

**GREAT BASIN**  
NATIONAL PARK / NEVADA

alternatives workbook

**background and alternatives**





The National Park Service is in the process of preparing a general management plan for Great Basin National Park. The plan will present the basic management philosophy for the park and provide strategies for meeting management objectives over the next 5 to 10 years. Two types of strategies will be considered – those to properly protect the park's resources, and those to provide for appropriate visitor use and interpretation. The GMP will also propose actions, programs, and support facilities necessary to implement the strategies and ensure efficient park operations.

In the past year the Great Basin planning team has gathered extensive resource information, held public meetings to identify major planning issues, and developed preliminary alternatives for management and use of the park. The team is now seeking your comments and suggestions about these alternatives so that they can be considered during the preparation of the general management plan.

This workbook is divided into two parts – "Background and Alternatives" and "Comments." The "Background and Alternatives" section describes planning constraints, zoning classes, and major resource management issues, and it includes maps of existing conditions and four preliminary planning alternatives. The "Comments" section presents the alternative actions in chart form and provides space for you to indicate your preferences and record your comments. After all comments are received and evaluated, and the alternatives are fully developed, the team will prepare and distribute a draft general management plan/environmental assessment for public review. The draft plan is expected to be available in the summer of 1989.

Thank you for your interest in Great Basin National Park.

Al Hendricks  
Superintendent



## PURPOSE OF AND CONSTRAINTS ON THE PLANNING EFFORT

On October 27, 1986, Great Basin National Park was established "to preserve for the benefit and inspiration of the people a representative segment of the Great Basin of the Western United States possessing outstanding resources and significant geological and scenic values." The authorizing legislation placed the following constraints on management of the park:

The Secretary [of the Interior] shall permit fishing on lands and waters under his jurisdiction within the park . . . except that he may designate zones where, and periods when, no fishing may be permitted for reasons of public safety. . . .

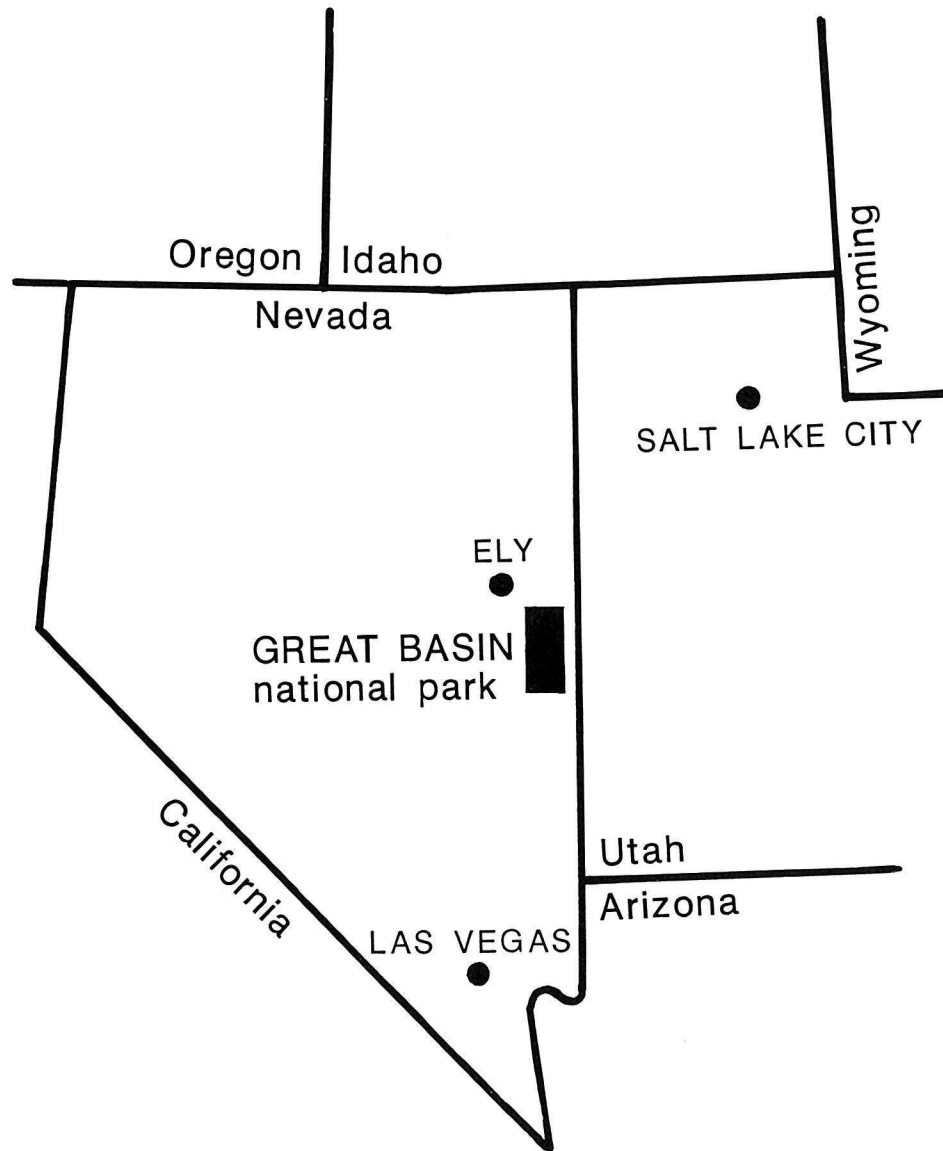
Subject to valid existing rights, Federal lands and interests therein, within the park, are withdrawn from disposition under the public lands laws and from entry or appropriation under the mining laws of the United States, from the operation of the mineral leasing laws of the United States, and from operation of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970, as amended.

