

**From:** [Leslie Gurley](#)  
**To:** [emnrd-parkscomments](#), [EMNRD](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments on Fee Changes at New Mexico State Parks  
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Although I agree that the state parks need to increase the fees for use of the parks, I believe the recommended amounts are too high and put the onus for supporting the parks on overnight campers. Data that would have been helpful to us during the presentations would have been a breakdown on how many day-use visitors versus overnight campers use each of the existing NM parks annually.

#### Recommendation 1: No Day Fee

I disagree with this change. The \$5 daily fee per vehicle is dirt cheap and I do not believe it discourages use of the parks. I don't believe eliminating it will increase day use. Although the park officials gave the reason for the change being to increase accessibility, the study report states the reason is collecting and accounting for the fees is highly labor intensive. What happens if the severe increase in camping fees backfires and revenues decrease precipitously? The \$850K revenue from day fees will not be available to cover some of the shortfall.

I would recommend keeping the day fee. In addition, to introduce residents to the state parks, I suggest offering special free weekend day passes in which special events, such as kids fishing clinics, adult flyfishing instruction, guided hikes, educational seminars put on by Game and Fish, etc. be held to highlight what the parks have to offer.

I would also recommend keeping the annual day use pass, but the amount could be lowered and only available to NM residents.

#### Recommendation 2: Increase Daily Camping Fees

I do agree that the camping fees need to be adjusted for inflation, however the proposed 50% to 500% increase in camping fees will put camping out of reach for many families.

I also agree with eliminating the annual passes for the reasons given in the study.

However, I know that a lot of people are in opposition to elimination of the passes as they have enjoyed years of free camping/residency from this perk. Therefore, I would suggest that the parks consider an annual pass similar to the one for Texas residents where the day fees are waived and residents can get discounted camping fees. Non-residents would still be required to pay the full camping fee and a daily access fee.

I do not have an objection to the proposed increase in the camping fee, but \$20 on average per night for the utilities plus \$10 dump fee is extremely high for those using the developed campsites.

#### Recommendation 3: Dump Station Charge and Paddle Craft

I do not agree with this. I think dumping and personal watercraft should be included as part of the camping fee. Miscellaneous charges such as these will be seen as unjust and may lead to undesirable behavior such as dumping grey water at sites, or heaven forbid sewage! I know of no other state with a separate dump fee for paying overnight guests.

I also see the dump fee and paddle craft fees as unenforceable. When would you collect these fees? How would they be enforced? As stated in the study, the handling of these fees would be highly labor intensive and hard to collect since dump stations are not monitored. Paddle craft are not normally launched from the boat ramp but from the shore so extra manpower would be required to enforce this.

In addition, Toby Velasquez mentioned the state was doing a feasibility study to acquire additional land for parks. Is this a wise use of taxpayer money? Shouldn't the state be concentrating on improving the existing parks before adding more parks?

As a fourth generation New Mexican, I have enjoyed New Mexico state parks for over 40 years. My husband and I have held an annual pass for the majority of that time, but have not abused it. If the rates are adopted at the current proposed rate, I doubt we would continue to visit as often as we do. With rates as high as proposed, it would encourage us to look at other options, such as federal and private campgrounds, instead of the state parks.

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