

**UPPER SALT RIVER CANYON WILDERNESS**  
**PRIVATE RIVER PERMIT SYSTEM**  
**Globe Ranger District, Tonto National Forest**  
**Recreation Enhancement Act**  
**Proposed Fee Structure Change**

The Salt River Canyon Wilderness is a special management area established by Congress in 1984. This area is known for its varied vegetation, outstanding rock formations, rugged character, outstanding opportunities for solitude, and the beautiful Salt River.

The early-day influence of man has not had a marked effect on the character and quality of much of this Wilderness. It remains much the same as it always has been. There are, however, several uses and intrusions which have impacted portions of the area. Public use is increasing, particularly river usage, and must be managed to ensure an enduring Wilderness resource.

Most of the Salt River Canyon Wilderness use is from river runners who access the Salt River from river access points (RAP's) outside of the wilderness. The main RAP's are on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation.

**HISTORY OF PRIVATE RIVER PERMIT SYSTEM**

On August 11, 1994 the Tonto National Forest Supervisor, in a letter to the Regional Forester, requested authorization to institute a permit system for river-running within the Salt River Canyon Wilderness, as per Forest Service Manual 2323.04c. It was noted that the forest had worked many years to avoid this type of restriction; however, the time had come to require a permit for all groups which travel down the Salt River by boat. Outfitter and Guides were already required to have a forest Special Use Permit. Non-commercial groups had no required permit.

The following criteria (FSH 2309.19, Sec. 21.12) were used as a basis for the forest's recommendation:

Visitor use has depreciated or is endangering the Wilderness resource.

Despite the forest's best efforts at visitor education, the large numbers of people using this river every spring have had serious impacts on the campsites scattered along its banks. This had been monitored for five years prior to the determination for the need to permit all users. The monitoring consisted of studies of users actions on the Limits of Acceptable Change (LACs) established in the Wilderness Implementation Plan for this Wilderness. Monitoring reports consistently showed the depreciation of the Wilderness resource due to human use.

It is necessary to limit visitor numbers, etc.; to route visitors around or away from overused trails or camping spots; or to otherwise influence visitor activities or distribution.

Although not documented, the LAC standards for social indicators are routinely being exceeded. With the destruction of the lower drop of Quartzite Falls, it was expected that this problem would be significantly exacerbated. This permit system would allow the forest to provide reserved dates to enter the Wilderness during the established high-use

season, thereby limiting the number of groups entering per day. Distributing the use more evenly throughout the week would help the forest achieve the social LAC standards, and limiting the total number of groups would help the forest achieve the resource LAC standards. Scheduling entry dates would greatly benefit the outfitter/guides who will then be able to schedule their trips well in advance, knowing that specific dates have been reserved for the.

Indirect or less restrictive measures cannot achieve objectives.

The results of the five year monitoring clearly showed that the forest was not achieving its objectives at the camping spots along the river's banks. The 1994 River Ranger's report further addressed the failure of the forest's best efforts to fully achieve established objectives and LAC standards by indirect and less restrictive measures (although the forest would continue these measures even with a permit system.) River Rangers made numerous visitor contacts educating river runners on "Leave No Trace" ethics. Use of fire pans and removal of solid human waste is required of all river runners. Despite these and other indirect and less restrictive measures, established objectives could not be met without the use of a mandatory permit.

Information is needed on visitor characteristics, amount of use, and distribution for management planning.

At the time the request for authorization to implement a fee was made, the forest had made many observations of visitors, but did not systematically gather information concerning the amount of use occurring in this Wilderness, visitor characteristics or visitor distribution.

The Forest Plan specifies a need for permits to monitor or regulate use.

The Salt River Canyon Wilderness Implementation Plan (which is tiered to the Tonto Land and Resource Management Plan) states: "Regulations limiting the general public's numbers during critical time frames will be preceded by significant efforts to reduce visitor use impacts by other methods." As was pointed out above, the forest had made very significant efforts to reduce impacts by indirect and less restrictive methods. The Tonto was, in fact, the last to implement a permit system on a major river which receives significant use.

On October 20, 1994 the Regional Forester approved the implementation of the private river permit system for the Upper Salt River Canyon Wilderness.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT**

This Special Recreation Permit has allowed the District to meet management requirements that mandate the District implement and monitor the Limits of Acceptable Change (LACs) as established in the Wilderness Implementation Plan for this Wilderness.

