

**Objectives Email Input**

**10/12/19**

This is a report of all input received from emails regarding the Draft Objectives starting Sep 24 and ending Oct 11, 2019

1	I just got back from Glacier National Park. The connection to the internet via WiFi or cell service is important, even when roughing it, which we weren't doing. But I didn't always have a physical map, which wasn't a comfortable feeling. I'm also very much in favor of increasing your presence on social media. Young people pay attention to social media. We need more young people for the area to be viable in the future.
2	I was looking through the objectives, and was hoping that you could clarify something. So far, they are looking great, and attainable, although I am a little confused on a couple. Under Goal #1, draft objective #7, it has a 10% increase in visitation at the EE facilities within 3 years, but Goal #3, draft objective #3 has an increase in participation in EE facilities/program/events of 5% in 5 years. Is visitation being distinguished from participation? If so, then no issue. If not, then there are competing objectives/timelines. Under Goal #3, draft objective #5, it mentions establishing 2 sponsorships/year, but does not have an ending timeline (e.g. within 2 years, 3 years, etc.). Is this meant to be an ongoing goal for the foreseeable future? That's all I had. Overall, looking great!
3	Goal 1: Objective 7. Increase visitation by 10% in 3 years at Turkey Bay, Woodlands Nature Station, Homeplace 1850s Farm, and basic camping areas.
	Goal 3: Objective 3. Increase participation in environmental education facilities/programs/events by 5% per year for the next 5 years. The only thing I see right now is that we might need to mesh these two goals out a bit more. G107 shoots for a 10% increase in 3 years, which I think is a fairish target to strive for. G303 shoots for a 27.6% increase over 5 years. 5% a year for 5 years sounds good, but when you look at it as 27.6% over 5 years, it might be a huge and maybe overwhelming challenge. I'm sure that better accounting/tracking of visitation might help though.
4	Thanks for the continuing opportunities to contribute. The objectives for goals #1 & 3 look like pretty clear and sound choices. So, I have nothing more to suggest in those areas. However, the plans for goal #2 seem weak and/or poorly defined. In fairness, as I was part of the small group that showed up to chat with John about ideas this in this area, I do not feel you have been provided with much help. Clearly a larger and more representative group was needed and maybe the mindmixer is the only way for you to try and get that. Sadly I also do not think that is going to work well until the objectives are better defined and more people understand your range of choices to get things done. For example, I have no idea what "c) 3500 acres of woodland structure" would look like or what it would take to produce it. At the same time I do understand that all of these plans will require funding and John's answer regarding funding via selective tree harvesting seems flawed. I say this be of what I have seen in the northern part of the LBL where past thinning off 117 has lead to a greater invasion of the Tree of heaven with no plan presented regarding how to deal with that challenge. I sent John some pictures of trees I sprayed along the roadside and trees back in the woods that I am not even approved to try and kill. It seems to me it would most likely require some controlled burns to deal with the invaders but I also understood from our summer meeting that the windows of opportunity for approved burns are very rare. So, the only option would seem to be clear cuts that are transitioned over to open prairie. Obviously that approach would have political problems, would be limited in scope, and also would be plagued by problems in managing lespedeza and Japanese stilt grass. However, I recall the addition of more prairie was a key recommendation discussed by our group and am curious why your current list does not include that. Sorry my comments are not more positive. I remain optimistic that a bit more information will allow myself and others to be more helpful.
5	Jeff, there is very little mention of turkey bay ohv y'all are wanting to increase occupancy by 10% in three years in order to do that your going to have to upgrade turkey bay like wranglers give the people something to come back to, a few camp sites with electric water be able to ride at night Don't get me wrong I have done the horse thing for several years at LBL and enjoyed every minute that I was there, but there should be some upgrades at t-bay also including a water truck at both places during the holiday weekends on the roads
6	I have reviewed the objectives. How/where does eradication of invasive species (specifically wild hogs) and education/awareness of CWD fit into the objectives for the second strategic goal? Both of those pose major issues for not only LBL, but the surrounding area. There has been considerable talk about these issues across the country and considerable support for proactive measures being put in place. Time is of the essence with both it seems.
7	Hey Jeffrey, Thank you for the opportunity to give input on LBL's current 3 strategic objectives. Goal #1. Adding wifi where possible is a good thing as it is how we relay information these days and I think will be very valuable in involving the youth mentioned later. Expanding existing campground utilities and "conveniences" is definitely not something I would like to see as I believe those LBL patrons are already well served. I strongly believe efforts should be made to focus on Goals 2 and 3 leading to a much broader public with far greater benefits.
	Strategic goal #2 I think is a very worthy effort as habitat for small game is very scarce. Especially winged game like quail. Local sportsman groups such as Quail Unlimited would also quickly sign on to help these efforts. Skunk populations are a major threat to winged wildlife but also efforts to quickly squash the spread of wild hogs and armadillos should receive lots of attention as they are already causing harm to the area.  Strategic goal #3 is the most important issue of the three goals with efforts being made involve local youth in environmental education. I would suggest a heavy emphasis on cultural heritage education and with opportunities for hands on involvement of ongoing efforts to save cultural history of the area. Education the public on the cultural heritage of the area is almost non-existent.
8	Goal #1, Jeff I find this a concern, because it does not line up with the original mission of LBL...One of the main objectives was to return the area to a state of nature with few to NO amenities. To allow people to appreciate and experience nature? Do you believe this Goal lines up with that? Some of it would, but not all! I would like to see more discussion about this with a broader panel of interested users and people that have a heart for the place, and don't just see it as a commercial venture! There are recreational areas that need funding that are being neglected in favor or improving other areas. Could there be a way to cover more for less?
	IS # 7 SUSTAINABLE? There is a lot of erosion of the soil that flows into the Reservoir (Lake) now? I hate to see the "Lake" disappear before its allotted expiration date!!
	#8 Will need a lot of planning and expansion, it seems it is bursting at the seams now, are the camp grounds making a profit that you plan to turn back into them are will there be a budget steal from other facilities or road up keep?

