

ROCKHOUND STATE PARK

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Draft Plan for Public Review

Please submit comments by:
April 18, 2011

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Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department
State Parks Division



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Plan

The *Rockhound State Park Management Plan* provides guidance on the management and development of the Park over a five year period. The planning process involved an evaluation from multiple perspectives so that future actions balance the need for recreational opportunities and the protection of park resources. The plan provides a description of the Park's existing resources and conditions, issues of concern, and recommendations.

The Park

Rockhound State Park (Park) is located in Luna County, 13 miles from Deming and easily accessible from Interstate 10. The Park is made up of two units, Rockhound (329 acres) and Spring Canyon (576 acres). Rockhound features the visitor center, campground, trails, and picnic area, and Spring Canyon has day use picnic areas and unimproved trails.

Mission of the State Parks Division

Protect and enhance natural and cultural resources, provide first-class recreational and education facilities and opportunities, and promote public safety to benefit and enrich the lives of visitors.

Recommendations

The following are several key recommendations. A detailed explanation of these and other proposals are included in the "Recommendations" portion of the plan. The "Action Plan" breaks down the list of recommendations by year, and includes a cost estimate, proposed project lead, and funding source.

Resources & Education

- Complete a botanical inventory of the Park, and develop a brochure of park plants.
- Extend fencing to keep cattle out of the Park.
- Reclaim an old road at Spring Canyon.

Recreation

- Evaluate the need for and possibly expand the campground.
- Construct new trails at Spring Canyon and improve trails at Rockhound.

Facilities

- Renovate the shop into a multi-purpose educational building; and construct a new maintenance shop.
- Develop a universally accessible campsite.
- Provide water at the Rockhound day use area.

Management

- Upgrade the Park Technician to a Heritage Educator.
- Establish the Park as the sub-regional heavy equipment storage.

INTRODUCTION

Mission

The following is the mission of the State Parks Division and the Park:

Protect and enhance natural and cultural resources, provide first-class recreational and education facilities and opportunities, and promote public safety to benefit and enrich the lives of visitors.

Park Description and History

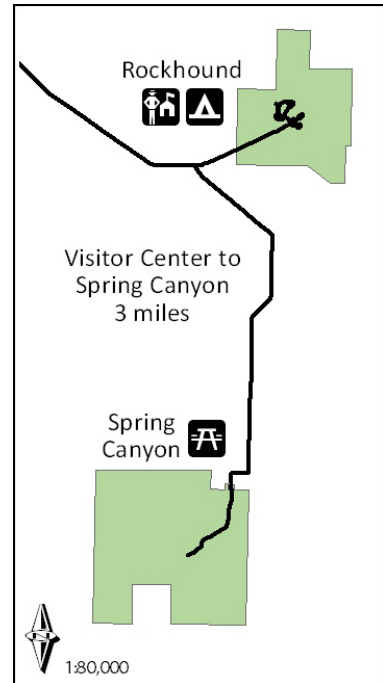
Key Facts	
Park established:	1966
Park management area:	905 acres
Division owned:	825 acres 249 acres at Rockhound 576 acres at Spring Canyon
Leased from State Land Office:	80 acres at Rockhound
Full-time Employees:	3
Annual Visitation:	64,328
Campgrounds:	1 at Rockhound
Campsites:	29
Picnic Areas:	2 4 sites at Rockhound 10 sites at Spring Canyon
Group Shelter:	2, one at Rockhound, one at Spring Canyon
Trails:	3 Thunder Egg Trail (1.2 miles) at Rockhound Jasper Trail (.5 mile) at Rockhound Lovers Leap Trail at Spring Canyon (unimproved)
Park Elevation:	Rockhound 4520' – 5400' Spring Canyon 4880' – 6440'
County:	Luna

Rockhound State Park (the Park) is made up of two units – Rockhound and Spring Canyon, which are approximately two miles apart. Rockhound is 249 acres at the base of the Little Florida Mountains and features the visitor center, campground, and maintenance facilities. Spring Canyon is a day use area with picnic sites within 581 acres of the rugged Florida Mountains. Throughout this document, the “Park” refers to both Rockhound and Spring Canyon collectively.

Rockhound State Park was dedicated on June 17, 1966 by Governor Jack Campbell. The property was donated to the State Parks Division (Division) in 1964 by the Deming Ranchettes development company. The name of the Park is derived from the fact that the Park’s original intent was to cater to rock collectors. Today the practice of collecting rocks at the Park is discouraged.

The Division acquired the Spring Canyon property from Luna County in 1979. Luna County acquired 560 acres at Spring Canyon from the BLM in 1966 to be used as a county park. Luna County acquired an additional 16 acres from a private developer. The county could not afford the costs of managing the park and chose to transfer the land to the Division in 1979.

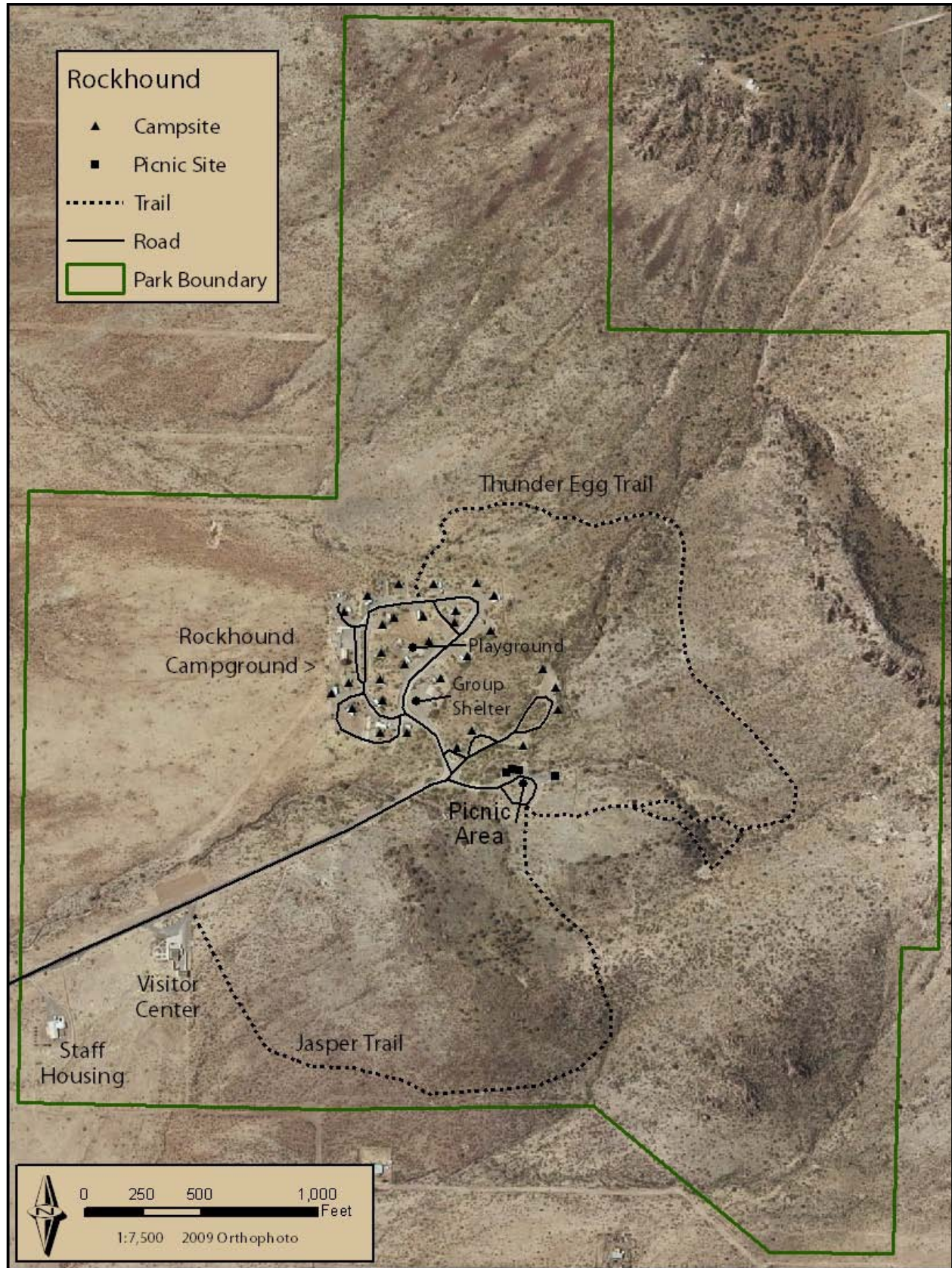
In 1998 the Division began leasing 80 acres adjacent to Rockhound from the State Land Office for the purpose of expanding the campground.

