

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-0300-2015-0040-EA**

April 2017

Calf Creek Recreation Area Site Improvements

Location: Along Highway 12
16 miles east of Escalante, Utah and 13 miles west of Boulder, Utah
Salt Lake Meridian, Garfield County, Utah
Township 35 South, Range 4 East, Section 1

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**Calf Creek Recreation Area Site Improvements
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE ACTION ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management proposes to update and improve the developed portions of Calf Creek Recreation Area in Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) in order to address site limitations primarily due to impacts from increased visitation as well as improve the visitor experience. Two alternatives are being considered for implementation, one that includes modest improvements and one that includes expanded improvements. See Appendix A – Project Area Map for project location and area. The recreation area is located along Highway 12 between Escalante and Boulder, Utah in Garfield County. The project area is approximately 20 acres, includes the Calf Creek Campground and Day Use Area, as well as the Lower Calf Creek Falls Trailhead, and is in the Monument's Frontcountry Management Zone. This developed portion of the Calf Creek Recreation Area is the most visited site on GSENM.

Recreational facilities at Calf Creek were initially constructed in 1962-1963 under authorization of an Accelerated Public Works Program. Those facilities included nine camping units, a group picnic area, bridges, toilets, roads, and a water system. Facilities at Calf Creek have been maintained, improved, and expanded since that time, including the construction of the Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail in 1968. The entire Calf Creek Recreation Area is 5,835 acres and was established for its recreational and scenic value by BLM in 1970, under authority of 43 CFR 2070 and the Classification and Multiple Use Act (1964). The *Calf Creek Recreation Area Management Plan* was approved in 1976 that provided uniform management direction for recreational usage and development within the recreation area. The *Calf Creek Recreation Area and Deer Creek Campground Business Plan* was developed with public input in 2013 that implemented a new fee structure and budget to fund future facility and staffing needs at both the campground and day use site. See Appendix B – Calf Creek Recreation Area Map for location and boundaries of recreation area.

Currently, the developed portion of Calf Creek Recreation Area contains the following amenities and site fixtures:

- 13 campsites with tables, fire rings, grills, and site numbering posts – one campsite also has a shade shelter
- A camp host site connected to utilities (electricity, water, septic)
- Two group day use areas – one with tables, a fire ring, and a food prep area and the other with two shade shelters, tables, grills, and fire rings

- Paved parking for approximately 30 automobiles that serves the day use area, trailhead, and nearby walk in campsites
- A water play area in Calf Creek
- A restroom building with flush toilets connected to a septic system
- Two vault toilets (one has not been used in years)
- A pedestrian suspension bridge
- A fee station with fee tube and bulletin boards
- A trailhead register and kiosk at the beginning of the Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail
- A paved site road; a bridge and a concrete low water crossing
- A chlorinated culinary water system with five hydrants
- Site signage
- Fabricated block retaining walls
- Post and rail fencing

The development and maintenance of facilities at the recreation site was addressed in prior planning efforts. Those include:

- *GSENM Trail/Trailhead Maintenance/Restoration EA (UT 048 98 015, 1998)*
BLM approved the maintenance and restoration of existing trails and trailheads in the Escalante area of GSENM, including Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail and Trailhead.
- *GSENM Calf Creek Campground Maintenance and Improvements CX (UT 048 98 016, 1998)*
BLM approved installing a new fee station, repairing masonry steps near the water play area, pruning and removing vegetation around campsites and roadway, and installing a buried electric line.
- *GSENM Calf Creek Campground Maintenance and Improvements CX (UT 030 99 020, 1999)*
BLM approved constructing a block retaining wall around the day use parking area, replacing all faucets and drains, insulating the water line, and filling in the old spring box.
- *GSENM Calf Creek Recreation Area Water System Replacement EA (DOI BLM UT 0300 2009 0008 EA, 2009)*
BLM approved the installation/replacement of approximately 3000 feet of poly waterline and five hydrants with ADA compliant pump handles to protect human health and safety and improve accessibility.

If approved, BLM deferred maintenance funds and recreation site user fees would be used to complete the proposed improvements; many of which would be constructed only during the fall and winter months (September through March) beginning in 2017, though others would be implemented in subsequent years as funding allows.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION ALTERNATIVES

The purpose of the action alternatives is to update recreation facilities, improve site access, enhance the recreational experience for visitors, and provide better long term protection to riparian resources within the developed portion of Calf Creek Recreation Area. These would be accomplished by replacing old, deteriorated site amenities, providing additional parking and campsites, improving vehicular circulation, and improving universal accessibility and safety throughout the site.

At Calf Creek Recreation Area the existing day use parking capacity exceeds the current footprint during much of the visitation season. The parking overflow leads visitors to park along the entrance road and highway creating traffic flow and safety issues as well as damage to vegetation and soils. The campground is filled to capacity during much of the visitation season with a limited amount of associated parking space. For a number of years, overflow and last minute dispersed tent camping has also been allowed in an open disturbed area adjacent to the lower day use picnic area which has led to an expanding footprint of disturbed vegetation and soils. Tables in the day use picnic area are then occupied or surrounded by dispersed tent campers.

The wooden pedestrian suspension bridge has rotted handrails and loose lateral bracing underneath the deck that needs repair. Conduit housing a power line is attached to the bottom of the bridge and has broken because of the bridge shifting. The three existing shade shelters that were constructed in the 1960s with metal overhangs do not provide the proper overhead clearances to meet current building codes and have concrete footers that are increasingly unstable. The retaining wall along the creek by the water play area was damaged by a flood event such that it has slumped and 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. The low water crossing through Calf Creek in the back of the campground is slippery and motorcycles as well as pedestrians have fallen while crossing it. Contamination to the creek from the undercarriage of vehicles crossing through the creek has also occurred for decades.

Some facilities are deteriorating, create safety concerns, and do not meet the *Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas*. The comfort station, vault toilet, and several of the campsites are some examples of features that do not meet accessibility guidelines.

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:

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FAC-6 All facilities and parking areas will be designed to be unobtrusive and to meet the visual resource objectives.

FAC-10 Calf Creek and White House Campgrounds are the only developed campgrounds in the Frontcountry Zone.

The project area is in the Frontcountry Zone where facilities are allowed for visitor use, safety, interpretation, and the protection of Monument resources. It is also located within the HWY 12 Special Recreation Management Area where the recreation experience is to focus on learning about geology, history, archaeology, biology, and paleontology, in addition to scenic viewing, and opportunities provided are to accommodate all visitors.

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.

Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument Proclamation (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.

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.

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.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) requires BLM to identify all rivers and associated tributaries on BLM administered lands that possess free flowing condition or outstanding remarkable values and therefore may have potential for addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS). Calf Creek is a tributary of the Escalante River and was inventoried and recommended suitable for inclusion in the NWSRS as required by Section 5(d) (1) of the WSRA. It is managed to retain its eligibility for possible designation as part of the NWSRS.

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.

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). Calf Creek Campground is listed in the GSENM Management Plan as one of “the only developed campground(s)” in the Frontcountry Zone. The proposed actions would maintain and improve this existing development.

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*. Uses or facilities within WSAs should be temporary and not create any new surface disturbance.

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

BLM’s policy goal for management of inventoried suitable Wild and Scenic River segments is to manage and maintain their free flowing condition, water quality, tentative classification, and any identified outstanding remarkable values (ORV) until designated or released in a subsequent land use plan. *Architectural Barriers Act (Public Law 90 480)*

The Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), enacted in 1968, requires that all buildings and facilities constructed in whole or in part using Federal funds must be accessible to, and usable by, physically disabled persons. This includes any construction, renovation, restoration, remodeling, or site development completed by Federal agencies.

Final Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas Published in the Federal Register September 26, 2013. 36 CFR Part 1191 RIN 3014 AA22

The final rule amends the ABA Accessibility Guidelines by adding scoping and technical requirements for camping facilities, picnic facilities, viewing areas, trails, and beach access routes constructed or altered by or on behalf of federal agencies. The final rule ensures that these facilities are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

BLM Guidelines for a Quality Built Environment

The *BLM Guidelines for a Quality Built Environment* directs BLM to provide facilities that are sustainable, attractive, functional, cost effective, and responsive to place and setting.

Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) provides legal criteria for the collection of recreation fees at federal campgrounds or expanded amenity sites. It also directs BLM to provide a specific set of amenities in order to collect fees in campgrounds or special management areas. FLREA also established the America the Beautiful Interagency Pass program.

Calf Creek Recreation Area and Deer Creek Campground Business Plan (2014)

The Business Plan was developed by the BLM and approved by the Utah Recreation Advisory Council in 2014. The proposed action in this EA is consistent with the vision of expenditures of campground fee program revenues which are to be directed towards improving facilities and providing enhanced visitor services at Calf Creek Recreation Area. The Business Plan also included project priorities for future health and safety upgrades proposed in this EA.

Garfield County General Management Plan (2007)

Although Calf Creek Recreation Area is 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 expanding recreational opportunities on page 42:

"...GSENM needs to expand recreation, economic, scientific, and cultural opportunities and increase beneficial uses for residents and visitors of Garfield County to the maximum extent possible."

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

Issue 1: Cultural Resources

- How will the proposed improvements affect the identified historic sites 42Ga8060, 42Ga6091, 42Ga1431, and what mitigation measures might be required?
- Are there other sites in the vicinity that might also be affected?

Issue 2: Floodplains

- How would the proposed low water crossing and stream bank restoration and the water play area impact floodplains?

Issue 3: Hydrologic Conditions

- How would the proposed parking upgrades at Calf Creek Recreation Area impact hydrologic conditions?

