of Fitzpatrick and Black Mesas) contain other agency lands that are proposed for transfer to address operational or management issues. The following are examples of land units within the COA that contain resources worthy of seeking partnerships between NPS and landowners to more effectively conserve each unit.

- Land Unit A (CO 92 COA): Contains scenic qualities and severe winter range for elk and mule deer.
- Land Unit C (Gunnison River COA): Contains scenic qualities, heron

rookery, and portions of historic the narrow gauge, railroad corridor along the Gunnison River between Riverway and Neversink.

- Land Unit E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA): Contains scenic qualities, offers opportunities to enhance and protect Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat on Sapinero Mesa, and provides opportunity to acquire access to currently undeveloped scenic overlooks on Sapinero Mesa and Windy Point.

SUITABILITY AND FEASIBILITY

The feasibility of managing federal and private lands, considering their size, configuration, ownership, acquisition costs, mineral and grazing rights, leases, potential hazardous wastes, and other factors, are addressed generally, because private lands would only be acquired if a land owner is willing to transfer their lands. Acquisition is only needed if other methods of conservation are not adequate. As resource conservation tools, particularly conservation easements and fee simple acquisition, are considered for implementation on private parcels, the feasibility of managing these properties would be considered in more detail by the National Park Service.

Size: All land units are of significant size. Within each land unit, NPS is most interested in conserving resources on those parcels that are larger in size.

Configuration: All land units are now contiguous to the NRA; however, some noncontiguous parcels could be added to the NRA if NPS should acquire property that was located away from the proposed NRA boundary, even though it would be within the COA. In most cases, agency land transfers would occur in locations where other agency land is adjacent to the existing NRA, where the transfer would help clarify the proposed NRA boundary, and where the acquiring agency could more easily administer the lands.

Ownership: Land units within the COA are comprised of private lands. Private lands would not be acquired unless a landowner is willing. Other land units within the proposed NRA boundary are owned by state or other federal agencies. Agreement in principle among all agencies involved has been established for transfer of these lands.

Cost: Costs would be determined by fair market values and negotiations between NPS and private landowners for potential agreements, acquisition of conservation easements, and acquisition in fee simple. They would be based on opportunity, priorities set by an LPP, availability of funding, and the willingness of private landowners.

Access: The need for access to acquired private properties within each land unit would be determined at the time of acquisition, and would be met on a case-by-case basis.

Potential hazardous waste and other factors: Due diligence would be performed on all private parcels before easements or fee simple acquisition occur. Leases, grazing rights, mineral rights, hazardous waste issues, and other factors would be evaluated at that point in time to determine the suitability of the property for inclusion within the NRA.

Grazing: Leases would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. If a conservation easement were to be acquired on a piece of property contiguous with USFS land on which a grazing lease exists, use would most likely be allowed to continue if compatible with the terms and conditions of the conservation easement. If such lands were to be acquired in fee simple, then the grazing lease might be terminated. Decisions would be made on a case-by-case, willing-landowner basis. NPS would likely enter into agreements with other agencies where a portion of an allotment falls within the NRA boundary, so that the agency would continue to have authority to manage the allotment, subject to consultation with NPS. Where an allotment exists on agency land to be included within the NRA boundary under Alternative 2, NPS would likely enter into an agreement with the transferring agency

to allow grazing to continue as long as such grazing was compatible with other uses.

EFFECTIVENESS OF ALTERNATIVES IN MEETING STUDY OBJECTIVES AND NRA MISSION

In addition to assessing impacts of the alternatives on the environment, the study team analyzed the effectiveness of the alternatives in meeting the goals and objectives of the RPS, and in providing the tools necessary for management to meet the NRA's mission. A summary of that analysis is shown in Table 3. This analysis was an important consideration in the study team's recommendation of Alternative 2 as the Proposed Action.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

Table 4 provides a summary of alternatives.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Table 5 provides a summary of environmental consequences. NOTE: Because there would be no major adverse impacts to a resource or value contained within the NRA, whose conservation is: (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation for Curecanti NRA; (2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of the NRA or to opportunities for enjoyment of the NRA; or (3) identified as a goal in the NRA's GMP or other relevant NPS planning documents, as a result of activities undertaken by NPS, visitors, or concessioners, contractors, or others operating within the NRA, there would be no impairment of the NRA's resources or values as a result of implementing either Alternative 1 or Alternative 2.

