

RECREATION FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM



EVALUATION REPORT

UTAH FEE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS: Selected Utah Sites



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	iii
UT State Situation Affecting the Evaluation.....	iv
National, State & Field Office Common Issues	v
UT Evaluation Report	1
Background.....	1
Purpose of the Evaluation.....	2
Methodology.....	2
Site-Specific Evaluation Reports	6
Moab Field Office: Colorado River Corridor Sites.....	6
Monticello Field Office: Cedar Mesa Recreation Area.....	15
Fillmore Field Office: Little Sahara	23

UTAH RECREATION FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the result of on-site evaluations of three of BLM's Utah (UT) State Recreation Fee Demonstration Project Sites. The Fee Demonstration Act requires that an annual report on management, operation, and public sentiment about the program be submitted to Congress. This evaluation effort is intended to help BLM in its efforts to manage the sites in accordance with the tenets of the Act, as well as to collect and share best practices across fee demonstration sites throughout the BLM.



The report contains background on the Act and BLM's implementation of its projects, a review of the evaluation methodology and the evaluation guide itself, a statement of the UT State-specific factors affecting the evaluation, and national, state and field office issues common across sites. The report also includes site-specific reports for each of the three sites evaluated.

The visitation and collections data for the evaluated sites are:

Site	FY 99 Visits	FY 00 Visits	FY 99 Collections	FY 00 Collections
Moab FO: CO Riverway	107,857	124,781	\$159,000	\$178,196
Monticello FO: Cedar Mesa	36,018	38,376	\$67,647	\$58,285
Fillmore FO: Little Sahara	179,356	230,834	\$231,364	\$280,967

Overall, staff visited at the UT Field Offices and sites have done a good job implementing the primary tenets of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Act. The three sites have a number of exemplary practices that should be noted and shared elsewhere within UT and BLM. On a site-by-site basis the following practices were also noteworthy:

Moab Field Office: Colorado Riverway
(See site-specific report below)

Cedar Mesa Recreation Area
(See site-specific report below)

Little Sahara Recreation Area
(See site-specific report below)

UTAH STATE SITUATION AFFECTING MANAGEMENT OF EVALUATED SITES

The following Utah (UT) State-specific factors affect management and implementation of the Fee Demonstration Act in the fee sites visited in this evaluation.

- Utah does not have access to funds such as the western Oregon districts O&C funds, NV's Southern NV Public Lands Act funds, and CA Greensticker Funds. However, the State of Utah does administer a challenge cost share program and TEA21 monies. The Utah State Parks has a matching grant program for motorized and non-motorized trails, although it is generally underutilized by the Utah Field Offices. This program was better utilized when matching money was held at the Utah State Office for Field Offices to use as their grant match. Since the money has been dispersed to the field, only Moab has applied for a grant. The evaluation team feels that all field offices should aggressively pursue these funding opportunities.
- The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and several other environmental groups filed a statewide lawsuit against the BLM in FY 99. The lawsuit alleges that BLM has neglected to follow Executive orders and its own regulations to minimize the effects of OHVs on public land resources, to designate trails, and to monitor impacts of OHV use. Additionally, the plaintiffs filed a motion for a Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction Hearing to close four WSA's and five 202 planning areas to OHV use. Both of these motions were heard and ruled in favor of BLM. The plaintiffs have appealed the ruling of the Preliminary Injunction Hearing. The statewide lawsuit has not yet been heard. This lawsuit has created a major workload on the recreation and field office management staffs. A significant amount of 1220 funds have been used for the litigation process.
- The Utah Wilderness Coalition's proposal and the other program issues, such as those caused by the Comb Wash decision for grazing permit renewal work, wilderness inventory and the related planning, and seismic, or oil and gas applications have taken priority at individual offices. These activities have increased the workload, which is completed primarily by recreation staff. This is not a funding issue per se, but it creates a shortage in time spent on specific recreation program activities.
- The Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument was designated in 1996. Congress added an additional \$4.8 million and earmarked about \$1.6 million, of Utah's 1220 base funding (about 1/3) to go directly to the Monument. Although it appears that Utah has a substantial 1220 base budget because of the increase in funding for the Monument, in reality, Utah's 1220 budget has only slightly increased since 1996. One of the sites evaluated had already used its entire 1220 base funding at the time the evaluations were conducted.
- BLM law enforcement resources are spread thin and do not adequately meet the growing demand placed on BLM public lands. Little Sahara has an active law enforcement cooperative agreement with local/community law enforcement agencies, which could be used as a model for other locations throughout the country. The Cedar Mesa site had a shared term law enforcement position between Natural Bridges National Monument and the BLM that worked well. Unfortunately the term position expired and the Park Service is uninterested in continuing the cooperative agreement. Moab has a cooperative dispatch agreement and is implementing an agreement for the deputy based in Green River in FY02.
- The sites have been contracting within the local communities for a variety of services such as camp hosts, cleaning, and other maintenance and development. This is a positive use of Recreational Fee Demonstration Program collections that helps to leverage BLM staff and provides important socioeconomic benefits for the community.

NATIONAL, STATE, & FIELD OFFICE COMMON ISSUES

The following issues were identified as common across the UT sites evaluated. The issues were listed by the team at the closeout session and then edited, categorized as to the organization level to which the issues should be raised, and agreed to by all.

National.

- N-1) *Pooling a percentage of fee collections from specific sites for redistribution:* Personnel at the site level, field office level, and state office level agreed that there is a need to fund fee demonstration start-ups, to leverage partnerships, and for critical one time needs. However, all were hesitant to support the holding back of a percentage of fee demonstration funds at either the Washington Office or State Office level without a better idea of the criteria that would be used to determine the percentage withheld and details of how the funds would be distributed.
- N-2) *Planning, funding, & managing recreation work:* One of the Utah Field Offices visited had already exhausted recreation program funds at the date of the visit. This was also found in one NV site. Operation of fee sites, which is strongly encouraged at the national level, is more expensive and labor intensive to manage. A reevaluation of base funding levels for those states that have fee sites, in line with the number of sites, the number of visitors, and the complexity of the sites themselves, may be warranted. At the state and national level attention should be given to developing an equitable way to adjust base funding which considers key variables for the equitable allocation of funds and resources. Consideration of a combination of factors that evaluates variables related to workload, demand for services and facility liability and costs such as use levels, visitation, extent of capital investment/level of infrastructure, number of SRPs, permits issues, number of special events assessed, authorized and monitored etc. In addition, the field offices should strive to fully recover costs for special events to the extent practical. The number and scope of recent special events have drained already limited personnel and base funding resources.

The root cause of this annual problem is that there is continuing growth of recreation use of BLM lands by the public which produces more recreation work to do than there is money to do it, given either erosion of base in recreation and insufficient growth in budgets overall. Some possible solutions are to: increase budgets, increase fees, better manage costs, close sites, curtail access, or stop development.

- N-3) *Managing the business:* As the financial aspects of fee demonstration projects continue to become more complex due to use of credit cards, multiple sub-accounts, etc., it is essential that staff and managers develop business-like approaches to monitoring expenditures and tracking funds. The National office should assist by providing appropriate software, tracking systems, and training. Additionally, standard reports should be developed through the MIS system to allow easy retrieval and access to pertinent data from MIS.
- All fee demonstration sites require assistance from the National Office to develop business plans, communication plans, and outreach plans.
 - National Office should collate information about fee schedules for all BLM fee demonstration sites and send them to site managers for comparison/fee analysis purposes.
 - There is a shared national need for standardized MIS reports to developed specific to

fee demo project applications. In that way the validity and reliability of comparative data will allow for clear and consistent information between offices and states. Some site managers would like a report automated and sent out on a monthly basis to the FOs.

- CBS credit card processing and approval time must be reduced. Oregon may serve as a model for this process and their procedures should be shared with all sites.

Sites should go after appropriate use of deferred maintenance and fire money as appropriate.

- N-4) *Expand less than full time staffing.* As a function of increased recreation use by the public, the high season has expanded to 9 months, rather than the traditional summer or other seasonal peak usage. Thus, there is a clear need across the Fee Demonstration sites that more longer term but less than full time staff are needed. Further, the complexity and shear demand on these sites requires that these staff have more continuity than that provided by a summer hire. The training issues are very substantial for new staff, which drains the already strapped staff. So, turnover needs to be kept at a minimum, while still taking advantage of the economies of less than full time staffing. Specifically states and sites should look into expanded staffing via career seasonals, WAEs, and shared positions.
- N-5) *Ranking of recreation deferred maintenance projects.* It is apparent that many recreation deferred maintenance projects regularly don't make it to the top of the list that gets implemented. This leaves many critical projects incomplete. The criteria and process used for making these decisions need to be reconsidered.
- N-6) *Continue to increase emphasis on environmental education & interpretation:* The visiting public is very satisfied with the recreation experiences they are receiving in BLM. However, the Recreation Use Surveys, as well as extensive external interviews have showed the greatest satisfaction enhancers, to be environmental education and interpretation. Additional needs were identified for interpretive support and expertise. The staggering need and high visitor and community demand for more and better information exceeds the capability of existing staff levels. Management should consider the value of providing interpretive media design, fabrication and publication expertise to the field offices – this could include a zoned position that would provide support to a number of field offices similar to support already provided for landscape architecture, project engineering, force account crew etc. Interpretive expertise could also be provided through interagency or non-profit partnerships as well as through contracts.
- N-7) *Sharing information and best practices.* Training and interoffice information sharing for fee demo issues also was highlighted as an opportunity to learn and share on-the-ground solutions, techniques, technology and innovations. Multi-state training sessions should be conducted should conduct training sessions to allow field staff – seasonals, volunteers, and partners as well – the opportunity to share innovations and successful fee collection operations as well as other management techniques. Allowing staff to travel and visit other areas for short-term job shadow opportunities with their counterpart in other locations could benefit the program as well as interoffice coordination and collaboration.
- ? Sand dune management, particularly related OHVs, has some unique characteristics. BLM manages sand dunes in a number of locations, yet these offices lack a method for coordination and sharing innovations concerning sand dune management. One possible solution to enhancing a dialogue between sand dune managers would be a national OHV/Dune management conference.

