

## INTRODUCTION

Population growth, new recreation technology, and community interest have increased the focus on management of outdoor recreation settings and opportunities. Strategies incorporated into the various DLMP/DEIS alternatives aim to maintain and enhance desirable recreation settings, integrate recreation with other resource objectives, provide for sustainable recreation experiences, and promote collaboration with local and regional partners in order to achieve recreation objectives. (The complete text of this analysis is presented in the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), which is on file at the SJPLC.)

## LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

### LAWS

- ***The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968***: This act requires access to facilities designed, built, altered, or leased with Federal funds.
- ***The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, as amended***: This act prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability.

### REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

- ***The San Juan-Rio Grande National Forest Wilderness Management Direction decision signed 8/3/1998***: This provides direction for the administration of Wilderness areas on the San Juan and Rio Grande National Forests.
- ***Title 36 CFR 212***: This provides direction for the administration of the Forest Transportation System; the designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use; and use by over-snow vehicles.
- ***Title 36 CFR 251***: This provides overall direction for land uses, including miscellaneous land uses; special uses (Outfitter/Guides, for example); appeal of decisions relating to occupancy and use of USFS lands; and access to non-Federal lands.
- ***Title 36 CFR 261***: This provides general prohibitions on USFS lands.
- ***Title 36 CFR 290***: This provides direction for cave resources management on USFS lands. The rules of this part implement the requirements of the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988.
- ***Title 36 CFR 291***: This provides direction for the occupancy and use of developed sites and areas of concentrated public use on USFS lands, including admission fees, recreation use fees, and reservation fees.
- ***Title 36 CFR 293***: This provides direction for the administration and use of Wilderness and primitive areas on USFS lands.

- **Title 36 CFR 294:** This provides direction for special areas, including recreation and inventoried roadless areas (IRAs).
- **Title 36 CFR 297:** This provides direction for the administration of Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSRs) under Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) of 1968, which provides for the protection of the free-flowing, scenic, and natural values of rivers designated as components or potential components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System from the effects of construction of any water resources project.
- **FSM 1909.15 and 1950:** This provides direction for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations.
- **FSM 2300:** This provides direction for management and planning in relation to recreation, Wilderness, and related resources.
- **FSM 2709, 2710, and 2720:** These provide the legal framework for special uses on USFS lands.
- **FSM 7300:** This provides direction for planning, development, and managing facilities on USFS lands.
- **FSM 7400 and 7409.11:** These provide direction for administration and managing drinking water systems, waste water systems, effluents, solid waste systems and food services.
- **FSH 2309.18:** This provides direction for designing, building and maintaining USFS trails.
- **Title 43 CFR 8342:** This provides direction for the designation of areas and trails on public lands.
- **Title 43 CFR 8340:** This provides direction to establish criteria for designating public lands as open, limited, or closed to the use of off-road vehicles, and for establishing controls governing the use and operation of off-road vehicles in such areas.
- **FSH 7309.11:** This provides direction for managing USFS facilities.
- **BLM Manual 8330:** This provides policy on reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.
- **BLM Handbook 1601, Appendix C:** This provides minimum guidance for developing the Recreation sections in a Resource Management Plan
- **BLM Washington Office IM 2006-060:** This provides direction for incorporating benefits-based management in the recreation program.
- **BLM Washington Office IM 2007-043:** This Instruction Memorandum transmits the “Unified Strategy” describing how best to implement the BLM Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services Workplan (Purple Book), as outlined in IM No. 2006-060.

## DESIGN CRITERIA

Management guidelines and design criteria describe the environmental protection measures that would be applied to all of the alternatives at the project level in order to protect, enhance, and, where appropriate, improve resources related to recreation. Guidelines and design criteria are presented in Part 3 of Volume 2 of the DLMP/DEIS.

### Existing Conditions and Trends

There are five components that describe existing recreation conditions within the planning area, as follows:

- **Recreation Profile:** This section presents and analyzes the question: What role do public lands play in local and regional lifestyles, and in offering attractions and activities for tourists?
- **Recreation Demographics and Demand Trends:** This section presents and analyzes the question: What do recreation trends suggest about the future of recreation within the planning area?
- **Dispersed Recreation:** This section presents and analyzes the question: What are the important activities and settings that currently characterize dispersed recreation uses within the planning area?
- **Recreation Facilities and Funding:** This section presents and analyzes the question: Within the context of reduced budgets, how can the SJPLC meet the increasing demand for recreation through partnership opportunities and other non-traditional methods? What realignment of facilities makes sense?
- **Recreation Issues and Need for Change:** This section presents and analyzes the question: Do existing conditions and public scoping comments illuminate the need for change regarding recreation settings, capacities, markets, and suitability? (Preliminary revision issues are identified.)

### Recreation Profile

Outdoor adventure in southwestern Colorado has a reputation for diversity and excellence, and its appeal is contagious. More than two-thirds of a random sample of prospective visitors views Colorado as an “exciting” place. Portions of the planning area near communities are gaining social value due to the increasing demand for the available recreation settings. Aging Baby-Boomers and people engaging in amenity migration are helping establish more active (and less “retired”) populations settling near the planning area boundaries. Many residents value the ability to conveniently access the planning area near their homes, for a variety of recreational activities.

**Tourism** - The spectacular landscape of the San Juan Mountains continues to fuel the tourist economy, regardless of whether visitors actively engage in planning area recreation. For many, proximity and views are enough of a draw to bring them to the region. Colorado, as a whole, attracts visitors who embrace its image as a place for adventure and recreation.

Outdoor recreation accounted for approximately 31% all travel into Colorado (including business travel and skiing). According to America’s Scenic Byways, the Colorado Report, the total vehicle miles traveled on the San Juan Skyway nearly doubled between 1990 and 2002. Other sections of scenic highway not designated as a scenic byway (including Wolf Creek Pass) are experiencing the same surge in scenic driving. Other visitor surveys (National Visitor Use Monitoring/NVUM, Fort Lewis College surveys) have found that sight-seeing is the most common activity, and that scenery is the most highly valued resource.

**Outdoor Recreation Industry** - A variety of attractions and activities, during all seasons, provide a stable tourism industry. Tourists make up the majority of the market for guided outdoor recreation on public lands; however, the skiing and outdoor equipment industry are equally fueled by local dollars. These industries are important to the regional economy, as well as to the fiscal well-being of the sales tax dependent local governments.

**Winter Sports** - Nationally, the increase in annual skiing days is expected to be approximately 110% percent by 2050, with the largest increase in the Rocky Mountain Region. Silverton Mountain, Durango Mountain Resort, and Wolf Creek ski areas play an important role in the communities and economies within the planning area. The ski industry is a large seasonal employer in the region. During the winter of 2003, skiing in La Plata County ranked as the number one private sector job provider.

Winter recreation has been affected (impacted) in recent years by the increase in population in southwestern Colorado. This has resulted in an increased demand for access to recreational opportunities on snow. In addition, snowmobiles have increased in power and reliability, allowing them to access more terrain. Backcountry skiers now also have better equipment, and there has been an overall surge in adventure skiing. Another emerging sport is hybrid skiing, which is where a snowmobile tows or carries a skier or snowboarder up hills. During the past several decades, backcountry skiers and snowmobilers have had some success in resolving differences regarding where these groups could recreate without conflict. This cooperation has been challenged by the increase in number of users, as well as by changes in technology. This increase in overall number of users has polarized users, and communities, to the point that segregation of users is being asked for by the non-motorized community.

**River-Running and Fishing** - The planning area offers some of the highest quality fishing in the United States. From the San Juan mountain high country to the semi-arid San Juan River tailwaters, world-class fishing awaits the angler year-round. Boating is another strong recreational asset of the planning area. Large reservoirs (including McPhee, Williams, Vallecito, and Lemon) offer recreational boating in a mostly natural, scenic setting. Numerous rivers (including the Dolores, the Animas, and the Piedra) support a robust and beneficial commercial river-running economy.

**Second-Homes and Amenity Migration** - Many of the attributes that attract people to visit the San Juan Mountains also prompts some to move, or buy a second home, in the area. Vacation and/or second homes are an economic driver in many local communities, fueling regional economies with outside dollars. This occurs while they are being built (related to construction, development, real estate, and finance), as well as after they are built (related to maintenance and local spending of occupants). As the demand for residential access across the planning area, the recreation setting desired by visitors would be impacted.

**Table 3.20.1 – Tourism by Geographic Area (Dolores)**

<b>Maintenance Level</b>	<b>RECREATION – TOURISM PROFILE OF DOLORES GEOGRAPHIC AREA</b>
Terrain and Access	The Dolores Geographic Area has the widest variety of terrain and climate zones of all three districts, ranging from the high peaks in the La Plata Mountains to the desert country downriver of McPhee Reservoir. The most extensive and signature country is the foothills and mesas terrain stepping off of the La Plata, Rico, and Wilson mountains. Due to a long history of grazing and logging on these relatively flat mesas and foothills, road access to this area is extensive and well-developed. The flat topography also increases the impacts associated with illegal off-road driving.
Feedback from Area Residents	Due to the recent roots in traditional uses of the forest, and to the long-established and extensive network of access roads on the Dolores District, people on the west end of the planning area have a noticeably strong multiple-use ethic. “There’s something for everyone out there” was a commonly stated phrase in the 2005 Dolores Public Lands Office (PLO) Study Groups. Many recognize the challenge of multiple uses, most, however, would prefer to avoid a high degree of use segregation. Most people favor limiting motorized travel to established routes. With the exception of fairly widespread concern about gas well development, the majority of Dolores PLO residents are tolerant, and even supportive, of traditional uses within the planning area.
Strongest Recreation - Tourism Asset	Diversity of terrain and plentiful road access offers a variety of opportunities, and disperses uses to many different areas.
Recreation - Tourism Economy	Visiting Mesa Verde National Park and going hunting are the largest tourist attractions in the area. The proximity to the mountains goes hand-in-hand with the agricultural lifestyles that many recent immigrants have come to enjoy in Cortez, Dolores, and other nearby communities. The planning area offers geographic and climatic relief for the thousands of people who live in the flatter, warmer, and drier terrains. Residents from around the Four Corners region can quickly access the mountains and higher ground to enjoy trails, rivers, streams, lakes, and scenic vistas.
Management Challenge	Travel management is the number one recreation challenge, and the designation of travel access routes would profoundly influence the recreation setting and experience in this geographic area.

