



Heard in the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee on 5/20/2026



**Outdoor
Recreation**

Division of Outdoor Recreation

Jason Curry

Director of the Division of Outdoor Recreation

Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee | May 20, 2026

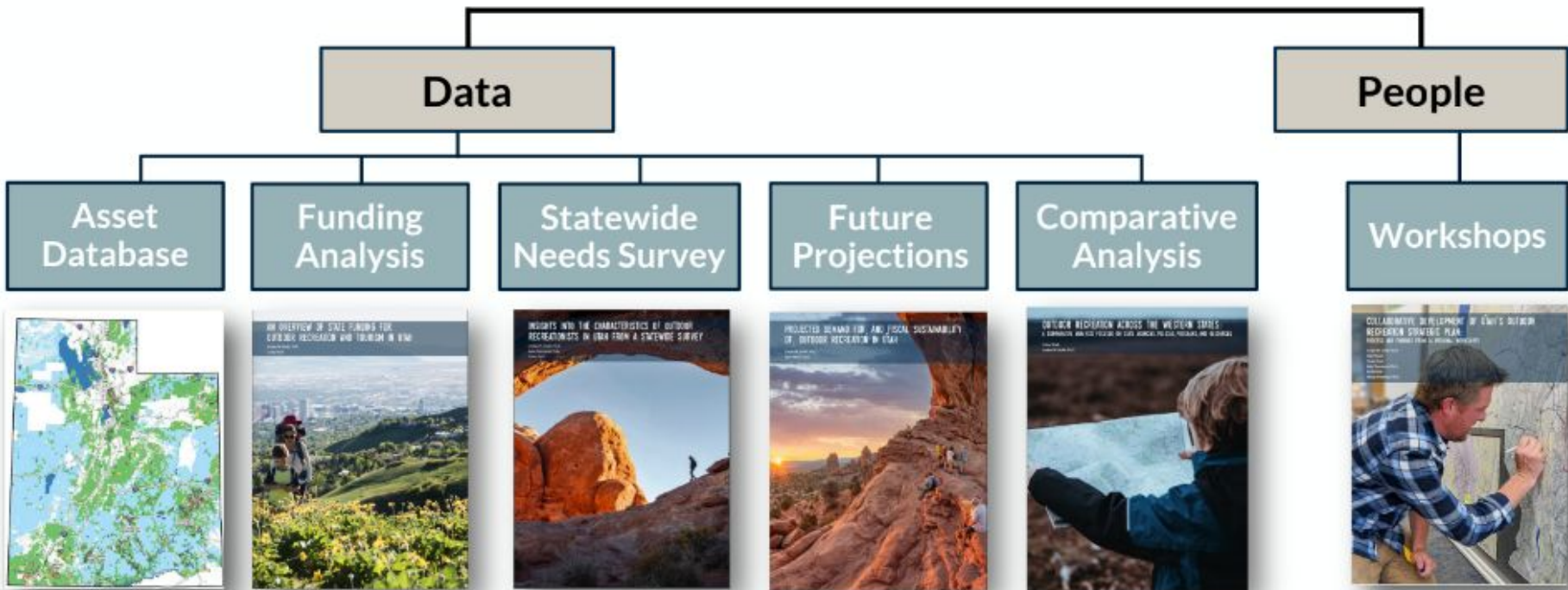
Mission

The Division's mission is to ensure health, safety, enjoyment, and economic benefit through life-enriching, high quality outdoor recreation for all of Utah's residents and visitors.





ANALYSIS AND PLANNING SUPPORTING THE STRATEGIC PLANNING EFFORT



Mission:

The Outdoor Recreation Initiative will be the tool to deliver Utah's Strategic Outdoor Recreation Plan.

INCREASE THE ECONOMIC AND HEALTH BENEFITS GENERATED BY OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Objective 4.1 - Distribute the economic benefits of outdoor recreation to the areas where use is occurring
- Objective 4.2 - Increase the capacity of gateway and natural amenity regions to plan for, and manage, non-local visitation
- Objective 4.3 - Improve the ability of individuals to achieve the mental and physical benefits of outdoor recreation

BUILD AND SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

- Objective 1.1 - Increase the ability of municipal, county, state, tribal, and federal entities to access and share resources
- Objective 1.2 - Increase the ability of user groups, non-profits, and private industry to support infrastructure development and maintenance
- Objective 1.3 - Ensure infrastructure development and outdoor recreation management meets local needs



IMPROVE AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ABOUT SAFE AND RESPONSIBLE RECREATION

- Objective 2.1 - Decrease the need for search and rescue support for uneducated or ill-prepared recreationists
- Objective 2.2 - Foster a sense of stewardship for Utah's outdoors
- Objective 2.3 - Minimize conflict between different outdoor recreation activities
- Objective 2.4 - Increase all Utahns' awareness of the benefits of outdoor recreation

INCREASE ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION WHILE PROTECTING NATURAL AND SCENIC LANDSCAPES

- Objective 3.1 - Provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities, ranging from the highly-developed to the very primitive
- Objective 3.2 - Ensure existing outdoor recreation assets are well maintained for decades to come

Vision:

The Outdoor Recreation Initiative (ORI) aspires to be a national model for effective, collaborative, and sustainable management of outdoor recreation infrastructure. By leveraging municipal, state, federal, and private resources, the ORI seeks to create a legacy of well-preserved public recreation opportunities, offering a multitude of recreational experiences that strengthen local communities and foster a deep connection between people and the great outdoors.



**GRANTS &
PLANNING**

UTAH OUTDOOR RECREATION

The Outdoor Recreation Initiative

The Outdoor Recreation Initiative was created in the [2023 General Session by H.B. 224 - Outdoor Recreation Initiative](#).

- Partnership agreements
- Local input and collaboration
- “Managing, maintaining, expanding, restoring, and improving outdoor recreation infrastructure on public lands within the state”
- Building new and expanding existing outdoor recreation infrastructure
- Address increased usage and to minimize overcrowding

Funded through:

- Appropriations made to the initiative by the Legislature, including any appropriation from the Outdoor Adventure Infrastructure Restricted Account created in Section 51-9-902.
- Contributions, including in-kind assistance, from public and private sources, including a federal agency, state agency, local government, or private entity.



**GRANTS &
PLANNING**

UTAH OUTDOOR RECREATION



Regional Recreation Councils

Roster Construction

Members that will vote for suggested projects.

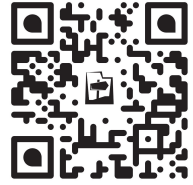
Ranking Committee
2 members from UAC
2 members from ULCT
1-2 members from AOG
Federal Gov. Advisors (Non Voting)

General Recreation Council

<u>Federal</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Local Governments</u>	<u>General Public/Counsel</u>
United States Forest Service Bureau of Land Management National Parks Service	State Parks Division of Wildlife Resources TLA - Trust Lands Administration PLPCO	County/City Elected Officials Tourism/Econ Development Parks/Recreation Staff	User Group Organizations Conservation/Advocacy Organizations Access Protection Organizations Tribal Adaptive Motivated Individuals

General advisory and collaboration purpose.

Outdoor Recreation Initiative - Overview



2023 ORI Statistics:

\$24,000,000 funded to 12 Projects

\$101,822,090 total project cost

2023 Project Type Breakdown:

- NEPA/Planning: 2
- New Infrastructure: 4
- Restoration: 4
- Land Acquisition: 2

