

# **From the Turnagain Times, Girdwood Alaska**

**May 1, 2008**

## **The Begich, Boggs Visitor Center takes a phased approach to changes in its recreation fee program**

The Begich, Boggs Visitor Center has decided to take a phased approach to changes in its Recreation Fee Program outlined in the center's 2007 Business Plan. These changes were recommended due to declining budgets which caused us to explore options to leverage and enhance our visitor center services while increasing our ability to recover costs for operations and deferred maintenance. The visitor center has received response from the general public as well as tour guide operators at public meetings, through emails and by telephone. In general, people were very understanding of our need to work towards self-sufficiency and applauded our efforts.

The majority of people who responded recommended that any change made to the existing movie fee should not occur until the summer of 2009 and we agree. By postponing the change to this part of the Recreation Fee Program the tour guide operators will be able to market and advertise the new rate in time for the 2009 visitor season. This phased fee change will also assist the general public in its ability to plan ahead. In addition, most people recommended that when the change occurs we begin with a \$3 fee and increase it to no more than \$5 per adult over time.

So here's what we decided to do...For the summer of 2008 we will maintain the existing fee for the movie at \$1 for adults only. Beginning with the summer of 2009 we will change from a fee for the movie only, to a fee for the movie and the exhibits. This Standard Amenity Fee will be \$3 per adult in 2009, \$4 per adult in 2010 and \$5 per adult in 2011. The proceeds from the increased fee will allow us to earn additional proceeds to enhance the amenities and special events we offer the public and provide support for operations and maintenance of the facility. Season Passes will be sold to individuals, two adults, or family groups. In all cases children 15 and under will be admitted to the movie and exhibits free of charge, as will those who own an America the Beautiful Pass, Senior Pass, Access Pass, Golden Age Pass or Golden Access Pass.

Beginning in 2009 permitted tour guide companies will have the ability to receive a 10% discount in the Standard Amenity Fee for their guests if they pay in advance. This option will require each company to contact the Visitor Center Director to work out the details. Otherwise they or their guests will be charged the same amount as the general public. We will continue to be Fee Free in the off-season and to provide important services to the public at no charge during the key visitor season, such as free access to information services at the front desk, exhibits in the lobby, the bookstore and the restrooms.

The additional funds that the visitor center is able to earn will assist us in meeting the following goals over time:

- re-open the visitor center on weekends and special events during the off-season
- reinstate the annual "Nature Spooktacular"
- enhance our conservation education and interpretive program offerings

- offer new exhibits and special events
- create a much needed new film
- assist with operation and maintenance costs of the facility
- advertise and market the visitor center and its services
- update and improve our web page

To view a complete Recreation Fee Program Implementation Schedule for the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center check out the Chugach National Forest website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/> If you have any questions please call Lezlie Murray at 907-743-2316 or send her an email at: [lmurray01@fs.fed.us](mailto:lmurray01@fs.fed.us)