



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Superintendent
Lake Meredith National Recreation Area
Re: ORV Management Plan/EIS
P.O. Box 1460
Fritch, Texas 79036

**Update on the Lake Meredith National Recreation Area
Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan**

March 2010





Your Participation Will Help Shape This Plan

Because of your interest in the Lake Meredith National Recreation Area (NRA), we are requesting your input for developing an Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (plan/EIS) at Lake Meredith NRA.

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

Please join us at one of the following meetings:

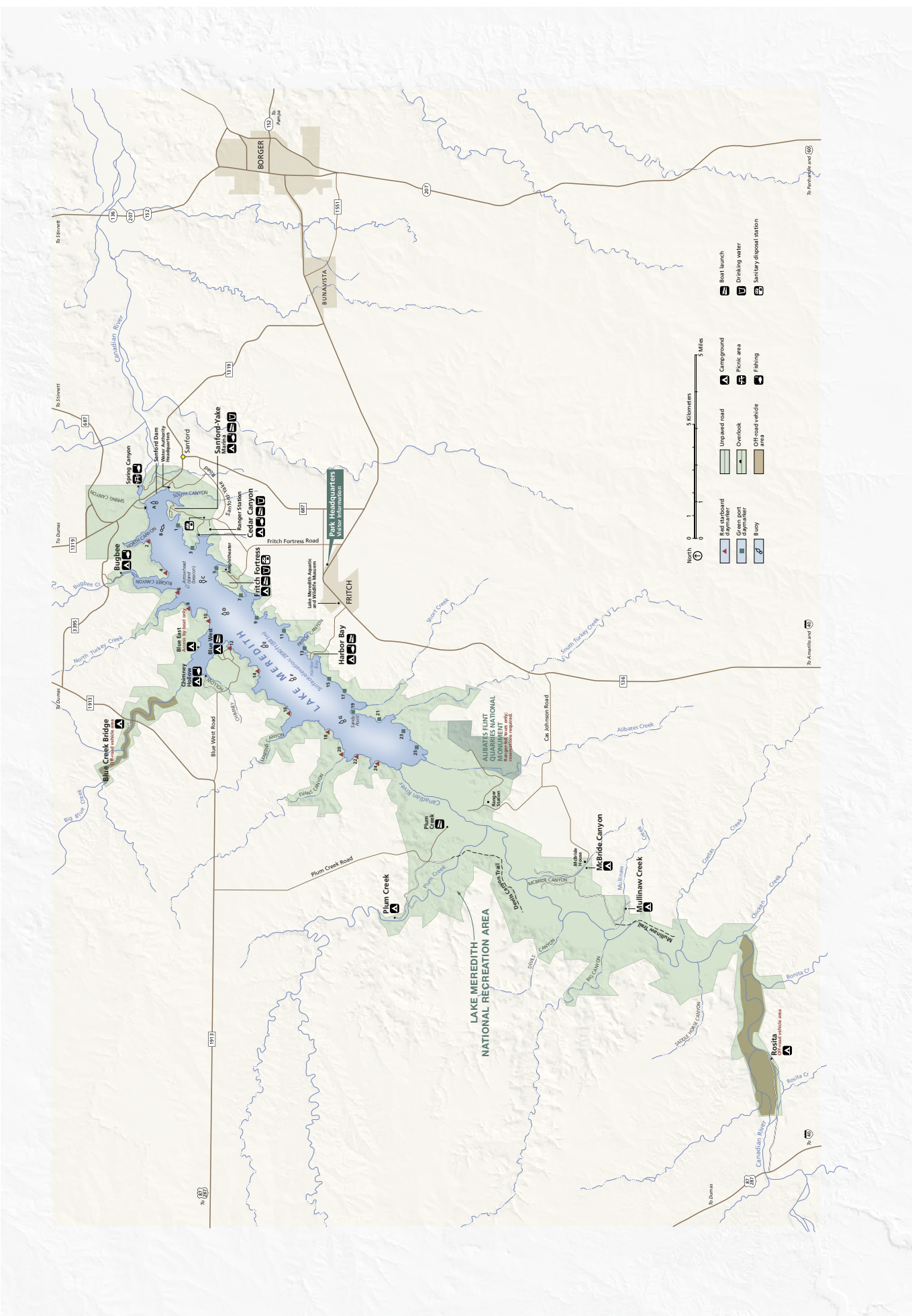
Open House
Tuesday, April 20, 2010
5:30 pm-7:30 pm
Business Office
Sanford-Fritch Schools
540 Eagle Boulevard
Fritch, Texas

