

April 22, 2005

# **Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA)**

## **Forest Service Interim Implementation Guidelines**

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# **Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Interim Implementation Guidelines**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) was passed into law as part of the 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 108-447) on December 8, 2004. The REA authorizes the USDA Forest Service and four Department of the Interior agencies---Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service---to retain recreation fee revenues to supplement appropriations and other funding sources to repair, improve, operate, and maintain recreation sites and areas to quality standards (including elimination of recreation deferred maintenance), and to enhance the delivery of recreation services to quality standards.

The Forest Service assumes that appropriations for recreation for the foreseeable future will not be enough to meet recreation infrastructure and service needs. While the revenue derived from fees will be helpful, it is only part of a more comprehensive funding strategy. This funding strategy embraces a broad revenue stream including appropriated funding, volunteer assistance, inter-agency cooperation, partnerships with the private sector, commercial operations, leveraged funding, and user fees. Sustainable funding strategies for various recreation sites/areas/services will range from full or partial cost recovery to full or partial subsidy from appropriated funds.

Fee authority is critical to the sustainability of quality Forest Service recreation programs. Conscientious, consistent, and conservative implementation of REA will protect this authority and demonstrate the agency's ability to meet expectations of the general public and Congress. Careful adherence to these guidelines will promote national consistency. Major exceptions necessary to respond to local situations must comply with legal authority, have demonstrated local support, and first be reviewed and recommended by Regional Fee Boards and, where appropriate, reviewed by Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRACs), and approved by Regional Foresters. These guidelines will be formalized as Forest Service directives at a later time.

These **principles** will be applied during implementation of REA:

1. An enduring program is only possible with wide public and Congressional support. Involve communities of place and interest in decisions about fee project design and where the fee money is invested. Use a variety of methods to report to the public about the recreation enhancement fee program.
2. Fees are acceptable if they have a direct connection to a perceived benefit such as at developed areas and where expanded or specialized services are provided.
3. Each National Forest and Grassland provides a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities that are free of charge.
4. Fairness, consistency, convenience of payment (credit cards, internet sales, etc.), and accountability are important to visitors.
5. Administrative agency boundaries or jurisdictions are not always apparent or of concern to recreation visitors. Operate seamlessly across agency boundaries where feasible.

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6. Fees for multiple facilities, services, or enhanced benefits are acceptable if they are seamless and not layered. Where possible, offer a single fee where standard amenity recreation facilities and services are grouped or clustered.

## CHAPTER 2

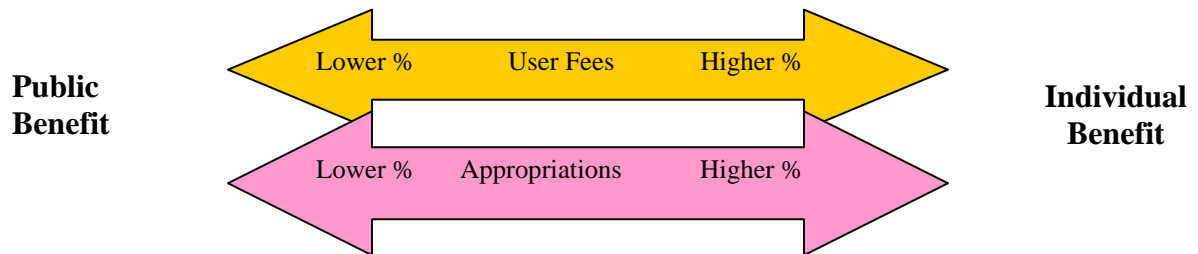
### GUIDELINES FOR FEE CATEGORIES

These guidelines support the Forest Service recreation vision and key objectives set forth in the National *Recreation Agenda* and reflect the requirements and intent of the 2004 Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA). The overarching philosophy of the recreation program is to provide the public with Forest recreation opportunities funded primarily with Federal tax dollars, recreation fees, and support from partners, grants, and other non-appropriated sources. The types of activities and services that should be funded with appropriations and those that should be funded in part or entirely by recreation fees have not been articulated clearly in the past. This lack of clarity has resulted in inconsistency where fees were charged which understandably caused confusion and concern by the visiting public. Of particular concern were day-use sites, including trailheads, picnic areas, and observation sites which make up a significant portion of the Forest Service's recreation opportunities.

To address these concerns, Congress (through the REA) has provided specific direction on where fees should not be charged. Further, Congress mandated that the public have free access to a variety of recreation opportunities and undeveloped public lands. The Act also requires agencies to "establish the minimum number of recreation fees and shall avoid the collection of multiple or layered recreation fees for similar uses, activities, or programs." The enactors expect a reduction in the number of standard amenity recreation fee sites.

#### Fee Categories

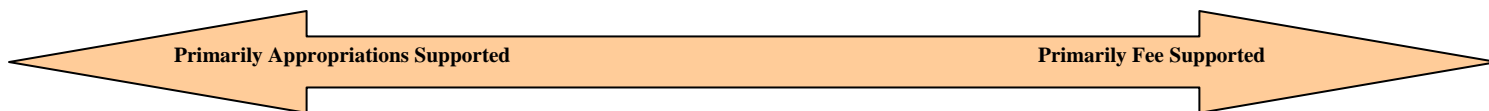
Public lands recreation sites and services provide an array of amenities and benefits ranging from collective societal /public good to highly individual or personal benefits. This forms a spectrum of benefits for the provision of visitor services.



On the left of the arrow are recreational activities of inherent benefit to the public as a whole; on the right are more specialized activities in which the individual user benefits directly. In general, costs for services and facilities supporting the more specialized activities would be borne more directly by the individual user. The source and mix of funding migrates across this spectrum between appropriated funds and non-appropriated funds (revenue generated by recreation fees). The proportion of appropriated to non-appropriated funds drives the level of cost recovery to which a facility or service should be managed.

Table 1 shows general funding categories along this fee spectrum that reflect the REA requirements and the range of services and facilities associated with each.

