



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

# BLM North Dakota Field Office

Schnell Recreation Area Business Plan

December 2024



---

### **Mission statement**

The Bureau of Land Management sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

### **Cover Photo**

Schnell Recreation Area

---

BLM North Dakota Field Office Schnell Recreation Area Business Plan

[LVRDMT060000]

**Recommendations, Reviews, and Approvals**

Recommended by:

**EDWARD KRAFT** Digitally signed by EDWARD KRAFT  
Date: 2025.02.10 13:14:42 -07'00'

---

Edward Kraft, Field Manager, North Dakota Field Office

Date

Reviewed by:

**WENDY WARREN** Digitally signed by WENDY  
WARREN  
Date: 2025.02.10 15:20:37 -07'00'

---

Wendy Warren, District Manager, Eastern Montana/Dakotas District Office

Date

Approved by:

**SONYA GERMANN** Digitally signed by SONYA  
GERMANN  
Date: 2025.02.10 18:04:39 -07'00'

---

Sonya Germann, Montana/Dakotas State Director

Date

This business plan was prepared by the Bureau of Land Management's North Dakota 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 Schnell Recreation Area within the North Dakota Field Office.

## Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary.....	5
2	Authorities and Plan Conformance.....	6
3	Schnell Recreation Area Background.....	7
4	Proposed Modifications to Recreation Fee Rates.....	9
5	Operating Costs.....	11
6	Revenues.....	12
7	Analysis of Recreation Fee Rates.....	12
8	Public Outreach.....	13
9	References.....	14

## Tables

Table 1: The Fee Schedule Developed for the North Dakota Office Schnell Recreation Area.....	5
Table 2: Estimated Number of Visitors to North Dakota Field Office, Fiscal Years 2020-2024.....	7
Table 3: The Current and Proposed Fee Schedule for the North Dakota Office Campground.....	9
Table 4: The Current and Proposed Fee Schedule for the North Dakota Office Campground.....	11
Table 5: Annual Revenue for Schnell Campground.....	12
Table 6: Annual Revenue for Schnell Campground.....	12

## Figures

Figure 1: Map Showing Location of Campgrounds.....	8
--	---

# 1 Executive Summary

This business plan was prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), North Dakota Field Office (NDFO) pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004 (P.L. 108-447, as amended) and BLM recreation fee program policy and manual direction (Manual 2930). FLREA provides the BLM current authority to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at federal recreational lands and waters. FLREA states that an expanded amenity fee may be collected if the developed campground provides at least five of the following nine services: tent or trailer spaces, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, the collection of the fee by an employee or agent of the Federal land management agency, reasonable visitor protection, refuse containers, toilet facilities, and simple devices for containing a campfire. Schnell campground provides the following amenities: tent or trailer spaces, picnic tables, drinking water, access road, fee collection, toilet facilities, fire rings, and reasonable visitor protection. Per FLREA the Interagency Senior and Access passes may provide a 50% discount on expanded amenity fees associated with individual campsites. This discount does not apply to group sites or dump station fees. FLREA (16 United States Code (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 special groups.

This business plan describes the existing fee site, proposed changes in fees to these sites, associated operating costs, planned expenditures of fee revenue, a financial analysis utilizing a regional comparative market study, and the impacts of proposed fee changes.

The Schnell Recreation Area campground currently has an overnight Expanded Amenity Fee of \$5

Proposed Expanded Amenity Fee:

- Schnell Recreation Area (SRA) campground: The proposed Expanded Amenity Fee is \$10 per campsite per night, increasing from \$5 per campsite per night.