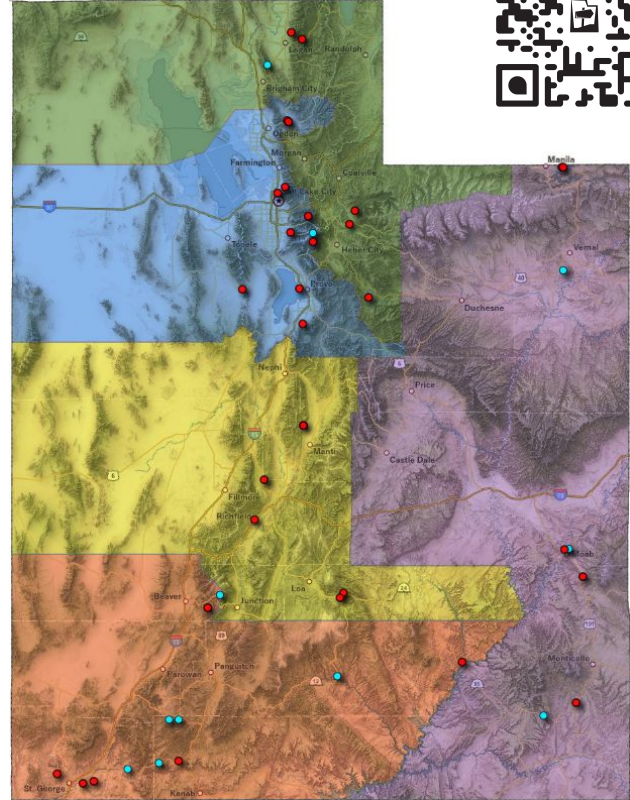
2024 ORI Statistics:

\$20,379,301 funded to 31 Projects

\$40,731,188 total project cost

2024 Project Type Breakdown:

- NEPA/Planning: 9
- New Infrastructure: 8
- Restoration: 8
- Land Acquisition: 5



Outdoor Recreation Initiative - 2025

51 Project Submissions - **\$55,871,508** in Requests

Project Type

New Infrastructure - 23

Restoration - 12

NEPA/Planning - 12

Land Acquisition - 3

Requests By Region

Northern - \$7,301,186 (8 Projects)

Wasatch Front - \$18,741,491 (14 Projects)

Central - \$4,098,500 (5 Projects)

Eastern - \$14,252,474 (13 Projects)

Southwest - \$10,911,669 (10 Projects)

2025 ORI Debrief

Map of projects →



Successes

- Awarded \$21,029,750.01 to 38 projects
- Demonstrated DOR project management success
- Initiated long-range planning efforts

