



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument  
Paria River District, Utah

## Notice of Proposal Development

### [Calf Creek Recreation Site Deferred Maintenance and Improvements Project, Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-UT-P010-2021-0010-EA](#)

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is conducting public outreach to determine if there is additional information that might support BLM's planning process for this proposal.

#### [Introduction and Background](#)

The BLM proposes improvements at Calf Creek Recreation Site to improve public safety, address deferred maintenance, improve accessibility, enhance visitor experiences, and reduce resource degradation.

Calf Creek Recreation Site is located in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) between Escalante and Boulder in Garfield County, Utah. Recreational facilities (e.g., nine camping units, a group picnic area, bridges, toilets, roads, and a water system) were first developed here in 1962-1963 under authorization and funding of the Accelerated Public Works Program. The trail to Lower Calf Creek Falls was constructed in 1968. Then in 1970 the broader area encompassing 5,835 acres of the Calf Creek watershed was designated as the Calf Creek Recreation Area.

The project area is approximately 17 acres and includes the Calf Creek Campground and Day Use Area, as well as the Lower Calf Creek Falls Trailhead. The recreation site is also in the Calf Creek Special Recreation Management Area (*Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan for GSENM*, 2020, p. ARMPs-27) and is bounded on the west and north sides by the Phipps Death Hollow Instant Study Area (managed as a wilderness study area) and All-American Road - Scenic Byway 12 (SB12) on the east and south sides (figure 1). The site is in the bottom of a narrow canyon surrounded by steep sandstone walls with Calf Creek running through the middle.

Calf Creek Recreation Site has experienced continually increasing demand for both day use and camping. Hiking to Lower Calf Creek Falls is one of, if not the, most popular and accessible recreational opportunity between Bryce Canyon and Capitol Reef National Parks along SB12. Throughout the visitation season (not just on busy holiday weekends), visitors park along the

