

----- Original Message -----

From: Art Jeffers

To: Stephen Sample

Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2010 6:25 PM

Subject: Re: No Fee increase

Mr. Sample:

I received your email regarding a PROPOSED change in the discount for holders of lifetime senior and access passes. I have printed your remarks and requested they be included in the record.

I have received many similar emails on this subject; apparently the result of a "mail-in" campaign. This is a general response, with an emphasis on addressing what appears to be some misunderstanding and confusion. Many emails I have received seem to have been written by individuals that have not read the PROPOSED change for public comment published in the Federal Register. If you have read the Federal Register notice and this is not applicable to your comments, I apologize for this general response.

If you have not already done so, please submit your comments formally, as described below.

First, and most importantly, the best way to ensure your comments are included officially in the formal record and, thereby, considered in the development of any final version of this PROPOSED change is to:

1. If you have not already done so, please read the notice published by the Forest Service in the Federal Register on December 1, 2009. This notice requests comments on a PROPOSED directive revision that would change how concessionaires honor Interagency Passes (the notice and related information can be found at the following website –

http://www.fs.fed.us/specialuses/special_concession.shtml); and

2. Send any comments in writing as instructed in this Federal Register notice on or before the close of the sixty day comment period, February 1st, 2010.

Second, many of the emails I have received on this subject raise concerns that are addressed directly in the Federal Register notice. As a result, the following key points from the notice are listed for your information, not as a substitute for reading the notice, but in an effort to clear up some of the most frequent misunderstandings reflected in many of the emails received.

The subject notice involves a request for public comment on a PROPOSED change in how passes would be honored in CONCESSION operated campgrounds – the PROPOSED change applies ONLY to campgrounds operated by concessionaires on the National Forests and Grasslands. It does NOT apply to Forest Service operated sites or campgrounds operated by any other federal agency.

Key Points of the PROPOSAL for public comment (which are described more fully and explained in the notice):

For holders of lifetime senior and access passes:

- o no change to 50% discount at Forest Service-operated sites
- o new benefit of 10% discount at concession operated standard amenity fee sites

- o reduction in camping discount from 50% to 10% at concession operated campgrounds

For holders of annual and volunteer passes:

- o new benefit of free admission to concession operated standard amenity fee sites

Again, if you have not already done so, please read the Federal Register notice and submit your comments formally as explained above.

Thank you,
Art Jeffers
Assistant Director for Recreation
Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources
USDA Forest Service

Mr Jeffers,

I have long been opposed to ANY fees for use of OUR national forests.

Here in Arizona, I can't even park along a public highway and enjoy the view without PAYING for a Red Rock Pass. The only way we find out about these proposals to hike fees is through our e-mail network. If that is an organized campaign, then you are correct. It is no less organized than your bunch. As far as I am concerned, PROPOSED fee increases are usually approved. I am very disappointed that this fee structure would even be PROPOSED. But, since many, if not most of the sites that I use have been outsourced to for-profit concessionaire companies, I believe that the USFS and the Federal Government is not concerned about my welfare and is welching on the promises given by the Senior Pass. Also, what is to keep you from continuing with the outsourcing of other sites if these PROPOSALS are approved?

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE IS ANY MISUNDERSTANDING OR CONFUSION ABOUT THE PROPOSALS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE. If you PROPOSE it, then you are trying to make it happen. The average person will be powerless against your organized efforts behind this PROPOSAL, unless they band together and all write their congressmen and senators and vigorously oppose these PROPOSALS. Your bureaucratic organization can only be stopped by the legions of outraged senior citizens. If these fees get approved, then you haven't seen anything yet, and forget about getting volunteers to assist with future programs!

Your agency is too myopic to understand that instead of being stewards of OUR forests and land, you have turned into uniformed tax collectors or maybe even worse, who prey on the old and disabled. Your agency has a real public relations problem as a result of all of these fees. If I didn't have a senior pass, I would be even more outraged at these fees.

Also, how do you expect the average citizen and land user to be able to understand how to access the Federal Register or be able to navigate their way through the comments process? Many seniors and disabled do not even know how to use a computer.

Since, I myself can't understand how to navigate the federal register process, will you also include this follow up e-mail as a formal response to the USFS PROPOSALS and post it to the Federal register?

Thank You,

Stephen E. Sample

Mr Jeffers,

Stephen Sample copied me on your response to his comment regarding the proposed changes to pass-acceptance at concessionaire-managed Forest Service sites. Could you please provide additional clarification for the following statements you made:

[Key Points of the PROPOSAL for public comment \(which are described more fully and explained in the notice\):](#)

[For holders of lifetime senior and access passes:](#)

- o [no change to 50% discount at Forest Service-operated sites](#)

QUESTION: Is there anything in FLREA to prevent the Forest Service from changing its policy at agency-managed sites to conform to what is currently being proposed at concessionaire sites? In fact would it not be the obvious next step because it would bring national consistency to camping discount policy?

- o [new benefit of 10% discount at concession operated standard amenity fee sites](#)

Far from being a "new benefit" this disingenuous statement disguises the fact that allowing concessionaires NOT to accept all interagency passes (annual and lifetime) at standard amenity fee sites is in violation of the law, which states that the passes, "shall cover the entrance fee and standard amenity recreation fee for all Federal recreational lands and waters for which an entrance fee or a standard amenity recreation fee is charged." The FLREA defines "standard amenity fee" and is the sole legal authority for standard amenity fees. So my QUESTION is: under what authority is the FS currently not requiring concessionaires to accept the interagency passes at SAF sites?

- o [reduction in camping discount from 50% to 10% at concession operated campgrounds](#)

QUESTION: The FS does have authority to do this to holders of the FLREA interagency lifetime passes (since FLREA is silent about the amount of the discount), but under what authority are you proposing to also do it to holders of the Golden Age and Golden Access passes, which were issued under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act that specified the amount of the discount?

For holders of annual and volunteer passes:

- o new benefit of free admission to concession operated standard amenity fee sites

No "new" benefit here because the FLREA requires that all interagency passes, (annual, volunteer, and lifetime) be accepted at standard amenity fee sites. This would put these fee sites more in compliance with the law than they are now, but you can't be a little bit compliant any more than you can be a little bit pregnant.

Thank you for your clarification and answers on these points.

Kitty Benzar

President, Western Slope No-Fee Coalition

PS I have read and thoroughly understand the federal register notice about this proposal. I initiated the first alarms as soon as I had read it. My organization has helped organize what you snidely call a "mail in campaign." Can you please tell me in what way a "mail in campaign" differs from the submission of public comments in response to a formal request for such comments by the Forest Service? Can you tell me why the FS elected to hide the comments submitted through regulations.gov, rather than allowing the entire docket to be viewed as would be the norm?

We are providing information at

<http://westernslopenofee.org/index2.php?display=yes&pageid=2> to enable the public to comment effectively.