

CHAPTER 2. RECREATION

Forest Overview

The three forests, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison, managed as one unit, each offer diverse landforms and each provides recreation opportunities unique to their individual settings. An in-depth place-based description of the recreation activities that occur on each of the units is described within Appendix 2. The three forests however do face similar impacts and recreation trends.

All three forests are experiencing population growth that is typical of the mountain west. Increased populations of surrounding forest towns contribute to the increased numbers of visitors seeking recreation opportunities on adjacent national forest lands. National forest areas of relative seclusion ten years ago are now being sought out by greater numbers of users displacing and changing many landscapes particularly the non-wilderness backcountry.

Tourism accounts for a substantial portion of the surrounding counties' economic structure particularly Hinsdale, Pitkin, Gunnison, San Miguel and Ouray Counties (CBEF Tourism Report 1/8/01). Activities associated with nature-based tourism are those that usually require travel out of the city to public and private areas with developed recreation sites, wildlife, trails, lakes, streams or snow cover (Cordell, 2005).

General trends show that there appears to be a shift in recreation activities from utilitarian practices like hunting and fishing to more intrinsic or spiritual uses such as activities that lead to renewed health and relaxation (Starch, 1999). The 20 most participated in nature-based outdoor tourism activities for metro areas west of the Mississippi River in ranked order are*:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Picnicking | 11. Primitive camping |
| 2. Viewing/photographing wildlife | 12. Coldwater fishing |
| 3. Swimming in lakes, streams etc. | 13. Backpacking |
| 4. Day hiking | 14. Rafting |
| 5. Visit to wilderness/primitive area | 15. Canoeing |
| 6. View/photograph birds | 16. Big game hunting |
| 7. Developed camping | 17. Downhill skiing |
| 8. Warmwater fishing | 18. Horseback riding on trails |
| 9. Mountain biking | 19. Small game hunting |
| 10. Driving off-road | 20. Cross country skiing |

*The source of outdoor tourism activity participation rates is the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE), a nationwide survey of people 16 or older.

Recreation Amenities

The GMUG forest offers a variety of attractions and developments. There are approximately:

- One hundred ninety four (194) miles of road along portions of 6 Scenic Byways

- 556,641 acres of designated wilderness, 28,665 acres of special management areas, 43,900 acres of special recreation management area (Fossil Ridge RMA) (more detailed discussion on wilderness is in Chapter 5)
- 6 mountain summits over 14,000 feet
- Fourteen (14) Interpretive Sites 1 Visitor Center
- 36 Recreation Residence permits
- 3 Lodge Resorts permits
- 3 Ski Area permits
- 58 Developed Campgrounds
- 18 Developed Day Use– picnic areas
- 7 Observation Sites
- 12 Boating sites
- 6 Fishing sites
- 68 Developed Trailheads
- approximately 700 miles of wilderness trails
- approximately 1800 miles of summer non-motorized trails (non-wilderness)
- approximately 800 miles of summer motorized trails
- approximately 730 miles of winter trails
- outfitting and guiding special use permits authorizing:
 - summer activities such as mountaineering, climbing, trail rides (motorized and non-motorized), mountain bike excursions, rafting, temporary hut system, fly fishing,
 - fall activities predominately big game hunting and pack trips, and
 - winter activities such as ice climbing, winter mountaineering, snowmobile events, back country ski, ski huts, and sled dog tours.

Developed Recreation Program

A limited inventory of recreation facilities and sites is managed. Those sites retained are high quality, meet accessibility standards, are economically self-sustaining, and support the recreation niche of the area. The scale of development and amenities at facilities and sites is commensurate with demand and visitor expectation.

Facilities that do not meet high quality standards or have a disproportionately high operating cost are generally decommissioned. However, low-use developed sites may exist where the need to protect the environment is paramount to cost.

Forest Service Visitor Centers provide visitor information, education, and interpretation. The recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) setting for most developed facilities is Roaded Natural or Rural. Trailhead ROS settings will range from SPM – R. Scenery is managed to provide an array of scenic integrity objectives from High (appears unaltered) to Moderate (slightly altered).

