



File Code: 2700/5300

Date: May 26, 2010

Route To:

Subject: Rainbow Gathering - 2010

To: Forest Supervisors, Allegheny, Green Mountain and Finger Lakes, Monongahela, and White Mountain National Forests

The Rainbow Family of Living Light (Rainbow Family) may hold their annual gathering in the Eastern Region this summer from mid-June through mid-July 2010. All indications are the gathering will be held on national forest land somewhere in the eastern states region in Pennsylvania, Vermont, West Virginia, or New Hampshire.

Members of the Rainbow Family describe themselves as a loosely structured group of people who gather on national forest land to pray for peace and discuss political and environmental issues. Attendance at these gatherings can range from 8,000-10,000 people.

The Rainbow Family may follow Forest Service (FS) procedures and apply for a Noncommercial Group Use Permit. Due to recent court decisions, we are optimistic that an application will be submitted and a permit issued for the annual gathering this year. Planning for this event is already in progress. Necessary management of this event costs the FS in excess of \$400,000 annually.

The FS national strategy is to:

1. Reduce costs of this event to the taxpayers by successfully managing the event.
2. Ensure any impact to National Forest System land is satisfactorily mitigated.

The gathering will be managed by a National Incident Management Team (NIMT) and partially funded out of the Washington Office (WO), Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI). The agency representative for this event will be the Forest Supervisor; the Region will provide the funding. The team will be comprised of local forest resource managers, professionals in law enforcement, safety and health, and community relations. The Incident Commander for the national team is Gene Smithson, WO LEI and National Coordinator for Noncommercial Group Use Management. Gene has considerable experience in managing Rainbow Family gatherings and can be reached at (703) 605-4730.

Enclosed is a copy of the **NIMT - Management Organization Chart**. We will need personnel/skills from the Forest/Region to serve on the NIMT in the following positions (indicated in red on the organization chart):

- Planning
- Information



- Special Use Permit Administrator and Resource Advisor
- Four (4) Resource Technicians

If you do not have all of the needed personnel (resource skills), please let us know as soon as possible by indicating on the enclosed chart the names of individuals for each position and **“cannot provide”** where resource skills are not available. We will work with you to ensure you have the necessary personnel/skills available for the event.

Also enclosed are recommendations to assist you with making preliminary contacts with your local government and key partners to ensure that we maintain good relationships. This pre-notification checklist includes key talking points.

If you have additional questions regarding communications at this time, please contact Ken Arbogast, Acting Congressional Relations Specialist, at (414) 297-3182 ([karbogast@fs.fed.us](mailto:karbogast@fs.fed.us)). If you have any other questions, please contact Carolyn Williams, Regional Realty Specialist, Special Uses, at (414) 297-3696 or [cwilliams04@fs.fed.us](mailto:cwilliams04@fs.fed.us).

*/s/ Lee Nightingale (for)*  
KENT P. CONNAUGHTON  
Regional Forester

Enclosures (2)

cc: Carolyn Williams  
Kenneth Arbogast  
Gene Smithson

## Things to Think About if a Rainbow Gathering is Coming Your Way

### Where?:

- Will have to balance what Rainbows are looking for with resource and administration concerns.
- Rainbows will want....gathering area (fields or openings) where they can hold evening circle (hundreds of people) and usually another fairly large area for a drum circle (100 or so people, along with an amphitheatre area (with sloped area for seating), parking for personal vehicles, parking for busses, many locations within overall gathering area for group camps or family camps, an area for trading, areas for medical set up, many areas for small kitchens, several good drinking water supplies, a swimming area, an area for the A (alcoholic) camp that can be near main road and somewhat separate from rest of camp, multiple entrances/exits to the gathering area, and many areas for small slit trench latrines. They'll establish a "main" entrance/greeting area, which will usually have a large tent for both information sharing and a place to hold their council meetings.
- Forest service will want to protect resource areas, especially sensitive (plants, animals, archaeological, riparian, soils); restricted access points for better crowd control; parking/gathering area for permit administrators and other team members; parking off main roads; places for trash and recycling; location with few impacts to other Forest users and local communities
- Monongahela experience has been that it works best to scout locations in advance to see what would suit both parties and be ready to negotiate. Have several acceptable locations to offer up. Be willing to agree upon a location that isn't ideal from FS point of view and then figure out how to make it work. For example; last national gathering on Forest ended up in a location originally scouted by neither party, and was immediately adjacent to a sensitive botanical area. It ended up being the location after extensive working together between FS (rangers and PAO) and Rainbow scouts.
- Think about who can help you steer the Gathering to an acceptable location. For example, in West Virginia the initial preferred Rainbow location, and the one on which they began to gather, was a serious concern to the FS due to the presence of populations of several TES species and/or habitat for such species. There were also parking and access issues, along with private landowners in the area who were concerned. The FS could (and did) discuss these issues with the Rainbows, but hearing some of the same issues raised by private citizens and members of local environmental organizations helped as well. We're not always on the same page as some people we

