

COMING THIS WINTER!

Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge Will Begin Implementing Entrance Fee at the Concord Unit

The Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex intends to start implementing its previously approved entrance fee for all visitors at the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge's Concord Unit at the end of Monsen Rd in Concord. Our fee program was originally approved in 2005 and was established under the Recreation Fee Program (Rec Fee Program), a program which Congress initiated in December 2004 to encourage Department of Agriculture and Department of Interior agencies that provide recreational opportunities to recover costs for their public use facilities, improve visitor facilities, promote activities for visitors and address the maintenance backlog of visitor service projects.

The Rec Fee Program requires expenditures to have a direct tie to the visitor. No revenues may be spent on monitoring of threatened and endangered species. No revenues may be spent on employee bonuses. Congress authorized the Rec Fee Program for 10 years. The Rec Fee Program requires at least 80% of revenue remain at the collection site. Currently, 80% of the funds raised from user fees on a particular refuge in this region stay at the refuge. The other 20% is sent to the region to be distributed to other refuges. The percent of revenue remaining on site could change, however it will be between 80% and 100%. The

Complex has received money from these regional funds in previous years for public use facilities and has been implementing fees for hunting permits at the Assabet River, Great Meadows and Oxbow Refuges since 2005.

While we do not have an exact date to implement, the following entrance fee would be initiated at this location this winter:

- **A weekly entrance fee will be charged per car at \$4 and for an individual \$2.**
- **An annual pass for Great Meadows would be available for \$12 (valid for up to four people per vehicle).**
- **A self-service fee collection station will consist of a secure box with envelopes to register and pay the weekly fee (cash and check only).**
- **Purchase of the annual pass will be available on-line, over the phone and via text.**
- **Duck Stamps, and all Interagency Passes (ie., senior pass, military pass, annual pass, volunteer pass and access pass) are accepted in lieu of the refuge specific pass.**

Passes can be placed on your dashboard or you may carry it with you.

Fees will be used to support visitor service needs and visitor related projects on the refuge, such as maintenance of roads, trails, and infrastructure, and upkeep of the restrooms. The only way the Service will be able to achieve, maintain and provide a high quality of visitor service in the future is with additional

funds. Unfortunately, our budget is insufficient to meet our visitor service's needs. We have been in a declining budget situation for the last three years and anticipate that continuing for the next two years. Failure to receive additional revenues will have a significant impact on our ability to provide quality opportunities for visitors to engage in wildlife-dependent public uses and may force us to close trails due to maintenance issues we cannot address or closure of the restrooms.

We realize this this will take some time to adjust to and may feel burdensome to some of our visitors. We are here to assist our visitors to make the program as successful as possible. In order to keep our trails open and passable, and the restrooms available we are in need of exploring additional revenue generating methods.

For more information, please contact Susan J. Russo 978-443-4661 x 34 or Susan_J_Russo@fws.gov

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