

# Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes Draft Business Plan

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- ***What is the Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes Special Management Area?***

The Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes Special Management Area is located within the Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness and comprises three distinct areas: Paria Canyon Overnight (including Buckskin Gulch and Wire Pass), Coyote Buttes North (The Wave), and Coyote Buttes South. Because of the high demand to access these areas, all three require separate access permits so that natural resources and wilderness characteristics are protected. For day use access in Paria Canyon, Buckskin Gulch, and Wire Pass, visitors can use self-pay envelopes at the trailheads.

- ***Why are you preparing a Draft Business Plan?***

Since 2008, the BLM has experienced a 400 percent increase in the number of visitors seeking permits to access the Wave, as well as an increase in visitor demand for other areas in the SMA. With that higher demand comes an increase in associated management costs. Based on customer feedback, the BLM determined it was necessary to reevaluate our business plan in order to provide better customer service and to ensure the public continues to enjoy a pristine experience in this wilderness area.

As part of our commitment to our stakeholders, we are providing the Draft Business Plan to share proposed changes in our permit delivery system and fee structure. Under this public process, we welcome public input into our proposed changes. No final decision will be made until we have reviewed stakeholders' input.

- ***Why does the BLM limit visitor use in Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes?***

High visitor demand, combined with the fragile and delicate geologic features in the area, impacts the wilderness character of the area. Overcrowding can degrade an otherwise memorable hiking trip. The visitor use limits are intended to meet resource management goals while preserving a pristine wilderness experience for visitors to this unique and special place.

For this reason, 20 persons total are allowed into each Coyote Buttes North and Coyote Buttes South. This is the total from all trailheads/access points for each permit area. 20 people per day are also allowed access to camp overnight in Paria Canyon from all trailheads. There are no visitor use limits for day-use in Paria Canyon, Buckskin Gulch, and Wire Pass.

- ***Why are you switching the current online permitting system to an outside source?***

Recreation.gov offers one-stop travel planning for people interested in visiting public lands across the United States. By using Recreation.gov for issuing permits to the Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes SMA, the BLM will be able to better serve the public. Recreation.gov is better

equipped to keep up with changing technology and to deal with security concerns related to privacy information, since e-commerce is its specialty. Recreation.gov's call center will be available to help customers 24 hours a day, 7 days/week. Currently, a significant amount of BLM staff time and resources are being spent administering permits. This transition will free up BLM staff time to interact more one-on-one with the public and manage the public lands.

- *What is Recreation.gov?*

Recreation.gov is a website that is operated by Active Network (government contractor) and operates as a one-stop shopping center for a variety of recreation reservations and permits on public lands. There is a large amount of recreation information and help available at this site.

- *When would the new system go into effect?*

The transition to Recreation.gov is tentatively scheduled to go live in phases beginning April 1, 2016. The first phase will start with the advance online permits for Coyote Buttes North and South, and Paria Canyon Overnight. The "48-hour" online lottery and calendar for Coyote Buttes North and South will go live March 15, 2016.

- *How will the online permitting work?*

The new system will be similar to the old system. The biggest change will be the elimination of the live "walk-in" lottery in Kanab, Utah, for Coyote Buttes North and no over-the-counter purchases for Coyote Buttes South. The system will implement a "48-hour" online lottery for Coyote Buttes North, which includes the Wave.

Previously, 10 of the 20 daily permits were issued via an advanced online lottery and the remaining 10 daily permits were issued during a live "walk-in" lottery.

- *How do the semi-annual and 48-hour lotteries for Coyote Buttes North (including the Wave) work?*

Permits for Coyote Buttes North will be issued via two methods: a semi-annual lottery and a daily, 48-hour lottery.

For the semiannual lottery, the public will have two months to enter the lotteries that will run on December 1 and June 1 for the months of January 1-June 30 and July 1-December 31, respectively. Application periods will be October 1-November 30 for the December 1 lottery and April 1-May 31 for the June 1 lottery.

The main benefit of the semi-annual lottery will be the public will only have to apply twice a year to the lottery instead of monthly as under the current system.

The "48-hour" lottery will take the place of the current "walk-in" lottery and take place daily online. For example, if you want to access Coyote Buttes on May 15, you would apply for those permits on May 13. Successful applicants would be notified that night so permits could be picked up on May 14.

The benefits of a “48-hour” online lottery are:

- Users will not have to attend a live “walk-in” lottery in person.
- The system will be more equitable to the local communities surrounding Vermilion Cliffs National Monument.
- “Winners” of permits will still need to pick up permits at designated areas so there will be no loss of face-to-face contact with visitors accessing the SMA.
- Reduces staff time managing the walk-in lottery and shifts resources to “on-the-ground” management of the SMA, such as increased safety patrols.

- ***How will permits for Coyote Buttes South and Paria Canyon Overnight be issued?***

On December 1 and June 1, the six-month online calendars for Coyote Buttes South and Paria Canyon Overnight will be posted. These six-month periods of time will be January 1-June 30 and July 1-December 31, respectively. All available permits (20) for Paria Canyon Overnight will be posted at that time. Half of the available permits (10) for Coyote Buttes South will be posted. The remaining 10 permits would be made available 48 hours in advance of the entry date (e.g., permits for Thursday would be made available on Tuesday).

