

**Recreation Resource Advisory Council Meeting Notes**  
**February 17, 2010**  
**Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area**

**Main Topic: Red Rock Canyon NCA draft Business Plan and Fee changes**

Recreation Subcommittee Attendees: John Hiatt, Sheri Eklund Brown, Will Roger Peterson, William Molini, Skip Canfield, Elise McAllister, Sharlet Berentsen, Julie Von Tobel Gleason. via conference call: Lee Turner and Larry Hyslop.

In addition, 32 members of general public were in attendance.

**Welcome and Introductions were led by Doran Sanchez, BLM Nevada Chief of Communications**

**Review of RRAC Process by Barb Keleher, BLM Nevada Recreation Lead**

**Presentation on Red Rock Canyon, the draft business plan and potential fee increases by Mark Tanaka Sanders, Red Rock Canyon NCA Manager**

**Key Points:**

Each year over 1 million people visit the Scenic Loop area. These high levels of visitation contribute to safety and resource concerns. Fee money is used towards maintenance, resource protection and visitor safety. From 1996 to 2005 the NCA boundary has increased in size by 134% and visitation is up from 20 thousand to 1 million visitors per year. The fees have not increased since their inception in 1997. Fee collection needs to be updated to reflect the expansion of amenities and services offered. Additional funding is needed if BLM hopes to keep facilities from falling into disrepair. Projects identified in our Resource Management Plan still need to be implemented.

Sources of funding are experiencing fluctuations and need to become more sustainable. The local BLM office would be able to maintain a steady source of revenue through increased amenity fees.

The additional fees would be used in the following areas: Scenic drive maintenance and safety, education, staying open additional hours to meet demand for both visitor center and scenic drive, rehabilitating disturbed areas, rehabilitating Oliver Ranch and removing safety hazards, developing and removing safety hazards for new acquisitions including Ash Spring.

The S. NV District Office did have a public comment period, from August – November, with limited responses received (A total of 15 people attended two public meetings and 140 written public comments were received).

**Written comments included:**

**Biking/Walking**

Many comments did not support fees for bicyclist or walk-ins.

More law enforcement (this directly identified with fees).

It would cost more to collect due to having odd numbers (\$7) for cars (\$3) for bikes/pedestrians (Mark commented that BLM plans to track the costs of collection).

What about Horses? Shouldn't the horseback riders pay fees? (Tim W commented we will monitor trailheads for equestrian use in the future).

Tim Wakefield added that the annual pass is a real discount pass for locals as it works out to 13 cents a day. Out of town guests will generally pay the \$7 per vehicle.

### **Recreation RAC members question and comment period:**

Most of the concerns seem to be from bicyclists and pedestrians.

Hikers and bikers should pay as they also have an impact on the area.

It may be discriminatory if they don't all pay.

Can we justify a fee increase with what's happening in the local economy?

RRC: People are coming from local areas. Our visitation is up 8% and due to the economy we reduced our projected vehicle fee from \$10 to \$7 for vehicle fee.

This area attracts world wide use. This is the fourth most popular climbing destination in the US.

Do climbers use the loop road?

RRC: Yes, they are usually here for multiple days and buy an annual pass and stay in the campground.

The annual pass would not apply towards group reservations.

Are there plans to "market" the annual pass? Have you planned for that?

RRC: not specifically at this time.

There haven't been too many public comments via public meetings and written comments. RRC has never had a fee increase. There is deferred maintenance and the staff is trying to be proactive. Federal funding is flat and in decline, SNPLMA funds are declining.

This is not a highly objectionable issue to the public because of the very low responses related to the very high number of users and local population numbers.

Are cyclists riding a tandem charged the same as a single bicycle?

RRC: The fee is per vehicle, not per person. The fee is the same as the motorcyclist fee.

Road bikes do not want to wait on line at the entrance station. Having a pass swipe machine/express lane would help. RRC: There are three lanes and most transactions are approximately 15 seconds.

In-kind donations are huge and continue to be depended on.

Plan to sell the passes at sporting goods stores, etc.

**Public Comment Period (2 minute limit):**

--Overall I support the idea. And increasing the annual pass is a good idea. One question: Will people who used to walk and bike in for free now drive their vehicle in since they now have to pay to bike/walk in? It's already congested. It's getting dangerous. Have shuttles and get the vehicles off the loop, ex: Zion. Have we thought about safety hazard if people park on the road (St Hwy 159)?

--The fee has to be fair. Everyone should pay. I'm in favor of the increases. It's still worth it.

--I'm in favor of the plan. The increase still makes this an inexpensive place to visit.

--The business plan is for 10 years. Does this mean there will be no fee increase for 10 years and BLM cannot come back in five years and ask for an increase? Tim Wakefield: This is the Plan for now but BLM cannot guarantee that it wouldn't be revised in the future.

--I volunteer and give back to help keep the area clean. I approve of the increase.

--Object to bicycle day pass. I remember when fees were first charged at Red Rock and they were promised access would always be free to bikers and hikers.

--Comments from a medical doctor: We are in an obesity epidemic. 25% of Clark County residents are obese. Most of the people affected have no access or additional funds. I strongly urge that you do not charge for walking.

--A hiker: My club supports the increase. We all need to go along with this as we all use Red Rock and need to contribute to the upkeep.

