

Rock Creek Park and Fort Dupont Park Picnic Area Reservations and Fee Increase

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Background Information

Since 1949, the National Park Service has had an agreement with the District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to manage the group picnic area reservations on National Park Service property at Rock Creek Park and Fort Dupont Park. Recently, DPR asked the National Park Service to manage the reservation process for these National Park Service sites.

Proposed Changes

Beginning March 1, 2014, visitors will be able to reserve picnic groves in Rock Creek and Fort DuPont parks through the website Recreation.gov. This convenient system is already used by thousands of national park visitors across the country. By using this website visitors will no longer be required to show up in person to acquire a picnic permit.

In addition, visitors will now be able to choose full or half day rentals. Rates will change as well, bringing the fees in line with those of similar group picnic areas in the Washington, D.C. area. The proposal is to phase in this increase over the next three years, starting in the spring of 2014 with an increase to \$25/half day. Additional increases will occur in 2015, when the cost will rise to \$45/half day, and in 2016, when the cost will rise to \$65/half day.

Our Authority to Collect Fees

Congress gave the National Park Service the authority to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at Federal recreational lands and waters in 2005, when it passed Public Law 113-036.

This law created Title 16, Section 6802 of the United States Code, which says that recreation fees shall be established in a manner consistent with the following criteria: (1) the amount of the recreation fee shall be commensurate with the benefits and services provided to the visitor, (2) shall consider the aggregate effect of recreation fees on recreation users and recreation service providers, (3) shall consider comparable fees charged elsewhere and by other public agencies and by nearby private sector operators, and (4) shall consider the public policy or management objectives served by the recreation fee.

How These Fees are Used

Fees collected are to be used to fund projects that address deferred maintenance needs, provide new visitor programs and services, protect resources, and improve and rehabilitate facilities for visitors. The majority of funds used for national park management come from Congressional appropriations. By using collected recreation fees, visitors help the National Park Service cover part of the cost of their visit. The fees also help the National Park Service improve the condition of the picnic areas, and respond to increased demand for visitor facilities and services.