

Public Information Center America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Sales Business Plan



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Alaska State Office
Anchorage, Alaska



Public Information Center entrance

Business Plan for BLM
Alaska State Office Public Information Center

RECOMMENDATIONS, REVIEWS, and APPROVALS

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This business plan was prepared pursuant to the "Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, 2004" (P.L. 108-447) and the BLM recreation fee program policy. It establishes future management goals and priorities for the recreation use program in the Alaska State Office.

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Business Plan for BLM Alaska State Office Public Information Center America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Sales

Executive Summary

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alaska State Office (AKSO) prepared this recreation fee business plan pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of December 2004 (P.L. 108-477, as amended), and BLM recreation permit and fee program policy. FLREA provides the BLM the authority to charge and collect recreation fees for benefits and services provided to visitors. FLREA also authorizes the BLM to retain collected fees locally and outlines how revenues may be used and identifies specific limitations on recreation fees. Collected revenue may be expended for benefits and services such as facility repair, maintenance, enhancement, interpretation, visitor information and services, visitor needs assessments, signs, restoration, law enforcement related to public use and recreation, and operating or capital costs directly associated with the recreation fee program.

A business plan outlines the fee program for the identified location and thoroughly discusses and explains how fees are consistent with the criteria set forth in FLREA. Business plans assist offices in determining appropriate fee rates, outlining the costs of administering fee programs, and identifying priorities for future fee program expenditures.

The Public Information Center (PIC) is located within the James M. Fitzgerald United States Courthouse and Federal Building at 222 West 7th Ave in downtown Anchorage, Alaska. The PIC is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm and serves as a one-stop location for visitors who need information or need to transact business with the BLM. The PIC is also one of the few physical locations in Anchorage where visitors can obtain an America the Beautiful (ATB) interagency pass.

1. Introduction

a. Authorities

The authorities and regulations for this business plan are:

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended,** [Public Law 94-579] contains BLM’s general land use management authority over the public lands and identifies outdoor recreation as an allowable use of those lands. Section 302 (b) of FLPMA directs the Secretary of the Interior to regulate through permits or other instruments the use of the public lands. Section 303 of FLPMA contains the BLM’s authority to enforce the regulations and impose penalties.
- **The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) 2004** [Public Law 108-447] repealed applicable portions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and replaced the BLM’s authority to collect recreational fees. The FLREA provides the BLM the authority to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at federal recreation lands and waters that meet certain requirements. The FLREA allows the BLM to keep the fee revenues at the local offices where they are collected. It also directs how the BLM will manage and utilize these revenues, including for expenses such as facility repair, maintenance and enhancement, interpretation, visitor information, services and needs assessments, signage, law enforcement directly related to public use and recreation, and operating or capital costs associated with the Recreation and Visitor Services program. The FLREA also established the America the Beautiful - The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass program. The FLREA is codified in the U.S. Code in Title 16 (Conservation), Chapter 87 (Sections 6801 – 6814).
- **43 CFR 2930: Permits for Recreation on Public Land.** The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is an annual codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the federal government. Title 43 covers public lands administered by the Department of the Interior. Sections 1000 – 9999 cover the Bureau of Land Management.

This business plan has also been prepared pursuant to all applicable BLM recreation fee program policies and guidance, including:

- BLM Recreation Permits and Fees Manual 2930
- BLM Recreation Permits and Fees Administration Handbook (2930-1 Handbook)
- Standard Operating Procedures for the ATB interagency pass program (2023)

b. Fees and Business Plan Requirement

The BLM strives to manage recreation and visitor services to serve diverse outdoor recreation demands while maintaining the sustainable resource conditions needed so recreation opportunities remain available. The BLM's goals for delivering recreation benefits from BLM-administered public lands and waters to the American public and their communities are:

- Improve access to appropriate recreation opportunities;
- Ensure a quality experience and enjoyment of natural and cultural resources; and
- Provide for and receive fair value in recreation.

This business plan will assist the AKSO in meeting these recreation and visitor service goals.

According to BLM Handbook 2930-1, Recreation Permits and Fees (Rel. 2-300, dated November 17, 2014), each recreation fee program must have an approved business plan that comprehensively discusses fees and how fees are consistent with the FLREA fee criteria. Business plans assist offices in determining the appropriateness and level of fees as well as the cost of administering fee programs. Plans also outline how fees will be used and provide a structured communication and marketing plan. Lastly, the plan serves as the outreach document to provide the public with opportunities to participate in the development regarding use of recreation fee revenues, and to provide the public an opportunity to comment.

