

Desolation and Gray Canyons of the Green River Special Management Area

Draft Business Plan

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Price Field Office

(Revised in September, 2012 to include proposed transition to Recreation.gov permit system)



*“We enter a
region of the
wildest
Desolation”*

John Wesley Powell 1869

*Powell’s Lighthouse Rock,
August 11, 1871*



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PRICE FIELD OFFICE
125 South 600 West
Price, Utah 84501



In Reply Refer to:
2932 (UTW02000)

Dear Reader,

Enclosed for your review and comment is the *Draft Business Plan for Desolation and Gray Canyons of the Green River*. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Price Field Office manages Desolation and Gray canyons for primitive recreation. Each year, about 5,500 rafters, kayakers, canoeists and other visitors compete through a reservation system to obtain a permit to enjoy outstanding recreational experiences on these uniquely spectacular public lands.

The Price Field Office proposes to change the reservation system from a telephone call-in system to the national Recreation.gov online reservation and lottery system. This change will improve the public's opportunity to obtain a river permit by offering 24-hour access to the reservation system. It will also ensure that every applicant has an equal chance of obtaining a permit.

The proposed change to Recreation.gov reservation system will not increase individual fees. In most cases, the result is a net decrease in group fees. With the change, there will no longer be a \$20 reservation fee to obtain a permit and a \$10 transaction fee to make subsequent changes to the permit. Instead of these fees, there will be a \$6 fee for each application submitted or launch reserved. Special Area fees will remain at \$25 for each trip participant. Details of the proposed changes begin on Page 9 of this document.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act authorizes the BLM to regulate the use of the public lands through permits, and the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act authorizes the BLM to collect recreational fees when sites and areas meet specific criteria.

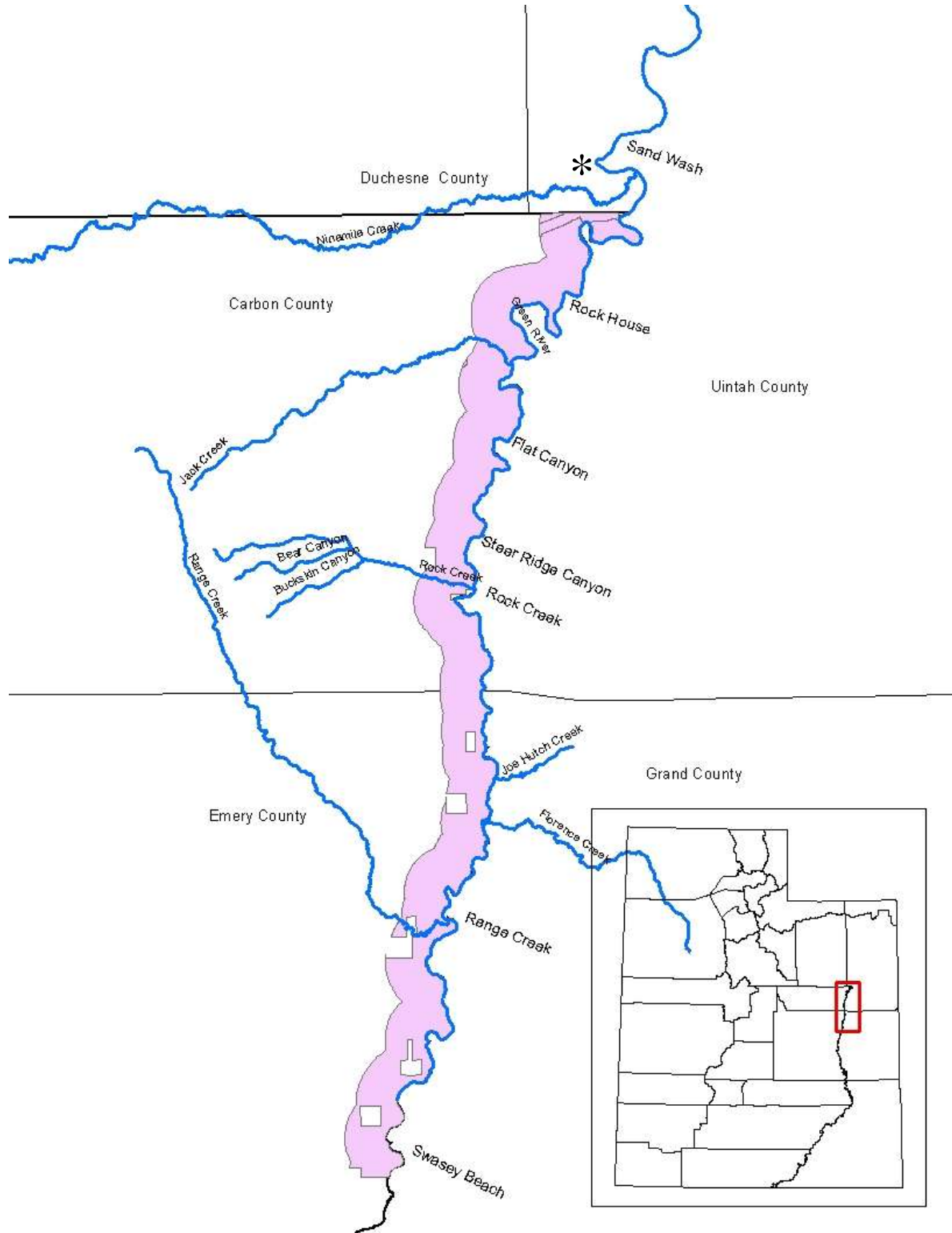
The objective of the *Draft Business Plan for Desolation and Gray Canyons of the Green River* is to provide you with the opportunity to review how the reservation system is operated and the proposed changes to the reservation system. Then give you the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed changes. Comments may be mailed to BLM, River Business Plan Comment, 125 South 600 West, Price, UT 84501 or emailed to mblocker@blm.gov (put "river business plan comment" in the subject line). Comments are due by November 10, 2012.

