

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND / HISTORY**

In November 2002, Congress designated the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA) to preserve and protect a portion of southern Nevada's Mojave Desert as a permanent asset for future generations. The Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002 [Public Law (P.L.) 107-282] (Title IV, the Sloan Canyon NCA Act) established the Sloan Canyon NCA and the North McCullough Wilderness (Title II), which is entirely contained within the NCA. The 48,438-acre NCA, which forms the natural, mountainous southern skyline of the cities of Henderson and Las Vegas, contains important archaeological sites, scenic resources, and wildlife habitat. The centerpiece of the NCA is the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site, one of the most notable cultural resources in southern Nevada. More than 400 rock art panels with nearly 1,200 designs represent native cultures dating from the Archaic to Historic era. Eventually, residential housing, schools, parks, and businesses will border much of the northern and western edges of the NCA.

### **1.2 PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION**

The Sloan Canyon NCA encompasses the northern portion of the McCullough Range and is located approximately 20 miles southeast of the City of Las Vegas (Maps 1 and 2). The northwestern NCA boundary borders the City of Henderson. The NCA is situated at the edge of a rapidly urbanizing valley. The NCA is one of the latest additions to a regional network of protected local, state, and federal lands. Throughout the greater Las Vegas Valley, large tracts of land have been set aside to provide outdoor recreational opportunities for the growing population as well as to ensure the preservation of natural desert ecosystems. Many of these protected areas are connected by a network of city, county, and/or federal trails and pathways.

Volcanic activity formed the McCullough Range and a long basalt spine dominates the topography within the NCA. The eastern slopes of the range are much steeper than the western slopes. Ridgelines offer exceptional views of the Las Vegas Valley, the Frenchman and Sunrise Mountains, and the Eldorado and Jean Dry Lakes. Elevations within the NCA range from approximately 1,800 feet on the southern border to over 5,000 feet at Black Mountain in the northern half of the NCA. Other notable peaks include Sutor, Pyramid, Hanna, and Little and Big Sheep Mountains.

The McCullough Range is located in the Mojave Desert near the confluence of two geographic zones, the Colorado Plateau and the Great Basin. This setting plays a major role in the natural characteristics of the NCA. The primary ecosystem in the northern portion of the McCullough Range is Mojave Desert scrub, which is dominated by creosote and bursage with scattered stands of cholla cactus in varying densities, depending on elevation. Small communities of unique and isolated vegetation types, including several Special Status Species of beardtongue, exist within canyon and wash microclimates.

Archaeological evidence suggests that humans have used the area now designated as the NCA for approximately 7,000 years. Petroglyph Canyon, located within the southwestern portion of the NCA, contains more than 1,700 rock art elements within a half-mile stretch of the canyon. Although cultural affiliation has not been determined for each panel, archaeologists studying Sloan Canyon believe it has been used by many previous cultures. An ethnographic study completed for the Resource Management Plan (RMP) and ongoing consultation with Tribes

have confirmed the cultural significance of the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site to present-day area Native Americans. The Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1978. In addition to the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site, cultural resource inventories have identified 19 other rock art sites in and around the NCA; however, none of the sites are as extensive as in the Petroglyph Canyon.

Historically, recreational use of the NCA has been low. However, with the recent population trends in Clark County, recreation is now becoming an important use of the North McCullough Range. As urban growth in the Las Vegas Valley has enveloped the northern portion of the NCA, hiking, mountain biking, equestrian, and illegal off-highway vehicle (OHV) use have become more prevalent in the NCA. Because of its rugged character and greater isolation, the southern portion of the NCA receives little visitation and recreational uses are limited primarily to cross-country hiking and equestrian use. Recreational use has been concentrated on the NCA perimeter, primarily in the Dutchman Pass, Hidden Valley, and Petroglyph Canyon areas. Due to extreme high temperatures in the summer months, recreational use of the NCA peaks in the period from October to May.

### **1.3 PROPOSED PROJECT**

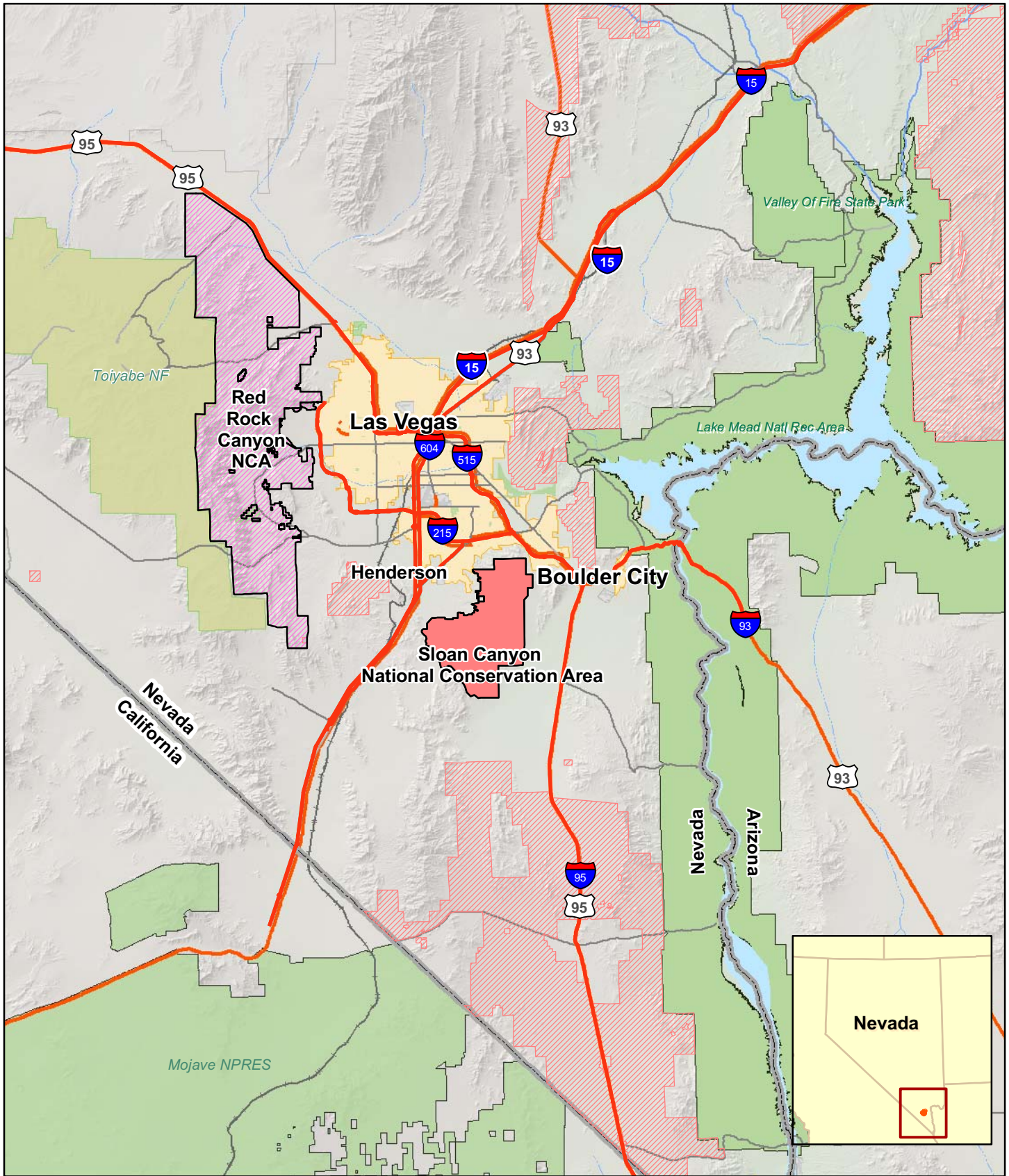
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to develop a comprehensive non-motorized trail network (Trails Master Plan or Master Plan) within the Sloan Canyon NCA, including the North McCullough Wilderness. The Trails Master Plan is intended to meet the needs of hiking, equestrian, and mountain biking groups and other non-motorized trail users by providing a range of opportunities for differing skill levels, abilities, and interests. The proposed Sloan Canyon NCA trails network would connect to trails identified in the City of Henderson's Open Space and Trails Plan, including the approved Anthem Trails System and the proposed McCullough Hills Trail.

