

As long-time residents of New Mexico and a regular State park user, the opportunity to offer comments on the proposed fee changes is appreciated. We live in Albuquerque and drive to Ute Lake on weekends when we can with our children. The State Park Rangers at Ute Lake are professional and well-respected. We have a boat in dry storage at the lake.

My husband and I attended the meeting on March 12th at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park and appreciated the additional information provided and the professional manner in which the presentation and comments were received. Thank you.

The discussion came up that New Mexico has one of the lowest Median Incomes in the nation. You presented a graph that indicated that New Mexico State Park rates should be in line with our neighboring states. Your idea to charge a premium for our out of state guests is one solution, but also keeping a reasonable lower rate for locals seems prudent. Below are the slides you presented for state comparison.

Fee Comparisons With Surrounding State Park Systems

DAY USE FEE COMPARISONS		
State	Day Use Pass Fee	Notes
New Mexico	\$5/vehicle	New Mexico's parks all charge the same day use fee (Except Rio Grande Nature Center and Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Parks)
Arizona	\$7-\$30/vehicle; \$2-\$30/individual or bicyclist	Each of Arizona's parks has different entrance fees. Many parks use dynamic pricing, differentiating between high and low seasons, child vs. adult fees, and vehicle vs. individual/bicyclist fees. The highest fee is charged for guided cave tours.
Colorado	\$10/vehicle; \$4 individual or bicyclist	Colorado differentiates between vehicle day passes and individual day passes, as well as charging slightly higher prices for certain parks to cover administrative fees.
Nevada	\$5-\$10/vehicle \$10-\$15/vehicle non-Nevada Vehicle; \$2 individual or bicyclist	Nevada differentiates between vehicle day passes and individual day passes, as well as charging higher prices for certain parks with specific amenities. Nevada charges higher fees for out of state vehicles typically 1.5-2x the price of an in-state vehicle.
Texas	\$2-\$8/person	Texas charges per person, rather than per vehicle, and uses dynamic pricing at many of its parks.
Utah	\$5-\$15 per vehicle; \$2-\$35 per individual or bicyclist	Utah differentiates between vehicle day passes and individual day passes, as well as charging higher prices for non-residents at certain parks and having dynamic pricing with different prices for certain parks with specific amenities and during different times of the year.

Fee Comparisons With Surrounding State Park Systems

PRIMITIVE CAMPING FEE COMPARISONS		
State	Primitive Camping Fee	Notes
New Mexico	\$8/night	The fee is charged per vehicle.
Arizona	\$15-\$25/night	Arizona's primitive camping fee varies by park and is for one vehicle. Additional vehicles are charged at \$15/vehicle.
Colorado	\$14-\$18/night	Colorado's primitive camping fee varies by park and is charged in addition to the park entrance fee.
Nevada	\$15-\$18/night	Nevada's primitive camping fee varies by park
Texas	\$5-\$15/night	Texas charges \$10 for 'dry' campsites, with no water and no other utilities in addition to the park entrance fee.
Utah	\$10-\$15/night	Most Utah campsites are developed in some way.

Fee Comparisons With Surrounding State Park Systems

DEVELOPED CAMPING FEE COMPARISONS

State	Developed Camping Fee	Notes
New Mexico	\$10/night	The fee is charged per vehicle. There is an additional \$4 fee each for electricity and sewer hookups, where available.
Arizona	\$15-\$50/night for developed campsites; \$35-\$139/night for cabins	Arizona's developed camping fee varies by park and level of amenities offered and has a reservation surcharge of \$5.
Colorado	\$22-\$41/night	Colorado's developed camping fee varies by park and level of amenities offered. All camping must be reserved. Camping fees are in addition to entrance fees.
Nevada	\$14-\$30/night	Nevada charges an additional \$15 per vehicle at the campsite.
Texas	\$12-\$25/night	Texas' developed camping fee varies by park, level of amenity, and time of year. Campers must also pay a daily use fee per person.
Utah	\$15-\$40/night; up to \$350/night for yurts, group reservations, etc.	Most Utah campsites are developed in some way.

