AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

AgendaTitle:
Visitors; Bureau of Land Management Acting Field Manager Elijah Waters and Associate Field Office Manager Stuart Schneider; Oh Be Joyful Campground Fee Proposal and General Update

Action Requested: Discussion

Parties to the Agreement:

Term Begins: **Term Ends:** **Grant Contract #:**

Summary:
Please see the attached materials provided by the BLM.

Fiscal Impact: None.

Submitted by: Katherine Haase **Submitter's Email Address:** khaase@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date:

County Attorney Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date: Certificate of Insurance Required Yes ○ No ○

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reviewed by: GUNCOUNTY1\khaase Discharge Date: 2/18/2015

○ Consent Agenda ○ Regular Agenda ◉ Worksession Time Allotted: 30 minutes

Agenda Date: 2/24/2015 Follow Up Agenda Date:

Revised April 2013

Katherine Haase

From: Schneider, Stuart <swschneider@blm.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 13, 2015 2:39 PM
To: Katherine Haase
Cc: Elijah Waters
Subject: Agenda Items for February 24th County Commissioners Meeting
Attachments: Briefing for Gunnison County Commissioners.docx; OBJ Map.jpg

Kathy,

1) I'd like to introduce Elijah Waters (from the Glennallen Field Office in Alaska) as the Acting Field Office Manager (through April 3rd) and give an update on when the new manager should be here.
2) Answer any questions re. the new fee proposal for the Oh Be Joyful campground near Crested Butte (2 attachments).
3) Attempt to answer any other questions that may come up.

Thanks,

--
Stuart W. Schneider

Associate Field Manager
Gunnison Field Office
970-642-4964

Briefing for Gunnison County Commissioners: Oh be Joyful Campground Fee Proposal

SUMMARY:

The BLM Gunnison Field Office is proposing an overnight use fee at Oh Be Joyful Campground near Crested Butte, Colorado. The campground is located approximately five miles northwest of Crested Butte along the Slate River. Increased use at this site (BLM estimates that over 50,000 visitors use this area annually) has resulted in undesirable impacts to natural resources and visitor experiences. The BLM would like to improve visitor experiences by improved maintenance, amenities, and facilities with these fees. The proposed fees for this site would be $10/night for a designated site (a designated site has a numbered post, parking space, picnic table and fire pit); and $5/night for a dispersed site (all other camping).

ISSUES:

Although the campground only has fourteen developed sites, there are about 46 dispersed camping sites - places where visitors can park and/or pitch a tent - in and around the campground. This use causes additional resource damage (impacted vegetation, littering, sanitation issues, damage from off-road use and parking, etc.) due to the high numbers of campers. There are serious concerns in regards to sanitation as the site's toilet capacities are often surpassed. Until 2013 there was no BLM law enforcement presence to enforce length-of-stay limitations and other resource regulations. There are presently no commercial or other public tent campgrounds within or adjacent to the town of Crested Butte.

Other issues are access to the south end of the campground across the Slate River (a sometimes dangerous river crossing during high spring flows, or through deep holes that can develop later in the season); no foot access across the river without wading; lack of trash collection; safe drinking water; and eroding river banks adjacent to campsites and trails.

Currently, camping at Oh Be Joyful has a higher demand than available developed campsites. The BLM is struggling with public need versus resource protection in the Slate River drainage. Concern revolves around displacing the concentrated dispersed camping around Oh Be Joyful only to create a bigger impact in another location. Our goal is to manage OBJ camping to create a positive healthy experience for the user yet minimizing resource impacts to the larger Slate River area.

OPERATING COSTS:

No additional staffing needs are anticipated. Infrastructure needs and start-up costs would include a few new signs, campsite number posts and a fee envelope dispenser. For BLM personnel to collect fees twice weekly, operating costs would increase by around $2,800 for the summer. A campground host could reduce this amount of time and costs needed by assisting with fee compliance checks by visiting campsites daily.

The estimated cost of maintaining and patrolling the existing campground, trailhead, and resources is approximately $14,000 per year. This includes labor (personnel costs for maintenance), supplies & materials, replacing/repairing equipment (picnic tables, signs, etc.), transportation costs, renting portable toilets, and pumping the vault 2-3 times (minimally) a season.

REASONS FOR FEE IMPLEMENTATION:

- Improve overall management of the campground;
- Increase capacity to reduce visitor-use impacts at other locales along the Slate River;

- Continue/increase facility maintenance;
- Better protect water quality, vegetation and other natural resources;
- Increase visitor compliance;
- Create an enjoyable, high-quality/equitable experience for all visitors.

HOW FEES WOULD BE USED:

Fees collected could enable the BLM to:

- better maintain the access and campground roads;
- replace damaged signs;
- mitigate/reduce stream bank erosion;
- install, repair or replace equipment (picnic tables, signs, barriers, etc.);
- continue pumping the vault toilet; rent portable toilets for peak periods; leverage funds to purchase/install another permanent toilet;
- perform additional maintenance such as cleaning restrooms and fire pits, picking up trash, etc. ;
- greet visitors and share important mission-related educational information;
- concentrate campsites in appropriate areas;
- provide a map and better visitor information for a kiosk;
- provide a stipend for a campground host.

FEE STRUCTURE & ANTICIPATED REVENUES:

We propose a two-tiered fee system: a $10 fee for the developed sites and a $5 fee for dispersed sites with the current facilities provided. Amenities for all sites include toilet facilities, campfire containment (fire grate or rock ring), tent space, reasonable visitor protection and parking. Developed sites have a picnic table and dispersed sites do not. A fee is necessary for the entire OBJ Campground area. If only the developed sites were charged, then the number of dispersed campsites in and around these sites would increase, leading to more resource damage. As picnic tables and fire grates are installed at appropriate sites, a $10 fee would then be charged. We project revenues to be ~$11,700 increasing to $17,600 over a five year period (anticipate that compliance would rise from 60% initially to 90%).

