



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Okanogan-Wenatchee
National
Forest

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Subject: Recreation Fee Proposals for PNW Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

To: Regional Forester

It is with great pleasure that we submit our proposals for fee increases as authorized by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act for consideration by the Pacific Northwest Recreation Resource Advisory Committee. The required proposal template for fee increases has previously been provided to Jocelyn Biro as requested by the Regional Fee Board. Transmitted with this letter is an Executive Summary describing the fee proposals and need for fee increases at some developed recreation sites on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Please contact Mary Bean, Recreation Program Manager, if there are any questions about these submissions.

Thank you for the opportunity to address our critical need for additional fee revenues for these programs.

/s/ Rebecca Lockett Heath

REBECCA LOCKETT HEATH
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure
cc: Jocelyn Biro

Executive Summary

2008 Recreation Fee Proposals

Okanogon-Wenatchee National Forest

The Okanogon-Wenatchee National Forest is proposing fee increases for 47 campgrounds, 4 group campgrounds and 1 rental cabin on the Naches, Entiat and Methow Valley Ranger Districts. Fee increases are also proposed for the Enchantments Special Recreation Permit on the Wenatchee River Ranger District and the Echo Ridge Nordic Special Recreation Permit on the Chelan Ranger District.

The Forest comprises seven Ranger Districts: Naches, Cle Elum, Wenatchee River, Entiat, Chelan, Methow Valley and Tonasket and is located primarily in Yakima, Chelan and Okanogon counties in eastern Washington. The Forest receives over 2.8 million recreation visits a year. The number of visits is projected to increase by 31% by 2025. The Forest is crossed by four Scenic Highways and Interstate 90, offering easy access from the Puget Sound metropolis.

Campground, Group Campground and Cabin Rental Fee Proposals

Campgrounds and cabins are a destination for many Forest visitors. They are a respite from a busy city life, and they are a quick, cool getaway for local communities. Almost all of the 83 Forest Service operated campgrounds and group camps on the Forest are located adjacent to a river or lake.

Nearly all of the recreation facilities on the Forest were built prior to or in the early '60's. These facilities are in need of heavy maintenance and some degree of reconstruction, resource protection, or restoration. Historically, maintenance and operation funds have only covered minimal maintenance while the facilities have continued to deteriorate.

The Forest charges fees at 67 campgrounds, 12 group campgrounds, 4 horse camps, and 5 recreation rental cabins under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Ninety-five percent of the fees collected at these sites are retained on forest to cover operations, maintenance and site improvements (80%) and fee collections costs (15%). These fees are a critical contribution to financial stability of the Forest's developed recreation program. The Forest also relies on Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants to supplement the developed recreation program. Field work accomplished with fee revenue is used as matching funds to attain these grants. Grants help to fund 'on the ground work' including maintenance, operations and site improvements.

The Forest proposes to raise fees by \$2-4/night at 47 campgrounds, by \$10-30/night at 4 group campgrounds and by \$20/night at one rental cabin. Nightly camping fees would range from \$5 at rustic campgrounds to \$12 at higher-developed sites, group campgrounds from \$50 up to \$120 for large sites on holiday weekends, and cabins from \$40 up to \$150/night for weekend rental of the American Ridge Lodge. The Forest will still operate 33 free rustic campgrounds and has hundreds of dispersed camps.

Fee proposals were posted at each site during the open season for two years (2006 and 2007), publicized in local newspapers, and posted on the forest website. Only 36 written comments were received. Of those comments, about half were opposed to the fee increase because: they were generally opposed to fees, felt they had already paid enough in taxes, and/or that they were not getting a fair value for the fee paid. Only a few indicated that it would affect their ability to be able to camp or that they would not return. The other half of the respondents indicated they supported or understood the need for the increase.

Fees retained would be used for the following:

- Bring operation and maintenance closer to the full service standard of the Forest Service.
- Reduce backlog of deferred maintenance.
- Make improvements to come closer to full universal accessibility.
- Resolve health and safety issues, particularly with water systems.
- Provide increased visitor information, security, and customer service.
- Rehabilitate or reconstruct as needed to meet current visitor needs.
- Leverage State grants for maintenance, operations and improvements of recreation sites.

