



# Division of State Parks, Accountable Budget Review

Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee

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This report is intended to assist the members of the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee during the Accountable Budget Process. [JR 3-2-501](#) requires each appropriations subcommittee to annually scrutinize 20% of the budget that falls within the subcommittee's purview, ensuring that once every five years, each line item is the subject to an accountable budget review. The Legislature is to create a budget for the reviewed line item or program by starting from zero and determining whether or to what extent to recommend funding be included in a budget for FY 2026.

The report reviews the [Division of State Parks](#)' Operations and Capital line items and includes the following sections:

1. [Summary of Recommendations](#)
2. [Overview](#)
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6. [Funding Trends](#)
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## Summary of Recommendations

This report contains the following recommendations:

1. We recommend the Legislature:
  - a. eliminate outdated code sections referring to the parks board, discontinue the Riverway enhancement grants, remove the provisions allowing State Parks to access Boating Account funds, and correct any typographical errors ([p. 3](#));
  - b. restructure the division's operations line item ([p. 5](#));
  - c. reduce the division's base budget by \$1,010,800 ongoing from the Park Fees Restricted Account, starting in FY 2025 ([p. 5](#)); and
  - d. change the fee name from "Annual Repository Agreement, Annual Agreement Fee, Fee Collection, Return Checks, and Duplicate Document (per storage unit)" to "Repository and Annual Agreement Fee" ([p. 15](#))
2. We recommend the division leadership:
  - a. ensure all information on their website is accurate and reviewed regularly ([p. 2](#));
  - b. establish guidelines for the maximum boats allowed at each boating park based on water levels ([p. 3](#));
  - c. continue to work with the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst and the Governor's Office to align its performance metrics with its defined objectives ([p. 5](#));
  - d. comply with statutory fee requirements and provide to the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst by November 15, 2024, a detailed report of all fee revenues received in FY 2024, including each fee's name, amount, the park where it was collected, the date of collection, and an explanation of what is included in the fee ([p. 13](#));
  - e. provide a comprehensive price comparison and a proposal for boating slips and storage ([p. 15](#)); and
  - f. revise its current methodology for calculating the costs to administer each fee, work with the Division of Finance to enable separate tracking of revenue and expenses for each fee, and report its progress during the 2025 General Session ([p. 15](#)).

**Overview**

The [Division of State Parks](#) is the state parks authority, and its mission is to “enhance the quality of life of Utahns and visitors by preserving and providing natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.” The division has the following objectives:

1. Manage Utah's natural and cultural resources.
2. Provide diverse recreational opportunities.
3. Promote outdoor education and interpretation.
4. Ensure sustainable use and management of park resources.

The division was created by [H.B. 346, Natural Resources Entities Amendments \(2021 GS\)](#) and it has two line items: Operations and Capital.

**Website Issues**

During our review, we identified outdated and inaccurate information on the State Parks' website. For instance, the site lists Palisade Cabins at \$100 and \$125, while a linked page with cabin photos shows rates between \$80 and \$100 (see images below).

stateparks.utah.gov/parks/palisade/park-fees/

- \$70 per night for Double Sites (no hookups)
- \$45 per night for Single Sites (full hookups)

**Wakara Campground**

- \$45 per night for Single Sites (full hookups)
- \$90 per night for Double Sites (full hookups)
- \$40 per night for sites with electric/water only

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**Cabins**

- \$125 per night (full amenities)
- \$100 per night (basic amenities)

## PALISADE STATE PARK

CABINS Taylor Made/Bird House/Tripp Lodge: (Restrooms)	CABINS Pinion Pine/White Pine/Bristlecone (No Restrooms)	CABINS Bobcat/Badger/Eagle/Bear (No Restrooms)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- \$100 per night</li> </ul> <p><b>Each Cabin Provides:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sleeping accommodations for up to 8 people</li> <li>- Lighting, electrical outlets &amp; cooling/heating unit</li> <li>- Kitchenette with sink, microwave &amp; refrigerator</li> <li>- Modern restroom with shower</li> <li>- Table and chairs</li> <li>- Locking door with key</li> <li>- Barbeque grill, fire pit, &amp; picnic table outside</li> </ul> <p><b>Visitors should bring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bedding, such as sleeping bags and/or sheets</li> <li>- Blankets and pillows</li> <li>- Camping-style cookware and cooking supplies</li> <li>- Eating utensils</li> <li>- Towels and washcloths</li> <li>- <b>NO PETS</b> allowed in or around cabins</li> <li>- Parking accommodates 2 vehicles only</li> <li>- Renter responsible for light cleaning upon leaving</li> </ul> <p>- Check-In: 3 p.m. - Check-Out: 12 p.m.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- \$80 per night</li> </ul> <p><b>Each Cabin Provides:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sleeping accommodations for up to 8 people</li> <li>- Lighting, electrical outlets &amp; cooling/heating unit</li> <li>- Kitchenette, microwave, &amp; mini refrigerator</li> <li>- Table and chairs</li> <li>- Locking door with key</li> <li>- Barbeque grill, fire pit, &amp; picnic table outside</li> </ul> <p><b>Visitors should bring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bedding, such as sleeping bags and/or sheets</li> <li>- Blankets and pillows</li> <li>- Camping-style cookware and cooking supplies</li> <li>- Eating utensils</li> <li>- Towels and washcloths</li> <li>- <b>NO PETS</b> allowed in or around cabins</li> <li>- Parking accommodates for 2 vehicles only</li> <li>- Renter responsible for light cleaning upon leaving</li> </ul> <p>- Check-In: 3 p.m. - Check-Out: 12 p.m.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- \$80 per night</li> </ul> <p><b>Each Cabin Provides:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sleeping accommodations for up to 6 people</li> <li>- Lighting, electrical outlets &amp; cooling/heating unit</li> <li>- Microwave &amp; mini refrigerator</li> <li>- Table and chairs</li> <li>- Locking door with key</li> <li>- Barbeque grill, fire pit, &amp; picnic table outside</li> </ul> <p><b>Visitors should bring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bedding, such as sleeping bags and/or sheets</li> <li>- Blankets and pillows</li> <li>- Camping-style cookware and cooking supplies</li> <li>- Eating utensils</li> <li>- Towels and washcloths</li> <li>- <b>NO PETS</b> allowed in or around cabins</li> <li>- Parking accommodates for 2 vehicles only</li> <li>- Renter responsible for light cleaning upon leaving</li> </ul> <p>- Check-In: 3 p.m. - Check-Out: 12 p.m.</p>

Reservations can be made by calling 1-800-322-3770  
or online at [stateparks.utah.gov](http://stateparks.utah.gov)

Similarly, East Canyon’s webpage advertises yurt rates at \$100 for weekdays and \$130 for weekends/holidays, but the reservation site lists them as \$120 for weekdays and \$150 for weekends.

