

America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Pass (Interagency Pass) Program

Business Plan



United States Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management

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1. Background

This business plan has been prepared pursuant to the “*Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act 2004*” (P.L. 108-447) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation program fee policy (*BLM Manual 2930*). The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) repealed applicable portions of the *Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (Public Law 33-578)* and replaced the BLM’s authority to collect fees in 2004. This current law authorizes the BLM to collect recreation amenity fees at sites that meet certain requirements and other fees through the issuance of Special Recreation Permits. It allows the BLM to keep the fee revenues collected, and directs how the BLM will manage and utilize these revenues. FLREA also established a national “America the Beautiful - the National Parks and Federal Recreational Pass” (Interagency Pass Program) to replace the Golden Eagle, Golden Eagle Hologram, Golden Age, Golden Access Passports, and the National Parks Pass.

National interagency transition from the Golden Passport Program was facilitated during 2005-2006. The official Interagency Pass Program began on January 1, 2007. Some tables in this business plan reflect Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 data from the Golden Passport Program transition period.

The America the Beautiful - the National Parks and Federal Recreational Interagency Passes are valid for entrance fees or standard amenity fees at sites managed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service (FS), National Park Service (NPS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation).

An Entrance Fee is a fee charged to enter an area. A Standard Amenity Fee is a fee charged for use of sites that have a combination of *basic* amenities, as described in the law. An Expanded Amenity Fee is a fee charged for use of sites with *specialized* amenities (“the extras” that aren’t basic entrance or standard amenity fees), which are also described in the law. Examples of amenities at expanded amenity fees sites include: campgrounds, boat launches, cabins, and/or guided tours. Because combinations of Interagency Pass types and site amenities can vary, it is recommended that the passholder verify possible pass benefits with their destination’s local office before arriving.

Objectives of the Interagency Pass Program include:

- Making Interagency Passes more convenient to purchase and use.
- Incorporating technologies to allow for improved data collection and to prevent misuse.

- Providing a durable, collectable, high-quality product that promotes the identity and support of Federal recreation lands.
- Providing opportunities for partnerships and education about recreational opportunities on Federal recreation lands.

The America the Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass (Interagency Pass Program) is described in more detail on the official website at: <http://store.usgs.gov/pass>.

2. Introduction

This business plan is about a recreational fee revenue project, internally referred to as AZ03, that is comprised of the fee receipts from the sale of the national America the Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass, at the BLM's Arizona State Office Public Room. The Arizona State Office Public Room is located at the Freeport-McMoRan Building (formerly Phelps Dodge Tower), One North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, Arizona 85004-4427, Phone: (602) 417-9200, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Access to the Public Room is through the main lobby, up the elevators, to the eighth floor.

Fee Project Contact: Don Applegate
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3. Description of Customers

Purchasers of America the Beautiful - the National Parks and Federal Recreational Interagency Passes at the Arizona State Office are the general public: United States citizens and international travelers that visit the Public Room. Visitors learn of the availability of passes by word-of-mouth, BLM publications and websites, and references from other business locations, such as the Phoenix Convention Center. There is no specific demographic to these visitors, other than this location is convenient for them at the time of their purchase.

4. Objectives for Use of Fee Receipts

Generally, proceeds from the America the Beautiful - the National Parks and Federal Recreational Interagency Pass Program are used to improve and enhance visitor recreation services and self-support the program. Because this project's revenues are collected at the BLM's central administrative office for Arizona, the funds can be considered applicable to all Arizona BLM offices. The purpose of this project, therefore,

is to provide general support that can be shown to benefit all amenity fee sites throughout Arizona.

Fee revenue expenditures will be prioritized as follows:

- Continued maintenance and production of a multi-partnered, multi-agency recreation map that illustrates where campgrounds and other recreational facilities are found throughout the State of Arizona where the Interagency Pass is valid.
- Support for web pages that pertain to the Interagency Pass and other recreation programs in Arizona.
- Further development and expansion of online permitting services.
- Agreements with partners to facilitate further distribution of the Interagency Passes.
- If the project account grows, it may be feasible to consider additional amenity fee-related support that may be provided to the various offices and fee sites throughout the State.

