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## Edhat Santa Barbara

### No More Parking Fees for Hikers

updated: Jul 05, 2016, 8:00 AM

*By the Dedicated Staff of edhat.com*

The U.S. Forest Service has ended parking fees for hikers in Southern California forest areas after a recent lawsuit.

Hikers will no longer be required to buy an "Adventure Pass" for trail access with 1/2 mile of trailheads if they don't use amenities such as permanent bathrooms and picnic tables.

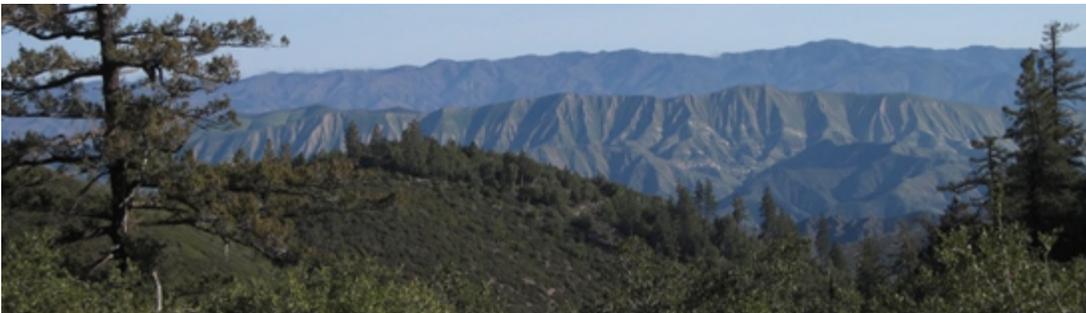


A settlement agreement between four southern California hikers and the US Forest Service determined that people who want to access trails without using any developed amenities will no longer have to purchase and display an "Adventure Pass" in order to park their car at trailheads on the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino National Forests.

Adventure Passes cost \$5 a day or \$30 a year.

Several years of litigation were finalized in May after four hikers, two from the Ojai area, sued the Forest Service.

"This is a huge win, not only in southern California but in many other places where the Forest Service assumes that anyone parked near developed amenities is using them and owes a fee for that use," said Kitty Benzar, president of the Western Slope No-Fee Coalition, an outdoors advocacy group based in Colorado who advised the plaintiffs.



Paul Robbins Jr., a spokesman for the Forest Service, told the *Ventura County Star* the agency will continue to legally charge a fee for visitors who use recreation sites with six standard amenities: designated developed parking, picnic tables, permanent toilets, security, interpretive signs, and trash receptacles.

A copy of the legal document can be found [here](#).

**Comments in order of when they were received | ([reverse order](#))**

FLICKA 

2016-07-05 08:31 AM

About time! Thanks to the hikers pursuing this, and congratulations.

COMMENT 714481 

2016-07-05 08:35 AM

bravo!

COMMENT 714484 

2016-07-05 08:37 AM

Power to the people.. Not a complete win, but darn near close! Now, they will call it a "parking" fee. I remember a few years ago I took a Cub Scout pack up to Mt. Pinos to play in the snow and the Sheriff's had the nerve to blockade the road and charge \$5 to each car to DRIVE up the road to Mt. Pinos.. What Thievery! Just keep pushing them folks and eventually the Adventure Pass will go the way of the honest politician, and disappear.

COMMENT 714489 

2016-07-05 08:47 AM

Finally.

COMMENT 714492P 

2016-07-05 08:53 AM

How will they determine if a hiker has used a picnic table, trash can or restroom?

COMMENT 714509 

2016-07-05 09:33 AM

It's actually if you park in an area that has the six amenities and is clearly signed that a pass is needed since there is no way to tell if you've actually used the amenities without a witness. One of the amenities is paved parking, but all six need to be present and clearly signed. The FS website has more details. If the Adventure Pass is ever eradicated, then amenities might follow - like bathrooms (or at the very least reasonably clean bathrooms with toilet paper, and that are emptied regularly,) trash receptacles, security, messes cleaned up regularly (it's disturbing how trashy some people are out in the woods ). So be careful what you wish for.. If you dont care about those things there are plenty of places without those amenities to go to. Please don't ruin it for the rest of us who think it's worth it and that \$30 a year is a bargain. America the Beautiful passes cover those areas too.

COMMENT 714514P 

2016-07-05 09:42 AM

I have never had a problem paying \$30 a year - because I have used many toilets (cleaned) in parks, and often being thankful that they exist. It is cheap at the price, and paying represents the high regard I have for the park system. If it means one less eating out, it is more than worth it.

COMMENT 714520 

2016-07-05 09:48 AM

It's not "the park system". They are called National Forests, State Parks are a whole different thing.

