

CHAPTER 9 - RECREATION USE FEES

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

9-2. Authority. 16 USC 4601-6a provides that users of specialized sites, facilities, equipment or services provided at Federal expense will be assessed fair and equitable fees. Fee schedules will be based upon distinguishable differences among the facilities of the Corps and those provided by other Federal agencies, non-Federal public agencies, and the private sector in the same service area. In addition, Section 210 of the Flood Control Act of 1968 (16 USC 460d-3) provides that no entrance fees shall be charged at US Army Corps of Engineers recreation areas, but does allow for the collection of camping and day use fees.

9-3. General Fees.

a. Fee Schedules. The District Commander will provide the proposed schedule of use fees for the next two years to the Major Subordinate Command (MSC) Commander no later than 1 August each year. The MSC Commander will approve or disapprove the recommendations and respond back to District Commander no later than 1 September. District Commanders will assess seasonal visitation patterns of individual fee areas to determine the period during which a fee program will be in effect. It is anticipated that fees will be charged at some areas throughout the peak recreation season, while at other areas fees will be collected throughout the year. In order to assure consistency and sound business practices, the MSC Commander will establish a procedure for periodic review/audit of the districts' establishment of fee schedules. The MSC will review comparability studies prior to approval of fee schedules. Information on approved use of fee areas and charges will be submitted through Operations and Maintenance Business Information Link (OMBIL). Corps of Engineers Financial Management System (CEFMS) accounts will be established to record fee receipts by type, i.e., camping, day use, and other. Guidance regarding the establishment of these accounts is contained in ER 37-2-10.

b. Setting Fees. Engineer districts whose boundaries coincide within a single state will coordinate fee proposals on projects within that state, to assure comparable fees for comparable facilities and services. To attain comparability between Federal and non-Federal fee schedules and the private sector, the District Commander may recommend fees below the minimum in Appendix M. Such recommendations will contain full justification for deviation from the proposed minimum fees.

c. Supporting Data. Supporting data should be developed, documented, and retained for two years, which details fees and facilities for other Federal and non-Federal public agencies, as well as private entities in the service areas, so that an accurate comparison may be made. Where Corps facilities are of higher quality than similar competing state, local, or private facilities, a higher fee should be charged commensurate with the higher quality experience offered. It is recognized that the fee structure resulting from this evaluation may not permit recovery of the total cost to operate and maintain the facilities or the recreation area. The District Commander will consider the following in developing an appropriate use fee structure:

- (1) the construction cost of the facility;
- (2) the cost of O&M at that facility;
- (3) the comparability of this facility and its amenities to other facilities within a reasonable distance (30-60 miles can be considered reasonable);
- (4) the proximity of the facility to the water;
- (5) paved vs. unpaved roads;
- (6) availability of showers;
- (7) level of security;
- (8) degree of development;
- (9) availability of amenities;
- (10) availability of reservation services; and
- (11) other factors, such as those described in Chapter 9, paragraph 9-3 of ER 1130-2-550.

d. Collection Costs. Normally, recreation use fees will be collected only at those areas where revenue exceeds the cost of collection. As a general rule, the fee program for an area will be terminated if the sum of direct and indirect costs of collection exceeds revenue for two consecutive years. This policy does not preclude the control of access with manned gates at non-fee areas.

e. Exceptions. In some unusual cases, it may be in the best interest of the public and the government to charge recreation use fees at areas where cost of collection has historically exceeded revenue collected. Should such areas be recommended for inclusion in the fee program, a written justification for such action will be submitted by the District Commander to the MSC Commander. The justification will explain:

(1) The management alternatives considered which could result in more economical fee collection and the impact of each alternative;

(2) The cost to operate and maintain the camp area if there is no fee collection;

(3) If it is in the best interest of the Government or public to continue charging a use fee, close the camp area, or operate the camp area as a non-fee area.

f. Public Relations. In the interest of informing the public of the fee collection program, public relations activities will be conducted to disseminate information regarding this program before the collection of fees begins.

(1) District Commanders will notify Congressional representatives, as appropriate, of the fee collection program in their Congressional districts.

(2) All areas designated as recreation use fee areas will be marked in accordance with the standards set forth in the Corps of Engineers sign manual. The U.S. Fee Area symbol will be displayed at the entrance to designated use fee areas and will be installed prior to collection of fees in the area.

