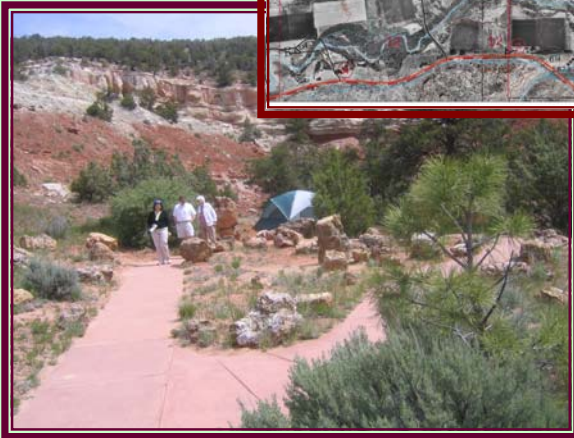
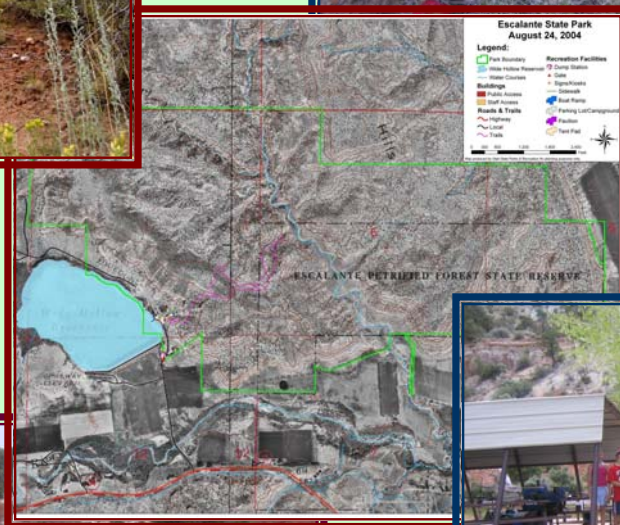


Escalante State Park



Resource Management Plan September 2005



Utah State Parks & Escalante Resource Management Plan

Legend:

- ▲ Utah State Park Locations
- ★ Resource Management Plan Study Locality



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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

In October 2004, representatives from the Utah Division of State Parks and Recreation met with community stakeholders from the Escalante area to initiate a resource planning effort for Escalante State Park. The planning process was based on public input and involvement. The Escalante State Park Resource Management Planning Team - a citizen-based team representing community leaders, interested users, local residents and agency representatives – was at the core of the process. The recommendations contained in this document represent several months of work by the Team as well as direct public input.

The plan provides recommendations founded upon six primary vision elements that will guide future management of Escalante State Park. These elements focus on the following:

- Developing and maintaining facilities that offer safe and suitable recreation opportunities to visitors.
- Providing management that maintains traditional experiences, while allowing for other appropriate, non-traditional types of activities to occur in the Park.
- Partnering with local residents, civic groups, businesses and other agencies to provide a linked network of recreation opportunities to Escalante and surrounding areas, and to be a positive factor in the local economy.
- Protecting and preserving park resources by exercising good stewardship practices.
- Offering interpretive and educational programs and materials that give visitors an appreciation of park and area natural and cultural resources, and promote proper, non-destructive types of use.
- Ensuring the Park has adequate and appropriate staff, equipment, and support.

These objectives are geared towards improving and expanding the Park's recreational opportunities, protecting its resources and providing the visitor with a safe, enjoyable experience. Achievement of these vision elements will require the continued support of users, legislative and community leaders, and the Division of State Parks and Recreation.

The Planning Team issued a number of specific recommendations in support of the plan's vision elements. Six issue areas form the basis of the Team's recommendations. Each issue area with its accompanying recommendations is outlined as follows:

Park Management and Funding

- Provide adequate staffing and funding for the operation of the Park.
 - Complete a staffing and budget analysis for the Park, and adjust staffing and funding levels to allow the Park to provide needed services while operating independently from Kodachrome Basin State Park.
 - Ensure that sufficient, on-going operational funding is included with new development.
- Separate the management of Escalante and Kodachrome Basin State Parks.
 - Establish a park manager position at the Park.

Facility Development

- Provide more and varied hiking and equestrian trail opportunities.
 - Complete a trail plan for the Park that identifies opportunities that offer a variety of experiences, trail lengths, and degrees of difficulty.
- Enhancement of camping and day-use opportunities.
 - Provide additional camping and day-use facilities including group-use areas, and an interpretive center.

- Improve park signage and entrance experience.
 - Move entrance further into park.
 - Add/improve signs leading to the park, along park boundary, and those informing visitors about rules, and safe use of the park, etc.

Interpretation and Education

- Add a naturalist position to the Park to develop interpretive plans, materials and programs.
- Develop a comprehensive interpretive plan for the Park.

Legislative, Governmental, and Community Support

- Develop community and legislative support for the Park.
 - Staff participation and support of community activities.
 - Park should host community events.
 - Meet with, and encourage, local officials and agency partners to visit the Park.
 - Establish a friends group.

Visitor Experience and Resource Management

- Protect park resources.
 - Inventory resources.
 - Use interpretation and education to educate visitors about the importance of the resources.
- Ensure adequate culinary water for current and future use.
- Partner with the New Escalante Irrigation Company to find ways to maintain water level that is adequate for recreation in Wide Hollow Reservoir.
- Support Garfield County's efforts to provide off-highway vehicle (OHV) routes in the County. OHVs will be treated the same as other vehicles using the Park's facilities, such as the campground, and the county road

through the Park. If demand dictates, an OHV trailhead will be considered for placement where the county road leaves the Park to the north.

- Work with Garfield County and adjacent landowners to limit use of park road to traffic compatible with park activities.
- Due to the fragility and scarcity of many of the Park's resources, and to the rugged nature of the terrain, access to the undeveloped portions of the Park should remain by foot or horseback only, except in emergency situations as determined by park staff.
- In the future, the Park should cooperate with groups/user groups (county, city) and nurture partnerships to consider additional recreation opportunities, provided these opportunities are compatible with the other elements of this plan.

Marketing

- Create a unique identity for the Park.
- Identify potential customers and institute market strategies to reach new patrons.
- Provide and market enhanced visitor opportunities.

Implementing many of these recommendations will be dependent upon acquiring new funding sources. The funding requests arising from this plan will compete for priority against other projects within the Division and other agencies in state government.

The plan's success is dependent upon the continued support of park stakeholders. Efforts must be made to preserve park resources, interact with local communities, and strive to meet the expectations of park visitors. The recommendations contained within this plan were based upon an open and collaborative process. It is imperative that this collaborative spirit continues as the plan's components are implemented.

Mission and Vision

Mission Statement

Mission Statement

The mission of Escalante State Park is to provide a wide variety of quality recreational opportunities that meet visitor needs, supply linkages to the local community and other recreation sites, and promote and ensure the protection of park resources and the environment.

Team Members developed the mission statement recognizing that the Park is an important provider of recreational opportunities in the Escalante area. The Team also recognized that the Park has many unique and irreplaceable resources that need to be protected and preserved for the future, while being enjoyed by visitors.

Vision Statement

A vision statement is like a compass; it charts a destination, sets the Team and Park on the correct course of action, and provides the means to determine how closely the Team recommendations will follow that charted course. Utilizing the basic principles developed in the mission statement, the Team developed a vision to guide the development of the plan's recommendations and park management for the next few years. The vision statement provides the foundation for recommendations that balance recreational demands with preservation of the Park's natural and cultural resources, offer new and varied opportunities, and encourage community involvement.

Vision Statement

Escalante State Park will accomplish its mission by:

-  Developing and maintaining facilities that offer safe and suitable recreation opportunities to visitors
-  Providing management that maintains traditional experiences, while allowing for other appropriate, non-traditional types of activities to occur in the park
-  Partnering with local residents, civic groups, businesses and other agencies to provide a linked network of recreation opportunities to Escalante and surrounding areas, and to be a positive factor in the local economy
-  Protecting and preserving park resources by exercising good stewardship practices
-  Offering interpretive and educational programs and materials that give visitors an appreciation of park and area natural and cultural resources, and promote proper, non-destructive types of use
-  Ensuring the park has adequate and appropriate staff, equipment, and support

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Resource Management Plan Purpose and Process

Purpose of the Plan

This resource management plan (RMP) is intended to help guide the Utah Division of State Parks and Recreation's stewardship obligations for Escalante State Park. Planning for the Park is essential, given the unique and fragile nature of the natural and cultural resources, and the potential for growth in visitation due to the establishment of the nearby Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.



View of Wide Hollow Reservoir

Escalante State Park is located along State Highway 12, an important tourist/visitor route, and is positioned in the middle of a vast area offering a multitude of recreation sites and activities. The Park is situated within easy access of numerous national parks, monuments and recreation areas, as well as national forests, wilderness areas, other state parks, recreation sites, and

attractions. In fact the vast majority of park visitors also visit nearby Bryce Canyon and Zion National Parks, as well as Lake Powell and Lake Mead National Recreation Areas. The new Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument – which is directly adjacent to the Park – will likely lead to additional visitation to the Park due to the Monument's proximity and relatively few visitor/camping accommodations.

