

Newsletter # 4 | Spring 2015
Draft General Management Plan
Environmental Impact Statement



Rainbow above Emigrant Canyon.

Dear Citizen,

Recently, I quietly celebrated my 13th anniversary as Superintendent of City of Rocks. Each day, I am reminded of the privilege it is to serve you in this place. All of the employees here, as well as our planning team and agency leaders, consider and take seriously your expectations of our stewardship over this unit of the national park system. It is from that thoughtful consideration that we are pleased to present for your review and comment the *Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (GMP/EIS) for City of Rocks National Reserve.

Although not as daunting as reading the tax code, the draft GMP is lengthy and not as casual as reading the day's Facebook and Twitter posts. Much of the information contained within is required by federal law and is provided for your benefit. It is there for you to examine the thought process that resulted in the preferred alternative for management that we bring to you for consideration. If you choose to read nothing else, please pay close attention to the executive summary in this newsletter as well as chapter 3 of the draft GMP/EIS and the preferred alternative it describes.

The preferred alternative for management (alternative B) is entitled "Silent City of Rocks" and would focus on the spectacular scenery, geology, biological richness, and cultural landscape experienced by past and present visitors.

It would emphasize a backcountry-type visitor experience that would allow for self-discovery within a minimally developed western outdoor environment.

An approved general management plan guides park managers in nearly every aspect of public land stewardship. The plan provides a philosophical framework for setting and accomplishing priorities in resource management, visitor services and facilities, and competing uses. The GMP will become the superintendent's management bible and can be thought of as a kind of contract with the visitor and the owner of the park—you.

Thirteen years can seem like a blip in time compared to the timelessness of the City of Rocks landscape, but with each passing year, I'm convinced that the management decisions we make together result in lifelong memories and greater preservation of the nationally significant values within City of Rocks. Please consider how the plan meets your expectations and those of future generations who will receive from us the City of Rocks National Reserve.



Wallace F. Keck, Superintendent



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact:

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Castle Rocks State Park
(208) 824-5911

For current GMP information and to submit comments using an online form:

GMP Project Website:
parkplanning.nps.gov/ciro

To submit written comments:

E-mail:
CIRO_GMP@nps.gov

Mail:

National Park Service
Attn: City of Rocks National Reserve GMP/EIS
909 First Avenue, Suite 548
Seattle, WA 98104

For general information about the Reserve:

Reserve Website:
www.nps.gov/ciro

Reserve Facebook Page:

www.facebook.com/CityOfRocksNationalReserve

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 to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

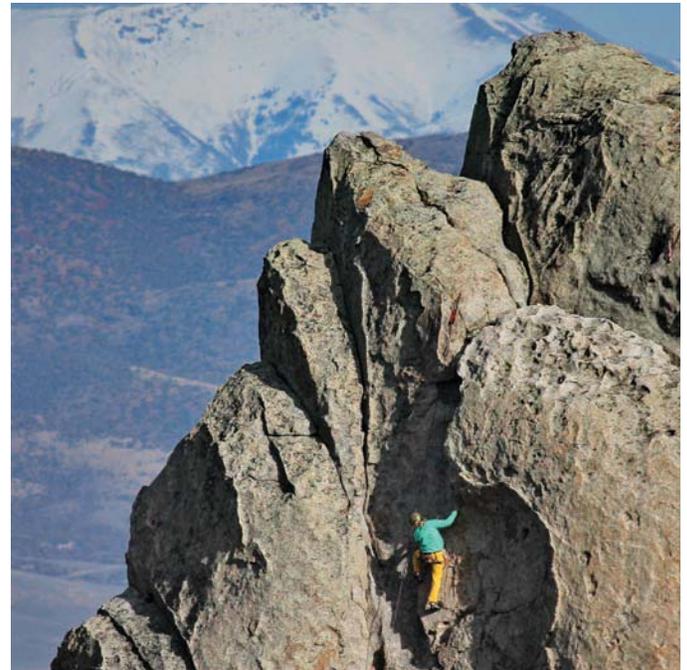
Please submit comments by **June 30, 2015** or 60 days from the date the EPA notice of filing and release of the draft GMP/EIS is published in the *Federal Register*, whichever is later.



PWRO 963 / 128214/ Spring 2015
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You're Invited to a Public Meeting!

Date	Location
Wednesday, May 6 11:00am– 1:00pm	Twin Falls, Idaho <i>Open House (drop-in)</i> Twin Falls Tourist Center 858 N. Blue Lakes Boulevard
Thursday, May 7 7:00pm– 8:30pm	Almo, Idaho <i>In cooperation with Cache Peak Civic Association</i> Cache Peak Emergency Services Bldg. 2743 S. Narrows Road



HOW TO COMMENT ON THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

This draft general management plan/environmental impact statement has been distributed to other agencies and interested organizations and individuals for their review and comment. The public comment period for this document will begin with official publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* and will last for approximately 60 days. Comments can be submitted at one of the public meetings, online, or via mail or e-mail.

You can view, download, and comment on this document online on the NPS Planning and Public Comment website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ciro>

You can also find public meeting information and links for the GMP at: www.nps.gov/ciro

Printed copies of the complete document are available upon request. Please see the contact information provided on the left.

INTRODUCTION

City of Rocks National Reserve (Reserve) was designated as a unit of the national park system on November 18, 1988 by the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-696) and is managed cooperatively by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR). The Reserve is located in the Albion Mountains in south-central Idaho and is one of the many publicly owned areas within the region (see map: Existing Conditions). The unit comprises an area of 14,407 acres. Of that total, approximately 9,680 acres are in federal ownership, 4,087 acres are privately owned, and 640 acres are owned by the state of Idaho (see map: Land Ownership and Management).

The Reserve protects unique and diverse resources. Its geologic features are world-renowned both for rock climbing and academic study. The Reserve is located at a biogeographic crossroads and protects a rich diversity of wildlife, especially mammals and birds. Seven distinct plant communities have been identified within its boundary, including the largest pinyon-juniper woodlands in the state of Idaho.

The Reserve also preserves 6.9 miles of the California National Historic Trail, 1.8 miles of the Salt Lake Alternate, and the surrounding cultural landscape, which

includes remnant historic trail ruts, over 350 emigrant signatures on 22 rocks, a portion of the Mormon Battalion Trail, and the Kelton-Boise Stage Route. Due to these exceptional resources, a portion of City of Rocks was designated a state park in 1957. The Reserve was designated a national historic landmark in 1964 and a national natural landmark in 1974.

