



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

Final Business Plan for the Butte Field Office Developed Recreation Fee Sites



**Butte Field Office
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Introduction

This Final Butte Field Office Business Plan (Final Plan) has been prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Butte Field Office (BFO). This Final Plan outlines the direction for the continued maintenance and operation of the Developed Campgrounds and Day-Use Areas and the associated Recreation Use Permits within the BFO. This Final Plan has been prepared to meet the criteria defined under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (FLREA), which provides the BLM the authority to collect recreation fees at sites that meet certain criteria. Under FLREA, these fees remain with the site that generated them and can be used to provide for a quality recreation experience at the site(s). Currently the BFO requires Recreation Use Permits for 8 campgrounds/day use sites.

FLREA guidelines require that each fee program has a business plan that thoroughly discusses fees and explains how the use of these fees is consistent with criteria set forth in FLREA and other BLM directives. Additionally, this Final Plan documents how appropriate fee rates were established, outlines the operational costs for the included recreation sites, and identifies future priorities for the use of collected fees. The Final Plan also notifies the public of the objectives for use of recreation fee revenues and provides the public with an opportunity to comment on the objectives.

The Final Plan was developed by the BFO while identifying that additional services may be needed to support a quality recreation experience, or that previous recreation fees were not adequate given use demands and need for services at many of our remote developed recreation sites. Costs for general maintenance and daily operations of these sites is increasing annually. In addition, there has been a sharp increase in recreation use of these sites over the past five years. Increasing operational costs and more visitors has highlighted the need for yearlong maintenance of these sites and increased staff presence at to provide the necessary visitor services.

The data used to analyze and prepare this business plan was obtained through internal BLM tracking and accounting mechanisms such as the Recreation Management Information System (RMIS), Collections and Billing System (CBS), Federal Business Management System (FBMS), and other locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking spreadsheets. For more detailed information, please contact the BLM BFO point of contact. Some of the additional data may be subject to Privacy Act requirements.

Background and Authorities

This business plan has been prepared to meet the criteria defined in the “Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act 2004” (P.L.108-447). The authorities and regulations for this business plan, including recreation fee collections, are:

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA, Public Law 94-579)** - 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 of 2004 (FLREA, 16 U.S.C. 6801-6814)** – this 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 are collected, and directs how BLM will manage and utilize these revenues. Section 6802 contains BLM’s authority to issue permits and charge a permit fee. FLREA fee rates are dependent on the amenities provided at each site. The proposed BFO fee sites meet the criteria for either standard amenity sites or expanded amenity sites.

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

- **Code of Federal Regulations, Title 43, Part 2930 (43 CFR 2930)** – contains the regulations governing BLM’s recreation permitting programs. It states that, “You must obtain a Recreation Use Permit for individual or group use of fee areas. These are sites where we provide or administer specialized facilities, equipment, or services related to outdoor recreation. You may visit for the uses and time BLM specifies. We will post these uses and limits at the entrance to the area or site and provide this information in the local BLM office with jurisdiction over the area or sites. You may contact this office for permit information when planning your visit.” This information will also be posted online.
- **BLM Manual 2930 – Recreation Permits and Fees**
- **BLM Manual 2930-1 – Recreation Permit and Fee Administration** – describes how the BLM implements the recreation fee program.
- **BLM Information Bulletin No. 2019-056 – Recreation Fee Revenue Spending Plans and Accomplishment Report**
- **BLM Manual 1105 – Donations, Solicitations, and Fundraising**
- **2009 Record of Decision and Approved Butte Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP)**
 - **Goal RM1** – Provide a diverse array of recreational opportunities while maintaining healthy public land resources
 - **Goal RM2** – Establish, manage, and maintain quality recreation sites and facilities to meet a broad range of public needs subject to appropriate resource constraints

- **Goal RM3** – Manage commercial, competitive, or special events with special recreation permits that eliminate or minimize impacts on resources and conflicts with other users
- **Goal RM4** – Manage recreation opportunities to provide a sustained flow of local economic benefits and protect non-market economic values

Consistent with Department of Interior and BLM priorities, the BLM Butte Field Office seeks to achieve environmental justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and make a difference in Alaskan 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.

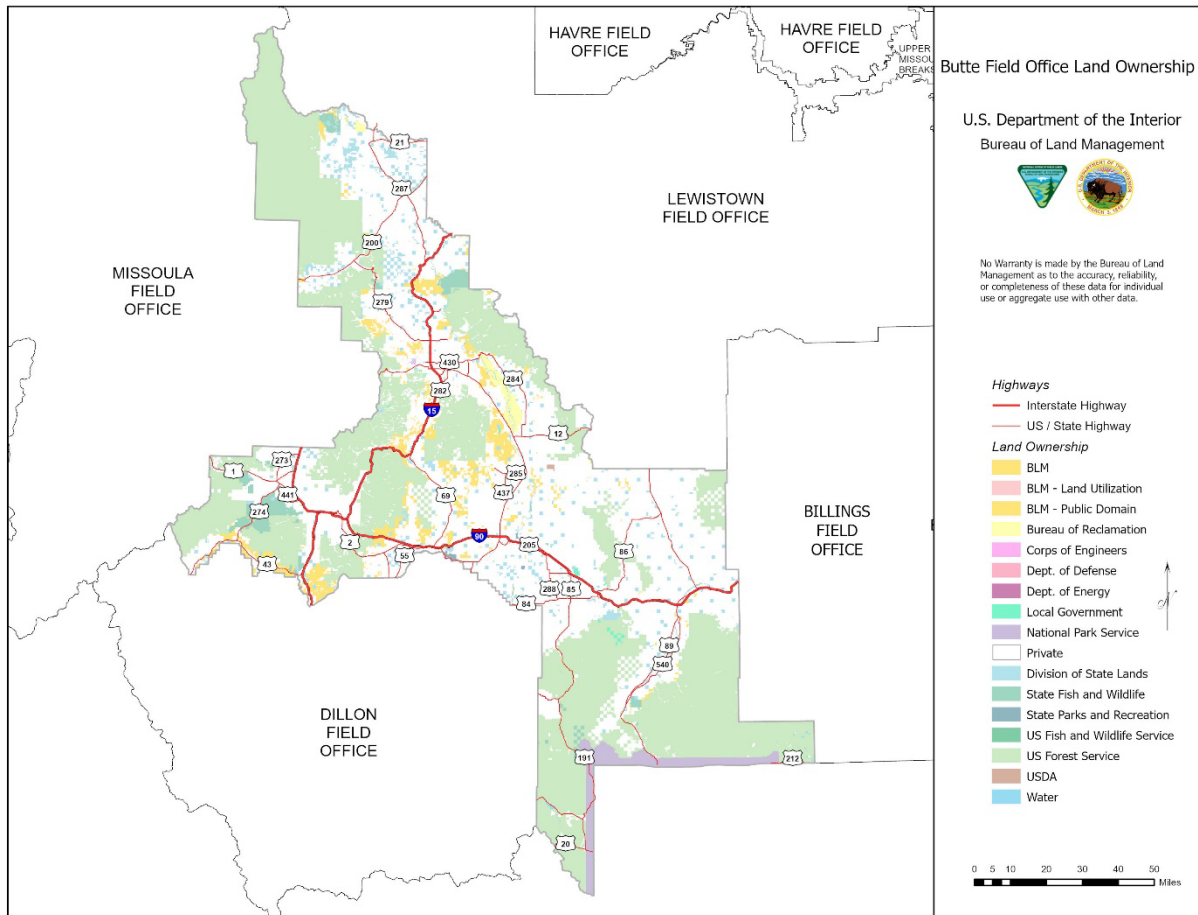
The BFO will use various e-commerce technologies, as directed in BLM Instruction Memorandum 2022-010, to provide recreation visitors opportunities to find, reserve, and pay for campsites and day use within the field office. Most of these options are provided through the interagency reservation service Recreation.gov. If the BFO decides to add additional reservation services or 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 fee 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 at each of the campgrounds and day use areas. Other payment options may also be considered in the future as technology and software develops including onsite credit card payment systems or scan and pay as examples.

The Butte Field Office Developed Recreation Fee Program

Administrative Unit

The BLM BFO is one of three Field Offices within the Western Montana District. The BFO manages approximately 354,962 acres across eight Montana Counties (Map 1).