Subject to such limitations, conditions, or regulations as he may prescribe, the Secretary shall permit grazing on lands within the park to the same extent as was permitted on such lands as of July 1, 1985. Grazing within the park shall be administered by the National Park Service. . . .

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to establish a new express or implied reservation to the United States of any water or water-related right. . . . The United States shall be entitled to only that express or implied reserved water right which may have been associated with the initial establishment and withdrawal of Humboldt National Forest and the Lehman Caves National Monument. . . .

The Secretary is authorized and encouraged to enter into cooperative agreements with other Federal, State, and local public departments and agencies providing for the interpretation of the Great Basin physiographic region. Such agreements shall include . . . authority for the Secretary to develop and operate interpretive facilities and programs on lands and waters outside the boundaries of such park, with the concurrence of the owner or administrator thereof.

The Great Basin legislation also required that a general management plan be submitted to Congress by October 1989.



## PLANNING APPROACH

The recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS)\* will be used to zone lands in Great Basin National Park and provide the basis for developing proposals in the general management plan. The ROS is a zoning strategy for integrating and coordinating recreation with other resource uses and management activities. It is based on the assumption that a quality visitor experience is best assured through the provision of diverse recreational opportunities – as long as they are within the context of the agency’s mission and policies. The ROS reflects the fact that opportunities sought by recreationists range from easily accessible, developed, and convenient to undeveloped and primitive, and it allows managers and planners to consider all of the recreational opportunities that are appropriate.

Five ROS classes have been developed to provide a zoning strategy for the park. These classes stipulate what types of recreational opportunities and management activities can and cannot occur in specific areas. Please familiarize yourself with the five classes below and note their application on the Existing Conditions and Alternatives A-D maps before filling out the “Comments” section for the ROS.

**Primitive Class:** Trailless backcountry where use is dispersed

Access: Roadless and trailless; hikers only

On-site management: No development; no designated campsites

Social interaction: Excellent opportunities for solitude; high challenge

Acceptability of visitor impacts: Very low; evidence of man minimal to none

**Semi-Primitive Class:** Trailed backcountry where use is generally destination-oriented

Access: Roadless; low to medium standard trails; hikers and horses accommodated

On-site management: Very limited development; designated backcountry campsites where necessary to protect resources

Social interaction: Moderate opportunities for solitude; moderate challenge

Acceptability of visitor impacts: Low to moderate; visitor use evident in localized areas

**Semi-Primitive Day Use Class:** Trailed backcountry that is destination-oriented and readily accessible to the majority of the visiting public

Access: Roadless; low to high standard trails; hikers only

On-site management: Limited development; no camping; modest interpretive structures (unmanned with media)

Social interaction: Limited opportunities for solitude; low to high challenge

Acceptability of visitor impacts: Moderate; trails and other sites hardened where necessary

**Rural Class:** Dispersed campsites that are vehicle-accessible from unsurfaced, low-standard roads

Access: Unsurfaced roads only (two- or four-wheel-drive); hikers, horses, and vehicles accommodated

On-site management: Limited development; designated limited-service campgrounds, horse corrals, manned contact stations, and interpretive media

Social interaction: Limited opportunities for solitude; group and family oriented; low challenge

Acceptability of visitor impacts: Moderate; visitor impacts confined to resistant areas

**Modern Class:** Developed areas that are designed to accommodate large numbers of visitors and park staff; landscape is often modified

Access: Surfaced and unsurfaced roads; hikers, horses, vehicles, and recreational vehicles accommodated

On-site management: Major development (visitor centers, parking, water and sewer facilities, maintenance areas, transportation centers, residential areas, full-service campgrounds, etc.)

