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# Executive Summary

## Issues and Concerns Related to the USDA Forest Service's Recreational Fee Demonstration Program

*A Synthesis of Published Literature,  
Critical Reports, Media Reports, Public  
Comments, and Likely Knowledge Gaps*

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# Issues and Concerns Related to the USDA Forest Service's Recreational Fee Demonstration Program

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## Executive Summary

Since 1897, when Congress established the forerunner of the USDA Forest Service, the agency's work of providing recreation opportunities has largely been funded with public tax dollars allocated by Congress. Today, current backlogs of recreation-related maintenance are substantial and the popularity of recreating on all federal lands continues to increase even as fluctuating budgets are increasingly inadequate to fund related work. Federal land management agencies are expected to accomplish more with less. Previously secured non-tax dollars, such as timber sale revenue, have become generally less acceptable to the American public. During the 1990's, recreation fees were seen by many inside and outside the agency as a means to fund needed work, stabilize fluctuating budgets, and allow the agency to continue providing diverse, high-quality recreation while distributing more of the costs to those who most directly benefit.

The Forest Service is currently preparing to revise its Recreational Fee Demonstration program<sup>1</sup> in response to an opportunity presented by Congress. The program began after Congress, in 1996, directed the Forest Service, through the Secretary of Agriculture, to implement a Recreational Fee Demonstration program (P.L. 104-134, §315). In the same Act, Congress also directed the Secretary of Interior to implement separate, agency-specific versions of the program for agencies within the DOI. The authority to collect fees has been extended to September 30, 2004.

The current opportunity provided by Congress is for the Forest Service to revise its current program based upon lessons learned since its inception and test the revised program's feasibility over the two years of remaining authorization. This document contributes to the revision effort by summarizing known issues and concerns related to the Forest Service's program as reported in published literature, critical reports, media reports, and public comments. Several issues and concerns that are outside the scope of agency control are described because they are part of the discussion. This document contributes to the discussion a summary of existing research and known opinions related to recreation fees.

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<sup>1</sup> Congress authorized four federal agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the USDA Forest Service—to each establish a “Recreational Fee Demonstration program”. To remain consistent with authorizing language, this document applies that name to the program instead of other variations, such as Recreation Fee Demonstration program or Fee Demo. In places, the term “program” substitutes for the formal program title when the meaning is clear.



Primary sources for this document include published literature from research studies, critical reports from internal and external sources, media reports and surveys, and public comments submitted to the agency. Two separate, supplemental documents provide an index and bibliography of related literature.

The Forest Service's program shows examples of the agency's efforts to adapt to new information and respond to issues and concerns while remaining focused on the task Congress assigned. Where possible and needed, the agency has made the current program less confusing than it was when it began. Such changes are efforts to address frustrations expressed by visitors. The agency has conducted numerous research studies, detailed in separate documents, to better understand visitor concerns and seek other ideas for improving the program. It is aggressively developing more convenient payment options and local programs that would extend to visitors a variety of substitutes for fees, including increased volunteer programs and clear communication of non-fee site availability. And it continues to invite suggestions for additional alternatives to recreation fees, alternatives that can help meet the very real need, clearly identified by Congress, to operate and maintain recreation areas or sites and enhance habitat affected by recreation.

This document concludes with a complete list of the central lessons learned and identifiable knowledge gaps related to the issues and concerns. It includes description of innovative Forest Service efforts to adapt the program to changing understanding and circumstances.

## **Issues and Concerns**

The following are summary statements of the central issues and concerns to which the Forest Service's Recreation Fee Demonstration program and any future recreation fee program must attend. An issue or concern exists when an individual or group believes that a Forest Service action related to the Recreational Fee Demonstration program has caused or will cause a problem. For those who support the program, an issue or concern often reflects possible problems that might follow from changing or discontinuing the program.

To emphasize the point that various individuals and groups tend to see issues and concerns differently, this document states them in the form of an implicit question rather than a statement of fact. This format is intended to encourage discussion, rather than argument, and highlight simultaneous ways of seeing each issue or concern.

### Overarching Issue and Concern: Role of Recreation Fees in Agency Funding

- Whether and to what degree recreation fees can or should recover all or a portion of the cost of operating and maintaining recreation areas or sites and enhancing habitat affected by recreation.

