



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Business Plan for Fee Campgrounds



Bureau of Land Management
Gunnison Field Office
August 2023

BLM Signatory Page

Developed By:

Gunnison Field Office – Recreation Program
Southwest District BLM
2500 East New York Avenue, Gunnison, CO 81230
(970) 642-4940
E-Mail: blm_co_gu_admin@blm.gov

Signatures for Approving Business Plan

Recommended By:

Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner

Date

Approved By:

Field Office Manager

Date

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Executive Summary

The Bureau of Land Management's Gunnison Field Office (GFO) manages four developed campgrounds: Oh Be Joyful, Red Bridge, The Gate, and Mill Creek. This business plan provides a proposal to increase camping fees at each of the four campgrounds.

Current campground fee revenue across the four campgrounds (\$55,000 in FY21) does not cover the cost to operate the campgrounds (\$90,000/year). For example, the camping fee at Mill Creek campground has been \$7 per night since 1999. Over the past two decades, costs of labor, supplies, and maintenance have increased significantly.

The justification for increasing Expanded Amenity Fees at the four GFO campgrounds is based on a fair market analysis of fees charged at comparable public and private campgrounds in the geographic area. Data on comparable campgrounds in the Crested Butte and Lake City areas are included in this plan. The proposed fees for the GFO campgrounds are comparable to those at nearby U.S. Forest Service (USFS) campgrounds.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) requires that revenue from camping fees at the GFO campgrounds will be used to fund GFO campground operations and other recreation projects, providing direct benefits back to users. Increasing camping fees will increase fee revenue and allow the GFO to address maintenance and capital improvement needs at recreation sites.

Regular campground maintenance includes the cleaning and pumping of restrooms, repair and replacement of picnic tables and fire rings, and regular testing for the drinking water systems at Mill Creek and The Gate. Fee revenue will fund additional park ranger patrols in the campgrounds. In the future, the BLM may use fee revenue for capital improvement projects in the campgrounds to manage high levels of recreational use.

This document was prepared to fulfill the fee proposal package requirements outlined in the BLM Colorado Recreation Fee Proposals Step-by-Step Review and Approval Process (2011).

Background and Authorities

This business plan was prepared in accordance with the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), 2004 (P.L. 108-447, as amended), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation fee program policy and manual (MS-2930 – Recreation Permits and Fees) and handbook (H-2930-1 Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook). FLREA provides the BLM current authority to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at Federal recreational lands and waters. FLREA authorizes the BLM to locally retain collected recreation fees and outlines how revenues may be used for such things as facility repair, maintenance, facility enhancement directly related to public use, and operating or capital costs associated with the Recreation and Visitor Services program.

Under FLREA, a Standard Amenity fee and an Expanded Amenity fee may be charged for the use of certain facilities or services, which include developed day-use sites and campgrounds. The developed recreational sites must meet the criteria below. These fees are usually implemented through the issuance of a recreation use permit (RUP), or through a specific annual pass. BLM policy requires that revenue from RUPs be deposited into a separate account (pg. 2-3 of H-2930-1). Doing so allows the BLM to more readily track and report collections; and ensures that RUP revenue is spent at or near the site of collection.

Definitions of Standard and Expanded Amenities taken from Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), 2004 (P.L. 108-447, as amended), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation fee program policy and manual (MS-2930 – Recreation Permits and Fees) for the area covered under this business plan:

- **Standard Amenity Recreation Fees** cover outdoor recreation areas that provides significant opportunities for outdoor recreation; has substantial Federal investments; where fees can be effectively collected, and that has all of the following amenities: (1) designated developed parking, (2) a permanent toilet facility, (3) a permanent trash receptacle, (4) interpretive sign, exhibit, or kiosk, (5) picnic tables, (6) and security services (Sec.6802.(f)(4)(D) of FLREA).
- **Expanded Amenity Recreation Fees** cover specialized outdoor recreation sites and services including but not limited to developed campgrounds with at least a majority of the following amenities: (1) tent or trailer spaces, (2) picnic tables, (3) drinking water, (4) access roads, (5) fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM, (6) reasonable visitor protection, (7) refuse containers, (8) toilet facilities, (9) simple devices for containing a campfire (Sec.6802.(g)(2)(A) of FLREA).
- **Additional Expanded Amenity** recreation facilities or services include rental of cabins, group day-use or overnight sites, binoculars or other equipment (Sec.6802.(g)(2)(C) of FLREA); use of hookups for electricity, cable, or sewer (Sec.6802.(g)(2)(D) of FLREA); use of sanitary dump stations (SEC.6802.(g)(2)(E) of FLREA); and use of reservation services (Sec.6802.(g)(2)(G) of FLREA).

Purpose of Document

The BLM Handbook H-2930-1, Recreation Permits and Fee Administration, requires that each recreation fee program have an approved business plan which thoroughly discusses fees and explains how fees are consistent with the criteria set forth in FLREA. Business plans are to assist management in determining the appropriateness and level of fees, the cost of administering a fee program, the expected benefits to be derived for the public and to provide a structured communication and marketing plan. The primary purpose of the plan is to serve as public notification of the objectives for use of recreation fee revenues and to provide the public an opportunity to comment on these objectives. The finalized business plan guides the expenditure of collected FLREA funds and ensures public accountability.

