

**From:** [Paige Oliverio](#)  
**To:** [emnrd-parkscomments](#), EMNRD  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Feedback on Proposed State Park Fee Changes  
**Date:** Friday, March 15, 2024 1:00:34 PM

---

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

Hello,

Thank you for your time and willingness to engage the public in conversations regarding proposed new State Park fees. I appreciate the effort to address long-overdue changes necessary for adequate staffing, facility improvements, and enhancing public access to outdoor resources—a defining aspect of New Mexico.

I also commend the recognition of the challenges faced by many low-income residents, whose access to vital outdoor resources could be hindered by even minimal fees.

However, I am concerned that the current proposal may have unintended negative consequences for both residents and non-residents. Having traveled to neighboring states for outdoor recreation, I've observed that New Mexico's State Park fees have traditionally been lower. While the proposed changes acknowledge this discrepancy, they fail to benchmark against neighboring states' fee structures, which may lead to dissatisfaction among visitors familiar with other state park systems.

Here are my line-by-line kudos, concerns, and suggestions.

**Day Use Resident** - I love that you're looking for ways to make this free for residents.

**Day Use Non - Resident** - \$10 per person aligns with other states.

**Primitive Camping** - \$20 per night for primitive camping seems disproportionately high compared to nearby states, where fees range from \$10 to \$15.

**Developed Camping** - Most nearby states charge \$20-\$25 for basic developed camping and up to \$35 for modern, improved sites with more amenities. Consider increasing this category to help offset the recommendation to keep your primitive camping rates reasonable. RV users put high demand and have a high impact on our State Parks, facilities, and the environment.

**Utilities** - \$10 per utility appears high, especially when paired with camping fee increases, and others. I can't recommend alternatives because I don't use these services. But people who do have expressed that these seem very high when stacked.

**Dump Station Fee** - I REALLY WORRY THAT CHARGING A HIGH DUMP FEE on top of all the others will cause people to start dumping illegally on the side of the road or in creeks and the National Forests. I've already seen people use forest and BLM land to dump their trash. I wouldn't put it past people to try and find a way to avoid paying \$10 for a dump fee. Please reconsider.

**Annual Day Use Pass** - PLEASE DO NOT ELIMINATE THIS!!! There are a lot of people who live part-time in NM and who don't have in-state licenses. Like me. Having an annual day

use pass allows me to fish, kayak, and hike daily when I am in NM for months at a time. Eliminating this option for non-residents who live in NM as their second home will cause hardship for many. For example, for me, if you were to adopt your proposed changes, I would end up paying \$200-\$300 per month for day use fees and periodic kayak or SUP launch fees. I'm generally in NM 4 months a year.

State Park passes exist for most states that charge fees at their state parks, and they're typically \$75 - \$85. So I would advocate for raising the price of the annual passes but NOT eliminating them. (Also, I can't speak for all states, but I know that Texas's and Colorado's annual day use pass is per vehicle, not per person, FYI.)

If you still want to eliminate annual day use passes, please consider letting people who own property, pay bills, and pay property taxes show property ownership or utility bills as a way to be treated more like a resident for some fees.

**Annual Camping Pass** - I can understand why this needs to be eliminated and how it could easily have been abused in the past.

**Living Desert Entrance Fee** - Seems reasonable.

**Vessel Registration Fee** - Seems reasonable.

**Vessel Launch Fee (Non - motor)** - This does not seem reasonable, especially if we're considering the fact that whole families may want to go paddling for a day. That adds up fast.

Also, consider how impractical that would be to enforce!! Most state parks are already understaffed. Requiring staff to check and make sure everyone with a SUP, kayak, or canoe has paid their \$5 would be so difficult and take them away from other more important tasks!

Paddle craft users have a low footprint and low environmental impact compared to watercraft with engines. In fact a lot of paddlecraft users work hard to improve the environment and protect water quality.

If you must keep this fee, please consider offering it as a low cost annual fee just like getting a fishing license, or a vessel registration fee.

Modernizing your annual registration fee system and providing online registration and pass acknowledgement will go a long way in helping reduce your costs, increase adoption, and be manageable for enforcement. Imagine if someone headed to the lake can show on their phone upon arrival that they have a current annual pass, vessel registration, and fishing license all in one place whenever asked? Imagine an annual vehicle window sticker or high visibility vessel sticker (like an annual beach access pass on the coast) so rangers can tell at a glance that someone is good to go?! It's all possible!

I ask you to consider these recommendations earnestly, as they aim to ensure equitable access to outdoor resources while sustaining the financial needs of State Parks. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. Unfortunately, I may not be able to attend future meetings, but I hope my feedback proves valuable, and please feel free to contact me with questions.

Regards,  
-Paige Oliverio  
512-573-7812

Eagle Nest Lake and Cimarron Canyon are my "home" waters! where I learned to fish and still do.

----- Paige Hill Oliverio -----  
Outdoor Living, Learning, and Play  
Office: 512-662-1854  
Text: 512-573-7812