Facilities with a higher level of management and development on the forest are listed below:

Grand Mesa Visitor Center	Jumbo Trailhead
Lakeview Campground	Lizard Head Interpretive Site
Lands End Summit Trailhead	Five Mile Access
Matterhorn Campground	Nagach Day Use
Amphitheater Campground	Taylor Dam Vista Point
Jumbo Campground	Taylor Reservoir Boat Launch
Red Mountain Mining	One Mile Campground
Overlook	Lottis Creek Campground
Glacier Springs Picnic Area	Keystone Hill Interpretive Site
Sunset Day Use Area	County Line Trailhead

Scenic Byways

The National Scenic Byway Program, authorized through the Department of Transportation, provides resources to local communities to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote the intrinsic qualities of designated byways. National Scenic Byways are initiated through grassroots efforts. Roads submitted for national designation are first designated by the State of Colorado as Scenic Byways. To be designated as a National Scenic Byway, a road must significantly meet at least one of the six scenic byway intrinsic qualities – scenic, natural, historic, cultural, archeological, or recreational – as defined in Federal Register Vol. 60, No. 96, May 18, 1995. In order to be designated an All-American Road, the road must meet the criteria for at least two intrinsic qualities and must also be considered a destination unto itself.

The GMUG hosts one National Scenic Byway, the Grand Mesa Byway, and shares an All-American Road, the San Juan Skyway. Four other Scenic Byways hold State designations: Alpine Loop, Unaweep, Silverthread, and West Elk Loop. The Forest has identified six additional forest roads to be managed as scenic travel corridors for their high quality scenery and recreation values.

National Scenic Byways (Federal Highways Administration)

San Juan Skyway All American Road is a paved state highway that was designated September 22, 1989, for its historical and scenic intrinsic qualities. The corridor is managed within a Rural ROS setting and consistent with the San Juan Corridor Management Plan.

Grand Mesa Scenic and Historic Byway is a paved state highway that was designated September 21, 1991, for its historical intrinsic quality. The corridor is managed within a Rural ROS setting and consistent with the Grand Mesa Corridor Management Plan.

State of Colorado Scenic Byways (Colorado Dept of Transportation)

Alpine Loop Backcountry Byway is a rugged high elevation four-wheel drive road designated September 22, 1989, as a backcountry byway. The byway is managed within a SPM ROS setting consistent with the Alpine Triangle Recreation Management Plan (BLM, 1995).

Silver Thread Scenic Byway is a paved state highway designated October 18, 1990 and is managed within a Rural ROS setting and consistent with the Silver Thread Corridor Management Plan and Interpretive Plan.

Unaweep/Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway is a paved state highway, designated October 18, 1990, and managed within a Rural ROS setting and consistent with its corridor management and interpretive plan.

West Elk Loop Scenic Byway was designated September 21, 1991. The Kebler Pass Road segment is managed as a surfaced road within a Roaded Natural ROS setting; the remainder of the byway is paved and managed within a Rural ROS setting. The West Elk Byway is managed consistent with the West Elk Corridor and Interpretive Plans.

Forest Scenic Travel Corridors

Table 1 describes scenic travel corridors across the forest that do not hold special designations.

Table 1. Forest Scenic Travel Corridors

Scenic Travel Corridor	Geographic Area	Development Level
Lower Taylor Canyon Road	Gunnison Basin	Paved
Ohio Pass Road	Gunnison Basin	Surfaced
Owl Creek-Cimarron Road	San Juan	Surfaced
Lands End Road	Grand Mesa	Surfaced
Canyon Creek-Yankee Boy Rd	San Juan	High clearance four-wheel drive
Imogene-Black Bear Road	San Juan	High clearance four-wheel drive
Ophir Road	San Juan	High clearance four-wheel drive

Special Designated Trails

The National Trails System was created by National Trails System Act, Public Law 90-543, approved October 2, 1968, as a framework for a national system of connected scenic, historic, and recreational trails. These three categories of trails have distinct objectives within the National Trail System. National Scenic Trails are protected scenic corridors primarily in the backcountry; National Historic Trails recognize prominent routes of exploration, migration, commerce and military actions; and National Recreation Trails are shorter trails that vary in length and difficulty and are managed at the local level. The GMUG currently has 5 National Trails, one proposed National Discovery Trail and one State designated trail, The Colorado Trail, (Figure 1) each summarized below.