The business plan covers a description of the fee site, proposed changes in fees to these sites, associated operating costs, planned expenditures of fee revenue, a financial analysis utilizing a regional comparative market study of fees charged for other similar recreation facilities, and the impacts of proposed fee changes. The data used to analyze and prepare this business plan was obtained through internal BLM tracking and accounting mechanisms such as the Federal Business Management System (FBMS), Recreation Management Information System (RMIS), Collections and Billing Systems (CBS), and other locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking spreadsheets.

For additional detailed information, contact the BLM Southwest Colorado District. Much of the data is open and available but associated personally identifiable information contained in these systems may be subject to Privacy Act requirements.

Overview of the Gunnison Field Office Recreation Program

The Gunnison Field Office (GFO) is responsible for the management and stewardship of more than 650,000 acres of public land in southwestern Colorado's upper Gunnison River Basin, San Juan Mountains, and upper Animas River Basin. The GFO lands include a diversity of ecosystems from dry sagebrush steppes at 7,000 feet to alpine tundra meadows and 14,000-foot peaks. This vast and diverse landscape provides for equally diverse recreational opportunities. Visitors from local communities and from around the world come to enjoy the beauty and recreational opportunities on Gunnison BLM lands. Since 2019, the GFO has recorded 1.6 million visitor days each year (RMIS).

The GFO manages four developed campgrounds that currently charge Expanded Amenity Fees: Oh Be Joyful, Mill Creek, The Gate, and Red Bridge. Each of these campgrounds provides access to a wide array of recreational activities.

The GFO manages the Oh Be Joyful campground, located six miles north of the town of Crested Butte along County Road 734. Recreation opportunities in the Slate River valley include camping, fishing, horseback riding, sight-seeing, hiking, swimming, kayaking, mountain biking, driving for pleasure, bicycling, and bird-watching.

South of Gunnison, the GFO manages much of the land within and adjacent to the Alpine Loop National Backcountry Byway. The Alpine Loop is a rugged 4x4 road that winds 65 miles through the spectacular scenery of the San Juan Mountains nestled between the towns of Lake City, Silverton and Ouray, Colorado. This system of roads provides visitors with spectacular views, waterfalls, wildlife, fishing, abandoned mines, and historical structures. The Alpine Loop is very popular among Off-Highway Vehicle users, but also offers opportunities for hiking, camping, and fishing.

The GFO's Mill Creek Campground is the highest developed campground on the Lake City side of the Alpine Loop. North of Lake City, The Gate and Red Bridge campgrounds are located along the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River providing access to popular fly-fishing waters.



Map 1: Map of the Gunnison Field Office Management Area with Campgrounds

Campground Descriptions

Oh Be Joyful Campground

Oh Be Joyful Campground is located six miles northwest of the town of Crested Butte, Colorado along County Road 734 (CR734) in the Slate River Valley. A moderately steep, gravel access road connects CR734 to the campground and day-use parking site. The beauty of the Slate River Valley, the views into the Ruby Range, and the easy access to the Raggeds Wilderness make Oh Be Joyful campground a desirable destination.

Oh Be Joyful has 29 individual sites and one group campsite. There are six additional walk-in tent campsites at the River Flats site. River Flats is just south of Oh Be Joyful along the Slate River. For the purposes of this plan, the River Flats sites are included in Oh Be Joyful campground for a total of 36 campsites.

Pursuant to FLREA, fees may be charged for overnight camping where specific amenities and services are provided. The Oh Be Joyful campground has 7 of the 9 amenities for an Expanded Amenity Fee under FLREA:

All sites have:

1. Tent or trailer spaces
2. Picnic tables
3. Access road
4. Fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM
5. Reasonable visitor protection
6. Toilet facilities
7. Device for containing a campfire

The campground offers several different types of sites. In the main loop, sites have ample room for RVs, while the Oxbow loop offers 11 more private walk-in campsites for tent campers. The campground also features an accessible group campsite which can accommodate groups up to 20 people.



Figure 1. View of the Slate River Valley from Oh Be Joyful Campground, Crested Butte, CO.

Management History

Prior to 2016, there were no developed campsites in the Oh Be Joyful area. Instead, visitors drove across the Slate River where there were dozens of dispersed campsites. BLM monitoring found as many as 147 tent/camping units on a busy holiday weekend. The BLM determined that significant resource damage was occurring to the river and the riparian vegetation in the dispersed camping area. The BLM initiated a project to develop 30 designated campsites to manage visitor use and resource impacts. The campground development was completed in 2020.

In 2017, the BLM implemented a camping fee of \$10 per night. Since then, the BLM has invested in major campground improvements in 2018 and 2019 including installation of two new vault toilets, bear boxes, tent pads, a group campsite, and a foot and horse bridge to access hiking trails. A campground host was hired in 2018-2021 and has provided visitor services. Hosts manage the reservation system, conduct daily cleaning and facility maintenance, and provide orientation for public lands visitors.