Since the website serves as the main resource for visitors planning their trips, it is critical that the information is accurate. Although we only reviewed a small sample of webpages, the discrepancies we found suggest that these issues may be more widespread.

We informed division leadership about these inaccuracies in July 2024, but as of November 11, 2024, no corrections have been made. The division should address these inconsistencies to ensure visitors have access to up-to-date and accurate information.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that the division ensure all information on their website is accurate and reviewed regularly.

**Division Response to the Recommendation:** State Parks agrees and conducts monthly reviews of our website and the website content.

### **Guidelines for Maximum Boats**

Park managers often use available parking spaces to determine how many boats can be allowed at a boating park on busy days. However, since water levels at reservoirs fluctuate both annually and within the year, they should instead establish guidelines for the maximum number of boats based on the current water levels. This would help park managers ensure greater safety and satisfaction for visitors.

**Recommendation:** We recommend the division establish guidelines for the maximum boats allowed at each boating park based on the water levels.

**Division Response to the Recommendation:** State Parks has long talked about boating safety and the carrying capacities of our lakes and reservoirs. We will continue to review carrying capacities at our boating parks.

### **Statutory Review**

The enabling statute for the Division of State Parks is in [UCA 79-4](#). The division also operates under [UCA 79-4-402, State Park Fees Restricted Account](#).

### **Statutory Issues**

Our review of the statute identified several areas that need updating. There are outdated references to the now-discontinued parks board and some sections that refer to functions no longer in practice, such as riverway enhancement grants ([UCA 79-4-802](#)). Additionally, there is a potential error regarding the use of Boating Account ([UCA 79-4-401](#)). There is also a typographical error that needs to be addressed in [UCA 79-4-1203\(1\)\(a\)\(iii\)\(A\)](#). For details on the statutory issues, please refer to [Appendix B, Statutory Issues](#).

**Recommendation:** We recommend that the Legislature eliminate outdated sections referring to the parks board, discontinue the Riverway enhancement grants, remove the provisions allowing State Parks to access Boating Account funds, and correct any typographical errors.

**Division Response to the Recommendation:** The Division of State Parks (State Parks) not only agrees with the recommendation, we appreciate the LFA’s support.

### **Required Reports**

Statute requires agencies subject to the accountable budget process to report on their utilization of nonlapsing amounts ([UCA 63J-1-602\(4\)](#)) and on their internal controls and performance measures ([UCA 63J-1-903\(13\)](#)).

## **Nonlapsing Amounts**

[UCA 63J-1-602\(4\)](#) requires an agency to submit to the appropriations subcommittee a “report that describes the agency's plan to expend any nonlapsing appropriations.”

The division has statutory nonlapsing authority for “acquisition and development” funds ([UCA 63J-1-601\(2\)\(d\)](#)).

The following is the information reported by the division.

*RMAA [Capital line item] nonlapsing balances refer to allocated funds for park construction projects that are either underway, in the engineering phase, or in the initial stages of development. Below is a summary of major projects currently managed by State Parks. It is important to note that construction projects typically span multiple years. The non-lapsing authority remains essential to ensure that funds can be carried over annually to support these ongoing projects. For example, projects initiated in 2022 are only now reaching completion.*

*Summary of major projects in RMAA: Antelope Island Visitor Center and Theater, Bear Lake Marina, Utahraptor Development, Lost Creek Development, Red Fleet Improvements, Jordanelle State Park Improvements, Great Salt Lake Waterline, Goblin Valley Powerline, Green River Improvements*

## **Internal Controls and Performance Measures**

[UCA 63J-1-903\(13\)](#) directs that as part of the accountable budget process, each agency is required to: “(a) conduct a thorough evaluation of the agency's performance measures, internal budget process, and budget controls; and (b) submit the results of the evaluation to the legislative appropriations subcommittee.”

The following is the report provided by the division:

*We measure success through gate revenue, total revenue, park expenditures, completion of renovation projects, facility care, customer service, donation revenue, construction, new state parks, and new state park amenities.*

*These measures are chosen for their ability to provide a comprehensive view of the division. They provide both qualitative and quantitative aspects of financial health, economic benefit, stewardship, and visitor experience.*

*Targets are set based on historical data, expected trends, and strategic goals to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with the division's mission.*

*The division conducts regular evaluations of its performance measures to ensure they accurately reflect its impact and progress. This involves analyzing revenues and expenditures, forecasting progress, and reporting on performance measure status*

### **Internal Budget Process:**

*The internal budget process involves detailed planning and review to ensure funds are allocated efficiently. This includes prioritizing projects based on strategic importance and potential impact.*

### **Budget Controls:**

*Strict budget controls are in place to monitor expenditures, prevent overspending, and ensure funds are used effectively.*

After reviewing the division's performance measures, we concluded that there may be a disconnect between the division's definition of success and how it is measured. They define success as the level of natural resource management, visitor satisfaction, attendance, economic impact, and educational value of the parks (see [Appendix A, Agency Response to LFA Questions](#)). However, they measure success

primarily through financial indicators, such as gate revenue, total revenue, park expenditures, completion of renovation projects, and donation revenue.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that the division continue to work with the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst and the Governor’s Office to align its performance metrics with its defined objectives.

