

RECREATION FEE BACKGROUND



Public land fees have been around since the late 1800's, and the first recreation fee was implemented in 1949. Recreation fees help fund various recreation projects and operations; without them, recreation sites would not be as nearly accessible, developed, maintained, or staffed. The Involved agencies are the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Forest Service.

The goals of recreation fees are to develop and maintain, nationwide, a high quality level of outdoor recreation activities to encourage citizens to strengthen the health of U.S citizens.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA):

Effective from 1965 to present

Program Summary: Revenue is collected through admission, use, and special recreation fees, collected into a fund, and then allocated at the discretion of congress to similar projects, programs, and grants.

Recreation Fee Demo Program:

Effective from 1996 to 2004

Program Summary: Designed as an experiment in recreation management that required funds to return at the site of collection opposed to a general nationwide fund. At minimum, 80% of funds return to the site of collection for project work. Up to 15% of funds are used at the site of collection for free collection costs. Finally, a minimum of 5% goes into a regional account for allocation determined by the Regional Fee Demo Board.

Recreation Enhancement Act (REA):

Effective from 2004 to 2014

Program Summary: Due to Success of Recreation Fee Demo Program, congress passed the REA with a 10-year authority. REA collects fees and requires that 95% of fees collected be reinvestment into the forest unit of collection, and 5% goes into a regional account for allocation as determined by the Regional Fee Board. REA includes revised language to address the concerns the public and congress had with the Recreation Fee Demo Program.

Public participation is a large part of the decision making process. Public support must be shown before a project is proposed, then the project will proceed through the review process before implementation.



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Alaska Recreation Enhancement Act Review Process¹

Forest:

- Performs recreation fee analysis
- Develops fee proposal

Regional Fee Coordinator:

- Provides guidance on fee proposal development
- Coordinates with Regional Fee Board

Regional Fee Board:

- Reviews proposal for submission to Regional Forester

Regional Forester:

- Accepts Regional Fee Board recommendation/approves fee proposal
- Appoints new regional fee board members

Alaska Recreation Enhancement Act Fund Allocation

95% of funds collected are used for project work and fee administration:

Project work:

- Repair
- Maintenance
- Interpretation
- Sign creation
- Habitat or facility enhancement
- Resource assessment, preservation and restoration
- Law enforcement relating to public use

Fee administration

- Signs identifying a fee area
- Equipment necessary to fee collection activities
- Printing of permits, fee envelopes
- Fee compliance monitoring at fee sites
- Bank contract charges for handling fee collections

A minimum of 5% of funds is deposited into a regional account for distribution by the Regional Recreation Fee Board:

- Can only be used for project work
- Can only be used on Recreation Fee sites
- At discretion of Rec Fee Board. The final decision is made by Regional Forester.



¹ Working decision process from 2011-2014