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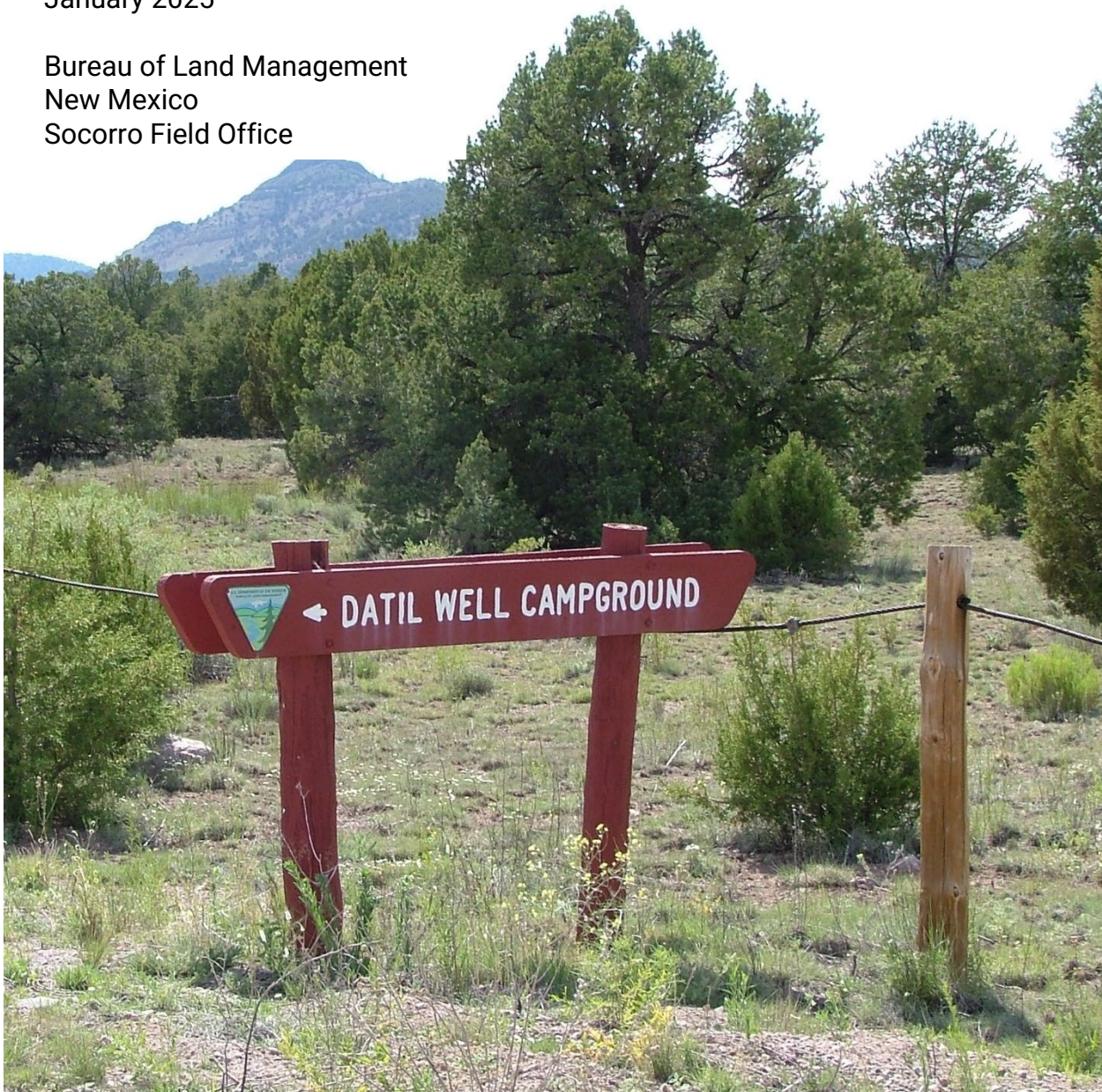


U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Datil Well Campground Business Plan and Fee Adjustment Proposal

January 2025

Bureau of Land Management
New Mexico
Socorro Field Office



RECOMMENDATIONS, REVIEWS, and APPROVALS

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This business plan was prepared by the Bureau of Land Management's Socorro 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 Albuquerque District Office fee sites.

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1 Executive Summary

This business plan was prepared pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004 (P.L. 108-447, as amended) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation fee program policy and manual direction. FLREA allows the BLM current jurisdiction to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees on federal recreational lands and waters.

After careful consideration of the anticipated revenues and expenditures as outlined in this document, as well as a comparative review of fees charged elsewhere by other public agencies and private sector providers for similar sites, services, and facilities within the region, the following fee changes are recommended:

- Establish an individual site overnight camping expanded amenity fee of \$20.00 per night per campsite with no electric and \$30.00 per night per campsite with electric.
 - America the Beautiful Interagency Senior Pass or Access pass holders will receive a 50% discount on the expanded amenity fee overnight camping. The discount is applicable only to the campsite occupied by the pass holder themselves and does not extend to additional campsites occupied by others in their party.
 - An expanded amenity fee for reservation services would be charged at Datil Well Campground in addition to any other standard or expanded amenity fees in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(G).
 - To account for inflation, adopt a model to increase fees by 20% (then rounded to the nearest half-dollar) whenever the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U), US City Average,

Fees will assist the BLM-Socorro Field Office (SFO) with accomplishing business needs required to maintain and operate the site, and to provide visitor services including information about the campground. The fee is expected to enhance visitor experience and sustainability. Charging expanded amenity fees at BLM campgrounds helps cover the costs of maintenance, resource protection, and improved services, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors. Fees contribute to the financial sustainability of the campgrounds and allow for enhanced amenities and visitor management. This approach ensures that those who benefit from the facilities contribute to their upkeep, promoting fairness and the long-term preservation of public lands. The BLM conducted comparative market research analysis by examining fees for a mix of state and federal government recreation sites with similar facilities and services in the market area to determine the fair market value for overnight camping.

The Datil Well Campground (Datil Well) is managed by the Socorro Field Office (SFO), Albuquerque District Office (ADO) BLM administered public lands located in Catron County of New Mexico's 2nd Congressional District. The recreation site was established in 1969 to provide camping and hiking for the enjoyment by the public wanting to visit their public lands. The site

has been developed for day and overnight use, with amenities including a visitor center, vault toilet facilities, interpretive trails, camping and picnic sites, three electrical RV sites, a campground host site, and more. A more in-depth description of the available amenities is included in Chapter 2.

Fee collection at Datil Well began in 1983 and has never been increased. Fee revenue is generated by Standard, Expanded, and Additional Expanded Amenity fees. **Table 1** below outlines existing and proposed recreation fees at Datil Well campground. Detailed discussion on this proposal occurs in the body of this business plan.

Cost recovery, visitation growth, economic inflation, and a comparative review of fees charged by nearby facilities that provide similar services were analyzed through this business plan process. SFO proposes to increase fees for Datil Well based on the results of these analyses. The SFO 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.

The proposed expanded amenity fee increases are as follows: Campsites with no electric from current fee \$5.00 to the proposed \$20.00 per site/per day; Electric RV campsites from current fee \$5.00 to proposed \$30.00 per site/per day; and group site fee will remain unchanged. These changes are proposed to be implemented in Spring of 2025. Fees will assist the SFO with accomplishing business needs required to maintain and operate the site, and to provide visitor services including information about the campground. The fee is expected to enhance visitor experience and sustainability. Charging expanded amenity fees at BLM campgrounds helps cover the costs of maintenance, resource protection, and improved services, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors. Fees contribute to the financial sustainability of the campgrounds and allow for enhanced amenities and visitor management. This approach ensures that those who benefit from the facilities contribute to their upkeep, promoting fairness and the long-term preservation of public lands. The BLM conducted comparative market research analysis by examining fees for a mix of state and federal government recreation sites with similar facilities and services in the market area to determine the fair market value for overnight camping.

Table 1: Datil Well Campground Proposed Expanded Amenity Fee Increase

Service	Current Fee	Proposed Fee & Changes
Non-Electric Camping (per site/per day)	\$5.00	\$20.00
Electrical RV Hookup Campsite (per site/per day)	\$5.00	\$30.00
Group Site (per site/per group)	\$15.00 for day use/\$30.00 for overnight camping	Unchanged

INTRODUCTION

Authorities

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

Under FLREA, three fee categories were established:

- **Standard Amenity Fee:** covers areas that provide significant opportunities for outdoor recreation, have substantial federal investments, have fee collection mechanisms, and have the following amenities: designated developed parking, a permanent toilet facility, a permanent trash, interpretive signs, exhibits, or kiosks, picnic tables, and security services (Sec. 803 (f)(4)(D) of REA).
- **Expanded Amenity Fee:** covers specialized outdoor recreation sites and services including but not limited to developed campgrounds with most of the following amenities: tent or trailer spaces, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM, reasonable visitor protection, refuse containers, toilet facilities, and simple devices for containing a campfire (Sec. 803 (g)(2)(A) of REA).
- **Additional Expanded Amenity Fee:** covers recreation facilities or services including rental of cabins, group day-use or overnight sites, binoculars or other equipment, use of hookups for electricity, cable, or sewer, use of sanitary dump stations, and use of reservation services (Sec.803 (g)(2) (C-G) of REA).

Section 804 of FLREA addresses the minimum public outreach requirements that an agency must consider when developing or changing recreation fees. This outreach process includes the involvement of a Resource Advisory Council (RAC). RACs provide recommendations to agency officials on matters including, but not limited to:

- Implementing or eliminating fees;
- Expanding or limiting the recreation fee program; and
- Implementing fee level changes.

In addition to FLREA, the authorities and regulations for this business plan, including fee collection at federal recreation lands, are:

- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-579), which contains the BLM's general land use management authority over public lands.
- [43 Code of Federal Regulations 2931.2](#), which establishes a permit and fee system for use of fee areas such as campgrounds and day use areas.
- [43 Code of Federal Regulations 2932](#), which establishes a permit and fee system for special recreation permits.