Map 1: Map of the Butte Field Office

Butte Field Office Recreation Programs

Recreation Sites

The BFO currently manages a large and diverse recreation program that includes developed recreation sites, trailheads, Off-Highway Vehicle areas, and general recreation sites.

Chain of Lakes Developed Recreation Sites

The Chain of Lakes sites are located close to Wolf Creek and Helena, Montana. They are unique for their proximity to Helena and Great Falls, their consistently high levels of visitation, the “home base” they provide to visitors wanting to spend time on the lakes over multiple days, and the density of facilities they include to support this visitation (restrooms, picnic areas, and grassy/landscapes areas which provide areas for relaxing and picnicking, with irrigation systems and attendants). Together, they offer more than 220 campsites and are supported by 20+ volunteers. Existing fees sites are denoted by an asterisk (*).

- Holter Dam*
- Holter Lake*
- Log Gulch*
- Departure Point*
- Beartooth Landing
- White Sandy*

- Devil’s Elbow*
- Two Camps Vista*
- Clark’s Bay Day Use Site*
- Spokane Bay

Other BFO Developed Recreation Sites

These other developed recreation sites are spread across the BFO’s eight county region and offer a wide array of recreational amenities, from developed off highway vehicle areas, mountain bike trail systems, fishing access sites and campgrounds.

- Lower Toston Campground
- Upper Toston Campground
- Crow Creek
- Galena Gulch
- Divide Bridge Campground*
- Divide Bridge Day Use Site
- Jerry Creek
- Dickie Bridge
- East Bank
- Carbella
- Maiden Rock

Trailheads (TH)

- Woodsiding TH
- Sleeping Giant TH
- Spokane Bay TH
- McMaster Hills East TH
- McMaster Hills West TH
- Spokane Bay TH
- Echo Lane TH
- Head Lane TH
- Tumbleweed TH
- Norris TH
- John G. Mine TH
- Sheep Mountain TH
- Sawmill Gulch TH
- Moose Creek TH

Recreation Areas

- Ward Ranch Historical Sites
- French Bar
- Crimson Bluff
- Lombard
- Duck Creek
- Sheep Camp
- Ringing Rocks
- Maiden Rock East
- Sawlog Gulch
- Pintlar Creek
- Buffalo Hump

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Areas

- Ohio Gulch OHV TH
- Radersburg OHV TH
- Four Corners OHV TH
- Pipestone OHV TH
- Whiskey Gulch OHV

Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs)

BFO manages nine SRMAs where recreation is the priority management objective. Table 1 summarizes the SRMAs within the BFO and identifies the primary recreation opportunities managed for in each area.

Table 1: Management Objectives of Special Recreation Areas within the Bute Field Office

Special Recreation Management Area	Primary Recreation Opportunities
Hauser Lake	Developed camping, lake access for boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and group gatherings
Humbug Spires	Hiking, backpacking, rock climbing, primitive camping, fishing, and hiking
Lower Holter Lake/Missouri River	Developed camping and day-use activities, lake access for motorized boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and group gatherings
Pipestone	OHV riding, driving for pleasure, semi-developed camping, hunting, horseback riding, hiking, and mountain biking
Scratchgravel Hills	Hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and hunting
Sheep Mountain	Northern portion – hiking, rock climbing, hunting, and natural viewing Southern portion – OHV riding, driving for pleasure, semi-developed camping, and hunting
Sleeping Giant/Missouri River	ACEC areas – primitive shoreline camping, fishing, hiking, hunting, horseback riding and natural viewing Non-ACEC areas – limited motorized travel, pleasure driving, hunting, horseback riding, and natural viewing
Upper Big Hole River	Semi-developed camping, limited motorized pleasure driving, river access for floating and fishing, fall hunting, hiking, and natural viewing
Uppermost Missouri River	Semi-developed camping, lake access for motorized and non-motorized boating, fishing, picnicking, and upland hunting

Special Designation Areas

The BFO also manages several specially designated areas that include Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns (ACECs), National Trails, Suitable for Wild and Scenic River Segments, and Wilderness Study Areas (WSA).

Table 2: Summary of specially designated recreation areas and the special values associated with each area

Specialty Designated Area
Elkhorns Mountains ACEC
Humbug Spires ACEC
Ringing Rocks ACEC
Sleeping Giant ACEC
Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
Missouri River
Muskrat Creek
Black Sage WSA

Elkhorns Tack-on WSA
Humbug Spires WSA
Sleeping Giant WSA
Sheep Creek WSA
Yellowstone River WSA

Description of Butte Field Office Existing and Proposed Fee Sites

The BFO Developed Recreation Sites have experienced high levels of use over the previous five years. Tables 3 and 4 summarize Total Visits and Visitor Days Per Site reported by the BFO in the Recreation Management Information System (RMIS) for 2018-2022.

Table 3: Butte Field Office Specific Site Visitor Days Per Site reported in the RMIS from 2018-2022. Numbers reported for Log Gulch Recreation Site reflect only visits to the Day Use Area because the campground was closed due to the lack of staffing. Numbers for Carbella in 2022 reflect a partial closure due to flooding of the Yellowstone River. Existing fee sites are denoted by an asterisk ().*

Recreation Site	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022
Departure Point*	16,288	16,316	17,132	17,989	14,276
Log Gulch*	146,196	142,600	149,730	157,217	34,441
Holter Lake Campground*	155,443	155,459	163,231	171,393	147,105
Holter Dam*	35,442	35,487	37,262	39,123	25,300
White Sandy Campground*	83,825	81,542	85,619	89,900	97,245
Clark's Bay Day Use Site*	14,992	15,006	15,756	16,544	16,660
Devil's Elbow*	133,225	133,274	139,939	146,934	147,674
Divide Bridge Campground*	75,764	75,787	78,046	59,681	66,070
Dickie Bridge	10,878	10,901	11,447	8,585	9,791
Carbella	23,837	24,111	25,316	22,785	19,136
East Bank	21,113	21,119	22,175	16,631	18,293
Galena Gulch	25,840	25,907	27,202	28,562	33,223
Crow Creek	47,466	47,512	49,890	52,383	66,872
Upper and Lower Toston	26,423	27,428	28,799	30,239	42,028

Table 4: Butte Field Office Total Visits and Total Visitor Days for all recreation sites reported in RMIS from 2018 – 2022.

Fiscal Year	Total Recreation Visits	Total Visitor Days
FY2018	1,625,361	2,173,003
FY2019	1,650,680	2,184,931
FY2020	1,727,030	2,287,366
FY2021	1,717,522	2,314,893
FY2022	1,592,498	2,091,831

Current Fee Season

Fees are charged at the following sites from May 1 to September 30 each year. No fees are charged during October 1 to April 30, however all sites, excluding White Sandy, remain open for visitor use. “Off-season” use has increased, particularly during the shoulder seasons (spring and fall); however, providing services during this period is challenging without staff and volunteer camp hosts present.

Proposed Modification to Butte Field Office Recreation Fee Rates

The BFO is proposing to raise existing camp rate fees at campgrounds currently charging fees to levels consistent with other camping areas in the region, to raise the Chain of Lakes Day Use season pass rate and establish a Big Hole Day Use season pass. Current and proposed fee rates in addition to the amenities that each site provides is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Butte Field Office Current and Proposed Recreation Fees and the amenities that each recreation site provides. Existing fee sites are denoted by an asterisk ().*

Recreation Site	Current Fees	FY24 Proposed Fees	FY29 Proposed Fees	Amenities (Standard or Expanded)
Log Gulch*	\$15/night	\$25/night	\$35/night	Expanded: Campground host, trailer and tent spaces, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, boat launch, docks, swimming area and beach, fee collection services, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire pits, accessible facilities, and landscaping.
Holter Lake*	\$15/night	\$25/night	\$35/night	Expanded: Campground host, trailer and tent spaces, picnic tables, fire rings, drinking water, access roads, boat launch, docks, fee collection services, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire pits, accessible facilities, and landscaping.
Holter Dam*	\$15/night	\$20/night	\$30/night	Expanded: Campground host, trailer and tent spaces, boat ramp, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, fee collection services, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire rings, and accessible facilities, and landscaping.

