



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

# Salmon Field Office Recreation Sites Business Plan

May 2024



Prepared by

BLM Salmon Field Office

## **Mission statement**

The Bureau of Land Management sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

## **Cover Photo**

Tarpons Roost Cabin (BLM)

## **For more Information**

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Salmon Field Office Recreation Sites Business Plan

Created April 2024

Recommended by:

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Glenn Travis Seaberg, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Date

Reviewed by:

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Linda R. Price, Salmon Field Manager

Date

Approved by:

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Mary D'Aversa, Idaho Falls District Manager

Date

This business plan was prepared pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (Public Law 108-447) and BLM recreation fee program policy. It establishes future management goals and priorities for the Recreation Fee Program in the Salmon Field Office.



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Salmon Field Office  
1206 South Challis Street  
Salmon, Idaho 83467



In Reply Refer To:  
2932 (IDI04000)

Dear Reader,

I would like to present for your review and comment the Draft Salmon Field Office Recreation Fee Sites Business Plan. The Bureau of Land Management, Salmon Field Office (BLM) manages the Salmon Field Office Recreation Fee Sites Program which includes 5 campgrounds, two rental shelters, and a developed day-use hot spring facility. All recreation fee sites are located within the Salmon Field Office in eastern Idaho.

This business plan includes a proposed fee increase to address facility maintenance and public health and safety needs due to increased visitor use and the cost of yearly operations associated with the recreation sites. The plan proposes to increase the current \$5/night per campsite fee at all five campgrounds to \$15/night per campsite, designate two group campsites at both McFarland and Williams Lake Campgrounds with a \$30/night per group campsite fee, and establish a new fee of \$75/night for Tarpons Roost. The rationale for the fee increase, comparison to other campgrounds with similar amenities, operating costs, and anticipated revenue is found in the business plan.

The plan will be presented to the BLM Idaho Resource Advisory Council for their review and approval, at their May meeting. After incorporating public comments and RAC input, the final business plan for the Upper Salmon River Recreation Fee Sites Program would be approved and initiated 180 days after federal register notice publishing.

A public comment period has been established to give you the opportunity to submit feedback on the proposed business plan and associated fee proposal. Comments are due by June 5, 2024. Comments will be accepted through the following means:

Email: [BLM\\_ID\\_SalmonOffice@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_ID_SalmonOffice@blm.gov)

U.S. Mail: BLM Salmon Field Office, 1206 S Challis St., Salmon, ID 83467

Thank you for your interest in your public lands.

Sincerely,

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Linda R. Price  
Field Manager

## Executive Summary

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

BLM Manual 2930 requires field offices to produce a business plan when establishing new fee areas and sites and developing or changing recreation fees. The business plan outlines the fee program for the identified location and thoroughly discusses and explains how fees are consistent with the criteria set forth in FLREA. Business plans assist offices in determining appropriate fee rates, outlining the costs of administering fee programs, and identifying priorities for future fee program expenditures. The plan also serves as the outreach document to provide the public with opportunities to participate in the development of or modification of recreation fees.

The SFO manages five campgrounds, two rental cabins, and a developed hot spring use through issuance of Recreation Use Permits (RUP) for short-term recreation use of specialized sites, facilities, and/or services which meet the fee collection criteria established by FLREA. This business plan describes the recreation fee sites, proposed site fee changes, planned fee revenue expenditures, a financial analysis of fee charges for other similar recreation facilities, and impacts of proposed fee changes.

After careful consideration of the current fee program, current and anticipated revenues and expenditures, and comparison with other regional recreation providers, the SFO proposes the following fee modifications:

- Increase the individual campsite fee at all SFO campgrounds from \$5 to \$15 per night.
- Designate two group campsites at each McFarland and Williams Lake Campgrounds. Establish new group campsite fee of \$30 per night.
- Establish new fee of \$75 per night for rental of Tarpons Roost cabin.

The proposed fee modifications are necessary to meet the growing expenses of the recreation fee sites program especially the rising cost of annual maintenance and the associated increase in public use and increasing age of the campground facilities. Developed campgrounds, rental cabins, and hot springs are management tools used to prevent further resource damage and to provide better visitor services. Recreation fees are also considered a way to ensure that those who actively use developed recreation opportunities make a reasonable contribution towards protecting and enhancing those opportunities.

# 1. Introduction

## a. Authorities and Regulations

The authorities and regulations for this business plan are:

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended,** [Public Law 94-579] contains BLM’s general land use management authority over the public lands and establishes outdoor recreation as one principal use of those lands. Section 302 (b) of FLPMA directs the Secretary of the Interior to regulate through permits or other instruments the use of the public lands. The BLM originally began collecting recreational fees for the use of public lands under this authority. Section 303 of FLPMA contains the BLM’s authority to enforce the regulations and impose penalties.
  