*Table 1: The Fee Schedule Developed for the North Dakota Office Schnell Recreation Area*

Fee Areas	Current Fees	Proposed Fees (Expanded Amenity)
Schnell Campground	\$5 camping (expanded amenity)	Individual Site (non-electric) per night: \$10 Senior and Access Pass holders: 50% off individual campsites

The NDFO is proposing an initial fee of \$10 per campsite per night at the Acton Recreation Area Campground, with plans to increase the fee to \$15 per campsite per night five years after implementation. The proposed fee increase for individual campsites at the Schnell Campground will follow the guidelines established by FLREA. Fee revenue would be used to fund maintenance, enhance visitor services, and sustain natural resources. Fees would support the upkeep of campgrounds, trails, and amenities such as toilets and campsites, improving the overall visitor experience and safety. By complying with FLREA guidelines, the BLM ensures responsible

management of recreation sites, fosters public-private partnerships for enhanced facilities, and contributes to the conservation and restoration of public lands.

Currently fees collected at the Schnell Campground to supplement the cost of campsite maintenance, trash collection, vault toilet maintenance, kiosk upkeep, site monitoring and road maintenance. The NDFO will use the expanded amenity fee revenue to fund improvements to the existing campsites, campground amenities and signage.

The NDFO conducted market analysis to develop the fee proposal. The proposed \$10 fee for an individual (non-electric) site is comparable to a variety of other federal, state, and county campgrounds near the North Dakota Office that offer similar amenities. Market analysis identified these sites charge between \$10 to \$32 per night.

## 2 Authorities and Plan Conformance

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.
- **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.
- Provide for and receive fair value in recreation.

### 3 Schnell Recreation Area Background

The Schnell Recreation Area is approximately 2,000 acres of public lands. It is owned and managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The Schnell Recreation Area was once a working cattle ranch and was privately owned and operated for 120 years before the BLM's acquisition in 1993. It is an ecologically diverse property offering a wide variety of recreational and education/research opportunities. Schnell Recreation Area is managed for multiple uses with an emphasis on non-commodity resource values. The recreation area provides a variety of non-motorized recreation opportunities including hiking, hunting, horseback riding, bird watching, picnicking, biking, fishing, and camping. Admittance is free, with exception of the 6 developed campsites. The campsites are first come first serve. Schnell campground provides the following amenities: tent and trailer spaces, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, fee collection, toilet facilities, fire rings and reasonable visitor protection. Potable water is available from May through September. Horse corrals are also provided at no charge for recreationist. Hiking opportunities around the campground are available with approximately 4 miles of developed trail.

*Table 2: Estimated Number of Visitors to North Dakota Field Office, Fiscal Years 2020-2024*

Fiscal Year	North Dakota Field Office Estimated Number of Visitors
FY2020	1,025
FY2021	1,045
FY2022	1,346
FY2023	1,486
FY2024	1,675