Goal#2, #2a under this heading is very troublesome..I'm confused one the one hand FS has concerns about Pine and I don't understand why you are suggesting increasing then by 550 acres? 2b.. open oak forest sounds like cutting and burning to me,...There are enough openings from the old fields that existed to help in this endeavor, would suggest that oak trees are planted to help in this project, instead of pine! #3c sounds like cutting timber....will only say there will be better use of talent and resources, more support for the plan if this is not included!

Goal#3 Support any and all improvement in EE much needed the local schools and local educators should be drawn into this!

Will express my dismay that more interested people were not included in this effort. Respect and regards, appreciate any and all consideration

I think it's a great idea to upgrade campsites to the 50 amp type -- this is becoming very in demand by the public.

I don't think the OnCell app will be a popular or effective tool. No one that I know who visits public lands areas has ever heard of it or uses it. I've looked at reviews on Google Play of many OnCell apps for different parks and other public lands, and most have only a small number of downloads and hardly any customer reviews (most have no customer reviews). Many of the existing customer reviews are negative and say the app didn't work at the park. Assessments at other public land areas have judged that apps that rely on people downloading them ahead of time are not effective because people don't plan in such detail that much ahead of time. I think it will be a lot of work, money, and staff resources devoted to something that gets little usage.

In determining the recreation/EE budget based on a 3-year average of past fiscal years, what does this mean? Which past years? Are numbers adjusted for inflation? Do the totals include money spent that was received through grants and other non-appropriated or revenue-generated ways? Many necessary projects have been done through these additional sources of funding, and a true budget should recognize that.

Why are there no targets for visitation increases for Brandon Spring Group Camp? It seems like every other facility is being challenged to stretch and grow their operations and services -- why not that one?

I question visitation growth as the indicator and solution to facility sustainability. From what has been explained, it seems that the big challenge is decreased funding. Solutions to that should, it seems to me, encompass a variety of revenue-generating strategies beyond just increased visitation. I see no mention in this draft of solutions such as fee increases or age category changes (reducing the age of children admitted free). Changes like this should be considered. Also, what is the definition of "visitation" that is targeted for an increase? Does this include just paying customers? Walk-ins? Free children? Visitors who come on fee-free days? People contacted through off-site outreach programs? Depending on how "visitation" is defined will have a big impact on how the facilities can try to work towards this objective.

Another concern about the visitation objectives given in the draft is that many factors affect visitation, many beyond control of facility managers and staff. For example: weather, the economy, unexpected closures for things like government shutdowns or destructive weather events, area road and bridge construction, population trends, etc. I think there should be some recognition that these targets are not entirely controllable.

Who is going to do the work involved in establishing regional partnerships with the 6 surrounding county school systems, and the additional 30 schools within a 200-mile radius, spelled out in the objectives? This is a large and complicated task. Who on your staff is both qualified for (not just has the job title but actually has qualifications in the field of education) and has time within their scope of work to take this on?

The objective that gives a goal of increasing participation in EE activities by 5% in 5 years seems to say something different than the objective given earlier of increasing visitation at the EE facilities by 10% within 3 years. What is the way that this 5% increase in participation will be measured that will be different than the measure of visitation? Clarification needed here.

Who is going to be responsible for providing "Forest Service Outreach presence with an environmental education focus"? Will this be FS staff or EE staff? The only FS EE staff currently employed at LBL, as far as I know (except for managers who oversee EE facilities) is 1 staff at Brandon Spring.

