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

Draft Business Management Plan

Cody Field Office



Draft Business Plan for:
Five Springs Falls Campground, Hogan and Luce Reservoirs, and Cottonwood Creek Campground

RECOMMENDATIONS, REVIEWS, AND APPROVALS

Recommended by:

_____ _____

Outdoor Recreation Planner Date

Reviewed by:

_____ _____

Assistant Field Manager Date

Approved by:

_____ _____

Field Office Manager Date

This business plan was prepared pursuant to the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act (Public Law 10-8-447) and BLM recreation fee program policy. It establishes future management goals and priorities for the recreation fee program for campgrounds in the Cody Field Office.

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Executive Summary

This draft business plan for Five Springs Falls Campground, Cottonwood Creek Campground, and Hogan and Luce Campground, seeks to establish two new fee areas and raise the cost of camping fees at the existing fee site. The Bureau of Land Management – Cody Field Office is seeking these changes compliant with 16 USC Ch. 87 Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) §6802 Expanded Amenity Recreation Fee. FRLEA grants BLM the authority to modify fees at Federal recreational lands. It also grants the BLM the authority to establish new fee areas that meet criteria specified in the FLREA.

This plan proposes the following fee changes:

- **Five Springs Falls Campground**
    - Increase from $7 per night to $20 per night
- **Hogan and Luce Campground**
    - $15 per night
- **Cottonwood Creek Campground**
    - $10 per night

Note that Hogan and Luce Campground and Cottonwood Creek Campground would be new fee areas. If deemed necessary in the future reservations and payments may be moved to an online system.

This proposal will include input from the BLM Wyoming Recreation Action Team (REACT). As defined in the FLREA, this draft document will establish a plan for public involvement and provide the public an opportunity to participate in, and provide comment on, the development of new fee areas.

A fee increase for Five Springs Falls Campground was considered as recently as 2012 but, the Outdoor Recreation Planner and the Cody Field Office ultimately decided against it; However, they recommended that a fee increase be considered in the future. The proposed fees are based on a combination of criteria outlined in FLREA and BLM Handbook 2930. From an area review, a Fair Market Value, defined as a fair price relative to amenities offered, was established by referencing nearby sites. These sites have also seen increased usage in recent years, in turn, increasing the frequency of maintenance activities. The fee increase and establishment of a new fee area will also help offset the rising costs associated with maintaining and improving the Cody Field Office recreation sites.

This Business Management Plan has been developed in accordance with the BLM Policy Handbook 2930 Chapter 2. Section II. Fees. Several projects using collected fees will be identified in this draft. Some of the money collected from Recreation Use Permits (RUPs) will be put towards projects where we receive volunteer assistance. It is also outlined in the handbook that the money collected will be used to improve those sites identified in this draft document and increase recreation opportunities for the public. This will help the BLM the Cody Field Office support the national recreation strategy of making recreation more accessible and supporting local goals to enhance the visitor experience.

Introduction

The Cody Field Office is seeking the establishment of two new fee areas, and to modify one existing expanded amenity fee, under the FLREA. Within the 1.1 million acres under the purview of the Cody Field Office, the recreation and maintenance teams manage some 25+ sites that provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities. Recently, the Cody Field Office has increased the opportunities available to the public through community partnerships, significant site improvements, and more consistent site maintenance. The public can view the end of year progress reports on the BLM website. Beyond the abundant recreation opportunities, the Bighorn Basin has some of the most significant paleontological sites in the world.
For more than 20 years, the Cody Field Office recreation team has managed just one fee area, Five Springs Falls Campground. The other sites and amenities are available free of charge to the public. To keep up with increasing demand and continue to provide a quality service, the recreation team is looking to increase the fee at Five Springs Falls and add two new fee areas where campgrounds currently exist.

Background and Authorities

This business plan has been prepared pursuant to the "Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act 2004" (P.L. 108-447, as amended) and BLM recreation program fee policy. A chronology of authorities for this business plan is:

- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), {Public Law 94-579}, contains BLM's general land use management authority over the public lands and establishes outdoor recreation as one of the principal uses of those lands. Section 302 (b) of FLPMA directs the Secretary of the Interior to regulate through permits or other instruments the use of public lands. Section 303 of FLPMA contains BLM's authority to enforce the regulations and impose penalties.
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA), as amended, {Public Law 33-578}, initially authorized BLM to collect fees for recreational use of qualifying facilities

and services. These fee revenues were then deposited into the Treasury for Congress to appropriate as part of the annual National budget.

- Section 315 of the "Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996", established the "Recreation Fee Demonstration Program", which authorized BLM to keep recreation fees collected and expend them within the guidelines of the law. Annual reauthorizations of this legislation kept this fee project alive until enactment of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA).

- The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) repealed applicable portions of the LWCFA and replaced BLM's authority to collect fees in 2004. This current law authorizes BLM to collect recreation amenity fees at sites that meet certain requirements, allows BLM to keep the fee revenue collected, and directs how BLM will manage and utilize these revenues. FLREA also established the America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Pass Program (ATB).

- Section 805 of the FLREA provided for the establishment of a single interagency national pass known as the "America the Beautiful – the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass," which provides the bearer full coverage of standard amenity fees and holders of the Interagency Senior, Military, and Access Passes a 50 percent discount on some expanded amenity fees. The National Interagency Senior and Access Passes replaced the Golden Age and Access Passports in 2007; the BLM continues to honor these passes. No discount is allowed for expanded amenity group use sites, shelters, yurts, or cabins.

- Cody Field Office will use various ecommerce technologies as directed in BLM Instruction Memorandum2022-010, 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 Cody Field Office decides to add additional reservation services of other types of e-commerce options available in the future, and 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 $.50 to $10.00 depending on the type of service provided. The reservation service is subject to contracting requirements and will be adjusted with contract changes or with future updates to the business plan. For visitors who wish not to pay the expanded amenity fee of reservation services, the field office will attempt to continue to provide a blend of reservation and first come-first serve options at each of the campgrounds and day use areas. Other payment options may also be considered in the future as technology and software develops, including onsite credit card payment systems or scan and pay (as examples).

Site Descriptions

The site details are accurate as of September 2023. Over this summer, the maintenance worker for The Cody Field Office has been performing condition assessments to update site information through the Facility and Asset Management System (FAMS).

Five Springs Falls Campground

Five Springs Falls Campground is nestled on the western slope of the Bighorn Mountains east of Lovell, Wyoming. It provides a secluded camping experience with 19 sites encompassed between an upper and lower loop. It's location between Medicine Wheel Mountain and Bighorn National Recreation Area offers abundant recreation opportunities. The site includes interpretive panels that describe a historic spring used to cool down car engines and another describing riparian areas. Today cattle often use the area around the spring for grazing. The site is located in an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), because four species of endemic or near-endemic wildflowers were identified nearby. Though Highway 14A has since been rerouted, the campground is located on the Old WY Highway 14A. The road is paved for approximately 3 miles. It is located about 60 miles from The Cody Field Office. The elevation ranges from 6,250 feet at the campground to 7,240 feet at the forest boundary. Wildlife in the area includes mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, and bighorn sheep.

The lower loop is situated next to Five Springs Creek, well shaded, and offers a total of nine sites. Each site is equipped with tent pads, fire rings and picnic tables. Expanded amenities for the lower campground include the quality of campsites and hiking trails. Site #1 has been designed for a camp host, is ADA accessible, has an electrical outlet, and is the only pull in site in the lower loop. Site #5 is suitable for larger groups because it has a larger fire ring, larger tent pads, three trash cans, and is ADA accessible. All these sites share a double vault toilet located near the trailhead. When visitors turn into the lower loop off the Old US Highway 14A, there is an "Iron Ranger" and a map kiosk. At the trailhead there is an interpretive panel that was created with help from local students at Northwest College in Powell. The panel describes the best ways to see the falls and an overview of riparian areas, which conveniently surround the lower loop. The trail is approximately a .25-mile loop with two scenic viewpoints. The further of the two takes hikers right next to the lower falls. The closer viewpoint has a bench specifically positioned to provide the best views of the upper falls. These upper falls provide high quality climbing opportunities in the winter months.

Further up the Old US Highway 14A is the upper loop. With sweeping views of the Bighorn Basin and Five Springs Point, there are ten sites in total with four located before the overlook. At the overlook there is an interpretive panel with information about the Bighorn Basin and one of our nearby recreation sites, Rainbow Canyon. Next to site #14 there is another kiosk and "iron ranger". All the sites are graveled and delineated by timbers. All the sites have tent pads and fire rings. Almost all of the sites have their own bear resistant trash cans and picnic tables. The Expanded Amenities for the upper loop include the quality of campsites and the old Highway 14A hiking trail. Sites #14, #18, and #19, have ample space for campers, the rest are walk-in

only. Sites #12, #14, #18, and #19, are ADA accessible. There is a double vault toilet that serves the upper loop. Just beyond the furthest site, the Old US Highway 14A has been reclaimed by the land. A primitive trail leads 3.5 miles further up to where it has been redesignated as Forest Road (FR) 651. FR-651. This trail follows the former highway all the way to the current Highway 14A. Additionally, the trail provides access to the Bighorn National Forest and the Bighorn Medicine Wheel National Historic Landmark.

Map of Five Springs Falls Campground

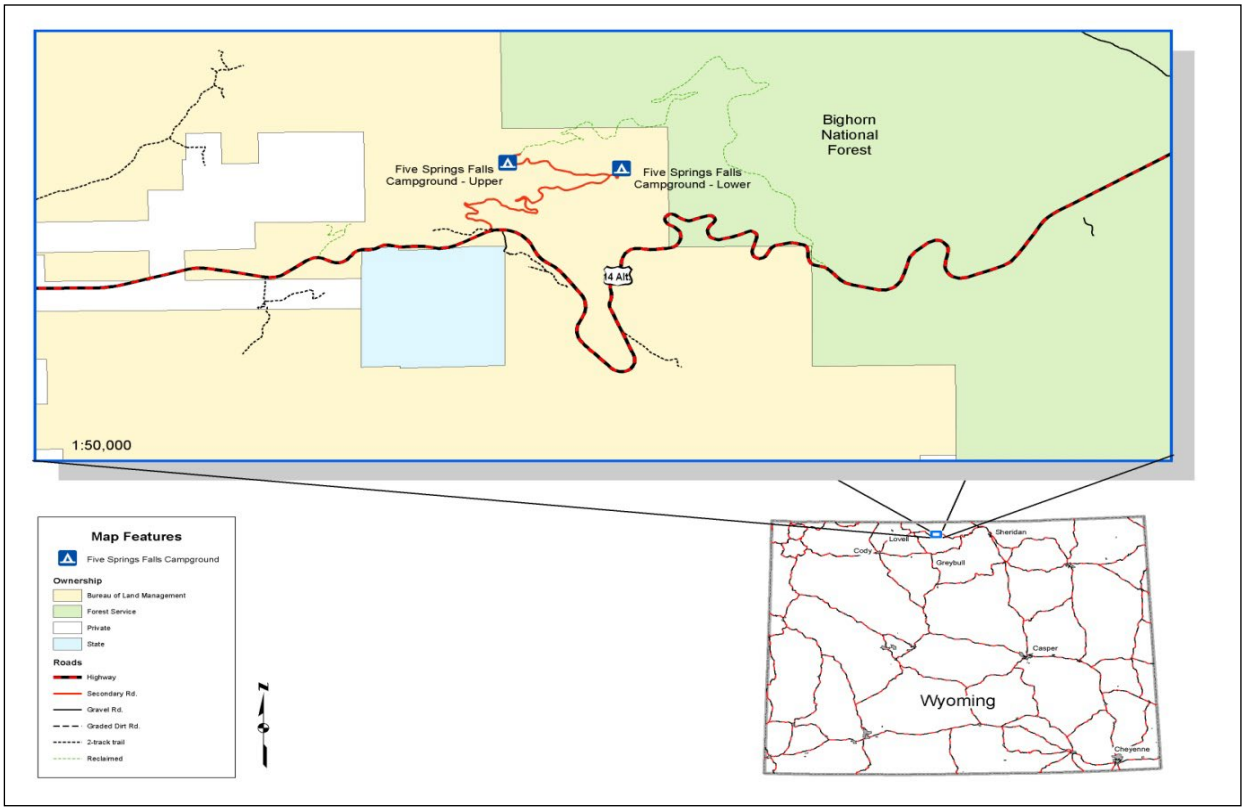


Figure.1 Five Springs Falls Campground is located on the western slope of the Bighorn Mountains and consists of 19 campsites between the upper and lower campgrounds.

Map of Lower Five Springs Falls Campground

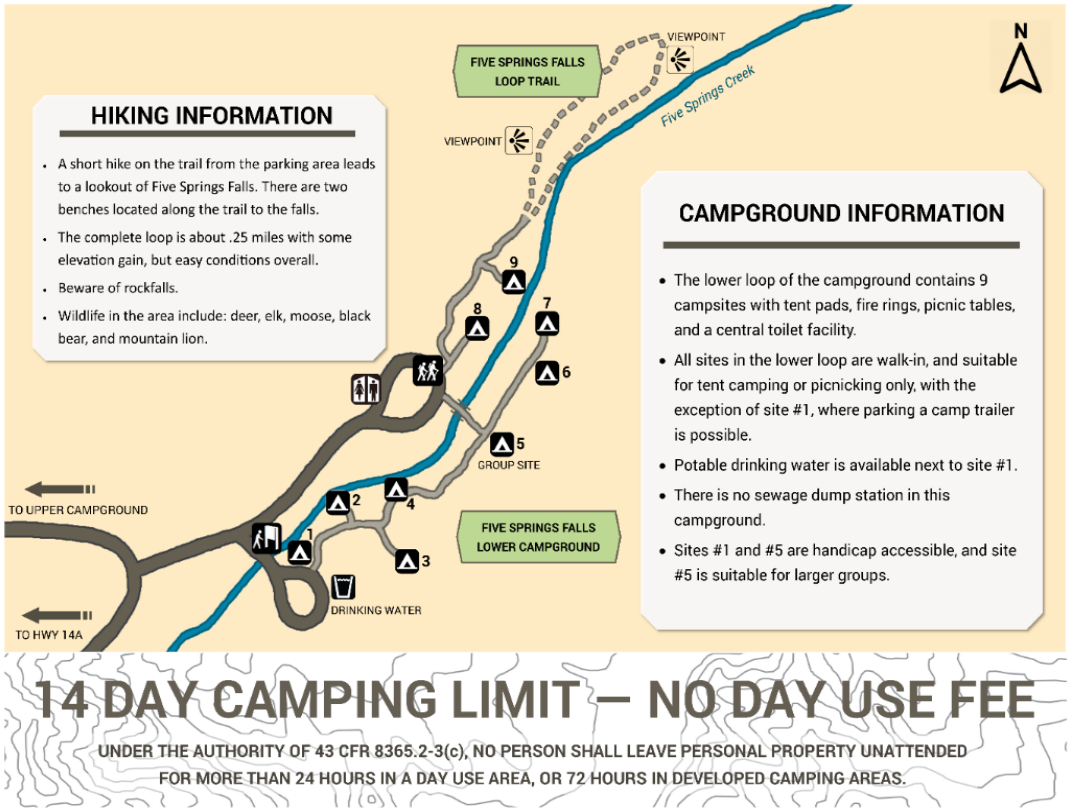


Figure 2. The Lower campground consists of nine campsites, a hiking trail, and potable drinking water. There is only one campsite suitable for a trailer.