This project implements a noncommercial private river permit system on the Upper Salt River and is used as a means to disperse camping along the river banks in order to ease past resource damage caused by constant human use in concentrated areas. Natural and cultural resources are protected by partnership with the White Mountain Apache Tribe

and the Forest Service by providing educational and special signage as well as site monitoring for identified sites along the river corridor.

In the past human waste was apparent at most pull-outs along the river's shoreline. Through this Special Recreation Permit the forest has implemented a requirement for all permitted trips to have an enclosed container in which all human wastes are carried and disposed off of Forest Service lands at an approved facility for disposal. Constant monitoring for compliance of this requirement has resulted in a positive outcome for the natural river ecosystem.

Implementing this program requires the expert skills of professional river rangers. For the safety of these rangers the forest brings on two shifts of two rangers each. These shifts are served back to back, with 2 days off, for five to eight day trips. Having a Forest Service presence is important not only to resource management, but additionally assures the health and safety of the users in this remote wilderness. River Rangers are outfitted with first aid, personal protective equipment and with both radio and satellite communication systems. The forest provides training in order for each ranger to maintain their wilderness survival skills and white water rafting certifications for this Class 3-4 river.

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

### Proposed Fee Rate Change

It is proposed to leave the application fee at the current rate of \$10. It is proposed to increase the permit fee from \$75 to \$125. In the average season there are approximately 1400 applicants, and 240 people paying for permits. Given this, the old fee structure nets \$32,000 ( $\$10 \times 1400 + \$75 \times 240 = \$32,000$ ), and the new proposed fee structure would net \$44,000 ( $\$10 \times 1400 + 125 \times 240 = 44,000$ ).

Date of Last Increase: In 2005 we decided to increase the permit fee for the 2006 season \$5 per person (9 people average  $\times$  \$5 = \$45), to \$75 per trip.

Current Annual O&M: \$73,760.

1 GS-7 14 pay periods:	\$31,640
2 x GS-5 6 pay periods:	\$14,400
1 GS-4 for 4 pay periods	\$4,320
1 Admin. Assistant for 20 days	\$3,900
River Gear and Tools	\$7,500
Crew Cab Truck	\$4,000
Per-Diem	\$3,500
Training (Swiftwater & Wilderness First Aid)	\$3,000
Lump Sum	<u>\$1,500</u>
Total:	\$73,760

Current Revenue: \$32,000- See Action Requested Above

Projected Revenue: \$44,000- See Action Requested Above

Difference: \$12,000 increase. These figures include the application fee.

## Planned Accomplishments

- Improve facilities at Gleason Flat RAP (currently an undeveloped parking area with one kiosk)
- Improve facilities at Horseshoe Bend RAP (currently undeveloped parking area)
- Increase patrols by highly trained river rangers to assure resource protection and health and safety of users.
- Provide waterproof area-specific maps and brochures.
- Provide campsite cleanups, fire ring and human waste removal where necessary.
- Implement non-invasive weed program along the river corridor and monitor/perform mitigation actions where necessary.
- Maintain training for Swift Water Rescue and Wilderness First Aid Certifications.
- Maintain communications systems in order to provide for emergency medical and rescue services.
- Implement special orders pertaining to the Upper Salt River Canyon Wilderness.

## Reason for Changing Fee

The main reason is to bring this river permit system in line with REA. Additionally, it is intended to increase/improve service, and align fee to similar river permit systems in the Western United States.

## Results of Not Implementing Fee Change:

The main result will be not conforming to REA.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

On July 31, 2007 the District sent out a mass e-mailing to 1200 people who have expressed an interest in the management of the Upper Salt River Canyon Wilderness and the Private River Permit System.

On August 1, 2007 a press release was sent to both the Arizona Silver Belt in Globe, Arizona and to the Mesa Tribune in Mesa, Arizona.

Additionally, on August 1, 2007 a request was submitted to the Forest's Public Affairs Officer to advertise the proposed fee increase on the Forest's public internet site.

The public notice was as follows:

### ***EMAIL***

“Greetings! You are receiving this e-mail because you have expressed an interest in the management of the Upper Salt River.

The Forest Service is considering a change for the Private Permit Fees for running the Upper Salt River through the Salt River Canyon Wilderness from March 1 to May 15 each year . The application fee of \$10 will remain the same. The permit fee is proposed from the current \$75 to a fee of \$125. The purpose of the proposed fee increase is to help better cover the cost of managing the river program for the Upper Salt River Canyon Wilderness. The proposed fees are in line with those charged by

other Forest Service and federal government agencies for similar river permits in the western United States.

