

October 2022



**Bureau of Land Management
Morley Nelson Snake River
Birds of Prey National
Conservation Area – Boise
District**

Cove Recreation Site Business Plan



Draft Business Plan for the Cove Recreation Site Fee Program RECOMMENDATIONS, REVIEWS, AND APPROVALS

Developed by: - Jared Fluckiger

Recommended by:

Outdoor Recreation Planner

Date

Approved By:

Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey
National Conservation Area Manager

Date

This business plan was prepared pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (Public Law 108-447) and BLM recreation fee program policy. It establishes future management goals and priorities for the Cove Recreation Site recreation fee program in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area.

United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey
National Conservation Area
3094 S Development Ave.
Boise Idaho, 83705



In Reply Refer to:
2932

Dear Reader,

I would like to present for your review and comment the draft *Cove Recreation Site Business Plan*, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and located within the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA). This recreation site includes a campground and day-use area providing outstanding recreation opportunities for nearly 7,000 visitors annually. The draft plan proposes the following fee increases (see table below) based on comparative market research within the region. The proposed fee increases are needed to meet growing operational and maintenance expenses.

Type of Recreation Fees at Cove Recreation Site	Current Fees	Proposed Fees
Day Use – Standard Amenity	\$2	\$5
Tent Camping – Expanded Amenity	\$5	\$15
RV Camping – Expanded Amenity	\$12	\$15
Campsite with Electricity (when available) – Expanded Amenity	n/a	\$20
Each additional vehicle, after the first two, for any campsite	\$2	\$5

In addition to approval for the fee increase, the NCA seeks approval to exercise the option to raise overnight camping rates by an additional \$5 a night for the expanded amenity sites when the Consumer Price Index rises by 20% from the date of approval of this plan.

Current fee revenue neither covers operations and maintenance costs, nor will it fund anticipated upgrades and future infrastructure replacement. The current fee structure has remained unchanged since 2005 while costs and visitation have both increased. In fiscal year 2020, revenues from site fees were approximately \$24,900, whereas annual expenditures were roughly \$85,000.

The purposes of this draft plan is to describe the site's fee program objectives and how BLM intends to achieve them. The draft plan is available for public comment from November 14, 2022 to December 13, 2022. Comments will be accepted through the following means and are due by December 13, 2022:

- Email: BLM_ID_FourRiversOffice@blm.gov
- Fax: 208-384-3326
- Mail: BLM NCA, 3948 S Development Ave, Boise, ID 83705

Thank you for your interest in your public lands.

Sincerely,

Amanda Hoffman
Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey
National Conservation Area Manager

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Executive Summary

This draft business plan proposes to increase day use and camping fees (see Table 1) based on comparative market research within the region and to meet growing operational and maintenance expenses. The plan was prepared pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of December 2004 (P.L. 108-447, as amended), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation fee program policy and manual direction. FLREA provides the BLM current authority to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at Federal recreational lands and waters.

Cove Recreation Site is located in Owyhee County, Idaho approximately 8 miles northwest of Bruneau, Idaho and approximately 35 miles southwest of Mountain Home, Idaho. The site is located on the south shore of C.J. Strike Reservoir within the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. Fees were first collected at the site in 2005 and have remained unchanged, while visitor use and operating expenses have increased.

Cove Recreation Site consists of 1) Cove Campground with 38 campsites, 2) Cove Point Day Use Area with 3 large day use sites, and 3) Cove Inlet with 6 small shelter sites along the shoreline assigned for day use. Potable water is available from multiple standpipes dispersed about every three to four campsites throughout the campground. Nearly every campsite contains a graveled parking area for Recreational Vehicle (RV) or tent camping, a cement pad, a 10' x 20' cabana over a picnic table, and a steel fire ring. The recreation site also contains day use parking areas, six vault toilets, an RV dump station, a single lane shallow water boat ramp, two camp host sites, several informational kiosks, and regulatory signs. Garbage services are also provided. These amenities meet the requirements needed to charge fees under FLREA. Table 1 presents the current and proposed fees and fee types.

Table 1: Current and Proposed Fees and Fee Type at Cove Recreation Site

Recreation Fee and Category	Current Fees	Proposed Fees
Day Use – Standard Amenity	\$2	\$5
Tent Camping – Expanded Amenity	\$5	\$15
RV Camping – Expanded Amenity	\$12	\$15
Campsite with Electricity (when available) – Expanded Amenity	N/A	\$20
Each additional vehicle, after the first two, for any campsite	\$2	\$5

Furthermore, the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey NCA Office seeks approval to raise the overnight camping fee by \$5 a night per site when the Consumer Price Index rises by 20% from the date this business plan is approved.

Introduction

Purpose of Document

The BLM Handbook H-2930-1, Recreation Permits and Fee Administration (Rel. 2-300, Dated November 17, 2014), requires that each recreation fee program have an approved business plan which thoroughly discusses fees and explains how fees are consistent with the criteria set forth in FLREA. Business plans are to assist management in determining the appropriateness and level of

fees, the cost of administering a fee program, the expected benefits to be derived for the public, and to provide a structured communication and marketing plan. The primary purpose of the plan is to serve as public notification of the objectives and planning for use of recreation fee revenues and to provide the public an opportunity to comment on these objectives. It is BLM's goal to improve access to appropriate recreation opportunities; ensure a quality experience and enjoyment of resources; and to provide for and receive fair value in recreation.

