

RAC Meeting 04/01/2020

Virtual – Cabin Rental Fee Increase

Roll Call

Mark Schiltz
Janette Turk
Randy Brodehl
Larry Klamecki
Paul McKenzie
Randy Kenyon
Rachel Schimt
Lisa Paulin
Sarah Lundstrum
Debo Powers
Ralph Hopkins
Lincoln Chute
Chris Prew – FNF Recreation Program Manager
Jeff Ward – R1 Recreation Program Manager
Kurt Steele – FNF Forest Supervisor
Bill Waker – general public

Approve meeting notes from previous meeting 10/10/2019

Motion (Randy Kenyon) to approve last meetings notes
2nd Randy Brodehl
Motion is passed

Janette Turk – brought up monitoring assignments, stating some people have responded while others have not
Rachel – asked to take on any assignment Janette assigns her
Lisa – is willing to take on anything for Spotted Bear
Sarah – sent an email to Janette
Debo – asked for North Fork Road and Nordic Ski Trac – those are already assigned, Janette will call her
Randy B – needs to pass on monitoring due to current workload
Lincoln – asked for Deadhorse and Middle Fork Trailhead monitoring
Krystal – Janette will catch up with her later

Janette Turk – primary purpose of this meeting is to approve or disapprove the increase in cabin rental/developed recreation sites fee increase.

- Are there any topics that need to be added? Negative

Kurt Steele – introduction of himself and general hello, asked if there were any questions for him at this time – negative

Chris Prew/Jeff Ward to present (Powerpoint presentation)

Questions:

Debo – she agrees with raising the fees but wondering how the increase on Hornet LO was done? What was the thought process behind it?
Chris – They looked at a multitude of things; cost of maintenance due to it being on the National Register – any repairs have to go through the SHPO(State Historic Preservation Office) process, popularity of it, the demand for it, and the accessibility to it (all supplies will need to be airlifted or brought on horse back depending) .
Jeff – the fee increase is in line with other similar LO's throughout the region

Questions written in via email:

Jeff Ward – (addressed questions 2, 3, 6, 8, 9) – user fees are not the only income source; the Forest keeps 95% of the fees while the Region gets 5%. FIA is meant to supplement appropriated funds for recreation, the appropriated funds ie FS budgets has not increased, they mainly have decreased. Projected Dev Cost shows how much money has already been invested in the sites which can be calculated two different ways. 1-calculated since the last fee increase (which would be the 90's) or 2 – is the figure of what needs to be done before the fee is implemented. The FNF looked at using the first method but toned down the numbers and or used their best guess. Deferred maintenance is the money needed to be invested in the sites. The 10+ year record of occupancy is a little difficult due to FS switching contractors in the past. We still can get those records from the previous contractor, but they are not easily accessible. We can say that the occupancy in general is consistent year to year with some increase. The wait time for reservations varies and can be difficult. They work off of a rolling 6 month window. I.E. the public can reserve a site 6 months to the day from when they want it, however, if a person wants the site for say 5 days (July 1-5) when a person goes in to reserve the site for July 3 it will show that it's already been booked.

Randy: 4th question in email -Is there a chance the Flathead could lose a site to deferred maintenance for public health and safety?

Jeff Ward – no, none of the Flathead's maintenance is that serious

Chris Prew – health & safety are prioritized maintenance for the forest

Janette – How often are the sites reviewed?

Chris – there is a dedicated permanent employee whose job it is to check and review each site on their district. The public also lets us know if something is missed or anything needs attention. Most districts do a deep clean minimally once a month, some stagger the check-ins so a daily clean is possible.

Janette – asking about question 1 from the email – What is the timeline for the next increase?

Jeff Ward – increases should become more of a routine, they will look at them more often, maybe 2-3 years instead of 15 years like the last one.

Janette – Can the RAC recommend raising the fees higher than the proposed?

Jeff Ward/Chris Prew – yes, but it's a different process and must go back through the public for comment.

Mark – 2-3 years is much better than the current 15 years. With COVID-19 we might not know what the impact is until a couple of years down the road.

Comments to overall view:

Larry Klamecki – significant capital is already invested, he does support the rental rate increase however, he suggests that there is a much more immediate need for a review not the 2-3 years. **Would like to see a new review instituted within the next year. The current rate increase will not cover the listed deferred maintenance. Please see the documents that James Marsh and Larry Klamecki sent out to everyone.**

Chris Prew – appreciates the comments and said the Forest is very dedicated to these sites and is working strongly on and for them.

Lincoln – concerning the campgrounds: if the general public stumble on to them, it's very unlikely that they will have \$13-15 on hand. How will this be handled?

Chris Prew - Most of the campgrounds have hosts. Like Spotted Bear Campground has a host on site as well as having the Ranger station nearby. The hosts will handle the fee payments. The price was chosen to be in line with competitors' campgrounds with the same or similar amenities.

Mark – as there is no other questions, is there a motion to pass to increase the cabin rentals and campgrounds fees as proposed?

Motion (Debo) to pass the fee increase as proposed

2nd Randy Kenyon

Opposed – negative

Motion is passed

Comments:

Mark – suggested to Chris Prew placing a comment card at the cabins asking about the fee increase and what people thought of it. Let the people who are renting/staying there offer their opinions about it?

RAC Notes:

The RAC was reauthorized for 2019 & 2020. The money was released but it's not down to the FS level yet and has a use by date of September 30, 2023.

RAC membership – several members appointments have expired or will be expiring. If any expiring RAC member, would like to re-apply, you could serve two back to back 4 year terms. Also, if anybody knows of someone interested in signing up for the RAC please let Janette know.

Monitoring – if you term is expiring and you are not coming back, you may still sign up for monitoring

Heads up – Zoom video testing a possibility for future meetings. Please check out the Zoom platform

Final report document – has not been created yet but Janette will get on it.

Meeting adjourned