View from the Inside

The staff working for the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service are dedicated to protecting our public lands and sharing them with our visitors. The Portal sat down with the managers of these areas – Karen Tucker, Manager for Gunnison Gorge NCA, and Connie Rudd, Superintendent of Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP and Curecanti NRA – to gain their inside view of the land they care for.

What is the national significance of the land you manage?

KAREN – Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area is part of BLM’s National Landscape Conservation System which is comprised of some of the West’s most spectacular, wild and diverse landscapes. The Gorge was designated by Congress in recognition of its outstanding geologic, scenic, wilderness, and recreational resources. The Gunnison Gorge Wilderness is famous for its spectacular geology, world class trout fishing, and challenging whitewater boating adventures. The NCA also offers a range of hiking, biking, equestrian, and motorized riding adventures on primitive roads and trails that wind their way through imposing adobe badland formations, scenic sandstone canyons, and diverse native plant communities.

CONNIE – Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park is renowned for its steep and deep canyon, carved over millennia by the Gunnison River. Running water has the power to move boulders and move emotions. Stand at the rim of the canyon and speculate about the whispered passage of time chronicled in the gorge below.

Curecanti National Recreation Area cradles the still waters of the Gunnison River in a series of three reservoirs within and upstream of the Black Canyon. The soaring mesas and snow capped peaks of the West Elk Mountains serve as a rich biological transition zone in the high country.

Portions of the Gunnison Gorge and Black Canyon have been set aside as Wilderness areas. What value does wilderness add to the visitor experience at the parks?

KAREN – Wilderness areas are rare, wild places where you can escape civilization and reconnect with nature. The wilderness areas of Black Canyon and Gunnison Gorge offer visitors and area residents alike spectacular places where they can tune out the noises and distractions of their busy lives and tune in to the sights and sounds of cascading waters, the screech of a hawk, the splash of a jumping fish, or the laughter of friends and family. While some folks fear being “lost in the wilderness,” sometimes it is the perfect place to find something special in ourselves.

What is the National Park Service doing to address climate change?

CONNIE – The NPS is in the process of developing a service-wide climate change response strategy that includes four integrated components: science, adaptation, mitigation, and communication. Locally, in the realm of science, we are working to better understand the local effects of climate change. The parks are taking steps to mitigate climate change by attempting to reduce our carbon footprint. We have plans to calculate that footprint this summer and we are already initiating recycling and converting much of our fleet to hybrid vehicles.

As information becomes available, our neighbors and visitors can look forward to learning more about the effects of climate change on our parks and about the ways we are addressing these effects. Ask a ranger what you can do to help address the global climate change challenge.

Is there anything else you want to tell our visitors?

CONNIE – Visiting almost any national park has the potential to challenge you physically, mentally, and spiritually. Find time to slow down for your own personal journey.

Junior Ranger Programs

Help take care of your national treasures! Anyone can become a Junior Ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park or Curecanti National Recreation Area. Children aged 10 and up are encouraged to participate in this new program focusing on the night sky. Learn more about stars, planets, the moon, and animals that are active at night. Ask for this free booklet at any park visitor center. When finished, bring your completed booklet to the visitor center to receive an embroidered night sky patch.

Special ranger-led programs for children and families will be offered throughout the summer. Check at a visitor center for more details.

Teachers! Are you interested in sharing your park experience with your students?

There are many ways to make this happen. Over 30 park relevant lessons are available on our website, organized by grade:

http://www.nps.gov/cure/forteachers/curriculummaterials.htm

You can also schedule a field trip or a classroom visit, at no cost, by calling: (970) 641-2337, ext. 203. Entrance fee waivers are available to most educational groups.
Life and Times of the Black Bear

Bears were frequently seen at the Black Canyon South Rim, North Rim, and East Portal campgrounds last summer. They were also seen along all of the inner-canyon routes, on the banks of the Gunnison River, at Curecanti, and at Gunnison Gorge.

The bears who call this area home are American black bears (Ursus americanus). Many of these bears are only "black" in name and are cinnamon, or even light brown, in color.

When raspberries, serviceberries, wax currants, and acorns ripen, bears begin roaming and foraging for food. Black bears are omnivores and will eat insects, plants, fruits, fungus, and animal carcasses they happen upon. However, about 90% of their diet comes from plants.

These animals are very intelligent and curious. Their innate curiosity and extraordinary sense of smell (they can smell food from 5 miles away) will often lead them towards food sources. Imagine someone from a different culture cooking an unexpected meal full of enticing aromas in your home. Would curiosity lead you towards the kitchen?

During late summer and autumn, bears are particularly enterprising in finding food. Because they are preparing for hibernation, they must put on as much fat as possible to survive the long winter. This period is called hyperphagia, which means "excessive-eating". Bears will eat up to 20,000 calories each day during hyperphagia. That's equivalent to eating 40 hamburgers!

In addition to a powerful sense of smell, bears have great memories. They remember the places where they previously found food. That's why it's important that bears never receive food from human sources; they will remember such places (like campgrounds), and will often return.

Seeing a bear can elicit a wide range of emotions. Some visitors find joyous delight in spotting a bear in the wild, while for others, this can be a fearsome experience. It's important to remember that black bears are typically very shy and tend to avoid interactions with humans.

Often, when we have a better understanding of something, we come to appreciate it more. Here are a few ways you can find out more about these magnificent animals:

- Attend a ranger program about bears. Check the program schedule at the visitor center for information on when the next bear program will be offered.
- Find a ranger on a trail or at the visitor center and ask any questions you might have about bears. There are also brochures and books available to help you learn more about bear management, behavior, and their role in the ecosystem.
- Observe them quietly, and from a distance. Wild bears tend to look for food at dawn and dusk. You are more likely to see one in these quieter times, when there is less human activity. Remember that hiking alone, or after dark, is not recommended in bear country.

