

Key Points

Proposal to Implement Fees in the Buffalo Pass Backcountry Winter Recreation Area of the Routt National Forest

Dec. 2006

In May of 2005, the Routt National Forest made a decision on the Winter Recreation Management Forest Plan Amendment. The Decision was made following extensive public involvement over several years. The Environmental Assessment, Decision and maps can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr/projects/rec/index.shtml>

The Decision separated motorized and non-motorized use on Rabbit Ears Pass, and separated some uses and allowed mixed uses in some areas of the Buffalo Pass Backcountry Winter Recreation Area.

The Routt National Forest is proposing to begin charging a \$5 fee to enter the 4,980-acre Buffalo Pass Backcountry Winter Recreation Area, beginning in 2007. A \$50 annual permit is also being proposed. No other new recreation fees are being proposed for the remainder of the 1.1 million-acre Routt National Forest.

The area is intensively used by skiers, snowmobilers, snowshoers, hybrids and an outfitter providing winter recreation activities under a special use permit from the Forest Service.

The fees will be used for providing the public information about backcountry etiquette, avalanche danger and sharing groomed trails. Fees will also be used to administer the permit system and provide backcountry patrols and delineate trails and boundaries, resulting in a quality recreation experience for winter recreationists.

The proposal to implement fees for the Buffalo Pass Backcountry Winter Recreation Area is being done under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), which was signed into law in Dec. 2005. It provides direction for collecting recreation fees on federal lands.

The FLREA allows the Secretary of Agriculture to issue a Special Recreation Permit and charge a permit fee for specialized recreation.

The FLREA also requires that the agency publish a notice in the Federal Register six months prior to implementing fees; prepare a business plan; provide the public with opportunity to comment; and provide information on a yearly basis

about how the fees are being spent. The business plan will be made available to the public as soon as it's finalized.

This process is not Scoping, as is done with projects being analyzed under the National Environmental Policy Act. The comments received during this comment period will be used by the Forest Service for fee determination and may be used by a Recreation Resource Advisory Committee as described below.

The FLREA requires the formation of a **Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC)** which may make recommendations regarding the Forest Service's proposal to implement new fees. Public comments will be provided to the RRAC for their consideration before making recommendations. Colorado's RRAC is currently in the process of being formed.

To read the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act please visit http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/feedemo/fee_legislation.html

How to comment:

Email to: r2_mbr_vis@FSNOTES and include "Recreation Fees" in the subject line.

Mail or hand deliver to:
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Laramie WY 82070

Fax: 970-870-2284 or 307-745-2398

Comments are due May 31, 2007.