

4.12. RECREATION

4.12.1. IMPACTS COMMON TO THE PROPOSED RMP AND ALL ALTERNATIVES

Impacts to recreation resources that are common to the Proposed RMP and all alternatives would come from new management direction as described in the Proposed RMP and each alternative and include abandoned mine lands, cultural resource protection, fire management, construction and/or designation of roads and trails, mineral resources development, protection of paleontological resources, changes in recreational opportunities, and designation of ACECs.

In conformance to the BLM's policy on abandoned mine lands, the Proposed RMP and all of the alternatives would establish safety and hazardous conditions priorities to remediate and/or reclaim abandoned mine sites that pose high health and safety risks to the public, and in instances where high-risk sites are located near developed recreation sites. The direct effects would be to beneficially improve recreational opportunities in the long term by enhancing recreation resources adjacent to these sites.

Under the Proposed RMP and all of the alternatives, the current federal laws and agency guidelines in place to protect cultural resources would have long-term beneficial and adverse effects on the recreational resources in the VPA. Long-term beneficial effects would be produced through the preservation of cultural resources. In addition to preserving sites of historic importance, the identification, stabilization and protection of cultural resources would expand recreational and educational opportunities (e.g. sightseeing and interpretive study) within the VPA by preserving cultural sites of recreational interest to visitors. Limiting recreational opportunities in order to minimize cultural resource disturbances would potentially have long-term adverse effects on other recreational opportunities, such as OHV use. Also, specific plans developed for the protection of cultural resources, such as site monitoring, identification, stabilization, and/or restoration plans, would restrict recreational activities in specific areas, in the short-term.

Fire management has the potential to have short-term adverse impacts and long-term beneficial impacts on recreation resources and opportunities within the VPA. Direct short-term, adverse impacts from wildland fire management would cause the closing of developed recreation areas and remote, undeveloped recreation areas in the short-term, producing short-term losses of recreational opportunities in the affected areas. Visual quality, often a component of recreational activities, would be degraded in the short-term as well. In the long-term, by reducing fuel loads, moving the present fire regime toward historic, ecologically sustainable fire conditions, reducing the potential for wildland fire, and creating a visual mosaic of vegetation, wildlife habitat, visual quality would improve; subsequently, recreational opportunities for viewing wildlife and for big game hunting would improve. With these measures, as well as the implementation of emergency stabilization and rehabilitation (ESR) treatments as needed, vegetation communities would be improved, which would provide long-term beneficial impacts by enhancing recreational opportunities and improving scenic quality.

Road and trail construction and maintenance, exchanges or acquisition of lands for the purposes of easing access to public lands and resources and/or contributing to a more efficient and manageable land ownership pattern, would have beneficial impacts on some forms of recreational uses in the long term by improving access to recreation areas and expanding trail-related recreational opportunities (e.g., motorized and non-motorized vehicle use, horseback riding). Acquisition of easements proposed for high-, mid-, and low-priority recreation areas would have a long-term, beneficial effect on the availability and accessibility of recreation areas throughout the VPA. Designation of new motorized trails would serve to increase awareness of the trail system and create an increase in motorized activity in the VPA. This would threaten the integrity of cultural resource and paleontological sites in the vicinity of the trail system, and threaten the recreational and educational values of such sites. Recreational overuse of the trail system would have the potential to damage other natural resource values within areas served by these trails including long-term, adverse impacts to soils, vegetation, riparian areas, and wildlife habitat (and the recreational values that require that these resources remain undisturbed).

Long-term, indirect effects common to the Proposed RMP and all alternatives would include the potential for degradation of recreation resources by off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. This use would also have long-term, indirect adverse effects under all of the alternatives, with varying degrees of adverse resource degradation by the Proposed RMP and each alternative:

- Existing trails would be degraded by OHV overuse.
- Known user conflicts between motorized users and non-motorized users would continue.
- Fewer OHV-designated routes under the Proposed RMP and any alternative would create an increase in cross-country travel, thus increasing the direct, adverse effects of OHV travel.
- OHV use would degrade water resources, soils, riparian areas, and wildlife habitat and, thus, degrade the recreational experiences associated with these resources. Degradation of these resources would intensify with cross-country travel. Resource degradation would be less intense where OHV trails were designated.
- OHV use would increase the risk of wildland fire, which would reduce recreational opportunities in areas affected by fire, or cause closure of areas disturbed by wildland fire.
- Increasing the opportunity for OHV use and fulfilling demand would increase visitation to the area.
- Allowing OHV use in areas where OHV use is not currently allowed would decrease visitation for other forms of recreation, such as mountain biking, hiking, sightseeing, and hunting.

OHV trail designation, under the Proposed RMP and all of the alternatives, would have long-term direct beneficial impacts on recreation by increasing the opportunities for OHV travel, limit resource degradation, and reduce resource use conflicts, and adequately respond to the recreational demand for this particular activity.

The development of mineral resources within the VPA would have direct, adverse impacts on recreational resources in the short- and long-term. Surface disturbances caused by mineral exploration and development, such as the construction of oil and natural gas wells, access roads, pipelines, cross-country seismic exploration; noise; night lighting; and locatable minerals prospects and mines, have the potential to affect vegetation, wildlife, and scenic quality within the VPA and thus, degrade some recreational opportunities within the VPA. However, minerals-related access roads would provide access to portions of the VPA that are currently inaccessible to certain types of recreation uses, such as hunting and OHV use, and this would have long-term beneficial impacts on these recreational activities.

Paleontology management actions to foster public awareness, public appreciation, recreation, and educational opportunities; to encourage recreational collection according to guidelines; and to reduce threats to paleontological resources would have long term, beneficial impacts on recreation, related to the appreciation of and education about paleontology. However, establishment of scientifically significant paleontological sites requiring protection would restrict some forms of recreational opportunities within affected areas. This would have minor adverse impacts on recreation in these restricted areas by reducing recreational opportunities.

Management decisions that provide for a wide range of developed and dispersed recreational activities, while continuing to implement public education and environmental awareness programs to protect and preserve areas within the VPA, would have direct, long-term, beneficial impacts on recreational opportunities and the quality of recreational experiences. Continued management of Pelican Lake and Red Mountain-Dry Fork as SRMAs under the Proposed RMP and all of the alternatives, and continued implementation of management plans to protect historic landmarks within the VPA would allow appropriate recreational use levels while protecting resources, benefiting both traditional and interpretive recreation uses. Comprehensive activity plans for Blue Mountain, Fantasy Canyon, Red Mountain-Dry Fork, and Pelican Lake, which would address appropriate recreational uses and facility development, would have long-term, beneficial impacts on recreation resources by resolving user conflicts and maintaining resource integrity. The BLM would maintain or expand the infrastructure at all recreation sites within the VPA, including (but not limited to) stabilizing and preserving Chipeta, Trujillo, Moonshine, and Rat Hole Cabins; and would ensure the safety of all sites for public use. The following recreational management guidelines, intended to help achieve and maintain healthy public lands as defined by the Standards of Rangeland Health, would have long-term, indirect beneficial impacts on recreation:

- Designating OHV use on BLM-administered lands in order to minimize the impacts on natural resources, would help to reduce conflicts among various users, and would promote public safety. Implementation of a continuous monitoring program and subsequent adaptive management strategies would also reduce indirect impacts of OHV use, such as the degradation of water quality, soil quality, and wildlife habitat.
- Establishing wildlife viewing areas along the Book Cliffs Divide Ridge Road would have a long-term, beneficial effect on recreational wildlife viewing and would potentially increase visitation in the area.
- Designating Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) would protect recreational resources, but also increase awareness of these areas for recreation, and increase

recreational activity in the area. However, there could be adverse impacts if increasing numbers of visitors threaten the integrity of cultural resource and paleontological sites and the recreational and educational value of such sites. Recreational overuse has the potential to adversely impact other resources within these SRMAs.

- Designating some SRMAs as No Surface Occupancy (NSO) areas for oil and gas development and as Closed to mineral leasing would have direct, long-term, beneficial impacts on recreation resources by preserving the natural, undisturbed qualities of these recreation areas. Each SRMA would have a management plan that would specify the limits of mineral resources development.

The designation and management of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) to protect important historic, cultural, scenic, and wildlife values would have long-term beneficial impacts on most recreational activities. Considering OHV use, this designation would limit use to designated routes in certain ACECs, with such use closed in other ACECs. Identification of segments of river corridors considered suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic River System would beneficially impact these river segments by preserving the recreational opportunities in these areas. All of the proposed ACECs would also remain open to oil and gas leasing, and subject to valid existing mineral leasing rights, which would have long-term adverse impacts on recreational opportunities and the quality of recreational experiences.

Under the Proposed RMP and all of the alternatives, segments of the Upper Green and Lower Green River that have already been recommended to Congress as suitable for designation as part of the Wild and Scenic River System would continue to be managed under their suitability status. These areas would continue to be protected for their outstanding and remarkable values, and free-flowing nature, subject to valid existing mineral rights. This would have long-term beneficial protection-related impacts on recreation, as these river segments would continue to provide recreational opportunities.

4.12.2. PROPOSED RMP AND ALTERNATIVES IMPACTS

4.12.2.1. IMPACTS OF CULTURAL RESOURCE DECISIONS ON RECREATION

4.12.2.1.1. PROPOSED RMP

The development of on- and off-site interpretive facilities at appropriate archaeological and historic sites would broaden the scope of recreation opportunities available to visitors and serve as a draw for additional visitation to the VPA. Off-highway vehicle use in the Uinta Foothills would be limited to designated routes. Off-highway vehicle use in Little/Devils Hole area, Upper Willow Creek areas and Four Mile Wash would be limited to designated routes to protect areas with high densities of cultural sites. These restrictions would have long-term direct, adverse impacts to OHV use by reducing the areas of cross-country travel that OHV users are currently allowed. However, when compared to Alternative D (No Action), the activity restriction described above would have direct, long-term beneficial effects on other recreational opportunities within the VPA by enhancing the opportunities for educational and other recreational activities, and potentially improving the recreational experience of those not participating in motorized (OHV) recreational activities. The OHV restrictions would also

improve visitor safety in those areas where mechanized and non-mechanized users (e.g., hiking, mountain biking, backpacking, and horseback riding potentially mingle, and would reduce resource use conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users.

4.12.2.1.2. ALTERNATIVE A

Under this alternative, the proposed management decisions would be the same as the Proposed RMP. Therefore, the impacts of cultural resource decisions on recreation would be the same as discussed above.