**Division Response to the Recommendation:** State Parks agrees and is excited to hear the LFA is not solely focused on financial indicators. We will incorporate other measures, such as visitor feedback into our report to the Legislature.

**Programs and FTE**

For FY 2025, the division has 321 budgeted FTE and 163 vehicles in the Operations line item, and 19 budgeted FTE and 3 vehicles in the Capital line item.

**Parks Operations Line Item Restructure**

Parks Operations’ line item currently doesn’t provide details on the budget of the different types of state parks, such as the state golf courses, the museums, the recreation parks (see table below).

<b>Current Structure</b>
Executive Management
Support Services
Planning and Design
State Park Operations Management
Heritage Services
Park Management Contracts

**Recommendation:** We recommend the Legislature restructure the division’s operations line item to include the following appropriation units:

<b>Proposed Structure</b>
Executive Management
Support Services
Recreational Parks
Golf Courses
Heritage Parks
This Is The Place

**Division Response to the Recommendation:** State Parks agrees with the recommendation.

**Funding Trends**

The majority of the funding for the division comes from restricted funds (81%) and the General Fund (9%).

**Soldier Hollow Golf Course Bond Funding**

After the Winter Olympics of 2002, the Division of Parks and Recreation issued a revenue bond for the Soldier Hollow Golf Course for \$20.2 million with an annual payment of \$1,010,800 from the Park Fees Restricted Account. The bond was fully paid off in 2024 and the \$1,010,800 is no longer needed.

**Recommendation:** We recommend the Legislature reduce the division’s base budget by \$1,010,800 ongoing from the Park Fees Restricted Account, starting in FY 2025.

**Division Response to the Recommendation:** State Parks agrees with the recommendation.

The following tables show the division’s two line items funding over time by source, including the anticipated amounts for FY 2026. Please note that the numbers in the Operations line item reflect the recommendation for reducing the restricted account.

**State Parks Operations Line Item, Funding**

	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Actual)	2024	2025	2026
General Fund	4,418,500	4,614,000	4,810,800	4,877,400	4,869,000
Federal Funds	120,500	5,300	160,000	164,800	164,500
Dedicated Credits Revenue	851,600	805,200	1,206,700	1,241,900	1,239,600
Expendable Receipts	20,500		133,400	137,300	137,000
Federal Funds - American Rescue Plan	335,200	34,400			
Public Safety and Firefighter tier II Retirements	32,400				
<b>State Park Fees (GFR)</b>	<b>24,505,900</b>	<b>32,051,300</b>	<b>36,110,700</b>	<b>39,493,500</b>	<b>37,896,000</b>
Transfers	451,700	57,800	143,000	147,500	147,200
Beginning Nonlapsing	0	343,100	295,700	375,000	
Closing Nonlapsing	(343,100)	(295,700)	(375,000)		
Lapsing Balance	(47,100)	(62,200)			
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>30,346,100</b>	<b>37,553,200</b>	<b>42,485,300</b>	<b>46,437,400</b>	<b>44,453,300</b>

**State Parks Capital Line Item, Funding**

	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Actual)	2024	2025	2026
General Fund	94,700,000	60,000,000	29,300,000		
Federal Funds	4,199,000	3,693,100	4,262,200	4,298,500	4,293,400
Expendable Receipts	150,600	148,200	178,000	178,000	178,000
Outdoor Adventure Infrastructure Restricted Account (GFR)		15,000,000	6,622,900	6,765,600	6,759,600
State Park Fees (GFR)	16,622,700	21,426,000	13,558,200	12,054,800	1,054,400
Transfers	11,226,600				
Utah Capital Investment Restricted Account (GFF)	10,000,000				
Beginning Nonlapsing	0	109,267,300	165,411,900	112,619,700	
Closing Nonlapsing	(109,267,300)	(165,411,900)	(112,619,700)		
Lapsing Balance		(1,500,000)			
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>27,631,600</b>	<b>42,622,700</b>	<b>106,713,500</b>	<b>135,916,600</b>	<b>12,285,400</b>

### Expenditures Trends

The following tables show the expenditures for the division’s two line items, including the anticipated amounts for FY 2026.

#### State Parks Operations Line Item, Expenditures

	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Actual)	2024	2025	2026
Personnel Services	22,122,400	22,337,400	23,270,900	25,016,200	24,933,100
In-state Travel	97,200	118,100	92,400	92,400	92,400
Out-of-state Travel	12,100	25,700	7,300	7,300	7,300
<b>Current Expense</b>	<b>12,840,900</b>	<b>11,467,500</b>	<b>17,985,700</b>	<b>20,192,500</b>	<b>18,666,500</b>
DP Capital Outlay		70,000			
DP Current Expense	645,600	672,900	64,600	64,600	64,600
Capital Outlay	1,130,900	771,100	64,400	64,400	64,400
Other Charges/Pass Thru	(6,503,000)	2,090,500	1,000,000	1,000,000	625,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>30,346,100</b>	<b>37,553,200</b>	<b>42,485,300</b>	<b>46,437,400</b>	<b>44,453,300</b>

#### State Parks Capital Line Item, Expenditures

	2022 (Actual)	2023 (Actual)	2024	2025	2026
Personnel Services	1,400	2,258,600	2,012,600	2,101,600	1,400
In-state Travel	200	21,500	21,100	21,100	200
Out-of-state Travel		7,800	7,200	7,200	0
Current Expense	369,100	1,733,900	39,718,600	10,972,100	369,100
DP Current Expense		44,100	242,500	243,100	0
Capital Outlay	8,540,500	4,175,700	8,761,500	13,056,900	8,540,500
Other Charges/Pass Thru	18,720,400	34,381,100	55,950,000	109,514,600	3,374,200
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>27,631,600</b>	<b>42,622,700</b>	<b>106,713,500</b>	<b>135,916,600</b>	<b>12,285,400</b>

**New Funding Over Time**

The following tables include some of the budget changes for the two line items by fiscal year.

