



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

Uncompahgre Field Office Draft Recreation Business Plan

BLM Southwest Colorado District
Department of Interior Upper Colorado River Region
August 2024





United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 Townsend Avenue
Montrose, Colorado 81401



Dear Reader,

This is your opportunity to review and comment on the *Uncompahgre Field Office Recreation Business Plan*. The plan includes a proposal to implement a Standard Amenity Fee at select developed day use sites and an Expanded Amenity Fee at all existing and proposed developed campgrounds within the Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) as permitted by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). These fees will enable the UFO to provide sufficient resources to effectively manage the sites.

The Uncompahgre Field Office does not currently have a fee structure in place that would allow the generation of revenue necessary to meet increasing visitor demand and provide needed recreation amenities. These amenities and services include providing clean and sanitary facilities, installing appropriate structures and sites for campfires, and providing agency operation, management, and enforcement. Three fee structures are being proposed to cover current operational costs now and into the future.

The BLM is proposing to assess the following fees:

- Expanded amenity fee of \$12 per campsite per night at five existing campgrounds (Lower Beaver, Caddis Flats, Fall Creek, Ledges Cottonwood, and Ledges Rockhouse) and three proposed campgrounds (Electric Hills Rim, Nucla, and Paradox).
- Standard amenity fee of \$4 per vehicle per day at eight day-use areas (Lower Beaver, Specie Creek, Caddis Flats, Ridgway Area Trails, Buzzard Gulch, Lower Spring Creek, Rim Road, and Upper Beaver).
- Site-specific Standard Amenity Pass/Annual Day-Use Pass of \$20 per year for all day use sites.

All three of these rates would be tied to the Consumer Price Index. Fees would be implemented at future campgrounds and day-use areas as they are developed. The proposed fees are based on fair-market analysis of fees charged at comparable public and private sites in the local geographic area, including National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service sites.

The intent of establishing fees is to help protect natural resources, provide for public health and safety, and facilitate access to public lands and related waters. Fees are a way of ensuring that those who actively use recreation opportunities make a reasonable contribution toward protecting and enhancing these opportunities.

Please submit comments on the draft business plan by September 16, 2024. Comments may be sent by email to BLM_CO_UFO_Recreation@blm.gov (Subject: Proposed Business Plan). Comments may also be submitted by U.S. mail to: BLM Uncompahgre Field Office, Attn: Proposed Business Plan, 2465 S Townsend Ave, Montrose, CO 81401. For questions about the

draft plan, contact BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner Caroline Kilbane at 970-240-5310 or ckilbane@blm.gov.

Thank you for your interest in helping to manage and protect America's public lands.

Sincerely,

Dan Ben-Horin
Uncompahgre Field Manager
BLM Southwest Colorado District

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Executive Summary

This business plan includes a proposal to implement a Standard Amenity Fee at select developed day use sites and an Expanded Amenity Fee at all existing and proposed developed campgrounds within the Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) as permitted by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). These fees will enable the UFO to provide sufficient resources to effectively manage the sites now and into the future.

The Uncompahgre Field Office does not currently have a fee structure in place that would allow the generation of revenue necessary to meet increasing visitor demand and provide needed recreation amenities.

Consistent with FLREA, the BLM may implement fees at a developed site for several reasons:

- **Cost Recovery:** Fees help cover the costs of maintaining and improving facilities and services at the site.
- **Enhancing Visitor Experience:** Revenue generated from fees can be reinvested to enhance the quality of visitor experiences by funding amenities, maintenance, and other services.
- **Resource Protection:** Fees can be used to fund projects that protect natural and cultural resources, ensuring the sustainability of the site for future visitors.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** Fees support the upkeep and enhancement of infrastructure such as trails, campgrounds, and picnic areas.
- **Visitor Safety:** Funds from fees can be allocated towards improving visitor safety through better signage, ranger services, and emergency response.
- **Equitable Cost Sharing:** Implementing fees ensures that those who use and benefit from the developed sites contribute to their upkeep and improvements.

After careful consideration of the anticipated costs and revenues, as well as a comparison to fees charged at nearby facilities for similar sites, services, and amenities, BLM is proposing to assess the following fees:

Recreation Site	Existing Fee	Proposed Fee
Standard Amenity Fee at Developed Day-Use Sites		
Lower Beaver, Specie Creek, Caddis Flats, Ridgway Area Trails, Buzzard Gulch, Lower Spring Creek, Rim Road, And Upper Beaver	\$0	\$4/vehicle
Standard Amenity Fee at Proposed Developed Day-Use Sites		
Paradox	\$0	\$4/vehicle
Site Specific Standard Amenity Pass (Annual Day-Use Pass)		
All Day-Use Sites	\$0	\$20/year
Expanded Amenity Fee at Existing Developed Campgrounds		
Lower Beaver, Caddis Flats, Fall Creek, Ledges Cottonwood, Ledges Rockhouse	\$0	\$12/night
Expanded Amenity Fee at Proposed Developed Campgrounds		
Electric Hills Rim, Nucla, Paradox	\$0	\$12/night

Both fee calculation methods recommended by the BLM Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook were analyzed. To ensure a fair market value fee, the proposed fees have been compared to fees charged by other public agencies and private providers with similar services within the geographic area of the UFO. A cost recovery fee calculation was also taken into consideration, where fee rates assume that revenues should cover the operating costs of a site or area. This plan also analyzes the potential impacts to the public, environment, and local economies from establishing and not establishing recreation fees as well as identifies how the UFO would inform and connect with the public throughout this process.

Background and Authorities

This business plan has been prepared to meet the criteria defined in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-447, Title VIII, Sections 801-815; 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, and
- Provide for and receive fair value in recreation.

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Introduction to the Uncompahgre Field Office Recreation Program

The Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) administrative unit encompasses approximately 675,800 acres in Delta, Gunnison, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties in BLM Colorado's Southwest District. This business plan is solely for sites in the UFO fee account (LLCOS05000) and does not include the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area or the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area.

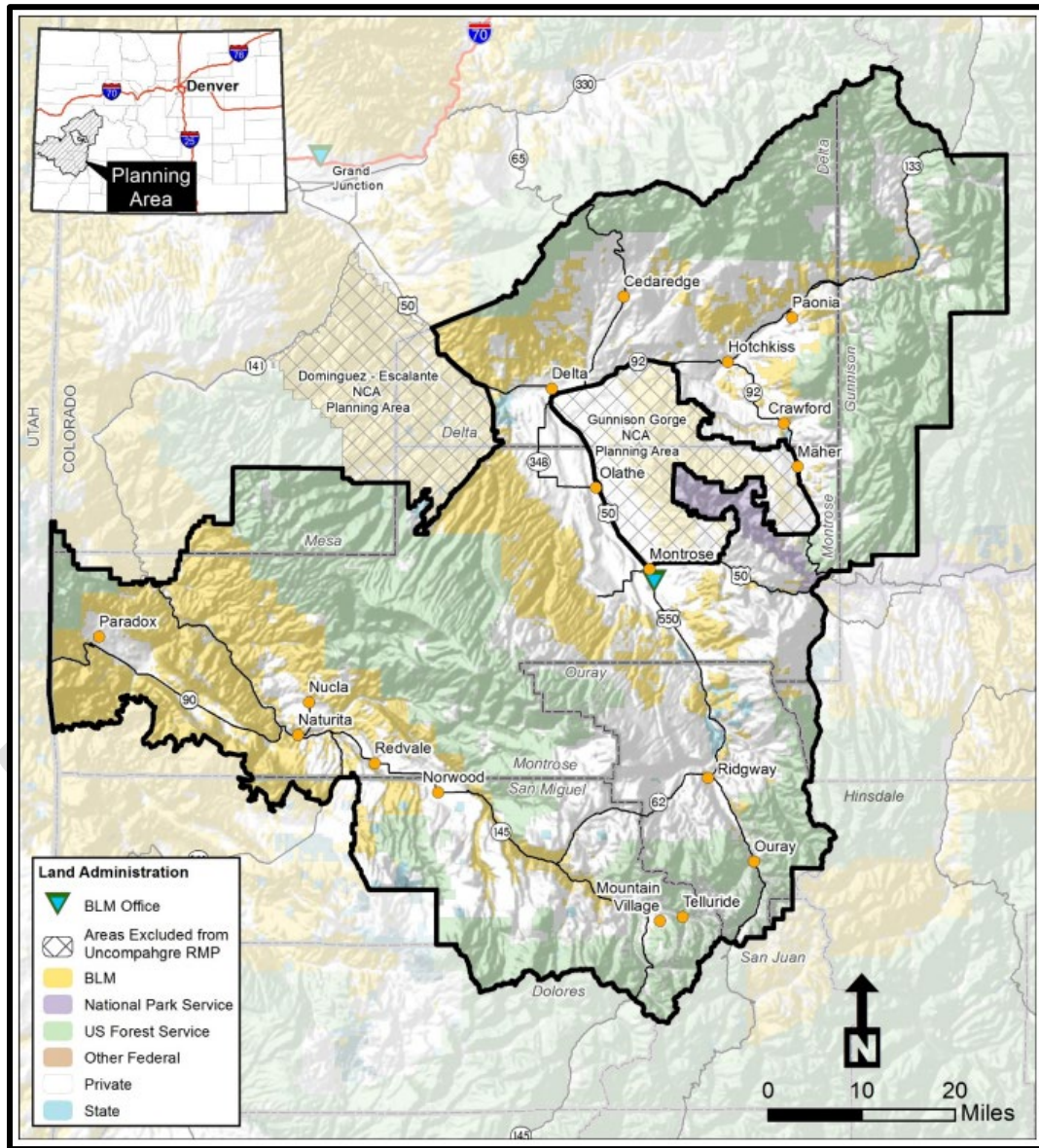


Figure 1 Uncompahgre Field Office Administrative Boundary

Within UFO's geographic area lies an array of landscapes which range from lowland riparian along the Dolores River (at around 4,700 feet) to red rock desert to a moonscape of highly erodible Mancos shale badlands to the ponderosa pine and piñon-juniper woodlands of the Uncompahgre Plateau.

