# COLORADO NATIONAL MONUMENT

**Frequently Asked Questions**

This list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) was identified during the Colorado National Monument Community “Listening Sessions” conducted in July and August 2013.

NPS FAQ intends to provide information and general responses to questions raised during the listening sessions and offers additional context for “Summary of Colorado National Monument Listening Sessions” report prepared by CDR Associates for the National Park Service during the fall of 2013.

The Summary of Colorado National Monument Listening Sessions report is available through the monument website on the [Community Engagement](http://www.nps.gov/colm/parkmgmt/community-engagement.htm) page or at the monument’s visitor center.

Both documents work together to build an understanding of the resources, challenges, and opportunities ahead for Colorado National Monument.

**LISTENING SESSIONS - JULY & AUGUST 2013**

# MANAGEMENT

## What rules apply at Colorado National Monument (COLM)?

See response for #3 below.

### There seems to be conflicting information about the monument and its management; where do I find the correct information?

See response for #3 below.

## Why does the National Park Service have different requirements than the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or U.S. Forest Service (USFS)?

The National Park Service (NPS), like the BLM, is an agency of the Department of the Interior. The USFS is an agency of the Department of Agriculture. Each agency has different missions based on their authorizing legislation. Unlike the BLM and the USFS, the National Park Service is not a multiple-use agency. Commercial harvesting of trees, mining and other uses is not permitted unless Congress specifically authorizes that in a park’s enabling legislation. For example, some parks such as Great Sand Dunes permit hunting (under Colorado Parks and Wildlife rules) in the portions designated National Preserve by Congress.

**Links to helpful Information:**

**National Park Service (NPS) Laws, Policies and Director’s Orders:** The most concise listing can be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/applications/npspolicy/index.cfm>

**Colorado National Monument:** Specific rules included in the Superintendent’s Compendium can be found at: (<http://www.nps.gov/colm/parkmgmt/superintendents-compendium.htm> )

Hard copies are available through the Chief Ranger or Superintendent’s office at Colorado National Monument Visitor Center. For more information - Colorado National Monument telephone: 970-858-3617, extension 300.

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Related Information:** Pertaining to McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area can be found at: <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/mcnca/management.html>

**United States Forest Service (USFS) Laws, Regulations, and Policies:** Pertaining to Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests can be found at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/aboutus/lawsandregs.shtml>

**General USFS policy information can be found at:**

<http://www.fs.fed.us/im/directives/>

## Why do policies seem to change with a new Superintendent?

All superintendents must make management decisions that are consistent with the Constitution, Executive Orders, NPS Organic Act, other federal laws, regulations, Department of the Interior policies, and NPS *Management Policies* *2006*. NPS Management Policies and related policy documents, such as Director’s Orders and Policy Memoranda, provide very specific guidance about how the NPS should manage all the units in the National Park System. The NPS strives to apply these laws, regulations, and policies consistently across the more than 400 units of the National Park System. However, these park units vary widely, as do the resources they contain, and most have unique enabling legislation through which Congress has provided legal guidance specific to those individual parks. In addition, NPS guidance allows for some flexibility for individual superintendents to exercise their own discretion and sound judgment in the application of those policies.

# COMMUNICATION

## Where do I get information on applying for a special use permit?

See response for #3 below.

## Where do I get information on events happening in the park?

See response for #3 below.

## Where do I get information on road closures?

For all of these questions, the monument staff is committed to updating the monument’s website for current and up-to-date information regarding the special use permit process, events, and road closures. Additionally, each year, Colorado National Monument Association (CNMA) publishes a Visitor Guide for general information; both CNMA and COLM are on Facebook.

**Colorado National Monument information website:**

http://[nps.gov/colm](http://nps.gov/colm)

**Information: 970-858-3617, ext. 300 (Mon – Fri); ext. 402 dedicated road info.**

# PLANNING

# (Visitor Activities and Commercial Services project planning)

## What is the purpose of this “plan”?

The purpose of this planning process is to address the myriad of requests for special uses in the monument. The 2005 Colorado National Monument General Management Plan (GMP) did not include many specifics on special uses other than a 23-mile Rim Rock Run that has its own and separate 1998 Environmental Assessment.  With a new superintendent it seemed a perfect time to see if there was a way to look at requests in a holistic way to streamline the process for both users and NPS staff, to gather information we may be lacking, to collect information from the public on new uses they would like to see in the monument, and on uses they want to have continue in the monument. We also want to have a conversation with the public so that there is an increased understanding of the laws, regulations, and policies the NPS operates under and how those laws, regulations, and policies are applied. These listening sessions are a first step. The bottom line is the NPS wants to be a more effective partner with the Grand Valley community and Glade Park.

## What is the NPS decision-making process?

The NPS uses existing Laws, Regulations, Policies and Director’s Orders to assist in the decision-making process. The Superintendent of COLM is the primary contact for questions about the decision-making process for the monument. The three listening sessions held in July and August 2013 provided the opportunity to enhance community dialogue. We will use the input from those meetings and the corresponding CDR Associates’ summary to identify opportunities to improve communication and coordination with the communities.

## Will NEPA be part of the planning process?

The NPS wants to encourage dialogue with the community to determine what concerns exist and at the same time take a much more systematic approach to reviewing how the monument is being used now and how the various uses either enhance or detract from the overall visitor experience. The NPS may determine that an environmental assessment (EA) or other NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process is needed after gathering more information.

