

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Resource Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes Yakima County Title II Projects and Recreation Fee Proposal Presentation

October 27, 2021

Zoom meeting link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86704927642?pwd=NVZUN2tZTU43VG9LcFAxTC9NSFdIU09>

Meeting ID: 867 0492 7642 <> Meeting Passcode: 479589

If calling in via phone: 1-253-215-8782 (same meeting ID and passcode)

Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) members in attendance via Zoom: Travis Hornby, Ken Tolonen, Al Murphy, Darcy Batura, Powys Gadd, Meghan Craig, Matt Gilroy, Amy Ramsey, Bob Bugert, Keith Goehner, and Jeff Hardesty

Forest Service participants:

Erick Walker – Designated Federal Official (DFO) for the RAC

Victoria Wilkins – meeting facilitator

Robin DeMario – RAC Coordinator and note taker

Deb Kelly – behind the scenes Zoom coordinator

Agenda:

9:00 **Welcome:**

- Review agenda
- RAC Business:
 - Terms extended to Dec. 21, 2022 for Travis Hornby, Ken Tolonen, Darcy Batura, Tammy James-Pino, and Jeff Hardesty; all other RAC members terms end on Jan. 12, 2025
 - Report on the status of unspent Title II monies and suggested solutions—Erick Walker

9:30 **External Project Proponent**—new project presentation:

- 10 minutes—Meadow Protection, User Outreach & Education—Laurel Baum, Conservation Northwest

9:40 **Naches Ranger District**—new project presentations:

- 10 minutes—Solar Powered Electric Sign Boards—Aaron Rowe and Jason Emhoff
- 10 minutes—FS Road 1201 Surface Conversion—Kayli Barber

10:00 **Public comment** on Title II projects

10:05 Discussion and Recommendation of Yakima County Title II projects by RAC members

10:15 **15-minute break**

10:30 **Recreation Fee Proposal Presentation and Discussion**

- 10 minutes—Introduction—Bryan Mulligan
- 30 minutes—PowerPoint presentation—Suzanne Cable and Jon Meier
- 40 minutes—Questions and Answers

11:50 **Public comment** on the Recreation Fee Proposal topic

A quick break if needed

12:00 RAC discussion and recommendations on proposed Recreation Fee Proposals

12:55 Meeting wrap-up, discussion about spring RAC meetings

1:00 Adjourn

Keith Goehner: I move to approve the agenda.

Bob Bugert: I second.

Discussion: none

Vote taken, motion passes.

Welcome and RAC business

- One-minute review of agenda. As we have the barest minimum quorum, when voting we just need to know if there are any dissenting votes.
- Terms extended to Dec. 21, 2022 for Travis Hornby, Ken Tolonen, Darcy Batura, Tammy James-Pino, and Jeff Hardesty; all other RAC members terms end on Jan. 12, 2025.
- If you know someone who might be interested in applying to become a RAC member, please pass their name and contact info to Robin (or ask them to contact Robin for more info). When we submit a nomination package to fill soon to be vacant RAC positions, we have to submit two candidate names for each vacant position.

Report on the status of past Title II projects – Deputy Forest Supervisor & DFO Erick Walker

Good morning all! Thank you for your efforts on this advisory committee. We will continue to include Tonasket Ranger District as part of the function of this RAC even though it is now part of the Colville National Forest. I have accepted the forest supervisor role on the South Lake Tahoe basin and will start there on Nov. 21. This will be my last time presiding as Designated Federal Official (DFO). Forest Supervisor Kristin Bail will become the DFO for future meetings. She will be joining us later today. I am excited to be going to my new position but leaving the area and all of you and the great work we've been able to accomplish is hard. I appreciate all of the support that you have given to me and the forest during the past three and a half years that I have worked on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. It has been a pleasure to work alongside you all.

Options for unspent Title II funds (this does not include 2019 and 2020 Title II funds that the RAC addressed during the June 2021 RAC meetings):

1. Monies may be allocated to partially funded projects approved by the RAC in June 2021.
2. Monies can be used on the projects that still have Title II monies or are ongoing projects that need to be completed.
3. Add these Title II monies to each county's Title II funds that will be allocated during spring 2022 RAC meetings.
4. Other suggestions by RAC members?

