



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

# **BLM Yuma Field Office Long-Term Visitor Areas Business Plan**



**September 2024**

BLM Yuma Field Office Long-Term Areas Business Plan

[LLAZC020000 L12320000 LVRDAZ210000]

**Recommendations, Reviews, and Approvals**

Recommended by:

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Raymond Castro Jr., Field Manager, Yuma Field Office

Date

Reviewed by:

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William Mack Jr., District Manager, Colorado River District Office

Date

Approved by:

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Raymond Suazo, Arizona State Director

Date

This business plan was prepared by the Bureau of Land Management's Yuma Field Office pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (16 U.S.C. 6801-6814) and BLM recreation fee program policies. It establishes future management goals and priorities for the Long-Term Visitor Area Program within the Yuma Field Office.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Yuma Field Office  
7341 E 30<sup>th</sup> St Ste A  
Yuma, AZ 85365



In Reply Refer to:  
2932 AZ-020

Dear Reader,

The Bureau of Land Management Colorado River District, Yuma Field Office has produced a draft recreation fee business plan for the Yuma Field Office's Long-Term Visitor Area Program (LTVA: Imperial Dam LTVA and La Posa LTVA).

The LTVAs are designated "special areas" where it has been determined that the resources require special management and control measures for their protection and where a permit system for individual use would support BLM management objectives. The designation of LTVAs ensures that suitable locations are available for long-term use year after year, with protection of areas with sensitive natural and cultural resources. In conjunction with establishing the LTVAs, a limit on camping on public lands outside LTVAs occurred. Visitors could camp in one location outside an LTVA, unless closed to such use, for no more than 14 days in any 28-day period. The underlying authority for the designation of LTVAs is contained in 43 CFR 1601.0-3 and defined in 43 CFR 1601.0-5 (k) (1), (2), and (4). The LTVAs have special areas designation in compliance with the BLM's land use planning process, outlined in 43 CFR part 1600 et seq. The requirements for special areas are in 43 CFR part 2932 et seq.

The authority for the BLM to obtain an Individual Special Recreation Permit (ISRP) for recreational use within special areas is contained in 43 CFR 2932.11(b). "If BLM determines that it is necessary, based on planning decisions, resource concerns, potential user conflicts or public health and safety, we may require you to obtain a Special Recreation Permit." In the case of the LTVAs Individual Special Recreation Permits (ISRPs) are required.

Under Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) 16 U.S.C. 87, 6801-6814) Section 2, Definitions: the LTVAs are categorized under (13) Special Recreation Permits and are not (1) Standard Amenity Fee sites nor (2) Expanded Amenity Fee sites. The authority for the BLM

State Directors to set and adjust SRP fees for use of special areas is contained in 43 CFR 2932.31 (a)(b)(d)(2)<sup>1</sup> and is not related to FLREA requirements of number and type of amenities.

A Long-Term Visitor Area Permit (Individual Special Recreation Permit, or ISRP) is required from September 15 through April 15 each season. The current cost for a Long-Term Permit is \$180 and is valid for up to 7 months. A short-term permit is valid for 14 days and is \$40. The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass, often referred to simply as the America the Beautiful Pass, pertains to FLREA standard amenity fee recreation sites, and thus is not an accepted form of payment for LTVA ISRPs.

This business plan outlines proposed changes to the current recreation fee program for the Long-Term Visitor Areas (LTVAs) located in Arizona. The Business Plan proposes to increase current fees from \$180 to \$600 per long-term permit, and from \$40 to \$200 per short-term permit. It would also modify the short-term permit length from 14 days to 30 days.

This business plan was prepared pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004 (16 United States Code (U.S.C.) 6801-6814), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation fee program policy.

A 45-day comment period will be held from September 6-October 21, 2024. During that time public meetings and information sessions will be held online and in the various LTVA locations to present information about the proposed fee increases. Comments regarding the proposed fee modification can be sent to: BLM Yuma Field Office 7341 E 30<sup>th</sup> St Ste A Yuma AZ 85365.

Sincerely,

Raymond Castro Jr.  
Field Manager  
Yuma Field Office

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Register Volume 72, Number 185 (Tuesday, September 25, 2007) Notice of Special Recreation Permit Fee Adjustments and Supplementary Rule Revision for use of All Arizona and California Long Term Visitor Areas. I. Discussion of LTVA Program; II Discussion of Special Recreation Permit Fees.

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# 1 Executive Summary

This plan replaces the 2008 Yuma Field Office (YFO) Recreation Business Plan. It outlines proposed changes to the current recreation fee program for the Imperial Dam and La Posa Long-Term Visitor Areas (LTVAs) managed by the Yuma Field Office (YFO). This plan only applies to the YFO managed LTVA Locations of Imperial Dam LTVA and La Posa LTVA.

LTVA locations managed under California Desert District (CDD), El Centro Field Office and Palm Springs Field Office are not included in this proposed business plan, as these sites are managed separately from YFO. A management decision has determined that the LTVAs in Arizona will follow their own fee structure. Starting September 1, 2025, fees and permits that previously applied to LTVAs in both offices will be managed separately. The individual special recreation permits (ISRPs) for Imperial Dam and La Posa LTVA would be valid only for those locations and would not apply to the California LTVAs and vice versa.

The BLM's LTVA program, established in 1983, meets the long-term camping needs of winter visitors staying on public lands. Every winter, thousands of visitors come to enjoy the mild temperatures, natural beauty and recreational opportunities offered at BLM's LTVAs, where visitors may camp for as long as seven months. The LTVAs are designated "special areas" (an area managed under special authority) where it has been determined that the resources require special management and control measures for their protection, and where a permit system for individual use would support BLM management objectives. The designation of LTVAs ensures that suitable locations are available for long-term use year after year, with protection of areas with sensitive natural and cultural resources. In conjunction with establishing the LTVAs, a limit on camping on public lands outside LTVAs occurred. Visitors could camp in one location outside an LTVA, unless closed to such use, for no more than 14 days in any 28-day period.

The YFO has two Long-Term Visitor Areas (LTVA): Imperial Dam and La Posa. During the winter on-long-term season (September 15 to April 15), individual special recreation use permit recreation fees are collected according to the YFO's Long Term Visitor Area Business Plan, as described in this document. The LTVAs are managed as expanded amenity sites during the non-winter off-long-term season (April 16 to September 14), which is described in the separate YFO amenity fee business plan.

The proposal increases current fees from **\$180 to \$600 per long-term permit**, and from **\$40 to \$200 per short-term permit** (FLREA 6802(h)). It would also modify the **short-term permit length from 14 days to 30 days**.

The BLM also proposes to use e-commerce technology for reservations according to FLREA 6802(g)(2)(G).

In addition, the BLM proposes to adopt a model to increase fees by 20% (then rounded) whenever the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U), US City Average, All Items, 1982-84=100, not seasonally adjusted, rises by 20%.

This plan will be routinely reviewed for relevancy, environmental law compliance, fiscal responsibility, as well as adherence to BLM and Interior land management policies.

Under FLREA, all recreation fee revenue is reinvested back into the fee sites, which provide for sustainable site maintenance, amenity service contracts, campground improvements, volunteers, and staff support, among other investments.

Current combined program funding levels (AFRS & LTVA) only meet 60-63% of obligations associated with the program. Due to the shortage of funding necessary maintenance, contract adjustments and staffing levels have been kept intentionally low and deferred to maintain fiscal responsibility. It is anticipated that the recreation fees will increase available funding for site maintenance and improvements.

