

Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

US Forest Service- Eastern Region Fee Proposal

National Forest, State: Monongahela National Forest,
West Virginia

Site Type: Campsites

FLREA Fee Type: Special Recreation Permit

Type of proposal: New fee



Site Description:

30 developed campsites along the Williams River and 14 on the Cranberry River, on the Gauley and Marlinton Ranger Districts. Within these two river corridors, camping is restricted to numbered sites only. All are adjacent to Forest Service roads. Each Development Level 2 campsite includes a graveled parking spur and camping area defined by boulders or posts. Available amenities include an accessible table and fire ring, a lantern post, and an accessible, animal-resistant trash container. Accessible toilet facilities are dispersed throughout the corridors.

Proposed Action: implement a new fee.

Current Fee: none

Proposed Fee: \$5 per night



Reason for proposing a new fee:

Camping within these two river corridors has been extremely popular for decades. Prior to 1985, camping was unregulated, which led to environmental and social concerns, including soil compaction and erosion, loss of vegetation, littering, and overcrowding. Many campers attempted to over-extend their stay, creating law enforcement concerns. This condition led to a Forest Supervisor's Order, limiting camping to the numbered campsites and in developed campgrounds. This Order is still in effect. The 44 campsites provide 7 of the 9 amenities required at fee campgrounds. Regularly scheduled cleaning and trash collection are provided at each site. Prior to 2007, enrollees of the Department of Labor, Senior Community

Service Employment Program (SCSEP) accomplished this task. The loss of the SCSEP program resulted in increased operations and maintenance expenses due to labor costs. In addition, campers often stay longer than the 14-day camping limit at these sites (locally known as "homesteading"). The most common remark received from the public is related to frustration over the current situation. Many campers stated they hoped a fee would reduce or eliminate this problem, making campsites more available for more people.

If approved, the fee will be used for: operations and maintenance, and construction of additional toilet facilities, as funding allows.

If approved, the proposal will be implemented April 2009.

Free camping will continue to be available in the general forest area.

Price Comparisons for Similar Facilities & Services:

Forest Service: Monongahela NF: Big Rock, Cranberry, and Tea Creek

Campgrounds: \$10/night

Monongahela NF: Bishop Knob and Day Run Campgrounds: \$8/night

There are no similar facilities on private lands nearby; the nearest public facility is a West Virginia DNR primitive campground at the Handley Public Hunting and Fishing Area: \$10/night.

Public Participation

Method	Date(s)	Comments/Results
Posted notice at recreation site inviting comments on the proposal	June 2007 to present	An estimated 17,000 campers viewed the posters. Compliance officers had many conversations with campers. Most comments were supportive.
News release and/or notice in local papers inviting comments on the proposal	6/14 & 7/5/2007: Pocahontas Times (circ. 5,650) Nicholas Chronicle (circ. 9,000)	No comments were received that could be directly tied to the news releases.

Briefed local elected officials and Tribal leaders on the proposal	8/2007: Forest Public Affairs Officer informed Congressional staffers for Senators Byrd and Rockefeller, and Congressman Rahall. District Ranger informed Pocahontas County Commissioners Reta Griffith, James Carpenter, and Martin Saffer.	Congressional staffers had no concerns. County Commissioners either expressed support, or had no concerns. There is no tribal presence in the project area. No tribal contacts were made.
Met with affected stakeholder groups for input on the proposal	Summer 2007: contacts with local service clubs, Pocahontas County CVB, Richwood Chamber of Commerce, WVDNR Area Game Manager.	Informal conversations resulted in supportive comments.
Posted Federal Register Notice	9/17/2007	No comments received.
Posted proposal on Forest Website	6/25/2007	1 email, in support.
Other methods		

Analysis

There is public and congressional support for the proposed fee. The two most common public comments received related to the concern over homesteading at these sites and the use of fees. There is a common belief that fees will help reduce the homesteading problem. Users were also supportive when they learned the fees would help manage and improve these campsites.