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News Release

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Kaibab to conduct Outfitter-Guide Needs Assessment, Capacity Study

Fredonia, Ariz., Mar. 20, 2017 — For Immediate Release. Due to increasing demand and visitor use on the Rainbow Rim Trail continuing to trend upward, recreation planners on the North Kaibab Ranger District will immediately conduct an outfitter-guide needs assessment followed by a capacity analysis to determine use within the vicinity of this increasingly popular recreation site on the Kaibab National Forest.

On Feb. 1, the North Kaibab Ranger District determined the imminent need to place a hold on all “new” special-use permits for all commercial uses on the Rainbow Rim. Under the current Land and Resource Management Plan for the Kaibab National Forest, special-use permits are characterized as a partnership between the Forest Service and private businesses, academia, non-governmental organizations, or individuals in order to provide specific services to the public on forest lands. Authorization of these special-use permits supports the Forest Service mission, helps meet demonstrated public needs, and is consistent with the desired conditions for the use area.

“Our intent is to provide better service to our special-use permit holders and quality experiences for the public,” said North Kaibab Natural Resources Specialist Dan Gunn.

Under the direction of the Recreation Special Uses Handbook, Forest Service policy requires that a needs assessment be conducted to determine the public or agency need for authorized outfitting and guiding activities. The process is anticipated to take up to one year to complete. In the interim, district staff will not process any “new” outfitter-guide applications for use on the Rainbow Rim.

This will not impact operations for outfitters and guides with “existing” permit-use on the Rainbow Rim or any special-use permit holders for activities outside the Rainbow Rim vicinity, and applications for areas outside the Rainbow Rim vicinity will continue to be accepted.

“With a large increase in demand for outfitter and guide requests, we want to exercise our due diligence by re-assessing and identifying visitor needs, determining if current use for the area aligns with desired conditions and adjusting our business model accordingly,” said Gunn. “Upon completion of the capacity study, we will have the most recent data and analysis available, which will help identify a reasonable level of “use” specific to the Rainbow Rim, ensure that “use” aligns with desired conditions of the forest plan, and ensure our recreation partner’s and visitor’s needs are appropriately met while continuing to improve the overall visitor experience.”

Upon completion of the needs assessment and capacity analysis, the data collected will aid recreation planners in drafting a Rainbow Rim management plan intended to tailor a manageable pool of outfitter and guide permit holders specifically tied to the Rainbow Rim, improve management practices and public services local to the area and increase overall quality of the user experience.

For further information, please contact Dan Gunn at degunn@fs.fed.us.

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