A number of issues ranging from resource management, to park management and funding, were identified by various sources including input from the Planning Team members, and the general public through a public meeting and a visitor survey. Team members aggregated the issues into six distinct categories or issue areas addressing: facility development; park management and funding; visitor experience and park resource management; legislative, governmental and community support; interpretation and education; and marketing. This plan and its recommendations address each of the issue areas. It provides flexible guidelines for the management and development of the Park over the next five to ten years. More importantly, the plan is based on a foundation of public input and consensus of the key stakeholders rather than by the unilateral direction of the Division of State Parks and Recreation.

The Planning Process

Planning for an outstanding recreational resource such as Escalante State Park is required for the protection of this unique area and to ensure the efficient and effective expenditure of state and local funds. It is necessary for the long-term protection and public enjoyment of the Park's many opportunities and resources. This RMP is required by the Utah State Legislature and

the Board of the Utah Division of State Parks and Recreation to guide short and long-term management and capital development.

The Utah Division of State Parks and Recreation's long-range strategic plan, Vision 2010, outlines the required planning actions needed to effectively meet customer recreational and leisure needs for the next five to 10 years. Vision 2010 identifies resource management planning as essential to the effective administration and operation of all parks in the agency's system. Under the guidance of Vision 2010, each RMP is developed around one core concept: meeting the needs and expectations of customers, visitors, and the citizens of the state of Utah, while protecting each park's unique resource base. In short, the process is "customer driven and resource-based."

The planning process recommends limits of acceptable change or modification and a future vision for the Park. Specifically, the process: (1) recognizes impacts will result from use and enjoyment of the site; (2) defines how much and what types of impacts may be accommodated while providing reasonable protection of the resources for future visitors; (3) incorporates values of resource sustainability, quality facilities, education and interpretation for visitors; and (4) seeks to determine the conditions under which this can be attained.

In October 2004, Division representatives met with community stakeholders to familiarize them with the planning process and the need for creating a resource management plan for Escalante State Park. During this meeting, the Division solicited the names of community members and various users with an interest and expertise in the Park to serve as members of a Resource Management Planning Team.

Team members were selected for a variety of reasons ranging from technical expertise to interest in the Park.

All team members participated on a voluntary basis and expressed a willingness to sacrifice a significant portion of their time and expertise to the process. Ten individuals were selected to serve on the Planning Team and three representatives from the Division served as staff to the Team.

The Team participated in a public meeting in Escalante that was facilitated by Division planners. This meeting was an opportunity for the public to provide input for the Planning Team to consider as they developed issues and recommendations for the Park. The Team met five times between January and June 2005 to develop issues and recommendations for the Park.

About the Park

Park History

Evidence from the nearby Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument documents that humans have used the area, including Escalante State Park, for at least 8,000 years. The earliest inhabitants, the Paleo-Indian culture, followed by the nomadic Archaic people, are known by stone tools found in the area. By 400 A.D., both the Ancestral Puebloan and Fremont peoples had settled in the area, remaining until the widespread exodus of the region by both cultures in the 1300s. These peoples foraged for native plants, hunted game such as bighorn sheep, deer, and rabbits, and grew crops of maize and beans. The Escalante area settlements of these later people were small villages of pit houses, and later, adobe pueblos. Evidence of these cultures found in Escalante State Park includes remnants of pit houses, a granary structure, anthropomorphic rock art figures, stone tools, and lithic scatter.

Near the end of the Fremont and Ancestral Puebloan occupation, other cultures moved into the area. Ancestors of the modern Southern Paiute, Navajo, Apache, and other puebloan cultures made use of the area's resources. The Southern Paiutes consider the Escalante area as their homeland. For many centuries, the Southern Paiutes grew crops, harvested local native plants, and hunted game in the area. The Southern Paiutes were the predominant people in the area when the first Anglo explorers and settlers arrived.

During the 1866 Black Hawk Indian War, a cavalry troop led by Captain James Andrus chased a group of Indians into the upper Escalante River Drainage near the present day community of Escalante. These cavalrymen may have been the first Anglos to view the Escalante area.

A.H. Thompson, who was the chief mapmaker of John Wesley Powell's famous expeditions, traveled through the region on different trips mapping and naming the features. On an excursion in 1875, Thompson's party met four Mormons from Panguitch that were planning to establish a settlement in the Escalante area. Thompson advised the pioneers to name the new settlement for Father Silvestre Velez de Escalante, who passed near the Escalante River on his expedition from Santa Fe to California in 1776.

The Anglo settlement of the Escalante area began in the spring of 1876 when Mormon settlers from Panguitch, seeking a mild climate for growing fruit and crops, founded the community of Escalante. Farming and livestock were the major industries well into the 20th century. Later, mining and timber became important to the economy of the region. In the late 1900s, tourists began to discover the incredible scenery of this rugged and beautiful area. Today, agriculture, forest products, mining and tourism are still the major industries of the area.

Escalante State Park, located just outside of the town of Escalante, was established in 1963 with land purchased from the Bureau of Land Management. The new Escalante Petrified Forest State Preserve's purpose was to protect the abundant petrified wood resources found within the preserve. In 1972, additional land was purchased to expand the Park to include some of the shoreline of Wide Hollow Reservoir. In 1977, a campground and ranger house was built near the reservoir. Restrooms and a boat ramp were also constructed at that time. Until 1989, the access to the campground and boat ramp was an unpaved road that required a ford of the Escalante River. In 1989, the road was paved and a bridge was

built across the river. A small visitor contact station was added to the Park, near the campground, in 1991.

Initially, the Park was not staffed and virtually all of the petrified wood that could be accessed by vehicle was taken. In the early 1970s, staff from Anasazi State Park in Boulder began to make infrequent patrols in the Park. From 1975 to 1976, staff from Kodachrome Basin State Park conducted weekly patrols. In 1976, a fulltime ranger was stationed at the Park. The Park has had fulltime staff since that time. The operations of Escalante and Kodachrome Basin State Parks were combined under one park manager in 1988.

Physical Setting and Facilities

Escalante State Park is located about ½ mile off State Highway 12 just west of Escalante, Utah. The Park is approximately 285 road miles south of Salt Lake City and 50 miles east of Bryce Canyon National Park on Highway 12. The Park contains approximately 1,350 acres that include shoreline along the Wide Hollow Reservoir, and developed and backcountry areas of multi-hued cliffs, canyon walls, and mesa top.

Amenities at the Park include a 22-unit campground with restrooms, showers, and a sanitary station. A small visitor contact station offers visitor information when staffed. The Wide Hollow Reservoir provides boating, fishing, swimming and bird watching. Several miles of hiking trails lead visitors into the Park's backcountry where they can experience this stunningly rugged area, and view some of the abundant petrified logs. Much of the Park is undeveloped and has no developed public access.

Climate

The climate in Escalante, Utah is temperate and arid, with annual precipitation averaging about 11 inches. From June through early September thunderstorms advance from the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Mexico and Southern California. Frontal-type storms out of the Northwest move through the area from October through June.

The highest amount of precipitation occurs from July through October. Summer temperatures vary approximately 30 degrees F, with highs in the mid to upper 80s and lows in the mid 50s. Winters in Escalante have a temperature range of about 26 degrees F; with highs in the low 40s and lows of about 15 degrees F. Annual snowfall in Escalante generally averages 26 inches.



Escalante State Park Campground

Park Visitation

Visitation to Escalante State Park has been trending downward since 1995 (from 86,792 visitors in 1995 to 36,461 in 2004), however inconsistencies in visitation counting and reporting procedures, and the establishment of the nearby Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument make this trend suspect (figure 1).

As shown in figure 2, most visits (94 percent) to Escalante State Park occur between March and October. May is the busiest month with 16.8 percent of yearly visitation. February and December have the least visitation, each averaging 1.1 percent of the total visitation.

Figure 1: Escalante State Park Visitation 1990-2002

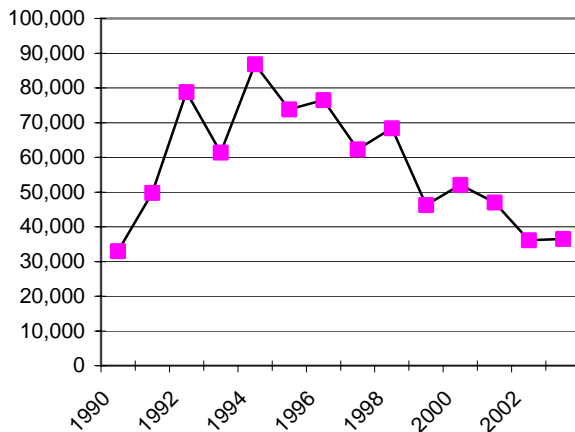
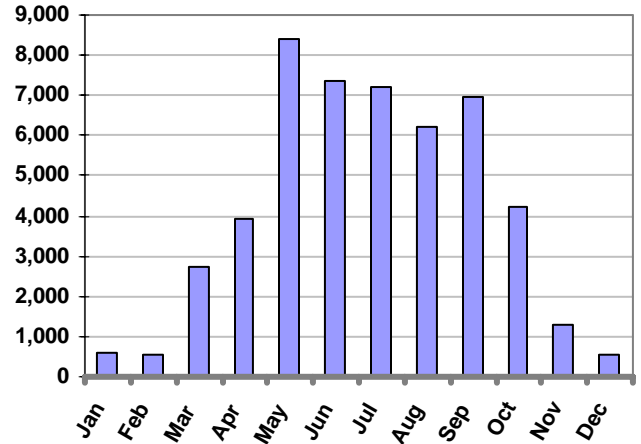


Figure 2: Escalante State Park Average Monthly Visitation 1999-2003



The number of visitors does climb sharply in May, decreasing slightly during the warmer summer months. There is a definite visitation plateau in the warmer months with May through September accounting for 72.3 percent of visits. There is a steep decrease in numbers of visitors after October. Only 6 percent of visits occur during the cooler winter months of November through February.

