

The Planning Process

Scoping is the first step to involve the public in the environmental analysis process. Scoping includes holding meetings and providing opportunities for the public to comment so that their concerns are identified early and the analysis is focused on important issues. The NPS uses your comments to ensure that it is considering all of the possible alternatives in developing a motorized access plan and subsequent regulations.

Your participation will help shape this plan.

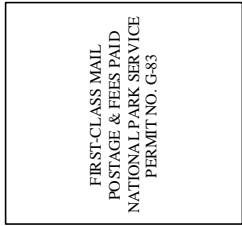
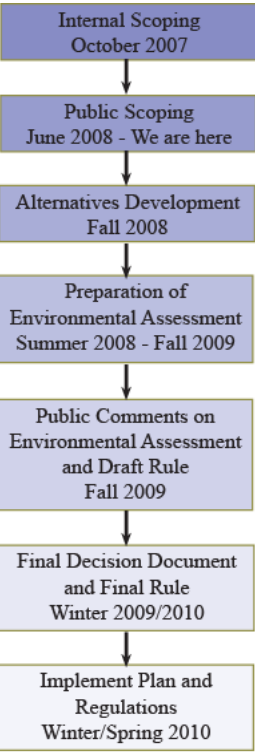
There are a number of ways to be involved:

- Attend a public scoping meeting
- Submit comments (preferred method) electronically at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/CURE>
- Submit written comments by mail to:

Superintendent
Curecanti National Recreation Area
Re: Motorized Vehicle Access Plan/EA
102 Elk Creek
Gunnison, CO 81230

The comment period for scoping will be open until July 11, 2008.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Curecanti National Recreation Area
102 Elk Creek
Gunnison, CO 81230



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Curecanti National Recreation Area

National Park Service
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**Motorized Vehicle Access Plan and Regulations/
Environmental Assessment**

Public Scoping Meetings

June 24-25, 2008

You're Invited!
Because of your interest in the Curecanti National Recreation Area (NRA), we are requesting your input in developing a Motorized Vehicle Access Plan/Environmental Assessment (plan/EA) at Curecanti NRA. Your participation is vital to our planning process.

The National Park Service (NPS) requests your participation in the project planning process to identify potential environmental impacts, issues, concerns, and alternative concepts. The NPS would like to discuss the proposal and gather any thoughts, ideas, or comments that you may have regarding this project.

<u>Public Scoping Meetings</u>	<u>Meeting Format</u>
Tuesday, June 24 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Holiday Inn Express 1391 South Townsend Montrose, CO 81402	The meetings will consist of a presentation followed by an open house with NPS staff on hand to visit with you, answer questions, and record your input.
Wednesday, June 25 5:00 p.m – 7:00 p.m. Fred R. Field Western Heritage Center (Gunnison Fairgrounds) 275 Spruce St. Gunnison, CO 81230	Attendees may also submit comments on written forms available at the meeting; on-line through the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website; or by regular mail as described in this brochure.

Curecanti National Recreation Area: Background

Curecanti National Recreation Area is located in southwestern Colorado along the Gunnison River. The Recreation Area includes three reservoirs (Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal) and is managed to provide for public use and enjoyment while ensuring visitor safety, resource preservation, and the conservation of scenic, natural, historic, archaeological, and wildlife values.

Traditionally, park policy has been to allow the operation of motor vehicles on lake-bottom routes within the pool area of Blue Mesa Reservoir (also referred to as Blue Mesa Lake), but only between the high water line - or the point at which the reservoir level is at maximum capacity - and the actual water surface level for the purpose of fishing access and boat launching.

Although the most common motor vehicles at the Recreation Area are cars and trucks, snowmobiles are often used to access popular ice fishing locations during the winter months. Current regulations limit snowmobiles at the Recreation Area to the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir and designated access roads.

