

Rec issue input still sought by ANF staff

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story on U.S. Forest Service / Allegheny National
Forest "Recreation Facilities Analysis"
pages A1 & A6

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The Forest Service is still looking for input about its developed recreational facilities.

After a public meeting last week went off topic and stayed there, the U.S. Forest Service is trying something else.

According to Natural Resource Specialist Linda White, the Forest Service is looking for answers to four questions posted on its Web site at:
www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/allegheny

Answers will help guide forest service policy regarding developed recreational facilities. "I will pass them up the line for consideration," White said.

White needs any responses back by Friday, Feb. 15.

The answers will be combined with visitor use data and other information to help the forest service get a handle on who is using what.

"We're going to try to develop this forest niche," White said. "It's a process that all of the forests in the nation are going through right now, trying to get an idea of what people think is important about the national forest, how they use it, particularly developed recreational facilities."

A developed facility has some kind of building, White said. Picnic areas, campgrounds, beaches, boat launches, and trail heads with toilets or hitching rails, loading ramps are some examples of developed facilities.

"It's not just a parking lot," White said. "It's got some structure, some level of development."

Many developed facilities are "behind in their maintenance," White said. "Those are the things we're concerned about right now."

Ranking the public value of facilities will be part of the plan as the forest service works out how to spend its recreation funds.

"The trails — that was not part of it," she said.

There were no plans for another public meeting before last Tuesday's meeting went off task. That hasn't changed.

"I think it's a good idea to have public meetings, but to have everybody focus on trails again isn't what we need," White said.

Instead of another public meeting, the forest service will hold an internal workshop taking advantage of

existing input. "What we're going to do is meet internally here in the forest," White said. "We're going to try to nail down what our developed recreation niche is."

She said she understands the goals of the people who attended the Tuesday, Jan. 29 meeting in Sheffield.

"I understand that the forest is important to people," White said. "People have a lot of passion in the recreation that they do."

However, comments about trails were not what she was looking for.

"It didn't serve the purpose that I need," White said. "My job is to get this done in the next six months. I need to remain focused."

The questions are:

- What is unique or exceptionally distinctive about the Allegheny National Forest and/or the recreation opportunities it provides?

- What are the things that Forest visitors are most satisfied about?

- What is the importance of the Forest and/or the recreation opportunities it provides to the local communities?

- 25 years from now, what do you expect the public to value the most about the Forest?

Anyone interested in submitting responses may direct them to White at lmwhite@fs.fed.us.

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