

Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

US Forest Service Eastern Region

Fee Proposal

National Forest, State: Superior National Forest, Minnesota

Site Type: Designated Wilderness - Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW)

FLREA Fee Type: Special Recreation Permit

Type of proposal: Fee Increase

Site Description: The BWCAW became part of the National Wilderness Preservation System through the 1964 Wilderness Act. The BWCAW has approximately 1175 lakes varying in size from 10 acres to 10,000 acres and several hundred miles of streams. It is the largest and only federal wilderness of substantial size east of the Rocky Mountains and north of the Everglades at over a million acres. BWCAW contains the largest contiguous areas of uncut forest remaining in the eastern United States. It's the most heavily used wilderness in the country with over 250,000 visitors annually. The BWCAW represents less than 1% of the acreage of the National Wilderness Preservation System, but receives 10% of the use in the entire NWPS. The BWCAW is the only wilderness with airspace reservation prohibiting flights below 4,000 feet. The National Geographic Society named the BWCAW one of 50 greatest places to visit in a lifetime.

Proposed Action: Fee increase. These prices are apply "per trip", and not "per night".

Visitor Type	Adult	Youth	Youth Seasonal	Adult Seasonal
Current Fee	\$10.00	\$5.00	\$20.00	\$40.00
Proposed Fee	\$16.00	\$8.00	\$32.00	\$64.00
Amount Increase	\$6.00	\$3.00	\$12.00	\$24.00

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

Date of Last Increase: 1997

Reason for New Fee or Fee Change: These fees have not increased since their inception over 10 years ago. This proposal is based on inflation using the Consumer Price Index Increases over the last 10 years and projecting forward for the next 5-10 years. Appropriated funds and the current fee are not sufficient to address the impacts of a high-use wilderness.

If recommended, fee increase will be used for: additional staff at contact stations, longer contact station hours, campsite improvements such as transplanting native vegetation to

encourage campsite recovery, improving tent pads, cleaning and repairing fire grates, latrine replacement, and erosion repair and prevention, winter maintenance work via sled dogs and more winter contacts, public education, interpretation, and law enforcement contacts, portage and hiking trail improvements such as clearing brush, installing water barriers to prevent erosion, repairing eroded areas, and hazard tree removal from campsites and portages. Fee money has also contributed to projects such as our new education video and heritage site protection projects.

If recommended, fee increase will be implemented: 2008

Price Comparisons for Similar Facilities & Services: There are no truly comparable facilities and services within the United States. Canada has a similar situation (Quetico) which is noted below. We have also listed other wilderness areas in the Eastern Region that charge wilderness use fees.

- **Ontario Parks - similar facilities, services, and size:** Quetico Provincial Park charges \$20, \$16, or \$14 (CN) per person **per night** w/ \$100 deposit, \$9 cancellation fee, and \$9 change fee. The size of Quetico Wilderness Park is similar to the BWCAW at over 1 million acres. Plus \$30 (CN) for RABC/CANPASS to enter into Canada from the U.S. for 12-18 months. The use fee for the BWCAW is charged **per trip** with a much smaller deposit. For comparison, a 4 day trip in Quetico for 4 adults would cost \$350. The same trip in the BWCAW would cost \$40 under the current fee, and \$64 under the proposed fee.
- **Forest Service Wilderness - similar facilities (wilderness campsites):** The Ottawa National Forest charges for overnight camping sites at \$5 per vehicle per day, and \$10 for the campsite per night.
- **Park Service Wilderness - similar facilities and services (wilderness campsites, water oriented recreation):** Isle Royale National Park and Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. The Apostle Islands charge for a variety of services at \$10 per person per night, \$10 to dock your boat, \$3 for interpretation programs, and \$5 for parking a car per night.
- **State Wilderness -** Porcupine Mountain State Wilderness in Michigan charges \$10-\$14 per night and all Minnesota State Parks charge an entrance fee.

Supporting Research:

1. *BWCAW User Fee Evaluation 1998, Lime, University of Minnesota* -90% of respondents said that those who visited the BWCAW should help pay for its management.
2. *Support for Wilderness Recreation Fees: The influence of Fee Purpose and Day Versus Overnight Use, Vogt and Williams 1999* - Results suggest general support for wilderness use fees, with strongest support for restoration of human damaged sites, litter removal, and related degradation. Unlike most visitors, the wilderness users surveyed, gave more support for using fees to maintain or provide the current level of service rather than to improve service.
3. *Assessing the Publics Attitudes Towards Fees at Wildland Recreation Sites, 2005, Riley and Ramthun, Concord University* - The sample population was not supportive of fees in general, but supportive towards fees dedicated to specific wilderness projects. Demographic variables such as age, proximity to the site, years of participation and income were not good predictors of the publics' response towards fees.

