

**Trails Proposal and Concept Design for the Revision and  
Expansion of the Flaming Gorge Trail System  
Ashley National Forest, Daggett County, Utah**

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**PREPARED FOR:**

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## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	3
PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION .....	4
VOLUNTEER COMMITMENTS .....	7
TRAIL PROPOSAL .....	8
<i>Stacked Loops</i> .....	9
<i>Progression and Hubs &amp; Clusters</i> .....	9
<i>Trailheads</i> .....	10
SUMMARY OF MILEAGE .....	11
POTENTIAL TRAIL DEVELOPMENT ZONES.....	12
<i>Zone 1: Manila</i> .....	12
<i>Zone 2: Dowd Mountain</i> .....	13
<i>Zone 3: Browne Lake</i> .....	17
<i>Zone 4: Red Canyon</i> .....	18
<i>Zone 5: Bare Top Mountain</i> .....	20
<i>Zone 6: Dutch John</i> .....	22
SIGNAGE.....	25
PROJECT COSTS .....	26
PHASING.....	27
KEY TO TRAIL PLAN MAP .....	29
APPENDIX .....	30

## INTRODUCTION

This Trails Proposal and Concept Design for the Revision and Expansion of the Flaming Gorge Trail System provides guidance and suggestions for new shared-use trail opportunities in the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (NRA) of the Ashley National Forest, within Daggett County, Utah. The plan is intended to provide guidance for Daggett County, which has expressed interest in the development of mountain biking and new shared-use trails to bolster their outdoor recreation-based economy. Specifically, the plan outlines proposed new trail, reroutes, and closures to improve the Flaming Gorge trail system.

The NRA represents a vast area of over 200,000 acres. As such, six overall "zones" are proposed for the potential development of mountain bike trails. While the zones overlap, each zone has its own specific terrain and trail features.

The current trail system is outdated, with very few singletrack loop opportunities. New loops and improved connections will vastly increase the trail opportunities for beginner to expert mountain bikers, including

families and groups. That said, many existing trails are in good condition and can be integrated into this concept design. For those trails, suggested actions may include short reroutes, improvements, closures and road to trail conversions.

With adjustments to the system that include creating small to large loops, modifying existing trails, increasing existing viewsheds, creating more logical trail connections, and designing trails that meet the needs of a wider variety of users and desired experiences, existing non-motorized trails of the Flaming Gorge NRA will be transformed into a modern day comprehensive network with improved sustainability, minimized maintenance and increased user enjoyment.

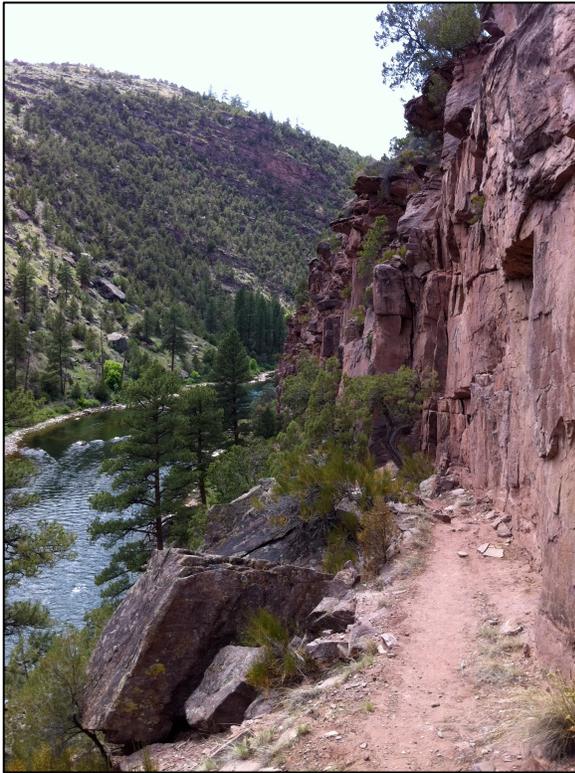
The enclosed description and zone maps outline the proposed modifications to the trail system with the attributes, strengths, and weaknesses of each zone described in detail. The proposed trails and trailheads on the maps enclosed in the Appendix highlight conceptual trail corridors, not exact trail locations. As priority zones and trail improvements are chosen, these corridors will be "ground-truthed," at which point IMBA Trail Solutions can assist in on-the-ground design and layout using current sustainable trail design techniques.



## PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is located along the shorelines, inlets, canyon rims, slopes, and upper peaks surrounding the Utah side of the Flaming Gorge Reservoir (FGR). FGR is in the Ashley National Forest, Flaming Gorge District of Daggett County in northeastern Utah.

Daggett County is an isolated pocket of wild open space neighboring western Colorado and southwest Wyoming. Daggett County has a population of less than 1,200 people and a per capita annual income of under \$30,000. Of this population, around 140 jobs (or 12%) are tourism and travel related employment.



Land in Daggett County is primarily federally owned (83%), with 11% of the land privately owned and the rest managed by the State of Utah. The townships of Manila and Dutch John are the two population centers, each located on opposite sides of the reservoir, Manila to the west and Dutch John to the east.

The nearest major population is Salt Lake City, approximately 170 miles (3 hours) to the west by car. From Manila, the nearest population center is Green River, Wyoming 47 miles and under an away hour by car. Dutch John can be reached easiest from Rock Springs, Wyoming, 70 miles and just over an hour away. The Red Canyon Visitor Center is considered the center for the Utah portion of Flaming Gorge Reservoir and is best accessed from the town of Vernal, on Highway 40, approximately 39 miles or 45 minutes away to the south. The visitor center is approximately 80 miles by Highway 44, or

191 miles from Interstate 80 in southwest Wyoming.

The Flaming Gorge NRA straddles two state lines, Utah and Wyoming. This concept design covers the Utah side of the NRA, which is approximately 80,000 acres. The overall area discussed extends beyond the NRA. Manila serves as the northwestern boundary, Browne Lake as a southwestern boundary, the Green River as the eastern boundary, and the Wyoming State Line as the northern boundary.

Six zones were considered for trail development. These are: Manila (Zone 1), Sheep Creek/Dowd Mountain (Zone 2), Browne Lake (Zone 3), Red Canyon Rim (Zone 4), Bare Top Mountain (Zone 5), and Dutch John (Zone 6). Over 100 miles of non-contiguous existing trails and roads were considered for inclusion in this concept plan.



These trails and roadways could serve as connections or short linkages between the new proposed trails, but should not be considered optimal trail and lacks in a recreation-oriented experience. Although the total mileage of these existing corridors and pathways appears high, the majority of them is not recreation-oriented and should be heavily supplanted with new, purpose-built singletrack trails.

This plan proposes *up to* 382 miles of new trails and 11 miles of road to trail conversion (see Summary of Mileage, page 12) to build purpose-built singletrack trails that offer a positive recreation experience that includes logical connections and loops. Singletrack is defined as a dirt path narrower than a doubletrack or a fire road, that is usually 12 to 36 inches wide. These trails are not typically accessible to ATVs or other four-wheeled vehicles. Singletrack may be smooth or rocky, flat or steep, among many other attributes and building techniques.

New legs of trail added to existing routes are intended to create loop experiences. Loops offer a trail experience that can be ridden in either direction, thereby essentially doubling the trail options and allowing users to complete a loop and avoid an “out and back.” These new loops will vastly increase the trail opportunities for beginner to expert mountain bikers, including families and groups.

Some of the trails, routes, and roads surrounding Flaming Gorge NRA are of historic significance. Indicative of trail this age, the trail grades exceed today’s guidelines for sustainability. Sustainable trails have grades that average 8 – 10% and do not exceed half of the grade of the sideslope, also called the “fall line.” Because these historic trails are often too steep and difficult for most bikers, opportunities in the existing trail system are consequently limited for families with small children or beginner mountain bikers.

Mountain bikers have become sophisticated, longing for purpose-built trails that offer a wide range of difficulty levels, terrain diversity, and genre types. Purpose-built trails are thoughtfully designed with users in mind in order to optimize the user experience. These trails meet users’ needs and provide meaningful recreation experiences that highlight the natural features and viewsheds while minimizing environmental impacts of trails and trails-based recreation.

Each of the zones has its own eco-zone of flora, fauna, elevation profile, soil type, vegetation, and forest types. The zones are incredibly diverse, and each offer a unique and natural experience.

- *Manila (Zone 1)* has the sandiest soils in the area and would offer wonderful “shoulder season” (spring and fall) riding. Sandy trails are best ridden when they are moist, but less appealing in the summer riding season when the sand is loose. This area has substantial natural erosion, and highly altered stream morphology along Sheep Creek. Lower elevations in the area (around 7,500 feet) contain sagebrush grasslands, pinyon/juniper, scattered ponderosa pines; while high elevations (up to 9,000 feet) see Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, and limber pine on the drier ridge top sites. This is a lightning belt with a history of fire where grasses, brush and forbs have replaced pine, fir and aspen, although trees are

regenerating. Wildlife in this area include bats, deer, elk, moose, and native and non-native fish species. Sport fishery is common, as well as livestock grazing, hunting, and geologic study.

- *Dowd Mountain (Zone 2), Red Canyon (Zone 4), and Dutch John (Zone 6)* have the best combination of existing quality trails with a long riding season, due to soil type, terrain diversity and access to the canyon rim, shorelines, forests, high ridges and the Green River. These areas have a variety of terrain, from steep slopes to



moderately steep brush covered slopes and rock outcrops. The area contains a wide range of vegetation from mountain sagebrush, forbs, grasses, pinyon pines, and juniper woodlands at lower elevations, to Douglas fir and lodgepole pines, ponderosa pines, narrow leaf cottonwoods, and aspen at higher elevations (around 9,000 feet). Wildlife in the area include elk, deer, mountain lion, big horn sheep, moose, eagle, northern goshawk, osprey, and sage grouse. The areas are accessible to camping, hunting, fishing, and boating.

- *Browne Lake (Zone 3)* has excellent forest diversity and some of the most existing trail. The riding season is notably shorter due to higher elevations and many of these routes are already popular with motorized ATV use. This area also has variety of terrain, with mostly pines and aspen.
- *Bare Top Mountain (Zone 5)* is a roadless area and essential to big game hunters. Trail development will primarily be focused away from prime hunting areas, in order to protect the hunting experience. There are more attractive areas in the FGR area for trail development that would not have to endure seasonal closures. Bare Top is predominantly made up of sagebrush and grass communities on a nearly flat, grassy mesa with moderately steep to, that is less desirable for trail drainage. There are also very steep slopes on either side. The mesa top is populated with cliff rims with pockets of mountain shrub, pinyon pine, juniper, and ponderosa pine and pinyon pine with juniper, transitioning into sagebrush and grass communities in other parts. Drainage in this area is very poor. Active erosion on the shoreline is noticeable, as well as rock outcrops, rocky talus, and ridges with exposed bedrock. Wildlife include deer, elk, bighorn sheep, antelope, and sage grouse.

