

The Catwalk Interpretive Plan

Prepared and Submitted by

Interpretive Arts Unlimited!

A USDA Forest Service Enterprise Team



Gila National Forest



Glenwood Ranger District

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The Catwalk Interpretive Plan

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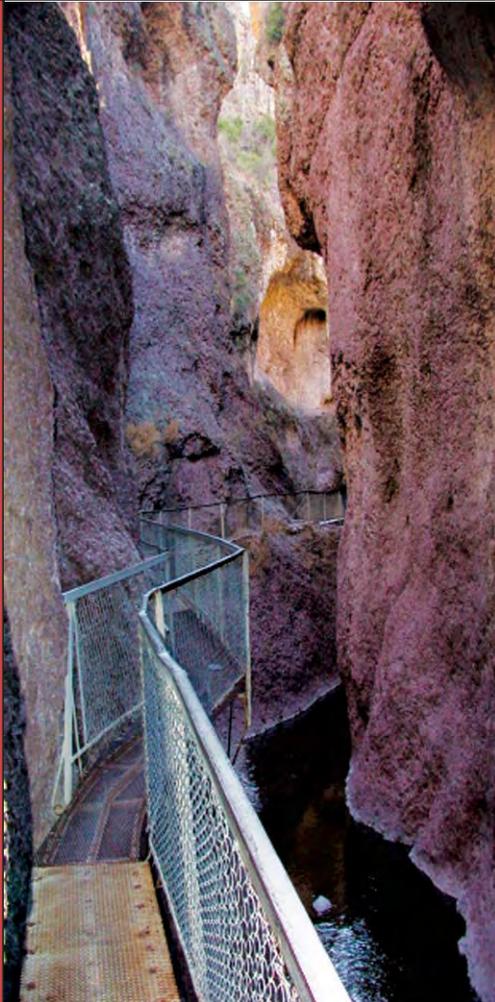
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The Catwalk Exhibit and Landscape Design Plan

Details of the interpretive exhibits and settings are documented in this companion plan.

Plan Introduction



The Catwalk Interpretive Plan is the result of a collaborative effort to capture the essence of the Catwalk in response to visitors' requests for interpretation at the site. Site managers, community members, scientists, and interpreters all contributed their knowledge about, and passion for, the Catwalk. Together, these participants identified interpretive themes, goals, objectives, and targeted audiences. These elements are the foundation of the plan and will be the foundation for all interpretation relating to the Catwalk area. The interpretive plan ensures that the needs of visitors, as well as site managers, will be satisfied.

Part A of this document presents the foundation of the interpretive plan. This section discusses visitor profile, natural history of the site, community setting, and management of the site. The design guidelines presented in Part A are intended to help site managers fit the interpretive program into the natural and cultural context of the area, and will also unify the different aspects and media of the interpretive work.

Part B discusses the implementation of the plan, showing how and where the interpretive themes, goals, and objectives will be met, satisfying the targeted audiences. The implementation section is designed to allow site managers to respond to changing visitor and management needs while still providing a solid interpretive foundation and continuity.

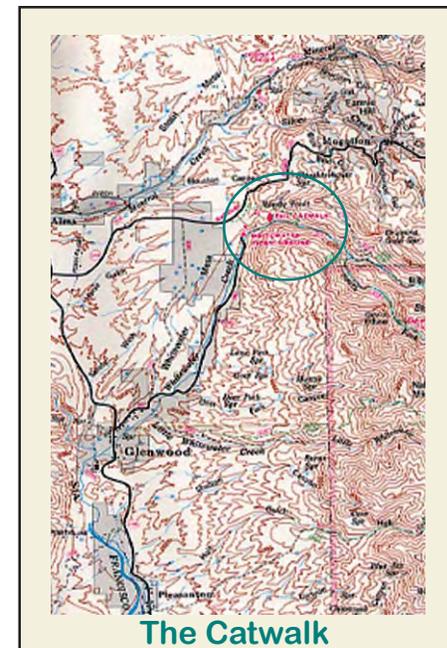
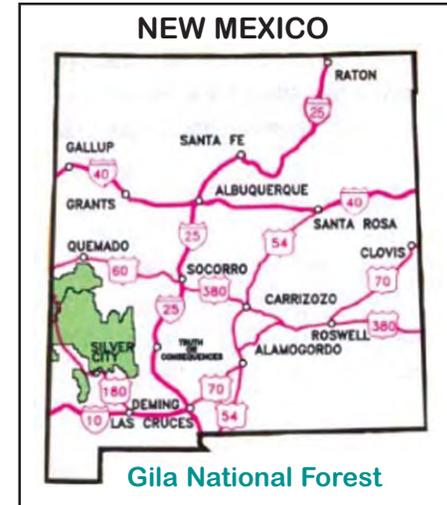
The Exhibit and Landscape Plan documents the details of the interpretive exhibits and settings. This plan provides interpretive text, panel layout and design, exhibit and setting designs, and overall landscape design.

Site Introduction

The Catwalk Recreation Area is located in New Mexico in the Glenwood Ranger District within the 3.3-million-acre Gila National Forest, approximately 5 miles northeast of the town of Glenwood. The Recreation Area follows Whitewater Creek, a ribbon of life running through a dry, rocky landscape, into Whitewater Canyon. The recreation area includes picnic areas and a spectacular 1.1-mile hike through the narrow canyon carved by Whitewater Creek. For a portion of the journey, visitors are suspended over the creek on a metal catwalk hung on the wall of the canyon. The trail never ventures far away from the creek. Visitors walk next to the creek, cross over bridges, and walk through a keyhole made by two huge boulders.

Whitewater Canyon is a beautiful place, a rich riparian area with lush sycamore trees, clear pools, and cascading water. In addition to their present-day attractions, the canyon and creek offer hints of a dynamic geological and human past. The pre-historic Mogollon people probably hunted and gathered food in the area, though periodic flooding has swept away all physical evidence of their presence. More recently, the Apaches used this area extensively.

From 1893 to 1912, the town of Graham flourished around a silver and gold ore processing mill located where the picnic area is today. A 3-mile pipeline brought water from Whitewater Creek down the canyon to the mill. Later, in the mid-1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps developed the area for recreational use. Since then, the Forest Service has expanded and modified the recreational facilities, often in response to changes wrought by major floods. The Catwalk National Recreation Trail, designated in 1978, encompasses the 1.1-mile Catwalk hike and continues another 1.1 mile up the canyon to where the South Fork joins Whitewater Creek, at the edge of the Gila Wilderness.



Visitor Introduction

Catwalk visitors

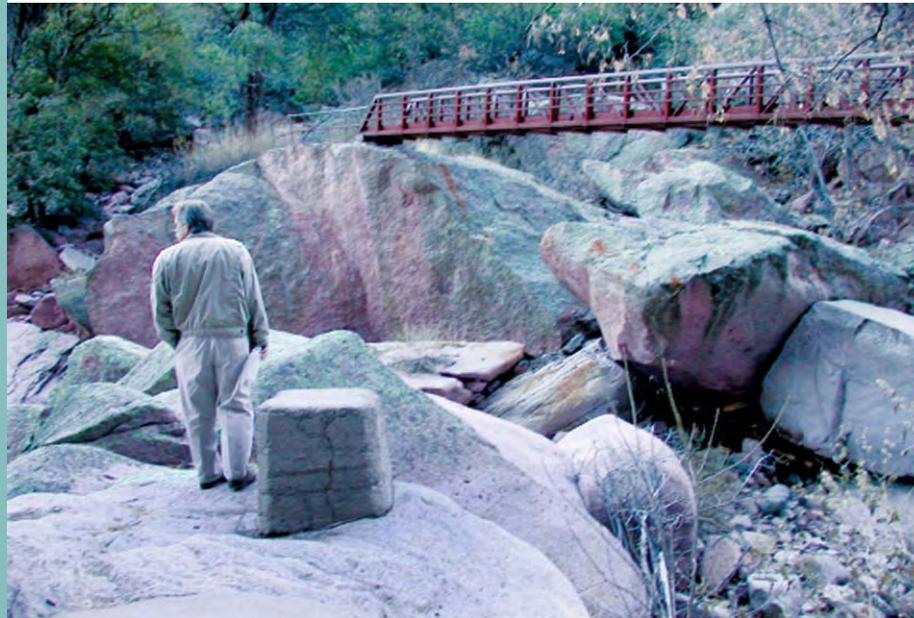
Tourists
Organized groups
Social groups
Local and area residents

About 50,000 people visit the Catwalk Recreation Area every year. Late fall, winter, and early spring bring only a modest number of “snowbirds” and other visitors, but the number of visitors, especially children, peaks in the summer. Most people come on the weekend; in the summer, about two-thirds of the visitors come on Saturday and Sunday.