(3) A limited number of Free-night Camping Coupons may be issued for the purpose of increasing awareness of recreation opportunities to potential users. These coupons will not be redeemed for camping at reservable sites. To reduce confusion, these coupons should not be referred to as "vouchers". Each coupon will be redeemed within one year from the date of issuance. A camping coupon may only be used at the issuing Project. The issuing project must keep a record of each coupon issued, including the date, value, recipient, and reason for issuance. Incoming coupons must be retained by the receiving

project for end-of-season evaluation. The program should be evaluated for effectiveness in increasing campsite use on an annual basis. Each District may produce and distribute a camping coupon for their projects' use. Each coupon will be numbered, and the Operations Manager will authorize the number of camping coupons issued per season in accordance with the District's established schedule of use fees. The Operations Manager will authorize each camping coupon issued. See Appendix U, Figure U-1 for a sample Free-night Camping Coupon.

g. ENG Form 4457. ENG Form 4457 (User Permit) may be used as a permit and the official record for receipt of fees paid for use of campsites, other special sites, facilities, equipment, services, activities, and special events. The cardboard copy will be issued to the user and the white or yellow copy and voided cardboard copies will be retained for at least one year. ENG Form 4457 is available from the USACE Publications Depot. The Automated User Permit System (AUPS) and the National Recreation Reservation System (NRRS™) may also be used to collect fees and issue permits.

9-4. Campground Use Fees.

a. Criteria. A fee will be charged for single user unit campsites and group camp areas in accordance with the criteria shown in Appendix M.

b. Payment. A maximum of 14 days in use fee charges may be collected for a single user unit campsite or group camp area in advance. Payment will be made by personal check, traveler's check, cashier's check, currently accepted credit card, debit card, money order, or cash. The preferred method of payment is by credit card for security reasons.

c. Methods of Collection. Fees for the use of camping areas will be collected by one of the following methods:

(1) Fees may be collected by uniformed Corps personnel at the entrance to the area. Fees may also be collected by Ranger personnel while on routine patrols through a fee camp area.

(2) Fees may be collected by contract gate attendants as part of their overall responsibility of providing control, information, or custodial services. Contractors will be properly identified to preclude unauthorized personnel from collecting fees. Operations Managers will arrange for frequent collections of use fees from the contractor or frequent deposits by attendants to preclude a large buildup of cash at the gatehouse. Collection of use fees by contract gate attendants is the preferred method of collection. Volunteers are

authorized to sell permits and collect fees from the public at campgrounds, day-use facilities, administration offices and other locations, including those off-site. Contract fee collectors/volunteers must be bonded in accordance with provisions of ER 37-2-10.

(3) A multi-area fee collection station may be used where several recreation areas are grouped in the same general location. Such stations must have easy public access and must be easy for the public to identify. Multi-area fee collection stations could be located at project offices, visitor centers, at one of the areas being served or on an access road common to all areas served. Where multi-area collection stations are used, it is especially important that there be good informational and directional signs to alert the public to the requirement for fees and to explain the location of the fee collection station.

(4) Where small and/or remote camp areas are included in the fee collection system, the Self Deposit Vault System may be used to reduce the cost of collection. The self-deposit vault system will be implemented as follows:

(a) ENG Form 4839 (Self Deposit Permit), a sealable envelope with a detachable stub will be used to pay fees. The stub will be retained by the camper as his/her receipt and site identification. These forms will be procured locally as needed to meet program requirements.

(b) A registration point will be located at the entrance of the camp area, which has:

(1) A sign instructing the user on the self-deposit system, stating the fee for the area, and indicating a 50 percent reduction of fees applies for bearers of Golden Age or Golden Access Passports.

(2) A secure honor vault (program integrity guidance is provided at Appendix O).

(3) Supply of ENG Form 4839 (Self-Deposit Permit).

(c) In camp areas administered in this manner, each campsite should be equipped with a holder for displaying the permit stub. The sign at the fee collection point should provide instructions for completion and display of the permit stub. Bearers of Golden Age/Golden Access Passports are required to enter their passport number on the fee envelope.

(d) Revenues will be collected from the deposit vault on a regular basis. While in the area, personnel will check to insure occupied campsites have appropriate permits displayed and if possible, insure correct fees have been deposited.