Wednesday, April 21, 2010
5:30 pm-7:30 pm
First National Bank
1201 E. First Street
Dumas, Texas

Thursday, April 22, 2010
5:30 pm-7:30 pm
The Ambassador Hotel
3100 I-40, Exit 68B
Amarillo, Texas

Format

The meeting will consist of an open house with NPS staff on hand to visit with you, answer questions, and record your input. Attendees may also submit comments on written forms available at the meeting or on-line or by mail as described.



Lake Meredith Park Map



Purpose of and Need for Action

This *ORV Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (plan/EIS) presents three action alternatives for managing ORV use and assesses the impacts that could result from continuing current management (the no-action alternative) or implementation of any of the action alternatives. Upon conclusion of this plan and decision-making process, the alternative selected for implementation will become the ORV management plan, which will guide the management and control of ORVs at the national recreation area for the next 15 to 20 years. During that approximate time-frame, the NPS will reexamine the plan, and if it has continuing viability, may decide to extend its life. The plan will also form the basis for a special regulation to manage ORV use at the national recreation area.

Purpose of the Plan/
Environmental Impact Statement

The purpose of this plan/EIS is to manage ORV use in the national recreation area for visitor enjoyment and recreation opportunities, while minimizing and correcting damage to resources.

Need for Action

The Lake Meredith National Recreation Area provides a variety of visitor experiences, including the use of ORVs. In the 1970s, two authorized ORV use areas were designated by special regulation (36 CFR 7.57): Blue Creek at the north end of the national recreation area and Rosita (also known as Rosita Flats) at the south end of the national recreation area. ORV use has changed drastically since the establishment of the special regulation and the first use of ORVs at the national recreation area, both in intensity as well as type of ORV used. Modern all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are the primary ORVs used today; however, they were not in use when the original regulations were put into effect.

- To address these concerns, an ORV management plan for Lake Meredith National Recreation Area is needed at this time to:
- Comply with Executive Order 11644, Use of Off-Road Vehicles on Public Lands, as stated in the court case of *Friends of the Earth v. the Department of the Interior*;
 - Provide for sustainable recreational ORV use areas;
 - Address the lack of an approved plan, which has led to ORV use outside of authorized areas;
 - Address resource impacts resulting from ORV use; and
 - Address the change in numbers, power, range, and capabilities of ORVs.

Objectives in Taking Action

Objectives are “what must be achieved to a large degree for the action to be considered a success” (NPS 2001). All alternatives

selected for detailed analysis must meet project objectives to a large degree and resolve the purpose of and need for action. Objectives must be grounded in the national recreation area’s enabling legislation, purpose, significance, and mission goals, and must be compatible with direction and guidance provided by park plans and other management guidance. The following are objectives identified by national recreation area staff for developing this ORV management plan/EIS.



Visitor Use and Safety

- Manage ORV use to minimize conflicts among different ORV users.
- Promote safe operation of ORVs and safety of all visitors.

Management

- Build stewardship through public awareness and understanding of NPS resource management and visitor use policy and responsibilities as they pertain to the national recreation area and ORV management.

Natural Resources

- Preserve and protect threatened, endangered, and other protected species and their habitats.
- Define effective strategies for soil erosion control and restoration of plant resources to support wildlife populations.

Cultural Resources

- Preserve and protect significant cultural resources within the national recreation area.
- Work with interested parties to identify cultural resources that could be adversely affected by ORV use.

