



NEWS RELEASE

USDA FOREST SERVICE • Press Office • 201 14th Street, SW
Washington, D.C., 20024 • Voice (202) 205-1134 • Web: <http://www.fs.fed.us>

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Contact: Press Office, 202-205-1134

USDA Forest Service Continues Discounts at Campgrounds

WASHINGTON, March 17, 2010 -- USDA Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell announced today his decision not to implement proposed changes to fees charged to holders of passes at Forest Service campgrounds operated by private businesses. The Chief's decision means Seniors and people with disabilities will continue to receive a discount at Forest Service campgrounds run by private concessions.

The Forest Service had proposed changes to discounts provided to holders of Golden Age and Golden Access Passports and Senior and Access Passes. Under the proposal, discounts at concession-operated campgrounds would have changed from the current 50 percent to 10 percent. After considering many public comments, the Chief determined the proposed changes are not the best way to address growing challenges regarding services provided by private businesses at Forest Service recreation facilities.

“Each year more than 175 million people enjoy recreational opportunities on National Forests and Grasslands, and that includes more than 15 million visits to our campgrounds,” said Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. “Particularly in these difficult economic times, it is very important to maintain affordable access to our National Forests and Grasslands, giving people easy ways to recreate and find respite in the great outdoors.”

The Chief's decision leaves in place a 50 percent discount at campgrounds run by private concessions for holders of Golden Age and Golden Access Passports and Interagency Senior and Access Passes. Concessioners are not required to accept passes at day use sites. Seniors age 62 and older pay a one-time \$10 fee for the Senior Pass. Lifetime Access Passes for people with disabilities are free.

The Forest Service conducted a 60-day public notice and comment period on the proposed changes. More than 4,000 comments were received.

The mission of the USDA 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 National Forest System land, provides stewardship assistance to non-federal forest landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. For more information, visit: www.fs.fed.us

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