New Singletrack Trail at Gunnison Gorge

In 2009 and 2010 BLM partnered with Bicycle Colorado, Singletrack Trails, Inc., and the Western Colorado Conservation Corps to design and build Sidewinder Trail. The project was funded with stimulus money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The trail was completed in fall 2010. The construction phase employed 40 youths from Colorado's western slope over a ten week period.

Snaking in and out of canyons as it contours the western flank of Gunnison Gorge, Sidewinder is aptly named. All single-track users including hikers, equestrians, motorcyclists and mountain bikers are welcome on this rocky, sinuous trail.

Running 20 miles through pinyon-juniper forest and semi-desert shrub, this is one of the longest trails in the Gunnison Gorge. By linking to other routes, trail enthusiasts can enjoy sections of Sidewinder without committing to its entire length. Depending on which routes are linked, a number of loop options of various lengths are available.

Most sections of Sidewinder are moderate in difficulty for hiking and equestrian use, with just a few hundred feet of elevation change; but for those on two wheels, whether mountain bike or motorcycle, this is an expert-level technical trail. "Unrelenting" is a common description.

"This trail doesn't let up. Not even a little. The rocks are everywhere, and seem to get bigger as the day goes on... Don't let this freak you out. The trail is really fun and challenging. It's just constant. You don't get a break unless you stop and take a breather." (Sidewinder Trail description by Bauer, a trail rider.)

For more detailed information, including maps, visit the Montrose Public Lands Center or the Gunnison Gorge NCA website (see contact information on page 2).

On Bears

Spotting a wild bear in its natural habitat can be a cherished memory. If you see one, please follow these guidelines:

Always:
- Remain calm and keep a safe distance between you and the bear, generally greater than 100 feet.
- Speak calmly to make the bear aware of your presence.
- If a bear approaches, make loud noises (shout, clap your hands, or bang pots together) and slowly back away while facing the bear.
- Report your sighting to a ranger.

Never:
- Chase or follow a bear.
- Leave children unattended or let them run ahead.
- Abandon your food.

Bears are made of the same dust as we, and breathe the same winds and drink of the same waters. A bear's days are warmed by the same sun, his dwellings are overdomed by the same blue sky, and his life turns and ebbs with heart-pulsings like ours and was poured from the same fountain... -John Muir

Working Together

The Bureau of Land Management, which oversees Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area, and the National Park Service, which manages Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP and Curecanti NRA, coordinate the stewardship of these lands bound by the Gunnison River. Here are a few things accomplished in collaboration:

- Rangers team up on backcountry patrols, search and rescue, trespass problems, resource protection, and campsite management.
- Resource challenges like invasive plant removal, environmental compliance, recreation planning, habitat restoration, rangeland conservation, and scientific research are addressed as a team.
- Agencies work together to complete the Wilderness Boundary Survey, Backcountry Management Plan, and maintain water rights.
- Agencies collaborate on Land and Water Conservation Fund requests to acquire new lands and conserve resources through voluntary easements.
FEES AND PASSES
Curecanti does not charge an entrance fee except at East Portal (which is included in the Black Canyon entrance fee). However, if you plan to launch a boat into Blue Mesa Reservoir, you must purchase a boat permit. Senior and Access pass discounts apply to all boating fees at Curecanti.

Boat Permits:
$4 per two days
$10 per two weeks
$30 per year

For visitors interested in visiting multiple public lands, the America the Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass is available for $80. For US citizens 62 and older, Senior passes are $10, and for those with disabilities, Access passes are free.

VISITOR CENTERS
Elk Creek Visitor Center is open year round. From Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend it is open seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Winter hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday.

Cimarron Visitor Center is open mid-May to Labor Day, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., closed Tuesdays.

CAMPING
There are several campgrounds around Blue Mesa Reservoir. Camping is available first-come, first-served in all campgrounds and reservations are accepted for Elk Creek, Lake Fork, and Stevens Creek through www.recreation.gov or (877) 444-6777. Camping fees are $12 per night in most sites. Loop D at Elk Creek Campground has electric hookups; fees are $18 per night. Group camping is available at Red Mesa Reservoir.

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SHOWERS
Showers are available at the Elk Creek Marina starting Memorial Day Weekend. Change for the showers is available at the marina.

FOOD SERVICES
Pappy's Restaurant at Elk Creek Marina is open May - September. Call (970) 641-0403. Additional food options are available in Montrose and Gunnison.

BOAT RENTALS
Boat rentals, slip rentals, gas, supplies, and other services are available at Elk Creek Marina and Lake Fork Marina. Visit www.bluemesares.com.

PETS
Pets are allowed in all areas at Curecanti, but must be leashed at all times.

ACCESSIBILITY
Visitor centers, some overlooks, and most campgrounds and restrooms are accessible. For visitors with disabilities, Lake Fork is most suitable.

PHONE NUMBERS
Elk Creek Visitor Center (970) 641-2337
Elk Creek Marina (970) 641-0707
Lake Fork Marina (970) 641-3048

Curecanti National Recreation Area

Boat Tours into Black Canyon of the Gunnison

Join a park ranger for a leisurely boat tour on Morrow Point Reservoir, traveling seven miles into the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, where canyon walls will tower above you. Hear the stories of the geologic history, wildlife, rugged early inhabitants, the narrow gauge railroad, and the dams and reservoirs.

