

### III. Accomplishments of the Program

#### A. Interagency Coordination

##### COORDINATION AMONG THE DEPARTMENTS

The Interagency Recreational Fee Leadership Council (Council), made up of high-level officials from both Departments, and the staff-level Fee Coordination Task Force continue to facilitate cooperative efforts between the Departments. During FY 2003 some of the specific accomplishments included the following:

- Expanding acceptance of the Golden Eagle Passport. The USDA FS expanded the acceptance of the Golden Eagle, Golden Age, and Golden Access Passports at 1,500 additional sites. The previous policy on pass acceptance at those sites was extremely confusing: the Golden Eagle Passport was not accepted, Golden Age and Access passport holders were given a 50 percent discount, while a regional pass, the Northwest Forest Pass, was accepted in full. While NPS accepts passes at a majority of its fee sites, six sites that previously relied on use fees for the primary attraction to the site now accept passes. In addition, NPS is evaluating 30 sites where use fees could possibly be converted to entrance fees, thereby allowing acceptance of passes.
- Sale of passes/providing the public information about passes. The Departments made Golden Eagle Passports available for sale via the World Wide Web. The recreation.gov web site was also updated to include information about the various passes. In addition, the Departments cooperated to design and develop a new brochure to provide updated information about the various passes.
- Golden Age Passport. The Golden Age Passport was converted to a more durable plastic card and encoded with a magnetic strip in order to track use on an anonymous basis.
- Data on pass use. The NPS initiated a project to collect data on the use of National Parks Passes.
- Fee-free day. The Departments coordinated in the selection of Public Lands Day as a common fee-free day in FY 2003. It is expected that this will continue to be the common fee-free day in future years. The Departments are continuing to work on mechanisms to reward members of the public that volunteer on Public Lands Day.
- Reservation system. In FY 2003, the Departments continued their efforts to develop a single reservation system, in preparation for issuing a new contract to develop this system in FY 2004. The eventual goal is a single reservation system that will allow visitors to make reservations at all appropriate NPS, USDA FS, BLM, FWS, Bureau of Reclamation, and Corps of Engineers recreation sites. The new system will replace the existing separate reservation systems.
- Spending categories. The Departments identified a common set of spending categories that all agencies would report on. These categories include: visitor services; resource

protection; facilities deferred maintenance; facilities capital improvement; facilities routine/annual maintenance. The Departments also adopted common definitions for maintenance and construction terms. These common definitions are shown in Appendix A.

- Washington and Oregon Recreation Pass. During FY 2003, state and federal agencies worked cooperatively to develop an annual multi-agency day-use recreation pass for use in the Pacific Northwest. This pass became in April 2004, and is accepted at many public day-use fee areas in Oregon and Washington. Participating agencies include the USDA FS, NPS, BLM, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the FWS. The pass is an add-on to the existing Golden Eagle Passport. It reduces the need to purchase multiple passes while providing a cost savings to recreationists visiting federal lands and state parks. Revenues will be used to operate and maintain key recreation facilities and services. The federal departments will continue to retain and distribute the revenue generated from the sale of the Golden Eagle Passports according to their current agency policy. The additional revenue generated will be distributed to Washington State Parks, Oregon State Parks, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, based on FY 2002-2003 Fee Demo revenues and the number of sites participating. Washington and Oregon State Parks will each receive 45 percent, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will receive the remaining 10 percent. The distribution formula will be evaluated and adjusted as necessary in the future. In addition to the benefits of the Golden Eagle Passport, the Washington and Oregon Recreation Pass will be honored at 26 Oregon State Parks charging a day-use fee, the 20 participating Washington State Parks charging a vehicle parking fee, and six U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sites charging facility use fees. The pass sells for \$85, which includes the Golden Eagle Passport for \$65, and the Washington and Oregon Recreation Pass Upgrade for \$20. The Washington and Oregon Recreation Pass can be purchased only at federal sites and from authorized vendors.

## **OTHER PARTNERSHIP EFFORTS**

Some of the outstanding FY 2003 partnership efforts are noted below.

The National Elk Refuge operates the Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Interagency Visitor Center. This center is staffed with representatives of seven partner agencies: FWS, NPS, USDA FS, the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, the Grand Teton Natural History Association, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. With staff support from the partner agencies, the center is open to the public every day of the year except Thanksgiving and Christmas day. The partnership allows for consolidation at one location of a variety of visitor services, including the sale of entrance passes, hunting and fishing licenses, and the provision of information on local sites and points of interest. Revenues from the sales of Golden Eagle Passports are used to fund upkeep, improvements, and program needs for the visitor center. The partner agencies collaborate to provide a wide range of exhibits and interpretive programs for the over 300,000 visitors that come to the center each year.

In partnership with the NPS, the Public Land Corps program matched \$4 million from fee revenue with their youth work partners to complete 223 projects focused primarily on deferred maintenance.

Fee Demo revenues helped to fund the REDStart fish hatchery on the FWS's J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR by providing tanks and filtration equipment to farm mosquito larvae-eating fish. The REDStart program is a partnership with Lee County Seagrass, Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation Marine Laboratory, Mote Marine Lab, South Florida Water Management District, and the State of Florida. The refuge uses fish produced at the hatchery in wetland areas to help control mosquito populations in high visitation areas on the refuge.

The Sand Flats Agreement between BLM and the gateway community of Grand County, Utah, allows the county to collect recreation fees and use them to manage a popular recreational area. The county and its citizens have benefited from more vigorous tourism; the BLM has a signature recreation area; and visitors can safely enjoy the Sand Flats area. The Departments believe that the Sand Flats Agreement is an excellent model of a mutually beneficial partnership and that the opportunity to craft these types of agreements exists across the country.

Along the South Fork of the Snake River in Idaho, a partnership between federal, state, and local entities has evolved to cooperatively manage recreation sites spread along a 62-mile stretch of the Snake River. The use of fees collected from boat launching and other activities in the river corridor is determined on a consensus basis by the partnership group, regardless of which jurisdiction collects the fee. Typical uses of Fee Demo revenues have included providing restroom facilities and litter control.