### **1.4 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The Trails Master Plan is necessary to implement the recreation management direction outlined in the approved Sloan Canyon RMP. Specifically, the Trails Master Plan would address recreation guidelines 9 – 13 (RMP Section 2.2.2, REC 9-13), which call for the systematic planning and development of a sustainable, low impact trail system that accommodates multiple non-motorized uses by utilizing a combination of new trails, existing roads and rights-of-way, and the reconstruction of unauthorized routes and social trails (BLM 2006).

Residential and urban development near or adjacent to Sloan Canyon has increased dramatically in the last 20 years. The greater Las Vegas Valley and Clark County both experienced average annual population growth rates in excess of 5% for the period 1990-2007 (Clark County 2007 and Clark County 2009a). For the period 1990-2004, the City of Henderson experienced an average annual population growth rate in excess of 9% (City of Henderson 2005a). Future population projections for these three entities suggest that population growth will continue at similar (but slightly lower) rates through 2030 (Clark County 2007).

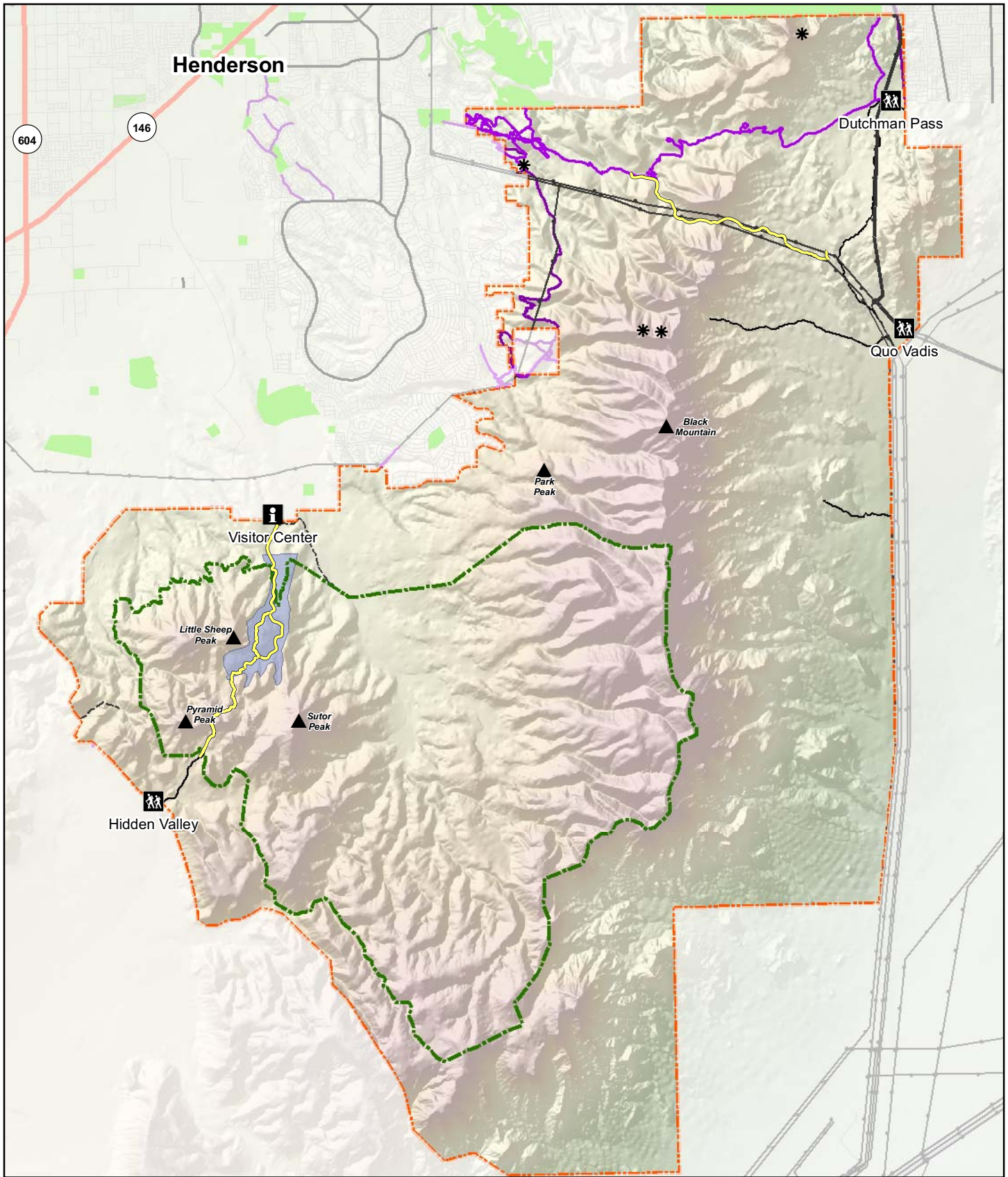
Current visitation to the NCA is estimated at 28,500 visitors annually (BLM 2007). As regional population growth and surrounding development occurs, and as Sloan Canyon NCA becomes better known, visitation is expected to increase even without the development of additional visitor facilities. If the recent growth rates in the region remain constant, it is estimated that annual visitation to the NCA would approach 75,000 visitors by 2030 (BLM 2007).



