

Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

USDA Forest Service Eastern Region

Fee Proposal

National Forest, State: Monongahela NF, WV

Site Type: Cabin

FLREA Fee Type: Expanded Amenity

Type of Proposal: Fee increase.

Site Description: The historic Middle Mountain Cabins are secluded and offer a quiet retreat for all who visit.

Rented as a single unit, Middle Mountain Cabins includes a main cabin with a kitchen and two sleeping cabins. The rate is the same whether one or all of the cabins are used. All cabins have fireplaces. Firewood is available on site. There is no water in the cabin, but an outside hand-pump for drinking water is available. One vault toilet is located on site. There is no electric available. Each sleeping cabin contains two sets of bunk beds, while the main cabin contains one full size bed and a bunk bed for a total site capacity of twelve people. The kitchen cabin includes a gas stove and refrigerator, kitchen cabinets, a table and six chairs, two lounge chairs, some pots, pans, dishes and silverware. May be reserved through the National Recreation Reservation Service for an additional fee.

Proposed Action: Raise fee from \$35 to \$75/night and include an incentive discount of \$60/night after the first 2 nights.

Current Fee: The fee was \$50 until May 19, 2002 when the main cabin burned down. The Forest Service reduced the price to \$35/night because the main cabin housed the kitchen/gathering facilities. The main cabin has been rebuilt since 2005.

Amount Increase: \$25

Date of Last Increase: 1999

Reason for New Fee or Fee Change: The reason for the fee change is to reflect recent improvements and to reflect fees of similar facilities nearby. Customers were used to paying \$50/night until the fire burned the main cabin. After the fire many customers were supportive of its rebuilding. Similar facilities nearby Middle Mountain Cabin charge even more than our proposed fee. Also loss of the SCSEP program.

If recommended, the fee increase will be used for: improvements, operations and maintenance.

If recommended, the proposal will be implemented: January 1, 2008

Benchmark Price Comparisons for Similar Facilities & Services:

- **Forest Service:** There are no other cabin rentals on the Monongahela NF.
- **Local Private and Public Providers:**

Kumbrabow State Forest:

Spring/Fall Rental: 8 person cabins \$99/night plus \$40/night for 4 additional cots with similar amenities for the first 2 nights.

Two night total: \$206 plus tax for 12 people

Additional nights: \$129 plus tax for 12 people

Summer Rental: Full week rental only: 8 person cabins \$465 plus \$40 x 7 days or \$745 per week for 12 persons.

Seneca State Forest

Memorial Day to Labor Day: 3 day minimum stay (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)

Weeknights are \$95.92 for 10 people or \$117.72 for 12 people

Weekends with 3-day minimum stay are \$333.54 for 10 people or \$420.74 for 12 people.

State forest cabins provide linens.

The Forest Service cabin is isolated, nestled near the Laurel Fork South Wilderness, near hiking and biking trails, near the West Fork Rail-Trail and offers a unique and remote cabin experience unlike the state cabins which are located within state parks and are often surrounded by other cabins, and other park facilities.

Public Participation:

- **Methods:** After the May 19, 2002 fire burned the main cabin facility, there was so much public and congressional support that we were able to

secure funds to rebuild the cabin. The public was used to paying \$50/night until the cabin burned and would support paying that as a minimum. The new cabin is a great asset to the site and the public has thoroughly enjoyed using the cabins. Since the new cabin was built in 2005 the Forest website has indicated that the price could be raised. A letter to customers indicating the proposed fee increase was posted on the cabin in May 2007 and news releases were put into the Inter-Mountain newspaper in Elkins, WV on June 23, 2007 and the Pocahontas Times, Marlinton, WV on June 21, 2007. There were no concerns identified during Congressional contacts.

- **Results:** No phone calls about price increase were received. One letter supported the fee increase but did not support the reduced rate for longer stays and a letter indicating that they thought the price increase was too high.

Public Participation

Method	Date(s)	Comments/Results
Posted notice at recreation site inviting comments on the proposal (2 months minimum during visitor season)	May 7, 2007 - Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Service officers had many conversations with campers: most comments were supportive, all comments showed an understanding of the need for fee increases. Only 2 written comments were received. One letter supporting the fee increase but not supporting the reduced rate for longer stays and a letter indicating that they thought the price increase was too high.

News release and/or notice in local papers inviting comments on the proposal	June 21 and 23, 2007, news releases in two local papers	No comments were received that could be directly tied to the news releases.
Briefed local elected officials on the proposal. List names of officials.	August 15-16, 2007 Congressman Rahall's office (Kim McMillion, Paul Gay from Senator Byrd's office and John Richards from Senator Rockefeller's office.	Informal conversations between Forest Legislative Affairs Officer and Congressional Staffers generally supported the fee increases, no concerns were expressed. In some cases where detailed voice mail messages about the proposals and asking for a return call if they had any issues or concerns, no returned calls were received.
Met with affected stakeholder groups to get input on the proposal	Contacts made with local service clubs, CVB, Chamber Of Commerce	Informal conversations resulted in supportive comments
Posted proposal on Forest Website	June 25, 2007	One e-mail received, in support of the proposal
Other methods		

Analysis: There is public and congressional support for the proposed fee.