**Table 1**



<b>Category 1</b> <b>Emphasis on Appropriations</b> <b>(no recreation fee)</b>	<b>Category 2</b> <b>Mix of Appropriations &amp;</b> <b>Recreation Fees</b>	<b>Category 3</b> <b>Emphasis on Recreation</b> <b>Fees</b>
<p>Services and facilities for which no fee can be charged (benefit society as a whole):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General access</li> <li>• Pass-through travel by car, foot, boat, or horse</li> <li>• Scenic overlooks and pullouts</li> <li>• Wayside exhibits</li> <li>• Parking only</li> <li>• Dispersed areas with low or no investment</li> <li>• Information centers at administrative offices</li> <li>• Right-of-access permitted hunting &amp; fishing access</li> <li>• Extra services for needs of disabled</li> <li>• Facility entry &amp; use of standard amenity fee sites and services for persons under 16 &amp; education groups</li> </ul>	<p>Services and facilities for which some fees may be charged to offset costs (provide a mix of societal and individual benefits):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Volcanic Monuments</li> <li>• Destination visitor/interpretive centers</li> <li>• Developed* day-use sites</li> <li>• High impact recreation areas</li> </ul>	<p>Services and facilities for which user fees should offset all or most of the costs (provide highly individual benefits):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed* campgrounds</li> <li>• Rental cabins, structures</li> <li>• Developed swimming areas</li> <li>• Highly developed boat launches</li> <li>• Specialized interpretive programs and tours</li> <li>• Group day use and overnight sites</li> <li>• Utility hookups</li> <li>• Sanitary dump stations</li> <li>• Rental equipment</li> <li>• Specialized services</li> <li>• Transportation services</li> <li>• All special recreation permitted activities</li> </ul>

\*Level of development and other requirements are described in the following sections.

**RELATION TO CONCESSION OPERATIONS:** Concession-operated sites are not included in the REA authority. These operations will continue under their existing permits and authorities.

**1. PROHIBITIONS (Category 1)**

This category reflects specific recreation opportunities that deliver broad societal benefits, are supported by appropriated funds, and underscore the principle that a portion of all National Forests and Grasslands should be available free of charge to the public. Fees will not be charged:

- A. for general Forest/unit access, including charging solely for parking or picnicking along roads or trailsides;

\* = term defined in Appendix A

- B. for overlooks or scenic pullouts;
- C. for dispersed areas with low or no investment unless high impact recreation area requirements are met;
- D. for persons who are driving, boating, horseback riding, or hiking through Federal recreational lands and waters without using the facilities and services ( this prohibition does not apply to special recreation permit holders);
- E. Road maintenance as provided in FSM 7732.22 shall not be charged to commercial special use permit holders authorized under this authority.
- F. An entity that pays a special recreation permit fee or similar permit fee shall not be subject to a road cost sharing fee or a fee for the use of highways or roads that are open to private, noncommercial use within the boundaries of any Federal recreational lands or waters, as authorized under section 6, Public Law 88-657 (16 U.S.C. 537, commonly known as the Forest Roads and Trails Act).
- G. for camping at undeveloped sites that do not provide the minimum number of required facilities (as outlined under Expanded Amenity Fee Developed Camping);
- H. for travel by private, noncommercial vehicle over any Federal-aid system road or highway, which is commonly used as a means of travel between two places either or both of which are outside any unit or area at which recreation fees are charged under this Act.
- I. for travel by private, noncommercial vehicle, boat, or aircraft over any road, highway, waterway, or airway to land in which such person has any property right if such land is within any unit or area at which recreation fees are charged;
- J. for any person who has a right of access for hunting or fishing privileges under a specific provision of law or treaty;
- K. for any person who is engaged in the conduct of official Federal, State, Tribal, or local government business;
- L. for special attention or extra services necessary to met the needs of the disabled;
- M. for any person engaged in a non-recreational activity authorized under any other valid permit issued such as a grazing permit;
- N. for general access for an entire administrative unit of a National Forest or Grassland;
- O. for providing basic information services such as those offered in a Forest Service office;

**2. STANDARD AMENITY RECREATION FEE (Category 2)**

This category includes facilities and services that are provided to the public generally and are at a sufficient level to justify users sharing a portion of the costs. Standard amenity fees may be assessed for the following sites:

- A. National Volcanic Monuments;
- B. Destination visitor or interpretive centers\* that provide a broad range of interpretive services, programs, and media; and
- C. An area such as,
  - 1) Day-use facilities such as trailheads and picnic areas that meet all the following criteria
    - a. Provide significant recreation opportunities for outdoor recreation. In evaluating the significance of a site, consider the primary use, length of stay, overall visitation levels and impacts of use;

\* = term defined in Appendix A



- b. Have substantial Federal investments. It is important to note that provision of the six required amenities (listed below) does not mean that there is substantial federal investment. The entire scope and scale of development needs to be evaluated.
  - c. Are where fees can be efficiently collected; and
  - d. Contain all the following amenities,
    - a. Designated developed parking\*
    - b. Permanent toilet facility\*
    - c. Permanent trash receptacle\*
    - d. Interpretive sign, exhibit, or kiosk\*
    - e. Picnic tables; and
    - f. Security services\*
- 2) High-impact recreation areas. A high impact recreation area is a clearly delineated, contiguous area with specific, tightly defined boundaries and clearly defined access points (such that visitors can easily identify the fee area boundaries on the ground or on a map/sign); that supports or sustains concentrated recreation use; and that provides opportunities for outdoor recreation that are directly associated with a natural or cultural feature, place, or activity (i.e., waterway, canyon, travel corridor, geographic attraction – the recreation attraction). High impact recreation areas:
- a. Provide significant recreation opportunities for outdoor recreation.
  - b. Have substantial Federal investments. It is important to note that provision of the six required amenities (listed below) does not mean there is substantial federal investment. The entire scope and scale of development needs to be evaluated.
  - c. Are where fees can be collected efficiently; and
  - d. Contain all the following amenities, and are located in an integrated manner so they reasonably accommodate the visitor.
    - a. Designated developed parking\*
    - b. Permanent toilet facility\*
    - c. Permanent trash receptacle\*
    - d. Interpretive sign, exhibit, or kiosk\*
    - e. Picnic tables and
    - f. Security services\*
  - e. The following additional criteria must be met for high-impact recreation areas:
    - a. They incur significant expenditures for items such as operations and maintenance of recreation facilities, public health and safety, educational services, and protection of natural and cultural resources.
    - b. They have been analyzed by regional fee boards and approved by the appropriate line officer. They will be reviewed for by Recreation RACs when established.

