

Rawlins Field Office Corral Creek Campground Business Plan

BLM

High Desert District: Rawlins Field Office, Wyoming



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Executive Summary

This business plan proposes a new Recreation Fee Site. The Corral Creek Campground located in Wyoming Congressional District 1. This plan will cover the collection, expenditures and public accountability of the proposed expanded amenity fees to be collected at Corral Creek Campground within the North Platte River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). Recreation fees are also collected for Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) and “America the Beautiful” passes. The proposed fee structure for Corral Creek Campground includes a \$10 overnight camping fee and no day use fee. Fees for Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) are set at the national level with a minimum annual payment of \$105. 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).

Under REA, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is not allowed to charge entrance fees. The BLM is authorized to collect expanded amenity fees. Expanded amenity fees are charged for specialized outdoor recreation sites and services that provide direct benefits primarily to individuals or groups rather than to society as a whole. The individual or group receiving a direct service or using a specialized facility should bear a greater share of the direct costs of providing the service or facility.

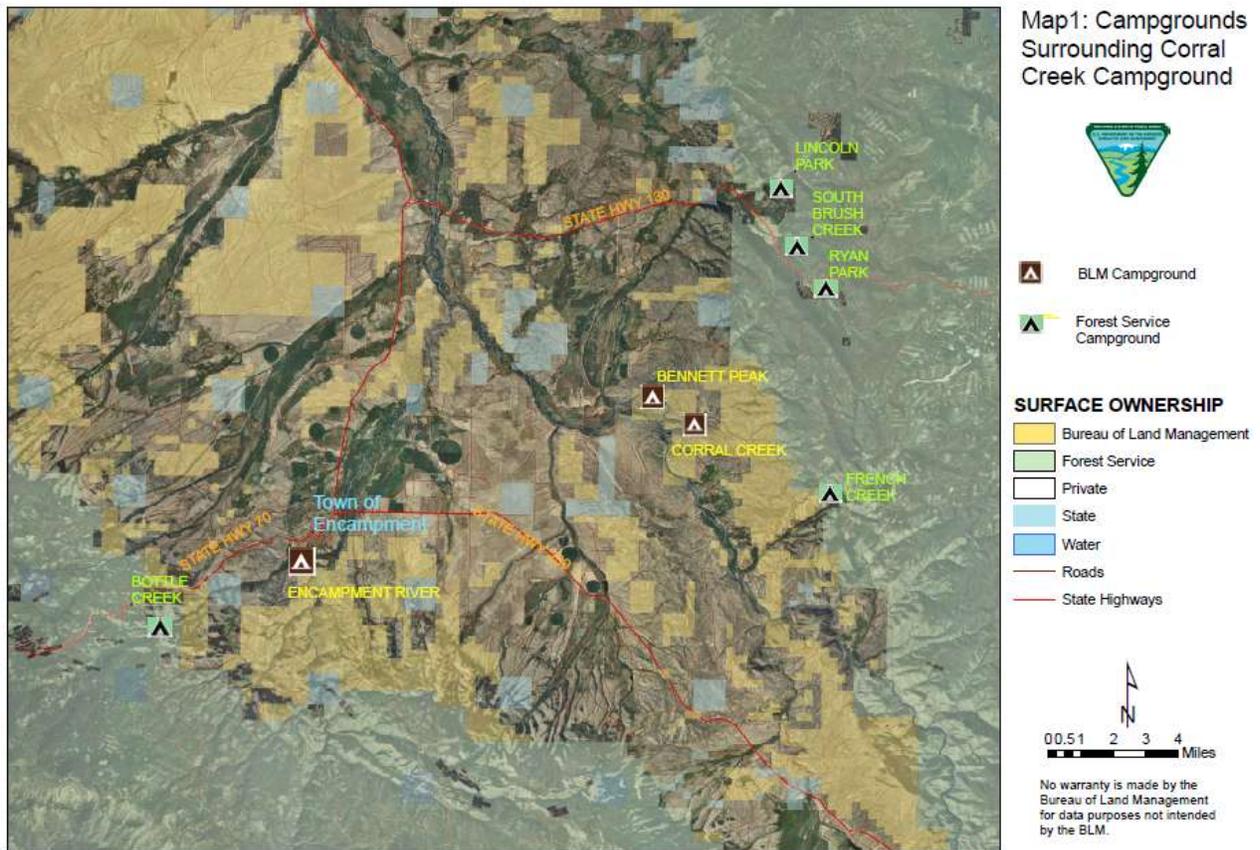
In general, REA directs the Secretary of the Interior to involve the public in developing recreation fees and requires the BLM to establish committees, called Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRACs) or use an existing Resource Advisory Committee, to allow public input on recommendations for fee 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.

