

Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

US Forest Service Eastern Region

Fee Proposal

National Forest, State: Chippewa NF, Minnesota

Site Type: Campground

FLREA Fee Type: Expanded Amenity

Type of proposal: Fee increase at eight of eighteen campgrounds

Site Descriptions:

NORWAY BEACH CAMPGROUND

Chippewa, Cass Lake, Norway Beach, and Wanaki Loops

The Norway Beach Campground lies on the wooded, sandy shoreline of one of the largest lakes in northern Minnesota. Amenities include flush toilets, extra long campsite units, showers, dump station, electric hook-ups in the Chippewa Loop, campground hosts in each loop, picnic area, designated swimming beach, boat ramp, Civilian Conservation Corp era visitor center staffed with a naturalist offering environmental educational programming, interpretive trails and a paved bike trail.

STONY POINT CAMPGROUND

Stony Point offers a developed boat access, two boat harbors, swimming beach, showers, flush toilets, dump station, campground host, electric hook-ups, fish cleaning station, and picnic area. Stony Point is an open grassy campground surrounded by an old growth forest of oak, elm, maple, and ash; some trees are over 200 years old.

ON-E-GUM-E CAMPGROUND

ON-E-GUM-E Campground provides extra long campsite units, vault toilets, electric hook-ups, campground host, and a nearby staffed visitor center. The campground is centered in the Chippewa National Forest's premier fishing area. With access to Little Cut Foot Sioux, Cut Foot Sioux, and Winnibigoshish Lakes, the campground attracts a large number of visitors each summer.

All the following campgrounds provide vault toilets and most have boat ramps, swimming beaches and campground hosts. Many have extra-long campsite units.

KNUTSON DAM

Located on the northeast shore of Cass Lake, this campground is known for good canoe access to the Mississippi River. A boat ramp provides access to Cass Lake and a picnic area and accessible fishing platform are additional amenities.

WINNIE

Campsites here are tucked into red and white pine forest, along the shores of Lake Winnebigoishish, a large, premier fishing lake.

CUT FOOT HORSE CAMP

This campground offers access to over 120 miles of Forest Roads and trails for horse-back riding. The site provides a picket line and manure pits to facilitate horse use. A local equestrian club provides assistance in maintaining this campground.

EAST SEELYE BAY

The Cut Foot Sioux National Recreation Trail borders this campground and then continues on to Seelye Point, along Cut Foot Sioux Lake. A designated swimming beach and picnic area are additional amenities.

CLUBHOUSE LAKE

A sandy designated swimming beach, accessible fishing pier and day use area are amenities at this site. Fishing for northern pike, bass and panfish is popular. The Rice River canoe route starts its journey to the Bigfork River from waters that flow into Clubhouse Lake.

Sites may be reserved through the National Recreation Reservation Service for an additional fee.

Proposed Action:

Campground	Current fee	Proposed fee	Amount Increase	Date of Last Increase
Norway Beach:				
<i>Chippewa Loop</i>	20	23	3	2005
<i>Cass Lake Loop</i>	18	21	3	2005
<i>Norway Bch Loop</i>	18	21	3	2005
<i>Wanaki Loop</i>	18	21	3	2005
Stony Point	20	23	3	2005
On-E-Gum-E	18	20	2	2005
Knutson Dam	14	16	2	2005
Winnie	14	16	2	2005
Cut Foot Horse Camp	14	16	2	2005
East Seelye Bay	14	16	2	2005
Clubhouse Lake	14	16	2	2005

Reason for New Fee or Fee Change:

- Over the past decade, recreation funding has continued to decline by 10-15%.
- Recreation staff has been reduced from four to two in response to budget decline.
- Proposed requested fee increases will address a 4% inflation rate.
- Operation and Maintenance costs continue to increase. Utility, garbage fees, and vault and dump station pumping expenses increase annually.
- Loss of the Department of Labor Senior Employment Program (SCSEP) has increased operations and maintenance costs.
- The approximately \$130,000 generated through increased fees will allow for the base program to continue. The consequences of not increasing fees will be reducing operating season and closure of some campgrounds.
- Proposed requested fee increases will more closely align fees with local markets.
- \$3 fee increases are proposed for campgrounds with higher amenities and \$2 fee increases at campgrounds with lower level of amenities.

If recommended, the fee increase will be used for:

Camping fees are currently and will continue to be used for operations and maintenance. The fee increase would be used to electrify selected campgrounds, to provide increased amenities and generate more revenue, replace aging vault toilets, and increase accessibility for people with disabilities. It will also provide the opportunity to reduce backlog maintenance.

If recommended, the proposal will be implemented: 2008 when the campgrounds open for the season.

Price Comparisons for Similar Facilities & Services:

- **Forest Service:** The Chippewa National Forest has consistently followed Regional direction to operate campgrounds in a business-like manner. Fees will be significantly higher than forests that have not increased fees since 1996 (Wayne NF) and are in alignment with a forest with similar campground amenities and fees ranging from \$16 to \$25 (Allegheny NF).
- **Abundant free day use sites** provide recreation opportunities to low-income populations. Beltrami and Cass Counties have 17.6% and 13.6% of their population respectively in the Low Income or Below Poverty Level (2000) as compared to 7.9% statewide.
- **Local Private and Public Providers:**
A Campground fee analysis has been completed to compare private and public campgrounds over the past ten years. The table below indicates a comparison of the average fees over a decade between private and public campgrounds.

