Replacement of Water and Wastewater Systems

Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) proposes to replace the water and wastewater systems at Curecanti National Recreation Area (Park) in 2027, funded by the Legacy Restoration Funds (LRF), authorized by the Great American Outdoor Act (GAOA). GAOA funds deferred maintenance projects on public lands, and provides permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The NPS will accept public comments on this project from February 26 to March 27 2026.

The Curecanti National Recreation Area surrounds Blue Mesa Reservoir. the largest waterbody located entirely within the State of Colorado. Curecanti NRA provides vast landscapes, including mesas and canyons, recreational lands, and year-round fishing, water-and-ice sports, hunting, and wildlife viewing. The three main recreation facilities identified for the Replacement of Water and Wastewater Systems are Elk Creek, Lake Fork, and the Iola facilities. The age (55+ years) of these systems has made them unreliable and maintenance intensive. In their current condition, they can no longer support the continued, reliable enjoyment and usability of the Park for both employees and visitors.

The Park provides for nearly one million visitors annually with the enjoyment of the three reservoirs, as well as a variety of activities, in one recreation area. The NPS, park visitors, Elk Creek Marina employees, Lake Fork Marina employees, and campers in the Lake Fork and Elk Creek Campgrounds, are the primary water users. The water and wastewater systems serve nearly one million visitors per year in addition to NPS employees, including those in residence in the park. The existing system has experienced leaks, rusting, failing valves, and failing pressure-reducing valves. These systems need to be upgraded to prevent future closures to the Park during repairs and maintain high visitor satisfaction.

This project will replace the water distribution system, sanitary sewer system piping, and upgrade lift stations. Replacement systems will be designed and installed to meet modern industry standards and support the recreation area for decades. The distribution systems will be significantly modernized to allow more reliable operation and maintenance, resulting in reduced operational costs.

The project will improve the ability of NPS staff to maintain the current system, and the integrity and protection of adjacent sensitive cultural and natural resources. NPS is consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, tribal governments, as well as federal, state, and local resource agencies on the project, to mitigate impacts to threatened and endangered species, other natural resources, and cultural sites and values.

We welcome public comment on the project proposal. Thank you for your interest and participation.

