

Business Plan for Westwater Canyon of the Colorado River



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management, Utah
Canyon Country District
Moab Field Office
February 2012



**Business Plan for
Westwater Canyon of the Colorado River**

**SPECIAL RECREATION PERMITS (River)
Commercial and Individual Special Area Permits**

RECOMMENDATIONS, REVIEWS and APPROVALS

Recommended by:

Outdoor Recreation Planner

Date

Reviewed by:

Recreation Division Chief

Date

Approved By:

Moab Field Manager

Date

This business plan was prepared pursuant to the “Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, 2004” (P.L. 108-447) and BLM recreation fee program policy. It establishes future management goals and priorities for the Special Recreation Permit program in the Moab Field Office.



United States Department of the Interior
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MOAB FIELD OFFICE
82 East Dogwood
Moab, Utah 84532



In Reply Refer to:
2932 (UTW02000)

Dear Reader,

I would like to present for your review and comment the *Draft Business Plan for Westwater Canyon of the Colorado River*. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Moab Field Office manages the Westwater Canyon whitewater float trip that annually provides over 15,000 visitors with outstanding recreational opportunities on their public lands. (Westwater Canyon was named the “West’s Best Short Whitewater Trip” by *National Geographic Magazine*.) Of these visitors, approximately 7,500 are passengers on commercial river trips, and 7,500 are private boaters. In addition to providing the whitewater float trip, Westwater offers a wide variety of amenities, including put-in and take-out boat ramps, a public drinking water system, parking facilities, camping facilities, trash removal, toilet facilities at both the put-in and take-out, canyon campsites, interpretive services including a book store, a staffed ranger station and staff safety patrols.

The Moab Field Office proposes to increase Special Recreation Permit fees for the public’s use of the Westwater Area. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act authorizes the BLM to regulate the use of the public lands through permits, and the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act authorizes the BLM to collect recreational fees when sites and areas meet specific criteria. The purchase of a Westwater float permit includes the use of all facilities located within the special area. Fees at Westwater have not been increased since 1998, when they were raised from \$5.00 per person to \$7.00 per person. Operational costs have risen substantially since that time. The proposed fee change is to raise the current \$7.00 Westwater Special Area fee to \$10.00. The change is proposed to begin on March 1, 2013.

The objective of the *Draft Business Plan for Westwater Canyon of the Colorado River* is to provide you with the opportunity to review how collected recreation fees have been and are being planned to be used, and give you the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed fee change. Comments may be mailed to BLM, River Business Plan Comment, 82 E. Dogwood, Moab, UT 84532 or emailed to kstevens@blm.gov (put “river business plan comment” in the subject line). Comments are due by March 22, 2012.

Thank you for your interest in your public lands.

Sincerely,

/s/Lisa Bryant, acting for

Rock Smith
Moab Field Manager

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Business Plan for Westwater Canyon of the Colorado River

SPECIAL RECREATION PERMITS (River) Commercial and Individual Special Area Permits WBS# LVRD UT020000: Colorado River

Introduction

This business plan has been prepared to meet the criteria defined in the “Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, 2004” (FLREA). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) originally began collecting fees for the recreational use of public lands under the authority of the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (1976) – known as the “organic act”. The FLREA recognizes the Bureau of Land Management’s authority to collect Special Recreation Permit fees for the recreational use of certain areas. FLREA allows collected Special Recreation Permit fees, as well as Special Area fees, to be retained locally and furthermore outlines how revenues are to be used for such things as facility repair, maintenance, enhancement, interpretation, visitor information, visitor services, visitor needs assessments, signs, habitat restoration, law enforcement related to public use and recreation, and direct operating or capital costs associated with the Recreation and Visitor Services program. At the Moab Field Office (MFO), the recreational use of certain areas within the field office is managed through the Special Recreation Permit Program. Westwater Canyon is managed using the Special Area fee established for that allocated segment of the Colorado River.

FLREA guidelines require that each fee program have a business plan which thoroughly discusses fees and explains how fees are consistent with the criteria set forth in the Act. Business plans are to assist management in determining the appropriateness and level of fees, cost of administering fee programs, and provide a structured communication and marketing plan. The primary purpose of the plans 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. This river fee Business Plan is subject to public review and is the Moab Field Office’s official documentation in the event of an audit.

In the Moab Field Office, river-based activities are deposited in the Moab River Recreation Fee account (Moab River Recreation Fee Account). These deposits include 1) river outfitters’ Special Recreation Permit fees for use of the Colorado and Dolores Rivers and 2) commercial passenger and private boater Special Area Fees for Westwater Canyon. This business plan covers both these sources of revenue.

Background and Authorities

This business plan has been prepared to meet the criteria defined in the “Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act 2004” (P.L.108-447). The authorities and regulations for this business plan, including fee collection for Special Recreation Permits, are:

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), 1976**, [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 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), 2004**, repealed applicable portions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and replaced BLM's authority to collect recreation fees in 2004. 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, Part 2930 of the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 2930)**, contains the regulations governing BLM's recreation permitting programs.

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

- BLM Recreation Permit Administration Handbook (H-2930-1)
- BLM Recreation Fee Proposals Step-by-Step Review & Approval Process, March 22, 2007
- BLM Instruction Memorandum 2007-028: *Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act – Final Public Participation Policy for Certain Recreation Fee Adjustments and Proposed New Fee Sites/Areas*
- BLM Utah Instruction Memorandum UT 2007-056: *Fee Site Business Plan Development and Business Plan Outline*

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

- 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.

This business plan will assist the Moab Field Office in meeting these river-based recreation and visitor service goals. This plan cover trips conducted by commercial river outfitters and private boaters managed under the BLM's Special Recreation Permit Program. Fees from these uses include Special Recreation Permit commercial fees, as well as the Special Area Fee both commercial passengers and private boaters for use of Westwater Canyon.

Fees collected for the Colorado River program include both commercial and special area fees. Commercial outfitters pay 3% of adjusted gross revenue for river trips. In addition, for Westwater Canyon, a \$7.00 Special Area Fee is levied on private boaters as well as on commercial passengers. Outfitters collect \$7.00 per commercial passenger and remit this money to the BLM. Private boaters pay the \$7.00 Special Area Fee directly to the BLM. All

these river-based fees are deposited into the Moab River Recreation Fee account, which is the subject of this business plan.

A. Introduction to the Moab Field Office Special Recreation Permit Program

Administrative Unit

The Moab Field Office of the Canyon Country District, Bureau of Land Management, is the administrative unit for the WBS# LVRD UT020000 account (the Moab River Recreation Fee Account). The Moab Field Office manages approximately 1,500,000 acres public lands in Grand County, Utah as well as approximately 300,000 acres of public land in San Juan County, Utah. The Moab Field Office is located in Utah Congressional District 2.

Moab Field Office Recreation Program and Visitation

The Moab Field Office has a diverse and extensive recreation program. The red rock scenery in the Moab area is iconic and is highly sought after by local, national and international visitors. Features such as the Colorado River, Fisher Towers, Castle Rock, Slickrock Bike Trail and Gemini Bridges attract visitors from all over the world, who recreate both privately and by hiring commercial outfitters.

Arches National Park is enveloped by lands managed by the Moab Field Office; Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park are located along the field office's western boundary.

Visitation to BLM lands in the Moab Field Office is very high, totaling approximately 1.8 million visits in 2011. This visitation exceeds that of Arches National Park. Table 1 displays the average number of recreation visits over the past five years to both Moab Field Office and Arches National Park lands.