- N-8) *Coordination with sister agencies.* Staff also identified the lack of regional coordination between the NPS and to a lesser extent the FS. There seems to be a reluctance on the part of other agencies to address regional visitor use issues outside of their boundaries but directly related to their national attractions. Overtures and attempts by Field office staff at developing partnerships between the agencies have been unsuccessful. Generally, there appears to be a declining interest by sister agencies to join with BLM in joint fee demo projects. Perhaps higher level discussions between state director and regional foresters and park service regional directors should be initiated to facilitate cooperative ventures and service first efforts to address fee collections, and larger more complex visitor and community service issues such as coordinated permit issuance, resource monitoring, sewage treatment capacity, law enforcement etc. Particularly with Arches Nat. Park and Manati La Sal NF.
- N-9) *Employee safety & security.* Insufficient staffing to follow the regulations for fee collections and transport of funds is compromising the safety of staff at fee sites. Further, there is inadequate radio and/or cell phone coverage in virtually every site. Digital radio infrastructure is insufficient to buy digital radios at this time. The inconsistent policy between recreation and fire in the purchase of radios should be resolved. Radios that work should be immediately purchased. Where radios cannot solve the problem cell and/or satellite phones should be evaluated and purchased. At fee booths and contact stations video surveillance camera systems need to be evaluated and installed. Low cost ideas for increasing the appearance of BLM presence in high volume non-wilderness experience sites need to be shared (e.g. patrol car shells strategically parked).
- N-10) *Adherence to Recreation Fee Policies.* The national office needs to reiterate key recreation fee demonstration program policies in a single consolidated information memorandum.
? One key policy that has to be uniformly implemented is what charges can appropriately go to 1220 and 1232. At one of the sites evaluated 1232 funds are being used to fund work months previously funded by 1220 monies that departs from the intent of the fee demo program.

State.

Public Recognition & Communication

- UT-1) *Improving the BLM image.* The three sites we evaluated are all national treasures in their own right. However, visitors often do not realize their experience is taking place on public lands. Further, they are not likely to realize that they have entered the Colorado Riverway or Cedar Mesa BLM recreation areas until they get to the actual fee collection sites. Although signing can be difficult to maintain, BLM needs to increase its recognition and sense of place by developing major area entrance or gateway signs on the highways.
- UT-2) *Sharing information:* The Act requires a public accounting and distribution of information about use of fee demo collections. The State Office public affairs staff could assist the Recreation Program by cooperating with Recreation staff in developing a comprehensive statewide brochure about expenditures, the "Annual Public Accounting". The Forest Service has a nice example of such a publication for its OR fee sites. The Cedar Mesa pie chart is the start of a simple and understandable communication about use of fees that could easily be made generic and used across the State. It could benefit from a picture or

two of specific development projects or volunteer activities with a simple caption linked to a slice of the pie.

Planning, Funding & Managing

UT-3) *Priority of recreation program:* There is continued and growing demand for recreational use in the evaluated sites. The state should increase the emphasis on the recreation program and the public it serves. Demand is growing in all three of the sites the team evaluated, as well as the ancillary sites we toured.

UT-4) *Planning, funding, & managing recreation work:* The Little Sahara site had exhausted all of the 1220 recreation program funds. This is an annual problem. Better use of deferred maintenance dollars within the recreation program needs to be considered. Further, the use of fire monies as appropriate, as well as consideration of fire program cost sharing for recreation facilities (in a situation like Little Sahara where a fire facility is adjacent to the recreation facility), should be considered.

- Partnerships with state and county agencies were witnessed at the sites we evaluated. However, the team feels that more of these partnerships could and should be pursued, e.g. to solve issues like long-term squatters camping out in Williams Bottom, who are putting a very significant strain on natural resources. To solve this problem, county and Federal agreements and whose resources should be used needs to be examined. The partnerships we witnessed in the Moab Field Office and Yuba Reservoir (a fee demo site which was not part of the evaluation) with the county and state co-managed recreation sites are excellent examples of the type of partnerships that should be engaged in.
- Only the Moab fee demo sites have business and communication plans in place. The other two sites are operating under their existing recreation management activity plans. At the time these sites entered into the fee demo program, they were told that they did not need to develop new business and communication plans; however, the National Office now suggests that since these plans help site managers manage the business these plans be developed as soon as possible.

UT-5) *Business plans:* Business plans are not in place for two of the sites evaluated. The development of business plans is now a requirement for these sites. Plan development should include fee evaluation, law enforcement support and community-based partnerships. Further, the plan should include actions planned based on the results of administering the Recreation Use Visitor Survey, if the survey has been administered within the last three years.

Increase Fees. In every case, the market can bare increased fee structures. The team suggests when fees are increased, they should be increased substantially, not incrementally. Fees should be reevaluated on an annual basis and have not been in the area evaluated.

UT-6) *Law enforcement & Employee Safety:* The number of law enforcement issues, coupled with the financial and personal risk to BLM employees, partners, volunteers and the visiting public are significant enough at these sites to warrant a meeting of Recreation and Law Enforcement staff across the state to discuss the issues and possible improvements to the

current situation. Law enforcement issues should be addressed in all updates to the site business plans. Effective models for law enforcement agreements, such as the one operating for Little Sahara, should be discussed and developed as opportunities arise in various Counties.

SITE-SPECIFIC REPORTS

See the Table of Contents to find the site-specific reports.

UTAH RECREATION FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

BACKGROUND

Congress authorized the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program in section 315 of the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-134) and amended the program under Public Law 104-208, Public Law 105-18, Public Law 105-83, Public Law 105-277, and Public Law 106-291. Four federal land management agencies – the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management in the Department of the Interior, and the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture – were mandated to implement a Recreational Fee Demonstration Program. This project allowed these agencies to test new fees in 100 sites that represent the geographic and programmatic spectrum of sites that they manage. Under the program, the agencies retain all of the new fees, with at least 80% of the retained fees to be used at the sites where they were collected. Up to 20% of the fee revenues may be used at other sites under the administrative jurisdiction of the collecting agency.

The Recreational Fee Demonstration Program was authorized to begin October 1, 1995 and end on September 30, 1998, with a final report to be submitted to Congress annually. These reports identify the annual accomplishments for the preceding fiscal year and any recommended improvements to the program. Congress subsequently authorized operation of the Program through September 30, 2002, with fees to remain available through September 30, 2005. An evaluation report is to be provided to the Committee on Appropriations no later than September 1, 2001.



During FY 2000, the Administration submitted to Congress a legislative proposal that would permanently authorize the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program. Provisions in the proposal were based on the experience of the agencies, and were consistent with recommendations for legislative and management improvements that were contained in previous annual reports to Congress concerning the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program. To date, no action has been taken by the Congress on the Administration's proposal.

As of this date, 97 Bureau of Land Management projects collect fees. Fee demonstration revenues have increased in the Bureau of Land Management every year. Visitation to recreation sites participating in the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program continues to appear unaffected in any significant way by the new fees. Visitation at Recreational Fee Demonstration Program sites has remained relatively constant, hitting 19.3 million in FY2000.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION/GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To ensure that the intent of the Fee Demonstration Program Act of 1996 is being administered properly, the BLM is now conducting an evaluation of its implementation within selected sites. The fee demonstration sites across the BLM run the gamut from highly improved visitor centers to rafting sites to camping sites to wilderness sites.

These sites have significant Congressional interest and the fee collections now amount to over \$7 million. As such, the program has significant fiduciary responsibility for management and control of public funds. The integrity and management of the processes managing these funds should be regularly audited. Further, the program manages some of the premier sites managed by BLM from a visitor services perspective. It is in the Bureau's best interests to evaluate the management of these resources and of the interaction with the public we serve. Such evaluation should lead to discovering and promulgating best practices for other recreation sites and new fee demonstration sites, should Congress extend the program, and for development of and communication of improvement recommendations within each project or set of sites evaluated.

While cost of collection actually decreased in FY 2000, it is important to keep such costs down and to increase the percent of cost of operations of these sites that fees pay for. The BLM is getting more efficient with its collections. Costs of collection decreased from 39.1% in FY 1999, the previous year, to 25.5% in FY 2000 for a total of \$1.9 million. The evaluation process is intended as a means to collect and apply "lessons learned" from our experience with collecting fees. Costs of collection are supplemented by 1220 or 1230 funds in some cases (Cedar Mesa) to save Federal money for improvements.

Further, the evaluation process will help to monitor and improve the appropriate use of revenues collected on priority maintenance and enhancement projects. The Bureau asked each demonstration area to provide the top five deferred maintenance or enhancement projects for FY 1999-2000. The top five projects from each of the 97 recreation fee demonstration projects that charged fees in FY 2000 totaled approximately \$21.2 million. During FY 2000, approximately \$3 million from recreation collections was spent on recreation projects to reduce the number of deferred maintenance projects. The BLM will spend approximately \$25 million from all sources on deferred maintenance, annual maintenance, and enhancement projects for these same sites during FY 2001. Site managers spent nearly 85.7% of the revenue collected during the fourth year of the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program.

METHODOLOGY

Site selection process.

The intent of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Evaluation Cycle is to evaluate a representative sample of Fee Demonstration Sites in line with the following criteria. The intent is to get to most of the sites within a 4 year cycle, with high revenue, high visit sites being evaluated more frequently, and low revenue, low visit sites being evaluated less frequently.

The following factors are key in determining which sites will be visited when:

1. Representative cut across States/Areas/Sites
2. Representative cut of recreation activities
3. Level of Fiscal Risk--Revenue generated (highest to lowest)
4. Level of Fiscal Risk--Remote geographic locations (most remote to most central)
5. Reasonable travel clustering for evaluation team

6. Indication of Management or Fiscal Issues, such as:
 - IG/GAO report findings
 - Customer research findings (comment cards, recreation use survey)
 - Substantial changes in revenue collection, obligations, and costs
 - Unusual Cost/Revenue Ratios
 - Request of State or WO Rec. Program Lead

Intended audience of the evaluation and the site-specific report.

