

## APPENDIX B

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# Recreation Monitoring Plan



# RECREATION MONITORING PLAN

The Recreation Monitoring Plan contains the monitoring approach that will be used at the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA) to ensure that management actions meet the recreation management goals and objectives described in the Approved Resource Management Plan. This Recreation Monitoring Plan is organized by resource area, followed by resource goals, objectives, and actions, and finally a description of the monitoring methods.

## 1.0 RESOURCE MONITORING

Monitoring is the process of collecting information to evaluate the effects of selected management actions, public actions and interests, and impacts in relation to the RMP goals and objectives and to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policy. Data describing changing trends over time are collected and used to determine whether desired outcomes are being met.

Because the NCA and the North McCullough Wilderness were relatively recently designated, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Las Vegas Field Office has just begun to focus management attention on the area. Consequently only limited specific resource and visitor use baseline data exist. In addition, visitor use is expected to change drastically as urban growth surrounds the NCA, trails and facilities are developed, and the NCA transitions and management decisions contained in the RMP are implemented.

This Recreation Monitoring Plan is designed to be outcome-based, technically feasible, affordable, and operationally attainable. Three types of monitoring will occur to determine the current status of the NCA baseline and to measure changes to it:

- **Baseline Monitoring**—What are the current baseline conditions?
- **Implementation Monitoring**—Were the decisions and actions developed during planning implemented?
- **Effectiveness Monitoring**—Did the implemented action result in changes to resource condition, visitor numbers, activity types, and duration of stay? Did changes in the indicators exceed thresholds established for achieving the objectives?

To monitor change within the NCA, BLM staff would identify and track indicators, which are specific elements of the NCA setting that change in response to human activities. Indicators provide quantitative documentation on how much conditions have changed, serve as tools for examining trends and highlighting problems, and can act as an early warning to predict future conditions. When compared with standards that describe the acceptable limits of change, indicators can signal the need for corrective action, evaluate the effectiveness of management actions, and help determine whether desired conditions are being achieved. To accommodate the need for management flexibility as this development occurs, a baseline would be established and used to determine appropriate indicators and limits of acceptable change. The indicators would be monitored frequently as the NCA facilities are developed. As visitation and recreation opportunities stabilize, the monitoring frequency would become more static.

## 2.0 RECREATION MONITORING

Two different aspects would be considered during recreation monitoring: the social setting and the physical setting. The number of people and the number and type of encounters that take place in defined settings characterize the social setting. The physical setting includes the physical landscape and environment, ranging from primitive areas where the landscape is remote, pristine, and shows minimal evidence of human presence, to more developed areas that are manipulated to provide a desired setting and include an abundance of facilities to accommodate heavy recreational use. The first objective and its associated goals and actions refer to the social setting. The second objective refers to the physical setting.

**Goal:** Provide recreation opportunities within the NCA, including the North McCullough Wilderness, consistent with the Sloan Canyon NCA Act (Title VI of the Clark County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of 2002) and Clark County Act, Title II (“Wilderness Areas”).

### Objective 1

Provide an array of outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences within the NCA.

#### Management Actions Examples

Interpretive opportunities designed to enhance recreation experiences through information on the NCA’s unique cultural and natural resources would be provided to visitors.

A trail system would be developed to accommodate multiple trail uses in appropriate areas of the NCA and would be appropriately managed near wildlife water developments. Trail designs that avoid sensitive natural and cultural resource areas and Special Status Plant communities would be emphasized. Site-specific resource conditions would be considered when selecting and designing trails and adding new trails, including avoiding areas of sensitive wildlife habitat. Trails outside the North McCullough Wilderness would be evaluated to determine if they should be developed as an Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 trails. Additional trails could be added to the trail system when a new trail would not cause substantial impacts to sensitive cultural or natural resources and would improve visitor experiences. Unauthorized constructed and social trails would be evaluated to determine whether to close and restore, or adopt them into the trail system. Permits for overnight parking to support recreation activities would be available on a case-by-case basis.