COMMENT 714522P 

2016-07-05 09:56 AM

Yes! We had an encounter with a ranger "just doing his job"... We were out for a drive along east Camino Cielo. We had stopped at a turn-out, with the car still running, to reach for sodas and chips in the back seat when a ranger pulled up and told us to move along since we didn't have an Adventure Pass. We explained we weren't going to park there, we weren't even out of the car, but he was adamant that he was going to issue a ticket if we didn't leave immediately. We hadn't even opened our drinks yet. Other people said they'd had similar experiences.

COMMENT 714525 

2016-07-05 10:09 AM

Some rangers I've encountered are real power trippin a-holes. Give 'em a gun & badge and it goes to their head.

COMMENT 714526 

2016-07-05 10:14 AM

The Adventure Pass was always illegal, and never enforceable in a court of law. I could see some legitimacy to the pass if the funds generated were put back into the forest lands but the the fact is most of the money went to the 3rd party private for-profit entities that contracted with the US Forest Dept to oversee the program. Only a very small amount ever made it back into facility improvements. Sad our government is still trying to sell our public lands to the highest bidder.

COMMENT 714514P 

2016-07-05 10:15 AM

You may have noticed that "park system" was not capitalized - it was a generic name not an official name. (And "National Forests" are actually a misnomer if one is going to split hairs, because many of them have no forests.)

Here is talk about the generic "parks" on the US Forest Service website.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/blogs/lets-get-every-kid-park>

COMMENT 714514P 

2016-07-05 10:30 AM

*Sad our government is still trying to sell our public lands to the highest bidder.*

Nope, our government is not trying to sell our public lands to the highest bidder - there has been a record increase in the size of public lands under this government.

The "Recreation Fee" program was enacted under Bush I, and was opposed by many in Congress including Lois Capps. I believe the proponents of the program wanted to shift some of the costs of running the recreation areas onto the public, as a first step toward privatizing them while they were cutting the budgets for park system support. There has been consistent pressure by a certain segment of politicians (not all in government) to sell public lands to private owners - especially in Utah (and supported by the Kochs and Bundy affiliates).

*Under the Recreational Fee Demonstration (Fee Demo) program, Congress authorized the Department of the Interior's National Park Service (NPS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA FS) to implement and test new fees across the spectrum of recreation sites they manage. The Departments are authorized to retain all of the revenues from the Fee Demo Program, of which at least 80 percent must be spent at the sites where the fees were collected. These revenues continue to provide on-the-ground improvements at recreation sites managed by the Departments.*

*The FY 1998 Interior Appropriations Act (P.L. 105-163) required the participating Federal land management agencies to prepare a joint report to Congress each year of the Fee Demo Program.1*

*This report details aggregate and site-specific figures for visitation, revenue, obligations, and cost of collection as well as agency specific explanations of data trends, general program updates, and a number of example project examples.*

I am an avid supporter of public lands and their continued existence and protection.

COMMENT 714534 A H N O

2016-07-05 10:59 AM

The Adventure Pass represented double taxation. We already support our public lands through our income taxes. Collecting an additional payment to park on our own public lands is like charging a fee to park in your own driveway at night.

And yes, the America the Beautiful pass, which includes all the National Parks, covers all other public lands. If you have the ATB pass, and still want to use the developed local areas, you don't need to pay any additional fees anyway. Just toss your ATB pass on the dash.

COMMENT 714514P A H N O

2016-07-05 11:45 AM

It would be double taxation if budgets for parks had not been cut, and that money moved to other areas - i.e. we are not paying twice for the same service. However, even more insidious is the following, and people should be aware of it.

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When federal land becomes state land, it can be bought and sold to the profit of small-government billionaires

“The politicians and corporations pushing this agenda are doing it under the false pretenses of states rights,”

Brad Brooks of the Wilderness Society argued, “knowing states can never afford to manage the land, and that states can sell off their lands, unlike public lands.”

It’s “political sleight-of-hand,” he continued. First, get the lands out of federal hands into state hands. Then, wait for the inevitable state budget crisis. Then, buy the resource-rich land, turning it from a beautiful, publicly accessible slice of nature into a resource extraction site.

“Idaho has sold or traded 41 percent of the land it was granted at statehood,” Brooks continued. “Nevada has sold off 99 percent of its original state land holdings. In total, Western states have sold 31 million acres of state lands that were given to them at statehood, an area roughly equivalent in size to the state of Louisiana.”

<http://tinyurl.com/gtjavvb>

COMMENT 714526 

2016-07-05 12:00 PM

"Sad our government is still trying to sell our public lands to the highest bidder"

IT'S TRUE, now the Fed is selling naming rights on some of our most precious natural resources...

[www.outsideonline\(dot com\)/2048041/who-owns-yosemite](http://www.outsideonline(dot com)/2048041/who-owns-yosemite)

COMMENT 714534 

2016-07-05 12:43 PM

Budgets may have been cut, but the US Dept of the Interior, which runs the Forest Service, still gets its money from taxation...our income taxes.

So, yes, it IS double taxation.