If approved, the plan as proposed would allow for the changes needed to effectively manage the LTVA Program for future generations.

Impacts if the plan is not approved include potential adjustments to the LTVAs to manage visitor numbers and amenities and services within the existing budget.

Market research identified that similar for a fee boondocking or dry camping locations within the southwest region charge anywhere from \$15 - \$25 per night (\$450 - \$750 per month) and require reservations often having to be made months in advance.

The ease and accessibility of visits to the LTVA coupled with the abundance of amenities and services make the LTVA a viable choice for all.

## 2 Background and Authorities

This business plan has been prepared to meet the criteria defined in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-447; Title VIII, Section 801; 16 U.S.C. 6801–6814). The authorities and regulations for this business plan are:

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976** (Public Law 94-579; 43 U.S.C. 1701–1787), contains BLM’s general land use management authority over the public lands, and establishes outdoor recreation as one of the principal uses of those lands. Section 302 (b) of FLPMA directs the Secretary of the Interior to regulate through permits or other instruments the use of the public lands. Section 303 of FLPMA contains BLM’s authority to enforce the regulations and impose penalties.
- **The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004** repealed applicable portions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and replaced BLM’s authority to collect recreation fees. This current law authorizes BLM to collect recreation fees at sites that meet certain requirements, allows BLM to keep the fee revenues at the local offices where they were collected, and directs how BLM will manage and utilize these revenues. FLREA also established the America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Pass Program. FLREA (16 U.S.C. 6802(b)(1)) does not grant the authority for BLM to provide discounts or reduced recreation fees for local residents or other groups.
- **Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 2930 (43 CFR 2930) Permits for Recreation on Public Lands** contains the regulations governing BLM’s recreation permitting program.

This business plan has also been prepared pursuant to all applicable BLM recreation fee program policies and guidance, including:



- BLM Manual 2930, *Recreation Permits and Fees*, Rel. 2-296 dated October 22, 2007
- BLM Handbook 2930-1, *Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook*, Rel. 2-300 dated November 17, 2014

The BLM strives to manage recreation and visitor services to serve the diverse visitor outdoor recreation demands while helping to maintain sustainable setting conditions needed to conserve the public lands, so the visitors' desired recreation choices remain available. The BLM's goals for delivering recreation benefits from BLM-administered lands and waters to the American people and their communities are to:

- Improve access to appropriate recreation opportunities,
- Ensure a quality experience and enjoyment of natural and cultural resources, and
- Provide for and receive fair value in recreation.

## **2.1 Special Area Permits and Fees**

FLREA authorizes the BLM to collect special recreation permit fees for specialized recreation uses of federal recreational lands (16 U.S.C. 6802 (h)). Under 43 CFR §2931.2, BLM may establish a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) and fee system for the use of special areas. Special areas include any area officially designated by statute or Presidential order including national monuments and national conservation areas (43 CFR 2932.5). SRPs for individual recreation use in a special area are referred to as ISRPs.

ISRP fee rates are set by the BLM State Director based on several considerations to ensure a fair return for the use of public lands. These considerations include management costs related to the special area, costs of operating the permit system, and comparison with fees charged in similar areas. Fees charged in a special area apply to all users of the area, including private, non-commercial visitors, clients and guests.

## **2.2 Yuma Field Office Long-Term Visitor Area SRP Program Management**

The LTVAs are designated special areas. The authority for the BLM to require the purchase of an Individual Special Recreation Permit (ISRP) for recreational use within special areas is contained in 43 CFR 2932.11(b). "If BLM determines that it is necessary, based on planning decisions, resource concerns, potential user conflicts or public health and safety, we may require you to obtain a Special Recreation Permit." In the case of LTVAs, these are individual special recreation permits (ISRPs).

Under Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act, ("FLREA"), Section 2, Definitions: the LTVAs are categorized under (13) Special Recreation Permits as an ISRP and are not (1) Standard Amenity Fee sites nor (2) Expanded Amenity Fee sites. The authority for the BLM State Directors to set and adjust SRP fees for use of special areas is contained in 43 CFR 2932.31 (a)(b)(d)(2) and is not related to FLREA requirements of number and type of amenities.

While the Yuma Field Office SRP program includes permitting commercial activities, organized group events, and individual use of specially managed areas such as the LTVAs, the requirements for these follow a different process separate from this business plan process.

This recreation fee business plan only addresses the ISRP program of the LTVAs. Revenues from individual special recreation permits (ISRPs) for use of special areas cover a portion of standard operational costs and address identified capital improvement needs.

### **2.3 Fee and Business Plan Requirements**

The data used in this business plan came from internal BLM tracking and accounting mechanisms such as the Recreation Management Information System (RMIS), Collections and Billings Systems (CBS), Federal Business Management System (FBMS), other locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking spreadsheets and other publicly available data. The BLM Yuma Field Office can provide additional information on data sources upon request; however, some data contained in these systems may be subject to Privacy Act requirements.

## **3 Introduction to the Field Office Recreation Program**

The BLM Yuma Field Office is located within the southwestern corner of Arizona (Figure 1). The Yuma Field Office area encompasses 1.2 million acres along the Lower Colorado River in Southwest Arizona and Southeast California, extending eastward into Arizona. The public lands in this field office comprise an area 155 miles long and up to 90 miles wide. This area extends northward along the Lower Colorado River from the southern international boundary at San Luis, Arizona, to north of Blythe, California, and Ehrenberg, Arizona. The Yuma Field Office boundary extends eastward to the Eagletail Mountains Wilderness Area and south along the Yuma and Maricopa County line to the northern boundary of the Barry Goldwater Range. The Yuma Field Office geography spans Yuma, La Paz, and Maricopa Counties in Arizona that includes the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congressional Districts of Arizona and the Arizona State Legislative Districts 5 and 13 as their political jurisdictions.

The LTVA program is consistent with and operates within the parameters of the January 2010 Yuma Field Office Record of Decision approved Resource Management Plan.

The Yuma Field Office manages multiple dispersed fee free sites and areas that encompass the Colorado River on its west boundary through scenic Sonoran Desert settings to its eastern boundary. These locations and settings allow the public to enjoy many different recreational undertakings such as fishing, swimming, bird watching, kayaking, boating, hiking, camping, shooting, hunting and wildlife viewing.

In addition, the YFO manages expanded amenity fee sites, which are part of the proposed Yuma Field Office Amenity Site business plan.

The BLM's LTVA program was established in 1983. The current approved business plan for the LTVA Program was implemented in 2008 and is included in the Yuma Field Office's January 2010 Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision. The 2008 business plan has become outdated and requires this revision effort to maintain regulatory compliance and fiscal responsibility for the recreation program. LTVA sites have provided millions of Americans a fair value venue for recreation and use of America's public lands. Fees collected are reinvested back into the sites while enabling managers to continue developing additional amenities, perform needed maintenance, and retain staff and volunteers necessary for the operation of the program and its sites.