Issue 4: Recreation

- How would the proposed facility upgrades and improvements at Calf Creek Recreation Area affect the recreational opportunities or experience of visitors?

Issue 5: Soils

- How would the proposed parking upgrades at Calf Creek Recreation Area impact soils?

Issue 6: Water Resources

- Would the proposed upgrades at Calf Creek Recreation Area create long term impacts to water resources (quality and quantity)?

Issue 7: Wetlands/Riparian Zones

- Would the proposed project impact riparian vegetation?

Issue 8: Wild and Scenic Rivers

- Would the proposed facility developments at Calf Creek Recreation Area affect the wild and free flowing nature, water quality or any of the identified outstanding remarkable values of Calf Creek and have any impact to long term suitability of Calf Creek for designation in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System?

Issue 9: Visual Resources

- Would the proposed site developments create visually contrasting impacts that alter the landscape character?
- Would the proposed site developments meet the VRM Class II objectives?

Issue 10: Vegetation excluding USFWS designated species

- Would the proposed project impact vegetation?

CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

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

ACTIONS COMMON TO BOTH ACTION ALTERNATIVES

BLM is proposing to upgrade and improve facilities within the Calf Creek Recreation Area. GSENM would use BLM deferred maintenance and recreation use fees to pay for the proposed improvements. Contractor, BLM force account and maintenance staff, and/or volunteer labor could be used to perform the work. The recreation site is approximately 20 acres. The construction of improvements proposed in both Action Alternatives would likely occur in phases over several years. Construction of the first phase could occur as soon as fall 2017.

Both Action Alternatives include the following (See Appendix C for Conceptual Site Designs):

Parking and Driveway

- Widen site road up to 20 feet wide and repair/replace the driveway bridge.
- Replace low water crossing with low, end to end, open bottomed concrete culverts.
- Construct overflow parking for up to 20 standard size vehicles near the entrance from Highway 12.
- Construct additional parking for up to 10 standard size vehicles on east side of site road between creek and site sign.
- Reclaim insufficiently sized parking space adjacent to Site #1 (parking for walk in sites #1 thru #4 would be in main parking area).

Toilets

- Remove and replace vault toilet on east side of campground in same location and install new sidewalk.

Campground

- Remove old concrete pad and construct two walk in sites in same location.
- Convert existing site closest to east side of pedestrian bridge to parking for three walk in sites.
- Reconfigure site #11 to locate tent pad away from the creek.
- Install base material to raise, define, and improve surface stability of campsites.
- Upgrade all existing campsites with tent pads, new fire rings, and tables (as needed – some tables can be reused).
- Replace shade shelters at site #10 and install new shade shelters at sites #9 and #13.

- Replace campsite numbering posts.
- Repair wooden suspension pedestrian bridge by replacing all timber components.
- Remove electrical conduit from underside of pedestrian bridge and place it inside the abandoned metal water line piping that is supported above the creek but below the bridge.
- Reconfigure camp host site at/near the existing location.

Day Use

- Replace the main self pay fee station (See Appendix C for Conceptual Design – Page C503 and C504) and construct a second small self pay fee station
- Construct natural stone retaining walls that are engineered to stabilize the streambank and provide access to the creek (See Appendix C for Conceptual Design – Page C502).
- Construct universally accessible but unpaved walkways through the day use area, including to the edge of the creek near the water play area.
- Construct a rustic open amphitheater for up to 50 people adjacent to the lower day use picnic area for interpretive and educational programs.

Trailhead

- Improve the Lower Calf Creek Fall Trailhead access and reduce erosion by replacing stone stairs, stabilizing erosion prone areas, and relocating trailhead kiosk and register if needed.

Misc. Site Elements

- Install barriers (i.e. boulders and/or rail fencing) as needed to define areas and prevent vegetation and soil trampling.
- Install directional, informational, and interpretive signage as necessary.
- Replace all fabricated block retaining walls with natural stone walls.
- Plant cottonwood trees and other riparian vegetation in the lower day use area and along the creek as necessary. Plant or seed using native plants in disturbed areas outside the riparian zone.

During construction the recreation area access road and parking could be closed to the public for overnight and day use including trailhead access for the Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail. When it is possible for the public to safely access the site during construction, it would be allowed. Construction closures could potentially last several weeks at a time when the ground is not frozen during fall and winter months (September through March) to prevent impacts to migratory birds. 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 daylight hours. Throughout construction, equipment would be parked at the project site and contractors, if used, would have the option of camping onsite.

Once construction is completed, general maintenance would be performed. Overnight camping would continue to be allowed only in designated campsites as consistent with federal regulations for developed recreation sites and would not be allowed in the day use or parking areas.

Under both action alternatives, *BLM's Guidelines for a Quality Built Environment* are being 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) are also being 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.
- 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).
- Native plant container stock and/or native plant seeds would be used to re vegetate areas impacted during construction. Where practical, native plants that need to be removed during construction would be replanted in areas where re vegetation is needed.

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

- The historic features at Calf Creek Recreation Area would consist of thorough architectural and photographic documentation of the historic features, including the shade shelters, and day use facilities.
- 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.
- Heavy equipment use would be avoided during wet conditions to reduce the compaction of soils.
- Erosion and sediment control structures would be used during construction to mitigate soil loss due to runoff. Erosion and sediment control structures would remain in place until gravel is laid down on the upper parking area and the area around the constructed parking area has been revegetated.
- All construction would take place from September 1 through March 31 to avoid the migratory bird breeding and brood raising period.

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

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

ACTIONS IN ALTERNATIVE A (MODEST IMPROVEMENTS)

In addition to the items noted in Common to All Action Alternatives, Alternative A includes the following (See Appendix C for Conceptual Site Designs – Page C101):

- Replace two small shade shelters in lower portions of the day use area (See Appendix C for Conceptual Site Designs – Page C506).

ACTIONS IN ALTERNATIVE B (EXPANDED IMPROVEMENTS)

In addition to the items noted in Common to All Action Alternatives, Alternative B includes the following (See Appendix C for Conceptual Site Designs – Page C201):

- Reconfigure the main parking area to increase capacity to approximately 50 spaces.
- Remove the existing flush toilet building and construct a new one in a different location.
- Remove current group picnic area and move all day use functions to the lower area.
- Install up to three small shade shelters and one large group shelter in lower portion of day use area (See Appendix C for Conceptual Design – Page C505 and C506).

COMPARISON OF ACTION ALTERNATIVES

The following table provides a comparison on the proposed improvements included in both or either Action Alternative.

Table 2.1

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT	Alt A	Alt B
<i>Parking and Driveway</i>		
Widen site road up to 20 feet wide and repair/replace driveway bridge.	x	x
Replace low water crossing with low, end to end, open bottomed concrete culverts.	x	x
Construct overflow parking for up to 20 standard size vehicles and a small fee station near the entrance from Highway 12.	x	x
Construct additional parking for up to 10 standard size vehicles on east side of site road between creek and site sign.	x	x
Reclaim insufficiently sized parking space adjacent to Site #1 ((parking for walk in sites #1 thru #4 would be in main parking area).	x	x

Reconfigure the main parking area to increase capacity to approximately 50 spaces.		x
Toilets		
Remove and replace vault toilet on east side of campground in same location and install new sidewalk.	x	x
Remove the existing flush toilet building and construct a new one in a different location.		x
Campground		
Remove old concrete pad and construct two walk in sites in same location.	x	x
Convert existing site closest to east side of pedestrian bridge to parking for three walk in sites.	x	x
Reconfigure site #11 to locate tent pad away from the creek.	x	x
Install base material to raise, define, and improve surface stability of campsites.	x	x
Upgrade all existing campsites with tent pads, new fire rings, and tables (as needed – some tables can be reused).	x	x
Replace shade shelters at site #10 and install new shade shelters at sites #9 and #13.	x	x
Replace campsite numbering posts.	x	x
Repair wooden suspension pedestrian bridge by replacing all timber components.	x	x
Remove electrical conduit from underside of pedestrian bridge and place it inside the abandoned metal water line piping that is supported above the creek but below the bridge.	x	x
Reconfigure camp host site at/near the existing location.	x	x
Day Use		
Replace the main self pay fee station and construct a second small self pay fee station.	x	x
Construct natural stone retaining walls that are engineered to stabilize the streambank and provide access to the creek.	x	x
Construct universally accessible but unpaved walkways through the day use area, including to the edge of the creek near the water play area.	x	x
Construct amphitheater for up to 50 people in day use area for interpretive and educational program use.	x	x
Replace two small shade shelters in lower portions of the day use area.	x	
Remove current group picnic area and move all day use functions to lower area.		x
Install three small, single party shade shelters and one large group shelter in lower portion of day use area.		x
Trailhead		
Improve hiking access and reduce erosion at the Lower Calf Creek Fall Trailhead by replacing stone stairs, stabilizing erosion prone areas, and relocating trailhead kiosk and register if needed.	x	x
Miscellaneous Improvements		
Install barriers (i.e. boulders and/or rail fencing) as needed to define areas and prevent vegetation and soil trampling.	x	x
Install directional, informational, and interpretive signage as necessary.	x	x

Replace all fabricated block retaining walls with natural stone walls.	x	x
Plant cottonwood trees and other riparian vegetation in the lower day use area and along the creek as necessary. Plant or seed using native plants in disturbed areas outside the riparian zone.	x	x

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, BLM would not improve and update the Calf Creek Recreation Area. The BLM would not provide any of the improvements or facilities proposed in the Action Alternatives. Under this alternative the old vault toilet and shade shelters would not be replaced; access to the water play area would not be improved; additional parking and/or camping would not be provided; and universal accessibility throughout the site would not be improved.