**Table 3.20.2 – Tourism by Geographic Area (Pagosa)**

<b>Maintenance Level</b>	<b>RECREATION – TOURISM PROFILE OF PAGOSA GEOGRAPHIC AREA</b>
Terrain and Access	The Pagosa Geographic Area contains the Weminuche Wilderness, which is the largest Wilderness Area in the State of Colorado. The access opportunities to the Wilderness in the Pagosa PLO are more numerous and geographically dispersed than other places within the planning area. Large open parks with rugged mountain backdrops characterize this geographic area. Pagosa Springs, the main urban center, is experiencing rapid growth. Due to the mix of private and public lands, the urban interface is more extensive than in other places within the planning area. Residents value access and proximity to public lands. Consequently, the recreation use of the planning area close to Pagosa Springs is heavy and growing, while recreation public services are lagging.
Feedback from Area Residents	Agricultural roots are important in Pagosa, and many elements of the agricultural lifestyle relate to living near public lands. Some opportunities currently exist for recreation near Pagosa; however, many residents expressed the desire for more urban interface recreational opportunities, services, and access. Scenery is very important to local residents, and to the local economy. Pagosa residents like to recreate in the winter, and many go to the Wolf Creek Pass area, where the access to higher-elevation snow is easy and snow conditions are good.
Strongest Recreation - Tourism Asset	Diverse opportunities for Wilderness access; diverse and high quality wildlife habitat.
Recreation - Tourism Economy	Unobstructed views of the San Juan Mountains are common from any of the thousands of home sites platted around Pagosa Springs. With up to 200 building permits per year, the Archuleta County development industry is accommodating the many new full- and part-time residents. The Wolf Creek Ski Area plays an important role in the otherwise quiet winter months, while hunting season gets area cash registers ringing in the fall.
Management Challenge	Managing hunting has been the biggest challenge for many years; however, this geographic area is changing from a rural forest to a residential intermixed forest. Management of recreation in the urban interface, Wilderness, and in relation to heritage tourism, will be the challenges of the future.

**Table 3.20.3 – Tourism by Geographic Area (Columbine)**

<b>Maintenance Level</b>	<b>RECREATION – TOURISM PROFILE OF COLUMBINE GEOGRAPHIC AREA</b>
Terrain and Access	The Columbine Geographic Area offers easier vehicle access to higher-elevation terrain than do either of the other two districts. This is via mining roads, timber roads, and State highways. The Columbine Geographic Area offers almost limitless possibilities for recreation access along Highway 550, the San Juan Skyway. The Columbine is also known for its wild country and big peaks. The scenery, and the strong presence of mountain adventurers of all types, reflects the proximity of some of the highest, most impressive, rugged mountains in Colorado.
Feedback from Area Residents	Residents seek high-quality recreation opportunities in the urban interface, and day trip opportunities to spectacular mountain settings. The easily accessible features of planning area near Durango, Bayfield, Vallecito, and other population centers are used frequently by the fitness-minded population of La Plata County. However, easy access to higher elevations entices recreational users out of the foothills and into the mountains for alpine day trips, in winter and summer.
Strongest Recreation - Tourism Asset	Easy road access to higher-elevation trailheads, cultural sites, and road-heads offers a remarkable range of recreation opportunities strongly connected to the communities of Durango and Silverton.
Recreation - Tourism Economy	Durango has the longest history and most experience with, tourism of any town in the region. Public-land use reflects this experience and commitment to tourism with the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, Animas river fishing and boating, two ski areas, world-class mountain biking, and the San Juan Skyway and Alpine Loop Scenic Byways.
Management Challenge	This geographic area will continue to experience growth in population and tourism. Meeting the demand for a wide range of sustainable and diverse, developed and dispersed day-use recreational settings will be the biggest challenge.

## **Recreation Demographics and Demand Trends**

The 2003 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) provided information about people who visit State Parks in southwestern Colorado. In combination with National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) survey results and information from Cordell (1999), these data represent the general demographics of visitors to the planning area. Most visitors are white males over the age of 30 (with non-local residents being older, mostly over 45), with some college education and a middle-class income. More than 40% of visitors to the planning area are from local communities (including Durango, Farmington, and Pagosa Springs). Wilderness visitors tend to be older than other visitors, with approximately 68% in the 40- to 70-year-old range. Approximately 60% of visitors seek a setting that has little or no development, or has limited trails, camping, boating, and fishing. Key activities for resident visitors include swimming and motorized boating. Non-resident visitors, on the other hand, plan to hike, fish, and camp. Most visitors indicated that “relaxing” and “spending time with family and friends” were their top reason for visiting.

Top primary activities were listed as viewing scenery, downhill skiing, hiking/walking, relaxation and fishing. The most heavily used facilities include forest roads and trails. The most popular specially designated areas are the scenic byways and the Wilderness Areas.

Key national recreation findings indicate that the five fastest growing outdoor recreation activities are expected to be: visiting historic places (“heritage tourism”), downhill skiing, snowmobiling, sightseeing, and non-consumptive wildlife activity (Cordell 1999). The five slowest growing outdoor recreation activities (activity days) are expected to be: fishing, primitive camping, cross-country skiing, off-road vehicle driving, and hunting. Both tourism and regional populations are growing steadily due to the demand for an amenity-rich lifestyle, the centerpiece of which is the planning area. There is increasing participation in recreation activities that occur on public lands, particularly day-use dispersed recreation, motorized activities, and heritage tourism. The trend is a strong and steady increase in recreation demand, primarily driven by residents focused on public lands close to communities. In addition, there is a strong destination market driven by tourists who want to reconnect with rural communities within cultural landscapes.

## **Dispersed Recreation**

The planning area offers an extraordinary variety of dispersed outdoor settings and opportunities, often defined by a low level of facility development, freedom of choice, and a semi-primitive and predominantly natural environment. A combination of features offers a remote, rustic and primitive setting; high-quality scenery; and suitable terrain for camping, picnicking, mountain biking, OHV-driving, snowmobiling, backcountry skiing, hunting, and other dispersed uses. Users value the freedom of choice, remoteness, and naturalness associated with dispersed recreation use. Regardless of the activity, the opportunity to get away from day-to-day stresses, and to be with friends and family in a natural setting, is the primary benefits that motivate dispersed recreation visitors.

An inventory of dispersed campsites shows camps often clustered along streams in valley bottoms. Concerns have been raised regarding the sanitation, erosion, and wildlife impacts associated with heavily used, and easily accessed, dispersed recreation areas. La Plata Canyon, South Mineral, and Williams Creek are examples of locations with intensive dispersed camping use, and with the associated wear-and-tear. Locations close to communities such as Cortez and Durango also show the impacts of constant and intensive dispersed day use.

### **Recreation Facilities and Funding**

Within the planning area, only a fraction of the cost of providing recreation facilities and infrastructure is paid for by the annual revenues from all recreation fees (including special-use fees, Outfitter/Guide fees, entrance fees, and recreation fees) collected.

The inventory of SJPLC-administered recreation facilities includes campgrounds, picnic areas, trailheads, scenic overlooks, and marinas. Maintaining these facilities is costly. The SJPLC has identified maintenance backlogs, and has implemented a recreation facility master plan process designed to align recreation facility investments with benefits to visitors and revenues available.

Demographic and recreation trends have important implications for the future of recreation facilities within the planning area. Aging populations from urban areas with more available leisure time, a predominance of day use versus overnight use, private/public partnership potential, the demand for heritage tourism, an “undeveloped” environment, “adventure learning” in “outdoor museum environments,” and the proximity of the planning area to growing communities are all facts that have important consequences for the appropriate location, type, and amount of future facilities and visitor services.

### **Recreation Issues and Need for Changes**

Historically, use of the planning area has emphasized commodities; however, current social, economic, and demographic changes have significantly increased recreational uses, and have changed the nature of recreation demand. Recreation is now the most extensive, and economically valuable, resource associated with the planning area. Every recreation and leisure trend associated with public lands exists within the planning area (including amenity migration, Baby-Boomer demands, Wilderness Area crowding, motorized recreation, wildland-urban interface (WUI) demands, and resort development). In contrast with the past, current management must accommodate, and protect, recreation values if it is to be successful and sustainable. The recreation tourism market is expected to grow. Recent trends, as well as future projections, point toward increases in the number of participants, trips, and activity days for outdoor recreation across most activities. For many activities, participant growth will be faster than population growth. This growth offers challenge, as well as opportunity.

Public land recreation sustainability has become dependent upon a wide range of creative and effective partnerships that involve both public and private entities. The SJPLC must collaborate with commercial enterprise, land trusts, municipalities and State agencies, publishers, Outfitter/Guides, interpretive associations, and universities, among others. Recreation within the planning area is a local, regional, and national resource. Collaborative efforts would directly affect the ability of the SJPLC to deliver sustainable recreation settings and benefits.

