

Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

US Forest Service- Eastern Region Fee Proposal

National Forest, State: Mark Twain National Forest,
Missouri

Site Type: Motorcycle and ATV Trail system

FLREA Fee Type: Special recreation permit.

Type of Proposal: fee increase.



Site Description:

Chadwick (78 miles) and Sutton Bluff (23 miles) ATV (All Terrain Vehicle) and motorcycle trails are two of only a few public motorized trail systems where off-road motorcycles and ATV's can be ridden legally in Missouri. The trails are in the rough Ozark Mountains, along rocky ridges and forested hollows. 70% of ATV visitors are from Missouri, with the remaining from surrounding states. In 2007, more than 16,000 daily and annual permits were issued. Total revenue collected in 2007 was \$161,640. Annual permits are used an average 20 times per year. Trails are open year-round. The permit is good for both trail systems.

Proposed Action: Increase daily and annual permit fees for the Motorcycle and ATV trail systems at Chadwick and Sutton Bluff.

Current Fee: Daily Permit = \$5 Annual Permit = \$35

Proposed Fee: Daily Permit = \$7 (+\$2) Annual Permit = \$45 (+\$10)

Date of Last Increase: Fees have not increased since original fees began:

Chadwick Motorcycle and ATV trail = 1997

Sutton Bluff Motorcycle and ATV trail = January 1, 1999

Reason for proposed fee increase: Use, especially at Chadwick, has increased over the past 10 years. Motorized trail fee collections in 1997 were \$39,200 with 2007 collections at \$161,640. These numbers indicate use has increased over 4 times in the past 10 years.

A fee increase is needed to help pay for trail maintenance and backlog maintenance, to make improvements to trailhead facilities, to keep up with inflation and increased maintenance costs, and to align fee with local market.

Based on 2007 permits, collections are expected to increase \$42,000 if the fee increase is approved, and would be used for: constructing and maintaining trails signs & equipment, salary for two trail technicians and improvements at trailheads

If approved, the proposal will be implemented with the sale of 2009 permits.

Price Comparisons for Similar Facilities & Services

PROVIDER	OPPORTUNITY	SEASON	ANNUAL Permit	7-DAY Permit	3-DAY Permit	DAILY Permit
Mark Twain NF	101 miles (2 areas)	Year-round	\$35	N/A	N/A	\$5
Wayne NF	111 miles (3 areas)	April-Dec.	\$45	N/A	\$12	\$12
Land Between the Lakes	100 miles	4/1-3/31	\$60	\$30	\$15	N/A
Finger Lakes SP	70+ miles	Year-round	\$60	N/A	N/A	\$3
Flatnasty (private)	Not listed	Year round	\$150/individ. \$300/family	N/A	N/A	\$15/driver \$5/ person
St. Joe SP	2000 ac.	Year round	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$3
Army Corps of Engineers Cooper Creek ATV area	400 ac.	Year-round	Free	Free	Free	Free
Bricks 4x4 Farm	Not listed	Weekends	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$10

Public Participation

Public participation focused on contacting ATV/motorcycle enthusiasts who already use Sutton Bluff and Chadwick, through clubs, the Forest website, at trailheads and permit vendors.

Method	Date(s)	Comments/Results
Posted notice at recreation site inviting comments on the proposal	May - July 2008	41 written comments: For =13 Against=18 For reduced increase=10
News release and/or notice in local papers inviting comments on the proposal	May - July 2008	Press release sent to: 16 newspapers/radio stations. Fee increase was topic of radio talk show (≈ 20,000 listeners)
Briefed local elected officials and Tribal leaders on the proposal.	April 2008 July 2008	McCaskill, Bond, Skelton, Blunt, Emerson, Holshof, Childers, Hoskins - no responses 41 Tribal leaders were notified by letter - no responses
Met with affected stakeholder groups for input on the proposal	April 2008	11 ATV/motorcycle clubs were contacted by mail - received 1 club response.
Posted proposal on Forest Website	May - July 2008	36 emails received (included in "written comments" above.
Other methods	April 2008	4 permit outlets were notified and they posted the proposal at their business. Posted at 3 Forest Service Offices.

Analysis:

Extensive public outreach and congressional notification generated 41 comments from ATV/motorcycle enthusiasts that use the Sutton Bluff or Chadwick trail systems. Thirteen supported the proposal, 18 were against the proposal, and 10 supported a fee increase of a lesser amount than proposed. Some respondents suggested that if there is a fee increase, more trails should be available, especially at Sutton Bluff (currently 23 miles). Several comments criticized trail conditions

and suggested that better trail maintenance should occur on both Chadwick and Sutton Bluff areas regardless of what happens with fees.

Mark Twain National Forest Response to Comments:

Proposed Fee Increase: After considering public comments, the Forest reduced the proposed fee increase. The original proposal was to increase the daily permit fee from \$5.00 to \$10.00 and the annual permit fee from \$35 to \$60. The proposed fee is now \$7 for the daily permit and \$45 for the annual permit.

Need for more trail mileage: A proposed action is being formulated to add 6-8 miles of ATV trail at Sutton Bluff. The Mark Twain NF obligated \$78,000 to conduct a trail inventory and develop a trail management plan at Chadwick; it is scheduled to be completed by December 2008. This plan would add 10 miles of single track trail for motorcycles, identify trails to be relocated, and prioritize reconstruction and maintenance needs for all 78 miles of trail. The cost to maintain motorized trails is \$2,500 - \$15,000 per mile.

Need for improved trail maintenance: Two GS-5 trail technicians were approved in 2008 and will work full time on Chadwick trails to maintain and improve the trails. The Mark Twain NF has been successful in receiving Recreational Trail Grants for motorized trails over the past 12 years. These grants require the Forest to match some of the grant money with appropriated dollars. The Forest has requested \$100,000 in grant money for 2009.

