

Casper Field Office Recreation Business Management Plan

The recreation fee structure presented in this document will allow the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Casper Field Office to meet user expectations and adapt to sudden changes in user trends that would otherwise impact important resources values. All criteria set by the Recreation Enhancement Act of 2003 for expanded amenity fees have been met and the fees outlined in this document have been found appropriate.

The fees outlined are only one part of a more comprehensive funding strategy and will be used to enhance recreation opportunities, increase visitor satisfaction and provide for public safety. This business plan addresses the need for new infrastructure, long term maintenance, and provides clear objectives for expenditures. Public awareness and participation is vital to the success of this program and is not limited solely to the development of this plan. Public feedback mechanisms will be implemented and maintain through-out the life of this plan. It is for these reasons that the enclosed Recreation Business Plan is hereby approved. This is a living document and may be updated at any time with the acceptance of the Wyoming Recreation Advisory Team (REACT).

/s/ Joseph Meyer

Field Manager, Casper

December 29, 2010

Date



Table of Context

| | |
|--|----|
| Executive Summary | 2 |
| Special Recreation Permits | 5 |
| Area Description | 5 |
| Visitor Demographics | 5 |
| Recreation Use | 5 |
| Financial Analysis | 7 |
| Costs | 7 |
| Revenues | 8 |
| Fair Market Value Assessment | 8 |
| Rationale For New Fees | 9 |
| Objectives For Use Of Fee Revenues | 9 |
| Social/Economic Impacts | 9 |
| Trapper’s Route Special Recreation Management Area | 11 |
| Area Description | 11 |
| Visitor Demographics | 12 |
| Recreation Use | 14 |
| Financial Analysis | 14 |
| Costs | 14 |
| Revenues | 15 |
| Fair Market Value Assessment | 16 |
| Rationale For New Fees | 16 |
| Objectives For Use Of Fee Revenues | 17 |
| Social/Economic Impacts | 18 |
| Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area | 19 |
| Area Description | 19 |
| Visitor Demographics | 20 |
| Recreation Use | 20 |
| Financial Analysis | 21 |
| Costs | 21 |
| Revenues | 22 |
| Fair Market Value Assessment | 23 |
| Rationale For Change in Fee Structure | 24 |
| Objectives For Use Of Fee Revenues | 24 |
| Social/Economic Impacts | 24 |
| Visitor Feedback Mechanisms | 25 |
| Public Participation | 25 |
| Literature Cited | 26 |

Executive Summary

This business plan addresses the collection, expenditures and public accountability of the Recreation Fee Program for the Casper Field Office, located in Wyoming Congressional District #1. Expanded amenity fees sites would be collected at campgrounds within the Trapper’s Route Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and the Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area (EEA). Recreation fees are also collected for Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) and “America the Beautiful” passes.

Proposed changes to the current fee structure include the implementation of expanded amenities fees for campgrounds within Trapper’s Route SRMA and a small increase to campground fees within the Muddy Mountain EEA. The proposed fee structure reflects a \$2.00 increase in overnight camping and a \$1.00 increase for extra vehicles. The current day use fee will be removed. Fees for Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) are set at the national level with a minimum annual payment of \$95.00. There is no proposed fee increase for SRPs in this document. All fees are applied in accordance with the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA).

Table 1: Current Fee Structure

| <i>Recreation Area</i> | <i>Recreation Fee</i> | <i>Campground</i> | <i>Extra vehicles</i> | <i>Day Use</i> |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------|----------------|
| Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area | | | | |
| Lodgepole Campground | Expanded Amenity Fee | \$5.00 | \$2.00 | 3.00 |
| Rim Campground | Expanded Amenity Fee | \$5.00 | \$2.00 | 3.00 |
| Trappers Route | | | | |
| The Redds | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| Pete’s Draw Campground | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| Ledge Creek | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| Miles Landing | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| White Tail Landing | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| Golden Current Campground | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| Chalk Bluffs Campground | Undeveloped | Free | Free | Free |
| Buffalo Berry Campground | Undeveloped | Free | Free | Free |
| Casper Field Office | | | | |
| | SRP fees | \$95.00 minimal annual fee and 3% gross for commercial permits, \$180.00 exclusive use fee when applicable, other permit types (non-commercial, competitive and organized group) have a rate of \$5.00/person/day. Specific details are outlined in detail in accordance with BLM Manual H-2930-1. | | |
| | America the Beautiful Annual Pass | This \$80.00 pass is available to the general public and provides access to, and use of, Federal recreation sites that charge an Entrance or Amenity Fee for a year. | | |
| | America the Beautiful Senior Pass | This \$10.00 is a lifetime pass for U.S. citizens or permanent residents age 62 or over. The pass provides access to, and use of, Federal recreation sites that charge an Entrance or Amenity. | | |

Table 2: Proposed Fee Structure

| <i>Recreation Area</i> | <i>Recreation Fee</i> | <i>Campground</i> | <i>Extra vehicles</i> | <i>Day Use</i> |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------|----------------|
| Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area | | | | |
| Lodgepole Campground | Expanded Amenity Fee | \$7.00 | \$3.00 | Free |
| Rim Campground | Expanded Amenity Fee | \$7.00 | \$3.00 | Free |
| Trappers Route | | | | |
| The Redds | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| Pete’s Draw Campground | Expanded Amenity Fee | 10.00 | 5.00 | Free |
| Ledge Creek | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| Miles Landing | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| White Tail Landing | Non-Fee Site | Free | Free | Free |
| Golden Current Campground | Expanded Amenity Fee | 10.00 | 5.00 | Free |
| *Chalk Bluffs Campground | Expanded Amenity Fee | 10.00 | 5.00 | Free |
| *Buffalo Berry Campground | Expanded Amenity Fee | 10.00 | 5.00 | Free |
| Casper Field Office | | | | |
| | SRP fees | \$95.00 minimal annual fee and 3% gross for commercial permits, \$180.00 exclusive use fee when applicable, other permit types (non-commercial, competitive and organized group) have a rate of \$5.00/person/day. Specific details are outlined in detail in accordance with BLM Manual H-2930-1. | | |
| | America the Beautiful Annual Pass | This \$80.00 pass is available to the general public and provides access to, and use of, Federal recreation sites that charge an Entrance or Amenity Fee for a year, beginning from the date of sale. | | |
| | America the Beautiful Senior Pass | This \$10.00 is a lifetime pass for U.S. citizens or permanent residents age 62 or over. The pass provides access to, and use of, Federal recreation sites that charge an Entrance or Amenity fee. | | |

* *These Campgrounds have not been developed at this time. Campgrounds fees will be enacted after construction is completed at the same rate as the existing campgrounds.*

The goal of the recreation fee program is to provide recreation sites, services, and settings that meet quality standards to enhance visitor experience and protect natural, heritage, and cultural resources. The overall strategy of this program is to retain fee revenues to supplement appropriations and other funding sources, to repair, improve and maintain recreation sites and settings to quality standards (including trying to eliminate the backlog of recreation deferred maintenance), in order to maintain landscape settings, and to enhance the delivery of recreation services.

Recreation sites include developed and semi-developed overnight and day-use facilities. Recreation sites include areas where high levels of use take place and consequently require intensive management. Some of the amenities or services fee revenues can provide include reservation services, enhanced visitor safety and security measures, enhanced interpretive opportunities, facility improvements, restoration projects, and expanded visitor service hours.

The BLM uses six key principles to develop and evaluate recreation business plans. These principles include: feasibility, equitability, efficiency, convenience, coordination and the ability to reinvest. The following guidelines help to determine the amount charged at each site location selected: (1) the amount

charged is commensurate with the benefits and services provided to the visitor; (2) the aggregate effect of recreation fees on recreation users and recreation service providers; (3) comparable fees charged elsewhere and by other public agencies and by nearby private sector operators; and (4) public policy or management objectives served by the recreation fees.

In order to reduce paperwork, administrative workloads and to provide a comprehensive overview of the recreational fee program for the Casper Field Office, the BLM has elected to produce a single document which outlines the structure for collections and expenditures of all outdoor recreation fees collected in the planning area. A detailed fee structure, as well as goals and objectives, are provided for each Special Recreation Management Area and for the Special Recreation Permit Program. Prices and management of the Interagency Passes are determined at the national level. They are made available at the front desk with an average of three passes sold each year. While, the revenue remains within and is utilized by the Casper Field Office, the total annual amount is not significant enough to discuss in further detail.