Brinnen Carter

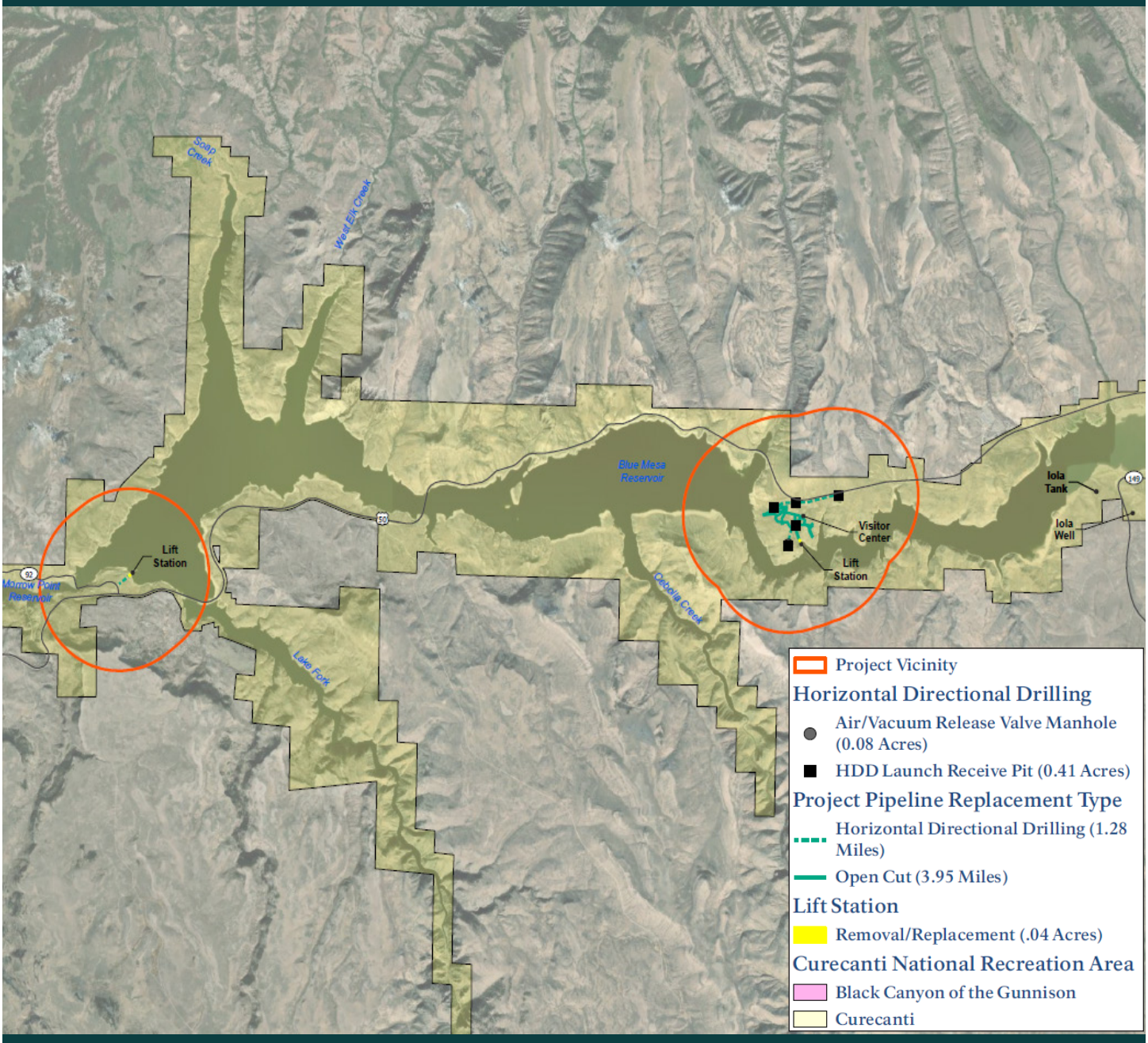
Resource Manager and Park Operations Point-of-Contact, Curecanti National Recreation Area

