

Questions and Answers for BLM Advisory Council Members

What is the purpose of a Recreation RAC?

Recreation RACs provide recommendations to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) officials on matters including, but not limited to:

- Implementing or eliminating standard amenity fees, expanded amenity fees, and non-commercial individual special recreation permit fee (these are called special use fees by the BLM);
- Expanding or limiting the recreation fee program; and
- Implementing fee level changes (increases or decreases)

Why are Recreation RACs working with two agencies?

The Forest Service and BLM have agreed to use a shared Recreation RAC approach. Where appropriate, fee proposals for both agencies will be reviewed by the same FACA-chartered entity: Either an existing BLM Resource Advisory Council (RAC) or a newly chartered Forest Service Recreation RAC. For the purposes of this Q&A, the term "Recreation RAC" will mean both Forest Service Recreation RACs and BLM RACs and/or their subcommittees.

BLM RACs do not have the membership make-up required in the REA. Is this a problem?

The BLM is working with the BLM RACs to determine if they would like to set up subcommittees to more reflect the membership required by the REA. However, the decision to form a subcommittee is an Advisory Council, not an agency, decision. Since the REA enables the Forest Service and the BLM to use existing councils in lieu of establishing new ones, the membership make-up of existing councils is appropriate according to the REA.

How does the Forest Service interact with BLM RACs?

The Forest Service and the BLM have developed an interagency agreement that enables the Forest Service to work with a BLM RACs or recreation subcommittee on recreation fee issues in those states where appropriate. The BLM is the lead agency in this situation; however, a Forest Service official must attend a BLM RAC meeting when Forest Service recreation fee-related issues are an agenda item. The Forest Service official is not a member of the BLM RAC. Recommendations pertaining to the Forest Service will be presented to the official BLM representative, who will then transfer them to the Forest Service. When BLM RAC charters are renewed, the Forest Service will be given 'ex officio' membership.

Some States have more than one BLM Advisory Council and some national forests cross State boundaries. How will the Forest Service decide which Recreation RAC to use?

Where uncertainty exists, recreation managers in regional offices will make the decision about which Recreation RAC each Forest will use. It is important that federal officials work together to ensure each other and the Recreation RACs are aware of proposals. For example, if a proposal is known to be of particular interest in the adjoining State,



officials may make presentations to both advisory groups; however only the official advisory group would make the recommendation.



Does the Recreation RAC deal with ALL fees or just some fees?

Recreation RACs do not have the authority to make recommendations on recreation fee sites operated by a concessionaire or contractor, commercial permits such as outfitting and guiding, and Forest Service special use permits or BLM special recreation permits issued for group events such as bike races. (Note: The REA identifies group events as a recreation fee under the special recreation permit category. However, REA does not state that Recreation RACs will review these permits. The Secretaries added individual permits, not group permits, to the list of fee changes that Recreation RACs will review.)

What happens if the Forest Service or BLM decides not to follow the Recreation RAC recommendation?

If a recommendation is rejected, the Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary of Interior must issue a notice that identifies the reasons for rejecting the recommendation to both the House Committee of Resources and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. This notice must occur not less than 30 days prior to implementing the decision that pertains to the recommendation.

Usually at the first meeting, members elect a chair and vice chair to serve for two years.

How long will the Recreation RACs last?

Recreation RACs are currently expected to be in place as long as the REA exists, which is until December 2014. If the REA is re-authorized, Recreation RACs may exist for a longer period of time.

How will the public know about Recreation RAC meetings?

All meetings of must be published in the *Federal Register* 15 days before the meeting as well as announced through local media. These announcements include a tentative agenda for the meeting and public comment time, so people can determine whether or not they would like to attend. In addition, links to all meeting announcements, agendas and notes will be available at www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/rrac.

Will the agencies receive any other public input about fees?

Yes, the Forest Service and the BLM will follow agency public involvement guidelines for proposing new or changing existing recreation fees. These include, but are not limited to, posting a notice of fee proposal at the site where it will occur, ensuring notices of new fees are posted in the *Federal Register* six months before implementation, and posting a notice of the proposal in local media.

How will “general public support” be documented?

REA states that Recreation RACs must have documentation on general public support for their recommendation. The Forest Service has a strategy for informing the public about all fee changes. The Forest Service will bring the feedback received on those efforts to the Recreation RAC. The Office of General Counsel has advised that if the agency receives little to no feedback on a proposal, it can be interpreted as not objecting to the proposal.



Can members give input on items other than recreation fees?

Recreation RAC members are members of the public and can, as anyone can, give comments and opinions on an individual basis, any aspect of Forest Service or BLM management. However, in terms of the formal recommendation process as described in the REA, Recreation RACs are limited to the roles and duties outlined in their charter.