



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

BLM California Recreation Strategy



2023

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Introduction

In 2014, BLM Headquarters released the first Recreation Strategy - Connecting with Communities and an updated version in October 2020. The strategy aims to reposition the resources of the BLM's Recreation and Visitor Services Program to achieve the social, economic, and environmental goals of local communities located near America's public lands while expanding the benefits of outdoor recreation to public land visitors. The strategy identifies numerous external and internal efforts that will be necessary to enhance collaboration with local communities, businesses, and other service providers who are dependent upon the public lands for enhancing their quality of life.

In June 2021, BLM California completed the California Recreation and Visitor Services Program Review to determine strengths and weaknesses of the recreation program, identify strategic opportunities, challenges, and provide recommendations for a statewide recreation strategy and budget allocation model. The review, undertaken with assistance from Department of Interior's Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution, included surveys, interviews, and data analysis, which provided an understanding current program status, and potential direction for the future.

In October 2021, BLM California completed a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) Audit. The audit included 29 permittees that operated between 2018, 2019 and 2020. Audit Report had specific recommendations for each permittee. CASO has provided audit recommendations to the field offices and will follow up semiannually to ensure audit recommendations are being addressed.

This step-down strategy outlines BLM California's current action plan for implementing the national Connecting with Communities Strategy and incorporating key recommendations from the 2021 California Recreation and Visitor Services Program Review and findings from the SRP Audit. This strategy does not amend any BLM Resource Management Plans or replace any local planning or decision-making processes. Rather, it lays out how BLM California's will achieve its Recreation and Visitor Services mission while sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Background



BLM California offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities including hiking, mountain biking, fishing, hunting, climbing, horseback riding, boating, camping, Off-Highway Motor Vehicles (OHV) and backcountry exploring. BLM California has 542 Recreation sites and areas, 735,000 acres open for OHV, 350 miles of open river for fishing and 189 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail. BLM field offices are in 14 communities across California and are responsible for the on-the-ground stewardship and providing access to outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands.

Why It's Important

In 2021, over 14.2 million people visited the 15 million acres of multiple-use public lands administered by the BLM California. Visitation on BLM lands in California increased 9% from 2019 to 2020 and 12% from 2020 to 2021. The increase in visitation the past few years further demonstrates the need to continue collaboration and communication with local communities, public lands stakeholders, nongovernmental organizations, and chambers of commerce.

BLM California, through increased collaboration and partnerships can improve the recreational opportunities and experiences that communities value, prioritize recreation areas that provide the greatest public benefits, and ensure recreation areas are maintained. This increased collaboration will improve the visitor experience by increasing quantity and quality of recreation services and build a

more efficient and sustainable recreation program. These efforts will further contribute to the socioeconomic health and well-being of the local communities that BLM California serves.

Vision

The vision of the BLM California Recreation Strategy is to expand collaboration with local, state, tribal and federal partners to provide equitable access and sustainable recreation opportunities on California's public lands. BLM will accomplish this vision through internal and external actions.



Internal Repositioning Strategy

BLM California has a dedicated field staff of outdoor recreation planners, recreation technicians, park rangers, and are supported by field office staff and managers. BLM California needs to maintain a trained recreation workforce to engage with the community, partners, local governments, tribal and federal agencies. BLM California will continue to improve knowledge sharing across field offices, improve communication and utilize funding sources.

Priority Action Items are **bolded** under each Strategic Focus.