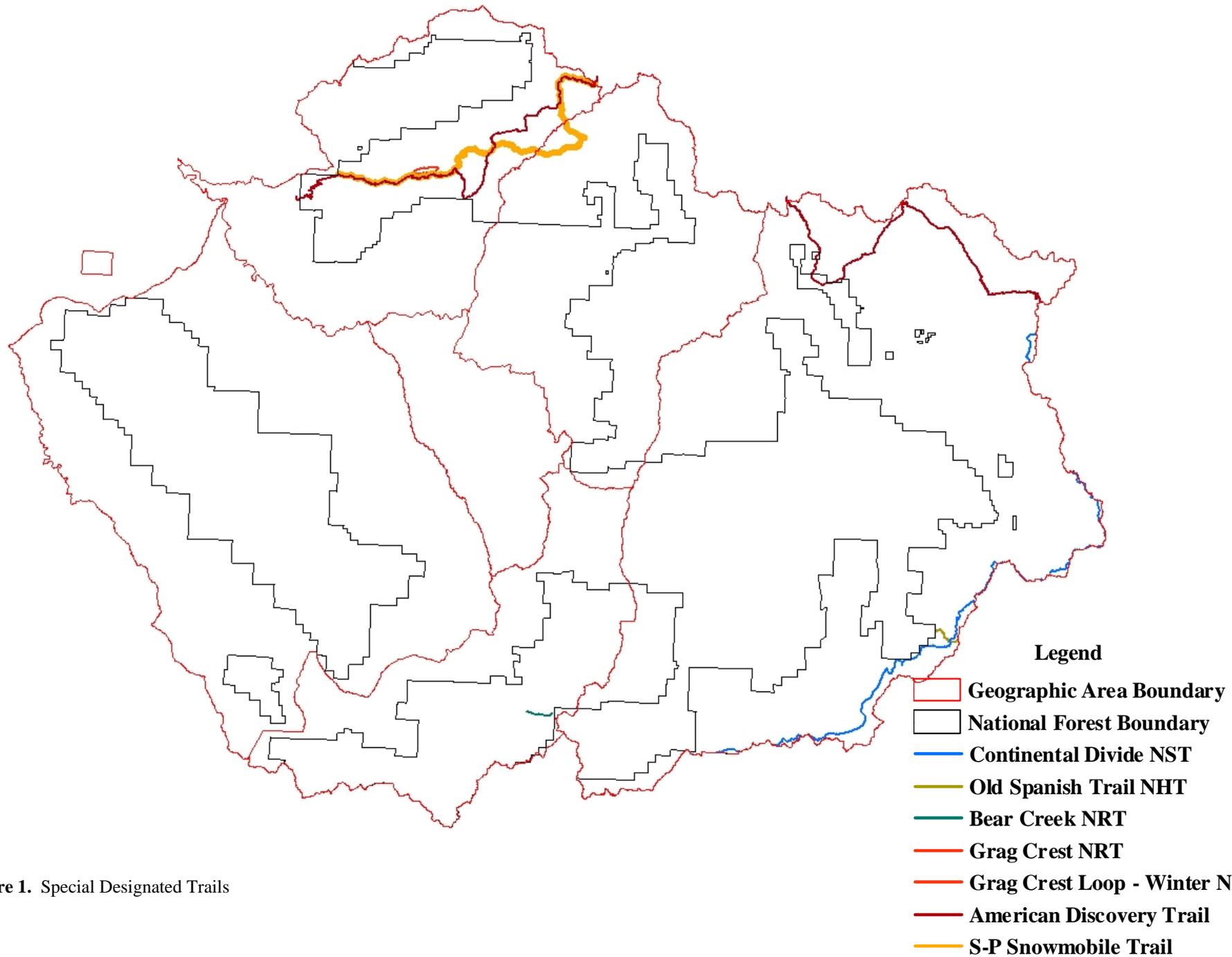


Figure 1. Special Designated Trails

National Recreation Trails - National Trails System Act provided for establishment of National Recreation trails by the Secretaries of Interior or Agriculture. Three National Recreation Trails (NRT) have been designated on the GMUG National Forest. The Bear Creek Trail, 6 miles long in the rugged mining country near Ouray, the Crag Crest Trail, 11 miles long following the Grand Mesa Ridge; and the Crag Crest Cross-country Ski Trail, 11.5 miles of connecting routes within the Scales Lake Area of the Grand Mesa.

