

Connecting with Utah Communities

BLM-Utah's Recreation and Visitor Services Strategy
2016-2020



Utah



This strategic plan aligns the resources of the BLM's Recreation and Visitor Services Program with the desired outcomes of local communities, businesses, and other service providers to deliver as many benefits as possible to the recreating public.



How does the BLM-Utah Recreation Program Benefit Utah's Economy?



Supported 4,447 Jobs



Contributed \$460 Million in Economic Activity to the State



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Introduction

In 2015, over 7.5 million people visited the 23 million acres of multiple-use public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Utah. BLM-Utah is the steward of numerous outdoor recreation destinations that attract visitors from across the state, region, country, and world, including the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, San Rafael Swell, Book Cliffs, Little Sahara Recreation Area, Henry Mountains, and Cedar Mesa; Desolation, Labyrinth, and Nine-Mile Canyons; popular segments of the Colorado, Dirty Devil, Green, San Juan, and White Rivers; as well as hundreds of miles of motorized and non-motorized trails surrounding Moab and St. George. BLM field offices located in 13 communities across Utah are responsible for the on-the-ground stewardship of approximately 40 percent of the state, and providing a wide variety of first-class, sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities on these public lands is critical to supporting Utahns' quality of life.

In May 2014, the BLM released a national five-year strategy for its Recreation and Visitor Services Program titled *Connecting with Communities*. **The strategy aims to reposition the resources of the BLM's Recreation and Visitor Services Program to achieve the social, economic, and environmental goals of local communities located near America's public lands while expanding the benefits of outdoor recreation to public land visitors.** In other words this is not business as usual for the BLM's Recreation and Visitor Services Program. The strategy identifies numerous external and internal efforts that will be necessary to enhance collaboration with local communities, businesses, and other service providers who are dependent upon the public lands for their quality of life.

This step-down strategy outlines BLM-Utah's current ideas for implementing the national *Connecting with Communities* strategy here in Utah. After incorporating stakeholder input, this five-year strategy serves as a "living" document that BLM-Utah will update as successes are achieved, priorities are updated, and opportunities arise. This strategy does not amend any BLM Resource Management Plans or replace any local planning or decision-making processes. Rather, it lays out how BLM-Utah plans to achieve its Recreation and Visitor Services mission while sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Why It's Important

The abundance and diversity of recreational opportunities and stunning landscapes on Utah's public lands are a critical component of Utahns' outdoor heritage in numerous rural communities across the state, and have helped establish outdoor recreation as a vital component of Utah's economic vitality.

In 2015, American and foreign visitors made over 7.5 million visits to Utah's public lands, supported 4,447 Utah jobs, and contributed \$460 million in economic activity to the state. Through its Resource Management Planning process, BLM-Utah has designated 68 Special Recreation Management Areas across the state totaling 5.6 million acres. Where SRMAs are designated the agency is prioritizing recreation management efforts (see p.11).

With such a full plate, BLM-Utah gratefully relies on the help of interested citizens who believe in our mission, who love their public lands, and who are willing to volunteer their time and energy to accomplishing projects that would otherwise go undone. In fiscal year 2015, volunteers contributed more than 54,000 hours of time, energy and hard work to supporting BLM-Utah's Recreation and Visitor Services Program. Volunteers served their communities by removing trash from roads and trails; serving as campground hosts or guides; erecting signs and fences; and building and maintaining recreational trails, sites and facilities.

Through increased collaboration, BLM-Utah can provide the public with the recreational opportunities and experiences that communities value most, prioritize recreation areas that provide the greatest public benefits, and leverage partners’ financial resources to ensure that top-priority sites and services are maintained. These efforts will enable BLM-Utah to improve the quality of recreation opportunities on the public lands and further contribute to the socioeconomic health and well-being of the local communities that we serve.

Vision

The vision of the *Connecting with Utah Communities* strategy is to build upon and expand BLM-Utah’s collaboration with local, regional, and national organizations to provide outstanding and sustainable recreation opportunities on Utah’s public lands that produce lasting benefits from the places Utahn’s live, work, and play. Accomplishing this will require BLM-Utah to reposition itself both internally and externally.

