

# Park entrance fees may rise



WASHINGTON (AP) — The Clinton administration is proposing to charge entrance fees at national recreation areas that now are free and wants to more than double some fees for using campsites and other public facilities, officials said Thursday.

The administration asked Congress to enact the new fees, which conservation groups called unreasonable, as a way to pay for maintaining and enhancing public recreation lands.

Clinton's 1994 budget called for an increase of nearly \$58 million in increased entrance fees to recreation areas and higher fees for camping, picnicking and use of boat ramps and beaches.

Some facilities that now are free — day-use picnic areas, national monuments, and lakes — would be available only for a fee. The new fees would be no greater than \$3, administration officials told the House Natural Resources subcommittee on parks, forests and public lands.

"In order for the president's economic program to succeed, everyone must contribute, and the increases must be fair and reasonable," said David Moffitt, National Park Service assistant director for visitor services. "It is not our intention to charge for every drinking fountain, but where several services and facilities are provided in an area, we could charge a user fee."

The increases would apply to national parks as well as public

lands managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Some familiar programs would be affected:

- The Golden Eagle passport, now \$25 a year for unlimited entry to any national park, would cost \$35 next year and \$50 in four years.

- The annual park pass, providing unlimited admission to any one park for a year, would rise from the current \$10 or \$15, depending on the park, to \$15 or \$20 and eventually to \$30.

- The fee for a single entry to a national park — now \$5 per car at most parks and \$10 at Yellowstone, Grand Teton and Grand Canyon — would gradually increase to \$16 at all parks after 1994.

- Back country campers would have to pay fees.

The administration also would amend existing law that prohibits charging fees for use of most boat launching ramps and campgrounds that do not have running water, access roads, picnic tables and other amenities.

The National Parks and Conservation Association, a private group devoted to protecting the national parks, said the government should shift some of the increase from the public to commercial entities who operate on public land.

William Chandler, speaking for the association, suggested the government obtain higher fees

from concessionaires and tour operators who use the parks for economic gain, private utility companies that run phone and power lines across parks, and other commercial users like movie companies.

"At Yosemite, 12,000 bus tours enter the park each year; these tour operators pay no license fee," he said.

Subcommittee Chairman Bruce Vento, D-Minn., and the Sierra Club criticized the administration for pushing the recreational fee increases while dropping higher fees for grazing and mining on public lands from the budget process.

Administration officials have vowed to pursue higher mining and grazing fees outside the budget process, but Vento said the decision puts lawmakers in a difficult position.

"We're being asked to raise entrance and user fees on the American people while at the same time letting consumptive, for-profit enterprises that use public lands off the hook," he said.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt is beginning meetings in the West to determine how much to raise the below-market fees that ranchers pay for grazing their herds on public lands and how to improve the land.

The administration also is backing legislation to charge royalties from mining companies that now pay nothing for gold and other minerals they extract from federally owned lands.

# Battle flag removed from Alabama Capitol

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — New Gov. Jim Folsom banned the Confederate battle flag from the state Capitol dome Thursday, a move hailed by black leaders who had viewed the banner as a racist symbol.

"This has been a divisive issue in our state, and I believe it is time we put it behind us and move our state forward," Folsom said at a news conference.

Folsom immediately had the American and state flags raised atop the dome. He ordered the Confederate battle flag be flown across the street from the Capitol at the First White House of the Confederacy.

State Rep. George Perdue, chairman of the House Black Caucus, praised Folsom's decision.

"We have maintained all along the Confederate battle flag should be relegated to some kind of historical display or museum. We have never maintained one should forget one's heritage," Perdue, D-Birmingham, said.

But Norman Dasinger of Jacksonville, lieutenant commander of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, said the decision will cost Folsom votes in the 1994 governor's race.

"He is just a coward. He's playing politics with our heritage," Dasinger said.

Folsom's decision also drew criticism from the White House Association, a volunteer group which manages the First White House of the Confederacy for the state. Association Regent Cameron Napier of Montgomery said she opposes flying the flag on a pole outside the house.

She said the battle flag is displayed inside the house, but the first flag of the Confederacy, the Stars and Bars, flies on the flag pole in front because that was the only flag the Confederacy had when Montgomery served as its Capitol. The capital moved to Richmond, Va., in May 1861, two months before the Confederacy adopted the battle flag.

"Having the battle flag out front on a pole is inaccurate, and we can't have that," she said.

The Confederate battle flag, with a blue X over a red field, is frequently used by the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups.

Battle flags have been issues in three other Southern states: Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina.

# UA students wary after body found in dormitory

FAIRBANKS, Alaska (AP) — Students at the University of Alaska Fairbanks didn't even bother to lock their dormitory doors before this week.

Then, the bloodied body of a woman was found in a dormitory bathtub in the first campus killing in two decades.

"You don't have to be in a big city for this to happen," said Bennie Williams, a graduate student from Washington, D.C.

Williams, a resident assistant in the dormitory complex, called the slaying "a wake-up call," especially for students from Alaska's remote villages.

"I think the main thing is people have to learn that you have to be careful," he said.

Sophie A. Sergie was killed by a single gunshot. The killer was still at large Thursday and the motive for the attack was unknown, police said.

Crimes like that weren't supposed to happen at the 9,000-student university nestled among the rugged pine and birch forests of Alaska's Interior.

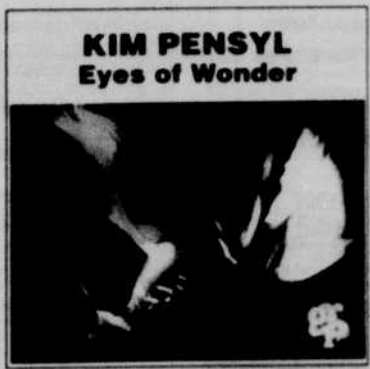
Rose Pedi chose Fairbanks for her son, Eric, because she wanted him far away from the violence in the Boston area.

"It's a little unnerving because I figure how much danger can you be in up there?" Pedi said by telephone from Wareham, Mass. "So what do you do? How do you protect your children?"

Sergie, a 20-year-old from the southwest Alaska village of Pitkas Point, had taken a year off from school to work and was visiting a friend at the university when she was slain.

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