Challenges

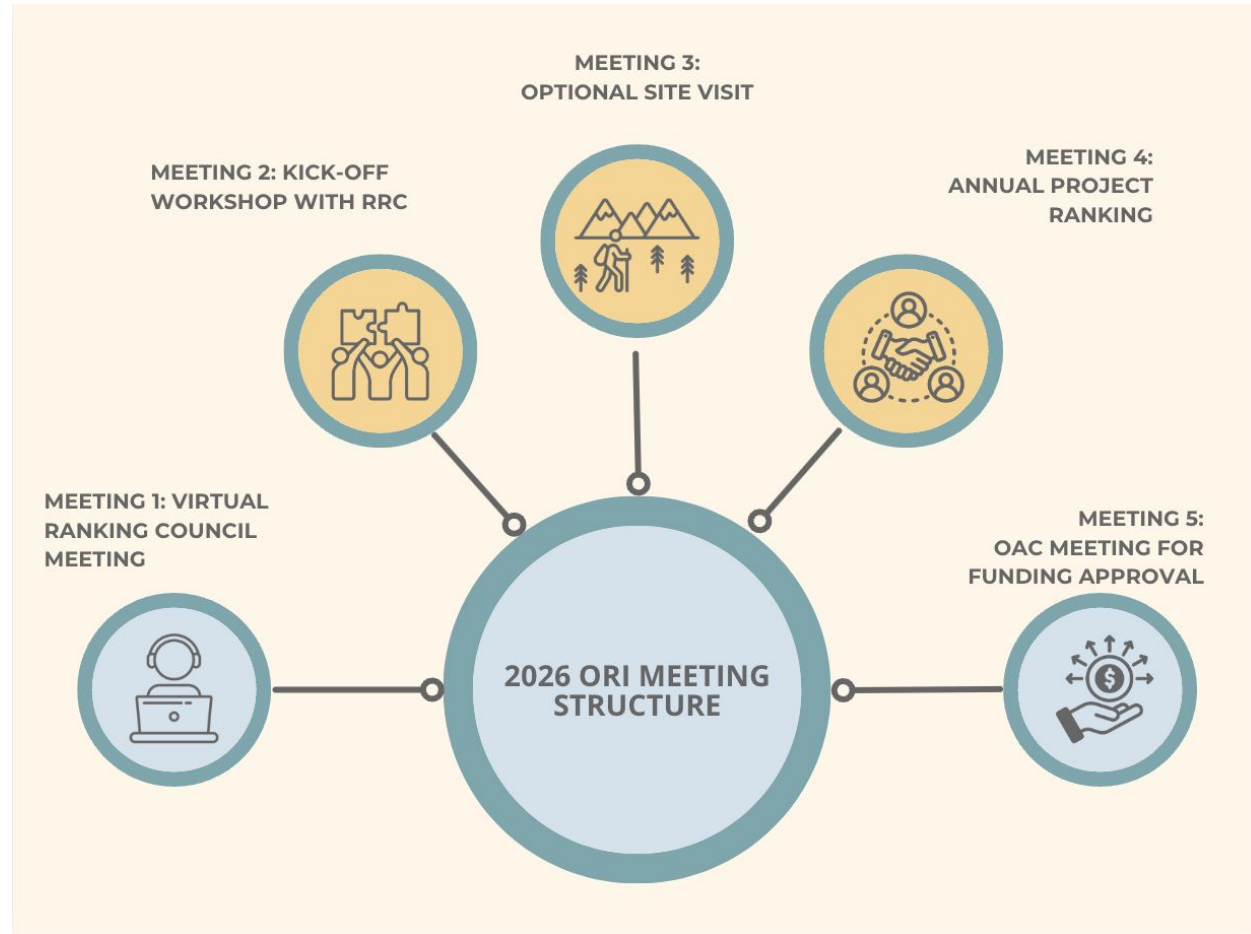
- Monthly Agenda Building
- Virtual meetings led to inconsistent engagement
- Not all counties represented on ranking councils
- Applying to the wrong program

Opportunities

- Greater attendance through in-person meetings
- Connect council members to projects through annual site visits
- Utilize long-range plans and regional priorities to guide investment
- Additional project management capacity

2026 ORI Overview

Financial Forecasts indicate approximately \$21-22 million available for the ORI program in FY 27



2026 ORI Calendar

June Regional Council Meetings -
Determine regional funding priorities

Mid-Summer ORI Site Visit - See project status or potential future projects.

October Regional Council Meetings -
Local project ranking process

Outdoor Adventure Commission Meeting - Project approval

June Regional Council Meeting Schedule

REGION	LOCATION	DATE
Central	Sevier County Office	June 10 @ 10am
Southwest	East Zion Discovery Center	June 11th @ 10am
Eastern	Price - DNR Regional Office	June 12th @ 10am
Northern	Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge	June 15th @10am
Wasatch Front	Salt Lake City DNR Office	June 16th @ 10am

Outdoor Recreation Planning Assistance (ORPA)

- Support for local area planning
- Transition from a technical assistance to a grant to fund:
 - planning assistance,
 - stakeholder engagement,
 - elements of NEPA,
 - feasibility studies, etc.

Intended to Build capacity at the local level through consulting services.