(5) Camping fees may be collected using the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS™), Automated User Permit System (AUPS) or ENG 4457.

(6) The use of automated fee collection systems is encouraged when cost effective. Commercial bill and coin counters may be useful in counting large amounts of small denomination currency.

9-5. Day Use Fees.

a. Criteria. A fee will be charged for the use of Corps operated day use facilities meeting the criteria in Chapter 9, paragraph 9-6. a. of ER 1130-2-550.

b. Methods of Collection. Fees for day use will be collected by one of the following methods:

(1) Day use fees may be collected by either contract, volunteer or uniformed Corps personnel. Contractors and volunteers will be properly identified to preclude unauthorized personnel from collecting fees.

(a) A cash register may be used in the fee collection process to issue receipts to users. The cash registers will provide a minimum of two receipts, one receipt to be given to the visitor and the second to stay at the project for audit purposes. The receipts should list the date, identify the recreation area, identify the individual making the transaction, and print "void" as needed.

(b) The NRRS™, AUPS and ENG 4457 may also be used to collect day use fees. Only day use fees collected in areas participating in the NRRS™ program may be collected and remitted through the NRRS™.

(2) Where and when appropriate, the self-deposit vault system may be used to reduce the cost of collection. The self-deposit vault system will be implemented as follows:

(a) ENG Form 4839A, (Self Deposit Day User Permit) a sealable envelope with detachable stub, will be used to pay fees. The stub will be retained by the user as his/her receipt. These forms will be procured locally as needed to meet program requirements.

(b) The self-deposit vault will be in the day use area. A registration point will be provided which has:

(1) A sign instructing the user on the self-deposit system, stating the fee for the area, and indicating a 50 percent reduction of fees applies for bearers of Golden Age or Golden Access Passports. Bearers of Golden Age/Golden Access Passports are required to enter their passport number on the fee envelope. The sign at the fee collection point should provide instructions for completion and display of the permit stub.

(2) A secure honor vault (program integrity guidance is provided in Appendix O).

(3) Supply of ENG Form 4839A (Self-Deposit Use Fee Permit).

(c) In day use areas administered in this manner, a sign at the fee collection point should provide instructions for display of the permit stub.

(d) Revenues will be collected from the deposit vault on a regular basis. While in the area, personnel will check to insure that appropriate permits are displayed and, if possible, insure correct fees have been deposited.

(3) The use of automated fee collection systems is encouraged when cost effective. Commercial bill and coin counters may be useful in counting large amounts of small denomination currency.

(4) Annual passes may be sold through the mail, if payment is received in advance. Annual passes may be sold through the mail with a Golden Age/Golden Access Passport discount if the applicant furnishes a photocopy of their Golden Age/Access Passport. Personalized check is the only authorized method of payment for Annual Passes purchased by mail.

(5) Annual passes may also be purchased over the telephone with currently accepted credit cards.

(6) Fees may be collected by authorized Corps and contractor employees, volunteers, and vendors as covered in Chapter 9, paragraph 9-6 of ER 1130-2-550. These collections may be made using a cash register, AUPS, NRRS™, or ENG Form 4457.

9-6. Special Use Fees.

a. General. Special facility use fees, special event permit fees, and special activity fees will be collected in person, through the NRRS™, or by mail by the Operations Manager, or his/her designated representative.

b. Special Facility Use Fees. A fee may be charged for the use of special recreation facilities (i.e., group picnic shelters, multipurpose courts, amphitheaters, athletic complexes, equestrian areas, etc.). Fees proposed for the use of special recreation facilities should be comparable to fees charged by other Federal or non-Federal public agencies or the private sector within the service area of the management unit. Full payment is required prior to the use of special facilities.

c. Special Event Permit Fee. Procedures for issuing special event permits are given in Appendix N.

(1) Special Event Permits shall include the prohibition relating to discrimination (see Appendix N 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 for approval.

(2) For special events requiring work schedule modifications or other special arrangements, permit fees must be paid 15 days or more in advance of the scheduled special event. Fees may be collected in person or by mail by the Operations Manager or his/her designated representative. Fees collected may be remitted using the NRRS™ if the event takes place in an NRRS™ area.

d. Special Activity Permit Fee. In some cases, it has been determined necessary to issue Special Activity Permits for recreational activities on Corps land. These permits may serve to promote environmental, safety, or security concerns; restrict numbers of visitors to an area; place restrictions on the recreational use activity; or provide information to the user concerning their activity. Examples of the types of recreational activities where the

Special Activity Permit program may be appropriate include hunting and off-road vehicle use. A fee may be collected to capture the administrative cost of these programs.

(1) A general plan for operating the Special Activity Permit program, including the fee structure, will be submitted by the District Commander for approval by the MSC, prior to charging any fees. The plan will include a public information plan, which will include congressional notification.

(2) Special activity permits that restrict hunting activities are not required to coincide entirely with laws for the protection of fish and game of the state in which it is situated. Use permits, however, cannot be inconsistent with these laws. The Corps may be more restrictive than state law when necessary. Examples of this include limiting hunting on an area to a time period less than the state hunting season or reducing specific bag limits to a number less than the state's.

9-7 Other Equipment, Facilities and Services. Fees may be charged for certain other 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 recreation equipment rental, 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 use 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 user's vehicles in excess to the number permitted on the campsite. No additional parking fees may be charged for user vehicles parked on the campsite in accordance with the designated vehicle carrying capacity. Designated, improved parking spaces must be provided elsewhere in the park to charge separate parking fees.

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.

9-8. Discounts.

a. Applicability. 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 50 percent reduction of established use fees. This 50 percent reduction is also applicable to use fees assessed passport holders who are visitors to registered campers. The reduction does not apply to group use fees unless all members of a group have such passports.

b. Documentation. The Golden Age and Golden Access Passport Record (shown in Appendix P) will be used to record appropriate data and will serve as a record of accountability for the passports issued. Information recorded on ENG Form 4468-R should be maintained for one year and then may be discarded. 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). ENG Form 4840, Golden Age Passport and Golden Access Passport Eligibility Statement (shown in Appendix P) must be completed for each passport issued if the applicant fails to provide documentation. The recipient will sign the statement of eligibility, and the issuing official will complete remaining entries on the form. The recipient should be provided a copy of this form on request. These forms are available from the USACE Publications Depot. Completed Eligibility Statements should be kept for one year and then discarded.

c. Eligibility Requirements.

(1) Individuals eligible to receive the Golden Age Passport shall be any United States citizen or permanent resident who is 62 years of age or older. Applicants must appear in person, provide proof of age and sign the Passport in the presence of the issuing official.

(2) Individuals eligible to receive the Golden Access Passport shall be any person who has a permanent physical, mental or sensory impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning or working. Applicants must appear in person and provide acceptable documentation for issuance of the passport as follows:

(a) A document issued by a Federal Agency providing Federal benefits, which attests that the applicant has been medically determined to be eligible to receive Federal benefits as a result of blindness or permanent disability.

(b) A statement signed by a licensed physician attesting that the applicant has a permanent physical, mental, or sensory impairment that severely limits one or more major life activities, and enumerating the nature of the impairment.

(c) A document issued by a State vocational rehabilitation agency, which attests that the applicant has been medically determined to be eligible to receive vocational rehabilitation agency benefits or services as a result of blindness or permanent disability.

(d) The statement of permanent disability or blindness provided by the Federal agency issuing the Golden Access Passport, that is signed and dated by the applicant in the presence of the officer issuing the Passport.

9-9. Accounting.

a. **Remitting Fee Collections.** Revenue collected from the users of facilities at recreation areas managed by the Corps will be deposited in a special account in the U.S. Treasury. Recreation use fees may be directly transmitted to servicing finance and accounting (F&A) offices (or servicing Federal Reserve Bank if this is an approved District practice) by contract gate attendants or volunteers, if adequate control and protection of funds is provided and contracts reflect this procedure. In parks using NRRS™, fee collections will be transmitted in accordance with the NRRS™ Operating Procedures Manual. Appendices Q and R of this EP provide guidance and procedures for the direct transmittal of recreational use fees and for maintaining funds security.

b. **Administration Costs.** An analysis of the cost, to include direct and indirect cost, of administering the program will be completed annually. Direct costs of collection are those costs resulting solely from fee collection activities. Direct costs will include the time

Corps personnel or contract gate attendants are directly involved in fee collection. Personnel costs for duties other than fee collection will not be charged to this account. The portion of the gate attendant contract to be charged to direct costs will depend on the language of the contract which delegates duties and responsibilities. Indirect costs of collection are efforts of project office and District office personnel associated with the program. Also, indirect costs should include district overhead distribution to the program. This analysis should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the recreation use fee program and should be retained for 2 years.

c. Revenue Reporting. All income derived from fee collection will be deposited into Special Receipt Account 96-145005.4 (96X5007) and reported in accordance with ER 37-2-10.

d. Refunds. No refunds for recreation use fees may be made at the project. No credit voucher or refund will be given for day use fees or for fees for other equipment, facilities and services as described in paragraph 9-7 above.