Thank you for your interest in your public lands.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Clabaugh
Field Manager

Desolation Canyon Recreation Area



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Area Description

Desolation and Gray Canyons of the Green River are located in Central Eastern Utah between the cities of Vernal and Green River. The Green River enters Desolation Canyon just north of Sand Wash as it exits the Uinta Basin. The river neatly divides the Tavaputs Plateau into its East and West components. The canyon is cut over a mile deep. The record of the rocks in this canyon is remarkably short and young. The oldest formation in the Desolation and Gray Canyon systems is younger than any bedrock exposed in walls at Lodore Canyon, Cataract Canyon and the Grand Canyon. River runners launch in the age of mammals and take out in the last period of the Dinosaurs. Desolation Canyon walls are all stream and lake deposits of Eocene age. Around Three Fords Canyon a transition begins out of the Desolation Canyon geology and into the Cretaceous delta and sea deposits of Gray Canyon.

The vegetation of the canyon is best described in terms of elevation and distance from the river. Along the river, the riparian zone is a verdant river of life, dominated by willow, cottonwood, box elder and other woody riparian species. This vegetation zone provides critical habitat to neo-tropical migrant birds, nesting waterfowl, wintering deer and elk and is a haven for reptiles. Moving away from the cool shade of the riparian zone, one immediately enters a desert environment dominated by salt shrubs and bunch grasses. There is a small sagebrush zone that gives way to the sparse pinyon and juniper slopes. Throughout, the view is always dominated by rock and cliff. Douglas fir trees find homes in protected, well watered alcoves that occasionally interrupt the vast walls of stone.

Sixty riffles and rapids punctuate the trip below Jack Creek. None are particularly difficult – a dozen or so can cause some trouble for the unwary, unprepared or unlucky traveler. Camping tends to be idyllic. You park the boat on a clean, sandy beach in an eddy perfect for swimming and bathing. Right behind the beach, a grove of cottonwood trees offer shade and a windbreak.

More than 60 side canyons descend from the plateau to meet the Green River. Every side canyon holds a surprise. In a few, a cold, clear stream pours into a warm silty river. Some may even offer a hanging garden of orchids under a small spring or waterfall. Even the most dry and desolate side canyon contains reminders of those who lived here for over 8,000 years. Prehistoric rock art is prolific. Take time to look and you will see the ruins of dwellings, towers and granaries. The Old Ones are gone, but the wildlife depicted in their rock art is still here.

Administration

Desolation and Gray Canyons of the Green River is managed by the BLM's Price Field Office. The area actually includes area in three field office areas. The entry point, Sand Wash, and the first four miles of the river are located in the Vernal Field Office. The last 14 miles of the canyons are shared by the Price (west of the river) and Moab (east of the river) Field Offices. The take out point, Swaseys Boat Ramp, is located in the Moab Field Office. By interoffice agreement, the Price Field Office is responsible for recreation on the entire area.

Special Designations

Of the 84-mile long river segment, 66 miles are within the Desolation Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA). This WSA is BLM's largest in the lower 48 states. The lands outside the WSA have been inventoried and found to have wilderness character.

The Desolation Canyon National Historic Landmark (NHL) extends one mile either side of the river from Nine Mile Creek to Florence Creek. The Landmark was designated by the Secretary of the Interior in 1969 as part of the centennial celebration of the 1869 exploration of the Green and Colorado Rivers by John Wesley Powell. This river segment was selected as the Landmark because it was the least changed from the original exploration.

There is a 320-acre Archaeological District at the mouth of Flat Canyon. Both the archaeological district and the NHL are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Green River in Desolation and Gray Canyons has been found to be suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Special Recreation Management Area

The Desolation Canyon Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) was established in the Price River Management Framework Plan of 1983. The SRMA extends from Sand Wash to Swaseys Boat Ramp and includes lands within two miles of the river.



