



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

Acton Recreation Area

Business Plan

February 2025



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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

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BLM Billings Field Office Acton Recreation Area Business Plan

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This business plan was prepared by the Bureau of Land Management's Billings Field Office pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (16 U.S.C. 6801-6814) and BLM recreation fee program policies. It establishes future management goals and priorities for the Acton Recreation Area Campground within the Billings Field Office.

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1 Executive Summary

This business plan was prepared by the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Billings Field Office (BiFO) in accordance with the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004 (P.L. 108-447, as amended) and BLM recreation program policy and manual direction regarding the administration of fee sites (BLM Manual 2930). FLREA provides the BLM with the authority to collect Standard and Expanded Amenity Fees, and other fees for sites and services that provide direct benefits to individuals and groups. Standard and Expanded Amenity fees can be charged on BLM recreational lands, the difference being that Standard Amenity fees cover sites with only moderate development, while Expanded Amenity fees are charged for specific or specialized facilities, equipment, or services. FLREA provides the BLM current authority to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at federal recreational lands and waters. FLREA states that an expanded amenity fee may be collected if the developed campground provides at least five of the following nine services: tent or trailer spaces, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, the collection of the fee by an employee or agent of the Federal land management agency, reasonable visitor protection, refuse containers, toilet facilities, and simple devices for containing a campfire. Per FLREA the Interagency Senior and Access passes may provide a 50% discount on expanded amenity fees associated with individual campsites.

BLM Manual 2930 requires each fee program have a business plan which thoroughly discusses fees and explains how rates are consistent with the criteria set forth in FLREA and other agency directives. Business plans assist management in determining appropriate fee rates, outline the cost of administering fee programs, and identify priorities for future fee program expenditures. 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 2025 Acton Recreation Area Business Plan was developed by the Billings Field Office (BiFO) while identifying that additional services may be needed to support a quality recreation experience. Costs for general maintenance and daily operations of this site is increasing annually. In addition, there has been a sharp increase in recreation use of this site over the past 12 years. Increasing operational costs, visitor pressure, and illegal camping overstays and dumping have highlighted the need for year-round maintenance of these sites, as well as required supplemental staff presence to be able to provide adequate visitor services and amenities.

The data used to analyze and prepare this business plan was obtained through internal BLM tracking and accounting mechanisms such as the Recreation Management Information System (RMIS), TrafX Vehicle Counters, Collections and Billing Systems (CBS), Federal Business Management System (FBMS), and other locally generated recreation and visitor use tracking systems. For more detailed information, please contact the BLM BiFO. Some of the additional data may be subject to Privacy Act requirements.

The proposed expanded amenity fee for the BiFO's Acton Recreation Area Campground per (16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(A)) is:

- Individual non-electric campsite: \$20 per campsite per night
- Individual non-electric campsite: Interagency Senior and Access Passes 50% off

The BiFO is proposing an initial fee of \$20 per campsite per night at the Acton Recreation Area Campground, with plans to increase the fee to \$30 per campsite per night five years after implementation. Additionally, to account for inflation, the BiFO proposes adopting a model to adjust fees by 20% (rounded to the nearest half dollar) whenever the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U), U.S. City Average, All Items, 1982-84=100, not seasonally adjusted, increases by 20%.

Currently, there are no fees at the Acton Recreation Area Campground. Maintenance and upkeep include campsite maintenance, trash collection, vault toilet maintenance and cleaning contracts, kiosk upkeep, site monitoring, and road maintenance. The proposed expanded amenity fees would be used to fund these activities, increase staff presence, improve signage, and maintain or enhance available amenities.

The BiFO conducted market analysis to develop the fee proposal. Most available camping opportunities on federal lands in the area are dispersed camping which does not require a fee. The proposed \$20 fee for an individual (non-electric) site is competitive to a variety of other federal, private, city, county, or state campgrounds near Acton that offer similar amenities. Market analysis identified these sites charge between \$18-\$127 per night depending on the available amenities. See Section 8 for a more detailed price comparison.

2 Authorities and Plan Conformance

This business plan has been prepared to meet the criteria defined in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-447; Title VIII, Section 801; 16 U.S.C. 6801–6814). The authorities and regulations for this business plan are:

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976** (Public Law 94-579; 43 U.S.C. 1701–1787), 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 the public lands. Section 303 of FLPMA contains BLM’s authority to enforce the regulations and impose penalties.
- **The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) of 2004** repealed applicable portions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and replaced BLM’s authority to collect recreation fees. This current law authorizes BLM to collect recreation fees at sites that meet certain requirements, allows BLM to keep the fee revenues at the local offices where they were 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.
- **Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 2930 (43 CFR 2930) Permits for Recreation on Public Lands** contains the regulations governing BLM’s recreation permitting program.

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

- BLM Manual 2930, *Recreation Permits and Fees*, Rel. 2-296 dated October 22, 2007
- BLM Handbook 2930-1, *Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook*, Rel. 2-300 dated November 17, 2014

The BLM strives to manage recreation and visitor services to serve the diverse visitor outdoor recreation demands while helping to maintain sustainable setting conditions needed to conserve the public lands, so the visitors’ desired recreation choices remain available. The BLM’s goals for delivering recreation benefits from BLM-administered lands and waters to the American people and their communities are to:

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

- **2015 Billings Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan**

The 2015 Approved Billings Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) is a comprehensive land use plan guiding management of all BLM lands within the BiFO. The following Management Decisions (MD) were decided upon, and are in conformance with the decision to implement camping fees:

