

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment
DOI- BLM-UT-Y010-2016-0037 EA
January 2016**

Hittle Bottom Recreation Site Remodel

Location: Hittle Bottom Campground, mp 22 on Highway 128, Grand County, Utah

Applicant/Address: BLM, 82 East Dogwood, Moab, UT 84532

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Moab Field Office
82 East Dogwood
Moab, UT 84532
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

INTRODUCTION

The Moab Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management proposes to remodel the existing Hittle Bottom Recreation Site by rerouting the boat ramp entrance road, adding one individual campsite and one toilet, and moving the Group Site upstream along the Colorado River. This fee campground is located immediately adjacent to Utah Highway 128 at about milepost 22. The recreation site already includes a reservable group site, two boat launches to the Colorado River and 13 individual campsites.

The Hittle Bottom area had been a popular dispersed camping site for decades, as well as the main put-in point for the Colorado River Daily. In the early 1990's, the BLM restricted camping to the campground, improved the user-made boat ramps, provided boat parking and installed four toilets. A reservable group site was added in 2013 (immediately adjacent to the boat ramp) and four individual sites were added in 2014. Since that time, the popularity of the area for camping has increased, as has use of the boat ramps. Hittle Bottom is the most popular boat ramp along Highway 128; the majority of commercial river companies use it to initiate trips. In addition, private boaters utilize the Hittle Bottom ramps. This means that parking near the boatramp is at a premium, toilets near the boat ramp can see a line forming for their use, and competition for the shade shelter arises between boaters and camper.s

The BLM proposes to remodel the Hittle Bottom Recreation Site to improve the traffic flow at the boat ramp, maximize the number of parking spots at the boat ramp, and move the camping to the other side of the campground in order to reduce user conflicts between campers and boaters. The group site would be moved to the upstream side of the campground; an additional toilet would be added near the group site and one extra individual campsite would be added. In this way, groupsite campers would be separated from individual campers, and congestion at the boat ramp would be lessened.

See Appendix B for a diagram of the proposed remodeling of facilities.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Hittle Bottom Recreation Site is a popular recreation destination, as it is located very near the Utah Highway 128 corridor. The Highway 128 corridor hosts up to one-half million people per year; many of the users are out-of-area tourists who are interested in camping. Although the BLM has 11 fee campgrounds along Highway 128, the number of campsites is not sufficient to meet demand. This means that visitors often camp illegally or on private land because they cannot be accommodated in a BLM campground. There is a need to provide additional campsites (including group sites) along Utah Highway 128, the most popular recreation destination in the Moab Field Office.

In addition, Hittle Bottom is the primary put-in location for commercial river companies and private boaters on the Colorado River "Daily". There is a need to separate out

boating use from the camping use that occurs at the downstream end of the campground, and to improve traffic patterns at the boat ramp to enhance visitor safety.

The proposed action is to improve traffic patterns around the boat ramp, separate boating use from camping use (moving the group site to another part of the campground) and add one individual campsite and one toilet to the Hittle Bottom Recreation Site to provide quality camping and boating experiences within a scenic, heavily used recreation corridor.

CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN

The proposed action described below is in conformance with the 2008 Moab Resource Management Plan (RMP). Hittle Bottom is within the Colorado Riverway Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), which is managed as a Destination SRMA (page 87).

RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act mandates multiple use of Public Lands, including recreation use. An objective of BLM's recreation policy is to satisfy recreation demand within allowable use levels in an equitable, safe and enjoyable manner, minimizing adverse resource impacts and user conflicts.

The proposed action specifically implements the Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Recreation Management for BLM Lands in Utah by seeking to repair long-term damage caused by dispersed and illegal camping. The proposed action "limits or controls activities through specialized management tools such as designated campsites. . . and (places) limitations on number of users."

CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

There are two alternatives: (a) the Proposed Action, to realign the road to the boat ramp, relocate the group site upstream and add one individual site and one toilet at Hittle Bottom Campground and (b) No Action, which is to not construct the additional facilities and not to move the group site away from the boat ramp. The No Action alternative is considered and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the proposed action.

