



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

Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes Special Management Area and White Pocket Business Plan



Figure 1: The famous "Wave" in Coyote Buttes

May 2024

BLM Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes Special Management Area and White Pocket
Business Plan

Recreation Fee Accounts: LVRDAZ010000, LVRDAZ__0000, and LVRDUT300000

Recommendations, Reviews, and Approvals

Recommended by:

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Date

Reviewed by:

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Date

Approved by:

Raymond Suazo, Arizona State Director

Date

Gregory J Sheehan, Utah State Director

Date

This business plan was prepared by the Bureau of Land Management's Vermilion Cliffs National Monument and the Paria River District 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 Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes Special Management Area and White Pocket within the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument and the Kanab Field Office.

DRAFT



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Vermilion Cliffs National Monument
345 E Riverside Drive
St. George, UT 84790

In Reply Refer to:

2932 AZA02

Dear Reader,

I would like to present for your review and comment a Business Plan for the Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes Special Management Area (SMA) and White Pocket. The SMA is located in Northern Arizona and Southern Utah and managed by The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)'s Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (VCNM) within the Arizona Strip District, the Kanab Field Office (KFO) and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) within the Paria River District, hereinafter referred to as the BLM. Part of the BLM's responsibility is to manage visitor use for permitted hiking and overnight backpacking in this SMA. White Pocket is not part of the SMA; it is located in the northern end of the Paria Plateau, part of VCNM, bordering the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness.

This business plan discusses fee schedules and revenue collection regarding Individual Special Recreation Permits (ISRPs) issued for recreational use of the SMA and for a proposed standard amenity recreation fee at White Pocket. The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (FLREA) provides the BLM with the authority to collect recreation fees and allows the agency to collect Special Recreation Permit fees for specialized uses of federal lands and waters. Revenues collected from fees support resource management goals and the overall visitor experience in these remote, backcountry areas.

Recreation across the SMA and White Pocket has become highly sought after due to a surge in visibility on trending social media posts of the area, including the geologic feature known as "The Wave". These recreation areas provide approximately 80,000 visitors annually with outstanding recreational opportunities on public lands. The business plan proposes to increase fees in the SMA and to establish a standard amenity fee for use of White Pocket to support the BLM's goals of providing educational and interpretive information, assisting in visitor safety, and protecting natural and cultural resources.

Current and proposed fees are as following for the three existing permit areas and one proposed fee site:

Permit Area or Proposed Fee Site	Existing Fee	Proposed Fee
Coyote Buttes North Permit Area	\$7 per person / dog per day	\$20 per person / per dog per day
Coyote Buttes South Permit Area	\$5 per person / per dog per day	\$10 per person / per dog per day
Paria Canyon – Overnight Permit Area	\$5 per person / per dog per day	\$10 per person / per dog per day
Paria Canyon – Day Use Permit Area	\$6 per person / per dog per day	\$10 per person / per dog per day
White Pocket – Proposed Fee Site	N/A	\$10 per person 16 years of age or older/per day*

*There will not be a fee for dogs for White Pocket

Current fee revenue only partially covers operations and maintenance costs, and will not cover the necessary increase in labor and overall operations to appropriately maintain infrastructure and services for this 18,313-acre SMA. The current fee structure has remained unchanged for 16 years, since 2008, while costs and visitation have both increased. Average annual expenditures from fiscal years 2019-2023 are \$728,719. White Pocket visitation has surged in recent years, and a standard amenity fee would offset the costs of developing and maintaining infrastructure at this new site.

In addition to the fee increase proposal described above, the BLM seeks input to implement routine adjustments to fees to offset inflation and cover future operating

expenses, based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). BLM proposes to increase each fee by 20% and rounded to the nearest dollar whenever the CPI-U rises by 20%.

The Draft Business Plan for the Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes SMA and White Pocket is available for public comment from May 13 to June 12, 2024. Written comments will be accepted through the following means and are due by June 12:

- Email: blm_az_asdoweb@blm.gov with the subject line: "Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes SMA and White Pocket Business Plan comments"
- Mail or hand-deliver: Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, Attn: Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes SMA and White Pocket Business Plan, 345 East Riverside Drive, St. George, UT 84790
- Fax: 435-688-3258 with the subject line: "Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes SMA and White Pocket Business Plan comments"

Thank you for your interest in your public lands.

Sincerely,

Robert Bate
VCNM Monument Manager

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Acronyms

AROLPS – Arizona Recreation Online Permitting System

BLM – Bureau of Land Management

CBN – Coyote Buttes North

CBS – Coyote Buttes South

FLPMA – Federal Land Policy and Management Act

FLREA – Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act

FY – Fiscal Year

GCNRA – Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

GSENM – Grand Staircase – Escalante National Monument

IIC – Intergovernmental Internship Cooperative

ISRP – Individual Special Recreation Permit

KFO – Kanab Field Office

NAU – Northern Arizona University

NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act

NPLD – National Public Lands Day

NPS – National Park Service

PCO – Paria Canyon Overnight

PRD – Paria River District

SAR – Search and Rescue

SMA – Special Management Area

SRP – Special Recreation Permit

SUU – Southern Utah University

VCNM – Vermilion Cliffs National Monument

1 Executive Summary

This business plan explains the current management of the Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes Special Management Area (SMA) within Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (VCNM), part of the Arizona Strip District in northern Arizona, and also within the Kanab Field Office (KFO) and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM), both part of the Paria River District (PRD) in southern Utah; it also states how collected fee revenues are used for direct operating costs associated with site management. The plan proposes a new standard amenity fee site and increases to existing fees to establish and maintain site facilities and services where needed. The increase would allow the BLM to provide unreduced amenities while protecting this valuable resource.

Individual Special Recreation Permits (ISRPs) are required for day use hiking and overnight backpacking in the SMA.

The SMA is divided into distinct geographic units:

1. Paria Canyon (including Buckskin Gulch and Wire Pass)
2. Coyote Buttes North
3. Coyote Buttes South

White Pocket is located outside of the SMA and the BLM currently does not charge a fee at this site. Due to increased visitation and user impacts, BLM is proposing to develop White Pocket to meet the standard amenity recreation fee site criteria as described in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). Users of this proposed fee site, if approved, would share in the cost of the needed services associated with managing the site. BLM will evaluate through the NEPA process any developments necessary to ensure the site meets the amenity requirements of FLREA.

On average, the SMA and White Pocket annually provide approximately 80,000 visitors with outstanding recreational opportunities on their public lands.

This business plan discusses fee schedules and revenue collection regarding ISRPs issued for recreational use of the SMA and the establishment of a standard amenity fee at White Pocket. The fee revenues from ISRPs support the resource management goals for this SMA and the overall visitor experience in these remote, backcountry areas. The SMA is managed by Arizona and Utah BLM. A Memorandum of

Understanding guides the roles and responsibilities of each office. White Pocket is managed by VCNM.

Under FLREA, revenues collected at fee sites can be used locally for such things as facility repair, maintenance, enhancement, interpretation, visitor information, visitor services, visitor needs assessments, signs, habitat restoration directly related to wildlife-dependent recreation (that is limited to hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, or photography), law enforcement related to public use and recreation, and direct operating or capital costs associated with the fee program.

After careful consideration of the current fee rates and 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.