- c. They are not an entire administrative unit such as a National Forest, but may include a collection of recreation sites; and
- d. They typically display one or more of the following characteristics:
  - a. They are within 2 hours driving time of populations of 1 million or more;
  - b. They contain rivers, streams, lakes or interpreted scenic corridors
  - c. Natural and cultural resources management activities are conducted in the area to maintain or enhance recreation opportunities; and
  - d. They have regionally or nationally recognized recreation resources that are marketed for their tourism values.

D. If a standard amenity fee is charged for a high-impact recreation area, no additional standard amenity fee can be charged for day-use facilities within the area. Expanded amenity recreation fees or special recreation permit fees may be charged where authorized for facilities, services, or activities within a high-impact recreation area.

### **3. EXPANDED AMENITY RECREATION SITES AND SERVICES FEES (Category 3)**

This category includes facilities and services that provide direct benefits primarily to individuals or groups. It is thus appropriate for the individual or group that is provided a direct service or uses a specialized facility to bear a greater share of these costs. Fees may be assessed for the following facilities or services:

- A. Use of developed campgrounds that provide at least a majority of the following amenities in a configuration that can be used in an integrated manner by the visitor:
  - i. tent or trailer space;
  - ii. picnic tables;
  - iii. drinking water;
  - iv. access roads;
  - v. collection of the fee by an employee or agent of the Forest Service\*;
  - vi. reasonable visitor protection\*;
  - vii. refuse containers;
  - viii. toilet facilities; and
  - ix. simple devices for containing a campfire.
  
- B. Use of highly developed boat launches defined by having specialized facilities or services involving significant Federal investments, such as any combination of the facilities and services that follow:
  - a. mechanical or hydraulic boat lifts or facilities
  - b. multi-lane paved ramps
  - c. paved parking
  - d. toilet facilities

- e. lighting for parking and ramp use;
  - f. security services
  - g. changing rooms
  - h. boarding floats or docks\*
  - i. mooring floats/buoys, moorage docks
  - j. loading ramps
  - k. fish cleaning stations
  - l. picnic area
  - m. refuse containers
  - n. play ground areas
- C. Rental cabins, boats, stock animals, lookout towers, historic structures, trail shelters, group day-use or group overnight sites, audio tour devices, portable sanitation devices, binoculars, or other equipment.
- D. Use of hookups
- E. Use of sanitary dump stations.
- F. Participation in an enhanced interpretive program or special tour\*.
- G. Use of reservation services.
- H. Use of transportation services\* including both mandatory and optional systems.
- I. Use of developed swimming areas that provide at least a majority of the following:
- i. bathhouse with showers and flush toilets;
  - ii. refuse containers;
  - iii. picnic areas;
  - iv. paved parking;
  - v. attendants including lifeguards;
  - vi. floats/buoys, encompassing the swimming area; and
  - vii. swimming deck.

#### **4. SPECIAL RECREATION PERMITS (SRPs) including Recreation Permits and Special Use Permits (Category 3)**

- A. Recreation Permits are noncommercial and issued as a means to allocate capacity and/or disperse use, protect natural and cultural resources, provide for the health and safety of visitors, and to help cover the higher costs for providing specialized services. To address these needs, specialized services and/or additional management actions are required. Special management is needed and will be documented in the form of a management plan, recreation fee business plan, or strategy. This plan should address details about the Recreation Permit fee site or area, why a fee is needed, how fees will be used, and what special management/specialized services are provided (see below for types of services). If existing Recreation Permit areas/services' business plans do not address the details listed above, then the unit must update these plans to address the details within one year.

- i. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- 1. Wilderness permits (must be coordinated with Wilderness program staff);

2. river rafting/float permits (if wild & scenic river, must be coordinated with that program staff);
  3. wildlife viewing areas (e.g., Pack Creek under capacity allocation system);
  4. hot springs;
  5. specialized trail systems including OHV, snowmobile, equestrian, and mountain bike;
  6. target shooting ranges;
  7. cross-country ski trail grooming;
  8. snow play areas;
  9. Christmas tree permits (must be coordinated with Forest Products staff); and
  10. recreational mining (must be coordinated with Minerals staff)
- ii. Some of the services and management typically provided for recreation permits include, but are not limited to:
1. increased patrols by FS employees;
  2. patrols by specially trained FS employees such as river rangers, mountaineering rangers, OHV rangers;
  3. increased visitor contact by interpreters;
  4. area-specific maps and brochures;
  5. campsite cleanup and human waste removal;
  6. volunteer programs supporting provision of services and management;
  7. maintenance of specialized trails (OHV, winter, mountain bike, etc.);
  8. specially required environmental monitoring and mitigation actions
  9. safety training;
  10. safety advisories;
  11. maintenance of portal facilities and access to portal facilities;
  12. support of emergency medical and rescue services;
  13. special orders; and

**NOTE:** If a Recreation Permit is required for an area, a standard or expanded amenity fee will not be charged to the permit holder for the use of the same area.

- B. Special Use Permits – special use permit fee retention includes outfitting and guiding permits (not resort permits) and recreation event permit fee retention. Term permits or uses authorized under a term permit such as ski areas, resorts, recreation residences, or organizational camps are **not** included in this category.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ADDITIONAL AGENCY DIRECTION**

The following agency guidelines are necessary to ensure national consistency when implementing REA. The intent is to formalize these into agency policy when formal manual and handbook direction is issued.

#### **AGREEMENTS**

Existing agreements with partners that involve recreation fee revenues should be reviewed to ensure that they are not in conflict with new fiscal policies and procedures. In particular, operating plans may need to be restructured to be responsive to timing of spending authority being granted. Examples of agreements include those arranged with emergency medical facilities for services and local law enforcement.

#### **TRIBAL AND TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PURPOSES**

The Forest Service will work cooperatively with Indian Tribes in implementing the recreation fee program. Use of National Forest System lands by Indian Tribes for traditional cultural purposes will be taken into account in setting guidelines for the establishment of new fee areas. Public involvement as it relates to Tribes as required under the Act will be done consistently with FSM 1563; Consultation Policy. In addition, a representative of affected Indian Tribes will serve on the Recreation Resource Advisory Committees. Line officers have authority to issue administrative passes to Tribes for traditional cultural purposes.

#### **INTERAGENCY PROJECTS**

Some projects under Fee Demo were joint projects with other agencies such as the BLM. REA allows for the continuation of joint efforts. Forest Service units must continue to work with partner agencies to ensure that the sites/services included in the Fee Demo program meet the new REA requirements and criteria. The Forest Service supports the continued management and collaboration on joint recreation projects.