Table 1: Recreation Visits to Moab Field Office and Arches National Park over a Five Year Period

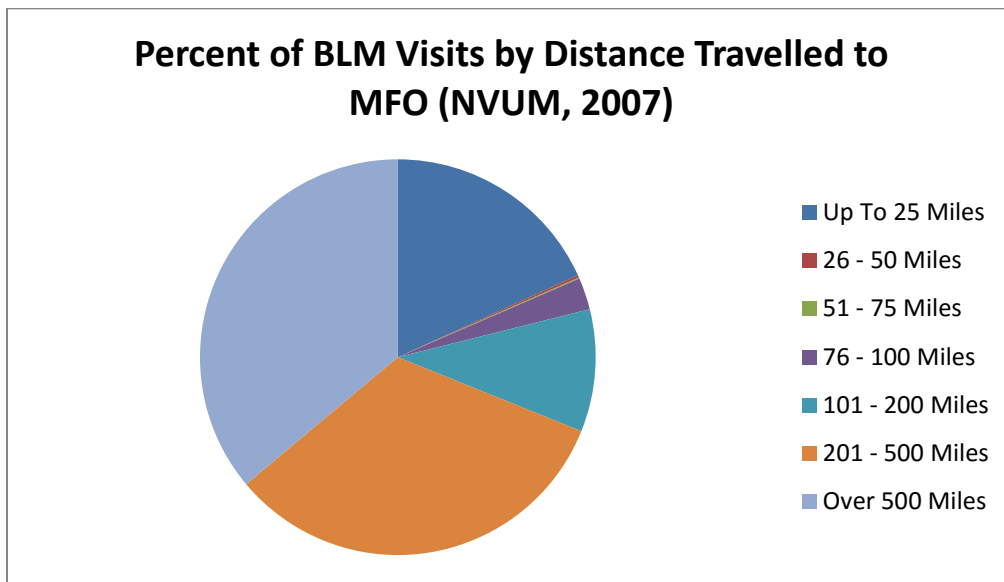
Year	Visits to Moab Field Office	Visits to Arches National Park
2007	1,493,700	860,181
2008	1,706,389	928,795
2009	1,674,504	996,312
2010	1,834,724	1,014,405
2011	1,809,702	1,023,669 (YTD NOV 2011)

Visitation to the Moab area grew at a 9% rate during the 1990's, but has since leveled off to an approximately 2% yearly growth rate. Thus, it is anticipated that recreation visitation will continue to grow, but at this lower rate (*Economic Value of Public Lands in Grand County, Utah, 2011*, Headwaters Economics).

The recreation programs provided by the Moab Field Office, including those that focus on boating (both commercial and private), are particularly important to the Grand County economy.

A recent study commissioned by Grand County and conducted by Headwaters Economics (*Economic Value of Public Lands in Grand County, Utah, 2011*) found that the economy of Grand County is heavily dependent upon public lands recreation use. It is unlikely that any other county in the United States that is surrounded by BLM lands is as heavily dependent on public recreation lands for its economic well-being. All Moab river businesses are BLM Special Recreation Permit holders; they employ 120 people. In addition, most commercial river guides are self-employed as contractors, and are not included in the employment statistics as employees. The economic impact resulting from expenditures on BLM lands in Grand County by non-local visitors engaging in boating was \$8.5 million dollars in 2010 (Headwaters Economics, 2011).

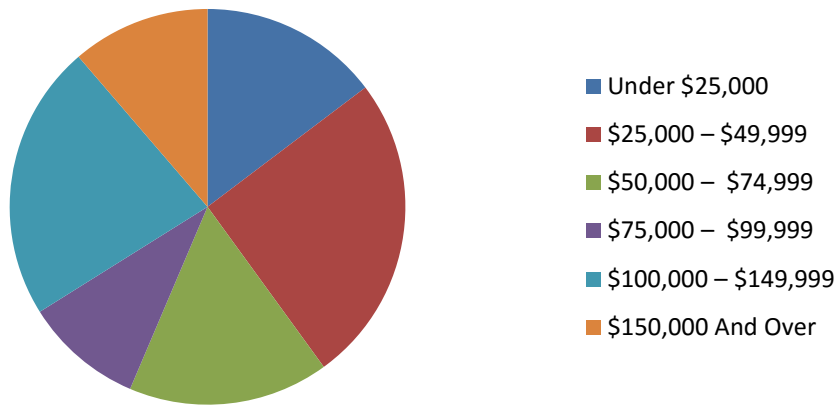
The most reliable information on visitor demographics, such as from where visitors to Moab BLM originate, comes from 2006 data gathered for the National Visitation Use Monitoring (NVUM) study. This was prepared by the U.S. Forest Service (U.S. National Forest Service, 2007) for the Moab BLM. Results from this survey indicate that the great majority of recreation visitors to Moab BLM travel large distances to come to the area. This is summarized in the following chart:



The visits reported above include 6.5 per cent overseas visitation, primarily from Europe (4.1 per cent) and Canada (2.3 per cent).

Recreation visitors to Moab BLM have a higher than average income profile than the population at large. This is illustrated in the following chart, derived from the 2007 NVUM study:

Annual Household Income of Visitors to the Moab FO (NVUM, 2007)



Applicable Plans

Management in the Moab Field office is guided by the Approved Moab Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) which was signed on October 31, 2008. Specific decisions were made concerning the boating program, including water-based Special Recreation Permits. These are:

REC-37 (page 89): Boating Management, Dewey to Castle Creek, Colorado Riverway SRMA: Manage to provide an opportunity for scenic, mild whitewater boating. No restrictions on amount of private use will be established unless unacceptable resource impacts occur. Permit 22 unallocated commercial permits. No further restrictions on amount of commercial use will be established. Camping will be restricted to designated campsites along the north side of the Colorado River and existing campgrounds on the south side of the Colorado River.

REC-38 (page 89): Boating Management: Colorado State Line to Bridge Canyon, Dolores River Canyon SRMA: Manage to provide opportunities for scenic whitewater boating trips. Permits required for private and commercial use. Establish maximum group size of 25 (excluding guides on commercial trips). Do not establish daily launch limits. Permit 14 unallocated commercial outfitters.

REC-43 (page 95): Boating Management:

Stateline to Westwater Ranger Station: Manage for relatively high use flat water boating in conjunction with the Ruby/Horsethief Canyons section in Colorado. Coadminister a private boating or parking permit system and user limitations and fees in conjunction with Colorado BLM as a means of providing for adequate take-out.

Westwater Canyon: Manage to provide an opportunity for whitewater boating in a primitive and remote setting. Permits required for private and commercial use. Distribute potential use levels equally from May 1 to September 30 (allocation season) between private and commercial sectors (including guides). Establish maximum private group size of 25 people and a daily launch limit of 75 people. For commercial use, establish a maximum trip size of

25 passengers, plus one crew member per passenger carrying craft, plus two additional crew. Establish a commercial daily launch limit of 75 passengers. Permit 18 commercial outfitters. Cisco Landing to Dewey Bridge: Manage to provide an opportunity for scenic flat-water boating or as an extension of Westwater Canyon trips. For private use, no restrictions on amount of use will be established. Permit 22 unallocated commercial permits. No further restrictions on amount of commercial use will be established.

Dolores River from Bridge Canyon to its confluence with the Colorado River: Manage to provide opportunity for scenic whitewater boating trips. Permits required for private and commercial use. Establish maximum group size of 25 (excluding guides on commercial trips). Do not establish daily launch limits. Permit 14 unallocated commercial outfitters.

REC-46 (page 97): Special Recreation Permits: Special Recreation Permits are issued as a discretionary action as a means to help meet management objectives, provide opportunities for economic activity, facilitate recreational use of the public lands, control visitor use, protect recreational and natural resources, and provide for the health and safety of visitors. Cost recovery procedures for issuing Special Recreation Permits will be applied where appropriate.

REC-47 (page 98): Priority for authorization of new SRPs for events are given to applicants proposing uses that: do not duplicate existing events; take place outside of March, April, May and October; make use of less-crowded weekdays; utilize facilities off public lands for overnight accommodation of guests; display and communicate the Canyon Country Minimum Impact Practices; and focus visitation on sites and area capable of withstanding repeated use.

REC-48 (page 98): All SRPs will contain standard stipulations appropriate for the type of activity and may include additional stipulations necessary to protect lands or resources, reduce users conflicts, or minimize health and safety concerns.

