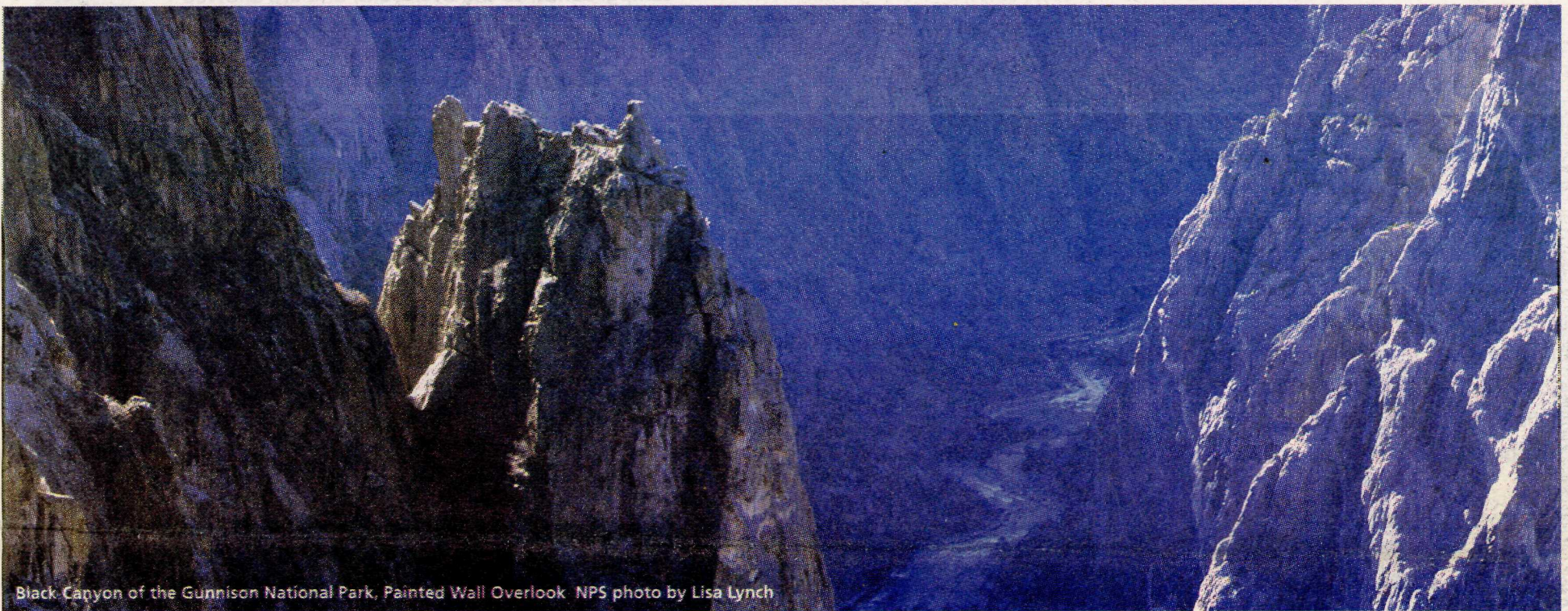




VISITOR GUIDE



BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON NATIONAL PARK CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA GUNNISON GORGE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA



Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Painted Wall Overlook NPS photo by Lisa Lynch

Welcome to Canyon Country!

Welcome to the southwest central mountains of Colorado, canyon and mesa country! Incredible scenery and a wide diversity of recreational opportunities await you at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area and the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area. These three areas are managed by agencies within the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service (NPS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Each of the areas share the Black Canyon and the Gunnison River yet offer different ways to explore them. The steepest and narrowest part of the Black Canyon is in the national park and can be viewed from either the North or South Rim Roads. The rugged, remote wilderness of the inner gorge in the national park and the national conservation area, calls to those seeking a challenge. The conservation area also offers whitewater boating and four wheel drive opportunities. Most of the Black Canyon lies in Curecanti where you can find a less demanding inner canyon experience on Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs.

We're glad you're here! We want you to be safe and have fun no matter what you decide to do during your stay in the area. Before venturing into any remote, inner canyon, backcountry or wilderness areas do some planning and visit with a ranger. Some places are harder to get to than they might seem. Let us know how we can help you make the most out of your visit to canyon and mesa country.