The proposed fee increases will increase developed recreation site revenue by approximately \$88,000/year. Eighty percent, roughly \$70,000, will be available for maintenance, operations, and site improvements. The Forest has been highly successful at leveraging these dollars to attain Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants for additional maintenance, operations, and improvements at overnight recreation sites. On average the Forest has been granted 150% of our matching contributions. Fee revenue and RCO grants will also be used to address the maintenance backlog of \$3 million at Forest Service operated overnight developed sites.

Forest overnight developed sites can generally be grouped into three categories: rustic campgrounds, higher-development campgrounds, and group campgrounds & rental cabins.

Rustic Campgrounds – Proposed fee \$5 or \$8 per night (plus extra vehicle fee)

These are fairly small campgrounds with rustic facilities (e.g. toilet, picnic table, fire ring). All sites provide on-site fee stations. Most sites are pack-in/pack-out, although some offer trash service.

Fee proposals for these types of sites are:

District	Site	Site Type	Fee Type	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Cle Elum	Beverly	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Entiat	Spruce Grove	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$3.00	\$5.00
Entiat	Three Creeks	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$3.00	\$5.00
Entiat	Pine Flats	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Ballard	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Buck Lake	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Camp 4	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Early Winter	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Falls Creek	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Flat Camp	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Foggy Dew	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Harts Pass	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Honeymoon	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	J.R.	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Meadows	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Mystery Camp	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Nice	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	River Bend	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Roads End	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	Ruffed Grouse	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	South Creek	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Methow	War Creek	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Naches	Crow Creek	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$7.00	\$8.00
Naches	Dog Lake	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Naches	Halfway Flat Dispersed	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Naches	Indian Creek Rec Area	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Naches	Leech Lake (White Pass)	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Naches	Peninsula	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Naches	South Fork Bay	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Naches	South Fork Tieton	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00
Naches	Tieton Pond	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$5.00	\$8.00

Higher-Development Campgrounds - Proposed fee \$10 or \$12 per night (plus extra vehicle fee)

These sites are typically more developed and provide water and/or garbage service. Some of the larger, busy sites have campground hosts. All sites have picnic tables, fire rings, toilets, and on-site fee stations.

Fee proposals for these types of sites are:

District	Site	Site Type	Fee Type	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Entiat	Cottonwood	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$8.00	\$10.00
Entiat	Fox Creek	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$8.00	\$10.00
Entiat	Lake Creek	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$8.00	\$10.00
Entiat	North Fork	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$7.00	\$10.00
Entiat	Silver Falls	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$9.00	\$12.00
Methow	Blackpine Lake	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$8.00	\$12.00
Methow	Chewuch	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$8.00	\$12.00
Methow	Klipchuck	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$8.00	\$12.00
Methow	Lone Fir	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$8.00	\$12.00
Methow	Loup Loup	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$8.00	\$12.00
Methow	Poplar Flat	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$8.00	\$12.00
Naches	American Forks	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$7.00	\$10.00
Naches	Kaner Flat	Campground	Expanded Amenity	\$10.00	\$12.00

Group Campgrounds & Rental Cabins - \$50 to \$100 per night (plus additional fee for holiday weekends)

These facilities offer the public the opportunity to reserve a cabin or an entire campground.

Group campgrounds were often old single site campgrounds. These sites are very popular and are reserved almost every weekend during the summer. The sites have varying amenities. All sites have picnic tables, fire rings and toilets. Some sites have garbage service and/or water.

Rental cabins are often beautiful historic buildings. These sites have varying amenities. American River Guard Station (proposed fee increase) has recently been restored and has had numerous improvements over the past few years. The cabin offers a kitchen, living room, bedroom, sleeping loft, electricity and a toilet. Planned future improvements include repairing the indoor plumbing. This cabin is rented almost every night.