REC-49 (page 98): There will be no competitive mechanized or motorized events in Wilderness Study Areas while these areas are managed under the *Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review*.

REC-50 (page 98): Issue and manage special recreation permits for a wide variety of uses to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities, provide opportunities for private enterprise, management user-group interaction, and limit the impacts of such uses upon natural and cultural resources. Organized group permits are required for groups with 25 or more vehicles (one driver/vehicle).

River-Based Special Recreation Permits in the Moab Field Office

River companies are required to obtain a Special Recreation Permit to offer commercial outfitting services on public lands. The Moab Field Office administers approximately 33 commercial river-based special recreation permits that authorize use of one to four river segments in the field office. Commercial river outfitters provide recreation services to

approximately 60,000 visitors per year. Fees for commercial recreation use are set by national BLM policy and regulation at 3% of adjusted gross revenue.

In addition, an individual special recreation permit for private boating is required for Westwater Canyon. This permit is obtained by paying the Special Area Fee of \$7.00 per person per trip on this allocated stretch of the Colorado River. Approximately 7,500 private boaters float Westwater Canyon per year. The Westwater Special Area Fee is established by the BLM Utah State Director; it has not changed since 1998.

B. Description of the Colorado River Fee Sites

The Moab River Recreation Fee Account receives revenues from both commercial river-based Special Recreation Permit holders as well as the Special Area fees charged for Westwater Canyon. As commercial Special Recreation Permit rates are set by national BLM policy and regulation, only the \$7.00 per person per trip Westwater Special Area fee is proposed for change. Revenues from the Moab River Recreation Fee Account are used to maintain river-based recreation facilities, including, but not limited to Westwater Canyon. The following table includes facilities and locations that are maintained using Moab River Recreation Fee Account monies:

Table 2: Moab Field Office Facilities Supporting the River Recreation Program

Site Name	Location (in Colorado River Miles)	Approx. Acreage
Westwater Put-in: Includes ranger station and bookstore, ranger residences, warehouse, toilets, public drinking water system, campground, boat ramp, and parking lots. Westwater serves as the take-out for Ruby-Horsethief river trips initiating in the McInnis Canyons NCA.	RM 127.5	14
Cisco Take-Out: Includes parking lot, boat ramp, trash service and toilets.	RM 110.5	5
Fish Ford: Includes boat ramp, toilet and campground.	RM 105.5	4
Dewey Bridge: Includes boat ramp, toilets, parking lot, campgrounds, trash service and future accessible group site. This site serves as the take-out for Dolores River river trips which are initiated in Colorado	RM 95	7
Hittle Bottom: Includes large boat ramp, toilets, trash service, parking lot and campground.	RM 88	7
Lower Onion Creek: Includes two boat ramps, toilets, parking area, campground and group site.	RM 85	3
Rocky Rapid: Includes parking lot, toilets, two boat ramps, and shade shelter.	RM 81	5
Sandy Beach: Includes parking lot and toilets.	RM 76	5
Government (or BLM) Take-Out: Includes parking lot, 6 lane concrete boat ramp, shade shelter, toilets, and accessible walkway.	RM 74	5
Gold Bar: Includes boat ramp, parking lots, toilets, trash service,	RM 54	7

campground and group sites.		
Potash Boat Ramp (maintained by BLM) (includes parking lot, boat ramp and toilets)	RM 47	7

The facilities listed above are utilized by visitors engaged in non-motorized boating. Westwater Ranger Station, Cisco Take Out and Fish Ford are facilities supporting Westwater Canyon; the remainder are facilities supporting boaters on the Colorado River Daily. See Appendix B for a map of river-related facilities.



Westwater Ranger Station Public Contact Area and Bookstore

Visitation: Approximately 88,959 visitors engaged in non-motorized boating in the Moab Field Office in 2011. The following table provides the numbers of visitors on the two most visited river segments, the Colorado River Daily and Westwater Canyon. Some non-motorized boating use (both commercial and private) also occurs on the Lower Dolores River, and on the Colorado River below Moab. Those numbers are not included in Table 3.

Table 3: Numbers of Non-Motorized Boaters in Moab Field Office in Past Five Years

Year	Daily commercial use (actual)	Daily private use (estimated at 50% of commercial use)	Westwater commercial use (actual)	Westwater private use (actual)
2007	38,401	19,200	4,849	6,001
2008	37,394	18,697	5,942	7,607
2009	44,475	22,238	5,952	8,888
2010	46,825	23,412	6,519	8,841
2011	51,355	25,677	5,078	6,849



Government Take-out on the Colorado River Daily

Partnerships and Volunteer Programs: The Moab Field Office's river program is supported by several partners. The WAVE (Westwater Area Volunteers for Excellence) program provides volunteers for the Westwater Canyon segment of the Colorado River; the WAVE program also spearheads the annual National Public Lands Day event in Westwater Canyon. Westwater and the Daily river programs (as well as the Lower Dolores and the Colorado River below Moab) receive support from the Utah Guides and Outfitters Association (UGO). UGO represents commercial outfitters. Utah State Parks provides assistance to the Moab Field Office regarding the boating program; Utah State Parks has jurisdictional authority regarding Utah boating laws. Utah State Parks personnel patrol the river segments for safety issues.



Westwater Native Planting Trip: National Public Lands Day 2011

Fees: Special Recreation Permit fees are collected from commercial outfitters on all river stretches (although the great majority of the fees come from use of the Daily and from Westwater Canyon).

The Special Area fee for Westwater was authorized in 1983; the fee was initially set at \$1.50 per person per trip. In 1987, the fee was raised to \$2.25, and to \$3.00 in 1993. The fee was then raised to \$5.00; in 1998, the fee was changed to \$7.00.

C. Proposed Modifications for the Recreation Fee Rates

The BLM proposes to raise the Westwater Special Area Fee from \$7.00 to \$10.00. The increase in fee would affect approximately 15,000 people per year, who would pay an additional \$3.00 for their Westwater trip. An increase in the fee from \$7.00 to \$10.00 would thus raise the revenue from the Westwater Special Area Fee from approximately \$105,000 to \$150,000 per year, or an increase of \$45,000 per year. The fee was last raised in 1998, when the Consumer Price Index was 161.6; at the end of 2011, the Consumer Price Index was 224.9, representing an increase of 39%. The proposed fee increase for 2013 would thus offset inflation over the last 15 years.

D. Expenditures/Operating Costs

The Moab Field Office maintains an extensive infrastructure that supports both private and commercial river recreation. The largest expense is the operation of the Westwater Ranger Station. Operations at Westwater include residences for the three river rangers, a well and a reverse-osmosis public drinking water system, a ranger station, two trucks, two trailers, an ATV and a motorcycle (which are used for river shuttles), two boat ramps, toilets, a campground, parking lots, and a warehouse for the boating equipment required for patrols and rescues. Other boating infrastructure maintained by the Moab Field Office includes the nine boat ramps detailed in Table 2, along with their associated parking lots, toilets and campgrounds.

Annual operating costs for the river recreation program include expenditures for permit administration, permit monitoring, law enforcement services, maintenance and cleaning, vault toilet pumping, parking lot maintenance and marking, and trash disposal. Up to ten permanent employees provide services to the river recreation program: three river rangers provide patrols and safety services at Westwater Ranger Station, two recreation employees are involved with permit administration, one employee is involved with permit monitoring and two law enforcement officers provide compliance checks. In addition, two maintenance workers ensure the cleanliness and safety of the facilities. These maintenance duties include repair and cleaning of the toilets, trash collection, and maintenance and repair of recreational infrastructure, including the Westwater Ranger Station, its water system and its residences.

The program also supports government vehicles and boat trailers used to support patrols, maintenance work, resource and visitor use monitoring and law enforcement. Vehicles routinely used include pick-up trucks, an ATV and a motorcycle. Heavy equipment is also utilized as needed. Table 4 identifies the annual expenditures associated with the Moab River Recreation Fee Account program, and also includes revenues as well as the net fund balance gain / loss for the last five fiscal years.