There are increasing concerns over access to the planning area, as well as regarding visual impacts to scenery. People who recreate within the planning area value scenery, and expect a natural environment. They also value existing public lands access, and are sensitive to changes in the location, amount, and type of access.

People are generally aware that every acre cannot support every type of recreation. They would like to maintain recreation opportunities and support multiple uses where it is feasible and sensible, while, at the same time, balancing use with recreation values.

Recreation travel corridors are the backbone of recreational access to the planning area. These more-developed routes serve as essential gateways to a wide range of recreational opportunities. Facilities along these corridors can further provide essential visitor services, and can serve as information hubs.

Nationally, motorized use of public lands has surged in the last few decades. Travel on scenic highways has doubled, and OHV-use continues to grow as Baby-Boomers age and become less physically active. At the same time, the demand for “quiet” use in large remote backcountry areas is on the rise. Areas within the planning area are experiencing this increase, as well as its associated impacts on other users.

Dispersed-use and day-use recreation is becoming a predominant recreation use within the planning area. Visitors and residents want quick access to public lands for short visits that are close to home (within a day’s drive) in a natural environment. Recreation facilities and travel infrastructure can better support this dispersed day use.

Interpretation and conservation education is critical to stewardship of the planning area. Recent surveys show that the predominantly urban culture knows very little about public lands. Research indicates that people have a keen desire to participate meaningfully in land stewardship, as well as in the protection of their community’s public “backyard.” SJPLC managers can facilitate this involvement, building ownership with individuals and communities, and a conservation ethic that benefits people and the land.

Colorado is known for its outdoor adventure sports. The planning area can offer diverse outdoor recreational opportunities for all age groups and activity levels, as well as diverse recreational opportunities beyond adventure sports. Such diversity would benefit the regional economy, and better enable the planning area to meet the anticipated demand from aging populations (who seek less-active, close-to-home, outdoor recreation). Heritage tourism, short loop trails, community connections, increased conservation educational offerings, day-use activities on trails and roads, and stewardship opportunities are all likely to offer a welcome complement to Colorado’s more traditional adventure sports.

Population growth implies added recreational-use conflicts. The SJPLC would do well to invest in management actions that minimize conflicts (including providing better recreation-related information to people so they can make better decisions about the settings they seek; implementing improved signing, in order to encourage stewardship behaviors and the sharing of trails and roads; and separating uses as a last, but necessary, resort). A major factor accounting for the projected increase in many recreation activities (e.g., skiing, snowmobiling, and camping) appears to be the strong positive relationship to personal income, as well as the rather large expected increase in real personal income over the next 50 years (Cordell 1999). These projections, however, assume that the distribution of income within the population would remain constant, which it has not done in recent years. The proportion of people in the “middle class” has gotten smaller, and there has been a widening gap between the very rich and the very poor. Should this trend continue, participation in some outdoor recreation activities may be reduced while others may increase.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

### DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS

#### General Impacts

Within the planning area, recreation occurs throughout the year. Recreational opportunities, experiences, and settings would continue under all of the alternatives. Within the planning area, recreation opportunities are managed according to their ROS setting, which are: Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-motorized, Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roaded Natural, and Rural. There are no Urban settings within the planning area. Each alternative would propose different numbers of acres under the various settings and that, in turn, would change the social, physical, and administrative use of the setting.

In general, recreation experiences and benefits would not change between alternatives, and although new Structured Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) would be established, there would be no change in benefits. This is because the SRMAs merely identify the use patterns that have already been established within that SRMA boundary. Future management actions may change emphasis on administrative activities; however, the recreational “niche” for the area would stay the same.

Recreation facilities would not be noticeably impacted in relation to any of the alternatives. This would be due, in part, to the long-term established use of these facilities, as well as to the current capacity, the ability to handle increased occupation, and the considerable public investment in facility operation. Implementation of any of the alternatives would not impact the number and location of facilities; however, budget constraints and/or increases and use trends would result in a dramatic impact to facilities in the future.

Allocation of land for potential ski area development (one of the activities in MA 8) would be consistent with the land use planning process. Allocation would not preclude the need for future ski area planning and additional NEPA analysis. All alternatives would continue the current permitted ski areas (Durango Mountain Resort and Silverton Mountain). Alternative A would carry forward ski areas from the 1983 LMP. Alternative D would also keep the potential ski area in the East Fork of the San Juan .that was in the 1983 Land Management Plan The East Fork ski area would impact the roadless character of the South San Juan Adjacent IRA, and would increase commercial skiable terrain in the planning area (while, at the same time, non-commercial terrain would be lost).

The number of recreation residences would not vary by alternative. There are no other uses identified for the areas occupied by recreation residences. Future use is expected to continue to allow all recreation residences, and the SJPLC would continue to work in partnership with permit holders until conditions change, or until the appropriate NEPA analysis shows a higher need for these lands.

## **Impacts Related to Travel and Access Management**

Currently, travel and access is being affected by national policies adopted by both the BLM and the Forest Service. In the previous LMPs, motorized recreation was open to cross-country travel unless closed or limited. The new policies change motorized recreation opportunities on roads, trails and areas to “closed” unless designated as “limited” or “open”. The planning and environmental analyses for the implementation of these agency policies are well beyond the scope of this plan (see “Cumulative Affects” analysis). However, following implementation of these travel management policies, summer motorized use will be limited to a system of designated routes, regardless of which action alternative is selected for implementation. Although the travel management planning process would result in a motorized use map, the planning process would also consider the entire range of travel modes, from foot through motorized travel (including mountain bike and horseback use). Just as recreation use changes as population rates change within the planning area, so would travel use. Population in the planning area is predicted to increase; therefore, the demand for travel and access would also increase, regardless of alternative implemented.

Figure 3. 20.1 - Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Alternative A



# San Juan Public Lands Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Alternative A

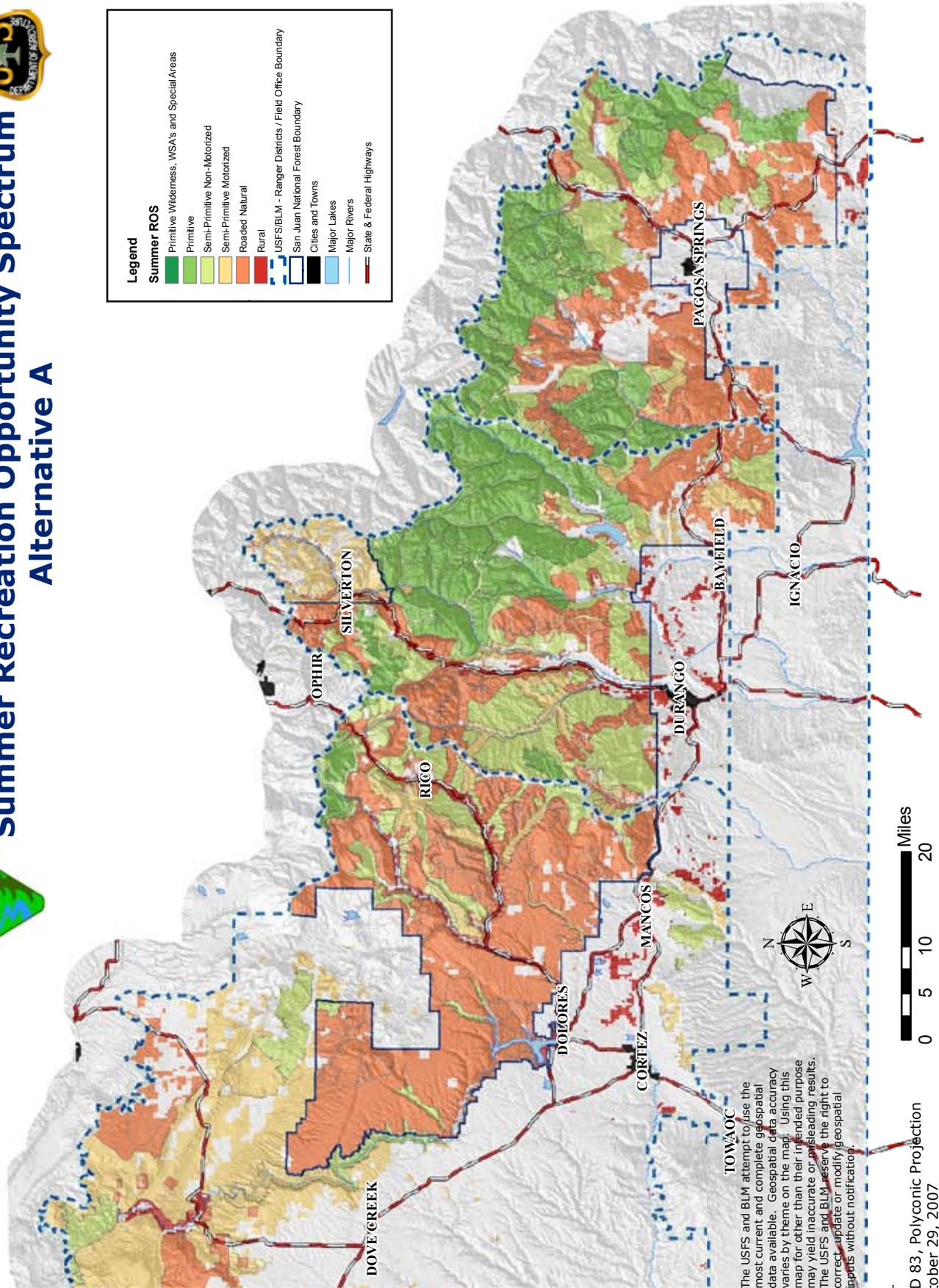
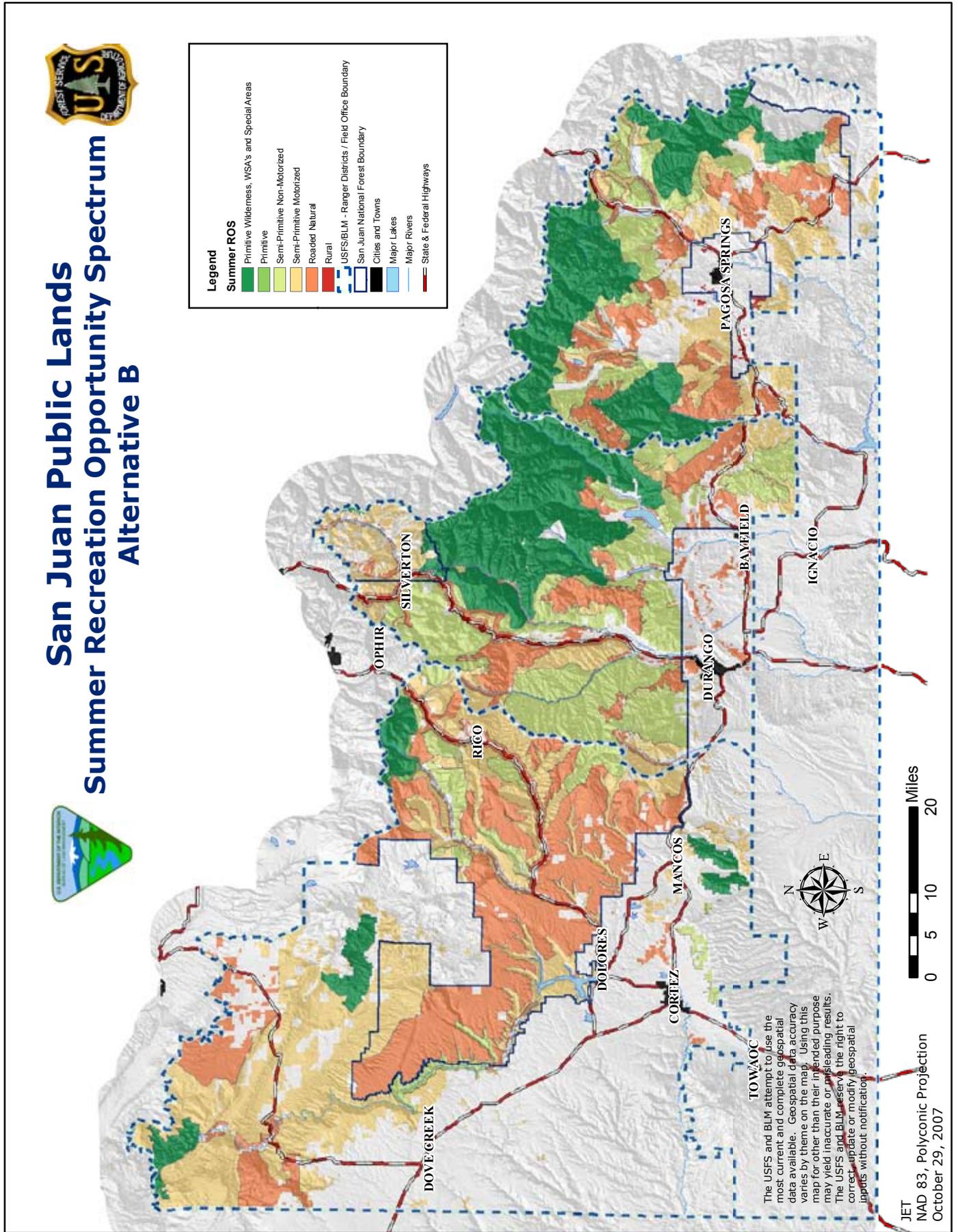


Figure 3.20.2 - Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Alternative B



**San Juan Public Lands**  
**Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**  
**Alternative B**

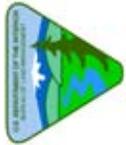
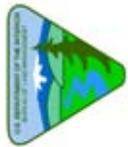


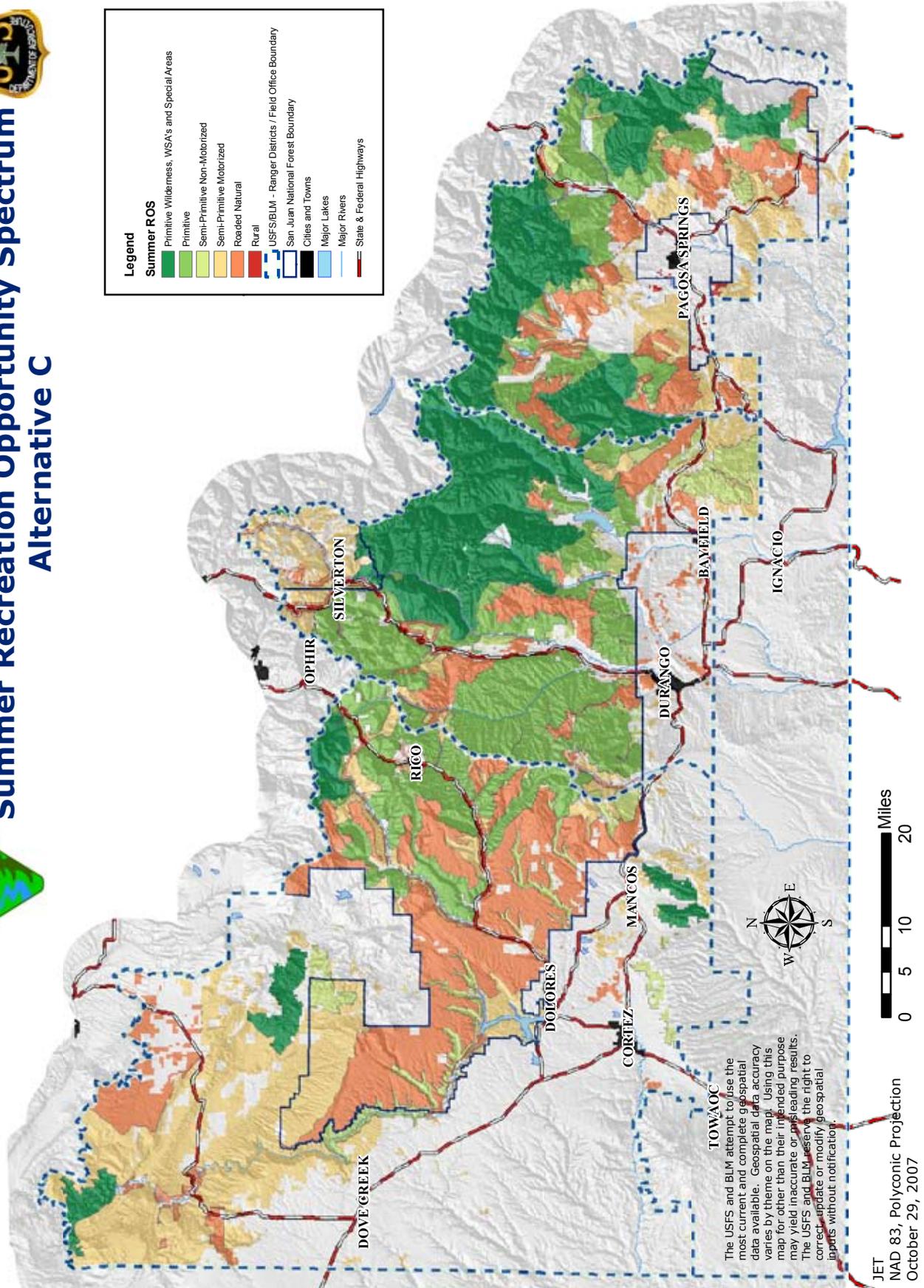
Figure 3.20.3 - Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Alternative C



# San Juan Public Lands Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Alternative C



Legend	
<b>Summer ROS</b>	
	Primitive Wilderness, WSAs and Special Areas
	Primitive
	Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized
	Semi-Primitive Motorized
	Readed Natural
	Rural
	USFS/BLM - Ranger Districts / Field Office Boundary
	San Juan National Forest Boundary
	Cities and Towns
	Major Lakes
	Major Rivers
	State & Federal Highways

