

Allegheny National Forest - Marienville Ranger District
Addendum to District Ranger White Paper on Recreation Facilities Analysis Action
Recommendations (September 4, 2008 – Summary Revisions in Response to Public Comments)

Recreation Facility	Revised Recommendation	Primary Considerations	District Ranger Rationale
<p>Beaver Meadows Campground and Recreation Area</p>	<p>Conduct Feasibility Study within the next 5 years to determine if Beaver Meadows (BM) is a suitable site for an ATV Trailhead and Campground. This includes potential for a connector to the ATV/Bike Trails from the Campground.</p> <p>If the Study determines that conversion of this site to an ATV Trailhead and CG is feasible; then the ANF would design and propose for public comment a connector trail to BM and installation of a trailhead loading ramp.</p> <p>If the Study determines that conversion of this site to an ATV Trailhead and CG is not feasible; then the ANF would propose for public comment to close and decommission the campground, and recycle toilet buildings and gravel to other recreation areas (Marienville ATV Trailhead, FR 395 Trailhead and/or Forest County Allegheny River Boat Landing).</p> <p>With either option, the ANF would keep and maintain the Day Use Recreation Area (parking</p>	<p>Low occupancy makes this a strong candidate for decommissioning or conversion to a different emphasis. Beaver Meadows (BM) is located 1-2 miles from the westernmost leg of the Marienville Bike Trail. There is demand for camping facilities with direct access to the ATV trail network. If a connection can be made to the trail network, BM has infrastructure to support this demand. Current BM experience is provided elsewhere on ANF. Converting CG to ATV emphasis will save investment cost in Timberline ATV Trailhead camping, and support</p>	<p>The concept of connecting Beaver Meadows (BM) to the ATV trail network and changing the emphasis to ATV camping was originally proposed by Jenks Township during the comment period, and then seconded by several other respondents.</p> <p>Utilizing existing infrastructure, rather than investing in new infrastructure at the Timberline Trailhead, is a cost saver. The primary issue with BM is that it is underutilized; while the primary concern with camping facilities for the ATV trail network is that there simply aren't enough.</p> <p>This could allow Jenks Township to consider direct ATV access to Marienville, although that would be a decision beyond the purview of the ANF. The railroad line from Kane to Clarion has recently been sold and entered into the railbank program, possibly creating new trail possibilities for Marienville that did not exist prior to RFA.</p> <p>This is not a slam dunk by any means. There are resource concerns with trying to connect the trail to BM. BM is located on the extreme western edge of the ATV/Bike Trail network, and it would connect to the most difficult segments of the network. A Feasibility Study would help determine if such concerns could be adequately mitigated.</p>

<p>Beaver Meadows Campground and Recreation Area</p>	<p>lot, toilet building, picnic tables, and boat launch). Any improvements to the reservoir are beyond the scope of RFA.</p>	<p>investment in DM. O&M costs will be commensurate with use. Fees collected on ATV/Bike trail network can help defray O&M and DM costs. Potential for grants and cost share with the ATV/Bike trail network.</p>	<p>Conversion to an ATV Trailhead and CG would not preclude other users from camping at BM, but it would certainly change the experience for the numerous respondents who spoke passionately of their enjoyment of the more primitive camping experience at BM. Again, there may be mitigations that would allow for mixed use and a quality experience for all users.</p> <p>If conversion to an ATV campground and trailhead are not feasible or is otherwise rejected during NEPA analysis, closure of this campground is the preferred, though very difficult, recommendation. Beaver Meadows provides the classic Forest Service front country camping experience – pleasant setting, sheltered sites, trails, surface water, hardened camping surface, picnic table, fire ring, drinking water, and vault toilet – and many respondents spoke of characteristics such as the “primitive”, “quiet”, “tranquil”, “unique” feel of the camping experience. It was very clear from the comments that many users have had memorable experiences at Beaver Meadows; but the over-riding concern is that there are simply not enough folks who have been seeking this experience. Consideration was given to closing the day use area and just one loop of the campground; however, this is a case of the Forest Service providing what it traditionally provides, but the public seemingly wants less and less. Proximity to Marienville is key factor in keeping the day use area as it provides a local attraction and ANF connection for visitors to that community.</p>
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<p>Buzzard Swamp FR 157 Trailhead</p>	<p>No Change</p>	<p>Minimal O&M and DM costs. Parking lot is maintained through partnership with PA Game Commission. Cost would be incurred to reclaim part of the parking area, with no real cost savings from reducing size of lot.</p>	<p>A popular area for hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, and wildlife viewing. Amenities include the parking area and vault toilet. There are other parking areas and access points, but they do not have any other amenities. This parking area may not be fully utilized during much of the year; but it is at or beyond capacity during hunting season and during the annual Forest County Youth Field Day. The PA Game Commission maintains the parking lot as part of their shared interest in managing the Buzzard Swamp area, so there is little if any cost savings to the ANF by reducing the lot, and such a change would reduce parking capacity below what is needed during peak use. Proximity to Marienville makes this a strong local attraction and ANF connection for visitors to that community, but it is also a strong draw for the ANF as a whole.</p>