**LEGEND**

- Sloan Canyon NCA
- Red Rock Canyon NCA
- BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- Parks (National / State)
- Forests (National / State)
- City / Metropolitan Area

**Sloan Canyon NCA**  
**Trails Master Plan**  
**MAP 1 - LOCATOR**  
**OCTOBER 4, 2009**



**LEGEND**

- Sloan Canyon NCA Boundary
- North McCullough Wilderness
- Transmission Lines
- Petroglyph Management Area
- RMP Proposed Trails (Existing, Unimproved Routes)
- Existing NCA Major Roads
- City of Henderson Trails
- Peaks
- Communication Towers

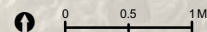
- i Visitor Center
- hiker Proposed Trailheads

**Sloan Canyon NCA**

**Trails Master Plan**

**MAP 2 - PROJECT AREA**

OCTOBER 4, 2009



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The Trails Master Plan project would provide a framework for developing trail related recreation and interpretive opportunities, which would be used by NCA neighbors, residents of the greater Las Vegas Valley, and out-of-area visitors. Additionally, a designated trail system near the more populated boundaries would help alleviate some resource impacts and abuses occurring in the NCA. Informal access and use in some frontcountry areas within the NCA have resulted in resource damage, numerous social trails, and illegal uses such as shooting, OHV use, and trash dumping.

The primary objectives of the Sloan Canyon Trails Master Plan are to:

- Establish sustainable, non-motorized access to areas of interest within the NCA.
- Provide recreational opportunities that meet the expectations of hiking, equestrian, and mountain biking groups and other non-motorized trail users.
- Plan and manage for future recreational use and demand levels.
- Ensure that trail related recreational disturbances are minimized.
- Provide interpretive opportunities consistent with the Sloan Canyon Act.
- Provide connectivity to regional trail systems and proposed developed areas, such as the Sloan Canyon Visitor Center.

In summary, as residential and urban development near the NCA boundary and throughout the Las Vegas Valley continue to increase, it is anticipated that the recreational use of Sloan Canyon will also increase. Developing a comprehensive Trails Master Plan is a critical step toward providing reasonable and sustainable access to the NCA, meeting visitor expectations, and managing use levels. The Trails Master Plan would provide the BLM with an opportunity to mitigate future potential user conflicts, reduce maintenance costs, and manage for public use and enjoyment of the NCA while protecting sensitive resources.

## **1.5 RELATIONSHIP TO MANAGEMENT DIRECTION, STATUTES AND REGULATIONS, AND OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS**

### **1.5.1 EXISTING MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

Lands within the Sloan Canyon NCA are managed according to two plans: the 2006 Approved RMP/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and the North McCullough Wilderness Management Plan (WMP).

The 2006 RMP provides overarching management guidance, decisions, and objectives for all resources in the NCA. All decisions and objectives were considered in the development of this Trails Master Plan proposal. However, the decisions and objectives identified for Management Emphasis Areas, Recreation, and the North McCullough Wilderness were particularly relevant to the planning process.

Currently, visitation to the NCA is largely unmanaged. There are no permit or entry fee requirements to visit or use the NCA and there are no manned entry stations. The entire NCA is currently open to cross-country travel by all non-motorized means. Based on likely amounts of future use and in an effort to preserve visual and biological resources, the subsequent need for administrative controls, and the reduction of conflicts among users, the BLM has designated use

areas for hiking, equestrian use, and mountain biking; designated use areas are shown on Map 3 (BLM 2006). These designations will be implemented once a decision is made regarding the proposed trail project. For the remainder of this document, the three primary trail network areas will be referenced as follows: Dutchman Pass area, Black Mountain area and/or Visitor's Center area, and Hidden Valley area. The general extent of these areas is shown on Map 4.

The most popular destinations for hikers include the many high peaks in the NCA, the Petroglyph Management Area, and the North McCullough Wilderness by way of Hidden Valley. Equestrian use is popular in both the Hidden Valley and Dutchman Pass areas. Mountain biking is primarily limited to the Dutchman Pass area where soils, slopes, and general terrain are more amenable to biking than in other portions of the NCA. Dispersed camping is only allowed in designated areas (refer to the 2006 RMP for more information).

The 2006 Sloan Canyon NCA RMP prohibits OHV use within the NCA. Registered, motorized vehicles are permissible on designated NCA roads. Although OHV use is not permitted within the NCA, unauthorized access still occurs quite frequently, particularly in the Dutchman Pass and Hidden Valley areas. The BLM has recently installed (fall 2008) a barrier fence along the Dutchman Pass area boundary to inhibit OHV use of the area.

The RMP acknowledges that use types and levels will likely be changing dramatically in the coming years. As such, the BLM has identified several potential methods for better monitoring visitor use as well as resource impacts. In the future, the BLM will consider imposing a nominal use fee at key access points, providing interpretive information at trailheads, or potentially instituting a permit or quota system for popular destination areas within the NCA. While none of these activities are assessed in this planning effort, the potential future uses and demands were important considerations in the development of an extensive trail network proposal.

The overall objectives of wilderness management in the NCA are to maintain or improve solitude within the Wilderness; maintain or improve naturalness in the Wilderness to achieve a standard of No Known Surface Disturbances and stable or decreasing non-native plant populations; and to provide a diversity of opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The North McCullough WMP establishes visitor numbers, group size, and seasonal and area limits so that wilderness characteristics, including solitude, are not affected beyond an acceptable limit (BLM 2006). In the future, some or all of the following management techniques may be used to maintain wilderness characteristics and protect resources: number of people at one time, size of party, timing of visits, daily visitation limits, permits, reservations, guides, and self-guided tours (BLM 2006).

