



United States Department of Agriculture

**Forest Service**

Hoosier National Forest  
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# Hoosier NF Highlights

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## THE HOOSIER NATIONAL FOREST – SPECIAL LAND, SPECIAL USES



By Jackie Contreras, Resource Assistant

Across the nation, the Forest Service manages over 192 million acres. In Indiana, the Hoosier National Forest is over 203,000 acres, from the Ohio River on the south to Monroe Lake on the north. The Hoosier has private lands interspersed with public land throughout nine counties on the Forest. This creates a demand for a variety of uses on the Forest. Forest staff work to maintain a balance with the needs of private landowners, utility companies, and commercial vendors.

The Forest Service's special-uses program authorizes use and occupancy on public land, while protecting public and natural resource values. Currently the Hoosier has over 170 special use permits that range from temporary outfitter and guide permits, to 30-year utility right-of-way permits. Many permits are issued to private landowners that need to cross public land to gain access to their private property.

Each year, Forest staff receive many applications for activities such as road and utility rights-of-way, recreation events, research, and photography and video productions. The Forest

Service reviews each application to determine how the request affects the public's use of National Forest System (NFS) land. Normally, NFS land is not made available if the overall needs of the individual or business can be met on nonfederal lands.

A special-use authorization is a legal document such as a permit, lease, or easement, which allows occupancy, use, rights, or privileges on NFS land. The authorization is granted for a specific use and for a specific period of time.

How does the special-uses program work on the Hoosier and when do you need a special use authorization? Easy! If you are camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, mountain biking, or engaged in a noncommercial activity involving less than 75 people, you do not need special authorization. Keep in mind Indiana fishing and hunting licenses are required, and some fees may be involved with other activities. Check the Forest website at [www.fs.usda.gov/hoosier](http://www.fs.usda.gov/hoosier).

You will need a special use authorization if

- (1) you need to occupy, use, or construct any improvements on NFS land for personal or business purposes;
- (2) if there is a fee being charged or if income is derived from the use; or
- (3) if an activity on NFS land involves individuals or organizations with 75 or more participants or spectators.

The Hoosier issues a free-use permit for activities such as weddings or gatherings with 75 participants or less if there are any 'special circumstances'. Examples of special circumstances are bringing in a portable toilet, hay bales for seating, or anything that does not traditionally belong on the national forest.

Special use proposals are evaluated to ensure they are consistent with the Hoosier Forest Plan and potential environmental effects are analyzed. Therefore, processing time to issue an authorization varies, but can take up to a year or more for complex projects. If you anticipate needing an authorization contact us as early as possible, but at least 60 days before you need it.

For more information about the Hoosier special use program, contact Jackie Contreras, Resource Assistant, at 812-547-7051 ([jcontreras@fs.fed.us](mailto:jcontreras@fs.fed.us)) or Ron Scott, Lands Program Manager, at 812-275-5987 ([ronscott@fs.fed.us](mailto:ronscott@fs.fed.us)). For information regarding the recreation special use program you can contact Vicki Gullang-Harris at 812-275-5987 ([vgullang@fs.fed.us](mailto:vgullang@fs.fed.us)).



Buried telephone line on the Hoosier National Forest under special use permit.



Special use permit authorized this power line crossing the Forest.