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<p>Loleta Campground and Recreation Area</p>	<p>Revise to an NC1 (No change from current management)</p> <p>Monitor occupancy and O&M costs for 5 years.</p> <p>O&M costs are likely to increase as the water and waste-water systems age. If occupancy fails to increase appreciably over this 5 year period, the O&M costs will exceed income; and the recommendation will be to decommission the water and waste-water systems at that time. A concessionaire cannot operate an ANF campground at a loss, and neither can the ANF.</p> <p>The ANF will work with local government and private partners to explore options for cost-sharing, maintenance of historic structures, providing vouchers for local residents, and improving occupancy rates.</p>	<p>Full service is not supported by low occupancy rates. However, relatively new (1996) improvements to the bathhouse and on-site sewage system, and relatively low O&M costs for a full service campground should have greater consideration. DM costs are primarily in historic structures, where private/public partnerships are possible. Similar amenities are provided by local private vendors, but there is renewed interest in camping and recreation along the nearby Clarion River.</p>	<p>The original recommendation was to decommission the water and waste-water systems at Loleta. A couple of respondents noted that the bathhouse, on-site sewage disposal system and other improvements were completed in 1996, and are not in a state of disrepair. The on-site sewage disposal system is a holding tank with a sand mound treatment. Other than pump maintenance and periodic dredging of the tank, the operational costs for the on-site sewage system are relatively low and predictable – and they can be built into a concessionaire agreement. The water system is a little older, but also in good condition. The use is high on most weekends, but this facility is greatly underutilized on weekdays.</p> <p>This is a difficult call, especially given the nearby private campgrounds, but there are a number of factors pushing for retention of the full range of services at Loleta.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Good operating condition of the more costly replacement components (pumps, piping, showers and toilets). 2) Relatively low cost of operations, compared to other ANF full service CGs. 3) Proximity to Clarion River and renewed emphasis on recreation on and near this wild and scenic river. 4) Need to maintain historic buildings, regardless of services offered, and potential for partnerships to improve and maintain these structures.

**Loleta
Campground
and
Recreation
Area**

The revised recommendation here is to retain the services offered at Loleta Campground and Day Use Area. Continue to monitor use. If occupancy does not increase or O&M costs increase (particularly due to deterioration in the water or waste-water systems), this site will become more and more difficult to operate, particularly through a concessionaire permit. The ANF will monitor use and O&M rates for the next 5 years. If costs continue to outpace income, the recommendation at that point will be to decommission the water and waste-water systems and operate Loleta as a developed campground and day use area with basic services.

Loleta day use area was once the unofficial “park” for the Marienville community; but this use has diminished in recent years – perhaps due in part to day use fees. The fees are necessary to support the O&M costs for amenities such as the bathhouse, water, on-site sewage and garbage collection. Rather than remove these amenities and the day use fees, the ANF can work with local government to investigate the possibility of a voucher system for local residents to access the day use area; as well as to explore funding options for repairs and maintenance of historic structures. The lower camping loop will continue to provide slots for RVs in close proximity to state road, while the upper camping loop will provide a more remote experience that appeals more to tent campers, and the group sites will continue to accommodate larger groups.