The staffs of the NPS and the BLM

**WE'RE
ON THE
WEB!**

BLACK CANYON:

<http://www.nps.gov/blca>

CURECANTI:

<http://www.nps.gov/cure>

GUNNISON GORGE:

<http://www.co.blm.gov/ggnca>

GENERAL INFORMATION

Camping

Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP

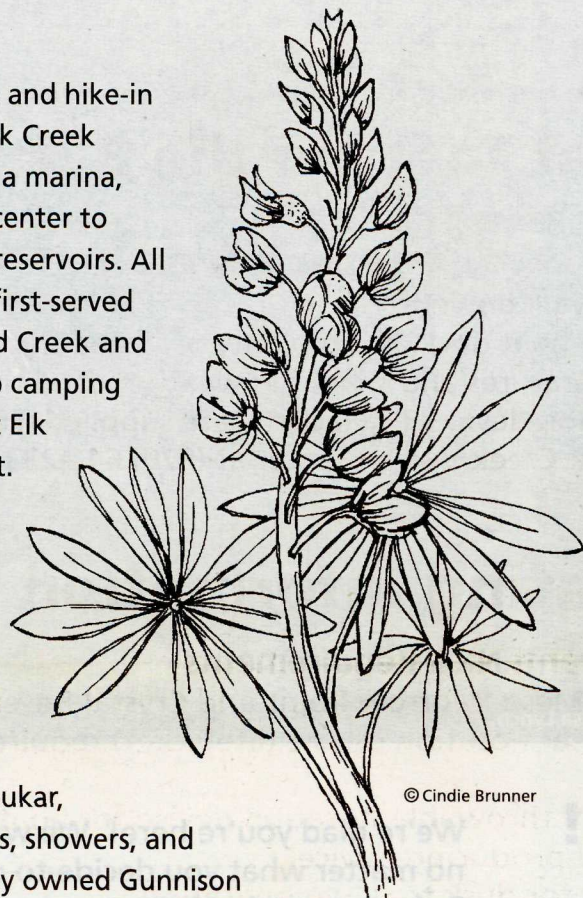
Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP has two campgrounds, one on each rim. The 13 sites at the North Rim Campground tend to fill up, while the larger South Rim Campground generally has sites available, some with electrical hookups, even during holiday weekends. Picnic tables, fire grates, restrooms, and water are available. Generator use is not allowed.

Curecanti NRA

Curecanti NRA offers drive-in, boat-in and hike-in campgrounds. Facilities range from Elk Creek Campground with 162 sites, showers, a marina, restaurant, amphitheater and visitor center to remote boat-in camping on all three reservoirs. All camping is available on a first-come, first-served basis except for group camping at Red Creek and East Elk Creek. Reservations for group camping may be made at park headquarters at Elk Creek, or by calling (970) 641-2337 ext. 200. Picnic tables, fire grates, restrooms, and water are available.

Gunnison Gorge NCA

Vehicle camping is permitted outside the wilderness area on a first come, first served basis. Picnic tables and fire grates are available at the Chukar, Duncan, and Ute trailheads. Campsites, showers, and other services are available at privately owned Gunnison River Pleasure Park at the Gunnison Forks. Camping in the wilderness area is permitted in designated sites only. Sites are marked by numbered wooden posts with blue (boater) or green (hiker) tops. Wilderness camping fee: \$10.00 per person for 1 night, \$15.00 per person for 2 nights (maximum allowable stay). The camping fee applies to all users, 16 years of age and older within the Gunnison River canyon.



What About Fido?

The regulations for pets vary throughout the three areas. Pets in the Gunnison Gorge NCA must be under their owner's control at all times. Pets are permitted in Curecanti, but must be leashed at all times. In Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, pets on leash may be walked on roads, in campgrounds, to the overlooks, and are allowed on the Rim Rock Trail, Cedar Point Nature Trail, and North Rim Chasm View Nature Trail. Pets are not allowed on any other hiking trails, inner canyon routes or in the wilderness area within Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. Owners are responsible for their pet's behavior and may receive fines if their animal creates problems with wildlife and/or other visitors. Do not leave your pet unattended in a vehicle or campsite. Boarding services in the area include:



Montrose:

Alta Vista Veterinary Clinic, 1845 E. Main Street, (970) 249-8185
Double Diamond Kennels, 23661 Horsefly Rd., (970) 249-3067
Montrose Veterinary Clinic, 2260 S. Townsend, (970) 249-5469
Redclyffe Kennels, 16793 Chipeta Rd., (970) 249-6395
San Juan Veterinary Clinic, 822 Spring Creek Blvd., (970) 249-4490

Gunnison:

Critter Sitters and Outfitters, 98 County Road 17, (970) 641-0460
Tomichi Pet Care Center, 106 S. 11th St., (970) 641-2460
Town and Country Animal Hospital, 525 Hwy 135, (970) 641-2215

