



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

# Draft Business Plan

King Range National Conservation Area



BLM California

Arcata Field Office

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## BLM Signatory Page

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## Executive Summary

This Business Plan was prepared pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004, (P.L. 108-447) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation fee program policy. It establishes future management goals and priorities for the King Range National Conservation Area (NCA) recreation fee program. This Business Plan outlines proposed fee changes at four campgrounds and the establishment of a new fee for overnight use in the King Range Wilderness, located within the King Range NCA. These fees would be used to expand visitor services and to ensure continued maintenance of recreation resources.

Consistent with FLREA, the intent of this Business Plan is not to maximize fee revenue but to help protect natural resources, provide for public health and safety, and facilitate access to public lands and related waters. Fees are a way of ensuring that those who actively use recreation opportunities make a greater, but reasonable, contribution toward protecting and enhancing those opportunities than those who do not utilize recreational opportunities.

### Background

The 2005 King Range Resource Management Plan (RMP) outlined objectives and management decisions to maintain and restore natural conditions in the King Range NCA. The RMP directed the BLM to establish carrying capacities and set a fee schedule for overnight backcountry use. During the planning process much of the public recognized the need for management to protect the wilderness qualities of the King Range NCA.

In 2006, the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act designated 42,625 acres of the King Range NCA (approximately 67 percent) as the King Range Wilderness. In addition, approximately 2 acres of offshore rocks and islands within 3 miles of the King Range NCA coastline were designated the Rocks and Islands Wilderness, which is part of the California Coastal National Monument. The Backcountry Area is defined in the King Range WMP as 2.5 miles of non-wilderness coastal strand (approximately 70 acres) extending north from the wilderness boundary at Four Mile Creek to the Mattole River. The King Range Wilderness and the Backcountry Area are collectively referred to as the King Range Wilderness throughout this document and managed as one unit.

The BLM continued to place a high importance on solitude and primitive recreation in the development of the 2012 King Range Wilderness Management Plan (WMP). In consideration of community feedback, the BLM developed a season of use and a capacity limit for overnight visitation in the King Range Wilderness. Since 2017, overnight visitation in the King Range Wilderness has been managed with an Individual Special Recreation Permit (ISRP) issued through Recreation.gov. The total number of persons entering the King Range Wilderness for overnight visitation is limited to 60 persons per day during the peak season of May 15<sup>th</sup> through September 15<sup>th</sup> and 30 persons per day during the off season of September 16<sup>th</sup> through May 14<sup>th</sup> (This was published in the Federal Register in September of 2016; 81 FR 61243).

The 2013 Draft Business Plan for the King Range National Conservation Area & King Range Wilderness proposed a fee system for the ISRP (\$6 per person per day) and updated fees for the campgrounds (\$15 per site per night) in the King Range NCA. The 2013 Draft Business Plan was open to public comment for 30 days and was presented to the Northwest California Resource Advisory Council on February 21, 2013. Although the proposed ISRP fee and updated campground fees were not implemented, the need for fees has persisted over the past 10 years, as will be outlined in this Business Plan.



## Proposed Fees

### *King Range Wilderness ISRP*

The ISRP fee is proposed at \$12 per person per trip (maximum 14 day stay). There would be no fee for children 16 and under. This is consistent with fair market analysis of fees charged by public agencies at similar areas. 100% of the fees would stay in the King Range NCA and would be used to enhance visitor services and experiences in the following ways (more details on how the funding would be used is presented in Section 10):

- Hire additional staffing to open the King Range Visitor Center an additional day (Saturdays) from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends and provide more opportunities for on-the-ground visitor services in the King Range Wilderness and at trailheads. This is increasingly important to communicate with visitors about Lost Coast Trail safety information (travel with the tides, weather, and ocean conditions), rules and regulations (where to dispose of human waste, fire restrictions), and to rent bear canisters.
- Consistently fund at least three backcountry trail maintenance crews annually. This would provide a significant improvement to the King Range Wilderness trails and to the experience of visitors recreating on the trails.
- Provide support to local volunteer fire departments in the King Range NCA. Most of the rescue and emergency support received by visitors in the King Range NCA is from local volunteers and the US Coast Guard. There are typically a minimum of 3-5 rescues or evacuations conducted in the King Range Wilderness each year, varying from dehydration/exhaustion issues to more serious and immediate life-threatening emergencies.

Additionally, the ISRP fee of \$12 per person per trip will help the King Range NCA manage the ISRP program by providing incentive for trip leaders to book permits with the correct number of participants (as opposed to the max available on Recreation.gov) and to cancel their permit if they can't use it (they would receive a refund of the fees).

### *King Range NCA Campgrounds*

This Draft Business Plan proposes to increase the existing expanded amenity fee at the four developed campgrounds in the King Range NCA from \$8 to \$15 per site per night. 100% of the fees stay in the King Range NCA and would be used to continue consistent campground janitorial service and fund the pumping and removal of waste from the vault toilets on a yearly basis.

Table 1: Proposed Recreation Fees

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
<b>Campgrounds</b>	\$8 per night	\$15 per night
<b>King Range Wilderness ISRP</b>	\$0	\$12 per person (plus \$6 permit reservation fee)

All proposed fees are based on a fair market analysis of fees charged by other public agencies and private providers for similar services within the respective geographic area of each recreation site. Fee increases are necessary to better meet the expenses of the recreation program, including maintenance and operations to prevent resource damage and provide visitor services.

## 1.0 Background and Authorities

The BLM Handbook H-2930-1, Recreation Permits and Fee Administration (Rel. 2- 300, dated Nov. 17, 2014), requires each recreation fee program has an approved Business Plan which thoroughly discusses fees and explains how fees are consistent with the criteria set forth in FLREA. Business Plans are to assist management in determining the appropriateness and level of fees, the cost of administering a fee program, and the expected benefits for the public. The primary purpose of the plan is to serve as public notification of the objectives for use of recreation fee revenues and to provide the public an opportunity to comment on these objectives. The finalized Business Plan guides the expenditure of collected FLREA funds and ensures public accountability. The Business Plan will specifically cover a description of the fee site, proposed changes in fees to these sites, associated operating costs, planned expenditures of fee revenue, a financial analysis utilizing a regional comparative market study of fees charged for other similar recreation facilities, and the impacts of proposed fee changes. The data used to analyze and prepare this Business Plan was obtained through internal BLM tracking and accounting mechanisms such as the Federal Business Management System (FBMS), Recreation Management Information System (RMIS), Collections and Billing Systems (CBS), and other locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking spreadsheets.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (Public Law 94-579) provides the BLM's general land use management authority over public lands and establishes outdoor recreation as an authorized use of those lands. Section 302(b) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to regulate public lands uses through permits or other instruments.

This Business Plan has been prepared pursuant to all applicable BLM recreation fee program policies and guidance outlined in the BLM Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook (H-2930-1).

The King Range NCA submits this Business Plan to:

- 1) Address the appropriateness and level of recreation fee proposals.
- 2) Disclose the cost of administering the fee program.
- 3) Provide public transparency on agency use of future recreation fee revenue.
- 4) Identify priorities for future expenditures.
- 5) Consider impacts to underserved communities and the local economy.
- 6) Provide for public notification and public comment on recreation fee proposals.

### 1.1 Special Area Permits and Fees

The King Range NCA is managed as a "Special Area" and is a component of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System. Special Areas are defined as areas officially designated by statute, Presidential decree, or Secretarial order and include components of the National Trails System; the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; the National Wilderness Preservation System; National Conservation Areas, National Monuments, or National Recreation Areas.

When a field office determines that an ISRP system to manage individual use of a Special Area is desirable, implementation of the permit system requires public notification with a Federal Register notice (43 CFR 2932.13). If fees will be charged for the Special Area ISRP, the public



participation requirements of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act must also be met. Examples of individual permits for Special Areas include camping in long-term visitor areas in California and Arizona, boating many BLM-managed rivers, hiking in the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness, and OHV use in the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area. When use takes place in a Special Area where Special Area fees are required, the Special Area fee is due in addition to the commercial use fee.

Fees associated with individual use of Special Areas are set by the state director and are published in the Federal Register six months before the fee area is established. Fees may be adjusted to reflect changes in costs and to ensure a fair return for the use of the public lands and related waters. The BLM publishes announcements in local newspapers and publications near the site when implementing fee adjustments.