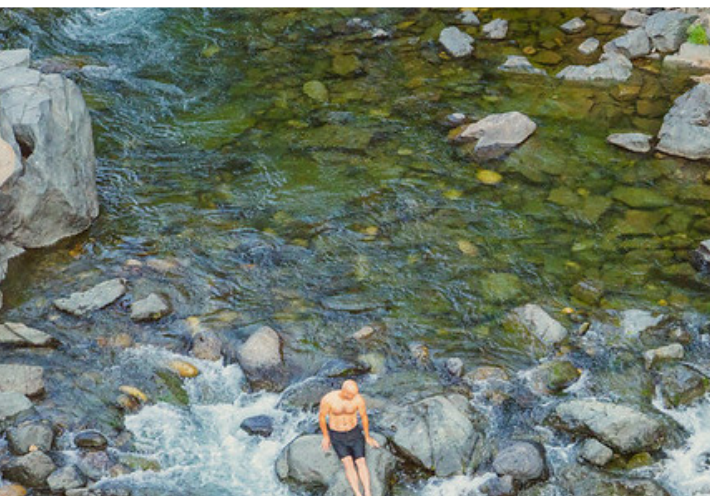
Goal 1: Provide enhanced Skills, Accurate Data Reporting and 1220 Budget

Strategic Focus 1: Training

The need to improve staff knowledge and skills was identified in the California Recreation Program Review and the SRP Audit. Most of the applicable training is offered through the National Training Center (NTC).



- **Field offices will conduct an internal training needs assessment to identify training needs to improve recreation knowledge and skills.**
 - ◆ **Provide training assessment needs to the State office recreation staff.**
 - ◆ CA State office recreation staff will prioritize training needs and will continue to collaborate with Head Quarters (HQ) Recreation Leads and BLM National Training Center (NTC) to provide trainings, or work with NTC to garner expert advisor to provide training.
- **Recreation staff with less than 3 years' experience shall attend the following NTC trainings:**



- ◆ **Recreation 101**
 - ◆ **Recreation Permitting (Special Recreation Permits)**
 - ◆ **Travel and Transportation management**
 - ◆ **Recreation Management Information System management (RMIS)**
- CA State office recreation staff shall continue statewide monthly calls and provide webinars for Recreation and Visitor Services staff on training topics specific to training needs.



Strategic Focus 2: Maintain an Accurate Inventory of Data Reporting

The Recreation Program Review emphasized the need for accurately data reporting. The data entered into the Recreation Management Information System (RMIS) is a critical metric for the 1220 Budget Allocation Model.

- **Field offices shall expand their ability to accurately track visitation through various methods such as increased use of traffic counters or other means.**
 - ◆ Field offices should develop a frequency (weekly, biweekly, monthly) for traffic counter or other data collection.
 - ◆ Field offices shall inform California State Office (CASO) Recreation Lead when they need traffic counters.
 - ◆ Field offices shall leverage partnerships to improve visitor data collation.
- **Field offices will continue to record all recreational use of the public lands in (RMIS).**
 - ◆ RMIS data entry should be entered quarterly, and the data is required to be entered by September 30th each year as identified in [IM 2021-037](#).
- Field offices will participate in BLM Visitor Satisfaction Surveys to ensure BLM is providing a quality recreation experience.
 - ◆ **Each year BLM California will select two recreation areas sites to participate in the survey as required by [IB 2022-006](#).**
- Field Managers will support maintaining and updating recreation site information on BLM databases.
 - ◆ Recreation Information Database (RIDB) data is used to populate webpages on blm.gov and recreation.gov.
 - ◆ Recreation reservable sites must be edited in the Recreation.gov HUB portal.
 - ◆ BLM has moved to [DRUPAL](#) (our web content software) as the tool to edit non-reservable site data in RIDB.
- One of the SRP Audit recommendations was to offer an electronic permit system. The Recreation and Permit Tracking Online Reporting System (RAPTOR) makes Special Recreation Permits process simpler, consistent, provides tracking with automation and has secure user access.



- ◆ CA RAPTOR schedule has been submitted to HQ requiring all BLM offices to move to RAPTOR for all new SRP issuances by the end of FY25.
- ◆ CASO Recreation Lead will notify field office staff when the NOC is accepting volunteers to join RAPTOR.
- ◆ [RAPTOR](#) will be mandatory for all BLM field offices by FY26.

Strategic Focus 3: 1220 Recreation Budget and Funding

A 1220 Budget Allocation Model (BAM) Metric was recommended as part of the California Program Review that was published in June of 2021.

