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Linn to manage U.S. Forest Service campgrounds

By Alex Paul | Posted: Wednesday, January 19, 2011 7:00 am

Linn County will manage six U.S. Forest Service campgrounds for at least the next five years, the board of commissioners has agreed.

The contract is for five years with an option for another five, according to Brian Carroll, Linn County Parks and Recreation Department director.

"The public is looking for government to be creative and to come up with partnerships like this," Carroll said.

The county will pay the federal government 5.3 percent of adjusted gross revenues from camping fees, or a minimum of \$2,628 annually. The cost of work done by the county can be counted toward that figure.

Commissioners Roger Nyquist and Will Tucker voted in favor, with John Lindsey opposed, because the federal government does not want the county to install new signs that indicate the campgrounds are being managed and maintained by the county.

"It's supposed to be a partnership, yet they want us to make their campgrounds look good but not give credit where credit is due," Lindsey said. "The public should know who is doing the work."

Historically, the campgrounds take in about \$49,000 in annual income. The Linn County parks system generates about \$1 million annually.

Carroll said the campgrounds, which border the South Santiam River, fit nicely between the county's River Bend Campground at Cascadia and Clear Lake Resort. They will also provide campers with more rustic camping opportunities.

Carroll told commissioners he believes the campgrounds will be "cash flow positive" quickly. The county submitted a bid for the concession rights in October.

Many county residents already use the campgrounds, Carroll said.

The campgrounds are:

- Fernview: 23 miles east of Sweet Home, with 11 campsites and two tent-only sites.
- House Rock: 26 miles east of Sweet Home on 7 acres at the confluence of Sheep Creek and the South Santiam River; 17 camping sites.
- Longbow Organizational Campground: 22 miles east of Sweet Home, a group camping site that was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s on 10 acres. There are six alpine shelters with fireplaces that sleep up to 48 people, as well as a dining hall with cooking area and fireplace with seating for 40.
- Lost Prairie: 37 miles east of Sweet Home, near Hackleman Creek; 10 camping units, eight of which are walk-in tent sites.
- Trout Creek: 19 miles east of Sweet Home on 7 acres, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s; 24 camping sites, and a picnic shelter and fireplace.
- Yukwah: 19.5 miles east of Sweet Home on 7 acres of second-growth Douglas-fir. There are 20 campsites, and a small picnic area; several campsites and the picnic area are handicap accessible.