## 2.0 Introduction to the KRNCA and the Lost Coast

The King Range NCA is located about 200 miles north of San Francisco and 60 miles south of Eureka and is comprised of approximately 62,636 acres of public land extending along 38 miles of coastline between the mouth of the Mattole River and the northern boundary of Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. (Figure 1). The Pacific Ocean and the North Coast Range meet dramatically in the King Range NCA to form a spectacular setting known as the “Lost Coast” where an abrupt wall of mountains climb 4,000 feet above the Pacific Ocean. The elemental beauty and ever-changing mood of the ocean meeting the wild, undeveloped coastline, old-growth forests, and rugged peaks of the King Range inspired its original designation as a National Conservation Area in 1970. The King Range Wilderness draws people from all over the world to visit the “Lost Coast” of California and offers one of the only coastal backpacking experiences in the contiguous United States. It includes beaches, coastal terraces, and mountain ridges that provide unique recreation opportunities.

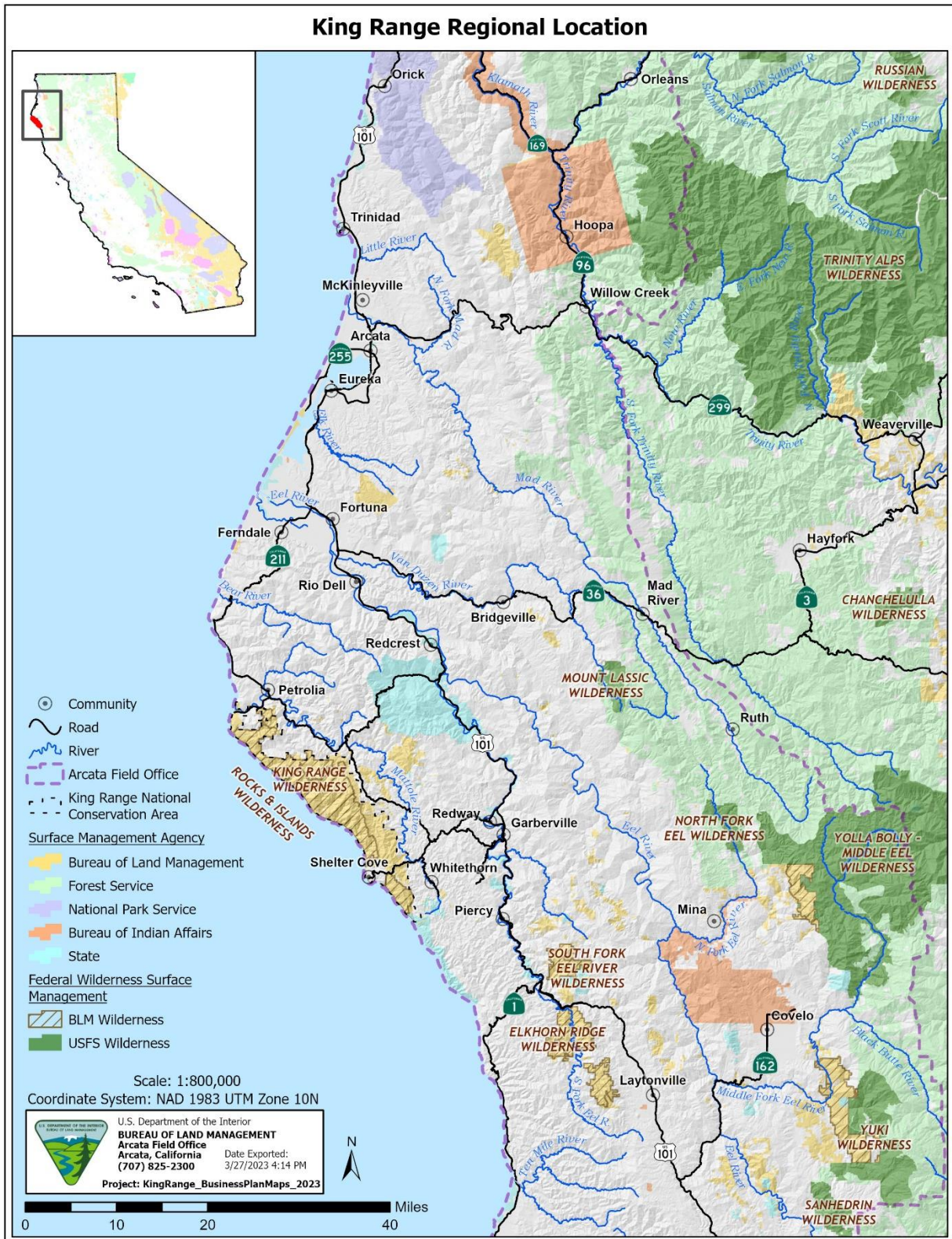


Figure 1: King Range NCA and Wilderness Area Vicinity Map



## 3.0 Facilities and Services

The King Range NCA manages a mix of developed facilities and recreation opportunities. This includes: four campgrounds, three coastal access sites & day-use picnic areas, twelve trailheads, 24 miles of mountain bike trails, 85 miles of wilderness trails, 41 miles of unsurfaced roads, and 15 toilets, including the only public restroom facilities in the community of Shelter Cove.

### 3.1 Trails in the King Range Wilderness

- **Lost Coast National Recreation Trail:** This 52-mile-long trail is comprised of two sections in the King Range NCA, and one section in the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. The northern section of the Lost Coast Trail traverses more than 24.8 miles of beach and coastal terrace beginning at the Mattole Trailhead on the north end and ending at the Black Sands Beach Trailhead near Shelter Cove on the south end. The southern, upland section of the Lost Coast Trail begins at the Hidden Valley Trailhead outside of the community of Shelter Cove and traverses 6 miles connecting to the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park near Whale Gulch. The remaining 22 miles of the Lost Coast Trail crosses coastal bluffs and ridge tops of the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, ending at the mouth of Usal Creek at the south end of the state park. For the remainder of this document, the term “Lost Coast Trail” refers only to those portions managed by the BLM within the King Range NCA.
- **Buck Creek Trail:** This 3.6-mile-long trail drops nearly 3,300 vertical feet from the King Crest Trail to the beach.
- **Kinsey Ridge Trail:** Starting at the end of the Smith-Etter Road on Kinsey Ridge this trail drops 2,450 feet in over 4 miles from the trailhead to the beach.
- **Spanish Ridge Trail:** This trail follows a former roadbed for about 2 miles from the end of Telegraph Ridge Road before splitting off from the Cooskie Creek Trail and descending a former road 2,400 vertical feet in just over 3 miles to the ocean.
- **Rattlesnake Ridge Trail:** This 5.7-mile-long trail drops 3,500 vertical feet from the King Crest near Miller Loop Trail to Big Flat.
- **Cooskie Creek Trail and Spur:** This 13-mile trail generally follows old ranch roads from Spanish Ridge to the beach between Fourmile Creek and Punta Gorda Lighthouse. The Cooskie Creek Spur is a shortcut to the beach, dropping 750 vertical feet in 1.2 miles.
- **Lightning Trail:** This popular trail for day trips into the King Range Wilderness is the shortest route to King Peak climbing 1,900 feet in 2.6 miles.
- **Horse Mountain Creek Trail:** This ridge to beach trail drops 1,500 feet in 4.2 miles.
- **Chemise Mountain Trail:** A short connector trail less than 1 mile in length provides access to the Lost Coast Trail from Nadelos and Wailaki campgrounds.
- **King Crest Trail National Recreation Trail:** This 11-mile trail traverses the King Crest, the “spine” of the King Range.



Figure 2: King Range NCA and King Range Wilderness Area Map

### 3.3 King Range NCA Campgrounds

There are four campgrounds with a total of 44 sites that are currently in operation and serviced by the King Range NCA. The campgrounds and campsites vary in terms of site layout and proximity to residential areas and roads. There are no hookups or waste dumping facilities for RVs/trailers and reservations are currently not required at any of the campgrounds.