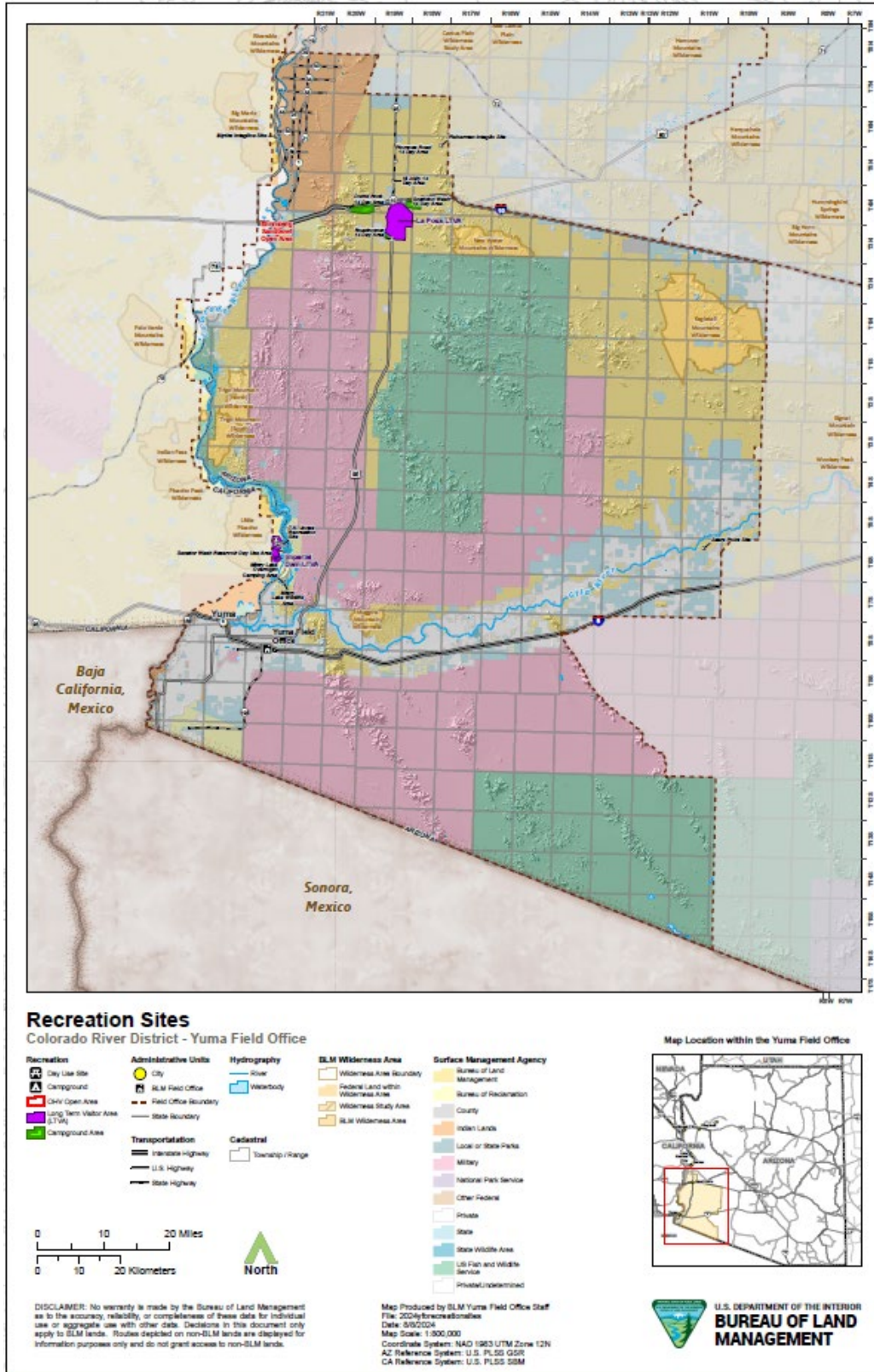


Figure 1: Yuma Field Office Recreation Sites

### 3.1 Field Office Visitation

Over the past five years, Yuma Field Office recreation visitation has generally increased (Table 1). One current trend aside from the historical RV/Camper use includes new subculture variants of the RV culture. These new visitor trends see people moving into smaller style conversion vehicles such as retrofitted vans, buses, and passenger cars with less built-in amenities that normal RV's have. These new variant visitors create additional challenges for site management, as well as balancing visitor conflicts. Based on the growing popularity of this movement and others YFO anticipates a minimum 5% per season growth for these types of visitors. This increase in visitor numbers has consequently caused a short fall in current BLM service contracts for potable water treatment, sewage removal and processing, as well as trash collection.

*Table 1: Estimated Number of Visitors to Yuma Field Office, Fiscal Years 2019-2023*

Fiscal Year	YFO Estimated Number of Visitors
FY 2019	640,804
FY 2020	736,774
FY 2021	1,343,291
FY 2022	1,001,110
FY 2023	893,754
*Note	Formula anomalies in Recreation Management Information System (RMIS) created usage numbers for FY20, FY21, FY22 that do not accurately reflect true visitation for those years.

#### 3.1.1 Demographics of Recreational Visitors

Anecdotal data indicates that the LTVA areas are visited by people from all over the world. However, aside from registration data collected from purchased permits the YFO does not have data regarding race, gender, socioeconomic status, or education levels of the visitors who travel to and utilize the LTVAs. In addition, information on visitor origins may be inaccurate due to the transient nature of this demographic group. For example, visitors may hold a driver's license in one state but may not reside or hold any specific residency or occupancy in that state.

See Table 2 for visitors' ten most common states of residency.

- Approximately 63% of long-term and 68% of the short-term permit holders come from the United States.
- Canadians make up approximately 7% of the long-term and 8% of the short-term permit holders.
- The remaining approximately 30% of long-term and 25% of the short-term permit holders reflects data of which the visitor origin information was not available.

Table 2: Visitors of Long-Term Visitor Areas: Top Ten States and Canada

Visitors	Long-term permit (%)	Short-visit permit (%)
Arizona	16.3%	14.7%
South Dakota	7.5%	2.6%
California	6.6%	24.1%
Washington	5.9%	4.4%
Oregon	5.4%	5.6%
Texas	4.9%	3.8%
Idaho	4.6%	2.6%
Nevada	4.5%	4.1%
Colorado	4.0%	2.9%
Florida	3.4%	2.7%
Canada	6.9%	7.9%
Other Locations (origin unknown)	30.0%	24.5%

## 4 Description of Each Existing or Proposed Fee Site/Area

YFO manages two LTVAs: Imperial Dam and La Posa. During the winter on-long-term season of September 15-April 15, the individual special recreation permit (ISRP) recreation fees are collected according to FLREA 6802(h) and the YFO Long Term Visitor Area Business Plan, as described in this document. The LTVAs are managed as expanded amenity sites during the non-winter off-long-term season (April 16-September 14), as described in the proposed YFO Amenity Fee Business Plan. The LTVAs are designated special areas (see Section 2.2 for more information). Fees were first collected for ISRPs in 1983. A robust volunteer program assists the public and BLM with permit sales, maintenance and operational continuity for the program.