National Recreation Area Operations

- Identify needs and costs necessary to implement an ORV plan.
- Minimize impacts to national recreation area operations and costs necessary to implement an ORV plan.



Draft Alternatives

Alternatives provide a full range of management options for decision makers.

Elements Common to Alternatives A, B, C, D:
Operator/Vehicle Requirements

Vehicle Requirements. All vehicles operating in any area of the recreation area must have a decal for ORV use, per Texas state law.

All-terrain vehicle (ATV) specific operator and vehicle requirements, per Texas state law, include the following:

- All ATV operators must wear eye protection and a helmet approved by the Texas Department of Transportation.
- by the state of Texas under §663.031 of the Texas Transportation Code.
- All ATV operators under the age of 14 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.
- ATV operators may not carry a passenger unless the vehicle is designed by the manufacturer for carrying a passenger.

Campfires

Activities related to camping, such as campfires, would continue to be regulated through the Superintendent’s Compendium, with additional restrictions during high fire-danger times (fire bans follow county bans).

Education and Outreach

- All alternatives would include education and outreach elements such as new signage, materials to hand out to visitors, and educational programs.
- All ATV operators must possess a valid safety certificate issued by the state of Texas under § 663.031 of the Texas Transportation Code.

Alternative A: Continuation of Current Management (No Action Alternative)

Under alternative A (no action), the park would continue to manage ORV use at Rosita Flats and Blue Creek per the 2007 Interim ORV Management Plan, as well as through the regulations contained in 36 CFR 7.57 and the Superintendent’s Compendium. This alternative would allow ORV use at Blue Creek, along the creek bottom, officially known as “cutbank to cutbank” (see map 1) and at Rosita Flats below the 3,000-foot

elevation line (see map 2). User and operator requirements described under “Elements Common to All Alternatives” would continue to be implemented and enforced. There will also continue to be no limitation on the operating hours of vehicles. No additional ORV management measures, such as establishment of user zones, user capacity, or a permit system, would be established.

Alternative A would include camping opportunities throughout both Rosita Flats and Blue Creek. There are currently no official designated camping areas at either site, and camping could occur anywhere the visitor can access.

Elements Common to All Action Alternatives:
Elements Common to All Action Alternatives (B, C and D):

Operator/Vehicle Requirements

- The following operator/vehicle requirements would be implemented:
- All ORVs would be required to have a functioning muffler system, a qualified spark arrester, and functioning headlights and taillights.
 - Vehicle mufflers on ORVs that allow more than 96 decibels of sound would be prohibited.
 - All ATVs would be required to have a triangular orange flag on top of an eight-foot pole attached to the back of the vehicle.
 - All ORVs would be required to display lighted headlights and taillights after dark.

Waste Disposal

The NPS would continue to provide waste disposal services at Blue Creek and Rosita Flats and would develop new educational programs/materials such as explaining proper waste disposal techniques.

Hours of Vehicle Operation

Under the action alternatives, there would be no limitation on the operating hours of vehicles in Rosita Flats and Blue Creek, except for in the designated camping areas, where non-registered motorized vehicles would be prohibited from operating between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

Speed Limits

The maximum speed limit in all ORV routes/areas would be 35 mph, with a speed limit of 15 mph in designated camping areas.



Alternative B: Designated Routes at Blue Creek Plus Seek a Transfer in Ownership of Rosita Flats

Under alternative B, the NPS would designate areas at Blue Creek that would be open to ORV use. ORV use areas would be designated as the sandy bottom areas at Blue Creek, with designated ORV routes located outside of and adjacent to the sandy bottom, as shown on map 3. Designated ORV routes would be marked by carsonite posts. ORV use would be prohibited on any vegetation. No permit system or implementation of user capacity would be included under alternative B in Blue Creek. Law enforcement in Blue Creek would be maintained at current levels under alternative B. Alternative B would allow camping at Blue Creek to continue, with a restriction on camping within designated ORV routes. Camping in all other areas, against previously disturbed sites only, would continue to be permitted with the existing amenities.

