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subject to the notice and appeal procedures at 36 CFR part 215 and shall be made within 48 hours after the decision becomes final under that appeal process. A denial of an application under paragraphs (g)(3)(ii)(A) through (g)(3)(ii)(H) of this section constitutes final agency action and is immediately subject to judicial review.

(4) *Response to all other applications.* Based on evaluation of the information provided by the applicant and other relevant information such as environmental findings, the authorized officer shall decide whether to approve the proposed use, approve the proposed use with modifications, or deny the proposed use. A group of applications for similar uses having minor environmental impacts may be evaluated with one analysis and approved in one decision.

(5) *Authorization of a special use.* Upon a decision to approve a special use or a group of similar special uses, the authorized officer may issue one or more special use authorizations as defined in § 251.51 of this subpart.

[63 FR 65964, Nov. 30, 1998]

§ 251.55 Nature of interest.

(a) A holder is authorized only to occupy such land and structures and conduct such activities as is specified in the special use authorization. The holder may sublet the use and occupancy of the premises and improvements authorized only with the prior written approval of the authorized officer, but the holder shall continue to be responsible for compliance with all conditions of the special use authorization.

(b) All rights not expressly granted are retained by the United States, including but not limited to (1) continuing rights of access to all National Forest System land (including the subsurface and air space); (2) a continuing right of physical entry to any part of the authorized facilities for inspection, monitoring, or for any other purposes or reason consistent with any right or obligation of the United States under any law or regulation; and (3) the right to require common use of the land or to authorize the use by others in any way not inconsistent with a holder's existing rights and privileges after con-

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sultation with all parties and agencies involved. When costs can be feasibly allocated and have not been amortized, a new holder may be required to compensate existing holders for an equitable proportion of the original costs or other expense associated with the common use.

(c) Special use authorizations are subject to all outstanding valid rights.

(d) Each special use authorization will specify the lands to be used or occupied which shall be limited to that which the authorized officer determines: (1) Will be occupied by the facilities authorized; (2) to be necessary for the construction, operation, maintenance, and full utilization of the authorized facilities or the conduct of authorized activities; and, (3) to be necessary to protect the public health and safety and the environment.

(e) The holder will secure permission under applicable law, and pay in advance, the value as determined by the authorized officer for any mineral and vegetative materials (including timber) to be cut, removed, used, or destroyed by the holder from the authorized use area or other National Forest System land. The authorized officer may, in lieu of requiring an advance payment, require the holder to stockpile or stack the material at designated locations for later disposal by the United States.

§ 251.56 Terms and conditions.

(a) *General.* (1) Each special use authorization must contain:

(i) Terms and conditions which will:

(A) Carry out the purposes of applicable statutes and rules and regulations issued thereunder;

(B) Minimize damage to scenic and esthetic values and fish and wildlife habitat and otherwise protect the environment;

(C) Require compliance with applicable air and water quality standards established by or pursuant to applicable Federal or State law; and

(D) Require compliance with State standards for public health and safety, environmental protection, and siting, construction, operation, and maintenance if those standards are more stringent than applicable Federal standards.

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(ii) Such terms and conditions as the authorized officer deems necessary to:

(A) Protect Federal property and economic interests;

(B) Manage efficiently the lands subject to the use and adjacent thereto;

(C) Protect other lawful users of the lands adjacent to or occupied by such use;

(D) Protect lives and property;

(E) Protect the interests of individuals living in the general area of the use who rely on the fish, wildlife, and other biotic resources of the area for subsistence purposes;

(F) Require siting to cause the least damage to the environment, taking into consideration feasibility and other relevant factors; and

(G) Otherwise protect the public interest.

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (a)(1)(ii)(G): The Department is making explicit its preexisting understanding of § 251.56(a)(1)(ii)(G) of this subpart in the context of authorizing non-commercial group uses of National Forest System lands. Section 251.56(a)(1)(ii)(G) provides that each special use authorization shall contain such terms and conditions as the authorized officer deems necessary to otherwise protect the public interest. In the context of noncommercial group uses, the Forest Service interprets the term "public interest" found in § 251.56(a)(1)(ii)(G) to refer to the three public interests identified by the Forest Service on August 30, 1995. These public interests include the protection of resources and improvements on National Forest System lands, the allocation of space among potential or existing uses and activities, and public health and safety concerns. Under this construction, § 251.56(a)(1)(ii)(G) allows the Forest Service to impose terms and conditions that are not specifically addressed in § 251.56(a)(1)(ii)(A)-(F) but only those that further these public interests. The Forest Service shall implement and enforce § 251.56(a)(1)(ii)(G) in accordance with this interpretation.

