



File Code: 2300; 2700**Date:** April 8, 2020**Route To:****Subject:** COVID-19 National Emergency Direction for Billing Holders of Commercial Recreation Special Use Authorizations and Commercial Filming Permits**To:** Regional Foresters and Station Directors

The Forest Service is taking the risks presented by COVID-19 seriously. Our special use permit holders are among our strongest partners. They help support local economies, provide outdoor recreation experiences to thousands of citizens, and share in the stewardship of National Forest System lands.

Holders of commercial recreation special use authorizations, which provide recreational services to the public, have been unable to operate or have experienced a significant reduction in business due to the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic since the President's Declaration of a National Emergency on March 13, 2020, including social distancing guidelines and governors' declarations of a state of emergency and stay-at-home orders.

To provide financial relief to these permit holders to the extent authorized by law, per 36 Code of Federal Regulations 200.4(b)(2), I am requesting Regional Foresters and Station Directors ensure that authorized officers under their supervision take the following steps regarding billing for holders of commercial recreation special use authorizations and commercial filming permits:

- Delay issuance of future bills for 90 days for advance, interim, and final land use fees.
- Extend the due date for bills for land use fees that have already been issued, but are not yet due, to coincide with the 90-day delay for future bills.
- For bills paid in advance, reconcile final bills early, and refund any overpayments made.
- If a planned commercial recreation special use or commercial filming activity is not likely to occur due to the COVID-19 pandemic, consider, as applicable, foregoing issuance of the special use authorization or revoking the authorization with the holder's consent so that land use fees do not accrue.
- Waive interest, penalties, and administrative fees for 90 days for past due bills where the account was in good standing as of the Declaration of a National Emergency on March 13, 2020.
- Delay collection for 90 days for past due bills of \$100,000 or less where the account was in good standing as of the Declaration of a National Emergency on March 13, 2020.
- Refer past due bills that exceed \$100,000 where the account was in good standing as of the Declaration of a National Emergency on March 13, 2020, to the Washington Office



Special Uses staff, which will seek approval from the U.S. Department of Justice to suspend collection for 90 days.

The enclosed template should be used to provide notice to permit holders of implementation of the foregoing direction. We will consider extending the foregoing relief, as appropriate, based on the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic. This direction does not apply to lands special uses other than commercial filming because they can continue to operate under the restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19.

If you have any questions regarding this direction, please contact Jeff Marsolais, Acting Director of Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources, at jeff.marsolais@usda.gov or (202) 205-1240.

Thank you for your support in this effort.

X

for

CHRISTOPHER B. FRENCH
Deputy Chief, National Forest System

Enclosure