

Proposed Action for Flagstaff Loop Trail

Peaks Ranger District, Coconino National Forest

January, 2008

Background

Planning for this project began in 2003 led by the non-profit Flagstaff Biking Organization and fellow founding partners and interested parties, including the Coconino National Forest, Coconino County, and the City of Flagstaff. These various partners and interested parties make up the “Core Team” for the project in its entirety and these entities have worked closely together over the last four years in developing this proposal.

These partners have recognized that in a time of rapid population growth, the community has a need for proactively dedicating a predominantly rural trail corridor so that generations of trail users will be assured easy and pleasant access to our natural landscapes that surround the city.

In developing the proposal the partners considered several existing regional plans. The Loop Trail is an amalgamation of existing and proposed trails identified in these plans, with additional trail route segments proposed to tie the trails in the various plans together to form the continuous loop objective. The various plans and their goals and objectives that are considered in developing this proposal include:

- **Coconino County Comprehensive Plan, 2003**

This plan was developed through a conservation-based planning partnership with the goal of balancing growth, development and conservation throughout the county. The following are the trails goals and policies from the plan.

Goal:

“Support a regional system of trails that link communities, public lands, and activity centers” (page 66).

Policies:

“The County supports a comprehensive approach to addressing the need for public lands access, continuity of trail networks, provisions for non-motorized circulation, and resource protection through community trails plans.”

“To protect sensitive natural and cultural resources, the County encourages the identification and development of trails designed to accommodate a high level of use while minimizing impacts to the environment.”

“In coordination with developers, community groups, and land management agencies, the County encourages regional planning of non-motorized circulation infrastructure and facilities, such as trails and bike lanes that link destination areas, community activity centers, and where appropriate designated access points to public lands.”

“Partnerships are encouraged among the County, trail managers, trail users, and neighborhoods to improve trail safety and access, user information, volunteer stewardship, linkages between long-distance trails, and recognition of historic trails.”

- **Coconino National Forest Land Management Plan - Amendment 17, Flagstaff/Lake Mary Ecosystem Analysis; 2002**

Goals:

- “There are opportunities for a variety of trail experiences and challenges that are consistent with protection of sensitive resources, meet the needs of a diverse public, emphasize the natural environment, and meet Recreation Opportunity Spectrum objectives.”
- “There is a network of trails linked to other trail systems, such as City and County trail systems.”
- “The Urban/Rural Influence Zone is actively managed to provide opportunities and lessen environmental impacts.”

Guidelines:

- “Connect Forest Service trails to community access points... Work with planning and zoning and developers while building plans are still under development...”
- “Coordinate with State, County, and community park departments to connect Forest trails with parks and green-belt corridors when it is mutually beneficial, provides better public service and development is compatible with other resource management.”

Management Emphasis - Flagstaff Management Area:

- “...within the Urban/Rural Influence Zone...emphasize daytime non-motorized recreation opportunities and balance recreation demands with protection of soils, water, wildlife and vegetation, and maintain public access to public lands.”

- **Flagstaff Area Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan, 2001**

This plan is a joint city and county effort. The geographic scope of the plan is the same as the boundary of the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization which goes beyond the city limits. The following policies are pertinent to the development of The Flagstaff Loop Trail.

- “Provide non-motorized transportation corridors to connect communities, neighborhoods, open spaces and recreational areas” Policy OSPR1.3, page 4-3.
- “Provide neighborhood connections to regional trails and open space network” Strategy OSPR1.3a
- “Coordinate urban, county, and USFS trail systems” Strategy OSPR1.3f.
- “Establish a comprehensive bicycling network and trails system” Policy T3.1, page 3-10.
- “Coordinate trail programs with USFS Trail System, Strategy T3.1b.

- **Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenway Plan, 1998.** The City of Flagstaff led this effort by involving land management agencies and local citizens to participate in a planning process that began in 1994 and was completed in 1997.

A guiding principle of the plan:

“Connect communities, neighborhoods, open spaces, parks, cultural sites, and natural areas by providing non-motorized transportation corridors to the city, between communities, and between the city and outlying areas” (page 5).

Plan Goal:

“Develop an interconnected open space and greenway network providing access and recreational opportunities” (page 11)

Objectives:

- “Provide a range of opportunities for recreation in open spaces and greenways”
- “Develop a network of interconnected trails for recreation and commuting”
- “Protect access to public lands”

Recommendation:

“The City and Forest Service should coordinate and connect their trail systems. The County should develop a trail system to connect to the Forest Service’s and City’s systems; and that connects to park, cultural, and educational sites”.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed in 1997 to “establish a framework for cooperation and collaboration” to implement the plan between the following entities:

City of Flagstaff	Coconino County
Arizona State Land Department	Arizona Game and Fish Department
Coconino National Forest	NPS, Flagstaff Area Monuments

- **Coconino National Forest Land Management Plan - Amendment 9; 1992**

Goal:

“Maintain a variety of Forest trails that include foot, horse, bicycle...and challenge and adventure opportunities...”

The Proposed 42 mile Flagstaff Loop Trail responds to these various plans and their goals and objectives as a proposed multi-use, non-motorized recreation trail that would encircle the City of Flagstaff. The completed trail would utilize a variety of Forest Service system trails, two track roads, the Flagstaff Urban Trail System, the Arizona Trail, and Coconino County trails. The trail in its entirety has been described as an outer wheel surrounding Flagstaff, with the spokes of the wheel being trails within the City (the Flagstaff Urban Trail System or FUTS). The wheel would then link to communities outside the city limits and to Forest Service trails. The Forest Service system would consist of 24 miles of system trail.

The Proposed Loop Trail is divided into eight passages which are based on geographical areas and opportunities. A passage will have a main trailhead and will be no more than 15 miles in length, making it possible to complete a passage on foot in one day. Smaller segments are based on land management areas, existing trails, and roads.

The trail includes a number of jurisdictions and ownerships. This Proposed Action will address actions proposed on Forest Service jurisdiction and identify the appropriate level of environmental analysis; however, the trail connections and routes on other jurisdictions will be considered and displayed as analysis proceeds to provide a complete scope of the project.

Public Involvement

Public involvement for the Loop Trail began early in the process and is continuing to date. The Loop trail concept was first presented to the public in November of 2003. Feedback was collected on comment forms and in a print and online questionnaire.

Recommendations from those with extensive on-the-ground knowledge were used to develop the preferred route.

Questionnaire

The survey was intended to gauge the level of support for the concept and the types of uses people would like to see accommodated. With over 250 respondents, 92% supported the project. The survey also found that the respondents were likely to use the trail on a regular basis.

Website

The evolving details of the project were posted on Flagstaff Biking's website (www.flagstaffbiking.org). There is now a direct link to this information (www.thelooptrail.org). The site provides corridor descriptions for the proposed route as well as a series of detailed maps. This information has helped encourage public discourse on the project and has given residents an opportunity to volunteer suggestions on a regular basis.

Outreach

In 2004 the Team presented The Loop Trail concept to the following organizations in an effort to gauge support and obtain further input on the project. All of the presentations were received positively, and encouraged implementation of the project. At this point all of the government agencies that will be affected by the project have had an opportunity to review the details, ask questions, and express concerns and support of the project.

- The Flagstaff City Council
- The City of Flagstaff's Parks and Recreation Commission
- The City of Flagstaff's Open Space Commission
- Flagstaff Bicycle Advisory Committees
- Flagstaff Pedestrian Advisory Committees
- Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization
- The Coconino County Board of Supervisors
- Coconino County Parks and Recreation Commission
- Coconino National Forest Leadership Team

Outreach Planned

A well attended public open house was conducted on November 15, 2007 in which approximately 100 citizens participated. Additional public meetings will be held when significant milestones in the project warrant updated communication with the public. The Team will also be seeking the input from a variety of local organizations through presentations to their membership or in newsletter articles.

Those organizations that will be contacted may include:

- Realtors association
- Homebuilders association
- Chamber of Commerce
- Homeowners associations
- Conservation organizations

Additional public involvement will be requested during a 30 day comment period on the Proposed Action associated with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that will begin early to mid February 2008. This opportunity to comment will be advertised through an existing mail list of those who have expressed interest in the NEPA analysis for the Forest Service portion of the project. In an effort to expand the existing

mail list, media advertisement has been done through a notice in the Arizona Daily Sun that was placed on Wednesday, January 23, 2008. This advertisement provided information on how to be placed on the mailing list to receive the Loop Trail Proposed Action, in an effort to reach as many interested citizens as possible, who might want to comment on the proposal. A more specific time frame for the scoping period will be included in a cover letter you receive with the document and in a news release in the Arizona Daily Sun.