### Issues and Concerns About Accountability

- Whether the program, including the financial component, is adequately accountable to Congress and the public based upon understandable criteria.
- Whether the agency currently has adequate criteria to evaluate the program in a managerially relevant and publicly responsive manner.



### Issues and Concerns About Public Involvement

- Whether the agency could more clearly improve and define opportunities for public involvement, better incorporate the public input, do a better job communicating with the public at various levels, and establish greater opportunities for stakeholder participation at regional and national levels.

### Issues and Concerns About Inequitable Effects

- Whether the Fee Demonstration Program limits access based on economic ability to pay and causes an inequitable effect on those who have less income.
- Whether the Forest Service adequately addresses the possible effects of fees on visitors who have low levels of disposable income.
- Whether the population most affected by the program is defined by low-income or by low disposable or discretionary income.
- Whether recreation fees present an inequitable or unfair burden on local residents.
- Whether the program unfairly burdens recreation-related businesses, such as outfitter guides, whitewater boaters, or concessionaires, who already must obtain fee permits to operate.
- Whether the Forest Service has sufficient flexibility to distribute recreation fee revenue fairly and equitably to address high priority organizational needs.

### Issues and Concerns About Acceptability of Fees

- Whether recreation fees are appropriate.
- Whether recreation fees are appropriate for dispersed recreation, such as trail access or backcountry camping, or for general access.

### Issues and Concerns About Pricing of Fees

- Whether visitors are being charged numerous or layered fees by the same agency or by multiple public land management agencies;
- Whether the price of each recreation fee is appropriate for the level of service provided;
- Whether recreation fees could lead to greater levels of service that require more funding and higher or more common recreation fees.

### Issues and Concerns About Displacement

- Whether visitors are being displaced by recreation fees or visiting less frequently and whether any displacement that might occur is by definition problematic.



### Issues and Concerns About Volunteerism

- Whether payment of recreation fees reduces the ability of volunteer groups to attract willing participants to accomplish needed work on public lands.

### Issues and Concerns Beyond Agency Control

- Whether Congress should have established a recreation fee program or increased agencies' budgets to provide the same benefits and whether Congress should fund the administration of the program.
- Whether Congress was correct in establishing a recreation fee program through an Appropriations Bill rider rather than with a distinct legislative act.
- Whether the fee program legislation is sufficiently clear about agency discretion to apply fee revenue to pay for recreation fee program related costs.
- Whether recreation fees are appropriate in light of current grazing fees and timber contract requirements, as well as any other Forest Service program established by legislation.
- Whether Congress should allow recreation fee revenue to replace appropriated funds to maintain recreation opportunities and habitat enhancements.
- Whether public land recreation should be free for all and paid for by the tax dollars of current and future generations.

### **Lessons Learned**

The Forest Service's experience with the Recreational Fee Demonstration program since its inception has taught numerous lessons. Some of those lessons are reflected in research studies, others in Forest Service reports, and others in critical evaluations. The previous discussion of issues and concerns contains discussion of lessons learned associated with each issue or concern. These are the ones that stood out in the material reviewed for this document:

- Recreation fees have become increasingly important as a way to allow those who most directly benefit from recreation opportunities to most directly support the costs of providing those opportunities.
- Recreation fees are an important addition to other means already employed to meet needs of operating and maintaining recreation areas and sites and enhancing habitat affects by recreation; they are not the only answer.
- Negative public responses to the recreation fee program often reflect perceptions of how federal land management has addressed other responsibilities.
- The program is controversial in some areas and not others and for some individuals and not others, so program accountability and related evaluations require diverse criteria to adequately reflect related issues and concerns.
- Accounting for program expenditures in an understandable and professionally valid way that is also clearly associated with accomplishing recognizable outcomes



is a significant challenge that the program must meet to establish, retain, or increase credibility.