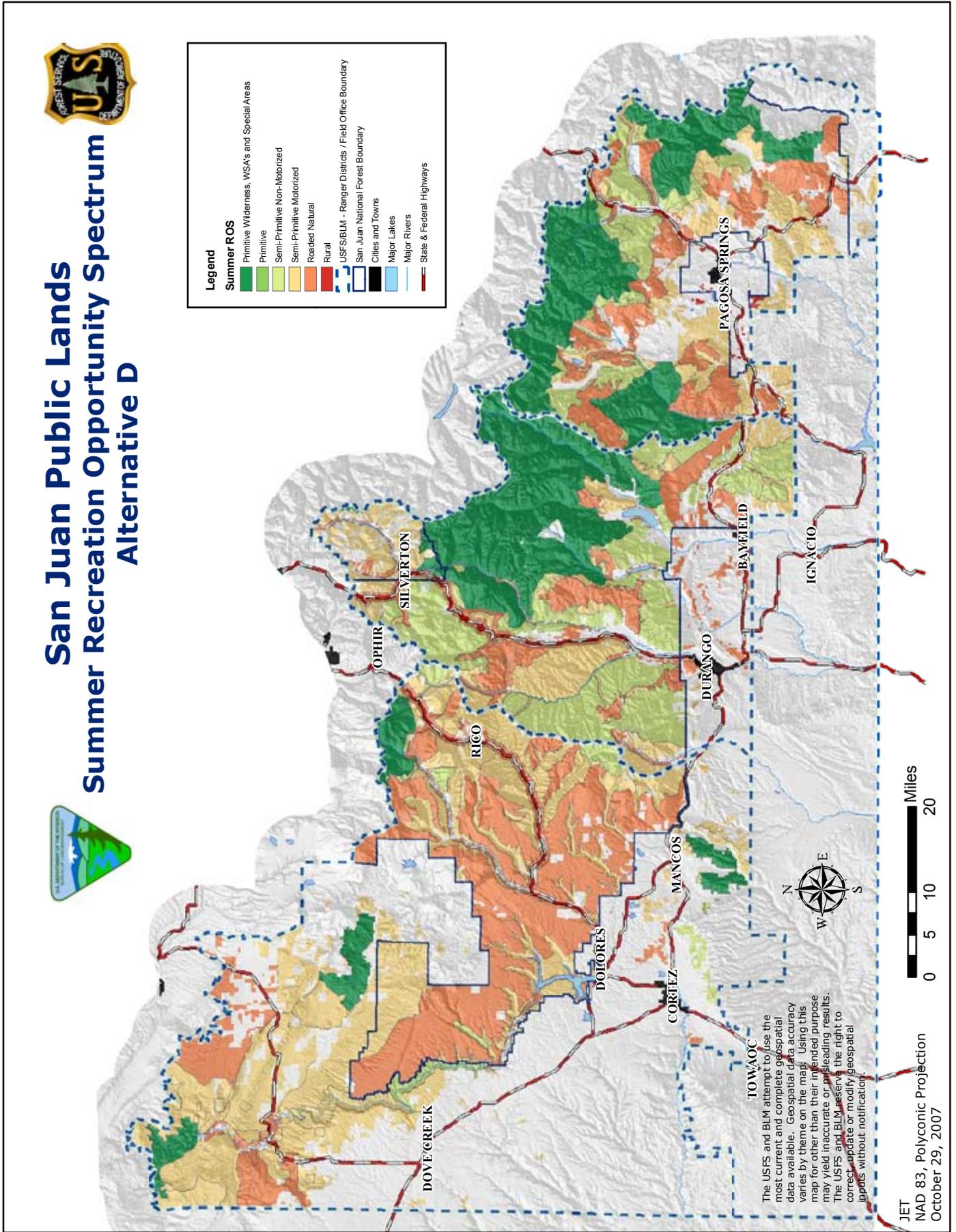


TOWAOC  
 The USFS and BLM attempt to use the most current and complete geospatial data available. Geospatial data accuracy varies by theme on the map. Using this map for other than their intended purpose may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The USFS and BLM reserve the right to correct, update or modify geospatial inputs without notification.



JET  
 NAD 83, Polyconic Projection  
 October 29, 2007

Figure 3.20.4 - Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Alternative D



**San Juan Public Lands**  
**Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**  
**Alternative D**



The alternatives that encompass either the most non-motorized suitability (Alternative C) or split the areas relatively equally between motorized and non-motorized (Alternative B) would best minimize conflicts between winter sports users (by directly avoiding contact between users and by maintaining settings consistent with achieving either motorized or non-motorized recreation benefits, rather than by always mixing the two). Similarly, for over-ground travel, Alternatives A and D would result in the greatest potential for user conflicts. This is because they would offer the most overlapping acreage for motorized travel suitability and cross-country motorized travel (Alternative A), and non-motorized travel. This situation would be conducive to direct user conflicts between groups with differing values, and would result in the highest likelihood of conflicting recreation setting attributes (including motor vehicle noise in an area sought out for the benefits of natural quiet).

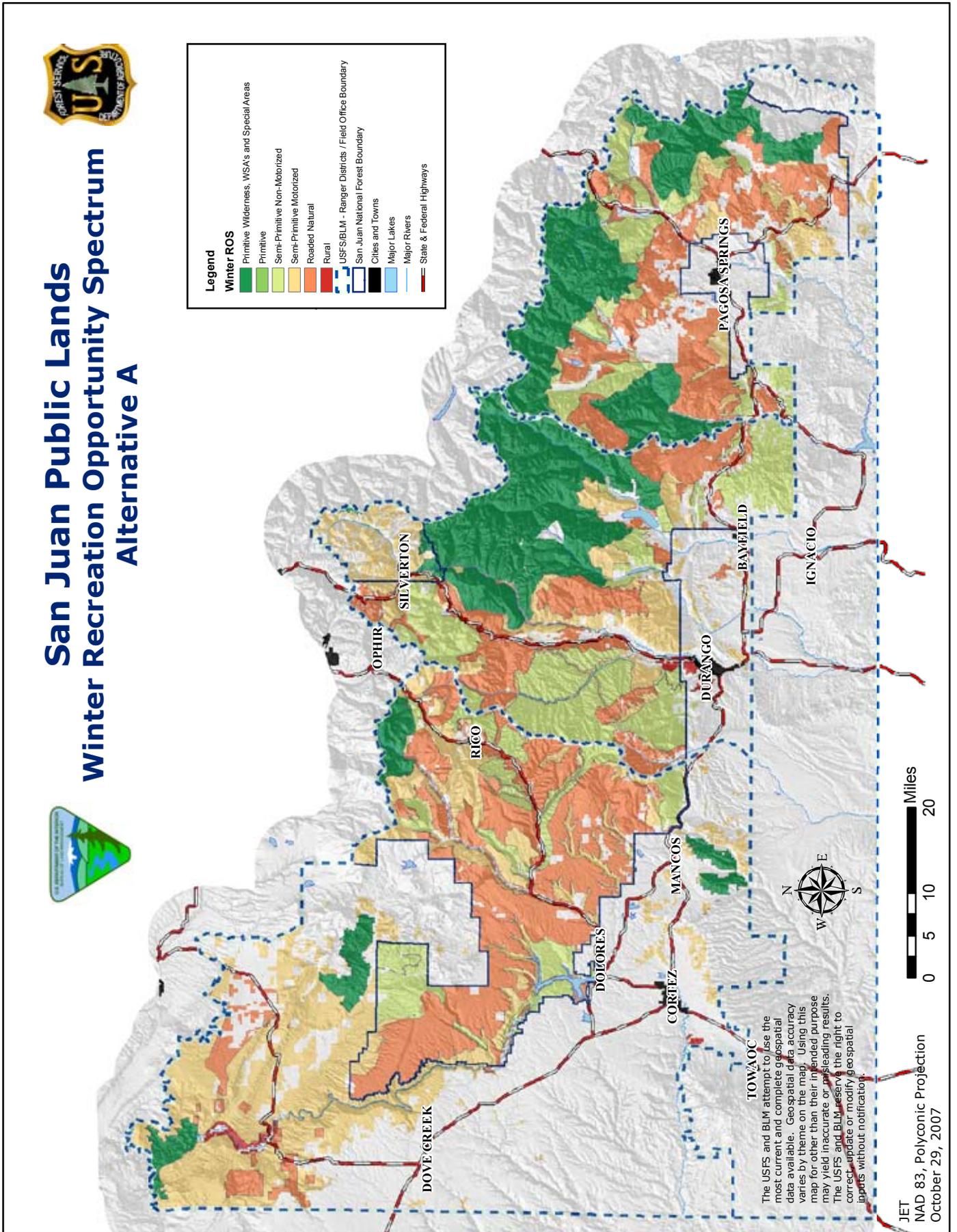
Generally, the alternatives would not differ in how they manage equestrian and mountain bike travel, except in terms of indirect impacts related to travel suitability allocations. No SJPLC roads currently available to the public would be unsuitable under any of the alternatives.

Anticipated annual trail construction/maintenance levels would not vary by alternative. Travel provisions regarding individual roads and trails are not being addressed through this planning process. They would be addressed through more site-specific travel management planning.

Changes in recreation experience, in relation to allowing or limiting motorized use, would be the most noticeable between alternatives where there are changes between MA 1s and 3s (Alternatives B, C, and D). Differences for travel suitability and for ROS between the alternatives would be especially noteworthy in the areas of Hermosa Creek, Rico, Missionary Ridge, and Red Mountain Pass. Alternative C would allocate the most land to a non-motorized setting (MA 1). Alternatives A, B, and D would offer more motorized access opportunities in both summer and winter.

Suitability for motorized travel during the summer months would be limited to designated routes over the entire planning area. Differences in visitor use across alternatives, in terms of wheeled-travel experiences, would generally be subtle (see Figure 3.20.1 - Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Alternative A, B, and D), especially in the earlier years of the new plan. Areas would become more crowded due to an increased awareness of the area through word-of-mouth, volunteer projects, signing, and maps. Conversely, the long-term potential for maintaining the greatest amount of non-motorized recreation experiences would be highest under Alternative C, followed by Alternative B, and then D. Alternative C would have a profound impact on motorcycle experiences (by closing several very popular single-track trails, including Calico and Hermosa Creek, to motorized over-ground use). (See Chapter 2 for acres of change by alternative.)

