

United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-0300-2015-0016-EA

June 2015

Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead Improvements

Location: Burr Trail Road, 8 miles southeast of Boulder, Utah
Salt Lake Meridian, Garfield County, Utah
Township 34 South, Range 5 East, Section 16, NE 1/4

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management proposes to update and improve the Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM). See Appendix A – Project Area Map for project location and area. These existing recreation facilities are located in the Monument’s Passage Zone approximately 8 miles southeast of Boulder, Utah in Garfield County and are included within the Deer Creek Recreation Site which was established on Wednesday, December 23, 1970 as published in Federal Register Notice, Volume 35, No. 248. See Appendix B – Deer Creek Recreation Site Map for location and boundaries of recreation site.

Deer Creek Campground is located on the north side of Burr Trail Road adjacent to Deer Creek and contains the following amenities and site fixtures:

- 7 campsites with tables, fire rings, grills, and site numbering posts
- A single vault toilet
- A fee station with fee tube and bulletin board
- A gravel/natural surface site road
- Post and rail fencing around the perimeter
- A cattle guard
- A few small signs

The site road for the campground doubles as access to private inholdings across the creek further up the canyon.

The development of facilities at the campground was addressed in prior planning efforts and environmental assessments (EA). Those include:

- *Deer Creek Campground Fence EA (UT-030-01-011, 2002)*

BLM approved the construction of 1,122 feet of pole fencing to prevent livestock from entering Deer Creek Campground to protect facilities and prevent recreation and livestock conflicts.

- Deer Creek Recreation Site Accessibility, Maintenance, and Rehabilitation EA (UT-048-98-030, 1998)

BLM approved completing construction of Deer Creek Campground and continuance of routine maintenance. Work included constructing three additional campsites, replacing picnic tables, leveling areas for tents, installing fire rings and grills, constructing accessible walkways to the toilet, installing numbered posts at campsites, and installing a fee collection box and a site sign.

Deer Creek Trailhead is located in close proximity to Deer Creek on the south side of Burr Trail Road across from the campground. It is a small, user-created parking area with gravel/natural material surfacing. It can currently accommodate approximately five to seven automobiles plus two trucks with stock trailers if all are parked in an organized manner to efficiently use the space. A trailhead register and small signs are installed on the edge of the site where user-created trails lead down canyon.

Maintenance of the trailhead was addressed in the following planning and compliance document:

- GSENM Trail/Trailhead Maintenance/Restoration EA (UT-048-98-015, 1998)

BLM approved the maintenance and restoration of existing trailheads in GSENM, including Deer Creek Trailhead. Work at the Deer Creek Trailhead was focused on resource protection and included installation of rock barriers to protect riparian vegetation and signage to prevent vehicle encroachment into the adjacent Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

BLM has secured deferred maintenance funds to complete the proposed campground improvements and recreation site user fees will be used to improve the trailhead. If approved, the proposed recreation site improvements could be implemented as soon as Fall 2015.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the proposed action is to replace old, deteriorated site amenities, improve vehicular circulation and site drainage, improve accessibility, reduce vegetation and soil trampling, prevent encroachment into an adjacent WSA, and improve the recreational experience.

At Deer Creek Campground the facilities are deteriorating; none of them meet the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas; the site road and some campsites do not drain water well; and vegetation and soils are being trampled because of disorganized and insufficient vehicular circulation and parking. Both issues also diminish the quality of the recreational experience for campground users.

The vault toilet in the campground does not meet accessibility standards and has settled to the degree that opening the door is affected. The concrete path that leads to the toilet begins in the parking area for the adjacent campsite and is often blocked by parked vehicles. Only one of the campsites has a picnic table that is designed to meet accessibility standards and that picnic table sits on a concrete pad that prevents it from being used by someone in a wheelchair. None of the fire rings in the campground meet accessibility standards. One of the campsites does not have enough space for a tent. Another campsite is accessed by parking on the opposite side of the site road and climbing up slope over tree roots. At another campsite the parking area and the camping unit are separated by a soggy depression. The site road averages 12 feet wide forcing motorists to encroach on vegetation or use campsite parking spaces to allow passage.

At Deer Creek Trailhead the disturbed area currently used for parking extends from the edge of Burr Trail Road into an abandoned section of the old Burr Trail Road alignment. It is surrounded on all sides – on the east side by Deer Creek, on the west by a steep bank, on the north side by Burr Trail road and a steep grade change, and on the south by vegetation and the WSA. Vehicles often park in a disorganized fashion and reduce the already limited parking capacity of the site. The parking area is in soft sand and drainage from along the edge of Burr Trail Road floods across the parking area during storm events, periodically depositing more sand. The native and regularly deposited sand in the parking area makes for an unstable parking surface. Incremental encroachment towards the WSA occurs as the perimeter boulders are either shifted or covered with sand. Social trailing from all points around the southern edge of the parking area occurs as users head down canyon, trampling vegetation and soils.

CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN

The proposed action is in conformance with the *Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Management Plan* (MMP), effective February 2000, and is supported by the following plan decisions:

FAC-11 *The condition of routes and distance from communities in the Passage Zone makes it a secondary zone for visitation. Similar facilities as allowed in the Frontcountry Zone could be provided for resource protection, visitor safety, or for the interpretation of Monument resources. Information kiosks approximately the size of two 3 foot by 5 foot panels will be located at major trailheads (e.g., The Gulch, Deer Creek, and Dry Fork), and smaller kiosks or signs will be located at less used trailheads.*

FAC-12 *Existing parking areas may be better delineated with barriers to prevent further expansion. Parking areas could accommodate up to 30 vehicles, but most will be designed for fewer than 10 cars. Construction of small spur routes or trails may be allowed to access parking areas or other facilities. Trails and parking areas will not be paved.*

FAC-15 *The existing Deer Creek Campground will be the only developed campground in this (Passage) zone.*

The project area is in the Passage Zone where facilities are allowed for safety, interpretation, and the protection of Monument resources.

RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND OTHER PLANS

The proposed action complies with federal environmental laws and regulations, Executive Orders, and Department of Interior, BLM, and GSENM policies. It is consistent with state laws and local and county ordinances and plans, including the following:

Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act (OPLMA) established the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) in order to conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations. The Act goes on to require that NLCS units, of which GSENM is one, be managed in a manner that protects the values for which the components of the system were designated. The NLCS includes National Monuments, Wilderness Study Areas, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. The proposal was designed to meet the objectives of OPLMA.

Federal Lands Policy and Management Act of 1976

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 U.S.C. 1701-1712) directs the development of land use plans for BLM lands. Once land use plans are developed, any approved project must be provided in the land use plan or be consistent with the terms, conditions, and decisions in the approved land use plan. As noted above, this project conforms to the land use plan.

