
Chapter 1
Introduction

Preface

This *Campground Concession Desk Guide* is a compilation of agency regulations and policy. It is not new policy, but rather guidance on application of existing policy in a specific context. The desk guide will be periodically reviewed and modified as new regulations or policy are promulgated.

An electronic copy of the desk guide is available. For more information, please contact the Washington Office Recreation Special Uses staff at (202) 205-1706.

Acknowledgements

This desk guide would not have been possible without the contributions of many talented people in the Washington Office, regional offices, field offices, and the Office of the General Counsel, who gave their most limited resource: time.

We wish to give special acknowledgment to the employees of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest who helped formulate many of the ideas and appendices in this desk guide and who have acted as a sounding board during its formulation.

Finally, we wish to give our utmost appreciation to Randy Welsh, chief visionary, inspiration, and author of the first draft of this desk guide, and to Carolyn Holbrook and Ellen Hornstein, who as primary authors made this final version possible. Thanks.

Program Objective

The objective of the agency's concession program is to offer quality recreation services to the public by providing a business opportunity on National Forest System lands. To meet this objective, the agency must establish an effective business relationship with concessionaires.

Purpose of the Desk Guide

The concession program is growing. Two decades ago, Forest Service (FS) personnel operated and maintained the vast majority of recreation facilities on National Forest System lands. Today, concessionaires operate the majority of campgrounds where use fees are charged. Concession management will continue to be a vital means of accommodating visitor demands into the twenty-first century.

With continued budget reductions, the number and complexity of sites managed as concessions have grown. Additionally, some concessionaires have evolved from local businesses to national businesses. Both factors contribute to complexity in the concession program. This desk guide is intended to ensure proficiency and consistency in issuing and administering special-use permits for concessions at Government-owned recreational facilities, without sacrificing the flexibility to manage individual situations.

In addition to following the desk guide, understanding each other's needs will help forge an effective

business relationship between the FS and its concessionaires. Some of these needs may include the types and hours of services offered, consistent administration, clear understanding of performance criteria, an appreciation of fee offset priorities, understanding each other's procedures, and the difference between Government management and concessionaire management, which involves operation of a business. Make this guide available to the permit holder. Use it together to enhance mutual understanding in connection with administration and operation of the concession.

This guide:

- Applies to concessions involving strictly Government-owned facilities authorized by a special-use permit issued under Section 7 of the Granger-Thye (G-T) Act, 16 U.S.C. 580d. Since most of these facilities are campgrounds, this document is entitled "Campground Concession Desk Guide." However, much of the information found in the desk guide can be used for other related G-T concessions.
- Provides guidance on establishing and administering concession operations, including selection of applicants and proper fee calculation and offset.
- Ensures consistency in concession management by providing standard direction and standard tools, including a standard permit.
- Emphasizes enhancement of visitor services.

Where there is management of public and private improvements on National Forest System lands, refer to the *Private/Public Ventures Desk Guide*. Concessions involving strictly privately owned improvements are covered in FSM 2340 and 2700.

Background

The FS is constantly looking for innovative ways to accomplish the concession program objective explained above. An entrepreneurial approach is needed to manage FS facilities and reduce costs to the Federal Government.

As appropriated dollars and the Federal workforce shrink, local managers are relying more on the private sector to provide recreation opportunities to the public on the National Forests. Thus, the agency's ability to offer quality recreation services depends on a vibrant concession program.

Operating a concession program is a different way of doing business. Rather than supervising a maintenance crew, the FS administers a special-use permit. Operating a concession program therefore requires good permit administration. While concession operation of campgrounds may improve services, it also requires users to pay the true cost for those services.

A concession program gives the managing unit different options for spending allocated funds. Instead of spending funds on collecting garbage, cleaning toilets, and sanding picnic tables, the manager disburses funds for permit administration and more significant maintenance.

This guide results from years of good work by many Forests and Ranger Districts. Samples from around the nation have been used to develop the standard permit. Examples of other tools from around the country have also been included. The Washington Office and the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) must review any changes to standard forms.

Benefits of Campground Concessions

Concessionaire management of campgrounds offers important benefits:

- The ability to continue to provide recreation facilities and services in the face of reduced Federal appropriations.
- The enhanced ability to maintain and recondition Federal facilities through the G-T fee offset.
- The potential for improved public service, in terms of both quality and quantity.
- The potential for more staff on site.

**Authority for
Campground Concessions**

Section 7 of the G-T Act is the authority for issuing campground concession permits. The G-T Act authorizes the FS to issue permits to individuals or entities for the use and occupancy of Government-owned structures and their associated lands. All or part of the permit fee may be offset by the cost of maintenance and reconditioning (M&R) paid by the holder of the Government-owned structures and their associated land covered by the permit. Chapter 5 addresses calculation of the G-T permit fee and what type of M&R qualifies for offset under applicable law and agency policy.