- [43 Code of Federal Regulations 2933](#), which further outlines Recreation Use Permits guidance.

This business plan also follows applicable BLM recreation fee program policies and guidance, including:

- [BLM Manual 2930, Recreation Permits and Fees](#)
- [BLM Handbook 2930-1, Recreation Permit and Fee Administration](#)
- [BLM Information Bulletin No. 2019-056, Recreation Fee Revenue Spending Plans and Accomplishment Report](#)
- [BLM Manual 1105 – Donations, Solicitation, and Fundraising](#)

In addition to specific authorities and regulations, this business plan assists in fulfilling the following strategies:

- [Connecting with Communities: BLM Recreation Strategy](#), by making the benefits of recreation more accessible to communities while supporting local social, economic, and environmental goals.
- [Socorro Resource Management Plan](#), by aligning with SFO’s comprehensive framework for managing public land and for allocating resources using principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

Purpose of Document

The BLM Handbook H-2930-1, Recreation Permits and Fee Administration (Rel. 2-300, Dated November 17, 2014), requires that each recreation fee program have an approved business plan which thoroughly discusses fees and explains how fees are consistent with the criteria set forth in FLREA. Business plans are to assist management in determining the appropriateness and level of fees, the cost of administering a fee program, the expected benefits to be derived for the public and to provide a structured communication and marketing plan. The primary purpose of the plan is to serve as public notification of the objectives for use of recreation fee revenues. The final business plan guides the expenditure of collected FLREA funds and insures public accountability.

FLREA provides agencies with recreation fee authority. This allows agencies to improve the efficiency of the program, provide better facilities and services to visitors, employ greater use of technology, and enter into more fee management agreements to provide additional services to visitors. The established fee for Datil Well was five dollars in 1983 and fees have remained at their current levels for 41 years. Revenues from current fees are not sufficient to offset the long-term costs of managing the recreation sites.

The business plan will specifically cover a description of the fee sites, proposed changes in fees to these sites, associated operating costs, planned expenditures of fee revenue, a financial analysis utilizing a regional comparative market study, and the impacts of proposed fee changes. The data used to analyze and prepare this business plan was obtained through internal BLM tracking and accounting mechanisms such as the Federal Business Management System (FBMS), Recreation Management Information System (RMIS), Collections and Billing Systems (CBS), and other locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking, including Recreation Use Permits (RUPs), Special Recreation Permits (SRPs), and vehicle counters.

Background

The BLM SFO manages 1.5 million acres of public land in two counties (Socorro and Catron) in New Mexico SFO began receiving recreation fee revenues in 1983 from recreational users at the Datil Well campground developed for overnight campers and group site users. In this new 2024

business plan, changes to fees for non-electric site overnight camping and electric RV sites with overnight camping are proposed.

Revenues from the Recreation Fee Account are used to maintain recreation facilities at their site of collection. Specifically, the account covers vault toilet pumping services, vandalism cleanup and repairs, visitor center cleaning and repairs, sign replacement, trail maintenance, grounds keeping, monthly potable water system testing and maintenance/repairs, roadway repairs, roadway mowing, and roadway grading.

2 SFO Recreation Program

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT & OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

The SFO lies within New Mexico's Congressional District 2. The SFO planning area encompasses 1.5 million acres across Socorro and Catron counties. The Datil Well campground shares its western boundaries with public lands administered by the Cibola National Forest and adjacent sub-divisions. The Cibola National Forest was part of the of the Gila Forest reserve in 1899 and got its current name in 1906. While its historic history of logging and mining days are over the Cibola National Forest provides several recreational opportunities in the form of hiking, camping, star grazing, horseback riding, mountain biking, rock climbing and big game hunting as well as popular fee-free recreation opportunities at other SFO sites on the district.



Figure 1: Continental Divide WSA


Nearby non-BLM fee areas include campgrounds in the Gila National Forest, Quemado Lake Recreation area- Pinon, and El Caso campgrounds. Nearby attractions include ghost towns in Magdalena, Reserve, and numerous outdoor recreation activities in Springerville, Arizona. Located in the nearby Whitewater Canyon of the Mogollon Mountains is a popular tourist attraction managed by the US Forest Service, The Catwalk. The Very Large Array (VLA) is located 15 miles from Datil Well Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and is another popular destination that features 28, 25-meter radio telescopes used to investigate astronomical objects such as: galaxies, supernovas and planets. SFO manages 1.5 million surface acres of public lands across 2 counties in southwest New Mexico, shown in Figure 2, including:

- 13 Wilderness Study Areas
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
- The El Camino Real National Historic Trail
- The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail-34 Mile
- Quebradas Backcountry Byway-24 Mile Route
- The Box Climbing/Bouldering Special Recreation Management Area
- San Lorenzo Canyon Special Recreation Management Area
- Socorro Nature Area
- Fort Craig Historic Site
- Diverse wildlife, plant species, and Invertebrates including, 12 Federally

Threatened & Endangered species.

- Significant cultural (historic & prehistoric) resources
- Internationally significant paleontological resources

Table 2:

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Datil Well Campground at a Glance</h2> 	
Location:	Two miles west of Datil, NM, between U.S. Highway 60 and U.S. Highway 12.
Acreage:	Approximately 640 acres
Amenities Offered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 developed camping/picnicking sites with shelters, picnic tables, grills, and permanent trash receptacles • 3 RV electrical sites with 30/50-amp electricity • 1 ADA-accessible camping/picnicking site • 1 large group site with pavilion, picnic tables, and grills • 4 double vault toilet facility • Potable water spigots • 3 miles of hiking trails • A visitor center with interpretive exhibits and WIFI • Kiosk with fee-collection services (Iron Ranger) • Site hosts • Fees are collected bi-monthly by BLM employees. • Datil Well is patrol by County Sheriff's department and BLM Law Enforcement Officers on a regular basis.
Daily Fees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5.00 per night per site • \$5.00 per night per site (RV hookup) • \$15.00 day use of group site • \$30.00 overnight camping group site
Visitation (2023):	Average: 20,889 annual visitors
Season of Use:	Open year round; busiest May-November
Where Most Visitors Originate:	New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Arizona
Popular Activities:	Hiking, sightseeing, camping, picnicking, Dark sky Astrophotography
Average Group Size:	2 people

Datil Well Campground offers significant opportunities for outdoor recreation, in part because of the financial investment the BLM has dedicated to it. Amenities such as: a developed parking lot, permanent trash receptacles and permanent restroom facilities, interpretive exhibits, picnic tables and a simple fee-collection service all meet FLREA standard and expanded amenity fee requirements.

Datil Well Campground

The campground owes its name to one of the 15 windmill wells spaced out every 10 miles along the Magdalena stock driveway. Established in 1885, the stock driveway route joined Springerville, Arizona with the railroad spur in Magdalena, New Mexico. During the peak trailing year of 1919, over 21,000 cattle and 150,000 sheep passed over the trail. Many herds watered and rested at what is now the site of the campground. The last cattle drive was held in the 1960's.

The campground has 22 individual campsites, a large group site with picnic tables, shelters, and fires rings. The Datil Well campground has a total of 22 designated campsites. Sites 17,19, and 21 provide 30/50-amp electrical hookups. Sites 1 through 16,18,20 and 22 have no electricity. Present amenity fees are \$5.00 per night per site. Other amenities available at the campground include potable water, 4 vault toilets, 6 water spigots and a group picnic shelter with fees at \$15.00 per day for day use and \$30.00 per night for overnight camping if reserved. The campground is adjacent to the group site and trailhead parking, there is a certain amount of crossover use, such as campers using the vault toilets or the group site picnic area. A campground host is available year-round and can be found at the host site. Currently the group site and campsite do not use a reservation system and that individual camp sites are on a first-come-first served basis and the group site can be reserved by calling the BLM, Socorro Field Office.



Figure 3: Trailhead.



Figure 4: Original Signage from 1969.

Per statistics gathered during fiscal year 2023, approximately 20,889 members of the public visited the Datil Well. Of these visitors, 60 percent traveled two or fewer hours within New Mexico to reach the SRMA. Approximately 20 percent of visitors traveled between two and ten hours from adjacent States like Arizona, Texas and Colorado to reach the SRMA. Ten percent traveled greater than ten hours to reach the Datil Well. International visitors comprise ten percent of the total SRMA visitation. Visitation is boosted from people coming to see the Vary Large Array (VLA)-National Radio Astronomy Observatory, which receives approximately 25,000 visitors each year who use the campground to hike, camp, and picnic.



Figure 5: ADA Campsite



Figure 6: Astrophotography

The Socorro Field Office takes a proactive approach in managing the Datil Well campground to meet the following primary objectives:

1. Minimize conflicts with adjacent private landowners.
2. Minimize conflicts between recreation user groups.
3. Minimize conflicts with other resources and uses.
4. Provide for visitor safety and interpretive needs.
5. Provide for quality developed recreation experiences compatible with other uses.
6. Provide for quality primitive and semi-primitive recreation experience in a manner compatible with other uses.

