



# Skinny Dipper Hot Springs

## KEY FACTS

<http://on.doi.gov/1Ua25mz>

### Location and History

- Skinny Dipper Hot Springs is located about four miles east of Banks, ID, and approximately 45 miles north of Boise. The unauthorized pools are situated about 800 feet north (and above) Highway 17 and the Payette River.
- Unauthorized piping and water retention structures began to appear at Skinny Dipper in the early 1990s. Because they were not authorized, the structures constitute a trespass on public lands.
- The resource management plan for the area (Cascade RMP, 1988) requires abatement of trespasses and rehabilitation of the land and resources damaged by the unauthorized use.
- This unauthorized development of the site has led to **public health and safety concerns and ongoing damage to environmental resources**.
  - State health officials have expressed concern about sewage/human waste contamination at the site, in the absence of any sanitary toilet facilities.
  - The proximity of the South Fork Payette River raises concerns about water quality.
  - Use of an unauthorized trail to access the soaking pools has damaged vegetation.
- Under law and regulations, these remain the BLM's responsibility to address.
- In addition to resource impacts, illegal or unsafe activities at the site continue to pose serious threats to public safety and health.
- Responsible users have cooperated in attempts to address these issues during periods when the site was under nighttime closure (sunset to sunrise), but resource damage and sanitation concerns remain, regardless of any improvements in the safety situation.
- The BLM remains responsible for all activities and resource conditions on these lands, which are remote and can therefore be a challenge to manage.
- At the beginning of the Environmental Assessment process (during scoping, 2013) and again after the recent decision to close and rehabilitate the site (May/June 2015), the BLM has discussed proposed alternatives with users who would like to keep the site open and others interested in public land access in general.

## Appeal and Denial of Request for Stay

- A formal appeal of the decision to temporarily close and rehabilitate Skinny Dipper Hot Springs is still pending with the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). It could take months or years for them to render a legal decision.
- A request for a stay of the original closure decision was filed with the IBLA. On July 2, 2015, IBLA denied the stay, citing the appellants' inability to "demonstrate that the public interest favors granting the stay ... We therefore find BLM's conclusion that the public interest in recreation is outweighed by the public interest in health and safety that would be served by closing the Springs to be reasonable and supported by the record."

## Current Management

- BLM recognizes the impact to those who enjoy recreating at these popular hot springs and the value of providing public access for multiple uses of public lands.
- Safety of the public, first responders, law enforcement officials, and BLM employees continues to be the first and over-arching priority.
- In order to address the public health and safety issues at Skinny Dipper, as well as the unauthorized structures and associated resource damage, the BLM must take action.

## Short-Term Plans

- As of June 21, 2016, BLM has published a Federal Register Notice formalizing the decision to close Skinny Dipper Hot Springs for five years from the date of publication.
- BLM will begin enforcing that closure immediately and issuing citations accordingly.
- Removal of the unauthorized structures will be initiated in the near future. This will begin with dismantling the piping infrastructure, followed by pool removal and trail rehabilitation.

## Proposals for Management

- BLM has yet to receive a complete proposal from an individual or group regarding alternative management options of the area for continued recreational use.
- Any proposal for managing the site must be thorough and well thought-out, must address resource and public health and safety issues identified in the Environmental Assessment, and must demonstrate a long-term commitment to the site in order to be considered.
- The area cannot re-open until all these issues are addressed and the trespass is resolved.
- If a complete proposal is received for managing the site, BLM will review and evaluate the proposal, including conducting additional environmental analysis, to include public participation under the National Environmental Policy Act.