

## ARRL to Oppose Forest Service Administrative Fees for Amateur Radio Facilities

The US Forest Service is proposing to implement a statutorily required annual fee for new and existing communications use authorizations to cover the costs of administering its authorization program. ARRL plans to vigorously oppose the imposition of the proposed fees on amateur radio.

The Forest Service proposal results from requirements set forth in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (aka "the Farm Bill"). Specifically, section 8705(c)(3)(b) of the Farm Bill directs the Forest Service to issue regulations that require fees for issuing communications use authorizations based on the cost to the Agency for maintenance or other activities to be performed by the Agency "as a result of the location or modification of a communications facility."

The Forest Service is responsible for managing Federal lands and authorizes the use and occupancy of National Forest System (NFS) lands for communications facilities that provide communications services for adjacent rural and urban communities. The Agency said in its proposal that it administers more than 3,700 special use authorizations on NFS lands for infrastructure that supports more than 10,000 wireless communications uses at 1,367 communications sites.

According to the Forest Service [Notice](#) published in the December 22, 2021 issue of the *Federal Register*, revenues from the proposed fee, "would provide the funds necessary to support a more modernized, efficient, and enhanced communications use program," and will "cover the costs of administering the Agency's communications use program." Costs, as laid out in section 8705(f)(4) of the Farm Bill, may include expenditures for such things as "on-site reviews of communications sites, developing communications site management plans, hiring and training personnel for the communications use program, conducting internal and external outreach for and national oversight of the communications use program, and obtaining or improving access to communications sites on NFS lands."

ARRL encourages amateur radio licensees to file comments opposing the imposition of the proposed administrative fee on amateur radio users. Comments must be received in writing by no later than February 22, 2022. Comments may be [submitted online](#) at the Federal Rulemaking Portal or via USPS mail to Director, Lands & Realty Management Staff, 201 14th Street SW, Washington, DC 20250-1124, and must include the identifier "RIN 0596-AD44."