**State Parks Operations Line Item, New Funding**

	Fed. Funds	Other Sources	Grand Total
<b>Ongoing</b>			
<b>FY 2022</b>			
Public Safety and Firefighter Retirement Rate Changes		\$32,400	\$32,400
<b>FY 2023</b>			
License Plate Revisions		\$12,500	\$12,500
State Parks Expendable Receipts		\$125,000	\$125,000
State Parks Federal Funds	\$64,400		\$64,400
State Parks Management Staffing		\$500,000	\$500,000
State Parks Supplies and Equipment		\$750,000	\$750,000
State Parks Vehicles		\$25,000	\$25,000
<b>FY 2024</b>			
State Park Innovation		\$500,000	\$500,000
State Parks Campground and Improvements		\$250,000	\$250,000
State Parks Operations Cost Increases		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
State Parks Retail Sales Merchandise		\$1,750,000	\$1,750,000
State Parks Staff and Compensation		\$1,750,000	\$1,750,000
<b>FY 2025</b>			
State Parks Comp Increases & Construction Personnel		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
State Parks Operations Cost Increase		\$700,000	\$700,000
State Parks Road Repair & Maintenance		\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
<b>One-Time</b>			
<b>FY 2022</b>			
DNR Digital Park Entry Hardware		\$600,000	\$600,000
Emergency Communications Equipment - Enhanc	\$369,600		\$369,600
State Parks Expendable Receipts		\$125,000	\$125,000
State Parks Federal Funds	\$64,400		\$64,400
<b>FY 2023</b>			
State Park Innovation		\$500,000	\$500,000
State Parks Law Enforcement Equipment		\$250,000	\$250,000
State Parks Operations Cost Increases		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
State Parks Retail Sales Merchandise		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
State Parks Staff and Compensation		\$1,100,000	\$1,100,000
<b>FY 2024</b>			
State Parks Comp Increases & Construction Personnel		\$850,000	\$850,000
State Parks Operations Cost Increase		\$700,000	\$700,000
<b>FY 2025</b>			
State Parks Road Repair & Maintenance		\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$498,400</b>	<b>\$19,019,900</b>	<b>\$19,518,300</b>

State Parks Capital Line Item, New Funding

	GF/ITF	Fed. Funds	Other Sources	Grand Total
<b>Ongoing</b>				
<b>FY 2023</b>				
Bear Lake State Park Marina Expansion			\$500,000	\$500,000
<b>FY 2024</b>				
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Amendments			\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
Parks Federal Funds		\$4,000,000		\$4,000,000
<b>FY 2025</b>				
Adjustments Based on Revenue Forecast			\$1,714,200	\$1,714,200
<b>One-Time</b>				
<b>FY 2022</b>				
Bridal Veil Falls / State Monument / State Park	\$1,200,000			\$1,200,000
Fund of Funds Amendments			\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000
State Parks Capital Federal Funds Adjustment		\$4,000,000		\$4,000,000
<b>FY 2023</b>				
Bear Lake State Park Marina Expansion	\$60,000,000			\$60,000,000
Deer Creek State Park Improvements Match			\$12,000,000	\$12,000,000
Recreation Infrastructure Amendments			\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000
State Park Visitor Lodging			\$500,000	\$500,000
State Parks Campground and Improvements			\$4,750,000	\$4,750,000
State Parks Capital Federal Funds Adjustment		\$4,000,000		\$4,000,000
State Parks Golf Course Improvements			\$2,600,000	\$2,600,000
State Parks Staff and Compensation			\$150,000	\$150,000
State Parks Vehicles			\$200,000	\$200,000
Targeted State Parks Staff Housing			\$250,000	\$250,000
<b>FY 2024</b>				
Adjustments Based on Revenue Forecast			\$1,618,800	\$1,618,800
Antelope Island Visitor Center	\$15,000,000			\$15,000,000
Great Salt Lake State Park Waterline Replacement			\$6,000,000	\$6,000,000
Seasonal Employee Housing			\$500,000	\$500,000
State Park Visitor Lodging			\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
State Parks Golf Course Improvements			\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
Supplemental Funding to Complete Phase One of	\$14,300,000			\$14,300,000
<b>FY 2025</b>				
Seasonal Employee Housing			\$500,000	\$500,000
State Park Visitor Lodging			\$500,000	\$500,000
Wasatch Mountain State Park Campground			\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
Wildlife Resources Land Purchase			\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
<b>and Total</b>	<b>\$90,500,000</b>	<b>\$12,000,000</b>	<b>\$77,783,000</b>	<b>\$180,283,000</b>

**Fees**

***Fees Exceeding Authorization***

The Division of State Parks has been charging fees that exceed the amounts authorized by the Legislature, in violation of state statute. This not only undermines legislative authority but also risks making these facilities unaffordable for many Utah residents. By imposing the higher fees, the division may also be driving away potential visitors, leading to unnecessary vacancies and reducing potential revenue for the parks.

According to [UCA 63J-1-504\(3\)\(b\)](#), an agency may not “create, change, or collect any fee unless the fee has been established according to the procedures and requirements of this section.” The State Parks’ section of the fee, included in [H.B. 8, State Agency Fees and Internal Service Fund Rate Authorization and Appropriations](#) (2024 GS) states: “All fees for the Division of State Parks may not exceed, but may be less than, the amounts stated in the division’s fee schedule.”

The Legislature has allowed the division flexibility to charge up to the maximum authorized amounts during peak demand periods, typically on holidays and certain weekends, and to reduce fees during lower-demand periods, such as weekdays or the off-season. It is crucial for the division to maintain a

balance between generating necessary revenue and to also ensure that state parks remain affordable and accessible to all Utah residents.

In our review, we noticed that the division is charging fees that are higher than those authorized by the Legislature. We notified the division leadership of these violations in July 2024, yet as of October 10, 2024, the division is still overcharging its visitors. Due to time constraints, we only reviewed a small sample of fees, so the issues identified should not be considered exhaustive. The following are some examples.

**Cottages: \$200 vs. \$500**

The division has installed cottages in several state parks, with a maximum authorized fee of \$200 per night for Utah residents and \$400 per night for nonresidents. However, in some parks, the division is charging significantly higher rates. For instance, the cottages at Beachside Drive in Sand Hollow State Park are priced at \$500 per night with a required two-night minimum stay (see image below). These rates do not distinguish between residents and nonresidents.