Map of Upper Five Springs Falls Campground

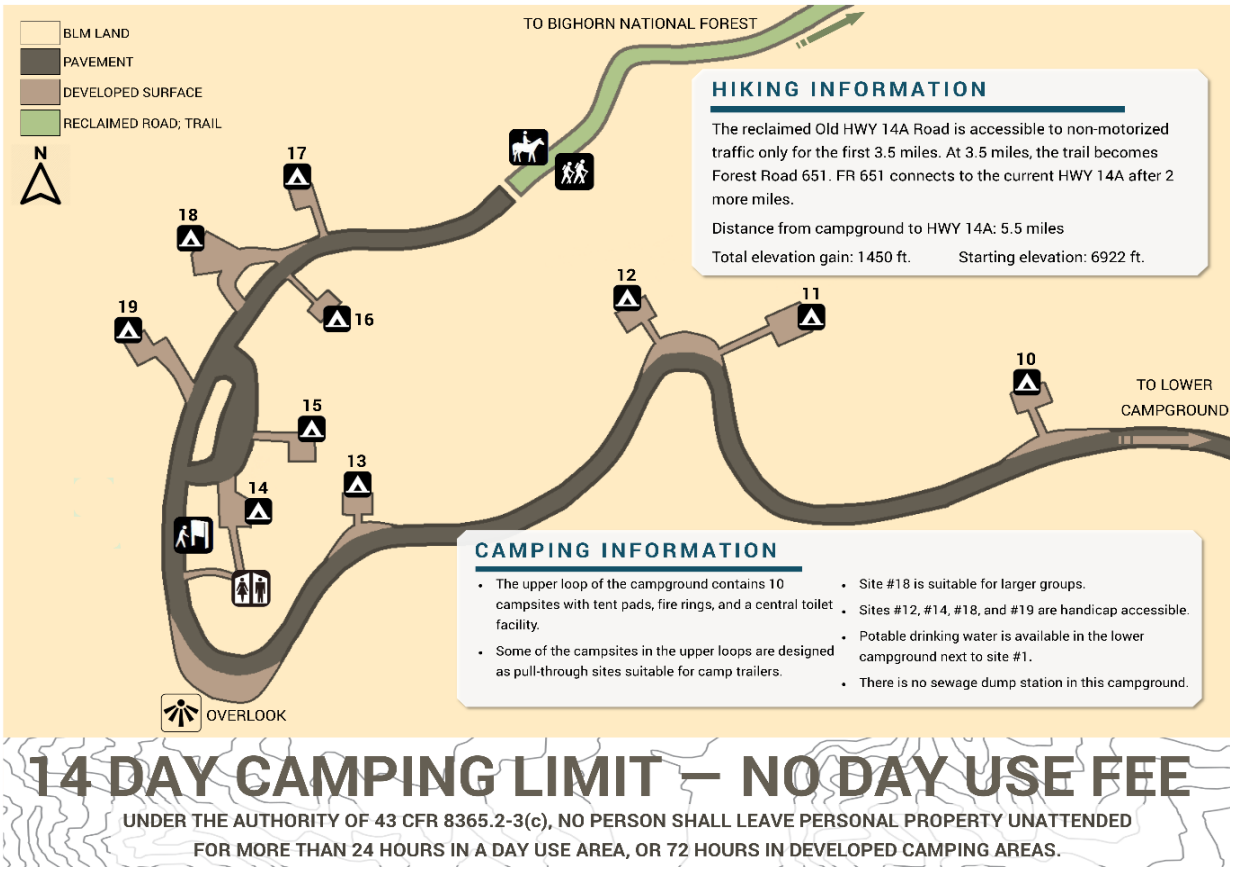


Figure 3. The Upper Campground consists of 10 spots, hiking trail (reclaimed 14A), and an overlook.

Hogan and Luce Campground

Sitting clear across the Bighorn Basin and north of Cody off the Belfry Highway are Hogan and Luce Reservoirs. With 360° views of Heart Mountain, Pat O'Hara Mountain, and Bald Ridge, this campground is one of the most popular in the area. The campground is located on the north shore of Hogan with each site having direct access to the water. There are six sites in total with one being a designated group site. Each smaller site is graveled and has accessible fire rings and bear boxes. There are two large parking areas, one when you first arrive and one in the middle of the loop. Just past the first parking area there is an informational kiosk and a vault toilet. There is also a primitive boat launch. To improve fishing access, the recreation team purchased an accessible EZ Dock® and Kayak Launch and installs it each year prior to Memorial Day and uninstalls it each year after Labor Day. The parking area in the middle is large enough to pull a horse trailer through and is adjacent to the hitching posts and stanchions provided for horses. Luce Reservoir is walk-in only and accessible through the gate along the maintenance road. Adjacent to Luce Reservoir there is another vault toilet as well as a picnic table. There is a bench roughly halfway between the reservoirs with a scenic view of Bald Ridge. This heavily trafficked

recreation site also provides access to Bald Ridge and the Shoshone National Forest via the Bald Ridge Trail. The Expanded Amenities for this Campground include the quality of campsites, hiking trails, horse hitching posts and stanchions, primitive boat launch, and the EZ dock installed each season.

As part of the Resource Management Plan, the Cody Field Office strives to increase and improve upon recreation opportunities. In recent years, more investment has been made to the campground at the Hogan and Luce Reservoirs. In 2018, one local visitor wrote, “Wish this park was better maintained.” Since then, two Outdoor Recreation Planners here have dedicated considerable time toward improving the campground and prioritizing Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility. Each site was leveled, delineated with timbers, covered with landscape fabric, and covered with crusher fines to increase accessibility. New bear boxes, fire rings, and picnic tables were added to each site. A new kiosk was installed at a more centralized location. Various native riparian plants and trees have been planted in 2022 at National Public Lands Day to provide more shade when mature. The road between the reservoirs was graded and older signs were updated and replaced. The recreation site is treated each year with herbicide to combat weeds in the parking areas and campgrounds. The reservoirs are stocked by the Wyoming Game and Fish. Luce Reservoir is catch and release only while Hogan Reservoir allows catch and keep. In 2022, The Cody Field Office conducted a study with Washington State University’s Social and Economic Sciences Research Center to assess visitor satisfaction. They randomly sampled visitors over the course of eleven days during the summer. The result was that 98% of visitors reported that they were satisfied overall with visitor information, facilities, management, interpretation/education, staff services, and programs. Out of 5 points possible, the mean score was 4.8. Understandably, this site is seeing consistently increasing usage.

Map of Hogan and Luce Campground

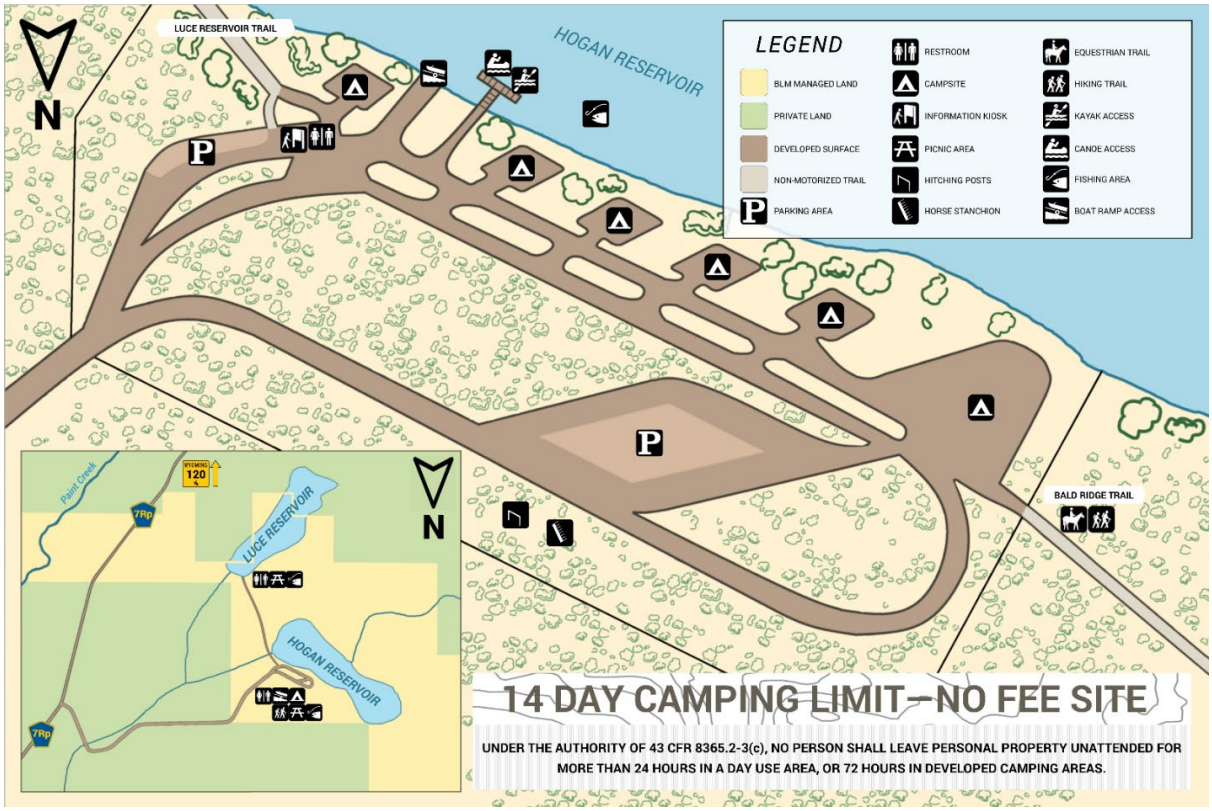


Figure 4. Hogan and Luce Campground is a recreational area near the Hogan and Luce reservoirs. The campground has 6 campsites with one designated as a group site. The campground also consists of hitching posts and stanchions for equestrian use and a hiking trail suitable for both hikers and horse riders.

Map of Hogan and Luce Recreation Area

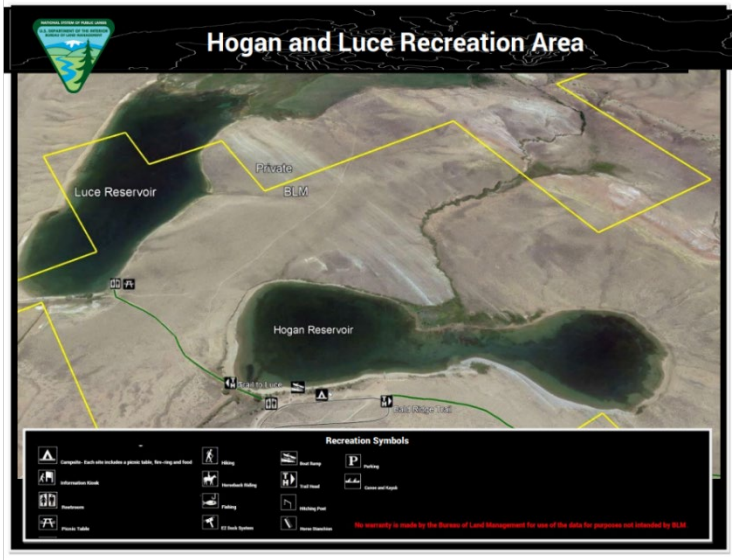


Figure 5. The recreation area consists of 2 reservoirs and offers hiking trails, fishing, a kayak launch, and many other recreational opportunities.

Cottonwood Creek Campground

Cottonwood Creek Campground is also located in the foothills of the Bighorn Mountains in north central Wyoming east of Lovell. When you turn off Wyoming HWY 14A and follow Cottonwood Creek Rd. visitors are greeted with incredible views of Cottonwood Canyon and the surrounding Bighorn Basin. The campground is near the mouth of the canyon and provides further access via the trail that follows the creek. Within the campground there are five camping sites. This includes two walk-in sites; three that are suitable for campers, and two that are designated day use areas. The road to the site as well as the road between the campgrounds is graded gravel. When visitors turn into the campground loop, there is a double vault toilet surrounded by a concrete pad. Adjacent to the vault toilets is the interpretive kiosk with more information about the site and surrounding area. Right in front of the kiosk is the visitor register. On the east side of the campground loop there is a short trail that leads to an octagon shaped gazebo with two benches. This was put together with the help of volunteers and is most often used by visitors seeking shade during the day. In the center of the campground loop there are four connected corrals with troughs. Additionally, there is a large stock water tank just outside of the loop for horses. The expanded amenities at Cottonwood Creek Campground include the horse corrals, stock tank, and hiking trails. Whether wildlife watcher, camper or equestrian, this campground has something for everybody.

Cottonwood Creek Trail is 4.7 miles one way and climbs about 2,800 feet in elevation. It is non-motorized and connects to the Bighorn National Forest. Approximately 1 mile into the trail visitors can see Melody Falls where ice climbers frequent in the winter months. Additionally, visitors can access the Little Mountain Travel Management Area from the nearby John Blue

parking area. Vegetation in Cottonwood Canyon includes Narrowleaf Cottonwood, Willow, Waterbirch, Red Osier Dogwood, Big Sagebrush, Juniper, Mountain Mahogany, Rocky Mountain Maple, Limber Pine, Douglas Fir, Aspen, and Bluebunch Wheatgrass. As for wildlife there are mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, small mammals, and some amphibians and reptiles. “Riparian areas account for less than 1% of the western landscape but have a disproportionately high value as wildlife habitat” (Knopf et al. 1988, Montgomery 1996). This is especially true for birds. “In Wyoming, approximately 73 avian species have been identified as using riparian habitats” (Nicholoff, 2003). Visitors to the canyon have a unique opportunity to see abundant wildlife in one area. The closest town, Lovell, is in the early stages of proposing a new system of mountain bike trails nearby.

