



Photo: Efrain Padro/Alamy

Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) invites your input on a Grazing Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (GrMP/EA) prepared for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park (BLCA) and the Curecanti National Recreation Area (CURE), pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The release of this newsletter and GrMP/EA is the final opportunity for public involvement in this planning effort.

The purpose of this effort is to programmatically evaluate grazing in both parks and provide management direction for the NPS assuming permitting responsibilities in both parks. The GrMP/EA outlines approaches for grazing management that consider the impacts of livestock grazing and trailing on native species and ecosystems within BLCA and CURE. Additionally, this plan would provide management consistency to align with current laws, regulations, and policies in order to ensure balance with natural and cultural resource management priorities, as directed by the NPS Organic Act (54 United States Code 100101). The NPS has conducted internal, public, and cooperating agency scoping to assist with the development of this GrMP/EA.

Three alternatives, including a proposed action, are being presented at this time: the No-Action Alternative under which the NPS continues management of grazing under the current terms and conditions established by the NPS with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forest Service (USFS), but with the NPS administering all permits; an Adaptive Management Grazing Alternative under which livestock grazing activities and infrastructure could be modified to maintain or enhance resource protection; and a Phased Reduced Grazing Alternative, which would reduce grazing on NPS lands over time. This newsletter includes further information about the alternatives being considered in the GrMP/EA.

The NPS is initiating a public comment period from May 28, 2025, to June 27, 2025. The NPS will host a virtual public meeting on June 5, 2025, and in-person public meetings on June 3 and June 4, 2025. We invite you to participate in the planning process by providing public comments on the GrMP/EA. Thank you for your continued interest in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area.

Sincerely,

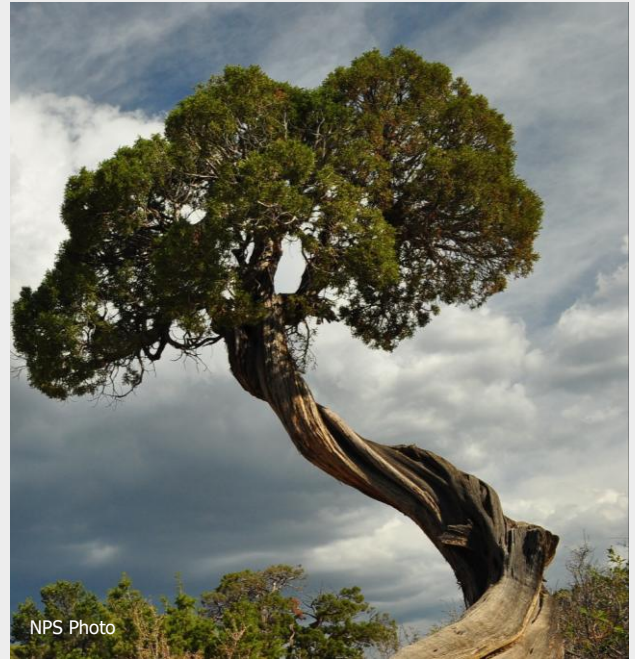
Stuart West, Superintendent
Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
Curecanti National Recreation Area



Background

Livestock grazing existed within the BLCA boundaries prior to its establishment as a National Monument in 1933. The 1999 Act establishing BLCA as a National Park (rather than a National Monument) provided for continued livestock grazing where authorized under existing permits or leases as of October 21, 1999. Grazing within CURE was permitted prior to the transfer of management from the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) to the NPS on February 11, 1965 (as one of the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement between the USBR and NPS).

Currently, the NPS administers grazing through a combination of NPS-issued Special Use Permits (SUPs) and interagency agreements with BLM and USFS. Once the GrMP is complete, the NPS will issue livestock grazing and trailing SUPs to all permittees, which will be renewed annually.



Purpose and Need for Action



The purpose of the project is to provide a long-term plan that ensures that livestock grazing is consistent with relevant laws, regulations, interagency agreements, and policies. In developing a grazing management plan, NPS will fulfill its commitment to preserve and protect the natural, cultural, and recreational resources as stated in the purpose of each park unit.

The grazing management plan is needed to:

- Meet NPS' obligation to manage authorized grazing operations in coordination with the BLM and USFS.
- Issue and manage grazing SUPs in accordance with 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 2.60 - Livestock use and agriculture.
- Provide and enhance ecosystem resilience in the face of droughts, aridification, ecological degradation, and altered fire regimes.
- Address conservation measures for Gunnison sage-grouse (GUSG) consistent with the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
- Manage livestock grazing to protect wilderness character qualities in BLCA in accordance with the 2023 BLCA-CURE Wilderness and Backcountry Management Plan (NPS 2023a).