- **Project Types**
 - Master Planning (Recreation Area, Trails, Community Parks and Recreation etc.)
 - Feasibility/Trail Alignment Studies
 - Community Engagement Efforts
 - Impact Fee Studies
 - Conceptual/Site Design



Regional Long Range Planning

- 10+ year strategy with local communities to guide future Outdoor Recreation Initiative (ORI) investments.
- Roadmap for outdoor infrastructure similar to long-range transportation planning
- First pilot effort is underway in the Central Region

Regional Plan Status

YEAR	REGION PLAN	STATUS
2025–2026	Central Region Plan	In Progress
2026–2027	Northern Region Plan	Funded
2026–2027	Southwest Region Plan	Funded
2027–2028	Eastern Region Plan	Unfunded
2027–2028	Wasatch Front Region Plan	Unfunded

Regional Long Range Planning

Central Region Recreation Council: ROLES & FUNCTIONS



Regional Long-Range Recreation Planning

Planning Process To-Date:
Summer '25 - Winter '26



1,500+ survey responses.



Intensive 1 week site visit.



Detailed research & building a database.

- Region-wide asset inventory and mapping.
- Outdoor recreation business inventory.



Stakeholder Meetings

- Six County-based stakeholder meetings.
- 1-1 meetings with land management agencies (NPS, USFS, BLM, DWR, TLA).



Regional Long-Range Recreation Planning

Sanpete County Profile

Key Takeaways | Central Utah Outdoor Recreation Plan | February 2026

This document presents Key Takeaways of the Sanpete County Profile. The profile was informed by state and federal data, local stakeholders and the Sanpete County community. You can view the entire profile online [here](#).

Recreation Assets

- Sanpete County has a diverse and extensive outdoor recreation network. With more than 1,100 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails, 27 parks, 23 campgrounds, major water-based recreation sites (Palladise State Park, Yuba State Park, Gunnison Reservoir), and the most published rock climbing routes in the Central Region, the county offers one of the Central Region's broadest mixes of motorized, non-motorized, and water-based recreation.



Palladise State Park

- Residents strongly value camping, fishing, and motorized recreation. This reflects a community that relies on multi-season, multi-type recreation supported by both developed facilities and abundant dispersed-use areas. Sanpete County has some of the most prominent snow-based recreation opportunities in the Central Region and is seeing a boom in mountain biking participation and infrastructure.

- Local partners are working together to expand the County's outdoor recreation assets. The creation of the Ephraim Canyon mountain bike trail system has been a collaborative effort between local mountain bike groups, Manti-La Sal National Forest, and the County's Travel and Tourism Office. Snowland Ski Area, a free, non-profit-operated ski area, will have an initial opening in winter 2025 following a sustained partnership between the Snowland Foundation, local and county governments, and educational institutions.

This research was conducted as part of the Central Region Outdoor Recreation Plan. Learn more about the project at <https://crorj.org/>.

Sanpete County Profile

Key Takeaways | Central Utah Outdoor Recreation Plan | February 2026

Businesses

- A strong outdoor recreation business community. Sanpete County has the highest number of outdoor recreation-related businesses of any county in the Central Region, with at least 48 outdoor recreation businesses, 43 lodging facilities, and 64 food and beverage establishments. This may be partially driven by Sanpete County having the highest population of all counties in the Central Region.



Kroopen Trail System

- Smaller relative outdoor recreation and tourism employment. Outdoor recreation and tourism employment makes up a smaller percentage of overall employment in Sanpete County compared to the rest of the Central Region, accounting for 9% of local jobs, compared to 14% region-wide.



Maple Canyon

Communities

- Significant funding for outdoor recreation. The Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation has awarded over \$5 million in grant funding to outdoor recreation projects in Sanpete County since 2019, including over \$1 million towards the establishment of Snowland Ski Area. In total, there have been 36 grant awards to a mix of municipal, federal, nonprofit, school, and county partners.

- Amongst respondents to a region-wide outdoor recreation survey, there was more disagreement about the role of outdoor recreation in supporting tourism and economic development in Sanpete County. Compared to 81% of all Central Region respondents, 71% of Sanpete County respondents agreed that outdoor recreation tourism strongly contributes to the economy, and 29% of Sanpete County respondents "strongly disagree" that attracting more visitors should be a priority, compared to 21% region-wide.