It is possible that the revenues from this project may be used to fund Arizona's share of the overall National management of the Interagency Pass Program. This possible scenario is explained in Section 9. Should this scenario occur, obviously it would become the highest priority for use of the revenues.

5. Key Components of the Fee Project

There are four America the Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes:

- Interagency Annual Pass: \$80 - Available to anyone 16 years of age and older, valid for 12 months from the date of purchase (Replaces the Golden Eagle Passport).
 - A lost, stolen or destroyed Annual Pass will not be replaced even if a receipt is produced.
 - A damaged Annual Pass may be replaced if the visitor provides personal signature identification and the damaged pass signature is identical.
 - Annual Passes are non-transferable. Refunds may not be issued. The Annual Passes must be signed by the purchaser/holder.
 - To avoid fraud in the use of the Annual Pass, it is a requirement for the Annual Pass holder to show identification upon use of the pass.
 - Annual Passes may be purchased as a gift; however, upon the initial use of the pass the recipient must sign the pass and show identification.

- Interagency Senior Pass: \$10 - Available to United States residents and citizens, 62 years of age or older and are valid for the lifetime of the pass owner (Replaces the Golden Age Passport).
 - The Senior Passes may only be obtained in person upon proof of age.
 - They are non-transferable. The Senior Passes must be signed by the purchaser/holder.

- Interagency Access Pass: Free - Available to United States citizens and residents with documentation of permanent disability (Replaces the Golden Access Passport).
 - Persons receiving the Access Pass must be “permanently” disabled.
 - Individuals eligible to receive the Access Pass shall be any person who has a permanent physical, mental or sensory impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning or working.
 - Adequate documentation of applicant’s disability should be presented prior to issuance of an Access Pass. Such documentation can include any of the following:
 1. A document issued by an office of a Federal agency providing Federal benefits, which attests that the individual has been medically determined to be eligible to receive Federal benefits as a result of blindness or permanent disability (A Veterans Disability card at the time of discharge may not qualify for proof unless the conditions still apply).
 2. A statement signed by a licensed physician attesting to the fact that the person does have a permanent physical, mental or sensory impairment that severely limits one or more major life activities, as well as states the nature of the condition.
 3. An official identification card or certificate issued by a State Government entity identifying the person as blind or permanently disabled.
 4. An identification card issued by a National or State organization for disabled persons identifying the applicant as blind or permanently disabled.
 5. If the person claims eligibility but cannot or refuses to produce the above mentioned forms, they are required to read or have read to them the forms, and then sign the affidavit and notice.
 - Access Passes are non-transferable and must be signed by the holder.

- Interagency Volunteer Pass: Free - Earned with 500+ hours of volunteer service at participating agencies.
 - Congress authorized the Secretaries of the USDA and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to issue an annual pass to volunteers as recognition for the performance of significant volunteer services.
 - Volunteers may only be recognized with one pass every 12 months.
 - Once a pass is issued volunteer hours are reset to zero.

Included with the purchase of an American the Beautiful Interagency Pass:

- Hangtags: used to display any America the Beautiful Interagency Pass at un-staffed areas.
- Decals: for Annual Pass owners with open-top vehicles to use in un-staffed areas only.
- A brochure will be issued with each Annual Pass. It will provide the visitor with basic information on the pass program, the participating Federal agencies, stewardship and volunteer opportunities, and contact information (phone numbers and websites) to agency sites.

6. Recreation Use by Key Component

The following table displays the number of passes issued by the Arizona State Office Public Room over the last 3 years.

Number of America The Beautiful Interagency Passes Issued			
	FY06*	FY07	FY08
Annual	4	1	1
Senior	17	12	21
Access	0	7	9
Volunteer	0	0	0
TOTALS	21	20	31

*Data for 2006 is from the Golden Passport Program.

