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**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fw: You Forgot New Mexico Residents In Your Plan To Raise State Park Camping Fees By Up To 900%!  
**Date:** Saturday, March 9, 2024 7:09:23 PM

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Greetings,

I am writing with the hope of getting someone's attention to a huge issue that is extremely detrimental to New Mexican residents of modest means.

I am a New Mexico resident and one of New Mexico State Parks very biggest, most enthusiastic fans. I have purchased a resident Annual Camping Pass (ACP) for our State Parks for many years. As a retired senior citizen with some limitations, the ACP has been my 'Golden Ticket' to being active, engaged, and healthy in body, mind, and spirit. It has allowed me to be able to afford to camp frequently, throughout the year, at almost every single one of our fantastic parks. Traveling all over our breathtakingly beautiful state, soaking in nature while recreating in our NMSPs is my lifeline, my medicine, my passion.

I always assumed the New Mexico resident ACP was offered to enable and encourage New Mexican families, seniors, and disabled folks of modest means to get out in nature, exercise, and recreate. Not accounting for reservation fees, NMSPD proposes to increase the fee for everyone who currently purchases the ACP-- including New Mexico residents, even seniors and disabled folks-- from \$4 to \$40 per night for a site with electric- a 900 PERCENT PRICE INCREASE. My 2024 Social Security COLA increase was 3.2%. What could they be thinking?

The NMSPD proposes to effectively banish me and other senior and disabled ACP users, along with all New Mexicans of modest means, from camping in our own State Parks, by eliminating all ACPs while simultaneously drastically increasing all fees for everyone- BY UP TO 900 PERCENT! I am heartbroken and very upset.

I currently pay \$100 for the ACP, which effectively gives me \$10 a night off of the current camping fees. That means I pay \$4 a night for a \$14 electric site, plus a \$12 reservation fee. If I camp for a week I pay \$40, including the reservation fee.

But now, NMSPD proposes that I will have to pay \$40 a NIGHT for this electric site, plus the reservation fee. A weeklong camping trip will go from costing \$40 to costing \$292. That is outrageous and is impossible for me and for all New Mexicans of modest means. Many seniors, disabled folks, and others who require electricity for medical supplies or equipment cannot camp in a non-electric site, which means they cannot even opt for the undeveloped sites.

The State Parks Fees Study states that "New Mexico has the 3rd highest poverty rate in the Nation with 16.8% of our citizens living in poverty". It also states "This study... was conducted for the purpose of exploring strategies for providing affordable and equitable access for all visitors to New Mexico's thirty-five State Parks".

And yet the Study proceeds to propose that even the poorest of New Mexico residents start paying up to camp in our own State Parks exactly like even the wealthiest people from the surrounding states. It proposes NO equity and NO affordability for New Mexicans of modest means to participate in one of the very few opportunities we have to affordably get outside and recreate. You forgot New Mexicans in your Fees Study.

There is a happy middle between letting everyone camp for very little and banning New Mexicans who have very little. The huge, regressive proposed flat fees of \$20-\$50 a night for everyone will have the effect of chasing non-residents to the parks in other states that have, I'm told, more and better amenities for the price, and forcing New Mexico residents to just plain stay home.

Local businesses often depend on the revenue that campers bring to their area. For example, I've spoken to several local businesses in T or C and Elephant Butte about the proposed fee increases, and they are alarmed at the probable very negative impact of off-seasonal campers not showing up anymore to fill the winter gap at the summer hotspots of EB, Percha, and Caballo throughout the lean winter months.

I am just one older woman who, armed with my resident ACP, has been able to heal, recharge, feel joy, and grow stronger through traveling New Mexico via our State Parks. It has been the gift of a lifetime, one that I am eternally grateful for, and I am utterly devastated at the thought of losing it. If you follow through on the massive fees increases proposed, I will be banished, grounded. And I am not the only resident camping enthusiast out here just like me.

Please, please reconsider pricing poorer residents out of our campgrounds. Thank you so very much for reading all of this lengthy essay, and for taking seriously my concerns, comments, and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Theresa Johnson  
Deming and Taos, NM