The projects showing money on the books:

1. Are not completed
2. Have been funded through other avenues
3. Are de-obligated from a contract or an agreement

Title II monies not utilized in past projects:

- *Okanogan County Title II monies unspent: 0 - \$8,178*
The North Summit Horse Camp Project for \$11,178 will be completed by March 2022 and \$3,000 will be used for signs. The second phase of the project was funded via an RCO grant. There will be some unspent funds that will be determined after March 2022.
- *Chelan County Title II monies unspent: \$5,520 - \$42,852*
We are working with the Leavenworth Ski Hill Stewardship project proponents regarding the \$37,322 awarded for this project; if that amount is awarded to this group, then there is \$5,520 unspent.
- *Kittitas County Title II monies unspent: \$33,392*
- *Yakima County Title II monies unspent: \$5,450*

These amounts for Kittitas and Yakima Counties do not include the FY2019 and FY2020 Title II monies that were awarded/recommended during the June 1 and June 16, 2021 RAC meetings.

Jeff Hardesty: It's important to consider whether these organizations were being fiscally responsible and did a good job. If they were being fiscally responsible about the money, I'd agree for them to be able to receive additional dollars.

Robin DeMario: A couple of projects received RCO funding and a few others were burned over during past wildfires.

Meghan Craig: Thank you for presenting us options, do you have a preference?

Erick Walker: No, we wanted your guidance to the agency.

Travis Hornby: I like this layout and it fits well with previous RAC discussions--

1. Look at unfunded projects
2. Move money to unfunded projects
3. Move it to be included with Title II monies allocated next year

Keith Goehner: I'd like to see the money invested in projects that can be fully funded this year.

Erick Walker: Reminder, we need to allocate it by county. We could put that \$5,450 remaining in Yakima County to the list of projects we are looking at today. We wouldn't be going back to any other projects that weren't addressed in our June RAC meetings. We are just proposing that the money be added to the RAC recommended projects in June.

Jeff Hardesty: If the money is there, get it used on the ground. If a group was engaged and active and they pursued extra dollars, it would be good to keep that money with the county.

Amy Ramsey: It makes sense that if there is leftover money, we go back to the projects under funded in the June meetings and rank them.

Al Murphy: I agree with Amy, we fund those from June that were underfunded.

Bob Bugert: I agree with Amy; we have already reviewed and ranked those projects.

Matt Gilroy: When we had the last two meetings, we determined what to do with extra funding and ranked them, wouldn't we use those priorities?

Travis Hornby: Yes.

Al Murphy: I move you review the projects that we approved at the June meetings that were underfunded and fund them according to the priority order that the RAC developed in the June RAC meetings.

Keith Goehner: I second.

Discussion: none

Vote taken, motion passes.

Erick Walker: Thank you for the support, we will make sure the monies will be applied to those projects and report back at the next meeting.

Victoria Wilkins: Is there any other business?

Travis Hornby: No.

List of proposed projects for RAC members to discuss:

2021 Secure Rural Schools Title II Proposed Project List for Yakima County:

#	Project Name	Project Sponsor	Funds Requested
1	Meadow Protection, User Outreach & Education	Conservation Northwest (Laurel Baum)	\$25,000
2	Solar Powered Electric Sign Boards	Naches Ranger District (Jason Emhoff & Aaron Rowe)	\$35,000
3	FS Road 1201 Lost Lake Surface Conversion	Naches Ranger District (Kayli Barber)	\$105,000
Total requested =			\$165,000

Potential FY19 & FY 20 Title II funds available for Yakima County = **\$143,700**

Adding the unspent Title II funds carried over (\$5,450) = **\$149,150**

Project Proposals – Yakima County

1. **Meadow Protection, User Outreach & Education** -- Laurel Baum, Conservation Northwest