Powell's Lighthouse Rock



The SRMA is a destination area of national and international significance. Appendix A further describes the management strategy, experiences and beneficial outcomes for this SRMA.

Desolation Canyon Recreation Program Mission Statement

We provide opportunity for a high quality, primitive recreation experience for all people, now and forever.

Management Goals and Objectives

Recreation use is managed under the Desolation and Gray Canyons of the Green River, River Management Plan. This plan was signed in 1979 and was incorporated into the Price River Management Framework Plan of 1983. It is incorporated by reference in the Price Field Office Resource Management Plan. The River Management Plan contains six objectives directing the management of the SRMA:

1. Maintain the natural character of the canyon environment in Desolation and Gray Canyons.
2. Provide for the equitable distribution of available user days to a broad spectrum of the public.
3. Provide a continuing opportunity for a quality wilderness type experience between Sand Wash and Nefertiti Rapid.
4. Provide an opportunity for day use oriented recreation below Nefertiti Rapid.
5. Protect the scientific value of cultural resources while allowing for their enjoyment.
6. Provide for safe and lawful use of the river resource.

Due to the emphasis on maintaining the naturalness of the canyon environment, most of the BLM management happens off site. Between Sand Wash and Nefertiti Rapid, there is no recreation management infrastructure in the canyon. There are no facilities of any kind, not even a single sign. There are no assigned campsites. Once they launch, users are free to set their itinerary and camp and hike wherever they please. There are a number of hiking trails in the canyon. These are maintained only as necessary to protect adjacent resources and prevent trail braiding.

The off site management consist primarily of the permit system including required permits and permit stipulations designed to protect both the user and the environment. Visitor contact at Sand Wash is also an important component of management. Every trip is inspected for permit compliance and information about the canyon and the importance of protecting natural values is provided. Regular patrols of the canyon provide further compliance checks, monitoring of conditions, weed control and site clean up.

Infrastructure is provided at Sand Wash. There is a primitive boat ramp, a primitive eight site campground, a contact/information station, staffed ranger station and toilets. This remote site does not provide trash receptacles or water. This location has been kept fairly primitive to help the visitor transition to the wilderness environment of the canyon. Due to the remoteness of the area and long drive times to get to Sand Wash, many groups camp there the night before their launch on the river. Because Sand Wash frequently experiences plagues of mosquitoes, reaching Biblical proportions, BLM has provided four of the campsites with 12 foot by 16 foot screen cabins.



This contrasts with the more developed Swaseys Boat Ramp where the user can transition back to a more urban environment. At this location, there is a large, concrete boat ramp, along with improved parking, toilets, and trash removal services.

A copy of the permit stipulations can found in **Appendix A**.

Visitor Demographics

Except where otherwise noted, the following demographic information is compiled from the *Utah River Study Results Report: Recreational Use, Value and Experience of Boaters on Rivers Managed by the BLM in Utah*. This five volume report was published in 2001 by Utah State University, Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism. The study was done under a contract from the BLM and Utah Travel Council.

Approximately 50 percent of users come from Utah and Colorado. Twenty-five percent hail from other western states. Another 20 percent originate from states outside the west and five percent are international visitors. International and non-western states visitors are probably under-reported for a variety of reasons. They are more likely to be on their first noncommercial trip or on a commercial trip. For noncommercial trips, the permit holder is most likely to be a resident of the region even if others on the trip originate elsewhere. The survey technique was more likely to obtain response from the regional residents.

Table 1

Age distribution of users (2001 survey)	
Age	Percentage of Users
15-20	16
21-30	16
31-40	23
41-50	33
51-60	7
61-70	4
>70	1

Sixty-three percent of users fall in the 30 to 60 age group. This represents a general aging of the user population. In 1975, 40 percent of the users were in the 21 to 30 year old age group. This population is very well educated; 72 percent of users report having a college degree. This compares with 25 percent of the United States population (U.S Census, 2003).

Desolation Canyon users are also experienced river runners. Forty-five percent of the users report having multiple Desolation Canyon trips with seven as the average number of previous trips. Seventy-five percent rate their river running experience as at least intermediate. These users report an average of seven river trips per year.

Typical Desolation Canyon visitors have well defined expectations and report these expectations are met, resulting in satisfying outcomes. The two outcomes rated as most important are the experience of solitude and nature and social interaction. The ability to experience natural areas, beautiful scenery, experience a remote area, and quiet and tranquility all were rated as extremely important aspects of solitude and nature. For social interaction, relationship with family and friends on the trip was the most important component. Among non-commercial users small group sizes contribute to these outcomes. The average group size is eight, but the modal group size is only four. The experience and thrills of running whitewater was rated as being only slightly important to the experience.

Users report their expectations are met and they are highly satisfied with their experience and outcomes. Reported dissatisfaction deals with conditions that are beyond BLM’s control. These complaints deal with wind, mosquitoes, and condition of county roads in Duchesne and Uintah counties.

