



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SHAWNEE NATIONAL FOREST PROPOSES NEW FEES

Harrisburg, Il, March 27, 2008 - The Shawnee National Forest has extended the comment period from April 15, 2008, to June 30, 2008, for the proposal to charge user fees at eight national forest day-use recreation sites and for bridle tag fees on designated trails. The proposal is based on the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act that was enacted in 2004. This Act is being implemented nationwide as a tool to assist public land managers in addressing certain recreation needs.

The Shawnee is proposing to charge \$5.00 per vehicle per day at the Johnson Creek Boat Launch, Johnson Creek Beach/Picnic Area, Buttermilk Hill Picnic Area, Lincoln Memorial Park at Jonesboro, Little Grand Canyon Trailhead, Pounds Hollow Beach/Picnic Area, Garden of the Gods Interpretive/Picnic Site and Bell Smith Springs Interpretive/Picnic Area. As an alternative, a yearly pass covering use of all of these sites would be available for \$50.00 per vehicle.

Additionally, the Shawnee proposes to charge \$5.00 per person, per day for equestrian use of the designated trail system. A \$50.00 yearly bridle tag would also be available. Riding on the Forest where cross country use is authorized would continue to be free.

Lastly, the Shawnee National Forest is proposing to increase existing fees from \$5.00 to \$10.00 per night at Camp Cadiz and Pine Hills Campground, and from \$5.00 to \$12.00 at Pine Ridge (Pounds Hollow) and Pharaoh (Garden of the Gods) Campgrounds. Fees at the Johnson Creek Group Campground, which vary between \$5.00 and \$12.00, would increase to between \$12.00 and \$20.00.

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Publication in the *Federal Register* began a six month period for the Forest to accept public comment and recommendations regarding these fee proposals. The comment period originally ending April 15 has been extended until June 30, 2008.

The proposed fees are authorized by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA), which was signed by the President in 2004. The Act authorizes federal land management agencies to charge fees for certain types of facilities, including specialized trail systems. Furthermore, the Act authorizes at least 80% of the fee revenue to be retained where it was collected and made available for the operation and maintenance of recreation facilities, including trails.

The Shawnee National Forest is making these proposals at this time as a means to fund the continued operation of the Forest's recreation sites, and to further the progress that is now being made in trail maintenance and reconstruction. In addition to charging fees, the Forest proposes to eliminate the Johnson Creek Single Family Campground, which has been closed since 2003 (the Johnson Creek Group Campground will remain open). Also, two of the four campground loops at Pine Ridge Campground at Pounds Hollow will also be eliminated.

Comments and recommendations regarding the Shawnee National Forest's recreation fee and/or facilities proposals can be sent to Hurston A. Nicholas, Forest Supervisor, Shawnee National Forest, 50 Highway 145 South, Harrisburg, IL 62946. Comments or recommendations concerning these recreation fee proposals should be submitted prior to June 30, 2008, in order to be considered. You can email your comments using the "Contact Us" link on the Shawnee National Forest website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/>.

For additional information contact Tim Pohlman, Recreation Program Manager, 618-253-7114. Information about proposed fee changes can also be found on the Shawnee National Forest Website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/passes/>