Internally, BLM-Utah will:

- Train and maintain a recreation workforce capable of productively engaging in community relations to identify outcomes that will benefit communities and visitors alike;
- Revise internal processes to provide greater support for a community-centered approach and better information for decision-making;
- Improve communication and outreach efforts; and
- Use traditional and alternative funding sources as efficiently and effectively as possible.

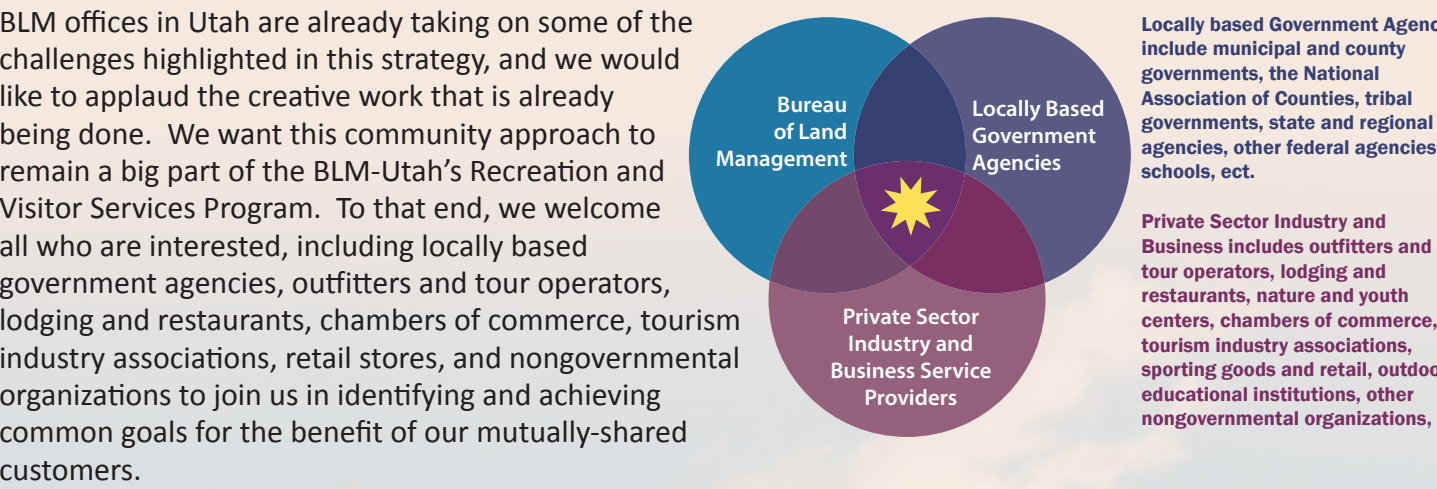
Externally, BLM-Utah will:

- Capitalize on the BLM’s recreation brand America’s “Backyard to Backcountry” treasure;
- Consistently coordinate with community and landscape-level representatives when planning and managing outdoor recreation opportunities on the public lands;
- Prioritize recreation areas that provide the most significant public benefits; and
- Leverage financial resources through community partner organizations to ensure that top-priority sites and services are maintained.