The Uncompahgre Field Office also manages four river systems—the Gunnison, San Miguel, Dolores, and Uncompahgre. The variety of landscapes leads to an assortment of recreation opportunities including rafting, boating, fishing, kayaking, hiking, running, mountain biking, OHV riding, picnicking, scenic viewing, horseback riding, hunting, rock crawling, rock climbing, camping, and educational programs.

To help manage recreation use on public lands, BLM categorizes recreation management into three types of areas: Special Recreation Management Areas, Extensive Recreation Management Areas and areas not designated as recreation management areas.

Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) are areas where recreation



Figure 2 Visitors fishing and rafting on the San Miguel River.

opportunities and the environment which creates those opportunities are recognized for their unique value, importance, and/or distinctiveness, especially as compared to other areas used for recreation. SRMAs are broken further down into *Recreation Management Zones* (RMZs), which are categorized by targeted recreation activities within those areas. UFO has eight SRMAs and this business plan analyzes the following four:

- Dry Creek SRMA- Motorized and non-motorized trail-based opportunities.
- Ridgway Trails SRMA- Non-motorized trail-based opportunities.
- Spring Creek SRMA- Non-motorized trail-based opportunities.
- San Miguel River SRMA- River based opportunities.

The San Miguel River is a Special Recreation Management Area and is also designated as an *Area of Critical Environmental Concern* (ACEC), and as such special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, and scenic values; fish and wildlife resources and other natural system processes; and to protect life and safety from natural hazards. The San Miguel River includes valuable scenic, recreation, wildlife, historic, vegetation, and paleontological resources which led to the designation of an ACEC.

Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs) require specific management consideration to address recreation use, demand, or Recreation and Visitor Services program investments. While UFO manages three ERMAs, this plan only analyzes the Paradox Valley ERMA.

Finally, there are general UFO-managed BLM lands that are not designated as Recreation Management Areas (RMAs) which provide recreation opportunities but are managed for multiple uses. These areas are not specifically managed for the purpose of recreation. The proposed developed Nucla Campground is the only site discussed in this plan that is not in a designated RMA.

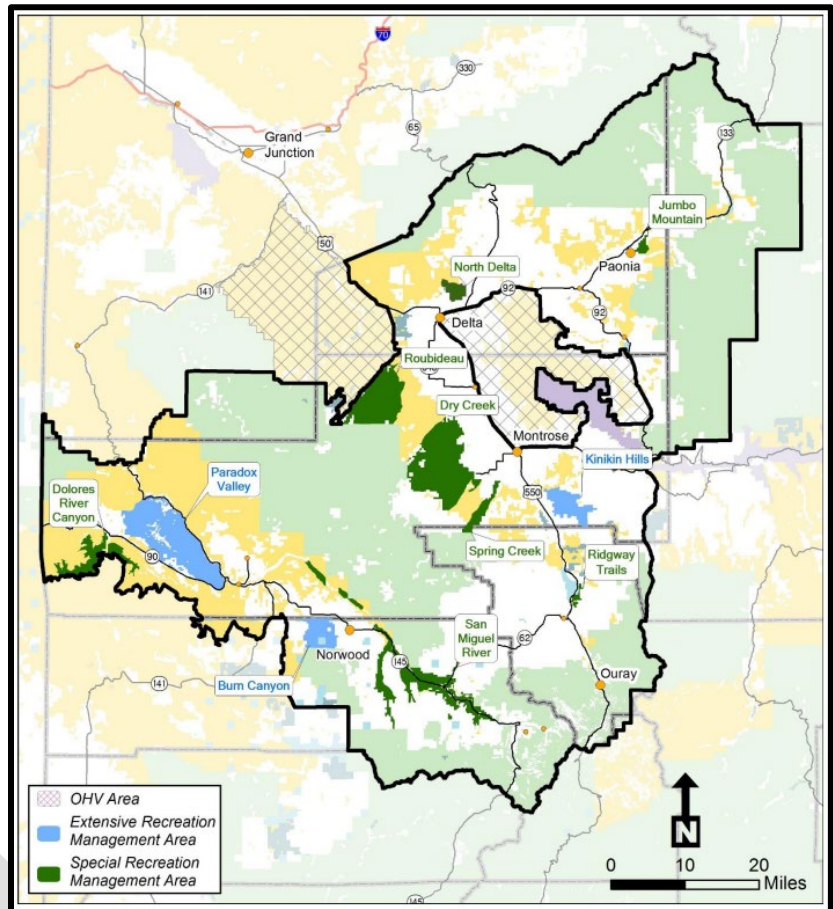


Figure 3 Map of all UFO BLM Recreation Management Areas

Other major recreation areas are located in the vicinity of the Uncompahgre Field Office and are managed by the following public or private land managers:

- Uncompahgre National Forest (USFS)
- Gunnison National Forest (USFS)
- Grand Mesa National Forest (USFS)
- Crawford State Park (CPW)
- Ridgway State Park (CPW)
- Paonia State Park (CPW)
- Sweitzer Lake State Park (CPW)
- Black Canyon of the Gunnison (NPS)
- Curecanti National Recreation Area (NPS)

A. Uncompahgre Field Office Visitation

Visitation is recorded annually in the BLM’s Recreation Management Information System (RMIS) database and published to the public. One of the ways use at a site or area is captured is as “visits,” or the number of individuals per day entering BLM public lands in pursuit of recreational purposes. One visit may represent a stay that is multiple days in duration, such as a camping or backpacking trip.

The other primary way visitor use is captured is as “visitor days.” One visitor day is identified as one visitor who spends 12 hours in a given area. Visitation in RMIS follows the federal fiscal year (FY) cycle that begins on October 1 and runs through September 30 of the following year. For example, Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) began October 1, 2021, and ended September 30, 2022.

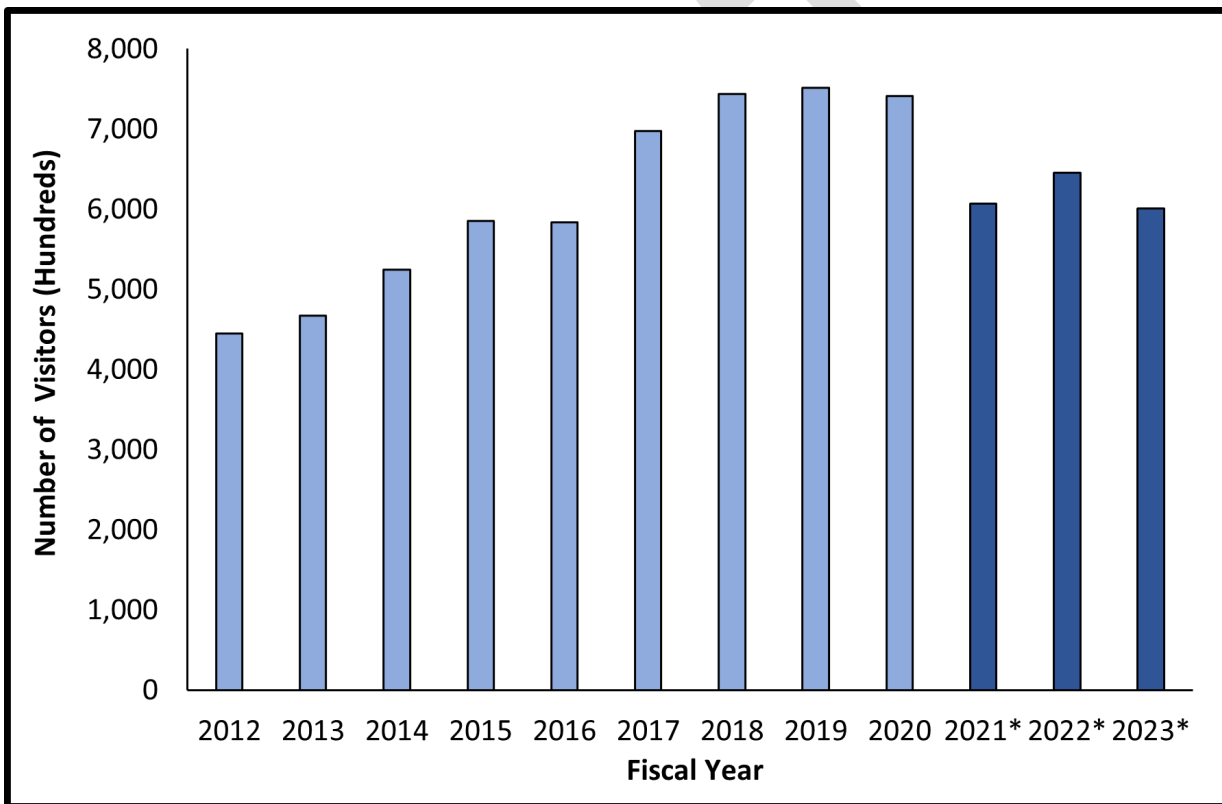


Figure 4 Estimated Number of Visitors to UFO, Fiscal Years 2012-2023

In Figure 4 the light blue represents years where visitor numbers were based on qualitative data and the dark blue represents years where counts are based on traffic counters.

The UFO does not have entrance gates or primary access points so it can be difficult to collect accurate visitor data for the unit. Prior to FY21, UFO recorded visits by making educated estimates based on use compared to previous years and staff observation. This method is highly qualitative and has the potential for a high degree of error. In FY21 UFO transitioned to utilizing traffic counters at most developed recreation sites and popular trails to count the visits.

Traffic counters can detect vehicles or people as they pass within the range of the counter. Many recreation sites have a single entry/exit, while others have multiple. The counters have been calibrated so that vehicles/people are only counted once per visit. Vehicle counter numbers are then multiplied by the standard 2.5 (which is baseline number of people per vehicle visiting UFO-managed lands). While there is still room for errors such as double counting, incorrect person per vehicle ratios, and visitors missed because they did not pass close enough to a counter, the UFO anticipates that, overall, fiscal years 21-23 have more accurate visitor use numbers due to the use of the traffic counters.

Visitation Trends

Across the UFO, there were around 600,000 visits a year over FY21-23 using the accurate traffic counter data.