Social interaction: Little or no opportunity for solitude; very low challenge

Acceptability of visitor impacts: High; trails and other sites often hardened

\*Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS): A Framework for Planning, Management, and Research*, by Roger Clark and George Stankey. USFS:PNW-98, 1979.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Park Service will address resource issues and concerns in the general management plan to provide broad management directions that will guide the preparation of subsequent resource management action plans. The major resource management issues that will be addressed are summarized below. Please read this information carefully before completing the resources management portion of the "Comments" section.

### Natural Resources

**Fisheries Management.** The Bonneville cutthroat is the only native trout species in the streams of Great Basin National Park. In most streams the Bonneville cutthroat has been eliminated because of human-caused influences. The general management plan will address the protection of existing populations and the possibility of using these populations as a source for reintroductions into other streams.

**Fish Stocking.** Before the park was established, the state of Nevada routinely stocked certain subalpine lakes and some of the streams with nonnative trout species. The general management plan will consider whether or not fish stocking for consumptive angling is appropriate within the park, and if so, where it should continue.

**Bighorn Sheep.** There is a small resident herd of bighorn sheep within the park inhabiting an area around Mt. Washington. Research has shown that the bighorn is very susceptible to diseases carried by domestic livestock. The general management plan will address whether grazing should be controlled to protect this species, and if so, to what extent.

**Elk.** Elk were once residents of the area that is now Great Basin National Park. Although the Park Service has no plans to reintroduce elk into the park, there are several herds in adjacent areas that may migrate into the park, possibly reestablishing a resident herd. Elk are grazing ungulates and compete with cattle for forage. The general management plan will address whether to allow elk to reestablish themselves in the park or to work with the state of Nevada to prevent this from occurring.

**Mule Deer.** Many individuals expressed concern during public meetings that the deer population could increase, creating problems within the park and hardships for nearby ranchers. Although public hunting will not be allowed in the park, the Park Service will consider alternatives to control the deer herd if it expands and overpopulates the range.

**Native Predators.** Some individuals also expressed concern that grazing livestock within the park will be very susceptible to predation by mountain lions and coyotes. Alternatives will be considered for cooperative agreements with other federal and state agencies to provide protection for or control of predator populations.

**Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive Species.** The park contains potential habitat for bald eagles and peregrine falcons, which are listed as threatened or endangered, and is home to several candidate species, including the Bonneville cutthroat trout, ferruginous hawk, and at least four alpine plant species. The general management plan will make recommendations regarding the reintroduction and protection of these species and their habitat.

