



**FRIENDS OF THE
ORGAN MOUNTAINS
— DESERT PEAKS —**

**To the New Mexico State Parks
1220 S St. Francis Dr., Ste. 215
Santa Fe, NM 87505**

The Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks submits the following comments for the New Mexico State Parks Fees Study and Recommendation. Friends of OMDP works to enrich our community and diverse cultures through advocacy, conservation and restoration of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument as a premier example of America's National Conservation Lands. The Friends of OMDP strives to better engage our borderland community on issues of conservation. We achieve this, along with our mission to enrich our community with the maintenance of public lands, by providing more opportunities for community members of different backgrounds to connect with public lands.

As an organization, we support the recommendations found by the New Mexico State Parks study. Friends of OMDP strives to improve our community's connection with their environment, and also improve their access to public lands. We view that eliminating the day-use for New Mexico residents is improving access to these incredible natural spaces. Costs are so often a barrier for many families, so by eliminating them we make significant gains in providing equitable access to our state parks.

Our state parks currently are primarily used by out-of-state users for overnight camping. The majority of overnight stays are 2-3 nights. For these reasons we support an increase in overnight camping fees. We view that these recommendations will encourage more New Mexicans to use our state parks while capitalizing on out-of-state users who have primarily benefited from our natural resources these past years. The proposed fees line up with neighboring states and match the value we feel our state parks provide.

While in a general sense we support the idea of a yearly pass, we also recognize that how this program is currently being managed has had a negative impact on our parks

as well as our visitors' recreational experiences. We recognize that eliminating this program could help resolve this issue, we also know that this will impact many of our current users and longtime users of the year long pass. In the interest of making the needed changes to this program, we encourage state parks to develop alternatives to the elimination of the year pass.

Regarding the fees for boating, vessel registration, and dump stations. We support these increases as well.

We recognize the need for state parks to have more resources to manage their parks. Post pandemic we are seeing increased visitation to all of our outdoor spaces, and this visitation, while welcomed and encouraged, has impacts on our land. Our land management agencies are in dire need of increased resources to manage these impacts. While we recognize the short term increases will have impacts, we also know that in the long term we need to better resource our land management partners as they manage these lands for future generations.

We are grateful to the New Mexico State Parks for pursuing this study, and support the division's efforts to improve access to our public lands and our state parks.

Please do not hesitate to reach out for support in the southern New Mexico area.

All the best,

Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
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