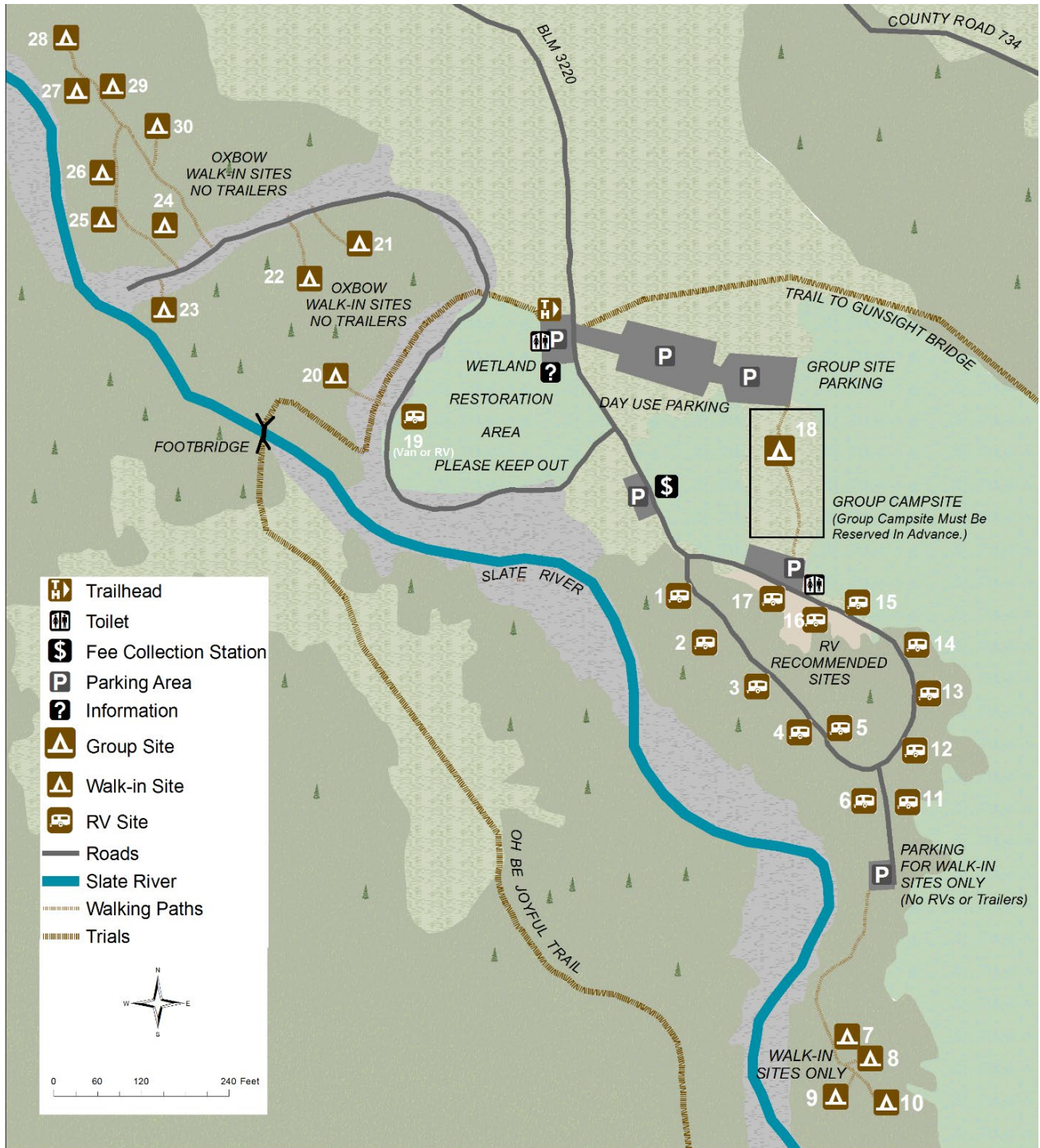
A foot and horse bridge, completed in the summer of 2020, crosses the river providing access to hiking trails. The Oh Be Joyful hiking trail provides access to view waterfalls on Oh Be Joyful Creek. The trail continues onto the Gunnison National Forest and into the Raggeds Wilderness, accessing a large trail network.

In 2020, the Coal Train trail was completed that connects Oh Be Joyful campground to Gunsight Bridge and the extensive Crested Butte trail system. The Coal Train trail provides mountain biking and hiking access from the town of Crested Butte to the Oh Be Joyful recreation site.

Since 2020, campsites at Oh Be Joyful are reservable on Recreation.gov on a 14-day rolling basis. The BLM will continue using the reservation system from May 27 – September 30. The campground is typically full throughout the summer season.



Figure 2 Oh Be Joyful Recreation Area Sign



Map 2. Oh Be Joyful Campground Map

Mill Creek Campground

Mill Creek Campground is located 11 miles southwest of Lake City, Colorado on County Road 30. The campground is accessed via a bridge over the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River.

Mill Creek is the highest developed campground on the Alpine Loop Backcountry Byway, making it a popular access to driving Cinnamon Pass. Many visitors use this campground as a base-camp for driving the Alpine Loop, climbing the San Juan's 14,000-foot mountains, fly-fishing, and other recreational activities.

The campground has 22 developed sites each with a parking spur, picnic table, metal fire ring with grate, and bear box. Other amenities include two vault toilets, two water wells (hand pumps), refuse containers, and an information kiosk and map. Two campsites are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible and linked to an ADA accessible restroom. A short hiking trail provides access to the river for fishing and other opportunities. Toilet pumping is provided in the project area through local contractors. Other maintenance services are provided utilizing volunteer efforts from campground hosts and BLM employees.

