



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

BLM Huckleberry Campground Business Plan

Coeur d'Alene Field Office

September 2024

Mission statement

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

Cover Photo

(St. Joe River in Northern Idaho from Huckleberry Campground)

LVRDID110000

For more Information

To request a copy of this publication please contact:

BLM Coeur d'Alene Field Office
3232 W Nursery Rd, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815

208-769-5000

BLM Huckleberry Campground Business Plan

LVRDID110000

Recommendations, Reviews, and Approvals

Recommended by:

JAMES PEASE Digitally signed by JAMES PEASE
Date: 2024.08.29 08:50:47 -07'00'

J. Raymond Pease, Field Manager, Coeur d'Alene Field Office

Date

Reviewed by:

KURT PINDEL Digitally signed by KURT PINDEL
Date: 2024.08.29 15:34:47 -07'00'

Kurt Pindel, District Manager, Coeur d'Alene District Office

Date

Approved by:

Peter Ditton, Acting Idaho State Director

Date

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



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Coeur d'Alene Field Office
3232 W. Nursery Rd.
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815



In Reply Refer to:
2932 (IDC01000)

Dear Reader,

I would like to present for your review and comment the Draft *Business Plan for the Huckleberry Campground (Business Plan)*. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Coeur d'Alene Field Office (CDAFO) manages this full-service campground that annually provides over 40,000 visitors with outstanding camping and day-use opportunities along the St. Joe River. The Business Plan seeks fee increases for all sites, power and water hookups, dump station, and extra vehicles. The current fee structure is as follows: \$14.00 per night for individual and group sites, \$4.00 for power and water hookups, \$5.00 dump station, and \$5.00 extra vehicle. Proposed fee increases are: \$30.00 per night for single RV sites, \$90.00 per night for group RV sites, \$15.00 for electrical and water hookups, \$15.00 for septic dump station, and extra vehicles/utility trailers starting at \$5.00 phasing up to \$10.00. In addition, we proposed to add a new day-use fee of \$10.00 per vehicle that will start at \$5.00 and phase up to the full cost. The new day-use fee can be covered with the purchase of an \$80.00 annual Access Pass for the CDAFO. BLM's Huckleberry Campground is extremely popular, and sites are in high demand due to the standard and expanded amenities provided. The 33 campsites offered at Huckleberry provide both individual and large group RV camping accommodations along the scenic St. Joe River.

These proposed fee increases are necessary to meet the growing expenses of operating the campground, especially those related to regular and deferred maintenance needs. This fee proposal addresses facility maintenance and public safety needs due to increased use and costs of operation. In 2022 and 2023, BLM upgraded the electrical power supply to all 33 sites to accommodate 50-amp RV hookups. Agency costs associated with this electrical upgrade were close to \$850,000 dollars. The BLM is planning to remodel the entire campground's potable water system in 2025. As Huckleberry ages and the demand for outdoor recreation and camping increases, deferred maintenance needs increase as well. In 2022, revenues for the campground were \$91,209 while expenses totaled \$409,163. These expenses were typical labor and operation costs along with expenses related to less typical maintenance projects like hazard tree removal, electrical system upgrades, and well pump replacement.

The objective of the Draft *Business Plan* is to provide you with an opportunity to review how fees have been utilized, proposed fee increases and future planned expenditures. Comments may be mailed hard copy to Bureau of Land Management, Coeur d'Alene Field Office, Huckleberry Business Plan, 3232 W. Nursery Rd Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815, or emailed to: **BLM_ID_CD_CDAREcreationFees@blm.gov** (put "Huckleberry Campground Business Plan Comment" in the subject line). Comments are most useful if received by July 11, 2024.

Thank you for your interest in your public lands.

J. Raymond Pease
Coeur d'Alene Field Manager
Bureau of Land Management - Idaho

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1 Executive Summary

This business plan is proposing to modify and add recreation fees at Huckleberry Campground within the Coeur d'Alene Field Office (CDAFO). Huckleberry is fully operated and maintained by the CDAFO, offering overnight RV camping and day-use activities. The campground is located along the scenic St. Joe River, 29 miles east of St. Maries, Idaho on Forest Service Highway 50 in Shoshone County, Idaho. Huckleberry is the most visited campground in the CDAFO with about 40,000 visitors annually. Visitation is highest from June through September, but still receives steady visitation in the shoulder months. Huckleberry has the most expanded amenities of any other fee area within the CDAFO.

The CDAFO is responsible for all operational and maintenance costs. As the region's population continues to grow, so does recreation on public lands including use and visitation to Huckleberry. With appropriated funding subject to significant fluctuations, BLM must leverage its recreation sites to become more self-sufficient and operate at market value. Fee collection is needed to sustain increased costs.

Huckleberry Campground has 33 RV camp sites. Single RV sites each contain paved parking, potable water and electricity. Group sites each contain a gravel parking site and three potable water and electric hookups. The campground has an undeveloped boat ramp, two wireless internet hotspots to place online reservations, and two onsite full-time camp hosts from May through October.

The *Huckleberry Campground Business Plan* proposes to increase fees for overnight camping. Under this proposal, single RV sites would increase to \$30, group RV sites to \$90, power and water hookups to \$15, dump station to \$15, extra vehicle fee of \$10 (starting at \$5 and phasing up to full amount). This plan also proposes to implement a new day-use fee of \$10 (starting at \$5 and phasing up to full amount). Day-use fees can be waived with valid annual purchase of the CDAFO's Access Pass for \$80. These fees were determined through a comparative cost review of similar public and private facilities in the surrounding area as required by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004. Collected fees are used for operations and maintenance costs, with excess generated dollars being carried over annually for improving infrastructure and adding desired amenities.

Public outreach for this proposed business plan includes posting information at each recreation site, publishing a news release to local and regional media, posting information on social media, posting on BLM websites and publishing in the Federal Register Notice. Comments from the public and the BLM The Idaho Statewide Resource Advisory Council will be considered prior to the implementation of the proposed recreation fees.

2 Background and Authorities

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

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976** (Public Law 94-579; 43 U.S.C. 1701–1787), contains BLM's general land use management authority over the public lands, and establishes outdoor recreation as one of the principal uses of those lands. Section 302 (b) of FLPMA directs the Secretary of the Interior to regulate through permits or other instruments the use of the public lands. Section 303 of FLPMA contains BLM's authority to enforce the regulations and impose penalties.
- **The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004** repealed applicable portions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and replaced BLM's authority to collect

recreation fees. This current law authorizes BLM to collect recreation fees at sites that meet certain requirements, allows BLM to keep the fee revenues at the local offices where they were collected, and directs how BLM will manage and utilize these revenues. FLREA also established the America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Pass Program.

- **Chapter 87 Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, 16 USC 6802: Recreation Fee Authority (d) Limitations on Recreation Fees (1) Prohibition on Fees for Certain Activities or Services**, The Secretary shall not charge any standard amenity recreation fee or expanded amenity recreation fee for Federal recreational lands and waters administered by the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, or the Bureau of Reclamation under this chapter for any of the following: (I) For any person who has a right of access for hunting or fishing privileges under a specific provision of law or treaty; and (J) For any person who is engaged in the conduct of official Federal, State, Tribal, or local government business.
- **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.

Land Use Plan Guidance

The CDAFO’s recreation program is guided by the 2007 Coeur d’Alene Resource Management Plan (RMP). It provides a framework that includes objectives and actions for designated Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA) within the Field Office. This Business Plan will assist the CDAFO in meeting objectives and action items.

3 Introduction to the Coeur d’Alene Field Office Recreation Program

The Coeur d’Alene Field Office (CDAFO) has an extensive recreation program. The area is known for its beautiful lakes and rivers surrounded by large, forested mountains and remote areas. The area receives its highest visitation from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend with bursts of visits occurring throughout the year. Visitation in the area can be irregular mainly due to weather conditions, outdoor temperature, and air quality. The recreation sites near Lake Coeur d’Alene also see an increase in visitation from December through January with people coming from all over the region to see Bald Eagles prey upon spawning Kokanee salmon. The CDAFO manages six fee areas. These fee areas include two day-use boat launch facilities and four campgrounds, with Huckleberry and Killarney Lake Campgrounds serving as both boat launching facilities and campgrounds. Mica Bay and Windy Bay are boater park

campgrounds where visitor access is mainly from Lake Coeur d'Alene. The CDAFO also manages 14 other fee-free developed day use areas, campgrounds, and trail systems scattered throughout the five northern counties of Idaho. The BLM landscape in North Idaho is varied, with some lands in or adjacent to the Coeur d'Alene metropolitan area. The CDAFO also manages lands in remote backcountry areas that include several Wilderness Study Areas. All BLM Idaho lands have a have a 14-day maximum stay limit, where overnight camping is authorized, unless otherwise posted.

The area's economy has a rich history of mining and logging, with tourism and recreation driving most of the regional economic activity today. According to U.S. Census Bureau statistics, in 2010 Spokane and Kootenai County had a combined population of 609,715. By 2022, these counties combined population had grown to 733,268. In that time frame, the average growth rate for Spokane County was 1.3 percent while Kootenai County grew at 2.5 percent. The largest growth rate for Kootenai County occurred between 2020 and 2022, at 7.1 percent. Kootenai County is one of the fastest growing counties in Idaho. Ada, Canyon, and Kootenai Counties represent 50 percent of Idaho's total population. Some trends expect



Figure 1: Aerial Photo of Huckleberry Campground

that 277,000 people will be living in Kootenai County by the year 2030. As of 2023, Idaho remained one of the nation's fastest growing states at 1.6 percent population growth rate.

The CDAFO has seen a large growth in visitation over the past few years; for the 2023 fiscal year the CDAFO had 628,859 visits. Over the past five years the CDAFO averaged 710,331 visits. We expect that visitation will continue to increase in the area as it continues to be a destination for people to relocate to as well as vacation to. The CDAFO has seen an increase in day-use recreation at traditional overnight sites along with a general increase in visitation at all sites.

Funds collected at Huckleberry Campground are used for recreation facility improvement, maintenance, staffing labor, campground hosts, and overall management.

Huckleberry Campground is the most visited campground in the CDAFO. It is located along the banks of the St. Joe River, 29 miles east of St. Maries, Idaho on Forest Service Highway 50. The site is administered by the BLM Coeur d’Alene District, Coeur d’Alene Field Office, within Shoshone County Idaho, 1st Congressional District of Idaho, in the Huckleberry Campground Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). The St. Joe River upstream from Huckleberry, at mile post 49 in Avery, Idaho, is designated as a Recreational and Wild and Scenic River. In total, 66.3 river miles are designated Recreational, Wild, and Scenic.

Huckleberry’s visitation is highest from June through September, but the campground still receives steady visitation in the shoulder months. Huckleberry offers access to the most expanded amenities of any other fee site within the CDAFO.

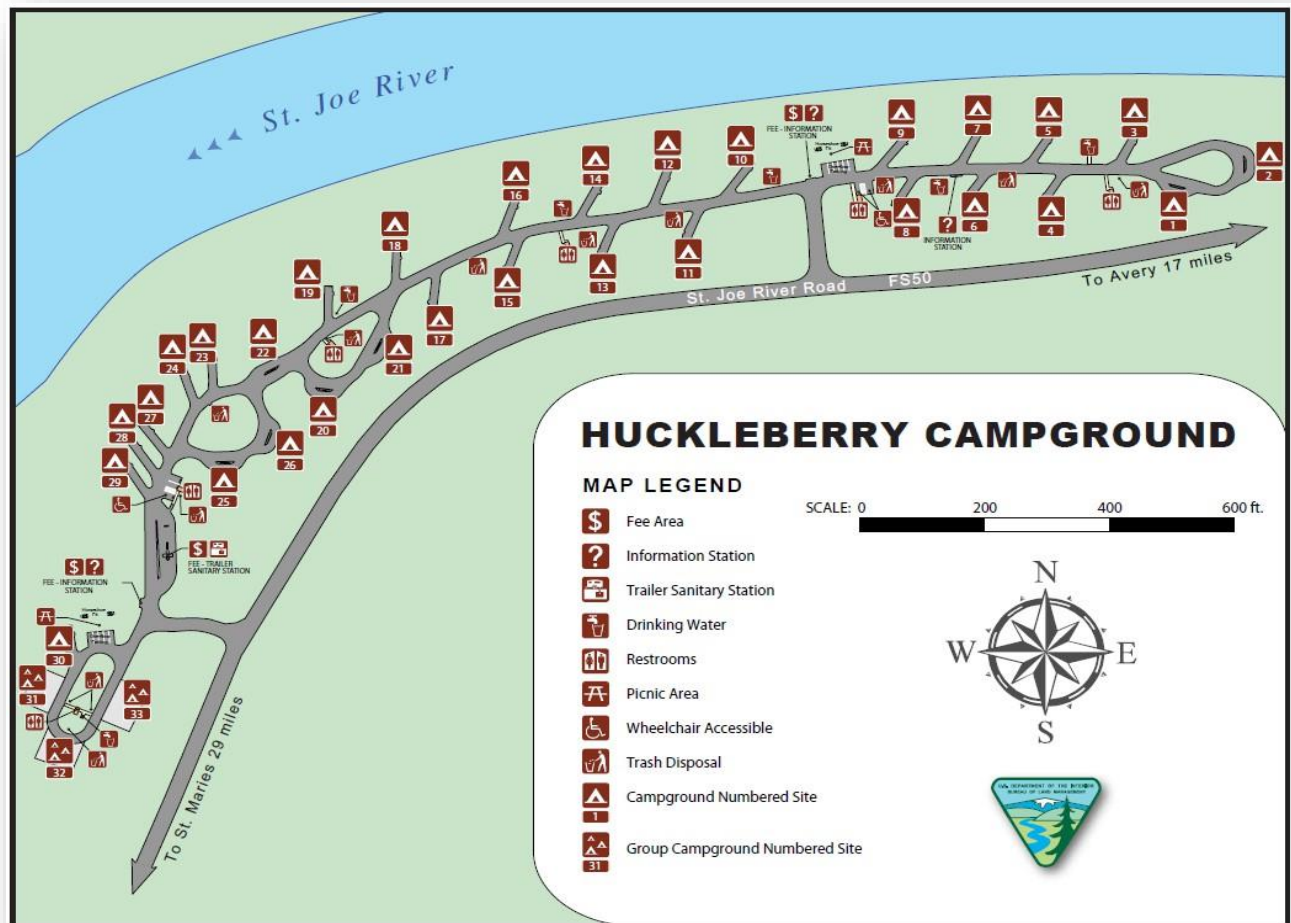


Figure 2: Map of Huckleberry Campground

4 Description of Huckleberry Campground

Huckleberry Campground has 33 RV camp sites, 30 of which are single RV sites with a maximum capacity of one sleeping unit, four vehicles/utility trailers, and 15 people per site. The other three are RV group sites, with a maximum capacity of three sleeping units, six vehicles/utility trailers, and 25 people per site. Sites 1-30 are single RV sites, each containing paved parking, potable water, electricity, picnic table, graveled area, grass lawn, and a campfire ring. The group sites (Sites 31-33) each contain a gravel parking site, three potable water and electric hookups, three picnic tables, and three fire rings. The campground has six precast concrete vault toilet restrooms, a boat launch, day-use parking next to boat launch, trash receptacles throughout, one garbage dumpster, an RV waste dump station, three kiosk information and payment stations, two wireless internet hotspots to place online reservations, and two sets of onsite full-time camp hosts from May through October.

The campground serves as a central location for campers and recreationists choosing to recreate along the section of river between Calder and Avery, Idaho. Multiple hunting, fishing and motorist user groups travel to the campground and utilize it as a hub to access nearby areas and miles of U.S. Forest Service, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), and private timber company lands and roads. The campground also serves as a central location to stage river float trips.

Huckleberry Campground is staffed annually with volunteer campground hosts. These hosts live onsite throughout the busy operating season. The host's objectives are to assist with site cleanliness, provide visitor services, and guide public understanding of campground rules and etiquette. Local campground hosts also share information about nearby public lands and recreational opportunities available in the area. Seasonal BLM staff also augment permanent BLM staff throughout the year. This includes working



Figure 3: Typical overnight visitor enjoying Huckleberry Campground

weekends and holidays, making sure the campground has someone on site representing BLM, providing information, administering fee compliance and collections, while maintaining and operating the campground for public enjoyment.

5 Proposed Modifications to Recreation Fee Rates

5.1 Historical Fee Increases for Huckleberry Campground

Recreational Use Permits (RUP) are issued for short term recreational use of specialized sites, facilities, equipment, or services furnished at the federal expense. Most often, RUP are fee envelopes collected at campgrounds and day use areas or boat launches. RUP data can be helpful in determining the number of visitors to a site. CDAFO collects, analyzes, and reports RUP data on an annual basis. As Table 1 represents, average visitation since 2015. Visitation has increased for the CDAFO by 13.7 percent and fee RUP by 22.8 percent.

Table 1: CDAFO and Huckleberry Campground Visitation and Recreation Use Permits (RUP) since 2015. In 2023, camping was temporarily paused for electrical upgrades.

Fiscal Year	CDAFO		Huckleberry Campground
	Visits	RUP	RUP
2015	466,493	9,669	1,109
2016	**433,161	10,406	2,065
2017	374,339	12,341	3,413
2018	458,670	10,587	1,918
2019	741,021	18,508	1,482
2020	671,00	11,601	1,343
2021	899,501	11,635	1,926
2022	611,278	25,549	1,318
2023	628,859	10,283	203
Average	530,546	11,879	1,642

**Installed a Traf-x Visitor Counter to count vehicles entering recreation sites

The table below shows the history of fees at Huckleberry Campground. Fees were initially established in 1996 and have increased only twice since they were introduced.

Table 2: Huckleberry Campground Fee History

Year	Overnight Camping	Electric and Water Hookup	Extra Vehicle	RV Dump Station
1996	\$7	\$3	\$3	-

2005	\$12	\$3	\$4	\$4
2012	\$14	\$4	\$5	\$4

The BLM collected \$36,562 in 2011. Between 2012 and 2023, the average annual fee collection has been \$58,377.49. Over that same period, the average annual fee collection has risen by \$21,815, representing a 59.6 percent fee revenue increase. Based on RUPs and rec.gov reservations, overall use of Huckleberry Campground has increased 48 percent since 2015.

5.2 Proposed Fee Increase

Table 3: Existing Fees and Proposed Fee Changes at Huckleberry Campground

Expanded Amenity Fee	Existing Fee	Proposed Fee
Single RV Site Fee	\$14	\$30
Group RV Site Fee	\$14	\$90
Electric & Water Hookup Fee	\$4	\$15
Extra Vehicle/Utility Trailer Fee	\$5	\$10 (starts at \$5)
Dump Station Fee	\$5	\$15
Day-Use Fee	-	\$10 (starts at \$5) or \$80 annual Access Pass

The CDAFO is proposing to increase the current \$14.00 per night camping fee to \$30.00 per night for single RV sites, and \$90.00 per night for group sites (group sites include three campsites). Electric and water hookup fees would rise from \$4.00 per night to \$15.00 per night. The dump station fee would increase from \$5.00 to \$15.00. Extra vehicle/utility trailer fees will follow the day-use fee and raise to \$10 with the fee phasing up from \$5. This phasing would start at \$5, 2-years later would raise to \$7, and finally after an additional 2-years it would raise to \$10. The typical fee increase per night for a single RV site would be \$37.00, and for groups sites it would \$119.00.

5.3 Proposed New Day-Use Fee

Per the BLM Handbook, *standard amenity fees* are appropriate in nationally designated areas and destination visitor or interpretive centers providing a broad range of interpretive services. Standard amenity fees may also be charged at developed day-use sites that provide significant opportunities for outdoor recreation; entail substantial federal investment; and require intensive management to enhance visitor experiences, address environmental needs, and manage conflicting uses. However, the Handbook states that *expanded amenity fees* are appropriate at places such as developed campgrounds and highly developed boat launches with specialized facilities or services, such as mechanical or hydraulic boatlifts or facilities, multilane paved ramps, paved parking, refuse containers, restrooms, and other improvements. Highly developed boat launches may feature ramp or parking lighting, security services, changing rooms, mooring floats, picnic areas or playground areas.