### Cultural Resources

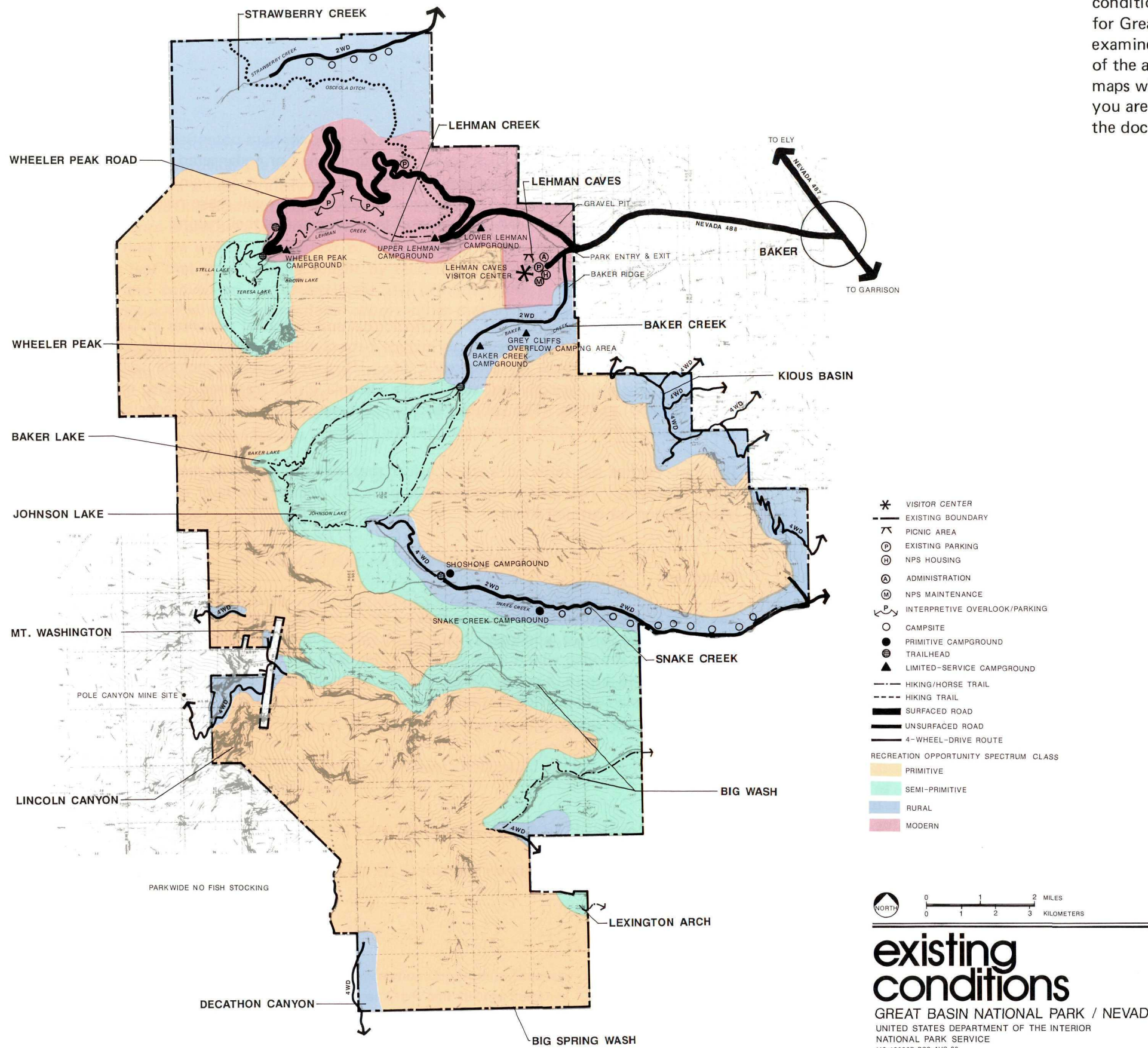
At present, little is known about the archeological and historical resources in Great Basin National Park. Archeological resources include petroglyph and pictograph sites and various caves containing evidence of prehistoric life. Historic resources include various sites associated with mining activities, such as the Osceola ditch, scattered cabins, machinery, and associated artifacts. The Lehman orchard, Lehman aqueduct, and Rhodes cabin have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Park Service has initiated a study effort that will provide basic data to support this planning effort. The general management plan will address the level of protection and interpretation for cultural sites.

### Wilderness

The general management plan will not make a recommendation regarding the designation of portions of the park as wilderness; however, it will evaluate the lands within the park and include a map showing which lands meet or potentially meet the criteria of the Wilderness Act. If, in the future, a wilderness recommendation is made for Great Basin, the general management plan will provide necessary background information.

The following five maps illustrate existing conditions and four preliminary alternatives for Great Basin National Park. Please examine the maps closely, and compare each of the alternatives to existing conditions. The maps will provide a helpful reference while you are filling out the "Comments" section of the document.



## ALTERNATIVE A SUMMARY

Construct a new Great Basin interpretive center at Baker Ridge

Construct a new entrance road across public land from Nevada 487 to Baker Ridge; close the existing entrance road at the park boundary

Construct a 100-car parking lot and shuttle staging facility near Lehman Caves; provide seasonal shuttle service along the 12-mile road from Lehman Caves to the Wheeler Peak day use area