This report is intended for use by BLM management responsible for oversight, management and operation of recreation sites designated as Fee Demonstration Act Pilot Sites. These managers and staff include: Site Management, Area, District and Field Office Management, State Management, and National Recreation Program Management, as well as the Assistant Director for Resources. The results will also be used in the annual Report to Congress.

Evaluation method & records review process.

An interdisciplinary team consisting of the following people conducts the evaluation:

- State recreation representative (usually the State Recreation Lead)
- State Evaluation Program Lead
- WO recreation specialist (team leader)
- Financial/Accounting Expert (knowledgeable about MIS, CBS, and RMIS)
- Evaluation Expert (under contract)

The team members were: Anthony Bobo, Team Leader (WO 250), Bob Ratcliffe, WO200 Deputy Group Manager, Lee Larson, WO250 Recreation Fee Program Coordinator, Robin Fehlau, UT State OHV Lead, Scott Packer, UT State Evaluation Lead and CBS expert, and Kevin Coray, HMS, Inc. Kamilah Rasheed, National Evaluation Lead (WO 830) acted as a consultant to the team prior to going on-site.

The team generally followed the attached evaluation guide (see appendix). The guide calls for the team leader to request site-specific management and financial documents from each site. Key documents requested include reports from the Collections and Billings System (CBS), the Management Information System (MIS), and cuff records, as well as the various business, marketing and communications plans, the Recreation Use Survey results, fee schedule, activities plan, and web site for the site.

Team members conducted a preliminary review of the documents. Shortly before the on-site portion of the evaluation commenced, the evaluation team met and the Team Leader assigned sections of the evaluation guide for which specific team members were responsible. Information from the preliminary review was provided to team members. Additional questions were added to the on-site question set based on the preliminary review. The team then followed the evaluation agenda/schedule established by the team leader and the State Recreation Lead.

For Utah, the following sites were visited on the dates specified and attended by the listed staff.

Site	2001 Date	Staff Present
State Office	8/6	Sally Wisely (State Director)
Moab Field Office, Colorado Riverway, Sand Flats, Moab Info. Center	8/6	Russ Von Koch (Resource Advisor), Katie Stevens (Seasonal Rec. Tech.), Bill Stringer (Assis. FO Mgr), James Ward (LE), Carol Freudiger (Rec. Tech., CBS expert), Barbara Hutchins (Admin. Support) Moab Information Center: Cindy Hardgrave (Moab Information Center Manager), Steve Hazlett (Utah Guides and Outfitters & Worldwide Expeditions), Marion Delay (Moab Travel Council and Economic Development), Kirsten Peterson (Moab City Council & Rim Tours), Matt Hebbard (Rim Tours)
Monticello Field Office, Sand Island, Cedar Mesa	8/7	Kent Walter (FO mgr), Scott Berkenfield (Rec. Planner), Marie Tuxhorn (LE), Marilyn Low (Admin. Support-CBS & MIS), Andy Boone (Rec. Tech.), Laura Lantz (Park Ranger)
Fillmore Field Office, Little Sahara	8/8	Ferris Clegg (Rec planner), Rex Rowley (Fillmore FO Mgr), Neal Scoresby (LE), Marjean Christensen (Fillmore FO, collections), Will Fullmer (Maintenance), Cheryl Poulsen (Park Ranger, fee collection)
Close out at Richfield Field Office	8/9	Suzanne Garcia (State Recreation Lead), Shelly Smith (Branch Chief-for Recreation, Cultural, Wilderness, and Planning), Maggie Wyatt (Moab FO Mgr), Russ Von Koch (Resource Advisor), Scott Berkenfield (Rec. Planner), Kent Walter (Monticello Assis. FO Mgr), Ferris Clegg (Rec. Planner), Rex Rowley (Fillmore FO Mgr), & the Evaluation Team

The agenda/schedule typically includes:

- Team briefs State Office management about the review and add any content they recommend.
- Team travels to the first of the selected sites. The team meets with site, area, and program-related management at the site. They tour the site together and most of the questions from the interview guide are asked and answered.
- Back at the Field Office, the team asks any remaining questions and then meets separately to discuss the strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Team begins the report preparation for that site, travels to the next location and repeats the interview process.
- On the last day of the on-site review, the team conducts a ½ day closeout briefing and discussion with State-Office representatives and representatives from relevant staff from every site. This is a participative session, rather than a one-way negative findings briefing, in which the SO, FO, and site management staff meet together with the evaluation team to develop the recommendations and implementation plan. By the end of the closeout, the outline of an implementation plan was complete and available immediately. The purposes of the closeout are apparent in the four-step closeout process:

1. Share best practices and best experiences from the site visit
2. Share constructive ideas for improvement
3. Design strategies for making practical improvements, using the combined resources from the State, the FO, the Project staff, the evaluation team, and WO staff.
4. Develop a plan for implementing the strategies



COLORADO RIVERWAY/MOAB FIELD OFFICE CAMPGROUNDS EVALUATION REPORT:

Moab Field Office & Site Staff Interviewed by the Evaluation Team:

Russ Von Koch (Resource Advisor), Katie Stevens (Seasonal Rec. Tech.), Bill Stringer (Assis. FO Mgr), James Ward (LE), Carol Freudiger (Rec. Tech., CBS expert), Barbara Hutchins (admin. Support), Rob Sweeten (Landscape Architect)

Moab Information Center: Cindy Hardgrave (Moab Info. Center Mgr, Canyonlands Natural History Assoc.), Steve Hazlett (Utah Guides & Outfitters Assoc. & Worldwide River Expeditions), Marion Delay (Moab Travel Council and Economic Development), Kirsten Peterson (Moab City Council & Rim Tours), Matt Hebbard (Rim Tours)

Editorial Note: The Sand Flat Recreation Area, the Sand Island Recreation Area, and the Moab Information Center were visited as part of a broader BLM National initiative examining community and visitor services approaches. As such, comments below from these sites are not relevant to the Recreation Fee Demonstration Act Evaluation itself. These comments are included more from a perspective of providing context and depth.

BACKGROUND

The project includes 18 fee campgrounds and camping areas within the Moab Field Office. The original project included only the semi-developed camping areas within the Colorado Riverway Recreation Area. The original purpose of the project was to evaluate if the cost of managing low-cost sites with very simple facilities could be covered through collection of modest site use fees. This phase of the project was undertaken during FY 97 and was completed when collections proved to be both higher than projected and adequate to support routine site management.

Beginning in FY 98, the project was expanded to include all of the Moab Field Office's fee campgrounds. This action added 16 campgrounds located in the Colorado Riverway Recreation Area and two from the Canyon Rims Recreation Area. This change was made to simplify record

keeping and to provide a higher level of maintenance at the campgrounds by including them in the demonstration project.

Visitation. The Colorado Riverway directly serves approximately 260,000 recreation visitors annually. An additional 35,000 visit the Canyon Rims Recreation Area.

No formal surveys of campers have been completed. The following conclusions are based upon field staff observations and comments. Over 99% of campers are estimated to be non-local. Consistent with the Moab area's destination status, campers come from all over the country and from Western Europe and Canada. The Moab area is the destination for visitors much more than a specific campground or recreation area. Moab residents use the Riverway for day use activities, but rarely stay in the campgrounds. Seasonally resident service workers who stay in the campgrounds while seeking more suitable temporary accommodations are a type of exception to the non-resident use pattern.

Campers at campgrounds appear to be more commonly (in comparison to user of camping areas) family groups, retired persons, foreign visitors, and recreational vehicle campers. Campers at camping areas (in comparison to campgrounds) appear to be more multi-household type groups who arrive in more than one vehicle, student age, oriented to mountain biking, seeking a more primitive type of camping experience, and camp in tents.

Spring is the busiest season, followed by Fall, Summer and Winter. Peak use is always the week up to and including Easter weekend. Spring and fall visitors are more public land activity oriented than summer visitors. A large portion of the Spring and fall visitors camping in the Riverway engages in off-site OHV, mountain bike, and hiking activities. The project sites are popular with spring break students seeking sunlight and warm weather. Summer visitors are more focused on national park and river use than spring and fall visitors.

Outfitted visitors are a growing visitor segment with commercial companies making up a large segment of the group site users. Other group site users include school and church organizations. Visitors camp with tents and recreation vehicles. Many groups have both tents and recreation vehicles.

Development Chronology.

1988--In response to unfavorable news articles and growing concern about sanitation concerns along the Colorado River near Moab, Grand County at the request of the Bureau of Land Management established the Grand County Blue Ribbon Committee to make recommendations about the area could be better managed. Committee members represented the county, the City of Moab, service clubs, land users, business interests, Utah State Parks, and other federal agencies.

1990--The Grand County Blue Ribbon Committee report identified human waste and site deterioration problems at Big Bend and other sites along the river and recommended specific management actions. In response to the report, county and community leaders sought financial help from the Utah Congressional Delegation

1991-- Congress appropriated \$300,000 for BLM to resolve human waste and OHV problems along the river near Moab. BLM installed toilets and purchased campground construction materials with the funding.

1992–BLM completed the Colorado Riverway Recreation Area Management Plan that incorporated the recommendations of the Grand County Blue Ribbon Committee into the Bureau planning process.

1992 to 2000– Starting with only minor inadequate facilities at Big Bend, Fisher Towers, and Jaycee Park that have all been removed and replaced, BLM developed the nine camping facilities at recreation sites along the Colorado River over an eight-year period. The sites were developed using a combination of the initial Congressional appropriation, site fee revenues, and maintenance funds. All project work was designed and constructed by local BLM staff with the exception of camping facilities at the Drinks Canyon, Negro Bill, Goldbar, Moonflower Canyon, Kings Bottom, Hunter Canyon and Echo camping areas which were built by the Grand County AmeriCorps and Grand County High School Apprentice programs in 1996.