Endangered Species Act of 1973

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) provides for conserving endangered and threatened species of plants and animals. It requires that federal agencies consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any actions that they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued survival of a listed species or result in the adverse modification or destruction of its critical habitat. This proposal was designed to avoid impacts to species listed under ESA.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

The National Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of any undertaking on historic resources and to provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking. Federal agencies must determine whether the undertaking is a type of activity that could affect historic properties. Historic properties are properties that are included in the National Register of Historic Places or that meet the criteria for inclusion on the National Register. If the agency

determines that it has no undertaking, or that its undertaking is a type of activity that has no potential to affect historic properties, the agency has no further Section 106 obligations.

Proclamation for the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (1996)

The proposed action and no action alternative have been evaluated for consistency with the Proclamation, particularly in reference to the specific objects that were identified within the Proclamation. No effects of the proposed action, with the included design features, are anticipated on any of objects identified within the Proclamation.

BLM Manual 6220 – National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, and Similar Designations (2012)

The BLM will inventory existing facilities within Monuments and NCAs and determine whether to remove, maintain, restore, enhance, or allow natural disintegration of each facility (p. 1-10). Deer Creek Campground is listed in the GSENM Management Plan as “the only developed campground” in the Passage Zone. The proposed action will maintain this existing facility.

BLM Manual 6330 - Management of BLM Wilderness Study Areas (2012)

BLM is guided to manage WSAs in a manner that does not impair their suitability for designation as wilderness as directed by *BLM Manual 6330 - Management of BLM Wilderness Study Areas*.

BLM Manual 6400 - Wild and Scenic Rivers - Policy and Program Direction for Identification, Evaluation, Planning and Management (2012)

BLM is guided to manage any inventoried eligible Wild and Scenic River segments to maintain their suitability and tentative classifications until designated or released in a subsequent land use plan. Interim project activities on Wild and Scenic River (WSR) eligible segments are guided by *BLM Manual 6400 Wild and Scenic Rivers-Policy and Program Direction for Identification, Evaluation, Planning and Management (2012)*.

Garfield County General Management Plan (1998, updated 2010)

Although Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead are not specifically mentioned in the Garfield County General Plan, a review of the document suggests that this proposal would not conflict with the county plan. The county plan does note support for recreation opportunities and facilities on page 5-3:

- *Planning Assumption:* Therefore, in an effort to strengthen its economic base, the county desires to increase its revenue opportunities through enhancing county recreational opportunities and developing destination-related activities.
- *Policy Statements:* Garfield County supports creating new attractions and recreational facilities within the county.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

Issue 1: Recreation - How would the proposed upgrades and improvements at Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead affect the recreation experience?

Issue 2: Lands and Realty - How would the proposed upgrades and improvements affect Right of Way (ROW) holders accessing their private property?

Issue 3: Wilderness Study Areas - How would the proposed upgrades and improvements at Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead affect WSAs?

Issue 4: Wild and Scenic River Suitable Segments - How would the proposed upgrades and improvements at Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead affect the Wild and Scenic River Suitable segments?

Issue 5: Visual Resources – Would the proposed site developments create visually contrasting impacts that alter the landscape character?

Issue 6: Threatened and Endangered Plant Species - How would the upgrades and improvements at Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead affect Utes Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) a species listed under ESA?

CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment reviews a No Action alternative and the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative provides a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the Proposed Action.

PROPOSED ACTION

BLM is proposing to upgrade and improve the Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead. GSENM would use BLM deferred maintenance and recreation site user fees to pay for the proposed improvements. Contractor, BLM force account or maintenance staff, and/or volunteer labor could be used to perform the work. The campground is approximately 2 acres and the trailhead is approximately 0.25 acres. Construction is slated to occur in late October/early November 2015 and should be completed in 4 weeks or less.

The proposed action (See Appendix C – Site Design) includes the following:

Campground

- Replace the vault toilet
- Construct a parking space adjacent to toilet
- Remove concrete walkway to toilet
- Construct new accessible walkway to toilet
- Reorganize fee station area including parking, new information/interpretive kiosk, and fee station
- Reorient parking for all campsites from parallel to 90 degrees orientation
- Split one campsite into two (use parking from one and camping area of the other)
- Abandon one campsite
- Install base material to raise, define, and improve surface stability of campsites
- Replace campsite numbering posts
- Remove picnic tables and concrete pads
- Install new picnic tables
- Remove all grills and fire rings
- Install new fire rings
- Install tent pads at all sites
- Install new NLCS standard site sign on masonry base and other site signs as needed
- Widen site road to up to 15 feet wide and install gravel/road base on it to improve drainage
- Install two culverts under site road to improve drainage
- Raise cattle guard

- Designate a vehicle turnaround area on the north end of the campground that is not to be used for parking

The proposed parking improvements at the campground would limit each campsite to one vehicle 20 feet or less in length. Overnight camping would not be allowed at the trailhead.

Trailhead

- Upgrade parking area using gravel/road base to accommodate up to 11 standard size automobiles and one vehicle pulling a trailer
- Install barriers (fencing and/or boulders) to define edges of parking area and protect vegetation
- Remove register box and install new one
- Install information/interpretive kiosk
- Install NLCS standard site sign, “No Camping” signs, and other needed signs on posts

By more efficiently using the limited amount of space available, the proposed parking improvements at the trailhead would slightly increase the number of standard size vehicle spaces while limiting the number of spaces for vehicles pulling trailers to one. The physical (Burr Trail Road, surrounding steep banks, Deer Creek) and administrative (WSA) constraints of the site do not allow for expanding the site to provide parking for additional oversize vehicles.

Once construction begins on either the campground or trailhead, they would individually be closed to the public until construction is completed. A variety of heavy, motorized equipment would be used during construction, including but not limited to a dump truck, crane, front-end loader, skid-steer loader, and tractor. Work would be done during the daylight hours (7 am to 6 pm). Throughout construction, equipment would be parked at the project site but not on the site road. It is anticipated the project would take no more than 4 weeks to complete. General maintenance would be performed at the proposed facilities once construction was completed.

BLM’s Guidelines for a Quality Environment was used to plan and design this project, seeking to meet the agency’s goals of developing facilities that are sustainable, functional, accessible, cost effective, and responsive to place and setting. *Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas* (Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, 2013) was also used to plan and design this project to ensure that these facilities are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

Design criteria to meet built environment image guidelines and other mandates would include the following:

- Natural or natural-appearing materials would be used. These could include concrete, natural stone, road base, gravels or fines, rusted or painted metal, and/or wood.
- No shiny, reflective materials would be used.