This business plan meets the criteria outlined in BLM Manual 2930. The plan describes the ATB interagency pass sales location, associated operating costs, financial analysis, and proposed use of the fees. It includes analysis of data from internal BLM tracking and accounting mechanisms such as the Recreation Management Information System (RMIS), Collections and Billings Systems (CBS), Federal Business Management System (FBMS), and other locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking spreadsheets. Some data contained in these systems may be subject to Privacy Act requirements. For more detailed information, contact the AKSO.

The plan covers recreation fee revenues for the sales of the ATB Annual Pass, Annual Senior Pass, and Lifetime Senior Pass as identified in section 6804 of FLREA [Public Law 108-447] which states "the Secretaries shall establish, and may charge a fee for, an interagency national pass to be known as the "America the Beautiful—the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass", which shall cover the entrance fee and standard amenity recreation fee for all Federal recreational lands and waters for which an entrance fee or a standard amenity recreation fee is charged". The plan will also cover standard operating procedures for the issuance of no-fee passes including the Volunteer, Annual and Lifetime Military (including Veterans and Gold Star Families), Access, and Every Kid Outdoors (4th Grade) Pass. Under FLREA, at the AKSO, pass sale revenues are deposited in a recreation fee account (WBS LVRDPASS0000).

c. Environmental Justice

Consistent with Department of Interior (DOI) and BLM priorities, the AKSO seeks to achieve environmental justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and make a difference in Alaskan communities through interpretation and outreach. This includes:

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

2. Background

a. Policy and History of the Program

Congress passed the FLREA, Public Law 108-447, fee collection authority in December 2004, replacing the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. The FLREA law authorized the Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior’s National Park Service (NPS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to charge fees at Federal recreation sites which meet certain criteria and to reinvest a majority of the revenues into enhancing the site. The law also established the America the Beautiful – the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass Program. The interagency pass program was implemented on January 1, 2007.

Recreation fees received from the ATB pass program are a vital source of revenue used specifically for improving federal recreation facilities and services that directly benefit visitors. The ATB pass program offers a suite of interagency annual, and lifetime passes that provide U.S. citizens and visitors with a cost-effective and convenient way to access Federal recreation lands. Up to 100% of the pass program’s proceeds are used for projects and services that directly improve and enhance visitor recreation services.

Objectives of the interagency pass program include:

- Making interagency passes more convenient to purchase and use;
- Incorporating technologies to allow for improved data collection and to prevent misuse;
- Providing a durable, collectable, high-quality product that promotes the identity and support of Federal recreation lands; and
- Providing opportunities for partnerships and education about recreational opportunities on Federal recreation lands.

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) began participating in the ATB pass program on January 1, 2016, with authority through The Water Resources Reform and Development Act signed into law June 10, 2014.




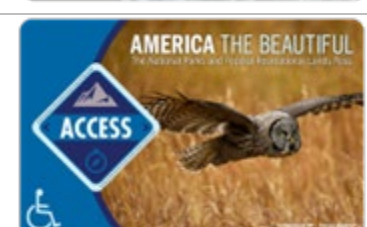

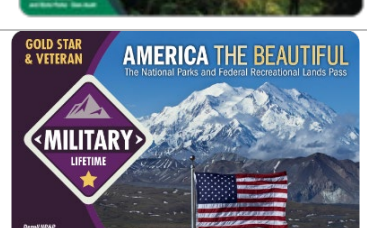
The National Park Service Centennial Act signed into law on December 16, 2016, stipulated changes to the Senior Pass: Lifetime Senior Pass price became equivalent to the interagency Annual Pass price; added an Annual Senior Pass for \$20 beginning August 28, 2017; and allowed visitors who purchased four Senior Annual Passes to exchange all four passes for a Lifetime Senior Pass at no additional charge. A Senior Pass holder with fewer than four Annual Senior Passes may exchange these Annual Passes for a Lifetime Senior Pass if they pay the difference between the paid sum of the purchased Passes and the Lifetime Senior Pass price. The Senior Annual Passes do not have to have been purchased in four consecutive years.



In 2019, the Every Kid Outdoors Act, part of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, required the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to jointly establish a program to provide all U.S. fourth graders with a free pass to public lands and waters for themselves and their families. On September 1, 2019, the Every Kid Outdoors program replaced Every Kid in a Park.

On January 1, 2021, Section 625 of The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year (FY) 2021 (PL 116-283) created a free Lifetime Military Pass available for Gold Star families and Veterans. The Annual Military Pass started in 2012 as a free annual pass for current U.S. military personnel and their dependents. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2022 (PL 117-81) codified the Annual Military Pass for current U.S. Military members and their dependents.

