

CHAPTER 9 - RECREATION USE FEES

9-1. Purpose. This chapter establishes the Recreation Use Fee Program at civil works water resource projects.

9-2. Goals. The goals of the recreation use fee program are:

- to recover a portion of the cost of administering, operating, maintaining and improving specialized recreation facilities, services, or supplies;
- to distribute public use more effectively to preserve resources and reduce overcrowding;
- to support the national economy through the provision of quality recreational experiences;
- to control facility use to deter incidences of vandalism and other disruptive behavior;
- to foster a responsible user ethic among recreation users.

9-3. Policy. It is the policy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that fees shall be charged for the use of specialized recreation sites, facilities and services provided by the Corps.

a. Setting Fees. 16 USC 4601-6a provides that users of specialized sites, facilities, equipment, or services provided at Federal expense shall be assessed fair and equitable fees, with consideration for the following:

- (1) Direct and indirect amount of Federal expenditure.
- (2) Benefit to the recipient.
- (3) Public policy or interest served.

(4) Comparability with recreation fees charged by other Federal and non-Federal public agencies and the private sector within the service area of the management unit at which the fee is charged.

(5) Economic and administrative feasibility of fee collection.

(6) Other pertinent factors such as improved security, reducing vandalism, protection of resources, and improving visitor contact.

b. Signage. All areas designated as recreation use fee areas shall be marked with appropriate signs that provide necessary instructions to users of the area with regard to collection of fees. The official U.S. Fee Area symbol shall be displayed at the entrance to designated "use fee areas."

c. Failure to Pay. Persons failing to pay established fees will be subject to citation under 36 CFR 327.23, Recreation Use Fees.

d. Entrance Fees. Section 210 of the flood Control Act of 1968 (16 USC 460d-3) provides that no fee will be charged for entrance to any Corps operated area. The Corps of Engineers does not sell or accept Golden Eagle Passports, the National Park Pass, or any State or local park passes.

e. Special Recreation Use Fees (SRUF). All recreation use fees collected will be deposited into the special account in the Treasury established for the Corps of Engineers under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. Subject to appropriations, funds shall be returned to the water resources development project at which the fees were collected. Funds generated from collecting recreation use fees are returned in O&M, General appropriations for operation, maintenance and improvement of recreation sites and facilities. The construction of new recreation facilities in existing areas or renovation and/or improvement of existing facilities may be accomplished with these funds if the goal of providing quality public recreation experiences with the most cost efficient management of water resource development projects can be met. New recreation areas may not be constructed without a cost share sponsor.

f. Public Relations. District Commanders will notify congressional representatives, as appropriate, of the use fee program in their congressional districts. In the interest of

informing the public of the use fee program, public relations activities will be conducted to disseminate information regarding this program before collection of fees begin.

g. Increasing Campsite Use. It may be appropriate to offer limited free camping at non-reservable campsites. The purpose of offering free camping is as a short-term promotional effort that will provide long-term benefits to both the Corps and the public by increasing the use of Federal facilities. Written documentation should include rationale for providing the free camping and number of coupons distributed. Free camping should be limited so as to avoid any perception that distribution involves a major give-away of Government resources.

9-4. General Fees.

a. Fee Schedules. District recommendations for proposed use fees for the next two years will be submitted to the Major Subordinate Command (MSC) Commander no later than 1 August each year. District commanders shall assess seasonal visitation patterns of individual fee areas to determine the period during which a fee program shall be in effect. It is anticipated that fees shall be charged at some areas throughout the summer months, while at other areas fees shall be collected throughout the year. The MSC Commander will review and approve or disapprove the recommendations.

b. Guidance. Comparability studies will be conducted annually. Fees charged shall be based upon distinguishable differences between Corps facilities and services and those facilities and services provided by other Federal agencies, non-Federal agencies, and the private sector in the same service area. Specific guidance and criteria for researching and evaluating fees at other local recreation sites, for evaluating and determining fees for Corps sites, and for approving, reviewing, and auditing annual district fee schedules is found in Chapter 9, paragraph 9-3.c. of EP 1130-2-550.

c. Volunteers. Volunteers may be provided campsites at projects where their volunteer service occurs and not be required to pay a use fee. Day use fees may be waived for volunteers conducting recognized volunteer service on the day it is performed.