This business plan provides a description of the fee site, the proposed fees for the site, associated operating costs, planned expenditures of fee revenue, a financial analysis utilizing a regional comparative market study of fees charged for other similar recreation facilities (see Table 5), and the impacts of proposed fee changes. The data used to analyze and prepare this business plan was obtained through internal BLM tracking mechanisms such as the Recreation Management Information System (RMIS), Collections and Billing System (CBS), and other locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking spreadsheets. As new solutions for collecting fees become available, these methods will be considered to better serve the public.

Figure 1: One of the two on-site, self-service pay stations.

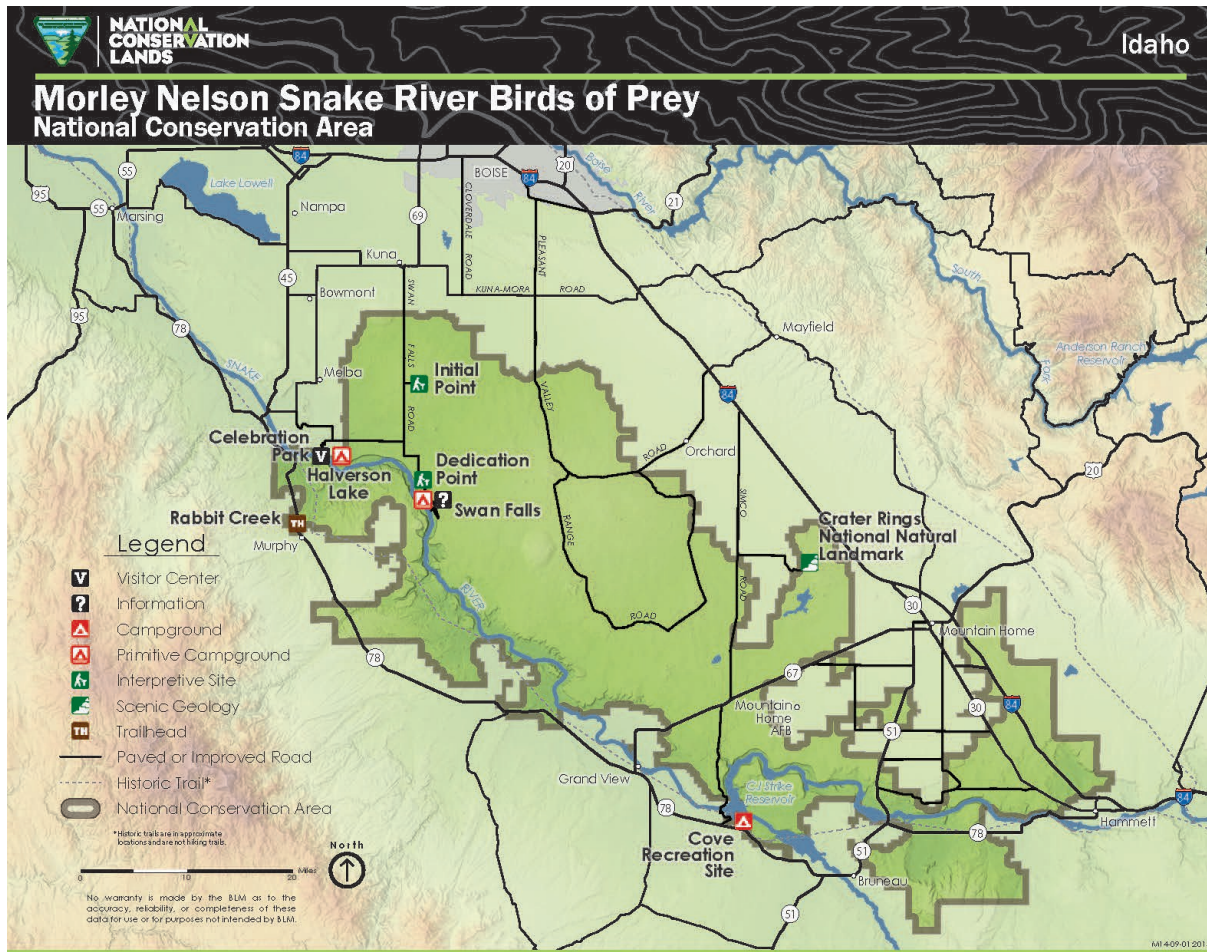


Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Recreation Fee Program

The Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) is a component of the Four Rivers Field Office and is the administrative unit responsible for the Cove Recreation Site Fee Program. There are approximately 485,000 acres of public land managed by the BLM within the NCA (see Figure 2). Cove Recreation Site is the BLM's only recreation fee site

currently within the NCA.

Figure 2: Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Map



Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Recreation Program and Visitation

There are four Special Recreation Management Areas within the NCA: Snake River Canyon, Owyhee Front, C.J. Strike, and the Oregon Trail. While the primary management focus in the NCA is the protection of raptor populations and habitat, for which the conservation area was established, public lands in the NCA offer extensive recreation opportunities including camping, fishing, hiking, bird watching, horseback riding and sightseeing.