## VOLUNTEER COMMITMENTS

Mark Wilson, owner of Red Canyon Lodge, maintains many of the trails near the Red Canyon Rim. Mark has organized several races and guided rides in the early days of mountain biking. There are not other known mountain bike leaders or organized mountain biking organizations in the area.

As this project moves forward, it is recommended that the County and the Forest Service reach out to the nearest mountain bike clubs and promoters such as Troy Lupcho, owner of Altitude Cycle in Vernal, Utah, The Sweetwater Mountain Bike Association in Green River, Wyoming. Distant organizations within 3.5 hours away such as the Mountain Trails Foundation in Park City, UT, the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA) in Grand Junction, and the Routt County Riders of Steamboat, Colorado, could also be contacted for support and volunteer commitments.





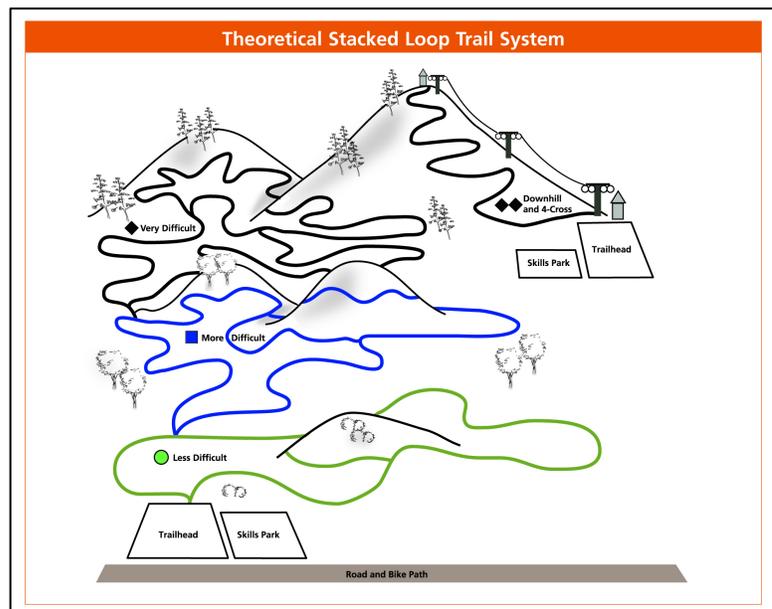
## TRAIL PROPOSAL

Much like a modern ski area, the proposed trail network at Flaming Gorge will offer many different skill level choices, from family-focused and introductory to advanced and expert level trail. This trail proposal emphasizes skill level diversity, progression, stacked loops, and hubs/clusters. These terms are described in this report.

The majority of the proposed new trails are blue (52% intermediate), with many options for beginner (16%, green) to advanced (32%, black) experiences. While there is a small population of trail users in this area, once complete, the trail system will become a draw from Salt Lake City, Denver, and core mountain bike communities such as Park City, and Moab, and other more populated areas.

The objectives of the proposal concept design are to:

- Designate and increase the relative availability of green (beginner/family), blue (intermediate) trails, and black (advanced) trails in the system.
- Create a shared-use, stacked loop singletrack trail system that appeals to a wide spectrum of abilities.
- Locate trailheads at low points guaranteeing outbound climbs with inbound descents.
- Develop trailheads and parking areas that become hubs with clusters of trails spreading outward.
- Provide the quality and quantity of experiences in the system to raise it to the level of a regionally significant trail destination that merits a half- or full-day drive to the area.
- Create a trail system that is environmentally and socially sustainable, and that best highlights the natural beauty of Flaming Gorge.
- Create a trail system that better interacts with existing park infrastructure.
- Create a trail system that can be implemented in a phased approach.





### *Stacked Loops*

Stacked loops force users to share many different levels of trail. In this stacked-loop system, the loops that are closest to the trailheads are more inviting to new users, beginners, or families. This allows users of all levels to enjoy the park and improve their fitness and skill while being in nature.

Green (beginner) trails have smoother and wider tread, lower grades, and less exposure. Blue (intermediate) trails can be steeper, and contain more technical difficulty or longer experiences. Black (advanced) trails can offer a combination of difficult trail tread and long distances for those looking for technical challenge and/or endurance-oriented experiences. Black trails will be the most difficult and challenging in regards to skill level difficulty, construction and exposure. Difficulty levels may be interchanged depending on terrain and desired outcome for trail system.

### *Progression and Hubs & Clusters*

All shared use trails are created with skill level progression in mind. With progressive trail features, a mountain biker may become a better rider by gradually moving up in trail difficulty. It is proposed that this trail system offer features of varying skill levels so that riders may find a trail that meet their skills and progress accordingly.

"Hubs and clusters" give the users more trail options for varying skill levels at each hub, allowing for progressive skill level diversity. A trailhead or major trail intersection is usually a hub. A rider may start out on a beginner trail and then graduate on to a more difficult trail for their return leg. At many intersections, there is the option to change the trail difficulty. This spreads out visitation and helps reduce trail user conflict. A difficulty scale will be provided at every hub and wherever necessary in the trail system to inform users of which type of trail to choose based on their skill levels and desired experience.



A design priority is to provide consistent climbs and extended descents, and in most cases, the trails contour gently up or down for consistent lengths to maximize climbs and descents (rolling contour design). All shared use trails are of rolling contour design to minimize impact and sedimentation to the watershed.

The most challenging trail and terrain will be further away from the proposed parking hubs, rewarding those willing or able to travel longer distances. This



is also a proven risk management tool, putting the difficult segments further out of reach for beginners, while still providing enjoyable trail opportunities from the trailhead for all users, and giving riders time or distance to warm up before reaching those technical segments.

### *Trailheads*

Well-placed trailheads and parking lots contribute to a successful trail system. In this system, the trailheads are located in lower areas, as most trail users prefer outbound climbs with inbound descents back to the parking area. This is especially true for mountain bikers, and necessary for families and beginners. Mountain bikers prefer to exert themselves the fullest on the first half of an outing, and enjoy a descent back to their vehicle on the second half.



There will be mountain biking, and hiking opportunities from each of the main trailheads, each offering a varied experience depending on the user's fitness and skill level. In some cases equestrian use will also be appropriate depending on recommendations. Trailheads will offer information useful for the trail users, including trail maps, emergency information, and volunteer information.



## SUMMARY OF MILEAGE

Trail Type	Difficulty	Mileage
Assessed Existing (Trail & Double Track)	Green	56.2
	Blue	88.2
	Black	97.2
Proposed New	Green	55.4
	Blue	200.8
	Black	126.7
Recommended Road to Trail	Green	6.0
	Blue	5.2
	Black	-
No Bikes	N/A	0.3
Surfaced	White	4.1

Totals	
Green	<b>117.5</b>
Blue	<b>294.1</b>
Black	<b>223.9</b>
White	<b>4.1</b>
Purple	<b>0.3</b>

## POTENTIAL TRAIL DEVELOPMENT ZONES

### *Zone 1: Manila*

#### Opportunities

The closest available USFS lands to Manila are less than 1 mile east of the Daggett County Airport, in the form of a narrow strip of NRA land along the west shore of Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Approximately 2 miles southeast, these lands open up to over 1,000 acres of land with appealing slopes of pinyon and juniper, and sandstone cliff bands and outcrops. There is ample space here to create a cluster of trails with all levels of difficulty and excitement.

The upper ridgelines provide outstanding views of Flaming Gorge and especially Sheep Creek Canyon. These soils are very sandy, thus providing good wet condition riding. When other zones are muddy or under snow, it is likely that these trails will be in excellent condition for mountain biking. Some of the existing 4x4 roads could be used as arteries or short-term legs of connecting trail while singletrack is being created.

There are two options for new trailheads, restrooms, and parking areas. In both cases, these hubs would be close to highways and have ample space to grow as the trail system develops. These options are:

- Manila Airport Road: Add an official parking area at the eastern tip of the airport road.
- Manila Dump Road: Add a potential hub on USFS lands, southeast of the intersection with Highway 44 (at the junction of FR 592/182, south of the green gate).



#### Constraints

Because the first few miles of proposed shoreline trail would be along a flat and narrow strip, these miles would need to be a surfaced “out and back” pathway. Trails of this nature are costly to build, but offer a good benefit to visitors and residents alike, and attract a high number of users. This would be a family friendly conduit, quickly moving users to the sloped hills and cliff bands southeast of Manila. Many 4x4 roads cross this area, popular with ATVs and other off-road motorized use. Organizing the system for

ATV usage and behavior will be necessary as non-motorized singletrack trails are developed.



Many of these roads are very steep, loose, and sandy. Loose sand is only appealing to mountain bikers when it is moist and compacted. During the summer months and prolonged dry spells, these roads and trails would be less desirable for mountain biking.

Though there is a possibility of a successful shoulder-season trail cluster, it would be nearly impossible to connect the Manila trails cluster with nearby Sheep Creek or Dowd Mountain. Impassable cliff bands and steep slopes along

Highway 44 prevent the possibility of a link from Sheep Creek to the Manila Zone. There is no current infrastructure, with no official parking area, toilets, or campgrounds for the Manila Zone.

**Phase Priority:**

The Manila Zone is rated as a *low priority* for development, due to the initial start up cost versus the return, for the following reasons:

- There is no existing singletrack.
- Sandy soils minimize summer riding season.
- The shoreline trail would be of high cost due to surfacing needs.
- There is no current trails infrastructure.
- Much of the terrain is already in use by motorized vehicles.
- There is no possibility of connecting to other zones.

**Zone 2: Dowd Mountain**

The Dowd Mountain Zone includes Sheep Creek, Hideout Canyon, World Canyon, Death Valley, Dowd Overlook, and Carter Creek. These areas include almost all of the natural features that the Flaming Gorge area has to offer: everything from rolling sagebrush hills to dark and shady fir tree hollows and coves. There is a vast amount of shoreline and rim riding potential, workable soils, and difficult rock outcroppings.



## Opportunities

Dowd Mountain has already been designated for mountain biking and has a few high quality existing trails or routes. With some additional connector trails to create loops, this zone has the highest potential for success.

It encompasses a vast range of terrain from shoreline to rims, and open sagebrush to dense coniferous forest. There are many soil types and difficulty-level possibilities. This zone will have a long riding season due

to elevation, vegetation, and aspect diversity.

The existing trailhead for Dowd Mountain sits at the base of a road-to-trail conversion. This converted road corridor could become an exciting purpose-built cluster of family, intermediate, and advanced-level gravity-oriented trails.

