



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Umatilla  
National  
Forest

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**File Code:** 2350

**Date:** February 29, 2008

**Route To:**

**Subject:** Recreation Fee proposals for PNW RAC

**To:** Regional Forester, R6

**OPTIONAL REPLY DUE FEBRUARY 29, 2008**

We are pleased to submit our proposals for new fees and for fee increases as authorized by the Forest Lands and Recreation Enhancement Act for consideration by the Pacific Northwest Recreation Resource Advisory Committee. The required proposal templates for fee increases and for new fees as well as site analysis forms have been provided to Jocelyn Biro as she requested. Attached with this letter is an Executive Summary for both new and increased fees. Please contact Larry Randall, Recreation Staff Officer, if there are any questions about these submissions. He or another representative from the forest is prepared to present these proposals to the Recreation RAC if desired.

Thank you for the opportunity to address our critical need for additional fee revenues for the developed recreation program.

KEVIN MARTIN  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: Edwin V Pugh, Larry Randall, Jocelyn Biro



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Executive Summary  
Umatilla National Forest Recreation Fee Site Proposal  
February, 2008

**BACKGROUND:**

The Umatilla National Forest, located in the Blue Mountains of southeast Washington and northeast Oregon, covers 1.4 million acres of diverse landscapes and plant communities. The forest is comprised of four Ranger Districts: Pomeroy (located mostly in Washington); Walla Walla (about 25% of which is located in Washington); North Fork John Day and Heppner (both located entirely in Oregon).

The Umatilla National Forest is proposing to change fees or begin charging new fees at 51 sites during the next 2 years. Our fee site proposal is part of a five year program of work developed using the Recreation Facility Analysis (RFA) process. We evaluated 116 developed recreation sites including campgrounds, cabins and trailheads. The five year program of work is designed to create a sustainable recreation program, eliminate facility maintenance backlog and meet the needs and expectations of our visitors.

Early in the RFA process it became apparent the recreation fee program would be a crucial component to meeting our goals. Generally speaking, many of our developed sites are:

- older (many were built in the 1960's),
- in need of major maintenance (we identified a \$1.8 million maintenance backlog),
- out of date (e.g. most campground parking spurs don't accommodate today's RVs)
- in need of improved access to persons with disabilities.

Historically, funds have only covered minimal operations and maintenance while facilities and have continued to deteriorate.

The 5 year program of work proposes increasing fees at the 14 campgrounds and 11 rental cabins where fees are currently charged and phasing in new fees over the next several years at another 20 developed campgrounds, 17 trailheads and 2 cabins. According to the RFA, anticipated fee revenues would increase from about \$78,000/year to \$174,000/yr when the program of work is fully implemented. With anticipated revenues and a stable appropriated budget, we should be able to operate our developed recreation program to standard and significantly reduce maintenance backlog over the long run.

**Developed Recreation Program Balance Sheet (From RFA).**

<b>Annual Expenses</b>	
Operating Costs	\$123,000
Maintenance Costs	\$114,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$237,000</b>
<b>Operating Assets</b>	
Appropriated funding	\$82,000
Fee Receipts available	\$174,000
Misc. other funds	\$3,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$259,000</b>

The 5-year program of work was developed with extensive public outreach beginning in November, 2006 and continued throughout the RFA process. The public was notified and invited to participate through mailings, press releases, newsletters, and forest web sites. Personal contacts were made with local and state officials and at various clubs such as local chapters of the back Country Horsemen of America. Proposed fee change notices were posted at all affected developed sites in August, 2007. Open houses were held at seven locations in communities neighboring the forest in September and October, 2007 to review our proposed 5-year program of work. The Recreation Program Manager discussed the RFA process and fee proposals on a local talk radio station in Walla Walla in October as well.

To date, we've received 17 fee-related comments. Nine of the comments supported new fees or fee increases as long as facilities and services were maintained or improved. Many expressed the importance of retaining fees at the local level. Eight respondents were opposed to new fees or fee increases. Several people and organizations expressed opposition to fees in principle, while others felt that the quality of a particular facility did not warrant a fee. In general, there is recognized need and strong support from the public for improving developed recreation facilities and services on the forest.

## **FEE PROPOSALS AND FOREST SETTINGS:**

The Umatilla National Forest is known primarily for its vast landscapes, wild and scenic rivers and highway corridors, wilderness areas and generally undeveloped character. It provides the setting for traditional recreational activities such as big game hunting, wildlife viewing, backcountry equestrian riding, hiking, mountain biking, ATV riding, skiing and snowmobiling.

Our focus is to continue to provide developed facilities in three basic settings identified during the RFA process:

**Wilderness/Backcountry:** Designated Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers and other undeveloped areas that are remote and provide a high degree of solitude with an emphasis on self-reliance.

