

Supes to hear presentation on new King Range fees: Bureau of Land Management seeks to limit use for first time

Catherine Wong/The Times-Standard

Posted: 09/15/2013 02:03:24 AM PDT | Updated: a day ago

Representatives from the Bureau of Land Management will present a plan to the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday that aims to limit overnight use in the King Range Wilderness for the first time.

Second District Supervisor Estelle Fennell said BLM Arcata Field Manager Lynda Roush and King Range National Conservation Area Manager Gary Pritchard-Peterson will brief the board on an increase in campground fees and a proposed Wilderness Permit Program.

The program would require a new Special Recreation Permit with a fee of \$5 per person, per day for overnight use in the King Range, and limit use through the National Reservation Service, according to a BLM business plan report. There is currently no fee or limit to overnight use.

”Most people go to the King Range to go to the beach on the Lost Coast,” Fennell said. “People come from all over the country and the world, but a lot of the locals like to stay there for their anniversaries, birthdays and picnics. Limiting the capacity will definitely affect them.”

The Wilderness Act, federal regulations and bureau policy require that the “component qualities” of wilderness character -- such as naturalness and solitude -- are preserved, according to the report.

Between 2007 and 2011, visitor use has increased from 12,480 to 22,324 visitors per day. The report states that the proposed plan is “intended to protect the quality of solitude” by establishing a visitor capacity.

It also states that the Arcata Field Office has proposed increasing the existing fee for camping at the Mattole, Honeydew Creek, Horse Mountain, Tolkan, Nadelos and Wailaki campgrounds from the current \$8 per site, per night to \$15.

The bureau currently collects an average of around \$16,450, which funds 7.5 percent of costs required to operate the camps. The fee increase is expected to generate around \$31,000, according to the report.

At least 85 percent of the funds have been slated to protect the wilderness and maintain campgrounds. The remaining will be spent on managing the fee program.

Bureau staff expect \$87,325 to \$111,750 in revenue from the Wilderness Permit Program to fund additional staffing to monitor permit compliance and capacities. The funds will also go to restoration, maintaining trails, and trash removal.

Fennell said the original deadline for public comment was Sept. 9, but the bureau recently extended it to Oct. 18.

The bureau report states that comments can be sent to ca338@blm.gov. They can also be mailed to the BLM King Range Project Office, P.O. Box 189, 768 Shelter Cove Road in Whitethorn, or to the BLM

Arcata Field Office at 1695 Heindon Road.

In other business, on the consent calendar, the board will be voting on fixing the tax rate for fiscal year 2013-14, railroad crossing improvements, and storm damage repair construction, as well as the possible reclassification of the county undersheriff's position.

If you go:

What: Board of Supervisors meeting

When: 9 a.m. Tuesday

Where: Supervisors' chamber, first floor, Humboldt County Courthouse, 825 Fifth St. in Eureka

The full agenda can be viewed online at <http://co.humboldt.ca.us/board>

Catherine Wong can be reached at 441-0514 or cwong@times-standard.com. Follow her on Twitter and Tout @cmwong27.