



Curecanti National Recreation Area

MOTORIZED VEHICLE ACCESS PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

October 2010



Curecanti National Recreation Area Motorized Vehicle Access Plan Environmental Assessment

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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
MOTORIZED VEHICLE ACCESS PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The National Park Service (NPS) is conducting an environmental assessment (EA) to analyze the impacts of managing motorized vehicle access at Curecanti National Recreation Area (the recreation area). Traditionally, the recreation area has allowed motorized vehicle access in certain off-road areas unless specifically closed pursuant to regulation. This includes lake-bottom routes below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir for the purpose of fishing access, boat launching, and other recreational activities. The recreation area initiated this planning process to comply with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989, which require that all units of the NPS 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. As part of this requirement, the NPS must designate particular routes and areas as open to motorized vehicle access, with the understanding that all other areas would be closed to vehicular access.

This EA addresses the use of motorized vehicles to access appropriate recreational opportunities throughout Curecanti National Recreation Area, including the boundary expansion lands proposed in the park unit's 2008 Resource Protection Study. This EA does not address motorized vehicle access on maintained federal, state, county, or NPS roads, pullouts, or parking lots that occur within the boundaries of the recreation area.

Three alternatives are analyzed in this EA. Alternative A is the "no-action" alternative, which represents the continuation of current motorized vehicle access management as identified in the 2007 Off-Highway Vehicle Evaluation and Interim Management Plan and regulations contained in the Superintendent's Compendium. Alternative B designates routes and areas consistent with the management prescriptions in the park unit's 1997 general management plan, which would limit some traditional public access. Alternative C—the NPS preferred alternative—would provide for the greatest amount of traditional motorized vehicle access by making a minor amendment to the 1997 general management plan.

This EA has been prepared in accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that (1) analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives; (2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to the recreation area's resources and values; and (3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts. Resource topics that have been addressed in this document because the resultant impacts may be greater than minor include soils, vegetation, wildlife, cultural and paleontological resources, visitor use and experience, and recreation area management and operations. All other resource topics have been dismissed because the resource does not exist within the recreation area (or project area), or the project would result in no or negligible to minor effects to those resources and a full analysis was not considered to be necessary. No major effects are anticipated as a result of this project. Internal and public scoping was conducted to assist with the development of this document.

Public Comment

If you wish to comment on this EA, you may do so online at the NPS website "Planning, Environment, and Public Comment" at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cure> or you may mail comments to the address below. This EA will be available for public review for 30 days. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware 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 your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Please address written comments to

Superintendent
Curecanti National Recreation Area
102 Elk Creek
Gunnison, CO 81230

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of this Motorized Vehicle Access Plan/Environmental Assessment (plan/EA) is to:

- develop regulations and procedures that manage motorized vehicle access in the recreation area;
- 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; and
- assure that management of motorized vehicle access considers the purposes and operational needs of the recreation area, Aspinall project, and adjacent lands (see “History of Curecanti National Recreation Area” section later in this chapter for a discussion of the Aspinall Project).

This motorized vehicle access planning effort is based on recognition by the National Park Service (NPS) that motorized vehicles must be regulated in a manner that is not only consistent with applicable law but also appropriately addresses natural and cultural resource protection, potential conflicts among the various users of the recreation area, and visitor and employee safety. The Bureau of Land Management, which manages off-road vehicle (ORV) use on lands adjacent to Curecanti National Recreation Area, is a cooperating agency on this planning effort. Executive Order 11644, Use of Off-Road Vehicles on the Public Lands, was issued in 1972 in response to the widespread and rapidly increasing use of ORVs on public lands, and requires federal agencies that allow ORV use to designate specific areas and routes on public lands where the use of ORVs may be permitted. This Executive Order was amended by Executive Order 11989 in 1977, and section 3 of the amended Executive Order authorizes the NPS to designate ORV use areas provided that the designation of such areas and trails will be based on protecting resources of public lands, promoting the safety of all users of those lands, and minimizing conflicts among the various uses on those lands.

Therefore, a motorized vehicle access plan for Curecanti National Recreation Area is needed at this time to:

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

For the purposes of this plan, “motorized vehicles” are self-propelled vehicles operated by the public below the mean high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir, on the frozen surface of the reservoir, or on travel routes designated by the NPS at the recreation area. Motorized vehicles include cars, trucks, sport utility vehicles (SUVs), recreational vehicles, snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), ORVs, motorcycles, and other similar self-propelled vehicles.

OBJECTIVES IN TAKING ACTION

Objectives define what must be achieved for an action to be considered a success. The following objectives, related to motorized vehicle use at Curecanti National Recreation Area, were developed for this plan.

MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

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

SOILS

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

SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

- Provide protection for threatened, endangered, and other protected species (e.g., state-listed species) and their habitats.

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.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- Protect known localities of paleontological resources from adverse impacts related to motorized vehicle access.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

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

VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE

- Manage motorized vehicle access for appropriate recreational opportunities.
- Ensure that motorized vehicle operators are informed about the rules and regulations regarding motorized vehicle access and use 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

- Consult with adjacent landowners regarding management of motorized vehicle access.
- Prevent impacts to the works and facilities of the Aspinall Unit, including dams, power plants, transmission lines, and access roads from motorized vehicle access.

MOTORIZED VEHICLE USE AT CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Curecanti National Recreation Area, established in 1965, 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. Blue Mesa reservoir is Colorado's largest body of water, and is the area of Curecanti that experiences the highest visitor use, including the most motorized vehicle use.

Vehicle management has become an issue of concern in many NPS park units in recent years. Compendium files from the 1980s show that the superintendent at Curecanti National Recreation Area used discretionary authority to allow vehicle travel below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir (NPS 2007a). Until this plan/EA is completed and a rule is published, the NPS will continue to manage motorized vehicle use under the 2007 Off-Highway Vehicle Evaluation and Interim Management Plan (interim management plan), which addresses the need to close appropriate areas to vehicle use for the protection of historical, cultural, archeological, and other sensitive resources. Park policy has been to allow for the operation of motor vehicles on lake-bottom routes within the pool area of Blue Mesa Reservoir but only between the high water line and water surface level for the purpose of fishing access and boat launching. In addition, the interim plan allows for motor vehicle use on power line access roads along the south shore of the reservoir. Snowmobile access is also popular in the winter months, and their use is limited to the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir and designated access routes. The operation of motorized vehicles in the recreation area (even in permitted areas below the high water line) has the potential to impact Curecanti's natural and cultural resources. Protection of these resources is a major component of this plan/EA.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternatives under consideration include a required "no action" alternative and two action alternatives that were developed by an interdisciplinary planning team and through feedback from the public and scientific community during the planning process. The alternatives are described below. There are also a number of actions that would be common to all alternatives as well as common to action alternatives, which are described in detail in the "Alternatives" chapter of this plan/EA.

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

Alternative A would formalize motorized vehicle access management as identified in the interim management plan and regulations included in the Superintendent's Compendium (NPS 2009f). As a result, all motorized vehicle routes and areas not currently designated as closed to such use would remain open. This would include a total of approximately 61 miles of routes in areas throughout the park unit, including approximately 4.9 miles that would be transferred to the NPS as a result of the transfer of lands to the NPS as recommended by the 2008 Resource Protection Study (RPS). In addition, all areas below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir would remain open to public motorized vehicle access, unless closed for resource concerns. This area totals approximately 8,239 acres, 7,280 of which are considered open but not traditionally used because of access limitations caused by terrain and reservoir level. All routes and areas currently open for administrative access would remain open and legal private access

would be maintained. Appropriate snowmobile use and access would continue to be provided in accordance with the recreation area's existing rule (36 CFR 7.51(c)), but there would be no specific routes for reaching the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir from existing designated access points.

The no-action alternative, as it is occurring right now, could not be adopted because the park does not have a regulation allowing motorized vehicles off road as required by 36 CFR 4.10. To make the no-action alternative legal, the park would have to undertake a rulemaking process as with any of the action alternatives.

Alternative B: Designate Motorized Vehicle Access Consistent with the 1997 General Management Plan:

Under alternative B, routes and areas open to motorized vehicle use would be designated in accordance with the management prescriptions in the park unit's 1997 general management plan. As a result, routes, areas, and access points located in the Semi-Primitive/Non-Motorized zone would be closed, unless needed for specific administrative functions. This would close some routes traditionally open to the public, including some above the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir, as well as those currently open for administrative use that are not specifically associated with an administrative function. All other administrative and legal private access would be maintained. As a result, under alternative B, there would be approximately 14 miles of designated routes open to public motorized vehicle access, including mileage on lands to be transferred to the NPS as mentioned under alternative A. As with alternative A, all areas below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir would be open to motorized vehicle access, unless closed for resource concerns. This area totals approximately 8,239 acres, and includes 7,280 acres not traditionally used because of access limitations caused by terrain or reservoir levels (see maps 5a and 5b). Two new snowmobile access points to the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir would be formalized: one at the Lake Fork Visitor Center boat ramp (only when snow and ice conditions are sufficient for snowmobile use) and one on the southeast shore of Iola Basin near Willow Creek. These access points would be included on the official maps referenced in the existing snowmobile rule (36 CFR 7.51(c)).

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative): Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan:

Under alternative C, like alternative B, motorized vehicle use within the recreation area would be allowed only in areas designated as open, including routes and areas above and below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir. However, this alternative would better preserve traditional access in areas above the high water line by making a minor amendment to the 1997 general management plan for the creation of a Semi-Primitive/Motorized zone. This zone would be applied to routes that have been traditionally used by the public in areas where such use is prohibited by management prescriptions of the 1997 general management plan. The zone would be linear in nature and would allow the NPS to maintain traditional access to recreational opportunities within the park unit and on adjacent federal lands, where appropriate. For example, this new general management plan zone would allow for access on routes closed under alternative B, including, among others, the power line access and associated spur routes to the shoreline on the south side of Blue Mesa Reservoir. As a result, approximately 29 miles of traditionally used routes would be open to public motorized vehicle access under alternative C, including mileage on lands to be transferred to the NPS as mentioned under alternative A. Some administrative routes that were closed under alternative B because they did not serve a specific administrative function would also remain open to provide management flexibility.

Below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir, the NPS would designate the approximately 958 acres traditionally used by the public as open to motorized access. Although not traditionally used due to access

limitations caused by terrain or reservoir levels, the remaining area below high water would be closed to vehicular use to protect known and unknown resources, including cultural sites. Pedestrian access would be permitted in these areas, outside of resource closures.

Three new snowmobile access points would be designated and established under alternative C. One access point would be established at the Lake Fork Visitor Center boat ramp, one on the southeast shore of Iola Basin near Willow Creek, and one in the McIntyre Gulch area. These access points would be included on the official maps referenced in the existing snowmobile rule (36 CFR 7.51(c)).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The summary of environmental consequences considers the actions being proposed and the cumulative impacts to resources from occurrences inside and outside the park unit. The potential environmental consequences of the actions are addressed for cultural resources; visitor use and experience; vegetation and invasive species; wildlife and wildlife habitat; species of special concern; soils; paleontological resources; and recreation area management and operations. The table below summarizes the results of the impacts analysis for these topics.

	Alternative A: No Action (Continuation of Current Management)	Alternative B: Designate Motorized Vehicle Access Consistent with the 1997 General Management Plan	Alternative C (Preferred Alternative): Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan
Archeological Resources	<p>Localized long-term, minor to moderate, adverse impacts on archeological resources could result from implementation of alternative A. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the minor impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative A, would result in long-term, minor to moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on archeological resources. Direct impacts to archeological resources could occur if motorized vehicles drive over and/or near archeological sites. Alternative A would result in potential impacts to 27 prehistoric or historical archeological resources along or near open routes and areas. However, there would be no impairment of archeological resources under alternative A because impacts, including cumulative effects, would only affect some archeological resources, but spread over a large area. While these impacts may be noticeable in some places, there would be no change to the cultural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.</p>	<p>Although there could be localized, long-term, minor adverse effects on archeological resources along open routes and areas, there would also be long-term beneficial effects as a result of closing 47 miles of motorized vehicle access routes. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative B, would result in long-term, minor to moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on archeological resources. Direct impacts to archeological resources could occur if motorized vehicles drive over and/or near archeological sites. Alternative B would result in potential impacts to four archeological resources within the Curecanti Archeological District and one site at the Dickerson Pit along or near open routes and areas. Three sites would suffer long-term minor adverse impacts from continued use of the route; two sites would see reduced adverse impacts (i.e., long-term minor beneficial impacts) as a result of partial closure of routes. However, there would be no impairment of archeological resources under alternative B because impacts, including cumulative effects, would only affect some archeological resources, but over a relatively large area. There would be no change to the cultural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.</p>	<p>Although there could be localized, long-term, negligible adverse effects on archeological resources along open routes and areas, there would also be long-term beneficial effects as a result of closing 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes. Closing 7,280 acres below the high water line that are not traditionally used would not affect archeological resources because no known sites are located in this area. Past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the long-term minor adverse and long-term minor beneficial impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative C, would result in minor to moderate adverse cumulative impacts on archeological resources. Direct impacts to archeological resources could occur if motorized vehicles drive over and/or near archeological sites. Alternative C would result in potential impacts to eight sites within the Curecanti Archeological District, and one site at the Dickerson Pit along or near open routes and areas. Six sites would suffer long-term minor adverse impacts from continued use of the route; two sites would see reduced adverse impacts (i.e., long-term minor beneficial impacts) as a result of partial closure of routes. However, there would be no impairment of archeological resources under alternative B because impacts, including cumulative effects, would only affect some archeological resources, but over a relatively large area. There would be no change to the cultural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.</p>