Sites are typically undeveloped, dispersed camp sites and remote, rustic trailheads. There currently are no trailheads under the fee program. Examples of trailheads where new fees would be charged include Elk Flats and Timothy Springs trailheads. These sites have standard amenities and provide access to the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness on the Pomeroy Ranger District.

**Hunting/Dispersed:** General forest areas where more rustic facilities support hunting and other traditional recreation activities such as ATV riding, horseback riding and hiking.

These are typically small, rustic campgrounds scattered across the forest where toilets, picnic tables, fire rings and grills are provided but not water or garbage service. Typically, where fees are currently charged, the fee for a single campsite is \$5 and would

increase to \$8 plus \$5/additional vehicle after 2. Examples include: Tollbridge, and Welch Creek campgrounds on the North Fork John Day Ranger District.

**Concentrated Recreation:** Key high recreation use corridors on the forest where more developed facilities will be concentrated:

These sites are located along major access routes, scenic river corridors, or lakes and attract considerable use. Campgrounds typically have water, group sites, picnic shelters, associated trails, and other more highly developed amenities like fish cleaning stations, boat ramps, and boat/swimming docks. Examples include: Jubilee Lake, Woodward, and Olive Lake campgrounds. Fees currently range from \$5-\$15/single site and would increase to \$10-\$17 plus \$5/additional vehicle after 2 depending upon the level of amenities provided. Additional fee scales apply for other amenities such as group sites.

There are also a number of lesser developed campgrounds located within the concentrated recreation corridors that are more rustic. These sites are similar in development scale to those described in the Hunting/Dispersed setting. Proposed fees for a single site would typically be \$8 plus \$5/additional vehicle after 2. Examples include North Fork John Day and Tucannon campgrounds.

### **Fee Proposal Specifics:**

Increases at current fee sites could be implemented as early as May, 2008. New fee proposals were posted in the Federal Register February 8, 2008. Implementation would not proceed until after the 6 month comment period which ends August 8, 2008.

#### ***Increase fees at 14 campgrounds:***

**Pomeroy RD (1):** Tucannon.

**North Fork John Day RD (7):** Bear Wallow, Frazier, Lane Creek, North Fork John Day, Olive Lake, Tollbridge, Welch Creek.

**Walla Walla RD (6):** Jubilee Lake, Mottet, Target Meadows, Umatilla Forks, Woodland, Woodward.

#### ***Increase fees at 11 Rental Cabins:***

**Heppner RD (2):** Ditch Creek (increase from \$40 to \$50/night), Tamarack (increase from \$25 to \$40/night).

**Pomeroy RD (4):** Clearwater Big House (increase from \$40 to \$60/night from May 1-September 30 and \$75/night from October 1-April 30), Clearwater Lookout (increase from \$25 to \$50/night), Godman (increase from \$40 to \$60/night from May 1-September 30 and \$75/night from October 1-April 30), Wenatchee (increase from \$30 to \$50/night).

**North Fork John Day RD (3):** Fremont Congo Gulch (increase from \$60 to \$80/night), Fremont Hilltop Hideaway (Increase from \$30 to \$55/night), Fremont Miners Retreat (increase from \$50 to \$65/night).

**Walla Walla RD (2):** Fry Meadows (increase from \$25 to \$40/night), Summit (increase from \$35 to \$45/night).

***New fees at 12 trail heads:***

These are rustic trailheads with standard amenities.

**Pomeroy RD (8):** Elk Flats, Meadow Creek, Panjab, Teepee, Three Forks, Timothy Springs, Tucannon, Twin Buttes. Implementation would follow after the six month comment period in the federal register and when interpretative signs are completed and posted.

**North Fork John day RD (4):** Big Creek Meadows, Frazier, North Fork John Day, Winom. Implementation would follow after the six month comment period in the federal register. Interpretative signs have been developed.

***New fees at 12 developed campgrounds:***

**Heppner RD (1):** Penland Lake. Development scale 2-3 without garbage or drinking water. Proposed fee is \$8/single site plus \$5.00/additional vehicle after 2.

**Pomeroy RD (6):** Alder Thicket, Forest Boundary, Godman, Ladybug, Midway, Panjab. All are development scale 2-3 without garbage or drinking water. Proposed fee is \$8/single site plus \$5.00/additional vehicle after 2.

**North Fork John Day RD (5):** Drift Fence, Driftwood, Gold Dredge, Oriental and Winom. All development scale 2-3 without garbage or drinking water. Proposed fee is \$8/single site plus \$5.00/additional vehicle after 2.

***New fees at 2 cabins:***

Both cabins were recently renovated. They provide all facilities including electricity, flush toilet and potable water.

**North Fork John Day RD (1):** Fremont Caretakers Cabin; \$80/night.

**Pomeroy RD (1):** Tucannon Guard Station; \$100/night.