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ON MICROFILM

# CANYONLANDS

general management plan / may 1978

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Canyonlands National Park was established in 1964 to preserve outstanding scenic, scientific, and archaeological resources for public enjoyment. Its canyons, arches, fins, buttes, towers, and other landforms are a collection of erosional features as diverse as can be found anywhere on the Colorado Plateau; impressive rock art and other remnants of ancient habitation found within its borders are priceless and irreplaceable cultural resources. Viewing the park's spectacular landscapes and examining its archaeological treasures are important elements of the visitor experience, as are four-wheel driving (the traditional form of access to this rugged area), hiking, and floating the Green and Colorado Rivers.

Virtually unknown by Americans before the 1960s, Canyonlands now is attracting so many visitors that current demands for use must be managed through planning to ensure protection of resources. This general management plan was prepared with two goals in mind — that the park serve both as a major scenic attraction and as a model for preservation of a unique natural environment.

The major concepts of the plan and the rationale for their selection are presented in this document. The supporting information and details of the concepts as well as their alternatives are contained in a separate document, the *Assessment of Alternatives*. Environmental impacts associated with the proposed actions will not be significant; the proposals suggest only minor alterations to existing development and operations with an overall goal of improving visitor use and preserving the park's resources. There will be no significant environmental effects or any cumulative or secondary effects. The selected actions commit the National Park Service to expenditures totaling an estimated \$18,665,850 over the next 15 years, and assessments on design alternatives will be prepared for individual components of the plan. Based on the above the Regional Director, Rocky Mountain Region, has approved the general management plan and determined that an environmental statement will not be prepared.

## 2 SUMMARY AND RATIONALE

### VISITOR USE AND DEVELOPMENT

#### Arches/Canyonlands Visitor Facility

An enlarged and redesigned visitor facility will be provided at

Arches National Park to introduce visitors to Arches and Canyonlands. The Arches and Canyonlands stories will be presented in a way that preserves the individual identity of each park while encouraging visitors to experience their complementary environments. An audiovisual program and exhibits will orient visitors to the different geographic areas of the region and explain their geologic origins. They will also illustrate the recreational and educational opportunities available at the two national parks, Dead Horse Point and Newspaper Rock State Parks, and other areas within the region.

#### Dead Horse Point State Park and Island in the Sky District

The National Park Service, the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation, and the Bureau of Land Management will develop an unmanned information/orientation kiosk near the intersection of U.S. Highway 163 and the Seven Mile Canyon road. Information provided here will help visitors decide whether to proceed to Dead Horse Point State Park and Island in the Sky or to drive first to the Arches/Canyonlands visitor facility.

The mesa tops of Dead Horse Point and Island in the Sky provide an unparalleled opportunity to complete a visitor experience begun at nearby Arches National Park. Visitors who have stopped at the Arches/Canyonlands visitor facility will have received an orientation to the entire region, including an overview of its geologic history. On the mesa tops there will be opportunities for two additional experiences: structured interpretive and viewing activities at Dead Horse Point State Park, and relatively unstructured viewing, hiking, and on-site interpretation at Island in the Sky.

The view of the Colorado River from Dead Horse Point is superlative, making this an ideal spot to interpret the geologic origin and human history of the river canyons. The National Park Service will work cooperatively with the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation to improve interpretive services at the Dead Horse Point visitor center by rehabilitating the exhibits and adding an audiovisual program. Two themes will be emphasized: the story of canyonlands formation, which will be developed with strong visual references to the river, and the story of how man explored and used this land.

Another objective of joint planning will be the upgrading of the main access road from its steep grade in Seven Mile Canyon to the park boundary. The existing access routes to Dead Horse Point State Park and Island in the Sky will be retained. The Knoll intersection will be redesigned to increase sight distance and improve traffic safety. A parking area will be developed near the Knoll, and a trail will be provided to a viewing area on top. This will be planned in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management.

