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Cross words at the Crossing



Cindy Wilmer, a resident of Red Rock Crossing Village stands on the edge of neighboring Crescent Moon picnic area, where she can no longer walk without paying a fee. Wilmer and her daughter used to walk through the area, and were exempted from the fee, but now are being required to pay it to a concessionaire. (Josh Biggs/Arizona Daily Sun)

By Cyndy Cole, Sun Staff Reporter

Cindy Wilmer noticed a man in a golf cart watching a few weeks ago when she and her 4-year-old daughter moved branches placed across the path into the Crescent Moon Picnic Area at Red Rock Crossing.

They moved the branches to get through to the park; he put them back.

This was the beginning of a fee dispute between residents of the nearby mobile home park and fee collectors at the picnic area, which is on Coconino National Forest land and operated by a private company.

The daily entry fee is \$10 per car or \$2 per person on foot.

"Half a dozen people from my community said, 'Fine -- ticket me,'" Wilmer said.

Three residents and the area's ranger are at odds over what was said next, and whether there was a plan to send law enforcement officers wearing bulletproof vests to cite all who entered without paying (the Forest Service now says that is definitely not their plan).

Nearby resident Kristin Monday has continued to lobby the Forest Service for the right not to be charged for taking a daily walk along the creek, which includes the picnic area.

"We have a right to walk across this land" under federal law, she said.

She's arguing for her neighbors, many of whom are elderly.

"A lot of people that are in their 70s or 80s or 90s," she said. "They can't afford to pay \$50 or \$100 for a pass."

The company that is managing the park may agree with some of Monday's thoughts.

"We have from time to time had people that were truly, purely passing through ... they're really specifically trying to get to an area on the other side of the park," said Recreation Resource Management's president, Warren Meyer. "We have made specific accommodations working with the Forest Service for those folks in the past and are open to those in the future, but we haven't been approached by the Coconino for this."