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## **Walks in the woods could cost a lot more**

By PAULA TRACY

New Hampshire Union Leader Staff

11 hours, 53 minutes ago

CAMPTON – The White Mountain National Forest is considering plans to increase its fees for recreation passes.

Since 1997, the forest service has used recreation fees in parking areas to maintain facilities, no longer paid for under federal budget appropriations.

It is seeking public comment on the proposals, which would change the cost of a daily recreation pass from \$3 to \$5, a weekly pass from \$5 to \$10, an annual pass from \$20 to \$30, and a household pass from \$25 to \$40.

This is the first proposed fee increase since the program began in 1997.

The proposal also calls for dropping fees at some locations, due to changes in amenities and services.

Under the plan, fees will no longer be charged at: Sawyer Rock Picnic Area, Elbow Pond Day Use Area, Russell Pond Day Use Area, Cherry Mountain Dispersed Camping Area, Gale River East/West Dispersed Camping Area, Haystack Road Dispersed Camping Area, Little Larry/Bull Brook Dispersed Camping Area, Sawyer Pond Trailhead, Sawyer River Road Trailhead, Signal Ridge Trailhead, Caribou Trailhead, East Royce Trailhead and Hastings Trailhead.

Fees for Doublehead and Black Mountain cabins would change from \$20 to \$30 per night, Fourth Iron Tentsite from \$8 to \$10 per night, and Crocker Pond Campground from \$14 to \$16 per night. The forest service is also proposing adding two sites to the fee program: Cabot Cabin would have an overnight rental fee of \$30, and a recreation pass would be required for Zealand Picnic Area.

Hikers such as Tess Price of Rumney aren't happy about the fee increases, but she notes that the money helps pay for bridges, picnic benches, bathrooms and services in the forest.

She bought the annual pass in the past, but said the price increase might affect her willingness to buy a new pass.

"I might avoid hiking in places where a pass is required or leave my car at a friend's house or walk from my mom's home," Price said.

More than 50 percent of her town is in the White Mountain National Forest but the town does not share in those fees. They do, however, get patrol help with crowd control at the busy Rumney Rocks rock climbing area, which is on the national forest land.

During the past 12 years, \$7,013,700 has been collected and returned to the White Mountain National Forest. Fees are used to do backcountry patrols and maintain highly used trails, shelters, and campsites, to assist visitors with information and education services such as Leave No Trace and hikeSafe, to maintain day-use sites including trash pickup, painting, and cleaning and to address the backlog of deferred maintenance at our recreation sites.

The Eastern Region Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC) will review the proposal for fee increases this spring. If approved, fee increases will be implemented over

the next year. For more specific information visit [www.fs.fed.us/r9/white](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white). To provide feedback on this proposal, contact Marianne Leberman, Recreation & Wilderness Program Leader at [wmnfplan@fs.fed.us](mailto:wmnfplan@fs.fed.us) or 603-528-8751, or Marianne Leberman, White Mountain National Forest, 719 N Main St., Laconia 03246 by May 1.

## YOUR COMMENTS

I bristle a bit at the idea of fees for the mountains, though I hike myself. If this were done on a donation basis, I would gladly donate more than the fee, and would do so when hiking areas that aren't covered by the mandatory pass at the moment. Trail maintenance isn't free, but is this really the best way to pay for it?

Granted, the fees still aren't much, but aesthetically, there must be better alternatives.  
- Brian, Manchester, NH

I think a fee increase for the first time in 12 years is well justified.

Considering inflation, one could argue that the fees have been going down for the last 12 years.

I can see the new dilemma this will cause for some of you though - "Lets see, should I buy a Starbucks latte today or park for the day and enjoy a hike in the splendor of the White Mountains?" Decisions, decisions...

As an avid White Mountains hiker and a true beneficiary of the park systems, I'm more than happy to pay the increased fees. I can't think of a better use for my dollars actually.  
- Erik, Candia, NH

Tom, Let me know where we are all meeting. I couldn't agree more. Literally every day, there is another story in the news of a fee hike, gas tax hike, higher cost on this, increase in that. Interesting, isn't it..... there was no hike two years ago, or six years ago? Since we are all numb to all the news of another tax hike..... why not hit us with a tax hike for a walk in the woods.

- Gus, Manchester

I do not normally agree with fee hikes but going from \$3.00 to \$5.00 for an all day pass after twelve years is hardly gouging the people. My only concern is that the money is used to maintain the existing program and not used to expand the size of state workers or divert the funds to other areas of government.

- Ross, Derry

Since they seek comment... the revolution is coming .. sure as the sun ..

Everyday, more more more .. government. Taxes, fees, tolls, .. at some point, the unemployed, underemployed, old, those who feel their lives have been stolen .. will rise up.. a march here, a demonstration ... when government gets too big, and starts to steal from its citizens

- tom, manchester,nh

Still sounds cheap to me.

- Bob, Salem

This proposal cannot, by law, be recommended for approval unless it has documented “general public support.” So if you don’t like it, use the contact information provided and tell the WMNF officials how you feel.

-Kitty Bazar, Western Slope No-Fee Coalition