Planning for the Reserve

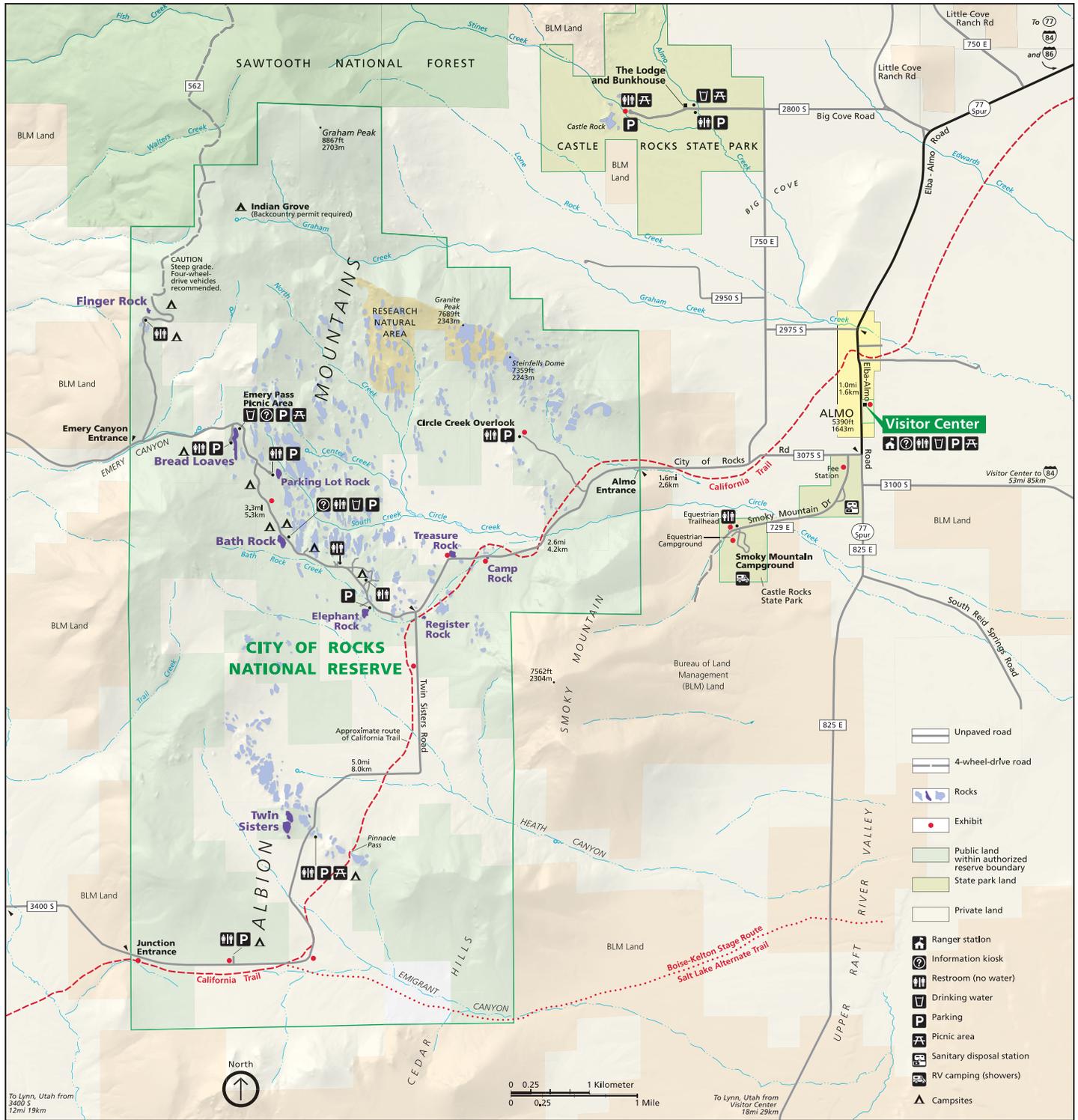
Planning for the Reserve has taken into consideration its location in south central Idaho and activities occurring outside its boundary. For instance, management activities on adjacent lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) affect conditions and use at the Reserve. In addition to these federally managed lands, state-owned lands also surround City of Rocks. These include Castle Rocks State Park (1 mile northeast of the Reserve) managed by IDPR, and several Idaho Department of Lands parcels located to the south and southeast of the Reserve boundary. The state of Idaho also owns one section of land in the heart of the Reserve.

The purpose of this general management plan and environmental impact statement (GMP/EIS) is to articulate a vision and overall management framework



Opposite: Climber on Anteater. **Above:** Camping area near Elephant Rock.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Opposite: Development and public review of the preliminary alternatives for City of Rocks National Reserve, 2011.

for the Reserve that will guide decision-making for the foreseeable future. The GMP includes management strategies for resource protection and preservation, visitor use, interpretation and education, use of facilities and the need for new facilities, and long-term operations and management of the Reserve.

Public involvement and consultation efforts were ongoing throughout the process of preparing the draft GMP/EIS. Public involvement methods included news releases, newsletter mailings, posters, public workshops, *Federal Register* notices, and website postings. The public scoping period offered the first opportunity for public comment and extended from August to November 2009. Public workshops were held in Almo, Burley, Pocatello, Boise, and Ketchum, Idaho. In addition to the comments shared during the workshops, written responses were received from individuals and organizations. The scoping comments assisted the planning team in identifying the range of issues to address in the GMP and preliminary ideas for the development of alternatives.

Public review of the preliminary alternatives was an additional step in the planning process and was held between April and July 2011. Public comments on the preliminary alternatives assisted the planning team in refining the preliminary alternatives and identifying a preferred alternative.

The interdisciplinary planning team was composed of staff from City of Rocks National Reserve and the Pacific West Regional Office. NPS staff regularly updated Reserve partners and stakeholders—including IDPR, BLM, USFS, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, and state and local agencies—at every milestone in this planning effort.



ISSUES ADDRESSED

The planning team, along with representatives from other agencies, organizations, and interested members of the public, identified various issues and concerns about City of Rocks National Reserve during this planning process. An issue is defined as an opportunity, conflict, or problem regarding the use or management of public lands. This information assisted in determining the scope, or range of issues, to be addressed by this GMP/EIS. The GMP alternatives provide strategies for addressing these issues within the context of the Reserve's purpose, significance, and special mandates.

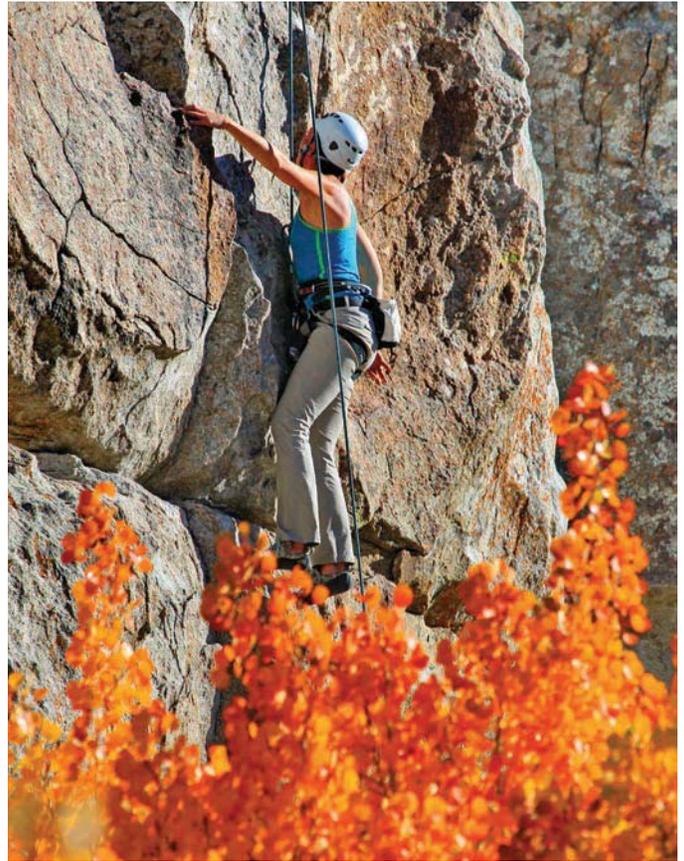
The following issues and concerns are addressed in this general management plan:

- management direction for **cultural resources** protection, research, collections management, and monitoring, largely based on law and policy, as well as the balance between visitor use and enjoyment and resource protection;
- management direction for **natural resources** (including management of the Reserve's Research Natural Area) largely based on law and policy, as well as the balance between visitor use and enjoyment and resource protection;
- alternatives for **grazing** within the management alternatives, based on the alternative concepts and how management zones are applied for each alternative;
- protection of the Reserve's **airsheds, soundscapes, dark night skies, and viewsheds** (particularly those associated with the California National Historic Trail);
- guidance on how the Reserve will assess, respond to, and interpret the impacts of **global climate change** on both natural and cultural resources, as well as operations and visitor services;