There are several existing parking areas, restrooms, trailheads, and campgrounds that can be brought into this system. These include:

- Sheep Creek Boat Ramp and its Overflow parking area could be an optimal trail hub, with trails of all difficulty levels.
- The Dowd Mountain trailhead has plenty of space to become an official trailhead, and it is near a fresh water spring.
- The Hideout Boat campground offers a unique shoreline solitude experience.



Dowd Mountain and neighboring areas have many quality existing trails, including:

- The Dowd Mountain Overlook
- Hideout Canyon Trail
- Carter Creek-Meadow Park Trail

The natural landscape of this zone is unrivaled by any other in the park. New trails should be created to showcase the following park highlights:

- Unfettered views of the Uinta Crest Fault, currently seen from the Sheep Creek Scenic Byway, with proposed trails west of Death Valley
- Sheep Creek and the surrounding red rock landscape
- World Canyon and Hideout Draw
- Dowd Mountain Overlook and Carter Creek



### Constraints

As with any new trail the possibility of archeological or historic sites are of a concern, and proposed trail locations will be subject to scrutiny. Many of the proposed trails will follow canyon rims where such objects may be found. Some of the old trails will or may require subtle maintenance, adjustments, or reroutes. The trail corridors must all be approved prior to construction.

Though Sheep Creek is attractive, there are a few issues

to consider:

- Any additional trails in proximity to the creek have to be located with care due to

Kokanee salmon spawning, or seasonal closures could be considered.

- The soils are clay-like, which limits riding during the wet riding season.
- Thoughtful rail design should minimize congestion to this popular destination.

Dowd Mountain as a trail hub will eventually require an investment in infrastructure, including:

- An official parking area, restrooms and/or adequate signage
- Approval and installation of a new campground to prevent resource damage from ad hoc camping, as this area is far from other campgrounds
- Shifting or minimizing cattle grazing that is prevalent on the mesa top
- Additions or alterations of gates and fences

### Phase Priority:

Approximate priority mileage is 16-40 miles. This range represents the minimum needed to accomplish the phase's goals, and the maximum possible given the terrain and options.

The Dowd Mountain Zone is the *highest priority* for trails development, for the following reasons:

- There is a wide range of riding options with a long riding season.
- There are several existing high-quality trails of which to expand on or link to.
- The potential views offered from these new trails are some of the best at Flaming Gorge.
- Road-to-trail conversions are a good way to organize or minimize unwanted motorized activity.
- There is existing infrastructure of which can be expanded.
- There is little potential conflict with current users.
- There is an infinite number of trail links and connections.



### Zone 3: Browne Lake

This zone encompasses Browne Lake, Ute Mountain, and Deep Creek campground. This area includes coniferous and aspen-forested slopes, and clear lakes and streams south to the Daggett County Border and east to Highway 44. This is the highest elevation zone with Browne Lake sitting at 8,200 feet, the Highline Trail at 10,000 feet, and nearby Leidy Peak at 12,028 feet. There are vast tracts of available land to the west but these are not included in this scope due to the popularity of ATV use and the increased driving distance from Highway 44.

#### Opportunities

Browne Lake campground provides an excellent kickoff point for recreation during the summer months when other zones in the park may be congested or too hot. The forested slopes surrounding Browne Lake provide shade and cooler temperatures and have many existing trails from which to link. As the Dowd Mountain trail network grows to the west, potential connections can be made to join these two zones.



There are several current parking areas, restrooms, trailheads, and/or campgrounds that make this zone appealing for development:

- Browne Lake campground could be an excellent hub, starting with a family-level trail that circumnavigates the lake. Other trails such as the existing Ute Mountain Trail can be linked to, offering a wide variety of skill level trails.
- The Deep Creek campground is only a few miles west of Highway 44, and can also become a trail hub.

Browne Lake is surrounded by existing trails, some of which can be included in the new system:

- Ute Mountain Trail
- High Line Trail
- Trails between Browne Lake and Deep Creek campgrounds

#### Constraints



Since many of the existing trails are from an older time, they can be steep and difficult for many users. These trails may need modification to improve their sustainability and user experience. The current trail network offers a high difficulty rating with few singletrack loop outings. Trails that are popular with hikers may need to be assessed regarding potential user conflict. Routes frequented by ATV use may also be looked at as short-term connections until more appropriate singletrack is created.

**Phase Priority:**

The Browne Lake Zone is of a *mid-level priority* for trails development, for the following reasons:

- The riding season here is shorter (June to November), with heavy deer and elk hunting use in September and October.
- There are several existing high-quality trails that could be expanded or linked to.
- There is existing infrastructure that can be expanded or improved.
- The higher elevations offer a unique experience.

**Zone 4: Red Canyon**

The Red Canyon Zone radiates west, south, and east from Red Canyon Visitor Center, along the south rim of Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Carter Creek can be considered the western boundary, with the Daggett County line atop Highline Ridge as the south and Carter Creek Bridge forming the eastern edge. The northern boundary is the steep and impenetrable south rim of FGR. Just south of the visitor center is the Red Canyon Lodge, which at one time was a lesser-known destination for mountain biking. There are several trails that link the lodge, visitor center, canyon rim, and other nearby campgrounds.

The terrain is primarily made up of sparsely covered ponderosa pines that slope gently to the canyon rims. The goal of this zone is to expand the current trail network to link existing infrastructure, while providing a low point hub at Cedar Springs campground (6,000 feet), and improving the Highline Trail (9,200 feet) to create a high point destination. This trail cluster would potentially have 3,200 vertical feet of elevation change with several ecozones and stunning





viewsheds.

### Opportunities

The existing trails that link the visitor center, canyon rim, and other nearby attractions can be adjusted quite simply to form a comprehensive stacked loop trail system. In most cases, improvements are needed to make these trails easier for family-level users and to add more technical trails for advanced riders.

This zone has the highest amount of existing infrastructure with several campgrounds, trailheads, restrooms, lodging, retail, and restaurants. Since Red Canyon sits nearly equidistant between Manila and Dutch John, both communities stand to benefit, especially if visitors are coming from the north. Most of this trail cluster will be proximal to the junction of Highways 44 and 191.

This area encompasses a vast range of terrain from shoreline to rims, with sparse to dense coniferous forest. These trails will be most appreciated during the summer months due to the relatively high elevation, vegetation, and north-facing aspect.

There are many existing trailheads, parking areas, restrooms, trailheads, and/or campgrounds that can be expanded as the trails gain popularity:

- The Cedar Springs campground could make an ideal low point hub with clusters of trail climbing to the excellent views and rim country above.
- The Red Canyon Visitor Center parking area could be expanded as the trail system grows, bringing tourism dollars to the area and showcasing more rim country views.
- Green Dale Junction has adequate parking and a restroom that could become a trail hub for a potential gravity trail cluster and/or the Highline Trail above.



Red Canyon has many existing trails that, with adjustments and additions, could increase visitation to the Flaming Gorge area:

- The Canyon Rim Trail
- Greens Lake Trail



- Swett Ranch Loop
- Bear Trap Trail
- Greendale-Highline Trail
- Highline Trail

### Constraints

None of the existing trails offer an outstanding mountain biking experience. Many are too rocky for beginners or, in the case of trails west of Highway 44, are overgrown and difficult to navigate. Many of the trails are short “out and backs” with tedious climbs back to the starting point. Loops are much more enjoyable for trail users and disperse trail use. Cedar Springs campground is the only shoreline accessible by car. During the summer, the infrastructure is already busy, so expansion may be necessary to accommodate growing trail use and visitation.

### Phase Priority:

Approximate priority mileage is 8 - 65 miles. This range represents the minimum needed to accomplish the phase’s goals, and the maximum possible given the terrain and options.

The Red Canyon Zone is of a *mid to high-level priority* for trails development, for the following reasons:

- The riding season here is shorter (May to November), with heavy deer and elk hunting use in September and October.
- The existing trails will need adjustments and additions, though much of the infrastructure is in place.
- The soil types, slopes, and vegetation appear to be optimal for trail construction and use.
- The proposal to create a trail cluster that connects Highline to Cedar Spring campground offers the greatest elevation drop in the Flaming Gorge area.
- This is the closest hub for trail development and would be a good partnership opportunity that involved mountain bikers from Vernal.

### *Zone 5: Bare Top Mountain*

This zone encompasses Bare Top Mountain west of Highway 191, making up most of the northern rim of the Utah region of Flaming Gorge Reservoir. The area extends from Antelope Flats campground southeast towards Mustang Ridge campground. Bare Top Mountain juts out into Flaming Gorge as a peninsular mesa, with only one access road that is closed to public motorized use.

Bare Top is a federally designated roadless area and is considered prime big game hunting habitat. Hunters access this “island of solitude” mainly on horseback for a



chance at trophy bull elk, mule deer, big horn sheep, and antelope. Even the most experienced hunters may wait decades to draw a tag for a limited-day bull elk hunt at this highly prized location. The notion of developing mountain bike trails in this area could radically change the experience for the current user group. Even if the trails were closed during hunting season, the increase in human activity could tamper with the fragile balance of this unique habitat and the economic value it produces.

### Opportunities

Antelope Flats campground gets relatively little visitation compared to other facilities in the park. It could act as a trail hub, with a small cluster of trails spreading south towards Bare Top. The heart of Bare Top should remain void of trail development to minimize impacts to the current hunting and wildlife conditions. Other opportunities include:

- There is an existing road cut on the north side of the Boar's Tusk of Bare Top Mountain that could be converted to a road to trail, and then extended to the western point for an outstanding view.
- A cluster of trails could be created from Antelope Flats onto the north flanks of Boar's Tusk without going near the core of Bare Top Mountain.
- There is an intriguing ridgeline directly west and east of Highway 191, adjacent to a lesser-used power-line road.
- Mustang Ridge or Sunny Side campgrounds could become trail hubs with several miles of clusters that mimic the feel of Bare Top, without entering the actual core and mesa top.

### Constraints

Daggett County has a history of economic value derived from big game hunting. Bare Top Mountain is considered one of the most treasured locations in the entire county and Ashley National Forest for this experience. Any potential mountain bike trail development in this zone should be measured against this existing use. Currently, mountain biking is allowed in the Bare Top Zone on designated 4x4 roads. If purpose-built mountain bike trails were created, the number of users would increase exponentially, much more than with hikers and equestrians. While there is potential for trail development away from the Bare Top Mountain core, there are better development opportunities closer to Manila, Dutch John, and Red Canyon.

### Phase Priority:

The Bare Top Zone is the *lowest priority* for trails development, for the following reasons:

- There is too much potential conflict with big game hunting.
- Antelope Flats appears to be very sandy, with little shade and little cross slope drainage.