- **The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) 2004** [Public Law 108-447] repealed applicable portions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and replaced the BLM’s authority to collect recreational fees. The FLREA provides the BLM the authority to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at federal recreation lands and waters that meet certain requirements. The FLREA also allows the BLM to keep the fee revenues at the local offices where they are collected and directs how the BLM will manage and utilize these revenues, including for expenses such as facility repair, maintenance and enhancement, interpretation, visitor information, services and needs assessments, signage, law enforcement directly related to public use and recreation, and operating or capital costs associated with the Recreation and Visitor Services program. The FLREA also established the America the Beautiful—The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass program. The FLREA is codified in the U.S. Code in Title 16 (Conservation), Chapter 87 (Sections 6801-6814).
  - Definitions of Standard and Expanded Amenities from FLREA, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation fee program policy and manual (Manual 2930 – Recreation Permits and Fees) for the area covered under this business plan:
    - Standard Amenity Recreation Fees cover outdoor recreation areas that provides significant opportunities for outdoor recreation; has substantial Federal investments; where fees can be effectively collected, and that has all of the following amenities: (I) designated developed parking, (II) a permanent toilet facility, (III) a permanent trash receptacle, (IV) interpretive sign, exhibit, or kiosk, (V) picnic tables, (VI) security patrols.
    - Expanded Amenity Recreation Fees cover specialized outdoor recreation sites and services including but not limited to developed campgrounds with at least a majority of the following amenities: (I) tent or trailer spaces, (II) picnic tables, (III) drinking water, (IV) access roads, (V) fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM, (VI) reasonable visitor protection, (VII) refuse containers, (VIII) toilet facilities, (IX) simple devices for containing a campfire (Sec. 803.(g)(2)(A) of REA).

- Additional Expanded Amenity recreation facilities or services include rental of cabins, group day-use or overnight sites, binoculars or other equipment (Sec.803.(g)(2)(C) of FLREA); use of hookups for electricity, cable, or sewer (Sec.803.(g)(2)(D) of FLREA); use of sanitary dump stations (SEC.803.(g)(2)(E) of FLREA); and use of reservation services (Sec.803.(g)(2)(G) of FLREA).
- **43 CFR 2930: Permits for Recreation on Public Land.** The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is an annual codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the federal government. Title 43 covers public lands administered by the Department of the Interior. Sections 1000 – 9999 cover the Bureau of Land Management.

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

- BLM Recreation Permits and Fees Manual 2930
- BLM Recreation Permits and Fees Administration Handbook (2930-1 Handbook)

#### b. Business Plan Requirements

The BLM strives to manage recreation and visitor services to serve diverse outdoor recreation demands while maintaining the sustainable resource conditions needed so recreation opportunities remain available. The BLM is committed to provide and receive fair value for the use of developed recreation facilities and services in a manner that meets public use demands, provides quality experiences, and protects important resources. The BLM’s policy is to collect fees at specialized recreation sites, or where the BLM provides facilities, equipment, or services, at Federal expense, in connection with outdoor use.

The BLM Handbook H-2930-1, Recreation Permits and Fee Administration (Rel. 2-300, dated November 17, 2014), requires that each recreation fee program have 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, the expected benefits to be derived for the public, and to provide a structured communication and marketing plan. 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 insures public accountability. The business plan will specifically cover a description of the fee sites, fees collected, proposed fee changes, associated operating costs, financial analysis, impacts of charging fees, and planned expenditures of fees. This report utilized data from internal BLM tracking and accounting mechanisms such as the Recreation Management Information System (RMIS), Collections and Billings Systems (CBS), Federal Business Management System (FBMS), and other locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking methods.

### c. Environmental Justice

Consistent with Department of Interior and BLM priorities, the BLM seeks to achieve environmental justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and make a difference in communities through expanding recreational access and opportunities and providing for natural resource interpretation. This includes to:

- encourage, facilitate, and improve partnership with and access for youth, tribes, and underserved communities to public lands through recreation partnerships and collaborations;
- improve public health and safety at developed recreation sites and areas by updating and modernizing infrastructure—including meeting accessibility standards for people with disabilities;
- invite education, interpretation, and recreational access for all Americans, especially for diverse populations and those near urban areas to encourage enjoyment of public lands and waters;
- collaborate with community members, government organizations, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and other stakeholders to address environmental and health-related challenges for recreation management;
- enhance understanding of environmental and health-related issues at the community level;
- improve methods for identifying, addressing, tracking, and measuring progress toward achieving environmental justice; and develop and support youth education and outreach programs.

## 2. Background and Fee Sites

### a. Area Description and Visitation

The Salmon Field Office (SFO) is the administrative unit responsible for the management of almost 500,000 acres of BLM administered lands in Lemhi County, Idaho. Lemhi County encompasses the Salmon and Lemhi Rivers corridors as well as the Bitterroot and Lemhi Ranges of the Rocky Mountains. The SFO offers stunning scenery, peaceful solitude and outstanding opportunities for year-round recreation including hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, river rafting, snowmobiling, motorized and non-motorized trails, wildlife, and scenic viewing.

The SFO manages five campgrounds, two rental cabins, and a developed day-use hot spring facility as the recreation fee sites program. The SFO charges expanded amenity fees for fee campgrounds and rental cabins utilizing recreation use permits (RUP). A standard amenity fee is used at Sharkey Hot Springs for day-use visits. The SFO also manages two non-fee campgrounds, several river access sites/boat ramps for the Salmon River, day-use picnic and historic sites, and sections of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail, and Nez Perce National Historic Trail.

Most recreational visitors to the SFO during the winter/spring/summer are local area residents or from neighboring communities in Eastern Idaho or Western Montana. Fall recreation sees an increase in out-of-area visitors coming for big-game hunting seasons from September-

December. There has been an increase in year-round visitors from other areas of the United States, as well as international visitors in recent years. Big-game hunting, river rafting, and hiking the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail draw the largest percentage of out-of-area visitors.