Special Recreation Permits:

I. AREA DESCRIPTION

Central Wyoming, Congressional District 1, provides the backdrop for numerous permitted activities and is comprised of a mixture of uplift mountains, foothills and basins. The open space and uninterrupted landscapes provide the backdrop to the National Historic Trails which symbolizes exploration and settlement of the West. Wyoming's tourism is still focused on the western lifestyle and cowboy persona. Today, these same landscapes provide important wildlife habitats for numerous big game and non-game species. The North Platte River is the only floatable river located in the area and is known as one of the world's best sport fishery. Public lands are invaluable to professional guides and event organizers. Commercial recreation activities occur throughout the field office and permit holders often obtain multiple authorizations by land management agencies and private owners in order to conduct business effectively in the mixed ownership patterns common to central Wyoming. The Casper Field Office averages approximately 36 companies that are authorized and managed under a Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) to provide recreational services on public lands. All SRP are discretionary and are analyzed on case by case basis.

Special Recreation Permits are also available for competitive use and organized group activities. These types of activities often occur within Special Recreation Management Areas. These areas include the National Historic Trails, the Trapper's Route Recreation Area, the Muddy Mountain EEA, the Poison Spider OHV Park, Goldeneye Wildlife and Recreation Area and two Back-Country Byways. Recreation opportunities range from semi-primitive to rural developed depending on location, management objectives and the experience sought.

II. VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS:

Special Recreational Permits are required for specific recreational activities. The three general categories are commercial; competitive; and/or non-commercial, non-competitive recreation events (BLM Manual, 2007). Lengths of permits are dependent upon the proposed activity, location and past record of the potential permittee and may be issued for periods ranging from a few hours up to ten years. Basic requirements for SRPs include an application (form WY 2930-1), Operating Plan (form WY 2930-04), liability insurance and an outfitters license (Big Game only).

The largest and most organized of permit holders are the big game outfitters. The Wyoming Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides licenses and manages this group of professional. Big game outfitters tend to be from the local commuting area and have deep ties to the community. Long standing companies have been in business for 10-15 years, with some being permitted on public lands for much longer. In addition, many of these permittees also hold grazing leases with the BLM and with the state of Wyoming.

Other commercial SRPs that have grown dramatically in only a few years include fly fishing guides. While this last group is not licensed or managed by any professional organization, many are members of the Wyoming Fly Caster's Association.

Many of the competitive groups and other social organizations see the SRP program as a way to promote their activities and to teach environmental ethics. Social demographics such as age, educational levels, social backgrounds and recreational interests vary greatly among non-commercial groups.

III. RECREATION USE

The regional importance of big game outfitters is indicated by the number of licensed guides in the state of Wyoming. The Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides average 362 licensed guides and 1220 professional guides per year with an average of 104,003 clients annually (Wyoming State Library 2008). These numbers are dependent on available big game licenses and have remained fairly consistent over the past thirteen years. The Casper Field Office administers an average of 36 SRPs

annually of which 22 are professional big game outfitters.

The first permit for a commercial fly fishing operation in the Casper Field Office was authorized in 2000. Today, there are 18 different companies permitted to operate on public lands within the boundary of this special recreation area. Many of these companies have several full time guides and offer a variety of recreational services including upland bird hunts, horseback riding, and overnight stays at private lodges. Permit numbers at major landing sites show that during the peak season, commercial guides represent



almost 80% of the total trips between Alcova and the Clarkson Hill landing site (BLM 2010).

The size of the companies and the extent of services, provided ranges from a single owner offering guided day trips to larger companies that offer a full-service recreation experience including overnight lodging at a private lodge, horseback riding and bird hunting. The recreation fees collected by the BLM are based on 3% of the total gross revenue collected for day trips on public lands along the North Platte River. A temporary restriction on the number of SRPs on the North Platte River between Alcova and Casper was enacted as

part of the recreation plan for the area (BLM 2006).

The Casper Field Office authorizes between one and six SRPs for non-commercial recreation activities per year. These permits are generally for competitive Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) events including slow speed motorcycle trials and endurance competitions to historic trail re-enactments and large family reunions. ATV and 4 x4 events are held primary at the Poison Spider OHV Park. The competitions are normally free to spectators and used to promote the ethical use of motorized vehicles on public lands. Authorizations are generally from one to three days. A motorized trial competition is authorized each year and takes place in one of five locations. This slow speed off-trail event measures the rider's skill at maneuvering over natural and artificial obstacles. Competitors can compete at several different skill levels. Similar to motorized events held at the Poison OHV Park, these competitions are family events, free for spectators, and are used to promote ethical use of motorized recreation equipment. Most OHV events have 25-40 contestants and, at times, have up to twice as many spectators. The average number of visitor days derived from motorized competitions is approximately 100.

Permits for heritage tourism activities are most often located along the Oregon, Mormon, California, and Pony Express National Historic Trails and are multijurisdictional. The primary field office in which most of the activities are located is normally the lead and coordinates all activities on public lands. Revenues derived from these permits remain with the lead field office. Heritage tourism activities occur annually in the Casper Field Office. However, Casper is not normally the lead field office as permits often originate outside the field office boundary. Visitation stemming from these activities can vary greatly from one year to the next. In 2008, over 250 visitor days can be attributed to trail re-enactments.

The smallest category of SRP is organized events such as family reunions, youth groups, music concerts and charitable activities. The BLM authorizes one permit every couple years for these types of activities. They normally occur over 2 or 3 days time and have very little impact on public land resources. These types of organized events account for 50 to 200 visitor days each year. Table 3 provides the annual

number of SRPs administered by the Casper Field Office by type, over the past five years.

Table 3: Total Permits by Number administered by the Casper Field Office

| Activity | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Big Game Outfitting | 17 | 19 | 24 | 24 | 25 |
| Fly Fishing Guides | 4 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 12 |
| Special Events | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Annual Totals | 22 | 29 | 37 | 38 | 35 |

*This table does not reflect permits that use public lands within the field office but are administered another office.

IV. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:

The following section details daily operations and maintenance costs, revenues and future projections. Table 4 provides an overview of this section.

Table 4: Total Revenues and Annual Costs

| Activity | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---------------------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| Annual Revenues | \$10,136 | 10,250 | \$10,250 | \$10,500 | \$10,500 |
| Daily Operations | \$5,000 | \$5,000 | \$8,000 | \$8,000 | \$8,000 |
| Annual Maintenance | \$3,000 | \$3,000 | \$3,000 | \$3,000 | \$3,000 |

Costs:

The costs of the administration and compliance of SRP program are dependent upon the intricacies of each individual permit. Administration of an individual permit includes but is not limited to review and approval of permit, outlining stipulations, coordinating with other resource specialists and ensuring that legislative and management guidelines are followed, annual post-use reports are accurate and insurance needs are met. The highest cost associated with the SRP program is compliance. Onsite inspections and other forms of compliance are to be completed for 15% of each type of commercial permit and 80% of all recreation events. Costs can run as high as \$250.00 per day per staff member, including vehicles and other equipment that may be needed. The total number of days required for yearly compliance work varies from year to year and is approximately eight work months. The majority of this work is completed by the field law enforcement personnel and by the Outdoor Recreation Planner. The BLM is reimbursed for all associated costs for administration and compliance for complex permits that require over 50 hours for BLM staff time (BLM 2009). This provision for cost recovery helps to offset cost of administration. Daily operations costs are approximately \$5,000 per year.

Annual maintenance costs that can be contributed to SRP management include permit stickers for fly fishing guides, sign replacement in hunting areas and some facilities maintenance. In 2005, portable comfort stations were installed on Trapper's Route, as an interim management technique, until permanent facilities could be constructed at public landing. While these facilities were initially set-up to mitigate impacts resulting from the increased use related to commercial fly fishing, all visitors to the area benefitted from changing management techniques. Annual maintenance costs are approximately \$3,000 per year.

Revenues:

All fees associated with commercial use, competitive use, and organized group activities or events, are established by the Director, updated every three years based on the Implicit Price Deflator Index, and published in the Federal Register. All commercial uses require a minimum annual SRP fee (\$95 as of March, 2008). For competitive use, and organized group activities fees are charged on a per user-day basis for participants (\$5.00/person/day in 2008); as a percentage of gross receipts; or the minimum fee, whichever is greater. When use is both commercial and competitive, the higher fee should be charged. Fees associated with individual use of Special Areas are set by State Directors and published in the Federal Register six months before the fee is established. Fees may be adjusted from time to time to reflect changes in costs and to ensure a fair return for the use of the public lands. The cost recovery charge is based upon the actual personnel, vehicle, travel, and materials costs required to issue, administer and monitor the SRP (BLM Handbook, 2006). As SRP fees are set at the national level, no changes are proposed in the business plan.