Recreation use occurs year-round with visitor use being highest in the spring and early summer months and lowest during winter months. The western third of the NCA and along the Snake River and C.J. Strike Reservoir receive most of the recreational use due to road access and the proximity to populations centers. The BLM estimates approximately 150,000 people visit the NCA each year.

According to data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau for the period between 2000 and 2019 (U.S. Census Bureau 2019), Idaho is in the top ten fastest-growing states in the United States, and an increasing number of people are living near or seeking to live near public lands for a diversity

of recreational opportunities. As a result of this growth, public lands administered by the BLM are experiencing increased recreational demand and use.

Regulatory Framework

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

Under FLREA, a Standard Amenity fee and an Expanded Amenity fee may be charged for the use of certain facilities or services, which include developed day-use sites and campgrounds. The developed recreational sites must meet the criteria that are defined below. These fees are usually implemented through the issuance of a recreation use permit (RUP), or through a specific annual pass. BLM policy requires that revenue from RUPs be deposited into a separate account (pg. 2-3 of H-2930-1). Doing so allows the BLM to more readily track and report collections; and ensures that RUP revenue is spent at or near the site of collection. The Cove Recreation Site account is LVRDID370000.

In accordance with FLREA, the following are definitions of Standard and Expanded amenities for the area covered under this business plan:

- **Standard Amenity Recreation Fees** cover outdoor recreation areas that provides significant opportunities for outdoor recreation, has substantial Federal investments, where fees can be effectively collected, and that has all of the following amenities: (1) designated developed parking, (2) a permanent toilet facility, (3) a permanent trash receptacle, (4) interpretive sign, exhibit, or kiosk, (5) picnic tables, and (6) security services (Sec. 803.(f)(4)(D) of FLREA).
- **Expanded Amenity Recreation Fees** cover specialized outdoor recreation sites and services including but not limited to developed campgrounds with at least a majority of the following amenities: (1) tent or trailer spaces, (2) picnic tables, (3) drinking water, (4) access roads, (5) fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM, (6) reasonable visitor protection, (7) refuse containers, (8) toilet facilities, (9) simple devices for containing a campfire (Sec. 803.(g)(2)(A) of FLREA).
- **Additional Expanded Amenity** recreation facilities or services include rental of cabins, group day-use or overnight sites, binoculars or other equipment (Sec.803.(g)(2)(C) of REA); use of hookups for electricity, cable, or sewer (Sec.803.(g)(2)(D) of REA); use of sanitary dump stations (SEC.803.(g)(2)(E) of FLREA); and use of reservation services (Sec.803.(g)(2)(G) of FLREA).

Fee Discounts

Section 805 of the FLREA provided for the establishment of a single interagency national pass known as the “America the Beautiful – the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass,” which provides the bearer full coverage of standard amenity fees and holders of the Interagency Senior Lifetime, Senior Annual and Access Passes a 50 percent discount on some expanded amenity fees. The national interagency Senior and Access Passes replaced the Golden Age and Access Passports in 2007. The BLM continues to honor these passes at Cove Recreation Site.

Description of Cove Recreation Fee Site

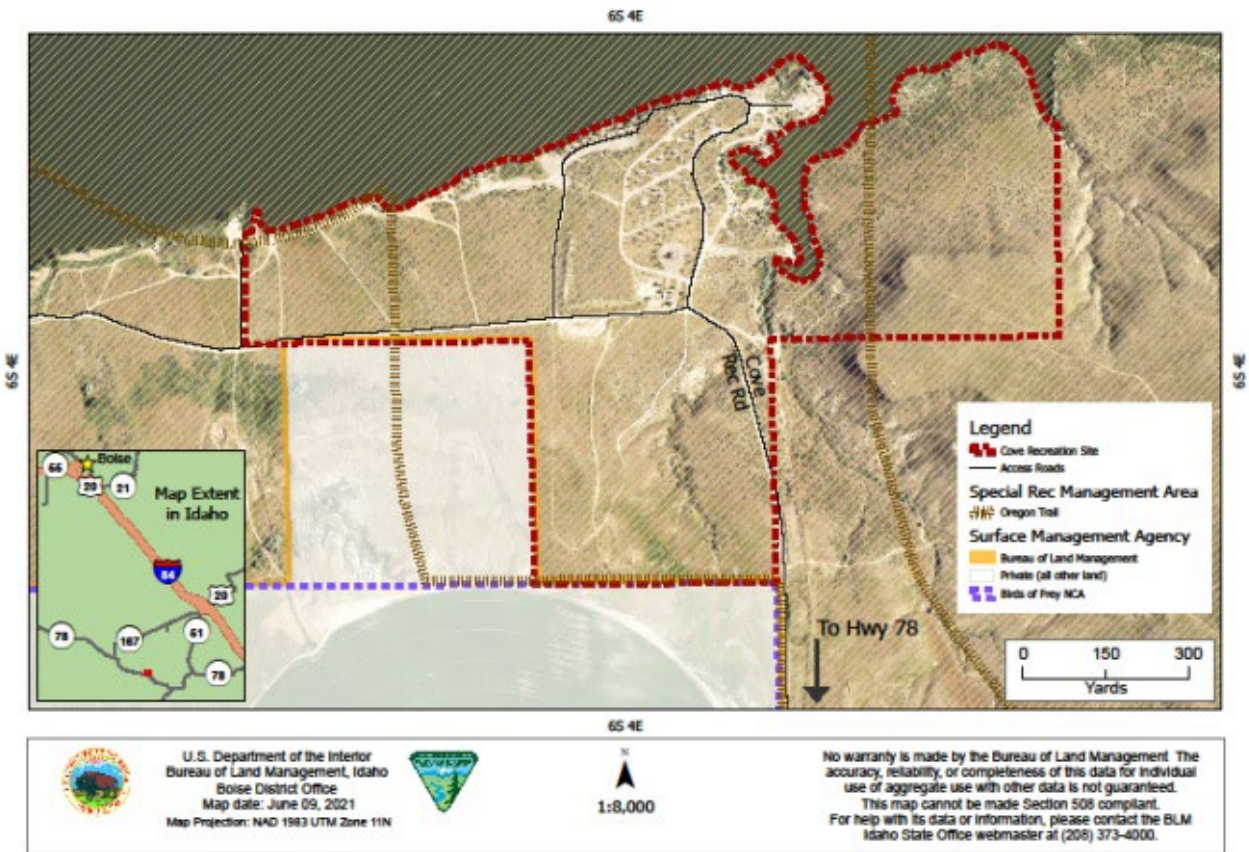
Cove Recreation Site is located in Owyhee County, Idaho approximately 8 miles northwest of Bruneau, Idaho and approximately 35 miles southwest of Mountain Home, Idaho. The site is located on the south shore of C.J. Strike Reservoir (an Idaho Power Company reservoir). The site encompasses approximately 160 acres. The site is located on BLM-administered lands and was maintained and operated over the past 15 years using appropriated dollars and fees collected on site. Prior to 2006, this area was minimally developed, and no fees were charged for use.