Visitors to the Catwalk are diverse. They may come from the local area, the region, elsewhere in the United States, or anywhere in the world. People of all levels of education and income, all ages, and all ethnicities

enjoy spending time here. English and Spanish are the languages most often heard in the canyon.

For the purposes of this plan, visitors are divided into four categories: tourists, organized groups, social groups, and local and area residents.



Visitors at the Catwalk, continued

Tourists

Tourists may have heard or read about the Catwalk from friends, Web sites, local tourist centers or publications, or one of the occasional articles about the Catwalk in newspapers and magazines around the country. Many of them visit the site only once.

Different aspects of the Catwalk draw different tourists. Some are drawn by the unusual prospect of walking on the metal walkway suspended from the canyon wall. Others—ecotourists, a fast-growing segment of the touring public—are drawn by the opportunity to see the canyon's birds and plants.

Still other tourists visit the Catwalk as part of a longer stay in the Gila National Forest. They may plan day hikes, visits to the nearby San Francisco Hot Springs, or extended backpacking or horseback trips into the Gila Wilderness.

Organized Groups

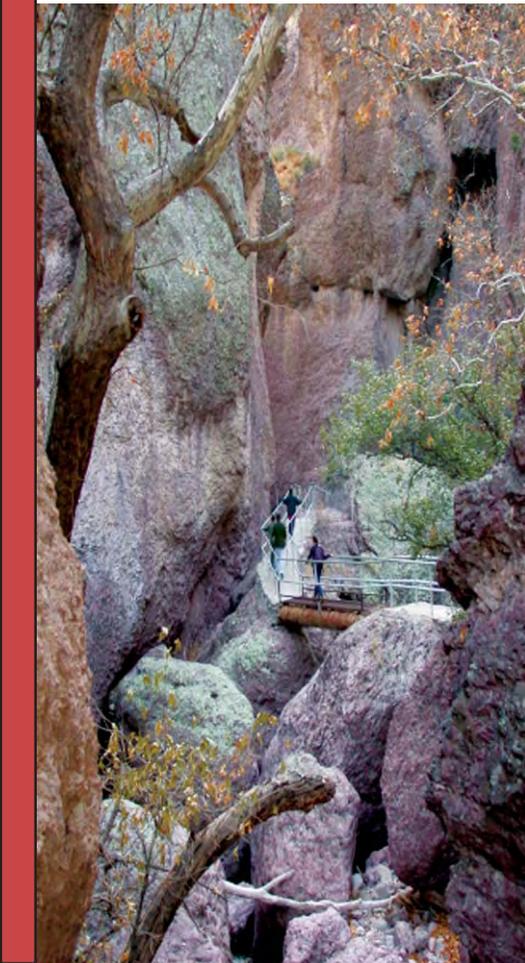
Organized groups, from schools, churches and scout organizations in Silver City, Las Cruces, El Paso, and even San Antonio, visit the Catwalk mostly in the late spring and summer. Some of these groups contact the Glenwood Ranger District to ask for special programs while they are there, but the majority of the groups go on their own. Some organized groups use the Catwalk only as a scenic background for their social activities. Others, especially the school and scout groups, pursue their own educational agenda during their visit.



Visitors at the Catwalk, *continued*

Social Groups

Visitors who come to the Catwalk in family or social groups return often. Many are local, from the immediate area around Glenwood or the small



towns within a 100-mile radius. Quite a few come from further away, especially Las Cruces and El Paso, and visitors from Texas seem to be a growing group.

Social groups may come because it is a tradition, or because the Catwalk is the closest shady riparian area to their homes. They come to picnic and to play in the water together with their extended family or friends. Children are a large part of this group. The holiday weekends of the summer—Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day—find the Catwalk crowded with many families spending the day at the picnic areas and in areas along Whitewater Creek. For these groups, the Catwalk is a pleasant backdrop for a social outing. The beauty of the area and uniqueness of the Catwalk are secondary to these visitors' enjoyment of each other's company.

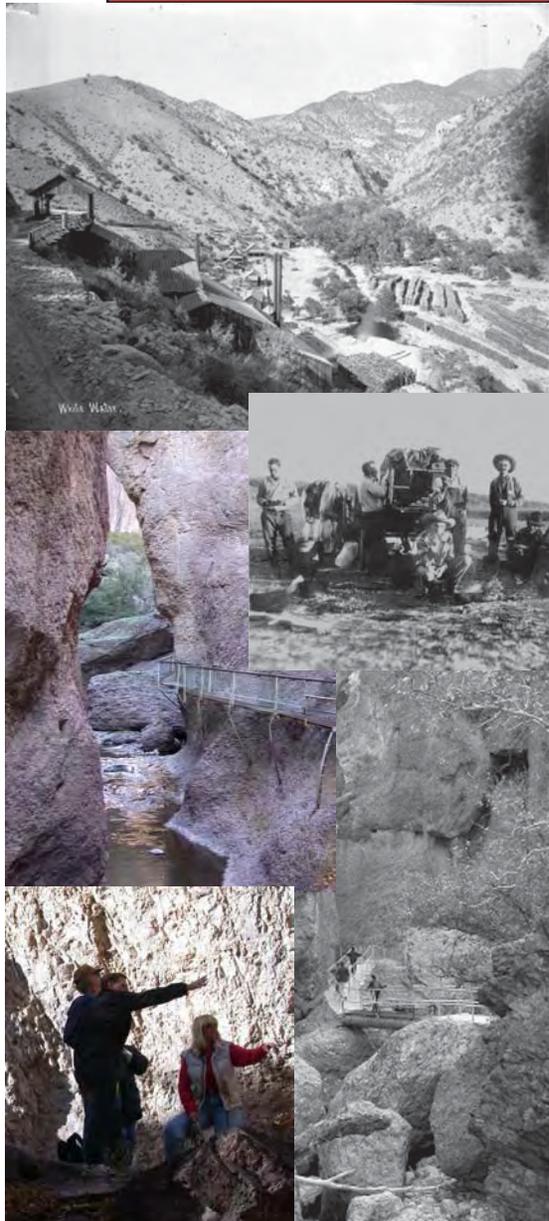
Local and Area Residents

Many people who live within a 100-mile radius enjoy the Catwalk year-round. Some residents of Glenwood, Pleasanton, and Alma, all within 10 miles of the site, make a point of not going to the Catwalk during peak times. They visit during the off-season, and in the summer, they can be found at the Catwalk during midweek, early morning, or late afternoon hours, when it is quieter and easier to feel a sense of solitude.

Local and area residents visit the Catwalk often. They usually come alone or with one or two others to quietly enjoy being in the forest, seeing and hearing the creek, and observing the seasonal changes that go on in nature. They enjoy showing the Catwalk to their friends and houseguests. Many local residents seem to feel a certain ownership of the Catwalk, and some have become "Friends of the Catwalk," volunteering their time leading nature walks, picking up trash, and so on in exchange for a \$10 yearly parking fee pass. Although there are some families with children in this group, most are middle-aged and older individuals, or couples whose children have grown.

Another group of local residents uses the Catwalk in an entirely different way. Teens and young adults have traditionally used the Catwalk, along with the Glenwood Community Park, to meet their friends after the normal visiting hours.

Theme, Subthemes, and Goals of the Catwalk Interpretive Plan



Theme

The Catwalk is a rugged Southwest canyon oasis that is relatively easy to enter over a historic route of bridges and a catwalk.

Subthemes

People have been attracted to the canyon since ancient times.

The creek creates an ecologically diverse ribbon of life in an otherwise dry landscape.

Goals

1. Natural history
Encourage a sense of familiarity with and appreciation for the natural aspects of the Catwalk's rich riparian area.
2. Cultural history
Enhance visitors' experience by providing an understanding of the dynamic cultural history of the area.
3. Local community
Increase visitors' interest in the surrounding area.
4. Management
Gain support for management of the Recreation Area.

Natural History

Natural History Goal

#1. Encourage a sense of familiarity with and appreciation for the natural aspects of the Catwalk's rich riparian area.

Objectives

1. Visitors will know that Whitewater Creek creates a diverse riparian area.
 - A. Visitors will know that the riparian area is home to plants and animals that have adapted to a continuum of dry and wet environments.
 - B. Visitors will be familiar with some of the plants and animals of the riparian area.
 - C. Visitors will understand that this riparian area is vulnerable to trampling and misuse.
 - D. Visitors will appreciate that this riparian area is unique because the plants are almost all native, and species common to both Mexico and the United States are found here.

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If you ask visitors what they remember most about the Catwalk, they usually mention the sycamore trees and walking on the metal catwalk. Visitors take home memories of the natural sights and sounds of the canyon as well as the hanging catwalk and other human-made objects from the past they have seen. Both aspects of the site, the natural history and the cultural history, are equally important and intimately connected.

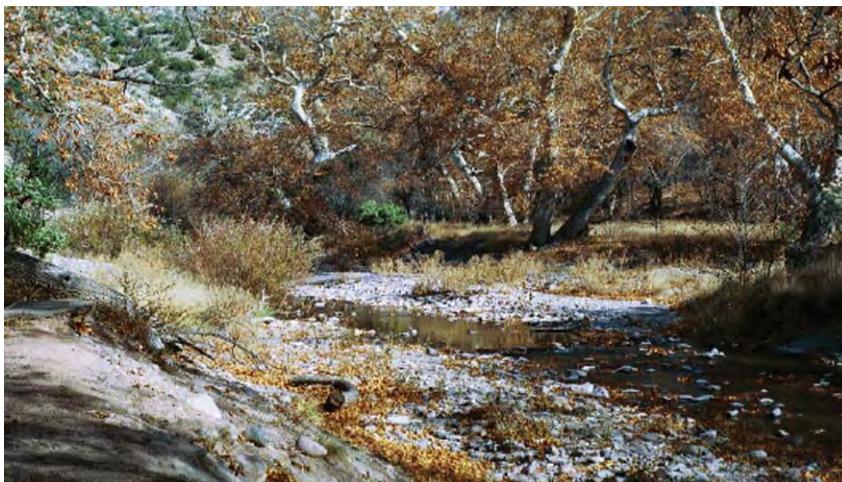
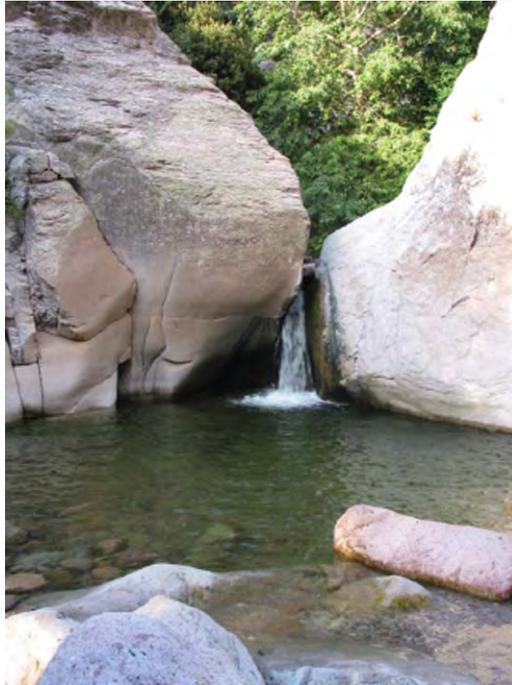
In contrast to the general landscape of the dry Southwest, the Catwalk is situated in an area of unusual biological diversity. One reason for this diversity is the perennial flow of Whitewater Creek, a ribbon of life in the dry climate of the Southwest. Another reason is the Catwalk's geographic position, where the northern fingers of the Sierra Madrean flora and fauna reach up and overlap with the southernmost extent of the Rocky Mountain species.

The perennial water supports plants that are better adapted to floods than to drought, and creates a lush corridor of green that is striking against the browns and grays of the surrounding desert land. The geographic location causes species more typical of Mexico to live next to species usually seen further north. The elevation change from the creek bottom to the tops of the canyon cliffs

also adds to the diversity. The diversity in plant life brings with it a diversity of animal and bird life.

The geology of the Catwalk is equally interesting, telling stories both from a distance and close up. The rocks of the cliffs show the effects of two major volcanic eruptions 34 million years ago, the shifting of the land along fault zones, and the action of running water. A closer look at the rocks tells more about their formation—one can see rock bubbles lined with crystals, and flattened pieces of pumice and glass. Finally, the spectacle of tree roots breaking huge rocks apart shows the relationship of biology and geology.

Natural History, continued



Objectives, continue

2. Visitors will know that flooding and drought are dynamic aspects of the canyon.
3. Visitors will know the canyon has an exciting and evident geological past.
 - A. Visitors will be introduced to the origins and features of the rocks of the canyon.
 - B. Visitors will know that geology is an ongoing process involving brief catastrophic episodes, as well as change over long periods of time.
 - C. Visitors will be aware that the interaction between the water and the rocks plays a key role in forming the canyon.

Cultural History

Cultural History Goal

#2. Enhance visitors' experience by providing an understanding of the dynamic cultural history of the area.

Objectives

1. Visitors will know:
 - A. the historic remnants they see are the result of silver and gold processing;
 - B. the trail follows the historic pipeline that carried water for the milling process;
 - C. the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built the original trail;
 - D. although we cannot see signs of the prehistoric Archaic, Mogollon and more recent Apache people in the canyon, it was part of their homelands.
2. Visitors will feel a sense of discovery as they come upon 19th and early 20th century artifacts along the trail.
3. Visitors will be aware of flooding's effects on the cultural history (Native peoples, mill site and town, Civilian Conservation Corps, USDA Forest Service) in the canyon.

Visitors to the Catwalk can see many hints of the cultural past. Many relics survive from gold and silver mining and processing activities of the late 1800s: the cement and rock walls and wooden remains of the mill, metal hardware hanging on the walls of the canyon, and scattered pieces of pipe, equipment, and hand-forged hardware. More recent artifacts, such as rockwork built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and later developments by the Forest Service, are also visual clues to the past.

Signs of indigenous inhabitation in the canyon are not so easy to see. Although archaeologists have found evidence of Apache, Mogollon, and Archaic cultures in the surrounding Gila National Forest, there are no known indications of them in Whitewater Canyon. This is not to say that these indigenous peoples were unfamiliar with the canyon. Rather, it is likely that the steepness of the canyon and the forcefulness of the water have carried away any evidence of the prehistoric and historic past that might have been there at one time.

The human history of the Catwalk and Whitewater Canyon areas offers wonderful stories to tell: stories of Native people's lives in the ruggedness of the Gila; stories of hard work and hard living in the tumultuous years of this country's "wild West"; and stories of an army of workers serving their country with their skilled hands and labor, to create, in the case of the Catwalk, a recreation area for the public.

The Community

Catron County, New Mexico, the site of the Catwalk Recreation Area, is in an economic transition. Many of the county's 3,543 residents are seeking to modify the traditional industries of logging and ranching to make them more economically viable. Small-diameter wood lots and processing facilities have replaced the logging industry of the past. Ranchers struggle to maintain their livelihood as a drought continues. In the wider geographical area, mining, which formerly employed many people, has become unprofitable. Phelps Dodge is in the process of closing its copper mines near Silver City, in neighboring Grant County.

In Catron County, residents whose families have lived here for many generations rub elbows with relative newcomers, mostly from California or "back east," who find the area an attractive place to spend their winters or retire. The community has a strong ranching contingent as well as a strong environmentalist contingent. Another group consists of newcomers to the area, attracted to the landscape but not yet ready to retire, who find that they can support themselves in this rural area through home-based computer work.

Many people in the Glenwood community devote their energies to the library, 4-H Club, Crafts Club, Women's Club, EMT organization, and volunteer fire department

The Forest Service, with three district offices, is the largest employer in the county. Of the county's land base, 76% is public land, with 50% of that being managed by the Forest Service. Catron County includes two wilderness areas and its northeastern section encompasses the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, a National Park Service site managed by the Wilderness Ranger District of the Gila Forest in Grant County.



The Community, *continued*

Community Goal

#3. Increase the level of visitor interest in the area surrounding the Catwalk Recreation Area.

Objectives

1. Visitors will be aware of the various recreation and interpretation resources in the area.
2. Visitors will enjoy and feel satisfied with their visit to the Catwalk.
3. Visitors will tell others about their experiences at the Catwalk, the local community, and the local forest area.

As the traditional livelihoods are changing, some local residents see tourism as a desirable alternative. Tourism is already an important industry in Glenwood, a town of 350, because the Catwalk brings approximately 50,000 visitors to the area each year. However, the seasonal nature of tourism at the Catwalk keeps many business owners from expanding their services. It is possible that the Glenwood community could experience more economic benefit from those visitors. Finding ways to encourage visitors to stay in the area longer is a standing objective of the Economic Development Committee of the Glenwood Area Chamber of Commerce.