Prior to approval, all potential fees are reviewed with the applicant, the minimum annual fee is paid and a certificate of insurance, containing the minimum insurance levels and listing the BLM as coinsured, is required. For some permittees, the total estimated fees are due prior to use. These requirements protect the BLM from losses due to unpaid fees and potential liability related to SPRs. All SRP fees are collected at the front desk of the local BLM office or by mail and are immediately entered into the Central Billing System (CBS).

The majority of the revenue collected via SRP holders have, historically, been derived from big game outfitters. This group is the largest contributor to the recreation fee program. Fees collected from this group have steadily increased from fiscal years 2004 to 2008, except for a slight decrease in the 2006 fiscal year. These companies contribute an average of 67% of revenues collected. The second largest group is fly fishing guides paying an average of 30% of total revenues annually. Over the past five years, revenues from fly-fishing guides, who operate within the Trapper’s Route SRMA, have steadily increased. The fees applied to permit holders are based on 3% of the gross revenues of permit holders. An exclusive use can also be applied to specific permittees. Independent audits are periodically conducted of BLM and permittee business records related to SRPs. Table 5 depicts revenues collected from 2005 to 2009.

Table 5: Annual Revenue of Permit Type

| Activity | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Big Game Outfitting | \$2,824.69 | \$5,961.68 | \$4,928.86 | \$6,849.77 | \$8,376.037 |
| Fly Fishing Guide Service | \$1,775.18 | \$2,803.35 | \$4,179.84 | \$2,662.85 | \$1,399.48 |
| Special Events | \$80.00 | \$170.00 | \$180.00 | \$90.00 | \$360.00 |
| Revenue Totals | \$4,679.85 | \$8,935.03 | \$9,288.70 | \$9,602.62 | \$10,135.85 |

V. FAIR MARKET VALUE ASSESSMENT

Recreation fees charged by the BLM can be compared to permit, special use, or concession fees charged by the Forest Service and Park Service in Wyoming and to licensing and administrative fees collected the Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides. Trespass fees are set by the land owner and vary greatly depending on location, species, landownership patterns and season of use. While, many private land owners may charge only minimal fees, conversations with professional guides reveal that some land owners will charge in excess of \$1,000.00 per animal.

The Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides provide oversight and administration of commercial hunting guides and outfitters who operate within the state. There is a \$1200 new applicant fee for outfitters and a new \$25 applicant fee for guides. License fees are set under the Board's Rules and Regulations and are currently \$600 per year. There is a \$300 fee to become a member of the board. The board's entire operating budget is derived from these fees. They are responsible for licensing and regulating 365 hunting outfitters and 1200 professional guides per year. The board serves to ensure that a quality hunt and that the services promised are provided. They ensure the licensee is insured and possesses the necessary equipment, vehicles, tack and livestock necessary to run a professional and safe business. Full investigators handle client complaints and allegations of illegal activity. The Wyoming State Board of Outfitters and Professional Guides works in conjunction with the other state and federal agencies. Their administrative responsibilities are similar to that described for the BLM.

VI. RATIONALE FOR NEW FEES

No changes to the current fee structure are proposed. Administrative changes, related to trips logs, calculations of the percent public lands used and post-use reporting were recently enacted by the BLM State Office in order to provide options for end users. No other changes to the fee structure are proposed as the fees are set at the national level and are outside the scope of the business plan.

VII. OBJECTIVES FOR USE OF FEE RECEIPTS

Annual revenues will not completely cover the costs associated with management objectives but will be used to support the recreation program, thereby improving the BLMs ability to respond to resource needs and visitor services. Objectives for SRP fees collected are listed below and are aimed at improving public recreation services and reducing degradation.

1. Providing for support for volunteer and interpretive programs. Support for these programs may include purchasing supplies and equipment as needed, the development and printing of interpretive materials, providing interpretive specialists, reimbursement of costs.
2. Providing interim management in highly used areas to mitigate recreation use. These costs may include the rental of potable comfort stations, barriers for road closures or equipment rentals and short term contract needs.
3. Supplement the recreation budget in order to complete partially funded or unfunded projects. These may include the purchase of picnic tables, fire rings, signage or other needed supplies or may be used to rectify costs overruns.
4. Completing annual maintenance at developed recreation sites. This may include such things as purchase of supplies and equipment rentals.

VIII. SOCIAL/ECONOMIC IMPACTS:

The Special Recreation Permit program in the Casper Field Office provides a variety of opportunities for privately owned commercial operations, competitive events and locations for organized groups. Many small businesses have thrived in recent years helping to diversify the economic structure of the Wyoming economy.

A few of the larger fly fishing guide companies employ numerous guides and other staff to manage the private lodges and associated fly shops. These small businesses create jobs. SRP holders hire a number of individuals for both seasonal and year round employment. These companies actively promote Wyoming recreation opportunities increasing national exposure, and impacting Wyoming's tourism industry. This has an indirect, positive effect on other local businesses.

Commercial outfitters use public lands throughout the field office. Big game outfitters operate within a combination of state trust lands, Forest Service lands, BLM administered properties and private ranches. On public lands along the North Platte River, an SRP is required for both launching and retrieving drift boats and which allows them to anchor drift boats and wade-fish on BLM administered property.



The recreation use that can be contributed to commercial recreation companies significantly adds to the overall visitation numbers changing the recreational experience in some areas. The SRP program helps to mitigate some of these negative environmental impacts and conflicts among users groups.

Competitive events and other organized activities fill an important role in society. These activities help to form social bonds, and promote healthy lifestyles. The application process and review provides resource specialists input into the event planning. Special Recreation Permits reduce the potential for environmental impacts, help to ensure public safety and often become a forum for educational programs such as “Leave No Trace”.

All recreation fees collected, including sale of annual passes remain and are used to support the outdoor recreation program. The SRP program is an important part of the overall recreation program.

Trapper's Route Special Recreation Management Area:

I. AREA DESCRIPTION:

Trapper's Route Special Recreation Management Area includes all public lands generally within ¼ mile of the North Platte River between Alcova and Casper. This area is approximately 41 river miles long and contains approximately 5 miles (3,800 acres), of federally administered surface. The Special Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) for the area was completed 2007. It provides guidelines for long term recreational development and site specific regulations and provides the mechanism for sustaining a broad range of recreational opportunities.

Scenic and recreational values of the area are derived from a combination of environmental factors and management practices. Its year round water flow, geologic formations, changing plant communities and abundance of wildlife contribute to the recreational experience. The North Platte River is highly valued as a Class 1 fishery and is rated as Blue Ribbon by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Game fish species include rainbow, brown and cutthroat trout. The most common recreation activities are fishing, floating, waterfowl hunting and wildlife observation. There are also opportunities for picnicking and camping. This river remains a vital part of the heritage and culture of central Wyoming.

The view from the surface of the water creates the perception of a relatively undisturbed landscape. While floating these waters, visitors can observe differing combinations of line, form, color and texture. The visual quality of the North Platte River corridor is derived from its constantly changing shorelines and vegetation communities.



The character of the landscape changes as visitors travel from open areas with densely vegetated banks and panoramic views to more enclosed locations dominated by landform features. Cliff walls formed by erosion add visual interest and provide nesting habitats for a variety of bird species.

Site designs for developed areas vary, depending on the nature of the recreation opportunity made available. Recreational facilities within Rural Developed areas accommodate a higher concentration of visitors and allow for RV camping. Site plans for Rural-Natural and Semi-Primitive areas would be limited to smaller groups and provide for a more natural setting.

After full implementation of the RAMP, there would be a total of four overnight campgrounds (Pete's Draw, Golden Current, Chalk Bluffs and Buffalo Berry) and four developed day use sites (the Redds, Mile's Landing, White Tail Landing and Bessemer Bend Historic Site). More primitive recreation opportunities would be available interspersed between these facilities. This open space would preserve the natural landscape and serve to protect wildlife habitats.

Overnight camping fees of \$10.00 per occupied site and \$5.00 for each extra vehicle will be implemented for Pete's Draw and Golden Current Campgrounds after the completion of the federal register notice. It is anticipated that the Chalk Bluffs and Buffalo Berry Campgrounds will be completed by the end of year 2011. The same fee schedule will be implemented after construction is completed.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department's (WGFD) fishing access areas and state school sections provide additional recreational opportunities. Gray Reef, one the most heavily used public access locations, is administered by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and managed by the Natrona County Parks Department. Approximately 75-80 percent of riverfront property is privately owned. Table 6 describes the jurisdiction, access and miles of river at each site.