! Minimum length of stay at this site is 2 night(s) for the dates selected. Please extend the length of your stay.

Find other camp

### Sand Hollow State Park, UT

Status: Open through Mon Jun 30 2025  
Max Reservation Window: Tue Sep 09 2025

Site, Loop: BSD 2, Cottages at Beachside Drive

Type: Cottage      Amenities: 🌊 ♿

A Selected   
 A Available   
 X Not avail.   
 R Reserved

< Previous 2 weeks      Nov-Dec 2024      Next 2 weeks >

21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4
Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W
A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A

Arrival date:      
 Length of stay:  Nights     
 Departure date:

Check-in: 2:00 pm      Check-out: 12:00 pm

**Price Rate:\***

\$500.00 Per Night, \$3,500.00 Per Week

(\*Rate may vary across dates; displayed rates do not reflect discounts, fees or taxes)

In [response](#) to our preliminary recommendations to the subcommittee on August 20, 2024, Parks’ leadership stated that their “facility charges align with the approved amounts in the fee schedule. Any appearance of higher fees likely results from the inclusion of additional services, entrance fees, amenities, and/or taxes in the final total, to simplify the visitor’s experience by avoiding the breakdown of each individual fee.”

But when the division provided an explanation of the \$500 per night charge (see table below), they admitted that the \$145.16 was an “Overcharge per transaction.” However, after a more thorough review, we believe the actual overcharge is closer to \$300 per transaction.

Sand Hollow Cottage Charge	\$ 500.00
Included in charge lodging fee	\$ (200.00)
Included in charge rental equipment fee	\$ (100.00)
Included in charge sales & transient tax imputed	\$ (54.84)
Overage per transaction	\$ 145.16

In response to further inquiries, the division stated that the \$100 "Included charge rental equipment fee" was meant to provide guests with access to kayak rentals, but this plan was "never realized." They also indicated that \$54.84 of the \$500 charge accounted for taxes (listed as "Included in charge sales & transient tax imputed"), yet the reservation site stated that the "displayed rates do not reflect discounts, fees, or taxes."

We are concerned that the division is charging its visitors more than 2.5 times of the maximum they are authorized, and likely making these facilities unaffordable to many Utah residents. We are also concerned that these higher fees may be leading to unnecessary vacancies. As of October 11, 2024, the [reservation site](#) shows no bookings for this cottage between October 20 and December 31, 2024. It would be prudent for the division to consider lowering the fees to attract more guests and reduce vacancies.

In addition to the cottages at Sand Hollow State Park, there are cottages in two other state parks where the division is charging rates that exceed the authorized \$200 per night limit. At Jordanelle State Park, the division is charging \$250 per night from Monday to Thursday and \$300 per night from Friday to Sunday. Similarly, at Soldier Hollow, the rate is set at \$250 per night.

**Group Site Camping: \$400 vs. \$650**

We also found, that similar to the fees for Cottages, the division is charging higher-than-authorized fees for group camping facilities. The approved maximum is \$400, yet the actual fee charged for the Wallsburg site at the Deer Creek State Park is \$650 per night (see image below).

Site, Loop: WALLSBURG CAMPING AREA, Group Standard Overnight Use

Type: Group Overnight Camping Amenities: 🌊 ♿

**No suitable availability shown**

- Find Next Available Date
- Create Availability Notification. Get email alert when there is availability.
- See other dates by using the calendar below

**A** X R  
Selected Not avail. Reserved

< Previous 2 weeks Nov 2024

7 Th	8 F	9 Sa	10 Su	11 M	12 Tu	13 W	14 Th	15 F	16 Sa	17 Su	18 M
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Arrival date:  Length of stay:  Nights Departure date: **Fri Nov 08 2024**

Check-in: 3:00 pm Check-out: 12:00 pm

**Price Rate:\***  
\$650.00 Per Night, \$4,550.00 Per Week  
(\*Rate may vary across dates; displayed rates do not reflect discounts, fees or taxes)

In explaining what is included in the \$650 charge, the division stated that it includes \$100 for five additional parking spots available in the group day-use area at \$20 each. We are not sure why this needs to be bundled with the \$400 base fee and be paid by every group. There may be groups that don't need that many extra parking spaces. It is better to let the customers have the choice.

The division also stated that the \$650 covered \$51.65 in taxes but the website specifically states that it doesn't reflect taxes (see image above).

**Group Site Day-Use: \$250 vs. \$400**

The division is also charging more than the authorized maximum amount for group day-use facilities. While the approved maximum fee is \$250, the actual rate for the Wallsburg site at Deer Creek State Park is \$400 per day (see image below).

**Deer Creek State Park, UT**

Status: Open through Sat Nov 30 2024  
 Max Reservation Window: Wed Sep 10 2025

Site, Loop: WESTWB, Group Day Use

Type: GROUP DAY USE      Amenities: 🌊 ♿

**No suitable availability shown**

- Find Next Available Date
- Create Availability Notification. Get email alert when there is availability.
- See other dates by using the calendar below

**A** X R  
 Selected Not avail. Reserved

< Previous 2 weeks      Oct-Nov 2024      Next 2 weeks >

24 Th	25 F	26 Sa	27 Su	28 M	29 Tu	30 W	31 Th	1 F	2 Sa	3 Su	4 M	5 Tu	6 W
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Arrival date:       Length of stay:  Days      Departure date:

Check-in: 8:00 am      Check-out: 10:00 pm

**Price Rate:**  
 \$400.00 Per Day, \$2,800.00 Per Week  
 (\*Rate may vary across dates; displayed rates do not reflect discounts, fees or taxes)

As with the Group Camping fees, the division explained that they have included in this fee an additional \$100 for five extra parking spaces in the group day-use area, at \$20 each. And also stated that the \$400 charge covered \$25.99 in taxes, but here again, the website specifically states that it doesn't cover taxes (see image above).