Fee proposals for these types of sites are:

District	Site	Site Type	Fee Type	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Naches	American River Guard Station	Rental Cabin	Expanded Amenity	\$40.00	\$60.00
Naches	Clear Lake (Grade Forest)	Group/Reservation	Expanded Amenity	\$50.00	\$60.00
Naches	Indian Flat	Group/Reservation	Expanded Amenity	\$70.00	\$100.00
Naches	Kaner Flat Reservation	Group/Reservation	Expanded Amenity	\$50.00	\$60.00
Naches	Pine Needle	Group/Reservation	Expanded Amenity	\$30.00	\$50.00

Special Recreation Permit Fee Proposals

The Forest operates four Special Recreation Permit systems under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. These permit systems are: Enchantments Wilderness Permits, Echo Ridge Nordic Area Permits, Lake Chelan Boat Dock Permits and Christmas Tree Permits. Ninety-five percent of the fees collected from these permits are retained on forest to cover operations, maintenance, site improvements, and administration of the permit system (80%) and fee collections costs (15%). The Forest has also been successful in attaining Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants to supplement these programs. Field work accomplished with fee revenue is used as matching funds to attain grants that help to fund ‘on the ground work’ including maintenance, operations and site improvements.

Enchantments Overnight Permit Fee Increase

The Forest proposes to raise permit fees from \$3/per person per night to \$5/person per night.

The Alpine Lakes Wilderness limited access area, commonly called the Enchantments permit area, has 5 quota zones: Enchantments, Snow Lakes, Stuart Lake, Colchuck Lake and Eightmile/Carolines Lakes. All Zones are located on the Wenatchee River Ranger District. Quota permits are required for overnight camping in all zones from June 15 to October 15. Quota permits cover the recreation user fee for the duration of the permit. Permit Reservations can be made through mail in applications. Twenty five percent of the entry quota is allocated to walk-in visitors using a daily drawing each morning (except Sundays). Day use of the permit area is not limited.

The purpose of the fee increase is to generate enough revenue to cover annual operations and maintenance costs. Expected permit revenues were overestimated in the 1997 business plan (\$51,000 in 1997 dollars) and actual revenue has not been large enough to fully fund the permit program. Eleven years of inflation has compounded the problem. Other recreation funds have been used to help fund an abbreviated program which lacks enough wilderness ranger presence on the ground.

The fee increase is expected to increase annual revenue by about \$30,000. These funds will be used to hire a third wilderness ranger to improve enforcement, education, and maintenance of the backcountry toilets and trail markers, and to help fund Saturday office hours at the Leavenworth Ranger Station.

District	Site	Site Type	Fee Type	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Wenatchee River	Enchantments Permit Area	Overnight Wilderness Permit	Special Rec. Permit	\$3.00	\$5.00

Echo Ridge Winter Permit Fee Increase

The Forest proposes to raise permit fees from \$5/day and \$40/seasons pass to \$10/day and \$70/seasons pass.

Echo Ridge is a mid-size Nordic Ski complex with 20.3 miles of groomed trails including: 8.6 miles of easy Classic and/or Skate skiing opportunities, 4.9 miles of more difficult Classic and/or Skate skiing, and 6.8 miles of most difficult Classic, Skate and Snowshoes trails. The area has been expanded and improved over the past decade. In addition to more miles and wider trails, Echo Ridge offers four parking lots, four toilets, on-site pay tubes, information kiosks, signs, marked intersections, and information boards. Trail grooming is done through a partnership agreement with Lake Chelan Nordic Ski Club

The complex was built largely with Washington State RCO grants and FS road appropriations. The ski complex will have fully implemented all planned expansions and additional amenities by winter 2008.

With the proposed increase, fee revenue is expected to increase by at least \$3,200. These funds will be used to expand grooming frequency and plowing to prepare for weekends and holidays so more miles of trail are groomed more often.

District	Site	Site Type	Fee Type	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Chelan	Echo Ridge	Nordic Ski Trail	Special Rec. Permit	\$5/day \$40/season	\$10/day \$70/season