9-5. Camping Fees.

a. Applicability. A fee will be charged and a permit issued for single user unit campsites, group camp areas and specialized facilities in accordance with Appendix M of EP 1130-2-550. Camping fees will be charged on a per-site basis. Each campsite shall be rented to a single user/unit party, which does not exceed the established carrying capacity for

persons, vehicles, or camping equipment for that site. These facilities shall be available on a first-come, first-served basis unless they are currently reserved through the NRRS™.

b. Carrying Capacity. Using a comparison of all components necessary, the Operations Manager shall determine the carrying capacity, in numbers of persons, vehicles, and camping equipment, for each campsite under his/her management. Except in unusual circumstances, this carrying capacity shall not be exceeded.

c. Variable Pricing. Variable pricing of fee campsites within a single campground shall be permitted based on documented differences in the quality or desirability of certain sites due to location or campsite amenities. Variable pricing for camping use shall also be permitted based on time differences, such as different days of the week, different seasons, or holidays.

d. Utilities. At sites with utility hookups, a charge for the utilities shall be included in the use fee regardless of whether they are used. No free utility services shall be provided.

e. Visitors. Visitors to registered campers in fee campgrounds may be charged use fees for use of specialized facilities. If charged, the fee shall not exceed 50 percent of the single user unit campsite fee and will also entitle the holder to use any or all day use facilities without paying additional use fees at the same project, on any day for which the permit is valid.

f. Camping Permit. The camping permit entitles the holder to use a designated campsite and related support and recreation facilities within the boundaries of the camp area where the designated campsite is located. It will also entitle the holder to use any or all Corps-operated day use facilities without paying additional use fees at the same project, on any day for which the permit is valid.

9-6. Day Use Fees.

a. Criteria. Day use fees may be collected at developed recreation areas and facilities including swimming beaches and boat ramps but not at areas which include only a boat ramp and courtesy dock. Fees will not be charged for the use or provision of visitor centers, drinking water, wayside exhibits, roads, scenic drives, overlook sites, picnic tables, toilet facilities, surface water areas, undeveloped or lightly developed shoreline, or general visitor information.

(1) Day use fees will be charged where there is reasonable expectation that revenue will exceed costs of collection, to include implementation costs. Managers may choose to assess their fee collections programs, revenue and collection costs on a per project basis rather than a per park basis. The cost to collect includes (a) direct, on-project costs incurred for fee collection and remittance and (b) implementation costs amortized over the design life of the improvements. Cost and revenue estimates should be reviewed periodically by MSC commanders to assist in determining appropriate adjustments to the project fee collection program.

(2) No day use fee will be charged for children 12 years of age or younger.

b. Annual Day Use Passes. An Annual Day Use Pass may be purchased for \$30.00. This pass permits the holder and all accompanying passengers in the vehicle to use any or all boat launch ramps and/or designated, developed swimming beaches at any Corps operated recreation area at any Corps project for that calendar year, except at facilities located within a fee campground and reserved exclusively for the use of campers. The annual pass is a decal, which is affixed to the back of the interior rear view mirror. On vehicles having no interior rear view mirror, the decal may be affixed at an alternate location, such as the left front bumper, the back of the left exterior rear view mirror, or the left front windshield, if permitted by the state Department of Motor Vehicles. Golden Age/Golden Access 50 percent discounts apply to the purchase of Annual Day Use Passes.

(1) Sales of Annual Day Use Passes and Golden Age Passports at outdoor recreation shows, special events, fairs, etc. is encouraged.

(2) The selling of annual passes utilizing agreements, such as Challenge Partnerships with local businesses, cooperative associations or vendors is encouraged. Accounting procedures must be established at the local level to account for all sold and unsold passes as well as fee collections. Vendors are required to sell passes without markup.

(3) Annual Day Use Passes may be sold through the mail. Golden Age/Access discounts may be applied to annual passes purchased by mail, phone or fax if the applicant furnishes a photocopy of their Golden Age/Access Passport. Cash will not be accepted as payment for Annual Passes purchased by mail. Under no circumstances will a customer be asked to provide a credit card number via email.

(4) An additional annual pass may be purchased by the same individual for a reduced fee of \$15.00 for a second vehicle. Only one duplicate pass may be purchased at the \$15.00 fee for each full price Annual Day Use Pass purchased. The duplicate pass may be purchased

at the same time as the original pass or at a later date if proof of original purchase is presented and no duplicate has been issued. The duplicate will be identified at the time of purchase by punching a hole or marking an "x" in the box marked "D".

(5) Annual Day Use Passes removed from vehicles that have been sold or destroyed will be replaced at no charge if the original pass is returned. In the absence of a returned pass, the full fee will be charged for a new annual pass. Passes lost due to vehicle theft will be replaced at no cost if proof of theft, such as police report or insurance document is provided.

c. Day Use Fee Alternatives. Fees will be assessed either on a per facility basis or a per recreation area basis at any particular area. Only one alternative will be used within a single area. Fees assessed on a per facility basis allow for more detailed tracking of revenues.

(1) Per Facility - Boat Launching / Swimming.