2001– BLM completed Amendment 1 to the Colorado Riverway Management Plan, which updates the 1992 plan to recognize previous accomplishments and establishes additional guidance for the next phase of site development and visitor management.

Results. The Colorado Riverway was created to resolve management concerns related to the heavy use of dispersed, undeveloped recreation sites. Prior to implementation of the Riverway Plan, the lack of sanitary and other facilities threatened the future viability of recreation and tourism at a point when the Moab area economy was just beginning to recover from the collapse of its uranium mining and milling industry. Today, the Riverway, with its many managed recreation sites, is a major tourism and community asset. BLM has received many positive comments about the improvements made along the Colorado River. For FY 2001, fee collections at the campgrounds are expected to total about \$214,000, which cover the maintenance and upkeep of all of the Riverway recreation sites. Successful implementation of the Riverway Plan paved the way for joint BLM-County management of the Sand Flats Recreation Area, and is serving as a model of BLM's ability to manage large-scale recreation areas.

KUDOS/BEST PRACTICES

The Moab Field Office responded at a critical point in implementing and developing the Colorado Riverway to accommodate and provide desperately needed camping facilities to meet both the visitor needs in health and safety and the recreation experience. This was done in a manner to meet resource-based objectives while supplying an increasing number of camping opportunities in a highly desirable location. Moab has been innovative in their approach of providing a range of camping experiences for the visitor to choose from within a relatively small area. These different levels of development appeal to different portions of the visiting public and don't attempt to squeeze all members of the public into a one-size-fits-all approach.



- One of the best aspects of the Moab FO and Colorado Riverway is its very extensive relationships with the community and local government agencies. This extensive project manager and staff involvement with the local governments and the business community has been a success for tackling the incredible recreation growth in the Moab area, really a local emergency situation. The local community clearly recognizes BLM's efforts for having resolved sanitation problems and generally cleaning up the Colorado Riverway near Moab.

Another best practice is the way they have leveraged dollars through these partnerships to accomplish their plan objectives. These relationships have enabled low cost development that would not have been possible without the help of the community and the local agencies. In fact, a number of sites within the corridor have been built without any BLM funding. This has allowed Moab to utilize its funding in other areas while increasing their revenue generating capability. As an example, the Grand County road crew agreed to haul all of the gravel for a new BLM site within San Juan County. Another example is the cooperative agreement with Grand County that authorized the County to construct eight semi-developed camping areas using State Travel Council Destination Development funds. Some of these community involvement practices include:

- Sand Flats Recreation Area. This community partnership, which predated fee demo, is a model for high volume sites.
- Moab Information Center (MIC). The cooperative efforts and effective partnerships with the MIC have greatly enhanced the quality of customer contact and information available for trip planning, environmental and cultural education. Further, the MIC stays open during hours that BLM could not staff at current staffing levels. Key partners in the MIC include:
 - BLM, FS, NPS
 - Grand County
 - Canyonlands Natural History Association
- Moab's dedicated and enthusiastic staff have generated very high public support - from both the public and the community - for the program and have greatly enhanced the public's and community's level of recognition and respect for the agency. These extensive community involvement efforts have led to greater conservation and environmental awareness and increased constituency for the site, as well as substantial commitments of time and materiel for site development.
 - One dedicated seasonal recreation technician has been able to provide visitor contact on the riverway. Additional personnel visit this area, yet it is the consistent day-to-day work of this rec. technician that has reduced conflict, and improved visitor relations. It is this personal touch that provides the public with a "face" for the BLM management.

Other best practices include:

- Use of campground hosts who live at four of the area's campgrounds. These hosts provide additional on-site presence, some labor and help with miscellaneous visitor services.
- The FO has provided a range of camping opportunities from which visitors can select a site that meets their needs, while limiting facility development to those reasonably necessary to resolve resource issues.
 - The FO has nearly eliminated free camping near Moab for resource and safety reasons, which have helped, increase use of fee sites. The community appreciates this rather than viewing it as competition with local businesses.

- The FO uses a combination of signing, honor pay system, low cost camping options, and staff presence to increase compliance without high collection costs. Regular and consistent field patrols have significantly influenced compliance with fee payment and done much to build awareness of responsible use ethics. The recreation program in Moab has made uniformed presence a high priority.
- The use of regular patrols, camp hosts, and volunteers have had a positive impact on resource condition and responsible use resulting in a model high quality recreation experience.
- Staff training and safety awareness is very high. Law enforcement rangers emphasize education and public contact over citation.
- Fee pipes are in high traffic, highly visible locations near roadways. Simple, low cost theft deterrent solutions such as placing foam in the bottom of fee tubes to deter “fishing” for envelopes exemplifies staff’s creativity and innovation.
- Public health and safety issues are quickly addressed through regular maintenance and monitoring. High levels of maintenance have reduced incidents of vandalism, and enhanced the safety and cleanliness of the sites.
- Big Bend Campground group camping areas, Goose Island overlook/kiosk and other sites incorporate efficient, aesthetic and accessible design features.
- Field office staff should be commended for their innovative and cost saving facility design and construction – use of in-house engineering, simple, low maintenance and prefabricated designs and force account/staff labor for construction is a model for efficient use of resources and stretching available funds.
- A sign inventory was just finished using GIS. Now when a sign is destroyed, staff can electronically see what the sign looked like and replace it with the same information.
- BLM has conducted training sessions for Arches Nat’l Park, Canyonlands National Park Staff, Dead Horse Point State Park Staff, and Moab Information Center Staff. Training sessions focused on the location of the campgrounds, differences among campgrounds, site occupancy rates, and the fee structure.

One high point experience for the staff was when the FO completed the last of the group camping areas at Big Bend Recreation Area and installed accessible walkways throughout the core of the recreation site including the Riverwalk that provides the only accessible walkway to the Colorado River in the region.

WISHES

Staff wishes for the site include:

- Development of another 175 campsites, bringing the total number up to about 500 in the area.
- Up to five more seasonal employees.
- Complete the Goldbar shelters so can meet needs of groups of up to 125 people.
- Lease Williams Bottom from the State to rehabilitate the site and provide quality camping.
- Obtain a special designation such as National Recreation Area to gain recognition within the BLM.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

The site is in RMIS as a fee site. It is under several names. (Dewey Bridge, Hittle Bottom, Fisher Towers, Upper Big Bend, Big Bend, Oak Grove, Hal Canyon, Drinks, Negro Bill Canyon, Goose Island, J.C. Park (should be Jaycee Park), Gold Bar, Kings Bottom, Moonflower Canyon, Hunter

Canyon, Echo, Windwhistle, Hatch Point). It also has several numbers in RMIS (01312, 01204, 00865, 09690, 0866, 09681, 01384, 09689, 09684, 01382, 01205, 0969.1, 09692, 01396, 09695, 09606, 00297, 0027). Most of the area sites are only 8 years old so they are not in the backlog maintenance category. Most of the site is in good condition. Employees, hosts, and contractors are use to keep the facilities clean. This year, the area has had several comments that sites have run out of toilet paper and that cleaning was not accomplished in a timely fashion.

The office does not maintain a specific suggestion box but do get comments from visitors on the fee envelopes. The staff read all comments and suggestions and takes action as appropriate. Comments have resulted in changes in signing at sites. The staff provides input for the Secretary's Annual Report to Congress for each year of its participation in the fee demonstration program. It provides a public accounting of fee site expenditures at the FO. It is an informal goal to have basic interpretive information at every site and has been upgrading its information boards over the past two years. The recreation program maintains 85 information boards located at fee sites, trailheads, information areas, and river access points to inform visitors about the human and natural history of the area, travel designations, special rules, and safety considerations. All information boards are designed to serve site-specific functions. The staff does not have a formal volunteer interpretive training program. Seasonal staff provides information and orientation to volunteers who show an interest in learning about the area. All hosts are provided with informational brochures and shown around their sites. Several efforts at providing interpretive information are on going as offices replace and update the material on its information boards and kiosks. They also recently completed a riparian interpretive area with three exhibit panels at the Goose Island Riverway entry area and completely restored and revised the exhibit shelter and exhibits at the Canyon Rims Recreation Area entrance. Because of an unforeseen circumstance, the area had to back out of the customer survey.

The areas visited had the Recreation Fee Demo Sign displayed. The FO completed a cost comparison analysis in 1997. The analysis reviewed charges made at both commercial camp parks and other public campgrounds. Fees at the developed sites were subsequently raised from \$8/site to \$10/site to better cover operations costs and keep pace with fee rate increases made by other local providers. In 2000, based on an informal assessment, they changed the fee schedule at the semi-developed sites from \$5/site to \$5/vehicle to better capture the costs of providing services to larger groups. Most people seem to think that the rates are fair. The site sometimes gets additional small donations included with the fee envelopes. Other comments include requests to provide free campgrounds.

Recommendations:

M-1) Some type of public account at the site is needed. Basically post "your fees at work" signs at the fee tubes to give the visitor and idea of what their fees are paying for. Some areas just post a pie chart with expenditures from the last year.

M-2) Reassess the current fee schedule. Whether it is through market base (what the public is willing to pay) or cost recovery (expenses for public use) the policy is that the fee schedule be reviewed bi-annually.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND REPORTING

The Moab Field Office personnel are doing an outstanding job managing the fiscal side of the pilot fee program. It appears that funds are being spent properly to benefit and enhance the recreation sites within the fee demonstration area. Fees collected mostly are sufficient to meet the maintenance and operation needs. Most 1220 funds are used to fund key staff. Some 1650 funds have been used to supplement maintenance needs. RMIS and FFS accounts are in balance.

Proper collection procedures are in place. Fee envelopes are collected on a regular basis at least weekly in most cases. Locked Pipe collection systems are used at each site. One person and sometimes two collect envelopes. Funds are secured in a safe in the Moab Field Office. Funds are counted by two employees and then transferred to the collection officer for deposit. CBS rules are followed on deposit frequency.