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<p>Timberline ATV Trail – Main Trailhead and Camping Area</p>	<p>Future actions at this trailhead should be considered as part of the Feasibility Study within the next 5 years to determine if Beaver Meadows (BM) is a suitable site for an ATV Trailhead and Campground.</p> <p>The timberline ATV Trailhead is located at a central point in the ATV/Bike trail network, and has proven popular as a no-fee camping area.</p> <p>If the Study determines that conversion of Beaver Meadows to an ATV Trailhead and CG is feasible; then this site should take on a diminished role as a camping location. No-fee sites could be reduced or eliminated, and this site could be managed as a trailhead parking area only.</p> <p>If the Study determines that conversion of Beaver Meadows to an ATV Trailhead and CG is not feasible; then this could signal the need to add amenities to this site, expand camping sites, and charge fees as a developed campground with emphasis on ATV users.</p>	<p>Low O&M and DM costs. Central location in the ATV/Bike trail network. Potential conflict of continued no-fee camping at this location, if Beaver Meadows becomes a fee site with direct trail access in the future.</p>	<p>This site is centrally located on the ATV/Bike trail network, with direct access to the least difficult of the trail systems (Timberline) and a short jump to the moderate-difficulty Marienville ATV trail. This is currently both a parking area and a no-fee camping area. Amenities include parking, loading ramp, information kiosk, delineated camping sites and vault toilet. Many ATV users on multiple-day stays seek camping sites with direct access to the trail system.</p> <p>Currently, only dispersed camping, and the minimum amenities provided at this site, is available on National Forest land, and only one private vendor is providing a full-service campground with direct access to the ATV trail system. However, the need for camping with direct access to the trail network is evident from the amount of dispersed (no-fee) camping that occurs here, in the FR 401 stone pit, the FR 395 trailhead, and several other locations along the trail network.</p> <p>Depending on the outcome of the Beaver Meadows Feasibility Study (which would include a look at other camping options with direct access to the trail network), and public input relative to any recommendations that come out of that study; this site could be expanded into a developed fee-site campground in the future, with additional camping sites, fire rings, picnic tables, and possibly other amenities specific to ATV use, or it could be limited to day use parking only as a trailhead.</p>

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<p>Twin Lakes Campground and Recreation Area</p>	<p>Decommission the water and wastewater systems. Remove the waste-water treatment plant. Retain other infrastructure related to water and waste-water (piping, pumps, faucets, drains, etc.)</p>	<p>High O&M and DM costs, Diminished, 40-year old waste-water treatment system plagued by unique design components with high replacement costs, deterioration, and high operating costs.</p>	<p>This is a difficult recommendation, particularly given the number of respondents who talked of a special connection to this campground. With reduced services, the campground may hold less appeal for many visitors; but the cost of maintaining the current level of services simply cannot be sustained with the current occupancy. And the majority of the O&M and deferred maintenance is related to the water and waste-water systems. Full service camping is available north of Kane at Red Bridge CG, and through local private vendors in Sheffield and Lantz Corners.</p> <p>Like Loleta for Marienville residents, this recreation area is popular with local residents in Kane and Wilcox, particularly for fishing and swimming in the lake. And, like Loleta, this popularity may have diminished a bit since the day use fee was instituted. Reducing the services available at this site affects convenience, but retains the elements that make this site attractive to local and non-local alike, and could be grounds to drop the fee. Full service camping is available north of Kane at Red Bridge CG, and through local private vendors in Sheffield and Lantz Corners.</p> <p>Not all is lost, though. The ANF will actively pursue private/public partnerships to maintain the level of service at Twin Lakes. This includes working with local and state government, and seeking private partners to do the following:</p>

<p>Twin Lakes Campground and Recreation Area</p>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Retool the existing waste-water treatment facilities or replace them with lower cost options; 2) Investigate the possibility of a voucher system for local residents to access the day use area; and 3) Explore funding options for repairs and maintenance of historic structures <p>There is potential for such partnerships, but also a very real possibility that such partnerships will not be enough to replace the systems that have supported the services at Twin Lakes for the past 40 years.</p> <p>In the event partnerships come up short, the recommendation here is that the waste-water treatment plant be decommissioned and removed; but the all other facilities related to the water and waste-water systems be “mothballed” rather than removed, in the event that trends change and funding becomes available in the future.</p>
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