Map of Cottonwood Creek Campground

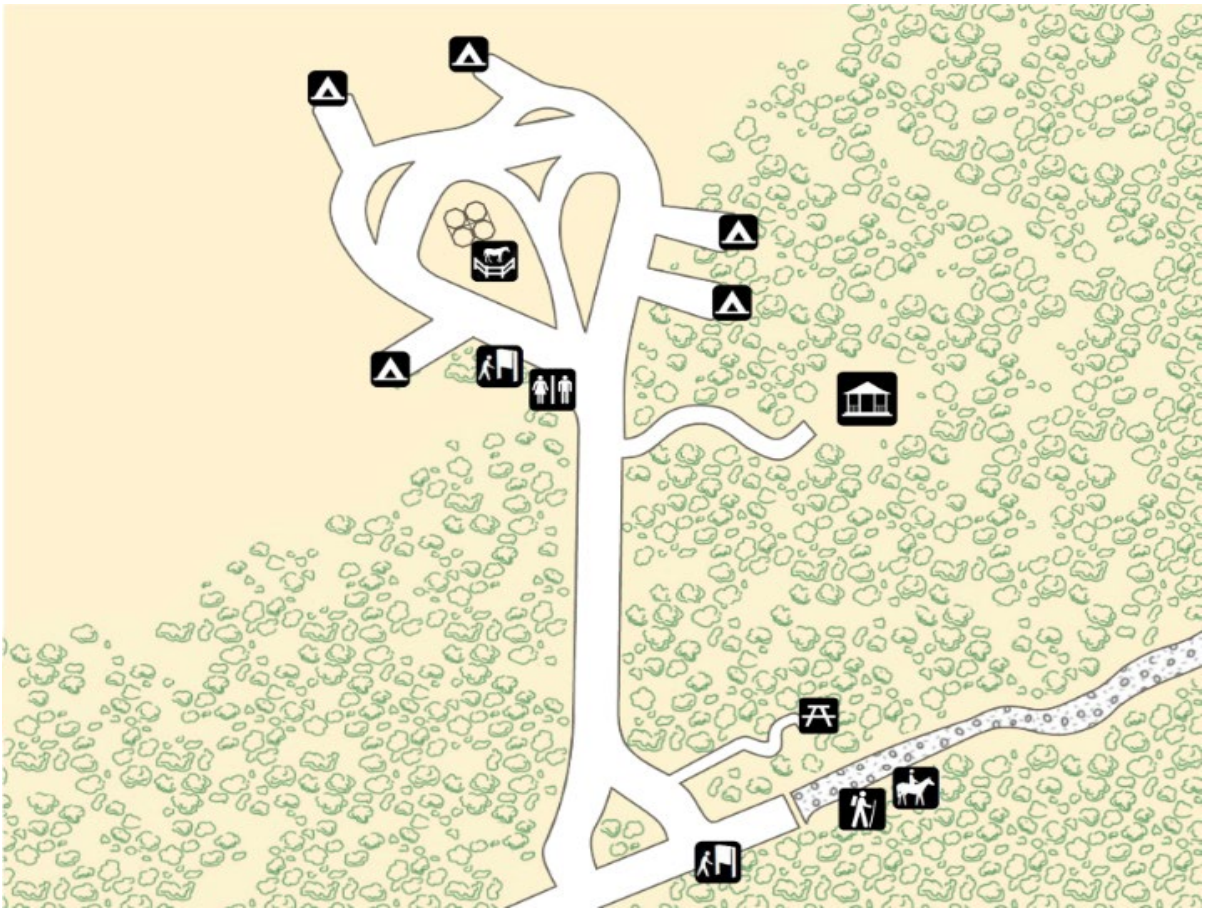


Figure 6. Cottonwood Creek Campground is located in the foothills of the bighorn mountains. This campground consists of 5 campsites, a vault toilet, and four connected corrals with troughs.

Map of Cottonwood Creek Trail



Figure 7. Cottonwood creek trail starts at the campground and about 4.7 miles one way. Melody Falls can be reached from the trail about a mile into the hike.

All three campgrounds present a high-quality experience through routine maintenance and their unique expanded amenities. The expanded amenities are aimed at benefiting a specific group who may use the campground such as hikers, horse riders, kayakers, etc. Implementing campgrounds with these types of amenities requires more funds and maintenance, which the proposed fees will alleviate. Each campground also benefits from law enforcement patrols on a consistent basis and with the proposed fee changes, a camp host program will be a future consideration for each campground. A camp host would be an onsite authority who will also help with monitoring, RUP collection, light maintenance, and trash collection.

Visitor Demographics

Visitor Use Data

The data referenced in this section was collected between FY18-FY22. It is compiled from three different sources: Recreation Use Permits (RUPs), visitor registers (VRs), and traffic counter data. From these sources we are able to determine how many visitors we receive, where our users are from, and what recreation activities they are participating in, among other things. The RUPs are collected from two "iron rangers" located at both the upper and lower loop. The traffic counters are hidden along the roads to the campgrounds. The RUPs and traffic counter data are collected roughly every month, and often more frequently during peak season, April-October. The visitor register is checked during every site visit and collected when the sheets are full or nearly full. For Hogan and Luce, a visitor satisfaction survey that was conducted in FY22 will also be referenced.

Five Springs Falls Campground

Recreation Use Permits (RUPs)

For the past 5 years, Five Springs Falls has averaged visitors from 35 different states and at least one other country. Over the same period, we averaged 653 visitors and a total of 3,265 visitors who reported use on our RUPs. The majority of users hail from Wyoming, with the second biggest group being from Montana. Wyoming and Montana consistently represent less than 50% of users. Like many other campgrounds we saw a spike in visitation during FY20, likely due to the pandemic. From our RUPs, we know that most of these users are simply camping. The next most common response includes some form of recreation, followed by tourism. These are also good for suggestions and remarks. Our average group size on RUPs is 2.61.

Five Springs Falls Campground RUPs

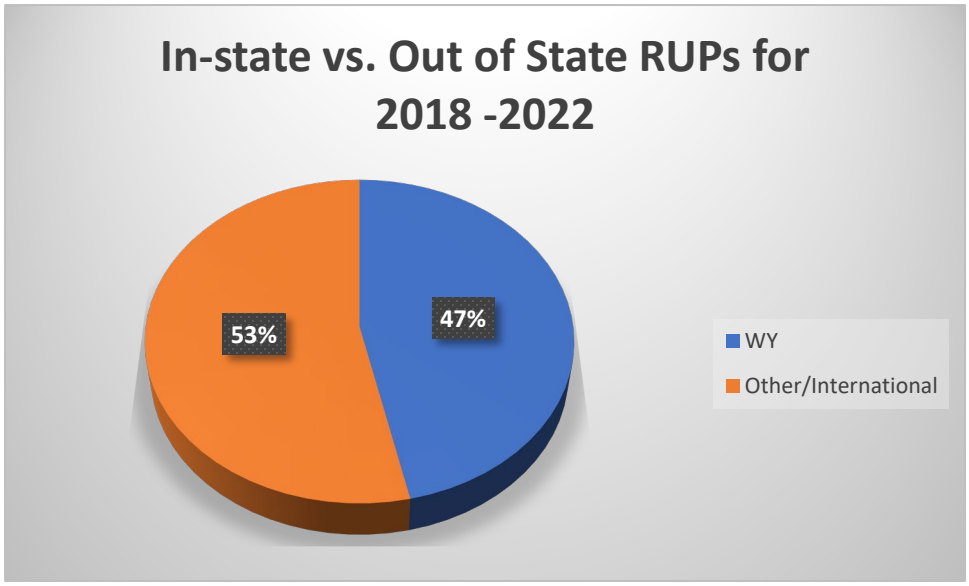


Figure 8. Wyoming RUPs for Five springs Falls compared to RUPs collected from other states and international travelers.

Money collected from RUPs at Five Springs Falls Campground

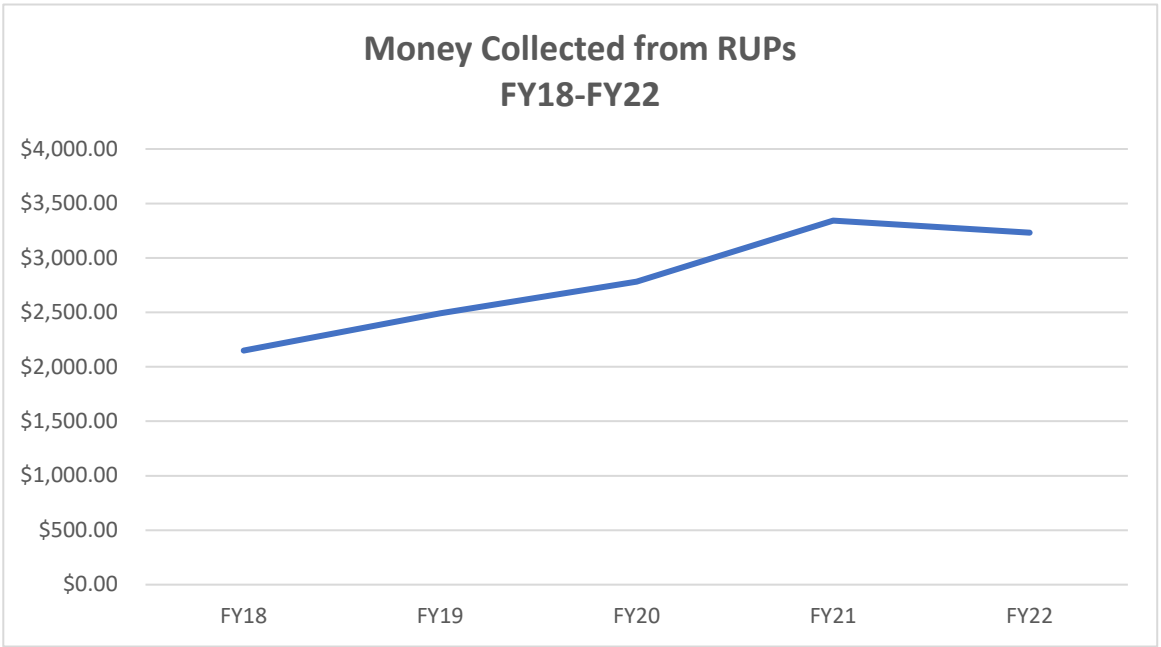


Figure 9. Money collected from RUPs at Five Springs Falls Campground has steadily increased from around $2,000 in 2018 to just below $3,500 in 2021.

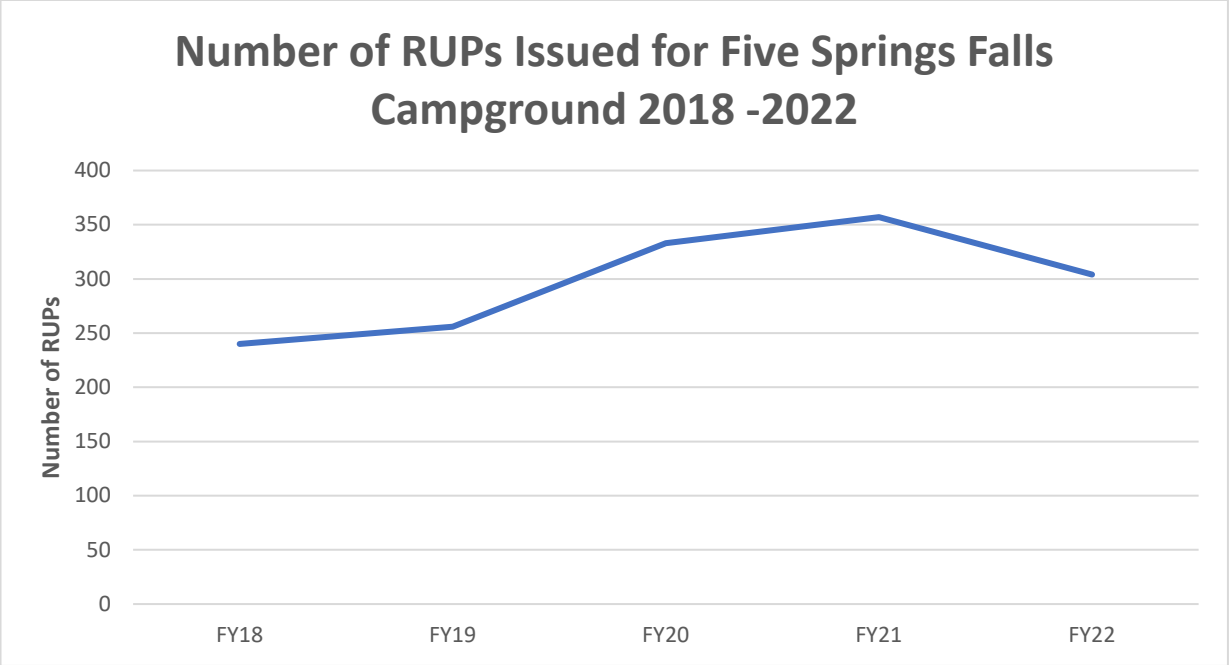


Figure 10. The Number of RUPs issued from 2018 to 2021 increased from around 250 RUPs to over 350 RUPs before declining around 50 in 2022. The trend here closely correlates to the Trend seen in Fig.9

Visitor Register

These primarily represent day users. Their average group size is 3.27. The register provides an area to answer what activities visitors are participating in. The most common answer is "Hiking/Walking", likely on the loop to see the falls. Following closely behind, many people indicated that they were "Camping Near Vehicle" or simply "Touring (Sightseeing)". Visit length ranged between 10 and 16 hours with the 5-year average being 11 hours. The total number of visitors that signed in was 2,827 visitors, and they reported 31,598 hours in the last 5 years.