Recreation Site	Current Fees	FY24 Proposed Fees	FY29 Proposed Fees	Amenities (Standard or Expanded)
White Sandy*	\$15/night	\$25/night	\$35/night	Expanded: Campground host, trailer and tent spaces, boat ramp, docks, picnic tables drinking water, swimming area and beach, access roads, fee collection services, visitor protection services, vault concrete latrine, fire rings, accessible facilities, and landscaping.
Devil's Elbow*	\$15/night	\$25/night	\$35/night	Expanded: Campground host, trailer and tent spaces, boat ramp, docks, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, fee collection services, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire rings, and accessible facilities, and landscaping.
Chain of Lakes Day Use*	\$40/season or \$5/day	\$50/season or \$10/day	\$60/season or \$12/day	Standard: Season long access to all the Chain of Lakes Day Use Areas, including Departure Point, Log Gulch, Holter Lake, Holter Dam, White Sandy, Clark's Bay Day Use Area, and Devil's Elbow. Amenities at these sites include vault latrines, kiosks, picnic tables, security services, trash receptacles, boat ramps, docks, swimming areas, and beaches.
Divide Bridge *	\$10/night	\$15/night	\$20/night	Expanded: Campground hosts, trailer and tent spaces, boat launch, picnic tables, drinking water, access road, fee collection services, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, accessible facilities, and fire rings.
Dickie Bridge	None	\$15/night	\$20/night	Expanded: Trailer and tent spaces, picnic tables, access road, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire rings, accessible facilities, and bear boxes. Once fees are implemented fee collections services would be provided.

Recreation Site	Current Fees	FY24 Proposed Fees	FY29 Proposed Fees	Amenities (Standard or Expanded)
East Bank	None	\$15/night	\$20/night	Expanded: Trailer and tent spaces, picnic tables, access road, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire rings, accessible facilities, and bear boxes. Once fees are implemented fee collections services would be provided.
Maiden Rock	None	\$15/night	\$20/night	Expanded: Trailer and tent spaces, picnic tables, access road, boat ramp, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire rings, accessible facilities, and bear boxes. Once fees are implemented fee collection services would be provided.
Big Hole Day Use	None	\$20/season or \$5/day	\$40/season or \$10/day	Standard: Season long access to the all the Big Hole Day Use Areas, including Divide Bride, Jerry Creek, Dickey Bridge, East Bank, and Maiden Rock. Amenities at these sites include campground hosts, boat ramps, concrete vault latrines, trash receptacles, picnic tables, bear boxes, accessible facilities, paved delineating parking, and kiosks.
Carbella	None	\$15/night	\$20/night	Expanded: Campground hosts, trailer and tent spaces, boat ramp, picnic tables, access road, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire rings, accessible facilities, and bear boxes. Once fees are implemented fee collections services would be provided.
Upper and Lower Toston	None	\$10/night	\$15/night	Expanded: Trailer and tent spaces, boat ramp, picnic tables, access road, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire rings, accessible facilities, and bear boxes. Once fees are implemented fee collections services would be provided.

Recreation Site	Current Fees	FY24 Proposed Fees	FY29 Proposed Fees	Amenities (Standard or Expanded)
Galena Gulch	None	\$10/night	\$15/night	Trailer and tent spaces, picnic tables, access road, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire rings, accessible facilities, and bear boxes. Once fees are implemented fee collections services would be provided.
Crow Creek	None	\$10/night	\$15/night	Trailer and tent spaces, picnic tables, access road, visitor protection, concrete vault latrines, fire rings, accessible facilities, and bear boxes. Once fees are implemented fee collections services would be provided.

Proposed Fee Season

We propose extending the fee collection season by three months, to April 1 through November 30 each year for all fee sites throughout the BFO. Although recreation use stretches through the fall seasons and into winter, no fees would be charged December 1-March 31. These time periods could potentially be adjusted as needed. For example, the fee season could be shortened or extended depending on factors such as weather, operational needs, or staffing availability.

Existing BFO Fee Sites

Departure Point

Departure Point is located on Holter Lake, a 24-mile-long reservoir on the Missouri River, approximately ¼ of a mile south of the Log Gulch Recreation Area. Departure Point was acquired along with Log Gulch from Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks through a land exchange that occurred in 1993. Fees are collected for the use of Departure Point from May 1 through September 30.

Departure Point is popular for shoreline fishing, sunbathing, swimming, and overnight camping. The swim area is accessible via a paved ramp. Departure Point offers four designated camp sites that are currently first-come-first-serve, day-use parking, an informational kiosk, fee station, two vault latrines, garbage collection, designated swim area, picnic tables, grills, and fire rings. The area is also patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and operation and maintenance of the sites is supported by BLM seasonal and permanent staff.

New improvements and upgrades made over the past five years include installing additional shade/picnic structures and maintaining trails.



Photograph 1: View of the Day Use Area at the Departure Point Recreation Site

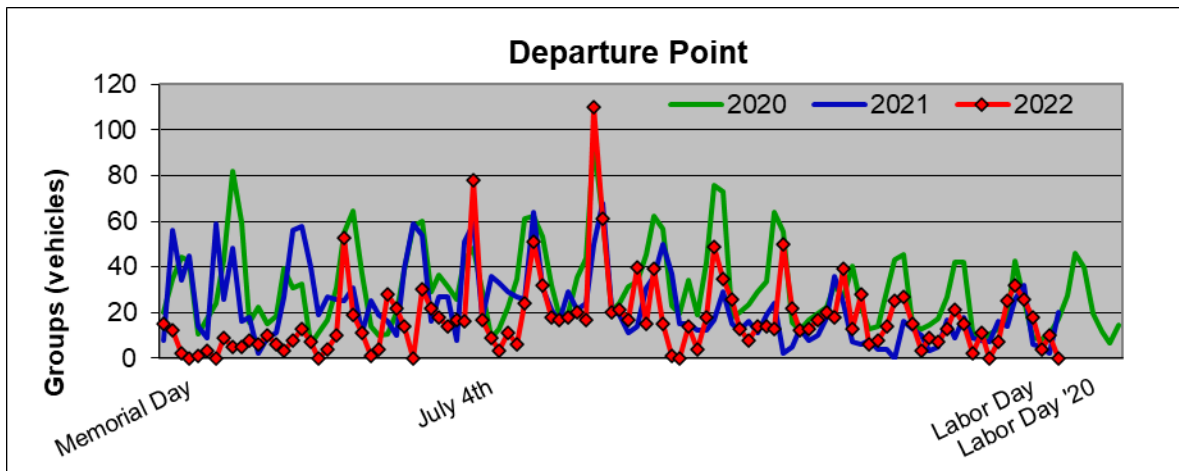


Figure 1: Total Visitation to Departure Point Day Use Site

Log Gulch

Log Gulch is also located on Holter Lake, approximately 3.5 miles south of the Holter Lake Recreation Site. Log Gulch was acquired along with Departure Point from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks through a land exchange that occurred in 1993. Fees for recreation use have been charged at Log Gulch since 1993, from May 1 until September 30 of each year.

Log Gulch is popular for shoreline fishing, sunbathing, swimming, overnight camping, and for

launching boats. Log Gulch provides 75 camping spots that are reservable online, a reservable pavilion, informational kiosks, fee stations, garbage collection, a docking system, a triple lane boat ramp, potable water, picnic tables, fire rings, lawn/landscaping, night lighting, and a sandy beach. The area is also patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement, and operation and maintenance of the sites is supported by BLM seasonal and permanent staff as well as volunteer campground hosts. Log Gulch also has an administrative building with living quarters for support staff and garages for equipment storage.

New improvements/upgrades over the last 5 years include replacing the roofs on administrative buildings and pavilion and chip sealing of the parking lots and internal roads.



