

CHAPTER 2 - ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

The Proposed General Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/FEIS) contains proposed management direction, decisions and actions for Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (RRCNCA). It is the result of an extensive planning process involving numerous individuals, organizations, interest groups and government agencies from all levels. The Proposed GMP/FEIS, often referred to herein as the Proposed Plan, is a stand-alone plan for the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, and is not considered to be a Plan Amendment to the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan (RMP), although it does make some minor amendments to the boundary of the Red Rock Herd Management Area as designated in the RMP. The Proposed Plan is based on the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 3) from the Draft General Management Plan (July 1999). Modifications to Alternative 3 were made based on comments received from the general public, other federal agencies, local agencies and all other comments received during the public comment period for the Draft GMP/EIS.

MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS AREAS

Management Emphasis Areas (MEAs) provide a framework for indicating the management intent for a particular geographic area and for evaluating the appropriateness of future actions and proposals. By zoning all parts of RRCNCA under corresponding MEA categories, so that future actions can be considered that have not been specifically addressed in this plan, the GMP remains flexible and may serve a longer span before becoming outdated.

Using a modification of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) method of planning, RRCNCA has been divided into five MEA zones. Each MEA zone has a set of guidelines which both describes its current setting and provides a standard for future management. Any actions or improvements must be consistent with what is normally expected in that particular setting so the visitor is provided a positive experience consistent with expectations. For planning purposes the following settings and characteristics have been used.

MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS AREA ZONE DESCRIPTIONS

1. Developed

- Substantial modification of natural environment
- Intensified motorized use and parking available
- Human interaction level moderate to high
- On site controls obvious and facilities widely available
- Law enforcement moderately visible

2. Roaded Developed

- Recreation activities rely on and are consistent with the natural environment
- May include paved roads and buildings, but the design should blend with the natural environment
- Human interaction level moderate to high in more developed portions and low to moderate elsewhere
- On site controls, facilities and law enforcement noticeable

3. Roaded Natural

- Developments limited to improved access and those consistent with the natural environment
- The recreational experience is based on the natural setting
- May include roads, trails and camping areas (new improvements for resource protection only)
- Human interaction level is low to moderate, more often on the low side
- On site controls present, but subtle
- Includes areas with existing dirt roads

4. Non-motorized

- Area(s) may not necessarily be remote and access may be easy, but human interaction level would be low
- Opportunities provided could include trails for mountain bikers, horse riders and hikers
- Existing roads closed and converted to trails; motorized use is prohibited
- Off site controls preferred
- Facilities are avoided, but may be provided for resource protection or user safety

5. Primitive

- More risk is assumed and self-reliance is necessary
- Remote areas not on primary travel routes or easily accessed
- Access is by hiking and horseback; no mechanized vehicles (including mountain bikes) would be allowed
- Human interaction is rare to low and evidence of other users would be minimal
- No on site controls or facilities provided except those required for resource protection

MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS AREA DESIGNATIONS

The NCA has been divided into the following Management Emphasis Areas as a planning tool for establishing desired conditions for proposed and future actions (see following MEA map). These designations do not include inholdings.

Developed

- Includes the following areas:
- Oliver Ranch

Roaded Developed

Includes the following areas:

- Scenic Drive vicinity
- 13 Mile Campground vicinity

Roaded Natural

Includes the following areas:

- From Lee Canyon Road south to the northern boundary of the La Madre Wilderness Study Area (WSA)
- East of Calico Hills and north of SR 159 outside of the La Madre WSA
- All NCA land south of Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, excluding the Pine Creek WSA and the Oliver Ranch area
- NCA land adjacent to the eastern boundary of the La Madre WSA
- All cherry-stemmed road corridors within WSAs

Non-Motorized

Includes the following areas:

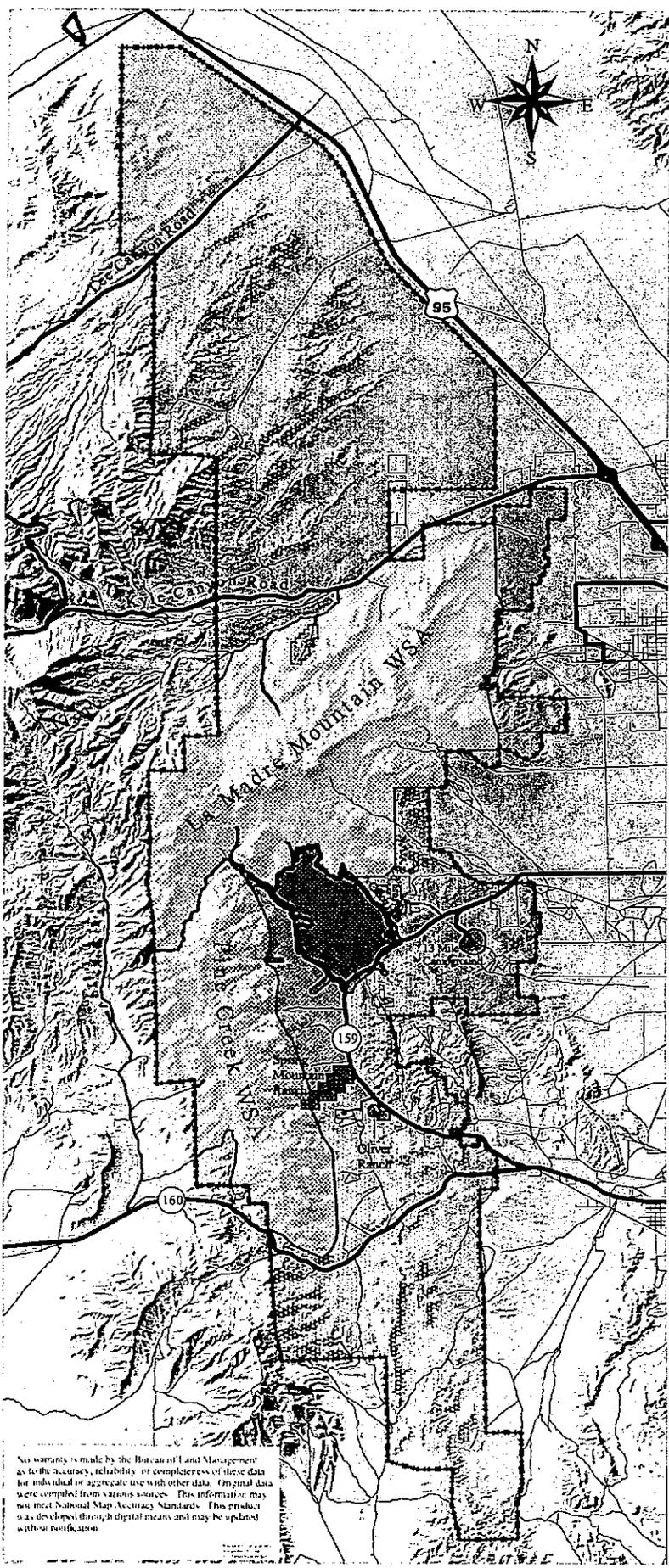
- North of Lee Canyon Road
- Area between the Scenic Drive vicinity and Pine Creek WSA, south to Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, and east to SR 159

The horse guiding operation adjacent to Spring Mountain Ranch State Park is grandfathered into this area. However, should this permit be vacated, the site will become non-motorized and a new permit will not be issued at this location.

Primitive

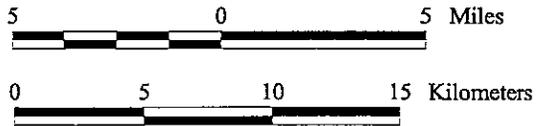
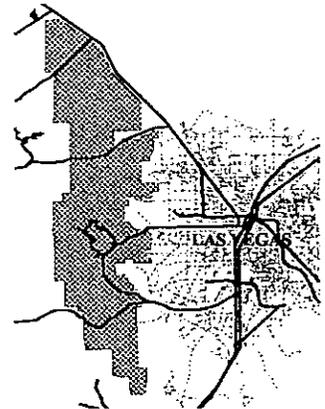
Includes the following areas:

- Pine Creek and La Madre WSAs



MANAGEMENT EMPHASIS AREAS

Red Rock Canyon
National Conservation Area
General Management Plan



Legend	
-----	Red Rock Canyon NCA Boundary
Inholding	
[White Box]	Private
[Cross-hatched Box]	Spring Mountain Ranch State Park
Management Emphasis Areas	
[Dark Stippled Box]	Developed
[Medium Stippled Box]	Roaded Developed
[Light Stippled Box]	Roaded Natural
[White Box with Dashed Border]	Non-motorized
[White Box with Dotted Border]	Primitive

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ALTERNATIVES SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

An important aspect of the planning process for all major actions is to create a range of alternatives from which to select the preferred plan to govern the proposed action. Each alternative should be based on the project goals and objectives, the list of developed issues, and the effects that implementing the actions proposed will have on the natural environment. Although each alternative considers these criteria, they differ in that the focus of each leans more toward certain aspects that need to be considered and less on others. In all circumstances, one of the alternatives proposed must be a "no action" alternative, under which no changes to the current management regime would occur.

A range of five alternatives was developed for the RRCNCA Draft General Management Plan. The gist of each is described in the following paragraphs.

ALTERNATIVE 1

This alternative focuses heavily on facilities development and, in most cases, associated recreation opportunities. Most springs and water sources would be developed to accommodate wild horse and burro use. Access would be more readily available with a more extensive trail system and fewer dirt roads being closed. Biodiversity enhancement would be less encompassing than in other alternatives with fewer specific enhancement actions being proposed.

ALTERNATIVE 2

This is the "No Action" alternative, meaning that the NCA would continue to be managed under the existing situation. Presently, the governing document for the NCA is the Interim General Management Plan (IGMP). The original intent of the IGMP was to administer the NCA until the completion of a final plan. The planning analysis for the IGMP did not include the expanded portions of the NCA since the expansion occurred after analysis had been completed.