Why We Want to Hear from You

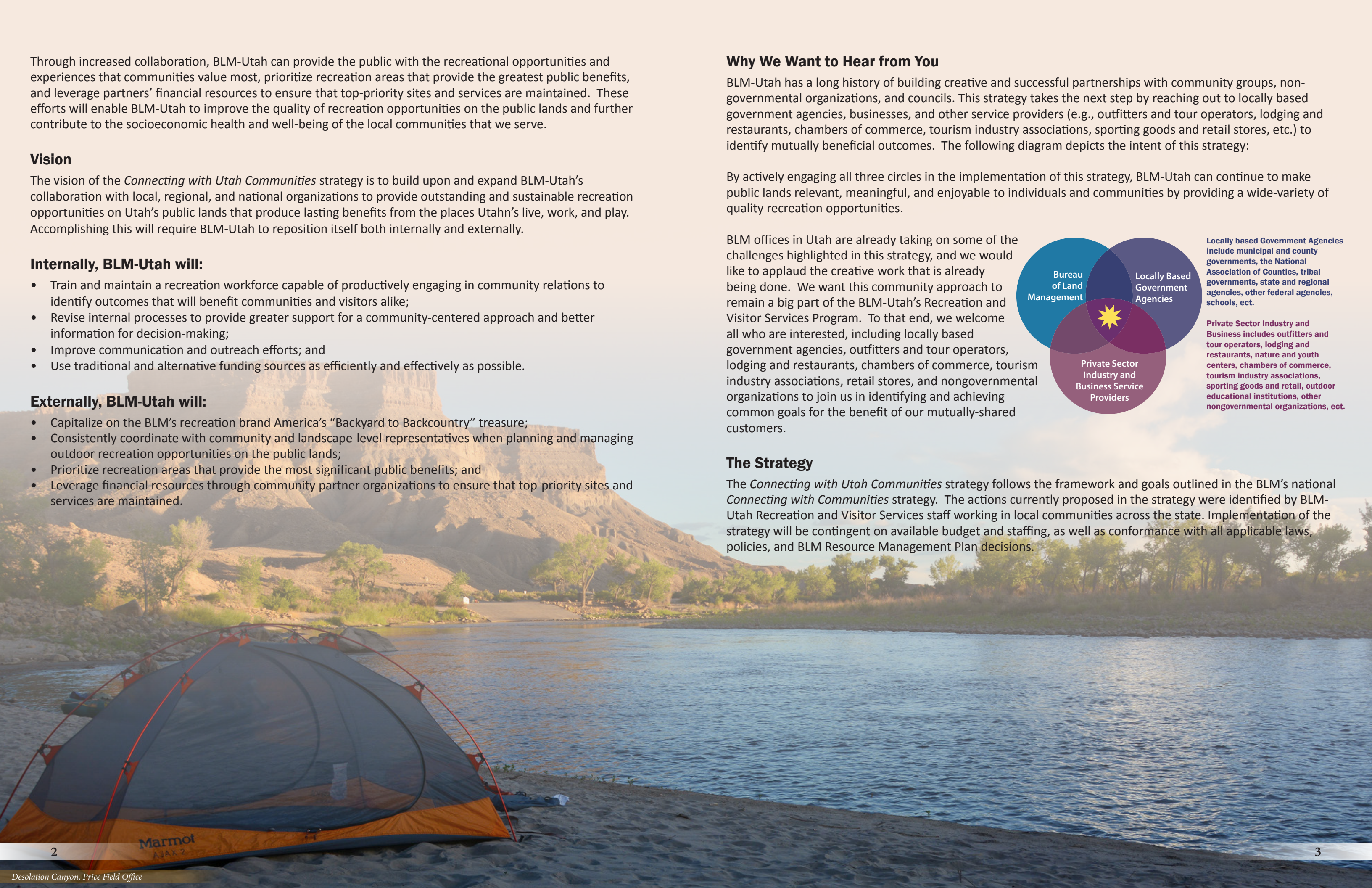
BLM-Utah has a long history of building creative and successful partnerships with community groups, non-governmental organizations, and councils. This strategy takes the next step by reaching out to locally based government agencies, businesses, and other service providers (e.g., outfitters and tour operators, lodging and restaurants, chambers of commerce, tourism industry associations, sporting goods and retail stores, etc.) to identify mutually beneficial outcomes. The following diagram depicts the intent of this strategy:

By actively engaging all three circles in the implementation of this strategy, BLM-Utah can continue to make public lands relevant, meaningful, and enjoyable to individuals and communities by providing a wide-variety of quality recreation opportunities.