### 4.1 Imperial Dam LTVA

The 3,500-acre Imperial Dam LTVA is located within the Imperial Dam Recreation Area. It is approximately 21 miles north of Yuma in Imperial County, California, directly south of the Senator Wash Reservoir (Figure 2). The Imperial Dam LTVA provides two universally accessible flush toilet restrooms, a universally accessible double vault toilet, a potable water distribution site, a three-lane dump station with rinse water, a dry dump station, a grey water dump site, trash disposal services, shade ramadas, three full hook-up sites for volunteer hosts and

contractors, post and cable fencing, extensive signage, and numerous unpaved roads. The ISRP fees for LTVAs exist between September 15 and April 15 of each year. After April 16<sup>th</sup>, and through September 14<sup>th</sup> the Imperial Dam site are considered expanded amenity sites and require an expanded amenity fee for use and occupancy. Activities available include fishing, boating, swimming, cultural sites, rock hounding, watchable wildlife, unique desert scenery, biking, off-highway vehicle trails and hiking opportunities. The increasing use of the LTVAs, particularly during the active LTVA season, creates a heavy demand on the existing facilities. Since most of the infrastructure at the Imperial LTVA was built in the early 1980's there are several large maintenance projects pending. These include replacement of the well house and water treatment facility, replacement of the 85,000-gallon water tank that serves the entire recreation area, and replacement of the existing flush toilet restrooms.

## **4.2 La Posa LTVA**

The 11,400-acre La Posa LTVA is located approximately two miles south of Quartzsite in La Paz County, Arizona (Figure 3). Facilities at the La Posa LTVA include potable well water systems with water distribution sites, a four-lane dump station with sewage lagoon, garbage collection locations, thirteen universally accessible restrooms, over 3 miles of post and cable fencing, shade ramadas, a concrete dance floor, and extensive signage. Other improvements include four electrical hook-up sites for volunteer hosts, one major paved road, numerous other surface improved roads and four permanent volunteer contact stations with electricity and telephones. Fees were first collected for ISRP in 1983. The area is visited by people from all over the world. No specific demographic information has been collected. A robust Volunteer program assists the public and BLM with permit sales, maintenance and operational continuity for the program. Activities available include cultural sites, rock hounding, watchable wildlife, unique desert scenery, solitude, off-highway vehicle trails, biking and hiking opportunities. Major issues include extensive road maintenance needs after heavy rains and OHV trail proliferation outside of the LTVA.

## **4.3 Yuma Field Office Free 14-Day Camping Areas**

Short-term camping opportunities (14 day stay areas) are allowed on designated public land locations. BLM has allocated several designated locations as fee free 14-day camping areas in Arizona. These areas were established in 1983 to facilitate public land opportunities for visitors who do not wish to utilize the Long-Term Visitor Program. Many short-term public land visitors opt for the free areas due to their ease of accessibility and no fee/amenity status. Because public lands stay is limited to 14 days, people will often move around to different free areas, as well as spend time in the LTVAs with the purchase of permits. The highest use free 14-day camping area is located near the town of Quartzsite, and its highest occupancy is during the Big Tent and Rock and Gem Show in January. Although the BLM does not charge for these areas, they do have operational and maintenance costs associated with overseeing these areas because of the concentrated use.

