

Business Plan

Birch Creek Campground

August 2012 - Updated February 2013

Area Description:

Birch Creek Campground is managed by the Bureau of Land Management in the Idaho Falls District Upper Snake Field Office. The campground is located in Clark County Idaho and is approximately 75 miles northwest of Idaho Falls, Idaho and 86 miles south of Salmon, Idaho. There are approximately 60 campsites and four large identified group sites that are dispersed along a 5.5 mile stretch of Birch Creek. Approximately one-third of the campsites have picnic tables and fire rings. There are three restroom facilities throughout the campground. The campground is adjacent to Highway 28 and is accessed by one of the three entrances. The BLM does not provide electricity or water at the individual campsites and there is no RV dump station or refuse collection. The host site has hook-ups. The BLM also allows visitors to use a water pump adjacent to the host site to fill their RV tanks. See Table 1 for a summary of Birch Creek Campground Amenities.

Table 1. Birch Creek Campground Amenities

Birch Creek Campground Amenities	Required for Expanded Amenity Developed Campground Classification
Tent or Trailer Space	Yes
Picnic Tables	Yes
Drinking Water	Yes
Access Roads	Yes
Collection of fee/donation by BLM employee	Yes
Reasonable visitor protection/Security services (e.g., host presence and fee tubes)	Yes
Toilet Facilities	Yes
Campfire rings	Yes

The BLM provides opportunities to camp adjacent to the popular Birch Creek fishing area. Visitors camping at Birch Creek also recreate with motorized vehicles on adjacent BLM and Forest Service managed lands. The campground is fairly remote and allows visitors to enjoy the scenery of the Lemhi Mountain range.

The BLM is proposing a new group site reservation fee that would go into effect in the fall of 2013. This fee proposal is classified as an expanded amenity fee under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). This fee would only apply to visitors wanting to reserve a group site. The BLM has received up to 12-15 requests on an annual basis to reserve group sites at Birch Creek Campground for exclusive use. Some of the group sites are located adjacent to accessible restroom facilities, which is the primary reason visitors would like to reserve the sites. Other groups enjoy camping in the group sites and want to reserve them for busy holiday weekends or various special occasions.

The contact person for this new fee proposal is Shannon Bassista, Outdoor Recreation Planner, 208-524-7552, sbassista@blm.gov.



Large Group at Birch Creek Campground



Large Group Site



Sign Reflecting Large Group Site

Visitor Demographics (Market)

The majority of visitors staying at Birch Creek Campground are from Eastern Idaho. Visitors are likely to be from towns/cities such as Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Blackfoot, Rigby, Rexburg, Mudlake, and Salmon, Idaho. A very small percentage of visitors are from other states such as Utah and Montana.

The BLM is proposing a fee to reserve group sites. Visitors would not have to pay a fee if a reservation was not desired. This proposal is to accommodate individuals who would like ensure exclusive access to a group site for their family and friends. Due to the size of Birch Creek Campground, a reservation system would not displace other campers. Visitors would still be allowed to camp in the group sites without a reservation, but reservations will be posted at least 24 hours in advance. Based on these factors mentioned above, visitors' willingness to pay would be extremely high.

Recreation Use

Birch Creek Campground is open year-round with the majority of use from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Camping at this site is a more primitive experience and does not cater to visitors seeking amenities such as full hook-ups. On an annual basis, approximately 40,000 visitors camp at Birch Creek Campground and/or utilize the resources available adjacent to the campground. Many of the campers use Birch Creek Campground as a base camp to fish and ride motorized vehicles on public lands. The BLM does not see future visitor use deviating significantly from the current visitor use numbers with the implementation of a reservation system.

Financial Analysis

The BLM does not charge fees to camp at Birch Creek Campground. Donation tubes collect approximately \$700 annually. It is anticipated that revenues generated from a new group site reservation fee could total anywhere between \$400 up to \$2,000 on an annual basis. That calculation is based on the proposed **\$35 per night** reservation fee for group sites. The proposed reservation fee would allow exclusive use to the site for each night visitors would like to reserve the site and allowing the BLM a mechanism and way to enforce this right. Table 2 outlines the annual costs of operating the campground.