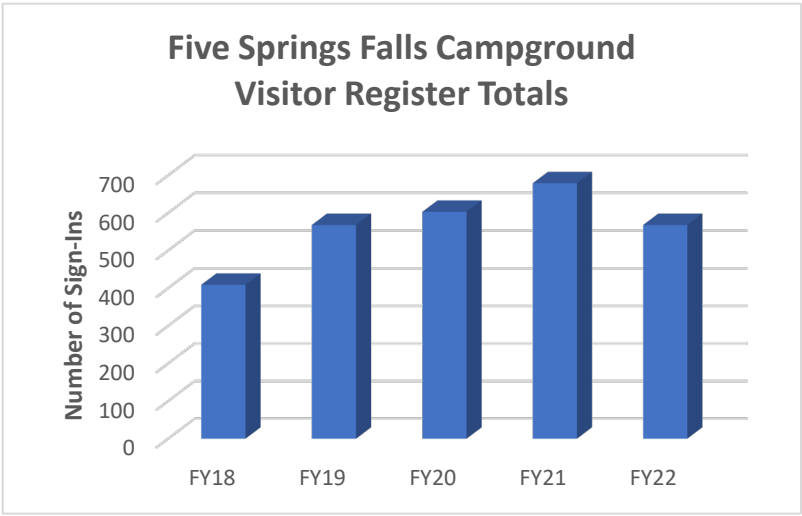


Figure 11. The number of visitor sign ins for each year.

Trafx

Lastly, we have traffic counter data gathered from the only entrance road to the campground. A note with these numbers is that in 2020 the counter was moved from the road to the trailhead. We will disregard that outlier. Also, because there is only one road to and from the site, we will divide the traffic counts in half, assuming visitors counted on the way up and down. The total number of hits over that period was 18,739. That would make the five-year average 3,748 cars per year.

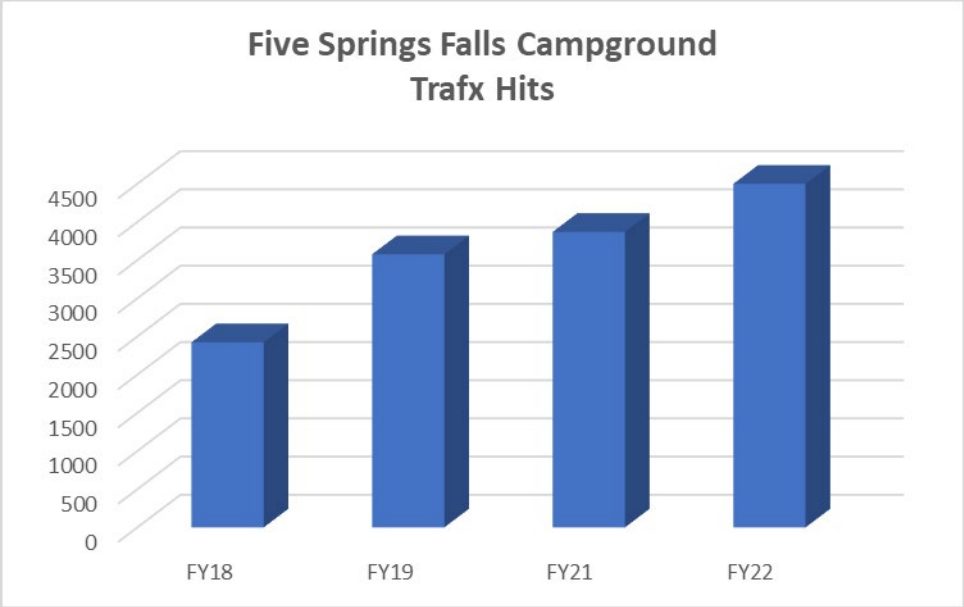


Figure 12. Trafx hits for Five Springs Falls Campground. Recorded numbers are divided by two because vehicles would be counted twice, once upon entrance and once upon exit. Due to location change for the Trafx device, 2020 data will be disregarded.

Hogan and Luce Campground

Visitor Register

Day use represents a significant portion of visitors to Hogan and Luce. On average, this visitor register receives 170 sign-ins per fiscal year. Of those, more than 50% come from Wyoming. The most popular activity for visitors to the reservoirs is fishing, representing an average of 17% of the total number of respondents. The next most common activities are “Touring (Sightseeing)”, “Camping Near Vehicle”, and “Watching Wildlife”. These four responses represent 42% of the total number of sign-ins at the site.

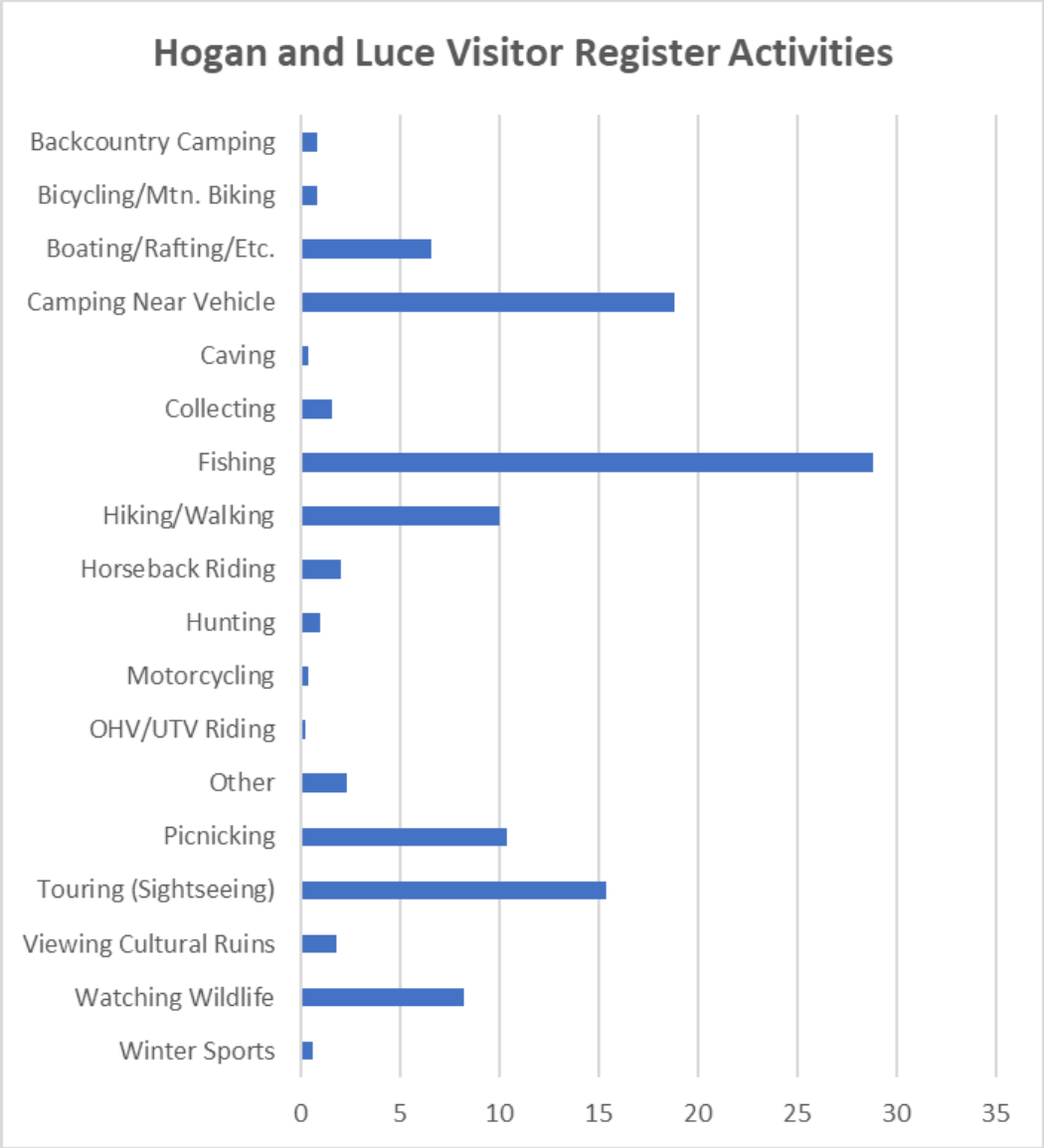


Figure 13. Visitor activities collected from visitor register for Hogan and Luce campground. The top activities are camping, fishing, sightseeing, and picnicking.

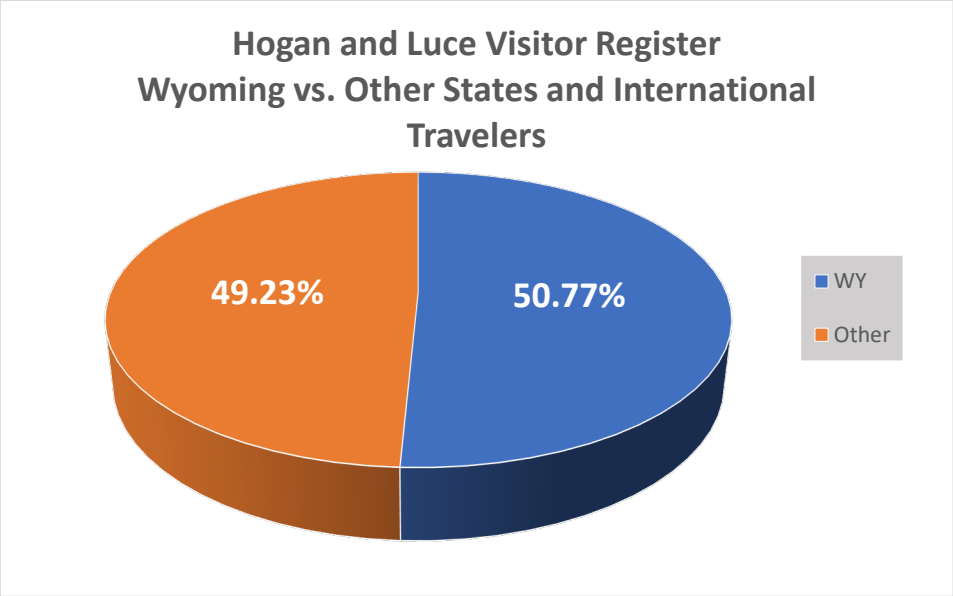


Figure 14. Percentage of visitors to Hogan and Luce from Wyoming compared to other states and international travelers.

Trafx

A traffic counter on the access road was installed at the beginning of FY19 so this data represents the last four years. The average number of hits was 4,952. This fails to account for vehicles with multiple passengers, so the true number of visitors is likely even higher.

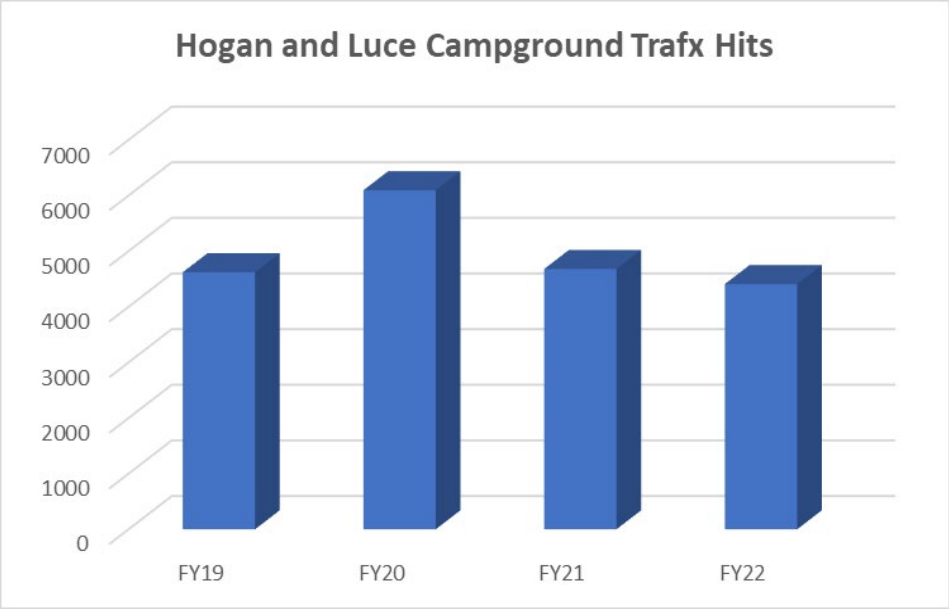


Figure 15. Number of Trafx hits from 2019 to 2022. This only accounts for vehicles, not for passengers.

Visitor Satisfaction Survey

The visitor satisfaction survey was conducted in 2022 with the help of the Washington State University's Social and Economic Sciences Research Center. The survey was developed to measure a site's performance related to Mission Area 3, Goal 2, Strategy 1 (as specified in the DOI 2019/2020 Annual Performance Plan & 2018 Report) - Enhance Public Satisfaction at DOI Sites by enhancing the enjoyment and appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage; and Mission Area 2, Goal 3, Strategy 2: Ensure Public Receives Fair Market Value for Resources by ensuring effective collection and application of recreation fees. The survey was conducted over the course of 11 days during the peak season. Some of the questions had too low of a response rate and were therefore disregarded. The survey asked about visitor satisfaction with the following: visitor information, facilities, management, interpretation/education, staff services, and programs. The results showed that the overall satisfaction with the previously mentioned categories was 98%. The remaining 2% described the experience as "average". This coincides with the reservoirs' increasing usage, and improvements made by the Cody Field Office staff.