Existing and Desired Conditions

Existing:

The proposed trail route on Forest Service lands includes a variety of existing conditions, including existing trails, two track roads that could be converted to trail, and areas with no existing trail, where trail construction will be required. City and County jurisdictions and land ownership is intermixed breaking up Forest Service trail connection. There is often no Forest Service trail connection to existing and proposed City and County trails. There is currently no continuous trail loop existing in the project area.

Desired:

The desired condition is to connect Forest Service trails to the City and County existing and proposed trail routes by incorporating existing system trails, converting roads to trail, and constructing new trails. The result will be a continuous outer trail loop that offers multiple access routes from the city of Flagstaff to public lands, improve and provide recreational access from all areas of town, and offer a non-motorized outdoor recreation opportunity for most levels of ability.

Existing Condition:

Existing System Trail – 11.5 miles

Includes segments of the following named trails:

- Rocky Ridge Trail, Segment 6
- Easy Oldham Trail, Segment 7
- Forces of Nature/Pipeline Trails, Segment 9
- Fat Mans Loop/Elden Lookout Trails, Segment 10
- Fat Mans Loop Trail, Segment 12
- Christmas Tree Trail, Segment 13
- Sandy Seep Trail, Segment 14
- Arizona Trail, Segments 15 & 16
- Campbell Mesa Loop Trail, Segment 22
- Anasazi Loop Trail, Segment 23
- Sinagua Loop Trail, Segment 24

Need: Designation of trails to include Loop Trail identification and trail work to address deferred maintenance needs. All existing system trails will maintain their current USFS Trail Maintenance and Design Standards classification of Class 3.

Existing Condition:

Existing system and non-system roads - 1.8 miles

Includes segments of the following roads:

- FR 9112C, Segment 30
- Un-named road, most of Segment 34
- Sheep Crossing Trail, Segment 38

Need: Convert roads to trail using both hand and mechanical means. De-classification of roads when necessary; designation as Loop Trail.

Existing Condition:

No current system trail - 10.5 miles

This includes segments of existing social trails (non-system) and segments where no trail exists.

Need: Trail construction to bring social trails to desired condition and where no trail currently exists; designation as Loop Trail.

- Segment 5, 0.4 miles
- Segment 8, 1.3 miles
- Segment 11, 0.1 miles
- Segment 21, 0.3 miles
- Segment 25, 0.2 miles
- Segment 27, 2.3 miles
- Segment 28, 0.2 miles
- Segment 29, 1.3 miles
- Segment 30, 0.4 miles
- Segment 31, 0.6 miles
- Segment 32, 1.9 miles
- Skunk Canyon social trail, Segment 33, 0.9 miles
- Segment 34, 1.4 miles
- Segment 43, 0.8 miles

Purpose and Need

The overall Purpose and Need for the proposed action is to create a trail route on Forest Service lands that when connected to existing and planned City and County trails provides a continuous non-motorized loop trail around the City of Flagstaff. This Proposed Action responds to goals and objectives for recreation outlined in the Forest Plan and other City and County Regional Plans.

Proposed Action

To meet the project's purpose and need, the following actions are proposed:

- New trail construction and system trail designation of social trails totaling approximately **10.5 miles**

- Adding loop trail designation to existing system trails and performing deferred maintenance on approximately **11.5 miles**
- Converting existing system and non-system roads to trail and adding system trail designation on approximately **1.8 miles**
- Total miles of Forest Service System Trails to be designated as the Loop Trail System is approximately **24 miles**.

The activities and improvements in this proposal link to the additional 18 miles of existing and proposed trails on the other jurisdictions and land ownerships to form the continuous loop trail.

For more detailed description of the proposed activities by trail segment, including activities occurring on other jurisdictions, see Table 1 on pages 9 and 10. Also see,

Figure 1, Proposed Action Map and Figure 2, Trail Segment Map

Preliminary Issues

A number of proposed route segments on other jurisdictions will require acquisition of Easements. Failure to secure easement for a particular segment could leave the loop disconnected.

Segments 36 and 38 of the Airport Passage are located within or adjacent to Forest Service lands associated with the imminent Yavapai Ranch Land Exchange. While the City of Flagstaff is the anticipated future owner, these plans are not currently finalized and additional coordination on Easements may be required.

A proposed bypass highway is being considered in the Picture Canyon Passage area (Segment 16). This may affect the alignment of Segment 16 in the future.