PROPOSED ACTION

The BLM would remodel and existing fee campground and boat ramp. The entrance road to the boat ramp would be made one way, and additional parking would be provided. The existing group site (next to the boat ramp) would be moved to the eastern end of the campground. One additional individual site and one extra toilet would be added at the Recreation Site (see Appendix B for campground diagram). Existing facilities at this location include a group site, two boat ramps, 13 individual campsites

and four toilets. The boat ramps, group site shade shelter and existing toilets would remain in place. The existing shade shelter would become a waiting area for boaters (there is a need for a waiting area while boats are being rigged). The group site would be moved with a new shade shelter built; one toilet would be added, as well as an additional individual campsite.

The new group site and the new individual site would have picnic tables and fire rings; The group site would include walk-in tent sites. Weed control would occur throughout the campground, as necessary, to control weed invasion.

The remodel of the campground would be executed by BLM employees. Should any fossils be unearthed during construction, construction activities would cease and the District paleontologist called to assess the situation. The area provided for group site tenting would be limited so as to limit new disturbance on the east side of the campground.

New surface disturbing activities that would remove nesting structure would not occur during the migratory bird May 1st through July 31st.

New surface disturbing activities that would remove nesting structure and potentially disturb raptors would not occur during raptor nesting season, March 1st through August 31st. An exception would be granted if raptor habitat breeding season surveys have been completed and it is determined that no nesting raptors occur in the construction area.

NO ACTION

The campground remodel would not be authorized or constructed.

CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SETTING

The affected environment of the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in Appendix A, the Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist. The checklist indicates which resources of concern are either not present in the project area, or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis. Critical Elements of the Human Environment are those elements that are subject to the requirements specified in statute, regulation, or executive order, and must be considered in all EAs (BLM H-1790-1, Appendix 5). Critical Elements of the Human Environment are included in Appendix A. Resources, including Critical Elements, which would be impacted to a level requiring further analysis are described in Chapter 3 and impacts on these resources are analyzed in Chapter 4 below.

Recreation

The Utah Highway 128 corridor has been a popular recreation destination for many years; it has been utilized by recreationists since World War II. Recreation activities in

the area include boating, hiking, jeeping, bicycling, climbing, horseback riding and sightseeing. Approximately one-half million people recreate along the Utah 128 corridor each year. Until the early 1990's, camping was not restricted to campgrounds, resulting in the entire corridor filling with campers on a busy spring weekend. In the early 1990's, restrictions were imposed that required all camping to be in the campgrounds, thus freeing up the rest of the river corridor for wildlife use.

Recreationists utilize the Hittle Bottom Recreation Site for two main purposes. There are 12 campsites and one group site at the location (right next to the boat ramp). Hittle Bottom serves as the put in for the Colorado River "Daily" float trip. Approximately 70,000 people utilize the boat launch per year; the majority of these are commercial passengers. The Hittle Bottom boat ramp is used to prepare for river trips down the Colorado River "Daily". While the trips are being prepped, the passengers (especially commercial passengers) are required to wait until the boats are ready. This fact often leads to commercial passengers milling around the boat ramp, invading the group site and getting in the way of boats, trailers and vehicles at this busy location.

Campers who use Hittle Bottom are often, but not always boaters, who choose to camp at the most convenient location to their upcoming boat trip. The campground is also used by commercial boating companies, who launch their passengers on the river on the day after their camping experience. Campers also use Hittle Bottom to explore the nearby area, whether hiking, bicycling or jeeping. Many camping groups seek to utilize a reservable group site, as they are assured a camp spot; in addition, the group sites are configured to meet the needs of groups ranging in size from 15 people to 30 people.

Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds

The proposed new group site is in an area that is a tamarisk treatment site with Russian knapweed understory

Vegetation

The upland vegetation in the vicinity of the campground consists of greasewood and grasses.

CHAPTER 4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS

PROPOSED ACTION

This section analyzes the impacts of the proposed action to those resources described in the Affected Environment, Chapter 3, above.

Recreation

The remodel of the Hittle Bottom Campground would have the effect of separating boating from camping activities, to the benefit of both recreation experiences. The safety at the boat ramp would be enhanced by improved traffic flow; vehicles backing up to the

boat ramp would need to worry less about milling pedestrians in their path. Additional parking spots for boaters would also be gained in the remodel. The current group site would become a raft staging and waiting area (thus removing passengers from the busy traffic area). The existing toilet facilities on the west side of the recreation site would be provided solely for boaters, lessening lines at these toilets.

