



- News-Review file photo

Umpqua National Forest camping fees may rise

[DD BIXBY](#)

THE NEWS-REVIEW,

So you know ...

On the Web ...

To view the fee increases by campground site, visit the Umpqua National Forests Project and Plans Web site. A PDF of the current, proposed fees and phase-in schedules can be downloaded at <http://tinyurl.com/yhqzbp>.

To comment ...

Comments on the proposed fee hike should be directed to Bill Blackwell, assistant forest recreation staff officer, by calling 957-3349 or sending e-mail to comments-pacificnorthwest-umpqua@fs.fed.us. Comments are due to Blackwell by Dec. 18.

With the cold, wet weather, it's hard to inspire thoughts about camping, but that's exactly what officials on the Umpqua National Forest are asking from the public.

The U.S. Forest Service is proposing fee increases on the Umpqua's many campgrounds and is asking for public comment on the new fee schedule.

Increases range from \$2 to \$11, depending on the campground. Most proposed increases are \$3 to \$4. Without an increase, services may have to be cut in the future, officials say.

Comments are due by Dec. 18.

Comments and the proposal will be presented to the Pacific Northwest Recreation Resource Advisory Committee on Jan. 21 and 22 in Portland. The

committee will make its recommendation, and if it approves the drafted fees, those increases could begin next May.

Fee increases will help continue the day-to-day operations of campgrounds, shore up declining funding and help offset some, but not all, deferred maintenance of the aging facilities.

Bill Blackwell, assistant forest recreation staff officer on the Umpqua, said the proposal was originally discussed in 2008 and the fees were set to change this year before the recession hit.

"Because of the economic situation, our forest managers did not want to do that at this time," Blackwell said.

The office held off fee raises for a year.

"I realize the economy is not good (now), but the prices of everything continue to go up. To keep the operations going to the level they are currently is why we're increasing the fees," he said.

Blackwell said with flat federal funding — which means less over time, as inflation kicks costs up — and the prospect of doing without federal timber payments, the alternative to raising fees is to cut services or close campgrounds.

Most of the campground fees collected, about 95 percent, stays on the Umpqua National Forest to operate and maintain those sites, according to forest officials.

The remaining 5 percent goes to Washington, D.C., but Blackwell said often some of that money comes back to the local forest, too.

At the request of some campers, Blackwell said the proposal includes a "phase-in" period for some of the steeper increases to ease sticker shock.

Blackwell and his team figured the fee increases based on a point system that rated each campground on the amenities, facilities and services.

Campgrounds with more to offer got a higher rating and therefore a higher fee proposal. The more rustic a campground is, the lower the rating and the proposed fee.

For instance, the Diamond Lake campground got a rating of 39 for the amount of paved roads, showers, flush toilets and other amenities. Campers now pay \$12 to stay at a single-family site. The proposed fee for the campground is \$20, to be phased in at \$16 for the first two years.

On the flip side, Ash Flat, in the Tiller Ranger District, has a vault toilet, needs some repairs and received a rating of 15. The proposed fee is \$10.

Ash Flat campground is one of six campgrounds on the forest that were no-fee sites before and are included in the proposal.

The Musick Guard Station rental will increase from \$40 to \$50 and the popular Fairview Peak Lookout will rise to \$65, after a two-year phase-in at \$50. Other lookouts and cabins currently undergoing improvements, such as the Acker Rock Lookout and Butler Butte Cabin, will increase from the current \$40 to \$50 in 2011 when they reopen.

Blackwell said the rating system also compared fees of similar campgrounds in other nearby national forests, such as the Rogue River National Forest, as well as Crater Lake National Park and neighboring county parks.

- You can reach reporter DD Bixby at 957-4211 or by e-mail at dbixby@nrtoday.com.

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