*Image 1. Sharkey Hot Springs recreation site.*



*Graph 1. Recreation visitor days to SFO fee sites.*



*\*Geertson Shelter receives approximately 100-130 visitor days per year.*

## b. Recreation Site Descriptions

### i. McFarland Campground

This 5-acre campground, 30 miles southeast of Salmon, features nine designated campsites (each equipped with gravel parking area, fire pit, picnic table, and briquette grill), double vault bathroom, garbage service, potable water system, law enforcement patrols for visitor safety, and walk-in fishing access to the Lemhi River. The RUP fee is \$5/night with an additional vehicle fee of \$2/night. The site sees regular camping use during the summer months and heavy use during the hunting season from September-November. McFarland Campground meets all nine amenities listed in FLREA for an expanded amenity fee.

*Image 2. McFarland Campground campsite.*



## ii. Morgan Bar Campground

This 7-acre campground features eight designated campsites (each equipped with gravel parking area, fire pit, picnic table, and briquette grill), two single vault bathrooms, garbage service, potable water system, law enforcement patrols for visitor safety, horseshoe pits, grass volleyball court, boat ramp with access to the Salmon River, adjacent 37 acres field with wetlands and pond for wildlife and bird viewing, and a reservable covered pavilion (equipped with lights, electrical outlets, picnic tables seating up to 40 people and oversized briquette grill). The RUP fee is \$5/night with an additional vehicle fee of \$2/night. The site sees camping use all year with the highest use in the summer and fall months. The campground also receives heavy day-use traffic utilizing the boat ramp and parking area during the spring and fall steelhead fishing seasons as well as summer river rafters. Morgan Bar Campground meets all nine amenities listed in FLREA for an expanded amenity fee.

*Image 3. Morgan Bar Campground entrance.*



### iii. Shoup Bridge Campground

This 2-acre campground features eight designated campsites (each equipped with paved asphalt parking area, fire pit, picnic table, and briquette grill), double vault bathroom, garbage service, potable water system, law enforcement patrols for visitor safety, boat ramp with access to the Salmon River, and designated boat trailer parking area. The RUP fee is \$5/night with an additional vehicle fee of \$2/night. The site sees camping use all year long and heavy day-use traffic utilizing the boat ramp and parking area during the spring and fall steelhead fishing seasons, as well as summer river rafters. Shoup Bridge Campground meets all nine amenities listed in FLREA for an expanded amenity fee.

*Image 4. Shoup Bridge Campground.*



#### iv. Tower Rock Campground

This 5-acre campground features six designated campsites (each equipped with paved asphalt parking area, fire pit, picnic table, and briquette grill), covered pavilion facility with multiple picnic tables seating up to 24 people and an oversized briquette grill, lighted double vault bathroom, garbage service, law enforcement patrols for visitor safety, handicap accessible fishing access, boat ramp with access to the Salmon River, and designated boat trailer parking area. The RUP fee is \$5/night with an additional vehicle fee of \$2/night. The site sees camping use all year with the highest use occurring during the summer and fall months. The campground also sees heavy day-use traffic utilizing the boat ramp and parking area during the spring and fall steelhead fishing seasons, as well as from summer river rafters. Tower Rock Campground meets eight of the nine amenities listed in FLREA for an expanded amenity fee. The site does not offer potable water.

*Image 5. Tower Rock Campground entrance.*



#### v. Williams Lake Campground

This 13-acre campground, 11 miles southwest of Salmon, features eight designated campsites (each equipped with gravel parking area, fire pit, picnic table, and briquette grill), two vault bathrooms, garbage service, law enforcement patrols for visitor safety, and potable water system. The RUP fee is \$5/night with an additional vehicle fee of \$2/night. The site sees regular camping use during the summer months and heavier use during October and November with open big-game hunting seasons in the area. Williams Lake Campground meets all nine amenities listed in FLREA for an expanded amenity fee.

*Image 6. Williams Lake Campground campsite.*



vi. Geertson Shelter

This high elevation remote rental cabin is situated just below Geertson Lake, 5 miles east of Salmon, near the top of the Beaverhead Mountains. Access to the site is limited to either hiking, horseback riding or by high-clearance off-highway vehicles through private land. The cabin features bunk beds, loft area, dining table, wood stove and covered wood storage area, propane cook stove, and simple cooking utensils, as well as outside picnic table, fire pit, and nearby outhouse. The cabin sees occasional day use and rents sporadically throughout the year due to remoteness and lack of public access. The nightly rental fee for Geertson Shelter is \$20 and meets the definition of a rental cabin listed in FLREA for an expanded amenity fee.

*Image 7. Geertson Shelter.*



vii. Tarpons Roost

This newly constructed rental cabin is located on the Continental Divide two miles south of Lemhi Pass. The shelter is a 20-ft x 20-ft one room log structure with bunk beds that will sleep up to 6 people (adults and children). A table with benches, cooking and eating utensils and equipment, axe, shovel, bucket, cleaning supplies and firewood (during the winter months) will also be provided. A wood stove will be available for heat, and firewood will be provided to renters from Sept. 16 through June 15. Renters will need to provide their own firewood from June 16 through Sept. 15. The cabin has no electricity or running water. Other amenities included in the nightly rental fee are a concrete vault bathroom, gravel parking area, horse corrals, briquette grill, picnic area, and fire pit. Tarpons Roost has a proposed nightly rental fee of \$75 and meets the definition of a rental cabin listed in FLREA for an expanded amenity fee.

*Image 8. Tarpons Roost rental cabin during construction.*



*Image 9. Tarpons Roost site.*



### viii. Sharkey Hot Springs

This 1-acre day use site, 18 miles southeast of Salmon, features: two 6'x10' concrete soaking pools with built-in steps, benches, handrails, and concrete surround. At the site there is a designated gravel parking area, garbage service, two heated changing rooms, double vault bathroom, communal fire pit area with benches, picnic tables, briquette grills, law enforcement patrols for visitor safety, interpretive signs, fee collection kiosk, and ADA accessible concrete parking area and walkways. The day use fee is \$3/person for users over 16, and annual passes are \$20. Children under 16 are not charged a fee. The site sees constant use year-round with approximately 60-80 visitors per day. Sharkey Hot Springs meets all the criteria listed in FLREA for charging a standard amenity fee.