Relationship to the Community and Surrounding Area

Escalante State Park is located in central Garfield County adjacent to the small city of Escalante. State Route 12, a Scenic Byway, provides access to the Park and town, as well as the nearby Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, other Bureau of Land Management areas, the Dixie National Forest and Bryce Canyon National Park.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Information

According to the 2000 census report, Garfield County had a population of 4,735. Escalante City, with a population of 818, accounts for 17 percent of Garfield's population, and is the second largest city in the county. While Garfield County is Utah's fourth-largest county in terms of land area, it is the least populated in terms of density with less than one person per square mile.

A visitor survey conducted at the Park in 1999 indicated that most visitors (91 percent) came from outside of Utah. Thirty-one percent of all visitors came from outside the United States. Of foreign countries, Germany had the most respondents with 12 percent of the total.

In 2000, the U.S. Bureau of Census reported that Garfield County had a per capita income of \$13,349, Escalante City \$13,501, compared to \$18,185 for Utah as whole. The unemployment rate in Garfield County was 5.2 percent; Escalante City was 4.4 percent; compared to 3.4 percent for the entire state.

Ruby's Inn, near Bryce Canyon National Park, is Garfield County's largest single employer. The leisure/hospitality industry is the largest nonagricultural employment sector, followed by government and trades/transportation/utilities sectors.

Park Resources

One of the Escalante Planning Team's primary vision elements is to preserve the Park's resources by protecting the geological, historical, biological, and cultural attributes. To do this, the planning process calls for an inventory and analysis of park resources. It is essential that management decisions affecting the Park's natural environment be based on reliable scientific information. This section provides an analysis of Escalante's geological, biological, and cultural resources. A natural hazards analysis is also included.

Geological Resources

Escalante State Park contains significant geological resources, including fossils of late-Jurassic dinosaurs and considerable amounts of petrified wood.



Petrified Wood

The oldest geological formation visible in the Park is the Escalante member of the Entrada Sandstone. The Escalante Member formed approximately 153 million years ago (m.y.a.) during the middle to late Jurassic period and is visible as the light gray to white dune-like formations at the base of the cliffs near the campground, along the dirt road paralleling Wide Hollow Reservoir, and along the southern boundary of the Park.

After the deposition of the Escalante Sandstone, the geologic history of the Park is interrupted by a significant period of erosion.

The next, and perhaps most significant, formation seen within the Park is the Morrison Formation, formed between 146 m.y.a. and 138 m.y.a. during the late Jurassic period. There are three members of the Morrison formation found in the Park: the Tidwell, Salt Wash, and Brushy Basin. The Tidwell Member created from river sediments is seen in the Park as the lower reddish portion of the red and white cliffs near the campground, along the southern edge of the Park, and in Bailey Wash. Braided streams deposited the materials forming the Salt Wash Member seen as the lighter colored cliff portion capping the Tidwell. The last member of the Morrison exposed within the state park area is the Brushy Basin Member. The Brushy Basin Member of the Morrison Formation is 170 feet thick locally and composed of mudstones, conglomerates and sandstones. The Brushy Basin Member represents changing environments as the braided streams of the Salt Wash Member were replaced by migrating river and lake deposits. The petrified wood that gave the Park its original name is found in the upper conglomerate layer of the Brushy Basin Member. It is thought that a flood event buried the trees, leading to their preservation. The agatized petrified wood is thought to be coniferous in origin and evidences large tree growth on the paleo-floodplain. The Brushy Basin Member is best viewed on top of the cliffs surrounding the campground and can be accessed by the Petrified Forest Trail and the Trail of Sleeping Rainbows. The Brushy Basin Member also contains fossilized bones of late Jurassic dinosaurs.

Biological Resources

The Park supports a variety of desert plant and animal life. The plants and animals that thrive in the Park have adapted to the area's dry climate.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) conducted field surveys to identify and document the many plant and animal species occurring in the Park. The plant field survey was conducted during July and September 1999. Because the survey was conducted late in the growing season, DWR recommended that future botanical inventory should include the period of April through June. The animal inventory was conducted in July and August 1999 and included both day and night survey methods and activities.

The zoological and botanical inventories, including plant and animal checklists, are found in Appendix A.

Flora

The Park supports more than 150 different species of desert plants including juniper, pinion, cottonwood, willow, scrub oak, sagebrush, rabbitbrush, buffaloberry, squawbush, cactus, yucca, as well as native grasses and many seasonal wildflowers that have adapted to the high desert climate. No species of special concern were found in the Park.

Fauna

Nearly 60 species of animals were observed in the Park. As DWR stated in the inventory report, "despite its proximity to the town of Escalante and to farming activities, Escalante State Park appears to be zoologically healthy." Resident mammals include mule deer, black-tailed jackrabbit, desert cottontail, and rock squirrel.

Birds are the most numerous animal by

species. DWR researchers identified 38 species at the Park including red-tailed hawk, turkey vulture, grebes, great blue



Western Grebe

Photo Courtesy of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

heron, Canada goose, raven, and great horned owl. Many bird species nest in the Park, others are transient or seasonal visitors. Sagebrush lizards, eastern fence lizards, gopher snakes and other reptiles inhabit the Park, along with a number of mollusks and amphibians. The DWR Team identified three animal species that were on the State of Utah Sensitive Species List. Two of those species, the plateau striped lizard and the peregrine falcon, have since been removed from the list. The third species, the spotted bat, remains a species of concern.

► **Spotted Bat, *Euderma maculatum***

The spotted bat occupies a wide variety of habitats, but has been collected most often in dry, rough, desert terrain. Roosts are most often in rock crevices or under loose rocks or boulders. This bat, though widespread in distribution, is rare in numbers. It has a very low reproduction potential, so once populations are reduced in number, they are slow to rebuild. For these reasons, the spotted bat is designated as a species of concern. DWR encourages thoughtful management to prevent this species from being listed federally.

Cultural Resources

Escalante State Park is located in the heart of an area known for its cultural resources, particularly the indigenous prehistoric cultures. The earliest known inhabitants of the area were the Paleo-Indians (12,500 – 6,000 before present). The nearest known Paleo-Indian site is located approximately three miles from the Park. The Archaic people followed the Paleo-Indians in the area. They exploited wild plants in addition to hunting big and small game. There have been no Archaic sites identified near or in Escalante State Park. The Escalante area is located on the boundary of the contemporaneous Fremont and Ancestral Puebloan cultures. These people were agriculturalists and developed unique settlements. There are numerous Fremont/Ancestral Puebloan sites in and near the Park. There is evidence that the historic Paiutes moved into the area approximately 1,000 years ago. There are a number of Piute sites located near the Park.

The Park does contain significant archeological resources including remnants of pit houses, a granary structure, anthropomorphic rock art figures, stone tools, and lithic scatter. Less than 150 of the Park's 1,350 acres have been inventoried for cultural resources. With the wealth of information already recorded in and around Escalante State Park, it can be assumed that there are many unknown cultural resources to be found in areas of the Park that have yet to be surveyed. Cultural inventories/surveys for affected areas must be completed before any new activity or development is allowed.

Natural Hazards Analysis

The Utah Division of Emergency Services and Homeland Security conducted a natural hazards analysis during the spring of 2005.

This study discussed the risks associated with flooding, earthquake activity, landslides, wildfire, severe weather, drought, and dam failure.

Flooding to Escalante State Park facilities would be minimal and as a direct result of localized flash flood events. A combination of slick rock slopes and ledges with very little vegetation increase the risk of flash flooding.

The current campground has small drainage channels that assist in routing floodwater away from campsites and structures. In a severe thunderstorm/flash flood event, campers and park officials should monitor the area and watch for high water levels, debris flows, and rock falls associated with such events.

Wide Hollow Dam is considered a "high hazard dam". While the park infrastructure would not be directly impacted by a dam failure, such an event would, affect access to the Park by damaging the road and river bridge. High spring snowmelt flows and resulting accumulation of debris along the Escalante River may also affect the bridge. The New Escalante Irrigation Company has proposed a project that would repair and raise the dam. Raising the dam would also raise the water level in the reservoir inundating some of the developed portions of the Park. The Division will need to work closely with the Irrigation Company to ensure that there is no net loss of facilities and opportunities in the Park. This will require moving and redeveloping some of the Park's amenities, and may necessitate the acquisition of developable land from outside of the Park.