The Strategy

The *Connecting with Utah Communities* strategy follows the framework and goals outlined in the BLM’s national *Connecting with Communities* strategy. The actions currently proposed in the strategy were identified by BLM-Utah Recreation and Visitor Services staff working in local communities across the state. Implementation of the strategy will be contingent on available budget and staffing, as well as conformance with all applicable laws, policies, and BLM Resource Management Plan decisions.



INTERNAL REPOSITIONING ACTIONS

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

Goal 1: Deepen the Knowledge and Skill Base Needed for Maximizing Partnership Opportunities

Strategic Focus 1: Provide Enhanced Skills and Training

- Conduct an internal training needs assessment to identify the Recreation and Visitor Services staff members’ training gaps, the causes and reasons for the gaps, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to eliminate the gaps.
- Collaborate with the BLM National Training Center to ensure foundational training opportunities are provided for the Recreation and Visitor Services staff. This will allow them to effectively implement core responsibilities related to recreation facility development and management, trails and travel management, recreational permitting, visual resource management, wilderness management, National Historic Trail management, Wild and Scenic River management, land use planning, and the National Environmental Policy Act.
- Collaborate with the BLM National Training Center to expand and enhance training opportunities for Recreation and Visitor Services staff to further develop their customer service, partnership development, technical writing, dispute resolution, and business management skills.
- Promote online distance learning courses such as webinars, online courses, and satellite broadcasts that support the development of the knowledge and skills for creating, facilitating, and maintaining effective partnerships.

Strategic Focus 2: Encourage Knowledge-Sharing

- Continue holding statewide quarterly conference calls and/or webinars for Recreation and Visitor Services staff. During the quarterly calls, incorporate one refresher training related to a core skill set and showcase one successful local partnership to promote innovative ideas for harnessing community collaboration.



Cedar Mountain Wilderness Area, Salt Lake Field Office

- Continue to host an annual Outdoor Recreation Workshop to promote dialogue and knowledge-sharing about statewide opportunities and challenges; provide hands-on training and updates on BLM policies and processes; and introduce new partnership and funding opportunities.
- Annually brief the BLM-Utah Executive Leadership Team on the progress of the *Connecting with Utah Communities* strategy. During the annual briefing, provide leadership with information about internal and external partnership resources that can expand and enhance the capacity of field office Recreation and Visitor Services programs.
- Hold an annual meeting with each BLM District’s leadership to discuss its implementation of the *Connecting with Utah Communities* strategy.
- Expand and enhance involvement in other key BLM programs such as National Conservation Lands, cultural resources, paleontological resources, wildlife resources, lands and realty, abandoned mine lands, law enforcement, GIS, public affairs, budget, and collections and billing to encourage cross-training opportunities and a team approach to planning, marketing, and managing outdoor recreation.

Goal 2: Ensure that BLM participation in Partnerships Remains Relevant and Effective

Strategic Focus 1: Stay Up-to-date About the Interests of Network Providers and Primary Recreation-Tourism Visitors

- Promote and apply new avenues for public engagement to find out what matters most and how well BLM-Utah is supporting the needs of its communities and visitors. Such efforts may include social media, online commenting platforms, and QR codes at recreation sites and areas.
- Support Recreation and Visitor Services staff members’ attendance and participation in partner-sponsored conventions and conferences, community meetings, open houses, friends group activities, and other partnership forums.
- Continue to participate in statewide outdoor recreation forums, including the Utah Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee; Utah Gateway Community Forum; Utah Council for Outdoor Recreation; Utah Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Committee; Utah Recreation Trails Advisory Council; Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program; and Utah Scenic Byway Committee.