Table 6: Land Jurisdiction

| Site Name | Ownership | Access | River Miles |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Grey Reef | BOR | Cnty Rd | .32 |
| The Redds | BLM | Cnty Rd | .62 |
| Pete's Draw | BLM | Cnty Rd | .53 |
| Ledge Creek | BLM | River only | .53 |
| Lusby | G&F | G&F easement | 2.08 |
| Bolton Creek | BLM | Cnty Rd | .30 |
| Government Bridge | BLM | State Hwy | .30 |
| Clarkson Hill (4 sites) | BLM | G&F easement, Cnty Rd | 2.5 |
| Bates Creek | BLM, WY State Land | G&F easement, Cnty Rd | 2.05 |
| Gray Cliff | BLM | 2-track | .49 |
| Sechrist | G&F | State Hwy | .49 |
| Schmitt | G&F | State Hwy | .11 |
| Hartnet | G&F | Cnty Rd, river, | .10 |
| Bessemer Mountain | BLM | River only | .11 |
| Flycaster's | G&F | Cnty Rd, G&F easement | .73 |
| Speck/Bessemer Bend | BLM, G&F | Cnty Rd | .20 |
| Emigrant Ridge | BLM, WY State Land | River only | 1.27 |
| Robertson Road | G&F | Cnty Rd | .06 |

II. Visitor Demographics

The US Fish and Wildlife Service completed a national recreation survey every five years since 1955. It provides information on the number of participants in fishing, hunting and wildlife watching, and the amount of time and money spent on these activities (OMB, 2007). In 2006, over 87 million US residents, 16 years and older, fished, hunted, or participated in wildlife viewing activities, of which 29.9 million people fished the nations rivers, lakes and streams. When compared to 2001 use numbers, fishing continues to be the favorite pastime. National survey numbers show a decline of 13% in the number of average days spent fishing and a 12% decline in the overall number of fishermen. However, their expenditures for fishing equipment (rods, reels, etc.) and for fishing trips increased 5% and 7% respectively.

Wyoming's tourism between 2007 and 2008 remained relatively steady, in spite of increased gasoline prices and waning consumer confidence. The Wyoming Tourism 2008 Visitor Profile Report depicts similar findings related to changes in the visitor travel patterns to those seen by national level visitor surveys. The most notable change is that travelers choose to stay closer to home, reduce the number of visitor days and the amount of monies spent per trip. The 2006 findings indicated a 6% increase in the number of overnight stays and remained unchanged during 2007, with 7.3 million overnight stays.

The largest seasons of use parallel the spring fishing season (second quarter) and the fall hunting season (third quarter). The visitor profile notes 15 different states that account for the majority of all overnight stays, with the highest concentration of visitors originating from nearby locations such Colorado, Utah, Idaho and other towns in Wyoming. Key activities include visiting national parks, wildlife watching,

camping, visiting historical places and fishing. Hunting and fishing were the primary motivation for planning a trip to Wyoming 4.5% of the time. Another major shift in travel patterns is that more visitors are choosing to stay in campgrounds or with friends or relatives. In spite of shifting patterns, visitors feel positive about their experiences and plan to return. The average stay is approximately 3 days. Wyoming's recreational opportunities are becoming more marketable as travel is linked to specific recreational activities and events. Wyoming was chosen as the main destination for 52.5% of recreational trips in 2007 and 53.9% in 2008.

In spite of these national and state level visitor trends, the number of fishing days in Wyoming has grown sharply over the past five years. The North Platte River and its reservoirs are among the nation's most important sport fisheries. The North Platte River below Grey Reef has recently been touted as the #1 "big fish" trout stream by popular angling publications. It is a world-class fishery and an important focus of the BLM's recreation management program in Natrona County. Interest in fishing, both as recreation and as business continues to grow.

The rapid shift in recreational use and in visitor demographics has prompted both the BLM and the WGFD to conduct visitor information surveys. Current visitor information has been derived from a combination of BLM visitor satisfaction surveys completed in 2009, site registrations, annual use data provided by professional guides and by on-site observations.

As a destination fishery, this river draws anglers from across the United States. Out-of-state visitation stems mainly from bordering states such as Colorado, Montana, and Utah and represents the fastest growing segment of river users. The majority of non-residential bank fishermen utilize areas near Gray Reef and Pete's Draw. This group appears to be less affected by increased visitation numbers than their local counterparts and generally have higher expectations of land managing agencies and recreational opportunities. Many of these visitors have expressed the need for a recreation fee at developed sites. They feel that the revenues would benefit site maintenance and improvement projects and would increase ethical use of public lands.

Residential bank fishermen utilize more of the public lands. They will use different sections of the river based on season of use, water levels and visitation numbers. Many local residents seek out areas with less people regardless of the available infrastructure and, at times, will avoid areas with a high quality of fishing in order to seek a more solitary and primitive recreational experience. This visitor group has expressed a wide range of views about recreation fees. Some feel strongly that any type of use fee would be inappropriate. Visitors, who hold this opinion, feel that all public lands and infrastructure should be free for public use. Others have expressed the need to charge for overnight camping in developed sites and that revenues should be used for site maintenance and law enforcement as well as informational signs on public lands.

A large proportion of visitors to the North Platte River fish from drift boats and a growing number of local visitors are enjoying kayaking and rafting. These two visitor groups are concentrated at specific landing sites. User needs and expectations are based on the ease of launching, wait times and distribution of boat ramps. The limited number of locations that include motorized access and boat ramps funnel river users onto shorter sections of the river, limiting recreational opportunities. Included in this user group are customers of commercial guides. Commercial operators that offer a variety of recreational services that include lodging are growing in popularity and cater to a specific demographic group. This group generally has some education with middle income levels. Visitor groups consist of 90% adults and 6% of children under the age of 12. The vast majority (90%) of respondents were men with an average age ranging from 41-50 years old. Other age groups which represented at least 19% of the overall visitation were those between 31-40, 51-60 and 61-70 years old.

III. Recreation Use:

In 1996 an estimated 17,000 anglers used the river; about 20% were fishing by boat. By 2000, the estimated number of anglers had increased by approximately 600%. A recent headline from the Denver Post commented on traffic jams on the river. Today a conservative estimate for the 41 miles of river between Alcova and Casper is approximately 100,000 seasonal anglers (Conder, 2006).

The BLM is currently managing 18 Special Recreation Permits (SRP) for commercial fly-fishing companies. Some companies report up to 2,500 visitor days, with the mean number of visitor days reported at 250. These companies continue to thrive as businesses. The overall visitor use numbers will be adjusted after the completion of the visitor creel survey that is currently being conducted by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. These numbers are projected to remain stable or slightly increase over the next five years.

Fly-fishing is the principal recreational activity on Trapper's Route. The primary season of use begins in mid March and goes to the end of June, with a secondary peak in early fall. In March and April of 2008, launch times exceeded 45 minutes and the spawning beds were crowded with a combination of drift boats and bank fishermen. All of the parking areas available for public use were at or over capacity on any given day. This was especially true during the weekend. Crowded landing, limited public lands and the high number of commercial guides, as well as an increase in the casual visitor, fueled conflicts among different user groups and among competing guide companies.

During July and August, water levels in the river are raised for downstream irrigation and the number of angler days decreases substantially. Other water based recreational activities such as camping, kayaking, rafting and wildlife viewing are popular during the hot summer months. Trapper's Route is a popular location with local Casper residents. Public lands are close to town, making for easy day trips or for long weekends. Public lands along the river bank do not have as many visitors as the campgrounds at nearby reservoirs and the existing recreation opportunities allow for a semi-primitive experience.

IV. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:

The following section details daily operations and maintenance costs, revenues and future projections. Table x provides an overview of this section.

Table 7: Total Revenues and Annual Costs

| Activity | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Annual Revenues | \$50,000 | \$50,000 | \$55,000 | \$55,000 | \$55,000 |
| Daily Operations Costs | \$5,000 | \$15,000 | \$15,000 | \$20,000 | \$20,000 |
| Annual Maintenance Costs | \$24,400 | \$31,600 | \$64,400 | \$64,400 | \$64,400 |

Costs:

From 1998 to 2005, the BLM noted dramatic changes in recreation use along the North Platte River. The existing recreational infrastructure was limited to a single vault toilet, three main access roads, two picnic tables and a small boat ramp. Major upgrades had not been completed since the mid 1970's and the existing facilities were not meeting resource demands or visitor expectations. Non-developed areas with motorized access were being heavily used and impacted from recreation activities, vehicle traffic, and livestock grazing. The lack of recreation facilities combined with high use numbers, created negative impacts on the environment and caused public health and safety issues. Both interim management and facilities upgrades were needed to ensure resource sustainability. The costs of implementing and maintaining a more proactive management approach can often be the limiting factor. The establishment of a recreation fee area will provide for additional services and improved management of public lands.