Although an earthquake threat is not necessarily of a concern in this area (Escalante), such an event would increase

the risk of rock falls. Park facilities and infrastructure could be damaged by rock falls caused by earthquakes. Earthquake activity on the Wasatch Front could have considerable financial impact to Escalante State Park. Repairing earthquake damage reduces financial resources often lessening the amount spent on recreation.

There is some potential for landslides or rock falls to impact park facilities and create a threat to people camping and hiking in areas with steep slick rock. The Park should identify areas of risk and post hazard signs. An internal response and notification procedure for rock falls should be developed.

Escalante State Park is located in an area defined as a medium risk for wildfire. There are areas near the Park that are identified as high risk for wildfire. Thunderstorms start many of rural Utah's wildfires, but humans are the ignition source for most wildfires. Campgrounds and campfires increase the number of ignition sources. The Park should monitor State and Federal wildfire mitigation and/or response activities and enforce burn restrictions.

Extreme heat and thunderstorms that include lightning, cloudbursts and hail, have the potential to impact park facilities and park visitors. Park visitors and park staff are also in danger of extreme heat, summer lightning, and thunderstorms.

Drought may increase insect infestation and reptile migration. The forests of southwestern Utah are infested with several species of beetles and other damaging insects. Trees that are weakened by drought are more susceptible to insect damage. West Nile Virus has been identified in the area and is spread by mosquitoes. Visitors and park staff should follow Center for Disease

Control mosquito bite prevention techniques when participating in outdoor activities in the area.

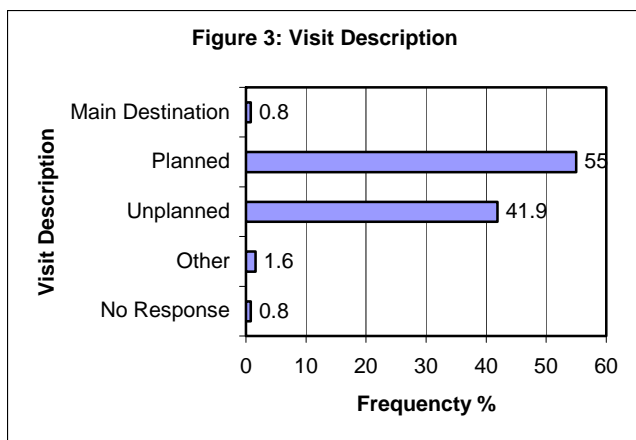
Natural hazards can create safety concerns for visitors and staff, damage park facilities, and have detrimental effects on the economy of the Park and area by interrupting access and use of the Park.

Visitor Survey

Summary of Results

The Division of State Parks and Recreation administered a visitor survey from July 1 to September 28, 1999. The survey was conducted to achieve a better understanding of park visitors, their satisfaction with existing facilities and services, and their opinions about development and recreation at a potential reservoir near Wide Hollow Reservoir. Survey results were incorporated into the planning process in the development of recommendations. It is important to note that the survey results reflect visitor use patterns during the study period only. Moreover, several factors contributed to a lower than normal response rate. Consequently, one must be careful in using the results to draw generalized conclusions about the population of users who visited Escalante during the study period. With these limitations in mind, respondents noted several items of interest that are summarized below. This information provides important insight about visitor use patterns, activities, needs and concerns.

ESCALANTE WAS NOT A DESTINATION PARK



Less than one percent of respondents indicated that Escalante State Park was their

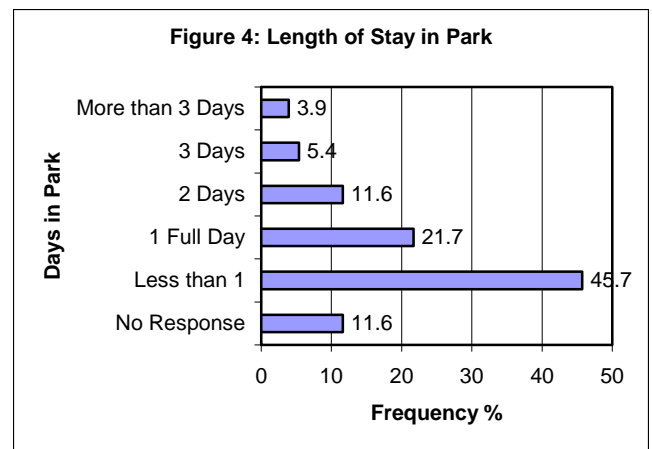
main destination. Nearly 97 percent listed the Park as one stop in several made during their trip. Fifty-five percent said they had planned to visit the Park. Forty-two percent indicated that Escalante was an unplanned stop.

MOST RESPONDENTS WERE FIRST TIME VISITORS

Of the respondents, 84.5 percent were first time visitors to Escalante.

MOST VISITORS WERE DAY-USERS

Most respondents (67.4 percent) indicated that they stayed one full day or less at the Park. Twenty-one percent of respondents stayed overnight in the Park. These findings correspond with day-use visitation in the Division's other southwest region parks.



MOST VISITORS LIVE OUTSIDE OF UTAH

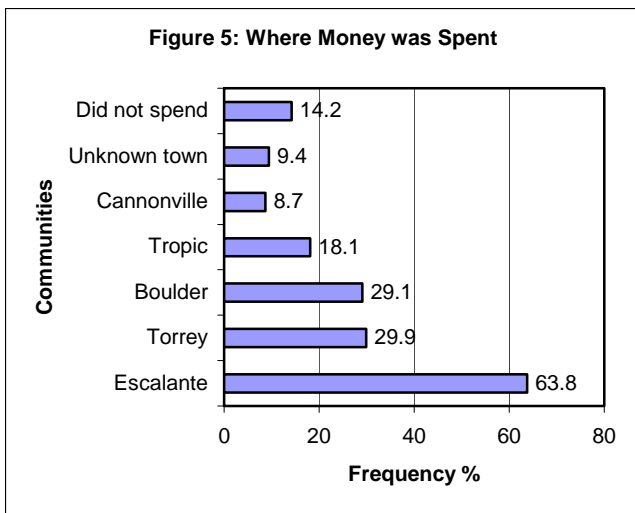
Only 13.3 percent of respondents were from Utah. California was the state with the most respondents (24.1 percent), followed by Utah and then Arizona (12 percent). Germany accounted for 11.6 percent of respondents, while foreigners accounted for 29.6 percent of total respondents.

HIKING, CAMPING, SIGHTSEEING AND RELAXING WERE THE TOP RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Survey respondents listed hiking, camping, sightseeing, relaxing and photography as their preferred recreation activities during their stay at the Park. About 75 percent indicated that they prefer to engage in these five activities.

MOST RESPONDENTS SPENT MONEY IN NEARBY COMMUNITIES

Respondents provided information on expenditures (by their entire group) for motels/hotels, campgrounds, restaurants, vehicles, activities, and supplies. More than 84% indicated that they made such purchases in nearby towns. The majority of respondents spent money in Escalante City (63.8 percent).



*Note: Multiple answers can total over 100%.

Other towns where respondents spent money included Torrey, Boulder, Tropic, Cannonville, Henrieville, and Grover. The average total amount spent per group was \$113.95. It is important to note that reported expenditures varied considerably among respondents. Moreover, the reported \$113.95 average expenditure figure includes

those respondents (15.8 percent) who did not spend any money in nearby towns. According to visitor survey data, average group size was 2.67 people. Dividing this figure into the total amount spent per group, results in an average expenditure per person of \$50.16.

Economic Impact

There were approximately 36,461 visitors to Escalante State Park in 2004. Assuming that 63.8 percent made purchases locally (Escalante City) in connection to their visit to the Park, we would find that about 23,262 visitors spent trip-related monies in Escalante City. Under these assumptions, total, potential visitor impact during 2004 is calculated as follows:

- 23,261 visitors multiplied by \$50.16 visitor expenditure/trip amounts to about \$1,166,771 in total expenditures within the area

One of the major shortcomings of this analysis is the inability to identify whether local visitor expenditures were directly connected to visits to Escalante State Park. As was shown above, one of the most striking results of the survey was that less than one percent of visitors indicated that the Park was their primary destination. The vast majority of survey respondents indicated that the Park was one stop within a larger tour of the area. As a result, it is difficult to determine if these expenditures would not have taken place regardless of their visit to Escalante State Park. Additional study is needed to more accurately assess visitor expenditures that are directly attributable to the Park.

Issues and Recommendations

A number of issues ranging from building legislative and community support for the Park, to developing new visitor opportunities and facilities, were addressed in the plan. Issues relating to natural and cultural resource protection, park management and funding, interpretation and education, and marketing were also addressed. Each of these issues was identified by various means including input from planning team members, the public-at-large through a public meeting, and by a visitor survey. Team members and the public identified nine major issues that were aggregated into six distinct categories. An analytical technique used to determine the Park's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and future threats (known as a "SWOT" analysis) helped in the development of these issues. A specific description or statement summarizing each issue was constructed to clearly identify and articulate each problem or challenge.