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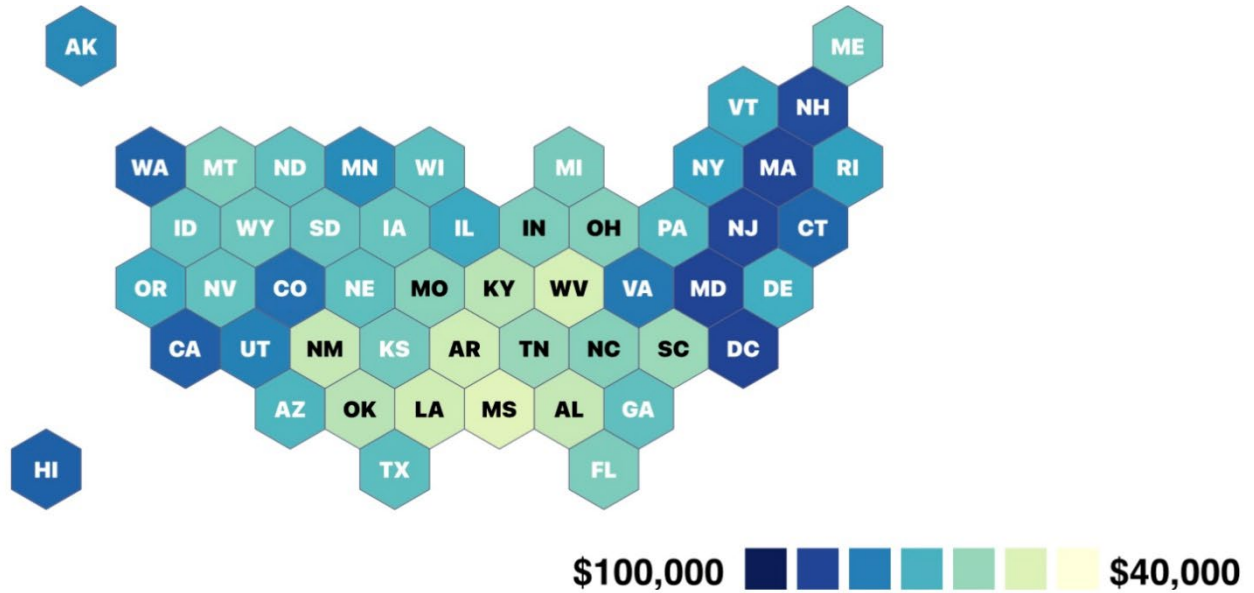
Example of Current vs. Proposed Fees

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John Smith takes his family camping to Caballo Lake State Park. They stay in an electric site with a water hook up for three days. What's it going to cost John for the weekend?

STATE	FEE
Colorado	\$133.46
Texas	\$150.00
Arizona	\$123.20
Utah	\$188.00
New Mexico	\$150.00

The piece you did not tie out was the commensurate affordability for our lower income residents. Below are the median incomes by states you referenced as our peers.



(<http://Kff.org>)

New Mexico –	\$53,992	
Arizona –	\$69,056	28% higher income
Colorado -	\$82,254	52% higher income
Nevada -	\$66,274	23% higher income
Texas -	\$66,963	24% higher income
Utah -	\$79,449	47% higher income

So, as a minimum, the state fee comparisons should take into account the above income disparity for residents.

Although the below comments pertain – we will summarize additional recommendations based on the constructive request at the meeting.