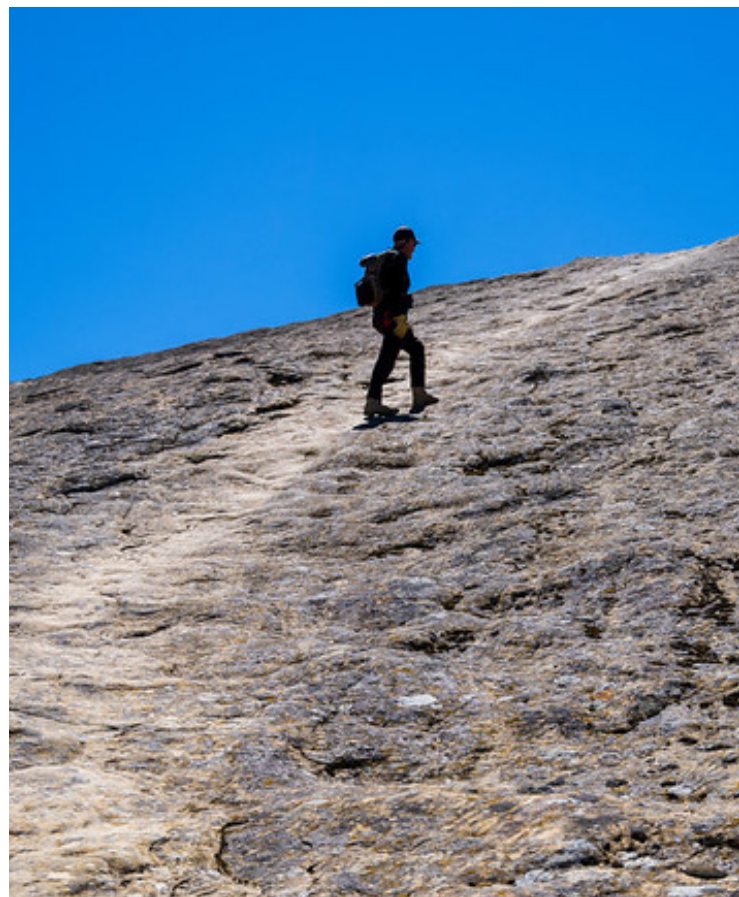
- A workload Metric was developed using Visitation, Special Recreation Permits, Recreation Partnerships and Geographic edge of field office boundary in miles.
- The State Budget Strategy Team approved the 1220 Budget Allocation Model (BAM) in May of 2022.
 - ◆ CASO Recreation Lead will provide annual trainings on the BAM metric.
- Field Offices are encouraged to seek OHV grants and other funding sources to supplement the recreation budget.

Goal 2: Partnerships

The Recreation Review identified partnerships as vital to managing public lands. A partnership is an engagement with diverse partners that helps ensure that management decisions and efforts reflect the interests of affected communities while accomplishing shared or complementary goals. They provide invaluable support for activities on BLM-managed lands with their donation of time and resources. In addition, the White House and Department of Interior have prioritized strengthening of government-to-government relationships with sovereign Tribal Nations.

Strategic Focus 1: Enhance Partnerships

- **Field offices shall continue to seek partnerships with local tribes, community outreach groups, regional sustainable recreation groups, state, and federal partners.**
 - ◆ Field offices shall reach out to local tribal groups to explore opportunities for partnering in recreation.
- **Ensure partners understand the Recreation and Visitor Services, Notice of Funding Opportunity in the grants.gov system.**
 - ◆ Offices shall communicate with partners that are interested in applying for the grant opportunity to ensure they understand the application process.



- **Field offices will improve communication with partners by planning regular coordination meetings.** The meetings allow for coordination, collaboration, expectations and keep them informed on upcoming project opportunities.
- Partners should be leveraged to assist with design and construction of facilities where possible, especially for trail maintenance and construction.
- Field offices will emphasize partnering with local groups to assist in educating the public on sustainable use habits and etiquette.
- CASO will coordinate trainings for Partnership Agreements, Financial Assistance Agreements, Friends Group Partnership Agreements and Monetary Donations.