LOGISTICS
The National Park Service tour boat is a 40-foot, 42-passenger pontoon boat. Tours are offered twice daily at 10:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., early June through Labor Day, every day of the week except Tuesdays (this is subject to change). Tours begin at the Pine Creek Boat Dock, located 35 miles east of Montrose, 25 miles west of Gunnison, at US Highway 50 mile marker 130. From the Pine Creek parking lot, walk down 232 steps, (remember, you'll have to walk back up too!) then enjoy an easy ¼-mile walk along the old narrow gauge rail bed to the boat dock. We suggest starting down one hour before your scheduled tour, allowing more time if you need a slower pace. Meet the park ranger at the boat dock at least 15 minutes before your scheduled departure.

WHAT TO BRING
Dress for the Colorado mountains, where a sunny day can quickly become stormy. Bring drinking water, snacks, sun and rain protection, and your camera. For security reasons, carry-on bags and packs are subject to search. Pets, smoking, firearms, and alcoholic beverages are not allowed on the tour. Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) are provided and must be worn on the boat tour.

RESERVATIONS
Prepaid reservations are required and are occasionally still available early on the day of the tour. Call (970) 641-2337, ext. 205, or visit the Elk Creek Visitor Center. Persons arriving at the boat dock without a reservation will not be permitted on the tour.

ACCESSIBILITY
Due to the rugged nature of the trail leading to the boat dock, the boat tour is inaccessible to most visitors with mobility impairments. Accommodations can be provided for alternative programs with a two week notice. Accommodations for visitors with hearing impairments can also be made with a two week notice.

COST
$16 for adults
$8 for adults who possess a Senior or Access Pass
$8 for children ages 12 and under

Ranger Programs

MORROW POINT BOAT TOUR
Offered daily except Tuesdays. See above for details.

CURECANTI CREEK GUIDED HIKE ($5 on map)
Saturdays and Sundays, 10:00 a.m.
Join one of our park rangers for this four mile round-trip hike along one of the most stunning trails in the area. This natural history tour investigates the interaction of geology, water, plants, and animals in the Curecanti Creek canyon. This is a strenuous trail that descends 900 feet from the canyon rim to reservoir level. The hike usually takes about four hours round-trip. Reservations are available at no charge up to eight days prior to the event. Reservations can be made in person at the Elk Creek Visitor Center or by calling (970) 641-2337, ext. 205.

NIGHT HIKES
Saturdays, times and locations vary.
Far from major light pollution sources, Curecanti National Recreation Area is an ideal location for stargazing. Join a ranger for a hike into the night to experience dark skies, night creatures, and the wonders of our universe. Reservations are available at no charge up to eight days prior to the event. Space is limited to the first 15 individuals to reserve. Reservations can be made in person at the Elk Creek Visitor Center or by calling (970) 641-2337, ext. 205.

The interior of the Elk Creek Visitor Center has a new look thanks to some much needed upgrades to the facility. In the past year, the staff has installed new exhibits, a new information desk, and new benches. The exhibits cover topics that range from recreational opportunities to plants and animals found in Curecanti's boundaries.

If you haven't stopped by the Elk Creek Visitor Center in a while, please stop in and see the changes.
Boating

Blue Mesa Reservoir is the largest water body in Colorado, and combined with Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs, offers great recreational opportunities for motor and sail boating, windsurfing, and jet skiing in the summer to snowshoeing and ice fishing in the winter.

Marinas and boat ramps are located in designated areas with easy access to the reservoir. Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs are more difficult to access, but many people enjoy kayaking and fishing using small hand-carried crafts.

Check boating and fishing regulations before heading out on the water.

Requirements for Blue Mesa, Morrow Point and Crystal Reservoirs:
- All boats launching at Curecanti must be certified as mussel free. See page 10 for details.
- USCG approved personal flotation devices are required for all on board.
- One Type IV throwable flotation device for boats 16 feet and greater.
- Sound-producing device.
- Lights for dusk to dawn operation.
- A NPS boat permit is required for motorized vessels on Blue Mesa.
- Motorized vessels must be registered in their home state.
- Fire extinguisher (unless boat is of open construction and less than 26 feet long).

Check boating and fishing regulations before heading out on the water.

Hiking

Curecanti offers a variety of hiking opportunities for all skill levels. Vistas vary from serene walks along the Gunnison River, to volcanic pinnacles, to steeper paths into the canyon. Remember that you are hiking at high elevation and be prepared for changing summer weather. Wear good hiking boots, carry a hat, sunscreen, rain jacket and extra water. Dogs are allowed on all Curecanti trails but must be on a leash at all times. Pets are not allowed on the boat tour.

Curecanti Fishing Limits

All Colorado state limits apply; all marinas and visitor centers have complete rules and regulations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPECIES</th>
<th>DAILY BAG</th>
<th>POSSESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trout (in aggregate)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brook Trout &lt; 8&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Trout (Blue Mesa)*</td>
<td>Unlimited*</td>
<td>Unlimited*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Trout (Morrow Point, Crystal)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokanee salmon</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Perch, White Suckers, Crayfish</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only one lake trout greater than 38" per day
**Fees and Passes**

Black Canyon entrance fee is $15 per vehicle. For pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorcycles, the fee is $7 per person. A Black Canyon Annual Pass is available for $30 and is valid for 12 months from the date of purchase.

For visitors interested in visiting multiple public lands, the America the Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass is available for $80. For US citizens 62 and older, Senior passes are $10, and for those with disabilities, Access passes are free.

