

Appendix B: Recreation Resource Advisory Committees

History

REA requires the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to establish Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRACs) in each State or region.¹¹ RRACs provide local communities with the opportunity to make recommendations on certain types of proposed recreation fee changes. Specifically, RRACs can make recommendations on implementing, eliminating, or changing standard amenity fees, expanded amenity fees, and non-commercial individual special recreation permit fees.

REA allows the agencies to use existing Advisory Councils, such as BLM Resource Advisory Councils (BLM RACs), or to establish new committees as appropriate. After holding 11 listening sessions in locations across the country in 2005, the FS and BLM elected to use a mix of new and existing RRACs. In addition, upon Governor request, the two Departments exempted three states from the REA-RRAC requirement. See map and table below for a depiction of the mix of RRACs. (A State-by-State description is also included later in this report.)



Figure B-1. Advisory Committees Serving as RRACs

¹¹ RRACs are required unless, in consultation with the governor of a State, it is determined insufficient interest exists to establish an RRAC in that State. Three States are currently exempted from REA-RRAC requirement: Alaska, Nebraska, and Wyoming.

Table B-1. State-by-State Description of RRACs

State	RRAC Name	Agency Lead	State	RRAC Name	Agency Lead
Alabama	Southern Region	FS	Nebraska	No RRAC; Governor's request	
Alaska	No RRAC; Governor's request		Nevada	RRAC subcommittee comprised of members of three Nevada RACs	BLM
Arizona	Arizona RAC	BLM	New Hampshire	Eastern Region	FS
Arkansas	Southern Region	FS	New Jersey	No FS or BLM lands	
California	Pacific Southwest Region	FS	New Mexico	New Mexico	BLM
Colorado	Colorado	FS	New York	Eastern Region	FS
Connecticut	No FS or BLM lands		North Carolina	Southern Region	FS
Delaware	No FS or BLM lands		North Dakota	Dakotas	BLM
Florida	Southern Region	FS	Ohio	Eastern Region	FS
Georgia	Southern Region	FS	Oklahoma	New Mexico (for FS grasslands) Southern Region (for portion of Ouachita National Forest)	BLM FS
Hawaii	No FS or BLM lands		Oregon	Pacific Northwest Region	FS
Idaho	Boise, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Falls, Twin Falls	BLM	Pennsylvania	Eastern Region	FS
Illinois	Eastern Region	FS	Puerto Rico	Southern Region	FS
Indiana	Eastern Region	FS	Rhode Island	Eastern Region	FS
Iowa	No FS or BLM lands.		South Carolina	Southern Region	FS
Kansas	Colorado	FS	South Dakota	Dakotas (for BLM & Dakota Prairie National Grasslands) Black Hills National Forest Advisory Board (for Black Hills National Forest)	BLM FS
Kentucky	Southern Region	FS	Tennessee	Southern Region	FS
Louisiana	Southern Region	FS	Texas	New Mexico (for FS grasslands) Southern Region (for NFs of Texas)	BLM FS
Maine	Eastern Region	FS	Vermont	Eastern Region	FS
Maryland	No FS or BLM lands		Virginia	Southern Region	FS
Massachusetts	No FS or BLM lands		Utah	Utah	BLM
Michigan	Eastern Region	FS	Washington	Pacific Northwest Region	FS
Minnesota	Eastern Region	FS	West Virginia	Eastern Region	FS
Mississippi	Southern Region	FS	Wisconsin	Eastern Region	FS
Missouri	Eastern Region	FS	Wyoming	No RRAC; Governor's request	
Montana	Central Montana Eastern Montana Western Montana Dakotas	BLM			

The FS and BLM signed an Interagency Agreement in September 2006, which outlines how the agencies are to work cooperatively to involve BLM RACs and FS-established RRACs for this fee review process.

RRAC Membership

FS-established RRACs are comprised of 11 members:

- Five members represent recreation users;
- Three members represent outfitter-guides and environmental groups; and
- Three members represent state tourism, affected Indian tribes, and local government interests.

Existing BLM RACs that perform the function of a RRAC retain their membership mix under their current legislative authority and charters.

BLM RACs are comprised of 15 members:

- Five members represent commercial uses and users such as livestock grazing, timber, mining, oil and gas, realty and rights-of-way, off-highway vehicle groups, and guides and outfitters;
- Five members represent environmental organizations, historic and cultural interests, wildlife organizations, wild horses and burros, and dispersed recreation; and
- Five members represent elected officials, Tribes, State or other governmental agencies, academic institutions, and the public-at-large.

