

**From:** [John Ebert](#)  
**To:** [emnrd-parkscomments, EMNRD](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fee Study Comments from a non-resident camper  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 21, 2024 8:43:58 PM

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

I am a 72 years of age male with a gross annual income of approximately \$28450, with approximately \$7279 in unavoidable expenses, leaving a discretionary remainder of about \$21,171. I annually travel from Minnesota to either Florida, Texas, New Mexico or Arizona for about 180 days within a winter season ranging anywhere from Sept.15th to April 15th. This year 2024 is my second New Mexico State Park Annual Camping Pass entirely applied in the Caballo, Percha and Elephant Butte State Park facilities. My 113 day receipts up to February 17th show expenditures within the parks fees and the local economy of Elephant Butte and Truth Or Consequences of \$2020, or about \$18 a day. I estimate I'll remain in this area for a maximum of 160 days this winter season so I estimate spending \$2880 in the local economy for the first part of 2024. The Parks Fee Study states 398 non-resident Annual Camping Passes purchased, so by extension, if all non-resident winter pass holders spent at my rate of \$18 a day, we added \$1,146,240 value to the community in 160 days. I enjoy recreational camping 365 days a year. For me, there is nothing about my activities that fit the description in the Fee Study of non-recreational dwelling in state parks. In fact, some of my camping also takes place on public BLM primitive camping areas. I move around often. I only reserved 1 electric/water site for 14 days this season, the remainder has been primitive dry camping and I consume about 1 gallons of water a day from the park. It can't be said I as a winter season camper made it a hardship for others to reserve a site either, where reservations hardships and resources consumption are arguments used in the Fee Study.

Camping in one place gets boring! The best part of it is when I meet other people. I meet plenty of persons coming south to escape northern winters that are not survivable by houseless persons living the Homes On Wheels lifestyle. I do it partially by choice and partially by necessity. My life is entirely a Homes On Wheels life and so must become a 'Solar Gypsy' and follow the sun cycle like migratory birds do. I like it as a lifestyle choice and it also helps me financially as a low income person. I know I am nowhere a low income person compared to some fellow campers, some of whom I've met are residents of New Mexico. For some of our Annual Camping Pass campers the cost of even a month of electric site reservations in the cold nights of February are a stretch of their means, and as soon as the nights rise above freezing they stop reservations and go back to primitive dry camping. And it is a witnessed fact, some never leave primitive camping no matter how cold February is, but they do follow the 14 day rule without fail.

I would like to propose the New Mexico Parks recognize they have 2 populations of camping consumers and frame fees policies accordingly. The Long Term Visitors Area of BLM in Arizona has a 7 month season pass for \$180 from September 15th to April 15th. It includes water, dumpster and waste water dump stations. Hot showers are \$1 by token for 7 minutes. Something like that would work for Winter Season primitive camping in New Mexico, and the cost of the pass is negotiable because the camper community wants to see New Mexico State Parks viable economically but termination of the pass is a complete deal breaker. By splitting the policy into Summer and Winter plans, you will retain the 398 non-resident winter campers which you will otherwise witness not returning for Winter 2025 with the proposed termination of the Annual Camping Pass.

Please take note of the first person camper narrative I next report told to me in person by a local summer camper. You will see why I know New Mexico State Parks has two different camping consumers with very different camping behaviors. The story goes like this, while discussing that I camp at the State Park, the other person told me they bring their 5th wheel to the beach in the summer, and their buddies bring theirs also, and they 'corral up' nose to tail in an area. One of the rigs is even from Albuquerque and they will move it for their buddy if he can't make it down on 'moving day.' They don't always occupy the rigs, but leave them for 14 days and then to 'satisfy' they free'd up the site, they shuffle the rigs 200 feet nearby, which of course I know is not correct behavior. I was told that's how you get around having to go to other parks. I don't agree or would do that. I have not seen anyone do this from the Winter Campers. That's just not how non-resident winter campers roll, and few of us even have 'buddies' we would bunch up with like that anyway. From this true life narrative you can understand how I know you have two camping populations each with their differing behaviors. Policy needs to address the opportunities and risks of one season policy versus two season realities, or not maximize fees and fail to fulfill your mission to many campers, especially non-resident winter campers as well as low income persons trying to survive the cold season.

I've heard and read numerous times people wishing New Mexico had a Long Term Visitors Area (LTVA) system like Arizona has. The closest thing to it has been the fabulous New Mexico State Parks system, and it has the best reputation for camping in the nation in general.

Please develop some amendments to the Fee Study options that propose a Winter Season Pass that is along the lines of the Arizona LTVA while setting fees high enough to keep the New Mexico park system healthy while not outright eliminating a camping demographic which the current study options will do. Another option is you could even evaluate that northern New Mexico Parks not be have winter passes but warmer southern parks would. If the policy becomes enacted as brain stormed in the study, I sincerely anticipate you will not only lose projected revenues proposed but also lose existing revenue because the majority of winter campers will re-route to competing opportunities like the Arizona LTVAs or a select few options in Texas that exist as well. Good luck, choose wisely.