Strategic Focus 2: Maintain an Accurate Inventory of Data

- Expand BLM-Utah’s ability to accurately track public land visitation through the increased use and monitoring of road and trail counters.
- Expand and enhance citizen-steward volunteer opportunities to monitor and track recreational visitation data.
- Continue recording all recreational use of the public lands in the BLM’s Recreation Management Information System (RMIS). Ensure all field offices are tracking RMIS data that corresponds to existing recreational land use planning designations, such as Special Recreation Management Areas and Off-Highway Vehicle Management Areas.
- Create innovative solutions and partnerships to make visual resource, wilderness characteristic, and National Historic Trail inventory data available to public land stakeholders online.
- Ensure that BLM-Utah’s internal revenue collections practices accurately correspond to the organizational structure of the recreation fee program. Use this data to increase accountability and transparency of BLM-Utah’s recreation fee revenues and expenditures and enable BLM-Utah to better quantify the benefits of its recreation program to local economies.



Lazy/Easy Trail, Moab Field Office

INTERNAL REPOSITIONING ACTIONS

Wedge Overlook, San Rafael Swell, Price Field Office

Goal 3: Transform Communication and Outreach Efforts

Strategic Focus 1: Employ a Palette of Interpretive Communication Tools and Technology to Market Recreation Opportunities

- Publish a quarterly #MyUtah e-newsletter to update partners and stakeholders about BLM-Utah’s efforts to connect Utah communities with their public lands.
- Overhaul BLM-Utah’s entire Recreation and Visitor Services website to make it easier for people to find, access, and explore public lands in Utah. Regularly update the website with information about public land conditions, volunteer and public involvement opportunities, and partnership achievements.
- Ensure that universally accessible outdoor recreation opportunities on Utah’s public lands can be easily identified on the BLM-Utah website.
- Make GIS-enabled maps of BLM trails and recreation sites that provide real-time locational information on mobile devices publicly available. Prioritize the development of maps of designated trail systems surrounding local communities and within international destinations.
- Expand the printing of high quality, hard copy maps of designated internationally renowned BLM-Utah trail systems within international destinations.
- Pursue partnerships and contracts with agencies, universities, organizations, and businesses to develop and distribute multimedia outreach content that promotes and markets recreation opportunities.
- Enhance BLM-Utah’s ability to develop and market accessible outdoor recreation apps for persons with disabilities.



Turtle Rock, St George Field Office, Photo by Thomas Burton

Strategic Focus 2: Access Communications Expertise, As Well As BLM and Partner Social Media, To Improve Message Content and Delivery

- Increase the use of BLM social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr to market recreation opportunities, to provide “know before you go” information, and to promote environmentally responsible outdoor recreation in ‘real-time’.
- Increase the development of BLM-Utah YouTube videos such as the Old Spanish Trail Adventure, Hastings Cutoff Adventure, and Desolation Gray Canyons River Permit to highlight Utah tourist destinations and promote environmentally responsible outdoor recreation.
 - Continue prioritizing the implementation of the interagency “Ride On Designated Routes, Utah” public outreach campaign with Tread Lightly.
 - Initiate a #MyUtah hashtag campaign aimed at encouraging visitor interaction and engagement about their experiences on Utah’s public lands.
- Ensure that all recreation site information on BLM-Utah’s website is consistent with Recreation.gov.
- Share designated BLM trail system information with the public, private sector, and other agencies as much as possible. Make designated trail GIS data downloadable from the BLM-Utah website. Partner with the Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation and other participating agencies to create a single online source of trail and recreation site data for the state of Utah.

Goal 4: Establish Secure and Reliable Funding Sources

Strategic Focus 1: Use All Funding Sources Available to Maintain Priority Sites and Services

- Any unidentified recreation funding received by the BLM-Utah State Office will be used towards funding “Connecting with Communities” projects identified by the District/Field Offices.
- Increase the number of grant applications for trail and travel management projects from the Utah State Parks and Recreation Division, including from the Utah Off-Highway Vehicle Trails Program and the Recreational Trails Program.
- Work with existing partners and pursue new partnerships to increase BLM-Utah’s eligibility for matching funds (e.g., sponsor cash, in-kind goods or services, volunteer labor, donations).
- Maximize our competitiveness for obtaining additional one-time funds (e.g., Deferred Maintenance, Challenge Cost Share, Federal Highway Administration) by increasing recreation staff awareness and understanding of how to use alternative funding sources for the benefit of public use and resources.
- Set annual workload funding priorities that will allow fiscal and human capital resources to be placed where most needed.
- Establish contracts and agreements in advance of funding opportunities in order to benefit from “use or lose” financial resources.
- Identify operational efficiencies at recreation sites and facilities by evaluating the hours of operation, seasons of use, amenities provided, maintenance contracts, and staffing of all facilities; increasing partnership and volunteer supported recreation opportunities; and evaluating sites and facilities for decommissioning where feasible.

