

**SOUTHERN REGION RECREATION
RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
April 10, 2012**

The Southern Region Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC) convened via teleconference 10:00 am on Tuesday, April 10, 2012.

RRAC members participating: Larry Mashburn, Jack Terrell, Morgan Sommerville, Ron Fox, and Taylor Stein.

USFS attendees included: Alison Koopman and Caroline Mitchell.

Public participants: Kitty Benzar and Keith Bettcher.

Alison Koopman introduced herself as the Southern Region Fee Program Manager and the Designated Federal Manager (DFO) for the RRAC. As DFO, she explained that her responsibilities include: calling or approving the call of a meeting, attending meetings, and approving the agenda.

She also introduced Caroline Mitchell, Planning/Recreation Programs, Ouachita National Forest (Arkansas) as the Committee Coordinator.

PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS

It was explained that, under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, federal agencies sponsoring advisory committees must open committee meetings to the public, with few exceptions. Two members of the public were identified on the call: Kitty Benzar with Western Slope No-Fee Coalition and Keith Bettcher with Florida State Forest Service.

PURPOSE OF MEETING

The primary purpose of this meeting was to introduce government and committee members, provide background information pertaining to the Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) and Federal Advisory Committees, discuss committee matters, and to identify a potential date for the next RRAC meeting. No fee proposals were discussed or reviewed at the meeting.

INTRODUCTIONS

Each of the members on the teleconference gave a brief introduction of themselves.

- 1) A brief description of the RRAC make-up was explained, including that there are:
 - a. 11 members in the following three categories:
 - i. (5) Persons who represent recreation users
 1. Winter non-motorized recreation
 2. Winter motorized recreation
 3. Summer motorized recreation
 4. Summer non-motorized recreation
 5. Hunting and Fishing
 - ii. (3) Persons who represent
 1. Motorized Outfitter & Guides
 2. Non-Motorized Outfitter & Guides

3. Local Environmental Group
- iii. (3) Persons who are
 1. State Tourism Official
 2. Local Government Official
 3. Indian Tribe Representative

OVERVIEWS

An overview of the Recreation Enhancement Act was provided. It included information on the following:

1) HISTORY

- a. REA was passed in the 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act (PL 108-447) and signed into law by President Bush on December 8, 2004. The 10-year Act authorizes the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to establish, modify, charge and collect recreation fees at Federal recreation lands and waters managed by the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation and Forest Service.
- b. Recreation Fees are not new to the Forest Service. Since the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act was passed in 1964, the Forest Service has had the authority to charge recreation fees for activities such as camping in developed campgrounds. Following LWCF, the Fee Demonstration Program was established in 1994. REA, as it is referred in short, was designed against the backdrop of the recreation Fee Demonstration Program that included public and Congressional involvement.

2) BENEFITS

- a. There are 4 primary ways REA benefits visitors to federal public lands:
 - i. Reinvesting a majority of revenue back to the site of collection;
 - ii. Providing an interagency pass program that reduces confusion;
 - iii. Providing more opportunities for public involvement in determining recreation fee sites and fees (including member's role of an advisory committee);
 - iv. Providing focused criteria and limits on areas and sites where recreation fees can be charged;

3) THREE FEE CATEGORIES

- a. Standard Amenity Fees
 - i. Day-use fees where certain services and facilities must be in place at individual sites or areas.
 - ii. Requires the following:
 1. Permanent Toilet
 2. Permanent Trash
 3. Picnic Table
 4. Parking
 5. Security
 6. Interpretive Sign
 - iii. TYPICAL EXAMPLES – Visitor Centers, Large day-use areas