A number of constraints (i.e.: available funding, sufficiency of staff, facility location and design, and federal regulations, etc.) will need to be addressed prior to issue resolution. Team members, planning staff and division experts identified some of the limiting factors that may hinder implementation of a specific team recommendation.

The Planning Team developed specific recommendations for the identified issues. The Team's recommendations were arrived at by consensus of opinion. The Team also emphasized that recommendations be consistent with the mission and vision statements.

The six issue areas forming the basis of the Team's recommendations include: (1) park management and funding; (2) facility development; (3) interpretation and

education; (4) legislative, governmental, and community support; (5) visitor experience and park resource management; (6) marketing.

Management and Funding

The public and Planning Team identified concerns about the Park's limited funding for the current operational workload. They felt that the Park does not have enough staff and funding to properly operate the Park at its current level of development. New development would only add to this problem, unless increases in ongoing operational funding were included with the new development. Furthermore, the Team thought that Escalante would receive more fiscal and administrative attention if it were separated from Kodachrome Basin State Park, and had its own manager and full staff. Currently, Escalante shares a manager with Kodachrome. The manager is stationed at Kodachrome.

Issue Area: Management and Funding

Key Issues:

- Need adequate staffing and funding for park operation.
 - Staffing and funding analysis to determine needs.
 - Ensure that ongoing operational funding is included with new development.
- Separate the management of Escalante and Kodachrome State Parks.
 - Establish a park manager position at Escalante.

Issue: Lack of Adequate Staffing and Funding for the Park Operation

The Park currently has a limited staff and must share positions with Kodachrome Basin State Park. To properly manage the Park, provide resource and visitor protection, and offer amenities and programs to enhance visitor experiences, the Park needs more staff and operational funding. An analysis of staffing and funding levels will assist the Park in their requests for more operations staff and funds to operate as an independent entity, and will help them justify more operational funding and staff for new development.

Recommendations

1. Provide adequate staffing and funding for operation of the Park.

- A. A staffing and budget analysis should be completed to determine current staffing and funding needs. Staffing and funding should be increased to a level that allows the Park to operate independently, and provide needed services.
- B. Use interns, camp hosts, and volunteers to help supplement Park staff – consider on-site housing to attract interns and volunteers.
- C. Ensure that sufficient, on-going operational funding is included with new development.

Issue: Management of Park

As mentioned above, the Team recommends that the management of Escalante and Kodachrome State Parks be separated, with each park having its own manager. The manager at Escalante would live in, and be more involved in, the community. With separate management, the Team felt Escalante would have a better chance of receiving more funding and staff.

Recommendations

1. Separate the management of Escalante and Kodachrome State Parks.




- A. Establish a park manager position at Escalante State Park.

Facility Development

The Park has limited facilities and opportunities for visitors. The existing facilities are inadequate for visitor needs; for example, individual campsites are too small for many recreational vehicles. Park signage is insufficient to identify the park access, entrance, and boundary. The hiking trail system is not extensive, and some trails are too difficult for many people. Visitation to the Park could be increased to provide more revenue, aid the local economy, and improve the importance of the Park. There is a need to enhance recreational opportunities at the Park to attract visitors and make them want to revisit the Park. Enhancement of opportunities will improve visitor experiences at the Park.

Issue Area: Facility Development

Key Issues:

-  Complete a trail plan for the park.
 - Create a trail system with a variety of trails of varying lengths and difficulties.
-  Enhancement of camping and day-use opportunities.
 - Provide additional camping and day-use facilities including group-use areas, and an interpretive center.
-  Improve park signage and entrance experience.
 - Move entrance further into park.
 - Add/improve signs leading to the park, along park boundary, and those informing visitors about rules, and safe use of the Park, etc.

Issue: Enhancement of Camping and Day-Use Opportunities

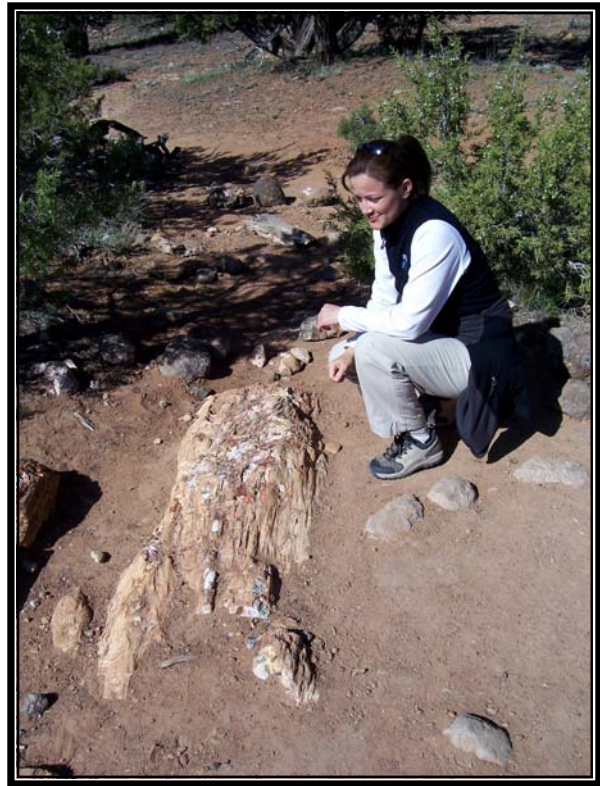
The current camping facilities are too small for large RVs and are too few in number. There is a need for group camping facilities in the Park. Day-use facilities are inadequate to support any increase in use and do not offer much variety. **Note:** The New Escalante Irrigation Company, that manages the Wide Hollow Reservoir, is seeking approval and funding to raise the height of the dam. Increasing the height of the dam, and the subsequent raising of the 100-year flood plain surrounding the reservoir, would impact the campground, launch ramp, day-use area, and park road. Portions of these park facilities would be underwater or in the non-developable flood plain. If this project proceeds, the Park and Division will need to partner with the Irrigation Company to ensure there is no net loss of facilities. The Team’s recommendations are appropriate despite any changes to the Wide Hollow Dam.

Recommendations:

- 1. Add additional camping facilities, to include individual sites and group site(s), north of existing campground.**
- 2. Develop group day-use site(s) with water.**
- 3. Provide more day-use facilities such as an interpretive area in existing group-use area and some sites along the lakeshore.**
- 4. Add a fishing pier and beach near the boat ramp.**

Issue: Trail System

There is a need to provide more and varied hiking and equestrian opportunities in the Park, and to provide trail linkages to the community and surrounding public lands.



Hiker viewing fossilized wood along Petrified Forest Trail

Recommendations:

- 1. Complete a trail plan that determines current usage, where additional trails are appropriate, and create a trail system with a variety of trails of varying lengths and difficulties.**
 - This Plan should determine primary trail user and plan trails for user type. For example, equestrian trails could be east of Bailey’s Wash, and constructed for horse use.
 - Consider an arrangement of connecting trail loops.
 - Identify any mountain biking opportunities.
 - Name trails to give them identities. Trails signs and markers should have a design relating to the Park.

- E. Examine the feasibility of a non-motorized/pedestrian trail connecting the Park to community and linkages to other areas: (i.e.: walk along the lake) – work with the city, county, trails group towards a connecting trail system.
- F. Provide nature trail along the lakeshore with benches for resting and viewing wildlife. Investigate if local artisans would be interested in constructing benches.
- G. If use warrants, develop an equestrian staging area at the mouth of Bailey’s Wash for equestrians using park trails.

Issue: Improve Park Signage and Entrance Experience

There is a need to improve the external signage to attract visitors and lead them to the Park. Within the Park and along the boundary, signage needs improvement to clearly identify parklands. There is no sense of arrival to the Park at the current entrance.

Recommendations:

1. **Improve park signage and entrance by:**
 - A. Developing a sense of arrival and entrance to the Park by moving the park entrance further into the Park, screening park housing and sanitary station
 - B. Incorporating petrified wood in entrance sign.
 - C. Completing a boundary survey and signing the boundary to clearly mark park property.
 - D. Enhancing highway/external signage to help guide visitors to the Park and to build anticipation.
 - E. Installing a distinctive sign at the highway turnoff that explicitly identifies the Park.
 - F. Add signs and bulletin boards that provide visitors with information on

safe use of Park trails, facilities and grounds.




- G. Signing properly to minimize the number of signs needed in the Park.

Interpretation and Education

There is a need for the Park to provide education, interpretation and information programs and materials that enhance visitor experiences, provide visitors an appreciation of the Park and instill the need to preserve

Issue Area: Interpretation and Education

Key Issues:

-  Add a naturalist position to park staff.
-  Develop a comprehensive interpretive plan to insure that the Park’s interpretive efforts are guided and deliberate, and meet the goals of the Park. The following are some items to consider.
-  Continue use of campground hosts to provide service and information to visitors.

park resources for future users.

Issue: Interpretation and Education Program

Escalante State Park is rich in natural and cultural resources, but offers visitors few opportunities to learn about the Park. The Park has a number of challenges that interpretation and education could help with, including damage and loss of resources, and lack of community and other support. The Park needs a comprehensive interpretive plan to determine themes, goals and objectives for the Park’s interpretive efforts.

