

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service Pacific

Northwest Region

Umatilla National Forest

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Forest Seeks Public Feedback on Recreation Site Management

The Umatilla National Forest is seeking public feedback on the future management of 116 developed recreation sites, including campgrounds, trailheads, and cabin rentals. Through the Recreation Facility Analysis (RFA) process, the forest has drafted a “program of work” outlining the proposed management for these sites over the next five years. A series of open house meetings are scheduled throughout the area to discuss the proposed program of work, share information and gather comments.

As in so many places, operating budgets have been flat or are declining while operating costs have been increasing. Recreation use has been on the rise, yet facilities are aging. Many of the Umatilla’s developed recreation sites were built 30-50 years ago and have received little significant investment in basic maintenance or improvements.

“We know that, over the years, visitor preferences and demographics have changed,” said Kevin Martin, Forest Supervisor. “Our data shows that some sites receive little use and those that do are in need of backlog maintenance.” Changes are needed to help ensure the forest continues to provide the high quality recreation opportunities that people have come to expect.

The Recreation Facility Analysis process involves several steps: gathering inventory and financial data; identifying the forest recreation niche; evaluating each developed recreation site against established national criteria (including conformance with the forest niche, financial efficiency, and environmental and community sustainability); and ranking the recreation sites according to those criteria. Using this analysis tool, the Forest has drafted a proposed program of work for the next five years.

The proposal could reduce annual operation and maintenance costs on the forest 25-42% by implementing options such as adjusting campground operating seasons, repairing some facilities scheduled for replacement, and changing the size of some campgrounds.

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Changing the fee equation is an essential component to meeting recreation program objectives. The forest is considering increasing fees at the 25 campgrounds and recreational cabin rentals where fees are currently charged. The forest is also considering phasing an additional 19 campgrounds, 13 trailheads, and 2 cabins into the fee program over the next several years in order to help cover the costs of operations and maintenance.

Any additional fees would be comparable with fees charged for similar amenities by others in the area. Eighty-95 percent of the funds collected at recreation fee sites will remain on the forest. In addition to helping fund routine operations, additional fees will help make sorely needed improvements at many sites such providing new picnic tables and fire rings and repairing or replacing toilets.

“Public input is important to the forest and is critical to this process,” said Martin. Open houses are scheduled for:

September 18
North Fork John Day
Ranger District Office
6:00-7:30PM
Ukiah, OR

September 24
Heppner Ranger
District Office
1:00-4:00 PM and 6:00-7:30PM
Heppner, OR

September 25
Umatilla National Forest
Supervisor’s Office
6:00-8:00 PM
Pendleton, OR

September 27
Pomeroy Ranger
District Office
1:00-4:00 PM and 5:00-7:00 PM
Pomeroy, WA

October 2
Kennewick Branch Library
1620 Union Street
6:00-8:00 PM
Kennewick, WA

October 4
Walla Walla
Ranger District Office
2:00-4:00 PM and 6:00-7:30 PM
Walla Walla, WA

The proposed 5-year program of work document, listing proposed changes, can be obtained at any of the Umatilla National Forest District Offices or on the Forest web site at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/recreation/rsfmp.shtml>

“Our goal with RFA is to create a sustainable recreation program, eliminate facility maintenance backlog and meet the needs and expectations of our visitors, said Martin. “I believe our proposed program of work is a great starting point. The ideas and information we receive from the public will help us fine tune and prioritize the tasks to meet those needs.”