- **MD REC-2: Monitoring:** Monitoring of recreation resources and human use including the following: visitor use and use patterns; recreation caused resource effects or impacts; visitor satisfaction; and effectiveness or attainment of outcomes-focused management objectives, recreation setting characteristics, and standards and indicators will be developed and implemented as an Implementation-Plan level Decision component.
- **MD REC-3:** Allow non-commercial dispersed camping subject to length of stay limitations, without a permit on BLM-administered lands in the planning area, except where prohibited. Evaluate the need for future developed camping locations in SRMA plans, based on select criteria such as habitat, resources, cultural, and socio-economic needs.
- **MD REC-10:** Monitoring of recreation resources will continue to occur, with emphasis placed on developed recreation sites and SRMAs. Monitoring will include regular patrols to check on signing, visitor use, recreation related impacts, and user conflicts. Monitoring will also emphasize identification of areas with compliance problems. Actual visitor numbers and/or vehicle counts will be documented at developed sites for trend analysis. Monitoring of SRPs will be conducted for compliance with the terms, conditions, and stipulations of the SRP as well as annual monitoring and evaluation of compliance with administrative requirements. Periodic assessments will be made to ensure that uses in SRMAs and ERMAs are consistent with their management objectives.

3 Acton Recreation Area Background

Acton Recreation Area (Appendix C, Map 1) is a 3,697-acre Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) in the BiFO, in Yellowstone County, north of Montana Highway 3. Located approximately 25 miles north of Billings, Acton consists of an extremely diverse landscape, with its' primary recreation uses being mountain biking on 26 miles of purpose-built trails with varying difficulties, and camping. Secondary uses include hiking, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, UTV riding, and hunting. Acton provides multiple possibilities for use year-round. The landscape consists of Cretaceous Age upland bluffs of Eagle sandstone, minor badlands, steep drainages, weathered shale, and scattered ponderosa pine. Per the BiFO RMP, the Management Objective for the Acton Travel Management Area is to provide a range of recreational and access opportunities while minimizing impacts on cultural properties and other resource values. About 6.8 miles of mapped roads are open for motorized use, 1 mile limited to administrative use, and .8 mile closed.

Acton is located within the Hoskins Basin Archaeological District, an area containing the remains of both conical and cribbed aboriginal wooden dwellings. Both types are increasing rarities on the northwest plains. Reports of early explorers indicated that dwellings of this type were once common. Due to loss through natural causes (weathering, floods, and fire), many of the structures have been lost. Their use for firewood and fence posts accounts for other losses. Distribution of the both the cribbed and conical dwellings is quite limited. The cribbed type is reported to have been spotted only from south-central Montana to northern Wyoming. The conical types have a wider range but are not as common in southcentral Montana as the cribbed. Only a limited number of these dwellings are known to exist. Sites with both types represented are fewer still. No off-road motorized vehicle use is permitted to protect the archaeological sites and wildlife habitat.

The BLM's management in a SRMA is focused on the protection and enhancement of targeted recreation activities, experiences, and settings. Recreation and visitor services management is the predominant land use planning focus in a SRMA. The SRMA designation provides planning-level guidance outlining and describing the appropriate types and locations for recreation uses, types, and locations of other allowable resource uses and activities, and necessary resource protections. Outcome-focused objectives for the SRMA establish the overarching management priorities that the BLM implements through a Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP). The BiFO signed the Acton Recreation and Travel Management Plan Environmental Assessment on March 29, 2018 (NEPA number DOI-BLM-MT-A010-2017-0002-EA).

Limitations within Acton include:

- Controlled Surface Use avoidance areas in portions of Acton.
- Closed to mineral material deposits.
- Oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development would be allowed with a No Surface Occupancy.
- Right-of-way avoidance area.

3.1 Amenities

The BiFO does not currently charge any fees at Acton, however the BLM does have amenities that would fall under Expanded Amenities, justifying charging Expanded Amenity Fees at the site. These proposed fees support improved visitor safety and experiences. Existing Expanded Amenities include:

- Access roads.
- Trailhead parking.
- Information kiosk and bulletin board.
- Vault toilets with a cleaning contract.
- Purpose built mountain bike trail network.
- Shade structure with accessible picnic table and grill.
- BLM Law Enforcement and non-law enforcement personnel patrols.
- Campground with 15 sites. Each site has designated parking, picnic tables, and fire rings.



Appendix D, Photo 13 – Campsite with picnic table and fire ring.

See Appendix D, Photos 7-15 for amenity photos.

Since 2013 many improvements have been made at Acton, such as mountain bike trails, a vault toilet, information kiosk and bulletin board installation, trail signage, and campsite designation with picnic tables and fire rings. Each year the BLM also hosts several mountain bike and running race SRPs, bike demonstration days from a local bike shop, and search and rescue trainings from the Yellowstone County Sheriff's Office.

There are plans for future improvements as well:

- Chemical treatment to Heag Road (access road) to prevent wash boarding (subject to funding, 2025)
- Increased accessibility at the trailhead and campsites (2025)
- Modifying existing trails to be accessible for adaptive mobility devices (beginning 2025)
- Permanent bike work stand with tools (purchased, to be installed 2025)
- Dog waste bag dispenser and trash can (purchased, to be installed 2025)
- Pump track (Pedal United to break ground 2025)
- Roughly 10 miles of new trails (Pedal United to begin planning routes 2025)

- Routine trail maintenance (annually)

The BLM is also looking into the possibility of improving the fire road for increased access to the interior of the recreation area, with potential for a new trailhead as well.

3.1.1 Expanded Amenities Fee Requirements

Except as limited by subsection (d-Limitations of Recreation Fees-16 U.S. Code § 6802 - Recreation fee authority), the Secretary of the Interior may charge an expanded amenity recreation fee, either in addition to a standard amenity fee or by itself, at Federal recreational lands and waters under the jurisdiction the BLM. The BLM's proposed Expanded Amenity Fees would be for the following facilities present at Acton:

- Use of developed campgrounds:
 - Tent or trailer spaces.
 - Picnic tables.
 - Access roads.
 - The collection of the fee by an employee or agent of the Federal land management agency.
 - Reasonable visitor protection.
 - Refuse containers.
 - Toilet facilities.
 - Simple devices for containing a campfire.

