

# NPS Proposes Fee Changes at Delaware Water Gap NRA

By Kathleen Sandt, Public Affairs Specialist

BUSHKILL, PA — Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area is proposing several changes to the park’s fee system and is seeking public input on the proposal during a 30-day public comment period beginning December 16, 2024. The proposal includes an increase in fee amounts, a two-week extension of the fee season, changes to the annual pass purchases, and the addition of two new fee sites. The last fee increase was implemented in 2015. If approved the fee changes would go into effect in April 2025.

“Over the past several years, the park’s budget has remained relatively flat while costs and visitation have both increased, facilities and equipment have aged, and the need for routine maintenance has grown,” said Superintendent Doyle Sapp.

Since 2019, visitation to the park has increased 26%. Due to inflation and rising costs, the \$10 amenity fee currently charged at the park now purchases nearly 33% less than it did in 2015 when the fee was increased from \$7, meaning it now takes over \$13 to buy the same goods and services. As a result, the revenue generated by park fees no longer stretches as far as it once did.

“It is essential that we seek additional revenue sources to help us fill the funding gap so that we can continue to offer outstanding recreational opportunities and visitor experiences while protecting the park’s natural and cultural resources in perpetuity,” said Sapp.

The current Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) enables the National Park Service to collect and retain revenue and requires that fee revenue is used to enhance visitor experiences. Funds can be used to support visitor enjoyment, interpretation, habitat restoration, and law enforcement. Between 80 and 100 percent of fees are retained by the park where they are collected. In addition, balances can be carried over from year to year, allowing more effective use of funds. More information on FLREA can be found at Your Fee Dollars at Work (U.S. National Park Service).

The NPS is seeking public comment on the proposed changes which would include:

Increasing amenity fees from \$10 per vehicle per day to \$20 per vehicle per day at the sites that charge expanded amenity fees and extending the fee season by approximately two weeks to November 1.

Increasing

Charging amenity fees at two new sites, Kittatinny Point in New Jersey, and Hialeah Picnic Area in Pennsylvania. Day passes for these sites would be available through recreation.gov, the NPS online reservation system, or in person by using a drop box and fee envelope like those used at other unstaffed fee sites in the park.

“What you pay here, stays here, in this park, where it is used for repair, maintenance, and facility enhancements directly related to visitor enjoyment, access, health, and safety and for seasonal staff that serve park visitors and improve their experiences,” said Elizabeth Winslow, the park’s fee program manager.

Over the past three years revenue from amenity fees has been used for restroom repairs and upgrades throughout the park, river campsite improvements, multiple trail projects including rehabilitation, stabilization and resurfacing of the McDade Recreational Trail and work at George W. Childs Park. Revenue has also been used to pay for seasonal maintenance, fee collection and public safety staff. To learn more about Your Fee Dollars at Work at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area visit Your Dollars At Work - Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (U.S. National Park Service).


If approved, increased revenue from the proposed fee changes would allow the park to hire additional seasonal employees, including custodians, trail workers, interpretive park rangers and visitor center staff, and public safety staff to help meet the public’s needs and ensure outstanding visitor experiences. As required by FLREA, a portion of revenue raised through amenity fees must be used to complete much-needed repairs and improvements at key recreation sites and facilities throughout the park including the implementation of some of the strategies that were identified in the park’s Visitor Use Management Plan.

With more than 150 miles of trails, hiking is one of the most popular activities in the park. Over the next five years the park plans to invest approximately \$800,000 of fee revenue on trail improvements and vegetation management throughout the recreation area, including popular trails such as the Toms Creek Trail, Cliff Park Trails, and Hornbecks Creek Trail in Pa., and the Van Campens Glen Trail, Military Road Trail, and Rattlesnake Swamp Trail in N.J., among others. Additionally, fee revenue would fund much needed improvements to the facilities at Milford Beach.


Tell us what you think: To make an official comment on the proposal, go to

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/DEWAFees25> and click on “Comment Now” or mail your written comment to Superintendent Doyle Sapp, Attention: Fee Change Proposal, 1978 River Road, Bushkill, PA, 18324. The 30-day comment period is open from December 16, 2024, until midnight on January 14, 2025. Comments received via email or on social media will be considered and are appreciated but will not be a part of the official record for this proposal.

For more information on Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area call the information desk at (570) 426-2452; visit our website at [www.nps.gov/dewa](http://www.nps.gov/dewa); or follow us on Facebook at [www.Facebook.com/DelWaterGapNPS](http://www.Facebook.com/DelWaterGapNPS).



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