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New Mexico State Parks  
c/o Fees Study Public Comment  
1220 South St. Francis Dr., Ste. 215  
Sante Fe, NM 87505

RE: State Park Fee Increases

Greetings:

I am writing to offer my opinions about the state park fee proposals.

Without exception, I say YES to raising park fees and eliminating the nominal day use fees for New Mexico residents. It is unfathomable to me that fees have not been addressed at regular intervals for the past 25 years. Was the recent \$5M forfeiture of federal funds the benchmark for finally looking at the situation? Whether by an ineffective legislative or administrative lack of oversight or forethought, the failure to address fees certainly explains why there are so many maintenance shortcomings at numerous parks. (Certain park areas closed at Sumner Lake, no potable water at Conchas, the continuing closure of the shower house at Percha, no playscape cover at Sumner Lake, and a state of disrepair and decay at Bottomless Lakes, among countless others). These examples do not even begin to address project funds to expand and modernize facilities.

The most irksome fact in your fee study is NM Park's ill-conceived notion to waive camping fees after a certain number of days if one purchased an annual pass. As your study indicates, this giveaway invited people to live rent free for months on end or store RVs at parks at no cost. This fiscally irresponsible and egregious initiative has resulted in hundred of thousands of dollars lost. How could NM ever have considered this scenario to be self-sustaining? Everyone must pay to use state park facilities so fees remain fair and equitable while providing increased park operating funds.

In closing, I reiterate: PLEASE raise park fees, however regrettable and sharply increased they may be. The parks' vitality can no longer be sacrificed by a failure to do so. The funding blight has gone on long enough and parks (and staff operating them) have suffered as a result. I hope that the appointment of a new Cabinet Secretary and your rate proposals are signs that oversight, consistency, and conformity may be returning to the State Parks. We need increased funding, increased staffing, increased maintenance and increased programming and volunteerism to cover the demands of an ever-growing amount of tourism and to preserve and improve our parks for years to come.

Sincerely,



SUSAN WHEATLEY

cc: file