Description of Alternatives

Actions Common to All Alternatives

Consistent with interagency agreements, the NPS would administer grazing for all allotments within the park units' boundaries. After the NPS selects an alternative through the NEPA process, the NPS would permit grazing under specific terms and conditions on NPS-administered lands in BLCA and CURE. In BLCA, consistent with Public Law 106-76, Section 4(e), grazing would continue for the lifetime of the permit holder as of October 21, 1999, or until the permit is voluntarily relinquished. In CURE and BLCA, the NPS would monitor rangeland conditions. The NPS would continue its current long-term vegetation and soils inventory and monitoring program. Under all alternatives, legacy range improvements and infrastructure would be removed from the Black Canyon of the Gunnison Wilderness.

No-Action Alternative

Under the no-action alternative, the NPS would manage and administer grazing activities within CURE and BLCA boundaries. The NPS would issue livestock SUPs that maintain the existing terms and conditions found in active BLM and USFS allotment permits. The NPS would coordinate directly with grazing and trailing permit holders to address range management activities (for example, timing and usage) and range projects on a case-by-case basis. The no-action alternative would reflect the NPS assumption of administrative duties and the adoption of the current BLM and USFS management approaches and fees.

Adaptive Grazing Management Alternative (Proposed Action)

The proposed action would guide livestock grazing authorizations within all allotments that overlap with the park units, in consultation with the BLM and USFS. The NPS would issue SUPs to permittees with specific terms, conditions, thresholds, and monitoring goals and objectives to mitigate impacts on and protect natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Failure to meet or make progress towards meeting monitoring thresholds would be used as a key indicator for adaptive adjustment of grazing practices. NPS SUPs would be renewed annually, on a schedule independent of BLM's and USFS's renewal process. New SUPs may adjust the timing, duration, and intensity of grazing activities, and implement other new or supplementary terms and conditions to meet resource objectives outlined in the grazing management plan to be consistent with goals for the park units.

Phased Reduced Grazing Alternative

The NPS would issue SUPs to permittees. Livestock grazing within CURE would continue until the current BLM or USFS grazing permits expire. After that time, NPS would not issue additional grazing SUPs. As permits expire, the NPS would take the necessary actions to prevent livestock trespass and use of NPS-administered lands, which could include constructing and maintaining existing boundary fences and removing range improvements, such as water developments. As under all other alternatives, livestock grazing within BLCA would continue for the lifetime of the permit holder or until the grazing permit is voluntarily relinquished according to the 1999 enabling legislation.

A full description of alternatives can be found at: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/BLCACUREGRAZING>



Public Meetings

Virtual Public Meeting

- NPS will hold the **June 5, 2025**, meeting via the Zoom online platform from **6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Mountain Time**. During the virtual public meeting, attendees can join by computer or phone to learn about the GrMP/EA. Information about joining the meeting can be found on the project Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/BLCACUREGRAZING>.
- Please register prior to the meeting at: https://empsi.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_NIqUKC-RRAmHJK3zJAr6rg

In-Person Meetings

NPS will hold in-person meetings on **June 3 and 4, 2025**, at the below venues and times.

- **Montrose, Colorado** – June 3, 2025, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
 - Montrose Police Department, 434 S. 1st St., Montrose, CO 81401
- **Gunnison, Colorado** – June 4, 2025, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
 - Fred Field Center, 298 S. Spruce St., Gunnison, CO 81230



How to Comment

Public participation is an important element of the planning process, and we welcome your comments, on the GrMP/EA. Comments that provide relevant and new information with sufficient detail are most useful. The most valuable comments are those that provide information that can be used when revising management alternatives, or the impacts of alternatives. The NPS will review all public comments and use the substantive comments to inform the final decision for this project.

Please share your comments no later than **June 27, 2025**, online through the PEPC website (preferred method) at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/blcacuregrazing>. Written comments will be accepted at the in-person meetings, or mailed to:

Superintendent
Black Canyon of the Gunnison National
Park and Curecanti National Recreation
Area 102 Elk Creek
Gunnison, CO 81230

Comments will only be accepted as specified above. The NPS won't accept bulk comments in digital or hard-copy submitted on behalf of others. Please note that your entire comment, including your personal information, may be made publicly available at any time. You can request that we withhold your personal identifying information from public view, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

OCT 2023 - JUL 2024	AUG - SEPT 2024	FALL - WINTER 2024	SPRING 2025	SUMMER 2025
Data Gathering and Planning Preparation	Initiate NEPA / Public Scoping Period *	Formulate Draft and Final Alternatives and Prepare EA	Release EA for Public Comment*	NEPA Decision Document

*Opportunity for public input

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Current phase