Cove Recreation Site lies within the Oregon Trail Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) of the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (see Figure 3). This SRMA consists of approximately 7,900 acres lying along a one-mile wide (1/2 mile on each side) corridor of the South Alternate of the Oregon National Historic Trail. The purpose of the SRMA is to protect the visual and historic values of the Trail. Common activities within the recreation site consist of camping, picnicking, fishing, swimming, boating, and wildlife watching.

Cove Recreation Site consists of 1) Cove Campground with 38 campsites, 2) Cove Point Day Use Area with three large day use sites, and 3) Cove Inlet with six small shelter sites along the shoreline assigned for day use (see Figure 4). Potable water is available from multiple standpipes dispersed about every three to four campsites throughout the campground (see Figure 5). Nearly every campsite contains a graveled parking area for RV or tent camping, a cement pad, a 10' x 20' cabana over a picnic table, and a steel fire ring. The recreation site also contains day use parking areas, six vault toilets, an RV dump station, a single lane shallow water boat ramp, five boat docks, two camp host sites, several informational kiosks, a shoreline trail, irrigation system, and regulatory signs. Garbage services are also provided. These amenities meet the established criteria needed to charge fees under FLREA.

The site is located on the Snake River Plain near the confluence of the Snake and Bruneau Rivers, within the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. C.J. Strike Dam was constructed on the Snake River approximately one mile below the Bruneau River confluence. The resulting C.J. Strike Reservoir backs up both the Snake (22 miles) and Bruneau (7 miles) Rivers. The reservoir dam is owned by the Idaho Power Company (IPC).

Figure 3: Cove Recreation Site and Oregon Trail Special Recreation Management Area Boundary Map



The area receives approximately 6-8 inches of precipitation annually and is characterized by sparse sagebrush and mixed annual/perennial grasses. A portion of the recreation site was burned by a wildfire in 1999. Following the fire, deciduous trees were planted in the campground and an irrigation system installed. Although vegetation in this area is sparse, there are naturally occurring trees along the shoreline that provide natural shade for campers. The predominate use of this area with calm and warm water is boat and bank fishing for catfish, bass and crappie. The current fee for day use at this site is \$2 per vehicle. Tent camping is \$5 per night and RV camping is \$12 per night. Each campsite is allowed 2 vehicles per site, additional vehicles are charged \$2 per day (see Table 2). Fees are collected year-round.

Table 2. Current Recreation Fee Type and Category

Current Recreation Fee Type and Category	Current Fees
Day Use – Standard Amenity	\$2/day
Tent Camping – Expanded Amenity	\$5/night
RV Camping – Expanded Amenity	\$12/night
Each additional vehicle, after the first two, for any campsite	\$2/night

Figure 4: Map of Cove Recreation Site



Figure 5: Potable water standpipe located between campsites. Picnic table under 10' x 20' cabana with cement pad and fire ring in background.



Season of Use

This recreation site is open year-round. The months with the largest visitation are April through September. While fees are collected year-round, few people visit Cove in December and January. Visitation is on an upward trend (see Table 3).

Table 3: Estimated Number of Visitors and Recreation Use Permits (RUPs) Issued Annually

Annual Number Type	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Cove Recreation Site Estimated Number of Visitors	4595	4842	4510	4576	6190	6996
Number of Cove Recreation Site RUPs Issued	1671	1761	1640	1664	2251	2544

Recreation Use

Visitation at Cove Recreation Site is estimated annually. The use at a specific site is captured as “visits” which equates to one person entering onto lands or waters, administered by the BLM for pursuit of recreational experiences. The applicable rule is that one entrance per individual per day to public lands is reportable as a visit.