This research was conducted as part of the Central Region Outdoor Recreation Plan. Learn more about the project at <https://crorj.org/>.

Utah Central Region Outdoor Recreation Plan

Piute County Profile

Key Takeaways | Central Utah Outdoor Recreation Plan | February 2026

This document presents Key Takeaways of the Piute County Profile. The profile was informed by state and federal data, local stakeholders and the Piute County community. You can view the entire profile online [here](#).

Recreation Assets

- Motorized recreation is the backbone of Piute County's outdoor recreation system. Piute County residents report high rates of OHV/ATV participation, supported by extensive motorized trail access, the Paiute Trail System, and direct connections from State Parks and communities, including Marysvale, Circleville, and Junction.
- Public lands and state parks anchor recreation opportunities. With 87% of land in the County managed by state and federal agencies, recreation is heavily concentrated on USFS lands and at Otter Creek and Piute State Parks, which serve as regional hubs for boating, fishing, hunting, camping, and OHV use. The Tushar Mountains in Fishlake National Forest include the highest elevations in the Central Region, with peaks over 12,000 feet in elevation.
- Non-motorized and winter recreation opportunities are limited but emerging. There are no paved trails, hiking-only trails, or mountain bike trails, and winter recreation infrastructure is minimal; however, planned UTN connections and an ongoing mountain bike master plan signal potential diversification.



Paiute Trail System



Otter Creek State Park



Kingston Canyon

This research was conducted as part of the Central Region Outdoor Recreation Plan. Learn more about the project at <https://crorj.org/>.

Piute County Profile

Key Takeaways | Central Utah Outdoor Recreation Plan | February 2026

Businesses

- Piute County's outdoor recreation economy is tourism-dependent and centered on motorized recreation. Despite a population of approximately 1,700 residents, the Piute county supports at least 13 outdoor recreation businesses and at least 20 overnight accommodation establishments, suggesting one of the highest per-capita concentrations of recreation and lodging businesses in the Central Region. These businesses are closely tied to OHV use, camping, and seasonal events associated with the Paiute Trail System.



Miners Park

- Travel and tourism play a meaningful but highly seasonal role in Piute County's economy. The sector accounts for approximately 12% of total employment and is characterized by pronounced seasonal fluctuations that align with peak recreation and visitation periods, underscoring the importance of strategies that support year-round visitation, business stability, and shoulder-season activity.
- There are strong opportunities to build on existing demand for outdoor recreation experiences. Community feedback points to interest in guided experiences, equipment rental and repair, and complementary services that could extend stays, support seasonal balance, and strengthen a more diverse and resilient outdoor recreation economy.

Communities

- Piute County is the smallest county in the Central Region by both population and land area. With just 1,705 residents and approximately 490,000 acres, its small scale shapes outdoor recreation demand, service capacity, and infrastructure needs, and amplifies the importance of regional partnerships and shared facilities.
- Residents strongly support outdoor recreation and tourism growth. Piute County survey respondents express the highest level of agreement in the region that outdoor recreation contributes to the local economy and that attracting more visitors is critical to future economic health.
- Community priorities emphasize basic amenities and local quality of life. Top investment priorities include in-town walking and biking trails, parks and greenspace, picnic areas, sports fields, trail maintenance, improved signage, and better parking and restroom facilities to support both residents and visitors.

This research was conducted as part of the Central Region Outdoor Recreation Plan. Learn more about the project at <https://crorj.org/>.



Regional Long-Range Recreation Planning

Sevier County Recreation Map

Sevier County boasts a wide array of recreational resources, from cultural tourism at state parks, to peaceful paved multi use paths, rugged and challenging mountain bike and OHV trail systems, and unique camping and fishing opportunities throughout BLM, State, and USFS landholdings.

This map highlights the location and character of some of these resources across the varied landscape of Sevier County.

