

## **RECREATION FACILITIES ANALYSIS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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### **What is Recreation Facility Analysis (RFA)?**

RFA is an analysis tool being used nationally to help National Forests create a sustainable program that aligns their developed recreation sites with visitors' desires and use. RFA helps ensure that developed recreation sites make sense considering each National Forest's special characteristics. The RFA tool carefully assesses where to focus investments and energy to be as responsive as possible to visitors' needs. By understanding our visitors' needs, National Forests can make more informed decisions that match available resources to visitor recreation preferences and patterns.

### **Is RFA something new?**

National Forests have always evaluated and modified existing recreation facilities to keep them current with use-trends and public needs; however, processes varied from one Forest to another. Recreation Facility Analysis standardizes evaluation and modification of recreation facilities nationwide and improves collaboration with the public.

### **What are the goals of RFA?**

- Sustain recreation opportunities consistent with the Forest's "recreation niche" (the unique recreation experiences the Fremont-Winema National Forests provide).
- Keep up with the demand for recreation facilities on all Ranger Districts.
- Operate and maintain recreation sites to national standards of health and safety.
- Improve the quality of recreation facilities by reducing the deferred maintenance backlog.

### **Why is the Fremont-Winema National Forests going through this process?**

Each National Forest will examine their recreation facilities and evaluate how they might operate and maintain these structures and sites more efficiently – both as prudent financial managers and in terms of meeting the changing needs of our public. Because many facilities were built 40 or more years ago and are reaching the end of their useful life, the Fremont-Winema National Forests need to make decisions about which facilities continue to meet the demands of users and which facilities are no longer suitable and need investment.

### **How will the public benefit from this planning process?**

RFA will result in a higher quality, more efficiently managed recreation sites with facilities aligned with wants and expectation of visitors.

### **Isn't this just a way to get rid of recreation sites?**

No. Many factors are considered in evaluating each developed recreation site. These considerations are related to how well a site supports the recreation needs of the public on the Fremont-Winema National Forests, the role that site plays in the local community and the site's relationship to the environment.

### **Is the Forest Service privatizing recreation venues on public lands?**

Recreation opportunities on the National Forests and grasslands are provided by a wide array of means. By far, the majority of our visitors are supported by Forest Service staff. Others are supported through the efforts of volunteers and non-profit partnerships. Private interests providing recreation opportunities on public lands is a long-standing practice and may be one of the options a Forest considers when determining how to best manage a particular recreation site.

### **In an era when recreation demand is increasing, shouldn't the Forest Service also be increasing the number of recreation sites?**

Recreation on National Forest lands takes many forms. Use is increasing, but it doesn't necessarily involve developed facilities. RFA focuses on developed recreation – one piece of the overall recreation program. RFA helps the Forest Service understand what people are doing, where they are recreating on the landscape, and what facilities may or may not be needed to support those activities. The Forest Service must gather and consider this type of information before making decisions about whether to increase the number of developed recreation sites.

### **What is the Forest Service using to establish recreation needs?**

RFA looks at what forests offer in terms of recreation opportunities and what the public wants in terms of outdoor recreation on public land. The Forest Service uses a blend of public participation and data analysis in the process. Market and demographic survey information is used to describe the majority of the visitors to a specific National Forest and one-on-one survey information from visitors to that National Forest (National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey). The Forest Service also uses information collected on a statistical basis from the entire country (National Survey on Recreation and the Environment). In addition, each Forest will include public participation and input throughout the entire process, as they work to develop a 5-year program of work for their Forest's developed recreation sites program. Involvement of the local public, surrounding communities and each National Forest's recreation visitors is a critical and essential component of the RFA process. This will ensure the National Forest is providing the best recreation opportunities in the right places.

### **How will the public be involved?**

The public is involved in the entire RFA process. Initially, the public is involved through survey results and demographic information. Forests also engage local communities and stakeholders in a dialogue about a forest's special settings and opportunities and visitors' needs and expectations (“niche”). After ensuring data are adequate for initial analysis and including any public input received at this point, staff will prepare, share, review and discuss a proposed 5-year program of work with the public, National Forest visitors and local communities. Public involvement will also be needed in the development of specific projects described in the 5-year program of work.

### **How many and what types of recreation sites will be affected and on what kind of timetable?**

All developed sites such as campgrounds, rustic campgrounds, trailheads, interpretive sites, boat launches and picnic sites will be analyzed and may experience changes. Changes will occur during a 5-year implementation period of the RFA with input from the public to help improve the planned program of work.

