



Begich, Boggs Visitor Center

Issue

Begich, Boggs Visitor Center is the jewel of southcentral Alaska. Visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists and residents, the visitor center provides an exciting introduction to the natural and cultural wonders of Portage Valley, Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound within the Chugach National Forest.

Operating this multi-million dollar facility is an important responsibility. The Forest Service is committed to offering visitors a high quality experience with interactive exhibits, skilled naturalists, an award-winning movie, and educational materials from the Alaska Geographic Natural History Association.



Currently, the Chugach National Forest devotes half its recreation operations and maintenance budget to keeping the visitor center open and in good repair. However, with flat to declining budgets, economies need to be made, such as closing the visitor center to the general public in past winters.

Background

We conducted public meetings in 2007 to explore options to increase our ability to recover costs for operation and maintenance of the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center. We received many responses from members of the general public and tour operators.

The majority of people who responded recommended that any change made to the existing movie fee should not occur until the summer of 2009. By postponing the change to this part of the Recreation Fee Program, the tour guide operators were able to market and advertise the new rate in a timely fashion for the 2009 visitor season. Most people asked that when the change occurs we begin with a \$3 fee and increase it to no more than \$5 per adult over time.

Future of the Fee Program

Memorial Day Weekend 2009 we began charging a Standard Amenity Fee of \$3 per adult. The fee is set to increase to \$4 per adult in 2010 and \$5 per adult in 2011. Season Passes will be sold to individuals, two adults or family groups. In all cases children 15 and under will be admitted to the movie and exhibits free of charge, as will those who own an America the Beautiful Pass, Senior Pass, Access Pass, Golden Age Pass or Golden Access Pass. Beginning in 2009 permitted tour guide companies will have the ability to receive a 10% discount in the Standard Amenity Fee for their guests if they pay in advance.

Benefits of Amended Fee Program

The additional funds that the visitor center is able to earn will assist us in meeting the following goals over time:

- Re-open the visitor center on weekends and special events during the off-season.
- Assist with operation and maintenance costs of the facility.
- Enhance our conservation education and interpretive program offerings.
- Offer new exhibits and special events.
- Reinstate the annual *Nature Spooktacular*.
- Advertise and market the visitor center and its services.
- Update and improve our web page.

Additional Opportunities

Greater utilization of this world class facility could occur by charging fees for appropriate special activities such as film festivals, concerts, and special events. The facilities and staff could also be made available to the private sector for meetings, small conferences or workshops, trainings, and receptions during the off-season or when the center is closed to the public.

For More Information

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