Bear Creek Trail – The Bear Creek Trail was established as a NRT in 1979. The establishment report cites trail attributes of historic significance to the area, a variety of geologic structures along the trail, scenic overviews and contributions to the tourism activities for the Town of Ouray. At the time of establishment, most of the Bear Creek Trail was within the Uncompahgre Primitive area and management of the trail has continued to promote the backcountry non-motorized trail experience.

Crag Crest Trail – The Crag Crest Trail including the Crag Crest Lower Loop, was established as an NRT in March of 1978. The trail is located along a high ridge separating Delta and Mesa counties. Views from the trail include large sections of western Colorado and extend into eastern Utah. The trail is designed to serve non-motorized use. Horses are permitted on the Loop and Cottonwood Lakes section of the trail.

Crag Crest Cross-country Ski Trail – The Crag Crest winter ski trail was established as a NRT in 1983. While they share the Crag Crest name, the winter NRT and the summer NRT are distinct and separate routes. The winter NRT is a series of ski loops ranging in size from 7 ½ miles to 0.8 miles. A total of 11.5 miles are designated. The winter NRT originates at the County Line trailhead on State Highway 65 passes through the Scales Lake area and returns to the County Line trailhead. The majority of the trail system is located within the Scales Lake area. The area is managed, packed, groomed and signed for user convenience. The system is managed for non-motorized Nordic winter use.

National Scenic Trails - National Scenic Trails are 100 miles or longer, continuous, primarily non-motorized routes of outstanding recreation opportunity. Such trails are established by Act of Congress. The National Parks and Recreation Act, November 10, 1978; established the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Corridor (CDNST), of which approximately 79 miles is located on the Gunnison National Forest.

Continental Divide National Scenic Trail – Approximately seventy-nine (79)miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) are currently located on the Gunnison National Forest. Of these miles, 17 or 20% cross land which offers primitive or semi-primitive non motorized recreation opportunities. Thirty-five miles or 44% cross land which offers semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities and 28 miles or 36% cross land which offers roaded natural recreation opportunities. National and regional Forest Service direction is to locate the entire length of the CDNST on non-motorized trail routes to accommodate foot and horse use. The majority of the CDNST on the Gunnison National Forest and adjacent national forests is motorized. To meet national and

regional direction, multi-forest planning efforts have begun to identify alternative non-motorized existing or new trail routes. The San Isabel and Gunnison National Forests are currently studying a corridor for the trail from Elbert Creek to Monarch Pass. The San Isabel, Gunnison and Rio Grande National Forests are currently studying a corridor from Monarch Pass to the LaGarita Wilderness Area. Also, the Gunnison and Rio Grande National Forests are currently studying a corridor from Cataract to Stony Pass.

National Historic Trails - National historic trails commemorate historic (and prehistoric) routes of travel that are of significance to the entire Nation. They must meet all three criteria listed in Section 5(b) (11) of the National Trails System Act. Such trails are established by an Act of Congress.

Old Spanish National Historic Trail – The Old Spanish Trail was designated as a National Historic Trail in 2002. The trail follows the route of Spanish traders and explorers during the period of 1829-1848 traveling from old Mexico to California. A management plan is currently being developed by joint managers, the National Park Service and BLM; a draft document is expected to be released in early 2007. The historic route follows State Highway 114 corridor through the Gunnison National Forest. Portions of the Old Spanish Trail are coincidental with the Dominguez/Escalante Trail where it parallels the Uncompahgre Plateau.

National Discovery Trail - In 1995, the National Park Service conducted a feasibility study to determine the appropriateness of a cross country discovery trail and recommended that a new category of national trail, National Discovery Trail, be created. This category of trail places an emphasis on connecting metropolitan areas with natural areas of interest. Legislation, known as the National Discovery Trails Act, to amend the National Trails Act and designate the American Discovery Trail as the first of this new category has been introduced in Congress in 1995, 1996, 1999, 2001 and again in 2005. Each time the bill has stalled in committees in the House.

The American Discovery Trail (ADT) - is being proposed as the first of this new category of long-distance trails. The ADT is the nation's first coast-to-coast trail stretching across 6800 miles and 15 states. The ADT links communities, cities, parks and wilderness using existing trails, greenways and country roads. The proposed ADT enters the GMUG National Forest at the Continental Divide and travels west to Crested Butte and on to the White River National Forest. The route returns to the GMUG via the Grand Mesa following the Sunlight-Powderhorn Snowmobile Trail to Kannah Creek.