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

(2) Other refunds may be requested upon presentation, either in person or by mail, of the recreation use fee receipt which has been appropriately marked as eligible for a refund by the Operations Project Manager/Ranger and mailed to the servicing finance and accounting office along with a completed copy of the Use Fee Refund Request, ENG FORM 6013-R, AUG 2002, shown in Appendix T. A reproducible copy of this form is posted on the Natural Resources Management Gateway.

e. Cost of Remittance. Various options exist to pay for the cost of remitting use fee collections as follows:

(1) Contract fee collectors may be responsible for remittance costs in accordance with the terms of their contract.

(2) Utilize a VISA check program at field offices.

(3) Make contractual arrangements at a local bank where cashier's checks, bank drafts or money orders are purchased to pay for remittances.

(4) Projects may use collections to purchase money orders or cashier's checks to remit use fees. The funds expended must be replaced from project O&M, General funds, at the end of each accounting period (month) to ensure gross collections are remitted to the U.S. Treasury. If this option is selected, use the following procedures:

(a) Maintain a register for all money orders or cashiers checks purchased during the month. The register should include the date purchased, money order or cashier's check fee.

(b) Remit net collections (gross collections minus money order or cashier check fees) to the USACE Finance Center. Indicate on the CEFMS Receiving Office Voucher (ROV) the money order or cashier's check number. Record the difference between the gross and net collection amount on the worksheet.

(c) Create a Purchase Request and Commitment (PR&C), Obligation and Receiving Report charging O&M, General (96X3123) for the total amount of fees paid as indicated on the worksheet. The obligation number should be established with the project office's seven-character organization code followed by a dash, then SRUFMOCC, (i.e., K5ROLEO-SRUFMOCC).

(d) Project Offices will create an ROV in CEFMS for the total amount recorded on the worksheet, citing 96X5007 as the collecting appropriation. Reference the month that the ROV covers on the description line, (i.e., money orders/cashier checks purchased for May, 2001 for SRUF cash collections).

(e) The worksheet along with the ROV number will be sent to the USACE Finance Center monthly. The Finance Center will input the invoice in CEFMS based upon the work sheet. When the check is disbursed, the Finance Center will collect the check against the ROV, then certify and deposit funds into the appropriate appropriation.

f. Credit Vouchers. In non-NRRS™ parks, vouchers will be issued in lieu of refunds whenever possible. No vouchers will be issued for day use fees.

9-10. Security Measures.

a. Funds Security. As a minimum, Operations Managers will consider the following options to enhance the security of personnel handling funds, as well as safeguarding the funds themselves:

(1) Collect and deposit funds frequently to reduce the amount stored on-hand. Funds must be deposited when collections on hand exceed \$5,000 or once a week in accordance with ER 37-2-10, Chapter 4.

(2) Vary the times of collection and deposit to avoid developing patterns and becoming a target.

(3) Vary the routes to and from collection and deposit, if possible, to avoid patterns.

(4) Maximize the use of credit cards to reduce the cash stored on hand.

(5) Contract for private security to collect and deposit funds.

(6) Include collection and deposit of funds in cooperative law enforcement agreements.

(7) Ensure personnel collecting and storing funds work in pairs and have reliable communication equipment (radios or cellular phones) available at all times.

b. Protective Measures. District security managers will assist operations project managers in assessing the criminal threat to their operation and recommending protective measures.

c. Security Inspections. District security managers will review the security of personnel and funds during biennial physical security inspections.

9-11. Controlling Paperwork Burden on the Public. The guidance in 5 CFR 1320 establishes the framework for the paperwork control process. Generally this CFR provides that an agency shall not engage in a collection of information (from the public) without obtaining Office of Management and Budget approval. There are no procedures contained in this pamphlet that should be interpreted to require the public to provide information other than data for receipt purposes.