River users on Desolation and Gray canyons have been paying fees since 1983. The river is used at its carrying capacity of 35,000 user days per year and demand for permits exceeds the supply. The Utah River Study found strong support for permit and use fees on Utah rivers.

Recreation Use

Recreation use in Desolation Canyon is governed by the 1979 River Management Plan. This plan established a carrying capacity of 35,000 user days per year and places limits on the number of launches allowed per day. A permit is required year-round to run Desolation Canyon. Permits are issued only through advance reservation to individuals 18 years and older.

The 1979 plan established a maximum group size of 25. Use was allocated between commercial and non-commercial sectors on a 50/50 basis, but time has shown that about 70 percent of permits are used by private boaters. There are currently 16 commercial guides and outfitters operating in the canyon. Launches that are unused by commercial outfitters are offered to private boaters. The following table shows recorded use between 2001 and 2011:

Table 2

Desolation-Gray Canyons Visitor Use Numbers 2001-2011									
Private Permits					Commercial Permits				Total
Year	# people	Trip Length	User Days	% of Total	# people	Trip Length	User Days	%of Total	Total User Days
2001	3732	7	26,124	63	2594	6	15,564	37	41,688
2002	2408	7	16,856	56	2173	6	13,038	44	29,894
2003	3223	7	22,561	73	1671	5	8,355	27	30,916
2004	3311	7	23,177	67	1904	6	11,424	33	34,601
2005	3752	7	26,264	70	1905	6	11,430	30	37,694
2006	3753	6	22,518	70	1601	6	9,606	30	32,124
2007	3615	6	21,690	66	1902	6	11,412	34	33,102
2008	3761	7	26,327	74	1575	6	9,450	26	35,777
2009	4405	6	26,430	77	1302	6	7,812	23	34,242
2010	3756	7	26,292	76	1373	6	8,238	24	34,530
2011	4723	7	33,061	75	1867	6	11,202	25	44,263
Averages	3,676	7	30,059	70	1,806	6	10,685	30	35,348

The recreation season is divided into high use and low use periods. High use runs from May 15 through August 14. Up to six launches per day are allowed during the high use season. Low use season is the remainder of the year and only two launches are allowed per day.

Use of the river is constrained by the launch limits. The river use is at or near capacity during the period of May through August. There are two discernible trends in visitor use. One is increased use, particularly

by the noncommercial sector, in the spring and fall shoulder seasons. The other is an increase in the total number of boats. The popularity of smaller rafts, catarafts and inflatable kayaks has resulted in more boats on the river carrying the same numbers of people.

Proposal to Move to Recreation.gov

Recreation.gov is an online trip planning, information sharing and reservation system that includes 12 federal agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers and the National Archives. It currently offers advance reservations at 2,500 federal areas for over 60,000 facilities and activities. Permits for several popular whitewater river trips, including the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, the Main Salmon, the Selway River and Hell's Canyon of the Snake River are currently issued through Recreation.gov.

The proposal to move the reservation system to Recreation.gov would go into effect Dec. 1, 2012, and would allocate launches for the 2013 season.

Existing Process

Private river launches are made using a call-in reservation system with no lottery. Launch reservations are issued on a first come, first served basis via telephone or in person up to five months in advance. Launches may be reserved up to five months prior to the launch date. For example, a June 3 launch may be reserved anytime on or after January 3. You can obtain any available launch within the five month period. If the first call-in date falls on a Saturday, Sunday or Federal Holiday, reservations will be taken on the next business day. You may only hold one launch reservation at a time. Available launches are posted on our website www.blm.gov/utah/price. This website is updated daily. Cancelled private and commercial launches are available to private users and posted on the website as they become available. The river reservation desk at (435) 636-0975 operates from 8 a.m. until noon, Monday through Friday. In-person reservations may be made during business hours any time after 1p.m. on the first call in date. The current system has been in use since 2006.

- **The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), 2004**, repealed applicable portions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and replaced BLM's authority to collect recreation fees in 2004. This current law authorizes BLM to collect recreation fees at sites that meet certain requirements, allows BLM to keep the fee revenues at the local offices where they were collected, and directs how BLM will manage and utilize these revenues. FLREA also established the America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Pass Program.
- **Title 43, Part 2930 of the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 2930)**, contains the regulations governing BLM's recreation permitting programs.

Commercial Launches

Commercial permit holders have permanent launches with a set allocation every year. Commercial operators may also request additional temporary launches for one operating year at a time. Currently there are no additional fees for obtaining temporary launches. There is a cancellation policy for commercial launches as outlined in the commercial stipulation attachment (**Appendix B**). The \$25 special use fee and the 3% of gross profits are paid at the end of the operating season pending submittal of a post-use report.

Existing Fees

Special Area Fees (“permit fees”) are \$25 for each participant on a private or commercial river trip. There is currently a \$20 reservation fee for each private reservation made using the call-in reservation system. There were 550 reservations made in 2012, generating a total of \$11,000. There is a \$10 transaction fee charged when changes are made after the initial reservation. There were 387 transactions in 2012, for which the BLM collected \$3,870. Commercial operators are required to pay a 3 percent fee based on the gross revenue from the trips.