ALTERNATIVE 3

Alternative 3 was the Preferred Alternative in the Draft GMP. It features a full array of actions promoting biodiversity, with some reduction to dirt road access and moderate enhancement of the trails network. Various facilities would be developed to contend with increasing visitor use in the Scenic Drive vicinity and to accommodate the relocation of wild horses to the south side of SR 160.

ALTERNATIVE 4

This alternative favors biodiversity, providing a greater number of actions promoting riparian restoration, biological preservation, and ecosystem management. The dirt road network is reduced to a minimum and the fewest recreation enhancements are proposed. Wild horses would be permanently relocated to the south side of SR 160.

ALTERNATIVE 5

Alternative 5 emphasizes biodiversity enhancement. Included are specific actions designed to enhance riparian restoration, biological preservation, and ecosystem management. Recreational access and proposed facilities are concentrated within the developed Scenic Drive area. The miles of dirt roads remaining open, while still substantial, is reduced to a minimum and limited recreation enhancements and developments are proposed. All NCA lands would be removed from the Red Rock HMA, allowing for the removal of fences around riparian sites and removal of most spring developments.

CHANGES FROM DRAFT TO PROPOSED PLAN

This section describes changes that were made to the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 3) in the Draft GMP (hereon simply referred to as the Draft Plan) to arrive at the Proposed Plan. Changes are based on comments received from the public and other agencies, and from BLM's review to ensure consistency with laws and regulations.

Wild Horse and Burro Management

Whereas the Draft Plan proposed to change the actual Red Rock Herd Management Area (HMA) boundary, removing the portion of the HMA north of Spring Mountain Ranch State Park and east of SR 159, the Proposed Plan leaves the HMA intact. The Proposed Plan maintains the HMA boundary as shown in the Resource Management Plan for the Las Vegas District, with 2 minor adjustments.

- Minor adjustments to the HMA south of State Route 160 will be made in order to provide a more logical boundary that can be easily located on the ground.
- An area along the southeast HMA boundary will expand eastward to incorporate an area that is commonly grazed by wild horses.

(adjustments shown on HMA map in Chapter 2)

The Draft Plan also calls for a temporary relocation of the wild horses in the area north of SR 160, south of Spring Mountain Ranch State Park and west of SR 159, to allow for recovery of impacted vegetative components. The Proposed Plan leaves a herd of 6-10

horses and calls for monitoring of the vegetation to see if improvement occurs.

The Draft Plan also sets an AML of 0 burros in the area north of SR 160 to the northern boundary of the HMA, and west/north of SR 159. Burros within this area would be moved to the east side of SR 159 and south of SR 160. The Proposed Plan manages burros throughout the HMA in accordance to their normal use patterns, within Appropriate Management Levels that are adjusted periodically based on monitoring and herd area objectives.

Rock Climbing

The Draft Plan considers the climbing policy included in the GMP to be the climbing plan for Red Rock Canyon NCA. The Proposed Plan calls for a plan specifically addressing climbing to be completed which will tier from the GMP.

The Draft Plan allows for early access (before the Scenic Drive gate opens) for a maximum of 2 parties per day. The Proposed Plan will pursue this issue and look for more reasonable alternatives which will be considered in the climbing plan mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Trails

A multiple use paved trail was proposed between Sandstone Quarry and the Ice Box Canyon trailhead. This trail has been eliminated in the Proposed Plan. Also eliminated is the \$5/day trail user fee that was proposed for the Cottonwood Valley vicinity.

Two areas were proposed for designation as equestrian staging areas, the old Oak Creek Campground location and the Scenic Drive exit lot. The Proposed Plan includes an additional location along the Kyle Canyon Road around the 12 mile marker.

Roads

The Draft Plan proposed the closure of a number of dirt roads. The same roads are still proposed for closure, but if a valid need arises for an individual road prior to actual closure, the decision may be reconsidered.

In the La Madre WSA, two ways (14 & 15 as shown on map M16 in Chapter 2) were proposed to allow vehicle traffic until a wilderness decision has been made by Congress. These ways will be closed, with the option of being opened again should they eventually fall outside of wilderness designation.

A one-way return road was also proposed from Sandstone Quarry to the Visitor Center. The proposal is still included in the Proposed Plan,

but as an option rather than a primary action. Public comment was evenly split between support and opposition of this road. A third faction supported the road only in conjunction with a mass-transit feasibility study.

Commercial Use

The following table demonstrates the changes in the maximum number of Special Recreation Permits allowed for specific uses.

DRAFT PLAN	PROPOSED PLAN
6 full time climbing permits	5 full time climbing permits
5 guided horse ride permits	3 guided horse ride permits
5 vehicle tour permits (4x4)	4 vehicle tour permits (4x4)
5 guided bike tour permits	4 guided bike tour permits