The ATB pass program provides eight pass options for the public to use at Federal recreation sites where entrance or standard amenity (and some expanded amenity) fees are charged. The eight passes that make up the program are listed in Table 1. The ATB pass program is described in more detail on the official website at: <http://store.usgs.gov/pass>.

Table 1. ATB pass types and descriptions

 <p>The image shows the Annual Pass, which is a red diamond-shaped pass with the text 'ANNUAL PASS' in white. The background features a scenic view of a waterfall in a forest.</p>	<p>Annual Pass (\$80 per year). This pass is available to anyone. It is valid for 12 months from the time of purchase and covers entrance and standard amenity recreation fees at thousands of sites nationwide.</p>
 <p>The image shows the Annual Senior Pass, which is a white diamond-shaped pass with the text 'SENIOR ANNUAL PASS' in black. The background features a scenic view of a waterfall in a forest.</p>	<p>Annual Senior Pass (\$20 per year). This pass is available to U.S. citizens and permanent residents 62 years of age and older. It covers entrance and standard amenity recreation fees and provides discounts on some expanded amenity recreation fees.</p>
 <p>The image shows the Lifetime Senior Pass, which is a white diamond-shaped pass with the text 'SENIOR LIFETIME PASS' in black. The background features a scenic view of a bison in a field.</p>	<p>Lifetime Senior Pass (\$80-lifetime pass). This pass is available to U.S. citizens and permanent residents 62 years of age and older. It covers entrance and standard amenity recreation fees and provides discounts on some expanded amenity recreation fees.</p>
 <p>The image shows the Access Pass, which is a blue diamond-shaped pass with the text 'ACCESS PASS' in white. The background features a scenic view of a bald eagle in flight over a field. A wheelchair icon is visible in the bottom left corner.</p>	<p>Access Pass (free lifetime pass). This pass is available to U.S. citizens and permanent residents, regardless of age, who certify they have a permanent disability by showing appropriate documentation or signing a Statement of Disability. The Access Pass has the same benefits as the Senior Pass.</p>
 <p>The image shows the Volunteer Pass, which is a green diamond-shaped pass with the text 'VOLUNTEER PASS' in white. The background features a scenic view of a waterfall in a forest.</p>	<p>Volunteer Pass (free annual pass). This pass is issued free of charge to volunteers who log 250 hours of volunteer time. It is valid for 12 months from the date of issuance and covers entrance and standard amenity recreation fees.</p>
 <p>The image shows the Lifetime Military Pass, which is a purple diamond-shaped pass with the text 'MILITARY LIFETIME PASS' in white. The background features a scenic view of a mountain range with an American flag in the foreground.</p>	<p>Lifetime Military Pass (free lifetime pass). This pass is issued free of charge to eligible U.S. military Veterans and Gold Star families. This lifetime pass covers entrance and standard amenity recreation fees.</p>

	<p>Military Pass (free annual pass). This pass is issued free of charge to current active-duty military service members and their dependents. It is valid for 12 months from the date of issuance and covers entrance and standard amenity recreation fees.</p>
	<p>Every Kid Outdoors 4th Grade Pass (free pass). This free pass is available for U.S. 4th graders, including home-school and free-choice learners 10 years of age, with a valid Every Kid outdoors paper pass. The pass is valid for the duration of the 4th grader's school year through the following summer (September through August). This pass covers entrance and standard amenity recreation fees.</p>

b. PIC Visitor Demographics

The PIC is located within the James M. Fitzgerald United States Courthouse and Federal Building at 222 West 7th Ave in downtown Anchorage, Alaska. Most local visitors to the PIC travel from their homes in Anchorage or the Matanuska-Susitna Boroughs. Due to the proximity of tourism hubs in downtown Anchorage including the 4th Avenue area, Alaska Railroad depot, and local large hotels; there are also PIC visitors from the U.S. and international locations although the demographics of those visiting outside the local areas cannot be ascertained.

The following information was compiled from United States Census Bureau data and State of Alaska Labor Department and Workforce Development – Research and Analysis data.

Alaska has a population of 733,391 people with 291,247 living in the Municipality of Anchorage and 107,081 in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Anchorage is the most populous city in Alaska.

Alaska is the twelfth most diverse state in the United States. Anchorage has a diversity index of 66.7%, meaning it ranks in the top 15th percentile for diversity in the nation and has three of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the country, according to 2013-2014 census data.

The median household income for Anchorage is \$84,928 (2015-2019) with 8.3% of the population living below the poverty level. The median age is 35; 24% are persons under the age of 18 and 49.1% of the population is female. Anchorage is racially composed of 63.8% Whites (non-Hispanic), 10% Asians, 9.4% Hispanic or Latinos, 9.1% American Indians or Native Alaskans, 6.0% Blacks or African Americans, 2.8% Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 8.4% of two or more races.