If you wish to comment, please respond by telephone or written correspondence by close of business *August 31, 2007*. The phone number to call is 928-402-6236 you may leave a detailed message of your response. If you would prefer to talk to the River Permit Coordinator please leave your contact information and someone will return your call. Written correspondence can be sent to Globe Ranger District, ATTN: River Permit Coordinator, 7680 Sixshooter Canyon Road, Globe, AZ 85501.

In accordance with the Federal Land Recreational Lands Enhancement Act of 2004, all fee change proposal such as this must be reviewed by a Recreation Resource Advisory Committee. This function is being fulfilled by the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Resource Advisory Council (RAC) for the state of Arizona. The BLM RAC will consider the proposal at their quarterly meeting in September. For more information about the meeting you may contact Connie Lane, Recreation Staff, Globe Ranger District, Tonto National Forest 928-402-6200.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the Tonto National Forest.”

***PRESS RELEASE FOR ARIZONA SILVER BELT AND MESA TRIBUNE (ALSO PROPOSED TO ADD TO FOREST WEBSITE)***

US FOREST SERVICE  
TONTO NATIONAL FOREST

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Additionally, the District will work with the RRAC to have both the Power Point Presentation and this written narrative proposal added to the RRAC website for public review.

**COMPARISON OF OTHER SIMILAR RIVER PERMIT FEES**

<b>National Comparative River Fees</b>						
<b>River</b>	<b>App Fee</b>	<b># Days</b>	<b>Trip Fee</b>	<b>Per Person Fee</b>	<b>Equivalent to Salt Trip (9 people x 4 days)</b>	<b>Agency</b>
<b>(Current)</b> Salt River Canyon Wilderness (AZ)	\$10.00	4	\$75	\$0.00	\$75.00* (9 people x 1 trip [4 days])	USFS
<b>(Proposed)</b> Salt River Canyon Wilderness (AZ)	\$10.00	4	\$125	\$0.00	\$125.00* (9 people x 1 trip [4 days])	USFS
Desolation Canyon (UT)	\$0.00	6 to 7	\$0.00	\$18.00	\$648	BLM**
Grand Canyon (AZ)	\$25.00	2 to 5	\$400***	\$100.00	\$400	NPS
Ladore Canyon (Green) (UT)	\$15.00	5	\$185.00	\$0.00	\$148.00	NPS
Main Salmon (ID)	\$6.00	5 to 6	\$0.00	\$4.00 per day	\$144.00	USFS
Middle Fork of the Salmon (ID)	\$6.00	6 to 7	\$0.00	\$4.00 per day	\$144.00	USFS
Westwater Canyon (CO)	\$0.00	1 or 2	\$0.00	\$7.00	\$63.00	BLM
Rogue River (OR)	\$0.00	5	\$0.00	\$10.00	\$90.00	BLM
Yampa River (UT)	\$15.00	6	\$185.00	\$0.00	\$123.00	NPS

\* Salt River – The White Mountain Apache Reservation charges a permit fee of \$15/person for 2 of the trip days that cross jointly over FS and Reservation lands = \$270.

\*\*Desolation Canyon – The Ute Tribe charges a camping fee of \$25-50 per group per night. A four day trip of nine people would cost \$100.

\*\*\*Grand Canyon – Applicants who win through the lottery are immediately charged an additional, \$400, non-refundable trip deposit (applied towards the final \$100/per person cost of the permit)

Reservation Fees – It is noted that two days on the Wilderness section require a permit from the White Mountain Apache Reservation. This fee is set and charged by the White Mountain Apache Tribal Council. It is required for any recreation use of tribal lands. It does not fall under REA regulations and is therefore, not negotiable for proposal of a joint fee between the reservation and the Forest Service for this permit system.

**DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE DISTRICT WILL INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT HOW FEE REVENUE WILL BE EXPENDED.**

The public will be kept informed of how their fees are at work in the area by signage at the Gleason Flat RAP on individual signage at the Horseshoe Bend takeout and on the

bulleting board at the Highway 288 bridge takeout informing the public that improvements made at the sites are made using fees collected (i.e. “Your Fees at Work”) Specifically, the fees will help the District to complete site operations and maintenance, river patrols, resource monitoring, and visitor contact at Gleason Flat RAP, Horseshoe Bend takeout, Highway 288 bridge takeout and along the Wilderness river corridor.

The public will also be kept informed through the permit application system by including verbiage in the application package regarding the fee program and improvements to the river management program made possible by the collection of permit fees.