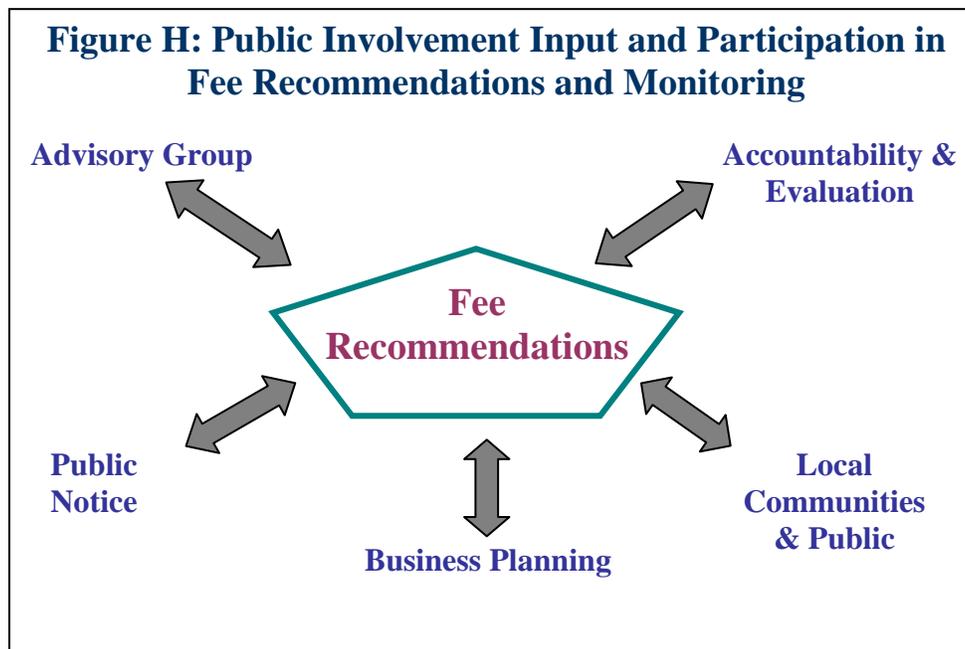


Section 4: Public Participation

One of the more significant changes from the Fee Demo program to REA is the emphasis now put on public participation. Section 4 of REA (Public Participation) and the Act's guidelines call and provide for many opportunities for active public participation regarding recreational fees, including:

1. Recreation Resource Advisory Committees—a Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) chartered committee to address fee programs for the BLM and FS;
2. Agency-led public notice, including: the Federal Register, newspapers, onsite signage, and electronic media;
3. Agency-led public outreach, including: focus groups, listening sessions, public meetings, field visits, websites, local media, reporting, and one-on-one discussions; and
4. Interagency and agency-specific public involvement guidelines.



Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRACs)

REA requires BLM and FS to create a Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC) in each state or region. This section also authorizes the use of similar existing entities as an alternative to establishing the new RRACs. Both DOI and FS view the RRACs as important mediums for engaging the public, interested stakeholders, and local communities in discussions on a wide variety of fee related issues. The RRACs will discuss, in an advisory capacity, all aspects of BLM and FS's recreation fee programs,

including establishing new fee areas, fee levels or rates, abolishing fees, and expenditure of revenue.

Under FACA, anyone can nominate persons to serve on the RRAC. REA allows state governors and designated county officials to submit nominations. The secretaries will appoint members from a list of qualified candidates compiled by the agencies for staggered 2-3 year terms. In addition, Congress mandated that each RRAC be comprised of 11 members:

- Five members will represent recreation users:
 1. winter motorized (e.g., snowmobiling);
 2. winter non-motorized users (e.g., cross-country skiing);
 3. summer motorized (e.g., motorcycles);
 4. summer non-motorized users (e.g., backpacking); and
 5. hunting/fishing interests.
- Three members will represent the following interest groups:
 1. motorized outfitters and guides;
 2. non-motorized outfitters and guides, and
 3. local environmental groups.
- Three members will represent:
 1. the State tourism official to represent the State;
 2. a representative for affected Indian tribes, and
 3. a representative for affected local government interests.

The BLM and FS are developing a Charter that includes all new RRACs established under REA and constitutes the operating guidelines for RRACs. It outlines the RRACs' purposes and scopes, duties, memberships, communication requirements (i.e., posting notices of meetings, etc.), costs, reporting requirements, and other requirements outlined in REA or as part of FACA directions.

A RRAC Workgroup determined the most efficient and effective way to set up the RRACs, taking into consideration REA requirements, past experience with such groups, public input and guidance on how RRACs should be structured, their duties, and other items. FS and BLM gathered public input by holding 11 listening sessions in locations across the country (two each in Washington, D.C., Idaho, and California, and one in Oregon, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, and Georgia) to discuss the formation and configuration of the RRACs. At these listening sessions, the BLM and FS presented at least three options to generate discussion regarding the organization and framework of RRACs including using existing BLM RACs, operating regional RRACs, and creating one national RRAC. Based on these discussions the following structure was chosen: 17 existing BLM RACs will be used, along with one existing FS RAC, and five new RRACs will be established (4 joint, 1 FS issues only). These decisions are further detailed in Appendix V and will also be included in an Interagency Agreement between BLM and FS.

To allow for local representation, more focused subgroups may be created by the existing BLM RACs and RRACs where those committees determine subgroups are necessary.

Following FACA, advisory committees may establish subgroups on an ad-hoc basis or as an established subcommittee for whatever purpose the committees wish to investigate. (The BLM and FS are encouraging existing RACs to establish subgroups specifically to work on recreation fee issues, but establishing these subgroups is, and will continue to be, the privilege of the existing RACs, not the agencies involved.)

Public Participation Guidelines

Interagency Guidelines:

REA calls for establishing guidelines for public involvement. In response to REA, on September 28, 2005, the DOI and USFS jointly published a “*Notice of Guidelines for Public Involvement in Establishing Recreation Fee Areas and for Demonstrating How the Public Was Informed on the Use of Recreation Fee Revenue*” in the Federal Register. This is the first time that the agencies have codified and standardized their public involvement guidelines. This notice explained that:

1. The agencies will integrate public involvement opportunities in their decisions to establish new recreation fee areas;
2. The agencies will identify outreach efforts to encourage public involvement in establishment of new recreation fee areas, including recreation fee site visits, public meetings, focus groups, newsletters and websites;
3. Public involvement opportunities will include sharing plans developed by the cooperating agencies for establishment of new recreation fee areas⁶;
4. Each agency will determine specific public involvement opportunities based on local needs and interests; and
5. In the triennial reports to Congress on REA program, the agencies will describe how they have informed the public about the use of recreation fee revenue. This information also will be made available on the agencies’ websites.

The aforementioned interagency Federal Register notice also stipulated that each agency should develop detailed agency-specific guidance on public involvement that will be incorporated into each agency’s directives, manuals, or orders and requires that agencies publish a notice in the Federal Register six months before a new fee area is established. See Appendix V for agency-specific guidelines.

⁶ These plans generally contain a description of the new recreation fee area; a financial analysis, including projected development, operating, and maintenance costs, and projected income for the fee area; analysis of potentially competing private and public facilities or services in the vicinity of the fee area; and the ways in which the cooperating agencies will inform the public as to how the fees collected at the area are spent.