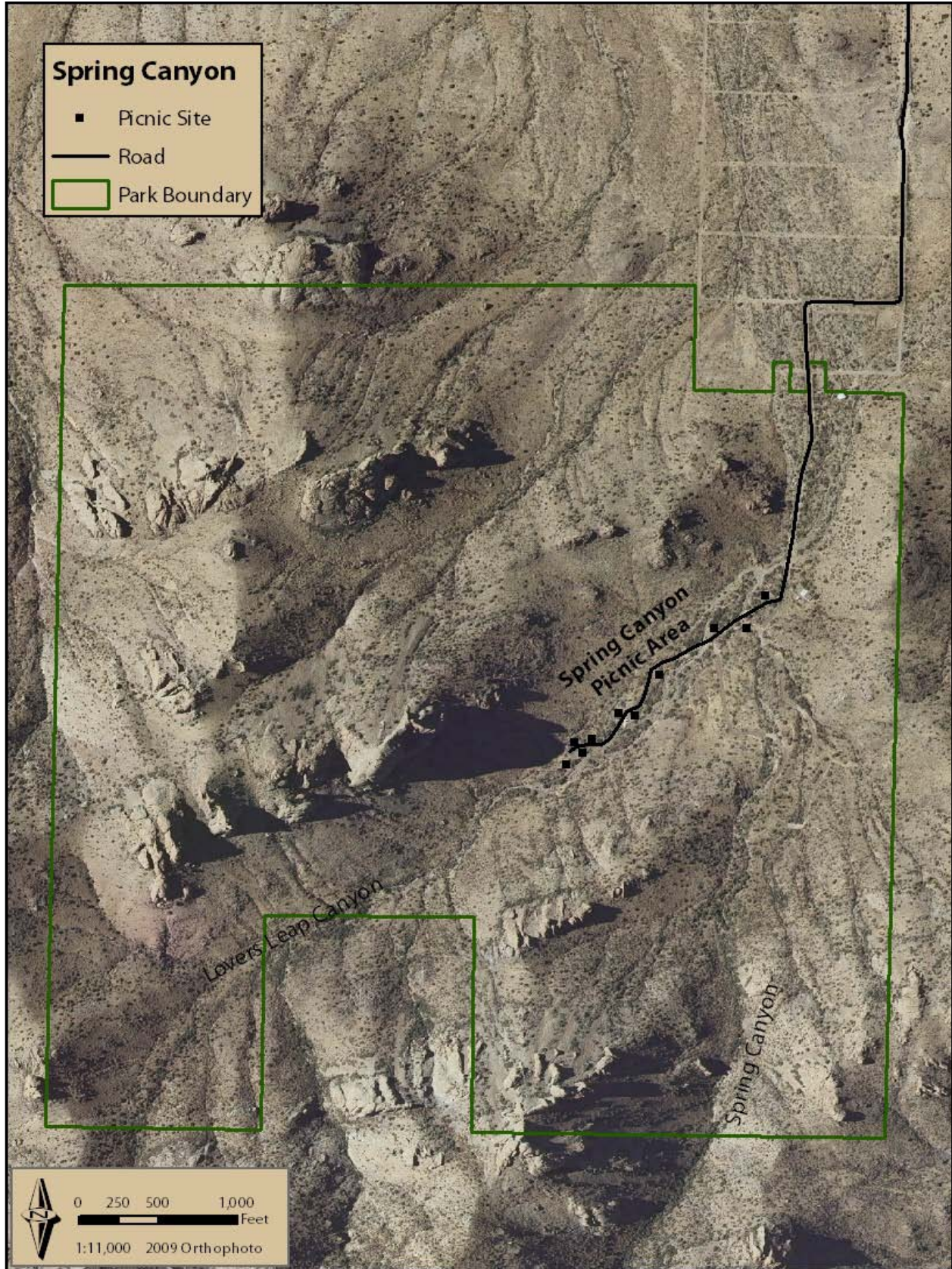


Key Historical Events	
1964	249 acres donated to the Division by Deming Ranchettes
1966	Park dedication
1979	Spring Canyon transferred from Luna County to the Division
1998	Lease of 80 acres from State Land Office begins
2001	Visitor center construction completed
2003	Friends of Rockhound State Park established

Park Map

Maps of both Rockhound and Spring Canyon are on the following pages.





Regional Setting

The Park is located in Luna County, just east of Deming off of Interstate 10. The Park campground attracts travelers from the interstate, and the day use areas are convenient for local residents. The climate is characterized by hot summers with an average high in June and July of 95° F. Winter highs average 58° F in December and January. Most of the precipitation occurs during July, August, and September, with an annual average of nine inches of rain.

2000 Census Data	Population	Median age	Median household income	Families below poverty	Housing median value
New Mexico	1,819,046	34.6	\$34,133	15%	\$108,100
Luna County	25,016	36.7	\$20,784	27%	\$66,000
Deming	14,116	34.9	\$20,081	29%	\$65,200

There are two other state parks within 50 miles, both of which offer camping – City of Rocks State Park, 43 miles north; and Pancho Villa State Park, 46 miles south. Other parks in the region include 12 city parks managed by the City of Deming.

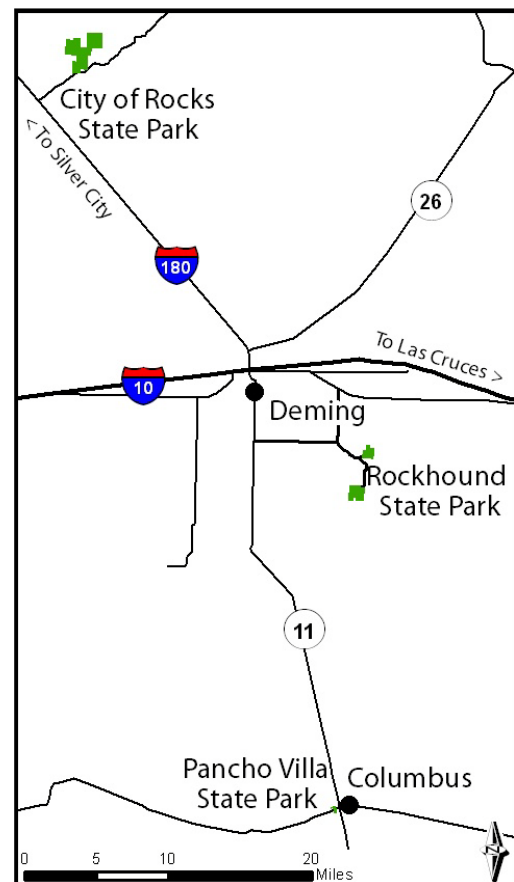
Recent Accomplishments

The following is a list of Park improvement projects that have been completed since the 2001 Park Management Plan.

- Visitor Center construction with exhibits, offices, and maintenance shop.
- Botanical garden constructed at Visitor Center.
- Improvements to the day use area included new shelters, vault toilet, and an ADA accessible picnic site.
- Improvements to the Thunder Egg Trail, including a new shade shelter on the trail.
- Created a 5-vehicle parking area adjacent to the Thunder Egg Trail.
- Definition of trails between the group shelter and comfort station and playground.
- Drainage improvements along Park roads.
- Replaced two self pay stations.
- Relocation of the entrance gate.

The following projects were completed at Spring Canyon:

- Installed concrete sidewalks and ADA accessible parking at the group shelter and vault toilet.
- Installed one self pay station.
- Installed 10 new picnic shelters on concrete slabs with new grills and tables.



- Road improvements to the Spring Canyon Road.
- Friends of Rockhound State Park constructed a labyrinth west of the visitor center.

Planning Process

19.5.3 New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) requires that each park shall establish a management plan, and review and update plans every five years. The stated objective is “to provide direction for the management and development of the parks in the New Mexico state parks system in a manner that enhances recreational opportunities, protects park resources, and provides for public input and protects the environment” (19.5.3 NMAC). Section 018 of the State Park Division’s *State Parks Policy and Procedures Manual* explains in more detail the planning process, content, and format of park management plans.

The use of a management plan may vary depending upon an individual’s perspective and use of the plan. The audience for the plan may include park users, park staff, partners, and elected officials. The following are the management plan’s primary values.