Table 2. Annual Birch Creek Campground Operation Costs

Item	Cost
Volunteer Campground Host Reimbursement	\$2,500
Gas	\$ 500
Maintenance Supplies	\$ 600

Portable Toilet Contracts	\$1,500
Host Pumping	\$ 240
Repair Costs	\$ 700
Total Cost of Operation	\$6,040

BLM staff travel to Birch Creek at least once per week to provide supplies to the hosts and collect donations. The group site would only be reserved through the Eastern Idaho Visitor Information Center (EIVIC) collections officer. Visitors would pay when they made the reservation at the EIVIC. Reservations would be required at least 24 hours in advance. The host(s) and/or BLM field staff would not collect fees generated from group site reservations.

The anticipated start-up cost for implementing the new group site reservation fee would include \$2,000 for group site reservation signing. This cost would include updating 3 large kiosk signs and purchasing official BLM reservation signs for the individual group sites. Labor costs associated with reserving the group sites is minimal and would be included as a future job duty for the Visitor Information Assistant at the EIVIC. The volunteer campground host would be responsible for reservation signing the majority of the time.

Fair Market Value Assessment

In the Idaho Falls District, there are not many BLM-managed large group sites that visitors can reserve for camping. Many campgrounds can accommodate larger groups but they are considered double Recreational Vehicle (RV) sites and would not allow for the same vehicle arrangements available at the large group sites at Birch Creek Campground. Kelly Island Campground group site is comparable to Birch Creek Campground in that both sites have amenities but lack electrical hook-ups. This is why the proposed group site fee at Birch Creek Campground is identical to Kelly Island Campground. See Table 3 for a Fair Market Value Assessment.

Table 3. Fair Market Value Assessment

Site	Type of Service	Fees Collected Per Night
Kelly Island Campground	Group Site Reservation – no amenities	\$35 dollars per night
Egin Lakes Campground	Double Sites – electric hook-ups	\$60 per night
Joe T. Fallini Recreation Site	Double Sites – Electric hook-up	\$16 per night plus \$4 for each power pedestal used

Rationale for New Fees

Based on requests at the beginning of 2012 for group site reservations at Birch Creek Campground, the BLM believes there is a need to provide this service. Reservation requests are usually made during busy holiday weekends or when people are trying to accommodate large groups (e.g., family reunions, scouting events, etc.), which could not fit into other campsites. A group site reservation fee would benefit the public by allowing individuals the opportunity to have exclusive access to a large group site and providing them with security knowing their reservation would be honored. Large groups that would normally not fit into the more prevalent smaller campsites could now be accommodated. Additionally, fees collected from the reservation service would directly be used to help supplement the costs associated with maintaining the facilities and keeping the sites clean.

Objectives for Use of Fee Receipts

As documented in Table 2, the annual cost of maintaining Birch Creek Campground is approximately \$6,000. The money collected from the reservation fees would be applied directly towards the maintenance of the campground and its facilities. It is not anticipated the BLM would collect more money in fees than what is spent to maintain the campground.

Social/Economic Impacts

There would be no social/economic impacts by this fee proposal. Only visitors interested in ensuring a large group site would be reserved would be impacted. There would still be no fee to camp at Birch Creek; those willing to gamble on a group site, or are just interested in camping in one of the other sites, would not pay a fee. Those that pay the fee are willing to in exchange for the reservation benefits they receive.

Visitor Feedback Mechanisms

Visitors are able to provide feedback by phone, email, or written correspondence. An annual letter would be sent to visitors who reserved the group site to inform them of how their money was, or will be spent. Completed projects at Birch Creek Campground would be advertised on the BLM Upper Snake Website.

Public Participation

BLM Public Affairs will notify the press of the proposed group site reservation fee. Legal notices in multiple newspapers (Idaho Falls, Rexburg, and Salmon, Idaho) were published on August 23, 2012. Signs were posted to advertise the proposed group site fee at Birch Creek Campground. The BLM Upper Snake website will post the press release that advertised the proposed group site reservation fee. A federal register notice will be published six months prior to implementing a group site reservation fee.

Visitors who requested reservations have been notified of this proposed reservation system and how to submit their comments. The updates to the business plan are posted on the BLM website and press releases have been submitted. All interested publics have been informed of the updates to the business plan and signs have been posted on-site to announce the business plan updates.