- Natural palette colors would include blacks, grays, reds, rusts, browns, and buffs. No bright colors such as whites or yellows would be used (except for lettering on signs).
- Where practical, native plants that need to be removed during construction would be replanted in areas where re-vegetation is needed. Otherwise, native plant container stock and/or native plant seeds would be used to re-vegetate areas impacted during construction.

In order to prevent unnecessary resource impacts, the following design features would be required and incorporated into project construction, scheduling and monitoring:

- Construction limits would be staked and flagged to prevent encroachment into Utes Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) habitat and to protect other vegetation and soils during construction.
- To prevent the spread of invasive and noxious weeds, the equipment used would be washed before transport to the construction site.
- The project site would be monitored for noxious and invasive vegetation after construction. If noxious weeds or non-native, invasive plants are discovered, BLM-approved weed treatments would be applied in a manner consistent with current BLM practice.
- All construction would take place outside of the migratory bird breeding and brood raising period from May 15 to July 15.

To inform the public of the construction closures, BLM would do the following:

- Issue a press release to relevant media outlets.
- Publish notice on GSENM website.
- Post closure signs in the local communities at businesses and community bulletin boards.
- Work with the Garfield County Office of Tourism to do outreach to visitors.

To coordinate with and minimize construction impacts on campground site road ROW holders, BLM would do the following:

- Provide advanced notice about and coordinate construction scheduling.
- Limit wait times to an average of 15 minutes or less but no longer than 30 minutes during construction, with the exception of the days when the vault toilet is being installed or the cattle guard is being adjusted, which could take longer.
- Establish a parking area for ROW holders to use when passing through site is not necessary.

No ACTION

Under the No Action Alternative, BLM would not improve and update the Deer Creek Campground or Trailhead. The BLM would not provide any of the improvements or facilities proposed in the Action Alternative. Under this alternative the outdated vault toilet would continue to be used by the public; vehicular circulation would continue to be disorganized

and congested; accessibility would not be improved; impacts to soils and vegetation would continue; and incremental encroachment toward the WSA would not be additionally restricted.

CHAPTER 3

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SETTING

The affected environment was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in the Interdisciplinary Team Checklist (See Appendix D – IDT Checklist). The checklist indicates which resources are either not present in the project area or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis. Resources which are predicted to be impacted are described in Chapter 3 and impacts on these resources are analyzed in Chapter 4. Recreation, Lands and Realty, Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Visual Resources, and Threatened and Endangered Plant Species were identified by the Interdisciplinary Team as potentially affected by the Proposed Action.

Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead are located along the Burr Trail Road and adjacent to Deer Creek, a tributary of the Escalante River. The project area is 5,700 feet above sea level and is located within Deer Creek Canyon. It is within the Escalante Canyons physiographic region which is typified by colorful sandstone canyons carved by desert creeks and rivers and slickrock expanses dotted with Ponderosa pine and pinyon and juniper trees. The creeks and rivers here are lined with cottonwood trees, willows, and river birch. Both the campground and trailhead sites are constrained in by the roads, the creek and flood plain, and sandstone outcrops.

Construction of Deer Creek Campground began in the 1980s when four of seven planned campsites were constructed. The additional sites were constructed after GSENM was designated in the late 1990s. Deer Creek Trailhead was formally established in 1998.

Resource A: Recreation

Deer Creek Recreation Site was designated in December 1970 under the authority of the Multiple Use Act of 1964. Deer Creek Campground was built along an existing ROW that accesses private inholdings. Improvements to the campground have been made incrementally over the years. This small, seven-site campground is one of only three developed campgrounds in GSENM and one of two in the Escalante Canyons region. During 2014, GSENM recorded 2,510 visits equating to 5,104 visitor days in the campground. The busiest months for visitation averaged over the past 5 years are May, June, September, and October.

The narrow, single-lane campground road is capped with gravel and vehicle parking spaces were created by use patterns rather than by formal design. In more recent years, travel trailers and recreational vehicles (RVs) have become more common although the campground and parking areas were not sized for these vehicles. To accommodate these larger vehicles, vegetation and soils have incrementally been damaged to expand the

parking footprints. These larger vehicles have also created congestion along the roadway as identified by BLM, ROW holders, and the general public.

Deer Creek Trailhead is minimally developed with a trail register and two small regulation signs. The parking area is a barren core of approximately one quarter acre comprised of mostly compacted native sand. It can currently accommodate approximately five to seven automobiles plus two trucks with stock trailers if all are parked in an organized manner to efficiently use the space. The trailhead parking area is used throughout the year by hiking, backpacking, and equestrian users. An established foot trail as well as several braided, user-created routes leaves the parking around along the southern edge. BLM recorded 460 visits accounting for 1,454 visitor days as the 5 year averages at this trailhead. These statistics reflect that though this trailhead is used by day users it is more likely used by backpackers on overnight trips.

Resource B: Lands and Realty

The Deer Creek Campground site road overlaps an established Title V ROW granting access to private property inholdings. The ROW (UTU-054541) was originally issued in 1984, and BLM is processing an application to renew this ROW. The road pre-dates the development of the campground although the ROW was originally established during the same time as the development of the campground. The ROW grant established a 24-foot ROW width and a total road length of 2,650 feet. The campground lies within the first one-eighth of a mile of the ROW.

Deer Creek Trailhead is immediately adjacent to Burr Trail Road which was adjudicated to Garfield County under R.S. 2477 in 1989. A review of the case file for UTU-066242 does not reference or establish a ROW width; however the *Burr Trail Paving EA* (UT-040-89-6, 1989) identifies a surface travel width of 24 feet.

Resource C: Wilderness Study Areas

This project area lies adjacent to two WSAs (See Appendix B – Deer Creek Recreation Site Map). Deer Creek Recreation Site is directly adjacent to the boundaries of Steep Creek WSA which encircles the campground, as well as private inholdings, on the northern side of Burr Trail Road. Deer Creek Trailhead provides access into North Escalante Canyons-The Gulch Instant Study Area (ISA) which is also a WSA. The North Escalante Canyons-The Gulch ISA encompasses 120,204 acres and is characterized by spectacular plateaus, benches and canyons and is bisected by the deep winding corridor of the Escalante River and its tributaries, including Deer Creek. Steep Creek WSA encompasses 21,896 acres and is noted for five south-trending canyons with many scenic sandstone features.

As guided by the Wilderness Act, both WSAs were inventoried and identified as having the following wilderness characteristics: Untrammeled, Natural, Undeveloped, Solitude, and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation. Both WSAs were studied under Section 603 of FLPMA

and included in the *BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)* (1990).

Previous work on the Deer Creek Trailhead was analyzed as part of a *GSENM Trail/Trailhead Maintenance/Restoration EA* (UT-048-98-015, 1998). At that time BLM determined that the trailhead was located in the historic alignment of the Burr Trail Road on the edge of the WSA. Trailhead work approved in that analysis created a better defined parking area using native materials to prevent vehicle ingress into the WSA and protect riparian vegetation.