Once residential development on the northwestern side of the NCA is complete, the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Management Area will be just a short distance from a large urban population. To manage the potential high number of visitors, to protect the sensitive cultural and natural resources, and to protect wilderness characteristics, detailed management actions were developed. These actions will be implemented once adequate NCA infrastructure is in place.

Visitors to the Petroglyph Management Area during periods of high use, such as weekends and holidays, must join a BLM-sponsored tour. No more than one guided group of 20 people is allowed in the Petroglyph Management Area at one time. During periods of lower use (such as weekdays), visitors may go to the Petroglyph Management Area unaccompanied by a BLM-sponsored guide if they obtain a permit. Access to and use of the Petroglyph Management Area is confined to the canyon bottom and a limited number of side trails. The main access to the Petroglyph Management Area will be controlled through a visitor center located near the

NCA boundary at the northern end of the Sloan Canyon wash. Use of the Petroglyph Canyon from this location would be limited to the visitor center's operational hours, which will be determined by BLM before the center is opened. Visitor would still be allowed to access the Petroglyph Canyon from the Hidden Valley entrance (BLM 2006; WLD 4-8).

### **1.5.2 MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS AREAS (MEAS)**

Management Emphasis Areas (MEAs) have been established to provide a framework for identifying BLM's management intent for a particular geographic area and for evaluating future actions and proposals. The MEAs developed for Sloan Canyon reflect the potential for increased development at the main access points for the NCA.

The area surrounding the potential Visitor's Center is the only area within the NCA that is zoned as Developed. Developed (D) zones allow substantial modification of the natural environment. Overall, human interaction levels are moderate to high and motorized use and parking are available in this zone.

The Petroglyph Management Area, which is expected to receive high levels of visitation in the future, has been designated as Semi-Primitive, Non-Motorized (SP). This designation was also given to the northernmost portion of the NCA as well as large areas south and east of the North McCullough Wilderness Area.

The SP designation indicates that an area may not necessarily be remote and access may be easy, but human interaction is low. Motorized use is prohibited, and existing roads could be closed and could be converted to trails. In this zone, facilities could include mountain bike, equestrian, and hiking trails. Construction of other facilities in SP areas would be avoided, except where they provide resource protection or aid in visitor safety.

The area south of Dutchman Pass and adjacent to the wilderness area on the north and west has been zoned Roaded Natural (RN), which indicates that the recreational experience is based on the natural setting but includes areas with roads. Human interaction should be low to moderate, but is more often on the low side. Development is limited to improved access and those consistent with the natural environment, which may include roads, trails, and camping sites; however, new improvements are intended for resource protection only.

All of the McCullough Wilderness Area is zoned as Primitive (P), which includes remote areas not on primary travel routes or easily accessed. Overall access is achieved by hiking and horseback; no mechanized vehicles (including mountain bikes) are allowed. Human interaction in P zones is rare to low and evidence of other uses is minimal. More visitor risk is assumed in a P zone and self-reliance is necessary.

### **1.5.3 CONFORMANCE WITH THE SLOAN CANYON RMP**

The Sloan Canyon NCA Act required the BLM to develop a plan for the appropriate use and management of the NCA and Wilderness within three years of enactment. The BLM fulfilled this requirement with the release of the approved RMP, WMP, and Record of Decision (ROD) in May 2006. The approved RMP and WMP provide guidance for the planning and management of actions consistent with the NCA vision for the next 15-20 years. The purpose of these plans is to provide the BLM Red Rock/Sloan Field Office with a comprehensive framework for managing the NCA and the North McCullough Wilderness. The RMP and WMP are detailed public documents that define management policies and permissible actions on these lands.

