

RECREATION RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RRAC)
FINAL MINUTES
September 18, 2008

BLM National Training Center
9828 North 31st Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona

AGENDA ITEM: Recreation Resource Advisory Council (RRAC) Session
REA Work Group Report, Steve Saway

Forest Service Fee Proposals, Jeff Saari, FS Region 3, Developed Sites Program Manager

- 1. Arizona Cabin Rental Program Fee Proposals, Kathy Makansi, Coronado National Forest; and Jeremy Haines, Coconino National Forest**
- 2. Prescott National Forest Fee Proposals, Rachel Franchina, Recreation Specialist, Independent Resources Enterprise Team; and Bruce Fahrni, Prescott National Forest**

BLM Fee Proposals, Don Applegate, Arizona Recreation Program Lead, BLM Arizona State Office

- 1. Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes Special Management Area Fee Changes, Judy Culver, Arizona Strip District**

DISCUSSION: Meeting was called to order at approximately 1:15 p.m. by Steve Saway, RRAC Chair.

AGENDA ITEM: REA Work Group Report, Steve Saway.

DISCUSSION: Steve Saway, Chair of the Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Working Group, stated that members of the Group were Norman Perry, Frances Werner, Glen Collins, and Steve Saway. Steve summarized the Work Group's activities since the last RAC meeting.

1. On July 31, the group met via phone conference with Forest Service and BLM officials to review and screen fee proposals that are tentatively scheduled to be presented to the full Recreation RAC (RRAC) in September. The group reviewed cabin rental proposals from the Coronado and Coconino National Forest; reviewed the Prescott National Forest forest-wide fee update; discussed status of the BLM Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes special recreation permit fee proposals, and offered suggestions to expand public outreach via the BLM web site. The work group agreed that all proposals should be presented at the next RRAC meeting in September.

2. On September 17, the work group met at the BLM National Training Center along with other RAC members and Forest Service and BLM officials. The group approved minutes of the July 31 meeting; reviewed the Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes fee proposals; and aired some concerns regarding the Prescott National Forest fee proposals. One concern dealt with a “one size fits all” day use fee; however, the Forest Service explained that this works best because it gives visitors more certainty and consistency when using day use sites across the Forest. Another concern was the revenue/cost projections at certain sites which implied the fees were too high. However, the Forest Service explained that they managed the sites in aggregate and at the Forest level the revenue/cost projections were appropriate. Next, the group discussed their overall tentative recommendations pending public comment at the RRAC meeting.
3. Steve reminded everyone that a copy of the detailed fee proposals had been posted to the RRAC web site for prior review by the RAC members. The fee proposal briefings at today's RRAC meeting will be a more condensed presentation due to the constrained agenda time. After completion of the public comment period, the work group will provide recommendations on the proposals.

AGENDA ITEM: Forest Service Fee Proposals – Half Moon Ranch and Shaw House, Coronado National Forest (Kathy Makansi, Coronado National Forest); Apache Maid Cabin, Coconino National Forest (Jeremy Haines, Coconino National Forest)

DISCUSSION: Kathy and Jeremy gave a PowerPoint presentation (see handout) which summarized the fee proposals, cabin amenities, financial details, fee justification, and public comments. We would like to make these cabins available for rental. This provides a unique opportunity to the public. Is this on your Forest Service website? Yes, also in the Safford and Tucson newspapers. What are the fees? The Shaw and Half Moon Ranch cabins are \$150/night for each cabin and \$75/night for the Apache Maid cabin. How close in proximity are the Shaw and Half Moon cabins? The cabins are approximately one mile apart. The setting of the two cabins is in the Dragoon Mountains, which is the perfect location for hikers. What is the recommendation of the committee? The committee felt this was reasonable and comparable to other cabin rentals. If someone wants to use the Apache Main Cabin, where do they get water? The nearest location is Beaver Creek. We are looking into having a potable water tank onsite.