Resource D: Wild and Scenic River

Both segments of Lower Deer Creek in the vicinity of this project were inventoried and recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS) as required by Section 5(d) (1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The study and suitability recommendation were analyzed as part of the MMP/EIS. The Lower Deer Creek-1 segment runs along the western edge of Deer Creek Campground and is tentatively classified as *Recreational*. The Lower Deer Creek-2 segment runs adjacent to the Deer Creek Trailhead and is tentatively classified as *Wild*. These segments were recommended as worthy additions to the NWSRS and include the following identified outstanding remarkable values (ORVs): Scenic, Recreational, Geological, Riparian, and Historic.

Resource E: Visual Resources

Characteristic Landscape

The proposed project area is located in the northeastern portion of the Escalante Canyons physiographic province along Burr Trail Road and Deer Creek in Deer Creek Canyon. The dominant vegetation is riparian vegetation (cottonwood trees, river birch, and willows) growing along the creek. Other vegetation in the project area on the uplands are desert shrubs, grasses and pinyon/juniper trees. The vegetation is a full range of greens, from light sage green to dark juniper green to bright cottonwood leaves green, and ranges from medium to coarse in texture. The built elements in this landscape include the paved road, a gravel road, a vault toilet, pole fencing, a kiosk, picnic tables, fire rings, and a few signs. Since most of the built elements are screened from view by the riparian vegetation, the paved road is the primary element that draws attention.

The project area is within an enclosed landscape created by the sandstone landforms that surround it. The predominant lines are rounded and horizontal created by landform edges. The road and riparian vegetation add distinct curving bands through the landscape. The predominant colors of this landscape are salmons, greens, buffs, and grays due to the landform and vegetation. The texture of the landscape varies from medium due to the upland vegetation and landform to coarse due to the sandstone outcrops and the riparian vegetation.

This project is proposed in a classic Southern Utah, canyon country landscape with exposed red and white sandstone, sand dunes, and desert vegetation similar to other areas within the Colorado Plateau.

Burr Trail Road, the campground and the trailhead are used primarily by recreationists, cattle permittees, and private property owners. Those using the area for recreation are typically engaged in scenic touring, car camping, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, biking, and photography. This range of individuals defines the casual observer.

Visual Resource Management Classes and Objectives

The proposed Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead Improvements project area is located in Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II. The objective for VRM Class II is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Resource F: Threatened and Endangered Plant Species

Adjacent to the proposed project in the Deer Creek Campground is a known population of the Utes Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service currently has this plant species listed under the ESA as Threatened. Ute ladies' tresses populations fluctuate widely in numbers of individuals visible on a year to year basis.

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

PROPOSED ACTION

This section analyzes the impacts of the proposed action to those resources described in the Affected Environment, Chapter 3, above.

Resource A: Recreation

Implementing deferred maintenance at Deer Creek Campground would have direct benefits to the recreating public. The general public would benefit in having new and updated site improvements in the campground. A new toilet, tables, fire grates, and tent pads would be installed. These improvements would reduce resource impacts by directing uses to specific areas in the campground.

The redesign of the parking spaces would provide better parking delineation and reduce trampling of vegetation and soils. The parking spaces would also provide space for the public to park completely off the edges of the site road, eliminating a conflict which has at times impeded traffic flow. The redesigned parking spaces would not accommodate vehicles over 20 feet in length, thus larger RVs and vehicles pulling travel trailers would be displaced. The campground was never designed to accommodate oversize vehicles and does not have enough space to make the major site design modifications necessary to accommodate this type of user. Oversize vehicles would need to find other accommodations outside of Deer Creek Campground.

Deer Creek Trailhead would also receive benefits from the proposed improvements. The driving surface would be stabilized and the parking area would be defined by rail fence to reduce its expansion. The rail fence would also allow BLM to direct hikers and equestrian users toward the desired route reducing multiple braided trails departing from the trailhead. Improvements to the trailhead would aid BLM in keeping vehicles within the parking area and reduce vegetation and soil trampling.

Short term effects for both sites would include displacement of the public during construction. The construction is proposed for mid-October into early November when visitation is transitioning from high to low season.

Long term effects include improved campground facilities making the public's stay more enjoyable. Impacts to vegetation and soils would be reduced with new site designs directing uses to specific areas in the campsites. Oversized vehicles would be displaced from the campground.

Resource B: Lands and Realty

The ROW passes directly through the campground on the dual use site road. The campground improvements would not affect the ROW grant. Benefits to the ROW holders would include reduced congestion along the road due to the displacement of oversized vehicles that would not fit in the proposed 90 degree parking spaces.

Short term effects would include limited access to ROW holders during construction. There would be times when access is limited due to construction. BLM would communicate construction schedules and coordinate with ROW holders. BLM would also park equipment off the roadway when not in use to maintain access.

BLM has not identified long term effects of the project on ROW holders.

Resource C: Wilderness Study Areas

The deferred maintenance project at Deer Creek Campground does not occur within the boundaries of either WSA. Implementing the proposed maintenance work at Deer Creek Campground would have no direct or indirect impact on the adjacent Steep Creek WSA or North Escalante Canyons-The Gulch ISA.

The parking area improvements at the Deer Creek trailhead would have potential to impact the North-Escalante Canyons-The Gulch ISA. The project design features would prioritize a natural setting and reduce the size of the current disturbed footprint. The design features and criteria include the use of natural or natural-appearing materials, establishment of construction limits, protection of the existing island of vegetation that is currently overrun by vehicles, and pulling the parking back from the riparian edge. These would all serve to benefit the natural setting adjacent to the WSA. Installing barriers would prevent vehicle ingress into the WSA. Installing barriers would also direct visitors to the established trail and reduce the braided, user-created routes thus improving the natural character of the WSA adjacent to the trailhead.

Resource D: Wild and Scenic River

The deferred maintenance activities at Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead would not increase development beyond the existing footprint of the campground and would slightly reduce the footprint of the existing trailhead parking area. There is no threat to the wild and free flowing nature of either WSR suitable tributary or threat to identified outstanding remarkable values (ORVs). Implementation of the project features in the campground such as improving site drainage, closing off one creek-side camp site, reducing the potential for vehicle congestion, and protecting riparian vegetation all serve to maintain the suitability of Lower Deer Creek Segment-1 (tentatively classified *Recreational* section). Lower Deer Creek-2 segment (tentatively classified *Wild* section) begins adjacent to the Deer Creek

Trailhead and would benefit from the trailhead redesign which would protect riparian vegetation, one of the ORVs. Implementation of the proposed action including design features and criteria would protect vegetation and help restore the riparian edge in this location.