**Visitor Centers**

The South Rim Visitor Center is open every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Summer hours are 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Winter hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The North Rim Ranger Station will be open intermittently during the summer. A self registration board is also available to pay your entrance fee or obtain a wilderness permit.

Cimarron Visitor Center is open mid-May to Labor Day, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Closed Tuesdays.

**Camping**

The South Rim Campground is open all year, only Loop A in winter. There are no water hookups or dump stations. Loop B has electrical hookups (only available in the summer). Sites can be reserved through www.recreation.gov or (877) 444-6777. Loops A and C are $12 per night. Loop B is $18 per night. Interagency Senior and Access Pass discounts apply to all camping areas.

The East Portal Campground has 15 tent sites, first-come, first-served. Sites are $12 per night.

The North Rim Campground has 13 sites and fills on a first-come, first-served basis and are $12 per night. There are no hookups on the North Rim.

Road maintenance is scheduled from mid-April to mid-May at the South Rim. Campgrounds will remain open but interruptions and noise from machinery are possible during this work. Please call (970) 249-1914, ext. 423 for current information.

**Pets**

Pets on a six-foot leash may be walked on roads, in campgrounds, to the overlooks, and are allowed on the Rim Rock and Chasm View trails. Pets are not allowed on any other trails, inner canyon routes, or in the Wilderness. Clean up after your pet. Do not leave your pet unattended; boarding services are available in the local Montrose area.

**Accessibility**

The South Rim Visitor Center is accessible and the South Rim Campground has accessible campsites. All restrooms on the north and south rim, and some restrooms at East Portal are accessible. A number of overlooks on the South Rim and North Rim drive are also accessible. These overlooks are labeled on the map above.

**Maps Location**

**TRAIL & TRAILHEAD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAIL &amp; TRAILHEAD</th>
<th>ROUNDTWIP (mi / km)</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>MAP LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Rim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uplands Trail</td>
<td>2mi / 3km</td>
<td>Easy. A nice stroll through the oakbrush. Look for mule deer and other wildlife.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rim Rock Trail</td>
<td>2mi / 3km</td>
<td>Moderate. A self-guiding nature trail that takes you along the rim of the canyon. Guide books are available at trailhead.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warner Point Trail</td>
<td>1.5mi / 2.5km</td>
<td>Moderate. Beautiful mountain vistas and canyon views. Guide books are available.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Flat Loop</td>
<td>2mi / 3km</td>
<td>Strenuous. Short but steep, dropping 400 feet through aspen and Douglas-fir, with great views of the canyon.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Rim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chasm View Nature Trail North Rim Campground</td>
<td>0.3mi / 0.5km</td>
<td>Easy. Provides excellent views of the narrowest part of the canyon. Guide books are available at the trailhead.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadhorse Trail</td>
<td>5mi / 9km</td>
<td>Moderate. Provides excellent views of Deadhorse Gulch and East Portal. It is open to horses, weed-free forage only.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Vista Trail</td>
<td>3mi / 4.5km</td>
<td>Moderate. The first section ends at Exclamation Point with a breathtaking view.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7mi / 11km</td>
<td>Strenuous. After Exclamation Point, climb 840 feet to the summit of Green Mountain</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trails in Black Canyon offer diverse habitats, sweeping vistas of the sheer canyon walls, and a variety of wildlife and wildflowers. Interpretive signs and nature guides help visitors understand the rich natural and cultural history.

Backcountry hiking and camping are available and require a free permit. For more information pick up a backcountry brochure at the South Rim Visitor Center or North Rim Ranger Station. Remember that routes into the canyon are rugged and unforgiving for the unprepared.
Adventures in Black Canyon

AUTO TOUR
The South Rim Drive offers beautiful views of Black Canyon. Some of the 12 viewpoints are close to the road and others involve short strolls on well-maintained trails.

Traveling east on US Highway 30 from Black Canyon you will find a short detour to Cimarron Canyon and Visitor Center. This will take you to railroad exhibits and to a view of Morrow Point Dam. Continuing on Highway 50 offers views of unique geologic formations and panoramas of surrounding mountains.

The North Rim Drive is a road less traveled. Many prefer the relative solitude that this drive offers. It is a gravel road open generally from late March through mid-November, depending on the weather. The North Rim Drive offers six uniquely stunning overlooks of the canyon.

CLIMBING
There are a number of technical climbing routes in the Black Canyon. Most climbs are long, multi-pitch routes and are not for novice climbers. Access is difficult, but with the right amount of skill and preparation, climbing in the canyon can be a rewarding adventure. Free backcountry permits are required.

For those interested in something that stays a little closer to the ground, there are a number of "bouldering" options in the park. Check with rangers for more information.

KAYAKING
The Gunnison River through the national park is extremely dangerous due to difficult rapids and portages. Even well prepared kayakers will find the canyon challenging. The river is classified as Class V to Unnavigable.

- All boaters must have a U.S. Coast Guard approved whitewater PFD.
- Obtain a backcountry permit at the South Rim Visitor Center or the East Portal bulletin board at the put-in.
- It is wise to go with an experienced kayaker who has been down this stretch of the river before.
- Wood fires are prohibited.
- Pack out everything, including trash, used toilet paper, and cigarette butts.

Black Canyon Wilderness Regulations
Backcountry travel is a rewarding and unique experience, but only for the prepared. Remember that the inner canyon within Black Canyon National Park is rugged and remote.

