

Fact Sheet

CECW-ON

4 Nov 2002

SUBJECT: Revised Recreation Use Fee Policy

1. **PURPOSE:** To summarize the subject policy changes and their impact on our customers.
2. **BACKGROUND:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers charges recreation use fees for certain facilities and services provided at Federal expense under authorities conveyed in the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.
3. **INFORMATION:**
 - a. A comprehensive review of recreation use fee program policy was conducted in 2000 and 2001 to update and clarify existing policy, and to incorporate new policy, as appropriate.
 - b. A number of policy changes were incorporated in the new guidance to facilitate fee collection and improve program effectiveness and efficiency. These changes should not affect our customers directly. A summary of these changes is provided at Tab A.
 - c. Several increases in recreation use fees are also included in the new guidance. These increases are relatively minor and, in general, reflect the increases in the Consumer Price Index and the cost of doing business. These increases will affect our customers directly. A summary of these changes is provided at Tab B.
 - d. The new fees become effective January 1, 2003. Annual passes for 2003 will be sold after November 15 at the increased price.
 - e. A communications strategy was developed and provided to all field locations to assist in informing the public of the fee increases and the reasons for them. A national press release is scheduled for November 15, 2002. Local Corps PAOs will issue corresponding press releases, tailored to their local areas, simultaneously. The draft press release is provided at TAB C. A synopsis of key public messages is provided at TAB D.
4. **APPROVAL:** This fact sheet is approved by the Chief, Operations Division.

Action Officer: Judy Rice
CECW-ON/761-4751

TAB A
General Policy Changes

1. Recreation use fee program goals were established:
 - a. To recover a portion of the cost of administering, operating, maintaining and improving specialized recreation facilities, services, or supplies;
 - b. To distribute public use more effectively to preserve resources and reduce overcrowding;
 - c. To support the national economy through the provision of quality recreational experiences;
 - d. To control facility use to deter incidences of vandalism and other disruptive behavior;
 - e. To foster a responsible user ethic among recreation users.
2. Policies to accommodate the National Recreation Reservation Service were incorporated.
3. New authority to provide some limited campsites no charge is provided, if it is determined the promotional effort will provide long-term benefits to both the public and the Corps by increasing the use of Federal facilities. This authority is strictly controlled to assure appropriate application.
4. New authority is provided to issue permits for certain special activities, such as hunting or off-road vehicle use, to address environmental, safety, or security concerns; to control the number of visitors to an area; or to provide information and communicate restrictions to visitors about their activity. Fees may be charged to cover the administrative costs of issuing these permits.
5. Refunds may be authorized for legitimate reasons at the Operations Manager's discretion. Previously, refunds were only authorized for emergency situations.
6. Comparability studies are conducted annually, in accordance with the requirements of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, to assure fees are comparable to those charged for similar opportunities by other providers in the local area. New guidance requires these studies be reviewed and approved at the Major Subordinate Command level to assure appropriate oversight. Documentation for these studies must be retained for 2 years.
7. Authority is provided to sell annual day use passes through the mail and over the telephone. Previously, all annual day use passes were sold in person.
8. Expanded authority is included for the provision of outdoor recreation related equipment and services at government expense at local discretion. Fees are authorized for these equipment and services.

TAB B
 Recreation Use Fee Comparison
 New Fees Effective 1 January 2003

<u>FOR THE USE OF</u>	<u>OLD FEE</u>	<u>NEW FEE</u>
Swim Beach *	\$1/person up to \$3/day	\$1/person up to \$4/day
Launch Ramp *	\$2	\$3
All day use facilities In a park *	\$3	\$4
Annual Pass *	\$25	\$30
Duplicate Annual Pass **	\$5	\$15
Special Event Permit ***	\$25	\$50

* Increased in accordance with the CPI

** Initially under priced. Increased to reflect real value more accurately.

*** First increase since this fee was originally established in 1984.

TAB C
Draft Press Release

DRAFT
PRESS RELEASE

Release No. XX-XX
Contact: Denver Beaulieu-Hains, (202) 761-0343
For Release: November 15, 2002

Embargoed until 15 Nov 2002

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will increase recreation day use fees effective Jan. 1, 2003. Fees for the issuance of special event permits will also increase for the 2003 recreation season. Over 375 million Americans visit Corps lakes for recreation purposes each year. One quarter of them come to fish. Others come to camp, hike, hunt and view wildlife.

“The Corps operates these facilities for the use of all Americans”, said Maj. Gen. Robert H. Griffin, director of Civil Works, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. “These fees will help us sustain the quality of our facilities for the enjoyment of our visitors.”

Recreation use fees collected are used to help offset operating and maintenance costs at Corps facilities, to assure public demand for high quality recreation opportunities is met.

The new day use fee schedule for Corps operated recreation facilities is as follows:

- * A fee of \$1 per person, up to \$4 per vehicle, will be charged at developed swimming beaches, and a fee of \$3 will be charged for boat launching at ramps that have additional amenities.
- * A maximum fee of \$4 per vehicle per day may be charged for the use of all day use recreation facilities within a park.
- * An annual pass may be purchased for \$30 to permit the holder and accompanying passengers to use all day use facilities at Corps-operated parks for the calendar year. A second annual pass may be purchased at the reduced rate of \$15.00.
- * Golden Age and Golden Access passports will be honored. Holders will receive a 50 percent discount on all recreation use fees.

- * There will be no fee for children 12 years of age or under.
- * The basic fee to issue a special events permit will be \$50.

In addition to the fee changes, the Corps is conducting a stringent review to ensure Corps recreation use fees are comparable to those charged by other providers for similar facilities and services in the local area. This is being done to assure unfair competition with private industry is avoided and may result in increased camping fees at some locations.

The Corps charges fees under the authority of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act for recreation sites, facilities and services provided at government expense.

-END-

TAB D
Communications Strategy
Key Public Messages

1. The Corps charges fees for the use of certain recreation facilities and services provided at government expense, under the authority of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. These facilities and services include campsites, boat ramps, swim beaches, specialized facilities, the issuance of special events permits, etc.
2. The recreation use fee program reflects a "user pay" philosophy, which supposes that those who benefit most directly from the provision of recreation opportunities should bear a greater part of the cost for their operation and maintenance.
3. The revenue collected helps the Corps sustain historic levels of operation and maintenance to meet customers' expectations.
4. Recreation fee schedules are established locally and vary based upon the amenities and services provided, location of sites (near shoreline or restrooms), and fees charged by other local providers for similar recreation opportunities. Day use fees are established nationwide for consistency and to comply with legislated requirements.
5. Recreation day use fees are increasing in 2003 in accordance with increases in the Consumer Price Index since 1992, when the fees were first implemented.
6. Fees for special event permits are increasing for the first time since the fee was initially established in 1984.
7. The Corps is conducting an intensive review of our annual comparability studies to assure our fees are comparable and do not compete unfairly with other providers, including private industry. This review may result in some increases in camping fees at some locations over the next two years.