

The Daily Courier

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Forest day-use, camp fees increase today

By Joanna Dodder Nellans

The Daily Courier

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Matt Hinshaw/The Daily Courier

Bill Meyer of Prescott sails around Lynx Lake in Prescott Sept. 1, 2008.

PRESCOTT - [Prescott National Forest](#) officials are increasing day-use and campground fees throughout the 1.2 million-acre forest today.

The increases affect 28 recreation sites including 13 campgrounds, 13 day-use sites and two off-highway vehicle areas.

Day-use fees at popular sites have increased from \$2 to \$5. Fees at OHV sites are rising from \$3 to \$5.

Campground fees generally were \$6 to \$10 per night, and now most will cost \$10 to \$18, with a new \$5 fee for the second vehicle. Group campground fee rentals will increase from \$25-\$100 to \$75-\$150, depending on the group size.

The Forest Service is eliminating fees at two current sites, Powell Springs Campground (\$6) and Ranch Trailhead #62 (\$2).

Frequent users get a break, because annual day-use passes good at all day-use sites on the Prescott National Forest will remain at \$40. The fee to add a second vehicle sticker rises from \$5 to \$10.

Season passes on the forest that are good for four months out of the year also remain the same, at \$20.

Campers also get a new deal. People who already paid camping fees get free access to all day-use sites across the forest.

Wednesdays remain free at all day-use sites on the forest.

Forest officials haven't increased the fees for a decade, and without fee increases, they will continue to fall behind on maintenance needs, said Bruce Fahrni, recreation program manager on the forest.

The fees won't increase again for at least five years, he added.

The Forest Service sought public comments about proposed fee increases back in May. The Arizona Recreation Advisory Council agreed with the proposal in a September meeting, and the Southwestern regional forester made the final decision.

The local forest will get to keep 95 percent of the money to put directly back into the fee sites, because of the 2005 Recreation Enhancement Act.

The Forest Service looked at fees on neighboring national forests (Tonto, Coconino and Kaibab), state parks and a Black Canyon City KOA camp to help decide how much to charge here, according to documents the Daily Courier reviewed.

A Forest Service market analysis concluded that fees on the Prescott Forest often are lower than fees elsewhere.

While the Prescott Forest charged \$2 at its developed day-use sites, the Tonto already was charging \$5 and the Coconino was charging \$5-\$7, the analysis stated.

Revenues from the Prescott Forest's fees in 2007 added up to \$311,127, which covered only 78 percent of the annual O&M costs, according to the recreation fee analysis.

Officials estimate the deferred maintenance needs on the forest now total \$317,160.

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Reader Comments

Posted: Monday, January 05, 2009

Article comment by: **This Land Is Your Land**

Thinking out of the box is a good idea, for now. People have been parking along Walker Road and around the parking lots at Thumb Butte for years to avoid the fees. There will come a day that the Prescott National Forrest will have the same restrictions as say the Kaibab. A person must have a day use pass or seasonal pass to stop a vehicle anyplace in the Kaibab National Forrest. This includes Highway 89 along Oak Creek Canyon, or the desert parts. Yes, it is illegal to stop anyplace around Sedona without paying. The point here is that these places are already the property of the people of the United States of America. No fee should be required to stop at a forest trailhead when our parents and grandparents tax dollars paid for these places long ago.

Posted: Monday, January 05, 2009

Article comment by: **Rocktorcher**

This is appalling. First you tax my income, then I must pay taxes for things that I purchase. Then I get the pleasure of spending around 50 bucks to buy a fishing license. Why is it that we must be bilked for every extra cent that we have? Do you think that I care that Lynx Lake has a paved parking lot and gross smelling bathrooms? NO!! I remember it being a dirt parking lot and it was just fine. Just like Mr. Kraft said, public lands should be free to all people. If the government can't make due with what they have after all the taxes we pay, then we have too

much government.

Posted: Monday, January 05, 2009

Article comment by: **No name provided**

Do you realize that money will not stop the citizen in hiking in the forest, there are many ways around paying the fees. So what you will see is people still hiking but not paying the fees since you can find parking alongside roads, places where they have blocked off because people where having bonfires. Yes, you may need to go into the woods more to find that parking spot, but if you truly love hiking, biking in the woods, you will find another way of not having to pay the outrageous amount just to hike in the woods... You could also just ride your bike to the trails then hike from there. Think outside of the box citizens of Prescott... there's always an upside to the bad economy and decisions that have been put through.

