Cleveland National Forest
Change in Recreation Fee Structure: Ortega Recreation Fee Area

Background

In June 2011, the Forest Service conducted a national review of the 97 standard amenity recreation fee areas on National Forest System lands. As a result of the review, the Forest Service plans to remove the fee area designation for 73 standard amenity recreation fee areas, and reduce the size of the remaining 24 standard amenity recreation fee areas.

Within the Cleveland National Forest, the national review resulted in a proposal to eliminate the fee area designation for four standard amenity recreation fee areas (Corral Canyon, Ortega, Tenaja, and Wildomar) and substantially reduce the area size of the remaining two (Holy Jim and Mt. Laguna). Based on direction regarding implementation of the national review, in June 2012, the Cleveland National Forest began issuing notices of required fees and enforcing recreation fees consistent with this proposal, while preparing to submit it to the California Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (R-RAC).

Description of the Recreation Area

The 6,240-acre Ortega standard amenity recreation fee area is a major destination for Riverside and Orange County residents seeking to escape the summer heat. The area offers three family campgrounds, two picnic areas, one group campground, two trailheads, and one visitor center. There are nationally acclaimed hang gliding launch sites within the area overlooking Lake Elsinore.

Ortega Recreation Fee Proposal

The Cleveland National Forest is proposing to:

- Eliminate the Ortega standard amenity recreation fee area designation, see enclosed map;
- Retain three standard amenity recreation fee (SAF) sites (see Table 1);
- Retain four expanded amenity recreation fee (EAF) sites (see Table 2);
- Eliminate recreation fee at four SAF sites: Elsinore Hang Gliding Sites 1 and 2, Morgan Trailhead, and Ortega Falls Day Use Site;
- Retain two sites as free: El Cariso Information and Firefighter Memorial Sites; and
- Continue to accept local and national passes at the remaining recreation fee sites and areas.

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Table 1. Standard Amenity Recreation Fee Sites (Passes Accepted)

Site Name	Parking	Toilet	Trash Receptacle	Interpretive Sign	Picnic Tables	Security Services
El Cariso Picnic Area	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
El Cariso South Picnic Area	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
San Juan Loop Trailhead	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Table 2. Expanded Amenity Recreation Fee Sites

Site Name	Tent or Trailer Space	Picnic Tables	Drinking Water	Access Roads	Fee Collection by FS	Security	Trash	Toilet	Simple campfire devices
Blue Jay Campground (includes Falcon & San Juan Trailheads)[1, 2]	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
El Cariso Campground[1]	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Falcon Group Campground (includes Falcon Trailhead)[1, 2]	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Upper San Juan Campground[1]	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

[1] No change, campground has a separate expanded amenity recreation fee. Fee per night: Blue Jay - $20; El Cariso - $15; Falcon - $60, $75, or $120 depending on the site occupied; Upper San Juan - $18. Fees are paid on-site, except for Falcon Group Campground fees, which are paid through Recreation.gov.

[2] No change for day use in campgrounds, including at Falcon and San Juan Trailheads; passes accepted.

Fee Collection and Compliance

If the proposal is implemented the recreation area would be available to the public free of charge. No change is being proposed to the recreation fees charged at sites listed in Tables 1 and 2. The fee payment mechanism for day use would continue to be recreation passes: the Adventure Pass ($5 per day, $30 annually, and $5 for a second vehicle) or the America the Beautiful-the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes (Annual-$80; Senior-$10; and Access, Military, and Volunteer-free). The fee payment mechanism for the campgrounds would continue to be through the National Recreation Reservation Service or on-site fee tubes.

The Forest Service's Adventure Pass is available at Forest Service offices, local vendors, and on-line. The use of recreation passes as a fee payment mechanism would continue to enhance efficiencies in fee collection and compliance while providing the customer convenience visitors have come to expect. The Forest Service enforces and would continue to enforce recreation fees and issues notices of required

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fees at the recreation sites listed in Tables 1 and 2. Compliance is and would continue to be verified by observing recreation passes (for day use) or fee envelopes (for overnight use) displayed on vehicles parked within these recreation sites.

Anticipated Impacts of the Change

Financial

The financial impacts of the proposed changes are unknown at this time. Fee revenue may decrease slightly or remain relatively stable.

Resources

The impacts of the proposed changes on natural resources are unknown at this time and would be monitored.

Visitor Use

Shifts in visitor use pattern may result from the proposed changes. Impacts on recreation facilities, sanitation, public health and safety, and resources are unknown and would be monitored.

Planned Accomplishments

Fee revenue would fund operation and maintenance of campgrounds and day use areas, including: trash removal; toilet pumping; graffiti removal; security patrols; maintenance of information and interpretive signs; and facility repairs. Fee revenue also would support facility enhancements such as restroom replacement, picnic tables, fire rings, grills, interpretive signs, and information boards.

Public Involvement

Planned

The Forest Service is seeking public comment on the proposed changes and plans to submit the proposal to the R-RAC in the winter 2014. In the interim, the Cleveland National Forest is issuing notices of required fees and enforcing recreation fees only within the recreation fee sites listed in Tables 1 and 2.

The forest will:

- Post information on the proposed changes at the affected sites;
- Publish a press release regarding the proposal in the *Press Enterprise and Orange County Register*;
- Post information on proposal on the Cleveland National Forest website;
- Brief local and federal elected officials; and
- Present the proposal to the R-RAC.