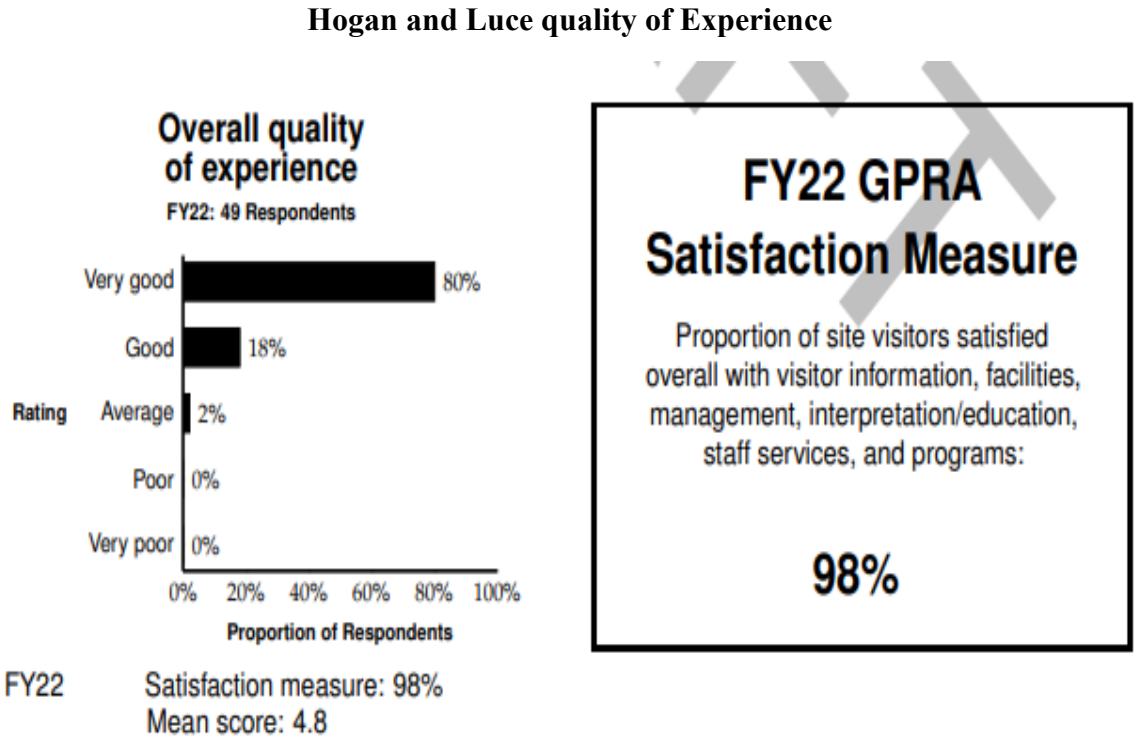


Figure 16. The quality of visitor experience was measured through surveys conducted during the peak season. The satisfaction of the campground was 98% with a mean score of 4.8.

Cottonwood Creek Campground

Visitor Register

From FY18-FY22, there were an average of 71 sign-ins each year. It should be noted that the visitor register is located at the campground kiosk and not the trailhead. Because of this, some day users may be excluded, meaning the average is likely higher than the one shown. It is also worth noting that some visitors report returning multiple times. Visitors report an average of 25 hours per visit. From the registers we know that the campground receives an average of 1,951 visitor hours per year. The most popular activity at this campground is "Hiking/Walking", followed by "Camping Near Vehicle". The area is also popular with visitors who are "Touring (Sightseeing)" and "Watching Wildlife".

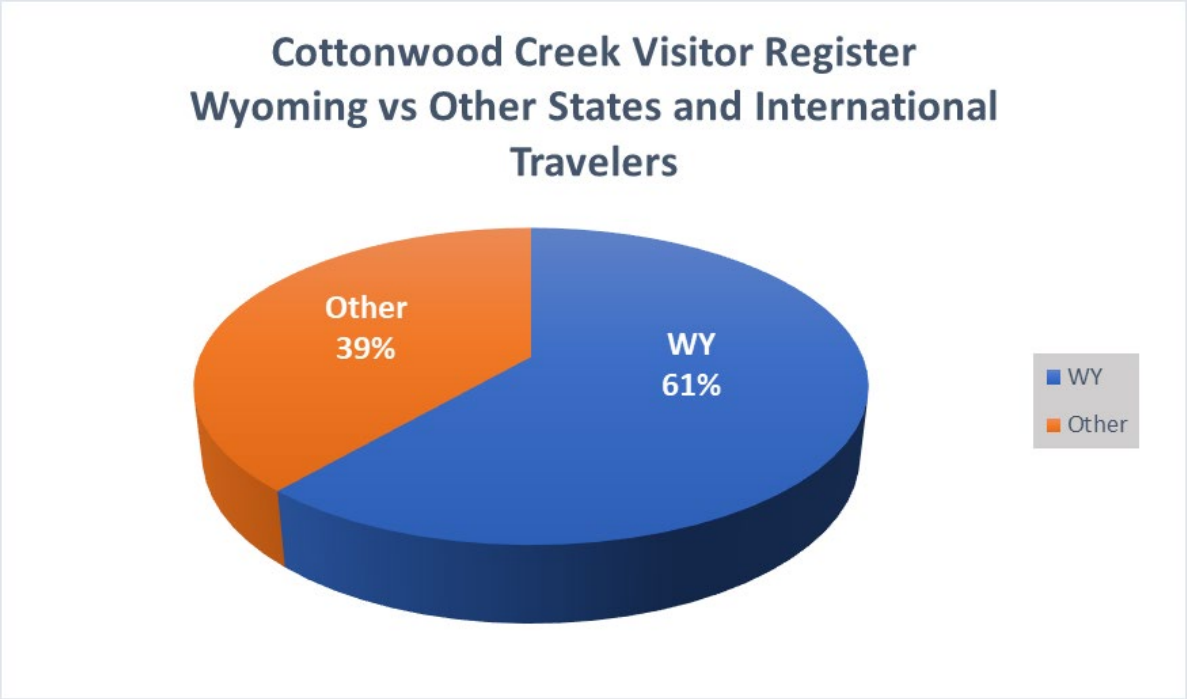


Figure 17. The Visitors to Cottonwood from other States including international travelers compared to Wyoming.

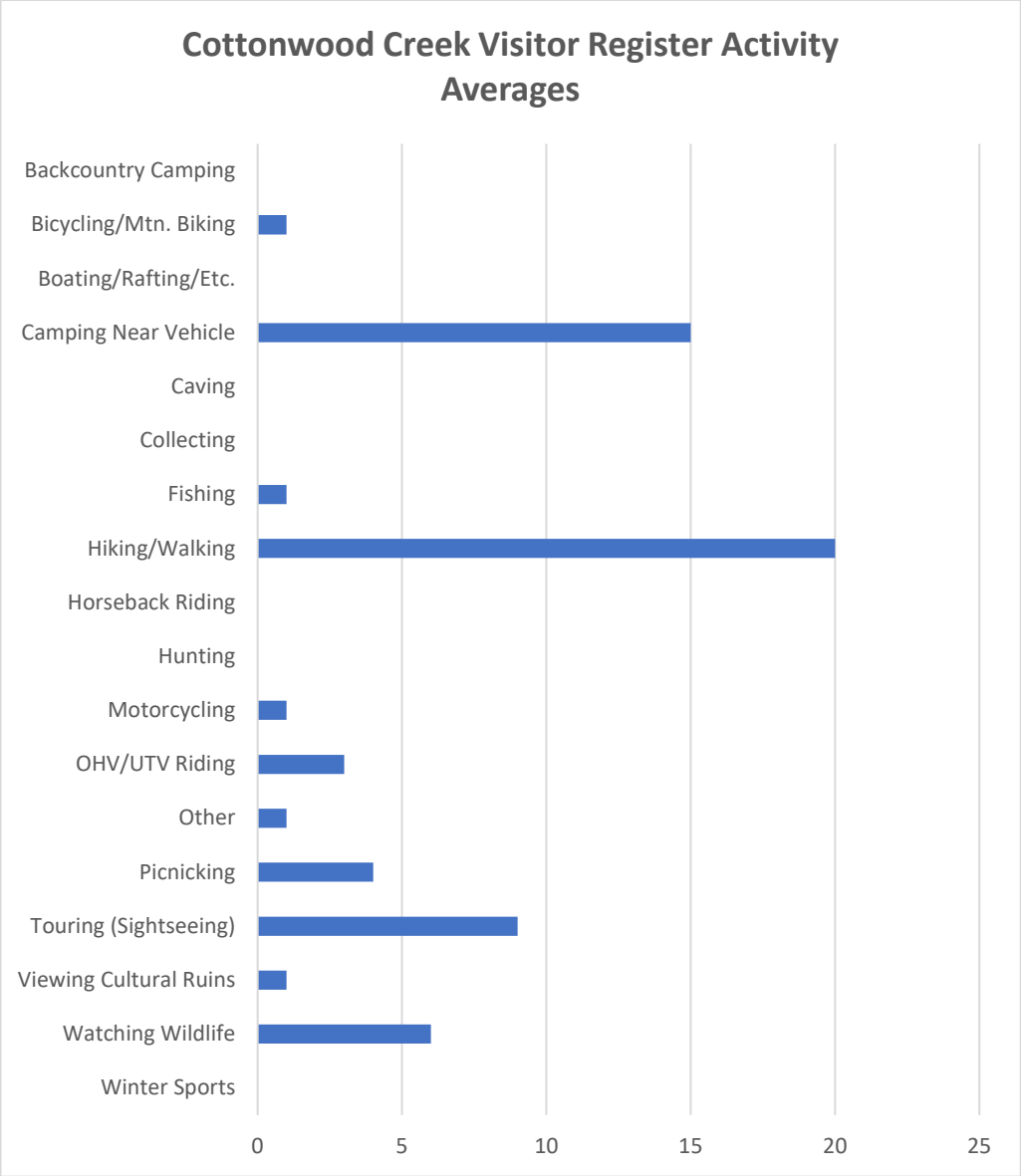


Figure 18. Popular activities at cottonwood Creek Campground include camping, hiking, sightseeing, and watching wildlife.

Trafx

The traffic counter was installed on Cottonwood Creek Rd. at the start of FY19. Due to issues with the counter that was previously there, there is no data for FY22 however, the issue has since been resolved. From FY19 to FY21, there was an average of 2,008 hits per year. These numbers have been trending upward since the pandemic.

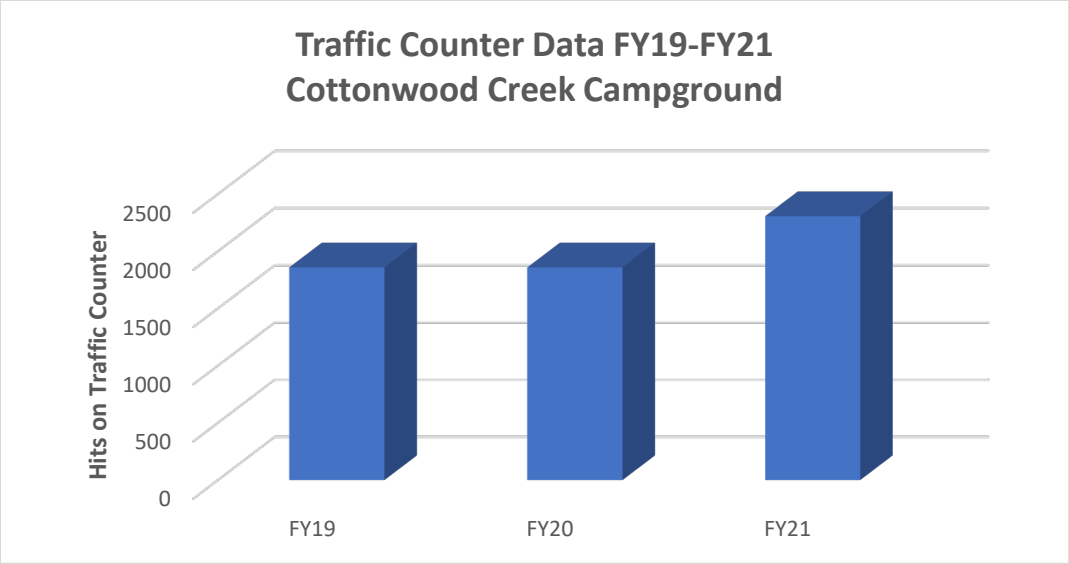


Figure 19. Number of Trafx hits from 2019 – 2021. Due to technical issues with the Trafx device, there is no data for 2022.

Current Costs

Besides materials, one of the most substantial costs associated with the Cody Field Office recreation sites is time. The reason for this is that all cleaning, maintenance, and fee collection is almost exclusively done in-house. Another reason is the vast geographic area covered by the Cody Field Office requiring significant travel time between recreation sites. It takes approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes to get to Cottonwood Creek Campground from Cody. It takes an additional 40 minutes to get to Five Springs Falls Campground. All told, a day visiting Cottonwood Creek and Five Springs Falls would consist of more than 3 hours and 30 minutes of travel time and more than 150 miles. These sites are on the eastern edge of the Bighorn Basin whereas Hogan and Luce Reservoirs are on the western edge. Although Hogan and Luce Campground is closer in proximity to the field office, it still requires a 45-minute drive each way. It is estimated that the recreation and maintenance teams spend an average of 24 hours/week, and sometimes more during peak season, maintaining these sites.

Cost data is available to the public through the BLM website under "FLREA Revenue and Spending Plans" https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-fees/flrea-revenue. This report comes out yearly and allows the public to see how funding is being used. Many costs have risen in recent years. This, in addition to the lack of fee areas under the purview of the Cody Field Office, leads to a significant deficit. Operating costs are expected to continue to increase steadily in the future, in accord with increasing usage and visitation. For example, Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites, and Trails, saw an increase in visitation of 32% in FY21. It is worth noting that many of the recent improvements will last for years to come, offsetting the upfront costs. The table below shows costs and revenue for fiscal year 2020 through 2022.

Revenue and Costs

	FY20	FY21	FY22
Maintenance and Improvements	$8,194.70	$19,000	$12,699.19
Visitor Services	$4,145.60	$5,000	$10,786.25
Habitat Restoration	$128	$4,000	$562.97
RUP Revenue	**$2,783.07**	**$3,342.47**	**$3,233.01**
Totals	**-$9,685.23**	**-$24,657.53**	**-$20,815.40**

Table 1. Current costs associated with restoration, services, and maintenance compared to RUP revenue for fiscal years 2020 through 2022.

In addition to fees collected through RUPs, the Cody Field Office recreation team has two other sources of revenue. These are the sale of park passes and the issuance of Special Recreation Permits (SRPs). Some SRP holders use these recreation sites during peak season however, we are not seeking an additional fee for day use, so their permits and cost are unaffected. While these also help offset the costs associated with recreation sites, they are not the focus of this business management plan. All the money collected through RUPs is used for the three priorities outlined in BLM Policy Handbook 2930 Sec. II, A. 2. (7). Additionally, the Cody Field Office has purchased "iron rangers" so the cost of creating the new fee areas would only consist of purchasing more RUP envelopes. Additional costs associated with fee collection would be negligible as maintenance and recreation teams routinely monitor the sites and would not need to increase the frequency of visits.