Each campground provides:

- Tent or trailer spaces
- Picnic tables
- Access road
- Refuse containers
- Toilet facilities
- Fee collection
- Devices for containing a campfire
- Reasonable visitor protection (i.e., Law Enforcement patrols)

1. Mattole Campground provides 14 tent/trailer campsites with renovations underway (2022-2023) to expand the campground to 23 sites. Mattole Campground is located near the mouth of the Mattole River and approximately 200 yards from the ocean at the north end of the King Range NCA. The northern trailhead for the Lost Coast Trail is located adjacent to the Mattole Campground.

2. Tolkan Campground provides nine campsites (five trailer and four tent) and serves as a trailhead to the Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail System and Terrain Park.

3. Nadelos Campground provides eight “walk-in” tent campsites with one designated parking area and is located on the southern end of the King Range NCA, approximately six miles from Shelter Cove. Nadelos Campground also serves as a trailhead for the Chemise Mountain Trail.

4. Wailaki Campground provides 13 tent/trailer campsites and is located on the southern end of the King Range NCA, approximately seven miles from Shelter Cove and just one mile from Nadelos Campground. Wailaki Campground also serves as a trailhead for the Chemise Mountain Trail.





Figure 3: Campsite at Mattole Campground



Figure 4: Satellite Image of Mattole Campground and Mattole Trailhead

## 4.0 Recreation Visitation and Visitor Demographics

*Table 2: Recreation Visitation to the King Range NCA*

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Total Visits</b>	109,314	110,134	116,287	142,004	130,021
<b>Total Overnight King Range Wilderness Visitors</b>	11,309	11,303	8,246	14,342	11,458
<b>Total Camp-nights Occupied (all four campgrounds)</b>	1,823	2,108	2,064	3,581	3,764

### *Total visitation to the KRNCA*

Total King Range NCA visits reflected in Table 2 includes all sites and all visits, such as visits to the day use sites in Shelter Cove, visitors to Black Sands Beach for a day, and dispersed use, such as hunting, camping outside of campgrounds, driving the backroads, and target shooting. The total visitation also includes overnight wilderness visitation.

### *King Range Wilderness*

Overnight visitation data for the King Range Wilderness is obtained from the ISRP and reports generated by Recreation.gov; these numbers reflect the number of people that entered the wilderness but does not reflect how long they stayed. The average trip is three days and two nights. The total overnight King Range Wilderness visitation also includes commercial and organized groups managed through BLM's Special Recreation Permit (SRP) Regulations (43 CFR 2930). The King Range NCA authorizes approximately 40 separate SRPs with 75 different trips and 600-800 total people annually.

### *Campground Visits*

Camp-nights occupied reflects the total number of nights that campsites were being used. For example, if a group pays for two nights at a campsite with one fee envelope, this equals two camp-nights. These numbers were derived from the fees collected.

## 4.1 Recreation Activities and Visitor Use Patterns

Analysis of ISRP data from 2022 indicates that 72% of overnight King Range Wilderness visitors started at Mattole Trailhead, 23% started at Black Sands Beach, and the remaining 5% of visitors started at upland trailheads. While the majority of visitors start at one of the trailheads for the Lost Coast Trail, observations by BLM staff indicate that many visitors are doing loops that involve upland trail systems.

Most visitors backpacking along the Lost Coast Trail camp overnight near creeks where water sources are available and where they can camp above high tides. Lost Coast Trail users frequently congregate in a few specific locations due to limited camping sites, average hiking distances, and tidal conditions. Due to the steep topography and narrow creek drainages, many of these locations result in visitors camping in close proximity to one another.





*Figure 5: Steep Topography Along the Lost Coast Trail*

A Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) visitor survey conducted at recreation sites throughout the King Range NCA on 21 days between July 2 and September 24, 2021, indicated the top five recreation activities that visitors participated in (note that visitors could select multiple answers) were hiking/walking (79%), sightseeing (58%), camping (42%), picnicking (39%), and birdwatching/wildlife viewing (36%).

The King Range NCA is best known to outdoor enthusiasts as the location of the Lost Coast Trail. However, the area offers opportunities for a diverse array of activities not cited above, including collecting edible mushrooms, mountain biking, and driving the back roads, among others.

## 4.2 Visitor Demographics

According to permit data from 2022: 81% of ISRP holders were from California, 18% were from other areas of the U.S., and 1% were visiting internationally. BLM staff observations reveal that the visitor base for the King Range NCA is primarily non-locals, with many visitors coming from the Sacramento Valley, the San Francisco Bay area, and southern California. This is consistent with results from the 2021 GPRA visitor survey which indicates that 73% of King Range NCA visitors are from California (282 respondents), and visitors from California came from 36 counties, of which 22% of were from Humboldt County.

The following demographics of visitors to the Lost Coast Trail are based on visitor studies conducted and reported by Humboldt State University in 1997 and 2003 (Martin and Widner 1998; Martin and Harris 2004). The studies focused on users of the Lost Coast Trail.



Table 3: Visitor Demographics to the Lost Coast Trail

Variable	Percentage of Visitors 1997 Survey	Percentage of Visitors 2003 Survey
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	59	59.4
Female	41	40.6
<b>Age*</b>		
Under 21	5	8
21-30	35	32.4
31-40	24	17.8
41-50	22	21.1
51-60	9	18.1
61 and older	4	2.6
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>		
White	87.7	87.9
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.0	3.9
Multi-racial	2.4	NA
Hispanic/Latino	1.7	3.2
Asian-American	1.7	4.3
African American	0	1.1
Pacific Islander	1.0	1.8
Other	4.4	2.5
<b>Education</b>		
Up to 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1	NA
Some High School	2	3
High School Graduate	5	3.6
Some College	24	20.2
College Graduate	35	39.9
Graduate School	33	33.5

The GPRA visitor survey provides the following additional demographics of King Range NCA visitors:

- Out of 234 respondents, 51% identified as male and 49% identified as female.
- 89% of those responding to the survey indicated that their group had no children under 12.
- 4% of those responding to the survey indicated that their group had 1-2 teenagers (13-17 years old) and 96% of those responding to the survey indicated that their group had no teenagers. No survey respondent had more than 2 teenagers in their group.

No comprehensive visitor study has been conducted specifically for King Range NCA campground users. Information about campground visitor use is primarily reported to the BLM through the collection of fee envelopes, but also by staff observations and visitor comments. The standard envelope requests the following information: amount enclosed, number of days paid, date permit purchased, vehicle license number, state, home zip code, assigned campsite number, number in group, other charges/fees if any, purpose of visit, and various interagency passes or passports offering fee discounts. In practice, these envelopes are often incompletely filled out.

In addition to using the campgrounds specifically for camping, many visitors use the campgrounds as base camps to explore other King Range NCA facilities (hiking & biking trails) or visit other local attractions like Shelter Cove and Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. Tolkan Campground has become a camping and mountain biking destination, reflected in the doubling of use after the 2008 completion of the Paradise Royale MTB Trail System.



*Figure 6: Hiker on the Lost Coast Trail*

## 5.0 Overview of King Range NCA Operating Costs

The King Range NCA staff is comprised of seven permanent, full-time (PFT) employees and a varying number of seasonal Park Ranger staff. The PFT staff is comprised of the NCA Manager, Administrative Support Assistant (Contact Representative), an Outdoor Recreation Planner (ORP), two Career Seasonal Park Rangers (wilderness), Maintenance Worker, and an Engineering Equipment Operator. A senior Law Enforcement Officer has been shared with Arcata Field Office the past several years, and many other resource specialists (e.g., ecologist, wildlife biologist, geologist) charge their labor to the King Range NCA funding codes when working on projects in the King Range.

Actual costs and sources of funding vary significantly from year to year. Annual variations in project-specific directed funding, fee revenues, public visitation, and episodic events affect operational needs and the funding mix utilized to accomplish operations. Additionally, actual costs cannot always be accurately captured as staff often perform a variety of duties on any given day or week.

*Table 4: Total Operating Expenses for the King Range NCA in FY 2022*

Total Operating Expenses FY 2022	
Item	Cost
Labor	\$627,178
Fleet	\$63,140
Travel	\$35,172
Contracts and Agreements	\$172,995
Purchases	\$117,931
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,016,416</b>

The total for operating expenses in Table 4 includes carryover funds from the previous fiscal year.