**Recommendation:** We recommend that the division comply with statutory fee requirements and provide to the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst by November 15, 2024, a detailed report of all fee revenues received in FY 2024, including each fee's name, amount, the park where it was collected, the date of collection, and an explanation of what is included in the fee.

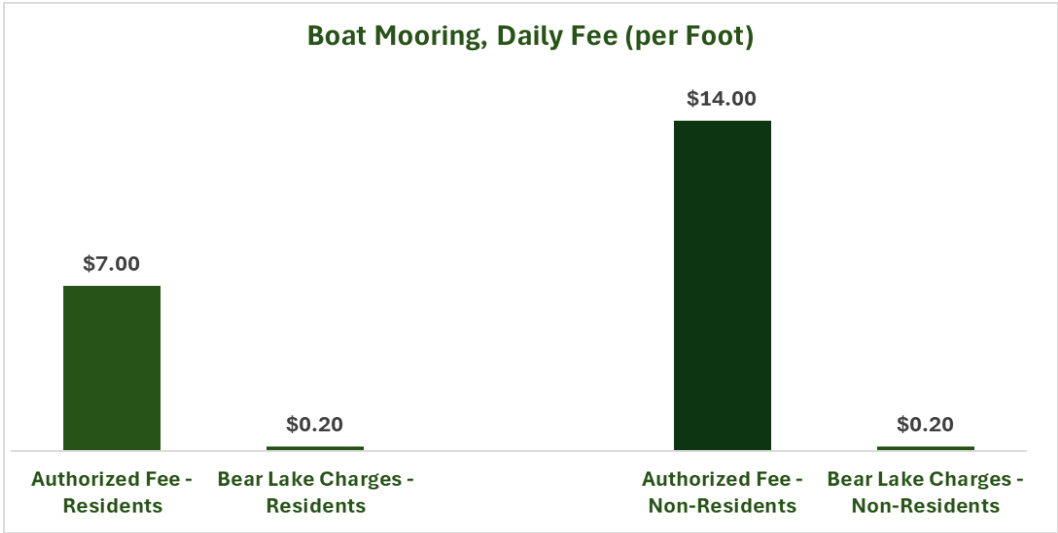
**Division Response to the Recommendation:** State Parks believes the Legislature intended to significantly increase fees for out-of-state visitors, doubling or tripling each fee, and that the omission of out-of-state golf fees from the fee schedule was an oversight. Regarding the other fees mentioned, it is understood that the facility charges align with the approved amounts in the fee schedule. Any appearance of higher fees likely results from the inclusion of additional services, entrance fees, amenities, and/or taxes in the final total, to simplify the visitor's experience by avoiding the breakdown of each individual fee.

**Boating Slips and Storage Fees**

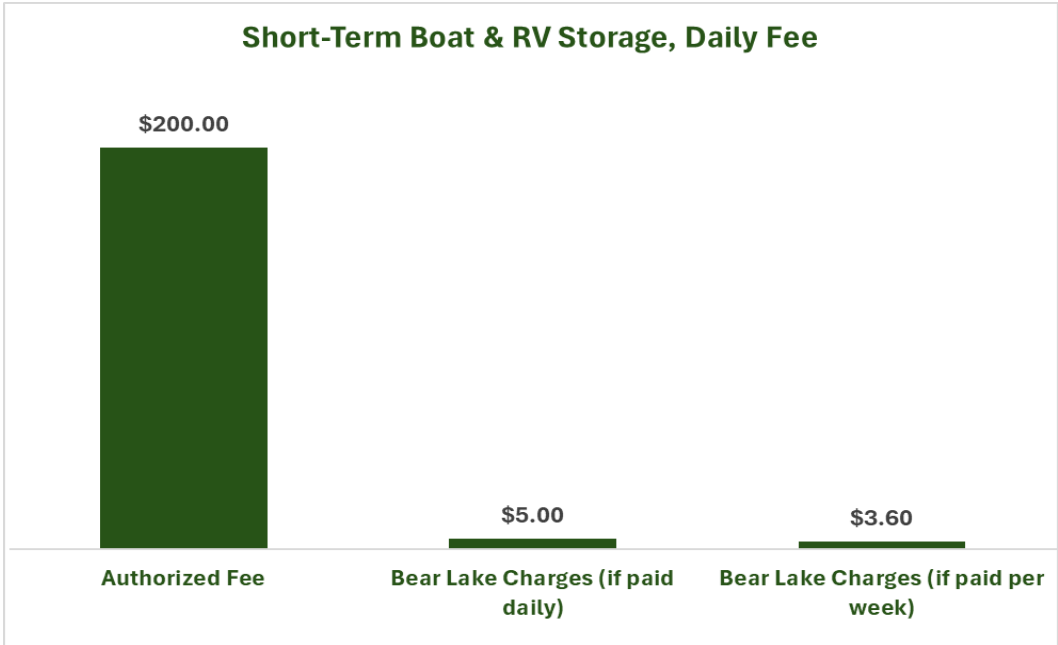
As we reviewed implementation of the fees for boating slips and storage, we found large discrepancies between the authorized fees and the actual fees charged by the Division of State Parks. In this case, the division is utilizing its authority to charge below the maximum allowable fees, but this appears to be taken to an extreme. Unlike the fees for cottages and group sites, where the division charged higher rates, here it is charging 30 to 200 times less than the authorized fees.

The current fee schedule allows the division to charge up to \$7.00 per foot per day for boat mooring for residents and \$14.00 per foot per day for nonresidents. But at the Bear Lake State Park, the fee for a Long-Term Boat Rental Slip for a 22-foot boat is \$800 per season (May 1 - October 31), which equates to \$4 per day or \$0.20 per foot per day. This is 35 times less than the authorized \$154 per day (\$7.00 per foot x 22 feet) for residents.