Glenwood currently has two restaurants open daily and year-round. One serves breakfast, and the other serves lunches and dinners. A third restaurant is open year round, but with limited hours that increase in the summer when there are more tourists in the area. A fourth is open only in the summer and even then is closed for two days during the middle of the week. There is also a short-order grill (in an arcade), which is open most days during the year, and the Rock Shop sells ice cream and shakes during the summer.

Visitors can find lodging at three motels and two bed-and-breakfast establishments in Glenwood. There are several RV parks and one privately owned campground. In addition, there is one Forest Service campground, built and maintained by the Forest Service and the community, just north of the city. A bed and breakfast in nearby Mogollon offers lodging and dining as well. The Glenwood Trading Post and the Alma Trading Company sell gas, food, camping supplies, and gifts.

Services accessible to the disabled are almost nonexistent in Glenwood. The Catwalk Arcade is the only place to eat with an accessible restroom. One bed-and-breakfast has an accessible rental unit. No motels in town meet the ADA requirements, but motel owners say they would do what they could to assist a disabled person in staying at their facility. The closest motel that meets the ADA requirements is in Reserve, 39 miles north of Glenwood.

Perspectives

The Recreation Area's management strategy balances two functions, providing visitors with recreational experiences while maintaining the natural and cultural integrity of the site. Since people tend to care about what they know about, it is important to promote a strong connection between people and the Catwalk Recreation Area.

One way to promote such a connection is to effectively present messages that encourage visitors to interact with the site in appropriate, nondestructive ways. Such messages may include "Pack it in—pack it out," "Use the facilities provided," and so on. The need for messages such as these is especially apparent during the busy summer weekends when the numbers of visitors exceeds that recommended by the Persons At One Time (PAOT) guidelines, and communicating these messages will likely increase in importance as the numbers of the visiting public increase over the years.

Development of facilities, trail improvements, and placement of interpretation are also important visitor management tools. A particularly important way to promote a connection between visitors and the site is to create programs for young people. Youth programs that encourage a connection to

and ownership of the site help to prevent vandalism. At the Catwalk, vandalism has been occasional and usually minor, but recently the fee demo station, a rock structure, was destroyed in an attempt to remove the money.

Another point to consider in developing messages for visitors is that the site is part of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. Visitors will be much more supportive of the program if they can see the benefits of the fees they pay.

Management Concerns

Currently, the interpretive plan is being designed to increase the satisfaction of the visitors coming to the Catwalk rather than increase the number of visitors to the Catwalk. If more visitors are desired, then the following items should be determined: how much of an increase is desired; when the visitors should arrive; which visitors should be targeted; and how site management will be modified to accommodate the increased visitation.

Site Management Goal

#4. Gain support for management of the Recreation Area.

Objectives

1. Visitors will be oriented to the site and made aware of safety concerns (trail length, difficulty and conditions, rattlesnakes, dehydration, giardia, poison ivy).
2. Visitors will act in ways appropriate and beneficial for the site and respectful of other visitors.
 - A. Leave cultural artifacts in place.
 - B. Do not cut or break tree limbs or carve on bark.
 - C. Pack it in—pack it out, and use the facilities provided.
3. Visitors will know that the fees they pay provide for interpretation and other services.

Design Setting and Guidelines



Design Setting

The Catwalk Recreation Area is set in rural New Mexico, a land of small towns, ranches, and lots of open country. The barbed wire fences and ranch entrance gates with decorative metal work, distinctly Southwestern, are the predominant cultural design elements set against the dry, rocky landscape. Weathered wood, stone, and log buildings, many of them

historic, grace the nearby small communities of Glenwood, Alma, and Pleasanton. Along the narrow five-mile road to the Catwalk, from Glenwood, you cross a cattle guard and, if there's been enough rain or snow, drive through two river crossings. As you approach the recreation area, you pass the rock walls and wooden remains of a historic mill.

The Catwalk Recreation Area is set in the riparian area created by Whitewater Creek. Looking toward the entrance, you see sycamore trees, with lush green leaves in the summer, and ghostly mottled white trunks and fingers of branches going every which way in the winter. You see picnic tables and grills on each side of the creek. The hillsides are rocky and dry, with prickly pear, pinyon, juniper, and agaves. As you walk through the picnic area and up to the canyon and trailhead, you notice large cottonwoods and Arizona walnut trees lining the banks of the creek. You see a bridge to the south connecting another smaller picnic area with the trail as you approach the trailhead. The canyon narrows as you approach the metal catwalk. The metal structure contrasts strikingly with the beautiful rock cliff. This landscape is a striking visual mixture of historic culture and rugged nature.

Design Guidelines

Visual continuity plays an important role in creating thematic, memorable, interpretive experiences for visitors. Because visitors will experience their Catwalk interpretive adventure in the context of their overall stay in the area, it is important to design interpretive features that are in harmony with the cultural and natural surroundings.

The purpose of these general design guidelines is to guide the physical design of the interpretive components and settings. Working from these guidelines, the project's interpretive, exhibit, and landscape designers will develop site-specific designs. For example, the natural aspects of the canyon may be reflected in the interpretive components and settings by using river rocks and logs where appropriate. Incorporating wood and metal into the displays may reflect the history of the area.

Design Setting and Guidelines, *continued*

Overall Guidelines

Ensure that design decisions will complement rather than compete with the natural environment.

- Interpretive panels and other components will be placed in areas that are already developed.
- Panels will be designed as a site addition that visitors can select rather than a visual imposition or an intrusion on visitors' site experience.

Ensure that design decisions are consistent with the cultural landscape character of the Catwalk.

Maintain site integrity.

Consciously support the desired visitor experiences as defined in the themes, goals, and objectives found in this Catwalk Interpretive Plan.

Create interpretive and, where possible, site continuity.

Create designs and products that, where appropriate, will help address site and visitor management.

Address pragmatic concerns such as durability, maintenance, cost/benefit ratio, quality, accessibility, and safety.

- Accessibility issues will be considered in all planning and design work, creating interpretive media that can be seen, read, heard, and appreciated by many people with varying degrees of ability.
- Some text will be offered in Spanish, to meet the large South-west Hispanic population's needs.

Panel Guidelines

All interpretive installations will have a strong visual emphasis with minimal text.

Thematic, site-relevant supports and frames will visually unify panels.

Panels will be visually unified by thematic design elements.

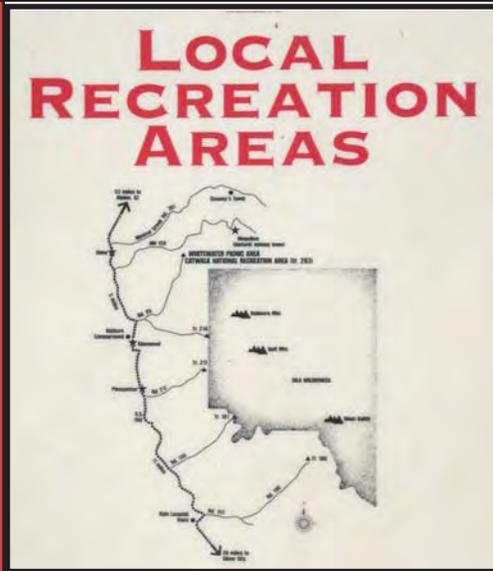
Most of the cultural history story will be told with historic photographs, allowing the images of the past to forge a connection with the people of the present.

The natural history story will be unified with a thematic graphic style.

The colors and fonts will represent the environment and history of the Catwalk Recreation Area, and will be used in ways that unify the various interpretive elements.



Interpretive Context



Interpretive and Recreational Opportunities—Immediate Area

The Gila Forest attracts many of the area's visitors. They come to hike, soak in the hot springs, and enjoy a forest environment. The Glenwood Ranger District offers visitors information about the Catwalk and other things to see and do in the area nearby, as well as in the forest.

The Cooney Trail, about 14 miles north of the Catwalk, is becoming a popular hike. Those who enjoy the Catwalk Trail will also enjoy the Cooney Trail—it is in a spectacular canyon and although there is no hanging metalwork, the trail takes you past the remains of the old mining town and mill of Cooney. There is no formal interpretive program at Cooney Canyon, although employees at the Ranger District will often mention the town of Cooney to those interested in hiking in that area.

The Glenwood District displays changing interpretive or informative materials in the lobby of its headquarters. The district organizes a nature walk series led by local volunteers who explain the social/cultural and natural history of the Catwalk and Whitewater Canyon.