### 5.1 King Range Wilderness Management Operating Costs

#### *Visitor Services and Interpretation*

BLM personnel, volunteers, websites, kiosks, maps, and brochures provide important information and resources to wilderness visitors during trip planning, upon arrival at the Visitor Center, at wilderness trailheads, and during personal contacts with Park Rangers in the wilderness. Providing safety and trip planning information is important due to the unique safety issues associated with a coastal, wilderness environment, such as: the influence of tides, waves, and storms on the Lost Coast Trail; rapid rises in coastal streams from rain; the presence of rattlesnakes in beach driftwood; poison oak; and Lyme disease-carrying ticks.

Visiting the King Range NCA, particularly traveling on the Lost Coast Trail, requires educational efforts and awareness-raising not unlike that required for avalanche awareness in snow country. Additionally, visitor services and information exchange are important to preserve the unique wilderness resources of the King Range Wilderness. This includes conveying Leave No Trace ethics and practices specific to a coastal environment, such as solid human waste disposal; communicating the requirements for and the proper use of bear-proof food storage canisters; current fire restrictions and guidelines for campfire and backpacking stove use.

Labor costs associated with visitor services and interpretation consist of staffing the King Range Visitor Center year around, Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, primarily by the Contact Representative, but all King Range NCA staff answer telephone and email inquiries and serve walk-in visitors as needed. This activity also includes the issuance of permits and the rental of bear-proof food storage canisters to wilderness visitors. On average, the King Range Visitor Center receives 2,600 phone calls and 1,500 in-person visits each year. The average telephone call is approximately 15 minutes and often includes in-depth trip planning assistance with all of the above-mentioned topics, with many calls running 45 minutes or more.

#### *Special Recreation Permit Administration*

This activity is specifically related to permitting commercially guided operations and organized group trips in the King Range Wilderness. This includes email and phone communication with permittees, processing and issuing permits, verifying insurance requirements, processing post-use reports, collection and processing fee payments, on-site SRP compliance checks in the wilderness, and SRP evaluations per BLM policy. BLM staff work closely with permittees to develop itineraries that are safe for travel with the tides on the Lost Coast Trail, and to comply with SRP group rules specific to the King Range NCA.

#### *Wilderness Patrol, Permit Compliance, and Law Enforcement*

BLM Park Rangers perform regular patrols in the King Range Wilderness during the peak visitation season, May 15 to September 15, and continue patrols throughout fall months. When heavy rains begin, and through the winter months, Park Rangers patrol the wilderness intermittently to coincide with favorable weather and ocean conditions.

While on patrol, Park Rangers check for compliance with wilderness permit requirements (the ISRP), bear-proof food storage canister requirements, and compliance with fire restrictions, if currently in effect. Park Rangers focus the majority of their public interactions on Leave No Trace education, specifically practices unique to the coastal environment of the King Range Wilderness. Park Rangers also spend considerable time during their patrols naturalizing campsites along the LCT by demolishing large, user-created driftwood shelters, excessively large or proliferating fire rings, collecting and packing out trash and, unfortunately, burying inappropriately deposited human waste.

Much of the labor for Law Enforcement is covered under the campground expenses (Table 6) and includes patrols of trailheads. There are additional foot patrols into the wilderness to assess trespass issues (motorized use, for example), to communicate rules and regulations with visitors, and to issue citations as needed.





*Figure 7: King Range NCA Park Ranger Assists Visitors on the Lost Coast Trail*

#### *Wilderness Trail Maintenance*

The unstable geology, powerful storms, torrential rainfall, and temperate climate of the King Range Wilderness necessitate frequent and consistent maintenance of the trail system. Very rapid vegetation growth requires frequent clearing of trail corridors to keep trails passable. Both live and dead-standing trees fall and block trails that need clearing. Heavy rainfall and seismic events produce landslides and washouts, obliterating sections of the trail that need repair.

#### *Wilderness Monitoring*

King Range NCA staff monitor and report the status of wilderness character according to BLM Wilderness Monitoring Protocols on an annual basis. King Range NCA staff have also developed, implemented, and continue to refine specific campsite monitoring protocols over the last 15 years to track changes in campsite number, size, and level of development, primarily along the Lost Coast Trail.





*Figure 8: Example of Typical Annual Trail Maintenance Needs in the King Range Wilderness*

Labor costs for wilderness management include trail condition assessment and maintenance performed by BLM King Range staff, supervision of and support logistics for hosted workers (e.g., California Conservation Corps, Student Conservation Association, and American Conservation Association), and the recruitment, training, and supervision of volunteers, such as American Hiking Society and Wilderness Volunteers. Operational costs include employee per diem (camp rate is currently @\$40/day) for overnight tours of duty, and BLM provided supplies and equipment (e.g., water filters, stoves, tents, communications equipment), hand tools (shovels, pulaskis, McCleods, digging bars, loppers, hand saws, cross-cut saws), first-aid and safety equipment, and food for volunteers.

Table 5: Estimate of Yearly Expenses for King Range Wilderness Management

<b>King Range Wilderness Operational Expenses</b>	
<b>Service Provided</b>	<b>Costs</b>
<b>Permanent Staff</b>	
GS-07 Contact Representative, estimated 50 weeks	\$60,144
GS-09 Park Ranger, estimated 32 weeks	\$49,408
GS-07 Park Ranger, estimated 32 weeks	\$44,624
GS-11 Outdoor Recreation Planner, estimated 12 weeks	\$27,774
Law Enforcement	\$3,766
<b>Seasonal Staff</b>	
GS-05 Park Ranger, estimated 16 weeks	\$14,728
<b>Operational Costs</b>	
Overnight travel per diem	\$5,760
Materials and Supplies	\$2,500
Tide books	\$920
Vehicles and Fuel	\$8,871
<b>TOTAL AVERAGE YEARLY EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$218,495</b>

## 5.2 King Range NCA Campgrounds Operating Costs

Actual costs and sources of funding vary significantly from year to year as annual variations in project-specific funding, fee revenues, public visitation, vandalism, normal wear and tear, and the coastal climate impacts on infrastructure all affect operational needs and the funding mix utilized to accomplish operations. For example, in 2022 one vault toilet door was replaced due to accelerated corrosion by the coastal climate costing \$7,739.95.

Fee revenues are a significant supplement to the operation of King Range NCA campgrounds and are used to fund routine cleaning of campground facilities with a janitorial contract from May 1 to October 31 (routine cleaning duties are performed by BLM staff the remainder of the year, approximately 1-2 days per week) and to remove the waste from the vault toilets at least once per year.

Campground maintenance is primarily performed by maintenance workers and Park Rangers. This includes trash disposal; repair of vandalism; maintenance of facilities, picnic tables, fire rings, kiosks, signage, campground roads, parking areas, vehicle barriers, as well as routine landscaping and vegetation management. Operational costs include fuel, vehicle, trailer, and equipment costs, lumber and building materials, facility replacements (fire rings, picnic tables), janitorial supplies, road materials (gravel), and paint.





*Figure 9: Park Ranger Removing Graffiti from Restroom Wall*

Campground fees are collected from the “iron rangers” and transported to a secure location where information from the envelopes is entered into a spreadsheet. The collected fees are then processed and deposited by administrative support staff.

Law enforcement conduct regular patrols (approximately twice per week) throughout King Range NCA campgrounds and recreation sites. Additional informal visitor contacts to answer questions are performed by Park Rangers and the maintenance staff.

Along with the services described above, additional costs for administering the campgrounds include:

- Managerial support and work by an Outdoor Recreation Planner.
- Development of materials for interpretive displays and kiosks, maps, brochures, signage, and the BLM webpage. These costs are likely minimal most years until a major update is needed or vandalism occurs.
- Costs associated with staffing the King Range Visitor Center year around, 5-days per week.