Moving the group site to the east side of the campground, and providing a separate toilet facility and vehicle entrance would enhance the group site experience. The group site's distance from the individual campsites would enhance individual campers' experiences, as they would not need to put up with the hustle and bustle of the group. Consideration was given to having the group site on the south side of the highway; this was rejected because of the necessity of group campers crossing a busy highway.

The addition of an extra individual site would increase camping capacity at a busy location.

Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds

The addition of camping activity on the east side of the campground may result in increased Russian knapweed. Vegetation control measures undertaken by the recreation maintenance staff would lessen this increase in knapweed.

Vegetation

Some upland vegetation would be removed for the construction of the one-way boat ramp access road (see Diagram in Appendix B). Additionally, some upland vegetation would be removed for the construction of the new group site.

NO ACTION

The No Action alternative would not meet the need for the proposed action and would not provide a recreation resource for the traveling public.

Recreation

The campground would not be remodeled; boaters and campers would continue to mix at the recreation site. Traffic patterns around the boat ramp would not be improved, and the safety situation in this busy area would not be resolved. Having no staging area, passengers would continue to mill around in the ramp area with vehicles attempting to back into the boat ramp. The group site would remain on the west side of the campground, leading to conflicts between boaters and campers, especially over the two toilets that service both functions. Parking would not be added to the boat ramp area, leading to inappropriate parking on the part of the public.

A new group site would not be provided to the public; a valuable recreation experience would be foregone. An additional campsite would not be added to the campground, leaving campers very few options since camping is restricted to the campgrounds.

Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds

Additional disturbance would not increase the growth of knapweed; however, knapweed continues to spread in the absence of man-made disturbance, so the problem would not be solved.

Vegetation

Upland vegetation would not be destroyed by the construction of a new entrance road and group site. However, random parking practices would still occur that could impact vegetation.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts are expected to be negligible because the direct impacts of expanding a fee campground in situ are negligible.

CHAPTER 5 PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

Table 5.1. List of Persons, Agencies and Organizations Consulted

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
Jonathan Taylor	Rafting company owner; Utah Guides and Outfitters	Consulted on desirable traffic patterns for rafting operations.

During preparation of this EA, the public was notified of the proposed action by posting on the BLM's ePlanning website on December 1, 2015. No comments were received as a result of this posting, although the Utah Guides and Outfitters have expressed support for the project..

BLM Preparers

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Ann Marie Aubry	Hydrologist	Soils, Air Quality, Floodplains, Water Resources
Mark Grover	Ecologist	Wetlands
Bill Stevens	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Socioeconomics, BLM Natural Areas, Environmental Justice
David Pals	Geologist	Wastes, Geology
Pamela Riddle	Wildlife Biologist	T&E Animals, Fish and Wildlife, Migratory Birds, Utah BLM Sensitive Species
Jared Lundell	Archeologist	Cultural, Native American Consultation
Katie Stevens	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Team Leader, Recreation, VRM, ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers
Dave Williams	Range Management	T&E Plants

	Specialist	
Jordan Davis	Range Management Specialist	Invasive Species, Woodlands
Kim Allison	Range Management Specialist	Livestock Grazing, RHS, Vegetation
Jan Denney	Realty Specialist	Lands/Access
ReBecca Hunt-Foster	Paleontologist	Paleontology
Josh Relph	Fuels Specialist	Fuels/Fire Management

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist

Appendix B: Diagram of the Proposed Hittle Bottom Remodel

Appendix A: INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST Project Title:

Remodel of Hittle Bottom Boat Ramp and Campground

NEPA Log Number: DOI BLM UT Y010-2016-0037 EA

Project Leader: Katie Stevens

DETERMINATION OF STAFF: *(Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)*

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for relevant impact that need to be analyzed in detail in the EA.

The following elements are not present in the Moab Field Office and have been removed from the checklist:
Farmlands (Prime or Unique), Wild Horses and Burros.