Table 4: Actual Expenditures of River Fees, by Year (LVRD UT02)

Federal Fiscal Year	Staff Labor	Operations Costs	Total Annual Expenditures	Revenues¹	Net Gain/Loss	Fund Balance
2011	\$154,460	\$187,734 ²	\$342,194	\$245,137	(\$97,057)	\$230,375
2010	\$167,575	\$55,285	\$222,860	\$231,894	\$9,034	\$327,431
2009	\$160,570	\$44,395	\$204,965	\$269,338	\$64,373	\$318,397
2008	\$161,929	\$31,062	\$192,991	\$229,515	\$36,524	\$254,025
2007	\$126,673	\$90,361	\$217,034	\$174,237	(\$42,797)	\$217,501
5-Year Average	\$154,241	\$81,767	\$236,008	\$230,024	(\$29,923)	\$269,545

Additional costs to the government of administering the river program include managerial support, work by recreation planners and office overhead. These costs are generally borne by the L1220 account (Recreation Management) or the L1210 account (Wilderness Management for Westwater Canyon WSA).

Positive Fund Balance Maintenance

The Moab Field Office will strive to maintain a positive fund balance of no less than the average of the expenditures for the prior two years in the UT 02 account. The reason for this goal is to have the flexibility to obtain matching funds in applying for grants, effect emergency repairs (e.g., the access road to takeout beach ramp on the Colorado Daily washed out three times in two weeks due to repeated flash floods), provide long-term stability for staff services, provide capability to meet unanticipated costs or to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities to improve services, or to use revenues to provide future recreation infrastructure to support visitor use. The Moab BLM needs the ability to retain services to support the local economy during anticipated uncertain times. The fund balance will be managed as a working capital fund, with the goal of investing in facilities and services that will promote program growth consistent with visitor demand through generation of increased revenue.

Maintenance of a positive fund balance is essential because the economy of Grand County, identified by Frommer’s as the “Top Adventure Destination” in the world, is dependent upon the recreational use of public lands. The BLM Moab Field Office plays an essential role in providing river recreation opportunities in the Grand County economy. Our business and other partners depend upon the BLM providing proper authorizations and facilities in a timely manner so that the Grand County economy can prosper. For instance, if BLM boat ramps are not maintained after the spring floods, the river recreation industry cannot safely function at full capacity.

¹ UT02 revenues include both the 3% commercial use fee paid by outfitters, as well as the \$7.00 per person per trip Special Area Fee for use of Westwater Canyon.

² Operations costs in 2011 represent major capital improvements, including doubling the capacity of the Take-Out and Hittle Boat Ramps, purchase of a new truck-mounted, high pressure hot water cleaning unit to service restrooms and new toilets for the Westwater Ranger Station.

Headwaters Economics produced an economic study for Grand County in October of 2011 (*The Economic Value of Public Lands in Grand County, Utah*). That study found that least 44% of the jobs (1,486 of the 3,378 private sector jobs) in Grand County are directly in the recreation sector and thus are dependent on public lands. This figure does not include jobs in the government sector that depend upon tourism (including federal, state and local government), nor does it include jobs closely related to tourism, such as grocery stores and specialty shops. The study found that, “it is the robust variety of outdoor activities, largely on public land” that drive the Moab economy (*The Economic Value of Public Lands in Grand County, Utah, page 6*). The majority of these activities are provided by BLM Special Recreation Permit holders, including river outfitters.

Continuity of Operations

The recreation program in the Moab Field Office is one of the mainstays of the Grand County economy; the river recreation subset of that economy supports many local businesses. As such, the continuity of its operations is vital not only to individual businesses, but to the entire community. The river program must continue to operate, even in light of an unexpected or sudden loss of appropriated funds or a decline in fee revenue. The fund balance will be maintained as explained above, and, in addition, the following steps will be taken should appropriated monies (or fees) decline:

- 1) Site construction and improvements would be deferred and maintenance would continue;
- 2) Spending would be focused on key frontline recreation staff;
- 3) Spending on non-revenue producing agreements would be eliminated, reduced or deferred;
- 4) Fee adjustments would be implemented when appropriate to maintain services and program capability;
- 5) The season during which services would be offered would be reduced;
- 6) Low use, non-profitable sites would be closed if necessary to maintain economic health; and
- 7) Other allowable actions would be taken as necessary to maintain a positive fund balance to ensure the continuity of services in the river program.

Should appropriated funds be greatly reduced or eliminated, the Moab Field Office will take action by managing river revenues and expenditures to maintain continuity of operations for the program.

E. River Recreation Revenues (from Special Recreation Permits including the Westwater Special Area Fee)

Commercial river Special Recreation Permit user fees are partially pre-paid prior to the river season and fully reconciled at the end of the season. Fees are set for Special Recreation Permit holders by national policy. As of 2011, commercial use fees are 3% of adjusted gross revenue. The Westwater Special Area Fee is levied upon all users of Westwater Canyon. Private boaters pay this fee when securing their Westwater permits. Commercial passengers pay the Special

Area fee to their outfitter as part of their trip costs; outfitters are billed for the Special Area fee after they submit their post-use report for the season each calendar year.

River recreation fees (commercial Special Recreation Permit fees and Westwater Special Area fees) are deposited into a separate recreation fee account established exclusively for Moab river-based recreation. Table 5 displays revenues collected in this account for the past five years.

Table 5: Recreation Fee Revenues Deposited in the Moab River Recreation Fee Account

Federal Fiscal Year	Revenues
2011	\$245,137
2010	\$231,894
2009	\$269,338
2008	\$229,515
2007	\$176,237

Source: BLM Collections and Billings System database

The projected annual revenues are expected to be \$245,000 in 2012 (average of last four years, plus 2% growth). This figure is based on past revenue, with provision for growth following the general recreation visitation growth pattern reported in the study done by Headwaters Economics. There are no other anticipated changes in revenue.

F. Priorities for Future Expenditures

Table 6 shows the estimated annual UT 02 operating costs for Fiscal Years 2012, 2013 and 2014. This table assumes approval of the proposed \$3.00 per person increase in the Special Area fee in 2012 with initial implementation of the fee in 2013. Should the \$3.00 increase in the Special Area fee be approved, the estimated revenues would increase by approximately \$45,000 per year.

Table 6: Estimated Annual Operating Costs (from the Moab River Recreation Fee Account) for the Special Recreation Permit Program (does not include expenditure of appropriated funds)

Federal Fiscal Year	Estimated Revenues (without increase)	Estimated Revenues (with increase)	Staff Labor	Operations Costs	Total Annual Expenditures from UT02	UT02 Fund Balance
2012	\$245,000	\$245,000 ³	\$160,000	\$110,000	\$270,000	\$205,000
2013	\$250,000	\$295,000	\$170,000	\$115,000	\$295,000	\$205,000
2014	\$255,000	\$300,000	\$175,000	\$125,000	\$300,000	\$205,000

³ The fee increase is proposed for approval in 2012 with implementation in 2013.

Future Expenditures for On-going Program Services

Priority expenditures for the river program include all aspects of maintaining current levels of service to commercial and private boaters as the majority of funds for the entire program (73% in 2012) are derived from the Moab River Recreation Fee Account fee account. This level of service includes issuing and managing permits, on-site river patrol and safety checks, government vehicle costs, staff training and certifications, maintenance of necessary river gear and equipment including patrol rafts, regular maintenance of river-related facilities including the Westwater Ranger Station, boat ramps, toilets, and river campsites. The expenditures illustrated in Table 6 include only these essential program services and some routine minor improvements or repairs to facilities such as refurbishing toilet buildings and repairing damaged access roads.

Consequently, the additional revenues from the proposed \$3.00 per person per trip increase in the special area fee will be used primarily for the maintenance of existing program services to private boaters and commercial users. Through a combination of the proposed fee increase and increased use of the Moab Daily section of the Colorado River, program revenues are expected to increase to \$300,000 by 2014. For the 10 year period 2012-2022, total fee program expenditures for the Moab River Recreation Fee Account are expected to exceed \$3,000,000 in 2012 dollars to maintain existing program services to boaters.