The road will be paved from the Knoll to Grand View Point, Murphy Point, and Upheaval Dome. All paving will be done with environmentally compatible materials that blend into the landscape. The present road alignment within the national park will be retained as nearly as possible, but the road will be realigned where necessary to protect the environment, meet safety standards, and achieve high visual interest. At the present time, it appears that these considerations may dictate some realignment at the north and south ends of Grays Pasture. If the existing roadway is realigned, the old roadbed will be recontoured and revegetated to its natural appearance.

Mesa-top parking areas will be relocated to protect prime resources. Adjacent overlooks will be designed to contain the impacts of increasing visitation and to be easily accessible to all visitors. Self-contained waterless comfort facilities will be constructed at the major visitor attractions. Trails will encourage visitors to experience the resource leisurely and in depth.

The spur road leading west to Upheaval Dome will continue to serve visitors who are oriented to hiking. The existing



primitive campground near Green River Overlook will remain to support the backcountry experience in this area of the Island.

The National Park Service will establish permanent but minimal maintenance and residential facilities south of the park boundary near the Shafer Trail intersection. This site is not visible from the park road. A visitor contact station designed to be compatible with the landscape will also be built in this general area, where it will be convenient to the public. It will serve as a protection checkpoint for the Island and as a place to issue backcountry permits. The existing administrative site near the Neck will be converted to a picnic area to support day-use activities in the Island.

#### Needles District

To improve visitor information and orientation services in this district, a manned interpretive/information facility will be provided at Monticello and an unmanned kiosk will be located at the intersection of U.S. 163 and the park entrance road. In addition, a permanent visitor contact station will be constructed in the park where the present information trailer is situated; this site is convenient to public use and is in terrain that mitigates visual intrusion.

Permanent maintenance and residential facilities will be hidden from view in a basin about 1 mile northeast of the present temporary complex at Squaw Butte. This site is closer to proven water than the present location, and its use will free Squaw Butte for use as a visitor orientation and tour staging area.

The existing road to the Colorado River Overlook will be paved to provide access to a panoramic overlook of the 1,200-foot-deep Colorado River Gorge. This route also will provide access to other viewing areas such as the Lower Jump where Salt Creek plunges nearly 200 feet. The major interpretive theme at this area will be erosion, both on a grand scale and in detail.

The road from Big Spring Canyon to Confluence Overlook will not be completed as previously planned because of excessive construction cost and irreversible environmental damage. A four-wheel-drive road will be built westward from the existing paved road near Big Spring Canyon to intersect with existing four-wheel-drive roads leading to Confluence Overlook. Four-wheel-drive traffic over Elephant Hill will then become one-way east to west, with traffic returning from the Confluence using the new four-wheel-drive road. The new and old four-wheel-drive roads used as a loop route will improve driving safety and expose visitors to a greater diversity of terrain.

An economic and marketing feasibility study for a public transportation system will be conducted. If implemented, this system would make the Confluence Overlook and intermediate features easily accessible to visitors who do not own four-wheel-drive vehicles. A public transportation system also would reduce congestion, improve safety, and better protect the cultural and natural resources. The study would provide information on the possibility of expanding such a system to other areas in the district.

#### Maze District

To maintain the remote, primitive character of the district, roads will not be upgraded, and because low density use is important visitor capacities will be tested here. District headquarters will remain at Hans Flat in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area; a small permanent building will replace the visitor contact trailer, and an additional duplex will be built in the employee residential area.

Emphasis on the enjoyment of resources on one's own will continue to be reflected in an unstructured interpretive program.

Irreplaceable rock art in Horseshoe Canyon will be protected by on-site personnel, providing personal services where none exist now.

#### Green and Colorado Rivers

Visitor use of the rivers and river bottoms is distinctly different from other activities in the park and poses a unique challenge to management. River management, therefore, is being considered in a separate planning process. A revision of the river management plan will be initiated in 1978.

#### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

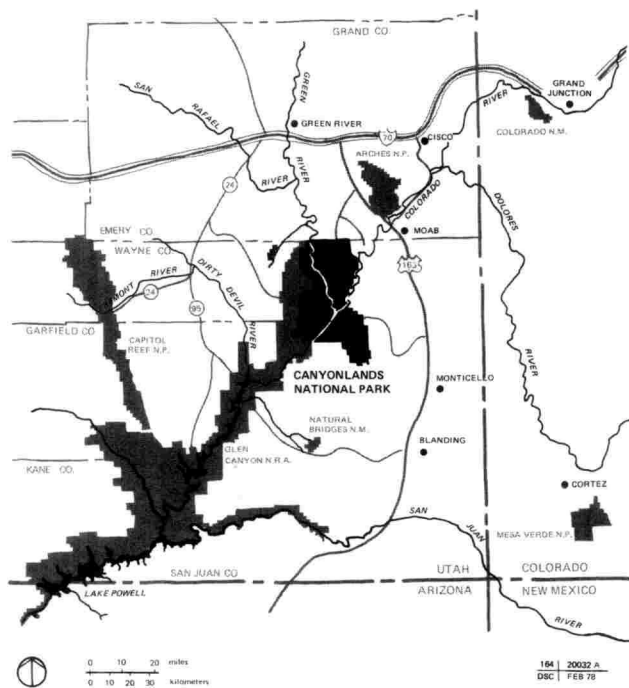
The resource management recommendations are general concepts. In order to manage park resources effectively, additional research is necessary to formulate specific resource management plans (e.g., fire management, pronghorn reintroduction, exotic plant management, and backcountry use).

Parklands will be managed for the perpetuation of the natural environment, except for development areas. Mining is not allowed except on existing valid claims, grazing is being phased out, and other consumptive uses may be prohibited. Bighorn sheep lambing areas may be closed prior to and during lambing season. All rare, threatened, and endangered species will be identified and protected. Manipulation of terrain and vegetation will restore land altered by human activity (e.g., mine spoils, closed roads, and off-road vehicle tracks).

Cultural resources will be preserved, as prescribed by research and professional recommendation. Stabilization of selected ruins will continue. An inventory of cultural resources will be completed, and qualified sites will be nominated to the List of Classified Structures and/or the National Register of Historic Places.

Park developments will be managed for intensive use but will be designed to have minimal impacts on the environment. Landscaping will make use of native plants. To reduce energy and water requirements, solar and conservation technology and passive building design (energy efficient) will be used in new facilities. For the National Park Service to design and build such innovative structures, creative new architectural concepts will be applied.

### 3 THE REGION



4 MANAGEMENT SUBUNITS AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

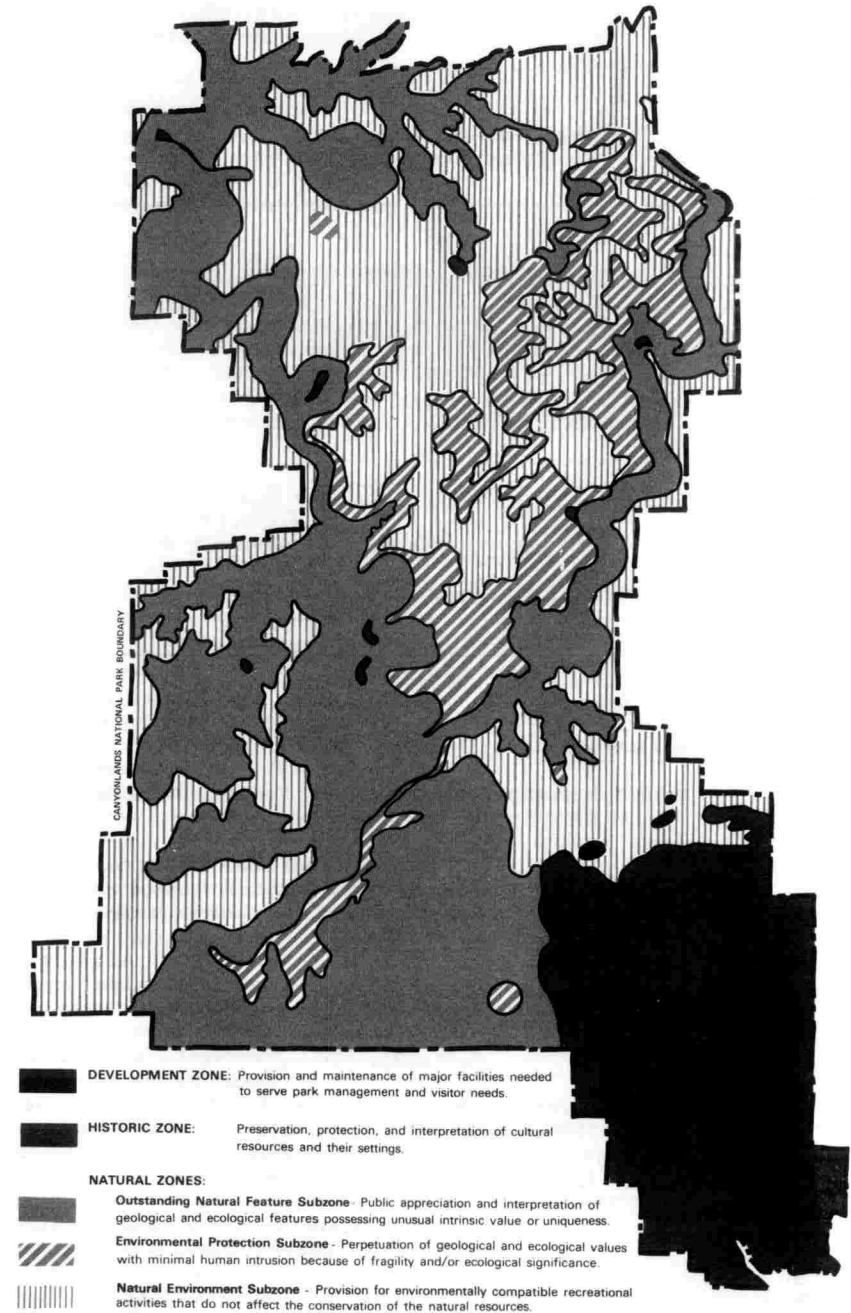
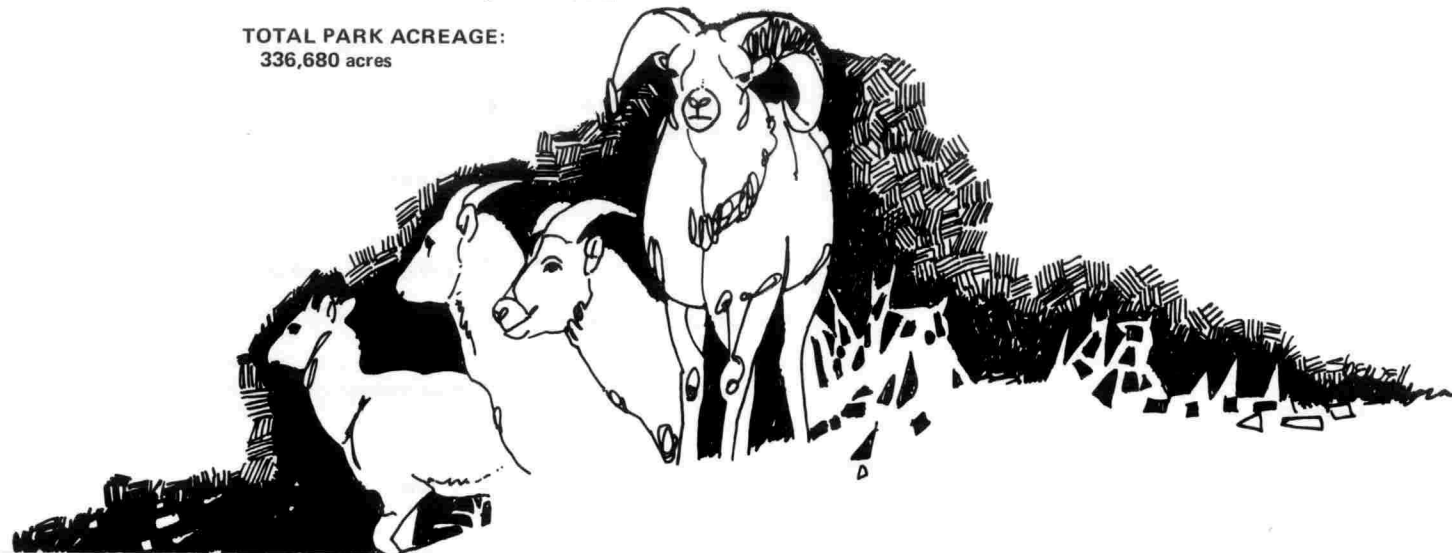
After the planning team assessed the public involvement data described in the statement for management and analyzed both the critical and outstanding resources, the park was divided into the management subunits described in this section. A desired visitor experience was then established for each subunit. Proposed visitor uses were formulated and a capacity set for each use based on the suitability/capability of the resources in each management subunit.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES	MANAGEMENT SUBUNITS (approx. acreage within park)	OUTSTANDING RESOURCES (and other features)	EXPERIENCES	PROPOSED USES	MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES	MANAGEMENT SUBUNITS (approx. acreage within park)	OUTSTANDING RESOURCES (and other features)	EXPERIENCES	PROPOSED USES
To manage the <b>ISLAND IN THE SKY DISTRICT</b> as a series of viewing platforms emphasizing the concept of increasing naturalness and remoteness as the visitor descends in elevation	<b>Island in the Sky Mesa</b> (28,660 acres)	<b>Island in the Sky Cliffs</b> <b>Mesa Arch</b> <b>Aztec Butte</b> (The Neck, Grays Pasture, and Bighorn Mesa)	The mesa tops, including both Dead Horse Point State Park and Island in the Sky, serve as an expansive, rocky viewing platform. There are opportunities to see interesting features on the mesas, but the dominant experience is driving to and walking along the rims. Interpretation at panoramic overviews of Canyonlands emphasizes both the immensity and the diversity of erosional processes.	Information/Orientation Interpretation Two-Wheel Driving All-Persons Trails*, Marked Routes, and Cross-Country Hiking Two-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking Picnicking District Operations	To manage the <b>MAZE DISTRICT</b> as a rugged, wild area with remoteness and self-reliance the principal elements of the visitor experience	<b>Salt Creek Canyons</b> (61,480 acres)	<b>Lavender, Davis, Horse, Salt, Lost, Squaw, Elephant, and Big Spring Canyons</b> Arches <b>Salt Creek Archaeological District</b> including ruins and rock art	The visitor finds himself within deep, winding canyons, where narrowing corridors lead to outstanding erosional and archaeological features. These features are the focus of interpretation. Four-wheel driving and hiking provide access.	Interpretation Four-Wheel Driving Marked Routes and Cross-Country Hiking Four-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking
	<b>White Rim</b> (50,910 acres)	<b>Junction Butte</b> <b>Candlestick Tower</b> <b>Musselman Arch</b> (Shafer Trail, Bighorn habitat)	The visitor is on a broad, stony bench bounded on one side by the colorful cliffs of the Island in the Sky mesa and on the other by vistas of arid gorges descending to the rivers. The White Rim offers a backcountry experience with jeeping and hiking the primary means of access.	Information/Orientation Interpretation Four-Wheel Driving Marked Routes and Cross-Country Hiking Four-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking Horse Use		<b>Needles</b> (9,170 acres)	<b>Needles/Parks</b> (The Pinnacles, Chesler Park, Druid Arch, and Joint Trail)	Surrounded by masses of fractured rock eroded into spires and interspersed with grassy parks, the visitor can explore in all directions, both horizontally and vertically. Jumbled terrain makes access tortuous. Hiking is the primary activity. Four-wheel-drive access is limited to the perimeter of the area. Interpretation encourages self-discovery and emphasizes the natural history of this unique subunit.	Interpretation Four-Wheel Driving Marked Routes and Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking
	<b>Taylor Canyon</b> (12,770 acres)	<b>Taylor and Upheaval Canyons</b> <b>Upheaval Dome</b>	Here in the Taylor system of long, deep, flat-bottomed canyons, the feeling is one of being gradually enclosed by narrowing passages that entice further exploration to their sheer-walled heads. Four-wheel driving and hiking are the principal activities.	Four-Wheel Driving Marked Routes and Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking		<b>Grabens</b> (24,910 acres)	<b>Grabens</b> (Devils Lane and Cyclone Canyon)	The visitor to this subunit is in long, narrow, flat-bottomed valleys bordered by sheer rock walls. Several of the grabens serve as routes for four-wheel-drive vehicles; the remainder are accessible only by unmarked routes. The monotony of travel heightens the feeling of isolation. Opportunities are provided for unstructured hiking in remote, arid terrain. The structure and origin of the grabens are the principal subjects of interpretation.	Interpretation Information/Orientation Four-Wheel Driving Cross-Country Hiking Four-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking
	<b>Gorge Rims</b> (33,770 acres, includes gorge rims in Needles District)	<b>Monument Basin</b> (Bighorn habitat)	This rugged complex of benches, rims, and canyons is tributary to the main river gorges. The experience is one of discovery, that perhaps you might be the first person to explore the area. Hiking is the only means of access except in Lathrop and Lockhard Canyons.	Four-Wheel Driving Marked Routes and Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking		<b>Orange Cliffs Mesa</b> (2,920 acres)	<b>Orange Cliffs Cleopatra's Chair</b> <b>Ekker Butte</b>	Visitors travel on progressively rougher roads that culminate at mesa rims overlooking the inner canyon country. Below these cliffs is Canyonlands at its wildest, demanding arduous driving and hiking by the few who will venture in.	Information/Orientation Interpretation Two-Wheel and Four-Wheel Driving Cross-Country Hiking Two-Wheel- and Four-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking District Operations Horse Use