In addition to the management actions proposed at Blue Creek, under alternative B the NPS would also seek to revise the recreation area boundary to exclude the Rosita Flats area. Management of ORV use in this area has historically been difficult to accomplish, mainly due to the distance of Rosita Flats from park headquarters. Due to its difficult accessibility from the north entrance of the park, presence of ranger patrol is not as frequent as in other areas of the recreation area, such as Blue Creek, and has resulted in a high level of ORV and other types of violations including vandalism, trespass and narcotics possession.



Alternative C: Management of ORV through a Zone System Including Separation of Visitor Uses and Implementation of a Permit System for Educational Purposes

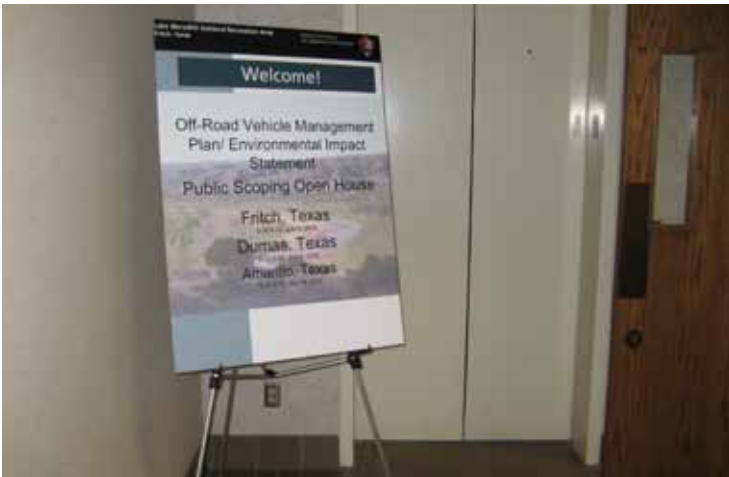
Under alternative C the park would base the designation of routes and areas on a zoning system, with one of the purposes being separation of visitor uses that have the potential to be in conflict with one another. As shown on maps 4 and 5, ORV routes and areas would be established as follows:

- **Blue Creek:** ORVs would only be allowed on sandy bottom areas and designated routes (see map 4), with ORV use prohibited on vegetated areas. Routes and areas where ORV use is allowed would be marked by carsonite posts.
- **Rosita Flats:** The area south of the river (currently denuded) will be established as an ORV “area” and would be open to ORV use. Access to the riverbed from this ORV area will be from designated access points only. Outside of this ORV area, ORV use would only be permitted on designated, marked routes. ORVs could only access the riverbed area from marked and designated access points off the designated ORV routes. In both the ORV area and on ORV routes, driving on vegetated areas would be prohibited.

Alternative C would also institute a zoning system, that would be a “layer” on top of these routes and areas that would further manage use. Zones established could include: Camping Only Zones, Hunting Zones, Resource Protection Zones, Low-speed Zones, and Beginner Zones. See Maps 4 and 5.

Alternative C would include an ORV permit system, with no limit on the number of permits issued. This permit would be of no cost to the user, and would be provided in an effort to increase user education regarding ORV rules and regulations at the park. Establishment of a user capacity would not occur under alternative C.

Additional restrictions would include prohibiting ORV use in areas of pooled water during times of drought (when federally protected fish could be using the pools for habitat) and posting signs to inform the public of this restriction. Alternative C would also prohibit the consumption of alcohol while operating an ORV at Rosita Flats and Blue Creek.





Alternative D: Management of ORV through a Permit System and User Capacity

Under alternative D, the park would manage ORV use through a permitting system as well as through establishment of a user capacity, as described below. These management tools would occur in the context of the following designated routes and areas (same as alternative C), as shown on maps 6 and 7.

