



# Recreation Facilities Analysis on the Umatilla National Forest



Newsletter #3

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## Forest Completes Recreation Facilities Analysis Fee Changes Essential Part of Proposed Plan

The Umatilla National Forest recently evaluated the future management of its 116 developed recreation sites, including campgrounds, trailheads, and cabin rentals through the process known as Recreation Facilities Analysis or RFA. The RFA process is being used by National Forests across the country to create a “5-year program of work” that outlines future management of recreation sites. The goal is to create a sustainable recreation program, eliminate facility maintenance backlog and meet the needs and expectations of our visitors.

While the program of work does not propose closing developed sites, it does include cost cutting actions like reducing the length of season a particular campground might be cleaned or repairing rather than replacing aging facilities. The following is a summary of the management actions defined in the program of work:

- No change to 20 sites
- Change season of use at 28 sites
- Replace or repair features at 27 sites
- Discontinue Concessionaire operation
  - Only 1 site currently remaining (Jubilee Lake Campground)
- Conduct cabin rental feasibility study on 23 buildings (11 are existing rentals)
- Add or increase fees at qualifying sites

Early in the RFA process it became apparent the recreation fee program would be a crucial component to meeting our goals. Generally speaking, many of our developed sites are:

- older (many were built in the 1960’s),
- in need of major maintenance (we identified a \$1.8 million maintenance backlog),
- out of date (e.g. most campground parking spurs don’t accommodate today’s RVs)
- in need of improved access to persons with disabilities.

The 5 year program of work proposes increasing fees at the 14 campgrounds and 11 rental cabins where fees are currently charged and phasing in new fees over the next several years at another 20 developed campgrounds, 17 trailheads and 2 cabins. Anticipated fee revenues would increase from about \$78,000/year to \$174,000/yr when the program of work is fully implemented. With anticipated revenues and a stable appropriated budget, and by employing cost cutting measures, we should be able to operate our developed recreation program to standard and significantly reduce maintenance backlog over the long run.

**Developed Recreation Program Balance Sheet (From RFA).**

<b>Current Annual Expenses</b>	
Operating Costs	\$123,000
Maintenance Costs	\$114,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$237,000</b>
<b>Anticipated Operating Assets</b>	
Appropriated funding	\$82,000
Fee Receipts available	\$174,000
Misc. other funds	\$3,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$259,000</b>

**Fee Proposals and Forest Settings:**

The Umatilla National Forest is proposing to increase fees at all of its 25 existing fee sites (14 campgrounds and 11 cabins) this year. New fees would be phased in over time. During the next two years or so new fees would be charged at 12 trail heads, 12 campgrounds and 2 cabins. Proposed fee rates are based upon comparable public and private facilities in our local markets.

Our focus is to continue to provide developed facilities in three basic settings identified during the RFA process:

**Wilderness/Backcountry:** Designated Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers and other undeveloped areas that are remote and provide a high degree of solitude with an emphasis on self-reliance.

Sites are typically undeveloped, dispersed camp sites and remote, rustic trailheads. There currently are no trailheads under the fee program. Examples of trailheads where new fees would be charged include Elk Flats and Timothy Springs trailheads. These sites have standard amenities and provide access to the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness on the Pomeroy Ranger District.

**Hunting/Dispersed:** General forest areas where more rustic facilities support hunting and other traditional recreation activities such as ATV riding, horseback riding and hiking.

These are typically small, rustic campgrounds scattered across the forest where toilets, picnic tables, fire rings and grills are provided but not water or garbage service. Typically, where fees are currently charged, the fee for a single campsite is \$5 and would increase to \$8 plus \$5/additional vehicle. Examples include: Tollbridge, and Welch Creek campgrounds on the North Fork John Day Ranger District.

**Concentrated Recreation:** Key high recreation use corridors on the forest where more developed facilities will be concentrated:

These sites are located along major access routes, scenic river corridors, or lakes and attract considerable use. Campgrounds typically have water, group sites, picnic shelters, associated trails, and other more highly developed amenities like fish cleaning stations, boat ramps, and boat/swimming docks. Examples include: Jubilee Lake, Woodward, and Olive Lake campgrounds. Fees currently range from \$5-\$15/single site and would increase to \$10-\$17 plus

\$5/additional vehicle depending upon the level of amenities provided. Additional fee scales apply for other amenities such as group sites.

