

The Daily Courier

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Red Rock Pass fee area is now much smaller

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Changes to the Coconino National Forest's Red Rock Pass program are now final.

The Forest Service has been working on changes to the fee program for more than a year, beginning shortly after a federal judge agreed with a Sedona backpacker in the fall of 2010 that he shouldn't have to pay a fine for not buying the \$5 Red Rock Pass to park at a remote trailhead.

Federal Magistrate Judge Mark Aspey concluded the Forest Service needs to provide parking, toilets, trash cans, exhibits, picnic tables and security in the area if it wants to charge a fee.

The Forest Service now has reduced the Red Rock Pass fee area from a single 160,000-acre area to several areas totaling 11,000 acres.

The changes take effect in February, as soon as Forest Service officials erect new signs, said Sarah Tomsky, acting recreation staff officer on forest.



Joanna Dodder/The Daily Courier
Oak Creek Canyon north of Sedona is one of the more popular spots for visitors to Red Rock Country, and they'll still have to pay the Red Rock Pass fee to visit most of the canyon on the Coconino National Forest.

In the meantime, The Red Rock Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest has already ended the fees at some of the district's more remote locations.

For details about the program and fees, go online to redrockcountry.org or call 928-203-7500.

The Red Rock Pass is \$5 daily, \$15 weekly and \$20 annually.

The Red Rock Ranger District created the 160,000-acre fee area in 2000 to pay for more amenities and services in the face of about 1.5 million visitors annually. The fees produce about \$1 million annually for everything from trash collection to toilets to trail maintenance in Red Rock Country.

Regional Forester Corbin Newman chose the same Red Rock Pass changes that the Forest Service proposed in August to the Arizona Resource Advisory Council, which recommended approval of the proposal.

The new fee area includes the forest along parts of highways 89A and 179, as well as seven individual sites.

Highway signs will mark the start and end of the fee areas, Tomsky said.

The 9-mile-long fee corridor along Highway 89A in Oak Creek Canyon runs from Midgely Bridge north to the Bootlegger day-use area (mile marker 375 north to 384).

The 3-mile-long fee corridor along Highway 179 is located between the Village of Oak Creek and Sedona (mile marker 307 to 310).

The seven individual sites are Palatki Heritage, Honanki Heritage, V Bar V Heritage, Jim Thompson Trailhead, Boynton Canyon Trailhead, Bear/Doe Trailhead and Baldwin Trailhead.

The Red Rock Pass doesn't cover several of the most popular sites on the Coconino National Forest in Red Rock Country.

Recreation Resource Management has a special use permit to operate and charge \$8-\$9 fees at Grasshopper Point, Crescent Moon and West Fork.

The company also manages all the ranger district's campgrounds.

The Red Rock Pass proposal didn't include any concessionaire issues because the Forest Service just granted RRM a new 10-year permit last year.

"Very few people support concession management of the recreation sites in the area," the ranger district noted on its website.

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