Figure 2: Location of Datil Well Campground SRMA

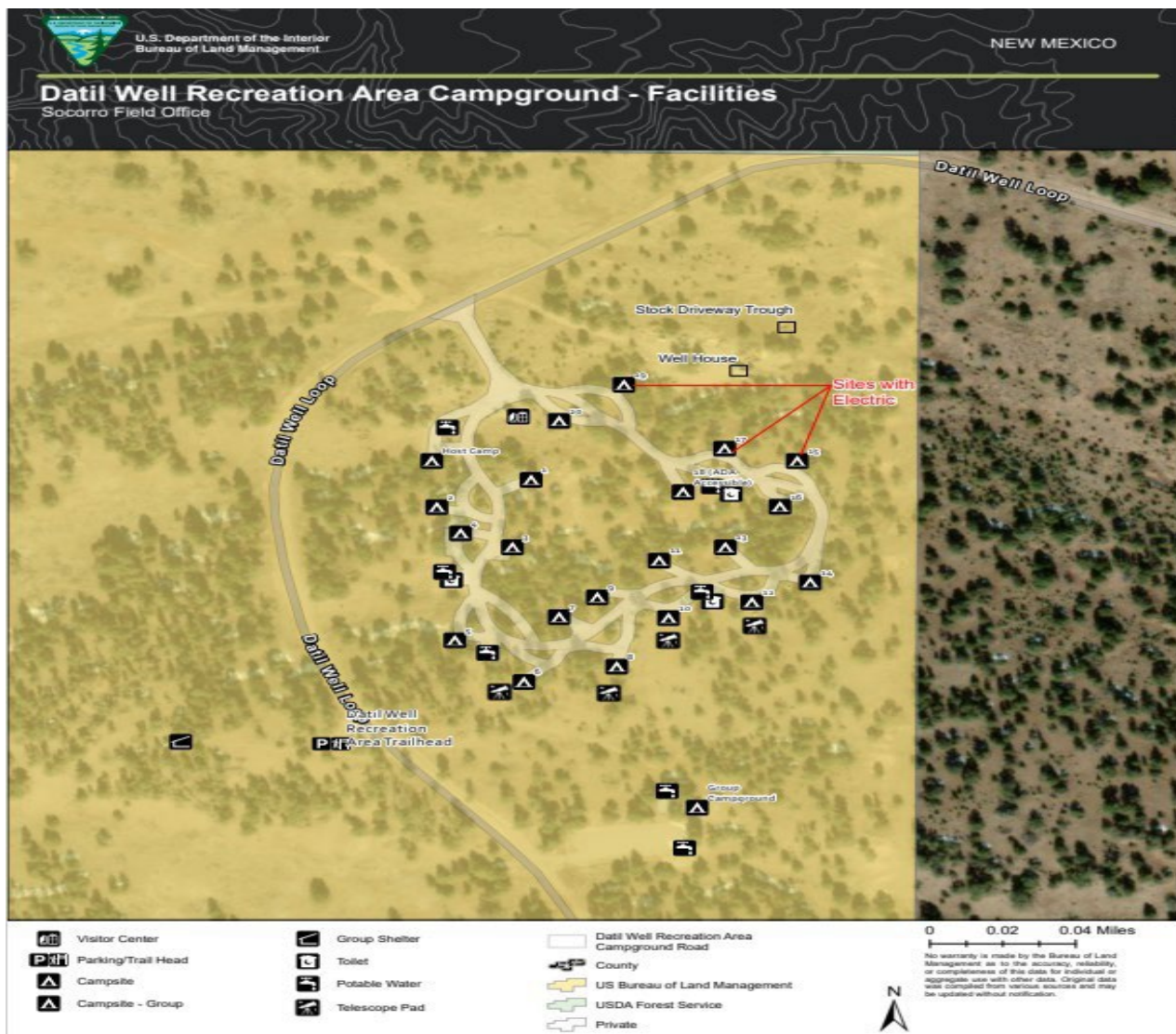


Figure 7: Overview Map of the Datil Well Campground

Fees

Fees at Datil Well campground were first implemented in 1983 at \$5.00 per site per night and have remained unchanged for the past 41 years while visitation use has simultaneously grown. The fee program is managed through Recreation Use Permits (RUPs) and associated fees, issued for short term recreation use of specialized facilities and services that meet FLREA guidelines. The fee is an expanded amenity fee covering specialized outdoor recreation sites and services that provide direct benefits to individuals and groups.

With amenities including access roads, Wi-Fi, tent, trailer, and RV areas, fee collection and security presence by site hosts and BLM staff, permanent trash receptacles, a vault toilet facility, and picnic tables and shelters, Datil Well campground meets or exceeds all FLREA fee requirements and conditions for an expanded amenity fee, as shown below.

Table 3: The current Datil Well Campground Amenities and Fees

Number of Sites	Type/Use	Current Fee
19	Non-electric Site	\$5.00 per site per night
3	Electric Sites	\$5.00 per site per night
1	Group Site	\$15.00 day use/\$30.00 overnight use
<p>Amenities include: 19 developed campsites with picnic tables, fire rings, grills, trash receptacles and shade shelters (one is handicap accessible), 3 sites with water and electric hookups and grills and shade shelters; 1 group site with 6 picnic tables under two shelters and 2 grills and trash receptacles; a permanent restroom facility; developed hiking trails; and site host living area and a visitor center.</p>		

Visitor Satisfaction

In compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA, 1993), and to better understand and meet the needs of the recreating public, Visitor Surveys have been periodically conducted at BLM recreation fee sites. These surveys are developed to measure visitor satisfaction and BLM performance related to the Bureau’s goals of providing quality recreation experiences and ensuring the public receives fair value for their recreation activity.

The most recent Visitor Survey for Datil Well was conducted in 2016. The results of the survey indicate that 98% of the visitors surveyed rated the overall quality of their visit as “Very Good”, and 2% as “Good”, leading to an overall satisfaction level of 100%.

Regarding fees, about (36%) of respondents thought that the fees charged were too low. The remainder (64%) thought the fees were just right. No respondents thought the fees were too high. The 2016 visitor surveys were conducted before any facilities upgrades were completed such as: vault toilets, water, electrical and upgrading all 22 campsites.

Since the 2013 and 2016 visitor satisfaction surveys, substantial facility upgrades have been made to Datil Well, including modern vault toilets, upgrades water and electrical services, and campsite improvements. These enhancements have significantly elevated the quality of visitor experiences but have also increased the costs of maintaining the site. The proposed fee increase is necessary to ensure these improvements are sustained over the long term and continue to meet the high expectations of visitors.

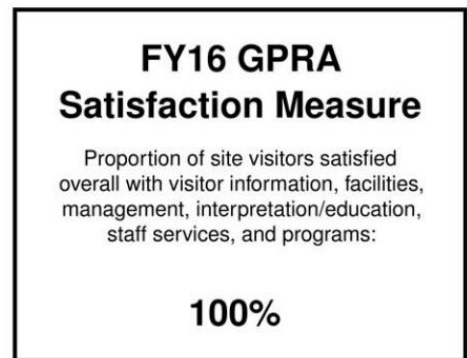


Table 4: Datil Well Visitor Survey: Fees

Survey Year	% Saying fees were too low	% Saying fees were just right	% Saying fees were too high
2013	30%	71%	0%
2016	36%	64%	0%

This table summarizes the results of the question, “How appropriate was the fee charged for this site/area?” over time. Note: The 2016 survey results were before any facilities deferred maintenance upgrades were completed in 2022.

Visitation and Visitor Use

The primary recreation activities at Datil Well include Camping, hiking, picnicking, and dark sky watching. The average group size is 2-3 people with an average stay of two days. Datil Well is primarily used by out-of-state visitors as opposed to local or repeat visitors. Many of those who stop in have intentionally planned their visit. From fall through spring, Datil Well will receive a large volume of people reserving the group site. The location of Datil Well provides a conveniently centralized point in New Mexico for groups gathering to stay overnight and hold reunions. Most visitation comes from outside of Catron County and New Mexico. Over the past several years, Datil Well has experienced a steady increase in visitation, particularly out-of-state visitors. This rise in use places additional demands on campground infrastructure accelerating wear and tear and necessitating more annual maintenance and eventual replacement of key facilities. The fee increase is necessary to meet the growing expenses of the campground program, especially those of both regular and deferred maintenance. Until now, the campground fee structure has never fully considered the replacement costs of the campground infrastructure. As the Datil Well campground use increases and becomes popular, the demand grows and the deferred maintenance needs increase. The proposed fee increase is necessary to keep the campground program self-sufficient, as well as to provide for safe and enjoyable camping experiences through routine maintenance as well as increased deferred maintenance as visitation continually grows annually.

Table 5: Datil Well Visitation

Fiscal Year	Visitation Figures
2020	11,359
2021	11,632
2022	12,350
2023	20,889
2024	23,189
Total:	85,713
Average:	10,714
Percent change from 2020 to 2023:	+83.8%

SOURCE: USDI, BLM Recreation Management Information Systems (RMIS) and Collection and Billing System Reports.

Demographics at Datil Well Campground

The most recent Visitor Survey conducted by Washington State University in 2016 offers a demographic sample of Datil Well visitors. The survey found:

- The division of sex of visitors was about 57% male and 42% female.
- The most common age of respondents was just between 61-70 years old. The most common age group was adults, though visitors from all ages were represented.
- The most common number of adult visitors was 1-2 per group with no children.
- Visitors came from 24 states across the country:
 - The most common location of respondents was Texas, followed by New Mexico.
 - There are more out-of-state than in-state visitors.
 - Out-of-state visitors most commonly came from neighboring states.
 - New Mexico visitors came from 8 counties, with Otero being the most common.
- <5% of visitors surveyed identified as having a disability.

Demographics like race, ethnicity, gender identity, education, or income bracket were not surveyed. There have been some very comprehensive studies done on demographic profile of adult RV ownership and alignment with user groups. These studies focused on intentions and motivations of RV users often priorities well-maintained amenities and could support a modest fee.

The Datil Well Campground has been used for day use and camping since 1969. Information on the number of visitors each year is obtained using field observations, professional judgment, tracking recreation use permits (RUP), and tracking special recreation permits (SRP). Visitor data is compiled by the campground hosts, who record daily use observations in addition to any written information provided on the RUP envelopes and daily visitor use log forms by paying visitors. The current available data indicate that at least five RV/trailers may be found in the campground daily. Visitors are primarily hikers, but also include mountain bikers, birdwatchers, and hunters.

Recreational use is consistent during the spring, summer, and fall. In the spring and summer, most visitors are from nearby regional communities visiting higher elevations to escape the summer heat. Most of these visitors make day trips to the SRMA, but some make use of the campground facilities. Visitor use decreases in the fall and use shifts to primarily wood haulers, pinon nut gathering and on to pronghorn, deer, and elk hunting. Winter use at the SRMA has not been captured but some hikers have been observed, as well as those camping at Datil Well and cutting and gathering firewood in the nearby Cibola National Forest. The consistent seasonal use and large proportion of regional visitors place significant demands on campground facilities during peak seasons, further highlighting the necessity of a fee increase to ensure these demands are met sustainably.

