

# NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service Pacific

Northwest Region

Umatilla National Forest

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## **Forest Completes Recreation Site Analysis Fee Changes Essential Part of Proposed Plan**

The Umatilla National Forest recently evaluated the future management of its 116 developed recreation sites, including campgrounds, trailheads, and cabin rentals through the process known as Recreation Facilities Analysis or RFA. The RFA process is being used by National Forests across the country to create a “5-year program of work” that outlines future management of recreation sites. “Our goal through RFA is to create a sustainable recreation program, eliminate facility maintenance backlog and meet the needs and expectations of our visitors,” said Kevin Martin, Forest Supervisor.

“The five-year program of work identifies actions that move us closer to meeting our goal,” said Larry Randall, Recreation Program Manager. While the program of work does not propose closing developed sites, it does include cost cutting actions like reducing the length of season a particular campground might be cleaned or repairing rather than replacing aging facilities. “It also recognizes that many developed campgrounds need updating to better accommodate today’s visitors such as those with larger RV’s. Many sites are in need of new picnic tables, fire rings and restrooms and to improve access for persons with disabilities.”

Changing the fee equation is also an essential component to meeting recreation program objectives. The Program of Work proposes increasing fees at the 14 campgrounds and 11 recreational cabin rentals where fees are currently charged. “It’s been over 10 years since some campgrounds and rental cabins have seen a fee hike” said Randall. “We need to catch up with inflation and current market conditions”.

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The fee for a typical single campsite providing a restroom, picnic tables, and fire rings but not water or garbage service (such as at North Fork John Day campground) would increase from \$5 to \$8. The fee for more developed sites that include water and garbage service (such as Woodward campground) would increase from \$10 to \$12.

Additional revenue is also needed to operate and maintain other developed sites on the forest. The plan calls for implementing new fees over the next several years at another 20 developed campgrounds, 17 trail trailheads and two cabins. Once fully implemented, fees would be charged at about half of the total developed recreation sites on the forest.

“Fees are crucially important to managing the forest’s developed recreation sites” said Randall. Up to 95% of the fees collected on the forest stay on the forest. “We were able to accomplish a lot with those fees in 2007.” For example, in addition to helping fund forest personnel to operate and maintain sites, picnic tables were purchased and installed at Olive Lake and North Fork John Day campgrounds. New tent sites were also constructed at North Fork campground. New entrance signs were installed at Mottet and Woodward campgrounds, and an outhouse and picnic tables were refurbished at Tucannon campground. “New roofs were put on two of our historic rental cabins, Godman and Fry Guard stations,” said Randall.

“Before implementing any fee changes, we’ll review any additional public comment received and present our finalized proposal to a citizen’s advisory committee called the Pacific Northwest Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC) this spring” said Martin. Committee members represent a broad array of recreation interest groups to help ensure that the Forest Service is proposing reasonable and acceptable fee changes.

“We would like to hear your thoughts about our proposed fee changes” said Martin. Proposals for implementing new fees are posted in the Federal Register for public comment. A copy of the federal register notice and proposed fee increases at existing fee sites can be obtained at any Umatilla National Forest Office or on the Forest web site at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/recreation/rsfmp.shtml> A copy of the 5-yr program of work is also available online.