(a) A day use fee of \$3.00 will be charged to use a boat launch ramp in a Corps operated day use recreation area. The fee will be charged at recreation areas having a boat ramp and one or more of the following facilities: restrooms, picnicking facilities, swimming facilities, or other developed recreation facilities. The boat launch fee will not be charged at boat ramps located in recreation areas which are exclusively campgrounds and reserved exclusively for the use of campers, or in recreation areas which provide only a boat ramp and courtesy dock. Payment of this fee entitles the user to launch a boat at any Corps operated recreation area at any Corps project on that day, except at boat ramps located within a fee campground and reserved exclusively for the use of campers.

(b) A day use fee of \$1.00 per person for each person over the age of 12, whether walk-in or in a vehicle, up to \$4.00 per vehicle, will be charged for the use of a designated, developed swimming beach in a Corps operated day use recreation area. However, if a vehicle has more than eight passengers over the age of 12, there will be a fee of \$1 for each additional individual over the age of 12. The swimming beach fee will be charged at Corps-operated, designated, developed swimming beaches, with the exception of swimming beaches located in recreation areas which are exclusively campgrounds and reserved exclusively for the use of campers. A designated, developed swimming beach is properly signed, buoyed and delineated in accordance with established design and safety requirements and may have one or more of the following attendant facilities: restrooms, change houses, picnicking facilities, or other developed recreation facilities. Payment of this fee entitles the user to use any developed beach at any Corps operated recreation area at any Corps project on that day, with the exception of swimming beaches located within fee campgrounds and reserved exclusively for the use of campers.

(2) Area Fees.

(a) The option of charging a single fee for the use of all day use facilities in an area is simpler to administer and enforce. This option may be utilized where a boat ramp and/or a swimming beach exist in the same fee area. It expedites the fee collection process and reduces customer delays.

(b) The area fee is a facility use fee, not an entrance fee. Golden Age and Golden Access Passports 50 percent discounts apply. Golden Eagle Passports do not apply.

(c) The area fee will not exceed \$4 per vehicle or \$1 per person, if walking into the area.

d. Native American Indian Tribes. The District Commander may waive all day use fees for boat launching or swimming beaches for Federally recognized Native American Indian Tribal members consistent with rights reserved to the Tribes under law or treaties.

9-7. Special Use Fees.

a. Applicability. The charging of a day use fee at a recreation area does not preclude the charging of a fee for the reservation of a specialized facility or for a special event within the area. Neither does the charging of a fee for the reservation of a specialized facility or special event preclude the collecting of the established day use fee for the recreation area. Operations Managers should consider local situations when determining fee applicability.

b. Special Facility Use Fee. A fee may be charged for the use of specialized recreation facilities (e.g., group picnic shelters, multipurpose courts, amphitheaters, athletic complexes, etc.). Since this is a use fee, Golden Age and Golden Access discounts may apply.

c. Special Event Permit Fee. A basic fee of \$50 will be charged for each special event permit issued. Additional fees may be assessed in accordance with EP 1130-2-550, Appendix N. Activities for which special event permits may be required include, but are not limited to, water carnivals, boat regattas, music festivals, fishing tournaments and dramatic presentations. Since this is a permit fee, Golden Age and Golden Access discounts do not apply.

(1) Special Event Permits shall include the prohibition relating to discrimination (see Appendix N of EP 1130-2-550 for text). Requests for special events permits citing "special circumstances" for participation requiring gender or age discrimination must be well justified. If the Operations Manager considers the justification adequate, he/she shall forward the request to the District Commander or higher authority for approval.

(2) Specific procedures for issuing Special Event Permits are included in Appendix N of EP 1130-2-550.

d. Special Activity Permit Fee. A Special Activity Permit for recreational activities on Corps land may be issued in accordance with Chapter 9, paragraph 9-6.d. of EP 1130-2-550. A permit fee may be charged to cover the administrative cost of the program. Since this is a permit fee, Golden Age and Golden Access discounts do not apply.

9-8. Other Equipment, Facilities and Services. Fees may be charged for outdoor recreation related equipment and services provided at government expense for visitor use. Examples include firewood, ice, laundry machine use, shower use, dump station use, parking, and equipment rentals, such as rent-a-tent.

a. Discretion should be used in charging fees for other equipment and services to assure visitors aren't charged more than once for the same services. For instance, paying campers using services such as showers and dump stations should not be charged separate fees for these services. In such cases, the availability of these services is appropriately considered when the camping fee is established. Separate shower or dump station fees may be charged for day users or transient visitors not paying camping fees.

b. Parking fees in campgrounds may be charged for users' vehicles parked in designated, improved parking spaces other than the campsite. No separate parking fees may be charged for user vehicles parked on the campsite in accordance with the established vehicle carrying capacity.

c. Fees should be established under this section only when a discrete, separate service is offered to visitors at government expense. This service must be directly and clearly related to the visitor's recreation experience.

d. Care should be taken to avoid a multiplicity of fees, to assure the costs to provide the service and collect the fees are not prohibitive, and to avoid the appearance of excessive fee collection.