Strategic Focus 2: Use Collected Fees to Their Maximum Potential to Develop Recreation Benefits

- Continue to use recreation fees as an investment to enhance the visitor services and recreation opportunities available to the public at the sites where fees are collected. (e.g., facility repair and maintenance; upgrade trails and roads; create more accessible facilities)
- Complete and revise business plans for all fee sites and areas, explaining to the public the purposes of recreation sites, how fees are collected and spent, and what plans exist for future recreation fee expenditures.
- Inform the public about fee revenue expenditures by posting information at recreation sites (e.g., campgrounds, day-use areas, special areas) and visitor centers, on websites, and in newsletters.
- Consider all developed recreation sites that are not charging recreation fees for future fee implementation.
- Consider expanding fees for the purchase of digital (i.e., geospatial PDFs) and hardcopy recreation maps.
- Pursue innovative methods for efficiently collecting recreation fees (e.g., portable credit card readers, automated pay stations, point of sale systems) – to quickly and easily accept payments at BLM-Utah’s developed recreation sites and visitor centers.



EXTERNAL REPOSITIONING ACTIONS

Tim Wright, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Share the Experience

Goal 1: Reposition the Recreation Program within Community Service Provider Networks to Better Serve Mutually Shared Customers

Strategic Focus 1: Proactively Engage with Community Networks of Service Providers

- Increase engagement with local communities and organizations such as user groups, outfitters, tour operators, lodging, restaurants, chambers of commerce, tourism industry associations, retail stores, and other nongovernmental organizations to identify and develop partnerships. Continue actively engaging with the Utah Guides and Outfitters Association.
- Collaborate with the Utah Office of Tourism, Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation, Utah Office of Rural Development and Utah Tourism Industry Association on tourism development efforts highlighting Utah’s public lands.
- Expand and enhance partnerships with Utah’s numerous adaptable sports organizations throughout the state to further develop and promote universally accessible outdoor recreation opportunities on the public lands.

Strategic Focus 2: Plan and Manage Recreation Efforts to Achieve Specific and Desired Benefits to the Community

- Engage the public, Utah Resource Advisory Council, and other cooperating agencies to more fully understand and respond to the desired settings, outcomes and experiences on the public lands surrounding rural Utah communities.
- Partner with local and county tourism boards and organizations to develop hard copy and online BLM district and/or county recreation guides to promote and market local recreation destinations.



Goal 2: Facilitate Greater Well-Being and Economic Benefits within Communities

Strategic Focus 1: Capitalize On and Protect the BLM’s “Backyard to Backcountry” Recreation Brand

- Using the BLM’s “Backyard to Backcountry” brand, market the economic, environmental, and social values and benefits of recreation opportunities on Utah’s public lands and the niches that make BLM-Utah a different, relevant, and necessary service provider to Utah’s recreational users and communities.
- Continue to expand the network of designated BLM trails that connect Utah communities to their surrounding public lands. Establish these trails through partnerships with local communities, regional governments, and interested stakeholders in an effort to construct and maintain trails that appeal to a wide variety of recreation users. Participate in local and state transportation planning efforts, such as the Uintah County Trails Concept Plan, to promote seamless trail connectivity between urban and rural environments.
- Establish an adoption program, such as Adopt-a-Trail, Adopt-a-River, Adopt-a-Crag, etc., that encourages citizen-steward volunteers to monitor and maintain recreational resources on Utah’s public lands.

