

AMENDMENT TO
VALLEY OF FIRES
RECREATION AREA
MANAGEMENT PLAN

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This amendment will be supplemental to the Valley of Fires Recreation Area Management Plan of 1990. The amendment is meant to be a living document and may be amended at any time as needed.

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INTRODUCTION

The Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) was developed in coordination with Texas Technological University Department of Park Administration and Landscape Architecture. The plan was put into action on February 28, 1990. Since that time planned development has occurred using the text as a guideline for the management plan. Due to changes in philosophy and approved actions the plan is in need of revision. The following document will serve as an amendment to the existing management plan.

BACKGROUND

The original RAMP was developed after the New Mexico State Parks decided they would no longer use the area as stated in the Recreation for Public Purposes Agreement. The lands included in the state park were Quit Claimed to the Bureau of Land Management in the fall of 1989. The area was renamed the Valley of Fires Recreation Area. Development has taken place along the guidelines of the RAMP.

Developments within the recreation area under the existing management plan:

1. Upgraded and moved the pay station at the front section of the recreation area.
2. Regraded and improved existing camping and pull through spurs.
3. Redesigned the parallel camping spurs in the middle of the recreation area to pull in spurs.
4. Redesigned and Replaced the Dump station to the middle of the recreation area.
5. Replaced the water lines within the front and middle section of the recreation area, Sites number 3 to 16.
6. Replaced water lines to the comfort station and visitor information/maintenance building..
7. Installed electric to sites number 3 to 16.
8. Rebuilt roof on the group shelter. This included sheeting on the sides of the shelter, new ceiling, replacing sections of the roof and coating the roof.
9. Constructed the campground host site.
10. Stuccoed inside of group shelter.
11. Re-stuccoed the comfort station..
12. Stuccoed the campground host site.
13. Constructed the visitor contact station/maintenance building.
14. Provided accessibility to the Visitor Contact Station.
15. Constructed wind wing walls and shade shelter for the comfort station.
16. Provided accessibility to the outside of the comfort station.
17. Redesigned inside of comfort station for accessibility.
18. Removed existing playground equipment and dilapidated maintenance trailer.
19. Placed underground water tanks at the hill top.
20. Constructed bulletin board at comfort station.
21. Landscaping around comfort station.
22. Hill top overlook , semi developed trail and parking area.
23. Public Lands Information Center (SNCHA)

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

AND DECISION MAKING

The organization structure will be left to the Area Manager's discretion, with oversight by the District Manager.

Staffing, Skills and Task Responsibilities:

Presently the area is managed by a Park Manager, and a Maintenance Worker. The recreation area is supervised by a Multi Resource Team Leader. The lead outdoor recreation planner has responsibility for program direction, project coordination and monitoring of work activities of the recreation area staff. Volunteers are presently used as campground hosts and for other duties within the recreation area. The Summer Youth Program usually provides two individuals for short periods during the summer.

Additional Staff:

If money allows, two seasonal or Student Conservation Employees would be hired.

Volunteerism is encouraged.

Training:

Training is important to maintain the professionalism of the employees working within at the Recreation Area.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

Management Principals

The Valley of Fires Recreation Area would be managed to protect natural and cultural resources and allow the public to use the area for recreation without degrading the resources. The area would be used as a focal point for regional cave management and the Carrizozo Malpais Wilderness Study Area or wilderness if the area is designated.

Facilities would be limited to the minimum necessary to provide a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors at the recreation area. Facilities would include a modern campground, group and individual

picnic facilities, flush toilets interpretive hiking trails and overlooks. Facilities would meet the architectural barriers act standards and the uniform federal accessibility standards.

This amendment to the current RAMP will be used as a tool to guide the management of the recreation area as well as protect the resources within this part of the Resource Area.

Visitor statistics available for the area show an increase in visitation since the BLM started management of the area. The area shows high camping and day use, from April - October. The visitor statistics are as follows:

YEAR	NUMBER OF VISITORS	FEEES COLLECTED	BOOK STORE SALES
*1991	52,000	\$17,500	
1992	69,000	\$20,000	
**1993	85,000	\$21,000	\$11,000
1994	103,000	\$23,000	\$21,000
1995	150,000	\$28,000	\$24,000

*First year for BLM management of the recreation area.