Member Outreach and Appointments

The FS and BLM follow both REA and the Federal Advisory Committee Act when soliciting member nominations. Nominations are open to any member of the public and all nominations are considered equally based on evaluation criteria.

Outreach efforts to solicit members to the new FS-established Recreation RACs occurred both nationally and locally in 2006. National efforts included announcements through the national Forest Service website, a Federal Register notice, and through contacts with national organizations.

Locally, each region/State conducted extensive outreach within appropriate timeframes and within the geographic boundaries of each RRAC to recruit committee members and involve the public on the implementation of REA.

Most experienced some difficulty with obtaining nominations for some of the interests that required representation on the RRACs; however, all members were appointed to the three regional RRACs in February 2007, and to the two State RRACs July 2007. As initial membership was for either two- or three-year terms as required by REA, efforts to recruit members for those positions with a two-year term began in 2008.

Features of RRAC Input

- The agencies' work with the RRACs has been highly successful. RRACs provide a critical public perspective to the FS and BLM Recreation Fee Programs; they give the public a formal voice; and they provide constructive local input to the decision-making process.
- The significance of RRACs extends beyond analysis of specific fee proposal and recommendations. RRACs bring a broad understanding of local economic, social, and environmental concerns to fee proposal considerations and engage the agencies in valuable discussions on the role of Federal lands and the benefits and challenges in providing outdoor recreation opportunities in their communities. RRAC members also represent a wide spectrum of communities and values.
- The RRAC review process ensures agencies advance sound fee proposals. Most proposals have received positive recommendations after comprehensive RRAC review; however, the agencies also have reconsidered numerous proposals based on RRAC input. In some cases, the agencies incorporated RRAC suggestions regarding fee rates; in others the agencies enhanced the opportunities for public input based on RRAC recommendations.

RRAC Meetings

BLM RACs meet from one to four times per year. FS RRACs meet on an “as needed” basis, averaging about two times per year. It is expected that as the backlog of fee proposals diminishes, the frequency of meetings on recreation fee proposals will also decrease.

- Meeting dates, times, and places are set to ensure the largest participation possible by RRAC members.
- Members of the public are able to address RRACs directly through the public comment portion of the meeting, through writing letters or e-mails, or via teleconference if a meeting is held in that forum. All correspondence addressed to RRACs is shared with all RRAC members.
- Meetings are announced in at least three ways: through local media, through a notice in the Federal Register, and on RRAC websites.
- Meeting minutes are posted on RRAC websites according to each committee’s by-laws or operating procedures. This is often within one month of the meeting.
- The public is welcome to attend RRAC field visits to Federal recreation sites.

Documenting “General Public Support”

REA requires that “general public support” for a fee proposal be documented prior to submitting a fee proposal to a RRAC. The agencies provide for appropriate public outreach and participation efforts commensurate with each proposal and document the results. The RRAC assesses the benefits to the public and adequacy of the agency’s public participation efforts, and provides a recommendation based on that assessment.

RRAC Highlights

The agencies have been receptive and responsive to RRAC advice as it relates to fee policies. Some examples include:

Costs versus Fees: All of the RRACs have had in-depth discussions on the costs to operate and maintain fee sites and the responsibility of those who use the sites to help pay for them. In many cases, these discussions have resulted in the agencies providing more information on all the factors that go into assessing costs; in others, the agencies have worked with RRACs to ensure better consistency of fee rates.

Improving Fee Proposals: By asking for more or different information, the RRACs have influenced how the agencies develop their fee proposals. Several RRACs have requested the agency not implement incremental fee increases, in favor of one fee change that lasts for many years. Other RRACs have asked for unit-wide fee proposals rather than individual proposals that only affect one site. Some proposals have not received recommendations from RRACs and have been returned to the agencies to improve public participation, to propose a change, or to offer a different perspective in the fee proposal. These fee proposals may be brought back to RRACs at a later date once improvements have been made or changes or subsequent public input has been obtained.

Advice on Future Proposals: In some cases RRACs have reviewed and provided advice on preliminary or conceptual fee proposals. These discussions helped the units build better proposals and improve public engagement.