TABLE 3: EFFECTIVENESS OF ALTERNATIVES IN MEETING STUDY OBJECTIVES AND NRA MISSION

Study Objectives and NRA Mission	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
(1) Assess the natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resource value and character of the land within and surrounding Curecanti NRA (including open vistas, wildlife habitat, and other public benefits).	Objective met by completion of RPS	Objective met by completion of RPS
(2) Identify practicable alternatives that conserve the resource value and character of the land.	Does not meet objective. Only resources within the NRA and on other federal lands would be conserved and managed for resource values. Limited incentives to conserve resource values would be available to private landowners.	Meets objective. Tools, funding, and NPS staff would be available to encourage and assist landowners to conserve resources and character of the land surrounding Curecanti.
(3) Recommend a variety of economically feasible and viable tools to achieve the above.	Partially meets objective. NPS would have no authority or sources of funding to seek partnerships or assist landowners in conservation efforts.	Fully meets objective. NPS would have authority and funding, if appropriated, to work with willing landowners to conserve resources through implementation of resource conservation tools, including acquiring additional land to incorporate within an expanded NRA.
(4) Estimate the costs of implementing the approaches recommended by the study.	Meets objective. NPS estimates one-time costs to be \$500,000; with no additional recurring annual costs.	Meets objective. NPS estimates one-time costs to be \$3,690,000 to \$14,973,000, including acquiring interests in land from willing landowners; plus recurring annual costs of \$160,000 per year for additional staff and related expenditures.

Study Objectives and NRA Mission	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
(5) Find ways acceptable to Congress that would allow NPS to work in partnership with landowners and others to conserve the natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources and character of the land.	Partially meets objective. Authorization to partner and provide funding for efforts such as conservation easements and land acquisition would have to be continuously requested from Congress on a case-by-case basis.	Fully meets objective. Authorization and expected funding would be present for NPS and landowners to utilize the <i>Toolbox of Incentives for Resource Conservation</i> to conserve the natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources and character of the land.
(6) Formally establish Curecanti NRA for permanence of resource conservation and public recreation.	Does not meet objective. Curecanti would not be legislatively established by Congress as an NRA, and in all probability would continue to be without a legislated boundary.	Meets objective. The new NRA would include 51,830 acres, with an additional 24,300 acres in the COA, some of which could ultimately be added to the NRA through negotiations with willing landowners.
NRA MISSION: Conserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant and diverse natural, cultural, and scenic resources of Curecanti, balanced with the provision of outstanding recreational opportunities, and consistent with the purposes of the CRSP Act and other applicable laws; and manage the area as a part of the greater riverine ecosystem, coordinating with other land management agencies.	Lacks the authority and tools to fully meet NRA Mission.	Provides the authority and tools to fully meet NRA Mission.

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

Action Topics	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
Area designation	Commonly identified as a National Recreation Area, but with no enabling legislation or legislated boundary.	Designated by Congress as a National Recreation Area, with enabling legislation and a legislated boundary.
NRA management	NPS would continue to manage the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the NRA, and associated facilities, pursuant to Reclamation law, NPS law, the 1965 MOA between NPS and Reclamation, and other applicable laws and regulations. However, the permanence of NPS as the manager of said resources would not be assured.	NPS would manage the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the NRA, and associated facilities, pursuant to Reclamation law; NPS law, including new legislation establishing the NRA; a revised MOA, which would further define the administrative jurisdiction, roles, and responsibilities of Reclamation and its managing entities, NPS, and Western within the NRA; and other applicable laws and regulations. The permanence of NPS as the manager of these resources would be assured.
Reclamation projects management	Reclamation and its managing entities, and Western, would continue to construct, operate, maintain, replace, and expand their facilities pursuant to Reclamation law, the 1965 MOA, and other applicable laws and regulations, and would have unrestricted access to their lands and facilities.	Reclamation and its managing entities, and Western, would construct, operate, maintain, replace, and expand their facilities pursuant to Reclamation law, the revised MOA, and other applicable laws and regulations; and would have unrestricted access to their lands and facilities.
Acres of land within NRA by agency source	Reclamation (NPS managed per agreement with Reclamation) – 40,360 acres NPS – 1,105 acres BLM – None USFS (NPS managed) – 325 acres CDOW – None	Reclamation (NPS managed per agreement with Reclamation) – 41,860 acres NPS – 1,105 acres BLM (NPS managed) – 5,840 acres USFS (NPS managed) – 2,885 acres CDOW (NPS managed, if acquired by exchange) – 140 acres

Note: Under Alternative 1, NPS would manage other agency lands under agreement with each agency. Under Alternative 2, NPS would manage Reclamation land under agreement with Reclamation; however, lands that Reclamation deems are no longer necessary for the project would be transferred to NPS, unless otherwise identified by this study. Also, other agency lands would be transferred to NPS to administer and manage.