Figure 10: King Range NCA Staff Remove a Fallen Tree at a Developed Campground

Table 6: Estimate of Expenses for King Range Campground Operations

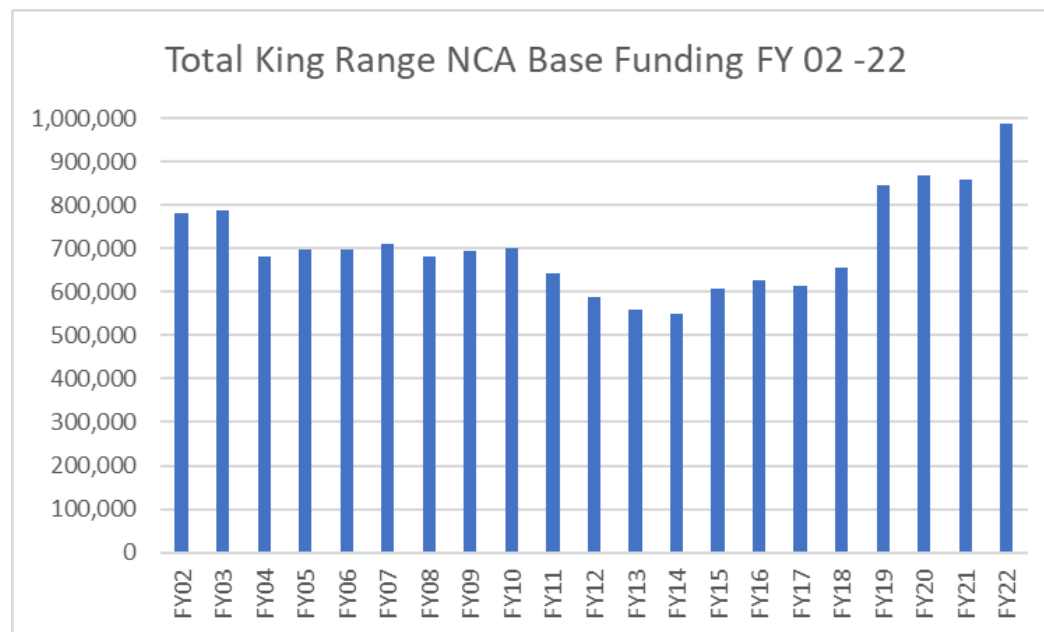
Campground Operational Expenses	
Service Provided	Costs
Staff	
WG-08 Maintenance Worker, estimated 50 days/year	\$19,160
GS-05 Park Ranger	\$3,682
Administrative Support Staff	\$5,012
Law Enforcement	\$54,152
Operations	
Janitorial Services	\$25,000
Janitorial Supplies	\$9,398
Vault Toilet Pumping	\$9,050
Materials and Supplies	\$14,019
Vehicles and Fuel	\$6,705
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$146,178</b>

## 6.0 Financial Analysis and Revenue Sources

### *Base Funding*

The King Range NCA receives an annual operating budget through the federal appropriations process. This is the base budget that supports general operations and labor. These funds come from two “Functional Areas”: 1210, for wilderness, and 1711, for National Monuments and National Conservation Areas. Both Functional Areas are combined in Table 7, which illustrates the fluctuations in the King Range NCA base funding.

*Table 7: King Range NCA Base Funding, FY 2002-2022*



Additional funding varies widely from year to year depending upon the size, scope, and specific purpose for which the funding is directed. Examples include:

- Restoration of The Punta Gorda Lighthouse and oil house (2022-2023) to improve the condition and appearance, and to provide a safe experience to the thousands of visitors who recreate at this iconic site (which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places) in the King Range NCA. This project was funded by the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA).
- The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provided \$80,000 for trail maintenance in the King Range NCA. This has provided for three 8-day trail crew “hitches,” consisting of 6-8 individuals each, and provided a much-needed injection of funding to the King Range wilderness program.

### *Grant Funding*

Funding from non-BLM sources is generally acquired for a specific project through a competitive application process. Grants have not been a major source of funding for King Range wilderness management, nor for campground operation and maintenance, with a few notable exceptions. Most recently, funding was acquired from the California State Coastal Conservancy to expand low-cost camping opportunities at Mattole Campground from 14 campsites to 23 campsites.

### Fee Revenue

Recreation use fees collected in King Range NCA are locally retained to fund operations and maintenance. Currently, a fee of \$8 per site per night is charged for overnight use within the four developed campgrounds. Fees are currently collected under the “honor system” whereby individuals utilize a standard US DOI BLM Recreation Permit Fee Envelope to deposit payment in a secure fee tube, or “iron ranger”. Additionally, commercial SRP groups pay fees calculated at 3 percent of gross revenue, while organized group SRP fees are \$6 per person per day.

Table 8: Fee Collections FY 2018-2022

Fees Collected FY 2018-2022			
	Recreation Use Fees (Campgrounds)	Special Recreation Permits (commercial and organized groups)	TOTAL
2018	\$14,584	\$19,189	\$33,773
2019	\$16,865	\$18,608	\$35,473
2020	\$15,802	\$13,849	\$29,651
2021	\$28,648	\$4,128	\$32,776
2022	\$30,237	\$12,970	\$43,207

Fee expenditures for FY22 are listed below in Table 9, which reflect an average year (expenditures for these services often come from fees collected from multiple different years).

Table 9: Fee Expenditures for FY 2022

Contract Description	Cost
Janitorial Contracts	\$46,928
Vault toilet pumping	\$8,820
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$55,748</b>

The King Range NCA has two janitorial contracts:

- Shelter Cove janitorial services consist of maintaining day-use areas, coastal access sites, and Black Sands Beach Trailhead in Shelter Cove. This includes cleaning and stocking the restrooms and ensuring they are in working order (six days per week); emptying the 12 trash containers and four recycling containers; mowing and string trimming; picking up all litter scattered around the grounds and parking areas; cleaning the two charcoal grills; and cleaning 10 interpretive signs.
- Campground janitorial services consist of cleaning and stocking the vault toilets and trash removal two days per week (three days per week on holiday weekends), May 1 to October 31.

## 7.0 Partnerships

The BLM is fortunate to partner with a variety of organizations that enhance the management of the King Range NCA. These partners provide many valuable services that BLM would not otherwise be able to provide.



Since the 1970's, the BLM has partnered with the California Conservation Corps (CCC), California's oldest youth corps, working under the authority of assistance agreements to employ CCC's 18–25 year-old corps members to complete extensive watershed, riparian, and in-stream habitat restoration, trail construction and maintenance, non-native invasive plant removal, and post-fire emergency stabilization and rehabilitation.

Since the late-1990s, the BLM has partnered with the American Hiking Society's (AHS) Volunteer Vacations program to bring volunteers to the King Range for a week-long backpack trip during which participants perform service projects in the King Range Wilderness and along the northern section of the Lost Coast Trail. Service projects include trail clearing, reconstructing trail tread, removing user-built structures and fire rings, treating invasive weeds, and marine debris/user trash collection and removal. BLM will continue its relationship with AHS into the future and hopes to create more wilderness volunteer opportunities. Since 2013 BLM also has partnered with Wilderness Volunteers (WV) and Sierra Club to complete similar volunteer service projects in the King Range Wilderness.

Since 2000, the Friends of the Lost Coast (FOLC) has helped to educate the public about the King Range NCA and the Lost Coast's unique environment. FOLC's current focus is in the following areas:

- Lost Coast Trail Stewards and Trailhead Hosts: Volunteers assist BLM with both a backlog of trail maintenance projects and engaging visitors at Black Sands Beach in Shelter Cove on the weekends of highest summer use.
- In-school environmental education.
- Summer Adventure Camp, serves over 60 youth each year, ages 4-13, bringing them outside to hike, create nature inspired crafts, journal, observe wildlife, and other educational activities.
- Lost Coast Education Center & Native Plant Garden.
- Shelter Cove Invasive Plant Program.
- Hikes and Lectures.

For more than three decades the BLM has partnered with the Mattole Restoration Council (MRC) and the Mattole Salmon Group (MSG) to improve watershed conditions in the Mattole River watershed and King Range NCA, and to assist with salmon recovery efforts. This has included the removal of abandoned road networks, "storm-proofing" active system roads, tree planting, riparian and in-stream habitat improvements, and salmonid monitoring. The MRC and MSG have been the recipients of BLM funding, working under the authority of assistance agreements, and both the MRC and MSG have sought and acquired significant, non-BLM grant funding to complete watershed and salmonid restoration projects in the King Range NCA.

Another partner, Sanctuary Forest (SFI), is a land and water trust whose mission is to conserve the Mattole River watershed and surrounding areas for wildlife habitat and aesthetic, spiritual and intrinsic values, in cooperation with the diverse community. King Range NCA biologists, geographers, and ecologists work in collaboration with SFI on state-of-the-art watershed restoration projects, such as groundwater retention ponds and beaver dam analogues.

