



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT NEWS RELEASE
 Central California District
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BLM Seeks Public Comment on San Joaquin River Gorge Recreation Fees

In order to accommodate growing public interest in the San Joaquin River Gorge Special Recreation Management Area, the Bureau of Land Management is proposing fees for certain uses of the area and is requesting public comments.

"We are considering fees at the San Joaquin River Gorge consistent with Congressional direction to 'provide fair value and fair return' for recreation through amenity fees and commercial services," said Tracy Rowland, San Joaquin River Gorge park manager.

The BLM held meetings on the fee proposal in May 2010 in Prather and Clovis. The Pacific Southwest Region Recreation Resource Advisory Committee recommended approval of the fee proposal at its June 24, 2010, meeting in Mammoth Lakes.

Members of the public have until July 9 to submit comments on the proposed fees. BLM is requesting that comments be as specific as possible. Comments are most helpful when they are substantive, site specific, or include suggested changes or proposed resolutions to your concerns. Please send comments to: Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Bakersfield Field Office, 3801 Pegasus Drive, Bakersfield, Calif. 93308, fax (661) 391-6041. Before including an address, phone number, email address or other personal identifying information in a comment, the public needs to be aware that the entire comment, including personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask BLM to withhold personal information from public review, the agency cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so.

The BLM's Bakersfield Field Office will consider all public comments made in making a decision whether to alter, set aside, or implement the fee proposal. If the fee proposal is implemented, it will be effective January 9, 2012, unless a Federal Register notice to the contrary is published.

Fees are proposed for the use of specific facilities such as the campgrounds and equestrian facilities, as well as for any activity that requires the special attention of BLM staff. The proposal would also charge a nominal special area standard amenity fee for day use to support the maintenance and operation of facilities provided throughout the area, including access to the area and its trail system, restrooms, water, visitor center and interpretive exhibits.

Proposed fees for use of a single walk-in campsite at the campground are \$10; \$15 would be charged for double and triple sites. Fees for the use of the group campground would be \$175 and \$25 for non-exclusive use of the horse camp. Interpretive and educational programs would cost \$15 per person for up to a half day (4 hours) and \$20 per person for a full day (6+ hours). The proposed day-use fee is \$5. For ease of collection and enforcement, this fee would be assessed per vehicle rather than per person. An annual day-use pass may be purchased for \$40. The annual pass would not include camping or guided interpretive program fees.

"The fees would generate an estimated \$50,000 to \$80,000 annually, depending upon visitation", Rowland said. An estimated 60,000 people visit the gorge annually.

Fees provide a means of ensuring that services meet the public's expectations. As use has increased, the cost of providing an appropriate level of services has also gone up. "The money generated from fees would be reinvested in the facilities and services within the San Joaquin Gorge to provide a wider variety of educational and interpretive programs and consistently better service to the public" said Rowland. Fee revenues would be used for operations and maintenance, and to help expand the level of visitor services. Expanded services could include additional guided walks, talks and interpretive programs, new self-guided interpretive displays and experiences, and wayside exhibits that highlight natural features and the cultural history of the area.

Proposed improvements to facilities and trails include adding a shade structure for the group picnic area at the group camp, adding permanent restrooms in the horse camp and fishing access areas, creating new interpretive exhibits and adding a self-guided interpretive trail.

For more information, contact BLM San Joaquin River Gorge Park Manager, 3801 Pegasus Drive, Bakersfield, Calif. 93308, call (559) 855-3492.

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