

# 3. Life Along the River: We Care for It, and for Good Reason!

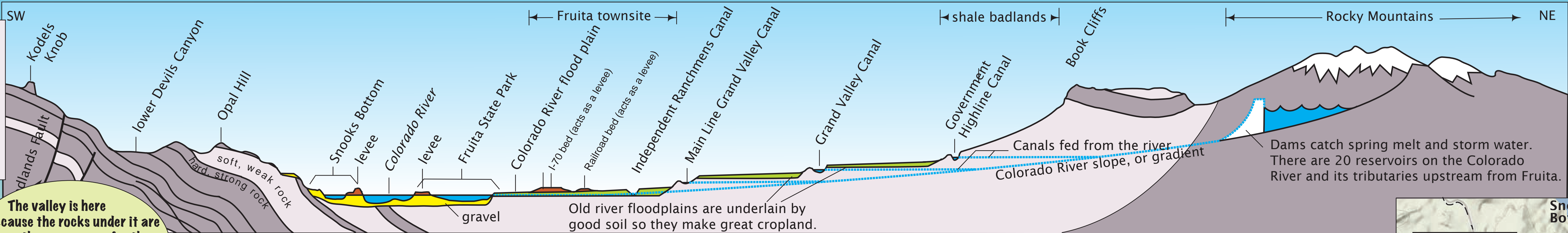
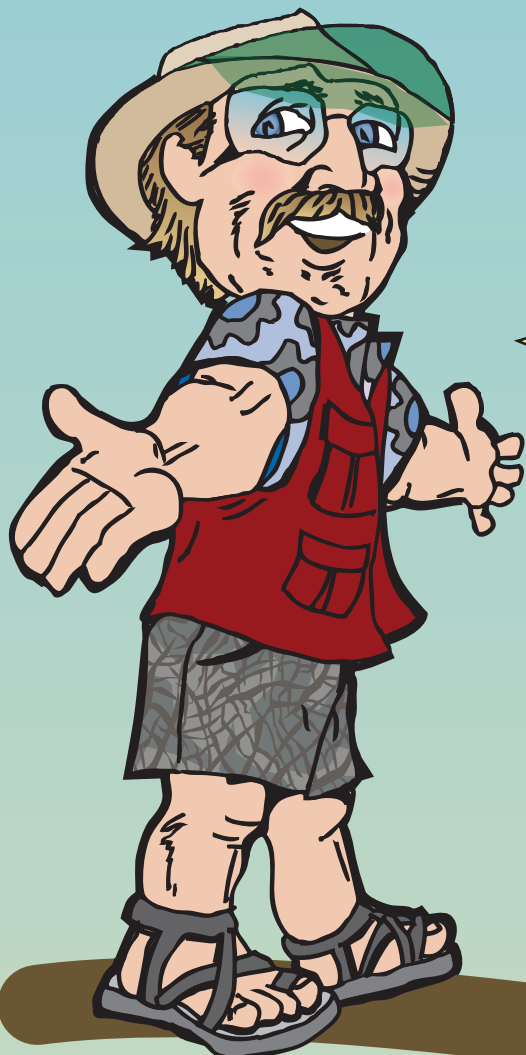
You may think of the Colorado River as just another place to have fun, but without it, people would not live here.

Long before people arrived on this continent, the river carved this valley and covered its floor with fertile soil.

We use the river's water in our homes and on our crops. We use its gravel and sand for road beds, landscaping, and cement.

This diagram shows how river water flows to irrigate our valley. It also shows how we corral the river when it is high. To catch and guide the water we have dams upstream, levees along the sides of the river channel, and storm drains. The system works pretty well; damage from floods is rare now.

The valley is here because the rocks under it are soft, so they were easy for the river to wear away. The valley is wide because the soft rocks underlie a wide area.



The river's channel is floored with alluvium, loose sediment moved by the river. Where the river flows fastest, the floor is made of cobbles, coarse gravel bars, and sand.



When the river spreads onto its flood plain, it slows and deposits sand, silt, and clay that make good soil.