- Permits (at no charge) are required for ALL inner canyon use.
- Reservations are required for Red Rock Canyon. Reservations for 2011 are all full. Check the Black Canyon website for information on 2012.
- Pets are prohibited in the Wilderness area and on all inner canyon routes.
- Hunting is prohibited.
- A valid Colorado fishing license is required for fishing in the canyon. Gold Medal Fishing regulations apply.
- Collecting anything within the national park is prohibited, including wood, flowers, plants, animals, antlers, historical artifacts, and rocks.
- Follow "Leave No Trace" ethics. These are listed on the back of the permit.
- Use pit toilets if available. If not, bury human waste six inches deep and 200 feet away from the river.
- Wood fires are prohibited. Use only camp stoves for cooking.
- Carry extra food, clothing, and a water filter.

Ranger Programs
We invite you to learn more about Black Canyon by joining us for a Ranger-led activity. This is a great way to learn about the park, make lasting connections, or just have that nagging question answered. All programs are located at the South Rim and are free. Check with a ranger or at any visitor center for start times and locations.

CHASM VIEW TALKS
For the curious who are wondering how this magnificent canyon was formed. Programs are daily at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. at the South Rim.

OVERLOOK TALKS
Topics vary widely on these popular afternoon talks from birds of prey, to plant life, to early explorations of the canyon. Join us to learn more about the big and the small within the park.

EAST PORTAL WALKS
Life in the Uncompahgre Valley was changed forever by the construction of the Gunnison Tunnel, a 6-mile irrigation tunnel, in the early 1900s. Follow in the footsteps of the people who lived at the river during this 2-hour program. Friday through Monday at 10:00 a.m. Make reservations at the South Rim Visitor Center or by calling (970) 249-1914, ext. 423.

NATURE HIKE
Join a park ranger Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 10:00 a.m. for a 2-hour walk along the Warner Trail. Experience the beauty and rugged nature of western Colorado on this moderate hike.

Gold Medal Fishing Regulations
These special regulations apply from 200 yards downstream of Crystal Dam to the North Fork Confluence.

Fish with artificial lures and flies only.

The daily bag limit for brown trout is four.

The possession limit for brown trout is eight.

All rainbow trout caught must be returned to the water immediately.

A state fishing license is required.

Fishing is prohibited within 200 yards downstream of Crystal Dam.
Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area

**WILDERNESS PERMITS AND PASSES**
Permits and fees are required for anyone 16 years of age and over entering the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness, whether entering briefly or for the maximum 2 night/3 day stay:
- $3 per person for Day Use
- $10 per person for One Night
- $15 per person for Two Nights (maximum stay)
- $15 per person/year for Annual Day Use Pass

Self-register fee stations are located at all wilderness trailheads.

Passes (America the Beautiful, Golden Eagle, State Parks, etc.) are not valid for Gunnison Gorge Wilderness permits. Annual day use passes cannot be applied toward camping permit fees.

If accessing Black Canyon National Park from the Chukar Trail you still must register and purchase a Gunnison Gorge Wilderness permit. Persons traveling upstream of the Margaritaville camping area must also obtain a backcountry permit for the national park.

**CAMPING**
Camping within the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness and Gunnison River corridor is allowed in designated sites or camping areas only. Visitors must obtain camping permits, register, and reserve river campsites at the Wilderness trailheads. Sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Wilderness camping permit fees are $10 per person for 1 night, $15 per person for 2 nights (maximum stay). Interagency passes are not valid for Wilderness permit fees.

Campsites, restrooms, picnic tables and fire grills are available at the Chukar, Duncan, and Ute trailheads, Peach Valley Recreation Area and Cottonwood Grove at no charge. Campsites, showers, and other services are available at the private Gunnison River Pleasure Park located at the Gunnison Forks.

Dispersed vehicle camping in the remainder of the NCA is permitted up to seven consecutive days, unless posted otherwise. Check BLM signs and maps for additional camping regulations and designated campsite locations.

**PETS**
All animals brought into the NCA must be under your visual, audible, or physical control at all times and are not permitted to run at large or chase, harass or disturb wildlife or other users. Keep pets leashed in developed recreation sites and always carry a leash with you while hiking.

**ACCESSIBILITY**
Recreation sites have rough dirt and/or gravel surfaces; trails are steep, rocky, and difficult to traverse without assistance. There are accessible toilet facilities at the Chukar, Duncan, and Ute trailheads, and at the Gunnison Forks. The Cottonwood Grove camping area has an accessible campsite, toilet and fishing pier.

**Biking and Horseback Information**
Saddle up your horse or hop on your mountain bike and head to the Gunnison Gorge NCA for miles of scenic riding through adobe badlands, sandstone canyons, and pinyon-juniper woodlands. Take in views of surrounding mountains, valleys, and the colorful cliffs and canyons of Gunnison Gorge Wilderness. Equestrians might want to grab their fishing poles and head 4.5 miles down the Ute Trail to the Gunnison River for some fishing in the Gold Medal Waters. The Bobcat and Duncan trails are not horse-friendly due to very steep drop-offs and rocky sections. Mountain bikes are not permitted within the Wilderness but there are plenty of other great riding areas from which to choose.

**Adventures by Car**
Looking for an off-road adventure? Driving in the Gunnison Gorge NCA can be a great adventure. Take a drive through scenic adobe badland formations along Peach Valley Road or enjoy beautiful river views while looking for that fishing spot along the South River Road. Check out spectacular views of the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness from the Smith Mountain jeep road. All NCA roads are natural surface and most have rocky outcrops. Four wheel drive and/or high clearance vehicles are recommended. Frequent and localized summer rainstorms may render roads and trails impassible even for four-wheel-drive vehicles. Do not attempt to drive on saturated roads. Motorized and non-motorized vehicles must stay on signed, designated roads and trails.