4.12.2.1.3. ALTERNATIVE B

The impacts of Alternative B on recreation resources would be similar to the Proposed RMP, and the impacts compared to Alternative D (No Action) for the Uinta Foothills, Little/Devils Hole area, and Upper Willow Creek would be similar to those described under the Proposed RMP. Interpretive facilities would only be developed as mitigation for permitted activities, therefore this alternative would have fewer long-term beneficial impacts than the other action alternatives.

4.12.2.1.4. ALTERNATIVE C

Under this alternative, the development of interpretive facilities for all appropriate archeological, historical, and cultural resources would have the same effect as described under the Proposed RMP. Closing the Uinta Foothills, Little/Devils Hole area, Four Mile Wash, and Upper Willow Creek area to OHV use would have long-term, adverse effects on OHV recreational opportunities, when compared to Alternative D (No Action). This action would potentially intensify OHV overuse because additional trail development for motorized uses is not a component of Alternative C. The restrictions on OHV use and on oil and gas leasing would have indirect, long-term beneficial impacts to non-motorized recreation by increasing solitude and wildlife viewing opportunities in these areas, when compared to Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.1.5. ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)

This alternative would have no adverse impacts on motorized recreational activities, but a lack of resource protection could have direct, long-term, adverse impacts on these sites and on sightseeing or interpretive/educational activities at these sites. Development of interpretive facilities at Old Rock Saloon and Nine Mile Canyon archeological sites and construction of a facility in Nine Mile Canyon to help manage cultural use in the area would have beneficial effects on recreation by increasing the opportunities for regional cultural interpretation and nature study.

4.12.2.1.6. ALTERNATIVE E

Under Alternative E, the development of on- and off-site interpretive facilities at archaeological and historic sites would broaden the range of recreation opportunities available to visitors and serve as a draw for additional visitation to the VPA. Closing the Uinta Foothills, Little/Devils Hole area, Four Mile Wash, and Upper Willow Creek area to OHV use would have long-term,

adverse effects on OHV motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities, when compared to Alternative D (No Action). This action would potentially intensify OHV use in other areas of the VPA because additional trail development for motorized uses is not a component of Alternative E. The restrictions on OHV use and on oil and gas leasing would have indirect, long-term beneficial impacts to non-motorized recreation by increasing solitude and wildlife viewing opportunities in these areas, when compared to Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.2. IMPACTS OF FIRE MANAGEMENT DECISIONS ON RECREATION

4.12.2.2.1. PROPOSED RMP AND ALTERNATIVES A, B, C, AND E

Permitting prescribed fire on 156,425 acres per decade would limit the number of acres available for recreational activities in a prescribed burn area, during and after burning. These areas would most likely be less desirable for recreation in the short-term until vegetation re-growth occurs. Long-term benefits would result in these areas because of reduced fuel loads, improved wildlife habitat, more diverse landscape variety (scenic quality), and the decreased probability of wildland fire damage to recreation areas, which would enhance opportunities (settings, activities, and experiences) for hunting, wildlife viewing, sightseeing, and similar activities. The Proposed RMP and the action alternatives would have a greater likelihood of adverse short-term impacts and beneficial long-term impacts, when compared to Alternative D (No Action) because of the larger area planned for prescribed burning.

4.12.2.2.2. ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)

The beneficial and adverse impacts of fire management decisions on recreation under Alternative D (No Action) would be the same as the Proposed RMP and the action alternatives (Alternatives A, B, C, and E) except that the impacts would be reduced in scope and intensity. This is because a total of 50,900 acres would be designated for prescribed burning or other treatments within the VPA as compared to the 156,425 acres/decade designated for prescribed burning under the action alternatives.

4.12.2.3. IMPACTS OF LAND AND REALTY MANAGEMENT DECISIONS ON RECREATION

4.12.2.3.1. PROPOSED RMP

Pursuing public access or easements to the White River at the mouth of Cowboy Canyon, Evacuation Creek (from the state line to the creek along the Uintah Railroad bed), Bonanza Ridge and Wagon Hound Road would increase the amount of land accessible for a variety of recreational opportunities, thereby having direct long-term beneficial impacts on recreation resources availability. This alternative would have more beneficial impacts than Alternative D (No Action), which would not specify these areas for public access. The pursued acquisition of Indian Trust Lands in Bitter Creek and near the confluence of the South and Sweetwater Canyons would also have long-term beneficial impacts on recreation by increasing recreational opportunities in these areas. All of these areas would be managed under ERMA or SRMA stipulations, which would have beneficial, protection-related impacts on recreation resources.

Locatable mineral withdrawal or other protective measures that would preclude mineral entry on a total of 24,202 acres including the Green River Scenic Corridor in Browns Park (8,208 acres), along the White River (9,218 acres), in Lears Canyon (1,375 acres), in developed and potential recreation sites (5,000 acres), and the Book Cliffs Natural Area (401 acres) would have long-term beneficial impacts on recreation by protecting natural features and scenic quality in these areas. Compared to Alternative D (No Action), the Proposed RMP would have more beneficial impacts in some areas: Alternative D (No Action) would not preclude mineral entry along the White River and within the Book Cliffs Natural Area; however, Alternative D (No Action) would be more beneficial if total acreage is considered, as Alternative D (No Action) would propose withdrawal of 35,900 acres compared to 24,202 under the Proposed RMP.

Retention of public lands in federal ownership in the 106,178 acres of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics managed under this alternative would ensure protection of non-WSA wilderness characteristics values and the setting needed to support non-mechanized, primitive forms of recreation, including hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, wildlife observation, and river floating. Excluding non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics from the issuance of new rights-of-way (ROWs) would beneficially retain the undeveloped character of these landscapes and the primitive forms of recreation dependent on those settings. The exclusion of ROWs, however, would potentially limit (and adversely impact) mechanized recreational opportunities (i.e., motorized OHV use, mountain biking) commonly available along the access roads to and within the ROWs by limiting the opportunities for these forms of recreation.

4.12.2.3.2. ALTERNATIVE A

The impacts of proposed pursuance of public access would be the same as discussed above under the Proposed RMP except that the easement from Evacuation Creek (from the state line to the creek along the Uintah Railroad bed) would not be pursued.

Locatable mineral withdrawal or other protective measures that would preclude mineral entry in the Green River Scenic Corridor in Browns Park, the White River, Lears Canyon, the Book Cliffs Natural Area, and developed and potential recreation sites would have long-term beneficial impacts on recreation as discussed above under the Proposed RMP because the management decisions would be the same.

4.12.2.3.3. ALTERNATIVE B

Administrative access only would be pursued across Indian trust lands in Bitter Creek, and South and Sweetwater Canyons, but recreation-related public access would not be pursued for any area under Alternative B. The impact on recreational opportunities would be the same as Alternative D (No Action).

Locatable mineral withdrawal impacts would be the same as those described under the Proposed RMP.

4.12.2.3.4. ALTERNATIVE C

The impacts of pursuing public access through easements and acquisitions under Alternative C would be the same as those described under the Proposed RMP alternative because the management decisions would be the same.

Under this alternative, locatable mineral withdrawal management decisions to preclude mineral entry would be the same as those described under the Proposed RMP, except that the 5,000 acres of developed and potential recreation sites would not be considered for withdrawal and an additional 17,063 acres would be proposed for withdrawal within the Lower Green River ACEC. This would increase the beneficial, protection-related impacts on recreation resources to 41,265 acres. Compared to Alternative D (No Action), this alternative would be more beneficial in the long term because more acreage would be proposed for recreation resource protection.

4.12.2.3.5. ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)

The pursuit of public access would be unspecified under Alternative D (No Action). Therefore current management would not improve recreational access or opportunities. Mineral withdrawal would occur on 19,400 acres along the Green River Scenic Corridor in Browns Park, on 3,600 acres of relict vegetation, 7,900 acres within the Lower Green River ACEC, and 5,000 acres of developed and potential recreation sites, totaling 35,900 acres. This would have beneficial preservation-related impacts on recreation resources.

4.12.2.3.6. ALTERNATIVE E

Securing public access to White River and in Evacuation Creek would provide additional opportunities for mechanized, and primitive non-mechanized recreational activities, as would acquiring Indian Trust Lands in Bitter Creek and at the confluence of South and Sweet Water Canyons. Pursuing mineral withdrawals (on the same number of acres as Alternative A) in the Green River Scenic Corridor (Browns Park), the White River, Lears Canyon, and the Book Cliffs Natural Area would reduce the potential for surface disturbances and maintain the settings needed to support opportunities for non-mechanized forms of recreation (e.g., hiking, backpacking, river floating, wildlife viewing, and hunting).

Retention of public lands in federal ownership in 277,596 acres of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would ensure protection of wilderness values and the settings needed to support the non-mechanized recreational opportunities discussed above. The exclusion of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics from the issuance of new rights-of-way (ROWs) would retain the undeveloped character of these landscapes and the primitive forms of recreation dependent on those settings. Exclusion of ROWs, however, would not provide additional mechanized recreational opportunities commonly available along the access roads to and within the ROWs.

Compared to Alternative D (No Action), Alternative E would have more beneficial impacts on non-mechanized recreation by providing opportunities for these types of activities. The impacts

on mechanized (motorized and non-motorized OHV activities) would be more adverse than Alternative D (No Action) because 277,596 acres would be managed as ROW exclusion areas.

4.12.2.4. IMPACTS OF MINERALS DECISIONS ON RECREATION

As discussed above under subsection 4.10.1 Impacts Common to All Alternatives, minerals-related exploration, development, access road, and infrastructure construction on BLM administered land within the VPA would create surface disturbances, noise, and light pollution that would adversely and beneficially affect recreation resources in the long-term. The proposed acreages available for minerals leasing are tabulated below in Table 4.12.1.

Table 4.12.1. Mineral Leasing Acreages

	Proposed RMP	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D (No Action)	Alternative E
Oil and Gas – Standard Stipulations, Timing and Controlled Surface Use	1,640,381	1,780,860	1,819,397	1,627,085	1,536,030	1,499,641
Mineral Materials, Open	389,788	415,395	432,953	388,699	387,700	344,682
Phosphate, Open	76,208	87,724	87,724	63,571	84,600	52,063
Gilsonite (miles/acres)	172 / 36,846	172 / 36,846	172 / 36,846	172 / 36,846	168 / 36,009	163 / 34,967

4.12.2.4.1. PROPOSED RMP

The Proposed RMP would allow minerals development (including oil, gas, mineral materials, and phosphate) with Open, Standard Stipulations, or Timing and Controlled Surface Use on 2,143,223 acres of BLM administered lands within the VPA. Under the Proposed RMP, 106,178 acres of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be closed to leasing for oil, gas, mineral materials, and phosphate and Gilsonite. Compared to Alternative D (No Action), the Proposed RMP would allow 27,022 more acres of BLM land potentially open to minerals development. The estimated total short-term and long-term surface disturbance would be 8,796 acres (for oil and gas development). As described in subsection 4.10.1, the leasing of areas for oil, gas, CBNG, and other mineral uses would have direct long-term adverse impacts on most recreational opportunities by potentially degrading the natural characteristics of the landscape, and degrading scenic quality and wildlife habitat. Off-highway vehicle access would improve in areas where new minerals-related access and spur roads were built, thus having indirect long-term beneficial impacts on this type of recreational activity by creating more opportunities for OHV recreational travel.