Pursuant to FLREA, fees may be charged for overnight camping where specific amenities and services are provided. Mill Creek campground has all of the 9 amenities for an Expanded Amenity Fee:

1. Tent or trailer spaces
2. Picnic tables
3. Access road
4. Fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM
5. Reasonable visitor protection
6. Toilet facilities
7. Device for containing a campfire
8. Drinking water
9. Refuse containers



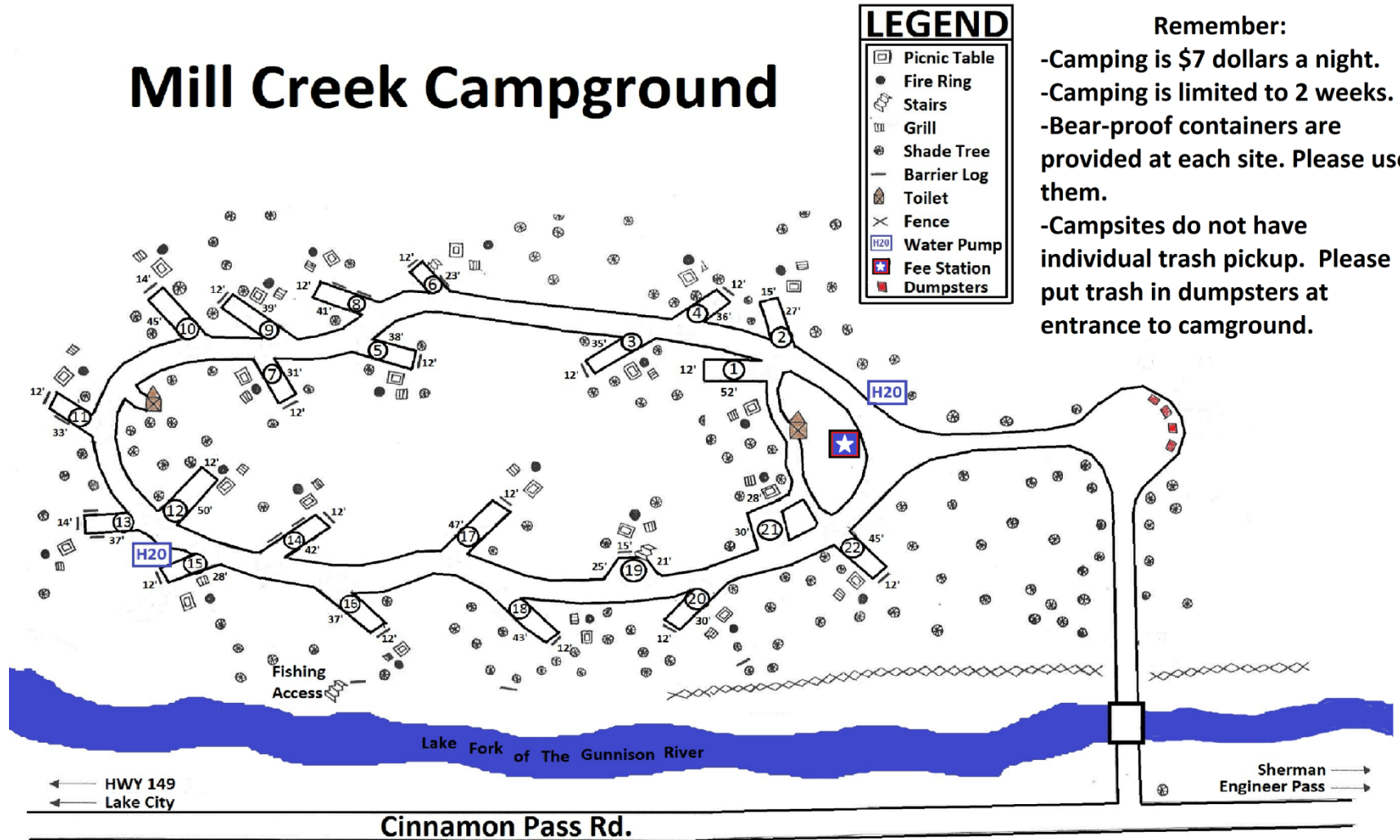
Figure 3. A typical campsite at Mill Creek Campground with picnic table, fire ring, and bear box.

Management History

The campground was established in 1968.

In 1984, a \$5 fee was implemented. The camping fee was increased to \$7 in 1999. This fee is not representative of the extensive amenities offered, not compatible with other campgrounds in the Lake City area and does not provide sufficient revenue to cover operating costs. Operating costs at Mill Creek include camp host stipends, facility maintenance, regular restroom cleaning, trash collection, and water system costs.

Mill Creek Campground



LEGEND	
	Picnic Table
	Fire Ring
	Stairs
	Grill
	Shade Tree
	Barrier Log
	Toilet
	Fence
	Water Pump
	Fee Station
	Dumpsters

- Remember:
- Camping is \$7 dollars a night.
 - Camping is limited to 2 weeks.
 - Bear-proof containers are provided at each site. Please use them.
 - Campsites do not have individual trash pickup. Please put trash in dumpsters at entrance to campground.

Map 3. Mill Creek Campground Map

The Gate Campground

The Gate is named for the unique geologic formation high above the river and is located just west of Hwy 149, 15 miles north of Lake City, Colorado. The campground provides access to the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River, a popular spot for fishing, camping, and picnicing. The camping fee is currently \$5 per night.

The campground has 8 campsites, two vault restrooms, and a drinking water hand pump. Each campsite has a parking spur, metal fire ring with a grate, and a picnic table. Pursuant to FLREA, fees may be charged for overnight camping where specific amenities and services are provided. The Gate Campground has 8 of the 9 amenities for an Expanded Amenity Fee:

1. Tent or trailer spaces
2. Picnic tables
3. Access road
4. Fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM
5. Reasonable visitor protection
6. Toilet facilities
7. Device for containing a campfire
8. Drinking water

The \$5 camping fee is not representative of the extensive amenities offered, not compatible with other campgrounds in the Lake City area, and does not provide sufficient revenue to cover operating costs. Operating costs at The Gate include facility maintenance, regular restroom cleaning, and water system costs.