*Image 10. Sharkey Hot Springs soaking pools.*



### c. Operating Costs

The SFO expends considerable resources in managing the recreation fee sites. Direct costs for recreation management includes BLM labor, camp host stipends, services such as restroom pumping, garbage collection, firewood, hazard tree mitigation, potable water testing, vehicles and vehicle maintenance, law enforcement, signage, maintenance materials and supplies, brochures, and other interpretive materials. The SFO spends approximately \$48,500 each year to operate and maintain the fee recreation sites program (with the addition of Tarpons Roost the total would be approximately \$59,500). The table below is a breakdown of all approximated costs associated with operating SFO recreation fee sites in 2023. These expenditures represent expenses of a typical year, although some years may be higher due to unforeseen circumstances.

*Table 1. 2023 recreation fee site expenditures.*

| Expenditure   | Amount   |
|---|----------|
| Labor – Outdoor Recreation Planner (2 months)   | \$12,000 |
| Labor – Park Ranger (4 months)  | 14,500   |
| Camp Host Stipends  | \$3,500  |
| Services – restroom pumping, garbage collection, potable water testing, hazard tree removal, etc. | \$5,000  |
| Maintenance Supplies  | \$3,500  |
| Vehicles/Fuel   | \$10,000 |
| Total Expenditure   | \$48,500 |

The SFO anticipates spending approximately \$11,000 each year to operate and maintain Tarpons Roost, which includes staff salary (seasonal and permanent), vehicles, fuel, and supplies for cleaning and maintenance of the site. The cost of fee collection at this site will be less than \$1,000 annually with the booking taking place on Recreation.gov reducing the amount of staff time needed for collection and counting of fees. The total yearly annual operating costs for the Tarpons Roost site is anticipated to be \$10,000.

*Table 2. Annual anticipated operating costs for SFO recreation fee sites.*

| Recreation Site     | Operating Costs | Fee Collection Costs | Total    |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------|
| SFO Campgrounds     | \$25,000        | \$5,000              | \$30,000 |
| Sharkey Hot Springs | \$15,000        | \$2,000              | \$17,000 |
| Geertson Cabin      | \$1,000         | \$500                | \$1,500  |
| Tarpons Roost       | \$10,000        | \$1,000              | \$11,000 |
| Totals              | \$51,000        | \$8,500              | \$59,500 |

#### d. Recreation Use Fees and Revenues

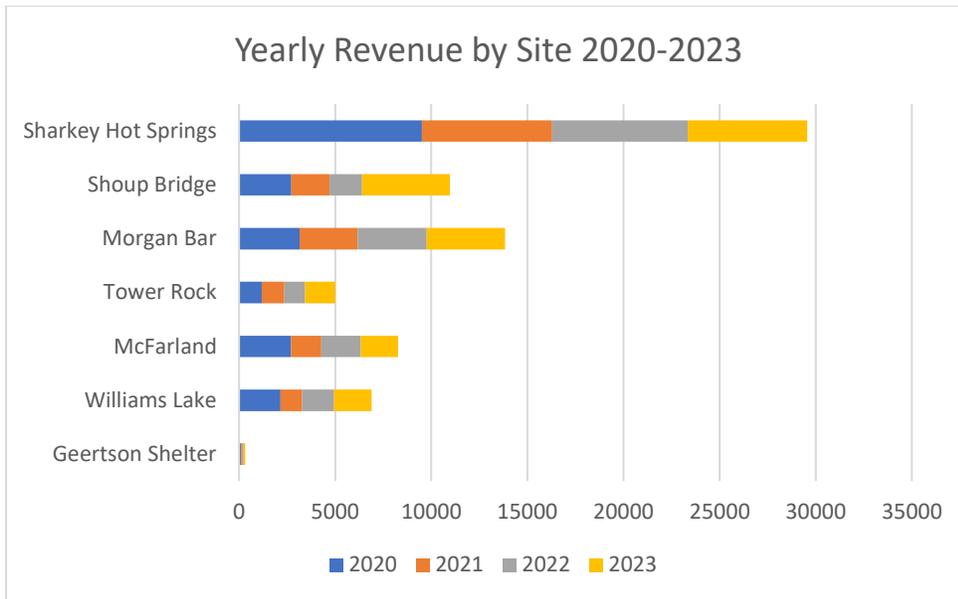
Visitors camping overnight at the five fee campgrounds within the SFO are required to obtain a recreational use permit (RUP)/fee envelope at the self-service fee stations located at each campground. Campers may also use the Scan & Pay feature on Recreation.gov to obtain a RUP for any of the SFO fee campgrounds. Visitors at Sharkey Hot Springs may obtain a RUP from the self-service fee station located onsite or purchase an annual pass from the SFO office. Visitors may also purchase a day-use pass or annual pass for Sharkey Hot Springs through Recreation.gov. The RUPs for all fee sites must be displayed either at the campsite or on their vehicle at all times during their use of the recreation site. If using e-commerce through Recreation.gov visitors must display a fee envelope with their reservation number.