work with, but when the common ground of resource concerns came up we had considerable support.

- Think about what you can and cannot accept in terms of permit conditions and other actions to enforce. Two common ones are a restriction on public nudity and requiring all dogs to be on leashes. You may have existing Forest orders on these. There will be plenty of things to enforce....decide on these if nudity inside the camp and away from any passing tourist is or is not acceptable. Decide if you want tickets issued to every person with an unleashed dog or if you will be less restrictive. These are the sorts of things that can quickly divide the FS LE and resource people so talking about the Forest Supervisor's expectations and the LE expectations is a good idea BEFORE the actual event.

#### **Getting the local word out YOUR way:**

- As soon as the Rainbows start showing up in the area so will rumors
- Even if exact location is not known, best to start talking to contacts in your community as soon as it appears likely a gathering will take place. That may mean talking to several counties as location is narrowed.
- Who to talk to? County commissioners, mayors, local judges, local opinion leaders whether elected or not, local area wildlife managers/LE who work on the Forest (in West Virginia that is the WV Division of Natural Resources), local and State LE folks. Local media will become involved rapidly so be sure to talk with them as well
- What to tell folks? Gathering may happen here; Rainbows have a right to use their national forest; FS is working with them like any permit applicant to find a suitable location; it is not a FS event but we have to respond; we have a mandate to protect and manage the National Forests; if gathering does take place there will be significant impacts on local communities...explain some and give basic idea how FS will do best to respond but make people aware not all is within FS control. For example we can work with local law enforcement and our own to handle traffic and incidents within the gathering but we cannot mitigate the impacts on local services like hospitals and social services. There will be some local economic benefit for gasoline and food purchases, but it has been hard to quantify.
- It's important the FS is seen as being professional from very beginning of possible event...especially in conversations outside the office. Media will very quickly pick up anything negative. Forest Service employees can have a very strong impact on local attitude towards Gathering just by what we say outside the office.

- Assign someone to be the Forest liaison for event....not the incident commander or even necessarily the incident public affairs person, but someone who has an overall idea of what is going on and can speak to what FS is planning/thinking/doing regarding the event, and why.
- Consider an info sheet that is updated daily or as needed, to be made available to all Forest employees regarding the event....works both as general information and informal talking points to have a consistent message
- Remember that for many National Forest locations the "local" media may be a weekly newspaper rather than a daily, and they may or may not have access to a local radio station. If you work with regional media outlets, especially dailies, try to establish one or two people that you can work with throughout the event rather than having to have a new person each time...you won't have to repeat yourself as much, nor worry about forgetting remembering what you told to who. Local radio stations may be your best way to get information out to local audiences in a timely manner.

#### **OK, So a Location is Settled Upon (and a permit signed)...Now What Happens?**

- Eastern Gatherings tend to smaller than their western counterparts, and people tend to arrive over a longer period of time. This does allow for more adjustments as things evolve but as much advance planning as possible is essential.
- People will begin to arrive on site before or immediately after spring council decides the location. Numbers will grow to a maximum over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, which is the "big" day. They typically decrease rapidly after that.
- Advance members of the Rainbow family will arrive to set up their infrastructure. This is an ideal time to get in place the structure the FS wants as well. There will be relatively few people to coordinate with.
- One of their first tasks will be to develop water locations. They come with fairly sophisticated water treatment materials and plastic piping which they will lay over the ground to collect water from springs and other locations to taps.
- As people gather and individual camps and kitchens are set up they will begin to develop slit trench latrines as well as graywater pits and compost pits.
- As more people arrive they will create other community structures, including a welcome center/information area, an outdoor amphitheatre, drum circle locations, a trading area, C.A.L.M. (Center for Alternative Living Medicine) treatment areas
- Being a step or two ahead of each wave of people will make things go more smoothly