Figure 4. The Gate Campground.

Red Bridge Campground

Red Bridge is located on the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River, 23 miles north of Lake City, Colorado along County Road 25. The campground sits in the trees along the north bank of the Lake Fork and is known for its exceptional fishing access.

The campground has 7 campsites and one vault restroom. Each campsite has a parking spur, metal fire ring with grate, and a picnic table. Potable water is not available at this campground. The camping fee is currently \$5 per night.

Pursuant to FLREA, fees may be charged for overnight camping where specific amenities and services are provided. Red Bridge Campground has 7 of the 9 amenities for an Expanded Amenity Fee:

1. Tent or trailer spaces
2. Picnic tables
3. Access road
4. Fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM
5. Reasonable visitor protection
6. Toilet facilities
7. Device for containing a campfire

The \$5 camping fee is not representative of the extensive amenities offered, not compatible with other campgrounds in the Lake City area, and does not provide sufficient revenue to cover operating costs. Operating costs at Red Bridge include facility maintenance, park ranger patrols, and regular restroom cleaning.



Figure 5. A shady campsite at Red Bridge Campground along the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River.

Current Visitation, Fee Revenue, and Operating Costs

Current Visitation

Visitation to GFO recreation sites is recorded annually in the BLM’s Recreation Management Information Systems (RMIS) database. The use at a specific site is captured as “visits” which equates to one person entering onto lands or waters managed by the BLM for the purposes of recreation. A “visitor day” is defined as a visitor spending 12 hours in an area. A family of 4 camping for 3 days would count as 12 visitor days.

These visitation numbers are derived from multiple methods including records from recreation permits, such as campground fee envelopes, data from traffic counters, and simple observation. While technically open year-round, visitation to the GFO campgrounds is concentrated in the summer season, generally May through September.

Visitation in RMIS follows the federal fiscal year (FY), which runs from October 1 through September 30 of the following year. Across the Gunnison Field Office, there were 1.4 million recreational visits in FY19 and FY20, and 1.9 million visits in FY21. This increase in recreational use is consistent with other public lands across Colorado. The BLM anticipates that recreational use will continue to increase.

Table 1. Annual Visitation to GFO Campgrounds in Visitor Days

Campground	FY19	FY20	FY21	Average
Oh Be Joyful	290,542*	194,797	214,406	204,601
Mill Creek	12,263	11,910	27,393	17,189
The Gate	6,373	2,063	2,784	3,740
Red Bridge	7,857	7,628	8,009	7,831

Notes: Oh Be Joyful visitation captures both campers and day-users. Oh Be Joyful waterfall is a very popular day hike. The visitor days for Oh Be Joyful campground likely saw a decrease in FY20 as the campground became reservable on Recreation.gov for the first time. The Covid pandemic also likely impacted visitation data in FY20.

*Excluded from average.

Current Fee Revenue

The GFO uses Recreational Use Permit (RUP) envelopes to collect campground fees at each of the four campgrounds. In 2020, the GFO began using Recreation.gov to manage reservations and fee collection for Oh Be Joyful campground. The GFO intends to use Recreation.gov for reservations and fee collection at Mill Creek Campground beginning in 2024.

Table 2. Annual Fee Collection at GFO Campgrounds FY17-FY21

Campground	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	Five-Year Average
Oh Be Joyful	\$24,640	\$25,232	\$25,766	\$32,064	\$34,455	\$28,431
Mill Creek	\$6,170	\$5,681	\$8,376	\$12,615	\$10,516	\$8,672
The Gate	\$2,166	\$1,741	\$2,113	\$3,068	\$2,691	\$2,356
Red Bridge	\$2,273	\$1,679	\$3,264	\$2,538	\$2,171	\$2,385
Totals	\$35,249	\$34,333	\$39,518	\$50,256	\$39,834	\$39,838

Notes:

FY18: A large wildfire in the Lake City area during the summer of 2018 impacted visitation.

FY20: Oh Be Joyful went on Recreation.gov at the beginning of summer 2020.

Current Operating Costs

The GFO spends approximately \$90,000 each year to operate and maintain these four campgrounds, which includes staff salaries, vehicles, supplies, law enforcement, and operations costs, such as water testing and toilet pumping. The GFO spends approximately \$10,000 annually on fee collections, which includes regular fee collection and accounting, and maintenance of self-service fee stations.

The GFO expects that campground operations and maintenance costs will continue to increase. Additional staff time, services, and supplies will increase as visitation increases and campgrounds require more frequent cleaning, fee collection, and maintenance.

Table 3. Annual Expenditures by Expense Category

Cost Type (averages, including benefits)	FY21	Projected FY23
Park Rangers (2)	\$35,000	\$40,000
Vehicles (1)	\$5,000	\$5,000
Equipment & Supplies	\$20,000	\$25,000
Services (water testing, toilet pumping, trash pickup, etc.)	\$10,000	\$15,000
Camp Host stipends	\$5,000	\$5,000
Law Enforcement	\$15,000	\$15,000
Totals	\$90,000	\$105,000

Anticipated Future Costs

Renovation and replacement of campground facilities as they become unserviceable (e.g. pit toilets, bear boxes, fire rings, etc).

Fee Proposal

The fee analysis portion of this business plan was based on a comparative review of fees at existing private and public facilities within the service area that provide similar services, including USFS and privately owned campgrounds. See Appendix A for the full comparison of area campground amenities and fees.