The BLM uses six key principles when deciding to charge recreation fees. These principles include: feasibility, equitability, efficiency, convenience, coordination and the ability to reinvest. Simply put, the criterion used when deciding to charge fees creates a common sense approach that requires the total gross revenue to exceed the costs of collection and a fair return on the investment.

The amount charged at Corral Creek Campground would be determined using the following guidelines: (1) the amount charged 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.

The fee program is intended to enable the agency to respond to local, fluctuating needs without depending solely on the lengthy and uncertain congressional appropriations process. Additionally, the BLM staff will work diligently to supplement funding by providing support for volunteer programs, promoting cooperative efforts, and utilizing grant opportunities. Corral Creek Campground is located one mile south of Bennett Peak Campground, as demonstrated in Map 1.

This business plan is being prepared to guide the proposed Recreation Fee Structure at Corral Creek Campground under the direction of the 2013 North Platte River Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP). The 2013 RAMP includes specific guidelines for the development, management, and maintenance of the recreational facilities within the North Platte River Special Recreation Management Area. The RAMP also includes goals, objectives, and management measures for areas which are not developed and which will remain in an undeveloped state. Other BLM planning documents have also discussed the BLM’s priority of proposing a Recreation Fee at Corral Creek Campground. The 1994 Great Divide Resource Area: Recreation Project Plans for Bennett Peak and Corral Creek states that “Corral Creek will be converted to a fee site to conform with local norms and to offset maintenance costs” (pg. 13, Sect. 1a). The 1994 project plan also provides figures for a site plan and planned changes which demonstrate the installation of a pay station and campground improvements to make the site suitable for a proposed expanded amenity fee.



Map 1. Campgrounds Surrounding Corral Creek Campground



Photo 1: The 2013 North Platte River RAMP Decision Record approved a gated four-wheel drive river access for Special Recreation Permittees only in the Corral Creek Campground.

Area Description

The Corral Creek Campground is located along the North Platte River in southern Carbon County, Wyoming. The 10 Corral Creek campsites currently have tent and trailer spaces, picnic tables, fire rings, trash receptacles, and barbecue grills. There is a vault toilet, primitive boat launch, and a hand pump well. During the 2013 National Public Lands Day (NPLD), a team of volunteers and the BLM staff constructed four tent pads and restored six campsites. Garbage is collected and restroom maintenance is currently provided by a contractor. The proposed \$10 per night campsite fee would assist in covering the cost of this contracted maintenance as well as other services and equipment costs incurred directly by the BLM (i.e., facilities maintenance and services on the water pump, tables, grills, fire rings, and toilet).

Table 1. Expanded Amenity Recreation Services and Facilities at Corral Creek Campground
Tent or trailer spaces
Picnic tables
Drinking water
Access road
Refuse containers
Toilet facilities
Fee collection by an employee or agent of the BLM
Reasonable visitor protection
Simple devices for containing a campfire
Group day-use sites
Group overnight sites
Horse Corral (approved to be installed in 2014 season)
Primitive Boat Launch and River Access Trail



Photo 2: Corral Creek Campground accessible water pump.