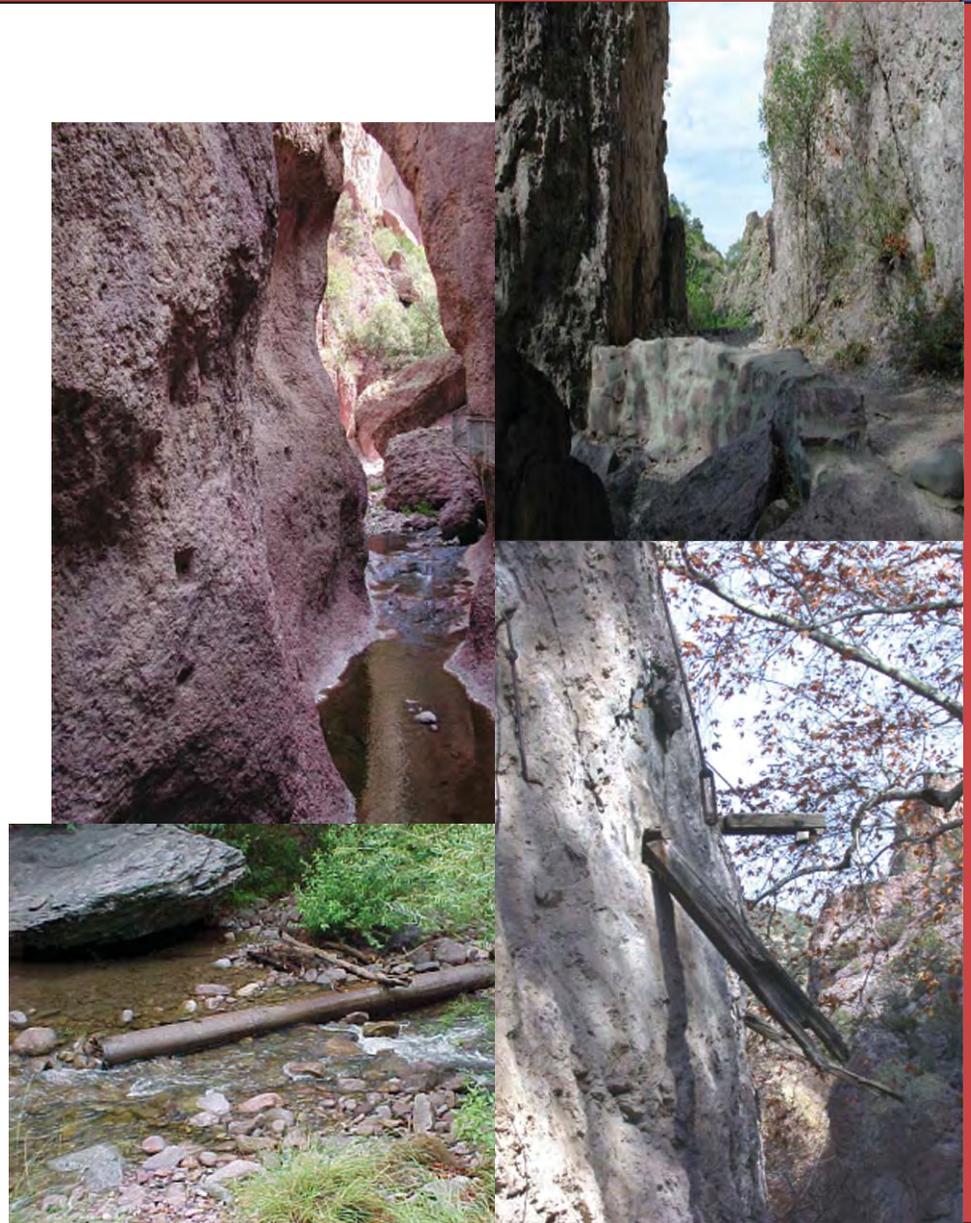
The Aldo Leopold Vista, on forest land 12 miles south of the Glenwood Ranger Station, offers picnic tables and rest room facilities and will soon have an interpretive display on Aldo Leopold and the Gila Wilderness. The pioneering conservationist, who was the area's assistant district forester at the time, persuaded the Forest Service to set aside the Gila Wilderness in 1924 as the first federally designated wilderness.

The ghost town of Mogollon is only about 20 miles from the Catwalk, and many visitors will spend the hour to drive up the narrow, winding road to see it. It is becoming more of a tourist attraction as the new owner of many of the buildings has invested money and effort into making it an interesting place for visitors. There are two museums—one focusing on the mining history of the town, and the other on the prehistory of the area—with displays of pottery, tools, photographs, and other artifacts. Mogollon also has an art gallery, a rock shop, and a little general store, which is a museum in itself. Visitation is seasonal. During the summer months some of the buildings are open Thursday through Monday, and others only on the weekends.

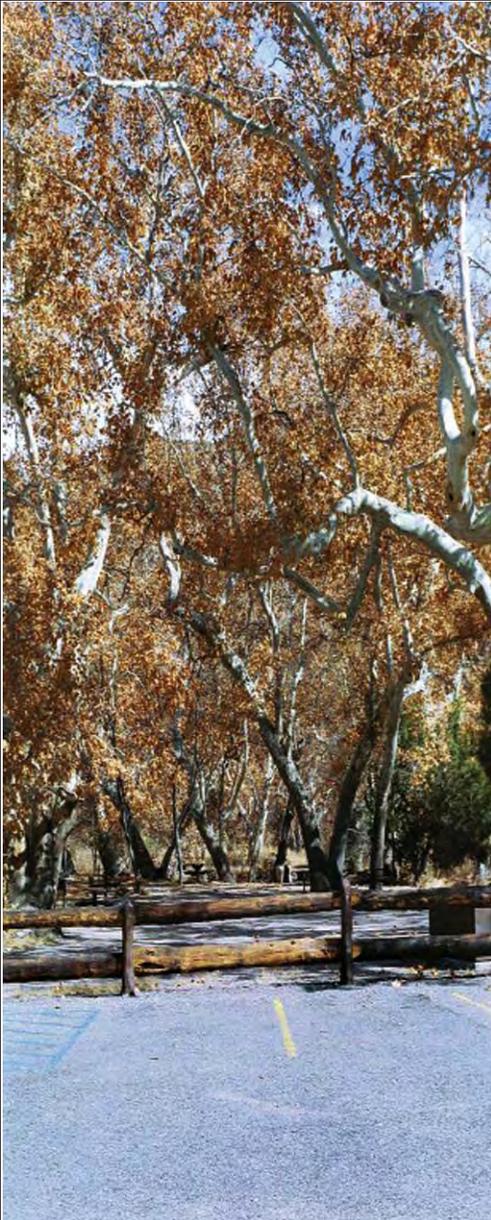
Interpretive and Recreational Opportunities—General Area

The Catwalk is the second most visited site in the Gila National Forest, after the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. Tourists staying in Silver City will often spend one day at the Cliff Dwellings, about an hour and a half north of Silver City, and another day at the Catwalk, 62 miles in another direction. The Nature Conservancy's Bear Canyon Lodge near Silver City has an interpreter on staff, and although it has been open only two years, it is attracting a growing number of visitors. Visitors to Silver City can go to the Silver City Museum for local history. Another popular destination there is the Western New Mexico University Museum, especially for visitors interested in the pottery of the Mimbres, a branch of the Mogollon culture. The Gila National Forest Supervisor's Office in Silver City offers interpretive displays in the lobby.

Several other areas within a two- to three-hour drive of Glenwood offer natural or cultural attractions. City of Rocks State Park, Bill Evans Lake, Lake Roberts, Gila River Bird Habitat Area, Quemado Lake, and Snow Lake are all nearby. The City of Rocks has a small visitor center, and at times the Gila River Bird Habitat Area has a host who can provide visitors with information about the site.



Visitor Analysis



The data on visitor use of the Catwalk is somewhat questionable. Since 1978, when the Catwalk was designated a National Recreation Trail, visitor data has been gathered from the guest registry at the trailhead and collected from a traffic counter across the trail just above the trailhead. Unfortunately, neither of these methods is very reliable: only a portion of the visitors sign the registry, and technical problems or human problems often prevent the traffic counter from consistently collecting the data. The data collected pertains only to the visitors who walk to the trailhead (approximately 1/4 mile from the entrance), and therefore doesn't include the many people who enjoy the picnic area and the creek at the first part of the Catwalk Recreation Area. Another source of visitor information is a fee demo station installed in the winter of 1999. Data is collected and tallied from the fee envelopes. However, it is questionable because no one monitors compliance with the fee system, and the station has been vandalized and out of commission for two periods since first installed.