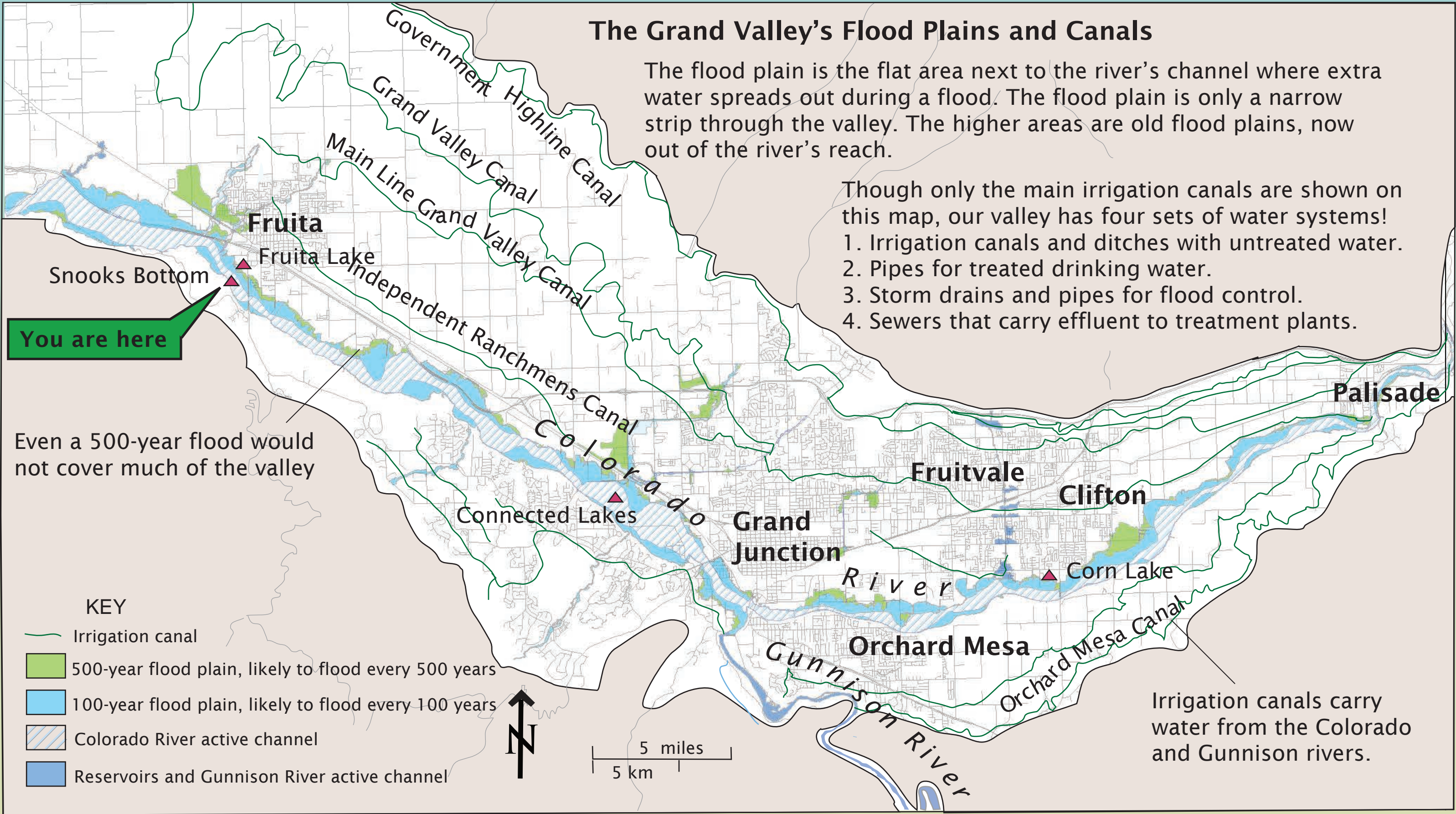
Gravel mines are scattered along the river's channel. The emptied pits form lakes that have been landscaped into parks: Island Acres, Corn Lake, Connected Lakes, Fruita State Park, and Snooks Bottom.



In 2011, the river rose onto its flood plain in a few places, leaving piles of branches and a new layer of silt and sand.



You can do your part to take care of the river: These markers, near storm drains, remind us to dump only clean water in storm drains and gutters. They drain straight to the river!