Viewing Recreation Sites: Several RRACs have been able to view the amenities and facilities included in fee proposals, which has enriched discussions and has helped RRAC members better understand the purpose of recreation fees, issues associated with them, and challenges that land managers face.

Statements of RRAC Members

Dennis Oliphant, Chair of the Pacific Northwest RRAC: “It has been a rewarding and valuable experience to be part of the Region 6 Recreation RAC. I took the appointment seriously and when my colleagues on the committee voted me in as chair I made a commitment to see that our group did the best job possible with the responsibility entrusted in us. All in all, I feel we have looked closely at all the proposals brought to us and made our recommendations using good data, solid facts and in good faith. It has been a pleasure being part of the public process.”

Dana Johnson, Chair of the Eastern RRAC: “I believe the RRAC committee brings a very important step to the fee assessment process. Having such a diverse group of individuals from many regions allows the forests to get information pertinent to all users. It also provides a buffer for the National Forest Service as a Federal Agency. The fee changes are not just Federal mandates, but rather well thought out changes with justifiable reasons brought to the forefront by citizens who recreate in the forest.”

Brett Paben, Chair of the Southern RRAC: “The advisory committees provide another level of public participation and scrutiny that would otherwise be missing from the Forest Service's recreation fee decisions. The fact that the advisory committees are comprised of members representing a broad range of interests also ensures the Forest Service is provided with a diversity of perspectives regarding public lands recreation and fees prior to implementing recreation fees.”

Riley Cutler, Utah Office of Economic Development: “I have been very pleased with how the BLM and Forest Service were willing to work with the RAC to form the Recreation RAC. I found their change requests easy to read and understand. [The clarity of the requests enabled the RRAC] to efficiently do our job of approving or suggesting changes to the proposals. This is a good use of the RAC.”

Fee Proposals Submitted to RRACs

Forest Service – Since 2006, the FS has shared about 900 proposals with RRACs. The following table is a brief description of those proposals that have received recommendations to implement the fee proposal.

Table B-2. Forest Service Fee Changes, FY 2006-2008¹

Site Type	Sites with New Fees		Sites with Fee Increases		Sites with Fee Decreases		Total Sites with Fee Changes	
	RRAC Recommendations	States without RRACs	RRAC Recommendations	States without RRACs	RRAC Recommendations	States without RRACs	RRAC Recommendations	States without RRACs
Standard (Day Use: such as picnic areas, interpretive sites, boat launches, developed trailheads)	6	8	214	0	1	0	221	8
Expanded (Campgrounds and group campgrounds)	59	1	435	21	3	0	497	22
Expanded (Cabins)	51	1	73	0	1	0	125	1
Expanded (Other: such as group sites, dump stations, highly developed boat launches)	12	1	9	0	0	0	21	1
Special Recreation Permits (Specialized trails, climbing areas, river use)	4	1	25	0	0	0	29	1
Subtotal of Sites with Fee Changes	132	12	756	21	5	0	893	33
Total Sites with Fee Changes (both RRAC Recommendations and States without RRACs)	144		777		5		926	
¹ This table differs from Table 5 In the Triennial Report because it also includes proposals in non-RRAC states.								

Bureau of Land Management – Since 2006, BLM has shared 49 fee proposals with RRACs in the following categories:

Table B-3. Bureau of Land Management Fee Changes, FY 2006-2008

Site Type	Type of Fee Change		
	New Fee	Fee Increase	Total Fee Changes
Standard (Day use such as picnic areas, interpretive sites, and developed trailheads)	2	9	11
Expanded (Primarily Campgrounds)	8	21	29
Special Recreation Permits (Specialized Areas, such as Off-Highway Vehicle, River, or Long-Term Visitor Areas)	3	6	9
Total Proposals	13	36	49