1. Recommend that the Day use fee remains at \$5 per vehicle for residents. (Or, even increase this to \$6-\$8 per vehicle per day, since this would not be a hardship for anyone who has spent gas money and time to enjoy the Parks). Agree with your recommendation of slightly higher \$10 for non-resident day use.
2. Primitive camping. Do not eliminate primitive camping, but increase the fee from \$8 per night to \$12 per night (this is a 150% increase, but only \$4 per night increase). Instead of \$16 for the weekend it will increase to \$24 for the weekend. This makes camping affordable for the significant population of lower income residents in New Mexicans.
3. Developed camping – agree with the increase from \$10 per night to \$20 per night.
4. Utilities – Would recommend an increase from \$4 to \$10 but this increase should both water and electric. Not an additional \$20 on top of the \$20 per night camping fee.
5. Dump station fee – we would not charge for the dump station as this is a behavior that we would like to encourage.
6. Annual day-use pass. We would not eliminate this pass and it is a pass for convenience and also saves the Park Rangers time in collecting monies at the gates. This fee could easily be increased to \$60 per year, however, if you are encouraging day use – you may want to leave it at \$40.
7. Annual camping pass. We would not eliminate this pass as we heard from many at the meeting – it would make it prohibitive for many lower income New Mexicans to use the State Parks. However, we would increase the fees.
 - a. NM Resident, currently at \$180 – we would increase this to \$350 per year and limit the number of camping nights to 35 nights total for the year.
 - b. NM Resident, senior and disabled, currently at \$100 – we would increase this to \$250 per year and limit the number of camping nights to 35 nights total for the year.
 - c. Out-of-State Resident, currently at \$225 – we would increase this to \$450 per year and limit the number of camping nights to 35 nights total for the year.
 - d. Replacement pass, currently \$10 – we would increase to \$20.
8. Living Desert Entrance Fee – We agree with your proposed increases.
9. Vessel Registration fees – for a 3-year period. Proposed increases are over 250%. We recommend doubling the fees and adding an additional class of non-motorized vessels.
 - a. Class A, less than 16' – Current \$28.50, proposed \$83.67. Recommend: \$57.
 - b. Class 1: 16' to less than 26', current \$36, proposed \$105.69. Recommend \$72.
 - c. Class II: 26' to less than 40', current \$43.50, proposed \$122.70. Recommend \$87.
 - d. Class III: 40' to less than 65', current \$51, proposed \$149.73. Recommend \$102.
 - e. Add a Class B?: non-motorized vessels – you'll need to define – as you would like to include canoes, kayaks, etc. (however you were going to define the launch fee vehicles perhaps). Recommend \$30 for a 3-year period.
10. Vessel launch fee – you recommend \$5 per car for launching all non-motorized vessels. As individuals stated in the meeting, there are many residents that kayak several times a week and this would be excessive and would discourage a healthy opportunity to get outdoors, exercise, etc. Instead of a launch fee, we would recommend that you add an additional class of non-motorized vessels to the boat registrations.

Some support for the above recommendations:

First, please do not eliminate the primitive camping. It is unclear if the primitive camping option is going to be eliminated, or, if the new policy recommends that families camping in the primitive areas will be charged the same fees as those utilizing developed sites. The increase from \$8 per night to \$20 per night seems a bit excessive (250% increase), for those trying to manage their reduced service camping expenses.

Primitive camping is often the first choice for:

New Mexicans without the funds for the developed sites,

Individuals who want to camp a little further from the noise and general commotion in the campgrounds (sometimes those with physical/emotional issues who might choose to be alone in the beauty of the State Park).

New Mexicans that are in tents or vehicles that don't require the need for electric or water.

Second, please continue to charge for the residential day use. The \$5 (per vehicle) fee is VERY affordable for every New Mexican. It does not deter the families within the State from enjoying the State Parks. If you are going to have an Out-of-State fee, you are still needing to have employees manning the booths and collecting revenues. It seems that it would be advantageous to continue to generate this revenue. In addition, the annual day use pass is reasonably priced and offers the convenience of not having park staff have to stop and collect money on a daily basis, and affords New Mexicans living near a State Park the ability to take advantage of the Park on an affordable regular basis.

Third, I'm not clear why we would charge for the dump stations. We have never been to an area where we pay for camping and have to pay to dump your vehicle. From all our travels, not even the National Parks charge for campers to dump their RVs. I would think we would want to encourage individuals to use the dump stations versus dump in the mesa or other unauthorized areas, which would require extra effort on park staff to clean up random dumpings. The State of New Mexico has closed most of the dump stations in the rest areas and it seems that this would be a service to New Mexicans that we would want to continue and encourage.

Finally, it was brought up in the meeting that the State Parks should seek additional funding to cover expenses from the state funds. Everyone in the meeting felt that they would be willing to support this type effort and write to our state leadership in support of such a proposal. If you took into account the above recommendations and still had a shortfall of funding, you could enlist public support (meeting attendees and other state residents) to lobby our state representative to champion this additional funding.

Should we plan on forwarding this to our legislators at this time, or wait for your staff to make some adjustments in advance of any submissions?

Thank you,

Armand and Pam Losinski