3.2 Visitation

Acton is a popular recreation site in part due to its proximity to Billings, Montana, as well as the popularity of mountain biking opportunities in the area. Billings is Montana’s largest city with a population of 120,854 as of 2023, and a population increase of 1.37% per year from 2000-2023 (Neilsberg, 2024). Acton is a premier site for mountain biking with its extensive network of trails with varying difficulties, authorization of e-bikes (which are restricted from many trail systems), and free dispersed camping opportunities for multi-day trips. Mountain biking participation throughout the United States has also seen a significant increase in recent years due to innovation in bike design, as well as more people getting outdoors, especially during and after the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Annual visitation for Acton since 2002 is listed in the table and chart.

Note: Visitation for December 2024 was not available at the time of writing this plan, however visitation is on track to be on par with previous years.



Year	Visits	Percent Increase
2002	3,000	
2003	3,300	10.0%
2004	4,750	43.9%
2005	7,126	50.0%
2006	7,482	5.0%
2007	7,706	3.0%
2008	7,937	3.0%
2009	7,937	0.0%
2010	7,927	-0.1%
2011	8,323	5.0%
2012	7,860	-5.6%
2013	12,216	55.4%
2014	11,740	-3.9%
2015	9,981	-15.0%
2016	11,817	18.4%
2017	10,482	-11.3%
2018	12,539	19.6%
2019	16,176	29.0%
2020	25,678	58.7%
2021	19,534	-23.9%
2022	21,426	9.7%
2023	21,498	0.3%
2024	20,846	-3.0%
Total	267,281	594.9%

3.3 Issues

Although visitation and use have increased 119% from 2012 to 2024, and many improvements have been made, the BLM has not charged any fees at Acton. As a result, it has been difficult to maintain the site and its amenities. There have been many negative resource impacts as well, with the most notable being camping overstays.

The BLM Montana/Dakotas has a dispersed camping limit of 16 consecutive days. After this, campers are required to relocate at least half a mile. However, due to the 6.8-mile road access to the Acton Recreation Area, some campers have exploited this camping rule and remain at Acton year-round. Many of these campers are often houseless and living in vehicles, tents, or campers. When they fail to move as required they limiting space for other visitors. Overstayers frequently accumulate large amounts of household items, vehicle parts, and garbage, which they leave behind when they eventually vacate. In Fiscal Year 2024 alone, the BiFO conducted three major cleanups at Acton, removing over 3,000 pounds of trash. These abandoned camps not only create an eyesore but also contribute to safety concerns and environmental damage. See Appendix D, Photos 1-6, for images of these sites.



Appendix D, Photo 2 – Trash left from overstay camper.

3.4 Operating Costs

The annual operating cost for Acton Recreation Area is approximately \$23,570.64 per year. Below is a table with a breakdown for various operations that take place to maintain the recreation area:

Operation	Description	Cost
Outdoor Recreation Planner GS-11	Patrols Acton, performs maintenance, processes and monitors SRPs, Program Officer for agreement with Pedal United, leads cleanups	\$6,046.08 (1 work month)

Seasonal Park Ranger GS-07	Patrols Acton, performs maintenance, public contacts, leads trail crews	\$ 4,085.41 (1 work month)
Montana Conservation Corps Fellow	Patrols Acton, performs maintenance, public contacts	\$3,092.80 (1 work month)
Abandoned camp cleanup	<p>Average cleanup is 1,200 lbs. of waste. 8 work hours for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 GS11 Outdoor Recreation Planner - \$283.44 • 1 WG6 Maintenance Worker - \$192.00 • 1 GS7 Park Ranger - \$191.52 • 6 interns - \$927.84 • Dump fees - ~\$25.00 • Supplies - ~\$50.00 • Fuel for 2 vehicles and mini skid steer if needed - \$50.00 	\$1,719.80
Restroom cleaning contract	April 1 – October 31	\$1,793.75
Off season restroom maintenance	November 1 – March 31. Estimate includes toilet paper, cleaning supplies, fuel.	~\$300
Heag Road grading	<p>Grade access road to rec. area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport grader w/ semi - \$582 • Trailer - \$571.20 • Operator - \$480 • Total - \$1,633.20 	\$6,532.80 (grade road 4/yr.)

4 Proposed Fees and Rules

This business plan is proposing expanded amenities fees at its existing developed campground at Acton, which the BLM is authorized to collect as the site meets the requirements outlined in FLREA. FLREA states that an expanded amenity fee may be collected if the developed campground provides at least five of the following nine services:

- Tent or trailer spaces*
- Picnic tables*
- Drinking water
- Access roads*
- The collection of the fee by an employee or agent of the Federal land management agency
- Reasonable visitor protection*
- Refuse containers*
- Toilet facilities*
- Simple devices for containing a campfire*

Items marked with an asterisk indicate amenities which are available at Acton.

Per FLREA the Interagency Senior and Access passes may provide a 50% discount on expanded amenity fees associated with individual campsites. The BLM retains and expends 100% of collected recreation fees for maintenance, improvements and visitor services at the site or area in which they are collected. Acton Recreation Area Campground already meets the FLREA expanded amenity requirements, though there are no existing fees.

The BiFO is proposing the following fees and discounts for the Acton Recreation Area Campground:

	Proposed Fees	Discounts
Day Use	None.	N/A
Camping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$20.00 per campsite per night [Individual non-electric campsites of \$20 (16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(A))] • Reservation services (16 U.S.C. 6802(g)(2)(G). Reservation service fees could range from \$.50 to \$10.00 depending on the type of service provided. 	50% off with qualifying America the Beautiful Pass: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Pass. • Senior Lifetime Pass. • Senior Annual Pass. • Golden Age Pass. • Golden Access Pass.