- The plan is a:
 - tool to guide decisions;
 - a reference tool that documents park history, facts, and conditions;
 - a tool for identifying land use within a park’s boundary; and
 - a five-year capital improvements plan.
- The planning process provides opportunities to:
 - discuss the long-term, “big picture” for those often mired in the details; and
 - address issues, trends, and changing conditions and uses affecting the park.
- The plan and the process allows communication with the public to:
 - learn their concerns, expectations, and values for the park; and
 - share with the public the purpose, significance, opportunities, and constraints of the park.

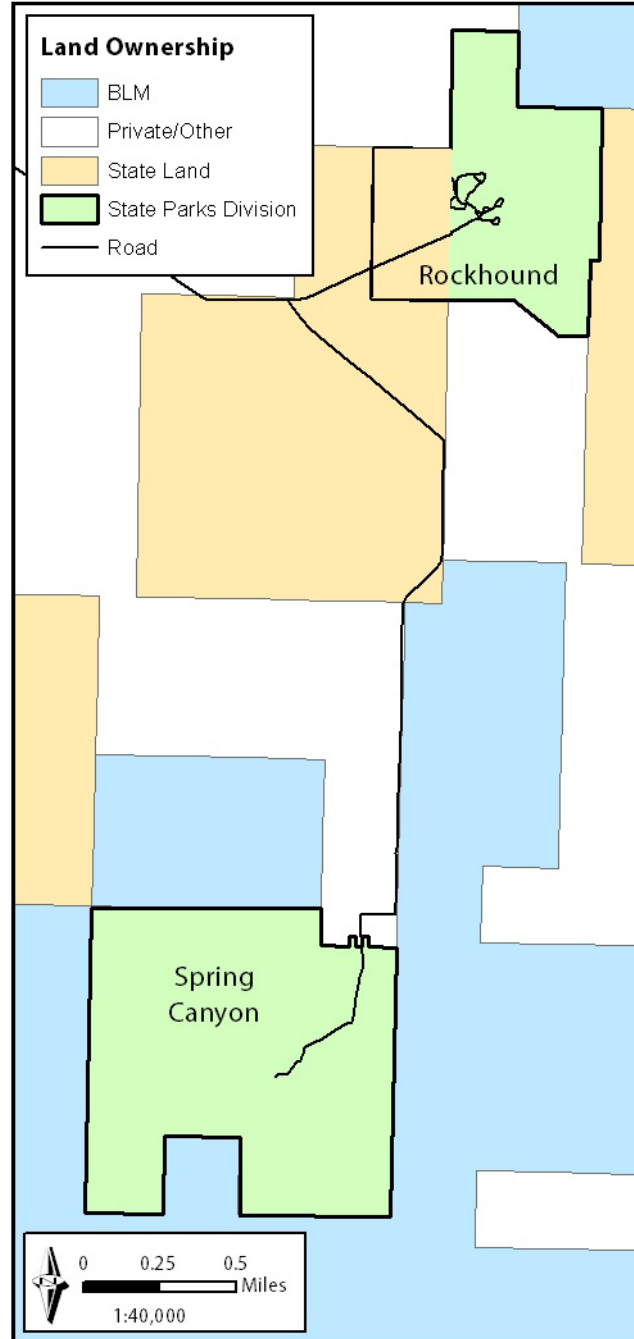
This plan is divided into two sections. The “Introduction and Park Assessment” includes a summary of the Park’s history, existing conditions, and resources. The “Recommendations” portion of the plan lists the issues that were identified during the planning process, and the proposed actions the Division recommends.

PARK ASSESSMENT

PARK RESOURCES

Land

The Park comprises 910 acres in total. The Division owns 830 acres: 249 acres at Rockhound and 581 acres at Spring Canyon. The Division leases an additional 80 acres at Rockhound from the State Land Office (lease term ends in 2012). The Division has leased the 80 acres since 1998, and the 80 acres is the site of the visitor center and employee housing. It was also intended to allow for the expansion of the campground. The Park is bounded by state trust lands, private lands, and BLM lands.



Land Management Zones

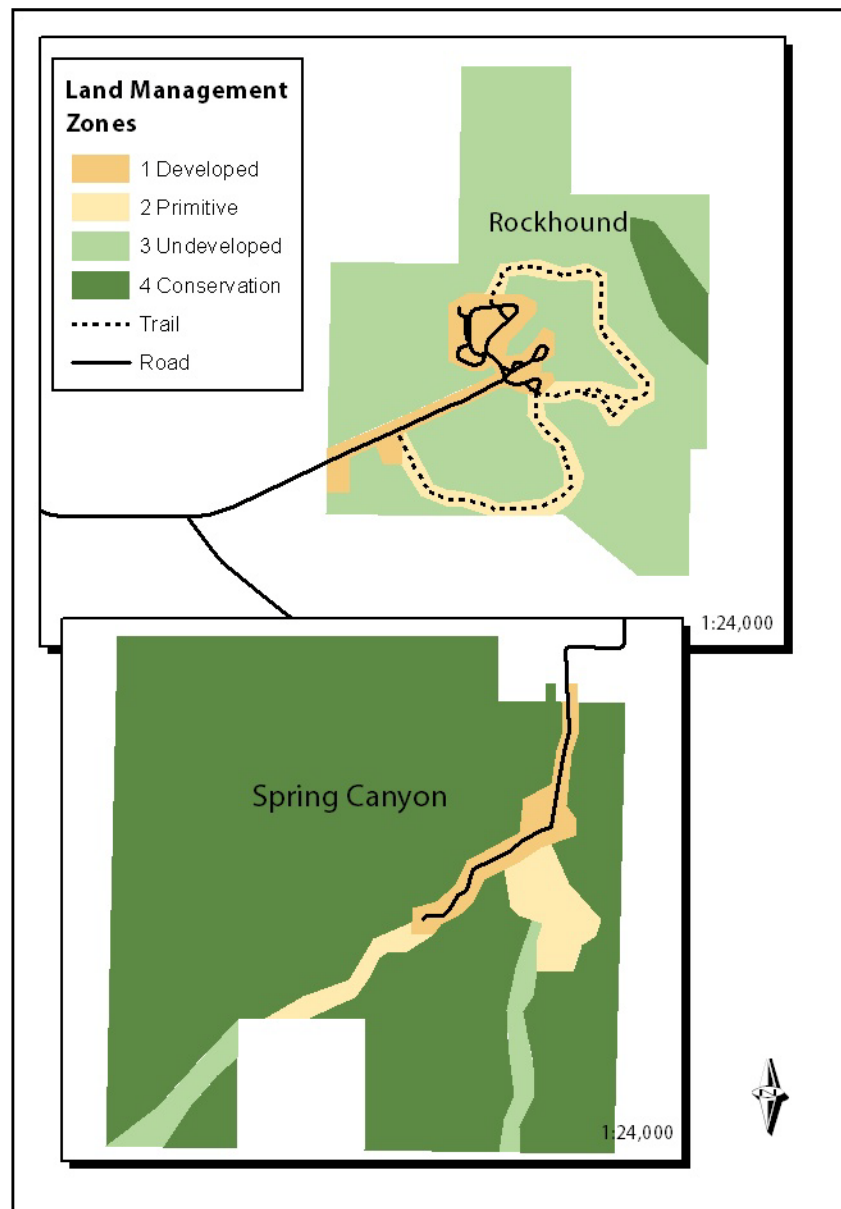
The Division’s Natural Resource Management Policy (SPD Policy 013) defines land management zones as areas managed for different types and intensities of use with varying degrees of protection, visitation, and practices. The Division’s best management practice defines four zones, described below. The following map outlines the management zones at both Rockhound and Spring Canyon.

The Developed Recreation Zone 1 is managed primarily for intensive human use and includes roads, buildings, campgrounds, and picnic areas. These lands are to be managed such that:

- visitor and staff health and safety are the top priority;
- active, consumptive recreational activities are allowed;
- roads are provided for motorized vehicles; and
- park facilities receive routine active management.

The Primitive Recreation Zone 2 is managed primarily for purposes of quiet, low impact, and low to moderate intensity visitor use. These are relatively natural areas with limited infrastructure serving low impact recreation such as fishing and hiking and include the Park trails. These lands are to be managed such that:

- resource protection and management are moderate to high priorities;
- visitors expect to experience nature and natural settings;
- the only facilities are trails;
- travel is non-motorized; and
- maintenance activities are infrequent and low impact, but planned.