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. Cultural Resources, Fish and Wildlife, Floodplains, Hydrologic Conditions, Recreation, Soils, Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Visual Resources were identified by the Interdisciplinary Team as potentially affected by the Action Alternatives.

A brief environmental setting description of the Calf Creek Recreation Area is as follows:

- **Physiographic Province:** Colorado Plateaus (Escalante Canyons)
- **Elevation:** 5,300'
- **Geology:** Early Jurassic Kayenta and Navajo formations; predominantly medium sandstone
- **Ecological Site:** Semi wet Fresh Streambank
- **Hydrology:** Calf Creek flows into the Escalante River, which then empties into Lake Powell and the Colorado River system
- **Soil Type:** Riverwash, fine sandy loam
- **Landform:** Deep sandstone canyon with riparian area in bottom
- **Typical uses:** Recreational (hiking, camping, picnicking)
- **Wild and Scenic Rivers – Suitable Segments:** Calf Creek 2 Scenic, Calf Creek 3 Recreational
- **Wilderness Study Areas:** Adjacent to Phipps Death Hollow WSA
- **Visual Resource Management:** Classes II

Calf Creek Recreation Area is located along Highway 12 and adjacent to Calf Creek, a tributary of the Escalante River. The project area is 5,300 feet above sea level and is located within Calf 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. The recreation area is physically constrained by the highway, the creek and flood plain, sandstone cliffs, and a wilderness study area boundary.

Resource A: Cultural Resources

Both the Calf Creek Campground and the old Escalante to Boulder road are documented historic properties considered to be eligible to the National Register. Calf Creek Campground, site 42Ga8060, was established in 1963 and contains interesting architectural features and elements that would be directly impacted or entirely removed under the action alternatives. These features include shade shelters constructed on site utilizing materials reportedly salvaged from nearby mining and/or drilling operations and a toilet structure and day use facilities constructed using native field stone. Both construction techniques are not widely seen in our current more industrialized and technologically advanced society, and these architectural structures contribute to the site's eligibility to the National Register under criterion C in that they "embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction..."

The old Escalante to Boulder road is a CCC construction completed in 1940 and has been recorded as 42Ga6091, and is considered eligible to the NRHP. The old Escalante to Boulder road provided predictable, year round vehicular access to the community of Boulder. This was the last community in the continental US to see such access. The road contains some interesting constructed features, such as the native stone retaining walls visible immediately above Calf Creek Campground. This site is considered eligible to the National Register under criterion A in that is "...associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history," and again under criterion C for similar reasons as Calf Creek Campground.

One other cultural resource site, 42Ga1431, is located in the immediate vicinity of the campground. This is a small rock art panel located some five meters above the campground, and will not be adversely affected by the proposed action alternatives. Calf Creek Campground also contains features of a non historic nature, such as the current toilet facility constructed in the 1980s and the previously replaced timber elements of the footbridge; loss of these features and the replacement of the bridge timber elements are not considered an issue under cultural resource analysis.

Resource B: Floodplains

The proposed project area includes a concrete low water stream crossing of Calf Creek at the upstream end of the project area and a water play area along approximately 60 feet of the floodplain adjacent to Calf Creek near the day use area. The low water crossing is a submerged concrete pad that spans the width of the stream cross section. The low water crossing allows for vehicles to ford the stream to reach campsites on the east side of Calf Creek.

The water play area is a small area adjacent to Calf Creek that allows swimmers and waders access to the creek. Fabricated red blocks are used as for stream bank re enforcement on the west side of Calf Creek.

Resource C: Hydrologic Conditions

The proposed project area includes an abandoned road cut near the entrance to the campground where the overflow parking lot would be constructed. Soils on the area proposed for the overflow parking area are shallow (i.e., < 20 inches to bedrock), fine sand and sandy loam on 15 50% slopes, and therefore are prone to runoff.

Resource D: Recreation

Calf Creek Recreation Area is the most visited recreation site in the Monument receiving roughly 40,000 visitors annually as people flock to its lush riparian setting in the midst of the sandstone canyons. Calf Creek Recreation Area also provides the only public toilet facilities along the 28 mile stretch connecting Escalante and Boulder. The scenic overlooks along Highway 12 within GSENM are estimated to receive more than 325,000 visitors annually. Some percentage of these travelers utilizes the restrooms at Calf Creek Recreation Area, although statistics are not available for this specific use. The area offers the only developed recreational site with culinary water and clean, maintained restrooms in the northern reaches of the Monument and is accessible via a paved road. Popular recreation uses at Calf Creek include hiking, camping, picnicking, fishing, water play, photography, and bird watching.

During 2016, BLM collected 2,217 fee permits for a total of 6,208 campers in the campground. More than 96% of the campground permits issues were for parties of six or fewer people, and parties of two were the most common at 52% of total permits. The campground's daily occupancy is at or exceeds capacity from April into October. In 2016 BLM collected 9,280 day use fee permits for a total of 25,904 visitors. 97% of the day use permits issues were for parties of six or fewer people, and parties of two were the most common at 62% of total permits. The shaded picnic site near the fee station is used primarily by individual groups. Although it is available for advance reservation for group use of 50 75 people, there is little demand for group use and during the past 5 years, the day use picnic site has been reserved only 2 4 times per year.

In 2016, foot counters at Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail recorded 36,437 hikers. Current day use parking is primarily by destination visitors who spend 3 4 hours hiking the Lower Falls Trail. The trail to Lower Calf Creek Falls enters Phipps Death Hollow Wilderness Study Area at the trailhead and is the only maintained trail on the Monument. The six mile round trip hike ends at the spectacular 126 foot Lower Calf Creek waterfall. The waterfall is regarded as a must see for visitors to the area and is popular for locals who bring friends or family to view the waterfall. It is also popular for large organized groups of young people from universities and scout groups who trek to visit the Lower Falls. The trail features wooden numbered posts that correspond to a free interpretive trail guide available at the trail register. Current use on the trail during peak months is often 300 500 people on the trail at one time and 150 people at Lower Calf Creek Falls itself.

The infrastructure at the trailhead includes one trailhead sign and a register box for interpretive brochures. The register box is located about 15 feet from the beginning of the trail which begins off the edge of the campground road. The location for the trailhead sign is on a slope with physical space for only one or two people to view the sign at one time. Social trails lead up to the trailhead sign and register box creating erosion and compacted soil.

During high visitation times, especially holidays, the available day use parking capacity and road sides experience congestion with partial blocking of access and GSENM staff and volunteers must direct traffic from the highway at the top of the access road.

Resource E: Soils

The proposed project area includes an abandoned road cut near the entrance to the campground where the overflow parking lot would be constructed. Soils on the area proposed for the overflow parking areas are shallow (< 20 inches to bedrock), fine sand and sandy loam on 15-50% slopes, and therefore are prone to runoff and erosion.

Resource F: Water Resources

The proposed project area includes approximately 1500 stream feet of Calf Creek that flows through 20 acres of Calf Creek Campground. The section of Calf Creek located in the proposed project area was inventoried and found suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System as required by Section 5(d) (1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. Calf Creek and its tributaries to the confluence of the Escalante River (approximately 8 stream miles) are listed on the EPA 303(d) list as not supporting water quality criteria for temperature.

The proposed project includes a concrete low water stream crossing of Calf Creek at the upstream end of the project area; currently vehicles ford the stream to access camp sites on the east side of Calf Creek. A water play area along approximately 60 feet of floodplain is adjacent to Calf Creek near the day use area. There is a retaining wall that was damaged by recent flooding next to the water play area and an access trail that descends a steep slope down to the water play area. Above the campground an abandoned road cut exists where an overflow parking lot would be constructed.

There is also inadequate parking available in the campground and vehicles currently park in undesignated areas on the side of the highway and the campground road.

Resource G: Wetlands/Riparian Zones

The riparian plant community is continuous along the Calf Creek drainage with outcroppings of rock and sand. Herbaceous riparian vegetation cover is high with woody species that are

the dominant plant form. Dominant trees and shrubs include Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), Coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), Whiplash willow (*S. lucida* var. *caudata*), Yellow willow (*S. lutea*), Water birch (*Betula occidentalis*), Box elder (*Acer negundo*), and Skunkbush (*Rhus aromatica*). Dominant herbaceous and graminoid species include sedges (*Carex* spp.), Arctic rush (*Juncus balticus*), Common reed (*Phragmites australis*), reedgrass (*Calamagrostis* spp.), willow herb (*Epilobium* spp.), and clover (*Trifolium* spp.)

Invasive Species

No state noxious weeds are present in the riparian area of the project area but two do occur in the Calf Creek tributary. Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*), a Class B species, occurs sporadically along the whole drainage. Salt Cedar (*Tamarisk* sp.), a Class C species and Russian olive (*Eleagnus angustifolia*) have been and are being controlled by efforts made by the Escalante River Watershed Partnership. Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), puncture vine (*Tribulus terrestris*), riggut brome (*Bromus diandrus*) and Russian thistle (*Salsola pestifer*) are also invasive species found in the tributary but are not listed as noxious by the State of Utah.