While visitation did experience an initial decrease due to the pandemic, the drop was likely not as significant as the data shows. Based on the data collected using traffic counters, UFO anticipates many sites' visits were being over estimated, while others were being underestimated. Based on the more accurate traffic counter numbers, the UFO does not believe there was an on the ground decrease in visitation starting in FY21, but rather a previous overestimation of the visitor numbers. The accuracy of this data will only improve as UFO has more years of traffic counter data. As a result of improved data collection as well as nationwide trends indicating an increase in outdoor recreation, the BLM anticipates that recreational use counts will continue to increase in the Uncompahgre Field Office.

UFO Visitation	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	Five-Year Average (Visits/Year)
Visits	751,772	741,178	606,440	645,810	601,211	669,282
Visitor Days	1,022,958	1,067,646	607,172	647,240	587,191	786,441

Table 1 Annual Visitation to UFO, FY19-FY23 Source: Recreation Management Information System, RMIS.

Anticipated Visitation

Future visitation numbers can be difficult to predict due to outside circumstances such as: environmental factors (wildfires, river flows, weather); travel patterns (gas prices, airline travel, economic inflation); and large projects (HWY 50 road maintenance, site maintenance).

UFO's anticipated recreational visitation could reasonably be expected to mirror population growth trends in Delta, Gunnison, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties. According to data from the Colorado Demography Office, population in the six-county UFO region was 262,594 in 2021. The six-county area comprised over 44 percent of the Western Slope's population. Population growth in the combined six-county area is expected to grow 11 percent between 2021 and 2030 and could grow by 34 percent, or by 89,240 residents, by 2050. These trends also mirror growth anticipated in the Central Western Slope region (Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties), which is expected to increase 9.1 percent in 2030 and 23.6 percent in 2050.

Geography	Historical Population*					Rate of Population Change (AARC)				Projected Population		
	1990	2000	2010	2020	2021	1990 to 2000	2000 to 2010	2010 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2030	2040	2050
Delta County	20,980	27,834	30,952	31,196	31,673	2.9%	1.1%	0.1%	1.5%	33,518	35,506	36,624
Gunnison County	10,273	13,956	15,324	16,918	17,298	3.1%	0.9%	1.0%	2.2%	18,561	19,870	20,773
Mesa County	93,145	116,255	146,723	155,703	157,323	2.2%	2.4%	0.6%	1.0%	176,032	202,388	221,563
Montrose County	24,423	33,432	41,276	42,679	43,178	3.2%	2.1%	0.3%	1.2%	48,201	53,418	55,571
Ouray County	2,295	3,742	4,436	4,874	5,046	5.0%	1.7%	0.9%	3.5%	5,282	5,526	5,880
San Miguel County	3,653	6,594	7,359	8,072	8,076	6.1%	1.1%	0.9%	0.0%	9,370	10,741	11,424
TOTAL, 6-County	154,769	201,813	246,070	259,442	262,594	2.7%	2.0%	0.5%	1.2%	290,965	327,449	351,834
Western Slope**	334,208	461,423	554,574	587,702	590,618	3.3%	1.9%	0.6%	0.5%	651,485	731,437	790,017
Colorado	3,294,393	4,301,261	5,029,196	5,773,714	5,814,707	2.7%	1.6%	1.4%	0.7%	6,416,217	7,073,418	7,486,286

Table 2 Population data for UFO Counties, 1990-2050 (source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office, 2023) *Data from 1990 to 2020 is derived from the Historical Census years, and 2021 data is derived from the Colorado Demography Office intercensal estimates.

**The Western Slope is defined using the Colorado Department of Local Affairs' State Demography Office definition including Archuleta, Delta, Dolores, Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Jackson, La Plata, Mesa, Moffat, Montezuma, Montrose, Ouray, Pitkin, Rio Blanco, Routt, San Juan, San Miguel, and Summit counties.

Population growth in the region, combined with economic growth and organic economic growth in many of the area's industries such as tourism, outdoor recreation, agriculture, and natural resources, is fueling recreation demand in the area. The area has several key economic drivers that attract larger employers and attract new residents and visitors. For example, Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction and Western Colorado University in Gunnison contribute more than \$600 million to the area's economy, annually^[1]. Students make up a large percentage of the younger population in Gunnison County and spend money on recreation, tourism, and retail. These large institutions are amenities that serve as attractors for new residents and businesses that are seeking a vibrant community with high quality of life.

The increase in visitors coming to the Western Slope is a vital and significant regional economic asset. This influx supports the region's growing tourism base. Visitors arrive via the Grand Junction Airport (GJT), Montrose Regional Airport (MTJ), Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport (GUC), and Telluride Regional Airport (TEX). Aviation-related businesses and facilities also spur economic vitality. According to the 2020 Economic Impact Study of Colorado Airports^[2], these four regional airports that support the six-county UFO region combined generate over \$1 billion in annual economic impact for Colorado and support over 7,700 jobs. Further, MTJ was one of Colorado's top growing airports for commercial airline passenger activity between 2015 and 2018, according to the Colorado Department of Transportation's Division of Aeronautics Annual Report.

Furthermore, MTJ is the busiest airport on the Western Slope^[3], serving as a "gateway for Montrose, the San Juan Mountains, and the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park." MTJ completed a \$37 million terminal expansion and remodel project in September 2023, including a

new concourse level, a larger baggage claim area, and more spacious waiting areas to support increasing and future passenger demand. Growth at these airports is expected to continue with enplanements forecasted to increase over the next several years.

The growing population base in the Western Slope and across the six-county area, along with the increase in visitation to the area, is anticipated to drive demand for developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. As a result, visitation to the UFO recreation sites over the next decade is projected to increase and may lead to demand for new and more accessible developed recreation sites. If not planned for and managed, this increase in use will lead to significant resource impacts. The addition of new infrastructure that encourages responsible recreation and accommodates demand for amenities would be supported by the funds generated from this fee implementation.

Visitor Demographics

Several indicators were used to provide insight into the type of visitors recreating at the UFO recreation sites. The 2010 Visitor Satisfaction Survey on the San Miguel River Special Recreation Management Area is the most up to date information UFO has on visitor demographics. This survey found that, in general, the typical user is a middle aged, college-educated white male from Colorado recreating in a small group for the day. Over half of the visitors were from Colorado and, of those visitors, a third were from Telluride or Mountain Village. Approximately 63% had visited the river before and tend to be frequent visitors.

The BLM also utilizes the U.S. Forest Service's National Visitor Use Monitoring Program (NVUM^[4]) 2019 data which provides detailed visitation socioeconomic data for nearby forests since socioeconomic data on BLM recreation users is unknown. NVUM survey results^[5] collected on the nearby Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) in fiscal year 2019 provide additional insight into the area's typical recreational user.

While these data are a few years old and collected on national forest system lands instead of BLM-managed lands, the survey remains one of the most accurate means for analyzing regionally specific data concerning recreational visitation.

The survey found:

- 31% of visitors were female and 69% were male
- 97% of visitors were white
- 17% of visitors were under 16
- 1% were 16-19
- 9% were 20-29
- 23% were 30-39
- 14% were 40-49
- 16% were 50-59
- 13% were 60-69
- 8% were 70 or older

Most visitors came from local areas with approximately 57% of visits by individuals who had traveled less than 50 miles to recreate. It is expected that UFO visitor demographics closely resemble the GMUG visitor demographics listed above and that the majority of use includes visitation from residents of the six-county area surrounding UFO recreation sites.

The table below examines the average income and poverty rates from 2017-2021 for Delta, Gunnison, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties, as well as age groups based on the *United States Census Bureau's* most recent 2021 American Community Survey data profiles of each of those counties.

Income and Poverty	Delta	Gunnison	Mesa	Montrose	Ouray	San Miguel	Average
Median household income (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$51,803	\$63,341	\$62,127	\$57,225	\$67,228	\$70,965	\$62,115
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$30,551	\$37,642	\$33,073	\$31,403	\$42,317	\$51,725	\$37,785
Persons in poverty, percent	13.9%	12.3%	10.6%	12.5%	6.4%	9.0%	10.8%

Table 3 Average Income and Poverty Rate of all counties within UFO's boundary Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey and Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program.

Season of Use

Most visitation to UFO recreation sites begins in April when snow melt raises the river levels and continues through November when snow begins to fall again. The UFO is especially busy from April to June and September to November due to desirable weather and terrain conditions. Visitors are drawn to UFO's lower elevation trails that are generally passable and in good condition throughout these months. While use does occur in summer and winter months, visitation is reduced due to hot weather, impassable or muddy roads and trails, reduced access due to wildlife or resource-driven seasonal road closures, and ample opportunities for desirable snow-based recreation activities on surrounding USFS managed lands.

Another factor that affects UFO's visitation is San Miguel and Dolores River flow rates. During years when snow melt and precipitation are high, river levels rise and attract an increase in use by fishermen and boaters. This flow-rate volatility and spike in visitor use specially occurs since the San Miguel is only boatable during high flows and the Dolores only runs every few years resulting in a flood of visitors who travel from across the country to boat the river.



Camping in the San Miguel River area is not as dramatically affected by the river flow as it is by festivals and large events that occur in Telluride. Many people camp on UFO managed lands to avoid expensive stays in town and for access to other recreational opportunities. Many festivals are held throughout the year, including the Telluride Bluegrass and Blues and Brews festivals. Fall Creek Campground and Caddis Flats Campground experience the most use during

these events due to their proximity to Telluride.

B. Applicable Land Use Plans

A Resource Management Plan (RMP) provides broad guidance for managing public lands. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) directs the BLM to develop RMPs as the primary means to identify and allow for appropriate uses of BLM-administered land. RMP decisions establish goals and objectives for resource management that guide future implementation decisions. The RMP also identifies measures necessary for achieving the outcomes, expressed as management actions and allowable uses, including any restrictions on uses. The [UFO Record of Decision & Approved Resource Management Plan](#) (2020) guides the management of the UFO recreation program.