Future Expenditures for Program Infrastructure

Major expenditures on projects in support of the river recreation program include the addition of specialized camping facilities for persons with disabilities, the improvement of boat ramps, and installation of new toilets and other infrastructure, including parking (estimated to cost \$200,000; see Appendix A for a listing of improvements and expenses). A major renovation at the Westwater Ranger Station is being planned to reduce site congestion and provide enhanced visitor services. This renovation includes the addition of a boat ramp for boaters exiting Ruby-Horsethief Canyon, a large improved parking area to reduce parking along the road, additional toilets, and construction of additional campsites. There is also a need for new ranger residences at the Westwater Station to replace the temporary travel trailers now being used as housing. The Westwater improvements are estimated to cost \$600,000 (see Appendix A). Thus, the total estimated cost of river recreation-related improvements is projected to be \$800,000. These facilities would require maintenance on at least a weekly basis.

Revenues Necessary to Maintain Program Services

Projected expenditures included in Table 6 include only those necessary for continued program operations and minor improvements. The proposed \$3.00 per person per trip rate increase for Westwater Special Area permits would not result in the near term accomplishment of the larger program infrastructure improvements described in the above paragraph. BLM would continue its long term efforts to gradually improve physical facilities at river recreation areas through a combination of regular appropriated funds, internal one-time program grants, and some expenditure of user fees.

Maintenance of Fund Account Balance

It is critical to maintain a positive fund balance in the recreation fee accounts, including that derived from river fees, so that the BLM can provide required permit administration, quickly address threats to public health and safety, and allocate some revenue for future investments in recreation infrastructure. In normal budget years, regular non-fee program appropriated funds are not available for seasonal employee labor, on-going purchasing, or project work until more than half of the fiscal year has elapsed. A positive fund balance the working capital necessary for the recreation program to provide program services to permit holders throughout the year.

The fund balance would also be available to cover labor costs of those employees involved in the river recreation program should appropriated monies be reduced. At the 2012 expenditure level, the Moab Field Office has determined that approximately \$280,000 should be available in the Moab River Recreation Fee Account for the above purposes. This amount would allow maintenance of the average past two years of program expenditures for purposes of program continuity. The projections in Table 6 show fund balances for the near term to be less than the desired level to reasonably assure program continuity. To reach the \$280,000 fund balance goal, the Moab Field Office will work to reduce program labor and operations costs to attain additional savings through delay of expenditures or similar means while retaining essential services. Future improvements, such as those described above and in Appendix A, will likely require additional funding. For example, the Moab Field Office has been a leader in providing enhanced river access for persons with disabilities and has been successful in receiving special funding for this purpose through the BLM budget process.

G. Analysis of Recreation Fee Rates

The Westwater Canyon Special Area Fee has been \$7.00 since 1998. In 1998, the Consumer Price Index was 161.6; at the end of 2011, the Consumer Price Index was 224.9. This means that, on average, costs have increased by 39% at a time when the Special Area Fee remained fixed at \$7.00 per person per trip. Since 1998, the costs of operating the river recreation program have climbed substantially. Increases in costs have come in every category, including labor, vehicles, equipment, fuel, supplies and facility maintenance. In the past 14 years, permit fees charged for running other rivers, including those in Utah, have increased. This section uses both the cost recovery fee calculation method, as well as describes the fees charged by other offices and/or agencies for running rivers, and identifies differences and similarities in services offered.

Cost Recovery Fee Calculation Method

Fee rates are based on the concept that revenues should cover a program's operating costs where direct benefits are provided to users. Table 7 shows the operating costs for the river recreation program over the past 5 years. It should be noted that the 2011 year's operations costs included several large capital expenditures including significant improvements to two boat ramps on the Colorado River Daily and a portion of the cost of new toilets at the Westwater Ranger Station. As has been normally the case, appropriated recreation management funds paid for a portion of office staff salaries for program administration and site maintenance in 2011 (all river ranger

staff salaries are paid by the Moab River Recreation Fee Account). For FY 2012, appropriated funds planned for river management are expected to total about \$100,000. Based on staff work month spread in 2012, an estimate was made of appropriated funds used by river recreation staff in prior years. Costs of the river recreation program do not include overhead costs for management services or for office support.

Table 7: Costs of Running the River Recreation Program

Federal Fiscal Year	UT02 Staff Labor	Appropriated Funds Staff Labor⁴	UT02 Operations Costs	Appropriated Funds Operations	Total Annual Expenditures	UT02 Revenues⁵
2011	\$154,460	\$90,000	\$187,734 ⁶	\$22,000	\$454,194	\$245,137
2010	\$167,575	\$85,000	\$55,285	\$22,000	\$329,860	\$231,894
2009	\$160,570	\$80,000	\$44,395	\$22,000	\$306,965	\$269,338
2008	\$161,929	\$80,000	\$31,062	\$22,000	\$294,991	\$229,515
2007	\$126,673	\$75,000	\$90,361	\$22,000	\$314,034	\$174,237
5-Year Average	\$154,241		\$81,767		\$318,008	\$230,024

Table 7 shows that the fee revenue from commercial and private boating use typically fund almost three dollars of every four dollars spent for direct river program expenses with about a five year average of \$88,000 dollars per year coming from appropriated funds and \$230,000 coming from river program fees deposited into the Moab River Recreation Fee Account. Use fees pay about 72% of river program costs, while appropriated funds cover about 28%.

Table 8 shows the estimated annual future operating expenditures necessary to continue existing program services, maintain facilities, and accomplish minor infrastructure improvements. Completion of major infrastructure projects, such as those discussed in Appendix A, would require additional sources of funding, even if a fee increase were to be approved.

⁴ An examination of FY2012 allocations show that river program is funded by about \$100,000 in appropriated funds for river staff functions and \$25,000 for maintenance operations. Rough estimates of appropriated funding for past river recreation program have been made for past year expenditures.

⁵ UT02 revenues include both the 3% commercial use fee paid by outfitters, as well as the \$7.00 per person per trip Special Area Fee for use of Westwater Canyon.

⁶ Operations costs in 2011 represent major capital improvements, including doubling the capacity of the Take-Out and Hittle Boat Ramps, purchase of a new truck-mounted, high pressure hot water cleaning unit to service restrooms and new toilets for the Westwater Ranger Station.

Table 8: Total Annual Expenditures vs. Estimated Revenues in River Recreation Program

Federal Fiscal Year	Estimated Revenues (without increase)	Estimated Revenues (with \$3.00 increase) Effective in 2013	UT02 Estimated Revenue (with \$8.00 increase) Effective in 2013	Staff Labor (Fee and Appropriated Funds)	Operations Costs (Fee and Appropriated Funds)	Total Annual Expenditures
2012	\$245,000	\$245,000	\$245,000	\$256,000	\$110,000	\$366,000
2013	\$250,000	\$295,000	\$370,000	\$260,000	\$110,000	\$370,000
2014	\$255,000	\$300,000	\$375,000	\$260,000	\$115,000	\$375,000

In conclusion, if the river program were to be run on fee revenue alone (that is, without appropriated funding), the Special Area Fee would have to increase by \$8.00 rather than by the proposed \$3.00 (in 2013: \$370,000 - \$250,000 = \$120,000 divided by 15,000 = \$8.00 increase). If appropriated funds were to disappear, operations costs would be reduced to cover only basic cleaning and patrols; only limited capital improvements would occur under this scenario.

The fee rate that would generate 100% of the revenues needed to cover the river recreation program’s full operating costs without the use of any appropriated funding would be a Special Area Fee of \$15.00 per person per trip (the current \$7.00 fee + an \$8.00 increase). However, the Moab Field Office does not anticipate a complete reduction in appropriated funds. In addition, to keep fees in line with the minimum charged for other Western rivers (as shown in the Fair Market Value Fee Calculation Method above), the Moab Field Office recommends only the modest increase of \$3.00 for a Westwater Special Area Fee of \$10.00 per person per trip. In order to cover the full costs of operating the river recreation program, the increase take the Westwater Special Area Fee to \$15.00.

Fair Market Value Fee Calculation Method

In addition to the identified need to raise the fee in order to keep pace with inflation, this section of the business plan uses the Fair Market Assessment approach to calculate the proposed fee changes. The Fair Market Assessment approach compares the fees charged at similar recreational areas in the western United States being administered by federal and state land management agencies. Table 9 presents the permit fee for boating various Western rivers. The current Westwater Special Area Fee is offered as comparison, as well as the proposed Westwater Special Area Fee.

It should be noted that the Westwater boating program does not charge an application or a lottery fee. Private boaters only pay a use fee for Westwater trips for which they actually secure a permit. In contrast, the majority of river programs generate considerable revenue by charging a non-refundable application or lottery fee. This fee is charged whether or not a permit is secured. The Westwater program reduced program costs by switching from a paper and staff intensive lottery system to a direct call-in system. As is the norm for river areas where use is limited,

Westwater boaters pay a use fee for the special access and related services designed to provide the opportunity for a quality outdoor experience.

Table 9: A Comparison of River Permit Fees

River Name	Administering Agency	Permit Fee	Approx. Trip Length	Cost per Day per Person
Current Westwater Canyon, Colorado River (Utah)	Moab BLM	\$7.00 per person per trip	2 days	\$3.50
Proposed Westwater Canyon, Colorado River (Utah)	Moab BLM	\$10.00 per person per trip	2 days	\$5.00
Full cost recovery Westwater Canyon, Colorado River (Utah)	Moab BLM	\$15.00 per person per trip	2 days	\$7.50
Desolation Canyon, Green River (Utah)	Price BLM	\$25.00 per person + \$20 application fee	5 days	\$5.00
San Juan River (Utah)	Monticello BLM	\$6.00, \$12.00 or \$18.00 per person, depending on trip length	varies	\$6.00
Cataract Canyon, Colorado River (Utah)	National Park Service	\$20 per person + \$30 launch fee	4 days	\$5.00 + \$30 launch fee
Lodore (Green River) (Utah)	National Park Service	\$185 per trip + \$15.00 application fee	4 days	Varies by size of group + \$15 appl. fee
Yampa (Colorado)	National Park Service	\$20 per one day trip + \$15.00 application fee	1 day	\$20.00 + \$15.00
Grand Canyon (Arizona)	National Park Service	\$100 per person + \$25 application fee	15 days	\$6.66 + \$25 app. fee
Rogue River (Oregon)	Medford BLM	\$10 per person per trip	Varies	\$5.00 - \$10.00
Selway, Salmon, Snake Rivers (Idaho)	U.S. Forest Service	\$4 .00 per person per day + \$6.00 lottery fee	N/A	\$4.00 + \$6.00 lottery fee
Salt River (Arizona)	U.S. Forest Service	\$125 per trip (15 people maximum) + \$10 application fee	Varies	Varies by size of group
Deschutes River (Oregon)	Prineville BLM	\$12.00 per person	Varies	\$6.00 - \$12.00
Gunnison Gorge (Colorado)	Montrose BLM	\$10.00 per night	2 days	\$5.00 per day
Rio Chama (New Mexico)	Taos BLM	\$5.00 per person + \$6.00 application fee	1 day	\$5.00 per day

Smith River (Montana)	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	\$10.00 application fee, \$5.00 lottery fee \$60 per person (nonresident) and \$25 per person (resident)	3 days	\$20 per day- nonresidents and \$8.33 per day- residents + \$15.00 lottery fee
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The variation in river recreation fee structures makes direct comparisons difficult, such as the different fee rates charged on the Smith River for non-Montana residents. A typical Western river trip costs a *minimum* of \$5.00 per person per day, however, some rivers charge considerably more. Additionally, as noted above, the majority of river programs charge non-refundable application or lottery fees. These fees are paid by participants for the *chance* of obtaining a permit. In contrast, Westwater users only pay for permits actually secured.

The services and facilities provided at the sites listed above also vary somewhat. All offer river permitting systems so that only permitted users are allowed on the allocated river. These rivers are generally patrolled by agency personnel. Boat ramps with toilet and camping facilities are typically provided at both the put-ins and take-outs. Westwater Canyon also offers on-site ranger services at the put-in, with safety checks and equipment checks provided by agency personnel; some, but not all, of the rivers above also offer this service. The level of service at Westwater is equal to or exceeds the river programs listed in the table above.

Westwater Canyon, unlike many of the rivers listed above, provides a very inexpensive rafting trip. The vehicle shuttle for a Westwater trip is most usually done by the boating group itself, unlike the shuttle requirements on many other rivers, which require professional services or additional fees to non-agency landowners. The BLM manages both the put-in and the take-out for Westwater Canyon, so that users do not have to pay an additional fee to another entity for ingress or egress. Thus, the Special Area Fee covers the entire cost of trip logistics.

If the Moab BLM were to raise its Westwater Special Area fee to \$10.00 per trip, participants would benefit from the continuity of on-going services, facility maintenance and some limited improvements to facilities associated with Westwater. The completion of major infrastructure improvements shown in Appendix A would not likely be completed through this action alone.

In conclusion, the analysis of the value of the Westwater Special Area Fee increase shows that the proposed \$3.00 fee increase would increase the per person daily fee from \$3.50 up to \$5.00 per day. The review of other river areas with similar programs and fees shows that the \$5.00 daily rate would be equal to the lowest daily rate charged for the use of other river areas. In addition, most other areas also charge a permit application fee to cover the cost of issuing the permit. A permit application fee is not proposed for Westwater at this time.



Rafting in Westwater Canyon

H. Impacts from Changing and Not Changing Recreation Fee Rates

Anticipated Results of Modifying Special Area Fee

Introduction: The Westwater Special Area fee has remained constant since 1998. In that time, the costs of goods, labor and services have continued to increase. The Consumer Price Index increased by 39% from 1998 to 2011, thus eroding the buying power of the Westwater Special Area Fee. As the costs of goods, labor and services increase, the purchasing power of a static Special Area fee decreases proportionately. This has occurred with the Westwater Special Area fee over the past 14 years.

Benefits to Recreational Users: If the fee were raised, services would continue to be offered in the river recreation program. In addition, some revenues could be used to gradually improve river program infrastructure as part of routine upgrades. The Moab BLM would also pursue other funding options to address larger infrastructure needs as described in Appendix A. The photographs below of a busy weekend illustrates the need for new facilities (in this case, a parking lot) at the Westwater Ranger Station.



Parked vehicles blocking bus access to ramp at Westwater Ranger Station



Nowhere to park at Westwater Ranger Station

New facilities would benefit both Westwater and Loma boaters (those starting their river trips in the McInnis Canyons NCA); a separate boat ramp is needed to service the number of boaters using Westwater, as the current serves as the take-out for Loma boaters. An expansion of the campground would help boaters both before and after their trips. Similarly, needed minor improvements such as a shade shelter (so that passengers might get out of the hot sun while boats are being derigged and gear loaded onto vehicles) at the Cisco Takeout could be provided by an increase in the Special Area Fee.

Benefits to the Local Economy

As explained above, the Grand County economy is heavily dependent upon tourism. The river recreation sector is an important element of Grand County tourism. The Headwaters Economics

(2011) study, *The Economic Value of Public Lands in Grand County*, found that the economic impact resulting from expenditures on BLM Lands in Grand County by non-local visitors whose primary activity was boating (for the year 2007) amounted to \$8,551,451. Furthermore, the study found that the attraction of Grand County is the *variety* of recreation opportunities (including boating) that it can offer the visitor. It is important to the local economy to keep boating infrastructure in good condition, and to service and clean boating facilities at a high standard.

