

NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Forest Service Announces Fee Waiver Dates

Fee Waiver Weekend Kicks Off June 5-6

WASHINGTON, June 2, 2010, -- Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell announced today that the Forest Service will offer two fee waiver weekends during the summer of 2010, in addition to other annual fee waiver events at standard amenity fee sites. The first fee waiver weekend will be June 5-6. These fee waivers will be offered in cooperation with other federal agencies under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA). "The Forest Service is working to ensure as many visitors as possible have the opportunity to experience the great outdoors and take advantage of the many recreational activities national forests have to offer," said Tidwell. "By waiving fees, everyone will have the opportunity to enjoy the wonder and rejuvenation of recreation on national forests."

The Fee Waiver dates for 2010 are as follows:

National Trails Day - June 5-6, - fees will be waived for Saturday and Sunday.

Back-to-School Season - Aug.14-15, - fees will be waived for Saturday and Sunday.

National Public Lands Day - Sept 25, 2010 -This fee waiver is offered every year.

Veterans' Day - Nov. 11, 2010 - This fee waiver is offered every year.

The Fee Waiver weekends supports the goals of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Conference and First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative by actively supporting and promoting programs, projects and initiatives that encourage the use of outdoor spaces by the public. The waiver will allow people to explore our nation's forests, which offer a wide range of recreation and educational benefits such as: improved physical and mental health, emotional well being, a concern for nature, and a conservation ethic.

Traditionally, fees are not charged on 98 percent of national forests and grasslands and over two-thirds of developed recreation sites can be used for free. Many recreation opportunities such as camping, sightseeing and hiking can be enjoyed throughout the year at no cost. The Forest Service is glad that we can help Americans better afford recreational opportunities, and we hope this will encourage people to get outside and reconnect with those special places we call National Forests.

The Forest Service operates about 17,000 recreation sites. Of those sites, approximately 6,000 require a fee at recreation sites which provide visitor services, needed maintenance/repairs, and recreational facilities and services.

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Agency manages 193 million acres of public land and is the largest forestry research organization in the world.