A key component to helping maintain the Five Springs Falls Campground is volunteers. The Cody Field Office actively maintains state and national partnerships with volunteer groups. Each year the recreation team hosts underserved youth at Five Springs Falls Campground through the Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Education (C.O.R.E. Kids) group out of Casper. The recreation team identifies improvement projects and subsequently works with the C.O.R.E Kids at the campground to complete them. In recent years we have routinely cleaned out drains along the interpretive trail loop, improved fencing damaged by cattle, cut back encroaching trees, etc. The Cody Field Office has also worked with American Hiking Society's Volunteer Vacations. Under that program, volunteers spend a week at Five Springs Falls Campground assisting the Cody Field Office staff with maintenance projects as well. The current national volunteer rate is estimated to be $31.80/hour, per the University of Maryland's Do-Good Institute. At that rate, the recreation team receives an estimated $12,000+ of volunteer work each year. Through the generosity of volunteers and partnerships, the Cody Field Office has made significant contributions to the maintenance and improvement of Five Springs Falls Campground.

Visitor and RUP Estimates

Regarding revenue projections, the simplest calculations are for Five Springs Falls Campground because we already have RUP data. To make the revenue projections, we will use estimates from Five Springs Falls Campground and apply them to Cottonwood Creek Campground and Hogan and Luce Reservoirs Campground. To estimate revenue for Cottonwood Creek Campground and Hogan and Luce Reservoirs Campground we must first estimate how many visitors will stay overnight. The two main data points for these estimates are traffic counters and visitor registers. These data points are then compared to Five Springs to create an estimate of how many RUPs we will see. A further explanation of visitor estimates is included below, along with tables for more clarity.

With data from Five Springs, we are able to find a number that represents the relationship between Trafx hits and the number of RUPs. There are some important considerations for these visitor estimates. Additionally, readers should know that the visitor register at Cottonwood Creek Campground is located .1 miles away from the trailhead, possibly excluding some day users. It is also important to consider that, because of their lower elevation, the two new fee sites in this proposal see more consistent usage throughout the year. The following table shows the relationship between traffic counter hits and Recreation Use Permits for Five Springs Falls Campground. The relationship is calculated by dividing Trafx by 2 then dividing the number RUPs by the previous quotient as seen below in table 2.

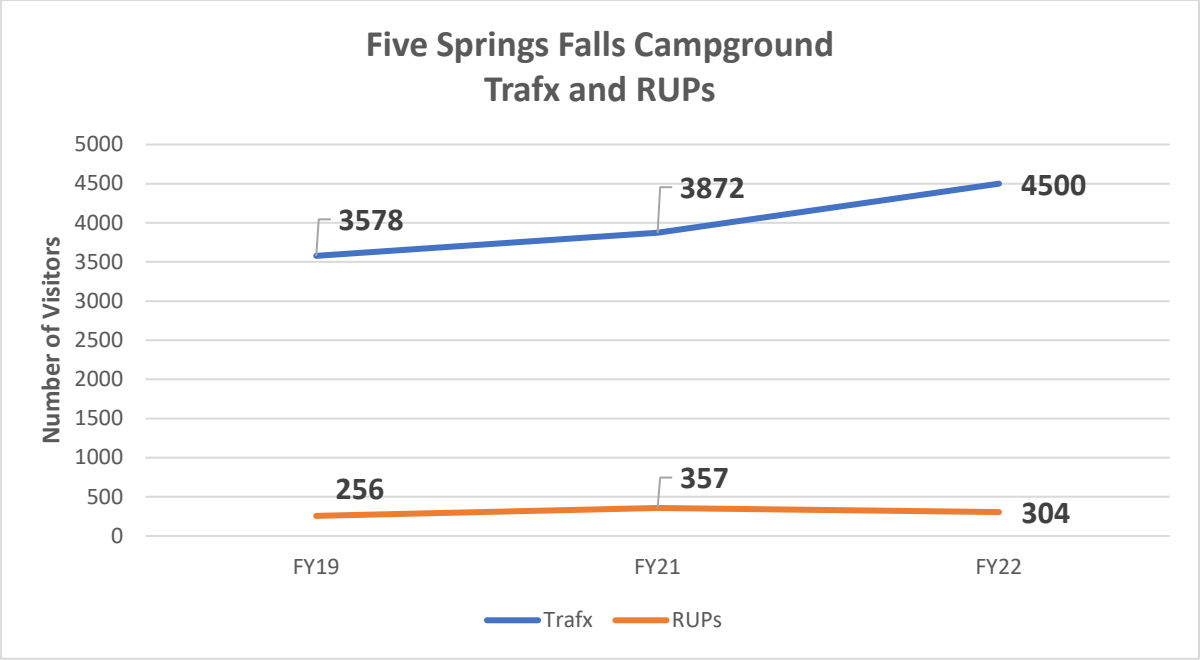


Figure 20. Traffic hits (blue) and RUP (orange) counts for Five Springs Falls for 2019, 2021, and 2022. Despite an increase in traffic hits, RUPs declined. The relationship between site traffic and RUPS would be 0.16 RUPs per car entering the campground.

Relationship between Trafx and RUPs for Five Springs Falls Campground

	FY19	FY21	FY22	AVG
Y= RUPs / (Trafx/2)	.14	0.18	0.14	0.16

Table 2. Average relationship (Y) for years 2019, 2021, and 2022. Trafx was divided by 2 due to each vehicle being counted twice. The average relationship was calculated to be 0.16, which would mean 0.07 RUPs per Trafx hit.

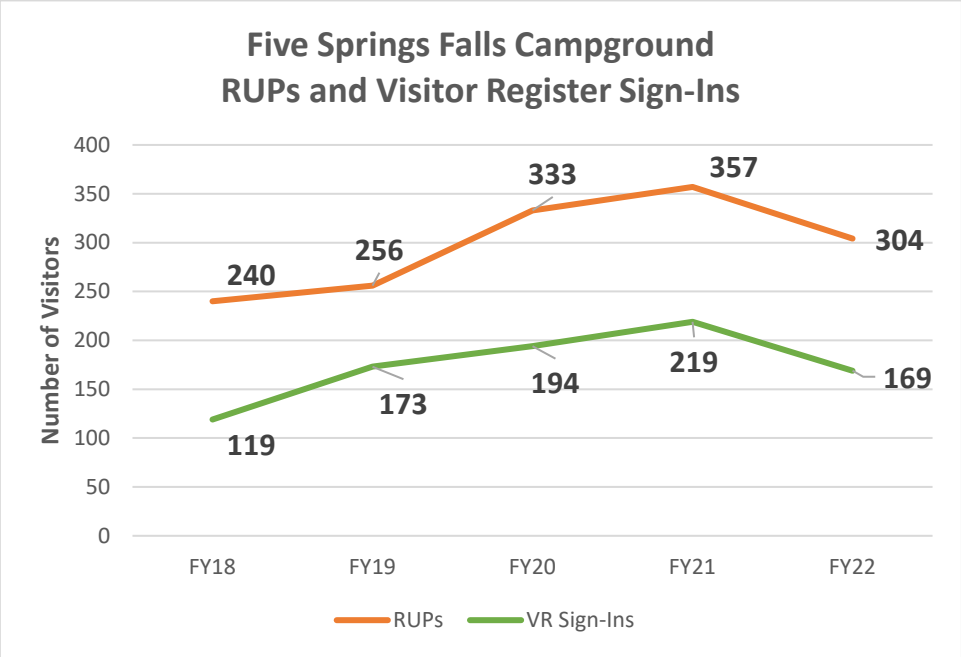


Figure 21. The relationship between RUPs and Visitor Sign-ins appears to be directly related according to the two trendlines. According to the relationship it is expected to that 1.73 RUPs will be collected for every visitor-sign in.

As was used for traffic counter hits, we are able to find a number that represents the relationship between the number of sign-ins on our visitor registers and the number of RUPs. The following table shows that number that represents the relationship over the last five years and the average. This was calculated by dividing RUPs by the VR sign-ins as seen below in table 3.

Relationship between RUPs and VRs for Five Springs Falls Campground

	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	AVG
Y = RUPs / VR	2.02	1.48	1.72	1.63	1.8	1.73

Table 3. Average relationship (Y) between years 2018 – 2022. The average relationship was calculated to be 1.73 RUPs per VR would mean 0.07 RUPs per Trafx hit.

Our estimated RUPs for the new fee sites will fall between the estimates from Trafx and the estimates from the visitor registers. One of the last steps in estimating how much visitor use the newly proposed fee sites will see is to estimate how much time visitors will spend. To determine this, the data from Five Springs Falls was again referenced. This number was calculated by dividing the average time, in days, that visitors spent on RUPs, by the average time, in days, that visitors spent on visitor registers. The following table shows the relationship between the average time spent on visitors and the average time spent on Recreation Use Permits for Five Springs Falls.

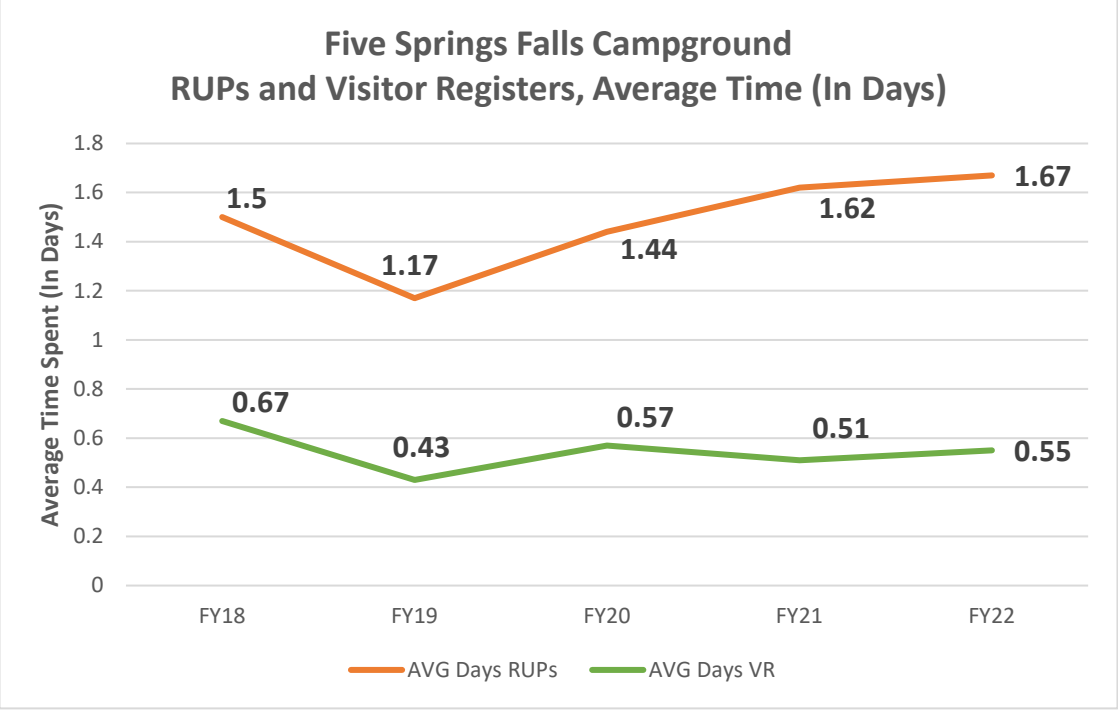


Figure 22. Average time spent at the Five Springs Falls Campground between RUPs and VRs from 2018 through 2022.

Relationship between VRs and RUPs for Five Springs Falls Campground

	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	AVG
Y = RUPs / VR	2.24	2.72	2.53	3.18	3.04	2.74

Table 4. Average value describing the relationship between days spent for RUPs and VRs each year. On average, RUPs spend 2.74 times more time in the campground than VRs.

By taking the average of Trafx hits and visitor register sign-ins then multiplying that by the Y numbers referenced above, we are able to estimate how many RUPs the new fee sites will generate. Using the estimated RUPs and estimated time spent at the campgrounds we will then create an estimated nights paid for each respective site.

Cottonwood Creek Campground Estimates

Over the past five years, with data from RMIS, we know that the average number of sign-ins on the visitor register is 28. Multiplying that by 1.73 from the data above gives us an estimate of 48.44 RUPs. We also know that the average number of Trafx hits, divided by two, is 1,083. Multiplying that by 0.16 from above, we get an estimate of 173 RUPs. Averaging the estimated RUPs from the Trafx and visitor register data gives us a final estimated number of RUPs at 111. On average, visitors spend 1 day at this campground. Multiplying that by 2.74 from Five Springs gives an estimate of 2.74 days that visitors will spend at this campground. With our estimated RUPs of 111, and an average time of stay at 2.74 days, we estimate that this campground will see 304 nights paid per year.

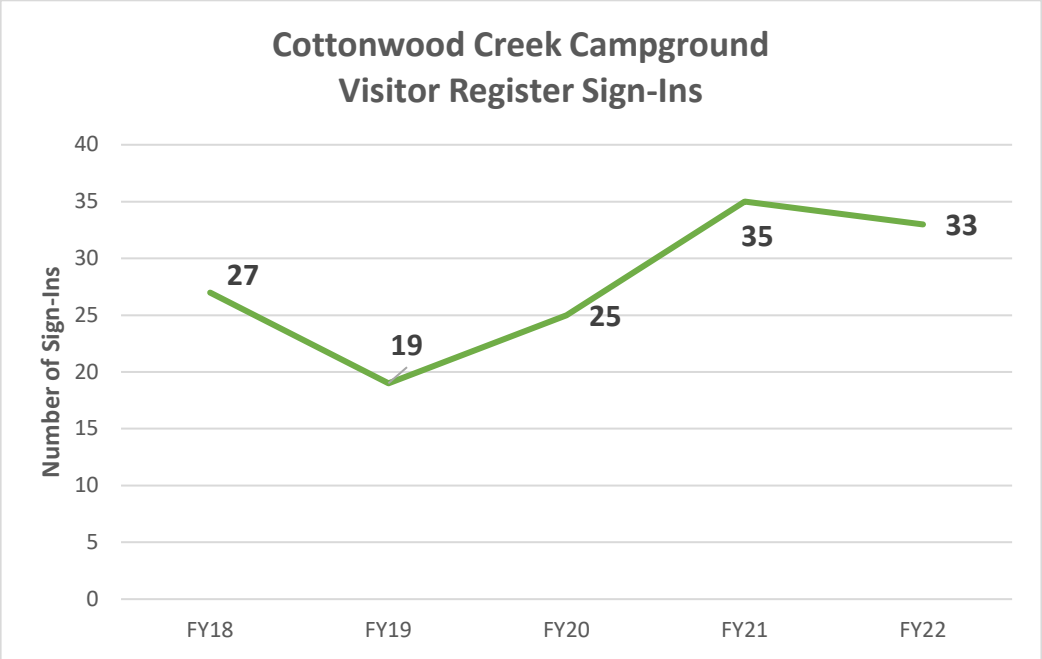


Figure 23. Visitor Sign-ins from 2018 – 2022 for Cottonwood Creek Campground. Sign ins peaked in 2021 and were at their lowest in 2019.