The Undeveloped Recreation Zone 3 are natural areas with no infrastructure and suitable only for dispersed, wilderness-style recreation. Class 3 lands are managed such that:

- resource protection and management are high priorities;
- no facilities, maintenance or patrols are provided;
- maintenance activities are limited to resource management activities; and
- foot travel is allowed.

The Resource Protection and Conservation Zone 4 is managed solely for purposes of protecting, conserving, restoring, and reclaiming natural resources requiring special management; lands serving as refuges for wildlife; or lands requiring special management practices to protect/conserves/enhance/restore natural resources. Class 4 lands are managed such that:

- resource protection is the top priority;
- visitor use is disallowed, prohibited, restricted, or available only by special permission of park manager; and
- park maintenance activities are only as prescribed to support the resources (e.g., weed management, forest health, inventory, research, restoration).

Natural Resources

An important component of the Division's mission is to protect and enhance the Park's natural resources. One component of resource protection is that all Park improvement projects must comply with a variety of resource protection laws. As such, staff must document any proposed park improvement projects on the Division's "Park Project Form" (see Appendix B) and practice appropriate resource protection measures prior to undertaking a project.

Geology

The Park was originally founded upon rock collecting, a popular recreational activity in the 1960s. Common at Rockhound is a variety of minerals, including perlite, thunder eggs, jasper, geodes, agate, rhyolite, and quartz. Rockhound sits at the base of the Little Florida Mountains, which are comprised of a late tertiary volcanic rock that includes interbedded fanglomerate intruded by rhyolite domes and dikes. These volcanic units are between 22 and 38 million years old and appear to extend less than 600 feet deep below ground.

Spring Canyon is at the base of the Big Florida Mountains, which consist of Paleozoic through lower Tertiary sedimentary rocks on top of older granite and syenite plutons of Proterozoic and Cambrian age. Later Tertiary (29 million years old) rhyolite, diorite, and andesite intrude these older rocks.

Vegetation

The plants found throughout the Park are typical of the Chihuahuan Desert. The following table lists those plants commonly seen in the Park.

Plants Commonly Seen in the Park	
Trees	Shrubs
honey mesquite <i>Prosopis glandulosa</i> hackberry <i>Celtis pallida</i> one-seed juniper <i>Juniperus monosperma</i> piñon <i>Pinus monophylla</i> scrub oak <i>Quercus turbinella</i>	California brickellbush <i>Brickellia californica</i> creosote <i>Larrea tridentata</i> little-leaf sumac <i>Rhus microphylla</i> snakeweed <i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i> mormon tea <i>Ephedra viridis</i>
Cacti	Perennials
agave <i>Agave</i> sp. barrel cactus <i>Ferocactus</i> sp. cholla <i>Cylindropuntia</i> sp. hedgehog cactus <i>Echinocereus</i> sp. prickly pear <i>Opuntia</i> sp. ocotillo <i>Fouquieria splendens</i> beargrass <i>Nolina</i> sp. sotol <i>Dasyliirion wheeleri</i> yucca <i>Yucca</i> sp.	desert marigold <i>Baileya multiradiata</i> globemallow <i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i> lupine <i>Lupinus breviculus</i> Mexican poppy <i>Eschscholzia californica</i> tansymustard <i>Descurainia pinnata</i> twistflower <i>Streptanhanus</i> sp. wallflower <i>Erysimum asperum</i>

In 2004, the botanical garden (next to the visitor center) was built to serve as a native plant demonstration garden. Volunteers contributed to the creation of the garden, and included members of the Luna County Master Gardeners, Deming Garden Club, and Friends of Rockhound State Park. The theme of the garden is pollination and thus many are flowering plants. Several of the species planted in the garden include ocotillo, Apache plume, desert willow, false indigo, desert zinnia, and verbena. There is a list of the plants found in the garden available at the visitor center.

Wildlife

Animals routinely seen in and around the Park include ground squirrel, chipmunk, cottontail and jackrabbit, coyote, and mule deer. Occasionally Persian ibex can be seen in Spring Canyon. In the 1970s, the Department of Game and Fish released Persian ibex, native to Iran, into the Florida Mountains where they have since flourished. There are no known protected species within Park boundaries.

Birds

Spring Canyon is one of 41 sites along the New Mexico Birding Trail. However, both units of the Park offer excellent birdwatching opportunities. The best time for viewing birds at the Park is fall, winter, and spring. The Park's bird list includes 101 different species that have been observed at the Park. During the 2007 Hummingbird Festival, four species of hummingbirds were found in two days in April: black-chinned hummingbird, broad-tailed hummingbird, Calliope hummingbird, and the rufous hummingbird.

Cultural Resources

Park personnel work under a mandate to preserve and protect cultural resources from impacts caused by human or environmental factors. Cultural resources within Park boundaries are subject to state and potentially federal cultural resource protection laws (see Appendix A). Development within the Park will be coordinated with the Division's Cultural Resources Planner to avoid impacts to cultural resources and to comply with applicable rules and regulations. Prior to any activities that would result in ground disturbance, the State Parks Division will ensure that appropriate cultural resource management measures are undertaken to protect or minimize impacts to cultural resources.

Areas where construction and other improvements have occurred have been surveyed for cultural resources at both Rockhound and Spring Canyon. Only a few historic sites were identified at Spring Canyon. One is from the early ranching period and the other is associated with the Apache occupation in this area in the late 1800's.

Regional History

Diverse cultures have occupied the region throughout the last 10,000 years. Paleo-Indian sites are the earliest evidence (9500-5500 B.C.), a period characterized by big-game hunting of now-extinct Pleistocene mammoth and bison. These sites consist of scatters of lithic materials and are characterized by very specific stone tool types, including fluted Folsom or Clovis projectile points or scrapers. Archaic period people also utilized the area from 5000 B.C. to A.D. 200 and were mobile hunters and gatherers. Archaic sites are often campsites, rock-shelters, or stone tool production sites.

The Formative period (A.D. 200-1400) was characterized by the establishment of farming villages along principal watercourses. People lived in pithouse settlements and later pueblo villages practicing agriculture for subsistence. Formative period sites in the area can be attributed to either the Jornada Mogollon culture of southeastern New Mexico, west Texas, and northern Mexico or Mimbres Mogollon culture of southwestern New Mexico. The Mimbres flourished from 1000-1150 A.D. and created distinctive black-on-white pottery with geometric, animal, and human designs.

The fate of those from the Formative period is uncertain, but by the 15th century, the Apache inhabited New Mexico and west Texas. The Apache were highly mobile hunter gatherers. As a result, artifacts are often hunting tools such as projectile points, as well as drills, spears, and stone axes.

Early Spanish explorers traveling north from Mexico traversed the area in the 1500s. The Spanish first passed through the region on exploratory expeditions, which increased during the Spanish Colonial period (1598-1821) with the creation of substantial trade routes such as the El Camino Real. The name Florida Mountains is attributed to the Spanish explorers who named the mountains for the springtime profusion of flowers.

The American frontier expanded into the Southwest during the Territorial period of 1848-1912. Military expeditions explored the region, blazing trails across the state and establishing forts to protect Euro-American settlers. Captain Philip St. George Cooke led the Mormon expedition through the region and a prominent peak and spring about 19 miles northeast of the Park still bear his name. Near the foot of Cooke's Peak are the ruins of Fort Cummings (1863-1873, 1880-1886), a military stronghold in the region.

The military made its presence known directly in the Florida Mountains. In 1877, a group of six Buffalo Soldiers and three Navajo scouts encountered a camp of 40 – 50 Warm Springs Apache in the Florida Mountains. The cavalry detachment tried to elicit the Apache to return to the San Carlos Reservation, but this resulted in a skirmish that dissolved into hand-to-hand combat. The detachment was able to escape due to the bravery of one Buffalo Soldier, Corporal Clinton Greaves. As a result, Greaves was recognized by the government and awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

With the Homestead Act of 1862, Euro-American settlers entered the region. Traveling at first by horse or ox-drawn wagon on the Butterfield Overland Trail or old military routes, settlers braved Apache attacks to create new homes in the region. Several skirmishes between the Apache and settlers took place in the Florida Mountains.

