MT HOOD NATIONAL FOREST SPECIAL USE APPLICATION PROCESS

This follows national directives which can be found in Forest Service directives.

Status definitions

There are a few definitions that are part of the process to be aware of regarding the status of your project:

- **Proposal** – The paperwork that you submit to the Forest Service outlining what you want to do is a proposal.
- **Accepted** – If the proposal is accepted by the Forest Service its status is accepted and it becomes an application.
- **Application Approved** – After the application is accepted, the environmental review takes place. A decision is made by the line officer regarding the environmental review which will state if the application is approved or not. Once approved, final details can be worked out before issuing the permit or lease.
- **Issued** – Once the permit or lease is signed by both the permit holder and the USFS line officer the permit is considered issued and the use is authorized to begin.

Before you prepare your proposal

- Become familiar with the USFS policies related to the activity you are proposing. Check the Mt Hood National Forest web site for the most current special uses processes. LINK
- Fine tune what the purpose of your proposed use is. Why is there a need for this on public land?
- Evaluate options to have your proposed use on private land. If the use can be accommodated on private land, the USFS will not accept your proposal.
- Review Mt Hood National Forest's web site regarding the special uses proposal process. There are various open seasons depending on the type of proposal you are submitting.

Preparing your proposal

- Application forms vary based on intended use. Be sure to use the correct form for the type of use that you are applying for.
- If the proposal is from a business or non-profit, the name and address needs to match how the entity is registered with the Oregon Secretary of State's business registry. For term permits this may not be needed.
- Complete the form fully. Proposals that are incomplete will be returned. Revised proposals need to be submitted within the open season to be considered.
- The map that you provide should be clear and detailed. An electronic version is preferred.
- Submit it during the open season. Proposals must be received by 4:30PM the end of the appropriate open season date.
- Submit proposal to: mthoodspecialuses@fs.fed.us or via snail mail to Special Uses, Mt Hood National Forest, 16400 Champion Way, Sandy, OR 97067. If you are an existing permit holder you may send a courtesy copy to your permit administrator.

Screening

- The Forest Service will review your proposal for completeness. If it is not complete, you will be notified and the proposal will be returned to you.
- Complete proposal will be screened using the screening criteria outlined in Forest Service directives. Here is a LINK to the screening criteria. You will be notified of the status of the proposal within 60 days of the Forest Service receipt of the proposal. Filming has a shorter turnaround time.
- If the proposal meets the screening criteria, you will be notified that the proposal is accepted and becomes an application. If it does not meet the screening criteria, it will not be accepted and it will be returned to you.
- The decision to not accept a proposal cannot be appealed.

Processing the Application: Environmental Review & Cost Recovery

- Once the proposal becomes an application, processing of the application can begin. This includes the environmental review followed by the actual permit or lease preparation. The line officer will provide the applicant with an estimated timeline for processing.
- The Forest Service determines what level of environmental review is needed.
- Cost Recovery for processing: For most proposals to be processed, the Forest Service recovers the cost of the processing from the proponent. If the application is a "lands" application, the applicant is responsible for the Forest Service costs of the environmental review & permit preparation. If it is a "recreation" application, the applicant is responsible for the costs if it will take 50 hours or more of Forest Service staff time. If more than 50 hours of Forest Service work is estimated for processing either a lands or recreation application, then a major cost recovery agreement is required.
- Prior to beginning the environmental review, the applicant must pay the estimated costs for processing, if any. No work will start until the Mt Hood National Forest has the funding in place.

Environmental Review (NEPA):

- The regulations that the Forest Service follows regarding environmental review are commonly referred to as NEPA, National Environmental Policy Act. The amount of NEPA required varies depending on the project. Some can be reviewed in less than a day and other project can take a years.
- The line officer's decision on the environmental review determines if the application is approved or not. If it is approved, a permit or lease can be issued.
- The proponent knowingly accepts the risk and financial investment understanding that the project may not be approved through the NEPA process.

Permit/Lease Preparation

- The Forest Service will prepare the permit or lease. The terms and conditions outlined in the clauses are standardized and are not negotiated.
- Operating Plans: Most permits have operating plans which are appendix to the permit. This document is typically prepared by the applicant and reviewed by the Forest Service. This is where the unique elements of the proposed use are detailed. Examples of elements covered include best management practices for erosion control, operating season, guest fees, safety plans, sign plans and staffing.
- Map: A professionally prepared map is an appendix to the permit or lease. The applicant is responsible for the preparation of the final map. Many permits such as ski areas and resort have a physical boundary while others, such as linear right of way permits are simply a corridor of a given width as mapped for a given length.
- Cost recovery for monitoring: If the authorized use involves activities such as construction, vegetation modification or ground disturbance, the Forest Service will need to monitor the project. Like with cost recovery for processing the application, the same criteria are in place for monitoring projects. The funds must be in place prior to on the ground work beginning. There is no cost to the permit holder for routine inspections that are not project specific.
- Insurance is required in most permits. Bonding may be required.
- Permit issuance: The above documents (Permit, operating plan, map and cost recovery agreement for monitoring) are compiled into a packet. Two copies are prepared by the Forest Service and are mailed to the applicant for signature. Both signed copies are returned and then signed by the line officer. At this point, the permit has been issued and use can begin as outlined in these documents.