Resource H: Wild and Scenic Rivers

Calf Creek, a spring fed tributary of the Escalante River flows through the recreation area and was inventoried and found suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System (NWSRS) as required by Section 5(d) (1) of the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Calf Creek is divided into three WSR suitable segments: Segment 1 (wild classification) from headwaters to Lower Falls; Segment 2 (scenic classification) from Lower Falls to the campground; and Segment 3 (recreational classification) from the upper edge of the campground through the campground and day use site to the confluence with the Escalante River. The area of evaluation included in the suitability determination is usually measured 1/4 mile from the mean high water mark on both sides of the river or tributary. All eight miles of the creek are managed to retain their eligibility for possible designation as part of the 122 miles of the Escalante River and tributaries that are recommended as suitable for inclusion in the NWSRS.

The proposed project area for the Calf Creek Campground and the Lower Falls trailhead lies within the Calf Creek segment 3 with a tentative classification of recreational. The WSR suitability recommendation also identifies the following Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs): high scenic quality, bird habitat, rock art, pre historic structures, high recreation use and riparian values.

Resource I: Visual Resources

Characteristic Landscape

The proposed project area is located in the northern reaches of the Escalante Canyons physiographic province just off Highway 12 on a narrow canyon floor straddling Calf Creek about a mile before it joins the Escalante River. The Escalante Canyons province is a landscape comprised of dramatic erosional landforms created by the Escalante River and its tributaries. High vertical canyon walls, slot canyons, domes, arches and natural bridges are

common features in this landscape. Lush riparian corridors along the river and its tributaries provide contrasts to the expanses of exposed slickrock.

The dominant vegetation in the project area 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 and juniper trees. The vegetation is a full range of greens, from light sage and yellow greens to dark juniper greens to the bright greens associated with cottonwoods and willows; the vegetation ranges from medium to coarse in texture. The built elements in this landscape include the paved highway, site road and parking area, a restroom building, a vault toilet, a large kiosk and fee station, shade shelters, fabricated block retaining walls, pole fencing, picnic tables, fire rings, and signs. Most of the built elements are screened from view by the riparian vegetation and landforms. The primary elements that draw attention are the paved surfaces and the parked vehicles.

The project area is within an enclosed landscape created by the sandstone landforms that surround it. The predominant lines in this landscape are vertical, horizontal, or rounded as created by landform banding and edges. The highway and site road add distinct bands across the landscape that are created by the removal of vegetation and application of pavement which creates a contrast in color and texture to the existing scene and that directs the eye along their alignments. The riparian corridor also creates a distinct green band. The predominant colors of this landscape are reds, buffs and greens due to the landform and vegetation. The texture of the landscape varies from medium to coarse due to the mixes of vegetation and rugged landforms.

This project is proposed in a dramatic Southern Utah, riparian canyon landscape with exposed red and buff sandstone and riparian vegetation similar to other canyon areas within the Colorado Plateau.

This project area is at a heavily visited recreational development along Highway 12 (a National Scenic Byway). It is used primarily by recreationists who are typically engaged in hiking, camping, picnicking, fishing, bird watching, and photography. Those travelling along the highway but not visiting the recreation area include byway travelers and local residents. This range of individuals defines the casual observer.

Visual Resource Management Classes and Objectives

The proposed Calf Creek Recreation Area Site 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 J: Vegetation excluding USFWS designated species

The upland plant community surrounding the Calf Creek drainage beyond the riparian zone has a low vegetation cover and is dominated by grasses, forbs, and shrubs. The dominant shrub species include rabbit brush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), sagebrush (*Artemisia sp.*), buffalo berry (*Shepherdia rotundifolia*), and Mormon tea (*Ephedra viridis*). Grasses found in the area include sand drop seed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*), Indian rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), needle and thread grass (*Hesperostipa comata*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), and side oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*). The forbs species include globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea parvifolia*), and tanseyleaf aster (*Machaeranthera canescens*).

Invasive Species

No state noxious weeds are present in the upland area of the project area. Puncture vine (*Tribulus terrestris*), yellow bluestem (*Bothriochloa ischaemum*), cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*) occupy certain areas within the project area.

Chapter 4

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

ALTERNATIVE A (MODEST IMPROVEMENTS)

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

Resource A: Cultural Resources

Effects common to both alternatives

Under the action alternatives the Calf Creek Campground would see the loss of the historic shade structures and field stone day use facilities, as well as the concrete volleyball court (an element without any unique architectural features). The field stone toilet structure would be removed or repurposed. The loss of the shade shelters and toilet facility would be considered adverse effects under 36CFR 800.5(1), and would require mitigation of some sort as per 36CFR 800.6. As proposed under the action alternatives, part of the old Escalante to Boulder road would be used as an overflow parking area to alleviate congestion at the Calf Creek trailhead. This is seen as a no adverse effect under 36CFR 800.5(d)(1), with potential beneficial effects in that a short portion of the road would be maintained rather than continuing to degrade through natural erosional processes.

Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has been conducted regarding both of these sites. SHPO has concurred with assessments of eligibility on both sites, and a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding mitigation will be prepared under 36CFR 800.6(b)(1)(iv). Proposed mitigation for the loss of the historic features at Calf Creek Campground will consist of thorough architectural and photographic documentation of the historic features, including the toilet structure, shade shelters, and day use facilities. No mitigation is considered necessary for the old Escalante to Boulder road in that use of this as a parking area will be a beneficial effect.

Resource B: Floodplains

Effects common to both alternatives

Alternatives A and B include removing the existing concrete pad at the low water stream crossing and replacing it with a series of end to end, open bottomed concrete culverts. The concrete culverts would allow water to pass underneath the stream crossing during normal flow conditions while also allowing vehicles to cross to the east side of the stream to access campsites without entering the water. Water would flow over the concrete culvert crossing during high flows. Removal of the concrete low water crossing would restore the stream bed to its natural gravel/cobble bottom state. There is the potential for the stream to become blocked at the concrete culvert during flood flows that produce bedload movement and move debris, such as sediment, trees and limbs. Blocking the flow could cause water to

breach the culvert and result in scouring around the edges of the culvert, and in the worst case scenario, could cause the culvert crossing to be washed out depending on the intensity of the flood event. Material may also be deposited beneath the culvert during moderate to high flows and the area beneath the culvert would need to be maintained so that the stream remains free flowing after such events. Changing the stream crossing from a ford to a culvert crossing would potentially reduce the amount of vehicle related contaminants, such as oil, grease, mud from tires, and brake dust, that are deposited directly into the stream due to vehicles entering the water. Erosion of the road on either side of the stream would also potentially be reduced since vehicles would not be entering and exiting the stream.

Alternatives A and B include removing the existing retaining wall adjacent to the water play area, removing the current walkway down the steep slope, regrading the steep slope adjacent to the water play area, and stabilizing the regraded slope with a combination of natural stone retaining walls and native trees and riparian vegetation (i.e., cottonwoods). There is the potential for the section of slope being graded to erode during construction therefore, design features, such as erosion and sediment control structures, would be used during construction and until the site has been revegetated and/or stabilized with retaining walls. Heavy equipment could cause compaction in the area being graded and efforts would be made to avoid operating heavy equipment during wet conditions. Relocating the current access trail away from the steep slope going down to the creek would reduce erosion due to compaction of the trail.

Resource C: Hydrologic Conditions

Effects common to both alternatives

Alternatives A and B include constructing an overflow parking area for 20 vehicles near the Highway 12 entrance to Calf Creek Campground. The overflow parking area would reduce the potential for compaction and therefore runoff and erosion on the side of roads within the campground by reducing the number vehicles that park in undesignated areas. There is the potential for the parking area to generate runoff during construction. Design features such as erosion and sediment control structures, would be used during construction to mitigate soil loss due to runoff. Erosion and sediment control structures would remain in place until gravel is laid down on the parking area and the area around the constructed parking area have been revegetated. Heavy equipment could also cause compaction in the area being graded to construct the parking area and efforts would be made to avoid operating heavy equipment during wet conditions.

Resource D: Recreation

Effects of Common to both Alternatives

Implementation of facility upgrades and improvement of physical accessibility features for both camping and day use within the site offers health and safety upgrades that are a direct benefit to the visiting public. Reconstruction of the retaining walls by the water play area

helps insure safer, long term access to the creek. The addition of new shade structures to several camp sites and replacement of shade at existing day use structures would be a direct benefit. Reconfiguring parking would benefit all users by reducing the frustration associated with current parking congestion along campground access roads and within the sites. Historic fee data indicates larger groups reserve adjoining campsites. There would be no impact on current use from reconfiguring camp sites or associated parking.

Both alternatives propose the addition of a new parking area near the site entrance in an old road cut that would offer up to 20 new spaces. A self pay fee station would be installed in the new parking lot to allow people to obtain a fee envelope close to their cars. This new parking capacity near the site entrance in both alternatives along the access road is expected to absorb current use and reduce congestion along the entrance to the site. It would limit vegetation and erosion impacts by reducing illegal parking along the access road into the site. There would be increased safety for pedestrians walking through the site to access the trailhead and staff who continually monitor to discourage drivers of large vehicles from blocking access. Vehicle congestion would be reduced. However, it is anticipated that staff will continue to provide traffic control during peak use periods.

Implementation of either alternative is not anticipated to completely prevent continued parking of vehicles illegally on Highway 12. It is unknown how many visitors that are unable to find parking, return at different times of day when parking is available. Turnover within the parking area happens several times per day. Traffic enforcement and regulatory signage along the access road continues to be the key to limiting parking outside of designated sites. Visitors would be encouraged to self select to visit early in the day or late to avoid the majority of crowded conditions. There is not anticipated to be a substantially greater number of people hiking on the Lower Falls Trail through addition of better defined parking spaces available on site.