These fees would allow the BiFO to address the camping overstay issues present at Acton by increasing law enforcement patrols and enabling law enforcement to enforce the camping rules and stay limits more easily. By reducing the camping overstay violations at Acton, the illegal dumping occurring because of these overstay campers will also be eliminated. These fees will also

allow the BiFO to provide more visitor education on trash dumping and other Leave No Trace principles to promote resource protection.

The BLM is proposing to begin charging campground fees on May 1, 2026.

4.1 Campground Rules:

In addition to normal BLM camping rules, the following would apply:

- First come, first served.
- 16 day stay limit.
- Campsite occupancy limited to 8 people per site.
- Three vehicle limit - all automobiles, trailer types, motorcycles and UTVs are defined as vehicles.
- Camping restricted to developed sites with carsonite markers.
- Dispersed Camping would be permitted 3 miles into Acton (following the Fire Road) and beyond.
- Dispersed Camping would not be permitted at the developed campground, current trailhead, or any other trailheads created in the future.

4.2 Future Considerations

- Increase fees at Acton Recreation Area Campground to \$30 per campsite per night 5 years after implementation.
- To account for inflation, the BiFO is also proposing to adopt a model to increase fees by 20% (then rounded to the nearest half dollar) whenever the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U), US City Average, All Items, 1982-84=100, not seasonally adjusted, rises by 20%.
- 1 additional developed campground may be considered in the future at Acton Recreation Area, subject to appropriate analysis. All sites would be built to satisfy the expanded amenity fee requirements of FLREA.
- The BLM has proposed to improve Heag Road with a magnesium chloride treatment in 2025, subject to funding approval or grant award. This chemical treatment would improve the 2.5-mile gravel access road by preventing the wash-boarding effect that occurs due to heavy use. The treatment would also reduce the airborne dust that goes onto the nearby private agricultural land. It would also reduce the number of times the BLM needs to grade the road each year. This project is estimated to cost \$20,000.

4.3 E-Commerce:

BiFO will use various e-commerce technologies as directed in E-Commerce Technologies for Recreation Fee Collections and Reservation Services (BLM Instruction Memorandum 2022-010),

to provide recreation visitors opportunities to find and pay for campsites at Acton. This is provided through the interagency reservation service Recreation.gov.

An expanded amenity fee for reservation services would be charged at the Acton Campground in addition to any other 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 is subject to contracting requirements and will be adjusted with contract changes or with future updates to the business plan. Other payment options may also be considered in the future as technology and software develops, such as onsite credit card payment systems.

5 Impacts from Charging Fees to Recreation Users

The primary purpose of the proposed fees is to maintain and preserve the investment that the public has made into the BiFO recreation sites and to provide the visitor amenities that are expected at developed recreation sites. The proposed fees will help to defray the cost of staffing for maintenance and visitor services, commensurate with significant recent increases in visitation and associated needs and pressures, as well as help offset the rising costs of operating these sites.

5.1 Benefits to Recreational Users

If fees were charged for camping at Acton, recreationists would see an improvement in facilities, more campsite availability due to the enforcement of fees and elimination of camping overstays, and the potential for expanded trails and other amenities. Any fees collected at Acton would be used at Acton. Services and facility maintenance standards would continue uninterrupted. The fees would offset the rising costs of maintaining and improving Acton. Specifically, the BiFO would likely use the fees for the restroom cleaning contract, Heag Road magnesium chloride treatments to improve the heavily wash boarded gravel road, supplement staffing work months, signage, additional campsites, additional trailhead, and an improved interior road.

5.2 Benefits to Local Economy

Many citizens of Billings and the surrounding communities enjoy mountain biking, camping, driving OHVs, hunting, and hiking, amongst other outdoor activities available at Acton. With an improved campground and expanded amenities, Acton would likely see an increase in users. Local outfitters, grocery stores, and gas stations may see an increase in purchases as a result.

5.3 Benefits to the Environment

The environment would benefit from fees being implemented for camping at Acton as a result of dispersed camping being limited. This would prevent long term camping overstays, which have resulted in illegal dumping, trash blowing throughout the recreation area, and HAZMAT issues, such as oils and other fluids from long term campers being spilled/leaked on the ground.

5.4 Socioeconomic Impacts, including Low Income Populations and At-Risk Communities

Fees are only being considered for camping. There would not be a fee for day use only. Acton is becoming a destination for many users on road trips through Montana. \$20 is generally less than when compared to other local campgrounds (see Table in Section 8) and hotels.

Users from low-income populations or at-risk communities would not see a significant impact if they intend to camp, as there is still other BLM land and State Trust Land nearby that visitors may dispersed camp on if they wish to stay near Acton. There are also many other locations nearby that users can mountain bike or camp at within the BiFO on BLM, or at city/county parks, none of which charge any fees. This would be the only location within the BiFO that charges fees. No other BLM recreation sites have an associated day use or camping fee.

6 Impacts from Not Charging Fees to Recreation Users

A failure to charge camping fees will lead to a continued heavy reliance on appropriated funding to support recreation opportunities at Acton. While the current funds can support the operations, not increasing fees will severely inhibit the ability to implement more improvements at this site. A disruption or decrease in the current level of services will have negative impacts on recreational users, the local economy, and the environment.

6.1 Negative Impacts to Recreational Users

Maintaining the current fee structure (no fees) at Acton will result in a similar staffing levels. Due to increased visitation, deterioration in infrastructure and timely facility maintenance are likely to occur. With appropriated funding, sometimes it takes years to complete necessary projects. Projects that have been necessary but difficult to complete due to lack of funding include road improvements for enhanced visitor access, additional campsites, and an additional trailhead. Many of the improvements that are needed are very costly and will take years of scrimping funds to prepare for. If camping fees are not implemented, many of these projects will not be completed for years if funding even becomes available at all.