Geertson Shelter nightly rental reservations may be obtained by visiting or calling the SFO office during normal business hours from 08:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday. Tarpons Roost will be available to reserve through Recreation.gov. The recreational fee revenues collected from Sharkey Hot Springs, Geertson Shelter, Tarpons Roost, Williams Lake and McFarland Campgrounds are deposited into the Non-River Recreational Fee Sites Account ID23 (LVR-DID230000). The recreational fee revenues collected from Morgan Bar, Shoup Bridge, and Tower Rock Campgrounds are deposited into the Upper Salmon River Recreational Fee Sites Account ID08 (LVRDID080000). The tables and graphs below show recent revenues collected.

*Table 3. Yearly revenue from all fee sites combined.*

| Year    | Revenue  |
|---------|----------|
| 2020    | \$21,543 |
| 2021    | \$15,731 |
| 2022    | \$17,182 |
| 2023    | \$20,431 |
| Average | \$18,721 |

Graph 2. Yearly revenue from individual sites.



SFO 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 day use within the field office. Most of these options are provided through the interagency reservation service Recreation.gov. If the SFO decides to add additional reservation services or other types of e-commerce 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).

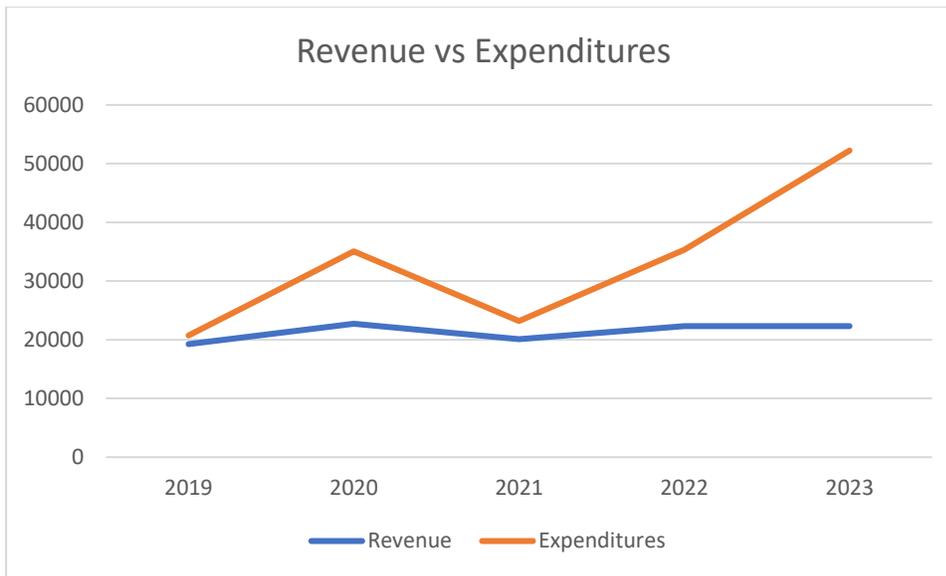
Reservation services fees could range from \$0.50 to \$10.00 depending on the type of service provided. The reservation service fee is subject to contracting requirements and will be adjusted with contract changes or with future updates to the business plan. The field office will continue to provide a blend of reservation and first-come first serve options at each of the campgrounds and day use areas. This accommodates visitors who do not desire to pay the expanded amenity fee for reservation services. Other payment options may also be considered in the future as technology and software develops.

#### e. Expenditures and Planned Future Projects

Normal campground annual operation and maintenance funding will come from base appropriated budget sources and supplemented with recreational fee revenues. Specific operation and maintenance costs were included above in the operating cost section of this business plan and are anticipated to be approximately \$51,000 per year. The cost of fee collection at these sites is also an annual expenditure and is approximately \$8,500 annually for all sites combined, which includes staff time for collection, counting, recording, and depositing of recreation fees.

The fee revenue utilized each year varies depending on the appropriated budget, permanent staffing, and number of summer seasonal park rangers hired. Fee revenue needed can also fluctuate due to unforeseen circumstances.

Graph 3. Yearly revenues and expenditures for 2019-2023.



The expenditures included above are for base annual maintenance and operations and do not include any significant improvements, upgrades, or larger deferred maintenance projects. Planned future projects for the SFO recreation fee sites include:

- Morgan Bar Campground – Additional walk-in tent sites are planned for Morgan Bar Campground. These sites will appeal to recreationalists wanting a more remote campsite while still being near the main campgrounds designated facilities. Fee revenue may be used for campsite preparation/construction and purchasing additional infrastructure such as picnic tables, fire pits, and briquette grills. Project could require up to \$8,000 from fee revenue accounts to complete.
- Tower Rock Campground – The old potable water system at the campground is not functioning and is in need of replacement. SFO is currently working with the District Engineering staff to design a new system to enhance visitor services. This is a multi-year project and funding may come from multiple sources including the recreation revenue fee accounts. Project could require up to \$100,000 from fee revenue accounts to complete.
- Williams Lake Campground – A deferred maintenance project is scheduled for 2028 to remove an existing single-vault toilet and convert the area into an additional campsite. The project would also re-gravel and grade the campground access road. The project should be funded by deferred maintenance dollars but could require \$10,000-\$15,000 from fee revenue accounts.
- Sharkey Hot Springs - A potential safety hazard was discovered with the concrete bathroom. The bathroom will be replaced and an additional concrete sidewalk poured in front of and adjacent to the bathroom. The cost of the project could be up to \$200,000. Funding may come from multiple sources including the recreation fee revenue accounts. The project could require the entire balance of the fee revenue account to complete.