We are members of the Little Naches Working Group and identified areas where we can partner with 4-wheel drive representatives/members and Forest Service recreation and botany staff to identify areas that are having resource damage from recreational use off the Little Naches Road and meadow restoration in the Little Crow project areas. We would install buck and rail fencing, adding recreate responsibly signs, and talk with people within the 4-wheel drive community. Our goal is to educate people new to the area, add fencing as barriers, add signage, and do education outreach. Forest Service Botanist Helen Lau is tackling invasive species in the corridor. We do have experience working on the west side of the Little Naches. The signs are ready to go, and we've identified some areas to place them. We have done some of this recreation work on the west side of the Little Naches already addressing mudding issues and off-road driving. We are partnering with Forest Service staff. We need to identify areas on the east side where barriers are needed to restore impacted areas. Recreation pressure has increased in the past two years, we are looking to mitigate resource damage, educate people, and bring more capacity forward for the Forest Service. We have identified some meadows off the 1900 road and received feedback. This project could be scalable, \$10,000 for supplies, and \$15,000 for the WA Conservation Corps crew to install the fencing.

Question: Was this all part of the Little Crow project or would it necessitate additional NEPA?

Laurel Baum: The NEPA has been completed under the Little Crow project NEPA.

Question: You are requesting \$25,000 instead of \$27,000 as stated in the project application

Laurel Baum: Yes, it should be \$25,000 as we removed \$2,000 for administrative work.

2. **Solar Powered Electric Signs** -- Okanogan-Wenatchee NF Fuels and Prevention Specialist Aaron Rowe

Naches Ranger District Fire Management Offices Jason Emhoff had planned to present this but couldn't be here today, so I'm filling in for him. Background on the proposal—the Naches Ranger District gets a huge amount on visitor traffic on State Route 410 and Hwy 12. We have rented roadside signs for the last three years to convey messages around fire prevention (such as put out campfires, no campfire allowed, and no woodcutting). Funding to rent these signs has come from severity dollars related to wildfires, this money is not guaranteed to us on a yearly basis so the opportunity to rent these items is hit and miss.

We propose to purchase some of these solar powered signs for fire prevention messaging and other messages such as prescribed fire purposes, Industrial Fire Precaution Level announcements, woodcutting restrictions, campfire restrictions, fire info, open/closed campgrounds, heavy traffic for certain holiday weekends, fire danger (high, very high, extreme), and fire traffic ahead messages.

We have used some of the permanent DOT signs in the past, but they are designed for traffic only and DOT does not want to use their signs for forest messaging (for example messages like closed/open campgrounds). We have had fatalities with holiday weekend travel on State Route 410 and Hwy. 12, so we would also use the signs to show messages encouraging traffic to slow down.

Question: What is the life span of the signs and would you use them more if you had them more than just a few months a year? How long do the batteries last before they require maintenance?

Aaron Rowe: They are solar powered. We rent them for three months (primarily during fire season and due to severity funds, this is not granted on an annual basis). If we purchased the signs, we would use them probably eight months each year, and possibly even into the winter months. They could possibly be used year-round for recreation-based info.

Question: Do you feel this would be the best use of those dollars due to the longevity (or lifespan of the signs) or time of year they are used?

Aaron Rowe: I can't speak to longevity, but I foresee that these would work for years. These products would be used across the entire forest.

3. **FS Road 1201 Lost Lake Surface Conversion** -- Engineer Bruce Bernard for Kayli Barber, Naches Ranger District

The project is located 20 miles west of Naches. The goals and objectives are to convert a very badly degraded asphalt surface road to an aggregate surface road, improve user safety, and facilitate the appropriate maintenance level on a heavily used recreation access road. Forest Service Road 1201 has degraded beyond economic feasibility to repair and maintain as an asphalt surface road. Conversion to an aggregate surface could be completed at an obtainable cost and provide a long-term solution to maintenance needs.

Project description—there are two phases. In Phase 1 we would grind 4.9 miles of the remaining asphalt surface and utilize the material in place as aggregate surfacing. In Phase 2, we would include placing a fresh layer of compacted surface coarse aggregate throughout the 4.9-mile length of the converted surface.