Mining has also been an important part of the history and economy of this area. Mining occurred primarily north of the Park in the Santa Rita del Cobre mine near Silver City and in a series of mining districts in the mountains to the north. Some of these mines date back to the early 1800s. Mining was undertaken in the Big Florida Mountains south of Spring Canyon in the Florida Mountains Mining District, established in 1876. From 1880 to 1956, copper, gold, silver and lead were produced from vein deposits in this district. Manganese and fluorite were produced from veins on the southeast slopes of the mountains and the northeast slopes of the Little Florida Mountains.

RECREATION

The activities that most park visitors participate in are camping, hiking, birdwatching, and picnicking.

Campground

The Rockhound Campground has 29 developed campsites (shelter, table, and grill), 24 of which have water and electric hookups. The campground has a comfort station with hot showers.

Day Use Areas

The day use area at Rockhound was renovated in 2001, with the addition of four new picnic shelters, erosion control timber walls, the addition of one ADA accessible site, and a vault toilet. Spring Canyon has 10 picnic sites with shelters, tables, and grills. There is one vault toilet located at the upper end of the Spring Canyon Road. The Park has two group picnic shelters (30' x 60'), one at Rockhound and another at Spring Canyon. These are available for rent if groups would like to reserve a large picnic shelter for group gatherings.

Trails

There are almost two miles of trails at the Park. The Thunder Egg Trail at Rockhound is 1.2 miles. The trailhead is at the day use area, and the trail meanders along the base of the Little Florida Mountain and offers excellent views of the surrounding area. The Jasper Trail begins east of the visitor center, is .5 miles in length, and connects to the Thunder Egg Trailhead near the day use area. There is an unimproved trail at Spring Canyon that is known as Lovers Leap Trail, which starts near site 5 and leads to a viewpoint at the saddle above the picnic area.

Interpretation and Education

Interpretive programming includes on and off-site presentations on topics such as regional Apache and U.S. military history, local flora and fauna, and geology. Presentations are given either by Park staff, volunteers, or guest speakers. The Friends offer monthly programs and sponsor special events that feature interpretive programs. They also assist with Outdoor Classroom Programs where local schools visit the Park to learn about topics such as astronomy, GPS, geology, animal tracks, and plant and animal identification.

The interpretive exhibits in the Visitor Center were completed in 2002. The exhibits address geology, Apache history, Buffalo Soldiers, ethnobotany ("Desert Grocery"), and the wildlife and plants of the Chihuahuan Desert.

The Park offers astronomy events several times a year that are sponsored by the National Public Observatory. There is an observatory platform next to the visitor center. An 8-inch-reflector telescope is available for educational programs, and is shared with the other parks in Region 3.

Events

The Friends hold monthly interpretive programs by providing a guest speaker on a variety of topics. These programs are held monthly on the last Wednesday of the month except in February, July, and December. The following are annual events held at the Park, most of which are coordinated by the Friends.

- **Desert Alive!**
This is a celebration of spring in the Chihuahuan Desert, highlighting wildflowers, bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators. There are guided walks and programs and a plant sale. Desert Alive is held annually on the 2nd Saturday of April.
- **Music in the Park**
The summer concert series features live music under the stars. Concerts are held on the 3rd Saturdays in June, July, and August.
- **Mariachi Festival and Folklorico** - the 3rd Saturday in September.
- **Star Parties** – held periodically during the Fall.
- **Holiday Lights** - the Friends set up more than 1,000 luminarias along the paths throughout the Park.

OPERATIONS

Park operations, facilities, and administrative management follow the guidelines set forth in the Division's "Policy and Procedures Manuals". All Park facilities are maintained according to guidelines set forth in the Division's "Standards of Care Manual", which ensures quality, safety, and consistency.

Park management, rules, and law enforcement authority are authorized by the New Mexico statutes and the implementing rules in the New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC). See Appendix A for the complete list.

Park Facilities

Visitor Center

The visitor center was built in 2000-2001 and includes public restrooms, a lobby with interpretive exhibits, a visitor reception desk, and administrative offices. Next to the visitor center is a botanical garden and observatory, which is a concrete pad with an electrical hookup for operating the telescope. The labyrinth, completed in 2009, is next to the garden and set to align with the North Star, ancient patterns that date back 5000 years, "to quiet the mind, recover balance in life, encourage meditation, insight, self-reflection, discover innovation and celebration".

Maintenance Shop

The maintenance shop was built at the same time as the visitor center. It is a two-bay building, approximately 1,000 square feet. The shop opens into a courtyard behind the visitor center with access controlled by a drive-thru gate. In 2009, photovoltaic panels were installed on the

roof of the shop to supplement electrical power to the visitor center complex. This photovoltaic system is tied to the electric grid where supplemental power can be drawn when the photovoltaic system is not operating.

Staff Housing

There is one residence within the Park (near the visitor center) that is occupied by the Park Manager. This provides added security with the presence of staff in the Park after-hours. This is a ground-set, stuccoed, manufactured home that was constructed in the 1990s.

Roads

There is approximately ¼ mile of paved road at Rockhound and another ¼ mile of paved road at Spring Canyon. The remaining roads through the campground are surfaced with gravel and base course. Minor road maintenance is done by Park and Region 3 staff. NMDOT has been relied on in the past through a Cooperative Agreement with the Division to chip seal the roads and complete other repairs as requested. This cooperative agreement expired in 2009 and has not been renewed.

Utilities and Infrastructure

Spring Canyon has two vault toilets, and no utilities. The Rockhound water system is comprised of one production well, one treatment system that utilizes calcium hypochlorite for disinfection, one 1200-gallon storage tank, one booster pump, one 80 gallon pressure tank and a distribution system with 25 service connections. The well is capable of producing an estimated 13 gallons per minute.

Park staff remove solid waste on a regular basis. There is an on-site trash compactor that will normally accommodate two to four weeks worth of waste. Once filled, Park staff takes the solid waste to the local landfill for disposal.

There is one vault toilet at Rockhound, a comfort station at the campground, and restrooms at the visitor center. The Park's wastewater system consists of septic tanks and leach fields. The following facilities each have a separate septic system: staff residence, visitor center complex (includes shop), and comfort station. A dump station for RVs is located at the west edge of the campground and consists of a 2,500 gallon tank with 180 feet of infiltrators.

Utility Providers	
Water	One on-site well
Electricity	Columbus Electric Cooperative Inc.
Propane	Contract vendor
Solid Waste Management	Staff delivers to landfill
Wastewater Management	On-site septic systems
Telephone	Qwest and NM Communications

Park Management

Hours of Operation

Rockhound is open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. The visitor center is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily. Visitor center hours may vary occasionally depending on staff and volunteers schedules, visitation, or special events.

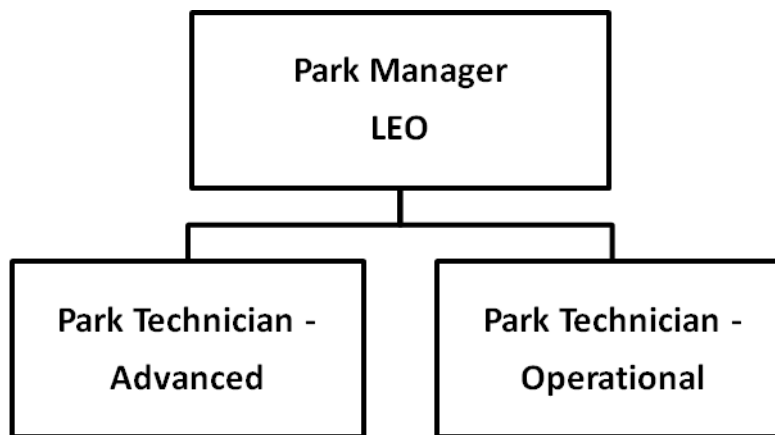
Spring Canyon is open Wednesday through Sunday and closed Mondays and Tuesdays (except major holidays). This is a day use area that is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. A gate on the access road is locked after hours.

Fee Collections

There are two self-pay stations at Rockhound and one at Spring Canyon. All visitors to the Park are required to pay park fees, which are established by state rule and are posted on the Division's website (www.nmparks.com).

Staffing

There are three full-time employees (FTE): Park Manager, Park Technician Advanced, and Park Technician Operational. A seasonal laborer is hired to help with park operations and maintenance during the summer months. The following is a description of each FTE position.



- Park Manager – responsible for all aspects of park administration, management, and day-to-day operations, and the only law enforcement officer (LEO).
- Park Technician Advanced - responsible for administering the volunteer program and developing and presenting interpretive programs in addition to regular park maintenance duties.
- Park Technician Operational - responsible for grounds, facility, and equipment maintenance.

