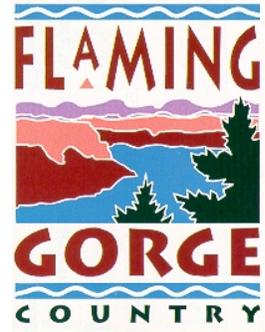


**Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area**

# **Recreation Fee Proposal Business Plan**



USDA Forest Service  
Ashley National Forest  
Flaming Gorge Ranger District  
December 6, 2007



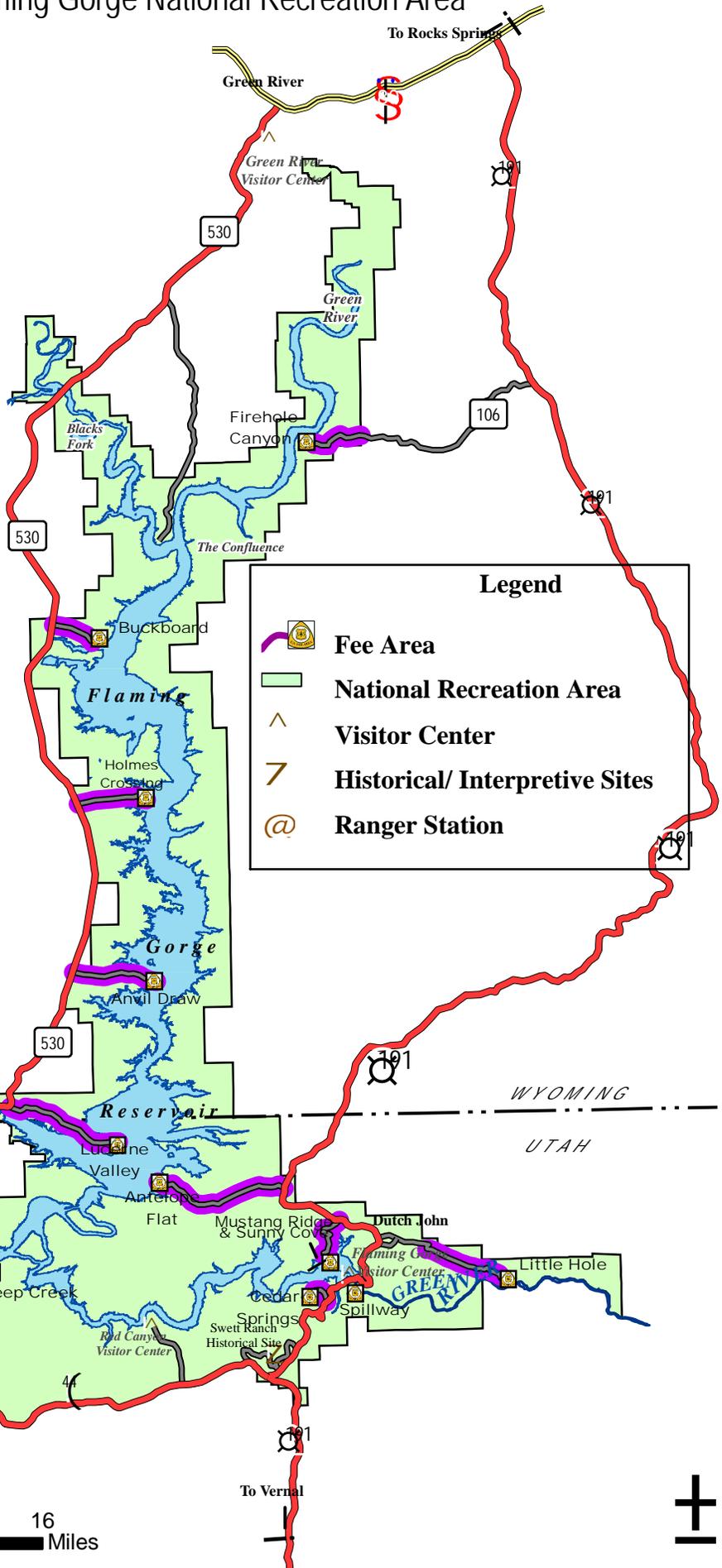
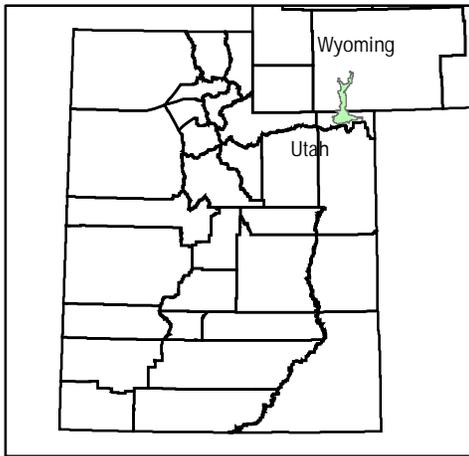
*“(The river) enters the range by a flaring, brilliant red gorge, that may be seen from the north a score of miles away. We name it Flaming Gorge.”*