Action Topics	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
Total initial acres within NRA	41,790 acres	51,830 acres (Increase of 10,040 acres)
Land managed under agreement to be deleted from NRA	None	USFS – 80 acres The 80 acres of USFS land managed under agreement with USFS are not Reclamation withdrawn; therefore, upon passage of legislation, NPS would return these lands to USFS to manage.
Possible future deletion of Reclamation land from NRA, subject to approval and revocation by Reclamation, for potential purposes stated	None	To be managed by BLM (NPS interim management) – 800 acres There is a potential for some NRA lands to be exchanged for private COA lands, subject to landowner agreement. Although the location of those NRA lands, and the number of acres would be confirmed by a future LPP, 363 acres on the north side of CO 92 have already been identified as appropriate NRA lands to be exchanged for COA lands.
Conservation Opportunity Area	None	Private – 24,300 acres A COA would be established adjacent to the proposed NRA boundary. NPS would be authorized by Congress to use resource conservation tools to partner with neighbors to conserve resources and values identified as important to the NRA.
Legislated authority to implement resource conservation tools	NPS could provide only limited technical assistance. Landowners would have to work with other agencies and organizations to utilize tools such as conservation funding and establishment of conservation easements.	An LPP would be written and implemented. NPS would be authorized to implement tools for resource conservation and to secure funding to assist willing landowners within the COA.
Resource conservation tools	NPS could provide only limited technical assistance to adjacent landowners regarding resource conservation issues.	NPS would implement tools outlined in the <i>Toolbox of Incentives for Resource Conservation</i> . These include technical assistance, general agreements, incentive payments, acquisition of conservation easements or other property rights, purchase and retained use and occupancy, and fee simple acquisition.

Action Topics	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
Joint Agency Management Effort (JAME)	NPS, and other land management agencies with lands adjacent to the NRA, would continue to meet to address resource issues that are common to each agency. NPS would continue to cooperate with CDOW to address wildlife and habitat issues, and in managing fishing and hunting within the NRA.	Same as Alternative 1.
Estimated costs of implementation	\$500,000 for one-time costs; with no additional recurring annual costs.	<p>\$3,690,000 to \$14,973,000 for one-time costs, including acquiring interests in land from willing landowners; plus recurring annual costs of \$160,000 per year for additional staff and related expenditures.</p> <p>This study recognizes that the availability of federal funds for acquiring interests in land may be limited. However, many of the goals and objectives of Alternative 2 would still be achievable through the application of other tools that could be used to provide incentives to willing landowners for conserving resources.</p>
Staffing requirements	No change in existing staff.	<p>Initially, one additional FTE staff position to implement the Proposed Action during the first ten years, and to oversee its operation into the future. As implementation nears completion, the need for a full time employee may decrease, but many of the functions of the “partnership liaison” position would remain indefinitely.</p> <p>As interests in land are acquired, one additional FTE, shared among all five operating divisions at the NRA, for operations associated with acquisition of new lands from other government agencies and from willing private landowners.</p>