- A NEPA analysis will need to be done as the basis for closure orders. Will need an order specific to the site and Gathering in addition to orders already on the books. Work with the Forest LE and patrol captain to get orders together and approved/signed.
- You'll need your GIS specialists to help with map for closure order, for maps showing resource issues, and for maps locating various Rainbow structures for monitoring after the event is over.
- Make sure to post/sign the boundaries of the permit area on the ground as well as developing a map for posting. Doing so as soon as possible will help when thousands of people arrive.
- Work closely with Forest resource specialists to identify locations to avoid (wildlife, riparian, sensitive soils, historic sites, hazards) and then work with Rainbows to explain WHY to avoid. We put up our bureaucratic signs and they will deface or ignore the signs, or replace our signs with their own but with same general message. Monongahela had great experiences with marking wetland area off limits and then working with Rainbows as to why. They replaced FS signs with colorful signs noting people could get "beaver fever" if they swam in area. Rainbows also posted signs to leave wildlife alone after FS employees explained young animals were present in area. Forest posted flagging around an old cistern location and worked with Rainbows to make sure they spread the word about it being an unsafe place to be. Key was working internally to identify resource issues and then with Rainbows.
- Remember that your resource specialists such as wildlife biologist and archaeologist have responsibilities to share information with agencies such as US Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Historic Preservation Officer if there are relevant resources affected so they need to be in the information loop. A Gathering can be so overwhelming that it can become easy to overlook things we would normally do, but long term relationships with partner agencies can suffer if we miss a step.
- Work closely with FS resource specialists to identify best places within Gathering location for slit trenches (soil scientist, aquatic ecologist, botanist, wildlife biologist, archaeologist all consulted on Monongahela); and group gathering locations, including kitchens. We can control some locations under permit terms, especially slit trenches but some will end up in places we might not love but will have to work with.
- Think ahead to clean up. Locate a source of straw or acceptable hay as well as source of seed. One of the biggest headaches on the Monongahela was trying to find weed-free mulch material for the Rainbows to purchase and use in the rehab process. Think about this point when developing terms and conditions for the permit....quite a bit of material will be needed.
- Figure out best way to park thousands of vehicles. Will need a large area for busses, some of which will have people living in them and some of which will simply be parked.

Ideally only have parking on one side of typical FS road to ensure safe access/egress. Will have to sign and patrol from beginning of event. Again the Rainbows will help with their own signs if they understand what the rationale is. If public road is used for parking (as was the Highland Scenic Highway on Monongahela) may be able to park on both sides. Will have to coordinate with State Police and local law enforcement and make sure all have same understanding of what is and isn't allowed. (Parking on one or both sides? All four wheels off pavement? How far off road? Etc.) Figure out in advance how you will remove stranded or illegal vehicles...what company will tow and to where? Be ready to post notice in Rainbow camp as to where towed vehicles have gone so they know where to find them.

- Identify where you would prefer the "A" alcoholic camp to be located although it may not end up there. Usually along main access road but is good if you can separate from main camp. (Rainbows often prefer it that way as well). This camp is likely to be a location for law enforcement issues.
- Identify where recycled materials will go. Rainbows will set up collection points throughout Gathering but they may be recycling items that there is no local place to take. What plans will you have for disposing of those? If cannot accept locally may be able to work with Rainbows to take with them when they leave instead of putting into local trash.
- Identify local dumps and who will haul trash out of camp? Local trash collection services will be overwhelmed. Rainbows will collect trash at places throughout Gathering but usually expect "someone" else to haul off to dump. See if you can work with them to haul, but even then they won't want to pay tipping fees. Mounds of garbage after event, along with mounds of recycling and major headaches after Gatherings.
- Talk with local social services. This will include medical facilities, emergency squads, child protective services, and other similar services. Many of the participants at Gatherings do not have regular health care or insurance and have a higher than average need for medical services. There will be a need for medical transport. There will be runaways in the Gathering. There will be more people wanting to use food banks that most local areas are prepared for. There will be sick children who may need medical help and child protective services. There will be communicable diseases. There may be suicides, rapes, and overdoses.
- Talk with local animal shelters/rescue groups/animal control and local veterinarians. Although the Rainbow web site usually discourages participants from doing so, many people bring animals (mostly dogs) to the Gathering. They frequently are not fully vaccinated, and after each gathering on the Monongahela some were abandoned. Be aware that many of the dogs are not leashed. While most of the dogs are not aggressive, a few will be. The Monongahela staff often carried lengths of heavy twine to