For the *Huckleberry Campground Business Plan*, the proposed standard amenity fee (day-use fee) can be charged at sites that have substantial recreation opportunities separate from the overnight camping amenity fees. The proposed introductory day-use fee at Huckleberry will be established at \$5 per day per vehicle/utility trailer with phased fee increases occurring up to \$10 per day within the next four years. The phased increases will be done in two increments, 2 years after establishment, the day-use fee will increase by \$2 to \$7. After an additional 2 years, the final increase will occur from \$7 to \$10. Current market

research supports charging a day-use fee at this site up to a \$10 threshold. The campground extra vehicle/utility trailer fee would increase at the same phased increases as the day-use fee.

In recent years, BLM staff and volunteers have seen an increase in day-use activities at Huckleberry and other CDAFO developed recreation facilities. Since Huckleberry is also utilized by the public as a staging area to access the greater St. Joe River area, demand for day-use parking and utilization of the campground's amenities has increased. The CDAFO believes this is a direct correlation to recent area population growth in the greater Spokane/Coeur d'Alene metropolitan areas and pandemic-driven behavior to get outside and discovering public lands.

To help accommodate frequent day-users of Huckleberry, the CDAFO currently offers an annual boat launch pass to accommodate access to BLM's Blackwell Island Recreation Site and Mineral Ridge Public Boat Launch. This annual pass costs \$40.00. Pass holders are exempt from the daily fee at both sites. This system has proven beneficial for both the public and BLM. With increased day-use occurring at established fee sites, like Huckleberry, the CDAFO proposes to enhance this annual pass system with a new version, called the Coeur d'Alene Field Office Access Pass (Access Pass), which combines the privileges of the old pass system with the proposed new day-use fees at several established fee areas, including Huckleberry Campground. This proposed pass would help accommodate the growing demand for day-use activities while supporting management, maintenance, and operations at established fee areas and other developed recreation sites within the CDAFO.

Currently, the annual boat launch pass only covers Blackwell Island Recreation Site and Mineral Ridge Boat Launch use fees. The proposed Access Pass will continue to cover day-use fees at both locations, while additionally covering the new proposed vehicle day-use fee of \$10 at Huckleberry Campground, Killarney Lake Campground and Mica Bay Boaters Park. The Access Pass is proposed to be priced at \$80.00 annually, while the alternative option would be the daily fee of \$12.00 at Blackwell and Mineral Ridge or \$10.00 at Huckleberry, Killarney Lake and Mica Bay. The new Access Pass would have two components, one hang tag for vehicles and another sticker for marine vessels. Purchasers would receive both a hang tag and sticker with their \$80 Access Pass purchase.

Once this business plan is approved, the new proposed day-use fee would be published in the *Federal Register* and implemented six months later. Notification to the public regarding the new fee would be done through news releases, social media and on-site postings.

The CDAFO will use various e-commerce technologies as directed in BLM Instruction Memorandum 2022-010, to provide recreation visitors opportunities to find, reserve and pay for campsites and day use within the field office. Most of these options are provided through the interagency reservation service Recreation.gov. If the CDAFO decides to add additional reservation services of other types of e-commerce options available in the future, an expanded amenity fee for reservation services would be charged in addition to any other standard or expanded amenity fees in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(G).

Reservation services fees could range from \$.50 to \$10.00 depending on the type of service provided. The reservation service is subject to contracting requirements and will be adjusted with contract changes or with future updates to the business plan. For visitors who wish not to pay the expanded amenity fee of reservation services, the field office will attempt to continue to provide a blend of reservation and first come-first served options until or unless the office moves the fee site/area entirely to e-commerce. Other payment options may also be considered in the future as technology and software develops, such as onsite credit card payment systems or scan and pay.

6 Operating Costs

The CDAFO maintains an extensive infrastructure that supports its highly developed recreation program’s operation and maintenance. The CDAFO has six established fee sites along with multiple developed day-use sites and trail systems. Developed recreation sites include trailheads, campgrounds, boater parks, picnic sites, and boat launches. These recreation sites receive a high amount of use due to paved access close to metropolitan areas. These fee sites have significant operating costs to maintain the site amenities. The operating costs at Huckleberry include a biweekly (at minimum, daily when host is present) cleaning of the campground and the six vault toilet restrooms. These vault toilets restrooms are typically cleaned by hand with a bucket, soap, and water, but at times cleaned with a mounted high pressure spray truck. Pumping the campground’s sewage holding tanks entails a substantial operating cost. This includes 6,000 gallons from the RV dump station, 6,000 gallons from the vault toilets, and 600 gallons from the host site holding tanks. In 2022, BLM spent over \$10,700 in septic pumping services for Huckleberry. This cost is projected to be \$19,400 in 2024. In addition to cleaning the restrooms, the campground has daily/weekly maintenance tasks entailing emptying 20 trash cans, cleaning 39 fire rings and picnic tables, string trimming and mowing 15 acres, irrigating the lawn, supplying potable water, clearing asphalt, and performing visitor services. Costs associated with operating and maintaining the campground includes paying maintenance workers; purchasing and replacing special equipment and vehicles; buying toilet paper, garbage bags and cleaning supplies; as well as paying for dumpster garbage collection and sewage pumping contractor. These duties are performed by maintenance workers consisting mostly of CDAFO recreation staff (two to three permanent staff, two seasonal staff, and one to two volunteer campground hosts).