Benefits to the Environment

The Special Area Fee enables the Moab BLM to operate the allocation system in Westwater Canyon which serves to reduce negative impacts to sites and resources associated with higher levels of visitation in small areas. Because Westwater Canyon has been designated as a Wilderness Study Area and identified as a suitable Wild and Scenic River, the BLM is legally required to maintain the canyon and river's natural and cultural resource values until Congress determines whether to designate the area into the National Wilderness Preservation System and/or the National Wild and Scenic River System. By keeping the number of people to allocated levels, natural and cultural resources in the canyon can be preserved and maintained. The special area fee also funds recreation staff resource protection and project work within the canyon including invasive species control and maintenance of drip systems used to support the reintroduction of cottonwood trees.

Socioeconomic Impacts, including Low-Income Populations

A study of BLM boaters conducted by Utah State University in 2001 (Reiter et al, 2001) found that "consistent with backcountry studies, the BLM boaters have relatively high levels of income, education and occupational status." (page III.8) The study further found that from 60% to 80% of the boaters on Westwater and other Utah BLM river segments worked in professional/technical or managerial occupations. In the year 2000, 76% of the boaters on Westwater Canyon had incomes above \$40,000, with 15% reporting incomes of \$110,000 or more.

People utilizing Westwater Canyon fall into two categories. About half of the users are engaging the services of commercial outfitters; a commercial Westwater Canyon trip ranges from \$160 per person to \$650 per person (depending upon the length of the trip). An increase of \$3.00 per person per trip represents an increase from 0.46% to 1.8% on a commercial trip. It is unlikely that an increase of this amount in the cost of a commercial Westwater trip would make it more difficult for companies to attract customers.

The other users of Westwater Canyon are boaters who raft Westwater Canyon on a private permit. These individuals must be in possession of boats and boating equipment, trailers, vehicles and other recreational gear. Data provided by the Utah State University Study show that Westwater Canyon private users have fairly high incomes which would reduce any impact of an additional charge. While a fee increase would make Westwater trips more expensive by \$3.00 per person, the additional cost would be relatively small in comparison to overall trip and equipment expenses.

Anticipated Result of Not Modifying Special Area Fee

Negative Impacts to Recreational Users

The purchasing power of the \$7.00 Special Area Fee has fallen since it was instituted in 1998. This erosion of purchasing power means that, without a fee increase, even gradual and minor improvements to Westwater Canyon infrastructure will become less common as present revenue will be largely used to cover basic services such as ranger patrols and cleaning. Additionally, it can be expected that ranger patrol and check-in presence will be reduced, introducing potential for reduced compliance with the permit system and with environmental protection requirements. Consequently, unauthorized use may increase and boaters may find more instances of dirty camps, human wastes, and upstream travel.

Negative Impacts to Local Economy

Not raising the Westwater Special Area Fee would lead to the erosion of services, such as cleaning, at boating recreation sites. This would eventually impact the river recreation sector of the Grand County economy, making people less likely to book or take river trips on Moab BLM lands. Vacation dollars are entirely discretionary; people can spend their vacation dollars in many different locales. Should people be less likely to recreate in Moab because of poor or unmaintained facilities, the Grand County economy would suffer.

Negative Impacts to the Environment

Should the BLM be unable to regularly service toilets along the river (all routine cleaning costs are paid by the Moab River Recreation Fee Account), people would be less likely to utilize toilets. Additionally, recreation maintenance staff (funded almost entirely by fees) conduct site cleanup and weed control and it is likely that such work would be reduced. This would lead to negative impacts to the environment.

Socioeconomic Impacts, including Low-Income Populations

A Westwater Canyon trip is rarely available to lower income populations, because the basic expenses of the trip put it out of the reach of most lower income people. Not raising the Special Area Fee would have no impact on such populations, as they do not utilize Westwater Canyon now.

Managing for Positive River Recreation Results

The goal of the river-based Special Recreation Permit program in the Moab Field Office is to enhance recreation services to meet increasing demand for river-based recreation. In order to meet the demand, the field office will seek to increase river-based Special Recreation Permit revenues by managing for positive Special Recreation Permit results for the following four groups: Special Recreation Permit holders, the local community, the Special Recreation Permit participants, and the BLM.

The commercial river Special Recreation Permit holder benefits by:

- (1) having the opportunity to build business value

- (2) being able to operate a business in a more stable and predictable environment including efficient processing of routine transactions such as making and changing launch dates and trip sizes
- (3) having a predictable and stable business relationship with BLM, including efficient, low-cost processing of routine transactions

The local community, including non-motorized boaters, benefits by:

- 1) the development of business opportunities in the outdoor recreation sector
- 2) the provision of jobs for its citizens and tax revenues for local government
- 3) improved services and quality of life through facility development and resource protection

The participants benefit by:

- 1) enhanced interpretive and educational experiences
- 2) improved public lands facilities for outings (i.e. clean toilets)
- 3) outstanding river-based outdoor recreation opportunities
- 4) a focused opportunity to enhance outdoor skills, build group and family relationships, and introduce youth to the world of nature

The BLM benefits by:

- 1) meeting its land management goals, including protection of cultural and natural resources
- 2) partnering with Special Recreation Permit holders as stewards of the public lands
- 3) providing for a more stable (and hence knowledgeable) BLM work force
- 4) lowering costs by developing improved business management systems
- 5) obtaining revenues to use for program management and facilities enhancement.

The positive results summarized above allow commercial outfitters and private Westwater boaters to work with the BLM to achieve mutual benefits. As users of the public lands, outfitters and private boaters have a vested interest in their sustainability. The local community gains in its most important economic sector, and participants and the public benefit by increased opportunities to enjoy public lands.

The achievement of positive river recreation results requires adequate funding to provide necessary services. Presently, in addition to funds provided through the BLM budget process, the Moab Field Office collects fees due to the government from river based commercial outfitters, as well from private Westwater boaters, in order to enhance visitor services. Continuing actions include field patrols, careful auditing of post-use reports, and the use of a tailor-made database to professionalize contacts and to accurately determine payments due.

To protect river based Special Recreation Permit holders, the public, and the public lands, continual efforts are undertaken to ensure that Special Recreation Permits are obtained by all who require them. River patrols in Westwater Canyon check permits of all users to ensure compliance with the permit requirements. Existing Special Recreation Permit holders are encouraged to report “pirate” activities, and many have done so over the years. In addition to field patrols, staff members search the internet for businesses and groups utilizing river resources without a permit, as well as work with other agencies and BLM offices to ensure permit compliance. Entities continuing to operate without authorization are cited for non-compliance with Special Recreation Permit regulations.

UT 02 Program Relationship to Appropriated Funds

Both appropriated funds and UT 02 funds are used to cover the costs of operating BLM's Colorado River program. Through 1988, appropriated funds covered the entire cost of operating a smaller program with far few facilities and staff. In 1989, recreation fees became available to supplement appropriated funds. The preliminary 2012 budget (January 2012) for the Moab Field Office uses river fees (UT 02) to fund approximately 73% of the operating costs of the river program with the remainder of costs (23%) funded by appropriated federal funds. Presently, appropriated 2012 funds are planned to cover the office's recreation garbage collection contract, the office's toilet pumping interagency agreement with the National Park Service and a portion of the labor costs for BLM staff. Anticipated appropriated fund reductions in the Moab Field Office's final FY 2012 budget for recreation management are expected to result in increased utilization of UT 02 funds to cover program costs in 2012 and beyond.

A portion of the labor costs of those working in the Special Recreation Permit program will also continue to be supported by appropriated monies, including funding for Recreation Management (L12200000), Wilderness Management (L12100000), and Operations Management (L1651). Of the 12 people working in the river program (3 full-time river staff and 9 who also work in other recreation program areas), \$101,400 dollars are allocated to them in FY 2012 for river recreation work from allocated funds (with about two thirds of that coming from L1220, and about one-third coming from L1210). This means that \$101,400 in allocated funds will be spent doing river recreation work in FY 2012. Added to the \$155,000 in staff labor expected to be expended in UT 02 funds in FY 2012, total staff labor devoted to running the river program will be \$256,400 for FY 2012. For 2012, river program operations costs are estimated to total \$110,000.