** First full year Public Lands Information Center open.

PROJECT PLANNING

All project proposals would be developed in accordance with BLM Manual Handbook H-1740-1. This would include the preparation of

project files. All Valley of Fires project files and planning would be kept in Central Files. The District Project Planning Checklist shall be used for all projects within the Recreation Area.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

This section describes individual actions which would form the amendment to the RAMP. The information presented identifies the goals and objectives of the area, management prescriptions and resulting actions applied to specific areas.

Land Ownership

Objective: The BLM is proposing to acquire lands immediately adjacent to the east boundary.

Present Situation: The area contains approximately 462.5 acres of BLM administered land. The east boundary is extremely close to major facilities such as the visitor contact station, comfort station and the campground road at the southern portion of the area.

Management Prescription: Acquire approximately 493 acres of private lands on the eastern portion of the recreation area.

Management Actions: Propose this action through the Roswell Resource Management Plan. Use land and water conservation funds, BLM funding or land exchanges to accomplish this activity.

Scenic Quality

Objective: Maintain the scenic quality of the area.

Present Situation: The scenic quality on the kipuka is dominated by the developed campground. The majority of the buildings are located on the eastern slope of the Kipuka which tend to subdue their presence from the rest of the area. The existing picnic shelter is on the escarpment of the kipuka but blends into the landscape due to the color of the structure. The lava portion of the area is relatively

pristine with the exception of a self guided interpretive trail which winds its way through the lava for three quarters of a mile.

Management Prescription: The Visual Resource Management prescriptions for the Kipuka portion of the Recreation Area are Class III. The Carrizozo Lava Flow and Little Black Peak WSA are Class I. No further degradation of scenic quality will be allowed. Protection of the areas scenic quality will be one of the major considerations in facility design and placement.

Management Actions: Specifications for each proposed facility will include visual consideration relating to size, shape, use of materials, color and basic harmony with the setting. A contrast rating work sheet would be completed during the design phase of any project. The work sheet will be placed in the project file.

Prehistoric and Historic Sites

Objective: Protect all Prehistoric, Historic artifacts and historic structures found within the recreation area.

Present situation: Very little historic or prehistoric features have been located within the area. Some small lithic scatters have been found at the southern end of the Kipuka.

Management Prescriptions: Cultural resource inventories will be accomplished by a BLM Archaeologist prior to any surface disturbing activities within the recreation area boundary.

Management Actions: A cultural resource intensive (Class III) survey of the entire Kipuka would be performed by a BLM archaeologist. If an entire Class III inventory is not possible areas will be surveyed on an as needed basis. If necessary, sites would be tested and inventoried to determine their significance. Copies of site forms and cultural resource reports would be placed in the project file.

Wildlife

Objective: Emphasize wildlife viewing within the area.

Present Situation: The area has a variety of wildlife which are of interest to the general public. Song birds are very common within the area. reptiles such as black (melanistic) lizards and dark phased snakes are common within the area.

Management Prescriptions: Promote habitat improvement projects that would enhance the abundance and maintain species diversity of wildlife within the area.

Management Actions: A BLM Wildlife Biologist would participate in the planning of all facilities. All parties would work closely with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to assist in wildlife management. A bird identification list would be developed for the visiting public. The area is closed to hunting for the protection of visitors.

Road Conditions

Objective: Provide and maintain a safe and efficient road system to meet visitor and administrative needs, while considering costs and minimizing adverse visual impacts.

Present Situation: There is approximately one mile of gravel surface roads, parking areas and camping spurs within the area.

Management Prescription: Evaluate road maintenance to determine the most cost effective way to meet objectives. Develop a multi-year ISTEA or Federal Land Highway funding proposal to update the road system to an asphalt surface. All road manipulation shall be coordinated through the ADM for Operations in the Roswell District Office.

Management Actions: If the road remains a gravel surface, the road surface should be re-graveled, and crowned (to 2%) and ditched through out the area. A 24' travel surface should be attained through out the area where there is two way traffic. In one way

traffic areas and camping spurs a 12' travel surface should be maintained. The roads and camping spaces should not be flat-bladed because the water will not drain from the road surface. Yearly or semi annual blading would be necessary to keep the graveled roads in good condition. Additional gravel should be placed on the road surface to keep the dust to a minimum. A low water (concrete or asphalt) crossing or culvert may be necessary on the southern portion of the existing road to prevent road surface erosion.

