

US Forest Service waives fees during Veterans Day weekend

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 23, 2012 -- The U.S. Forest Service is waiving fees at most of its day-use recreation sites over the Veterans Day holiday weekend, Nov. 10-12.

The fee waivers – the fourth this year -- are offered in cooperation with other federal agencies under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Day-use fees will be waived at all standard amenity fee sites operated by the Forest Service. Concessionaire operated day-use sites may be included in the waiver if the permit holder wishes to participate.

"This is our way of saying thanks to the brave men and women – past and present – who put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe at home," said U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. "We encourage veterans, their families and all visitors to take time out over the holiday weekend to enjoy the benefits that nature provides at forests and grasslands throughout the country."

The fee waiver days support the goals of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative and First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move Outside."

Traditionally, fees are not charged on 98 percent of national forests and grasslands, and approximately two-thirds of developed recreation sites in national forests and grasslands can be used for free. Many recreation opportunities such as camping, sightseeing and hiking can be enjoyed throughout the year at no cost.

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The Forest Service operates approximately 17,000 developed recreation sites nationwide. Of those, approximately 6,000 require recreation fees, which are used to provide visitor services, repairs and replacements, and facilities maintenance.

The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Forest Service lands contribute more than \$13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone. Those same lands provide 20 percent of the nation's clean water supply, a value estimated at \$27 billion per year.

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