

Central Idaho Resource Advisory Committee Agenda

Public Lands Center; Salmon & via TEAMS

December 10, 2024

1:30 pm

Members Present

A:

Lonnie Mollberg

Robert Loucks

Shane Rosenkrance

Chris Gaughan

Melinda Ellison

B:

Louise Bruce

Tim Carroll

Mike Foster

Patti Lousen

C:

Steve Smith

Brett Barsalou via phone

Charlyne McNeely-Joy

Other attendance

Lanson Stavast

Amanda Loye

Todd Harbin

Ilia Fiene

Joanna Wilson

Courtney Miller

Liza Honorio

Nick Schade

Administrative:

Heather DeGeest, DFO

Darci Neyman - notes

Welcome & CIRAC Member Introductions – Heather DeGeest – Designated Federal Official (DFO)

Heather DeGeest, DFO gave welcome. Nick Schade led up introductions.

Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and RAC

Presentation of FLREA/RAC by Ilia Fiene.

Fee Proposal Presentation

Presentation of Fee Proposal by Nick Schade. He stated there will be two different fee proposals that we will be looking at today including 29 fee increases, 2 fee reductions and 2 fee eliminations.

Questions

Patti Lousen - When was the last time there was a comprehensive change to the fee structure for amenities in this region? Nick Schade answered that it's been a long time ago.

Steve Smith asked to elaborate more regarding campground fees. Nick responded with Basin Butte required too much work to upgrade to get it to a place to charge fees. The district said too much work and that wouldn't happen. Passcreek Meadows is spread out and more dispersed camping. Vault toilets are spread out and didn't meet campground definition. One comment was received regarding that. Steve also asked if anything was removed? Things stayed as they are per Nick.

Patti Lousen - Fees aren't going to increase for another 20-ish years. How do you want them to look at revenue vs expenses? Nick replied that future managers on the Salmon-Challis say that it's not our goal to offset our costs. Cost/Benefit analysis shows we lose money. It's just to help offset our costs to help maintain critical infrastructure. We will talk more throughout the presentation.

Mike Foster – Is the Copper Basin cabin on LRRD no longer rented? Nick said that it still is. Mike then asked what is the fee there? Nick said \$100/night.

Mike Foster - How much additional revenue will these fee increases raise if approved? Nick answered that based on use and how many people will rent these cabins. We make \$60-\$70k on cabin rentals. During COVID, we made \$120k on cabin rentals on the forest. Use has now dropped and we are just under \$85k. If we were to maintain use levels, we would make an additional \$20k annually. Mike asked if revenue goes back to the facility or is it allocated back to Rec program? Nick said it goes back to developed rec program (for NZ and SZ) county boundaries. Mike said given the budget situation with no seasonals will it be spent on hiring summer seasonals to maintain work? And how do you propose spending? Hire a summer seasonal? Nick answered not as of right now unless something changes. Most of these expenses go to general deferred maintenance and it can be carried over year after year. Prior to the direction of no summer seasonal hiring, we had a temp-perm hiring boom. Instead of having a larger seasonal workforce we would hire more permanent employees to do the work of the seasonals. We are fairly confident that we have enough employees to maintain these campgrounds.

Todd Harbin said at a national level that as we are trying to figure out our budget that right now and we are not sure what each forest will look like. Some forests will be prioritized by being fully staffed, etc. It will be on a site by site basis, but it won't be that different. The money we are able to get in this FY rolls over. We will have the money to hire next year. Hopefully in 2026 we won't be in the same situation.

Steve Smith asked about Basin Butte being removed? That was only specific to campgrounds per Nick (not the cabin rental).

Chris Gaughan asked about the sites going from \$0 to a fee. Nick said we are not adding outside Bonzana Guard Station we are talking about fee tube which will be a couple hundred dollars.

Patti Lousen asked to explain the thinking behind a \$200 fee for Dragonfly cabin also called Time After Time? Nick and Louise answered that that cabin does not sound familiar and they are unsure of where that's located.

Bob Loucks suggests to raise the fees (SCAT machine) but not to \$3/\$4. Nick and Louise said if we did have a solution we would have to go through this proposal process again. Bob stated that it's important to enhance the local floating experience. We have to do something about the waste. Nick said there are other options for disposal in town other than the SCAT machine. All rivers don't provide this service to all floaters. Bob said it shouldn't be up to the town of Salmon to come up with an answer and if we need to charge more than do it.

Steve Smith – are you doing away with the SCAT machine or meeting standards with outhouses? Nick said it will be partially functional as it is right now. Steve said that we might need to raise that fee (echoing Bob's comment)

Tim Carroll asked if that fee a year round? Yes, Nick said. Tim then asked how did the SCAT machine get built to begin with? Where did the funding come from? Nick said he isn't sure where the original funding came from. It was an agreement with the outfitting companies. There used to be a \$5 PP fee, but part of the outfitter's agreement is that we would operate the SCAT machine. Several years ago it was reduced to \$4.

Mike Foster asked if we're going to go to a vault system that is pumped by a contractor and disposed by Salmon's system instead of evaporating system? Nick said that is how it's been for the past 3 years. Mike asked if we know what it costs to dispose of the sewage in the vault disposal? Nick said between \$30-\$45k/year. Mike asked if \$4 fee will pay for that on an annual basis. Nick said yes that we collect about \$475k from the special recreation permit fee of \$4/day. With that funding Mike asked if we are paying staff with the permit funding? Nick said yes, we pay river patrol, flights into Indian Creek, ramp expansion, etc.

Patti stated via Teams chat that the SCAT disposal is a great amenity for the guides and the general public. I would support going back to the \$5 fee. Pretty minimal cost when considering the costs of boating these waters. It really takes a lot off the outfitters plate.

Tim Carroll asked about doing a temporary increase and if we would have a number in mind? Nick said he doesn't and it's much more complicated and convoluted than what's being presented today. Lots of different options, but it really depends on what we decide going forward. Tim said he feels that people might do that if it's temporary increase.

Todd Hardin stated to clarify at this point and time we cannot increase the fee we have to go back out and do another proposal to do that. He is hearing that the public comments are that they public is willing to pay a fee for it. It is nice to hear the support and need for it, etc. and the encouraging words from the public.

Louise – asked to do a roll call vote by answering yes or no. She began asking each person.

Steve – yes

Brett – yes

Shane – yes

Charlene – yes

Lonnie – yes

Bob – yes

Chris – yes

Melinda – yes

Tim – yes

Mike Foster – yes

Patti – yes

Louise – yes

Proposal has passed unanimously from each group. Nick said if people have questions or further comments to contact Louise and he will be happy to speak to you regarding any rec issues.

Heather DeGeest stated that where the SCAT machine is located in the corridor and with the way the system was designed that it was designed faulty. A lot of money has been thrown at it to fix it. The way things are working, we are having a hard time getting port-a-potties to support our fire crew. We are exceeding our available resources. We've had to shut down the pumping due to fires because they aren't being able to be pumped. With the amount of volume in that spot it's hard to find a solution. This has been a long standing dilemma and we can't just keep throwing money at it. It's a lot tougher of a problem then what people realize. We are going to keep trying to figure something out. What is the FS role if there are other individuals for the business too. Is it a smart government function? The location complicates it even more. Nick then stated it's not for lack of trying and that the designer has been flown out multiple times, but unfortunately the technology doesn't work. Again, this wasn't for lack of trying, it was just another attempt that didn't work.

Adjourn

The meeting was then adjourned at 2:58 pm.