The Resource Management Plan for Belle Fourche Reservoir Continues!

For those of you who are new to our mailing list, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), in cooperation with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP), has initiated work on a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for Belle Fourche Reservoir. The RMP will serve as the blueprint for the future use, management and development of Belle Fourche Reservoir. **The RMP will not address Belle Fourche Reservoir water operations or irrigation.**

This is the second newsletter regarding the Belle Fourche RMP. Newsletters are sent to provide information on the progress of the RMP. This newsletter provides a summary of the 2018 summer Recreational User Survey (User Survey), and status of the RMP.

Public Involvement

Public involvement is one of the most important aspects of planning during the RMP development process. Reclamation and SDGFP hosted an informal open house at the Belle Fourche Reservoir Warehouse on August 23, 2018. Visitors viewed displays, and had the opportunity to speak with Reclamation and SDGFP staff about Belle Fourche Reservoir and the RMP, as well as the opportunity to complete the Belle Fourche Reservoir User Survey. Moreover, Reclamation submitted press releases to the local newspapers, radio stations, and local businesses advertising the User Survey and Open House Meeting.

In addition to the open house, the User Survey was sent to over 1,200 recreationists. This list was derived from all people who registered to camp at Rocky Point State Recreation Area in 2017. Outside of Rocky Point, Reclamation does not have a registration system on Reclamation managed lands to capture names and addresses of all users on Reclamation managed lands. However, people that included their contact information on a submitted User Survey will be added to our mailing list and sent a newsletter.
Thank You for Your Comments

The User Survey was available to the public at six locations around Belle Fourche Reservoir from May 1 thru October 1, 2018, as well as at the Rocky Point Fee Booth, the Wheel Inn Bait Shop, the Buckstop, the Belle Fourche Irrigation District office, and Reclamation’s Rapid City Office. In addition, the User Survey was available online from May 1 thru October 1, 2018. QR Code cards were also available to the public to access the User Survey on their cell phones.

SDGFP and Reclamation received 568 responses between May and October of 2018. A summary of the Survey results will be included in the RMP. A brief summary of some of the survey questions indicate:

- Most respondents had visited Belle Fourche Reservoir before (91%).
- More than three quarters of the respondents took day trips (83%), whereas (76%) made overnight trips to the reservoir.
- Travel distances varied for respondents from 1 mile to 2,509 miles, with nearly half traveling less than 30 miles (46%).
- Most agreed the reservoir is inviting to use (86%), and they enjoyed both the developed (64%) and undeveloped (75%) recreational areas at the reservoir. More than half thought public access is safe (67%) and access is sufficient (59%), See graph below.

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<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>I enjoy the developed recreational areas at the Reservoir.</td>
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<td>I enjoy the undeveloped nature of the recreational activities at the Reservoir.</td>
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<td>Public access to the Reservoir is safe.</td>
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<td>Public access to the Reservoir is sufficient.</td>
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<td>The Reservoir is inviting to use.</td>
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How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about Belle Fourche Reservoir?
Which of the following additional facilities/services, if any, would you like to see at the reservoir?

From the 568 survey responses to the User Survey Question #6 regarding the 17 different Management Units, there were more than 6100 checked boxes desiring additional facilities.

✿ Only 5% of those responses did not desire additional facilities.
✿ 335 respondents desire additional campgrounds with electrical hookups; with Gadens Point, Rocky Point State Recreation Area, Middle Point and the Inlet Canal Area receiving the most responses for electrical campsites. Gadens Point also received the most responses for a boat ramp, shower house, hike and bike trails, potable water, fish cleaning station, camping cabins, dump/fill station, day use picnic shelters and playground equipment.

As discussed in issue one of the Belle Fourche Reservoir Resource Management Plan Newsletter, Reclamation policy limits recreation development to minimum basic facilities only when there is no managing partner. Minimum basic facilities provided on Reclamation managed lands include vault toilets, fire rings, garbage dumpsters, gravel roads and parking lots, and informational kiosks. Not only does Reclamation lack the Congressional authority to develop recreational facilities without a managing partner, annual funding is not sufficient to develop facilities.

