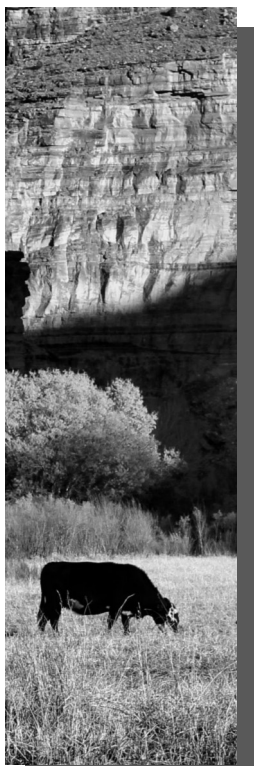




# :Nine Mile Canyon Coalition News

Fall 2015

ninemilecanyoncoalition.org



## President's Message

Dennis Willis

*It has been over a year now we have been driving the new and improved Nine Mile Canyon Road. I must confess, I like it. I do not miss the dust and buckboard ride of the old road although I carry those memories. With the passage of time, memories become more fond than the actual experiences.*

*We still see mighty forces shake and shape the canyon to this very day, despite society's efforts at civilizing the place. When side canyons flash flood, nature, despite being channelized into the big dips, decides whether we can safely travel. Clean road shoulders, borrow ditches and newly installed delimiter posts and signs give testimony to the fact the laws of gravity still apply in this canyon. Big rock falls still happen, sometimes crushing a few of those signs and posts. Before the shoulders were so well groomed the size and frequency of rock falls were masked by the overgrown roadside. I think about what might lie above much more than I ever did on the old road.*

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*On the new road it is harder to pull off and park at some of my, and probably some of your, favorite sites to visit. That is not entirely bad. It makes those favorite sites less accessible to the careless visitor and looter. That is another change brought about by the new road – the nature of the visitors has changed. Nine Mile Canyon used to be a destination for visitors. You had to want to go to Nine Mile. Now we are seeing more visitors for whom the canyon is an attraction site on the way to someplace else. This provides new challenges in visitor management and interpretation—challenges the Coalition will assist BLM in addressing as the agency revises the management plan and interpretive plan for Nine Mile Canyon.*

*Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find an article on what the Board has been up to. Suffice it to say the road ahead for the board will not be quite as smooth as a Sunday drive through Nine Mile Canyon. At present there are 13*

*projects in various stages of contemplation, active planning, and implementation. Each has the potential to dramatically affect the future conditions, character and experience of the canyon.*

*Sometime, you may hear the Coalition is a radical environmental group, interested only in stopping projects. Nothing could be further from the truth. Rumors to the contrary, the Coalition never opposed or tried to stop paving the road. We were very concerned over the details of how it was accomplished but not opposed to the concept. In fact we have stopped some ill-conceived, poorly planned projects. The only joy to be found in those cases was we protected canyon resources for another day. We prefer our role to be proactive. Nine Mile Canyon is a unique and special place. Any project proponent needs to know we will be insisting their project be done using best practices with an eye to protecting the resources, including the landscape character. Too often these conflicts are made into a false dichotomy: "Do you want a gas pipeline or would you rather freeze in the dark." The reality is there are usually many shades of gray. The Coalition advocates for productive harmony and excellent action that all parties can take pride in. May we all take pride in doing our part in supporting Coalition efforts to keep Nine Mile Canyon special and unique for ourselves and generations to follow.*

## ☸ Misfires, Hang Fires and Irons in the Fire

What the Board of Directors is working on  
*Dennis Willis*  
*President, Nine Mile Canyon Coalition*

Much as I would like to write this column as a natural history essay; the job of the Coalition Board remains primarily concerned with coordination with various management agencies and riding herd of the numerous projects proposed for the canyon. It is a challenge because things tend to drag on forever until they happen quickly. An announcement is made and we are faced with a 30 day or less deadline to speak or forever hold our peace on reviewing up to several hundred pages of documents. Here is a list of our current irons in the fire and pulses we are keeping a finger on:

- **Ongoing monitoring and compliance with the West Tavaputs Programmatic Agreement (PA):** BLM's ability to complete their obligations under the PA has been hit or miss, largely miss for items we care about dearly

such as site stewardship and interpretation.