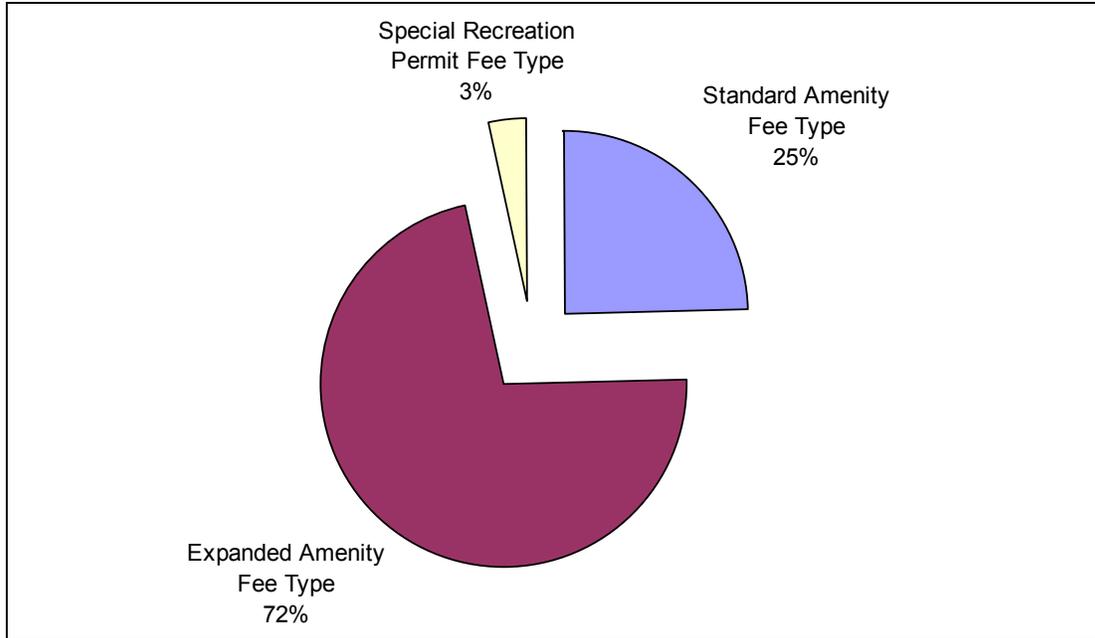


Figure B-2. Fee Changes for Forest Service Sites or Opportunities by Fee Type

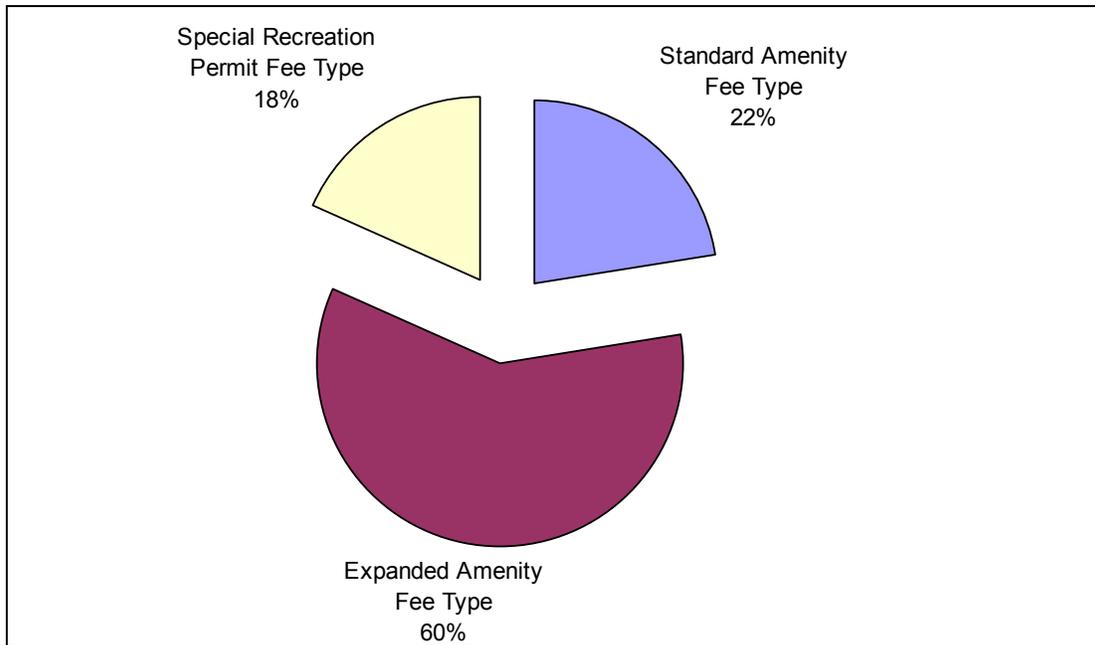


Figure B-3. Fee Changes for Bureau of Land Management Sites or Opportunities by Fee Type

This page intentionally left blank