To manage the <b>NEEDLES DISTRICT'S</b> varied concentration of resources so as to offer a wide range of interpretive and recreational activities focusing principally on hiking and four-wheel-drive use	<b>Hatch Point Mesa</b> (administered by the Bureau of Land Management)	(Hatch and Hart Point Cliffs)	As on the Island in the Sky mesa top, the visitor is attracted to the edge of the mesa. Two-wheel driving provides easy access to viewpoints of the canyon country.	Information/Orientation Interpretation Two-Wheel Driving All-Persons Trails* and Cross-Country Hiking Two-Wheel- and Four-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking	<b>Horseshoe Canyon</b> (1,750 acres)	<b>Rock art including Great Gallery</b>	Walking along the bottom of this remote, steep-walled canyon, the visitor is impressed by solitude and awed in the discovery of mysterious rock art.	Interpretation Four-Wheel Driving Marked Routes Four-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking Horse Use	
	<b>Needles Flats</b> (16,250 acres)	(Squaw Butte, Roadside Ruin, and Cave Spring)	These open expanses are dominated by low rock outcrops and grasslands. All major facilities and paved roads in the district are restricted to this subunit. At Confluence and Colorado River Overlooks, the river is a major visual element in understanding the origin of Canyonlands.	Information/Orientation Interpretation Two-Wheel and Four-Wheel Driving Marked Routes and Cross-Country Hiking Two-Wheel-Drive Camping Picnicking District Operations	<b>Maze Flats</b> (5,400 acres)	<b>Bagpipe Butte</b> <b>Elaterite Butte</b> (Flint Trail)	The visitor descends the Orange Cliffs and enters Maze Flats. Views from this broad, arid basin are partly or wholly blocked by buttes and long cliffs. The slow, rough approach leads the visitor to anticipate rewarding driving and hiking experiences in subunits ahead. Four-wheel driving and minor hiking are the primary activities.	Information/Orientation Four-Wheel Driving Marked Routes and Cross-Country Hiking Four-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking	
					<b>Maze Rims</b> (12,890 acres)	<b>Land of Standing Rocks</b> <b>Chocolate Drops</b>	These rims are dominated by views of the contorted Maze Canyons and nearby buttes and towers eroded in red sandstone. The visitor senses adventure in the more rugged scenic terrain that lies ahead. Although some hiking occurs here, the primary access is by four-wheel-drive vehicle.	Four-Wheel Driving Cross-Country Hiking Four-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking	

