

From: [Beth Buck](#)
To: [emnrd-parkscomments, EMNRD](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Rule Changes/Fee Amendments
Date: Monday, March 18, 2024 7:11:42 PM

CAUTION: This email originated outside of our organization. Exercise caution prior to clicking on links or opening attachments.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Beth Buck** <shanebeth2@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Mar 18, 2024 at 8:05 PM
Subject: Rule Changes/Fee Amendments
To: <ENMRD-ParksComments@emnrd.nm.gov>
Cc: <JaredR.Langenegger@emnrd.nm.gov>

Dear Jared and Fellow Committee Members,

We have seen the notice of fees changes and watched the video of the virtual meeting. We would like to make a few comments and suggestions.

We are Canadian Snowbirds and we have enjoyed camping in New Mexico for many years. We love all of the outdoor activities that New Mexico has to offer and staying in your parks allows us the opportunity to enjoy them.

We spend a month in Florida State Parks, a few weeks in Texas State Parks and almost 2 months in New Mexico State Parks each winter/spring. We have also spent time in Arizona and Utah. So we have a fairly good idea of how things compare. For 4 years, we have made use of the Annual Camping Pass. While it is a great deal which we would hate to lose, we agree wholeheartedly that the fees need to be increased in NM State Parks. However, based on our observations which we will share with you, we feel that your proposed fees do not compare well with the states we have camped in.

Beginning in February 2024, we camped in 3 state parks in Florida for a total of 31 days for a total cost of \$925. Eight days were spent at a campsite with full services (Water/Electric/Sewer); the remaining campsites were (W/E). Florida charges \$7 a night for electricity which has been included in our total. If we spent 31 days at your parks, under the proposed fee schedule, it would cost us \$1320. We spent 8 days in Texas at 4 state parks (2 nights of which were full-service) for a total cost of \$211, which includes the cost of our Texas State Park Pass(\$70) . Without the pass it would have cost \$280. Based on your new fee schedule, it would have cost us \$340. We are also staying 2 nights in Arizona for a total of \$60. New Mexico's new fees would be \$80. None of these campgrounds charge for pump out. This year we are spending \$405 for 45 days of camping in New Mexico (\$225 Annual Camping Pass + \$4/ night electrical charge). Yes, an amazing deal! However, next year this would cost us \$1800!!! Admittedly we stay here longer because it is economical. However, if the new fee schedule passes, we won't spend as much time here.

As you can see there would be a fairly significant difference in fees. However, we have to point out that in our opinion, the services provided in all of the state parks we visited this year were far superior to the services provided here in New Mexico. The campsites that we stayed

in all had heated/cooled restrooms and showers, all of which were very well maintained and cleaned thoroughly on a daily basis. In comparison, we find NM facilities lacking in all of the above, which we understand may, in part be, the result of understaffing and lack of funding. For example, here at Leasburg, several taps, shower heads, and toilets don't work properly. At Elephant Butte there is, at present, one restroom with running water and showers for the entire 3 campgrounds and primitive campers. On windy days the facilities at both of these parks are often too cold to have a shower. These services are extremely important to us, and many others like us, who are camping in small trailers without bathrooms. If you expect us to pay considerably more to camp here, we are going to expect better quality of services.

We are also concerned about the proposal to charge fees to launch paddle craft. We do travel with a kayak and we have kayaked in all the parks where it is possible to do so. At no place have we been required to pay launching fees. If we spend 2 weeks at Elephant Butte and kayak often, as we usually do, we would be facing even more expense.

We have a few suggestions:

Based on our experience camping in multiple states, water/electric sites vary between \$20 and \$33 and therefore we feel your fees should not be more.

We also feel that some kind of camping pass should remain. We would be willing to pay much more for an Annual Camping Pass. Regardless, we feel you need some kind of a pass, possibly similar to a Texas Park Pass, which gives some discounts to encourage people to camp more often.

The day-use entry fee for non-residents should vary from park to park based on the activities available. The only state that charges an entry fee to campers, is Texas. But they offer the Park Pass which eliminates that fee and gives cheaper camping for the second night.

We have observed that other state park volunteers and hosts have more responsibilities such as cleaning the washrooms daily and cleaning vacated campsites. This gives the park staff time to do other jobs.

In our opinion the proposed fee changes are going to make it less likely for out of state people and snowbirds such as ourselves to stay a long time in New Mexico State Parks. Since most of us are here during your off-season, we don't feel that we are taking campsites away from residents. We truly feel that you may get fewer out-of-state campers which could be a significant loss to revenue. For instance, at the present time, we are camping at Leasburg Dam and there are only 2 New Mexico campers out of 25. The park employees told us that this is pretty much normal. So if we stopped coming, the state parks would experience a loss of revenue. We'd also like to point out that while staying in New Mexico this year we, personally, expect to spend between \$4000 and \$5000 on tourism-related activities, food, gas, restaurants, souvenirs etc. We expect other out-of-state snowbirds to spend the same and this must have a significant impact on the New Mexico economy. Hopefully you already use this information when requesting greater funds.

Summary:

Make camping fees reasonable

Don't charge launch fees for paddlecraft

Volunteers should help out with all services

Pump out should be free

Some type of park pass should be available

Day-use entry fee should not be charged to campers and should be relevant to the activities offered at each park

Fewer non-resident campers will use the parks

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to voice our concerns and suggestions. We hope to continue coming to New Mexico in the future.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth and Shane Buck