Process and fees with Recreation.gov

The river season on Desolation and Gray consists of low-use and high-use periods. The high-use period runs from May 15 to August 14 when up to six launches per day are permitted. The low-use period includes all dates before May 15 and after August 14, when a maximum of two launches per day are permitted. These two periods will not be changed, but under the Recreation.gov system, all high-use launches and some of the low-use launches will be allocated through a lottery system. Some low-use launches will be allocated by an online reservation system, operated on a first-come, first-served basis, also through Recreation.gov.

Private Permits

Starting December 1, 2012, you can access Recreation.gov for private river permits. At this point you can reserve launches for low-use dates between January 1 and April 30 and October 1 through December 31 can be reserved at this time. These permits will not be part of a lottery and can be reserved at any time starting December 1, 2012.

On December 1, 2012, you will also be able to apply for the lottery for launches between May 1 and September 30. You will need to complete an application for this portion of the lottery. A lottery application will allow you to select up to four dates to launch on Desolation-Gray. Applications will be accepted from December 1, 2012, to January 31, 2013. All applicants will be notified of the lottery results in early February.

Applicants will be notified in February and asked to confirm acceptance of a launch date by paying for one or more passengers. Permits that are obtained through the lottery or by reservation that are cancelled more than 21 days before the launch date will receive a full refund. No refunds will be given for cancellations within 21 days of the scheduled launch. All payments will be final seven days before the launch or when the permit is printed. No changes to the permit can be made after this point. Only the Price Field Office will have the authority to make changes after this point.

A launch reservation is not a river permit. A permit will be issued after all fees are paid.

Summary of proposed changes to private permits under Recreation.gov

- The current \$20 reservation fee and \$10 transaction fee will be eliminated. Users will have to establish an account and profile with Recreation.gov. Ability to reserve a launch 24 hours a day.
- A \$6 application fee each time you apply for a permit on Recreation.gov. If more than one prospective trip participant applies for a permit, each must pay the \$6 application fee.

- Permits that are obtained through the lottery or by reservation that are cancelled more than 21 days before the launch date will receive a full refund. No refunds will be given for cancellations within 21 days of the scheduled launch.
- No telephone call-in to the Price Field Office, but the office will continue to provide customer service for river users who have questions regarding river conditions.
- The special area fee would remain at \$25 per person. A confirmation and payment for at least one participant will be due by March 15. Additional participants may be added at no charge until 7 days before launch. Final payment for all participants is due 7 days before launch.
- Cancelled launches will be returned to the shared pool available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

Commercial Permits

Commercial permits will continue to have permanent launches and will still be able to request temporary launches one year in advance.

Permanent launch dates will need to be confirmed by March 16 by indicating one guide or passenger on the permit. Temporary launches will need to be confirmed by March 15 by indicating one guide or passenger and paying the \$6 reservation fee along with any special use fees for passengers.

All special use fees for passengers will need to be paid 7 days before the launch date.

The cancellation policy for dates that were confirmed and \$6 fee paid can still be cancelled with no additional fees if cancelled more than 21 days before the launch date. There will be \$150 penalty fee for dates cancelled within 21 days of launch and not rebooked either commercially or privately. Launches that are not cancelled, and fail to show up will have a \$300 no show fee.

Summary of proposed changes to commercial permits under Recreation.gov

- Permanent launches will need to be confirmed by March 16 by indicating a guide or passenger and paying the special use fee of \$25 per passenger.
- There will be a \$6 reservation fee for each temporary launch date requested. Commercial operators will be required to confirm the launch date by paying the \$6 fee and indicating one guide or passenger will be on the trip. There is no special area fee for guides. Indicating a passenger would require the \$25 special area fee and the \$6 reservation fee.
- Special use fees for all passengers must be paid 7 days before the launch.
- Launches confirmed but then cancelled more than 21 days before the launch have no additional fees.
- Launches with 21 days have a \$150 penalty fee if not rebooked.
- Confirmed launches that fail to show up and launch will have a \$300 penalty fee.

Rationale for the change to Recreation.gov

Changing from a call-in system to Recreation.gov will provide boaters with 24 hour, 7 day a week access to the reservation system. It should increase the fairness of the system. Under the current call-in system, the permits available for a given day during the high use season are typically issued within 15 minutes, leaving Price Field Office employees to field telephone calls for several hours to explain that all of the permits have been issued.

Allocating permits through the Recreation.gov lottery system gives every applicant an equal chance of drawing a permit. It also frees up BLM employees to work on other elements of the river and recreation program.

The switch would produce less, but still significant benefits, such as a reduction in the amount of paper produced by the river program and eliminating the need for BLM employees to obtain private information, including credit card numbers.

