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Dear Interested Party,

I am pleased to release the Bighorn National Forest's Recreation Site Analysis and draft Five-Year Program of Work, which provide management recommendations for the 71 sites that comprise the Bighorn's developed recreation program.

The Bighorn National Forest, in cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Regional Office and external stakeholders, began this in-depth analysis in October 2014.

The Forest Service is keenly aware of the benefits outdoor recreation provides to the American public, but at the same time, the agency faces many challenges. Major trends and drivers affecting our recreation program include changes in equipment technology, use patterns, activities, and climatic conditions. The agency's budget is also affected by increases in fixed cost obligations and wildland firefighting costs.

While developed recreation sites are often high profile facilities that offer popular opportunities, they represent only one segment of the Bighorn's total recreation program. Developed recreation sites have a higher cost per user than many other areas and activities. We also manage outfitters and guides, recreation cabins, resort and ski area special use permits, visitor information services, wilderness, trails, and motor vehicle travel, among others, from the same limited agency funds. We remain dedicated to providing the best array and quality of recreation services possible with the resources available to us.

The Recreation Site Analysis process began with the Bighorn's recreation team ranking the facilities as to their overall value and then considering a variety of options for each site that could include changing the open season, changing service levels, changing fees, removing (decommissioning) sites, making site improvements, and seeking partners or volunteers.

We have approached this project acutely aware of the economic impacts the Bighorn's recreation program has on businesses, governments, and residents of local communities. The increasing importance of tourism is widely recognized and the Bighorns are part of the attraction. The national forest's abundant and diverse outdoor opportunities contribute greatly to our way of life around the Bighorn Mountains.

The draft Recreation Site Analysis provides a comprehensive view of our developed recreation program and includes a Program of Work designed to help us invest limited funding and partnership resources where they are of most benefit. We also hope this process will help all parties better understand the recreation management challenges we face. I hope we will generate a mutual understanding of these challenges to help us most effectively tackle them together as a community.



We invite your feedback on the draft Recreation Site Analysis and Five-Year Program of Work by July 15, 2016, after which we will finalize the documents and begin implementation. Environmental analyses will be conducted for ground-disturbing actions with yet another opportunity for public involvement.

The Recreation Site Analysis web page at <http://1.usa.gov/1q0TCtl> includes more information about the Recreation Site Analysis process, links to documents, and describes how you can submit written comments.

Questions about the Recreation Site Analysis should be addressed to Dave McKee, Recreation Staff Officer, at dfmckee@fs.fed.us or (307) 674-2636.

Thank you for helping the Bighorn National Forest move toward a sustainable long-term recreation program.

Sincerely,



WILLIAM T. BASS

Forest Supervisor