Most visitors to the Datil Well Campground are from Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The majority of Arizona Visitors are from Phoenix. New Mexico visitors are most commonly from Albuquerque, Socorro, Los Lunas, and Las Cruces. Texas visitors are primarily from Lubbock, El Paso, and West Texas regions.

Datil Well CG Demographics

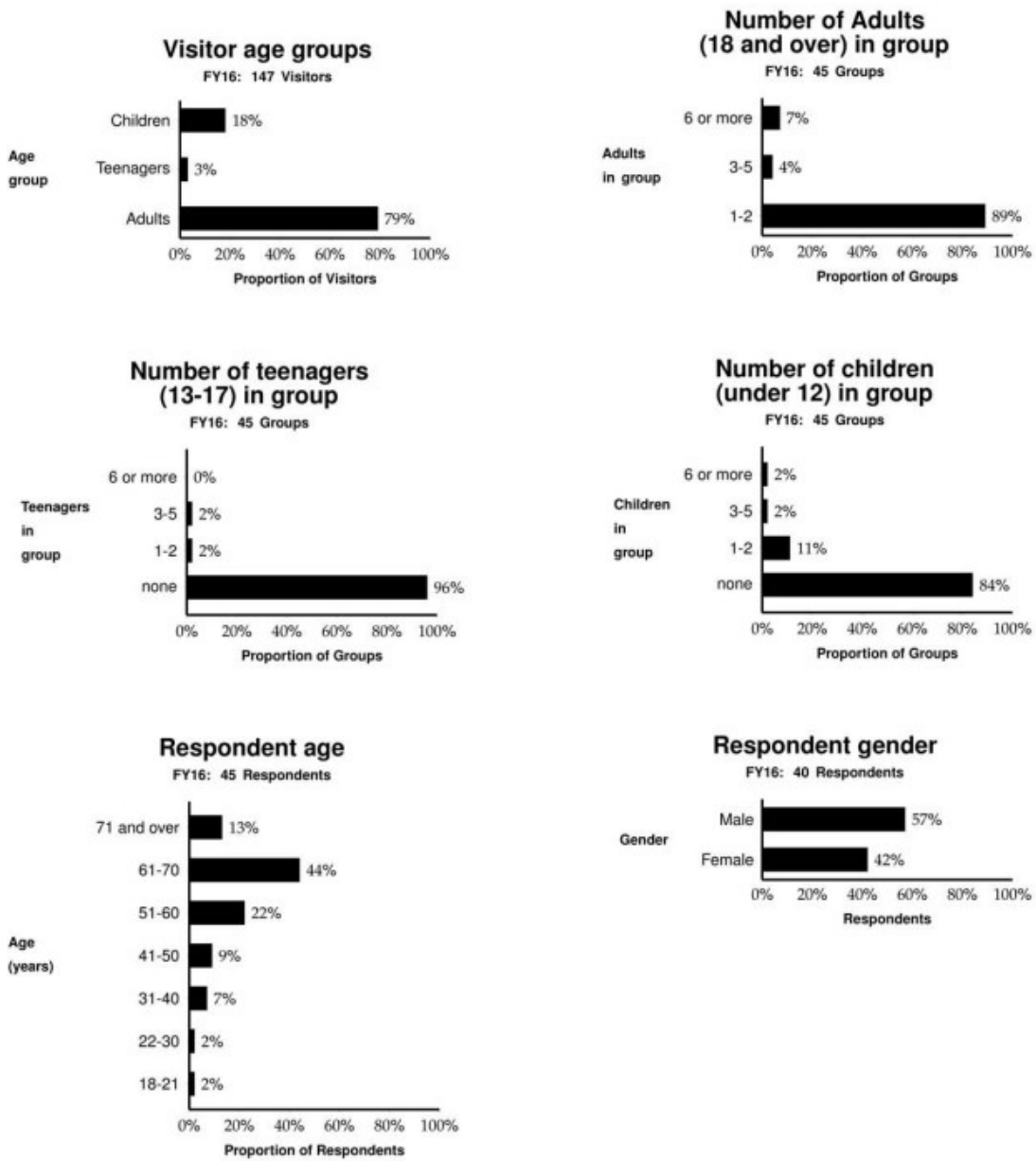


Figure 8: Overview of demographics from Visitor Survey, Washington State University (2016).

Stakeholders and Partnerships

As part of its [Connecting with Communities Recreation Strategy](#), BLM seeks engagement and partnerships with local stakeholders to accomplish mutual objectives for public access and recreation. The BLM strongly believes that community partners must be engaged to have a successful recreation program. The BLM not only gains great volunteers, but also gains essential community attachment to a place. A community that is attached to a campground or trail system are more likely to promote these places and take pride in their stewardship.

The community benefits from tourism dollars associated with these sites, the skills that the BLM staff teaches area youth, and the extra finances directly tied to the assistance agreements, all of which are empowering for rural communities. The SFO manages a site host program at Datil Well. The cooperative agreement consists of, on average, \$9,000 per year for 1 site host couple to manage a diverse set of tasks that include: visitor engagement and education, trash cleanup and site maintenance, fee collection, and rule and regulation compliance.



Figure 9: Volunteer Campground Hosts



Figure 10: New Mexico Volunteer of the Outdoors

the hiking trail system at the Datil Well campground. This program does not cost the SFO but does offer numerous mutual benefits to the BLM and volunteers.

SFO partners with Rocky Mountain Youth Corp. The assistant agreement consists of corps-style crews and individual placement interns who work on diverse tasks, including wilderness monitoring, project field work, GIS mapping, recreation planning, and interpretive education over the course of three months to one year. This program assists SFO with staffing while offering young people valuable experience in a federal land management agency. The New Mexico Volunteer for the Outdoors (NMVFO) is an inclusive all-volunteer organization that promotes involvement and education of the public in maintenance, improvement and stewardship of New Mexico's public lands. The SFO has utilized the NMVFO for the last 10 years in maintaining

3 Financial and Fee Revenue Analyses

This plan deploys two types of analyses: the Cost Recovery Method (discussed in **Section 3**) identifies funds collected at and allocated to the recreation areas compared with expenditures; and the Fair Market assessment (discussed in **Section 4**) that compares fees at Datil Well campground with fees charged at similar public and private campgrounds in and around southwest New Mexico.

REVENUES FROM THE RECREATION PROGRAM

Management of recreation sites is funded through two revenue streams: appropriated funding and fee collections. Fees collected at Datil Well supplement appropriated funding and are used to maintain and enhance recreation facility services and operations. They are intended to help provide a desirable setting that will meet quality standards to enhance the visitor's experience and protect natural and cultural resources.

Amenities and upkeep at Datil Well are maintained with Fee Account revenue from recreation fees paid by visitors. *Table 7: Datil Well campground Cost Recovery* on page 23 displays fee revenues since 2016.

Fee Collection, Enforcement, and Compliance

Fee collection at Datil Well campground is managed through the **Recreation Use Permit (RUP) program**. All vehicles entering the recreation site are required to obtain an RUP for overnight camping. The RUP covers both Standard and Expanded Amenity Fees and differ according to the visitor's use of the recreation sites. Visitors purchase RUPs at the self-service kiosk station located near the entrance. All passes must be displayed on the campsite post.

User fees are collected regularly by staff from the "iron rangers" where visitors submit RUP envelopes. Iron rangers use an inner lockbox system, so cash is not handled in the field. These inner lockboxes are transported to a secure location where they are sorted, opened, and revenues are counted, then deposited, in the presence of more than one staff person in accordance with BLM fee collection policies as described in the Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 2006-211 (I).

Payment of Standard and Expanded Amenity Fees via the RUP program is enforced through the presence of volunteer campground hosts and by a rotation of BLM employees that patrol the sites. If problems arise, local, state, or BLM law enforcement are contacted.

Fee compliance is positively affected by several factors, including amenities perceived to offer value and BLM presence on site by Park Rangers, volunteers, or site hosts. However, fee compliance is imperfect at BLM sites, as some visitors can fail to comply with fee requirements. Failure to comply with fee requirements can result in a warning ticket from BLM employees or volunteers. Fee compliance estimates are currently unknown.

SFO will use various e-commerce technologies, as instructed in BLM Instruction Memorandum 2022-019, 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 SFO decides to make reservation services or other types of e-commerce options available in the future, an expanded amenity fee for reservation services would be charged in addition to any other standard or expanded amenity fees in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(G). Reservation services fees could range from \$0.50 to \$10.00 depending on the type of service provided. This range is approximate and may be adjusted based on contractual requirements or with future updates to the business plan. For visitors who wish not to pay the expanded amenity fee of reservation services, the traditional iron ranger with RUP envelopes will exist until the field office moves the fee area completely to e-commerce options and/or the RUP envelope is no longer available for payment.

Fee Discounts

SFO upholds various opportunities for discounted or fee-free recreation at fee sites through the America the Beautiful Pass; and fee-free holidays and events. These opportunities are discussed below.

America the Beautiful Interagency Pass

FLREA established an interagency National pass known as the **America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass**. The America the Beautiful (ATB) Pass took the place of the popular Golden Eagle, Age, and Access Passports in 2007, although existing Golden Passports will continue to be honored until expired, lost, or stolen.

Any of the seven types of ATB Passes provide the bearer full coverage of standard day use fees at fee sites on public lands, which apply at the SFO to Datil Well campground.