Strategic Focus 2: Create Collaborative Recreation and Travel Management Plans

- Prioritize the development and implementation of community-level outreach tactics, such as interactive web-based tools, recreation site design charrettes, and annual workshops for local Special Recreation Permit holders, to fully understand and respond to local communities’ desired recreational settings,

- outcomes, and experiences on Utah’s public lands.
- Encourage BLM field offices to conduct regular public outreach meetings to discuss and answer questions regarding current projects and events.

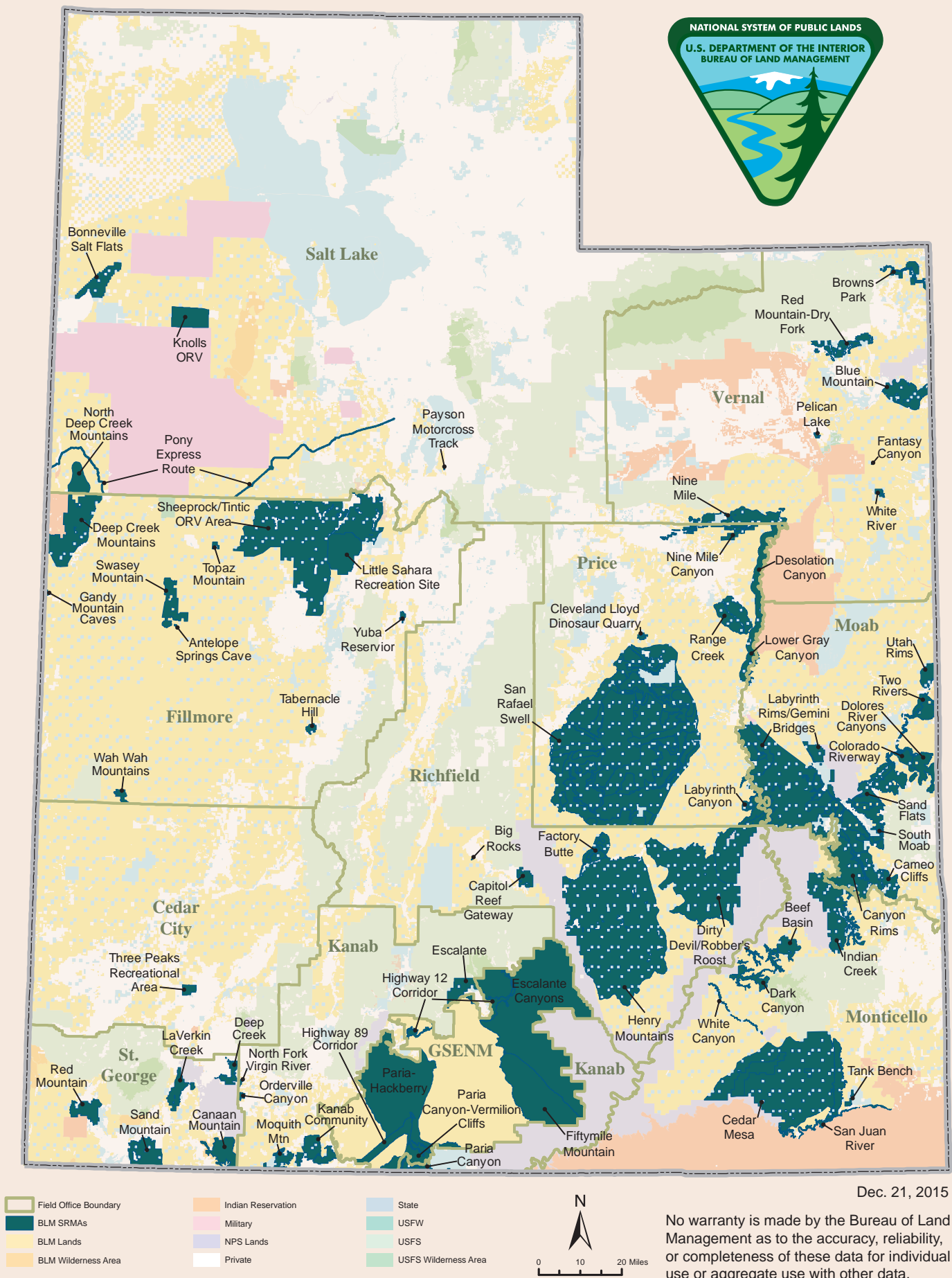
Strategic Focus 3: Give Priority to Those Recreation Opportunities that Promise the Most Significant Social and Economic Benefits that are within the Productive Capacity of the Community’s Delivery Systems, and that Best Fit the Character/Setting of Place-Based Recreation

