



Shaping the Future of the Frontcountry Experience at Guadalupe Mountains National Park



A MESSAGE FROM THE PARK SUPERINTENDENT

The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the initiation of a Frontcountry Management Plan for Guadalupe Mountains National Park (the park). The intent of this project is to define desired conditions for resource protection and visitor experience in frontcountry areas of the park, which include key destinations such as campgrounds, trails, and day use areas. The plan will also establish strategies and concepts to guide potential future facility investments, with consideration for visitor enjoyment, climate resiliency, and preservation of important natural and cultural resources. Thank you for taking the time to join us in this important and meaningful planning process.

The park encompasses over 86,000 acres in west Texas. The Guadalupe Mountains rise more than 3,000 feet above the arid Chihuahuan Desert, and Guadalupe Peak, 8,749 feet above sea level, is the highest point in Texas. Since the early 2000s, the park has experienced a significant shift in visitation. Prior to 2005, McKittrick Canyon was the centerpiece of use; today, visitors flock to the Pine Springs area to hike Guadalupe Peak. Additionally, the busy season is lengthening, which places stress on resources, parking areas, campgrounds, trails, and other infrastructure.

Now, the NPS has begun the planning process for the future of the park's frontcountry. Please read through the information in this newsletter to learn about key issues, and preliminary ideas for management zoning and desired conditions. The NPS then welcomes your thoughts and ideas during the open comment period from **May 1, 2024** to **June 7, 2024**, which will help inform this planning process. More information on how to submit comments is included in this newsletter packet.

Sincerely,
William Cole Uphouse, Acting Superintendent

Join Us for a Virtual Public Meeting

Meeting 1

Tuesday May 21, 2024
4:00-6:00 pm MT

Meeting 2

Wednesday May 22, 2024
12:30-2:30 pm MT

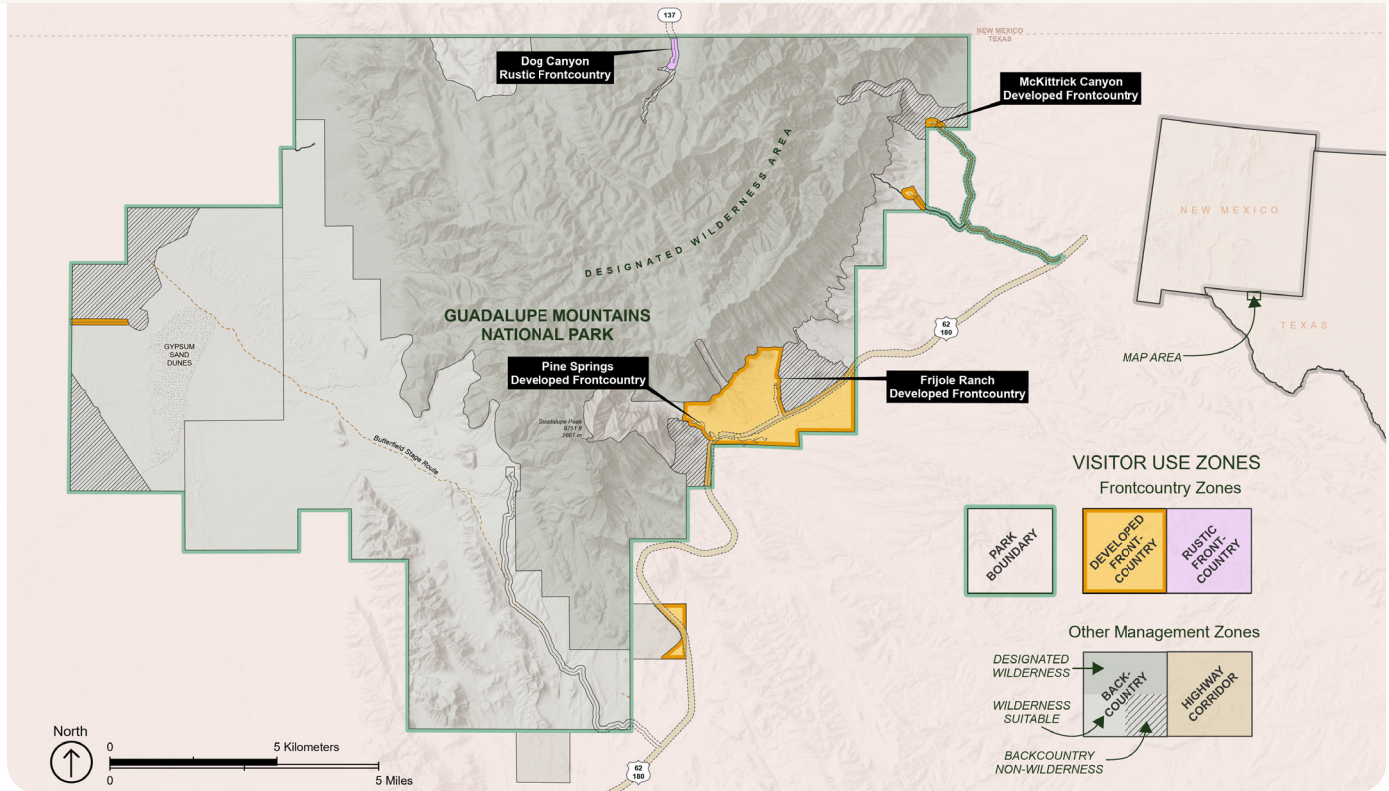
Information on how to join the meetings is available at:

https://parkplanning.nps.gov/GUMO_Frontcountry

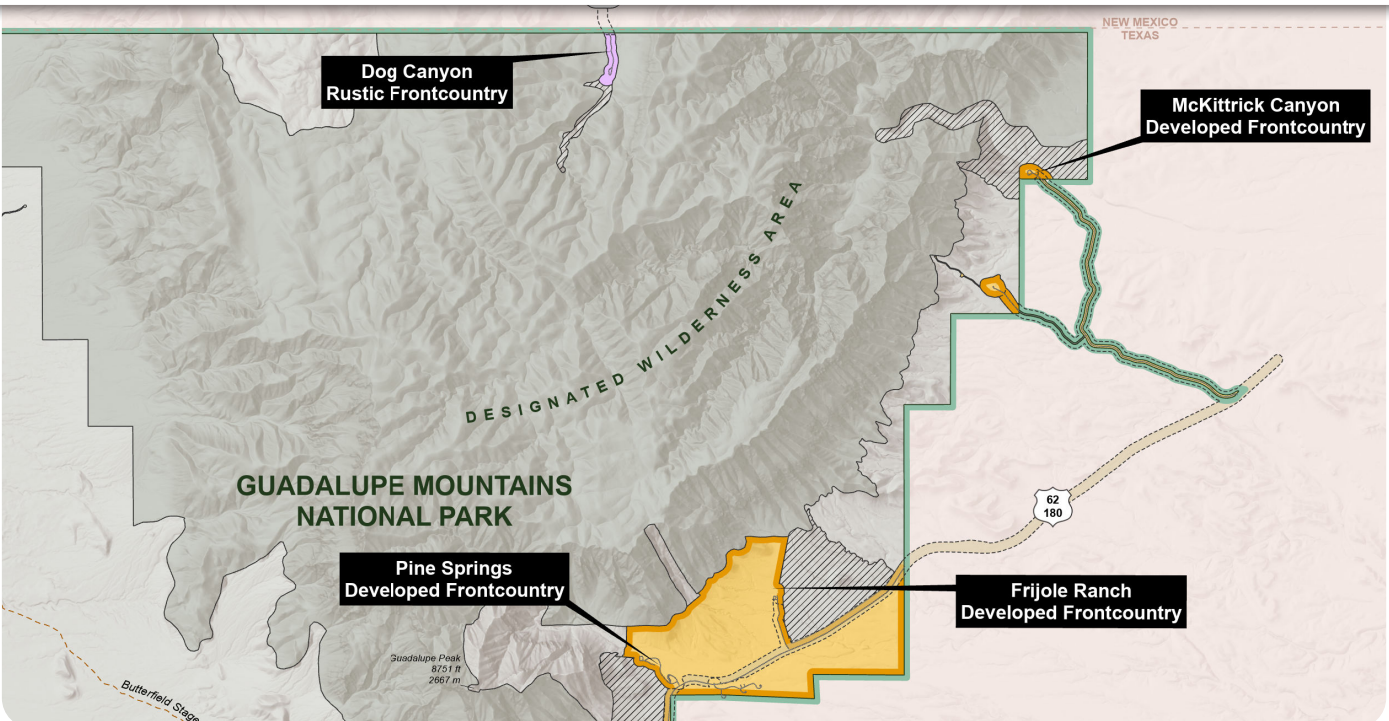


PRELIMINARY MANAGEMENT ZONES

Park zoning identifies and describes the appropriate variety of desired future resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved and maintained in distinct areas, including suitable management activities, types of visitor use, and development. The NPS is considering the following new frontcountry management zones: the Developed Frontcountry, which encompasses the busiest and most readily accessible areas such as Pine Springs, Frijole Ranch, and McKittrick Canyon, and the Rustic Frontcountry, which encompasses Dog Canyon and offers a quieter, more remote experience while retaining frontcountry facilities. These management zones are shown on the map below.