I am concerned that it is not feasible to have an outreach presence at 75% of community fairs, festivals, etc. Many of these events occur on holiday weekends and other times when there is already a lot going on at LBL. For example, almost every county has some kind of big event over Labor Day Weekend. Can LBL really commit to being at 4 out of 6 community Labor Day Weekend events, plus covering everything on property at that time?

Thank you Jeff and the Mind Mixer program for being part of this process. I have two concerns about the objectives and a question.

\*I worry the 3 year goal on the 10% is too short. There is a lot of factors that can determine its effect and I think a 5 year goal is much more obtainable. In the 3 year span, you have to generate new creative ideas, fail on a few, perfect others. It is not enough time to see a pattern of success and sustainability, as I feel you can with five years. New sources of audiences and revenue will need to be seeked out and that takes time to determine if you have a "winner" and work out the "bugs". The 10% goal is obtainable and reasonable, just need the time to develop. Also, during the short 3 year time frame all sorts of issues that may pop up and disrupt a true determination like funding issues, shutdowns, weather events, loss of staff, replacement of staff, natural diasters, promotional capilities. Five years would give us the right amount of time to make things work out for the long term.

\*I am also concerned about the goal of 75% of FS presnecne at all surrounding communities events. Now, I agree to have a presence is important, but I feel the goal is set way too high. There is a lot of communities aroundherre and ther is a lot of events. Grand Rivers iseself a town of 350 people seems to have an event one a week in the summer. Maybe a more obtainable goal would be 50% gateway communitis significant events. I fear this will take away from the responsibilities of manangeing LBL for all the visitors that come to it, which in turn serves the local communities. If the level of customer service drops at the facilities or management needs for the natural resources it would work against the main goals of LbL. That is a lot of time.

Q:In the facilities goals of 10% growth in 3 years, what is Brandon Group Center's? Did I miss it or was it in there? If not, why were they not included? Thanks for the opportunity. Let's make LBL a grat place to visit

First, if LBL had all the money it needed to achieve all the goals that need to be met, I would be less concerned about the objectives you have prioritized. But, I would still be concerned that LBL is heading in the wrong direction. Given that LBL does have budgetary restraints I am especially concerned, somewhat alarmed, actually. With a budget that is chronically tight, and likely to get tighter, choosing to focus on any objective necessarily means others are eliminated. The glaring absences in the list of priorities is what alarms me the most. It is also obvious that where and how your public input was obtained is going to skew any results towards the objectives you have prioritized, while minimizing input from other sorts of recreational use.

Your first priority is upgrading the developed, fee for admission, facilities. There are private campgrounds on the other sides of the reservoirs that are trying to make a living. Expansion and upgrading of the developed facilities in LBL is a direct competition to them. LBL was taken from unwilling, multigenerational families for the express purpose of "stimulating the economy of the surrounding region." Going into competition with private campgrounds is a violation of that reason for LBL existing. Encouraging increased use of such a facility is at odds with Objective 3: Environmental Education in their natural lands. Environmental education would be better suited by getting people out on trails than in a KOA type setting. They can visit KOAs anywhere and would get just as much environmental education. The private sector can provide larger and more modern developed campgrounds; it cannot provide a trail system that includes old growth forest and wildflower meadows.

11a

Over use of trails is a major problem on most public lands. At LBL the trails are under used, poorly maintained, poorly marked (many with no signage indicating where to find the trail head, or where the trail leads, or where the next water source is). There are strong indications that this has been by design--and the complete lack of mention of any type of trails in a 10 to 15 year recreation plan would seem to be proof that this is the case. LBL IS a National Recreation Area. Outdoor recreation is more than sitting in an air conditioned motorhome streaming videos on faster wifi. Two loop trails through impressive Core Area forest, and in one of the very few no hunting areas so that they can be used in the prime seasons for hiking (also hunting season) have been abandoned and do not appear on any of the hiking/recreation maps on your website. I have attached a screen shot of a map indicating all listed trails in LBL. The two loop trails (near Energy Lake) do not appear on that source of trail maps, either. Looking at the map it is clear that the trails in LBL prioritize ORVs and horses. Even the one long trail in LBL has major portions shared with horses and mountain bikes, making their use dangerous and in the area of Wrangler's camp almost unusable. It is disingenuous to cite the miles of hiking trails in LBL when most of those miles are on the one long trail, and it is shared. But, your Draft Objectives don't mention trails at all!

