

Coronado Forest seeks comment on proposed fee increases

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Dates have been set for public meetings to discuss and comment on a Coronado National Forest proposal to raise fees for day-use sites, campgrounds and annual forest passes.

"Forest personnel will engage with the public, tribes, stakeholders and partners to receive input regarding the proposed fee changes," said Coronado Forest spokeswoman Heidi Schewel. "Personnel will be available for conversations with forest visitors."

Meetings will be held this month on the forest's Safford Ranger District, Douglas Ranger District, Sierra Vista Ranger District and Nogales Ranger District. (See box on Page A7 for meeting dates, times and locations.)

Schewel said meetings have already been held in the Santa Catalina Ranger District, which includes forest lands in the Tucson area.

Under the Coronado Forest proposal, fees for 23 day-use sites would increase from \$5 to \$8 per day and campground fees would go up from \$10 to \$20 per night at five campgrounds. The cost of an annual Coronado Forest pass would change from \$20 to \$40.

The proposal also calls for fees at seven group sites — used for picnicking and camping — to be a \$50 flat fee plus \$10 per vehicle per day.

REASONS FOR FEE PROPOSAL

The forest "operates and maintains approximately 204 fee and non-fee developed recreation sites," Schewel said in a news release.

Recreation fee sites provide amenities such as picnic tables, restroom facilities, trash receptacles, designated parking, visitor security and interpretive signs, exhibits or kiosks.

"Most lands on the forest are not considered developed areas and are available for use free of charge," Schewel said. "However, fees are charged at some developed recreation sites to be used for operations, maintenance, and replacement costs."

The estimated costs of maintaining all developed sites are \$3.8 million per year.

"The revenue to operate and maintain the developed recreation sites totals approximately \$1.3 million annually, which falls about \$2.5 million short of needed funds," the news release stated. "Approximately 50 percent of that funding comes from tax dollars allocated by Congress. The remaining 50 percent comes from the collection of fees."

- Caption: Jordane Pineau and Mathieu Beaudouin, visitors from Nantes, France, look out over the city from an overlook at Windy Point in The Santa Catalina Mountains north of Tucson.
- Memo: Fee proposal feedback

Members of the public are invited to attend open house-style meetings to discuss the fee proposal with forest personnel and fill out comment cards. Meeting dates are as follows:

- Safford Ranger District: Wednesday, April 18, 4 to 7 p.m. at the Safford Library, 808 S. Seventh Ave., Safford, AZ.
- Douglas Ranger District: Monday, April 23, 4 to 7 p.m. at the Douglas Visitor Center, 345 16th St., Douglas, AZ.
- Sierra Vista Ranger District: Tuesday, April 24, 4 to 7 p.m. at the Sierra Vista Library, 2600 E. Tacoma St., Sierra Vista, AZ.
- Nogales Ranger District: Wednesday, April 25, 4 to 7 p.m. at La Posada Life Community Services, 780 S. Park Centre Ave., Green Valley, AZ.

Meetings have been held previously at the Santa Catalina Ranger District in the Tucson area.

For more information, visit the Coronado Forest Restructuring Developed Recreation website at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/coronado/feereview. Information will also be posted at developed recreation sites. Comments can be emailed to CoronadoRecreation@fs.fed.us. Comments will be accepted through May 15, 2018.

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