AGENDA ITEM: Prescott National Forest – Forest-wide Fee Proposal (Rachel Franchina and Bruce Fahrni, Prescott National Forest)

DISCUSSION: Rachel and Bruce gave a PowerPoint presentation (see handout) which summarized the fee proposals, market analysis, financial details, benefits, public involvement, and public comment. All information has been posted on the website. Forest-wide proposal is to increase fees at day-use sites and campgrounds. Discontinue fees at one campground and also at one day use area. Camping fees would include access to day use sites across the forest. An extra vehicle charge of \$5 would apply at

campgrounds. Annual passes (for day use) would remain the current price of \$40. Wednesdays would remain a free day at standard amenity sites all year.

What's the definition of an extra vehicle? More than one vehicle per single site or more than two vehicles per double site (RVs towing a car count as one vehicle).

The proposed fee increases will allow the Forest Service to dedicate funds annually to reduce deferred maintenance, help maintain the current services and benefits provided, and enhance visitor experiences through continued improvements and site protection. Comment: the Forest Service did a very good job with public outreach. We have a goal of reducing deferred maintenance by 90 percent. This would allow the Forest Service to better use appropriations of the forest and push to have developed sites become more self-sufficient.

Concern: one size fits all day use fee. Example: one proposed day use site in the Tonto National Forest (Haigler Creek) was contentious because the local community opposed the standard Tonto Pass day use fee (\$6). Should day use fees vary by site? We recognize that fees at some sites generate more revenue than the cost structure and others do not generate enough revenue, but we manage these sites in aggregate forest-wide as one unit. Also, it was felt that a standard day use fee was more consistent and predictable for forest visitors.

AGENDA ITEM: BLM Fee Proposal – Paria Canyon/Coyote Buttes Recreation Area (Judy Culver, BLM Arizona Strip District)

DISCUSSION: Judy Culver gave a PowerPoint presentation (see handout) which summarized the fee proposals, location and components of the special management area, financial details and public outreach.

Is there any thought to including a road to the Wire Pass Trailhead (needed 4wd to access last time)? On good weather days you do not need 4wd. The road on the north side can be closed at times due to flooding. There is an issue between the County, State and BLM. The County said it was their road, however, they did not maintain the road so BLM took care of road maintenance. We do not have enough funding to upgrade the drainage area. If someone comes to the day use area after flooding, they have another road for access by driving an additional two miles. The drainage problem is in Utah. The concern is for BLM to have enough money to manage the sites. This is a world-class destination with people competing from all over the world for permits. Why do we have to have appropriated funds to run this facility? The fees were based on the comparable fees of other areas in this region. What's the definition of appropriations? The appropriations are Congressional appropriations to the agency. These sites are used by an international tourist base and the fees should be enough for the sites to be maintained by visitor fees instead of with appropriation funding. However, we need to look at both local and non-local perspectives and users. A lot of the walk-in visitors are local residents. Comment: BLM should re-look the overall fee structure to move toward more self-sufficient fee revenues in the future. But this needs to show benefits such as

the LTVAs. There was a lot of trouble with this site a couple years ago with obtaining permits over the internet. When the proposal was being designed four years ago, there was an application fee and also a permit fee. The current lottery fee process is a much better experience.

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment on Recreation Fee Proposals.

DISCUSSION: Public comment period was opened for members of the public to comment on any of the fee proposals under consideration. There being no public comments, the public comment period was closed.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Reconvenes to provide Fee Proposal Recommendations to BLM State Director (RAC Members)

MOTION: Bill Brake moves that the RRAC recommend approval of the following fee proposals as presented during today's meeting: 1) Coronado National Forest Shaw House and Half Moon Ranch cabin rentals; 2) Coconino National Forest Apache Maid cabin rental; 3) Prescott National Forest forest-wide fee update; 4) BLM Special Recreation Permits Paria Canyon day use and Coyote Buttes North day use fee increases. Seconded by Linda Binder. Motion approved by the RRAC.

AGENDA ITEM: Discussion on next REA Working Group Meeting and Upcoming BLM and Forest Service Recreation Fee Proposals (RAC Members)

DISCUSSION: The Forest Service is currently gathering requirements and has no specific proposals at this time. The next BLM fee proposal would be the Kingman Field Office fee update. This will be discussed at the Work Group Meeting in the Spring of 2009. The Work Group will also meet to develop a 2009 fee review schedule.

ACTION: RRAC meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.