The plan would identify customers and their needs, park problems areas, and the methods of interpretation to deal with these demands. Having a clear plan identifying objectives and methods will help the Park compete for funding of the plan elements.

Recommendations

1. **Add a naturalist position to the Park staff to develop interpretive plans, materials and programs.**
2. **Develop a comprehensive interpretive plan to insure that the Park's interpretive efforts are guided and deliberate, and meet the goals of the Park. The following are some items to consider:**
 - A. Place large specimens of petrified wood along trails in easy, highly visible locations for visitors to access and enjoy.
 - B. Develop an education/interpretive facility/center in the Park to provide a focal point for visitor education and information.
 - C. Provide information on personal safety while using park facilities and grounds.
 - D. Utilize interagency, shared staff time for interpretive/educational programs.
 - E. Use interns to help conduct programs.
 - F. Develop an amphitheater for conducting programs.
 - G. Conduct guided tours/programs for larger groups.
 - H. Provide curriculum-based educational programs to draw student groups to the Park for field trips.
 - I. Develop exhibits explaining the processes involved in forming significant features (i.e.: how petrified wood is formed)
 - J. Invite colleges and other groups to bring groups to the Park for research or educational purposes; attracting these groups may benefit the Park in the form of those groups providing interpretive programs; develop group campsite(s) for use by these groups.
 - K. Place interpretive information along

trails to encourage and entice hikers to stay on trails.

- L. Provide information/signage on the rarity of the petrified wood – include this message in all printed materials.
- M. Do not promote or advertise sensitive areas or resources (example: ruins). Provide general interpretive information about these subjects.
- N. Provide multilingual brochures and printed materials.

3. **Continue camp host program to provide service and information to visitors.**

Legislative, Governmental, and Community Support

Issue Area: Legislative, Governmental, and Community Support

Key Issues:

- 👉 Develop community and legislative support for the Park.
 - Staff participation and support of community activities.
 - Park should host community events.
 - Meet with, and encourage, local officials and agency partners to visit the Park.
 - Establish a friends group.

From the beginning of the planning process, team members realized that for the Park to be successful, support for the Park at all levels – including state and local government officials, and community members – must be improved. Also, it is a goal of Utah State Parks that every park be perceived as a valuable asset and partner in their communities. The Team developed a number of recommendations to enhance support for the Park.

Issue: Build Legislative, Governmental and Community Support for the Park

It is imperative, that if Escalante State Park is to succeed in providing rewarding visitor experiences, protecting resources, and being seen as a valuable part of the Escalante community, it will need to improve its standing in the community, as well as receive greater legislative support. The Team decided that support needs to begin at the local level and most of their recommendations are directed towards the neighboring community.

Recommendations

1. Develop community and legislative support for the Park.

- A. Park staff will participate in and support community activities and programs. Park staff should be empowered to do this.
- B. The Park will host community events when possible and appropriate; such as a Founders' Day event with free admission to the Park (concentrating on the history of the Park). This event would highlight the contributions of local citizens and groups that participated in the establishment of the Park.
- C. Entice local officials to visit the Park to better understand its issues.
- D. The Park Manager will meet on a quarterly basis with area partners (city governments, BLM, USFS, Scenic Byway 12 group, emergency service providers, etc.).
- E. Work with the two other area parks – Kodachrome and Anasazi – to enhance visitation and revenue by developing regional marketing, regional pass, etc.
- F. Establish a friends group/support group that will meet quarterly to discuss ways to deal with issues relating to the Park and this plan.

- G. Advocate for a statewide friends group with local/regional chapters.

Visitor Experience and Resource Management

The Planning Team indicated that there is a need to stop damage and loss of park resources, and to protect the natural environment. They also recommend methods to ensure adequate culinary water for the Park, and support maintaining a minimum water level in the reservoir for recreation purposes.

Issue Area: Visitor Experience and Resource Management

Key Issues:

- 🏞️ Protect park resources.
 - Inventory resources.
 - Use interpretation and education to educate about the importance of the resources.
- 🏞️ Ensure adequate culinary water for current and future use.
- 🏞️ Partner with Irrigation Company to find ways to maintain water level that is adequate for recreation in Wide Hollow Reservoir.
- 🏞️ Work with Garfield County and adjacent landowners to limit use of park road to traffic compatible with park activities.
- 🏞️ Due to the fragility and scarcity of many of the park's resources, and to the rugged nature of the terrain, access to the undeveloped portions of the park should remain by foot or horseback only, except in emergency situations as determined by park staff.
- 🏞️ Support Garfield County's efforts to increase OHV opportunities. Allow OHV riders to use park facilities.
- 🏞️ In the future the park should cooperate with groups/user groups (county, city) and nurture partnerships to consider additional recreation opportunities, provided these opportunities are compatible with the other elements of this plan.

Issue: Resource Protection

Before the area became a park, and until the Park received permanent staff, the resources of the Park were not well protected. Much of the petrified wood that was accessible by vehicle was removed from the Park. Some cultural sites were plundered for artifacts. With permanent staffing, these resources are receiving much more protection, but these materials are still being removed from the Park. Other resource damage is occurring from hikers not staying on trails, erosion, and trespasses on parklands from off-highway vehicles and woodcutters. The Team developed recommendations to stop current impacts to park resources, and to begin the rehabilitation of past impacts.

Recommendations

1. Create natural and cultural resource inventories.

- A. Develop natural, paleontological, and cultural resource inventories, and monitor resources for changes from user impact and other causes.
- B. Periodically update inventories.
- C. When impacts and causes are identified, the Park will determine and implement methods to stop and reverse the effects of the impacts.

2. Use interpretation to protect resources by educating park visitors about the uniqueness and importance of park resources.

- A. Prepare an interpretive plan for the Park that emphasizes protection of resources and experiences.
- B. Add a naturalist position to the park staff to develop interpretive materials and programs.
- C. Develop some programs to target specific user groups, such as local school children.
- D. Partner with the Bureau of Land Management to provide programs.

- E. Provide interpretive information about, and along trails, to encourage and entice hikers to stay on trails.
- F. Consider placing large specimens of petrified wood along trails in easy, highly visible locations for visitors to access and enjoy.
- G. Provide information/signage on the rarity of the petrified wood – include this message in all printed materials.
- H. Institute a donation program to accept petrified wood currently in private hands to be used for park purposes.
- I. Do not promote or advertise sensitive areas or resources (example: ruins), provide general interpretive information about these subjects.

3. Use signage as necessary to protect resources.

- A. Identify and mark park boundaries.
- B. Place new regulatory signage in the Park as necessary to clearly explain park regulations and protect resources (example: at access points, identify that removal of artifacts/petrified wood is a punishable offense).

4. Use volunteer patrols to protect resources and educate visitors.

- A. Use members of the friends group, or develop a volunteer trails patrol group to monitor trail use and educate visitors about park resources and appropriate use of the Park.
- B. Maintain trails to provide good walking surface and encourage hikers to stay on trails.

5. Study the removal of the roadway dike and culvert at the mouth of Bailey's Wash to reestablish the natural wash channel.

Issue: Park Culinary Water Supply and Wide Hollow Reservoir Water Level

The Park must rely on Escalante City to supply water for its culinary water needs. The City currently has little surplus water to supply. It is unclear if the City will be able to supply enough water for improvements or additional development at the Park. The water in the Wide Hollow Reservoir is used for irrigation and its level fluctuates greatly during the year, affecting recreational use at the Park. The Team realizes that the New Escalante Irrigation Company owns the water, but suggests ways to partner with the district to maintain adequate water in the reservoir for recreation uses.

Recommendations

- 1. Ensure adequate culinary water for current and future use and development.**
 - A. Park should monitor and log water usage to determine if water conservation measures work.
 - B. Retrofit existing water system so that it is more water efficient.
 - C. Landscaped areas should utilize native drought resistant plants.
 - D. Consider drilling a well, if the city cannot supply adequate water to the Park.

- 2. Work with the Irrigation Company to find ways to maintain a water level in Wide Hollow Reservoir that is adequate for recreation.**
 - A. Explore partnering with the Irrigation Company to dredge the reservoir to increase water capacity, and possibly, maintain a conservation pool for recreation use (involve the Division of Wildlife Resources). Consider capital budget request for possible funding.
 - B. Consider an allocation of funds for lake improvement in

exchange/consideration of recreation benefits. For example, the Park would work with the Irrigation Company to solve sanitation issues along shoreline outside of the Park in exchange for maintaining adequate water level for recreational use.

- C. Investigate purchasing additional water rights for recreation.

Issue: Protecting and Improving Visitor Experiences and Assessing Types of Use

The Park’s entrance road is owned by Garfield County. The road runs through the Park’s developed area, including the campground and day-use area. Currently, besides supplying access to the Park facilities, the road is used by the Irrigation Company for maintenance access to the reservoir and water supply lines, and private landowners to access their property to the north and west of the Park. The current level of use on the road has little impact on the Park and its visitors. There are some potential projects and developments that may increase use on the road to a level that is incompatible with park facilities, and especially visitor safety and enjoyment. These developments would include use of the road to construct a second reservoir north of the Park, and mineral development on public lands north of the Park. The Team suggests working with the county and adjacent landowners to maintain the current level of use on the road, and if necessary, find alternatives to using the park road, if proposed development occurs north of the Park.