- **BLM Plan for Cultural Resources in the Canyon:** In September 2014, the BLM requested public comments for consideration in their plan. Specifically, they wanted alternative courses of action, identification of issues and impacts and mitigation for those impacts. The Coalition provided detailed comments as part of the process. We have also had several meetings with the BLM on the topic. At this point, we are awaiting the release of the draft plan that will probably be released with a 30 day comment period.
- **Interpretive Plan and Implementation:** It appears the BLM will not take on the interpretive plan until after the above plan is finished. The Coalition has offered both money and volunteer time to move this process along. Thus far, there has been no interest in taking us up on it. By the terms of the PA, the interpretive plan should have been completed in 2012 and interpretive media installed in the canyon. We are very concerned

about the delay. The PA provides a funding source for interpretation but that funding is only guaranteed if the expenditures take place before 2020.

- **Gate Canyon Road Improvement:** This project entails straightening and paving from the top of Wells Draw through Gate Canyon. The Coalition has been granted consulting party status on the project. To date we have not seen a final proposal to consult on. The project involves cutting through several points and ledges to straighten the road. This will entail the removal of some historic axle grease signature panels and obliteration of “The Ledge” campsite. We obviously are concerned over the loss of historic resources, a 50 mph speed limit on semi-trucks coming down a 6% grade. We have submitted comments for mitigating the loss of cultural resources and suggested a slower speed limit and some speed control on the road. Part of the mitigation we have asked for is preservation of the character of the old, abandoned road segment between Gate Canyon and Wells Draw. This is the last place where visitors could get the experience of what the road was really like back in the freighting and settlement days.
- **State of Utah TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) determinations for Nine Mile Creek:** I won't bore you with the intricacies of TMDL. Basically it is an approach to addressing the water quality of the stream. Nine Mile Creek has some water quality issues pertaining to water temperature and nutrients - particularly phosphorus. The State's initial proposal was to lower the classification of the stream, basically to say the degraded conditions were OK. Thanks in large part to Coalition efforts, the State is currently looking at improving rather

than accepting the current condition.

- **DC Express Pipeline:** This project is discussed in detail in another article in this newsletter.
- **Carbon County Road Improvements:** Carbon County proposed road improvements including raising the grade and drainage structure adjacent to the Family Panel. The Coalition has concerns over impacts to the stream and cultural resources. BLM has suspended the project until a full evaluation has been completed and right of way process completed. We will engage on this issue once a formal proposal has been announced.
- **XTO Drilling on the West Tavaputs:** There are a number of unanswered questions on this project. A major concern for the Coalition is whether it will require additional pipelines and compressors to be installed in the canyon. This project is currently on hold with the BLM but undoubtedly we will have to respond quickly when the hold is lifted.
- **Carbon County Salt Shed:** Carbon and Duchesne Counties want to have a shed to stockpile salt in the canyon for snow removal operations. Great idea but the devil is in the details. We are suggesting a site location and design that would blend in with the more rural character of the canyon. Making a shed that looks more like a barn or manger instead of a UDOT standard issue salt shed would go a long way to preserving the character of the canyon.
- **Water Load Outs:** The energy industry has acquired agricultural water rights in Nine Mile Creek and converted them to industrial use. They take water from the creek near the mouths of Harmon and Cottonwood Canyons. On our spring cleanup trip, we identified a number of problems with the construction and operation of these facilities. The need for

toilets and garbage disposal was evidenced by unsightly and unsanitary conditions in the immediate vicinity. To their credit, EnerVest cleaned up these messes as soon as they were notified of the problems. The sites are on public lands and should be covered by BLM rights of way. BLM assures us rights of way will be in place before any new drilling starts up. We of course plan to become involved in the right of way process to ensure Coalition concerns are adequately addressed.

- **BLM Statewide Travel and Transportation PA:** This is another programmatic agreement development project that while not Nine Mile Canyon specific, has potential to affect Nine Mile Canyon and the West Tavaputs Plateau. It will indirectly effect cultural resources outside the canyon, in the Basin and San Rafael Swell that have connections to Nine Mile Canyon sites. We are working with the Utah Rock Art Research Association and Colorado Plateau Archaeological Alliance on this one.
- **BLM Oil and Gas Leasing:** BLM holds quarterly oil and gas lease sales in Utah. We review and comment on leases proposed for Nine Mile and the West Tavaputs Plateau. Reviewing lease sales is a big job involving hundreds of pages of documents and BLM

does not make it particularly easy. Even when leases are not proposed in our wheelhouse, we often give help and support to URARA, CCAA and others, since we know we can count on them to help and support us when Nine Mile Canyon is in the crosshairs.