Staff support is provided by the Division's Region 3 office located in Dona Ana, just north of Las Cruces. The Regional Office provides operational support for all the state parks in this southwestern region of the Division. There is a Regional Manager who supervises the Park

Manager, an Administrator, Plant Operations Specialist, Mechanic, Heavy Equipment Operator, and Regional Interpretive Ranger.

Volunteer Program

The volunteer program is particularly important to park operations because volunteers provide such a wide variety of services for park visitors while supplementing staff. Park volunteers contributed over 7,500 volunteer hours in 2009, which equals 3.5 full-time staff positions. Volunteers perform a variety of duties including field fee collections, office work, campground host, maintenance, and special event coordination.

There are two year-round campground host sites. Their task is to greet and provide information to visitors and support staff in park operations. The campground hosts along with other volunteers play a vital role working in the visitor center providing information on the history of the Park, special events, and interpretive programs. Volunteers are often guest presenters for the interpretive talks given throughout the summer months. Boy Scouts, youth groups, and civic organizations also play an important role in a variety of park improvement and maintenance projects.

Partners

The Friends of Rockhound State Park (Friends) is a community non-profit that supports the Park. The group formed in 2003, and received its 501c(3) non-profit status in 2005. The Friends and the Division signed a new cooperative agreement in 2010 for a period of four years with a four year renewable option. The mission of the Friends is to promote, preserve, and protect the Park through education and sharing. They sponsor and host park programs and events, and raise funds for park improvements. The Friends provide monthly interpretive programs, assist with school groups, maintain native and botanical gardens and support the Park by providing funds for projects and the purchase of tools and equipment.

Budget

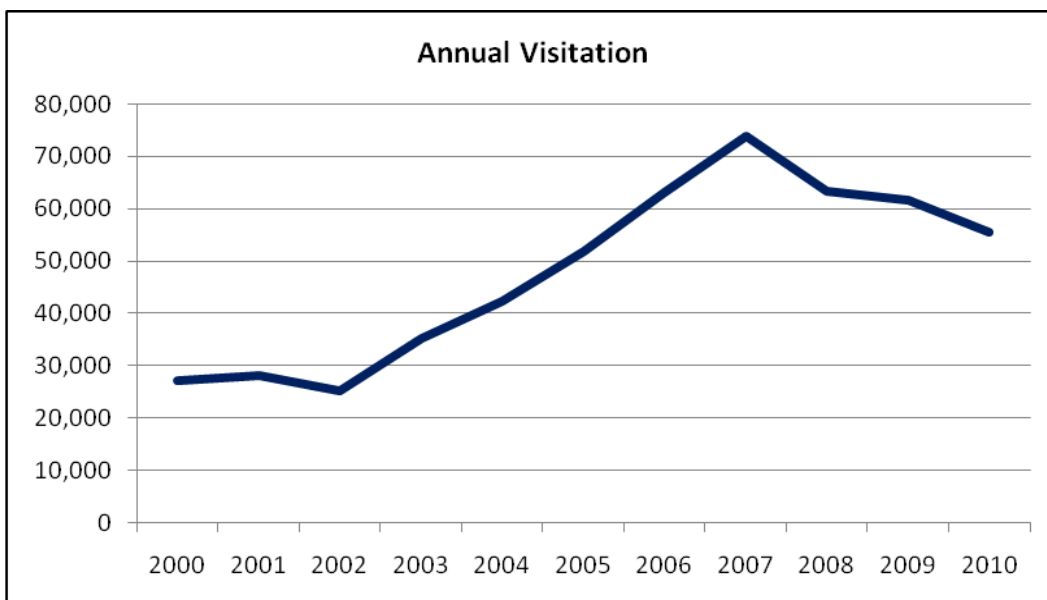
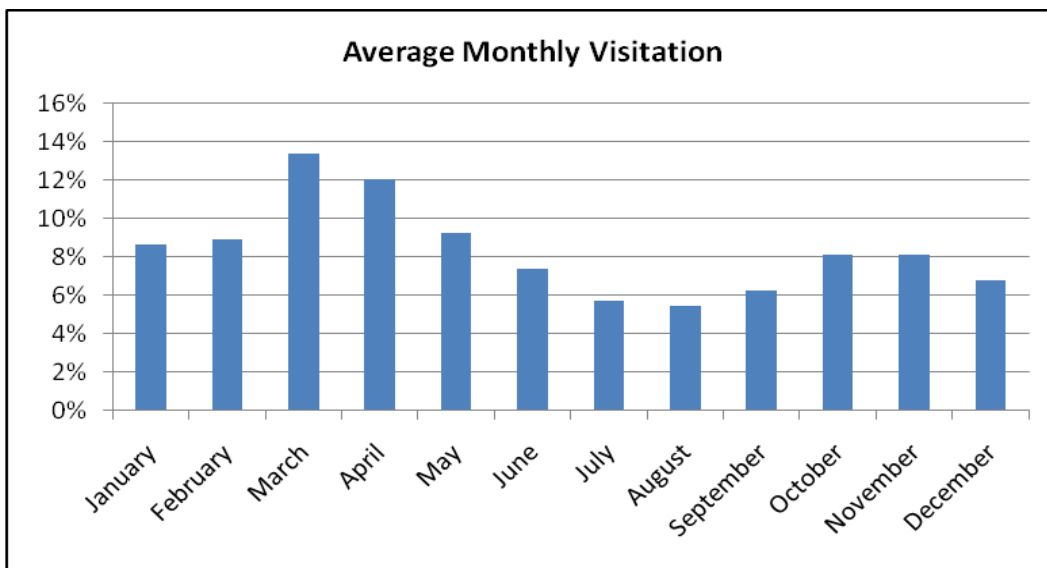
The following table illustrates the Park expenditures of the last three years. This does not include staff salaries. Revenue is generated from camping and day use fees.

Park Expenditures				
	FY 08	FY 09	FY 10	Average
Transportation	\$3,734	\$5,827	\$4,411	\$4,657
Maintenance	\$1,354	\$2,145	\$1,003	\$1,501
Supplies	\$1,721	\$1,990	\$2,987	\$2,233
Other operating costs	\$21,289	\$23,518	\$26,306	\$23,705
Other	\$291	\$212	\$218	\$240
Total:	\$28,389	\$33,693	\$34,924	\$32,335

Visitation

Annual park visitation has averaged 64,328 over the last five years. The peak season for visitation is during March and April, which coincides with pleasant temperatures, spring break vacations, and wildflower blooms. The majority of RV campers during the winter are “snowbirds” escaping the colder northern climates.

Annual Visitation			
Fiscal Year	Rockhound	Spring Canyon	Total
2010	55,624	4,039	59,663
2009	57,452	4,060	61,512
2008	57,323	6,017	63,340
2007	59,308	14,644	73,952
2006	47,282	15,889	63,171
2005	43,692	8,222	51,914



RECOMMENDATIONS

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Issues are concerns, problems, threats, or opportunities. The issues were raised by individual staff, during the group planning workshops, by stakeholders, or by the public. Not all issues will result in an action. Some issues may be beyond the Division's control, or may not be a priority issue during this planning period. The issues are listed in the categories that correspond to this plan's organization.

The proposed actions (shown with ➤) are also listed in the "action plan" following this section, along with estimated costs and timeframes. Some actions will require further research, evaluation, planning, or design before they can be implemented. Each action is contingent upon available funding and other resources, and there is no guarantee that it will be feasible or that it can be funded and implemented in the proposed timeframe.

Note: The "Park" refers to both Rockhound and Spring Canyon. When referring to one area in particular, it will be specified as either unit of the Park.

PARK RESOURCES

● Rock Collecting

Rockhound State Park was originally established as a destination for rock collectors. At the time, in 1966, rock collecting was a popular pastime. Visitors were encouraged to visit the Park in order to collect rocks, and were allowed to take home up to 15 pounds of rocks.

Today the Division promotes a respect for the natural environment through interpretive and educational programs. Not only does rock collecting in a public park contradict the principle of natural resource protection.

There is only one state park in the United States that permits rock collecting: Crater of Diamonds State Park in Arkansas, which has a 38-acre plowed field set aside for collecting. Nearly all municipal, state, and national parks prohibit the removal of natural artifacts from parks. The practice of rock collecting at the Park would need to comply with NMSA 1978, Section 16-2-32:

"A person who commits any of the following acts is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be sentenced in accordance with the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978:

A. cut, break, injure, destroy, take or remove a tree, shrub, timber, plant or natural object in any state park and recreation area, except in areas designated by the secretary and permitted by regulations adopted by the secretary, such regulations shall only permit the removal of a tree, shrub, timber, plant or natural object for scientific study or for non-commercial use by an individual as a

souvenir, the quantity of material authorized for removal from any area shall be strictly regulated by park personnel in order to minimize resource damage.”

