Baacadia User Testing Plan

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Testing Plan Version

Baacadia complete build through the first Chapter before *the Winter Thesis Show* on 12/12/2024

Background

Baacadia is an exploration-driven sound-ecology game where the player learns the world by listening, observing creatures, and traversing by solving sound-based puzzles. This user testing plan ensures that onboarding, 3C fundamentals, puzzle readability, and ecological audio design all support a cohesive, intuitive, and emotionally engaging first-chapter experience.

Testing focuses on four pillars:

1. **3C – character motion, camera feel, and core controls**
2. **Level visual guidance – sightlines, legibility, and environmental cueing**
3. **Puzzle validation – sound mechanics, sheep interactions, and edge cases**
4. **Audio feedback – atmospheric design, interactive sound, and ecological clarity**

Testing Objective (THE WHAT)

- ➔ Tutorials + Controls
  - The initial phase focuses on the tutorial experience, emphasizing intuitive controls and basic mechanics in the first canyon level:
    - Ensure camera movement feels seamless and smooth, with Focus Mode effectively guiding players to interact with objects, making it clear which elements are important in the environment.

➔ Level Design Layout
- Ensuring sightlines leading toward key points of interest (trees, sheep, relics, canyon exits).
- Evaluate the clarity of affordances: climbable areas, dangerous noise zones, reachable ledges.

➔ Puzzle Validation
- Check that sheep behavior patterns (wander → attracted → graze → disperse) are readable.
- Validate puzzle loops:
  - Fruit falling → sonic lure → sheep attraction → player action.
  - Understanding the difference between ambient sound and functional sound.
- Test all edge cases (sheep stuck, sound overlapping, inconsistent triggers).
- Confirm players can deduce puzzle logic through observation, without text explanations.

➔ Audio Feedback
- Evaluate the clarity of functional sounds.
- Identify audio gaps.
- Check how well audio enhances the sense of scale and ecological resonance.

Testing Schedule (THE WHEN)

Testing will be divided into three phases according to the testing objectives:

Testing Phase	Timeline	Focus Areas
Phase 1: Tutorial Mechanics	Early to Mid-November	3D controls, Camera Follow, Sheep interactions, Recording Mechanics
Phase 2: Puzzle and Level Design	Late November	Puzzle elements, edge cases, comprehensibility, visual cues for guidance

Phase 3: Environmental Design	Early December (Ideally by The Winter Show)	Effectiveness of audio and visual effects, integration within the 3D environments

Testing Plan (THE HOW)

- ➔ Tutorial - 3C
  - ◆ Objectives: Test the ease and intuitiveness of camera, character, and control
  - ◆ Methods:
    - 10–15 minute guided free-roam in the starting canyon.
    - Observe player's instinctive camera behavior and awkward moments.
    - Note all points where players hesitate, overshoot, or lose sight of goals.
  - ◆ Evaluation Questions:
    - Does the camera ever fight players on slopes or turns?
    - Does the player get stuck in the landscape?
    - How does the player feel about their walking speed?
- ➔ Level Visual Guidance Testing
  - ◆ Objectives: Test whether the player knows where to look and go in the environment.
  - ◆ Methods: Silent playtest: no verbal hints.
  - ◆ Evaluation Questions:
    - Do players follow sightlines or wander aimlessly?
    - Do visual hints (lighting, motion, foliage density) attract attention?
    - Does the environment clearly communicate what is interactive versus scenery?

- ➔ Puzzle Validation Testing
  - ◆ Objectives: Test if the player understands the puzzle logic and passes the puzzle the intended way.
  - ◆ Methods: Observe how long it takes them to deduce the interaction loop.
  - ◆ **Edge Cases to Test:**

        - The player does not observe the environment and misses the cue
        - Player interrupts sheep during interaction.
        - Two sounds overlapping unintentionally.
        - Player brings sheep to a non-intended location.

- Evaluation Questions:
    - Do players understand why sheep move?
    - Do they detect differences between ambient sounds and gameplay sounds?
    - Do they feel rewarded when the puzzle resolves?

Feedback Incorporation

Scheduled Milestone Feedback Loops: Plan for **feedback reviews** immediately after each milestone. Feedback will be analyzed and, if necessary, changes will be made to address any core issues discovered during testing.

Rapid Iterative Testing: Between milestones, **rapid fixes** will be implemented, and some elements will be retested if time allows.