(2) Authorizations for use of National Forest System lands may be conditioned to require State, county, or other Federal agency licenses, permits, certificates, or other approval documents, such as a Federal Communication Commission license, a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license, a State water right, or a county building permit.

(b) *Duration and renewability*—(1) *Requirements*. If appropriate, each special

use authorization will specify its duration and renewability. The duration shall be no longer than the authorized officer determines to be necessary to accomplish the purpose of the authorization and to be reasonable in light of all circumstances concerning the use, including

(i) Resource management direction contained in land management and other plans;

(ii) Public benefits provided;

(iii) Cost and life expectancy of the authorized facilities;

(iv) Financial arrangements for the project; and

(v) The life expectancy of associated facilities, licenses, etc. Except for special use authorizations issued under the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986, authorizations exceeding 30 years shall provide for revision of terms and conditions at specified intervals to reflect changing times and conditions.

(2) *Ski area permits*. (i) For authorizations issued under the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986, the authorized officer normally shall issue a ski area authorization for 40 years, if, upon consideration of information submitted by the applicant, the authorized officer finds that the ski area development meets the following standards:

(A) In the case of an existing permit holder, existing on-site investment is of sufficient magnitude to justify authorization for 40 years;

(B) In the case of an existing permit holder, existing investment of capital is in ski-related facilities;

(C) Planned investment capital is directly related to development of ski area facilities and is not for financing regular, ongoing operation and maintenance costs;

(D) Ski facilities requiring long-term investment are, or will be, located predominantly on land authorized under a permit;

(E) The number and magnitude of planned facilities, as detailed in a Master Development Plan, clearly require long-term financing and/or operation;

(F) The United States is not the owner of the principal facilities within the authorized ski area.

(ii) A term of less than 40 years shall be authorized for a ski area when the

applicant requests a shorter term or when, in the authorized officer's discretion:

(A) Analysis of the information submitted by the applicant indicates that a shorter term is sufficient for financing of the ski area;

(B) The ski area development, whether existing or proposed, does not meet the standards of paragraph (2)(i)(A) through (F) of this section; or

(C) A 40-year authorization would be inconsistent with the approved forest land and resource management plan governing the area (36 CFR part 219).

(c) *Preconstruction approvals.* Forest Service approval of location, design and plans (or standards, if appropriate) of all developments within the authorized area will be required prior to construction.

(d) *Liability.* Holders shall pay the United States for all injury, loss, or damage, including fire suppression costs, in accordance with existing Federal and State laws.

(1) Holders shall also indemnify the United States for any and all injury, loss, or damage, including fire suppression costs, the United States may suffer as a result of claims, demands, losses, or judgments caused by the holder's use or occupancy.

(2) Holders of special use authorizations for high risk use and occupancy, such as, but not limited to, powerlines and oil and gas pipelines, shall be held liable for all injury, loss, or damage, including fire suppression costs, caused by the holder's use or occupancy, without regard to the holder's negligence, provided that maximum liability shall be specified in the special use authorization as determined by a risk assessment, prepared in accordance with established agency procedures, but shall not exceed \$1,000,000 for any one occurrence. Liability for injury, loss, or damage, including fire suppression costs, in excess of the specified maximum shall be determined by the laws governing ordinary negligence of the jurisdiction in which the damage or injury occurred.

(e) *Bonding.* An authorized officer may require the holder of a special use authorization for other than a non-commercial group use to furnish a bond or other security to secure all or any of

the obligations imposed by the terms of the authorization or by any applicable law, regulation or order.

(f) *Special terms and conditions— (1) Public service enterprises.* Special use permits authorizing the operation of public service enterprises shall require that the permittee charge reasonable rates and furnish such services as may be necessary in the public interest, except where such rates and services are regulated by Federal, State or municipal agencies having jurisdiction.