Much of the expensive described in this section are derived from a combination of appropriated funds, grants and costs share projects. Start-up costs, specific to the fee program are limited to the installation of fee tubes at overnight campgrounds. Collections would be completed as part of the normal maintenance schedule and would not add significantly to the costs of daily operations.

The maintenance costs of the new infrastructure would be absorbed into the annual maintenance budget and is approximated at \$8,200 annually for each developed site. Road maintenance is the highest long term expenditure and is in addition to the annual maintenance per site costs. There will be approximately 5 miles of internal roads with an annual maintenance cost of \$400 per mile for an annual total of \$2,000.

New facilities and other improvements recently completed at recreation sites along Trapper's Route have all been funded using a combination of appropriated funding and smaller grants that are available for use by the BLM. Major improvements to Trapper's Route began in 2005, when contracts for the installation and maintenance of portable toilets were used an interim management technique until vault toilets could be installed at public landings along the North River, at an annual cost of \$6,000. The BLM completed the reconstruction of Pete's Draw with deferred maintenance funds in 2009. Upgrades included six overnight campsites, a walking trail, a new vault toilet and a day use area. The total cost of this project was \$230,000. Mile's Landing (formerly known as Government Bridge), upgrades will be completed in 2010, using a combination of deferred maintenance funding, annual maintenance dollars and fee revenues.

Other projects scheduled to be completed this year include a small parking area and interpretive trail on the "Redds" Public Access Area. The project is a cooperative effort between the BLM, the WGFD and the Wyoming Fly Caster's Association. The river walk is the first in-stream "Watchable Wildlife" project in the state with a total anticipated cost of \$40,000. This project was funded using existing recreation fee revenues matched 50/50 with the Fish Wyoming Grant program. Several different volunteer groups pitched in to complete trail construction during the BLM's local National Trails Day Event. Interpretive signs will be installed to educate visitors on trout breeding habits and promote ethical use of spawning areas. A second Fish Wyoming Grant for \$20,000 has been allocated to the BLM for the construction of the White Tail boat ramp, which is to be completed in the spring of 2010. The White Tail Landing is located approximately 2.5 miles downstream from Mile's Landing. Golden Current Campground will also be completed in 2010 and will be limited to tents only, providing a more primitive experience. The combined total for the 2008 and 2009 improvements was \$100,000.

A total of two additional boat ramps will be constructed over the next two years at a cost of \$70,000 each. Moreover, the Casper Field Office is seeking funding for Chalk Bluffs and Buffalo Berry campgrounds, which are estimated at \$215,000. Main transportation routes will be upgraded in order to meet motorized travel levels and reduce rutting, severe levels of erosion and on-site environmental damage. Closed routes will be reclaimed. Informational and regulatory signs will be installed at all overnight campgrounds and at day use areas. The total cost of implementing the Trapper's Route RAMP is estimated at 1.2 million dollars (BLM 2009).

Revenues:

Currently, no fees are collected for use of recreation facilities outside of fees associated with Special Recreation Permits. A new fee structure is being proposed for overnight camping. The fee structure would implement a \$10.00 fee for overnight camping and \$5.00 each for extra vehicles. Fees for day use areas would not be enacted. These fees can be established under REA for expanded amenities such as campgrounds with developed camping sites, a parking area, comfort stations and trash removal.

A conservative estimate the proposed revenues at campgrounds along Trapper’s Route is approximately \$50,000 per year. With 100% of all revenues remaining within the field office for recreation management, there will be a long term benefit to the visitors and the wildlife habitats along the river.

V. Fair Market Value Assessment

The table 8 provides a comparison of campgrounds in the region, including amenities. The fee structure being proposed for Trapper’s Route SRMA lies midway between highly developed campgrounds such Antelope Run and the Casper KOA and campgrounds with very basic amenities such as Buffalo Creek Campground. The North Platte River is a world class destination fishery. The public lands are managed in such a way as to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities that are unique to the area. The proposed fees are slightly higher than sites at the reservoirs and Gray Reef without RV hook-ups. However, the existing fees at Grey Reef and nearby reservoirs have not been adjusted for inflation in several years and are not equivalent to fees established for campgrounds on other rivers which provide similar recreational opportunities. The \$10.00 fee proposed for overnight camping is reasonable and comparable campgrounds along rivers with similar opportunities. Campgrounds managed by the private sector in this area are generally more expensive but provide a higher level of amenities, such as running water, showers, laundry hook-ups and electrical outlets.

Table 8: Fee Comparisons

| Site Name | Location | Amenities | Recreation opportunities | Setting | Price |
|--|------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Trappers Route Campgrounds* | North Platte River | Vault toilets, delineated campsites, picnic tables, fire rings, hardened trails, parking areas, access roads, adjoining day use areas, kiosks, trash receptacles as needed, boat launch (Chalk Bluffs only) | Overnight camping, world class fishing, picnicking, viewing wild life boat launch is only available at Chalk Bluffs. Both Tent camping only sites are available as well as more developed campgrounds that are designed for RV units. | Campgrounds are located along the North Platte River in areas that vary between Rural Developed to Rural Natural | \$10.00/ per night \$5.00/extra vehicles Day use areas free |
| Trappers Route Day Use Areas* | North Platte River | Vault toilets, picnic tables, parking areas, access roads, trash receptacles as needed, boat launch in some locations. interpretive trails and universally accessible trails. | Day use only, fishing, boat launch | Day Use are located along the North Platte River in areas that vary between Rural Developed to Rural Natural | Free |
| Gray Reef Campground | North Platte River | Vault toilets, surface campsites, Picnic tables, boat ramp trash removal | Overnight camping, fishing, boat launch | Rural developed , | \$5.00 per vehicle |
| Glenrock south recreation complex | Glenrock | Vault toilets and potable water, dispersed camping allowed, picnic tables and grills | Baseball field , rodeo arena | Along Deer Creek in a stand of cottonwoods | Free |
| Alcova and Pathfinder lake campgrounds (includes Grey | West of Casper, on reservoir | RV sites with hook-ups, boat ramps, tables, fire rings and shelters, garbage pick-up | Fishing, boating and other water sports | Camps sit along lake side, some campgrounds have limited shelter | RV with hook-ups \$12.00, over camping \$5.00 per vehicle |

| Reef) | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Izaak Walton | Casper | Restrooms showers, laundry, nature walk, RV camping | Fishing, camping, historic fort | Along the North Platte River , near historic site | RV hook-ups \$16.00/2 people Tents sites \$11.00/2 people |
| Buffalo Creek | North of Waltman | Vault toilets, surface campsites, Picnic tables, boat ramp trash removal | Stream fishing Camping hunting and wildlife viewing | Scenic Byway, Foothills of the Bighorn Mnts | Free |
| Graves Springs | North of Waltman | Vault toilets, surface campsites, Picnic tables, boat ramp trash removal | Stream fishing Camping hunting and wildlife viewing | Scenic Byway, Foothills of the Bighorn Mnts | Free |
| Pine Bar | Idaho | Vault toilets, surface campsites, Picnic tables, boat ramp trash removal | Overnight camping, fishing, boat launch | Salmon River | Overnight camping \$7.00 |
| Hammer Creek | Idaho | Vault toilets, surface campsites, Picnic tables, boat ramp trash removal | Overnight camping, fishing, boat launch | Salmon River | Overnight camping \$10.00, extra vehicles \$4.00 |

Rationale for New Fees

The Trapper’s Route Special Recreation Area Management Plan was written in order to address the negative environmental impacts caused by substantial increases in visitor use on public lands along the North Platte River. Additional infrastructure and reclamation projects have been designed to mitigate these impacts and to sustain the high quality values. Revenues collected will be used to supplement the appropriated annual maintenance budget and diversify funding for wildlife habitat and improvement projects.

Appropriated funds are not keeping pace with the facility management needs of the area. Without this new fee structure, some improvement and maintenance projects may not be accomplished on an annual basis, allowing for a deterioration of campground facilities and road network. Over time, the deferment of maintenance projects leads to costly upgrades and replacements. Roads that are not properly maintained result in increased erosion, impacting natural habitats. The most significant of these impacts is increased sedimentation in spawning beds, impacting the reproductive success of trout populations. Because the quality of the recreational values is tied to the health of the natural environments, visitor satisfaction rates would be reduced. The new fee structure meets national standards for expanded amenity fees and is appropriate in this Special Recreation management Area.