Table 6: America the Beautiful Pass: Types and Benefits

Type	Who Can Use	Cost and Timeframe	Benefits
Annual	Anyone can purchase	\$80, annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Waives day use fees for public lands. ✓ May be jointly owned by 2 people. ✓ Covers fees for passholder(s) at per person fee sites and for 1 car at per car fee sites. ✓ NPS and some FWS sites offer upgrades from entrance receipts and park-specific annual passes to ATB. <input type="checkbox"/> Does not waive expanded amenity fees such as camping or group sites <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot be used by people other than passholder(s)
Military Lifetime	Military veterans and Gold Star Families	Free, lifetime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Waives day use fees for public lands. ✓ Waives fees for passholder at per-person fee sites and for 1 car at per-car fee sites. <input type="checkbox"/> Does not waive expanded amenity fees such as camping or group sites <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot be used by people other than passholder

Military	Current U.S. Military personnel and their dependents with specific documentation	Free, annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Waives day use fees for public lands. ✓ Waives fees for passholder at per-person fee sites and for 1 car at per-car fee sites. □ Does not waive expanded amenity fees such as camping or group sites □ Cannot be used by people other than passholder
4th Grade	U.S. 4 th graders for duration of 4 th grade year	Free with voucher, annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Waives day use fees for public lands. ✓ Waives fees for passholder at per-person fee sites and for 1 car at per-car fee sites. □ Does not waive expanded amenity fees such as camping or group sites ✓ □ Cannot be used by people other than passholder
Senior	Any U.S. citizen or permanent resident 62 and older	\$20, annual \$80, lifetime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Waives day use fees for public lands. ✓ Waives fee for passholder and up to 3 additional adults (w/ passholder present) ✓ Some discounts for overnight camping on individual sites, guided tours, and non-optional transportation (valid only for passholder) – <i>contact specific sites to verify discounts.</i> ✓ Annual passes may be exchanged for a lifetime pass; seniors may present up to 4 annual passes and/or pay the difference between annual and lifetime pass. ✓ □ Cannot be purchased by non-permanent U.S. residents (i.e., “snowbirds”)
Access	U.S. citizens or permanent residents with documentation of permanent disability	Free, lifetime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Waives day use fees for public lands. ✓ Waives fee for passholder and up to 3 additional adults (w/ passholder present) ✓ Some discounts for overnight camping on individual sites, guided tours, and non-optional transportation (valid only for passholder) – <i>contact specific sites to verify discounts</i>
Volunteer	Anyone with 250+ hours of volunteer service on public lands	Free, annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Waives day use fees for public lands. ✓ Waives fees for passholder at per-person fee sites and for 1 car at per-car fee sites. □ Does not waive expanded amenity fees such as camping or group sites ✓ □ Cannot be used by people other than passholder

Key components to remember about the ATB Pass:

- The ATB pass waives standard amenity day use fees at sites managed by six federal agencies: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Forest Service (USDA-FS), and National Park Service (NPS).
- The ATB Pass does not cover expanded amenity fees charged for parking, camping, tours, boat launches, or group sites (excepting Senior and Access Passes; see **Table 6** for specifics).
- Not all federal recreation agencies participate in the program; for example, much of the

Bureau of Reclamation lands are managed by nonfederal partners. **Contact sites directly to ensure the America the Beautiful Pass is accepted there.**

- Visitors must present the actual pass for use, not a copy or electronic version or any other documentation such as: confirmation emails, versions saved to apps like Google or Apple wallets, purchase receipts, or hangtags.

Fee-Free Holidays and Events

Fee-free days are where standard amenity fees are waived. These days are usually in conjunction with federal holidays or anniversaries related to public lands and can include Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Juneteenth, Great American Outdoors Day, National Public Lands Day.

SFO also waives group site fees on a case-by-case basis for school and youth groups, crews, organizational groups conducting business, and BLM educational events to encourage environmental education on public lands.

COST RECOVERY FOR THE RECREATION PROGRAM

Costs for the Recreation Program

Management of SFO sites are funded through **appropriated funding** and **fee collections**.

Fee collections at Datil Well campground contribute to fee accounts for the Recreation Fee Account (L1232) and brought in \$10,044.00 in the 2023 fiscal year. These revenues are used primarily to cover operating costs of the site and pay for basic maintenance and repairs of site infrastructure, septic pumping and water system testing, vandalism cleanup and repairs, campground volunteer reimbursements, grounds keeping, roadway repairs, monsoon cleanup, and the purchasing of supplies to accomplish these tasks. The BLM's National Operations Center (NOC) covers the costs of utilities at Datil Well campground.

Fee collections can be carried over from year to year, thereby providing needed funds to address emergency circumstances and to fund improvement projects that require additional revenues. Fees collected at recreation sites supplement appropriated funding and are used to maintain and enhance recreation facility services and operations. They are intended to help provide a desirable setting that will meet quality standards to enhance the visitor's experience and protect natural and cultural resources.

Fee collection revenue does not cover the labor costs associated with the staff that manages the site. These costs are borne by **appropriated funds**. These include the proportional salaries of a GS-11 Outdoor Recreation Planner, a GS-9 Park Ranger, a GS-9 Volunteer Coordinator, a GS-11 Archaeologist, a GS-11 Facilities Manager, and a GS-11 Law Enforcement Officer and the intermittent salaries of the force account crew and other BLM staff. Appropriated funds also cover the costs associated with administering the fee collection program and provide some financial assistance for executing significant capital improvement projects. These funds are not included in this business plan, as they do not relate to direct revenues or expenditures for recreation fee sites.

Cost Recovery

From 2017 through 2023, a combination of inflation and increased visitation has contributed to a commensurate increase in operating costs for Datil Well campground. This includes daily maintenance, septic services, supplies, security, volunteer stipends, etc., the increased costs associated with the replacement of aging/defunct infrastructure such as: buildings, roads, fencing, parking areas, camp-host site/facilities, etc., and cleanups from severe weather, monsoons, and vandalism.

Concurrently, the cost of the described maintenance, labor and goods required to operate the campground has risen significantly since 1983, when the fees were first introduced, and expected to grow continuously as the U.S. inflation rate increase, eroding the purchasing power of a static recreation fee.

Ideally, fees collected at the site should be enough to sustain the day-to-day operation and upkeep of the site, plus a surplus that can be saved up to supplement significant capital improvement projects. Currently, maintenance costs and expenditures compete with SFO’s ability to provide management for many of fee-free recreation sites across the district.

As shown in *Table 7*, regular annual costs at Datil Well campground are outpacing income revenue, requiring the difference to be covered by appropriated funds shared across the entire recreation program. An increase in fees, and commensurate increase in revenue, is necessary to bring the management of Datil Well campground back to a self-sustaining level.

Table 7: Datil Well Campground Cost Recovery

Fiscal Year	Costs	Revenue	Difference
2017	\$10,460.00	\$5,350.00	-\$5,110.00
2018	\$14,997.00	\$4,990.00	-\$10,007.00
2019	\$16,197.00	\$8,485.00	-\$7,712.00
2020	\$13,265.00	\$13,125.00	-\$140.00
2021	\$17,805.00	\$7,980.00	-\$9,825.00
2022	\$15,495.00	\$8,760.51	-\$6,735.00
2023	\$13,526.00	\$10,029.33	-\$3,497.00
2024	\$8,470.00	\$9,566.80	1,096.80
Total:	\$110,215.00	\$68,286.64	-\$41,928.56
Average:	\$13,776.00	\$8,535.00	-\$5,241.07

Comparison between annual costs and revenues collected at Datil Well campground. Note that “costs” include the cost of regular maintenance plus site host reimbursements. Revenues are RUP fees collected at Datil Well. Note: Expenditures could only be tallied comprehensively dating back to 2017.

As *Table 7* shows, Datil Well campground expenditures are outpacing its annual revenue for regular maintenance costs and expenditures. It should be noted that some years revenue outpaces the cost, but since it was made a fee site, it has run a deficit of its annual revenues. This leaves no financial cushion for larger expenditures such as upgrades to facilities and recreation sites nor for unexpected expenses like cleanup for weather, vandalism, and inclement events.

4 Market Values

ASSESSING FAIR MARKET VALUE OF DATIL WELL CAMPGROUND

This business plan uses a Fair Market Value Assessment to analyze recreation fee sites across the region with a level of development comparable to that of the Datil Well (i.e., developed sites with amenities such as picnic tables with shade shelters and tent pads, and not including sites with amenities and services that Datil Well does not offer, such as: lodging, showers, or full RV connections) administered by federal and state land management agencies as well as private sites.

The analysis demonstrates that Datil Well offers excellent recreation opportunities at a very reasonable cost.

Comparable Fee Site Analysis

Table 8 below compares fees at other recreation fee sites proximate to the Socorro Field Office (public and private), as well as some BLM sites in New Mexico, with levels of development comparable to Datil well campground. The table compares Standard and Expanded Amenity Fees; Additional Expanded Amenity Fees are compared on page 29.

As the tables show, private sites are significantly more expensive than public sites but often offer more services and amenities. Day use fees are not included for public areas, as day use fees are often not distinct from camping fees. RV sites are included for their site fee with hookups.

Proposed fee figures still offer an excellent recreation value, particularly compared with National Park Service and Forest Service sites. While proposed fee figures for RVs are high compared to market values, Datil Well offers excellent amenities including picnic tables, pavilions, grills and fire pits, vault toilets, parking, water and electric which make Datil Well RV sites an excellent recreation value at \$20.00 without electric and \$30.00 for sites with electric per night, especially compared with private sites' average of \$37.00 per night.

The figure below compares group site fees at other public recreation fee sites in the regional area of the Socorro Field Office, as well as BLM-wide, comparing Additional Expanded Amenity Fees. These figures are calculated at cost per person for maximum capacity at the group site. Private sites are not included, as private campgrounds do not offer group site recreation comparable to public sites.

As displayed in **Table 8**, Datil Well proposed fees offer a higher though still cost-effective group site recreation opportunity per person. The amenities present at Datil Well group site, including picnic tables, pavilions, grills and fire pits, pit toilets, and parking, as well as tent pads, still make Datil Well group site an excellent recreational value for the number of amenities offered. Furthermore, Datil Well offers group recreation at a very reasonable cost, as group site fees are \$15.00 daily Standard Amenity Fees and/or Expanded Amenity Fee of \$30.00 for overnight camping. In comparison, USFS group sites charge group fees (which range up to \$125 based on the number of recreationists in the group) per night.