### **How soon will the public notice any changes in management of developed recreation sites?**

Many changes to recreation sites will not be noticeable by the visiting public. Simple changes will most likely occur, such as how often a recreation site’s grass is mowed. Other changes may be more complex, requiring additional analysis and public involvement and may occur over a long period of time.

### **Will some sites be converted to dispersed recreation sites?**

After an appropriate level of public involvement, in some cases, this could be an outcome. Closing a site does not necessarily mean that the location can no longer be used. The Forest Service may change the level of services provided at a site, such as removing a toilet or a water system at a campground, but the public will still be able to camp in the same location with a more rustic experience.

### **How does RFA relate to Forest Plan Revision, Travel Management and other planning efforts?**

There is a consistent tie between RFA and other planning efforts. The RFA gives guidance to travel management and can be used to help describe the desired future condition in forest plan revisions. Where other planning efforts have occurred prior to RFA, it builds on and tiers from them, adding a qualitative and focused look at the developed recreation program.

### **How can partners or volunteer groups be involved in recreation facilities?**

For sites that have strong community or visitor support, offers to operate and maintain those sites will be considered. A partnership needs to be a long-term commitment that provides consistency for communities that value a particular site.

**How does RFA influence and help support local tourism goals?**

The Fremont-Winema National Forests recognize the importance of recreation and tourism to many communities in Oregon. Public participation will include discussion of local tourism goals and how recreation sites meet those goals. Enhancing the recreation experience through a quality recreation program will be one factor in promoting tourism in south central Oregon.

**How does RFA work into the future? Will new sites ever be developed? Will current sites ever be re-evaluated?**

RFA helps the Fremont-Winema National Forests efficiently use available resources to provide the best quality recreation opportunities possible. In so doing, the Forest is better able to respond to changing recreation demands with facilities and programs in the future. The Fremont-Winema National Forests will review the RFA 5-year program of work every year to monitor program effectiveness and implementation, and whether modifications are required. As new sites are needed to help carryout the developed recreation program, proposed sites would be evaluated with an appropriate level of public involvement through the RFA process to ensure the public's needs would be met with new sites.

**Is the Forest Service planning to sell recreation sites?**

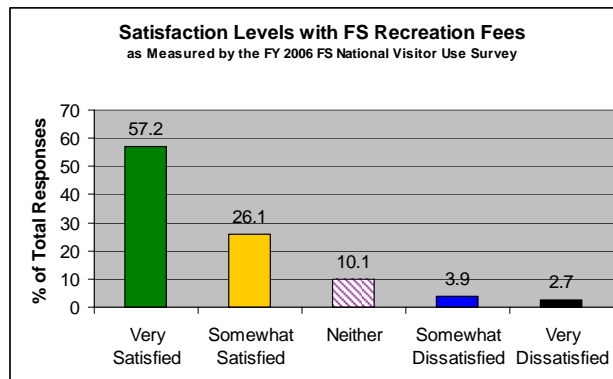
No. There are no plans to sell recreation sites.

**What types of recreation facilities were evaluated by the RFA?**

The RFA process only evaluates recreation sites with facilities such as campgrounds and picnic areas; it does not deal with roads or trails or with undeveloped sites such as dispersed campsites and Wilderness.

**Is the public generally receptive to paying fees for recreation services at National Forest recreation sites?**

Over 83 percent of visitors who responded to the Forest Service’s FY 2006 National Visitor Use Survey said they were somewhat or very satisfied with the value for fee paid.



### **What happens to fees paid by visitors at National Forest recreation sites?**

Visitors benefit directly from the fees they pay. In 2006, \$53 million was collected by National Forests, from sales of passes, use of facilities, outfitter/guide and special event permits. During the same period of time, \$51 million was spent primarily for visitor services, maintenance, repairs and other enhancements that benefit visitors.