Strategic Focus 2: Across Agency Collaboration Internal and External

- **Field offices shall communicate new and ongoing partnerships to district office.** This will allow the district to share partnership information across field offices to maximize efforts and create efficiencies.
- **Field offices shall collaborate with neighboring agencies (Federal, State and County).** Collaboration with agencies on a monthly, quarterly, or semiannual call will aid in planning efforts for recreation projects that crosses agencies boundaries and allow for shared resources.

Goal 3: Communication and Outreach Efforts

The Recreation Review highlighted the need to focus on visitor education and to develop a high impact visitor outreach effort at all information points.

Strategic Focus 1: Employ a Palette of Interpretive Communication Tools & Market Recreation Opportunities

- All field offices will promote and apply new avenues for public engagement with social media, online commenting platforms and QR codes at recreation sites and areas.
 - ◆ Communication and information on social media, signage, kiosk, and visitor centers will be evaluated for 508 compliant, and to ensure messaging is current and meaningful.
 - ◆ **A sign replacement priority list will be developed in each office. Funding has been set aside in the National Sign Program. Offices have been informed the amount of funding they have been allocated to use through the National Sign Program.**
- Identify methods to distribute information to market statewide and regional recreation opportunities to target youth, provide education, resource protection to the visiting public.



- **Recreation information will be available in multiple languages.**
- Ensure that GIS-enabled maps of BLM trails and recreation sites that provide real-time location information is available publicly and for mobile devices.
- **Identify and prioritize the development of maps of designated trail systems surrounding local communities.**
- Promote equitable access to public lands by promoting recreation opportunities that provide free parking, hiking, and camping.
- Pursue partnerships and contract with agencies, universities, organizations, and business to develop and distribute multimedia outreach content that promotes and markets recreation opportunities.

Strategic Focus 2: Improve Message Content and Delivery

- **Expand the use of BLM social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr to market field office recreation opportunities and proper use of the recreation area.**
 - ◆ Field offices shall evaluate their messaging of agency campaigns, [Outdoor Ethics](#) and [Know Before You Go](#) to determine the effectiveness and find creative ways to convey messaging. Field offices can create a pack it out program that encourages all users to reduce impacts during their visit by remembering that what is brought to the recreation area should be brought out of the recreation area at the end of each visit.





- Public Affairs will assist with interpretive displays and brochures, and other information available in a variety of media including the latest technologies.
- **Field offices shall work collaboratively with city, town, county, chamber of commerce, and friend groups to develop and deliver information about recreational opportunities on local BLM lands at via off-site visitor contact facilities.**
- **Field Offices are encouraged to submit success stories to Public Affairs Office.**

Goal 4: Establish Secure and Reliable Funding Sources

Strategic Focus 1: Use All Funding Sources Available

- CASO, Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Planner (OHV) will provide training and technical assistance to field offices when applying for OHV grants.
- CA BLM will maximize our competitiveness for obtaining additional one-time funds (e.g., Deferred Maintenance, Challenge Cost Share, Federal Highway Administration) by increasing recreation staff awareness and understanding of how to use alternative funding sources for the benefit of public use and resources.
- **Field offices will work with existing partners and pursue new partnerships to increase BLM California's eligibility for matching funds (e.g., sponsor cash, in-kind goods or services, volunteer labor, donations).**
- Additional 1220 funding allocated from the Washington Office may be used to fund the priorities outlined in this strategy.



Strategic Focus 2: Use Collected Fees to Their Maximum Potential to Develop Recreation Benefits

- Recreation fees will continue to be used as an investment to enhance the visitor services and recreation opportunities available to the public at the sites where fees are collected. (e.g., facility repair and maintenance; upgrade trails and roads; create more accessible facilities).
- **Field offices will complete, revise or update business plans by FY27 for all fee sites and areas.**
 - ◆ CASO Recreation Lead will provide a business plan template that can assist with the plan development.
 - ◆ CASO Recreation Lead will use the business plan tracking spreadsheet to track the status, establish priorities and to keep Head Quarters updated.
- The field office shall inform the public about fee revenue expenditures regarding local fee sites through posting the information at the recreation site (e.g., campgrounds, day-use areas, special areas) and visitor centers, on websites, and in newsletters.

