

Methow Valley (WA) News

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Local fights forest-fee ticket

By Marcy Stamper

A Twisp resident is challenging a ticket she received for failure to pay a day-use fee at a trailhead, claiming the site did not have the amenities required by law.

Kristi Laguzza-Boosman received a \$75 ticket during Memorial Day weekend for not buying a \$5 pass to use the Cedar Creek trailhead, a popular route to a waterfall on the North Cascades highway, about four miles west of Mazama.

Laguzza-Boosman pleaded innocent at a hearing on Thursday (Sept 24). She is disputing her ticket on the grounds that the Forest Service is not authorized to charge a fee at a site that does not have six amenities: a picnic table, toilet, trash collection, interpretive sign, developed parking, and security. She described the parking area as a gravel pit, said the sign is pockmarked with bullet holes and the trash receptacle is substandard.

Laguzza-Boosman said she would have had to drive more than 15 miles to the Washington Pass overlook in order to use all six amenities. She was also frustrated by the lack of clarity on the ticket, which provided no instructions for appealing the citation.

In fact, while she wrote in the address on the ticket envelope, she only received a court date after apparently missing an initial hearing, about which she had not been notified because the courts take street addresses from vehicle registration, rather than mail to a post office box.

However, Jocelyn Biro, program coordinator for developed recreation for the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, said that the 2005 Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act allows the Forest Service and other agencies to charge fees at two types of recreational sites. The program covers more developed sites with all six amenities as well as high-impact recreation areas, which encompass numerous sites in a contiguous areas with natural or cultural features.

The law does not specify the proximity of these sites or number of amenities that must be present in these larger recreation areas. "We are looking at fees more closely to see what makes sense, almost putting ourselves in the recreational users' shoes," said Biro. Some 20 trailheads in the Methow Valley Ranger District are designated as fee sites, which can be covered by the day-use fee or one of several annual passes.

Laguzza-Boosman has a court date in U.S. District Court in Spokane at the end of October.