



Welcome!

Motorized Vehicle Access Plan/Environmental Assessment

Public Scoping Open House

Montrose, CO

Holiday Inn Express

5:00 – 7:00, June 24, 2008

Gunnison, CO

Fred R. Fields Western Heritage Center

5:00 – 7:00, June 25, 2008



Scoping Comments

The primary goal of scoping is to determine the range of issues and alternatives to be addressed.

During scoping, the park provides a description of the project proposal, including statements of purpose and need, a list of project objectives, a list of issues to be considered, and preliminary alternative elements.

The public is asked to submit comments, concerns, and suggestions related to these aspects of the project at this time.

The most useful types of scoping comments consider the following:

- Alternative approaches and ideas for accomplishing the project goals
- The range of environmental and socioeconomic issues that need to be considered
- Other potential projects that might affect or be affected by this project
- Information that needs to be considered (such as related research) and why
- Information on how you use the park and how a project might affect that use



How To Comment

Each person has an important perspective on the management of Curecanti National Recreation Area and can make a unique contribution to the planning process that will help the National Park Service produce better planning documents.

The type of comment that is most useful in evaluating a plan or project depends on how far along it is in the planning process. The public is also encouraged to send in general comments for consideration by park staff at any time.

- **Submit comments on-line at <http://parkplanning/nps.gov/CURE> (preferred method)**
- Provide comments to NPS staff during the open house
- Write your comments on comment sheets provided at the open house
- Mail comments to:

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

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



Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the motorized vehicle access plan is to:

“Purpose” is a broad statement of goals and objectives that the National Park Service intends to fulfill by taking action.

- 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 for Action

Need is a discussion of existing conditions, problems that need to be remedied, decisions that need to be made, and policies or mandates that need to be implemented.

Need answers the question "Why is action is being taken at this time?"



A motorized vehicle access plan is needed at this time:

- 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

Objectives are specific statements of purpose and indicate what must be achieved for the plan to be considered a success.

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

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





Objectives



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 policies

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



Objectives

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

Alternative elements are actions that could be used to create alternatives

During internal scoping meetings, the planning team developed a list of preliminary alternative elements

- 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 closures to protect wet soils.
- Implement temporary closures to protect 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 found below high water.
- Establish “zones” to separate different types of visitor use.
- Prohibit the establishment of “play areas.”



Preliminary Alternative Elements

The list does not represent all possible elements that could be considered

Public input is a very important component of developing plan alternatives

- Maintain appropriate access for mobility-impaired visitors.
- Implement a “self-certification” permit system where applicants review information related to motorized vehicle access and answer a series of questions before printing a permit.
- Provide educational/informational materials (e.g., brochures, maps, and signage).
- 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 access through areas below the high water line which are not covered by the current rule.



Preliminary Issues

In NEPA, an “issue” describes the relationship between actions and environmental resources.

Issues often describe concerns or obstacles to achieving a park goal.

- The spread of non-native species and impacts on vegetation, including plant species of special concern (e.g., adobe thistle – a state-listed rare plant)
- Impacts on wildlife, including species of special concern (e.g., the Gunnison’s sage grouse – formerly a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act), and their habitat
- Impacts to sensitive paleontological resources
- Erosion and soil damage
- Damage to cultural landscapes, prehistoric and historic resources, and archeological resources





Preliminary Issues

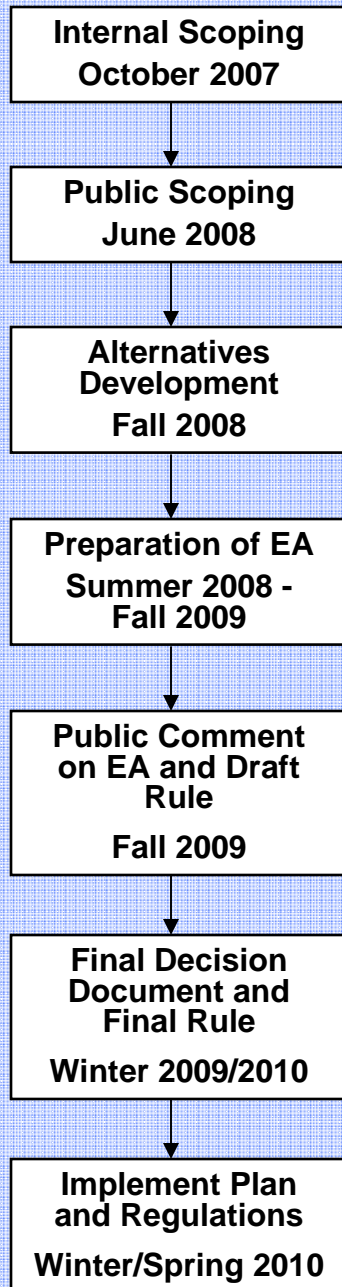
Issues identified so far are problems that either current vehicle management has caused or that any of the alternative elements being considered might cause.

- Impacts to all users resulting from restrictions on level of use
- Coordination of motorized vehicle access with agencies that manage the Aspinall Unit (Bureau of Reclamation and Western Area Power Administration)
- Coordination of land and vehicle management with adjacent landowners, including the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife





NEPA Process



NPS is preparing an EA in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires federal agencies to analyze impacts to the natural and human environment for any major federal actions, such as the development of this plan.

NEPA also encourages the participation of affected citizens and federal and state agencies in the decision-making process.

Steps in the planning process are identified in the graphic on the left. The dates provided give a very general idea of when the planning process may be completed and implementation can begin.

Throughout the process, project updates will be available on the National Park Service's planning website (PEPC) at <http://parkplanning/nps.gov/CURE>