- **Bruin Point Tar Sands Mining Project:** The board has not decided whether we will engage on this project. Our concerns would be water quality in the streams and springs coming off of Bruin Point and increased industrial traffic through Nine Mile and Cottonwood Canyons. This project would potentially intercept groundwater flow in the Dry Canyon, Cottonwood Canyon and Range Creek drainages. A large tailings pond is planned with potential to pollute Dry Canyon and Cottonwood Creeks. The ownership is all private, so permitting issues would be addressed with Utah Division of Oil Gas and Mining and Department of Environmental Quality.

Then of course there are the projects that are much more fun to work on; Fall Gathering, Spring Cleanup, Project Discovery summer program and stewardship days in September. I must say we do an admirable job on all of them for a small non-profit, run entirely by volunteers with no paid staff.



Nine Mile Canyon Coalition

### Board of Directors

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XTO Energy, a subsidiary of Exxon-Mobile, was the high bidder for four parcels located on Horse Bench above Nine Mile Canyon in a November 2011 oil and gas lease sale. In November 2014, the Bureau of Land Management – Price Field Office (BLM-PFO) signed a Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA), allowing XTO to drill seven wells from a single well pad. The location is much further east than Bill Barrett Corporation (BBC) or EnerVest have drilled up until now, pursuant to the West Tavaputs Plateau Environmental Impact Statement (WTP EIS) and is very near the Desolation Canyon Wilderness Study Area. Other BBC and EnerVest proposals have required additional NEPA actions, so this action taken by the BLM surprised many conservation organizations, including the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition.

On April 24, 2015, the Coalition sent scoping comments to the BLM-PFO, urging them to consider the following issues:

1. We have great concern for the need to develop duplicative infrastructure in the form of pipelines and compressors located in Nine Mile Canyon and tributary canyons. Our preferred solution would be for XTO to reach agreements with EnerVest to handle the production from this field. The existing Dry Canyon compressor facility is unnecessarily and unduly loud and visually intrusive. Nine Mile Canyon should not suffer the insult of another one of these poorly designed and executed compressor stations. Extraordinary efforts were used to meet Visual Resource Management (VRM) standards for the Bill Barrett Corporation pipelines. This mitigation should also apply to any new XTO pipelines.
2. Adding compressors not only raises issues of noise and visual intrusion, they also cause concern for air quality. There should be a commitment to air quality monitoring in Nine Mile Canyon. We know ozone exceeds standards at times in the Uinta Basin. That problem may include Nine Mile Canyon but there is insufficient monitoring to verify. We know ozone is a strong oxidizer that prematurely degrades many painted surfaces. The effects

of ozone on ancient pictograph paints has not been studied to our knowledge. It seems likely increased ozone could be an adverse effect to most organic artifacts including paints, basketry, leather and wood materials. Air quality is routinely monitored in all museums containing great artworks or historic artifacts. Nine Mile Canyon has often been described as an outdoor museum. Therefore, it is also worthy of air quality monitoring.

3. We are unaware of any technique for meaningful reclamation of shallow rocky soils over bedrock. We request reclamation potential of the project area be considered in this EA. As recommended mitigation, we suggest minimizing digging into the native surface.
4. Source of drilling water is a concern. The existing water load outs in Nine Mile Canyon at Cottonwood and Harmon are in horrendous condition. They likely violate storm runoff rules and are contaminating the creek both with sediment and hydrocarbons. BLM holds water rights on Nine Mile Creek and owns important lands at the mouth of the creek. The confluence of Nine Mile Creek and the Green River is critical habitat for endangered fish of the Green River. Given the volume and nature of activity in the watershed and history of spills and leaks we recommend a system of quarterly monitoring of the water quality of Nine Mile Creek.
5. As always, the Coalition has an interest in the archaeological survey of the project area and compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The plateau top has not received the intensity of cultural inventory as the canyon bottoms. The cultural resources have for the most part, not been discovered by the public. The remoteness of the plateau has long protected it from intensive visitation. With the road improvements the area is becoming much more known and accessible.

We will keep you informed of this proposed project as it progresses.

