

Executive Summary for the Pacific Northwest Recreation Resource Advisory Council

Site: Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area

Site Type: Standard Amenity

Proposed Action: Fee Increase

Recommended Fees: See fee schedule comparison on page 3.

Site Description

Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area (YHONA) is located in the Salem District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 5th Congressional District. The site is located two miles North of Newport along the Oregon Coast. The YHONA was established by Public Law 96-199, March 5, 1980 for the purposes of:

- The conservation and development of the scenic, natural, and historic values of the area;
- The continued use of the area for purposes of education, scientific study, and public recreation which do not substantially impair the purposes for which the area was established; and
- Protection of the wildlife habitat of the area.

A unit of the National Landscape Conservation System, YHONA is approximately 100 acres in size and encompasses a mile long by one-half mile wide headland that juts due west into the Pacific Ocean. It is dominated by the Yaquina Head lighthouse, a National Historic Register structure. The natural resources include one of four state designated marine gardens in Oregon, one of the largest seabird rookeries on the Pacific coast, marine mammal resting sites and gray whale viewing as well as bird and wild flower viewing opportunities in the uplands. The area is bordered by sheer cliffs, 100 feet or more above the ocean, with sea caves and numerous off shore rocks and islands. Other facilities that exist on site include:

- A 13,000 square foot interpretive center, with gift store, theater, and full scale replica of the top of the lighthouse
- A 4,000 square foot maintenance building
- Over 3 miles of hiking trails with interpretive exhibits
- Volunteer docent site with 3 RV pads

This is a family recreation destination where visitors can enjoy a clean, safe, educational experience very close to animals in their natural habitat while the animals are protected from disturbance by the visitors. Visitors to YHONA tend to be highly educated. A majority (62%) have incomes in excess of \$30,000 a year. Most are couples, over the age of 25, with children. A visitor study (Visitor Profile and Impact Analysis: Site Development at Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area, Dean Runyon Associate, Portland, OR 1990) indicated that only 3 percent of the YHONA visitation comes from the local Lincoln County area. The majority of visitors (63%) are from the rest of Oregon, where as, out-of- state visitation makes up the remaining 34 percent. Of the

approximately 340,000 people that visit YHONA annually, over 90,000 of them visit the interior of the lighthouse, and over 85,000 visit the interpretive center where permanent exhibits are available describing the early days of lighthouse keeping, the natural resources to be seen at YHONA, as well as the history of the BLM in the Oregon and California Grant Lands.

Other agency partners involved in assisting BLM in the management of YHONA include the U.S. Coast Guard who is still involved in managing the active aid to navigation within the lighthouse. The first order Fresnel lens inside the lighthouse is owned by the Coast Guard. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has jurisdiction over the islands and rocks off of the headland which are a part of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. These islands have also been designated by Congress as wilderness and are a part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife administers the Yaquina Head marine garden including Cobble Beach and Quarry Cove Inter-tidal Area. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has jurisdiction over the harbor seal colonies.

Standard amenity fees are charged for use of the site and associated facilities. YHONA is currently open seven days per week, 365 days per year, dawn to dusk. The site is managed by one full-time Park Manager, a Chief Park Ranger, a Volunteer Program Coordinator, an Education Program Coordinator, an Administrative Assistant, several maintenance personnel, and a cadre of full time and seasonal Park Rangers and volunteers. The fees are used to pay for approximately 50% of YHONA's total operating budget.

Fee Assessment

The standard amenity fees have not been updated since they were first included under the Fee Demonstration Program in 1998. A comparative analysis was conducted in 2007 which reviewed rates at similar federal, state, regional and local facilities. Standard use fees are being increased based on this comparative market analysis.

Increasing fees at Yaquina Head ONA is necessary to continue to meet the sites operational goals which are to (1) To provide high quality recreational, interpretive and environmental education experiences centered around the themes of the role of lighthouses in 19th century western expansion, and marine and inter-tidal ecosystems (emphasis on tidepool life, harbor seals, whales, and nesting seabirds); (2) To preserve the historical, cultural, natural, and visual features of the site; and, (3) To contribute to the local tourism based economy, and to maintain strong community partnerships and relationships.

If fees are not increased, Yaquina Head ONA would continue to be operated and managed below actual cost. Increased deferred maintenance costs, loss of ability to recruit volunteer staff, and declining opportunities for quality interpretive and environmental education services would likely result.

Public Involvement

Public involvement and outreach regarding fees has been conducted over the last six weeks. This outreach has included on site postings within the recreation site and on the YHONA website, issuance of a statewide press release, public notices placed in the Newport News Times, briefings with the Lincoln County Commissioners, Newport City Council and federal legislators. Minimal comments have been received as part of this outreach process since fees are in line with current market value, amenities provided, and cost of maintaining and operating the facility.

Fee Schedule Comparison

The fee schedule comparison outlines the existing and proposed increases for standard amenity recreation fees at YHONA.

Proposed New Fee Schedule

	Existing Fee Schedule	Proposed New Fee Schedule
Private Vehicles (9 passenger maximum)	\$5 for three days	\$7 for three days
Motorcycles	\$2 for three days	\$3 for three days
Private Vans (10 – 20 passenger)	\$20 for three days	\$25 for three days
Commercial Vans (10 – 20 passenger capacity)	\$20 (one time use)	\$25 (one time use)
Commercial Bus (21+ passenger capacity)	\$40 (one time use)	\$50 (one time use)
Annual Vehicle Pass	\$10	\$15
All non-motorized traffic	FREE	FREE (no change)
Scheduled Educational groups (with a certified teacher)	FREE	FREE (no change)

The YHONA also sells and honors the following passes.

- Oregon Pacific Coast Annual Passport
- Oregon Pacific Coast 5-Day Passport
- Washington/Oregon Recreation Pass
- America the Beautiful – National Parks & Federal Recreational Lands Passes