New Forest Fees

By BW Staff

Don't forget your wallet this summer when you go camping in the Boise National Forest.

Forest officials have asked for user fees at 12 campgrounds, two cabin sites and one boat ramp, ranging from $12 to $15. This is in addition to already approved fee increases of $1 to $6 at 36 other sites.

David Olsen, spokesman for the Boise National Forest, said the fees help pay for upkeep. Future plans call for fees at an additional seven sites, but those won't take effect this year.

"The primary interest is to try to use the funding for the cost of maintenance of the facility," Olsen said.

Jim Keller, in charge of recreation for the Boise National Forest, said 95 percent of fees go back to the area they were collected for things like cleaning bathrooms and fire pits. The other 5 percent is used for larger projects across the forest, including picnic tables and water systems.

User fees on public lands have been controversial for years, with many arguing that they already pay for the facilities through tax dollars. But forest managers across the country point to increased use and reduced federal budgets.

U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo is co-sponsoring a bill that would remove access fees but preserve those for campground usage.

This current round of fees has been presented to the Bureau of Land Management Resource Advisory Council, which will give the regional forester a final recommendation in May. A decision should follow soon after.

The fee increases will not affect the Payette River fee program.

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