



# The Mountain Pact

## REMINDER: 14 Days Left to Comment on NPS Proposed Fee Increase

The Trump Administration recently released a proposal to significantly increase the entrance fees on some of our most visited national parks, a move that would leave many Americans without access. The comment period closes in just 14 days and we invite you to adapt the updated [sample comment letter](#).



Throughout the years budget cuts have left the National Park Service (NPS) with an \$11.3 billion maintenance backlog. Instead of looking to Congress for a funding solution, Interior Secretary Zinke has proposed an entrance fee hike to \$70/vehicle during peak season at the nation's [17 most popular](#) national parks. This will likely make visiting national parks unaffordable for many Americans, which will in turn adversely impact the surrounding outdoor recreation and tourism-based communities.

### The Proposed Rate Increase

The Department of Interior has [released a proposal](#) to increase entrance fees to 17 national parks to \$70 per vehicle as a means of addressing maintenance backlogs. This proposed rate hike would only raise [a fraction](#) of the needed revenue to deal with the \$11.3 billion backlog while making it harder for many Americans to enjoy their public lands. It would also likely disrupt understaffed NPS offices as visitors try to take advantage of lower rates during the shoulder season.

This announcement follows a nearly [\\$300 million](#) proposed White House budget cut to the NPS and further demonstrates the Trump Administration's disconnect between America's public lands and the American public. Public lands belong to all Americans and this fee increase would make it even harder for many families to enjoy these beautiful places.

Alternatives to this proposal do exist. In May the Center for American Progress published [an analysis](#) that \$389 million of the backlog [should be paid](#) by the private concessionaires--private parties that run businesses inside park boundaries--rather than taxpayers.

The bipartisan [National Park Service Legacy Act](#) offers another approach to addressing the backlog. If passed, it would address this maintenance need by channeling existing revenue from oil, gas, and coal operations to the NPS. This would shift the pressure off of park visitors and provide a much larger budget with which to address the backlog. This Act, coupled with a responsible federal budget [would allow](#) the NPS to solve the maintenance backlog without deterring the public from visiting their national parks.

### **What This Means For Mountain Communities**

The fee increase may make it unaffordable for many families to visit national parks. This could reduce visitation, having adverse impacts on communities with outdoor recreation and tourism based economies. The rate hike could also lead to more visitors during the off season, when fees are lower, potentially inundating NPS offices when they have fewer staff.

The desire of American citizens to protect public lands relies on their ability to visit these lands. Our outdoor recreation and tourism based economies rely on public visitation and a healthy public lands system, but if many Americans are deterred by fees, outdoor economies may suffer.

### **What Can You Do?**

The NPS has opened a 30-day public [comment period](#) closing on November 23 regarding the proposed fee increase. We encourage you to submit comment and invite you to adapt this Mountain Pact [sample comment letter](#). E-mail us at [info@themountainpact.org](mailto:info@themountainpact.org) with questions.

*Correction from Nov. 1 email: Sixteen of the seventeen national parks potentially impacted by this fee increase charge entry on a weekly basis. We originally reported that the entrance fee for all the parks included in this proposal would increase to \$70/vehicle/day. In fact this would only be the case for Rocky Mountain National Park as they charge entrance fees per day. All other parks included in this proposal would see a fee increase to \$70/vehicle/seven day period.*

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