\* All-persons trails are suitable for handicapped use.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES	MANAGEMENT SUBUNITS (approx. acreage within park)	OUTSTANDING RESOURCES (and other features)	EXPERIENCES	PROPOSED USES
	Doll House (490 acres)	Entire subunit	Here stone towers resemble Kachina dolls and other fanciful figures. Exploring around and between the fractured masses of rock, hikers can glimpse the Colorado River in its inner gorge and view in many perspectives the variety of erosional features in this remote place.	Four-Wheel Driving Marked Routes and Cross-Country Hiking Four-Wheel-Drive Camping and Backpacking
	Maze Canyons (19,650 acres)	Maze, Horse, Water, Shot, and Jasper Canyons Rock art including Harvest Scene	An incredible maze of narrow, steep-walled canyons sinuously doubles back and forth. The experience is a wilderness adventure highlighted by self-reliance and lonely isolation in these farthest reaches of the park.	Marked Routes and Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking Horse Use
	Surprise Valley (580 acres)	Entire subunit	This small valley surrounded by rough terrain virtually hangs on the side of Cataract Canyon. Surprise Valley seems precariously out of place in its spectacular surroundings, and it invites exploration.	Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking
	Fins (3,990 acres)	Entire subunit	The fins are a system of dead-end canyons and deep fissures between hundreds of long, parallel rock spurs. This area prompts one to explore and climb up into narrow crevices.	Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking
	Ernies Country (8,750 acres)		In this broad, desolate area, visitors see distant needles, spines, and buttes in other subunits as well as spectacular views of nearby Cataract Canyon.	Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking
	Millard Canyon (3,740 acres)	Entire subunit	The visitor is in the Millard system of long, deep, flat-bottomed canyons. The feeling is one of being gradually enclosed by steep slopes of jumbled rock surmounted by precipitous, ever narrowing cliffs of red sandstone that offer no exit. The only means of access is hiking.	Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking
To manage use of the GREEN AND COLORADO RIVERS and their canyons in order to preserve their primitive character	Green and Colorado River Canyons (29,180 acres)	Entire subunit including Fort Bottom, Turks Head, Stillwater Canyon, the Loop, and the Confluence	Enjoying a slow float trip through meandering, ever deepening canyons, the visitor may become absorbed in colorful reflections in the silty river. During the trip, he hikes into side canyons to view ancient ruins and fascinating erosional forms.	Interpretation Boating Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking
	Cataract Canyon (9,420 acres)	Entire Subunit including gypsum plugs and rapids such as Big Drop (Bighorn habitat)	The roar of rapids ahead followed by the wild rush through perilous white water contribute to the excitement of boating here in this deep, inner canyon wilderness of the park.	Interpretation Boating Cross-Country Hiking Backpacking

TOTAL PARK ACREAGE:  
336,680 acres



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6 PLANNING TEAM

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