In the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the median household income is \$75,493 with 8.7% living below the poverty level. The median age in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough is 36.2; 26.4% are under 18 years old and 48.1% of the population is female. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is racially composed of 82.5% Whites (non-Hispanic), 7% two or more races, 6.9% American

Indians or Native Alaskans, 5.2% Hispanic or Latinos, 1.7% Asians, 1.3% Blacks or African Americans, and 0.4% Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

c. PIC Services

The PIC is a full-service resource for the visiting public, located on the first floor within the James M. Fitzgerald United States Courthouse and Federal Building at 222 West 7th Ave in downtown Anchorage, Alaska. Access to the Federal Building requires security screening. The PIC is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm and serves as a one-stop location for visitors who need information or need to transact business with the BLM. Here, visitors can transact business related to mining, land and realty services, and find information related to recreation and visitor services. The PIC has a wide variety of in-person maps, brochures, and visitor educational items. In addition to the in-person services, the [PIC website](#) has maps, brochures, and notices the public can view at home or while travelling.

The PIC is one of three in person locations in Anchorage where ATB passes can be obtained. There are no in-person sales of ATB passes in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. In addition to the PIC, the other two sales locations in Anchorage are the Alaska Public Lands Information Center (APLIC) and the Chugach National Forest headquarters. Table 2 lists all the ATB sale locations in Alaska.

Image 2. PIC Staff assisting a visitor



Table 2. Alaska ATB Sales Locations

Pass Sales Area/Site	City	State
BLM PIC	Anchorage	AK
NPS APLIC	Anchorage	AK
NPS APLIC	Fairbanks	AK
USFS Chugach National Forest	Anchorage	AK
NPS Denali National Park & Preserve	Denali Park	AK
BLM Fairbanks District Office	Fairbanks	AK
BLM Glennallen Field Office	Glennallen	AK
FWS Kenai National Wildlife Refuge	Soldotna	AK
USFS Talkeetna Ranger Station	Talkeetna	AK
USFS Mendenhall Visitor Center	Juneau	AK
USFS Southeast Alaska Discovery Center	Ketchikan	AK

The BLM’s standard operating procedures for the ATB pass program are identified in Headquarters Information Bulletin No. 2022-058 (Internal). These instructions govern the administration of the ATB pass program. Additional local procedures that apply to BLM management of the program are specifically set forth in BLM Alaska Instruction Memorandum No. 2020-004 (Internal). Issued passes must be accounted for by serial number. This is true whether passes are sold, refunded, upgraded, or voided. As the passes are issued and any revenues deposited, passes are accounted for in CBS.

d. Operating Costs

Pass sales at the PIC take up a moderate amount of staff time. On average, it takes a total of ½ hour to complete the sale or issuance of each pass. The total time for each pass includes the education about the products for each visitor, issuance of the actual pass, and the reconciliation of each pass in CBS. Since each pass is accountable property, staff must register each pass in the BLM system to account for the pass issuance. Finally, at the end of each FY, staff must enter the total number of passes (by type) issued into RMIS, which is used to populate data for the annual Public Lands Statistics report.

Nationally, the costs of managing the ATB pass program are significant. Sales by field offices and locations, such as the PIC, pay shipment costs for the passes. All other costs of the program, such as design, production, fulfillment, call center, overhead, and marketing are paid for with revenue from national central sales (i.e., the USGS website). The ATB passes and decals are re-designed and reproduced each year, therefore leftover stock cannot be re-used. If central sales revenue is not sufficient to cover the ATB pass costs, it is possible that agencies and field sites could be made responsible for the costs of the program. The PIC operating costs associated with the sale of the ATB pass program consist of the labor of the PIC staff. These labor costs are not funded from the ATB project account. Instead, annual appropriations are utilized. Since the amount of labor needed is driven by the number of passes issued any particular year, these figures in Table 3 below are only estimates based on FY2021 passes issued.

Table 3. FY21 Estimated Operating Cost Based on Issuance of 249 total ATB passes at PIC.

