

# NEWS RELEASE

## USDA Forest Service -- Northern Region



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Forest Service Invites Public to Comment on Recreation Site Facility Master Planning**

**MISSOULA, Mont.,** - Forests and Grasslands in the Northern Region are taking part in a national process called Recreation Site Facility Master Planning to determine how to best meet current and expected user demands at recreation sites.

Forests and Grasslands in the Northern Region (Montana, Northern Idaho, and North Dakota) will invite the public to review their proposed developed recreation facility program to ensure agency managers are providing the best recreation opportunities in the right places now and into the future.

The Recreation Site Facility Master Planning (RS-FMP) process allows recreation managers to consider every developed facility on their unit and propose the best way these facilities can be managed to meet operation and maintenance standards, as well as provide healthy, safe and quality experiences. This process also allows managers to identify ways to eliminate overdue maintenance at recreation sites

The planning process includes forest and grassland recreation managers identifying their forest “niche.” This is done by analyzing current research on recreation use to determine which unique characteristics attract people to recreate on their forest or grassland. Managers also use financial tools to determine what each facility costs to operate, maintain and repair.

As a result of RS-FMP, each forest and grassland in the Northern Region will have a five year plan. This plan will lists the tasks needed to ensure the Forest Service can operate and maintain financially sustainable recreation facilities to accepted quality standards. The goal is to provide enjoyable and safe experiences for visitors at an affordable cost. These proposals will be available for public review as each draft program of work is prepared.

“Most of the developed recreation sites on each Forest or Grassland Unit are proposed for continued operation,” stated Terry Knupp, Developed Recreation Program Manager for the Region. “But at some sites, possible scenarios include implementing shorter operating seasons, increasing or implementing new recreation fees, changing the type of services provided such as drinking water, or seeking partnership and volunteer opportunities to help maintain sites.”

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One of the goals of the RS-FMP process is to provide quality recreation opportunities to the public within annual budgets. As a result, with increased costs of providing services, some new fee proposals are suggested on each unit's program of work. These new fee proposals, in addition to receiving public review as part of RS-FMP, will undergo formal public involvement required by the Recreation Enhancement Act including a published news release and presentation to the Resource Advisory Committees for recommendation. The Resource Advisory Committees are comprised of a panel of citizens representing various interests.

There are three national forests in Montana who have scheduled their open houses:

- Bitterroot National Forest will host a "Lunch and Learn" presentation and open house on January 24<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 – 2:00 to present their initial ideas. The meeting will be held at the Forest Supervisor's Office on North 1<sup>st</sup> Street in Hamilton. <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot/recreation/>
- The Flathead National Forest will host an open house on Tuesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> from 4-7 p.m. with a formal presentation at 5:30 p.m. The open house will be at the Outlaw Inn in Kalispell. [www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead).
- Lolo National Forest will host an open house on February 7<sup>th</sup> in Missoula at Fort Missoula for the public to learn more about RS-FMP and the forest's initial proposals.

The Gallatin, Helena, Custer, Lewis and Clark National Forests and Dakota Prairie Grasslands will begin public review in the spring...

The Kootenai, Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Idaho Panhandle, Clearwater and Nez Perce are preparing their data and refining their proposals. They are scheduling to engage the public in late spring or summer of 2007.

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