Table 8:

Comparative Analysis of Regional Campground Rates				
Site	Day Use	Camping	RV w/Hookups	Group Site
BLM/NM Valley of Fires, Pecos District, Roswell Field Office	\$3.00 to \$5.00	\$7.00 tent/no electric. \$12.00 RV no electric.	\$18.00	\$25.00 per day
BLM/NM Aguirre Springs, Las Cruces District	\$5.00 per passenger vehicle. \$15.00 per commercial bus.	\$7.00 per vehicle per site.	N/A	\$50.00 per day
BLM/NM Three Rivers Petroglyph Site, Las Cruces District	\$5.00 per vehicle. \$15.00 per bus.	\$7.00 per campsite	\$18.00 per campsite	\$50.00 per group
BLM/NM Orilla Verde, Taos Field Office	\$3.00 per vehicle	\$5.00 per primitive campsite. \$7.00 per developed campsite	\$15 per RV site and \$3.00 for extra vehicle.	\$30.00 for day use and \$40.00 for overnight camping.
USFS/NM Sam Tobias Campground, Lincoln National Forest	N/A	\$6.00	N/A	\$60.00 per night 1-60 people. \$80.00 per night 61-80 people. \$100.00 per night 81-100 people.
USFS/AZ Luna Lake Campground Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest	N/A	\$20.00 per site/non-electric.	N/A	\$50.00, \$60.00, \$125.00 non-electric. Price based on number of people.
USFS/NM Juniper Campground Gila National Forest	N/A	\$15.00 per standard non-electric site.	\$25.00 per electric site	N/A
USFS/AZ Apache Trout Campground Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest	N/A	\$30.00 per site	\$46.00 per electric site.	\$50.00 non-electric. \$84.00 electric.
BLM/NM Current Datil Well Campground	\$0	\$5.00 per site	\$5.00 per site	\$15.00 day use \$30.00 Overnight Camping
Regional Average Fees	\$4.50	\$13.00	\$24.00	\$44.16
Proposed Datil Well Campground Fees	\$0	\$10.00	\$20.00	\$15.00 no change day use \$30.00 overnight camping

Inflation and Consumer Price Index

BLM's permit and fee policy recommends the use of an index for routine fee adjustments rather than reviewing each individual adjustment through a comprehensive business plan effort that requires tremendous investment of effort and time. The Socorro Field Office seeks approval to adopt a model to increase fees by 20% (then rounded) whenever the CPI-U, US City Average. The CPI has increased 215.80%, moreover, it is projected to rise by 2.84% per year. According to the

Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index or CPI is "a measure of the average change over time in the price paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services" (bls.gov/cpi). The CPI-U is the broadest and most comprehensive CPI. The all-urban consumer group included in the CPI-U represents over 90 percent of the total U.S. population (<https://www.bls.gov/cpi/questions-and-answers.htm>).

Since the original business plan was signed in 1983, that date will be used to provide an example of the CPI change over time. In 1983 the average annual Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) was at 99.6%; by 2024 it had climbed to 214.80%.

According to the CPI Inflation Calculator, \$5.00 in January 1983 had the same buying power as \$15.79 in January 2024. The BLM is seeking approval to exercise the option to increase the camping fee by 25%, rounded up to the nearest half dollar, when there is a 20% increase in the CPI-U from the date this business plan is approved. The first adjustment would result in an increase to \$20.00 without electric and \$30.00 for sites with electric. This model would ensure the Datil Well Campground evolves in tandem with the ever-changing environment of the future and increasing costs.

FLREA provides agencies with continually updated recreation fee authority, meaning a proposed fee increase should account for continual inflation and decreasing purchasing power of fees established during the prior authority period. The chart below displays CPI increase according to the rate of inflation since 1983 (sourced from BLS) and projected into 2030 (sourced from CBI). By projecting CPI and inflation rates into 2030, this business plan accounts for future economic changes and prepares Datil Well Campground to be insulated for those changes within the 10-year FLREA fee authority period.



Figure 11, Before and after of facility upgrades in 2022

According to the BLS and the CBI, inflation rate rose by 2.84% each year from 1983 to 2032. Already, inflation has risen 114% since campground fee was establishment in 1983 (41 years). SFO is proposing an overall fee increase of approximately 22.4%, accounting for this change in purchasing power of a static recreation fee.

The table below shoes what Datil Well campground fees would be for 2024 and 2030 if they rose with inflation, as well as the proposed fee increase. Proposed fees increase track with both the comparable market value at similar sites and with current and projected rates of inflation. These changes are proposed to begin in summer or late fall of 2025.

5 Expanding Recreation Fees

According to an analysis of Fair Market Value, Consumer Price Index inflation, and visitation growth, this business plan proposes a fee raise of approximately 25% to account for greater cost recovery.

As discussed, fees at Datil Well Campground have remained unchanged since 1983, and the current rate is not sufficient to keep up with the costs associated with managing and operating the recreation site. Moreover, Datil Well experiences high rates of half off fee entrance due to a high population of older campers using the campground, resulting in a loss of potential visitation revenue.

The costs of goods, labor, and services have increased 13% since 2012, and are predicted to grow another 21% by 2030, thus eroding the purchasing power of a static recreation fee. Visitation has swelled 26% at Datil Well Campground, requiring higher levels of investment via maintenance, staffing and security, etc.

Fee increases of approximately 35% prepares Datil Well Campground to be insulated for continued visitation growth, continual inflation, and rising costs of management and maintenance within the upcoming 10-year FLREA fee authority period.



Figure 12: 2022 Vault Toilet Replacement

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Managing for Positive Recreation Program Results

The goal of SFO's recreation program is to meet increasing demand for outdoor recreation services, including camping, hiking, biking, and visiting natural and cultural heritage sites. To meet the demand, SFO aims to increase recreation revenues by managing for positive results for the following three groups: BLM recreationists (individual and group), the local community, and the BLM. Recreation at BLM sites provide a business base for many local entrepreneurs, as the sites bring customers directly to the local community.

The recreationists benefit by having:

- 1) Low-cost recreation sites accessible and available for their use.
- 2) Improved public lands facilities (i.e., clean toilets, paved roads) and amenities (i.e., footrails, interpretive education, and signage).
- 3) Outstanding and reliable nature-based recreation opportunities, providing on-site experiences (i.e., exercise, solitude, adventure, and developing skills) and personal benefits (i.e., fitness, personal health, and self-confidence)
- 4) A focused opportunity to build relationships with family, groups, and fellow recreationists as well as foster interest and stewardship for their shared public lands and the area's rich natural, cultural, and historical characteristics.



Figure 13: A hiker and his pet at the Rocky Point overlook.

The local community benefits by developing:

- 1) Improved services and quality of life through facility development and resource protection.
- 2) Business opportunities in the outdoor recreation sector (i.e., guide services, gear stores), the hospitality sector (i.e., restaurants, hotels), and the retail sector (i.e., outfitter stores, souvenir merchandise).
- 3) Jobs for its citizens and tax revenues for local government.
- 4) A heightened sense of community pride in their shared natural and cultural landmarks.

The BLM benefits by:

- 1) Meeting land management goals, including protection of natural and cultural resources.
- 2) Partnering with recreationists as stewards of the public lands
- 3) Providing for a more stable (and hence knowledgeable) BLM work force
- 4) Lowering costs by developing improved business management systems
- 5) Obtaining revenues to provide for program management and facilities enhancement.
- 6) Reducing negative impacts to the environment by containing impacts to developed areas and thus managing impacts properly (i.e., waste, fire, garbage)

Anticipated Results of Expanding Recreation Fees

Overall impacts from changing fees include:

- Generation of revenue to be used for labor and operational needs.
- Ensure adequate staff to halt resource damage and provide the level of service the public has come to expect.
- Improve recreational opportunities and the quality of the experience and public satisfaction

for visitors.

- Ability to continue operations despite potential increase of costs of goods, labor, and/or services.
- Greater fee equality with comparable private recreation sites.
- Greater self-sufficiency for management of the recreation site.

Impacts to Recreational Users

Recreational users may be initially disappointed with the decision to expand recreation fees, as this would force them to spend more to utilize the campground.

Still, with increased demand for public land recreation, the BLM will need to improve sites to meet demand and to maintain health, human safety and provide a better user experience. Should fees be raised, services could continue to be offered in the recreation program. In addition, revenues could be used to gradually improve infrastructure as part of routine upgrades and long-term projects, such as expanding the Datil Well Stock Driveway interpretive content at the Visitor Center.

Impacts to the Local Economy

Rural Catron County depends on tourism. Its location presents a crossroads between diverse recreation opportunities across the BLM and USFS. Increase in visitation to Datil Well Campground brings increased expenditures from tourism to the Catron County economy. Local businesses benefit from increased area visitation as visitors are likely to make purchases at those local business.

BLM sites offer important low-cost recreation. Many tourists prefer to camp at public campgrounds, but with many local Forest Service campgrounds being closed between October and May, regional capacity can be low. Thus, campers rely on BLM campgrounds. Many tourists would be unable to come to Datil Well if not for the availability of BLM campgrounds and dispersed camping opportunities. This is also true for group site campers, as many low-income and youth groups cannot afford to stay in motels. Recreation is important to the local economy to keep site infrastructure in good condition, and to service and clean facilities at a high standard.



Figure 14: Modernized facilities provide recreational users a highly desirable camping experience.

Impacts to the Environment

Amenity fees enable SFO to operate the recreation program. Developed sites reduce negative impacts to resources associated with higher levels of visitation. By providing developed recreation sites for visitors, the BLM can better contain impacts to these smaller areas. Associated recreation impacts, including waste, fire, and garbage, are more limited to developed recreation areas and allow impacts to be managed more efficiently.