- **Field Managers shall ensure 1232 Spend Plans Electronic Reporting is submitted prior to December 31st each year as required in [IM 2022-019](#).**
- **Field offices must transition their recreation fee programs, where practical (including sales of local agency passes), to one or more [e-commerce](#) technologies and use these products and service to conduct official business electronically as required by [IM 2022-010](#).**
- CASO Recreation Lead will assist with the e-commerce process conversion.

External Repositioning Strategy

BLM California has engaged with local communities in the development of the recreation program, however there are opportunities for BLM California to further develop closer ties to communities, public land stakeholders, nongovernmental organizations, and chambers of commerce. Field offices can prioritize recreation areas that provide significant public benefits and community connection. BLM California will continue to build and maintain relationships with external partners and build a collaborative approach to improve community connection.



Priority Action Items are **bolded** under each Strategic Focus.

Goal 1: Community Networks

Collaboration and planning with a variety of community sectors will build greater ties with stakeholders, build relationships, and share information.

Strategic Focus 1: Engage with Community Networks

Partnerships provide an opportunity for the public to discuss improvements in recreation areas that may provide significant public benefit to the community. Collaboration by field offices with local, state, tribal and federal partners is vital to providing equitable access to hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, OHV, and other activities by promoting recreation activities on California's public lands.

- **Field offices are encouraged to partner with local communities, chamber of commerce and other nongovernmental organizations.**
- Field offices shall seek local recreation partnerships to assist with messaging on BLM lands and social media platforms, promote volunteer opportunities and Leave No Trace Principles.

Goal 2: Community Enhancement

Strategic Focus 1: Enhance Community Based Recreation Opportunities

- **Field offices will identify areas where portal signs, kiosks, and bulletin boards are needed to improve signage and inform the public they are on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands with the intent to enhance education information for visitors to understand the local recreational resources, various multiple-use management programs and interpret natural, cultural, geological, and scenic features.**



- BLM CA at all levels will collaborate with friends' groups, permit holders and local community members that have a common vision and common interest, examples include Adopt-a-Trail program, Tread Lightly program, and Recreation Responsible.
- **BLM CA will prioritize recreation projects that are mutually beneficial to public land resources and the surrounding community, that correspond to common visions and objectives, and sustain the distinctive desired recreational settings of the surrounding landscape.**
- CASO will support Field offices public outreach meetings to discuss and answer questions regarding current projects and events.
- BLM CA will focus advertising, programming, and staffing efforts to those recreational opportunities that will directly benefit communities.

Goal 3: Increase in Visitation of both Experienced and Non-experienced users

BLM California visitation increased 12% in 2021 from 2020. Impacts of increased visitation are overflowing parking lots, parking in unauthorized areas, congestion at trailheads and bike trails, an expansive amount of trash and debris, and communicating to new users not knowing how to recreate properly on the land. The volume of visitation exceeded office staff's capacity to manage the increase impacts at some of the recreation areas. Offices had to increase the frequency of cleaning of facilities, collection of trash, and modify parking areas.



Strategic Focus 1: Experienced users

Experienced users usually plan ahead, understand the resources, and have experience in the recreation activity.

- Field Offices should seek partnership or volunteer agreements with experienced users within the local community to assist with education, monitoring, and information sharing on what trends they are seeing on the public land.

Strategic Focus 2: Non-experienced users

First time users were unaware of resource protection, proper disposal of waste, and how to recreate on the land respectfully. Users were not practicing good [Outdoor Ethics](#) and [Know Before You Go](#).

- Field Offices shall evaluate education information for first time users and create a best practices list for recreation areas.

Annual Status Report:

- CASO Recreation Lead will provide an annual status report on the progress of the **bolded** Priority Action Items in the strategy.