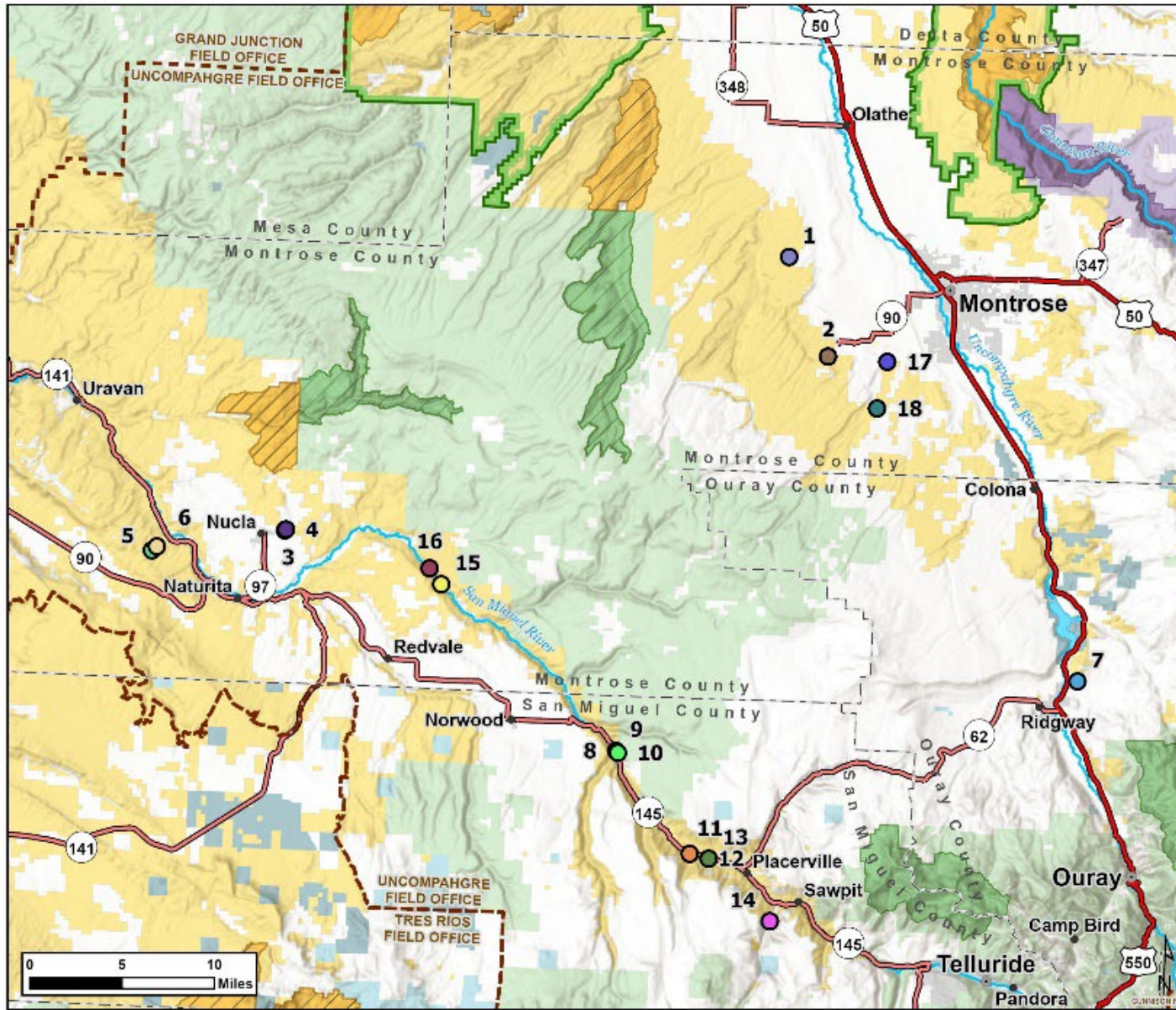
	Recreation and Visitor Services
REC-GOAL-01	Goal: Produce a diversity of quality recreational opportunities that support outdoor-oriented lifestyles and add to participants' quality of life, enhance the quality of local communities, and foster protection of natural and cultural resources.
REC-OBJ-01	Objective: Provide quality recreational opportunities and increase awareness, understanding, and a sense of stewardship in recreational users so their conduct safeguards cultural and natural resources as defined by Colorado Standards for Public Land Health and area-specific (e.g., ACECs and WSRs) objectives. Increase collaboration with community partners to maintain appropriate activity-based recreation opportunities in community growth areas (BLM-administered lands adjacent to, between, and surrounding communities; also referred to as wildland urban interface areas).
REC-MA-03	Action: Provide new and maintain existing facilities where needed to meet management objectives.
	Public Lands Not Designated as Recreation Management Areas
REC-OBJ-03	Objective: Provide for a diversity of quality, sustainable recreational opportunities consistent with other resources and uses, and contribute to local communities.
	Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs)
REC-SRMA-OBJ-01	Objective: Manage administratively designated areas (SRMAs) to provide for targeted recreation, experiences, and settings for personal, community, environmental, and economic activities.
	Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs)
REC-ERMA-OBJ-01	Objective: Manage administratively designated areas (ERMAs) to provide for targeted recreation opportunities.

Table 4 Recreation and Visitor Services Approved RMP Decisions.



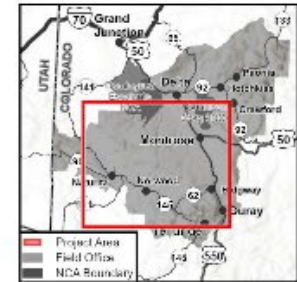
Recreation Fee Sites Business Plan

BLM Colorado | Southwest District | Uncompahgre Field Office



- 1-Rim Road
 - 2-Electric Hills Campground
 - 3-Nucla
 - 4-Nucla Campground
 - 5-Paradox Campground
 - 6-Paradox
 - 7-Ridgway Area Trails
 - 8-Lower Beaver Campground
 - 9-Lower Beaver
 - 10-Upper Beaver
 - 11-Specie Creek
 - 12-Caddis Flats
 - 13-Caddis Flats Campground
 - 14-Fall Creek Campground
 - 15-Ledges Rockhouse Campground
 - 16-Ledges Cottonwood Campground
 - 17-Buzzard Gulch
 - 18-Lower Spring Creek
- US Highway
 - State Highway
 - BLM Wilderness Area
 - BLM Wilderness Study Area
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - Bureau of Reclamation
 - National Park Service
 - Private
 - State, County, City Areas
 - US Forest Service
 - Incorporated Area

Map Produced by BLM Uncompahgre Field Office Staff
 File: 2024_UFO_BusinessPlan
 Date: 7/18/2024
 Map Scale: 1:500,000
 Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 13N
 CO Reference System: U.S. PLSS NMM / 6th M



DISCLAIMER: No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data. Decisions in this document only apply to BLM lands. Routes depicted on non-BLM lands are displayed for information purposes only and do not grant access to non-BLM lands.

Figure 6 Map of Fee Sites in UFO Business Plan

Description of Each Existing or Proposed Fee Site and Fee Area

Fee Site Descriptions

Rim Road Day Use Area: Located northwest of Montrose, Colorado Rim Road Day Use Area is the primary trailhead access for the Dry Creek Travel Management Area, with trails accommodating both motorized and non-motorized recreational use. Built in the fall of 2021, this day use area boasts expansive parking and large areas for future amenities. The Dry Creek area sees high volumes of recreational use, especially as one of the trail systems open all year round. From this day use area, visitors can access 92 miles of trails.

Electric Hills Campground: Located only a 15-minute drive outside of Montrose, CO, the Electric Hills non-motorized trail system, sits within a Juniper-Sagebrush area with views of the surrounding area. Trails here began construction in the Spring of 2021, with completion of the 17-mile trail system completed in 2023 scheduled for winter 2023. These new purpose-built single-track trails will bring an influx of new visitors to the area, with limited amenities. In addition to the non-motorized trails, it serves as the start/end point of the Rimrocker Trail, a popular motorized trail from Moab, Utah to Montrose. The BLM anticipates needing to build a campground on top of the nearby overlook to accommodate these visitors and reduce resource damage from dispersed camping.

Nucla Day Use Area and Campground: The existing Nucla Day Use Area serves as the primary access point from the town of Nucla, Colorado to BLM managed lands. It currently sees primarily local use although is connected to the Rim Rocker Trail (popular motorized trail from Moab, UT to Montrose, CO). As recreation increases on the West End of Montrose County, BLM anticipates adding a campground with approximately 10 sites to the existing day use area, as there is very limited developed camping opportunities in the adjacent communities of Nucla and Naturita, who are working to increase recreational tourism in the area.

Paradox Day Use Area and Campground: This is a future development site in the Paradox Valley ERMA south of the town of Naturita, CO. There is currently a proposal for approximately 50 miles of new single-track trails, some motorized and some non-motorized. Due to the limited facilities that exist in the area, BLM anticipates developing a campground along with robust day use trailhead facilities.

Ridgway Area Trails Day Use Area: Located just outside of Ridgway, Colorado, the Ridgway Area Trail System is regionally highly valued as a resource for non-motorized trail users. The trail system is directly adjacent to the Ridgway State Park and encompasses over 20 miles of great singletrack trails with excellent views of the Ridgway Reservoir and San Juan Mountains. The trails offer a range of experience level—expert, intermediate, and beginner.

Lower Beaver Day Use Area and Campground: This site is located off the Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic Byway along Colorado Hwy 145. It provides prime fishing and rafting access to the San Miguel River. There are three tent sites with tables and grills. Two parking areas will accommodate a few small RVs. A hand-carry boat launch is present, along with interpretive information and a double vault toilet.

Upper Beaver Day Use Area: This site is located off the Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic Byway along Colorado Hwy 145. It provides prime fishing and rafting access to the San Miguel River. The San Miguel River offers the whitewater boater a variety of runs, all within the class II+ to III range. Upper Beaver Creek site is a day use site for boat launching. The site includes a restroom, cabanas, picnic tables, and a boat ramp.

Caddis Flats Day Use Area and Campground: This site is located off the Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic Byway along Colorado Hwy 145. It provides prime fishing and rafting access to the San Miguel River. The canyon in this area makes the transition from forest to high desert and is quite scenic. The campground has three developed campsites, one with a cabana. Four parking areas will accommodate large RVs and boat trailer parking. There is a toilet but no drinking water. There is a hand-carry boat launch.