Remove the existing Lehman Caves visitor center and parking area

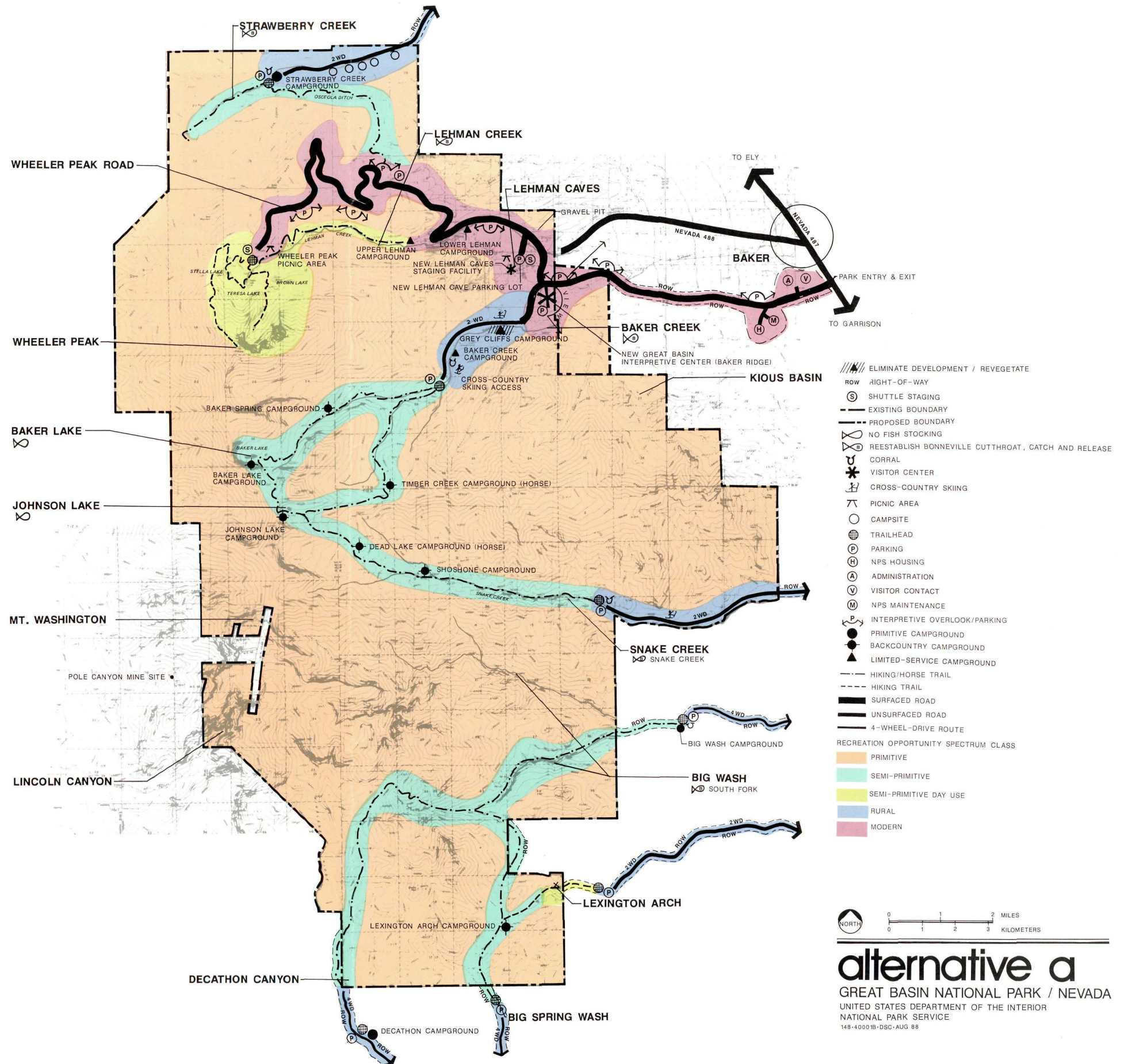
Maintain the Baker Creek and Snake Creek roads as improved gravel roads

Maintain the Strawberry Creek road as an unimproved gravel road

Maintain the Big Wash, Big Spring Wash, and Decathon Canyon roads as four-wheel-drive roads