Permit Area or Proposed Fee Site	Existing Fee	Proposed Fee
Coyote Buttes North (CBN) Permit Area	\$7 per person / dog per day	\$20 per person / per dog per day
Coyote Buttes South (CBS) Permit Area	\$5 per person / dog per day	\$10 per person / per dog per day
Paria Canyon – Overnight (PCO) Permit Area	\$5 per person / dog per day	\$10 per person / per dog per day
Paria Canyon – Day Use Permit Area	\$6 per person / dog per day	\$10 per person / per dog per day
White Pocket – Proposed Standard Amenity Fee Site	NA	\$10 per person 16 years of age or older/per day

Table 1 Current and Proposed Fee

A portion of recreation fees collected through permits helps fund staffing at the Paria Contact Station and the Information Center in St. George. Staff answer a wide range of questions and educate visitors by providing accurate and up to date information such as current weather and road conditions, mileage to various recreation sites and other vital details that aid visitors in safely navigating this rugged, backcountry area. Staff also issue overnight permits, record and compile visitor and weather data, and report emergencies to the proper authorities. Salaries for BLM staff engaged in the operation of the SMA are funded through Congressionally appropriated funds to the BLM, as well as fee revenues. Contracted services are used for regular pumping of the vault toilets, as well as cleaning restrooms, road maintenance, garbage collection, and interpretive safety material.

Since 2019 several deferred maintenance and new construction projects have been completed including the necessary expansion of Wire Pass parking area and construction of an overflow lot to protect the area's natural resources from damage, installation of interpretative signs to better prepare visitors for the extreme conditions of the wilderness area, and a magnesium chloride treatment for dust abatement for a portion of House Rock Valley Rd to meet air quality standards. Due to a significant increase in visitation over the past 10 years at White Pocket, funds are needed to establish facilities which would minimize potential issues with human waste and improve the parking area to protect the surrounding resources.

A review of VCNM's comparability analysis detailed in table 13, found the fees at recreation sites across the Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes SMA are lower than the average fees charged for use of similar areas within the region. Paria Canyon Overnight current fee (\$5) is about \$10 less than the average fee charged (\$15.55) for access to similar areas in the region; the new proposed fee of \$10 remains significantly lower and competitive to comparable areas. Coyote Buttes North day use fee (\$7) is roughly \$20 less than the average day use fee for access to similar areas in the region (\$27.60); the new proposed fee is \$20. Coyote Buttes South day use fee (\$5) is about \$8 lower than the average for access to similar areas in the region (\$13.25); the new proposed fee is \$10. White Pocket, which is comparable to Coyote Buttes South, will be a new fee site to provide much needed resources for the health, safety, and enjoyment of visitors and protection of natural resources.

The data used to analyze and prepare this business plan was obtained through internal BLM tracking and accounting mechanisms such as the Recreation Management Information System, Collections and Billings System, Federal Business

Management System, and locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking spreadsheets. For more detailed information, please contact the BLM Arizona Strip District Office. Some data may be subject to Privacy Act or other legal requirements.

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.
- **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.

2.1 Special Area Permits and Fees

FLREA authorizes the BLM to collect special recreation permit fees for specialized recreation uses of federal recreational lands. Under 43 CFR §2931.2, BLM may establish a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) and fee system for the use of special areas. Special areas include any area officially designated by statute or Presidential order (43 CFR 2932.5). SRPs for individual recreation use in a special area are referred to as ISRPs. ISRP fee rates are set by the BLM State Director based on several considerations in order to ensure a fair return for the use of public lands. These considerations include: management costs related to the special area, costs of operating the permit system, and comparison with fees charged in similar areas. Fees charged in a special area apply to all users of the area, including: private, non-commercial visitors; clients and guests of commercial permittees; and participants and spectators in a competitive event.

3 Introduction to the SMA and White Pocket Recreation Program

The Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes Fee Project was selected as a Fee Demonstration Pilot Project in May 1996, managed under Section 315 of the "Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996," commonly known as the "Recreation Fee Demonstration Program". BLM began collecting fees in May 1997, and continued under annual reauthorizations of that legislation. In late 2004, Congress passed FLREA which replaced the Fee Demonstration Program. Since 2005 the Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes Fee Project for recreation units in the SMA has been managed under the authority and direction of FLREA.

The BLM does not currently charge a recreation fee at White Pocket. This site has become increasingly popular over recent years. Due to increased visitation and user

impacts, VCNM is proposing to establish a standard amenity recreation fee at White Pocket.

The following are Resource Management Plans and activity level plans that currently guide the management of recreational resources for the Coyote Buttes/Paria Canyon SMA and White Pocket:

- 1987. Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Management Plan. Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Strip and Cedar City Districts. St. George, UT.
- 2008. Vermilion Cliffs National Monument Management Plan. Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Strip Field Office. St. George, UT.
- 2008. Kanab Field Office Resource Management Plan. Bureau of Land Management, Kanab Field Office. Kanab, UT.
- 2008. Arizona Strip Field Office Resource Management Plan. Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Strip Field Office. St. George, UT.
- 2020. Kanab-Escalante Planning Area Resource Management Plan. Bureau of Land Management. Kanab, UT.
- Proposed Change in Management of Paria Canyon - Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness and other Related Actions DOI-BLM-AZ-A020-2019-0003-EA

4 Description of Each Existing or Proposed Fee Site/Area

The 18,313 -acre Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes SMA is located on BLM lands in both Arizona and Utah. It is entirely within the 112,190-acre Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area (designated in 1984) which is also part of the VCNM in Arizona and the KFO in Utah. White Pocket is a proposed fee site situated north on the Paria Plateau, adjacent to the SMA and bordering the wilderness. White Pocket is monitored and managed by VCNM. VCNM, which includes White Pocket, and the SMA are within the region commonly known as the Grand Circle, which is an international tourism destination due to the number of parks and monuments adjacent to each other. Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (GCNRA) to the east, GSENM to the northwest, and Kaibab National Forest to the west. The Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni - Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument borders VCNM to the south and west. The nearby North Rim of the Grand Canyon is due south and other notable recreation destinations such as Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks are within a few hours' drive. (Figure 2 – Regional Map).

The SMA is currently divided into three distinct units both geographically and managerially: Paria Canyon (including Buckskin Gulch and Wire Pass), CBN and CBS. (Figure 3 – Detailed Map).

Paria Canyon, Buckskin Gulch, and Wire Pass are widely recognized as one of the longest and most stunning slot canyon combinations in the world. Accessed from the three aforementioned trailheads within the SMA and a fourth trailhead (the White House trailhead in BLM Utah), these narrow canyons wind their way and cut down through seven geologic layers, eventually ending at the Colorado River just below Glen Canyon Dam. The longest route through the entire system is 47 miles and takes the average backpacker four days to complete. (Figure 4 – Photographs).

CBN is an international destination. The main attraction within CBN is “The Wave”, an area made up of lithified, wind-eroded, sandstone that forms an awe-inspiring, swirling, mass of stunning color (Figure 5 – Photograph). CBN first began to gain popularity through advertisements that promoted Utah as the home of the 2002 winter Olympics, ads that put The Wave and CBN on the map as a recreation destination. The Wave’s popularity thereafter picked up steam through multiple media stories in big markets including ABC Nightline, the Today Show, CNN and countless others. In recent years, interest and demand for access has grown exponentially due to trending social media posts featuring high resolution photos of The Wave, naming the hike one of the top 10 places to visit in the US.

CBS is simply the southern extension of the same geologic formations found in the north unit with features as unique as The Wave; however, the area is less popular than CBN because vehicle access is more difficult. Traveling to CBS requires a four-wheel drive vehicle to navigate deep sand that is prevalent throughout the area. Despite the challenging terrain and difficult access, more people are hiring guides and finding ways to visit CBS so they may explore and discover unique and stunning formations similar to those found in the north unit, if they were unable to obtain a permit to The Wave. (Figure 6 – Photograph).