Socioeconomic Impacts, including Low-Income Populations

In line with the Department of Interior's [Environmental Justice Strategic Plan](#), SFO seeks to meet the needs of underserved communities (minorities and low-income populations) by reducing disparate environmental burdens, removing barriers to participation in decision-making, and increasing access to environmental benefits that help make BLM lands and communities safe, vibrant, and healthy for all those who live, work, and recreate there.

Fees and fee increases can pose a hardship to those with lower incomes as well as decrease visitor use and reduce compliance in paying fees. Increasing fees may force those who chose not to pay or cannot pay to pursue recreation opportunities on other public lands where fees are not required.

Dispersed camping opportunities on BLM and USFS lands in the area would still be available free of charge and would not be affected by a fee increase at Datil Well.

Anticipated Results of Not Expanding Recreation Fees

Overall impacts from not changing fees include:

- Loss of potential recreation fee revenue to augment funds for labor and operational costs.
- Potential environmental degradation of resources.
- Potential degradation of recreation experience and public satisfaction for current and new visitors with less funding available for aging facilities and not enough personnel to work the area.
- Costs of goods, labor, and services increase at a faster rate than fee revenue projections making it more difficult for BLM to purchase resources it needs to maintain Datil Well.
- Favorable socio-economic impacts to low-income or minority populations.

Impacts to Recreational Users

Recreational users may benefit in the short-term from not increasing recreation fees, as they would not pay higher sums to recreate at Datil Well.

With this business plan, the BLM seeks to service recreationists, the local economy, and the BLM in the long-term. Replace costs for the infrastructure at Datil Well will continue to increase, given current trends. The requested fee increase would be partially used to cover replacement costs of existing infrastructure not yet replaced. A failure to raise the recreation fee would mean that aging infrastructure would not be replaced in a timely manner to maintain site quality. In addition, a failure to raise recreation fees would mean improvements to recreation sites, such as expansions to the visitor center, adding RV site amenities, upgrading signage, repairing trails, and expanding developed recreation opportunities would not be added to the existing infrastructure.

Impacts to Local Economy

Not raising recreation fees could erode services like cleaning and site host presence at sites. This would eventually impact the recreation sector of the Catron County economy, resulting in decreased visitation to BLM sites. Visitation dollars are entirely discretionary; people can spend their vacation dollars at other locations if they find their experience on BLM to be underwhelming or unsatisfactory. Should people be less likely to recreate at BLM sites because of poor or unmaintained facilities, then rural Catron County economy would suffer.

Impacts to the Environment

Developed recreation sites mitigate the negative impacts to the environment resulting from unrestrained dispersed use. Dispersed use can result in harmful impacts to wildlife, riparian resources, wilderness areas, cultural resources, and enjoyment by other recreation visitors. Failure to maintain the recreation program would result in negative impacts to the environment. For example, should the BLM be unable to regularly service toilets, people would be less likely to



Figure 15: Rio Grande Valley with Ladron WSA in background

utilize developed toilet facilities and potentially damage natural or cultural resources by leaving human waste and trash on the land. Additionally, recreation staff conduct site cleanup and weed control. Not increasing fees would mean such work would be reduced, resulting in negative impacts to the environment.

Socioeconomic Impacts, including Low-Income Populations

Overall, not expanding or changes to recreational users would likely benefit low-income populations, as they would not have to pay higher fees to use Datil Well.

However, the opportunity to pay lower fees may mean recreational users are less likely to purchase any of the seven types of ATB Passes provide the bearer full coverage of standard day use fees at fee sites on public lands, fee discount could outweigh the one-time cost of one of the ATB Passes, resulting in recreationists potentially paying more for recreation in the long run.

Furthermore, some group site reservations are held by groups looking for an inexpensive vacation. Should fee accounts erode such that group sites could not be maintained or serviced, the BLM might be forced to curtail group site opportunities. Failure to offer these low-cost group sites to youth groups, scout groups, family groups, and other such assemblages could have negative impacts on lower-income populations.

PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE EXPENDITURES AND PLANS

Development Plans for Datil Well Campground

SFO is proposing to broadly enhance recreational amenities at Datil Well using collected recreation fee dollars. SFO plans to initiate these development plans as funds become available.

Desired developments include adding additional RV sites with utility hookups and shade structures, extending the water system, and updating all interpretive exhibits at the Visitor Center. Development would be paid for through recreation fee revenue and appropriated funds and would likely take several years to complete.

Currently, our campsites with electric are the most used and in demand amenities at Datil Well. Additional campsites with electric have been the most requested items from public interactions

between visitors and our site hosts. Additionally, the water system at Datil Well needs updating. By updating the system and including a chlorinator for the water, maintenance costs will drop and the water available to visitors will be of higher quality.

To improve the visitor experience and provide additional opportunities to students and educational groups, we hope to significantly upgrade the interpretive materials found in the visitor center at Datil Well in addition to the signage and kiosks around the site and on the hiking trail. These additions would better explain the history and significance of the site and allow for a more developed educational experience for student groups that frequent the site.

These development plans present significant expenditures to SFO, and therefore further reinforce the need to raise fees. The installation of new infrastructure and enhancement of the recreation program would benefit recreationists, the local economy, and the environment. An increase in fees would allow the BLM more capacity to provide labor and materials for these proposed enhancements.

Table 10: Future Project Estimated Costs

Projects	Cost
Campsites with electric (<i>3 sites at \$35,000.00 each</i>)	\$105,000.00
Camp sites with shade structure (<i>3 sites at \$15,000 each</i>)	\$45,000.00
Chlorinator Water System	\$7,000.00
New Interpretive Exhibit (<i>500 sq feet</i>)	\$ 200,000.00
Total:	\$ 357,000.00

Transition to Recreation.gov

To better manage visitation to recreation fee sites especially sites with electric, SFO is transitioning fee sites to Recreation.gov, the federal government’s public lands reservation system. Recreation.gov opens BLM lands to more visitors to enjoy the vast natural, cultural, recreational, geological, wildlife, and historical opportunities and resources of America’s shared public lands. The website offers venue details, site descriptions and recreation reservations for agencies including the BLM, NPS, and USFS. With the span of 21+ million users across multiple agencies, recreation.gov offers SFO an excellent marketing opportunity to make opportunities known to visitors who may not otherwise hear of Datil Well campground.

Currently, Datil Well group sites are reserved through SFO’s administrative team. This manual system is not as efficient as an online reservation system and can lead to scheduling conflicts. By transitioning to Recreation.gov, SFO offers visitors a more accessible reservation system, keeps group site information more centralized, and streamlines the communications and process of reserving the site.

In the future, SFO will also expand its recreation.gov presence to allow visitors the option to pay for individual campsites via recreation.gov. This transition will make payment more efficient for modern visitors, who are increasingly unlikely or otherwise unable to carry cash to pay recreation fees. All sites will remain first-come first-served.

Transition to Electronic Fee Collection

The Socorro Field Office will use various e-commerce directed through the 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.

An expanded amenity fee for reservation services would be charged at Stateline Campground in addition to any other standard or expanded amenity fees in accordance with 16 U.S.C. BLM Stateline CG ASFO/GSENM Business Plan - Page 15 of 24 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

Currently, SFO recreation fee sites do not offer electronic fee collection. The BLM in the past year has begun researching and planning the transition to e-commerce-based fee collection wherever possible. The recreation staff at SFO is working to set up the solar-powered 'Remote Off-Grid Kiosk' or 'ROK' system that will allow for credit card payments based on the type of activity, with a corresponding, printable ticket. The benefit of the ROK system is that there are no additional transaction fees borne by the visitor, unlike other e-commerce solutions like the QR- based Scan-and-Pay system.

Electronic fee payment is also expected to increase fee compliance. Currently, many visitors cannot pay recreation fees due to their lacking cash or change from a larger amount. This results in visitors either skipping fee payment or mailing in fees. Electronic fee payment would provide visitors a streamlined, on-site method to pay fees regardless of cash on hand. As the economy moves increasingly away from hard currency and towards electronic forms of payment, SFO's transition to electronic fee collection ensures continued provision of recreation opportunities in accordance with current visitor trends and desires.

Recreation.gov opens BLM lands to more visitors to enjoy the vast natural, cultural, recreational, geological, wildlife, and historical opportunities and resources of America's shared public lands. The website offers venue details, site descriptions and recreation reservations for agencies including the BLM, NPS, and USFS. With the span of 21+ million users across multiple agencies, recreation.gov offers SFO an excellent marketing opportunity to make opportunities known to visitors who may not otherwise hear of Datil Well campground.

Currently, Datil Well group site is reserved through SFO's administrative team. This manual system is not as efficient as an online reservation system and can lead to scheduling conflicts. By transitioning to Recreation.gov, SFO offers visitors a more accessible reservation system, keeps group site information more centralized, and streamlines the communications and process of reserving the site.

In the future, SFO will also expand its recreation.gov presence to allow visitors the option to pay for individual campsites via recreation.gov. This transition will make payment more efficient for modern visitors, who are increasingly unlikely or otherwise unable to carry cash to pay recreation fees. All sites will remain first-come first-served.

6 Feedback and Public Participation

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Section 804 of FLREA addresses the minimum public outreach requirements that an agency must consider when developing or changing recreation fees. This outreach process involves sharing and getting feedback on the proposed Business Plan by a Resource Advisory Council (RAC). RACs provide recommendations to agency officials on matters including, but not limited to:

- Implementing or eliminating fees.
- Expanding or limiting the recreation fee program.
- Implementing fee level changes.

SFO will initiate public notification and outreach for the fee proposal per PL 108-447 Sec. 804 (d)(4) and the BLM Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook (H-2930- 1). This includes:

- Soliciting public comments for at least 30 days on the draft business plan by:
 - Posting it on the [BLM Recreation Site Business Plans website](#).
 - Issuing news releases, posting information on social media platforms (including [BLM NM Facebook page](#)), and/or purchasing ads in local media outlets, and post notices at our recreation fee sites.
 - Sending letters to interested parties and stakeholders
- Reviewing and considering public comments, revising the draft business plan as warranted, and finalizing the business plan for Resource Advisory Council recommendation.
 - Including the number and content of public comments in an additional section of this business plan.

