

The following section supplements the analysis found Chapter Three, [Section 3.20 - Recreation](#) of the Draft EIS on page 3.412, “Impacts Related to Oil and Gas Leasing”.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS

The GSGP area provides both dispersed recreation opportunities (hiking, biking, viewing wildlife and scenery, etc.) and developed recreation opportunities and facilities (e.g., developed campgrounds, trailheads, picnic, boating, and fishing sites). The types of impacts that could occur from developing the GSGP area are the same as those described in the Draft EIS, including altering the natural setting of areas used for recreation; and impacts from noise, dust, and increased traffic that disrupt the recreation experience. The projected development for GSGP is approximately four times the amount of development that was analyzed in the Draft EIS for the Paradox Basin (the area of conventional gas development that is within and adjacent to the GSGP area). As a result of the magnitude of visual impacts and increased traffic and noise that could result from developing the GSGP, there may be a reduction in the number of persons recreating in the GSGP area. Similarly, the number of winter recreationists may decrease due to a reduction in visual quality and extensive snowplowing that would accompany operation of an oil or gas field.

The increased amount of development, increases the likelihood of displacing recreation, as well as changing recreation use patterns (because recreationist will seek out other areas of the SJPL for recreating), and changing the recreation setting from a Roaded Natural area to that of a Rural setting due to a more industrial influence characterizing the area than currently exists. Across the alternatives, both the summer and winter recreation opportunity settings for the GSGP are predominately Roaded Natural and Semi-Primitive Motorized. If the lands were leased and developed, the projected development would likely change the area to a predominantly rural setting. The degree of recreation impacts would be greatest on the USFS lands where there is currently less gas development (i.e., there are fewer USFS lands held by lease or developed); and a lesser impact on the BLM lands where there is existing gas development and lower levels of recreational activity.

The standards and guidelines, stipulations and mitigation measures for reducing the impacts to dispersed and developed recreation are the same as were described in the Draft EIS. Specifically, there is a CSU stipulation in Alternatives B, C, and D for Structured Recreation Management Areas (i.e., the areas of known dispersed recreation use occurring in the Boggy, Haycamp and Aspen Loop areas that are within the GSGP area). The stipulation is aimed at minimizing impacts to the recreation experience by considering the recreation use, line of site, etc. when selecting well sites. Impacts to developed recreation sites would be mitigated by NSO stipulation in Alternatives A, B, C, and D, within ¼ mile of developed recreation sites. The ¼ mile buffer would reduce or eliminate the sounds of producing wells, and wells would be located, where possible, to eliminate direct sight lines to campgrounds.

Alternative Comparison: The projected amount of well pads on unleased lands ranges from 391 well pads in Alternative C to 406 well pads in Alternative A, i.e., there is not a substantial difference between the alternatives. Therefore, all alternatives would experience similar negative impacts to the recreation settings and activities. Given that Alternative A does not have the Structured Recreation Management Area (SRMA) stipulation, which aids in reducing impacts to the dispersed recreation in the area; it would have the greatest impact to recreation. Alternatives B, C and D, would all experience about the same level of impact.

To minimize the potential for entirely displacing recreation, if the GSGP's drilling activity progressed to a gas development plan, the phasing of development across zones may be considered as one way of reducing the potential effects on dispersed recreation. By phasing development across the GSGP, some areas could still be used for recreation, while other areas could be developed.

The No Lease Alternative would have the least impact to recreation, resulting in approximately 66% of the area not being developed (i.e., 66% of the GSGP is currently unleased and would not be leased under the No Lease Alternative).

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The cumulative effects boundary for this analysis is the Paradox Basin of the planning area which includes the GSGP, as well as the adjacent area with conventional and gas shale development, in Montezuma, Dolores and San Miguel counties, and includes the potential impacts from projected oil and gas development on leased and unleased federal lands, and private and state leases.

In addition to the potential acres of disturbance described above for unleased lands, there are also projections for more development on federal lands already leased. An additional 1,786 acres of disturbance could result from future development on lands currently held under lease on BLM and USFS mineral estate (1,166 acres from future gas shale development, and approximately 620 acres from conventional gas development). Future development on lands currently held under lease would require pads and access roads and would generally result in the same types of impacts as described for unleased lands, i.e., adding the industrial component to the landscape and introducing new sources of vehicle traffic and noise that would diminish the natural setting sought by recreationists. There are currently more BLM lands than USFS lands currently held under lease within the Paradox Basin of the planning area; hence future development on lands currently leased would affect more BLM lands. Mitigations for lands currently held under lease would be similar to the mitigations described for unleased lands and would be specified during project level NEPA analysis using COA based on Design Criteria in the Draft LMP, Part Three (see [Design Criteria](#) for a listing of these mitigation measures).

Approximately 2,700 acres of disturbance is projected for development on private and state lands. Most of the private lands adjacent to the public lands are not high use recreation areas but serve as gateways to the public lands. Development on private lands would require pads and access roads and would generally result in the same types of impacts as described above, i.e., adding the industrial component to the landscape and introducing new sources of vehicle traffic and noise that would diminish the natural setting sought by recreationists. Oil and gas-related construction, operation, and maintenance could also disrupt recreation and related tourism as a result of the noise, dust, traffic, and increased human activity. Some of the limited recreational and tourism activities that take place on private lands, such as hunting, could be displaced on to public lands.