

Questions and Answers for Recreation RAC Members

Who serves on a Recreation RAC?

Each Recreation RAC includes representatives in three categories:

Five persons who represent recreation users and that include, as appropriate -

- Winter motorized recreation
- Winter non-motorized recreation
- Summer motorized recreation
- Summer non-motorized recreation
- Hunting and Fishing

Three persons who represent, as appropriate -

- Motorized outfitters and guides
- Non-motorized outfitters and guides
- Local environmental groups

Three persons who are -

- State tourism official representing the state
- A representative of affected Indian Tribes
- A representative of affected local government interests

What does it mean to be an “Advisory Committee”?

Advisory Committees are established under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), which has certain requirements to ensure that federal agencies receive broad and balanced input into their decision-making process. See the FACA handout for more information.

What is the purpose of a Recreation RAC?

Recreation RACs provide recommendations to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) officials on matters including, but not limited to:

- Implementing or eliminating standard amenity fees, expanded amenity fees, and non-commercial individual special recreation permit fee (these are called special use fees by the BLM);
- Expanding or limiting the recreation fee program; and
- Implementing fee level changes (increases or decreases)

Why are Recreation RACs working with two agencies?

The Forest Service and BLM have agreed to use a shared Recreation RAC approach. Where appropriate, fee proposals for both agencies will be reviewed by the same FACA-chartered entity: Either an existing BLM Resource Advisory Council or a newly chartered Forest Service Recreation RAC.



Does the Recreation RAC deal with ALL fees or just some fees?

Recreation RACs do not have the authority to make recommendations on recreation fee sites operated by a concessionaire or contractor, commercial permits such as outfitting and guiding, and Forest Service special use permits or BLM special recreation permits issued for group events such as bike races. (Note: The REA identifies group events as a recreation fee under the special recreation permit category. However, REA does not state that Recreation RACs will review these permits. The Secretaries added individual permits, not group permits, to the list of fee changes that Recreation RACs will review.)

Does the Recreation RAC make decisions about fees?

No. The Recreation RAC is an advisory body. It recommends actions, and those recommendations will be considered by Forest Service and BLM managers who will make the actual decisions.

What happens if the Forest Service or BLM decides not to follow the Recreation RAC recommendation?

If a recommendation is rejected, the Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary of the Interior must issue a notice that identifies the reasons for rejecting the recommendation to both the House Committee of Resources and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. This notice must occur not less than 30 days prior to implementing the decision that pertains to the recommendation.

How does the Recreation RAC interact with the agencies?

Each Recreation RAC has a 'Designated Federal Official' or DFO who serves as a liaison to the Forest Service. The DFO also will:

- Approve or call both the Recreation RAC and any subcommittee meetings;
- Approve the agendas;
- Attend the meetings;
- Adjourn the meeting when such an adjournment is in the public interest; and
- Chair the meeting in absence of a Chairperson selected by the Recreation RAC.

In addition a BLM representative will attend meetings as an 'ex officio' member for all meetings where BLM fee issues are discussed. This official will act as a liaison the Recreation RAC and the BLM.

Some national forests cross State boundaries. How will the Forest Service decide which Recreation RAC to use?

Where uncertainty exists, recreation managers in regional offices will make the decision about which Recreation RAC each Forest will use. It is important that federal officials work together to ensure each other and the Recreation RACs are aware of proposals. For example, if a proposal is known to be of particular



interest in the adjoining State, officials may make presentations to both advisory groups; however only the official advisory group would make the recommendation.

Should the Recreation RAC elect a Chairperson?

FACA stipulates that each RRAC should elect officers from among its members. Usually at the first meeting, members elect a chair and vice chair to serve for two years.

When and where do the Recreation RACs meet?

Each Recreation RAC meets at least once annually or as often as is determined necessary. The location and length of meetings will be determined by the DFO and Chairperson and will be shared with members.

Are Recreation RAC members paid?