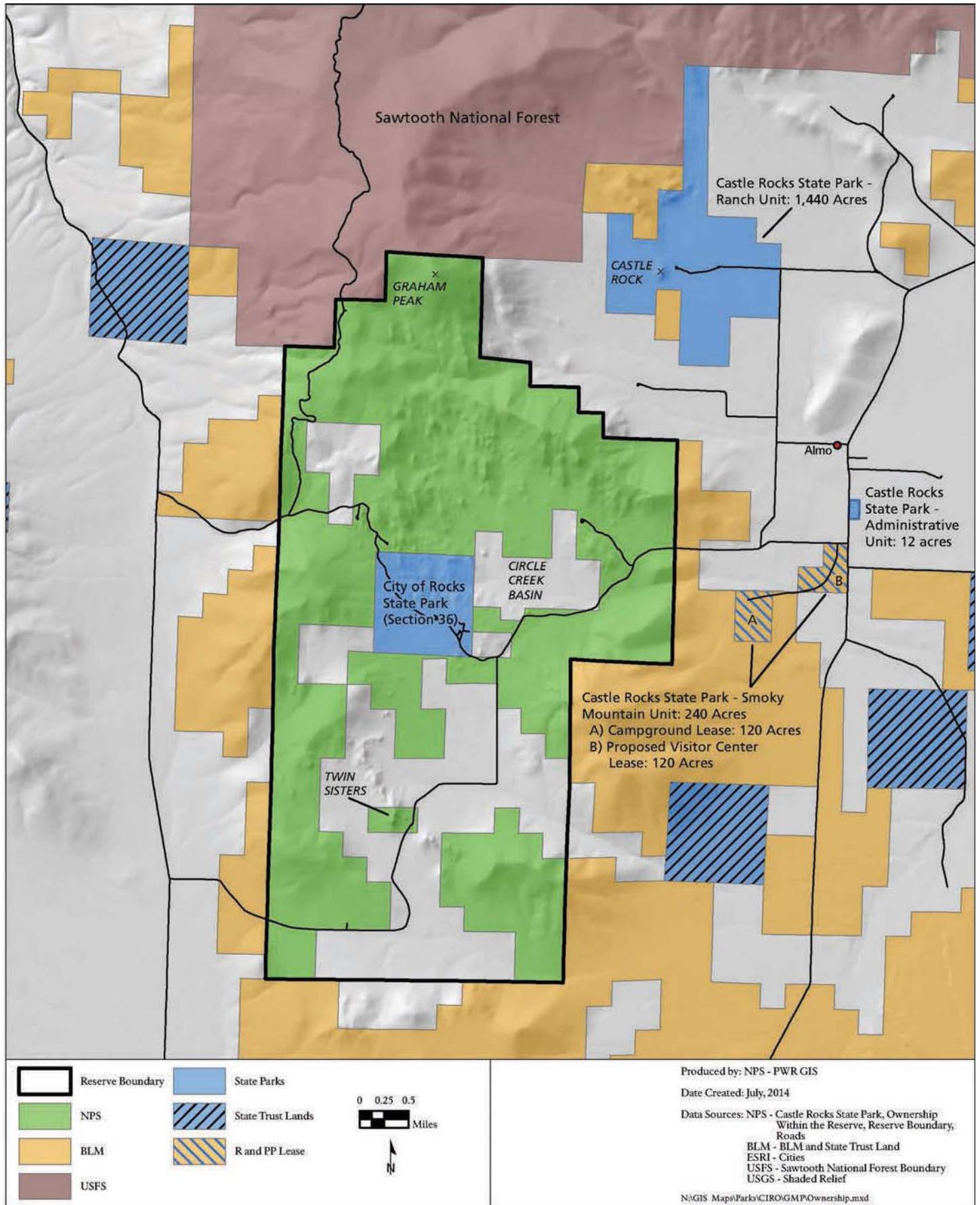
Cattle grazing below an Albion Mountain Sunset.

- guidance regarding sustainable, cost-effective approaches to **Reserve operations**, including staffing, administrative and visitor facilities, and employee housing;
- types of **visitor experiences, facilities, and activities, including interpretation and education**, that should be available in different areas of the Reserve, consistent with the values and special designations of those areas and the surrounding lands;
- adequacy of existing **boundaries** as required by the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, as amended and options for reconfiguration of special designation areas (National Natural Landmark, Natural Historic Landmark, and county Historical Preservation Zone) to address inconsistencies and management challenges;
- and all forms of motorized and non-motorized **transportation**, circulation patterns, parking, and other transportation options, as well as recommendations for management of the City of Rocks Back Country Byway.



Issues addressed in the draft GMP/EIS include visitor experience, facilities, and resource protection.

LAND OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT



ALTERNATIVES

The four management alternatives considered in this draft GMP/EIS present a vision and direction for City of Rocks National Reserve. The alternatives are consistent with the Reserve's purpose, significance, and special mandates as presented in Chapter 2 of the draft GMP/EIS. The alternatives presented by the planning team propose different ways to manage resources, visitor use, and facilities at the Reserve through cooperative efforts. These cooperative efforts rely on local citizens, Cassia County, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, and the National Park Service.

The four alternatives are alternative A: No Action Alternative (Continue Current Management), alternative B: Silent City of Rocks (NPS and IDPR preferred alternative), alternative C: A Stage for Stewardship, and alternative D: Treasured Landscapes, Inspiring Stories. The four alternatives vary by theme or concept, resource management decisions, desired future conditions, and the application of management zones.

Common to All Alternatives

Several actions would be common to all alternatives. These actions span areas of resource protection, visitor use, and operations. Some of these actions include:

- Private uses on private lands would continue under the jurisdiction of Cassia County.
- The Reserve would continue to work with adjacent landowners and citizens on issues of mutual concern.

- To better educate hunters and trappers about areas available within the Reserve and to establish sustainable levels of hunting, the Reserve would work with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
- Reserve operations (administration and maintenance) would continue to be located at the Castle Rocks State Park Administrative Unit in Almo.
- The Reserve would recommend that Cassia County extend the Historical Preservation Zone to cover the entire Reserve to fully protect its cultural and natural resources.
- Section 36 in the Reserve would continue to be a state-owned parcel within the Reserve.
- The Reserve would encourage Cassia County to support national scenic byway designation of the existing City of Rocks Back Country Byway.
- The national historic landmark and the national natural landmark designations would be updated to encompass other significant features in the Reserve.
- The Reserve would continue to allow noncommercial pinyon nut gathering and hunting.

A full list of actions that are common to all alternatives is included in Chapter 3: Alternatives of the draft GMP/EIS.



Historic rural setting in autumn.

RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A: No-Action Alternative

Alternative A is the no-action alternative and assumes that existing programming, facilities, staffing, and funding would generally continue at their current levels. The primary emphasis of the no-action alternative would continue to be the protection of resources and maintenance of existing recreational uses in the Reserve.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

Under alternative A, natural and cultural resource preservation and protection would continue to be a high priority for Reserve management. Programs would focus on the inventory and monitoring of resources working with the NPS Upper Columbia Basin Network (UCBN) and private landowners. The 312-acre Research Natural Area (RNA) would continue to be managed for its nationally designated values.

GRAZING

Grazing would continue at an economically viable level for permittees (permit holders) while meeting long-range objectives to preserve and protect significant resources and scenic quality in the Reserve.

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

The Reserve would continue to provide interpretive and educational opportunities relating to the various City of Rocks interpretive themes and would continue to work with other organizations that use the Reserve as a place to teach. Reserve staff would continue to conduct a variety of interpretive programs and special events and provide educational materials and activities.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Alternative A would continue to offer the current level of visitor services. Traditional recreational activities such as hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, birding, and climbing would continue to be accommodated, and the current trail system would be maintained.

In the short term, the existing visitor center with its administrative and visitor services functions would remain located within the Castle Rocks State Park Administrative Unit in Almo, on state-owned land. In the long-term, IDPR would seek to develop a permanent visitor center on state-leased BLM land near Smoky Mountain as approved in the Reserve's 1996 *Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP)* and in the 2006 *Castle Rocks State Park Master Plan*.

This page: Above—Horseback riding is a popular activity in the Reserve. Below—The existing visitor center in Almo. **Opposite:** A photographer's paradise.

Smoky Mountain Campground, located outside the Reserve on a state-leased BLM parcel, would continue to serve as the main campground for recreational vehicles, equestrians, and others camping outside the Reserve. It would be expanded to include a second camping loop of up to 62 sites, as described in the CMP.

BOUNDARY

There would be no change to the Reserve boundary under alternative A.

CLIMATE CHANGE

In alternative A, the Reserve would continue to interpret and monitor the effects of human-caused climate change in the northern Basin and Range Province at City of Rocks and would work toward increasing fuel and energy efficiency. The Reserve would implement actions outlined in its climate action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Reserve would continue to allow and support existing climate change research within the Reserve.



Alternative B: Silent City of Rocks (Preferred Alternative)

Alternative B, the NPS and IDPR preferred alternative, would highlight the spectacular scenic resources, geology, biological richness, and cultural landscape experienced by pioneers and early settlers as well as contemporary visitors. Alternative B would encourage self-directed exploration of the Reserve's western landscape and facilitate individual discovery to evoke a powerful connection to the Reserve and its history.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

Under alternative B natural and cultural resource preservation and protection would continue to be a high priority for management of the Reserve. To improve opportunities for research, the Research Natural Area would be reconfigured and expanded to 485 acres. The Reserve would develop and implement a wildlife monitoring plan to guide ongoing management of populations and habitats and would collaborate with partners to determine the feasibility of reintroducing certain extirpated wildlife. In addition, Reserve staff would conduct a condition assessment and evaluate and monitor features associated with the California Trail corridor to detect changes over time and to diminish impacts.

GRAZING

Grazing would continue within the Reserve but would be reduced over time as permittees discontinue requests for permits due to changing business models or abandonment. The presence of cattle on the landscape would continue, but total head and animal unit months (AUMs) would be expected to decrease over time.