**OHV RIDING AREAS**
Unload your OHV (off highway vehicle) at the Gunnison Gorge NCA Peach Valley Recreation Area. From here you can take off riding on over 75 miles of designated motorcycle single track and all terrain vehicle (ATV) trails within the 9,800 acre Flat Top-Peach Valley OHV Recreation Area. This area also offers two designated OHV play areas, at Peach Valley and Flat Top, where off-trail cross country riding is permitted for motorcycles, ATVs, universal terrain vehicles (UTV) 50 inches in width or less, and mountain bikes. The Peach Valley site also offers a beginner's loop.

All vehicles over 50 inches must stay on designated access roads. Check trailhead kiosks for trail locations and riding regulations. Your OHV must be registered with the Colorado State OHV program and your registration decals must be properly affixed to your vehicle. Wear your safety gear and come prepared for adventure! Want to learn to ride? Contact the BLM about motorcycle and ATV classes.

**Boating Information**
The Gunnison Gorge NCA provides a number of river access sites for non-motorized boating and fishing. Whitewater enthusiasts will find outstanding scenery and technical (Class II-IV) rapids within the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness which is accessed via the 1 mile Chukar Trail. You can pack in your own gear or arrange for a horse pack-in (970) 323-0115. Contact the Gunnison River Pleasure Park (970) 872-2525 for vehicle shuttle service.

Looking for calmer waters for your canoe or raft? Launch at Cottonwood Grove, Orchard River, or Gunnison Forks river access sites to float the lower Gunnison River downstream of the Gunnison Forks. You can also make arrangements with the Pleasure Park to jet boat you and your gear upstream to the Smith Fork and enjoy a scenic, leisure float back. Don't have a raft? Rent one at the Pleasure Park or contact BLM for a list of permitted river outfitters.
Hiking

The Gunnison Gorge NCA provides an assortment of easy to technical trails that wind through a variety of scenic backdrops including adobe "moonscapes," colorful sandstone canyons, and the towering black walls of the Gunnison Gorge river canyon. Dogs are allowed on NCA trails but be sure to bring along extra water for them!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAIL &amp; TRAILHEAD</th>
<th>ROUNDTRIPT (mi / km)</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>MAP LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gunnison Gorge NCA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle Valley Trail Peach Valley Road</td>
<td>2mi / 3km</td>
<td>Easy Fun family hike through adobe badlands and sandstone canyons.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chukar Trail Chukar Road</td>
<td>2.2mi / 3.5km</td>
<td>Moderate Very scenic, steep, winding trail descending down to Chukar Wash. Provides access for floating the gorge and hiking upstream into the national park.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunset Rocks Trail Chukar Road</td>
<td>6mi / 10km</td>
<td>Moderate Colorful geologic formations and pinyon-juniper woodlands with great views of the Uncompahgre Valley.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West River Trail South River Road</td>
<td>7mi / 11km</td>
<td>Moderate Provides three miles of Gold Medal fishing access on the west side of the Gunnison River.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ute Trail Peach Valley Road</td>
<td>1mi / 1.7km</td>
<td>Moderate Descends gradually to the river and offers impressive views of the towering cliffs and the gorge's &quot;double canyon.&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobcat Trail Peach Valley Road</td>
<td>3mi / 4.5km</td>
<td>Strenuous Stunning wilderness views. The last 1/2 mile is extremely steep requiring a scramble down a rocky draw. Not recommended for horse use.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncan Trail Peach Valley Road</td>
<td>3mi / 4.5km</td>
<td>Strenuous Colorful sandstone formations. The last 1/2 mile is extremely steep on loose rocks. Not recommended for horse use.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gunnison Gorge NCA Regulations

- Motorized and non-motorized vehicles must stay on signed, designated roads and trails.
- Off-trail use by motorcycles, ATVs, UTVs (up to 50 inches in width) and mountain bikes is allowed only in designated open areas within the Flat Top-Peach Valley Recreation Area.
- Motorized river craft are prohibited on rivers and streams in the NCA and Wilderness.
- Pets and pack stock must be under visual, audible, or physical control at all times. Keep pets leashed in developed recreation sites.
- Target shooting is prohibited.

- Hunting is permitted in accordance with Colorado Division of Wildlife regulations.
- Camping along the river corridor is allowed in designated sites only.
- Cutting of live or dead vegetation is prohibited.
- Fires must be contained either in stoves, grills, or metal fire pans.

Check BLM website, signs and maps for additional regulations regarding camping, group size, length of stay, human waste disposal, and campfire use in your proposed travel area.

Wilderness Regulations

- Visitors (16 yrs and older) must register and purchase self-issuing day use or camping permits.
- Camping is allowed in designated sites only; reserve campsites when purchasing permits at trailheads.
- Maximum length of stay is 2 nights.
- Maximum group size is 12.
- Wood fires are prohibited. Use camp stoves and/or fire pans with charcoal.
- Portable toilet systems required for all overnight users.
- Motorized and mechanical vehicles and equipment use is prohibited.
The National Park Service (NPS) and State of Colorado are determined to prevent the introduction of invasive mussels into Blue Mesa and other reservoirs of the Gunnison River basin. There is no way to eliminate these species once they are established. If they get established, they could significantly impact recreational fishing in Blue Mesa. Zebra and Quagga mussels entered the United States in the late 1980s by sea-going ships that sailed into the Great Lakes and since then have spread throughout much of the U.S. (including Colorado).

