

The U.S. Forest Service will start charging visitors for access to certain areas at the Mendenhall Glacier starting May 1

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

First Posted: April 20, 2016 - 9:04 am

Last Updated: April 20, 2016 - 9:04 am

JUNEAU, Alaska — The U.S. Forest Service will start charging visitors for access to certain areas at the Mendenhall Glacier starting May 1.

Visitors ages 16 and older will have to pay \$5 to use the restrooms, the visitor center, the pavilion, Photo Point Trail and Steep Creek Trail. Another option is a \$15 season pass allows the pass holder and one guest to access the areas through Sept. 30, The Juneau Empire reported (<http://bit.ly/1NAKxwR>).

Visitor Center Director John Neary said he expects some Juneau residents to be upset with the new charges.

"They're not used to paying a fee for a trail, we get that. But what we hope is that they'll see the logic that the fee will go toward improving trails, improving infrastructure, making the experience better," Neary said.

The fees were proposed in December 2014 and approved last June. They come in response to Congress allocating fewer funds to the visitor center and rising costs associated with the increased number of visitors each year, Neary said.

About 550,000 people visited the Mendenhall Glacier from May through September 2015, Neary said, and that number is expected to increase 3 percent this year.

Officials expect the new fees to bring in about \$2 million this year. Eighty percent of the earnings will go to tour operators, shuttle buses and taxes. A small portion will benefit Alaska's national forests, and a majority of the remainder will go back toward the visitor center's operational costs.

"Paying for clean restrooms, paying for the interpreters that are out there on the platforms talking to people about salmon," Neary said. "If we need new restrooms, where are we going to come up with the money for that? Part of it will come from that fee."

Visitors can continue to access several other trails for free, including Nugget Falls Trail, East Glacier Trail, Powerline Trail, Moraine Ecology Trail and the Trail of Time, as well as all trails in the Dredge Lakes and West Glacier area.

We also have more stories about:
(click the phrases to see a list)

Subjects:

- Glaciers (6)
- Environment and nature (1962)

Places:

- Juneau (46)
- Alaska (351)

Information from: Juneau (Alaska) Empire, <http://www.juneauempire.com>