Table 4: Actual Expenditures for Huckleberry Campground

Federal Fiscal Year	Total Expenditures
2012	\$95,306.94
2013	\$71,991.09
2014	\$81,516.50
2015	\$88,152.25
2016	\$128,176.26
2017	\$95,740.47
2018	\$93,321.05
2019	\$104,183.43
2020	\$123,465.87
2021	\$163,564.51
2022	\$409,163.19
2023	\$791,664.82
Average	\$187,187.20

Another large operational cost for the campground is removing hazardous trees. Some of the campground's mature cottonwood trees are decaying and rotting from the inside. The potential for broken limbs and weakened trees falling into camp sites creates a very serious public safety hazard. The costs to have these large trees and limbs removed from the campground requires hiring a professional arborist at a cost of approximately \$1,300-\$2,200 per tree. Tree work has been necessary five out of the last seven years and has come with an average cost of \$18,300 per project. Since 2017 the BLM has had to spend \$91,500 for tree removal.

Maintenance of the campground's public drinking water system is required. Weekly chlorine samples are taken by recreation staff, along with routine bacteriological samples which are then sent to a state lab for bacterial testing. The potable water system was originally installed in the mid-1990s. The CDAFO is planning to completely remodel the potable water system in 2025, with a projected cost over \$700,000.



Figure 4: 2009 sealcoat, striping, and pavement repairs.

Pavement upkeep requires patching and sealcoating and is a major cost every 5 to 7 years. In 2009, sealcoating, striping and other pavement repairs cost \$17,500. Because it has been 15 years since the last pavement repairs took place, BLM has estimated costs to repair Huckleberry's asphalt will be approximately \$360,000 in 2024.

Between 2019 to 2023, the CDAFO began a series of phases to fully remodel the electrical infrastructure in the campground. This remodel was triggered in part by the years of wear and tear caused by the frequency of RV campers drawing more power than what the infrastructure could sustain. This caused sustained problems with voltage drop and black-out situations in the busy summer season. Now, all 39 electrical power pedestals are equipped to supply 50-amp service to all 33 campsites. This electrical remodel cost the BLM over \$850,000 dollars to complete.

Also, in 2022 and 2023 the well pump failed. The campground could not supply fresh potable water until a replacement was completed. Both replacements combined cost the BLM \$12,000 in addition to the time and attention from BLM staff to get the water supply turned back on, treated, and tested. As Table 4 represents, the average total expenditure has risen 96 percent since the 2012 expenditures.

7 Revenues

Currently, the Huckleberry Campground fee account receives revenue from overnight campers. This revenue is mainly used to operate and maintain the camping facilities, purchase campground equipment and supplies, supporting volunteer hosts, and staff labor.

Table 5: Recreation Fee Revenues Deposited in the Huckleberry Campground Fee Account with Total Expenses from Table 4

Fiscal Year	Revenue Total	Expenses (from Table 4)
2012	\$42,660.98	\$95,306.94
2013	\$46,785.95	\$71,991.09
2014	\$41,765.00	\$81,516.50
2015	\$42,097.00	\$88,152.25
2016	\$50,408.00	\$128,176.26
2017	\$44,289.00	\$95,740.47
2018	\$50,449.00	\$93,321.05
2019	\$60,730.00	\$104,183.43
2020	\$86,240.00	\$123,465.87
2021	\$104,685.00	\$163,564.51
2022	\$91,209.00	\$409,163.19
2023	\$39,211.00	\$791,664.82
Average	\$58,377.49	\$187,187.20

Current year's operating funds e.g., 2023 earned funds and past years would be saved and spent in 2024.

Calculating projected fee revenue, first multiplying the average annual RUP for single RV sites (1,510) and group RV sites (132) by the typical fee increases (\$37 per night for single RVs and \$119 for group RVs), this projects the average annual revenue for Huckleberry would grow by approximately \$71,578. This represents a potential average annual fee revenue increase of 22% from the current fee structure. If average RUPs collected stay flat, the average annual fee collection would rise from \$58,377 to \$110,400. This would represent an annual average increase in revenue of 89% since 2023. This proposed increase would help offset rising operational and maintenance costs, while leveraging BLM's purchasing ability to afford modern equipment, remodel amenities, and save carryover dollars for future capital investment projects.

Projected Revenues 2025 - 2029

Table 6: Huckleberry Campground Projected Revenues

Site Name	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Huckleberry	\$110,400	\$115,920	\$121,716	\$127,801	\$134,191

The effects of doubling the overnight use fees and adding a new day-use fees will take some time to show up in our revenues. Some members of the public may be hesitant about the fee increase for overnight use and compliance to the new day-use fees may lag as well. In other words, a transitional period may occur before we see the full effects of the fee increases.