Without modifications to the existing fee structure, a continued lack of maintenance and decreased visitor services will occur and continue to worsen with the increase of operating costs over time. Deteriorating facilities due to lack of maintenance and reductions in visitor services will significantly reduce recreation experiences for the public. There may also be an increase in conflicts between user groups due to limited services, decline in public safety support, and a drain on funds because of the increased need for Law Enforcement partnerships.

6.2 Negative Impacts to Local Economy

Without implementation of campground fees, erosion of services, such as limited cleaning of sites, or limited development or improvements to facilities will occur. This may result in fewer recreationists using Acton, and fewer dollars being spent at local outfitters, grocery stores, and gas stations.

6.3 Negative Impacts to the Environment

Not charging fees would result in more long-term camping overstays, which leads to negative environmental impacts due to illegal dumping, trash blowing throughout the recreation area, and HAZMAT issues, such as oils and other fluids from long term campers being spilled/leaked on the ground.

6.4 Socioeconomic Impacts, including Low Income Populations and At-Risk Communities

Keeping the same fee structure (no camping fees) will most likely benefit low-income populations. However, first-rate visitor experiences will become difficult to provide which could prevent recreationists from continuing to use the site as quality decreases. Socioeconomic impacts can be mitigated by keeping surrounding sites fee-free, which is the case within the BiFO.

7 Price Comparison

There are a limited number of campgrounds in the Billings, MT area, most of which charge fees. The proposed camping fee is significantly less than most of these campgrounds. If users still wish to dispersed camp, there are plenty of BLM areas which could be used that are a similar distance as Acton is from Billings.

Location	Price per night	Amenities
Acton Rec. Area - BLM	\$20	Tent and RV sites, accessible picnic tables, and fire rings. Other amenities: Access roads, trailhead parking, information kiosk, vault toilets, cleaning contract, mountain bike trails, shade structure with accessible picnic table, grill.
Billings KOA	\$40-127	Tent pads, RV sites, water and electric hookups, picnic table, fire ring, table, swing, pet area, pet cleanup station, heated swimming pool, themed playground, minigolf, showers and restrooms, general store, laundry, Wi-Fi.
Yellowstone River RV Park and Campground	\$59.40-116.64	Tent pads, RV sites, water, electric, sewer hookups, swimming pool, hot tub, laundry, spa, arcade, fishing, playground, general store, pet area, basketball court, showers, restrooms, grills, Wi-Fi, discounts.
Billings Village RV Park	\$70 nightly, \$350 weekly	RVs only. Water, electric, sewage hookups, cable, Wi-Fi, RV washing, showers, restrooms, laundry, playground, bike trail, book exchange.
Riverside Park Camping	\$20-30	Tent pads, RV sites, fire rings, picnic tables, reservations only, Yellowstone River access.
Sheridan Campground - USFS	\$18-36	Tent pads, RV sites, picnic tables, fire rings with grills, accessible vault toilets, drinking water, 1 fully accessible campsite, food lockers. Nearby hiking, biking, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing opportunities.
Rattin Campground - USFS	\$18	Tent pads, picnic tables, fire rings with grills, accessible vault toilets, drinking water, firewood vendor, camp host, picnic area, self-pay station, trash collection, food lockers. Nearby hiking, biking, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing opportunities.
Basin Montana Campground - USFS	\$20-33	Tent pads, picnic tables, fire rings with grills, accessible vault toilets, 3 fully accessible campsites, drinking water, firewood vendor, picnic area, trash collection, food lockers. Nearby hiking, biking, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing opportunities.
Cascade Campground - USFS	\$20-33	Tent pads, picnic tables, fire rings with grills, accessible vault toilets, 1 fully accessible campsite, drinking water, firewood vendor, picnic area, self-pay station,

		trash collection, food lockers. Nearby hiking, biking, fishing, kayaking, and canoeing opportunities.
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8 Missouri Basin Resource Advisory Council

Established in 2020, the Missouri Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) is an official federal advisory committee that provides advice and recommendations on all aspects of public land management to the Bureau of Land Management's North Central Montana and Eastern Montana/Dakotas districts.

The RAC has 15 members, balanced to reflect various interests and users of public lands.

- 5 members representing commercial uses and users such as livestock grazing, timber, mining, oil & gas, realty & rights-of-ways, off-highway vehicle groups, and outfitters and guides.
- 5 members representing environmental organizations, historic & cultural interests, wildlife organizations, wild horses and burros, and dispersed recreation.
- 5 members representing elected officials, Tribes, state or other governmental agencies, academicians involved in natural sciences, and the public-at-large.

The Missouri Basin RAC meets two to four times a year. Meeting locations alternate among central and eastern Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota communities to allow the public to address the council. District Managers for the North Central Montana and Eastern Montana/Dakotas districts serve as the co-Designated Federal Officials (DFO).

The RAC met on January 16, 2025 from 8am to 5pm via Microsoft Teams where the BiFO presented this Business Plan as an agenda item to the RAC. A quorum vote took place and the RAC voted in favor of this business plan. The vote totals are as follows:

- Yea - 12
- Nay - 1
- Present – 2

9 Public Comment Period

In accordance with the FLREA, the BiFO provided the public with an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed fee and the intended uses of the revenue from these fees. Public comments were accepted from December 23, 2024 through January 21, 2025 and the comment period has now closed. Public comments were accepted through email, mail, and the Business Plan's ePlanning page: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2035543/510>

The BLM received 7 comments on this project; 5 in support, and 2 opposing the proposal to charge fees. The comments and BLM responses are available below.