Existing condition—this is a maintenance level 3 road designed for passenger cars with some consideration for user comfort, convenience, and speed of travel. Currently, it is not meeting this objective level in its existing degraded state. The equipment, resources, personnel, and costs to maintain this asphalt surface road is beyond the scope of our road crew’s workload. However, aggregate surface maintenance level 3 roads are within that scope and are maintained in a scheduled rotation.

Cost comparison—the cost to repair it as is, we are assuming that 50% of the existing asphalt would need to be patched, and it would cost \$654,000 per mile. To completely repair this section of road as an asphalt surface would cost more than \$3 million. Maintenance limitations would still exist as the surface continued to wear. The cost for the surface conversion to completely convert the road to an aggregate surface with freshly placed aggregate would cost \$420,000 or about \$86,000 per mile. The cost to complete only Phase 1 (full depth surface reclamation) would be about \$125,000 or \$25,000 per mile.

Question: Which is the total cost? You mentioned \$125,000 but in the project application it shows \$105,000?

Bruce Bernard: We would use the \$105,000 amount.

Question: I’m glad you are looking at an array of options. Are any other projects proposed in the future that would require a higher maintenance or service level road?

Bruce Bernard: Not that I know of at this time. It won’t change the maintenance level of the road.

10:00 **Public Comment on Title II Projects** – Tyler Forman wrote in the comments section of the Zoom chat: We are working to rehab a local trail that ends at the road near Camp Ghormley so that will really help with vehicle access to the trailhead.

RAC DISCUSSION & PRIORITIZATION of YAKIMA COUNTY PROJECTS

Discussion and voting on Yakima County Projects:

Matt Gilroy: The road work needs to get done and the signs would be a good use of the monies.

Erick Walker: The meadow restoration project is a scalable project and the road project also is scalable per mile.

Amy Ramsey: What is the estimated user use of that road? There is high recreation pressure in that Little Crow area so any education and outreach we can do there is important. Not all users have the same level of environmental awareness. I'd like to fully fund the meadow project and the sign project and scale the road conversion project down to the amount of funding that we have available.

Bruce Bernard: It is a low volume use road.

Bob Bugert: I move that we allocate \$25,000 for the meadow project, \$35,000 for the solar signs, leaving \$89,000 for the road surface conversion.

Al Murphy: I second the motion.

Discussion:

Powys Gadd: Is any of the meadow restoration work covered by the Little Crow project? Was funding provided in that project for any of these educational aspects?

Erick Walker: There was no funding committed to do these actions in the Little Crow project.

Darcy Batura: I support the motion. There is a tremendous increase in recreation use there. This is a good example of partners coming together to work on this, a coalition of people working on these projects. This project recognizes that good work.

Keith Goehner: There is a better opportunity to generate funds from groups or interested partners. The road maintenance is a fundamental responsibility for the Forest Service to do. The \$105,000 is not going to go very far, but it won't provide the best surface. I'd rather see us use the money on road maintenance and get the other group to generate additional funding from other interest groups.

Travis Hornby: With the solar power electric signs, I see the need being mostly fire related. There is some cross over for recreation. I'd recommend that we partially fund the project to be able to purchase one sign and fully fund the road work project.

Vote taken, motion fails.

Discussion:

Bob Bugert: I move we allocate \$25,000 for the meadow protection project, \$105,000 for the road surface conversion project, and use the balance of \$19,150 towards acquisition of one or more solar road signs.

Jeff Hardesty: I second.

Vote taken, motion passes.

Amy Ramsey: If we have an overage balance, how do we want to apply those extra funds for Yakima County projects?

Al Murphy: I move that if any additional funds become available that they be allocated to the solar sign project and any other under funded projects.

Darcy Batura: I second the motion.

Discussion, none.

Vote taken, motion passes.

Following is the RAC recommended prioritized project list to receive \$149,150 in Title II funding for Yakima County utilizing FY2019 & FY2020 Title II funds plus \$5,450 in unspent funds carried over from previous years.