Possible Alternatives

The Proposed Action will be analyzed in an environmental assessment (EA) as defined in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15. The EA will describe and evaluate the proposed action and any alternatives for meeting the purpose and need. The Forest Service is required to analyze the “No Action” alternative under the provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14). Additional alternatives may be developed in response to significant issues brought up during public scoping.

Design Features and Mitigation Measures

Applicable Forest Plan direction, Best Management Practices, and Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction will be incorporated in project design and implementation and disclosed in the EA.

Decision Framework

The District Ranger is the responsible official for this project. The District Ranger will decide whether or not to authorize the following activities for the Loop Trail:

- New trail construction and system trail designation of social trails totaling approximately **10.5 miles**
- Adding loop trail designation to existing system trails and performing deferred maintenance on approximately **11.5 miles**

- Converting existing system and non-system roads to trail and adding system trail designation on approximately **1.8 miles**

The decision will be based on a consideration of the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action or alternatives. The District Ranger may select the proposed action, an alternative analyzed in detail, or a modified proposed action or alternative within the project's range of alternatives.

Contact Person

For more information on this proposal and the project, contact: Brian Tritle, Project Manager at (928) 527-8201 or btritle@fs.fed.us.

Table 1 - Loop Trail Data by Segment

Segment	Trail Name	Trail Type	Status	Ownership	Manager	Miles	Interim Route	Construction	Acquisition	Notes
01	Schultz Pass Trail	3 paved FUTS	Existing	COF	COF	0.1				
02	Schultz Pass Trail	3 paved FUTS	Proposed	Private	COF	0.1	Elden Lookout Road	To be constructed by City	Acquisition of easements needed from several property owners	
03	Schultz Pass Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	COF	COF	0.2	Elden Lookout Road	To be constructed by City		
04	Schultz Pass Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	Private	COF	0.2	Elden Lookout Road	To be constructed by City	Easement needed from Museum of Northern Arizona	
05	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.4	Informal trails	To be constructed		
06	Rocky Ridge Trail	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	1.6		May require deferred maintenance		
07	Easy Oldham Trail	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	0.8		May require deferred maintenance		
08	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	1.3	Pipeline Trail	To be constructed		Realignment of Pipeline Trail
09	Forces of Nature Trail	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	2.4		May require deferred maintenance		
10	Fat Mans Loop/Elden Lookout Trail	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	0.1		May require deferred maintenance		
11	informal trail	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	0.1		May require deferred maintenance		Existing informal trail that needs to be accepted as system trail
12	Fat Mans Loop	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	0.1		May require deferred maintenance		
13	Christmas Tree Trail	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	1.5		May require deferred maintenance		
14	Sandy Seep Trail	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	1.3		May require deferred maintenance		
15	Arizona Trail	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	0.5		May require deferred maintenance		
16	Arizona Trail	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	0.5		May require deferred maintenance	In the long term, this parcel may be exchanged	
17	Arizona Trail	1 single track	Existing	ASLD	CC	3.2			Small section at NW corner crosses private land without an easement, future acquisition may be required	
18	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	ASLD	CC	0.1	Forest road 791	To be constructed	Easement needed from ASLD	
19	Route 66	5 paved road	Existing	ROW	ADOT	0.2				Bridge over BNSF tracks
20	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	ASLD	CC	0.3	None	To be constructed	Easement needed from ASLD; permit needed from ADOT for tunnel	Application for easement submitted to ASLD by County
21	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.3	Informal trail	To be constructed		
22	Campbell Mesa Loop	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	1.0		May require deferred maintenance		