No special financial audits of the fee program have been conducted other than the regular semi-annual collections audit.

Recommendations:

M-3) The fee collection system has some risk. A single person usually handles fee envelopes in the field. This opens up the possibility of theft of some or all of the funds. Under the present system only the personal integrity of the employee picking up the envelopes protects the Government's interest. It is suggest a method such as removable lock boxes be considered, or other methods that secure the funds from the time they are deposited until they are opened and counted in the office.

Employee suggestions or concerns: Field Office employees expressed concern on the excessive time it takes CBS to process credit card transactions. It would also be helpful to have temporary help with collections and deposits. More public contact capability is also needed.

PLANNING: COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING & BUSINESS PLAN

The Moab FO first established a business plan shortly after becoming a part of the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program (RFDP) in 1997. The plan was updated in July of 2001 and prepared was more of an integrated business and communication plan. The plan was updated to reflect the additions of developed sites to the program. The RFDP plan is a subset of a larger more detailed Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) that describes the past and future management activity. This plan reflects the on-going efforts of management in administering this project. The current plan express management's goals as action plan items for both the communication and business arena.

While the business plan section does lack some specificity in the areas of recreation collections, expenditures, and the priorities of these expenditures, these items are covered in the AWP, which the FO has agreed to attach to the business plan. This allows flexibility in both areas and reduces the need for constant updating. Regardless of the lack of specificity regarding the estimated revenues and costs of items, the objectives have been met along with most of the action items/goals and have been completed within the bounds of the collections and appropriated dollars that have been budgeted for the project.

The communications plan is being carried out very effectively. It is clear that the project management team is very well informed of the public that use the area, where they are from, what they are doing, and when they are doing it. The project team is very active in the community and is well known and respected by the local governments, special interest groups, and the visitors to the

area. Clearly the area has been vastly improved over conditions that existed seven years ago. Area leaders are quick to recognize and give praise for the efforts put forth by the Moab FO.

There are concerns by the evaluation team that the area is reaching a saturation point in both use and the number of camping sites the BLM can effectively manage and maintain with current staffing. It is not clear from the business plan what the maximum use should be or at what point growth should be limited or if use even needs to be limited. What is the carrying capacity of the area and how much more can BLM handle with existing staff and dollars? What are the future plans for this area? How does this project fit into regional long-term plans? There are many players in the subject project area, NPS, FS, County and City governments that need to be apart of this larger more complex planning effort for this fee demonstration program. While these concerns are addressed in the Moab FO fee site status document, the Riverway plan, and the draft Canyon Rims RAMP, a summary in the business plan would make it much easier for the staff and the public to understand the big picture.

PUBLIC WELFARE, EMPLOYEE SAFETY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT:

Summary: Moab manages 18 fee collection sites comprising of simple fee pipe collection systems at numerous camping areas. Sites are heavily visited and vary from close proximity to the office to over 60 miles distant. Seasonal staff and occasionally law enforcement personnel generally collect fees. Often staff is alone but policy is to try to have two individuals collect fees when possible. Fees are collected twice each week during the busy season, and less frequently during the summer and winter. Routes and times are varied and staff attempt to only access pipes when no other people are around to reduce the possibility of theft. Busy season can average up to \$400 per pipe safe and over \$4,000 per collection cycle if a majority of sites is visited. The Field office does have an adequate written fee collection and safety procedure policy. Fee compliance is quite high at 85%-90% and the fee program is widely supported by visitors – especially when they see on the ground improvements.

The field office has taken the initiative in developing camping facilities to accommodate the huge and growing demand for overnight facilities in the region --- and is the only public agency to do so. Staff has strived to meet demand with a range of appropriate levels of development, primitive camping areas to highly developed campgrounds incorporating many accessibility design features. The field office has focused on first addressing health and human safety issues by improving access, sanitation, and providing trash collection at fee facilities. Regular and consistent field patrols have significantly influenced compliance with fee payment and done much to build awareness of responsible use ethics. Higher levels of staff and volunteer presence have also been integral to the providing high levels of visitor safety and emergency response. The recreation program in Moab has made uniformed presence a high priority. Moab's fee program is one of the largest and most complex in the BLM and growing.

Recommendations:

M-6) While the honesty and integrity of staff is not in question, several procedural recommendations could enhance the staff safety and reduce both the opportunity and possibility of theft.

- *While policy emphasizes otherwise, collections employees often must collect fees alone. There is simply not enough seasonal and permanent staff to provide adequate coverage for collection due to the large number of sites and required frequency of collection. A much greater priority should be given to having two people collect fees, having law enforcement personnel collect*

- fees, or developing some other security solution.*
- *Fee envelopes, once collected are transported in a concealed cardboard box to discourage theft. Alternatives such as double lock boxes should be considered but may be impractical due to the large number of sites. An under the seat lock box such as the one used by Monticello FO should be considered.*
 - *Fee pipes are locked with numerous locks requiring many keys. While security measures are employed to limit access to the keys, currently used locks are simple master locks with easily duplicatable keys. Locks should be used that have share a single key core and have keys stamped with do not duplicate.*
 - *Recreation program should provide cell phones or satellite/cell phones to improve communication and safety of collections personnel and volunteer hosts.*
 - *Increased entrance signage and gateway signs along the major travel ways such as both river roads would help build awareness of BLM and its contribution to regions recreation support infrastructure and sustaining the area's high quality recreation opportunities.*

STATE/AREA MANAGEMENT

Field office staff feels that they are getting great support from management of the Recreational Fee Demo program. However concerns were raised that even though the Field office has nationally recognized recreation opportunities and support facilities, the fact that it is not in the NLCS system may reduce its priority and consideration at the state and national level. The field office base funding for the recreation program has not increased in real dollars in the past decade. Fee demo funds alone have made it possible to create the necessary support infrastructure to accommodate astronomical increases in visitors (16 new camp areas and campgrounds, as well as numerous trailheads, information kiosks etc). Staffing and partnerships are now stretched to their limit to provide sufficient maintenance and operations of existing facilities. Current staffing levels will not be sufficient to operate and maintain additional planned new facilities. Alternative solutions such as joint management or leveraged partnerships should continue to be pursued.



CEDAR MESA RECREATION AREA EVALUATION REPORT

Monticello Field Office & Site Staff Interviewed By The Evaluation Team:

Kent Walter (FO mgr), Scott Berkenfield (Rec. Planner), Marie Tuxhorn (LE), Marilyn Low (Admin. Support-CBS & MIS), Andy Boone (Rec. Tech.), Laura Lantz (Park Ranger)

BACKGROUND

Cedar Mesa encompasses over 400,000 acres of public land, including seven canyons and eleven trailheads. This massive canyon complex provides outstanding backcountry hiking opportunities in a setting that rivals many National Parks in its significance of cultural and wilderness resources. The emphasis for the recreating public is exploration in a primitive setting and cultural site discovery and enjoyment. Users are often astounded that they can freely view ancient structures, discover artifacts on the surface, and yet be unescorted by a ranger. These cultural sites are found throughout the mesa and the vast majority of them are not cataloged or documented (estimate that only 10% have been recorded).

A separate consideration is that although many users are seeking solitude, different methods of striving for that experience have resulted in conflicts between Off Highway Vehicles and wilderness values.

The area is managed in combination with the Monticello Field Office and the Kane Gulch Ranger Station. Visitation is managed through a permit system with specific allocations for each trailhead. The Monticello Field Office manages the commercial SRPs and the commercial allocation of permits. It also serves as the reservation desk for private trips to reserve and pay for some of the overnight permits. The Kane Gulch Ranger Station is a detached field station with a seasonal staff of 3 and typically 2-5 volunteers during the busy spring and fall seasons. All overnight permits (private and commercial) are picked up at the ranger station. Half the allocation for each trailhead is available on a first-come first-served basis at the ranger station. Day use is not allocated and self-register permits are available at all trailheads.

Fee money has been primarily invested in on-the-ground field rangers and their support rather than in new facility infrastructure with this project. A seasonal ranger and a permit administrator reservation system and for visitor information have been added to the staff, and all members of the Cedar Mesa staff have received appreciable training in search and rescue and emergency response. Additional resources have been expended on the visitor contact trailer and housing trailers to increase the safety and care of the employees.

Significant money has been provided for educational/interpretive efforts, namely the Cedar Mesa Trip Planner, trailhead interpretive signing, bulletin boards and kiosks. Monticello Field Office has also decided that cultural stabilization, and site recordation are appropriate expenditures of fee money in this particular area

Use of the area begins in early March, reaches a high point around Easter and then declines in early June as water becomes scarce, temperatures rise and bugs increase. A secondary peak occurs in mid September to late October and then declines with the onset of cold weather. Cedar Mesa attracts hundreds of repeat visitors. Most visitors come from the west slope of Colorado, the Colorado Front Range, and Utah's Wasatch Front, although Albuquerque and Flagstaff are also well represented. Locals are conspicuously absent. Europeans are showing up in late spring to a higher level than noted previously.

Fees are collected year round, although the fee schedule varies with the high and low use seasons. The compliance for backpacking (overnight) permits is close to 100% during the high use season. Day use fees are less well received and compliance varies with the distance from the ranger station. Permit compliance in the off seasons is less well known.

Access to the various trailhead sites is via county maintained roads, which typically require at least a high clearance vehicle. Trails are steep and minimally maintained, environmental conditions are harsh, and conditions can be difficult. People with physical disabilities typically use pack stock to access the primitive area. Pack stock use is also allocated, and must be reserved in advance. The ranger station has a handicapped ramp allowing for access to the ranger station and the parking lot is graveled. Public toilets on Cedar Mesa are Class A concrete structures and are generally handicapped accessible

KUDOS/BEST PRACTICES

The site has a very effective reservation system that keeps usage at a steady level with fewer peaks, which strain the delicate cultural balance being maintained. The reservation system balances commercial and non-commercial use of the site in such a way that demand is managed with few if any conflicts. Further, the permit system has increased interaction between BLM staff and both private users and commercial outfitters. This has resulted in better interpretation of cultural resource significance and value as well as an increased use of environmental education by outfitters. The reservation and permitting process also provides the surrounding communities and the recreation users the sense that the site is better managed.