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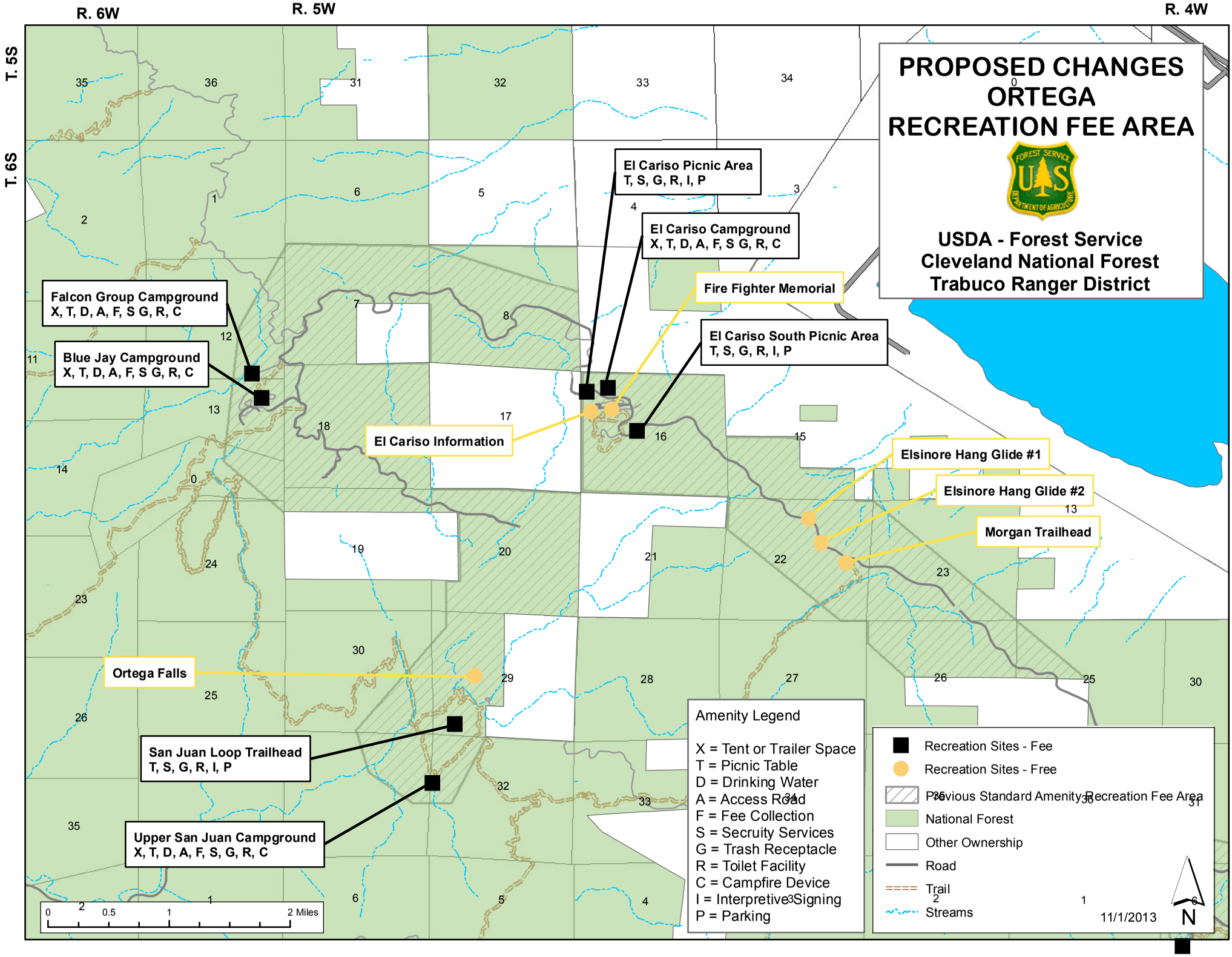
PROPOSED CHANGES
ORTEGA
RECREATION FEE AREA
USDA - Forest Service
Cleveland National Forest
Trabuco Ranger District
R. 6W
R. 5W
R. 4W
T. 5S
T. 6S
El Cariso Picnic Area
T, S, G, R, I, P
El Cariso Campground
X, T, D, A, F, S G, R, C
Fire Fighter Memorial
El Cariso South Picnic Area
T, S, G, R, I, P
Falcon Group Campground
X, T, D, A, F, S G, R, C
Blue Jay Campground
X, T, D, A, F, S G, R, C
El Cariso Information
Elsinore Hang Glide #1
Elsinore Hang Glide #2
Morgan Trailhead
Ortega Falls
San Juan Loop Trailhead
T, S, G, R, I, P
Upper San Juan Campground
X, T, D, A, F, S, G, R, C
Amenity Legend
X = Tent or Trailer Space
T = Picnic Table
D = Drinking Water
A = Access Road
F = Fee Collection
S = Secruity Services
G = Trash Receptacle
R = Toilet Facility
C = Campfire Device
I = Interpretive Signing
P = Parking
Recreation Sites - Fee
Recreation Sites - Free
Previous Standard Amenity Recreation Fee Area
National Forest
Other Ownership
Road
Trail
Streams
0 0.5 1 2 Miles
11/1/2013
N