- A fee program with adequate accountability, as described by sources reviewed for this report, would include three essential characteristics:
  - Clear sideboards and limitations on such things as where fees are collected and how fee revenue is spent;
  - Program sideboards would have national consistency as well as sufficient flexibility to adapt to local situations;
  - A clearly understandable evaluation system based upon established sideboards and other relevant criteria.
- Partnerships between the Forest Service and non-governmental organizations are a valuable program component and are also a focus of criticism from those who fear over-commercialization or undue influence on agency decisions.
- Security and safety of fee collection staff is a critical aspect of any recreation fee program.
- Organizational challenges of managing a demonstration program, such as attracting and retaining qualified staff to perform a temporary job, affect the program and its outcomes.
- Management challenges include inadequate sharing of specific lessons learned which reduces consistency and efficiency as lessons and tools are recreated.
- Extensive existing research is available and additional questions continue to emerge; yet, few program managers rely on research to evaluate the program.
- Program related evaluations are most often either focused on a narrow range of research criteria (with less broad program relevance) or, if more broad in scope, heavily-reliant upon less corroborated anecdotal evidence (with less scientific credibility).
- Public comments have helped the Forest Service learn of opportunities for improving the program.
- Public interest in participating in revising the program and in ongoing program management is strong and apparent.
- Recreation fees are likely to affect some visitors enough economically that they decide to recreate in non-fee areas.
- Some visitors choose to avoid fee sites because of personal objection to the Recreational Fee Demonstration program.
- Forest Service efforts to innovatively reduce potentially inequitable effects have been well received.
- Recreation fees are more likely to directly affect traditional visitors who have low levels of disposable income than potential visitors who have low incomes.
- Agencies can only spend revenue from the current Recreational Fee Demonstration program in limited ways while additional administration costs must come from other funding sources.



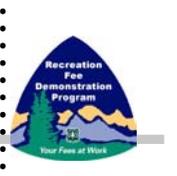
- Funding of activities related to administration of the Recreational Fee Demonstration program reduces current funding available for other Forest Service programs.
- General statements about support or opposition for fees contribute little to this discussion because the topic is more complicated than any general statement can address and general statements tend to distract from the question about how to meet the real need of maintaining recreation sites and enhance habitat affected by recreation.
- Reported support for the program is notably higher—often twice that of opposition—when surveys are conducted at recreation fee sites, as compared with support reported as part of national surveys or when surveys are conducted at comparable non-fee recreation sites.
- Fees for general access are typically less acceptable and more controversial than fees for either undeveloped sites or developed sites.
- Boat ramps, campgrounds, and special exhibits tend to draw the most support for funding from recreation fees while visitor centers, trails, picnic areas, restrooms, parking areas, and historic sites tend to draw greater support for funding from taxes or a combination of tax dollars and fee revenue.
- Extremely strong public support (>95% of those who responded to a peer-reviewed national survey) exists for funding at least some of the basic recreation services commonly provided on public land by charging recreation fees or through a combination of fees and tax dollars.
- Whole or partial reliance upon tax dollars is supported for funding several of the basic recreation services commonly found on public lands (visitor centers, trails, picnic areas, parking areas, and historic sites).
- Strongest support for a free, tax dollar supported service is for bathrooms.
- Those with lower income tend to support fees less while still tending to support some fees.
- Ethnic and cultural differences seem to correspond with differences in support for fees generally, with self-reported Black and Hispanic respondents typically supporting fees less than self-reported whites or Asians.
- Greater acceptability of fees and more willingness-to-pay tends to follow from obvious signs of facility improvements, good explanations of why fees are charged, and awareness of fees prior to the visit.
- Efforts to promote fee-based recreation are often more successful if they focus on the quality of the recreation experience.
- Perceptions change over time after fees are instituted and, generally, levels of support for paying fees tend to increase.
- How the Forest Service addresses fee compliance and law enforcement affects public support, revenue generation, and program effectiveness.
- Actively reporting fee related accomplishments through posters, brochures, newsletters, and press releases can help build public support.



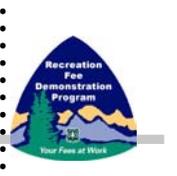
- Information regarding fees and how the revenue helps can mediate negative reactions to new fees and fee increases, especially information about immediate facility improvements, including habitat improvement projects.
- Visitors tend to prefer reasonable fee options, simplicity, equity and fairness, and good value (see the discussion on pricing that follows).
- Stakeholders and managers benefit from clearly stated program goals and specific descriptions of likely accomplishments (i.e., added value) from new fee revenue.
- Clear and flexible criteria are essential when deciding the proportion of recreation related costs that fee revenue should cover locally.
- Pricing decisions benefit from considering the need for revenue together with concerns about displacement, as well as four related concerns: fairness, equity, visitor's ability to pay, and congestion.
- A well-formed local management philosophy helps fee pricing decisions.
- Selecting revenue maximization as the main focus for charging fees is likely to price out many current visitors who will likely choose a similar, local area for their recreation.
- Designing an equitable and efficient fee system requires knowing and responding to basic socioeconomic characteristics of current visitors.
- Pricing decisions most easily affect low-income visitors and visitors with low discretionary income.
- Trends in local, regional, and national popularity of recreation activities are important to consider.
- The Forest Service has tried several innovative pricing strategies, often based upon visitor comments.
- Some visitors choose not to visit fee sites and, when new fees are instituted, are therefore displaced to sites they prefer.
- Some visitors choose to visit fee sites less frequently.
- Visitors who choose to visit less frequently or to visit another location because of fees may do so for economic reasons, philosophical objections, or both.
- Concerns about the effect of recreation fees on volunteerism are important.