Figure 1: Map Showing Location of Schnell Recreation Area

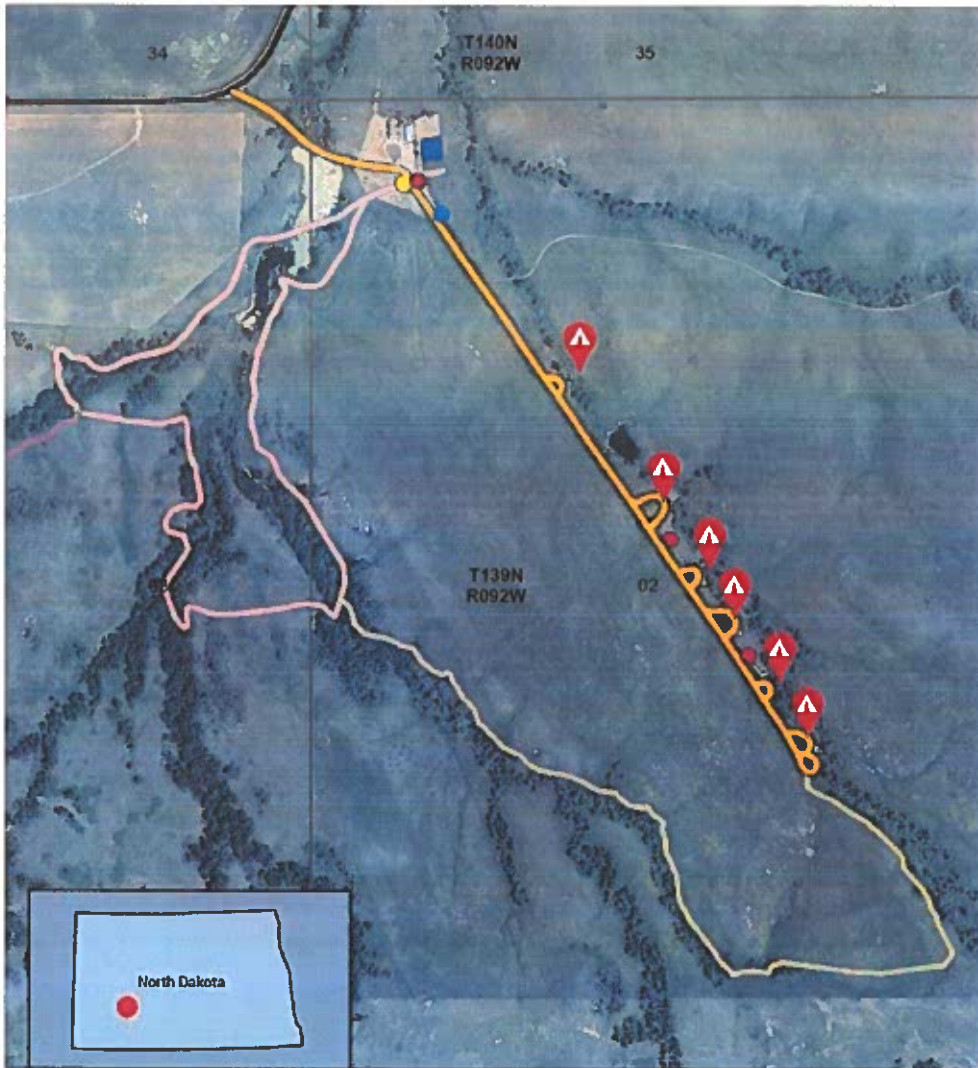













# Schnell Recreation Area Campground

Bureau of Land Management  
North Dakota Field Office  
99 23rd Avenue West, Suite A  
Dickinson, ND 58601  
701.227.7700



12/6/2024



 Camping	 Bathroom	 Access Road Campsites	 Grassland Trail
 Fee Station	 Corrals	 Bur Oak Nature Loop	
	 Headquarters Trailhead	 Campground Trail	 0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of this map or the data displayed for individual use or aggregate use with other data.



## 4 Proposed Modifications to Recreation Fee Rates

This business plan is proposing to modify the expanded amenities fees at the Schnell Recreation Area Campground, which the BLM is authorized to collect if each site meets the requirements outlined in the Federal Lands and Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). FLREA states that an expanded amenity fee may be collected if the developed campground provides at least five of the following nine services: tent or trailer spaces, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, the collection of the fee by an employee or agent of the Federal land management agency, reasonable visitor protection, refuse containers, toilet facilities, and simple devices for containing a campfire. Per FLREA the Interagency Senior and Access passes may provide a 50% discount on expanded amenity fees associated with individual campsites. The BLM retains and expends 100% of collected recreation fees for maintenance, improvements and visitor services at the site or area in which they are collected.

Schnell Campground already meets the FLREA expanded amenity requirements, by providing over five of the nine required amenities. This business plan will replace the existing 1998 Schnell Recreation Area Fee Proposal in its entirety. The site's current fees are \$5 per night per individual site (expanded amenity). This plan includes an increase in the amount of the established expanded amenity fee (16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(A)(D)) for overnight camping, as described in the following fee summary table.