The following fee schedule outlines the existing and proposed changes for recreation fees within the GFO:

Table 4. Existing Campground Fees and Proposed Changes

Site		Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Oh Be Joyful	Individual Site	\$10	\$20
Oh Be Joyful	Group Site	\$30	\$60
Mill Creek	Individual Site	\$7	\$20
The Gate	Individual Site	\$5	\$10
Red Bridge	Individual Site	\$5	\$10

Gunnison Field Office will use various e-commerce technologies, as directed in Instruction Memorandum 2022-019, to provide recreation visitors opportunities to find, reserve, and pay for a campsite within the field office. Most of these options are provided through the interagency reservation service Recreation.gov.

If the Gunnison Field Office decides to make available the “scan and pay” or any other type of ecommerce solution option in the future, an expanded amenity fee for reservation services would be charged in addition to any other standard or expanded amenity fees in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(G). The amount of the reservation fee is charged by the contractor. Current reservation fees can range from \$0.50 to \$10.00. The reservation fee is subject to contracting requirements on Recreation.gov and will be adjusted as that contract changes or with future updates to the Business Plan. For visitors who wish not to pay the expanded amenity fee for reservation services, the traditional iron ranger with RUP envelope will exist until the field office moves the fee area completely to ecommerce and/or the RUP envelope is no longer available for payment.

To account for inflation or other economic changes, this business plan also proposes tying the new fee structure to the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood Consumer Price Index (CPI). Fees would be reviewed annually against this index. Fees could be increased or decreased in \$2 increments if supported by the index.

Fee Calculation

The fees at each of the GFO campgrounds are far below comparable campgrounds in the area. Fees at the Mill Creek campground, for example, have not changed in more than 20 years, yet the costs of goods, services, and labor have steadily increased. Further, improvements to the campground, including new vault toilets have improved the quality of the campground. Fees at The Gate and Red Bridge have also remained unchanged for many years. The fees at Oh Be Joyful campground have not increased in three years despite major infrastructure improvements. This section reviews the amenities at each campground and the justification to collect an expanded amenity fee.

Table 5. Standard Campground Amenities (FLREA Sec. 6802.(f)(4)(D))

Campground	Sites	Current Site Fee	Designated developed parking	Toilet facility	Trash receptacle	Interpretive sign, exhibit, or kiosk	Picnic tables	Security services
Oh Be Joyful (inc. River Flats)	36	\$10	*	*		*	*	*
Mill Creek	22	\$7	*	*	*	*	*	*
The Gate	8	\$5	*	*		*	*	*
Red Bridge	7	\$5	*	*		*	*	*

Table 6. Expanded Campground Amenities (REA Sec. 6802.(g)(2)(A))

Campground	# Site	Current Fee	Tent Space	Picnic table	Drinking water	Access roads	Collection of fees by BLM	Reasonable Visitor Protection	Refuse Containers	Toilet Facilities	Simple device for containing a campfire
Oh Be Joyful (inc. River Flats)	36	\$10	*	*		*	*	*		*	*
Mill Creek	22	\$7	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
The Gate	8	\$5	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*
Red Bridge	7	\$5	*	*		*	*	*		*	*

Oh Be Joyful Campground

The BLM introduced a \$10 per night camping fee at Oh Be Joyful campground in 2017. The BLM made significant improvements to the campground in 2018, 2019, and 2020, yet the fee to camp has stayed constant at \$10 per night. The Oh Be Joyful campground provides 6 of the 9 amenities specified in REA qualifications for an expanded amenity fee including: tent or trailer spaces, picnic tables, access roads, fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM, reasonable visitor protection, toilet facilities, and simple devices for containing a campfire (Sec.6802.(g)(2)(A) of REA). Based on the amenities and visitor experience, we propose increasing the fee to \$20 for individual sites and \$60 for the group site per night.

In 2018, the BLM reconstructed loop one, reducing the number of campsites and increasing the distance between the sites and the distance between sites and the riverbank. The BLM improved four walk-in sites with a new trail surface, numbered posts, and tent pads. The BLM updated the campground map and fee station, installed two new vault toilets, built a day-use parking area, erected new signage, improved the access road, and hired a campground host.

In 2019, the BLM added tent pads in sites in loop one, installed bear boxes, constructed an ADA accessible group site, and enlarged the day-use parking area. The BLM also installed a new vault toilet, bear boxes, and fire rings, and improved parking at the River Flats walk-in camping area.

In 2020, the BLM installed rock barriers to prevent motorized vehicles from crossing the Slate River and installed a new foot and horse bridge.

The increased camping fee is commensurate with the provided campground amenities and the improved visitor experience. At present, the camping fee at OBJ is below other campgrounds in the region with similar amenities. Comparable USFS campgrounds in the area are Lake Irwin campground, at \$18 per night and Lost Lake campground near Paonia, CO at \$20 per night (see Appendix A). Increasing the camping fee at OBJ to \$20 for individual sites and \$60 for the group site per night will generate additional revenue in order to cover costs of maintaining, cleaning, and patrolling the campground, install an automated fee station, improve the access road, maintain infrastructure and initiate a day use fee (dependent on criteria previously specified).

Mill Creek Campground

Mill Creek is the highest developed campground on the Alpine Loop Scenic Byway, with nearby access to Cinnamon Pass. Currently, the Mill Creek campground fee of \$7 per night is lower than comparable campgrounds in the Lake City area, which average \$36 per night. Amenities at the Mill Creek campground include two potable water hand pumps, trash removal services, picnic tables, reasonable visitor protection, and simple devices for containing a campfire. These amenities substantiate an Expanded Amenity Recreation Fee, as defined in Sec.6802.(g)(2)(A) of REA.