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
RESOURCES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED (INCLUDES SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES APPENDIX 1 H-1790-1)				
NI	Air Quality Greenhouse Gas Emissions		A M Aubry	12/29/15
NI	Floodplains	Incorporate this suggestion: limit area for groupsite tents to limit disturbance	A M Aubry	12/29/15
NI	Soils	Incorporate this suggestion: limit area for groupsite tents to limit disturbance	A M Aubry	12/29/15
NI	Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)		A M Aubry	12/29/15
PI	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	Additional impacts from facilities	Mark Grover	12/29/15
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	See 2008 Moab RMP	K. Stevens	12/29/15
PI	Recreation	Would provide recreation benefit	K. Stevens	12/29/15
NI	Wild and Scenic Rivers	All activities within existing campground. River proposed for "recreational" management and level of development is an allowable activity. See 2008 Moab RMP	K. Stevens	12/29/15
NI	Visual Resources	All activities within existing campground.	K. Stevens	12/29/15
NP	BLM Natural Areas	See 2008 Moab RMP	W.P. Stevens	12/29/15
NI	Socio-Economics		W.P. Stevens	12/29/15
NP	Wilderness/WSA	See 2008 Moab RMP	W.P. Stevens	12/29/15
NP	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	See 2008 Moab RMP	W.P. Stevens	12/29/15
NI	Cultural Resources	BLM conducted a literature search and a Class III archaeological inventory of the project area. The BLM found no properties eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. The BLM, therefore, made a determination of No Historic Properties Affected. Details of these finds are discussed in the Cultural Resource Inventory Report (U-16-BL-0034). BLM will consult with the Utah SHPO in accordance with the threshold procedures for small projects specified in the Utah BLM/Utah SHPO Statewide Small-scale Undertakings Programmatic Agreement.	M. Jared Lundell	1-21-16

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
NI	Native American Religious Concerns	No known sites of religious or cultural significance to Native American tribes are within the project area.	M. Jared Lundell	1-21-16
NI	Environmental Justice		W.P. Stevens	12/29/15
NP	Wastes (hazardous or solid)		Dave Pals	12/31/15
NI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species		Pam Riddle	12/29/15
NI	Migratory Birds		Pam Riddle	12/29/15
NI	Utah BLM Sensitive Species		Pam Riddle	12/29/15
NI	Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFW Designated Species		Pam Riddle	12/29/15
PI	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds	The new groupsite facilities is in a tamarisk treatment site with some low Russian knapweed understory	Jordan Davis	12/29/15
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species		Dave Williams	1/4/2016
NI	Livestock Grazing		Kim Allison	12/29/15
NI	Rangeland Health Standards		Kim Allison	12/29/15
PI	Vegetation Excluding USFW Designated Species	Some vegetation would be removed or damaged as part of the new road and camping area.	Kim Allison	12/29/15
NP	Woodland / Forestry		Jordan Davis	12/29/15
NI	Fuels	Fire extinguishers will be on scene during construction	Josh Relph	1/6/16
NP	Geology / Mineral Resources/Energy Production		David Pals	12/31/15
NI	Lands/Access	Subject to valid existing rights	J Denney	12/29/15
NI	Paleontology	If fossils are found during construction, call District paleontologist before proceeding	ReBecca Hunt Foster	12/29/15

FINAL REVIEW:

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
Environmental Coordinator	Katie Stevens	1/21/16	
Authorized Officer		1/21/16	

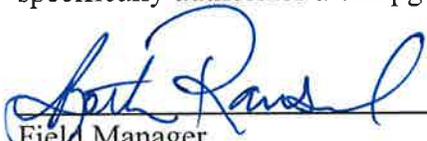
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD**

DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2016-0037 EA

FONSI: Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment (EA), I have determined that the action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and an environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

DECISION: It is my decision to remodel the Hittle Bottom Campground and Boat Ramp area described in the Proposed Action and shown on the diagram accompanying the EA..

RATIONALE: The decision to construct the campground additions has been made in consideration of the environmental impacts of the proposed action. The action is in conformance with the Moab Resource Area Resource Management Plan, which specifically authorizes a campground in the area.


Field Manager

Date 1/21/16