

Time Line - San Joaquin River Gorge Fee Proposal

Date	Event	
3/24/2010	Briefing Paper Prepared Internally	
4/9/2010	Briefing Paper Presented at Central California RAC meeting. No questions or comments from RAC members, no approval vote either sought or taken.	
4/29/2010	Press Release Announcing Public Meetings Sent To:	Published or Broadcast?
	Newsbytes (BLM Newsletter)	Yes 4/30/10
	Fresno Bee	No
	Porterville Record	No
	Tulare Advance-Register	No
	KGPE Channel 47 Fresno	No
	Merced Sun-Star	No
	Modesto Bee	No
	Stockton Record	No
	Manteca Bulletin	No
5/18/10	Madera Tribune	No
	Auberry Mountain Press	Yes 5/1/10
5/18/10	Public meeting in Clovis	Three attendees
5/19/10	Public meeting in Prather	Three attendees
5/20/10	Notice of fee proposal posted on site at SJRG. Comment cards provided on bulletin boards.	3 Comment Cards received - one in support, one opposed, one ambiguous
6/1/10	Federal Register notice appears announcing California RecRAC meeting June 23-24. Lists SJRG fee proposal as an agenda item	
6/2/10	Peter Wiechers sends email inquiry to Tracy Rowland asking for details about the proposed fee.	
6/2/10	Peter Wiechers locates 4/29 press release on BLM website and sends it to the Fresno Bee	Fresno Bee outdoors editor responds: "Peter, Thanks for sending this my way. You'd think the BLM would actually send press releases like this to the local newspaper. Or maybe they don't want anyone knowing until it's too late to do anything."
6/7/10	Tracy Rowland responds to Peter Wiechers	Indicates that the proposal details are not final. Whether camping fee will or will not include day use fee is not yet decided. Price of annual pass not yet decided. Solicits Peter's opinion as to what the price of the annual pass should be, but not on the overall proposal.
6/10/10	Fresno Bee runs story on front page of outdoors section.	

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6/21/10	Briefing Paper dated 3/24 is posted to SJRG webpage, 3 days prior to RecRAC meeting.	
6/24/10	<p>California RecRAC meets to review the proposal. They are provided with a 50+ page full-color Business Plan, which was not made available to the public on the website.</p> <p>Before looking at the details they review the public participation outreach and results. Tracy Rowland tells them:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the 4/29 press release was carried <i>before the public meetings</i> by the Auberry Mountain Press (true), Fresno Bee (not true) and Sierra Star (not true - they were not even on the distribution list). 2. That the Central California RAC had approved the proposal (not true). 3. That public comments had been generally supportive (not true). <p>Relying on this information, the RecRAC deems the public outreach to have been sufficient and approves the proposal.</p>	
8/24/10	WSNFC contacts the San Joaquin River Trail Council, the most active and important volunteer group at SJRG.	Trail Council President Steve Haze says the Council has never been informed about the proposal. He says he will invite Tracy Rowland to brief them at their next regular meeting.
9/8/10	Tracy Rowland briefs the San Joaquin River Trail Council and tells them they will be allowed to submit comments during the 30 day comment period that will follow publication in the Federal Register.	
9/16/10	<p>Bakersfield Office responds to our FOIA request, providing all the public comments, public meeting records, and media efforts.</p> <p>They show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one person supported the proposal, seven opposed it, and four comments were ambiguous - total media coverage was the posting in Newsbytes, the 5/1 Mountain Press article (Auberry, CA Pop: 2,053), and the 6/10 story in the Fresno Bee, 3 weeks after the public meetings were held. 	
9/23/10	RecRAC members and Peter Wiechers receive email update from Michael Ayers of BLM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Federal Register notice that is required 6 months in advance of implementation is in the State Office waiting for approval before being sent to the Washington Office. There will be a 30-day comment period following publication. (There is no requirement that BLM acknowledge, summarize, or respond to comments at that stage. The RecRAC approval that is the only approval required by law was already obtained on 6/24.) - Tim Smith of the BLM briefed the Central California RAC on 9/17 about the controversy over whether the BLM's public participation process was properly followed. "No member of the RAC questioned Mr. Smith nor made comments regarding the fee program. There were no public comments offered about the Gorge during the official public comment period."

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12/10/2010 (approx)	50+ page Business Plan posted online. No public announcement made that is was now available.
6/9/2011	Federal Register notice published announcing that the BLM intends to begin collecting fees at SJRG in six months. States that the public has until July 11 to submit comments.
6/10/2011	BLM Press Release issued stating "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." The Press Release gives a comment deadline of July 9, which does not match what was in the FR notice.
7/30/2011	WSNFC submits Freedom of Information Act request for all comments received in response to the Federal Register Notice by the July 9 (or was it July 11?) deadline
8/5/2011	Bakersfield Office responds to our FOIA request, providing emails from 48 individuals and one internal email exchange between Tracy Rowland and other BLM officials. They show: - 4 persons supported the proposal, 43 opposed it, and one comment was ambiguous. Three of the four supportive comments were in response to active solicitation for support from Ms Rowland to cavers who are local "partners" that help monitor a cave on the property. The opposing comments specifically cited such things as the process not following BLM policy, getting RecRAC approval before asking for public comments, using terms of art to try to disguise that the day use fee is really a parking fee, and general opposition to fees for access to trails and natural areas. - The internal email exchange had to do with the price of an annual pass, and shows clearly that the price was plucked out of thin air, despite having been supposedly based on a "business plan."
12/9/2011	BLM Press Release issued announcing the fee will commence on February 1, 2012. The press release says, "The notice in the Federal Register generated fewer than 50 comments, the majority of which were in general opposition to the charging of fees for any service, anywhere, without regard for the specifics of the proposal." [NOTE: this is not accurate. See 8/5/2011 entry above and actual comments posted at www.WesternSlopeNoFee.org . Most comments were very specific to this proposal.] There will be both a camping fee and a day-use fee. There will also be a \$10 per person fee for interpretive/educational programs, including school groups. The proposal as approved by the RecRAC called for free access for bicycles and pedestrians but the press release is silent on whether that recommendation will be followed.