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Impact Topics	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
Natural Resources¹		
Water Quality	The continuation of or increase in current land use practices within the proposed lands, particularly development, could cause long-term moderate to short-term localized major impacts from increased sedimentation or contaminant loading into waters within the proposed lands.	The increased likelihood that landowners would use resource conservation tools to conserve resources on their property would result in long-term minor to major beneficial impacts on water quality.
Geology and Paleontology	Private lands in the vicinity of Sapinero Mesa and the area southeast of Morrow Point Reservoir would be vulnerable to long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts from development and other land uses that could result in disturbance and degradation to geological and paleontological resources. Resources in other locations with lower development potential would likely be conserved into the foreseeable future.	Minor to moderate long-term beneficial impacts would occur as a result of increased conservation of geological and paleontological resources through resource conservation activities.
Vegetation, Including Wetlands; and Wildlife, Including Raptors and Fisheries	<p>The displacement of native vegetation communities by noxious weeds that spread from lands adjacent to the NRA would result in long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts to NRA lands. These impacts would be minimized where joint agency management efforts are underway. Where private lands within the proposed lands lack weed management efforts or occur in land units susceptible to development (such as D, E, and G), long-term moderate to major adverse impacts would result from the spread of noxious weeds or alteration and loss of native vegetation communities.</p> <p>Riparian and wetland communities in Land Units C (Gunnison River COA) and D (Iola Basin COA) would be susceptible to moderate to major long-term adverse impacts through land use practices, invasion of noxious weeds, or development. Riparian and wetlands within the NRA would largely be protected, but those communities adjacent to private lands with weed issues would be susceptible to long-term moderate to major</p>	Beneficial impacts to vegetation and wildlife resources would result from landowners' application of resource conservation tools and participation in partnerships. Benefits would be greatest in those areas of highest development potential, such as Land Units D (Iola Basin COA), E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA), and G (West-End COA). With participation partnerships and the application of resource conservation tools, long-term benefits to native vegetation, riparian and wetland communities, big game, and raptor habitat within NRA and COA lands would range from minor to major, and those to fisheries resources would range from negligible to minor. Intensity of impacts would be dependent on location, level of landowner participation, and types of tools implemented. However, if development occurs on private lands within the COA with no concern for resource conservation, adverse impacts to vegetation and wildlife resources would be similar to those described under Alternative 1.

¹ Public Law 106- 76 specifically requested that NPS evaluate natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources within, and surrounding, the NRA.

Impact Topics	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
	<p>adverse impacts.</p> <p>Long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts to big game habitat and raptor use of the NRA would result from exotic species invasion and continuing habitat fragmentation on adjacent lands, particularly Land Units D (Iola Basin COA), E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA), and G (West-End COA). Loss of habitat due to noxious or exotic plant species invasion, land development, or other land uses would result in long-term moderate to major adverse impacts on elk and mule deer severe winter range and bighorn sheep overall range. Raptor habitat and activities would be similarly affected.</p> <p>Fisheries within the NRA would not be directly impacted, though water quality impacts from activities outside the NRA could result in indirect short- to long-term negligible to minor effects to fisheries inside and outside the NRA.</p>	
Special Status Species	<p>Implementation of Alternative 1 would not cause direct effects to any special status species or associated habitats within the NRA. However, loss and fragmentation of habitats would continue and possibly increase in private land units outside the NRA, impacting species and habitats within the proposed lands. Federal species that may be affected and would likely be adversely affected include the bald eagle. Likewise, state listed species including the American peregrine falcon, greater sandhill crane, Gunnison Sage-grouse, and Colorado River cutthroat trout would experience minor to moderate impacts to individuals or habitat within the proposed lands, while impacts to long-billed curlew would be minor. The great blue heron and Gunnison's prairie dog, both sensitive species, would also be affected by indirect impacts from habitat alteration or disturbance. Impacts to heron would be moderate to major, while those to prairie dogs would be minor to moderate. Sensitive plant individuals or populations may be affected and could be lost due to activities outside the NRA, potentially</p>	<p>Implementation of Alternative 2 would benefit special status wildlife species and therefore would not adversely affect the bald eagle, Colorado River cutthroat trout, American peregrine falcon, greater sandhill crane, Gunnison Sage-grouse, long-billed curlew, great blue heron, nor Gunnison's prairie dog. Special status plant species would also experience beneficial impacts. Through decreased potential for development and other land use activities that are detrimental to habitats, all special status species within the proposed lands would have opportunities for increased conservation and potential for populations to expand. Benefits would be greatest on Land Units D (Iola Basin COA), E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA), and G (West-End COA), where development potential is currently the highest, but resources on other private lands within the COA would benefit as well.</p>