- **Blue Creek:** ORVs would only be allowed on sandy bottom areas and designated routes (as mapped map 6), with ORV use prohibited on vegetated areas. Routes and areas where ORV use is allowed would be marked by carsonite posts.
- **Rosita Flats:** The area south of the river (currently denuded) will be established as an ORV “area” and would be open to ORV use. Access to the riverbed from this ORV area will be from designated access points only. Outside this ORV area, ORV use would only be permitted on designated, marked routes. ORVs could only access the riverbed area from marked and designated access points off the designated ORV routes. In both the ORV area and on ORV routes, driving on vegetated areas would be prohibited. See map 7.

Similar to alternative C, alternative D would include camping

in designated camping areas in both Rosita Flats and Blue Creek (see map 6 and 7).

Alternative D would include an ORV permit system, and all ORVs entering the park would be required to have a permit (including vehicles transported to the park on a trailer). This permit would be inexpensive and similar to other permitting fee structures that currently exist within the park. For example, pricing based on consistency with boating permits would result in an ORV permit pricing structure that has a \$4/day permit, \$10/ three-day permit, and \$40/annual permit. Similar to alternative C, the ORV user would be required to read and sign educational materials prior to obtaining a permit. When first initiated, there would be no limit on the number of permits available; however, a limit could be instituted based on the results of future studies of ORV use and how that use relates to potential impacts to resources, as well as to visitor use and experience.

How to Comment on Draft Alternatives

COMMENTS ARE DUE May 19, 2010
To comment on the draft alternatives for the Lake Meredith National Recreation Area ORV Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement, go to:
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/lamr>
• Then click “ORV Management Plan and Regulation”
• Then click “Open For Public Comment”
• Then click “Comment on Document.” You can also download this brochure at this screen.

Written comments can be sent to:
Superintendent
Lake Meredith National Recreation Area
Re: ORV Management Plan/EIS
P.O. Box 1460
Fritch, Texas 79036

IMPORTANT: 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.



Timeline

October 2007	Internal Scoping
June/July 2008	Public Scoping
Fall 2008 to Spring 2010	Alternatives (WE ARE HERE)
Spring/Summer 2010	Preparation of Environmental Impact Statement
Winter 2011	Public Comments on Environmental Impact Statement
Spring 2011	Final Environmental Impact Statement
Summer 2011	Record of Decision



Map 1: Alternative A: Blue Creek ORV Area



-  LAMR Boundary
-  Blue Creek ORV Area (cutbank to cutbank)




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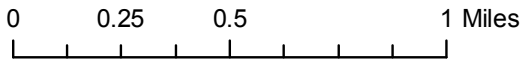