# SPECIAL PARK USES

## What is a Special Park Use?

National Park Service (NPS) policy guidance on special park uses is contained in Section 8.6 of NPS [*Management Policies 2006*](http://www.nps.gov/policy/mp/policies.html). That guidance is summarized in, and supplemented by [Director’s Order 53](http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/DO53.htm) and its companion document, [Reference Manual 53](http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/RM53.zip) (RM-53).

Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 2.50 is the regulation that forms the basis for which parks review permits for special events. A special park use is an activity that takes place on park land or waters and meets the following criteria:

* Provides a benefit to an individual, group, or organization, rather than the public at large,
* Requires written authorization and some degree of NPS management and oversight to protect park resources and the public interest,
* Is not prohibited by law or regulation,
* Is not initiated, sponsored, or conducted by the NPS,
* Is not managed under a concession contract, and
* Is not managed through a lease.

The Superintendent of each park unit is responsible for decisions to approve or deny requests to engage in special park uses at that particular park. The NPS is mandated to manage park uses to protect against impairment of park cultural and natural resources, values, and purposes.

## What kind of special park uses does the NPS encourage?

The NPS encourages special park uses that accomplish any or all of the following:

* Support the mission of the NPS,
* Add to the public understanding and enjoyment of the park,
* Promote a sense of ownership and stewardship for the park and its resources,
* Enhance the protection of park resources and values,
* Provide for an increased level of visitor safety.

## When will a Special Park Use not be permitted?

A Superintendent will not issue permits that:

* Create an unacceptable impact on park resources or values (see NPS *Management Policies 2006*, [Section 1.4.7.1](http://www.nps.gov/policy/mp/policies.html#_Toc157232614)), or
* Are contrary to the purposes for which the park was established, or
* Unreasonably disrupt the atmosphere of peace and tranquility of wilderness, natural, historic, or commemorative locations within the park, or
* Unreasonably interfere with interpretive programs, visitor activities, visitor services, or NPS administrative activities, or
* Substantially interfere with the operation of public facilities or the services of NPS concessioners or contractors, or
* Create an unsafe or unhealthy environment for other visitors or employees, or
* Result in conflict with other existing uses.

## Concern - “For-profit” uses of the park lack consistency in practice - approval processes seem confusing.

The NPS does allow for some necessary and appropriate uses by for-profit entities provided they do not adversely impact the park. These are permitted by the park through commercial use authorizations or concessions permits. Colorado National Monument has no concessions permits, and has ten commercial use authorizations (for guided climbing, one bicycle tour, and one for sales of visitor conveniences at the visitor center). Examples of other commercial uses might be bus tours, photography lessons, catering for events, canyoneering and others. Commercial activities, if there are many in number, can take away limited space from regular park visitors, as well as overwhelm a park with a small staff.

Specific to special park uses and special events, NPS policy guidance is contained in Section 8.6.2.1 of NPS *Management Policies 2006*. The policies state that the NPS will not permit the staging of an event in an area that is open to the public, or the closure of an area that is open to the public, when the event

* Is conducted primarily for the material or financial benefit of a for-profit entity; or
* Awards participants an appearance fee or prizes of more than nominal value; or
* Requires in-park advertising or publicity (unless the event is co-sponsored by the NPS); or
* Charges a separate public admission fee.

## Why do some National Park units have races and other events for profit?

Some parks do have races but they are often limited to non-commercial type events with nominal prize monies. Parks do have differences in their enabling legislation that allow for special uses in some park units that are not permissible in most other parks. For example, the National Mall in Washington DC allows and manages thousands of events each year that are unique to that setting. The National Mall is also the site of thousands of special events each year and those areas host a diverse set of public gatherings and events.

# COMMERCIAL USES

## Why are there not many visitor services or activities in COLM?

Before a commercial service is established in an NPS area, the service must first determine that the commercial service is necessary and appropriate for public use and enjoyment. There are visitor services or activities that can occur in a park and are not commercial in nature, such as camping, guided hikes and tours conducted by the NPS.

## Is the NPS trying to make COLM a commercial place?

No—The Superintendent must balance all park uses and protection of the resources. Some commercial activities in a park may or may not be necessary or appropriate. Currently, ten commercial use authorizations are issued in the monument to commercial entities.

At this time, the NPS is not currently considering other visitor services, such as hotels, cafeterias, gas stations or other major concession facilities in the monument. All of these amenities are located in the gateway communities. We are interested in hearing from the public about what smaller scale services may be important to visitors in the monument.

# TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

## Why is parking limited and often full when I come to the monument?

As part of this effort, the NPS is researching visitor use levels, patterns and characteristics that include available parking and traffic flow. This information will help us determine other capacity issues such as special events and commercial use requests. It is important to note that Rim Rock Drive is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and that there is very limited ability to widen the road or add parking places due to its historical significance. Shuttle buses have become a viable alternative at parks with similar limitations (Zion National Park, Denali National Park & Preserve). However, that solution involves considerable expense.

Some events simply cannot be permitted at popular overlooks in COLM during the monument’s busiest times because doing so would make those sites unavailable for other monument visitors. We also understand that residents would like to have other places to access the monument from the valley floor (for example, from Hwy 340 or South Broadway). We would like to have a dialogue about where opportunities exist for such access and parking. With more parking at the valley floor, the overlooks with trailheads along Rim Rock Drive may be impacted to a lesser degree. Again, this is part of an ongoing effort.