While White Pocket has no developed trails, it has become an increasingly popular destination. It provides visitors with access to a similar awe-inspiring experience in exploring and discovering features as phenomenal as CBN and CBS, due to the mind-boggling geologic features found across the area and formed naturally, over 190 million years. Visitors explore these exceptional slickrock, windswept layers of orange,

yellow, and white formations that were created over time by mineral deposits and shaped by the elements. (Figure 7 – Photograph).

The BLM is proposing to establish White Pocket as a new fee site, meeting the criteria provided in FLREA to charge a standard amenity recreation fee. If approved, users of this site would share in the cost to maintain the amenities provided. Amenities currently provided include informational kiosks, parking area, and security services. Following an evaluation in compliance with NEPA, the BLM expects to add the following amenities: picnic tables and trash receptacle. A decision authorizing the installation of a permanent toilet facility and improvements to the parking area at White Pocket was approved in January 2021.

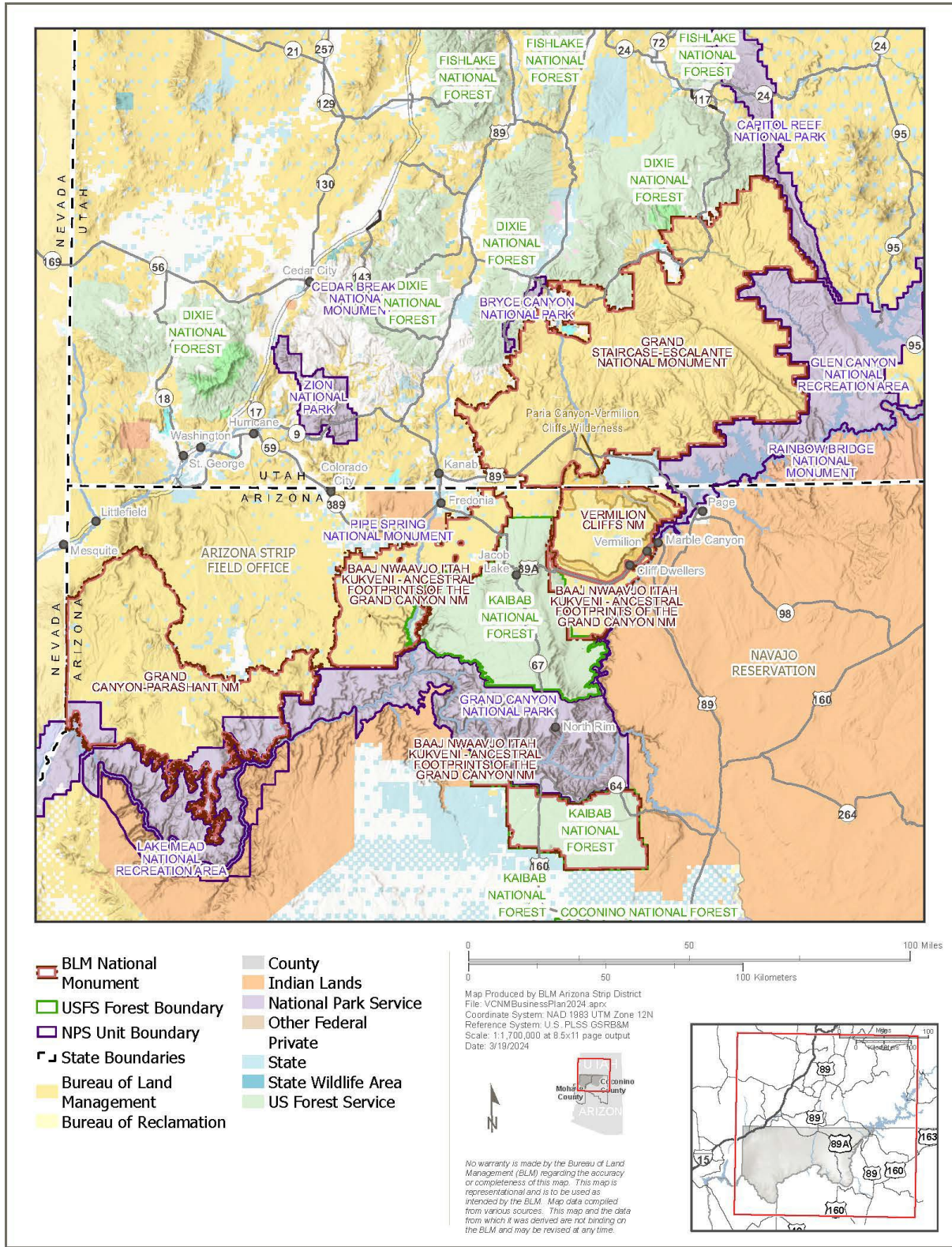


Figure 2 Regional Map

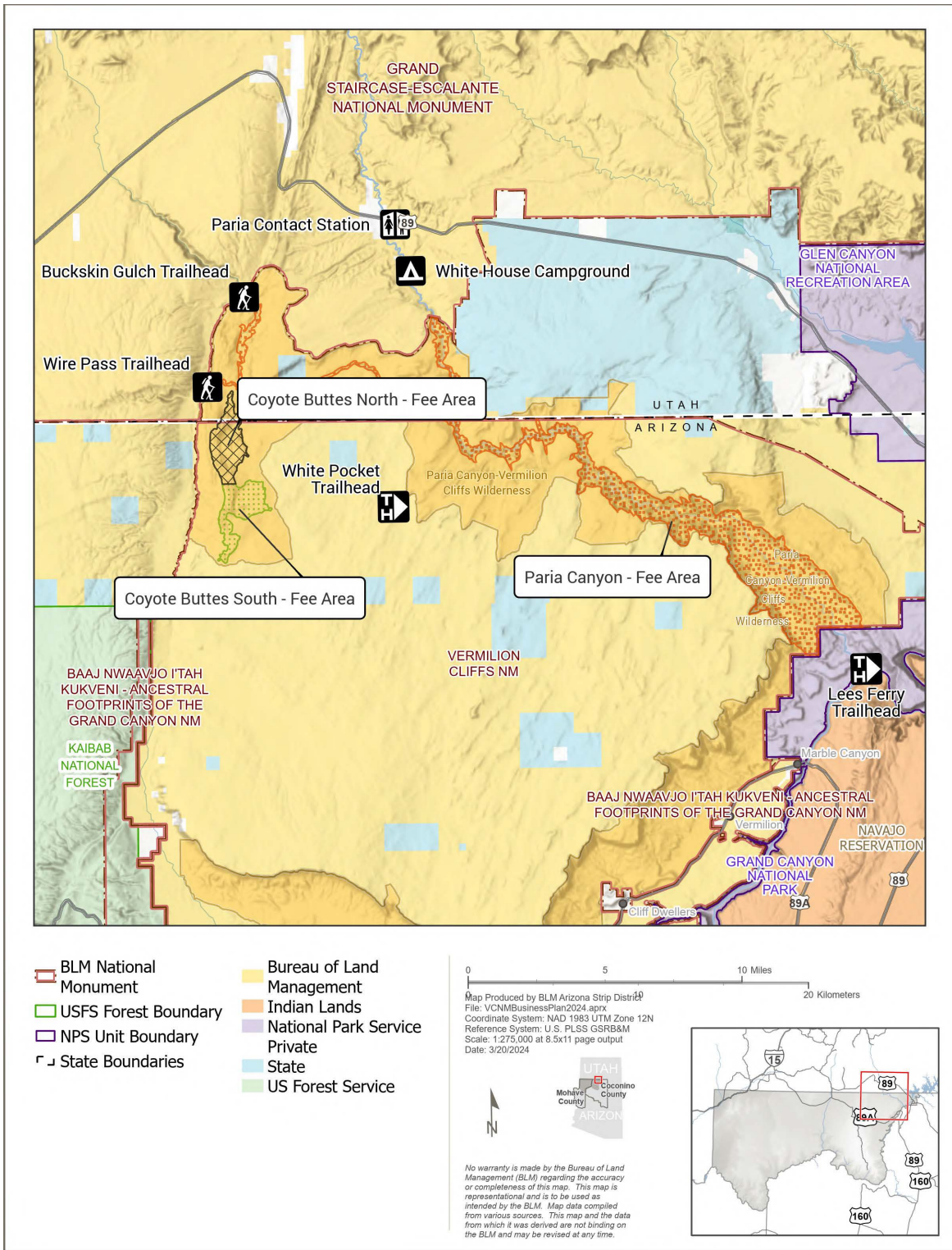


Figure 3 Detailed Map



Flood evidence in Buckskin Gulch



Two hikers in the Paria Canyon narrows



A hiker navigates through the narrow and sinuous Wire Pass

Figure 4 Photographs of Paria Canyon, Buckskin Gulch, and Wire Pass



Figure 5 Photograph of the Wave within Coyote Buttes North



Figure 6 Photograph of a rock formation within Coyote Buttes South



Figure 7 Photograph of rock formations reflecting on water within White Pocket

4.1 Current Management

ISRP's are issued for day hiking and overnight backpacking in the SMA. Commercial outfitters are permitted for guiding operations in the SMA; however, there is no separate ISRP allocation set aside for commercial use. They must compete for ISRP's in the same way as the public.

The SMA is divided into distinct geographic units:

1. Paria Canyon (including Buckskin Gulch and Wire Pass)
2. Coyote Buttes North
3. Coyote Buttes South

Each of these areas has its own management objectives and permit stipulations. These are implemented to attain the goals defined in the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Management Plan, which include:

1. Provide for the long-term protection and preservation of the area's wilderness character.
2. Manage the area for the use and enjoyment of visitors in a manner that will leave the area unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.
3. Manage the area using the minimum tool, equipment, or structure necessary to successfully, safely, and economically accomplish the objective.

In order to achieve these goals, the number of people allowed to visit CBN, CBS, and PCO (but not currently day-use in Paria Canyon, Buckskin Gulch, Wire Pass and White Pocket) is limited through a permit system. Permits are distributed through e-commerce in a variety of ways including advance online permits, daily permits, first-come, first-served calendars, and at the trailheads.

The maximum group size is ten persons in Paria Canyon, Buckskin Gulch, and Wire Pass. This limit applies to both day-use and overnight use. CBS and PCO are limited to twenty people each day. The maximum group size is six persons for CBN and CBS. Although fees are required for dogs, they do not count against the group size limit. Group size restrictions help to strike an appropriate balance by responding to the public's increased interest in visiting the site while minimizing environmental impacts and maintaining wilderness values including primitive and unconfined recreation, natural sights and sounds, remoteness, freedom, risk, and the physical and emotional challenges of self-discovery and self-reliance.

In [January of 2021](#), the BLM increased visitor numbers in CBN from 20 visitors per day to as many as 64 people or 16 groups per day, (whichever comes first), nearly tripling daily visitor access to the site. The following year, in [March of 2022](#), BLM implemented the new mobile geofence system transitioning the application process for permits to The Wave from the legacy, in-person, lottery to hosting those same permits, now known as the "Daily Lottery," online through Recreation.gov.