Photograph 2: Log Gulch Day-Use Area



Photograph 3: Holter Lake Campground and Day Use Site

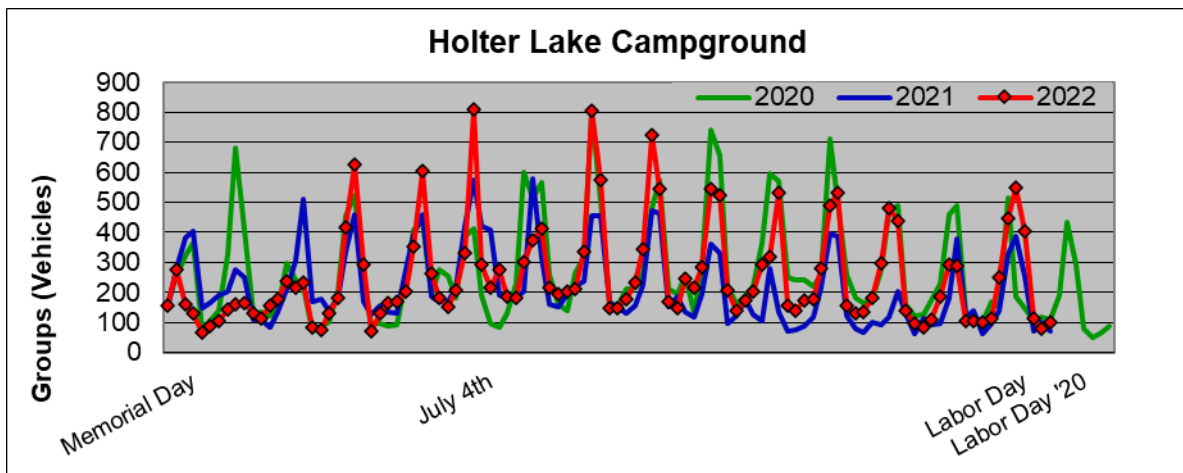


Figure 3: Total Visitation to Holter Lake Campground

Holter Dam

Holter Dam is located immediately below the dam on the Holter Lake. This segment of the Missouri River is a quality Blue-Ribbon fishery for rainbow and brown trout that attracts visitors nationwide. Holter Dam was donated to BLM by Pennsylvania Power and Light Montana (PPLM) in 2003 as part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) developed through the Hydroelectric Re-license Project finalized in 2000.

Holter Dam is popular for camping, river floating, fly fishing, picnicking, walking, scenic viewing, and wildlife observation. Holter Dam provides 16 camp sites that are first-come first-serve, a parking lot, trails, a 2-lane concrete boat ramp, concrete vaulted latrines, tables, grills, an information kiosk, fee station, shade structures, accessible shoreline fishing locations, picnic

shelters, an informational kiosk, garbage collection, potable water system, lawn and night lighting. The area is also patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and operation and maintenance of the sites is supported by BLM seasonal and permanent staff as well as volunteer campground hosts.

New improvements/upgrades over the past five years include installing shade/picnic structures, repairing the internal site roads, removing hazard trees, and repairing the water system.



Photograph 4: Holter Dam Recreation Site

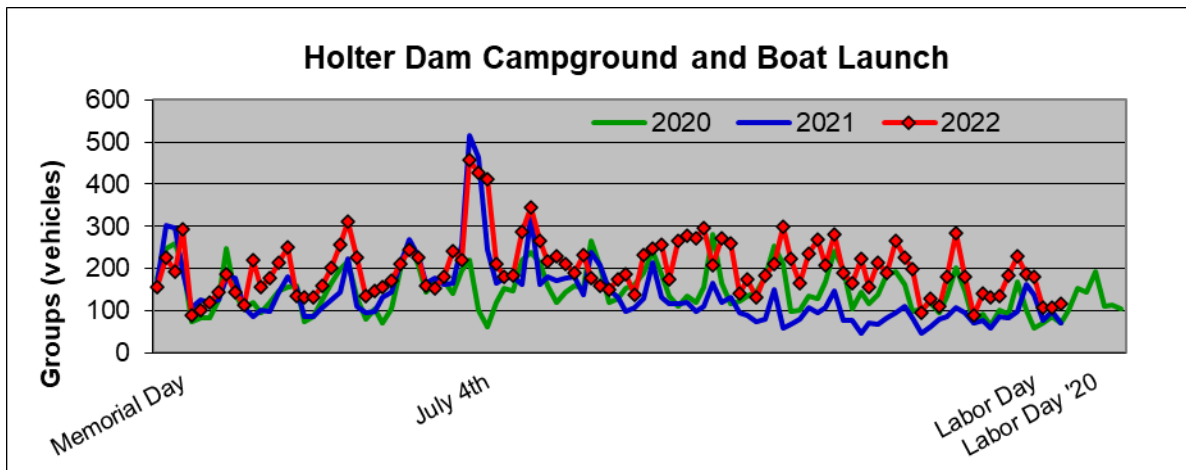


Figure 4: Total Visitation to Holter Dam Campground and Boat Launch

White Sandy

White Sandy was acquired, and the site was constructed under a partnership agreement with PPLM developed through the Hydroelectric Re-license Project finalized in 2000. White Sandy is located on Hauser Lake, the second major reservoir on the Missouri River in the area, approximately 15 miles east of Helena, Montana. Fees are collected at White Sandy from May 1 until September 30. The recreation site is closed to the public from November through April.

White Sandy is popular for camping, fishing, boating, picnicking, swimming, walking, scenic viewing, and wildlife observation. White Sandy provides 35 camp sites that are reservable online, a group camping area that is reservable online, a reservable ramada, a day-use area, swim area, beach, trails, parking lots, a 2-lane concrete boat ramp, a large dock system, seven concrete vaulted latrines, tables, grills, an information kiosk, fee station, a swim area with picnic/shade shelters, a water break with accessible shoreline fishing, a group-use picnic shelter, three RV hook-up pads, garbage collection, potable water, grassy/landscaped areas, and night lighting. The area is also patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and operation and maintenance of the sites is supported by BLM seasonal and permanent staff as well as volunteer campground hosts. White Sandy also has an administrative building and garages for equipment storage.

New improvements/upgrades completed over the past five years include replacing the roofs on the pavilions and repairing and replacing parts of the water systems (drinking and irrigation).



Photograph 5: Swim Beach at White Sandy Recreation Area

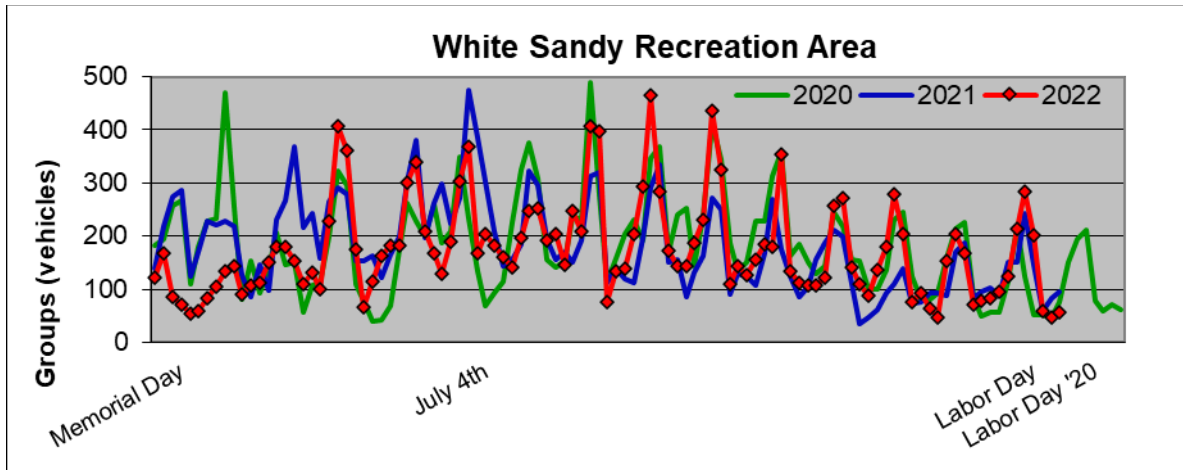


Figure 5: Total Visitation to White Sandy Recreation Site

Clark's Bay Day Use Site

Clark's Bay is a Day Use site is also located on Hauser Lake. Clark's Bay is located adjacent to Devil's Elbow and Two Camps Vista. Clark's Bay Day Use Site was acquired and developed under a partnership agreement with PPLM through the Hydroelectric Re-license Project finalized in 2000.

