

# Lake Mead will collect fees for using facilities

By Rachael Conlin

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In two years, Lake Mead visitors will pay \$5 a week for the privilege of swimming or taking a boat out on the water.

The fee is expected to pour millions of dollars into the underfunded national park system, which presently struggles to fill potholes and patch leaky roofs.

It will be the first time a fee will be charged at Lake Mead National Recreation Area, which is among the top three most-visited national parks with 9 million visitors a year.

Assistant Chief Ranger Bud Inman said the fee should be regarded as a contribution toward maintaining the recreational area for all to enjoy. "It can't just be looked at as

a money-making operation," he said.

The park has held the authority to collect fees since 1964, but has not had the money to staff fee booths. Congressional pressure has changed that.

In 1993, Congress passed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act that allowed the National Park Service to save 15 percent of all its revenue to implement fee programs at parks that now are free.

At Lake Mead, nine fee booths will supply visitors with weather updates, safety precautions and lake information. An estimated 64 jobs will be created as a result of the fee program.

Planning and design of the fee booths, as well as an environmental assessment of construction impacts, is under

way. Cultural resource and desert tortoise surveys should be completed this winter.

The booths should be open in 1996, with fee collection slated for that summer.

Inman does not expect the fees to be too controversial among visitors because the fees are comparable with those charged at other parks.

Lake Mead enthusiasts will be able to take advantage of the \$15 yearly permit, which allows unlimited use of the national park. For an extra \$10, visitors can buy a permit that will let them into all national parks.

The camping fee will remain \$8 a night.

Park rangers plan to gate off some of the dirt roads leading into the recreation area to cut down on sneaky visitors.

The first booths will be built at Lakeshore Drive below the Alan Bible Visitor Center of U.S. 93, on East Lake Mead Drive and Lake Mead Boulevard leading to Lake Mead and at Katherine Landing on Lake Mohave.

The second set of booths will be built at Overton, Willow Beach, Temple Bar, Meadview

and Cottonwood Cove.

The money generated from Lake Mead and other parks will be put into a nationwide pool that will be divided among all national parks. A percentage of the Lake Mead fees will remain within the park to cover the cost of staffing the stations and administering the fee collection.