## **Knowledge Gaps**

Part of the current understanding of issues and concerns is that gaps exist in the current knowledge about recreation fees and, more specifically, about the Forest Service's Recreational Fee Demonstration program. These gaps may exist as clearly stated research questions or as yet unexplored questions raised by those outside the traditional research community. The previous discussion of issues and concerns also describes each knowledge gap with an associated issue or concern. The following are the most apparent questions at this time:



- Whether and how the program affects other Forest Service programs.
- Whether and how alternatives to recreation fees, when evaluated against criteria such as feasibility, efficiency, equity, acceptability, and practicality, can help meet the need of maintaining and operating recreation sites and improving habitat affected by recreation.
- How potential Forest Service actions might affect low levels of social trust regarding recreation fee program management and public land management.
- What visitors mean when they say they want to see obvious results from spending recreation fee revenue.
- What managers mean by adequate and relevant research and what researchers can do to provide it as part of program evaluation efforts.
- Whether public involvement might serve as a way to ensure that the fee program evaluation focuses on public purposes in addition to financial analyses.
- Whether visitors are concerned about the opportunities and quality of opportunities for public involvement in this program.
- Whether perceptions of inequitable effects associated with fees change over time and what might reduce inequitable effects within the agency's control.
- Whether and how recreation fees might affect efforts to attract more diverse visitors, some of whom have low incomes and some of whom have low levels of disposable income.
- What evaluative criteria and methods are most responsive to issues and concerns related to equity and fairness while also most applicable to daily Forest Service business needs and budget realities and within agency control.
- How to evaluate recreation fee programs in a manner that is responsive to visitors, scientifically defensible, and relevant to regular Forest Service business needs at local, regional, and national levels.
- Whether a project funded by recreation fee revenue will change the character of immediate area in unwanted or unanticipated ways.
- Whether and how recreation fees affect visitor expectations.
- Whether agency understanding of public attitudes towards recreation fees sufficiently reflects attitudes of visitors who avoid sites where agencies charge recreation fees.
- Whether the increased role of recreation fees is changing the relationship between visitors and land managers to more of that between customer and seller, the effects or consequences of such a change if it is occurring, and whether the relationship might be characterized differently to avoid any unwanted consequences that are identified.
- How to address questions about recreation fees and pricing so that values, attitudes, and beliefs are simultaneously measured with traditional economic methods (neoclassical) and with other methods, including non-economic ones.
- Whether differential pricing strategies add undesired complexity to a fee program.



- Whether basic differential pricing strategies can capture the added value of popular times and locations.
- Whether differential pricing aggravates or mitigates concerns about real or feared inequities.
- Whether and how attitudes towards stewardship and volunteerism are affected by attitudes towards recreation fees and how to minimize any unwanted effect.
- What visitors mean when they say they want to see obvious results from spending recreation fee revenue.
- How to address the tension between (1) general public preferences for not having general access fees, (2) displacement that may occur in response to establishing a site-specific fee, and (3) general public preferences for not having land management agencies apply fees as a deliberate way to change visitation patterns through displacement.
- Whether and how recreation fees displace visitors during different seasons and how recreation fee prices might reflect that understanding.
- How to address broad social questions, such as whether certain basic conveniences, like restrooms, are most appropriately funded by appropriated tax dollars and base funding rather than by recreation fees revenue.
- How recreation fees might affect potential low-income visitors as compared with affecting actual visitors who have little disposable income.
- How equity might be interpreted by various sources (e.g., fair revenue distribution vs. fair pricing and treatment).
- Whether displacement that may occur when fees are established at scattered locations is more acceptable than disgruntlement towards general access fees at Forest Service sites.
- Whether displacement that may occur is a temporary effect for some visitors.
- Whether visitors who choose non-fee sites have a less-preferable recreation experience because of that choice.
- Whether efforts to ensure realistic visitor expectations reduce displacement or increase acceptance of the choice.
- Whether the possibly detrimental effect of recreation fees on volunteerism is actually occurring in specific situations and whether differential pricing or exchanges of service-in-kind for fees have addressed those concerns.



