

**From:** [HY Liu](#)  
**To:** [emnrd-parkscomments, EMNRD](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] New Mexico State Parks Fees Study  
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Thank you for soliciting public input on recommendations from your Fees Study. We love our state parks! Every time we visit other states, we bemoan the fact that their parks offer so much less for much higher costs. Still, we understand that our own parks need to make enough money to keep them open and operating. My main advice is to be careful and thoughtful in tweaking the fee structure, in order not to turn off either established or new visitors.

Below are my thoughts regarding the study's specific recommendations:

- Elimination of day-use fees for New Mexico residents
  - Although this would be a generous bonus for residents, I believe it may be more effective to keep the normal per-vehicle day-use fee at \$5. There is often a bias that when something is free, it's probably not worth the trouble.
  - Perhaps an alternative approach could be a specific free day each week for residents, like they do at the museums; or, maybe even a free week every month.
- Implementation of a non-resident day-use fee
  - Since a per-vehicle day-use fee is already in place, I would just increase it for non-residents (maybe \$8). That should cover the costs of any free days offered to residents.
- Eliminating Annual Passes
  - I can support elimination of annual day use passes. But, PLEASE, do not do away with the annual camping passes. Not only do we (as senior residents) rely on the savings provided by the camping pass, we know many out-of-state people who camp in New Mexico parks specifically because of the camping pass.
  - Since elimination of day-use fees is already under consideration, I would suggest offering free day-use entrance for resident holders of annual camping passes, whether they are camping or not.
- Adjusting camping and utility fees
  - From what we have seen in other states, our camping fees are definitely priced too low. With the scarcity of water in our state, a fee for water would not be unreasonable. Just adding a fee for water would bump the price up for most developed sites.
  - One thing to avoid is the imposition of entrance / parking fees on top of camping fees. That, more than price, has been a major complaint among campers about other state park systems.

- As you study camping fees, please take time to analyze your contract with ReserveAmerica. They are not perceived positively by campers and their fees are almost at the level of price gouging. There is absolutely no reason for a reservation fee to be based on the number of nights; no other industry does that. Our personal experience with ReserveAmerica was also soured by their conduct during the pandemic; they refused to refund reservation fees whenever parks closed down. As a result, we lost more than \$100 in reservation fees because we always planned and booked multi-months camping trips in advance.
- Adjusting boat registration and launching fees
  - We are not boaters and cannot offer first-hand insights. However, acquaintances who boat have always mentioned the low fees in New Mexico.
- Adjusting entrance fees at Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park and Smokey Bear Historical Park
  - The entrance fees should be consistent with day-use fees. But, it may be enticing to have a multi-day pass. For example, \$5 for one day; \$10 for three days; and \$15 for a full week.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Herman Y Liu