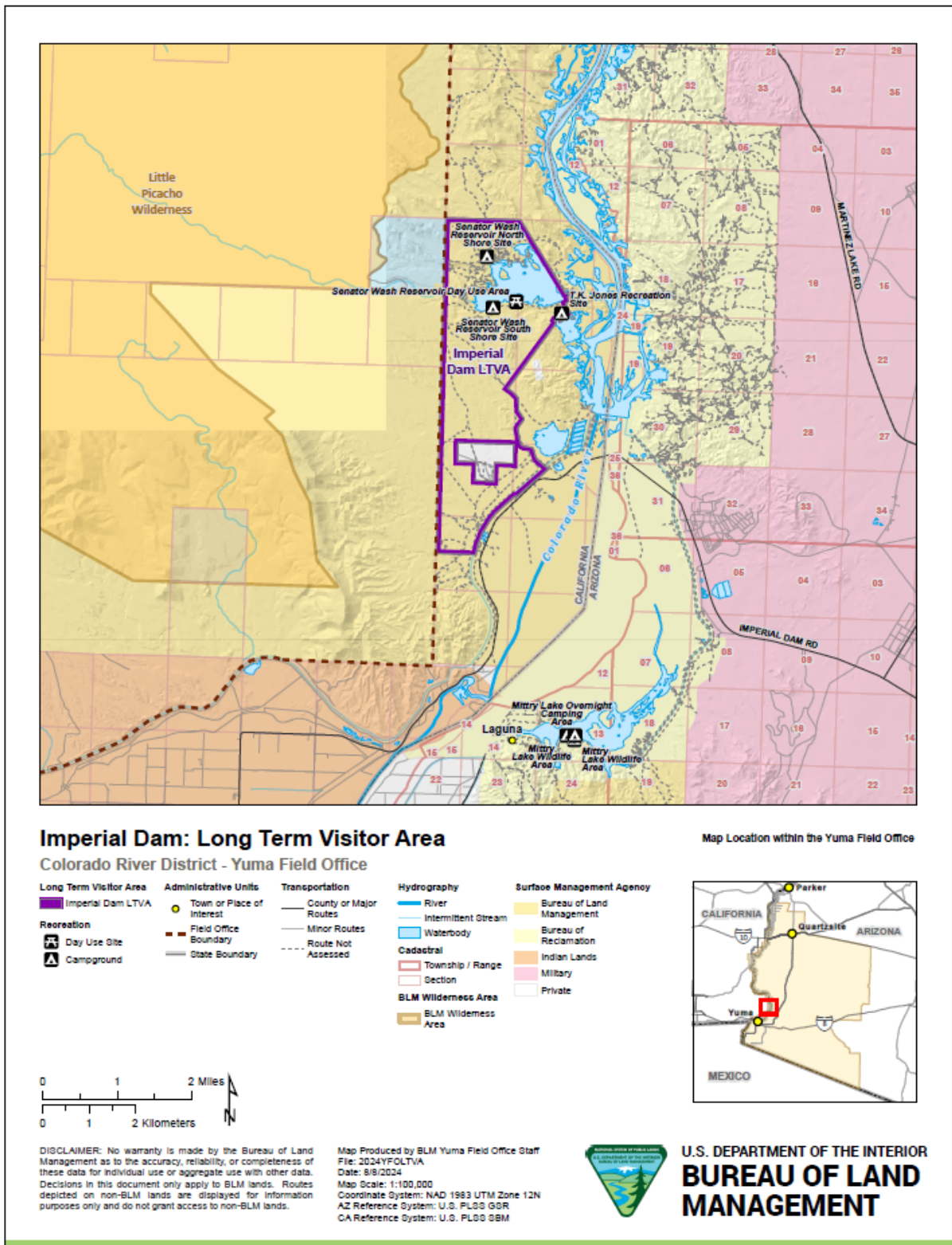


Figure 2: Map Showing Location of Imperial Dam Long-Term Visitor Area

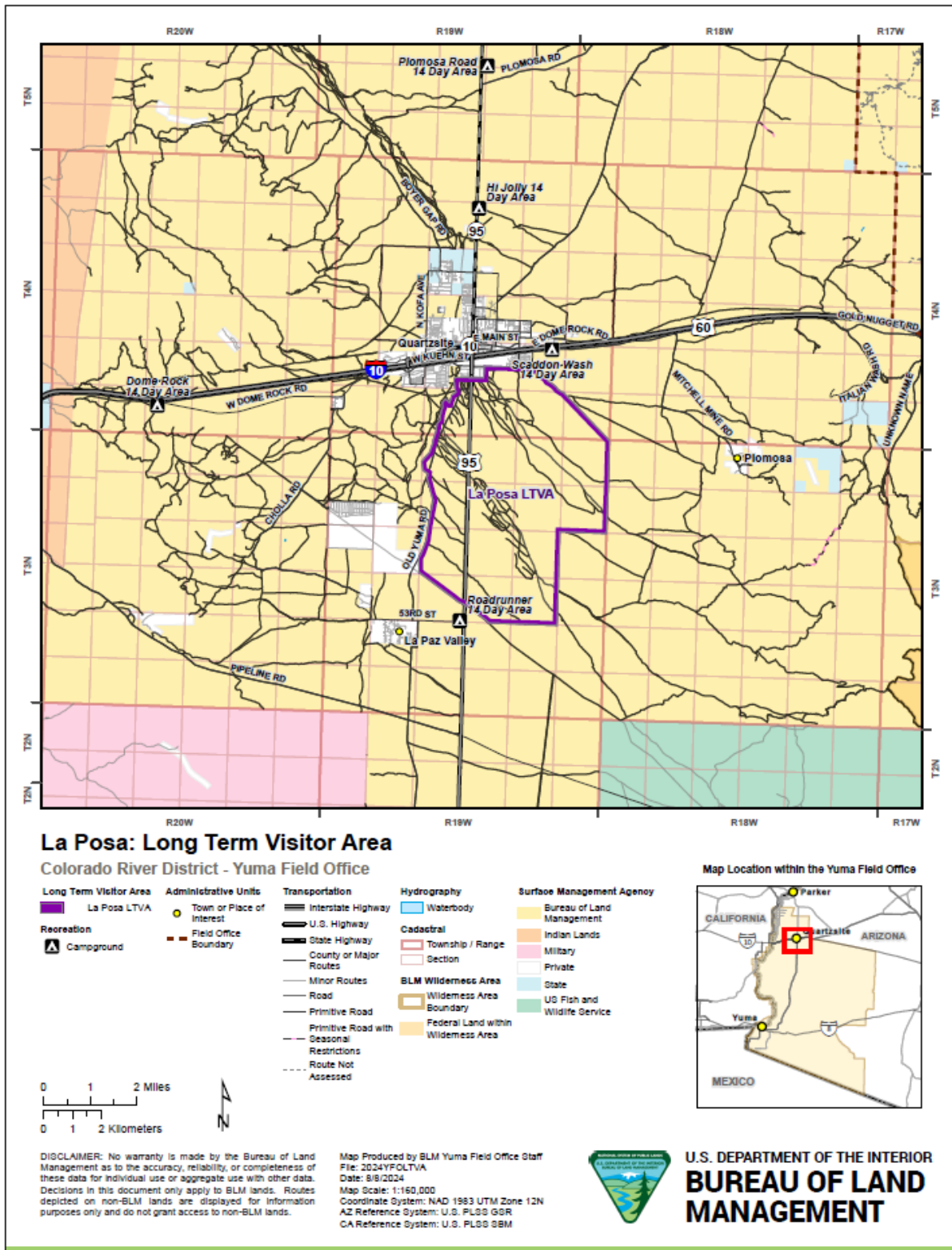


Figure 3: Map Showing Location of La Posa Long-Term Visitor Area



#### 4.4 LTVA-Specific Visitation Trend Discussion

The YFO uses permit numbers and basic camp counts to track visitor use of the LTVAs. Table 3 shows the annual LTVA ISRP permits sold and visitor numbers. Permit numbers reflect total program permits sold. Although permits may be sold at either LTVA, YFO information shows that most permit holders use both the Imperial and La Posa LTVA locations throughout the season, often traveling between the two locations. As such, static visitation numbers for each location do not exist. Generally, visitation has increased over the past five years. However, FY 2021 was affected by the Covid pandemic, where BLM was not able to consistently sell permits or staff the LTVAs and collect visitor counts.

In past contact camp counts YFO was able to determine that for each permit sold the average occupancy was 2.5 people. Starting in 2018 spot camp counts started showing that each permit sold had an occupancy rate of 3.5 people per permit sold. This increase has been noted for several years and is due to group size changes that include multi-generational family units and groups of people who have formed non-nuclear family units. This will likely lead to a change in the RMIS formulas that help YFO track visitation at the recreation sites.

Table 3: Annual LTVA ISRP Permits and Visitor Numbers

Fiscal Year	LTVA Program ISRP Permits	Visitor Numbers
FY 2020	7,299	18,248
FY 2021	6,498	16,245
FY 2022	8,282	20,705
FY 2023	8,629	21,573
FY 2024	9,192	22,980 @2.5 per permit 32,172 @3.5 per permit

Table 4 shows LTVA visitation since 2008, which was also the year of the last fee increase. LTVA visitation trends have been affected by several factors throughout the history of the LTVA Program. Socioeconomics, government shutdowns, pandemics, market devaluations and valuations, and permit price adjustments have played key roles in visitation numbers to the LTVA Program. Although there are annual fluctuations in the numbers of LTVA permits sold the basis of fair value recreation for the American people still holds enough draw that LTVA visitation will hold substantial enough numbers to justify maintenance and operation of the program.

Table 4: LTVA Program Visitation Trends

Fiscal Year	Program Permit Numbers	Trend Up or Down from Previous Year By %
FY 2008	6,998	Base Year. Year of Last Fee Increase.
FY 2009	6,125	Down by 12.5%
FY 2010	6,476	Up by 5.7%
FY 2011	6,886	Up by 6%
FY 2012	6,424	Down by 7%
FY 2013	5,483	Down by 15%
FY 2014	5,826	Up by 6%
FY 2015	5,578	Down by 4.3%
FY 2016	5,649	Up by 1.2%
FY 2017	5,847	Up by 3.5%
FY 2018	6,941	Up by 18.7%
FY 2019	4,308	Down by 38%
FY 2020	7,299	Up by 69.4%
FY 2021	6,498	Down by 11%
FY 2022	8,282	Up by 27%
FY 2023	8,629	Up by 4%
FY 2024	9,192	Up by 6.5%

## 5 Proposed Modifications to Recreation Fee Rates

### 5.1 YFO LTVA Fee Proposal

This business plan outlines proposed changes to the current recreation fee program for the Long-Term Visitor Areas (LTVAs) located in Arizona and California. The Business Plan proposes to:

- Increase current fees from \$180 to \$600 per long-term permit, and from \$40 to \$200 per short-term permit (16 U.S.C. 6802 (h)).

- Modify the short-term permit length from 14 days to 30 days. The change for the short-term permit from 14 to 30 days more accurately reflects the use trend of the typical short term permit user and encourages long visitation at the sites.

## **5.2 Routine Fee Adjustments**

BLM's permit and fee policy recommends the use of an index for routine fee adjustments rather than reviewing each individual adjustment through a comprehensive business plan effort that requires a tremendous investment of effort and time. The YFO LTVA permit fees have been at their current levels since 2008. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in 2008 the average annual Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) was at 215.3 or inflation by 2023 it had climbed to 304.7 an increase of 58%.

The BLM seeks approval to adopt a model to increase fees by 20% (then rounded) whenever the CPI-U, US City Average, All Items, 1982-84=100, not seasonally adjusted, annual average rises by 20%. According to the BLS, the Consumer Price Index or CPI is "a measure of the average change over time in the price paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services" (bls.gov/cpi). The CPI-U is the broadest and most comprehensive CPI. The all-urban consumer group included in the CPI-U represents over 90 percent of the total U.S. population (<https://www.bls.gov/cpi/questions-and-answers.htm>).