As opportunities arise, grazing allotments could be reorganized to achieve maximum benefits for both natural and cultural resources. As allotments are discontinued, increased protection of the California Trail Zone and the Visitor Facilities and Access Zone would be emphasized.

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

Alternative B would incorporate tribal perspectives and involvement into interpretive programming. Reserve neighbors would also be encouraged to participate in interpretation and storytelling.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

In alternative B, a full-scale replacement visitor center would not be built. Instead, the small existing visitor



MANAGEMENT ZONES

Management zoning is the method used by the National Park Service to identify and describe the appropriate variety of resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved and maintained in different areas of a park. Management zones show where different types of visitor experiences occur and where levels of development and resource protection may vary.

Unlike most national park units that are entirely owned and managed by the National Park Service, approximately a third of the land within the Reserve is in private ownership where local county zoning and regulations prevail. On private land, there would be no public visitation (except with the landowners' permission) and no activities or facilities. Private landowners would continue to be stewards on their own lands.

Summary of Management Zones

VISITOR FACILITIES AND ACCESS ZONE

The Visitor Facilities and Access Zone encompasses a variety of facilities that support the highest visitor capacity within the Reserve and serve as an access point for experiencing the Reserve.

TRANSITION ZONE

The Transition Zone balances recreation with the protection of resources. This zone provides a more geographically dispersed recreational experience, offering scenic vistas and a sense of open, natural character while providing minimal developed comforts.

NATURAL ZONE

The Natural Zone preserves natural features, natural processes, diversity, and ecological values, and provides for compatible recreational uses.

RESEARCH NATURAL AREA ZONE

The Research Natural Area Zone preserves outstanding natural features, natural processes, diversity, and ecological values, and provides for nonmanipulative research. Activities in this zone would be restricted to nonmanipulative research, education, and other activities that do not detract from the area's research values, according to NPS policies.

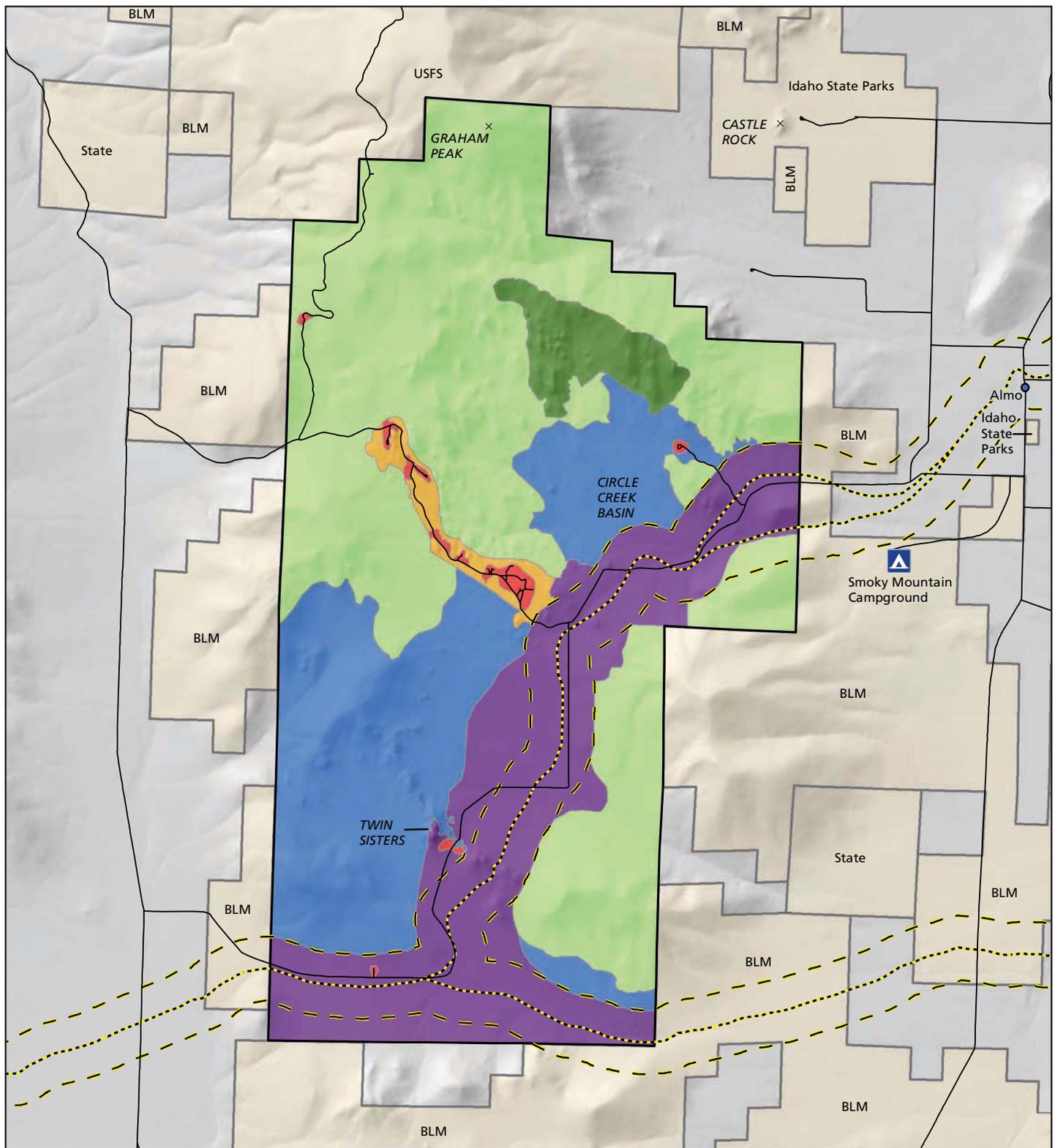
HISTORIC RURAL SETTING ZONE

The Historic Rural Setting Zone preserves the western rural setting and perpetuates the visual character of historic ranching activities on the landscape.

CALIFORNIA TRAIL ZONE

The California Trail Zone preserves and interprets the major landmarks, trail remnants, inscription rocks, and historically significant viewsheds associated with the California National Historic Trail.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE: ALTERNATIVE B, SILENT CITY OF ROCKS



Produced by: NPS - PWR GIS

Date Created: September, 2014

Data Sources: BLM - BLM, USFS and State Land
 NPS - California National Historic Trail, Management Zones, Reserve Boundary and Roads
 USGS - Shaded Relief

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center would be reconfigured and slightly expanded, if possible, to provide additional space and a better separation of uses and functions. This small, century-old house would continue to serve as the main visitor center for the Reserve and Castle Rocks State Park. In order to further enhance the facility's functionality, a new visitor contact station could be built on state-owned land adjacent to the existing visitor center/headquarters building to supplement the existing building.

Emphasis would be on visitor preplanning through the internet and community outreach, as well as on using self-guided exhibits and interpretive materials within the Reserve. There would be less emphasis on staff presence, guided programs, and tours. New entrance kiosks would be constructed at Smoky Mountain Campground and at Bath Rock to improve orientation for visitors. In the long term, if lands and funding become available, IDPR could consider building a visitor center as approved in the Reserve's 1996 *Comprehensive Management Plan* and the 2006 *Castle Rocks State Park Master Plan*.

A new recreational trail would be developed for hiking, bicycling, and equestrian use within the Reserve beginning at the end of the California Trail hiking trail, near Nicholson Ranch, and eventually connecting with the Tea Kettle Trail (see map: New Trail Proposed in Alternatives B and C). This new trail would allow visitors to explore signature rocks and the California Trail corridor without having to drive, walk, or bike along the road. This trail would also complete a large loop of hiking trails for the Reserve.

An equestrian staging area for parking and staging horse trailers would be developed near the Bread Loaves intersection to supplement the equestrian camping provided at Smoky Mountain and the Juniper group site. Alternative B would reconfigure camping within the Reserve to address resource impacts and visual and safety issues based on the proposed recommendations of the *Rim Development Concept Plan for City of Rocks National Reserve*.

Alternative B would also provide for primitive group camping and some additional tent camping sites at Smoky Mountain campground to serve 50–70 people. The National Park Service would partner with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation to develop a primitive camping area for social camping, including some tent campsites on the existing state-leased BLM parcel. The NPS would also partner with IDPR to construct an amphitheater at Smoky Mountain Campground for evening programs and interpretive activities.