Closure to mineral leasing of 106,178 acres of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics under this alternative would place recreational emphasis on opportunities for primitive and unconfined activities (e.g., hiking, backpacking, river floating, hunting, wildlife viewing, and nature study) and opportunities for solitude, as well as the undeveloped settings needed to

support these non-motorized activities and experiences. Opportunities for motorized forms of recreation activities such as backcountry driving and vehicle-supported camping at developed recreation sites such as campgrounds, picnic areas, and interpretive exhibits would be reduced with OHV vehicle travel restricted to designated routes. In those portions of the VPA where mineral leasing continues, exploration and development would contribute to an expanded road system for motorized forms of recreation (e.g., backcountry driving, vehicle-supported camping, and hunting). Proposed withdrawals from mineral entry in non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would prevent mining-related disturbances that impact opportunities for primitive forms of recreation, the undeveloped settings needed to support those activities, and the experience people seek while participating in those activities. In those areas open to mineral entry, future exploration and development would likely provide additional recreational opportunities for motorized forms of recreation.

Compared to Alternative D (No Action), the Proposed RMP would have more beneficial impacts on recreation resources and opportunities. This is because, though potentially more area would be available for surface disturbance leasing, the proposed non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would have prohibitions on minerals disturbances and would provide recreational opportunities for non-mechanized and mechanized activities.

4.12.2.4.2. ALTERNATIVE A

Alternative A would allow minerals development (including oil, gas, mineral materials, and phosphate) with Open, Standard Stipulations, or Timing and Controlled Surface Use on approximately 2,320,825 acres of BLM administered lands within the VPA. Compared to Alternative D (No Action), Alternative A would allow 204,624 more acres of BLM land potentially open to minerals development. The estimated total short-term and long-term surface disturbance would be 8,760 acres (for oil and gas development). As described in Section 4.10.1, the leasing of areas for oil, gas, natural gas CBNG, and other mineral uses would have direct long-term adverse impacts on most recreational opportunities by degrading the natural characteristics of the landscape, and degrading scenic quality and wildlife habitat. Off-highway vehicle access would improve in areas where new minerals-related access and spur roads were built, thus having indirect long-term beneficial impacts on this type of recreational activity by providing more opportunities for OHV use.

Compared to Alternative D (No Action), Alternative A would have impacts on recreation resources and opportunities as described above under the Proposed RMP.

4.12.2.4.3. ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B would allow mineral development with Open, Standard Stipulations or Timing and Controlled Surface Use on approximately 2,340,112 acres of BLM administered lands within the VPA. Compared to Alternative D (No Action), Alternative B would allow 332,581 more acres of BLM land open to minerals development. The estimated acres of short-term and long-term surface disturbance under this alternative would be 8,909 (for oil and gas development). The impacts would be similar to those discussed under the Proposed RMP, but to a greater degree, because more area within the VPA would be open to minerals disturbances.

4.12.2.4.4. ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C would have fewer adverse impacts to recreation than any of the other alternatives, as it would designate the fewest acres to minerals leasing and development. Alternative C would allow mineral development with Open, Standard Stipulations or Timing and Controlled Surface Use on approximately 2,116,201 acres of BLM administered land within the VPA. The estimated total short-term and long-term surface disturbance would be 8,728 acres (for oil and gas development). Compared to Alternative D (No Action), Alternative C would allow 71,862 acres more of BLM lands to be open to minerals development. The impacts would be similar to Alternative A, but to a lesser degree.

4.12.2.4.5. ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)

Under Alternative D (No Action), the estimated minerals-related surface disturbance, both short-term and long-term, would be 8,371 acres (for oil and gas development), with a total area open to mineral development of 2,044,339 acres. The scope and type of impacts to recreation would be similar to the impacts described under Impacts Common to All Alternatives (Section 4.12.1).

4.12.2.4.6. ALTERNATIVE E

Under this alternative, non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be closed to leasing for oil, gas, mineral materials, phosphate and Gilsonite. This alternative would allow leasing for oil, gas, phosphate, and mineral materials on 1,931,353 acres. For oil and gas development only, this represents a reduction of 112,986 acres in the total acreage available for leasing when compared to Alternative D (No Action). Thus, Alternative E would have the smallest area open to oil and gas development of all of the alternatives, with impacts to recreation resources and opportunities similar to those discussed under the Proposed RMP but to a lesser degree.

Closure to mineral leasing of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would place recreation emphasis on opportunities for primitive and unconfined activities (as discussed above under the Proposed RMP) and opportunities for solitude, as well as the undeveloped settings needed to support these non-motorized activities and experiences. Opportunities for motorized and/or mechanized forms of recreation activities would be reduced with the closure of 228 miles of vehicle routes and restrictions on recreation developments in the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. In those portions of the VPA where mineral leasing is permitted, exploration and development would beneficially contribute to an expanded road system (and increased recreational opportunities) for motorized forms of recreation (e.g., backcountry driving, vehicle-supported camping, and hunting).

Under Alternative E, proposed withdrawals from mineral entry in non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would prevent mining-related disturbances that would impact opportunities for primitive forms of recreation, the undeveloped settings needed to support those activities, and the experience people seek while participating in those activities. In those areas open to mineral entry, future exploration and development would likely (and beneficially) create the opportunities for motorized and mechanized forms of recreation.

In comparing this alternative to Alternative D (No Action), Alternative E would have more beneficial impacts on non-mechanized recreation and fewer beneficial impacts on mechanized recreation. This is because, as discussed above, the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be closed to mechanized use (motorized and non-motorized OHV use), but available for non-mechanized recreational activities that do not degrade wilderness values.

4.12.2.5. IMPACTS OF NON-WSA LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS DECISIONS ON RECREATION

4.12.2.5.1. PROPOSED RMP

Under the Proposed RMP, 106,178 acres would be managed to protect non-WSA wilderness characteristics that include naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive, remote, backcountry recreation (e.g., hiking, backpacking, river floating, hunting, wildlife viewing). Opportunities for motorized and non-motorized OHV use on designated routes would also be available. This would have long term, beneficial impacts on both non-mechanized and mechanized recreational activities because opportunities for a range of recreation resource users would be available within the proposed non-WSA wilderness characteristics areas. Compared to Alternative D (No Action), the Proposed RMP would have the same impacts because these recreational opportunities would be provided outside non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics.

4.12.2.5.2. ALTERNATIVES A, B, C, AND D

Under these alternatives, no actions would be prescribed to specifically protect the wilderness characteristics of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, and therefore there would be no direct impacts to recreation opportunities.

4.12.2.5.3. ALTERNATIVE E

Under Alternative E, 277,596 acres in 25 areas would be managed to protect wilderness characteristics of size, naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and opportunities for primitive forms of recreation. As discussed under the Proposed RMP alternative, this form of management would provide opportunities for primitive forms of recreation (e.g., hiking, backpacking, river floating, hunting, wildlife viewing, and nature study) and experiences of solitude in natural, undeveloped settings. Under this alternative, opportunities for motorized recreation (e.g., backcountry driving and OHV use) and developed facilities (e.g., campgrounds, picnic areas, and interpretive and wayside exhibits) would not be provided in these areas because OHV travel routes would not be allowed. Compared to Alternative A, this alternative would have more beneficial long-term impacts on non-mechanized forms of recreation because management of these areas would be more compatible with primitive, remote, and backcountry opportunities. As this alternative would not allow OHV use, the impacts on mechanized forms of recreation would be less beneficial than Alternative D (No Action); however opportunities would be provided outside non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics.

4.12.2.6. IMPACTS OF PALEONTOLOGY DECISIONS ON RECREATION

4.12.2.6.1. PROPOSED RMP

The Proposed RMP would provide information on paleontology, local paleontological sites, amateur fossil collecting, and fossil collection rules to the public via websites, publications, and personal contacts. Management decisions would allow the collection of common invertebrate and plant fossils for personal, non-commercial use; issue Paleontological Resources Use Permits for scientific study; and promote or support paleontological investigations in poorly known areas. These management decisions would enhance and beneficially impact paleontology-related recreational opportunities within the VPA by improving information access on known fossil sites for collectors. Under the Proposed RMP, fossil excavations would be limited within the proposed 106,178 acres of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics to those actions that meet the goals and objectives for management of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. Limitations on excavations in non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would limit the growth (number of sites) of these potential recreation opportunities.

Compared to Alternative D (No Action), the increase in recreational opportunity (and activity) under the Proposed RMP would be more beneficial to recreation resources because opportunities for allowed fossil collecting would be improved.

4.12.2.6.2. ALTERNATIVES A AND C

By providing information on paleontology, local paleontological sites, amateur fossil collecting, and fossil collection rules to the public via websites, publications, and personal contacts; allowing collection of common invertebrate and plant fossils for personal, non-commercial use; issuing Paleontological Resources Use Permits for scientific study; and promoting or supporting paleontological investigations in poorly known areas, Alternatives A and C would increase and beneficially impact the recreational opportunities related to paleontology similar to those discussed above under the Proposed RMP. Compared to Alternative D (No Action), the increase in recreational opportunity (and activity) under these alternatives would be more beneficial to recreation resources for the same reasons as discussed under the Proposed RMP.

4.12.2.6.3. ALTERNATIVES B AND D (NO ACTION)

These alternatives would have negligible impacts on recreation due to the lack of any specific improvements supporting the scientific study and dissemination of paleontological information.

4.12.2.6.4. ALTERNATIVE E

Under Alternative E, the following activities would increase and provide additional, long-term recreational opportunities related to paleontology: providing information on paleontology, local sites, fossil collecting, and the rules of fossil collecting to the public via websites, publications, and personal contacts; allowing collection of common invertebrate and plant fossils for personal, non-commercial use; issuing Paleontological Resources Use Permits for scientific study; and promoting or supporting paleontological investigations in poorly known areas. The increased

recreational opportunity provided under Alternative E would be more beneficial than that provided under Alternative D (No Action). Fossil excavations would be limited in non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics to those actions that meet the goals and objectives for management of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. Limitations on excavations in non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would limit the growth (number of sites) of these potential recreation opportunities.

