



Shenandoah National Park News Release

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Shenandoah National Park Proposes Revised Fee Structure

Luray, VA – In compliance with a nation-wide review being conducted by the National Park Service, officials at Shenandoah National Park are inviting the public to comment on proposed entrance fee increases for the park. No increase in camping fees is currently proposed. Fees collected at the park are critical to the park's operation. Eighty percent of fees collected stay in the park for visitor related projects and services. The other twenty percent are distributed to other national parks that do not collect fees.

In a memo dated September 5, 2014, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis, authorized park superintendents to begin a civic engagement process associated with increasing entrance fees within units of the National Park System. In an effort to standardize entrance fees, the 131 units that charge entrance fees have been placed in a particular category (called a Tier Group) based on size, complexity of operations and typical visitation patterns. To arrive at greater consistency around the Service, parks have been asked to bring their fees into compliance with others within their Tier Group. Shenandoah National Park is within Tier Group 3. Other similar parks within Tier Group 3 include Acadia, Rocky Mountain, Mount Rainier, Denali, and Saguaro National Parks, among others.

Shenandoah's current park entrance fees have been in place since 2006. The proposed entrance fees, which would become effective May 1, 2015, are as follows:

| Park Annual Pass | | Per Vehicle/7 days | | Per Person/7 days | | Motorcycle/7 days | |
|------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| current | proposed | current | proposed | current | proposed | current | proposed |
| \$30 | \$50 | \$15/\$10 | \$25 | \$8 | \$12 | \$10 | \$20 |

Entrance fees are not charged to persons under 16 years of age or holders of the America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Senior, Access or Military Passes. These passes may be obtained at the park.

The park is also proposing to begin to charge a fee of \$10 per person for visitors participating in special ranger-led van tours to Rapidan Camp, President Hoover's former retreat and a National Historic Landmark located within the park. Under the proposal, children 12 and under would not be charged. The tours involve providing special transportation for a limited number of visitors and a dedicated ranger for a 3-hour program.

No increases in park camping fees are proposed. The park is proposing to move the group campsite currently at Loft Mountain to an underutilized area at Dundo Picnic Area, reducing conflicts within the main campground. Two 20-person group sites will be established at Dundo. The cost per site will be \$45.

"We understand that no one likes fee increases, but this revenue is absolutely critical to the park operation, and we ask for the public's support," said Superintendent Jim Northup. "National Parks are still one of America's best bargains. I don't know of anything a family can do for 7 days for just \$25. Our entrance fee provides full access to the park, to 105 miles of the Skyline Drive, to over 500 miles of trails, to historic lodges with overnight accommodations and meals, to abundant wildlife, streams and waterfalls, to almost 80,000 acres of Congressionally designated Wilderness and to fascinating human history. These are the real places, where people come to recreate, for education, physical challenge, inspiration and even spiritual renewal. But, they do not run themselves for free, and our fee revenue is essential to providing for resource protection, public safety and enjoyment. We are committed to keeping the park affordable but we also want to provide visitors with the best possible experience. The money from camping/entrance fees is used to improve facilities, visitor safety, and visitor services."

Entrance fees have supported a wide range of projects that improve park conditions and visitor experience including, rehabilitating trails and trailhead signs, developing and installing exhibits in visitor centers, improving park water systems, rehabilitating wastewater treatment plants, providing ranger programs, improving ADA accessibility at Rapidan Camp and park comfort stations, and maintaining open vistas at park overlooks. Additional revenue raised by a fee increase could be used to rehabilitate/rebuild Front Royal Entrance Station for increased staff safety and improved access, restore a wetlands in Big Meadows campground by removing a loop in and establishing replacement sites in a less sensitive area, as well as restore backcountry stone structures, retaining walls, bridge structures, and huts.

Shenandoah National Park is a strong economic engine for the surrounding area. In 2013, more than 1.2 million park visitors contributed \$72.4 million to the local economy and supported nearly 900 jobs related to tourism.

To provide comments on the proposed fee increases, go to http://parkplanning.nps.gov/shen_2014_fee_changes. The public has the opportunity to comment on the increases for a 30-day period ending on January 7, 2015.

Interested citizens are invited to discuss the proposed fee increases at public meetings to be held in various locations around the park. All meetings will begin at 7:00 pm and end at 8:30 pm as follows:

- December 15, 2014, at the Piedmont Virginia Community College Room 209, 222 Main Street, Stanardsville, VA.
- December 16, 2014, at the Warren County Community Center, 538 Villa Avenue, Front Royal, VA.
- December 17, 2014 at the Waynesboro Public Library Room A, 600 Wayne Avenue, Waynesboro, VA.
- December 18, 2014 at the BB&T Center for the Performing Arts, 1 East Main Street, Luray, VA.

Following the comment period and public meetings, feedback will determine how, or if, a fee increase would be implemented.

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