



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
Atlanta Federal Center
1924 Building
100 Alabama St., S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

F5419 (5072)

Memorandum

To: Acting Associate Director, Business Services, Washington Office

From: Regional Director, Southeast Region

Subject: Exception Requests for New/Increased Fees in the Southeast Region

This memorandum is provided in response to the Fee Program Manager Jane Moore's May 20, 2011 e-mail requesting re-submission of a list of recommended parks to proceed with civic engagement activities to investigate increasing or establishing fees under the Federal Lands recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA).

The Southeast Region is recommending that Castillo de San Marcos National Monument (CASA), Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CHAT), Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GRSM) Fort Sumter National Monument (FOSU), and Big Cypress National Preserve (BICY) all be granted permission to proceed with the necessary civic engagement process to investigate the public response to increasing fees at each site.

The region has also approved and is recommending that Canaveral National Seashore (CANA) be granted approval of their completed implementation plan to move forward with a change in their fee structure.

CHAT and CASA are both requesting increases to their entrance fees. FOSU is requesting the establishment of an entrance fee at both Fort Sumter National Monument and Charles Pinckney National Historic Site. BICY is requesting to increase the per night fee for the primary park campgrounds and establishing a new fee to cover the costs of putting their backcountry permits on the National Recreation Reservation System (NRRS). Like BICY, GRSM is requesting to establish a fee to cover the costs of putting their backcountry permits on the NRRS.

CANA has completed a thorough civic engagement process in conjunction with the neighboring Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (MINWR). The primary reason for the proposed change in the park's fee structure is the MINWR's plan to implement a new fee program. The park is proposing to change from a \$3 per person to \$5 per vehicle. Under the new structure, the park and the refuge will honor each other's daily and annual passes, making it a seamless trip for visitors who wish to experience both sites. This plan will result in a lower cost per visit for most visitors. The park's proposal was well received during the civic engagement process. This change is projected to result in an annual decrease of approximately \$45,000-\$50,000 in the park's fee revenue. The park has completed internal plans to update the comprehensive fee plan to adjust the balances accordingly. The MINWR has published a notice in the Federal Register announcing the new fee area as required by FLREA. The refuge's current plan is to implement the new fee beginning in July 2011. Once approved, CANA plans to implement the fee change at the same time.

CASA is seeking to increase the daily entrance fee from \$6 to \$8 per adult. CASA currently transfers \$1 from each \$6 fee for funding of the transportation system. The park has requested (under separate cover) increasing this transfer to \$2 per adult entrance fee per the terms outlined in the Alternative Transportation System (ATS) review conducted by Booz Allen Hamilton, working for WASO. While this change will allow the park to continue the ATS without additional funding, this change in the transportation fee structure will result in a significant reduction in available revenue for visitor services and facility projects at the park. CASA has exclusively used fee revenue and has not requested funding from any other fund source for visitor facility rehabilitation for more than a decade. The park is preparing for the 450th anniversary of the park beginning in 2012. In preparation for this multi-year event, the park plans to execute numerous high visibility projects to better serve the visitors and continue to showcase the park as a main visitor destination in an area whose principal economic support is generated through tourism. Without the requested increase and with the proposed change in the transportation allotment, the park's annual fee revenue is expected to decrease by approximately 20% or \$311,000). As a result of this decrease, the park will likely have to rely on other funding sources to continue to maintain and rehabilitate its visitor facilities. The proposed increase will provide a similar increase (15-20%) in annual revenue. The park has plans in place to utilize this additional revenue and remain below the 35% unobligated balance target each year.

GRSM is proposing to institute a new fee for backcountry camping and shelter reservation and use. The park currently does not charge for these reservations and is proposing to begin charging a fee to cover the service charges and related costs of putting these sites onto the NRRS. The final actual fee will be determined through the civic engagement process and is likely to align with the total fees charged to the NPS by the NRRS. Having these sites on the NRRS will improve customer service for the visitors wishing to reserve these sites as they will now have 24/7 access to reserve and/or change reservations rather than having to call the park during normal business hours. There will be no increase in overall annual revenue as the result of this proposed increase as this will simply be a new fee to cover the recreation.gov service fees.

BICY is re-submitting their previously approved request to begin civic engagement activities to increase the fees at 2 front country campgrounds, start charging fees at an additional 4 front country and 2 back country campgrounds, and implement a charge for the park's backcountry permit system. Direct comparison between the BICY campgrounds and local private campgrounds is not available due to a wide variance in available amenities, but the park campgrounds have been improved with additional amenities so that they now meet NPS standards to charge fees. The primary reason for the increase and establishment of these campground fees is to somewhat reduce the undercutting of the private campgrounds adjacent to the park. These private campground owners have petitioned the

County Commission on several occasions to issue a resolution condemning the park due to this undercutting of their rates. The new fee for the backcountry permit will allow the park to add the permitting system to the NRRS. As is true at GRSM, the primary reasoning for adding the permits to the NRRS is to increase customer service by making use of available, proven electronic methods of conducting business operations. Having the permits on the NRRS will increase the visitors' knowledge of, and ease the process of getting, backcountry permits. The park plans to charge only the NRRS provider service fee charged to the NPS.