Expense Item	Annual Hours Spent on Pass Sales	Cost
Contact Representative (Labor)	125	\$5,680
Shipping, Printing, and Marketing (Labor)	10	\$450
Shipping, Printing, and Marketing Direct Costs	N/A	\$250
Total Annual AKSO Estimated FY21 Costs	135	\$6,380

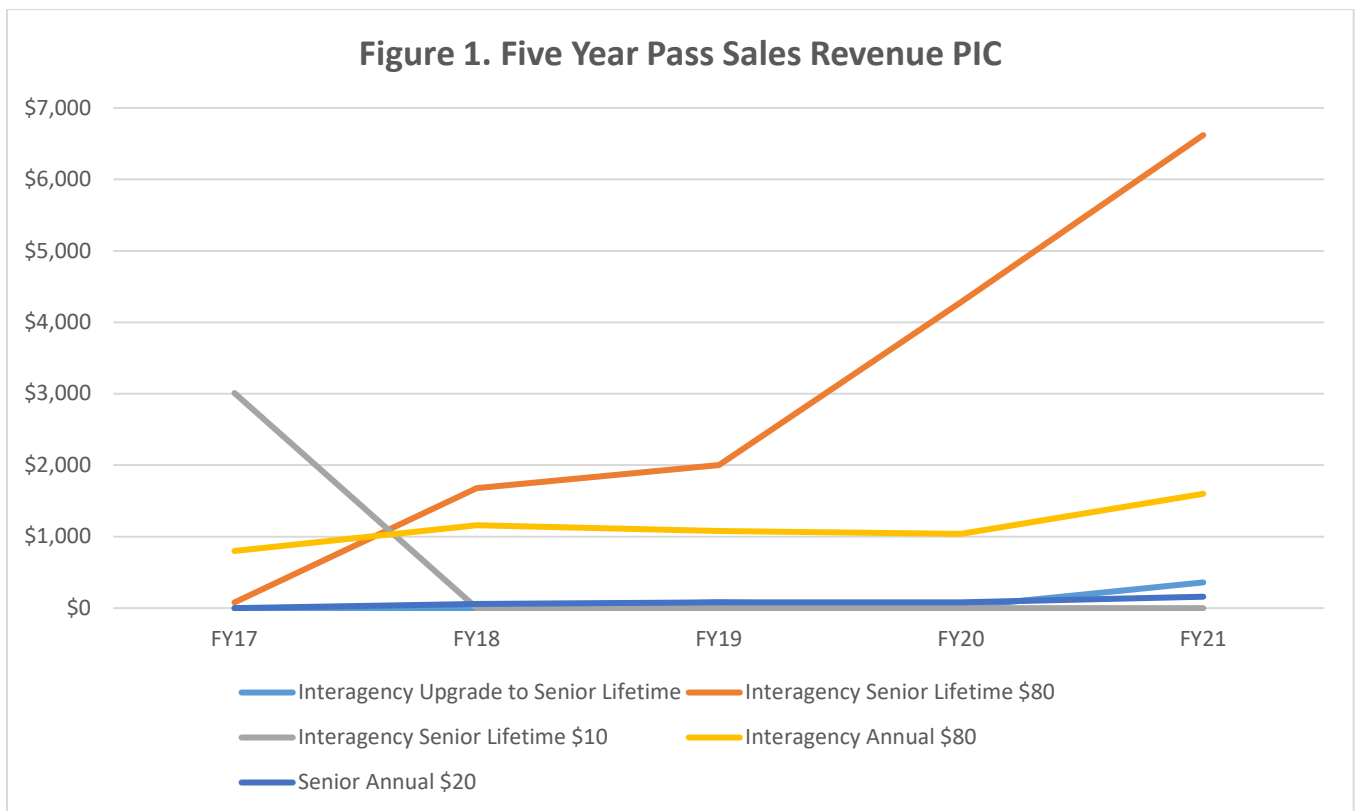
e. Interagency Pass Fees and Revenue

Table 4 below shows the five-year revenue history for the PIC. ATB pass sales continues to be consistent for the PIC, with increases in interagency annual and interagency senior passes noted over the last couple of years. Figure 1 shows the five-year trends for pass sales at the PIC.

Table 4. Five-year PIC ATB pass sales revenue.

Fiscal Year	Senior Upgrade to Lifetime	Interagency Annual \$80	Senior Annual \$20	Senior Lifetime \$10*	Senior Lifetime \$80	Fiscal Year Total
2017	\$0	\$800	\$0	\$3,010	\$80	\$3,890
2018	\$0	\$1,160	\$60	\$0	\$1,680	\$2,900
2019	\$80	\$1,080	\$80	\$0	\$2,000	\$3,240
2020	\$20	\$1,040	\$80	\$0	\$4,280	\$5,420
2021	\$360	\$1,600	\$160	\$0	\$6,620	\$8,740
Totals	\$460	\$5,680	\$380	\$3,010	\$14,660	\$24,190

*August 27, 2017 was the final day to purchase \$10 Senior Lifetime passes.



