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Mount Rainier National Park News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mount Rainier Fee Increases Approved for 2015

ASHFORD, WA – Mount Rainier National Park Superintendent Randy King announces that the park will begin increasing park entrance and camping fees on May 22, 2015. These fee increases, first announced in November, were open for public comment through the end of 2014. The timeline for implementation and in some cases the rates themselves have been adjusted based on feedback received from the public and other park stakeholders. The fee increase implementation date coincides with the anticipated opening of the Stevens Canyon Road, linking the park's east and west districts. These fees will support over \$1M in projects each year that have a direct benefit to the park's visitors.

Mount Rainier became the fifth national park in 1899, and was the first to admit vehicles for a fee in 1907. Eighty years later, the cost for a one week visit to the park was raised from \$2 to \$5 per vehicle. In 1996 the fee was increased to \$10, and by 2006 it reached \$15 where it has remained. This fee provides entry for all occupants in a single vehicle for seven consecutive days. Entrance fees are not charged for holders of a variety of passes, including the Interagency Pass, the Military Pass, and the Senior Pass. These passes may be purchased online or are available at Mount Rainier National Park when entrance booths are staffed. The National Park Service (NPS) fee program allows Mount Rainier to retain up to 80% of fees collected in the park, with the remaining 20% supporting national park units without fees. This revenue makes it possible for the park to provide many essential services, including repair and maintenance of visitor facilities, capital improvements, resource protection, and amenities. In addition, it supports park entrance, campground and wilderness information center staffing, and visitor information and brochures.

Recreation fee revenue is an important component of the overall financial health of Mount Rainier National Park and the National Park Service. In recent years, fee funding at Mount Rainier has been used to augment the restoration of historic Paradise, build a new ranger and visitor contact station at Carbon River, and support an ongoing project to replace the electric power and telecommunication utilities serving Longmire and Paradise. Fee revenue supports trail, campground and picnic area repairs and improvements, the restoration of subalpine meadows, the management of hazard trees, and enables the park to provide social media and update aging interpretive exhibits. Over the next few years, the park plans to continue rehabilitating restrooms, trails, campsites, and further improve accessibility for a variety of park facilities. In addition, the park will continue to invest in improvements to the Carbon River trail corridor, the rehabilitation of the Paradise Inn Annex, and evaluate improved visitor services elsewhere in the park.

With few exceptions, national parks across the United States have not increased entrance fees since 2006. However, in order to provide funding necessary for key projects and programs, all 131 fee-collecting national park sites evaluated potential fee increases, within an established fee structure. As a result, the entrance fee at both Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks was proposed to increase to \$25 for a seven-day vehicle pass based upon an updated rate schedule to be used by all park sites that charge fees.

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Mount Rainier also proposed to increase camping fees, bringing them up to \$20 per night for any park “single” campsite (up to six people). Group sites (up to 40 people) would increase to \$60. A 2014 campground comparability analysis confirmed that the existing park rates, which presently range from \$12 to \$15 per night for single sites and \$40 to \$64 for group sites, were significantly lower than local area public and private campsites outside of the park.

Public engagement was conducted in November and December of 2014. During the comment period, the park received over one hundred comments online, via mail, and in person- several of which were from organizations representing membership views. The majority of comments received were supportive of all or part of the proposal to increase park entrance and camping fees, with references made to the value of national parks in relation to costs for other recreational alternatives, the length of time since the last fee increase, and support for projects that could be funded by a fee increase. Of comments received in opposition to the proposed fee increase, primary themes included affordability and access for lower income individuals and families, the magnitude of the proposed increase (in particular the “per-person” fee), and a desire to see improved park access. Alternatives presented by the public included phased-in fee increases, increases for the interagency and senior passes, lower rates for a shorter-duration visits, and a reduction in the “individual” entrance fee proposed. Based on public feedback and general support for the fee changes, the park will phase in many increased fees over two years, and has reduced the “per-person” rate for bicyclists and walk-up visitors.

As of May 22, 2015, the park’s single vehicle rate will increase from \$15 to \$20. This rate will increase again to \$25 on May 27, 2016. Individual camping fees would increase to \$20 on May 22, 2015 and group sites would increase to \$60 per night. These camping rates would not increase again in 2016.

For further information, visit the park’s “Plan Your Visit” webpage at www.nps.gov/mora

Fee type	Current fee	Proposed fee (before public comment)	Approved fee (after public comment)
Mount Rainier NP annual pass <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants unlimited entry for one year to pass owner and passengers in same car 	\$30	\$50 in 2015	\$40 in May, 2015 \$50 in May, 2016
Mount Rainier single vehicle fee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants unlimited entry for one vehicle and passengers for seven consecutive days 	\$15	\$25 in 2015	\$20 in May, 2015 \$25 in May, 2016
Mount Rainier “per person” fee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk-up or single bicycle fee Grants unlimited entry for seven consecutive days 	\$5	\$12 in 2015	\$10 in May, 2015
Mount Rainier motorcycle fee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants unlimited entry for one motorcycle and passenger for seven consecutive days 	\$5	\$20 in 2015	\$10 in May, 2015 \$20 in May, 2016
Campground fee (single sites, nightly) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodates up to six people 	\$12-\$15	\$20 in 2015	\$20 in May, 2015
Campground fee (group sites, nightly) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodates 25 to 40 people 	\$40-\$64	\$60 in 2015	\$60 in May, 2015

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