And most of the money collected from the Adventure Pass went for administration costs...the costs of running the program in the first place. It never turned enough of a profit to fund any of the 'improvements' anyway, according to the GAO. So that \$30 was essentially wasted.

COMMENT 714552 

2016-07-05 01:13 PM

Many of us want the USFS to be well funded and to maintain the amenities, but the problem we have with the AP is that it is inefficient and causes resentment among people when they get asked for money for ambiguous and needless reasons. The solution is to provide the USFS with adequate funding via their annual budget from Congress, rather than require them to hit on the public any chance they can get to make ends meet.

COMMENT 714560 

2016-07-05 01:45 PM

The new Adventure Pass policy is clear as mud.

In the first paragraph, it seems the Pass is NOT needed if one parks and just hikes along a trail, returning to

one's car.

In the next paragraph, if one is parking on pavement, near a picnic table, near a bathroom, with a trash can, and hikes along a trail and returns to one's car without using any of these amenities, one needs an Adventure Pass.

Hmmm.....get ready for some violations to be issued which will bring in more fines than the original Adventure Pass cost in the first place!

COMMENT 714569 

2016-07-05 02:13 PM

Just be sure to park in an area without bathrooms or tables, and the fee is not required. Not too hard to figure that out. But I believe the whole pass should be abolished. Our taxes should support the picnic areas. And people should take their trash with them when they leave. (Thank you to the folks who brought this lawsuit!)

COMMENT 714581P 

2016-07-05 02:58 PM

Adventure Pass. An experiment that failed. What a bunch of lies were told, when people were made to think that they had to pay, pay, pay. I, for one, will be happy when this double taxation and harassment of hikers and bikers and nature lovers will be dumped once and for all.

COMMENT 714595 

2016-07-05 04:20 PM

@546, US Forest Service is under the US Dept of Agriculture, hence the "Land of Many Uses" motto. US DOI runs the National Park Service, which preserve natural, cultural, and historic resources. They have some similarities, but many many differences in purpose, style and substance.

COMMENT 714603 

2016-07-05 04:42 PM

Does NIRA have amenities?

COMMENT 714625 

2016-07-05 05:42 PM

I thought this was decided upon last year???

COMMENT 714639 

2016-07-05 07:28 PM

at 603...I once met/had a fine lady at Nira who was very amenable. So answer to your question is....if your timing is right, there could very well be.

COMMENT 714657P 

2016-07-05 10:32 PM

Oddly, I remember about 15 years ago my mother going to DC to talk to as many politicians as possible to get the Adventure Pass overturned. They, including Diane Frankenstein refused to listen to her. I'm happy someone finally got through to the Forest Service.

LEAVESOF3 [A](#) [H](#) [N](#) [O](#)

2016-07-05 11:39 PM

657P. What a cool Mom you have. Tell her from me I appreciate her involvement and effort.

COMMENT 714625 [A](#) [H](#) [N](#) [O](#)

2016-07-06 08:43 AM

The issue with their wording is that many trailheads have these amenities with long distances of no parking signs leading up to the trailhead. They are essentially forcing one to park in an "improved area" without actually using the improved area.

The Cerro Alto campground near slo is a perfect example of this. Unless FS sees ones using amenities they should go kick rocks.

COMMENT 714692 [A](#) [H](#) [N](#) [O](#)

2016-07-06 09:03 AM

Most of the parking at trailheads is paved, will I be hassled for parking near a trailhead? Seems it will be difficult to keep the program running to support the amenities unless the camping fees cover it.

I don't mind chipping in every few years to resurface the parking, especially since one doesn't have the option at most trailheads off Paradise to park in the dirt. As a backpacker, I find more amenities usually lead to more trash and loud partying in the camp area.

RHS [A](#) [H](#) [N](#) [O](#)

2016-07-06 10:16 AM

So what is the opinion of commentators about the TSA Pre Check system that charges you \$85 to get faster access through airport security? We are seeing a lot of public systems go elitist as the conservative business model politicians impose the idea that egalitarian sharing is old fashioned. Let the plebs stand in line, those with money can go first. There are other examples as well. Like the proposal to stop US mail delivery in out of area places leaving these folks dependent on expensive private companies.

COMMENT 714736 [A](#) [H](#) [N](#) [O](#)

2016-07-06 11:33 AM

Everyone knows those tickets were worthless right?

I got 1 evey couple weeks from riding my mtb back there. Used them for tp.

COMMENT 714509 

2016-07-06 02:22 PM

736 you probably have multiple warrants for your arrest and don't even know it.

COMMENT 714827 

2016-07-06 08:44 PM

Any time the government rolls out a program with name as cutesy as "Adventure Pass", beware! Did they hire an ad agency on this one? Probably it's nothing new, from wars to health care, it's all about the packaging and the sale.

And the politicians wonder why we're cynical, skeptical, and pretty much any other cal you can think of? Duh.