Based on the amenities and visitor experience, we propose increasing the fee to \$20 per night. Increasing the camping fee at Mill Creek to \$20 per night will generate more revenue which will help cover costs of maintaining, cleaning, and patrolling the campground, fund infrastructure, and replacement of vault toilets.

The Gate Campground

The Gate campground has 8 of the 9 amenities that justify an Expanded Amenity Recreation Fee, as defined in Sec.6802.(g)(2)(A) of FLREA. The Gate campground has tent or trailer spaces, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM, reasonable visitor protection, toilet facilities, and simple devices for containing a campfire (Sec.6802.(g)(2)(A) of FLREA).

Based on these amenities and the visitor experience, we propose increasing the fee to \$10 per night. Increasing the camping fee to \$10 per night will generate more revenue which will help cover costs of maintaining, cleaning, and patrolling the campground, fund infrastructure, and replacement of vault toilets.

Red Bridge Campground

Amenities at the Red Bridge campground include 7 of the 9 amenities that justify an Expanded Amenity Recreation Fee, as defined in Sec.6802.(g)(2)(A) of FLREA: tent or trailer spaces, picnic tables, access roads, fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM, reasonable visitor protection, toilet facilities, and simple devices for containing a campfire.

Based on the amenities and visitor experience, we propose increasing the fee to \$10 per night. Increasing the camping fee to \$10 per night will generate more revenue which will help cover costs of maintaining, cleaning, and patrolling the campground, fund infrastructure, and increasing the number of sites in the future.

Projected Fee Revenue

Estimated fee revenue was derived by multiplying the number of available campsites by the campground's occupancy rate, the average 126-day season, and proposed fee.

Table 7. Projected Fee Revenue with Proposed Increases

Campground	# Sites	Proposed Site Fee	Occupancy Rate	Season Length (days)*	Projected Revenue w/ Fee Increases
Oh Be Joyful (inc. River Flats)	34	\$20	100%	126	\$85,680
Mill Creek	22	\$20	75%	126	\$44,352
The Gate	8	\$10	50%	126	\$5,040
Red Bridge	7	\$10	50%	126	\$4,410
Total Estimated Fee Revenue					\$139,482

*Season length was calculated for peak season, May 27-September 30 = 126 days, which covers the dates that sites at OBJ are reservable on Recreation.gov.

Proposed Use of Additional Fee Revenue

The GFO strives to provide high-quality recreation opportunities and experiences for all visitors. Labor will continue to be the highest operating cost for the recreation sites. BLM staff provide visitor information, conduct field patrols, maintain facilities, install signage, collect and reconcile fees, and rehabilitate any damage to natural resources. Recreation fee revenue is vital to operation and maintenance of these developed recreation sites.

The following is an initial list of how the proposed recreation fee revenue would be used:

- Increased park ranger patrols and restroom cleaning in all campgrounds
- Graveling of sites and roads (OBJ)
- Graveling of sites and roads (Mill Creek)
- Replacement of vault toilets (Gate CG)
- Automated fee machines with credit card or cash option to reduce cost of employee fee collection; or alternately QR Codes (Scan and Pay option)

Fee Collection and Enforcement

All vehicles entering these four campgrounds are required to pay for a recreation use permit for overnight camping. Visitors can purchase the recreation use permits at self-service fee stations located near the entrances. Permits must be displayed on the campsite post. Oh Be Joyful campsites are already on the National Recreation Reservation System (Recreation.gov) and BLM will implement this reservation system for Mill Creek campground. The benefits of Recreation.gov are numerous, including increased fee compliance and decreased cost of collections because it reduces staff time accounting for fee collections.

Campground fee payment is encouraged by onsite hosts and by the BLM employees who regularly patrol campgrounds. If problems arise requiring the need for enforcement, the host or employee contacts BLM law enforcement in the Gunnison Office, or other appropriate law enforcement depending on availability and response time.

Impacts of Implementing or Not Implementing Fee Changes

This section analyzes the impacts of increasing camping fees at the four Gunnison Field Office campgrounds and the impacts of not changing the fee system.

High quality recreation opportunities in the Gunnison Valley are valued by local communities, and statewide and national visitors. Recreational opportunities, including camping on public lands in the Gunnison Valley are a reason many residents choose to live here. The BLM expects that demand for camping, and associated recreation on public lands, will only increase in the future.

Impacts of Increasing Campground Fees

Impacts to recreation visitors

If proposed fee increases are adopted, current services would continue to be offered and additional services (improvements to campsites, increased cleaning frequency, etc.) would be available. Additional fee revenue would allow for an increased law enforcement presence as well. Recreation fees can serve as an effective visitor management strategy leading to environmental benefits by providing opportunities for education when visitors pay fees. By paying a fee, users may place more value on the area, leading to less environmental degradation. These benefits would positively impact visitor experience.

Impacts to the environment

The GFO campground program serves to reduce negative impacts to sites and resources by containing camping into developed sites. Fee revenue from increased camping fees may be used for restoration projects that improve natural resource conditions in and around the campgrounds. Increasing camping fees would positively impact environmental conditions.