The Corral Creek Campground is within the boundaries of the Corral Creek Recreation Site which is currently a popular fly fishing access via a foot trail to the North Platte River and is currently one of the most popular campgrounds within the Rawlins Field Office (RFO). The popularity of this recreation site is related to this section of the Upper North Platte River being managed as a Blue Ribbon trout fishery. The fly-fishing float season occurs in late May and June, while fishing continues through September (depending on seasonal stream flows). Hunting season begins in October for deer and elk. Although there are not normally antelope in the campground area, antelope hunters do camp at Corral Creek Campground during the second half of September and elk hunters continue camping in this campground through November.

Common wildlife to the Corral Creek Campground area are: bighorn sheep, mule deer, elk, coyotes, red foxes, bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, dippers (ouzels), pronghorns, Stellar's jays, little brown bats, northern water shrews, porcupines, ground squirrels, cottontail rabbits, striped skunks, muskrats, beavers, tiger salamanders, wandering garter snakes, and northern sagebrush lizards.

The Corral Creek Campground is located on sandy soils overshadowed by steep rocky hillsides. Primary vegetation in the campground includes juniper, pine and cottonwood trees, silver sage, current, rabbit brush, and bitterbrush.



Photo 3: Example of a restored campsite at Corral Creek Campground from the 2013 NPLD effort.

One mile downstream from the Corral Creek Campground is an existing BLM-Administered Recreation Fee Site, Bennett Peak Campground, which is also on Bennett Peak Road (BLM 3404). This recreation site is the most popular and heavily visited recreation site within the RFO. The primary recreation activities at Bennett Peak Campground are fishing, floating, camping, sightseeing, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) riding, wildlife viewing, and hunting. There are 11 campsites along with an accessible vault toilet, hand pump well, boat ramp, and day use parking. There is currently a \$10 per night fee required for camping at this recreation site. The Bennett Peak Campground was reconstructed in 1996. There is currently a hardened boat ramp that was recently expanded to two vehicles wide and a boat ramp parking area for six vehicles with trailers as well as an overflow parking area for 18 vehicles with trailers (constructed in September 2013). The area also includes a hardened accessible fishing area as well as accessible tent pads.

Another nearby BLM-Administered Recreation Fee Site is the Encampment River Campground which is, approximately, 33 miles by vehicle from Corral Creek Campground. Encampment River Campground has eight campsites, a vault toilet, and a trailhead to the Encampment River Trail which extends into Colorado. Each campsite has a table, fire ring and a tent space. Camping fees are \$10 per night at this recreation site. However, pull-throughs for large trailers, tent pads, and a water pump are not available as they are at Corral Creek Campground. The primary recreation activities at Encampment Campground are fishing, floating, camping, hiking, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, and hunting.

Visitor Demographics & Recreation Use

Corral Creek Campground has been a popular day use and camping site for over 35 years. The typical visitation pattern varies with the season of use. During May through August, the majority of visitors travel to this recreation site to fish the Upper North Platte River. The majority of these visitors stay for only one to two nights. A few visitors and larger groups will stay as long as one to two weeks and tend to travel as a family or group of friends. Typically, Corral Creek has been a preferred area for Recreational Vehicle camping because of the large spaces to pull-in for camping and the ease of turning through the large roundabout. Prior to the 2013 installation of tent pads, tent camping was not as popular because of the lack of flat and private spaces (which are offered at the nearby Bennett Peak Campground). It is anticipated that the recent addition of tent pads will increase the number of visitors who prefer tent camping opportunities and disperse use away from Bennett Peak Campground which often reaches capacity on holiday weekends.

Activity	# of Participants	Visitor Days
Camping	1989	272
Fishing	1296	306
Hiking/Walking/Running	907	222
Hunting-Big Game	331	365
Picnicking	264	22
Row/Float/Raft	18	1

*Note that a single participant is estimated to participate in more than one activity.