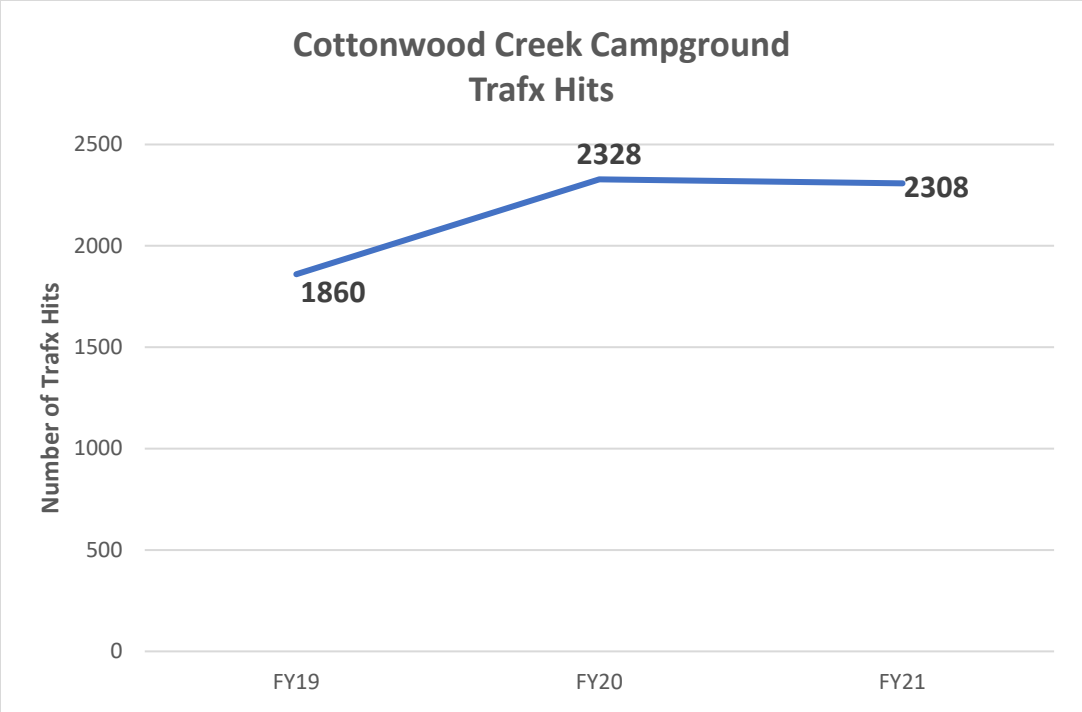


Figure 24. Trafx hits for years 2019, 2020, and 2021 for Cottonwood Creek Campground. Years 2020 and 2021 had similar hits.

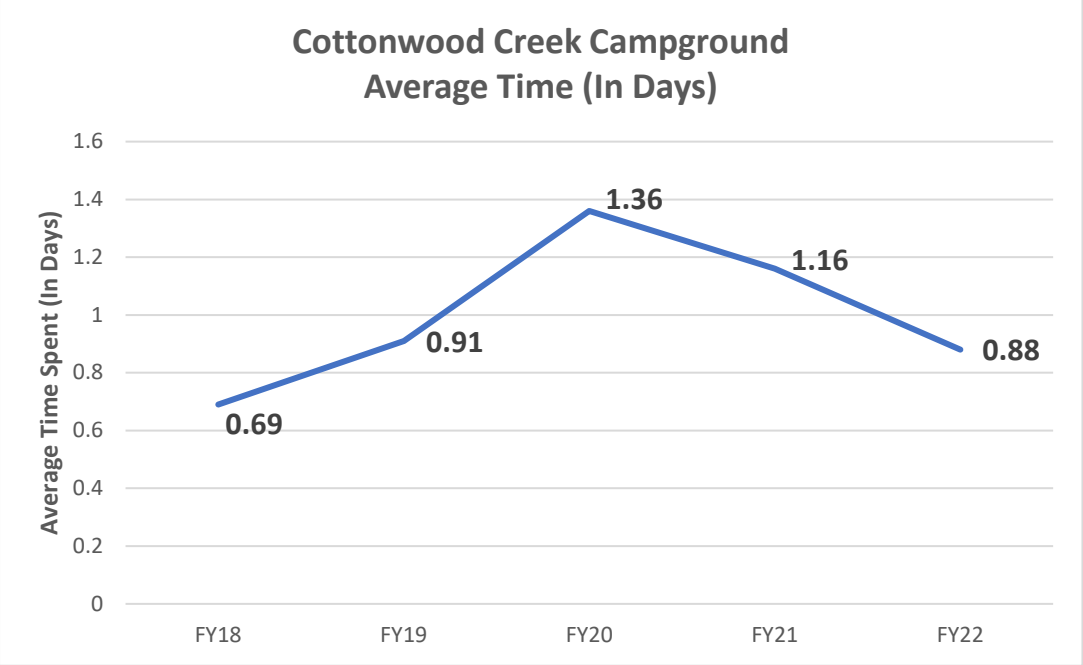


Figure 25. Average reported time spent at the Cottonwood Creek Campground. Despite 2020 and 2021 having similar Trafx counts, average time spent peaked noticeably in 2020 and steadily declined in 2021 into 2022.

Hogan and Luce Campground Estimates

Over the past five years, with data from RMIS, we know that the average number of sign-ins on the visitor register is 60. Multiplying that by 1.73 from the data above gives us an estimate of 104 RUPs. We also know that the average number of Trafx hits, divided by two, is 2,476. Multiplying that by 0.16 from the data above, we get an estimate of 396 RUPs. Averaging the estimated RUPs from the Trafx and visitor register data gives us a final estimated number of RUPs at 250. On average, visitors spend .57 days, or 14 hours, at this campground. Multiplying that by 2.74 from Five Springs gives an estimate of 1.56 days that visitors will spend at this campground. With our estimated RUPs of 250, and an average time of stay at 1.56 days, we estimate that this campground will see 390 nights paid per year.

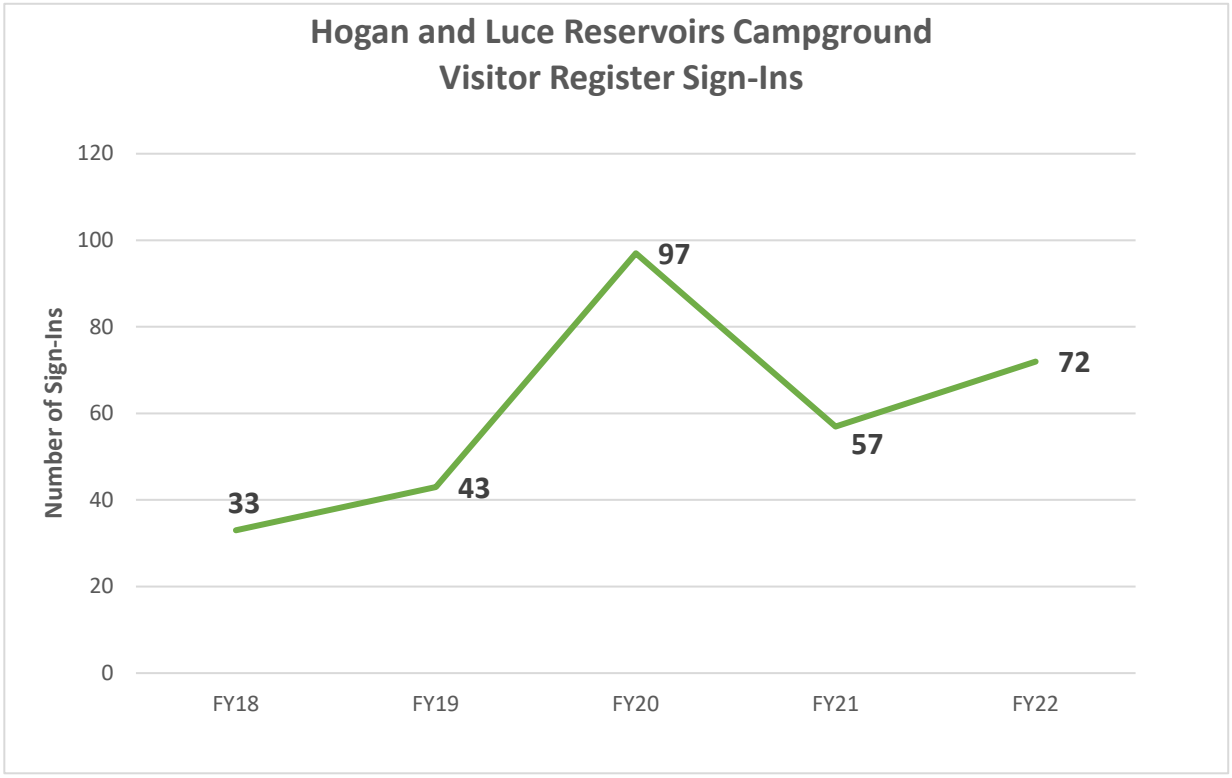


Figure 26. The number of visitor sign-ins for the Hogan and Luce Reservoirs. The number of sign ins peaked in 2020.

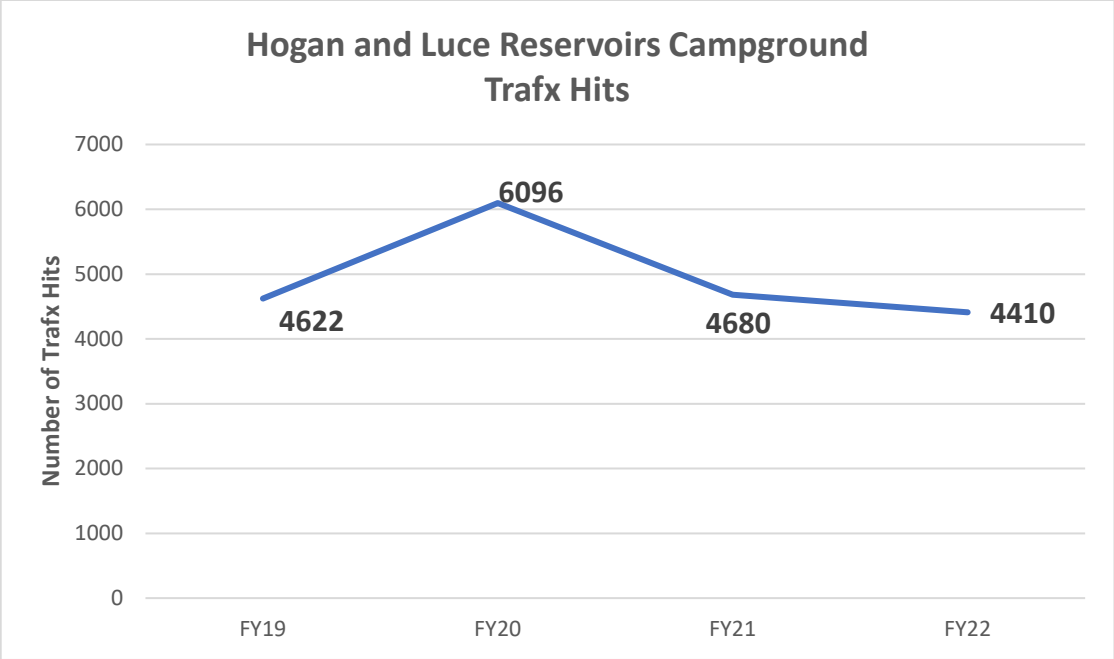


Figure 27. The peak traffic was measured in 2020 at 6096 hits. This campground receives the most traffic and use out of the three.

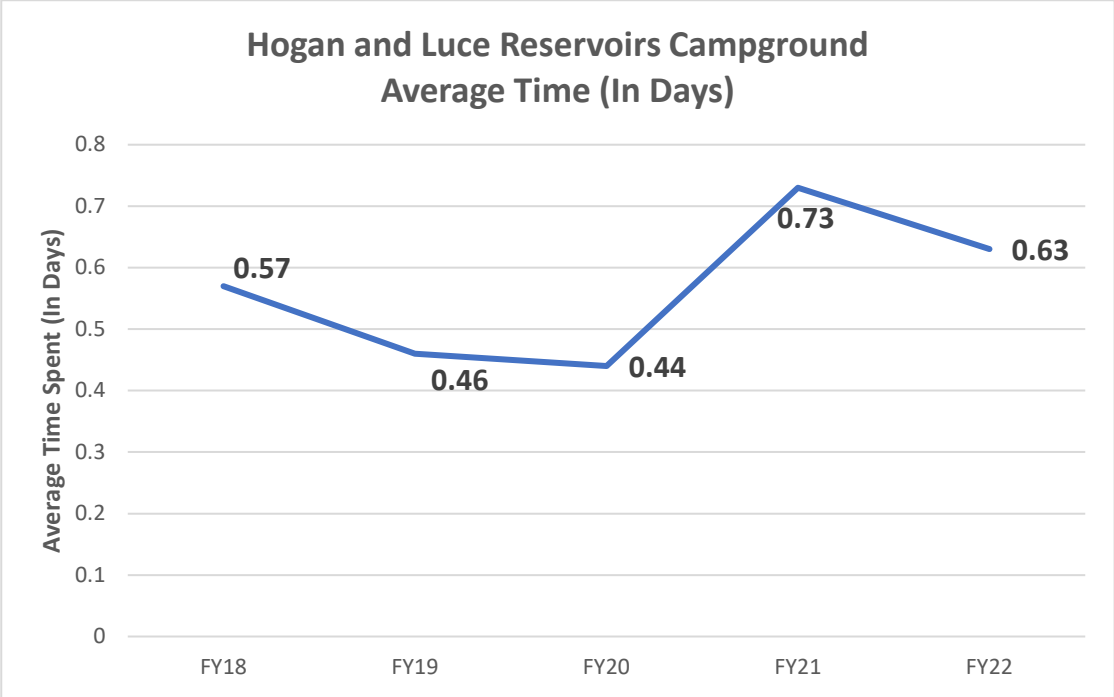


Figure 28. The average reported time spent at the Hogan and Luce Campground. Despite 2020 having the most Trafx Hits, 2021 had the longest reported stays at the campground.