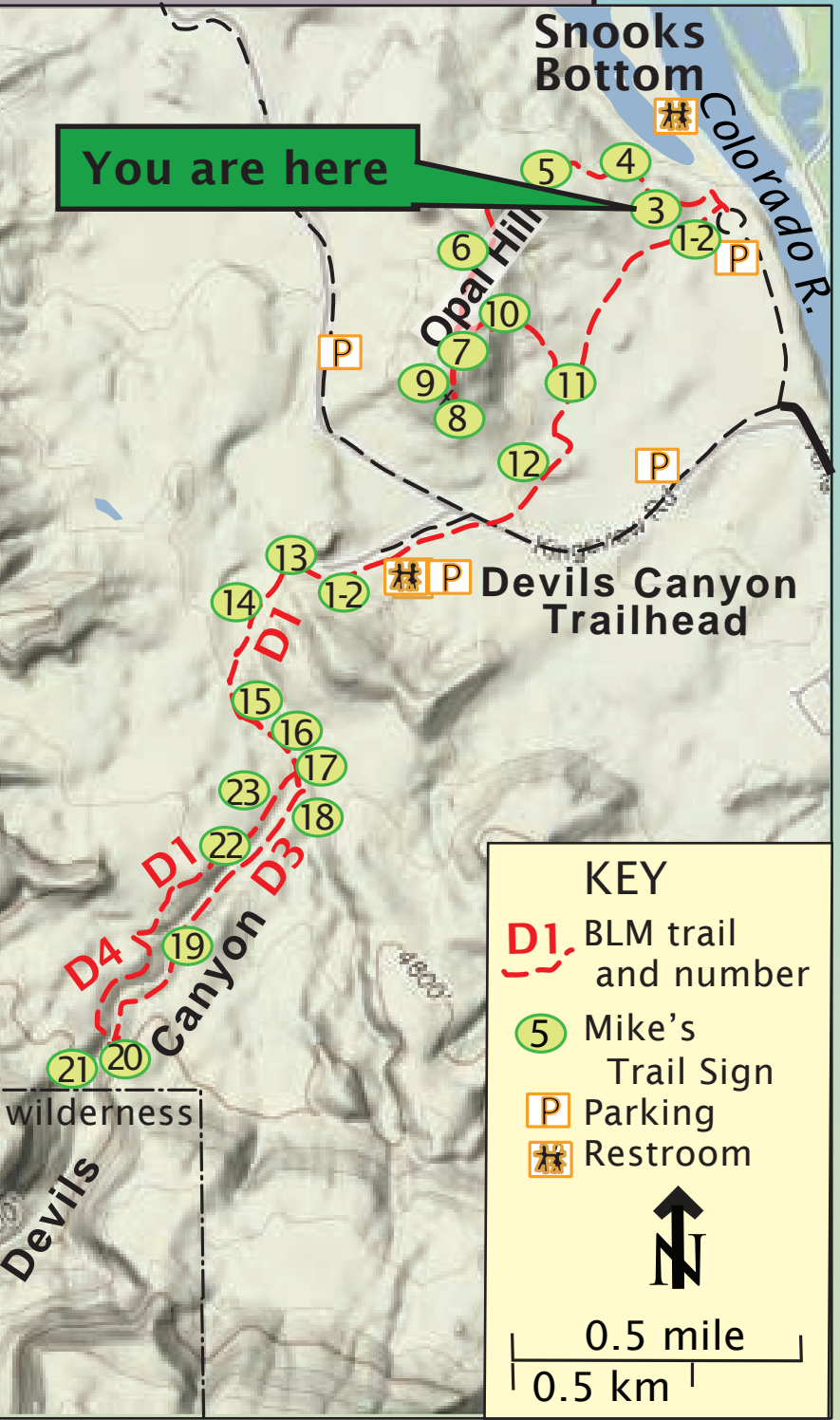
## The Grand Valley's Flood Plains and Canals

The flood plain is the flat area next to the river's channel where extra water spreads out during a flood. The flood plain is only a narrow strip through the valley. The higher areas are old flood plains, now out of the river's reach.

Though only the main irrigation canals are shown on this map, our valley has four sets of water systems!

1. Irrigation canals and ditches with untreated water.
2. Pipes for treated drinking water.
3. Storm drains and pipes for flood control.
4. Sewers that carry effluent to treatment plants.

Irrigation canals carry water from the Colorado and Gunnison rivers.



**KEY**

- DJ BLM trail and number
- 5 Mike's Trail Sign
- P Parking
- R Restroom

0.5 mile  
0.5 km