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	resulting in minor to moderate adverse impacts to skiff milkvetch, Gunnison milkvetch, Black Canyon gilia, Colorado desert parsley, Rocky Mountain thistle, or hanging garden Sullivantia.	
Natural Lightscape (Night Sky)	<p>Except for Reclamation's primary jurisdiction areas around the dams, night sky values within the NRA and on other adjacent federal and state lands would continue to be conserved through federal and state land management activities.</p> <p>Private portions of the proposed lands that remain in their current undeveloped condition would also continue to contribute to the existing high quality natural lightscape in the area. However, private portions of the proposed lands surrounding the NRA would continue to be increasingly subject to future development and other land uses in Alternative 1 that could interfere with night sky values within the NRA. This could result in long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts to the natural lightscape/night sky resource.</p>	<p>As in Alternative 1, except for Reclamation's primary jurisdiction areas around the dams, night sky values within the NRA and on other adjacent federal and state lands would continue to be conserved through federal and state land management activities.</p> <p>Within the COA, some of the areas most prone to development are located on private property in Land Units A (CO 92 COA), C (Gunnison River COA), D (Iola Basin COA), E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA), and G (West-End COA). In Alternative 2, there would be greater availability of resource conservation tools to private landowners, and congressionally authorized increased efforts on the part of NPS to work in partnership with private landowners to conserve natural lightscapes within the COA. Increased awareness and cooperation in these areas would be beneficial to both local and NRA-wide lightscapes for visitors and residents alike. This would help maintain existing night sky quality, and result in long-term minor to moderate beneficial impacts to this resource.</p>
Natural Soundscape	<p>Except where motorized recreational vehicles and boats are authorized, and except for Reclamation's primary jurisdiction areas around the dams, the soundscapes within the NRA, and on other adjacent federal and state lands would continue to be conserved through federal and state land management activities.</p> <p>Private portions of the proposed lands that remain in their current undeveloped condition would also continue to contribute to the existing high quality of the natural soundscape in the area. However, private portions of the proposed lands surrounding the NRA would continue to be increasingly subject to future development and other land uses in Alternative 1 that could interfere with soundscape values within the NRA. This</p>	<p>As in Alternative 1, except where motorized recreational vehicles and boats are authorized, and except for Reclamation's primary jurisdiction areas around the dams, the soundscapes within the NRA, and on other adjacent federal and state lands would continue to be conserved through federal and state land management activities.</p> <p>Within the COA, some of the more vulnerable areas to development are located on private property in Land Units A (CO 92 COA), C (Gunnison River COA), D (Iola Basin COA), E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA), and G (West-End COA). Under Alternative 2, there would be greater availability of resource conservation tools for private landowners, and congressionally authorized increased efforts on the part of NPS to work in partnership with private landowners to</p>

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	could result in long-term, minor to moderate adverse impacts to this resource.	conserve natural soundscapes within the COA. Increased awareness and cooperation in these areas would be beneficial to both local and NRA-wide soundscapes for visitors and residents alike. This would help maintain existing soundscape quality, and result in long-term minor to moderate beneficial impacts to this resource.
Cultural Resources²		
Archeological Resources, and Historic Districts and Structures	Federal actions within the NRA would result in short and long-term direct minor beneficial impacts on cultural resources. Potential development on Land Units C (Gunnison River COA) and G (West-End COA) could, when coupled with other federal activities, result in indirect minor to moderate adverse cumulative impacts on cultural resources within the NRA, through excavations, and by altering the scene or context of the resource.	The direct short- and long-term minor beneficial impact resulting from federal management practices within the NRA coupled with the beneficial impacts associated with potential conservation easements and/or additions to the NRA would result in direct short- and long-term minor beneficial impacts on cultural resources inside and outside the proposed NRA boundary.
Visitor Use, Understanding, and Enjoyment		
Recreational Opportunities ³	<p>Unmet potential for certain types of land-based recreation in the proposed lands surrounding the NRA would result in long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts to the NRA visitor's recreational experience and enjoyment. Long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts on the natural resources on non-NRA lands would be possible from the unrestricted motorized access by some visitors, and resultant change to sensitive habitat areas. Land Units A (CO 92 COA) and C (Gunnison River COA) would be susceptible to long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts as a result of trespass by visitors, including illegal landing of hang-gliders on NRA lands. Historic grazing would continue in Long Gulch-Beartrap, and crossing of the Crystal trail by cattle could result in long-term negligible to minor adverse impacts on the visitor experience due to grazing use.</p> <p>The potential for future development and</p>	<p>Long-term minor to moderate beneficial impacts to recreational opportunities and visitor enjoyment would result from landowners' willing participation in partnerships with NPS, and the use of tools for resource conservation. Intensity of impacts would be dependent on location, level of landowner participation, and types of tools implemented. Benefits would be greatest in those areas within the COA with the greatest potential for enhancement of trail connections, trail access to new scenic overlooks and backpacking camping areas, cross-county skiing, access to climbing areas, connectivity for mountain biking, and access to legal hang-gliding landing areas. These areas include Land Units A (CO 92 COA), C (Gunnison River COA), D (Iola Basin COA), and E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA).</p> <p>As in Alternative 1, there is a potential in Alternative 2 for long-term major adverse impacts on scenic resources, and the resultant long-term major adverse impact on</p>

² Public Law 106- 76 specifically requested that NPS evaluate natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources within and surrounding the NRA.

