



More fees for Oak Creek

CYNDY COLE Sun Staff Reporter | Posted: Monday, June 7, 2010 5:05 am

Visitors to three of the most popular recreation spots in Oak Creek Canyon will need a separate annual pass starting next year.

The Coconino National Forest will be granting a private concessionaire the ability to sell its own annual passes for West Fork, Grasshopper Point and Crescent Moon (also known as Red Rock Crossing).

The price is expected to be set in January.

That means the all-access version of the Red Rock Pass, now called the Grand Annual Pass, will not be valid past April 2011, and it is no longer being sold.

Also, those holding passes for national parks and other federal lands (\$80 annually unless senior or disabled) or passes to Arizona state parks (\$75) won't be able to use them at these three sites.

Slide Rock State Park, meanwhile, is now at \$20 per vehicle for one-day entry.

SEPARATE FROM RED ROCK FEES

A permit is now required for parking along much of Oak Creek Canyon and the roadsides and trailheads for the Red Rock Ranger District in Sedona.

The roughly \$800,000 collected annually from the pass helps the Forest Service offset the costs of collecting trash and cleaning bathrooms for an estimated 1.5 million visitors per year there.

Separate from the forest at large, there are a few especially popular sites on public Forest Service land that are managed by a private company -- now Recreation Resource Management -- for a fee.

RRM charges \$8 to \$10 per vehicle for entry to West Fork, Grasshopper and Crescent Moon, though that contract for management is now open for bid. More than six individuals and companies have expressed interest, said Bob Heiar, who manages the contract for the Red Rock Ranger District.

The Forest Service receives about 5 percent of the revenue generated from the fees paid for entry into these three sites, and the contractor gets the rest.

While Heiar acknowledges the new fees might not be popular with the public, he said there was little internal debate over whether the Forest Service had the personnel to collect trash and clean restrooms at sites like Crescent Moon, which had about a 20-car line this past weekend into the parking lot.

"The intensive management these sites need, we are just not equipped to deal with it," he said.

Budget analyses show that it is less expensive to staff the areas with contracted employees than with federal ones, Heiar said.

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