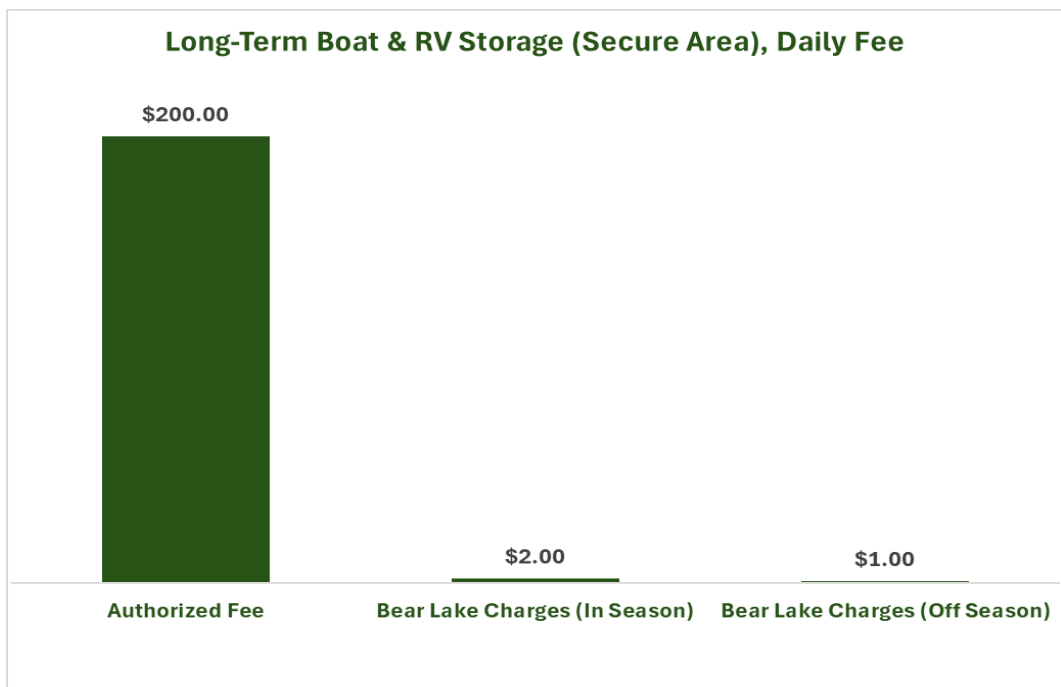
In addition, the division has decided not to apply the nonresident fee of \$14.00 per foot per day, and instead, they charge the same \$0.20 per foot per day. The figure below shows the discrepancy for a 22-foot boat.



Similarly, the authorized Boat and RV Storage fee is \$200 per day, but Bear Lake State Park charges only \$5.00 per day and \$25.00 per week (which is \$3.60 per day) for storage in the Short-Term Unsecure Area (see figure below).



For the Long-Term Secure Area, the fees charged by the division are \$375 for six months in the season (which averages to \$2.00 per day) and \$250 for six months off-season (averaging \$1.00 per day), see figure below.



Division staff reported a significant demand for these services, with hundreds of customers on waiting lists, some waiting for over a decade. The Legislature has already authorized the division to charge higher fees for these services. Now it is time for the division to adjust its fees to match the demand and seize the significant revenue generation opportunities available.

**Recommendation:** We recommend the division provide a comprehensive price comparison and a proposal for boating slips and storage rates.

**Division Response to Recommendation:** State Parks will draft a proposal to simplify the boating slip fee and storage fee.

**Fee Name Change**

One of State Parks fees is titled: “Annual Repository Agreement, Annual Agreement Fee, Fee Collection, Return Checks, and Duplicate Document (per storage unit).”

**Recommendation:** We recommend the Legislature change the name of the fee to "Repository and Annual Agreement Fee.”

**Division Response to the Recommendation:** State Parks agrees with the recommendation.

**Detailed Calculations**

[IR3-2-501\(3\)\(d\)](#) directs: “If a fee agency's budget is subject to review under Subsection (3)(c), an appropriations subcommittee shall: (i) review the fee agency's current fee schedule submitted under Utah Code Section [63J-1-504](#); and (ii) consider and make recommendations regarding:

- (A) the methods the fee agency uses to determine the amount of each fee; and
- (B) the fee agency's estimated cost related to each fee.”

The fee calculations provided by the division do not account for all the costs.

**Recommendation:** We recommend the division revise its current methodology for calculating the costs to administer each fee, work with the Division of Finance to enable separate tracking of revenue and expenses for each fee, and report its progress during the 2025 General Session.

## **Appendix A, Agency Response to LFA Questions**

### **1- Authorizing Statute**

The Utah Division of State Parks in Utah is authorized by Utah Code Ann. § 79-4-201. This statute provides the legal foundation for the creation, management, and maintenance of state parks in Utah.

### **2- Value to Society**

1. The Division of State Parks contributes significantly to society by:
2. Natural Resource Management: Protecting and preserving natural and cultural resources.
3. Recreation: Offering premier outdoor recreation experiences and venues for high-class outdoor recreation.
4. Economic Impact: Supporting local economies through tourism.
5. Education: Providing opportunities for educational experiences for natural and cultural resources.

### **3- Mission and Objectives**

Mission: To enhance the quality of life of Utahns and visitors by preserving and providing natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

Objectives:

1. Manage Utah's natural and cultural resources.
2. Provide diverse recreational opportunities.
3. Promote outdoor education and interpretation.
4. Ensure sustainable use and management of park resources.

### **4- Tying Mission and Objectives to Statutory Mandates**

The mission and objectives are aligned with the statutory mandates by focusing on conservation (preserving natural resources), recreation (providing public enjoyment), and education (promoting awareness and understanding of natural and cultural heritage).

### **5- Defining and Measuring Success**

Success Definition:

Success is defined by the level of natural resource management, visitor satisfaction and attendance, economic impact, and the educational value provided by the parks.

### **6- Measuring Success**

We measure success through gate revenue, total revenue, park expenditures, completion of renovation projects, facility care, customer service, donation revenue, construction, new state parks, and new state park amenities.

### **7- Chosen Measures**

These measures are chosen for their ability to provide a comprehensive view of the division. They provide both qualitative and quantitative aspects of financial health, economic benefit, stewardship, and visitor experience.

### **8- Targets:**

Targets are set based on historical data, expected trends, and strategic goals to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with the division's mission.