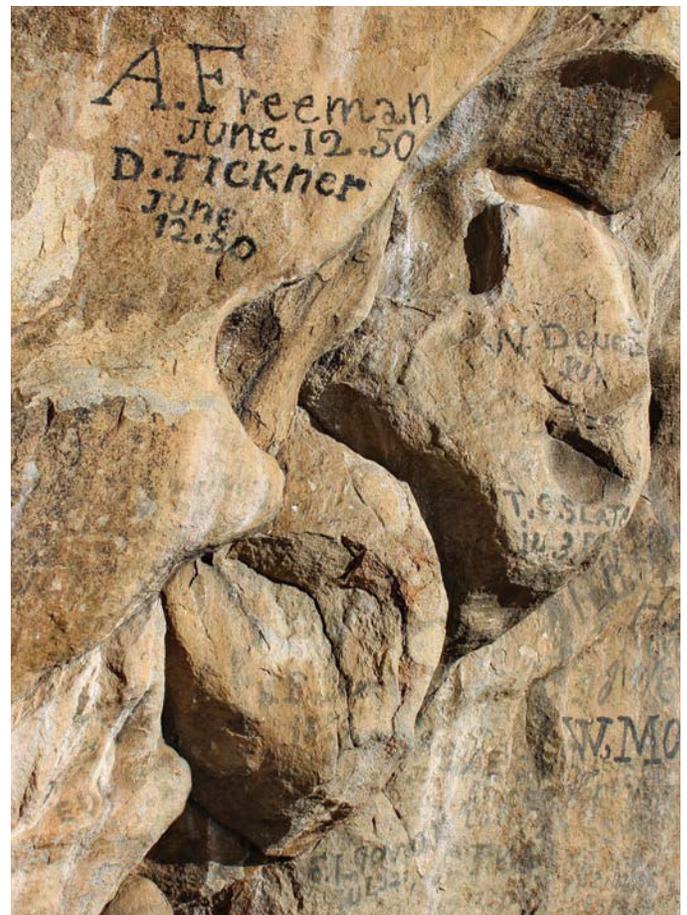
BOUNDARY

Under the preferred alternative, there would be no change to the current Reserve boundary. At the southwest corner of the Reserve, the National Park Service would work with Cassia County, the BLM, and private landowners to protect portions of the California

Trail corridor outside the Reserve. This area includes the southwest corner of the Reserve and continues to Granite Pass, the next stop for the pioneers traveling on the California Trail from the Circle Creek Basin.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Alternative B would implement the same climate change mitigation, research, and interpretation strategies outlined in alternative A, including interpretation of the effects of climate change and implementing the Reserve climate action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the minimal development emphasis in alternative B would provide for a lower facility-related energy and carbon footprint. Alternative B would also encourage RNA research that analyzes the impacts of climate change on different vegetation types.



Above: Camping at Bread Loaves.

Alternative C: A Stage for Stewardship

Alternative C would protect resources by encouraging research activities; enhancing educational and interpretive opportunities; and forging partnerships with educational institutions, agencies, organizations, private landowners, park visitors, and tribes. Visitors would be provided with a variety of opportunities to learn about and experience California Trail history and the many natural wonders within the Reserve. The Reserve would be recognized as part of a much larger area of protected lands—one that provides a stage for fostering improved understanding of resources across the broader landscape.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

Alternative C would increase public understanding of resources through the application and dissemination of research. The Research Natural Area would be reconfigured and expanded to 693 acres to provide and protect additional flora and fauna species for research. The Reserve would seek partnerships with other agencies to develop a better understanding of how wildlife uses the Reserve and surrounding lands.

GRAZING

In alternative C, grazing on public lands could be voluntarily eliminated over time within the life span of the general management plan. Encouraging the

elimination of grazing in alternative C would be consistent with the concept of stewardship, with an emphasis on promoting natural processes and biodiversity.

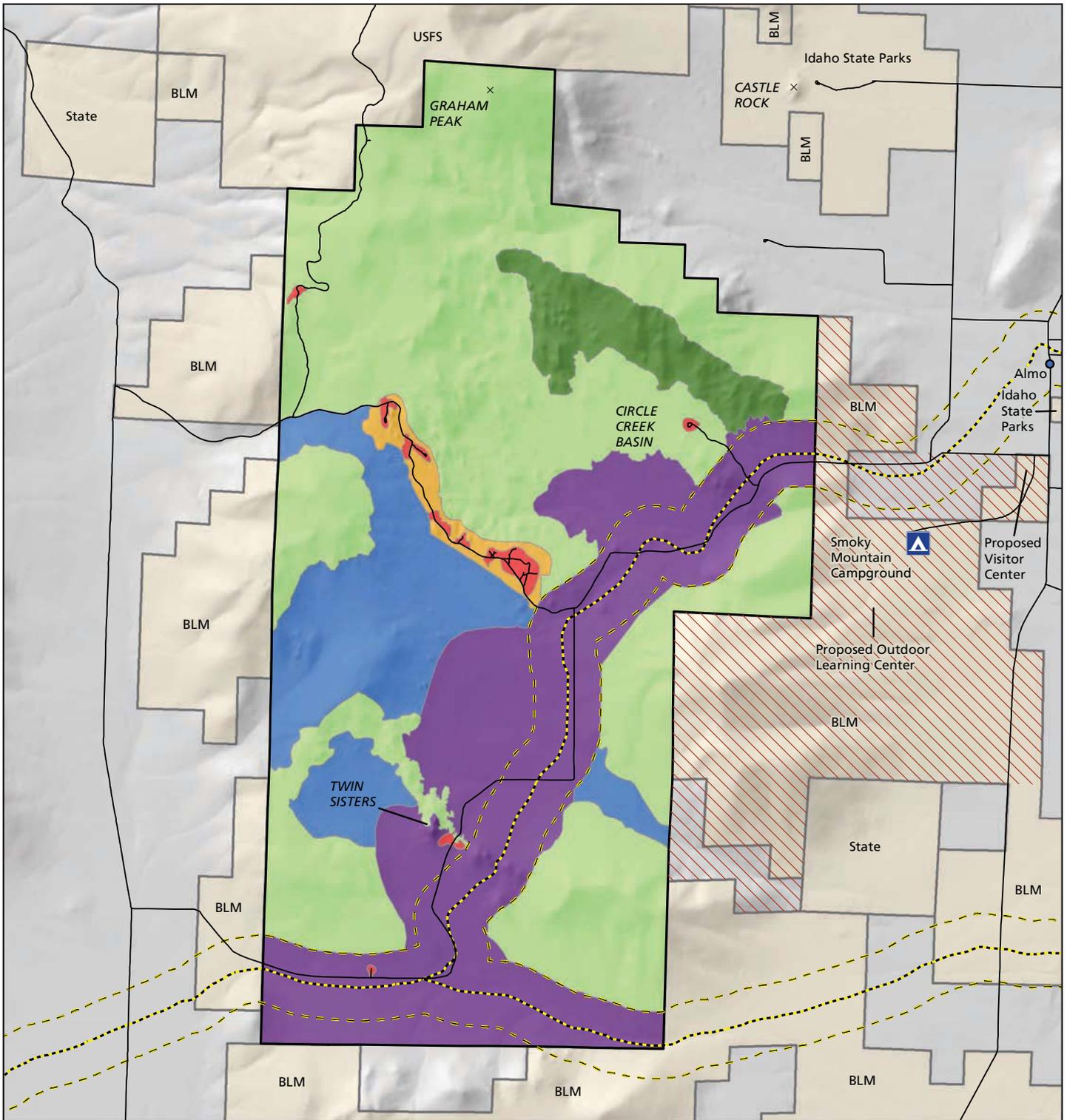
To facilitate removal of grazing, a voluntary federal grazing permit buyout program would be initiated. This buyout would allow permittees to exchange their permits for compensation from conservation organizations. The benefits would include the following:

- permittees would receive compensation by relinquishing their permits;
- taxpayer money would be saved by decreasing costs associated with subsidizing the federal livestock program for these grazing allotments;
- related management costs by the NPS and IDPR would be reduced;
- adverse impacts on natural and cultural resources, such as the California National Historic Trail, would be removed;
- and the Research Natural Area, as well as riparian and wetland areas would be protected.



Opposite and above: Visitors enjoy emigrant inscriptions at Register Rock.

