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United States
Department of Agriculture

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For Immediate Release: September 30, 2009

New Online Reservations Coming for Four Idaho Rivers

If you want to obtain a permit to float the Selway, Snake, Middle Fork of the Salmon, or wild main Salmon Rivers in 2010, you need to know about changes coming in the Forest Service permit lottery and launch reservation system. The Four Rivers Lottery is going “green”, incorporating an entirely online system as part of our desire to go paperless.

From December 1, 2009, to January 31, 2010, the Forest Service will conduct its usual lottery for floating the four rivers, but with some changes and at a different website. Applicants will now apply online at www.recreation.gov. This will require each applicant to have their own email address to create a profile online.

In the past, you could enter applications for several people at one time. Because the new system will be used for processing cancellations (and payments on the Middle Fork and wild main Salmon Rivers), each applicant will need to be registered under a unique email address with a password to access their profile.

Officials feel this will save time, paper, and money, and make the lottery run faster.

There’s another plus: before, a potential river floater could file only one application with four possible launch dates spread across all four rivers. With the 2010 season, applicants can file as many as four applications, one for each river, and list four possible launch dates on each application. Each river will have a separate lottery to assign their launch reservations; they will no longer be combined into one drawing system.

Applications can be filed online any time of the day or night. And the price, \$6 per application, is the same as previous years.

“This quadruples the number of launch dates you can ask for,” Dave Campbell, the Forest Service’s West Fork District Ranger in Montana, said. “That’s a real plus of putting the lottery online.”

“The Forest Service has used online applications now for several years”, Chris Grove, the Middle Fork District Ranger in Idaho, said. Grove noted a similar lottery has been run successfully online for Minnesota’s Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

“We expect to be able to let people know the lottery results much faster with the new system,” Russ Bacon, the Forest Service’s North Fork District Ranger in Idaho, said. “We’ll be able to notify everybody by email.”

The online system can also be used to post safety alerts to inform people as their trips draw near about special situations or river conditions.

“Our staff will be posting that information to the reservation system and they’re already set up to help spread the word when people need to know,” Mary DeAguiro, the Forest Service’s Hell’s Canyon NRA Area Ranger, said.

The online system will also be used to accept cancellations and reissue them as new reservations for the four rivers. This system will also be the place for boaters to make their reservations for pre/post season launches for the Middle Fork and wild main Salmon Rivers, as well as to pay their recreation fees for these two rivers.

The Forest Service lottery for 2010 permits opens December 1, 2009 at 8:00 am Mountain time at www.recreation.gov. Reservations for the pre/post season launches for the Middle Fork and wild main Salmon Rivers will also be accepted beginning December 1, *for this year only. Once the system is up and running the pre/post season reservation start date will revert to the usual October 1 date.*

For more information in the meantime, go to www.fs.fed.us/r4/sc/recreation/4rivers/index.shtml or call one of the Forest Service offices for the four rivers. *To learn more about the reservation system and to create your unique profile visit www.recreation.gov.*