Financial Analysis



Desolation Canyon at Trail Canyon

Cost Recovery Assessment

The BLM expects the switch to recreation.gov will result in a net decrease in the total amount of fees collected by the Price Field Office. Under the proposed change in permit systems, the BLM intends to eliminate the current \$20 reservation and \$10 transaction fees now in place. Those fees amounted to about \$14,870 in 2012.

A \$6 application fee will be charged for each person who applies for a Desolation/Gray canyon permit for the 2013 season. It is expected there will be about 3,000 applications for those permits, which will

generate an estimated \$18,000. All of the funds generated by application fees will be used to administer the Recreation.gov fee program, which is operated by a third-party provider. None of the application fees will be returned to the BLM Price Field Office and the Desolation-Gray canyon river program.

The loss of revenue to the river program will be compensated by not having to pay for a portion of the salary of the recreation assistant who currently handles the permit program.

The proposed changes in the reservation system should not reduce the level of service private and commercial boaters deserve and have come to expect from the river program. Knowledgeable BLM employees will continue to provide assistance to the public in the Price Field Office, at the Sand Wash Ranger Station, and while patrolling the Green River.

Table 3

Desolation Gray Canyons Program expenses 2006-2012								Projected
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Labor	163,057	169,579	176,363	183,418	179,130	154,318	179,655	153,405 ¹
Vehicles	8,500	8,840	9,194	9,562	9,945	19,585	15,229	15,229
Travel – per diem	12,000	12,480	12,979	13,498	14,038	9,661	18,673	18,673
All other expenses ²	32,797	26,177	27,225	28,314	29,447	31,809	53,997	44,997
Total	216,354	217,076	225,761	234,792	232,560	215,373	267,554	232,304

¹ Based on subtracting ¼ of the labor from the recreation assistants' job

² All other expenses includes boat and supply purchases, contracts for vault pumping, toilet cleaning, and water hauling, and any maintenance needs for the river program

Fees collected from private boaters and commercial outfitters are used exclusively for the Desolation Gray Canyons river program administered by the Price Field Office. Fees pay the salaries of seasonal river rangers who patrol Desolation Canyon and staff the Sand Wash Ranger Station. They also pay for a portion of the salaries of the recreation planner in charge of the river program and the recreation assistant who administers the program.

Special Area fees also pay for equipment used to support the river program, including rafts and vehicles, and for the maintenance of facilities such as campgrounds, parking areas and the outhouses at the boat ramps at Sand Wash and Swasey's Beach.

Table 3 demonstrates that there will be a reduction in labor expenses to the program. This is due to the recreation assistant not having to answer phones and take reservations since all reservations will be handled through Recreation.gov. Table 4 demonstrates that BLM's fee revenues could be reduced by the elimination of reservation fees and transactions fees. These fees will be replaced with a \$6 application fee. There would be a projected \$14,870 reduction in projected revenues from eliminating the reservation and transaction fees that would be unnecessary as a part of the Recreation.gov reservation system. However, this reduction in revenue would be offset by an estimated \$26,250 in reduced river program operating costs by eliminating much of the labor that is necessary to support the existing call-in reservation system.

Table 4

Fees collected by BLM under current and proposed permit systems from private boaters		
	Current (2012)	Recreation.gov (using 2012 fees)
Reservation Fees	\$11,000	0
Transaction Fees	\$3,870	0
Application Fees	0	0
Special Area Fees \$25 per person	\$87,475	\$87,475
Totals	\$102,345	\$87,475

Table 4a

Fees collected by BLM under current and proposed permit systems from commercial outfitters		
	Current (2012)	Recreation.gov (using 2012 fees)
Application Fees	0	0
Special Area Fees \$25 per person	\$30,925	\$30,925
3% fee	\$65,395.30 ¹	\$65,395.30 ¹
Totals	\$96,320.30	\$96,320.30

1. based on 2011 commercial outfitter revenues

Under the proposed system, the overall group cost to obtain a private permit would go down in many cases. The \$20 reservation fee and the \$10 transaction fee will be eliminated. In its place would be a \$6 application fee. ***The number of people in each party who apply for a permit determines the total group cost in fees.***

For example, if you obtained a Desolation-Gray Canyons permit for the 2012 season and paid for one person to confirm the launch, your initial cost would have been \$45 (\$20 reservation fee plus \$25 Special Area Fee). If you added nine people to the trip prior to the launch date, you would have paid \$10 for a transaction fee plus \$225 in Special Area Fees for nine people. The total fee cost for the 10-person trip would have been \$280 (\$250 for Special Area Fees, \$20 reservation fee and \$10 transaction fee).

If these same 10 people choose to float Desolation-Gray Canyons in 2013 with the proposed change to Recreation.gov, the overall cost is determined by the number of people who apply for that permit. If only one member of the party applies, the total cost would be lower (\$250 for Special Area Fees, \$6 for application fee, for a total of \$256). If all ten members of the party applied in an effort to increase the odds of drawing a permit for that date, the overall cost would be higher than in 2012 (\$250 for Special Area fees, \$60 for application fees, for a total of \$310).

