



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/25/2025

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Regional Parks
Staff Name and Phone Number: Robert Gonzalez, 565-6032
Vote Requirement: 4/5th
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Consolidated Fee Hearing - Regional Parks Fee Package FY 25-26

Recommended Action:

- A. Adopt a Resolution of the Board of Supervisors authorizing fee adjustments for various fees supporting camping, group use reservations, special events and activities, park operations including day use and seasonal parking, community engagement programs, camp cancellation fees and residence maintenance fees.
- B. Review and approval of new fees including Veteran's Day parking for veterans and active military; Veteran's pass membership; volume rate for memberships (100-199); synthetic field rental; field trip classroom pre-visit; community partner discount for park program fees; camp cancellation fees; and daily camp fee.
- C. Review and approval of the removal of obsolete fees that include non-peak camping fee structure; group campsite reservation and change fees; dog per night fee; bocce ball rental; various individual camp fees; and various resident/non-resident field trip fees.
- D. Review and approval of fees requiring description changes without fiscal impact including "additional vehicle" changing to "second vehicle" for Group and Individual Camping and description change from various individually named camps simply to "Camps."

Executive Summary:

Sonoma County manages 60 parks, trails, beaches, and other facilities covering more than 18,078 acres. In FY24-25, fees paid by park visitors provided 24% of the Regional Parks operating budget. Fee revenue is critical in operating and maintain the growing system of parks for residents and visitors.

Last year, Regional Parks completed a significant review of its fee structure. Many of the fees had not been adjusted since their inception, many nearly over 10 years. In most cases, fees were increased on the average 4% to increase cost recovery. The review also provided an opportunity to recommend new fees in response to changes in programing and deletion of fees that were obsolete.

Regional Parks proposes changes to its fees to recover reasonable costs of maintaining park services provided

for public use. This year, the review of the Department's fees provided another opportunity for the Department to further recommend new fees based on programming needs, delete fees that are no longer needed or are redundant and propose increases to fees, most on the average of 3%. Higher fee percentages are being proposed based on current market costs for products sold, utility rates charged, impact on facilities or the amount of labor needed to support the activity. Details on current and proposed rates are included in the Fee Package Adjustment document and Resolution accompanying this report.

Discussion:

Changes to Current Fees and Rates

Regional Parks propose increases and changes to the following fees for FY 25-26.

- Day use parking
- Day use parking for vehicles with 10+ passengers
- Seasonal day use parking (Friday prior to Memorial Day to Sunday following Labor Day)
- Seasonal day use parking (Park locations offering youth sports)
- Group picnic reservations for up to 99 guests; over 100 guests
- Non-commercial/non-profit events (1-7 days) for 25-99 guests; 100-199 guests; 200-299 guests; over 300 guests
- Non-commercial/non-profit events (1 wk.-1 yr.) for 25-99 guests; 100-199 guests; 200-299 guests; over 300 guests
- Non-league athletic field use (1-7 days) for 25-99 guests; 100-199 guests; 200-299 guests; over 300 guests
- Non-league athletic field use (1 wk.-1 yr.) for 25-99 guests; 100-199 guests; 200-299 guests; over 300 guests
- Gate access key card, replacement fee
- Athletic facilities permit, organized adult and youth, non-profit
- Individual camping - individual, individual resident, individual access
- Individual camping - hiker/biker
- Individual camping - reservation fee
- Individual camping - reservation change fee
- Boat ramp parking permits, recreational
- Boat ramp parking permits, commercial
- Boat ramp parking permits, gate key
- Firewood
- Boat wash
- Park program fees, individual resident
- Residence maintenance fee
- Camp deposit, non-refundable

Justification for Changes to Current Fees:

The proposed fee increases reflect the reasonable costs of maintaining the parks for public use and recovering costs the services provided. Many of the fees proposed for increase are service oriented, where Department staff performs daily services - environmental education, custodial and maintenance for field, campground, event coordination, and recreation use. The Department is recommending, in most instances, a 3% increase to most of the fees listed in this report. For fees exceeding 3%, the Department is providing information

supporting the recommended increases.

- Parking

Day use parking	14%
Day use parking, more than 10 people	7%
Seasonal day use parking (summer)	20%
Seasonal day use parking (youth sports)	17%

For Day use parking (14%) & Day use parking for 10+ passengers (7%) rates are recommended for increase to account for rising maintenance costs at heavily used parking areas, as well as inflation-related cost increases in staff wages, cleaning, and enforcement.