#	Project Name	Project Sponsor	Funds Requested	RAC Funding Allocation
1	Meadow Protection, User Outreach & Education	Laurel Baum, Conservation Northwest	\$25,000	Fully funded for \$25,000
2	FS Road 1201 Lost Lake Surface Conversion	Engineer Bruce Bernard, Naches Ranger District	\$105,000	Fully funded for \$105,000
3	Solar Powered Electric Signs	Aaron Rowe, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest	\$35,000	Partially funded for \$19,150

If additional monies become available, they will be used to completely fund the Solar Powered Electric Signs project first and then to fund any other underfunded Title II projects in Yakima County.

10:15 to 10:45 Break

People who joined the meeting during the break:

Brian Mulligan, Suzanne Cable, Jon Meier, Kari Grover Wier, Lindsey Pruett, Paul Willard, Aaron Stockton, Chris Furr, Judi Sandretto Reed, Kristin Bail, Jon Meier, Avery Kool, Les Moscoso, Kevin Hill, Rosemary Seifried, Michelle ?, and Jamey Basye

Recreation Fee Proposal Presentation

Bryan Mulligan: I am the public services staff officer on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Suzanne Cable is the program manager for recreation, and Jon Meier is the recreation staff person on the Entiat and Chelan districts. Due to increased maintenance costs and inflation, we need to change some of our recreation fees charged at recreation sites on the forest. We have reasonably priced campgrounds with the goal of better quality of services to decrease maintenance and backlog issues. This is a really important proposal. We have allocated Forest Service funds, grants and agreements help maintain our trails, and user fees are the third leg of the stool. The majority of our developed sites across the forest are maintained through these fees.

Jon Meier: The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) lines out for the agency a process to charge fees. Part of that process is the establishment of a Recreation RAC. In lieu of that not occurring, the Act allows us to use the Secure Rural Schools RAC. We do not have a Recreation RAC so that is why we are asking this RAC to help us with these proposals. The outcomes for today include these options:

1. For the RAC to accept the proposal as presented and move forward as presented
2. Recommend the proposal with minor tweaks/recommendations
3. Major revisions recommended by RAC members (but would require going back out for public comment, furthering the time)
4. Not recommend/support the proposal at all

PowerPoint Presentation by Suzanne Cable and Jon Meier:

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Recreation Fee Proposal – 2021

The Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA)

- Gives the secretary authority to charge fees at federal sites
- Gives authority to establish Recreation Resource Advisory Committee
- In lieu of a RRAC law gives authority to use Resource Advisory Committee

The USFS has developed policy to guide the implementation of the law

- Use a fee tool to inform the WO and RO, who review and approve
- Post new fees in Federal Register (done on 10/5/21)
- Outreach to the public (post sites, news release, social media)
- Outreach to local leaders and congressional leaders
- Present proposal to advisory committee (thank you)
- Committee sends recommendation to Regional Forester
- Regional Forester issues letter of approval when timelines are met forest may implement

National Visitor Use Monitoring 2016 Statistics

Main Activity on Forest

1. Hiking/Walking
2. Viewing Natural Features
3. Hunting

Annual Visitation Estimates

- 256,000 visits for day use at developed sites
- 778,000 visits for general forest area use
- 235,000 visits for overnight use in developed sites
- 214,000 visits for designated Wilderness visits

Percent of National Forest Visitors by Distance Traveled

- 17.8% 0-25 miles
- 14% 26-50 miles
- 11.8% 51-75 miles
- 18.9% 76-100 miles
- 25.5% 101-200 miles
- 7.1% 201-500 miles
- 4.9% Over 500 miles

Need for a fee increase

- Increased costs associated with operations, maintenance and staffing
- Due to lack of funds, sites are degrading; some are becoming unsafe
- Even with increase, sites are still lower cost than other opportunities
- Proposed increase will provide approximately 40 percent more funds to the program
- Fee changes will standardize services offered at same price points sites across the forest
- \$5 increments make it easier for visitors
- At the few sites that meet standard, but may need upgrade, increase won't go into place until upgrades are completed