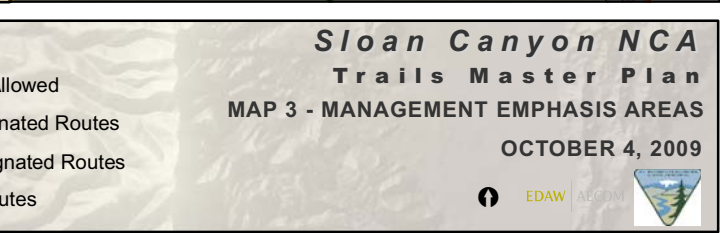
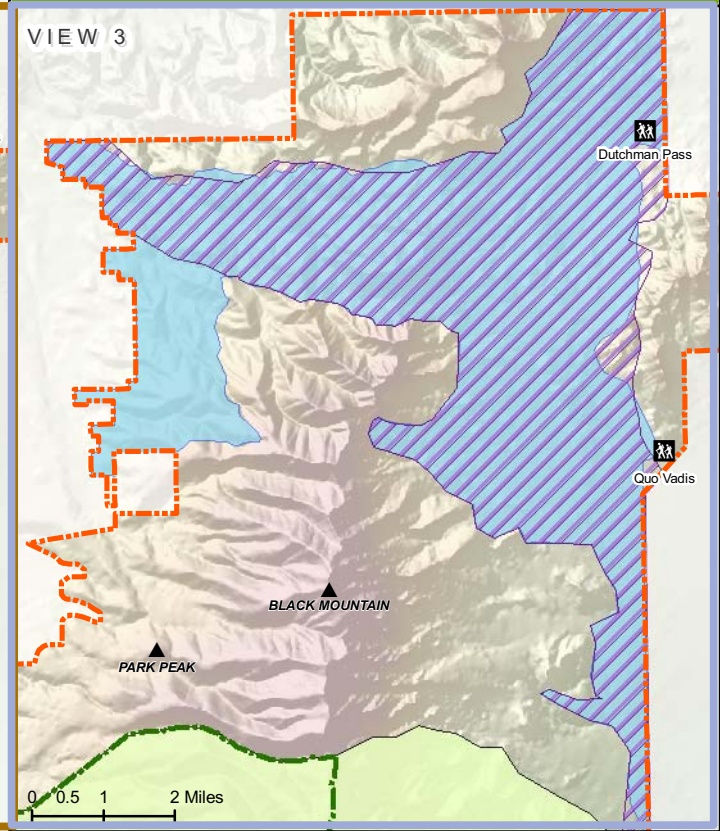
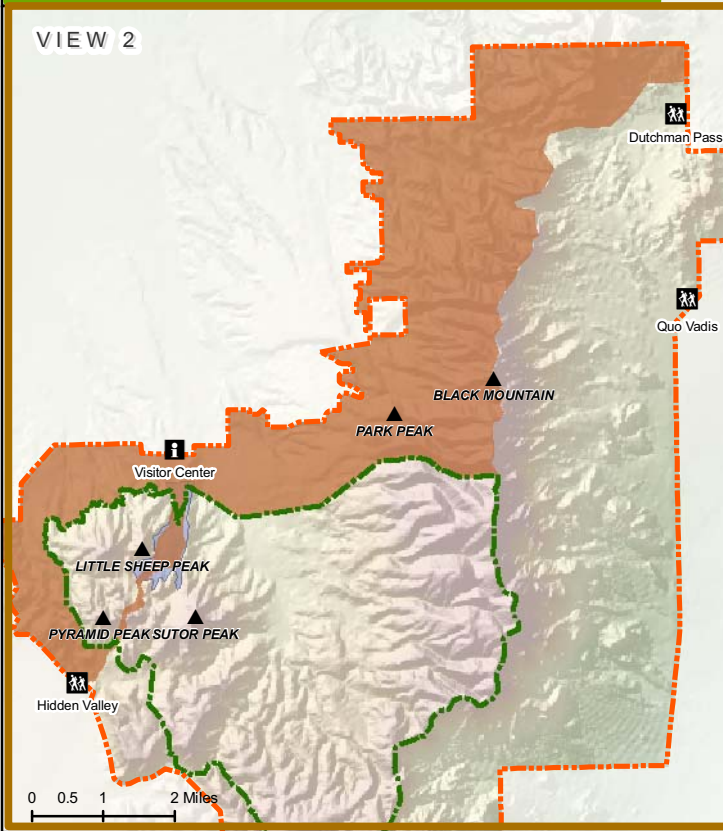
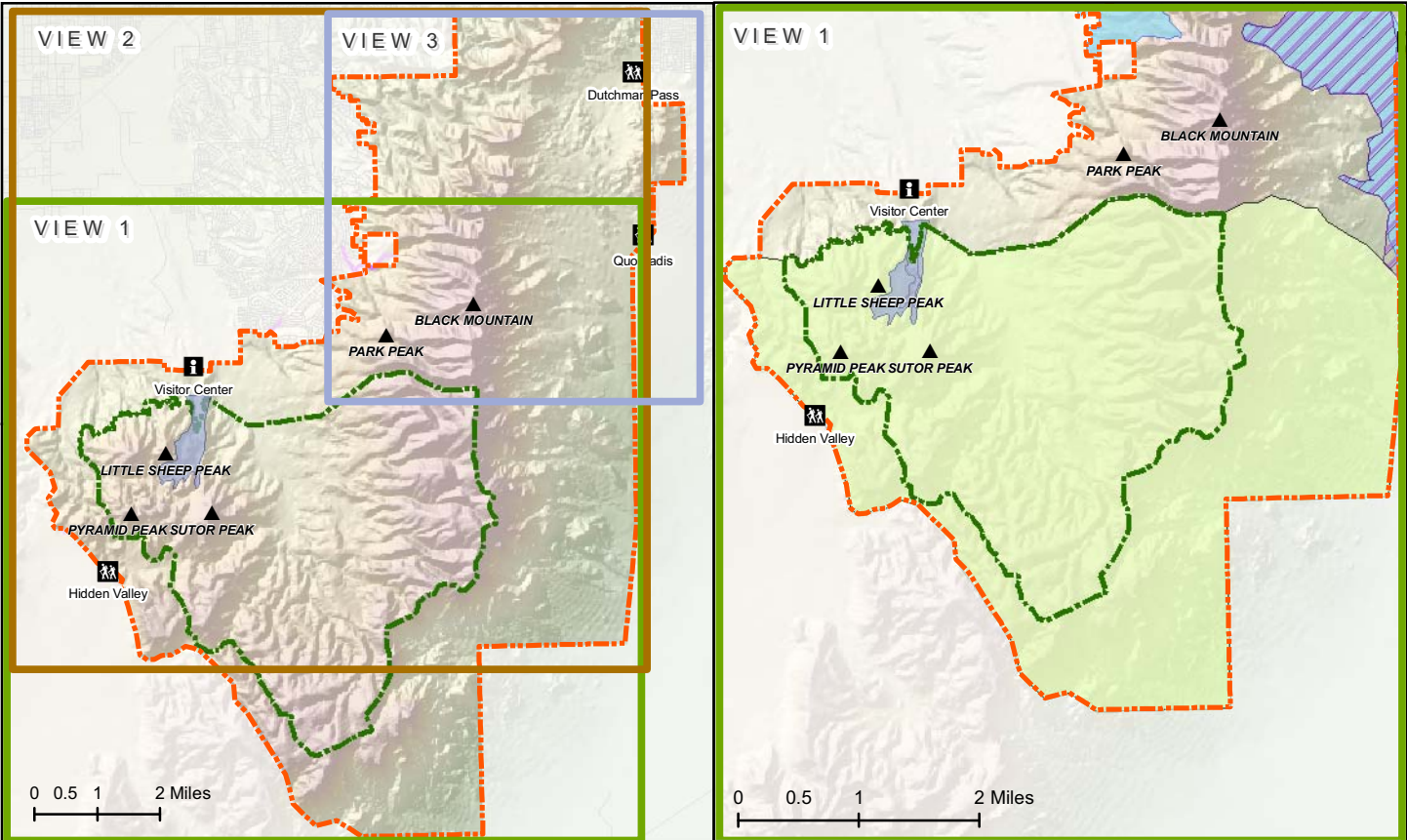
This proposed Trails Master Plan has been developed in accordance with the guidelines and policies identified in the RMP and WMP. The proposed resource management actions and the development of a non-motorized trail system, are “specifically provided for in the [RMP]” and are “consistent with the terms, conditions, and decision of the approved plan or amendments,” (43 CFR 1601.0-5(b)). The proposed Trails Master Plan has been “planned, designed, and [will be] constructed through a systematic process that [evaluates the] needs, potential uses, suitable destinations, and public interest.” Resource-specific assessments of conformance with the RMP will be provided in Chapter 3.0, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.

