



US Forest Service Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources Briefing Paper

Date: May 24, 2013

Topic: Recreation RAC Briefing Paper - Maroon Bells Update

Background: The standard amenity fee area for Maroon Valley has changed from one large area to 3 stand-alone areas per national direction.

- The Maroon Valley consists of 6 developed recreation sites along a 5.7 mile road corridor on National Forest System land. Three campgrounds, Silver Bar, Silver Bell and Silver Queen are located at the lower end of the Valley. The East Maroon Wilderness Portal is mid-valley and West Maroon Wilderness Portal and the Maroon Lake Scenic Area facilities are at the upper end of the road.
- The East Maroon and West Maroon standard amenity fee areas have paved parking lots, toilets, picnic tables, information kiosks, trash service, and security patrols. In addition, West Maroon has an adjacent paved overflow parking lot that serves both West Maroon and Maroon Lake. The Maroon Lake Scenic Area contains a major developed parking lot, bus staging parking, restroom facilities, picnic tables, grills, information center, amphitheater, and trash facilities. Security patrols are also conducted at these areas.
- A mandatory bus system has been in place since 1978. The bus system provides service from mid-June through the fall colors season. This service was implemented to curtail damage caused by roadside parking, high vehicle use, and conflicts in campgrounds. As a benefit of providing this service, education and interpretation opportunities are being taken advantage of. Roadside parking has been restricted in the Maroon Valley since the inception of the bus service in 1978.
- A rider fee has been charged by the bus service operator, the Roaring Fork Transit Authority (RFTA), since the time bus service was first established. The bus service and tours run from 9 AM to 5 PM daily. The Forest Service receives 50 cents per bus rider. Originally this was paid to the Forest Service through agreement authority and later as a part of the Fee Demo authority. These fees are expanded amenity fees under the Recreation Enhancement Act.
- The bus system allows for specific exceptions to vehicular travel to include allowing persons with disabilities and vehicles with 10 passengers or more to travel on the Maroon Valley Road. Visitors may also drive personal vehicles to the Maroon Valley sites before or after the hours of bus operations.
- Visitors not using the bus are charged a \$10 per vehicle standard amenity fee which is good for 5 days. This began in 1997 under the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program (Fee Demo) authority and will continue to apply at the 3 standard amenity fee areas.
- A separate expanded amenity fee is charged for overnight use in the campgrounds. These persons receive a 50% discount off the standard amenity fee.
- Outside of the 6 developed sites, there remains only one place for private vehicles to legally pull off and park in the Valley. This is a paved four vehicle parking pull out called the Stein Meadow Overlook. No facilities are at this location and no trails lead from this point to other locations.

Implementation Plan Changes:

- Change the Stein Meadow Overlook to non-fee parking for those persons who indicate this is their only destination in the Valley during their visit.