Fees

Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP

Entrance Fee	\$7.00
(per private vehicle, good for 7 calendar days)	
Black Canyon Annual Pass	\$15.00
(per private vehicle, good for 12 months)	
Pedestrians, Bikes, Motorcycles (per person; not to exceed \$7.00)...	\$4.00
Camping (per night).....	\$10.00
with electrical hookups (per night, South Rim Loop B).....	\$15.00
National Parks Pass	\$50.00
(annual pass for any national park charging entrance fee)	

Curecanti NRA

Boating Permits (Blue Mesa Reservoir only)	
Annual Permit.....	\$30.00
14-day Permit.....	\$10.00
2-day Permit.....	\$4.00
Camping (per night).....	\$10.00

Gunnison Gorge NCA (wilderness use only)

Day Use Only (per person).....	\$3.00
Camping - 1 Night (per person).....	\$10.00
Camping - 2 Nights (per person).....	\$15.00
Annual Pass (for day use).....	\$15.00
Note: Golden Eagle, Golden Age and Golden Access passports cannot be applied to fees in the Gunnison Gorge NCA.	

Visitor Center Hours

Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP

The South Rim Visitor Center is open every day of the year, except for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Day. Summer hours are 8:00am to 6:00pm. Winter hours are 8:30am to 4:00pm. (970) 249-1914, ext. 423

Curecanti NRA

The Elk Creek Visitor Center is open every day from the end of May through September, 8:00am to 4:30pm. (970) 641-2337, ext. 205
 The Cimarron and Lake Fork Visitor Centers are open every day from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, 9:00am to 4:00pm.

ACTIVITIES

General information on recreational activities and visitor services is shown on the chart below with a dot.

	Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP	Curecanti NRA	Gunnison Gorge NCA
Entrance Fee	●		
Other Fees (camping, etc.)	●	●	●
Visitor Center	●	●	
Ranger Programs	●	●	
Picnic Areas	●	●	●
Boat Rentals		●	
Boat Tours		●	
Backcountry/Wilderness Permits	●		●
Developed Camping	●	●	
Backcountry Camping	●	●	●
Group Camping		●	
Showers		●	
Fishing (lake)		●	
Fishing (river/stream)	●	●	●
Hiking	●	●	●
Rock Climbing	●		
Horse Trail	●	●	●
Kayaking (whitewater)	●		●
Rafting (whitewater)			●
Personal Water Craft			
Motorboats/Sailboats		●	
Windsurfing/Waterskiing		●	
Hunting		●	●
Snowmobiling		●	
Cross-country Skiing	●	●	●
Mountain Biking			●
4WD/Off-Highway Vehicle Area			●
Groceries		●	
Restaurant/Snacks		●	
♿ Overlooks	●	●	
♿ Campsites	●	●	
♿ Visitor Centers	●	●	
♿ Restrooms	●	●	

Ranger Activities

Learn more about Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP or Curecanti NRA at an afternoon or evening program! Schedules are available at visitor centers and bulletin boards within the parks. Schedules of ranger activities throughout the year are available at www.nps.gov/blca/webvc/rangact.htm for Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP and www.nps.gov/cure/webvc/rangact.htm for Curecanti NRA.

Boat Tours in the Black Canyon

Take a boat tour through the upper Black Canyon in Curecanti NRA! Morrow Point boat tours will begin in July 2003 and run through Labor Day. The one mile walk down the Pine Creek Trail includes 232 stairs. Allow an hour to get to the boat dock. Bring plenty of water and be prepared for cooler temperatures and changing weather conditions in the canyon. Personal flotation devices (lifejackets) are supplied. For more information, please call the Elk Creek Visitor Center at (970) 641-2337 extension 205.

Boating Information & Requirements

Curecanti NRA Requirements

(Blue Mesa, Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs)

Personal flotation device (lifejacket) required for everyone onboard any vessel.