Table 5a

Cost to private boaters under current and proposed systems		
	Current	Recreation.gov
Reservation Fees	\$20	0
Transaction Fees	\$10	0
Application Fees	0	\$6
Special Area Fees \$25 per person	\$25	\$25
Totals	\$55	\$31

Table 5b

Commercial Desolation Canyon Fees comparison with Recreation.gov		
	Current	Recreation.gov
Application Fees	0	\$6(for temporary launches only) ¹
Special Area Fees \$25 per person	\$25	\$25
Commercial SRPs gross revenues	3%(collected by the BLM)	3%(collected by the BLM)

1. Temporary launches are for commercial operators that requested launches for the next year in addition to their allocated annual launches for that year

Social/Economic Impacts



Sand Wash Airstrip. Many users fly to Sand Wash in chartered aircraft. This service typically costs \$150 per person.

Economic factors

The estimated cost for an individual who takes part in a Desolation Canyon river trip is \$235 for private boaters and over \$1,000 for commercial passengers. These figures would not change with switching to Recreation.gov. The major costs of the trip are transportation, shuttle and food. Permit costs would amount to about 11 percent of the cost of a private trip.

The average length of a private Desolation-Gray Canyon river trip is about six days. At \$25 per person in Special Area Fees, that's just over \$4 per person per day. River fees and fee collection systems vary considerably on federal river management programs, so for comparison purposes it is useful to break down fees to a per-person, per-day basis. On most river programs, the average per-person, per-day cost is about \$5-\$6. The fees for Desolation-Gray canyon are well within current standards.

As noted above, the proposed change would result in a net decrease in group fees in many cases. According to the Utah River Study, the imposition of fees and fee increases -- or fee decreases -- does not seem to depress recreational use on rivers around the West.

Visitor Feedback Mechanisms

Accomplishments under this program are not measured in new infrastructure or amenities. The BLM is committed to keeping the natural character of the canyon and protecting its cultural sites. A primary objective of the river program is to preserve the Green River corridor and to provide for primitive recreation.

This is accomplished primarily by off-site and indirect efforts such as the permit system, directly through interaction between visitors and river rangers at Sand Wash, and through contacts with the Price Field Office. Most river users have many years of experience on federally managed rivers and know what they are getting when they obtain a permit. Additionally, extensive details about Desolation-Gray Canyons and the river management program are available on the Price Field Office web site.

Public Participation

Public outreach on this proposal has been underway since February 2012. The proposal has been posted on the Desolation Canyon web page and has been the most viewed page on the Price Field Office website.

The proposal has been posted on three private boater message boards (Utah Whitewater, Idaho Rafters, and Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association). These sites account for several thousand views per month. The proposal has been posted in the visitor contact station at Sand Wash and has been sent out with each new permit issued during 2012.

Rangers at Sand Wash have discussed the proposed change with the majority of groups that launch on the river. Thus far, there has been little response. No negative comments have been received by the BLM.

Appendix A

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT RIVER USE STIPULATIONS FOR PRIVATE LAUNCHES, NONCOMMERCIAL USE

DESOLATION CANYON

Trips may be delayed or permits invalidated if conditions in these stipulations are not met. Failure to comply with stipulations or launching without a permit may result in penalties under Federal or Utah law and regulations. Penalties may include criminal action, civil action, and denial of future permits.

1. **The permit is not transferable** without prior approval of the issuing office and must be in the possession of the permittee on the trip. **Permittee must provide photo ID at permit inspection.**
2. The permittee must allow rangers to complete permit checks to determine the validity of the permit, ascertain that the group has all required equipment, and orient participants about river etiquette and safety.
3. **The permittee must** have at the launch:
 - a. a group of **25 people or fewer** and not greater than the number pre-paid for on the permit,
 - b. a **first aid kit** with adequate materials for the size of the group and sufficient for treating serious injuries,
 - c. a **repair kit or kits** with adequate materials to repair the types of boats used on the trip,
 - d. an **air pump or pumps** adequate to inflate boats after repairs.
 - e. a **washable, leak-proof, reusable toilet system** that allows for the carry-out and disposal of solid human body waste in a responsible and lawful manner. The system must be adequate for the size of the group and length of the trip. **Leaving solid human body waste on Public Land or dumping it into vault toilets or trash receptacles at BLM facilities is prohibited.**
 - f. a durable metal **fire pan** at least 12 inches wide with at least a 1.5 inch lip around its outer edge and sufficient to contain fire and remains. **Fire pans must be carried on all trips, even if stoves are to be used for cooking.** Fire blankets under fire pans are recommended to facilitate total ash removal.
 - g. a properly-sized **Type I, III, or V PFD** (approved on the label for paddling, whitewater, kayaking) for each member of the party.
4. **Each raft, dory, or canoe must** have at the launch:
 - a. **an extra oar, paddle, or motor capable of maneuvering** the vessel, and
 - b. **a bail bucket** or bilge pump (does not apply to self-baling boats, kayaks, and inflatable kayaks).
5. Parties using low capacity vessels (kayaks, inflatable kayaks, or canoes) must carry spare paddles as follows: **1-3 such craft require 1 spare paddle**, 4-6 required 2 spare paddles. 7-9 required 3 spare paddles, etc.
6. Each boat 16 feet or longer must have a **Type IV throwable device** or a commercially made rescue rope with at least 40 feet of line.