4.12.2.7. IMPACTS OF RECREATION DECISIONS ON RECREATION

Impacts to recreation from recreation decisions are analyzed through alternative comparisons of Backcountry Byways, Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs), trails, mitigation of noise and light, and recreational cabin development.

4.12.2.7.1. PROPOSED RMP

Recreation management decisions under the Proposed RMP would provide for a range of recreational opportunities within the VPA. A number of existing recreation opportunities would be expanded and improved under this alternative, whereas other opportunities would be limited. New recreation activities would also be established that would expand the range of recreational opportunities. The effects of these changes on existing resources and activities in both the short-term and long-term are discussed below.

4.12.2.7.1.1. Backcountry Byways

The designation of the Seep Ridge, Book Cliff Divide, and Atchee Ridge Roads as BLM Backcountry Byways under Alternative A would have long-term beneficial impacts on recreation by educating the public about recreational opportunities for backcountry sightseeing and scenic driving. The designation of roads as Utah State Highway Scenic Backcountry Byways would increase awareness of the scenic opportunities associated with these byways, which would increase traffic volume and encourage recreational visitation to the region. These designations would have greater beneficial impacts on recreation resources when compared to Alternative D (No Action), which would not designate Backcountry Byways.

Designation of Backcountry Byways would have long-term, indirect, adverse impacts on air-quality, in the form of increased fugitive dust caused by vehicle traffic. More vehicle traffic would also adversely increase the potential risk of wildland fire and increase the potential for vehicle/wildlife collisions. Designating Backcountry Byways would increase the potential for automobile conflicts with livestock and with minerals resource-related traffic. As increasing numbers of visitors enter more remote areas of the VPA some travelers could experience a reduction in the expectation of semi-primitive, isolated conditions, with some loss of this recreational opportunity.

4.12.2.7.1.2. SRMAs

The designation of SRMAs on BLM administered land within the VPA would provide recreational opportunities for experiencing outstanding scenic vistas, and enhance recreation-

related resources (e.g., riparian areas, fisheries, special status species, water quality) and associated activities (e.g., water-based recreation; hunting; a comprehensive trail system offering opportunities for hiking, biking, horse riding, and OHV use; camping; and facilities offering cultural and historical resource learning opportunities). The Proposed RMP would beneficially increase the combined acreage of SRMAs from 87,931 acres under current management to 133,560 acres. Each of the SRMAs would manage for the type and range of recreational activities and opportunities that lie within a given SRMA: the proposed Blue Mountain SRMA (42,729 acres) would be managed for OHV use, special recreational activities (e.g., hang gliding, rock climbing), and competitive events; Nine Mile SRMA (44,168 acres) would be managed to protect high-value cultural values and scenic quality. Browns Park SRMA (18,490 acres) would offer a wide variety of land and water opportunities, whereas the White River SRMA (2,831 acres) and Pelican Lake SRMA (1,014 acres) would offer water-based recreational opportunities, in addition to other recreational opportunities. Red Mountain-Dry Fork SRMA (24,259 acres) would continue to provide opportunities for OHV and non-motorized trail activities. The proposed Fantasy Canyon SRMA (69 acres) would offer opportunities for self-guided touring and hiking. In comparison, there would be no expansion of existing SRMAs or proposed new SRMA designations under Alternative D (No Action); thus, the Proposed RMP would have more beneficial impacts on recreational than Alternative D (No Action) because more area within the VPA would be managed under SRMAs to provide recreational opportunities.

Under the Proposed RMP, 106,178 acres of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would shift the focus of recreation to primitive and unconfined activities (e.g., hiking, backpacking, river floating, hunting, and wildlife viewing), opportunities for solitude, and the settings needed to achieve these opportunities. Proposed management stipulations for non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would limit OHV use to designated routes, which would adversely reduce the recreational opportunities for motorized and mechanized recreation within these areas.

4.12.2.7.1.3. Trails

Signing and/or improvement of existing trails and the development of new hiking, horseback and mechanized/non-motorized (i.e., mountain biking) trails would increase the total miles of hiking trails to 400 miles, compared to 55 miles under Alternative D (No Action). The increased number of trail miles would also reduce user densities on the trails, potentially alleviating user conflicts and improving individual users' experiences. Increased development of trails could cause increased adverse impacts to cultural and paleontological sites (and impacts to the recreational and educational value of such sites), and the ensuing increase in human activity would increase the potential for wildland fire (which would cause temporary closures of recreational areas or diminish the scenic quality in recreational areas). Because new areas for mountain biking are currently being sought, increasing non-motorized trails would beneficially impact recreation in the VPA by acting as an attraction to mountain bikers seeking new opportunities outside of existing, and often overcrowded, areas elsewhere in the state.

The improvement/development/signing of 800 miles of motorized trails represents a direct, long-term beneficial impact relative to current conditions under Alternative D (No Action) for OHV use (under Alternative D, No Action, the development of new motorized trails is unspecified).

Currently, the Red Mountain Trail is the only designated motorized trail. The additional number of trail miles would reduce the density of OHV users, increase user safety, and reduce user conflicts. The designation would also alleviate strains on trails currently used for a variety of recreational activities and would potentially reduce overland OHV use.

Prohibiting the use of OHVs for big game retrieval off designated OHV routes would minimize the amount of overland travel by OHV users, thereby minimizing surface disturbances caused by this activity. The ban would have a direct beneficial impact on recreation resources by preserving vegetation, habitat, waterways, and scenic quality within the VPA.

4.12.2.7.1.4. Mitigation of Noise and Light

The BLM would work in conjunction with the National Park Service and the energy industry to mitigate noise and light pollution adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument. Currently, there are no mitigation procedures in place. Mitigation would have long-term beneficial effects on recreation by limiting noise and light pollution, with corresponding enhancements in the visitor experience.

4.12.2.7.1.5. Cabins

Proposed would increase the total number of cabins (there are currently five), based on an assessment of needs. Cabins would be constructed near the existing Chipeta, Trujillo, Moonshine, Rat Hole and Wolf Den cabins and at West Water Point, Dick Canyon, and other locations. Increasing the number of cabins would have a long-term, beneficial effect on recreation opportunities, potentially enhancing hunting, mountain biking, hiking, equestrian, and OHV experiences. Increased visitation with longer periods of use extended into historically less-active seasons could adversely affect wildlife and thus, the recreational activity of wildlife viewing, particularly if the activity is extended into crucial wildlife winter ranges.

4.12.2.7.2. ALTERNATIVE A

4.12.2.7.2.1. Back Country Byways

The designation of the Seep Ridge, Book Cliff Divide, and Atchee Ridge Roads as BLM Backcountry Byways under Alternative A would have the same long-term beneficial impacts on recreation as discussed under the Proposed RMP because the management decisions are the same.

4.12.2.7.2.2. SRMAs

Alternative A would beneficially increase the combined acreage of SRMAs from 87,960 acres under current management to 499,588 acres, an increase of 568% when compared to Alternative D (No Action). The increase of 411,660 SRMA-managed acres within the VPA would be the result of expand the existing Browns Park and Nine Mile SRMAs by 71,233 acres (the 24,259-acre Red Mountain-Dry Fork SRMA would remain the same size), with the remaining acreage encompassing the proposed White River, Blue Mountain and Book Cliffs SRMAs. Special

Recreation Management Area-designated acreage would comprise 29% of the 1,725,512 acres of BLM administered lands within the VPA. Each of the five SRMAs would manage for a range of recreational opportunities and activities: Nine Mile SRMA (81,168 acres) would be managed to protect high-value cultural values and scenic quality; Browns Park SRMA (52,720 acres), White River SRMA (24,183 acres) and Pelican Lake SRMA (1,014 acres) would offer water-based recreational opportunities. The western portion of the White River SRMA would be managed under No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulations, thus beneficially protecting the area from minerals development and surface disturbances.

The Blue Mountain SRMA (42,758 acres) would also offer a beneficially broad range of recreational opportunities with an emphasis on activities such as hang gliding, hunting, equestrian use, camping, hiking, and rock climbing. Designating 273,486 acres in the Book Cliffs as an SRMA would have long-term beneficial impacts on recreational resources. The SRMA would offer opportunities for unconfined, dispersed, and primitive recreational activities. It should be noted that the Book Cliffs is currently leased for mineral development on approximately 90% of the area proposed as an SRMA, and this existing condition would have long-term adverse impacts on recreational opportunities in the SRMA.

Establishing a comprehensive integrated activity level plan for the 69-acre Fantasy Canyon area would have beneficial protection-related impacts on the area by increase protection of the unique geological formations in the area, and address health and safety considerations. An activity plan would help reduce conflicts between users in Fantasy Canyon, which would have beneficial impacts on recreation resources.

In comparison to Alternative D (No Action), this alternative would have more beneficial impacts on recreational opportunities because more area would be managed under SRMAs to protect recreation resources and provide opportunities for a range of recreational activities.

4.12.2.7.2.3. Trails

Signing and/or improvement of existing trails and the development of new hiking, horseback and mechanized/non-motorized (mountain biking) trails would increase the total miles of hiking trails to 400 miles, a total increase of 727% when compared to Alternative D (No Action). The increased number of trail miles would also reduce user densities on the trails, potentially alleviating user conflicts and improving individual users' experiences. Increased development of trails could cause increased adverse impacts to cultural and paleontological sites (and impacts to the recreational and educational value of such sites), and the ensuing increase in human activity would increase the potential for wildland fire (which would cause temporary closures of recreational areas or diminish the scenic quality in recreational areas). Because new areas for mountain biking are currently being sought, increasing non-motorized trails would beneficially impact recreation in the VPA by acting as an attraction to mountain bikers seeking new opportunities outside of existing, and often overcrowded, areas elsewhere in the state.

The improvement/development/signing of 800 miles of motorized trails represents a direct, long-term beneficial impact relative to current conditions under Alternative D (No Action) for OHV use. Currently, the Red Mountain Trail is the only designated motorized OHV trail. The

additional number of trail miles would reduce the density of OHV users, increase user safety, and reduce user conflicts. The designation would also alleviate strains on trails currently used for a variety of recreational activities and would potentially reduce overland OHV use.