For Seasonal day use parking, Summer (20%) and Youth Sports (17%) rates are recommended to increase to account for peak-season demand and increased staffing costs required for summer operations. For youth sports locations, fees are aligning with the increased maintenance required to keep fields and facilities in useable condition. The increases to day-use and seasonal parking will not affect annual membership holders, including holders of senior and access passes.

- Gate access key card, replacement 25%

At Foothill Regional Park, ADA parking is provided within the park inside of a gated area. Upon request, an individual who purchases an Access Membership can request a key card that provides gate access to the ADA parking area. A fee increase is recommend due administrative time for replacing lost or damaged key cards, along with rising costs for maintaining gate lock systems, including periodic servicing and security upgrades.

- Athletic facilities permit 7%

The proposed increase accounts for higher field maintenance costs, including irrigation, turf replacement, and cleaning.

- Camping fee increases

Individual camping, regular	7%
Individual camping, resident	5%
Individual camping, access	5%
Individual camping, hiker/biker	14%
Individual campsite, reservation fee	5%
Individual campsite, change fee	5%

Increases to these fees is based on labor associated with maintaining clean and safe campsites along with services associated with camping, particularly waste disposal service which has seen a 40% increase and continue to rise.

The hiker/biker campsite fee increases 14% due to a \$1 increase (from \$7 to \$8) to make the rate consistent with the proposed Day Use increase of \$8. Hiker/bikers are not charged a fee for driving into the park and the fee is being made consistent with day-use rates as these campers will utilize the same services provided to day-use attendees such as disposal services, water and restrooms.

- Boating

Boat ramp parking permit, recreational	11%
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Boat ramp parking permit, commercial 13%

Boat ramp, gate key fee 33%

These fees have not been updated in 14 years. The proposed increases will offset the higher maintenance costs for boat ramps and docks. Commercial rates increased slightly more due to greater wear and tear from business-related use. The significant percentage increase for gate keys is based on rising administrative costs associated with issuing and tracking gate keys.

- Firewood 17%

The fee increase is based on vendor increases for product and current market rates.

- Boat wash 67%

This significant percentage increase is due to water conservation efforts and higher utility costs for providing wash stations. The proposed rate encourages more responsible use of wash stations to reduce waste and aligns with Regional Parks Climate Adaptation and Resiliency plan for water reduction.

- Park Program fee (individual) 25%

The fee increase is primarily driven to support staff costs and supplies needed for these programs and to help allow for more complex programming.

- Residence maintenance fee 3.50%

The residence maintenance fees are charged to Parks employees who occupy residences in certain Regional Parks and are used to help mitigate some of the costs of repairs and deferred maintenance to these facilities. The percentage increase is based on labor Memorandum of Understanding language.

- Camp deposit, non-refundable 426%

All camps provided by Regional Parks fill up very quickly for families needing childcare activities during summer and breaks. Forfeiting a \$9.50 fee is not sufficient to deter people from booking camp session to later supplant with other plans. Particularly with last minute cancellations, it is almost impossible to fill the vacancy as many parents have already secured other camp opportunities weeks prior. It is recommended increasing the current deposit fee from \$9.50 to a non-refundable \$50 deposit registration fee. Given the timing of this fee item, we anticipate implementing this new cancellation fee structure in Spring 2026 when new camp sessions are released.

New Proposed Fees

Annually, in honor of Veteran's Day, the Department prepares an agenda item requesting free parking on Veteran's Day for veterans and active military. The department recommends solidifying this practice as part of its fee schedule.

The Department currently has a Distinguished Veterans Membership pass available to Sonoma County veterans who qualify with a service-connected disability rating of 50% or greater, former prisoner of war or Congressional Medal of Honor recipient. There is no cost for this specific pass. The Department is proposing adding a new Veteran's Membership that would be available to any Sonoma County veteran. The proposed cost is \$29.

The Department currently sells membership passes in volume to businesses wishing to purchase and provide

to their employees. The tiers begin at 200 passes or more and at the request of several businesses, we are requesting to add an additional tier that begins at 100-199 at a cost of \$51 (from the regular cost of \$69.)

Synthetic Turf Field Use: Last year, the Department requested a rate structure for two synthetic turf fields at Maxwell Farms Regional Park. Due to several operational issues, including difficulty with scheduling on an hourly basis, the field rates were not initiated. This year, we have developed new rates and the ability to provide online scheduling of the fields. The new rates and structure are as follows: Resident/youth/non-profit, \$20 per hour; resident/adult/non-profit, \$25 per hour; resident groups, \$35 per hour; non-resident groups, \$40 per hour; and commercial for profit, \$50 per hour.

