A proposal for charging fees at the West Tensleep parking area has been pulled from the federal register but according to Powder River District Ranger Mark Booth, the removal is only temporary.

“This gives us a chance to make proper changes to the wording in an effort to avoid potential legal conflict,” Booth said. “Basically the only difference between the old proposal and the new one is that the fee will be listed as a site amenity fee instead of a parking fee as was originally proposed. It will probably be back up there soon.”

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act enacted in 2004 allows the forest service to charge “standard amenity recreation fees” in areas that contain developed parking, permanent toilet facilities, trash receptacles, interpretive signs and picnic tables. It does not allow the fee to be charged for parking.

But Booth added that regardless of what the fee is named, the impact will be the same with people being charged $10 per vehicle per day to utilize the parking area located 30 miles west of Buffalo and acts as an access point to Cloud Peak, the tallest peak in the Big Horn Range, Bomber Mountain and several pristine alpine fishing lakes.

In previous interviews, Booth said that the justification for the fee is the popularity, and subsequent demand of the area that sees between 9,000 and 10,000 vehicles a year.

“’The necessity is the deferred maintenance and the yearly annual operation and maintenance costs at the most heavily-used trailhead on the Bighorn National Forest,” he said. “Our hope is to prevent this high-use, high-demand trailhead from having a negative impact on the services and standard maintenance at other developed recreation sites.’”

And to Booth the action isn’t that much of a novelty.

"When you think about it, it’s no different than the amenities that are provided at campgrounds and the fact that we charge people to camp,” Booth said.

The national register can be viewed online at www.regulations.justia.com/view.