Resource E: Visual Resources

BLM's Visual Resource Management program includes a standardized system to review lands actions for resource management plan conformance. Visual contrast rating worksheets are completed to determine if a project conforms to the resource management plan.

In order to evaluate the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action, a linear key observation point (KOP) was established along Burr Trail Road as part of completing the contrast rating analysis. Along most of the linear KOP the project elements are screened from view by landform and vegetation. When the casual observer is immediately adjacent to the campground entrance, the signs, fencing, and cattle guard would be visible, and when passing by the trailhead all its features and any parked vehicles would also be in view. The length of time the few visible project elements are in view is less than 30 seconds for those travelling along the road.

During construction, temporary visual impacts could result from the visibility of construction equipment and site work. Post-construction, the contrast created by the site improvements would be negligible.

The proposed improvements would be sited in locations currently developed for the same purposes. The campground and trailhead are located in the floor of a narrow riparian canyon with thick vegetation and are screened from view by vegetation and landforms. The toilet and other fixtures would be constructed of materials that blend with the natural environment minimizing the color and textural contrast they would create. By constructing the project according to the outlined design criteria and implementation measures, the negligible changes to the existing character of the landscape would be appropriate to meet the visual resource management objectives of the area.

Resource F: Threatened and Endangered Plant Species

BLM manages threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is required if the species or habitat will be impacted. Most threatened and endangered species have a recovery plan which guides management decisions and mitigates any impacts to the species.

The proposed project was designed to avoid any adverse effects to the known Utes Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) population or its habitat. Habitat for this species would be avoided.

No ACTION

Resource A: Recreation

In the No Action Alternative the general public would not see any changes in the campground. No deferred maintenance would be implemented thereby all current facility improvements would remain the same. Resource and visitor impacts (i.e. vegetation and soil trampling, erosion, and roadway congestion) would continue.

The trailhead parking would also remain the same. The parking area would remain undefined and the parking surface would not be improved. No delineating fences would be installed in the parking area to reduce vegetation and soil trampling.

Resource B: Lands and Realty

In the No Action Alternative the ROW holders would not see any changes in the campground. No deferred maintenance would be implemented thereby occasional roadway congestion would continue during busy times. Impacts would be expected to remain the same.

Resource C: Wilderness Study Areas

In the No-Action alternative, there would continue to be the potential for further vehicle ingress at the Deer Creek Trailhead and trampling of native vegetation lying on the boundary of the WSA. Impacts would remain the same. Although potential exists for further ingress on the boundary, current conditions are not expected to threaten long-term suitability.

Resource D: Wild and Scenic Rivers

In the No-Action alternative impacts would remain the same and the opportunity to improve riparian vegetation along the segment would be lost. Current conditions are not expected to threaten long-term suitability.

Resource E: Visual Resources

In the No-Action alternative the impacts to visual resources would remain the same.

Resource F: Threatened and Endangered Plant Species

In the No-Action alternative the Utes Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) population is expected to continue to fluctuate on an annual basis.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. Ongoing uses in the area include travel along Burr Trail Road, maintenance of Burr Trail Road, use of the road through the campground to access private land, recreational visits, and livestock grazing in the area.

Resource A: Recreation

BLM has not identified any cumulative impacts for recreation. The campground has existed for approximately 35 years and the overall layout will change very little. The project proposes facility improvements but does not change the size or scope of the campground.

Resource B: Lands and Realty

BLM has not identified any cumulative effects related to lands and realty actions with this project. The use of the road to access private land is not expected to change.

Resource C: Wilderness Study Areas

There are no known cumulative impacts to WSAs.

Resource D: Wild and Scenic River

There are no known cumulative impacts to Wild and Scenic River suitable segments.

Resource E: Visual Resources

Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)

Visual Resources - The cumulative impact area of analysis for Visual Resources is the viewshed along Burr Trail Road.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative impacts to visual resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions include recreational facilities (trailheads, day use areas, etc.), general recreational use, private property development, road construction and maintenance activities, and livestock grazing management facilities (corrals, fences, water developments, storage buildings, etc.). The action alternative would make improvements to existing facilities using elements that would blend with the landscape and be largely screened from view. Additionally, the paved portion of the Burr Trail Road through GSENM runs for more than

30 miles through a viewshed that encompasses a landscape of 100,000s of acres. These facilities are visible only when in immediate proximity to the site and are small in scale within this grand scale landscape. They would not contribute to an increase in impacts to visual resources in the area.

Resource F: Threatened and Endangered Plant Species

There are no known cumulative impacts to Utes Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*).

CHAPTER 5

PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

During preparation of the EA, the public was notified of the proposed action by posting on the BLM NEPA Register on May 9, 2015. No individuals or groups have contacted the BLM in response to the notice. A 30-day public comment period is being offered so the public can review the EA.

Table 5.1. List of Persons, Agencies, and Organizations Consulted

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
Craig Sorenson	Retired GSENM Outdoor Recreation Planner	Provided background on trailhead location, WSA boundary, and prior trailhead EA.
Sue Fearon	ROW holder, private property owner	Provided a background perspective of long term use and public attachment to the campground.

LIST OF PREPARERS

BLM staff specialists who determined the affected resources for this document are listed in Appendix A. Those who contributed further analysis in the body of this EA are listed below.

Table 5.2. List of Preparers

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Allysia Angus	Project Lead Landscape Architect	Technical Coordination Quality Control MMP Compliance Impact Analysis for Visual Resources
David Barfuss	Engineer	Site Designs
Jabe Beal	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Impact Analysis for Recreation Impact Analysis for Lands and Realty
Raymond Brinkerhoff	Botanist	Impact Analysis for Threatened and Endangered Plant Species

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Katherine Farrell	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	NEPA Compliance Quality Control
Lora Gale	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Impact Analysis for Wilderness Study Areas Impact Analysis for Wild and Scenic Rivers
Eric Matranga	GIS Specialist	Maps

APPENDIX A

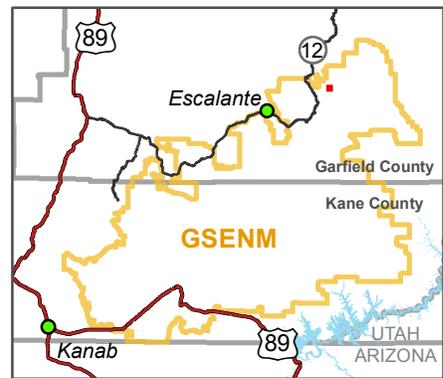
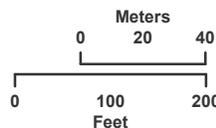
DEER CREEK CAMPGROUND AND TRAILHEAD PROJECT AREA MAP