- There are little to no existing singletrack trails from which to expand on Bare Top.
- Due to the sparse and gentle slopes of this grassy mesa, the current users feel no need for trail development.

### Zone 6: Dutch John

The town of Dutch John and the nearby county lands are almost completely surrounded by the Ashley National Forest. This includes the shorelines of Dutch John Draw and Mustang Ridge campgrounds, southeast to the Flaming Gorge Dam,



from the spillway and downstream along the Green River, to the eastern edge of the Ashley National Forest, and back around to the northwest along the southern slopes of Goslin and Dutch John mountains.

Due to the Mustang Forest Fire of 2002, much of these pinyon and juniper slopes are now barren. The fire has stripped most of the slopes of shade, although trail development here would increase the riding season and create a different riding experience. Trail development here is relatively easy. In addition to the ever-improving infrastructure of Dutch John, there are existing trails, parking areas, restrooms, and campgrounds that could link to the trails.

### Opportunities

Dutch John offers the greatest opportunity to develop trails that are close to a town center, with the potential for several trail clusters showcasing this unique landscape. The crown jewel of this zone is the Little Hole Trail along the Green River. This is the only existing riverside trail in the Flaming Gorge region. Little Hole is a world-class trout fishery, attracting over 40,000 fly-fishermen in drift boats and shoreline fishermen in July of 2013.

Currently, the seven-mile long Little Hole Trail is open to mountain biking from Labor Day to April 1st. Most of the shoreline fishermen do not walk further than two miles below the spillway. They can also be found near the Little Hole takeout boat ramp but rarely hike more than 1.5 miles upstream. This leaves approximately 4-5 miles of trail in the middle of the Little Hole Trail that sees little use even during the prime summer fishing season. A potential trail link could bring users from the rim south of Dutch John down to the middle of Little Hole and then bring them back up near the Little Hole Overlook. These trail additions would allow riders to avoid the busier fishing access points near the spillway and Little Hole while experiencing the natural wonder of Little Hole.

Other opportunities include the option to:



- Link Dutch John Draw, Sunnyside, Mustang Ridge, and Arch Dam campgrounds with beginner to intermediate level singletrack trails.
- Develop intermediate and advanced level singletrack along the Green River rims, south of Dutch John.
- Add two segments of trail (an entrance and an exit) into the middle segment of Little Hole Trail for mountain biking/hiking while protecting fishing access above and below.
- Consider trail development downstream of Little Hole along the Green River and up to the slopes of Goslin Mountain.
- Develop Dripping Springs campground as a trail hub.



### Constraints

Much like the economic value of big game hunting on Bare Top, care must be taken to protect the fishing experience along the Green River. There is currently a balance at Little Hole Trail between shoreline hikers/fishermen and drift boat fishermen, so adding another user and additional fishing access should be carefully considered.

For instance, there should not be a trailhead added close to the Green River Rim above the

middle of Little Hole Trail as this would provide new access for hikers and fishermen to a segment predominantly visited by drift boaters. A trail that travels from the rim would no doubt be very technical, thus minimizing fishing access by mountain bike. The closest trailhead should be several miles away to also deter this as fishing access. This trail link will be primarily geared towards intermediate to advanced level mountain bikers, hikers, trail runners, and occasional fishermen.

Though there exists infrastructure in Dutch John, the land managers and planners of Ashley National Forest must decide on the best potential trailheads, hubs, and trail clusters. Other constraints include:

- Many of the shoreline campgrounds might already be at capacity during the high summer season, in which case this zone will need additional infrastructure.
- To avoid potential congestion, a new trailhead hub above the current parking area at Little Hole and potentially at the Dripping Springs campground should be

considered.

- The Dutch John Rifle Range near the end of Forest Road 542 should be avoided.

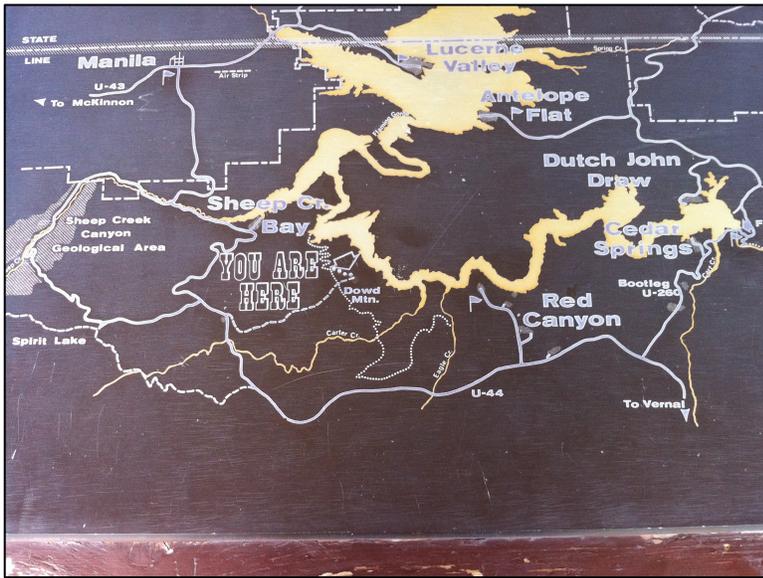
### Phase Priority:

Approximate priority mileage is 10 - 46 miles. This range represents the minimum needed to accomplish the phase's goals, and the maximum possible given the terrain and options.

Dutch John is of a *high priority* for trails development, for the following reasons:

- Dutch John has a relatively long riding season, potentially from April to November.
- The zone offers a good balance of lakeshore, canyon rims, riverside, forested slopes, and ridge top trail diversity.
- The Mustang Fire could allow for simpler clearances and easier construction.
- Infrastructure is primarily in place, and can be increased or improved as visitation grows.
- The Little Hole Trail is of the highest trail quality for intermediate to advanced-skill level riders, trail runners and hikers. With thoughtful adjustments, shared use is an option on this trail.





## SIGNAGE

Signs are the most important communication mechanism between the Forest Service and trail users. A well-implemented and maintained signage program has the potential to greatly enhance the user experience, navigate visitors through the trail network, and provide information about the area. Signs also play a critical role in managing risk and the rapid deployment of emergency services.

This proposal includes developing a comprehensive signage program that meets the needs of all users, from the savvy, daily trail user to someone who is experiencing the trails for the first time. In order to serve this variety of visitors, sign placement should be strategic and frequent. Because signs can intrude on the natural outdoor experience, balancing competing interests is key to developing a successful signage program.

A variety of signs will be created to help users identify trails and their location, select routes, remain confident in their trail choices, guide users to destinations and key points of interest, provide information on regulations and allowed uses, learn about responsible recreation and trail etiquette, learn about resource protection, and reduce risk and hazards. Signs can be informational/directional, regulatory/warning, and educational/interpretive.

- Directional signs provide navigational information, from a simple blaze to elaborate maps. Informational signs, usually positioned at the trailhead, provide details such as trail length and difficulty. These include trailhead identification signs (from a road), signs at a trailhead kiosk (with a complete map and description of all the nearby trails and facilities, local regulations, emergency contact information, and educational messages), trail intersection signs, waymarks, difficulty rating signs, and trail length or elevation gain/loss signs.
- Regulatory signs delineate rules, such as prohibited activities, direction of travel, or other restrictions. Warning signs are used to caution trail users of upcoming hazards or risks. These include visitor rules and regulations signs, allowed activities, road/trail intersections, and emergency signs.
- Educational signs provide guidelines for responsible recreation and trail etiquette. Interpretive signs describe natural or cultural resources. These include education/responsible use signs, and interpretive signs.



## PROJECT COSTS

Projects of this nature in this area could cost \$5 - \$12 per foot. However, in order to realize the vision of this concept design, Trail Solutions estimates that construction would cost approximately \$8.00 per foot. This additional upfront investment will ensure that the investment made in planning is maximized and that the trail system becomes a destination trail system of regional significance that effectively meets the needs of its users, is built to last, and reflects well upon the Forest Service. Developing trail that closely reflects the existing trail conditions will not allow the opportunities associated with this system to be capitalized upon.



## PHASING

For a project such as this one, phased implementation is recommended. The large number of loops and associated segments creates numerous viable phasing sequences. Implementing trail improvements in stages allows fundraising to keep pace with construction and allows park management and local advocates to tune any expansion of maintenance and responsibilities to the capacity of staff and the community. Suggested building phases are described below:

### *Phase 1: Dowd Mountain*

- Improve existing Dowd Mountain Loop, including a road to trail gravity zone, more rim singletrack linking the Overlook to the Carter-Meadow Park.
- Develop the current Dowd Mountain trailhead and consider a campground just up the Dowd Mountain Road.
- Decide on another trail in Hideout Canyon and/or linking to Sheep Creek Canyon.
- Decide on trail development west of Dowd Mountain Loop.



### *Phase 2: Red Canyon*

- Develop new trailhead/parking area with new trails for a complete family and intermediate skill level cluster near the visitor center or the junction of Highway 44.
- Develop the Highline Trail Reroute.
- Develop the Cedar Springs campground as a trail hub with trail clusters.

### *Phase 3: Dutch John*

- Link Shoreline campgrounds.
- Create a Green River Rim Loop or loops.
- Implement Little Hole Trail improvements.

### *Phase 4: Browne Lake*



- Develop a family-level trail around Browne Lake.
- Decide on the best improvements to existing trails linking south and east.
- Improve or create a Highline Trail extension.

*Phase 5: Manila*

- Choose between a trail hub at the airport or the rifle range
- Develop trail clusters from either of these hubs or both

*Phase 6: Bare Top*

- Create a loop or an out and back from the partial telegraph road on the north side of the Boar's Tusk.
- Work closely with the Utah DNR to choose other potential clusters of trail that do not conflict with big game hunting.



