

Adventure Pass Clears Final Hurdle

By Mike Harris, Associate Editor | Posted: Thursday, July 14, 2016 6:00 am

The federal government's controversial Adventure Pass fee program will stay in effect for developed sites within the San Bernardino National Forest.

Following a settlement reached by plaintiffs and the U.S. Forest Service, a District Court has vacated a 2014 ruling that affected the U.S. Forest Service's ability to enforce recreation fees at standard amenity recreation fee sites in the Los Padres, Angeles, San Bernardino and Cleveland National Forests in Southern California.

Under terms of the settlement, the Forest Service will be able to require an Adventure Pass—fees are \$5 for a day or \$30 for an annual pass—for visitors who use developed sites.

The key in determining if a Forest Service site requires the display of an Adventure Pass, or an Interagency Senior Pass, depends on whether the site has six amenities for visitors. The amenities include designated developed parking, interpretive signs, restroom facilities, picnic tables, garbage cans and security patrols.

Along Highway 18 developed sites where an Adventure Pass would be required include Baylis Park and Crest Park picnic areas, and the Heaps Peak Arboretum trailhead. Another example of a developed site where the Adventure Pass would be required is Splinters Cabin trailhead in Lake Arrowhead.

The exception to the requirement would be if you have parked your vehicle at a developed site such as Baylis Park picnic area, but remain inside the vehicle. If you step outside onto park property, however, you would need an Adventure Pass.

Under terms of the settlement, if you have parked your vehicle and are outside of the car, the Forest Service can have the expectation that you are there to use the amenities found at the site.

Al Colby, public service staff officer with the Forest Service, said plans are in the works to post signs within the Forest Service system informing the public they are within a fee area. Additionally, plans are in the works to also post signs in English and Spanish stating that parked vehicles must display a valid recreation pass.

With the settlement having been reached, and the lifting of the District Court's ruling, the Forest Service plans to add a map to the San Bernardino National Forest website showing areas where an Adventure Pass would be required. The map could be in place around Labor Day.

The Forest Service will be enforcing the Adventure Pass requirements once the proper signage is in place. Initial enforcement efforts will be to educate the public that the pass and associated fees are required for developed areas that offer the six amenities.

The majority of the recreation fees collected stay on the forest and go right back into operating, maintaining and improving the recreational opportunities visitors use and value the most—campgrounds, developed day use sites, boat ramps, trails, rental cabins and lookouts, and much more.

In 2014, for example, recreation fees amounted to \$876,883 for the San Bernardino National Forest. Of that, \$817,570 came from Adventure Pass fees.

Funds are also used to provide enhanced services such as interpretive programs, visitor information and transportation systems, the Forest Service said.



Baylis Park

Following a settlement reached between hikers and the Forest Service, with one exception developed areas such as the Baylis Park picnic area will require a vehicle to display an Adventure Pass to avoid getting a citation.