

## **Public Involvement Summary**

### **National Forests in North Carolina**

#### **Public Participation Efforts:**

- The Forest conducted very extensive public participation in August and September 2017 for a period of 46 days, and some sites had comment cards in place even longer. Public involvement varied by local national forest so the information below is not reflective of what occurred for every site, but is a compilation of all efforts; however every site met all requirements for public involvement.
- Six media and affiliation news groups published the information about the fee proposals:
  - The Mountaineer (8/11/2017)
  - WLOS News 13 (which received comments on their Facebook site, recorded by the forest) (8/11/2017).
  - Citizen Times (8/15/2017)
  - Smoky Mountain News (8/16/2017)
  - Havelock News (8/15/2017)
  - New Bern Sun Journal (8/15/2017)
  - The Courier Tribune (8/15/2017)
- The Forest reached out via letter federal and state senators and congressional staff by contacting one or more of their staffers on August 10, 2017.
  - Senator Richard Burr
  - Senator Thom Tillis
  - Representative Mark Meadows
  - Representative Richard Hudson
  - Representative Walter Jones
  - Mitchell County Commissioners
  - Madison County Commissioners
  - Graham County Commissioners
  - Swain County Commissioners
  - Cherokee County Commissioners
  - Clay County Commissioners
  - Craven County Commissioners
  - Carteret County Commissioners
  - Caldwell County Commissioners
  - McDowell County Commissioners
- The Forest posted notices onsite with opportunities to comment in August 2017
- The Forest parsed out comments received by site.
- Proposal posted on the Forest website and Facebook page
- The Forest reached out through social media (11,665 Facebook page followers) and website postings.

### Public Participation Results:

- The Forest received 251 comments. Of those 106 were generally supportive, whereas 140 were generally not supportive. The remaining 5 were either not related to the fee proposal or neutral.
- Many comments, whether supportive or not, spoke to the lack of current maintenance and the need to see improvements. Many of these gave ideas or opinions on what needed to be improved or changed at specific sites.
- Many non-supportive (and some supportive) comments centered around assuring that funds would be used on site.
- Some non-supportive comments were general philosophy around taxes paying for the sites already. Commenters expressed desire to direct their tax funds and/or made general political statements.
- Some commenters felt price increases were too steep, and some suggested incremental fee increases and/or other prices they felt were more reasonable.
- Some comments spoke to fixed incomes and lower income families.
- At the Cradle of Forestry, one commenter felt non-profits should not benefit from public lands.
- Some commenters (Panther, Arrowhead) complained that the rates had already increased at that site in 2016. A fee increase was approved for these sites in 2012 and recommended 2014, so if the fee increase occurred in 2016, may seem a little too recent.

### Forest Response to Public Involvement:

The Forest has decided to implement a phased-increase for three sites:

- Flintlock Valley Shooting Range: Currently \$3/day, \$30/year. 29 supportive, 26 non-supportive comments
  - Originally proposed to \$10/day, \$60/year
  - Recommended: \$5/day, \$45/year for one year; \$7/day, \$45/year for second year; \$10/day, \$60/year for third year
- West Morris Campground: Currently \$5/day. 3 supportive, 6 non-supportive comments.
  - Originally proposed to \$10/day
  - Recommended: \$7/day for one year, then increase to \$10/day for second year
- Mortimer Campground: Currently \$10/single site, \$20/double site. 5 supportive, 26 non-supportive comments.
  - Originally proposed to \$20/single site and \$40/double site
  - Recommended: \$15/single site and \$30/double site for one year, then increase to \$20/40.

## **Public Involvement Summary**

### **National Forests in Florida**

#### **Public Participation Efforts:**

The Forest conducted public involvement from November 2017 into December 2017. They reached out to local, state, and federal legislators in November 2017. The forest captured comments from social media, on-site comment forms, email and discussions.

- Post Notice within Recreation Area: 11/27/17
- Press Release: 11/29/17
- Website Post: 11/29/17
  
- Six media outlets ran the new releases: Associated Press, Tallahassee Democrat, Orlando Sentinel, Florida Times-Union, the Gainesville Sun, and the Ocala Star Banner on November 29, 2017. The comment period ended December 31, 2017.
- Elected officials were called, then letters were sent to County Commissioners and Federal Representatives on November 15, 2017:
  - Honorable Daniel Webster – House of Representatives
  - Honorable Ted Yoho – House of Representatives
  - Honorable Bill Nelson – United States Senate
  - Honorable Marco Rubio – United States Senate
  - Honorable Neal Dunn – House of Representatives
  - Honorable Ron DeSantis – House of Representatives
  - Honorable Al Lawson – House of Representatives
  - Franklin County Commissioners
  - Baker County Commissioners
  - Columbia County Commissioners
  - Lake County Commissioners
  - Leon County Commissioners
  - Liberty County Commissioners
  - Marion County Commissioners
  - Wakulla County Commissioners
- Letters were sent to the following key contacts on November 22, 2017:
  - Florida Forest Service
  - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Fee proposal info was posted on the Forest's Twitter and Facebook accounts on November 29 reaching more than 10,000 friends and followers. This effort directed interested followers back to the Forest website with full proposal details and comment instructions.

#### **Public Participation Results:**

A total of 12 comments were received, 11 of which either did not support or revealed concerns about the proposals. 1 commenter said they did understand the reasons why even though they

opposed and another was fully supportive. Finally a 13<sup>th</sup> person showed interest in commenting, but did not actually speak to anyone on the forest.

Themes from the comments included:

- Concern about current ‘opportunity’ to save a campsite by dropping off gear, paying cheap rates, and then coming back when actually planning to camp.
- Concerned that will have to pay additional fee with annual parking pass. Opposed to paying a daily rate and any fee increase.
- Fee increases are too much
  - For local community
  - Too much at once
  - For people who want to spend a month at a time in campgrounds.
- Public lands should be free to the public.
- Keep affordable sites available in consideration of elderly and youth families to make memories.
- Increased fees are double taxation
- Need better services before raising fees (specifically spoke to potable water and showers)

## **Public Involvement Summary**

### **George Washington & Jefferson**

#### Public Participation Efforts:

Public participation started August 18, 2017 and initially ran into September 2017. The comment period was extended to January 15, 2018.

- Posted Notice in each Recreation Area at the information/fee kiosk beginning 8/18/2017 until the site closed for the winter (minimum of 30 days), or until January 16, 2018 for year-round sites.
- News Releases: 8/18/2017
- Website Post: 8/18/2017 a link to all of the news releases were posted on main landing page under Features where it is still available, and was also posted on the News and Events page for 30 days, then moved to the News Archives page where it remains available.
- Fee announcements were done by Ranger District so that media only received notification for local sites. The news release for the Lee Ranger District sites did not receive media attention as a result of the press release (see listing for sites that did not receive media coverage). Publications that ran the various stories included:
  - "The Coalfield Progress" of Norton, Virginia, on August 22, 2017
  - "Daily News-Record" of Harrisonburg, Virginia, on August 28, 2017.
  - Aired on WSVA News/Talk Radio (550 AM, 92.1 FM) and it continues to be available on their website, WSVA-Online.
  - "News-Gazette" of Lexington, Virginia, on September 6, 2017.
  - "The Recorder" of Monterey, Virginia, on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017.
  - "Virginian Review" of Covington, Virginia in late August 2017.
  - The Alleghany Mountain Radio read the press release on the air.
  - "Smyth County News and Messenger" of Marion, Virginia, on August 26, 2017 and posted to their website, the SWVA Today.
  - "The Roanoke Times" on August 20, 2017. Also was in their December 31st year in review article.
  - "The Radford News Journal" on August 23, 2017.
- Notified federal legislators, elected officials (county commissioners, and city council) and received no comments except from Rockbridge County Administrator (Spencer Sutter) and the County Tourism Director (Jean Clark) expressing in favor of proposal.
  - Shenandoah County Administrator.
  - Botetourt County Board of Supervisors
  - Congressman Bob Goodlatte's staff (6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District)
  - Congressman Morgan Griffith's staff (9<sup>th</sup> Congressional District)
  - Augusta County Board of Supervisors
  - County Commissioner for Hardy County, WV
  - Rockbridge County Administrator (Spencer Sutter)
  - Rockbridge County Tourism Director (Jean Clark)
- For recreation areas on the national recreation reservation system, a notice was included on [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) on each recreation area's page.