Since 2004, the Raphael family, local organizations, and community members have collaborated on the Nick's Interns program to engage, mentor, and employ local youth in natural resource conservation work. This program serves local high school students in southern Humboldt County by offering 3, three-week, full-time paid summer internships with the BLM, Mattole Restoration Council, Mattole Salmon

Group, and Sanctuary Forest. Interns have worked in all aspects of conservation, from streamflow monitoring, steelhead monitoring, salmonid habitat restoration, native seed collecting, to hiking and mountain bike trail construction, wilderness trail maintenance, environmental education, invasive species removal, and recreation site maintenance.

BLM has partnered with the Shelter Cove Arts and Recreation Foundation (SCARF) for the past four years on the King Range Artist in Residence Program. Twice a year, an artist is chosen to immerse themselves in the wilderness area over a 4-week session during which time they use the inspirational surroundings to create meaningful artwork. The artists also lead workshops for youth and adults and present their interpretations of the King Range Wilderness at a capstone gallery show.

BLM has partnered with the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) to develop, plan, construct and manage the Paradise Royale Mountain Bike Trail System. The BLM/IMBA partnership has produced a world-class MTB trail and terrain park that has been described as “the best new trail in the US” by *Bike* magazine (March 2009). IMBA’s decades of experience building sustainable multi-use trails has greatly enhanced BLM’s capability to design, build and maintain sustainable trail systems in the extreme topography, with monsoonal rainfall and seismically active geology, of the King Range NCA.

## 8.0 Fee Proposal

The following presents the updated fee proposal for the King Range Wilderness (ISRP) and the fee adjustment proposal for King Range NCA Campgrounds. This proposal will be presented to the Recreation Resource Advisory Council (R/RAC) and based on its recommendation will either be carried forward, modified, or abandoned. The final fee structure for the ISRP will be published in the Federal Register as well as on site, online, and in local media prior to implementation.

### 8.1 King Range Wilderness ISRP Fees

This plan proposes a new ISRP fee of \$12 per person per trip for all overnight King Range Wilderness visitors 17 and older. There would be no fee for children 16 and under. The proposed ISRP fee is influenced by both the organized group SRP fees established by the BLM Director, which are currently \$6 per person per day, and the long-term average trip length for visitors to the King Range Wilderness, which is approximately three days. However, the proposed flat fee rate reflects a per person, rather than a per day fee, which is consistent with the market research (and the use of developed campgrounds), as displayed in Table 10. The market research of fees for similar experiences and areas shows that the majority are per person/trip or per night. Future adjustments in the proposed ISRP fee would be consistent with changes in organized group SRP fees set by the BLM Director. For example, if the organized group SRP fee was increased by one dollar, the ISRP fee would be increased by one dollar.

### 8.2 Campground Fees

This plan proposes an increase to the overnight use fee at all four King Range NCA campgrounds from the current \$8 per campsite per night to \$15 per site per night and would increase with inflation. The maximum number of vehicles allowed per site is two.

### 8.3 Expanded Amenity-Reservation Services

The King Range NCA will use various e-commerce technologies, as directed in BLM Instruction Memorandum 2022-010 to provide recreation visitors opportunities to find, reserve, and pay for campsites and IRSPs. Most of these options are provided through the interagency reservation service Recreation.gov. Currently, the King Range NCA utilizes Recreation.gov for the ISRP.

If the King Range NCA decides to make additional reservation services or other types of e-commerce options available in the future, an expanded amenity fee for reservation services would be charged in addition to any other standard or expanded amenity fees in accordance with 16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(G). Reservation services fees could range from \$0.50 to \$10.00 depending on the type of service provided. The reservation service fee is subject to contracting requirements and will be adjusted with contract changes or with future updates to the business plan. For visitors who don't wish to pay an expanded amenity fee of reservation services, the traditional iron ranger with RUP envelopes will exist at campgrounds until the field office moves the fee area completely to an e-commerce option and/or the RUP envelope is no longer available for payment.

### 8.4 Fee Discounts

Section 5 of FLREA provided for the establishment of a single interagency national pass known as the America the Beautiful Pass – the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Holders of the Interagency Senior and Access (for those with a permanent disability) passes receive half-off of expanded amenity fees, which includes overnight camping at campgrounds.

## 9.0 Market Research

The market assessment reviews existing fees for similar recreation opportunities. The purpose of presenting this information is to establish whether the proposed fees are set at “Fair Market Value,” and to serve as a comparison between fees for areas offering similar opportunities.

### 9.1 Comparable Fee Schedules to the Proposed King Range Wilderness ISRP Fees

Table 10 details overnight fee schedules for various backcountry and/or wilderness public land units across the western United States. Units are managed by BLM, National Park Service (NPS), US Forest Service (USFS), and California State Parks. No one unit compares equally to the King Range NCA in terms of the experience that visitors seek, but these 18 other units help understand the value of an overnight trip in a wilderness setting.



Table 10: Market Research for Comparable Wilderness and Backcountry Permit Fees

Area	Agency	State	Permit Fees	Additional Fees
<b>Per Person Per Night</b>				
Sinkyone Wilderness State Park	Ca State Parks	CA	\$5 per night/site for "trail camps" and \$25 per night/site for "environmental" campgrounds	None
Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness	USFS	CO	\$10 per person per night	\$6.00 reservation fee
Guadalupe Mountains National Park Wilderenss	NP	TX	\$6.00 per person per night	\$6.00 reservation fee
Saguaro National Park Wilderness	NP	AZ	\$8 per person per night	none
Glacier National Park Wilderness	PS	MT	\$7.00 per person per night	\$10.00 reservation fee
Olymic National Park Wilderness	NP	WA	\$8 per person per night	\$6.00 reservation fee
Desolation Wilderenss	USFS	CA	(over 12 years in age): \$5 per person for the 1st night; \$10 for 2-14 nights	\$6.00 reservation fee
<b>Per Person Per Day</b>				
Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness	BLM	AZ	\$5 per person per day	\$6.00 reservation fee
Paria Canyon	BLM	AZ	\$5 per person (and dog) per day	\$9.00 reservation fee
<b>Per Person Per Trip</b>				
Cedar Mesa and Bears Ears National Monument	BLM	UT	\$15 per person for overnight backpacking	\$6.00 reservation fee
Yosemite National Park Wilderness	NP	CA	\$5 per person	\$10 group lottery entry fee
Lassen National Park Wilderness	NP	CA	\$5 per person	\$6 reservation fee per group
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Wilderness	NP	CA	\$5 per person	\$15 reservation fee per group
Inyo National Forest Wilderness	USFS	CA	\$15.00 per person for trips entering the Whitney Zone; \$5.00 per person for all other areas.	\$6.00 reservation fee
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Wilderness	USFS	CA	\$3.00 per person	\$6.00 reservation fee
<b>Per Permit Fees</b>				
Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness	NP	CO	\$30 per permit	\$6.00 reservation fee
Grand Teton National Park Backcountry	NP	WY	\$45 for reserved permit; \$35 for walk-up permit	none
Central Cascades Wilderness	USFS	OR	\$6 per permit, group can be up to 12 people	none

## 9.2 Comparison of King Range NCA Campground Fees to Regional, State, and Federal Campgrounds

Table 11: Comparable Campground Fee Rates in the Northern California Region

Area	Agency	State	Fees	Notable Amenities
Sycamore Grove - Mendocino National Forest	USFS	CA	\$16/night	Potable water
Preacher Meadow - Shasta Trinity National Forest	USFS	CA	\$16/day	Vault toilets
Trinity River - Shasta Trinity National Forest	USFS	CA	\$16/day	Vault toilets
Pearch Creek - Six Rivers National Forest	USFS	CA	\$10/night	Potable water
Curly Jack - Klamath National Forest	USFS	CA	\$15/night	Potable water (May-Oct)
South Yuba Campground (Nevada City)	BLM	CA	\$5/night (proposed increase to \$15)	Food lockers; No potable water
Steel Bridge Campground (Redding)	BLM	CA	\$5/night (proposed increase to \$15)	Food lockers; No potable water
A W Way County Park	Humboldt County Parks	CA	\$25/night	Coin-operated showers, flush toilets, camp host.
Van Duzen County Park	Humboldt County Parks	CA	\$25/night	Coin-operated showers, flush toilets, camp host.
Sinkyone Wilderness State Park	CA State Parks	CA	\$25/night	Vault toilets
Jedediah Smith State Park	CA State Parks	CA	\$35/night	Coin-operated showers, flush toilets, camp host.
Humboldt Redwoods State Parks - Burlington Campground	CA State Parks	CA	\$35/night for one vehicle	Coin-operated showers, flush toilets, camp host.
Lassen National Park - Summit Lake	NPS	CA	\$24/night	Flush and vault toilets, potable water, trash, camp host
Point Reyes National Seashore	NPS	CA	Hike to camp: \$30/night	Potable water, food lockers

Table 11 displays information on campgrounds throughout Northern California with a variety of agencies. The campgrounds in the table are developed and offer standard amenities like picnic tables, fire rings, parking, and restrooms. Most notable in the market research is that many of the campgrounds researched have potable water. The proposed campground fees are congruent with other regional campgrounds while considering the amenities provided.