Wyoming's tourism, between 2011 and 2012, has continued to grow, in spite of increased gasoline prices and waning customer confidence. The Wyoming Tourism 2012 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. From 2008 to 2012, overnight leisure tourism increased from 7.31 to 8.67 million visitors, indicating a 16 percent increase in the frequency of overnight stays.

Wyoming's recreational opportunities are becoming more marketable as trips are becoming more related to specific activities and events. In spite of these national and state level visitor trends, the number of fishing days in Wyoming has grown over the past five years. The North Platte River and its reservoirs are among the nation's most important sport fisheries.

Less than 10 percent of the total fee revenues collected would be spent on costs associated with collections. The actual and anticipated costs of collections would be funded out of the annual maintenance, recreation management and administrative budgets. These budgets would be derived from annual base funding that is allocated to the RFO. Costs would include the burden rate for the Seasonal Recreation Technician, who would be responsible for collecting the fees, and office personnel who would verify the revenues collected and who would be responsible for reporting and depositing fees. There would be a total of less than one work month for all personnel involved, as these duties would be completed in combination with other management activities.

Annual operation and maintenance dollars for the campground would be approximately \$6,000 with approximately \$3,230 for a contract to clean the site.

The fee tubes would be collected by a BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner or a seasonal Recreation Technician using the double locked box method. The locked box is secured in a BLM vehicle and transported immediately to the RFO. Once at the field office, the locked box would be opened by the front desk attendant (who would also be the designated collections officer). The seasonal employee would open the envelopes and count the collected funds while the mail room attendant looks on, verifies the amount collected, and completes a spreadsheet that is also used for entries into the Recreation Management Information System (RMIS).

After the funds have been verified, the mail room attendant logs the collections into the Collections and Billings System (CBS). Reconciliation is done after every transaction. No alternative accounting registers are used to manage the site. No credit cards are accepted for payment.

Currently overnight use at the nearby Bennett Peak Campground is \$10 per night for each campsite. The fees at Corral Creek Campground would be collected on a weekly or bi-weekly basis depending of use levels and access road conditions. Fee revenues and the number of visitor days at the nearby Bennett Peak Campground have fluctuated somewhat since 2011 and for the fiscal year. Revenues averaged \$1,653 a year from 2011-2013, with the highest revenue of, approximately, \$2500 reported in 2011 (a high water year).



Photo 4: Corral Creek Campground, picnic table restoration after 2013 NPLD.

Fair Market Value Assessment

The remoteness and the settings of the developed campgrounds are not currently provided for by the private sector and, therefore, would not compete with the privately owned campgrounds. When comparing the proposed fee of \$10 with the fee structure of surrounding campgrounds on BLM-administered recreation sites and those sites managed by the U.S. Forest Service, there would be a high level of consistency in the fee amounts being charged for overnight camping (see Table 3). For example, Bennett Peak and Encampment Campgrounds are the closest fee sites (within a driving distance of approximately, one and 33 miles, respectively). These two BLM expanded amenity campgrounds currently charge \$10 for overnight camping. The nearby USFS expanded amenity fee sites, within the Brush Creek/Hayden District of the Medicine-Bow Routt National Forest, also charge a \$10 overnight camping fee. It is important to retain a consistent fee structure among campgrounds in order to disperse recreation use within the North Platte River SRMA which currently has several river access areas with higher levels of peak visitor use (i.e., Bennett Peak Campground).

Table 3: Current Campground Fee Structure for BLM Rawlins Field Office & USFS Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District

BLM Rawlins Campgrounds	Recreation Fee	Campground	Day Use
Bennett Peak Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Corral Creek Campground	Proposed Expanded Amenity Fee	Proposed \$10	Free
Encampment River Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Dugway Campground	Non-Fee Site	Free	Free
Teton Campground	Non-Fee Site	Free	Free
Prior Flat Campground	Non-Fee Site	Free	Free
Rawlins Field Office	SRP Fee	Commercial: Greater of a \$105/year or 3 percent of Gross Revenue	
	America the Beautiful Annual Pass	This \$80 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 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.	

