

# Fee Changes Q&A

June 2, 2011

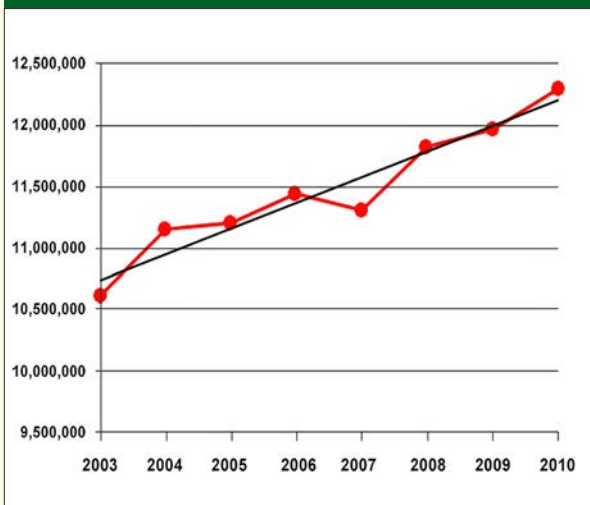
Coloradans are fortunate to have access to a state park system that provides thousands of acres of public lands set in magnificent landscapes. Our 42 Colorado State Parks contribute to the exceptional quality of life we enjoy and are a fundamental reason that many of us choose to live here.

During the last several years, millions of dollars of state general fund and severance taxes have been cut from the State Parks budget because of the state's economic downturn. To continue to keep our State Parks open around the state with quality services and well-maintained and safe facilities for our visitors, we must increase fees. The increasing reliance on higher fees to operate state parks reflects the drastic loss of taxpayer dollars provided to Colorado State Parks.

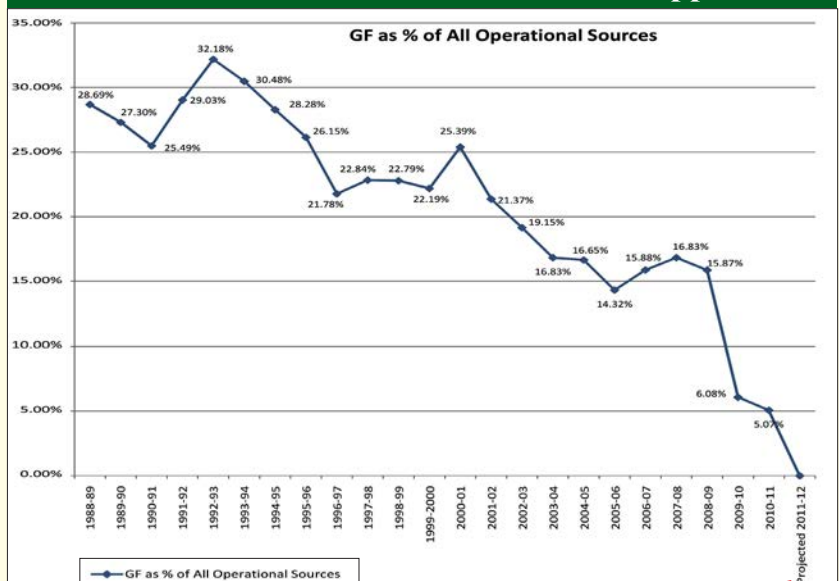
## *Why did the Park Board approve reductions to Aspen Leaf discounts? Isn't this essentially raising fees for seniors?*

- Fees for all State Park visitors have been increased in the last three years. The reduction in Aspen Leaf discounts were approved because Colorado State Parks will receive **no general fund tax dollars** and will receive substantially less support from severance tax dollars as of July 1, 2011.
- To prepare for the loss of general fund tax and severance tax dollars, the Parks Board approved a financial plan in November 2010, including ten strategies to reduce spending and increase revenue. Reducing the Aspen Leaf discounts is one of the strategies proposed.
- Colorado residents who are 64 years and older will continue to receive a discount on Annual Passes and camping fees.

Colorado State Parks Visitation



Colorado State Parks General Fund Support



**For the first time in the history of State Parks, the Parks operating budget will receive zero general funds (money from state income and sales taxes).**

## What are the Fee Changes?

Type of Fee	Rate Effective June 30, 2011	Discount Offered
Aspen Leaf Annual	\$60	\$10 off Annual Pass
Aspen Leaf Multiple	\$30	\$5 off Annual Multiple
Aspen Leaf Camping*	<b>Primitive:</b> \$ 7 Discount Sun.-Thurs excluding holidays <b>Basic:</b> \$13 Discount Sun.-Thurs excluding holidays <b>Electrical:</b> \$17 Discount Sun.-Thurs excluding holidays <b>Full Hookup:</b> \$21 Discount Sun.-Thurs excluding holidays	\$3 Discount Sun.-Thurs excluding holidays
Lifetime Pass (Based on 5x cost of Aspen Leaf Annual)	\$300	N/A

\*Additional \$2 camping fee applies at high use parks: Chatfield, Cherry Creek, Cheyenne Mountain, Golden Gate Canyon, Highline Lake, Mueller, Pearl Lake, Rifle Falls, Ridgway, St. Vrain, Steamboat Lake, Sylvan Lake.

## Can't you make cuts elsewhere or manage the budget better instead of charging more for seniors?

- Colorado State Parks has made significant cuts in all State Parks operations, including eliminating permanent and seasonal staff; closing some park facilities; reducing programs, administration, training and travel.
- State law requires that: "...state parks and state recreation areas should be financed as much as reasonably possible through revenues derived from the users of such system."
- The change to *visitors* funding State Parks rather than *all taxpayers* contributing to them is a result of the state budget situation.

## Why would you raise fees for those who can least afford it?

- We offer a Centennial annual pass for Colorado residents who are income eligible. The pass is available at our four regional offices (Denver, Littleton, Clifton, Colorado Springs), and applicants must provide their previous year's federal income tax return and photo identification.
- We also offer a Columbine annual pass for totally and permanently disabled Colorado residents.
- Individuals with Disabled Veterans Colorado license plates are provided free entrance to state parks when the veteran is present in the vehicle.
- To find out what is required to apply for these specialty passes and for more information on all Colorado State Parks passes, please visit [www.parks.state.co.us/ParksPasses](http://www.parks.state.co.us/ParksPasses).

## Won't the merger of State Parks and the Division of Wildlife solve the budget problem?

- Not immediately. The Governor initiated the merger to eliminate duplication, seek money-saving efficiencies and enhance the effectiveness of both divisions. No potential cost savings from the merger will be realized until the second half of 2012.
- The Division of Wildlife receives funding from hunting and fishing licenses and from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These funds are restricted and must be spent for the purposes for which the moneys were received.

## Why doesn't State Parks offer senior discounts like the National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for entrance fees and camping? Why isn't there one pass for all?

- The National Parks and the National Forests are federal government agencies and receive federal tax dollars which allows them to offer lower fees and discounts.
- Colorado State Parks is a state agency and will receive no general fund state tax dollars after July 1, 2011. There is no way to continue the current level of discounts for seniors and keep park facilities open, safe and well maintained.

## What is the Value of State Parks?

Colorado State Parks remain a great recreation value for the public. The daily entrance fee is good for a carload of people and costs less than a single movie ticket; our annual vehicle pass is less than a dinner at a restaurant for a family of four. State Parks provide havens for exercising our bodies and minds. They not only improve our physical health, but connect us to nature to restore our mental health and spirit. The benefits that State Parks provide to the people of Colorado are truly endless.

For more information please go to:  
<http://www.parks.state.co.us/Pages/FeeChange.aspx>