Clark's Bay is popular for sunbathing, swimming, boating, and fishing. Clark's Bay provides paved parking lots and trails, an informational kiosk, pay station, boat ramp, group reservation shelter, volleyball court, water break with access for shoreline fishing, large swim area with a beach, vaulted concrete latrines, picnic tables, individual picnic/shade shelters, drinking water, grassy/landscaped areas, and garbage collection. The area is also patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and operation and maintenance of the sites is supported by BLM seasonal and permanent staff as well as volunteer hosts. This has been a fee site since 2001.

Improvements/upgrades over the past five years include installing additional shade structures, replacing the pavilion roof, improving, and maintaining the water system and irrigation system.



Photograph 6: Clark's Bay Recreation Site

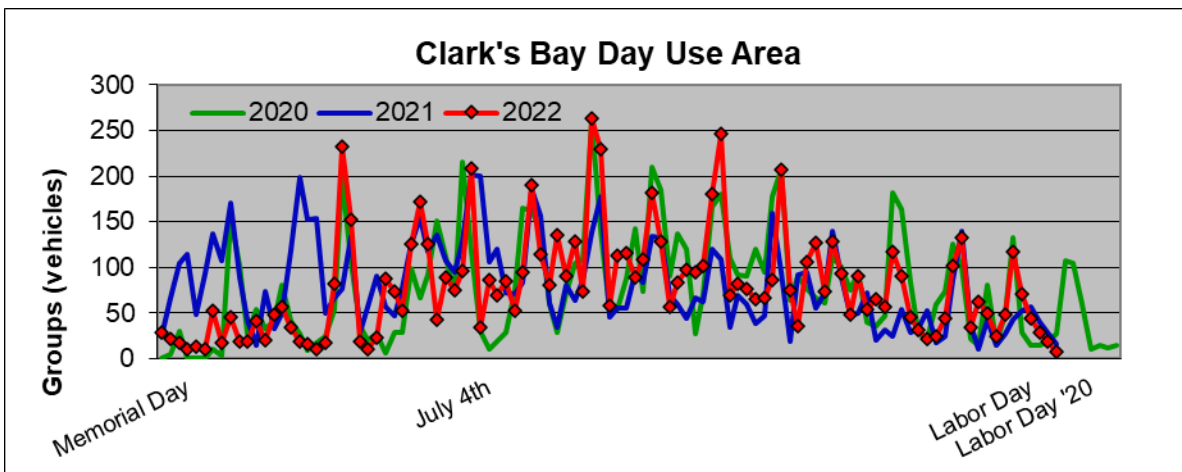


Figure 6: Total Visitation to Clark's Bay Day Use Site

Devil's Elbow

Devil's Elbow is located on Hauser Lake about 12 miles northeast of Helena. Devil's Elbow was acquired in 1998 and construction of the site began in 1999. Acquisition and construction of Devil's Elbow was part of an MOU agreement developed through the Missouri/Madison River Hydroelectric Re-license Project finalized in 2000. Fees have been charged at this site since 2001. Fee season runs from May 1 through September 30.

Devil's Elbow is popular for camping, fishing, boating, picnicking, swimming, walking, scenic viewing, and wildlife observation. Devil's Elbow provides 48 camp sites with graveled pads that

can be reserved online, 5 tent sites, paved parking lots, paved walking trails, swim area, picnic tables and fire rings, 2-lane concrete boat ramp, a large dock system and courtesy ramp dock, a large group picnic shelter, drinking water, garbage collection, a fish cleaning station, night lights, seven double concrete latrines, grassy/landscaped areas, an information kiosk and fee station. The area is also patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and operation and maintenance of the sites is supported by BLM seasonal and permanent staff as well as volunteer hosts. Devil's Elbow also has an administrative building with attached living quarters for temporary staff, and garages for equipment storage.

New improvements/upgrades completed over the past five years include repairing the accessible porch and approach ramp, repairing and replacing portions of the water system, replacing the roofs on administrative buildings, and building a new garage/dry storage structure.



Photograph 7: Devil's Elbow Recreation Site

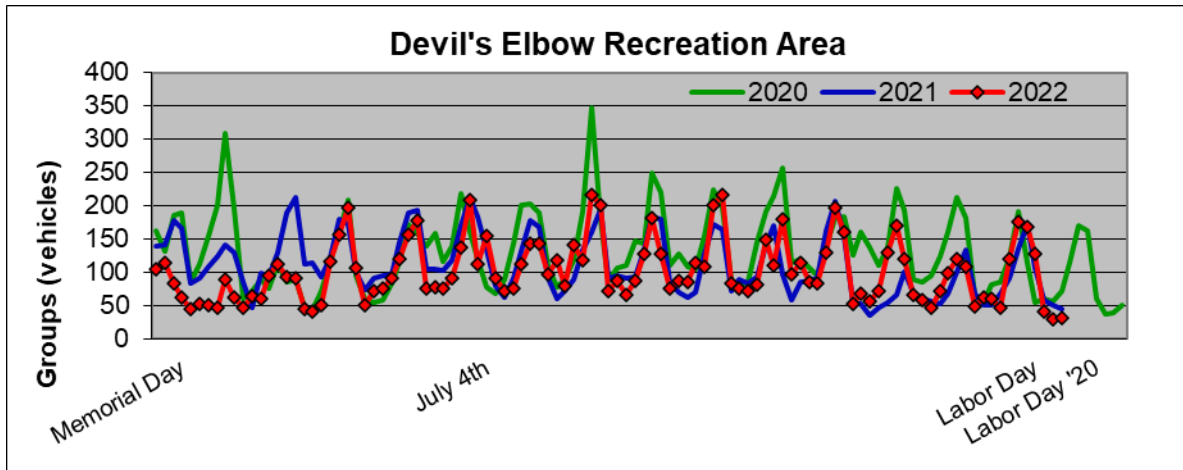


Figure 7: Total Visitation to Devil's Elbow Recreation Site

Divide Bridge Campground

Divide Bridge Campground is located on the Big Hole River, which is a Blue-Ribbon Trout Stream, approximately about three miles west of Divide, Montana. Divide Bridge Campground is popular for camping, hiking, hunting, equestrian, mountain biking, picnicking, fishing, boating, and scenic and wildlife viewing. Divide Bridge Campground provides a parking lot, picnic tables, fire rings, a dirt boat ramp, vault concrete latrines, an information kiosk, pay station, and garbage collection. Sawmill Gulch trailhead is located adjacent to the campground.

New improvements/upgrades completed over the past five years include current projects of paving parking lot, new construction of boat ramp with rigging lane and additional landscaping.

Upon approval of fees, a pay station would be installed for future fee collection.



Photograph 8: Divide Bridge Campground

Proposed New BFO Fee Sites

Dickie Bridge Campground

Dickie Bridge is Campground located along the Big Hole River approximately ten miles west of Divide, Montana. Dickie Bridge Campground is popular for camping, fishing, floating, hiking, picnicking, scenic viewing. Dickie Bridge Campground has 10 camp sites that are first-come first-served and provides a parking lot, picnic tables, fire rings, wood boat ramp, vault concrete latrine, bear boxes, and information kiosk. Dickie Bridge Campground is patrolled by BLM law enforcement and the operation and maintenance of the site is conducted by seasonal and permanent staff. Upon approval of fees, a pay station would be installed for future fee collection and the need for a volunteer campground host would be assessed.

New improvements/upgrades completed over the past five years include renovation of potable water system, and installation of bear boxes.

This proposed fee was previously approved by Western Montana RAC in 2012, however the BFO never implemented the fee.

East Bank Campground

East Bank Campground is located along the Big Hole River, approximately eleven miles west of Divide, Montana. East Bank Campground is popular for camping, fishing, floating, hiking, picnicking, and scenic viewing. East Bank Campground has 9 camp sites that are first-come, first-serve, and this recreation site provides parking lot, picnic tables, fire rings, a boat ramp, a

vaulted concrete latrine, information kiosk, and bear boxes. East Bank Campground is patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and the operation and maintenance of the site is conducted by seasonal and permanent staff. Upon approval of fees, a pay station would be installed, and the need for a volunteer campground host would be assessed.

New improvements/upgrades completed over the past five years include bear boxes and picnic tables with concrete pads at every site.

This proposed fee was previously approved by Western Montana RAC in 2012, however the BFO never implemented the fee.