J.W. Powell May 26, 1869

# Ashley National Forest

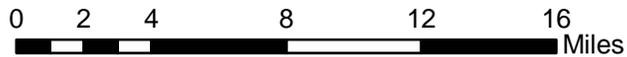
## Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area

Use Fee Areas



**Legend**

-  Fee Area
-  National Recreation Area
-  Visitor Center
-  Historical/ Interpretive Sites
-  Ranger Station



## Area Description

### General Area Description

The Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (FGNRA) encompasses lands ranging in character from high-desert plains to high-mountain lakes. Scenic beauty, geological and ecological study, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, boating, and other outdoor recreation activities draw most visitors to the area. Key features include the 91-mile long Flaming Gorge Reservoir and the canyons that contain it, a 13-mile stretch of the Green River that is renowned as a world-class fishery, a 7-mile National Recreation Trail, two National Register historic sites, Flaming Gorge Dam, Sheep Creek Geologic Area, and Flaming Gorge-Uintas Scenic Byway and two associated interpretive auto tours, “Drive Through the Ages” and “Wildlife Through the Ages”.

Flaming Gorge NRA has one of the most highly developed recreation infrastructures in the National Forest System. Many of its facilities were constructed by the National Park Service to “Mission 66”<sup>1</sup> standards, prior to designation of the NRA in 1968. At sites which require water and sewer service, the Forest Service maintains several: water lines, sewer lift stations, sewer lagoons, wells, and 3 municipal type water treatment plants.

Visitors purchasing a recreation pass have access to all the following amenities and services at the Flaming Gorge NRA (Recreation Enhancement Act) fee sites.

<b>Type of Amenities Offered</b>	<b>Number of Amenities Offered</b>
Designated/Improved Parking Areas	10 Paved, 2 Gravel
Flush Restrooms	8 Units
Vault restrooms	14 Vault
Fish Cleaning Stations	5 Stations
Improved Access Roads	8 Paved, Gravel
Courtesy Docks	8 Docks
Ramp Divider Docks	14 Dividers
Paved Multi-lane Boat Launch Ramps	14 Ramps
Camping Docks	8 Located on Reservoir
Boating Signs and Buoys	54 on Reservoir
Drinking Water	10 Stations plus 3 on Reservoir
Pre-Launch Safety Information Booth	2 Staffed for River Raft Launches
Ramp Supervisors	2 Staffed as needed at River Launch
Floating Toilets	3 Located on Reservoir

<sup>1</sup> *Mission 66* was a federally-sponsored program to improve deteriorated and dangerous conditions in the national parks, the result of a massive visitor boom after World War II. Projects began in 1956 and ended in 1966. During those ten years, more than \$1 billion was spent on infrastructure and other improvements in the parks. Mission 66 represented the largest program for park improvements ever initiated by the National Park Service and is one of the most significant federal undertakings of the twentieth century.

Boat Sewage Pump-out Stations	3 Located on Reservoir
Information Kiosks	10 Interpretive Stations
Picnic Areas	6 Improved Areas
Year-round Garbage Service	Each REA Fee Site
Year-round security*	All Sites (Varies by use and Season)

\*Security is provided through a combination of Forest Service Officers, Cooperative Agreement with County Sheriff's Departments, Coast Guard Auxiliary, Utah State Parks, Utah and Wyoming Wildlife Officers, and on site hosts.

In addition to the amenities listed above, visitors are provided with 5 RV dump stations, 4 shower units, 11 campgrounds, and 3 boat-in campgrounds for an additional fee paid to concessionaires within the fee areas. The following infrastructure is provided in conjunction with fee areas or is free of charge.