Curecanti National Recreation Area initiated this planning process to comply with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989, which require that all units of the National Park Service establish policies and procedures that ensure that off-road vehicle use is managed to protect the natural and cultural resources of the Recreation Area and provide for the safety of all visitors.

Purpose: the purpose of the proposed motorized vehicle access plan is to:

- Protect and preserve natural and cultural resources and natural processes while providing access for appropriate recreational opportunities.
- Promote the safety of all visitors and employees.
- Assure that management of motorized vehicle access considers the purposes and operational needs of the Recreation Area, Aspinall project, and adjacent lands.

Need: a motorized vehicle access plan is needed:

- To comply with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989 regarding off-road vehicle use, and with NPS laws, regulations, and policies to minimize impacts to Recreation Area resources and values.
- To protect natural and cultural resources and natural processes from potential effects of motorized vehicle access.
- To establish an approved plan incorporating public input that provides access for appropriate recreational opportunities.
- To more appropriately define snowmobile use as it relates to travel below the high water line.

Objectives: All alternatives selected for detailed analysis must meet project objectives and the purpose and need for action. The objectives of this plan include:

Management Methodology

- Identify criteria to designate motorized vehicle access areas and routes.

Soils

- Minimize impacts of motorized vehicle access on soil erosion and compaction.

Vegetation

- Minimize adverse impacts to native plant species related to motorized vehicle access.
- Minimize the potential introduction or spread of non-native plant species.

Wildlife

- Minimize impacts to native wildlife and their habitats related to motorized vehicle access.

Species of Special Concern

- Provide protection for threatened, endangered, and other protected species (e.g., state-listed species) and their habitats.
- Minimize impacts related to motorized vehicle access as required by laws and policies, such as the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and NPS laws and management policies.

Aquatic Species and Habitat

- Minimize impacts to aquatic species and habitat from motorized vehicle access.

Water Quality

- Minimize impacts to water quality from motorized vehicle access.

Paleontological Resources

- Protect known localities of paleontological resources from adverse impacts related to motorized vehicle access.
- Minimize impacts to geologic formations with the potential to contain paleontological resources.

Cultural Resources

- Protect cultural resources such as pre-historic and historic archeological sites, and cultural landscapes from adverse impacts related to motorized vehicle access.

Visitor Use and Experience

- Manage access for motorized vehicles for appropriate recreational opportunities.
- Minimize conflicts between motorized vehicle access and other uses.
- Ensure that motorized vehicle operators are informed about the rules and regulations regarding motorized vehicle access at the Recreation Area.

Visitor and Employee Safety

- Ensure that management of motorized vehicle access promotes the safety of all visitors and employees.

Recreation Area Operations and Management

- Minimize operational and maintenance needs and costs to fully implement a motorized vehicle access plan.
- Consult with adjacent landowners regarding management of motorized vehicle access.
- Prevent impacts to the works and facilities of the Aspinall Unit, including dams, powerplants, transmission lines, and access roads from motorized vehicle access.

Preliminary Alternative Elements

The NPS has identified preliminary alternative elements for managing motorized vehicle access at the Recreation Area. These include:

- Based on the location of resources, confine motorized vehicle access to designated routes, areas, and points.
- Provide additional parking areas and pull outs where lake-bottom driving is currently prohibited.
- Implement seasonal or temporary closures to protect wet soils and paleontological resources exposed by fluctuations in reservoir levels.
- Close all or certain parts of the park unit, or establish buffers around sensitive resource areas, including cultural resource sites.
- Establish “zones” to separate different types of visitor use.
- Restrict “play areas.”
- Maintain appropriate access for mobility-impaired visitors.
- Implement a “self-certification” permit system.
- Provide educational/informational materials.
- Set/enforce speed limits and vehicle standards to protect resources and promote vehicle safety.
- Continue current management of snowmobiles (limited to the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir), but address travel through areas below the high water line which are not covered by the current rule.



Exposed area below high water line at Iola Basin