

Park service considers fee to climb Longs Peak

BY BOBBY MAGILL • BobbyMagill@coloradoan.com • May 30, 2010

As the U.S. Forest Service looks for thoughts from climbers about charging a fee to access four 14,000 foot peaks in southern Colorado, another plan is in the works to start charging a fee to climb Longs Peak, one of the state's most popular and iconic fourteeners.

Though visitors have to pay \$20 per vehicle for a week of entry to Rocky Mountain National Park if driving through one of its four busy main entrances, the National Park Service doesn't assess the fee at the Longs Peak entrance.

That could change in the coming years as the park implements its Highway 7 Corridor plan, which calls for park officials to consider building a pay station at the Longs Peak entrance.

The plan envisions moving the Longs Peak Campground, expanding the peak's trailhead parking lot and making other improvements.

The plan is still on the drawing board, and some logistical challenges of collecting fees at Longs Peak need to be considered, said park spokeswoman Kyle Patterson

"We would need to determine the cost of collection versus projected revenue," she said. "Most people begin their climb of Longs Peak in the pre-dawn hours, so we would have to staff the entrance station at different hours."

When the Highway 7 plan was made available for public comment a year ago, the park received 11 comments about charging entrance fees at the Longs Peak trailhead, Patterson said.

"Eight respondents were in favor of charging an entrance fee," she said. "We also received four comments expressing support for a reservation system to climb Longs Peak." No such reservation system is eminent, she said.

For more on this story see Monday's Coloradoan.

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