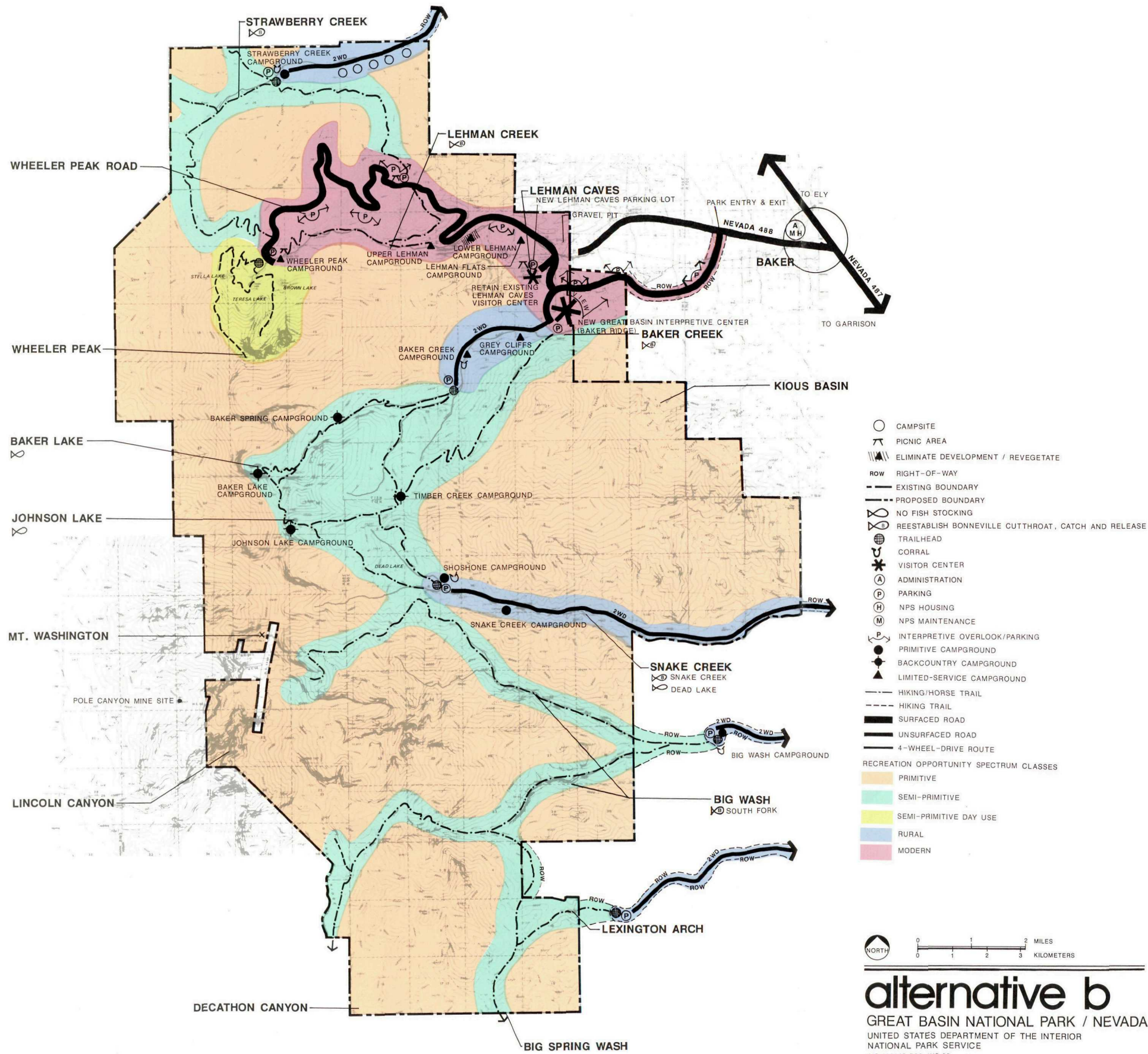
Upgrade the Lexington Arch road to an improved gravel two-wheel-drive standard

Provide no public road access to Mt. Washington



**alternative a**  
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## ALTERNATIVE B SUMMARY

Construct a new Great Basin interpretive center at Baker Ridge

Construct a new entrance road across public land from Nevada 488 to Baker Ridge; close the existing entrance road at the park boundary

Construct a 100-car parking lot near Lehman Caves; provide for vehicle access along the 12-mile road from Lehman Caves to the Wheeler Peak campground and trailhead; construct a new 25-car parking lot there

Retain the Lehman Caves visitor center and upper-level parking

Maintain the Baker Creek and Snake Creek roads as improved gravel roads

Maintain the Strawberry Creek road as an unimproved gravel road

Retain existing access to Big Spring Wash and Decathon Canyon along USFS and BLM four-wheel-drive routes

Upgrade the Big Wash and Lexington Arch roads to an improved gravel, two-wheel-drive standard

Provide no public road access to Mt. Washington

## ALTERNATIVE C SUMMARY

Construct a new Great Basin interpretive center at Kious Basin

Construct a new entrance road across public lands from Nevada 487 to the interpretive center, with a continuing link to the Lehman Caves visitor center; close the existing entrance road at the park boundary

Construct a 100-car parking lot near Lehman Caves; provide for vehicle access along the 12-mile road from Lehman Caves to the Wheeler Peak campground and trailhead; construct a new 50-car parking lot there