The Colorado Trail - The Colorado Trail is an intrastate non-motorized trail that originates in Denver and terminates in Durango. The trail enters the GMUG National Forest at Monarch Pass. South of Monarch Pass to the Spring Creek Trail, the Colorado Trail is coincidental with the CDNST trail. North of Monarch Pass, the trail follows a separate route.

Other Noteworthy Trails

The Sunlight-Powderhorn Winter Trail (S-P) – is a winter over snow trail that connects the Sunlight ski area on the White River National Forest with the Powderhorn ski area on the Grand Mesa National Forest. The S-P trail is managed cooperatively by the two forests with the GMUG acting as the lead forest for management. The primary S-P Trail route is defined on Figure 1. In 1995 a formal management agreement between the two forests, the State of Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and four snowmobile clubs was developed. The management agreement identified goals for consolidated and consistent management across boundaries that focus on sustaining a high-quality winter snowmobile trail program and increased public service, and coordination with the American Discovery Trail where the trails are coincidental.

Dominguez-Escalante Historical Route – follows the route of two Catholic Priests traveled from Sante Fe, New Mexico. Most of the identified route is located on adjacent BLM lands.

Dispersed Recreation Opportunities

Dispersed recreation use typically occurs over relatively large areas where limited developed facilities are present (Figure 2). In this discussion, dispersed recreation excludes wilderness lands. A large proportion of the recreation occurring on the GMUG is considered dispersed recreation activities, most of which occurs during the summer and fall (NVUM, 2004). Hunting, fishing, and camping are the primary summer-fall dispersed recreation activities on the GMUG. Winter dispersed activities occur outside of developed ski areas. Dispersed activities associated with travel, such as trail use, are discussed in this paper under the subheading *Travel*.

Dispersed recreation activities occur across all the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) settings. Many types of dispersed recreation activities, such as horseback riding, rafting, four-wheel driving, mountaineering, ice climbing, and hunting, are provided through commercial outfitting services authorized by a recreation special use permit.

The evolving uses, increasing demand, and forecasted growth in dispersed recreation activities are attributed to the growth in local populations, the development of new generation machines, better outdoor equipment and clothing, easier access to the backcountry, the advent of extreme sports, the evolution of alpine ski areas into four-season resorts, and the dramatic growth and diversification of dispersed winter recreation activities.