Figure 3.20.5 - Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Alternative A



**San Juan Public Lands**  
**Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**  
**Alternative A**

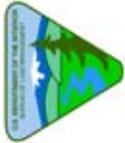
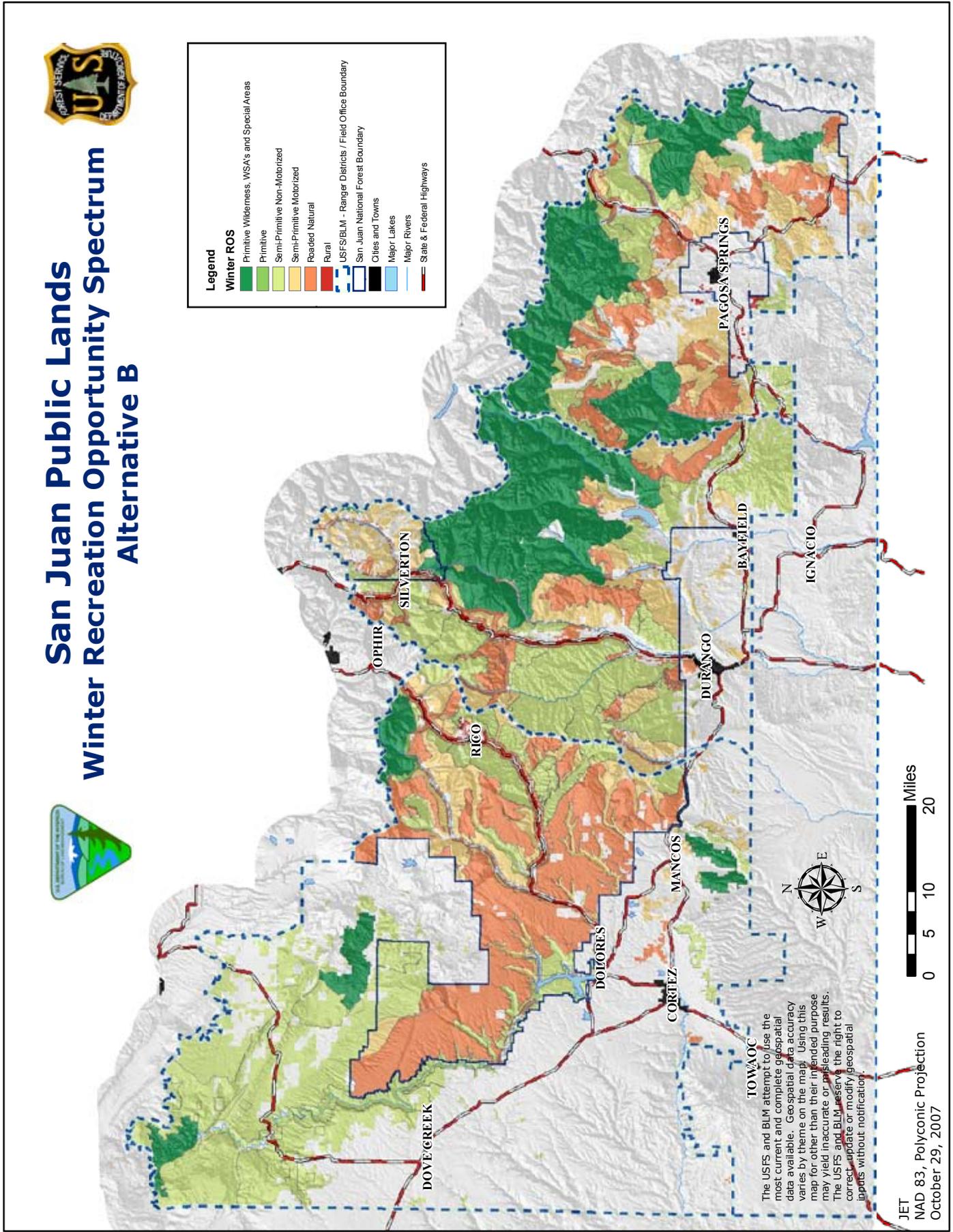


Figure 3.20.6 - Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Alternative B



# San Juan Public Lands Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Alternative B



Figure 3.20.7 - Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Alternative C

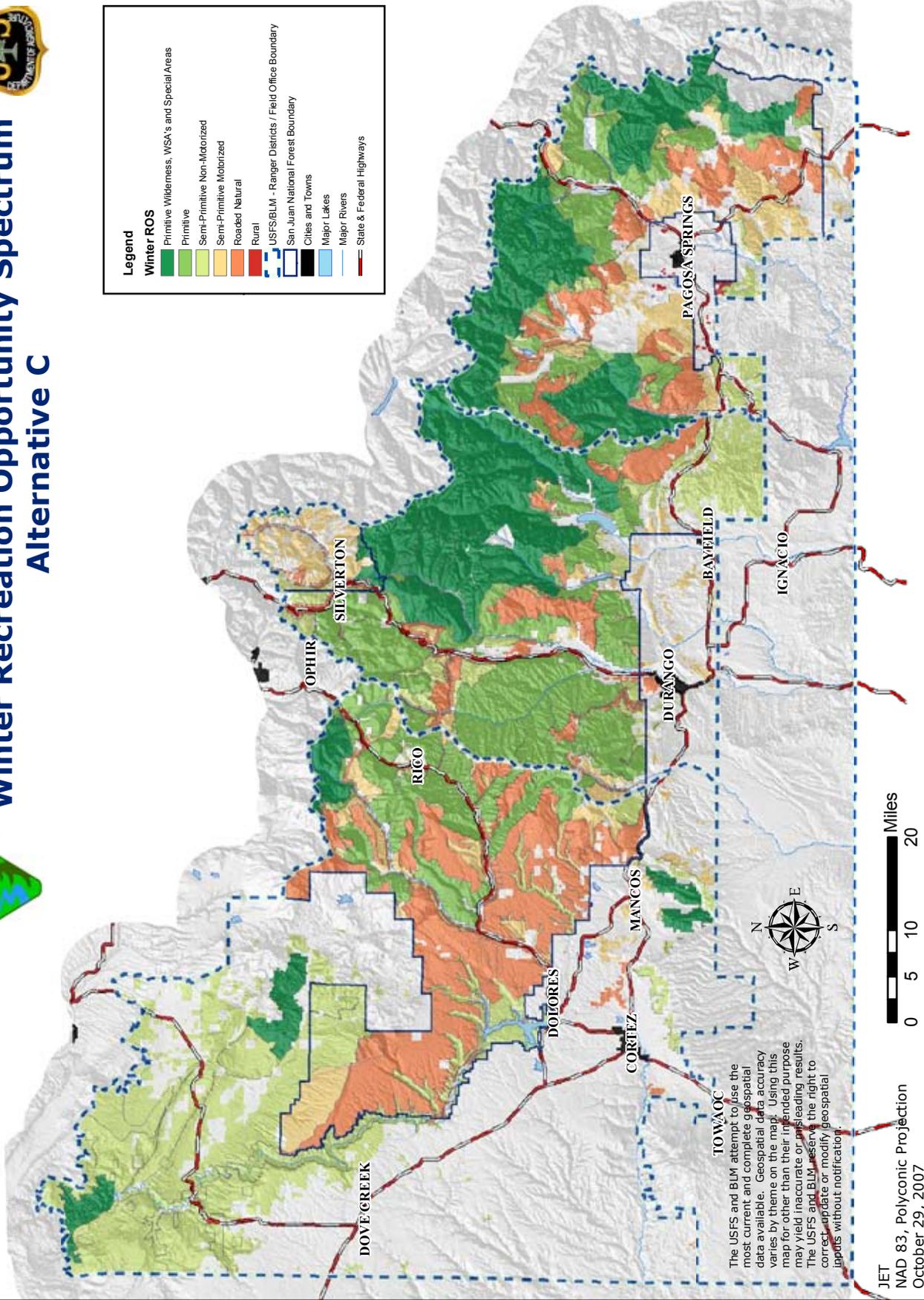
# San Juan Public Lands Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Alternative C



**Legend**

**Winter ROS**

- Primitive Wilderness, WSA's and Special Areas
- Primitive
- Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized
- Semi-Primitive Motorized
- Roaded Natural
- Rural
- USFS/BLM - Ranger Districts / Field Office Boundary
- San Juan National Forest Boundary
- Cities and Towns
- Major Lakes
- Major Rivers
- State & Federal Highways

