

This letter is in response to your letters and emails concerning the Day Use Fees to be implemented beginning May 23, 2009 at the Stumpy Meadows Boat Ramp and Picnic Area. I think it is important to share the same information with everyone, so I will answer all the questions in one letter.

***Some of you asked about historical agreements that provided for free access.***

In 1971, the California State Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) entered into a lease and an agreement with the Georgetown Divide Public Utility District (GDPUD) in which the CDFG agreed to construct, and the GDPUD agreed to operate and maintain, the Lake Edson (Stumpy Meadow Lake) fishing access. In 1980, the CDFG, GDPUD, and The Eldorado National Forest (FS) entered into an agreement in which GDPUD agreed to deed to the FS the Lake Edson Fishing Access, and relinquish maintenance and management to the FS "in order that all recreational responsibilities be vested in one entity for improved administration." The agreement specified that public access would be free of charge for the term of the agreement, and that the agreement would end in 1996. An amendment to the agreement in 1986 allowed the FS to designate some of the day use parking for overnight use, and establish a fee for that use. The amendment did not change the term (expiration date) of the agreement. There is also an agreement between the Forest Service and California Department of Boating and Waterways (1998) that limited boat launching fees for Stumpy Meadows to \$3.00 (in 1983 dollars), but allowed for increasing or decreasing the fee based on the Consumer Price Index.

***Some of you asked why you should pay a fee for day use at Stumpy Meadows when you already pay property taxes and Public Utility District fees.***

No money comes to the Forest Service for management and maintenance of the Stumpy Meadows Boat Ramp, Picnic Area, and Campground from your property taxes or GDPUD fees. The Georgetown Divide Recreation District also does not have any responsibility for the Stumpy Meadows facilities. The Forest Service receives funds from Congress to manage its programs. The recreation funds we receive would not allow us to manage these facilities to the current standard, and are supplemented by grants, volunteers and the use of concessionaires.

***Some of you asked why a company from out of state is managing Stumpy Meadows.***

As is now common Forest Service-wide, most of the developed recreation facilities on the Eldorado National Forest (NF) are managed by a concessionaire. The reason the Forest Service uses concessionaires to manage campgrounds and other recreation facilities is that it enables us to keep more facilities open and managed to a higher standard, than we could do with the funds appropriated

by Congress. The Forest Service puts together a “prospectus” and companies submit an application (essentially they bid on a contract). The Forest Service uses a variety of criteria to select the company to operate the facilities. American Land and Leisure (AL&L) was the successful bidder for the new concession permit. AL&L, a company based in Orem, Utah, has 35 concession permits on National Forests in 11 states, and also manages PG&E recreation facilities in California.

***Some of you asked how the fee money is spent.***

In a concession permit, the Concessionaire collects the campground or other fees, and pays a percentage of the fees (in this case, 16%) to the U.S. Treasury for the use of the land. The Forest Service and the Concessionaire may agree to have the Concessionaire perform needed improvements to the facilities (“fee-offset” work) in lieu of paying the land use fees to the Treasury. The new permit with American Land and Leisure covers much of the Eldorado NF, so money generated by facilities that have heavier use, such as those in the Crystal Basin, may be used for improvements at facilities with lower use, such as the Stumpy Meadows Campground and Boat Ramp. Fee offset work may include such things as replacing stairs that have deteriorated, grading parking spurs, or replacing old-style water faucets with accessible faucets. AL&L is responsible for paying for trash pickup, toilet pumping, repairing or replacing signs that have been vandalized and, where applicable, potable water testing. AL&L is responsible for maintaining picnic tables, bar-b-que grates, outhouse buildings, and water systems.

***Some of you asked why this fee is being implemented now.***

The Stumpy Meadows Campground, Boat Ramp, and Picnic Area have been managed by concessionaires for approximately 20 years. The last concession permit, which ran for 10 years, expired in 2008. In the previous permits, the Eldorado NF required the concessionaires to manage the Stumpy Boat Ramp and Picnic Area, as well as boat ramps at Loon Lake, Ice House Lake, and Union Valley Reservoir, but did not allow the concessionaires to charge fees. Thus, we were requiring the concessionaires to perform work without compensation. National direction has changed and so when the prospectus was developed for the new permit, it was recognized that the concessionaires should have the authority to collect fees for all the facilities they would be expected to manage. Therefore, the option was included in the prospectus for interested concessionaires to include day use fees when they developed their proposals. AL&L chose to exercise the option to charge day use fees at Stumpy Meadows and other boat ramps on the Eldorado NF. The Company proposed the fees, which have to be reasonable and within market range of similar nearby facilities, and the Forest Service approved the fees. The fees proposed by AL&L are lower than those charged at Sly Park Lake and Folsom Lake.

***Some of you asked why the Forest Service did not give the public an opportunity to comment before the day use fee was implemented.***

The Forest Service has regulations it must follow concerning implementation of the concessionaire program. There is no requirement in the regulations to seek public comment for fee implementation in a concessionaire-operated facility.

***Many of you requested that we allow local residents to use the Stumpy Meadows Boat Ramp free of charge, and only impose the fee on people from out of the area.***

The Forest Service is prohibited from giving a discount based on where people live. We have talked with AL&L's management, and they have agreed to offer two season passes for 2009 in addition to the \$6.00 daily fee. The season passes will be:

\$25 for day use at Stumpy only

\$50 for day use at Stumpy Meadows, Loon lake, Icehouse Lake, Union Valley, as well as any other facilities managed by AL&L

Additionally, AL&L has agreed to have 5 free use days (this does not include overnight camping) during 2009:

June 10, July 8, August 12, September 9, and October 14 (the second Wednesday of each summer month).

***Some of you said people will park alongside the road to avoid paying a fee, and this will create a traffic hazard.***

If parking on the road becomes hazardous, it will be within the authority of the California Highway Patrol to enforce safe parking.

***Some of you also asked why Stumpy Meadows is not being stocked with fish this year.***

The Forest Service does not stock fish. Fish stocking is a program of the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). In October 2006, the CDFG was sued over its fish stocking programs on the grounds that they had not completed an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Court ordered CDFG to complete an EIR, and to negotiate an agreement on how and where it can continue to stock fish during the time the EIR is being prepared. More information is available on the CDFG webpage <http://www.dfg.ca.gov>.

***Some of you commented that garbage is not picked up and toilets are not cleaned at the Stumpy Meadows Boat Ramp.***

This has definitely been a problem during the winter when it is difficult to get to Stumpy because of snow. Vandalism and littering increase when AL&L's representative is not visiting the Boat Ramp on a daily basis. The Forest Service will work with AL&L to do a better job.

If you experience unsatisfactory conditions during the normal operating season (mid-April through October), please let us know and we will work with AL&L to improve the conditions.

There is no fee for day use at Hell Hole Reservoir, located in the eastern portion of the Georgetown Ranger District. Although it is a longer trip from the Georgetown Divide, Hell Hole Reservoir is a beautiful location and well worth the trip.

It is my desire to provide quality recreation opportunities and facilities throughout the Georgetown Ranger District. I have listened to the many points that have been raised, and I hope that our efforts and those of American Land and Leisure will allow Forest visitors to continue to enjoy Stumpy Meadows Reservoir in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Pat Trimble, District Ranger  
Georgetown Ranger District  
Eldorado National Forest