

RECREATIONAL FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

Progress Report to Congress
Fiscal Year 2002

Submitted by the

U.S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	iv
I. Background and Data	1
A. Background	1
B. Suggestions for Legislative and Management Improvements	1
C. Introduction to the Data	5
D. Recreation Visits to DOI Sites	6
E. Recreation Fee Revenues	8
F. Cost of Collection for Fee Demo Projects	10
G. Obligation of Fee Demo Revenues	12
II. Accomplishments of the Program	18
A. Interagency Coordination	18
B. National Park Service	20
C. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	28
D. Bureau of Land Management	36
E. USDA FS	48
III. Appendices	63
Appendix A. FY 2002 Summary Data for the National Park Service	64
Appendix B. FY 2002 Summary Data for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	78
Appendix C: FY 2002 Summary Data for the Bureau of Land Management	85
Appendix D: FY 2002 Summary Data for the USDA FS	93

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1. Lessons Learned and Proposed Solutions	4
Table 2. Number of Recreation Visitors	7
Table 3. Gross Revenues Under the Fee Demo Program	9
Table 4. Cost of Collection for Fee Demo Projects	11
Table 5. Revenue and Obligations from Fee Demo Projects	13
Table 6. National Park Service Obligations by Category	14
Table 7. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Obligations by Category	15
Table 8. Bureau of Land Management Obligations by Category	16
Table 9. USDA Forest Service Obligations by Category	17
Table 10. Summary of BLM FY 2002 Recreation Accomplishments	39
Table 11. USDA FS Strategic Goal	55
Appendices:	
FY 2002 Summary Data for the National Park Service	64
FY 2002 Summary Data for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	78
FY 2002 Summary Data for the Bureau of Land Management	85
FY 2002 Summary Data for the USDA Forest Service	93
Figure 1. Recreation Visits	6
Figure 2. Recreation Fee Revenues	8
Figure 3. Cost of Collection for Fee Demo Projects	10
Figure 4. Obligation of Fee Demo Revenues	12
Figure 5. BLM Obligations by Category	37
Figure 6. BLM Site Condition Data	38
Figure 7. FY 2002 USDA FS Obligations by Category	51

Abbreviations

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
Council	The Recreational Fee Leadership Council
Departments	Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture
DOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
Fee Demo	Recreational Fee Demonstration Program
FS	USDA Forest Service
FY	Fiscal Year
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
NCA	National Conservation Area
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHP	National Historic Park
NHS	National Historic Site
NM	National Monument
NP	National Park
NPS	National Park Service
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
P.L.	Public Law
S.	Senate Bill
SRP	Special Recreation Permit
U.S.	United States
USA	United States of America
U.S.C.	United States Code
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDA FS	United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service

Recreational Fee Demonstration Program Annual Report to Congress

Executive Summary

Under the Recreational Fee Demonstration (Fee Demo) program, Congress authorized the Department of the Interior's National Park Service (NPS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA FS) to implement and test new fees across the spectrum of recreation sites they manage. The agencies are authorized to retain all of the revenues from the Fee Demo Program, of which at least 80 percent spent at the sites where the fees were collected. These revenues continue to provide on-the-ground improvements at recreation sites managed by the agencies.

Beginning in fiscal year 2002, the Congressionally mandated limit of 100 demonstration sites was lifted. The NPS shifted all of its remaining recreational fee sites into the Fee Demo Program increasing the number of Fee Demo projects from 100 to 233. The other land management agencies experienced minimal change in the number of participating sites. As of September 30, 2002, there were 104 U.S. FWS projects, 100 BLM projects, and 92 USDA FS projects.

Visitation has remained relatively constant (see Table 2, page 7).

- Visitation to recreation sites participating in the Fee Demo Program continues to be unaffected in any significant way by the new fees.
- Total visitation to sites managed by the three Interior agencies declined about 3 percent in FY 2002 relative to FY 2001.
- The USDA FS began using the National Visitor Use Monitoring program to estimate visitation in a statistically accurate and reliable manner. This new methodology makes comparisons to previous visitation estimates impractical. While more accurate, this new system does not allow for visitation estimates for units as small as individual Fee Demo sites. (See <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum/> for more information.)

The Fee Demo Program provides a substantial source of revenue to improve recreation sites and services for visitors (see Table 3, page 9).

- Total Fee Demo revenue in FY 2002 was \$175.7 million, compared to total revenue of \$172.8 million in FY 2001.
- Fee Demo revenues increased from \$7.6 million in FY 2001 to \$8.7 million in FY 2002 for the BLM; FWS Fee Demo revenue remained approximately constant relative to FY 2001; and USDA FS Fee Demo revenues increased from \$35.3 million to \$37.7 million.
- NPS Fee Demo revenue decreased slightly from \$126.2 million in FY 2001 to \$125.7 million in FY 2002.

The cost of collection for the agencies over the FY 2000-FY2002 period has remained roughly constant at about 20 percent of fee revenue (revenue includes revenue from the National Parks Pass and National Parks transportation system revenue) (see Table 4, page 13).