In addition, the Team felt that due to the sensitivity of the Park’s resources, and the nature of the terrain, parklands outside of the current developed area should remain non-motorized (equestrian and hiking use only).

Recommendations

1. **Division staff will work with Garfield County and adjacent landowners to limit use of the park entrance road to traffic that is compatible with park activities.**
 - A. Park should enter into a memorandum of understanding or other agreement regarding use of the road.
 - B. Encourage the County to find alternative access, besides the park road, to the areas north and west of the Park.
2. **Due to the fragility and scarcity of many of the Park's resources, and to the rugged nature of the terrain, access to the undeveloped portions of the Park should remain by foot or horseback only, except in emergency situations as determined by park staff.**
3. **In support of Garfield County's efforts to provide off-highway vehicle (OHV) access and routes in the County, visitors on OHVs arriving legally at the Park will be able to travel through the Park on the county road and will be able to use the campground and other facilities as do visitors arriving in other types of vehicles. If demand dictates, an OHV trailhead will be considered for placement where the county road leaves the Park to the north.**
4. **In the future the Park should cooperate with agencies (county, city)/user groups and nurture partnerships to consider additional recreation opportunities, provided these opportunities are compatible with the other elements of this plan.**

Issue Area: Marketing

Key Issues:

-  Create a unique identity for the park.
-  Identify potential customers and institute market strategies to reach new patrons.
-  Provide and market enhanced visitor opportunities.

Marketing

Visitation figures, visitor surveys, and statements from park staff indicate that the Park is currently underutilized and is not reaching its potential to positively impact the local economy. There is a lack of knowledge about the Park and its opportunities among potential users. The Park needs to be promoted and marketed to attract more visitors.

Issue: Market the Park

The Park needs to be promoted and marketed to advertise its attractions to draw more visitors and enhance the local economy. The Team felt that the Park should develop a unique identity to separate it from the other attractions in the area, and to lure visitors. Additional visitor opportunities need to be developed and advertised or marketed. Potential customers need to be identified and reached through marketing efforts. Attractive publications need to be created and distributed through various means to the public. The Division website needs to be updated to provide more information about the Park and surrounding area in an enticing manner. It should also provide links to other sites offering information about the area and state.

Recommendations

1. Create a unique identity for the Park.

- A. Develop a theme for the Park emphasizing the distinctive activities/opportunities of the Park: such as petrified wood, pictographs, backcountry hikes, etc.
- B. Change the name of the Park to distinguish the Park from the “other” Escalantes in the area (City, river, national monument, etc.). Study potential names, such as “Escalante Petrified Wood State Park,” possibly with outside focus groups.

2. Identify potential customers and institute market strategies to reach new customers.

- A. Park staff should work with Public Affairs to determine a visitor, and potential visitor, profile and consider placing stories or advertising in outdoor-based publications and websites that serve people with the visitor profile.
- B. Promote Escalante as part of package tours to other destination sites, such as Bryce and Zion National Parks.
- C. Market as a “family-friendly” experience. Provide a comfortable, safe, and secure experience.
- D. Redesign park brochure with a more detailed, colored map; trail guide, archeological information, etc.
- E. Provide information to local businesses for distribution to the public.
- F. Update the park website to make it more informational, attractive and enticing. Include links to other sites with similar activities/interests. Add more info about surrounding activities on the utah.com website (currently it just says OHV riding area are nearby).

- G. Provide better trail and resource information to encourage people to explore the Park.

3. Provide and market enhanced visitor opportunities.

- A. Develop educational, interpretive, and recreational activities and market them (example: guided tours to petrified wood and pictographs).
- B. Provide activities to entice continuing education programs, such as elder hostels, to visit the Park.

Conclusion

This plan is a blueprint to help implement the Planning Team's recommendations. As such, it outlines the initial steps to be taken in concert with park visitors, local communities and other interested users to: properly develop facilities to meet diverse visitor needs; ensure adequate staffing and funding; protect the natural resources of the Park; enhance the Park's impact on the community, and the state and local economies; and educate visitors and community members about the Park and its resources.

The recommendations contained in this plan conform to the Team's mission of providing visitors a wide variety of safe and satisfying recreation experiences. The plan's recommendations effectively address the current needs for facility development, resource protection, park operations, land management, and cooperative efforts. However, it is crucial that adequate funding be received to implement these goals and accommodate visitor needs. The plan's success is dependent upon the continued support of stakeholders. Stakeholders must continue their efforts to support park improvements, preserve park resources, interact with local communities and strive to meet the expectations of park visitors in the midst of a rapidly growing community of recreation-oriented citizens. The recommendations contained within this plan were based upon an open and collaborative process. It is imperative that this collaborative spirit continues as the plan's components are implemented.

It is also imperative that the document be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure its viability, relevance and usefulness. This document has sufficient flexibility to be amended in response to changing resource conditions, visitor needs and expectations, community needs, and agency priorities.

Such amendments may occur under the auspices of the Division of State Parks and Recreation. Any such changes will include input from park visitors, local citizens, community leaders, park management or other stakeholders with interests relevant to the operation and maintenance of the Park.



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Maps


Map 2: Escalante State Park General Ownership

Map 3: Escalante State Park Developed Area

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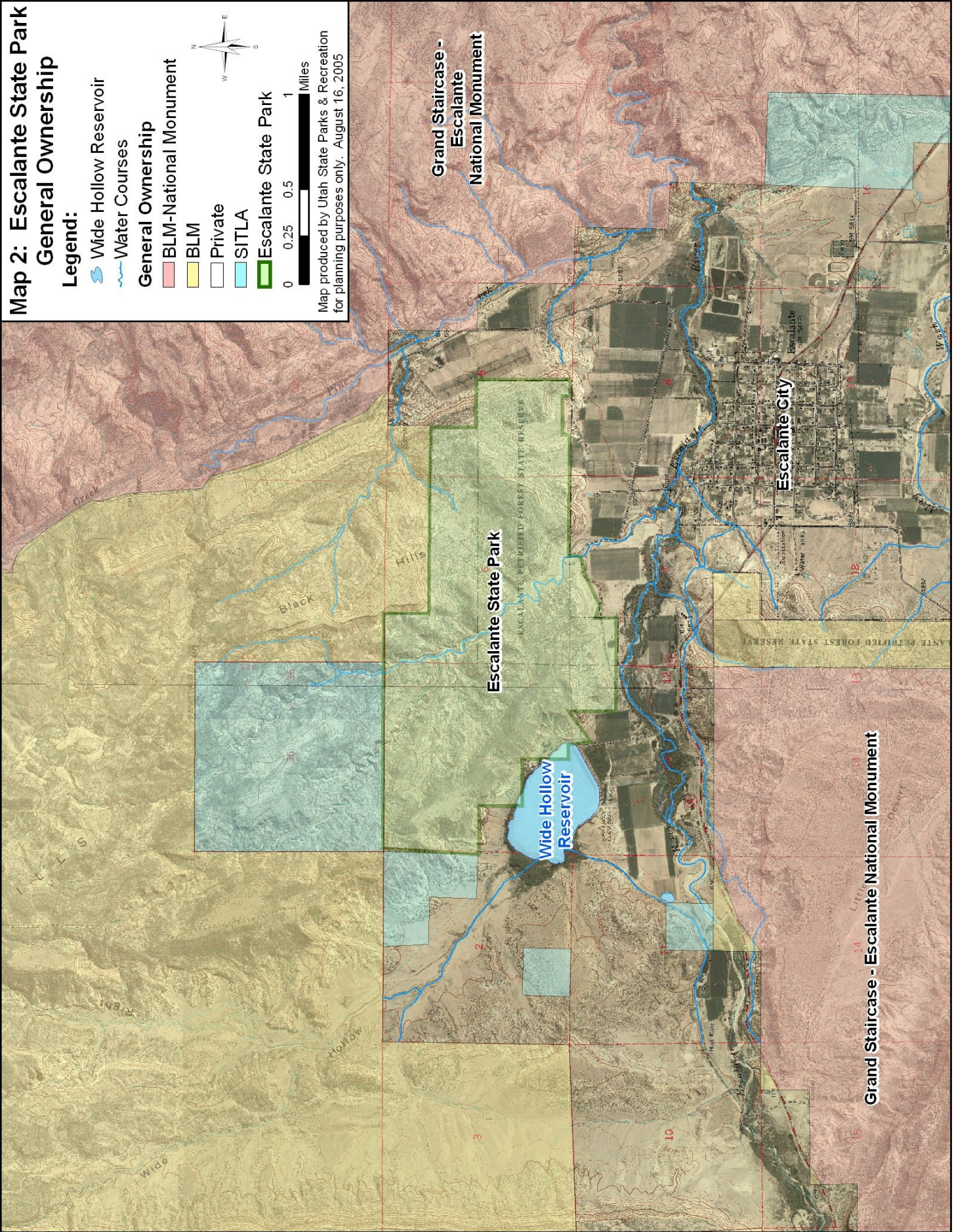
Map 2: Escalante State Park General Ownership

