

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Twin Falls District  
Burley Field Office  
15 East 200 South  
Burley, ID 83318

**Scoping Information Package  
Milner Historic Recreation Area Project  
DOI-BLM-ID-T020-2012-0022-EA**

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to expand and enhance the outdoor recreation opportunities available at the Milner Historic Recreation Area in accordance with the Cassia Resource Management Plan (RMP). Federal actions must be in conformance with the RMP that was approved on January 24, 1985. Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) with an estimated completion date of October 1, 2012. Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

**Purpose and Need for Action**

The Milner Historic Recreation Area is a popular destination in southern Idaho for outdoor recreation. However, most of the existing recreation facilities and structures are of considerable age, inconsistent in colors and types of materials, exhibiting various stages of deterioration and not sufficient to meet the needs of the existing and expanding uses occurring at this site.

In the Bureau of Land Management's Guidelines For a Quality Built Environment, it states: "In support of our responsibility to manage diverse landscapes and multiple uses, the BLM will provide safe and accessible facilities for the public and its employees that are sustainable, attractive, functional, cost-effective, and responsive to the place and settings."

The Milner Historic Recreation Area is no exception to this statement. To fall in-line with the BLM's vision of sustainability, attractiveness, functionality and cost-effectiveness, a number of amenities and facilities within the Milner site need improvement.

Therefore, the purpose of this project is to renovate and improve the overall design of the Milner Historic Recreation Area to achieve sustainability, attractiveness, functionality and cost-effectiveness.

## **Existing Condition**

The Milner Historic Recreation Area lies along the Snake River, 9 miles west of Burley, Idaho. Several camping recreation sites dot the four-mile shoreline. The area's basalt cliffs and surrounding sage grassland provide habitat for wildlife species including songbirds, waterfowl and upland game. The fishery in the Milner Reservoir is excellent for bass, channel catfish, yellow perch and trout.

Over 100 years ago, emigrants on the Oregon Trail passed through here, and segments marked by deep ruts are still visible. Just north of the west entrance to Milner, there is an interpretive shelter and a hiking trail that leads to some of the ruts.

Existing recreation facilities that have deteriorated include picnic tables, shelters, trash receptacles, signs, campfire rings, boat docks, fencing, roads, trails, campsites and fishing areas.

Existing natural features also are lacking for a recreation facility. Specifically, the site lacks sufficient ornamental vegetation and there are few shaded areas.

## **Proposed Action**

The proposed action is to improve the existing site facilities and develop new facilities at the Milner Historic Recreation Area. Improvements would be made to recreation facilities, structures, site fixtures and vegetation to improve the recreation opportunities and overall experience of the site.

Campgrounds and picnic areas would be improved or expanded using the following the guidelines:

- Campsites and picnic areas would be clearly defined with concrete curbing as a boundary to reduce disturbance and erosion.
- Material with campsites and living spaces would consist of a compacted road base.
- Concrete pads would be constructed around campfire rings and cabanas.
- Tent pads would be elevated with pressure treated timbers as edges.
- Sites would have generous parking areas for a variety of vehicle sizes and to provide space to move around vehicles.
- Adequate surface and space around the site elements would be provided to accommodate accessibility.
- Sites would be gently sloped to provide drainage.
- Components would be arranged to take into account the prevailing wind direction to keep smoke out of living spaces.

Boating Facilities would be improved or expanded using the following guidelines:

- Boat ramps would be built within a 12-15 % gradient into the water.
- Adequate parking would be provided for both standard vehicles and vehicles with trailers.
- Launch preparation areas would be provided to minimize traffic congestion.
- There would be a turnout on the exit corridor to allow a safe area for cleaning and tie down.
- Facilities would be designed to ensure access to water at high and low water levels.
- Facilities would be designed to maximize views of natural features and minimize views of boating facilities.