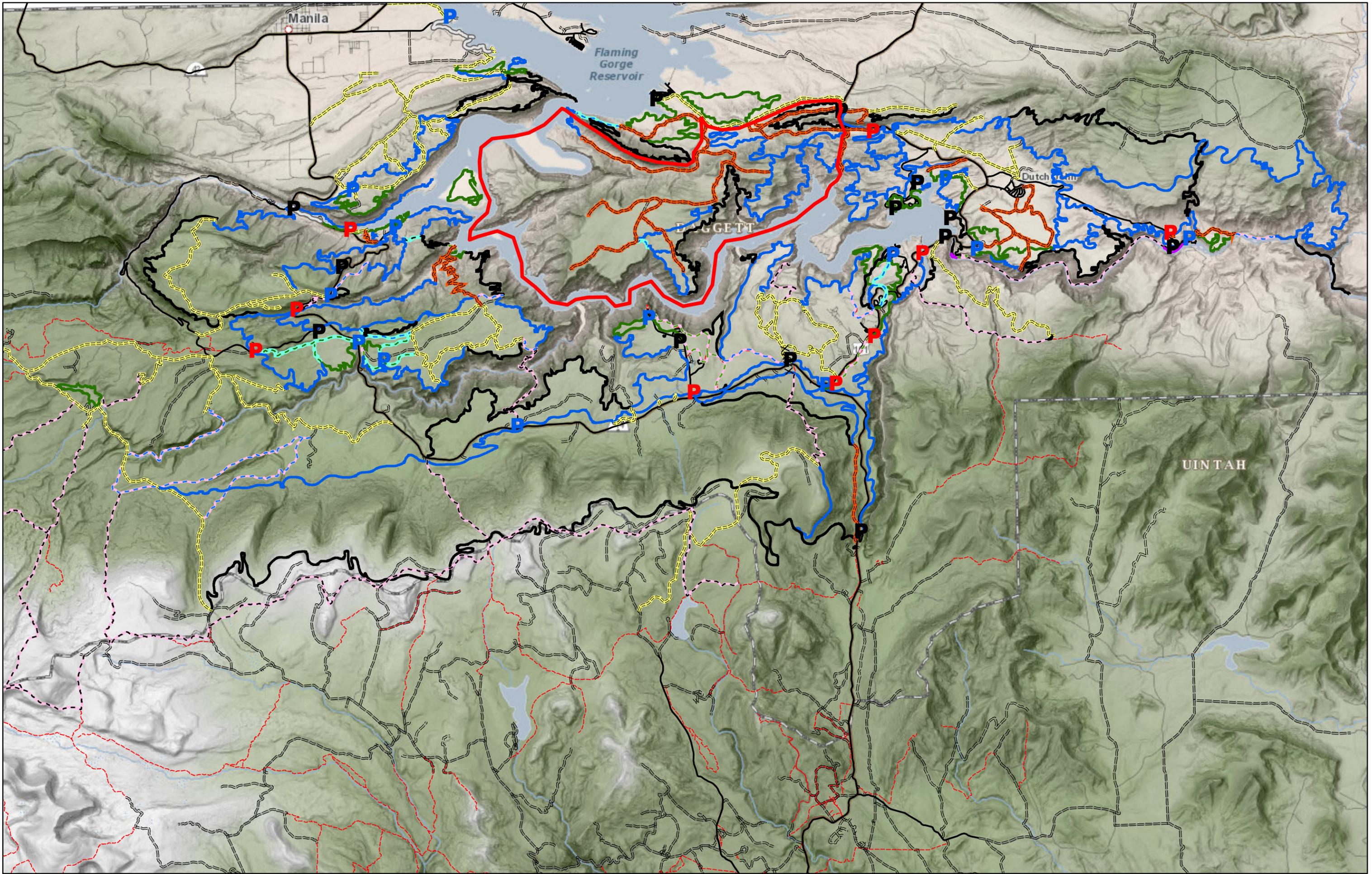
## KEY TO TRAIL PLAN MAP

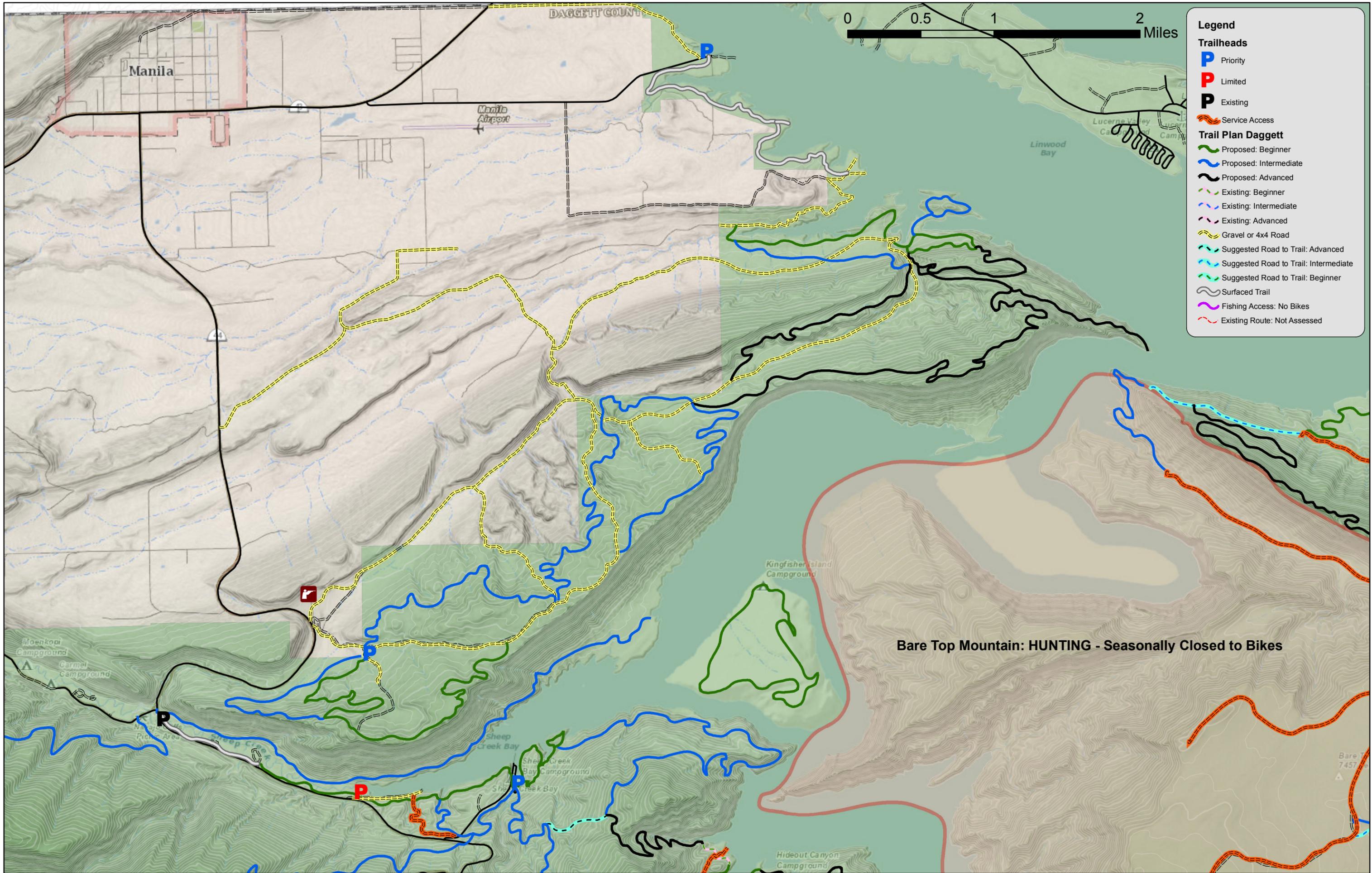
Solid Green:	Proposed new beginner trail
Solid Blue:	Proposed new intermediate trail
Solid Black:	Proposed new advanced trail
Pink and Green Hashed:	Existing beginner trail
Pink and Blue Hashed:	Existing intermediate trail
Pink and Black Hashed:	Existing advanced trail
Pale Blue and Green Hashed:	Suggested road to beginner trail conversion
Pale Blue and Blue Hashed:	Suggested road to intermediate trail conversion
Pale Blue and Black Hashed:	Suggested road to advanced trail conversion
Yellow and Black Double:	Gravel or 4x4 road
Red and Black Double:	Service access
Solid White:	Surfaced trail
Solid Purple:	Fishing access, no bikes
Dashed Red Single:	Existing route, not assessed
Blue P:	Priority trailhead
Red P:	Limited trailhead
Black P:	Existing trailhead



## APPENDIX

- Map 1: Area Overview
- Map 2: Zone 1: Manila
- Map 3: Zone 2: Dowd Mountain
- Map 3a: Zone 2: Dowd Mountain phase priorities
- Map 4: Zone 3: Browne Lake
- Map 5: Zone 4: Red Canyon
- Map 5a: Zone 4: Red Canyon phase priorities
- Map 6: Zone 5: Bare Top Mountain
- Map 7: Zone 6: Dutch John
- Map 7a: Zone 7: Dutch John phase priorities