New interpretive signage and a new amphitheater for guided programs would increase opportunities for visitors to learn about the resources of the area. Implementation of the proposed design features requiring use of natural materials during construction would insure that the additional parking area would improve the current congested environment that greets visitors now. It would not unduly impact the surrounding ambience of the natural environment nor impact the inviting nature of the lush riparian setting throughout the site, preserving and in some case enhancing the existing visitor experience.

The proposed changes to the trailhead infrastructure at the beginning of the trail are included in both alternatives. Reconstructing the short stretch of steps leading to the trailhead sign and re positioning the register and sign would allow groups to read the sign at one time and make it more attractive for hikers to access the sign and understand and comply with resource protection regulations.

Short term effects for both alternatives would include temporary displacement of the public during construction. The construction window for this project includes February, March,

September, October, and November which will cause the campground and the day use hiking trail to Lower Calf Creek Falls to temporarily close to the public either during spring break or the fall visitation season. Based on past use data, it is anticipated that approximately 7,000 visitors would be displaced from the campground and Lower Calf Creek Falls trailhead during March; approximately 9,000 visitors would be impacted in September and approximately 8,500 visitors in October. Depending upon project phasing, access to the trailhead and campground may not be possible due to work needed on parking, campsites and bridge. It is anticipated that increased staffing will be required to insure the public does not park on the highway or walk into the construction site when conditions are not safe. Depending upon which of these months is targeted for construction, an average of approximately \$5,000 in fees would not be collected. Closures would be a negative short term impact to recreational users who are unable to visit Lower Calf Creek Falls.

Effects Specific to Alternative A

In Alternative A the group day use picnic area would remain in its current location with no change to current use. Day use would continue to be divided between the upper area by the parking lot and the lower section which would continue to have two small group picnic shelters and the new amphitheater for educational programs. There would be no additional group picnic shelter in the lower day use site and no change in visitor access to either location. The current flush toilet would remain in its current location. Group use would be divided between two locations with no concentration of day use in one site. These facility changes are not anticipated to impact recreational users accessing the site for camping or day use.

Parking capacity in Alternative A would be provided by the existing parking area and the addition of the new overflow parking and defined parking along the access road. Parking capacity would total approximately 60 vehicles. This alternative would offer slightly less parking capacity in the existing parking area than Alternative B. Re configuration of the current parking lot to provide vehicle turn around and alleviate congestion would not be possible resulting in slightly greater demand for staff to direct traffic on high use days.

There is not anticipated to be any significant increase in the numbers of day use hikers on the Lower Calf Creek Falls trail.

Resource E: Soils

Effects common to both alternatives

Alternatives A and B include constructing an overflow parking area for 20 vehicles near the Highway 12 entrance to Calf Creek Campground. The overflow parking area would reduce the potential for compaction and erosion on the side of roads within the campground by reducing the number vehicles that park in undesignated areas. There is the potential for the parking area to erode during construction. Design features such as erosion and sediment control structures would be used during construction to mitigate soil loss. Erosion

and sediment control structures would remain in place until gravel is laid down on the parking area and the area around the constructed parking area have been revegetated. Heavy equipment could cause compaction in the area being graded to construct the parking area and efforts would be made to avoid operating heavy equipment during wet conditions.

Resource F: Water Resources

Effects common to both alternatives

Alternatives A and B include replacing the low water crossing with an open bottom concrete culvert, removing the retaining wall and regrading the steep slope down to the water play area, removing the existing access trail from the steep slope, and constructing an overflow parking area near the Calf Creek Campground entrance.

Changing the stream crossing from a ford to a culvert crossing would potentially reduce the amount of vehicle related contaminants, such as oil, grease, mud from tires, and brake dust, that are deposited directly into the stream due to vehicles entering the water. Erosion of the road on either side of the stream would also potentially be reduced since vehicles would not be entering and exiting the stream. Removing the existing concrete low water crossing and installing the new open bottom concrete culvert will increase turbidity and suspended sediment for a short period of time during removal construction and installation of culverts.

There is the potential for the section of slope being graded near the water play area to erode during construction which could reduce water quality in Calf Creek during storms. Design features such as erosion and sediment control structures, would be used during construction and until the site has been revegetated and/or stabilized with retaining walls to mitigate impacts to water quality. Heavy equipment could also cause compaction in the area being graded and efforts would be made to avoid operating heavy equipment during wet conditions to mitigate impacts to water quality. Relocating the current access trail away from the steep slope going down to the creek would reduce erosion due to compaction of the trail and improve water quality from water flowing into the creek from the compacted trail.

Adding the overflow parking area would reduce the potential for compaction and therefore runoff and erosion on the side of roads within the campground and improve water quality. There is the potential for the parking area to generate runoff during construction, which could impact water quality in the stream. Design features such as erosion and sediment control structures, would be used during construction to mitigate impacts to water quality. Erosion and sediment control structures would remain in place until gravel is laid down on the parking area and the area around the constructed parking area have been revegetated to mitigate impacts to water quality after construction. Heavy equipment could also cause compaction in the area being graded to construct the parking area and efforts would be made to avoid operating heavy equipment during wet conditions to mitigate impacts to water quality.

Resource G: Wetlands/Riparian Zones*Effects common to both alternatives*

Within the campground an existing concrete pad would be removed and two new walk in sites would be constructed. Vegetation would be planted in the space between and around the campsites improving vegetation conditions. Relocating the tent pad away from the creek, removing asphalt and replanting those areas at site #11 would be beneficial for vegetation. Installing a shade shelter at site #9 does not require removal of vegetation therefore there would be no impacts to vegetation. The construction of the stone retaining walls could have short term impacts to vegetation, in the long term vegetation would fill in after construction is finished. Constructing the universally accessible, unpaved walkway would require removing vegetation for the width requirements. Constructing an amphitheater would require removing low growing vegetation such as grasses, forbs, and weedy species. The oak trees in the area would remain so negative impacts would most likely not occur. The planting of cottonwood and other riparian vegetation in the lower area would be a positive impact for vegetation; this could be used as a mitigation measure for those areas requiring potential tree removal.

Replacing the stone stairs to reduce erosion at the trailhead would improve vegetation conditions by maintaining soil. The installation of barriers to define areas could also be used as design features to prevent social trails and protect areas that are being restored; this would be a beneficial impact for vegetation.

The replacement of the fabricated block wall with natural stone, the replacement of the toilets and sidewalks, all existing shade structures, tent pads, fire rings, tables, and numbered campsite posts would not impact vegetation as these sites have been disturbed and will continue to be used for their current purposes. Replacing the timber components on the pedestrian bridge along with the electrical conduit would have no effect on vegetation. Reconfiguring the camp host site would not have an impact on vegetation as the site will continue to be used for those needs.

Resource H: Wild and Scenic Rivers*Effects Common to Both Alternatives*

Effects to Wild and Free flowing: As stated in Water Resources, Section G, the addition of new culverts for the low water stream crossing would not result in any short or long term obstruction or impact to the free flowing nature of Calf Creek Segment 3 through the Campground or downstream to the Escalante River confluence.

Effects to Water Quality: As stated in Water Resources, Section G, there could be short term, temporary impacts to turbidity and erosion run off during construction both in the campground and downstream. However, changing the stream crossing from a ford to a culvert crossing is expected to reduce the amount of vehicle related contaminants, such as

oil, grease, mud from tires, and brake dust, that are deposited directly into the stream due to vehicles entering the water. Erosion of the road on either side of the stream would also potentially be reduced since vehicles would not be entering and exiting the stream. This would be beneficial to the entire Segment 3 of Calf Creek through the campground and downstream to the Escalante River confluence.

Effects to Tentative Classification: BLM Manual 6400 Wild and Scenic Rivers Policy and Program Direction for Identification, Evaluation, Planning and Management (2012) specifically addresses a recreational classification by clarifying in Section 3.6.D. Recreation Development that a tentative recreational classification “*does not require extensive recreation development*”, but rather “*should harmonize with natural and cultural settings and be screened from view of the river where possible*” (p. 3 11). Proposed facility upgrades associated with this project would benefit the existing campers, hikers, swimmers and anglers recreating along the Calf Creek segment. The campground and day use facilities and trailhead infrastructure will continue to be visible from the creek corridor but design features proposed will help to screen facilities from the creek corridor. As per the visual resources determination, facility colors and materials are anticipated to blend with the surrounding natural landscape and be subservient, minimizing the visual intrusion to those recreating along the creek. The on going presence of recreational facilities within the WSR corridor is consistent with the existing recreational classification.

Effects to Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs): The identified ORV’s for Calf Creek include high scenic quality, rock art, pre historic structures, high recreation use, bird habitat and riparian values. Revegetation of the lower section of the day use site is anticipated to have beneficial effects to riparian and bird habitat. (See Fish and Wildlife Section B).

There are no project effects that would pose a threat to suitability of Calf Creek for future WSR designation. As discussed several features of the project would be beneficial to WSR values by providing better protection of water quality, as a key element in managing long term suitability.

Resource I: Visual Resources

Effects Common to Both Alternatives

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 alternatives for this proposed project, a linear KOP along Highway 12 travelling in both directions was used to complete the contrast rating worksheet and analyze this proposal.

Along most of the narrow, winding linear KOP (Highway 12) the project elements of Alternative A would be screened from view by landform and vegetation because the highway is located above the development on a ledge cut out of the sandstone and those

travelling along the highway cannot see into the bottom of the canyon and are more focused on the stunning scenery and staying safely on the roadway. For those that are looking into the canyon, the length of time the visible project elements (parking areas, restroom, and parked vehicles) are in view is less than 20 seconds for eastbound travelers and less than 60 seconds for westbound travelers.



