

OUTDOORS

Feds propose increased fees at 18 campgrounds



Yellowbottom Recreation Site in the Quartzville Corridor, which stretches between Sweet Home and Marion Forks in the western foothills of the Cascades.

ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Bureau: Funds needed for upkeep, improvements

Zach Urness

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Bureau of Land Management is proposing new and increased fees at 18 current and future recreation sites in northwest Oregon, and they're looking for public feedback, the agency said last week.

The plan would increase the cost at campsites and group facilities while creating new fees at a number of sites that don't currently charge fees, the agency said. The plan also puts fees in

place for campgrounds and cabins expected to open in the future.

The public can comment on the plan by calling (503) 315-5935 or emailing: BLM_OR_NO_REC_publiccomments@blm.gov.

"These fee changes are being proposed because maintenance needs at these sites are not being fully met due to increased operating costs," BLM said in a news release. "It has been more than ten years since fees at these recreation sites were changed and most fees have not been updated in over two decades."

BLM said the news fees would go toward improved services and creating new amenities at current sites.

The plan also creates an annual pass that would cost \$30 per year and is designed to make it easier for frequent visitors while creating a cost savings, they

said. The pass could also be obtained by doing 12 hours or more of volunteer service in the Northwest Oregon District each year.

In general, the fees would increase to \$5 for day-use at sites such as Yellowbottom, Clay Creek and Sandy Ridge recreation sites, which do not currently require day-use fees.

The cost of camping would increase. At Alsea Falls, the cost of a basic campsite would increase from \$12 to \$20 while at Yellowbottom, a primitive campsite would go from \$10 to \$15 per night.

The plan also covers campsites, cabins and other sites that are planned in the future.

At Wildwood Recreation Site, the cabins and yurts planned for the site, that are not yet built, would cost \$45 to

\$80, depending on amenities.

Three of the sites where fees were planned to increase, including Fishermen's Bend Recreation Site, Elkhorn Valley Campground and Canyon Creek Day-use Area, were burned in the 2020 Labor Day Fires. It's unclear when those sites will be rebuilt or reopen, but it's unlikely to occur in 2021.

See below for a full breakdown of the fee increases and proposals. For even more detail, see the business plan online.

Zach Urness has been an outdoors reporter, photographer and videographer in Oregon for 12 years. Urness is the author of "Best Hikes with Kids: Oregon" and "Hiking Sothern Oregon." He can be reached at zurness@statesmanjournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at @ZachsORoutdoors.

A camping trip during the riots a long time ago



Fishing

Henry Miller
Guest columnist

The events of Jan. 6 in the nation's Capitol reminded me about ... a camping trip.

It was during a sweltering August, the tail end of summer vacation when I was a kid.

My friend Ed's dad drove the pair of us and our camping gear to a sun-baked patch of parched dirt with a picnic table in a smattering of oak trees to hell and gone off State Route 154 near the Santa Ynez River in Southern California.

Really a seldom-used day-use area, our "camping" spot featured do-it-yourself (take a shovel and bring your own paper) toilet facilities and no water other than the river, which was a sluggish green stream with occasional deeper pools at that point in the summer.

There were no other humans within miles.

For a couple of tweener males who had read way too many adventure novels, though, a tent, sleeping bags, fishing poles, bait, a gallon jug of water and a green, steel Coleman cooler with ice, kid

food and 12 cans of Shasta soda, it was a slice of heaven.

Our only nod to technology was a small blue-and-white cracked-plastic General Electric transistor radio that ran on a 9-volt battery that hadn't been changed after the previous weekend's Dodgers game.

Being in the middle of nowhere in a river valley didn't help the reception.

Or as the old joke about being in such places goes, "the stronger the signal, the more religious the station."

I digress.

Anyway, fishing for smallish bass and panfish was fairly productive, and we settled in under a bowl of stars for the night after a hearty fry-up of fish and potato chips.

Because it was so hot, we stretched out the sleeping bags on a dry patch of grass.

According to a dispatch on the weak, scratchy, intermittent signal on the radio, the world we left behind was in flames.

The 1965 Watts Riots had erupted in Los Angeles.

Contemplating the apocalypse and based on our avid reading of adventure fiction, Ed and I didn't panic and go "Lord of the Flies."

But in the interests of full disclosure,

we definitely went a little feral.

Ed's dad wasn't scheduled to pick us up for a couple of days, if he was still alive.

After parking the cooler in the shade of an oak in the morning of Day 2, because of the heat and our inattention to the Earth's rotation, the Coleman baked in the sun all afternoon while we were fishing.

It was as hot as an engine block at the end of the Indy 500.

Our bait, mealworms and red wigglers, had expired putridly in their cardboard containers, and the cans of crème soda and root beer were floating in a hot tub of melt water in the cooler along with most of the food.

As the signal on the radio faded, then died that night, Ed and I called a tribal council of two about our next move.

Hike to the highway and see if anyone drives by? We figured about 10 miles.

Stay put and see what transpires?

Being Day 2 of 4, and not knowing if marauding bands were out on the roads, we decided on the latter course of action.

Not to say that we were complacent. Ed and I pivoted into survival mode.

We figured there were enough grasshoppers to use as bait to keep us going.

The two lost boys also used fishing line to attach a couple of forks to sticks

to make primitive spears for fishing or to stab at ground squirrels if we really got really desperate.

Right on schedule, Ed's dad showed up to find two relieved, sunburned junior-league survivalists, makeshift spears leaning against the picnic table.

Things, he assured us, were fine at home.

Looking back, there may be some larger lessons about human resiliency and American strength and resolve in the wake of civil unrest.

The whole "better angels" argument.

Another narrative could be how a lack of facts and information causes people to think the worst.

I leave it to others to search for the deeper meanings.

My take is that you can weather just about anything with a reliable friend and some fishing gear.

Along with fresh batteries for the radio.

And also that the name "Santa Barbarians" would be excellent name for our two-kid tribe.

Stay safe, and keep the faith.

Thought for the week: Innovation is the mother of desperation.

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