³ Public Law 106- 76 specifically requested that NPS evaluate natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources within and surrounding the NRA.

Impact Topics	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
	<p>other types of land use, such as high-density housing, high-rise buildings, large parking areas, utility towers, and mining operations on private lands surrounding the NRA could have a long-term major adverse impact on the scenic resources in the area. The scenic resource is considered to be a key resource for enjoyment of the NRA. Therefore, there could also be a long-term major adverse impact on visitor enjoyment and appreciation of an otherwise nationally significant and spectacular geological and natural landscape setting.</p>	<p>visitor enjoyment and appreciation of the NRA and its surroundings due to incompatible development and land use, such as high-density housing, high-rise buildings, large parking areas, utility towers, and mining operations, within the COA. This is because the actions proposed in this alternative would be on a volunteer, or willing basis on the part of the private sector. However, if the actions proposed in Alternative 2 are implemented, and the tools and concepts of partnership, cooperation, and conservation are truly enacted, then there would be long-term major and beneficial impacts on the scenic resources. This would result in a long-term major beneficial impact on visitor enjoyment, experience, and appreciation of the NRA and its surroundings.</p>
Interpretation and Educational Opportunities	<p>Within the NRA, interpretive services and educational programs would continue as currently managed. Moderate to high development potential on land adjacent to the NRA (Land Units C [Gunnison River COA] and E [Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA]) could have long-term negligible to minor adverse impacts on future opportunities for expanded interpretive services and educational programs.</p>	<p>Beneficial impacts to interpretive and educational opportunities would result from COA landowners' participation in partnerships with NPS, and implementation of resource conservation tools. Benefits would be greatest in those areas with the potential for trail access to new interpretive and scenic overlooks, including Land Units A (CO 92 COA) and E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA). This would also provide the opportunity for facilitated access to overlooks of unique geologic formations such as the Curecanti Needle, resulting in long-term minor to moderate beneficial impacts. Land Units B (Blue Mesa Reservoir) and C (Gunnison River COA) would provide interpretive opportunities associated with a long distance trail connection to Riverway and Gunnison, and opportunities for access for the mobility impaired, school programs, and Night Sky viewing, resulting in long-term moderate beneficial impacts.</p> <p>Land Unit E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA) would provide opportunity for a joint-agency managed visitor center facility with direct access for visitors from US 50, resulting in a long-term moderate to major benefit. (Provision of such a visitor center, as well as other recreational and interpretive opportunities suggested in Alternative 2, would depend on a new General</p>

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		Management Plan or Implementation Plan for the NRA.)
Scenic Resources⁴		
Viewsheds	<p>Scenic resources within the NRA and on other adjacent federal and state lands would continue to be conserved through federal and state land management activities. Important scenic features such as the Dillon Pinnacles and Curecanti Needle would be protected, resulting in long-term major beneficial impacts on scenic resources. Private lands within the COA that remain in their current undeveloped condition would also continue to contribute to the existing high quality natural landscape in the area.</p> <p>However, private lands in the COA (surrounding the NRA) proposed for Alternative 2 would continue to be increasingly subject to future development and other land uses in Alternative 1 that might be incompatible with NRA goals and objectives. This could result in long-term major adverse impacts to the scenic resource, depending upon factors such as decisions by landowners, county land use regulations, and population growth. The degree of impact would depend upon type of development and land use; whether development remains localized within a few areas, or becomes increasingly widespread over time; and whether it would occur in the foreground, middle ground, and/or background of the viewer.</p> <p>Future development and other types of land use, such as high-density housing, high-rise buildings, large parking areas, utility towers, and mining operations on private lands in the COA could result in a long-term major adverse impact on the spectacular geological and natural landscape setting, which can be seen from within the NRA, and which is considered to be a key resource for visitor enjoyment of</p>	<p>Some of the more important scenic areas, and those more vulnerable to development, are located on private property in Land Units A (CO 92 COA), C (Gunnison River COA), D (Iola Basin COA), E (Sapinero/Blue Mesa COA), and G (West-End COA).</p> <p>Conservation of scenic views associated with these areas would be beneficial to both local and NRA-wide viewsheds and individual scenic features, for visitors and residents alike. The availability of resource conservation tools to private landowners, and congressionally authorized increased efforts on the part of NPS to work in partnership with private landowners to conserve viewsheds and scenic resources within the COA, would help maintain the existing scenic resource. The degree to which viewsheds and individual scenic features on private lands within the COA would be conserved is highly dependent upon the willingness and cooperation of landowners. Should landowners implement tools such as conservation easements or fee simple acquisition, long-term major beneficial impacts to the scenic resources would occur.</p> <p>As in Alternative 1, there is a potential in Alternative 2 for adverse impacts on scenic resources, due to certain types of development and land use, such as high-density housing, high-rise buildings, large parking areas, utility towers, and mining operations within the COA surrounding the NRA. This would occur if private landowners choose not to take advantage of the tools for resource conservation that are available, and if they choose to develop, or otherwise use their lands for purposes that are incompatible with NRA goals and objectives. This is because the actions proposed in Alternative 2 would be on a</p>