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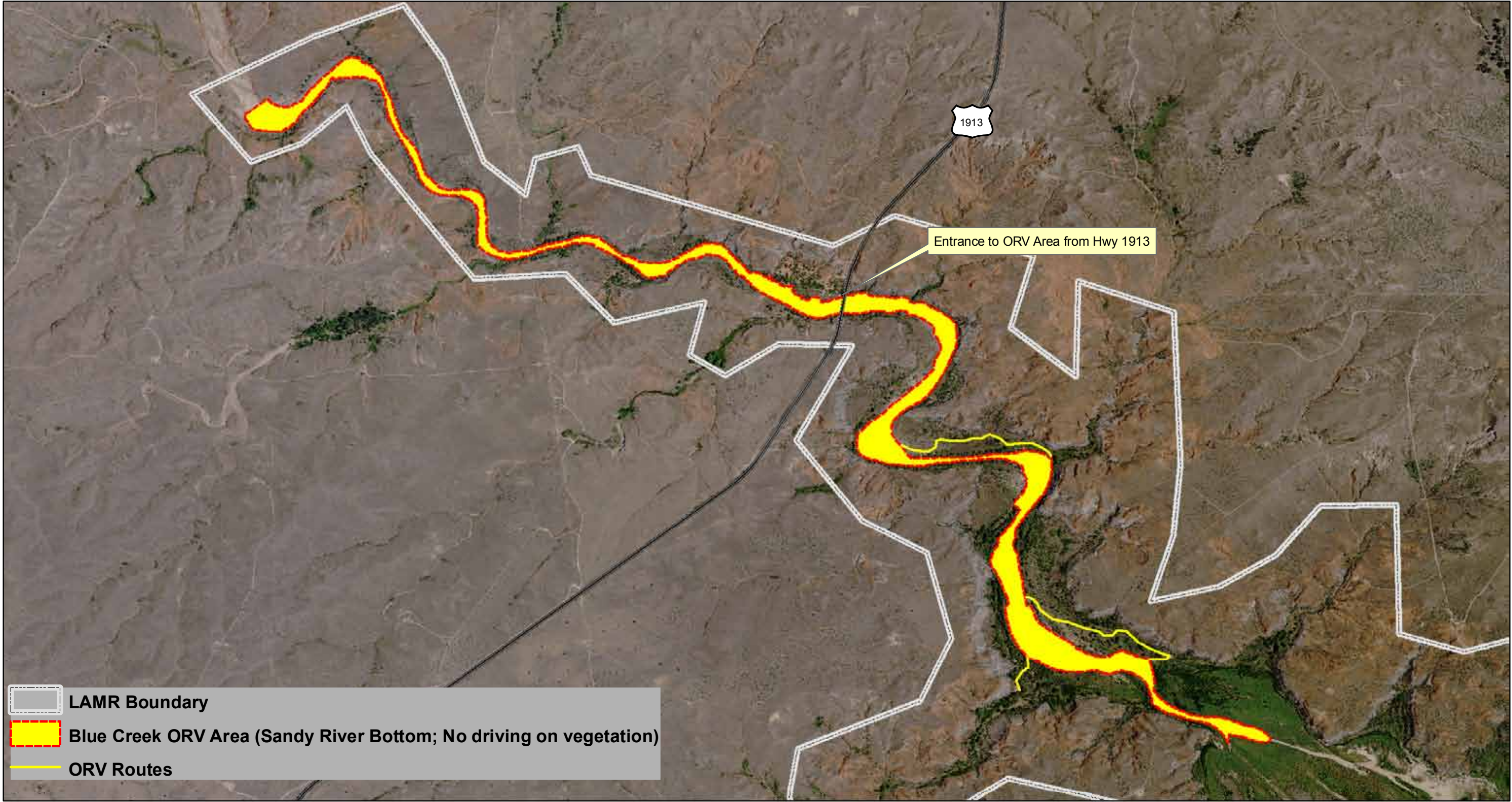
Map 2: Alternative A: Rosita Flats ORV Area



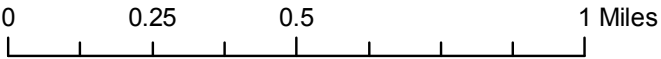
-  LAMR Boundary
-  Rosita ORV Area (3000' contour)
-  ORV Area End at Chicken Creek