Public Participation

Method	Date(s)	Comments/Results
<p>Posted notice at recreation site inviting comments on the proposal (2 months minimum during visitor season)</p>	<p>July 2007</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notice at all Forest Service BWCAW permit issuing stations where visitors receive their wilderness permit. Walk-in comments so far: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Gunflint Ranger Station - none ✓ Laurentian Ranger Station - none ✓ La Croix Ranger Station - 1. "Good, because if you raise it, maybe less people will come". 2. "It was about time". 3. "As a boy scout leader I would hope we would get a break because we don't have that much money". ✓ Tofte Ranger Station - "I hope that means there will be more crews working out in the wilderness." ✓ Kawishiwi Ranger Station - 1. "I think it's not enough. Twenty to twenty-five dollars would be better because a flat rate wouldn't be out of line at all". 2. "It would be cheap at any price". 3. "It was about time". ✓ Supervisor's Office - "It's really not that much for what you're getting". ▪ Any member of the public making a reservation on www.bwca.org will see the fee alert and request for comment. None received at this time.
<p>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)</p>	<p>Summer 2007</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase discussed as part of several news stories ▪ Press Release titled: BWCAW to Benefit from Proposed User Fee Increase. Discusses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ User fee purpose ✓ Proposed Increase and Request for comments ✓ Consumer Price Index ✓ The BWCAW and Recreation Visitor Days ✓ Local media outlets include contacts such as the Duluth Tribune, Minneapolis Star Tribune, MN Public Radio, Cook County News Herald, the Ely Echo, and 18 other print, radio and television contacts. ▪ Feedback from Pioneer Press: Outfitter - "the fee isn't controversial ... I think it's a good idea....they are just catching up with inflation". Public - "I deal with the same

		inflation and I haven't gotten a 60% raise over the last ten years." Public - "But it's not like the [government] is out there to make a profit... \$16 for one night's stay in one of the nation's most pristine parks....that's no easy feat. "
Elected Officials	April 2007	<p>Forest Supervisor presented to the State of Minnesota Delegation in Washington D.C. - those members included Congresswoman McCollum, Congressman Peterson, Congresswoman Bachmann, Congressman Walz, Senator Klobuchar, Senator Coleman, Congressman Oberstar, Congressman Ellison, and official staffers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We also informed Lake, Cook and St. Louis counties and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources at quarterly meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Acknowledgement from the elected officials, but no written or verbal comments received
Met with affected stakeholder groups to get input on the proposal	Various Quarterly Meetings During 2007	<p>Briefed interest groups including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Verbally received positive comments & no written comments. ▪ Forest Supervisor presentation at the annual "Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness" meeting in Minneapolis, MN. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Organization supports increase ▪ Briefed Isaac Walton League, NE Minnesotans for Wilderness, Voyageurs National Park, and Quetico Provincial Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Quetico Superintendent supports increase ▪ Briefed cooperators/local businesses that issue permits during several meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Comments - "We should be raising it more than the proposal and should have done it years ago". ▪ Posted in seasonal Cooperator Newsletters
Posted Federal Register Notice.	N/A	Non-applicable - fees are already in place
Posted proposal on Forest Website	July 2007	<p>http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/superior/projects/ http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/superior/bwcaw/ http://www.bwcaw.org</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Received post card asking that we keep the seasonal fee card available. ✓ E-mails suggested issues such as: worrying about the seasonal fee card no longer being available, the fee proposal needs to be higher, and that we should "go for it". ✓ 1 negative message sent said, "the fee

		increase was the worst idea ever...would be an undue burden...user fees should be abolished...the BWCAW is owned by the American people and we shouldn't have to pay for land we own..."
Other methods	On-going	Insert in public information mailings

Analysis -

Public support for the above BWCAW user fee increase proposal is the main theme throughout this comment and results process. Local businesses and general members of the public not only agree with the user fee increase, but feel the proposal should be higher. Unlike several other wilderness areas in our region, we do not charge for trailhead/entry point parking or even per night camping. We only charge for overnight "entry" and a fee if the visitor makes a reservation ahead of time. So, the visitor can spontaneously decide how long they want to stay in the BWCAW keeping within the spirit of wilderness self-discovery.