Comment	BLM Response
<p>I have reviewed the proposal to implement a fee system for the campground at the Acton Recreation Area and I am in favor of it. The pressure there has increased significantly over the past several years. With that has come negative impacts to the quality of the public land and facilities. Generated money is needed to repair this damage and to help prevent it from continuing into the future. Too many are using the campground as a permanent or semi-permanent residence instead of the intended use-short term 'camping'. Enforcement needs to be a priority with the fee system or the abuse of the regulations will continue.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment, and your understanding regarding the resource damage and other issues with the camping overstays and associated trash dumps. All money generated from camping fees will be spent at Acton on various amenities, employee salaries, and other operating costs. Enforcement of camping fees and other rules will be prioritized to ensure visitor enjoyment and resource protection.</p>
<p>I fully support your move to require a fee to use campsites at the Acton Recreation Area and enforce the stay limit of campers. Many homeless campers have ruined the intended purpose of enjoying the great outdoors in the area. Heaps of trash have been left on the premises, in addition to some burning trash and polluting the air. This is simply unacceptable. I recommend banning free dispersed camping, as this will simply push the problem further into the recreation area.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment, and your understanding regarding the resource damage and other issues with the camping overstays and associated trash dumps. Enforcement of camping fees and other rules will be prioritized to ensure visitor enjoyment and resource protection. The BLM is unable to ban all dispersed camping within Acton as it is an allowable use of the recreation area, per the 2015 BiFO RMP. The BLM will continue to monitor the area and enforce all rules and regulations. Should camping or dumping become an issue elsewhere the BLM will work to address it.</p>
<p>I have camped overnight at Acton on several occasions. I have attempted some biking and have hiked the area extensively. My use of the area has decreased because of the increasing prevalence of the mountain biking community who expressed displeasure at us</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment, and your understanding regarding the resource damage and other issues with the camping overstays and associated trash dumps. The trails at Acton are open to both hikers, bikers, and equestrians. The BLM recognizes that there</p>

<p>"old folks" using their trails. Accordingly my suggestions are: There should be marked trails for difficulty and light recreational biking to avoid conflicts on the trails. I also noticed that a significant number of the bikers were only there for the day, but did wander through dispersed campsites or, if camping, camped in large groups with their attendant noise and hubub. I am suggesting that there be a day use fee for this area, as well, if there is to be a camping fee (which i do not oppose). I noticed day users availing themselves of many of the amenities that this plan is proposing campers pay for. Additionally, campsite capacity rules (number of people, units, vehicles, tents, bikes (?)) should be promulgated and enforced. Maybe a reservable group camping area could be provided. The camp price seems to be a bit high when I consider the amenities found at Forest Service facilities, which provide water, all-weather sites, firewood sales and on-site camp hosts. I am not expecting this for a small site like Acton, however some consideration for better campsite amenities should be considered if campers are to bear all the burdens for improving the area.</p>	<p>are generally user conflicts between these groups, however emphasizes that these are all allowable uses of the trails. Thank you for your suggestions regarding fees, campsite capacity, group sites, and pricing. Please note that some of the amenities at Acton are available for both day users and campers. At this time the BLM is not considering a day use fee for Acton. As a result of your comment regarding campsite capacity, the BLM has included rules about this in the business plan. Please see section 5.1. At this time the BLM is not considering a reservable group campsite, however this is a good recommendation that the BLM will consider in the future should the need arise. The BLM feels that the pricing for the campground is appropriate considering the available amenities, site popularity, and distance from Billings, MT. The BLM is dedicated the improving the visitor experience at Acton and will continue to look for new and innovative ways to improve the site for all uses.</p>
<p>During this time of rampant inflation, increased taxation, and overall cost of living increases, free access to our public lands is a godsend. I and many I know have enjoyed the Acton recreation area responsibly for years now and to be charged for its use due to the actions of a few individuals who were never taught how to clean up after themselves feels like a slap in the face. Might I suggest trying to organize a citizen volunteer group to do the cleaning instead of increased fees? And if the budget is such an issue then the BLM should first act responsibly by cutting operating costs, cutting employee benefits/salaries or laying off employees wherever possible. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, if any fee system is implemented then I will simply ignore it and do whatever I can to</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Although the BLM could continue to conduct cleanups with employees or volunteers, these cleanups do not directly address the issues at hand, which are camping overstays and trash dumps. The BLM appreciates your budget suggestions. The BLM advises all users on public land to understand and adhere to all rules and regulations. Vandalizing or destroying government property is a crime and is not recommended.</p>

<p>vandalize or destroy whatever fee station is installed, consequences be damned. Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>	
<p>I STRONGLY support the proposal for charging camping fees at Acton recreation area. I have recreated (both biking and hiking) at Acton for almost 30 years. Illegal camping and dumping of garbage have gotten out of hand. Some of the "long term" campers during the summer have been frankly scary. Anything that can be done to keep Acton safer and cleaner, I strongly support.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment, and your understanding regarding the resource damage and other issues with the camping overstays and associated trash dumps. The BLM will continue to work to ensure resource protection and visitor satisfaction are a priority.</p>
<p>I support your plan to collect camping fees at Action Recreation Area to fund law enforcement, education, maintenance and amenities. I hike and trail run at Acton and the recent increase in illegal long term camping and trash all over is a problem. Thanks for your efforts to address this problem and keep Acton a great place for recreation.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment, and your understanding regarding the resource damage and other issues with the camping overstays and associated trash dumps. The BLM will continue to work to ensure resource protection and visitor satisfaction are a priority.</p>
<p>Hello, I am opposed to the fees being proposed at Acton Recreation area. I understand the issues facing the place, but there's already a serious lack of places where one can camp for free, and as an avid camper with a limited income who has spent many a night sleeping in back of my van, I know there is a serious need for such places, and they are already dwindling. I'm not sure what BLM lands the plan refers to when it says "Oh, people with low-incomes can camp elsewhere", but the only place I know of anywhere near Billings where camping is allowed for free is Horsethief Recreation Area, and that's much too far of a drive from Billings/Acton. Thank you for hearing my thoughts.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. The BLM recognizes that some may be opposed to this change. Although fees will be charged at Acton, there are other areas which are a similar distance from Billings where one could continue to dispersed camp for free. Please contact the Billings Field Office (406-896-5013) in order to learn more about these camping opportunities.</p>

10 What's next?

The BLM is dedicated to keeping the public informed and part of the land management process. The next steps for this business plan can be found below.

