



EXTORTION OF THE MASSES?

New Video Slams Forest Service for “Illegal” Mount Evans Fee Program

By Bill Schneider, 7-29-08

A new video produced by Aaron Johnson, a long-time recreational user of Mount Evans in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest in Colorado, is creating quite a stir down in the Centennial State. Johnson takes no prisoners in its criticism of the Forest Service (FS), calling the program “scandalous and extortionist.”

The video, almost 8 minutes long and titled “Mount Evans Illegal Fee Program,” has been posted on YouTube.Com and already has a five-star rating.



Johnson works for summitpost.org has is a frequent hiker and climber in the Mount Evans area, and did the video at his own expense.

Johnson used to get around paying the fee by parking only in undesignated areas and not using anything the FS might consider “amenities” such as restrooms, picnic areas, campgrounds or the visitor center. Then the FS changed policy and forced Mount Evans users to pay the fee if they park anywhere along the 15-mile scenic corridor.

The new sign states: “Parked Vehicles Must Display A Valid Recreation Pass, next 15 miles.” If drivers stop their vehicle for any reason, they are fined.

“Remember, this is your land,” Johnson says several times on the video, “and you have a right to use it for free.”

Last year, the Colorado Department of Transportation, who controls State Highway 5 up Mount Evans considered trying to stop the FS from charging people to drive and park along a state-owned and financed highway, but it turned out to be a head fake. The State of Colorado quickly caved after a high-level, closed-door meeting with the FS. [Read about it here.](#)

In the video, Johnson urges people to oppose the \$10 fee, find a way around it, or simply not pay it.

He also shows five FS vehicles parked at the toll booth at one time, but only one person on site doing any work, and a ranger lounging around doing next to nothing up along the road. He implies most money goes to administer the program, not protect the resources on the mountain.

“The FS threatens to privatize your land if they can’t collect fees,” he concludes. “This is a scare tactic to instill fear in the public. Private business is in bed with the FS deeper than any tick can manage.”

For complete *NewWest.Net* coverage of the recreation fee issue, [click here](#).

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