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## Utah forest access fees in question after court ruling

Scenic byways • Forest Service keeps collecting as it awaits decision.

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Fees for stopping along the Mirror Lake and Alpine Loop scenic byways could disappear as the U.S. Forest Service strips away many access charges nationwide.

Or maybe not.

The effect on Utah's few places covered under recreational access fees isn't yet clear in the wake of a court ruling and an agency decision to stop charging for hiking and other access at most places nationwide.

"We're actually waiting for interpretation on this from our Washington office," Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest spokeswoman Loyal Clark said. "We don't know yet."

The forest charges \$6 for a three-day pass or \$45 annually for the right to pull off either of the roads — one in the western Uinta Range and the other up American Fork Canyon — for recreation. Stopping briefly for photos is free.

Similar fees have been controversial since first imposed in 1996, and last month the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in California ruled some of them improper. The Forest Service is working on a policy that could remove most of them.

The scenic byway fees are meant to offset costs for restrooms, water systems, picnic grounds and other services.

The Ashley National Forest also has fee areas around Flaming Gorge Reservoir, but only for high-intensity use areas such as boat ramps, fish-cleaning stations or restrooms, spokesman Louis Haynes said.

He is unaware of any plan to phase out the fees, which are \$5 a day, \$15 a week or \$35 a year.

The Forest Service also has a fee area jointly operated with Salt Lake County in Millcreek Canyon.

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