Specie Creek Day Use Area: This site is located off the Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic Byway along Colorado Hwy 145. It provides prime fishing and rafting access to the San Miguel River. It serves as the primary boat launch for the Specie Creek to Beaver Creek run and the end of the Down Valley Park to Specie Creek run. This section has a number of blind corners adding a little zip to the whitewater. This site has picnic tables, a boat launch, and a restroom.

Fall Creek Campground: A popular primitive campground for the summer season being only a short drive from Telluride, CO. Set back from the highway on Fall Creek Road, this site is popular for groups attending summer music events in Telluride. Currently the campground has 6 sites and a large ramada.

Ledges Cottonwood Campground: Located in groves of cottonwoods along the San Miguel River to the north of Norwood, CO. Cottonwood campground has 14 campsites. RV and tent sites, a few cabanas, picnic tables, grills, toilets, and hand-carry boat ramps. The river in this section flows over sandstone bedrock where rock ledges form large holes creating rapids during high water. The two Ledges Campgrounds provide excellent opportunities to access the river for recreation and gold panning.

Ledges Rockhouse Campground: Ledges Rockhouse Campground is one of several recreation sites along the San Miguel River. Just down the road from Ledges Cottonwood Campground north of Norwood, CO, Ledges Rockhouse offers a quality camping experience. The site includes a restroom, 12 RV or tent camping sites, cabanas, picnic tables, grills, and a boat ramp. Campgrounds provide excellent opportunities to access the river for recreation and gold panning.

Buzzard Gulch Day Use Area: Located just west of Montrose, Colorado, the Buzzard Gulch Trail System has evolved into a well-loved resource for non-motorized single track trail users. The landscape is classic canyon country -alternating between rocky and sandy terrain- with elevations ranging from 6,200 to 6,800 feet. Sparse pinyon, juniper, and big sagebrush offer limited opportunities for shade. The day use area sees heavy use all year long and allows access to about 10 miles of trails that connect into the Lower Spring Creek Trail System.

Lower Spring Creek Day Use Area: Located only 20 minutes west of Montrose, CO, the Lower Spring Creek Day Use Area is the main connection to the Lower Spring Creek Trail which is an 8-mile long, motorized single-track trail that connects to USFS managed lands on the

Uncompahgre Plateau. Initially the route begins on a two track, then follows an ATV trail that goes out to the rim of Spring Creek. The Lower Spring Creek Trail begins at the bottom of a big descent. The trail heads down canyon through a thick canopy of Pinyon and Juniper trees. Much of the trail is rocky and technical. It also connects to a total of 15 miles of trails on BLM managed lands. It can be done as an out and back from the north trailhead, but many riders shuttle the South Dave Wood Road section.

Fee Site Activities

The table below describes proposed fee site targeted activities. These targeted activities would guide how to utilize the funds generated to improve those opportunities.

Facility Name	Recreation Type	Targeted Activities	Recreation Management Area
Rim Road	Day Use Area	OHV use, mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding	Dry Creek
Electric Hills*	Campground*	Mountain biking, running, hiking, horseback riding and accessible trails using current and emerging adaptive equipment	
Nucla	Campground*	Camping	Not in RMA
Nucla	Day Use Area	Hiking and camping	
Paradox*	Campground*	OHV riding, mountain biking, hiking, rock climbing and bouldering, rafting, scenic touring, hunting	Paradox
Paradox*	Day Use Area*	Mountain biking, hiking, rock climbing and bouldering, rafting, scenic touring, hunting	
Ridgway Area Trails	Day Use Area	Day-use Mountain biking, running, and hiking	Ridgway Trails
Lower Beaver	Campground	Rafting, kayaking, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, camping, nonmotorized trail use, educational programs, and scenic driving	San Miguel
Lower Beaver	Day Use Area	Rafting, kayaking, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, camping, nonmotorized trail use, educational programs, and scenic driving	
Upper Beaver	Day Use Area	Rafting, kayaking, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, camping, nonmotorized trail use, educational programs, and scenic driving	
Caddis Flats	Campground	Rafting, kayaking, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, camping, nonmotorized trail use, educational programs, and scenic driving	
Caddis Flats	Day Use Area	Rafting, kayaking, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, camping, nonmotorized trail use, educational programs, and scenic driving	
Specie Creek	Day Use Area	Rafting, kayaking, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, camping, nonmotorized trail use, educational programs, and scenic driving	
Fall Creek	Campground	Rafting, kayaking, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, camping, nonmotorized trail use, educational programs, and scenic driving	
Ledges Cottonwood	Campground	Rafting, kayaking, fishing, camping, and educational programs	
Ledges Rockhouse	Campground	Rafting, kayaking, fishing, camping, and educational programs	
Buzzard Gulch	Day Use Area	Mountain biking, running, hiking, and educational programs	
Lower Spring Creek	Day Use Area	Mountain biking, running, hiking, and educational programs	

Table 5 Proposed Recreation Fee Areas with targeted activities per RMZ and RMA. *Indicates Proposed Developed Day Use Sites and Proposed Developed Campgrounds.

The proposed fee areas target recreational activities that require additional management and infrastructure, as well as those activities that are not already linked to a different funding source. New non-motorized trail systems are in high demand in the UFO based on the current number of proposals being received from the public.

The Uncompahgre Field Office Resource Management Plan Recreation Goal 1 is as follows: *Produce a diversity of quality recreational opportunities that support outdoor-oriented lifestyles and add to participants’ quality of life, enhance the quality of local communities, and foster protection of natural and cultural resources.* See [Appendix 11.2](#) for Fee Site descriptions and pictures.

Proposed Recreation Fee Rates

A. Current and Proposed Standard and Expanded Amenity Fees

Standard Amenity Recreation Fees (apply to Day Use Areas), authorized by section 6802(f) of the FLREA, cover areas that provide significant opportunities for outdoor recreation that have substantial Federal investments; where fees can be efficiently collected; and that contain all of the following amenities: (1) designated developed parking, (2) a permanent toilet facility, (3) a permanent trash receptacle, (4) interpretive sign, exhibit, or kiosk, (5) picnic tables, (6) security services.

Expanded Amenity Recreation Fees, authorized by section 6802(g) of the FLREA, cover the use of developed campgrounds that provide at least a majority of the following: (1) tent or trailer spaces, (2) picnic tables, (3) drinking water, (4) access roads, (5) the collection of the fee by an employee or agent of the Federal land management agency, (6) reasonable visitor protection, (7) refuse containers, (8) toilet facilities, (9) simple devices for containing a campfire.

Recreation Site	Existing Fee	Proposed Fee
Standard Amenity Fee at Developed Day-Use Sites		
Lower Beaver, Specie Creek, Caddis Flats, Ridgway Area Trails, Buzzard Gulch, Lower Spring Creek, Rim Road, And Upper Beaver	\$0	\$4/vehicle
Standard Amenity Fee at Proposed Developed Day-Use Sites		
Paradox	\$0	\$4/vehicle
Site Specific Standard Amenity Pass (Annual Day-Use Pass)		
All Day-Use Sites	\$0	\$20/year
Expanded Amenity Fee at Existing Developed Campgrounds		
Lower Beaver, Caddis Flats, Fall Creek, Ledges Cottonwood, Ledges Rockhouse	\$0	\$12/night
Expanded Amenity Fee at Proposed Developed Campgrounds		
Electric Hills Rim, Nucla, Paradox	\$0	\$12/night

Table 6 UFO Recreation Fee Proposal based on Fair Market Value

The \$4 Day Use Fee would be per vehicle and the \$12 Campground Fee would be per site per night. Each campground would have a certain number of vehicles allowed at each site, and \$12 fee would cover the allotted number of vehicles. Some campgrounds will have larger sites, allowing for more vehicles than campgrounds with smaller sites, and the appropriate number of vehicles would be determined on a case-by-case basis. Fees would be implemented upon the development of the amenities necessary to meet the requirements of FLREA. These fees would allow UFO to meet the goals and objectives set by FLREA, the BLM and the RMP including, but not exclusive to, the improvement of recreation sites and access to recreation opportunities which would ensure the quality and enjoyment to natural and cultural resources surrounding these areas.

Visitors would be required to pay day-use fees per vehicle and camping fees per site per night at the recreation sites listed in Table 10. They also have the option to pay for an annual pass that includes access to all day-use sites for 12 months from the date of purchase. Campsites will remain first-come-first serve.

To ensure UFO can manage annual operating costs for proposed recreation fee areas with increased inflation, UFO would continually analyze revenue-to-cost ratio. To account for inflation or other economic changes, this business plan also proposes tying the new fee structure to the consumer price index. Fees would be reviewed annually against this index. Fees could be increased or decreased in \$2 increments if supported by the index. The BLM will keep the RAC informed of fee adjustments based on the Western U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI) and update the RAC on successes and challenges in using the CPI.

Standard and Expanded amenities are described for each site in Table 7 below.