- ▲ 860 Developed Campsites
- ▲ 3 Municipal Type Water Treatment Plants
- ▲ 750,000 Gallons of treated water storage
- ▲ 7 Sewer Lagoons
- ▲ 8 Sewer Lift Stations
- ▲ 44 Miles of Water Line
- ▲ 10 Miles of Sewer Line
- ▲ 5 Deep Wells
- ▲ 120 Dock Sections
- ▲ 50 Acres of Paved Parking
- ▲ 41 Miles of Paved Road
- ▲ 4 Visitor Centers
- ▲ 1 Historic Site – Swett Ranch
- ▲ 7 Developed View Points
- ▲ 45 Miles of Trail
- ▲ 60 Miles of Scenic Byway w/ 9 Interpretive Sites
- ▲ 3 Marinas/ 1 Resort
- ▲ 3 Visitor Contact Stations
- ▲ 10 Warehouses and shops

## **Administration**

Flaming Gorge NRA is located in the southwest corner of Wyoming and the northeast corner of Utah and is administered by the Flaming Gorge Ranger District of the Ashley National Forest in the Intermountain Region (R4). The Ashley National Forest is headquartered in Vernal, Utah. The Flaming Gorge Ranger District is headquartered in Manila, Utah, and also has offices in Dutch John, Utah and Green River, Wyoming. In Utah, the NRA lies within Daggett County and Congressional District #3. In Wyoming, the NRA lies within Sweetwater County and Congressional District #1. The Green River is managed in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management under a service first agreement. The NRA is operated in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation to fulfill the Colorado River Storage Project objectives for water storage and management of an interagency visitor center (Flaming Gorge Dam Visitor Center).

## Special Designations

The United States Congress has formally established 38 National Recreation Areas (NRA's), by law, 20 of which are located on lands administered by USDA Forest Service in 20 states. Forest Service NRA's have extraordinary combinations of outdoor recreation opportunities, scenery, and proximity to potential users. They generally have outstanding cultural, historic, and natural values that contribute to public enjoyment of the area.

Forest Service policy directs its NRA's to be managed as "showcases" and to exemplify National Forest management standards for programs, services, and facilities. While there is no official definition of the term "showcase" it has been interpreted to mean that these areas should be developed and managed to a noticeably higher standard than other Forest Service recreation areas (GAO/RCED-99-47).

Public Law 90-540 established Flaming Gorge NRA on October 1, 1968. The Act designated 189,825 acres in northeastern Utah and southwestern Wyoming as Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area "to provide, in furtherance of the Colorado River Storage project, for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of the Flaming Gorge Reservoir and surrounding lands... and the conservation of scenic, scientific, historic and other values contributing to public enjoyment of such lands and waters..." (Sec. 1) The Secretary of Agriculture is charged with administering, protecting, and developing Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area in a manner that "will best provide for (1) **public outdoor recreation** benefits; (2) conservation of **scenic, scientific, historical, and other values** contributing to public enjoyment; and (3) provide such **management, utilization, and disposal of natural resources** as will promote or are **compatible with, and do not significantly impair**, the purposes for which the recreation area is established." (Sec. 2)

**Mission:** The mission of Flaming Gorge NRA, is "to provide, in furtherance of the Colorado River Storage project, for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of the Flaming Gorge Reservoir and surrounding lands... and the conservation of scenic, scientific, historic and other values contributing to public enjoyment of such lands and waters..."

**Vision:** "Flaming Gorge NRA will be the premier water-based recreation area in the tri-state area of Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming".

## **Management Goals and Objectives**

Recreation use is managed under the Ashley National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (FLRMP), signed in 1986. The Ashley National Forest is currently working on the Forest Plan Revision.

The FLRMP guides all natural resource and recreation management activities and sets standards for the Ashley National Forest. The plan describes resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability and suitability of lands for resource management.

The plan provides broad program-level direction for management of the land and its resources and requires: 1) the establishment of Forest-wide goals and objectives, 2) the establishment of Forest-wide standards and guidelines, and 3) the delineation of Management Areas and associated management prescriptions.

