

ABOUT THE PROPOSED TRAIL PERMIT FEES

The Shawnee National Forest is proposing to charge trail permit fees for horse & mule use. The proposal is open for public comment for 6 months (until April 2008), and then would go before a public committee (not Forest Service people) to make the decision if or how much to charge.

The Forest Service is a federal agency (a part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture). Currently, money for building, maintaining, and repairing trails comes from Congress budget appropriations to the Department of Agriculture, then a portion goes to the Forest Service, of which a portion goes to the Eastern Region of the United States, then a portion of that goes to the Shawnee, then a portion of that goes to the trails. Different priorities anywhere along that chain can greatly affect the budget for the Shawnee trails. For example, if the Department of Agriculture gets less money (like more to the Dept of Defense for the war) then there is less to 'trickle down' to the Shawnee. As another example, wildfires in the Western U.S. can divert lots of money to that half of the country to fight the fires and re-plant what was burnt. *[side note, keep contacting your Congressmen and Senators to help these federal \$\$ to be directed to the Forest Service and to the Shawnee trails, each year's federal budget battles in Washington D.C. affect the trails]*

The trail permit fees are being proposed to serve as a 'steady' source of money to work on the trails. 80% of the fees would be used here on the Shawnee to build/maintain/repair trails, improve trailhead facilities (like toilets or hitching rails), improve signage, etc.

The proposal :

\$5 per day or \$50 per year for persons 16 years or older (not required for 15 or younger).

Allows the use of only 1 horse/mule (at a time) – no pack strings or ponying young horse unless you buy another permit for each one.

No proposal for senior discount or Golden Ages/Golden Access discounts.

Comparison with other National Forests :

Hoosier NF in Indiana

Proposed to increase in 2008 to \$5 per day --- \$35 per year. Currently \$3 per day --- \$25 per year.

Kids 16 and younger don't need permit.

No limit on un-ridden horses = can have pack horse or pony young horse.

No senior discounts.

Wayne NF in Ohio

\$12 per day --- \$45 per year (increasing 1/1/08 from \$5 per day --- \$25 per year)

Kids 15 and younger don't need permit.

No limit on un-ridden horses = can have pack horse or pony young horse.

No senior discounts.

Land Between the Lakes (it is a National Recreation Area, not a National Forest)

'trailer fee' at Wrangler's = \$5 per day --- \$60 per year PER TRAILER

No senior discount on trailer fee.

Hurston A. Nicholas, Forest Supervisor
50 Highway 145 South
Harrisburg, IL 62946

Date _____

Re: Trail Permit Fees Proposed on the Shawnee National Forest

I am a trail rider on the Shawnee National Forest. I have been riding here for _____ years.

The proposed trail permit fees for the horses to use the trails *(put your opinion here, like the proposed fees are OK with you, or are too low, or too high, and why you feel that way, and how it would affect you personally).*

I feel that the money raised from the trail permit fees should be used for *(for example, to re-open closed trails in certain areas, fix muddy spots on the trails, to make trails safer, or to put toilets or hitching rails in certain area)*

I believe that riders should / should not (circle one) be allowed to have pack stock or ponied (unridden) horses (like a mare with foal) under their permit.

I believe that there should / should not (circle one) be a senior citizen discount of _____ (put a dollar discount or percentage discount you feel would be OK).

I understand that it takes money to build, maintain, and repair the trails.

These are some ideas I have for raising money for the trails :

(put your ideas here, like grants you know that give money for trails, fundraisers, sell license plates, use prisoner labor, etc)

I would be willing to help with these ideas by :

(put here how you would help, like work on volunteer trail work days, write grant applications, work fundraising booth, supervise the prisoners, haha)

You can contact me at _____.(phone)

Thank you for considering my opinion. Sincerely,

(Name) _____ (Address) _____