A 1979 concept plan for the Catwalk suggested Persons at one Time (PAOT) guidelines. The plan was developed as a result of major flood damage in 1978 and the designation of the site as a National Recreation Trail. The PAOTs presented were 125 for the Catwalk Trail and between 75 and 100 for the Picnic Area. If the numbers of current visitors were averaged over the year, the PAOTs would likely be low. However, occasional observations during the peak days show that visitation at those times exceeds the carrying capacity of the site and thereby diminishes the recreational experience of the visitors during those times. This results in adverse effects to the site in the amount of litter left, the use of areas close to the trail in lieu of toilets, and the continuing hardening of unofficial side trails and off-trail areas as people disperse along the creek.

Visitor Analysis, continued

Interpretive Use and Impact

The interpretation of the natural and cultural history of the Catwalk will enhance the experience of all visitors, but will probably be most appreciated by the people categorized in this plan as tourists. They come to the site knowing very little, especially if they come from far away. They are curious about the site, and the interpretation can guide them in discovering the natural and cultural history of it. In contrast, the local residents are generally supportive of increased interpretation at the site; for example, the ranger district has repeatedly received requests from residents and other visitors for the installation of plant markers. But because most are already familiar with the history of the site, the information and interpretation will not be as important to them. It may be something of which they would be proud. However, some residents have expressed their concern that the Forest Service may do too much at the site, fearing that the interpretive displays will take away from the natural beauty of the site.

Some members of local social groups will find that the interpretive program adds to the enjoyment of their visit, as will many people who come with organized groups.





Catwalk Interpretive Trail Plan
Part B—The Implementation

Implementation—All Phases

The implementation of the Catwalk Interpretive Plan involves the selection of site, media, and design elements that conform to the project's theme, goals, objectives, and targeted audiences. The phases are prioritized as follows:

1. **An interpretive trail**, which includes interpretive and landscape design.
2. **A self-guided tour brochure** to provide in-depth information/interpretation for those visitors who want more details about the site.
3. **A CD** to be used by the district offices, which could also be sold at the districts or through the local Chamber of Commerce.
4. **A Junior Ranger publication** for middle-school-age children, which would be designed to guide them in a sense of discovery of the cultural and natural history of the Catwalk.
5. **Checklists** for birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.
6. **A thematic panel** focusing on the Civilian Conservation Corps camp, designed and installed at the

Community Park (the previous location of the camp) with the cooperation of the Glenwood Community Park Board.

7. **An audiotope** to provide an audio tour of the Catwalk, which would benefit visitors with visual impairment and would appeal to many other visitors as well.
8. **A geology poster** for the Catwalk area, created in cooperation with Jim Ratte, USGS.

Phases 2–8 will be developed as funding allows. See the following section for the development of Phase 1, the interpretive trail.

Goals, Objectives, and Targeted Audiences of the Interpretive Media

The **interpretive trail** meets all goals and objectives. It targets all identified visitors to the Catwalk—the local and area residents, tourists, and organized and social groups.

The **self-guided tour brochure** meets all goals and many objectives. It will be developed for the local residents, tourists, and organized groups, who are seeking more in-depth information on the area's cultural and natural history.

The **CD** will meet all goals and many objectives. It gives potential tourists a pre-visit look at the Catwalk, and will serve as a post-visit tool, as well as an advertisement for the Catwalk, which could be widely distributed.

The **Junior Ranger publication** will meet all goals and most objectives. It will be developed for middle-school-age children, local as well as those vacationing with their families, and for school groups.

The **checklists** will meet the natural history goal and will meet many natural history objectives. They will meet the needs of the more ecological-minded tourists (such as birdwatchers) and residents, and some of the organized groups.

The **CCC panel** will meet the cultural history goal and some objectives. This media presentation targets local residents and tourists.

The **audiotope** tour will meet all goals and many objectives. Although it targets visually impaired local residents and tourists, many others will likely be interested in this product.

The **geology poster**, targeting all audiences, will meet the natural history goal and the geology objective.

Implementation of Phase 1



Six interpretive settings are being developed along the accessible portion of the trail.

Design Criteria

Designs will reflect the Catwalk landscape, a visual mixture of historic culture and rugged nature. All interpretive and landscape design will be developed in context with the look of the cultural and natural surroundings.

Designs will reflect both the natural world:

- Rock canyon walls and boulders
- River rocks and logs
- Tall riparian trees

and will mimic the cultural world:

- Low rock walls
- Decorative metal work
- Old pipeline (replicas will be used)
- Old mill site timbers (replicas will be used) and stone walls

Materials will be predominantly rock and metal with some limited use of wood. Interpretive panels will be high-pressure poly laminate.

Design elements will include metal cut-out fence panels and bench backs, pipe railings, and torch-cut directional signs. Rock walls and boulders will be used as seats. The entry interpretive panels will be shaped like canyon walls.

Please see pages 16 and 17 for complete design setting and guidelines.

Implementation of Phase 1, continued

Site Criteria

Interpretive settings have been selected based on the following criteria:

- Sites take advantage of already developed areas
- Sites engage the largest numbers of visitors
- Sites are located where visitors can see examples of the topic being interpreted (for example, the cultural history of the site will be interpreted in the area of the historic town site and in view of the 1893 mill).

Site Elements

Each interpretive setting will be holistically designed using a combination of interpretive panels, seating, and exhibit and landscape design. Seating, sign supports, and fences will be thematically designed to visually work with the site and meet interpretive objectives.

In Addition to the Sites

In addition to the six interpretive settings, benches and directional signs will be placed appropriately along the trail. There are several areas along the trail where benches or boulders could provide a place for quiet reflection. The overhang at the end of the trail is an area that is especially suited for the placement of natural boulder seating. Directional signs will be placed in several areas where visitors currently experience confusion.

Please see the Catwalk Exhibit and Landscape Design Plan for more detailed development of the interpretive settings.

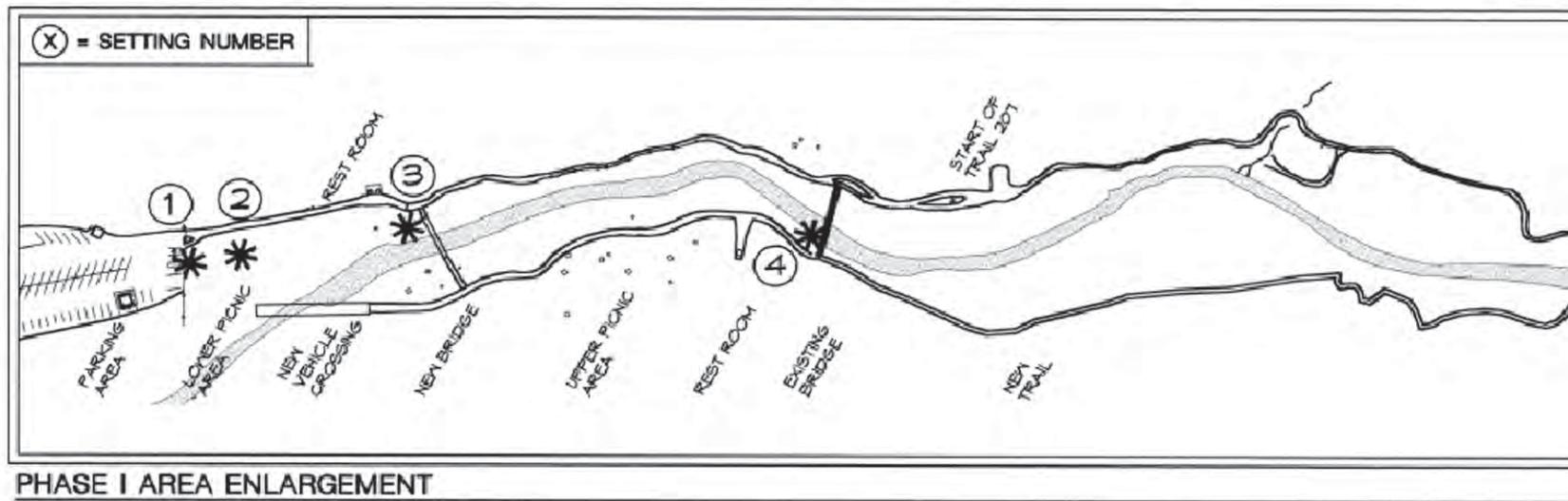


Setting 1: Entrance Area and Trailhead

The current entrance to the site is a hard-edged division between the parking area and the recreation area. The log fence and metal-gated driveway separate the two areas and present a functional but unattractive and uninviting passageway into the Catwalk.