White Pocket is not part of the SMA and is not a currently a fee site. Presently there are no group size limits for casual use by the general public.

Tables 2 and 3 summarize current permit types required by area and visitor use allocations in each of the areas listed above.

Type of Use and Payment Method	Paria Canyon, Buckskin Gulch, and Wire Pass	Coyote Buttes North	Coyote Buttes South
Day Use Self-pay at trailhead	Yes	No	No
Day Use Purchase permit online in advance	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day Use Purchase permit through the geofence Daily Lottery	No	Yes	Yes
Overnight Use Purchase permit online in advance of hike	Yes	Camping not allowed	Camping not allowed

Table 2 Permit Type Required by Area

Type of Use and Payment Method	Paria Canyon, Buckskin Gulch and Wire Pass	Coyote Buttes North	Coyote Buttes South
Day Use Number of permits issued up to three months in advance online	N/A	48 people or 12 groups, whichever fills first	10 people or 4 groups, whichever fills first
Day Use Number of permits issued through the Daily Lottery	N/A	16 people or 4 permits, whichever fills first	10 people or 4 permits, whichever fills first
Day Use Self-pay at trailhead	Unlimited	N/A	N/A
Overnight Use Number of permits issued up to four	20	Camping not allowed	Camping not allowed

months in advance online			
Total Daily Visitor Use Limits	20 overnight / unlimited day use	64 people or 16 permits, whichever fills first	20 people or 8 permits, whichever fills first

Table 3 Current Visitor Use Allocations

4.2 Permitting and Fee History

4.2.1 Paria Canyon, CBN and CBS

Visitor use limits in the SMA were first established in 1986 after completion of the Paria Canyon – Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Management Plan. Visitation was managed by a simple registration system, without permits, and the only limitations established pertained to group size. Over time, visitor use in Paria Canyon, Buckskin Gulch, and Coyote Buttes climbed from 2,400 visits in Fiscal Year (FY) 86 to 10,200 visits in FY96. As the dramatic increase approached limits originally analyzed as an alternative in the Management Plan, visitation began negatively impacting wilderness resources. One of the biggest issues was visitor health and safety caused by human waste left at the limited number of campsites in the narrow portion of Paria Canyon and Buckskin Gulch. In addition, a trend towards larger group sizes greatly decreased the opportunity for solitude, which detracted from each visitor’s wilderness experience. (Resource monitoring by entities such as Northern Arizona University (NAU) also tracked adverse impacts to natural resources such as broken “fins” or fragile, geologic formations which were formerly more prominently found throughout CBN and are now found minimally and only in the most remote regions of the SMA).

In order to effectively manage the increasing demand and resource issues, it was determined that implementing a permit system was the optimum solution to control visitation. A public involvement period was part of this process, which established the visitation limits considered in 1986. It was timely that the Fee Demonstration Program, newly implemented in the mid 90s, provided a viable mechanism to enforce the new permit requirement and limits, as well as fund newly needed services associated with managing the area. Planning for the permit system and the development of a recreation revenue business plan was initiated in 1996.

4.2.2 White Pocket

In 2010, 660 recreational users visited White Pocket. In 2018, this number increased to 11,794 users, a 1,687% increase. From current trail counters, the site currently

averages approximately 1,000 visitors a month. The geologic formations are considered by many to be as compelling as The Wave, but the difficult road conditions leading to White Pocket that had minimized use due to challenging access is no longer a challenge for visitors prepared with high clearance 4WD vehicles, UTVs, or hiring a guide service. As word has spread, more people have found their way there. Due to the significant uptick in visitation in recent years, signs of human waste have increased. With no vault toilets at White Pocket, the hazards of human waste have proved to be a challenging management issue for VCNM staff and managers. The proposed standard amenity fee at this site will provide resources for badly needed infrastructure to improve the health, safety, and enjoyment of White Pocket visitors.