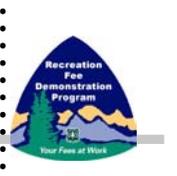
## Agency Adaptation and Innovation Regarding Issues and Concerns

Congress directed the Forest Service and three other federal land management agencies to implement a new recreation fee program on a demonstration and experimental basis aimed at exploring the program's feasibility. Since initiating the program, the agency has sought to innovatively adapt to public comments, research results, and management experience. The following are examples of that innovation:

- Since the first year of the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program, there has been a greater emphasis on interagency cooperation and coordination.
- The Forest Service has sought to make fees less confusing by working both internally and with other external agencies to simplify the fee program. An example of this is the Northwest Forest Pass.
- In 2000, the Forest Service became a part of the Interagency Recreational Fee Demonstration Program Coordination Task Force which was organized to facilitate interagency coordination.
- Recreation fee collection costs have continued to decline as projects with high collection costs have been modified or dropped.
- The FS has sought to improve pass sale convenience by using several different methods such as annual passes, auto-pay machines, internet sales, mail-order, and 1-800 number pass sales.
- In response to research and public comments, the Forest Service has tried to implement fees that are easy to pay and where fees stay at collection sites.
- After finding a lack of visitor support for access fees, the Forest Service has dropped several access fee programs and replaced them with fees for more developed recreation.
- After finding that compliance at dispersed sites is harder to enforce, the Forest Service has relied less on general access fees and also focused on providing better fee information to visitors, with warnings and citations as a last resort. The Forest Service has used local community concerns, user comments, and backlog information to determine how revenue recreation fee revenue will be spent.
- The Forest Service has actively sought public comments at local and national levels. The following website has further information: [Recreation Fees on National Forests \(http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/fee\\_demo/fee\\_intro.shtml\)](http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/fee_demo/fee_intro.shtml).
- A survey of visitors at several sites in the Mono Basin Scenic Area, with questions asked relating to customer service, suggested that the visitor center would function better as a free site because it is often used by first time visitors and visitors seeking information. As a result, the visitor center is now free.
- The Forest Service has funded research dealing with many aspects of recreation fees so as to better understand issues and concerns raised elsewhere.
- In response to visitor input, the agency modified the Adventure Pass project in Southern California to include free passes for volunteers and school groups and free days.



- The White Mountain National Forest project in New Hampshire and the Sawtooth project in Idaho dropped general access fees and replaced them with fees for designated sites. This change is based on expressed public concern and has brought increased program success.
- Shasta Trinity NF decided not to implement an access pass based on expressed local concerns. Instead, they instituted fees for specific sites.
- The public was confused and frustrated over the complexity and number of fees in the Northwest. In 2000, the Northwest Forest Pass was made official. This pass covers day use fees in Oregon and Washington.
- Throughout the life of the Recreational Fee Demonstration program, the Forest Service has sought to ensure that fees do not have a negative effect on any category of visitor. This is re-stressed in the 1999 report to Congress.
- In 1999, with a move unique to the agency, the Forest Service required fee demo projects to amend their business plans to include information designed to mitigate the effect of fees on non-traditional groups. The agency requires a civil rights impact assessment for every project.
- To provide additional choices to everyone, the FS has introduced reasonably priced annual passes, free days, and free passes to volunteers.
- A free day-use parking pass for low-income forest visitors was implemented on the Prescott National Forest to reduce the impact of fees on certain populations. A Forest Service evaluation of this project considered it to be a success.
- Fees per by car rather than by individual were another way the Forest Service has used to reduce the effect on families.
- The Forest Service has sought and established innovative approaches to fee implementation as requested by Congress and recognized by the GAO.
- Project coordinators must review and update business plans, communication plans, and the civil rights impact analysis yearly. The FS also has set criteria for measuring program success based on equity, efficiency, consistency, revenue production, and revenue distribution.
- Local project managers are given wide discretion on how to use fee revenues. Regional boards have been set up to monitor, evaluate, provide oversight, and coordination for fee projects in their region.
- Regional boards have been given the responsibility to oversee fee projects. They conduct periodic reviews of each project. The Washington Office also reviews one or more regions each year. Fiscal reviews of accounting and cash handling occur more for every region.
- Region 6 provides a good example of regional monitoring and evaluation. This region regularly updates its business plans, and actively highlights its accomplishments. One forest in the region worked with their civil rights coordinator to plan and implement fees. Another forest coordinated with their forest accountant to support management decision making. The region regularly conducts research to gather feedback from users and residents.



