EMS TRANSMISSION 06/16/2005

Instruction Memorandum No. 2005-166

Expires: 09/30/2006

To: All Field Officials

From: Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Subject: Interim Approval Guidelines for Recreation Fee Increases

Program Area: Recreation Permit Fees

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides approval and conditions for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Offices to proceed with routine fee increases at recreation sites/areas (see Attachment 1) which were submitted per Washington Office request in IM No. 2005-063, dated January 26, 2005.
**Background:** The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, P.L.108-447 (REA), was signed by President Bush on December 8, 2004. The Departments of Agriculture and Interior requested that all of their respective agencies affected by REA immediately suspend (place a moratorium on) any planned fee increases, or establishment of any new fee areas, pending further guidance issued from the Departments.

Under existing BLM policy, Field Managers are required to review and evaluate their respective recreation fees biennially to stay current with inflation and to maintain fees comparable to those charged by the private sector and other government agencies providing recreation facilities or similar recreation opportunities. A number of Field Offices (FO) had already completed, or were in the process of completing the required review/evaluation in order to increase their recreation fees this spring where applicable. Similarly, these FOs had already notified or were in the process of notifying the public regarding routine fee increases based on existing BLM policy required for public notification. The BLM also constructed several new campgrounds which were planned,
with extensive public involvement over a multi-year planning period, and completed in cooperation with partnerships. In January 2005, IM No. 2005-063 was issued requesting BLM State Offices to submit recreation fee site nominations, for approval, to allow fee increases under the moratorium.

The agencies affected by the moratorium consolidated their respective lists of recreation fee site/area nominations and met with the Departments of Agriculture and Interior on March 25, 2005, to request reprieve from the moratorium. Based on that meeting, both Departments agreed to approve and proceed with fee increases on specific sites under specified conditions. This Departmental agreement generally affected routine fee increases at expanded amenity sites, such as campgrounds, and the initiation of fees at newly constructed sites/areas where development of the sites/areas spanned several years of planning, were completed with partnership cooperation, or included wide public involvement where there was expectation of instituting fees at the grand opening of the sites/areas.

Policy/Action:

Routine Recreation Fee Increases. Regularly scheduled recreation fee increases will be allowed at expanded amenity sites/areas due to the addition of developed facilities or improved visitor services, or following review and evaluation of charges by the private sector and other government agencies providing recreation facilities or similar recreation opportunities. Also allowed are any fee increases which were scheduled for FY 2005, have had some public notification/involvement in the process (e.g., fee increases posted at the sites/areas prior to implementation, or news release issued), and are coordinated through the respective County Commissioners. There will be no change in standard amenity site fees through FY 2005.

New Fee Areas. Generally, new standard amenity fee sites/areas will not be permitted prior to establishment of and review by Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRAC). However, recreation fees may be imposed at new or newly available expanded amenity fee sites such as campgrounds or cabins where these sites meet the criteria for expanded amenity fee sites.
as outlined in REA. For each new fee area that meets the definition above, FOs must: 1) ensure that the local Congressional delegation and affected County Commissioners are notified; 2) complete the required public notification and involvement set forth in REA, including a notice in the Federal Register (FR) establishing the new fee area/site, and having six months elapsed since establishing the notice of the fee area in the FR; and 3) obtain “Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning” approval.

Special Recreation Permit (SRP) Fee Increases. Generally, SRPs are subject to the fee restriction moratorium through FY 2005. New SRP areas may be established if: 1) they have been associated with an extensive, public involved, planning process and/or partnerships; 2) they have been established as new fee areas with a notice in the FR; 3) six months have elapsed since they had notices of fee area establishment published in the
4) local Congressional delegations and affected County Commissioners have been notified; and 5) general public notification has occurred. Increases in existing SRP fees are approved as long as they have gone through a public notification process as required by existing BLM policy.

**Time Frame:** FOs with sites/areas included in Attachment 1 may proceed with initiation of fee increases upon completing public notification requirements based on REA and existing BLM policy and have notified appropriate local Congressional delegations and affected County Commissioners. No other fee increases may occur in FY 2005.

**Budget Impact:** Impact on the overall BLM budget is minimal. The additional revenue collected at specific recreation sites/areas, as a result of fee increases, will improve the individual site/area administration. On a Bureau-wide basis, it is expected that implementing this fee policy will mean an increase in revenues of approximately $150,000 in FY 2005.

**Manual/Handbook:** These interim approval guidelines will have no impact on existing BLM Manuals and/or Handbooks.

**Coordination:** This interim guidance has been coordinated through the Deputy Secretary of the Interior, the Assistant Secretaries affected by REA in both the Departments of Agriculture and Interior, all the agencies included in REA, the BLM’s Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning, and Budget Officer; the BLM’s Director, National Landscape Conservation System, and Directives.

**Contact:** If there are any questions concerning this IM, please contact Scott S. Abdon, Chief, Division of Recreation and Visitor Services at (202) 785-6515 or Lee V. Larson, Senior Recreation Specialist, Division of Recreation
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1 Attachment

1 – 2005 BLM Recreation Sites, Proposed Changes (3 pp)