4.3 Partnerships

Several partners track and provide information which assists the BLM in management aspects of the SMA permit area: BLM Arizona's St. George Information Center, GCNRA, Glen Canyon Conservancy (GCC), the National Weather Service (NWS), the city of Page, AZ through the Page HUB, Kane County Office of Tourism in Utah, and the Intergovernmental Internship Cooperative (IIC) based at Southern Utah University (SUU), to facilitate student internships with SUU, Utah Technical University and other US Universities. The Peregrine Fund, a non-profit condor recovery group, assists the US Fish and Wildlife Service with a recovery program.

The staff at BLM Arizona's St. George Information Center, BLM Utah's GSENM Visitor Center, and Paria Contact Station answer a wide range of questions and educate visitors about how to visit the area safely and responsibly. They also issue permits, compile visitor data, and report emergencies to the proper authorities. Recreation fees fund staff who provide these services at all three locations.

The lower portion of Paria Canyon is within the GCNRA managed by the National Park Service (NPS). A Memorandum of Understanding was established between BLM and GCNRA defining fee management requirements for this area. Visitors entering GCNRA already pay an entrance fee; therefore, they are not charged for day hiking in lower Paria Canyon. Furthermore, GCNRA allows Paria Canyon overnight backpackers to leave their vehicles in the GCNRA parking lot at no charge to facilitate being shuttled north to their desired starting trailhead. Hikers typically start at the Wire Pass, Buckskin, or White House trail heads within the SMA. Many hike from the SMA on the north end of the Paria Canyon Overnight hike, and travel south to finish near Lee's Ferry in Marble Canyon where the GCNRA has allowed them to conveniently park their vehicles in the NPS-managed parking lot. This generous and user-friendly convenience

was established through the BLM/NPS MOU. Hikers are now only required to place their PCO permit on the dashboard for entrance to the area and parking for the duration of their trip.

GCC and the BLM coordinate to provide pertinent maps, books, hiking gear, souvenirs, and safety items such as sunscreen, hats, and water bottles for sale at the Paria Contact Station and GSENM Visitor Center. A partnership with the National Weather Service provides online links to updated weather forecasts, and site-specific heat and flash flood advisories. This project is constantly improving with the advancement of technology.

The Page HUB and Kane County Office of Tourism both partner with the BLM to distribute Coyote Buttes permits won through the geofence Daily Lottery. Both locations also offer safety briefs to permit holders and answer numerous questions from visitors. Their partnership saves the BLM many hours of labor.

BLM partners with the IIC based at SUU. IIC partners with various land management agencies, outdoor recreation businesses, foundations, nonprofits, and Native American tribes of southern Utah, northern Arizona, and eastern Nevada to facilitate student internships for SUU, Utah Technical University, and other US University students. For approximately 13 years, this partnership has successfully opened up valuable internship opportunities for dozens of students from degree programs and in a diversity of exciting professional fields. Through the IIC partnership, agency partners mentor interns providing real world work experience that complements their academic pursuits and helps prepare students for successful careers, including jobs in government with agencies like the BLM.

The Peregrine Fund and US Fish and Wildlife Service are important partners in the California condor recovery program. In 1996, the US Fish and Wildlife Service used the 10(j) special provision of the Endangered Species Act to designate the Arizona population of condors as experimental and not essential to the species' survival.

4.4 General Management Concerns

Visitor safety and resource protection within the wilderness are the two primary management concerns for the SMA. Balancing visitor safety while managing wilderness values is an ongoing management consideration when planning future actions. Unfortunately, some visitors venture into these rugged, undeveloped, backcountry and wilderness recreation areas without vital preparation or logistical planning and often lack important knowledge or experience of how to handle harsh

terrain and elements. As a result, Search and Rescue (SAR) operations are routinely initiated with BLM law enforcement and county Emergency Management Services who have responded to mitigate injuries, to find lost individuals or sadly, attend to fatalities. BLM managers and law enforcement coordinate routinely with county Emergency Service Management leadership on vital SAR operations when needed.

Due to trending social media post that feature enticing and awe-inspiring photos of The Wave in CBN and reels of the impressive narrow slot canyons of the Paria, the area has experienced a significant uptick in the number of visitors who venture lightly into this rugged terrain to capture social media photos but do not fully understand or appreciate the remote and undeveloped nature of the area. A growing number of visitors are also choosing to hike in extreme or unfavorable weather conditions regardless of BLM's efforts to advise and educate visitors in person, by phone and email, social media posts or web advisories. A few visitors have been relentless in their pursuit to complete their trip for various reasons from obtaining an Instagram shot or TikTok reel or placing greater value on obtaining permits and collecting experiences than focusing on responsibility for personal safety in this unrefined area.

Protecting natural resources and the wilderness characteristic is another management concern. Paria Canyon backpackers are required to follow leave no trace principles, especially the use of what's commonly called, "wag bags", to carry human waste out of the canyon in sturdy, durable bags provided with their permit and furnished as a part of their fee. This policy has greatly improved the sanitary condition of the campsites, especially in the narrow portion of the canyons and with regards to water quality along the Paria River Corridor, which the main path of travel follows. Although dog waste is required to be dealt with the same way as human waste, this often does not happen and creates unhygienic conditions. Limitations on the number of visitors across this wilderness, protects and contributes to the "primitive and unconfined type of recreation" experience of the visitor and protects fragile geologic formations. Along with White Pocket's surging popularity, the amount of human waste and trash has become more problematic. The BLM's resource and wilderness policies are under constant pressure to yield to increasing visitation demands due to the international popularity and local economic opportunities. The proposal to collect fees at White Pocket, is vital to establishing facilities to protect these natural areas and resources.

4.5 Visitor Description and Visitation

Visitors are interested in hiking, backpacking, photography, and canyoneering. Backpackers enjoy a remote multi-day adventure in Paria Canyon and its tributaries

and day hikers are looking to explore the slot canyons as well as photograph the unique geologic formations in Coyote Buttes and White Pocket.

The area has become an international tourism destination. Visitors come from all 50 states and many foreign countries. The area is well known throughout the world and many tourists place a visit to “The Wave” as their primary destination when visiting the U.S. In an effort to bridge language gaps and encourage visitor safety, the BLM began investing in translation materials 20 years ago. Today, maps and interpretive information are available in English, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.

In conjunction with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), BLM conducts visitor satisfaction surveys for the Coyote Buttes portion of VCNM. Satisfaction surveys were completed in 2007, 2013, and 2023. The area received a customer satisfaction of greater than 95% all years. The survey is expected to be completed again in the next 5-6 years. Even though the data from this survey is generic, the data allows planners to gauge customer satisfaction and focus management practices on providing the experiences and benefits that Coyote Buttes visitors are seeking.

Colorado Mesa University, in partnership with GSENM, KFO, and VCNM, conducted a Recreational Experience Baseline Study for the House Rock Valley area in 2015 which gathered information about public perception of BLM and their outdoor recreation experience. This qualitative study collected data to support informed dialogue between agency decision makers and specialists, local communities, and service providers regarding partnerships and the benefits of outdoor recreation.

BLM tracks and records visitation numbers to the best of the agency’s ability to better understand where visitor interest and demand for access across the SMA is the highest as displayed in Tables 4-5 below.

Tables 4 summarizes permits issued. CBN numbers increased during FY 2021 due to increase in permit allocation.