The proposed expanded amenity fees for NDFO's campgrounds are:

- Individual non-electric campsites of \$10

*Table 3: The Current and Proposed Fee Schedule for the North Dakota Office Campground*

Fee Areas	Current Fees	Proposed Fees (Expanded Amenity)
Schnell Campground	\$5 camping (expanded amenity)	Individual Site (non-electric) per night: \$10 Senior and Access Pass holders: 50% off individual campsites

Figure 2: Map Showing Camp Site at Schnell Recreation Area



### **5.1 America the Beautiful**

FLREA established an interagency national pass known as the America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. There are six types of America the Beautiful (ATB) passes: Annual, Military, Every Kid Outdoors (EKO, 4th grade), Senior, Access, and Volunteer. While the America the Beautiful Annual, Military, EKO, and Volunteer passes are accepted at BLM fee sites that charge a standard amenity fee, these passes are not eligible for expanded amenity fees, such as the PDO Campgrounds. Only the Interagency Senior and Access passes apply to expanded amenity fees.

Interagency Senior Pass or Interagency Access Pass holders will receive a 50% discount on the expanded amenity fee for overnight individual campsites. The discount only applies to the fee for the campsite physically occupied by the Senior Pass or Access Pass holder, not to any additional campsite(s) occupied by members of the pass holder's party.

### **5.2 Future Considerations**

NDFO plans to increase fees at Schnell Recreation Area Campground to \$15 per campsite per night 5 years after implementation.

### 5.3 E-Commerce

North Dakota Office will explore the use various e-commerce technologies as directed in E-Commerce Technologies for Recreation Fee Collections and Reservation Services (BLM Instruction Memorandum 2022-010), to provide recreation visitors opportunities to find, reserve and pay for campsites and day use within the field office. These options, when available will be provided through the interagency reservation service Recreation.gov.

An expanded amenity fee for reservation services would be charged at the Schnell in addition to any other 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 district 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.

## 5 Operating Costs

There is a minimal recreation program in the NDFO, outside of Schnell, the recreation site is supported by other programs within the field office and district. Annual operating cost for Schnell Campground is approximately \$10,100 per year.

*Table 4: The Current and Proposed Fee Schedule for the North Dakota Office Campground*

<b>Operation and Maintenance Expenses</b>	<b>Annual Costs (approximate)</b>
General supplies and tools	\$ 5,500
Vehicle Expenses (fuel, maintenance, etc.)	\$4,000
Vault Toilet Pumping	\$400
Restroom Cleaning Contract	\$200
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,100</b>

## 6 Revenues

Table 5: Annual Revenue for Schnell Campground

Revenue by Year	Total
FY 2020	\$1,632
FY 2021	\$3,282
FY 2022	\$2,288
FY 2023	\$4,071
FY 2024	\$3,595

On a 5-year average the annual revenue covers approximately 29% of the operating costs. Increasing the cost of the camping fees would significantly support the NDFO with managing this resource.

Priority future expenditures:

- Access road improvement- \$40,000
- Seasonal Park Ranger- \$20,000
- Water well abandonment project- \$4000
- Repainting vault toilets- \$2000

## 7 Analysis of Recreation Fee Rates

Table 6 shows the fair market value comparison analysis for the services provided by the NDFO's current and proposed fee campgrounds to nearby fee campgrounds operated by other entities. These entities include the U.S. Forest Service and Private RV Parks, and all of which provide similar fee-based services in the western North Dakota area.

The proposed fees for NDFO BLM campgrounds are in line with comparable sites in the western North Dakota area. NDFO's non-electric campsites compare closely with U.S. Forest Service campgrounds and offer similar layouts and amenities.

