

# Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

US Forest Service Eastern Region

Fee Proposal

February 26, 2008

**National Forest, State:** Hiawatha National Forest, Michigan

**Site Type:** Campgrounds

**FLREA Fee Type:** Expanded Amenity

**Type of proposal:** Fee Increase

**Site Description:** Campsites are located on the West unit of the Forest. The 56 individual campsites are extremely popular among campers who love the uncrowded, natural settings. The majority are located on inland lakes. These rustic campsites (development level 2) all have tent or trailer spaces, access roads, visitor protection, campfire rings, fee collection and most have toilets. These sites are so popular that reservations are taken through a lottery process. Please refer to the attachment for a listing of the individual sites.



**Current Fee:** Camping permits for the campsites are currently \$10 for stays of 1-3 nights and \$20 for stays of 4-7 nights.

**Proposed Fee:** The proposed fee for these sites is a flat \$8.00 per night.

**Amount Increase:** At the current \$10 permit fee, a one night stay is \$10 per night and a 3 night stay is \$3.33 per night. At the current \$20 permit fee, a 4 night stay is \$5.00 per night and a 7 night stay is \$2.86 per night. Based on the current multiple night fee structure the amount of increase or decrease per night

varies based on the number of nights the site is occupied. Current range of fees: \$2.86 to \$10 per night.

**Date of Last Increase:** 1999

**Reason for Fee Change:** Fees were instituted in 1999. The Forest increased the number of toilets from 9 to 26 throughout the 56 campgrounds. The vault pumping costs rose from \$400 to \$3950 per year. The Forest installed the additional toilets because use at many of the sites is extremely high and campsites were developing health and safety concerns.

Changes in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) contract with the Department of Labor now require the Forest to incur the cost of a seasonal employee for 6 months. The key change in the program is that the seniors can no longer drive government vehicles. The seasonal employee drives and works with the seniors to clean and maintain the campgrounds. Fee revenues are no longer sufficient to cover the costs for the seasonal patrol rangers, resource protection projects, vault pumping and routine maintenance. The proposed fee increase will reduce the need for as much appropriated funding to manage this program. This would help the Forest continue to provide safe, high quality recreation facilities and a great outdoor experience to Forest visitors.

**If approved, the additional funds will be used for:** Hiring a seasonal employee for 6 months to drive the workforce to the recreation sites to conduct their work, hiring a seasonal Forest Protection Officer to patrol recreation areas on weekends, assist with deferred maintenance and resource protection projects, pumping the vault toilets, completing water samples and tests, purchasing materials and supplies, and implementing resource protection projects.

**If approved, the proposal will be implemented:** As soon as possible

**Price Comparisons for Similar Facilities & Services:**

**Forest Service:**

On the Hiawatha NF, campsites at slightly higher development level (development level 3) are typically \$9.00 per night.

Elsewhere across the Region, the price for single campsites with similar development levels range from \$7 to \$14 per site.

**Local Private and Public Providers:**

The State of Michigan offers rustic campsites at state forest campgrounds for \$15 per night. At state park campgrounds, the cost of rustic campsites is \$10 to \$14 per night.

There are no private providers who offer campsites at this development level.

## Public Participation

Method	Date(s)	Comments/Results
Posted notice at recreation site inviting comments on the proposal (2 months minimum during peak visitor season)	August 2007	Very little response to postings. See "Other Methods" below
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)	August 2007	Very little response to news releases. See "Other Methods" below.
Briefed local elected officials on the proposal. List names of officials.	January 2008	Morgan Tatrow, Garden Twp; Al Unger, Inwood Twp; Dorothy Rochefort, Thompson Twp; Dan Wilson, Munising Twp; Sen Debbie Stabenow; Sen Carl Levin; Rep Bart Stupak
Met with affected stakeholder groups to get input on the proposal	August 13, 2007	Stakeholders were contacted through direct mailing. See "Other Methods" below
Posted Federal Register Notice. Required for new fees.	Not a new fee	Not applicable
Posted proposal on Forest Website	August 2007	Very little response to web posting. See "Other Methods" below
<p><b>Other methods:</b> The Forest first scoped a fee increase in 2005 with 552 campers who used these campgrounds the previous year, and found broad support for an increase at that time.</p> <p>With the changed SCSEP program, the Forest re-scoped a higher fee than was proposed in 2005. In 2007 scoping letters were mailed to the 657 campers who visited these campgrounds in 2006, asking them for their comments on the proposed fee increase.</p>	August 13, 2007	The Forest received 66 comments on the 2007 proposed fee increase. Most of the responses were received as a result of the direct mailing rather than other postings. Fifty-nine (59%) of those who responded were supportive and understanding of a fee increase. Six percent (6%) were supportive of the fee increase if additional services were provided. Thirty percent (30%) supported alternative fee increases lower than our proposal. Only five percent (5%) did not support a fee increase.

**Analysis:** There is general public support for the proposed fee. The fee increase will better enable the Forest to continue to provide high quality, safe camping opportunities on the forest.

Attachment 1

Listing of campgrounds included in this proposal:

Bass Lake	1 site
Bear Lake	1 site
Carr Lake	1 site
Camp Cook	4 sites
Chicago Lake	4 sites
Cookson	5 sites
Council Lake	4 sites
Crooked Lake	1 site
East Lake	3 sites
Ewing Point	1 site
Gooseneck Lake	4 sites
Ironjaw Lake	1 site
Jackpine Lake	2 sites
Lake 19	1 site
Leg Lake	2 sites
Lyman Lake	10 sites
Minerva	1 site
Mowe Lake	2 sites
Steuben lake	2 sites
Swan Lake	4 sites
Triangle Lake	2 sites