If there is an opportunity to asphalt the surface roads and parking spurs within the area, this should be a top priority. Low concrete bumpers should be used through the area to deter off road vehicle parking. The large volcanic boulders should be removed from the edges of the roads and replaced with concrete bollards or like materials.

Trails

Objective: Provide accessible trails for people to traverse the Malpais and visit various portions of the area.

Present situation: There are only two trails within the area. One trail starts at the group shelter and traverses the escarpment of the kipuka to the lava flow. The trail traverses the lava flow for 3/4 of a mile and loops back to the escarpment. A second trail starts at the base of a hill in the middle of the recreation area and traverses the hill until it reaches the top. Neither of the two trails are accessible to disabled persons.

Management Prescription: Develop trails within the recreation area which are accessible to people with disabilities. Potential trails developed in the WSA could be developed using Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review (H8550-1). If the area is designated wilderness, BLM wilderness guidelines would be used at that time.

Management Actions: Work with the NMSHTD to make a portion of the interpretive trail accessible to people with disabilities. A ramada would be constructed at the terminus of the accessible portion of the interpretive trail and would provide shade for visitors. Accessible interpretive displays will be placed under or next to the ramada. If funding allows reconstruct the entire lava interpretive

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trail for accessibility. Construct a trail to the south portion of the recreation area. Mark a trail to the historic structure (ranch house) in the north of the recreation area. Mark a loop trail which would extend 4 miles into the lava. Develop hiking trails from the proposed Highway 380 interpretive turnouts into the lava.

Wilderness

Objective: Manage the Little Black Peak and the Carrizozo Lava Flow wilderness study areas in accordance with BLM Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review. If the areas become wilderness manage the areas as wilderness.

Present Situation: The lava areas outside the recreation area to the west, north and south are presently under wilderness study status.

Management Prescriptions: Do not place structures in the WSA's that would degrade the wilderness character of the area. Under the WSA status no alteration of wilderness values would be allowed which would prevent congress from making a decision on the wilderness status of the area. Any actions that take place within the recreation area should not be visually obtrusive from the WSA's.

Management Actions: Develop minimal facilities and trails that would blend into the wilderness character of the area. Develop trails from the proposed highway 380 turnouts into the WSA's

Cave Management

Objective: Use the recreation area as a base of operation to manage caves within the general area.

Present Situation: Some of the federal caves in the general area are managed by the staff at the recreation area.

Management Prescriptions: Use recreation area staff to issue permits, monitor and manage the caves within the general area.

Management Actions: Monitor Crockett, Tres Ninos, Fort Stanton and other caves within driving distance of the recreation area.

Grounds Maintenance

Objective: Provide clean, safe , attractive facilities for visitor use and enjoyment.

Present Situation: The area is free of trash and is maintained to contemporary park standards. Trash cans are located at convenient locations within the recreation area.

Management Prescriptions: Roads, trails and day use areas would be kept free of trash according to a schedule to meet site demand.

Management Actions: Trash would be collected on an as needed basis from trash cans within the area. As a labor and materials (trash bags) saving device three small dumpsters could be provided within the recreation area. People would be asked to place garbage in the dumpsters within the park.

Signing

Objective: To provide sufficient visitor informational, regulatory, and interpretive signing to meet current and future needs.

Present Situation: Signs that are presently in place are regulatory, informational and interpretive.

Management Prescriptions: Sign the area to protect natural, cultural, recreation and interpretive values.

Management Actions: Maintain BLM standard signing throughout the area. ISTEPA and other funding should be sought for the regulatory, informational and interpretive signing. A sign plan would be developed for the area. All signing would be coordinated through the Resource Area. If BLM signs are ordered through the Rawlins BLM sign shop, they will be requisitioned through the District Sign Coordinator. A entrance sign would be placed at the junction of U.S. Highway 380 and the entrance to the recreation area. The sign will be in accordance with BLM sign standards.

Landscaping

Objective: Promote a natural appearing distribution of xeric landscape throughout the area.

Present Situation: Vegetation consists of xeric species characteristic of the Chihuahuan Desert. Grasses grow intermittently through out the area. Trees and shrubs have been planted between the campsites and in the front section of the recreation area. The comfort station and campground host site has been landscaped with various shrubs and trees.

Management Prescriptions: Continue to water and feed the existing trees and shrubs within the park. The condition of the trees, woody shrubs and grasses would improve with proper management.