If the Division were to continue to allow the public to collect rocks at the Park, the EMNRD Cabinet Secretary would designate a specific area and adopt rules pertaining to the collecting of rocks on Park property (such as the amount and location).

The once popular hobby of rock collecting has declined significantly since the 1960s. There are local businesses that cater to rock collectors and can guide or direct them to similar opportunities outside of the Park. Safety is also a concern with the public collecting rocks in the Park, as there are steep and unstable slopes that are becoming more hazardous as the collecting alters the stability of the hillside. There is also a concern that some visitors may go beyond the Park boundaries in their quest for rocks.

Park staff has already begun the transition away from rock collecting and will need to educate the public about the need to respect the natural resources. One crucial step is to modify all Park information (signage, brochures, website), so that this activity is no longer encouraged. All materials need to state that it is a prohibited activity. The namesake theme can continue through educational programs and interpretive information about the rocks that occur in the Park and the geology of the region.

- Revise written materials by removing all mention of rock collecting and add a reference to the state statute which prohibits rock collecting on Park property.

● **Botanical Inventory and Protection**

The Park serves as an important refuge for native cactus and other Chihuahuan desert plants. Cactus theft for personal and commercial use is a problem on many public lands where there is easy access and little oversight. In order to successfully protect park plants, the first step is to complete a botanical inventory that will determine the location and species that exist in the Park. This is especially critical to identifying any rare or threatened species. It may be possible to complete the inventory with trained volunteers or university students or staff.

Given the results of an inventory, management strategies can be developed to better protect the plants and educate the public. There are four land management zones (see page 8) that provide varying degrees of resource protection, public access, and management practices. If the inventory locates rare species, the management zones may need to be adjusted accordingly. Appropriate management practices may also need to be developed depending on the species and location. The following are recommended actions to ensure that the Park is a refuge for native Chihuahuan desert plants.

- Complete a botanical inventory that will identify and map populations of rare species.
- Develop and implement management strategies to protect rare plant species.

● **Cattle at Spring Canyon**

Cattle have entered the Park at the main entrance where there is no cattle guard and the existing fence only goes partially up the adjacent hillsides. Cattle in Spring Canyon can cause

resource damage as well as detract from an enjoyable visitor experience. The most practical solution to keeping cattle out of the Park would be to extend the fencing approximately 200 yards to the road and install a cattle guard.

- Extend fence and install cattle guard at entrance to Spring Canyon to keep cattle from entering the Park.

● **Reclaim the Old Spring Canyon Road**

While closed many years ago, the old park road is still apparent from the remaining asphalt. Removal of the asphalt is recommended to restore the site to the natural condition by allowing for revegetation of the disturbed area with native plants. Removal of the asphalt and naturalizing the disturbed hillsides would also minimize further erosion caused by the old roadbed, as this roadbed concentrates runoff into locations that are prone to erosion. The reclamation process could include the construction of a trail, if the proposed trails plan (below) identifies this as an appropriate location for a trail.

- Reclaim old roadbed at Spring Canyon by removing asphalt surface and re-contouring the roadbed back to natural conditions.

EDUCATION & INTERPRETATION

● **Interpretive Brochure**

An interpretive brochure highlighting the plants of the Park would provide Park visitors with information about the plants and wildflowers seen in the Park, which they are often curious to learn the names of. The brochure could identify native plants, including wildflowers and cactus, as well as point out the non-native species.

- Develop a brochure on park plants.

RECREATION

● **Campground Expansion**

The Division leased 80 acres of land from the State Land Office in 1998 with the intention of expanding the campground. The need for a larger campground still exists. During the Spring and Fall peak visitation seasons, the campground fills to capacity, as do other area campgrounds. The majority of campers are looking for developed sites for RVs that have electric and water hook-ups. 24 of the Park's 29 campsites have electric and water hook-ups.

A new campground loop is proposed with approximately 28 sites and two double vault toilets. If sufficient budget is not available for constructing a full-service (electric and water) campground, the Division may take a phased approach to developing the campground expansion. The first phase could include the circulation roads and campsites. The second phase would add utilities (electric and water) and a comfort station. A two phased approach would be used due to budget constraints and the expense of adding utilities to the new campground.

While the comfort station in the campground is old, it was recently renovated and is in good shape. However, there is only one shower on each side, which is inadequate during peak

visitation. The existing comfort station could either be replaced or renovated to add capacity and improve water and energy efficiency. This could be done with the campground expansion, or independently.

In order to make a better informed decision about the need for expanding the campground, adding RV sites, and replacing the comfort station, it is recommended that the Division evaluate the current demand. At a minimum, it would be useful to collect data on the number of nights per year that the 24 developed sites are occupied and how many campers are turned away when the campground is full. The current capacity and demand should be evaluated by tracking the use of existing campsites and obtaining information on the number of campers turned away due to the campground being full. After this study is complete, a cost/benefit analysis can be performed to identify if a new campground is truly needed.

- Study the current capacity and demand for developed campsites.
- If warranted, build phase 1 of the campground expansion, adding basic campsites that would provide overflow during the peak seasons.
- If warranted, build phase 2 of the campground expansion by adding utilities and a comfort station and increase the inventory of the more desirable full hook-up campsites.

● **Trail Improvements**

Complete an inventory and assessment of existing trails, and a plan for existing and future trails at both Rockhound and Spring Canyon. The inventory would map established trails, both designated and user created. The assessment will identify safety hazards, resource impacts, and property boundary issues. The plan will then recommend which trails need to be rerouted, repaired, closed, or constructed. Spring Canyon currently offers only picnicking and user created paths to an overlook. A well-designed trail system at Spring Canyon would provide visitors with a new opportunity to explore this scenic landscape.

- Complete an inventory, assessment, and plan for Park trails.
- Implement trail construction and improvement projects.

● **Shelter Replacement**

Some of the ageing shelters have been replaced; however, there are still 15 of the older style of shelters that are in need of replacement. The remaining shelters should be replaced to improve the quality of the structure and conform to the new park standards.

- Replace 15 shelters with standard two-post shelters.

● **Playground**

The playground is located in the campground, which is problematic because there is not enough parking, and thus campsites are sometimes occupied by day-use visitors using the playground. The noise and activity at the playground can also be disturbing to campers, most of which are retired seniors. There does not seem to be a high demand for the playground, and when it is used, it is often local families from Deming. The City of Deming has 12 public parks, many of which have playgrounds that can serve this user group. If in the future it is determined

that there is a strong need for a playground, a new and improved structure should be located at the day-use area.

- Remove the playground and redevelop the site as overflow parking for users of the campground.

FACILITIES

● Education Building/Maintenance Shop

The Park does not have any indoor space for group events and activities. Space is needed as a classroom for school groups, interpretive programs, lectures, and meetings. Currently the maintenance shop is being used for this purpose. It is recommended that the maintenance shop be renovated into a multi-purpose building to better serve this need. The parking area in between the shop and the visitor center could be landscaped into a functional courtyard. In order to rebuild the shop into a multi-purpose educational building, a new maintenance shop would need to be constructed.

- Develop an education building by renovating the shop building into an indoor education and meeting space.

The construction of a new maintenance shop and equipment yard would need to include a one-bay shop with extended metal shade structures on either side that provides protection for heavy equipment such as a dump truck and a front-end loader that will be shared with City of Rocks and Pancho Villa State Parks (see “Equipment Sharing” below). The shop will be used to store tools and supplies, and to perform vehicle and equipment maintenance.

- Construct new maintenance shop and storage yard for housing regional equipment.

● Waterline Extension

The day-use area has no water available for park visitors. The extension of the water line from the main line to the day-use area (near the Thunder Egg trailhead) is recommended, as well as the installation of a frost-free water hydrant. The water would not only be useful to park visitors, it would also be useful to Park staff for cleaning the day-use facilities.

- Extend the water line to day use area.

● Accessible Restroom at Spring Canyon

The double vault toilet near the Spring Canyon group shelter is not ADA accessible. This should be replaced with an ADA accessible vault toilet. The exterior of the new building could be constructed to resemble the group shelter, which has a native rock facade. Since this area has low visitation numbers, a single vault toilet should be sufficient.