The Cedar Mesa trip planner is sent to all permittees and greatly improves information sharing and visitor contact.

The use of law enforcement officers to collect all fees is a practice adapted from the NPS, which greatly improves employee safety and fiscal security. Using a land permit officer position has decreased the workload on the field rangers and associated

costs. Budget was also managed more tightly by closing the Kane Gulch station for 1.5 months during the hottest part of the summer.

The field office is to be complimented on the care taken to secure the safe keeping of funds considering the great distances and limited funds available. Reasonable measures have been employed to safeguard funds.

The interpretive panels at the Grand Gulch trailheads are professionally done. The information, color, and design are an example of professionalism and dedication to providing interpretation about the resources.

Monticello has one of only three land-based backcountry permit systems for private users in the BLM (the other two being Paria Canyon and Aravaipa Canyon). The Cedar Mesa system is substantially more complex than the other two areas because of its number of access points, its variety of hiking opportunities and its permitting process.

The use of compliance reminder tags has helped increase fee payment compliance and understanding of the program. They have also encouraged and facilitated positive communication between visitors and staff.

The use of law enforcement personnel, under seat lock boxes, single not duplicatable key locks are examples of best management practices for accountability and theft deterrence.

Career seasonal labor/staff has been an excellent tool to hire and retain highly qualified staff while meeting seasonal visitor demand and service needs.

High quality trailhead signs are an excellent example of well designed, vandal resistant, attractive and affordable information signs. The use of a FS enterprise team further exemplifies excellent partnership and support options.

Use of simple credit card processing and fee envelopes at Kane Station is an excellent example of combining a low-tech approach and still providing customer service.

WISHES

Staff wishes for the site include:

- Attain National Monument designation.
- Improve the look and feel of BLM signage and interpretation.
- Complete the Kane Gulch Ranger Station and separate living facilities from it.
- Employee four seasonal employees to allow staff to have days off--make employees career or full time.
- Maintain the recreation experience in the site such that the sense of discovery remains in the long term.
- Add a law enforcement position to help with collections and enforcement and monitoring, as well as staff safety. Don't let OHV overrun the area and preserve wilderness values and the cultural treasures in the area.
- Work with the FS to design and implement an extension of the Cedar Mesa reservation system for BLM's Dark Canyon Primitive Area and FS' Wilderness. Designate the roads and trails through the planning process to reduce the OHV/wilderness values conflict.

- Work with the American Indians in the community to allow for traditional woodcutting, while having them understand and respect the wilderness study area boundaries.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORTING

The Monticello Field Office employees are very thorough in the way they operate the fee collection system within the Cedar Mesa system. Funds generated go back into the operation and maintenance of the program and associated facilities. Funds from Project UT05 (San Juan river) are deposited separately from the Cedar Mesa funds, although San Juan River funds supplement the Cedar Mesa program. Other funds including recreation (1220), wilderness (1210), and maintenance (1651, 1652, 1653, 1630) are used to supplement general management and maintenance. Total funds available are not sufficient to accomplish the priority needs within the management area.

Fee collections on site are accomplished through the fee tube system. Tubes are placed at trailheads and other locations where public use is occurring. This includes the Kane Gulch ranger station. Here, the visitors receive their permit and then place their fees in the envelope and place in the fee tube. Personnel at the station do not handle any money from the fees. All fee collection (picking up the fee envelopes from the fee tubes) is accomplished by one of the two law enforcement rangers. The fee tubes are emptied and the envelopes are placed in a locked box in their truck and transported back to the office in Monticello the same day.

Monticello Field Office collects approximately one third of the private permit fees when users make permit reservations over the phone using credit cards. The recreation technician on CBS processes credit cards.

In the office, two certified collection offices according to manual procedures process the fees. This process is time consuming due to the volume of envelopes received, especially during high use season. Fees are deposited by a third person responsible for collections. No special audits have been conducted, but procedures are reviewed in the semi-annual review of collections required by financial procedures. Credit card numbers are locked during non-business hours, and are shredded periodically.

Recommendations:

C-1) Consider the use of lock boxes for fee collection to eliminate the possibility of loss of funds by employees who pick up the fees and transport them to the office. It is understood that this may not be possible due to the remote locations of the collection points.

C-2) Look into the possibility of contracting the opening of envelopes and counting the fees by a local financial institution.

C-3) Implement procedures to secure credit card numbers from fee collections.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Cedar Mesa is in RMIS as a fee demo site and the number is UT-050. The zoned Moab Field Office Landscape Architect is responsible for cataloguing maintenance needs through FIMMS currently there are no backlog projects. Customer Survey cards are used in the area, but does not drive the local action. Staff feels that a well-crafted letter directed to them from a visitor should

have more attention than the survey cards. There are no suggestion boxes, but visitors put comments on the trailhead registers. The Monticello Field Office uses the results from the annual report to Congress to create a pie chart that is posted on bulletin boards. The charts were last updated in Spring 2001. The area has several interpretative/educational education projects.

The Cedar Mesa Trip Planner is sent to all permit holders and copies are made available at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station, at the Monticello Interagency Visitor Information Center, at the Moab Interagency Visitor Center, through the Canyonlands Natural History Association 1-800 book sales, and at the Monticello Field Office. It contains interpretive, regulatory, and visitor orientation material. It has been reviewed and will be reprinted this year in a cost share agreement through Canyonlands Natural History Association. Well-designed interpretive panels focusing on the Basketmaker era on Cedar Mesa have been installed at all the trailheads. The employees train volunteers and one of the main focuses is on interpretation. Both contractors and BLM employees maintain facilities to ensure cleanliness. There has been a problem with the current contractor. From the Recreation Use Survey several comments have been received that were typical. There seem to be some variances between the information given out in Monticello and at Kane Gulch. The staff tried to deliver better information from the receptionist's desk at Monticello by codifying regulations. The Recreation Fee Demonstration sign was displayed at most of the sites visited.

Recommendations:

C-4) Explicitly spell out the projects that the FO is using the fees for and share that information on the bulletin boards, i.e. "We provided 20 interpretative programs, done stabilization & scientific research at Mule Canyon Ruins. Projects to be completed: stabilization & research at XYZ..."

C-5) Reassess the current fee schedule. Whether it is through market base (what the public is willing to pay) or cost recovery (expenses for public use) the policy is that the fee schedule be reviewed bi-annually.

PLANNING: COMMUNICATION, MARKETING AND BUSINESS PLAN

The basis for the Cedar Mesa Fee Demo project is the Grand Gulch Plateau Cultural and Recreation Management Plan, which laid out a model for operating the allocation/reservation permit system on Cedar Mesa. Therefore a business plan and communication plan was not required at the time they were accepted into the RFDP. It should be noted that all sites that had activity plans were accepted under the condition that they would utilize their activity plans to create business/communication plans as soon as possible. Cedar Mesa does have a recent safety plan that was well thought out and is being implemented. It was obvious that many of the objectives of the Grand Gulch Recreation Management plan have been accomplished, and the area receives positive comments from the communities and publics that use Cedar Mesa.

In communicating with the public, Monticello uses their reservation personnel, their website, the Kane Gulch ranger staff and the Cedar Mesa Trip Planner to provide information about visiting the area. Although a communication plan is not in place, it is clear that the Monticello Field Office has made a good attempt to communicate how and why the area is managed. The manner in which this is done could be documented and included in a business/communication plan.

The current activity plan does not address the operational or financial needs of the existing program. Monticello Field Office went through a cost recovery discussion in determining their fees, although this was not a documented process. If this was documented, future recreation

managers could determine how or whether fees should be changed.

In terms of future construction, the Monticello Field Office is currently writing an environmental assessment for a permanent ranger station. This document should be released late FY 2001 or early FY 2002 for public comment. Congress had previously appropriated money for this facility. As soon as the environmental assessment is final, a contract will be let for the actual construction of the building. The existing ranger station would then be completely converted to employee housing, a function it already partially serves. Monticello Field Office continues to explore opportunities for additional employee housing possibilities, which could include housing people in other locations.

Recommendations:

C-6) Monticello Field Office should consider writing up their current Cedar Mesa operating plan and the existing communication tools that the Field Office employs, and then use this information as a first draft for their business/communication plan.

C-7) As part of developing the operating/business plan, Monticello may want to consider documenting how the fee amounts were determined, (although you may not want to include this in the actual document- could be an appendix or separate document).

C-8) Suggest reviewing Grand Gulch Plateau Cultural and Recreation Management Plan and examine the numerous accomplishments the Field Office has achieved, acknowledge those, and then review the other objectives, which have not been accomplished. Determine whether the objectives are still appropriate, should they be modified, or should they be discarded? Document what is determined.

PUBLIC WELFARE, EMPLOYEE SAFETY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Monticello manages 17 fee collection sites comprising of simple fee pipe collection systems at numerous trailheads as part of the Cedar Mesa and Grand Gulch area. Sites are extremely remote and often located off the paved road in isolated areas. Law enforcement rangers always collect fees. Fees are collected as often as once a week during the busy season, and less frequently, perhaps once a month during the summer and winter. Routes and times are varied and staff attempt to only access pipes when no other people are around to reduce the possibility of theft. The Field office does have an adequate written fee collection and safety procedure policy. According to backcountry patrols, fee compliance is very high among backpackers. The fee program is generally supported by visitors – especially when they see the ground improvements.

Public safety has been improved by staff presence at the Kane Gulch Contact station. Visitor information signage is excellent and conveys critical safety information. Regular law enforcement patrols and seasonal ranger visitor contact is a critical element in the high compliance rate – uniformed presence has also helped to reduce theft and vandalism to vehicles at trailheads.