Maintaining SFO's fee program can only come with widespread public support when fees have a direct connection to a perceived and/or tangible benefit. To ensure ongoing public support of any/all proposed fee adjustments, SFO will publish and vet proposals in newspapers with regional circulation, and on the BLM websites and recreation site bulletin boards. In addition, site hosts will inform visitors regarding details of fee proposals and provide a venue to comment if they choose.

Visitor Feedback Mechanisms

The following mechanisms provide visitors, stakeholders, and the public mechanisms to provide direct feedback to SFO on proposed changes:

- **Visitor Contacts:** BLM recreation staff and the law enforcement patrol the campground and surrounding recreation area regularly. This provides opportunities for direct visitor feedback.
- **Recreation Use Permits/Fee Envelopes:** Visitors often provide constructive comments on the permit or fee envelopes, and these comments are noted by recreation staff.
- **Volunteer Hosts:** The SFO coordinates regularly with Datil Well site hosts who provide valuable feedback and suggestions regarding visitor satisfaction and facility needs.
- **Visitor Use and Satisfaction Surveys:** BLM conducts these surveys on a rotating basis for all fee sites and related facilities. Datil Well was surveyed for visitor satisfaction in 2016

- and will resurvey in approximately 5 years.
- **Resource Advisory Council:** All fee proposals must first undergo review by BLM's New Mexico Resource Advisory Council (RAC), which will provide feedback on SFO's proposal.
 - **Facebook:** Visitors can provide feedback by privately messaging the [Bureau of Land Management New Mexico Facebook page](#).
 - **Direct Contact:** Visitors can provide direct feedback about the fee proposal by contacting the BLM Socorro Field Office by phone at (575) 838-1252 or by mail at 901 South Hwy 85, Socorro New Mexico 87801

Appendix

Fair Market Value Analysis of Regional Private and Public Campgrounds:

Quemado Ranger District, Gila National Forest, Quemado, New Mexico	
Description: The Quemado Ranger District; Catron County, NM; Gila National Forest. The district encompasses 603,382 acres and has over 155 miles of trails. Providing recreation opportunities such as hiking, camping, picnicking, horseback riding, winter sports, and wildlife viewing. There are several developed campgrounds: Quemado Lake; El Caso I, II, III; Pinon; Armijo; Jewett Gap; and Valle Tio Vince Corrals Campgrounds. Prices reflect new proposed prices as Gila is under consideration to fee changes.	
Quemado Lake Campground	
Amenities available: Fire rings, garbage receptacle, 2 nd access road, picnic tables, vault tables, information kiosk. and RV camping.	Per night for tent camping: \$0; Per night for RV camping with no hookup: \$10
Pinon Campground	
Amenities available: Drinking water, combo fire ring/grill, garbage receptacle, host or attendant present, paved access road, picnic tables, tent pad, vault toilet, paved parking, permanent sign on kiosk or standalone.	Per night for
Armijo Campground	
Amenities available: Tent camping, RV camping, tables, and vault toilet.	Per night for camping and RV without hookups: \$0
Jewett Gap Campground	
Amenities available: Campfire rings, graveled 2WD access road, picnic tables, security services, vault toilet, gravel parking area, permanent sign on kiosk or stand alone.	Per night for camping and RV without hookups: \$0
Valle Tio Vince Public Corrals/Campground	
Amenities available: Campfire rings, graveled 2WD access road, picnic tables, security services, vault toilet, gravel parking area, permanent sign on kiosk or stand alone, horse corrals, and Continental Divide Trail trailhead access.	Per night for camping: \$0; Per night for RC with no hookups: \$10

Mount Taylor Ranger District, Cibola National Forest, Grants, New Mexico

Description: The Mount Taylor Ranger District; Cibola County, NM; Cibola National Forest. The district encompasses 520,000 acres and has over 180 miles of trails. Providing recreation opportunities such as hiking, camping, picnicking, horseback riding, winter sports, and wildlife viewing. There are several developed campgrounds: Coal Mine Campground; Ojo Redondo Campground; and Quaking Aspen Campground.

Coal Mine Campground

Amenities available: Campfire rings, graveled 2WD access road, picnic tables, permanent sign on kiosk or stand alone.	Per night for tent camping and RV camping with no hookups: \$5
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McGaffy Campground

Amenities available: Campfire rings, graveled 2WD access road, picnic tables, host volunteer services, vault toilet gravel parkin area, permanent sign on kiosk or stand alone, 29 campsites, 21 picnic sites, and 3 group sites.	Per night for camping or RV: \$10; Group site day use: \$50, \$75, or \$100
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Ojo Redondo Campground

Amenities available: Fire rings, graveled 4WD access road, picnic tables, permanent sign on kiosk or stand alone.	Per night: \$0
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Quaking Aspen Campground

Amenities available: Campfire rings, graveled 2WD access road, picnic tables, permanent sign on kiosk or stand alone.	Per night: \$0
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Bureau of Land Management- Roswell Field Office, Pecos District - Valley of Fires Recreation Area (4 miles west of Carrizozo, NM)

Description: Recreation area of 19 RV campsites with picnic shelters, tables, grills, and potable water at each site. 30- & 50-amp RV electric hookups are available at 14 sites. 2 sites are wheelchair accessible. The full facility comfort station is fully accessible and has showers. 5 vault toilets are available throughout site. No RV size limit. Separate tent camp area and 2 group shelters, Visitor Center, has drinking water and flush restrooms.

Day-use - One person in vehicle	\$3.00
Day-Use – Two or more people in a vehicle	\$5.00
Tent camping	\$7.00
Camping – with water and electric hookups	\$18.00
Camping – without water and without electrical hookups	\$12.00
Group Shelter – group use	\$25.00
Dump fee	\$15.00
Tour Bus-15 or more persons on board	\$15.00
Average for camping at Valley of Fires Recreation Area	\$12.33

**Bureau of Land Management- Roswell Field Office, Pecos District -
Mescalero Sands OHV Area**

Description: 610 acres for OHV use, (ATVs: dune buggies). RV camping is allowed in the north, middle, and south parking lots. Dispersed camping is allowed in the dunes away from the parking lots, but these areas can only be accessed by machines designed to go in soft sand. Amenities - 4 picnic tables, shelters, grills, vault toilet, no electricity or water.

Individual	\$3.00
Vehicle (two or more people)	\$5.00
Bus (more than 15 people)	\$15.00
Average for camping at Mescalero Sands OHV Area	\$8.00

**Bureau of Land Management- Roswell Field Office, Pecos District -
Haystack Mountain OHV Area**

Description: 1,920 acres for OHV use, (Motorcycles, Trials motorcycles, Mountain biking, ATVs), picnicking; RV camping is allowed with no RV size limit. Camping is allowed in pull outs next to sun shelters and in the large gravel parking lot. Amenities - Picnic tables, shelters, grills, vault toilet, no electricity or water.

Individual	\$3.00
Vehicle (two or more people)	\$5.00
Bus (more than 15 people)	\$15.00
Average for camping at Mescalero Sands OHV Area	\$8.00

**Bureau of Land Management- Las Cruces District Office -
Three Rivers Petroglyph Site Campground**

Description: Visitor center, 2 trails, and campground. RV and tent camping sites. Amenities – 5 shelter sites with picnic tables and cooking grills; 2 RV sites with covered picnic tables, grills, water, and electric hookups; one group site with a shelter and two grills. Restrooms and drinking water are available.

Day Use (per vehicle)	\$7.00
Camping (per night)	\$10.00
RV Camping with Hookups (per night)	\$25.00
Group Site (per day)	\$60.00
Tour Bus	\$20.00
Average for camping at Three Rivers Petroglyph Site	\$31.67

Regional Private Campground Fees within the vicinity of Pie Town, Apache Creek, Datil, Magdalena, Socorro, NM; and Springerville, AZ.

Pie Town RV Park; Pie Town, NM	
<i>20- & 50- amp hookups; limited space; water; sewer; electric; Rates are for 4 people (under 6 are free)</i>	
Daily rate	\$40.00
Weekly rate	\$195.00
Monthly Rate	\$600.00
RV Dump	\$10.00
Average for camping at Pie Town RV Park	\$29.16
Apache RV; Apache Creek, NM	
<i>Showers; propane; laundry; 30- and 50- amp hookups; cable; water; sewer; free Wi-Fi</i>	
Daily rate	\$26.00
Weekly with electric	\$160.00
6 months with electric	\$1,050.00
Yearly with electric	\$1,700.00
Eagle Guest Ranch and RV; Datil, NM	
<i>30- and 50- amp hookups; pull-through sites; modern camping; open year-round</i>	
Nightly RV rate	\$22.00
Average for camping at Eagle Guest Ranch and RV	\$22.00
The Western Motel and RV Park; Magdalena, NM	
<i>30- and 50- amp hookups; trailers up to 42 feet</i>	
Daily rate 30-amp RV site	\$40.00
Daily rate 50-amp RV site	\$45.00
Average for camping at The Western Motel and RV Park	\$42.50
City of Socorro Sports Complex and RV; Socorro, NM	
<i>RV and tent sites; 50- amp hookups; electric, water, and sewer hookups; free Wi-Fi; horse corrals</i>	
Daily rate	\$30.00
Average for camping at City of Socorro Sports Complex and RV	\$30.00
Springerville RV Park; Springerville, AZ	
<i>RV spaces with complete hookups; sewer; water; electric</i>	
Daily RV camping rate with full hookups	\$50.00
Weekly RV camping rate with full hookups	\$280.00
Average for camping at Springerville RV Park	\$45.00
Gristmill Farms RV Park; Springerville, AZ	
<i>33 RV spaces with complete hookups; sewer; water; electric</i>	
Daily RV camping rate with full hookups (2 people)	\$45.00
Average for camping at Gristmill Farms RV Park	\$45.00

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