### Public Participation Results:

A total of 44 comments were received. Of those 24 indicated some level of support; 33 indicated lack of support. Some public comments received included comments on more than one site. Some were not site specific, so those comments were applied to all fee proposals included in that specific press release.

Themes from the comments included:

- Recognize that inflation means increasing prices.
- Expect more services and/or better maintenance if fees are increased.
- Some fee increases are too steep. Some commenters suggested smaller increases.
- Repairs and improvements should happen before fees are increased.
- Proposals are not clear regarding benefits visitors would receive for higher fees.
- Concerns about 'fee layering' when anglers must also purchase a fishing license from the State.
- Belief that the FS spends too much on personnel and vehicles.
- Concerns that higher fees would keep people away from sites specific to one Ranger District only).
- Concerns about impacts to local residents on fixed incomes, and impacts to a poor local economy (specific to on one Ranger District).
- Concerns fee increase does not recognize partner and local efforts to secure grants for a site.

### Forest Response to Public Involvement:

- The Forest revised their proposal to address the comments received.
- Some fee changes are now proposed for incremental increases that extend the timeframe out to the year 2021 to achieve the target fee price, in order to be responsive to comments concerned with too much of an increase all at once.
- The Forest is postponing initial fee implementation to Spring of 2019 to address comments about improving sites before fees are raised.

## **Public Involvement Summary**

### **National Forests and Grasslands in Texas**

#### Public Participation Efforts:

- The Forest had to split their public involvement efforts, based on forest/grassland unit. The variation on public participation was significant; therefore the efforts are shown by national forest/ then grasslands.
- Elected officials were sent a copy of the news release. No elected official commented on the news release.
  - Senator Ted Cruz
  - Senator John Cornyn
  - Congressman Louie Gohmert
  - Congressman Kevin Brady
  - Angelina County Judge
  - Houston County Judge
  - Jasper County Judge
  - Nacogdoches County Judge
  - Newton County Judge
  - Sabine County Judge
  - San Augustine County Judge
  - San Jacinto County Judge
  - Trinity County Judge
  - Walker County Judge
- **Sam Houston, Davy Crocket, Angelina National Forests** - Cagle Recreation Area, Cagle Boat Launch, Scotts Ridge Boat Launch and Swim Area, Ratcliff Lake, Boykin Springs Campground, Boykin Springs Rec Area, Caney Creek Boat Launch
  - Posted signs 8/23/2017 to timeframes between 3/22/2018 and 4/3/2018. Comment cards were available at the site and Forest Service offices.
  - Lufkin Daily News ran the story on 8/27/2017.
  - News Release Posted on Website
  - News Release sent to elected officials 8/24/2017
- **LBJohnson & Caddo National Grasslands**
  - Black Creek Lake, Tadra Point, Valley View, Bois d'Arc, Coffee Lake, West Lake Crockett Campgrounds
  - Posted signs 11/28/2017 to 1/17/2018
  - News Release Posted on Website
  - Wise Messenger Online Edition ran the story on 12/6/2017.
  - News Release sent to elected officials 11/28/2017
  - Facebook posts on a Caddo-LBJ overall page & trail riders page

### Public Participation Results:

- The Forest received 7 comments. Of those 4 were generally supportive, whereas 3 were generally not supportive. The sites that received comments were Caney Creek, Tadra Point, Bois d'Arc and Coffeemill
  - Sites need improvement – higher fees hopefully mean better facilities/services
  - You are charging more for less service
  - Several expressed concerns that only some pay and more funds would come if others paid.
  - Fee increase is too much for fixed income
  - Fee increases is too much – suggest lower increase
  - Appreciation for improvements made
- From Facebook posts, the Grasslands received 14 comments, mostly supportive
  - When people had questions about the price, the Grasslands, was responsive
  - People were very responsive to information about the Grasslands annual pass, at \$30, respondents see it as a great value.

### Forest Response to Public Participation:

The forest is only taking forward four sites that were better received to improve public involvement for the remaining sites.



## **Public Involvement Summary**

### **Kisatchie National Forest**

#### **Public Participation Efforts:**

The Forest has conducted all required public participation from August 2017 into January 2018. They have reached out to local, state and federal legislators in August 2017. The forest has captured comments from on-site comment forms, e-mail and discussions.

- Posted Notice in Rec Areas: 8/25/2017
- Media that ran the press release:
  - Channel 5, KALB with NBC News, published the news story on 8/22 & 23 /2017
  - Minden Press-Herald published the news story on 8/23/2017
  - Natchitoches Times (9/25/2017)
- Website Post: 11/28/2017 - The forest built a webpage for the fee proposal and made it prominently available from their home page for at least 90 days.
- Local Elected Official Notice/Comment: 8/23/2017
- Federal Legislator Notice/Comment: 8/23/2017
- Letters were sent to the following elected officials on 8/23/2017. No elected official commented on the potential fee increase.
  - Honorable Ralph Abraham, United States House of Representatives
  - Honorable Garret Graves, United States House of Representatives
  - Honorable Clay Higgins, United States House of Representatives
  - Honorable Mike Johnson, United States House of Representatives
  - Honorable Cedric Richmond, United States House of Representatives
  - Honorable Steve Scalise, United States House of Representatives
  - Honorable Bill Cassidy, United States Senate
  - Honorable John Kennedy, United States Senate
  - Mr. Jim Bonsall, Webster Parish Police Jury
  - Mr. Scott Davidson, Claiborne Parish Police Jury
  - Mr. Allen Michael McCartney, Winn Parish Police Jury
  - Mr. Arnold Murrell, Grant Parish Police Jury
  - Mr. Rick Nowlin, Natchitoches Parish Police Jury
  - Mr. Craig Smith, Rapides Parish Police Jury
  - Mr. James B. Tuck, Vernon Parish Police Jury

#### **Public Participation Results:**

A total of 14 comments were received. Of those 8 indicated some level of support; whereas 8 indicated lack of support and one didn't speak directly to the proposal. Some comments supported some aspect but not others, therefore totals do not match total comments received. Themes from the comments included:

- Proposed fee increases are too high, consider more affordable rates
- Need to see more amenities and improvements with increases
- Need to be better general maintenance of sites
- Sites are very primitive, so do not understand the need for rate increases.

## **Public Involvement Summary**

### **Chattahoochee Oconee National Forest**

#### **Public Participation Efforts:**

The Forest conducted all required public participation from August 2017 into February 2018. They reached out to local, state and federal legislators in December 2017. The forest captured comments from social media, on-site comment forms, e-mail and discussions.

- Two media ran the fee proposal story: WDUN and The Outdoor Wire.
- Online News Release was published on 08/18/2017. According to Constant Contact our online email statistics application, the news release was sent to 943 participants and was opened by 422 of recipients.
- According to Facebook, 5,309 people viewed the news release. 37 of viewers reacted to the post
- Each site was posted by 8/25/2017 for a minimum of 30 days. Most sites were posted for over 100 days.
- Letters were sent to County Commissioners, State and Federal Representatives on December 21, 2017:

Honorable Stan Helton  
Honorable Rhonda Wallace, Floyd County Commissioner  
Honorable Greg Hogan, Murray County Commissioner  
Honorable Lynn Laughter, Whitfield County Commissioner  
Honorable Stephen J. Hersey, Putnam County Commissioner  
Honorable Tom Graves, U.S. House of Representatives  
Honorable Jody Hice, U.S. House of Representatives  
Honorable Doug Collins, U.S. House of Representatives  
Honorable David Perdue, United States Senate  
Honorable Johnny Isakson, United States Senate

#### **Public Participation Results:**

A total of 93 comments were received. Of those 30 indicated some level of support; whereas 63 indicated lack of support for a variety of reasons.

Themes from the comments included

- 1) Fee increases are too high – they should not be 50 to 100 percent high all at once (many comments expressed this sentiment)
- 2) Fee increases will keep people from coming and will impact other less expensive opportunities.
- 3) Sites require repairs and need fixing prior to fee changes.
- 4) You are asking us to pay to park when we try to see the falls and find out its closed.
- 5) If you are going to charge more, more amenities are needed.
- 6) The price gets steep when you camp for several nights.
- 7) Nothing has changed to warrant the steep price increases.

- 8) Agree with fee changes if particular improvements are made.
- 9) Price should be per-vehicle, not per person (shooting range).
- 10) People will avoid fees by parking alongside roads making this a dangerous place.