- ***What will permits cost?***

The proposed permit fee change for Paria Canyon Overnight is from \$5 per person per night to \$10 per person per night. The existing fee for Wire Pass, Buckskin Gulch, and Paria Canyon Day-Use is \$6 per person per day. The proposed fee would decrease to \$5 per person per day.

The proposed fee change for Coyote Buttes North and South is from \$7 and \$5 per person per day, respectively, to \$12 per person per day for each area. The camping fee at White House Campground would increase to \$10, up from \$5, per night per site.

A \$6 transaction fee would also be charged by Recreation.gov for each permit issued.

- ***Will permit holders still receive face-to-face safety and weather updates with BLM staff under the new system?***

Yes, in fact the new system should increase face-to-face time with staff. Users who obtain permits on Recreation.gov from March 15-November 15 will need to pick up their permits at a designated site, potentially increasing face-to-face time with permit holders to discuss safety and current conditions. Designated locations will be Kanab and St. George, Utah, Paria Contact Station, and Marble Canyon, Arizona. This will increase the face-to-face time BLM staff spends with visitors to educate them on safety and current conditions. Because of limited hours, permits obtained online between November 16-March 14 can be printed at home. However, visitors will still be able to get current condition information from the Kanab Visitor Center 5 days/week and the St. George Interagency Visitor Center 6 days/week.

Day-use permits for Paria Canyon, Wire Pass, and Buckskin Gulch and White House Campground, will continue to be self-pay at the trailhead.

Staff time administering permits could potentially decrease because Recreation.gov staff will handle phone call regarding permit issues and information on how to obtain permits. Staff time will also not be spent administering the “walk-in” lottery which takes at least 2-3 employees 4 hours/day, 7 days/week. This will free staff for additional face-to-face customer service on the ground and providing services on the public lands themselves, such as increased safety patrols.

- ***Is this the first permit lottery system on Recreation.gov?***

Recreation.gov has other “lotteries” that have been successful on their website, such as Half-Dome Cables in Yosemite National Park.

- ***What is Recreation.gov and who are their partners?***

Recreation.gov is your one-stop-resource for the recreation facilities and activities offered by the US Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation and USDA-Forest Service. Recreation.gov is managed under a contract by a federal interagency group called Recreation One-Stop. The current contractor is Active Network, which will create the database and produce reports needed to run the lottery. ActiveWorks is able to provide state-of-the-art technologies to handle the Coyote Buttes North lottery.

- ***Can I phone in my application?***

Yes. Phone applications will be accepted.

- ***What if I don't have the Internet?***

Most local libraries and the St. George Interagency Visitor Center have internet capabilities. Public internet kiosks are being planned for the Kanab Visitor Center.

- ***What are the benefits of these changes to me?***

The permit application site will be available 24/7. You will be able to secure reservations as soon as the season opens. Users will be able to change, cancel, and receive refunds for permits, subject to certain restrictions. Permits were non-refundable under the current system.

Your personal information will be more secure and private. You can look for available permits online any time of the day.

- ***How will I find the new online permit site?***

Go to [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) and in the “Location” field type in the site name (i.e. “Paria Canyon Overnight,” “Coyote Buttes South,” or “Coyote Buttes North”), then search. Each of these areas within the SMA will be separate facilities on recreation.gov.

- ***What if I have problems or questions when I'm entering my application?***

A call center is available to assist you 24/7. Helpful information will be posted at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) as you fill out your application.

- ***How reliable is this new program?***

Recreation.gov runs the program for the Half Dome Cables and Mount Whitney lottery systems. Those areas have higher permit levels and a higher number of applications. It works well. Recreation.gov reserves campgrounds, cabins, and tour centers and has done so throughout the country for many years.

- ***Why is the BLM transitioning online permits to Recreation.gov?***

As a federal agency, we are moving to comply with Presidential direction for providing online recreation services. By transitioning to this new system we also use the latest technology to reduce paper handling, increase accuracy and improve privacy information protection. This will also reduce BLM staff time spends administering permits and increase time we spend managing public lands. Users will be able to cancel, change, and receive refunds for permits. BLM is unable to accommodate those requests under the current permit system.

- ***How will Recreation.gov know about hiking conditions and provide the information I may need for my trip?***

Recreation.gov already has “alert notices” it uses to tell people about changing conditions. BLM staff will be able to create and send these safety alert notices through the Recreation.gov system for Coyote Buttes and Paria Canyon. You’ll get the notices by email.

You will still be able to call BLM offices in Kanab or St. George to get the latest hiking conditions.

- ***Who gets the money?***

The \$6 transaction fee to purchase permits is collected by Recreation One-Stop and then distributed to Active Network for their operational costs to administer Recreation.gov. Recreation permit fees are retained by the BLM to be used for the management of the Paria Canyon-Coyote Buttes SMA.

- ***Can I still call the BLM offices that I have worked with before?***

Yes, we will still be here and able to help with your questions about safety, current hiking conditions, and interpretive information; however, we can’t make permit applications for you. You will have to do that yourself, online at: [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). The St. George Interagency Visitor Center does offer two computer kiosks that the public can use to apply for permits on recreation.gov. Kiosks at other locations could be proposed in the future for public convenience.