Management Actions: Any unneeded roads would be blocked and reclaimed to allow natural reseeding. Planting of xeric species would enhance the reclamation process. A landscape design plan would be developed to prevent a haphazard approach to landscaping. The use of xeric plants would be sought to conserve water within the area. Drip irrigation systems should be provided for new plantings that require watering.

Day Use and Camping

Objective: Provide day use and camping areas that would accommodate all visitor uses without degrading the environment.

Present Situation: Approximately 85% of the visitation is day use, the remaining use is overnight camping. Nineteen camping sites are located within the park on the west side of the road. There are no designated accessible sites within the area.

Management Prescriptions: Day use and camping sites would be maintained within the park. Additional tent camping areas would be planned for future development within the kipuka.

Management Actions: Prior to any additional day use or overnight camping implementation, a conceptual drawing would be developed for the area. The drawing would show all existing facilities and a detailed drawing of any proposed day use or overnight sites which

may be developed. At least three sites would be made accessible to all visitors using ADA and other accessible standards. Ground grills would be placed at all campsites within the area. Firewood would be provided by contract or through a cooperative association. All installation must be approved by the District Engineer, meet ADA, environmental, safety and structural standards.

Interpretation

Objective: To obtain current, accurate, informative, appealing interpretive displays and brochures for the visitor orientation.

Present situation: Very little interpretation exists within the local area. The full color Valley of Fires Brochure is currently being used as the publication for the park. The Malpais Nature Trail has been marked with numbers on wooden posts and corresponds to an interim nature trail guide. A bulletin board has been placed near the comfort station. Interpretive tours and talks occur on an occasional basis.

Management Prescriptions: Provide quality interpretive displays and materials of natural, historic and wildlife within the area.

Management Actions:

the Visitor Services and Interpretation Plan would be finalized. The color general informational brochure and the black and white brochure would be updated to reflect new information as the area is developed. Washington office approval is needed to develop or update brochures.

The current interim Malpais Nature Trail Guide would be updated, when WO approval is obtained. The brochure would be commercially designed and printed. In accordance with the interpretive plan, interpretive display panels should be acquired for the area. A priority list would be developed for all proposed interpretive displays placed in the area.

After development Malpais Nature Trail accessible displays would be developed and placed along the trail in accordance with the interpretive plan. A variety of materials could be utilized depending

on cost and vandal resistant applications of various media. Interpretive exhibits should be developed to accommodate most people with disabilities. Exhibits could be tactile or have audio narration.

Buildings and Structures

Objective: Maintain current facilities and improve the recreation area by adding or modifying facilities which serve the public and not burden the staff. Buildings and facilities should be designed in a southwest architectural style, if practical. Funding for maintenance and staff remain a big issue now and in the future.

Present Situation: The buildings within the recreation area consist of a metal peaked roof Visitor Contact Station/Maintenance Building, a peaked roof group picnic shelter and 19 campsite picnic shelters. The comfort station and campground host site is designed in a southwest adobe architectural style. At present the most requested facility is a shower building to augment the camping experience within the area. Visitors would likely stay longer within the local area, if showers were provided.

Management Prescriptions: Buildings should be maintained on an as needed basis to maintain a professional appearance of the area. New facilities should be constructed as maintenance free as possible. A tent camping area is a priority, because it could be accomplished as an in-house project. The priorities for new construction should be as follows: 1. Tent camping area. 2. Shower Facility, 3 .Group Shelter with flush toilets. 4. Visitor Contact Station (Ranger Station).

Management Actions: Design a shower facility for the recreation area. Outdoor Recreation Planners should research and prepare a narrative for various cost effective designs. BLM Operations should prepare a conceptual drawing and specifications for the project. The shower facility would be added to the existing comfort station.

A group shelter would be planned for the south end of the park. The facility should have water, electricity and flush toilets. Included in the plan would be a septic tank and leach field for sewage disposal.

A Visitor Contact Station or Ranger Station should be constructed as a regional information and interpretive center for BLM and other agencies within the area. A building of adequate size would be

needed to operate the needs of visitor information, interpretation, and administration of the recreation area. A Public Lands Information Center (PLIC) would be an continuing part of the operation. ISTEA, or congressional funding should be sought to fund the construction.

A shelter to provide shade would be constructed adjacent to the accessible portion of the interpretive loop trail in the malpais.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Phases of implementation

**THIS INFORMATION IS TO BE PREPARED
BY THE RESOURCE AREA SPECIALIST**