#### **AMENDING SPECIAL USE PERMITS TO SHOW NEW AUTHORITY**

Units **do not** need to amend existing special use permits issued under LWCFA to reflect the REA authority (see Act Section 5(f) (2)). As permits are (re)issued, the authority will be changed at that time.

#### **CONCESSIONAIRE OPERATIONS AND HONORING GOLDEN PASSPORTS AND/OR AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL.**

When concessionaire permits are renewed, the Forest Service will require that the concessionaire honor the Golden Passports and/or America the Beautiful benefits and discounts.

#### **OTHER TYPES OF FEES**

- **ADDITIONAL VEHICLES OR PEOPLE AT RECREATION SITES.** Site capacity determines the number of vehicles and number of people allowed at a recreation site/unit (i.e., campsite). Additional fees may apply if capacities are met and exceeded. Local

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managers will make this determination and charge as part of the campground expanded amenity fee.

- **DAY-USE SITE CHARGES WITHIN A CAMPGROUND.** Units may charge a day-use site fee charge for day-use of a campground unit as part of the campground's expanded amenity fee.
- **SHOWER FEES FOR DAY USERS.** Day use visitors may be assessed a fee for use of a shower at a recreational site if they have not already paid an expanded amenity fee where the shower use would be included in the fee. For example, if a person from another recreation site (trailhead, etc.) wants to use a shower at a campground or swimming site, we can assess a fee for use of the shower only as part of the expanded amenity fee.

### **INITIATING NEW RECREATION FEES PRIOR TO ESTABLISHMENT OF RRACs**

New fees at Standard Amenity Fee sites/areas will not be permitted prior to establishment of and review by RRACs. However, recreation fees may be initiated at newly built or newly- available expanded amenity fee sites such as campgrounds or cabins that were planned to open for the 2005 season. These new fee sites, activities, or services must meet all applicable criteria provided in this document. Prior to initiating the new fee, the local Congressional delegation and key elected officials must be notified about these new fees and units must complete adequate public participation/notification. Follow your Region's protocol/documentation requirements when establishing new recreation fee sites. Concessionaire-operated sites are not subject to these restrictions. Initiating a new fee at existing and previously free campgrounds will not be permitted prior to establishment of and review by RRACs.

### **RECREATION FEE INCREASES FOR 2005 SEASON**

Fee increases for standard amenity fees are not authorized at this time. Recreation fee increases will be permitted at existing expanded amenity fee sites, such as campgrounds and cabins, if they are (1) within the realm of "normal" fee increases, (2) were planned for the 2005 season, and (3) there has been adequate public notification (e.g. fee increases are posted at site prior to implementation, a news release is issued, etc.). The local Congressional delegation and other key elected officials must be notified about these fee increases. Follow your Region's protocol/documentation requirements when establishing fee increases. Concessionaire-operated sites are not subject to these restrictions.

### **REFUNDS**

National policy, in general, is that recreation fee refunds will not be considered. However, in light of the reduction in the number of fee sites that may occur as the new legislation is implemented and other occasional justifications for a refund (e.g., fire, flooding, etc.), recreation fee coordinators (Regional and Forest) may consider refunds on a case-by-case basis. A valid refund generally results from evidence of circumstances beyond the control of the person paying or collecting the fee. A special use permit fee is not refundable. Please see Appendix B for the refund process and documentation required.

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### **RENTAL CABINS/RECREATION LODGING AUTHORITY**

Rental of government operated cabins, guard stations, and look-outs no longer will be authorized under the Granger-Thye Act, but under REA. This will assure national consistency, provide greater flexibility for expenditures, eliminate the permit requirement, and reduce reporting requirements. All rental cabins, guard stations, and look-outs that take reservations must be available through the National Recreation Reservation System by February 1, 2006. Rental facilities operated by a concessionaire will continue to be authorized under Granger-Thye permit.

### **TEMPORARY OPERATION OF CONCESSIONAIRE RECREATION SITES (formerly Campground Safety Net project)**

Recreation sites that are usually operated by a concessionaire may need to be operated for a short term by the Forest Service. This need may arise due to permit default, timing of prospectus or permit issuance. Recreation sites that are viable for concessionaire operations are authorized to be included in the REA program and recreation fees may be retained on a temporary basis for up to 1 year. The expectation is that the unit will issue a new prospectus within 1 year to return these recreation sites to concessionaire operation. Those recreation sites that were included in the Campground Safety Net project under Recreation Fee Demo and are not viable for concessionaire management must meet the applicable REA criteria to continue charging an Expanded Amenity Fee.

### **NATIONAL RECREATION RESERVATION SERVICE and RECREATION ENHANCEMENT FEES**

All recreation sites, services, and permits may be offered on both a first-come, first-serve basis or by reservation. If units offer recreation sites, services, or permits through reservation, all reservations will comply with National Guidelines and Policy and placed under the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS).

### **BUSINESS PLANS**

Business plans will be required for all recreation sites/areas/services where a fee is charged. National business plans will be developed for each of the fee types and include brief templates for local application. Forests/units will utilize the templates to integrate the sites/areas/services in the fee program into a Forest-level business plan. These plans will provide the proposal format used with Regional Fee boards and Recreation Resource Advisory Committees. The national business plans and templates will be available by September 30, 2005.

### **ROLE OF REGIONAL FEE BOARDS**

#### *Immediate role*

Regional fee boards will provide the additional review and/or approval for units transitioning from the Fee Demo authority to the REA authority. Regional fee boards must review the changes from sites/services transferring from one type of fee to another (i.e., from a standard amenity fee to a special recreation permit) as part of the REA transition. If a Recreation Permit is established as part of the transition to REA, then Regional Fee Boards must review and/or approve the additional management needs for that Recreation Permit.

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*Long-term role*

Regional fee boards will play a critical role in the implementation and continuing success of REA by serving as a stabilizer for the region. Fee boards will continue to serve as the regional level review and ensure that recreation fee proposals for all recreation fee types/categories follow regional/national direction to maintain consistency. Even when Recreation Resources Advisory Committees (RRACs) are established and active, the RRACs review Standard and Expanded Amenity fee proposals only, thus Fee Boards will particularly be needed for review and guidance regarding Special Recreation Permit proposals. In addition, there will continue to be many “daily” decisions on which Fee Boards will need to provide guidance that may not be necessary to submit to a Recreation Resource Advisory Committee.



## CHAPTER 4

### IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

As you begin implementing REA on the ground, there are several items to do, prepare for, and acquire, both in the short-term and the long-term. To align our current program to comply with the REA criteria, in the short-term units will make decisions that may not follow all the public notification and involvement requirements outlined in REA. For future decisions, the Forest Service will follow all public notification and involvement procedures as outlined in a forthcoming “Forest Service Public Involvement Strategy for the Recreation Enhancement Act”.

If units make changes to the recreation fee program, including removing a site/area/service from the fee program or adding or increasing an enhanced amenity fee as allowed in the interim fee direction, consider the following items: *(Note, some items, such as developing new passes, may not be available until the next recreation season.)*

- Work with your Public Affairs Officers to notify internal and external audiences as identified the REA Communications Plan. (Timeline included in the Plan)
  - Specifically, use the section entitled “Implementation Communications Strategy”
  - There are numerous tools to help with this communications effort under Appendix A of the Communications Plan
- Notify the regional fee board of decisions and changes for their review
- Involve fiscal staff with accounting/authority needs
- Involve law enforcement staff with compliance needs
- Notify partners/modify partnership agreements, if appropriate
- Notify concessionaires, if appropriate
- Update National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) inventory and accounting, if appropriate
- Develop/update fee collection strategy if appropriate
- Establish fee collection infrastructure if appropriate
- Update signing (remove or change during the recreation season)
- Update maps, brochures
- Update or develop local passes (daily, multi-day, annual)

## CHAPTER 5

### REVENUE DEPOSIT AND EXPENDITURE DIRECTION

#### Directions for Deposits

Please follow directions as outlined in the March 18, 2005 letter from CFO Jesse King that outlines the job code structure for deposits of recreation fee revenues (including special use permits) under the REA (See Appendix D.)

#### Revenue Expenditures

1. Forest/Unit Expenditures – A minimum of 95% of recreation fee receipts are retained at each forest/unit. These fees will be used for:
  - a. Repair, Maintenance, and Facility Enhancement – these expenses must directly relate to visitor enjoyment, visitor access, and health and safety. They include the day-to-day facility maintenance, facility deferred maintenance, capital investments in facilities, including sites reviews, permits, surveys and design; and facility related expenses that meet current agency guidelines
  - b. Visitor Services – expenses associated with interpretation, visitor information, visitor service, visitor needs assessment, and signs.
  - c. Habitat Restoration – expenses directly related to wildlife dependent recreation that is limited to hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, or photography.
  - d. Law Enforcement – costs related to public use and recreation at fee sites and areas.
  - e. Direct operation expenses – expenses directly related to management and delivery of a recreation fee program including direct operation and capital costs. **This category includes cost of collection which is capped at 15% for fiscal year 2005.**
  - f. Fee management agreements
  - g. Administration, overhead, and indirect costs – expenses necessary for the operation of the agency recreation fee program, including cost pools limited to not more than an average of 15% of total revenues. **Do not use this expenditure category for fiscal year 2005.**
  - h. Special Use Permits: Expenditures for special use permit fees must follow the above expenditure categories. Some additional suggestions for special use permits include:
    1. Costs associated with issuing permits that will be exempt from cost recovery or;
    2. Capacity analysis or;
    3. Proportionate share of permit administrator's salary for managing outfitter and guides and/or recreation event special use permits
    4. Maintenance of those facilities, interpretation, or law enforcement associated with those special use permits.
2. Regional & National Expenditures – Up to 5% of unit collections will be used by the Regions to:
  - a. to reduce recreation deferred maintenance;
  - b. for a revolving fund focused on recreation projects authorized by legislation that provide a demonstrable improvement to National Forest recreation sites and services that would otherwise take years to realize;

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- c. funding enhancements through volunteer projects and the Challenge Cost Share program; and
- d. for limited Regional and National fee program administration.
- e. to leverage resources and funding for recreation projects, including volunteers and partnership grants.
- f. For visitor services, information, interpretive projects, and other similar needs identified by NVUM surveys and
- g. Some suggestions for Special Use Permit retained fees include:
  - 1. training for outfitting and guiding or,
  - 2. recreation even permit administration or,
  - 3. market analysis; or,
  - 4. proportionate share of regional program manager and SUDS program manager salary (whatever proportion of a person's salary is used for outfitting and guiding and/or recreation event permit management).

NOTE: Until America the Beautiful revenue distribution is determined, 20% of national Golden Passports sales will continue to be directly deposited to the WO to continue support for the national fee program.

- 3. Limitation on Use of Fees: Recreation fees will not be used for:
  - a. Biological monitoring on Federal recreational lands and waters under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 for listed or candidate species.
  - b. Employee bonuses

## CHAPTER 6

### GUIDELINES FOR FEE STRUCTURE AND PASSES

Until the new interagency pass, called America the Beautiful, is established, there will be no change to the local, regional, or national pass structure as operated under Fee Demo. America the Beautiful is tentatively scheduled to be issued January 2007.

Recreation fees are based upon a pass system for standard amenity sites and areas, expanded amenity facilities and services, and specialized recreation activities and services. Passes and associated fees vary based upon duration of pass coverage, geographic area covered by the pass, and range of benefits provided by the pass.

Line officers have the authority to issue administrative passes or free passes to visitors at their discretion.

Golden Age and Access Passports 50% discounts are only valid for the following expanded amenity sites and services:

1. Developed campgrounds for basic camping fee only (does not include hookups).
2. Highly developed boat launches.
3. Developed swimming sites.
4. Specialized interpretive services such as guided tours, movies, and seminars (see below).

Golden Age and Access Passports 50% discounts are not valid for the following:

1. Group day-use or overnight sites or facilities such as pavilions, or reserved group/multi-family campsites.
2. Use of hookups.
3. Use of sanitary dump stations.
4. Use of areas where emergency medical or first-aid services are administered from facilities staffed by public employees or employees under a contract or reciprocal agreement with the Federal Government.
5. Facility or equipment rentals, such as cabins, lookouts, and historic structures, and specialized equipment such as audio tour equipment, portable sanitation devices, boating equipment, binoculars, and similar recreation equipment.
6. Optional or mandatory transportation systems.
7. Reservation services, use, and application fees.
8. All Special Recreation Permits including special use permits.

Concessionaire operated sites are not included under REA and are not covered by passes unless specifically stated in their prospectus under which the concessionaire operates. When concessionaire permits are renewed, the Forest Service will require that the concessionaire honor the Golden Passports and/or America the Beautiful benefits and discounts.

## CHAPTER 7

### GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

#### **Passes Issued for Volunteer Recognition**

##### Local Passes

The local line officer has discretion to issue local passes for volunteer recognition. The line officer can decide what hours and service he or she determines is appropriate for their specific recreation fee site or area.

##### Regional Passes

Line officers may issue regional passes for volunteer recognition following established, agreed-upon guidelines for all parties participating in the regional pass.

##### National Passes

Golden Passports will not be issued for volunteer recognition. Issuing the interagency Golden Passports and the new America the Beautiful Pass for volunteer recognition will require interagency agreement on number of hours and type of volunteer service. Those agreements and understandings will be part of the general policies for the America the Beautiful Pass in January 2007.

## APPENDIX A

### DEFINITIONS

**Collection of fees by employee or agent** – A federal employee, or agent of the agency such as a campground volunteer host, who personally collects the fees from the user and/or routinely collects fees from self-service stations (i.e., drop boxes or “iron rangers”).

**Designated Developed Parking** – A parking area that has a graded surface, clear delineation of the boundaries, and natural or constructed surfacing.

**Destination Visitor or Interpretive Centers** – Provides a central location for communicating a specific theme and introducing important stories to the public, a direct visual or physical link to the resources, and often contains a variety of interpretive media, such as exhibits, audiovisual programs, resource libraries, observation areas, and trailheads, and often provides basic public services such as an emergency telephone.

**Docks** – Any floating or fixed facility such as a dock, deck, quay, or pier designed to allow people to transfer from land or shore onto a vessel.

**Enhanced Interpretive Program or Special Tour** – Presentations or special field trips conducted by Forest Service personnel (or agents) that are in-depth, detailed, and/or highly specialized in nature. These programs and tours provide activities, services or information that is clearly beyond the basic level of information and services provided to the public for free.

**Fee Layering** – multiple fees charged for similar facilities or services

**High Impact Recreation Area (HIRA)**- Clearly delineated areas that have clearly defined access points; that experience concentrated recreation use; and that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation that are directly associated with a natural or cultural feature, place, or activity.

**Interpretive Sign, Exhibit or Kiosk** – Each site or area must contain at least one public display designed to develop a visitor’s interest, enjoyment, and understanding of the natural or cultural environment. This requirement is in addition to facilities needed to inform visitors of recreation opportunities, facilities, and applicable regulations and restrictions. Messages should be relevant to the setting and the visitor – generic posters and safety information are not adequate. The design, content, and medium should be of professional quality. The information may be incorporated into a bulletin board or presented through other signing or media. In general, single displays should be a minimum of roughly 25 x 30 inches. Consideration should be given to bilingual and accessibility needs.

**Permanent Toilet Facility**– A toilet building with a floor, walls, and roof that is permanently affixed or that is available (year after year) in locations that serve visitors during the primary use season but are moved during the non-use season because of environmental or weather concerns. These facilities are located as a convenience to the user and efficiency of operation and maintenance.

**Permanent Trash Receptacle** – A garbage container of durable design and construction that is permanently available (year after year) in locations that serve visitors during the primary use season,

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but may be moved during the non-use season because of environmental or weather concerns. These facilities are located as a convenience to the user and efficiency of operation and maintenance.

**Reasonable Visitor Protection** – see security services.

**Recreation Site Types** – See Appendix E

**Security Services** – Services provided by qualified agency personnel or officers (cooperative law enforcement personnel, hosts, volunteers, etc.) that occur on a frequent and routine basis at the site or area. The level of security services is commensurate with the use levels.

**Snow Play Areas** – Specific area identified on a forest/unit that is managed for snow play recreation where services and amenities are provided as identified in 3. Special Recreation Permits (Category 3 (ii)). Snow removal is provided to facilitate access and parking. If snow play area is a state designated sno park area where a fee is required, no other fees will be charged.

**Trailsides** – A trailside is an undeveloped point on a trail where access can be obtained. There are few to no facilities or services associated with the trail. It is not within a high impact recreation area where the criteria are met to charge a fee. The visitor is gaining access at that point to participate in an activity on the forest/unit for which there is no charge and not to avoid fee payment at an associated trailhead or fee site.

**Transportation Service** – Services that provide a means of transporting visitors from one location to another.

## APPENDIX B

### INTERIM REFUND PROCEDURE

**Please note:**

- No refunds may be made from cash drawers.
- All refunds are processed electronically through FFIS (the Forest Service financial system). Individuals will receive a check in the mail within 30 days of their request.
- Minimum special use permit fees are non-refundable.

**Procedures:** When a pass purchaser or vendor requests a refund, the following process should be followed:

1. Purchaser submits their written request for a refund to the forest/unit where the pass was purchased. Request must include:
  - a. Letter indicating reason for request (see sample form letter attached)
  - b. Social security number or tax identification number.
  - c. Information regarding the date and location of purchase.
  - d. Method of payment and copy of any purchase documentation such as a credit card receipt, if available.
  - e. Type of pass purchased and price paid.
2. Collection Officer or fiscal personnel attaches supporting documentation from the collection officer register.
3. The Forest/Unit Rec Fee Coordinator, or delegated authority, reviews each request on a case-by-case basis and approves or denies.
4. Upon approval, Forest/unit fiscal personnel completes the Public Voucher for Refunds (SF-1049). A sample form is attached.
5. Forest/unit fiscal personnel processes the refund request in FFIS following instruction in CFO Bulletin #2003-016., Transaction Combinations for Recreation Fee Refunds. Transaction PV/RV must be used when recording a refund.



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## Request for Refund of Recreation Pass

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To: Forest Supervisor, \_\_\_\_\_ National Forest.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, request a refund in the amount of

\$\_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_ pass I purchased on

\_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_

(Indicate office or store where purchased.)

I paid for this purchase by \_\_\_\_\_  
(attach documentation, such as a copy of credit card receipt, if available).

The reason I am requesting this refund is: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Please make refund check payable to: \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_

My business tax identification number or social security number is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

April 22, 2005



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Washington Office

14<sup>th</sup> & Independence SW  
P.O. Box 96090  
Washington, DC 20090-6090

**File Code:** 6500  
**Route To:** (6500), (6530)

**Date:** July 2, 2003

**Subject:** CFO Bulletin #2003-016, Transaction Combinations for Fee Demo Refunds

**To:** Deputy Chiefs, Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF  
Director, FPL Director, WO Staff Directors

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this CFO Bulletin is to inform Forest Service units about the use of the transaction combinations ‘PV/RV’ with regard to Fee Demo refunds.

**BACKGROUND**

While performing a review of general ledger (GL) account 2310, Advances from Others, the Reconciliation Team identified Fee Demo refund transactions creating an abnormal balance in the Advances from Others account.

The abnormal balance is a direct result of the inappropriate use of the PV/RA and PV/RF transaction combinations for fund FDFD.

Fee Demo collections are recorded directly as revenue. Use of the PV/RA and PV/RF transaction combinations to refund monies creates an imbalance in the GL accounts, as demonstrated below.

Refunds Using “PV/RF” or “PV/RA”			
Transaction	Purpose	Debit	Credit
BF/A1	Recording of bill	1312	5100
LX/A1	Reversal of bill	5100	1312
	Recording Collection	1012	5100
PV/RF or PV/RA	Recording of Refund	2310	2110

Use of the “RF” or “RA” transaction type results in an abnormal balance (debit) in GL account 2310 and revenue accounts do not reflect the intended draw down effect of the refund.

**POLICY**

Per the online procedures manual, Forest Service units shall use transaction type “RV” or “RR” to process refunds for billings recorded directly as revenue. The online procedures manual distinguishes use of the transactions types, as follows: “**RA**” = Used to process refunds from non-PCAS billings for

\* = term defined in Appendix A

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non-revenue collections such as BCBC, SDSD, and TDTD. Collections are treated as liabilities, not revenue.

- **“RF”** = Used to process refunds from PCAS billings for collections billed in advance that have not been earned.
- **“RR”** = Used when refunding collections from PCAS generated reimbursable billings and PCAS generated revenue.
- **“RV”** = Used to process refunds for non-PCAS billing for revenue collections.

Proper use of the PV/RV transaction combination to process Fee Demo refunds will produce the intended result in the GL accounts, as demonstrated below.

Refunds Using “PV/RV”			
Transaction	Purpose	Debit	Credit
BF/A1	Recording of bill	1312	5100
LX/A1	Reversal of bill	5100	1312
	Recording Collection	1012	5100
PV/RV	Recording of Refund	5200	2110

*\*Note: the posting model causing the general ledger cross between the revenue accounts is in the process of being corrected.*

## INQUIRIES

If you require assistance with the proper use of the refund transaction combinations, please contact your R/S/A subject matter expert for accounts receivables. Questions regarding this bulletin should be directed to the Reconciliation Staff at (703) 605-4819.

/s/ Hank Kashdan, for  
MARY S. MATIELLA  
Chief Financial Officer, Deputy Chief for Budget and Finance

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## APPENDIX C

### FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF REA, CFO LETTER, 3/18/2005

6500/2720/2340

Date: March 18, 2005

**File Code:**  
**Route To:**

**Subject:** Financial Implementation of Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act for Outfitting and Guiding and Recreation Event Authorizations and Recreation Fees

**To:** Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), Title VIII, Division J, of Public Law 108-447 sets forth provisions for collection of recreation fees and retention of special recreation permit fees by the Forest Service. FLREA also repealed sections of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA) that refer to fee authority. This letter addresses three recreation fee issues:

1. Special use authorizations for outfitting and guiding, and recreation events that were either previously issued under the LWCFA or future authorizations to be issued under FLREA;
2. Campground receipts from campgrounds still under LWCFA as of December 8, 2004 (when FLREA was enacted); and
3. How to deposit future recreation fee receipts and manage the current recreation fee receipts collected under Fee Demo authority.

Below are directions on how to deposit and expend the recreation fee receipts.

#### 1. Special Use Authorization Directions

Before this Act became final, the Forest Service deposited 85% of special use permit revenues from these authorizations into *National Forest Fund* (fund code 5008, Treasury Symbol 125008) and 15% of revenues into *Recreation Fees for Collection Cost* (fund code FEFR, Treasury Symbol 12X5010). Deposits into these two accounts should cease. Funds already obligated for expenditure under 12X5010 will remain until spent.

#### 2. LWCFA Campground Receipts

Before this Act became final, the Forest Service collected recreation fees at those government operated sites, such as campgrounds and group use sites, which were still collecting fees under LWCFA authority (not part of the Fee Demo program). The Forest Service deposited 85% of revenues from these government operated recreation sites into the *National Forest Fund* (fund code 5008, Treasury Symbol 125008) and 15% of revenues into *Recreation Fees for Collection Cost* (fund code FEFR, Treasury Symbol 12X5010). Deposits into these two accounts should cease. Funds already obligated for expenditure under these codes will remain until spent.

#### J. Recreation Fee Receipts under FLREA and under Fee Demo

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The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) concurred with the Forest Service’s request to change the title of Treasury account 12X5268 from “Recreation fee demonstration program, Forest Service” to “Recreation Fees, Forest Service.” The existing fund code FDFD will be retained. The three program codes within fund FDFD will be retained and renamed as follows:

<b>Program Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
FDAS	Regional Recreation Enhancement
FDCL	Recreation Enhancement – Cost of Collection/Indirect
FDDS	Unit Recreation Enhancement

From the date of this letter, the deposit of all recreation enhancement fees will adhere to the following job code structure:

<b>Program Code</b>	<b>Job Code (override code)</b>	<b>Description</b>
FDAS	AS070105 (1324)	20% of all national pass sales deposited into one national job code
	FDAS3605 (region specific override)	5% of all recreation fees deposited to one regional job code
	FDAS4205 (region specific override)	5% of all special use billings deposited to one regional level job code
FDCL	FDCL7805 (unit specific override)	15% of all FDFD funds, including special uses, deposited into one unit level job code
FDDS	DS070105 (unit specific override)	80% of all national pass sales deposited into one unit level job code
	FDDS3605 (unit specific override)	80% of all recreation fees deposited to one unit level job code

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	FDDS4205 (unit specific override)	80% of all special use billings deposited to one unit level job code
--	-----------------------------------	--

This job code structure will apply to ALL recreation fees, including special uses, collected under FLREA authority. In other words, all your Fee Demo projects must adhere to this new accounting structure. You will note that we no longer track recreation fee funds by reporting category (i.e., by project such as the Recreation Lodging project, Campground Safety Net project, etc.). This is a significant change from how we accounted for collections/expenditures under Fee Demo.