Type IV throwable flotation device for boats 16 feet and greater

Sound-producing device

Lights for dusk to dawn operation

Boat permit (motorized and/or state registered vessels; Blue Mesa Reservoir only)

Fire extinguisher (unless boat is of open construction and less than 26 feet)

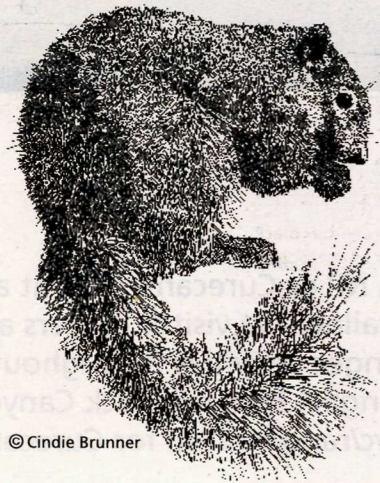
Gunnison Gorge NCA

All boaters must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved whitewater (Type III/IV) personal flotation device. Rafts must carry an extra oar or paddle, adequate first aid kit, repair kit, and an extra personal flotation device. Portable toilets and stoves or firepans with charcoal are mandatory for overnight boating parties. Registration is required.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP

The Gunnison River through the national park is extremely dangerous due to difficult rapids and the many grueling, poison ivy covered portages. Only the most experienced and well equipped kayakers attempt this stretch of the Gunnison River which is considered Class V to not navigable. All boaters must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved whitewater (Type III/IV) personal flotation device and obtain a free backcountry permit.

Additional wilderness regulations are on pages 6 and 7.



© Cindie Brunner

KEEP WILDLIFE WILD!

Feeding human food to wildlife reduces the animal's ability to survive naturally.

As animals become habituated to humans and lose their natural fear, the animals become aggressive and may be destroyed.

GETTING THERE

Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP

South Rim
Via US Highway 50, 15 miles east of Montrose, and CO Hwy 347

North Rim
Via CO Hwy 92, 11 miles south of Crawford, and North Rim Road. (Half of the road to the north rim is paved, half is graveled.)

Curecanti NRA

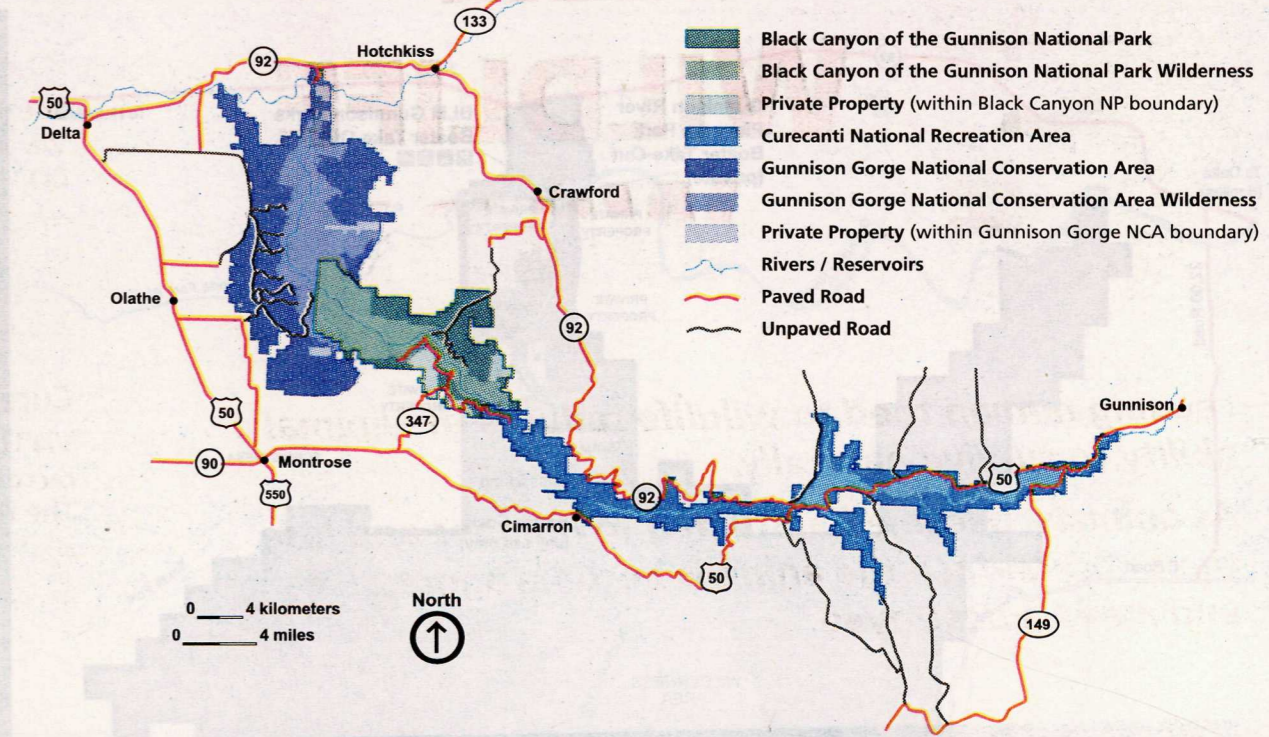
Via US Highway 50, which runs the length of the recreation area between Montrose and Gunnison. The recreation area is easily accessed from US Highway 50, CO Hwy 149, and CO Hwy 92.