ALTERNATIVE C, A STAGE FOR STEWARDSHIP



Visitor Facilities & Access Zone	Private Lands
Transition Zone	California National Historic Trail
Natural Zone	California National Historic Trail Corridor (1/2 Mile Wide)
Research Natural Area Zone	Reserve Boundary
Historic Rural Setting Zone	Roads
California Trail Zone	
Proposed Boundary Addition	

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Produced by: NPS - PWR GIS
 Date Created: July, 2014
 Data Sources: BLM - BLM, USFS and State Land
 NPS - California National Historic Trail, Management Zones, Proposed Visitor and Outdoor Learning Centers, Reserve Boundary and Roads
 USGS - Shaded Relief

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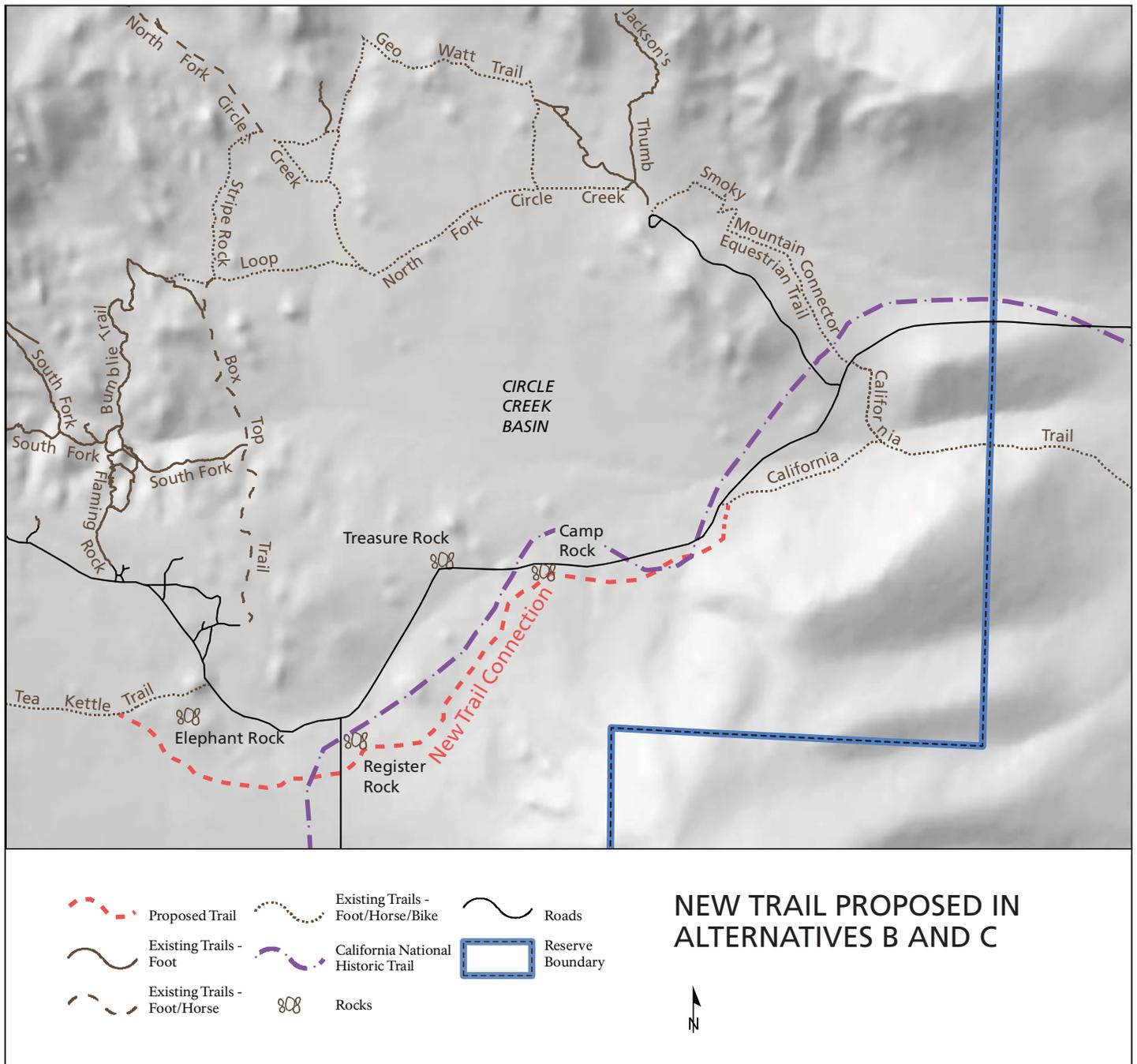
EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

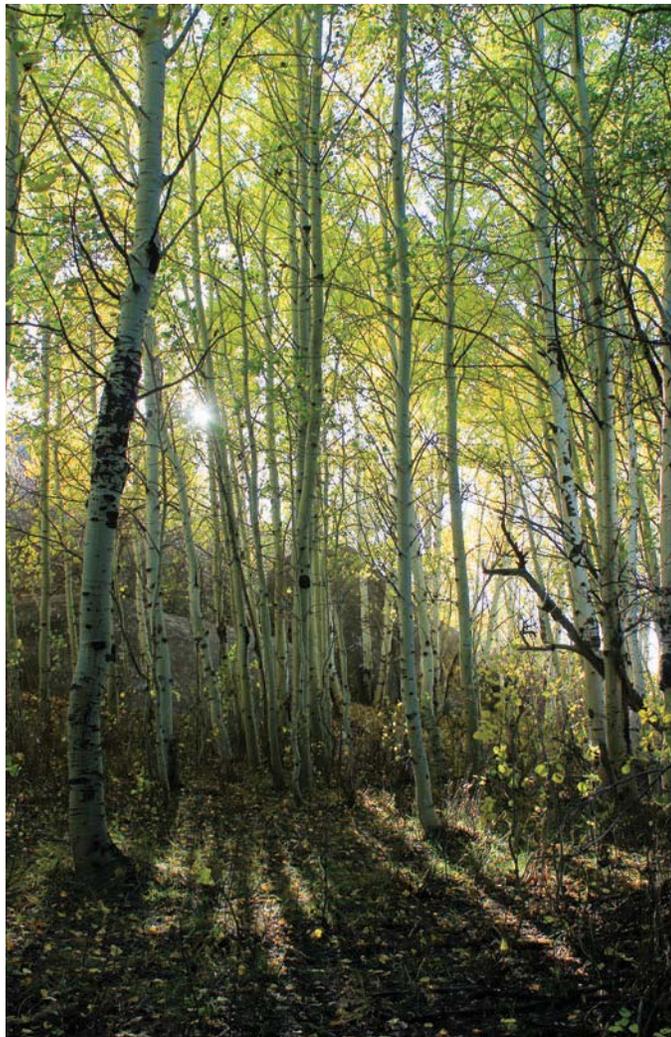
Additional interpretive and educational programs would be provided primarily through the proposed visitor center and the outdoor learning center, including guided walks and talks and exposure to the Reserve's natural and cultural environment. There would be opportunities for both structured and unstructured activities for self-guided and group discovery. Visitors and youth would participate in stewardship activities that contribute to the preservation of nationally significant resources, such as Reserve geology and the California National Historic Trail. Interpretive programs would focus on immersion, hands-on experiential learning, and environmental stewardship.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

As in alternative B, a new recreational trail would be developed to connect the California Trail hiking trail to the Tea Kettle Trail. In alternative C, an additional formal trail for hikers would be developed in partnership with the BLM to the summit of Smoky Mountain from the Smoky Mountain Campground.

As in alternative B, an equestrian staging area for parking and staging horse trailers would be developed near the Bread Loaves intersection to supplement the equestrian camping provided at Smoky Mountain and the Juniper group site. Alternative C would also reconfigure camping in the Reserve to address resource impacts and visual and





safety issues based on the proposed recommendations of the *Rim Development Concept Plan for City of Rocks National Reserve*.

Alternative C would develop a smaller, more cost-effective version of the visitor center approved in the Reserve’s 1996 *Comprehensive Management Plan* and the *Castle Rocks State Park Master Plan* for the Reserve. The National Park Service would partner with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation to develop a shared visitor center within the expanded boundary, close to the Reserve’s Almo entrance.

A second camping loop and amphitheater would be added to the Smoky Mountain Campground, with up to 62 additional campsites that emphasize group tent camping.

Adjacent to Smoky Mountain Campground, an outdoor learning center would be developed to immerse students and visitors in direct contact with nature through outdoor experiences emphasizing exploration, reflection, and stewardship. The learning center would connect people, nature, and community through science, art, and the hands-on study of natural and cultural history within the larger northern Basin and Range ecosystem.