Recommendations:

C-9) Continue to work in cooperation with the NPS for a variety of support services. Recent changes in the level of NPS support for a joint law enforcement position has resulted in the loss of critical staff support for the cedar mesa project operation. In addition other cooperative possibilities should be pursued such as housing for seasonal staff, law enforcement patrol, educational material sales, shared positions etc.

C-10) Application of a consistent and regular approach to adjusting fees (policy is every two years) to reflect appropriate pricing of permits.

STATE AND AREA MANAGEMENT

Field office staff feels that they are getting excellent support from management of the Recreational Fee Demo program. However concerns were raised that even though the Field office has nationally recognized recreation opportunities, special areas and support facilities, the fact that it is not in the NLCS system may reduce its priority and consideration at the state and national level. The field office base funding for the recreation program has not increased in real dollars in the past decade. Fee demo funds alone have made it possible to create the necessary support for the permit system and visitor control systems as well as infrastructure to accommodate significant increases in visitor demand. (Improved visitor contact, employee housing, as well as numerous trailheads, information kiosks etc). Staff is now stretched to their limit to provide sufficient maintenance and operations of existing facilities. Current staffing levels will not be sufficient to operate and maintain additional facilities. Alternative solutions such as joint management or leveraged partnerships should continue to be pursued.

Monticello staff expressed frustration with the lack of support or response to service first partnership proposal to jointly manage SRP and outfitter permit issuance for the Abajo Mountain area of the Manti La Sal Nat'l Forest. Loss of key recreation staff on the Manati La Sal NF due to simultaneous career at the District and Offices was cited as the primary reason joint management solutions have not been pursued.

Similar to all areas visited Monticello shares the issue of developing a equitable way to adjust base funding on a national and state basis which considers key variables for the equitable allocation of funds and resources. Consideration of a combination of factors that evaluates variables related to workload, demand for services and facility liability and cost such as use levels, visitation, extent of capital investment/level of infrastructure, number of SRPs, permits issued, number of special events assessed, authorized and monitored etc.

Training and interoffice information sharing for fee demo issues also was highlighted as an opportunity to learn and share on-the-ground solutions, techniques, technology and innovations. The state and perhaps region (Colorado Plateau) should conduct training sessions to allow field staff – seasonals, volunteers, and partners – the opportunity to share innovations and successful fee collection operations as well as other management techniques. Allowing staff to travel and visit other areas for short-term job shadow opportunities with their counterpart in other locations could benefit the program as well as interoffice coordination and collaboration.

Due to the proximity of the National Monument, many cooperative opportunities exist to address-shared issues of seasonal employee housing, emergency services, law enforcement and the possibility of shared positions. Perhaps higher level discussions between state director and regional foresters and park service regional directors should be initiated to facilitate cooperative ventures and service first efforts to address fee collections, and larger more complex visitor and community service issues such as coordinated permit issuance, resource monitoring, law enforcement etc.

Additional needs were identified for interpretive support and expertise. The staggering need and high visitor and community demand for more and better information exceeds the capability of existing staff levels. Management should consider the value of providing interpretive media design,

fabrication and publication expertise to the field offices – this could include the possibility of sharing a zoned position with other nearby field offices that would provide support to a number of field offices similar to support already provided for landscape architecture, project engineering, force account crew etc. Interpretive expertise could also be provided through interagency or non-profit partnerships as well as through contracts.



LITTLE SAHARA RECREATION AREA EVALUATION REPORT

Fillmore Field Office & Site Staff Interviewed By The Evaluation Team:

Ferris Clegg (Rec planner), Rex Rowley (Fillmore FO Mgr), Neal Scoresby (LE), Marjean Christensen (Fillmore FO, collections), Will Fullmer (Maintenance), Cheryl Poulsen (Park Ranger, fee collection)

BACKGROUND

Little Sahara Recreation Area is a designated and managed OHV open area. It is 60,000 acres of sand dunes, trails and sagebrush flats. The main attraction is a system of giant free-moving sand dunes, which creates a constantly changing playground for motorcycles, ATVs, dune buggies and sand rails.

In 1964, 10,000 people were visiting Little Sahara each year. Because of the existing use, the BLM built a few facilities in the White Sands campground site at the northeastern border of the dunes area. These facilities included parking, sanitation, and a few picnicking tables. In the late 1960s, Juab County broadened the Weiss Highway and paved it up to the entrance to White Sands Campground. Numbers of visitors increased and conflicts between users and resources began to emerge which resulted in the Richfield District Office developing the Little Sahara Recreation Management plan in 1979. Since 1979, Little Sahara has developed two large campgrounds containing 214 sites. These campgrounds have water, flush toilets, grills, and tables. Additionally the Jericho area, originally designed as a fenced picnic area, serves as an overflow camping area and can be reserved by large groups. Sand Mountain does not have individually designated sites, but serves as a large open area where campers congregate by the thousands. Two additional campgrounds are proposed in the future. Little Sahara has a visitor center that was built in the 1980's, but at this time the facility is in need of renovation. A pay station was installed at the entrance to Little Sahara in spring of 1996 and fee collections were increased substantially. A phone line was installed in FY 2000 and it has improved communications between Little Sahara and the outside world.

Little Sahara is usually staffed with five to seven people from Friday to Monday. Staff includes one permanent recreation planner, one park ranger WAE, one permanent equipment operator, and three or four seasonal park rangers and one law enforcement ranger. The staff works the visitor center/first aid station, fee station, and monitors/maintains the campgrounds.

In FY 1996, Little Sahara received 134,692 visitors. In FY 2000, Little Sahara received 212,529 visitors, this is a 57.8% increase over the past five years and a growth rate of nearly 12% per year. Seasonal peak use times are spring and fall. Within any given time period, holidays and weekends receive the greatest use. Most visitors come in groups of friends and families, and at least ninety percent of users originate from the Wasatch Front. The majority stays overnight (80%) and uses either White Sands campground or the Sand Mountain area.

KUDOS/BEST PRACTICES

The site staff is dedicated to meeting the needs of the quickly growing public demand for recreation in the area, as well as fighting an ongoing battle against the encroaching sand on the improved roads and facilities.

Further, the staff work very hard to keep crime and regulation infractions under control to optimize visitor experience.

The law enforcement officer is a trained EMT. He has trained all other staff as “First Responders.” This is a key practice in the area due to the very high frequency of accidents in the area (now over 145 to date this FY). Seasonal staff is trained in first aid. Further, there is a very effective partnership with the County ambulance organization to provide medical emergency transfer for injured visitors.

Procedures used to document fee collections are detailed so as to greatly reduce the possibility of fraud. Forms have been developed that track all stages have the collection and transmitting of the funds to Fillmore for depositing.

High point experiences for the staff include:

- Turning bad accident situations into positive results for visitors, including saving the life of a heart attack victim, using a new defibrillator.
- Meeting the visitors and simply spending time in the desert.
- Working with the other staff—it’s like a family.

Using regular law enforcement patrols, permanent staff and seasonal recreation technician, visitor contact is a critical element in the high fee compliance rate as well as visitor safety. Continuous uniformed presence has also helped to reduce theft, visitor conflict and vandalism. Most of the positive change and improvement of visitor safety and controlling illegal activities is directly attributable to the development and implementation of a recent law enforcement partnership. This model partnership, developed through the initiative of the staff, FO ranger and the local Juab County Sheriff, has been a widely recognized success.

WISHES

Staff wishes for the site include:

- Develop a firewood concession to sell firewood on busy days to save visitor cutting of green trees.

- Put on another law enforcement ranger to patrol with a dune buggy to complement current law enforcement via patrol vehicle.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORTING

Funds collected at the Little Sahara Recreation Area are used exclusively for management and maintenance of the complex. Other Field office funds including 1220 and maintenance funds are used to supplement 1232 funds. It is estimated that 75% of the total funds used are 1232. Fire operations share the headquarters area but it is unclear to what extent the fire program funds their share of the infrastructure or base operation and maintenance costs. It generally was felt that appropriated dollars have not been offset due to participation in the program. It was felt the effective amount of these dollars have declined in recent years due to inflation and competing needs elsewhere. It is noted that to date about \$235,000 has been collected at this site. Labor costs expended over this same time charged to 1232 have equaled this amount. This includes permanent work months. Monitoring of expenditures vs.: revenues is a little deficient.

Field controls utilized follow the guidelines outlined the Bureau collections procedures. Fees are collected personally at a fee collection booth and entered into a cash register. When the station is unattended, visitors use a self-registration system and put fees in a locked fee tube. Fees are transferred from the fee station to the safe in the visitor center when the fee station closes or when the amount of cash exceeds about \$200. Two certified collection officers accomplish an accounting of fees. Moneys are reconciled with the cash register tapes. At least weekly and more often if necessary (total dollars exceed \$5000) the fees are taken by the law enforcement officer to the Field Office in Fillmore to be deposited according to BLM procedures. The safe at the visitor center is located in a locked room out of sight of the public. The combination is changed yearly or when an employee leaves.

Credit cards are not accepted at the site. Reasons given were associated with time delays in processing during the busy use season and the problems this causes at the entrance station. No financial audits have been conducted other than the semi-annual review of collections report prepared by the field office. The visitor center maintains a cash box for local sales that apparently is used by all desk personnel.