The Ashley National Forest's FLRMP superseded and incorporated the essential elements of the 1977 Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area Management Plan. The FLRMP delineated three Management Areas within Flaming Gorge NRA. These areas were designated: "n1-NRA existing situation, D-NRA timber emphasis, and r-wildlife." The management area prescriptions and standards and guidelines were described in detail in the FLRMP. They represent modifications of Forest-wide prescriptions and standards and guidelines to insure that the primary values identified in PL 90-540 are enhanced, protected, and not "significantly impaired". The prescriptions and standards and guidelines for these three Management Areas constitute the primary direction for the management of Flaming Gorge NRA.

## **Visitor Demographics**

The following demographic information has been compiled from the Ashley National Forest National Visitor Use Monitoring Data gathered in fiscal year 2000-2001. Data from a Customer Survey conducted at Flaming Gorge in 1990 by the Outdoor Recreation and Wilderness Assessment Group, Southeastern Forest Experiment Station was also used because the data is specific to the Flaming Gorge NRA rather than the entire Ashley National Forest.

Approximately one million people from the United States and foreign countries visit the Flaming Gorge NRA each year. Although the FGNRA is several hours from major population sources, it is a key destination vacation area for Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, and Arizona as well as other national and international travelers. The majority of users are from Provo, Salt Lake City, Ogden (Wasatch Front), Vernal Utah, and the Green River/Rock Springs, Wyoming areas.

Basic descriptors of the forest visitors were developed based upon those visitors interviewed then expanded to the national forest visitor population. Tables 1 and 2 display gender and age descriptors.

**Table 1. Gender distribution of Ashley NF recreation visitors**

<b>Gender</b>	Male 74.4	Female 25.6
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**Table 2. Age distribution of Ashley NF recreation visitors**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Percent in group</b>
Under 16	21.5
16-20	2.3
21-30	9.6
31-40	12.8
41-50	24.6
51-60	11.1
61-70	15.5
Over 70	2.5

Visitors categorized themselves into one of seven race/ethnicity categories. Table 7 gives a detailed breakout by category.

**Table 3. Race/ethnicity of Ashley NF recreation visitors**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Total percent national forest visits</b>
Black/African American	0.1
Asian	0.3
White	96.4
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.5
Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	0.9
Other	1.2

Two percent of forest visitors were from another country. The survey did not collect country affiliation.

### **Visitor Satisfaction Information**

Twenty-five percent of visitors interviewed on the forest rated their satisfaction with the recreation facilities and services provided. Although their satisfaction ratings pertain to conditions at the specific site or area they visited, this information is not valid at the site-specific level.

The survey design does not usually have enough responses for every individual site or area on the forest to draw these conclusions. Rather, the information is generalized to overall satisfaction with facilities and services on the forest as a whole.

In addition to how satisfied visitors were with facilities and services they were asked how important that particular facility or service was to the quality of their recreation experience. The importance of these elements to the visitors' recreation experience is then analyzed in relation to their satisfaction. Those elements that were extremely important to a visitor's overall recreation experience and the visitor rated as poor quality are those elements needing most attention by the forest. Those elements that were rated not important to the visitors' recreation experience need the least attention.

Table 4 summarizes visitor satisfaction with the forest facilities and services at Day Use Developed sites. To interpret this information for possible management action, one must look at both the importance and satisfaction ratings. If visitors rated an element a 1 or 2 they are telling management that particular element is not very important to the overall quality of their recreation experience. Even if the visitors rated that element as poor or fair, improving this element may not necessarily increase visitor satisfaction because the element was not that important to them. On the other hand, if visitors rated an element as a 5 or 4 they are saying this element is very important to the quality of their recreation experience. If their overall satisfaction with that element is not very good, management action here can increase visitor satisfaction.

Survey conclusions and related actions from the first National Visitor Use Monitoring conducted for the Ashley National Forest, Flaming Gorge NRA:

After reviewing the information summarized below, NRA Administrators took immediate action to improve "Helpfulness of employees" and "Value for fee Paid". Training sessions for hosts, concessionaires and employees were conducted emphasizing these items. This Business Plan outlines improvement in value of services for fees paid by offering more services and facilities at fee sites.

The survey will occur at five-year intervals. The data collected in 2007, not yet available, will assist in evaluation of services and facilities areas that need improvement.

