

Recreation Fee Enhancement Program Guidance for Project Submittal (FY 2008 Servicewide Comprehensive Call)

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA), signed into law as part of the 2005 Omnibus Appropriations bill on December 8, 2004, replaces the Recreational Fee Demonstration (Fee Demo) and National Park Pass (NPP) authorities. Over the nine years of these programs, the National Park Service (NPS) worked diligently to develop multifaceted management tools, create policy in sync with similar programmatic areas, as well as align processes with established Department of the Interior (DOI) protocols to ensure that fee revenues were expended with accountability and integrity. Our goal is to utilize these management tools with their improved information management capabilities and the opportunities afforded by the new law to streamline processes. Integral to streamlining is high quality project submittals with continuous data management at every level which allows the NPS to provide complete, accurate and timely reporting. The identified tool is the Fee Revenue Comprehensive Plan which builds upon the Project Management Information System (PMIS) project submittals. To this end:

❖ **During this Servicewide Comprehensive Call, parks *must* submit all the projects needed to complete a 5-Year Comprehensive Plan for FY 2007 – 2011:**

- Recreation Fee parks need to submit additional projects for the park's 5-Year Plan, that **at a minimum equals** the total anticipated revenue and the current unobligated balance from Recreation Fees, Federal Recreation Passes, Transportation Fees, and Deed Restricted Revenue.
- **20 Percent Projects:** Parks and Washington Divisions (WASO) need to submit all their 20 percent projects that will compete for funding for this 5 year period so that each Region and Washington Associate can develop a 5-Year Plan for 20 percent revenues. The regional targets for prioritization of 20 percent projects will continue to follow the percentages established in 1998. Each Regional Director will determine the parks revenue threshold to compete for 20 percent funds for parks grossing less than \$500,000.
- **Public Land Corps (PLC):** Parks need to submit all their PLC projects that will compete for funding for this 5 year period so that each region can develop a 5-Year Plan for PLC projects funded by 20 percent revenues. PLC project titles should begin with PLC for example "PLC-Rehabilitate Lost Lake Trails," and each component title should identify the unique work funded and the year the work is planned e.g. "Rehabilitate Miles 1 to 4 of the Lost Lake Trail FY 2007." The Requested Funding FY identified should also be the year the work is planned.
- **Cost of Collection – Operations (COC):** Parks should create a new project titled "FY 2007- 2011 Cost of Collection – Operations," with separate funding components titled for each respective year, e.g. "FY2007 Cost of Collection – Operations," "FY 2008 Cost of Collection – Operations" etc. Existing FY 2007 – FY 2011 COC Operations projects or components should be deleted. Expenses associated with the administration and management of Commercial Use Authorizations (CUA) related to Commercial Busses should be identified as a separate component for each respective year in the COC operations project, e.g. "FY 2007 Cost of Collection – CUA," "FY 2008 Cost of Collection – CUA" etc. All COC operations project components must correspond to "Requested Funding FY 2007" through "Requested Funding FY 2011."

- **COC Capital Improvement:** Create a new separate project titled “FY 2007- 2011 Cost of Collection – Capital,” with separate funding components titled to identify capital improvements by fiscal year. Existing FY 2007- 2011 COC Capital Improvement projects or components should be deleted. In anticipation of the technology upgrades coming such as the Servicewide Point of Sale System, parks should submit a project that contains their best estimate on the cost that can be adjusted later.
- **Fee Management Agreements** (fee collection contracts/armored car/bank services etc.) and expenditures related to **National Reservation Systems** (NRRS, NPRS) should be removed from COC operations and placed in separate projects. Create a new separate project titled
- “FY 2007-2011 Fee Management Agreement - COC,” or “FY 2007 – 2011 National Reservation System (NRRS or NPRS)” with separate funding components titled for each respective year, e.g. “FY 2007 Fee Management Agreement- COC,” “FY 2008 Fee Management Agreements- COC” etc. with the “Requested Funding FY” as the year the action will take place. The law also establishes the use of Fee Management Agreements to commission or reimburse any governmental or nongovernmental entity for the purpose of obtaining Emergency Medical Services or Law Enforcement (dispatch centers, search and rescue services, etc.) Parks should create a new separate project titled “FY 2007-2011 Fee Management Agreement –EMS,” or “FY 2007-2011 Fee Management Agreement – LE,” with separate funding components titled for each respective year with the “Requested Funding FY” as the year the action will take place.
- **Visitor Services** projects (previously Cost Recovery) **will** change under REA policy. No new components should be added to an existing Cost Recovery project. Instead, parks should create new direct visitor services or recreational activity projects such as life guards, interpretive tours, transportation system operations and backcountry orientation/permit services that are within the expenditure categories as part of this current SCC with the understanding that future policy decisions will determine editing needs and approval. Backcountry permit administration should be removed from COC operations and placed in a separate visitor services project. The project title should include the years covered by the project, e.g. “FY 2007- 2011 Visitor Service – Provide Life Guards for South Cove Beach” and each component title should reflect a single year, e.g. “FY 2007 Provide Life Guards for South Cove Beach,” with the “Requested Funding FY” as the year in which the action will take place.