hand out to Rainbows whose dogs were not leashed. There will be obviously ill animals in camp. At the last Gathering on the Monongahela unvaccinated puppies died. It was suggested to the owner that the bodies be burned due to fears of disease transmission.

- Figure out where FS people will park and from where the command center will operate. The last national Gathering on the Monongahela was located adjacent to a main highway (Highland Scenic Highway) and very near to the Forest's Cranberry Mountain Nature Center. The Center became the command post and was very convenient as it had a large parking area, toilet facilities, electric and computer hook ups, kitchen area, and a meeting room which was used as an alternate court location for one of the two hearings held during the Gathering. While it worked well a couple of things did not. The Center had to be closed to the public throughout the Gathering period, during a main tourist season. It was a highly visible location and due to where various emergency services and law enforcement vehicles parked it appeared to some members of the public to be a very heavy-handed presence. This was reinforced by the many people in uniforms who accompanied the vehicles. In hind sight it would have been better to have had most of the vehicles located behind the VIS center in a less visible location.
- Assuming a VIS center isn't located nearby (and it usually isn't) you will need some sort of covered area near the Gathering for FS coordination but the main operations may have to take place a distance away.
- Identify lodging accommodations for people coming in to help with the incident. In West Virginia that turned out to be about 45 minutes away from the Gathering. It would have been ideal if the small communities closest to the gathering had benefitted from the additional lodging needs but they were unable to meet the demand.
- Remind people travelling around in FS rigs during the Gathering that there is increase scrutiny of us during such times. Everything a FS employee does, whether they are local or from out of the area, is noted and occurrences such as speeding or stray comments in a local store can be really negative to the agency. Forest Service vehicles travelled over the Highland Scenic Highway constantly during the WV gathering. The Highway is marked with a 45 mph speed limit. When that was routinely ignored by FS employees it was commented on by locals (and is STILL being commented on years later.)
- Decide on your Forest policy on employees who are not working the incident being at the Gathering. The Monongahela told Forest employees to stay out during their official work hours unless they were part of the incident team and to avoid driving FS rigs in the area unless absolutely necessary. Some employees were curious enough to visit the camp on their own after work hours.
- Be aware that locals will be curious as well and will visit. Depending on how they interact with the Rainbows they may be ignored, welcomed, or threatened. The presence of "tourists" in the Gathering can be an issue



- Figure out where to have partner agencies park (emergency service, local and state law enforcement, etc.)
- Figure out where you will meet and work with media.
- Identify a location in the vicinity for helicopter to land if needed.
- Identify a location for FS information board and for daily briefings. At the last Monongahela gathering daily briefings were conducted miles away from the Gathering at a local fire hall, and information was posted at the VIS center next to the Gathering
- If horses will be used by LE will need to find stabling in the area, as well as identifying where at the Gathering to park the trucks/trailers. Will need a safe, shaded area for them to rest between patrols. While the horses can be popular with some of the Rainbows (who want to pet them) they are abhorred by others who feel they are an example of heavy handed police tactics. Their hooves can cause considerable damage to resources so there may be tension between Forest employees and the mounted officers.
- Decide how you will handle the presence or participation of non-federal emergency services at the Gathering. This can be a great training exercise for organizations who don't often have such opportunities but it can backfire in terms of public perception. The WV disaster team participated in the last gathering on the Monongahela but the location of their equipment was highly visible at the VIS center and caused negative local reaction. Good to remember that whatever happens during a Gathering, the local Forest will live with local perceptions of how the Forest Service and others behaved long after the event is over.
- Work with local judges to determine where court will be held. This may be near the Gathering with a special court, or may be at the usual federal court location which usually is not near the Gathering. In West Virginia both were used....one court date was held at the VIS center and another in Elkins, many miles away. Be aware that protests demonstrations will occur. Know in advance where you will allow protesters and how you will manage security. The VIS center location was easy to control access to but it had to be determined who would be allowed to accompany each person into court. Once it became obvious the protests were drawing large numbers of Rainbows to the grounds of the VIS center, which was not open to the public, the Forest had to bring in a Port-a-potty for use by the protesters to prevent them simply using the lawn. They will want to be visible so plan a location that allows them that right, (with shade as well as toilet facilities), and consider physically flagging or marking the area to make it easier to identify where they are allowed and not allowed to gather.
- Don't forget the nearby communities. Talk with the mayor, opinion leaders, local media, city council, county commissioners, etc to keep them informed. Their reaction to the Gathering and to the FS management of it is critical to long term relationships after the