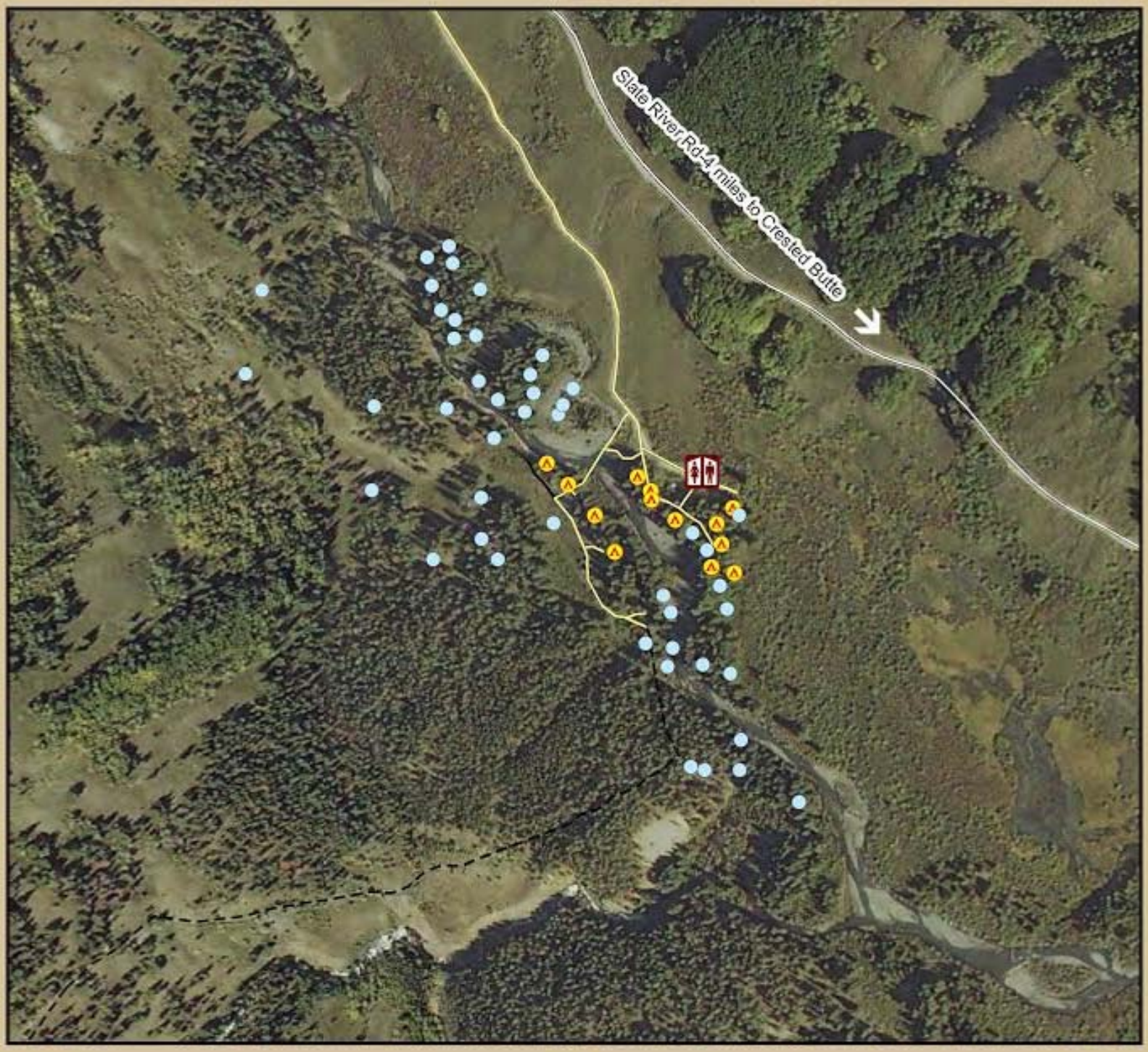
AFFECT of PRPOSED FEE on USERS

Charging a fee at OBJ will increase the appreciation of the facilities provided and the value of the natural resources for visitors at this site. It will decrease vandalism, littering, discourage people who are living illegally on public lands and create a better sense of stewardship for the natural resources along the Slate River. There would be no net effect on other service providers in the area, since the other campgrounds are in either different drainages or located long distances away. The campground would offer no competition to the RV site in Crested Butte because it is only for RV's and does not allow tent camping.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Extensive public involvement is planned. A poster will be placed at the campground bulletin board from Memorial Day through Labor Day; an announcement was placed on the Gunnison Field Office public bulletin board and a notice will be placed on our website. News releases in local media sources will be issued. Notifications will also be placed at local applicable businesses (bike shops, camping supply stores, etc.) and other public locations. The fee proposal will also be shared at the next Congressional Briefing, placed in the Federal Register and communicated to various local organizations (Town of Crested Butte, Coal Creek Watershed Coalition, CB Land Trust, Mt. Crested Butte) as well as permittees.

Oh Be Joyful, Campsite Inventory July 2014



LEGEND

- 1 CXT, Single Hole Restroom
- Developed Campsite
- Dispersed Campsite
- County Road
- Unmaintained Passenger Car Road
- Primitive Road (high clearance)
- Single Track (foot/horse)

N

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 Miles

PROJECT LOCATION INSET