**Legend**

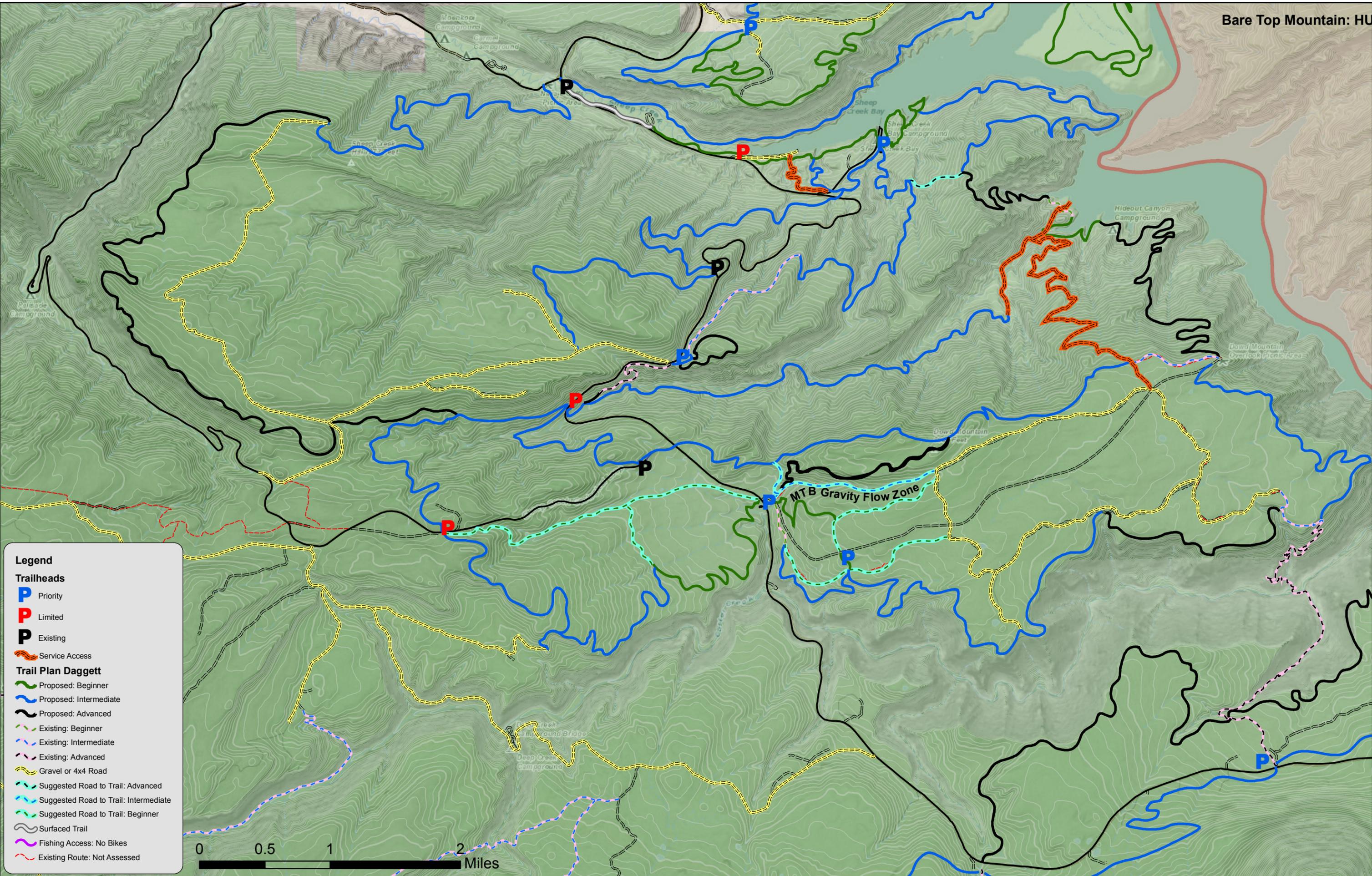
**Trailheads**

- P** Priority
- P** Limited
- P** Existing

**Trail Plan Daggett**

- Proposed: Beginner
- Proposed: Intermediate
- Proposed: Advanced
- Existing: Beginner
- Existing: Intermediate
- Existing: Advanced
- Gravel or 4x4 Road
- Suggested Road to Trail: Advanced
- Suggested Road to Trail: Intermediate
- Suggested Road to Trail: Beginner
- Surfaced Trail
- Fishing Access: No Bikes
- Existing Route: Not Assessed

**Bare Top Mountain: HUNTING - Seasonally Closed to Bikes**



**Legend**

**Trailheads**

- P** Priority
- P** Limited
- P** Existing

**Service Access**

- Orange dashed line

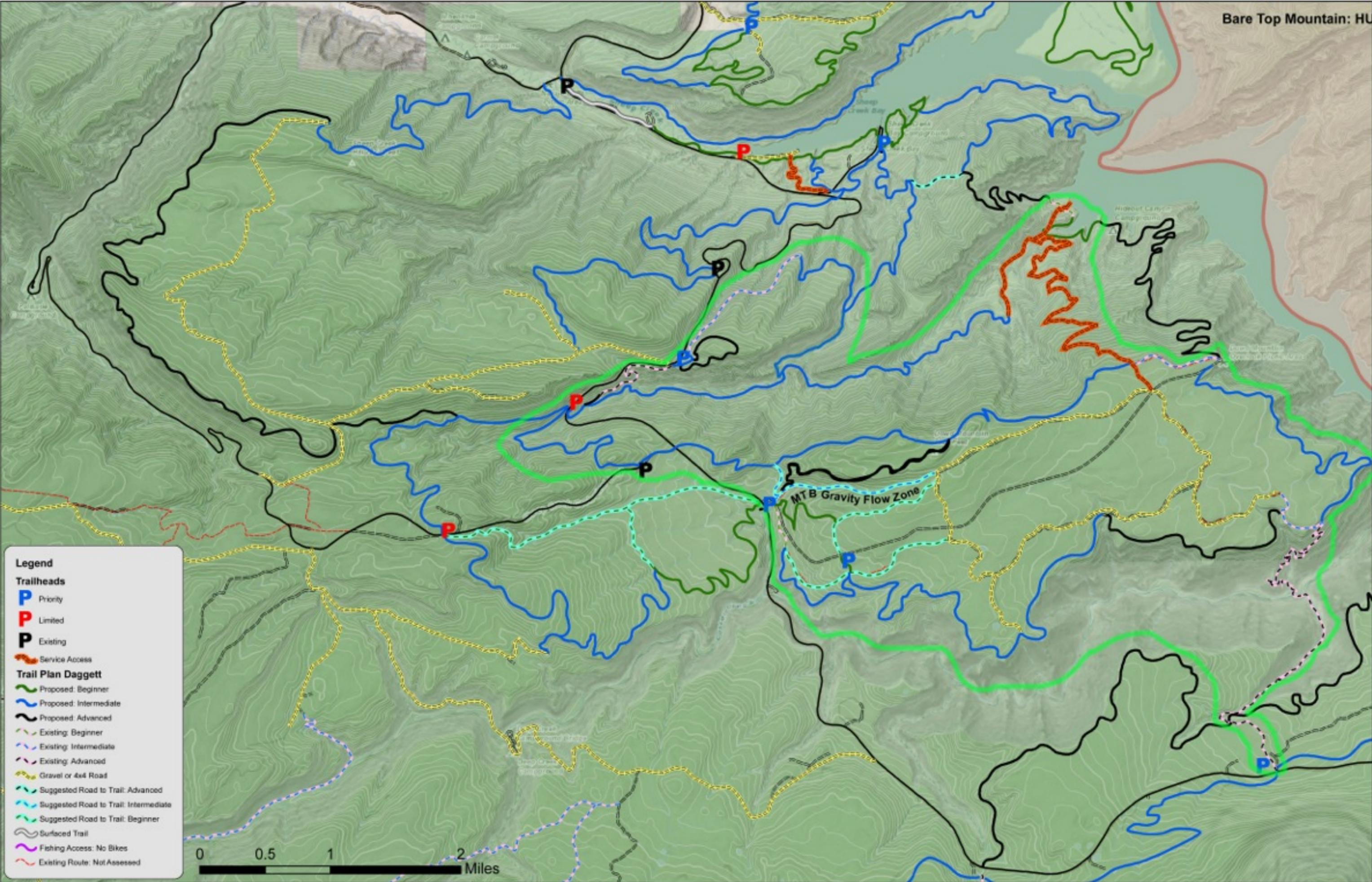
**Trail Plan Daggett**

- Proposed: Beginner (Green wavy line)
- Proposed: Intermediate (Blue wavy line)
- Proposed: Advanced (Black wavy line)
- Existing: Beginner (Green dashed line)
- Existing: Intermediate (Blue dashed line)
- Existing: Advanced (Black dashed line)
- Gravel or 4x4 Road (Yellow dashed line)
- Suggested Road to Trail: Advanced (Cyan dashed line)
- Suggested Road to Trail: Intermediate (Light blue dashed line)
- Suggested Road to Trail: Beginner (Light green dashed line)
- Surfaced Trail (Grey dashed line)
- Fishing Access: No Bikes (Pink dashed line)
- Existing Route: Not Assessed (Red dashed line)



## Dowd Mountain

New	
Green	2.0
Blue	22.2
Black	12.0
R2T	
Green	2.8
Blue	1.6
Existing	
Green	0.6
Blue	1.3
Black	4.9
Double Track	
Green	
Blue	7.6
Black	



**Legend**

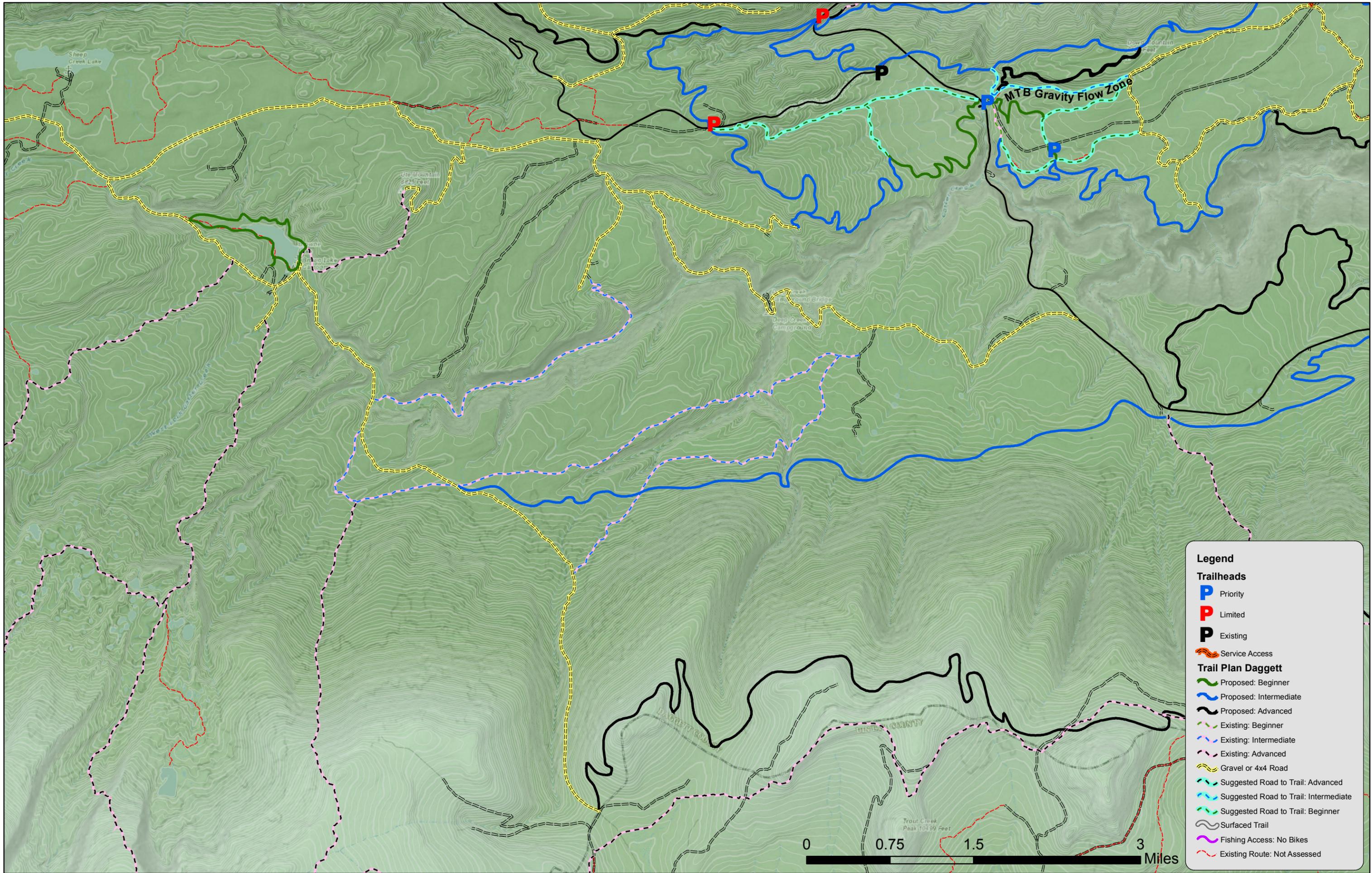
**Trailheads**

- P** Priority
- P** Limited
- P** Existing

**Trail Plan Daggett**

- Proposed: Beginner
- Proposed: Intermediate
- Proposed: Advanced
- Existing: Beginner
- Existing: Intermediate
- Existing: Advanced
- Gravel or 4x4 Road
- Suggested Road to Trail: Advanced
- Suggested Road to Trail: Intermediate
- Suggested Road to Trail: Beginner
- Surfaced Trail
- Fishing Access: No Bikes
- Existing Route: Not Assessed