New Proposed Day Use Fee

\$5 Day Use Fee and \$30 Northwest Forest Pass Season Pass

- 13 New Day Use sites
- Northwest Forest Pass can be used at these sites
- Open year-round
- Amenities:

Fee station

Gravel parking

Vault toilet

Picnic tables

Security

Garbage receptacles

Proposed \$10 Campgrounds with \$5 extra vehicle fee

- 8 campgrounds \$0 to \$10
- 18 campgrounds \$8 to \$10
- 5 campgrounds \$5 to \$10

- Total of 31 campgrounds
- Generally open June to October 31
- Amenities:

Fee station

Combo fire ring/grill

Gravel roads

Vault toilet

Picnic tables

Proposed \$15 Campgrounds with \$5 extra vehicle fee

- 8 campgrounds \$8 to \$15
- 7 campgrounds \$10 to \$15
- 1 campground \$12 to \$15

- Total of 16 campgrounds
- Generally open May 15 to November 10
- Amenities:

Fee station

Combo fire ring/grill

Paved roads

Vault toilet

Picnic tables

Drinking Water

Proposed \$20 Campgrounds with \$10 extra vehicle fee

- 9 campgrounds \$12 to \$20

- Total of 9 campgrounds
- Generally open May 15 to October 31
- Amenities:

Fee station

Combo fire ring/grill

Paved roads

Vault toilet

Picnic tables

Drinking Water

Campground Host

Proposed \$40 Group Campgrounds

- 3 camps \$8 to \$40 per night (up to 30 people)

- Total of 3 Groups Campgrounds that can hold up to 30 people each
- Generally open May 15 to October 31
- Amenities:

Fee station

Combo Fire Ring/Grill

Vault toilet

Picnic tables

Tent Pad

Gravel Roads

<p>Proposed \$75 Group Campgrounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North Fork Campground \$10 to \$75 (up to 45 people) - Pines Flats Group Site \$60 to \$75 (up to 40 people) - Lost Lake Group Site Tonasket \$55 to \$75 (up to 55 people) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally open May 15 to October 31 • Amenities: <p>Fire Ring Vault toilet Picnic tables Potable Water Paved Roads</p> <p>Proposed \$125 Group Campgrounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bonaparte Lake Group Site \$50 to \$125 (up to 75 people); although Tonasket Ranger District is no longer part of the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF, the proposal was started years ago when it was - Silver Falls Group Site \$60 to \$125 (up to 65 people) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total of 2 campgrounds • Generally open May 15 to October 31 • Amenities: <p>Fire Ring Vault toilet Picnic tables Potable Water Some Paved Roads</p> <p>Teanaway Guard Station</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$45 to \$65 per night <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open June to October 31 • Amenities: <p>Wood Stove Heater Propane Stove Basic Kitchen Supplies Vault Toilet Holds 4 people</p> <p>Lake Creek Yurts (don't exist yet, would be built when/if funding would become available)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$0 to \$75 per night <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Jan 1 to Dec 31 • Amenities: <p>Propane Lights/Appliances Outdoor Hand Water Pump Vault Toilet Holds 6 people</p> <p>Steliko Lookout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$0 to \$75 per night <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Jan 1 to Dec 31 • Amenities: <p>Electric Lights/Appliances Propane Lights/Appliances Vault toilet Propane stove and heater Holds 4 people</p> <p>American River Guard Station</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$50 to \$90 per night <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Jan 1 to Dec 31 • Amenities: <p>Propane Lights/Appliances Propane Heat Electric Stove Basic Kitchen Supplies Vault Toilet Holds 6 people Historical Structure</p>	<p>Cottonwood Cabin Site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$60 to \$90 per night for 4 people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open June 1 to October 31 • Amenities: <p>Electric lights Propane Lights/Appliances Propane Heat Running water indoors Shower Basic Kitchen Supplies Vault Toilet Holds up to 4 people</p> <p>Tyee Lookout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$0 to \$95 per night <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open June to October 15 • Amenities: <p>Pit Toilet Holds 4 people Historical Structure Picnic Table</p> <p>Chelan Boat Docks Special Recreation Permit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$5 to \$10 per Event per Boat - \$40 to \$75 per Season per Boat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open April 15 to November 1 • Amenities: <p>Vault Toilet Fire Ring Gravel Road Gravel Parking Fee Station Security presence for public/resource protection</p> <p>Echo Ridge Recreation Area Trailhead Special Recreation Permit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$10 to \$15 per Day per Person - \$70 to \$100 per Season per Person <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open November 25 to March 31 • Amenities: <p>Vault Toilet Gravel Road Gravel Parking Fee Station Garbage Receptacle Security responds to emergencies only Plowing of road/parking area Grooming of cross-country trails</p> <p>Suzanne Cable, recreation trails and wilderness manager for okawen:</p> <p>Public Involvement Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 1, 2020 to July 31, 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Posted on Forest website - Twitter message and Facebook posts - News Release distributed – May 7, 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Methow Valley News (article and editorial) – May 12, 2021 o Tri-City Herald –May 12, 2021 o NCW Life –May 7, 2021 o Bellingham Herald –May 12, 2021 o Wenatchee World –May 10, 2021 • Federal Register Notice – published Oct. 5, 2021 • Signs posted on sites on September 1, 2020, and then again in spring of 2021 • Yakima County and Okanogan County Commissioners briefed in March 2021 • Chelan County, Kittitas County were briefed in February 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No concerns • Federal Legislators were briefed in March 2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No comments or concerns received
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Lake Chelan Nordic Club, North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative, and Backcountry Horsemen of Washington were contacted in January and April