⁴ Public Law 106-76 specifically requested that NPS evaluate natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources within and surrounding the NRA.

Impact Topics	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
	the NRA.	volunteer, or willing, basis on the part of the private sector. However, if the actions proposed in Alternative 2 are implemented, and the tools and concepts of partnership, cooperation, and conservation are truly enacted on behalf of both NPS and private landowners, then there would be no long-term adverse impacts to the scenic resource, the conservation of which is essential to the enjoyment of the NRA by visitors and residents alike.
Regional Economic and Social Characteristics		
Economics	<p>Economic conditions within the county would remain unchanged assuming private lands within the proposed lands remained in existing conditions and all other factors such as NRA visitation, visitor expenditures, and payments-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILT) remained at current levels.</p> <p>If private lands were developed, expenditures and employment associated with construction-related activity and new residents could result in short-term minor to long-term negligible beneficial impacts within the local economy. Increased development would also result in long-term negligible to minor beneficial impacts to county revenues through increased property taxes, although associated infrastructure costs could offset some of this benefit.</p> <p>Conversely, development that eroded scenic or other key resource values could create long-term negligible to minor adverse impacts to visitation in the NRA and to the quality of life currently enjoyed by area residents. Overall, the long-term beneficial impacts associated with localized development could be offset or exceeded by the adverse impacts that could result from increased development in sensitive resource areas.</p>	<p>The implementation of resource conservation tools would most likely maintain or improve regional economic health by encouraging growth in the retail and service industries, in non-labor total personal income, and in visitor spending resulting in long-term minor to moderate beneficial impacts. If land is acquired, or comes under conservation easements, long-term negligible to moderate adverse impacts to county revenues could occur, depending upon the land conservation method and the land classification of the property. Any losses in tax revenue could be offset by payments in lieu of taxes, and decreased provision of infrastructure associated with preserved open space.</p>
Private Land Use Within the NRA	Currently the only privately owned interests within the NRA are mineral and/or mining rights. Under this alternative NPS would continue to work cooperatively with owners of such rights through a permitting process to allow the owner to exercise	Currently the only privately owned interests within the NRA are mineral and/or mining rights. As in Alternative 1, NPS would continue to work cooperatively with owners of such rights through a permitting process to allow the owner to exercise those rights

