

Southern Montana Resource Advisory Committee Fee Proposal Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2021. 1500-1800

The meeting was a virtual meeting conducted on Microsoft Teams. All RAC members were present:

Randy Weimer –Chair
Bill Brownlee
Corey Biggers
Charles Rein
Shantell Frame-Martin
Liz Muhs Stone
Craig Hash
Larry Lahren
John Lowell
James Moody
Susan Mosness
Becky Gray
Philip Chiaviello
Stanley Floyd

Kathy Minor determined that there was a quorum.

Forest Service personnel present included:

Mary Erickson, Forest Supervisor and Designated Federal Official
Kathy Minor, Deputy Forest Supervisor
Marna Daley, Public Affairs and Technical Support
Kat Barker, Public Affairs and Technical Support
Lauren Oswald, Service Staff Officer
Jane Ruchman, Developed Recreation
Jeff Ward, Recreation Business Program Manager, Regional Office
Lin Goettlich, Budget Officer
Karen Tuscano, Budget Analyst

The purpose of the meeting was for the RAC to review and discuss Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) fee proposals on the Ashland, Beartooth, Gardiner, and Yellowstone Ranger Districts on the Custer Gallatin National Forest. The proposals included implementation of new fees at two campgrounds and adding the Sage Creek Cabin as a new recreation rental opportunity; as well as increasing the fees at 26 sites that currently charge fees. The fee proposals for campgrounds included \$5/vehicle for an extra vehicle.

Mary and Randy welcomed the group and reviewed the decision-making procedures in the Charter. Randy went over the agenda and pre-meeting packet that was emailed to each member.

Jeff Ward, the Recreation Fee Program Manager from the Regional Office of the Forest Service's Northern Region gave a presentation which included background from the Fee Program and an overview of the CGNF Fee Proposals.

The group conducted an in-depth conversation on the proposals and process. Members expressed concern on affordability, but also recognized that fees had not been increased in over 20 years. The Forest Service mentioned that the Golden Eagle/America the Beautiful provide discounts on single-site campgrounds, but not cabins/recreation rentals. The group recognized proposed fee increases are needed to keep these facilities well-maintained into the future. The group considered two motions:

Motion 1

Recommend approving fee increases at all campgrounds, including charging fees at new campgrounds. Motion passed. There were two dissenting votes that raised concerns about that the proposed fees at several of the sites could result in a financial burden for lower income recreationists.

Motion 2

Recommend approving fee increases at cabins/recreation rentals. Motion passed. There were two dissenting votes that raised concerns about that the proposed fees at several of the sites could result in a financial burden for lower income recreationists.

Ultimately, the RAC recommended approving fee increases at all 29 sites. The RAC requests that recreation fees on the Forest be analyzed in a timelier manner moving forward and recommended that to better serve the public and the U.S. Forest Service operations; this analysis should occur every five years.

Jeff Ward presented next steps to the RAC to prepare a letter with their recommendations to send to the Regional Forester for her approval.

The meeting was adjourned.