SMA Permit Area or Proposed Fee Site	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Coyote Buttes North	2,697	2,571	3,338	5,018	5,158

Advanced/Daily					
Coyote Buttes South Advanced/Daily	2,257	2,304	2,235	1,990	1,748
Paria Canyon Overnight	1,242	1,389	1,596	1,325	1,133
Paria Canyon Day Use	6,848	6,250	7,251	15,215	9,755
White Pocket – Proposed Fee Site	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table 4 Individual Special Recreation Permits Issued

Table 5 summarizes visitation to the SMA and White Pocket from FY 2019 to 2023.

SMA Permit Area or Proposed Fee Site	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Coyote Buttes North	7,300	6,393	10,509	16,119	16,240
Coyote Buttes South	5,941	5,971	6,130	6,013	4,581
Paria Canyon Overnight	4,395	4,743	4,915	4,434	3,715
Paria Canyon Overnight Visitor Days	3.6 days	3.5 days	3.4 days	3.5 days	3.6 days
Paria Canyon Day Use	24,856	37,245	41,830	38,761	24,554

White Pocket – Proposed Fee Site	20,771	8,900	19,734	12,905*	25,861
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Table 5 SMA and White Pocket Visitors

*Inaccurate numbers due to trail counter being stolen

4.6 Current Fee Management

There are multiple options for obtaining an ISRP. Coyote Buttes North (The Wave): Seventy-five percent of the CBN permits are issued through the online CBN Advanced Lottery. Up to 48 people or 12 permits, whichever fills first, get permits through this option by applying three to four months prior to the hiking date. This method allows visitors ample time to plan. The other option for a CBN permit is through the Daily Lottery.

BLM transitioned from an in-person, walk-in lottery to the online Daily Lottery, which uses a mobile-based geofence system for next day permits for Coyote Buttes. A geofence is a virtual perimeter for a real-world geographic area. Transitioning to the geofence system benefits the public, gateway communities, and the agency. The public benefits from a more efficient process of permit application and delivery. Additional gateway communities benefit economically as the system expands the permit application perimeter and provides visitors with additional options to pick-up permits and enjoy overnight stays for the next day’s trip in several communities. The agency benefits as the system allows for more efficient management of permits and fee collection and improved safety for employees.

Coyote Buttes South: Half of CBS permits are issued through the online Daily Lottery and half through (an advanced, online) first-come, first served calendar that makes permits available three to four months prior to the hike.

Paria Canyon Overnight: Permits are only available through a first-come, first served online calendar, making permits available three to four months in advance of the hike.

Paria Canyon / Buckskin Gulch Day Use: Permits can be purchased any time online in advance of the hike or in person at the trailhead. Self-pay kiosks, hosted online through Recreation.gov are located at White House, Wire Pass, and Buckskin Gulch trailheads. Day use payments are also processed through Recreation.gov.

Table 6 illustrates the current fees and fee types for the SMA.

Permit Area	Existing Fee
Coyote Buttes North - ISRP	\$7 per person / per dog
Coyote Buttes South - ISRP	\$5 per person / per dog
Paria Canyon Overnight - ISRP	\$5 per person / per dog per day
Paria Canyon Day Use - ISRP	\$6 per person / per dog per day

Table 6 Current Fees

5 Proposed Modifications to Recreation Fee Rates

The BLM proposes to raise fees to \$20 per person/per dog for CBN, \$10 per person/per dog for CBS, \$10 per person/per dog per day for PCO, and \$10 per person/per dog for Paria / Buckskin Gulch Day Use. BLM also proposes to establish White Pocket as a standard amenity fee site with a fee of \$10 per person 16 years of age or older.

Table 7 illustrates the proposed changes:

Permit Area or Proposed Fee Site and Fee Type	Proposed Fee
Coyote Buttes North - ISRP	\$20 per person / per dog
Coyote Buttes South - ISRP	\$10 per person / per dog
Paria Canyon Overnight - ISRP	\$10 per person / per dog per day
Paria Canyon Day Use - ISRP	\$10 per person / per dog
White Pocket – Proposed Standard Amenity Fee Site	\$10 per person 16 years or age or older

Table 7 Proposed Fee Changes

The standard amenity fee for White Pocket will be available at a cost of \$10 per person 16 years of age or older and will cover a 24-hour period. The interagency America the

Beautiful—the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass covers all standard amenity fees. In addition, the BLM offers fee-free days annually at all BLM standard amenity fee sites.

The BLM uses 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. An expanded amenity fee for reservation services is charged at the SMA in addition to ISRP 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.

5.1 Model for Establishing Future Fee Changes

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 a tremendous investment of effort and time. The SMA's permit fees have been at their current levels since 2007. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in 2007 the average annual Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) was at 207.342; by 2023 it had climbed to 304.702, an increase of 47%.

The BLM seeks approval to adopt a model to increase fees by 20% (then rounded) whenever the CPI-U, US City Average, All Items, 1982-84=100, not seasonally adjusted, annual average rises by 20%. According to the BLS, 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>).

The BLM is seeking approval to exercise the option to increase each fee by 20%, rounded up to the nearest 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: the Coyote Buttes North fee of \$4, the Coyote Buttes South fee of \$2, the Paria Canyon Overnight fee of \$2, the Paria Canyon day use fee of \$2, and the White Pocket fee of \$2.

This model would ensure the fees evolve in tandem with the ever-changing environment of the future and increasing costs.

6 Operating Costs

The total expenditure, as shown in Table 8, includes staff labor; and operating expenses, which are made up of contractual services, equipment, materials, and supplies. The details of these costs are described in the following breakdowns for each category.

Federal Fiscal Year	Staff Labor*	Operating Expenses*	Total Expenditures
2019	\$ 411,917	\$ 161,724	\$573,641
2020	\$ 395,047	\$ 260,443	\$655,490
2021	\$ 469,228	\$ 429,966**	\$899,194
2022	\$338,815	\$ 212,312	\$551,127
2023	\$528,418	\$ 435,727***	\$964,145

Table 8 SMA Labor and Operating Expenses

*These totals include more than just L1232 recreation fee revenue funds (i.e. appropriated funds etc.)

**Includes costs associated with the parking lot improvements at Wire Pass

***Includes costs associated with new maintenance contracts for vault toilet pumping and cleaning contracts, and dust abatement contracts

6.1 Staff Labor

BLM employees such as law enforcement, outdoor recreation planners, and park rangers from VCNM, KFO, and the GSENM work together to manage the area. Total average labor costs are around \$428,685/year. These individuals are charged with keeping the public safe while protecting natural and cultural resources. Law enforcement provides ongoing protection, as well as assisting with many SARs. Outdoor recreation planners and park rangers conduct the day-to-day services of oversight of contract agreements such as the vault toilet pumping and cleaning contracts, managing ISRPs, managing commercial SRPs, monitoring resources, contacting and educating visitors, and providing oversight of the Paria Contact Station. A key component is oversight of the safety patrol volunteer program. This program involves recruiting volunteers, assessing effectiveness of risk assessments (risk management worksheet), setting up volunteer agreements, providing training, scheduling patrols, and supervising volunteers. BLM staff also contact and coordinate with partners such as the Kanab Office of Tourism and the Page HUB, which conduct the safety briefings for the area and issue permits. Due to steadily increasing increase labor cost these numbers are expected to increase.