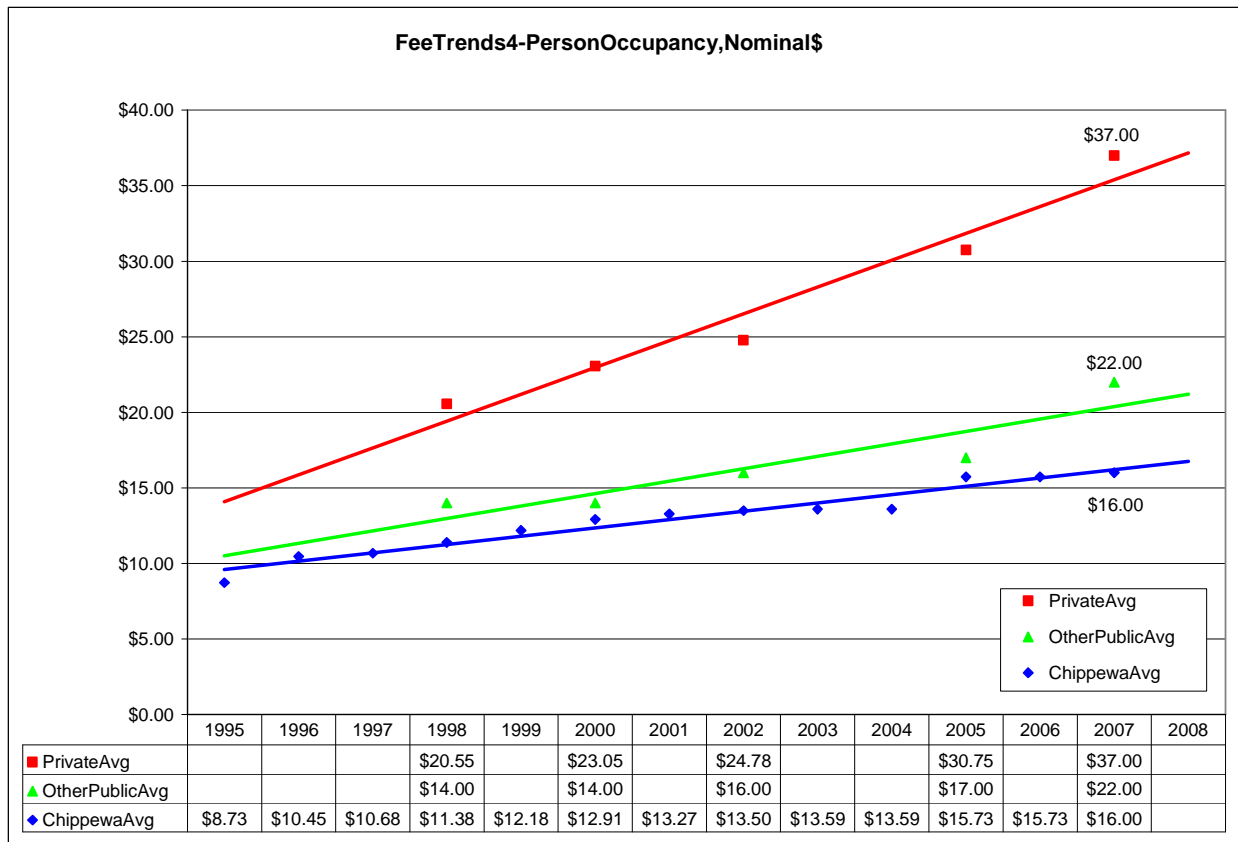


Figure 1. Public and Private Fee Trends, 1998-2007, 4-Person Occupancy, Nominal\$.
 Donald Deckard, Recreation Technician, Chippewa National Forest

Public Participation

Method	Date(s)	Comments/Results
Posted notice at recreation site inviting comments on the proposal (2 months minimum during visitor season)	July 6, 2007	Many comments from the lesser developed east side campgrounds received on Campground Comment Cards. All requested not raising fees at these more affordable campgrounds
News release and/or notice in local papers inviting comments on the proposal (if news release is not printed, place a paid notice in the newspaper)	Duluth News Minneapolis Star Tribune Outdoors Duluth News	Several papers published the news release, generating two emails with comments: One commenter suggested no benefits have been added over the last 40 years therefore no

	WalkerPilot Independent GrandRapidsHerald BemidjiPioneer DeerRiver BlackduckAmerican LeechLake DeBahJiMon CassLakeTimes BrainerdDispatch <i>July25,2007and August6,2007</i>	fees should be charged. Additionally we may be losing visitors as fees increase; the other comment requested more amenities at the East Seelye Bay campground.
Briefed local elected officials on the proposal. List names of officials.	<i>Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Hubbard, Itasca County Boards sent briefing letter July 25, 2007</i>	No comments to date
Met with affected stakeholder groups to get input on the proposal	<i>Rangers/District Recreation Staff requested to brief local groups when opportune and appropriate</i>	No comments to date
Posted Federal Register Notice.	N/A	Not required
Posted proposal on Forest Website	<i>Posted July 25, 2007</i>	Response suggested to increase revenue and occupancy we should lower fees and promote tent camping.
Other methods	<i>Other government: Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe: Chairman, Commissioner of Natural Resources, and Tribal Historic Preservation</i>	No comments to date

	<p><i>Officer notified.</i></p> <p>Local tourism contacts: Bemidji Chamber of Commerce, Cass Lake Information Center, Leech Lake Chamber of Commerce, Grand Rapids Chamber of commerce, Blackduck Tourist Information</p>	
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Analysis: Extensive public outreach and congressional notification generated little opposition to the proposal.