



# Request for Information

## Outfitting and Guiding Opportunities on the Ottawa National Forest



*Figure 1. Colorful bog lake reflects on the Ottawa National Forest.*

### Introduction

Providing recreation opportunities is a core Forest Service mission, supported by partnerships with volunteers and commercial providers who bring skills and resources that expand public opportunities. On the Ottawa National Forest, outfitting and guiding services help visitors access activities safely and connect with the forest's diverse landscapes.

The [EXPLORE Act](#), signed into law on January 4, 2025, streamlines permitting and affirms climbing as an appropriate use. Implementation and guidance on the EXPLORE Act is forthcoming.

In alignment with the goals of the EXPLORE Act and our commitment to modernizing special use management on the Ottawa National Forest, we are issuing this Request for Information (RFI) to gather input that will help shape future opportunities and ensure services align with visitor needs and resource protection and Forest Service objectives.

### Purpose and Need

The Forest is collecting this information to:

- Identify exact proposed use data from current and future permittees.
- Determine demand and transition recurring temporary special use permits into priority use permits where appropriate.
  - If demand exceeds limits – the Forest may begin development of a prospectus.

## Request

Respondents are encouraged to provide:

- Desired activity type(s)
- Desired operating areas (Ranger Districts, routes, sites, etc.)
  - Attachment 1 includes a vicinity map. For additional maps, please visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r09/ottawa/maps-guides>
- Season of use (months of operation)
- Maximum service days per activity
- Experience related to the desired activity

Services that will be considered include but are not limited to:

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Small Game Hunting
- Day Hiking
- Climbing\*
- Wilderness Education\*\*

*\*As mentioned earlier, specific guidance on climbing activities under the EXPLORE Act will be provided soon.*

*\*\*Commercial guiding is prohibited in the Sylvania Wilderness.*

Any special use permits issued pursuant to this request shall be subject to environmental review and public scoping in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

## Submission

The Forest Service asks interested parties to submit their information either hard copy or electronic file. The electronic file must be in a Microsoft Office program or a PDF. Responses must be submitted utilizing Attachment 2 (Interest Response). **Responses must be received by April 6, 2026.**

## Questions

Interested respondents may submit questions to Randi Ellsworth by email at [randi.ellsworth@usda.gov](mailto:randi.ellsworth@usda.gov).

For general information on special use permits with the Forest Service, respondents should visit the USFS Special Uses website at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/specialuses/>.

## Restrictions/Limitations

While this opportunity is open to multiple activities, there are some restrictions.

- Competitive events are prohibited in Wilderness on the Ottawa National Forest.
- Commercial Guiding is prohibited in Sylvania Wilderness.

Other restrictions include but are not limited to gambling, adult entertainment, livestock use, federally illegal drugs, and associated activities. For a full understanding of restrictions please review [US Code](#)

of Federal Regulations, US 36 § 251. (<https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=39e024582d845c5d11b8c3f2dc5c953d&node=pt36.2.251&rgn=div5%23sp36.2.251.b>).

There are fees associated with outfitting and guiding permits. Fees are generally for permit administration, assigned site fees, and annual fees for the permit, generally 3% of gross revenue or \$6 per day/per client. The 2026 annual minimum fee for outfitting and guiding on the Ottawa National Forest is \$130 per permit.

## **Notice**

This document is not intended as a formal offering for the award of any legal authorization. Participation in this request is voluntary, and the Forest may not provide a response to individuals who submit information through this Request for Information (RFI). Data collected in response to this request is for internal use only and may be used to gauge public and outfitter guide desires and/or needs to improve the Forest's outfitter guide program. Respondents should not assume they will receive any preference in connection with future solicitations. The Forest Service reserves the right to withdraw or discontinue the RFI in whole or in part and use the ideas or materials submitted in response to this RFI in any manner deemed to be in the best interests of the Forest Service. The Forest Service likewise reserves the right, at any time, to change any components, concepts or approaches of the RFI. All costs associated with responding to the RFI are the sole responsibility of the respondent and any such costs shall not be reimbursed by the Forest Service.

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