- The Enterprise Forest-Adventure Pass Program in California has provided for monitoring various aspects of the program such as public support and collection operations. The agency has also increased use of technology to manage fee projects within the program. One of the highlights of this program is that crime has been reduced in nearby urban national forests. The program is fairly standardized and consistent over 3.8 million acres.
- The Forest Service has sought to address inequitable effects, as discussed earlier in this document, and, in doing so, addressed the most likely economic reasons for displacement.
- The Forest Service has sought to address philosophical objections to recreation fees indirectly through actions addressing concerns about the acceptability of fees while continuing to recognize that those whose objections remain largely philosophical are expressing personal choices regarding an issue and concern largely beyond direct agency control.
- In some areas, the Forest Service has instituted a program that rewards volunteers with free passes.

## Conclusions

This document provides a summary description of issues and concerns, lessons learned, knowledge gaps, and agency innovations related to its Recreational Fee Demonstration program. Based upon this material, the following conclusions are worth consideration:

- The two years of remaining temporary authorization provide an opportunity to revise the demonstration program in response to issues and concerns, address knowledge gaps in response to agency and congressional goals for the program, and continue agency innovations in response to lessons learned.
- Wide distribution of this document, as well as the two related supplemental documents, is a means to share information with interested individuals and organizations.
- Those who read this document are encouraged to see it as a valuable summary of all the information invested in by the Forest Service as it tested the feasibility of the demonstration program and innovatively adapted to issues and concerns as they became apparent.
- Additional innovation will follow from continuing to pay attention to lessons already learned, including lessons regarding issues and concerns, and continuing to seek more learning through management-oriented research.
- A management-oriented research program can extend the Recreation Fee Demonstration program's potential for innovation if the research program seeks first to address knowledge gaps identified in this document, to identify additional knowledge gaps, and to set priorities for addressing the combined set of knowledge gaps.
- The Forest Service's mature approach towards testing the feasibility of its Recreational Fee Demonstration Program is shown by its willingness to identify issues and concerns, attempt innovative changes, look for knowledge gaps, and learn from its efforts.



## **Analysis Framework and Document Structure**

This document contributes to revising the Forest Service's Recreational Fee Demonstration program. It summarizes published literature and research as well as additional source materials including reports from the General Accounting Office and Congressional Research Service, media reports, unpublished internal observations, available public comments, and other more anecdotal material.

The framework for this document is drawn from the following basic set of questions that can promote strategic thinking and help distinguish between accepted knowledge, disputed knowledge, and gaps in knowledge:

- What problems and benefits have been, are, or might be associated with the Forest Service's Recreational Fee Demonstration program, regardless of who raises them?
- What goals or objectives have been suggested that might guide the program so as to address those problems while realizing the benefits?
- What obstacles, whether internal or external to the agency, might get in the way of meeting those goals?
- What actions might take us where we want?
- What information might tell us if we are moving in the desired direction?

## **Document Background and Analysis Method**

The USDA Forest Service's Collaboration Services team produced this document during December, 2001, and January, 2002. CST is part of the Content Analysis Team (CAT), based in Salt Lake City, Utah, and part of the agency's Ecosystem Management Coordination staff, Washington Office. The work was done under contract with the Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Program, also part of the Forest Service's Washington Office.

Methods applied during this analysis began with developing a meta-analytical framework of issues and concerns based upon a rapid assessment of source materials. A meta-analytical framework, as applied here, is a summary set of the key questions or topics regarding the USDA Forest Service's Recreational Fee Demonstration program. The questions were either explicit or implicit to the source material and directly related to the revision effort's need for strategic thinking and an eventual decision.

Following the initial meta-analysis, the next phase was to validate and detail the results by going through the source material more carefully. During the second phase, questions identified in the meta-analysis were clarified, rearranged, and detailed. At that point, other issues and concerns became more apparent, as did relationships between the issues and concerns.