9-9. Discounts.

a. Applicability. Golden Age and Golden Access Passports shall be made available to the public at all projects where use fees are charged. Projects without fee areas and districts or division offices may also issue these passports. Both passports are available to Corps offices from the USACE Publications Depot. The Corps does not issue or honor Golden Eagle Passports or National Park Passes.

(1) Lifetime Golden Age Passports are available for a fee of \$10.00 to all United States citizens and permanent residents 62 years of age and older. Applicants must appear in person and sign the Passport upon receipt, in the presence of the fee collector. Deteriorated cards will be replaced free of charge provided the old card is returned in exchange. Replacement of lost cards will require payment of the \$10.00 fee.

(2) Free, lifetime Golden Access Passports are available to United States citizens or permanent residents of the United States who have been medically determined to be blind or permanently disabled and are eligible to receive benefits under Federal law. Applicants must appear in person and sign the Passport upon receipt, in the presence of the fee collector. Complete procedures may be found in Chapter 9 paragraph 9-8.c. of EP 1130-2-550.

(3) A Golden Age or Golden Access Passport shall entitle the permittee and any person accompanying him/her in a single, private, non-commercial vehicle (or alternately, the permittee and his/her spouse, children, and parents where entry to the area is by any means other than a private, non-commercial vehicle) to a rate of 50 percent of the established use fees such as fees for swimming, boat launching, camping, and other equipment, facilities and services as described in paragraph 9-8 above. This 50 percent reduction is also applicable to use fees assessed passport holders who are visitors of registered campers and shower and dump station users. The reduction does not apply to group use fees unless all members of a group have such passports. Golden Age Passport or Golden Access discounts do not apply to Special Event or Special Activity fees. The reduction does not apply to fees charged by leaseholders or concessionaires.

(4) One original and one duplicate annual day use pass decal may be purchased by each Golden Age/Golden Access Passport holder. The decals will be identified at the time of purchase as discount Passport by punching a hole or marking an "x" in the box labeled "G". The duplicate will also be marked with an "x" in the box labeled "D".

b. Documentation. Offices that issue Golden Age and Golden Access Passports shall maintain the required documentation.

(1) ENG Form 4468-R, Golden Age Passport Record (shown in Appendix P of EP 1130-2-550), shall be used to record the recipient's name, evidence of eligibility (drivers license, fishing license, disability card, etc.), Golden Age or Golden Access Passport number, the issuing official, and the date of issue. Information recorded on ENG Form 4468-R will serve as a record of accountability for the passports issued and shall be maintained for one year.

(2) In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, each individual from whom this information is requested must be provided a Privacy Act statement, ENG Form 4468A (shown in Appendix P of EP 1130-2-550).

(3) ENG Form 4840, Golden Age Passport and Golden Access Passport Eligibility Statement, shall be completed for each passport issued if the applicant fails to provide documentation. Specific guidance on completing these forms is provided in Chapter 9, paragraph 9-8.b. of EP 1130-2-550.

9-10. Accounting.

a. Cost of Remittances. Various options exist to pay for cashier's checks, bank drafts, and money orders to remit fees. Further guidance may be found in Chapter 9, paragraph 9-9.e. of EP 1130-2-550 and in ER 37-2-10.

b. NRRS™ Parks. In parks using NRRS™, fee collections will be transmitted using procedures established in the NRRS™ Operating Procedures Manual.

c. Districts shall provide for the acceptance of credit cards for fee collection whenever feasible.

d. Refunds. Refunds for recreation use fees may be authorized for legitimate reasons at the Operations Manager's discretion. No refunds may be made at the project. No refund will be given for day use fees; fees for other equipment, facilities and services, as described in paragraph 9-8 above; or for annual passes.

(1) Refunds within the NRRS™ are processed according to the current NRRS™ Operating Procedures Manual.

(2) Other refunds may be requested upon presentation, either in person or by mail, of the recreation use fee receipt. If approved, the Operations Manager will forward the request to the servicing finance and accounting office, which will issue the refund. Details on refund request procedures are found in Chapter 9, paragraph 9-9.d.(2) of EP 1130-2-550.

e. Credit Vouchers. Credit vouchers are used to minimize the need to issue refund checks. Vouchers will not be given for day use fees (boat launching or swimming beach). Credit vouchers are not given for fees collected through the NRRS™. Procedures for issuing credit vouchers are covered in Chapter 9, paragraph 9-9.f. of EP 1130-2-550.

9-11. Security Measures. Managers will comply with Engineer regulations governing the security and storage of funds, particularly ER 37-2-10, Accounting and Reporting Civil Works Activities. Options for enhancing the security of personnel handling funds as well as safeguarding funds themselves are found in appendix O and Q and Chapter 9, paragraph 9-10 of EP 1130-2-550.