#### Monitoring

The formal method of monitoring the social setting would be through visitor satisfaction surveys. These comprehensive surveys would include information concerning visitor demographics, preferred activities, recreation experiences and benefits, and setting preferences, as well as evaluation of BLM management, facilities, and services. Visitor surveys would be conducted for at least 1.5 years following the completion of the RMP to establish baseline data for the seasonal variation in visitation, and regularly thereafter as the plan is implemented and visitation increases.

Monitoring would also be performed on an informal basis by BLM field personnel, volunteers, and through public participation. BLM field staff and volunteers will have training to gather data through visitor contacts and observation of social conditions. Comments from the public in the form of letters, telephone calls, e-mails, public meetings, feedback from special interest groups, or office visits will be collected and reviewed. When informal monitoring begins to indicate that the desired condition of the social setting is not being met, the next formal visitor survey should be implemented as soon as possible.

## Objective 2

Manage recreation uses so that recreation-related disturbances are minimized.

### Management Action Examples

Special recreation permits (SRP) could be issued consistent with the purposes of the NCA and North McCullough Wilderness to control visitor use, protect recreational and natural resources, provide for the health and safety of visitors, and provide a fair return to the Government for the opportunity to make a profit for the commercial recreational use of public lands. Competitive or vending SRPs could be issued within the NCA but not in the North McCullough Wilderness. Outfitters and guides wanting to guide hunts and conduct interpretive programs within the NCA would be required to obtain a commercial SRP from the NCA Manager to minimize potential conflicts among recreation uses. Outside the Petroglyph Management Area, organized groups would be required to obtain an SRP. Ongoing evaluations of the number, appropriateness, and impacts of commercial and competitive SRPs would be conducted, and limits could be placed on the issuance of commercial and competitive SRPs based on the evaluation and consistency with the purposes of the NCA. The NCA would be managed, in part, through Management Emphasis Areas zones.

Hiking and equestrian use would be allowed in designated areas. In trail areas, cross-country use could occur until BLM establishes and constructs trails. In open areas, cross-country travel is allowed. Mountain biking would be allowed only on a system of proposed trails and vehicle roads; cross-country biking is prohibited. Off-highway vehicles use would be prohibited throughout the NCA.

Primitive and dispersed camping would not be allowed in the Petroglyph Management Area or its north access, but it would be allowed in designated areas in other portions of the NCA. Campfires would be allowed at camping sites in fire pans or using fire blankets. No natural fuels in the NCA can be used for campfires, and all fuels must be packed in and out of the NCA. Further, all fire waste products must be packed out.

No forms of rock climbing would be allowed within the Petroglyph Management Area and its northern access, but bouldering and traditional rock climbing could be allowed outside designated sensitive resource areas in the remainder of the NCA. All forms of recreational target shooting, except permitted hunting, would be prohibited. Dogs, on leash, are allowed in the designated areas and are prohibited in the remainder of the NCA. Dog feces must immediately be picked up and packed out. Rockhounding and geocaching would be prohibited throughout the NCA.

### Monitoring

Indicators used for monitoring recreation would include visitor use, evidence of human and dog waste, vandalism, areas of impact, and SRP stipulations. Methods used for monitoring would include visitor surveys for numbers of encounters, trail counters, trailhead registers, ongoing management observations, recreation site and facility measurements, and permit evaluation and compliance. The frequency of monitoring would vary as development and visitation increase.

A team comprising appropriate BLM resource specialists would conduct formal monitoring for the physical setting. The resource specialists would determine the frequency of monitoring, but during the first phase, a comprehensive assessment would be conducted for at least 1.5 years following the completion of the RMP to establish baseline data for the seasonal variation in visitation.

Volunteers and BLM field personnel would conduct informal monitoring on a routine basis. Monitoring would occur by performing a visual assessment during normal field operations and implementing a photo monitoring program. If informal monitoring results in resource concerns, an appropriate resource specialist would be notified.