1. Pavant MTB Trail System



2. Glenwood Hills OHV Area



3. Freemont Indian State Park



4. Marysvale Canyon Bike Path



5. Monroe Canyon



6. Koosharem Reservoir



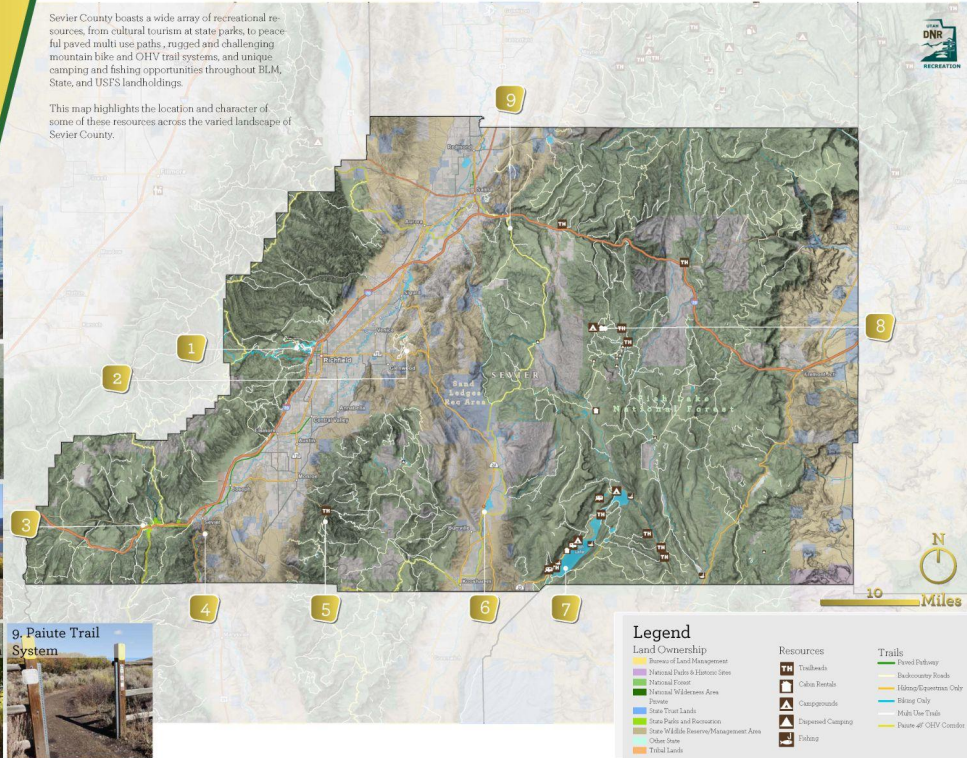
7. Fish Lake



8. Gooseberry Camping & OHV Area



9. Paiute Trail System



[Utah Central Region Outdoor Recreation Plan](#)



What's next for ORI?

