**DATES:** Written comments on the proposal will be accepted for April 19, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be addressed to the Bureau of Land Management, Roswell District Office, 1717 West 2nd Street, Roswell, New Mexico, 88201–2019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul T. Happel at the address listed above, telephone (505) 627–0203.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Interested persons are invited to participate in the making of the Recreation Fee Policy for entrance fees for specific caves within the Roswell District by submitting written data, views, or arguments as they may desire. All comments received on or before the closing date for acceptance specified above will be considered before taking action on the recreation fee policy for caves. The proposals contained in this notice may be changed in light of the comments received. All comments submitted will be available at the Roswell District Office, both before and after the closing date for comments, for examination by interested persons. Comment will be summarized and placed in the final Federal Register notice for collection of entrance fees for specific caves within the Roswell District, New Mexico. The proposal is as follows:

Fees for permit to enter BLM "special areas" caves where Special Recreation Permits will be required.

State: New Mexico District: Roswell

Resources Areas: Roswell and Carlsbad

#### List of Caves

Crystal Cave
Crocket Cave
Doc Brito Cave
Endless Cave
Fort Stanton Cave
Wind Cave
Algerita Blossom Cave (ABC)
Jarnigan No 2 Cave
Lost Cave
Little Manhole Cave
McKittrick Cave
Sand Cave

The six criteria used as a basis for the collection of fees under the Land and Water Conservation Fund are listed as follows:

# 1. Direct and Indirect Cost to the Government

The direct cost to the government would be for signing at each cafe and a volunteer self-service pay station at caves which are checked on a weekly basis. There would be an additional workload for on-board personnel to

collect fees at cave sites where there are self-service pay tubes. There would be an additional workload by on-board personnel associated with time spent processing the permits, receiving and accounting for money derived for money derived from the fee collection and tracking volunteer hours.

Additional equipment such as locks, lock boxes, money bags, will be needed for the collection process.

The indirect costs to the government would be administrative staff time to supervise accounting, reporting and auditing functions. It could take the recreation planner an additional 5–10 minutes to derive the additional information at the time the permit is issued.

### 2. Benefits to the Recipient

There will be less "no shows" for people who obtain a free permit and cancel their date assigned to them to enter the cave. There could be an increase of volunteer time from the caving community on BLM projects, to obtain waivers of fees to enter the caves. Funding from permits would provide funding for work projects associated with the caves. In a pay-as-you-go society, the careers will know that their support for the program, through fees, will go directly into the management of caves, through the 1230 and 1231 accounts. Of the amount collected 15 percent will be immediately available to the collecting Resources Area to be used in the cave program.

3. Comparable Recreation Fees Charged by other Federal and Non-Federal Public Agencies Within New Mexico and Bordering States

Carlsbad Caverns National Park charges \$8.00 per minor and \$12.00 per adult for a ranger guided tour of Spider, Slaughter and Ogle Caves.

Because of the changes in the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA), the U.S. Forest Service is in the beginning stages of looking into charging for cave entry.

# 4. Economic and Administrative Feasibility of Fee Collection

The average number of car permits issued within the District is 500 permits per fiscal year. The effect of a fee permit may reduce the number of permits per year within the District. Cavers may use other caves to ply their activity. This may help reduce wear and tear on the caves, thus letting the cave animals reclaim traveled portions of the caves. Collection would be done by the administrative staff within the resource areas. In cases where a fee pay tube is located at the cave, fees will be

collected by a resource person who regularly works the area. In the case of Fort Stanton Cave the administrative and maintenance people form Valley of Fires Recreation Area will collect the fees. The fees will be administered with 1230 and 1231 funds from Valley of Fires Recreation area. Existing Outdoor Recreation Planners at each resource areas will facilitate the paperwork for the application and permit process. Existing administrative personnel will collect the fees from the public and complete the accounting process. Overall revenue potential for fee collection could be a minimum \$4,950 if 250 permits are maintained for the fiscal year. Of the above amount, 15 percent of the fees collected will be immediately available to the Resource Area collecting the fees. The above figure is derived as follows:

Caves which require a BLM authorized trip leader to lead the caving trip (such as Torgac Cave) will be charged a flat fee of \$30.00 per trip. There may be some reduction of revenues due to Friends groups, educational, scientific, and volunteer groups who will be exempt from fees. If an individual volunteers five hours on a BLM authorized work project, the daily use fee will be waived for that individual for one day of caving.

## 5. Public Policy or Interest Served

The cave use within the District is mainly from New Mexico, the surrounding states of Texas, Colorado, and Arizona. A small portion of the visitors range from all over the United States and foreign countries. The cost of the permit system will be borne by the special interest caving groups and independent cavers. The existing services includes maintained roads to the caves and cave gates at each managed cave, which prevent unauthorized access to the caves.

#### 6. Other Pertinent Factors

Fee collection will achieve better protection of caves through improvement or replacement of old cave gates for increased security. Locks and equipment can be purchased through the permit fees. Small research projects and cost share agreements can be funded. The fee system may spread the visitor use out to other areas and lessen