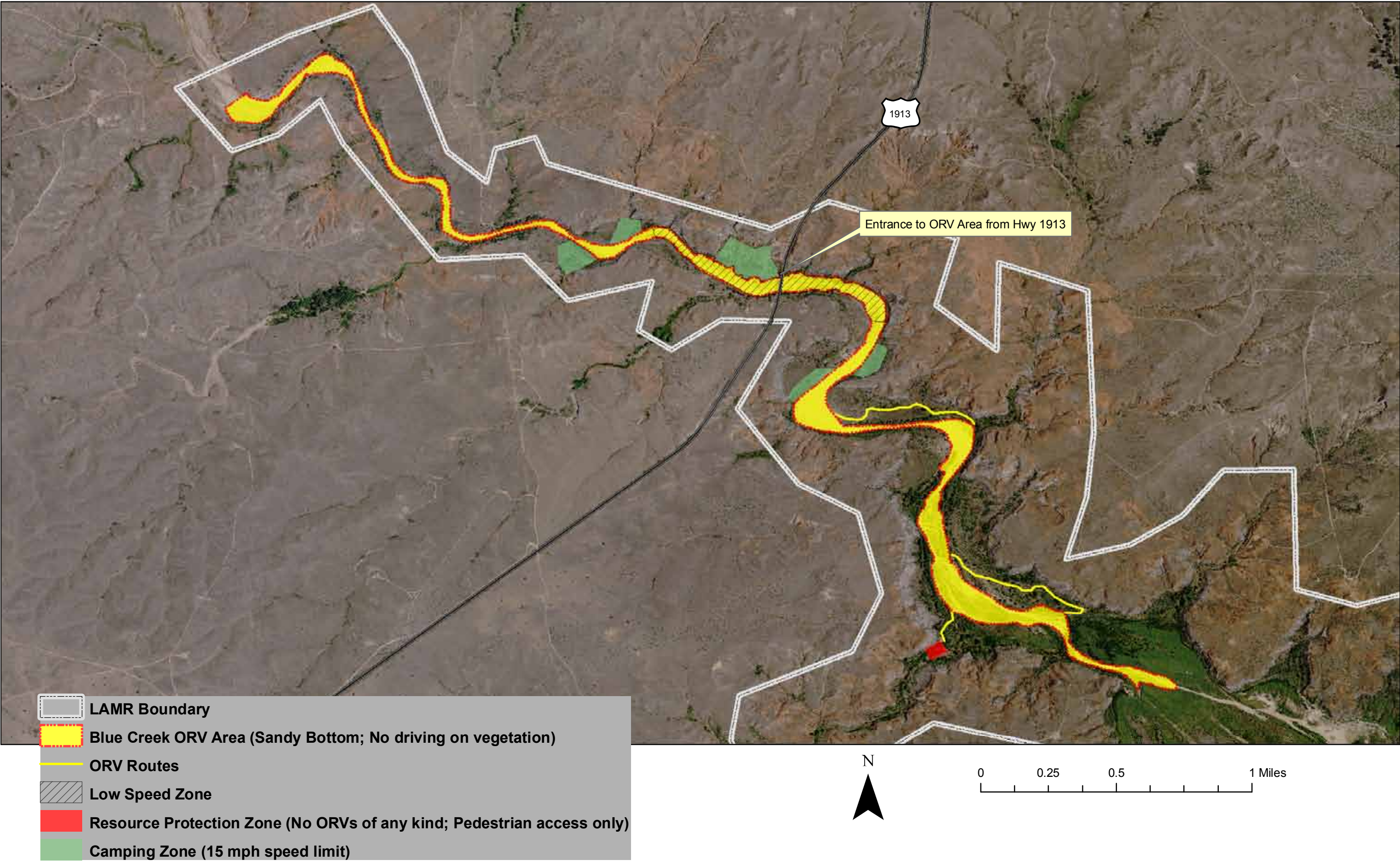
Map 3: Alternative B: Blue Creek ORV Area



