

KUTV Salt Lake City

Forest Service considers charging fee for Cottonwood Canyon users

By Chris Miller Tuesday, May 24th 2016

Salt Lake City — (KUTV) A visit to Big or Little Cottonwood Canyon could soon cost you. The U.S. Forest Service is considering adding a fee program for use of certain sites.

The regional office is conducting a public comment period to access how canyon users would react to paying \$6 for a three-day pass, or \$45 for an annual pass to use a handful of day-use sites.

"Ninty-five percent of the fees generated would go directly back into the sites in these canyons," said Matt Lane, with the Salt Lake Ranger District. "We want to be able to absolutely provide the very best recreation that we can in our crown jewels, the Cottonwood Canyons."

A visit to the ski resorts or restaurants, or a drive up the canyon would not be subject to a fee. Lane says a pay booth is not a consideration at this time. Instead, they would install a pay tube at the trailhead or parking lot at sites where users would drop payment for the required use fee.

Save Our Canyons is a local organization dedicated to protecting the wilderness. It supports the proposal.

"We're seeing more visitation here locally than all of our parks in the state combined," said Save Our Canyons Executive Director Carl Fisher.

"It will help us sustain our resources."

The group helped conduct a poll, asking people if they would support parking fees or canyon passes. The results showed 17 percent "strongly disagreed," 16 percent "strongly agreed" and 35 percent were spread between "neutral" to "slightly agree."

Of the 290 people polled, only 19 canyon users said they'd be unwilling to pay any fee.

While the U.S. Forest Service has said it will redirect the proceeds back into the maintenance of those sites, some canyon users remain skeptical.

"I would do everything in my power not to buy it," says Jonathon Watson. "If the trail maintenance were really good, or they opened up new trails, or they added more parking, so people aren't parking on the side of the road everywhere, then I think that money might be well spent."

You can read [more details at FS.USDA.gov](#). Comments will be accepted through Sept. 9. That can be directed to Matt Lane at malane@fs.fed.us.