- The cost of collection for NPS increased from 20.4 percent in FY 2001 to 21.9 percent in FY 2002; The FWS decreased from 24.8 percent in FY 2001 to 19.3 percent in FY 2002; the BLM decreased from 34.3 percent in FY 2001 to 22.3 percent in FY 2002; and for the USDA FS, increased from 14.4 percent in FY 2001 to 16.3 percent in FY 2002.

In FY 2002, the agencies obligated a total of \$159.7 million for a variety of projects designed primarily to address backlog maintenance needs, improve visitor services, meet outstanding health and safety needs, and protect and preserve resources (see Table 5, page 13, and Figure 4, page 12).

- Total obligations increased from \$156.2 million in FY 2001 to \$159.7 million in FY 2002.
- The Interior agencies obligated a total of about \$114.4 million.
- The USDA FS obligated a total of about \$ 45.3 million.

Interagency coordination of program management makes it easier for visitors to pay fees and receive services.

- The agencies have continued to coordinate their fee policies and practices in a variety of ways and with many different types of entities. These collaborative efforts typically arise from site-specific conditions such as adjacent boundaries, similar recreation activities, or the desire to involve non-Federal entities in decisions affecting a particular site.
- Interagency coordination and consistency took an important step forward in FY 2002 with the establishment of the Recreational Fee Leadership Council (Council). The Council is co-chaired by the DOI's Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget and the USDA's Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. The Council includes representatives from each of the Federal land management agencies at the assistant secretary or under secretary level, the agency heads (from NPS, FWS, BLM, and the USDA FS), and the legislative affairs directors from each agency. During FY 2002, the Council worked on developing the concepts and priorities necessary to establish a long-term or permanent Fee Demo Program. In FY 2003, the Council plans to address a variety of issues including legislation, pass policies, program evaluation parameters, reporting and tracking mechanisms, cost of collection, outreach, and other administrative efforts to improve the Fee Demo Program.
- In FY 2002, the agencies initiated efforts to develop a single reservation system. Beginning in 2003, a single reservation system will allow visitors to make reservations at NPS, USDA, BLM, and FWS recreation sites.

The agencies continue to use Fee Demo revenues as Congress intended (see Tables 5-9, pages 13-17). The following projects are examples of the many FY 2002 accomplishments that were made possible by revenues generated by the Fee Demo Program:

- The Public Land Corps program matched \$3 million from Fee Demo revenue with their youth work partners to complete 191 projects that focused on primarily deferred maintenance projects.
- Fee Demo revenues were used to purchase an additional vault toilet located in the expanded parking area at Kasha-Katuwe (Tent Rocks). Fee Demo revenues were also used to design and install additional parking and picnic areas, purchased new picnic tables, benches, a second bear-proof trash receptacle, and informational signs. This Fee Demo project is a partnership between BLM and the Pueblo de Cochiti. Sandoval County also assists in maintaining the 5-mile access road.
- The Uinta National Forest, Timpanogos Cave National Monument, Utah County, and the State of Utah continued their partnership to implement the American Fork Canyon Fee Demo project. The partnership has been well received by the surrounding communities, and has been successful in completing projects for all partners using Fee Demo funds.
- The NPS completed 136 deferred maintenance projects, including the rehabilitation of the Great Falls Tavern at Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, the South Entrance Ramp Granite Pavers at Jefferson National Memorial Expansion, the West Thumb comfort station of the Mammoth Campground at Yellowstone National Park, and the Bison Capture Corrals at Badlands National Park.
- After almost 30 years of handling wilderness canoe reservations manually, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) automated its reservation system with the help of Fee Demo funds. The FWS intends to make the information available on the Internet. The Refuge also developed a three-mile walking trail on both private land and NWR lands.
- St. Catherine Creek NWR in Mississippi completed important maintenance projects using fee demonstration money. The NWR replaced deteriorated signs and repaired two deer check stations used in its hunt program. In addition, the NWR used Fee Demo funds to upgrade its telephone system and print brochures, permits, and environmental education posters.
- Work undertaken at the Dakota Prairie Grasslands Campgrounds in North Dakota is typical of the facility enhancement accomplishments funded by Fee Demo revenues at USDA FS sites. As at many other USDA FS units, deferred maintenance needs at this campground have consumed most of the available appropriated funding. Fee Demo receipts paid for accessibility upgrades for persons with disabilities, new restrooms, new campfire rings, and additional picnic tables. Some of the labor for these enhancements was donated by youth enrolled in the Casey Foundation, a nonprofit organization offering direct services to children. Other accomplishments include:
 - Additional benches, animal-proof trash containers, and lantern holders at the campgrounds in the Coronado National Forest in Arizona.
 - A wheelchair-accessible ramp providing better access to a courtesy dock and marina slips in the Flaming Gorge National Scenic Area in Utah (Ashley National Forest).
 - A new boardwalk connecting the North Kawishiwi River and Clear Lake in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota (Superior National Forest).

- Reduction of the deferred maintenance backlog at many developed sites in the National Forests of North Carolina, including rehabilitation of 30 campsites and making 6 campsites accessible; repairing and replacing failed septic and water systems; replacing picnic tables, grills, and lantern posts; removing hazardous trees; improving restroom facilities; maintaining trails and parking areas; and increasing visitor contacts and security patrols.