

Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

US Forest Service Eastern Region

National Forest, State: Ottawa National Forest, Michigan

Site Type: Seasonal Boat Mooring

FLREA Fee Type: Special Recreation Permit

Type of proposal: Fee Increase

Site Description: Black River Harbor is located along the south shore of Lake Superior. This Harbor of Refuge provides seasonal and transient docking, electrical hook-ups, fuel, water, ice, restrooms, holding tank (septic) pump-out, launch ramp, concession stand, marine radio, phone, grills, and tables.

Fees:

Term	Boat	Current	Proposed
Season-long (May-Oct.)	Deep draft	\$12/ft.	\$17/ft.
	Regular draft	\$11/ft.	\$16/ft.
Transient	0-19'	\$7/night	\$12/night
	20-29'	\$10/night	\$15/night
	30-39'	\$15/night	\$20/night
	40-49'	\$20/night	\$25/night
Nov. - April	All	\$0	\$0

Amount of Increase: \$5.

Date of Last Increase: 2002.

Reason for New Fee or Fee Change: To keep pace with inflation and to continue to provide the same level and quality of existing services. Black River Harbor docking fees are priced to not pose an unfair advantage to other recreation providers by being either over- or under-priced. Other nearby non-Forest Service marinas have routinely raised fees.

If recommended, the fee increase will be used for: Maintenance and operation of the Black River Harbor Marina. This includes maintenance of the amenities identified above and occasional dredging of the harbor.

If recommended, the fee increase will be implemented: May 1, 2008.

Price Comparisons for Similar Facilities & Services:

- **Forest Service:** The method for determining fees for seasonal and transient docking is based on an analysis of fair market rental evidence for marinas in the area.
- **Local Private and Public Providers:** There are two, reasonably similar, developed marinas to Black River: Ontonagon and Saxon. Both harbors are publicly owned, have similar amenities, and are located in close nautical proximity. Market data from the Ontonagon and Saxon harbors was used to determine the fair market value for docking fees at Black River Harbor.

SEASONALDOCKINGRATES ¹

HARBOR		2002	2005	2007
Ontonagon (Public)		\$18.80	\$22.00	\$33.00
Saxon (Public)	Iron Co. resident	\$12.50	\$14.30 (min. \$345.00)	\$17.20 (min. \$440.00)
	non- Iron Co. resident	\$15.00	\$17.25 (min. \$402.00)	\$19.00 (min. \$480.00)
Black River		\$11/\$12	\$11/\$12	\$11/\$12

¹Pricesperlinealfoot

Public Participation:

Method	Date(s)	Comments/Results
Posted notice at recreation site inviting comments on the proposal (2 months minimum during visitor season)	July 2007	No comments received to date.
News release and/or notice in local papers inviting comments on the proposal (if news release is not printed, place a paid notice in the newspaper)	8/17/2007	No comments received to date.
Briefed local elected officials on the proposal.	8/8/2007: Gogebic Co. Commissioners Morin, Oliver, Siirala,	Support. Had discussed informally with most of the Commissioners several times

	Gerovac, Kangas, Jacobson, Bonovetz, Anonich, & Peterson	previously.
Met with affected stakeholder groups to get input on the proposal.	Each current seasonal dock permittee received a letter in the Spring of 2006 and again, in 2007, advising of a potential fee increase.	No comments received to date.
Posted Federal Register Notice.		
Posted proposal on Forest Website	8/16/2007	No comments received to date.

Analysis: There is public support for the proposed fee. Extensive outreach to the public and local representatives generated little opposition to the proposal.

After discussions with boaters, local harbor managers, and others knowledgeable about boat docking facilities, a list of 21 factors was developed to compare docking facilities. At present, the Black River Harbor facility offers slightly fewer on-site services and facilities than Saxon; with the Ontonagon Marina superior to both. The availability of services, harbor conditions, and facilities are reflected in the fee differences for each marina.

From 2002 to 2007, the seasonal rates at the Ontonagon Marina increased 43%. Saxon Harbor rates increased 27% for non-county residents and 21% for county residents. The Forest Service has not increased seasonal docking fees at Black River since 2002. Since all three marinas have waiting lists of boaters seeking seasonal docking space, dock space demand does not appear to be a major contributing factor in the price of docking fees.

Since the usage impacts from personal and charter boats are similar, it is recommended that fees for both personal pleasure and charter boat remain identical. Currently, none of the three facilities charges a different fee for charter operations.