

**Forest Service Handbook
National Headquarters - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 2709.14 – Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources
Chapter 10 - Organizational Camps and Other Privately Owned Improvements Authorized For
Groups**

Amendment: 2709.14-2014-1

Effective date: April 17, 2014

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Approved by: Leslie Weldon, Deputy Chief, NFS

Date approved: April 16, 2014

Responsible Staff:

Last Change: 2709.14-2013-1 to chapter 50.

Superseded Document(s): 2709.14_10, Amendment 2709.14-2011-1, April 15, 2014

Digest: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

13.2: Sets forth new policy statement in paragraph 9 that allows for the proposal, authorization, construction, operation, and maintenance of zip lines and ropes courses at organizational camps and requirements for the design construction and operation of those facilities.

Forest Service Handbook 2709.14 – Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources
Chapter 10 - Organizational Camps and Other Privately Owned Improvements Authorized For Groups
Amendment: 2709.14-2014-1
Effective date: April 17, 2014
Table of Contents

11 - Boat Dock and Wharf [Reserved]	3
12 - Club [Reserved]	3
13 - Organizational Camp.....	3
13.1 - Objectives	3
13.2 - Policy	3
13.3 - Definitions	4
13.4 - Priority for Competing Uses.....	5
13.5 - Administration of Authorizations	6
13.6 - Organizational Camp Fees	6
13.7 - Continuation of Authorized Uses	6
14 - Shelter [Reserved]	6
15 - Private Camp [Reserved].....	6

11 - Boat Dock and Wharf [Reserved]

12 - Club [Reserved]

13 - Organizational Camp

This use of National Forest System lands involves camps, generally operated by nonprofit organizations, institutions, or governmental agencies that promote the physical, mental, and spiritual health of young people, individuals with a disability, and their families through activities conducted in a natural environment. Use code 113 for privately owned improvements, and use code 143 for government-owned improvements.

13.1 - Objectives

1. Facilitate the use of National Forest System lands for organizational camp purposes when the establishment of an organizational camp cannot be reasonably accommodated on non-National Forest System lands.
2. Administer organizational camps to ensure compliance with forest land and resource management plans; applicable Federal, State and local laws, regulations, and ordinances; and the terms and conditions of the applicable special use permit and operating plan.
3. Establish an organizational camp fee that provides an equitable return to the Federal government for the use of National Forest System lands for organizational camp purposes. For direction on determining fees for organizational camps, see FSH 2709.11, section 36.5.

13.2 - Policy

1. Encourage organizations proposing the development of organizational camp facilities to build on private land when it is readily available for that purpose.
2. Encourage the holder to construct facilities and develop programs that promote environmental education, hiking, fishing, and similar forest-related activities, rather than organized games or other urban activities.
3. Limit the area authorized to the minimum necessary to exercise the authorized use. Do not extend boundaries to provide buffer zones around authorized facilities.
4. Locate organizational camps so that they do not restrict public access along the shoreline of lakes, rivers, and streams. Allow only water-oriented improvements, such as beaches, docks, floats, and enclosed swimming areas, to intrude into a shoreline. Locate non-water-related improvements away from public view so that they will not give the impression that the National Forest System lands on which they are located are private property.

Forest Service Handbook 2709.14 – Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources
Chapter 10 - Organizational Camps and Other Privately Owned Improvements Authorized For Groups

Amendment: 2709.14-2014-1

Effective date: April 17, 2014

5. Do not use public funds to construct a new facility unless the facility is associated with other Government-owned improvements.
6. Ensure that all organizational camp operations comply with applicable State and local sanitation, food-handling, and other laws pertaining to public health and safety by requiring holders to have their organizational camp inspected by appropriate State or local governmental officials or others who are certified or otherwise qualified to conduct public health and safety inspections.
7. Ensure that all organizational camp structures meet building and fire codes and provide for fire protection of NFS lands.
8. Revoke authorizations for non-use or sporadic use unless the holder makes the authorized site available to other groups.
9. Zip lines and ropes courses may be proposed, authorized, constructed, operated, and maintained at organizational camps. Apply the following additional criteria in initial screening of these proposals (36 CFR 251.54(e)(1) and FSH 2709.11, sec. 12.2):
 - a. A site plan must show the placement of the facilities, including how access will be restricted;
 - b. Design and construction of these improvements must conform to standards in FSM 7330; and
 - c. The operating plan must conform to standards in FSM 7330 and must address restricting access to these facilities to times of supervised operation.

See FSM 2340 and 7330 for further guidance on zip lines and aerial adventure courses.

13.3 - Definitions

Children at Risk. Children who are raised in poverty or in single-parent homes or are subject to such circumstances as parental drug abuse, homelessness, or child abuse.

Individual With a Disability. In general, a person that has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of that person's major life activities, as further defined in section 7(20) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 705(20)).

Ministerial Issuance or Amendment. Situations in which issuance or amendment of a special use authorization would not change the physical environment or the activities, facilities, or program of the operations governed by the authorization, and in which at least one of the following applies:

- a. The authorization is being issued upon a change in control of the holder of an existing authorization.

Forest Service Handbook 2709.14 – Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources
Chapter 10 - Organizational Camps and Other Privately Owned Improvements Authorized For Groups

Amendment: 2709.14-2014-1

Effective date: April 17, 2014

- b. The holder, upon expiration of an authorization, is being issued a new authorization.
- c. The authorization is being amended to:
 - (1) Effectuate administrative changes, such as modification of the use fee or conversion to a new special use authorization form; or
 - (2) Include nondiscretionary environmental standards or to conform with current law.

Organizational Camp. A public or semipublic camp that:

- a. Is developed on National Forest System lands by a nonprofit organization or governmental entity;
- b. Provides a valuable service to the public by using National Forest System lands as a setting to introduce young people or individuals with a disability to activities that they may not otherwise experience and to educate them on natural resource issues; and
- c. Does not have as a primary purpose the raising of revenues through commercial activities.

13.4 - Priority for Competing Uses

When several organizations are competing for a limited number of sites, use the following priority system to determine which organization is best qualified to be issued a special use authorization. If an organization provides both types of programs, classify it by the type that is predominant in its program delivery.

1. **Priority 1 Programs.** Priority 1 programs include activities involving people with disabilities or children at risk that are offered either free of charge or for a nominal fee. Participants should not have to be members of the sponsoring organization to attend or to receive a free or reduced fee rate. Examples of these types of programs include those sponsored by the Salvation Army, Boys Clubs of America, and civic clubs for the physically or mentally challenged where the objective is to provide rehabilitation, training, or an outdoor experience that would not otherwise be available to the participant. Give a higher weight to priority 1 programs.
2. **Priority 2 Programs.** Priority 2 programs offer organized and supervised social, citizenship, character-building, or faith-based activities oriented to outdoor recreation experiences. Membership in the sponsoring organization is normally a requirement. Program sponsors include regional or sub-regional units of such organized youth groups as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, YMCA, 4-H Clubs, and religious groups. Give a lower weight to priority 2 programs.

13.5 - Administration of Authorizations

1. Ministerial Issuance or Amendment of a Special Use Authorization. Ministerial issuance or amendment of an organizational camp special use authorization is not subject to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).
2. Operating Plans. The Authorized Officer shall require the holder to prepare and annually update an operating plan that, at a minimum, addresses procedures for responding to emergencies such as fire, hazardous material spills, floods, and bodily injury. The operating plan also must contain a provision that the holder provide full-time custodial service at the authorized facilities during the entire operating season.
3. Reporting. The Authorized Officer shall require the holder to annually submit a report specifying the total number of use days by type of priority (sec. 13.4 of this handbook). The report is due within 90 days of the end of the holder's operating season, or by September 30 for year-round operations.

13.6 - Organizational Camp Fees

For direction on computing land use fees, work in lieu program, facility use fee (if applicable), Granger-Thye Fee Offset (if applicable), and fees based on other revenue (if applicable) for organizational camps, see FSH 2709.11, section 36.5.

13.7 - Continuation of Authorized Uses

The public benefit provided by an organizational camp and conformance to the applicable forest land and resource management plan must be considered when determining whether to:

1. Issue a new special use authorization for that camp when the current authorization terminates, or
2. Revoke an existing authorization for specific and compelling reasons that are in the public interest.

Thoroughly explore and document all reasonable alternative measures before discontinuing authorized use or revoking an authorization for specific and compelling reasons that are in the public interest.

14 - Shelter [Reserved]

15 - Private Camp [Reserved]