3. Fee Proposal

a. Objectives for Use of ATB Pass Fee Revenue

Generally, proceeds from the ATB pass program are used to improve and enhance visitor recreation services and self-support the program. Because this project's revenues are collected at the PIC, the funds can be considered applicable to all BLM Alaska offices. The purpose of this project, therefore, is to provide general support that can benefit all BLM amenity fee sites throughout BLM Alaska.

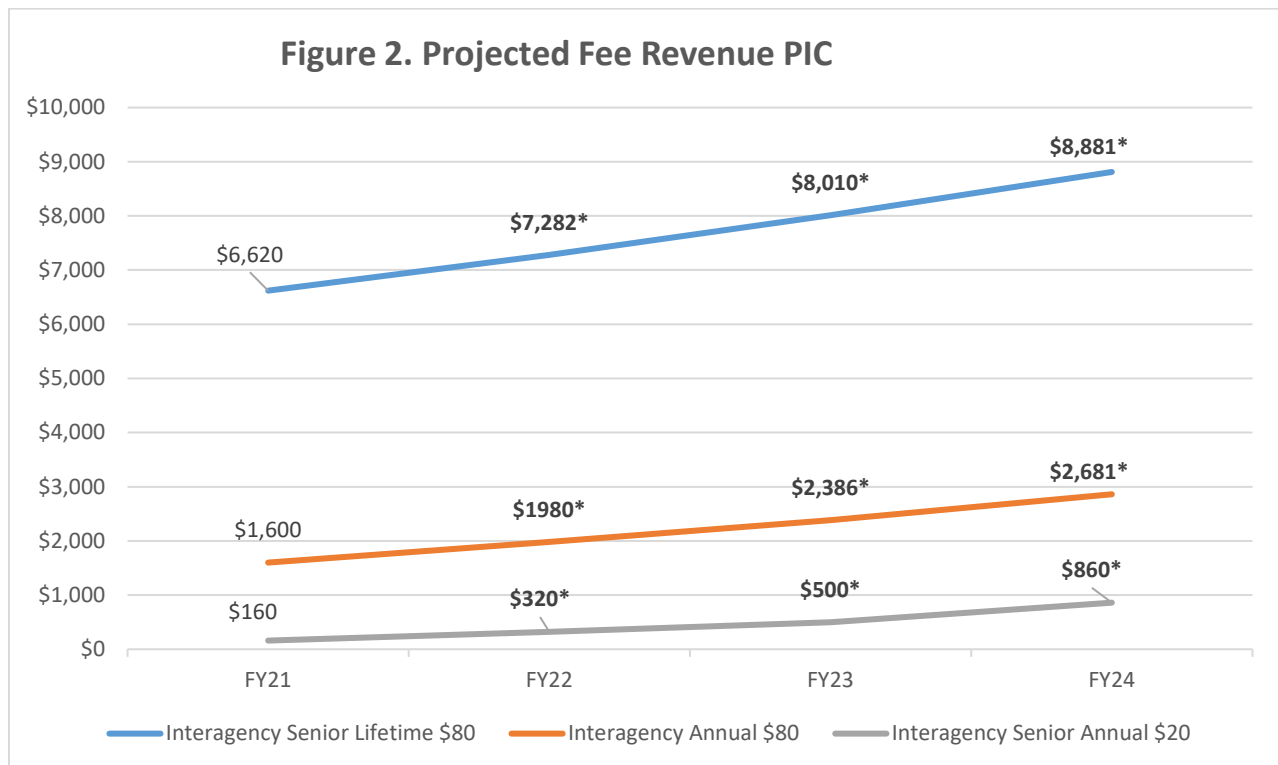
b. Financial Analysis

In FY2021, the PIC collected a total of \$8,740 in fees from the sale of passes which have a fee, 114 total. In addition to the revenue from these 114 fees passes, the PIC also issued 135 no-fee passes including the Access, Military, and Volunteer Passes in FY2021. There were no Every Kid Outdoors (4th Grade Pass) passes issued in FY2021.

Future issuance of the ATB passes is expected to be as follows:

- **Annual Pass:** Alaska does not have as many Federal attractions as the lower 48 states which creates demand for ATB passes (entrance fees to National Parks and day use fees at other Federal locations). Nonetheless, financial information shows there is a steady demand for these passes. With the recent increase in visitors pursuing Annual Passes and the upswing in recreational visitation across BLM administered lands, sales will likely show a minimal increase over the next few years.
- **Senior Annual Pass:** Following the new regulations passed for ATB passes in 2017, which created a Senior Annual Pass, and the ability to “trade up” the value of the purchased passes for a Senior Lifetime Pass, it is expected that this Pass will remain a steady trend for PIC sales.
- **Senior Lifetime Pass:** As an increasing percentage of adults enter their senior years, the sales of Senior Lifetime Passes are expected to increase compared to the past. The 50% fee discount given for individual campground fees continues to be an incentive for this Pass.
- **Access Pass:** New technologies are continuing to enable rising numbers of the population to experience the outdoors. It is expected that the steady demand for these Passes will be constant or will likely rise.
- **Volunteer Pass:** It is anticipated there will be a slight increase in awarding the Volunteer Pass to citizens as increasing numbers of recreation program managers become aware of, and experience using, this rewards program. Recent changes in ATB Volunteer Pass issuance policy, which has reduced the number of volunteer service hours from 500 to 250, will likely increase issuance.

- **Every Kid Outdoors (4th Grade Pass):** Issuance of this Pass has been minimal at the PIC, mainly due to other locations issuing them in lieu. It is anticipated that issuance of this Pass will remain low.
- **Annual Military Pass:** This Pass has been steadily issued since its inception in 2012. With the addition of Veterans and Gold Star families eligible for this Pass in 2020, issuance has increased greatly. Of the 135 no fee passes issued in FY2021 at the PIC, 68 of them were for the Annual Military Pass. It is anticipated that this Pass will remain a steady demand at the PIC.
- **Lifetime Military Pass:** The Lifetime Military Pass will be issued beginning November 2022. Gold Star families and Veterans will be eligible for lifetime passes to Federal recreational lands. The NDAA for 2022 replaces DOI Secretarial Order 3387 which made Veterans eligible for the Annual Military Pass in 2020 and the NDAA for 2021 (P.L. 116-283) which included Gold Star Families in the Annual Military Pass. It is anticipated that this Pass will be in high demand at the PIC.



*** Projections based on sales trends for current pass sales at the PIC**

c. Use of Fees

AKSO’s main goal for recreation fees collected at the PIC is to provide high-quality recreation education and information which increases positive experiences for all visitors. BLM staff assists visitors in getting out and experiencing their public lands by providing them with information and interpretive materials.

Recreation fee revenue will provide essential enhancement of the amenity sites in BLM Alaska. Fee revenue will be distributed via a project request system from the field offices to the recreation program lead. Projects will be reviewed based on the ability for the fees to provide enhanced recreation activities and amenities in BLM Alaska. Fee revenue expenditures will be prioritized as follows:

- Maintaining, improving, and replacing recreation site infrastructure such as trails, information and interpretive signage, fire rings, picnic tables, restroom buildings, etc.;
- Development of grants and agreements to promote additional recreation resources;
- Maps, brochure development and reprints, and interpretive materials.
- Educational and visitor services at Public Rooms throughout Alaska including production of educational, interpretive, and informative products to benefit visitor experience.
- Support for recreation staff labor used to expand and enhance recreational resources in BLM Alaska. This could include costs associated with labor, travel, or supplies to benefit amenity fee sites or the development of new resources.
- Agreements with partners to facilitate further distribution of the ATB passes. If the project account grows, it may be feasible to consider additional amenity fees related support that may be provided to the various offices and fee sites throughout the state.
- Financial support for recreational trails, facilities, and other recreation grants and agreements which require advance matching funds per the award criteria.

Budget shortfalls due to unforeseen events such as emergency building and site repair, are a frequent cause of maintenance backlogs or employee shortages. Given current reduced budget levels and uncertainty in future budget cycles, the use of fees for recreation enhancement is even more important.

Over the next five years, the BLM Alaska intends to utilize these fees to provide quality recreation resources and experience for visitors. The BLM's Recreation Strategy "Connecting with Communities" provides a vision to increase and improve collaboration with the local community network of service providers. This helps communities to increase socioeconomic health and deliver outstanding recreation experiences to visitors, while sustaining the distinctive character of public land recreation settings.

i. Fee Discounts

Section 5 of FLREA provided for the establishment of a single interagency national pass, herein referred to as the ATB pass program. This pass provides the bearer full coverage of standard amenity fees. No sites within BLM Alaska charge a standard amenity fee (these are typically day use fee areas, high visitation picnic areas, etc.). Holders of the ATB Senior and Access Passes may receive half-off of expanded amenity fees. This includes overnight camping at federal recreation sites and campgrounds within NPS, BLM, FWS, USFS, Reclamation, and USACE lands. No other fee discounts, passes, or waivers are allowed.

d. Impacts of Fee Changes

i. Positive Impacts of Adopting the Proposed Fee Expenditures

The PIC is not proposing to adjust fees associated with the ATB pass program. The PIC is only proposing uses and categories for future expenses and recreation enhancements. Fees for passes are determined nationally and are not subject to adjustment locally.