Visitation to the site has followed an upward trend over the last 6 years. As the population continues to grow in nearby communities, the site visits are predicted to increase. Calculating or estimating visitor use is derived through several methods including tallying the information from RUPs issued and through simple observation of typical group sizes. In most cases, the estimated number of visitors is a combination of these methods. Observations of typical group sizes throughout various times of the year are used to generate formulas which are applied to the number of permits issued to determine the estimated number of visitors to this site. Table 3 captures the estimated number of visitors at Cove Recreation Site over the last six fiscal years (FY).

Estimated visits and number of permits issued must be entered into the BLM’s Recreation Management Information System (RMIS) weeks prior to the end of each fiscal year. As a result, the figures used in Table 3 more closely represent the actual visitation and permits issued, because they have been adjusted to show the actual number of permits issued and associated visitors through the end of the fiscal year.

In Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018, there was a drop in visits, even though the overall trend over the last six years is upward. While the exact reasons for the decreased visitation are not clear, site visitors are sensitive to weather and fishing conditions. According to the National Weather Service’s [*Idaho 2017 Water Year Summary*](#), “[t]he 2017 Water Year will go down as one to remember due to record precipitation, record snowpack, and significant flooding that impacted the state [of Idaho]. Extreme wet conditions resulted in a number of disaster declarations due to snow, flooding, and landslides, along with runoff volumes not seen for decades across portions of southern Idaho.”

In FY18, the potable water system was not functioning properly for months until repairs were completed. These reasons likely contributed to the reduced number of permits and visitors during this two-year time period.

Fee Collection and Enforcement

There are two access points into the Cove Recreation Site. Each access point has a self-service fee stations (see Figure 4). All visitors entering or parking at this site are required to immediately obtain a RUP for day use or camping. The America the Beautiful pass covers the day use fee (standard amenity fee) and are offered at local BLM offices. All permits are required to be displayed in the vehicles front window. Camp hosts, BLM recreation staff and law enforcement officers patrol and monitor fee compliance. In the future, fee collection could be modernized to include a credit card option.

Fee Proposal

Proposed Fee Increase

After careful consideration of the market analysis as well as the operating expenses and revenue, this plan recommends the proposed fee increase to meet the growing need for the recreation program to become more self-sufficient. It is BLM’s goal to provide for and receive fair value in recreation. Table 4 presents the proposed increase to the recreation fees.

Table 4: Proposed Recreation Fees

Recreation Fee and Category	Current Fees	Proposed Fees
Day Use – Standard Amenity	\$2	\$5
Tent Camping – Expanded Amenity	\$5	\$15
RV Camping – Expanded Amenity	\$12	\$15
Campsite with Electricity, when available – Expanded Amenity*	N/A	\$20*
Each additional vehicle, after the first two, for any campsite	\$2	\$5

*If/when power becomes available in the future, the fee would be \$20 per night regardless of the method of camping for any sites offering electrical hookups. The current plan is to provide electricity to at least five sites.

Future Increase When Consumer Price Index Rises by 20%

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services” (bls.gov/cpi). The BLM is seeking approval to exercise the option to increase overnight camping fees by \$5 per night when there is a 20 percent increase in the CPI from the date this business plan is approved. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of June 2021 the CPI is 271.7. This option to further increase camping fees could occur when the CPI reaches of 326.04.

Rationale for Modifying Fees

The fee structure at Cove Recreation Site was first established in 2005 and has remained unchanged despite an increase in operating costs and visitation. The revenue generated from the Cove Recreation Site is currently substantially lower than the operating costs. The intent of the BLM Recreation Fee Program is not to maximize revenue, but to help protect natural resources, provide for public health and safety, and facilitate access to public lands and waters. In accordance with FLREA Sec. 803 (a)(1) the amount of the recreation fee should be commensurate with the benefits and services to the provided to the visitor. Fees are a way of ensuring those who actively use recreation opportunities make a greater contribution than non-users toward protecting and enhancing those opportunities. The BLM issues RUPs to help recover the construction, operation, maintenance, administration, and facility management costs.

With increased visitation and stagnation or decreases in annual appropriated recreation budgets, the fee collection program is necessary to facilitate maintenance, improvements, and the development of new facilities as demand warrants. The recreation program is looking to achieve greater self-sufficiency and resiliency through market related fee increases and to build the funding necessary to design purpose-built recreation sites that fill popular recreation demands.

Projected Fee Revenue

To estimate the yearly fee projection an average was calculated using fiscal years 2015 through 2020. Visitation fluctuates according to a variety of factors such as fishing conditions, weather, and fuel prices. The estimated use for six years, FY15 to FY20, is provided in Table 3.

Using the average number of visits in the last two years and the proposed fees, yearly revenue is estimated to be \$5,280 for day use and \$29,200 for camping, for a total of \$34,480.

It is likely that the fee program will generate additional funds to help supplement appropriated funds to keep facilities maintained to acceptable standards and help with maintenance costs. As fees accumulate over time, facility upgrades could be partially or entirely funded from collected fees. The BLM intends to seek external grant funding for future site improvements and would continue utilizing appropriated funds from the recreation, annual maintenance, and deferred maintenance programs to cover the remaining operating and maintenance costs (see Figure 8).