## **9- Thorough Evaluation and Budget Controls (UCA 63J-1-903)(13)**

Performance Measures Evaluation:

The division conducts regular evaluations of its performance measures to ensure they accurately reflect its impact and progress. This involves analyzing revenues and expenditures, forecasting progress, and reporting on performance measure status

Internal Budget Process:

The internal budget process involves detailed planning and review to ensure funds are allocated efficiently. This includes prioritizing projects based on strategic importance and potential impact.

Budget Controls:

Strict budget controls are in place to monitor expenditures, prevent overspending, and ensure funds are used effectively.

## **10- Efficiency and Effectiveness Efforts**

1. Strategic Management Practices: Implementing lean practices to reduce waste and increase efficiency.
2. Technology Upgrades: Utilizing technology to streamline operations and improve visitor services.
3. Partnerships: Collaborating with local communities and organizations to enhance resources and services.

## **11 & 12- State Management vs. Private Organization**

State Management Benefits:

- Ensures public access and stewardship.
- Focuses on natural resource management and public interest rather than only profit.
- Provides consistent management aligned with state goals.

Challenges with Privatization:

- Risk of prioritizing profit over public access and natural resource management.
- Potential reduction in educational and cultural programs.
- Less accountability to the public.
- Increased cost of access for visitors as private businesses need to make a profit to sustain their business operations and serve their personal monetary interests.

## **13- Major Challenges (Next 3-5 Years) and Plans**

Challenges:

1. Natural Resources: Addressing water, land-use issues, and park infrastructure.
2. Funding: Ensuring sustainable funding sources.
3. Visitor Management: Balancing increasing visitation with maintaining and improving existing infrastructure while also examining potential new parks and projects.
4. Staff Changes: Reimagining the appearance and management of state parks in the absence of law enforcement personnel following the unification process.

## **14- Plans to Meet Challenges**

1. Natural Concerns: Strategic planning to manage water, land use, and infrastructure.
2. Diversifying Revenue Sources: Seeking diverse funding sources, including grants, new revenue sources, new amenities, and partnerships.
3. Tourism Initiatives: Promoting practices that promote responsible recreation and invite more visitors to State Parks.

4. Develop new programs that will meet the needs of our growing population. These could be concessions, trails, and interpretive programs.
5. Prioritizing infrastructure projects based on need and impact. Our facility teams are actively working on living documents that will prioritize facilities that will need to be replaced.
6. Staff Changes: Implementing training programs for non-law enforcement staff to effectively manage park situations and collaborate with law enforcement, while redefining the role of a state park ranger. Retaining, training, supporting, and preparing staff for future positions within State Parks.

### 15- Nonlapsing Authority

Need for Nonlapsing Authority:

Allows the division to carry forward unspent funds for future construction projects that are constructed over more than one year, ensuring long-term planning and financial stability.

### 16- Usage

Funds are used for capital improvements, facility maintenance projects, program development, and unforeseen expenses.

### 17- Authorization

Nonlapsing authority is provided by Utah Code [Section 63J-1-601\(2\)\(d\)](#):

On or before August 31 of each fiscal year, the director of the Division of Finance shall close out to the proper fund or account all remaining unexpended and unencumbered balances of appropriations made by the Legislature, except:

- (a) those funds classified under Title 51, Chapter 5, Funds Consolidation Act, as:
  - (i) enterprise funds;
  - (ii) internal service funds;
  - (iii) fiduciary funds;
  - (iv) capital projects funds;
  - (v) discrete component unit funds;
  - (vi) debt service funds; and
  - (vii) permanent funds;
- (b) those appropriations from a fund or account or appropriations to a program that are designated as nonlapsing under Section 63J-1-602.1 or 63J-1-602.2;
- (c) expendable special revenue funds, unless specifically directed to close out the fund in the fund's enabling legislation;
- (d) acquisition and development funds appropriated to the Division of State Parks or the Division of Outdoor Recreation;**
- (e) funds encumbered to pay purchase orders issued before May 1 for capital equipment if delivery is expected before June 30; and
- (f) unexpended and unencumbered balances of appropriations that meet the requirements of Section 63J-1-603.

**Appendix B, Statutory Issues**

**1. References to the Board**

- a. 79-4-201(2) “The division is under...the policy direction of the board.”
- b. 79-4-203(9)(a) “The division may lease or rent concessions of all lawful kinds and nature in state parks and property to persons, partnerships, and corporations for a valuable consideration upon the recommendation of the board.”
- c. 79-4-206. “The division may provide administrative support to a nonprofit corporation or foundation that assists the board and the division in attaining the objectives outlined in the strategic or operational plan.
- d. 79-4-403. User fees for golf “The fee in Subsection (1) is in addition to the fee set by the board;”

**2. Unused Statute**

- a. [79-4-802](#). Riverway enhancement grants: no grants or funding.

**3. Boating Account Error**

- a. [79-4-401](#). Funds to be appropriated -- Boating account expenses. “The Legislature shall appropriate the money as from time to time necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter to the division [State Parks] to be used by the division in the administration of the powers and duties and in carrying out the objective and purposes prescribed by this chapter.”
- b. This statute seems to authorize the use of Boating \$ by Parks. Is it a mistake that needs to be fixed?
- c. Office of the Legislative Research and General Counsel: “General Session 2021, HB 346, last changed UCA 79-4-401 by removing the reference to the boating account in the body of that section. However, the boldface of UCA 79-4-401 was not changed. This appears to be an error.”

**4. Typo in the Code: [79-4-1203](#)**

**Effective 5/4/2022**

**79-4-1203. Division duties -- Committee duties.**

- (1) (a) When the division receives a completed application, the division shall:
  - (i) evaluate the application;
  - (ii) as applicable, comply with the requirements described in Subsections (2) through (5); and
  - (iii) provide a written report to a committee that includes:
    - (A) the results of the evaluation described in Subsection (1)(a)(i)  
;
    - (B) all resolutions described in Subsections (2) and (3);
    - (C) all comments submitted by a legislator under Subsection (4); and