Recreation RAC members do not receive compensation; however, they are reimbursed for transportation, lodging and meal expenses.

What are my responsibilities as a Recreation RAC member?

Through by-laws each Recreation RAC may identify unique responsibilities for members. In general some are:

1. Represent interests of appropriate groups by receiving pertinent information from and sharing discussions with interest groups.
2. Consider whether or not general public support exists for a recommendation.
3. Understand and agree to meeting commitments.
4. Work in a team setting and be open to discussing and understanding differing viewpoints.
5. Give everyone a chance to speak and withhold judgment on an idea presented by others until it has a chance to be developed.
6. Focus on issues, needs and opportunities, not on personalities, people, or firm positions.

How are meetings conducted?

Each Recreation RAC may identify the specific methods or requirements by which meetings are run and majority or consensus decisions are reached. However, REA does state that:

- A quorum, 8 members, must exist for the Recreation RAC to hold an official meeting;
- A majority of members from each of three member groups (at least 7 members) must be present to make recommendations; and
- A majority of total members (at least 6 members) must be present to make decisions such as nominating a chairperson or forming a subcommittee.



How long do members serve?

The first members will serve either two or three year terms. After the first term, all members will serve three years, with renewals or new recruitments coming up on a rotational basis. With this 'rolling' schedule of service, the Recreation RAC will not lose all experienced members at one time.

Can I be reappointed to the RRAC or am I limited to one term?

The Secretary of Agriculture may choose to appoint RRAC members to additional terms.

How long will the Recreation RACs last?

Recreation RACs are currently expected to be in place as long as the REA exists, which is until December 2014. If the REA is re-authorized, Recreation RACs may exist for a longer period of time.

What is the Recreation RAC Charter?

The charter is the document that officially identifies the membership, duties, costs, meeting requirements and any special instructions for the Recreation RACs. This document will be renewed every two years.

Are RRAC meetings open to the media and general public?

Yes. RRAC meetings are open to the media and general public.

How will the public know about Recreation RAC meetings?

All meetings of must be published in the *Federal Register* 15 days before the meeting as well as announced through local media. These announcements include a tentative agenda for the meeting and public comment time, so people can determine whether or not they would like to attend. In addition, links to all meeting announcements, agendas and notes will be available at www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/rrac.

How do we handle public participation in the meetings?

Typically, Advisory Council agendas identify a specific time for public comment. Individual public comments are usually limited to 3 to 5 minutes per individual, and are always recorded in the minutes. Speakers are encouraged to submit written copies of their comments for the official record.

Will the agencies receive any other public input about fees?

Yes, the Forest Service and the BLM will follow agency public involvement guidelines for proposing new or changing existing recreation fees. These include, but are not limited to, posting a notice of fee proposal at the site where it will occur, ensuring notices of new fees are posted in the *Federal Register* six months before implementation, and posting a notice of the proposal in local media.



How will “general public support” be documented?

REA states that Recreation RACs must have documentation on general public support for their recommendation. The Forest Service has a strategy for informing the public about all fee changes. The Forest Service will bring the feedback received on those efforts to the Recreation RAC. The Office of General Counsel has advised that if the agency receives little to no feedback on a proposal, it can be interpreted as not objecting to the proposal.

Can members give input on items other than recreation fees?

Recreation RAC members are members of the public and can, as anyone can, give comments and opinions, on an individual basis, on any aspect of Forest Service or BLM management. However, in terms of the formal recommendation process as described in the REA, Recreation RACs are limited to the roles and duties outlined in their charter.

Should the Recreation RACs form subcommittees?

Subcommittees can be formed for many reasons such as to get a local perspective on a recreation fee issue or to research a particular recreation fee question. Agencies do not make the decision to form subcommittees; however should the Recreation RAC decide to form one, it must have the approval of the DFO. Subcommittee members only receive reimbursement if they are actual members of the Recreation RAC.

