

**COLORADO RECREATION RESOURCE ADVISORY
FEDERAL LANDS RECREATION ENHANCEMENT ACT
NEW FEE OR FEE CHANGE
PROPOSAL FORM**

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Name of Project Area/Site: **Zapata Falls Campground**

Project Contact Person: **Sean Noonan**

Position Title & Phone #: **Outdoor Recreation Planner, 719-655-6136**

County: **Alamosa**

Congressional District: **3**

BLM Field Office: **La Jara Field Office**

Site Type: **Campground**

Capacity: **25 Sites** Season of Use: **March through November**

Fee Type: Standard Amenity___ Expanded Amenity **X**___ Special Rec. Permit___

Proposed Action: New fee **X**___ Change of fee___

Existing Fee: **\$ 0**

Proposed Fee: **\$ 11/20**

Date of last fee increase: **N/A**

Summary of **benefits** the public receives or will receive:

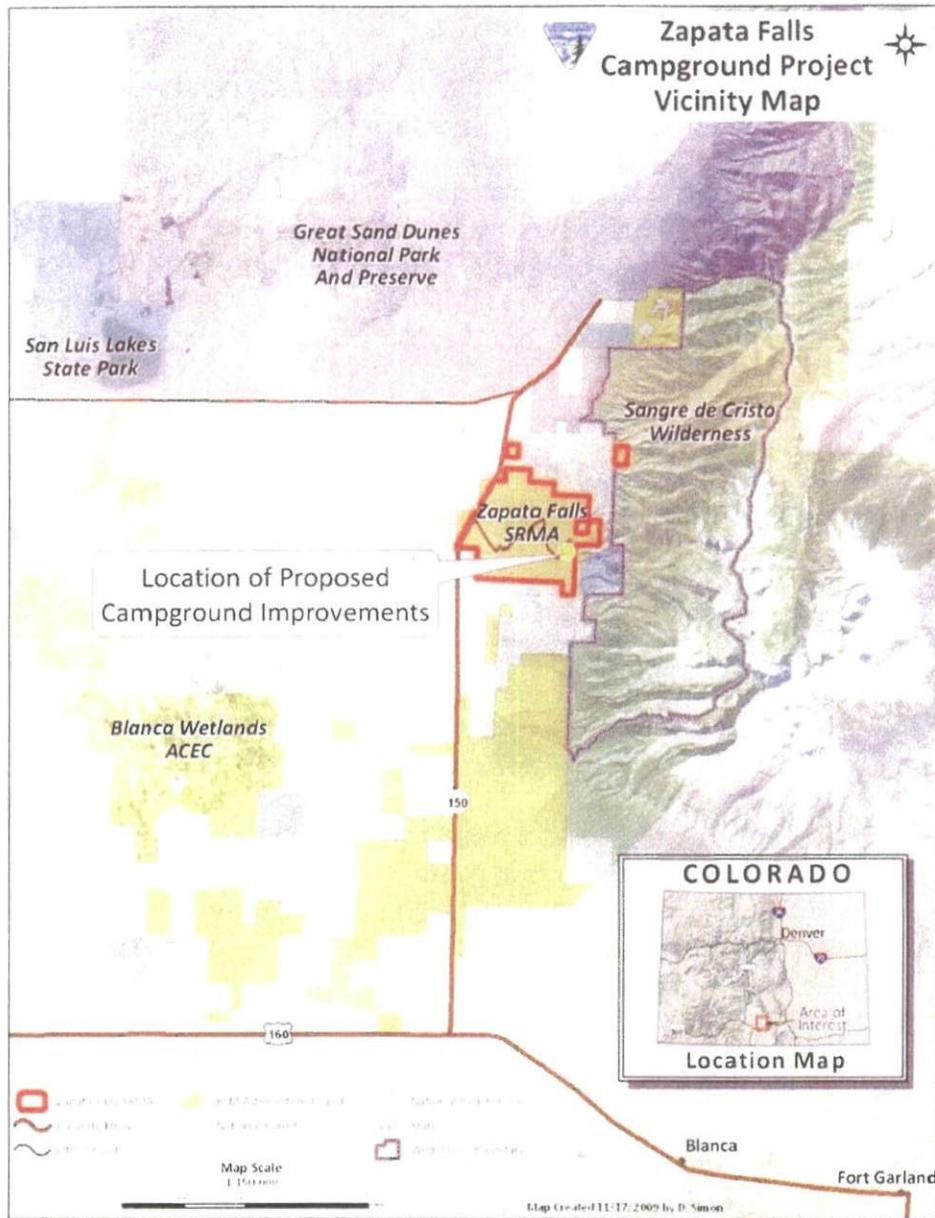
- **Increased safety and law enforcement patrols.**
- **Improved sanitation.**
- **Increased Accessibility and reduction of barriers.**
- **Improved routine and annual maintenance.**
- **Expanded Interpretation program.**
- **Enhanced setting for recreation experiences and beneficial outcomes-the opportunity for overnight camping in what previously was a day-use area only.**