Gunnison Gorge NCA

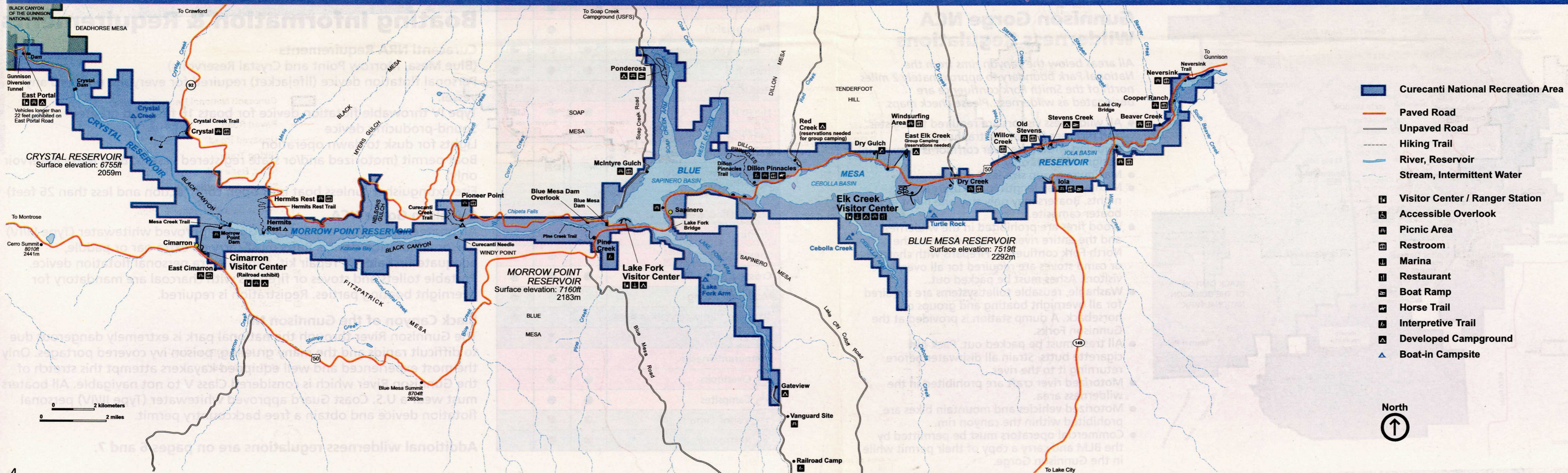
Via Falcon Road, 10 miles north of Montrose off of US Highway 50 just south of Olathe or via County Road 2200, off CO Hwy 92 near Austin, approximately 10 miles east of Delta. Follow signs to the unpaved Peach Valley Road. Gunnison Gorge access roads on both the east and west side of the Gunnison River Canyon are rough, four wheel drive roads that are impassable when wet. High clearance, 4WD vehicles are recommended.

Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Area

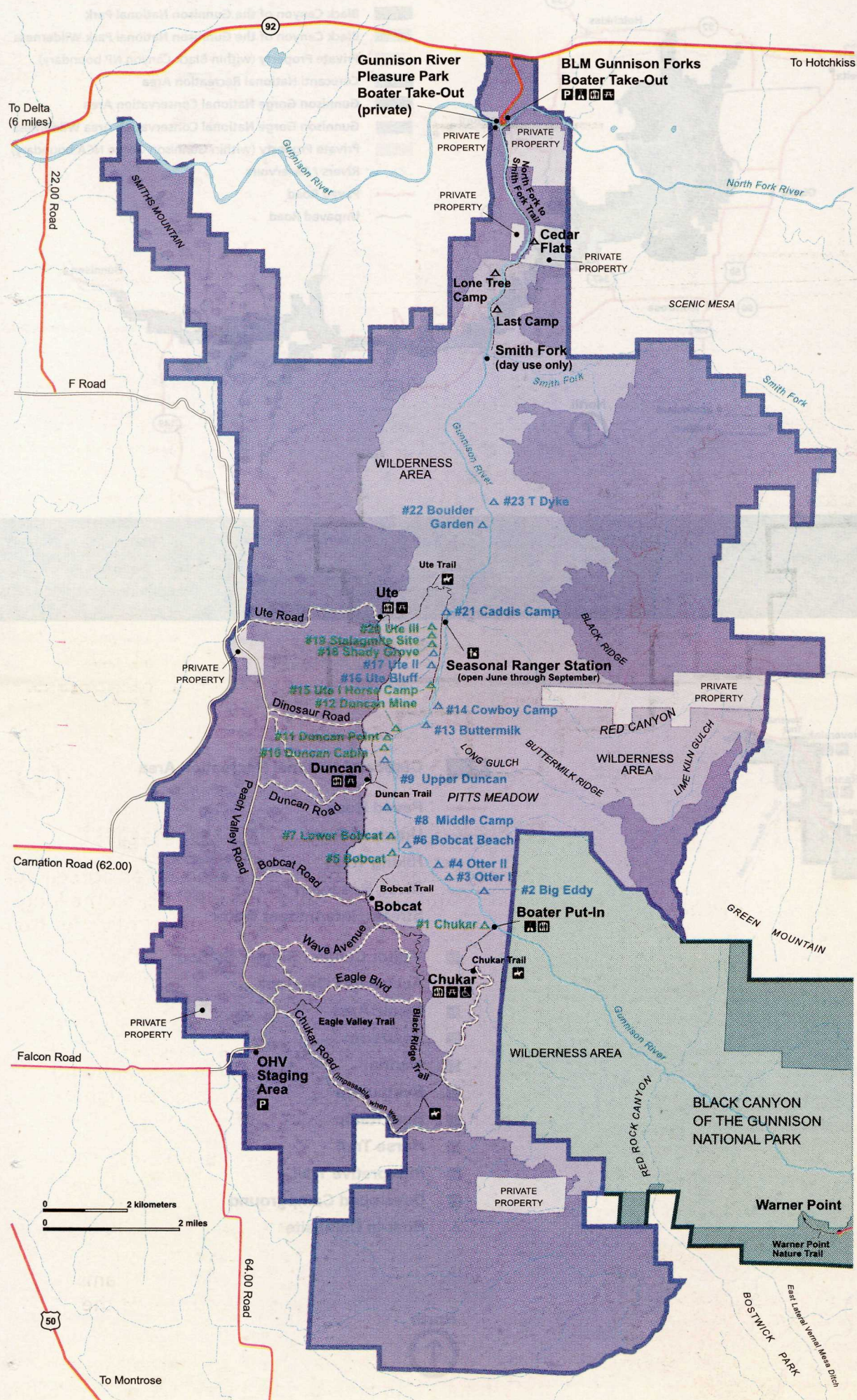
The four main trails into the Gunnison Gorge are accessed via the Chukar, Bobcat, Duncan, and Ute Roads off of Peach Valley Road. The Chukar Road and Trail provide the main access for boaters.



CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



GUNNISON GORGE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA



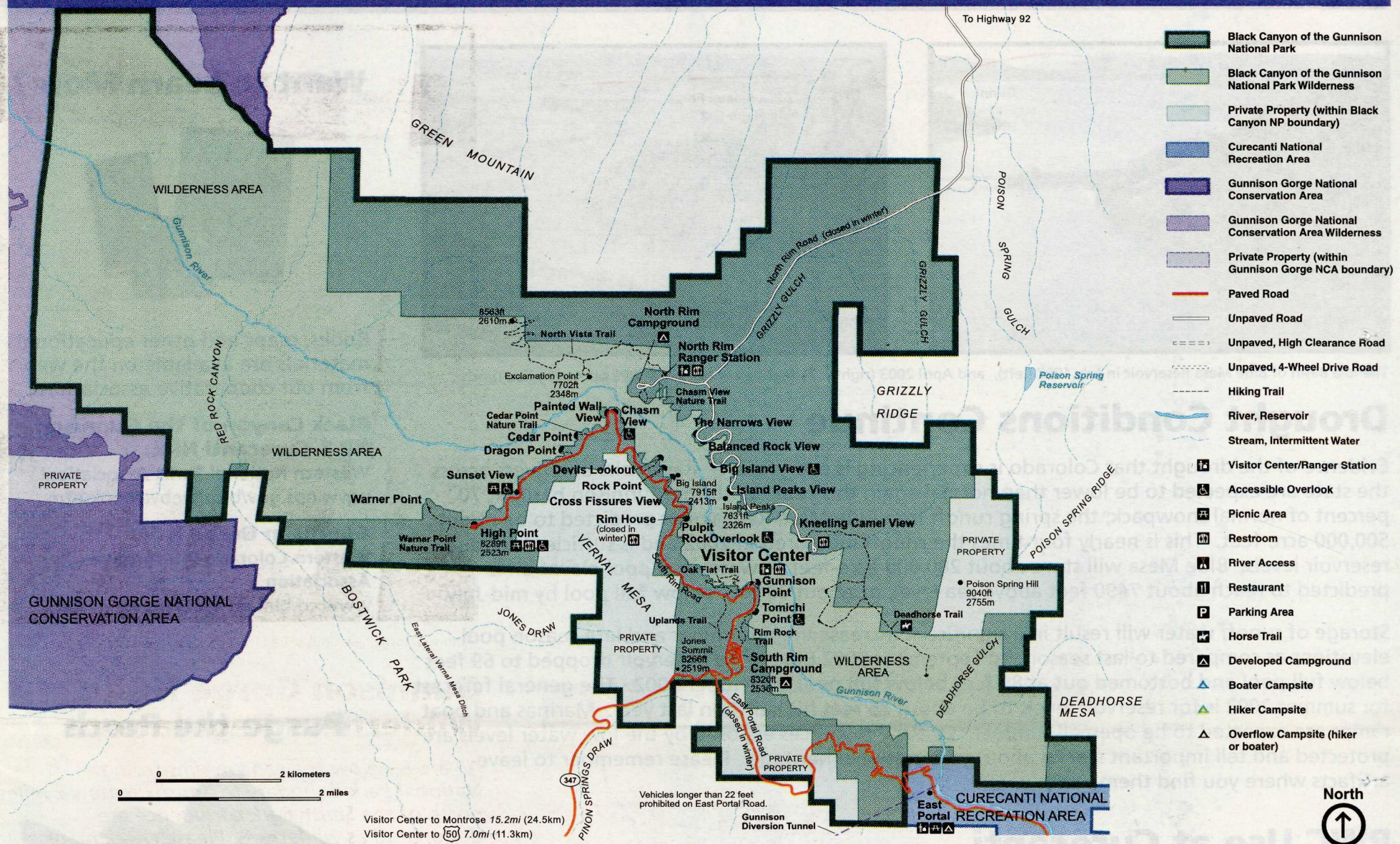
Gunnison Gorge near Chukar Trail. NPS photo by Lisa Lynch

Gunnison Gorge NCA Wilderness Regulations

All areas below the canyon rims from the National Park boundary to approximately 2 miles north of the Smith Fork confluence are designated as wilderness. Please check maps.

- All wilderness visitors are required to register and pay user fees at the trailhead.
- Camping within the river corridor is allowed in designated sites only.
- Maximum group size is 12 people.
- Maximum stay length for all users is two nights. Boaters may only stay one night at any boater campsite.
- Wood fires are prohibited in the wilderness and the entire river corridor down to the North Fork confluence. Firepans with charcoal or camp stoves are required for all overnight visitors. Ashes must be packed out.
- Washable, reusable toilet systems are required for all overnight boating and groups on horseback. A dump station is provided at the Gunnison Forks.
- All trash must be packed out. Pack out cigarette butts. Strain all dishwater before returning it to the river.
- Motorized river craft are prohibited in the wilderness area.
- Motorized vehicles and mountain bikes are prohibited within the canyon rim.
- Commercial operators must be permitted by the BLM and carry a copy of their permit while in the Gunnison Gorge.

BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON NATIONAL PARK



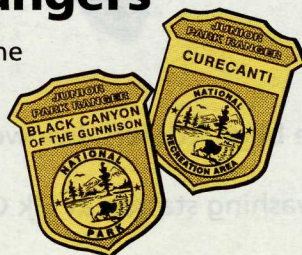
Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP Wilderness Regulations

All areas below the canyon rims and various sections on the North Rim are designated as wilderness. Please check maps.

- A free backcountry wilderness use permit is required for all inner canyon use (including day hikes, climbing, camping and kayaking). Permits may be obtained at the South Rim Visitor Center, the North Rim Ranger Station or East Portal.
- Pets are not allowed in the wilderness.
- Wood fires are prohibited. Use camp stoves only.
- Everything, including used toilet paper and cigarette butts, must be packed out of the wilderness area. (Campers and hikers on Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs in Curecanti National Recreation Area, please observe the "pack it in, pack it out" policy as well.)

NOW HIRING... Junior Park Rangers

Help take care of your national treasures! Anyone between the ages of 5 and 12 can become a Junior Park Ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park or Curecanti National Recreation Area. If you are under the age of 5, you can become a Curecanti Ranger Buddy. Stop by the Elk Creek, Lake Fork, Cimarron or South Rim Visitor Centers for more information.



