



United States Department of Agriculture

White River National Forest

900 Grand Ave
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601
(970) 945-2521

www.fs.usda.gov/whiteriver



News Release

Media Contact: Kate Jerman
(970) 945-3271

kejerman@fs.fed.us

Forest Service releases draft Environmental Assessment for Proposed Hanging Lake Management Plan

Hanging Lake, a National Natural Landmark, is situated between the communities of Eagle and Glenwood Springs in Glenwood Canyon, located in Garfield County, Colorado.

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo. – Dec. 21, 2017 - The Forest Service has released the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) of the Proposed Management Plan for Hanging Lake which initiates a final 30-day public comment period.

The Draft EA discloses the effects of the proposed management plan (proposed action) on the Hanging Lake area. The analysis contained in the EA demonstrates the need for a management plan to protect the natural resources and fragile ecosystem of the lake and trail corridor from the effects of high-use. The Draft Environmental Assessment found that the Proposed Plan would benefit the fragile ecology of the area by limiting soil compaction to improve soil health, plant viability, stream health and wildlife habit.

“In 2017, we saw 184,000 visitors at Hanging Lake, which is a 23% increase in only one year,” said Aaron Mayville, District Ranger. “This data further underscores the importance of the long-term management solution, and I’m happy we’re making good progress with this Environmental Assessment.”

Increased visitation this year is attributed to the rising popularity of the site, and warm fall and winter weather that has allowed for late-season trail accessibility.

Additionally, the Draft Environmental Assessment found that visitor experience and visitor safety would improve due to reduced crowding and congestion. Implementation of the proposed Plan would also allow for greater capacity to provide interpretive and educational programming, further enhancing visitor experiences.

Initial public feedback gathered from scoping, in August of 2017, revealed that the majority of people are supportive of the proposed Plan and are interested in providing suggestions for the implementation of the transportation service and the reservation system. Specific implementation details such as cost and how to obtain a permit/reservation will be determined by the option and/or service provider selected.

The Proposed Plan manages the area to a defined daily capacity of 615 users per day, year-round and was developed to protect resources, manage congestion, improve safety and visitor experience and continue to support local tourism. The proposed action utilizes a third-party transportation provider

(May-October) in order to allocate the daily capacity which would be managed through a fee-based reservation system year-round. During the “Off-Peak” season, (November- April) the area would be managed to its daily capacity through a fee-based reservation or permit system, and visitors could access the site using their own vehicles. An adaptive management strategy is employed in the proposed action that relies on monitoring to ensure that the plan’s objectives are obtained and the intent of the plan continues to be effective in the face of future changes.

How to Comment:

The release of the Draft Environmental Assessment initiates the beginning of a 30-day public comment period. Specific written comments on the proposed project will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of this notice in the Vail Daily. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period.

Written comments must be submitted via mail, fax, electronically, or in person (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays) to Aaron W. Mayville, District Ranger, o/c Paula K. Peterson, Project Leader, PO Box 190, Minturn, CO 81645, FAX: 970-827-9343, Electronic comments including attachments can be submitted to <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=50479>.

The proposed management plan and associated project documents can be found at this link: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50479>

NOTE – If any Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) fee is associated with this proposal, a separate public comment period process will be available prior to implementation of a FLREA fee for a limited entry “special recreation permit”. Questions and comments on the details of a “special recreation permit” system will be more pertinent to that secondary process.

The proposed action is subject to an objection process consistent with 36 CFR 218(a) (b), which includes an opportunity to object before the final decision is made. Those who have submitted comments and those who have requested to be included on the project mailing list will be notified prior to each of those opportunities to participate in this decision-making process. Individuals and organization who provide comments during the 30-day scoping period and/or the 30-day comment period on the draft EA will have standing to file objections.

For additional information please contact Paula K. Peterson at (970) 827-5159 or pkpeterson@fs.fed.us.