7. Fee Collection Process

Individuals seeking to purchase an America the Beautiful Interagency Pass may visit the Arizona State Office Public Room, located at the Freeport-McMoRan Building (formerly Phelps Dodge Tower), One North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, Arizona 85004-4427, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9 A.M. and 4 P.M. Access, Senior, and Volunteer passes must be obtained in person. Only the Annual Pass may be purchased online at: <http://store.usgs.gov/pass>.

The BLM’s Standard Operating Procedures for the Interagency Pass Program can be found in Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 2007-136 (P). These instructions govern the administration of the America the Beautiful - the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. Additional local procedures that apply to BLM management of the program are specifically set forth in this business plan.

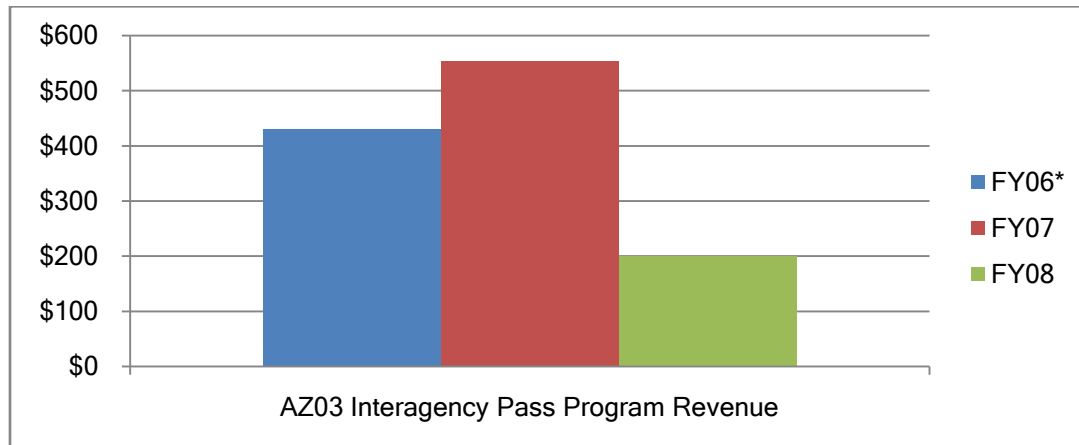
Issued passes must be accounted for by serial number. This is true whether passes are sold, refunded, upgraded, voided, etc. As the passes are issued and any revenues deposited, the tally of permits are reported nationally through the BLM’s accounting system.

8. Fee Receipt History

The following table and graph illustrate the amount of revenues collected at the Arizona State Office Public Room under the Interagency pass Program.

AZ03 Interagency Pass Program Revenue			
	FY06*	FY07	FY08
Revenue	\$430	\$555	\$200

*Data for 2006 is from the Golden Passport Program.



* Data from 2006 is from the Golden Passport Program.

9. Operational Costs

Revenues from this project have been used once during the last 3 years. The funds were used to partially support a contracted maintenance of software for Arizona’s online recreation permitting system.

AZ03 Recreation Fee Revenue Expenditures*						
	Fee Agreements	Cost of Collection Visitor Services	Resource Protection, Habitat Restoration	Law Enforcement Patrol and Emergency Response	Repair, Maintenance, and Facility Enhancement	TOTAL
FY06	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
FY07	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,512	\$1,512
FY08	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

*Source – BLM’s Management Information System (MIS), 2008

This project’s revenues were not utilized during FY08 because the account balance was too small to provide any meaningful project support.

Nationally, the costs of managing the Interagency Pass Program are significant. Sales by field offices and other sales locations only pay shipment costs for the passes. All other costs of the program, such as design, production, fulfillment, call center, overhead, and marketing are paid for with revenue from national central sales (i.e., the website). The Interagency Passes and decals are re-designed and reproduced each year, therefore leftover stock cannot be re-used. If central sales revenue is not sufficient to cover the Interagency Pass Program costs, it is possible that agencies and field sites could be made responsible for the costs of the program.