Facility Name	Type	Standard Amenities										Expanded Amenities									
		Opportunities for outdoor recreation	Substantial Federal investments	Fees can be efficiently collected	Contains all the following amenities:	Designated developed parking	A permanent toilet facility	Permanent trash receptacle	Interpretive sign, exhibit, or kiosk	Picnic tables	Security services	A majority of the following:	Tent or trailer spaces	Picnic tables	Drinking water	Access roads	The collection of the fee	Reasonable Visitor Protection	Refuse containers	Toilet facilities	Devices for containing a campfire
Rim Road	Day Use Area	P	P	F	F	P	F	F	P	P	P										
Electric Hills*	Campground*											F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Nucla*	Campground*											F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Nucla*	Day Use Area	P	P	F	F	P	F	F	P	P	P										
Paradox*	Campground*											F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Paradox*	Day Use Area	P	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F										
Ridgway Area Trails	Day Use Area	P	P	F	F	P	P	F	P	P	P										
Lower Beaver	Day Use Area	P	P	F	F	P	P	F	P	P	P										
Lower Beaver	Campground											P	P	P	P	F	P	F	P	P	

Upper Beaver	Day Use Area	P	P	F	F	P	P	F	P	P	P										
Caddis Flats	Campground											P	P	P		P	F	P	F	P	P
Caddis Flats	Day Use Area	P	P	F	F	P	P	F	P	P	P										
Specie Creek	Day Use Area	P	P	F	F	P	P	F	P	P	P										
Fall Creek	Campground											P	P	P		P	F	P	F	F	P
Ledges Cottonwood	Campground											P	P	P		P	F	P	F	P	P
Ledges Rockhouse	Campground											P	P	P		P	F	P	F	P	P
Buzzard Gulch	Day Use Area	P	P	F	F	P	F	F	P	P	P										
Lower Spring Creek	Day Use Area	P	P	F	F	P	F	F	P	F	P										

Table 7 Current and Proposed Standard and Expanded Amenities P is Present, and F is Future. *Indicates Proposed Developed Day Use Sites and Proposed Developed Campgrounds

B. Planned Fee Adjustments Methodology with Consumer Price Index Target

None of the costs associated with the management of these sites are fixed. As inflation increases, the costs of labor, materials, contractors, and supplies all increase at a commensurate rate.

To keep up with rising management and maintenance costs, the field office will implement the new fee structure and the following year will begin using the average annual Western U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI) to make future fee adjustments to account for inflation and other economic changes. The BLM will use the CPI the year after the collection of fees is implemented. Adjustments will be made in \$2 increments for campground fees and \$1 increments for day-use fees.

For example, with a \$20 fee for individual campsites, a 10 percent increase in the Western U.S. CPI would lead to a \$2 increase in fees to \$22. Typically, the Western U.S. CPI increases approximately 3 percent a year. Thus, it would likely take 4 years to increase the fees by \$2.

The UFO will use various e-commerce technologies, as directed in Instruction Memorandum 2022-019, to provide recreation visitors opportunities to find, acquire, and pay for a campsite and day use within the field office. Most of these options are currently provided through the interagency reservation service Recreation.gov. E-commerce technologies may change as federal contracts change so any future e-commerce platforms would apply to this plan.

If the UFO decides to make reservation services or other types of e-commerce (scan and pay) options available in the future, a service fee for reservation services would be charged in addition to any other standard or expanded amenity fees in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(G). The amount of the service fee is charged by the contractor. Current service fees can range from \$0.50 to \$10.00. The service fee is subject to contracting requirements on Recreation.gov. For visitors who wish to not pay the expanded amenity fee for reservation services, the traditional iron ranger with RUP envelope will exist until the field office moves the fee area completely to e-commerce and/or the RUP envelope is no longer available for payment.

C. Visitation at Proposed Recreation Fee Sites

The UFO does not consistently collect comprehensive visitor use information. The most recent completed survey on visitor use collected by UFO comes from a **2010 Visitor Satisfaction Survey on the San Miguel River Recreation Area**. This survey found that approximately 65% of visitors stayed only for one day. As of 2022, surveys are being conducted to monitor visitor use at individual recreation sites. These surveys would allow the BLM to better understand visitor activity on a site-by-site basis. Until the data is collected for multiple seasons, UFO assumes that 35% of visitors camped and 65% were day use.

Facility Name	Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	5-Year Average
Rim Road	Day Use Area	17,083	25,624	22,514	10,930	16,205	18,471
Electric Hills*	Campground*			2,800	3,350	4,157	3,435
Nucla*	Campground*	551	634	637	4,412	3,755	1,998
Nucla*	Day Use Area	1,024	1,177	1,183	8,194	10,729	4,461
Paradox*	Campground*				2,255	2,795	2,525
Paradox*	Day Use Area				4,188	5,192	4,690
Ridgway Area Trails	Day Use Area	5,023	11,000	20,157	26,792	28,931	18,381
Lower Beaver	Campground	280	140	3,677	5,014	4,813	2,785
Lower Beaver	Day Use Area	521	261	6,829	9,313	8,938	5,172
Upper Beaver	Day Use Area	31,030	9,683	16,414	7,689	7,926	14,548
Caddis Flats	Campground	299	1,890	8,418	5,217	5,366	4,238
Caddis Flats	Day Use Area	556	3,510	15,633	9,688	9,965	7,870
Specie Creek	Day Use Area	15,411	4,842	6,227	3,904	5,282	7,133
Fall Creek	Campground	993	993	10,552	9,530	9,819	6,377
Ledges Cottonwood	Campground	1,585	1,286	2,288	2,147	1,724	1,806
Ledges Rockhouse	Campground	1,462	1,169	3,334	3,607	3,201	2,555
Buzzard Gulch	Day Use Area	7,300	10,800	17,626	19,975	14,612	14,063
Lower Spring Creek	Day Use Area	2,007	6,002	11,390	13,331	8,664	8,279

Table 8 Visitation Use Numbers. *Indicates Proposed Developed Day Use Sites and Proposed Developed Campgrounds

RMIS does not have visitor numbers for the proposed developed day use sites or campgrounds, so Nucla and Paradox visitor numbers were based on traffic counters in the area. Electric Hills proposed campground was based on 35% of the visitation at the Electric Hills Trailhead.

In FY21 traffic counters were installed leading to more accurate visitor use numbers. In Table 7, the visitation at the proposed fee sites for FY21-23 is greater than was estimated before the introduction of traffic counters, even though the total of all visits (Figure 4) shows a decrease in visits based on traffic counter data, indicating visits to the developed recreation sites proposed for fee establishment were underestimated. Within the UFO sites that provide trail-based recreation opportunities, especially those with non-motorized trails, have seen significant visitation increases over the last few years. This trend is expected to continue with the rise of e-bikes and as mountain bike technology improves. The UFO continues to see a high demand for mountain bike centric trail systems due to its proximity to popular riding areas like Moab, UT and Fruita, CO.

Current Operating Costs

The operating costs depicted below in Table 8 summarize total obligations for the UFO (LLCOS05000) including equipment, labor, other contractual services, printing and reproduction, rent, communications, utilities, supplies, materials, vehicles and their maintenance, and travel.

Fiscal Year	Labor	Operations	Vehicle	Total
2017	\$162,153	\$46,598	\$26,477	\$235,229
2018	\$136,265	\$132,495	\$35,428	\$304,188
2019	\$198,638	\$10,146	\$63,549	\$272,334
2020	\$239,560	\$86,056	\$24,344	\$349,960
2021	\$323,222	\$37,714	\$24,178	\$385,114
5-Year Average	\$211,968	\$62,602	\$34,795	\$309,365

Table 9 Operating costs for the UFO LLCOS05000 fee account

As shown in the table, labor costs are trending higher. This is due to increased staffing levels, higher pay for park rangers (moving from GS-5 seasonals to GS-7 career seasonals), and increasing cost of living adjustments. Operations costs can vary significantly year to year,



Figure 7 Specie Creek Day-Use Area's vault toilets managed under LLCOS05000

especially when large amounts of aging equipment need to be replaced, or large projects are occurring across the recreation sites.

Revenue

A. Existing Revenue

The Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) currently has no fee structure to generate the revenue necessary to meet increasing visitor usage and improve the visitor recreation experience within the UFO administrative boundary. This plan seeks the establishment of a fee program for existing and proposed recreation sites to meet visitor demands.

B. Anticipated Revenue

The proposed fee sites have historically generated \$0 in revenue to cover basic amenities and maintenance. With a 100% fee compliance rate, revenue based on the average visitation from FY18-22 would generate a net profit of up to \$156,069 after covering basic maintenance and operating costs. These additional funds would be used to support trail development adjacent to fee sites, improve recreation site amenities, conduct site maintenance and improvements, provide interpretation and education programs and materials, and fund law enforcement and additional park ranger capacity as needed for response to sudden changes in use or increase in resource damage.

C. Priorities for Future Expenditures

Amenity	Quantity	Item Price	Total Price
Fee Tube	8	\$1,700.00	\$13,600.00
Vault Toilet	8	\$34,122.07	\$272,976.56
Picnic Table	36	\$1,000.00	\$36,000.00
Fire Rings (per campsite)	35	\$290.00	\$10,150.00
Grade and Shape (per campsite)	35	\$2,023.00	\$70,805.00
Gravel (per campsite)	35	\$11,580.00	\$405,300.00
3.5 mi Gravel Road (per campground)	3	\$263,900.00	\$791,700.00
Engineering	3	\$33,408.00	\$100,224.00
New Road Estimate	3	\$58,000.00	\$174,000.00
Vehicle	3	\$3,588.00	\$10,764.00
Post and Cable (250ft per site)	15	\$2,755.00	\$41,325.00
Total Over Time			\$1,926,844.56

Table 10 Breakdown of Future Expenditures for Amenity Establishment, Quantities are based on individual site needs.

Fees will be implemented at individual sites when they have all the amenities. In the UFO this will be an incremental approach, prioritizing the lowest costs to meet the amenities requirements sites, and then new sites later. The BLM's goal is to use 100 percent of fee revenue at the site of collection, provided the funds can be used efficiently and effectively. The priorities for use of fee revenue are, first, to provide benefits at the site of collection; second, to establish new recreation

sites on lands managed by the same field office that manages the site of collection; and third, to offset existing and new BLM recreation site costs within the same state as the site of collection. Establishing fee areas in increments would allow the proposed fee areas to pay for themselves over time and a slow introduction of fees in the UFO.

To annually maintain added fee facilities and amenities, UFO hopes to add a permanent GS-7 Ranger, two seasonal GS-7 rangers (at least one ranger would be spending a majority of their time supporting the fee program), trash collection and vault pumping services, as well as volunteer camp hosts. This would create an additional annual expense of about \$161,773 with supplies included. UFO would expand capacity to enforce fee compliance and security services at developed sites, by financially supporting the Law Enforcement program as they add a second officer.

DRAFT

Analysis of Recreation Fee Rates

In accordance with BLM Directive H-2930-1, the UFO adheres to guidelines for establishing fair and equitable fees using the Cost Recovery and Fair Market Value methodologies.