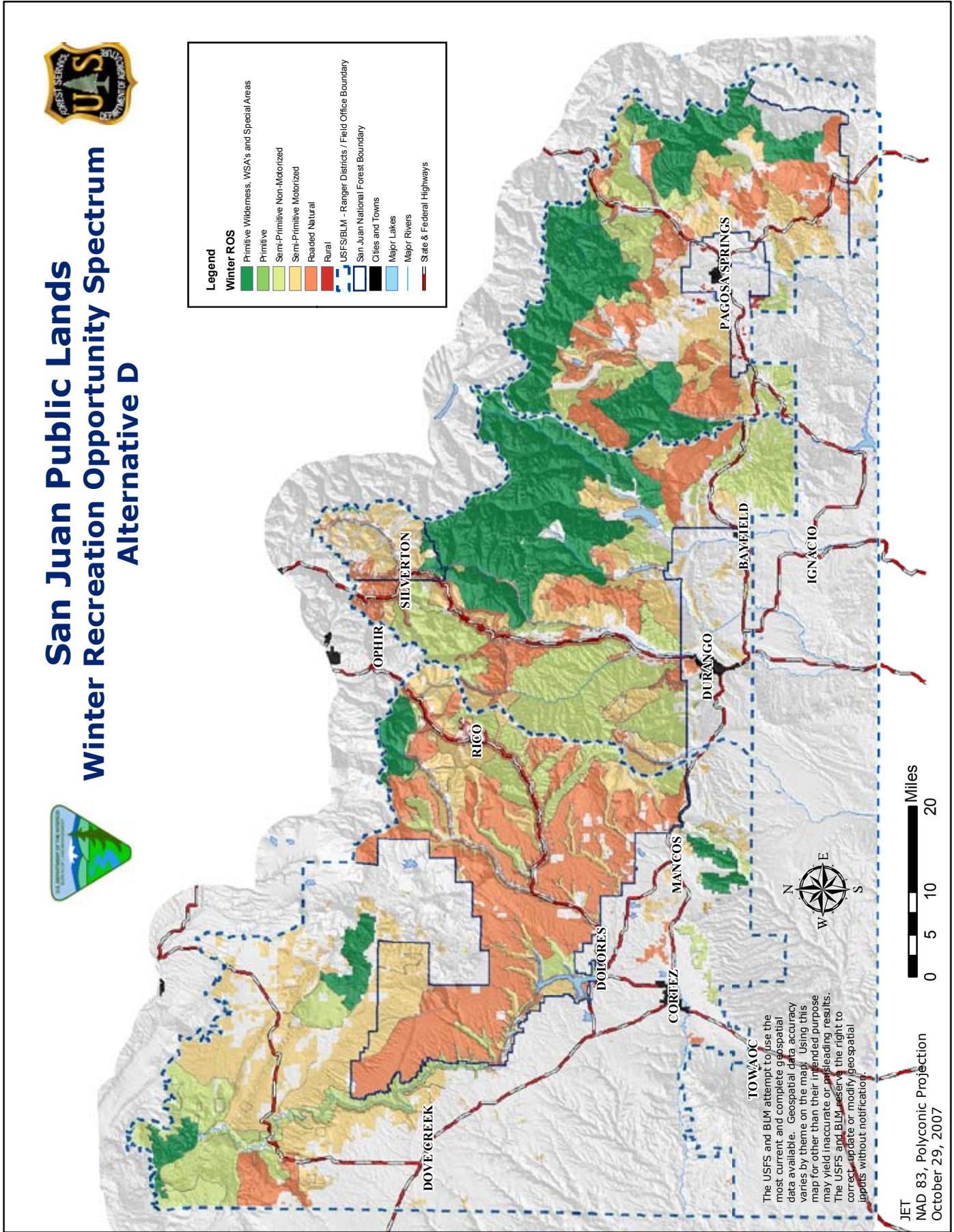


TO WAOO  
The USFS and BLM attempt to use the most current and complete geospatial data available. Geospatial data accuracy varies by theme on the map. Using this map for other than their intended purpose may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The USFS and BLM reserve the right to correct, update or modify geospatial inputs without notification.



JET  
NAD 83, Polyconic Projection  
October 29, 2007

Figure 3.20.8 - Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Alternative D



# San Juan Public Lands Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Alternative D



Other increases in unsuitable acres between Alternative A and Alternative B would result in impacts (from restricting motorized use under Alternatives B, C, and D to designated routes, and showing areas that do not currently have motorized opportunities as unsuitable). For example, congressionally designated Wilderness Areas, the Piedra Area, and administratively designated WSAs and RNAs are now shown as unsuitable areas, and account for approximately 536,292 acres (approximately 23%) of the planning area under all of the alternatives.

Alternatives would address over-snow travel in different ways (see the maps and tables in Chapter 2). Alternative A would offer the current opportunities, without resolving any of the conflicts between motorized and non-motorized winter use. Alternative B would present a mix that would keep the number of suitable acres for both motorized and non-motorized recreation balanced (but would make changes in where use would be allowed). Alternative C would increase the amount of non-motorized suitable acres, while Alternative D would propose a larger amount of motorized suitable acres.

The alternatives differ in the way they would address winter motorized and non-motorized user conflicts, especially in areas with consistent snow (including Molas Pass, Rico, Red Mountain Pass, Hermosa Creek, Missionary Ridge, and Vallecito Reservoir).

Alternative C would make most of the acreage in these areas unsuitable for motorized over-snow travel, while Alternatives A and D would do the opposite (proposing the highest amount of over-snow motorized suitable acreage, especially in the Rico and Red Mountain areas).

Over-snow motorized use is expected to remain primarily on groomed trails, and none of the groomed trails are being considered for closure under any of the alternatives. The result would be that most motorized users would not experience a loss of use under any of the alternatives. Intermediate and advanced snow machine riders would experience a loss in areas under Alternatives B, C, and D. Conversely, intermediate and advance non-motorized over-snow users would have additional areas along major roads that provide access to ungroomed backcountry winter play area under Alternatives B and C. (See Chapter 2 for acres of change by alternative.) The following specific examples show the differences between alternatives.

***Dolores Canyon Overlook*** - Routes along county roads accessing BLM-administered lands, and up to the Dolores Canyon Overlook, would be considered suitable under Alternatives B and D. The area would be open to snowmobiling under Alternative A, and closed under Alternative C. Motorized use and experience is not expected to change between Alternatives A, B, and D, and motorized use would be eliminated under Alternative C. This would result in users looking for a motorized over-snow experience to relocate to other areas; however, very few, if any, users would drop out of the sport if the area were to be closed.

***Lizard Head Pass*** - The groomed route up Barlow Pass, and the area east of Lizard Head Pass up to the divide between Dolores and Columbine RD/FO, would be considered suitable under Alternatives A, B, and D. Under Alternative C, only the groomed route up Barlow Pass (down the east fork of Hermosa Creek) would be suitable. There would be opportunities for hybrid skiing and backcountry skiing; however, off-route snowmobiling would be prohibited.

**Red Mountain Pass** - Under Alternative A, both sides of Highway 550 would be open to over-snow motorized use, and to non-motorized backcountry skiing. Under Alternative B, the west side of Highway 550 (up to the San Miguel County line) would be suitable; however, the east side of Highway 550 would be unsuitable to motorized use (but open to backcountry skiing). Under Alternative C, both sides of Highway 550 would be unsuitable for motorized use (but open to backcountry skiing). Under Alternative D, the west side of Highway 550 would be suitable for motorized use, and the east side of FSR 850, as well as the ridge north to McMillan Peak into Prospect Gulch (including Minnehaha Basin) would be suitable for over-snow motorized travel. The areas south of McMillan Peak, east of Highway 550 and west of CO 110 (Cement Mountain Road) would be unsuitable.

The impacts between alternatives would reflect an increased awareness that Red Mountain Pass would be open to motorized over-snow travel (which has, in the past, resulted in an increase in conflict between motorized and non-motorized users). Both motorized and non-motorized users have similar recreation experiences to gain in the area. Although over-snow motorized users would share terrain with non-motorized users, the backcountry skiing community would not have a positive experience with snowmobiles in the area (due to snow compaction, noise, and perceived interpersonal conflicts). Under In Alternatives B, C, and D, some snowmobiling opportunities would be lost, and over-snow motorized users would be displaced.

**Molas Pass** - Under Alternative A, the 200 acres east of Highway 550 (around Andrews Lake) would remain unsuitable for motorized use, and the rest of the area that is currently suitable for motorized use would remain suitable. Alternative B would make the area south of Big Molas Lake, as well as east of Highway 550 down to Lime Creek, unsuitable, and the area west of Highway 550 to West Lime Creek ridge north toward Grand Turk suitable.

**DLMP/DEIS Alternatives:** Overall, Alternative C would result in the greatest impacts on motorized recreation opportunities, followed by Alternatives B and D, and A, respectively. In general, travel access and management allocations under Alternative C would result in the greatest benefits to non-motorized recreation (by allocating the most land to those uses and reducing the potential for user conflict), followed by Alternative B and then Alternatives D and A.

### **Impacts Related to Oil and Gas Leasing**

In general, the act of leasing public lands for oil and gas development would have little impact on individual recreation experience. Impacts to recreation would occur when oil and gas development begins. Specifically, recreation impacts under all of the alternatives would include:

- oil and gas development altering the natural setting or character of an area used for recreation;
- oil and gas-related construction, operation, and maintenance disrupting recreation (due to noise, dust, traffic, and increased human activity);
- oil and gas development increasing vehicle access into previously roadless or inaccessible areas; and
- oil and gas development that may not be compatible with local, State, and/or Federal objectives for recreation in the RFD Area.

### **Impacts Related to Recreational Use**

Additional wells projected in the RFDS would add to this industrial component of the landscape, and would introduce new sources of vehicle traffic and noise that would diminish the recreational setting sought by visitors. Overall use, however, is not expected to decrease in the area due to development. Regardless of the location of development, recreation use would disperse and users would locate in areas away from development for most activities. Development in the SRMAs would be mostly mitigated by CSU stipulations (and would still see some use leave the area). A major field development in a SRMA would change the overall recreation experience, even with the CSU stipulation. Development along major travel corridors would be mitigated with NSO stipulations. The gas well access roads may be gated and closed to public motorized use in order to provide non-motorized opportunities in the “backyard” setting. Development in the backcountry setting, which is included in most of the IRAs, would be mitigated by NSO stipulations. However, any development would displace users seeking remote experiences, as well as some Outfitting/Guide operations (by forcing them to relocate to other remote areas).