Prohibiting the use of OHVs for big game retrieval off designated routes would minimize the level of overland travel by OHV users, thereby minimizing surface disturbances caused by this activity. The ban would have a direct beneficial impact on recreation resources by preserving vegetation, habitat, waterways, and scenic quality within the VPA.

The reduction of OHV use in Browns Park would have beneficial protection-related impacts on vegetation, riparian areas, water and soil quality, and wildlife habitat and, thus, would help maintain those resource values important to many other recreationists.

4.12.2.7.2.4. Mitigation of Light and Noise

Under this alternative, mitigation would be applied (in cooperation with the NPS) to reduce light pollution and sound impacts adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument, which would be beneficial in the short term and long term to recreation users in and adjacent to the Monument.

4.12.2.7.2.5. Cabins

Alternative A would increase the total number of cabins (there are currently five), based on an assessment of needs. Cabins would be constructed near the existing Chipeta, Trujillo, Moonshine, Rat Hole and Wolf Den cabins and at West Water Point, Dick Canyon, and other locations. Increasing the number of cabins would have a long-term, beneficial effect on recreation opportunities, potentially enhancing hunting, mountain biking, hiking, equestrian, and OHV experiences. Increased visitation with longer periods of use extended into historically less-active seasons could adversely affect wildlife and thus, the recreational activity of wildlife viewing, particularly if the activity is extended into crucial wildlife winter ranges.

4.12.2.7.3. ALTERNATIVE B

4.12.2.7.3.1. Backcountry Byways

The impacts would be the same as discussed under the Proposed RMP because the management decisions are the same.

4.12.2.7.3.2. SRMAs

Management of SRMAs would be the same as Alternative D (No Action). The following existing SRMAs (totaling 86,454 acres or 5% of the BLM-administered VPA) would continue to be managed for their scenic, cultural, wildlife, and/or recreation values:

- Browns Park: continued management of 17,000 acres
- Red Mountain-Dry Fork: continued management of 24,259 acres

- Nine Mile Canyon: continued management of 44,181 acres
- Pelican Lake: continued management of 1,014 acres

The remaining land within the VPA would be managed under ERMA guidelines. With 5% of the BLM-administered area of the VPA managed as SRMAs, the educational and recreational opportunities within the VPA would remain relatively undeveloped. Accessibility and availability of facilities would be difficult and safety would be an issue. As the majority of the land within the VPA would be managed without recreation resources protection, mineral exploration and development, and OHV use would have adverse impacts on non-motorized and non-mechanized recreational resources and opportunities within the VPA. This would maintain resource protection and management at current levels (the same management as Alternative D, No Action).

4.12.2.7.3.3. Trails

No hiking, horseback riding, or mountain biking (non-motorized/mechanized) trails would be developed under this alternative. However, 800 miles of motorized trails would be improved or developed, with impacts similar to those described under the Proposed RMP. Under this alternative, OHV use for big game retrieval would be allowed, with long term and short term, adverse impacts to soils, vegetation, and scenic quality from off-route surface disturbances.

4.12.2.7.3.4. Mitigation of Noise and Light

The impacts would be the same as discussed under Alternative A because the management decisions are the same.

4.12.2.7.3.5. Cabins

The impacts would be the same as discussed under the Proposed RMP because the management actions are the same.

4.12.2.7.4. ALTERNATIVE C

4.12.2.7.4.1. Backcountry Byways

No Back Country Byways would be designated under this alternative (the same as Alternative D). The management decision to not designate the Seep Ridge, Book Cliff Divide, and Atchee Ridge Routes as Back Country Byways would adversely limit recreational scenic driving opportunities within the VPA.

4.12.2.7.4.2. SRMAs

SRMA designations and impacts would be the same as discussed under Alternative A for Blue Mountain, the Book Cliffs, Pelican Lake, Nine Mile Canyon, Browns Park, and Red Mountain-Dry Fork. The 69-acre Fantasy Canyon SRMA and 47,130-acre White River SRMA would be

proposed under this alternative. Proposed SRMA designations would have greater direct, long-term beneficial impacts on recreation, when compared to Alternative D (No Action) because more area would be managed to provide recreational opportunities and protect recreation resources. This alternative would manage a total of 522,604 acres as SRMAs compared to 86,454 acres under Alternative D, an increase of 594% when compared to Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.7.4.3. Trails

Trails for hiking, horseback riding, and mechanized (non-motorized) recreation would be developed under this alternative with the same management actions and impacts as discussed under the Proposed RMP. Alternative C would not develop or improve motorized trails, which would be the same management decisions as Alternative D (No Action). By not developing and improving motorized trails, the opportunities for those participating in OHV recreation would be adversely limited. Red Mountain Trail is the only trail currently managed and maintained for motorized use, and the lack of established trails could produce an increase in cross-country travel, thereby increasing the adverse impacts to vegetation, soil and water, wildlife habitat, and scenic quality within the VPA. Without further management or designation of OHV trails, cross-country travel, recreation resource user conflicts, user densities, and safety would remain as OHV-related adverse impacts within the VPA. These adverse impacts would likely intensify in the long term as OHV use increases within the VPA.

Limiting OHV recreation would also have a long-term, beneficial effect on soils, vegetation, riparian health, and wildlife habitat (and the recreational experiences that require that these resources remain undisturbed) by reducing surface-disturbing impacts to resources. Reducing the opportunity for motorized OHV use would also have long-term beneficial impacts on other forms of recreation, such as non-motorized use (e.g., hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, dispersed camping), by decreasing user conflicts on trails. See Section 4.12.2.8 for a further analysis of OHV management decisions and impacts.

4.12.2.7.4.4. Noise and Light Mitigation

Noise and light near Dinosaur National Park would be mitigated to levels similar to those described under the Proposed RMP with the same impacts.

4.12.2.7.4.5. Cabins

Under Alternative C no new cabins would be developed, thus having the same impacts as Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.7.5. ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)

4.12.2.7.5.1. Back Country Byways

The designation of Back Country Byways are unspecified for this alternative.

4.12.2.7.5.2. SRMAs

Special Recreation Management Areas, activity plans, and non-motorized trail management would be managed as described for Alternative B, with the impacts to recreation as discussed under that alternative.

4.12.2.7.5.3. Trails

Additional motorized trails would not be developed, with impacts similar to those described under Alternative C, but the existing Red Mountain Trail would continue to be managed under current conditions for motorized OHV use, with impacts as described under Alternative C. Alternative D (No Action) would add 55 miles of non-motorized hiking and/or horseback trails along the Green River, in the Dry Fork, Ashley Creek, Beaver Creek, Willow Creek, Nine Mile areas, and in other places within the VPA. It would add 2 miles of mountain bicycle trails along existing rural roads and trails as well as a non-motorized trail in Sears Canyon. The addition of 55 miles of hiking and horse trails and 2 miles of mountain bike trails would have long-term beneficial impacts on recreation, and the recreational opportunities would be enhanced. However, the trail lengths would be limited, potentially creating direct long-term adverse impacts related to user-density, safety, and resource-use conflicts.

4.12.2.7.5.4. Noise and Light Mitigation

Under Alternative D (No Action), management of potential noise and light pollution adjacent to Dinosaur Nation Monument is currently unspecified. Minerals development operations (drilling well pads, infrastructure construction and operation, and lighting of these structures) would continue to adversely affect recreation settings and experiences. Based on the reasonably foreseeable development of fluid minerals within the VPA, it is likely that these impacts would intensify in the long term with increasingly adverse impacts to recreation opportunities and experiences adjacent to the Monument.

4.12.2.7.5.5. Cabins

Under this alternative, management for the construction and operation of additional cabins at or near existing cabins within the VPA is unspecified. Under the current RMP, it is unlikely that there would be beneficial impacts on recreational opportunities nor would there be the likelihood of adverse impacts to wildlife from an additional human presence in or near existing areas with cabins.

4.12.2.7.6. ALTERNATIVE E

4.12.2.7.6.1. Backcountry Byways

No backcountry byways would be designated under this alternative, providing no added backcountry driving or OHV opportunities.

4.12.2.7.6.2. SRMAs

Eight SRMAs (Book Cliffs, Nine Mile, White River, Fantasy Canyon, Pelican Lake, Blue Mountain, Red Mountain-Dry Fork, and Browns Park) would be designated under Alternative E (with the same impacts and acreages as discussed under Alternative C), focusing recreation management on a variety of opportunities. However, management of 277,596 acres of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics to protect their wilderness characteristics would shift the focus of recreation to primitive and unconfined activities (e.g., hiking, backpacking, river floating, hunting, and wildlife viewing), opportunities for solitude, and the settings needed to achieve these opportunities. Within the Blue Mountain, Book Cliffs, Browns Park, Nine Mile, and White River SRMAs, there are one or more areas considered to be non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics; the protection of these areas' wilderness characteristics would enhance opportunities for primitive recreation (see Table 4.12.2 below).

Table 4.12.2. Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness characteristics in SRMAs —Alternative E

SRMA (acres)	Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in SRMA (acres)
Blue Mountain (42,729 acres)	Bourdette Draw	13,328
Book Cliffs (273,486 acres)	Bitter Creek	33,484
	Cripple Cowboy	13,603
	Hells Hole Canyon	2,125
	Rat Hole	11,367
	Sweet Water	6,994
	Wolf Point	10,461
Browns Park (52,720 acres)	Cold Spring Mountain	8,649
	Dead Horse Pass	1,666
	Lower Flaming Gorge	11,296
	Mountain Home	2,102
Nine Mile (81,168 acres)	Desolation Canyon	20,989
White River (47,130 acres)	White River	21,167

With the shift in focus to primitive forms of recreation in portions of these SRMAs, however, opportunities for motorized recreation (e.g., backcountry driving, vehicle-supported camping) and activities at developed recreation sites (campgrounds, interpretive exhibits) would be reduced with the closure of 57 miles of vehicle routes and restrictions on recreation developments to maintain a natural landscape.

4.12.2.7.6.3. Trails

Signing and improving existing trails and developing new hiking, horseback, and mountain biking trails would increase the total number of trail miles to 400, with impacts as discussed under Proposed. The increased number of trail miles would reduce user densities on the trails, potentially alleviating user conflicts and improving individual users' experiences. Increased development of trails and the ensuing increase in human activity could cause increased adverse impacts to cultural and paleontological sites and the recreational and educational value of such sites. Increased visitation would also increase the potential for wildland fire and could lead to temporary closure of affected recreational areas and the temporary reduction of scenic quality in the affected area. New areas for mountain biking are currently being sought. Additional non-motorized trails would provide additional mountain biking opportunities outside of existing and often overcrowded areas elsewhere in the VPA and the state.