Left: Eastbound view along HWY 12 toward Calf Creek Recreation Area. Right: Westbound view along HWY 12 toward Calf Creek Recreation Area.

The proposed improvements associated with this alternative would be located in a recreation area that was developed in the 1960s. The renovated and/or additional built features associated with Alternative A would create similar levels of contrast to what is currently there. The recreation area is located in the floor of a narrow riparian canyon with thick vegetation and most built elements are screened from view by vegetation and landforms. During construction, temporary visual impacts could result from the visibility of construction equipment and site work. Post construction, the negligible contrast created by the site improvements would be similar to what currently exists.

The built elements proposed 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 J: Vegetation not including USFWS listed species

Effects common to both alternatives

Both alternatives propose the addition of a new parking area near the site entrance in an old road cut and an additional parking area between the creek and the site sign that would increase existing overall parking. The access road would be expanded to 20 feet wide. Removal of vegetation would occur along the edge of the current road. On busy weekends the sides of the roads serve as overflow parking. In both alternatives the proposed action would help decrease off road parking that is currently impacting vegetation.

Design features will be to maintain as much vegetation as possible so as to not impact upland vegetation resources.

ALTERNATIVE B (EXPANDED IMPROVEMENTS)

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

Resource A: Cultural Resources

The impacts and management plan conformance associated with this alternative are the same as those described for Alternative A.

Resource B: Floodplains

The impacts and management plan conformance associated with this alternative are the same as those described for Alternative A.

Resource C: Hydrologic Conditions

The impacts and management plan conformance associated with this alternative are the same as those described for Alternative A.

Resource D: Recreation

Same as Alternative A except for the following:

Alternative B would move the current group picnic area in order to expand the day use parking area and move all day use to the lower, open area. The flush toilet building would be moved to the middle of the parking turn around. Moving the current location of the group picnic use would be a change for local and repeat users of the site but would result in a clear separation of use provided by the group day use picnic area co located in conjunction with the new amphitheater. The addition of three new shade structures, the large group shelter, and additional trees and reconfiguring the lower area would make this area more functional and inviting for group use and offers connection to the water play area. Re vegetation of the lower area with native trees and shrubs would greatly improve the riparian setting in this location. Dispersed camping would not be allowed. Non designated dispersed camping in a developed campground without a minimum level of campsite amenities is not allowed under the regulations for campgrounds as expanded amenity fee sites (REA). This use is not allowable within Calf Creek Campground without individual designated campsite amenities. Dispersed camping opportunities continues to be offered throughout the Monument, as well as on neighboring public lands.

Increased parking in Alternative B would total up to 80 vehicles provided by additions within the existing parking area and the addition of the new overflow parking and defined parking along the access road. This alternative would offer more parking capacity in the current lot and would re configure the current parking lot to provide safe vehicle turn around and alleviate congestion. Future visitor demand for parking may be unable to be completely accommodated in any alternative due to the constrained nature of the site. Staff will continue to provide parking during peak periods.

Resource E: Soils

The impacts and management plan conformance associated with this alternative are the same as those described for Alternative A.

Resource F: Water Resources

The impacts and management plan conformance associated with this alternative are the same as those described for Alternative A.

Resource G: Wetlands/Riparian Zones

There's a possibility that one or two oak trees would need to be removed to increase the size of the main parking area. The new flush toilet building would be in the center of the parking area and wouldn't impact vegetation. Relocation of the current group picnic area to the lower area would benefit vegetation as the design calls for vegetation, in particular, trees and shrubs to be installed. The installation of three small single party shade shelters plus one large shelter would be located in areas with little to no vegetation and in couple of locations weedy species such as puncture vine exist. Installing these shelters, planting native species and maintaining the site to be weed free would benefit the riparian vegetation.

The remaining project analysis would be the same as in Alternative A.

Resource H: Wild and Scenic Rivers

The impacts and management plan conformance associated with this alternative are the same as those described for Alternative A.

Resource I: Visual Resources

The impacts and management plan conformance associated with this alternative are the same as those described for Alternative A.

Resource J: Vegetation not including USFWS listed species

The impacts and management plan conformance associated with this alternative are the same as those described for Alternative A.

No ACTION

Resource A: Cultural Resources

Under the No Action Alternative Calf Creek Campground would not lose the historic structures proposed for removal under the Action alternatives, and use of these structures would continue. However, the day use area structures are in poor condition and will continue to degrade over time, and they would eventually lose structural integrity, a vital part of their eligibility to the NRHP. The existing, but non functional, toilet facility would continue to degrade, with similar consequences to the day use area previously mentioned. The concrete volleyball court is non functional at present due to natural deterioration, and such deterioration would only increase with time. The shade shelters are of steel construction, and would probably remain intact for the foreseeable future. The portion of the old Escalante Boulder road would continue to degrade and not see the upkeep that would come with use as an overflow parking area.

Resource B: Floodplains

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be potential negative impacts to the floodplain adjacent to the water play area. Stone blocks that were placed to reinforce the stream bank are failing and falling into the stream. This creates a hazard for swimmers, waders, and pedestrians walking along the stream bank and exposes the soils along the stream bank. Continued failure of the reinforcement structure would lead to excessive erosion of the stream bank that the stone blocks were installed to protect, especially during high flow events.

Resource C: Hydrologic Conditions

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be the potential for negative impacts to hydrologic conditions due to soil compaction along edges of the driveway where patrons park when the existing parking lot is full. Compaction would occur from repeated instances of vehicles driving and parking on the unimproved edges of the existing road. The compacted soils would have lower water infiltration capacity and lead to excessive puddling, runoff, and erosion during storms. There would be no impacts to hydrologic conditions due to grading near the water play area or in the area designated for overflow parking under the No Action Alternative since no construction would be authorized in those areas.

Resource D: Recreation

In the No Action Alternative the general public would not see any changes at the recreation site. No deferred maintenance projects would be implemented thereby all current facilities

would remain the same. The constrained geography of the site and the regional demand for developed camp sites would continue to result in camping in the day use area or in other areas not designated for camping, as well as doubling up in sites that are only physically able to accommodate groups of six people. One of the camp sites is on sloping and eroding terrain; one is exposed with no shade; two camp sites lack designated parking; and two are located close to the edge of the creek where flash flooding occurs. Conflicts, crowding, and damage or erosion to vegetation and soils would continue. The water play area would continue to erode with no improved access.

Due to growing regional visitation, the public would continue to encounter a lack of places to park on an increasing number of days. Vehicle congestion throughout the day use parking area, along Highway 12 and within the campground would not be alleviated. Safety hazards to staff and pedestrians would be present due to blocking of the access road by large vehicles. There would be no increase in recreational opportunities from the addition of interpretive elements such as signage or the amphitheater. Campers at several campsites would continue to experience a lack of shade structures. The open area below the campground would continue to appear wind blown and eroded from social trails. Optimal ADA access would not be accommodated. The hillside supporting trailhead infrastructure would continue to erode.

Resource E: Soils

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be the potential for negative impacts to soils due to compaction along edges of the driveway where vehicles park when the existing parking lot is full. Compaction would occur from repeated instances of vehicles driving and parking on the unimproved edges of the existing road. The compacted soils would have lower water infiltration capacity and lead to excessive puddling, runoff, and erosion during storms. There would be no impacts to soils from construction in the water play area and the area designated for overflow parking under the No Action Alternative since no construction would be authorized in those areas.

Resource F: Water Resources

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be the potential for negative impacts to water quality due to vehicles crossing Calf Creek at the low water crossing. Vehicles must drive through the water at the low water crossing and have the potential to add pollutants to the stream from sediment washed from vehicles, sediment transported from the edges of the low water crossing, leaking oil and/or road grime that washes off of vehicles, and brake dust that is washed from vehicle wheels when driving through the water.

There would be no impacts to water quality from grading of the stream bank or grading of the overflow parking area under the No Action Alternative since no construction activities would be authorized. However, continued failure of the stone blocks stabilizing the stream near the water play area could lead to excessive erosion of the stream bank and contribute

sediment to Calf Creek. Erosion from compacted soils from vehicle parking in unauthorized areas along the edges of the road could also degrade water quality from sediments transported to Calf Creek during storms.

Resource G: Wetlands/Riparian Zones

Under the No Action Alternative, removal of any vegetation would not occur. The large cement pad within the campground would not be removed and revegetated. Installation of plants in the lower picnic area and identified campsites would not occur. Erosion along the banks of the play area would continue. The existing riparian vegetation would remain as is and the No Action Alternative would not impact riparian resources.

Resource H: Wild and Scenic Rivers

In the No Action alternative any existing riparian resource impacts (i.e. vegetation impacts from vehicle ingress, soil compaction on streamside access trails, and streamside erosion) would continue. Water quality would continue to be affected from streamside trail erosion and contaminants from oil and debris washing off vehicles upon crossing the creek. The current picnic area would remain in the same location and there would be no change to the current riparian vegetation or outstanding remarkable values.

The No Action alternative and continuation of current conditions are not expected to pose any threat to recreational classification, wild and free flowing nature, water quality, or outstanding remarkable values of this segment nor pose a threat to long term suitability for designation.

Resource I: Visual Resources

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

Resource J: Vegetation not including USFWS listed species

Under the No Action Alternative, vegetation would not be removed to construct the parking areas in the upland sections. Visitors would continue to park off the road which would continue to impact vegetation. The No Action Alternative would not impact vegetation resources.