VI. Objectives for Use of Fee Revenues

Casper Field Office intends to make use of the monies collected to the greatest extent possible by utilizing revenues to leverage additional dollars that might otherwise be available. Long term objectives for fee revenues have been taken directly from the Trapper’s Route Special Recreation Area Management Plan (BLM 2006) and will be used to provide enhanced recreation services and support projects that reduce impacts or mitigate damage that has already occurred.

1. Manage to the prescribed settings, providing for a range of recreational activities and experiences.
2. Complete restoration, deferred maintenance and capital improvement projects.
3. Provide facilities that adequately meet user needs and reduces negative impacts related to increased visitation.

VII. Social/Economic Impacts

A short term negative reaction would be expected with the establishment of a recreation use fee. However, this reaction would be minor as many visitors have expressed a need for fees at developed sites along the North Platte River. Long term impacts would result from the improved management practices and newly developed recreation facilities. Over time, visitors would drive a sense of ownership and responsibility for public lands.

Results of the 2002 visitor satisfaction survey indicated that 78% of visitors consider overall recreational management of the area above average. Ranking of specific management actions, such as appropriate recreation use, condition of facilities and the quality of resource protection, indicated that the majority of visitors were relatively satisfied with their experience. However, the BLM received lower scores for poor maintenance of roads and trails, inadequate differentiation of land status, and lack of sufficient law enforcement. Conversations with participants revealed that the perception of a lack of law enforcement relates to increased conflicts among users, lack of information, uncertain property boundaries, uncontrolled OHVs and vandalism (BLM, 2002).

The most common comments received regarding desired enhancement of the quality of recreational experience included improved roads and trails, comfort facilities, additional boat ramps, shade trees and higher-quality recreational maps. Land acquisition was ranked very important by 55% of all participants. Many upgrades to recreational infrastructure, access roads, and informational signs have been completed. Additionally, the Casper Field Office created a float guide and made it available free to the public (BLM, 2002)

These improvements were met with a positive response from the public. A second survey was completed in 2009. The results of this survey demonstrated a 92% overall satisfaction rating and a consistent improvement in all scores related to recreational opportunities provided for this special recreation management area. Suggested improvements include upgrades of county and BLM roads, more recreation facilities, landscaping, the enactment of fees and additional public acquisitions (BLM, 2009). The revenues collected from the proposed fee structure will increase the ability to complete recreational improvements and annual maintenance projects, sustaining resources and respond to visitor needs and expectations.



Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area:

I. Area Description:

Muddy Mountain was designated a special recreation management area (SRMA) in the Muddy Mountain Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) of 1977. The 1,260 acre Environmental Education Area (EEA) is divided into three distinct areas: a Natural Area (700 acres), an Interpretive/Developed Area (170 acres) and a Multi-Use Trails and Recreation Area (390 acres). This division increases the spectrum of recreational opportunities while protecting natural resources. The Natural Area, being the largest portion of the EEA, includes the eastern perimeter. The area is restricted to non-motorized recreational activities, including primitive camping, hunting and some commercial outfitting. The trail system inside the Natural Area accommodates hikers, mountain bikers and horseback enthusiasts. Two additional pedestrian gates are located along the western boundary. The majority of trail maintenance within the Natural Area is completed by local volunteers.

The centrally located Developed Area is the most commonly used portion of the Muddy Mountain EEA. The boundaries of the Developed Area are delineated by the loop road on the sides excluding the north, where the rim provides a natural border. Rim and Lodgepole Campgrounds and the Muddy Mountain Interpretive Nature Trail, are located here.

Restrictions on recreational activities for this area have been defined in the Recreation Area Management Plan for public health and safety purposes and for the protection of the resource. All camping in this area is restricted to developed sites and is limited to a two week stay. Fires are allowed only in the fire rings provided and weapons are not to be discharged anywhere within the Developed Area. All motorized travel is restricted to designated roads. Additional rules that restrict noise levels, prohibit cutting of live trees and require leashing of pets are posted at the entrance of each campground (BLM 2000).



The campgrounds have a combined total of 22 campsites and have been recently upgraded in an effort to meet universal standards. Potable water is available at the entrance to Lodgepole Campground. Accessible vault toilets are located within each campground and at the trail head. The Interpretive Nature Trail, which was designated as a Nature Recreation Trail in 2001 for its design, interpretation and public support, connects the two campgrounds. This trail was created using a series of interconnected loops and is paved with limestone crusher fines. The overall grade of the trail is less than five percent. Two overlooks located on the trail provide a unique view of the valley below. Travel along the trail is limited to hikers only.

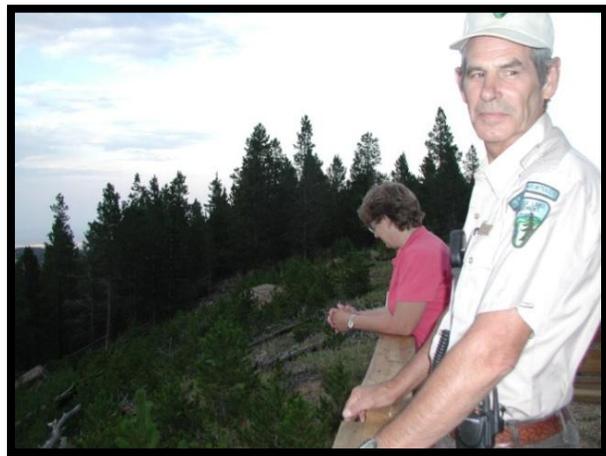
The remainder of the Muddy Mountain EEA consists of the Multi-Use Trails and motorized recreation area and consists of public lands on the western and southern sections of the EEA. The Corral Loop Road is located in a portion of the EEA and provides motorized access to most of this area. The construction of a multi-use trail specifically designed for use by snowmobiles in the winter and ATVs in the summer was completed in the summer of 2000. Dispersed camping is allowed in this area.

The recreational infrastructure on Muddy Mountain is in fairly good condition. The BLM has strived to meet universally accessibility standards whenever possible. These standards include providing level surfaces for camping, day use and trails, and fire rings, picnic tables and other facilities that are easily used by a broader scope of the public. Reconstruction projects for both Rim and Lodgepole campground were recently completed and the campgrounds have been adapted to meet the needs of a wide range of visitors. Interpretive signs along the nature trail are inventoried on a yearly basis and replaced as needed. The majority of maintenance on the recreation trails, within the EEA, is completed by local volunteer groups. An enclosure fence was to be completed in the summer of 2003.

Visitor Demographics:

The Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area is an important resource for Casper and surrounding communities. The majority of visitation comes from the local commuting area. This has become increasingly apparent as surveys completed on both the state and national levels demonstrate that the most significant change in recreational travel is that people are staying closer to home and are more likely to stay in a campground or with friends and/or relatives than in the past five previous years.

The Wyoming Tourism 2008 Visitor Profile Report, states that the average visitor for overnight stays is married, with some college or technical school education. They reported having 2.9 people living at home. Changes from the 2007 demographics show that visitors are younger and the average household income is lower. Out-of-state visitation to this area increases during the fall hunting season and are most often from neighboring states including Colorado, Montana, Utah and Idaho.



Visitor demographics for the Muddy Mountain EEA show that 31% of all visitors are between 41-50 years of age. Gender composition is 60% male to 40% female. Visitors over 18 years old make up 58% of all visitors. Group sizes are generally 2-5 people per group (BLM, 2006). Group demographics include several types of small and large assemblages. The overlooks are becoming popular locations for spring and summer weddings. Several local groups annually visit and support the management of the area. These groups include non-profit organizations; boy scouts troops, equestrian clubs and volunteer youth organizations. The Muddy Mountain trail system has become a popular project for both National Trails Day and National Public Lands Day.

Results from the most recent visitor satisfaction survey (BLM, 2006) show a 97% overall satisfaction rate and the majority of visitors feel that recreation fees are just about right. Most people show a general willingness to pay and compliance appears to be fairly high, when comparing camp receipts to volunteer registrations and information provided by the BLM ranger and camp hosts as they available. However, regulations and information on the existing fee structure is not clearly posted and there appears to be some confusion related to day use fees and extra vehicles. This resulted in less compliance for these two fees.