Socioeconomic impacts, including low-income populations

The BLM does not have socioeconomic data about visitors to the GFO campgrounds. However, BLM monitoring indicates that many visitors are participating in a variety of recreation activities that require outdoor gear including mountain biking, OHV riding, and camping with vans, RVs, and trailers. The impact of an increased camping fee on these recreational groups is expected to be minimal. Impacts to low-income populations are not expected to be significant, as there are other free dispersed camping areas managed by the BLM and the US Forest Service near Crested Butte and along the Alpine Loop. Furthermore, there are discounted rates for camping for seniors and those with disabilities.

Impacts of NOT Increasing Campground Fees

Impacts to recreation visitors

If proposed fees are not adopted, campgrounds could see a loss of functionality as operation and maintenance efforts may not be able to keep pace with current and increased use. As costs continue to increase, maintenance may not happen as quickly or as often as needed and some services may be reduced. Deferred maintenance costs would increase as facilities age and deteriorate without proper annual maintenance. Maintenance which is deferred because of insufficient funding may result in increased safety hazards, reduced service to the public, higher costs in the future and inefficient operations. A reduction in recreation and maintenance staff could occur as those positions may not be filled if vacated due to lack of funds. Law enforcement

patrols are not expected to be affected. Ultimately, the visitor experience would be negatively impacted if fees are not increased.

Impacts to the environment

Colorado is experiencing an increasing population and increasing participation in outdoor recreation activities. Social media has brought attention to previously seldom-known locations, and draws new visitors to beautiful places. Increasing visitation to recreation sites on public lands can lead to negative environmental impacts, including litter, human waste, and resource damage (e.g. tramping and loss of vegetation).

If campground fees remain the same, the BLM will have less funding to address increased needs for trash pickups and services including toilet pumping and law enforcement presence. This could lead to increased human waste and garbage impacts. Less-frequent patrols from recreation staff to maintain trails, signage and education materials may lead to some visitors to act inappropriately by cutting new trails and vandalizing facilities. If campground fees are not increased, there would be additional negative impacts to the environment over time.

Socioeconomic impacts, including low-income populations

If the camping fees remain the same, there would be no change therefore no economic impact on recreational visitors.

Public Outreach

As part of the proposal to increase campground fees, the Gunnison Field Office will conduct the following outreach efforts to notify the public of its opportunity to review and provide comments:

- Post Business Plan on the BLM Colorado website
- Issue a news release to local print and broadcast media
- Post the fee proposal notice at each of the four campgrounds

The Southwest Resource Advisory Council (RAC) voted unanimously to approve a conceptual fee increase as described in this proposal at their June 3, 2022 meeting.

Since the proposed fee adjustments are for existing fees, no Federal Register Notice is required for this action.

The BLM collects fee expenditure information annually and will post information on how FLREA fee revenue is spent in each campground. This information will be posted annually at: www.blm.gov/colorado/flrea-revenue-and-spending-plans/annual-report/spend-plans-gunnison-field-office

Appendix A: Rates and Service Comparison

Table 8. Rates and Service Comparison in Crested Butte Area Comparable for Oh Be Joyful Campground (Compiled in 2021)

Campground Name	Public/Private	# of Sites	Fee (\$)	Picnic Table	Fire Grate or Ring	Trash Collection	Potable Water	Toilet	Electricity	Notes
Oh Be Joyful	BLM	36	\$10	X	X			X		Including 5 River Flats sites
Gothic	USFS	4	\$12	X	X			X		\$4/day for day use/picnic
Cement Creek	USFS	13	\$16	X	X			X		
Lost Lake	USFS	18	\$20	X	X	X	X	X		\$4/day for day use/picnic
Lottis Creek	USFS	45	\$22	X	X		X	X	X	\$8/night for electric
Lake Irwin	USFS	32	\$18	X	X		X	X		
Elk Creek	NPS	157	\$16 Standard \$22 Electric	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Campfire Ranch	City of Gunnison, Concessionaire	10	\$60	X	X	X	X	X		Taxes extra. Gear rentals available.
Crested Butte RV Resort	Private	21	\$75	X	X	X	X	X	X	*Communal fire pit
Tall Texan RV Park	Private		\$29 Tent \$49+ RV	X	X	X	X	X	X	Glamping Wagons \$109/night
Gunnison KOA	Private	93	\$80	X	X	X	X	X	X	Wifi, cabins

Average Fee (Excluding BLM) = \$35

Average Fee (Public) = \$22

Table 9. Rates and Service Comparison in the Lake City Area. Comparable for Mill Creek, Red Bridge, and the Gate Campgrounds. (2021)

Campground Name	Public/Private	# of Sites	Fee (\$)	Picnic Table	Fire Grate or Ring	Trash Collection	Potable Water	Toilet	Electricity	Notes
Mill Creek	BLM	22	\$7	X	X	X	X	X		
The Gate	BLM	8	\$5	X	X		X	X		
Red Bridge	BLM	7	\$5	X	X			X		
Deer Lakes	USFS	12	\$12	X	X	X	X	X		
Williams Creek	USFS	23	\$16	X	X	X	X	X		
Castle Lakes	Private	50	\$34	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Elkhorn	Private	24	\$46 RV	X	Shared	X	X	X	X	Rates based on 2-person occupancy. Each additional person is \$5 per day.
Highlander RV	Private	38	\$43	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rates based on 2-person occupancy. Each additional person is \$3 per day. Internet, laundry, pavilion.
Riverfork	Private	26	\$44 RV \$25 Tent	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Woodlake Park	Private	50	\$38	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Wupperman	Hinsdale County	31	\$20	X	X	X	X	X		RV Dump \$10

Average Fee (Excluding BLM campgrounds) = \$29

Average Fee (Public) = \$16