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 and activities in the area

include travel along and maintenance of Highway 12, recreational visits, and removal of invasive/noxious plants species in the Escalante River and its tributaries.

Resource A: Cultural Resources

Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)

The Cultural Resources CIA for this project is the campground itself, recorded as 42Ka8060, and the short portion of adjacent 24Ka6091, the old Escalante Boulder road.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Reasonable and foreseeable impacts to Calf Creek Campground, site 42Ga8060, would be continued maintenance and potential upgrades of facilities over time. The loss of the historic features contributing to site eligibility under NRHP criterion C will have been mitigated, so cumulative impacts to those features will not be an issue. In time, additional features at this site will become historic and contribute to eligibility, and future actions at Calf Creek Campground will need to be taken into consideration at that time.

Reasonable and foreseeable impacts to the old Escalante to Boulder road, site 42Ga6091, will consist of use and maintenance of the road portion used as an overflow parking area. This is considered a beneficial effect. This offers good interpretive potential regarding the history of Escalante and Boulder, the CCC, and transportation development between these two communities. Unfortunately, the balance of the road in the vicinity of Calf Creek Campground is not suitable for use as an interpretive trail. No adverse cumulative impacts are foreseen for this site.

Resource B: Floodplains

Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)

The cumulative impact areas of analysis for Floodplains are the low water crossing at the upstream end of Calf Creek Campground and adjacent to the water play area near the center of Calf Creek Campground.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative impacts to floodplains from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions include construction of the low water crossing and development of floodplain adjacent to the water play area. In Alternatives A & B, replacing the concrete low water crossing with a concrete culvert to allow vehicles to cross over the stream without entering the stream would restore the floodplain at the stream crossing to a more natural condition. There would be temporary disturbance in the floodplain during removal of the existing concrete pad and during construction of the new culvert crossing. Installing the culvert crossing would contribute to reduced long term impacts to the stream banks from vehicle traffic on the east and west side of the stream crossing.

In Alternatives A & B, removing the retaining wall and regrading the slope adjacent to the water play area would cause a temporary disturbance to the floodplain during construction. Removing the retaining wall and regrading the slope would improve the stability of the floodplain over the long term.

Resource C: Hydrologic Conditions

Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)

The cumulative impact area of analysis for Hydrologic Conditions is the proposed overflow parking area for 20 vehicles near the Highway 12 entrance to Calf Creek Campground.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative impacts to hydrologic conditions from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions include an abandoned road cut from previous right of way development and the addition of an overflow parking area. There is the potential for short term impacts to hydrologic conditions from construction of the parking area. Development of the road cut previously disturbed the hydrologic function of the area and additional development of the overflow parking area is not expected to increase long term impacts to hydrologic conditions.

Resource D: Recreation

Cumulative Impact Area

The cumulative impact area of analysis for recreation includes Highway 12 corridor from Red Canyon to Capitol Reef National Park.

Cumulative Impact Analysis (CIA)

Effects of both alternatives

The impacts to recreational opportunities and the visitor experience from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions include the potential effects of any new recreational facilities or potential for changes in visitor use patterns along Highway 12. Implementing the project actions in either alternative is not expected to create any new recreational uses or displace current users along Highway 12 in the CUA. Increased parking capacity and facility upgrades insure the site is best equipped to meet the growing demand for recreational use along Highway 12.

There are no known potential cumulative effects of the project within the CIA.

Resource E: Soils

Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)

The cumulative impact area of analysis for Soils is the proposed overflow parking area for 20 vehicles near the Highway 12 entrance to Calf Creek Campground.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative impacts to soils from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions include an abandoned road cut from previous right of way development and the addition of an overflow parking area. There is the potential for short term impacts to soils from construction of the parking area. Development of the road cut previously disturbed soils in the area and additional development of the overflow parking area is not expected to increase long term impacts to soils.

Resource F: Water Resources*Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)*

The cumulative impact area of analysis for Water Resources is approximately 1500 stream ft. of Calf Creek that flows through 20 acres of Calf Creek Campground.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative impacts to water resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions include the low water stream crossing with a culvert crossing, the floodplain retaining wall adjacent to the water play area, an abandoned road cut from previous right of way development, and the addition of an overflow parking area. Actions under Alternatives A & B are expected to have short term negative impacts to water resources (i.e., an increase in runoff and turbidity) during construction. The action alternatives would make improvements to the low water crossing, water play area, and parking capacity and are expected to have long term beneficial impacts to water resources.

Resource G: Wetlands/Riparian Zones*Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)*

The cumulative impact area of analysis is the riparian zone through the entire Calf Creek tributary. This begins at the springs in the upper reaches of the tributary to the confluence with the Escalante River.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative impacts to riparian resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions include general recreational use and vegetation treatments to remove

primarily Russian olive and salt cedar within the Calf Creek Tributary. The action alternatives would make improvements to the riparian zone with the design features of restoring parts of the campground with native vegetation. Areas along Calf Creek would most likely see a decrease in soil erosion where plants would be used for restoration or vegetation would naturally fill in due to placement of social trailing barriers. With a defined path system in the campground there would be less social trailing which would improve vegetation restoration success. The proposed facility upgrades would not contribute to an increase in impacts to the riparian system of Calf Creek.

Resource H: Wild and Scenic Rivers

Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)

The CIA for Wild and Scenic Rivers includes Segment 2 that begins at Lower Calf Creek Falls and extends down to the campground and the entire stretch of Segment 3 of Calf Creek that begins at the upper edge of the campground and flows to the confluence of the Escalante River. The CUA would include the WSR eligibility width of 1/4 mile from the mean high water mark on both sides of Calf Creek.

Cumulative Impacts Analysis

The cumulative impacts from past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions on WSR segments are required to address the following elements:

Wild and free flowing nature: As stated above in Water Resources Section G, the addition of new culverts for the low water stream crossing would not result in any short or long term obstruction or impact to the free flowing nature of Calf Creek Segment 2 or Segment 3 from the waterfalls through the Campground or downstream to the Escalante River confluence.

Water quality: As stated above in Water Resources, there could be short term impacts to turbidity and run off during construction both in the campground and downstream. However, changing the stream crossing from a ford to a culvert crossing is expected to reduce the amount of vehicle related contaminants, such as oil, grease, mud from tires, and brake dust, that are deposited directly into the stream due to vehicles entering the water. Erosion of the road on either side of the stream would also potentially be reduced since vehicles would not be entering and exiting the stream. This would be beneficial to the entire Segment 3 of Calf Creek downstream to the Escalante River confluence and would have no impact on Segment 2 above the campground.

Tentative classification: Facility upgrades associated with this project and any future proposed actions at this site or along Highway 12 are not anticipated to pose any impact to recreational classification for the entire segment 3 or have any impact on the scenic classification of Segment 2 above the campground.

Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs) identified as high scenic quality, rock art, pre historic structures, high recreation use, bird habitat and riparian values: There are no known anticipated threats to the ORVs.

There are no known cumulative effects that would pose a threat to suitability of all Calf Creek segments for future WSR designation.

Resource I: Visual Resources

Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)

Visual Resources The cumulative impact area of analysis for Visual Resources is the viewshed along Highway 12 from Escalante to Boulder (approximately 40 miles) through the Escalante Canyons.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative impacts to visual resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions include establishment of residential and commercial development, recreational facilities (trailheads, day use areas, etc.), general recreational use, livestock grazing management facilities (corrals, fences, water developments, storage buildings, etc.) and road construction and maintenance activities. The action alternatives would make improvements to an existing development using elements that would blend with the landscape and be largely screened from view. Additionally, the viewshed along Highway 12 from Escalante to Boulder 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 J: Vegetation not including USFWS listed species

Cumulative Impact Area (CIA)

The cumulative impact area of analysis is the upland zone through the entire Calf Creek tributary. This begins in the upper reaches of the tributary to the confluence with the Escalante River.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The cumulative impacts to vegetation resources from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions include recreational use throughout the Calf Creek tributary, livestock grazing at New Home Bench, and the Highway 12 and utility corridor construction and maintenance needs. The action alternatives would make improvements to an existing development and this would have short term impacts on upland vegetation with the construction of parking areas and widening of the access road. Long term impacts would be

positive as vehicles will not be allowed to park off the road and will be required to park in the designated parking lots therefore reducing impacts on the surrounding vegetation. The proposed facility upgrades would not contribute to an increase in impacts to vegetation resources of Calf Creek.

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 XXX. 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.

COMMENT ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

During the 30 day comment period, BLM received 12 emails or letters from 12 individuals. All substantive comments (as defined in H 1790 1 – NEPA Handbook, page 66) were considered to the extent feasible and are addressed below by topic.

Project Timing

Seven commenters wrote about the potential negative impacts of the closing the recreation area during the high visitation months, especially September and October. One commenter wrote about the potential negative impacts of construction during the first two weeks of September when the hummingbird study is occurring.

Comment Response: Content needed from wildlife biologist.

Purpose and Need and Existing Conditions

One commenter wrote that the Purpose and Need and Existing Conditions included in the EA were erroneous, inaccurate, and misleading.

Comment Response: BLM has modified the purpose and need statement and existing conditions descriptions for clarification.

BLM Project Team

One commenter questioned the knowledge and experience of the planning and design team who collaborated to develop this project as well as outreach to other staff.