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Historic Structures and Districts	Localized long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on historic structures and districts could result from implementation of alternative A. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the negligible impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative A, would result in long-term, negligible adverse cumulative impacts on historic structures and districts. There would be no impairment of historic structures and districts under alternative A because impacts, including cumulative effects, would be barely measurable, with no perceptible consequences to historic structures. As a result, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.	Localized long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on historic structures and districts could result from implementation of alternative B. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the negligible impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative B would result in long-term, negligible adverse cumulative impacts on historic structures and districts. There would be no impairment of historic structures and districts under alternative B because impacts, including cumulative effects, would be barely measurable, with no perceptible consequences to historic structures. As a result, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.	Localized long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on historic structures and districts could result from implementation of alternative C. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the negligible impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative C would result in long-term, negligible adverse cumulative impacts on historic structures and districts. There would be no impairment of historic structures and districts under alternative C because impacts, including cumulative effects, would be barely measurable, with no perceptible consequences to historic structures. As a result, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.
Cultural Landscapes	Localized long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on cultural landscapes could result from implementation of alternative A. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the negligible impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative A, would result in long-term, negligible adverse cumulative impacts on cultural landscapes. There would be no impairment of cultural landscapes under alternative A because impacts, including cumulative effects, would be at the lowest levels of detection with neither adverse nor beneficial consequences. As a result, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this	Localized long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on cultural landscapes could result from implementation of alternative B. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the negligible impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative B, would result in long-term, negligible adverse cumulative impacts on cultural landscapes. There would be no impairment of cultural landscapes under alternative B, because impacts, including cumulative effects, would be at the lowest levels of detection with neither adverse nor beneficial consequences. As a result, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not	Localized long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on cultural landscapes could result from implementation of alternative C. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the negligible impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative C, would result in long-term, negligible adverse cumulative impacts on cultural landscapes. There would be no impairment of cultural landscapes under alternative C because impacts, including cumulative effects, would be at the lowest levels of detection with neither adverse nor beneficial consequences. As a result, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from

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	plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.	be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.	fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.
Section 106 Assessment of Effect	In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, potential adverse impacts (as defined in 36 CFR 800) on archeological resources, historic structures and districts, and cultural landscapes listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places would be coordinated between the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Officer to determine the level of effect on the property and to determine any necessary mitigation measures. Continuing implementation of the Cultural Resource Management Guideline (NPS 1997b) and adherence to NPS Management Policies 2006 (NPS 2006b) and the 2008 Servicewide programmatic agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NPS 2008e) would all aid in reducing the potential to adversely impact historic properties.		
Visitor Use and Experience	Long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on visitor use and experience could result from implementation of alternative A. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the long-term, negligible, adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative A, would result in short- and long-term beneficial cumulative impacts on visitor use and experience.	Long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts on visitor use and experience could result from implementation of alternative B for some users. However, there would also be long-term beneficial effects for users seeking opportunities for quiet and solitude. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area would result in short- and long-term beneficial cumulative impacts when combined with alternative B.	Long-term minor adverse impacts on visitor use and experience could result from implementation of alternative C for some users. However, there would also be long-term beneficial effects for users seeking opportunities for quiet and solitude. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area would result in short- and long-term beneficial cumulative impacts when combined with alternative C.
Vegetation	Short- and long-term minor adverse effects on vegetation could occur as a result of localized impacts including damage to plants; erosion that can cause further loss of vegetation; impacts on soil productivity that can affect natural recovery; and the potential introduction or spread of non-native plants. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the short- and long-term minor adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative A, would result in short- and long-term, moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on vegetation. There would be no impairment of vegetation under alternative A, because impacts, including cumulative effects,	Localized, short- and long-term, negligible to minor adverse impacts on vegetation could occur in areas open to motorized vehicle access. The impacts would occur in fewer vegetation types, as approximately 47 miles of motorized vehicle access routes would be closed as compared to alternative A (access below the high water line at Blue Mesa Reservoir would remain the same). These closed routes would be allowed to recover or would be rehabilitated if funding is available. As a result, there would be long-term beneficial impacts to vegetation associated with closed routes. Establishing and enforcing vehicle track width requirements and educating visitors about driving below the high water line would contribute to these beneficial impacts. Past, present, and	Localized, short- and long-term, negligible to minor adverse impacts on vegetation could occur in areas open to motorized vehicles. The impacts would occur in fewer vegetation types, as 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes would be closed as compared to alternative A. These closed areas would be allowed to recover or would be rehabilitated if funding is available. In addition, although these areas are not traditionally used, closing 7,280 acres below the high water line at Blue Mesa Reservoir would remove the potential for impacts to vegetation from motorized vehicle access in these areas. As a result, there would be long-term beneficial impacts to vegetation associated with closed routes and areas. Establishing and enforcing vehicle track width requirements and educating visitors about

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	would not have considerable effects on native plant populations over a large area. Impacts would be localized and would not affect overall population numbers or ecological or biological processes to the point that viability and stability of the plant communities would be compromised. Motorized vehicle access below the high water line has the potential to cause damage and loss of herbaceous plants but recovery would occur by the next growing season as a result of the periodic inundation of the area as the reservoir fills. Damaged vegetation above the high water line would take more time to recover from motorized vehicle travel off designated routes, whether intentional or not. Overall, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established, or other resource management goals.	reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the short- and long-term negligible to minor adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative B, would result in short- and long-term, moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on vegetation. There would be no impairment of vegetation under alternative B, because impacts, including cumulative effects, would not have considerable effects on native plant populations over a large area. Impacts would be localized and would not affect overall population numbers or ecological or biological processes to the point that viability and stability of the plant communities would be compromised. Motorized vehicle access below the high water line has the potential to cause damage and loss of herbaceous plants but recovery would occur by the next growing season as a result of the periodic inundation of the area as the reservoir fills. Damaged vegetation above the high water line would take more time to recover from motorized vehicle travel off designated routes, whether intentional or not. Overall, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established, or other resource management goals.	driving below the high water line would contribute to these beneficial impacts. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the short- and long-term negligible to minor adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative C, would result in short- and long-term, moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on vegetation. There would be no impairment of vegetation under alternative C, because impacts, including cumulative effects, would not have considerable effects on native plant populations over a large area. Impacts would be localized and would not affect overall population numbers or ecological or biological processes to the point that viability and stability of the plant communities would be compromised. Motorized vehicle access below the high water line has the potential to cause damage and loss of herbaceous plants but recovery would occur by the next growing season as a result of the periodic inundation of the area as the reservoir fills. Damaged vegetation above the high water line would take more time to recover from motorized vehicle travel off designated routes, whether intentional or not. Overall, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established, or other resource management goals.
Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat	Localized, short- and long-term, minor adverse impacts on wildlife could result from species disturbance and displacement, habitat damage and fragmentation, and species mortality. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the	Localized, short- and long-term, negligible to minor adverse impacts on wildlife and habitat could occur in areas open to motorized vehicles, but the impacts would occur in fewer areas, as approximately 47 miles of motorized vehicle access routes would be closed as compared to alternative A (access below the high water line at Blue Mesa	Localized, short- and long-term, minor to moderate adverse impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat could occur in areas open to motorized vehicles. The impacts would occur in fewer areas, as 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes would be closed as compared to alternative A. In addition, 7,280 acres below

	Alternative A: No Action (Continuation of Current Management)	Alternative B: Designate Motorized Vehicle Access Consistent with the 1997 General Management Plan	Alternative C (Preferred Alternative): Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan
	<p>short- and long-term minor adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative A, would result in short- and long-term minor to moderate cumulative impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat. There would be no impairment of wildlife or habitat under alternative A because species populations would most likely recover from impacts in less than a year, although it could take longer for impacted habitat to recover. Locally, along open routes and areas, habitat fragmentation would continue to be apparent and species mortality could occur, but overall, populations would remain stable in the recreation area. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of wildlife in the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.</p>	<p>Reservoir would remain the same). In addition, there would be long-term beneficial impacts to wildlife and habitat along the closed routes, which would be allowed to recover or would be rehabilitated if funding is available. Establishing and enforcing rules regarding motorized vehicle use and educating visitors would contribute to these beneficial impacts. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the short- and long-term negligible to minor adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative B, would result in short- and long-term, minor to moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on wildlife. There would be no impairment of wildlife or habitat under alternative B because species populations would most likely recover from impacts in less than a year, although it could take longer for impacted habitat to recover. Locally, along open routes and areas, habitat fragmentation would continue to be apparent and species mortality could occur, but overall, populations would remain stable in the recreation area. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of wildlife in the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.</p>	<p>the high water line at Blue Mesa Reservoir not traditionally used because of difficult access would be officially closed to motorized vehicles. Consequently, there would be long-term beneficial impacts to wildlife and habitat along the closed routes, which would be allowed to recover or would be rehabilitated if funding is available. This would contribute to beneficial impacts by reducing habitat fragmentation. Establishing and enforcing rules regarding motorized vehicle use and educating visitors would also contribute to these beneficial impacts. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the short- and long-term minor to moderate adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative C, would result in short- and long-term, minor to moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat. There would be no impairment of wildlife or habitat under alternative C because species populations would most likely recover from impacts in less than a year, although it could take longer for impacted habitat to recover. Locally, along open routes and areas, habitat fragmentation would continue to be apparent and species mortality could occur, but overall, populations would remain stable in the recreation area. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of wildlife in the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.</p>
Species of Special Concern	<p>Long-term, minor to moderate adverse effects on species of special concern could occur as a result of localized impacts including disturbance, displacement, or</p>	<p>Localized, long-term, minor to moderate adverse effects on species of special concern could occur along routes designated as open. There would also be long-term</p>	<p>Although long-term, minor to moderate adverse effects on species of special concern could occur along routes designated as open, there would also be long-term beneficial effects to</p>

	Alternative A: No Action (Continuation of Current Management)	Alternative B: Designate Motorized Vehicle Access Consistent with the 1997 General Management Plan	Alternative C (Preferred Alternative): Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan
	injury/mortality of Gunnison sage-grouse; damage to/loss of adobe thistle plants; and impacts to habitat. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the long-term, minor to moderate adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative A, would result in long-term, moderate adverse cumulative impacts on species of special concern. There would be no impairment of species of special concern under alternative A because impacts, including cumulative effects, would affect a relatively small percentage of the species population. Localized impacts to Gunnison sage-grouse and adobe thistle would occur along open routes and areas and could result in disturbance, injury, or mortality from direct vehicle impact, or habitat modification. However, populations of species of special concern would remain viable in the recreation area. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.	beneficial effects to Gunnison sage-grouse and adobe thistle plants as a result of closing approximately 47 miles of motorized vehicle access routes. Recovery or rehabilitation of closed routes, as well as establishing and enforcing vehicle width requirements, would contribute to these beneficial impacts. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the impacts from under alternative B, would result in long-term, moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on species of special concern. There would be no impairment of species of special concern under alternative B because impacts, including cumulative effects, would affect a relatively small percentage of the species population. Localized impacts to Gunnison sage-grouse and adobe thistle would occur along open routes and areas and could result in disturbance, injury, or mortality from direct vehicle impact, or habitat modification. However, populations of species of special concern would remain viable in the recreation area. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.	Gunnison sage-grouse and adobe thistle plants as a result of closing 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes, as well as 7,280 acres below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir. Recovery or rehabilitation of closed routes, as well as establishing and enforcing vehicle width requirements, would contribute to these beneficial impacts. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the impacts under alternative C, would result in long-term, moderate adverse cumulative impacts on species of special concern. There would be no impairment of species of special concern under alternative C because impacts, including cumulative effects, would affect a relatively small percentage of the species population. Localized impacts to Gunnison sage-grouse and adobe thistle would occur along open routes and areas and could result in disturbance, injury, or mortality from direct vehicle impact, or habitat modification. However, populations of species of special concern would remain viable in the recreation area. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.
Soils	Short- and long-term, moderate, adverse, generally localized impacts on soils could result from soil compaction and erosion; loss of fertility and productivity; and loss of biological soil crusts. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the short- and long-term, moderate, adverse impacts from	Impacts to soils would be short term and long term, moderate, and generally localized in areas open to motorized vehicle access. The impacts would occur in fewer areas, as approximately 47 miles of motorized vehicle access routes would be closed as compared to alternative A (access below the high water line at Blue Mesa Reservoir would remain the same). In addition, there would be long-term	Impacts to soils would be short term and long term, moderate, and generally localized to areas open to motorized vehicle access. The impacts would occur in fewer areas, as 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes would be closed as compared to alternative A. In addition, 7,280 acres below the high water line at Blue Mesa Reservoir not traditionally used because of difficult access would be officially

	Alternative A: No Action (Continuation of Current Management)	Alternative B: Designate Motorized Vehicle Access Consistent with the 1997 General Management Plan	Alternative C (Preferred Alternative): Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan
	<p>continued motorized vehicle use under alternative A, would result in short- and long-term, moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on soil. Motorized vehicle use under alternative A would result in soil compaction, erosion, and potential loss of biological soil crusts, especially if vehicles travel off established routes/areas. Although there would be readily apparent measurable disturbance to soils, there would be no impairment under alternative A because impacts would be localized around existing routes and would not be severe in nature. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.</p>	<p>beneficial impacts to soils along the closed routes, which would be allowed to recover or would be rehabilitated if funding is available. Establishing and enforcing vehicle width requirements and educating visitors about driving below the high water line would contribute to these beneficial impacts. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the short- and long-term, moderate, adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative B, would result in short- and long-term, moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on soil. Motorized vehicle use under alternative B would result in soil compaction, erosion, and potential loss of biological soil crusts, especially if vehicles travel off established routes/areas. Although there would be readily apparent measurable disturbance to soils, there would be no impairment under alternative A because impacts would be localized around existing routes and would not be severe in nature. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.</p>	<p>closed to motorized vehicles. Consequently, there would be long-term beneficial impacts to soils along the closed routes, which would be allowed to recover or would be rehabilitated if funding is available. Establishing and enforcing vehicle width requirements and educating visitors about driving below the high water line would contribute to these beneficial impacts. Past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the localized short- and long-term, moderate, adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative C, would result in short- and long-term, moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on soils. Motorized vehicle use under alternative C would result in soil compaction, erosion, and potential loss of biological soil crusts, especially if vehicles travel off established routes/areas. Although there would be readily apparent measurable disturbance to soils, there would be no impairment under alternative A because impacts would be localized around existing routes and would not be severe in nature. Consequently, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park unit was established or other resource management goals.</p>
Paleontological Resources	<p>Localized long-term, minor, adverse impacts on paleontological resources could result from implementation of alternative A. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the minor impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative A, would result in long-term, minor to moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on</p>	<p>Although there could be localized, long-term, minor adverse effects on paleontological resources along open routes and areas, there would also be long-term beneficial effects as a result of closing approximately 47 miles of motorized vehicle access routes. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the impacts from continued motorized vehicle</p>	<p>Although there could be localized, long-term, negligible adverse effects on paleontological resources along open routes and areas, there would also be long-term beneficial effects as a result of closing 32 miles of motorized vehicle access routes. Closing 7,280 acres below the high water line that are not traditionally used would not affect paleontological resources because none are located in this area. Past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future</p>