There are also a number of lesser developed campgrounds located within the concentrated recreation corridors that are more rustic. These sites are similar in development scale to those described in the Hunting/Dispersed setting. Proposed fees for a single site would typically be \$8 plus \$5/additional vehicle. Examples include North Fork John Day and Tucannon campgrounds.

### **Fee Proposal Specifics:**

Increases at current fee sites could be implemented as early as May, 2008. New fee proposals were posted in the Federal Register February 8, 2008. Implementation of new fees would not proceed until after the 6 month comment period which ends August 8, 2008.

#### ***Increase fees at 14 campgrounds:***

**Pomeroy RD (1):** Tucannon.

**North Fork John Day RD (7):** Bear Wallow, Frazier, Lane Creek, North Fork John Day, Olive Lake, Tollbridge, Welch Creek.

**Walla Walla RD (6):** Jubilee Lake, Mottet, Target Meadows, Umatilla Forks, Woodland, Woodward.

#### ***Increase fees at 11 Rental Cabins:***

**Heppner RD (2):** Ditch Creek (increase from \$40 to \$50/night), Tamarack (increase from \$25 to \$40/night).

**Pomeroy RD (4):** Clearwater Big House (increase from \$40 to \$60/night), Clearwater Lookout (increase from \$25 to \$50/night), Godman (increase from \$40 to \$60/night), Wenatchee (increase from \$30 to \$50/night).

**North Fork John Day RD (3):** Fremont Congo Gulch (increase from \$60 to \$80/night), Fremont Hilltop Hideaway (Increase from \$30 to \$55/night), Fremont Miners Retreat (increase from \$50 to \$65/night).

**Walla Walla RD (2):** Fry Meadows (increase from \$25 to \$40/night), Summit (increase from \$35 to \$45/night).

#### ***New fees at 12 trail heads:***

These are rustic trailheads with standard amenities.

**Pomeroy RD (8):** Elk Flats, Meadow Creek, Panjab, Teepee, Three Forks, Timothy Springs, Tucannon, Twin Buttes. Implementation would follow after the six month comment period in the federal register and when interpretative signs are completed and posted.

**North Fork John day RD (4):** Big Creek Meadows, Frazier, North Fork John Day, Winom. Implementation would follow after the six month comment period in the federal register. Interpretative signs have been developed.

***New fees at 12 developed campgrounds:***

**Heppner RD (1):** Penland Lake. Development scale 2-3 without garbage or drinking water. Proposed fee is \$8/single site plus \$5.00/additional vehicle.

**Pomeroy RD (6):** Alder Thicket, Forest Boundary, Godman, Ladybug, Midway, Panjab. All are without garbage or drinking water. Proposed fee is \$8/single site plus \$5.00/additional vehicle.

**North Fork John Day RD (5):** Drift Fence, Driftwood, Gold Dredge, Oriental and Winom. All are without garbage or drinking water. Proposed fee is \$8/single site plus \$5.00/additional vehicle, except Winom (\$10) which has newer facilities, direct access to a complex of OHV trails, and a shelter.

***New fees at 2 cabins:***

Both cabins were recently renovated. They provide all facilities including electricity, flush toilet and potable water.

**North Fork John Day RD (1):** Fremont Caretakers Cabin; \$80/night.

**Pomeroy RD (1):** Tucannon Guard Station; \$100/night.

**More Information or Provide Comments**

Before implementing any fee changes, we'll review any additional public comment received and present our finalized proposal to a citizen's advisory committee called the Pacific Northwest Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC) later this spring. Committee members represent a broad array of recreation interest groups to help ensure that the Forest Service is proposing reasonable and acceptable fee changes.

Proposals for implementing new fees are also posted in the Federal Register for public comment. A copy of both the federal register notice and proposed fee increases at existing fee sites can be obtained at any Umatilla National Forest Office or on the Forest web site at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/recreation/rsfmp.shtml>

A copy of the 5-yr program of work is also available online.

It would be most helpful to receive your comments by March 31. You may send them to the Umatilla National Forest, Attn: RFA-PAO, 2517 SW Hailey Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. You may also submit your comments online at the web site above.

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