

USFS Five Year Permits

Many distance rides make use of established trail systems located in National Forests around the country. Ride managers are required to obtain a permit (called a [special-use authorization](#)) from the [U.S. Forest Service](#) if any of their trails are used. This authorization is required as distance events are considered commercial ventures, as they have entry fees and often involve more than 75 participants and spectators.

A new ride manager would contact their [local Forest Service District](#) office to request the application. Often a pre-application meeting is required. This meeting will discuss the event planned, the proposed timing, potential conflicts with other scheduled park users, potential conflicts with area events, insurance requirements, and review potential environmental impacts. While this seems like a lot of information to deal with before the application is even submitted, this process helps assure all park users have a good experience, as it is unlikely that a bird watching club would want to share trail with distance riders and distance riders would not be pleased to find local roads closed for a marathon as they arrive or depart from camp.

Any commercial use of Forest Service property also requires an operating plan to be submitted with the application. This includes detailed information such as the base camp location and facilities, the date and description of the event, expected number of participants, a detailed map showing the proposed route along established trails, a sanitation plan, food and water availability, a medical plan, a parking plan, a communication plan, an advertising plan, and a cleanup plan. There is no application fee.

The first year of an event, the permit issued will be a temporary, one-year permit. After the successful completion of the event, a reconciling form is filed and fees are paid on a percentage basis. From that point, a five-year permit may be issued for future events.

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