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New, Hiked Fees At Haystack, Ochoco NF Spark Debate

By Ted Taylor and KTVZ.COM news sources

The Ochoco National Forest and the Crooked River National Grassland, in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation and a private concessionaire, announced Tuesday they will be increasing or charging new recreation use fees at several campgrounds and day use areas, starting May 1.

Recreation managers recommended the fee increases after a regional study analyzing fair market values showed that comparative recreation sites were charging higher fees.

The new fees will help pay for the private concessionaire which will, in turn, help maintain the facilities better than the Forest Service had been able to.

"These are the campgrounds that we feel have the best opportunity for a private concessionaire to come in and efficiently and effectively operate and maintain those facilities," said Mark Christiansen, recreation program manager for the Ochoco and Deschutes national forests in Bend.

Two years ago, part of the reservoir was closed due to health and safety concerns caused by people illegally mud-bogging in the area.

Some campers stayed for extended periods of time, exceeding the area's capacity for sanitation, trash disposal and law enforcement patrols.

Along with having firewood available and being able to provide information to campers about other recreational opportunities in the area, Christiansen said they can help police the area.

"The onsite presence, I think, a lot of times, helps maintain order in the facilities by keeping campers where they're supposed to be and preventing people from getting off into areas they're not supposed to be," he said.

Many campers and recreation enthusiasts on KTVZ.COM have voiced their displeasure over the hikes. But some say they understand everyone has been caught in a financial wake in recent years.

"I see outdoor enthusiasts really valuing that, so, for them to pay an extra \$5 to go every time, I don't see that as being that big of an issue," said Dan McGarigle of Bend. "But I think some people may actually see this as a line drawn in the sand."

Here are the details as provided by the Ochoco National Forest:

Crooked River National Grassland and Bureau of Reclamation

Haystack Reservoir

Haystack Reservoir, a popular developed recreation site located nine miles south of Madras, will charge increased fees at Haystack Campground and institute new fees at West Shore Campground and two South Shore Group Sites. Camping fees at Haystack will increase from \$8 to \$13 per night and \$6/per extra vehicle. A day use fee of \$5 per day will be charged.*

At West Shore Campground and boat launch area, a new camping fee of \$10/night, with \$5/per extra vehicle will be charged. A day use fee of \$5 per day will be charged for the West Shore area.* Once improvements are made to the fishing pier on the northwest side of the reservoir (expected completion 1-2 years), a day use fee will be charged at that site.

At South Shore, two group camping sites will be available for \$50/night. South Shore is not available for day use or single overnight camping sites and must be reserved for groups only through the www.recreation.gov web site.

*Senior and access pass discounts do not apply to day use fees.

Skull Hollow

Skull Hollow is a popular camping area for hikers, climbers, mountain bikers and horseback riders and

is located southeast of Gray Butte. Skull Hollow Campground fees will remain \$5 per night and \$3 per extra vehicle.

Ochoco National Forest

Ochoco Divide & Day Use

Ochoco Divide Campground is located in the tall pines 25 miles east of Prineville just off Highway 26. Camping fees will remain \$13 per night and \$6 per extra vehicle. The group site fee is \$35 per night and day use is \$5 per day. Ochoco Divide is anticipated to open on May 15, 2010, dependent upon weather.

Ochoco Forest Camp & Pavilion

Ochoco Forest Camp & Pavilion is a popular recreation site for families and large groups. The facility is adjacent to the Ochoco Ranger Station located 20 miles east of Prineville. Camping fees will remain at \$13 per night and \$6 per extra vehicle. Due to high demand, the group site at the Pavilion will increase to \$100 per day on Fridays and Saturdays. Sunday through Thursday, the Pavilion group site fee remains at \$60/day. Reservations for Ochoco Forest Pavilion group site must be made through the www.recreation.gov website.

The recreation facilities are managed by the US Forest Service, the US Bureau of Reclamation and a private concessionaire. Volunteer campground hosts will be recruited for all site locations except for the South Shore Campground at Haystack Reservoir.

For additional recreation information, contact the Ochoco National Forest at (541) 416-6500, the Crooked River National Grassland at (541) 475-9272, the Bureau of Reclamation at (541) 389-6541 or visit the Ochoco & Deschutes National Forests website at www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon.