

Questions and Answers Francis Marion & Sumter Recreation Fee Changes

Q. Why are you increasing campground fees and imposing new fees at shooting ranges?

A. The Francis Marion & Sumter National Forests (FMS) has not raised or imposed new fees in almost 20 years. We operate eight unsupervised outdoor public shooting ranges, as well as a number of other outdoor recreation facilities on national forest land across South Carolina. We have seen a significant increase in public use of these facilities (especially shooting ranges). In order to keep up with the associated increase in operation and maintenance costs, refresh aged infrastructure, and improve visitor experiences, fees are necessary.

Q. Who decided to raise the fees?

A. The FMS submitted a proposal to implement new fees at seven shooting ranges and raise fees at four campgrounds to the Southern Region Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC) in August 2018 (the proposal was circulated publicly for a year prior to submitting the proposal to the RRAC). The RRAC represents a broad array of recreation interest groups from the public at large to help ensure that the Forest Service is proposing reasonable and publicly acceptable fee changes. The RRAC recommended to the Southern Region Regional Forester that the fee changes go forward, and the Regional Forester approved the proposal.

Q. When was this decided?

A. We asked for the public's input starting in September 2017 and over the course of the next year, we posted at recreation sites, as well as, news releases and other postings on our forest website and Facebook page (for more information, go to our website at www.fs.usda.gov/scnfs). We received public feedback, and the RRAC used it in making their recommendation on whether to allow the fee changes or not. The Southern Regional Forester notified us this fall of his decision to allow the changes.

Q. Is every campground and shooting range increasing their fees.

A. No. Some Ranger Districts will not have any increases. Also, fees have never been collected at any of the FMS shooting ranges. Many shooting ranges have been in existence for over 40 years.

Q. When will these fees be implemented?

A. It will vary by Ranger District (there are four on the FMS). We hope to have all fee changes implemented forest-wide by the fall of 2019.

Q. How does one pay for shooting range use?

A. You can pay \$5/person/day by filling out a fee envelope at the site and placing it in the fee tube. See below on how to obtain an annual pass.

Q. How much will it cost to shoot at a shooting range?

A. \$5 per person per day, or \$50.00 per person for an annual pass. Persons under the age of 16 can use the range at no cost provided they are accompanied by an adult.

Q. I've heard there is an annual shooting range pass. How do I obtain that pass?

A. You can purchase an annual rifle range pass at the Enoree and Long Cane Ranger District Offices, as well as at the Supervisor's Office. You can also purchase an annual rifle range pass through the mail by downloading the forms, keeping a copy of the rules, and filling out the Rifle Range Annual Special Recreation Permit form. Mail the form with payment to the district office of the range that will be primarily used.

Q. If the pass is for a year, does it go by the calendar year or "date of purchase"?

A. The annual pass goes by calendar year, January 1st through December 31st.

Q. If I go to a shooting range and have a guest who isn't participating, do they have to pay?

A. No.

Q. If I buy a day or an annual pass at a particular shooting range, can I visit another range on that same day (or over the course of the year for an annual pass) without paying the fee at the other location?

A. Yes, if you keep the tear-off receipt and you remain on the Francis Marion & Sumter National Forests.

Q. How old does a person need to be to use the shooting ranges?

A. Persons under the age of 16 can use the range at no cost provided they are accompanied by an adult.

Q. What happens to the money that is collected at these shooting ranges?

A. The funds will return to the site from which they were collected and be used for operation and maintenance needs. Some examples of projects include mowing/trimming, berm rebuilding, trash removal services, access road maintenance, parking lot gravel, signage, etc