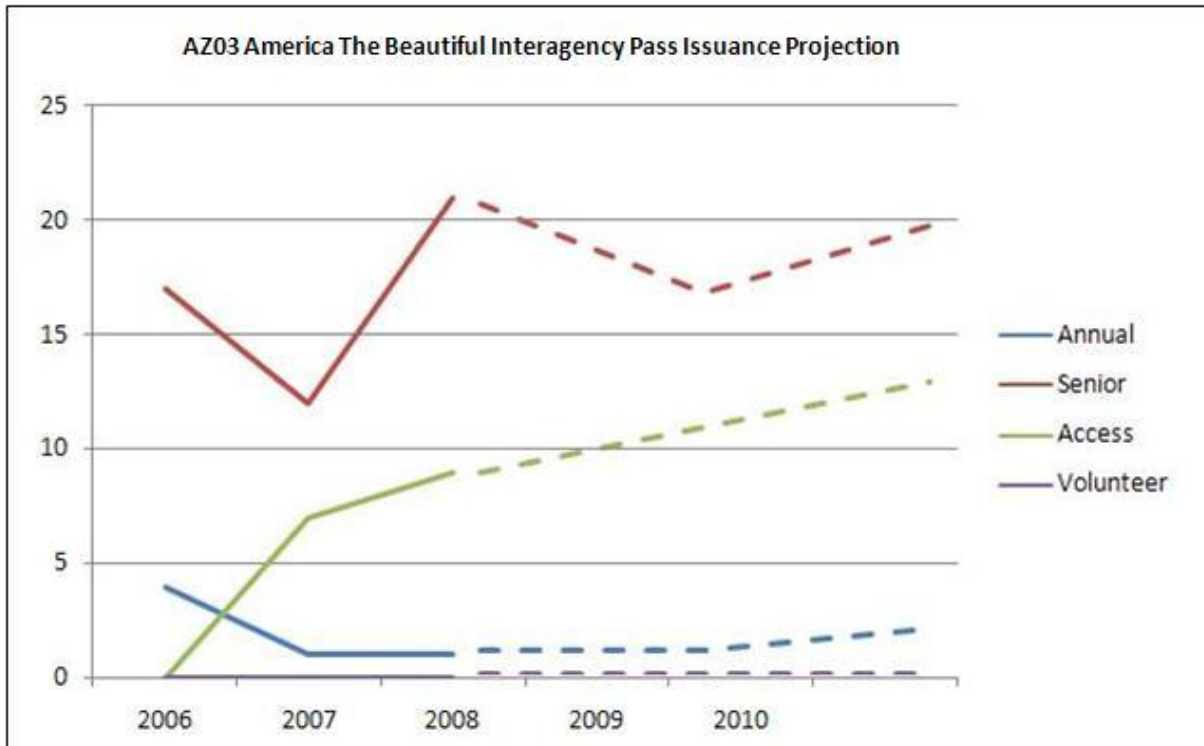
The local Arizona State Office operating costs associated with the sale of the America the Beautiful Interagency Pass consist of the labor of the State Office Account Technician, Public Room Supervisor, and the Recreation Program Lead. These labor costs are not funded from the project account. Instead, annual appropriations are utilized. Since amount of labor needed is driven by the number of Interagency Permits issued any particular year, these figures are only estimates based on Fiscal Year 2008 labor costs.

AZ03 Estimated Annual Operational Costs for the Interagency Pass Program		
	Approximate Annual Hours	Approximate Annual Cost
Account Technician	40	\$880
Recreation Program Lead	8	\$512
Public Room Supervisor	6	\$396
TOTALS	54	\$1788

10. Future Revenue/Sales Expected

Future issuance of the four America the Beautiful Interagency Passes is expected to be as follows:

- Annual Pass: Although the National Park System has experienced a recent decline in visitation, it is anticipated that the Centennial Initiative will counter this trend. Future sales of the Annual Pass will likely show a minimal increase over the next few years.
- Senior Pass: As an increasing percentage of adults enter their senior years, the sales of Senior Passes is expected to increase compared to the past.
- Access Pass: New technologies are continuing to enable rising numbers of the population to experience the outdoors. It is expected that the already rising demand for Access Passes will continue to climb.
- Volunteer Pass: It is anticipated that there will be a slight increase in awarding the Volunteer Pass to citizens as increasing numbers of recreation program managers become aware of, and experience using, this rewards program.