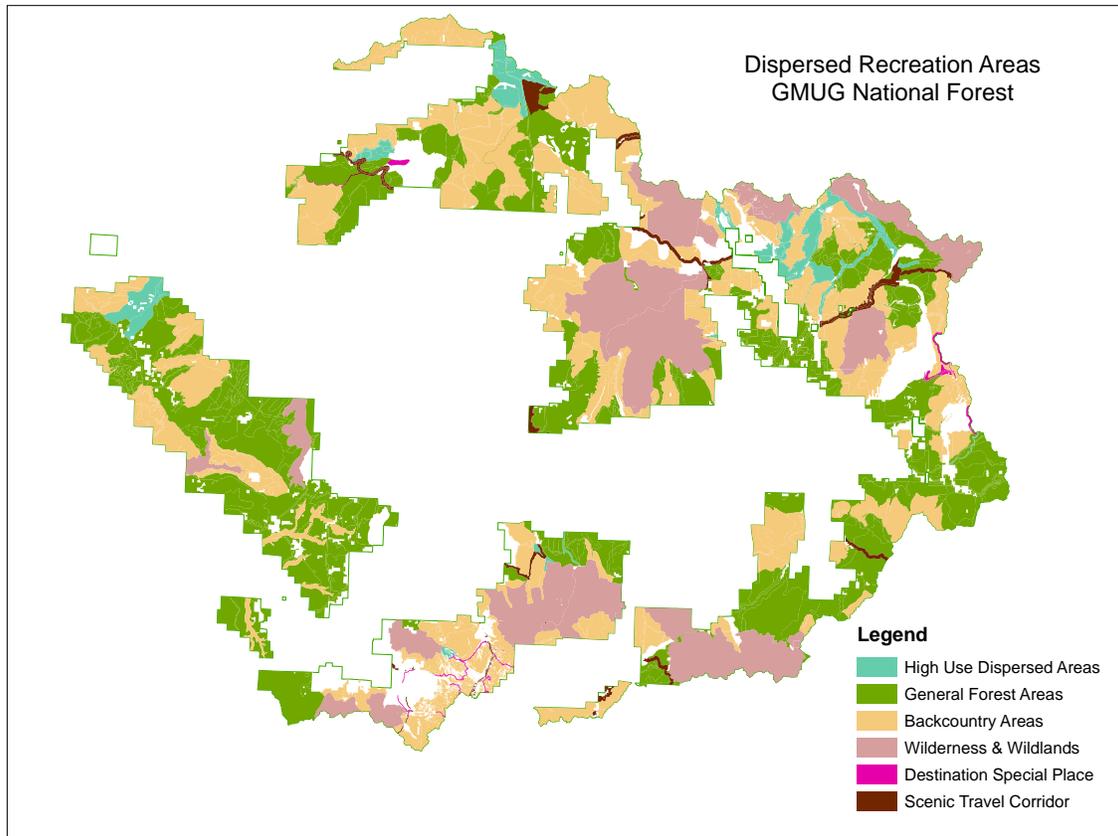


Figure 2. Areas Where Dispersed Recreation Occurs on GMUG

As increase in demand for dispersed recreation continues the ability of the resource to recover (sustainability) and the competition between public and commercial use has become more of a concern. Capacity allocation is not only essential for achieving, retaining, and sustaining desired conditions, particularly in the backcountry, but equally important to commercial outfitters, who, in most cases, are limited to a small percentage of the total available capacity.

Dispersed Camping – Camping outside of developed campgrounds, without amenity services, occurs throughout much of the forest. Camping is often associated with supplemental activities such as hunting, wildlife watching, family gatherings, or OHV riding. Camping has changed in its presentation over the years. Today, a self-contained trailer style camper has replaced many of the more traditional tent camps. Trailers range in size and style from a simple “pop-up” tent trailer to more elaborate units including horse trailers with sleeping and cooking compartments. Many trailer style campers seek out the natural and undeveloped atmosphere of the backcountry while others desire the amenities offered at built campgrounds.

Most dispersed camping occurs within 300 feet of a road or trail corridor. Several areas across the forest receive high concentration of dispersed camping. Areas of high concentration are displayed on Figure 2 as High Use Dispersed Areas.

Hunting/Fishing – Hunting and fishing yield an estimated \$1.5 billion within the economies of Colorado. An estimated 20,000 full-time jobs in Colorado are supported by

hunting and fishing. These jobs are located across Colorado and are an important component of the economic base, particularly in certain rural counties. Hinsdale and Gunnison Counties are ranked sixth and seventh in the state for employment related to hunting and fishing. Within the seven counties in which the GMUG resides, over 2200 full time jobs are attributed to hunting and fishing (Picktom & Sikorowski, 2004).

The GMUG is located within portions of 17 Game Management Units as defined by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Hunting as an activity represents the largest participation rate for any non-snow activity on the GMUG with an estimated 378,000 visitors participating. Fishing represents an estimated 193,000 visitors participating (NVUM, 2004).

Summer Travel

Travel is an integral part of virtually every activity that occurs on the Forest. The past ten to 15 years have brought a shift in the volume and mix of travel methods on the Forest. While traditional commercial use continues to be a transportation need, recreation use and new types of travel are ever increasing. Irrespective of the dramatic increase in traffic on Forest roads and trails, maintenance budgets have been relatively stable during the past 15 years. Consequently, not all roads and trails have been maintained to the level prescribed in management objectives.

All forms of recreation travel have increased in volume, some more dramatically than others. The variety of uses is too overwhelming to accommodate single use roads and trails. Demand for motorized recreation opportunities is not expected to be met. Differences in recreation values and increased demand on a finite resource have led to the need to identify areas suitable for motorized and non-motorized travel across the Forest. There has been particular interest, by both motorized and non-motorized users, in travel opportunities within the backcountry areas of the Forest.

Effective December 9, 2005, the Travel Management Rule: Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use (Travel Management Rule) clarified the need for forest-wide analysis of roads and trails. The final rule prohibits the use of motor vehicles off designated system routes as well as use of motor vehicles on routes and in areas that is not consistent with the designations. The Travel Management Rule requires a designation of roads and trails that are open to motor vehicle use through a transportation analysis.

