

Jared Langenegger,

My name is Howard Orgass, and I live in Logan, NM within approximately ½ mile from Ute Lake SP. I am writing in response to the proposed fee increases to our New Mexico State Parks. My family has been camping and utilizing these facilities throughout the state for over 50 years, and do so currently with our grown children, grandchildren and many other family members and friends, I recently attended your recent virtual meeting on March 6, 2024, and was shocked by the unbelievable cost increases you discussed. My wife and I listened very carefully and took many notes on the subjects you presented. I sympathize with the fiscal funding deficit our parks are facing, but I think the proposed fee increases will exacerbate the problem. You kept reiterating that it is not your intention to discourage visitors from enjoying our parks, but that will be the obvious consequence if these fees are raised overnight on July 1, 2024.

My recommendations and explanations/arguments are as follows, and I would seriously appreciate you considering them, so we will not be forced to camp more frequently in Tx, Ok, and Co.

Although you included in your PowerPoint presentation copies of neighboring state's fees, it was an unfair comparison because of inaccurate information, facilities and park personnel available. One example that jumped out was your fees that you claimed were "actual costs" for Cedar Hill State Park in Tx. We camped there from Oct. 18, 24 until Oct 23, 24 at site #317 which had electricity and water hookups, and were charged \$22.50 per night for everything, including the free use of any of their dumping stations. This price reflected a \$12.50 cent per day gate entrance fee and camping discount since we had purchased their \$70.00 annual Texas State parks pass, which you also said was only available in 4 states nationwide. I have a printed copy of this receipt if you would like a copy.

Dropping the resident day use pass from \$5.00 to free and losing \$862,500.00 is a big mistake. Leave these daily gate fees for New Mexicans alone and continue to offer the annual day use pass for \$40.00 and keep that \$295,000.00 revenue. Charging \$10.00 per vehicle for non-residents will bring in an additional \$575,000.00 according to your chart. Those 3 figures equal \$1,732,000.00 for your budget (according to your figures at your presentation).

I think that changing the current camping fee of \$10.00 and \$5.00 for electricity and water with no charge for dumping sewage to doubling the camp fee to \$20.00 and quadrupling the daily cost of electric and water to an additional \$10.00 each and another \$10.00 to dump is ridiculous! That is a proposed 333% increase in cost per night to camp. From \$15.00 to \$50.00 per night. I know that I cannot afford that price on my fixed income and have been told by many other people that they will probably be forced to stop camping in NM.

My proposal would be to charge out of state residents your proposed \$20.00 camping fee (since they do not contribute to our general fund contribution), charge \$15.00 for NM residents and charge \$12.50 per night for senior citizens, veterans or disabled people from our state. I realize this will require an extra burden on your reservation service (Reserve America) but I think a one-time proof of ID or disability sent to them and entered in their system would automatically apply any applicable discounts. I also understand your points about annual camping passes being abused by people parking their equipment in a premium spot to reserve it, thus restricting others from camping there, but please consider increasing that fee to \$250.00 for New Mexicans and \$200.00 for senior citizens, etc. No annual passes for camping will be issued to out of state residents.

Increasing the electricity/water usage charge by 400% also seems extremely unreasonable. Please consider an increase from the current charge of \$5.00 for both to \$7.50 with possible \$1.00 incremental increases every 3 years.

No fees should be charged for dumping grey or black water at the appropriate stations for currently paid camping people. Charge a fee if necessary to dumpers traveling through without camping overnight. Ute Lake State Park had 2 dumping in previous years but one has been permanently closed. I realize it is expensive to maintain the equipment, maintenance and personnel for these facilities and to construct new ones, but this should be required by our legislature to provide more funding for these services, since I'm sure the environmental requirements they have passed are a big reason for increased costs. None of our surrounding states charge a fee for dumping waste.

Do not raise our boat and watercraft registration fees by 272% overnight. You stated that these fees are used to fund boater safety courses, but I think that you should make those mandatory for young people piloting on the water and charge them a fee to cover the cost. Even though you said our registrations have not increased since 1984, to almost triple the price at once is not reasonable. Increase the cost 25% every 3 years. This will soften the blow to the purses of many of us that have older paid for boats and struggle with our own maintenance and fuel costs.

Do not charge a daily launching fee for kayaks, canoes, small paddle and pedal boats. They require very little resources to enjoy a little quiet, clean and healthy entertainment on our lakes and streams. Consider a sticker attached to their craft that would have a minimal cost such as \$25.00 for 3 years. That new small craft loading dock at Sugarite State Park is a nice addition but perhaps a small donation system to offset the costs could be arranged.

Thank you for reading my long list of my proposed fee structure and submitting it for consideration.

Sincerely, Howard Orgass

hmorgass@plateautel.net