6.2 Operating Expenses (Non-Labor)

Operating expenses are a combination of contracted services such as regular pumping of the vault toilets (\$80,000) and for a small number of other specialized services such as cleaning the toilets (\$90,000) and garbage collection. This also includes equipment, materials, and supplies needed to operate and maintain the area. Since 2019 several deferred maintenance and new construction undertakings have been completed: enlargement of Wire Pass parking area and construction of an overflow lot (\$400,000), installation of interpretative signs. Several large road maintenance projects (\$60,000), and magnesium chloride for dust abatement treatment projects to meet air quality standards (\$60,000) for a portion of House Rock Valley Road have occurred. Other projects such as agreements with IIC for Interns used for monitoring are between \$20,000 and \$55,000 and year. Also, agreements with the GCC (\$120,000) provide personnel to manage and run the Paria Contacts Station.

6.2.1 Start-Up Costs for Proposed White Pocket Fee Site

Initial capital improvement and establishment of a standard amenity recreation fee site at White Pocket will require an estimated one-time amount of \$250,000.

Composting toilets are needed to reduce the amount of human waste in the area.

The roads leading to the trailhead cannot be navigated by a pump truck, so composting toilets are required. Signage for the fee area, picnic tables, permanent trash receptacles, as well as improvements and maintenance of the parking area and fencing will be needed.

7 Revenues

Table 9 identifies the actual revenue collected during the last five years:

Permit Area	SMA Revenue by Permit Area				
Coyote Buttes North	\$51,100	\$44,751	\$73,563	\$122,833	\$113,680
Coyote Buttes South	\$29,705	\$28,855	\$30,650	\$30,065	\$22,905
Paria Canyon Overnight	\$79,110	\$83,002	\$83,555	\$77,595	\$66,870
Paria Canyon Day Use	\$149,135	\$232,473	\$250,984	\$232,568	\$147,329
Totals	\$309,050	\$389,081	\$438,752	\$463,061	\$350,784
Permit Area	FY19	FY20*	FY21**	FY22	FY23

Table 9 SMA Annual Fee Revenue Collection History

*FY20 no walk-in lottery for 3 months for CBN due to Covid-19

**FY21 numbers increased for CBN

Table 10 shows the projected annual revenue if the proposed fee changes are implemented, based on an estimated number of visitors. This estimation uses our total maximum allocation for each permit area, averaged with the actual number of visitors.

Permit Area or Proposed Fee Site	Estimated Visitors	Proposed Fee Rate	Total Projected Fees
Coyote Buttes North	18,000	\$20 per person	\$360,000
Coyote Buttes South	5,000	\$10 per person	\$50,000
Paria Canyon Overnight	5,000	\$10 per person per day	\$150,000**

Paria Canyon Day Use	30,000	\$10 per person	\$300,000
White Pocket – Proposed Fee Site	17,000	\$10 per person 16 years of age or older	\$85,000***
Total	75,000		\$945,000*

Table 10 SMA Projected Annual Fee Revenue (based on 5 years visitation)

*This number includes White Pocket that is currently not a fee site.

**This amount is the average for a 3 day stay. PCO permits include multiple days in the canyon, typically 2-5 days.

***This amount is an estimate based on half of visitors paying the \$10 fee and the other half using the interagency America the Beautiful—the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass which covers the standard amenity fees.

8 Priorities for Future Expenditures

Recreation-based fees are currently used to fund the day-to-day operations within the SMA. Future user fees will also serve this purpose and fund White Pocket. These operational tasks are critical to accomplishing the management objectives outlined for the SMA and White Pocket. Tasks include protecting natural and cultural resources, providing visitor information, conducting field patrols, and maintaining recreational facilities. The following is a list of future expenditures to be funded by recreation fee revenues:

- BLM staffing to provide visitor information, issue permits, conduct field patrols, interpretive programs, maintenance of recreation facilities and rehabilitate natural resource damage
- Reinitiate partnership with SUU or other local schools for recreation impact monitoring
- Printing and copying of maps, brochures, route descriptions and permits
- Law enforcement
- An appropriate share of government vehicle costs in support of operations
- Safety videos created for each permit area
- Supplies such as toilet paper, human waste bags, permit paper, etc.
- Services such as garbage collection, septic pumping, satellite phones, etc.
- Maintenance, replacement, and construction of recreational facilities such as vault toilets, etc.

- Installing composting toilets at White Pocket, picnic tables, permanent trash receptacles, fee signage, and parking area improvements
- Scientific research related to the area such as recreation site impact monitoring and visitor satisfaction surveys

Public demand to visit the area continues to increase. Often, people are not prepared and lack the experience to hike safely in a backcountry setting. BLM and volunteer field patrols are crucial in heavily visited areas such as the route to the Wave. The extra field patrols cost approximately \$100,000 for the year and are funded through the fee program.

The Paria Contact Station is a small facility that serves visitors to the SMA, White Pocket, and other visitors traveling along Highway 89 near the Paria River. It houses BLM volunteers that perform maintenance duties and conduct field patrols and is often the first place visitors go to report emergency situations. It can also serve as an incident command center during search and rescue operations with its communication capabilities including BLM radio, satellite internet, and cell phone coverage. It includes a shop for repairing signs and a culinary well which provides drinking water to the public. Garbage dumpsters are also available. A combination of recreation fee revenues and appropriated funding is used to maintain and improve this facility.

The GSENM Visitor Center in Kanab, Utah was the site of the walk-in lottery from November 2012 until it relocated to the Kanab Center in 2021. The Information Center in St. George is the main public communication point for the area. These facilities serve as contact points for visitors inquiring about information and education. Recreation fee revenue is used to support seasonal staffing for the SMA permit operations. These facilities will continue to serve as key points of contact for visitor information about the SMA and White Pocket.

NAU had been conducting recreation site impact monitoring for the SMA and neighboring Paria Plateau for several years. As of 2015, SUU had taken over this monitoring but due to COVID-19 and staff shortages, this partnership lapsed. This vital partnership is in the process of being reestablished. The monitoring information is used to identify user trends and problems associated with recreation use. This is used to make policy decisions regarding visitor use. This program costs approximately \$60,000 annually but is likely to increase over time due to inflation.

Colorado Mesa University conducted a Recreation Experience Baseline Study for the SMA and greater area. This study provided information to the BLM concerning the thoughts and feelings of a wide variety of user groups and individuals related to BLM’s administration. The study cost approximately \$40,000, of which \$15,000 was paid with recreation fee revenues. This is not an annual program and represents a one-time cost; however, similar social studies are necessary to identify managerial and administrative problems and to determine if overall management objectives are being achieved.

9 Analysis of Recreation Fee Rates

9.1 Cost Recovery Fee Calculation Method

Table 11 illustrates the difference between recreation fees collected and recreation fee revenue spent for the SMA by fiscal year since 2019. The cost recovery fee calculation is based on the assumption that revenues should cover the fee area’s operating costs without the use of any appropriated funding. Based on the average annual number of permits issued in the SMA (16,264) and the average annual operating expenses (\$725,120) over the last five years, each permit would need to cost \$44.58 to fully fund the average annual operating expenses without appropriated funds. This does not account for any increases to operating costs in the future.

Fiscal Year	Operational Cost (Labor and Operations)	Revenues	Difference
2019	\$573,642	\$309,050	-\$264,592
2020	\$655,490	\$389,081	-\$266,409
2021	\$899,194	\$438,752	-\$460,442
2022	\$551,127	\$463,061	-\$88,066
2023	\$946,145	\$350,784	-\$613,361
5 year Average	\$725,120	\$378,270	-\$285,825

Table 11 SMA Revenues and Expenditures

9.2 Fair Market Value Fee Calculation Method

The following is a market analysis comparing existing and proposed fee rates with fee rates from other outdoor recreation providers for similar recreation activities and services. The fee increases are needed to offset rising costs of maintaining recreation facilities, providing brochures and maps, hiring staff to provide an adequate level of customer service including staffing information desks and conducting regular field patrols. Increasing recreation fees is imperative in managing the SMA and White Pocket.