Transportation analyses and travel management decisions were completed for the Uncompahgre National Forest in 2002 and the Grand Mesa National Forest in 2004. Interim travel direction was developed for the Gunnison National Forest in 2000; a complete transportation analysis for the Gunnison is forthcoming.

Summer recreation travel opportunities are closely tied to Recreation Opportunity Spectrum settings (ROS). ROS settings describe both the physical and the social environments of an area of which access plays a key role. Table 2 illustrates the relationship between ROS setting and travel opportunities. ROS is described in detail in Chapter 3 and Appendix ROS.

Table 2. Compatible ROS Settings with Compatible Travel Type

ROS Setting Summer Travel:	Wilderness Primitive	SEMI-PRIMITIVE SETTINGS		ROADED NATURAL SETTINGS			Rural-Urban
		Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Semi-Primitive Motorized	Roaded Natural Non-Motorized*	Roaded Modified	Roaded Natural	
Non-motorized Trails	←The Norm-----→	←----- Compatible-----→					
Motorized Trails	←----Unsuitable ----→	←The Norm----→	←---Unsuitable ----→	←--Compatible----→		Inconsistent	
Temporary Roads	←----Unsuitable ----→	←--Compatible--→	←-----The Norm-----→			Unsuitable	
Admin/Permitted Roads	←-----Unsuitable -----→		←-----The Norm-----→			Compatible	
High Clearance - Native Surfaced Recreation Roads	←----Unsuitable ----→	←The Norm----→	←----Unsuitable ---→	←---Compatible ----→		Unsuitable	
Surfaced Roads	←-----Unsuitable -----→			←-----The Norm-----→		Compatible	
Paved Roads	←-----Unsuitable -----→					←The Norm→	

Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Opportunities - OHV opportunities are generally considered to be more desirable when they occur on motorized trails and high clearance or four wheel drive roads (Table 3). Motorized trails and high clearance roads (level 2 roads) can occur in either the backcountry or general forest roaded settings. Tables 4 and 5 display the available motorized recreation opportunities for each motorized forest setting. Level 3-4 roads occur in the general forest roaded setting yet are not accounted for in Table 5 since they do not contribute to a prime or reasonable recreation opportunity for OHV activities.

Table 3. Reasonable Recreation Experiences Available by Use Type

Forest Setting	Wilderness and Non-motorized Backcountry		Non-motorized Backcountry	Motorized Backcountry			General Forest Roaded Areas	
	Trail Type↔ Use Type↓	Foot Trail	Horse Trail	Mtn Bike Trail	Motorcycle Trail	ATV Trail	4WD Road	High Clearance
Foot Travel	Prime Experience		Reasonable Experience	Possible Opportunity	Allowed although not preferable			
Horse Travel	Unavailable	Prime Experience		Reasonable Experience	Allowed although not preferable			
Mtn Bike Travel	Unavailable		Prime Experience	Reasonable Experience	Possible Opportunity			Allowed although not preferable
Motorcycle Travel	Unavailable			Prime Experience	Reasonable Experience	Possible Opportunity		Allowed although not preferable
ATV Travel	Unavailable				Prime Experience		Reasonable Experience	Allowed although not preferable
4 WD Travel	Unavailable					Prime Experience	Reasonable Experience	Allowed although not preferable
High Clearance Vehicle Travel	Unavailable							Reasonable Experience
Passenger Vehicle Travel	Unavailable							Prime Experience

Table 4. Motorized Recreation Opportunities within the Motorized Backcountry Settings*

Geographic Area	Backcountry Motorized*		Total miles Backcountry
	Motorized Trails	Level 2 Road	
Grand Mesa – 298,345 acres	40	25	65
Gunnison – 1,280,530 acres	236	186	422
North Fork Valley – 490,790 acres	9	5	14
San Juans – 298,345 acres	21	48	69
Uncompahgre Plateau – 577,586 acres	47	62	109
Forest Totals – 2,977,590 acres	353	326	679

*Motorized backcountry settings are represented by the Semi-primitive Motorized ROS setting.