For the purposes of this document, issues and concerns are treated synonymously. Some issues and concerns help identify possible problems, weakness, or negative effects associated with the program. Other issues and concerns reflect possible problems that



might follow from changing or ending a recreation fee program. In that second sense, the issue or concern points at a perceived strength of the existing program that the eventually revised program might retain. Wherever possible, a distinction is made between questions addressed by research and questions that have not been addressed by research, as well as questions raised because of research.

Citation of this document should occur with the following format:

U.S. Department of Agriculture. Forest Service. 2002. Issues and Concerns Related to the USDA Forest Service's Recreational Fee Demonstration Program: A Synthesis of Published Literature, Critical Reports, Media Reports, Public Comments, and Likely Knowledge Gaps, by Peter B. Williams and Justin Black, USDA-Forest Service, Content Analysis Enterprise Team. Report to Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Program, USDA-Forest Service. Logan, Utah: USDA-Forest Service.

The two related supplemental documents have the following citations:

U.S. Department of Agriculture. Forest Service. 2002. Supplement 1: Short Index of Additional Readings Related to Recreation Fees and the USDA Forest Service's Recreational Fee Demonstration Program, by Peter B. Williams and Justin Black, USDA-Forest Service, Content Analysis Enterprise Team. Report to Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Program, USDA-Forest Service. Logan, Utah: USDA-Forest Service.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. Forest Service. 2002. Supplement 2: Extended Index of Additional Readings Related to Recreation Fees and the USDA-Forest Service's Recreational Fee Demonstration Program, by Peter B. Williams and Justin Black, USDA-Forest Service, Content Analysis Enterprise Team. Report to Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Program, USDA-Forest Service. Logan, Utah: USDA-Forest Service.

## Source Material

A primary source for this document is an annotated bibliography completed in 1999 by staff of the USDA Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station. It contains descriptions of 294 research publications related to recreation fees or the Recreational Fee Demonstration program and published between 1963 and 1999. That document is currently an unpublished reference resource available electronically and publicly on the Internet at [Recreation Fee Bibliography - Wildland Resource Valuation](http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/value/research-recfee_bibliog.html) or through the following direct address: ([http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/value/research-recfee\\_bibliog.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/value/research-recfee_bibliog.html)).

Other significant sources include Congressional Hearing testimony, annual agency reports submitted to Congress, reports related to Individual Recreation Fee Demonstration program pilot projects, and reports compiled by the General Accounting Office and Congressional Research Service. The Forest Service distributes electronic copies of annual agency reports and other materials related to the program through the [Recreation Fees on National Forests](http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/fee_demo/fee_intro.shtml) website. A direct link to the site is available at the following internet address: ([http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/fee\\_demo/fee\\_intro.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/fee_demo/fee_intro.shtml)).

General Accounting Office reports are available at the [Find GAO Reports](http://www.gao.gov/docdb/lite/form.php?entry=1) website and the | GAO Reports | Find GAO Reports | menu options where a search under the keyword "recreation" will find the relevant reports. The direct link is available at <http://www.gao.gov/docdb/lite/form.php?entry=1>.



Congressional Research Service's nonpartisan reports related to the Recreational Fee Demonstration program are redistributed through the Library of Congress's National Library for the Environment website at [Congressional Research Service Reports at the National Library for the Environment \(NLE\)](http://cnie.org/NLE/CRS/) which is at <http://cnie.org/NLE/CRS/>.

A rapid review of public comments submitted in recent years to the Forest Service's Recreational Demonstration Fee program website looked for any comments that added to the list of issues and concerns that had emerged from other sources. No comment added a new issue or concern not already noted, yet the review helped ensure that this work was not overlooking a noticeable topic. The review also ensured that comments from citizens contributed directly to the understanding of issues and concerns. The Forest Service's current website for its Recreational Fee Demonstration program and related information is reached at: [Recreation Fees on National Forests \(http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/fee\\_demo/fee\\_intro.shtml\)](http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/fee_demo/fee_intro.shtml).

Material presented in this document characterizes the breadth and range of issues and concerns relevant to the Recreational Fee Demonstration program. Except in a few general cases, the document does not reflect the amount or degree of either support or opposition associated with any particular issue or concern. Where possible, the document presents recognizable arguments for addressing a given issue or concern in a particular way. Work to prepare this document did not include collecting any original data through surveys, interviews, or any other mechanism.