The BLM is seeking approval to exercise the option to increase each fee by 20%, rounded up to the nearest dollar, when there is a 20% increase in the CPI-U from the date this business plan is approved. The first adjustment would result in an increase to: Long Term LTVA ISRP Permit \$720, Short Term LTVA ISRP Permit \$240.

This model would ensure the fees evolve in tandem with the ever-changing environment of the future and increasing costs.

## **5.3 America the Beautiful**

The LTVAs are designated special areas and require Individual Special Recreation Permits (ISRPs) for use. The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes, often referred to as the America the Beautiful Pass, pertains to FLREA standard amenity fee recreation sites, and thus is not an accepted form of payment for LTVA ISRPs.

## **5.4 E-Commerce Technologies**

Yuma Field Office will use various e-commerce technologies as directed in BLM Instruction Memorandum 2022-010, to provide recreation visitors opportunities to find, pay for campsites and day use within the field office. Most of these options are provided through the interagency reservation service Recreation.gov. If the Yuma Field Office decides to add additional reservation services of other types of e-commerce options available 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).

Reservation services fees could range from \$0.50 to \$10.00 depending on the type of service provided. The reservation service is subject to contracting requirements and will be adjusted with contract changes or with future updates to the business plan. For visitors who wish not to pay the expanded amenity fee of reservation services, the field office will attempt to continue to provide

a blend of reservation and first come-first served options until or unless the office moves the fee site/area entirely to e-commerce. Other payment options may also be considered in the future as technology and software develops, such as onsite credit card payment systems or scan and pay.

## 6 Operating Costs

LTVA operating costs include direct, indirect, and fixed expenses. The BLM Financial and Business Management System (FBMS) accounting system provides revenue and expense data for operating costs. In FY 2024, the estimated operating costs for the LTVAs is \$2,101,628.

- Direct expenses include:
  - Salaries and wages of BLM field staff responsible for managing or maintaining LTVAs
  - Volunteer Campground Hosts
  - Operating expenses (e.g. service contracts for, toilet paper, permit books, cleaning supplies, plumbing supplies, iron ranger keys, trash bags, and other supplies)
  - Repair and maintenance services (e.g. service contracts for dumpsters, water monitoring and vault toilet pumping)
- Indirect expenses include:
  - Administrative and general: overhead labor from the field office and or state office.
- Fixed expenses include:
  - Maintenance reserve: cyclic maintenance/replacement for LTVA assets (currently not included as an annual cost)

Table 5 outlines maintenance contract costs. Items in this table reflect the current 2024 cost. Each contract has a built-in compounding increase that will raise the cost of each contract by 5-10% for each of the following 4 option years. For example, if a contract costs \$50,000 in FY 2024, it would cost an additional \$2,500-\$5,000 more the following option year.

*Table 5: FY 2024 LTVA Maintenance Contract Costs*

<b>Item</b>	<b>FY24 Contract Cost</b>	<b>1/3 Reduction in Cost for LTVA Season (8 Months)</b>
Trash Imperial	\$90,948	\$60,025
Trash La Posa	\$242,000	\$161,172
Water Testing Imperial	\$60,064	\$39,642
Sewage Testing Imperial	\$1,200	\$800
Water Testing La Posa	\$60,064	\$39,642
Sewage Pumping	\$92,470	\$61,030
Annual Program Maintenance	\$150,000	\$100,000

<b>Item</b>	<b>FY24 Contract Cost</b>	<b>1/3 Reduction in Cost for LTVA Season (8 Months)</b>
Emergency Repair Funding	\$500,000	\$500,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,196,746</b>	<b>\$962,311</b>

Table 6 shows existing and planned staffing costs for operating the LTVAs. The government employee costs are figured at the full performance GS Step 5 level and based on 2,080 work hours per year. Approximately two-thirds of staffing time is dedicated to operating the YFO LTVAs. This includes law enforcement, park rangers, and outdoor recreation planners. In addition, YFO’s volunteer program supports the overall operation of the site.

*Table 6: LTVA Recommended Staffing*

<b>Position (government employees factored at full performance Step 5 rate)</b>	<b>FY24 Employee Cost (2/3rds of Staff Time)</b>
Law Enforcement GS 12	\$107,833
Law Enforcement GS 11	\$89,973
Law Enforcement GS 11	\$89,973
Law Enforcement GS 11	\$89,973
Park Ranger GS 07	\$60,979
Park Ranger GS 07	\$60,979
Park Ranger GS 07	\$60,979
Park Ranger GS 07	\$60,979
Park Ranger GS 07	\$60,979
Park Ranger GS 07	\$60,979
Outdoor Rec Planner GS 11	\$90,247
Outdoor Rec Planner GS 11	\$90,247
Overhead Staff -- Various GS	\$88,000
Volunteer Program (LTVA Program Cost)	\$126,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,139,317</b>

## 7 Revenues

The Yuma Field Office LTVA ISRP program produces individual special recreation permit (ISRP) fee revenue (Table 7). The Yuma Field Office currently expends substantial resources in managing visitor use at the Long-Term Visitor Areas. The revenue for the SRP program derives from the number of permits by type multiplied by the price of the permit. Revenue has increased in the past five years, which reflects the overall increasing visitation trend of the LTVAs (see Section 4.4). The costs are a function of the resources (i.e., direct, indirect, and fixed expenses) needed to oversee and manage the SRP LTVA program.

*Table 7: Annual LTVA ISRP Permits Issued and Revenue Collected*

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Short-Term ISRP Permits Issued</b>	<b>Long-Term ISRP Permits Issued</b>	<b>Total LTVA ISRP Revenue Collected</b>
FY 2020	5,309	1,990	\$570,560
FY 2021	4,125	2,373	\$592,140
FY 2022	5,649	2,633	\$651,840
FY 2023	5,707	2,922	\$754,240
FY 2024	5,674	3,518	\$849,400

If the fee proposal is approved, and using the FY 2024 permit numbers, the projected revenue is \$3,209,600. This projected revenue would cover the operating and maintenance expenses of managing the LTVAs. It would also enable the YFO to complete long-term maintenance improvements. Table 8 shows the revenue projections using the FY 2024 permits. The table factors in long-term permits for 60 volunteers, which are not included in the revenue.

*Table 8: LTVA Revenue Projections*

<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>FY24 Permits Issued</b>	<b>FY24 Revenue, using existing fee structure</b>	<b>Projected Revenue, using FY24 Permits numbers &amp; proposed fee structure</b>
Short-Term ISRP	5,674	\$226,960	\$1,134,800
Long-Term ISRP	3,518	\$622,440	\$2,074,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,192</b>	<b>\$849,400</b>	<b>\$3,209,600</b>

## **8 Priorities for Future Expenditures**

The Yuma Field Office has historically reinvested its LTVA recreation fee revenue back into the LTVA program and sites through infrastructure investment, maintenance, and upgrades. The YFO would continue to provide upgrades and advances in amenities for the LTVA camping experience with the fee revenue. The first priority is to maintain the LTVA's existing amenities and access routes. In addition, the YFO strives to achieve adequate staffing and volunteer campground host levels to provide visitor services. These maintenance and staffing priorities would ensure an enjoyable and positive public land experience for visitors who use the program. Future upgrades would include mandatory replacement of the LTVA sites' existing potable water tanks and potable delivery locations that have been in continuous use since the early 1980s. Replacement costs for those tanks and the additional build out and return to service exceeds \$1,000,000.00. Additional expenditures could include dedicated bike paths, hiking trails, shower facilities, laundry facilities and recreational activity sites such as horseshoes, shuffleboards, volleyball courts, additional ramada's etc.