Table 12 are the current and proposed fees. Other areas where the public is currently charged permit fees are listed in Table 13. BLM also manages Cedar Mesa. These areas offer similar opportunities and services as the Paria Canyon / Coyote Buttes SMA. Zion, Bryce Canyon, and Grand Canyon national parks also offer backcountry recreation opportunities. NPS locations typically offer more services and amenities than BLM locations. The additional services and amenities are often developed trails, additional field staff and law enforcement presence, additional interpretive signs, additional trailheads and toilets, and search and rescue crews. It is also important to point out that NPS units charge an entrance fee in addition to other recreation-based fees, whereas the BLM does not. Antelope Canyon is a popular slot canyon managed by the Navajo Nation near Page, Arizona.

Permit Area or Proposed Fee Site	Existing Fee	Proposed Fee
Coyote Buttes North	\$7 per person/per dog per day	\$20 per person/per dog per day
Coyote Buttes South	\$5 per person/per dog per day	\$10 per person/per dog per day
Paria Canyon Overnight	\$5 per person/per dog per day	\$10 per person/per dog per day
Paria Canyon Day-Use	\$6 per person/per dog per day	\$10 per person/per dog per day
White Pocket – Proposed Fee Site	No Fee	\$10 per person 16 years of age or older/per day

Table 12 Comparing Existing and Proposed Fees

Location	Backpacking	Day Hiking	Entrance Fee
Cedar Mesa/Bears Ears (BLM)	\$15 per person per trip (overnight use)	\$5 per person	N/A
Antelope Canyon (Navajo Nation)	N/A	\$85 per person	NA
Zion National Park (NPS) Overnight Wilderness Permit	\$7 per person / 2 days & 1 night	N/A	\$25 per vehicle
Grand Canyon National Park (NPS) Backcountry Lottery Permit	\$15 per person/day (below the rim)	N/A	\$25 per vehicle
Bryce Canyon National Park (NPS) Backcountry Permit	\$5 per person per trip	N/A	\$25 per vehicle
Angels Landing Lottery (Zion) (NPS)	NA	\$3 per person	\$25 per vehicle
Hualapai Reservation (Tribal)	\$40 for overnight	\$30 for day use	NA
Navajo Nation Tribal Lands Backcountry Permit (Tribal)	\$15 per person per night	\$15 per person per day	NA

Table 13 Regional Agency Fee Rates

10 Impacts from Changing and Non-Changing Recreation Fee Rates

10.1 Introduction

The fees for the Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes SMA have not changed since 2008. Since then, the costs of goods, labor, and services have experienced a continual rise. As the costs of goods, labor, and services increase, the purchasing power from the fees decreases proportionately.

10.1.1 Benefits to Recreational Users

Raising fees ensures critical services would continue to be offered to visitors. Fee revenues would be used to continually improve site infrastructure and provide routine

maintenance. Trailheads restrooms would be cleaned on a regular basis and human waste bags purchased and given out to visitors to maintain a pristine resource condition which helps ensure a quality wilderness experience. More toilets would be added as needed. BLM staff will continue patrolling to ensure the safety of the public and the protection of the resources.

Visitor services and information would continue to be made available to the public due to funding from recreation fee revenue. Accurate and quality information is an important component of the overall visitor experience. Educational and interpretive information focused on natural and cultural resources would continue to be posted in visitor centers and trailhead kiosks.

10.1.2 Benefits to the Environment

Recreation user fees help ensure recreation facilities are well maintained and available for visitors year-round. They also allow BLM and volunteers to clean popular campsites in Buckskin and Paria Canyon keeping the natural environment in a pristine condition which is a crucial component to a positive backcountry experience. Providing human waste bags and requiring all visitors to pack out their waste has greatly improved the natural conditions in Buckskin Gulch and Paria Canyon.

10.1.3 Socioeconomic Impacts, Including Low-Income Populations

A market analysis of similar facilities and hiking areas was completed to make sure the proposed fee increases would not be elevated beyond what is currently being charged for use of other nearby public land locations. The proposed fee increase and new fee would not result in a full cost recovery of the expected administrative and operational costs. Annual appropriation funding from Congress would continue to be used to help cover operating costs which helps keep recreation fees affordable to all income classes. White Pocket would be available for people to visit on national fee-free days.

Consistent with the Department of the Interior and BLM priorities, the BLM seeks to achieve environmental justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and make a difference in northern Arizona and southern Utah communities through expanding recreational access and opportunities and providing for natural resource interpretation. This includes to:

- encourage, facilitate, and improve partnership with and access for youth, tribes, and underserved communities to public lands through recreation partnerships and collaborations;

- improve public health and safety at developed recreation sites and areas by updating and modernizing infrastructure—including meeting accessibility standards for people with disabilities;
- invite education, interpretation, and recreational access for all Americans, especially for diverse populations and those near urban areas to encourage enjoyment of BLM-managed public lands and waters;
- collaborate with community members, government organizations, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and other stakeholders to address environmental and health-related challenges for recreation management;
- enhance understanding of environmental and health-related issues at the community level;
- improve methods for identifying, addressing, tracking, and measuring progress toward achieving environmental justice;
- and develop and support youth education and outreach programs.

10.2 Anticipated Result of Not Modifying SMA Fee or Adding a New Fee at White Pocket

10.2.1 Adverse Impacts to Recreational Users

The maintenance of existing facilities represents a substantial public investment, and visitors could expect to see a loss of functionality and use of these facilities as maintenance activity is reduced. Facilities require both regular and periodic maintenance to ensure that access roads and facilities are in good working order. Poorly maintained facilities could present safety issues for visitors.

A reduction in BLM and volunteer patrols would compromise visitor safety and reduce the integrity of the natural environment. Problems would not be identified and solved as quickly. The reduction of educational and informational materials would lead to less informed visitors which could lead to safety issues in the field and/or unintentional resource impacts.

10.2.2 Adverse Impacts to Local Economy

Not raising fees or adding a new fee at White Pocket, could lead to the disruption of services such as regular site maintenance. The degradation of facilities and natural resources could result in travelers choosing other locations to visit. A reduction in visitation could also negatively impact local outfitter and guides. Other businesses such as garbage collection and septic pumping could also be affected.

10.2.3 Adverse Impacts to the Environment

The area's popularity as a destination has increased substantially over time leading to high levels of visitation. Regular visitation can diminish natural resources. Regular patrols funded in part by recreation fees helps identify problems and rehabilitate natural resource damage such as graffiti on canyon walls or trash blowing around at the Wave.

BLM staff and volunteers also provide educational information specific to protecting the areas environment. Brochures and signs have been specifically designed to educate visitors on how to protect and preserve the environment while conducting desired recreation activities. Recreation use fees contribute to these efforts.

11 Public Outreach

Methods to solicit public input on the business plan proposal:

- Flyers will be posted at the proposed fee site and existing fee areas
- Flyers will be posted in visitor centers
- BLM news release
- Recreation.gov will provide links to the draft business plan and StoryMap
- BLM social media updates
- Federal Register notice to establish a standard amenity fee at White Pocket
- Contact partners, Special Recreation Permit holders, and visitor centers in the area

These outreach efforts follow the requirements outlined in FLREA.