Operating Costs

The BLM currently spends approximately \$85,000 each year to operate and maintain the site, which includes facility cleaning, dumpster service, vault toilet pumping, graffiti removal, road work, landscaping, vegetative management, water system management, miscellaneous repairs/maintenance, signs, supplies such as toilet paper, trash bags, hand tools, fuel, and hardware. Much of this work is accomplished through service contracts. Work that is not covered under a contract is completed on an as needed basis by BLM staff or outside labor and varies from year to year. Included in the \$85,000 annual operating costs is approximately \$3,000 per year to provide reimbursements to a seasonal camp host.

The estimated total of \$85,000 per year does not include annual engineering, Law Enforcement, or other BLM staff labor costs. A seasonal employee can cost up to \$10,000 for two months during the busy season, when funds are available.

As facilities age, some will need to be repaired, replaced, or upgraded. Irrigation system repairs are needed to provide a better visitor experience and ensure survival of planted trees throughout the campground. A preliminary estimate for repairing the irrigation system is \$25,000. The five existing boat docks have aged and deteriorated over time (see Figure 6) and need repairs or replacement at an estimated cost of \$35,000. This estimate includes installation of two new boat docks.

Revenues

The five-year average of fee revenue for Cove Recreation Site is \$18,009. Fees collected in the last three years totaled:

- \$24,900 in fiscal year 2020

Figure 6: Aging boat dock



- \$18,165 in fiscal year 2019
- \$15,858 in fiscal year 2018

Priorities for Future Expenditures

The BLM's primary goal for recreation sites is to provide high-quality recreation opportunities and experiences for all visitors. The revenue collected from day use and camping fees is applied toward the annual operation and maintenance of the recreation site and facilities. Any excess monies generated would be carried over annually and spent at the site itself on improvements to existing facilities, additional planned facilities, and other direct costs.

Labor will continue to be the highest operating cost for Cove Recreation Site. Recreation fee revenue is needed to help support the operation and maintenance of the site. The following is a list of how the recreation fee revenue would be used:

- Road maintenance and dust abatement
- Maintain, improve, and replace recreation site infrastructure such as trails, signs, fire rings, picnic tables, fencing, restroom buildings, docks, kiosks, etc.
- Maintain and replace equipment such as mowers, trimmers, hand tools, drills, etc.
- Interpretive and informational signage
- Fee collection equipment modernization and upkeep
- Audits and evaluations
- Finishing construction of recreation facilities, such as: restrooms, cabanas, docks, landscaping, and camp host shade structure
- Camp host reimbursement payments

In 2006, Cove Recreation Site's facilities were reconditioned and the site was further developed. At that time, the improvements approved in the site plan (Environmental Assessment For Reconstruction of Cove Recreation Site, C.J. Strike Reservoir (ID-090-030-22)) were approximately 85% completed the available funds were expended. There are five campsites with a graveled parking area that were not completed, according to the plan. While the camping fee is in place for use of these sites, they lack a picnic table, cement pad, shade structure, and a fire ring. It is a priority to provide picnic tables at these sites to improve the visitor experience.

According to the recreation site plan, two more vault toilets would and two more boat docks would be installed. The existing boat ramp needs to be reconditioned because of normal wear and tear over time. In 2021, the BLM is planning construction of a large shade structure for the camp host site using appropriated funds. Other opportunities could be provided in the future such as power to select sites.

The fee increase will help but it will not fully cover the annual operating costs, necessary improvements, nor supplement shortfalls in the deferred maintenance or other appropriated funds. The BLM is working cooperatively with the county and others to access additional funding streams such as state grants to help cover future expenses.

In summary, in addition to the \$85,000 for annual operations and maintenance expenses, future projects/improvements and estimated costs over the next 10 years are:

- Five new picnic tables (\$4,000)
- Replace seven existing/new docks (\$35,000)
- Repair boat ramp (\$20,000)
- Repair irrigation system (\$25,000)
- Purchase and install two vault toilet (\$35,000)
- Power to five select sites (\$20,000)

Analysis of Recreation Fee Rates

The fee analysis portion of this business plan uses both the cost recovery fee calculation method and the fair market value fee calculation method.

Fair Market Value Fee Calculation Method

The fair market value fee calculation was based on a comparative review of fees at other existing private and public facilities that provide similar services within the geographic area and identifies differences and similarities in the services offered. The analysis was conducted by the BLM recreation staff in 2021. Six private sector sites were included in the analysis: Black Sands Resort and five Idaho Power sites. Long-term RV parks are available within the region, but do not provide the same amenities, and therefore were not included in the fee comparisons charts. Table 6 displays the comparative analysis by the type of services and amenities each recreation site offers. The following information summarizes the comparative analysis by fee type.

Campsite: Campsite fees ranged from \$5 to \$18 per night for tent camping at sites that charge fees. These consist of three BLM sites, four Idaho Power sites, one county site, one private resort and one state park. Idaho Power offers free camping sites at Swan Falls. Most of these sites have comparable amenities (see Table 5). Notably, Celebration Park (county) includes a visitor center, atlatl range, and petroglyph tour, while Bruneau Dunes State Park has many additional amenities. Blacks Sands Resort has complete RV hookups and restaurant facilities. The average for tent camping fees is \$12.10. When including the one free site, the average is \$11.00.