Recommendations:

- S-1) The FO should look for ways to reduce the use of 1232 funds for permanent labor costs.*
- S-2) Identify the “fare share” costs generated by the on site presence of the fire program operation. These costs should be paid by fire and not 1232.*
- S-3) There needs to be separate change making funds for each employee at the desk of the visitor center as outlined in BLM manual 1385. The cashier who is issued the fund is personally responsible for the fund.*
- S-4) The FO should review the collections procedures associated with Little Sahara twice yearly when the semi-annual review of collections is done.*
- S-5) MIS should be used on a regular basis to monitor expenditures of funds to balance spending with funding sources.*

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Little Sahara is in RMIS as a recreation fee demo program. The maintenance backlog needs of the site are in FIMMS, but projects do not come up to priority on the list. The area is involved with the national Customer Survey Card. Each of the cards is sent to site and evaluated for merit and possible changes. There is no suggestion box, but visitors use the permit to comment on the site. When in contact with customers, staff members inform them that all fees are being used at the site. Signs, handouts, personal contact at the visitor center and at the pay station to provide some form of interpretation/environmental education. Improvements were last done this April. Employees clean the facilities and pump the toilets. Contractors complete the trash removal. In the Recreation Use Survey, Little Sahara got very positive results (88.4% favorable overall quality of recreation experience). Because of the results of the survey, staff has placed more emphasis on educating the public about geological and historical resources nearby Little Sahara by personal contact, signs, and brochures. The Recreation Fee Pilot logo is clearly displayed in the area.

Recommendations:

S-6) The 180 days seasonal employee restrictions do not work well for Little Sahara's long March - October use season. A strong management commitment to create additional career seasonal/WAE labor/staff would be an excellent tool to hire and retain highly qualified staff while meeting seasonal visitor demand and service needs. Additional seasonal staff may also be critical and necessary to meet security, workload and safety issues.

S-7) Higher quality roadside and camping area signs would have a significant effect on visitor perception of professional look of the site and would enhance visitor experience. The field office should consult with the national interpretive media specialist or fee staff at other areas of the state to explore opportunities to install well designed, vandal resistant, attractive and affordable information signs.

S-8) Use of simple credit card processing (mechanical swipe and no call in for approval) at the entrance station would be a way to combine a low-tech processing approach and still providing customer service.

S-9) Management and staff should explore cooperative association possibilities. Options for non-profit partnership of some kind should be pursued to assist and augment existing services such as material/map sales, safety equipment sales, post card and gift sales, supporting a volunteer program, additional law enforcement patrol and emergency response support, etc. A partnership with a non-profit organization could enhance revenues, foster stewardship and use ethic and provide better customer service.

S-10) Application of a consistent and regular approach to adjusting fees (policy is every two years) to reflect appropriate pricing of permits and recover costs.

S-11) Some type of public account at the site is needed. Basically post "your fees at work" signs at the fee tubes to give the visitor and idea of what their fees are paying for. Some areas just post a pie chart with expenditures from the last year.

S-12) Reassess the current fee schedule. Whether it is through market base (what the public is willing to pay) or cost recovery (expenses for public use) the policy is that the fee schedule be reviewed bi-annually.

S-13) Currently the whole area is managed using Fee Demo funds. Full time employees, force

account work, fire, and most maintenance projects are being done using 1232. It needs to be reassessed what appropriated funds should be used to run the area and fee demo funds to do what Congress has designed the funds to be used for.

PLANNING: COMMUNICATION, MARKETING AND BUSINESS PLAN

The subject area has been charging fees since 1985 and is managed and operated under an existing Recreation Activity Plan for the site. The management team knows what they want to do in regards to expansion and deferred maintenance and priorities for accomplishment and have accomplished many of the action items of the existing plan.

The plan appears to be out dated since numerous changes have taken place in the area since the plan was first written. Fee collections have sky rocketed since the first fees were collected in 1985. The operations and financial aspects of the project are also out dated at this point and needs to be addressed along with documentation of how the fees are collected, controls, how the fees were established, and safety procedures for the site. Likewise, the communications and marketing situations have also changed since the existing plan was first written. Methods of communication and market strategies have changed dramatically. This becomes a critical aspect for Little Sahara which appears to be lacking in status and attention and doesn't appear to be a very high priority for the State. A concentrated effort with a new marketing and communication plan could greatly improve the status of this incredible resource.

PUBLIC WELFARE, EMPLOYEE SAFETY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Little Sahara encompasses over 60,000 acres of open OHV management area, most of which is extensive areas of open sand and dunes. A single entrance road provides access to the area. The entrance area incorporates a fee collection booth, self-pay tubes, visitor contact station, shop, warehouse, and a staff-housing complex. Sixteen miles of paved road provide access to several developed campgrounds, day use areas and sand play areas. Though the site is isolated and relatively remote (30 miles from Nephi) it is heavily visited by Wasatch Front residents. High use weekends (Easter) can exceed 20,000 visitors inside the site and an additional 20,000 in the surrounding area.

Fees are only collected at self-pay tubes or at the entrance station booth or visitor contact station by certified collection staff, both seasonal and permanent. Virtually all staff is trained as collection officers. Fees are collected at least 8 to 14 hours a day seven days a week year round. Three days a week, fees are collected at the entrance station booth and visitor center. Fees are collected year round at the self-pay tubes located in the visitor center parking lot. Often the fee booth has extended hours of operation – open until 3:00 to 4:00 am on days preceding busy weekends and holidays to handle traffic. The site does have an adequate written fee collection and safety procedure policy. Fee compliance is very high at over 90% and visitors generally support the fee program – especially when they are told that the fees remain on site and they see on the ground improvements.

Public safety in the site is a challenge due to the inherent risks involved in OHV activity. OHV related accidents, at least the reporting and recording of accidents, has dramatically increased over the last few years to the point where there is rarely a week when an accident does not occur. For the 2000-2001 season it is expected that staff will have responded to over 150 accidents – an average of one every two days. The increased rate of accidents is attributed to the growth in the popularity of the sport, younger age of participants, and the increased power, size and speed of vehicles. A significant number of accidents are alcohol related.

The staff has taken many steps to build safety awareness (signs, brochures, patrols, law enforcement, etc.). Further, they have developed an extensive and excellent cooperative emergency response system. The level of staff first aid and rescue training is very good and year-round staff presence at the contact station has done much. Visitor information signage is good, but dated and worn. However, it focuses and conveys critical safety information.

Regular law enforcement patrols and permanent staff and seasonal recreation technician visitor contact are critical elements in the high compliance rate as well as in maintaining visitor safety. Continuous uniformed presence has also helped to reduce theft, visitor conflict and vandalism. Most of the positive change and improvement of visitor safety and controlling illegal activities is directly attributable to the development and implementation of a recent law enforcement partnership. This model partnership, developed through the initiative of the staff, FO ranger and the local Juab County Sheriff, has been widely recognized success.

Regular law enforcement patrols, permanent staff and seasonal recreation technician visitor contact is a critical element in the high compliance rate as well as visitor safety. Continuous uniformed presence has also helped to reduce theft, visitor conflict and vandalism. Most of the positive change and improvement of visitor safety and controlling illegal activities is directly attributable to the development and implementation of a recent law enforcement partnership. This model partnership, developed through the initiative of the staff, FO ranger and the local Juab County Sheriff, has been a widely recognized success.

Recommendations

S-14) Safety and security of staff should be made a priority for the fee collection staff and operations. Additional actions should be implemented to enhance security such as those recommended by staff – installation of security cameras and a fee booth panic button, immediate purchase of replacement analog radios for use until digital systems are completed and in place are two actions that could be taken immediately.

S-15) The installation of a second fee booth would enhance security during high use season when tempting large amounts of cash are present. It would also allow for better efficiency for handling high visitor numbers, two way traffic (refunds), emergency response etc.

STATE AND AREA MANAGEMENT

Field office staff feels that they are getting good support from management of the Recreational Fee Demo program. Staff commended the broad support the site receives from the Field Office for administrative services, support from the fire crew and force account staff and other programs. However, concerns were raised that even though the Field office has strongly supported Little Sahara base funding has been reduced and too much reliance has been placed on fee demo project funds to cover all site labor expenses and operating costs. This is a divergence from national policy for use of fee demo funding which was intended to augment and not replace base funding available to the site prior to its designation as a fee demo site. Steps should be taken to improve tracking of expenditures and to develop a cuff record system that would provide a better businesslike approach to managing project finances. Management should also review the extent of labor charges to 1232 and make appropriate adjustments that are consistent with national policy.

It is very important to note that the fee demo funds alone have made it possible to create the necessary support for permit program and visitor control systems as well as infrastructure to better

accommodate significant increases in visitor demand. Staff is now stretched to their limit to provide sufficient maintenance and operations of existing facilities. Current staffing levels are not adequate to cover fee collection coverage at hours and days needed and simultaneously provide needed maintenance, emergency services, compliance patrols and other critical management activities will not be sufficient to operate and maintain additional facilities. Alternative solutions such as joint management or leveraged partnerships should continue to be pursued.

Security issues are paramount for the Little Sahara site. Management should work with the USO safety officer and others to insure all possible and feasible security measures are implemented as soon as possible. Security cameras, panic buttons, staffing levels, training, analogue radios are some of the critical security measures which should be pursued as soon as possible.

Training and interoffice information sharing for fee demo issues also was highlighted as an opportunity to learn and share on-the-ground solutions, techniques, technology and innovations. It could be feasible for the national office to support a convening of sand dune/open OHV area managers in a forum to discuss shared issues and solutions (Imperial Dunes, St. Anthony Dunes etc). This could result in conducting training sessions to allow field staff – seasonals, volunteers, and partners as well – the opportunity to share innovations and successful fee collection operations as well as other management techniques. Also encouraging staff to travel and visit other areas for short-term job shadow opportunities with their counterpart in other locations could benefit the program as well as interoffice coordination and collaboration.

It is essential for the FO and USO to continue to maintain and sustain the Juab County law enforcement partnership. This partnership seems to be the critical driving factor for the improvement of visitor safety and services as well as improving and building support for the fee demo program. Maintaining a long term funding commitment to this partnership is essential.

Additional needs were identified for interpretive support and expertise. The staggering need and high visitor and community demand for more and better information exceeds the capability of existing staff levels. Management should consider the value of providing interpretive media design, fabrication and publication expertise to the field offices – this could include the possibility of sharing a zoned position with other nearby field offices that would provide support to a number of field offices similar to support already provided for landscape architecture, project engineering, force account crew etc. Interpretive expertise could also be provided through interagency or non-profit partnerships as well as through contracts.