- The BLM will begin charging campground fees at Acton Recreation Area on May 1, 2026.
- The BLM will continue to conduct outreach in preparation for charging fees with:
 - Local business owners, retailers, and organizations to notify them of the fees to be charged and availability of the Business Plan for their review.
 - Public notices posted at BiFO recreation sites, news releases, and social media posts with information about the fees and when they will be charged.
- Posting of the Business Plan on the BLM National Recreation Site Business Plan website: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-fees/business-plans>
- The BiFO will publish a Notice of Intent to Collect Recreation Fees in the Federal Register six months prior to implementing the new fee structure (November 1, 2025).
- The BLM will add additional signage and other amenities at Acton in order to prepare for fees to be charged.
- The BLM will add a “Visit Page” on Recreation.gov in preparation to charge fees.

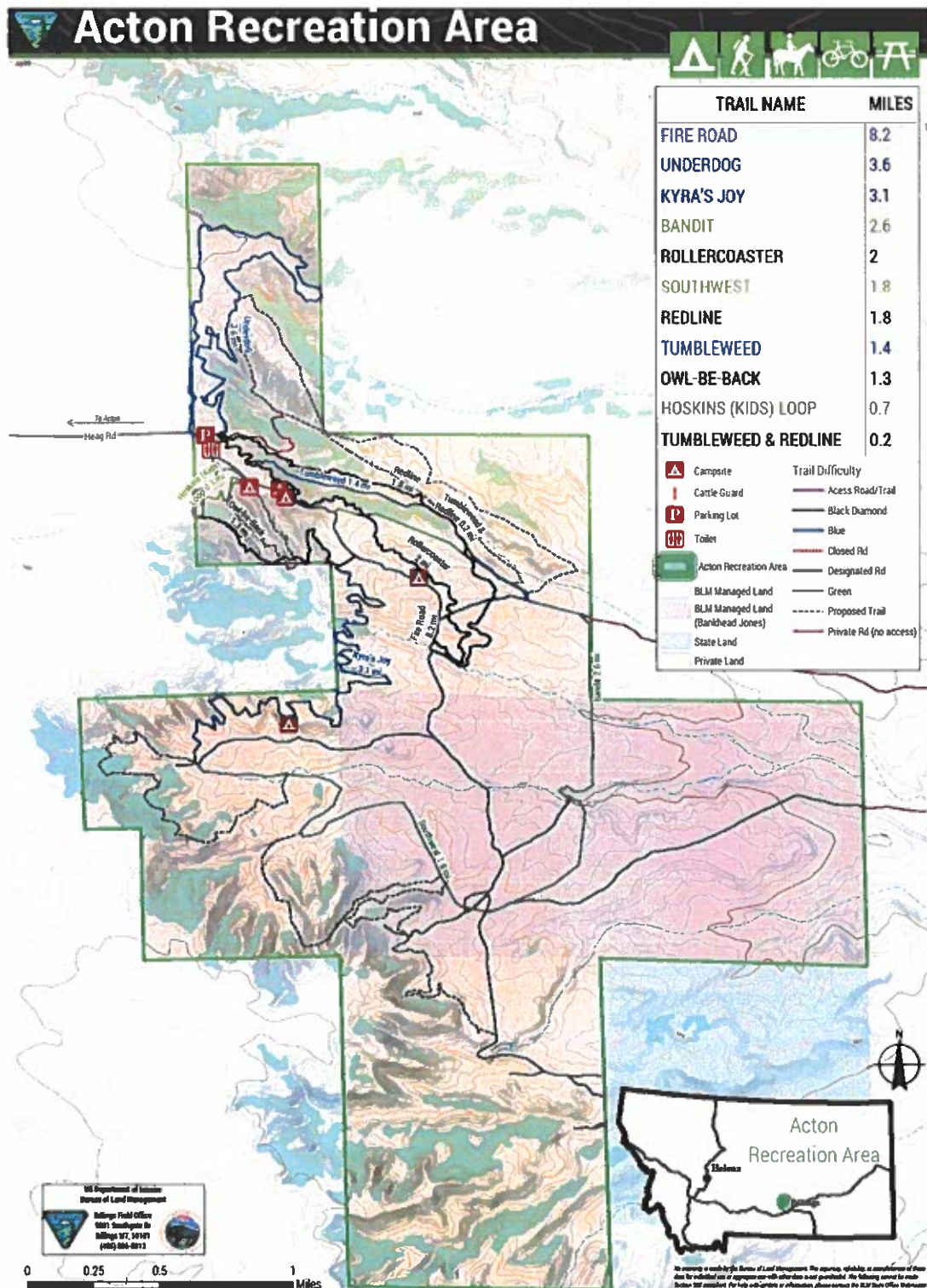
Appendix A: Acronyms and Abbreviations

BiFO	Billings Field Office
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DM	Departmental Manual
DR	Decision Record
EA	Environmental Assessment
EO	Executive Order
ERMA	Extensive Recreation Management Area
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976, as amended
FLREA	Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act
IB	Information Bulletin
MBRAC	Missouri Basin Resource Advisory Council
MD	Management Decisions
MSO	BLM Montana State Office
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
ORP	Outdoor Recreation Planner
RAC	Resource Advisory Council
Plan	Acton Recreation Area Business Plan
RAMP	Recreation Area Management Plan
RMIS	Recreation Management Information System
RMP	2015 Billings Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan
RUP	Recreation Use Permit
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
SRP	Special Recreation Permit

