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From: Scott Danouski

Sent: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 10:50 AM

To: emnrd-parkscomments, EMNRD <emnrd-parkscomments@emnrd.nm.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] A Pennsylvania Resident's Perspective on New Mexico's State Parks

Greetings Jared,

I'm a Pennsylvania resident, and I have frequently enjoyed hiking and camping in the western states for the past 15 years. I've been to all 50 states and have visited a state park in each one, seeking the best that isn't popularized. I've always seen New Mexico as the forgotten gem of the Four Corners region, and I have held your annual pass two non-consecutive times. I've seen almost all your state parks, and I'm only left with the nine in the southeast near Roswell, Carlsbad, and Santa Rosa.

Having seen just about every major town in New Mexico while visiting your state parks and national parks/monuments years ago, the basis for assessing who your visitors are and the purpose that your state parks serve is misguided. Your study blindly attempted to compare New Mexico to other western states without taking into account your state's own political and unique cultural concerns.

My home state of Pennsylvania has never charged anyone to enter a state park and considers accessible recreational opportunities within 30 miles essential. Other eastern states, such as Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, West Virginia, and most of North Carolina, offer free access to their parks for all visitors. New Mexico is surprisingly a poverty-stricken state, and I honestly believe your state park system should be free for everyone to visit and should never be closed or held hostage over your citizens, as it was during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stop giving handouts to Hollywood and other special interests in New Mexico and instead tax them to help fund the park system, rather than relying only on visitors who enjoy your state to bear the burden. If you won't even consider ending admission fees and proceed with discriminating against out-of-state visitors by charging us more, you're only going to hurt those who genuinely appreciate New Mexico and its unique landscape and heritage. This could make us stop visiting, or worse, prevent future visitors from ever seeing and experiencing why your state is secretly one of the best.

To conclude, please do not discriminate between in-state and out-of-state pricing. If you need to charge more for camping, fishing, boating, etc., I would accept the fees your final panel agrees upon. At the very least, consider allowing everyone to see your beautiful parks and experience your state lands for free, like in my state and the other eight I've mentioned!

Thank you, and I hope my feedback aids in finding the best solution for EMNRD.

Scott Danouski

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