Historically, there has been little to no carryover funds to address emergency repairs or catastrophic system failures. A management objective for the program is to be self-sustaining to meet current and future emergency, operating, and maintenance needs, as well as site improvements. The proposed fee increase will assist the BLM with meeting this goal and with continuing to provide quality fair value recreation experiences for visitors.

## **9 Analysis of Recreation Fee Rates**

### **9.1 Competitive Market Supply for LTVAs**

Dry camping, also called boondocking, is camping without hookups for water, electricity, and sewer. Typically, it requires a fully self-contained RV. The BLM conducted a market assessment of public and private for fee dry camping sites to assess the proposed LTVA pricing. When developing the LTVA pricing, it is important to consider and quantify the supply of competitive and/or comparable facilities in the marketplace. Because of the unique characteristics of the LTVA program, there are very few competitive sites in the market that offer true "dry camping or boon docking" experiences. As such, a true comparison for LTVAs as dry camping opportunities within the public and private sector were very limited and not representative of the LTVA offering.

Table 9 provides an inventory of dry camping locations within the competitive market of the Yuma Field Office. The market areas around the LTVAs offer a wide range of services and accommodations for RV owners. Apart from public lands, most dry camping consists of staying at store parking lots that allow overnight use (e.g., casinos and Wal Marts are two examples). Market area services range from dry camping to full hook ups with pools, laundry facilities, and Wi-Fi access. In addition, nearby towns of Yuma Az, and Quartzsite, AZ provide services such as laundry, water, dump stations, showers, and propane.

While LTVAs are primarily comparable to dry camping recreation sites, understanding RV Park rate structures provides an upper fee range comparison, particularly as the LTVAs offer a range of services and amenities. For example, Quartzsite RV parks had more complex rate strategies based on their high levels of demand in January. RV and camping rates increase at the majority of RV parks for day and monthly rates in January for those sites surrounding the La Posa LTVA.

Additionally, some RV Parks only offered daily rates for the month of January and limited weekly and monthly rates during this period. The daily, weekly, and monthly rates in the private sector are significantly higher than the LTVA rates.

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Table 9: Fair Market Value Fee Comparison

Location Name	Agency or Operator	Campground or Other Fees	Amenities Offered	Key differences
Imperial Dam Long Term Visitor Area (LVTA)	BLM/YFO	Short Term ISRP Permit for 14 Consecutive Days: \$40.00 (proposed: \$200, up to 30 days) Long Term ISRP Permit Valid from Sept. 15 – April 15 or any portion there of: \$180.00 (proposed: \$600)	Dump Station, Potable Water Points, Trash Collection Bins, Site Security, Contact Station, Interpretive Locations and Displays, Event Ramada. Flush Toilets, Token Operated Showers, Boat Launch, Picnic Tables	LVTA ISRP is valid Sept. 15- April 15. Site operates as expanded amenity fee site April 16-Sept 14.
La Posa Long Term Visitor Area (LTVA): La Posa South, La Posa North, La Posa West, La Posa Tyson	BLM/YFO	Short Term ISRP Permit for 14 Consecutive Days: \$40.00 (proposed: \$200) Long Term ISRP Permit Valid from Sept. 15 – April 15 or any portion there of: \$180.00 (proposed: \$600)	Dump Station, Potable Water Points, Trash Collection Bins, Site Security, Contact Station, Event Ramada, Picnic Tables.	LVTA ISRP is valid Sept. 15- April 15. Site operates as expanded amenity fee site April 16-Sept 14.
Arizona West RV Park	Private	<b>Daily:</b> \$30 - \$36 + Tax Seasonal Change <b>Weekly:</b> \$180 - \$216 + Tax Seasonal Change <b>Monthly:</b> \$275 - \$550 + Tax – Seasonal Change <b>Season:</b> 10/15 – 04/15 \$2,950	Sewer, Water and Electric Hook Ups Designated camp sites, Wi-Fi location on site, Phone hook ups	Yuma AZ RV park with Full Hook ups. Price increases during winter months. Taxes are charged on top of fee for longer stays. Limited Sites, Reservations recommended

<b>Location Name</b>	<b>Agency or Operator</b>	<b>Campground or Other Fees</b>	<b>Amenities Offered</b>	<b>Key differences</b>
Encore Mesa Verde	Private	Daily Rate: \$58 per night Weekly Rate: \$50 per night	Electric, Water and Sewer, and Concrete patios. 38' limit to RV size	Yuma, AZ Reservations recommended
Kofa Mountain RV Park	Private	Daily: \$37 Weekly: \$232 Monthly: \$363	30 Amps 50 Amps Back-in RV Sites Clubhouse Community Restrooms Showers Laundry Facilities Paved Roads Picnic Table Pull-Thru RV Sites RV Hookup Sewer Hookups Water Hookups Wi-Fi	Quartzsite, AZ
Alamo Lake State Park	AZ State Parks	Entrance Fee \$10 per vehicle. \$15 per night. Dry Camping	Vault Toilets	No Long-term Occupancy Plan
Lake Havasu State Park	AZ State Parks	Camping \$35 per night, \$40 per night waterfront.	50 Amp electric hookup, Ramada at camp site	14 Day limit.

The proposed average fees for the LTVA are \$85.71 per month for the long-term season (September 15-April 15), which averages \$2.83 per day, and \$200.00 for up to 30 days with the short term ISRP, which averages \$6.66 per day (Table 10). The cost comparison for the proposed ISRP with other area sites shows the average monthly fee is \$253.33 and the average daily fee is \$10.11.

*Table 10: Cost Comparison for Proposed Individual Special Recreation Permit Fees*

Area	Permit type	Permit fee	Averaged monthly fee	Averaged daily fee
Quartzsite / Yuma LTVA	Current LTVA long-term ISRP permit	\$180.00	\$25.71	\$0.84
Quartzsite / Yuma LTVA	Proposed LTVA long-term ISRP permit	\$600.00	\$85.71	\$2.83
Quartzsite / Yuma LTVA	Current LTVA short-visit IRSP permit: up to 14 days	\$40.00	\$85.50	\$2.85
Quartzsite / Yuma LTVA	Proposed LTVA short-visit IRSP permit: up to 30 days	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$6.66
Quartzsite	B-10 RV Park	N/A	\$175.00	\$5.83
Quartzsite	Desert Gardens RV Park	N/A	\$445.00	\$14.83
Quartzsite	La-Z-Daze RV Park	N/A	\$300.00	\$10.00
Yuma	Quechan Casino Resort *	N/A	\$200.00	\$10.00
Yuma	Paradise Casino *	N/A	\$200.00	\$10.00
Yuma	Cocopah Casino *	N/A	\$200.00	\$10.00

## 10 Impacts from Changing and Non-Changing Recreation Fee Rates

Consistent with the Department of the Interior and BLM priorities, the BLM Yuma Field Office seeks to achieve environmental justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and make a difference in the Yuma area communities through expanding recreational access and opportunities and providing for natural resource interpretation. This includes to:

- encourage, facilitate, and improve partnership with and access for youth, tribes, and underserved communities to public lands through recreation partnerships and collaborations.

