

A photograph of three hikers walking away from the camera on a dirt trail. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a red backpack and a brown jacket, with one leg lifted in mid-stride. The second hiker is wearing an orange backpack and a grey shirt. The third hiker is further back, wearing a blue jacket. They are surrounded by tall grass and wildflowers under a clear sky.

USDA FOREST SERVICE

RECREATION SPECIAL USES

Outdoor Recreation Economy: Where we fit in.

- Bureau of Economic Analysis:
 - \$412 Billion in GDP (2016)
 - Grew faster than the overall GDP, with higher wages and employment rates
- USDA Forest Service Special Uses Permits:
 - Approximately 30,000 permits that are worth roughly \$2 billion dollars to their holders
 - Responsible for \$148,000 jobs
 - Lands and Recreation Uses contribute \$130 million annually to the USG
 - More than any other activity on National Forests



Special Use Modernization

- Began in 2016 with release of the 'Chief's Guidance'
- Based on learnings from a nationwide study, led by Deputy Chief Leslie Weldon
- Focused on four main projects:
 - ePermitting
 - SUDS Redesign
 - Workforce Development
 - Policy and Process simplification





Outfitter/Guide Fee Offset Pilot Program

- Pilot program established by the Trails Stewardship Act
- Identify 20 National Forests that will work with Outfitter and Guide permit holders to offset all, or part, of their annual fee by completing trail construction and/or maintenance
- We are in the process of receiving and reviewing nominations from Regions
- Secretary of Agriculture will then formally nominate the selected National Forests with hopeful implementation for the 2019 field season



Environmental Analysis and Decision-making

- Agency wide effort started in 2018
- Focused on making compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act for efficient
- Special Uses permitting staff has been working with the leads of this effort to hopefully establish new permit specific NEPA tools that will allow for quicker issuance and reissuance of permits
 - Using past environmental analysis
 - New categorical exclusions
- Awaiting the final rule to be published in the federal register



Contact Information

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Discretion to waive the requirement for a special use authorization

- After the initial and second level screening, based on a review of the proposed use, the authorized officer can determine if the proposed use will have such nominal effects on National Forest System (NFS) lands, resources, or programs that it is not necessary to establish terms and conditions in a special use authorization to protect NFS lands and resources or to avoid conflict with NFS programs or operations. If the authorized officer makes this determination, he or she can waive the requirement for a special use authorization.
- The authorized officers have discretion to waive the special use authorization requirement for proposed uses on a case by case basis. Proposed uses in some situations may have little or no impact on NFS lands, resources, or programs.
- In case of a waiving the requirement for a special use authorization you will receive a determination letter from the authorized officer.
- In order to receive a waiver, the following 6 requirements have to be full filled;

Nominal Effect: Assessment Steps

1. Based on the review of the proposal, the authorized officer determines that the proposed use will have either have no effect, or only a nominal effect on NFS lands, resources, or programs
2. No terms and conditions needed (e.g. liability insurance)
3. The size of the group is less than 75 people (not applicable for noncommercial use group)
4. The proposed use is consistent with facility design and/or allowable activities as identified in the Forest Plan and would not exceed the capacity of existing Forest Service infrastructure.
5. A nominal effects determination is not being used to avoid conducting NEPA analysis, issuing a special use authorization, or collecting cost recovery and land use fees.
6. The proposed use would not lead to visitor conflicts or decrease the overall quality of visitor experience.