The Draft Objectives document states that it is a goal to establish partnerships. LBL is supposedly partnering with the Riverlands Alliance. It's primary objective is to increase outdoor recreational use of this region, especially trails, bird watching, wildflowers, and old growth forests. At the recent meeting of the Riverlands Alliance it was mentioned by several presenters that a major obstacle is the need for more trails and better signage in LBL. Improved water sources is a major need along the North South Trail. None of this was included in any way in the prioritized list of objectives you provided. It was also pointed out during one of the presentations that maintenance of the trails is not an issue because the Alliance can provide volunteers to do the maintenance work. But, as a center piece of their goals, LBL needs to step up and establish more and better trails. (Part of my assignment with the Alliance was to identify easy-to-establish new trail routes that run through more old growth and wildflower areas. I have that list, and am still working on developing more, but first it must at least be included on the list of goals. These types of recreation have the potential to attract many more users--as they do at other public lands--and they have great potential to stimulate the local economy. They cost very little, require minimal infrastructure, and can be maintained by volunteer labor. That they are not even mentioned in your list of objectives is enough to justify scrapping this list and starting over with new priorities.

11b

The second objective is to "restore and sustain healthy habitats to be a destination for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing." Other than making the roads passable and improving the boat ramps I am at a loss as to what LBL can do to improve fishing opportunities, and neither roads nor boat ramps are on the list of priorities. We all know that "restore and sustain healthy habitats" is a euphemism for "more logging and burning." We have seen where that led when the LBL Coalition began holding public meetings to address the logging and burning in LBL. When the excessive logging was taking place the deer population was already declining, due to factors that had nothing to do with the amount of logging. That said, according to the Fish and Wildlife standards the deer population in LBL is already above carrying capacity for a healthy forest ecosystem. A proper environmental education program would inform the public of that.

As mentioned above, the spring and fall are the prime times to be in LBL and I can attest from personal experience that confrontations between hikers, even on the established trails and while cleaning cemeteries, are common and cause many to not consider LBL as a destination for hiking and camping (unless you go to one of the KOA type facilities).

I do not oppose hunting in LBL, and encourage wildlife viewing, bird watching, etc., but, in a National Recreation Area more effort should be made to minimize the conflicts between these multiple uses. A balance is needed. That the other uses are either not mentioned at all, or only in passing, indicates which direction the scales are being tipped. I cannot help but believe this is based on which activity can be used to justify more logging and burning, which is a clear detriment to the non-extractive recreational uses of LBL.

It should also be pointed out that the majority of the hiking-only trails in LBL are in the Devil's Backbone section, which is slated for heavy logging (with the trails used for skid trails, no less). This is to be done to "establish" a shortleaf pine forest, which is already there and producing new seedlings on its on. The specific mention of shortleaf pines in the priorities, along with the oak-grassland (though by a different name) habitat is a red flag that this is really about increasing paying customers at the developed campgrounds, increasing logging and paying hunters. Listing the planned future logging projects certainly seems out of place in a list of recreational priorities.

11c

The third objective is to "inspire youth...to connect with their natural habitat and cultural heritage." You know I am strongly in favor of this one. I found it somewhat encouraging that "cultural heritage" was included, even if it was only mentioned in the heading. However, I would like to point out that it is the Between the Rivers cultural heritage, and we are still using it. Any effort to commercialize heritage sites or use them for any purpose inconsistent with the Between the Rivers cultural values would be strongly opposed.

As for the environmental education component of connecting youth (and the general public) to the natural world, I would point out that this one is inconsistent with your first objective, and runs the potential of being harmed by the logging and burning implied by the second objective. The public should be educated to appreciate natural processes and ecosystems and how they function, and how to interact with them without doing damage to them. (I notice, too, that there is no mention of either a Leave No Trace or Wilderness Ethic in the document, but that would be inconsistent with funneling everyone into a more highly developed and energy dependent facility.)

The abandonment of sites such as Star Camp is also at odds with this objective, as are roads that prevent the average visitor from accessing most of LBL. Encouraging the youth to "camp" in a trailer park-like atmosphere (I have seen the reports of law enforcement calls to those camps) or else destroy a vehicle trying to navigate poorly marked, unmaintained roads simply makes no sense if environmental education is a goal.

I would add that the obvious link to all the objectives--listed and those cast aside--is the road conditions at LBL. But, given that the developed campgrounds have paved roads leading to them and the public can't access the rest, that is only a problem when the original purpose of LBL is recalled: to be "a playground for the rugged." Motorhome camping is not what they had in mind when they forced us from our homes.

The non-motorized, non-extractive recreational uses are on the increase nationwide. They appear to be in decline at LBL and not included in the draft objectives for the new recreational plan. I have heard local politicians state that if they had the goal of killing tourism at LBL they would do exactly what has been being done at LBL: Let the roads become impassable, discourage trails usage, and log and burn the place so that it is an undesirable place to come for recreation. By the proposals, the only desirable places to visit in LBL will be developed facilities which provide economic benefit for LBL, but none at all for the surrounding region.

11d