8 Priorities for Future Expenditures

Until now, the CDAFO has never fully considered the replacement costs of major campground infrastructure. The water distribution system, including pump house, has been retrofitted several times to try to deliver adequate water pressure to the newer, larger RVs visiting the campground. These RVs have larger holding tanks and require more potable water. More high-pressure tanks have been installed to give the water the needed chlorine contact time and water pressure to comply with Idaho



Figure 5: Current pump house with retrofitted high-pressure tanks in 2012.

Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) standards. The current pump house is significantly smaller than what is adequate to house extra holding tanks and distribution equipment. Owing to larger high-pressure tanks, the entrance door does not fully open.

Because of the pump house inadequacies, well pump failures, weakening distribution components, and the life span deterioration of PVC water lines, BLM is

planning to replace the entire

potable water distribution system in the upcoming years. Full replacement will provide a safe, clean and potable water supply to the visiting public. Visitors to Huckleberry are accustomed to expecting reliable potable water during their visit. This amenity is a staple for the campground. This project is expected to cost BLM over \$700,000. BLM also plans to invest another \$360,000 in asphalt services and repairs in 2024.

In the upcoming years, BLM has plans to:

- Replace the RV dump station holding tanks.
- Clean-out service tower, manhole covers, and the sewage collection caps.
- Replace the six precast concrete vault toilet restrooms.
- Perform additional hazard tree removal.
- Perform asphalt leveling and patching.
- Hire full-time seasonal staff.
- Perform maintenance equipment and vehicle replacement.
- Completely update informational signage.
- Expand administrative storage facilities to secure on-site maintenance equipment and supplies.

9 Analysis of Recreation Fee Rates

Table 6 illustrates a comparison to other campground fees being charged locally and regionally. The table shows that the new proposed fee structure is less or comparable to those charged by other local providers. Huckleberry Campground most resembles nearby Forest Service, Idaho State Parks, and some private campgrounds along the St. Joe River. However, for visitors who do not use hookups, Huckleberry is most like nearby Forest Service campgrounds in the Coeur d'Alene area.

Table 7: Comparison of Campground Fees in the St. Joe River Area and Other Local Campgrounds

Campground Name	Agency	Campground Fee(s)	Amenities Offered
Other Nearby Campgrounds			
Shadowy St. Joe	USFS, St. Joe National Forest, St. Joe River	\$20 Per site per night \$5.00 extra vehicle \$5.00 boat launch	Paved Parking, boat ramp, vault toilets, fire rings, picnic tables, and potable water hand pump
The Cutthroat Resort (Prior name includes The Big Eddy)	Private, St. Joe River	\$40 per site per night	Full hookups
Misty Meadows RV Park	Private, St. Joe River	\$40 per site per night	Full hookups
Heyburn	Idaho State Park, Lake Coeur d'Alene	\$40 per site per night with a \$7 per vehicle per day entrance fee Non-resident fees apply	full hookups, boat launch, restrooms, visitor center, restrooms, showers
Other Federal Campgrounds in the Area*			
Tin Can Flat	USFS, St. Joe National Forest, St. Joe River	\$15 Per site per night, \$5 extra vehicle fee per night	Vault toilets, fire rings, picnic tables, and potable water hand pump (no hookups)
Bell Bay RV Campground	USFS, Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Lake Coeur d'Alene	\$24 per site per night (non-electric) \$112 group site per night \$6.00 day-use \$8.00 extra vehicle \$52 day-use season pass	RV camping, paved, picnic, boat launch, boat dock mooring and camping, group sites, restrooms, parking, on site host

Sam Owens RV Campground	USFS, Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Lake Pend Oreille	\$28.00 per site per night (non-electric), \$8.00 day-use, \$10.00 extra vehicle, day-use group \$105.00 \$8.00 dump station \$52 day-use season pass	Paved, boat launch, boat docks mooring, group pavilion, dump station, parking, trailhead
Noisy Creek Campground	USFS, Colville National Forest, Sullivan Lake	\$27 per night per site (non-electric) \$10 day-use \$52 day-use season pass	RV camping, picnic, vault toilets, potable water (hand pump), parking, trailhead
Egin Lake RV Campground	BLM Idaho, Upper Snake Field Office, St. Anthony's Sand Dunes	\$30.00 per night per site \$60.00 per night group site \$5.00 day-use \$60.00 day-use season pass	RV camping, OVH trailhead, pavilions, shade shelters, dump station, host, restrooms

* These federal campground sites do not provide full hookups for RVs.

**Represents a minimum fee. Does not include taxes or reservation fees. Camping fees also vary by length of vehicle, whether or not a trailer has slideouts, the number of people and/or pets, days of the week and months of the year. Prices shown reflect the lowest published per night price. Fees can increase greatly with the presence of any of the above factors.