- Tarpons Roost - The site is currently under development with an anticipated completion date in of August 2024. The main structure is completed on top of the cement slab foundation and a single-vault concrete bathroom has been placed adjacent to the site. Spring/summer 2024 planned projects to complete before site is in operation include: installing doors and windows, interior finishes to structure, enclosure fence around site, livestock shelter area, woodshed, picnic area, and installing an information kiosk. The fee revenue accounts may be used to complete these projects which is estimated to be approximately \$30,000.

### 3. Fee Proposal

#### a. Summary of Fee Proposal

The fee program for the SFO fee campgrounds has been in place since the early 1990s and fees have not increased during that time. Operation and maintenance costs have increased drastically since then in every category including labor, fuel, vehicles, supplies, annual maintenance, as well as deferred maintenance. There are no currently designated group campsites at any SFO campground. Two sites at each McFarland and Williams Lake Campgrounds have been analyzed as sufficient in size to warrant a group campsite designation. Group campsite designation would allow the use of more than one recreational vehicle or camp trailer to be used at the campsite to accommodate recreationists who desire a group camping experience. This will broaden the appeal of these campgrounds and help to promote diversity and inclusion at our recreation sites.

The following are the proposed fee increases for SFO fee campgrounds:

*Table 4. Existing and proposed fee structure.*

| Recreation Site  | Existing Fee | Proposed Fee |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| All SFO Campgrounds – Individual Campsites                                       | \$5          | \$15         |
| McFarland and Williams Lake Campgrounds – Group Campsites (2 at each campground) | N/A          | \$30         |

The SFO also proposes to initiate a nightly rental fee for Tarpons Roost. The nightly rental fee is proposed to be \$75/night, and all nightly rentals will be booked online through Recreation.gov. The maximum length of stay is proposed to be 7 consecutive nights, and the site will sleep up to 6 people total (adults and children).

#### b. Financial Analysis of Proposed Fees

The current annual revenue for the five SFO campgrounds is \$11,251 (based on the latest 5-yr average). If the proposed fee increases for campgrounds are implemented it would increase yearly campground revenue to \$33,753. This projected revenue would be sufficient to cover the \$30,000 base annual maintenance and operating costs associated with the five campgrounds. This revenue would be used for on-site operations and BLM recreation staff labor that provides resource protection and visitor services, facility maintenance, information displays, administrative costs, law enforcement patrols, and future improvements and upgrades to the recreation sites.

If the proposed fee is implemented for Tarpons Roost the projected yearly revenue would be \$10,800 based on the proposed \$75/night fee and the anticipated 40% of available nights booked (144 nights per year). That projected revenue would be enough to cover anticipated annual operating costs of \$10,000 if base budget or other funding sources are not available.

*Table 5. Current versus proposed revenues.*

| Recreation Site     | Current  | Proposed |
|---------------------|----------|----------|
| SFO Campgrounds     | \$11,251 | \$33,753 |
| Sharkey Hot Springs | \$7,391  | \$7,391  |
| Geertson Cabin      | \$100    | \$100    |
| Tarpons Roost       | N/A      | \$10,800 |
| Totals              | \$18,742 | \$52,044 |

If the proposed fees are implemented, the projected total yearly revenue for all SFO recreation fee sites would be \$52,044 (including all SFO campgrounds, Sharkey Hot Springs, Geertson and Tarpons Roost Cabins). The total expenditures and operating costs for all fee sites are anticipated to be \$59,500 annually.

*Table 6. Current versus proposed revenues and expenditures.*

|          | Revenue  | Expenditure | Difference |
|----------|----------|-------------|------------|
| Current  | \$18,742 | \$48,500    | -\$29,758  |
| Proposed | \$52,044 | \$59,500    | -\$7,456   |

### c. Fair Market Analysis and Fee Calculation

The SFO determined the new proposed expanded amenity fees for existing and new recreation fee sites by comparing the BLM facilities to other facilities that offer similar recreation activities, access, services, and amenities in Eastern Idaho and Western Montana. These include facilities managed by adjacent BLM field offices as well as those managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS).

#### Hot Springs

The fair market value calculation method was used in the fee calculation process with comparisons to other day use hot spring facilities in Eastern Idaho and Western Montana. The current day-use fee at Sharkey Hot Springs is \$3/adult and no charge for children under 16.

Table 7. Comparable hot spring facilities.

| Facility               | Agency                                   | Location                     | Fee   |
|------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|
| Sharkey Hot Springs    | BLM                                      | 13 miles southeast of Salmon | \$3/adult, no fee children under 16                     |
| Jackson Hot Springs    | Private                                  | 28 miles northeast of Salmon | \$10/adult, \$7 child under 16                          |
| Lost Trail Hot Springs | Private                                  | 40 miles north of Salmon     | \$8.25/adult, \$6.25/child 3-13, \$2.25/child under 3   |
| Challis Hot Springs    | Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation | 50 miles south of Salmon     | \$10/adult and children over 6, no fee children under 5 |

The comparison day-use fees listed above are for access to larger private swimming pool hot spring facilities, as those are the closest comparison to Sharkey Hot Springs. The pools at Sharkey Hot Springs are much smaller and can only be used for soaking and not for swimming. The comparison hot spring facilities also have access to indoor lodge-type facilities and restaurants. Based on the above comparisons the Sharkey Hot Springs day-use fee is considered a fair value.

### Campgrounds

The fair market value calculation method was used in the fee calculation process with comparisons to public campgrounds (BLM and U.S. Forest Service (USFS)) in Eastern Idaho. All BLM SFO campgrounds currently charge \$5/night per campsite.