Table 6: Annual Revenue for Schnell Campground

Campground Name	Agency or Operator	Campground Fees	Amenities Offered	Key Amenity Differences in Comparable Sites
Buffalo Gap	U.S. Forest Service	Standard site fees \$20 Senior and Access pass give 50% discount.	Flush toilets, showers, picnic area, accessible site options, potable water, hardened parking, paved roads, RV dump station	Flush toilets, showers, paved roads, RV dump station

Cottonwood	National Park Service	Standard site fees \$20 (May-Sept), \$10 (Oct-May),	Pit toilets, grills, picnic area, shelters, accessible site options and potable water	
Multiple USFS campgrounds including CCC, Summit, Bennett, Magpie, Elkhorn, Wannagan, Coal Creek, and Burning Coal Vein	U.S. Forest Service	Standard site fees \$10	Pit toilets, hand pump potable water (seasonal), fire pits, accessible site options, pay station, picnic areas, hardened parking, and staging area	Hand pump potable water
Little Missouri State Park	North Dakota Parks and Recreation	Primitive Camp Site \$15	Pit toilets, potable water (seasonal), fire pits, accessible site options, pay station, picnic areas, hardened parking, and staging area	Similar
Camp on the Heart	Private	Tent site \$32	Flush toilets, drinking water, picnic area, paved parking, Wi-Fi and showers	Unique amenities like Wi-Fi, showers and flush toilets.

## 8 Public Outreach

The draft business plan will be made available for a 2-week comment period. Statewide outreach efforts will include news releases, social media posts, and on-site signage.

Comments may be submitted by email to [blm\\_mt\\_north\\_dakota\\_fo@blm.gov](mailto:blm_mt_north_dakota_fo@blm.gov), in person at the North Dakota Field Office, or via mail to BLM North Dakota Field Office 99 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave West, Suite A Dickinson, ND 58601

The BLM's plan for outreach and notice about fees includes:

- 2-week public comment period.
- Public notice of proposed fee changes posted on site along with information on how to provide comments.
- News release and social media posts announcing the public comment period for proposed fee changes, including information on how to provide comments.
- Information on proposed and/or approved fee changes will be posted on BLM's website at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-fees/business-plans>.
- Any approved fee changes would be updated on the fee signs onsite to clearly reflect the fee changes when new fee schedule implemented.
- Publication of a Federal Register Notice.

Once the public comment period is completed and any changes are made to the fee proposal because of analysis of the public participation, the NDFO will present the draft business plan proposal to the Missouri Basic Resource Advisory Council (RAC) in January of 2025.

These outreach methods comply with requirements established by FLREA and BLM policy. Before charging fees at fee sites, the following outreach will occur:

- Publish a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register at least six months in advance of implementing fees.
- Issue a news release about the Federal Register Notice of Intent.
- Physically post the Federal Register notice near each site.

## 9 References

State of Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. (2021, July 13). *2020 Population Estimates by Borough, Census Area, and Economic Region*. Retrieved December 27, 2020, from Research and Analysis: <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/index.cfm>

Trading Economics. (2021). *United States Consumer Price Index (CPI)*. Retrieved December 27, 2021, from Trading Economics: <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/consumer-price-index-cpi#:~:text=Consumer%20Price%20Index%20CPI%20in%20the%20United%20States%20averaged%20117.83,points%20in%20January%20of%201950>.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021, December 10). *Consumer Price Index Summary*. Retrieved December 27, 2021, from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cpi.nr0.htm>

United States Census Bureau. (2021, July 1). *Quick Facts: Alaska; Anchorage Municipality (County), Alaska; Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska*. Retrieved December 27, 2021, from United States Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/matanuskasusitnaboroughalaska>

United States Census Bureau. (2021, October 14). *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census*. Retrieved December 27, 2021, from United States Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-the-united-states-2010-and-2020-census.html>

Washington State University. (2018). *Campbell Tract SRMA Visitor Survey*. Washington State University, Social and Economic Sciences Research Center. Pullman, WA: Washington State University. Retrieved November 6, 2020, from <https://sesrc.wsu.edu/pub/blm/reports/FY18/blm-CAMT18.pdf>