In conclusion, the analysis of the value of the Huckleberry's proposed fee increase illustrates that the \$30 single RV and \$90 group camping fee, \$15 hookup fee, \$15 dump station, and \$5 day-use is comparable to other local campgrounds with full hookups and day-use along the St. Joe River. This proposed fee structure is also comparable to other area campgrounds with similar offered amenities. Private campgrounds can provide services not offered at federal campgrounds thus their prices may be higher. Huckleberry Campground also recognizes the America the Beautiful Pass system, which provides half-off to the overnight site fee. The discounted rate would rise to \$15 per night for camping, which still provides a low-cost alternative for a St. Joe River-oriented camping trip.

10 Impacts from Changing and Non-Changing Recreation Fee Rates

Consistent with the Department of the Interior and BLM priorities, the BLM CDAFO seeks to achieve environmental justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and make a difference in North Idaho 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.
- Develop and support youth education and outreach programs.

The campground fees have not been increased since 2012. Fee revenue from Huckleberry Campground has not been sufficient to keep up with the costs associated with operating and maintaining the campground. Back in 2012, recreation managers worked under the assumption that the level of appropriated money would remain constant, and the campground could depend on this source of income. Since that time, the costs of goods, labor and services have continued to increase, eroding the buying power of the campground fee established in 2012. For instance, the sewage pumping costs has risen from \$6,000 in 2012 to an estimated \$19,400 in 2024. As the costs of goods, labor and services increase, the purchasing power of the existing campground fee revenue decreases proportionately.

If the proposed fees are implemented, services would continue to be offered at a high level. Without the fee increase, the frequency of cleaning could be reduced as expenses continue to rise. In contrast, with a fee increase, some revenues could be used to gradually leverage and improve campground infrastructure as part of planned and routine upgrades. Past instances of these upgrades include replacement of substandard precast concrete vault toilets restrooms, improvements to tent pads, replacement of substandard fire rings, addition of paved parking, and adding day-use parking. Campground improvements are quite important as many of the BLM campgrounds are reaching an age where replacement of some of the infrastructure is necessary to maintain public health and safety standards. Until now, the campground fee structure has never considered the replacement costs of the campground's key infrastructure amenities.

With the increased demand for camping and day-use activities, the BLM incurs more expense in terms of labor, contracted services like sewage pumping, equipment demands, internet services, and the required frequency of cleaning and maintenance services. When campgrounds are continually utilized from February through November, the frequency of maintenance visits must meet the demand.

Raising the standard camping fee by \$16.00 per night, and amenity fees by \$10.00, would cause a minimal impact to campers, because the proposed fees are comparable to private and public campgrounds in the area like the Cutthroat Resort, Heyburn State Park, and Sam Owens. The CDAFO believes this fee increase is necessary to maintain the level of service to the campers and to pay for both current and future deferred maintenance needs. Camping is a particularly low-cost alternative compared to many other forms of vacationing.

Huckleberry Campground is reaching an age where replacement costs of infrastructure will be increasing. Failing to increase the campground fee would mean that an aging infrastructure would not be replaced in a timely manner to maintain site quality. It would also mean that improvements, such as individual picnic table and fire ring replacements, would go unattended. Costs would incrementally compound each year, while fee revenue would stay flat, with constant public inquires of when amenities will be available or repaired. As Table 5 represents, average annual total expenditures are 220 percent greater than the average annual revenue generated. Huckleberry is a key hub for the St. Joe River Valley camping experience.



Figure 6: Typical vacation to Huckleberry Campground

11 Public Outreach

Public outreach for the draft CDAFO Business Plans was conducted between June 11 and July 11, 2024, allowing a 30-day period for public review and comment. The outreach included announcements via media press release, BLM Idaho Facebook page, coverage by local KXLY news, and posts from North Idaho News Facebook page; along with BLM posting physical notices at all fee sites. There were thirteen public comments. Feedback from the public predominantly highlighted a preference for higher fees for out-of-state visitors, particularly concerning the proposed fee increase at Blackwell Island Recreation Site. However, it was noted that federal regulations prevent BLM from charging out-of-state visitors differently than local visitors, which falls outside the parameters of the Business Plan and the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). Additionally, the CDAFO and District hosted the BLM Idaho Statewide Resource Advisory Council (RAC) for a two-day meeting in Coeur d'Alene, where they toured various area recreation sites and discussed the CDAFO fee proposals. The RAC, a 15-member advisory panel, unanimously approved the CDAFO fee proposals on July 11, 2024, following their review and the results of a 30-day comment period. Public and RAC comments were considered before finalizing the proposed fee increases. A Notice of Intent to collect the new day-use fees at Mica Bay, Killarney Lake, and Huckleberry Campground will be published in the Federal Register upon BLM's formal approval of the Business Plans, with implementation set for six months thereafter. To further inform the public of these changes, the CDAFO plans to post announcements at all fee site kiosks 60 days prior to implementation.

Coeur d'Alene Field Office Recommendation

After careful consideration of the fee program and the anticipated revenues and expenditures outlined in the *Huckleberry Campground Business Plan*, the CDAFO recommends increasing the nightly campsite to \$30.00 for single RV site, \$90.00 for group RV sites, electrical and water hookups to \$15.00, dump station to \$15.00, extra vehicle/utility Trailer to \$10.00 (starting at \$5), and new day-use fee of \$10.00, starting at \$5.00 (or purchase of annual Access Pass of \$80.00).



12 References

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