The planned entry design, both the landscaping and the entry itself, will strive to instill in visitors a feeling of welcome into a special place

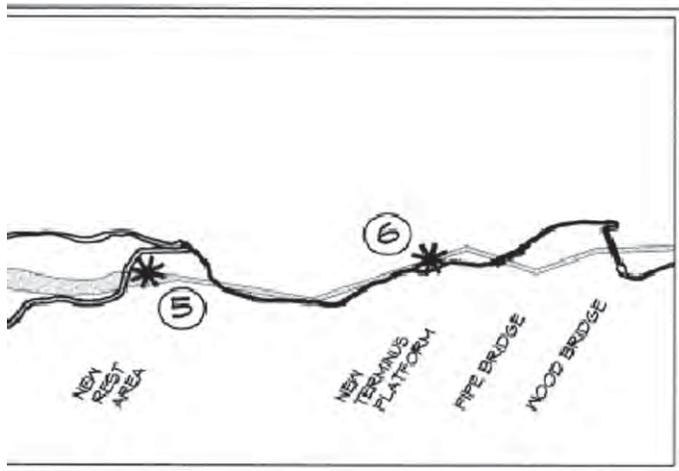
as they walk through the threshold separating the Catwalk Recreation Area from the outside parking area.



Setting 1: Entrance Area, *continued*

Design Goals

- Create a transition from the parking area to the site.
- Introduce the theme through visual design.
- Provide orientation for the site and trail.
- Provide thematic interpretive panels.
- Develop an attractive fee station.
- Develop elements on a scale that does not compete with the tree canopy.



SCALE: 1" = 200'-0"

Goals Met

- #1. Encourage a sense of familiarity with and appreciation for the natural aspects of the Catwalk's rich riparian area.
- #2. Enhance visitors' experience of the Catwalk by providing them with an understanding of the dynamic history of the area.
- #4. Gain support for management of the Recreation area.

Objectives Met

Management #1. Visitors will be oriented to the site and be aware of safety concerns.

Management #3. Visitors will know that the fees they pay provide for interpretation and other services.

Setting 2: Existing Interpretive Sign



Setting 2 will be located in the area most pertinent to the cultural history elements. The picnic area, to the right of the existing sign, is the historic townsite of Graham. The remains of the historic gold and silver processing mill, perched on a nearby hillside, can be easily seen from the site as well. The interpretation placed at this site

will be readily available to all visitors. Its location near the picnic area and close to the entrance ensures that it will be viewed by most visitors.

The interpretive presentation will also offer visitors information about additional attractions in the area.



Design Goals

- Develop visually interesting presentation for introducing cultural history.
- Provide thematic seating.
- Develop trail hierarchy.
- Direct pedestrian traffic flow.
- Complement interpretation of setting 1.

Setting 2: Existing Interpretive Sign, continued



Looking towards the parking area from the existing interpretive sign. The historic Graham Mill can be seen on the hillside.



Goals Met

- #2. Enhance visitors' experience of the Catwalk by providing them with an understanding of the dynamic history of the area.
- #3. Increase the level of visitor interest in the surrounding area.

Objectives Met

Cultural History #1A. Visitors will know that the historic remnants they see are the result of silver and gold processing.

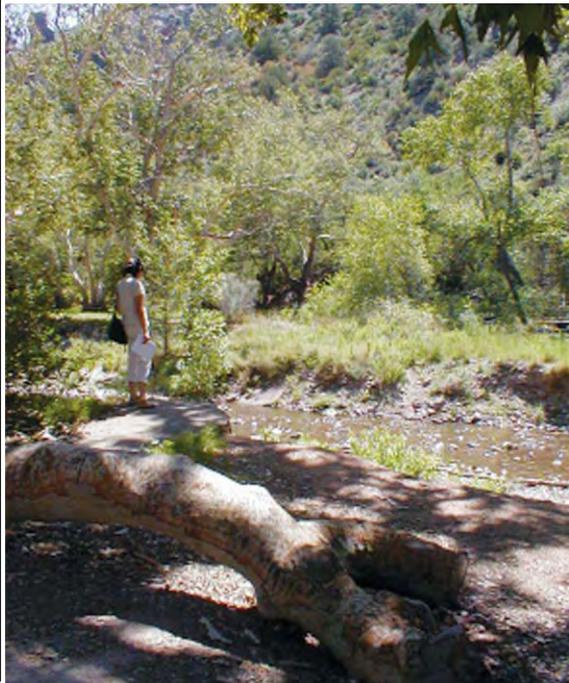
Cultural History #1B. Visitors will know the trail follows the historic pipeline that carried water for the milling process.

Community #1. Visitors will be aware of the various recreation and interpretation resources in the area.

Setting 3: New Bridge



The new bridge will replace a bridge that was washed away by flooding, making this an appropriate site for interpreting the dynamic nature of the creek and canyon. Evidence of past flooding, and the riprap protecting the island on the other side of the bridge from future flooding, can be seen from the interpretive site. The episodes of flooding in the canyon are an important interpretive topic, bearing on both cultural and natural history. The interpretation presented will show how the flooding has affected the natural history of the area as well as the lives of native people, mill workers, and townsfolk who were in the area.



Design Goals

- Provide transition from picnic area to trail.
- Narrow abandoned service road (to picnic areas) to appropriate pedestrian scale.
- Establish a trail hierarchy.
- Provide directional signage.
- Provide thematic seating and interpretive panels.
- Provide site structure continuity (use restroom facade similar to parking area restrooms).
- Provide surfacing continuity.

Setting 3: New Bridge, continued



Goals Met

- #1. Encourage a sense of familiarity with and appreciation for the natural aspects of the Catwalk's rich riparian area.
- #2. Enhance visitors' experience of the Catwalk by providing them with an understanding of the dynamic history of the area.

Objectives Met

Natural History #2. Visitors will know that flooding and drought are dynamic parts of the canyon.

Cultural History #1D. Visitors will know that although we cannot see signs of the prehistoric Archaic, Mogollon and more recent Apache people in the canyon, it was part of their homelands.

Cultural History #3. Visitors will be aware of flooding's effects on the cultural history (Native people, mill site and town, Civilian Conservation Corps, U.S. Forest Service) in the canyon.

Setting 4: Existing Bridge/Amphitheater

This setting is tentatively located in the small picnic area that is on the north side of the trail near the existing picnic area bridge. The trail from the proposed new bridge (setting 3) to this site is open and exposed, narrow, sloped, and surfaced with poly-pave, a soil cement. The exposure of this part of the trail gives visitors a real taste of the dry heat of the desert area before the trail drops back down to the riparian area. The site is a small riparian oasis on the edge of a dry upland slope. There is only one small sycamore, a tree that is most typical of the area's riparian environments.



Exposed section of trail.

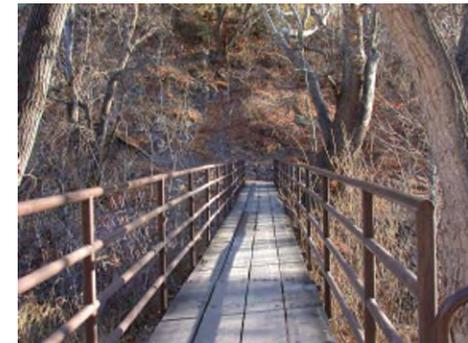


Small picnic area on north side of the original Catwalk Trail.

An alternative proposed site is located on the south side of the existing picnic area bridge. The setting could be located near the bridge or near the proposed amphitheater setting. The trail that leads over the proposed new bridge (setting 3) to the proposed amphitheater site is under the tree canopy, wide, flat and paved. Once the new bridge is built, visitors may be inclined to go over the creek, under the trees, and through the riparian area. The riparian area has a good representation of all the key species. If the setting is near the bridge (on the south side) it will be seen by visitors who use either of the picnic area bridges.



From north picnic area to bridge



Design Goals

- Thematic interpretive seating and panels.
- Goals will be further developed once the setting is selected.

Setting 4: Existing Bridge/Amphitheater, *continued*



Goals Met

#1. Encourage a sense of familiarity with and appreciation for the natural aspects of the Catwalk's rich riparian area.