#### **1.5.4 APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

The following laws and regulations (in chronological order) are pertinent to the development and management of trails in the Sloan Canyon NCA. For the protection of BLM lands and resources, the Trails Master Plan will be developed in conformance with the following legislation:

- Antiquities Act of 1906 (P.L. 59-209; 34 Stat. 225; 16 U.S.C. 432, 433).
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] 703-712; Ch. 128; July 13, 1918; 40 Stat. 755), as amended.
- Historic Sites Act of 1935 (P.L. 74-292; 49 Stat. 666; 16 U.S.C. 461).
- Archeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1960 (P.L. 86-523, 16 U.S.C. 469-469c-2), as amended.
- Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.).
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (P.L. 89-665; 16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).
- Clean Air Act of 1970 (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.), as amended.
- Executive Order 11593 ("Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment," 36 F.R. 8921, May 13, 1971).
- Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act) of 1972 (33 U.S.C. §1251 et seq.), as amended.
- Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544, 87 Stat. 884), as amended.
- The Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974 (7 U.S.C. 2814), as amended.
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 U.S.C.1701 et seq.), as amended.
- Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1977 (42 U.S.C. 201).
- Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, May 24, 1977.
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (P.L. 96-95; 16 U.S.C. 470aa-mm), as amended.

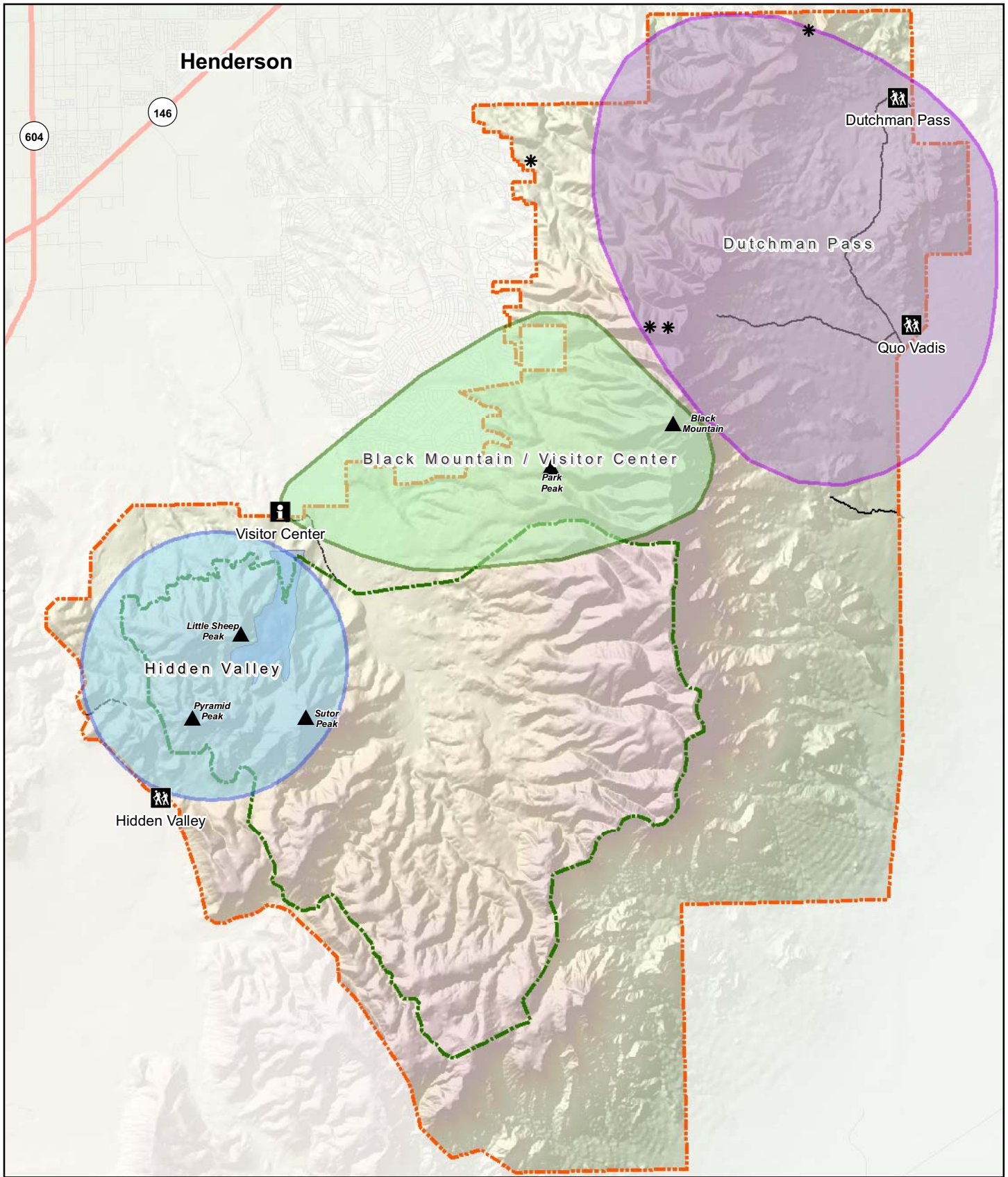
- Executive Order 12875, Enhancing the Intergovernmental Partnership, October 26, 1983.
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 U.S.C. 3001).
- Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice, February 11, 1994.
- Executive Order 13084, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, May 14, 1998.
- Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) of 1998 (P.L. 105-263).
- Noxious Weed Control Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-412).



**LEGEND**

Sloan Canyon NCA Boundary	Cross-Country Equestrian Use Allowed
North McCullough Wilderness	Equestrian Use Limited to Designated Routes
Petroglyph Management Area	Mountain Biking Limited to Designated Routes
Hiking Limited to Designated Routes	

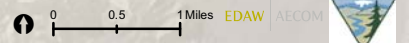
**Sloan Canyon NCA**  
**Trails Master Plan**  
**MAP 3 - MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS AREAS**  
**OCTOBER 4, 2009**



**LEGEND**

- Sloan Canyon NCA Boundary
- North McCullough Wilderness
- Petroglyph Management Area
- Dutchman Pass
- Hidden Valley
- Black Mountain / Visitor Center
- Existing NCA Major Roads
- \* Communication Towers
- i Visitor Center
- ⚓ Proposed Trailheads
- ▲ Peaks

**Sloan Canyon NCA  
Trails Master Plan  
MAP 4 - GEOGRAPHIC REFERENCE AREAS  
OCTOBER 4, 2009**



### 1.5.5 SIMULTANEOUS AND FUTURE PLANNING EFFORTS

Section 607 of the Sloan Canyon NCA Act directs BLM to grant the City of Henderson two rights-of-way (ROW), the North McCullough Road (N-65874) and Anthem Trail (N-76312) corridors, for the purposes of developing public trails and access.

The City of Henderson is currently preparing a trail plan and environmental review for the development of the McCullough Hills Trails within the North McCullough Road ROW. The road corridor currently provides service access for a high-voltage transmission line that is generally oriented east-west in the Dutchman Pass vicinity. The McCullough Hills Trails is envisioned as a scenic trail system to provide access from City of Henderson neighborhoods, parks, and open space areas to the NCA, trailheads, and overlook points. The environmental review for the McCullough Hills Trail is expected to be available for public review in the summer of 2009.

Two Anthem area trail projects were jointly funded by Del Webb / Pulte and SNPLMA funds awarded to the City of Henderson. Planning for these projects, including an environmental review process, began in 1996. In 2006, the BLM approved the proposed trail plans and environmental reviews. Phase I construction began in 2006; all construction on the Anthem trails project(s) is anticipated to be complete by the end of 2009.

The planning and construction of the North McCullough Road and Anthem trails would occur regardless of this Trails Master Plan effort per the Sloan Canyon Act and conveyance of ROW to the City of Henderson. As such, these trails will be analyzed as cumulative actions in this Environmental Assessment (EA) per 40 CFR 1508.25. Other relevant past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that will be analyzed for cumulative effects are identified in Chapter 3.0.

Unauthorized OHV use has resulted in an extensive network of unofficial roads and social trails throughout the NCA. These unofficial roads and the resulting resource damage are most prevalent in the Dutchman Pass and Quo Vadis areas on the east side of the NCA. These unofficial routes have perpetuated a number of resource issues and problems, including illegal trash dumping and target shooting, by providing accessible routes into the interior of the NCA. Many of the OHV routes are located on extremely steep slopes and/or unstable soils, which have accelerated erosion, denuded vegetation, and degraded habitat and visual / aesthetic resources. The BLM ultimately intends to close and restore many of the OHV trails; however, no definitive timeline has been identified. As part of this proposed project, the BLM intends to close OHV/user created routes that intersect proposed trails, as necessary, to facilitate appropriate use of the designated trail system. Additional detail regarding these closures and restoration efforts will be provided in Chapter 2.0.

In addition to the OHV/user created route restoration efforts, the BLM will also improve the NCA access roads designated in the RMP. Improvements may include grading, widening, or hardening. The restoration and road improvement activities will be defined and analyzed under a separate planning process. At this time, there are no definitive plans or timeframe for accomplishing these tasks.

The 2006 RMP identifies potential locations for the construction of a visitor's center and three main trailhead access points. The visitor's center would serve as the primary visitor contact station and would be located generally north of the entrance to the Petroglyph Management Area. Trailhead facilities would be constructed in the Dutchman Pass, Hidden Valley, and Quo Vadis areas. Trailhead facilities may include parking lots, equestrian staging areas, vault toilets,

interpretive signs and/or kiosks, and/or seasonal visitor contact stations. These facilities will be planned, designed, and constructed through a separate planning process. At this time, the BLM has not established a definitive timeframe for the planning or construction of these facilities. However, the trail network analyzed in this EA is designed to connect to each potential trailhead site.

Given the uncertainty of the timeframe and planning details, it is not possible to combine these planning efforts, the construction of a visitor's center and trailhead facilities, the closure and restoration of unauthorized OHV routes, the improvements of roads designated in the RMP, and the Trails Master Plan effort into a single proposal.

## **1.6 DECISION TO BE MADE**

The BLM will decide which alternative analyzed in this EA best meets the visitation, access, recreational, and long-term management objectives identified in the Sloan Canyon RMP. This EA is not the decision document for the proposed project. The Field Office Manager will first determine whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required based on the significance of environmental effects (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1509.9) documented in the EA. If no significant effects are anticipated, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be issued and a Decision Record (DR) will be prepared. The DR will document the decision regarding the action for which the EA was completed and will specify which alternative is selected for implementation. The decision cannot be implemented until the DR is signed.

## **1.7 AGENCY, TRIBAL GOVERNMENT, AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

### **1.7.1 STAKEHOLDER MEETING / SURVEY**

Approximately 15 interest groups were identified as project stakeholders (see Section 5.4 for a list of stakeholder groups). Stakeholders were invited to participate in the Trails Master Plan development process by completing a stakeholder survey, attending a stakeholder interview, and/or participating during the general public scoping process (described below).

Stakeholder interviews were held at the Red Rock / Sloan Field Office on May 12-13, 2008; five stakeholder groups attended the interview sessions. The purpose of the interviews was to gather feedback from current user groups on desired experience, visitation frequency, desired trail types, common access points, potential interpretation themes, potential trail connections to areas outside the NCA, and any other pertinent considerations for development of the trail network.

Stakeholder recommendations and knowledge of the Sloan Canyon NCA were critical considerations in the development of a preliminary trail network.

### **1.7.2 INTERNAL / EXTERNAL AGENCY AND PUBLIC SCOPING**

A project scoping letter was mailed (May 22, 2008) to approximately 500 interested parties, including private landowners, congressional representatives, special interest groups, county commissioners, and local media (including radio stations and newspapers). The letter was intended to inform the public of the project, to encourage public comments and feedback on the proposal and its potential impacts, and to invite public participation at a scoping meeting on July

1, 2008. The public was given approximately 30 days to respond with comments. The BLM received six comment letter responses.

Approximately 20 individuals attended a public scoping meeting at the Red Rock / Sloan Field Office on July 1, 2008. The meeting was organized as an open house, with numerous exhibits pertaining to the NEPA and Trails Master Plan process, preliminary trail network, preliminary field investigations, and upcoming public involvement activities. BLM and contractor staff were present to answer questions and discuss project elements with the attendees.

The scoping letter, press releases, mailing list, and all comments received are filed in the Administrative Record, available at the Red Rock / Sloan Field Office in Las Vegas.

