

Minutes

Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Work Group Meeting

September 17, 2008

1. A meeting of the REA Work Group was convened at 1:00 p.m. on September 17, 2008 at the BLM National Training Center. The agenda items are shown at enclosure 1.

2. Attendees:

a. REA Work Group members: Glen Collins, Frances Werner, Norman Perry, and Steve Saway.

b. Other RAC members: Bill Brake, Larry Howery, Linda Binder, Laura Pinnas, and Richard Lunt.

c. BLM representatives: Don Applegate, Arizona Recreation Program Lead, BLM Arizona State Office; Tom Dabbs, Gila District Manager; Tom Edgerton and Judy Culver, Arizona Strip District; and Roger Oyler.

d. Forest Service representatives: Jeff Saari, Region 3 Developed Sites Program Manager; Rachel Franchina, Recreation Specialist, Independent Resources Enterprise Team; and Bruce Fahrni, Prescott National Forest.

3. Action on agenda items:

a. The Chair asked all attendees to introduce themselves and then discussed the purpose and agenda for the meeting.

b. Draft minutes of the July 31, 2008 REA Work Group meeting. Motion made by Norman Perry, seconded by Glen Collins, to approve the minutes as stated. Motion was approved.

c. Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes fee proposals. Judy Culver and Don Applegate gave the Work Group a business plan with detailed information and justification for the proposed fee changes. The fee for Coyote Buttes North (the Wave) would change from \$5 per day to \$7 per day; the fee for Paria Canyon Day Use would change from \$5 per day to \$6 per day. These changes are needed to sustain the level of current operations and services. The current fee levels have not changed since 1997. Analysis of comparable fees at other locations shows that the proposed fees are consistent or even less than other fee sites in the region. Visitor demands have been increasing and Coyote Buttes North is filled all year long. Anticipated fee revenues will still be inadequate to cover operating and project costs without supplemental funding from appropriations. Public outreach efforts demonstrated good support for the fee structure.

d. Prescott National Forest fee proposals. Bruce Fahrni and Rachel Franchina gave the Work Group an update on the forest-wide fee proposal along with a handout which covered the fee proposal in depth. As suggested at the July 31st Work Group meeting, they provided additional details on anticipated revenues and operations and maintenance

(O&M) costs. Current revenues do not cover annual O&M costs nor begin to help with deferred maintenance costs. The predicted revenues by 2014 will cover O&M costs and generate some additional funding to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog. The group reviewed handouts which displayed the proposed fee changes at specific day use and campground sites across the Forest. Also, the Work Group Chair passed out a sheet which highlighted individual sites where predicted revenue would significantly exceed the O&M and deferred maintenance costs. This raised the question: should the fees vary to better conform to the cost structure for individual sites? However, it was explained by the Forest Service representatives that the sites are managed as a forest-wide unit and there is an overall balance of revenues/costs at the aggregate Forest level. It was noted by one RAC member that visitors desire a quality experience and are willing to pay a fee for quality facilities. Another RAC member felt that fees should cover O&M and deferred maintenance costs without supplemental appropriation funding. The group noted that public feedback was mixed but almost half of the comments supported the proposed fee increases.

e. Discuss tentative REA Work Group recommendations. Overall, the Work Group felt that both the BLM and Forest Service fee proposals were reasonable and well justified. The Work Group's tentative consensus was to support the fee proposals pending public comment at the RAC meeting.

4. Meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m.

5. Minutes submitted by: Steve Saway, REA Work Group Chair

6. Date approved: March 25, 2009