Brush Creek/Hayden District U.S. Forest Service Campgrounds	Recreation Fee	Campground	Day Use
Bottle Creek Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Bow River Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Deep Creek Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
French Creek Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Hog Park Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Jack Creek Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Lincoln Park Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Lost Creek Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Ryan Park Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free
Six Mile Campground	Expanded Amenity Fee	\$10	Free

Rationale for Change in Fee Structure

The \$10 fee proposed by the RFO is based on several years of historic data which were used to determine the market value. This consistency is important for public acceptance of the program. Corral Creek Campground is “rustic” and “primitive” compared to similar facilities in the private sector. Therefore, fees tend to be lower and non-competitive with private sector facilities.



Photo 5: Corral Creek Campground future site for an approved horse corral to be constructed in 2014.

Objective for Fee Revenues

The objective is to show, through a business plan, how the RFO intends to operate Corral Creek Campground. Revenues from the sites will be used to operate the sites and make them available to the public. Any revenue collected over and above that needed to operate the sites to the preferred level of service standard will be applied to backlog maintenance and to projects that have been identified in the 2013 North Platte River RAMP. The funds will not be used to replace or displace normal appropriations. Primary projects at the facilities will address critical standards for health and safety concerns where they exist, followed by projects that address needs identified in the North Platte River RAMP.

Objectives for fees collected are listed below and are aimed at improving public recreation opportunities, reducing conflict among non-commercial and commercial user groups and improving public awareness:

1. Maintaining and improving information and interpretive signs on public lands.
2. Completing annual maintenance at developed recreation sites.
3. Providing for support of volunteer and interpretive programs.
4. Providing interim management in highly used areas to mitigate recreation use.
5. Supplement the recreation budget in order to complete partially funded or unfunded projects.
6. Supplement the operations budget in order to implement the approved actions in the Decision Record of the 2013 North Platte River RAMP.

Social/Economic Impacts

The campgrounds do provide positive benefits to the local communities. A locally owned business holds a contract for cleaning of the facility and local construction companies are periodically hired for maintenance and construction projects accomplished in the campgrounds.

A short-term negative reaction would be expected with the establishment of an overnight camping fee at Corral Creek Campground. Examples of a negative public reaction would be an increase in dispersed camping along Bennett Peak Road which would require no fee. This initial reaction would be minor as many visitors have expressed a willingness to pay for fees at developed sites within the North Platte River SRMA. For example, a 2010 campground survey was completed at nearby Bennett Peak Campground (one mile north of Corral Creek Campground, see Table 4). All survey respondents were willing to pay the \$10 overnight campsite fee. However, 75 percent of respondents were not willing to pay more than \$10 per night. When visitors were asked which facilities would meet their needs, approximately 80 percent of customers responded that more information would be helpful and 80 percent responded that more educational information would help them meet their needs. Fifty-eight percent of respondents would like to see better signs, 80 percent more trails, 80 percent more campsites, and 60 percent more restrooms at Bennett Peak Campground. The results of this nearby campground survey suggest that having more campsites available in the area would be a benefit to the visiting public.

Long-term impacts would result from the improved management practices, recreation facilities, and increased maintenance services. Over time, visitors would drive a sense of ownership and responsibility for public lands and become more satisfied with overall improvements at Corral Creek Campground. During the 2009-2010 seasons a visitor satisfaction survey was conducted at Corral Creek Campground. Results of the 2009-2010 BLM Visitor Survey indicated that 87.5 percent of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with the current conditions at the campground while 12.5 percent were very dissatisfied. Open-ended visitor responses concerning the “factors that detracted from trip quality” included: “restrooms need maintenance” (30 percent), “water level too high” (20 percent), and “private property/additional access points needed” (20 percent). Overall, it is the goal of the BLM to decrease the proportion of unsatisfied visitors with improvements and resource protection supported by the proposed campground fee structure.