0 0.5 1 2 Miles



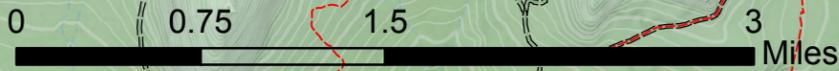
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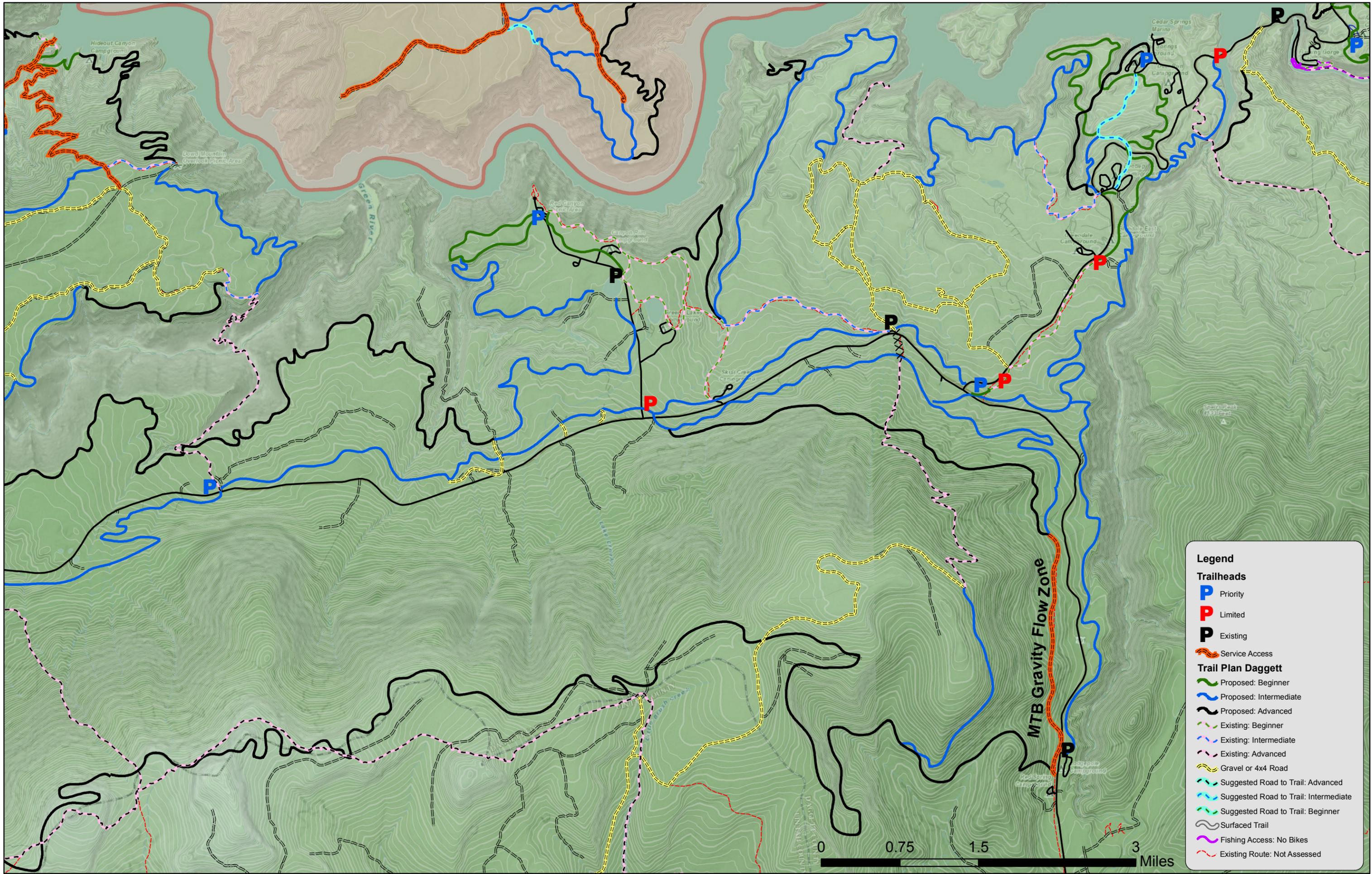
**Trailheads**

- P Priority
- P Limited
- P Existing
- Service Access

**Trail Plan Daggett**

- Proposed: Beginner
- Proposed: Intermediate
- Proposed: Advanced
- Existing: Beginner
- Existing: Intermediate
- Existing: Advanced
- Gravel or 4x4 Road
- Suggested Road to Trail: Advanced
- Suggested Road to Trail: Intermediate
- Suggested Road to Trail: Beginner
- Surfaced Trail
- Fishing Access: No Bikes
- Existing Route: Not Assessed





**Legend**

**Trailheads**

- P Priority
- P Limited
- P Existing

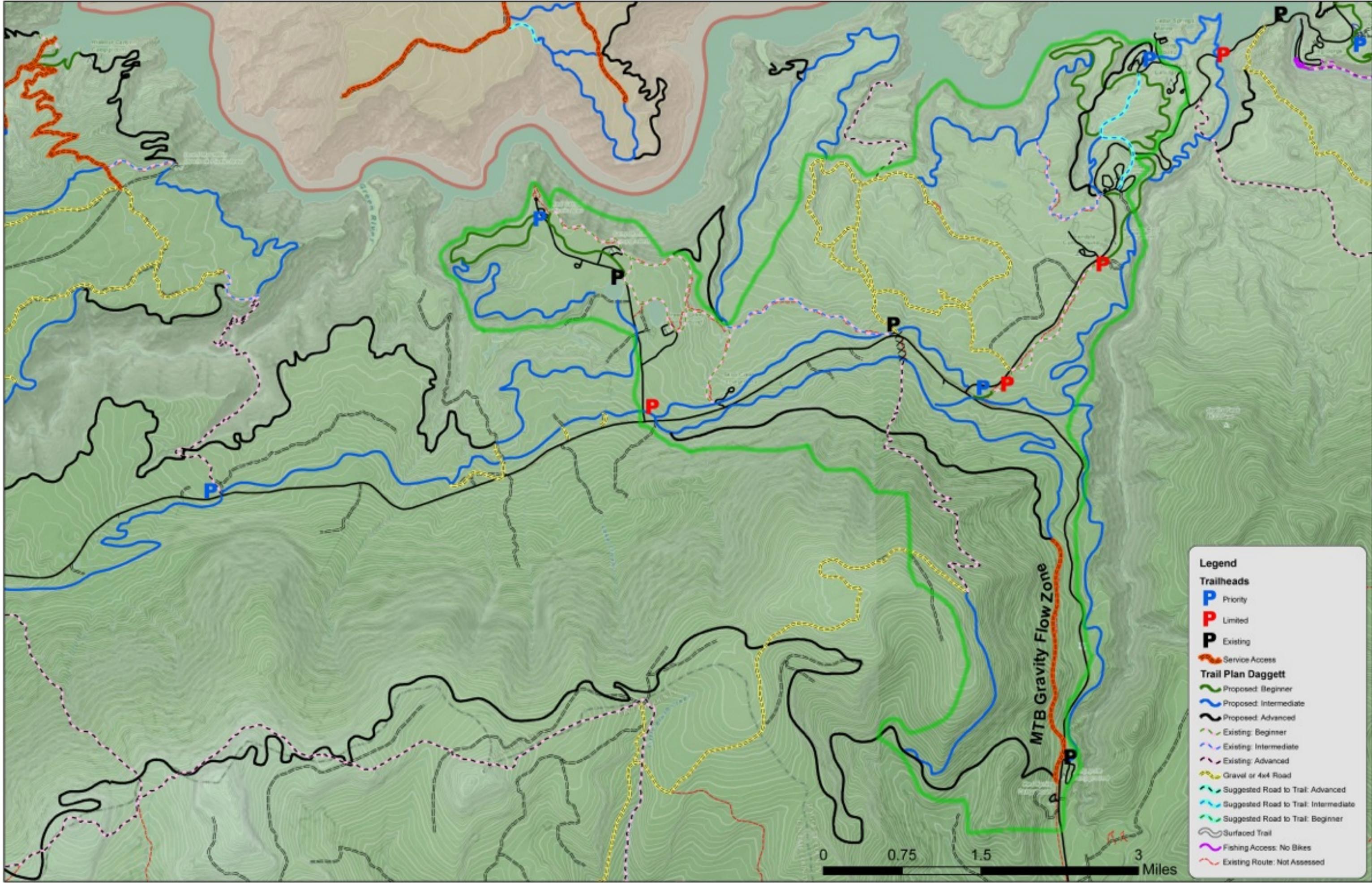
**Trail Plan Daggett**

- Proposed: Beginner
- Proposed: Intermediate
- Proposed: Advanced
- - - Existing: Beginner
- - - Existing: Intermediate
- - - Existing: Advanced
- - - Gravel or 4x4 Road
- - - Suggested Road to Trail: Advanced
- - - Suggested Road to Trail: Intermediate
- - - Suggested Road to Trail: Beginner
- Surfaced Trail
- - - Fishing Access: No Bikes
- - - Existing Route: Not Assessed



## Red Canyon

New	
Green	9.8
Blue	38.5
Black	14.6
White	0.5
R2T	
Green	0.0
Blue	1.5
Existing	
Green	6.4
Blue	3.3
Black	3.6
Double Track	
Green	7.8
Blue	0.7
Black	0.0