Community Engagement staff often are requested to present curriculum at various school sites in preparation for an upcoming field trip or as an enhancement and in conjunction to school curriculum. A new Classroom Pre-Visit fee is proposed at \$4 per student.

Community Engagement works with many community partners and would like to encourage them to participate in activities at our parks. The Department recommends a community partner discount provided on park program activities. The recommended discount is up to 50% dependent on various factors such as size of the group, number of staff required, and facilities being utilized.

Community Engagement proposes providing shorter duration camps ranging from 1-3 days per week. Currently our camp durations are for 4-5 days. The recommended per day camp fee, depending on topics, hours per day and activities, would range from \$60-\$90 daily.

As with camping and picnic reservations, \$9.50 is charged for all registrations for Community Engagement camps. The current policy allows someone to cancel their camp program registration and all fees, minus the registration fee, is refunded if notice is provided at least one week prior to the session starting. Cancellation less than one week prior will forfeit all camp fees, including registration.

Deletion of Fees

The following fees are being proposed for deletion

- Discovering Science in the Parks - resident
- Discovering Science in the Parks - non-resident
- Tolay Lake Educational Program - resident
- Tolay Lake Educational Program - non-resident

In previous years, the Department was adding every specific field trip to its fee schedule. Many of the field trips no longer are being offered or the curriculum has changed. The Department is recommending the following field trips be deleted and future field trips just be listed as "Field Trip" in the Regional Parks fee schedule.

- Non-peak regular
- Non-peak resident
- Non-peak access

Currently, the Department has approved peak and non-peak camping rates. At many of our parks with camping facilities, non-peak season is often as busy as peak season and many of our facilities such as Doran Beach and Spring Lake Park have full campgrounds year around. The Department is recommending removing

the non-peak rates and utilizing the rates established for peak use year-around.

- Reservation and change fee, up to 2 nights
- Reservation and change fee, 3-5 nights
- Reservation and change fee, 6-10 nights

Group campsite reservation and change fees were established based on the number of days for the reservation. The Department recommends removing these obsolete tier structures and utilizing the flat rate of \$30 already established for reservations and changes.

- Dogs per night

The Department currently charges a fee to campers who bring their dogs to stay at campsites. The Department is recommending the removal of this fee.

- Bocce ball rental

The Department no longer provides Bocce rental equipment.

- Basic Jr. Lifeguard
- Environmental Jr. Lifeguard
- Advanced Jr. Lifeguard
- Surf Camp
- River Camp
- Open Water Lifeguard Training
- Drop-In Jr. Lifeguard
- Transportation

As with the previously mentioned field trips, the Department's practice was to add all summer camp offerings to the fee schedule. Many of the camps have been modified or no longer being offered. The Department wishes to have all camps listed under one title "Camps" and delete all the individual offerings along with the Transportation fee previously charged.

Other Proposed Changes

The Department is requesting to change the current fee titled "Additional Vehicle, per night" used for both Group and Individual camping to "Second Vehicle, per night." This change has no fiscal impact and does not change the current rate of \$10.

As with field trips, Regional Parks would develop and list every camp offering on their fee schedule. Many of the camps are outdated on descriptions or no longer being offered. The Department recommends changing the title to "Camps." This change has no fiscal impact and does not change the current rate of \$250-\$350.

Summary of Expected Results:

Fees are only being added to cover ongoing increases or the costs of providing staff services for programs, maintenance and care of facilities and events. While cost recovery is the key driver necessitating increases to park fees, Regional Parks seeks to ensure that its fees are not prohibitive to users even at the expense of cost recovery.

Strategic Plan:

NA

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

March 21, 2023 - Board of Supervisors adopted Regional Park Fee Adjustments

March 26, 2024 - Board of Supervisors adopted Regional Park Fee Adjustments

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY24-25 Adopted	FY25-26 Projected	FY26-27 Projected
Budgeted Expenses		\$447,471	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures		\$447,471	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other		\$447,471	
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources		\$447,471	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Fees reflect the reasonable cost of operating park facilities, supporting community events and activities, educational opportunities, and services. Where possible, the Department has recommended a 3% increase to the fees shown in this report unless other factors such as utility costs, costs of goods purchased for sale, or impact on facilities or staffing performing the function, necessitated a higher rate.

While partial cost recovery is the key driver necessitating increases to park fees, Regional Parks seeks to ensure that its fees are not prohibitive to users even at the expense of cost recovery.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

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None

Attachments:

Fee Resolution

Regional Parks Fee Package Adjustment PDF

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

Regional Parks Fee Package Adjustment EXCEL