Trailheads and Trails would be designed using the following guidelines:

- There would be minimal site disturbance to preserve existing vegetation.
- Trails would use paving material for accessibility.
- Areas would be gently sloped to provide drainage without erosion.
- There would be shoulders on each side of trails to provide buffers between the natural vegetation and the trail and also to help control erosion.
- Kiosks and interpretive signs would be installed near parking areas to provide information.
- Man-made or natural barriers such as fences, vegetation, basalt boulders or other rocks would be used to separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Bridges or crossings would be constructed of natural materials and would consist of colors relative to other site furnishings and fixtures.
- Trails would meander to fit within natural elements of the site while minimally disturbing existing vegetation and geological features.
- Seating would be provided at strategic locations to maximize view and natural settings.

Structures (Cabanas, Pavilions and Shelters) would be designed using the following guidelines:

- A limited palette of materials, styles, colors (primarily black, browns and sage greens) and textures would be selected for consistency.
- Custom elements and materials may be used when trying to reflect a sense of place and setting, but would be consistent with other site fixtures and furnishings.
- Wind breaks would be incorporated on the prevailing wind side of cabanas, pavilions and shelters.
- Structures would be constructed of durable and long lasting materials, and would include recycled materials where appropriate.
- Cabanas, pavilions and shelters would be located to maximize views of natural features.
- Structures would use low profile, more horizontal roof lines where possible to match the natural terrain.

Signage and other site furnishings (such as benches, fire rings, picnic tables and barriers) would be designed using the following guidelines:

- A limited palette of materials, styles, colors (primarily black, browns and sage greens) and textures would be selected for consistency.
- Custom elements and material may be used to capture a sense of place and setting but would be consistent with other site fixtures and furnishings.
- Interpretive signs, kiosks and information panels would be built consistently.
- Materials used for sign construction would be durable and long lasting, including materials such as basalt rock, rustic timbers or powder coated steel.
- Materials for barriers and fencing would be reflective of the site and its character, and compliment the surrounding landscape.
- Barriers or fencing would be strategically placed to prohibit vehicular access or to separate vehicular traffic from pedestrian traffic.
- Boulders found on site would be used to reduce cost and provide a contextual link to the adjacent landscape.

Landscape use of vegetation for screening and shading would be designed using the following guidelines:

- A diverse mix of native and drought tolerant species would be selected that reflect the natural character of the site.
- Planting areas would be located based on the appropriate micro climate and soil conditions.
- Planting groups would mimic native plant communities by using layering, arrangement and spacing techniques.
- Trees and shrubs would be used to frame views or as windbreaks for key locations.
- Drip irrigation may be used to help establish plants.

### **Specific Site Plans Proposed**

#### West and East Entrance Fee Areas

- Two separate kiosks will replace the existing single kiosks.

#### Perch Point

- Perch point would be converted from an overnight campground and fishing area to a day-use area with picnicking facilities and amenities.
- The existing camp sites and cabanas would be removed and converted to picnic areas.
- New facilities would include a nine car parking lot, two RV parking spaces, one pavilion with picnic tables (to accommodate up to 20 people), and a fee tube/pay station.
- The existing boat dock would be upgraded.
- New trail segments would be created that link with the Western Oregon Trail and the Bicentennial Site.

### Bicentennial Site

- The Bicentennial Site which currently serves as a mixed day and night use areas is proposed to be a day-use only area with a new boat ramp and parking.
- A new boat ramp with boat docks would be added.
- Sufficient parking for vehicles and trailers would be provided.
- New interpretive signage would be placed at trailheads.
- Facilities that would be removed include the existing interpretive signage, shelter, amphitheater, road, camp units and the small boat dock.
- A new well would be developed for irrigation and culinary use.
- New Trail segments would be created that link with the Site Center and Perch Point.

### Oregon National Historic Trail and other Pedestrian Trails

- To accommodate increased use and interest in the Oregon Trail, a ten-foot wide paved trail is proposed along both the west and east sections of the Oregon Trail. Similar paved trails are proposed to connect each area within Milner.
- New trailheads, interpretive shelters (cabanas) and signage would be created.
- Benches would be installed along new trails at key locations.
- Trails would be marked implementing a consistent system.