event is over. Expect some of the community to be fine with the event or supportive of it and others to feel the FS should not allow it. Expect to have local editorial opinion pieces or news coverage that is not kind to the FS. This is where consistent messages of why the Gathering is allowed and that it is not a FS event is really important. Expect negative reaction and coverage of court proceedings, especially if they are held locally. Expect local concerns about trash, impacts to social services, etc. The local district ranger on the Monongahela served a liaison role throughout the Gathering, with the local community, the Rainbows, and the incident team. The Forest Supervisor served as a liaison with state and federal level contacts.

- If at all possible draw permit administrators from local unit (although an experienced lead permit administrator from another unit is great). The Rainbows will often respect the local knowledge and understand the attachment and commitment to the resources that a local FS person has.
- The Monongahela was able to have permit administrators work in teams of two with no immediate law enforcement escort, although they carried radios and could summon an officer if need be. This worked partly because the people doing the permit administration work were comfortable with the arrangement and partly because officers were available if needed. It should be noted this arrangement made the officers uncomfortable because they were not instantly available in case of an incident. It also to some extent emphasized a separation between the officers as the bad guys and the permit administrators as the OK guys, which doesn't clearly present the FS as all being part of the same organization. It did play well with the local community with whom the Forest has to work year after year.
- If at all possible have two people covering the public affairs/media duty at the Gathering. Someone in an office handling the phone calls and sending out updates for employees and others is essential, but it is also important to have someone on the ground to escort media. If one person is doing both they need to have excellent communications available to them and will need to constantly update voice mail and computer as to when they will next be available. In any event the incident PAO should only be the contact for that event and should send any non-Gathering related questions to the Forest PAO (or other designated rep in the case that the Forest PAO is serving as the incident information officer). It may be easier to use the Forest PAO as the incident PAO and have another Forest employee serve as the temporary Forest PAO than it is to locate incident PAOs.
- As a safety precaution no non-LE FS employees should be in the Gathering after dark.

**Whew! Survived the Gathering...people are leaving...now what?**

- A small contingent of Rainbows will stay behind to clean up. (Some others may just stay behind....and never leave!) These are pretty important folks, and most want to do a good job. They will help to dismantle fire rings, ovens, and all other temporary structures that have not been removed by the people who built them. They will ensure slit trenches are properly covered. They're the ones who will do their best to seed/mulch disturbed areas. Generally they are cooperative but may face weather challenges, not enough people to help them challenges, and "what to do with stuff" challenges that the Forest will have to help with. Trash and recycling are two big headaches, as is suitable seed and mulch sources.
- Even after site is rehabbed and everyone is gone the Forest will have to monitor it. Vegetables are often planted by participants even though they almost never mature before the Gathering has ended. Expect vegetables appearing in strange places, along with non-native flowers (marigolds seem popular.) Most do not seem to be invasive nor do most survive hard winters in West Virginia. If possible though it is good to do a sweep of the area a month or so after the Gathering ends to remove plants/flowers before they set seed. Marijuana does manage to hang on in the Appalachians over winter and there are numerous wild populations now in the State. Pulling it before it can go to seed is important. Marijuana seeds/plants were especially prevalent in the community gathering areas of the amphitheatre and evening circle, while marigolds and vegetables were common in the kiddie village area.
- Special attention may need to be paid to compost areas after the Gathering ends. Despite being well covered, they were so attractive to black bears that most of them on the Monongahela were dug up.