



U.S. Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management Briefing Paper



Date: June 6, 2008

Topic: Recreation Resource Advisory Committee Update

Background: The Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) requires that the Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) provide Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (R/RACs) with an opportunity to make recommendations to the two agencies on certain types of proposed recreation fee changes.

REA allows the agencies to use existing Advisory Councils, such as BLM Resource Advisory Councils (RACs), or to establish new Committees as appropriate. The FS and BLM elected to jointly use existing BLM RACs in the states of Arizona, Idaho, the Dakotas, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. The FS also chartered new Recreation RACs for the states of California and Colorado, and for the FS Pacific Northwest (including Oregon for the BLM), Eastern and Southern Regions. (The term R/RAC refers to both BLM RACs and FS-chartered Recreation RACs.) The FS is using an existing FS advisory board for the Black Hills National Forest in South Dakota. In addition, the Governors of three states – Alaska, Nebraska and Wyoming – requested that their States be exempt from the REA-R/RAC requirement, and the two Departments concurred with the exemptions.

The FS and BLM began working with BLM RACs following the signing of an Interagency Agreement in September 2006. Members were appointed to FS-established Recreation RACs in February 2007 for the three regions, and July 2007 for the two states. In all cases, the agencies sought to ensure R/RACs understood their new role and establish relationships prior to consideration of fee proposals.

Fee Proposals Brought Before R/RACs:

Forest Service – Most recreation opportunities on the 192 million acres of FS-managed land do not involve developed sites and are free. The FS manages over 17,000 developed recreation sites, of which about 6,000 require fees and 11,000 are free. Since 2006, the FS has shared over 370 proposals with R/RACs in the following categories:

Site Type	New Fees	Fee Increases
Standard (Day use such as picnic areas, interpretive sites & developed trailheads)	5	24
Expanded – Campgrounds	34	223
Expanded – Cabins	20	17
Expanded – Other (Group sites, dump stations, highly developed boat launches)	4	18
Special Recreation Permits (Specialized Trails, Climbing, River)	3	23

Bureau of Land Management – The vast majority of recreation on the 258 million acres of BLM-managed land is dispersed and does not involve any fee. In addition, the BLM manages approximately 3,000 recreation sites – of which approximately 300 require fees and the remainder are free. Since 2006, the BLM has shared 44 fee proposals with R/RACs in the following categories:

Site Type	New Fees	Fee Increases
Standard (Day use such as picnic areas, interpretive sites & developed trailheads)	2	7
Expanded – Primarily Campgrounds	8	19
Special Recreation Permits (Specialized Areas, such as OHV, River, or Long-Term Visitor Areas)	3	5

Key Points:

- 1) R/RAC members are very engaged in their work and are helping to ensure that the public is aware of and engaged in the recreation fee proposal process. Members are also generally interested in FS and BLM recreation, facilities, and management issues related to recreation.
- 2) To date, all FS and BLM proposals ultimately have received positive recommendations.
- 3) The FS also has also reconsidered six proposals based on R/RAC discussion and advice. In some cases, the FS incorporated R/RAC ideas, in others the agency sought to strengthen public participation.
- 4) During RRAC discussions, the BLM also has revised 3 fee proposals (both increasing and decreasing fee levels) after receiving input from the RRACs.
- 5) Both agencies are extremely positive about continuing to work with the R/RACs. They provide a critical public perspective to the FS and BLM recreation fee programs. The work of the R/RACs also has provided important evidence demonstrating public support for the recreation fee programs.

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