The job codes outlined above have been created and are active. Effective March 31, 2005, all recreation fees collected under the FLREA authorization must be deposited into and obligated from the appropriate program and job code as outlined above. For those units that had recreation sites and areas collecting receipts under the Fee Demo program, all new collections will be deposited according to the structure as outlined above. Discontinue depositing and obligating funds in the old Fee Demo job codes (with reporting categories). Although additional deposits are not allowed into the old Fee Demo job codes, those old codes will remain active until obligated funds have been expended. Begin using the new FLREA job codes for obligations and expenditures.

For additional information, contact Carolyn Holbrook, Special Uses Program Manager in the Recreation and Heritage Resources Staff at (202) 205-1399; Jennifer Eberlien, Recreation Fees in Recreation and Heritage Resources Staff at (202) 205-1169; Kathryn Lynn in the Program and Budget Analysis Staff at (202) 205-1128; or Gail McCrary in the Financial Policy and Analysis Staff at (703) 764-9117.

/s/Jesse L. King  
JESSE L. KING  
Associate Deputy Chief for Business Operations/Chief Financial Officer

cc: Carolyn Holbrook, Jennifer Eberlien, Kathryn Lynn, Gail McCrary, Linda Washington

## APPENDIX D

### RECREATION SITE TYPE DESCRIPTIONS

SITE TYPE	DESCRIPTION
BOATING SITE	Site designed primarily to facilitate access to water for boating activities.
CAMPGROUND	Site with camp units designed to accommodate overnight use by individuals and families.
CUA CAMPING AREA	Primitive site managed for overnight use. Minimal improvements, typically a Development Scale 1 or 2.
CUA DAY USE AREA	Primitive site managed for day use. Minimal improvements, typically Development Scale 1 or 2.
CUA INTERP/INFO	Primitive site managed to provide recreation information or minimal interpretive opportunities
CUA OTHER	Primitive site. Minimal improvements, typically Development Scale 1 or 2.
CUA TRAILHEAD	Primitive site managed as a trailhead. Minimal improvements, typically Development Scale 1 or 2.
DOCUMENTARY SITE	Historic sites, buildings, districts, or other features primarily managed and preserved for their cultural or historic values. Include only sites that have, or are eligible for, State and/or National register status.
FIRE LOOKOUTS/ CABINS OVERNIGHT	Look-out towers, cabins, guard station, or other administrative accommodations designated for overnight public use.
FISH VIEWING SITE	Site designed primarily to provide the opportunity to view fish.
FISHING SITE	Site designed primarily to accommodate fishing and other related day use activities from dock or shore.
GROUP CAMPGROUND	Site with camp units designed to accommodate overnight use by groups.
GROUP PICNIC SITE	Site designed for picnicking and other related day-use activities by groups.
HORSE CAMP	Site with camp units designed primarily accommodate stock and overnight use.
HOTEL, LODGE, RESORT FS OWNED	Hotels, lodges, motels, or similar structures owned by the Forest Service and designed primarily to accommodate overnight use.
HOTEL, LODGE, RESORT PRIVATELY	Hotels, lodges, motels, or similar structures non-Forest Service owned and designed primarily to accommodate overnight use.

OWNED.	
INFORMATION SITE	Site designed primarily to provide recreation information including maps, general orientation, directions, and regulations.
INTERPRETIVE SITE (ADMIN)	Site that includes those portions of administrative sites and offices that have been modified to provide interpretive programs and/or interpretive displays.
INTERPRETIVE SITE (MAJOR)	Sites and facilities designed and managed to provide a broad range of interpretive programs, services, and media (Visitor Centers, for example). A general guideline would be a design and construction investment in excess of \$250,000.
INTERPRETIVE SITE (MINOR)	A developed interpretive site or facility offering a limited range of information and interpretive opportunities; for example, a self-guiding nature trail or a wayside exhibit.
OBSERVATION SITE	Site designed primarily to accommodate visitors viewing scenery or viewing specific forest-related activities.
ORGANIZATION SITE FOREST SERVICE OWNED	Site designed primarily for structured recreation use by organized groups. Structures are Forest Service-owned.
ORGANIZATION SITE PRIVATELY OWNED	Site designed primarily for structured recreation use by organized groups. Structures are not Forest Service-owned.
OTHER RECREATION CONCESSION SITES	Concession-operated site not covered by other site type definitions. Sites are designed primarily to provide for the comfort and convenience of visitors and are typically managed by commercial operators under permit. Includes service stations, cafes, stores, rentals, restaurants, or cafeterias not a part of a unified hotel, lodge, or resort operation.
OTHER WINTER SPORTS SITE	Site designed primarily to accommodate snow-based activities other than skiing.
PICNIC SITE	Site designed for picnicking and other related day-use activities by individuals or families.
PLAYGROUND, PARK, SPECIALIZED SPORT SITE	Sites designed to accommodate specific recreation activities and usually located near population centers, developed under permit, and operated by others. Typical examples are city or county parks, playgrounds, golf courses, fairgrounds, moto-cross areas, hang-gliding sites, and gun or archery ranges.
RECREATION RESIDENCE	A privately built and owned structure authorized under special use permit.
SKI AREA ALPINE	Site designed primarily to accommodate downhill skiing. Sites are typically operated under special-use permit and usually include groomed ski runs, uphill transfer devices, sanitary facilities and provisions for public safety.



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SKI AREA NORDIC	Site designed primarily to accommodate Nordic skiing. Sites are typically operated under special-use permit and usually include groomed ski trails, sanitary facilities and provisions for public safety.
SNOWPARK	Site designed to provide staging for winter recreation activities including cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and other winter modes of recreation transportation.
SWIMMING SITE	Site designed primarily to accommodate swimming activities.
TRAILHEAD	Site designed to provide staging for trail use.
WILDLIFE VIEWING SITE	An observation site developed primarily to provide the opportunity to view wildlife. Facilities may include parking lot, toilet, and trails and interpretive displays.