Jerry Creek

Jerry Creek fishing access site is located along the Big Hole River, approximately fifteen miles west of Divide, Montana. Jerry Creek is popular for fishing, floating, picnicking, and scenic viewing. The Jerry Creek recreation site provides a paved parking lot with rigging lane, picnic tables, a boat ramp, a vaulted concrete latrine, and an information kiosk. Jerry Creek is patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and the operation and maintenance of the site is conducted by seasonal and permanent staff. Upon approval of fees, a pay station would be installed.

New improvements/upgrades completed over the past five years include paved and delineated parking, rigging lane, concrete vault toilets, boat ramp, kiosk, and landscaping.

Maiden Rock Campground

The Dillon Field Office's Maiden Rock Recreation Site is located on the Big Hole River, in Beaverhead County along the Maiden Rock Road off U.S. Highway 91 running between Butte and Dillon, MT. The site is approximately 8 road miles north of the Melrose, MT and 6 miles south of Divide, MT. The Butte Field Office manages a fishing access along Maiden Rock Road, east of the Maiden Rock Recreation Site in Silver Bow County along with Divide Bridge Campground. Maiden Rock is popular for camping, fishing, floating, hiking, picnicking, and scenic viewing. Maiden Rock Campground has 8 camp sites and several tent sites that are first-come, first-serve, and this recreation site provides parking lot, picnic tables, fire rings, a boat ramp, a vehicle/boat parking lot, a vaulted concrete latrine, information kiosk, and bear boxes. Maiden Rock Campground is patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and the operation and maintenance of the site is conducted by seasonal and permanent staff. Upon approval of fees, a pay station would be installed, and the need for a volunteer campground host would be assessed.

New improvements currently under construction include hardened campsites, fire rings, picnic tables, kiosks, signs, tent camping, and boat parking.

Galena Gulch Campground

Galena Gulch Campground is located along the Boulder River approximately seven miles south of Boulder, Montana, along the I-15 corridor. Galena Gulch campground is popular for camping, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, picnicking, and scenic viewing. Galena Gulch Campground has 9 camp sites that are first-come, first-served and provides a parking area, picnic tables, fire rings, vaulted concrete latrines, and an informational kiosk. Galena Gulch is patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and the operation and maintenance of the site is conducted by seasonal and permanent staff. Upon approval of fees, a pay station would be installed, and the need for a volunteer campground host would be assessed.

This proposed fee was previously approved by Western Montana RAC in 2012, however the BFO never implemented the fee.

Crow Creek Campground

Crow Creek Campground is a camping area that is located approximately fifteen miles northwest of Toston, Montana. The Crow Creek area is popular for camping, fishing, hiking, hunting, mountain biking, picnicking, and scenic viewing. Crow Creek Campground has 8 camp sites that are first-come, first-served and provides a parking area, picnic tables, fire ring, vaulted concrete latrines, an informational kiosk, and access to a nearby OHV area. Crow Creek Campground is patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and the operation and maintenance of the site is conducted by seasonal and permanent staff. Upon approval of fees, a pay station would be installed, and the need for a volunteer campground host would be assessed.

This proposed fee was previously approved by Western Montana RAC in 2012, however the BFO never implemented the fee.

Carbella Campground

Carbella Campground is located along the Yellowstone River approximately 20 miles north of Yellowstone National Park in the Paradise Valley. Carbella Campground is popular for camping, fishing, floating, hiking, hunting, picnicking, rafting, and scenic viewing. Carbella Campground has 15 camp sites that are first-come, first-served and provides a parking lot, picnic tables, fire rings, a concrete boat ramp, vaulted concrete latrines, bear boxes, and an informational kiosk. Carbella Campground is patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and the operation and maintenance of the site is conducted by seasonal and permanent staff as well as on-site volunteer campground hosts. Upon approval of fees, a pay station would be installed at the site for efficient fee collection.

This area was significantly redeveloped to improve the experience in 2021-2022. New improvements/upgrades completed over the past five years include renovation of campground adding 10 designated campsites, a tent camping area, boat ramp parking, construction of a new concrete boat ramp, and landscaping. Additional repairs occurred after the Yellowstone River flooding of 2022 that caused damage to the site.

Lower Toston and Upper Toston Campgrounds

Both Lower Toston and Upper Toston Campgrounds are located along the Missouri River above and below Toston Dam. The area is popular for fishing, floating, camping, hiking, picnicking, and scenic viewing. Between the two campgrounds there are seven camp sites that are first-come, first-served and these sites provide a parking area, picnic tables, fire rings, two concrete boat ramps, docks, vaulted concrete latrines, and information kiosks. Lower Toston and Upper Toston Campgrounds are patrolled by BLM Law Enforcement and the operation and maintenance of the site is conducted by seasonal and permanent staff. Upon approval of fees a pay station would be installed at the sites for efficient fee collection.

Operating Costs

As described above, the extensive infrastructure and support is required to support these highly valued recreation opportunities that stretch across eight counties in western Montana. Costs associated with operating and maintaining the infrastructure and visitor services associated with these sites include labor, vehicles, service contracts, supplies, and maintenance operations. Table 6 summarizes the approximate annual operations and maintenance budget. Values are approximate because actual spending can vary each year based upon maintenance needs, visitor use, ability to recruit and retain temporary staff, and equipment costs.

Table 6: Butte Field Office Developed Recreation Program Annual Operating and Maintenance Budget

Expense Category	Cost
Garbage collection/solid waste dumping fees	\$45,000
Vault Latrine Pumping	\$41,000
Fee Collection Contract ¹	\$30,000
Campground Host Reimbursements	\$70,000
Utilities	\$9,000
Cleaning Supplies, Toilet paper	\$10,000
Public Water Supply Testing	\$3,500
Fuel for Equipment	\$18,000
Training	\$10,000
Law Enforcement Support	\$10,000
Uniforms for Seasonal Staff and Volunteers	\$3,000
Vehicles/Fleet Expenses	\$35,000
Maintenance Costs (e.g. repairs, supplies, parts, tools, etc.)	\$20,000
Signs/Informational Kiosks	\$5,000
Total Operations and Maintenance Costs	\$341,000

Table 7 summarizes the current average annual labor costs to run the BFO Developed Recreation program. Labor costs assume that BFO can hire all seasonal positions and that both

seasonal and career seasonal positions are funded for six months, or six work months (WMs). Table 8 summarizes projected future labor costs that reflect recent changes made to the BFO Recreation Program Table of Organization that have not yet been implemented.

Table 7: Current Butte Field Office Developed Recreation Program Labor Costs. The Career Seasonal Positions are assumed to work 7 Work Months (WMs) and Seasonal Positions are assumed to work 6 WMs.

Position	Number of Positions	WM Cost	Central Labor WMs	Fee Revenue WMs	Central Labor Cost	Fee Revenue Labor Costs
Park Ranger (Leader) GS-09	1	\$7,552	6	5	\$45,312	\$37,760
Career Seasonal Park Ranger (Visitor Use) GS-07	2	\$6,175	6	8	\$37,050	\$49,400
Career Seasonal Maintenance Worker WG-05	3	\$3,774	0	24	\$0	\$113,220
Seasonal Park Ranger (Visitor Use) GS-07	4	\$4,984	0	24	\$0	\$119,616
Seasonal Maintenance Worker WG-05	2	\$3,774	0	12	\$0	\$45,288
Total	14				\$82,362	\$365,284

Table 8: Future Butte Field Office Developed Recreation Program Labor Costs. The Career Seasonal positions are assumed to work 10 Work Months (WMs) and Seasonal Positions are assumed to work 6 WMs

Position	Number of Positions	WM Cost	Central Labor WMs	Fee Revenue WMs	Central Labor Cost	Fee Revenue Labor Costs
Park Ranger (Leader) GS-09	1	\$7,552	6	5	\$45,312	\$37,760
Park Ranger (Visitor Use) GS-07	1	\$6,175	6	5	\$37,050	\$30,875
New Maintenance Worker Lead WL-08	2	\$6,104	0	22	\$0	\$134,288
New Career Seasonal Park Ranger (Visitor Use) GS-07	5	\$6,175	0	40	\$0	\$247,000

Career Seasonal Maintenance Worker WG-05	3	\$3,774	0	24	\$0	\$113,220
Seasonal Park Ranger (Visitor Use) GS-07	1	\$4,984	0	6	\$0	\$29,904
Seasonal Maintenance Worker WG-05	4	\$3,774	0	24	\$0	\$90,576
Total					\$82,362	\$683,623

Revenues

The Developed Recreation Program within the BFO is funded primarily through fees obtained from recreation users at the developed recreation sites (“1232” funds), from special recreation permits (SRPs) of commercial uses of public lands within BFO, operation and maintenance support from Northwest Energy as part of their FERC license, and project specific funding from the River Fund Grant Program. Appropriated recreation program funding also provides for overall recreation staffing for the Butte Field Office, which supports these sites, and additional appropriated funding provides for maintenance of facilities through the deferred and annual maintenance program. Currently, funds acquired through fees are used to maintain and operate the sites from which these funds are collected (i.e. Chain of Lakes recreation sites).