Annual funding is used for contracts including; road maintenance, dumpster service, vault toilet cleaning and pump-out, law enforcement and noxious weed spraying.

The Top 5 additional facilities/services desired by the survey respondents, totaled for all Management Units are:

1. Trees for wind breaks
2. Shore fishing access
3. Law enforcement presence
4. Road maintenance
5. Hunting trail access

To what extent, if at all, did you experience any of the following at the reservoir during the past 12 months?

✿ Two-thirds of all respondents felt noise disturbance was not an issue at the reservoir (67%)
✿ More than half (54%) of respondents felt crowding at their campsite was a slight to serious issue
✿ More than half (56%) felt inconsiderate groups were not an issue at the reservoir
✿ Nearly three-quarters (72%) did not feel that there were too many boats on the water; however
✿ More than half (51%) of the respondents felt that there were too many boats at the boat ramp
✿ Two-thirds (66%) did not have a conflict with other types of recreational users
User Survey Comments

Reclamation and the SDGFP have reviewed all 568 User Survey responses. Each response has been separated into individual comments and will be grouped into categories. Due to space limitations we have included only a snapshot of the comments received. Comments follow:

“They really would like to see more reservable campsites. It is very tough to use on weekends.”

“I think the Game, Fish and Parks does an excellent job of managing the Rocky Point Area. The issues I have had is booking sites at Rocky Point, therefore I primitive camp on other areas.”

“Another deep water boat ramp is a top priority.”

“Not alot of shore fishing spots.”

“Would like to see land grazed to help with fire danger.”

“Management has been good. Improvements are needed and have been good. Improvements are appreciated.”

“A number of friends and I enjoy riding the ORV area and hope stays available for public access.”

“Definitely need to expand the state monitored land to include the area to the north and west of the pay station, to include Gaden’s Point.”

“Leave Golf Course Point alone, no more development.”

“Add trees for wind breaks wherever possible.”

“It would be nice to have a portable handicapped fishing access on the shoreline and at the docks. How about a web cam and weather station accessible to on line use? Check wind and waves, temp, rain, etc. I have, in the past, gone to the reservoir many times to just turn around and go back home, mostly because of the wind.”

“ORV use needs to be controlled.”

“Need more policing so not so much drinking/driving/boating/shooting.”

“People who camp in the same spot all summer and think they own the place.”

“Children riding ATVs.”

“There is a problem with people dropping off camper on Thursday night and leaving them unattended until Friday night.”

“I love that most of it is open and left for back to nature without all of the upgrades so you can do actual camping with kids and grandkids but there is an area for the older/younger people that are not back to nature types that need electricity, showers, etc. The best of both worlds I guess and most important is that it is free to go to with family.”

“Require Park sticker to all areas to help with road maintenance and keep/discourage people driving around with no intent of using reservoir.”

“Please make the entire reservoir fee area and enhance the entire lake.”

“No more state park fee areas. Keep it like it is.”

“Love the Reservoir. Well kept and managed. Only good things to say.”

“Belle Fourche Reservoir is a nice place to camp and fish. It needs more RV camper sites since it is usually full up on weekends and very hard to get a site unless one rents a site for a night or two knowing that you won’t be there to use it.”

“You’ve done a wonderful job out there. I’ve lived nearby in the valley for 57 years and it has never been this organized, developed and well maintained. It is a wonderful addition to the community and very, very well used by fishermen and recreationists combined.”

While we received comments regarding water levels, and irrigation, comments in these categories were not considered because these topics are outside the scope of the RMP. Reclamation and the SDGFP will consider all other comments in the formulation of management alternatives providing they fall within current policies and regulations.
How to Stay Involved

Although public scoping concluded in October 2018, Reclamation and SDGFP encourage everyone to stay involved in the RMP process by providing comments and suggestions to the addresses below. The next phase of the RMP process will be developing management alternatives. The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the draft management alternatives at a second open house meeting scheduled for May, 2019. See timeline to the left.

Please send additional comments or suggestions to:

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