

BLM to start charging fees for day-use parking at St. Anthony Sand Dunes

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Posted: Friday, October 29, 2010 11:42 pm

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IDAHO FALLS — St. Anthony Sand Dune day users who like to use the Egin Lakes parking lot will have to pay for the privilege starting next spring.

The Bureau of Land Management Upper Snake Field Office will begin collecting fees for the day-use area at Egin Lakes Access Recreation Site at the dunes starting April 7.

That's six months from this week's publication in the Federal Register of a notice announcing the new fees.

The fees at Egin Lakes will be \$5 per day. A \$60 annual pass will

also be available.

In addition, there will be a \$10 per use charge for RVs using the dump station. The BLM already charges camping fees at the Egin Lakes Campground.

"We'll have a little booth set up like the national parks," says Bill Boggs of the BLM.

Boggs says the fee is only for parking, not for use of the dunes. Those who chose to park on the north end of the dunes in the large BLM parking lot or elsewhere that parking is allowed to access the dunes will not be charged the fee.

Parking is generally not allowed along the Red Road that accesses the north parking lot and the private Sand Hills Resort.

Boggs says it's his understanding that Fremont County would continue to negotiate with the BLM concerning charging a user fee for the dunes themselves to help cover the county's costs of policing and serving the area. County Commissioner Skip Hurt says that issue is still under consideration.

"They (dune visitors) are using our roads, landfill, EMS and sheriff's office at a cost to local taxpayers," Hurt says. "We encourage use out there, but we've concerned about recouping the costs. We appreciate what we get, but it's not covering our costs."

Hurt says the county values the partnership it has with the BLM to help pay for law enforcement costs and would welcome any sharing of the parking lot fee.

All of the fees collected will support the facilities and amenities in the day-use areas at the site, according to the BLM. Boggs says it's not inconceivable that some of the fees collected at the day-use parking lots could be used to help with law enforcement costs.

The agency's Resource Advisory Council's recreation committee approved establishing the fees about two years ago, Boggs says, but it has taken until now to go through the red tape to get the measure published in the Federal Register.

The Egin site qualifies under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act as a standard amenity recreation fee area where visitors can be charged a fee for use.

Holders of an America the Beautiful — The National Parks and Federal Recreation Lands Interagency Annual Pass, an Interagency Senior Pass, an Interagency Access Pass, or an Interagency Volunteer Pass will have all day-use fees waived, the BLM says.

The agency says it is committed to providing and receiving fair value for the use of developed recreation facilities and services in a manner that meets public-use demands, provides quality experiences and protects important resources.

The public may comment on fee collection at the Egin Lakes site through Nov. 8. The comments will assist the BLM in adjusting fees in the future in accordance with the site business plan and recommendations from the Idaho Falls District Resource Advisory Council.

For more information about this fee or to comment on fee collection, contact Boggs at 1405 Hollipark Drive, Idaho Falls, ID 83401, or by phone at (208) 524-7500.

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