RUBY-HORSETHIEF FEE PROPOSAL

Grand Junction Field Office,
McInnis Canyons NCA
Ruby-Horsethief Special Area

- Designated as a Special Area in 1998
Ruby-Horsethief Management

- BLM manages the river corridor to provide “opportunities for visitors to engage in overnight flat-water boating for social group and family affiliation in a naturally-appearing red-walled river canyon.”
  - Primary activities: Overnight rafting, canoeing and kayaking, associated camping and wilderness hiking.
- River Corridor: 2,600 acres with 20 miles of the Colorado River through Horsethief and Ruby Canyons.
  - 28 campsites (will increase to 35 in 2012).
- Proposed permit system for overnight use of the river corridor.
  - Call-in permits through the BLM-Grand Junction Field Office for Friday or Saturday nights
  - Self register at the primary boat launch for Sunday through Thursday nights, which currently see lower levels of visitation.
### Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor</th>
<th>weeks</th>
<th>hours/week</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Park Ranger</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$15,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Ranger (Career Seasonal)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$17,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Ranger (Seasonal)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Resource Specialist (invasive species treatment)</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>$8,200</td>
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<td>Law Enforcement Ranger</td>
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<td>$25,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational Costs (Biological restoration, recreation operations)</td>
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<td>$85,894</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>$125,894</td>
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</table>
Visitor numbers

• Increasing numbers over the last 10 years, highs in 2009, 2010 (20,000 camping nights)
• Long-term visitor use data will improve with permit information
• In 2010, 32 percent were from Mesa County, 61 percent were from within Colorado but outside Mesa County and 7 percent were from out of state.
  • 10 percent of users reported that this was their first time in Ruby-Horsethief, and 13 percent continued on through Westwater Canyon.
  • Frequency: 34 percent- once a year; 42 percent- a few times a year. 13 percent- at least four times a year.
Visitor Information

- Staff informational and educational Contacts:
  - Busy weekends: 400+ individual contacts per day
  - Loma Ranger when budgets permit (provide information and education, check equipment)
  - Law Enforcement:
    - Both a Ranger and Rules for the first time in 2011
Permit and fee proposal

- Formal public outreach since 2009
- Developed and refined through coordination with the McInnis Canyons subgroup of the NW RAC
- Proposed Fee Structure: Camping vs. launch-based
  - Refined with help of MCNCA subgroup: $20 small group (1-5), $50 medium (6-14), $100 large (15-25)
  - Original: $7/person per night: public comments indicated this was higher than preference
  - RAC subgroup noted it would be easier to monitor, less complicated to manage additions/subtractions to groups
  - Would apply to commercial customers as well
- No fee at this time for day use
Structure and Benefits

• Individual Special Area Special Recreation Permit: REA and BLM policy allow the BLM to collect fees associated with a Special Recreation Permit (for individual or group use of special areas) to manage visitor use and protect resources.

• This differs from the standard and enhanced amenity fees under REA.
Benefits/Objectives for fee receipts

1. Recreation and visitor services, safety, and security through increased patrols by BLM river rangers and law enforcement officers
2. Invasive species treatments and natives species restoration
3. Westwater take out improvements: new parking, restroom, and boat ramp in collaboration with Utah BLM.
4. Cleaning and maintenance of toilets
5. Cleaning and maintenance of campsites
6. Replacement and maintenance of existing signs and visitor information
7. Development of new educational and interpretive materials when requested by boaters
Public Involvement

  - 310 individual, substantive comments over 3 years
  - Specific to Fee, 4 comments against, 39 comments for, 21 “other”
  - Countless on-the-ground contacts
  - Six briefings for County Commissioners
  - Three presentations to Guides and Outfitters meetings
  - Multiple Sessions with Advisory Council
Public Feedback

• Use fees for a take-out at Westwater to serve Ruby boaters
• Increased presence at the Loma launch
• Enhanced enforcement of firepan and groover requirements, campsite “piracy”
• Enhance boater education
• Continue cottonwood restoration