

Gallatin Resource Advisory Committee Fee Proposal Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2020. 0900-1500

The meeting was a virtual meeting conducted on Microsoft Teams. All RAC members, except one (Dan Seifert) were present:

Joe Josephson – Co-Chair
Esther Fishbaugh – Co-Chair
Gary Edson
Jon Hudson
Sam Magro
Robert Knapp
Mark DeOpsomer
Daniel Porter
Tom Oliff
Aaron Clausen
Ronald Normandeau
Peter Bennett
Patrick Cross
Allison Gidley

Kathy Minor determined that there was a quorum.

Forest Service personnel present included:

Mary Erickson, Forest Supervisor and Designated Federal Official
Kathy Minor, Deputy Forest Supervisor
Marna Daley, Public Affairs and Technical Support
Kat Barker, Public Affairs and Technical Support
Lauren Oswald, Service Staff Officer
Jane Ruchman, Developed Recreation
Jeff Ward, Recreation Business Program Manager, Regional Office
Jason Brey, Hebgen Lake District Ranger

The purpose of the meeting was for the RAC to review and discuss fee proposals within Gallatin County, Montana on the Custer Gallatin National Forest. The proposals included implementation of new fees at two campgrounds and adding the Eldridge Cabin as a new recreation rental opportunity; as well as increasing the fees at 16 sites that currently charge fees.

Mary welcomed to the group. Joe also welcomed the group and gave some thanks. Mary and Joe reviewed the decision-making procedures in the Charter. Joe went over the agenda and pre-meeting packet that was emailed to each member.

Jeff Ward, the Recreation Fee Program Manager from the Regional Office of the Forest Service's Northern Region gave a presentation which included background from the Fee Program and an overview of the CGNF Fee Proposals.

The group had a robust discussion of proposed fee increases. Members expressed concern that fee increases at rental cabins may price people out. There was an ask if there could be discounts for State residents. Mary explained it isn't possible to do that. There were some that supported lower fees at rental cabins. One individual thought increasing rental cabin fees to \$65/night was too high and was concerned that the increase might price some folks out. Another member wanted us to consider a lower fee (\$150, rather than \$190) for family season passes at Rendezvous Nordic Ski Trails to make it more affordable without a significant drop in revenues. This RAC member also felt we should consider a higher fee for Eldridge cabin to account for the enhanced amenities (i.e., propane, electricity, outdoor running water, location, access) and felt the price was too low when compared to other sites. The RAC also had a general discussion about how the public would be more supportive of the fee increases if additional amenities and/or services were added/increased at these sites. They also recognized the importance of sharing the improvements that these increased fees are able to cover.

Four motions were considered:

Motion 1

Accept all campground fee increases and the proposed new fees at three sites. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion 2

Accept fee proposal for Rendezvous Nordic Ski Trails. Motion passed with one dissenting vote. Member wanted family pass to be \$150 rather than \$190 for the season.

Motion 3

Motion to approve Fox Creek cabin rental at \$45; Windy Pass and Yellow Mule at \$55; and Eldridge as a new rental at \$75. Motion passed with one dissenting vote. Member thought Eldridge should be higher as it has more amenities.

Motion 4

Motion to accept fee proposals at Basin, Beaver, Cabin, Garnett, Little Bear, Maxey, Mystic Lake, Spanish Creek, Wapati, and Window Rock. Motion passed. One member said the prices are too high and price out some people. He thought less than \$50/night might be acceptable.

Ultimately, the Gallatin RAC passed all four motions by a majority quorum recommending implementation of the fee increases at all 19 sites, as proposed.

Jeff Ward presented next steps to the RAC to prepare a letter with their recommendations to send to the Regional Forester for her approval.

The meeting was adjourned.