



Forest
Service

Mt. Hood National Forest

16400 Champion Way
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File Code: 2350
Route To:

Date: October 1, 2009

Subject: Recreation Enhancement Act - Fall 2009 Fee Proposals

To: Regional Forester, R6

The Mt. Hood National Forest is proposing to increase public use fees (expanded amenity fees) at four recreation lodging rental sites beginning in 2010. The sites are Clackamas Lake Historic Ranger Cabin, Fivemile Butte Lookout, Clear Lake Lookout, Flag Point Lookout. Enclosures (mailed separately) are the documents requested in your 2350 letter dated July 10, 2009, to be reviewed by the Regional Recreation Fee Board of Directors and to be presented to the Recreation RAC.

I am satisfied that my staff has taken the necessary steps to ensure that the proposals meet legal requirements under the Recreation Enhancement Act. Because these are fee changes and not new fees, the proposal has not been published in the federal register.

Please let me know as soon as possible if we will need to present an executive summary to the Recreation RAC so that we can prepare and deliver a Powerpoint presentation to you by October 2, 2009.

/s/ Kathryn J. Silverman for
GARY L. LARSEN
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures (mailed separately)

cc: Jocelyn Biro
Kathleen A Walker
Christine Arredondo
Daina Bambe
Mike Hernandez
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Recreation Lodging Rental Fee Increase Proposal
Mt. Hood National Forest
October 1, 2009

Mt. Hood National is proposing to increase recreation lodging rental fees (expanded amenity fees under REA) for four sites. The rental sites are Clackamas Lake Historic Ranger Cabin, Fivemile Butte Lookout, Flag Point Lookout, and Clear Lake Butte Lookout. The proposed fees more closely align with similar facilities in the local market. The increased revenue will enable the forest to complete deferred maintenance in a timely manner and also to make desirable improvements to increase customer service.

Public Participation

A press release announcing this proposal was issued on August 13, 2009. The Oregonian newspaper published the story on August 19, 2009, with contact information about how the public can comment on the proposal. The announcement was also posted to the Mt. Hood National Forest website and at each site. No public comments have been received.

The offices of all seven federal legislators from Oregon (5 Members of Congress; 2 Senators) were notified about the proposal by e-mail on August 14, 2009, and by follow-up phone call (Wyden's Staff was unavailable by phone). None of the federal legislators expressed any concern with the proposal.

Clackamas Lake Historic Ranger Cabin

We are proposing to increase the rental price from \$80 weeknights and \$100 weekends to \$140 weeknights and \$160 weekends. Other providers charge between \$169 and \$195 per night. We are not proposing to increase the price at Clackamas Lake to within this higher range because the Clackamas cabin lacks some of the amenities found at the comparable properties.

The cabin is a 90 minute drive from Portland, Oregon, near popular Timothy Lake in Clackamas County, Oregon. The cabin has 3 bedrooms with a maximum occupancy of 8 people. The cabin has been in the rental program since 2005 at which time the pricing structure was set at \$80.00 per night, Sunday through Thursday, and \$100 per night Friday, Saturday and holidays. Prices have remained unchanged. Reservations may be made from 7 to 360 days in advance. The rental season for 2009 was May 25 - October 19. There is a 2 day minimum stay and 7 day maximum stay. The cabin is very popular with a very high occupancy rate (approximately 93%). We anticipate only a modest (if any) reduction in occupancy with the fee increase.

In addition to more rapid retirement of deferred maintenance, the increased revenue will enable the forest to install a battery-powered system for lights and appliances to increase user convenience.

Fivemile Butte Lookout

We are proposing to increase the price from \$30 to \$50 per night. Other providers charge between \$40 and \$65 per night.

Fivemile Butte Lookout sits at the 4627 foot elevation on Fivemile Butte in Wasco County, Oregon. The 14' X 14' cabin sits atop a 40 foot tower, and has a maximum occupancy of four people. A new CXT outhouse is located nearby. The lookout has been in the rental program for approximately 25 years. At the program's inception, the price was set at \$30 per night. The price has not changed. Flag Point is the only four season (year around) lodging rental in Mt. Hood National Forest. The lookout is very popular with an occupancy rate of about 95%. For the next six months, there are only 14 nights that are not reserved at this time. We do not predict any reduction in occupancy if the proposed fee is implemented.

Increased revenue from the proposed fee increase will enable the forest to retire deferred maintenance more quickly and make desirable improvements.

Flag Point Lookout

We are proposing to increase the price from \$30 to \$50 per night. Other providers charge between \$40 and \$65 per night.

Flag Point Lookout is at the end of a primitive road and is surrounded by Badger Creek Wilderness in Wasco County, Oregon. The 14' X 14' room sits atop a 60 foot tower, and has a maximum occupancy of four people. An outhouse is located nearby. Like Fivemile Butte Lookout, Flag Point Lookout has been in the lodging rental program for about 25 years. The price was originally set at \$30 per night and has never been increased. The rental season is winter and spring season only, November 1 through May 31 (it is used as a fire lookout during the summer and fall). The lookout has a very high occupancy rate (approximately 85%) in spite of challenging winter access (eleven miles by XC-ski or snowmobile). At this time all but 55 nights have been reserved for the 2009-2010 season. We do not predict any reduction in occupancy if the proposed fee is implemented.

Increased revenue from the proposed fee increase will enable the forest to retire deferred maintenance more quickly, including the installation of a new toilet at the site.

Clear Lake Butte Lookout

We are proposing to increase the price from \$30 to \$50 per night beginning with the 2010-2011 season (there is currently only one night that has not already been reserved for the 2009-2010 rental season). Other providers charge between \$40 and \$65 per night.

Clear Lake Butte Lookout is at the 4454 foot elevation on FS road 42-240 spur. The 14' X 14' cabin sits atop a 40 foot tower, and has a maximum occupancy of four people. This lookout has only been in the lodging rental program about 10 years, but the price, \$30 per night, has been unchanged during that period. The lookout has a near 100% occupancy rate. There is currently only one night that has not already been reserved for the 2009-2010 rental season which is November 1 through May 31. We do not predict any reduction in occupancy if the proposed fee is implemented.

Increased revenue from the proposed fee increase will enable the forest to retire deferred maintenance more quickly and make desirable improvements.

Recreation Facility Analysis

The proposal for all four sites is consistent with the Mt. Hood National Forest recreation facility analysis and program of work that was completed in 2007.