Retain the Lehman Caves visitor center and upper-level parking

Pave the Baker Creek road

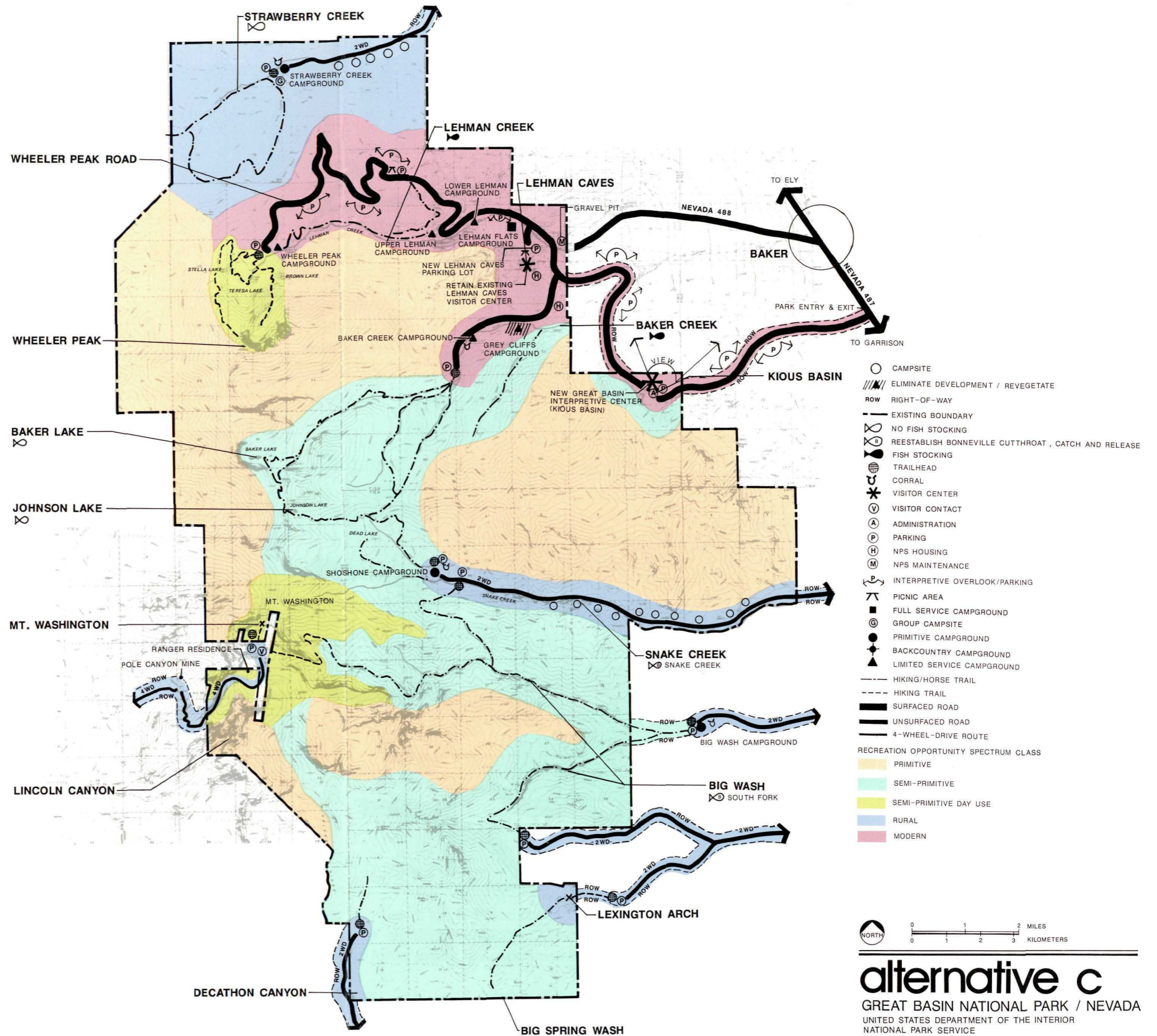
Maintain the Snake Creek road as an improved gravel road