Deer Creek Campground and Trailhead Improvements

UTM NAD 83 Zone 12
Scale: 1:2,400

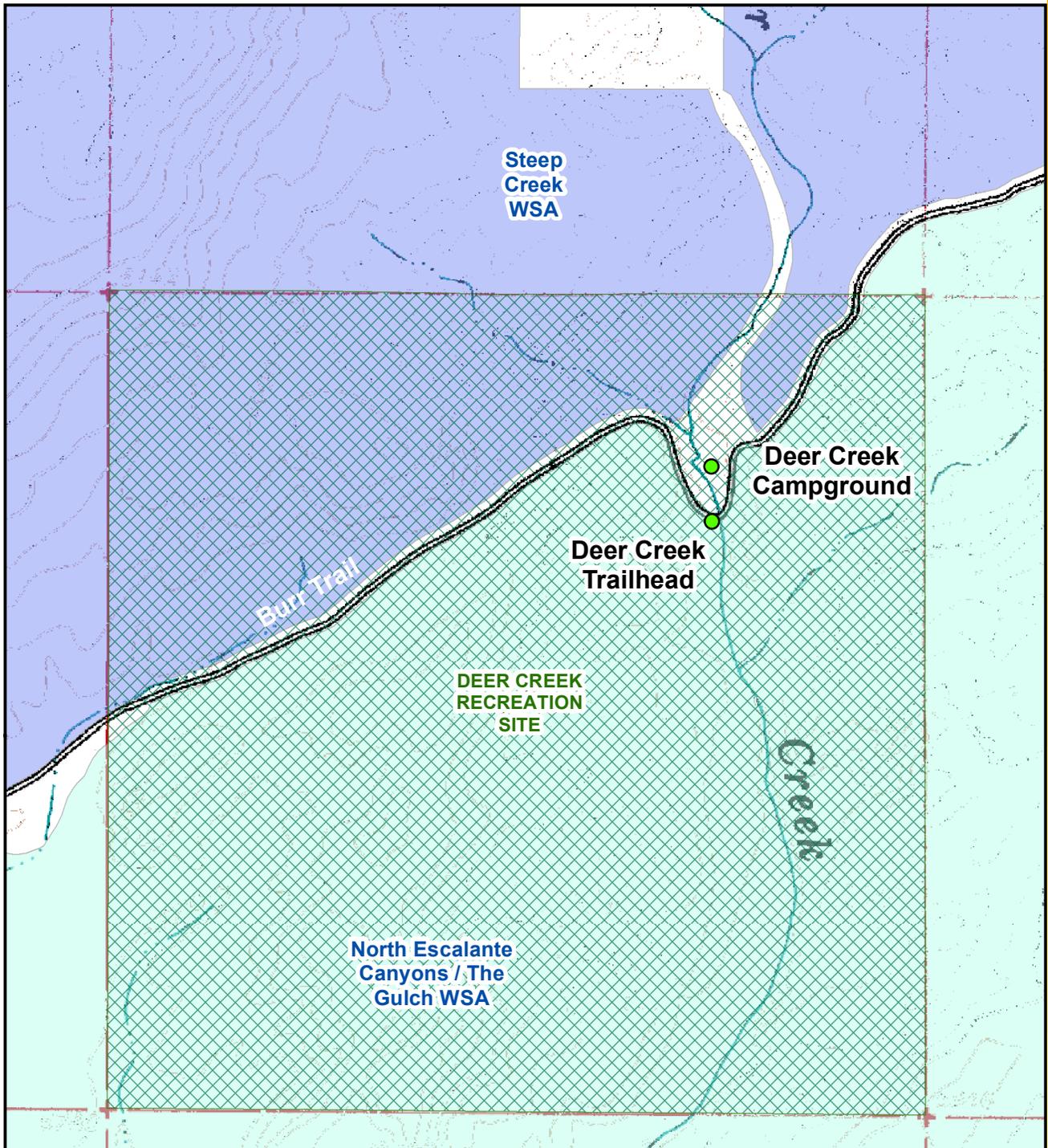
No warranty is made by the BLM for use of the data for purposes not intended by the BLM.



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

APPENDIX B

DEER CREEK RECREATION SITE AND WSAs MAP

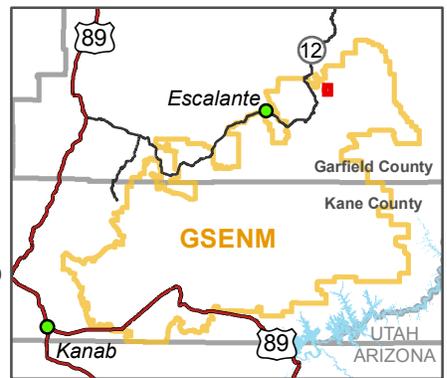
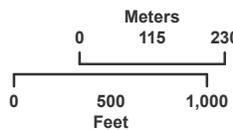


Deer Creek Recreation Site

- Deer Creek Recreation Site
- North Escalante Canyons/The Gulch
- Steep Creek

UTM NAD 83 Zone 12
Scale: 1:11,890

No warranty is made by the BLM for use of the data for purposes not intended by the BLM.