Zebra and Quagga mussels are freshwater mollusks that have a zebra-like pattern on their shells. When unchecked, they explode in population and then die off in mass, resulting in shorelines littered with sharp shells. Once established, invasive mussels can also cripple successful fisheries at Blue Mesa.

The NPS and Colorado began an inspection program in the summer of 2009 to prevent mussels from reaching the waters of Curecanti. All motorized and trailered vessels (including personal watercraft and sailboats) must be inspected by a state-certified inspector prior to launch and after exiting. The watercraft inspectors are looking for signs that a boat may be carrying mussels. One sign is standing water, where larval mussels can survive for up to a month. Inspectors will also rub their hands along hard surfaces of boats that are exposed to water in search of a gritty sandpaper feeling, a sign that young mussels have attached to the vessel. Finally, a visual inspection ensures that no adult mussels are attached to the boat.

If a vessel is determined to be carrying mussels, then decontamination will be required. Decontamination prevents species spread and entails on-site washing of boats and trailers with very hot water (>140° F) by certified personnel. While decontaminations are rare, boaters should adopt the idea of Clean, Drain, and Dry (see inset) to keep their watercraft mussel-free and expedite the inspection process.

Curecanti has five inspection stations: Elk Creek, Lake Fork, Stevens Creek, Iola, and Ponderosa. Detailed information on location is available: 1) from the map in this newspaper; 2) from any visitor center; or 3) from the Internet at http://go.nps.gov/mussel.

Clean, Drain, and Dry

Follow these general procedures every time you come in contact with any body of water:

- Remove all visible mud, plants, fish, and animals. Before leaving any body of water, it is important to examine all your equipment (boats, trailers, clothing, boots, buckets, etc).
- Eliminate water from all equipment before transporting anywhere. Most water recreational equipment contains areas where water can collect and harbor aquatic hitchhikers.
- Clean and dry anything that came in contact with the water (equipment, clothing, even dogs!).
- Never release or put plants, fish or animals into water unless they came out of that body of water.

The work to be done includes asphalt patching, sealing of cracks, culvert replacement, chip-sealing, and striping the main roads in both parks. This includes the South Rim Road, parking areas and campground at Black Canyon and Highway 92, access roads at Camarron, Lake Fork, Elk Creek, Stevens Creek and Iola parking lots, campgrounds and overlooks at Curecanti.

The work at Curecanti includes re-grading nearly all secondary roads. Locations like the roads to, and campgrounds at, Ponderosa, East Elk Creek, and Bay of Chickens are among those to receive improvement.

All of these efforts are planned for late spring and early summer, but weather and other conditions may cause the schedule to change. There may be travel delays in the work zones, and we very much appreciate your patience and safe driving in these areas.

When approved for launch, the boat inspector will issue a launch tag. This tag should be placed on the rearview mirror of the boater's automobile as evidence of inspection. Launch tags are issued only by certified boat inspectors and can only be obtained from Curecanti inspection stations.

The NPS has discovered that many people recreating at Curecanti have been very willing to help with the protection of the resources. Superintendent Connie Rudd stated, "The mussel prevention program has been successful because of concerned boaters, anglers and recreationists supporting the efforts." This partnership will help to keep Blue Mesa the incredible place that it has been for generations, with its gentle beauty and outstanding recreation.

For more information on what you can do to help prevent the spread of invasive mussels or other species, ask a ranger or visitor center staff or visit one of these websites: www.100thmeridian.org or www.protectyourwaters.net.

Clean, Drain, and Dry at Curecanti

The roads of Curecanti and Black Canyon are getting a face lift this summer. Although monitoring of the roads has been in progress, the Federal Highway Administration, the agency contracting the work, has selected smaller national parks in Colorado for repaving this year.

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Other Work to Be Done

There are various other projects to be accomplished by our maintenance crews this summer, in an on-going effort to care for the facilities that help us enjoy these parks. The work at Black Canyon includes olling log structures, such as the South Rim Visitor Center, restrooms, railings, and guideposts. The trail crew will be out in force again this summer, fixing erosion problems and keeping the trail surfaces up to standard at both parks.

The work at Curecanti includes the installation of an accessible dock-mounted restroom at the Elk Creek Marina and a new west dock and boat slip system. New signs will be installed along US Highway 50 through Curecanti. Also, the Elk Creek campground and Pappy's restaurant restrooms will be brought up to current ADA accessibility standards.

How this Work Could Affect Your Visit

Our hope is that any delay or inconvenience you experience is minor. Please be patient and be aware of traffic controls for your safety and the safety of the workers making improvements.

Please be sure to stop by any of the visitor centers at Black Canyon or Curecanti and speak with a park ranger about possible delays and/or closures. Park rangers will have the most up to date information related to the location and duration of work within the parks. They will be happy to assist you in planning your visit so that you are able to experience your parks with as little inconvenience as possible.

Again, thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to protect and preserve your national park lands.
Support Your Parks

Volunteer Your Time
If you are looking for a hands-on way to help your parks or public lands, we may have just the job for you! Volunteers for Black Canyon, Curecanti and the Gunnison Gorge tirelessly put in thousands of hours each year helping to keep our public lands afloat.

There are many ways you can share your enthusiasm and expertise with us. Full and part-time positions are available throughout the year. The agencies provide training, orientation, a uniform and modest reimbursements for expenses. We need:

**CAMPGROUND HOSTS**
Hosts provide on-site support in the various campgrounds. The park provides a campsite with full hook-ups.

**V.I.P.S**
Volunteers-in-Parks provide a wide variety of services from operating the information desk at the visitor center, to resource management projects, astronomy programs, and janitorial services. RV sites with full hook-ups or small shared housing may be available.

