



2015 Fee Increase: Frequently Asked Questions

- ***Where do your entrance fees go?***

White Sands National Monument is being cared for today and preserved for future generations by visitors like you. This dual objective—use and preservation—comes at a price. Protecting our natural and cultural heritage while ensuring that everyone visiting these areas has a safe, enjoyable and education experience costs money.

The number of visitors continues to climb due to the popularity of the monument and the cost to maintain the monument and add visitor amenities, including trails and trail maintenance, restrooms, picnic shelters, exhibits, and visitor services continues to increase as well. In 1996, to address these needs, Congress directed the U.S. Department of the Interior to implement the Recreation Fee Demonstration program in three of its agencies—the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Similarly, since 2004, the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act has allowed the National Park Service to keep the entrance fees to help manage these lands for those who use them.

Managing our public lands is a major financial investment most of which comes from the general tax base. Those who use these areas for recreation derive a greater benefit from—and place a greater burden on—resources than the public at large. Entrance fees redistribute that burden so that users pay an increased share of the costs. We encourage you to participate in recreational activities which will enhance your visit and create memories. And we also ask you to remember your role in keeping the outdoor recreational experience alive for others.

- ***What is a proposal?***

A proposal is a plan or suggestion that is put forward for the consideration and discussion of others.

- ***Who chose the amount of the proposed new fees?***

The proposed rates were determined by the National Park Service Washington Office.

- ***What are the different fee groups and what does that mean?***

The National Park Service proposed new fee structure is designed to bring all 131 national park units in alignment. Similar parks are grouped into one of four groupings.

- ***Why do only 131 of the more than 400 national parks and monuments charge fees?***

The remaining national park units do not charge an entrance fee for a variety of reasons. For example a few are legislatively prohibited from ever charging fees.

- ***What does “direct visitor benefit” mean?***

The National Park Service provides a variety of services and amenities that the visiting public may immediately use and enjoy. Examples that provide direct visitor benefit include interpretive led programs and events, as well as care of picnic shelters, the visitor center and restrooms. The follow are examples of National Park Service activities or facilities that may not provide immediate and direct visitor benefits: care of an administrative building that the visitor does not visit, purchase of a road grader or other heavy equipment, salaries of permanent park staff and repair of a maintenance building roof.

- ***How have fees at White Sands National Monument changed over time?***

Prior to 1988, visitors were charged \$1 per vehicle to enter the dunefield. In 1988, entrance fees were raised to \$3 per vehicle. This changed in 1993 when the fee was increased to \$4 per vehicle. The entrance fee was changed to \$3 per person in 1998 and has not changed since.

- ***How much of the entrance fees collected will benefit the monument?***

Until late 2014, FLREA allowed White Sands National Monument to keep 80% of entrance fees collected for use within the monument. The remaining 20% was made available by the Washington Office to other parks for similar uses throughout the national system. Currently the monument may retain 100% of entrance fees collected.