BOUNDARY

Alternative C would include a boundary modification of 4,247 acres of land: 3,595 acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management and 652 acres in two private parcels to incorporate scenic resources, portions of the California National Historic Trail, and old-growth pinyon-juniper forest at the east boundary of the Reserve. Smoky Mountain Campground would be located within the expanded Reserve boundary. This expansion would address overcrowding and lack of available campsites during the Reserve’s peak season. At the southwest corner of the Reserve, the National Park Service would work with Cassia County and private landowners to commemorate and protect the California Trail corridor outside the Reserve, beginning at the southwest corner of the Reserve and continuing to Granite Pass.

The Reserve would seek to partner with adjacent landowners and agencies to work on common issues or areas of mutual interest such as nonnative plants, climate change, the California National Historic Trail, and the Smoky Mountain pinyon forest. In particular, the National Park Service could cooperate or partner with the BLM on projects of mutual interest using the federal Service First Authority. Cassia County would continue to retain jurisdiction of remaining private lands within the current or revised boundary.

CLIMATE CHANGE

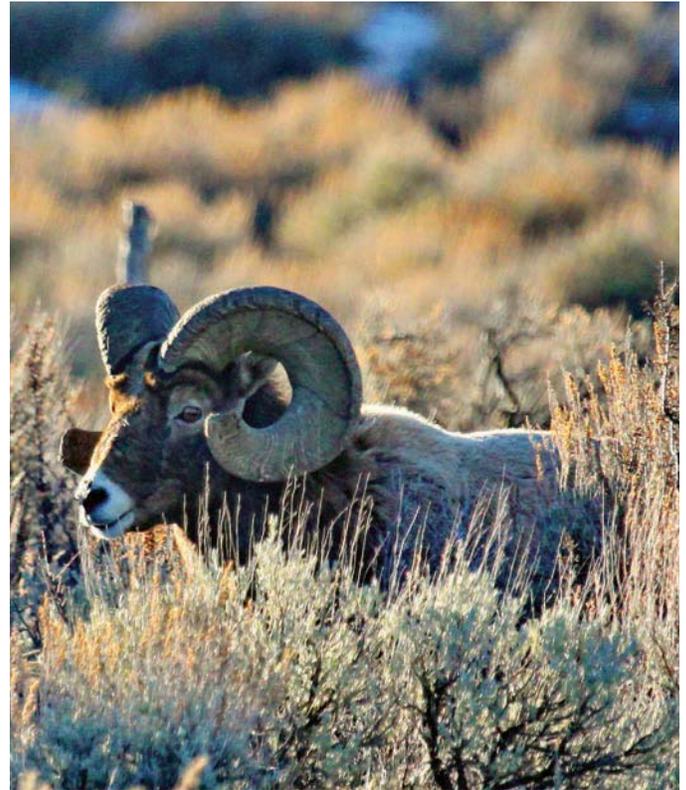
In alternative C, facilities and transportation options would be designed sustainably and with a low carbon

Above: Hikers above Indian Grove. **Below:** Aspens at Emery Pass Picnic Area.

footprint. The Reserve would encourage development of a privately operated shuttle system linking Castle Rocks State Park to the Reserve.

Alternative C would emphasize enhanced research opportunities on landscape-scale natural resource topics, including climate change. An expanded Research Natural Area would provide and protect additional flora and fauna species for research, including the opportunity for paired studies to compare and contrast species' adaptation to changing natural conditions. By establishing active partnerships, this alternative would promote climate change research and enhance public understanding by sharing the results.

Contingency plans would be developed to address instances of high-intensity fire or increased erosion, each of which could increase as the climate changes. Restoring connectivity between ecosystems and reducing fragmentation would allow ecosystems to adjust and adapt, thus increasing their resilience to fire, drought, invasive species, wildlife, changing water supplies, and other impacts associated with climate change.



Above: Desert bighorn sheep near Bath Rock. **Below:** Western rural setting and view to City of Rocks.

Alternative D: Treasured Landscapes Inspiring Stories

Alternative D would focus on telling the stories of the Reserve through the emigrants who passed through it as well as through the people who live, work, and recreate in it today. Visitors would gain a deeper understanding of the Reserve's resources through more formal and structured recreational opportunities and programs. This alternative emphasizes a frontcountry day-use visitor experience. Alternative D would focus on providing interactive and immersive experiences in the cultural and natural world for different user groups by providing enhanced opportunities to learn, recreate, and enjoy the Reserve.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

Natural and cultural resource preservation and protection would continue to be a high priority for Reserve management. Programs would focus on the inventory and monitoring of resources, working with the NPS Upper Columbia Basin Network and private landowners. The Research Natural Area would be reconfigured and expanded to 485 acres and continue to be managed for its designated values.

GRAZING

Grazing permits would continue to be renewed in all zones (except the Research Natural Area Zone) unless there was abandonment by permittees or consistent failure to comply with conditions of the permit. To minimize visitor conflicts, the Reserve would also consider removing cattle pasturing from the Visitor

Facilities and Access Zone where possible. This could result in a slight reduction in grazing from reconfiguring existing allotments. As in other alternatives, the grazing management plan would be updated to reflect these and other changes.

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

Alternative D would allow opportunities for visitors and youth to engage in onsite living history activities and demonstration projects to learn about archeology and other cultural resources. Programs would focus on the California Trail and ranching heritage. Some of these activities would be provided at the proposed full-service visitor center and some through commercial visitor services or by special programs, working with permittees.

Activities related to natural resources could include ranger-led or field expert-led nature hikes, night sky viewing opportunities, geology field schools, and onsite hunter education programs based on sound wildlife management principles.

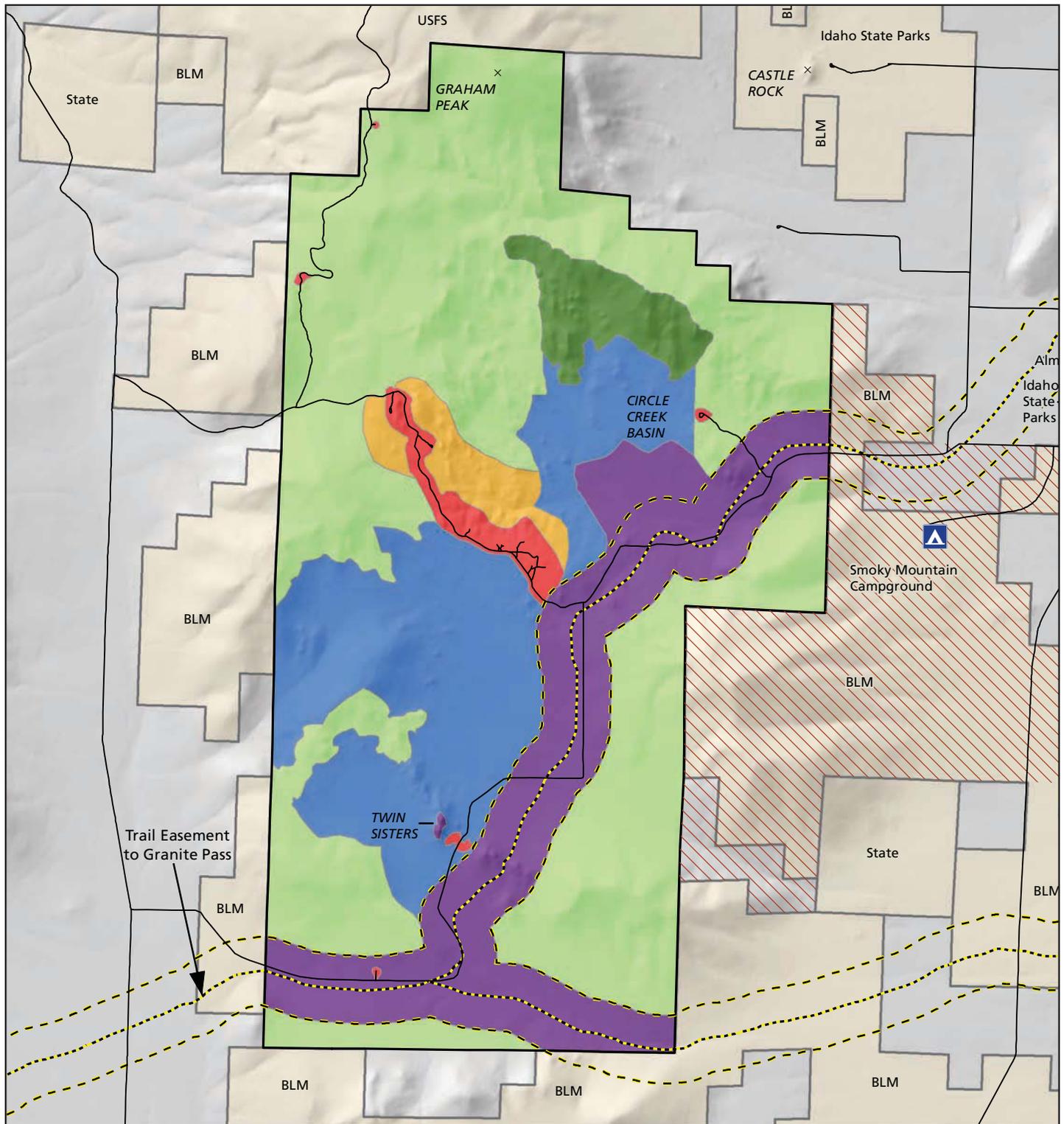
VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The current array of recreational opportunities would be expanded to include additional day-use activities, such as more walks and hikes, horseback riding, and bicycling opportunities. As in alternatives B and C, an equestrian staging area for parking and staging horse trailers would be developed to supplement the equestrian camping

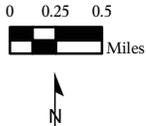


Equestrian ride near Campsite 12.

ALTERNATIVE D, TREASURED LANDSCAPES INSPIRING STORIES



- Visitor Facilities & Access Zone
- Transition Zone
- Natural Zone
- Research Natural Area Zone
- Historic Rural Setting Zone
- California Trail Zone
- Proposed Boundary Addition
- Private Lands
- California National Historic Trail
- California National Historic Trail Corridor (1/2 Mile Wide)
- Reserve Boundary
- Roads



Produced by: NPS - PWR GIS
 Date Created: July, 2014
 Data Sources: BLM - BLM, USFS and State Land
 NPS - California National Historic Trail
 Management Zones, Reserve
 Boundary and Roads
 USGS - Shaded Relief
 N:\GIS_Maps\Parks\CIRO\GMP\AlternativeD.mxd



provided at Smoky Mountain and the Juniper group site. Similarly, alternative D would reconfigure camping in the Reserve to address resource impacts and visual and safety issues based on the proposed recommendations of the *Rim Development Concept Plan for City of Rocks National Reserve*.

In alternative D, a combined City of Rocks National Reserve/Castle Rocks State Park visitor center would be developed. This permanent visitor center would be located within the expanded boundary, close to the Almo entrance of the Reserve.

A second campground loop at Smoky Mountain Campground would be added with up to 62 additional campsites. The emphasis would be on developing more individual tent campsites.

BOUNDARY

Similar to alternative C, alternative D would include a boundary modification of 4,247 acres of land: 3,595 acres managed by BLM and 652 acres in two private parcels to protect scenic portions of the California National Historic Trail and old-growth pinyon-juniper forest at the east boundary of the Reserve. Smoky Mountain Campground would be located within the proposed Reserve boundary. Cassia County would continue to retain jurisdiction of remaining private lands within the current or revised boundary. As in alternatives B and C, at the southern boundary of the Reserve, the National Park Service would work with Cassia County and private landowners to commemorate and protect the California Trail corridor from the southwest corner of the Reserve to Granite Pass.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Management of actions associated with climate change mitigation, research, and interpretation would be the same as alternative B, plus the Reserve would encourage commercial visitor services guides to use vehicles with alternative fuels to limit emissions within the Reserve and at Castle Rocks State Park. The Reserve would also encourage visitor activities that promote walking, bike riding, or hiking rather than driving.



Top left: Climbers on Morning Glory Spire. **Below left:** Family walking to Bread Loaves climbing area. **Right:** Pinyon jays are one of 142 birds found within the Reserve.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The potential effects of the four alternatives are analyzed for impacts in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This analysis is the basis for comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives. Chapter 5: Environmental Consequences of the draft GMP/EIS provides detailed analysis of impacts related to cultural, natural, and recreational resources; park operations and partnerships; special uses and designations; and impacts related to socioeconomics.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The environmentally preferable alternative is defined as “the alternative that will promote national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the National

Environmental Policy Act.” The environmentally preferable alternative for City of Rocks National Reserve is alternative B: Silent City of Rocks, the NPS and IDPR preferred alternative. This alternative best satisfies the national environmental goals identified in NEPA by providing the highest level of protection of natural and cultural resources while concurrently providing for a wide range of neutral and beneficial uses of the environment. This alternative maintains an environment that supports a diversity and variety of individual choices, and it integrates resource protection with an appropriate range of visitor uses and understanding.

Additional discussion of the environmentally preferable alternative can be found in Chapter 3: Alternatives in the draft GMP/EIS.



Granite Peak at sunset.

NEWS FROM THE RESERVE

“How’s that working for you?”

BY WALLACE KECK

“How’s that working for you?” I hear that skeptical question a lot when members of the public, elected officials, and even distant colleagues from the National Park Service discover a little-known clause in Public Law 100-696—the law that created City of Rocks National Reserve. That clause states, “the Secretary shall, pursuant to cooperative agreement transfer management and administration over all or any part of the property. . .to the State or appropriate units of local government.”

Congress not only created a new unit of the national park system in 1988, but it also created a new way of managing federal public lands in partnership with state and local governments. So here’s the 411 to sort it all out:

- The Reserve is a unit of the national park system.
- The Reserve contains federal, state, and private lands.
- 640 acres within the Reserve have been designated an Idaho State Park since 1957.
- The Reserve is managed and administered onsite by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation through a perpetual cooperative agreement with the NPS.
- Reserve employees are hired by the state of Idaho but function in both agencies.
- The Reserve is funded by both the NPS and IDPR in a near 50/50 split.
- The Reserve’s support facilities such as the visitor center, offices, employee housing, and maintenance shop are all located in Castle Rocks State Park, just outside the Reserve.

So back to that question, “How’s that working for you?” Surprisingly, it works incredibly well! Sure, there are two budgets to manage that have differing fiscal calendars; and yes, there are two sets of agency policies and reporting systems; and yes we do have to manage to both federal and state laws, rules, and regulations. . . but the partnership works (even at twice the bureaucracy) for half the price!

This page: The east entrance to the Reserve. **Inside back cover:** Wintry view of Smoky Mountain. **Back cover:** Full moon sets behind pinnacles.

The secret to the success of such a unique management arrangement is mutual trust and respect for the separate missions of the NPS and IDPR. Both agencies recognize their shared responsibilities, and both bring unique strengths to the partnership. The partners see that sometimes the state’s administrative process is simpler or more straightforward to accomplish a task and so both agree to proceed under that authority, and likewise sometimes the NPS can bring resources and expertise to the table that exceed the capacity of the state.

Congress may not have fully anticipated how successful the partnership would be when they added that little clause, but the public is getting the best bang for its buck, and without fully comprehending, the visitor gets the best of both agencies. Interested in more details? Give me a call, drop by the office, or send me an email.



GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN SCHEDULE

Estimated Time Frame	Planning Activity	Public Involvement Opportunities
2009 ✓ (Complete)	Conduct Public Scoping Identify goals and issues that need to be addressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review newsletter. Send us your ideas and concerns using the response form. Participate in public workshops: voice your ideas and concerns about the future of the Reserve and meet the planning team.
2011 ✓ (Complete)	Develop Preliminary Alternatives Based on the results of public scoping, develop a draft outline of different possible futures and strategies for the Reserve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review public scoping comment newsletter. Send us your ideas and concerns using the response form. Participate in public workshops: voice your ideas and concerns about the future of the Reserve and meet the planning team.
2012 ✓ (Complete)	Public Review of Preliminary Alternatives Solicit comments on preliminary alternative visions for the Reserve's future from the public, Reserve partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review preliminary alternatives newsletter. Send us your written comments on the preliminary alternatives. Participate in public workshops and voice your opinions.
2015	Prepare and Distribute DRAFT General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* Revise alternatives based on comments. Prepare and distribute a draft GMP/EIS, including identification of a preferred alternative. <i>* We are currently at this step.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the draft GMP/EIS newsletter. Send us your written comments on the draft GMP/EIS. Participate in public workshops and voice your opinions.
2015	Prepare and Distribute FINAL GMP/EIS Revise draft GMP/EIS based on comments. Prepare and distribute a final GMP/EIS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the final GMP/EIS newsletter.
2015	Prepare a Record of Decision and Implement the Approved Plan Prepare and file a Record of Decision in the <i>Federal Register</i> . Begin implementation of the approved plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Reserve to implement the plan.



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City of Rocks National Reserve

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