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To: [emnrd-parkscomments, EMNRD](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] park fees comments...
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Comments about park fee increase proposals

Who am I? Jim Wagner, 75, retired. Live in Albuquerque.

I challenge and quibble with the proposal to hike fees at what I consider to be a drastic rate on July 1, 2024. Over the past 15 years, my wife and I have spent scores of nights at state parks in an RV. We have visited about half of the 35. A few are wonderful. A few have not seen a “fresh coat of paint” in decades, it seems, and thus we would not return.

First, and especially significant, I want to point out that the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, created in 2023, has a hoped-for kitty of \$350 million, some of which is to be spent on state parks. This year, 2024, some \$50 million of that fund is to be spent. Information I found online says the fund is to be used “for outdoor recreation and infrastructure.” The intent of the fund is to grow the state’s “outdoor recreation economy.” Knowing such information – that such a huge sum of money exists for state parks -- one might even suggest that the state eliminate park use fees. Of course, that won’t happen.

Recently, I booked four nights at RV site No. 9 at Villanueva State Park. The total fee was \$28, which included the park fee and the Reserve America fee of \$12. Based on how I interpret the proposed new fee structure, the park fee for four nights would be \$200, which includes \$20 for a campsite per night and \$10 for water per night, \$10 for electric per night, and \$10 per day to dump wastewater. That’s an increase of more than 700%. I also suspect that those figures online are not accurate.

Today, dumping wastewater is free. A fee to do so, I fear, would encourage some campers to depart with full tanks of wastewater – and finding an isolated spot along a road somewhere and dumping. Also, will there be a padlock on the lid of the dumpsite? Who would have a key? Who will collect this fee? If you believe collecting a fee at a park entrance is time consuming, etc., I can imagine the challenge of collecting a poop fee. Nightmare.

The fact that only four states, according to information from EMNRD, offer an annual camping pass is not reason to eliminate New Mexico’s pass. That argument is not defensible. I interpret the ACP as a measure offered for New Mexico that is a wonderful financial benefit to its residents that most other states do not offer. I pay \$100 for such a pass, as I have for years. As for what the state calls “regional parity,” please do not use that argument when trying to explain why fees must go up. This is a financially poor state.

Is there a list of improvements envisioned for each state park? And a timeline for doing the work? If yes, where can I see it? If not, there should be. Also, what percentage of new fees would go to administrative expenses? And how much to the parks?

Were campers and others users of state parks surveyed at the parks to learn if they would continue using the parks as often if the fees to do so doubled or tripled? I suspect not. Also, if the comments you are receiving via email and at the public

meetings are overwhelmingly opposed to the drastically higher fees proposed, will they be re-examined? Or ignored?

Some RV owners do indeed live in state parks, fulltime. Existing rules say one may spend a maximum of 14 days at a campsite. Then the person must vacate the site. This measure is not enforced rigorously, based on my observations. Should this not be a law enforcement issue, carried out by the park rangers who patrol our parks? Again, our parks are for recreation, not for semipermanent residency.

Why eliminate the day-use fee? It's a mere \$5. Is there data that shows that park use would go up, or down, if park entry was free?

Campsite cancellation fees are too high. I realize that is a Reserve America issue. If that is your defense for its high fees, that too is not defensible. I also believe that when the state negotiates its contract with Reserve America, it can demand changes. Some states do not charge for a cancellation.

What about reduced-rate camping fees for senior citizens? I'm one. I live on Social Security. We appreciate discounts. Was this issue discussed? If so, who said what? Names please?

Does the state have data that show that the low-flow showerheads installed at state parks do indeed reduce water use? Those showerheads are akin to a punishment. The mist they create is cold when it hits the skin. I stand in the shower perhaps twice as long as I would with a higher flowing showerhead.

Thank you.