- Backcountry Horsemen—received several comments and concerns. Working with them on a solution on access concerns.
- Nordic Club (permittee for the Echo Ridge Nordic area) – they are supportive of the proposal
- North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative – no follow up requested

Overview of Public Results

- 113 comments received
(Full comments in package)

50 being supportive

33 not in support

21 were questions

10 were neutral

- Changes to the fee proposal due to comments received:

The Forest is dropping the Shoe Echo Trailhead fee proposal. There is no toilet at this location and after much discussion the forest will not be adding one.

Suzanne Cable: We received many questions about how the \$5 day use and trailhead fee sites would relate to Northwest Forest Pass (NWFP). These could be paid daily at the site or through use of the NWFP.

Q&A:

Question: Did you get any comments back from Colville Nation or Yakama Tribes?

Suzanne Cable: We did not receive any comments, we will double check to make sure the comments/recommendations were available to the tribes.

Question: The Colville Tribe is part of the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative.

Bryan Mulligan: I will check to see if we consulted with the tribes, and if that didn't occur, I will make sure they are consulted before we move forward.

Question/comment: About 5 years ago it was challenging to go to the recreation sites (state park sites) near my house because of the cost. I appreciate the forest sites being low fee, and what you are proposing is reasonable. The gas to get to sites is a limiting factor. People who can drive to the forest can afford the fees. I support this.

Question: Equitable access to our public lands and protecting natural resources. I recognize the challenges in raising fees and I support that. Sometimes when you increase fees there is a corresponding increase in user-created dispersed use and associated issues (garbage, resource damage, etc.). Is there a plan to address this?

Suzanne Cable: We recognize and acknowledge the dispersed use issue. The volume of use that we have seen in the last two years has increased drastically. It has been a challenge to manage these dispersed sites. Other funding sources are used at those sites (for education, clean up, etc.). Some dispersed site users are very responsible but that is not the case in all locations. We work closely with locally based organizations on maintenance and education, we also work with the Recreate Responsibly group.

Bryan Mulligan: This is an ongoing concern for recreation and natural resources folks. It continues to get worse as more people are using national forests. We work with collaboratives. Use is outstripping our capacities. This is an attempt to manage use in a good way, draw people into the sites as they will be better managed.

Comment: I acknowledge the issues, but also suggest that these issues are tied together and encourage Forest Service staff to consider this over time, to establish thresholds, to encourage collaboration, and resolve impacts.

Question: Are there alternative payment structures, pay by phone for example?