Table 5. Motorized Recreation Opportunities within the General Forest Roaded Setting

Geographic Area	General Forest Areas Roaded Areas*		Total miles General Forest Roaded Areas
	Motorized Trails	Level 2 Road	
Grand Mesa – 298,345 acres	82	113	195
Gunnison – 1,280,530 acres	118	959	1,077
North Fork Valley – 490,790 acres	22	146	168
San Juans – 298,345 acres	18	59	77
Uncompahgre Plateau – 577,586 acres	131	512	643
Forest Totals – 2,977,590 acres	371	1,789	2,160

*General Forest Roaded settings are represented by the Roaded Natural ROS setting.

Non-Motorized Recreation Trail Opportunities - Non-motorized trail opportunities include travel modes for hiking, equestrian use and mountain bike riding. Non-motorized trails occur in and outside of the wilderness. Table 3 displays the relationship of forest setting to non-motorized recreation experiences. Generally, trail use in wilderness and semi-primitive areas provide a more desirable non-motorized experience than trail use in

the more developed General Forest Roaded areas. Table 6 displays the available non-motorized recreation trail opportunities by forest setting.

Table 6. Non Motorized Trails by Forest Setting

Forest Setting⇒	Backcountry		General Forest Area	Total
Trail Type by ROS Geographic Area:	Wilderness Trails (P, PR, SP)	Non-motorized Trails (SPNM)	Non-motorized Trails (RN-NM, RN)	Total Non-motorized Trails
Grand Mesa	0	46	52	98
Gunnison	420	291	141	852
North Fork Valley	122	53	72	247
San Juans	122	97	110	329
Uncompahgre Plateau	47	105	104	256
Forest Totals	711	592	479	1,782

Winter Travel

Participation rates in winter sports continue to increase on the GMUG National Forest (NVUM, 2004). Data suggests that almost one fourth of GMUG visitors participate in snowmobiling or cross-country skiing. The Forest has not been able to keep up with the growing demand for facilities such as parking areas, restrooms, and trail systems for several reasons. Limitation in terrain constrains opportunities to find appropriate locations for parking areas. The listing of Canada lynx in 2000 as a threatened species restricts activities that increase snow compaction within lynx analysis areas (Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy, 2000). Trail maintenance demands for both motorized and non-motorized routes exceed management capabilities and competition between motorized and non-motorized users for the same terrain continues to be a management concern.

Ski Areas

Downhill skiing is the third most participated in activity on the GMUG National Forest with a 27 percent participation rate (NVUM, 2004). The GMUG is home to three ski areas, each located in a separate Geographic Area, Powderhorn Ski Resort, Telluride Ski Resort, and Crested Butte Mountain Resort. Table 7 displays information about the size and capacity of each ski area. Master development plans (MDP) for each ski area guide expected future conditions for the resort. Visitation at Telluride and Crested Butte Resorts indicates a slight but steady increase over the last five years (Table 7). Powderhorn has also experienced a slight overall increase in visitation. All three ski areas are expanding their services into other seasons. Summer activities in particular have been increasing. FS policy (FSM 2341) encourages the use of ski areas during other seasons.

Table 7. Skier Visits to Developed Ski Area by Geographic Area.

Geographic Area	Ski Area	Skier Visits				
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Grand Mesa	Powderhorn	76,456	79,624	82,948	81,894	79,165
San Juans	Telluride	334,506	341,370	367,252	367,775	411,396
Gunnison	Crested Butte	336,482	342,416	333,011	375,936	411,729

Recreation Special Uses

A variety of opportunities are provided to the public by commercial and non-commercial partners through recreation special use authorizations (permits). Permitted activities and associated facilities on the GMUG include developed campgrounds, ski areas, lodges, organization camps, ski areas, organizational camps, marinas, and recreation residences. Many facilities, such as lodges, marinas, and recreation residences, are privately-owned facilities residing on NFS lands, while others (e.g., campgrounds) are government-owned with management authorized by permit.

Group events, competitive events, recreation events, and outfitting and guiding services, both commercial and non-commercial, are also authorized under recreation special use permit. Outfitting and guiding operations include summer and winter mountaineering,

climbing, trail rides, mountain bike excursions, temporary hut system, fly fishing, big game hunting, pack trips, ice climbing, snowmobiling, backcountry skiing, huts, and sled dog tours. Outfitting occurs both in and outside of wilderness.

Allocations between commercial use and public use continues to be a management balancing act, particularly in the non-developed dispersed and backcountry areas.