	Alternative A: No Action (Continuation of Current Management)	Alternative B: Designate Motorized Vehicle Access Consistent with the 1997 General Management Plan	Alternative C (Preferred Alternative): Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan
	<p>paleontological resources. Direct impacts to paleontological resources could occur if motorized vehicles drive over and/or near paleontological sites. Therefore, some fossils could be lost due to a medium probability of impact from ground-disturbing activities associated with motorized vehicle access. Although impacts would be noticeable, there would be no impairment of paleontological resources under alternative A because impacts, including cumulative effects, would only affect a limited number of fossils, if any, and would not substantially change the character of the resource. As a result, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.</p>	<p>use under alternative B, would result in long-term, minor to moderate, adverse cumulative impacts on paleontological resources. Direct impacts to paleontological resources could occur if motorized vehicles drive over and/or near paleontological sites. Therefore, some fossils could be lost due to a medium probability of impact from ground-disturbing activities associated with motorized vehicle access. Although impacts would be noticeable, there would be no impairment of paleontological resources under alternative B because impacts, including cumulative effects, would only affect a limited number of fossils, if any, and would not substantially change the character of the resource. As a result, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.</p>	<p>activities both inside and outside the recreation area, when combined with the localized, negligible, adverse impacts from continued motorized vehicle use under alternative C, would result in minor to moderate adverse cumulative impacts on paleontological resources. Direct impacts to paleontological resources could occur if motorized vehicles drive over and/or near paleontological sites. Therefore, some fossils could be lost due to a medium probability of impact from ground-disturbing activities associated with motorized vehicle access. Although impacts would be noticeable, there would be no impairment of paleontological resources under alternative C because impacts, including cumulative effects, would only affect a limited number of fossils, if any, and would not substantially change the character of the resource. As a result, there would be no change to the natural integrity of the recreation area during the life of this plan, and the NPS would not be precluded from fulfilling either the purposes for which the park was established or other resource management goals.</p>

	Alternative A: No Action (Continuation of Current Management)	Alternative B: Designate Motorized Vehicle Access Consistent with the 1997 General Management Plan	Alternative C (Preferred Alternative): Designate Motorized Vehicle Access and Amend the 1997 General Management Plan
Recreation Area Management and Operations / Agency Coordination	Existing staffing and funding levels would be sufficient to continue the implementation of current motorized vehicle management practices, if formalized through the selection of alternative A. The total approximate cost of implementing alternative A would be \$63,623. Implementation of alternative A would result in long-term, negligible to minor impacts to recreation area management and operations. Past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future actions, when combined with the impacts of implementing alternative A, would result in long-term, minor, adverse impacts to recreation area management and operations.	Implementation of alternative B would require additional efforts from park staff and would necessitate creating one new position in the Resource and Visitor Protection Division to enforce the route closures associated with this alternative. The total approximate cost of implementing alternative B would be \$198,422. Implementation of alternative B would result in long-term minor adverse impacts to recreation area management and operations. Past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future actions, when combined with the impacts of implementing alternative B, would result in long term minor adverse impacts to recreation area management and operations.	Existing staffing levels would be sufficient to implement alternative C although it would require additional efforts from park staff. The total approximate cost of implementing alternative C would be \$158,628. Implementation of alternative C would result in long-term minor adverse impacts to recreation area management and operations. Past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future actions, when combined with the impacts of implementing alternative C, would result in long-term minor adverse impacts to recreation area management and operations.

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Acronyms

ACEC	area of critical environmental concern
ATV	all-terrain vehicle
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CCSP	U.S. Climate Change Science Program
CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
CDOW	Colorado Division of Wildlife
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CNHP	Colorado Natural Heritage Program
D&RG	Denver and Rio Grande Railroad
D&RGW	Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad
EA	environmental assessment
EIS	environmental impact statement
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FONSI	finding of no significant impact
FY	fiscal year
GVW	Gross Vehicle Weight
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LCS	List of Classified Structures
MOA	memorandum of agreement
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
NPOMA	National Parks Omnibus Management Act
NPS	National Park Service
OHV	off-highway vehicle
ORV	off-road vehicle
PAMP	park asset management plan
PEPC	NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website
PWC	personal watercraft
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RPS	Resource Protection Study
ROD	Record of Decision
SUV	sports utility vehicle
SUWA	Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

SWA	State Wildlife Area
USC	United States Code
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
Western	Western Area Power Administration

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

This “Purpose of and Need for Action” chapter explains what this plan intends to accomplish and why the National Park Service (NPS) is taking action at this time to evaluate a range of alternatives and management actions for motorized vehicle access at Curecanti National Recreation Area (the recreation area or park unit) (map 1). This Motorized Vehicle Access Plan and Environmental Assessment (plan/EA) presents two action alternatives for managing motorized vehicle access 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 motorized vehicle access plan, which will guide the management and control of motorized vehicles at Curecanti National Recreation Area for the next 15 to 20 years. It will also form the basis for a special regulation to manage motorized vehicle access at the recreation area. Brief summaries of both the purpose and need are presented here; however, more information is available in the “Recreation Area Background” section of this chapter.

For the purposes of this motorized vehicle access plan, “motorized vehicles” are self-propelled vehicles operated by the public below the mean high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir, on the frozen surface of the reservoir, or on travel routes designated by the NPS at the recreation area. Motorized vehicles include cars, trucks, sport utility vehicles (SUVs), recreational vehicles, snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-road vehicles (ORVs), motorcycles, and other similar self-propelled vehicles.

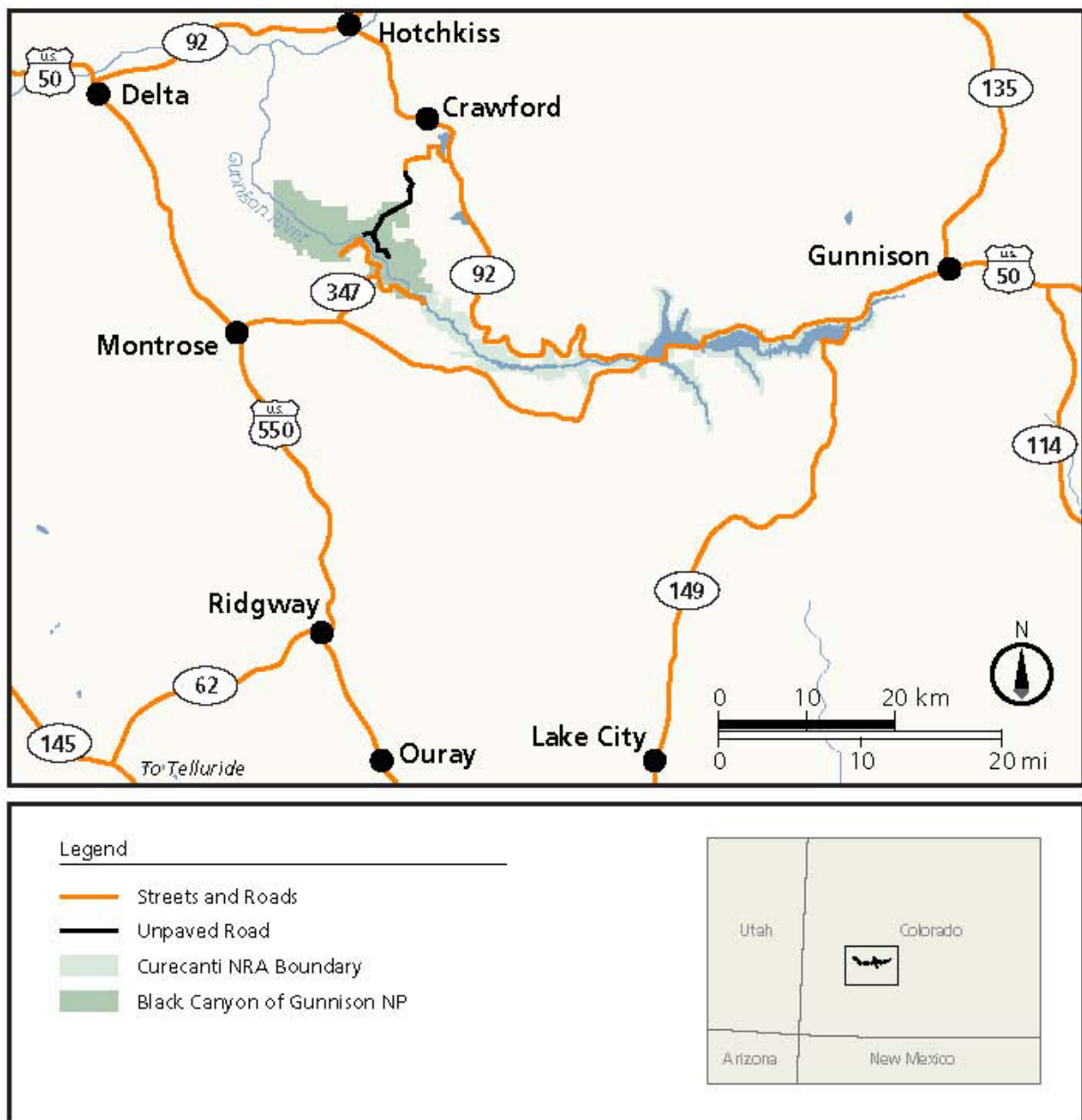
PURPOSE OF THE PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this plan/EA is to:

- develop regulations and procedures that manage motorized vehicle access in the recreation area;
- 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; and
- assure that management of motorized vehicle access considers the purposes and operational needs of the recreation area, Aspinall project, and adjacent lands (see “History of Curecanti National Recreation Area” section later in this chapter for a discussion of the Aspinall Project).

*The alternative
selected for
implementation will
become the motorized
vehicle access plan...it
will also form the
basis for a special
regulation to manage
motorized vehicle
access at the
recreation area.*

MAP 1: CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA VICINITY MAP



NEED FOR ACTION

The recreation area is managed to provide for public use and enjoyment while ensuring visitor safety; resource preservation; and the conservation of scenic, natural, historic, archeological, and wildlife values. Traditionally, motor vehicles traveled below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir (also referred to as Blue Mesa Lake), which is considered to be the point at which the reservoir level is at maximum capacity (full pool), an elevation of 7,519 feet. NPS policy at the recreation area has been to allow the operation of motor vehicles on lake-bottom routes within the pool area of Blue Mesa Reservoir, but only between the high water line and water surface level for the purpose of fishing access and boat launching. In addition, power line access roads have been designated as routes open for motorized vehicle access to other appropriate recreational uses.



Blue Mesa Reservoir

Access to areas below the high water line is primarily from maintained roads. However, tracks off of established roads provide access for travel below the high water line in a few areas. Vehicle access to these areas is highest in the spring when shore fishing is most popular. Although the most common motorized vehicles that access these areas are cars and trucks, snowmobiles are often used to reach popular ice fishing locations during the winter months. Past snowmobile use at the recreation area has occurred on the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir, snow-covered land exposures in the pool area below the high water line, and designated access routes.

This motorized vehicle access planning effort is based on recognition by the NPS that motorized vehicles must be regulated in a manner that is not only consistent with applicable law but also appropriately addresses natural and cultural resource protection, potential conflicts among the various users of the recreation area, and visitor and employee safety.

Executive Order 11644, Use of Off-Road Vehicles on the Public Lands, issued in 1972 and amended by Executive Order 11989 in 1977, requires federal agencies that allow ORV use to designate specific areas and routes on public lands where the use of ORVs may be permitted. Therefore, motorized travel off of established roads would not be permitted in any areas unless designated under a special regulation.

Section 3 of this Executive Order, as amended, authorizes the NPS to designate ORV use areas provided that the designation of such areas and trails will be based on protecting resources of public lands, promoting the safety of all users of those lands, and minimizing conflicts among the various uses on those lands. Executive Order 11644 was issued in response to the widespread and rapidly increasing use of ORVs on public lands “often for legitimate purposes but also in frequent conflict with wise land and resource management practices, environmental values, and other types of recreational activity.” Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 36, Section 4.10(b) contains regulations regarding vehicles and traffic safety on NPS lands and requires that “routes and areas designated for ORV use shall be promulgated as special regulations” and that the designation of routes and areas “shall comply with section 1.5 of this chapter and Executive Order 11644 (Volume 37 Federal Register, page

The recreation area is managed to provide for public use and enjoyment while ensuring visitor safety; resource preservation; and the conservation of scenic, natural, historic, archeological, and wildlife values.

2887).” In addition, such routes and areas may be designated only in national recreation areas, national seashores, national lakeshores, and national preserves.

As a result of these considerations, a motorized vehicle access plan for Curecanti National Recreation Area is needed at this time to

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

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 agreements that establish the recreation area as well as its purpose, significance, and mission goals. Objectives must also be compatible with direction and guidance provided by the recreation area’s general management plan, strategic plan, and/or other management guidance. The following are objectives identified by recreation area staff for developing this plan/EA.

MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

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

SOILS

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

SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

- Provide protection for threatened, endangered, and other protected species (e.g., state-listed species) and their habitats.

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.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- Protect known localities of paleontological resources from adverse impacts related to motorized vehicle access.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

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

VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE

- Manage motorized vehicle access for appropriate recreational opportunities.
- Ensure that motorized vehicle operators are informed about the rules and regulations regarding motorized vehicle access and use 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

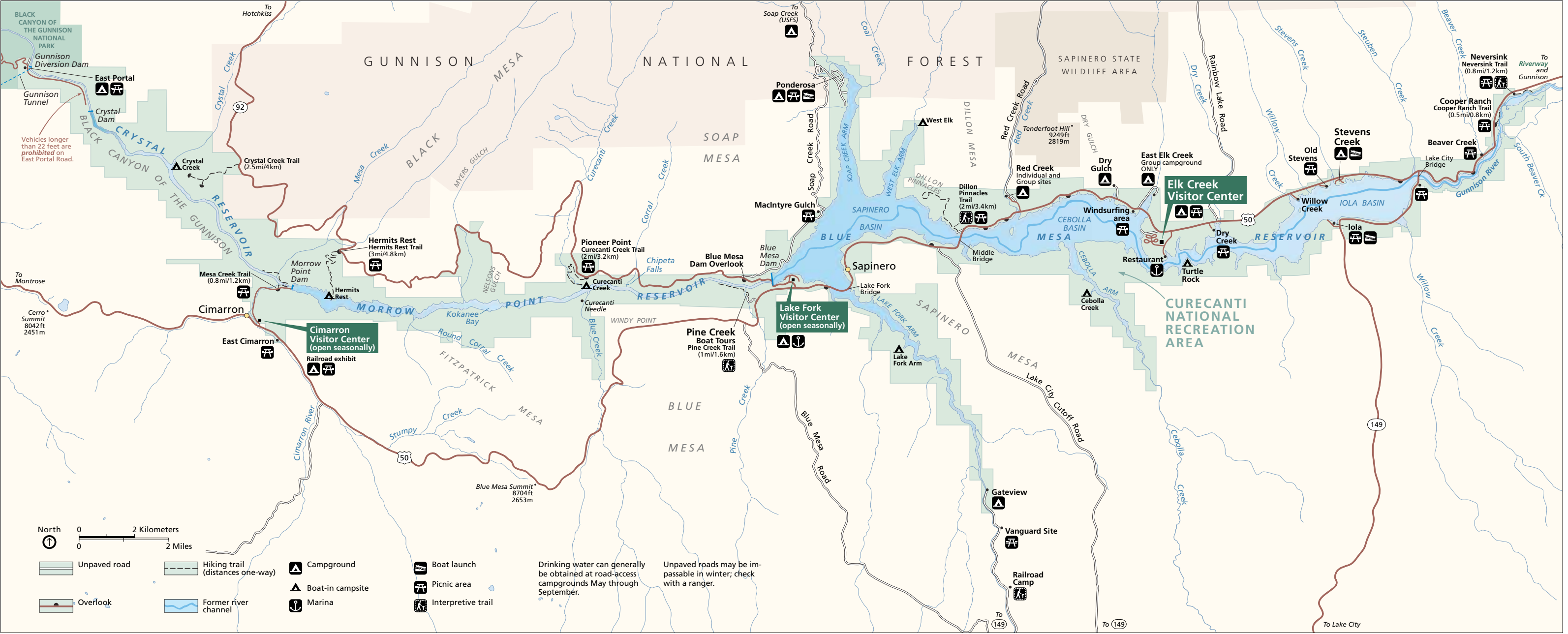
- Consult with adjacent landowners regarding management of motorized vehicle access.
- Prevent impacts to the works and facilities of the Aspinall Unit, including dams, power plants, transmission lines, and access roads from motorized vehicle access.