I. Public Outreach

Prior to increasing fees, the Moab Field Office is conducting the following outreach efforts to notify the public of its opportunity to review and comment on the proposal to increase the Westwater Special Area fee:

- Posting the Draft Business Plan on the BLM Utah, Moab Field Office, Westwater Canyon websites;
- Publishing a news story in the *Moab Times Independent* and the *Grand Junction Sentinel*;
- Issuing a News Release to statewide print and broadcast media;
- Posting the Draft Business Plan on websites trafficked by boaters, such as UtahRafters.com; and

In addition, the Moab Field Office will be presenting the Westwater Special Area fee increase proposal to the BLM Utah Recreation Resource Advisory Council (RAC) for its formal review. The Utah RAC is a 15-member advisory panel which provides advice and recommendations to the BLM on resource and land management issues for 22.9 million acres of public lands in Utah. The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act mandates that the appropriate Recreation RAC reviews all BLM recreation fee proposals prior to approval. Comments from both the public at

large and the BLM Utah RAC will be considered prior to approval of the increase in the Westwater Special Area fee.

Moab Field Office Recommendation

After careful consideration of the fee calculation process and the anticipated revenues and expenditures outlined in the *Colorado River Business Plan*, the BLM Moab Field Office recommends changing the Westwater Special Area Fee from \$7.00 per person per trip to \$10.00 per person per trip.

RAC Recommendation

The RAC approved the fee increase on March 28, 2012 (see Appendix C for additional details).

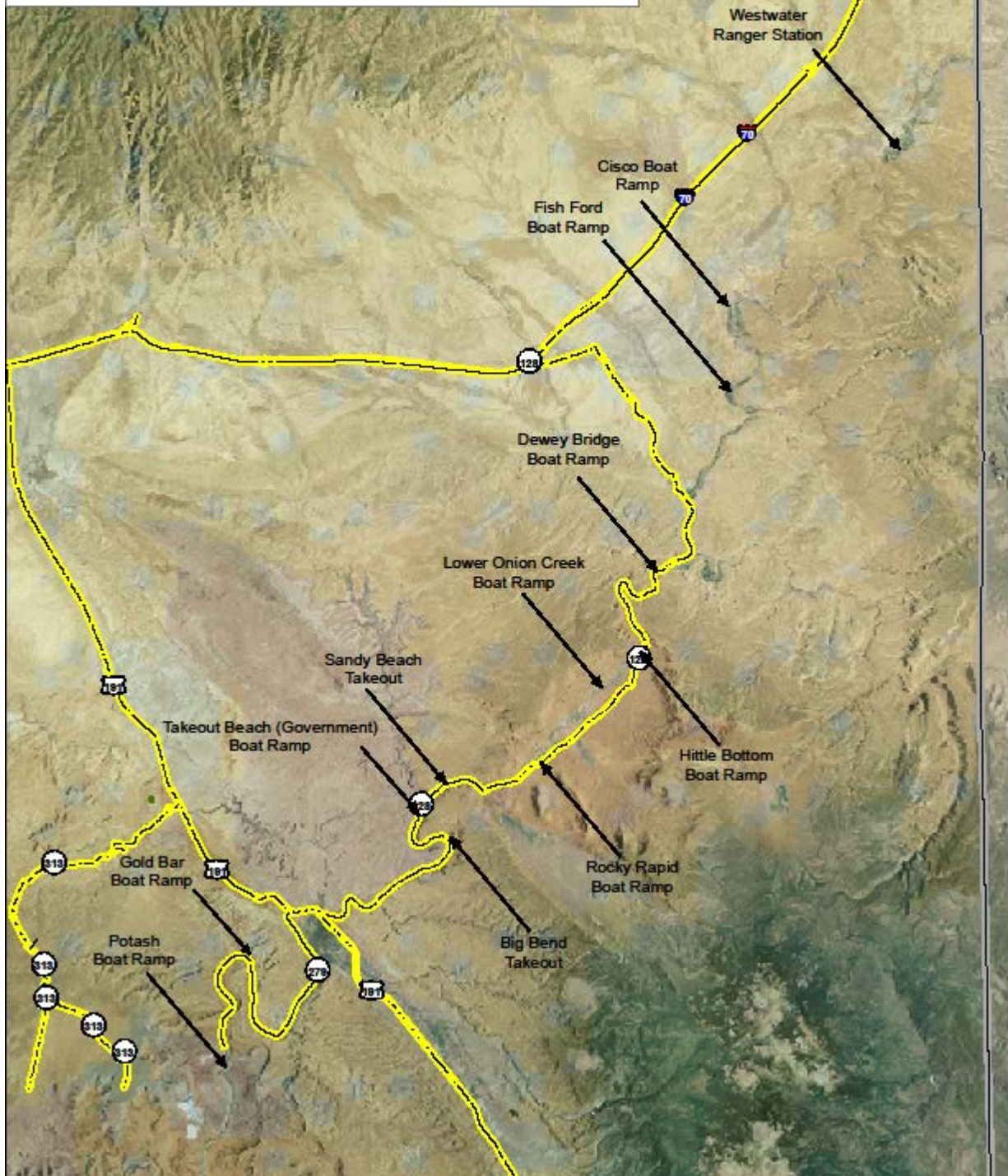
Appendix A: Specific Site Related Future Expenditures (Total = \$800,000)

**Sites Utilized by Permittees that Require Major Improvements in the Moab Field Office
(capital improvement only; no maintenance costs are included)**

1. Improved infrastructure at Westwater Ranger Station (\$600,000)
 - a. Provision of parking lot for Westwater and Loma (McInnis Canyon NCA) boaters
 - b. Enlarged and improved camping facilities for both Westwater and Loma (McInnis Canyon NCA) visitors
 - c. Additional boat ramp to relieve overcrowding and to resolve conflicts among Westwater and Loma boaters
 - d. Permanent ranger residences to replace current trailers
2. Improvements at Cisco Take-out (\$100,000)
 - a. Construction of shade shelter for passengers waiting for boats to be derigged and loaded onto vehicles
 - b. Improved toilet facilities
 - c. Enlargement of Cisco boat ramp to accommodate heavy use
3. Improvements at Fish Ford (\$20,000)
 - a. Replacement of toilet, picnic tables and fire rings
 - b. Realignment of boat ramp
4. Improvements at Dewey Bridge Put in (\$30,000)
 - a. Construction of accessible group site to accommodate Daily boaters
 - b. Enlarged parking lot
 - c. Campground remodel, including landscaping with native plants
5. Improvements at Hittle Bottom Put in (\$50,000)
 - a. Construction of group site to accommodate Daily boaters
 - b. Improvement of traffic flow patterns at Hittle ramp

It is to be noted that all the above sites will require maintenance services on at least a biweekly basis.

River Related Facilities Maintained by the Moab BLM



Appendix C: Summary of Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Approval

On March 28, 2012, the Utah BLM Resource Advisory Council (RAC) approved the increase in the Westwater Special Area fee to \$10.00. The RAC discussed the possibility of raising the fee to \$15.00, but decided to request that the Grand Junction BLM office assist the Moab BLM office in funding the additional improvements at Westwater to service Ruby-Horsethief boaters and to alleviate overcrowding at the Westwater ramp.

The Moab BLM had a 30-day public comment period on the proposal to raise the Westwater fee from \$7.00 to \$10.00 per person. Six comments were received. Four of these comments commended the Moab BLM for using their Westwater fees wisely; all four of these commenters stated that the already-low fee needed to be raised. One comment questioned the use of a Special Area (rather than Expanded Amenity) Fee. One commentor was opposed to raising the fee, stating that appropriated monies should be utilized for recreation services.

The Moab BLM will institute the Westwater Special Area fee increase starting March 1, 2013. The price will be \$10.00 per person, as approved by the Utah Resource Advisory Council.

References

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