Cost Recovery Method

This approach calculates fee rates to recover projected annual operating and maintenance costs associated with UFO's recreation sites. By accurately estimating these costs, UFO ensures that fees contribute directly to sustaining and enhancing site infrastructure and services.

Fair Market Value Method

In contrast, the Fair Market Value method establishes fee rates comparable to those charged at similar federal, state, and local recreation sites. This method helps UFO remain competitive in the regional recreation market while aligning fees with visitor expectations and market conditions.

A. Cost Recovery Fee Calculation Method:

To predict the revenue that would be generated by the proposed fee areas, accurate and consistent visitor counting data is necessary. Visitor data from 2021 and 2022 is more accurate than the data collected from 2018 to 2020.

However, with no fees established in these areas, there is not information to estimate fee compliance. Since these would be all new fees, UFO is estimating between 50% and 100% fee compliance. This range was used to predict the revenue produced by the proposed recreation fee sites.

	Operating Costs	Revenue 50% Fee Compliance	Revenue 100% Fee Compliance	Revenue-to-Cost Difference
5-Year Average	\$309,365	\$0	\$0	-\$309,365
Projected with Fees	\$471,137	\$360,453	\$720,905	-\$110,684 to \$249,768

Table 11 Projected costs and revenue including current operating costs for LLCOS05000 assuming full campground occupancy.

The proposed fee sites have generated \$0 in revenue over the last five years. The funds that maintain the current operating costs would remain, so the revenue generated by the proposed fee areas only needs to generate enough to maintain the amenities. With a 100% fee compliance rate, revenue based on the average visitation from FY19-23 would generate a net profit of up to \$249,768. These additional funds could be used to support trail development adjacent to sites, more amenities, site maintenance and improvements, interpretation and educational programs and materials, and funding towards additional law enforcement support.

B. Fair Market Value Fee Calculation Method:

The Fair Market Value assessment approach compares the fees charged at campgrounds and day use sites near UFO recreation sites, including privately-owned campgrounds (Tables 13 and 14).

Site	Agency	Campground Fee	Amenities
UFO Campgrounds	BLM- Uncompahgre Office	\$12/night	Fire Rings/Grills, Picnic Tables, Tent/Trailer Camping, Trash Collection, Vault Toilets
Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park	National Park Service	Standard Camping fee: \$16/night, plus reservation fee; Electric: \$22/night, plus reservation fee	Accessible, Fire Rings/Grills, Hosts, Potable Water, Reservations, Trash collection, Vault Toilets
The Gate Campground	BLM- Gunnison Office	\$10/night	Drinking water, Picnic Tables, Tent Camping, Trailer Camping, Vault Toilets
Dinner Station Campground	USFS- Gunnison RD	\$18/night	Picnic Tables, Potable Handpump Reservations, Tent camping, Vault Toilet
18 Road/North Fruita Desert Campground	Bureau of Land Management	\$20/site/night	Vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings
Iron Springs Campground	USFS- Ouray Ranger District	\$16/night	Picnic Tables, Tent camping, Vault Toilet
Quartz Campground	USFS- Gunnison RD	\$10/night	Picnic Tables, Tent camping, Vault Toilet
Ridgway State Park	Colorado Parks and Wildlife	April 1 to October 31: \$28-\$90; Nov. 1 to March 30: \$18-\$60	Boat Ramp, Drinking Water, Electric Hook-Ups, fire Ring/ Grills, Flush Toilets, Internet, Picnic Tables, Reservations, RV Sanitary Stations, Showers
Telluride Town Park Campground	Privately Owned	\$28-\$49.00/night	Bathrooms, Picnic tables, Tent camping, RV camping, Showers, Water

Table 12 Fair Market Value Table for Campgrounds

As Table 11 highlights, the proposed fee of \$12 a night for a campsite is congruent with other regional campgrounds with similar amenities. Table 14 (below) shows how the proposed fee of \$4 a day for a day use site or \$20 for an annual pass is similar to other sites in the region.

Site	Agency	Day-Use Fee/ Annual Day-Use Pass	Amenities
UFO Day Use-Sites	BLM- Uncompahgre Field Office	\$4 per vehicle/day	Picnic Tables, Vault Toilets, Trash Collection, Fire Rings/Grills, Accessible, Boat Ramp
		\$20 Annual Day-Use Pass	
Upper Colorado River Recreation Area	BLM- Kremmling Field Office	\$5 per vehicle/day	Boat Ramp, Picnic Tables, Vault Toilets
Guffey Gorge/ Paradise Cove	BLM- Royal Gorge Field Office	\$6 per vehicle/day between May 15 to September 30	Picnic Tables, Trash Collection, Vault toilets
Box Canon Falls	City of Ouray, CO	Age 17 under \$3, Adults \$5, Seniors 62-74 \$4, Super Seniors (75+) and children 3 and younger are admitted free	Restrooms, Picnic tables
Ridgway State Park	Colorado Parks and Wildlife	\$9 per vehicle/day	Boat Ramp, Fire ring/Grills, Flush Toilets, Showers,
		\$80 Annual Day-Use Pass	
		\$29 Annual Keep Colorado Wild Vehicle Pass	
Crawford State Park	Colorado Parks and Wildlife	\$9 per vehicle/day \$4 per walk-in/day	Boat Ramp, Fire Ring/Grills, Flush Toilets, Drinking Water, Picnic Tables, Outdoor Showers
		\$80 Annual Day-Use Pass	
		\$29 Annual Keep Colorado Wild Vehicle Pass	
Black Canyon of the Gunnison	National Park Service	\$30 per vehicle/day	Potable Water, Trash Collection, Vault toilets
		\$80 America the Beautiful Annual Pass	
Mesa Lakes Picnic Site	USFS- Grand Valley RD	\$6 per vehicle/day	Accessible, Picnic tables, Vault toilet
Beaver Lake Campground	USFS- Ouray Ranger District	\$4 day for day use in a campsite	Picnic Tables, Vault Toilets

Table 13 Fair Market Value Table for Day Use Areas

C. Fee Discounts

FLREA provided for the establishment of a single interagency national pass known as the America the Beautiful Pass – the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Holders of any America the Beautiful Interagency Pass will not need to separately pay standard amenity fees (day-use fees) because the Pass covers those fees. The Interagency Senior and Access passes provide holders with a 50% discount on expanded amenity fees, including overnight camping fees at campgrounds managed by UFO.

Based on both the cost recovery and fair market value calculations, UFO has determined that its proposed fees are fair, equitable, and consistent with FLREA. The proposed fees are projected to generate sufficient revenue to cover operating costs if fee compliance is approximately 75% or

higher. The proposed fees are also in line with, and slightly lower than, the fees charged by other campgrounds and day use sites in the region, even accounting for available amenities.

Impacts from Charging Recreation Fee Rates

Consistent with the Department of the Interior and BLM priorities, the UFO seeks to achieve environmental justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and make a difference in Western Slope 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.

UFO thoroughly considered the potential impacts from establishing fees at the proposed sites. The following is an analysis of the potential impacts to the public, environment, and local economies from establishing and not establishing recreation fees.

A. Impacts on visitors

High quality recreation opportunities in the Western Slope of Colorado are valued by local communities, as well as statewide and nationwide visitors. Recreational opportunities, including camping on public lands, are major reasons many residents choose to live in the area. The BLM expects the demand for camping, and associated recreation on public lands, to only increase in the future. As site visitation increases, it is becoming difficult to maintain the proposed recreation sites in their current condition without fee revenues. Implementing fees at the proposed recreation sites would improve the quality of the campgrounds and day-use areas. More amenities such as restrooms, fire rings, and trash collection services would be installed and would aid in the comfort and convenience for visitors and help protect on site and adjacent

resources from human waste, trash and debris, and wildfire risk. Fees ultimately help to enable responsible recreation, thus protecting the environment for present and future visitors.

UFO currently has park rangers shared with the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area and for motorized trails through Colorado Parks and Wildlife OHV grants but lacks sufficient on the ground support at the San Miguel River sites and at non-motorized trailheads. With the establishment of fees, UFO would hire additional rangers and recruit campground hosts that would be dedicated to these areas. The revenue generated from the proposed recreation fees would also allow for better maintenance of these facilities. Dedicated park rangers and volunteer campground hosts at UFO recreation fee areas would aid in the improvement of facilities as well as increase public safety with a stronger on-site presence. Staff and volunteer presence would also increase fee compliance and support BLM Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) by notifying them of any issues. UFO understands that our existing LEO resources are limited, and hopes that these fees could assist in funding additional LEO support. In the short term there would be limited criminal enforcement of fee compliance and the primary mechanism for compliance would be staff and volunteers.

B. Impacts on Natural Resources

The increased presence of staff would additionally aid in protecting and preserving natural resources. Without recreation fees, UFO lacks the personnel to consistently monitor the use of the recreation areas. Dumping on public lands is an issue in the UFO, and fees could be used to assist in anti-dumping campaigns and hazmat cleanup efforts. Fees could also support adding a secondary law enforcement officer which would allow for increased presence and hopefully a reduction in illegal activities.

Misuse and damage of resources within the recreation areas is not always intentional; sometimes visitors do not realize the potential impact of their actions. More educational signs and interpretive rangers would be used to explain how to use the lands without harming them. Trash services would be provided to reduce littering and help keep the area clean.

While the fees could support protection of natural resources, building new facilities such as restrooms or entire campgrounds has the potential to disrupt the environment. Therefore, consideration has been put into where campgrounds and new amenities should be built to minimize impacts on natural resources.

All three areas where campgrounds are being proposed currently see consistent dispersed camping. These proposed areas have had human waste as well as trash dumping issues. Many spots in these areas have already been disturbed by those staying for extended periods of time and have continued to expand as recreation visitation continues to increase. Campground sites would be constructed to utilize spots already disrupted to minimize further damage. Developing these campgrounds would help manage and prevent further misuse and expansion of these areas.

UFO conducts National Environmental Policy Act analysis before establishing new campgrounds.