7. **The permittee must ensure** that all trip participants:

- a. carry all charcoal, fire ash, garbage (dishwater strainers recommended), solid human body and pet waste out of the river area,
- b. adhere to the Utah Boating Act (Title 73, Chapter 18), **which includes the wearing of life jackets where required** (children ages 12 and under must wear PFD's at all times when boating on the river, and all persons must wear a PFD from Jack Creek Rapid to the take out.), **and registration of motorboats,**
- c. do not engage in commercial use as defined by 43 CFR 2932.5, i.e., 1) make a salary or profit or increase his or her financial standing as a result of the permitted trip, 2) charge other participants a fee or charge that is not strictly a sharing of trip costs, or 3) collect money or compensation in excess of actual expenses for the trip. Normally participants are not in a commercial use situation if they equally share the actual trip costs,
- d. list any trip sponsor or affiliated organization, e.g., scout group, school, etc., associated with the trip on the permit application,
- e. keep side canyon streams and springs free of soap and other contaminants, not remove, damage or destroy archaeological, historical, or ecological resources, including antlers, or cause unnecessary or undue damage to the natural and cultural resources of the public lands.
- f. do not camp or build fires on Public Land within ½ mile of the mouth of Rock Creek.
- g. make campfires only in fire pans and limit the use of gathered wood for campfires to driftwood found along river banks and beaches,
- h. not engage in upstream motorized travel except for emergency purposes, or engage in downstream motorized travel at other than a slow, wakeless speed
- i. launch, travel (stay within visual contact), and camp together as a group. No boats may be sent ahead to secure campsites. Groups launching separately may not camp together if such action would result in more than 25 persons occupying a campsite, and
- j. boat tags issued by the river ranger must remain attached to boats for the entire trip.

8. Pets are prohibited on the Desolation and Gray Canyons section of the Green River year round.

9. Minimum trip length is 3 calendar days. Maximum trip length is 9 calendar days.

Appendix B

Commercial Special Recreation Permit Supplemental Stipulations Specific to Desolation Canyon

- (1) Trips between Sand Wash and Nefertiti Rapid must be a minimum of three calendar days and a maximum of nine calendar days. Trips longer than nine days may be approved upon request for the period from August 15 to May 15.
- (2) Public lands within one-half (1/2) mile of the confluence of Rock Creek and the Green River is closed to overnight use and fires.
- (3) Motorized boats between Sand Wash and Swasey Rapid are limited to downstream travel only at a slow, wakeless speed.
- (4) Minimum use requirement is 200 passenger days (not including crew days nor training trips). Failure to exceed minimum use for two consecutive years is grounds for permit termination.
- (5) A launch date for river areas with group size limits, authorizes the permittee to launch one group with a maximum number of 25 passengers, who must launch, travel, and camp together as a group. No separate groups may camp together if the result would be a larger number than that allotted to launch as a single group. Split launches and other deviations from this requirement must be authorized in advance through the appropriate BLM office. Launch reservations will be based on a commercial launch calendar supplied to the outfitter no later than September 1 of the preceding year. The permittee will follow the established launch calendar with the following exceptions:
 - (a) Launch dates may be exchanged with other permitted outfitters on the same river segments with their concurrence. The permittee must notify the BLM office administering the river segment of any exchange by telephone or in writing at least one working day prior to the launch date. If telephone notice is used, the permittee acquiring the launch date must follow up the telephone notice with a written notice.
 - (b) Permittees desiring additional launch dates must make a request for additional dates to the BLM office administering the river segment. Additional launch dates will be granted on an as-available basis.
 - (c) The Price BLM office must receive notification from the permittee of launch dates that are not going to be used forty-five (45) days in advance of the launch date. Permittees cancelling a reserved launch with fewer than 45 days notice must pay a reservation fee if another outfitter or private group does not re-book the launch. The reservation fee is:
 - i. \$75 for trips cancelled less than 45 but more than 29 days from the launch date.
 - ii. \$150 for trips cancelled less than 29 days from the launch date.
 - iii. \$300 for trips not cancelled that also fail to show up and launch.
- (6) The permittee shall collect from each passenger, the Special Area Fee for Desolation Canyon (currently \$25/person, subject to change). All passengers, whether paying or not are required to pay this fee. Employees of the permittee working on the trip are exempt from this fee. Special Area Fees shall be remitted to the BLM with the end of the season payment.