PROJECT SITE LOCATION

The area administered as Curecanti National Recreation Area is located in Gunnison and Montrose counties in southwestern Colorado (map 1). The recreation area is 40 miles long from east to west and comprises 41,790 acres of federal lands located along the Gunnison River, approximately five miles west of the town of Gunnison. There are three reservoirs within the park unit, each named for corresponding dams on the Gunnison River: Blue Mesa Dam and Reservoir (the largest body of water in Colorado), Morrow Point Dam and Reservoir, and Crystal Dam and Reservoir. These reservoirs and the surrounding lands provide recreational opportunities in a spectacular geologic setting, amidst a variety of natural, cultural, and scenic resources, including recently-discovered dinosaur fossils, a 5,000-acre archeological district, and traces of 6,000 year-old dwellings (NPS 1997a). Although most of the park unit's recreational use is water-related (boating, fishing, swimming), other opportunities available include camping, picnicking, backpacking, hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, hunting, and snowmobiling (NPS 2008a). The number of annual visitors to the recreation area has ranged from 302,600 in 1968 to 1,125,447 in 1989 for an average of 911,957 visitors a year over this 40 year period. Over the last five years, visitation to the recreation area has stabilized at approximately 1,000,000 visitors per year (NPS 2008b).

The geographic study area for this plan/EA is the Curecanti National Recreation Area (map 2), unless otherwise noted under each resource topic. The study area also includes adjacent lands to be added to the recreation area upon passage of legislation proposed under alternative 2 of the 2008 Final Resource Protection Study / Environmental Impact Statement. This alternative recommended that Congress legislatively establish Curecanti as a National Recreation Area with a legislated boundary, which would include approximately 10,040 acres of additional adjacent lands that are currently managed by other federal and state agencies.

Map 2. Curecanti National Recreation Area Park Map



RECREATION AREA BACKGROUND

HISTORY OF CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Blue Mesa Dam and Reservoir, Morrow Point Dam and Reservoir, and Crystal Dam and Reservoir make up the Curecanti Unit, one of the four main units of the Colorado River Storage Project authorized by the *Colorado River Storage Project Act of April 11, 1956* (Public Law 84-485). The Curecanti Unit is also known as the Wayne N. Aspinall Storage Unit (Aspinall Unit).

Section 1 states that the *Colorado River Storage Project Act* was for “the purposes, among others, of regulating the flow of the Colorado River, storing water for beneficial consumptive use, making it possible for the States of the Upper Basin to utilize, consistently with the provisions of the Colorado River Compact, the apportionments made to, and among them, in the Colorado River Basin Compact and the Upper Colorado River Basin Compact, respectively, providing for the reclamation of arid and semiarid land, for the control of floods, and for the generation of hydroelectric power, as an incident to the foregoing purposes.”

Section 8 of the *Colorado River Storage Project Act* directed the Secretary of the Interior “to investigate, plan, construct, operate, and maintain (1) public recreational facilities on lands withdrawn or acquired for the development of said project or of said participating projects, to conserve the scenery, the natural, historic, and archeological objects, and the wildlife on said lands, and to provide for public use and enjoyment of the same and of the water areas created by these projects by such means as are consistent with the primary purposes of said projects; and (2) facilities to mitigate losses of, and improve conditions for, the propagation of fish and wildlife.”

In 1958, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the NPS jointly made a request to the Secretary of the Interior for the NPS to be given the responsibility for carrying out part 1 of the *Colorado River Storage Project Act* Section 8, as it relates to the Aspinall Unit. The Secretary of the Interior, Fred A. Seaton, approved the request, and in 1965, under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Reclamation, the NPS began managing natural and cultural resources, in addition to recreational uses, within the Aspinall Unit. In 1978, Reclamation lands in the East Portal area were added to the national recreation area, as part of the Uncompahgre Project (authorized by the Secretary of the Interior on March 14, 1903, pursuant to the *Reclamation Act of 1902*). The NPS agreed to manage these lands under the MOA with Reclamation (NPS 2008a).

Although the area managed by the NPS is known as Curecanti National Recreation Area and is administered as part of the national park system, it has never been legislatively established by Congress. Instead the park operates under the legislative authority of 16 USC 17j-2(b) as implemented through the MOA with Reclamation. To address this, in June 2007, the NPS produced a Draft Resource Protection Study / Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in which the only action alternative recommended that Congress officially establish Curecanti as a national recreation area with a legislated boundary which would include the addition of approximately 10,040 acres of adjacent land to the recreation area. The Final RPS/EIS was published in August 2008, a Notice of Availability was published on October 6, 2008, and a Record of Decision (ROD) was signed on December 4, 2008. Implementation of the Selected Action will require enactment of legislation, as well as appropriation of funding. A report to Congress summarizing the study’s recommendations has been forwarded to the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, and to the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks. It is up to Congress to decide what actions will be taken, if any. Approximately 4.9 miles of routes (map 3) under

***Approximately
4.9 miles of routes
designated as open in
this plan/EA exist on
lands recommended
for transfer to NPS
administration.***

BLM/USFS administration exist on lands recommended for transfer to NPS administration. These routes are currently designated as open to public motorized use. This mileage was included in the analysis of the impact topics in this EA. By evaluating the potential additional acreage in this EA, no future NEPA compliance would be required with respect to the development of a motorized vehicle access plan in these areas.

Under the MOA, Reclamation has overall responsibility for the Aspinall Unit, including operating and maintaining the dams, reservoirs, associated power plants, and related facilities. Since 1977, Western Area Power Administration (Western) has operated and maintained the power transmission system and has marketed the power generated at the Aspinall Unit. NPS manages the natural and cultural resources, recreational opportunities, and associated facilities on and adjacent to the reservoirs. As it relates to this plan/EA, this MOA specifically requires that the NPS establish and enforce policies regarding the recreational use of these lands (Article II, Part 4). It also states that the NPS would be responsible for the control of transportation in the area consistent with federal law but that this would not affect Reclamation activities required for the performance of its functions (Article II, Part 7).

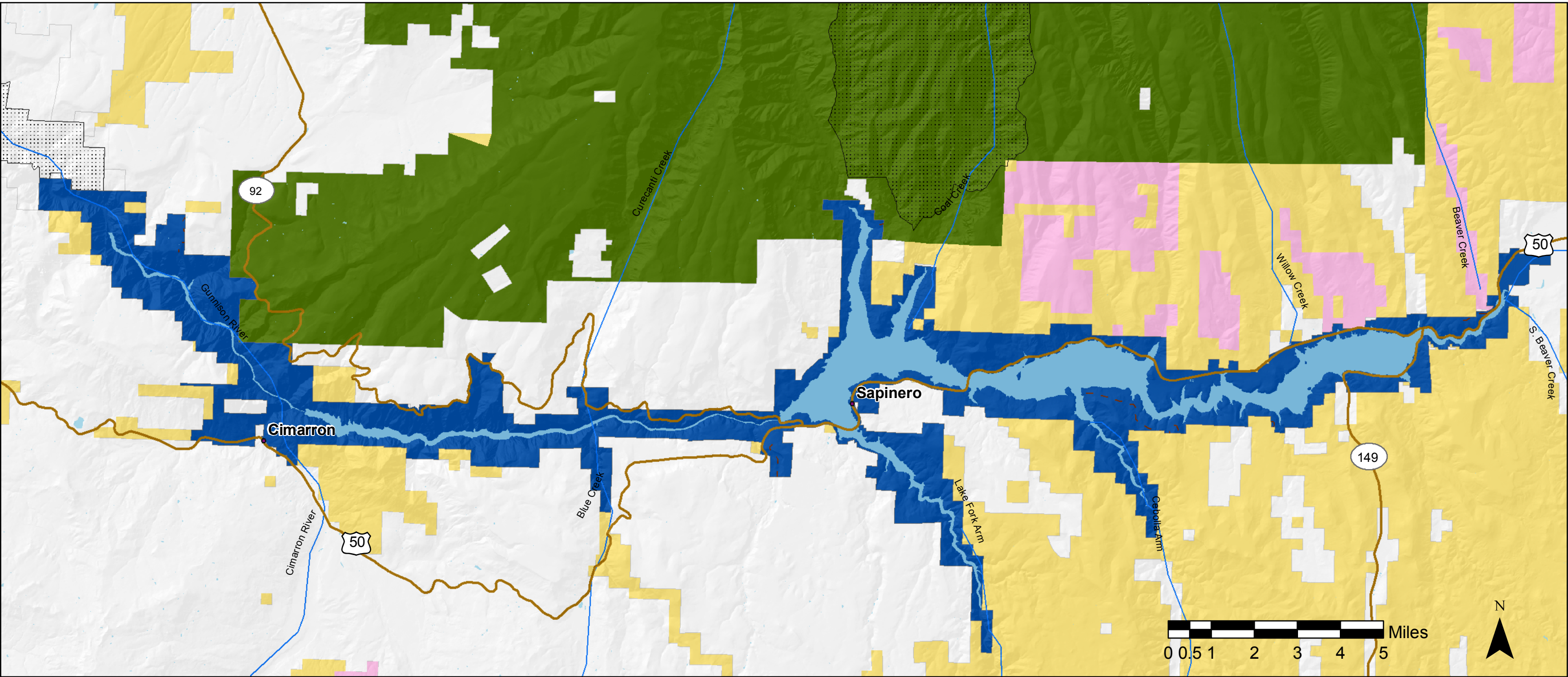
PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

All units of the national park system were formed for a specific purpose (reason for being) and to preserve significant resources or values for the enjoyment of future generations. The purpose and significance identify uses and values that individual NPS management plans should support. The following provides background on the purpose and significance of Curecanti National Recreation Area.

Although Curecanti National Recreation Area has not been officially designated by Congress as a National Recreation Area (as of September 2008), the purpose of the area is taken from the 1965 MOA between NPS and Reclamation as well as from Section 8 of the *Colorado River Storage Project Act* and the *Federal Water Project Recreation Act*, as amended. As documented in the 2008 Resource Protection Study/EIS for the recreation area, the purpose of the recreation area is

- to conserve the scenery, natural and cultural resources, and wildlife of the recreation area
- to manage the lands, waters, fish and wildlife, and recreational activities of the recreation area by means that are consistent with Reclamation law, as amended and supplemented, including the purposes of the *Colorado River Storage Project Act* and Uncompahgre Project, and Reclamation agreements affecting the operation of the Aspinall Unit and the Uncompahgre Project
- to provide for public understanding, use, and enjoyment in such a way as to ensure resource conservation and visitor safety by establishing and maintaining facilities and providing protective and interpretive services (NPS 2008a)

Map 3. Land Ownership Status



Land Ownership Legend

- Bureau of Land Management
- Colorado Department of Wildlife
- Forest Service
- Private Lands
- Curecanti National Recreation Area
- Populated Places
- Trails
- Lakes/Streams
- Wilderness Areas

Significance statements capture the essence of the park unit's importance to the natural and cultural heritage of the United States. Understanding the park unit's significance helps managers make decisions that preserve the resources and values necessary to the park unit's purpose. The following significance statements recognize the important natural and cultural features of the recreation area. As stated in the 2008 Curecanti Resource Protection Study/EIS, the following are what make the recreation area significant:

- **Water resources.** Water resources, including three reservoirs that provide a variety of recreational opportunities in a spectacular geological setting. The element of water has created majestic landforms at the recreation area, provided for the evolution of life since prehistoric times, and now provides a variety of recreational opportunities. Three dams unique in concept and construction were built between 1962 and 1976 to provide irrigation, flood control, hydroelectric power, and recreation. These dams created three reservoirs. The highest reservoir, Blue Mesa, is the largest in Colorado and one of the largest high altitude bodies of water in the United States. It provides an exciting diversity of water recreation in a spectacular geological setting of pinnacles, bluffs, and mesas. The lower two reservoirs, Morrow Point and Crystal, are in the upper reaches of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison – one of the world's premier steep walled canyons. The remarkably clear water of the three reservoirs provides one of the best cold-water fisheries in Colorado, attracting enthusiasts from throughout the nation and offering a diversity of game fish.
- **Geological, paleontological, and other natural resources, including abundant wildlife and fisheries.** The rock formations and canyons of the recreation area tell a story of violent volcanic activity, erosion, and geologic change that has occurred over the course of two billion years. The scenic resources of the canyons, the needles, the pinnacles, the cliffs, the mesas, and the reservoirs provide dramatic contrast, offering visitors an opportunity to pause and reflect on the diversity of the landscape and its spaciousness. Evidence of life during the Mesozoic and Cenozoic Eras has been found in the park. Jurassic Period Morrison Formation deposits have yielded dinosaur bones. Remains found in Pleistocene deposits indicate musk ox, cave lions, and cheetahs roamed the Blue Mesa area. Today, the recreation area protects existing and potential breeding habitat for numerous sensitive species, such as the golden eagle and peregrine falcon. The recreation area provides critical winter range for elk, deer, and bighorn. Blue Mesa Reservoir is Colorado's largest body of water and is the largest Kokanee salmon fishery in the United States. Pristine tributaries provide an opportunity to reintroduce and establish breeding populations of native Colorado River cutthroat trout.
- **10,000-year continuum of human culture.** The stories of human culture in the recreation area are recorded in the traces left by American Indians, miners, railroaders, ranchers, and dam builders. Archeological finds date back to some of the oldest villages found in North America, predating the pyramids. These signs document not only the human struggles to survive but also how changes in human value systems, economies, society, technology, and the importance of water have shaped the use of the land and the character of its people.