--This person promotes bicycling in Las Vegas and markets that there is a lot more to do in LV than the strip. The cyclists imprint is also considerably less. I could see \$1 per cyclist. On annual pass allow additional cyclists in similar to America the Beautiful Pass.

--Safety is a concern w/ bicyclists stopping at the entrance booth. This is mainly due to vehicles coming up on them while they are stopped and carbon monoxide.

--Bicyclists should pay less than a motorcycle as there are no emissions, they are helping the environment and they only stay 1 hr. Cyclists come to the scenic loop because they do feel safer then when riding around Las Vegas.

--Have donations for bicyclists instead.

--Is this park accessible to the public? We do not want to discourage people.

--President, Friends of Red Rock: If a person wants to volunteer sweat equity they can volunteer 3 ½ hours per month and get the annual pass for free.

--What are you going to get for charging cyclists? Post signs that warn drivers to watch out for cyclists.

--We don't see BLM Law Enforcement until they close the loop road at sunset.

--What about joggers coming in after hours? Doesn't think biking/pedestrian idea is well thought out, shouldn't do it and stick w/ the promise made.

--I'm the president of a bicycle club with 60 members. We didn't know about the 2 public meetings. There are many active members who can volunteer. \$3 per bicycle is steep but I do support the annual pass and supports the vehicle fee increase. This is a green mode of transportation.

--John Ensign is a bicyclist and I ride with him.

--You can park your horse trailer at the exit and it's free.

--How can you possibly enforce the pedestrian/bike access?

- How is the money being spent?
- Effects to bicyclists from the exhaust fumes at the entrance station need to be considered. Have a separate lane for cyclists.
- -Bikes have no emission, only here and hour, no carbon impact, and safer.
- We are missing the issue, safety and access is our concern, not the \$30 fee. We want a safe place to ride. There are no signs for cyclists. Right hand side of road can be a problem. Raising fees from \$20-\$30 and what do you get? BLM is harassing cyclist, joggers. The bike lane could be dangerous. A cyclist could get hurt if it's not well marked. And, it's impractical for club riders.
- Why not include equestrian users in fees?

### **Vote and Develop Fee Proposal Recommendations for Southern Mojave RAC:**

The Recreation Subcommittee and general public shared some additional discussion regarding the proposed fees before the final recommendation was developed.

Discussion included:

Amenity charges that include bikers, hikers, and equestrian be accepted.

Day pass be good for more than one person.

Can we include equestrian fees now? No, it would need to be addressed in business plan and would need further scoping and discussion.

Market the Annual Pass as an Annual "support" pass.

Add information about volunteer service pass to marketing.

Implement the bicycle "bypass" lane.

### **Official Motion:**

The following motion was made by Will Roger Peterson and seconded by Skip Canfield. A unanimous decision was made to provide the recommendation above to the Southern Mojave RAC at their meeting on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

The NV RAC Recreation Subcommittee recommends to the Southern Mojave RAC that the Business Plan, and proposed fee increases, be approved with the following amendments to the Plan:

A. That the Plan provides for an annual "support" pass. This means that the proposed annual pass would be retitled "Annual Support Pass" and be marketed to all users of the NCA with appropriate signage at NCA facilities, including those facilities such as the parking and restroom facilities on Highway 160 and Cottonwood Valley and other appropriate locations where no fee collection station exists or is proposed. It was the opinion of the Recreation RAC members that since the funds collected under the fee program are used to manage the entire NCA that all users should be encouraged to support the management of the NCA, even though only those entering the Scenic Loop through the fee station would be required to pay the fees.

B. That the Plan provide for a volunteer service pass. This recommendation is consistent with the present policy of the Red Rock Volunteer Association that volunteers providing 40 hours of service per year in the RRCNCA are provided a free annual pass.

C. That the Plan provide for an annual pass that complies with the guidelines for “guests” in accordance with the guidelines spelled out in the “America the Beautiful Pass”. This is intended to address the “fairness issue” of everyone in a passenger car enters without additional fees if the driver has an annual pass or pays the day use fee.

D. That the Plan provides for the analysis and possible implementation of a card (annual pass) operated electronic gate at the Red Rock Scenic Loop fee station so that regular users of the Red Rock Loop (particularly bicycles) don’t have to wait in line to show their annual pass but may proceed directly to the loop after passing through an electronically operated entry device.

#### **Editing Recreation Subcommittee Protocol :**

The Recreation Subcommittee edited the existing Protocol document to include information on length of term for members and officers, bringing on new members, etc.

Barb will edit the document and mail it to the RAC Chairs for signatures.

#### **Elections:**

John Hiatt was re-elected as Chairperson and Sheri Eklund-Brown was re-elected as Vice-Chairperson through FY2010. Elections will be held at the next meeting which is tentatively scheduled for November, before the Tri-RAC meeting. Meeting dates and location TBD.

#### **Ways to Improve the NV Fee Proposal Process:**

The Recreation Subcommittee should be involved earlier in the business planning process.

The Recreation Subcommittee can assist BLM with spreading the word on future fee proposals by sending the information to groups each member is involved in.

Post public meeting information on the BLM web pages where the public can find it. For example: Use the “In the spotlight” box on each District Office’s external web home page.