

Locals scratching heads over location of R-RAC's public hearing on Lake Isabella Recreation Fee Area proposal

CHRIS HORGAN/ Special to the Sun | Posted: Wednesday, August 14, 2013 7:35 am

In the past locals have turned out in large numbers for meetings about Lake Isabella Fees, however not this time unless they can drive to Sacramento.

“I think it is outrageous for this meeting, whose outcome will impact the Lake Isabella region, to be held in Sacramento!” roars Kitty Benzar of Western Slope No Fee Coalition. “Forest Service staff will likely have to travel from Vallejo, Porterville or Kernville to attend. Nobody who lives in Sacramento will be impacted directly by this at all.”

The Pacific Southwest Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (R-RAC) has chosen to hold this public meeting to review the Isabella Forest Service fee proposal in Sacramento on August 29th from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in room W2620 of the Federal Building, 2800 Cottage Way.

The Sequoia National Forest is proposing to reduce the size of the Lake Isabella recreation fee area and split it into three fee sites, at Auxiliary Dam, Old Isabella, and South Fork. Recreation fees will not change and the Southern Sierra Pass and America the Beautiful-the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass (Annual, Senior, Access, Volunteer, and Military) will continue to be accepted at these sites.

The public has raised questions about whether the fees can be charged due to lack of the legally required amenities. There is also a lawsuit pending on this issue.

For more information you can read two recent articles about this fee proposal in the Kern Valley Sun - Public comment requested for changes to Lake Isabella fee areas (July 17, 2013 issue) and Lake Isabella Recreation Access Fee Program Proposal (July 24, 2013)

You can submit comments about the fees to: Sequoia National Forest, 1839 S. Newcomb, Porterville, CA 93257 Attn: Mary Cole or by email at marycole@fs.fed.us or 559-784-1500 x 1133 and Regional Forester for Region 5, Randy Moore, at 707-562-9000 rmoore@fs.fed.us who can also provide more information. Please submit comments by Aug. 23, 2013 so comments can be compiled, analyzed, and shared with the R-RAC at the meeting.