New projects identified in the priorities for future expenditures section would be implemented. New informational products would be created, and existing recreation resources would be upgraded. These combined would improve the overall visitor experience.

Benefits to the local economy could also be realized. An Outdoor Industry Association study found that in 2017, outdoor recreation generated \$887 billion in consumer spending in the United States and generated \$7.3 billion in Alaska alone. It also brought in \$337 million in Alaska state and local tax revenue (<https://outdoorindustry.org/state/alaska/>). It is imperative to the local economy to keep recreation site infrastructure in good condition, clean, and serviced to high standards. Maintaining these high standards and creating new opportunities improve the overall recreational experience for current and future visitors alike.

By providing trailheads, waysides, campgrounds, and day-use areas for visitors, BLM Alaska can consolidate resource impacts to a much smaller area. Human waste and garbage are dealt with in an appropriate manner in areas where sufficient infrastructure is provided. If these services were not available, illegal dumping would proliferate.

ii. Negative Impacts of Not Adopting the Proposed Fee Expenditures

Existing facilities represent a substantial public investment. As costs are anticipated to increase, maintenance might not happen as quickly or as often as needed, and some services might be reduced. Deferred maintenance costs would increase as facilities age, and some facilities might not be operated at full capacity. Maintenance that is deferred because of insufficient funding might result in increased safety hazards, reduced service to the public, higher costs in the future, and inefficient operations.

Recreation demands would continue to increase if visitation increased, thus the costs to operate the fee sites and those activities proposed in this analysis would become more dependent on fluctuating appropriated funding. The opportunities for future planned developments would be constrained and likely set aside. BLM Alaska might have challenges implementing the BLM's "Connecting with Communities" recreation strategy. Development of high quality educational and informative content for the public requires considerable staff time, as well as financial obligation for the production and dissemination of the materials.

Negative impacts to the environment could also occur. Less frequent visitor contacts by recreation staff to maintain trails, signage, and education materials might allow some visitors to act inappropriately by creating new trails and vandalizing facilities. If visitors began to view these sites as non-maintained, it could lead to a belief that these sites are not frequented at all and could exacerbate problems with dumping and vandalism.

4. Outreach

a. Public and Stakeholder Participation

The BLM’s “Connecting with Communities” recreation strategy provides a vision to increase and improve collaboration with local community service providers to help communities produce greater well-being and socioeconomic health to deliver outstanding recreation experiences to visitors while sustaining the distinctive character of public land recreation settings. As part of this strategy, the BLM Alaska seeks engagement and partnerships with local stakeholders to accomplish mutual public access and recreation objectives. BLM Alaska also seeks relationships with youth groups like American Conservation Experience and The Student Conservation Association, and Alaska Trails in helping to promote a positive experience for youth and to promote and facilitate enhanced recreation experience for the public.

BLM Alaska will continue expanding existing partnerships and pursuing new ones that support a healthy, robust, relevant, and accountable recreation program for the public. Future priorities include increasing the number and scope of such partnerships and agreements associated with the BLM Alaska recreation program.

Draft business plans must be made available for public review and comment for a minimum of 30 days. Prior to implementing the proposed fee expenditures, BLM Alaska conducted outreach efforts to notify the public of its opportunity to review and comment on the draft business plan.

The BLM issued a press release regarding the proposed use of ATB fee revenue at the PIC. This included a press release to media outlets when the 30-day public comment period was announced.

b. Visitor Feedback Mechanisms

The BLM provided for a 30-day public review period from September 28, 2022 through October 28, 2022, during which time the public had the opportunity to learn about the proposal and to submit comments for consideration.

The public had the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed BLM Alaska State Office Public Information Center America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Sales Business Plan utilizing the following methods:

- E-mail: BLM_AK_AKSO_Public_Room@blm.gov
- Mail: BLM Alaska State Office, 222 West 7th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99507
Attention: BLM AKSO PIC Business Plan

No comments were received during the public review period for this proposal.

Appendix A – Acronyms, Abbreviations, and Symbols

AKSO – Alaska State Office

ATB – America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Program

BLM – Bureau of Land Management

CBS – Collection and Billing System

CFR – Code of Federal Regulations

FBMS – Federal Business Management System

FLPMA – Federal Lands Policy and Management Act

FLREA – Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act

FWS – US Fish and Wildlife Service

FY – Fiscal Year

NPS – National Park Service

PIC – Public Information Center

Reclamation – Bureau of Reclamation

RMIS – Recreation Management Information System

USACE – US Army Corps of Engineers

USFS – United States Forest Service

WBS – Work Breakdown Structure