

Becoming an Outfitter-Guide on the National Forests in Michigan

Do you provide outfitter or guide services on the Huron-Manistee, Hiawatha, or Ottawa National Forests in Michigan? This brochure will provide an overview about the requirements to conduct a commercial business on National Forest Lands and the permit application process.



The Role of the National Forest Outfitter – Guide

Outfitters and guides on a National Forest provide their clients with the opportunity to experience a particular activity. Outfitters and guides provide equipment, services and technical instruction, and they support a land ethic that assists the Forest Service in achieving its mission.

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Contact Information

Website: http://www.fs.fed.us/specialuses/special_outfitting.shtml

Hiawatha National Forest

Phone: (906) 786-4062

TDD: (906) 789-3337

Huron-Manistee National Forests

Phone: (231) 775-2421

TDD: (231) 775 - 3183

Ottawa National Forest

Phone: (906) 932 - 1330

TDD: (906) 932 - 0301



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

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The Forest Service Permit Process continued...

Are there other requirements? Permit holders are required to carry liability insurance and submit an annual operating plan. A land use fee based on gross sales is also required.



Tips on Being Successful

Successful outfitters and guides generally have the following traits:

- They fulfill the public need by establishing a niche in the outdoor market and specializing in it.

- They provide great service to their customers.
- They care for the land and resources of the area and explain the unique natural and cultural values to their clients.
- They communicate well and establish a positive relationship with the Forest Service.
- They pay attention to the business and reporting requirements of the Forest Service and other responsible agencies.

The Forest Service Permit Process

Who needs a permit? Any individual, business, or organization providing commercial outfitting and/or guiding services on National Forest Lands, whether or not the primary aim is to produce a profit.



Why does the Forest Service require a permit? Special use permits enable the Forest Service to:

1. protect resources;
2. ensure such uses do not conflict with other uses;
3. reduce public liability risks;
4. ensure that taxpayers receive fair market value from commercial users of public lands.

What is the duration of the permit?

Permits are initially issued for one year or less and may be renewed for an additional year subject to acceptable performance. After two years of acceptable performance, permit holders may be assigned a priority use permit for up to 10 years. These permits may be reissued if performance remains acceptable and services provided remain in the public interest.

The Forest Service Permit Process continued...

Where to I apply? Contact the Ranger District office in the area where you propose to conduct your service.

How do I apply? Ranger District staff will explain how to submit a written proposal. The proposal will include an explanation of the proposed operation such as objectives, specific area, season of use, typical clients, modes of transportation, amount of expected use, experience, financial capability, equipment, and training.



If I apply, will I get a permit? Not necessarily. The Forest Service will evaluate your proposal to determine if the proposed activity is in the public interest, if there is a public demand, if similar service is offered in your proposed area, and if it is consistent with laws and regulations and the Forest's Land and Resource Management Plans. Based on that initial evaluation a decision will be made whether to move forward in the permitting process.