Table 8. Comparable individual campsite fees.

| Campground    | Agency | Location                     | Fee        |
|---------------|--------|------------------------------|------------|
| Wallace Lake  | USFS   | 8 miles northwest of Salmon  | \$15/night |
| McDonald Flat | USFS   | 18 miles west of Salmon      | \$10/night |
| Spring Creek  | USFS   | 23 miles northwest of Salmon | \$15/night |
| Iron Lake     | USFS   | 24 miles southwest of Salmon | \$10/night |
| Twin Creeks   | USFS   | 30 miles north of Salmon     | \$15/night |
| Ebenezer Bar  | USFS   | 32 miles north of Salmon     | \$15/night |
| Cottonwood    | BLM    | 36 miles south of Salmon     | \$10/night |
| Bayhorse      | BLM    | 56 miles southwest of Salmon | \$10/night |
| Meadow Lake   | USFS   | 58 miles southeast of Salmon | \$15/night |

The comparison camping rates listed above are for basic (non-electric) campsites with access to picnic tables, barbecue grates, vault restrooms, and potable water. These campgrounds were chosen for comparison because they are the geographically closest public campgrounds with similar amenities to the BLM SFO campgrounds. Private campgrounds were not analyzed because the rates they charge are usually higher based on access to more amenities. Based on the above comparisons the BLM SFO campgrounds current rates are priced slightly-below to well-below average.

Five of the nine comparable campgrounds charge \$15/night and the other four charge \$10/night with the overall average of the nine comparable campgrounds being \$12.77/night. The SFO proposed fee of \$15/night would be considered a fair value.

*Table 9. Comparable group/double campsite fees.*

| Campground  | Agency | Location                     | Fee        |
|-------------|--------|------------------------------|------------|
| Twin Creeks | USFS   | 30 miles north of Salmon     | \$20/night |
| Meadow Lake | USFS   | 58 miles southeast of Salmon | \$20/night |
| Birch Creek | BLM    | 87 miles southeast of Salmon | \$35/night |
| Bonanza     | USFS   | 69 miles southwest of Salmon | \$35/night |

The comparison camping rates for group or double campsites listed above are for basic (non-electric) campsites with access to picnic tables, barbecue grates, vault restrooms, and potable water. These campgrounds were chosen for comparison because they are the geographically closest public campgrounds with similar amenities to the proposed BLM SFO group campsites. Private campgrounds were not analyzed because the rates they charge are usually higher based on access to more amenities. Two of the comparable campgrounds charge more per night for group sites, while two charge less than the SFO's proposed \$30/night. The average of the comparable sites is \$27.50. Based on the above comparisons the proposed BLM SFO group campsite fees are considered a fair value.

### **Rental Cabins**

The fair market value calculation method was used in the fee calculation process with comparisons to other rental cabins in Eastern Idaho and Western Montana. The nightly rental fee for Geertson Shelter is \$20 and sleeps 4. The proposed fee for Tarpons Roost is \$75/night and sleeps 6.

Table 10. Comparable rental cabins.

| Rental Cabin | Agency | Location                     | Sleeps | Fee        |
|--------------|--------|------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Twin Lakes   | USFS   | 19 miles northeast of Salmon | 4      | \$55/night |
| Bloody Dick  | USFS   | 22 miles east of Salmon      | 4      | \$55/night |
| Yellowjacket | USFS   | 31 miles west of Salmon      | 3      | \$40/night |
| May Creek    | USFS   | 31 miles north of Salmon     | 4      | \$45/night |
| Gordon-Reese | USFS   | 36 miles north of Salmon     | 8      | \$75/night |

The comparison rates listed above are for similar basic rental cabins without electricity. These rental cabins were chosen for comparison because they are the geographically closest rental cabins operated by a government agency. Access to the comparison rental cabins is either by motorized road or trail. Some have year-round road access while some only have seasonal motorized road access. Private rental cabins were not analyzed because they normally offer electricity and more amenities than those considered. When comparing rental cabins of various size and capacity an average fee per occupant was used. The average of the five comparable rental cabins was \$12.29 per occupant night.

Based on the above comparisons and taking into account the remoteness and limited motorized access the current nightly rental fee for Geertson Shelter (\$20) is considered fair to slightly-below average.

Based on the average per occupant night rate of \$12.29, and considering Tarpons Roost will accommodate 6 people, that equals \$73.80. Based on the above comparisons and considering the ease of access to site, size and number of sleeping accommodations, the proposed nightly rental fee for Tarpons Roost (\$75) is considered a fair value.

The SFO developed the proposed fee increases in this business plan by utilizing the fair market value analysis. The proposed fees are within the range of other service providers' and are based on what these agencies currently charge for similar visitor facilities, access, and amenities. Although comparison to facilities with similar services and amenities was the main determining factor, the SFO also took into consideration the length of time since the SFO last raised fees, the number of discounted RUPs sold (see Fee Discount section on page 29), and the increased cost of maintaining and operating the recreation sites.

#### d. Use of Fees

The SFO's primary goal for recreation fee sites is to provide high-quality recreation opportunities and experiences for all visitors. BLM labor will continue to be the highest operating cost, with minimal recreation site fee revenue utilized for labor. However, this may change in the future. BLM staff, among many other things, provides visitor information, conducts field patrols, maintains facilities, collects and reconciles fees, and rehabilitates natural resource damage.

Recreation fee revenue will continue to heavily support operations of the sites. The following is an initial list of priority expenditures that recreation fee site revenue will continue to be used for:

- Service contracts for garbage collection, septic pumping, water testing, and hazard tree mitigation.
- Supplies including but not limited to cleaning supplies, toilet paper, hand soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, fuel for motorized equipment, paint, lumber, etc.
- Maintain, improve, and replace recreation site infrastructure such as signage, fire rings, picnic tables, restroom buildings, information kiosks, etc.
- Government vehicles and trailers.
- Maps, brochure reprints, and interpretive materials.
- Construction of additional recreational facilities.