RV camping with or without hookups ranges from \$8 to \$32 per night at sites that charge fees. These consist of three BLM sites, three Idaho Power sites, one county site, one private resort, and one state park. Idaho Power offers free camping sites at Swan Falls. Blacks Sands Resort and Bruneau Dunes State Park are the only campgrounds with electrical and sewer hookups. The average for RV camping fees is \$14.89. When including the one free site the average is \$13.40.

Day-Use: Day-use fees range from \$2 to \$10 per vehicle for standard amenities at sites that charge fees. These consist of three BLM sites, one county site, one private resort and one state park. Idaho Power offers free day use at Swan Falls. Most of these sites have comparable amenities, with the exception of Celebration Park and Bruneau State Park: both with additional amenities. The average for day use fees is \$5.16. When including the one free site, the average is \$4.43.

Cost Recovery Fee Calculation Method

The BLM currently spends about \$85,000 each year to operate and maintain Cove Recreation Site. Fee revenue averaged \$19,641 over the last three years. The cost recovery method

emphasizes that individuals or groups receiving a direct service or benefit should bear a greater share of the direct costs of providing the service or facility. The costs of the fee program described in this business plan include only direct costs and do not include overhead costs for management services or for office support. In years past, the site has been maintained with appropriated funds and collected fees have been used to supplement those costs as needed. Completion of major infrastructure projects in the future would require additional sources of funding, even if the proposed fee increase were to be approved.

The campground fee rate that would generate the revenues needed to cover the recreation program’s operating costs of the campground would be \$38.00 per night for an individual campsite. At this point in time, the field office requests an increase for both day use and camping fees, as well as increasing the fee for additional vehicles in campsites. The requested fee increase would cover more of the operating costs. Capital improvements to the campground program would need to be paid for by other funding streams, including external grants.

Table 5: Comparison of Amenities at Comparable Sites

Campground Name	Agency or Operator	Campground Fee(s)	Amenities Offered
Cove Recreation Site Current Fees	BLM	\$2/vehicle day use, \$5/tent camping, \$12/site RV camping, 2 vehicles allowed at sites with \$2 for one additional vehicle	Vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structures, parking bays, host services, water, garbage collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp
Steck Park	BLM	\$2/vehicle day use, \$5/tent camping, \$8/site RV camping	Vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, host services, water, garbage collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp
Lud Drexler Park	BLM	\$5/vehicle day use; \$15/site camping up to 2 vehicles, each additional vehicle \$5/night; \$20/site with electrical hookup	Vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, host services, water, garbage collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp, electricity
Milner Historic Recreation Area	BLM	\$5/vehicle day use; \$15/site camping up to 2 vehicles, each additional vehicle \$5/night; \$20/site with electrical hookup, when available	Vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, host services, garbage collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp
North Park	Idaho Power	\$12/site tent camping (credit card); \$15/site tent camping (cash or check);	Vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, host services, water, garbage collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp

Campground Name	Agency or Operator	Campground Fee(s)	Amenities Offered
		\$15/site RV camping (credit card); \$20/site RV camping (cash or check)	
Scout Park	Idaho Power	\$12/site tent camping (credit card); \$15/site tent camping (cash or check); \$15/site RV camping (credit card) \$20/site RV camping (cash or check)	Flush toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, paved roads, host services, water, garbage collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp
Cottonwood	Idaho Power	\$15/site RV camping (credit card); \$20/site RV camping (cash or check)	Vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, parking bays, host services, water, garbage collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp
Locust	Idaho Power	\$10/site camping	Vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, paved roads, host services, water, garbage collection, docks, boat ramp
Swan Falls	Idaho Power	Free	Vault/flush toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, paved roads, water, garbage collection, docks, boat ramp, museum
Celebration Park	Canyon County	\$2/vehicle day use, \$5/site camping	Flush toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, paved roads, host services, water, garbage collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp, visitor's center, live interpretation
Black Sands Resort	Private	\$10/vehicle day use, \$18/tent camping, \$32/site RV camping	Flush toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, host services, water, garbage collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp, electricity, restaurant facilities
Bruneau Dunes State Park	Idaho State Parks	Entry Fee: \$7 Basic campsite: \$14 - \$17 Electric campsite: \$26-\$29 Equestrian campsite \$14-\$17	Flush toilets, showers, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structure, parking bays, host services, water, garbage

Campground Name	Agency or Operator	Campground Fee(s)	Amenities Offered
		Cabins: \$60- \$65	collection, RV dump, docks, boat ramp, electricity, museum/gift shop, visitor center/education center, sandboard rentals, observatory, equestrian facilities, hiking/biking/horse trails, loaner fishing poles and backpacks, guided walks and special programs

Impacts of Implementing or Not Implementing Fee Changes

The current day use and camping fees have not been changed since they were established in 2005, yet operating costs and visitation have increased. In addition, infrastructure such as the boat docks and the boat ramp are aging and deteriorating over time, requiring additional funds to repair or replace them. The proposed fee increase would align the site fees more closely with the average cost of similar services and amenities within the region and provide more revenue to help cover the operating costs. Six annual fee free days allow free use of the day use area for all visitors.

