



A LITTLE (INCREASE) GOES A LONG WAY

Frequently Asked Questions: Park User Fee Increase

County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation

Last Update: January 16, 2025

Background

In March 2014, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved a Resolution amending the ranges for park user fees for services provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). The new ranges allowed for DPR to adjust fees in the future in response to escalating costs. Although no specific fee increases were proposed at the time, fee increases are included in future Operational Plans, as appropriate. Since then, park user fees have remained relatively unchanged despite a rise in costs associated with the delivery of services. We've waited as long as possible to adjust our rates, but after nearly 11 years, the time has come. We're updating our prices to help offset rising maintenance and operating costs and to align with similar facilities and services in the area. To help reduce the burden on park users, fees will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they align with comparable rates and continue to be reasonable for park guests.

1. When will the park user fees increase?

The increase will be effective February 18, 2025.

2. Which specific park user fees are increasing?

A variety of fees at all County parks will be increasing, including camping and day use reservations, sports field and facility reservations, community center room rentals and parking. For a detailed list of fees, view our [park user fee list](#).

Note: DPR has also simplified camping fees by including up to two pets and one extra vehicle as part of your reservation.

3. What do park user fees pay for?

Park user fees are used to offset maintenance and operating costs which help us keep our gates open 365 days a year. This can include staffing, equipment, goods and services. User fees are used for building and maintaining park facilities, such as splash pads, bike parks, playgrounds, community gardens and picnic areas. They support our innovative interpretive programs and community events, such as Hawktober, Women in the Wild, First Time Camping, Intergenerational and Discovery Program. They support trail projects, historic facilities, and our nature centers. Fees also support major maintenance improvement projects and repairs of park facilities, including ADA upgrades, water system assessments and playground upgrades.



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4. Why are fees increasing?

To keep pace with the rising costs of park services so we can continue to offer first-rate programs and facilities and outdoor experiences that support physical and emotional well-being. In addition, per [Board Policy B-29, Fees, Grants, Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery](#), DPR is required to recover the cost of all services it provides to agencies or individuals outside of the County of San Diego organization. The increases will allow DPR to continue making progress towards that obligation while keeping with its goal of providing equitable access to its various resources and services by remaining an affordable option in the market.

5. How are fees determined?

DPR reviews all user fees, program costs, and market demand annually. DPR also compares its fees against other local jurisdictions and private providers to ensure we remain competitive. A review of comparable fees found that DPR fee ranges fall below or are at the median price of fees charged by other agencies while remaining an affordable option for customers. DPR has an established framework for cost recovery, resource allocation, and revenue enhancement, which aims to balance the needs of the community with sustainable financial management.

6. Who approves the fee structures?

User fees, fee ranges, and fee structures are approved by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. The DPR Director has the authority to approve fees within the Board approved ranges.

7. Will reservations made prior to February 18, 2025 be impacted?

No. Reservations booked before February 18, 2025, will not be affected unless changes to that reservation are made on or after February 18, 2025. All new, updated fees will be applicable starting February 18, 2025. For example, if a reservation that was made before February 18, 2025 is cancelled on or after February 18, 2025, then that cancellation will be subject to the new cancellation fee.

8. When is the last time these fees were adjusted or increased?

The ranges for park user fees were last amended nearly 11 years ago in March 2014.

9. How will customers be notified of the change?

Various communication channels will be used to notify customers of the fee increases including DPR's website and social media outlets, email, flyers and signage at park facilities throughout the county. Customers will also be notified in-person through discussions at local stakeholder meetings such as parks advisory committees and planning groups.



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10. Are there fees that are being removed?

Some fees will be removed or consolidated. For example, camping reservations will now include up to two pets and one additional vehicle.

11. What low cost/no cost opportunities exist for programs and services offered by DPR?

DPR will continue to provide a variety of low or no cost opportunities for customers to enjoy. This includes special community events like Breakfast with Santa, Spring Egg Hunts, and Movies in the Park. In addition, programs like First Time Camping, Women in the Wild, Nature Explores, and other will continue to provide opportunities for individuals to participate in outdoor activities at little to no cost. There are also several [ways to save](#) through veteran, senior and group discounts.