We first became acquainted with a proposed crude oil pipeline running from Duchesne County to Carbon County (“DC Express Pipeline”) when we attended a briefing with Jones & DeMille Engineering and Carbon County Commissioner Jae Potter. That was in the spring of 2014 and the project was known as the 670 Pipeline. The commissioner was soliciting the support of the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition. We know the devil is in the details and will not support any proposal until all the details are worked out. At that time, the project proponent was 670 LLC and a six county infrastructure group. The basics of the proposal were for a 16 to 20 inch pipeline to bring crude oil from the Uinta Basin to the Wellington area. It would follow the route of the Questar Loop Pipeline, entering Nine Mile Canyon at Water Canyon, running up Nine Mile and exiting the Canyon to the south on the Nutter Ranch. An eight inch pipeline would also be installed to bring diesel fuel from Carbon County back to Myton. There would be a processing plant in Myton that would make the normally thick waxy crude pourable down to about 35 degrees. A refinery of some type would be located in the Wellington area that would make diesel fuel from the processed crude. A large diesel powered pump station would be located in the bottom of Nine Mile Canyon.

In November, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) posted the project on their Environmental Notification Bulletin Board. In January, the BLM indicated the project was on indefinite hold

pending a more complete plan of development from the project proponents. Since then, even the proponents have changed. The six county infrastructure group is no longer a funding partner in the project. Carbon County protested the project but we have heard, without verification, they now support it again. The BLM and the Coalition are still waiting for a full plan of development.

Our last briefing with Jones & DeMille was in early June. The project has evolved from the original proposal. The changes are an improvement for the scenic values and cultural resources of Nine Mile Canyon. A new pipeline route is in play. The proposal is to establish a drilling location in the bottom of Nine Mile Canyon, still near Water Canyon. Rather than the usual trench and backfill construction, a hole would be bored to the top of the canyon in both directions. The pipeline would be pulled through the bores and connected at the bore site, located in Nutter Ranch pasture. There would be no surface disturbance in the canyon outside the bore site and the only surface facilities would be some block valves. The eight inch pipeline will now carry carbon dioxide rather than diesel.

Even though from our standpoint, the project is much improved over the first draft, we still have concerns and will reserve judgement until there is a complete plan of development on file with the BLM and public scoping has commenced. Our remaining/additional concerns are as follows:

The plan is for an applicant prepared EA, contracted to Jones & DeMille. We could probably go along if the proposal were just to install a tube from Myton to Wellington. We feel an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by BLM or a third party contractor is most appropriate here for the following reasons:

**Alternatives** - The purpose and need is to move Uinta Basin oil to someplace, a railhead in this case or processing facility. There are several alternatives presently in the works. There are at least three other pipeline proposals and a couple of refinery proposals within the Uinta Basin. We believe all deserve consideration, rather than just having a race to see who can build first. Since the DC pipeline would have capacity to take all of the current Basin production, if utilized at near capacity that would not leave much for other worthy alternatives.

**Unproven business model** - As far as we can tell, it is unprecedented in the industry for a startup that has no oil production, refining or need for product to go into business simply moving product through 70 miles of pipeline. BLM is entitled to ask 670 Corp to demonstrate its capability, but they have thus far been reluctant to do so.

**Connected actions** - Beyond the tube itself there will be a big processing facility in Myton and some sort of facilities (topping plant? Refinery?) in Wellington. Both will no doubt need large tank batteries and raise air quality issues. Even if the product comes out of the tube in Wellington and goes directly into rail cars, there is still the connected action of where those trains go, how many trips, risks to communities they pass

through etc. There was also discussion on our field trip of the DC pipe, of also taking production from Colorado via the existing Chevron pipeline. Also the plan includes an 8 inch CO2 line to run from Wellington back to Myton. So all the same questions about processing, handling and storage of CO2 on both sides of the project need answers.

**Unknown impacts arising from new, unproven technology** - The plant they propose to use to process waxy crude to make it flow at lower temperatures is new and only been demonstrated at a few hundred barrels per day. That is a long way from 120,000 barrels per day. It raises questions about air emissions, by and waste products, water consumption, volatility of the final product and simple properties of the final product. When waxy crude spills into surface water it congeals into big tar balls that are simple and easy to recover. How does the new product behave in water?