The mission of the recreation area is “to 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 *Colorado River Storage Project Act* and other applicable laws, to manage the area as a part of the greater riverine ecosystem, coordinating with other land-management agencies” (NPS 2008a).

SUMMARY OF MOTORIZED VEHICLE USE AND MANAGEMENT AT CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Vehicle management has become an issue of concern in many NPS park units in recent years. Management plans and regulations were developed, or are being developed, at multiple units including Cape Cod National Seashore, Fire Island National Seashore, Assateague Island National Seashore, Padre Island National Seashore, Big Cypress National Preserve, Lake Meredith National Recreation Area, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, Denali National Park and Preserve, and Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve.

Curecanti National Recreation Area's compendium files from the 1980s show that the superintendent used discretionary authority to allow vehicle travel below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir (NPS 2007a). In 1984, an environmental assessment for off-road operation of motor vehicles was completed and a draft proposed rule was written, but the rulemaking process was never completed. Until this plan/EA is completed and a rule is published, the NPS will continue to manage motorized vehicle use under the 2007 Off-Highway Vehicle Evaluation and Interim Management Plan, which addresses the need to close appropriate areas to vehicle use for the protection of historical, cultural, archeological, and other sensitive resources. The interim plan and the Superintendent's Compendium allow for the operation of motor vehicles on lake-bottom routes within the pool area of Blue Mesa Reservoir but only between the high water line and water surface level for the purpose of fishing access and boat launching. In addition, the interim plan allows for motor vehicle use on power line access roads along the south shore of the reservoir. Snowmobile access is also popular in the winter months. As per the regulations in 36 CFR 7.51(c), snowmobile use at the recreation area is limited to the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir and designated access routes. Currently, law enforcement personnel at the recreation area monitor all motorized vehicle use by observation because the terrain allows for an open view of the reservoir, shoreline areas, and vehicle access routes.

The operation of motorized vehicles in the recreation area (even in permitted areas below the high water line) has the potential to impact the cultural and natural resources for which Curecanti is known. The NPS is concerned about the potential for damage to archaeological resources from vehicle operation during low water events. Motor vehicles can impact wildlife, habitat, native vegetation, and soils in addition to contributing to the spread of invasive species throughout the recreation area. Protection of these natural and cultural resources is a major component of this plan/EA.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH ON MOTORIZED VEHICLE USE

A literature review was prepared to support the development of the motorized vehicle access plan at Curecanti National Recreation Area, and is located in appendix A of this document. The literature review summarized the available information related to the potential effects of motorized vehicle use on natural and cultural resources, such as air and water quality, soils, vegetation, wildlife, and archeological resources. It also examined information on the effects of motorized vehicles on socioeconomics, aesthetics/sound, safety, and land management. Because the recreation area is located within a semiarid region, the literature review focused on mountainous, semiarid, and desert environments, where appropriate.

The literature review was not intended to be "all inclusive" in its coverage of studies related to motorized vehicle management, but it did incorporate the scientific literature that was used in the development of this motorized vehicle access management plan/EA for the recreation area. Some topics addressed in this review, such as water quality and socioeconomics, can experience impacts from ORV use, but were not carried forward as impact topics for analysis in this EA, because the level or frequency of impact was not

sufficient to warrant a full analysis. A list of impact topics addressed and those considered but dismissed is contained later in this chapter.

SCOPING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) regulations require an “early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action” (40 CFR 1501.7). To determine the scope of issues to be analyzed in depth in this plan, meetings were conducted with recreation area staff, NPS personnel from the Environmental Quality Division, neighboring land management agencies, and other parties with an interest in this plan/EA. As a result of this scoping effort (see the “Consultation and Coordination” chapter for additional information), several issues were identified as requiring further analysis in this plan. These issues represent existing concerns as well as concerns that might arise during consideration and analysis of alternatives. The issues identified during internal and public scoping are presented below.

ISSUES AND IMPACT TOPICS

Issues associated with implementing a motorized vehicle access plan at Curecanti National Recreation Area were identified by recreation area staff during the internal scoping meeting and through the public scoping process. The following text discusses the issues which are the basis for the impact topics discussed in the “Affected Environment” and “Environmental Consequences” chapters.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Curecanti National Recreation Area boasts a rich cultural heritage, evidence of which can still be seen at the numerous archeological sites in and around the recreation area. Archeologists have documented that Native Americans inhabited the area as early as 10,000 years ago, leaving behind evidence of their hunting and gathering lifestyle. The considerable amount of prehistoric and historic archeological sites that were discovered within the recreation area prompted the NPS to conserve 5,000 acres as the Curecanti Archeological District in 1982, which is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NPS 2006a). The cultural deposits in the Gunnison Valley tend to be very shallow (usually less than 8 inches deep) and even light vehicular traffic can cause considerable damage and loss of data (NPS 2008b). Archeological sites can also be damaged by vehicles driving across unstable soils, vehicles becoming stuck in the lake bottom, and excavations made to remove stranded vehicles (NPS 2007a). Therefore, archeological resources are assessed in this EA.

In addition to the archeological district, there are historic structures and districts within the recreation area for which the NPS has responsibility. The Narrow Gauge Pratt Truss Bridge of D&RG northeast of the historic town of Cimarron is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, a display of historic railroad cars that are on the NPS List of Classified Structures (LCS) is near the town of Cimarron. Therefore, historic structures and districts are assessed in this EA.

The NPS defines a cultural landscape as “a geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein) associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values” (NPS 1998). As part of its ongoing efforts to identify and properly manage its significant cultural resources, the NPS has initiated the identification, documentation,

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identified by
recreation area staff
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and appropriate treatment of cultural landscapes at Curecanti National Recreation Area. Evidence of mining, ranching, and logging during the late 19th century exists at the recreation area, which coincides with construction associated with the Denver and Rio Grande Western (D&RGW) Railroad (NPS 2003a). Therefore, cultural landscapes are assessed in this EA.

The recreation area is charged to preserve and maintain the numerous cultural resources within its boundaries. The NPS also acknowledges the presence of cultural resources that exist outside of the recreation area that could be potentially impacted by proposed ORV use within the recreation area. The NPS will continue to coordinate its activities and consult with interested parties, to ensure that significant viewsheds and settings of historic and cultural resources outside the recreation area are taken into consideration during future planning for ORV routes within the recreation area.

SOILS

The NPS has documented impacts to soils from motorized vehicle use at the recreation area, particularly below the high water line. This includes temporary increases in soil compaction, rutting, and erosion, often caused by vehicles that get stuck in saturated soils, or by motorized vehicle travel off of established roads. Opening up additional areas off of established roads to motorized vehicle use has the potential to increase impacts to soils while closing existing off-road areas to vehicle use could reduce the level of impacts to soils.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The area surrounding and including Curecanti National Recreation Area contains geologic formations from the Jurassic and Cretaceous Periods that have a strong potential for containing fossils of extinct life forms. They include dinosaurs, plants, fish, termites, crocodiles, turtles and maybe a few early mammals.” One recent study resulted in the discovery of the remnants of a 140-million-year-old Allosaurus within the recreation area (NPS 2008a). A 2005 paleontological survey resulted in six genera of dinosaurs tentatively identified in the recreation area (NPS 2008b). A strong possibility exists that more fossil evidence similar to this will be found at the recreation area. Because these sensitive paleontological resources are known to exist along the shorelines of the reservoirs, they are potentially susceptible to impacts from motorized vehicle use in these areas. Therefore, paleontological resources are analyzed as an impact topic in this plan.

VEGETATION/INVASIVE SPECIES

Most of the vegetation within Curecanti National Recreation Area consists of sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) and native grasses with some hardwood tree and shrub species occurring in the wetter drainage areas. The higher elevations of the recreation area support conifers such as ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), spruce (*Picea* spp.), and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) (NPS 2008a). Blue Mesa Reservoir is a deepwater impoundment and does not have many shallow water areas or much shoreline vegetation. The vegetative community that does exist below the high water line of Blue Mesa Reservoir is comprised primarily of herbaceous species that become inundated on a periodic basis when the reservoir fills. Established motorized vehicle access routes are generally devoid of vegetation due to use over the years (NPS 2007a). Although not expected under this plan, new



Vegetation at Curecanti National Recreation Area

access routes could result in the long-term loss of some vegetation. Conversely, closure of existing access routes could have long-term beneficial effects on vegetation. In addition, motorized vehicles can potentially impact native vegetation communities in the recreation area by spreading the seeds of invasive species. Invasive or noxious weeds present a potential threat to the ecosystems of national park units throughout the country and control or eradication of these species is often extremely difficult and expensive.

WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Curecanti National Recreation Area contains an abundant amount of wildlife. Mammals known to live in the recreation area include mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), mountain lion (*Felis concolor*), bobcat (*Felis rufus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and chipmunk (*Tamias* spp.) (USGS 2003). Portions of the recreation area also provide habitat for elk (*Cervus elaphus*), pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), and bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*). More than 200 bird species have also been documented, including shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors, such as the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). A variety of snakes, lizards, and salamanders can also be found at the recreation area (NPS 2008a). The operation of motorized vehicles has the potential to cause impacts to these wildlife species as a result of vehicle noise (contributing to species disturbance or displacement), habitat damage caused by vehicle use off of established roads, or vehicle–wildlife collisions (causing species injury or mortality).

SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

Gunnison Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*)

The Gunnison sage-grouse is a unique species native to the region and prevalent in the sagebrush communities of the recreation area. It was designated as a federal candidate species for listing under the *Endangered Species Act* on December 28, 2000 (NPS 2008a). However, on April 18, 2006, the USFWS decided not to list the bird as endangered or threatened and removed it from the candidate species list. The state of Colorado and NPS still consider it to be a species of concern, and important habitat is located within and surrounding the recreation area. It is believed that the breeding population for the Gunnison sage-grouse is 4,000 individuals, with 3,000 of those individuals residing in Saguache or Gunnison counties, Colorado (NPS 2008a). The operation of motorized vehicles has the potential to cause impacts to the Gunnison sage-grouse as a result of vehicle noise (contributing to disturbance or displacement), habitat damage caused by vehicle use off of established roads; or vehicle–wildlife collisions (causing injury or mortality).

Adobe Thistle (*Cirsium perplexans*)

As described in the Final Resource Protection Study, Adobe thistle (Rocky Mountain thistle) is found in Mesa, Montrose, Delta, Eagle, and Ouray counties (CNHP 2002). Although not expected under this plan, new access routes could result in the long-term loss of habitat for adobe thistle. Conversely, closure of existing access routes could have long-term beneficial effects on this plant. In addition, motorized vehicles can potentially introduce or spread invasive species with the potential to compete with adobe thistle.

VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE

Approximately 1,000,000 people visit the recreation area annually to take advantage of the numerous recreational opportunities available. Most visitors come during the summer months when temperatures are warmer and water-based activities are more popular. Visitors use motorized vehicles to gain access to

campsites, fishing spots, marinas, trailheads, and other destinations throughout the recreation area. Motorized vehicle access is also an important issue for disabled or mobility impaired visitors to the recreation area. Motorized vehicle use can have impacts on aesthetics as a result of temporary fugitive dust emissions as well as the effects of noise on soundscapes. The implementation of a motorized vehicle access plan has the potential to impact visitor use and experience at the recreation area, especially if alternatives involve restrictions on vehicle use or user fees.

RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS (INCLUDING LAND MANAGEMENT SURROUNDING THE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA / AGENCY COORDINATION)

The NPS manages natural and cultural resources, public recreation, and associated facilities at the recreation area and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park as one operating unit. The superintendent has overall authority and uses five divisions for managing the park unit: (1) Resource Stewardship and Science; (2) Interpretation, Education, and Technology; (3) Resource and Visitor Protection; (4) Facility Management; and (5) Administration. In addition to numerous other responsibilities, recreation area staff are charged with enforcing seasonal and resource-based closures, monitoring motorized vehicle use for general violations, and providing interpretive and educational information to visitors. The implementation of additional management measures or regulations associated with this plan/EA has the potential to impact the day-to-day operations and management of Curecanti National Recreation Area.

Curecanti National Recreation Area is co-managed by Reclamation and the NPS pursuant to the 1965 MOA between the two agencies. Reclamation and Western have administrative jurisdiction throughout the recreation area in order to meet the mandates of Reclamation law. NPS also manages some Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and United States Forest Service (USFS) land within the recreation area under cooperative agreements with these agencies. BLM and USFS administer many more lands adjacent to the recreation area. Any motorized vehicle access plan at the recreation area has the potential to affect the operations of the agencies that have jurisdiction within the recreation area and the management of adjacent lands. Likewise, actions of these agencies could impact access to the recreation area. Therefore, because of the importance of coordinating with these agencies and the implications of motorized vehicle management, this topic has been retained for analysis.

*Curecanti National
Recreation Area is
co-managed by the
Bureau of
Reclamation and the
National Park Service
pursuant to the 1965
Memorandum of
Agreement between
the two agencies.*

ISSUES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS

The following issues and impact topics were dismissed from further analysis, as explained below:

- **Geohazards:** There are no known geohazards in the recreation area that would be affected by the implementation of a motorized vehicle access plan.
- **Geologic Features:** The unique geology of the area is a major component of the significance of Curecanti National Recreation Area. However, the implementation of a motorized vehicle access plan would not impact the geologic features of the recreation area, as no new vehicle routes would be designated in areas of geologic significance, such as the various needles, pinnacles, and cliffs that surround the reservoir. Therefore, this topic has been dismissed from further analysis in this EA.

- **Unique Ecosystems, Biosphere Reserves, and World Heritage Sites:** There are no known biosphere reserves, World Heritage sites, or unique ecosystems listed in the recreation area; therefore, implementation of a motorized vehicle access plan would not impact these resources and this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis.
- **Water Resources:** Motorized vehicle use has the potential to impact water quality at the recreation area due to erosion, sedimentation, and the potential discharge of fuels and fluids from motorized vehicles accessing the shoreline of Blue Mesa Reservoir. However, due to the large volume of water contained within the reservoir that would dilute these pollutants, it was determined that the impacts of motorized vehicle use on water quality would be only negligible. Therefore, this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis.
- **Marine/Estuarine Resources:** Because there are no marine or estuarine resources located at Curecanti National Recreation Area, this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis.
- **Soundscapes:** Because the use of motorized vehicles generates engine noise within the recreation area, implementation of any of the alternatives in this plan has the potential to impact the soundscapes at the park unit. Existing soundscapes at Curecanti National Recreation Area vary based on proximity to popular visitor use areas and developed areas. For example, impacts from motorized vehicle access on the soundscape below the high water line on the north side of Blue Mesa Reservoir—which is influenced by vehicles operating on the existing state highways, vehicles operating off of established roads, and by boats—would be different from those in areas used less frequently, such as access routes open above high water on the south side of Blue Mesa Reservoir, or towards the west end of the park unit. In areas where soundscapes are influenced by other human caused noise, impacts from the alternatives in this plan would be negligible. This determination reflects a preliminary screening of acoustic conditions, park management objectives, and appropriate uses in developed areas of Curecanti National Recreation Area. Impacts to the soundscape in less visited or less developed areas would be greater, but because of the lower volume of vehicle use expected in these areas, as well as the relatively low operating speed of these vehicles, motorized vehicle access would not cause greater than minor impacts on soundscapes. The noise associated with motorized vehicle access for other appropriate recreational opportunities would not be inconsistent with the purposes for which Curecanti National Recreation Area was established. Additionally, a discussion of effects of motorized vehicle noise on wildlife and visitor experience is provided in the “Environmental Consequences” chapter. As a result, soundscapes was dismissed from further analysis as a stand-alone impact topic in this EA.
- **Air Quality:** Motorized vehicle emissions and fugitive dust resulting from off-road driving have the potential to impact air quality in general. However, most of the motorized vehicle use at the recreation area is for the purpose of access to recreation areas and not pleasure driving. For example, one of the more popular vehicle uses involves driving to the water’s edge at the reservoir to access fishing and other recreational opportunities. Once reaching the shoreline, most visitors turn their vehicles off while recreating at the shoreline, resulting in only a negligible impact to air quality from emissions or dust. Because the air quality impacts of this type of motorized vehicle use are at most negligible, this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis. However, due to the potential for site-specific, short-term impacts from vehicle emissions and dust on visitor experience, elements of this topic are discussed under the “Visitor Use and Experience” section.
- **Ethnographic Resources:** While ethnographic resources have not yet been formally evaluated for their status as traditional cultural properties or sacred sites (NPS 2008a), the NPS would avoid any potentially eligible resources identified during this planning process. Because of

protection of federal lands, any impacts that do occur (e.g., impacts on access to sacred sites or traditionally used plants) would be negligible.

- **Museum Collections:** Museum collections at the recreation area include archeological objects and materials gathered from within the recreation area and materials collected from the Denver and Rio Grande narrow gauge railroad and the Town of Cimarron. These items are managed under Director's Order #24: NPS Museum Collections Management and the NPS Museum Handbook (NPS 2000). These collections are housed in buildings and other off-site locations and would not be impacted by the implementation of this motorized vehicle access plan.
- **Energy Resources:** This topic involves assessing energy requirements and the potential for energy conservation associated with the various alternatives but is most relevant to facility construction projects. It was determined that fuel consumption would not change from patrolling the recreation area even if a motorized vehicle access plan was implemented. Also, as mentioned previously, the predominant nature of vehicle use at the recreation area involves accessing recreation areas and then turning off the vehicle while recreating. Therefore, this impact topic was not carried forward for further analysis. The recreation area would continue to operate under the wise energy use guidelines and requirements stated in the NPS *Management Policies 2006*, Executive Order 13123 (Greening the Government Through Effective Energy Management), Executive Order 13031 (Federal Alternative Fueled Vehicle Leadership), Executive Order 13149 (Greening the Government Through Federal Fleet and Transportation Efficiency), and the 1993 NPS Guiding Principles of Sustainable Design.
- **Urban Quality, Gateway Communities:** A gateway community is defined by the NPS *Management Policies 2006* as a community that exists in close proximity to a unit of the national park system whose residents are often affected by the decisions made in the course of managing the park [unit] (NPS 2006b). Because of this, there are shared interests and concerns regarding management decisions. Gateway communities usually offer food, lodging, and other services to park visitors. They also provide opportunities for employee housing and a convenient location to purchase goods and services essential to park administration. Because the alternatives contained in this plan/EA would not result in substantial changes in motorized vehicle access or use, impacts to the overall levels of visitor use that would impact gateway communities are not anticipated. Therefore, impacts to urban quality or gateway communities would be negligible and this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis in this document.
- **Aquatic Species and Habitat:** As previously discussed, the implementation of a motorized vehicle access plan would have negligible impacts to water quality at the recreation area. This plan would also not affect water levels in the reservoir. With only negligible impacts to water quality (i.e., aquatic species habitat) and no impact to water quantity, it was determined that impacts to aquatic species would also be negligible and motorized vehicles would have no direct effects on this resource. Therefore, potential impacts to aquatic species and habitat were dismissed from further analysis in this plan/EA.
- **Minority or Low Income Populations:** As previously addressed, the implementation of a motorized vehicle access plan would not impact the level of visitor use, as the use of motorized vehicles would still be permitted within the recreation area. It was determined that there was no evidence to indicate that there would be any disproportionate impacts on minority and low income populations, particularly because of the absence of an admission fee to access the recreation area. Therefore, this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis.

- Health and Safety:** The operation of motor vehicles carries with it an inherent safety risk including the potential for vehicular incidents with pedestrians, wildlife, or other vehicles. However, the recreation area has been fortunate enough to have had no serious accidents or conflicts related to motorized vehicle use off of established roads. Congestion in certain areas, such as Dry Creek and Windsurf Beach, remains a concern as these areas are popular amongst visitors, and attract both vehicles



Vehicles at Dry Creek

- However, congestion can be generally self-regulating, as visitors tend to spread out along the shoreline. Any impacts to visitor health and safety would be minimal as the alternatives presented in this plan/EA would not affect the potential for safety issues. Therefore, this topic will not be carried forward for analysis in this plan/EA.
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change:** There is strong evidence linking global climate change to human activities, especially greenhouse gas emissions associated with the burning of fossil fuels (IPCC 2007). Some of the activities associated with motorized vehicle access would result in fossil fuel consumption. For example, vehicular trips by park staff conducting management activities and law enforcement patrol and response would consume fossil fuels. Additionally, motorized vehicle use by visitors would result in fossil fuel consumption and release of greenhouse gas emissions. It was determined that fuel consumption would not change from patrolling the recreation area even if a motorized vehicle access plan was implemented. Also, as mentioned previously, the predominant nature of vehicle use at the recreation area involves accessing recreation areas and then turning off the vehicle while recreating. Greenhouse gas emissions associated with the plan would be negligible at most. Therefore, the issue of the contribution of motorized vehicle access management to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions was dismissed from further analysis.
- Socioeconomics:** The implementation of a motorized vehicle access plan could have potential impacts on stakeholders like ORV retailers, local tackle shops, and fishing guides that depend on business from recreational users at the recreation area. However, this plan is not expected to substantially impact the level of visitor use because the use of motorized vehicles would still be permitted within the recreation area, and access to prime fishing and other popular recreational areas would still be allowed under this management plan. Therefore, because recreational access and visitor use levels would be maintained, and visitor use is not expected to change as a result of the plan/EA, socioeconomic impacts to local businesses would be negligible. As such, this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis.
- Floodplains:** The area around Blue Mesa Reservoir is not technically a regulated floodplain although it is managed for floodplain functions and values, per NPS *Management Policies 2006* (NPS 2006b). Because this project will not involve substantial capital investments in the floodplain, will not put human lives in floodplains, and will not result in the loss of floodplain functions or values, this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis.

- **Prime or Unique Farmland:** Prime farmland soils are protected under the *Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981*. Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Soils within Curecanti National Recreation Area that could be classified as Prime or Unique Farmland (USDA-NRCS 2009b) soils are as follows:

Soil Type	Importance
Alluvial land	Farmland of statewide importance
Alluvial land, occasionally flooded	Farmland of statewide importance
Billings silty clay loam, 3 to 6 percent slope	Prime farmland if irrigated
Dewville loam, 5 to 15 percent slope	Farmland of statewide importance
Gas Creek sandy loam, 0 to 1 percent slope	Farmland of statewide importance
Irim loam, 0 to 1 percent slope	Farmland of statewide importance
Kubler loam, 5 to 35 percent slope	Farmland of statewide importance
Radersburg loam, 6 to 12 percent slope	Farmland of statewide importance
Torriorthents-Haplargids complex, very stony	Farmland of statewide importance
Work loam, 3 to 6 percent slope	Farmland of statewide importance

None of the areas within the recreation area are currently in agricultural production. Also, the development of a motorized vehicle access plan would not involve the conversion of areas of prime farmland soils to a new use. Therefore, this topic will not be further discussed in this EA.

- **Wetlands:** Wetlands are present at the recreation area although they represent a very small percentage of the overall community type. The known wetlands at the recreation area are located along streams, particularly along the Gunnison River and its tributaries. There are no wetlands located in areas that are open to motorized vehicle use, and all wetland areas would continue to be subject to NPS management policies and protected under the *Clean Water Act* (33 USC 1251 et seq.). Therefore, because there would be no impacts to wetlands under this plan/EA, this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis.
- **Federally listed Species:** According to the USFWS (USFWS 2009), the following species are listed as “Endangered” or “Threatened” in Gunnison and Montrose counties, Colorado:
 - Black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) (E)
 - Bonytail (*Gila elegans*) (E)
 - Canada lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*) (T)
 - Clay-loving wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum pelinophilum*) (E)
 - Colorado pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*) (E)
 - Humpback chub (*Gila cypha*) (E)
 - Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) (T)
 - Razorback sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*) (E)
 - Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus glaucus*) (T)

Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly (*Boloria acrocne*) (E)

However, due to habitat requirements, either these species are not found within Curecanti National Recreation Area, or they are not found in the vicinity of areas being considered for designation as officially open to motorized vehicle use. Therefore, there would be no impacts to federally listed species associated with the implementation of a motorized vehicle access management plan, and this impact topic was dismissed from further analysis. As a result, the NPS has determined that there would be “no effect” as defined under Section 7 of the *Endangered Species Act*, on any of these species.

The yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) is currently a candidate for federal listing under the *Endangered Species Act*. The preferred riparian habitat is limited in the recreation area but may be present along portions of the Gunnison River. However, following 10 years of intensive point count monitoring, no yellow-billed cuckoos have been documented within the boundaries of the recreation area. Also, no riparian habitat or cottonwood galleries would be impacted by the motorized vehicle access management plan. Therefore, the NPS has determined that there would be “no effect” as defined under Section 7 of the *Endangered Species Act* on this candidate species.

The Gunnison’s prairie dog (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) is also currently a candidate for federal listing under the *Endangered Species Act*, and lives in short to medium-height grass prairies and plateaus at moderate to high elevations. Gunnison’s prairie dogs are restricted to southwestern and south-central Colorado. They range in elevation from 6,000 to 12,000 feet. As with all prairie dog species, populations are much smaller than they were historically due to eradication, habitat loss, and disease. In Curecanti National Recreation Area, Gunnison’s prairie dogs inhabit the sagebrush grassland communities (NPS 2008a). Motorized vehicle use would only affect Gunnison’s Prairie Dogs if prairie dogs re-colonized areas near the high water line. However, prairie dogs currently do not occupy any areas directly adjacent to motorized vehicle use (NPS 2008a). Therefore, the NPS has determined that there would be “no effect” as defined under Section 7 of the *Endangered Species Act* on this candidate species.

- **State Listed Species:** The following state-listed species were considered but dismissed from detailed analysis, as described below (NPS 2008c).

Black Canyon gilia (*Gilia pentstemonoides*). Black canyon gilia is endemic to Colorado and grows in cracks in vertical walls, on narrow ledges, and cliff rims at elevations of 6,800 to 9,000 feet in Gunnison, Montrose, Ouray, Hinsdale, and Mineral counties in 13 known populations (CNPS 1997). Motorized vehicle access would not occur in areas where this species is known to exist or could exist. Therefore, there would be no impacts to this species from motorized vehicle access.

Hanging garden sullivantia (*Sullivantia hapemanii*). Hanging garden sullivantia is the only species in this genus found in Colorado. Found in hanging gardens and wet cliffs of various geology including limestone, shale, and quartzite (CNHP 1999). It is known to occur at the bottom of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. Exact habitat locations within the recreation area are unknown, but habitat that could support the species is found within the recreation area. Motorized vehicle access would not occur in areas where this species is known to exist or could exist. Therefore, there would be no impacts to this species from motorized vehicle access.

Skiff milkvetch (*Astragalus microcymbus*) and Gunnison Milkvetch (*Astragalus anisus*). Two sensitive milkvetch species that occur in the recreation area, Gunnison milkvetch and skiff milkvetch, are listed by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) as globally and state critically imperiled. The Gunnison milkvetch and the skiff milkvetch occur in dry upland

sagebrush areas at elevations of approximately 7,500 to 8,500 feet (NPS 2008a). Although these species occur in habitat areas similar to those near existing motorized vehicle access routes, there are no known *Astragalus* species in the immediate vicinity of these access routes (NPS 2007a). Therefore, there would be no impacts to these species from the implementation of a motorized vehicle access plan.

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). The bald eagle is classified as threatened in all of the continental United States except Alaska. In 2001, there were an estimated 51 breeding pairs in Colorado. Colorado is also a very popular wintering area for bald eagles and boasts a stable population of up to 800 eagles (CDOW 2008a). Suitable foraging habitat for bald eagle exists along the entire length of Curecanti National Recreation Area, as the reservoirs provide an ample food source for bald eagles in the area. Winter eagle activity is concentrated around the Gunnison River and the reservoir shorelines (NPS 2008a). Motorized vehicle access would not be likely to impact bald eagles because once the reservoir is frozen and open to motorized access, the eagles have moved to areas of open water (NPS 2008b).

American Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*). The American peregrine falcon is approximately crow size – about 15 to 21 inches long – with a wingspan of roughly 40 inches. As with many other birds of prey, females are larger than males. They live primarily along mountain ranges, rivers, and coastlines. Results from a 2003 monitoring study indicate that the population of American peregrine falcons is continuing to climb to roughly 3,000 breeding pairs in the United States, Mexico, and Canada (USFWS 2006). Motorized vehicle use is not expected to affect the American peregrine falcon, as eyries could be located directly above highways without experiencing disturbance (NPS 2008b).

Mexican Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*). The Mexican spotted owl is a medium-sized owl with large dark eyes and no ear tufts. It has brown plumage with abundant white spots, and is roughly 17 inches long with a wingspan of 40 inches. Mexican spotted owls generally inhabit montane forests and woodlands, shady wooded canyons, and steep canyons (USFWS 2008). Their habitats range from the southern Rocky Mountains in Colorado southward to Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and further to the mountains at the southern end of the Mexican Plateau. Curecanti National Recreation Area has potential habitat for the Mexican spotted owl, but none are known to inhabit the recreation area (NPS 2008b). The areas they would occupy are not within the motorized vehicle access project area.

River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*). The North American river otter general inhabits streams, lakes, wetlands, and marine coasts. The species occurs broadly across much of North America and is considered reasonably secure overall. The river otter is listed as a Sensitive Species by the USFS throughout Region 2, threatened by the states of Colorado, Nebraska, and South Dakota, and protected under state laws in all states within Region 2. Because river otters are not commonly associated with reservoirs, which do not have adjacent riparian habitat, it is unlikely that any river otters occupy the project area (NPS 2008b).

RELATED LAWS, POLICIES, PLANS, AND REGULATIONS

GUIDING LAWS AND POLICIES

Executive Order 11644: Use of Off-Road Vehicles on the Public Lands

On February 8, 1972, President Richard Nixon issued Executive Order 11644 to “establish policies and provide for procedures that will ensure the use of ORVs on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands.”

The executive order directs agencies to develop and issue regulations and administrative instructions to designate the specific areas and trails on public lands on which ORV use may be permitted and areas in which ORV use may not be permitted. The location of areas and trails shall

- minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, or other resources of the public lands
- minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats
- minimize conflicts between ORV use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same on neighboring public lands, and ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors
- prohibit areas and trails in officially designated wilderness areas or primitive areas and allow them in areas of the national park system, natural areas, or national wildlife refuges and game ranges only if the respective agency head determines that ORV use in such locations will not adversely affect their natural, aesthetic, or scenic values.

Executive Order 11989: Off-Road Vehicles on Public Lands (Amendment to Executive Order 11644)

This executive order, issued on May 24, 1977 by President Jimmy Carter, directs agencies to immediately close areas or trails to ORV use when it is determined that the use of ORVs is causing or will cause considerable adverse effects on the soil, vegetation, wildlife, wildlife habitat or cultural or historic resources, until such time as determined that such adverse effects have been eliminated and measures have been implemented to prevent future recurrence. Also included in the executive order is the authority to adopt the policy that portions of the public lands under an agency's jurisdiction shall be closed to use by ORVs except those areas or trails that are suitable and specifically designated as open to such use.

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Section 4.10 Travel on Park Roads and Designated Routes

This CFR section states that “operating a motor vehicle is prohibited except on park roads, in parking areas, and on routes and areas designated for off-road motor vehicle use.” Additionally, routes and areas designated for ORV use shall be promulgated as special regulations, with designations complying with Executive Order 11644.

NPS *Organic Act of 1916*

By enacting the NPS *Organic Act of 1916 (Organic Act)*, Congress directed the U.S. Department of the Interior and NPS to manage units of the national park system “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” (16 USC 1). The *Redwood National Park Expansion Act of 1978* reiterates this mandate by stating that the NPS must conduct its actions in a manner that will ensure no “derogation of the values and purposes for which these various areas have been established, except as may have been or shall be directly and specifically provided by Congress” (16 USC 1 a-1).

Despite these mandates, the *Organic Act* and its amendments afford the NPS latitude when making resource decisions that balance visitor recreation and resource preservation. By these acts, Congress “empowered [the NPS] with the authority to determine what uses of park resources are proper and what proportion of the park's resources are available for each use” (Bicycle Trails Council of Marin v. Babbitt, 82 F.3d 1445, 1453 [9th Cir. 1996]).

Yet courts consistently interpret the *Organic Act* and its amendments to elevate resource conservation above visitor recreation. *Michigan United Conservation Clubs v. Lujan*, 949 F.2d 202, 206 (6th Cir. 1991) states: “Congress placed specific emphasis on conservation.” The court in *National Rifle Association of America v. Potter*, says “in the *Organic Act* Congress speaks of but a single purpose, namely, conservation.” The *NPS Management Policies 2006* also recognizes that resource conservation takes precedence over visitor recreation. The policy dictates: “when there is a conflict between conserving resources and values and providing for enjoyment of them, conservation is to be predominant” (NPS 2006b, sec. 1.4.3, 10).

Because conservation remains predominant, the NPS seeks to avoid or to minimize adverse impacts on park resources and values. However, the NPS has discretion to allow negative impacts when necessary (NPS 2006b, sec. 1.4.3, 10). While some actions and activities cause impacts, the NPS cannot allow an adverse impact that constitutes resource impairment (NPS 2006b, sec. 1.4.3, 10). Specifically, *NPS Management Policies 2006*, Section 1.4.3.1 states: “In the administration of authorized uses, park managers have the discretionary authority to allow and manage the use, provided that the use will not cause impairment or unacceptable impacts.” The *Organic Act* prohibits actions that permanently impair park resources unless a law directly and specifically allows for the action (16 USC 1a-1). An action constitutes “an impairment” when its impacts “harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values” (NPS 2006b, sec. 1.4.5, 11). To determine impairment, the NPS must evaluate “the particular resources and values that would be affected; the severity, duration, and timing of the impact; the direct and indirect effects of the impact; and the cumulative effects of the impact in question and other impacts” (NPS 2006b, sec. 1.4.5, 11).

Park managers must also not allow uses that would cause unacceptable impacts (NPS 2006b, sec. 1.4.7, 12). These are impacts that fall short of impairment, but are still not acceptable within a particular park’s environment. For the purposes of these policies, unacceptable impacts are impacts that, individually or cumulatively, would

- be inconsistent with a park’s purposes or values, or
- impede the attainment of a park’s desired future conditions for natural and cultural resources as identified through the park’s planning process, or
- create an unsafe or unhealthful environment for visitors or employees, or
- diminish opportunities for current or future generations to enjoy, learn about, or be inspired by park resources or values, or
- unreasonably interfere with
 - park programs or activities, or
 - an appropriate use, or
 - the atmosphere of peace and tranquility, or the natural soundscape maintained in wilderness and natural, historic, or commemorative locations within the park, or

NPS concessioner or contractor operations or services.

Because park units vary based on their enabling legislation, natural resources, cultural resources, and missions, management activities appropriate for each unit, and for areas in each unit, vary as well. An action appropriate in one unit could impair or cause unacceptable impacts to resources in another unit. Thus, this plan/EA analyzes the context, duration, and intensity of impacts related to the implementation of a motorized vehicle access plan at Curecanti National Recreation Area as well as the potential for

resource impairment or unacceptable impacts as required by Director's Order 12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis and Decision-making (NPS 2001).

NPS Management Policies 2006

NPS Management Policies 2006 addresses management of ORVs in Section 8.2.3.1, Off-Road Vehicle Use. This section states (NPS 2006b):

Off-road motor vehicle use in national park units is governed by Executive Order 11644 (Use of Off-Road Vehicles on the Public Lands, as amended by Executive Order 11989), which defines off-road vehicles as “any motorized vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over, land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other natural terrain” (except any registered motorboat or any vehicle used for emergency purposes). Unless otherwise provided by statute, any time there is a proposal to allow a motor vehicle meeting this description to be used in a park, the provisions of the executive order must be applied.

In accordance with 36 CFR 4.10(b), routes and areas may be designated only in national recreation areas, national seashores, national lakeshores, and national preserves and only by special regulation. In accordance with the executive order, they may be allowed only in locations where there will be no adverse impacts on the area's natural, cultural, scenic, and aesthetic values, and in consideration of other existing or proposed recreational uses. The criteria for new uses, appropriate uses, and unacceptable impacts listed in sections 8.1 and 8.2 must also be applied to determine whether off-road vehicle use may be allowed. As required by the executive order and the Organic Act, superintendents must immediately close a designated off-road vehicle route whenever the use is causing, or will cause, unacceptable impacts on the soil, vegetation, wildlife, wildlife habitat, or cultural and historic resources.

NPS administrative off-road motor vehicle use will be limited to what is necessary to manage the public use of designated off-road vehicle routes and areas; to conduct emergency operations; and to accomplish essential maintenance, construction, and resource protection activities that cannot be accomplished reasonably by other means.

Management policies relating to resource protection also were considered in developing this plan/EA. For example, *NPS Management Policies 2006* instructs park units to maintain, as parts of the natural ecosystems of parks, all plants and animals native to park ecosystems, in part by minimizing human impacts on native plants, animals, populations, communities, and ecosystems and the processes that sustain them (NPS 2006b, sec. 4.4.1, 43).

Section 4.4.2.3 of the *NPS Management Policies 2006* also states that the “NPS will inventory, monitor, and manage state and locally listed species in a manner similar to its treatment of federally listed species, to the greatest extent possible. In addition, the Service will inventory other native species that are of special management concern to parks (such as rare, declining, sensitive, or unique species and their habitats) and will manage them to maintain their natural distribution and abundance” (NPS 2006b, sec. 4.4.2.3, 45).

Section 4.4.4 states that “exotic species will not be allowed to displace native species if displacement can be prevented” (NPS 2006b, sec 4.4.4, 47). Section 4.4.4.1 goes on to say that, in general, the NPS will not willingly introduce non-native or invasive species into any national park unit. There may be rare instances when an exotic species may be introduced or maintained to meet “specific, identified, management needs

when all feasible and prudent measures to minimize the risk of harm have been taken...” (NPS 2006b, sec. 4.4.4.1, 47).

Federal Water Project Recreation Act of July 9, 1965 (Public Law 89-72, 79 Stat. 213), as amended by the Reclamation Recreation Management Act of 1992 (Title XX VIII of the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of October 30, 1992 (Public Law 102-575, 106 Stat. 4600))

This act requires that planning for recreational development of any federal multipurpose water resources projects (such as the *Colorado River Storage Project Act*) shall be coordinated with the use of existing and planned federal, state, or local public recreation developments (Section 1 as enacted by 16. USC 4602-12(b)).

Memorandum of Understanding between the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Park Service for Planning, Program Coordination, and Technical Assistance (Signed by Reclamation Commissioner and NPS Director in September 1988)

This agreement establishes the policy framework for formal and informal coordination and communications between officials at every level of Reclamation and NPS. The goal of the agreement is to improve public services and the management of natural and cultural resources and recreation and visitor use through cooperative efforts. The provisions of this agreement extend to all planning and program activities of each bureau that may have impacts on the plans and programs of the other. This plan/EA falls under this agreement and has been prepared in accordance with the stipulations and intent thereof (NPS 2008a).

Director’s Order 12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision Making and Handbook

NPS Director’s Order 12 and its accompanying handbook (NPS 2001) lay the groundwork for how the NPS complies with NEPA. Director’s Order 12 and its handbook set forth a planning process for incorporating scientific and technical information and establishing a solid administrative record for NPS projects. Director’s Order 12 requires that impacts to park resources be analyzed in terms of their context, duration, and intensity. It is crucial for the public and decision makers to understand the implications of those impacts in the short and long term, cumulatively, and within context, based on an understanding and interpretation by resource professionals and specialists. Director’s Order 12 also requires that an analysis of impairment to park resources and values be made as part of the NEPA document.

Director’s Order 77: Natural Resource Protection

Director’s Order 77 addresses natural resource protection, with specific guidance provided in Reference Manual #77: Natural Resource Management (NPS 2004c). This reference manual offers comprehensive guidance to NPS employees responsible for managing, conserving, and protecting the natural resources found in national park system units. The manual serves as the primary guidance on natural resource management in units of the national park system. Reference manual chapters that are particularly relevant to this plan/EA include: endangered, threatened, and rare species management; non-native species management; paleontological resources management; public health and safety; soils resources management; native animal management; and vegetation management.

Director's Order 28: Cultural Resource Management

This director's order sets forth the guidelines for management of cultural resources, including cultural landscapes, archeological resources, historic and prehistoric structures, museum objects, and ethnographic resources. This order calls for the NPS to protect and manage cultural resources in its custody through effective research, planning, and stewardship in accordance with the policies and principals contained in the *NPS Management Policies 2006*.

OTHER LEGISLATION, COMPLIANCE, AND POLICY

Redwood National Park Act of 1978, as Amended

Reasserting the system-wide standard of protection established by Congress in the original *Organic Act*, the Redwood Amendment stated:

The authorization of activities shall be construed and the protection, management, and administration of these areas shall be conducted in light of the high public value and integrity of the National Park System and shall not be exercised in derogation of the values and purposes for which these various areas have been established, except as may have been or shall be directly and specifically provided by Congress (P.L. 95-250, USC 1a-1).

Congress intended the language of the Redwood Amendment to the *General Authorities Act* to reiterate the provisions of the *Organic Act*, not to create a substantively different management standard. The House committee report described the Redwood Amendment as a “declaration by Congress” that the promotion and regulation of the national park system is to be consistent with the *Organic Act*. The Senate committee report stated that under the Redwood Amendment, “The Secretary has an absolute duty, which is not to be compromised, to fulfill the mandate of the 1916 Act to take whatever actions and seek whatever relief as will safeguard the units of the national park system.” Although the *Organic Act* and the *General Authorities Act*, as amended by the Redwood Amendment, use different wording (“unimpaired” and “derogation”) to describe what the NPS must avoid, both acts define a single standard for the management of the national park system—not two different standards. For simplicity, *NPS Management Policies 2006* uses “impairment,” not both statutory phrases, to refer to that single standard.

National Environmental Policy Act, 1969, as Amended

NEPA is implemented through regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 CFR 1500–1508). The NPS has in turn adopted procedures to comply with the act and the CEQ regulations, as found in Director's Order 12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision Making, and its accompanying handbook (NPS 2001). NEPA directs that an EA must lead to a finding of no significant impact (FONSI), or a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS. Therefore, if any alternatives to a proposed management action have the potential for significant impacts and the potential for impairment of park unit resources, the NOI and an EIS must be prepared. If there is no apparent risk to park unit resources or values as a result of the proposed alternatives, then a FONSI must be prepared following the completion of the EA.

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as Amended

This act requires all federal agencies to consult with the Secretary of the Interior on all projects and proposals with the potential to impact federally endangered or threatened plants and animals. It also requires federal agencies to use their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of the *Endangered Species*

Act by carrying out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species. Federal agencies are also responsible for ensuring that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by the agency is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat.

Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1975

The *Federal Noxious Weed Act* (7 USC 2801–2814, January 3, 1975, as amended 1988 and 1994) provides for the control and management of nonindigenous weeds that injure or have the potential to injure the interests of agriculture and commerce, wildlife resources, or the public health. Because the potential exists for seeds of non-native and potentially invasive or noxious plants to be introduced or spread by motorized vehicle use at the recreation area, this act is considered in developing potential management actions.

Executive Order 13112: Invasive Species

The use of motorized vehicles has the potential to introduce or spread the seeds of non-native plants at the recreation area. This executive order requires the NPS to prevent the introduction of invasive species, provide for their control, and minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918

The *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* implements various treaties and conventions between the United States and Canada, Japan, Mexico, and the former Soviet Union for the protection of migratory birds. Under this act, it is prohibited, unless permitted by regulations, to “pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, attempt to take, capture or kill, possess, offer for sale, sell, offer to purchase, purchase, deliver for shipment, ship, cause to be shipped, deliver for transportation, transport, cause to be transported, carry, or cause to be carried by any means whatever, receive for shipment, transportation or carriage, or export, at any time, or in any manner, any migratory bird, included in the terms of this Convention... for the protection of migratory birds... or any part, nest, or egg of any such bird” (16 USC 703). Subject to limitations in the Act, the Secretary of the Interior may adopt regulations determining the extent to which, if at all, hunting, taking, capturing, killing, possessing, selling, purchasing, shipping, transporting or exporting of any migratory bird, part, nest or egg will be allowed, having regard for temperature zones, distribution, abundance, economic value, breeding habits and migratory flight patterns.

Executive Order 13186: Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds

Migratory birds are of great ecological and economic value to this country and to other countries. They contribute to biological diversity and bring tremendous enjoyment to millions of people who study, watch, feed, or hunt these birds throughout the United States and other countries. The United States has recognized the critical importance of this shared resource by ratifying international, bilateral conventions for the conservation of migratory birds. Such conventions include the Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds with Great Britain on behalf of Canada 1916, the Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds and Game Mammals–Mexico 1936, the Convention for the Protection of Birds and Their Environment–Japan 1972, and the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Birds and Their Environment–Union of Soviet Socialist Republics 1978. These migratory bird conventions impose substantive obligations on the United States for the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats, and through the *Migratory Bird Treaty Act*, the United States has implemented these migratory bird conventions with respect to the United States. This executive order directs executive departments and agencies to take certain actions to further implement the *Migratory Bird Treaty Act*.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as Amended

Section 106 of this act requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on properties listed or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. All actions affecting the recreation area's cultural resources must comply with this legislation.

Historic Sites Act of 1935

This act declares as national policy the preservation for public use of historic sites, buildings, objects, and properties of national significance. It authorizes the Secretary of the Interior and NPS to restore, reconstruct, rehabilitate, preserve, and maintain historic or prehistoric sites, buildings, objects, and properties of national historical or archeological significance.

Executive Order 11593: Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment

This executive order directs federal agencies to support the preservation of cultural properties and to identify and nominate to the National Register cultural properties in the park and to “exercise caution... to assure that any NPS-owned property that might qualify for nomination is not inadvertently transferred, sold, demolished, or substantially altered.”

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36 (1992)

Title 36, Chapter 1, provides the regulations “for the proper use, management, government, and protection of persons, property, and natural and cultural resources within areas under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.” It states: “the National Park Service has the authority to manage the wildlife in the parks in fulfillment of the *Organic Act* without the consent of the state and by methods contrary to state law” (16 USC 3).

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 43

Title 43 of the CFR part 24 describes the four major systems of federal lands administered by the Department of the Interior. Section 24.4(f) states that “Units of the National Park System contain natural, recreation, historic, and cultural values of national significance as designated by Executive and Congressional action.” In describing appropriate activities, it states that “[a]s a general rule, consumptive resource utilization is prohibited.” In addition, section 24.4 (i) instructs all Federal agencies of the Department of the Interior, among other things, to “[p]repare fish and wildlife management plans in cooperation with State fish and wildlife agencies and other Federal (non-Interior) agencies where appropriate.” It also directs agencies to “[c]onsult with the States and comply with State permit requirements... except in instances where the Secretary of the Interior determines that such compliance would prevent him from carrying out his statutory responsibilities.”

National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998

Both the *National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998* (NPOMA) (16 USC 5901 et seq.) and NEPA are fundamental to NPS management decisions. Both acts provide direction for articulating and connecting the ultimate resource management decision to the analysis of impacts, using appropriate technical and scientific information. Both also recognize that such data may not be readily available and provide options for resource impact analysis in this case. The NPOMA directs the NPS to obtain scientific and technical information for analysis. The NPS handbook for Director's Order 12 states that if “such information cannot be obtained due to excessive cost or technical impossibility, the proposed alternative

for decision will be modified to eliminate the action causing the unknown or uncertain impact or other alternatives will be selected” (NPS 2001).

RELATED CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA PLANNING DOCUMENTS

General Management Plan (1980)

The 1980 plan provided for public use at the recreation area, identified development and management actions which satisfy recreational needs, and guided all future recreation development and management at the recreation area. The plan identified 17 development packages which called for the construction of roads, trails, parking lots, picnic sites, restrooms, and other recreational facilities. This plan was in effect until the 1997 General Management Plan/EA was completed.

General Management Plan – Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument and Curecanti National Recreation Area (September 1997)

This plan provides long-range management programs for Curecanti National Recreation Area and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park (NPS 1997a). The primary objectives for park unit management are guiding the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources while allowing ecological processes to continue with a minimum human disturbance. The plan also addresses transportation, economic issues, recreation, visitor experience, and park operations and management. Although the general management plan does not specifically address motorized vehicle access at the recreation area, it does address various resource protection issues that are related to recreational use, including: vegetation (controlling the spread of noxious weeds), paleontological resources (preserving the integrity of paleontological resources from the effects of human use; identification, inventory, and protection) and visitor use and lands (ensuring quality visitor experience and resource conservation).

Off-Highway Vehicle Evaluation and Interim Management Plan: Curecanti National Recreation Area (April 2007)

This management plan provides guidelines for motorized vehicle use and access on an interim basis until this plan/EA is completed and a federal rule is adopted, pursuant to the requirements of Executive Order 11644 as amended. It states that the recreation area’s policy has been “to allow the operation of motor vehicles on lake bottom routes within the pool area of Blue Mesa reservoir below the high water line and lake surface level for the purpose of fishing access and boat launching. In addition, power line access roads have been designated as routes open for use of motor vehicles” (NPS 2007a). The plan states that the recreation area will protect cultural resources by implementing “OHV [off-highway vehicle] closures pursuant to 36 CFR 1.5 during periods of low water to prohibit travel on or adjacent to known cultural sites. Temporary fencing and/or posts will be erected around cultural sites to prevent vehicle trespass. These barriers will be removed during periods of high water to prevent boating hazards. In addition, specific access roads will be closed permanently in strategic areas to prevent vehicle trespass” (NPS 2007a). In the end, the plan states that the recreation area recommends continuing to allow OHV use through the Superintendent’s Compendium, as described previously, until an ORV plan/EA is completed.

Final Resource Protection Study / Environmental Impact Statement: Curecanti National Recreation Area (August 2008)

The primary purposes of this study were to assess the natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resource value and character of the land within and surrounding Curecanti National Recreation Area and to identify practicable alternatives that protect the resource value and character of the land within and

surrounding the Curecanti National Recreation Area. The final version of this study was published in August 2008 and recommended that Congress officially designate the area as a national recreation area with a legislative boundary, including additional acreage to be transferred to NPS administration. While motorized vehicle use is not specifically analyzed within this EIS, it does identify ORV use as a recreational opportunity within the park unit. Furthermore, it also recognizes that ORV use contributes to long-term adverse impacts on soundscapes, wildlife habitat, paleontological resources, and sedimentation in nearby water systems.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area Disturbed Lands Inventory and Restoration Recommendations (December 2004)

This report presents field inventory data and restoration treatment recommendations for 46 disturbed land sites in Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area. The report is based on information obtained by the Geologic Resources Division staff during a three-week field assignment in the park on September 16, 2002 through October 4, 2002. Disturbed areas at Curecanti include roads, trails, facilities, dams, gravel pits, and mines. These disturbances have created visual impacts, vegetation and habitat impacts, safety hazards, and increased erosion. The Disturbed Lands Inventory assesses the potential impacts of each site and recommends the necessary remedial measures for restoration. Time and staffing limitations prevented mapping and analysis of many of the linear disturbances in Curecanti, such as non-highway roads, trails, and ditches. Of the 46 sites inventoried, 21 of them are located at Curecanti National Recreation Area with the remainder located at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The inventory noted several sites that were impacted from motorized vehicle use and recommended blocking vehicle access to these areas following the prescribed reclamation action.

Water Resources Management Plan: Curecanti National Recreation Area (September 1996)

This plan describes the water resources of Curecanti National Recreation Area and the issues affecting them. The plan is a compilation of management actions in the form of project statements, summaries, and completed tasks as identified and assigned in the Curecanti National Recreation Area Water Resources Scoping Report (1995b), the Water Resources Study Plan (1996), and management alternatives which address watershed-related issues.

36 CFR 7.51(c) Rule for Snowmobile Use at Curecanti National Recreation Area

In addition to the Superintendent's Compendium, this regulation also governs the use of snowmobiles at Curecanti National Recreation Area. This regulation sets forth areas for permitted snowmobile operation (the frozen surface of Blue Mesa Reservoir and designated access routes), establishes a maximum vehicle weight, and requires all vehicles and operators to abide by the regulations on snowmobile use established by the State of Colorado or the Department of Interior, whichever is more stringent. In 1981, a Finding of No Significant Impact was signed after preparation of an EA that evaluated the impacts of snowmobile use at Curecanti National Recreation Area. This motorized vehicle access plan/EA does not revisit the appropriateness of this use at Curecanti, but rather updates and modifies designated access points and analyzes the impacts of doing so.



Blue Mesa during Winter

Superintendent's Compendium

Under the provisions of 16 USC 3 and 36 CFR 1, 1–7, the compendium designates closures, permit requirements, and other restrictions imposed under the discretionary authority of the superintendent for Curecanti National Recreation Area. Regulations listed in the compendium are a requirement in addition to those listed in Parts 1–7 of Title 36 unless otherwise noted. The compendium also refers to the 2007 interim plan that was developed to manage motorized vehicle use at the recreation area until this plan/EA is completed and the subsequent rule is adopted. In addition to the compendium regulations, written determinations, which explain the reasoning behind the superintendent's use of discretionary authority, are required by 36 CFR 1.5 (c) and appear in the document as italicized print or are available for review in the Chief Rangers Office.

Strategic Plan for Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area October 1, 2005–September 30, 2008

The Strategic Plan was written to fulfill the requirements of Section 104 of the *NPS Omnibus Management Act of 1998*. This legislation requires all field units of the National Park System prepare Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans consistent with the *Government Performance and Results Act of 1993* and make these documents available to the public. This plan contains long-term goals, which target in quantifiable, measurable ways what the recreation area staff will accomplish during the planning period toward achieving the overall mission goals and mission. The long-term goals in the plan address both appropriate “servicewide” goals as well as park-specific outcomes. The Strategic Plan includes information on how these goals will be accomplished, including staffing, fiscal, infrastructure, and other resources available to achieve the plan's long-term goals.

Noxious Weed Annual Operating Plan

Invasive plant species have the potential to seriously impact natural vegetative communities and associated ecosystems. According to the 2008–2012 Strategic Plan, there are a total of 280 acres that are identified as “gross infested acres”, which refers to the total number of acres which are infested with individual invasive species. The recreation area, in coordination with Gunnison County, develops an annual operating plan directed at the control and removal of invasive plant species within and adjacent to the recreation area. The plan targets specific areas to be addressed through chemical and physical treatments of noxious weeds. A list of target weeds is provided and discussed further in the “Vegetation” section of the “Affected Environment” chapter.

NPS Park Asset Management Plan

Executive Order 13327 and NPS Director's Order 80 require the NPS to develop a comprehensive asset management strategy, including at the individual park unit level. This Park Asset Management Plan (PAMP) generates a strategy and road map to efficiently allocate limited resources. The PAMP provides a snapshot of a park's current asset portfolio that will enable park staff to understand and articulate the current state of its asset portfolio and the funding requirements of those assets. Ultimately, the PAMP outlines a dynamic 10-year plan for successful management of all park facilities.

OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY PLANS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Bureau of Reclamation's Directives System (the Reclamation Manual)

The Reclamation Manual consists of a series of policies, directives and standards that assign program responsibility and establish and document Bureau of Reclamation-wide methods of doing business (USBR 2008).

Gunnison Basin Federal Lands Travel Management/Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) was released on March 6, 2009 and provides analysis of the effects of modifying the current travel plan pertaining to motorized and mechanized vehicles for those federal lands managed by the USFS and BLM in the upper Gunnison Basin and North Fork Valley. The lands addressed in this analysis are the federal lands administered by the USFS in the Gunnison and Paonia Ranger Districts of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest and BLM for the Gunnison Field Office area. The proposed action maintains about 2,450 miles of road, 530 miles of motorized trail, and 450 miles of non-motorized trail open for public travel. The vehicle types to be allowed for motorized travel (e.g., full-sized highway vehicles, OHVs greater than 50 inches in width, ATVs, OHVs 50 inches or less in width, and motorcycles) on these roads and trails varies depending upon the design, width, and optimal recreation opportunity attributed to these roads and trails. The Proposed Action also identifies managed trails open for non-motorized travel. There would be about 192 miles of designated non-motorized trail where mechanized travel (e.g., mountain bikes) would be allowed. Another 260 miles of non-motorized trail is intended for hikers and horseback riders, and on these trails, mechanized travel would be restricted. There are designations for roads to be managed for administrative purposes (e.g., timber sales, energy exploration, mining, private land access) that would not be open to public travel. There are about 320 miles of these non-public roads on federal lands within the analysis area.

Prior Travel Management Plans of Adjacent Land Management Agencies

The USFS and BLM initiated a travel planning process in the late 1990s to help stop unplanned, user-created route proliferation, limit authorized uses to established roads and trails, and prohibit off-route travel. The result of this planning effort was the April 2001 Gunnison Travel Interim Restrictions which restricted motorized and mechanized vehicles to established routes (roads and trails recognized by the agencies as existing on the ground as of January 12, 2001). The 2001 Interim Travel Restriction Decision also required the agencies to complete a route-specific travel management analysis to evaluate existing routes and the vehicle type appropriate for the routes retained.

STATE AND LOCAL LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES

Colorado Revised Statutes Title 33 Article 14.5: Off-Highway Vehicles

These statutes and pursuant regulations (under the authority of the Colorado Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board) govern required equipment, off-highway use permits, and registration of OHVs in the State of Colorado.