- Prioritize recreation projects that are mutually beneficial to public land resources and the surrounding community, that correspond to common visions and objectives, and sustain the distinctive desired recreational settings of the surrounding landscape.
- Prioritize recreation projects that secure start-up funds or project funds, including donations, in-kind goods or services, volunteer labor, or grants.
- Whenever possible, prioritize providing public land management career opportunities to youth and veterans.
- Whenever possible, prioritize using local businesses for recreation development projects.



Desolation Canyon, Price Field Office

Map of BLM-Utah's Special Recreation Management Areas



Special Recreation Management Areas by Field Office

Cedar City	
Three Peaks Recreational Area	6,633
Fillmore	
Antelope Springs Cave	230
Deep Creek Mountains	101,458
Gandy Mountain Caves	1,137
Little Sahara Recreation Site	62,761
Sheeprock/Tintic ORV Area	392,779
Swasey Mountain	33,506
Tabernacle Hill	3,702
Topaz Mountain	1,603
Wah Wah Mountains	5,975
Yuba Reservoir	2,149
Grand Staircase	
Escalante Canyons	513,806
Fiftymile Mountain	157,611
Highway 12 Corridor	69,512
Highway 89 Corridor	43,947
Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs	30,220
Paria/Hackberry	279,386
Kanab	
Escalante	22,795
Kanab Community	33,033
Moquith Mtn	14,945
North Fork Virgin River	1,080
Orderville Canyon	1,952
Paria Canyon	21,310
Moab	
Cameo Cliffs	15,642
Canyon Rims	101,546
Colorado Riverway	86,770
Dolores River Canyons	31,721
Labyrinth Rims/Gemini Bridges	299,971
Lower Gray Canyon	3,805
Sand Flats	6,249
South Moab	63,982
Two Rivers	28,787
Utah Rims	15,739

Monticello	
Beef Basin	17,201
Cedar Mesa	477,122
Dark Canyon	30,820
Indian Creek	89,566
San Juan River	10,824
Tank Bench	2,680
White Canyon	2,828
Price	
Cleveland Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry	2,774
Desolation Canyon	72,754
Labyrinth Canyon	37,203
Nine Mile Canyon	24,277
Range Creek	40,706
San Rafael Swell	1,158,067
Richfield	
Big Rocks	90
Capitol Reef Gateway	12,767
Dirty Devil/Robber's Roost	290,519
Factory Butte	24,355
Henry Mountains	532,602
Salt Lake	
Bonneville Salt Flats	30,239
Knolls ORV	40,362
North Deep Creek Mountains	25,672
Payson Motorcross Track	114
Pony Express Route	22,320
St. George	
Canaan Mountain	34,577
Deep Creek	11,378
LaVerkin Creek	21,909
Red Mountain	25,361
Sand Mountain	40,940
Vernal	
Blue Mountain	42,729
Browns Park	18,490
Fantasy Canyon	69
Nine Mile	44,168
Pelican Lake	1,014
Red Mountain-Dry Fork	24,259
White River	2,831

Field Office SRMAs Acres

Special Recreation Management Areas. A SRMA is an administrative unit where existing or proposed recreation opportunities and recreation setting characteristics are recognized for their unique value, importance, and/or distinctiveness, especially as compared to other areas used for recreation. A SRMA is managed to protect and enhance a targeted set of activities, experiences, benefits, and desired recreation setting characteristics.

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