Jon Meier: The Forest Service Washington Office is working on an app for www.recreation.gov that will allow people to pay via their phones in areas where cell service is available. The obstacle is that something has to be printed out so it shows that they have paid; they are still working on this aspect of the app.

Suzanne Cable: Ideally, when the app is released our compliance personnel will be able to pull up on their phones the license plate number of those who have paid the fee at that site. We will be installing automated fee machines at some of our fee locations.

Comment: As part of the prework, I read quite a few of the comments that were submitted. There is a lot of ignorance in the questions people asked, and it showed that people are ill informed. I have no qualms with the proposal but this raises the issues that the message is not getting out there informing people what is going on, and what the funds are being used for. Regarding the Backcountry Horsemen comments concerning fees, is the volunteer pass still a valid thing? This opportunity can be capitalized more. If you are going to use phone apps, put in the request now for cell towers to be built as it will take a long time.

Jon Meier: Yes, the volunteer pass is still an option. There are also other passes (America the Beautiful pass, veterans pass, 4th grade pass) available to qualified folks.

Bryan Mulligan: Social capital is invaluable, and also partnerships. We will see some increased focus from our staff on that.

Comment: Solar signs would be a way to get the message out about fee increases.

Comment: You need to take non-traditional avenues (like these solar signs) to get the word out and think differently about the way you go about it. Talk with the user groups to get buy in.

11:50 **Public Comment on Recreation Fee Proposals** – Tyler Forman, Evergreen Mtn Bike Alliance. Echo concerns about communication to the public, many people are unaware of what’s going on and don’t have a frame of reference about these proposals. There is still a large disconnect that needs to be addressed. Along with the non-traditional methods are apps (issues with no cell connection), from the perspective of a central location for info (the Forest Service website is awful and disorganized and disjointed). Getting that overhauled will be a large step in getting the info out.

Victoria Wilkins: Our website will transition to a newer, user-friendly website in January 2022. We have a lot of work to do to streamline the info that is there. One thing that we welcome, is opportunities to partner with groups to get messages out. Users are familiar with our typical user info channels, especially user groups. The issue is finding avenues to reach new forest users who don’t know where to start to get info.

RAC DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE RECREATION FEE PROPOSALS

Travis Hornby: Let’s complete our discussion and finish an hour early. Are there any concerns or is any discussion needed with the current recreation fee proposal?

Jeff Hardesty: I move to approve the recreation fee change proposal as presented in the structure as proposed.

Al Murphy: I second the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote taken, motion passes.

Question: Is there a communication plan for this so that it isn’t just presented to the public? Will you meet with service groups so that it isn’t met with negative feelings?

Victoria Wilkins: We do have a communication plan. Not all of the fee changes will be rolled out at one time, but over time and we will continue sharing information.

Bryan Mulligan: Thank you RAC members for your time and attention to this proposal.

Travis Hornby: It has been great working with all of you.

Meeting wrap-up

Erick Walker: Thank you RAC members and the presenters who answered questions and shared updates. There has been a lot of great work in support of the RAC. Thank all of you.

Robin DeMario: I will send RAC members the notes from this meeting. I will also start the project solicitation process in the new year, so if you know anyone who would like to submit a Title II project for the four counties (Okanogan, Chelan, Kittitas, and Yakima) please encourage them to submit a project proposal. The news release I'll send out in January or early February will have all of the pertinent information. The Title II amounts will be smaller than what we normally address as they will just be for 2021, instead of the total of two years of funding which we have been doing during our recent meetings.

Comment: Late April or early May would be good times for the next RAC meetings, please work around the dates for spring break.

Deb Kelly: Just a reminder for those of you who work with user groups and people who would submit project proposals, please remember to work with district personnel.

Erick Walker: It has been a pleasure working with you all, I wish you all the best. If you are in the Lake Tahoe area please look me up. Thank you, Travis, for your fantastic facilitation of this group.

Al Murphy: I move we adjourn the meeting.

Darcy Batura: I second.

Discussion: none.

Vote taken, motion passes.

Meeting adjourned.

See you in spring 2022!