

Minutes

Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Work Group Meeting

April 23, 2007

1. A meeting of the REA Work Group was convened at the Tonto National Forest Supervisor's Office at 9:30 a.m., April 23, 2007. The agenda items are shown at enclosure 1.
2. Attendees:
 - a. REA Work Group members: Glen Collins, Frances Werner (by phone), Norman Perry, Jay Adkins, and Steve Saway.
 - b. Forest Service personnel: Jeff Saari, Southwestern Region; Delvin Lopez, Dave Killebrew, Dave Frew, and Jerry Mastel, Tonto National Forest; and Bill Cook, 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. This work group meeting was intended to review two Forest Service fee proposals (Alto Pit OHV Campground and Haigler Canyon Campground/Picnic Area) and to update the Fiscal Year 2007 schedule of fee proposals to be reviewed by the Arizona RRAC.
 - b. Draft minutes of March 7th REA Work Group meeting. Motion was made by Norman Perry, seconded by Jay Adkins, to approve the minutes as stated. Motion was approved.
 - c. Alto Pit OHV Campground, Prescott National Forest. Bill Cook gave an in-depth PowerPoint presentation on the fee proposal and distributed handouts to the Work Group. His presentation included the site location, site development background, campground amenities and attractions (including access to an extensive OHV trail system beyond the immediate site), day use features, fee analysis details, and public notification efforts. After considering REA Work Group concerns at the February 7th meeting, the proposed campground fee was reduced from \$15 single/\$30 double to \$10 single/\$20 double. The campground fee includes day use at no additional charge (which otherwise would be \$3.00). A market comparison of other similar fee sites was presented, and the revised Alto Pit OHV Campground fee proposal appeared more consistent with other similar fee sites than did the original fee proposal. The Alto Pit Campground fee site is part of the Prescott Basin Complex of developed recreation sites; thus, fee revenues will be applied to high priority work within the Complex. There was a concern expressed by Norman Perry that the proposed fee did not fully cover the annual operations and maintenance costs and thus should be higher. However, Jeff Saari explained that the original fee proposal was not comparable to other forest sites and had generated concerns from the regional fee board as well as from REA Work Group members and OHV users. There is

no requirement in REA that recreation fee sites be completely self-supporting. It was also noted by Steve Saway that the day use fee (\$3.00) might need to be examined and possibly increased in the future to help cover the site's O&M costs. Another point of concern and discussion was the inability of the Forest Service accounting system to distinguish fee revenues by recreation site, which creates gaps in accounting for site specific revenues versus costs. Jeff Saari explained that the Forest Service is trying to do that but is currently hampered by limitations of the existing accounting system. This appears to be an issue that must be solved at the national Forest Service level.

d. Haigler Canyon Campground, Tonto National Forest. Dave Frew gave an in-depth PowerPoint presentation on the fee proposal and distributed handouts to the Work Group. Jerry Mastel, District Ranger, Pleasant Valley Ranger District, provided comments from his perspective on the importance of the project and the District's public outreach efforts. The presentation included the site location, pre-development facilities, resource issues and motivations for the project, planned facilities and improvements, financial analysis and business plan, campground amenities, and public notification efforts. The District estimated fee revenue using the concept of Recreation Visitor Days (RVDs). This is a standard Forest Service technique; however, Jeff Saari suggested that revenue estimates be done in a way that's more easily understood by the public. Estimated camping and day use revenues were somewhat below the estimated O&M costs; however, appropriated funds will supplement fee revenue to cover the balance of O&M costs. Regarding campground amenities, Dave Frew explained that "reasonable visitor protection" consisted of weekly patrols (which are more frequent during peak visitor periods) and a resident campground host during two months of the year. The proposed \$6 campground fee and \$6 day use fee appeared consistent with nearby sites that were listed in a market comparison and are consistent with the standard fee for the Tonto Pass program. However, Glen Collins questioned why the District proposes to have both a \$6 day use fee and a \$6 camping fee for overnight use - doesn't seem logical. Dave Killebrew and Jeff Saari discussed user recreation patterns at the Haigler Canyon recreation site and why it's necessary to have both fees. During review and discussion of the public notification efforts, it was noted that the Tonto National Forest Federal Register notice dated January 19, 2007, only addressed the \$6 overnight camping fee, not the \$6 day use fee. After some discussion of ways to remedy this, it was decided that the Tonto should amend the Federal Register notice to add the proposed \$6 day use fee and also post a notice in the nearby community of Young, Arizona. Frances Werner suggested that the Game and Fish Department could also publish a notice on their web site. Results of this additional public outreach would be provided to the REA Work Group at the June 7th Work Group meeting.

e. Tentative REA Work Group Recommendations. Pending public comment at the June 8th RRAC meeting, the REA work group members agreed that both the Alto Pit and Haigler Canyon campground fee proposals were reasonable, had good public support, and should be given an RRAC recommendation of approval. Feedback from the expanded public outreach and amended Federal Register notice for Haigler Canyon is needed to further assess public support for the proposed day use fee.

f. Quarterly schedule for RRAC review of Fiscal Year 2007 BLM and Forest Service fee proposals. The draft schedule as of April 17th was reviewed and updated. The 4th quarter fee proposals were deleted except for the Salt River Canyon SRP fee increase – see revised schedule at enclosure 2. Considering that this is the only fee proposal for review, it was agreed that the 4th quarter REA Work Group meeting should be done via a conference call to save travel funds. The time and date will be coordinated with all concerned.

g. Other REA Work Group business. The Chair requested that a copy of the condensed PowerPoint presentations for the June 8th RRAC meeting be provided for the Chair's review 10 to 14 days before the RRAC meeting. Intent is to ensure the presentations will fit within allotted agenda times and that the files can be uploaded to the BLM RAC web site for advance review by RAC members. It was also noted that the presentations should not contain excessive graphics or photos in order to keep the file sizes at a reasonable level.

4. Meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.

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

6. Date approved: June 7, 2007