

Minutes

Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Work Group Meeting

February 3, 2010

1. A meeting of the REA Work Group was convened via conference call at 10:00 a.m on February 3, 2010. A toll free bridge line number was kindly arranged by Deborah Stevens for this conference call. The agenda items are shown at enclosure 1.

2. Attendees:

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

b. Forest Service personnel: Jeff Saari, Region 3 Developed Sites Program Manager; Kathy Makansi and Robert Walter, Coronado National Forest; and Michael Lyndon, Kaibab National Forest.

c. Member of the public: Kitty Benzar, President, Western Slope No-Fee Coalition.

3. Action on agenda items:

a. The Chair asked all attendees to introduce themselves and then discussed the purpose and agenda for the meeting. Prior to the meeting, each of the Forest Service fee proponents had sent to the Work Group members an advance copy of their cabin rental fee proposal and Powerpoint presentation. These documents had also been posted to the Arizona BLM RAC web site as well. The Work Group's purpose was to gain a good understanding of the fee proposals and insure they met the REA criteria before presentation to the full RAC meeting in March 2010. Jeff Saari indicated that these proposals had previously been screened by the Forest Service Region 3 fee board. The Work Group members expressed appreciation for the well-written documentation and timely receipt.

b. Kathy Makansi briefed the group on the Kent Springs Cabin fee proposal. The presentation included the location and history of the cabin, business plan, amenities, attractions, management and marketing, financial details and fee justification, social/economic impacts, and public involvement. She then fielded questions from the work group. Some of the comments/questions included: good outreach; meets the six month notice requirement; except for the shower, no major ADA issue using the cabin (though it is not required to be ADA compliant – shower on the “to do” list); cabin is located in a historic insect collection setting; can maximum group size be enforced (will monitor but not sure); cabin rental didn't garner support of the Friends of Madera Canyon because they wanted an environmental education center; how the \$150 fee level was determined; cabin has a new septic system; and level of fire risk (not big). Overall, the public involvement showed favorable support for the cabin. Members of the work group expressed differing views on the fee level, ranging from too low to too high. The Chair thought that the fee level should be based on a sliding scale, so that a group of four or less could pay a lower fee. Others were concerned that the fee not undercut or compete with private Bed and Breakfast establishments.

c. Michael Lyndon briefed the group on the Hull Cabin fee proposal. The presentation included the business plan, history and location of the cabin, rehabilitation work done over the last 3 years, amenities, financial details, social/economic impacts, and public involvement. The Chair pointed out some math discrepancies in the financial details which will need to be corrected. Michael (and another employee – name unknown) then fielded questions from the work group. Some of the comments/questions included: can outfitter-guide groups or other day users visit the cabin site (working on a solution); any additional capital improvement needed in the short term (no); location is near Grandview Tower; winter closure may affect traditional hunter safe haven usage (initially summer use but may expand the season – lessons learned from Spring Valley Cabin – phase it in); cabin has been re-keyed; type of water system (potable/treated water brought in to cistern uphill from cabin); is not ADA compliant – would change the historic structure too much; concern about closing this historic site to public visitors (don't want to shut off the public but also must respect privacy of cabin renters); make it clear in marketing materials that public visitors are allowed; does the cabin have check out and check in times (yes); availability for tours in between check out/check in times (tours usually in evenings); directions to site and type of road access (can get there via forest roads or via Grand Canyon National Park); is day use under consideration (looking at equestrian use); and is dispersed camping available (no).

d. Next, the Chair opened the public comment period and recognized Kitty Benzar from the Western Slope No-Fee Coalition. Kitty Benzar expressed her views and concerns as follows:

- no opposition to cabin rentals but believe they are significantly over-priced
- the emphasis on not under-cutting competition is mis-directed
- original idea was to give the public affordable rustic accommodations
- would suggest a sliding scale on the fee structure
- Hull Cabin Federal Register notice mentioned a \$110 summer rate without water – still true? (no, water will be provided)
- glad the historic Hull Cabin grounds are open to the public
- would like the gate not to be locked (gate is not locked but visitors are requested to walk in)
- there is plenty of room to adjust the price – make it more affordable (good point – sliding scale might be good- but cheap rates might attract party groups)
- the proposed fee structure creates an incentive to have large groups so that the per person cost is low

e. Other work group discussion: how can we protect historic sites in remote locations; suggestion – report on actual versus projected use of the facilities; Forest Service did a good job in the presentations; does revenue go into other uses (no, but pooled for all cabin rentals).

f. In summary, the Work Group felt the fee proposals were ready for the full RAC's review at the March meeting. The work group's discussion and various views expressed today should be considered by the Forest Service as they finalize the fee proposals and presentations to the RAC. The Chair requested that the updated Powerpoint presentations be provided to Deborah Stevens for posting on the BLM RAC web site a week before the RAC meeting.

4. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m.
5. Minutes submitted by: Steve Saway, REA Work Group Chair.
6. Date approved: March 17, 2010