Alternative E would not develop or improve motorized trails as is prescribed in Alternative D (No Action). Thus, opportunities for backcountry driving and OHV recreation would be limited to the road and trail system that currently exists. Red Mountain Trail is the only trail currently managed and maintained for motorized use. The lack of additional trails could produce an increase in cross-country travel, thereby increasing the adverse impacts to vegetation, soil, water, wildlife habitat, and scenic quality within the VPA. Without further OHV opportunities, overland riding, user conflicts, elevated user densities, and the decline in visitor safety would continue within the VPA.

Limiting OHV recreation, however, would have a long-term, beneficial effect on soils, riparian and upland vegetation, and wildlife habitat (and the recreational experiences dependent on these resources), by reducing surface disturbance to these resources. Reducing the opportunity for OHV use would also have long-term beneficial impacts on non-motorized forms of recreation (e.g., hiking, mountain biking, backpacking) by decreasing user conflicts on trails. Please refer to Section 4.12.2.8 of the DEIS for a further analysis of OHV management decisions and impacts.

4.12.2.7.6.4. Mitigation of Lights and Noise

The BLM would work in conjunction with the National Park Service and the energy industry to mitigate noise and light pollution adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument. Currently, there are no mitigation procedures in place. Mitigation would have long-term beneficial effects on recreation opportunities by limiting noise and light pollution and the corresponding enhancements in the recreation setting and desired visitor experience.

4.12.2.7.6.5. Cabins

Under Alternative E, no new cabins would be developed, providing no additional support for hunting, mountain biking, hiking, horse back riding/packing, or backcountry driving and OHV use. Without additional cabins for visitor to use, use seasons would not be extended. The impacts would be the same as discussed under Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.8. IMPACTS OF SPECIAL DESIGNATION DECISIONS ON RECREATION

Under the Proposed RMP and all of the alternatives, WSAs would be managed to maintain their suitability for designation as Wilderness (according to and as directed in the IMP) until Congress either designates an area as Wilderness or releases an area from wilderness consideration. Wilderness Study Areas within the VPA encompass 53,058 acres (see Special Designation Section 4.16 for a detailed discussion of these areas). The IMP stipulates that these special designation areas would exclude OHV use except on prior, existing "ways," prohibit construction of permanent structures, and preserve wilderness values. The impacts to non-mechanized recreational use would be beneficial in the long term because opportunities would continue to be available for these activities. The impacts to mechanized and motorized users would continue to be adverse in the long term because the opportunities for these activities would be very limited or prohibited.

4.12.2.8.1. PROPOSED RMP

The effects of special designations management decisions under the Proposed RMP would have impacts on recreation throughout the VPA. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) totaling 131,700 acres would be established or maintained in the following locations:

- Browns Park: 18,490 acres
- Lower Green River: 8,470 acres
- Red Mountain-Dry Fork: 24,285 acres
- Nine Mile Canyon: 44,168 acres
- Lears Canyon: 1,375
- Pariette: 10,437
- Red Creek: 24,475

While managed as ACECs, Browns Park, Nine Mile Canyon, and Red Mountain-Dry Fork would receive comprehensive integrated activity plans, with direct long-term beneficial protection-related impacts that would address SRMA values. Both sites have a broad range of valuable resources including high scenic quality, wildlife habitat, cultural, historic, and recreational opportunities. Each of the above ACEC designations would impact OHV use as such use would either be closed or limited to designated routes. Restrictions on motorized use would be balanced by new trails under the Proposed RMP (see Section 4.12.2.8).

As noted in Section 4.12.1, all proposed ACECs would be available for oil and gas leasing, and subject to valid existing mineral leasing rights. These potential mineral leaseings would have long-term adverse impacts on the range of recreational opportunities and the quality of recreation experiences.

The Proposed RMP would have fewer beneficial impacts to recreation due to the decreased acres of special designation areas when compared to Alternative D (No Action). While Alternative D (No Action) would not designate any new ACECs nor expand any currently designated areas,

Alternative D (No Action) would maintain a total of 165,944 ACEC acres within Pariette Wetlands, Red Creek Watershed, Lears Canyon, Browns Park, the Lower Green River, Nine Mile Canyon, and Red Mountain-Dry Fork (34,247 acres more than the Proposed RMP).

The Proposed RMP would continue to protect eligible WSR segments along the Upper and Lower Green River, but this would be less protective than Alternative D (No Action). Under Alternative D (No Action), suitability findings would not be made on either the White or Green rivers, but would maintain and continue to protect eligible segments along the White River, and Upper and Lower Green River. Under the Proposed RMP, segments along Evacuation Creek, Bitter Creek, and Argyle Creek would also not be identified as suitable for Wild or Scenic designation.

4.12.2.8.2. ALTERNATIVE A

Under Alternative A, ACECs totaling 345,850 acres would be established or maintained in the following locations:

- Bitter Creek: 68,834 acres
- Browns Park: 52,721 acres
- Coyote Basin: 87,743 acres
- Lower Green River: 10,170 acres
- Nine Mile Canyon: 48,000 acres
- Red Mountain-Dry Fork: 24,285 acres
- White River: 17,810 acres
- Lears Canyon: 1,375
- Pariette: 10,437
- Red Creek: 24,475

The Bitter Creek ACEC would be designated as an ACEC/Research Natural Area (RNA) due to its high-value, old growth pinyon pines, cultural resources, historic features, and high-quality watersheds. This would have long-term protection-related beneficial impacts on the area, and visitors to this ACEC would benefit from the special protection given to its unique ecosystem.

Coyote Basin would also be designated as an ACEC/RNA due to the white-tailed prairie dog, numerous special status wildlife species, and the high-value ecosystems that support this wildlife. Wildlife viewing opportunities would be enhanced within this ACEC.

While managed as ACECs, Browns Park and Nine Mile Canyon would receive comprehensive integrated activity plans, with direct long-term beneficial protection-related impacts that would address SRMA values. Both sites have a broad range of valuable resources including high scenic quality, wildlife habitat, cultural, historic, and recreational opportunities. Each of the above ACEC designations would impact OHV use as such use would either be closed or limited to

designated routes. Loss of these areas for motorized use would be balanced by new trails proposed under Alternative A (see Section 4.12.2.8).

Managing Red Mountain-Dry Fork as an ACEC for recreational purposes, specifically for OHV use, would enhance the recreation experience, diminish the adverse impacts from OHVs in this area, reduce direct, adverse resource-use conflicts between OHV and non-OHV users, and improve health and human safety.

As noted in Section 4.12.1, with the exception of portions of the White River and the Browns Park ACECs, all of the proposed ACECs would be available for oil and gas leasing, and subject to valid existing mineral leasing rights. These potential mineral leaseings would have long-term adverse impacts on the range of recreational opportunities and the quality of recreation experiences from surface disturbances that would affect scenic quality and setting.

This alternative would have more beneficial impacts to recreation due to the increased number of special designation areas than Alternative D (No Action), which would not designate any new ACECs nor expand any currently designated areas.

Alternative A would identify Wild and Scenic River suitability designations along segments of the White River, which would increase the number of free-flowing river miles and preserve cultural and scenic natural resources along the rivers (and thus, the recreational opportunities that are supported by cultural and scenic resources) within the suitability designation areas. These suitability designated river segments would have greater long-term protection-related beneficial impacts on recreation resources than Alternative D (No Action), under which suitability findings would not be made on either the White or Green rivers. Under Alternative A, segments along Evacuation Creek, Bitter Creek, and Argyle Creek would not be identified for Wild or Scenic designation.

4.12.2.8.3. ALTERNATIVE B

Under Alternative B, ACECs totaling 170,886 acres would be established or maintained in the following locations:

- Browns Park: 18,474 acres
- Coyote Basin: 47,659 acres
- Nine Mile Canyon: 44,181 acres
- Red Mountain-Dry Fork: 24,285 acres
- Lears Canyon: 1,375
- Pariette: 10,437
- Red Creek: 24,475

Under Alternative B there would be one new ACEC designated or expanded in the VPA (within Coyote Basin). Coyote Basin would be established as an ACEC/Research Natural Area for protection of the black-footed ferret and associated prey. This ACEC designation would have minor beneficial impacts on recreation, as the area would be designated for the protection and

enhancement of ferret habitat, and recreational opportunities for wildlife viewing would be possible. The total acreage proposed for designation as ACECs under this alternative would be 29,290 acres more than the 141,596 ACEC acres that would be maintained under Alternative D (No Action). Therefore the impacts on recreation under Alternative B would be more beneficial to recreation than Alternative D (No Action).

There would be no new Wild and Scenic River suitability designations under Alternative B but this alternative would maintain previously recommended segments along the Upper and Lower Green River, which would have the same impacts on this recreation resource as Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.8.4. ALTERNATIVE C

Under Alternative C, the greatest number of acres within the BLM-administered VPA would be designated as ACECs, when compared to Alternative D (No Action), which would not expand or designate any new ACECs. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) totaling 681,310 acres would be established or maintained in the following locations:

- Bitter Creek and Bitter Creek/PR Spring: 147,425 acres
- Browns Park: 52,721 acres
- Coyote Basin Complex: 124,161 acres
- Four Mile Wash: 50,280 acres
- Lower Green River: 10,170 acres
- Main Canyon: 100,915 acres
- Middle Green River: 6,768 acres
- Nine Mile Canyon: 81,168 acres
- Red Mountain-Dry Fork: 24,285 acres
- White River: 47,130 acres
- Lears Canyon: 1,375
- Pariette: 10,437
- Red Creek: 24,475

Compared to Alternative D (No Action), acreages for ACEC designation would be designated or increased in Bitter Creek, in the Coyote Basin-Snake John- Kennedy Wash sub-complexes, Four Mile Wash, along the Lower and Middle Green River, in Main Canyon, Nine Mile Canyon, and Red Mountain-Dry Fork. These new ACECS or enlarged, existing ACECS, would directly benefit recreation resources as described under Alternative A. The Coyote Basin, Snake John, and Kennedy Wash ACEC would include the Myton Bench and Shiner areas that would also offer protection to reintroduced black-footed ferrets, but would have beneficial impacts on recreation within the VPA, as described under Alternative A. These increases in acreage would beneficially improve and enhance non-motorized recreation opportunities in the long-term as

described in the Proposed RMP, although adverse impacts to recreation from oil and gas leasing could still occur. An ACEC designation for Four Mile Wash would be unique to this alternative and, further, would classify the area as an Outstanding Natural Area because of its high scenic quality, primitive recreational opportunities, riparian ecosystems, and special status fish species. This would have long-term beneficial protection-related impacts on recreation resources. An integrated activity level plan would provide additional site-specific management prescriptions and resource protection. The area would be closed to oil and gas leasing and OHV use would be limited to designated routes, which would have direct, long-term beneficial impacts on the area's recreation resources.