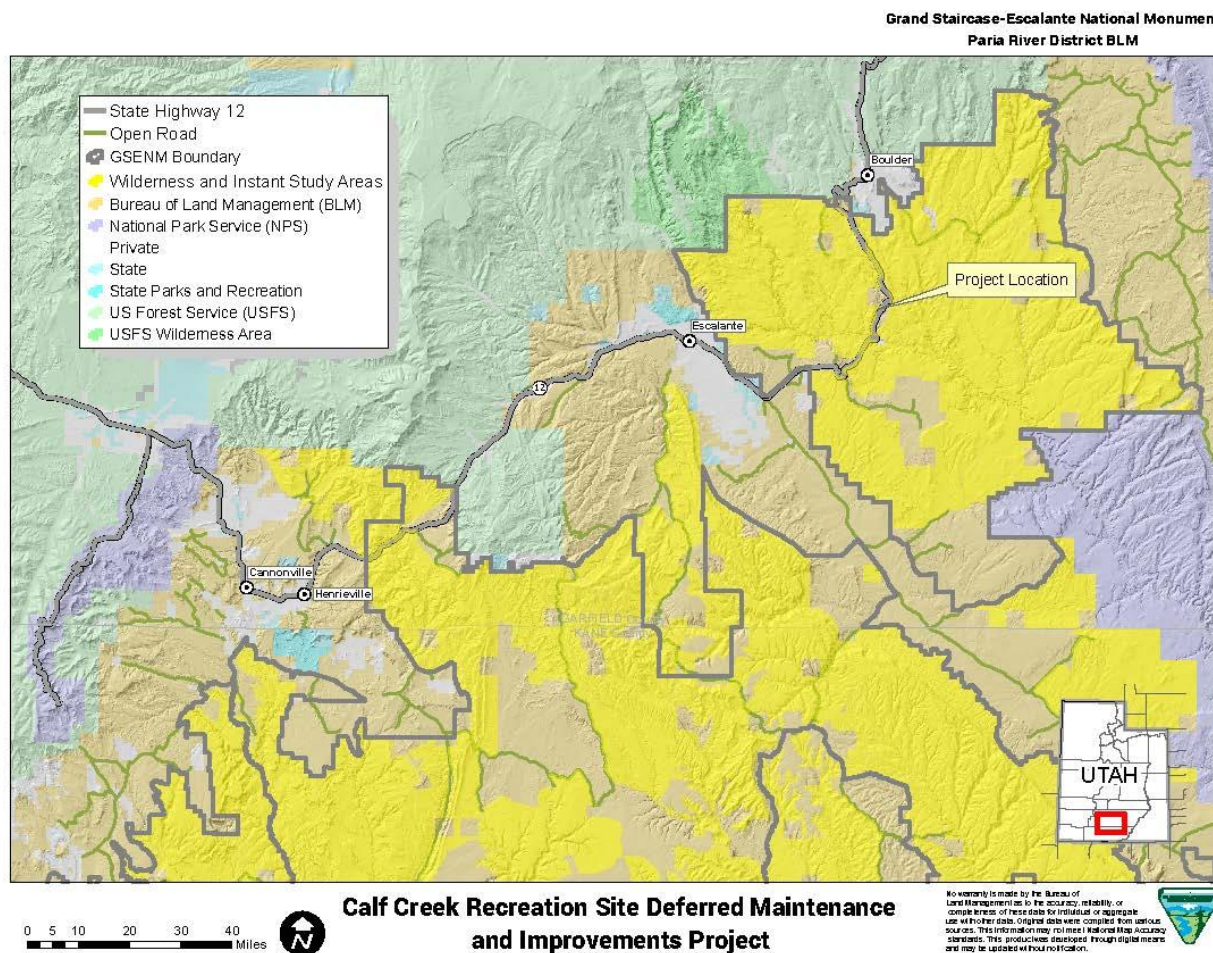


Figure 1- Overview map showing location of Calf Creek Recreation Site

site road, as well as in numerous undesignated shoulder locations along SB12, creating safety hazards for both motorists and pedestrians (figure 2). In 2020, parking along the highway extended as far as a half mile out from the recreation site entry on some days. In this area SB12 is curvy, narrow with little to no shoulder, and with steep grades eastbound (north) from the recreation site entry. This resulted in pedestrians walking in the travel lanes around blind curves. In addition, the entry to the recreation site is narrow and the main parking area layout is not efficient for parking or functional for traffic flow. The demand for campsites in the 13-site campground far exceeds the capacity through much of the visitation season.

The main restroom building, day use areas, and several campsites and their site fixtures (e.g., picnic tables, fire rings, grills) do not meet *Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas* (2014) per the *Accessibility Assessment for Calf Creek* (2016).





Figure 2 – Images of undesignated parking along Scenic Byway 12 and site road to Calf Creek Recreation Site

The proposed infrastructure maintenance and improvements at Calf Creek Recreation Site would be in conformance with the *Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan for GSENM* (2020, p. ARMPs-28 and pp. H-2 to H-5).



## **Proposed Action**

BLM proposes to implement a deferred maintenance and improvement project in the developed portion of the Calf Creek Recreation Area using Great American Outdoors Act funds, supplemented by recreation fee revenues and other funding sources. Proposed improvements include constructing new parking areas and expanding/reconfiguring the existing one, widening the site road throughout the site, replacing old infrastructure (e.g., vehicular bridge, shade shelters, restroom building, fee station), and installing a communication fiber line. BLM is also considering rerouting the beginning of the Lower Calf Creek Trail around (rather than through) the campground to improve user orientation and separate hiking and camping uses (figure 3).

*BLM's Guidelines for a Quality Environment* (2010) is being used to plan and design this project, seeking to meet the agency's goals of developing facilities that are sustainable, functional, cost-effective, and responsive to place and setting. Work would be performed by BLM staff, contractors, and/or volunteers. A variety of heavy, motorized equipment would be used during construction. Project implementation would begin in 2022.

The Proposed Action includes the following:

### *Vehicular Circulation and Parking*

The site road that accommodates two-way traffic is narrow (approximately 15' wide) and would be increased. The main parking area (currently striped for 30 vehicles) would be expanded and redesigned to improve traffic flow and increase designated parking capacity. An overflow parking area for approximately 40 vehicles would be constructed near the entrance to the site and approximately 15 additional designated parking spaces would be constructed along the site road. Overall designated parking would approximately triple, accommodating similar user numbers of recent years (with parking outside designated areas).

### *Campground*

The campground currently includes 13 sites, two of which are walk-in sites. Up to five additional walk-in sites and up to four additional car camping sites would be constructed. One of the existing and heavily eroded car camping sites would be converted to parking for walk-in sites, as would an old, paved athletic court near the existing walk-in sites. All camping sites would be outfitted with accessible tables and fire rings, and tent pads that are flush to the ground. Existing shade shelters would be replaced, and new shelters would be installed at other sites as funding allowed. The camp host site which is currently on the south end of the main parking area would be relocated nearer to the campground.