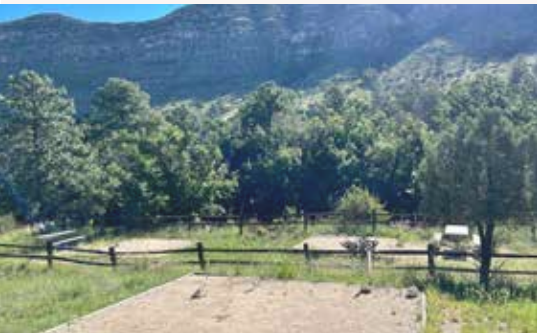
KEY FRONTCOUNTRY LOCATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THIS PLAN



KEY ISSUES

The plan is needed to address issues in the park's frontcountry related to the following topics:

- » Visitor access, orientation, and connectivity between key destinations
- » Campground experience for tent and RV users
- » Natural and cultural resource protection
- » Diversity and accessibility of recreation opportunities
- » Opportunities for the public to engage with interpretive media celebrating the natural and cultural heritage of the park



DESIRED CONDITIONS OF FRONTCOUNTRY MANAGEMENT ZONES

Desired conditions are statements of aspiration that describe what a management zone will look like, feel like, sound like, and function like in the future. Desired conditions do not propose specific developments; rather, they are used as a basis to inform future planning and decision making. A summary of preliminary desired conditions for each of the two frontcountry zones are below.

Developed Frontcountry

Natural Resources

Native species and ecological processes are protected and flourish alongside a built and bustling human environment.

Cultural Resources

Significant cultural, archeological, and paleontological resources may be present and are preserved.

Key Experiences

Easy and convenient access to spectacular views by foot, bicycle, or motor vehicle from improved roads and trails.

Facilities

Facilities are designed to accept intense visitation, large groups, and accommodate a wide range of visitor abilities.

Soundscapes

The sounds of other visitors are often present; however, visitors have opportunities to hear natural sounds like insects and animals.

Night Skies

Night skies and the nocturnal environment are protected with (only the necessary amount of) artificial outdoor lighting to provide for visitor safety and comfort.

Rustic Frontcountry

Natural Resources

Native species and ecological processes are protected and flourish alongside a minimal built human environment.

Cultural Resources

Significant cultural, archeological, and paleontological resources may be present and are preserved.

Key Experiences

A uniquely remote experience accessible by motor vehicle. It serves as a gateway to the backcountry.

Facilities

Facilities are designed to accept a moderate level of visitation and accommodate a more limited range of visitor abilities.

Soundscapes

A natural soundscape prevails in this zone. Natural noises are easily heard and sounds of other visitors are minimal.

Night Skies

Night skies and the nocturnal environment are protected with (only the minimal amount of) artificial outdoor lighting to provide for visitor safety and comfort.

» WE WOULD LIKE YOUR INPUT

As an integral part of the planning process, the NPS is asking for your input. Please consider the information in this newsletter and share your thoughts on the following questions:

1. What resources, activities, or experiences are important to you in the frontcountry areas of Pine Springs, Frijole Ranch, McKittrick Canyon, and/or Dog Canyon?
2. What specific steps could the National Park Service take to improve your experience or protect resources in any of these locations?
3. Do you have feedback or ideas on key frontcountry planning issues related to visitor access and orientation, connectivity between key destinations, campground experience, accessibility, recreation opportunities, or interpretive media?
4. Is there anything else we should know or consider in planning for the management of the frontcountry?

» YOU'RE INVITED

The NPS will host two virtual informational public meetings. Please join us to learn more about this project and have an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. The information provided at both meetings will be the same.

Meeting 1: Tues. May 21, 2024, 4:00-6:00 pm MT

Meeting 2: Wed. May 22, 2024, 12:30-2:30 pm MT

More information and links to join the virtual meetings are available on the project webpage under 'Meeting Notices' at https://parkplanning.nps.gov/GUMO_Frontcountry. If you are unable to attend a live, virtual meeting, recordings will remain available via meeting links once the event has concluded.

» HOW TO COMMENT

Formal comments will be accepted between **May 1, 2024** and **June 7, 2024**, and can be submitted in the following ways:

1. Submit comments electronically (preferred method) at https://parkplanning.nps.gov/GUMO_Frontcountry
To submit comments electronically, navigate to the link above, then click on "Open For Comment" on the left side of the page, and then click on the Newsletter link under "Documents Open For Comment." On the next page, click the "Comment Now" button.

2. Mail or hand deliver written comments to park headquarters:

Guadalupe Mountains National Park
RE: Frontcountry Management Plan
400 Pine Canyon, Salt Flat, TX 79847

» PLANNING PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Milestone	Schedule	Planning Effort
Civic Engagement	Spring 2024	Engage the public on issues, zoning, and desired conditions. Public comment period. » WE ARE HERE «
Develop and Analyze Concepts	Summer-Winter 2024	NPS staff review public comments and develop possible management concepts.
Prepare Draft Plan and Initiate Environmental Compliance	Winter-Spring 2025	NPS staff develop the plan and analyze the potential impacts of the management concepts on park resources through an environmental compliance document.
Public Review of Plan and Environmental Compliance Document	Summer 2025	Plan and environmental compliance document released for public comment. Public comment period.
Decision Document	Spring 2026	NPS selects the actions or alternative to be implemented and prepares decision document.