Facilities/Amenities Checklist (check all that apply, list each site separately):

Site Name:___

1. **X** Designated developed parking
2. **X** Permanent toilet facility: ___ Flush **X** Vault
3. **X** Permanent trash receptacle
4. **X** Interpretive sign, exhibit or kiosk
5. **X** Picnic tables
6. **X** Security services

Map (HIRA's show boundaries and ID amenities):



Setting & General Description (include description of the site, natural resources/features, scenic values, recreational attractions, amenities, current/projected visitation, etc.):

Zapata Falls campground is located within the Zapata Falls Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), a destination for visitors to Zapata Falls managed by the La Jara Field Office and located near Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve along the Sangre de Cristo mountain range in the San Luis Valley of south-central Colorado, and is the result of an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project begun in 2010. As of September 2010, the campground is currently under

construction. The new campground is expected to be completed around June of 2011 and will consist of 25 sites (with tent pads, fire rings and tables), including a tent site loop, an RV loop, a camp host site, a group site, information and interpretation kiosks, a water system, 2 vault toilets, trash service, and connectivity to a local trail system and picnic area.

The Record of Decision for the approved San Luis Resource Area Management Plan (RMP) was signed by the Associate State Director of the BLM on December 18, 1991. The approved RMP included a land use allocation decision that designated the Zapata Falls SRMA (6,302 acres) to be managed for intensive recreation. The Zapata Falls SRMA is located at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain range in southern Colorado about five miles south of Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. Public access to Zapata Falls and the development of the parking and day use areas on public lands occurred in the 1990's and was a cooperative effort that involved fourteen agencies. The actual waterfall is located on State Land Board lands, which are in the process of being transferred to BLM in a land trade with the Colorado State Land Board.

Based on data collected in 2010, approximately 104,000 people visited Zapata Falls SRMA. Though Zapata Falls is a BLM recreation site, visitation to the SRMA is strongly influenced by Great Sand Dunes NP, which heavily markets Zapata Falls to its visitors almost as an extension of the Park itself. Though the Park, due to its proximity and marketing strategy, is responsible for much of the visitation to Zapata Falls, the area is popular in general as a destination because of the nearly year-round easily accessible, low-elevation waterfall, which is also located along the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway.

Increased visitation to Zapata Falls is a trend that is expected to continue due to increased visitation to Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (which previously was a National Monument), increasing participation in driving for pleasure and sightseeing, the promotion of Zapata Falls as a heritage tourism destination by the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) (and by association promotion by CTO as part of the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway), and increasing population projections for the country as a whole, the West, and especially Colorado in the years ahead. Increased use of age-related (Golden Age or America the Beautiful-Senior) passes is also expected as baby-boomers continue to reach eligibility requirements.

NRHP Eligibility (Cabins/Structures): Archeologist's concurrence: Y N
Comments: Archaeological and Heritage Program assessment conducted in 2009.

2. CURRENT AND PROJECTED REVENUES and ANNUAL OPERATION & MAINTENANCE COSTS

Revenues: Projected annual revenue (based on approval of the proposed fee and an assumption of when the CG is actually completed, and based on current visitor use) at Zapata Falls CG is expected to be around \$10,000 in FY11.

Operations & Maintenance: Fee expenditures for O&M utilizing fee revenues are expected to be around \$3,475 in FY11 - \$500 for supplies (including water system compliance and testing expenses), \$1,000 for water hauling for the CG cistern water system, \$275 for CG maintenance worker salary for fee collections, \$200 for maintenance equipment, and \$1,500 for toilet pumping. A significant amount of operations and maintenance costs will be covered by regular appropriated funds (especially by a one-time add on of \$45,000 to the recreation budget to finish the campground development and provide for all operations and maintenance expenses in the absence of fees), and through the unique Service First agreement between the BLM San Luis Resource Area and the Rio Grande National Forest, and with a cooperative maintenance and law enforcement agreement with Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. Projected routine annual maintenance and operations expenses are expected to be similar to Penitente Canyon campground for FY 11, with the additional expense of hauling water for a cistern system (as opposed to a well).

3. COST OF BACKLOG WORK NEEDS:

Roads/Parking Areas:	\$
Building/Facilities:	\$
Water/Waste water Systems:	\$20,000
Associated Trails:	\$6,000
Signs:	\$1,000
Other (list): Campsite Rehab	\$
Total:	\$27,000

4. FEE COLLECTION METHOD AND ESTIMATED FEE COLLECTION COSTS

Method: On-site self pay station with Campground maintenance worker compliance checks. A campground host site is part of the site plan and a host could assist or assume those duties too.