Flagstaff Loop Trail

Table 1 Continued – Loop Trail Data by Segment

Segment	Trail Name	Trail Type	Status	Ownership	Manager	Miles	Interim Route	Construction	Acquisition	Notes
23	Anasazi Loop	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	1.3		May require deferred maintenance		
24	Sinagua Loop	1 single track	Existing	USFS	USFS	0.4		May require deferred maintenance		
25	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.2	Old Walnut Canyon Road	To be constructed		
26a	Walnut Canyon East Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	ASLD	COF	0.5	Forest road 301D	To be constructed as part of development of ASLD section 20	To be acquired as part of development of ASLD section 20	
26b	Walnut Canyon East Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	ASLD	COF	0.5	Forest road 301D	To be constructed a part of development of ASLD section 20	To be acquired as part of development of ASLD section 20	
26c	Walnut Canyon East Trail	1 single track	Proposed	ASLD	USFS	0.4	Forest road 301D	To be constructed		
27	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	2.3	Forest road 301D	To be constructed		
28	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	ASLD	USFS	0.2	Forest road 301D	To be constructed		To be routed onto Forest Service around State land section.
29a	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.3	Forest road 301D	To be constructed		
29b	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.4	Forest roads 301D and 301	Road-to-trail conversion		
29c	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.5	Forest roads 301, 301A, and 9112C	To be constructed with road-to-trail conversion on a portion of 9112C		
30	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.4	Forest road 9112C	Road to trail conversion and closure of FR 9112C		
31	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.6	Existing social trail	Existing social trail to be converted to system trail		
32	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	1.9	None	To be constructed		
33	Skunk Canyon Trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.9	Existing social trail			
34	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	1.4	None	To be constructed; approx. 80% would be road-to-trail conversion		
35	JWP Trail	3 paved FUTS	Existing	ROW	COF	0.1				
36a	JWP Trail	3 paved FUTS	Proposed	ROW	COF	0.3	Existing road on FS land	To be constructed as part of extension of J.W. Powell Blvd	National Forest lands part of imminent Ruskin land exchange	
36b	JWP Trail	3 paved FUTS	Proposed	ROW	COF	0.8	Existing road on city airport property	To be constructed as part of extension of J.W. Powell Blvd	City propoerty	
36c	JWP Trail	3 paved FUTS	Proposed	ROW	COF	0.1	Existing road on FS land	To be constructed as part of extension of J.W. Powell Blvd	National Forest lands part of imminent Ruskin land exchange	
36d	JWP Trail	3 paved FUTS	Proposed	ROW	COF	0.3	Existing road on city airport property	To be constructed as part of extension of J.W. Powell Blvd	City propoerty	
36e	JWP Trail	3 paved FUTS	Proposed	ROW	COF	0.3	Airport access road	To be constructed as part of extension of J.W. Powell Blvd	City propoerty	
37	Ponderosa Trail	3 paved FUTS	Existing	ROW	COF	0.3				

Table 1 Continued – Loop Trail Data by Segment

Segment	Trail Name	Trail Type	Status	Ownership	Manager	Miles	Interim Route	Construction	Acquisition	Notes
38	Sheep Crossing Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	USFS/ADOT	COF	0.2	Existing old road	To be constructed by City	Current ownership status unclear due to Ruskin Exchange; may need permit from ADOT for tunnel	Includes sheep tunnel under I-17
39	Sheep Crossing Spur	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	Private	COF	0.1	Existing social trail	To be constructed by City	Easement needed from property owner	May be possible to reroute to avoid private property
40	Soldiers Trail	1 single track	Existing	CC	CC	1.0				
41	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	CC	CC	0.1	Soldiers Trail	To be constructed by County		
42	Soldiers Trail	1 single track	Existing	CC	CC	0.1				
43	new trail	1 single track	Proposed	USFS	USFS	0.8	None	To be constructed		
44	Woody Mountain Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	COF	COF	0.3	None	To be constructed as part of Villagio Montano development	To be acquired as part of Villagio Montano development	
45	Woody Mountain Trail	3 paved FUTS	Proposed	ROW	COF	0.9	Woody Mountain Road	To be constructed as part of future development	To be acquired as part of future development	
46	Dry Lake Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Existing	ROW	COF	0.8				
47	Dry Lake Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	Private	COF	0.2	Flag Ranch Road	To be constructed by City	Easement needed from W.L. Gore	
48	Dry Lake Trail	5 paved road	Existing	ROW	ADOT	0.2		May be desirable to build paved shoulder		
49	Dry Lake Trail	3 paved FUTS	Proposed	Private	COF	0.4	Flag Ranch Road	To be constructed by City	Easement needed from private parcels	Consider realignment through parcels to east
50	Route 66 West Trail	3 paved FUTS	Proposed	ROW	COF	0.4	Route 66	To be constructed by City		May not be necessary if segment 49 is realigned
51	Santa Fe West Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	COF	COF	0.6	Interim trail to be constructed before FUTS	To be constructed by City		Within Clay detention basin
52	Santa Fe West Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	Private	COF	0.5	Interim trail to be constructed before FUTS	To be constructed by City	Easement needed on private property owner; City may own/control west half	
53	Santa Fe West Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	Private	COF	0.1	Interim trail to be constructed before FUTS	To be constructed by City	Easement needed from Lowell Observatory	
54	Tunnel Springs Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Existing	ASLD	COF	1.7				
55	Observatory Mesa Trail	1 single track	Proposed	ASLD	CC	1.5	None	To be constructed	Easement needed from ASLD	Application for easement submitted to ASLD by County
56	Observatory Mesa Trail	1 single track	Proposed	COF	CC	0.6	None	To be constructed		Requires agreement between City and County
57	Rio North Trail	2 unpaved FUTS	Proposed	COF	COF	0.9	None	Planned for construction		