Bare Top Mountain: HUNTING - Seasonally Closed to Bikes

**Legend**

**Trailheads**

- P** Priority
- P** Limited
- P** Existing

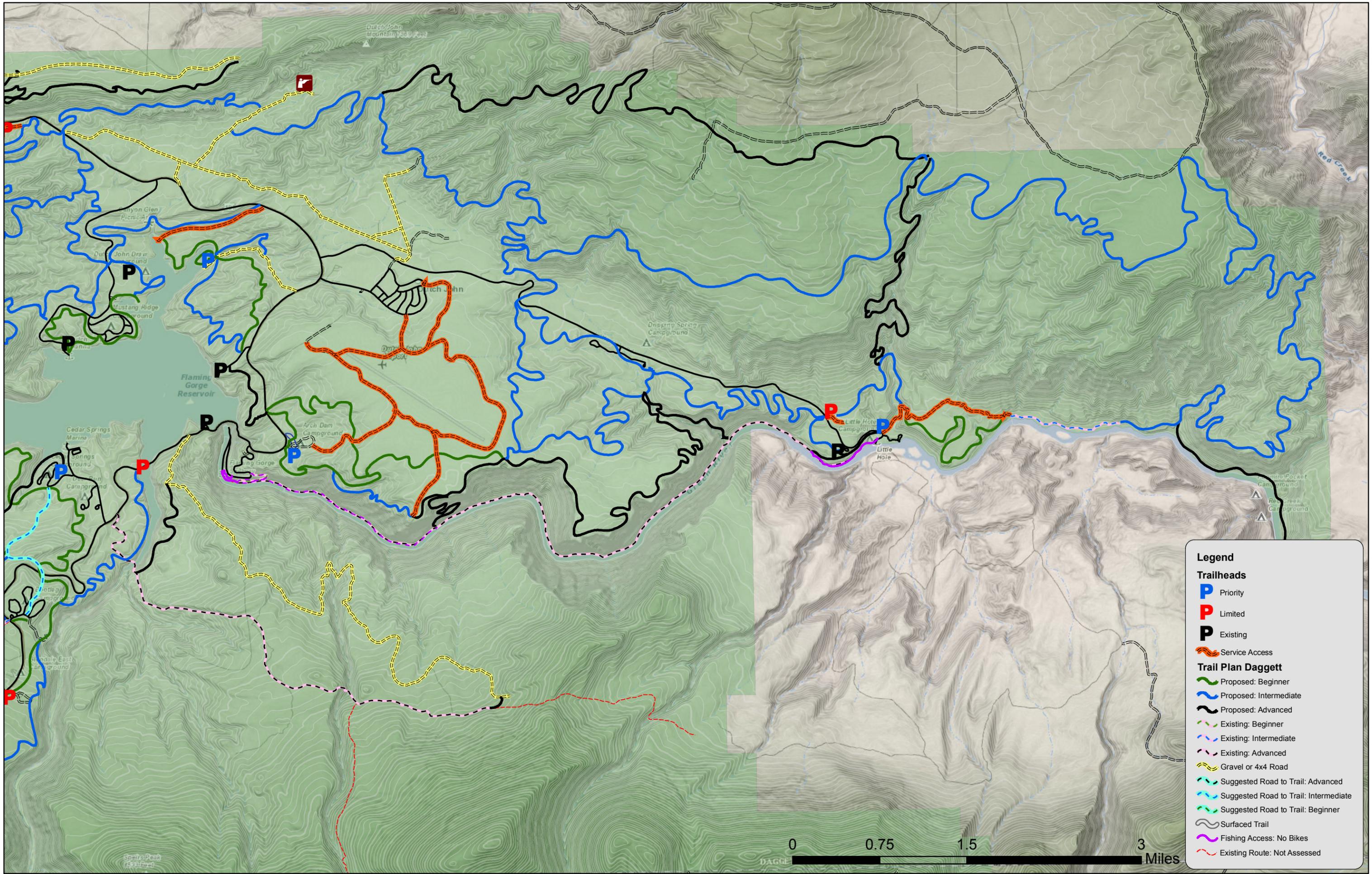
**Service Access**

- Orange dashed line

**Trail Plan Daggett**

- Green wavy line: Proposed: Beginner
- Blue wavy line: Proposed: Intermediate
- Black wavy line: Proposed: Advanced
- Green dashed line: Existing: Beginner
- Blue dashed line: Existing: Intermediate
- Black dashed line: Existing: Advanced
- Yellow dashed line: Gravel or 4x4 Road
- Cyan dashed line: Suggested Road to Trail: Advanced
- Light blue dashed line: Suggested Road to Trail: Intermediate
- Light green dashed line: Suggested Road to Trail: Beginner
- Grey dashed line: Surfaced Trail
- Purple dashed line: Fishing Access: No Bikes
- Red dashed line: Existing Route: Not Assessed





**Legend**

**Trailheads**

- P Priority
- P Limited
- P Existing

**Trail Plan Daggett**

- ~ Proposed: Beginner
- ~ Proposed: Intermediate
- ~ Proposed: Advanced
- ~ Existing: Beginner
- ~ Existing: Intermediate
- ~ Existing: Advanced
- ~ Gravel or 4x4 Road
- ~ Suggested Road to Trail: Advanced
- ~ Suggested Road to Trail: Intermediate
- ~ Suggested Road to Trail: Beginner
- ~ Surfaced Trail
- ~ Fishing Access: No Bikes
- ~ Existing Route: Not Assessed



Spring Creek  
9000 Feet

Dutch John  
Mountain  
7680 Feet

Red Creek

Flaming  
Gorge  
Reservoir

Cedar Springs  
Marine  
Springs  
Campground

Arch Dam  
Campground

Little Hole  
Campground

Red Creek  
Campground

Little Hole  
East  
Campground

Photiey  
Campground

Mustang Ridge  
Campground

Mustang Ridge  
Campground

Canyon Glen  
Picnic Area

Mustang Ridge  
Campground

Dutch John

Dropping Spring  
Campground

Dutch John  
Campground

Little Hole  
East  
Campground

Photiey  
Campground

Mustang Ridge  
Campground

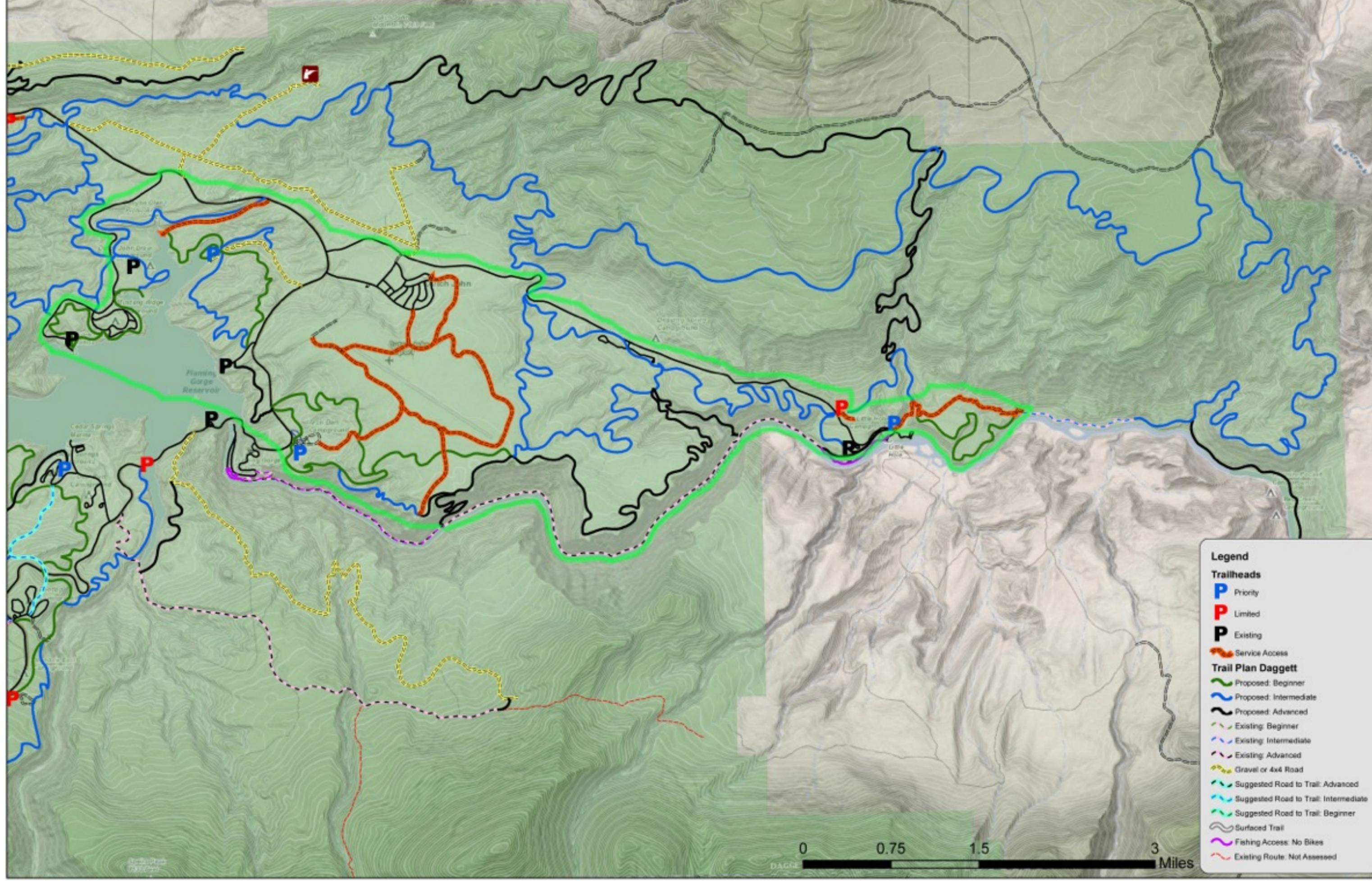
Mustang Ridge  
Campground

Canyon Glen  
Picnic Area

Mustang Ridge  
Campground

# Dutch John

New	
Green	12.5
Blue	25.7
Black	8.3
R2T	
Green	0
Blue	0
Existing	
Green	0
Blue	0
Black	6.9
Double Track	
Green	0
Blue	0
Black	0



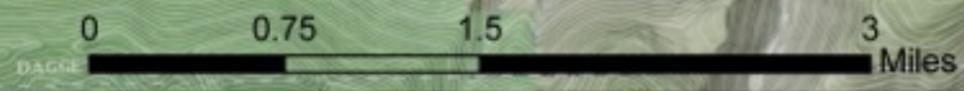
**Legend**

**Trailheads**

- P Priority
- P Limited
- P Existing

**Trail Plan Daggett**

- Service Access
- Proposed: Beginner
- Proposed: Intermediate
- Proposed: Advanced
- - - Existing: Beginner
- - - Existing: Intermediate
- - - Existing: Advanced
- - - Gravel or 4x4 Road
- - - Suggested Road to Trail: Advanced
- - - Suggested Road to Trail: Intermediate
- - - Suggested Road to Trail: Beginner
- Surfaced Trail
- Fishing Access: No Bikes
- - - Existing Route: Not Assessed



GeoData  
2023

DAGGETT