Costs: Salary of CG Maintenance worker, who collects fees weekly as part of other maintenance duties. Fee collection for a GS-4 Maintenance worker at \$18.25 x 30min./wk for approx. 30 weeks= \$275. (Note: Total cost of a seasonal CG maintenance worker =\$16,500.

5. FEE DETERMINATION PROCESS SUMMARY

Fair Market Value Comparison (compare similar fees at other FS, state, federal, or private recreation sites in the area with similar facilities & services):

Facility type(s): Public Lands-style Developed Campgrounds and one private campground/RV park.

Number of facilities compared: 30+

Proximity to project area: Throughout the San Luis Valley and within 50 miles outside of the Valley.

Price range:

- **Rio Grande National Forest**: \$5-\$16 for individual sites and \$26-\$32 for group sites (similar to other National Forest and Field Office campgrounds in surrounding areas and based on varying services and amenities).
- **Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve**: \$14 for individual sites and \$65-\$80 for group sites, plus park entrance fees (similar to other National Park system campgrounds in surrounding areas).
- **San Luis Lake State Park**: \$20/night for all campsites.
- **Fun Valley RV Camping**: \$24.50/night for 2 people. (Private CG's in the San Luis Valley are typically RV campgrounds with full hook-ups).

Selected fee and method: Increase from \$0 to \$11/night per individual site and \$0 to \$20/night per group site.

6. PLANNED USE OF FEES RETURNED TO SITE (list by priority; include daily O&M if appropriate; add to list if appropriate)

1. Improve public safety through increased visitor services and Law Enforcement and security patrols.
2. Improve routine and annual operations and maintenance with increased patrols, equipment and supplies (this includes providing water to the cistern system).
3. Expand interpretation of cultural and natural history –this includes signs, kiosks, brochures, maps, etc.
4. Improve visitor experiences by being responsive to customer desired enhancements and aesthetic improvements to the campground (includes connecting the new campground to the surrounding trail system).

7. CUSTOMER/PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MECHANISM TYPES

- Site Monitoring – closed for CG construction
- Customer Survey Card – at Field Offices
- Comment Log / Cabin Guest Book – at Field Offices
- Newspaper Articles
- Website Listing
- E-mails
- Direct Mail
- Personal Contacts
- On-site Posting – closed for CG construction
- Other (list):

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION RESULTS

Campground visitor contacts have been documented at Penitente Canyon CG (BLM's only other developed campground in the San Luis Valley) since June, 2009. To date, all fee-paying visitors to that campground that provided comments about the proposed fee increase there have expressed understanding and the need for a fee increase in order to provide high quality customer desired visitor services.

A news release was submitted to local area papers, Congressional staffs, Saguache and Alamosa County Commissioners, and internally to San Luis Valley Public Lands Center employees on or before September 21, 2010. The same information was posted at information kiosks at the campground along with customer comment cards. The complete proposal will also be posted to the BLM website on or about October 1, 2010. Combined with the 5 documented Penitente Canyon campground visitor contacts, only one other comment has been received at this time, which appeared to be the result of a frustration with out of state campground hosts (presumably in concessionaire campgrounds), which exist at some locations on the neighboring Rio Grande National Forest.

9. ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS

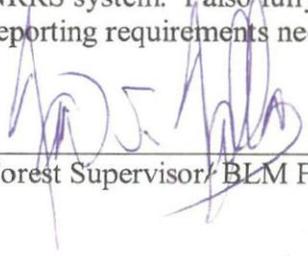
List and reference additional information (documents) that can be provided upon request to document this project proposal and the public response.

Zapata Falls SRMA Recreation Area Management Plan

10. PROJECT SUBMITTAL & CERTIFICATION

Project Submittal:

This recreation site is already, or being submitted for inclusion as, a fee site under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA). This proposal has been reviewed by representatives on the unit. I understand that any reservations must be made through the NRRS system. I also fully understand and agree to comply with the accounting and reporting requirements necessary to participate in the fee program.



Forest Supervisor/ BLM Field Manager

11/09/2010
Date

Project Certification:

This recreation site is already, or is now forwarded as, a fee site and the proposed fee schedule is forwarded to the RRAC for their review under REA.



Recreation Fee Board Chair

11/7/2011
Date

BLM Washington Office Review Y N

RRAC Project Recommendation:

This site and proposed fee schedule is ___ / is not ___ recommended as a fee site.
This recreation site is already a fee site and the proposed fee schedule is ___ / is not ___ recommended to the Secretary for acceptance under REA.

Colorado Recreation RAC Chair

Date

Project Acceptance:

This site and proposed fee schedule is ___ / is not ___ accepted as, a fee site.
This recreation site is already a fee site and the proposed fee schedule is ___ / is not ___ accepted by the Secretary under REA.

Regional Forester/BLM State Director

Date