**A whole host of air quality questions** - We know there is an air quality problem on the Uinta Basin side. In Castle Valley we just do not know, as there is not enough air quality monitoring to form a baseline. Currently, we are only monitored for ozone – nothing for particulates, NOX or other pollutants. When there is not a pollution event in the Basin or Wasatch Front, Price frequently has the highest ozone in the state. Background seems to run 50 – 60+. That does not leave a lot of room between background and the current EPA standard of 75. If the EPA, as expected, lowers the standard to something in the 60-70 range there is even less room for more pollution.

# Nine Mile Canyon Coalition Fall Gathering

September 18, 19, 20, 2015 at the Nine Mile Ranch

Reservations for camping and cabins call 435.637.2572

Friday 18th, Dinner around 6:00pm, we have been invited to join Project Discovery for a pot luck dinner at the Nine Mile Ranch lower campground. They are serving grilled hot dogs, brats and hamburgers, and will have all the fixing. If you would like to bring sides or desserts that would be great but not necessary. Bring your camp chair and drink, water will be provided. After dinner there will be a talk by Rick Chapoose, campfire and music.

-- Breakfast on your own --

Saturday 19th, 10:00am to 3:30pm, we are joining Project Discovery for Nine Mile Canyon Stewardship Day. Project Discovery is a mix of students and Professional Archeologists. Their message and goal is preservation. They will be setup in the canyon at different sites, with information and educational activities. Professional Archeologists Kevin Jones, Tim Riley and Jody Patterson will be in the Canyon Saturday.

-- Bring your own Lunch, Water --

5:00pm - Dinner at the Nine Mile Ranch Pavilion - Dutch Oven pork chops, mushroom gravy, Dutch oven potatoes, broccoli, rolls, dessert, water, tea, lemonade. This repast will be provided by award winning Dutch Oven Artisans Toni and Bill Thayn. @ \$15.00 a plate