- Replace existing double vault toilet with an ADA accessible single vault toilet.

● Accessible Campsite

There are no ADA accessible campsites at the Park. It is recommended that either an existing campsite be renovated, or a new campsite be constructed after the playground is moved. Another possibility is to include several ADA accessible campsite in the proposed expansion area of the campground.

- Develop at least one ADA accessible campsite.

● Volunteer Site at Spring Canyon

The local community would like to see Spring Canyon open 7-days a week. However, the low weekday visitation has led to the decision to close this portion of the Park for two days a week (Monday and Tuesday). This saves staff the time that it takes to unlock the gate in the morning and to lock the gate in the evening on days when there may be very few visitors.

It would be preferable to have an on-site volunteer that could ensure that Spring Canyon is open daily. A volunteer would also provide a daily presence to deter vandalism. The volunteer site would require utilities for an RV - electric, water, and wastewater. Unfortunately, none of these utilities are currently available at Spring Canyon. Electric service would need to be extended a significant distance to reach park property. A well would need to be drilled for water, and wastewater would require a septic system. Both of these undertakings would be particularly challenging and costly because of the rocky terrain. Given the circumstances, it would be cost-prohibitive to develop an RV site with utilities at Spring Canyon.

Another consideration about introducing utilities and a full-time presence at Spring Canyon is the potential for disturbing the primitive nature of the area. Spring Canyon is a natural area, the majority of which is designated a “Resource Protection and Conservation Zone” (see page 8), with the picnic area as a “Primitive Recreation Zone”. This zoning is intended to ensure the protection of wildlife, plants, and other natural resources, and a more wilderness-like experience for Park visitors. Thus, at this time the need for an on-site volunteer does not seem to warrant the resource impacts and high costs of developing a volunteer site. An alternative that could be evaluated is to move the gate up the road and add parking outside the gate. This would allow increased public access to Spring Canyon even when the Park gate is closed, minimizing the impact to staff.

- Evaluate alternatives for public access to Spring Canyon.

MANAGEMENT**● Equipment Sharing**

Recognizing that the Division cannot afford to provide heavy equipment in the form of a dump truck and backhoe to every park, it is proposed that this equipment for nearby parks be housed at Rockhound State Park. The equipment could then be shared with Pancho Villa State Park and City of Rocks State Park. Each of the parks would need to ensure that at least one employee is certified to transport equipment. A mid-sized backhoe or mini-excavator, 5-yard dump truck, and trailer to haul the backhoe will be necessary. In order to make this possible, an equipment storage yard of sufficient size will need to be developed. This could be done in conjunction with the construction of a new maintenance shop.

- Establish Rockhound State Park as a sub-regional heavy equipment storage site.

● Interpreter Position

An onsite staff interpreter position would improve and increase interpretive programming. Time and effort dedicated to interpretative programming is now limited by the availability and training of staff. The upgrade of the current “Park Technician – Advanced” position to an “Instructional Coordinator - O” with an emphasis on interpretation and education would

enhance the programming for the public and local schools. Curriculum-based educational programming could be offered in collaboration with local schools. The focus of this position would be to develop and deliver educational programs for park visitors and schoolchildren.

- Pursue an upgrade of the Park Technician-Advanced to an Instructional Coordinator-O.

- **Park Name Change**

For many years there have been discussions about changing the name of Rockhound State Park. The name “Rockhound” implies and encourages visitors to come to the Park to collect rocks, which contradicts state rule 16.2.32 NMAC. In addition, Spring Canyon is often overlooked or seen as a separate park. It has been suggested that the Park be renamed “Florida Mountains State Park”. The name change would be an opportunity to de-emphasize rock collecting. Renaming the Park “Florida Mountains State Park” would improve the marketing and outreach as the name better reflects the scenic landscape and recreational opportunities.

The legal process for renaming a state park would need to be researched, as it may require an action by the State Legislature. Once approved, all Park literature and marketing materials would need to be changed. The Division would also need to coordinate with other agencies such as the Department of Tourism and the Department of Transportation to change highway signs, maps, websites, and tourist information, all of which would require staff time and funding to accomplish. At this time, there does not seem to be strong interest in changing the name given the effort and cost it would require to do so.

ACTION PLAN

The tasks recommended above are listed in priority order in the following table.

Program Area	Action	Cost Estimate	Project Lead & Funding
Year 1			
Resources	Revise written materials to remove references to rock collecting.	0	Park/SFO-FO
Resources	Extend fencing to keep cattle out of the Park.	\$15,000	Park/FODD CIP
Recreation	Evaluate current campground use.	0	Park
Recreation	Complete a trails assessment and plan.	0	FODD RTP
Recreation	Remove the playground.	\$10,000	Park CIP
Facilities	Develop an ADA accessible campsite.	\$7,500	Park CIP
Year 2			
Resources	Complete a botanical inventory	0	Park PVT
Education	Develop a brochure on park plants.	tbd	Park/FODD
Recreation	Trail maintenance and construction.	\$50,000	FODD RTP
Facilities	Extend water line to day use area.	\$5,000	Park CIP
Facilities	Construct new maintenance shop.	\$200,000	FODD CIP
Year 3			
Resources	Implement strategies for protection of rare plants.	0	Park/FODD PVT
Facilities	Replace toilet with ADA accessible toilet.	\$30,000	FODD CIP
Facilities	Renovate the shop into an education building.	\$50,000	FODD CIP
Year 4			
Recreation	Replace 15 old shelters.	\$60,000	FODD CIP
Recreation	Build phase 1 of campground expansion (if warranted).	\$500,000	FODD CIP
Management	Establish the Park as the sub-regional heavy equipment storage site.	0	Regional

Year 5			
Recreation	Build phase 2 of campground expansion (if warranted).	\$500,000	FODD CIP
Management	Pursue upgrade of Park Technician to Instructional Coordinator.	0	Regional AOB

Project lead

The project lead is the entity that would be responsible for initiating and implementing the project. Support from others may be essential to project completion.

Park: Rockhound State Park Manager and staff

Regional: State Parks Division Region 3 office in Las Cruces.

SFO: Santa Fe Office, State Parks Division

AD: Administration, Santa Fe Office, State Parks Division

FODD: Field Operations, Design & Development, Santa Fe Office, State Parks Division

FOBLE: Field Operations , Boating and Law Enforcement, Santa Fe Office, State Parks Division

Funding:

AOB: annual operating budget, State Parks Division

CIP: Capital Improvement Program, administered by the State Parks Division Design and Development Bureau. CIP funds may be state, federal, or grant funds.

TBD: to be determined

RTP: Federal Recreation Trails Program (RTP) or other trails funding administered by the State Parks Division.

PVT: private sector, Friends, volunteers, grants, colleges, etc.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AOB	Annual Operations Budget, State Parks Division
BLM	United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
CIP	Capital Improvement Plan, State Parks Division
EMNRD	New Mexico Energy, Mineral, and Natural Resources Department
FY	Fiscal Year
LEO	Law Enforcement Officer
NM	New Mexico
NMDOT	New Mexico Department of Transportation
PVT	Private sector, Volunteers, Friends Groups
RTP	Recreation Trails Program
RV	Recreational Vehicle
SHPO	New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, Historic Preservation Division, Historic Preservation Office
SPD	Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, State Parks Division

REFERENCES

City of Deming. 2003. City of Deming Comprehensive Plan.

The Weather Channel. <www.weather.com>.

U.S. Census Bureau. <<http://factfinder.census.gov>>.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Rules

Statutes, Rules, and Policies

The following statutes, rules and regulations, or policies may apply to the operations, management, and development of New Mexico State Parks. This is only a listing of selected statutes, rules, and policies and not a comprehensive list of all statutes, rules, or policies that may apply to the Park.

- Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, *Policy and Procedures Manual*
- New Mexico State Parks Division, *State Parks Policy and Procedures Manual*
- New Mexico Statutes (NMSA 1978)
<<http://www.conwaygreene.com/nmsu/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-hit-h.htm&2.0>>
 - Chapter 16, Article 2: State Parks Division
 - Chapter 18, Article 6: Cultural Properties Act
 - Chapter 66, Article 12: Boating Act
- New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC)
<<http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/>>
 - Title 4, Chapter 10: Cultural Properties and Historic Preservation
 - Title 19, Chapter 5: State Parks and Recreation
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA)
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

Appendix B: Park Project Form