All Recreation Fee Enhancement projects (including NPP and PLC):

- ✓ Should be **“high priority,”** as articulated by PMIS banding, park numerical priority, and, in the case of 20 percent, the region numerical priority;
- ✓ Must illustrate a **“direct visitor connection” stated in title** and detailed in the justification;
- ✓ Asset or facility projects need a primary asset, accurate DOI criteria and a Facility Management Software System (FMSS) parent work order number in PMIS;
- ✓ Asset projects need a complete parent to children work order relationship in FMSS;
- ✓ PMIS Funding Components need to designate the Recreational Fee Demonstration and National Parks Pass funding sources, as PMIS has not been updated with the new law; and
- ✓ The funding components should have a Requested Funding FY 2007, FY 2008, FY 2009, FY 2010 or FY 2011. **All components should choose the year the work is planned as the “Requested Funding FY.”**

Important emphasis considerations in submitting Recreation Fee Enhancement Projects:

- Projects that improve the visitor experience and at the same time reduces the deferred maintenance identified on visitor use assets;
- Deferred Maintenance obligations should be about 60 percent of a parks yearly revenue;
- Projects that can be executed for an immediate reduction of unobligated balance;
- Parks should focus first on stabilization, restoration and replacement of highest Asset Priority Index value, highest Facility Condition Index value visitor use assets
- In the out years, parks should consider projects that maintain a previous investment or address an identified component renewal need for visitor use assets particularly fee generating facilities; and
- WASO Divisions should submit 20 percent projects with actions that happen in the parks but for efficiency and effectiveness require centralized management. These projects should not fund actions in parks with gross revenue over \$500,000.

❖ **Important factors for the transition to REA:**

Until new policy is finalized, the previously established policies and procedures for the Fee Demo and NPP programs will remain in place with the following exceptions:

- No new projects will be approved and all obligations should have stopped on approved projects for **threatened or endangered species monitoring, mitigation, and the writing of Recovery Plans**. Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), “monitoring” is defined as a distinct action with an established frequency or repetition, and “monitoring” is associated with recovery activities for listed or candidate species. Recreation fees may be used for the one-time survey, clearance or inventory and mitigation actions of the listed or candidate species required for National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) compliance. DOI continues to narrow the allowable ESA species projects under REA;
- No projects will be approved for **housing** with the exception of the external fabric of documented historic structures that are within a visitor use area;
- No recreation fee funds should be obligated for **personnel awards or bonuses**. Fee funds may be used for quality step increases for fee personnel dedicated to Cost of Collection activities;
- Fund types were consolidated under REA. In FY 2005, Fee Demo became REA (Type 25). NPP will remain Type 22 until the implementation of the America the Beautiful Pass (ATB). Upon implementation, any remaining NPP revenue and the new ATB revenue will be combined with REA (Type 25). For this reason, the basic revenue split has been changed so all parks grossing less than \$500,000 will retain 100 percent of the revenue. The same split will apply to ATB revenue. Parks need to factor in this critical information as well as the projected entrance fee increases when figuring their anticipated revenue over the next five years. (See the SCC Project Development Information below for a park’s basic split);
- Until NPS REA policy is finalized, permanent positions and projects that fund existing Operations of the National Park System (ONPS) will not be approved with the exception of positions directly involved in the collection of recreation fees, subject to furlough positions extended beyond their previously paid period to work on an approved project, operations of transportation systems and other previously established exceptions; and

- Funds derived from the program shall only be used for projects on Federal lands.

REA Expenditure Categories:

- Repair, maintenance, and facility enhancement related directly to visitor enjoyment, visitor access, and health and safety;
- Interpretation, visitor information, visitor service, visitor needs assessments, and signs;
- Habitat restoration directly related to wildlife-dependent recreation that is limited to hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, or photography;
- Law enforcement related to public use and recreation;
- Direct operating or capital costs associated with the recreation fee program;
- A fee management agreement established under section 6(a) or a visitor reservation service; and
- Administration, Overhead, and Indirect Costs -- NPS may not exceed 15 percent Servicewide. These costs should be incorporated in individual project cost estimates with the exception of large revenue parks with complex project management (Policy on this expenditure category is under development).

SCC Project Development Information at: <http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=336&lv=3>

Authorized Expenses for Cost of Collection	Deputy Director Martin's, July 18, 2005 Memorandum: "FLREA Comprehensive Plans"
Authorized Expenses for Servicewide Reservation System (NPRS or NRRS)	REA Basic Split List
Authorized Expenses for Fee Management Agreement - COC	HFC Brochure List
REA Interagency Implementation Handbook	Fire/Life Safety List
FMSS to PMIS Guidance	Spherix to National Reservation System List
REA Implementation Memos	Narrowband Radio Conversion List
Comprehensive Plan	

❖ **Conclusion**

At this time, park managers have previously approved funding components in PMIS to continue obligating fee funds in FY 2006. The FY 2006 COC and Cost Recovery projects have been approved. Parks should work with their region to expedite approval of FY 2006 funding components that will obligate deferred maintenance projects where a park does not have enough approved deferred maintenance projects or if the park has met a barrier to rapid project execution and wishes to complete an alternative deferred maintenance project with immediate results. Projects that are not deferred maintenance or projects to be implemented in FY 2007, and beyond, should be submitted as part of the current SCC. There are four additional exceptions that may require expedited approval because of recent NPS budget changes: FY 2006 printing of the park's unigrid brochure; FY 2006 Life/Fire Safety Condition Assessments; projects needed to replace the infrastructure required for the shift from Spherix to the National Reservation System; and FY 2006 Narrowband Radio Conversion projects. Lists of targeted revenue collecting parks for these four exceptions and a template for a PMIS project can be found at the **SCC Project Development Information** link cited above.

The success of streamlining the Recreation Fee program is dependent upon the NPS being able to report to DOI, Office of Management and Budget, Congress and the public solid accountable management of Fee revenues. The Fee Revenue Comprehensive Plans for FY 2007 – 2011 will provide the capabilities for reporting. Crucial to each parks success is development of a complete package of projects for FY 2007-2011 that addresses their high priority visitor asset needs and, for revenue parks, the package of projects at a minimum needs to equal their anticipated revenue. Forthcoming will be the next steps for regions and WASO to implement the policy changes generated by the Recreation Fee Enhancement Act and instructions on how to use the new web based Fee Revenue Comprehensive Plan.