Note: Data from 2006 is from the Golden Passport Program.

During the next few years, revenue from the America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Program at the Arizona State Office is expected to remain small. Sales tend to be greater at major attractions themselves, such as park entrances, rather than an administrative office. Annually, the expected number of issued passes sold as part of this project is projected to increase only slightly.

These projections indicate that the program may collect approximately \$300 per year, with annual operational costs of approximately \$1,800. Consequently this customer

service program will continue to be implemented in accordance with BLM's congressionally appropriated budget.

11. Fee Calculation Process

The Interagency Pass fee schedule is determined nationally. In FY05, an Interagency Pass Work Group began teaming with researchers from the University of Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center to analyze the implications of various prices. The price analysis was based on Pass use data, comparison of state park entrance and Parks Canada pass prices, surveys of Federal recreation-pass purchasers, recreation-site users and non-users, and other information.

12. Consequences of Not Collecting Pass Program Fees

Fees provide extra benefits in services and/or facilities that might not otherwise be possible, including the expansion of visitor recreation services and support of the Interagency Pass Program.

The consequences of not collecting the fees for the Annual and/or the Senior America the Beautiful Interagency Pass by the State Office are as follows:

- For Phoenix residents and downtown visitors, the convenient visitor service of having the Annual or Senior Interagency Passes available at a walk-up counter will be discontinued. This consequence is not as a matter of having enough funding to perform the service, but would be a result of policy - the salable Interagency Passes cannot be issued for free. If fees are not collected, the only Interagency Passes that would be available from this location would be the Access and Volunteer Interagency Passes.
- Interagency Pass revenues would not be available to support the continued maintenance and production of a multi-partnered, multi-agency recreation map that illustrates where campgrounds and other recreational facilities are found throughout the State of Arizona where the Interagency Pass is valid.
- Support for websites relating to Arizona's recreation programs would be according to congressional appropriation budget priorities.
- Development and expansion of online permitting services would be according to congressional appropriation budget priorities.
- The Arizona State Office would not enter program revenue-supported agreements with partners to facilitate further distribution of the Interagency Passes.

13. Proposed Fee Increases

At this time there is no proposed increase of fees for the Annual or Senior America the Beautiful Interagency Pass. As explained in Section 10, the pass fees are determined nationally, beyond the control of the BLM Arizona State Office.

14. Customer Feedback Mechanisms

Listed below are the mechanisms used for collecting public comment for this AZ03 America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Program business plan:

- On March 19, 2009, hardcopies of the America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Program Draft Business Plan were made available at the Explore Arizona! Outdoor Information Center and at the BLM State Office Public Room for thirty (30) days (through April 19, 2009).
- On March 19, 2009, the America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Program Business Plan was spotlighted on the Arizona BLM Homepage for thirty (30) days (through April 19, 2009) and the remained posted for comment on the Arizona BLM Recreation Fee Program page for an additional 2 weeks (though May 3, 2009).

Comments could have been submitted in the following ways:

- A mailed or hand-delivered comment to:

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Arizona State Office
Attn: Recreation Program Lead, AZ-931
One North Central Avenue, Suite 800
Phoenix, Arizona 85004-4427

- Or an e-mailed comment to:

Maria_Troche@blm.gov

During the 30-day public comment period, two comments were submitted via e-mail. Both comments expressed concern over the limited profitability of the Interagency Pass Program, and are appreciated. The Interagency Pass Program is a national public service program mandated by Public Law 108-447, a benefit of which is reduced costs-per-visit for the recreating public. The potential for profitability in the program is not a primary objective. Instead, the program increases access for larger numbers of citizens to more frequently visit qualifying Federal recreation lands, national attractions, and other opportunities for outdoor recreational experiences, and reap the benefits of doing so.

15. Recommendations and Approvals

America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Business Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS and APPROVALS

Recommended by:

signed by Don Applegate

4/28/2009

Don Applegate
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Date

Approved by:

signed by Michael A. Taylor

4/28/2009

Michael A. Taylor
Deputy State Director, Resources Division
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Date