(2) *Common carriers.* Oil and gas pipelines and related facilities authorized under section 28 of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, 41 Stat. 449, as amended (30 U.S.C. 185), shall be constructed, operated and maintained as common carriers. The owners or operators of pipelines shall accept, convey, transport, or purchase without discrimination all oil or gas delivered to the pipeline without regard to whether such oil or gas was produced on Federal or nonfederal lands. In the case of oil or gas produced from Federal lands or from the resources on the Federal lands in the vicinity of the pipeline, the Secretary may, after a full hearing with due notice thereof to interested parties and a proper finding of facts, determine the proportionate amounts to be accepted, conveyed, transported, or purchased. The common carrier provisions of this section shall not apply to any natural gas pipeline operated (i) by any person subject to regulation under the Natural Gas Act, 52 Stat. 821, as amended, (15 U.S.C. 717) or (ii) by any public utility subject to regulation by a State or municipal regulatory agency having jurisdiction to regulate the rates and charges for the sale of natural gas to consumers within the State or municipality. Where natural gas not subject to State regulatory or conservation laws governing its purchase by pipeline companies is offered for sale, each pipeline company shall purchase, without discrimination, any such natural gas produced in the vicinity of the pipeline.

(g) *Conversion of Ski Area Authorizations.* (1) The Forest Service shall request that all existing permit holders convert existing authorizations for ski areas to a new authorization issued

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pursuant to the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act.

(2) Any current holder of a ski area permit who wishes to convert an existing permit to one issued pursuant to the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act must submit a written request for the new authorization to the authorized officer.

(3) With the consent of the holder, the authorized officer shall convert the authorization if:

(i) The holder is in compliance with the existing authorization;

(ii) All fees currently due under the existing authorization are paid in full; and

(iii) Any proposed modifications of terms and conditions of the existing authorization included in a request for conversion meet the standards of paragraphs (2)(i) (A) through (F) of this section and the relevant requirements of this subpart.

(4) A holder retains the right to decline a new authorization offered pursuant to this paragraph and to continue to operate under the terms of the existing permit. However, pursuant to the rules at §251.61 of this subpart, major modifications of existing permits shall require conversion to a permit issued under the authority of the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act, unless the holder provides compelling justification for retaining the existing permit.

[45 FR 38327, June 6, 1980, as amended at 49 FR 46895, Nov. 29, 1984; 54 FR 22594, May 25, 1989; 60 FR 45294, Aug. 30, 1995; 63 FR 65967, Nov. 30, 1998; 64 FR 48960, Sept. 9, 1999]

§ 251.57 Rental fees.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this part or when specifically authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture, special use authorizations shall require the payment in advance of an annual rental fee as determined by the authorized officer.

(1) The fee shall be based on the fair market value of the rights and privileges authorized, as determined by appraisal or other sound business management principles.

(2) Where annual fees of one hundred dollars (\$100) or less are assessed, the authorized officer may require either annual payment or a payment covering

more than one year at a time. If the annual fee is greater than one hundred dollars (\$100), holders who are private individuals (that is, acting in an individual capacity), as opposed to those who are commercial, other corporate, or business or government entities, may, at their option, elect to make either annual payments or payments covering more than one year.

(b) All or part of the fee may be waived by the authorized officer, when equitable and in the public interest, for the use and occupancy of National Forest System land in the following circumstances:

(1) The holder is a State or local government or any agency or instrumentality thereof, excluding municipal utilities and cooperatives whose principal source of revenue from the authorized use is customer charges; or

(2) The holder is a nonprofit association or nonprofit corporation, which is not controlled or owned by profit-making corporations or business enterprises, and which is engaged in public or semi-public activity to further public health, safety, or welfare, except that free use will not be authorized when funds derived by the holder through the authorization are used to increase the value of the authorized improvements owned by the holder, or are used to support other activities of the holder; or

(3) The holder provides without charge, or at reduced charge, a valuable benefit to the public or to the programs of the Secretary; or

(4) When the rental fee is included in the fees for an authorized use or occupancy for which the United States is already receiving compensation; or

(5) When a right-of-way is authorized in reciprocation for a right-of-way conveyed to the United States; or

(6) For rights-of-way involving cost-share roads or reciprocal right-of-way agreements.

(c) No rental fee will be charged when the holder is the Federal government.

(d) No fee shall be charged when the authorization is for a noncommercial group use as defined in §251.51 of this subpart.