



Action Initiative Information		
Cluster:	Visitor Products	
Initiative:	Strengthen Accountability for Tongass Recreation Fees	
Goal:	This initiative addresses the development of a mechanism for more private sector input to decide where fees are allocated. The industry will work with Forest Service to establish more affordable access and/or local control of fee structure and more accountability.	
Champion:	Bob Janes, Gastineau Guiding, bob@gguiding.com	
Team:	Bill Hagevig, HAP Alaska-Yukon Drew Green, Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska Hans Von Rekowski, USFS, Recreation, Lands, Minerals Jennifer Berger, USFS, Recreation, Wilderness, Permitting John McConnochie, Cycle Alaska Lynn Humphrey, USFS, Regional Recreation and Tourism Program Manager Marti Marshall, District Ranger Tim McDonnell, TEMSCO	bhagevig@hollandamerica-princess.com andrewg@claalaska.com hvonrekowski@fs.fed.us jberger@fs.fed.us jpm@gci.net lhumphrey02@fs.fed.us mmarshall01@fs.fed.us tim_mcdonnell@temscoair.com

Meeting Summaries		
Date:	Attendees:	Outcome:
12/17/12	CWG monthly call-in	A decision has not yet come down from the fee board on allocation of funding. Kirby will follow up with Marti Marshall. No activity since last report.
11/16/12	CWG monthly call-in	Group members attended the Tongass Fee Board meeting on November 5 th . The Forest Service welcomed the outfitter/guide participation. Group would like to see other communities get involved next year, and the Forest Service committed to improving public notification for next year. In mid-December the Forest Service will release its decision on how fees will be allocated. <i>This is the first year that outfitter/guides and tourism companies have attended the fee</i>

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		<p><i>board meeting in an organized fashion - as a direct result, and success, of the cluster initiative.</i></p> <p>The group is concerned about the possible sunset in 2014 of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which brings back fees to use in the region. Fees will go to the Treasury instead. Lynn Humphrey clarified that the entrance fee for the MGVC discontinues if the act sunsets, and this will greatly impact operations. JEDC offered the February Innovation Summit as a vehicle to present industry concerns about reauthorization to the Alaska delegation.</p>
5/1/12	Update provided by Jon Martin	USFS has changed fee allocation formula to put more into enhancement and less into planning and administration.
4/27/12	CWG monthly call-in	<p>Bob Janes met with Senator Murkowski concerning the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to make sure she is aware that this is an important piece of legislation to continue to allow funds to come back to the region. Group is looking to Marti Marshall for direction on what they can do make sure attention is paid to this.</p> <p>Group will connect more to fee board work as it progresses next year. They want to get operators and the public more involved, possibly get people to attend so have an idea of how dollars are allocated. They will look for opportunities for commercial operators to give input to make sure dollars go to areas which will get use.</p>
3/8/12	CWG monthly call-in	<p>Ron Marvin received additional funding of \$57,000 at MGRA since Tuesday's teleconference.</p> <p>The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act authorizes the reinvestment of recreation fees at sites where they were collected to enhance facilities and services rather than back to DC. The act sunsets in 2014. Bob met with Murkowski and Begich to make sure this stays on their radar.</p>
3/6/12	Kirby Day, Bob Janes, Lynn Humphrey, Jennifer Berger, Bill Hagevig, John McConnochie, Dennis McDonald, Ron	<p>Meeting purpose was to express concern that budgeted funding has been reduced to the MGRA. Industry representatives sent a letter to Forrest Cole, Tongass National Forest Supervisor, requesting that funding be restored for seasonal summer staffing and provided for trail, shelter and rest room improvements. The group would like to see both adequate funding and reliability of annual funding for staff and maintenance. 81% of MGVC site fees go back to the Visitor Center; however, FS initial budget is based on revenue collected the prior year, which was down. The Forest Service expects some</p>



	<p>Marvin, Bill Tremblay, Jon Martin</p>	<p>adjustment to the budget.</p> <p>The initiative team is also concerned that only 28% of Special Use Permit revenue fees return to the MGRA. This money is allocated one third to administrative costs, one third to planning projects and one third is returned for enhancement projects throughout the region. FS is looking at alternative ways to distribute funds with less competition. Also, the allocation formula could be revisited. The Forest Service is facing a \$400,000 reduction in recreation funds and is looking at cuts everywhere.</p> <p>Regional office is pursuing in-kind work in lieu of payment options. This is a national program issue. In addition, it was noted that projects which have a partner willing to get work done get a higher priority for allocating funding.</p> <p>The Tongass Recreation fee board meeting is scheduled for November 5 and 6 in Juneau. The call letter for projects comes out Sept 1 and proposals are due Oct 19. There will be time at the meeting for the public (including outfitters/guides) to address the board and teleconference will be available. The FS is looking into a mechanism for sharing project proposals with the public for comment.</p>
<p>2/2/12</p>	<p>CWG Monthly call-in</p>	<p>Marti Marshall commented that at present all funding is allocated based on competition. She has been working on a proposal to allow more decisions to be made at the facility level. An update was asked on following up on developing a mechanism to credit in-kind labor against fees. Marti commented that this requires a change to a national policy. However, Alaska has always been a test area, as for example with flat fees, so Marti is open to proposing a pilot project as a test case. She will look into this.</p>

Initiative Action Plan Update		
<p>Activity 1:</p>	<p>Private sector operator presence on the Tongass Fee Board</p>	<p>Activity Date:</p>
	<p>Group members attended the Tongass Fee Board meeting on November 5th. The Forest Service welcomed the outfitter/guide participation, and the Forest Service committed to improving public notification for next year to get other communities involved. <i>This is the first year that outfitter/guides and tourism companies have</i></p>	<p>11/5/2012</p>

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	<p><i>attended the fee board meeting in an organized fashion - as a direct result, and success, of the cluster initiative.</i></p> <p>Unsuccessful in attaining a position on the board, but the USFS extended great effort to entertain comments and recommendations from users and op/guides last year.</p>	Fall 2011
Activity 2:	Investigate how the fee can be lowered.	Activity Date:
	Some work could be continued on this. Fee increases in relation to benefits to user have not been clearly justified.	On-going
Activity 3:	Annual report to outfitter/guides on how fees were spent.	Activity Date:
	This has been accomplished.	Fall 2011
Activity 4:	Investigate if revenues be used on capital investment and marketing for the Tongass.	Activity Date:
	<p>More work can be done in this area with regard to supporting local tourism marketing efforts through VB's and ATIA.</p> <p>The process of ensuring capital investment goes back into operator/guide projects in the Tongass will be on-going and tied to Activity#1.</p> <p>Letter sent to Forrest Cole to express concern for reduced budget for MGRA for 2012. \$57,000 funding reinstated.</p> <p>\$79,000 has been distributed to needed trail maintenance at the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area.</p>	<p>3/8/2012</p> <p>11/2011</p>
Activity 5:	Monitor FS user fees to gauge how operators are faring economically.	Activity Date:
	No Activity.	

Other Informational Items