Figure 1

Flagstaff Loop Trail General Location Map

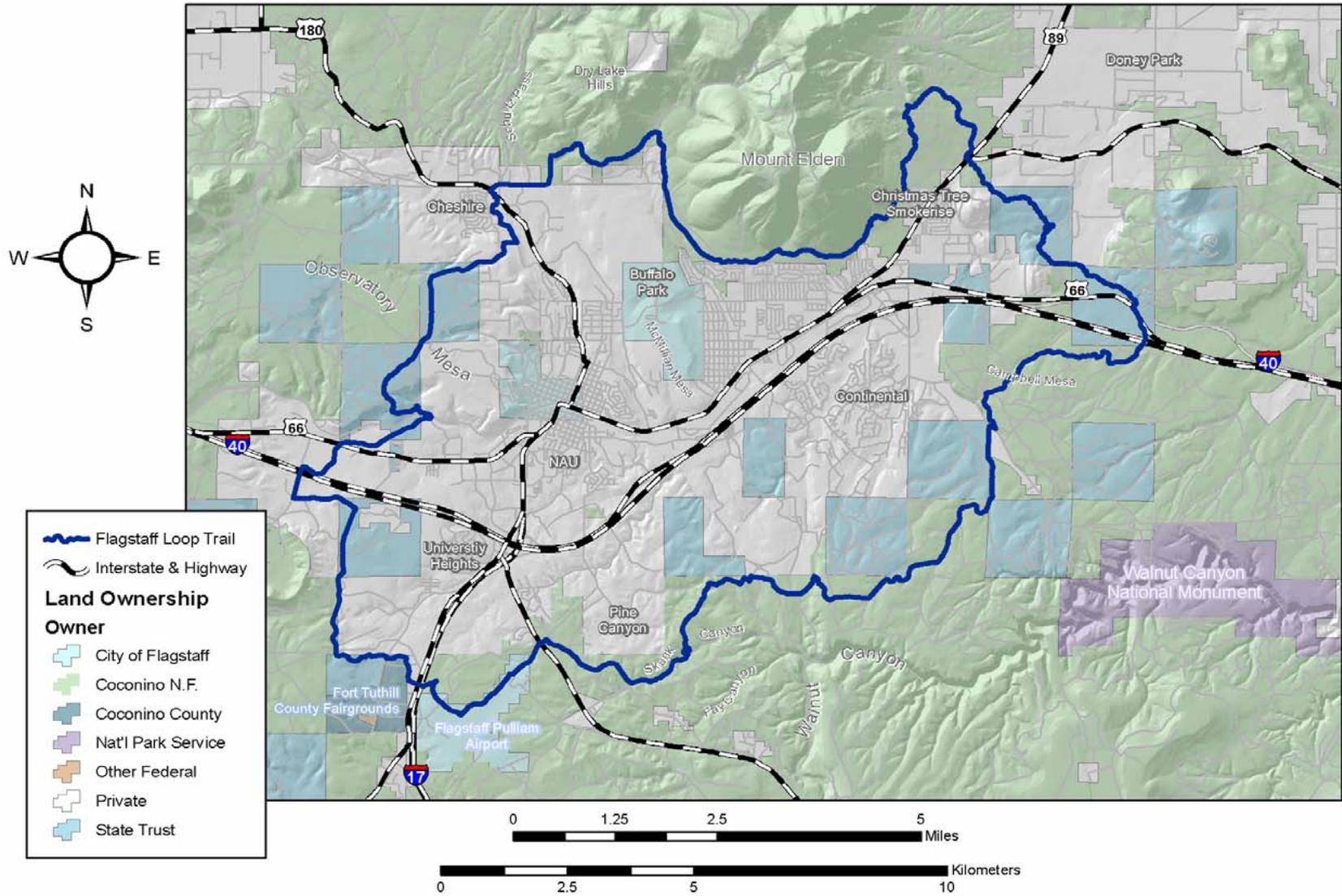


Figure 2

Flagstaff Loop Trail Segment Map

