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News Release

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Forest Service releases Draft Decision for Hanging Lake Management Plan

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Feb. 20, 2018 - The Forest Service has released a Draft Decision selecting to adopt and implement the Hanging Lake Management Plan (*Alternative 2*), which will set comprehensive management direction and support long-term management actions for the Hanging Lake area. The decision to implement the plan is based on years of analysis and community collaboration, and is in response to the overwhelming growth in visitation to the site.

“Thanks to the hundreds of public comments received and years of planning and study, we have reached this important and exiting milestone,” said Aaron Mayville, District Ranger. “We’ve still got some work to do, but we’re looking forward to implementing these new changes at Hanging Lake this year.”

Hanging Lake, has become one of Colorado’s “bucket list and must do” hikes for visitors from all over the world. Hanging Lake is distinctive not only for its beauty but for its geological composition – a large and rare example of a travertine deposition lake and hanging garden plant community. High use visitation at the Hanging Lake area over the last decade has resulted in damage to the area’s sensitive vegetation, historic resources and infrastructure within the area. The Plan seeks to balance the preservation of Hanging Lake’s unique natural resources, manage congestion, improve visitor experience, and support local tourism.

The Draft Decision authorizes the implementation of the Management Plan which will allocate and manage the area to a defined daily capacity of 615 visitors per day, year-round, through a fee-based reservation or permit system. Implementation will utilize a third-party transportation provider (shuttle) in order to allocate and manage to the daily capacity during the “Peak” season (May 1 through Oct. 31). The Draft Decision will also implement an adaptive management strategy to allow for adjustments and ensure that the intent of the Plan continues to be realized in light of potential future changes.

With a final decision on this project, implementation of the Plan will begin and a prospectus will be released. Through the prospectus process, various businesses may submit proposals through a Forest Service Outfitter and Guide special use permit process that includes transportation, a reservation system, and visitor services. After the prospectus application window is closed, the Forest Service will

evaluate the proposals and make a decision on the third-party transportation provider based on requirements identified in the prospectus. Specific implementation details such as cost, timing, and how to obtain a permit/reservation will be determined by the option and/or service provider selected.

Objections Process

The release of this Draft Decision initiates the 45-day objections period. Individuals who submitted timely and specific written comments during the scoping and/or comment period will have eligibility to file an objection to the draft Decision Notice under 36 CFR 218.

Documents are available for download on the White River National Forest website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50479> . Hardcopies may be reviewed at the Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District, in Minturn, Colo.

Objections, including attachments, must be filed via mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery or messenger service (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays) to: Reviewing Officer, c/o USDA Forest Service, Region 2, Rocky Mountain Region, Attn. Objection Reviewing Officer-Planning Department, 1617 Cole Boulevard, Building 17, Lakewood, Colo. 80401. Fax: 303-275-5134, or email to r02admin_review@fs.fed.us .

Objections must be submitted within 45 calendar days following the publication of a legal notice in the Vail Daily. The legal notice is anticipated to be published Feb. 20, 2018. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the time to file an objection.

Attachments:

Frequently Asked Questions for Hanging Lake
Photo of Hanging Lake – credit U.S. Forest Service