Objectives Met

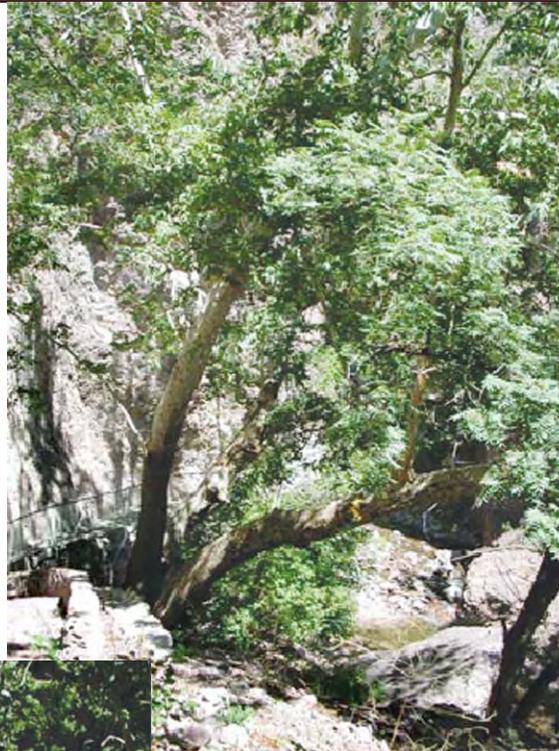
Natural History #1. Visitors will know that Whitewater Creek creates a diverse riparian area.

- A. Visitors will know that the riparian area is home to plants and animals that have adapted to a continuum of dry and wet environments.
- B. Visitors will be familiar with some of the plants and animals of the riparian area.
- C. Visitors will understand this riparian area is vulnerable to trampling and misuse.
- D. Visitors will appreciate that this riparian area is unique because the plants are almost all native, and species common to both Mexico and the United States are found here.

Setting 5: Platform/Beginning of Catwalk

This site is the first place visitors will see the original metal Catwalk structure hanging on the canyon wall. The platform joins the proposed accessible trail with the original trail. The platform, which will be created where the two trails connect, will be either seen or used by everyone going into the canyon. The platform will also provide a convenient resting place for visitors.

Along with the Catwalk structure itself, the notches, bolts and other physical hints of the Catwalk's past can be seen nearby, making this platform an ideal place to encourage a sense of discovery in the visitors.



Design Goals

- Create thematic seating and interpretive panels.
- Provide wheelchair parking.
- Interpretive panels will take advantage of, but will not obstruct, canyon views.
- Panels and seating will be located to avoid congestion.
- Visually distinguish rest/interpretive areas from movement/trail spaces.

Setting 5: Platform/Beginning of Catwalk, *continued*



New universal design trail will join with the original trail between the Catwalk structure and the sycamore tree shown in the photo. "Urban" chain-link fencing will be changed to more "rural" rectangular grid fencing.

Goals Met

#2. Enhance visitors' experience of the Catwalk by providing an understanding of the dynamic history of the area.

Objectives Met

Cultural History #1. Visitors will know that:

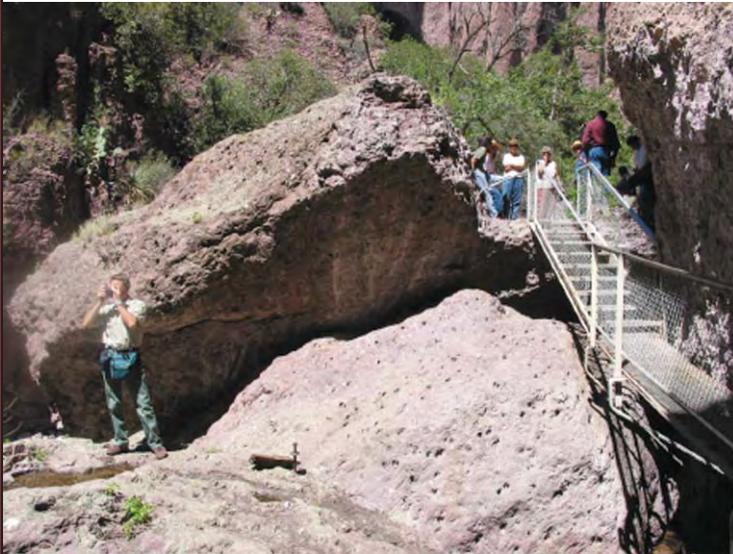
- A. the historic remnants they see are the result of silver and gold processing;
- B. the trail follows the historic pipeline that carried water for the milling process;
- C. the Civilian Conservation Corps built the original trail.

Cultural History #2. Visitors will feel a sense of discovery as they come upon the 19th and early 20th century artifacts along the trail.

Cultural History #3. Visitors will be aware of flooding's effects on the cultural history (Native people, mill site and town, Civilian Conservation Corps, U.S. Forest Service) in the canyon.

Setting 6: Platform/End of Catwalk

This platform is the last interpretive setting. The platform is at the terminus of the Catwalk structure and is the end of the accessible portion of the Catwalk trail. It is located deep in the canyon and provides an enticing area to spend time looking at the cliffs and rocks, and listening to the water in the creek, reflecting on the beauty and power of the place. The towering walls form a sanctuary. The walls and huge boulders in the creek lead visitors to wonder about the geology of the area.



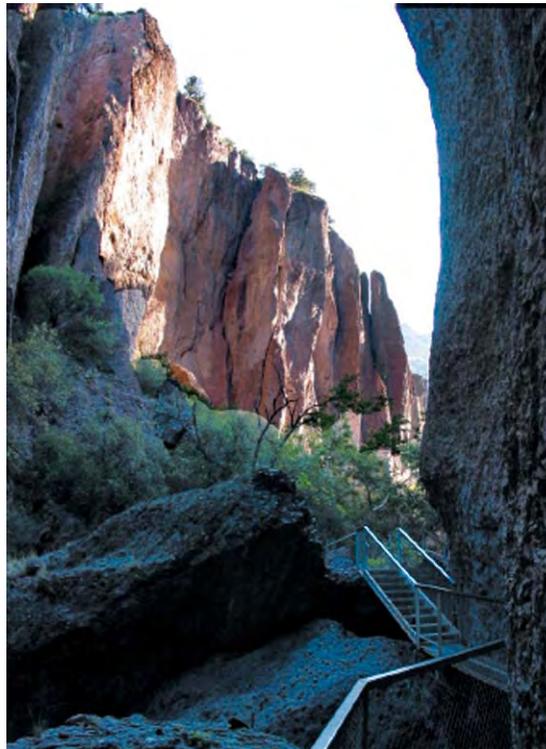
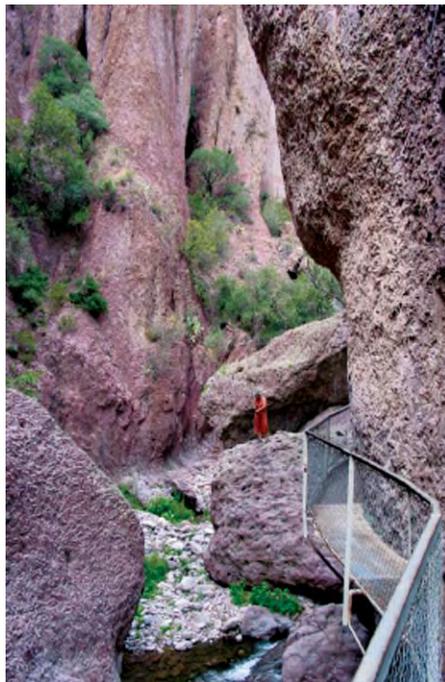
The platform will be located on a large rock before the stairs begin.

Design Goals

- Provide thematic seating.
- Provide wheelchair parking.
- Interpretive panels will take advantage of, but not obstruct, canyon views.
- Provide trail orientation/safety.
- Visually distinguish rest/interpretive areas from movement/trail spaces.

Setting 6: Platform/End of Catwalk, *continued*

The platform area will also have a panel with safety information concerning the remainder of the trail, whose character changes significantly from this point forward. The trail surface and elevation changes present potential hazards to those unaccustomed to hiking in rugged terrain.



Goals Met

- #2. Enhance visitors' experience of the Catwalk by providing an understanding of the dynamic history of the area.
- #4. Gain support for management of the Recreation Area.

Objectives Met

Natural History #3A. Visitors will know that the canyon has an exciting and evident geological past.

Natural History #3B. Visitors will know that geology is an ongoing process involving brief catastrophic episodes as well as change over long periods of time.

Natural History #3C. Visitors will know that the interaction between the water and the rocks plays a key role in forming the canyon.