## 10.0 Financial Projection and Priorities for Future Expenditures

This financial analysis estimates the predicted King Range NCA revenue stream from recreation fees based on this fee proposal and upon historical use data. Estimates of potential fee revenues are based upon the average number of overnight visitors to the King Range Wilderness (11,332) and the average occupied camp-nights for all four campgrounds (2,668), from 2018-2022, and multiplied by the proposed fee rates.

- Projected annual fee revenue from the King Range Wilderness ISRP: \$135,984
- Projected annual fee revenue from all four King Range campgrounds: \$40,020

### 10.1 Planned Use of King Range Wilderness ISRP Fees

The primary objectives are to maintain and improve wilderness character, maintain and enhance the visitor experience of the King Range Wilderness, enhance safety/education messaging and opportunities, and to support local Search & Rescue services. The proposed fee revenue from the King Range Wilderness ISRP will be used to:

*\$66,106: Hire two seasonal Park Rangers each year.*

Hiring additional Park Rangers will help accomplish the following:

- Increase public communication at trailheads and in the Wilderness to disseminate valuable safety information about traveling on the Lost Coast Trail.
- Expand the hours of operation for the King Range Visitor Center from 5-days per week to 6-days per week from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends. This is increasingly important to answer phone calls and communicate with on-site visitors about Lost Coast Trail safety information (tides, weather, and ocean conditions), rules and regulations (where to dispose of human waste, fire restrictions), and to rent bear canisters.
- Continue to restore campsite and resource impacts, trash removal, and develop improved off-site wilderness recreation information resources.
- Monitor and evaluate actual visitor use versus target visitor capacities and evaluate the effectiveness of the permit/allocation program in meeting plan objectives to determine if the proposed daily entry limits are effective at managing overnight visitor load and meeting target visitor use zone capacities, or if additional adaptive management actions are necessary.

*\$51,000: Annual trail maintenance*

Annual trail maintenance and periodic trail re-construction projects on 85 miles of trails in the King Range Wilderness. The current cost for one trail crew for 8 days is approximately \$17,000, which will likely only continue to increase. The proposed fees will be used to fund three 8-day trail crews each year to perform much needed maintenance of the King Range Wilderness trails.



*\$18,048: Support local Volunteer Fire Departments*

Provide financial support for local Search and Rescue and volunteer fire departments for equipment, supplies, and training needs. Essentially all of the rescue and emergency support received by visitors in the King Range is from local volunteer fire departments and the U.S. Coast Guard. There are typically a minimum of 3-5 rescues conducted in the King Range wilderness each year, varying from dehydration/exhaustion issues to more serious and immediate life-threatening emergencies, such as ocean rescues on Black Sands Beach. This funding could also be used as matched funding to apply for grants or other funding opportunities to enhance safety messaging, or other related unforeseen opportunities.



*Figure 11: Local Fire Departments Perform a Rescue in a King Range NCA Campground*

The above-mentioned projects are expected to comprise the majority of expenditures of projected fee revenue. Should ISRP fee revenue exceed projections, the following projects would be prioritized for implementation:

- Additional trail maintenance.
- Conduct a visitor survey similar to the 1997 and 2003 survey to gauge the effectiveness of the ISRP.
- Maintenance of backcountry campsites and springs. These facilities provide opportunities to experience the upland portions of the King Range Wilderness. Spring maintenance provides for visitor use and safety and helps to protect natural resources.
- Coordination and Implementation of Marine Trash Removal – Cleanup of beaches, trail corridors, and campsites that are impacted by the accumulation of marine trash.

## 10.2 Planned Use of Campground Fees

The historical norm for funding recreational site operations and maintenance is to draw on base appropriated funds supplemented with fee revenues collected within the specific office. The proposed fee increase is expected to generate approximately \$40,020 in fee revenue annually, or 27% of actual campground operating costs. The proposed fee revenue will be used to ensure continued contracted janitorial services and removal of waste from the vault toilets. Additional fee revenue collected beyond what is projected would be used to purchase janitorial supplies and replace aging infrastructure.

## 10.3. Positive Fund Balance Maintenance

The King Range NCA will strive to maintain a positive fund balance to have the flexibility to obtain matching funds in applying for grants, effect emergency repairs, provide long-term stability for staff services, provide capability to meet unanticipated costs or to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities to improve services, and to use revenues to provide future recreation infrastructure to support visitor use. In addition, the positive fund balance would cover expenses in the case of reduced fee revenue due to unforeseen circumstances. The positive fund balance will be managed as a working capital fund with the goal of investing in facilities and services that will continue to provide quality services consistent with visitor demand.

# 11.0 Anticipated Impacts from Implementing the Proposed Fees

The KRNCA has been operating and maintaining the campsites and trails in the King Range Wilderness without requiring a fee for recreation use. Partnerships and volunteers have historically been heavily relied upon to provide basic visitor services and wilderness campsite and trail maintenance.

The campground fees have been \$8 per site per night since 1993. Site facilities require annual maintenance and repairs; resources require protection; and visitors require services for public health and safety (such as restrooms, information, and law enforcement services). Currently, annual operating and maintenance costs are covered by a mix of federally appropriated funds, SRP fee revenue, and the existing campground fee.

The following is an analysis of potential recreational, environmental, economic, and socioeconomic impacts that could result from implementing the fee program at King Range Wilderness and updating the King Range Campground Fees.

### Benefits to Recreational Visitors:

The proposed fees in this Draft Business Plan ensure that services may continue at the King Range NCA campgrounds while allowing more appropriated base funding to be used for other services, such as maintenance for the 41 miles of unsurfaced roads in the King Range NCA. Services for the campgrounds include maintained septic systems, trash removal, basic sanitation, periodic law enforcement patrols for health and safety, and replacing worn and outdated infrastructure.

The new ISRP would allow for consistent and reliable funding for at least three trail crew sessions per year. Also, the new fee revenue would provide the funding to hire additional staffing to expand the hours of operation of the King Range Visitor Center to include Saturdays. This would be a great benefit

to the recreating public who rely on the King Range Visitor Center for important updates of safety information, trip planning, map purchases, and the rental of bear canisters, to name a few. Lastly, the new fee revenue would be used to support local volunteer fire departments. If visitors to the King Range NCA become injured, lost, or need emergency rescue, they will be relying on local Search and Rescue volunteers and fire departments. Providing financial support for these departments would benefit recreational visitors to the King Range NCA.

The proposed ISRP fee for overnight travel in the King Range Wilderness will reduce the number of permits that go unused because visitors will have an incentive to cancel their permits and receive a refund. Additionally, the proposed fee will encourage visitors to reserve their ISRP with the correct number of participants.

#### Benefits to the Local Economy:

Visitors that come to the King Range NCA contribute to local economies by stopping in the surrounding communities to purchase goods and services (such as gas, food, lodging, and other supplies or services). Data is not available to estimate how much money visitors to the King Range NCA spend in these local communities; however, any changes in visitation numbers would be expected to increase or decrease this amount accordingly. With the revenue from the new and updated recreation fees, the King Range NCA will have the needed additional funds to maintain and enhance the recreational setting to continue to attract visitors and ensure continued contributions to these local economies.

#### Benefits to the Environment:

The new ISRP program and updated campground fees would enable the King Range NCA to reduce impacts to sites and resources through the continued cleaning, repairs, and maintenance of facilities and backcountry campsites. For example:

- The availability of clean and reliable vault toilet facilities and routine trash removal service at the campgrounds.
- Park Rangers cleaning and maintaining backcountry campsites by removing trash, improperly buried human waste, and cleaning fire rings so that they can be continually used and thus eliminating the desire/need for the construction of new fire rings by visitors.