Anticipated Positive Impacts – The fee increase will generate additional funds to help supplement existing allocated funds. Currently, the service contracts for facility maintenance are funded through the BLM’s deferred maintenance funds. Additional fees collected by people using the site would augment allocated funds. Increased revenue would benefit the facility and the quality of the recreation experience of those using the facilities by continuing to provide a high level of service such as maintenance on access roads, completion of needed repairs, continued regular cleaning of restrooms, garbage collection, cleaning of fire rings, dumpster service, timely pumping of the vault toilets, and restocking of essential supplies such as toilet paper and trash bags. It is important to the local economy to keep campground infrastructure in good condition, and to service and clean facilities to a high standard.

The demand for quality recreation sites is expected to increase as the region’s population continues to grow, and visitation increases over time. By providing campgrounds and day use areas for visitors, the BLM can contain impacts in small areas while providing for higher levels of visitation along the shore of the reservoir. Human waste generated by campers is contained and processed properly at approved facilities. Garbage is collected and disposed of at a proper facility. Campfires are contained in metal rings, enhancing fire safety; ash is disposed of properly. The proposed fee increase for these facilities will continue to provide for their operation and maintenance, thus benefiting the environment.

While the fee increase will not fully cover the annual operating costs, necessary improvements, nor supplement shortfalls in the deferred maintenance or other appropriated funds, it is in line with fees in nearby areas and will help balance making the site affordable and providing the BLM will funds necessary for effective management. The BLM will work cooperatively with the

county and others to access additional funding streams such as state grants to help cover future expenses. The increase in fee revenue may be used in combination with other funding for future projects such as replacing dilapidated docks, reconditioning the boat ramp, adding additional restrooms, camp sites, picnic tables, fire rings, shade structures, and to provide additional amenities such as electrical hookups.

Anticipated Negative Impacts – Currently facilities maintenance and service contracts are funded for the recreation site with appropriated funds; however, all recreation sites are operating on a year-to-year basis. If these budgets decrease or the costs of the contracts increase, the need for additional funds becomes increasingly important.

If fees are not increased, maintenance may not happen as quickly or as often as needed, frequency of cleaning would not keep up with increased demand, and some services, such as vegetation management and road maintenance, may be reduced. Overall, maintenance costs increase as facilities age and deteriorate without proper routine and annual maintenance. Maintenance which is deferred because of insufficient funding may result in increased public health and/or safety hazards, as there may be fewer trash pickups and pumping of the vault toilets, thus creating human waste and trash issues, which all lead to higher costs in the future, and inefficient operations. A decrease in maintenance directly correlates to a decrease in the quality of the recreation experience.

If the fee is not approved to continue maintaining the site to a high standard, the local community would likely be impacted by the potential unsanitary conditions resulting from less frequent cleaning of facilities and collection of garbage.

Current law enforcement patrols are not expected to be affected if the proposed fee increase is not implemented. Recreation demands will continue to increase as the Treasure Valley is experiencing high population growth, which in turn increases visitation. Some low-income populations may decide not to visit the site as a result of the increase in fees. Higher fees could result in more visitors choosing to disperse camp or to camp at facilities with lower fees. However, camping remains a relatively low-cost alternative to spending the night in a hotel or motel. If the costs to operate the fee site are solely dependent on the fluctuating appropriated funding, service contracts to maintain the site and opportunities for future developments could be constrained.

Public Outreach

Public Communication and Marketing Plan

1. Public notice of the proposed fee increase will be posted onsite and would announce the opportunity to provide input during the public comment period.
2. News releases will be sent to local/regional newspapers informing the public of the fee proposal and announcing the opportunity to participate in the public comment period.
3. Both the public notice at the site and the news releases will contain details on where, how, and when to submit public comments on the fee proposal.
4. Website information will inform the public of the proposed fee changes and invite public participation through the public comment period. The draft business plan will be made

available through the BLM website.

5. If approved, the website, fee signs, and printed materials would be updated to reflect the new fee rates.

In addition, the BLM will provide the draft *Cove Recreation Site Business Plan* describing the fee increase proposal to the Idaho Recreation Resource Advisory Council (RAC) for its formal review. The NCA manager will present the fee proposal during an upcoming RAC meeting. The RAC is a 15-member advisory panel which provides advice and recommendations to the BLM on resource and land management issues for approximately 12,000,000 acres of public lands in Idaho. The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act mandates that the appropriate Recreation RAC will be consulted and given opportunities to provide recommendations to the BLM on all recreation fee proposals prior to implementation. Comments from both the public at large and the BLM RAC will be considered and incorporated into the final business plan prior to implementation of the proposed recreation fees.

The BLM will continue to monitor visitor use to detect changes in site utilization. Business plan review will occur in the future as circumstance change. Future adjustments to the Cove Recreation Site fee schedule will follow the guidelines and process in FLREA and BLM policy and provide for public comments.

Ways to Inform Public of Fee Expenditures

Fee expenditure information is collected on an annual basis and presented in the Public Land Statistics available online at https://www.blm.gov/public_land_statistics/. More specifically, each fee area will post fee expenditure information on site and online to inform the public where and on what services, maintenance, and operations their fees are spent.