**Table 4. Satisfaction of Ashley NF recreation visitors at Developed Day Use sites**

Item Name	Item by Percent response by *					Mean ** Satisfaction Of Visitors (n)		Mean ** Importance To Visitors (n)	
	P	F	A	G	VG				
Scenery	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100	5.0	50	4.9	42
Available parking	0.0	0.0	9.2	31.9	59.0	4.5	49	4.4	42
Parking lot condition	0.0	0.0	5.0	12.2	82.8	4.8	48	4.0	42
Cleanliness of restrooms	0.0	0.0	2.5	6.4	91.1	4.9	37	4.7	32
Condition of the natural environment	0.8	0.0	1.4	13.1	84.7	4.8	50	4.9	42
Condition of developed recreation facilities	0.0	0.0	5.2	25.7	69.1	4.6	40	4.7	34
Condition of forest roads	4.9	2.4	9.0	23.4	60.3	4.3	43	4.5	36
Condition of forest trails	0.0	0.0	9.9	61.5	28.6	4.2	16	4.5	18
Availability of information on recreation	0.0	0.0	0.5	67.6	31.9	4.3	34	4.2	30
Feeling of safety	0.0	0.6	3.8	42.8	52.8	4.5	50	4.8	42
Adequacy of signage	0.0	5.3	3.8	35.5	55.4	4.4	48	4.6	40
Helpfulness of employees	0.0	1.1	4.9	15.5	78.5	4.7	43	4.6	37
Attractiveness of the forest landscape	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.0	93.0	4.9	50	4.9	42
Value for fee paid	2.8	1.5	7.1	1.2	87.4	4.7	36	4.9	31

\* Scale is: P = poor F = fair A= average G = good VG = very good

\*\* Scale is: 1= not important 2= somewhat important 3=moderately important 4= important 5 = very important

n= number of responses on which rating is based.

### **Economic Information**

Flaming Gorge NRA is important to the overall economy of Daggett County, Utah and Sweetwater County, Wyoming. NRA management and programs affect both counties. Daggett County lacks an industrial base and is dependent on agriculture and the recreation and tourism industries, all of which are emphases of Flaming Gorge NRA. While tourism and recreation are also important to Sweetwater County, it is not as dependent on them due to its more diversified economy with both light and heavy industries.

Daggett County is the least populated county in Utah (population: 900). The land ownership is 81% federal, 9% state, and 10% private. There are two small towns in the County: Manila, the County Seat, and Dutch John.

Other than agriculture and some county and state government jobs, virtually all of Daggett County’s employment is somehow dependent on Flaming Gorge NRA.

Payrolls from approximately 39 permanent and 30 seasonal Forest Service personnel, over 70 concessionaire employees, and an estimated 80 seasonal and non-seasonal outfitter-guide positions provide critical cash flow for the community. Daggett County tourism employment accounts for 47% of all jobs in the county, the second highest rate in Utah.

In addition to the cash flow from wages, travelers to Daggett County spent \$11.7 million on recreation services in 2000. This represents a 6.4% increase from the previous year, in contrast to a decline in tourism spending in many Utah counties.

Sweetwater County, Wyoming has a population of 39,500. Major employers primarily represent the mining, railroad/transportation and recreation/tourism industries. The two communities most affected by Flaming Gorge NRA are Rock Springs and Green River. These towns represent important gateways to the NRA from Interstate 80.

Sweetwater County is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in travel spending in Wyoming. Travelers spent \$21.2 million in 2000, and 70% of these travelers visited Flaming Gorge NRA. Travel and tourism spending supported 1,820 jobs in 2000, an increase of 60 from 1999.

**Financial Analysis**

Since 1997 the NRA has collected over 1.5 million dollars in recreation fee revenues, averaging approximately \$180,000 per year. Recreation fee revenues have decreased since the fee area boundaries were redefined to assure compliance with the Recreation Enhancement Act (REA).

\$176,919 was collected in 2006. The revenue was distributed as follows:

Visitor Services	Habitat Restoration	Repair, Maintenance & Facility Enhancement	Fee Management Agreements	Law Enforcement	Cost of Collections Capital	Cost of Collections non-capital	Admin, Overhead & Indirect	Total Expenditure
\$11,596.58	\$0.00	\$80,202.41	\$0.00	\$3434.00	\$0.00	\$27,084.41	\$0.00	123,317.16

Required annual data submitted for Report to Congress.

Fee revenue is used in conjunction with other sources of funding to maintain the Flaming Gorge NRA. A mix of fee revenue, appropriations, partnerships, donations, grants, and concessionaire funding are used to operate, maintain, and improve the area. Appropriations pay for the majority of operations and minor maintenance. Grant and concessionaire funding is typically leveraged with fee revenues to pay for capital improvements, heavy maintenance, and enhanced visitor services.

Annual Operation & Maintenance Costs	Deferred Maintenance Backlog	Predicted Revenue
\$875,714	\$1,639,791	\$280,000

Anticipated revenue for 2008 was estimated by applying the proposed fee increase schedule to the amount of passes sold in 2006.

## **Fee Program Description**

The Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area was established in 1968 and contains 189,825 acres. The recreation fee program began 1997 under the recreation fee demonstration program authority, and fees were charged for entire NRA (National Recreation Area). With the passage of the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) in the 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act (PL 108-447) signed into law by President Bush on December 8, 2004. The fee area was reduced to 7,030 acres to comply with REA requirements. The fee is now implemented as high impact recreation area (HIRA), allowing visitors the convenience of purchasing a daily or annual pass valid for all sites within the area.

All persons within the designated fee areas of the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, pursuant to 36 CFR 261.15 and 261.58(g) with exception of those exemptions listed below are required to display a recreation pass. The pass must be displayed by hanging from the rearview mirror or placed on the dashboard with the expiration date visible and facing the windshield. Hikers, bikers, and horseback riders using recreation facilities, must carry the pass on their person if this is their primary mode of transportation. Valid passes include:

- America the Beautiful Senior, Access, Annual, and Volunteer Passes
- Golden Age, Golden Access, Golden Eagle (if expiration date is still valid) Passes
- Flaming Gorge day, seven day or annual pass.

Persons who do not display a valid pass are subject to a citation of \$50.

The following are exempt from paying the recreation use fee:

1. Persons under the age of 16.
2. Persons performing a non-recreational activity such as work authorized by a valid Forest Service Permit or official government business.
3. Persons passing through by motor vehicle, bike, foot, or horse who do not stop to use recreation facilities.
4. Persons staying in a developed campground who do not use recreation facilities outside of the campground.
5. Educational groups participating in academically sponsored trips.
6. Persons recreating on National Public Lands Day and veterans on Veterans Day.

Passes can be purchased at the Forest Service Offices in Manila, Green River and Vernal, the Flaming Gorge Dam and Red Canyon Visitor Centers. Daily Passes can also be purchased at any one of 16 self service fee tubes located at or near recreation sites. 22 local businesses located in each of the surrounding communities also sell passes. The vendor program increases visitor convenience by offering extended operating hours, payment by credit cards, and provides one-stop shopping. The program benefits local businesses by increasing walk in traffic. 12% of the revenue generated from Recreation Passes is returned to local businesses who participate in the vendor program.

**Fee Increase Proposal for 2008**

Current Fee Structure	Proposed Fee Structure
1 Day Pass: \$2	1 Day Pass: \$5
16 Day Pass: \$5	7 Day Pass: \$15
Annual Pass: \$20	Annual Pass: \$35

**Rationale for New Fees and Fee Changes**

A business plan for the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area was completed in 2002 and recommended strategies to make up the shortfall in appropriated funding needed to maintain the NRA. The plan recommended increasing recreation fees, in addition to other strategies including cost reduction, increasing grants and donations, increasing fee compliance, and use of concessionaires. A fee structure of \$5 per day, \$25 per 16 days, and \$40 per year was recommended in the business plan.

In the current proposal, the 16 day pass was replaced with a 7 day pass because Visitor Use Monitoring Data indicates the average length of stay is 3-7 days. The annual pass proposal was reduced from \$40 to \$35 because it was felt that doubling the price of the annual pass would not be acceptable to the local community.

There has not been a fee increase since the programs inception in 1997. Appropriated budgets have decreased, while the cost of doing business has increased (wages, fuel, utilities,) etc. Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area has one of the most highly developed recreation infrastructures, requiring a high level of maintenance, in the National Forest System. A market comparison of recreation fees in neighboring areas offering a similar experience and amenities was used to determine the proposed fee increase.

## Market Comparison of Recreation Fees

Site	1 Day	7 Day	Annual	Boating Fee		Total Annual
				7 Day	Annual	
Steinaker & RedFleet Utah State Parks	\$5	N/A	\$70 all state parks			\$70
Jordanelle Utah State Park	\$9	N/A	\$70 all state parks			\$70
Utah Lake State Park	\$9	N/A	\$70 all state parks			\$70
Lake Powell NRA (Utah)	N/A	\$15	\$30	\$16	\$20	\$60
Lake Mead NRA (Nevada)	N/A	\$5	\$20	\$10	\$20	\$40
Arapahoe NRA (Colorado)	\$5	\$15	\$30			\$30
Curecanti NRA (Colorado)	N/A	\$15	\$30			\$30
Bighorn NRA (Wyoming)	\$5	N/A	\$30			\$30

Without a fee increase, existing facilities will continue to deteriorate until some sites will become unusable or will need to be closed. The ability to use funding from grants and partners to complete projects will diminish, because the Forest Service cannot provide matching funds. Basic services such as trash removal, restroom cleaning, visitor information, road maintenance, and security will fall below minimally acceptable levels.

## Visitor Feedback Mechanisms

Communities are involved through public meetings and open houses, comment cards, media releases, and annual progress reports. Visitor comments are solicited through public meetings, visitor surveys, and comment cards (Examples of annual progress poster and public meeting notes can be provided upon request). To evaluate visitors' reactions to the fees at the FGNRA, a study was conducted by Colorado State University during the summer of 1999 (Visitor Assessment of Use Fees at Flaming Gorge NRA, Peter Fix, 1999).

The study indicated that 76% of the respondents understood the reasons behind the fee program, 65% approved of the fee program at Flaming Gorge, and 71% indicated they were satisfied with the quality of services.

## Public Participation

The original Flaming Gorge NRA Business Plan was published in 2002 the plan called for a fee increase among other cost reduction and revenue enhancement strategies. The Flaming Gorge Ranger District hosted 4 public meetings, and 6 meetings with county commissioners, congressional delegates, partners and cooperators, and one radio interview to present the findings and receive comments on the Business Plan.

News releases were sent to 19 radio stations and newspapers. Public comments about the fee increase received during this process were mixed. A fee increase was supported by some local business owners and some politicians, but not supported by others. Attendees at the public meetings report that mainly local people complain about fees and visitors from out of the area would support a fee increase.

The business plan changes were not implemented in 2003 due to the stress placed on the local economy from the Mustang Fire. The fee increase has since been delayed by the passage of the Recreation Enhancement Act in December 2004, which changed the process for increasing fees.

Formal public outreach on this proposal began on July 15, 2007. Notice of the proposed fee increase and request for comments were posted on message boards and pay stations at the fee sites, pass vendors, and at the 4 visitor centers located throughout the area. The proposal has been posted on the Ashley National Forest Website. Articles explaining the proposal were published in local and regional newspapers. A news release was distributed to 40 media outlets including the Associated Press, neighboring agencies and tribes, and cooperators. Public meetings were hosted from 6 to 7 pm at: the Daggett County Courthouse, in Manila, Utah, September 5<sup>th</sup>; Sweetwater County Public Library, Green River, Wyoming, September 6<sup>th</sup>, and the Unitah Interagency Fire Center in Vernal, Utah, September 10<sup>th</sup>. A radio interview was conducted in the Sweetwater County area on September 6<sup>th</sup>. 82 letters were sent to the Ashley National Forest recreation scoping mailing list on August 14<sup>th</sup>.

A briefing was given to the Daggett County Commissioners on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007, Sweetwater County Commissioners and area congressional aides/staffers on Sept 5<sup>th</sup> 2007, and the Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce Board on August, 29<sup>th</sup> 2007. There was no opposition to a fee increase, with support from one Daggett County Commissioner and the Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce Board.

Attendance was low at the Manila (3 attendances) and Vernal (2 attendances) public meetings, comments were positive and there was no opposition to the fee program or a fee increase. Attendance was better at the Green River public meeting (11 attendances), where most did not support the concept of paying fees to use public lands, but were not specifically opposed to the proposed fee increase. Most comments were directed at abolishing the fee program. One individual, who was especially vocal in his opposition to recreation fees in principle, admitted that the proposed fee increase was modest.

Seven public comments were received via mail and email. Two letters were written in support of the fee program (Flaming Gorge Resort and local Wyoming Game & Fish Officer). Three of the letters were in opposition to recreation fees in principle, including the Utah Environmental Congress. One comment stated that the Forest Service should not increase fees without better justification and one stated that the fee increase was too high.

## **Accomplishments**

### **Recent Accomplishments**

Fee dollars were leveraged with grant dollars to renovate Buckboard Campground. Wyoming Department of Transportation provided used asphalt for the road to the campground and Loop A. Several campground spurs were reconfigured to accommodate bigger vehicles. A four person shower unit and flush toilet building was installed. Fee dollars were used to extend and hook up sewer, water and electrical services to the new shower building, and for site grading and concrete work around the building.

Fee revenues contributed matching funds for a Utah State Trails grant for purchase of two cross-country ski trail grooming snowmobiles, also utilized by the Vernal Ranger District.

Recreation fee revenues paid for reprinting of visitor maps/brochures in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation and Flaming Gorge Country Association. Smokey Bear fire prevention educational items were also purchased for distribution at visitor centers, area parades, and the Sweetwater County Fair.

Visitor safety and security services were enhanced by hiring and training two seasonal Forest Protection Officers, and purchasing security equipment for the District Law Enforcement Officer. Forest Protection Officers provided public service by: performing fee compliance and resource protection patrols, weekend and holiday coverage, informing the public of fire restrictions, extinguishing abandoned campfires, posting signs, completing minor maintenance at recreation sites, picking up trash, providing bear safety education, and participating in Smokey Bear interpretive programs at campgrounds.

Fee revenues also supported basic maintenance functions, including maintaining reservoir buoys and docks, collecting trash from dumpsters, and pumping toilets.

### **Past Program Highlights**

#### **Repairs and Maintenance**

- Divider Dock rehabilitation, Little Hole Trail maintenance, and Red Canyon area paving maintenance.
- Buckboard parking lot striping, Buckboard boat ramp repair, and Lucerne boat ramp repair.
- Courtesy dock repairs throughout reservoir.
- Dumpster repairs throughout district, sediment removal off boat ramps throughout reservoir, and Little Hole road repairs.

### Facility Enhancement

- Installed Buckboard floating toilet, Flaming Gorge Dam picnic site rehabilitation, and installed Firehole vault toilet.
- Rock barrier placement at Cedar Springs.
- Installed Firehole flush toilet and Stateline Cove vault toilet.
- Accessible toilet pad hardening, Stateline Cove vault toilet, and Sunny Cove vault toilet.

### Interpretation and Signing

- Visitor information on NRA, Interpretive signs, Informational signs, Cross country ski trailhead signs, and Henry's Fork entrance sign.

### Resource Preservation and Enhancement

- Henry's Fork Wetland habitat enhancement, Bitterbrush seedling planting, rock barrier placement, and pet waste disposal system.

### Visitor Services and Operation

- Visitor survey, visitor center staffing, Free Fishing Day, public TV and radio spots, interpretive programs and supplies, community event participation.

### Security and Enforcement

- Uintah Basin Dispatch support, and federal law enforcement support.

### Cooperative Agreements

- Intermountain Natural History Association Partnership and County Cooperative Law Enforcement support.

## **Proposed Projects**

- Leverage fee dollars with Wyoming Game and Fish Wallop-Breaux Grant Funding to install courtesy docks at Buckboard and Anvil Boat Launches and new buoys on the Wyoming portion of the reservoir.
- Leverage fee dollars with Utah Wallop-Breaux Grant Funding to provide new docks at Hideout boat-in campground.
- Leverage fee dollars with Granger-Thye fee offset to purchase and install a shower house at Lucerne Campground.
- Provide support to Daggett County Emergency Services for purchase of equipment, supplies, and training.

- Leverage fee dollars with Scenic Byway grant to improve the picnic area and ADA access to the courtesy dock at the Dam Point Picnic Area.
- Apply for grant funding for Lucerne Fish Cleaning Station and camping docks using fee dollars to fund part of the projects.
- Apply for grant funding for replacement of camping docks in Wyoming.
- Install quality informational kiosks at highway portals with maps explaining the fee program, orientation and regulatory information.
- Upgrade signing; provide additional interpretive kiosks and programs.
- Increase security patrols
- Print visitor maps and brochures
- Continue to address health and safety issues and reduce maintenance backlog.