### *Toilets*

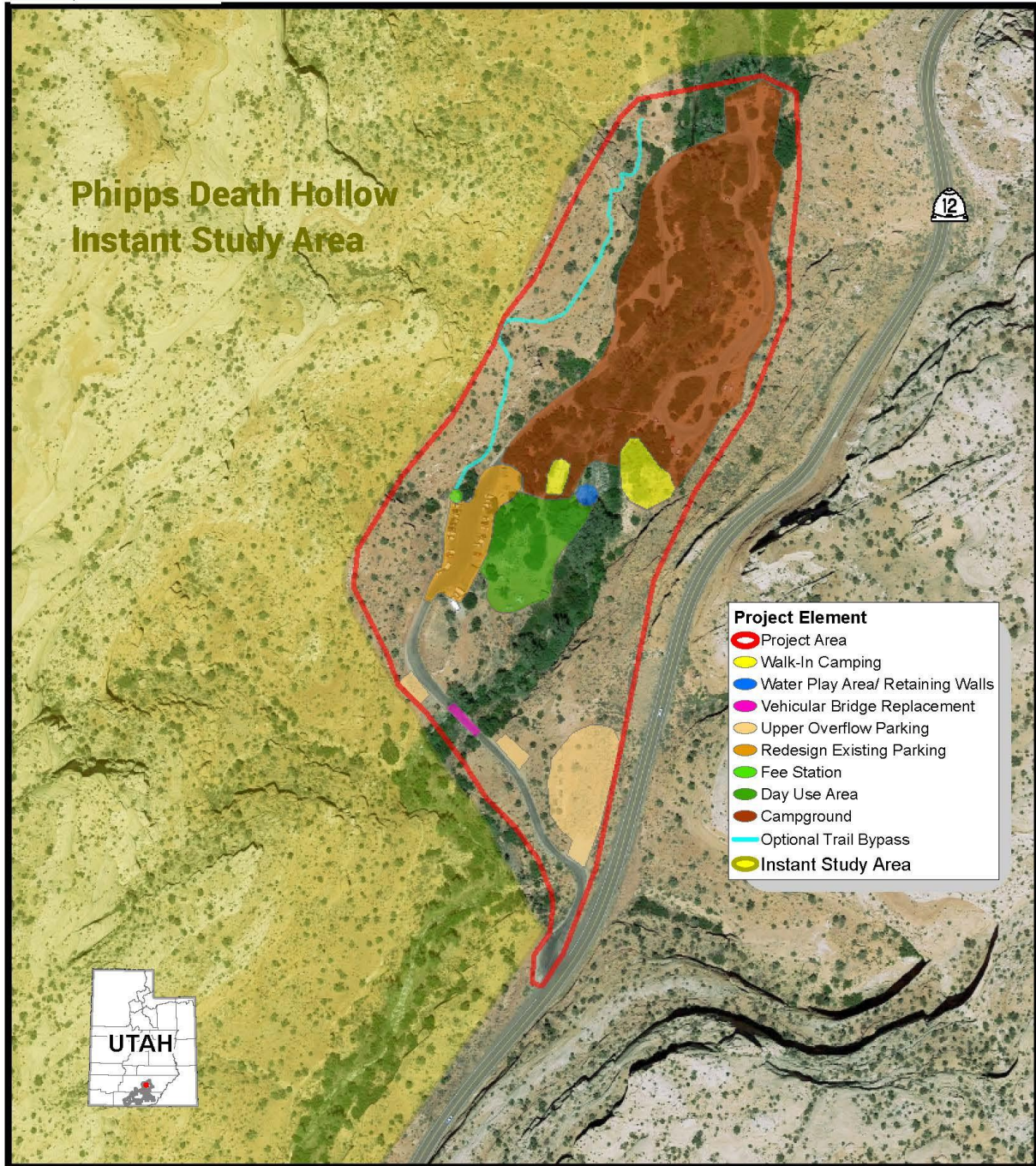
The existing main restroom building (currently plumbed and with four toilets) does not meet ABA standards and would be relocated and replaced with a vault toilet restroom building of similar capacity. This would forego the need for an updated septic system and enhance water



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## Project Area

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument  
Paria River District BLM



0 100 200 300 400 500 600  
Feet

### Calf Creek Recreation Site Deferred Maintenance and Improvements Project

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.

Figure 3 – Project Area Map of Calf Creek Recreation Site with proposed improvement locations



conservation at the site. A vault toilet would be installed within the campground on the west side of the creek (a new toilet was installed on the east side in 2019). Another vault toilet would be installed within the upper overflow parking area.

### *Day Use*

Day use activities at the site include trailhead parking for the Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail, picnicking, and water play in Calf Creek. There are currently two picnic areas, one immediately adjacent to the parking area and fee station in an oak stand, and another in the lower area closer to the creek. Most of the site fixtures associated with both picnic areas were originally constructed in the 1960s and do not meet ABA guidelines. The shade shelters have metal overhangs without proper overhead clearances to meet current building codes and have concrete footers that are exposed. The picnic area closer to the creek is often used for overflow camping which displaces day use picnicking. The retaining walls along the creek by the water play area are repeatedly damaged by flood events and have slumped; concrete blocks regularly dislodge and fall into the creek, creating hazards for those walking near the edge of the creek and for those wading and playing in the creek. Day use picnicking would be provided only in the lower area closer to the creek, with new shade shelters installed; this area would not be available for overflow camping. The picnic area in the oak stand would be removed to allow for reconfiguring and expanding the main parking area, while retaining as many of the oak trees as feasible. The retaining walls by the water play area would be removed and reconstructed to better withstand flood events. A small amphitheater for interpretive and education programs may be constructed.

### *Bridge Replacement*

The vehicular bridge over Calf Creek, which was constructed in the 1960s using a large, corrugated metal culvert with concrete footers and abutments, was inspected in 2019 and determined to be in poor overall condition. It would be replaced with a prefabricated steel structure. The footers and abutments would be removed and replaced with structures moved away from the edge of the creek in order to widen and restore the floodplain area under the structure.

### *Communications Fiber Line*

A buried communications fiber line would be installed from SB12 along the edge of the site road to the main parking area to allow for digital fee payment and the installation of emergency phones.

### *Trail Bypass Segment*

The beginning of the Lower Calf Creek Trail is currently located on the north boundary of the campground and requires trail users to walk through the campground along the site road past and in close proximity to several camp sites. Many hikers, especially first-time visitors, are confused as to where the trail begins because it is about 800 feet away, through the

campground, and out of view because of vegetation and landform screening. Signs and maps indicating the trailhead location have not adequately corrected this situation.

BLM is considering relocating the trailhead to the main parking area and re-routing the trail so that it bypasses the campground. The trail would start from the northern edge of the parking area, follow the western bench above the campground, and connect to the existing trail just past where it currently begins. This new trail segment would be about 1000 feet long and require substantial construction to navigate rocky ledges in a couple locations, to gain access to and get off the bench. The potential trail segment would pass close to but stay outside the Phipps Death Hollow Instant Study Area.

### *Design Elements*

To prevent or reduce adverse effects to resources, the following design elements would be a required:

#### *Cultural Resources*

- Historic features currently present will be thoroughly recorded with architectural and photographic documentation.
- If cultural resources are identified during any aspect of project implementation, activity will cease, and a BLM archaeologist will be immediately consulted. Work will be suspended until written authorization to proceed is issued.

#### *Vegetation Resources*

- Native plant container stock and/or native plant seeds will be used to re-vegetate areas impacted during construction. Where practical, native plants that need to be removed during construction will be saved and replanted in areas where re-vegetation is needed.
- Cottonwood trees and other native riparian vegetation will be planted in the lower day use area and along the creek.

#### *Noxious/Invasive Weeds*

- Equipment and machinery utilized during the project will be washed prior to entering the project area to prevent the introduction of noxious weeds into the area.
- If noxious weeds or non-native, invasive plants are discovered after implementation, BLM-approved weed treatments will be applied in a manner consistent with current BLM practice.

#### *Soil Resources/Erosion*

- Heavy equipment use will be avoided during wet conditions to reduce the compaction of soils.
- Erosion and sediment control structures will be used during construction to mitigate soil loss due to runoff.

### Visual Resources

- Natural or natural-appearing materials will be used. These could include concrete, natural stone, road base, gravels, or crusher fines, rusted or painted metal, and/or wood.
- Natural palette colors will include blacks, grays, reds, rusts, browns, and buffs. No bright colors such as whites or yellows will be used (except for lettering on signs and pavement striping).

### Wildlife Resources

- To avoid effects to migratory birds during crucial nesting season, implementation activities will not occur between May 15 and July 15, except if work is first cleared by a qualified biologist. If active nests of migratory birds are found this may require that at least a 100-foot buffer for nests are added to avoid potential impacts to migratory birds. Biological clearance surveys should not occur more than 7-10 days prior to work beginning. Once the nestlings have fledged, work could resume.

### Safety

- During construction, the site road and parking could be closed to the public for overnight and day use including closure of trailhead access for the Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail. When it is possible for the public to safely access the site during construction, it will be allowed.

### Recreation Resources

- A temporary foot trail from the upper overflow parking area will allow public access to Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail during construction when safe to do so.

### Public Outreach

- To inform the public of the construction closures, BLM will issue press releases to relevant media outlets (including via social media), publish notices on the GSENM website, and post notices at GSENM visitor centers and other local outlets.

### Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Invites Your Input on The Development of the Proposed Project

BLM is conducting public outreach to determine if there is additional information that might support BLM's planning process for this proposal.

- *Do you have first-hand knowledge or new ideas that could inform project design or raise project-related concerns?*
- *Do you have additional information on how this proposal might meaningfully affect natural resources or other values?*

Comments are most useful if they are within the scope of the proposal and relate specifically to 1) proposal design or 2) potential effects of the proposal and include rationale for why such effects might occur.



A public site visit will be scheduled if requested. This comment period extends through June 30, 2021. Request a site visit, direct questions, and submit comments to:

Allysia Angus, Landscape Architect

[aangus@blm.gov](mailto:aangus@blm.gov), (435) 826-5600

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*Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument appreciates your interest in your public lands.*