

Minutes

Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Work Group Meeting

July 31, 2008

1. A meeting of the REA Work Group was convened via conference call at 8:30 a.m. on July 31, 2008. A toll free bridge line number was kindly arranged by Deborah Stevens for this conference call.
2. Attendees:
 - a. REA Work Group members: Glen Collins, Frances Werner, Norman Perry, and Steve Saway.
 - b. Forest Service personnel: Jeff Saari, Region 3 Developed Sites Program Manager; Rachel Franchina, Recreation Specialist, Independent Resources Enterprise Team; Kathy Makansi and Chris Shrager, Coronado National Forest; Jeremy Haines, Coconino National Forest; and Bruce Fahrni, Prescott National Forest.
 - c. BLM representatives: Don Applegate, Arizona Recreation Program Lead, BLM Arizona State Office.
3. The Forest Service and BLM fee proposals were posted to the RAC web site prior to the conference call for advance review by the REA Work Group members. As requested, two Work Group members received hard copies of the Forest Service proposals as well.
4. Action on agenda items:
 - a. The Chair asked all attendees to introduce themselves and then discussed the purpose and agenda for the meeting. Purpose of the meeting was to review fee proposals from the Forest Service and BLM to determine if they are ready for a full Recreation RAC review at the September meeting. This is an opportunity to ask questions, provide comments/suggestions, and assess the degree of public support for the proposals. The Chair also covered some administrative items, timelines for getting input to Deborah Stevens for the RAC meeting Federal Register notice, and requirements for the RAC presentation.
 - b. Shaw House/Half Moon House Cabin Rentals, Coronado National Forest. Kathy Makansi provided some background and history of the cabins and described their setting in the Dragoon Mountains. She then briefed the group on details of the fee proposals, including amenities, financial analysis, market comparisons, public outreach efforts, and public input. These cabins will be maintained and managed by in-house Forest Service employees. The work group members offered comments and suggestions. It would help to have a more detailed map showing the cabin locations. Regarding fee revenues, Jeff Saari explained how revenues are used on-site but a portion is also available for other cabin rental projects. This allowed the Coronado National Forest to acquire seed money to improve the water system for these cabins. Regarding public support, the summary of public input documented excellent support for these cabin rentals.

b. Apache Maid Cabin Rental, Coconino National Forest. Jeremy Haines covered the history and background of the cabin. He briefed the group on the details of the fee proposal, including amenities, financial analysis, market comparisons, and public outreach efforts. The cabin will be maintained by Red Rock District staff along with volunteers. This cabin is located in a remote setting and has a more rustic character than other Forest Service cabins north of Phoenix. In response to a question about cabin availability during elk hunting season, Jeremy indicated it would depend on conditions and staff available but the District would be amenable. Another question related to where users could obtain water and whether there were hantavirus issues. There is no water at the cabin but nearby public sources could be identified for users. The cabin is thoroughly cleaned after the winter season to minimize hantavirus risk. As shown in the briefing, the public outreach efforts have been good though no public input has yet been received.

c. Prescott National Forest Forest-Wide Fees. Bruce Fahrni and Rachel Franchina presented a thorough briefing of the Prescott fee proposals (about 15 day use and 16 group/overnight fee sites) and public outreach efforts. The Forest plans to update their existing fees (many of which date back to 1998) and keep them at that level for the next five years. Based on public comments, the original proposal was modified for two sites. Overall, about 47 percent of the comments were favorable but about 24 percent felt the fees were too high or that more amenities were warranted. Bruce and Rachel responded to questions and comments from the work group members. Frances Werner suggested the proposal be advertised on the Arizona Game and Fish Dept web site to widen notification to fishing and boating enthusiasts. Norman Perry discussed his efforts to disseminate information to user groups and the County Board of Supervisors. No feedback from groups to date. One of the Supervisors felt that the fees would not be affordable to everyone; however, Bruce indicated that free Wednesdays would remain in effect plus the District would work with local groups to give out passes to low income folks. It was noted by one work group member that the proposed day use fees are all the same, yet as shown by the community reaction against a Tonto National Forest day use fee proposal (Haigler Creek), a “one size fits all” is not necessarily the best approach. With respect to the view by public commenters that the fees are too high, there was some discussion about reducing the proposed fees yet have an inflation adjustment for future years. However, the administrative and printing costs would make this too burdensome. In response to a question about whether the Forest could reduce the proposed fees to address the public's concerns, the assessment was no because the fees are considered comparable/appropriate and the Forest does not want to undercut the private sector. Some additional suggestions: modify the briefing to better display the anticipated revenue compared to the O&M costs; and display on a map where users have free dispersed camping opportunities and free trail access points.

d. BLM Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes Fee Proposals. The work group met briefly with Don Applegate to discuss re-scheduling the REA Work Group review. The Chair did not want to have an in-depth discussion of these proposals at this time because hard copies of the proposals had not yet been sent to two of the work group members who had requested them. Instead, it was agreed that these proposals will be reviewed at the REA Work Group meeting on September 17th (the day before the RAC meeting). It was anticipated that these two fee proposals will be ready for the full Recreation RAC review on September 18th. However, a suggestion was made to Don Applegate to expand the

public outreach efforts via a notice on the BLM web site. The BLM web site is the main source for many visitors to apply for permits to visit the Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes recreation areas, so it is logical that the BLM web site have a link to inform these users of the fee proposals. Don agreed to have this done.

5. Meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m.
6. Minutes submitted by: Steve Saway, REA Work Group Chair
7. Date approved: September 17, 2008