#### e. Impacts of Fee Changes

The intent of the SFO Recreation Sites fee proposal is to create a group of self-sustaining recreation sites. The purpose of the BLM recreation fee program is not to maximize revenue but to help protect natural resources, provide for public health and safety, and facilitate access to public lands and waters. BLM Manual 2930 – Recreation Permits and Fees outline that fees should be balanced and affordable for all members of the public, rather than an impediment. Recreation fees are also generally considered a way to ensure that those who actively use developed recreation sites make a reasonable contribution towards protecting and enhancing those opportunities. The fees proposed and projected revenue is similar to the anticipated annual operating costs associated with the recreation sites. If implemented the fee proposal would then meet the desired goal of being self-sustaining.

#### i. Impacts of Adopting Proposed Fees

High quality recreation opportunities are valued locally, statewide, and nationally by the public. The SFO expects the demand for camping and the associated recreation on public lands to continue to increase in the future. As visitation increases, so does the maintenance and operating costs associated with the campgrounds in this business plan. Implementing the fee proposal would improve the quality of the visitor experience by supporting more campground amenities, increasing recreation staff presence, and improving overall visitor experiences and satisfaction.

Implementing the proposed fees would give the SFO more flexibility in relation to funding for maintenance and operating costs associated with fee sites, and not be solely dependent on appropriated funding. If the proposed fee increases were adopted, current services would continue. New projects identified in the Expenditures and Planned Future Projects section could be implemented as needed. Site infrastructure, cleanliness, and visitor services and information would also benefit. All these combined would improve the overall visitor experience.

It is imperative to the local economy to keep recreation site infrastructure in good condition, clean, and serviced to high standards. Maintaining these high standards and creating new opportunities improve the overall recreational experience for current and future visitors alike.

## ii. Impacts of Not Adopting Proposed Fees

New and existing facilities represent a substantial public investment. Without a fee increase, visitors could expect to see a loss of functionality and use of these facilities as maintenance capacity will be reduced due to insufficient funding or staffing. As costs are anticipated to increase, maintenance might not happen as quickly or as often as needed, and some services might be reduced.

Recreation demands would continue to increase if visitation increased, thus the costs to operate the fee sites and those proposed in this analysis would become more dependent on fluctuating appropriated funding. The field office might have challenges implementing the BLM's recreation strategy. As mentioned earlier, not implementing the proposed fees could lead to limited services such as cleaning and maintaining the sites. If sites are not appealing to visitors, they might stop recreating in this region, thereby affecting the local economy.

The fee proposal may have an impact on low-income or minority populations. There are numerous free dispersed camping opportunities throughout the SFO as well as adjacent Salmon-Challis National Forest. The SFO also manages two free developed campgrounds located in the field office. There are also opportunities for 50% discounted camping fees for the campgrounds included in this business plan (details in Fee Discounts section below). With the opportunities for free or discounted fees, implementing the fee proposal is expected to have no significant impact to low-income or minority populations considering the availability of non-fee campgrounds and fee discounts.

## iii. 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. This pass as well as Every Kid Outdoors pass provides the bearer full coverage of standard amenity fees at Sharkey Hot Springs. The remaining fee sites within the SFO charge an expanded amenity fee. Holders of the Interagency Senior and Access passes may receive half-off of expanded amenity fees at individual sites only. This includes overnight camping at all five SFO campgrounds, but not rental cabins. No other fee discounts, passes or waivers are allowed.

# 4. Outreach

## a. Public and Stakeholder Participation

The BLM's "Blueprint for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Outdoor Recreation" provides a vision to proactively manage for exceptional and one-of-a kind recreational experiences that invite all to share in the enjoyment and stewardship of their public lands and waters. As part of this blueprint the SFO seeks engagement and partnerships with local stakeholders to accomplish mutual public access and recreation objectives.

#### Public Communication and Marketing Plan:

- Public notice of the proposed fee system, including fee details and calling for public comments, will be posted at the recreation sites included in this business plan and at the SFO Office, the Public Lands Center, in Salmon, ID.
- News release detailing the fee proposal and calling for public comments will be issued to all local newspapers and posted on BLM social media.
- The business plan will be published on the BLM website with links to submit comments. <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-fees/business-plans>
- A Notice of new Recreation Fee Collection, along with a call for public comments, will be published in the Federal Register.

The SFO will present the Upper Salmon River Recreation Fee Sites fee proposal to the BLM Idaho Resource Advisory Council (RAC) for advice, feedback and, recommendations at its next meeting in May of 2024. FLREA mandates that the appropriate RAC be consulted and given the opportunity to provide recommendations to BLM for all recreation fee proposals prior to implementation. Comments received from the public and BLM Idaho RAC will be considered prior to implementation of the fee proposal.

#### b. Feedback Mechanisms

The BLM will provide a 30-day minimum public review period during which the public will have the opportunity to learn about the proposal and to submit comments for consideration.

The public may submit comments on the proposed recreation use fee changes utilizing the following methods:

- Email to: [BLM\\_ID\\_SalmonOffice@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_ID_SalmonOffice@blm.gov)
- U.S. Postal Mail to: BLM Salmon Field Office, 1206 S Challis St., Salmon, ID 83467

## 5. Map of Salmon Field Office Recreation Fee Sites