Black Canyon Water Right

The Department of the Interior reached an agreement with the State of Colorado in April 2003, on the long-standing dispute involving management of water from the Gunnison River through the Black Canyon. The agreement establishes a reserve right for base flows of 300 cubic feet per second (cfs) to provide a minimal flow for the protection of fishery resources. It also provides that the park have a water right for flood flows to help reduce the buildup of sediment and vegetation in the canyon subject to water rights of other users previously acquired.

Since the Colorado water court has not yet ruled on the quantification of the federal right, nor has the Colorado Water Conservation Board obtained its in-stream right, the Bureau of Reclamation will regulate summer flows through the Black Canyon subject to the operations of the Aspinall Unit, the three dams regulating the Gunnison River upstream of the national park.

River flows around 275 cfs are expected through the park in June and are likely to increase to 600 cfs in July and decline to about 300 cfs in late September.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS



The Lola Basin of Blue Mesa Reservoir in July 1997 (left), and April 2003 (right), 71 feet below full pool. NPS photos by Lisa Lynch

Drought Conditions Continue

Evidence of the drought that Colorado is experiencing is everywhere. Reservoirs and rivers across the state are expected to be lower than normal again this year. With the Gunnison basin at 70 percent of normal snowpack, the spring runoff into Blue Mesa Reservoir is predicted to be about 500,000 acre-feet. This is nearly four times the runoff measured in 2002 and is sufficient to raise reservoir levels. Blue Mesa will store about 280,000 acre-feet of water and pool elevation is predicted to reach about 7490 feet above sea level, or about 30 feet below full pool by mid-July.

Storage of runoff water will result in a significant increase in midsummer and late-season pool elevations as compared to last season. In September 2002 Blue Mesa Reservoir dropped to 69 feet below full pool and bottomed out at 89 feet below full pool in October 2002. The general forecast for summer 2003 is for reservoir levels to be about 25 feet higher than last year. Marinas and boat ramps are expected to be open all summer. Cultural resources exposed by the low water levels are protected and tell important stories about your national heritage. Please remember to leave artifacts where you find them.

PWC Use at Curecanti

Blue Mesa Reservoir has been closed to PWC 's (personal watercraft or jetskis) since November 7, 2002 as a result of a court ordered settlement agreement between the National Park Service and Bluewater Network. Curecanti is completing an environmental assessment (EA) to determine if and how PWC use will continue on Blue Mesa Reservoir. The EA will be available for public perusal in the near future. After the EA is finalized, regulations will be written regarding the use of PWC's in Curecanti which will most likely not be completed until the summer season of 2004. (Copies of the EA will be available in park visitor centers and local libraries.)

Help Stop the Invasion of Zebra Mussels!

Zebra Mussels in Blue Mesa Reservoir could:

- Disrupt fishing by reducing natural food sources
- Ruin your boat by jamming steering equipment and blocking your engine's cooling system
- Cost taxpayers millions of dollars by clogging power plant and public water intakes and pipes
- Litter beaches with sharp, odor-producing shells

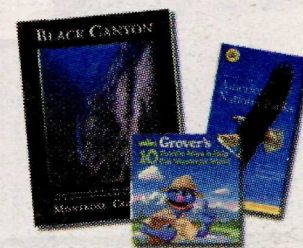
Before launching and before leaving:

- Remove aquatic plants from boat motor and trailer
- Drain lake or river water from your equipment including the bilge, coolers, live wells, bait buckets and motors
- Wash your boat, trailer, and equipment at the public boat washing station at Elk Creek and allow your boat to dry thoroughly.



USGS photo

Want to Learn More?



Books, maps and other educational materials are available on the web from our cooperative associations.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP & Curecanti NRA:

Western National Parks Association
www.nps.gov/blca/webvc/book.htm

Gunnison Gorge NCA:

Western Colorado Interpretive Association
www.co.blm.gov/gra/gra-wcia.htm

Purge the Perch



USFWS illustration

Yellow Perch have been introduced into Blue Mesa Reservoir within the last several years. This introduction was likely done illegally and could pose a serious threat to the fishery of Curecanti NRA. The Colorado Division of Wildlife will be studying the perch population in 2003 to determine its size and the potential impacts on the fishery. You may keep up to 20 perch and are encouraged to do so. Please contact the Colorado Division of Wildlife at 970-641-7070 for more information.



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