Appendix B: References

- Bureau of Land Management. Acton Recreation and Travel Management Plan Environmental Assessment, NEPA Number DOI-BLM-MT-A010-2017-0002-EA. March 29, 2018.
- Bureau of Land Management. Billings Approved Field Office Resource Management Plan. 2015.
- Bureau of Land Management. Dillon Field Office Madison River Business Plan. 2024.
- Bureau of Land Management. Phoenix District Office Campground Fees Business Plan. 2024
- Neilsberg. Billings, MT Population by Year. 2024. <https://www.neilsberg.com/insights/billings-mt-population-by-year/>

Appendix C: Maps



Map 1 – Acton Recreation Area map.

Appendix D: Photos



Photo 1 – Trash dump from overstay camper.



Photo 2 – Trash dump from overstay camper.



Photo 3 – MCC Interns gather trash from overstay camp site.

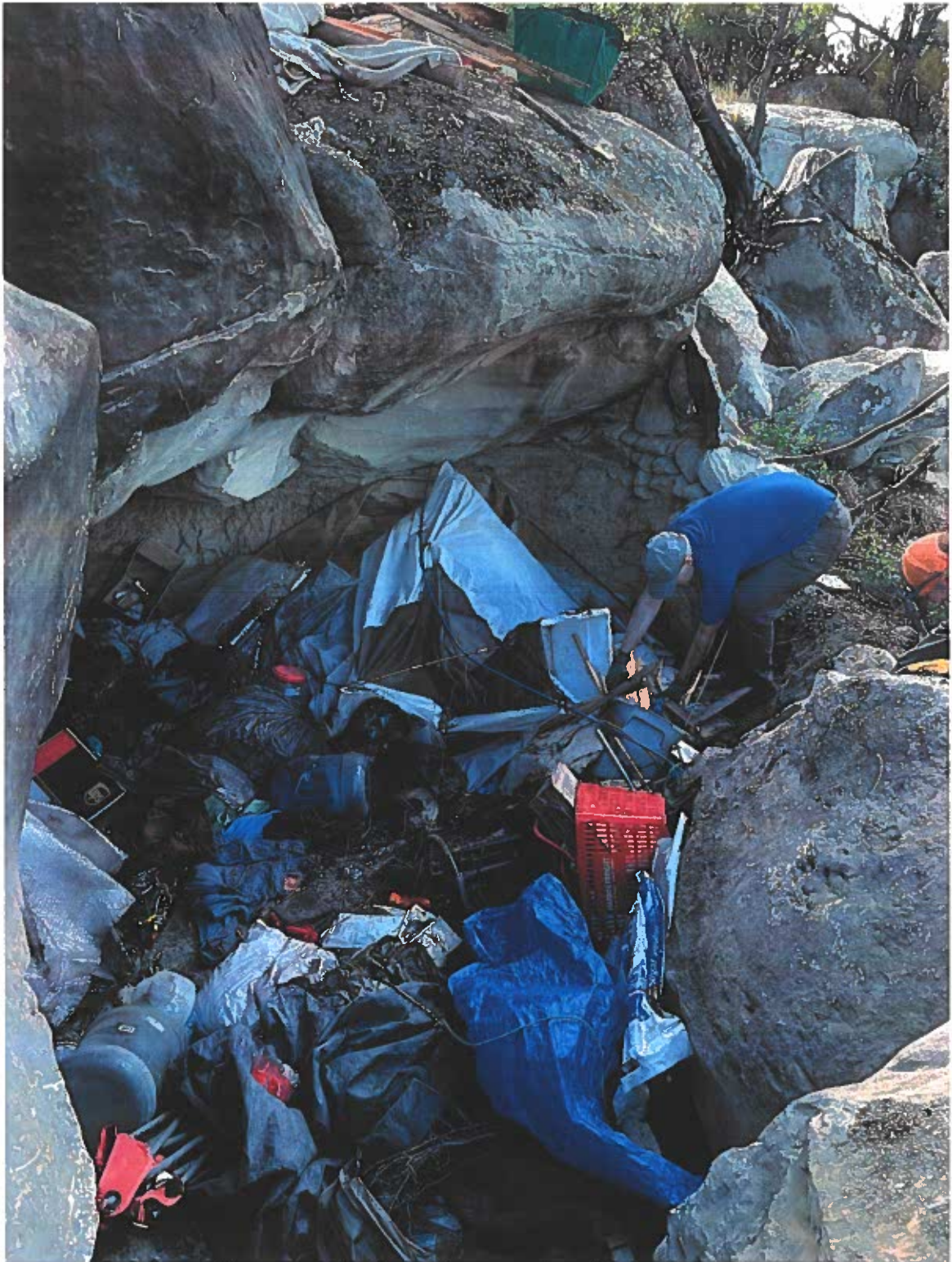


Photo 4 – BLM Employees gather trash from overstay camp site.



Photo 5 – Illegal wood cutting and pallet burnt as camp site.



Photo 6 – Trash dump from overstay camper.



Photo 7 – Entrance to Acton.



Photo 8 – Shade structure, accessible picnic table, and grill at trailhead.



Photo 9 – Vault toilet and information kiosk at trailhead.



Photo 10 – Information kiosk.



Photo 11 – Trailhead.



Photo 12 – Trailhead.



Photo 13 – Campsite with picnic table and fire ring.



Photo 14 – Campsite with picnic table and fire ring.



Photo 15 – Section of trail with dirt jumps.