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

APPENDIX C
DEER CREEK SITE DESIGN DRAWINGS



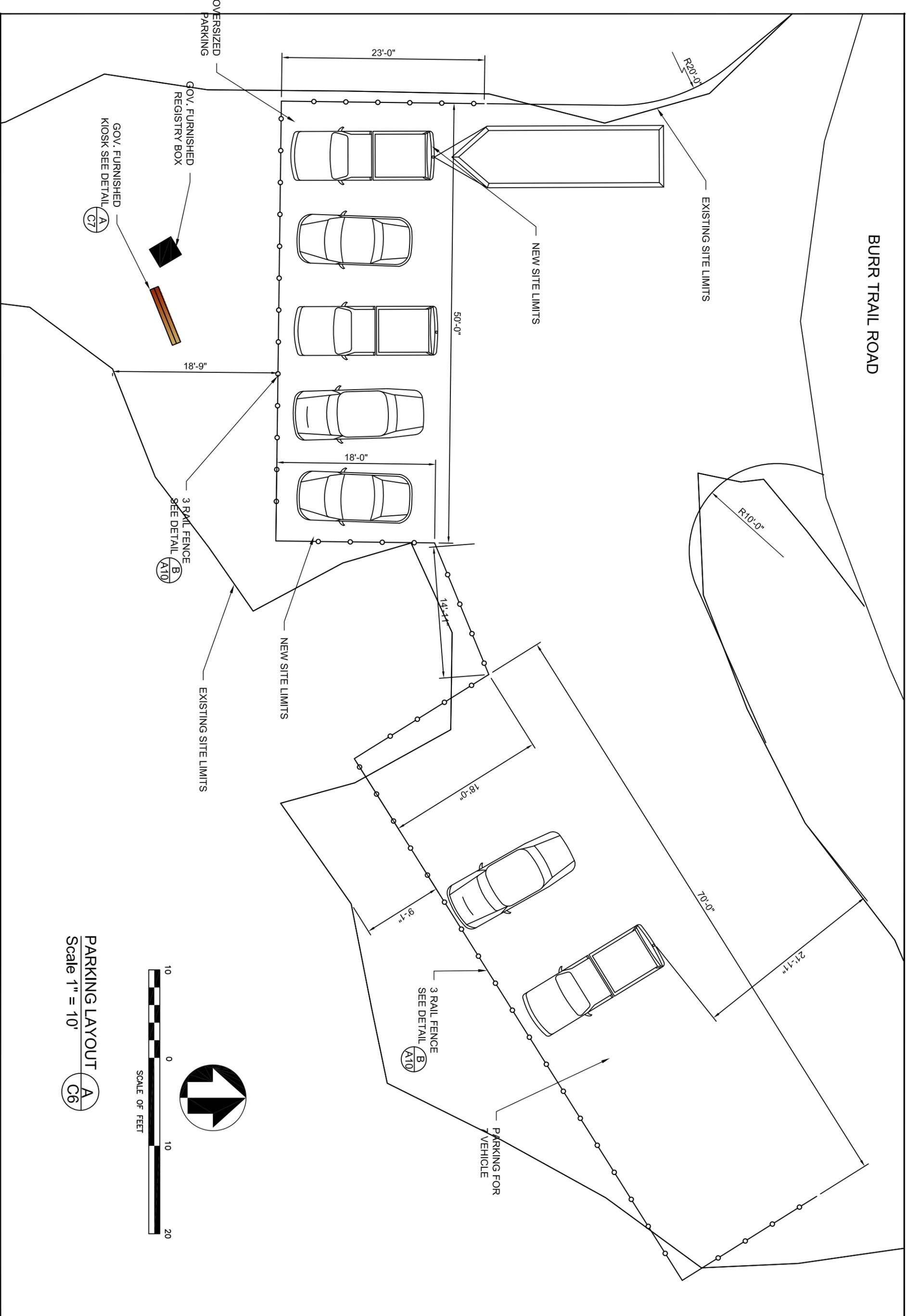
SHEET 3 OF 12
C1
SITE PLAN

PROJECT NO:				
CAD DWG FILE:				
DESIGNED BY: DCB				
DRAWN BY: DCB				
CHK'D BY:				
APPROVED BY:				
DATE: 02/02/2015				
SCALE: nts	MARK	DESCRIPTION	DATE	APPROVED

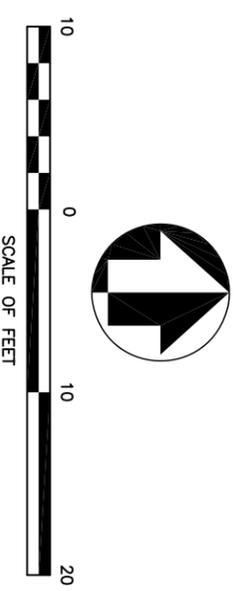
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
REFERENCE PLAN
DEER CREEK CAMPGROUND
GSENM
Escalante Utah



BURR TRAIL ROAD



PARKING LAYOUT
Scale 1" = 10'



A
C6

PROJECT NO:				
CAD DWG FILE:				
DESIGNED BY: DCB				
DRAWN BY: DCB				
CHK'D BY:				
APPROVED BY:				
DATE: 02/02/2015				
SCALE:				
	MARK	DESCRIPTION	DATE	APPROVED

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

TRAIL HEAD PLAN VIEW
DEER CREEK CAMPGROUND

GSENM

Escalante Utah



APPENDIX D INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

Project Title: Deer Creek Campground Improvements

NEPA Log Number: DOI-BLM-UT-0300-2015-0016-EA

Project Leader: Allysia Angus

DETERMINATION OF STAFF: (Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for impact that needs to be analyzed in detail

NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section D of the DNA form

The rationale column may include NI and NP discussions.

RESOURCES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED INCLUDES SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES (APPENDIX 1 H-1790-1)

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Air Quality (Miller)	Construction will result in surface disturbance in a limited area. Particulate matter and gaseous pollutants generated during construction should be quickly dispersed and have no measurable effect on air quality. During normal operations, both particulate and gaseous pollutants should be minimal.	/s/ khmiller	04/28/2015
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (Beal/Gale)	No Areas of Critical Environmental Concern are designated within Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.	/s/ J. Beal	4/21/2015
NI	Biological Soil Crusts (Brinkerhoff)	The majority of the surface disturbance is within an existing disturbance area therefore the impacts to the existing soil crusts would be minimal.	/s/R. Brinkerhoff	4/29/15
NI	BLM Natural Areas (Beal)	This project is not within a Natural Area.	/s/ J. Beal	4/21/2015
NP	Cultural Resources (Zweifel)	Previous inventory work and recent field inspections for this project have found no cultural resource sites in the campground area. However, monitoring of excavations for the proposed vault toilet is recommended in the event that an unidentified, sub-surface site exists at this location.	/s/ M. Zweifel	4/24/2015
NI	Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Miller)	Emissions generated during construction should be quickly dispersed and have no measurable effect. During normal operations, emissions should be minimal.	/s/ khmiller	04/28/2015
NI	Environmental Justice (Farrell)	The proposal would not have disproportionate effects on low income or minority communities. According to the EPA EJView Mapper, Garfield and Kane Counties have been categorized as having a minority population of 0-10% and a below poverty population of 0-10%. (Accessed at: http://epamap14.epa.gov/ejmap/ejmap.aspx?wherestr=Garfield%20County%2C%20UT on 2/5/2015.)	/s/ K. Farrell	3/26/15