#### Socio-economic Impacts, Including Low-Income Populations

Updated campground fee rates were considered with reference to the locality, and the new fees reflect a rate that is considered affordable for low-income populations. Anticipated socio-economic effects of implementing the proposed fee update for the campgrounds include the displacement of low-income users who cannot afford, and other visitors who refuse to pay, the updated recreation fee. However, it is not anticipated that the expanded amenity fee of \$15 per site per night will have a significant impact on developed campground use in the King Range NCA. At \$15 per site per night, the cost of using King Range NCA developed campsites is less than North Coast CA State Parks and Humboldt County's fees for campsites with similar amenities. Furthermore, there is a 50% discount on camping fees afforded to America the Beautiful Pass holders. When people seek no-cost options for camping, the King Range NCA will educate the inquiring public on responsible recreation and provide locations where dispersed camping is available in the King Range NCA.

Anticipated socio-economic effects of implementing the new ISRP fee include the displacement of low-income users who cannot afford, and other visitors who refuse to pay, the new recreation fee. Low-income and underserved individuals may have less of an ability to pay overnight use fees to experience



the King Range Wilderness with the implementation of a new fee schedule. However, it is expected that the impacts to most individuals seeking overnight use in the King Range Wilderness will be minimal due to the high cost and time investments already required to successfully backpack in the area. Many of these individuals are somewhat familiar and/or have personal experience with quota/lottery systems and paying a fee for overnight use in specially designated areas. It is expected that impacts to low-income and underserved populations will be minimal due to transportation and equipment costs that already necessary for an overnight backpacking trip in the King Range Wilderness. Additionally, no ISRP fee for those 16 and younger will help make an overnight trip into the King Range Wilderness affordable for families and low-income visitors.

The following conclusions about willingness to pay from visitors to the Lost Coast Trail are based on visitor studies conducted and reported by Humboldt State University in 1997 and 2003 (Martin and Widner 1998; Martin and Harris 2004).

*Table 12: Visitors' willingness to pay for use of Lost Coast Trail (1997 Study)*

Question	Percent of respondents who answered
Yes	81%
No	16%
No response	3%

Table 13 shows the median amounts respondents were willing to pay for King Range Wilderness access in 2003. The median per-day amount that people were willing to pay is \$5. The median per-visit amount was \$10. Non-locals (not a resident of Humboldt or Mendocino Counties) were willing to pay a higher amount per visit (\$10.00) than locals (\$7.50).

*Table 13: Amount willing to pay based on local/non-local status (2003 Study)*

Median amount willing to pay:	Locals	Average: Non-Locals	Average: Overall
Per day	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00
Per visit	\$7.50	\$10.00	\$10.00

Further, the 2021 GPRA visitor survey asked how appropriate the fee charged for the site/area was. Of the 68 respondents, 12% reported that the fee was, "far too low," while 26% reported that the fee was, "too low." The remaining responses indicated that the fee was, "about right". The GRPA visitor survey was conducted across multiple recreation sites in the King Range NCA, so it is uncertain if the site/area is a campground, a day use site, or the King Range Wilderness.

#### Environmental Justice:

The King Range NCA wilderness and developed campgrounds are managed with respect to environmental justice, which is defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Furthermore, the King Range NCA abides by fair treatment as defined by the EPA, where "no group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies."

Where camping with an amenity fee is not a possibility for visitors, the King Range NCA will encourage dispersed camping, where appropriate, and expand education on principles such as Leave No Trace. Additionally, ensuring campgrounds meet or exceed accessibility requirements will be a priority.

## 12.0 Anticipated Impacts of Not Implementing the New Fees

### Impacts to Recreational Visitors

Failure to implement the fee program will result in continued reliance on fluctuating federally appropriated funds and the existing fee revenue to maintain amenities and services. With this lack of funding, the King Range NCA may need to further implement cost saving measures by reducing the amenities and services that are provided, which could result in decreased recreational opportunities and increased impacts on resources and public health and safety. Services that may be reduced or eliminated in the future include, but are not limited to:

- Maintenance of the trails.
- Maintenance of the unsurfaced roads in the King Range NCA that are used to access various trailheads and dispersed recreational opportunities.
- Trash collection services in the campgrounds and throughout the day use sites in Shelter Cove and Black Sands Beach Trailhead.
- King Range Visitor Center hours may fluctuate and be reduced depending on staffing.
- Shortening or eliminating janitorial contracts.

Amenity campgrounds are considered functioning when most features are in operating condition, a sense of security prevails, and services are timely and routine. Impacts of not changing fee rates may mean deteriorating conditions, such as rotting campground markers remaining in place, fire rings that are missing or in a state of disrepair and remain dislodged from the ground, and bathrooms with needed replacement parts or in need of repainting may not be refurbished in a timely way.

### Impacts to the Local Economy

Failure to maintain visitor facilities and services, and the subsequent impacts to the recreation setting, would detract from visitors' recreational experiences and may lead to negative "reviews" (online and word of mouth) and fewer people recreating in the area. Any decrease in visitation could negatively impact local economies due to a reduction in the number of people stopping in the nearby communities to purchase goods and services.

### Impacts to the Environment

Without the revenue from the campground fees, the King Range NCA may be fiscally unable to adequately maintain, and may need to reduce, the existing environmental protections in the area (such as restroom facilities, fencing/barriers for off-highway vehicles into sensitive areas, signing, and law enforcement patrols) and result in increased resource degradation.

Without fee revenue from the new ISRP visitor services may be reduced resulting in impacts to the environment. This includes Park Rangers cleaning and maintaining backcountry campsites by removing trash, improperly buried human waste, and cleaning fire rings so that they can be continually used and thus eliminating the desire/need for the construction of new fire rings by visitors. Additionally, King Range Visitor Center hours would not be expanded, which provides information and education to

visitors on proper human waste disposal in the backcountry, the use (and rental) of bear canisters, and fire safety, including any current fire restrictions.

#### Socio-economic Impacts, Including Low-Income Populations

There would be no socio-economic impacts. The King Range NCA campground would remain at \$8 per site per night and the King Range Wilderness would continue to be free for visitors (except for the reservation fee for each permit).

#### Environmental Justice

Principles of environmental justice would be upheld regardless of fee rates. Priority in funding services would be given to upholding fair treatment and equitable access. Providing infrastructure to meet Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) specifications will continue to be a priority, for example.

### 13.0 Public Outreach

This Draft Business Plan will be made available for public review and comment for 30 days. As part of the proposal to modify recreation site fees and establish a new fee, the King Range NCA will conduct the following outreach to notify the public of its opportunity to review and provide comments:

- Public notice of proposed fee changes will be posted onsite at trailhead and campground kiosks until implemented.
- Information will be posted to Recreation.gov, where the public obtains overnight wilderness permits, and on the BLM King Range website.
- An email will be sent to individuals who obtained an ISRP over the past three years, at minimum.
- Special Recreation Permittees will be notified.
- News releases will be provided to local news outlets, informing the public of the proposed fee changes, and requesting public comment. Additionally, emails and/or flyers will be distributed widely throughout the region to include, but not limited to businesses and service providers; state, county, and tribal governments; Southern Humboldt Business and Visitors Bureau; King Range NCA gateway communities; California State Parks; Redwood National Park; US Forest Service.
- The King Range NCA will present the campground fee proposal to the BLM Northern California District Resource Advisory Council (RAC). The FLREA mandates that the appropriate Recreation RAC reviews all BLM recreation fee proposals prior to approval. Comments from both the public at large and the RAC will be considered prior to approval of this business plan.

Public notification of the new and updated recreation fees would occur a minimum of six months prior to the establishment of the new ISRP fee and updated campground fees, as mandated by FLREA.



## 14.0 References

Recreation.gov

King Range NCA/Lost Coast Trail Visitor Survey; Social & Economic Science Research Center, Washington State University

Bureau of Land Management (2014) BLM H-2930-1 Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook.

Martin, S. and C. Widner. 1998. Final Management Report for 1997 Lost Coast Backcountry Visitor Study. Report submitted to DOI Bureau of Land Management, King Range National Conservation Area, Whitethorn, CA.

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