**Paradox Basin (USFS)** - The USFS portion of the Paradox Basin is not currently developed for oil or gas. The anticipated 140 new wells that would be constructed in the area would be accessed by existing roads or by short spur roads constructed in this moderately roaded landscape. USFS lands in the Paradox Basin portion of the RFD Area are almost one-half (approximately 47%) Roaded Natural (ROS) setting, and show evidence of a multiple-use emphasis. Another one-third of the area (approximately 31%) is in the Semi-primitive (ROS) setting (there are no Wilderness Areas in the USFS portion of the Paradox Basin). One-fifth (approximately 22%) of the area is in the Rural Setting (ROS) setting (primarily around McPhee Reservoir, the Dolores River, and above the town of Dolores).

**San Juan/San Miguel (USFS)** - Within the San Juan Sag area, there have been exploratory wells drilled at an average rate of 1 well per every 3 years, mostly using existing roads. The wells have all been plugged and abandoned, and the sites have been reclaimed. Existing development has had little, if any, impact on dispersed recreation. Future oil and gas development within the area is projected at 2 wells per year, for a period of 10 to 15 years. These wells, similar to past wells, would mostly utilize the existing road system; however, some spur roads would be constructed. Construction activities would introduce noise, dust, and construction traffic. Impacts related to construction activities would be short-term and minor. Long-term impacts would depend upon the success of continued exploratory activities; however, the anticipated low rate of development would not measurably impact the current dispersed recreation patterns of use (which are mostly driving forest roads for pleasure, firewood gathering, and hunting).

Lands in the San Juan Sag portion of the RFD Area would be over one-half (approximately 6%) Roaded Natural (ROS) settings, primarily along travel corridors and areas showing evidence of a multiple-use emphasis. Another one-quarter of the area (approximately 24%) would be in the Semi-primitive (ROS) setting. The remaining 8% would be in the Rural (ROS) setting, around the town of Pagosa Springs.

**DLMP/DEIS Alternatives:** The impacts related to oil and gas leasing on recreation would be similar under all of the alternatives.

### **Impacts Related to Fire and Fuels Management**

Under all of the alternatives, fuels treatments would be similar. Impacts to recreation would be negligible, primarily because the activities would be short-term disruptions of the experience to the users that would be mitigated through guidelines applied to the project and implemented while the treatments are taking place. Impacts within SRMAs would be greater (due to the increased emphasis of the area); however, they would be mitigated by guidelines. More unpredictable to determine would be the impacts to recreation related to wildfire (which may alter both short-term and long-term experiences by changing the appearance of the recreation setting).

**DLMP/DEIS Alternatives:** The impacts related to fire and fuels management on recreation would be similar under all of the alternatives. If no new leases were made available, the impacts to the recreation resource would be similar to the impacts under all alternatives because most of the development will occur on existing leases. In addition recreation facilities, SRMAs, National trails and scenic byways have already been mitigated to protect recreation experiences.

### **Impacts Related to Timber Management**

Under all of the alternatives, impacts to recreational settings (ROS) related to timber management would remain unchanged. Site-specific impacts to recreation would be minor, and would be, primarily, short-term disruptions of the experience to the users that would be mitigated through guidelines applied to the project and implemented while the activity is taking place. Impacts within SRMAs would be moderate (because of the increased emphasis on the area); however, they would be mitigated by guidelines. The addition of new roads would provide some additional opportunities for recreational access, once the timber treatment is completed. However, most of the proposed new roads would be in areas that already have extensive road systems; therefore, the impacts would be negligible.

**DLMP/DEIS Alternatives:** The impacts related to timber management on recreation would be similar under all of the alternatives.

### **Impacts Related to Minerals Management**

Under all of the alternatives, impacts to recreational settings (ROS) related to minerals management would remain unchanged. Impacts to the recreation setting would be from the long-term disturbance to the area. Users would tend to move from these areas in order to have the experience they desire while the mineral activity is taking place. Given that most of the future mineral activity will take place in areas of former activity, the amount of projected acres for development disruption to recreation experience would be minor.

**DLMP/DEIS Alternatives:** The impacts related to mineral development on recreation would be similar under all of the alternatives.

## CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

In addition to trends described at the beginning of this section, the cumulative impacts described below include historic, current, and reasonably foreseeable future activities that were considered with regard to recreation. The next 15 years are considered the timeframe for “reasonably foreseeable future” cumulative impacts.

Planning area recreation setting shift - Historic project-level decisions (primarily oil and gas development, timber management, and road construction for access to private in-holdings) in the planning area have resulted in a shift in area-wide recreation setting composition, from the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Semi-Primitive Motorized to the more developed Roaded Natural and Rural (ROS) settings. This has been a long-term trend, and one that is likely to continue slowly. Some minor ROS setting shifts, however, would take place over the next 15 years, depending upon the alternative chosen.

As discussed in the general impacts portion of this section, the existing planning area recreation setting composition would experience the least amount of shift under Alternative B, followed by Alternatives C, D, and A, respectively. Alternative B would result in the greatest potential, over the long term, for loss of remote/Wilderness setting. This is due to the differing level of management activities (especially private land in-holding development, oil and gas, timber and fire/fuels management, and associated roading) that may take place under the various alternatives.

**Future off-trail travel (“open areas”)** - Currently, travel and access is being affected by a major policy shift on a national basis. This paradigm shift (from open unless closed, to closed unless open) would change resource impacts related to motorized recreation beyond the scope of this plan. Under this new USFS policy (2005), summer motorized use would be restricted to designated routes, regardless of which alternative is selected for implementation. BLM Handbook (H-1601-1) requires all motorized travel to be classified as open, limited, or closed to motorized travel activities.

**Future over-snow travel** - Winter recreation has been affected in recent years by the increase in population in southwestern Colorado, which as, in turn, resulted in increased competition for access to recreational opportunities on snow. In addition, snowmobiles have increased in power and reliability, which has, in turn, allowed more terrain to be used. Backcountry skiers also have better equipment, and there has been an overall surge in adventure skiing. Another emerging sport is hybrid skiing (where a snowmobile tows or carries a skier or snowboarder up hills), which has, in turn, resulted in direct competition with ski areas, commercial snowcat operators, and heli-skiing operators. During the past several decades, backcountry skiers and snowmobilers have worked out their differences where individuals would have winter recreation experiences. For the most part individuals, clubs, and communities worked out which areas were available for motorized and non-motorized use. This cooperation has been challenged by the increase in users, as well as by changes in technology. This increase in overall users has polarized users, and communities, to the point that segregation of users is being asked for by the non-motorized community.

**Oil and gas development implications:** The majority of development will continue in existing fields. The most noticeable exception is estimated 125 new wells, with an associated 425 acres of disturbance on USFS land in the Paradox Basin. Under a no lease scenario this develop would not take place. Additional coal bed methane (CBM) development in the Northern San Juan Basin on both USFS and BLM lands will continue to take place regardless of new leasing or no leasing scenarios. In its November 2006 FEIS regarding the Northern San Juan Coal Bed Methane Project, the SJPLC arrived at several conclusions with regard to cumulative effects that are pertinent to consider within the framework of recreation implications for the San Juan planning area. The development scenario in the San Juan Sag is estimated at between 2 and 7 wells with 50 acres of disturbance would be reduced to only 2 exploratory wells under the no lease scenario.

Colorado State OHV program - Currently all OHVs (ATVs, dirt bikes, and other unlicensed OHVs) are required to display a Colorado OHV permit while operating on public lands, as well as on other designated trails and areas (mirroring the current snowmobile registration requirements). Just as snowmobile use has increased dramatically since the 1990s, OHV use would likely continue to increase (due to increased information and advertising by the State Division of Tourism). Potential adverse impacts that may be anticipated as a result of greater information/promotion would include additional users at trailhead facilities, as well as more encounters on open roads and trails (which may increase the perception of crowding). Potentially positive impacts that would be anticipated include the chance of additional funds to benefit the trail system within the planning area (in the form of signage, enhanced education and enforcement initiatives), as well as additional improvements in trail opportunities (through construction or reconstruction, as opportunities arise).

### **The Future of Public Land Recreation Management**

A number of recent trends are having a significant impact on recreational opportunities within the planning area. Federal budgets are being reduced, and are projected to continue declining. The same trend is projected for the size of the Federal work force. Therefore, the number of public land recreation professionals available to deliver good quality recreation products and services has fallen. The result is a loss of technical expertise when demand is dramatically increasing. Consequently, agencies are finding it difficult to maintain the level of visitor services offered in the past. In addition, the backlog in maintenance of recreation facilities has increased. In light of this issue, the importance of developing effective working relationships with volunteer groups cannot be overstated, especially with regard to trail maintenance efforts within the planning area. Volunteer groups (including the San Juan Mountain Association, Trails 2000, VOC, Backcountry horsemen, hiking clubs, and motorized clubs) can provide a critical source of human capital to assist the SJPLC in accomplishing trail maintenance goals. In addition, the State of Colorado OHV-grants, as well as Colorado Snowmobile funds, are available to perform maintenance, rehabilitation, and development work.

The above listed partnership options/strategies mesh well with the 2001 USFS Recreation Agenda: “Continuing to support existing and establishing new professionally managed partnerships and intergovernmental cooperative efforts area significant means to accomplish the recreation job” (USFS 2000).

These realities would affect the planning area to differing levels, based on the alternative chosen. Given that recreation budget levels would be slightly less under Alternatives A and D (due to the emphasis placed on timber management and the need to fund a higher level of activity in that program in those alternatives), it would be more difficult to maintain the same level of services as it would under Alternative C (which would fund the recreation program at the higher level). As a result, this impact would be exaggerated under Alternatives A and D, and minimized under Alternative C. Alternatives B and D would likely fund the developed recreation budget at, or near, current levels.