The BFO currently manages 143 SRPs for activities that include, but are not limited to, guided hunting and fishing, backpacking, weddings, and group events. SRP fees by policy are 3 percent of adjusted gross income or \$6.00/participant (event), whichever is greater, with a minimum annual fee of \$130. Collected fees are used to support the operation and maintenance of lands and recreation sites where the SRPs occur and for the purpose of managing commercial recreation use. Funds received from SRPs are used to operate and maintain recreation sites and the areas where the SRPs occur and to manage commercial use of the public lands.

Funds received from Northwest Energy for operation and maintenance are restricted to the operation and maintenance of the Chain of Lakes Sites that are included under the FERC license.

BLM also has the potential to build new partnerships with local organizations that could improve recreation experiences and expand resources.

Table 9: Summary of BFO Revenues for the previous five years (2018-2022). Revenues include fees collected at the Chain of Lakes Recreation Fee Sites, fees from SRPs across the BFO, and operation and maintenance funding received from NWE as part of the FERC License.

Year	Fee Revenue	SRP Revenue	NWE O&M Contribution	River Fund Grant	Total
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2018	\$292,000	\$7,108	\$130,995	\$0	\$430,103
2019	\$260,097	\$8,345	\$220,790	\$80,000	\$569,232
2020	\$260,271	\$7,407	\$133,290	\$0	\$400,968
2021	\$286,362	\$18,052	\$137,940	\$105,000	\$547,354
2022 ¹	\$283,189	\$22,970	\$137,886	\$0	\$444,045

Comparison of Revenues and Operation Costs

The BFO Developed Recreation Program strives to balance operations, maintenance, and labor costs with revenues brought in by campground fees and day use fees. Table 10 summarizes current and future operations and labor costs in comparison to revenue streams. Current revenues and costs have been taken from actual revenue and operation costs from 2022. Revenues under the proposed fee schedule assumed that that fee season occurred from April 1 through November 30 and that campsites and day use area are utilized for only 50% of the days available.

Table 10: Summary of the Revenue and Costs of Operations for the Developed Recreation Sites within the BFO. Current Fee Schedule Revenues Operation and Maintenance Costs have been taken from data taken from 2022. Current Fee Schedule Labor costs are based on the desired labor force and does not account for vacant positions. Proposed Fee Schedule Revenues assume 50% use throughout the new fee season (April-November) and a 3% increase in revenue from SRPs and NWE O&M Contributed Funds to account for additional SRPs and inflation. Labor Costs under the Proposed Fee Schedule reflect an approved Table of Organization for the BFO Developed Recreation Program. Future Operation and Maintenance cost were increased by 3% to account for inflation.

	Current Fee Schedule	Proposed Fee Schedule
Revenue		
Fee Revenues	\$283,189	\$857,050
NWE O&M Contributed Funds	\$137,886	\$142,022
SRP Revenues	\$22,970	\$23,659
Total	\$444,045	\$1,022,731
Costs		
Labor	\$365,284	\$683,623
Operations and Maintenance Costs	\$341,000	\$351,230
Total	\$706,284	\$1,034,853
Balance		
Revenue	\$444,045	\$1,022,731
Cost	\$706,284	\$1,034,853
Total	\$(262,239)	\$(12,122)

Current revenues to run the Developed Recreation Sites within the BFO are inadequate to cover labor and operation and maintenance costs. As a result of this discrepancy the Developed Recreation Program must continually prioritize maintenance and labor needs and address only

the direst needs. Future estimated revenues provide a sustainable source of funding to adequately provide the necessary maintenance and visitor services to these Developed Recreation Sites.

Priorities for Future Expenditures

The BFO Developed Recreation Program strives to maintain an overall positive fee balance; that is, a balance that provides for annual staffing and expenses, with a small positive balance to respond to unexpected expenses related to facilities or water system maintenance, or threats to public health and safety. These sites are not supported solely by recreation fees; as described above, some recreation and annual maintenance funding is also available to support the recreation use in these areas. These sites are highly developed, the use they experience is high and consistent, and the number of services provided to ensure the public enjoys a quality recreation experience in these areas is also intensive. The proposed fee increases would help to ensure that fee revenues support the expected level of visitor services and maintenance of all the facilities and water systems.

Priorities for the BFO Developed Recreation Fee Program would be to maintain and improve upon the current levels of visitor services currently provided and address on-going maintenance needs due to historic lack of staffing while covering the rising cost of operations. Visitor services that would be maintained/improved would be include the following:

- Implementation of on-site digital fee pay stations that will increase compliance and minimize additional workload from new fee sites; on-site users often do not have cash and frequently request a digital pay option.
- Increased compliance checks for resource protection and visitor safety. Fee compliance is a necessary function at areas like these-based on ongoing monitoring, without some level of compliance attention, it is estimated that 30-40 percent of visitors (both day use and overnight) pay the required fees, and 60-70 percent do not.
- Increased visitor contacts to improve visitor experiences.
- Regular maintenance of recreation facilities including pavilions, administration buildings, shade structures, drinking water systems, boat ramps, day-use areas, kiosks, signage, and parking areas.

Specific staffing needs that would be supported with proposed fee increases include two Maintenance Worker Leaders and five Park Rangers (Table 8). Both Maintenance Worker Leaders and four of the Park Rangers would be designated to the Chain of Lakes Recreation sites to address continual maintenance needs and provide the visitor services necessary at these highly developed recreation sites. The other Park Ranger would focus on providing visitor services to the other the proposed fee sites across the rest of the BFO. Some of these positions would be career seasonals, who could return season after season, with the associated benefit of reducing annual training costs and ideally, improving retention and experience.

The BFO Developed Recreation Program also has projects proposed over the next five years to address ongoing maintenance needs, improve visitor experiences, and to respond to increases in recreation uses. Table (10) identifies proposed projects over the next five years and the estimated cost. These projects will be funded by a combination of deferred maintenance funding, River Fund Grants, and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act funding.

Table 11: Planned and Proposed Projects for the BFO Developed Recreation Program

Proposed Project	Timeframe	Estimated Cost
Planned - Devil’s Elbow and Clark’s Bay Water System Improvements	2024	\$100,000
Planned - Holter Lake Campground Water System Improvements	2025	\$35,000
Planned - Remote Off-Grid Kiosk (ROK) Digital Fee Stations	2024	\$75,000
Planned - Devil’s Elbow and Holter Lake Solar Panels	2024	\$125,000
Planned - Carbella Boat Ramp Realignment	2023	\$250,000
Planned - Bear Box Installation	2024	\$15,000
Proposed - Replacing/Repairing White Sandy and Log Gulch Water Systems	2026	\$350,000
Proposed - Chain of Lakes Resilient Landscaping (reducing the costs associated with labor intensive non-native landscaping)	2026	\$250,000

Analysis of Recreation Fee Rates

The BLM is authorized to use either the Cost Recovery Fee Calculation Method or the Fair Market Value Fee Calculation Method to determine appropriate fees at recreation sites. The Cost Recovery Method assumes that fee revenues should cover the recreation site’s operating costs. The Fair Market Value Fee Calculation Method compares fee rates to those charged by other area recreation sites that provide similar opportunities.

The BFO has chosen to use the Fair Market Value Fee Calculation Method to ensure that reasonably affordable rates for the region while allowing fees to support labor, operations, and maintenance of these sites to the highest extent possible. Table 11 summarizes recreation fees within the region with amenities like those provide by the BFO Recreation Sites.