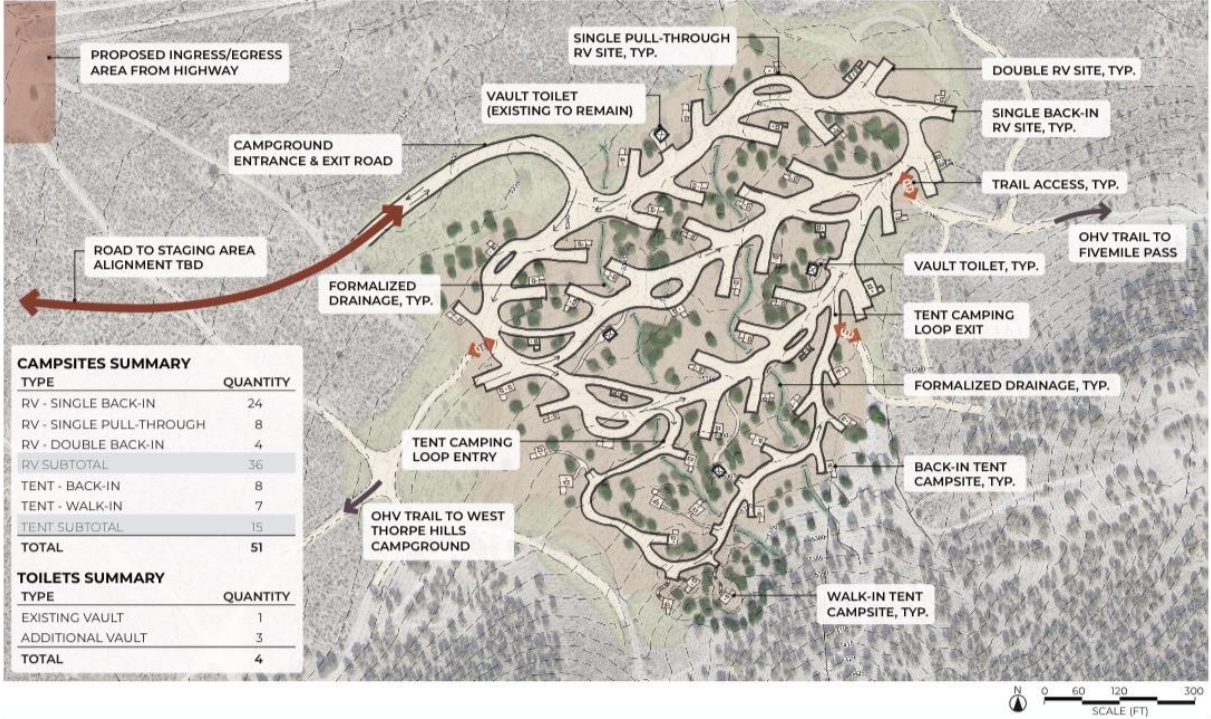
- Project management support
- Utilizing state contracting efficiencies
- Long-range plan informed state investment

Examples:

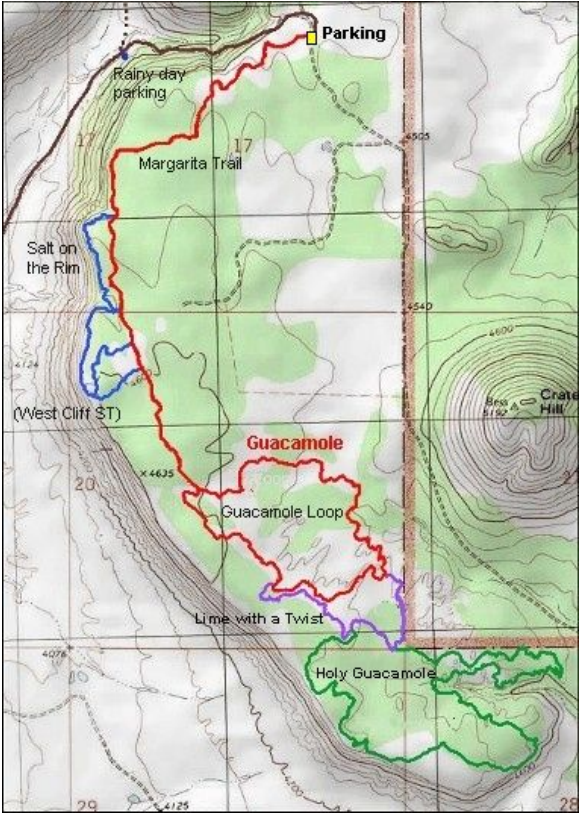
- Five Mile Pass Design & Engineering (BLM)
- Guacamole Mesa NEPA (BLM)
- North Wash Boat Ramp (NPS)



Example - Five Mile Pass Design & Engineering



Example - Guacamole Mesa



Example - North Wash Boat Ramp

Live project updates:
[recreation.utah.gov/
north-wash-boat-ramp/](https://recreation.utah.gov/north-wash-boat-ramp/)



Photo from 2023



Photo from 2022

Example - North Wash Boat Ramp



April 2026



Questions?



THANK YOU

recreation.utah.gov