**VOLUNTEER CLIMBING RANGERS**
These volunteers work within a talented team of climbers to provide the park assistance with high angle search and rescue. They are not only skilled climbers but are also paramedics, EMTs and first responders.

**SCAS**
The Student Conservation Association places volunteers (not necessarily students) in various resource agencies across the country. They provide uniforms, a weekly stipend, and transportation costs. Black Canyon and Curecanti use SCAs for park internships. They provide orientation to visitors and present interpretive programs.

**VOLUNTEER RIVER RANGERS**
These volunteers work with BLM rangers within the Gunnison Gorge assisting with river patrols and resource management projects. Volunteers have assisted with tamarisk removal, building trails, planting trees, cleaning campsites, and monitoring wildlife. Volunteers must be physically fit to participate. The work is strenuous, but rewarding.

Last year more than 400 volunteers donated over 25,000 hours to our parks and public lands. We are grateful to all of the volunteers who generously donated their time and skills in 2010.

Volunteer
If you are interested in volunteering please give us a call. For Black Canyon or Curecanti, contact Brant Porter at (970) 641-2337, ext. 206.

For Volunteer Climbing Rangers contact Brent Mims at (970) 641-2337, ext. 215.

For Gunnison Gorge, contact Edd Franz at (970) 240-5300.

For SCA, contact them directly at www.theSCA.org.

Your User Fees at Work
Black Canyon, Curecanti, and Gunnison Gorge are being carefully managed for you, and for future generations, by the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management. This vital work comes at a price. Protecting our natural and cultural heritage while ensuring that visitors have a safe, enjoyable, and educational experience is an important investment.

As the number of visitors to our public lands continues to climb due to the popularity of these national treasures, government funding available for necessities such as road and building repairs, campground maintenance, visitor protection, resource protection and other services has not kept pace with demand. In 2004, Congress initiated a program that would direct the entrance fees collected from visitors back to the maintenance of the facilities they use.

Managing public lands requires a major financial investment. While most of that investment comes from general tax revenues, those who directly use public lands for recreation derive a greater benefit from, and place a greater burden on, resources and facilities than the public at large. Applying user fees to projects at the area where they were collected assures that actual users pay an increased share of operational costs. These funds have been, and will continue to be, used for maintenance, repair projects, public service programs, signs, and natural and historical resource preservation.

Completed Projects
- Fish cleaning and boat washing stations
- Control of invasive weed species
- Bear resistant food containers in campgrounds
- Riparian, wildlife, and fishery protection projects
- Rehabilitation of the Cimarron and Lake Fork campgrounds
- Recycled plastic picnic tables at various campgrounds
- Trail and trailhead improvements

Many more projects are in the planning stages at this time. Look for the results of other fee projects on your next visit!

Shop in the Bookstore
WESTERN NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION (WNPA) sells many items about Black Canyon, Curecanti and the Gunnison Gorge. Visit their stores at the South Rim, Cimarron, and Elk Creek Visitor Centers. Your purchase supports these parks by funding a variety of projects like the publication of *The Portal* newspaper.

SUGGESTED READING:
- Black Canyon and Curecanti: The Story Behind the Scenery: A great introduction to these parks with many beautiful images. $9.95
- South Rim Driving Tour: Consult this guide as you drive the rim road for a deeper understanding of the sites along the way. $1.00
- The Essential Guide to Black Canyon: A complete guide to the canyon from geology to history. $19.95
- National Geographic Trails Illustrated Map: This topographic map includes Black Canyon, Curecanti, and Gunnison Gorge. $10.00, accompanying map $7.00
- The Black Canyon Video (DVD): A chronicle of one of the most stunning gorges in the world. $21.95
- The Geologic Story of the Gunnison Gorge: An overview of the Gunnison Gorge developed by the USGS. $10.00, accompanying map $7.00
CIMARRON
via US Highway 50 east of Montrose

Engine #278 and the other rail cars have been moved off the bridge and are currently being restored. However, the historic site of Cimarron is still well worth a visit. More rail cars, exhibits, and a visitor center make for a great stop along US Highway 50. There are also great opportunities for fishing, hiking along the Mesa Creek Trail, and viewing the Morrow Point Dam. Cimarron also offers a campground and picnic area.

EAST PORTAL
via the East Portal Road, accessed from Black Canyon (this road has a 16% grade and hairpin turns; vehicles longer than 22 feet are prohibited)

This road takes you to the bottom of Black Canyon. Once at the canyon floor there are exhibits that tell of the historic townsite once thriving here. The Gunnison Diversion Dam which provides water to the Uncompahgre Valley is visible. This is also a popular spot for anglers who are frequently seen fishing the Gunnison River.

BLACK CANYON NORTH RIM
via CO Highway 92 and North Rim Road (the last 5 miles are unpaved)

Visit the less traveled North Rim of the Black Canyon. The views from here are spectacular as the 2,000 foot walls drop almost vertically to the Gunnison River below. This is the starting point for many experienced rock climbers and this activity is frequently observed during the spring and fall. There is a small contact station, restrooms, hiking trails and a scenic drive.

GUNNISON GORGE PEACH VALLEY RECREATION AREA
via US Highway 50 west of Montrose to the paved Falcon Road which ends at the Peach Valley dirt road

The Peach Valley area has 75 miles of multi-use trails and is a very convenient stop when planning your time at the gorge. There is a parking area, information boards, and easy access to hiking, horse riding, mountain biking, and OHV trails.