On March 25, 2011, I issued guidance for reviewing our 97 large standard amenity recreation fee areas with multiple recreation sites or complexes. That guidance resulted in proposals to remove the large area designation from 73 of these areas and reduce most of the remaining 24 areas, which were concurred with in letters from my office in December, 2011 and February, 2012. As a result, many lower developed recreation sites are proposed for elimination from the recreation fee program. This is a significant change to our recreation fee program, one that puts us on sound footing for future success, and I want to applaud you for your hard work and diligence.

I recognize that public participation, including Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) review, is required by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) to implement these proposals. However, it is important that we demonstrate commitment to this approach.

To that end, I am directing that you not enforce standard amenity recreation fees or issue notices of required fees for any portion of a large area that has been proposed for elimination from the recreation fee program. If a large area is being divided into smaller areas with a single recreation site or tight cluster of sites, ensure that all these sites contain all the required amenities and services before continuing to enforce fees or issue notices of required fees at those sites. Sites may include some designated overflow parking areas if they are key to the function and use of the site.

You may convert a standard amenity recreation fee for an area to another type of recreation fee, such as an expanded amenity recreation fee or special recreation permit fee, provided there is no change in the fee amount and the criteria for charging that type of fee under REA and the Forest Service’s Interim Implementation Guidelines on REA are met.

I have discussed this change in enforcement strategy with the Law Enforcement and Investigations Staff (LEI) in the Washington Office. Please work with your local LEI and forest protection officers to implement this change in approach.
This direction will remain in effect until you have completed public participation and Recreation RAC review for affected standard amenity recreation fee areas. At that time, you will follow requirements applicable to Recreation RAC recommendations for these areas. Additional materials for implementing this direction are enclosed.

Please direct any questions you may have to Assistant Recreation Director Ken Karkula at (202) 205-1358.

/s/ James M. Pena (for)
LESLIE A. C. WELDON
Deputy Chief, National Forest System

cc: Ken Karkula
Julie A Cox
Guidance for Standard Amenity Recreation Fee Areas Proposed To Be Changed
Pending Public Input

May 11, 2012

1) Do not enforce standard amenity recreation fees or issue notices of required fees for any portion of an area that has been proposed for elimination from the recreation fee program.

2) If an area is being divided into smaller areas with a single recreation site or tight clusters of sites, ensure that all these sites contain all the required amenities and services before continuing to enforce fees or issue notices of required fees at those sites. Sites may include some designated overflow parking areas if they are key to the function and use of the site.

3) You may convert a standard amenity recreation fee for an area to another type of recreation fee, such as an expanded amenity recreation fee or special recreation permit fee, provided there is no change in the fee amount and the criteria for charging that type of fee under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) and the Forest Service’s Interim Implementation Guidelines on REA are met.

4) Remove standard amenity recreation fee signs at all locations where standard amenity recreation fees for areas will not be enforced.

5) For large areas where fee enforcement will change, post a notice at the entrances to those areas and at recreation sites within those areas that indicates where recreation fees will and will not be enforced (see sample notice).
Sample Notice on Enforcement at Standard Amenity Recreation Fee Areas
Proposed To Be Changed Pending Public Input

May 11, 2012

A national Forest Service review conducted of the 97 large standard amenity recreation fee areas on National Forest System lands has resulted in proposals to remove the area designation from 73 areas and reduce most of the remaining 24 areas. As a result, many less-developed recreation sites are proposed for elimination from the recreation fee program.

The Forest Service has proposed to [remove the area designation from XXXX Recreation Area /reduce XXXX Recreation Area]. Public participation, including Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) review, is required by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) to implement this proposal.

However, to demonstrate commitment to the changes proposed as a result of the national review, pending implementation of changes to the XXXX Recreation Area, the Forest Service will not enforce recreation fees or issue notices of required fees at the following sites in XXXX Recreation Area:

[List sites]

The Forest Service will enforce recreation fees and issue of notices of required fees at the following sites in XXXX Recreation Area:

[List sites]

The XXX National Forest provides unique recreation opportunities for millions (?) of visitors every year. Ninety-five percent of recreation fee revenue is invested locally to benefit residents and visitors. Recreation fee revenues improve, restore, and maintain recreational facilities, as well as conserve and restore natural and cultural resources.

To obtain more information or to comment on the recreation fee program, go to XXXX.