Table 12: Fair Market Value for Recreation Sites within the vicinity of the BFO.

Recreation Site	Fee Structure	Amenities Provided
Montana State Campgrounds		
MT Fish Wildlife and Parks Campgrounds	\$12/night \$7/night with valid MT Fishing License	Recreation sites may have a boat launch, vault latrines, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities

Recreation Site	Fee Structure	Amenities Provided
MT State Park Campgrounds (e.g. Black Sandy)	\$14-28/night	Recreation sites may have a boat launch, vault latrines, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities, docks, amphitheaters, electric hookups
US Forest Service Campgrounds		
Rainbow Point and Lonesomehurst Campgrounds	\$24/night Additional \$8/night with electrical hookups	Boat launch, drinking water, vault latrines, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities, garbage, electric hookups
Beavercreek and Cabin Creek Campground	\$24/night	Drinking water, vault latrines, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities
Greek Creek, Langhor, Swan Creek, Moose Creek Campgrounds	\$20/night (2 vehicles) \$8.00/night for each additional vehicle	Drinking water, latrines, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities, trash cans.
Thain Creek, Cave Mountain, Benchmark, Home Gulch, West Fork, Wood Lake, Spring Creek, Kading, South Fork, and Hay Canyon Campgrounds	\$ 10/night	Accessible facilities, drinking water, vault latrine, fire rings, picnic tables, some sites have boat ramps
Hilltop, Madison River, Wade Lake, Riverview, Copper Creek, Cromwell Dixon, Mortimer Gulch, Park Lake, Vigilante, Aspen, Aspen Grove, Jumping Creek, Kings Hill, Many Pines, and Skidway Campgrounds	\$ 15/night	Accessible facilities, drinking water, vault latrine, fire rings, picnic tables
Crystal Lake and Summit Campgrounds	\$20/night	Accessible facilities, drinking water, vault latrine, fire rings, picnic tables
Yellowstone National Park Campgrounds		
Slough Creek and Pebble Creek Campgrounds	\$20/night	Vault latrines, drinking water, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities, trash, and recycling
Mammoth Campground	\$25/night	Flush toilets, drinking water, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities, trash, and recycling
Glacier National Park Campgrounds		

Recreation Site	Fee Structure	Amenities Provided
Bowmans Lake, Cut Bank, Kintla Lake, Logging Creek, Quartz Creek Campgrounds	\$10-15/night	First-come, first-served campgrounds, primitive sites, vault latrines, drinking water, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities, trash, and recycling
Avalanche, Two Medicine, Rising Sun Campgrounds	\$20/night	Vault latrines, drinking water, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities, trash, and recycling
Apgar, Fish Creek, Many Glacier, St. Marys, Sprague Creek Campgrounds	\$23/night	Flush toilets, showers, drinking water, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities, trash and recycling, amphitheater.
Bureau of Reclamation Campgrounds		
Court Sheriff and Riverside Campgrounds	Single \$15/night Double \$30/night	Drinking water, vault latrines, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities
White Earth, Chinamens, Hellgate and Jo Bonner Campgrounds	Single \$10/night Double \$20/night	Drinking water, vault latrines, picnic tables, fire pits, accessible facilities

Impacts from Charging and Not-Charging Recreation Fee Rates

The primary purpose of the proposed fees is to maintain and preserve the investment that the public has made into the BFO recreation sites and to provide the visitor services that are expected at developed recreation sites.

The proposed fees and fee increases would help to increase staffing for maintenance and visitor services, commensurate with significant recent increases in visitation and associated needs and pressures, as well as helping to offset the rising costs of operating these sites.

Impacts from Modifying Fees to Recreation Users

BLM campgrounds and day-use areas remain an affordable option within the region for recreation users. The BFO considered the cost to run and maintain these sites as well as using the Fair Market Analysis to come up with a new proposed fee schedule. The BFO has a proposed a stepped fee schedule that splits the fee increase over five years. Initial fee increases or the establishment of new fee would not be more than \$10/night (e.g., from \$15 to \$25 dollars). After five years, fees at all campgrounds would increase by another \$5/night and the Chain of Lakes Annual Day Use Pass would increase by another \$10/year, while the Big Hole Annual Day Use Pass would increase by \$20/year.

These fees, like all fees, do have the potential to displace some recreation users during the fee season (April 1st – November 30th). Many of these sites remain open and free to the public, with reduced services, during the “off-season” (December 1st – March 31st). Additionally, the proposed day-use fees are incremental and include a season pass option to reduce the burden for regular, local users. The BFO believes that this stepped fee increase will minimize the economic impacts to recreation users while still allowing for increased staffing and maintenance activities.

The addition of electronic fee payment methods and reservation systems will increase access to these systems regardless of time of day or season which may be beneficial to address concerns related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). Additionally, an increasing portion of the population prefers to pay electronically instead of with cash.

BLM has considered impacts on local economies, and the inclusion of low-income populations by assuring fees are only assessed at sites that meet the FLREA criteria for standard or expanded amenities. Additionally, the Butte Field Office (and the surrounding National Forests) does offer many areas, both developed and undeveloped, for visitors to enjoy their public lands without paying fees. These areas do not require the same level of investment, facilities, maintenance, or services. These sites throughout the BFO are still available to the public to use for free throughout the year.

Impacts from Not Modifying Fees to Recreation Users

Maintaining the current fee structure (e.g., no change in fees) at the BFO would likely result in interruptions to visitor services and decreased user satisfaction. This conclusion is based on actual observed conditions, especially during the dramatic recreating increases experienced between 2020 and present. Over that time, many of the current fee sites have experienced significant disruptions in visitor services due to lack of maintenance, lack of staffing, or lack of funding, while also experiencing higher demands due to dramatically increased visitation. The list below provides examples of recent impacts to recreation users:

- Log Gulch Campground was closed during the fee season of 2022 for the entire season due to a lack of staff
- In 2023 several vault toilets have been locked across the BFO due to the high price and difficulty of finding vendors to pump the toilets (exacerbated by higher use)
- Drinking water has not been available at Devil’s Elbow and Clark’s Bay Day-Use Site from 2022-2023 due to lack of maintenance from staffing shortages
- Portions of several Chain of Lakes Campgrounds have been temporarily inaccessible due to waterline breaks
- Staff turnover has increased over the past few years, ability to support volunteers has become more challenging, and management has more often had to deal reactively with daily emergencies such cleanliness, watering, and other challenges based on higher visitation. Like many others in the area, the BFO Developed Recreation Program has

struggled with inadequate staffing levels and inability to hire short-term workers. That has limited the amount of routine and proactive maintenance that has occurred. Additionally, low staff numbers result in a lack of a consistent BLM presence at many of our developed recreation sites.

Not modifying the existing fee structure would result in continued lack of maintenance and visitor services provided. Additionally, the BFO would possibly have to reduce the visitor services available at these fee sites as current operation costs continue to increase over time. Deteriorating facilities due to lack of maintenance and reductions in visitor services will significantly reduce the public's experiences. There may also be an increase in conflicts between user groups due to limited services.

Public Outreach

In accordance with the FLREA, the BFO Developed Recreation program will provide the public with an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed fee changes and the intended uses of the revenue from these fees. The fee proposal and draft business plan was presented to the BLM Western Montana Resource Advisory Council for its formal Review on October 3rd, 2023. Listed below are outreach that are occurred to notify the public of their opportunity to provide comments on the Business Plan:

- Draft business plan posted to ePlanning for 57 days (the initial 30-day public comment period was extended adequate time following the October RAC meeting). BLM received 5 public comments: 3 comments were in support of the draft business plan, 1 comment was against establishing new fees, and 1 comment not applicable to the draft business plan.
- 7 Facebook posts between September and November 2023
- 1 News Release (included in the notification about the upcoming RAC meeting)
- Hard-copy notifications posted at each potentially affected recreation site
- County Commissioner notification (Broadwater, Gallatin, Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, Silver Bow, Park)
- All Congressional staffers notified, including in-person briefing and field trip
- Interest group in-person meetings as requested (including Anaconda Sportsmen and George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited)
- Upon BLM State Director approval, the BFO will publish a Notice of Intent to Collect Recreation Fees in the Federal Register six months prior to initiating the new fees or the modified fees.