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NP	Farmlands (Prime or Unique) (Farrell)	Prime farmland is described as farmland with resources available to sustain high levels of production. In general, prime farmland has a dependable water supply, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable levels of acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable content of salt and sodium, and few or no rocks. Unique farmland in Utah is primarily in the form of orchards. Based on these definitions, no prime or unique farmlands exist within the Monument. (See NRCS 1997 Results - Cropland Utah accessed at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ut/technical/dma/nri/?cid=nrcs141p2_034092 on 2/5/2015.)	/s/ K. Farrell	3/26/15
NI	Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFWS Designated Species (McQuivey)	The size, scope and timing of the project are appropriate to minimize potential harmful impacts to wildlife species, including migratory birds, for which there will be no direct impact due to timing. No measurable impacts anticipated.	/s/ C. McQuivey	4/28/15
NI	Floodplains (Miller)	There will be no net change in floodplains impacts (impacts from road widening; new fee station, toilet and information kiosk pullouts; new sand tent pads, tables and fire rings on gravel pads; offset by removing existing concrete pads and walkways and one campsite, and reclaiming existing parking layouts). Conversion of trailhead parking area from dirt to gravel/road base within the same footprint is not expected to result in any change in floodplains impacts.	/s/ khmiller	05/18/2015
NI	Fuels/Fire Management (Bate)	Fuels and Fire Management would remain as it is currently, the proposed action would not increase or decrease fuel or fire management for the Deer Creek Campground.	/s/ A. Bate	4/23/2015
NI	Geology / Mineral Resources/Energy Production (Titus)	Site of proposed action is located among outcrops of Navajo SS. No special geologic features are identified in the area. No geological hazards identified in area. Energy and mineral production would not be affected as there are no valid existing leases at the site.	/s/ Alan Titus	4/21/2015
NI	Hydrologic Conditions (Miller)	There will be no net change in hydrologic conditions (impacts from road widening; new fee station, toilet and information kiosk pullouts; new sand tent pads, tables and fire rings on gravel pads; offset by removing existing concrete pads and walkways and one campsite, and reclaiming existing parking layouts). Conversion of trailhead parking area from dirt to gravel/road base within the same footprint may improve hydrologic conditions by stabilizing soils and reducing runoff.	/s/ khmiller	05/18/2015
NP	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds (EO 13112) (Brinkerhoff)	Standard weed washing stipulations will be implemented prior to any equipment arriving on site. This will decrease the threat of invasive or noxious weeds.	/s/R. Brinkerhoff	4/29/15
PI	Lands/Access (Beal)	Lands and Realty issues have been addressed in the EA.	/s/ J. Beal	5/6/2015
NI	Livestock Grazing (Stewart)	Livestock are excluded from campground portion of the proposed action therefore the action would not impact livestock grazing. The size and scope of the proposed trail head work would not have any anticipated impacts to grazing.	/s/ S. Stewart	4/26/2015
NI	Native American Religious Concerns (Zweifel)	No cultural resource sites are found at this location, and no restrictions of any sort will be applied. This project will be included in the annual GSENM/Native American consultations, but no comments are anticipated.	/s/ M. Zweifel	4/24/2015

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Paleontology (Titus)	Site of proposed action is located among outcrops of Navajo SS with no documented fossil sites. Project work would be done on Holocene alluvium and modern dirt with no potential for fossils.	/s/ Alan Titus	4/21/2015
NI	Rangeland Health Standards (Stewart)	The site of proposed action is in and adjacent to an existing campground and trailhead. Due to the small area and the location type there are no anticipated impacts to rangeland health standards.	/s/S. Stewart	4/26/2015
PI	Recreation (Beal/Gale)	Recreation issues are addressed in the EA.	/s/ J. Beal	5/6/2015
NI	Socio-Economics (Farrell)	The proposed action is not likely to provide any noticeable impact to the local economy. The amount of economic activity generated by improving the campground is small. Once improvements are completed, the amount of use and activity is not expected to increase from that generated by use of the campground today.	/s/ K. Farrell	3/26/15
NI	Soils (Miller)	There will be no net change in soils impacts (impacts from road widening; new fee station, toilet and information kiosk pullouts; new sand tent pads, tables and fire rings on gravel pads; offset by removing existing concrete pads and walkways and one campsite, and reclaiming existing parking layouts). Conversion of trailhead parking area from dirt to gravel/road base within the same footprint may stabilize soils and reduce runoff.	/s/ khmiller	05/18/2015
PI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species (Brinkerhoff)	There is one known plant species of concern within the proposed project site. <i>Spiranthes diluvialis</i> is currently listed as threatened. Prior to work taking place the known populations will be flagged and avoided to minimize any impacts to the plants.	/s/R. Brinkerhoff	4/29/15
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species (McQuivey)	There are no known individuals, populations or critical habitat for any federally listed Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate wildlife species within the project area.	/s/ C. McQuivey	4/28/15
NP	Wastes (hazardous or solid) (Pierson)	There will be no industrial wastes or toxic substances used or generated.	/s/ B. Pierson	4/23/15
NI	Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground) (Miller)	There will be no net change in water resources impacts (impacts from road widening; new fee station, toilet and information kiosk pullouts; new sand tent pads, tables and fire rings on gravel pads; offset by removing existing concrete pads and walkways and one campsite, and reclaiming existing parking layouts). Conversion of trailhead parking area from dirt to gravel/road base within the same footprint may improve water resources by stabilizing soils and reducing runoff.	/s/ khmiller	05/18/2015
NI	Wetlands/Riparian Zones (Brinkerhoff)	The proposed project is located within existing disturbed areas therefore no impacts to the riparian areas are expected from this action.	/s/R. Brinkerhoff	4/29/15

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
PI	Wild and Scenic Rivers (Beal/Gale)	This project occurs on Deer Creek, a WSR tributary of the Escalante River, tentatively classified within the campground as recreational and tentatively classified below the campground as a wild section. Project needs to insure no obstruction of wild and free flowing nature of the river or threats to identified Outstanding Remarkable Values which are documented to include threatened plants such as Utes Ladies Tresses and overall protection for high quality scenery and riparian areas.	/s/LGale	4/21/15
PI	Wilderness/WSA (Beal/Gale)	The project footprint and construction boundaries as proposed are not expected to occur within the WSA boundaries which lie proximate to the campground and trailhead. The Deer Creek trailhead is located within an abandoned road alignment for the historic Burr trail which borders the North Escalante Canyons-The Gulch WSA. However, inclusion of language in the EA regarding actual boundaries of construction, contract construction oversight, and protection of WSA boundaries is needed to insure no impact to WSA's.	/s/L.Gale	04/21/15
NI	Woodland/Forestry (Bate)	No Forestry or tree species would be removed or cut in this proposal.	/s/A. Bate	4/22/2015
NI	Vegetation Excluding USFWS Designated Species (Brinkerhoff)	Some vegetation will be removed or disturbed but the overall health of the existing vegetation within the area will not be impacted by the proposed action.	/s/R. Brinkerhoff	4/29/15
PI	Visual Resources (Angus)	Contrast analysis needed to determine conformance with VRM Class objectives.	/s/AAngus	3/26/2015
NP	Wild Horses and Burros (Stewart)	There are no Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas within GSENM.	/s/S. Stewart	4/26/2015
NP	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (Beal/Gale)	There are no sections of LWC in the project area.	/s/L.Gale	4/21/15

FINAL REVIEW

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
Environmental Coordinator			
Authorized Officer			