Alternative C would add 164 miles of Wild and Scenic River suitability designations for segments of the White River, Nine Mile Creek, Middle Green River, Evacuation Creek, Bitter Creek, and Argyle Creek, increasing the number of free-flowing river miles and preserving the cultural- and scenic-resource-based recreational opportunities within the designated areas. This alternative would have the greatest number of river miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers designated, having greater long-term direct beneficial impacts on recreation resources when compared to Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.8.5. ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)

Alternative D (No Action) would maintain ACECs (totaling 165,944 acres) in the following locations:

- Browns Park: 52,721 acres
- Lower Green River: 8,470 acres
- Nine Mile Canyon: 44,181 acres
- Red Mountain-Dry Fork: 24,285 acres
- Lears Canyon: 1,375
- Pariette: 10,437
- Red Creek: 24,475

The ACECs currently established for the Lower Green River, Lears Canyon, Red Creek, Pariette, Browns Park, Red Mountain-Dry Fork, and Nine Mile Canyon (totaling 141,596 acres) would continue to have long-term beneficial protection-related impacts on recreation within these areas, with impacts to recreation as described under the Proposed RMP.

The Browns Park, Nine Mile Canyon, and Red Mountain-Dry Fork ACECs would continue to be managed as noted in the Proposed RMP, however, management under this alternative would also be less restrictive. Comprehensive integrated activity plans would not be developed and there would be fewer restrictions on oil and gas leasing. Off-highway vehicle use and VRM classifications would be unspecified. Alternative D (No Action) would provide protection to deer winter range, special status species, outstanding scenic, cultural, riparian, and fisheries resources, which would have beneficial, indirect impacts on recreational opportunities.

4.12.2.8.6. ALTERNATIVE E

Fourteen ACECs totaling 681,310 acres would be designated under Alternative E (the same as Alternative C):

- Bitter Creek and Bitter Creek/PR Spring: 147,425 acres
- Browns Park: 52,721 acres
- Coyote Basin Complex: 124,161 acres
- Four Mile Wash: 50,280 acres
- Lower Green River: 10,170 acres
- Middle Green River: 6,768 acres
- White River: 47,130 acres
- Main Canyon: 100,915 acres
- Red Mountain-Dry Fork: 24,285 acres
- Nine Mile Canyon: 81,168 acres
- Lears Canyon: 1,375
- Pariette Wetlands: 10,437
- Red Creek Watershed: 24,475

These ACECs would be designated and managed for a variety of relevant and important values, including natural landscapes and scenery, wildlife, critical wildlife habitat, riparian and wetland ecosystems, old growth forests, cultural and historic properties, and relict vegetation communities. These values provide for a wide variety of recreation opportunities, from motorized to non-motorized activities and developed to dispersed activities in a variety of settings. Management of these values varies from protection of unmodified landscapes and special status wildlife species to development of oil and gas and vegetation manipulation.

Ten of the ACECs designated under this alternative include non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics (see Table 4.12.3). Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics and to provide opportunities for primitive forms of recreation (e.g., hiking, backpacking, river floating, hunting, wildlife viewing, and nature study) and experiences of solitude in natural, undeveloped settings. Opportunities for motorized recreation (e.g., OHV and backcountry driving) and developed facilities (e.g., interpretive and wayside exhibits) would be provided outside non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics.

The impacts of these ACEC designations under this alternative would be more beneficial to recreation when compared to Alternative D (No Action) because more acreage would be protected from surface disturbances caused by mineral leasing, mineral materials disposal, new road construction, and ROWs that could otherwise adversely impact recreational opportunities and experiences.

Table 4.12.3. Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in ACECs—Alternative E

ACEC	Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Acreage of Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics
Bitter Creek	Bitter Creek	33,433
	Cripple Cowboy	13,579
	Hells Hole Canyon	38
	Rat Hole	11,337
	Sweet Water	4
Bitter Creek/P.R. Spring	Bitter Creek	7
	Cripple Cowboy	15
	Hells Hole Canyon	2,087
	Sweet Water	6,982
Browns Park	Cold Spring Mountain	8,649
	Diamond Breaks	1
	Dead Horse Pass	1,665
	Lower Flaming Gorge	11,274
	Mountain Home	2,089
Coyote Basin–Snake John	Bourdette Draw	13
Four Mile Wash	Desolation Canyon	43,014
Lower Green River	Desolation Canyon	5,242
Main Canyon	Wolf Point	11,783
Nine Mile Canyon	Desolation Canyon	19,470
Red Creek Watershed	Cold Spring Mountain	76
	Mountain Home	4,976
White River	White River	21,167

4.12.2.9. IMPACTS OF TRAVEL/ROADS AND TRAILS DECISIONS ON RECREATION

4.12.2.9.1. PROPOSED RMP

Under the Proposed RMP, areas within the VPA designated as Open to OHV cross-country travel would be limited to approximately 6,202 acres (a decrease of approximately 781,657 acres when compared to Alternative D, No Action). The impacts of limiting the number of open-designated acres would be long-term direct and indirect, adverse and beneficial on recreation. Long-term direct adverse effects would include the reduction in opportunities for OHV cross-country recreation-related travel. This loss would be offset by the 800 miles of trails proposed for OHV use in Alternative A. However, the long-term, beneficial effects of increased protection of soil, water, and wildlife habitat (which would preserve the quality of recreational activities associated with these resources) would counter the adverse effects of travel decisions. The reduction in noise, surface disturbances, visual quality degradation, and resource-use conflicts with other recreational activities would have direct long-term beneficial impacts on recreation. Indirect beneficial impacts to recreational activities that require high visual quality would result from the reduction in soil erosion and fugitive dust produced by OHV activities.

Areas designated as Limited to Designated Routes for OHV travel would be increased to 1,643,475 acres (an increase of 756,200 acres from current management as discussed in Alternative D, No Action), which would have direct long-term beneficial impacts on recreation by increasing the level of OHV management within the VPA. This would have direct beneficial impacts on recreation by reducing recreational resource-use conflicts. Under the Proposed RMP, OHV travel limited to designated routes would include the 106,178 acres of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics.

Designating areas as Closed to OHV travel would be increased from 50,388 acres (under Alternative D, No Action) to 75,845 acres (an increase of 25,457 acres) and the miles of designated routes would increase from zero miles under existing conditions (Alternative D, No Action) to 4,860 miles. This increase in designated closed OHV routes would have direct, long-term beneficial impacts on other non-motorized recreational opportunities activities by reducing recreation resource-use conflicts, and by reducing the OHV-related disturbances to soil, water, and wildlife habitat resources. Increasing the number of OHV closed acres within the VPA would have minor restriction-related adverse impacts on OHV use, but the long-term direct and indirect benefits of reduced surface disturbances and reduced resource-use conflicts with other recreational activities would counter the adverse effects on OHV use.

4.12.2.9.2. ALTERNATIVE A

The impacts of travel decisions on recreation would be the same as discussed above under the Proposed RMP because the management decisions are the same.

4.12.2.9.3. ALTERNATIVE B

Areas open to OHV travel would decrease to 5,434 acres (a decrease of 782,425 acres when compared to current management as described in Alternative D, No Action).

Areas limited to OHV travel would increase to 1,659,901 acres (an increase of 772,626 acres from current management as described in Alternative D, No Action).

Areas closed to OHV travel would increase to a total of 60,187 acres (an increase of 9,799 acres compared to Alternative D, No Action), the least amount of all the alternatives.

The number of miles of routes designated would increase from zero miles under existing conditions (Alternative D, No Action) to 4,860 miles.

The effects of Alternative B would be similar to those described under the Proposed RMP, for areas open to OHV travel. Areas designated as closed to OHV use would be reduced, which would reduce surface disturbances caused by overland OHV travel. Alternative B would have long-term beneficial impacts on other recreation resources similar to those described under the Proposed RMP.

4.12.2.9.4. ALTERNATIVE C

The impacts of road, trail, and OHV management decisions would be similar to those described under the Proposed RMP. There would be 5,434 acres open to cross-country OHV travel (the same as Alternative B), and the impacts of open OHV areas would be similar to those described under the Proposed RMP.

Areas designated as limited to designated routes for OHV travel would be increased to 1,353,529 acres (an increase of 466,254 acres from current management as described in Alternative D, No Action), allowing for increased use in a more managed setting, and potentially sustaining the existing levels of OHV use.

Areas closed to OHV travel would be increased from 50,388 acres (under Alternative D, No Action) to 366,559 acres, which would have direct long-term beneficial impacts on soil, water, and wildlife habitat resources.

The number of miles of routes designated would increase from zero miles under existing conditions to 4,707 miles.

Alternative C would be the most restrictive on OHV use. A decrease in the number of acres available for OHV use would have long-term beneficial impacts on other non-motorized forms of recreation by reducing resource-user conflicts and by enhancing and/or protecting recreation resources as described under the Proposed RMP.

Alternative C would also provide the highest degree of protection for natural resources, and create the lowest potential damage to natural resources from OHV-caused surface disturbances. This would have direct and indirect long-term beneficial impacts on all recreational activities within the VPA.

4.12.2.9.5. ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)

Current management practices designate a total of 787,859 acres as open to cross-country OHV travel, 887,275 acres as limited to designated routes, and 50,388 acres as closed to OHV use. No OHV routes would be designated under this alternative. Travel management under current conditions would be less restrictive to OHV users when compared to the action alternatives, but would maintain the current adverse impacts to natural and cultural resources and to non-motorized users, as discussed above. The adverse impacts of OHV-caused surface disturbances to soil, water, visual quality, and wildlife habitat would continue, as would recreational resource-use conflicts between motorized, non-motorized, and non-mechanized recreation resource users.

4.12.2.9.6. ALTERNATIVE E

Under Alternative E, 5,434 acres would be open to cross-country OHV travel, the same as under Alternatives B and C and a reduction of 782,425 acres from Alternative D (No Action). Under this alternative, motorized travel would be focused on designated routes, not cross-country.

While the experience of cross-country driving would be limited to 5,434 acres, motorized travel for access and recreation would still be available on 4,654 miles of road and trails.