Maintain the Strawberry Creek road as an unimproved gravel road

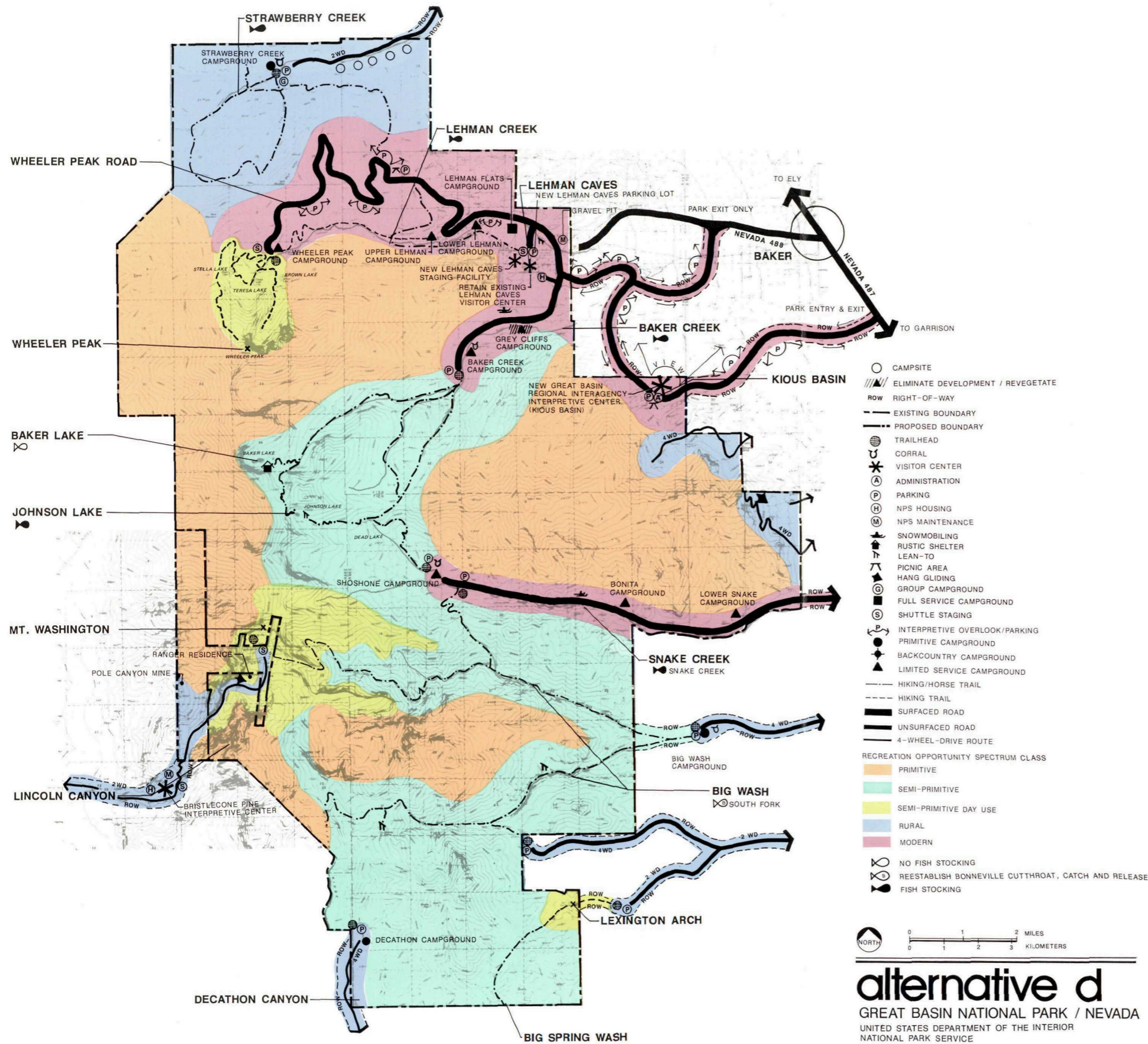
Upgrade the Big Wash, Decathon Canyon, and Lexington Arch roads to an improved gravel, two-wheel-drive standard

Retain existing access to Big Spring Wash along USFS and BLM four-wheel-drive routes

Provide public road access (four-wheel-drive) to Mt. Washington



**alternative c**  
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## ALTERNATIVE D SUMMARY

Construct a new Great Basin regional interagency interpretive center at Kious Basin

Construct a new entrance road across public land from Nevada 487 to the interpretive center, with a continuing link to the Lehman Caves visitor center; construct a new exit road from the link to Nevada 488; close the existing entrance road at the park boundary

Construct a 100-car parking lot and shuttle staging facility near Lehman Caves; provide seasonal shuttle service along the 12-mile road from Lehman Caves to the Wheeler Peak campground and trailhead

Retain the Lehman Caves visitor center and upper-level parking

Pave the Baker Creek and Snake Creek roads

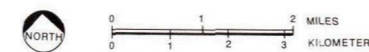
Maintain the Strawberry Creek road as an unimproved gravel road

Maintain the Big Wash, Decathon Canyon, and North Fork of Lexington Creek roads as four-wheel-drive standard roads

Upgrade the South Fork of Lexington Creek road to an improved gravel, two-wheel-drive standard

Retain existing access to Big Spring Wash along USFS and BLM four-wheel-drive routes

Initiate public shuttle service (four-wheel-drive) to Mt. Washington



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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, and parks and recreation areas, and to ensure the wise use of all these resources. The department also has major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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