II. Recreation Use:

Visitation to the Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area (MMEEA) has increased steadily, paralleling community growth rates and national recreation trends. Visitor use begins in early June as weather conditions allow and runs through the hunting season in late November. Most of the use occurs during the weekend and is derived from the local commuting area. Camping, hiking, horseback riding,

mountain biking, photography and motorized trail use are all popular activities. Firewood permits have resulted in increased week day visitation and in overnight stays during the summer months. The hunting season creates a second peak use season. Upland bird, elk, deer and black bear are the primary hunted species. During the winter the mountain is open to snowmobiles and is a popular area when weather conditions permit. ATV use on existing roads and trails is the fastest growing summer recreational activity throughout the entire Muddy Mountain Area. Use is expected to continue to grow as popularity increases and national trends reflect growing gas prices and inflation rates. Table 9 provides visitor days by site and year.

Table 9: Visitor Use

| Location | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Rim Campground | 587 | 490 | 592 | 642 | 1,557 |
| Lodgepole Campground | 1,095 | 906 | 1,159 | 1,187 | 2,362 |
| Beaver Pond Trail | 181 | 87 | 126 | 130 | 155 |
| Interpretive Trailhead | 1,150 | 262 | 227 | 413 | 575 |
| Natural Area | 510 | 304 | 413 | 437 | 902 |
| Dispersed Use | 6,867 | 5,689 | 7,910 | 8,336 | 16,672 |
| Visitor Days Total | 10,390 | 7,738 | 10,477 | 11,145 | 21,886 |

III. Financial Analysis:

The following section details daily operations and maintenance costs, revenues and future projections. Table 10 provides an overview of this section.

Table 10: Total Revenues and Annual Costs

| Activity | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Annual Revenues | \$4,000 | 4,500 | 4,500 | \$5,000 | \$5,000 |
| Daily Operations | \$3,800 | \$3,800 | \$3,800 | \$3,800 | \$3,800 |
| Annual Maintenance | \$16,400 | \$16,400 | \$16,400 | \$16,400 | \$16,400 |

Costs:

Annual operation and maintenance dollars for each site is approximately \$8,200 per year. Daily operational costs for include labor and support services by BLM personnel, are paid for out of appropriated dollars and would therefore not be affected by changes to the fee structure. The costs associated with changing the fee structure will be limited to the replacement of informational and regulatory signs as recreation fees. Sign replacement is approximately \$1,500. The existing kiosk will be updated to reflect these projects as soon as possible. Standard U.S. Fee Area signage and logos are posted at the MMEEA sites.

Compliance on voluntary fees is unknown, but is assumed to be relatively high, given the public sense of “ownership” fostered at the sites. Law enforcement ranger, recreation technicians, volunteer campground hosts help with compliance through reminders of fee payment, specific regulations, as well as provide visitor information. Volunteer hosts are reimbursed for expenses related to their duties and responsibilities. These costs average approximately \$2,000.00 per year. The staff works regularly with volunteer groups and other managing agencies to complete improvement projects and help to set annual objectives for use of fee dollars.

Revenues:

Currently overnight use is \$5.00/night per site, \$2.00 for each extra vehicle and \$3.00/day for day use. There is also a place for donations at the main trailhead. Fee revenues and the number of visitor days grew sharply between the 2002 and 2004 and for 2008. Revenues leveled off at an average of approximately \$3,000 a year, with an average of 730 permits per year. Revenues collected in 2008 and anticipated for 2009 demonstrate a marked increase in visitor days and total revenues collected. Annual revenues collected include overnight camping, day use and extra vehicles by fiscal year and are provided in table 11. Table 12 gives the total number of permits by year.

Table 11: Annual Revenues

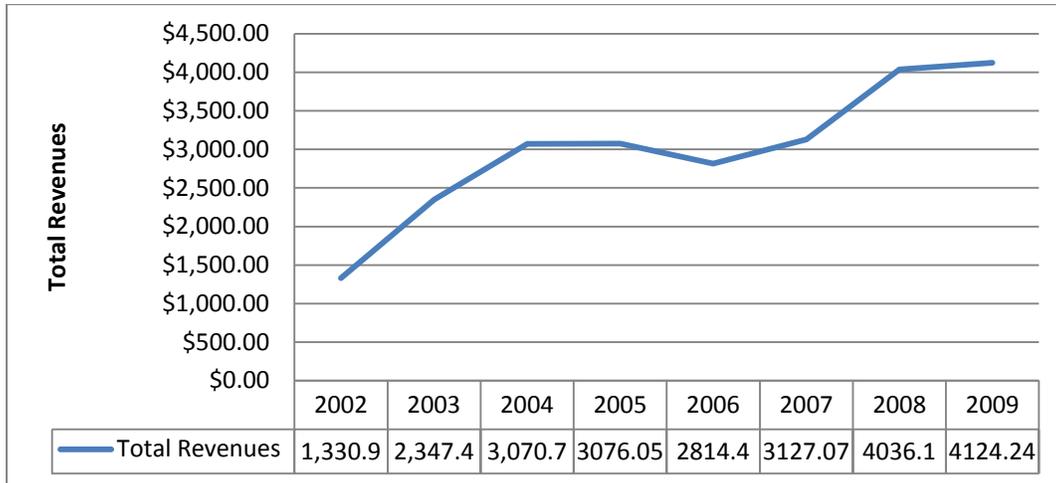
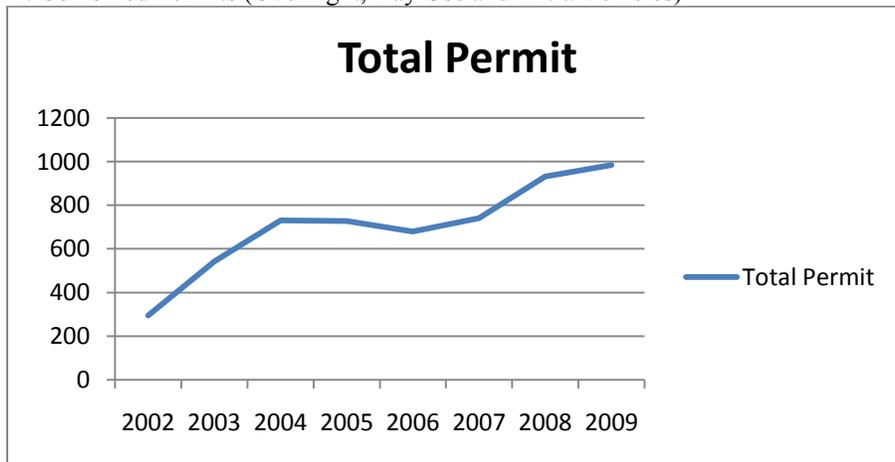


Table 12: Combined Permits (Overnight, Day Use and Extra Vehicles)



Overnight camping at Lodgepole and Rim campgrounds represents approximately 61% and 24 % of all revenues collected within the Muddy Mountain EEA, respectively. Combined day use fees at both campgrounds only provide 6% of the total revenues and represent less than 100 visitor days per site. This demonstrates that compliance with day use is far less than that associated with overnight camping. This is generally contributed to a lack of onsite information and that other campgrounds in the general area have not a day use fee. Revenues collected in fiscal year 2008 and 2009 for overnight camping and extra vehicles totaled \$4,036.10 and 4124.24, respectively. These numbers are slightly higher than in previous years; demonstrating a slow but stable growth in visitation to the area.

The proposed new fee structure would eliminate the day use fee, aligning with other campgrounds in the area. Overnight camp rates would be raised to \$7.00 and extra vehicles would be raised to \$3.00. This would be the first increase for Muddy Mountain in over ten years and would provide additional revenues needed for improvements.

Implementation of the Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area Recreation Management Plan, including existing recreation fees, has been fairly effective. Many of the projects outlined in the plan have been completed and the public has responded positively according to visitor registration comments. Impacts from the increase price to visitors would be slight and would be off-set by the increased service provided. Improvements that are planned for the area include better information on the fee prices, use of revenues and health and safety regulations as well as an increased higher level of maintenance projects being completed on an annual basis.