The area limited to designated routes for OHV travel would increase to 1,326,024 acres (an increase of 438,749 acres) from current management described in Alternative D (No Action). Limiting motorized travel to designated routes would emphasize an "on-road/trail" experience of varying degrees of challenge and risk, depending on the quality of the route traveled. Further limiting motorized travel to designated routes would place more management controls on the traveler, but sustaining the existing levels of OHV use is anticipated. The number of miles of routes formally designated for motorized use would increase from 0 miles under existing conditions (Alternative D, No Action) to 4,654 miles under Alternative E, although these routes would still be driven under Alternative D (No Action).

Areas closed to OHV travel would increase to 392,818 acres (an increase of 342,430 acres) from current management in Alternative D (No Action). Closure to cross-country travel would have direct long-term beneficial impacts on soils, water, and wildlife habitat and on the primitive and non-motorized forms of recreation dependent on those resources and settings. In the areas closed to OHV travel, the focus would be placed on primitive and non-motorized forms of recreation, including hiking, backpacking, river floating, hunting, wildlife viewing, nature study, sightseeing, and others. Included in the areas closed to OHV travel would be the 24 non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics (277,596 acres). Here, recreation emphasis would be placed on primitive forms of recreation, experiences of solitude, and the undeveloped settings that support those activities and experiences.

There are 228 miles of routes that exist in the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. Under this alternative, these routes would be closed to motorized travel, foreclosing the opportunity for backcountry driving, vehicle-supported camping, and other motorized forms of recreation.

4.12.2.10. IMPACTS OF VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DECISIONS ON RECREATION

The following activities are dependent on visual resources and would be affected more by decisions related to visual resources:

- Sight-seeing (the primary reason for current visitation to the VPA)
- Scenic driving
- Wildlife viewing
- Nature study

Many recreational activities in the VPA are related, in some way, to scenic quality. The degree to which scenic quality would be maintained is directly related to the degree to which the recreational experience would be maintained. Because VRM Classes I and II are most desirable for the recreation experience, the long-term beneficial effects of VRM upon recreation under the Proposed RMP and each alternative are represented as acreages categorized as VRM Class I or

Class II. Table 4.12.4 below summarized the VRM class designations within the BLM-administered portion of the VPA.

Table 4.12.4. VRM Class Acreages for the Proposed RMP and each Alternative

VRM Class	Proposed RMP	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D (No Action)	Alternative E
VRM I	57,776	63,136	52,764	145,781	53,086	334,516
VRM II	231,911	294,773	114,030	362,660	113,686	259,694
VRM III	786,612	716,186	199,179	580,846	199,192	535,586
VRM IV	643,641	645,845	1,353,967	630,653	1,353,976	590,144
Total	1,719,940	1,719,940	1,719,940	1,719,940	1,719,940	1,719,940
VRM I and II	289,687	357,909	166,794	508,441	166,772	594,210
VRM III and IV	1,430,253	1,362,031	1,553,146	1,211,499	1,553,168	1,125,730

4.12.2.10.1. PROPOSED RMP

The Proposed RMP would increase the current acreage of VRM Classes I and II by 122,915 acres (from 166,772 acres under Alternative D (No Action) to 289,687 acres under the Proposed RMP). This increase would more have long-term beneficial effect on recreation throughout the VPA, when compared with Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.10.2. ALTERNATIVE A

Alternative A would increase the current acreage of VRM Classes I and II by 191,137 acres to a total of 357,909 acres. This increase would have more long-term beneficial effect on recreation throughout the VPA, when compared with Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.10.3. ALTERNATIVES B AND D (NO ACTION)

Maintaining 166,794 acres as VRM Classes I and II under Alternative B (very similar to acreages designated under Alternative D, No Action) would have the same low protection-related beneficial impacts on the scenic quality component of recreation resources as Alternative D (No Action).

4.12.2.10.4. ALTERNATIVE C

The management actions under Alternative C would increase VRM Class I and Class II designated areas by 341,669 acres to 508,441 acres throughout the BLM administered VPA. When compared to current conditions under Alternative D (No Action), this large increase in area for the preservation of scenic quality would have greater long-term beneficial effects on recreational opportunities and activities.

4.12.2.10.5. ALTERNATIVE E

Under this alternative, there would be approximately 594,210 acres managed by VRM Class I (preserve the landscape character) and Class II (retain the landscape character) objectives. Class III (partially retain the landscape character) and Class IV (provide for landscape modification) objectives would be prescribed for 1,125,730 acres. Class I and II objectives would limit landscape change but would provide for dispersed and undeveloped recreation opportunities. The opportunities would include a variety of motorized and non-motorized activities like camping, hiking, backpacking, river floating, wildlife viewing, hunting, nature study, and picnicking. Backcountry driving and OHV use would be permitted on designated roads and trails. However, recreation requiring developed sites like campgrounds, picnic areas, or interpretive sites would not be permitted in Class I areas. Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics (277,596 acres) would be managed by VRM Class I objectives and provide the same recreation opportunities as described above, except backcountry driving or OHV use. Routes in non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would be closed to motorized use in these areas.

4.12.2.11. SUMMARY

4.12.2.11.1. PROPOSED RMP

The Proposed RMP would have a moderate degree of adverse impacts when compared to the action alternatives and major beneficial impacts when compared to Alternative D (No Action).

- Increases in oil and gas production would have major adverse impacts on recreational opportunities.
- Increases in OHV management would have adverse impacts on mechanized recreation, by restricting OHV recreational opportunities in the VPA.
- Increases in OHV management would have beneficial impacts on non-mechanized recreation through protection of wildlife, wilderness values, and the reduction of user conflicts.
- Protection of areas as ACECs and management of SRMAs would have a major beneficial impact on recreation. SRMA acreages would be increased from 87,931 to 133,560.

4.12.2.11.2. ALTERNATIVE A

This alternative would have impacts from minerals development similar to the Proposed RMP alternative, with a moderate degree of adverse impacts when compared to the other action alternatives and major beneficial impacts to recreation when compared to Alternative D (No Action).

- The acreages designated for OHV management would be the same as the Proposed RMP.
- SRMA acreages would be increased to 499,620, and ACEC designation would be increased to 345,850 acres.
- Designation of 357,909 acres of the VPA under VRM Classes I and II for protection of scenic quality.

- Minerals leasing acreage greater than all of the alternatives except Alternative B.

4.12.2.11.3. ALTERNATIVE B

This alternative would have the most adverse impacts to recreation resources due to the large number of acres available for oil and gas leasing. This alternative would permit the most acres within the VPA for surface-disturbing minerals development.

- Protection of wildlife and special status species would be the least under this alternative, with the greatest adverse impacts to recreation values and opportunities that are related to these resources.
- No new ACECs would be designated under this alternative, with 123,227 acres maintained as ACECS (less than Alternative D) so there would be fewer resource protection-related beneficial impacts to recreation from these designations than under the current RMP. SRMA acreages would be the same as Alternative D (No Action) (87,931)
- Limited protection of visual resources would have major adverse impacts on recreational opportunities in which scenic quality is an important component.

4.12.2.11.4. ALTERNATIVE C

This alternative would have the most beneficial impacts on recreation.

- Designation of additional ACECs and eligibility designations of Wild and Scenic River segments would have beneficial impacts on recreation. Designation of the most acreage for SRMA management (522,604) would have major beneficial impacts on all forms of recreation.
- Limits on OHV travel would be greatest under this alternative, producing adverse impacts on mechanized recreational opportunities and beneficial impacts on non-mechanized recreation.
- Limits on oil and gas leasing and increased protection of wildlife and special status species would produce the most beneficial impacts and the least adverse impacts on recreation.
- Designation of the most acreage of the VPA under VRM Classes I and II would provide the most protection to visual resources, and therefore would provide the greatest beneficial impacts to those recreational opportunities in which scenic quality is an important recreational component.

4.12.2.11.5. ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)

Oil and gas leasing would have a major adverse impact on recreation.

- Lack of limits on OHV use would have major beneficial impacts on motorized recreation, and major adverse impacts on all other types of non-motorized recreation.

- Protecting 141,596 acres currently designated as ACECs) with no eligible Wild and Scenic River segments (but with maintained protection of segments along the Upper and Lower Green River) would provide protection-related beneficial impacts to recreation.
- Limited protection of visual resources would have major adverse impacts on recreational opportunities in which scenic quality is an important component.

4.12.2.11.6. ALTERNATIVE E

The focus of this alternative would be the protection of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. That protection would have substantial beneficial impacts on primitive and non-mechanized recreation activities, but it would exclude OHV use on 228 miles of routes and activities dependent on developed sites (e.g., campground and interpretive facilities).

- Designation of ACECs and protection of suitable Wild and Scenic River segments would benefit undeveloped forms of recreation dependent on those settings. Designation of SRMA acreages the same as Alternative C (522,604 acres) would have major beneficial impacts on recreational opportunities within the VPA.
- OHV travel would be limited under this alternative, reducing opportunities for cross-country driving, focusing motorized travel to designated routes, and creating added opportunities for non-motorized recreation.
- Management for preservation and retention of the existing landscape character (VRM Classes I and II objectives) would provide the most opportunity for activities and experiences dependent on natural and undeveloped settings.

4.12.2.12. MITIGATION MEASURES

All of the alternatives would affect recreation resources to varying degrees and so would require varying forms of mitigation measures.

Mitigation measures would include:

- Where prescribed fire treatments overlap recreation areas, promoting recreational use of other areas with similar recreational opportunities.
- Maintaining wildlife viewing opportunities by following mitigation recommendations in the Wildlife and Minerals portions of this RMP.
- Controlling fugitive dust with dust suppressants along scenic byways, oil and gas development areas, and major recreational access routes.
- Separating recreational uses and opportunities, temporally or spatially, to mitigate conflict between user groups.
- Educating the users of recreation resources on the impacts that their activities have on the natural environment, in an effort to reduce the adverse impacts on natural resources, especially by OHV users.

4.12.3. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Some mineral development activities associated with the management actions of the Proposed RMP and the alternatives would have unavoidable, adverse impacts on recreation resources. Exploration and development would fragment hunting areas and impact OHV and non-motorized trails.

4.12.4. SHORT-TERM USE VERSUS LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

Short-term use of recreation resources in the VPA would result in negligible impacts on the long-term productivity of the resource.

4.12.5. IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE IMPACTS

No irreversible impacts to recreation resources or activities are anticipated. There would likely be irretrievable impacts to recreation resources (from a loss of vegetation and from surface disturbances directly and indirectly causing a reduction in scenic quality) produced by cross-country OHV use, and by minerals development in areas formerly used for solitary, remote, and unconfined recreation.