C. Nonmarket Values and Benefits

The term nonmarket values refers to the benefits individuals attribute to experiences of the environment or uses of natural and cultural resources that do not involve market transactions, and therefore lack prices. Examples include the perceived benefits received from wildlife viewing, hiking in a wilderness, camping in a semi-wild setting with friends and family, or recreational hunting. Nevertheless, such values are important to consider because they help tell the entire economic story. Estimates of nonmarket values supplement estimates of income generated from commodity uses to provide a more complete picture of the economic implications of proposed resource management decisions.

Numerous studies document that individuals are often willing to pay more than their actual costs for a particular recreational experience. This is termed *consumer surplus* or *net willingness to pay*, and consists of the amount an individual would have been willing to pay for an environmental benefit minus the amount actually expended.

For instance, hikers pay a market price for gasoline used to reach a trail but may pay nothing to use the trail itself. Similarly, campers may pay a fee for this activity, but may be willing to pay more due to the “free” economic benefit accruing to this experience. Any amount that a recreationist would be willing to pay to use this otherwise free or underpriced resource represents the nonmarket consumer surplus value of that resource to that consumer.

Nonmarket use values have been studied extensively for a wide variety of recreation “goods.” A recent study^[6] commissioned by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) examined studies designed to measure consumer surplus for a wide variety of recreation activities that typically occur on USFS lands, including camping at developed sites. Although the examined studies show a large degree of variation across geographies, they do show considerable degrees of consumer surplus for the studied activities. Of interest to the current project, the authors determined that camping in developed campgrounds, or sites with development amenities such as fire pits, electricity, toilets, picnic tables, and parking, on USFS land produced an average consumer surplus of \$35.28 per visitor day in the Rocky Mountain Region. This represents the amount of benefit campers are receiving above and beyond the actual fee charged. These average value estimates are what we would expect the economic benefit to be in the UFO, conditional on available information and holding all else constant.

Although one may quibble with the various methodologies these studies employ, it is well documented that recreationists are deriving value well beyond the fees charged.

D. Impacts on local economies

The economies in the six-county area are heavily dependent upon tourism, and each county stands to benefit from more recreation opportunities. Many tourists and locals alike prefer to camp at public campgrounds and are looking for reasonably priced fee sites. The BLM proposes to expand provision of amenities in response to increased visitation and associated impacts. Thus, increased fee sites are an indicator of increased visitation which represents a boon to gateway communities and their local businesses. Visitors typically contribute to local economies

on their way to and from public lands through the purchase of lodging and a variety of consumables (e.g., fuel, food, equipment, etc.). Facilities that meet the needs of visitors are likely to continue to attract visitation and result in an economic benefit to local communities and the economy.

Many of UFO’s visitors are locals. In 2020, the Nucla Station Coal Plant was shut down, causing a major loss of jobs and a downturn in the local economy. The implementation of a recreation fee at sites along the San Miguel River and in the West End has the potential to impact those who have already experienced the loss of income in the last two years. However, this same community has been working with BLM to expand tourism opportunities to increase economic opportunities. Taking this into consideration, this plan proposes rates that range lower on the fair market value chart to ensure continued accessibility.

This plan intentionally does not propose fees at all sites within UFO, including those that would require very little development to meet amenity fee requirements. This plan is also proposing a \$20 annual day-use pass that would allow users, especially locals, to avoid everyday fees that would add up. The implementation of fees may also aid in the local economy, not only by providing more jobs, but by supporting local infrastructure and attracting more visitors to the areas providing a better-quality recreation experience who then aid in economic flow to local areas.

E. Socioeconomic impacts, especially on low-income populations and environmental justice communities

Recreation on BLM-administered lands supported \$1.4 billion in economic output and 11,000 jobs in Colorado in FY21. Colorado’s 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) was developed in close collaboration with a wide range of partners to provide a shared vision for the future of Colorado’s outdoors. Surveys conducted as part of SCORP are used to identify recreation participation in Colorado regionally and statewide for residents of the state. Studies found that 92% of all adult residents engaged in outdoor recreational activities in 2019.

The socioeconomic data on BLM recreation users is unknown; however, the U.S. Forest Service’s National Visitor Use Monitoring Program (NVUM) 2019 data provides detailed visitation socioeconomic data for nearby forests including the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests adjacent to BLM-managed public lands. Over 73% of visitors traveled to these forests to recreate. The majority of visitors traveled from the nearby area. Specifically, 57 percent of visitation is from the area within 50 miles, while 43 percent of visitation is from over 51 miles.

The NVUM study further asked visitors to report their household incomes by category. The following data was gathered:

Annual Household Income Category	National Forest Visits (%)
Under \$25,000	4.7
\$25,000 to \$49,999	11.3

\$50,000 to \$74,999	20.0
\$75,000 to \$99,999	12.8
\$100,000 to \$149,999	11.4
More than \$150,000	39.8

Table 14 Annual household income of visitors traveling to Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests.

Many tourists prefer to camp at public campgrounds; capacity at adjacent National Forest campgrounds is exceeded for the majority of the camping season. These campers rely on BLM and private campgrounds as many cannot afford the high cost of hotel accommodations in the area or would prefer developed camping to dispersed camping. Those who vacation away from home are more likely to be above average in income and, in particular, recreation visitors to the area have a higher-than-average income profile than the population at large. As indicated in Table 15 above, 64% of household incomes exceed \$75,000 that are visiting nearby forests. Furthermore, BLM campgrounds offer a very low-cost alternative to staying in a hotel in the area (where prices can range from \$90 to over \$500 per room per night during the season). This low-cost alternative is particularly important at the group sites, where groups can enjoy the amenities of the area at a very low cost.

A priority set by [BLM](#) is “to ensure that all families now and into the future have equal opportunity” to access recreation activities provided by public lands. Without the establishment of recreation fees, UFO may struggle to meet this priority. The UFO understands that adding fees may cause an additional financial burden on some visitors which is why the annual pass is proposed to allow for repeat visitors to have a minimal fee per visit.

The fees would also be used to create more inclusive recreation sites allowing for easier access for all types of vehicles and more amenities for first time visitors. The UFO would also consider adding low cost group campsites, which research indicates appeal to many minority populations ([USFS Study](#)).

Impacts to low-income or minority populations are not expected to be significant, as there are other free dispersed camping areas managed by the BLM and the nearby US Forest Service’s Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests. Furthermore, there are discounted rates (50%) for camping for seniors and those with disabilities. An environmental justice screening was completed for Delta, Gunnison, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties. Based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) data as used by EPA’s EJScreen tool (U.S. EPA 2023; U.S. Census Bureau 2022), Delta, Gunnison, Mesa, Montrose, and San Miguel Counties have low-income populations that meet the criteria for being identified as having environmental justice populations compared with the state reference.

Geography	Low Income*#	Minority*
Delta County	37.1 percent	20.0 percent
Gunnison County	30.6 percent	14.4 percent
Mesa County	30.2 percent	19.8 percent
Montrose County	29.0 percent	24.8 percent

Ouray County	17.7 percent	7.9 percent
San Miguel County	28.7 percent	14.9 percent
Colorado (Reference area) ^{^#}	23.6 percent	33.2 percent 36.5 percent (MGA)

Table 15 UFO counties environmental justice baseline data. MGA is Meaningfully Greater Analysis...

* EPA EJScreen: <http://www.epa.gov/ejscreen> (accessed 10/04/2023); BLM EJ Mapping Tool.

Note: A minority community of concern is present if the percentage of the population identified as belonging to a minority group in a study area is 1) equal to or greater than 50 percent of the population OR 2) meets the “meaningfully greater” threshold. Meaningfully greater is calculated by comparing the minority group population percentage with 110 percent of the reference area minority population. A low-income community of concern is present if 1) the population experiencing poverty in one or more study area geographies are near, at, or below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold of the reference area OR 2) if the population of the community experiencing poverty is at or above 50 percent.

[^] Headwaters Economics BLM EPS and SEP: <https://headwaterseconomics.org/tools/blm-profiles/> (accessed 10/04/2023)

[#] American Community Survey, 5-Year 2017-2021 Estimates: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table> (accessed 10/04/2023)

One reason why UFO may be experiencing a disparity in racial and ethnic use is the type of activities the Recreation Management Areas target. Visitors must be able to afford all equipment necessary to participate in activities provided by recreation areas; this can make outdoor recreation especially difficult for environmental justice populations. In establishing recreation fees, UFO would look to increase outreach programs, improve inclusivity of informative material such as providing information in Spanish, and create more robust partnerships specifically at the proposed recreation fee areas. Outreach programs would vary to target a range of visitors to include those outside the typical visitor demographic.

Public Outreach

Pursuant to guidelines provided by BLM Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook H-2930-1 Chapter 2, Section II.B.2 and FLREA Section 6803, UFO intends to involve the public in decisions about the fee project design and allocation of fee revenue through the following:

- Public notice of the fees and fee areas would be published in the Federal Register for a minimum of 6 months prior to implementation.
- The draft Uncompahgre Field Office Recreation Business Plan would be posted to <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-fees/business-plans>, for a minimum of 30 days for public comment.
- News releases would be provided to local news outlets, informing the public of the proposed fee changes, requesting public comment, and providing information on how and where the public can participate.
- Flyers in Spanish and English informing the public of the proposed fee changes, requesting public comment, and providing information on how and where the public can participate would be posted at proposed fee areas and local areas.
- The Public would be able to provide feedback by phone, email, or written correspondence.
- Completed projects at fee areas would be publicized on the BLM UFO Website.
- UFO would present the Uncompahgre Field Office Recreation Business Plan to the BLM Southwest Colorado Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) for formal review. The appropriate RAC reviews all BLM recreation fee proposals and give recommendations to the BLM prior to plan finalization. Comments from both the public at large and the RAC would be considered prior to implementation of the business plan.

Appendix

A. Acronyms

Acronym	Full Phrase
ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CPW	Colorado Parks and Wildlife
ERMA	Extensive Recreation Management Area
FLREA	Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
NPS	National Park Service
RMA	Recreation Management Area
RMIS	Recreation Management Information System
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RMZ	Recreation Management Zone
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
UFO	Uncompahgre Field Office
USFS	United States Forest Service

Table 15 Acronyms

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D. References

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