After Dinner Speaker - To be Announced

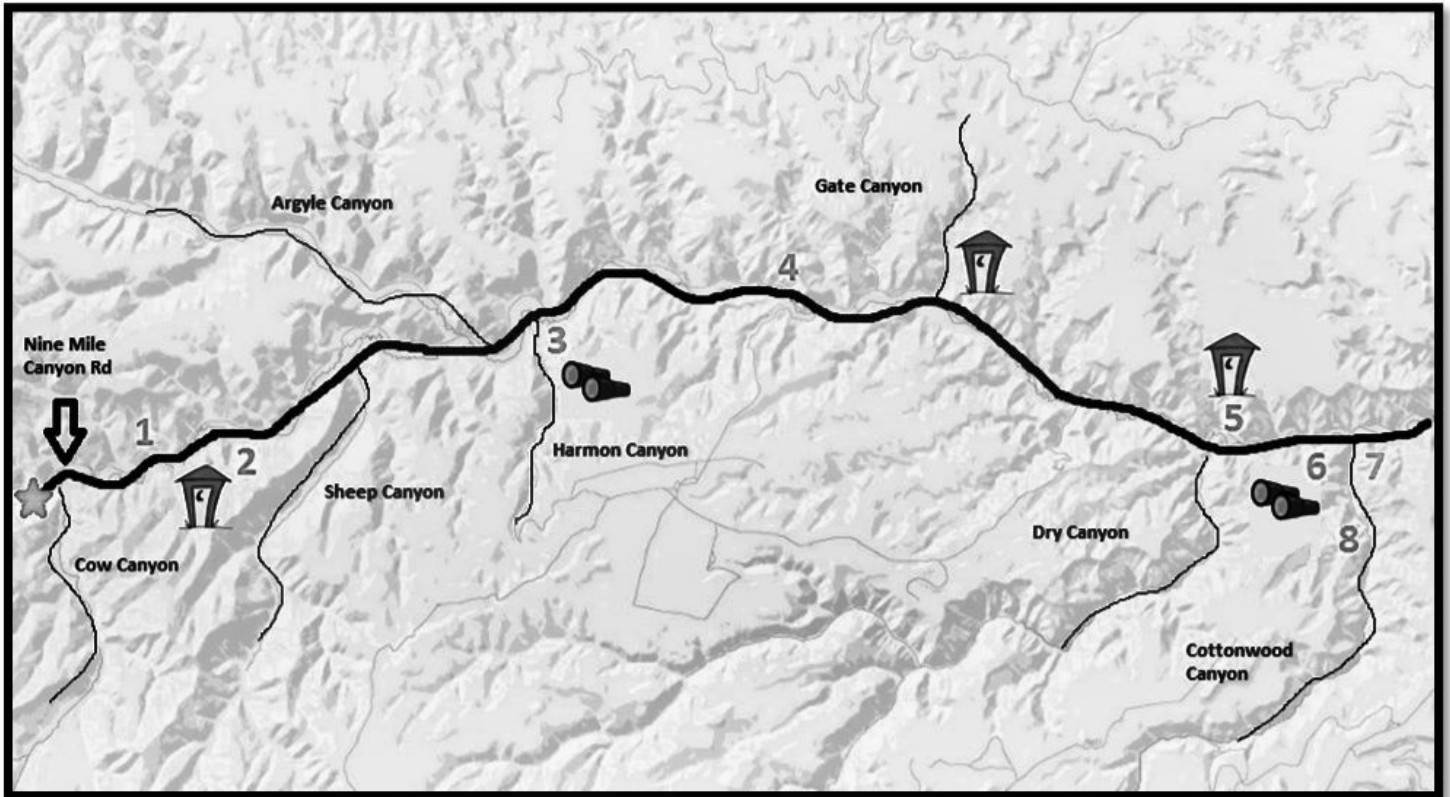
2015 T-Shirt Design

Mysterious Messages  
Nine Mile Canyon





# NINE MILE CANYON STEWARDSHIP DAY MAP



At the turn off from the Wellington Chevron gas station, set your odometer to 0 miles. The mileages below are estimates.

☆ Visitor table

1. (26.6 mi) First Site: pictograph vs. petroglyph, information about the Fremont
2. (27.7 mi) Picnic Area/Activities: hands-on activities, conversations with experts; atlatl, corn grinding, “Ask An Archaeologist” table, educational artifact boxes; restrooms here
3. (33.8 mi) Harmon Canyon: view several complex rock art panels with binoculars (binoculars provided)
4. (36.0 mi) Sandhill Crane Panel: view rock art – horned snakes, birds, sheep, elk
  - (38.5 mi) Gate Canyon restrooms
5. (44.0 mi) Rasmussen Cave: bedrock metates and “dancing sheep”; use a compass to determine the direction of a panel face and sketch an image on graph paper (materials provided); restrooms here
6. (45.1mi) Cottonwood Village: hike a short path up a slope to see the remains of pithouses; use a spotting scope to view a granary
7. (45.7 mi) Pregnant Buffalo: view rock art, sketch an image with charcoal (materials provided)
8. (46.0 mi) Great Hunt Panel: perhaps the most famous site in the canyon, turn in survey forms

Have your binoculars ready!

Keep an eye out for the restrooms!



## ☺ Nine Mile Canyon Stewardship Day

Nine Mile Canyon Stewardship Day is an event planned and hosted by Project Discovery, a non-profit organization that teaching archaeology to high school age students. It is an opportunity for you to visit “the world’s longest art gallery,” and learn about the ancient Fremont, who thrived there hundreds of years ago. As you drive down the canyon, you can stop at its most famed sites, where site stewards will answer your questions, lead educational activities, and share the canyon’s history. Nine Mile Road is paved and easy to travel in any type of car.

The Nine Mile Canyon Coalition will be joining with Project Discovery for this event on Saturday, September 19th, as part of this year’s Fall Gathering. We hope you will be able to attend!

## Nine Mile Canyon Ranch 2015



435-637-2572



### Campsites

\$15.00 Per Vehicle Per Night (2 people)  
\$3.00 Each Additional Person over 5  
\$3.00 Per Dog  
\$3.00 Per Shower

### Cabins

Prices are for 2 people, per night,  
Additional people \$5.00 each per night  
\$60.00 Creek view Cabin (Sleeps 6)  
\$60.00 Housekeeper Cabin  
(Sleeps 8 with a loft)  
\$50.00 Thompson Cabin (Sleeps 4)

### Other Amenities

Free R.V. Dump, Good Spring Water, Fire Pits, Picnic Tables and Flushable Toilets  
Pavilion \$50.00 per day  
Guided Tours - \$25.00 Per Person (\$150.00 Minimum)  
Dutch Ovens Dinner - \$20.00 Per Person, all you can eat  
(12 Person Minimum), Children (6-12) \$7.00, 5 and under Free