Project Overview: Replacement of Water and Wastewater Systems

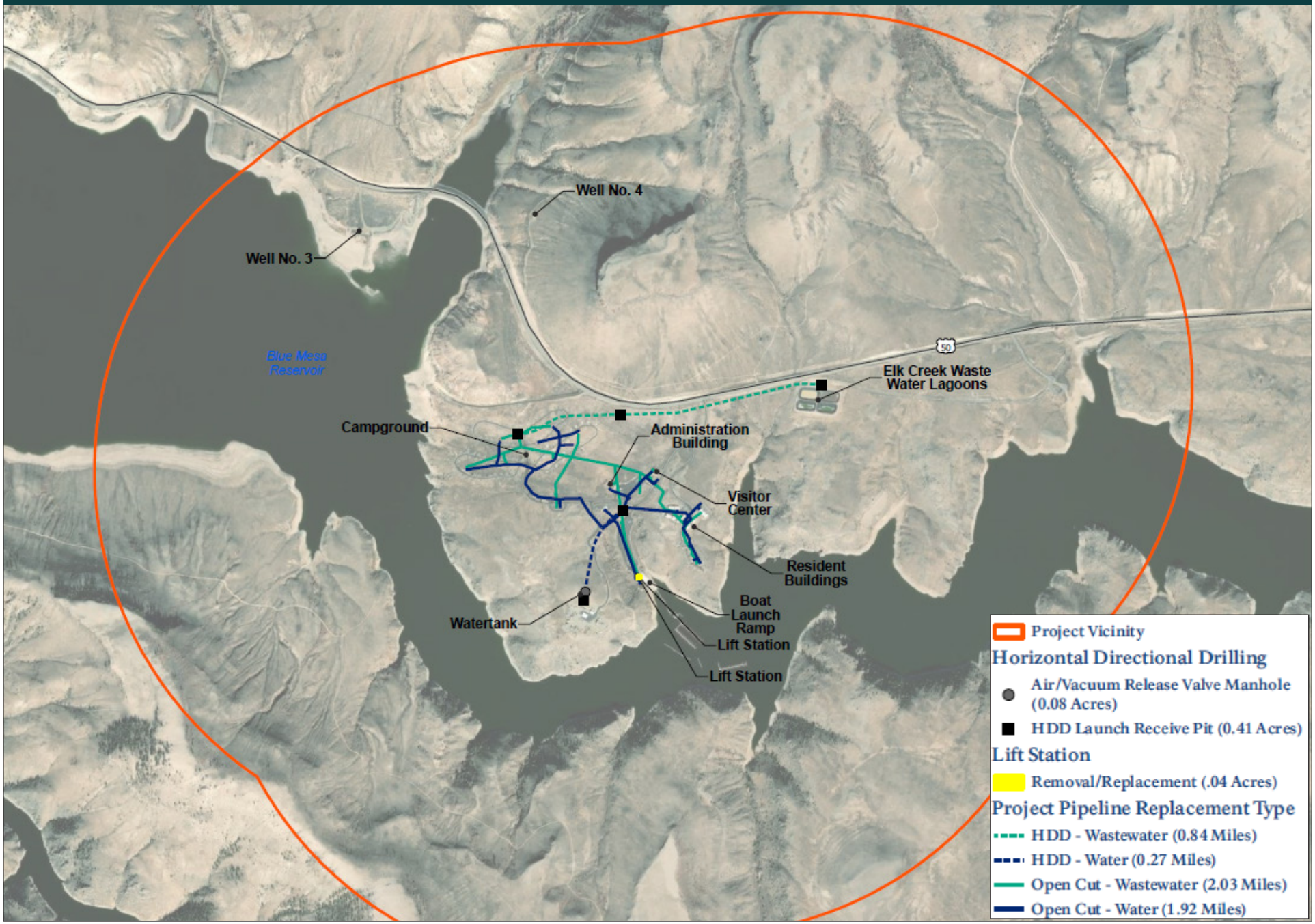
Water and wastewater pipeline improvements would require replacing the existing lines through either trenchless (horizontal directional drilling) or open trench (open cut) methods. Horizontal directional drilling helps to minimize impacts to Park resources by reducing surface disturbance, preserving natural habitats, avoiding sensitive environmental areas, and mitigating soil erosion. New lines will be installed within the same utility corridor as the existing waterline. Exposed obsolete lines will be removed where possible.

The project would also require upgrading storage pumps and monitoring technology, and other waterline connections in visitor, employee, and administrative areas to ensure adequate water volume is available.

Project Area Location and Vicinity within Curecanti National Recreation Area



Elk Creek Project Area



Lake Fork Project Area

Sewage Lagoons, Elk Creek

Storage Tank, Elk Creek

Pump House, Lake Fork

The original water and wastewater systems at Elk Creek and Lake Fork were installed in the late 1960's and are currently far beyond their lifecycle. They were installed in wide, deep, open trenches excavated by backhoe (see above). These trenches will be re-excavated, in part, and the replacement lines installed near the obsolete lines. We expect only minor new environmental disturbances, and trench lines will be restored post-installation.

Questions for Public Consideration

1. What suggestions do you have for us to consider when replacing the water and wastewater service systems in the Park?

2. What other comments do you have about the proposed replacements of the outdated water and wastewater systems in the Park?

Planning Process

The following schedule highlights the planning timelines.

Phase	Estimated Date
Civic Engagement & Public Comment Period	Q1 2026
Section 106 Completion	Q1/Q2 2026
NEPA Documentation (Categorical Exclusion)	Q1/Q2 2026
Anticipated Construction Start	Q2 2027
Anticipated Project Completion	Q4 2028

* Dates are approximate and subject to change

Questions and Information

We welcome your ideas, questions, concerns, suggestions and potential topics for consideration.

Questions and comments on the project may be submitted electronically at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/CURE-2025WATERANDWASTE

Before including your address, telephone number, electronic mail address, or other personally identifiable information in your comments, you should be aware that your entire comment (including your personally identifiable information) may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personally identifiable information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.