CHAT is requesting increases of \$3 to \$4 per day and from \$25 to \$35 for an annual pass. The primary justification for this increase is to somewhat better align the park fees with the NPS tier structure and with surrounding state and federal parks, which are currently much higher than the fee at CHAT. CHAT has experienced an increase of over 18% in visitation since 2004. This visitation primarily affects the developed areas including trails, boat ramps, picnic shelters and restrooms. The park has historically used fee revenue to fund the rehabilitation of these developed facilities to better serve the public. The projected increased revenue (approximately \$195K in 2012) will be used to replace two restroom units, replace roofs on picnic shelters and rehabilitate the environmental education facility where the park hosts its youth programs. While the proposed rates do not completely align with the NPS tier structure, the park completed civic engagement activities in 2007 and found that increases to the daily rate primarily affected a diverse, lower income population, many of which are from the urban areas of Atlanta and increases to the annual pass primarily affected the mostly white, upper income suburban visitors that use the park on a regular basis for exercise activities. The civic engagement activities conducted in 2007 proposed increases to a \$5 daily rate and a \$35 annual pass rate. These rates were viewed favorably by the public and provided some valuable visitor information. Armed with this visitor demographic knowledge, the park is asking that the increase to the daily rate be minimal with a larger increase to the annual pass.

FOSU is requesting to implement an entrance fee at Fort Sumter NM and Charles Pinckney NHS. The park currently charges an entrance fee of \$3 per person at the Fort Moultrie unit of FOSU. The park is proposing to charge an entrance fee of \$5 at each site that would be valid for any of the three sites for a period of at least 3 days. The park would work with the concessionaire to make this a seamless fee to the visiting public by means of a fee management agreement. Charging a fee at each site would encourage visitation at the other park units and discourage inappropriate uses at these sites. This new fee will allow for significantly increased visitor services project funding at the park, resulting in lower impacts on other shrinking fund sources, and will put FOSU in line with the NPS Tier pricing models established in 2009. FOSU's initial estimate of the increase in annual revenue ranges from \$500,000 to as much as \$1 Million. FOSU is completing internal plans to update its Fee Comprehensive Plan to obligate these funds as they are received.

Once these parks complete the civic engagement process outlined in RM-22, Appendix L, each park will submit a completed implementation plan to the regional office for review and regional approval. Upon receiving regional approval, these completed plans will be forwarded to your office for final approval. Each park plans to implement the increased fee in January 2012 or later.

A copy of the completed implementation plan for CANA is attached to this memo.

Any questions can be directed to the Regional Fee Program Manager, Richard Devenney, at 404-507-5640, or by e-mail at Richard_Devenney@nps.gov.

Attachments



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

F5419 (2608)

AUG 26 2011

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Southeast Region
Attention: Superintendent, Canaveral National Seashore
Superintendent, Big Cypress National Preserve
Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Superintendent, Castillo de San Marcos National Monument
Superintendent, Fort Sumter National Monument
Superintendent, Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

From: Acting Associate Director, Business Services *J. Moore acting*

Subject: Approval to Implement Fee Change at Canaveral National Seashore;
Initiate Public Participation for Fee Rate Changes in 2012 at Big Cypress
National Preserve, Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Castillo de
San Marcos National Monument and Denial of Initiating Public
Participation for Fee Rate Changes at Fort Sumter National Monument
and Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

The Deputy Director, Operations has reviewed and approved your request to implement a \$5 per-vehicle entrance fee instead of \$3 per-person fee and maintain the current \$35 park annual pass at Canaveral National Seashore to align with the same fees at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Please notify Jane Anderson with the actual date of implementation.

You are also approved to begin public participation about fee rate changes at Big Cypress National Preserve, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and Castillo de San Marcos National Monument (See Attachment 1). Once public participation events have been completed and analyzed, the region should submit their completed implementation plans including complete descriptions of public participation (See Attachment 2) to Jane Anderson via e-mail at: jane_anderson@nps.gov, by October 31, 2011. The WASO Fee

Office will submit your responses to the Associate Director, Business Services and the Deputy Director, Operations for approval. Once the region receives final approval, any changed fees may be implemented no earlier than January 1, 2012.

Your request for initiating public participation for fee rate change at Fort Sumter National Monument and Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area has been denied. If you would like to discuss it further with the Deputy Director, Operations please contact her office at (202) 208-3818.

If you have any questions about this memo, please contact Jane Anderson, WASO Deputy Fee Program Manager, via e-mail, or by telephone at (303) 987-6902.

cc: Regional Fee Manager, Southeast Region

Attachments (2)

Attachment 1

Region	Priority	Park	<i>Request APPROVED to proceed with Public Participation for FLREA Fee Changes</i>	<i>Compelling Reason</i>
SER	#2	Big Cypress	Increase fees at two front-country campgrounds; start charging for four front-country campgrounds, two backcountry campgrounds and charge for backcountry permit	Private campgrounds have petitioned County Commission to issue a resolution to condemn park due to undercutting rates (serious comparability issue).
SER	#3	Great Smoky Mountains	New fee for backcountry camping/shelter reservation	Recover contract line item number costs associated with joining Recreation.gov. Price to be determined during civic engagement.
SER	#4	Castillo de San Marcos	Increase entrance fee to \$7 per person from \$6 per person	Recover lost FLREA revenue resulting from increased transportation fee (\$1 to \$2) approved in 2011. This rate change will align the per person rate with the Servicewide pricing model.