### Site Center

- This will be a day use area with a reservation group site.
- A trailhead would be added to the proposed pedestrian trail located along the original Oregon Trail.
- The site would be landscaped and would include wind breaks.
- Electricity and culinary water would be provided.
- Two new large group cabanas with picnic tables would be installed.
- Sufficient parking for boat trailers and vehicles would be provided.
- Six new interpretive panels (48"x72") would be installed highlighting the Oregon Trail, local wildlife, geological formations, prehistory and local history of the Milner Dam.
- Existing cabanas, walks, grills and horseshoe pits would be removed.
- New Trail segments would be created that link with Cedar Circle, Cedar Point and Bicentennial Sites.

### Cedar Point and Cedar Circle

- New RV campsites would be developed.
- Existing tent campsites would be upgraded.
- Electricity and water would be provided.
- A fee tube/pay station would be installed.
- Landscaping would be provided including trees for shade.
- A new host RV campsite would be developed.
- New site furnishings would be installed.

- New trail segments would be created that link with Trout Point and Site Center.

#### Trout Point

- The existing boat dock would be upgraded.
- A fee tube/pay station would be installed.
- Existing campsites would be upgraded.
- New trail segments would be created that link with Bass Bay and Bass Point, and Cedar Point and Cedar Circle.

#### Bass Bay and Bass Point

- Existing campsites would be upgraded.
- Group campsites with larger group cabanas would be developed.
- A fee tube/pay station would be installed.
- A trailhead would be added to Oregon Trail with an interpretive shelter and signage.
- New trail segments would be created that link with Muskrat Bend and Trout Point.

#### Muskrat Bend

- Existing campsites would be upgraded.
- A fee tube/pay station would be installed.
- One new campsite would be developed.
- A pedestrian trailhead would be created near the existing restroom.
- New trail segments would be created that link with Bass Bay and Bass Point.

#### Hobson

- The existing campsite would be upgraded to a day use only site.
- The access road would be abandoned.
- A new boat dock with public access would be provided.
- The site would be accessed by boat only.

#### *Additional Design Features*

- Construction of facilities outside existing developed areas would occur outside the migratory bird nesting season to avoid harming migratory birds.
- Construction of facilities would be staggered to ensure recreation opportunities are provided on a continuous basis.

## **Preliminary Issues**

The Hobson Site is currently a single overnight campsite and is only legally accessible by boat. Due to distance from other campgrounds, limited access through private property, and difficulty in maintaining and monitoring the site, the BLM is considering abandoning this campsite for the present time.

## **Preliminary Alternative Development**

The only preliminary alternative identified through internal scoping would be an alternative similar to the one proposed but which would remove the facilities at the Hobson site and restore the natural vegetation.

## **Decision to be Made**

The Burley Field Manager will decide the overall design for the Milner Historic Recreation Area, including which facilities to upgrade and which new facilities to develop to achieve the objectives stated in the purpose and need. If the Field Manager decides to apply the treatment, he will also determine which design feature mitigation measure or restrictions are needed to reduce impacts to the natural resources in the project area.

## **Public Input Needed**

Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action, preliminary issues, and alternatives. Comments made on this proposal would be most helpful if they are received by August 10, 2012 and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA.

Written comments must be submitted to Michael Courtney, Field Manager, 15 East 200 South, Burley, ID 83318. The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are 7:45 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc), or portable document format (.pdf) to [BLM\\_ID\\_BurleyOffice@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_ID_BurleyOffice@blm.gov). E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. To be most helpful, comments sent electronically should include the title of this project in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

Additionally, a public scoping meeting will be held at the Burley BLM Fire conference room, 2630 Overland Drive, Burley, ID 83318, on July 11, 2012 from 4 – 6 pm.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Jeremy Bisson, Wildlife Biologist, 15 East 200 South, Burley, ID 83318 (208) 677-6618.

Copies sent to:

Idaho Department of Fish and Game  
Idaho Department of Agriculture  
Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation  
Chad Coulter Fish & Wildlife Dept.  
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes  
Chairman, Land Use Policy Commission  
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes  
Federal Land Advisory Group