Posted: Sunday, January 04, 2009

Article comment by: **We need to start anew**

Our Declaration of Independence states, in part, the following: That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Posted: Saturday, January 03, 2009

Article comment by: **Earl**

Yes the Department of the Interior started this nonsense under Clinton. It was called "Pay To Play" The idea was that all the Federal public lands should be run like a business and make a profit. The money for public lands should come from those that use them, not from the general fund. The trails, they were all built by prisoners or CCC when the government had a different view on what was important. Ironic all my life public lands were just that public lands, and a administration run by a Democrat was the first to go along with this nonsense. Hard core environmentalist traditionally are thought to vote for Democrats. Yet it was Clinton who did start this nonsense, not Reagan or Bush, a Democrat, not an evil Republican. The call to visit wild places for just a moment of peace in our hectic lives can be, and sometimes needs to be a spontaneous thing. Parents need to be able to on a whim stop the car with the little kids and breath air walk for just a moment, stop and hear the wind or the birds. The expense of five dollars does not sound like much to a Washington politician, it is huge to a struggling family, and we all feeling the struggle right now. Five dollars is five dollars lets face it. This type of arbitrary expense should not be placed on the American public to use property that is already their birthright when this country can spend several billion dollars a week occupying other countries not to mention the billions wasted in aid overseas. So want to take a walk in the forest, it's going to cost you five bucks.

Posted: Saturday, January 03, 2009

Article comment by: **Greedy greedy greedy**

Well I guess my Boy Scouts trail that we adopted, will just have be pushed aside and the hikes the Boy Scouts go on will be VERY limited. Good job. Greed finally bit you too. Thanks. We looked to the outdoors as our main goal but for the boys but for us to find \$5 every time we go, (sometimes 3 times a month, 6 or 7 cars) that is gonna be hard on some people in this economy.

Posted: Saturday, January 03, 2009

Article comment by: **MIKE MCMASTER**

WHY WAS THERE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUILD TRAILS, CAMPSITES AND OTHER OUTDOOR FACILITIES BUT THERE ISN'T ENOUGH TO MAINTAIN THEM. MAYBE OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS SHOULD LIVE ON A BUDGET.

Posted: Saturday, January 03, 2009

Article comment by: **Had Enuff**

Oh well, I guess I'll never hike up Thumb Butte again. It takes much less than an hour to do it, and you want to charge me \$5 to do it? Nice try. As I have said before, "Go sell crazy someplace else. We're all full up here!" I won't blame this on the Park Rangers. They are just the little guys in a big wheel. I won't be able to blame them because I will never see them again. What's next? Why not charge \$5 to park in the Granite St. Garage for an hour? Why don't they start charging the Mall Walkers for the privilege to do so? Things have gotten totally ridiculous and out of control. If this is their idea of a Happy New Year, their idea sucks!

Posted: Saturday, January 03, 2009

Article comment by: **Tom**

Re: Day use fee in forest. Does Golden age pass still work?

Posted: Saturday, January 03, 2009

Article comment by: **Bad Decision, Bad timing**

This has to be the most incompetent decision I have ever seen coming from the Prescott National Forest leadership. At a time where our economy is in a shambles, our government decides to take away a little pleasure from many who enjoy the forest. To pay \$5 for a quick hike on one of our local trails is not an option for many local citizens. I thought I have seen it all.

Posted: Saturday, January 03, 2009

Article comment by: **Ditto, very disappointed**

Ditto all previous posts...

Posted: Friday, January 02, 2009

Article comment by: **stuck at home**

In this economy? Five bucks just to go there for a little while? That pretty much insures the forest will be empty of humans. (maybe the animals will be happier) The very people that need to get out and enjoy the forest will be those who can't afford it. There should be no fee for day use at least. Camping maybe something, but not that much. Clinton started this nonsense, and the present administration is continuing it.

Posted: Friday, January 02, 2009

Article comment by: **No name provided**

i guess we won't be hiking thumb butte anymore!! because our governmentals can't manage their money, so sad for the people.

Posted: Friday, January 02, 2009

Article comment by: **tom**

I have to pay fees for my use of public lands. Then lets charge fees for senior centers and libraries unless you're a full-time student and under the age of 25. Lets all share in the cost for what every service we use, stop singling out public lands and parks. This is the last thing

that the average worker can afford.

Posted: Friday, January 02, 2009

Article comment by: **Christopher J. Kraft**

I think I'm going to be sick. When is it enough? These are PUBLIC LANDS your tax dollars go to support these parks and then they charge you to use them. We are all sheep and let the feds trample us. We CAN do without certain services and still have a great time. I remember when slide rock was free and I had a blast there now it costs \$10 to go to a creek. It won't stop with these fees they will keep adding to it. Like they did with the ATV's. They found their cash cow and it will never go away. This is truly discriminatory against the poor. Public lands should be free to all. You can't even take your kid fishing to any of the local lakes for free. I support paying taxes but this is appalling Public lands should be accessibly to all not just to those that can afford it. The next time I see a Forest Ranger I will have nothing nice to say to them and will expect a complete accounting of all expenditures.