Revenue Projections at Proposed Rates

The Cody Field Office is proposing raising the rate at its only current fee site, Five Springs Falls Campground, from a $7 per night expanded amenity fee and $3.50 per night for valid pass holders, to a $20 per night expanded amenity fee and $10 per night for valid pass holders. The first of two new fee areas, Hogan and Luce Reservoirs Campground is being proposed at a rate of $15 per night expanded amenity fee and $7.50 per night for valid pass holders. Cottonwood Creek Campground would charge $10 per night expanded amenity fee and $5 per night for valid pass holders. Currently, Five Springs Falls Campground sees approximately 80% of campers paying full price and 20% using valid passes. The following graph assumes similar usage rates at the proposed new fee sites, shows the projected revenue if these proposals are accepted, and compares that with 50% of average annual costs ($11,245). This proposal would bring RUP revenue to an estimated $15,399 per fiscal year, approximately 18% more than the minimum 50% recommended in BLM Handbook 2930-1.

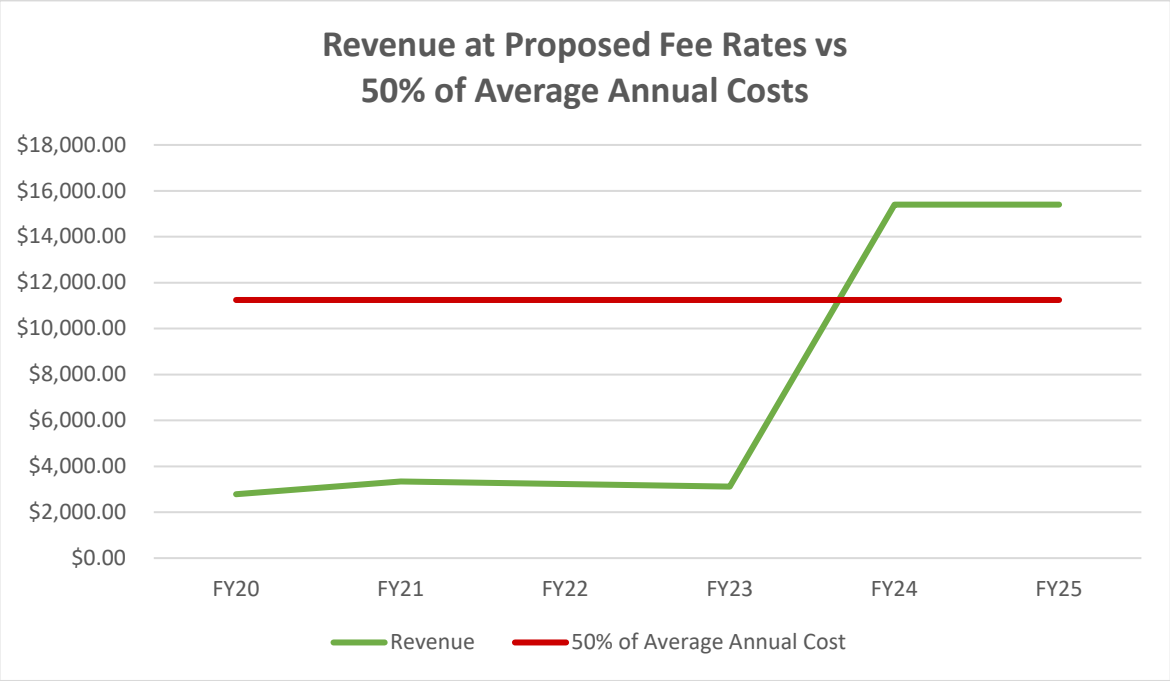


Figure 29. Graph displaying the change in revenue if the new fees are implemented at the three campgrounds compared to the 50% percent annual cost to maintain them. For the BLM to sustain campgrounds with expanded amenities, it is recommended that fees collected by visitors cover a greater share of the associated costs.

Market Analysis

A key component to ensuring the public that the fees being charged are equitable is conducting a market analysis. To do this, we have gathered information, including prices and amenities, from campgrounds near the current and proposed fee sites. From this, the Cody Field Office is able to discern what is referred to as a "fair market value" or an equitable price for the services provided. The following table compares the amenities offered by the three BLM sites that are the focus of this business plan, with fourteen other publicly and privately managed campgrounds nearby. It also compares their current nightly cost. Each campground managing agency is represented by a different color.

Amenity and Fee Comparison of Campgrounds

	Public/Private	Camping Fee Per Night	# of Sites	Vault Toilet	Potable Water	Picnic Tables	Fire Ring	Hook-Ups
Five Springs Falls Campground	BLM	$7	19	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Hogan and Luce Reservoirs Campground	BLM	$0	6	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Cottonwood Creek Campground	BLM	$0	5	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Horseshoe Bend Campground	NPS	$35 – Improved $17 - Unimproved	68	Flush	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes Some
Pebble Creek Campground	NPS	$20	27	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Porcupine Campground	USFS	$20 +$9 additional vehicle	16	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Bald Mountain Campground	USFS	$20 +$9 additional vehicle	15	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No

	Public/Private	Camping Fee Per Night	# of Sites	Vault Toilet	Potable Water	Picnic Tables	Fire Ring	Hook-Ups
Prune Creek Campground	USFS	$23 +$10 additional vehicle	21	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Dead Indian Campground	USFS	$10 $15* *Proposed	10	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Hunter Peak Campground	USFS	$15 $20* *Proposed	10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Big Game Campground	USFS	$10 $15* *Proposed	16	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Beartooth Lake Campground	USFS	$15 $25* *Proposed	21	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Cody KOA	Private	$45-$80	~100	Flush	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Buffalo Bluff RV Park	Private	$60-$75	43	Flush	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Absaroka Bay RV Park	Private	$50-$70	98	Flush	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ponderosa Campground	Private	$50-$75	150	Flush	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Town of Lovell Camper Park	Town of Lovell	n/a	11-13	Flush	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Table.5. When compared to the other campgrounds in the area, BLM undercuts the market based on amenities provided.

When comparing campgrounds managed by the Cody Field Office to those of other land management agencies and private owners, it is clear that the Cody Field Office currently undercuts the market. The amenities available to the public at Five Springs Falls Campground for $7, are being charged for between $15-$33. If proposed fee increases are approved, the lowest price for comparable amenities would be $20. Nearby campsites with the same amenities as the proposed new fee areas are currently charging between $10-$20. If proposed fee increases are approved, the lowest price for comparable amenities would be $15. This means that the proposed rates of $20, $15, and $10 per night fall right in the current range for nearby campgrounds with comparable amenities. It is worth noting that if the new fee areas are approved, Cody Field Office will still be providing free recreation opportunities both at

developed campgrounds, like Darnell Hills and Bobcat-Houlihan, and through dispersed camping in undeveloped areas.

Priorities for Use of Fees

At the proposed rates, the recreation team would see an increase in revenue. This means that previously identified areas for improvement or preventative maintenance could be addressed. This falls in line with the language in BLM Handbook 2930-1 regarding how fees are used. “The BLM’s goal is to use 100 percent of fee revenue at the site of collection, provided the funds can be used efficiently and effectively.” The following paragraphs outline how those funds would be used by the recreation and maintenance teams that care for these sites.

Five Springs Falls Campground

Currently there a few improvements identified at the lower loop. Unfortunately, a few of the wooden bollards that outline the lower loop have either decayed or been ran into by cars. There is also recent damage to the wood at the host site that will need addressing. Due to rain and runoff from this past spring, the road leading to the trailhead has some potholes and erosion. The team has also proposed expanding some of the existing campsites to allow for more visitors. This would consist of more graveling and leveling which is also needed at a few sites between the two loops. The Cody Field Office may also consider bringing in a camp host for the coming seasons.

For the upper loop, increased revenue would allow more resources to maintain the trail to Medicine Mountain and Bighorn National Forest. The team would also like to see more bear boxes for these sites as they are larger than those at the lower loop. To improve education about the area more interpretive panels and materials can be added. There are also a few benches near the overlook that need replacement and potentially additional seating. Some of the fire rings at the site see more use than others and as such need replacement. In the next five years, the team may consider replacing or improving the current water system.

Hogan and Luce Reservoirs Campground

A significant issue that has already been addressed with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding is the shoreline erosion on the northern bank of Hogan Reservoir. The reservoir’s original purpose was to provide irrigation to the surrounding area but, the recent improvements have dramatically increased the recreation opportunities available in the area. This funding will ensure the sustainability of the reservoir for both farming and recreation. In addition, the restoration will improve the ecosystem for fishing and wildlife. This also ties in with potential improvements to the primitive boat launch and maintenance for the accessible dock.

To provide more opportunities to the public, the recreation team wants to create more campsites. To improve the camping experience, the recreation team would like to provide shade shelters and

bear-resistant trash cans for every site. As the site is popular with horsemen, there is the potential for investment in more horse related infrastructure. Similar to Five Springs Falls Campground, more revenue would allow the team to spend more time maintaining the Bald Ridge Trail also providing access to the Shoshone National Forest. While 98% of visitors were satisfied, The Cody Field Office strives to improve this by providing more visitor information and providing an increased presence, as suggested by patrons. In the next five years, the team may consider improving the site even further by installing a drinking water system.

Cottonwood Creek Campground

One of the defining characteristics of this campground is the high desert environment. Because of this, the recreation team wants to install shade shelters at every site. A few other things that would improve the visitor experience are bear-resistant trash cans and replacing the shingles on the kiosk. One thing that became apparent during the condition assessment was that some of the culverts around the campground were either damaged or jammed with rocks. The team will work to remedy these issues. Because there is currently only one for the campground, another visitor register can be installed at the trailhead. And lastly, as with all the other sites, the team may consider installing a water source for campers in the future.

The Proposed fees would improve the concerns previously outlined and give way to new and exciting opportunities for these campsites. Another important aspect of the fee changes is that it would allow for a carryover balance. It is necessary that these campgrounds have a carryover fund in order to take care of unforeseen emergencies.

Rationale

Between the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) and the BLM Handbook there are specific criteria laid out for raising fee rates and the establishment of new fee sites. The campgrounds that are the focus of this draft business plan meet or exceed those criteria. Approving these changes would remedy the cost imbalances the agency is experiencing by increasing the cost to those actively using these campgrounds. These changes would not significantly increase the direct and indirect costs associated with these sites. This is primarily due to the frequent presence of Cody Field Office staff, especially during the peak season. After a market analysis, it is clear that Five Springs Falls Campground significantly undercuts the market based on the services provided. The two new fee areas, if approved, would bring those sites to a comparable level within the market. Beyond supporting the mission of the BLM, these fees can serve to prevent problems before they happen and subsequently improve the security and safety of the sites. The Cody Field Office staff will continue to collect fees in the same manner as the past and in accord with policy. Increasing fees and adding additional sites will serve to benefit the public by providing high quality recreation opportunities, better aligning with the market, and shifting more of the burden to users.

Impacts from Changing and Not Changing Fees

Increasing fees and establishing new fee areas would provide numerous positive impacts for the recreation team at the Cody Field Office. As previously mentioned, the goal of the recreation team and the BLM, is to use 100% of recreation fees at the site where they were collected. From informal condition assessments at these recreation sites, and surveying done by the recreation team, both short term and long-term maintenance and improvement projects have been identified. This plan also falls in line with the tenants of Environmental Justice which seek to achieve equity, diversity, inclusion, and meeting accessibility standards for people with disabilities. Without an increase in funds, it will be harder to implement projects that support these goals, such as the improvements in accessibility infrastructure seen at Hogan and Luce. The Cody Field Office also aims to "encourage, facilitate, and improve partnerships with and access for youth, tribes, and underserved communities to public lands through recreation partnerships and collaborations." Beyond hosting an AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) to help with educational outreach, the Cody Field Office actively promotes the Every Kid in a Park Pass, providing the opportunity for free or discounted recreation opportunities to one of the most at-risk demographics.

If fees were not changed, several negative impacts would be seen. The first has been discussed at length, that the public would continue to bear undue burden. Continuing to run at a deficit would also take away from local economies by not providing high-quality recreation experiences nearby, which could in turn decrease visitation. The visitor experience would be hampered by limiting funding for routine maintenance and improvements. These effects could spill over into the environment, from trash pollution and a minimized presence in the area, causing even more damage. There are also potential negative impacts to the local economies of the towns nearest to the sites in this plan. It would also increase the strain on the recreation team and dependence on volunteer partnerships. These are among the reasons that this plan has been put forward.

Public Outreach Plan

To facilitate public involvement, the Cody Field Office must outline a plan in accordance with the guidelines provided in FLREA and BLM Handbook 2930. First, public notice of proposed fee changes will be posted at the respective sites. Because we are proposing the establishment of new fee site(s), the Secretary will publish a notice in the Federal Register at least 6 months before the establishment of new fee areas. As described in our visitor demographics, many of our recreation site users are locals, specifically from Park and Big Horn Counties. To encourage public discourse, news releases will be published in local newspapers in these counties. The articles will include contact information and resources for the public to comment. Beyond the minimum requirements of the FLREA, BLM seeks to use additional techniques to ensure the public is informed and involved. Wyoming has established community groups for those interested in outdoor recreation called, "Outdoor Recreation Collaboratives" or ORCs. The recreation team at the Cody Field Office is active in two of these that fall under our purview, Park County Outdoor Recreation Collaborative (PCORC) and Bighorn Basin Outdoor Recreation

Collaborative (BBORC). The recreation team will use the open comment period to inform other members of the proposed fee increase and new fee areas. Since 2021, the Cody Field Office publishes a yearly report detailing how recreation funding was spent to improve sites throughout the basin. The report can be found at https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-fees/flrea-revenue. The results of the report were presented to the BLM Wyoming Recreation Action Team (REACT) as part of the draft Business Management Plan and a letter of support was obtained.

Sources

16 USC Ch. 87: FEDERAL LANDS RECREATION ENHANCEMENT

H-2930-1 Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook

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