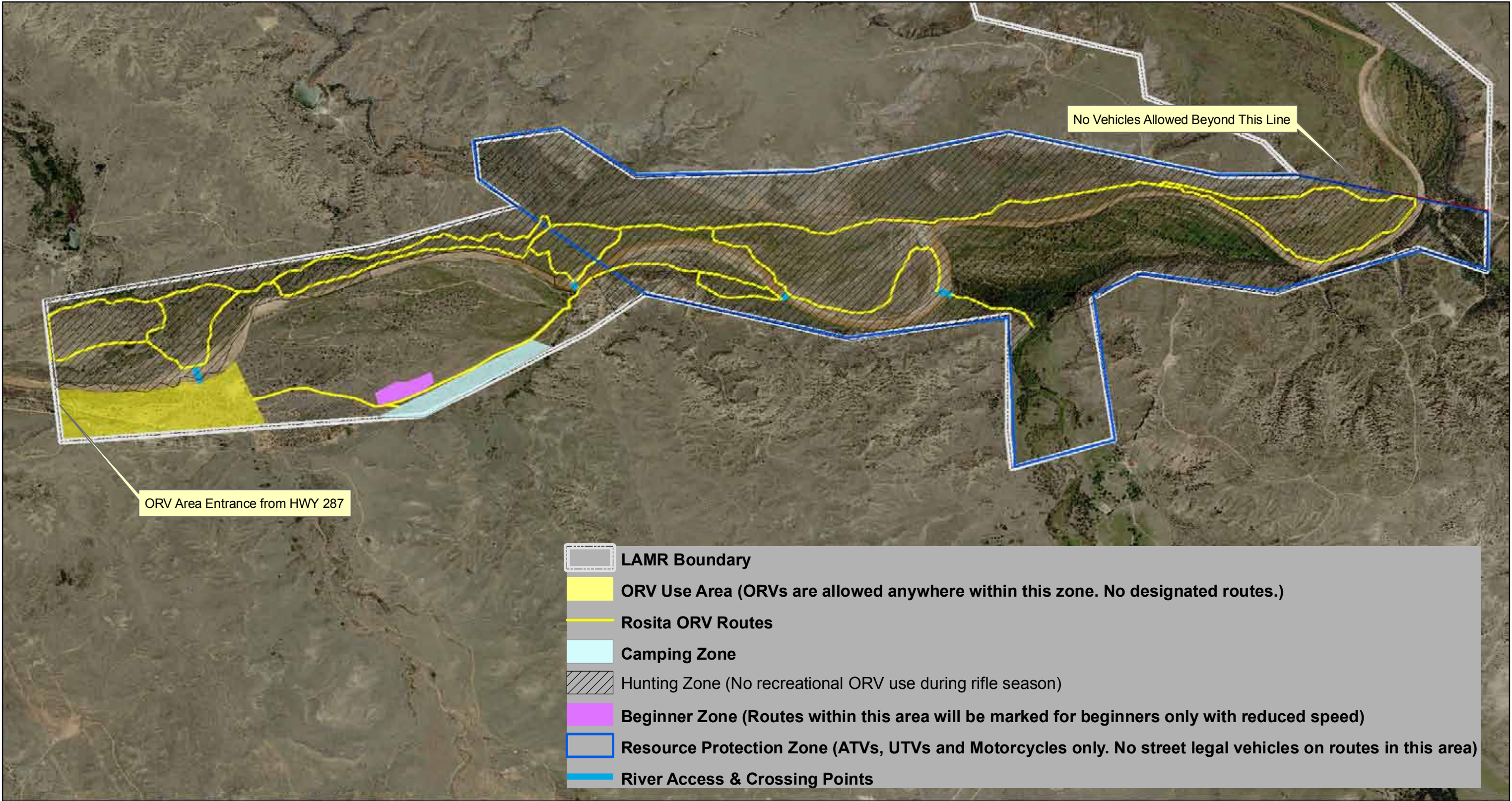
No camping on vegetation; camping allowed only in previously disturbed areas



Map 4: Alternative C: Blue Creek ORV Area



Map 5: Alternative C: Rosita Flats ORV Area



Map 6: Alternative D: Blue Creek ORV Area

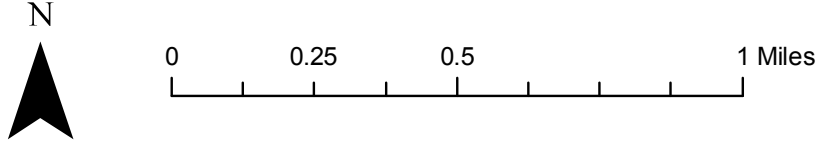


LAMR Boundary

Blue Creek ORV Area (Sandy Bottom; No driving on vegetation)

ORV Routes

Camping Areas (No Camping on Vegetation; Camp in Previously Disturbed Areas)



Map 7: Alternative D: Rosita Flats ORV Area

