



# Recreation Facility Analysis

LOLO  
NATIONAL  
FOREST

(Formerly Recreation Sites Facilities Master Planning)

January 25, 2007

## **Background**

All National Forests and Grasslands have been asked to take a close, detailed look at each of their “developed” recreation sites and develop a 5 year action plan. Some examples of developed recreation sites include: campgrounds, trailheads, rental cabins and lookouts, picnic sites, boating sites, horse camps, visitor centers, fishing sites, etc. This process, called Recreation Facilities Analysis (Formerly RS-FMP) will engage the public and should be completed by every national forest by the end of this year—2007.

This planning process is a useful tool for managers to analyze *each* recreation site for age and condition of the facility; amount of current and projected use at each site; operational costs; and any maintenance backlog (including necessary tasks and costs) to meet required health or customer service standards. Once all the necessary data is gathered it enables recreation managers to display a comprehensive overview of all their recreation sites: including costs, needs and current and projected use. Local managers will work with the public to recommend a sustainable and appropriate developed recreation plan that is safe, responsive to budget realities and meets anticipated public needs for the next five years.

## **Why Develop a Recreation Facilities Analysis Now?**

Many of our recreation sites, such as campgrounds, picnic areas, cabins, and trailheads were constructed 40 or more years ago. Old water systems are failing; picnic tables are rotting; signs have been destroyed; and parking is woefully inadequate at many sites. The recreating public uses their National Forests much differently today than they did in 1960. Some small campgrounds where people used to camp, they no longer do. Often times today’s RV’s and trailers do not fit into older sites. Other recreation sites have seen a marked increase in use—generally because they are close to a river, lake, or trailhead. And our rental program for cabins and lookouts has become very popular.

As facilities continue to age, maintenance needs continue to grow. It is prudent that we provide the public the right service in the right places. To best make this determination we began an in-depth look at *each* of our developed recreation sites. We also reviewed current user surveys to develop a better understanding of where our users were from, why they came to recreate on our Forest, how long they stayed, and why they selected that spot.

The user information helped us understand that the majority of recreationists on the Lolo National Forest come for the outstanding short term opportunities offered here. Examples include day use hunting, hiking or fishing and perhaps an overnight stay in a campground. Except on the Seeley Lake Ranger District where people come to camp for longer periods of time, but still use the Forest for day use activities. The Lolo is “just out the back door” from many of our local communities, and is used heavily by area residents. By analyzing the visitor information we realized we could define our recreation “niche” as Trail Based, Day Use Recreation, which we characterized as “We Live Here.”

After looking at all the information, such as costs, maintenance backlog, and user data, we began to think about questions such as: What’s unique or special about this Forest? What are we best suited for? What can we offer now, and into the future in terms of recreation experiences for the public? How do we most wisely spend our recreation dollars? What are the budget or visitor use trade-offs to upgrade some sites, repair others, or reduce facilities at other sites?

Recreation managers from each Ranger District met for several days to analyze the information and discuss the use and needs of each site. A 5 year proposed program of work was proposed that would adequately meet the needs of the users and the managers. This proposed program of work will be dynamic, capable of being adjusted as conditions change and partnership opportunities arise.



# Lolo National Forest – Summary of the Proposed 5-year Program of Work

## Perceived Niche

The recreation niche we propose is “*We Live Here*—accessible and abundant wildlands provide a backdrop for diverse day use, trail based recreation that is an everyday way of life for many people.” This niche statement accounts for the closeness of the Lolo to our local communities.

## Inventory of Developed Recreation Sites

We currently manage 79 Developed Recreation Sites. They have been distributed into the following categories:

- 32 Campgrounds
- 10 Existing Cabin/Lookout Rentals
- 4 Potential New Cabin/Lookout Rentals
- 23 Developed Trailheads
- 1 Boating Site
- 4 Picnic Sites
- 1 Major Interpretive Site (Ninemile Remount Depot)
- 2 Minor Interpretive Sites
- 1 Winter Sport Site (non commercial)
- 1 Organization Camp

## Summary of the Proposed Program of Work

After a thorough analysis of each of our 79 Developed Recreation Sites, we have recommended the following actions over the next 5 years:

No Changes Proposed	21 sites
Change in Season of Operation	25 sites
New Site Fees (i.e. 3 new cabin rentals, 1 new campground)	7 sites
Increase in Existing Fees (cabin rentals and campgrounds only)	18 sites
Increase or Improve Services	14 sites
Eliminate Services (i.e. trash collection)	2 sites
Remove Facilities/Operate as Dispersed Site	5 sites
Convert Site from Under-utilized Campground to Trailhead	3 sites

*Please see the Summary for each Ranger District for listing of specific sites where these changes are explained in a little more detail.*

Thank you for your interest. This proposed “program of work” is meant to be a dynamic, strategic game plan for the next 5 years, and is “carved in soap” so to speak, able to be adjusted as conditions change and as other financial and partnership opportunities occur. We welcome and invite you to share your concerns and comments on these proposals. If you would like additional information, please contact your local Ranger District office or visit [www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo)