

The Outfitter/Guide Philosophy

Why do I need a special use permit?

National Forests are public land – land that belongs to all U.S. citizens. The Forest Service manages that land on behalf of the people. We manage for a variety of uses – recreation, timber, mining, and so forth – with the goal of maintaining and preserving the character that makes each of these uses desirable. Special use permits are the mechanism that allows the Forest Service to review request for various activities and approve them, and to collect fees in return for the use.

Recreation and Tourism – Where the Outfitter/Guide fits in

The recreating public seeks a diversity of experiences, settings, and opportunities on the National Forests. Many are capable of obtaining these experiences on their own, but many want or need the assistance of others. They seek people possessing the experience, skills, and equipment that can help them have the kind of recreation experience they desire. They also want to learn about their wild lands; it makes a difference in their lives and increases their quality of living.

Outfitter/Guides can meet these needs. They are able to provide services to visitors who desire specialized recreation such as 4x4 tours, hot air balloons, and metaphysical experiences.

So, why a special use permit?

As stewards of public land, the Forest Service must ensure that the recreational experiences available to visitors are of high quality, safe, and rewarding. When outfitters and guides provide services on Forest lands, they become an extension of the Forest Service. As such, it is our job to ensure that the experiences they provide are consistent with our mission and management objectives.

The special use permit process is a way of doing that. It helps us screen companies to make sure they are capable of providing safe and enjoyable experiences for the public, that the services they offer meet the public's need for such services, and that they will care for the land as we do. It provides a mechanism for authorizing where these activities can occur and at what levels, which helps us protect our natural resources.

What happens to the fees we pay to the Forest Service?

Permitted outfitter/guides are required to pay the Forest Service 3% of their gross annual revenue. This money goes directly back into the permit program, providing critical funding for employees, environmental analysis for new permits, and other projects that enhance the program.

The Red Rock Ranger District uses these fee monies to:

- Hire two additional field employees, to assist with inspections and compliance patrols.
- Hire an employee to assist with quarterly billings and use reports.
- Implement a five-year program to address maintenance needs on roads heavily used by outfitter/guides.
- Initiate a use-level monitoring program, which gathers important information about recreation use on popular roads and trails.
- Fund the analyses needed to expand the program and issue new permits.