



New Mexico State Parks Division Fees Study & Recommendations: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why does the New Mexico State Parks Division (Division) need to increase park fees?

A: The Division is an enterprise agency; this means that the Division is expected to produce approximately 75% of our annual operating budget through park fees and other self-generated revenues. This requirement is provided by New Mexico Statutory Authority (NMSA) 16-2-7 which states, "The secretary shall promulgate and adopt rules for each park as circumstances may demand to the end that each state park may be made as nearly self-supporting as possible".

While our operating costs have increased over the years due to inflation, our park fees have not. This adjustment will ensure that the Division has sufficient revenue to continue to operate and provide outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities and services to the public.

Q: If Parks need additional revenue to operate, why are they eliminating the Day Use Fee for New Mexico Residents?

A: New Mexico's 35 State Parks are found in 25 Of 33 counties across our state and serve "a public good". They are essential to the quality of life for residents, as they provide conservation and protection of natural and cultural resources and an array of outdoor recreation opportunities and educational experiences. equitable access to all New Mexicans to their State Parks and other public lands is critical regardless of their social or economic standing. Eliminating the Day Use Fee for New Mexico Residents directly addresses inequality in outdoor recreation and removes barriers to full, equitable enjoyment of state parks.

Q: Who is considered a New Mexico resident and how do they demonstrate residency?

A: In reference to proposed administrative rule amendments, a New Mexico resident is an individual who for a period of not less than 90 days immediately preceding visiting the park has been domiciled in New Mexico and has not claimed residency elsewhere for any purpose. Park staff will verify residency by looking for New Mexico Driver's Licenses and vehicle license plates.

Q: Why are you eliminating the Annual Camping Pass?

A: New Mexico is one of only four states in the country that offers an annual camping pass. The majority of state park systems across the country have determined that annual camping passes are not good enterprise items and result in undesirable and unintended consequences. For example, annual camping passes tend to reduce access to popular campsites, reduce revenue generation, and encourage non-recreational use of state parks.

Q: Why are you recommending increasing motorboat registration fees? Where does that money go?

A: Unfortunately, boat registration fees have not been increased since 1984, that's nearly 40 years ago. Boat registration fees are critical to our parks as they help fund our statewide boating safety, education, and enforcement program. This includes personnel, facilities, equipment, access, and infrastructure that serve all recreational boaters. All the revenue generated by boat registration fees is matched dollar for dollar to federal funds provided through the United States Coast Guard Recreational Boating Safety Grant.

Q: Why are you adding a fee for launching paddlecraft?

A: Paddlecraft usage has increased significantly over the past several years across our country and state. The Division provides facilities, education, safety patrols, and enforcement for recreational boaters. Our Division's Recreational Boating Safety, Education, and Enforcement Program is funded through the United States Coast Guard Recreational Boating Safety Grant. This grant requires a 50/50 state-federal match requirement that is entirely supported by motorboat fuel tax funds, motorboat registration funds, and boat excise tax funds. As most paddlecraft are not motorized, registration is not required and paddlecraft users do not contribute to this user pay user benefit model. By establishing a paddlecraft fee, the Division and its partners can better serve this user group and improve and expand paddlecraft related access and amenities.

Q: How will the non-motorized vessel launch fee be enforced?

A: The non-motorized vessel launch fee will be a daily per vehicle fee for visitors wishing to launch non-motorized vessels. For New Mexico residents intending to use paddlecraft this will be a \$5.00 fee that will be paid upon entry to a state park. For non-residents intending to use paddlecraft, it will be a \$5 fee in addition to the \$10 non-resident day-use fee. The \$5.00 paddlecraft fee is per vehicle, and not per person or vessel.

Q: Are these changes final? When do these changes become final?

A: The Division's fee schedule is codified in the New Mexico Administrative Code. For the Division to change fees, we must complete a process which includes gathering public input and holding a public hearing.

We will be holding informational meetings throughout the state to provide the public with information on our study and recommendations. A schedule for those meetings can be found here: <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/spd/public-meetings/>.

Visitors are encouraged to provide comments on our rule changes and written comments will be accepted until March 29, 2024.

We will be holding a public rules hearing on April 1, 2024 at the Wendell Chino Building Pecos Hall, 1220 S. St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe, NM at 6:00 p.m.

After we gather public input and hold our rules hearing, we will publish our final rule changes. Our goal is to have any changes implemented on July 1, 2024.

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