Table 4: Bennett Peak Campground Questionnaire		
	Yes	No
Do the existing facilities meet your needs?	70%	30%
If not, what other facilities or improvements would you like to see?		
More Information	20%	80%
More Educational Information	20%	80%
Better Signs	43%	57%
More Trails	20%	80%
More Campsites	20%	80%
More Restrooms	40%	60%
Other		
Is the current \$10 camping fee acceptable?	100%	0%
Would you be willing to pay more?	25%	75%
*Percent of answered questions		

The implementation of the proposed fee is not expected to cause a significant negative impact to the economic and social conditions of the surrounding communities. Positive impacts of implementing a recreation fee at Corral Creek Campground include retaining the revenue that would be used to purchase materials and supplies from local vendors, contracting with the private sector where possible to provide needed services, and supporting maintenance projects. Enhancing the campground to attract more overnight visitors would, in turn, provide for additional expenditures within the tourism-based communities surrounding the North Platte River SRMA (i.e., Saratoga, Encampment, Riverside). For example, the 2009-2010 BLM North Platte River Visitor Survey reported that the average expenditure during a visit was \$904. A total of \$65,100 was spent among 72 survey respondents reporting expenditures (approximately 70 percent spent in Wyoming and 58 percent in Carbon County during the 2009 season). About half of respondents were non-Wyoming residents staying overnight. The residency of these visitors was most frequently reported as Boulder, Colo. (12.2 percent), followed by Denver (9.8 percent), Saratoga (7.3 percent), and Laramie and Fort Collins (4.9 percent).



Photo 6: Corral Creek Campground, river access trail and primitive boat launch.

The current \$10 fee structure will be reviewed at the end of every fiscal year and an annual report will be developed which compares year-to-date income and expense for the projects identified within this plan. This review will be shared openly with cooperators and REACT. If the results vary significantly from the business plan, if necessary, corrective strategies will be discussed in an open dialog with cooperators. The final determinations of the review will be communicated on the RFO website, and enlarged and mounted in a professional manner on each information kiosk/bulletin board, and the fee station at the campgrounds.

Fee Compliance and Public Safety

A voluntary fee compliance program would be implemented at Corral Creek Campground. A campground host would be pursued to be stationed at Bennett Peak Campground. This host would implement education and communication to encourage voluntary fee compliance and report any known permit or fee violations to the BLM Law Enforcement Ranger. The public would be required to place fee receipts on the dash of vehicles parked at campsites. The presence of a campground host would also increase levels of public safety by providing radio communication with law enforcement as needed.



Photo 7: Corral Creek Campground, river access trailhead, day-use parking area, and location of the proposed fee payment station.

Partnerships

The RFO will ultimately be responsible for administering the fee sites. Opportunities will exist for partners to be involved. Partners include state and local government, volunteer/host programs, local service organizations and clubs. The RFO will continue to pursue traditional service contracts where they are appropriate.

Visitor Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback from the visiting public would be gathered at Corral Creek Campground with survey question responses and comments on campground fee envelopes. The 2014 Visitor Satisfaction Survey will be conducted at recreation sites within the North Platte River SRMA and would include Corral Creek Campground.



**Corral Creek Campground
Expanded Amenity Fee Site**

Signature Page

The goal of the Corral Creek Campground Fee Collection Project is to ensure that funding is available to maintain existing facilities, provide recreational opportunities and law enforcement presence, develop additional services, and protect unique resources in the area.

Revenues that are generated by fee collection will be used primarily for maintaining and improve recreation facilities and a campground host program; improving environmental education, interpretive information, and existing trails; and increasing the law enforcement presence in the campground to provide a sense of security to the visitors of the recreation site. It is the intent of this fee collection project to provide the public with a high quality recreation experience in the Corral Creek Campground. Therefore, the enclosed Business Plan is hereby approved. This plan is a living document and may be amended at any time with the acceptance by the REACT.



Field Manager
Rawlins Field Office



Date