Comment Response: BLM conducted internal scoping of GSENM staff prior to the site design, during design development, and at solicitation for public comment. Improvements to Calf Creek Recreation Area have been discussed for years by GSENM recreation staff, including those who maintain and manage the site. The initial design received input from both recreation planners, visitor services staff, the landscape architect, the civil engineer, the soil and hydrology specialist, the botanist, and the archeologist. That input directly influenced the action alternatives. The recreation planner on the team has decades of experience on numerous recreation planning teams for the National Park Service, and multiple National Forest and BLM recreation sites in Oregon, Alaska, Arizona and California before coming to work at GSENM. The engineer, recreation planner, and landscape architect who shepherded this project through the planning, design, and compliance processes collectively have more than 60 years of experience in planning for recreation site

developments on public lands. At this site alone they collectively have approximately 30 years of experience.

Prioritization of Funding

One commenter wrote that this funding should instead be used to install toilets at other sites on the Monument with human waste issues.

Comment Response: This project is funded by deferred maintenance funds which supports improving existing facilities. Funds to install new construction efforts comes from other sources.

Competition with Local Businesses

One commenter wrote about the potential negative impact to local businesses from increasing the number of campsites.

Comment Response: The initial recreational developments at Calf Creek were initiated under authorization and funding of an Accelerated Public Works Program in 1962 and completed in 1963 to include nine individual camp units, a toilet, and day use facilities. Calf Creek Recreation Area was established on public lands for its recreational and scenic value by BLM in 1970, under authority of 43 CFR 2410 and 2411 and the Classification and Multiple Use Act. The developed area has been improved with additional camp units and other site amenities over the years and has become the most heavily visited site in the Monument and one of the most popular destinations along Scenic Highway 12. BLM developed a Campground Business Plan in 2012 for Calf Creek Recreation Area that addressed fees and anticipated costs associated with operating the campground and day use site. It also included a market analysis of fees being charged locally and regionally for camping. The analysis revealed that the fee structure is less or comparable to fees charged by other local providers. Privately owned, and nearby national and state park facilities typically provide a higher level of service (i.e. showers, utility hook ups, wifi, etc.), thus the fees at those sites are higher. The improvements proposed would increase camping from 13 sites to 17 units and all of the proposed new units are walk in sites. The Business Plan anticipated that the campground would operate up to 19 units. Expansion of the campground to a significant degree is not possible due to the steep topography and riparian nature of the site. The fees generated barely cover the existing costs of operating and staffing of this small but heavily visited recreation site.

User Conflicts

One commenter questioned the validity of user conflicts associated with overflow camping in the day use area and parking lot.

Comment Response: Calf Creek Recreation Area is one of the only developed recreation sites on GSENM. It offers a small capacity campground and is pressed to accommodate a high level of day use parking for those accessing the Lower Calf Creek Falls Trail. Many lament the increased level of visitation and the associated congestion at a site that is beloved by many locally, regionally, and nationally. This area has become iconic for tourism marketing organizations at both the state and local level as well as area businesses who promote the site as one of premier destinations of the Escalante Canyons area. The

campground and day use area is a constrained site with limited space for visitors to camp, park, hike and recreate. Over the past decade, vehicles have become larger, demand has increased significantly and dispersed, undefined uses cannot be as easily accommodated as in the past. BLM has solicited public comments for several past planning efforts in this location. Over time, a specific number of designated campsites and associated parking have been defined, designated and implemented and a fee structure approved for these sites. A basic tenet of recreation site design separates day use from camping where possible for obvious reasons. Continuing to allow for unspecified numbers of people to disperse camp in an open riparian area and park atop any remaining open road edge contributes to on going congestion of vehicles and people on site. A modest level of site hardening and definition of use is required to simply protect the site from on going erosion and trampling as well as accommodate the current level of visitation. Those who wish to disperse camp can utilize the hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands in the area that are open to dispersed camping.

Party Size in Camp Units

One commenter wrote about the negative impact of the proposed site design on limiting camping party sizes and favoring walk in sites over larger sites.

Comment Response: The campground allows for a range of party sizes based on the footprint of each site with most accommodating small party sizes due to the constraints of the site including steep rocky geography and riparian resources. The Calf Creek site is not large enough to allow for a large capacity campground or excessively large sites. Historically, groups desiring multiple tent locations or the accommodation of larger parties have reserved multiple adjoining sites. This inherent site constraint is reflected in that of the 2217 camping use permits issued in 2016, less than 4% were for parties of seven or more people. The one vehicle per campsite limit has not been included in the decision record. The removal of asphalt near two of the sites has not been included in the decision record.

The tent pads to be constructed in Calf Creek Campground would be flush with the ground surface and range in size from 12'x12' to 16'x16' depending on the space available in each site. Exceptions below this range could be necessary in the small sites like #7.

The proposal does not favor walk in sites over larger sites. The only site proposed for "removal" is the one closest to the pedestrian bridge on the east side of the creek. This site has eroded away so extensively that there are no locations for tents to be pitched without going down and toward the creek away from the parking, picnic table, and fire ring. It has a series of small retaining walls and block steps barely holding it together. Reconstructing that site to allow for parking for three developed walk in sites increases the capacity in the campground as opposed to reducing it. Also of note is that this area is commonly used for undesignated walk in camping already.

Large Group Camp Site

One commenter requested that a designated group camp site be included.

Comment Response: BLM agrees that there is a demand for group camping. Unfortunately, there is not adequate space at Calf Creek Recreation Area to accommodate group camping and associated vehicle parking. Group camping will be addressed in future planning efforts for the HWY 12 and Escalante Canyons Special Recreation Areas.

Walk-in Sites

One commenter wrote about the potential safety concerns related to locating walk in sites 15, 16 and 17 near Calf Creek.

Comment Response: The proposed location for walk in sites 15, 16, and 17 is approximately 4 feet above the base flow level at Calf Creek. The current visible high water mark adjacent to the proposed location for these sites is approximately 1 to 1.5 feet above the base flow level. While flash flooding is certainly a possibility in the Calf Creek drainage, as with most other canyons in the Escalante River watershed, these are relatively infrequent. The placement of campsites at approximately 4 feet above the base flow water line is adequate to allow campers to retreat to higher ground in the event of a flash flood. The placement of flood warning signs near camp sites that are adjacent to the creek clearly describes the risk involved with camping near the creek. Given the described risk, campers must use reasonable judgement and evaluate their risk tolerance in deciding where they camp.

Historic Structures

One commenter wrote about the potential negative impacts of removing the historic structures (wooden picnic tables, grill, vault toilet).

Comment Response: The removal of the historic vault toilet has not been included in the decision record. While the accessibility guidelines do not require removal of existing site fixtures that do not meet the guidance, implementing the selected alternative would require removal of the picnic tables and grill that area can be reconfigured for parking and improved vehicle circulation reducing vehicle congestion. Picnic tables and shade shelters would be located in the lower area.

Fee Stations

One commenter mistakenly understood the EA as specifying only one fee station near the entrance by HWY 12.

Comment Response: The design drawings note two self pay fee stations: one near the existing location and a smaller one by the new overflow parking area up near the highway. The addition of a second small self pay fee station offers convenience to those who park in the overflow parking area so they don't have to walk down to the main fee station and then walk back up the hill to put the fee receipt in their automobile window. The main fee station includes the new kiosk design as well as the fee envelope dispenser and receptacle.

Amphitheater

One commenter stated that constructing an amphitheater was not supported by the Purpose and Need for the project.

Comment Response: Providing space in the campground for a small rustic amphitheater would offer a multi use space for use by educational groups of all ages as well as defined space for ranger led public programs would contribute to improving the recreational experience of visitors.

Retaining Walls

One commenter wrote about the potential negative impacts to scorpion habitat in the existing block walls from replacing them with natural stone walls.

Comment Response: The existing retaining walls in the recreation area were constructed over the past few decades as needed by steep slopes and areas that were eroding. The proposal calls for replacing these fabricated block retaining walls with ones constructed of natural stone. As scorpions became established in the fabricated block wall construction, it is assumed that they would utilize the cracks and crevices in a natural stone rock wall, which is actually a more natural substrate. A biologist on the project interdisciplinary team was provided opportunity to contribute to the design of this element.

Trash Collection

One commenter wrote about issues associated with not providing trash collection at the recreation site.

Comment Response: Offering public trash receptacles on site at Calf Creek Recreation Area has been avoided due to the potential for bear issues as well as the challenge with collection and high costs. The day use site receives more than 30,000 visitors per year. It is difficult to maintain a constant level of cleanliness. We have several staff assigned to clean restrooms and pick up trash, including a camp host. We also have had bears that frequent the trail above the campground. We do intend to explore installing bear proof trash dumpsters up near the highway as part of these improvements.

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

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
Utah SHPO	Consultation of NHPA, Section 106.	Adverse effect with appropriate mitigation to be applies. SHPO consultation completed on July 22, 2016

LIST OF PREPARERS

BLM staff specialists who determined the affected resources for this document are listed in Appendix D. 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	Site Designs, Technical Coordination, Impact Analysis for Visual Resources
David Barfuss	Engineer	Site Designs, Engineering
Northwind Resource Consulting	Engineering Contractors	Site Designs, Engineering
Matthew Zweifel	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources
Lora Gale	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Impact Analysis for Recreation and Wild and Scenic Rivers
Amber Hughes	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	NEPA Compliance Quality Control Impact Analysis for Vegetation
Ken Bradshaw	Soil Scientist	Impact Analysis for Floodplains, Hydrologic Conditions, Soils, and Water Resources

APPENDIX A

Calf Creek Recreation Area Project Area Map

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APPENDIX B
CALF CREEK RECREATION AREA MAP

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APPENDIX C

CALF CREEK RECREATION AREA CONCEPTUAL SITE DESIGNS

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APPENDIX D
INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

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