A separate Notification of Proposed Action was distributed to persons and groups specifically interested in BLM actions affecting wilderness areas. Approximately 200 persons and/or groups were notified of the project by letter or postcard in July 2009 and were invited to provide comments on the proposed project. The BLM received six comment letter responses from organized groups and/or interested individuals.

### **1.7.3 TRIBAL GOVERNMENT SCOPING**

Tribal Government Consultation regarding the effects of the proposed project, including the identification of the proposed trail routes, were initiated during the planning phases of the project. Eleven tribes from the Southern Nevada region were identified by the BLM as potentially having concerns about the proposed project (see Chapter 5.0 for a list of Tribes contacted). All of these tribes were contacted and invited to participate in one of three BLM-Tribal Coordination meetings held at three different locations: Lake Havasu City, Arizona on June 23, 2008; Cedar City, Utah, on June 25, 2008; and Las Vegas, Nevada, on June 26, 2008. The comments from these meetings reflected a variety of opinions and concerns. These centered on three topics: general support for the project, the identification of trail routes that would avoid or minimize effects to wildlife, and cultural and aesthetic resources. In 2009, the BLM completed and reviewed a cultural survey of the proposed trail routes under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Under Section 106 of NHPA, the BLM will continue to consult with the identified tribes, as well as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

### **1.7.4 ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP**

Approximately 42 individuals attended a public alternatives workshop in Henderson, Nevada on December 9, 2008. The three trail system alternatives were presented in an open house format. The public was invited to provide feedback and discuss ideas and concerns about the alternatives. BLM and contractor staff was present to answer questions and offer more information about the project and alternatives considered to date. A comment form was distributed to all workshop participants; the BLM received approximately 30 completed comment forms or letters following the public workshop.

## **1.8 ISSUE IDENTIFICATION**

Issues are defined as concerns about the potential effects of the Proposed Action. The range of issues was determined through agency, stakeholder, and public scoping as well as from project Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) collaboration. Each potential issue was evaluated to determine its relevance to the decision, whether the issue could be eliminated from study because of

minimal or no known or anticipated effects, and if the issue presented a substantial concern – whether it was to be a key issue considered during alternative development. Ultimately, all issues identified were classified as either "Selected for Detailed Analysis" or "Dismissed from Detailed Analysis."

Issues Selected for Detailed Analysis will be addressed in the subsequent Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences chapter (Chapter 3.0). Issues Dismissed from Detailed Analysis will not be addressed further in the EA.

### **1.8.1 ISSUES SELECTED FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS**

The following issues provide a framework for the analysis in Chapter 3.0 of the EA. They were selected for detailed analysis because 1) they are potential factors in deciding which alternative will be selected for implementation; 2) they are topics of public interest; or 3) a law, regulation, or policy requires their analysis such that full disclosure was determined to be appropriate.

- Preservation and conservation of resources, both prehistoric and historic.
- Potential effects on fish and wildlife, including federally listed Threatened and Endangered species and designated Critical Habitat, BLM sensitive species, and other special status species and their habitats.
- Potential effects of trail construction and recreational use on trampling of vegetation resources, including federally Threatened and Endangered species, BLM sensitive species, and other special status species.
- Preservation of wilderness characteristics.
- Potential effects on site hydrology, drainage, and soils.
- Visual resources.
- Potential for increased recreational and visitation opportunities and/or enhanced recreational or visitor experience.
- Potential for short-term effects to air quality as a result of dust generated during trail construction.
- Use of existing social trails to minimize new disturbance.
- Use of volunteer labor during trail construction.
- Ensuring a variety of trails for different users, ages, groups, etc.
- Provide single track trails.
- Avoid locating trails on the main ridgelines of the McCullough Range; “skylining” effect of trail users would spook bighorn sheep populations.
- Consider American Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible trails.

## 1.8.2 ISSUES DISMISSED FROM DETAILED ANALYSIS

The following issues, identified during agency and public scoping, are not carried forward into the analysis for the reasons described below:

- Motorized/OHV use within the NCA – As stated in the Sloan Canyon NCA RMP, off-road motorized uses (e.g., OHV) are not consistent with the NCA designation and are not permitted within the NCA. OHV-related issues are beyond the scope of this Trails Master Plan and are, therefore, eliminated from further analysis.
- Visitor and emergency services access – As described in Section 1.5.5, a separate planning effort will determine what transportation and/or access improvements are necessary within the NCA.
- Eliminate or minimize the traffic/visitor impact on adjacent communities – Primary NCA access points were determined in the RMP process, and therefore will not be addressed in this EA. The construction of trailheads and access roads, will be analyzed in a separate planning process.
- Ensure security for existing property affected by use/access – NCA access, including trailheads and access roads, will be analyzed in a separate planning process.
- Restoration of disturbed areas – The restoration of OHV social trails and other disturbed areas (e.g., common dumping areas) will be addressed in a separate planning process. However, routes currently intersecting proposed trails would be closed as part of this proposed project to facilitate responsible use of the designated trail system.
- Campsites, group campgrounds (including equestrian campgrounds), and overnight parking – Planning and decisions regarding camping opportunities are outside the scope of this planning effort and EA. The development of these facilities would need to be addressed in a separate planning effort.
- Separation of mountain biking and equestrian uses – Changes to the specified travel zone designations, such as separating use types, are outside the scope of this planning effort and EA. These decisions are typically made during the RMP or amendment planning processes. Trails are proposed according to the use designation identified in the RMP.
- Modification of cross-country access restrictions – Changes to the specified travel zone designations, such as implementing cross-country travel restrictions, are outside the scope of this planning effort and EA. Sloan Canyon NCA cross-country travel decisions were made during the RMP planning process. However, use will be encouraged along designated routes.
- Reuse/redesignation of Shadow Canyon Trailhead – The Shadow Canyon Trailhead is located outside of the NCA boundary, on City of Henderson property. As such, this issue is beyond the scope of the BLM decision maker's authority.
- Connections to adjacent neighborhoods (e.g., Madeira Canyon) – NCA access, including trailheads and access roads, will be analyzed in a separate planning process.

- Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) – All proposed trail facilities have been located away from the known Quo Vadis Mine complex. The proposed project would not have any effects on AML in the NCA.
- Land use – The proposed project has been developed consistent with the existing and future land uses identified in the 2005 RMP. The proposed project would not affect land uses within the NCA or immediately adjacent to the NCA.