- improve public health and safety at developed recreation sites and areas by updating and modernizing infrastructure—including meeting accessibility standards for people with disabilities.
- invite education, interpretation, and recreational access for all Americans, especially for diverse populations and those near urban areas to encourage enjoyment of BLM-managed public lands and waters.
- collaborate with community members, government organizations, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and other stakeholders to address environmental and health-related challenges for recreation management.
- enhance understanding of environmental and health-related issues at the community level.
- improve methods for identifying, addressing, tracking, and measuring progress toward achieving environmental justice.
- and develop and support youth education and outreach programs.

The BLM Yuma Field Office has not updated the LTVA business plan or made fee changes since 2008. This has been due in part to administrative changes, staffing shortages, global pandemic, and the dissolution of the Resource Advisory Council (RAC), which has since been restored.

In the years since 2008 the rate of inflation has increased by over 46%. This has led to increased costs for all contracts, services, maintenance costs and staff that were previously able to be managed with revenues drawn from the existing fee rates.

The YFO strives to maintain operations within the 95% cost recovery of revenue earned. Currently the BLM/YFO is in the low 60 percentiles of cost recovery. This level of funding vs. expenditure has made the LTVA Program unsustainable and insufficiently funded.

Limited funding presents issues that hinder continuity of operation in the LTVA program in health and safety for the public, staff, and volunteers, shortages in amenities and services offered, shortages in environmental protection and safeguards, and shortages that affect visitors' quality public land experience. Staffing has intentionally been held below recommended levels to not exceed budget limitations.

If the BLM YFO LTVA Business Plan is approved and implemented, the required funding would exist and could be strategically deployed by agency managers to effectively address the growing use of the program and manage issues previously mentioned. In addition, the enhanced maintenance of the LTVAs sites would also improve the protection and restoration of the landscapes and natural resources supporting the LTVAs and therefore improve the ecosystem sustainability of the area.

If this business plan is not approved, the agency may consider what measures it can take to evaluate possible significant reductions in available services and cost cutting measures to address ongoing budget deficits.

## **10.1 Environmental Justice**

Table 11 provides a review of the socioeconomic indicators for the three counties near the LTVA sites, the top ten states of visitors to the LTVAs and the United States. The data indicate the following characteristics:

- The top ten states of LTVA visitors and the United States overall have had noticeable increases in their income levels from 2016 to 2022, ranging from 9% to 17.8%, accounting for inflation rates. This indicates that the proposed ISRP fee increases are highly likely to be affordable for the visitors to LTVA.
- The three counties (La Paz County, Yuma County, and Imperial County) where the LTVA sites are located or managed from have relatively high percentages of low-income population and minority-population. It is anticipated that the revenue from the ISRP fee increases would contribute to recreation opportunities for the local communities through enhanced maintenance of LTVA sites.

If approved, the plan as proposed would allow for the changes needed to manage effectively, and lawfully, the LTVA program for future generations. If the plan is not approved, the BLM may face significant budget constraints that could impact the scope of services and amenities provided. YFO's goal remains to enhance and maintain a high-quality visitor experience.

Table 11: Analysis Area: Environmental Justice Considerations

Area	Total population in 2016	Median household incomes in 2016	Low-income population in 2016	% Minority population in 2016	Total population in 2022	Median household incomes in 2022	% Low-income population in 2022	Minority population in 2022	% Income changes 2016 to 2022
La Paz County	20,304	\$44,423	52.4%	41.1%	16,681	\$46,634	43.4%	43.9%	5.0%
Yuma County	203,292	\$50,717	49.9%	67.3%	204,374	\$56,439	43.9%	70.8%	11.3%
Imperial County	178,807	\$52,054	50.4%	88.1%	179,578	\$53,847	46.4%	90.4%	3.4%
Arizona	6,728,577	\$62,793	38.1%	43.9%	7,172,282	\$72,581	30.8%	47.0%	15.6%
South Dakota	851,058	\$63,695	32.1%	17.1%	890,342	\$69,457	28.4%	19.4%	9.0%
California	38,654,206	\$78,011	35.2%	61.6%	39,356,104	\$91,905	28.0%	64.8%	17.8%
Washington	7,073,146	\$76,868	29.3%	29.6%	7,688,549	\$90,325	23.0%	34.5%	17.5%
Oregon	3,982,267	\$65,153	35.2%	23.0%	4,229,374	\$76,632	28.1%	26.7%	17.6%
Texas	26,956,435	\$66,935	37.2%	56.6%	29,243,342	\$73,035	32.2%	59.9%	9.1%
Idaho	1,635,483	\$60,143	37.9%	17.1%	1,854,109	\$70,214	30.5%	19.9%	16.7%
Nevada	2,839,172	\$64,938	35.9%	48.7%	3,104,817	\$71,646	30.8%	53.6%	10.3%

<b>Area</b>	<b>Total population in 2016</b>	<b>Median household incomes in 2016</b>	<b>Low-income population in 2016</b>	<b>% Minority population in 2016</b>	<b>Total population in 2022</b>	<b>Median household incomes in 2022</b>	<b>% Low-income population in 2022</b>	<b>Minority population in 2022</b>	<b>% Income changes 2016 to 2022</b>
Colorado	5,359,295	\$76,466	28.6%	31.0%	5,770,790	\$87,598	23.1%	33.8%	14.6%
Florida	19,934,451	\$59,808	37.3%	44.4%	21,634,529	\$67,917	31.4%	48.0%	13.6%
United States	318,558,162	\$67,663	33.6%	38.0%	331,097,593	\$75,149	28.8%	41.1%	11.1%

## 11 Public Outreach

Outreach methods to share information on how to provide comments on the draft business plan and fee proposal during the public comment period include:

- Signs posted at existing LTVA sites or access points.
- Public notifications on recreation.gov and blm.gov visit pages for La Posa Long Term Visitor Area and Imperial Dam Long Term Visitor Area.
- BLM news release
- Social media postings, and information on StoryMap
- Outreach to interested parties, local municipalities, and state agencies.
- Public meetings and information sessions held virtually and in-person.

Comments may be submitted by mail, hand delivery, or electronic mail.

Mail or hand-delivery: BLM Yuma Field Office, 7341 E. 30th St Ste A, Yuma, AZ 85365

Electronic mail: [BLM\\_AZ\\_YFOWEB@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_AZ_YFOWEB@blm.gov)

If you submit comments by electronic mail, please indicate “Attn: Amenity Fee Recreation Site Fee Increase Proposal” in your subject line and include your name and return address.

Copies of the fee proposal are available at the BLM Yuma Field Office at the above address and online at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-fees/business-plans>.

For further information contact: Raymond Castro, Jr., Field Manager, BLM Yuma Field Office, 7341 E. 30th St Ste A, Yuma, AZ 85365, by phone at (928) 317-3200, or by e-mail at: [BLM\\_AZ\\_YFOWEB@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_AZ_YFOWEB@blm.gov).

Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact the above individual(s) during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the above individuals. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

These outreach methods comply with requirements established by FLREA and BLM policy.

Once the public comment period on the draft business plan is completed and any changes are made to the fee proposal as a result of analysis of the public participation, the YFO will present the business plan proposal to the Arizona Recreation Resource Advisory Committee.



## 12 References

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U.S. Census Bureau (USCB), 2023a, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table>

U.S. Census Bureau (USCB), 2023b, Cartographic Boundary Files, Year of 2022, Scale of 1:500,000 <https://www.census.gov/geographies/mapping-files/time-series/geo/cartographic-boundary.html>

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