### **Are fees charged for dispersed recreation use of public lands?**

The vast majority of Federal lands remain free to the public: 98% of Forest Service lands and 65% of Forest Service developed sites are free for recreation. No fees are charged for:

- General access
- Traveling through areas; when no facilities or services are used
- Access to overlooks and scenic pullouts
- Parking in areas without Recreation Enhancement Act - specified facilities
- Picnicking along roads or trails
- People under age 16

### **Do proposals for recreation site fee increases and new site fees receive public review?**

The Recreation Enhancement Act ensures that the Forest Service receives feedback from a wide variety of well-informed stakeholders. Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRACs), made up of diverse stakeholders, review fee proposals and make recommendations to the Forest Service. Stakeholder groups represented in RRACs include:

- Recreational users, both motorized and non motorized
- Hunters and anglers
- Outfitters and guides
- Local environmental groups
- State tourism
- Local Indian tribes
- Local government

### **How is the Fremont-Winema National Forests using RFA?**

Many of the Fremont-Winema National Forests developed recreation sites were built 30-60 years ago. Since then, visitor preferences and demographics have changed, and some older facilities must be replaced or removed. To respond to these conditions, the Forest has developed a proposed RFA. The Fremont-Winema National Forests are committed to responsibly serving the public by operating efficiently and providing appropriate, quality recreation opportunities.

## **What has happened so far?**

The Fremont-Winema National Forests looked hard at all recreation opportunities, including what they cost, how much they were used and whether they met user expectations. The Forest also completed the first steps of the analysis process involving data collection (by surveying the public and assessing facilities), defining the Forest's "recreation niche," and ranking all developed recreation sites on the Forest (using a scientific computer model that incorporates things like costs, use levels, and conformance with niche).

## **What is the Fremont-Winema National Forests' recreation niche?**

The proposed Forest recreation niche statement which describes the Forest setting and opportunities reads as follows:

### **“Find Yourself in South Central Oregon”**

*Framed by major migratory bird flyways the Fremont-Winema National Forests provide a picture of solitude and serene beauty in a spacious open landscape, from majestic snow-capped peaks, lakes and streams, to park-like stands of large ponderosa pines with a lush understory of grasses and wildflowers. Scenic routes throughout the forest provide easy access for visitors. Backcountry solitude experiences contrast with some nodes of concentrated water-based recreation.*

The Fremont-Winema National Forests' is divided into four areas each with its own mix of settings, special places, values and opportunities. These areas are the Great Basin Flyway, Mazama Pumice, Klamath Waterways and Flyways and the Cascade Crest. A complete description of the Forest niche statement and setting is attached and included on the Forest web site.

## **What are the planned changes to campgrounds, picnic areas and trailheads on the Fremont-Winema National Forests?**

In the next five years, the Forest is proposing the following:

- Major facility replacement at 18 developed recreation sites.
- Facility improvements at 17 developed recreation sites.
- Restore the Fremont Point recreation cabin.
- Reduce deferred maintenance backlog of approximately \$1,966,000.
- Increase fees at eight developed recreation sites.
- Start charging fees at 10 developed recreation sites.
- Partially remove or reduce services at 10 developed recreation sites.
- Convert two developed recreation sites into dispersed recreation spots.
- No additional facilities proposed for concessionaire operation.

## **Will the RFA process improve recreation opportunities on the Fremont-Winema National Forests?**

Yes. The Fremont-Winema National Forests will remain a place where visitors can find a wide range of quality recreation settings and opportunities. Most of the recommendations in the proposed 5-year program of work focus on improving the overall value of Forest-wide recreation facilities while causing the least inconvenience or disruption to users. Actions to improve service include removing substandard, dilapidated or redundant facilities, and building new partnerships with interested users to improve site stewardship.

## **When will the RFA be finalized?**

The Forest expects to finalize the RFA in Summer of 2008.

## **Who is the decision-maker?**

Karen Shimamoto, Forest Supervisor for the Fremont-Winema National Forests, is the recommending official. The Regional Forester of the Pacific Northwest Region will make the final decision.

## **Will modifications recommended by the RFA be implemented immediately?**

Simple action items may occur in the summer of 2008. Major capital investment action items will take several years to complete and many will require the Forest to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which includes public involvement in project planning. Proposed fee changes are expected to be implemented in the spring of 2009. Fee change proposals must follow a public review process described in the Recreation Enhancement Act.

## **Does RFA require any environmental analysis?**

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work is not required to complete the RFA. However, any significant modifications to recreation sites that result from the RFA will require NEPA analysis, including public involvement.

## **How can I comment now?**

The Fremont-Winema National Forests recognize the importance of recreation sites and welcomes written comments and suggestions via email at [fwnf-rfa@fs.fed.us](mailto:fwnf-rfa@fs.fed.us). Public participation is important to ensure the RFA meets visitor needs and expectations in a cost effective manner.