

L.A. Times editorial has it wrong

Last Sunday the L.A. Times ran an editorial which distorted and glossed over the facts of the April 28 federal court's decision regarding the Adventure Pass requirements for visitors to our Angeles National Forest. To set the record straight, the Adventure Pass Fee legislation is very explicit in that fees can not be demanded for merely parking along a highway or visiting an area that doesn't have certain "improvements" such as a campground.

But the Forest Service ignored the law and, under threats to forest visitors of fines and imprisonment for noncompliance, began charging fees throughout our Angeles National Forest. They erected signs along Angeles Crest Highway "Parked Vehicles Must Display Adventure Pass Next 20 Miles." Hikers were cited, parked vehicles cited, even people stopping at overlooks to take the view were harassed.

So the Western Slope No Fee Coalition, a group of concerned citizen volunteers, was formed. They sued, demanding the Forest Service cease and desist their illegal fee collecting. The Forest Service lost and was ordered by the federal court to comply with the fee legislation.

VAULT SUIT 5-22-14

The Forest Service appealed the decision. Again they lost, this time at the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. Not happy with the outcome of the appeal, the Forest Service changed its "interpretation" of the law and again began collecting fees. The No Fee group sued again. Again the Forest Service lost. On April 28, Senior U.S. District Judge Terry J. Hatter Jr. explicitly ruled that the fees charged on Angeles National Forest for parking and hiking into undeveloped areas are illegal. He issued an immediate injunction against requiring an "Adventure Pass" to be purchased and displayed by those who solely park a vehicle or don't use any of a campground's facilities.

The Forest Service's response? They've ignored the "immediate injunction" and are still collecting the fees!

On another note, the Times editorial claimed the Forest Service doesn't have enough money to maintain trails, campsites and picnic areas. Yet the Forest Service managed to spend \$12 million building a fancy new Forest Supervisor's office in Arcadia two years ago, money that could (should) have been spent on trails and campgrounds.

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