Legend:

-  Wide Hollow Reservoir
-  Water Courses
- General Ownership**
-  BLM-National Monument
-  BLM
-  Private
-  SITLA
-  Escalante State Park



Map produced by Utah State Parks & Recreation for planning purposes only. August 16, 2005



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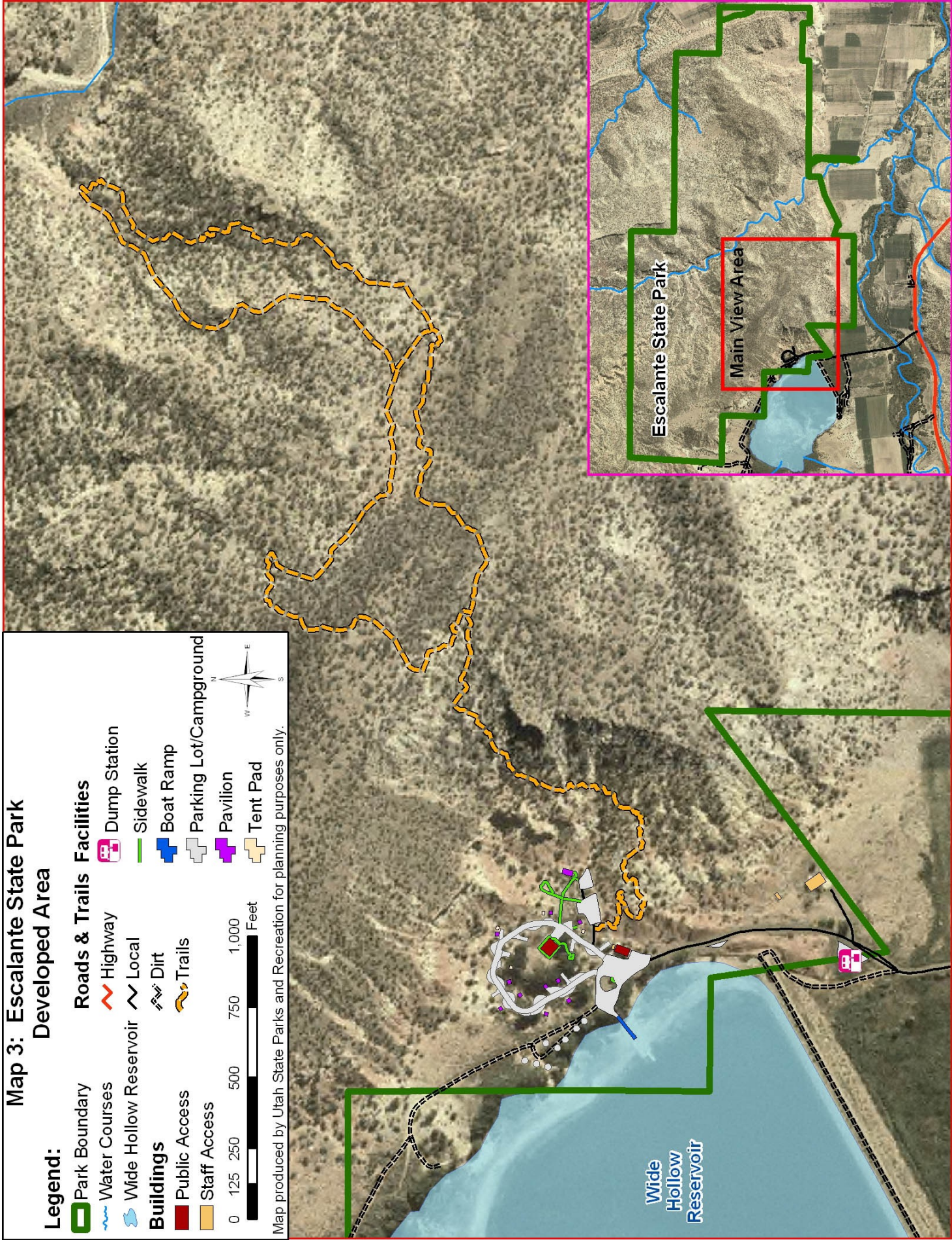
Map 3: Escalante State Park

Developed Area

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Legend: | Park Boundary | Roads & Trails | Facilities |
| Water Courses | Highway | Local | Dump Station |
| Wide Hollow Reservoir | Dirt | Trails | Sidewalk |
| Buildings | Public Access | Boat Ramp | Parking Lot/Campground |
| Staff Access | Pavilion | Tent Pad | |



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Appendices

Appendix A: Summary of Public Comments and Responses

Appendix B: Escalante State Park Hazard Mitigation Plan

Appendix C: Zoological and Botanical Inventories of Escalante State Park

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Appendix A

Summary of Public Comments and Responses

In October 2005, this Plan was released to the public for review and comment. During October and November 2005, the Plan was made available to the general public by placing an electronic version on the Utah Division of State Parks and Recreation website. Hardcopies were made available to the public at Escalante State Park, Escalante City offices, Garfield County offices, and the Department of Natural Resources building in Salt Lake City. Comments were accepted by e-mail or in writing to the Division's planning section. The following is a summary of comments received in response to the Draft Plan. Each comment is summarized below and is followed by the Division's corresponding response.

Comment: Off-Highway Vehicle Access (two comments)

Two comments addressing off-highway vehicle (OHV) access were received. They suggest that the RMP recognize that the county road through the Park is designated as open to OHV use by Garfield County. The comments also suggest that the RMP and Park should help the local economy by supporting the Garfield County Trails Committee's efforts to develop OHV riding opportunities throughout the County by allowing OHVs to use the Park's facilities as they travel through the Park on the county road. One comment suggests developing a trailhead facility in the Park for OHV users.

Response:

The public comments mirror those that the Garfield County Commission expressed to team members during an information-sharing meeting. The Division of Utah State Parks and Recreation does support the County's efforts to enhance OHV opportunities. A recommendation indicating this support has been added to the Plan. The recommendation states that visitors on OHVs arriving legally at the Park will be able to travel through the Park on the county road and will be able to use the campground and other facilities as do visitors arriving in other types of vehicles. The RMP Planning Team recommended that, if demand indicates, an OHV trailhead facility should be considered for the area near where the county road leaves the Park to the north. The Division feels that the recommendation added to the RMP (Page 25) is reasonable and meets the concerns expressed by Garfield County and the two public respondents.

Comment: Park Management (one comment)

A comment supports the Plan's recommendation to separate the management of Kodachrome and Escalante State Parks, and feels that the Division has the responsibility to ensure that all state parks are staffed properly, managed effectively, and funded adequately. The respondent also states that due to the small size of the state park staff, the employees must assume all of the duties and tasks that need to be accomplished at the Park, making specialization of staff members difficult. The comment also suggests that the Park consider partnering with the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument to share specialized staff such as interpreters.

Response:

The Plan recommends having separate managers for Kodachrome and Escalante State Parks (page 18). It also suggests completing a staffing and budget analysis to determine current staffing and budget needs (Page 18). The Plan does suggest investigating interagency partnership opportunities for interpretive services (Page 21).

Comment: Park Visitation (one comment)

A comment suggests several additional reasons for the decrease in visitation that has occurred at Escalante State Park over the past 10 years. The respondent believes that a general decrease in visitation has occurred in southern Utah in recent years due to weak national and state economies, negative publicity over the controversy between the federal government and local citizens over the establishment of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The respondent questions the claim that past visitation figures and counting methodologies at the Park are suspect (as stated in the RMP, Page 9).

Response:

While there is some anecdotal evidence that the influences mentioned in the comment may have had some effect on visitation at Escalante State Park since 2000, these factors would not account for the large decrease (58 percent) in visitor numbers since 1995. Kodachrome State Park to the west of Escalante showed a decrease in visitation of only 10 percent for that same period, while the numbers of visitors to Anasazi State Park, east of Escalante, increased by 7 percent. In the past, Escalante State Park used a relatively unscientific counting method for visitation, with no double sampling to verify accuracy. The Division is implementing a new visitation measuring system at all of its parks that relies on mechanical counters and double sampling to produce more accurate numbers.

Comment: Park Signage (one comment)

One comment was received that suggests the Park should include signage that informs visitors about trail difficulty levels, what equipment and supplies to take on hikes, weather forecasts, and other safety related information. The respondent stated that by providing this information, the number of accidents on the Park's trails could be reduced, thereby reducing the impact on local emergency services. It was also recommended that the Park meet with Escalante City and local emergency service providers to discuss how to decrease the number of accidents associated with activities at the Park.

Response:

The Division believes that the Park should be providing the types of information suggested in this comment. Language recommending this was added to the RMP (Page 20). The Park should be meeting with emergency service providers and other local partners on a regular basis to discuss mutually beneficial cooperation. Language directing the Park to do this is found on Page 22. It should be noted that the Park has personnel that are trained to respond to emergency situations. Park personnel are available to assist local agencies in off-park situations as available and requested.



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