Impact Topics	Alternative 1: No Action (Continuation of Existing Conditions)	Alternative 2: Proposed Action
	those rights while minimizing adverse impacts on NRA resources or visitor enjoyment. Therefore, this alternative would have no impact on privately held rights.	while minimizing adverse impacts on NRA resources or visitor enjoyment. However, under Alternative 2, there would be more programmatic funding and authorization to pursue greater incentives for resource conservation, that might provide a greater opportunity for financial benefit to the owner of the rights, while more closely meeting NPS resource conservation goals and objectives. Thus, this alternative could provide a minor to moderate long term beneficial impact for the owner of the rights.
Neighboring Private Lands and Landowners Within the Proposed Lands	Because landowners would continue to have the freedom to manage their properties within the limits of county land use regulations, there would be no adverse impacts to the control they have over their property due to actions by NPS. However, the NRA's ability to assist landowners to preserve important resources would be limited, since funding would be unavailable to purchase conservation easements or to pursue fee simple acquisition without Congressional appropriation. This would result in moderate to major adverse impacts to landowners who are interested in working in partnership with NPS towards enhanced resource conservation. Changes in land use and property values would most likely occur, but would range from adverse to beneficial depending upon landowner preferences.	<p>Landowners would be under no obligation to negotiate with the National Park Service, nor would NPS have any condemnation or other authority to take private lands within the COA without full consent of and compensation to the landowner. Because landowners would continue to have full private property rights within the limits of county land use regulations, there would be no adverse impacts to the control they have over their property. With congressional authorization, and subject to competing demands from other NPS units, there would be more opportunity for funds to be made available for acquisition of fee title or conservation easements from willing landowners in the COA. This could be a major beneficial impact to interested landowners.</p> <p>The availability of a full range of resource conservation opportunities and tax benefits could result in long-term minor to major benefits to interested landowners. Changes in land use and property values would most likely occur, but would range from adverse to beneficial depending upon landowner preferences.</p>
National Park Service, Reclamation, and Other Neighboring Agency Management and Operations		
National Park Service Administrative Management, and Operations	The ongoing requests for information related to resource conservation on adjacent private lands, and potential resource and visitor use impacts associated with potential development of private lands adjacent to the NRA would result in long-term minor adverse impacts to NPS operations.	If funding is not provided to hire the necessary staff that would be needed to perform the additional office and field duties that would be required to implement Alternative 2, there would be a long-term major adverse impact on NPS operations. If additional staff is available to perform these duties, there is expected to be a long-term

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	<p>There would be a minor beneficial impact on NPS ability to meet its mission through the Joint Agency Management Effort, which has been initiated as part of this RPS. However, under Alternative 1, progress is limited due to lack of staff time to fully realize the potential opportunities. Under Alternative 2, there would be more staff time available to pursue this effort.</p>	<p>moderate beneficial impact to NPS operations, due to enhanced cooperation from landowners and other neighbors in the realm of resource conservation. It is for these reasons that this study recommends an increase in the NRA's base funding to hire two additional full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees to accomplish these tasks, and to make Alternative 2 become a reality.</p> <p>There would be a long-term minor to moderate beneficial impact on NPS ability to meet its mission, due to appropriately worded legislation for the NRA, improved wording in a new MOA with Reclamation, and increased consultation and cooperation between NPS and other agencies, including Reclamation. This improvement in consultation and cooperation among the agencies is already happening, through the Joint Agency Management Effort, which is integral to the RPS.</p> <p>Land transfers between NPS and other agencies would simplify existing boundaries between agencies and improve NPS operations in site-specific areas, resulting in long-term negligible to minor beneficial impacts to NPS.</p>
Reclamation's Primary Operations	<p>The Bureau of Reclamation and Western Area Power Administration would continue their responsibilities within and adjacent to the national recreation area, including construction, operations, maintenance, replacement, and additions, consistent with Reclamation law, and other applicable laws and regulations. Reclamation, Western, and the National Park Service would consult with each other as necessary and appropriate. Thus, there would be no adverse impacts to Reclamation and Western responsibilities under Alternative 1.</p>	<p>As with Alternative 1, the Bureau of Reclamation and Western Area Power Administration would continue their responsibilities within and adjacent to the national recreation area, including construction, operations, maintenance, replacement, and additions, consistent with Reclamation law, and other applicable laws and regulations. Formal establishment of the NRA under Alternative 2 would not amend or supplement existing Reclamation law applicable to the Aspinall Unit or the Uncompahgre Project. Reclamation, Western, and the National Park Service would consult with each other as necessary and appropriate. Thus, there would be no adverse impacts to Reclamation and Western responsibilities under Alternative 2.</p>

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Reclamation and Other Neighboring Agency Administrative Management, and Operations	The existing condition requires Reclamation to develop, negotiate, implement, and maintain local agreements with at least two land management agencies (NPS and BLM) for its lands within and adjacent to the NRA. This activity and the associated personnel and costs for coordinating management on these lands create a minor long-term expense for all three agencies.	<p>New NRA legislation, a revised agreement between Reclamation and NPS, and streamlining or potential elimination of other agreements among various agencies, would provide a long-term minor beneficial impact to Reclamation operations, by reducing associated personnel costs for managing the lands and agreements.</p> <p>Other agencies, such as USFS, BLM, and CDOW would experience negligible to moderate beneficial impacts to operations, depending upon the location and change in agency responsibility associated with the land transfers. In some locations, long-term negligible adverse impacts could occur to existing maintenance schedules, where an agency would assume new responsibilities.</p>