- b. Expanded Amenity Fees
 - i. Fees for facilities or services that provide direct benefits to people.
 - ii. TYPICAL EXAMPLES- Developed campgrounds, Highly developed boat launches, Highly developed swim sites, Cabin rentals, Hook-ups, Dump stations, Transportation services and Reservation services
 - c. Special Recreation Permits
 - i. Where extra measures are needed for natural and cultural resource protection, the health and safety of visitors, to allocate capacity or disperse recreation use
 - ii. TYPICAL EXAMPLES- Wilderness Areas, Shooting Ranges, Specialized Trails
- 4) FEE RESTRICTIONS THAT APPLY TO THE FOREST SERVICE
- a. Entrance fees
 - b. Standard amenity fees for people under age 16
 - c. Activities such as-
 - i. Parking along roads or trails
 - ii. Stopping at overlooks and scenic pullouts
 - iii. Passing through travel of NFS lands

An overview of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) was provided. It included information on the following:

- 1) PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REQUIREMENTS
 - a. REA identifies 2 required public involvement procedures, which include, the use of:
 - i. Recreation Resource Advisory Committees
 - ii. Prior public notice of changes through the Federal Register, local media, on-site signing, etc.
- 2) RRAC IS A FACA COMMITTEE
 - a. The Secretary of Agriculture has appointed members to make recommendations on certain aspects of recreation fees.
 - b. Recommendations will be forwarded to the Regional Forester for final decision.
 - c. FACAs assure that no one interest group has undue influence on a decision maker, by requiring a balanced committee approach which is open and allows public access
 - d. All FACA Committees must have
 - i. Balanced representation
 - ii. Open meetings
 - iii. A charter that clearly outlines the committees work
 - iv. An ending date for their work (3 year term, beginning March 2011)
 - v. A Designated Federal Official and Chairperson
 - e. Committee Members
 - i. Serve 2-3 year terms but can be reappointed
 - ii. Serve without compensation
 - iii. Will be reimbursed for transportation, lodging and meals

An explanation of the role of RRAC members was provided, including the following information:

- 1) Overview of RRAC member role
 - a. Overall, members are being asked to make recommendations on the IMPLEMENTATION or ELIMINATION of fees, the EXPANSION or LIMITATION of the recreation fee program, and the IMPLEMENTATION of fee level CHANGES.
 - b. As an individuals, members are being asked to:
 - i. Provide local and user group perspective, input and collaboration
 - ii. Encourage accountability and oversight
 - iii. Represent local interest and concerns
 - iv. Be flexible in membership and location to accommodate different interests

COMMITTEE MATTERS

As outlined in the Charter, Koopman explained that a RRAC must appoint a Chairperson and MAY adopt by-laws or rules of operation to further guide their efforts. Decisions, such as these, require a majority vote = 6 members. Currently, there is no Committee Chairperson and a set of draft by-laws.

Koopman suggested that both the Chairperson and by-laws be decided at the next RRAC meeting. The by-laws used by the previous Committee will be sent out as starting point, by the request of the Committee members.

TRAVEL CLAIMS & FORMS

Koopman explained that part of the Agency responsibility, with regard to the RRAC, is to ensure committee members are reimbursed for travel and per diem costs. Caroline Mitchell informed the RRAC of the process to be reimbursed for travel and per diem. A form will be provided at each meeting. Members will fill out and sign the form, authorizing Mitchell to file a travel claim for that member.

PUBLIC INPUT

Koopman asked if members of the public wished to speak. Kitty Benzar mentioned that REA is a controversial law that will sunset in 2014. She encouraged the members to read the Act. She also wished to bring two recent court decisions regarding REA to the attention of the RRAC (Mt Evans Decision and Mt Lemmon Decision). Copies of the decisions can be obtained by contacting Alison Koopman. Benzar also encouraged the RRAC to consider evening or weekend meetings.

FUTURE FEE PROPOSAL MEETING

Koopman proposed a meeting for fall- September/October 2012; Atlanta location. It is proposed to be a two-day meeting, not including travel. There are around 40 proposals pending from previous years. These have not been approved to come before the RRAC. They will be reviewed at the Regional level and be updated prior to being released for consideration.

Meeting adjourned at 11:15am.