IV. Fair Market Value Assessment

The following table provides a comparison of campgrounds including amenities. The fee structure being proposed for the Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area lies midway between highly developed campgrounds such as Antelope Run and the Casper KOA and campgrounds comparable to the Casper Mountain campgrounds. The Muddy Mountain EEA is an important local recreation area and is managed in such a way as to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities. Recreation use fees have not been adjusted for inflation in over ten years. A \$2.00 increase for overnight camping and \$1.00 increase for extra vehicles would compensate for the removal of the day use fee. Campgrounds managed by the private sector in this area are generally more expensive but provide a higher level of amenities. Current prices, recreational opportunities and amenities of similar campgrounds within the area have been provided in table 13. This information was found in Camping Wyoming (McClure, 1999)

Table 13: Fee Comparisons

| Site Name | Location | Amenities | Recreation opportunities | Setting | Price |
|-------------------------|-------------|---|--|--|--|
| *Rim | Muddy Mtn | Fire rings, vault toilets picnic tables, potable water, shelters, RV sites (no hook-ups) | recreational trails, interpretive nature trail with over look, wildlife viewing opportunities, hunting | Rural Natural Lodgepole pine intermixed with aspen | Overnight camping \$7.00, extra vehicles \$3.00 |
| *Lodgepole | Muddy Mtn | Fire rings, vault toilets picnic tables, potable water, shelters, RV sites (no hook-ups), potable water | recreational trails, interpretive nature trail, wildlife viewing opportunities, hunting | Rural Natural Lodgepole pine intermixed with aspen | Overnight camping \$5.00, extra vehicles \$3.00 |
| Antelope Run | Bar Nunn | Restrooms & showers, RV Hook-ups, cable TV, laundry and dump stations | heated pool, use of city park | Urban | Full-hook-ups \$18.00, water & electric-\$17.00, tent camping \$12.00 additional person \$2.00 |
| Casper KOA | Casper | Restrooms & showers, RV Hook-ups, cable TV, laundry and dump stations | Heated pool, indoor spa, miniature golf, nightly Barbeques | Urban | Full-hook-ups \$19.00, water & electric-\$18.00, tent camping \$14.00 Kamper Kabins \$26.00 |
| Izaak Walton | Fort Casper | Restrooms & showers, laundry, dump stations | Nature walk, playground, catch & release fishing pond, Fort Casper Museum close by | Urban, river corridor, treed area | Full hook-ups \$16.00, Tent camping \$11.00 additional persons, \$1.00 |
| Casper Mnt Camps | Casper Mtn | Fire rings, vault toilets picnic tables, potable water, shelters, RV sites | Playground, recreational trails nearby, archery range | Rural Natural Lodgepole pine forest | Overnight camping \$5.00 per vehicle |

V. Rationale for Change in Fee Structure

The proposed change in the existing fee structure would reduce confusion among visitors and would have an overall higher compliance rate. Because day use fees are not charged at other nearby campgrounds, the removal of the day use fee places the BLM more in line with the costs of similar recreation opportunities. The BLM does anticipate a slight increase in the total amount of revenues collected.

VI. Objectives for Fee Revenues

While there is no current business plan for the Muddy Mountain EEA, the site is creatively managed to bring together volunteer and other partners. Monies collected in camp fees and SRPs, and grant monies are used to help leverage other existing funds. Partners have donated over \$400,000 of in-kind labor for a variety of projects. The recreation area could not be maintained and visitor experiences kept at a 97% satisfaction level without these additional resources (BLM 2006). There are over 25 various active participant groups. Grants and fee revenues are used for the purchase of equipment and resources used to maintain the site. The objectives set for fees collected would continue this practice and are as follows:

1. Maintaining and improving information and interpretive signs on public lands.
2. Completing annual maintenance at developed recreation sites.
3. Providing for support for volunteer and interpretive programs.
4. Supplement the recreation budget in order to complete partially funded or unfunded projects.
5. Leveraging grant opportunities.

VII. Social/Economic Impacts

The social and economic impacts of the proposed change from the existing structure would be minor. The enactment of the business plan would provide focus for the BLM and provide additional input and accountability to the public. Visitors would feel that they have a say on how fee money is being spent, increasing the sense of public ownership in this area.

Visitor Feedback Mechanisms:

The Casper Field Office has recently tried to improve the way it informs the public on how revenues are collected. A bi-annual newsletter is being published and will be put on the internet. On-site interpretation and postings of recreation fee projects are being completed and press releases will identify recreation projects funded by fee dollars.

Formal methods to collect visitor satisfaction data related to the recreation fee program include state wide audits of the SRP program and visitor satisfaction surveys in Special Recreation Areas. Audits take place once every five years and are completed by independent contractors. They include review of the BLM administrative records and the financial records of commercial permit holders as well as a series of questions related to SRP administration. The outcomes of these audits provide statewide consistency and are used to improve the administrative processes. The recent Wyoming audit was completed in 2008.

Visitor surveys are completed no less than once every five years but can be done as often as every two to three years in special recreation areas such as Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area and Trapper's Route Special Recreation Area. While these surveys are directed towards the average visitor, they will include questions related to SRP when the BLM feels that the visitor may be impacted by commercial use.

Other less formal visitor feedback mechanisms include meetings and informal conversations with the permittees and participants during compliance activities, on site communications with visitors, and close-out meetings with permit holders. In addition, the BLM will meet with individuals or special recreation and volunteer groups while engaged in planning activities. All data collected is used to set recreation priorities, improve visitor satisfaction and sustain environmental resources.

Public Participation:

REA directs the Secretary of the Interior to involve the public in developing recreation fees and requires BLM to establish committees, called Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRACs) or use an existing Resource Advisory Committee, to allow public input on recommendations for fee amounts and their usage, and the establishment of new fee sites. Wyoming has slight variations to this approach as directed by the governor. Wyoming has a Recreation Action Team (REACT) that serves for the fee advisory purpose required by REA. REA provides that recreation fee revenues are available for expenditure without further appropriation, until expended. The BLM practice is to retain and expend at the collecting unit 100 percent of revenues from recreation fees. This document was formally presented to the Wyoming REACT on February 22, 2010 and comments received by this group were addressed during the final edit.

Public participation in this process informally began during the completion of the Wyoming State SRP Audit, and while completing visitor surveys for Trapper's Route and the Muddy Mountain EEA. Additional information was collected during public scoping and comment periods completed during recent recreation activity planning efforts for both The Muddy Mountain Coordinated Activity Plan and for the Trapper's Routes RAMP. All information was used while preparing this document. The public was invited to a public meeting on July 30, 2009 at 6:00 PM. There has been positive feedback by the public.

Literature Cited:

Conder, Al. 2006. Personnel Conversation.

Driver B.L., Douglas Robert W. Douglass, Loomis John B. 2000. Outdoor Recreation And Wilderness In America: Benefits and History. Outdoor Recreation in American Life. Feb. vol. 21.

McClure, Michael. 1999. Camping Wyoming. WigRaf Publishing, Inc.

The Wyoming Business Council. 2009. The Wyoming Tourism 2008 Visitor Profile Report. Prepared by Strategic marketing & Research, Inc. Available from website on the internet as of February 2009: http://www.wyomingbusiness.org/pdf/tourism/wyoming_2008_visitor_profile_report_02.19.09.pdf

US Bureau of Land Management. 2000. Environmental Assessment for the Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area Recreation Area Management Plan. EA. No. WY-062-EA-97-013.

US Bureau of Land Management. 2006. Handbook 2930-1 Recreation Permit Administration.

US Bureau of Land Management. 2007. Manual 2930 - Recreation Permits and Fees.

US Bureau of Land Management. 2006. Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area Visitor Satisfactory Survey. Prepared by the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit.

US Bureau of Land Management. 2009. Budget Planning System. Non-published (limited use documents).

US Bureau of Land Management. 2008. Recreation Fee Program Management Evaluation Wyoming State Fee Projects.

US Bureau of Land Management. 2007. Special Recreation Permit Audit Reports, Notes and Correspondence. Prepared by Tronconi Segarra Associates. Non-published (limited use documents).

US Bureau of Land Management. 2007. Special Recreation Permit Files, Field Notes and Personal Observations. Administered by Bennett, Eve. Non-published (limited use documents).

US Bureau of Land Management. 2006. Trapper's Route Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), Finding of No Significant Impacts and Decision Record. Available from the website on the Internet: <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/cfodocs.html>

US Bureau of Land Management. 2002. Trapper's Route Special Recreation Management Area Visitor Satisfactory Survey. Prepared by the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit.

US Bureau of Land Management. 2009. Trapper's Route Special Recreation Management Area Visitor Satisfactory Survey. Prepared by the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit.

U.S. Department of the Interior. 2004. Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA).

U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. 2006. National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Available from the website on the Internet: http://library.fws.gov/pubs/nat_survey2006_final.pdf

Wyoming State Library. 2008. Wyoming State Government Annual Report. 2008. Available from the website on the Internet as of Feb. 2009: <http://www-wsl.state.wy.us/slpub/reports/2008/Board%20of%20Outfitters%20and%20Guides%2008%20AR.pdf>