



August 31, 2026

Subject: Administrative Rule & Camping Fee Changes

IDNR anticipates questions from our constituents, and the following are meant to address a few of these questions regarding the changes in the Camping Administrative Rules, campsite classification and fee increases:

1. When was the last camping fee increase?
 - a. 2008 is the last time a fee increase occurred. (16 years)
2. How did IDNR set the fee increase?
 - a. Beginning in 2024, IDNR staff reviewed the camping Administrative Rules, existing fee structure, camping fee structures of other Midwest State Park systems, and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) changes since 2008.
 - b. IDNR camping fees were recognized to be lower than most of the other state park systems. (see link to comparison spreadsheet)
 - c. The CPI for the Midwest increased by approximately 47% from 2008 to 2024.
 - d. IDNR set a target of approximately a 40% camping fee increase.
 - i. Less would not sufficiently cover the cost of utility fee increases and the increased construction costs.
 - ii. More would be difficult for our customer base to absorb based on the present cost of living.
3. Have other states raised camping fees?
 - a. Yes. Since 2008, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri and Wisconsin, have all increased the base rate to the camping fee.
4. How does IDNR expect its residents to pay the increased fee when the cost of living has gone up for everyone? Don't you think IDNR will lose visitors?
 - a. The proposed camping fees are lower than most state parks in the Midwest and provide economic value to the residents of Illinois.
 - b. IDNR recognizes the need to introduce camping to young or inexperienced campers at a cost most can afford. Youth group camping will remain the same, at \$2 per night, while primitive or backcountry tent camping is a nominal \$11 per night. RV sites that were previously non-electric, went from \$10 to \$11.
 - c. Illinois resident may qualify for discounts: Seniors (62+), Disabled with class 2/2A card, qualifying disabled veterans & POW, as well as Veterans who have served abroad. Kentucky and Missouri offer limited discounts, which are not of the same value.

- d. The new Administrative Rule allows for gift certificates.
- 5. How much revenue does IDNR expect to generate by the fee increase?
 - a. \$2.5 – \$3.0 million per year.
- 6. How will the revenue generated by the fee increase be utilized?
 - a. Increased utility costs will be absorbed by the OLM budget.
 - b. IDNR plans to reinvest available revenue in the campgrounds and site infrastructure.
 - c. \$1 Billion in projects have been identified to include electrical upgrades, playground replacement, shower house upgrades, water & sewer upgrades.
 - d. IDNR expects to share the progress on the website as projects are completed.
- 7. My taxes support the IDNR – why do I have to pay more for services?
 - a. Illinois residents pay taxes that support a wide variety of state services. A small percentage of the tax dollars are appropriated to the IDNR.
 - b. Camping fees generate approximately 10% of IDNR's budget for the Office of Land Management (OLM), which operates and maintains IDNR campgrounds. The fee increase will raise the total to approximately 13%.
 - c. Camping fees will be used to support the infrastructure at IDNR sites with campsites.
- 8. Why does the camping fee structure look different than before?
 - a. IDNR chose to simplify the camping structure to 3 main categories:
 - i. Premium Campgrounds and Campsites – to include the campgrounds and campsites with a preponderant history of operating at or near capacity or has unique amenities.
 - ii. Electric campsites – all campgrounds or campsites that provide electricity at the campsite.
 - iii. Non-Electric campsites – all campgrounds or campsites that provide a campsite without electricity. This may or may not include water and/or shower house.
 - b. Discounts for seniors over 62, disability with class 2 or 2A card, disabled veterans and POWs remain intact.
- 9. What is the difference between a Premium Campground vs Premium Campsite?
 - a. Premium Campgrounds have been identified in the Ad Rule for the reasons stated above. Sites include **Adeline Jay Geo-Karis Illinois Beach State Park, Chain O'Lakes State Park, Kankakee River State Park, Rock Cut State Park, Shabbona Lake State Recreation Area, Starved Rock State Park and the World Shooting Recreational Complex** at Sparta.
 - b. Premium Campsites can be located at: Clinton Lake, Jim Edgar Panther Creek, Eagle Creek, Red Hills as of January 1, 2027. Premium Campsites may be located at any of the other IDNR campgrounds and

meet one of two criteria but won't be initiated until a review of the 2027 campsite history.

- i. The campsite has full amenities such as water, sewer and electric service, OR
- ii. The campsite has a preponderant history of consistent occupancy. These sites may have a premium location due to a unique view, access to the beach, ease of use, etc. and have been demonstrated by consistent occupancy, above and beyond other campsites in the campground.

10. Why is IDNR charging a \$10 camping reservation processing fee?

- a. The \$10 camping reservation processing fee covers the cost of an online reservation system.
- b. The fee is comparable to fees charged by other state park systems.

11. Why doesn't IDNR charge a park entry fee?

- a. Illinois is one of 7 states that does not charge a Park entry fee.
- b. IDNR has been tasked to make the most of the budget provided by the state legislature and the variety of fees approved by the state legislature, such as camping fees.

12. How do the new camping rates compare with other state parks and/or private campgrounds?

- a. The new rates will be lower than most state parks in the Midwest and continue to provide a quality camping experience at a reasonable cost.
- b. Private campgrounds are consistently higher in cost and typically do not offer the opportunity to interact with nature as our state parks do.
 - i. Chatham Double J: RV = \$63/night, Tent = \$38/night.
 - ii. Rochester KOA: RV = \$74.89/night, Tent = \$49.49/night.
 - iii. **IDNR Sangchris Lake State Park, 2027 Rates: Electric Campsite = \$28/night, non-electric campsite = \$11/night.**

13. What other changes to the Camping Administrative Rules take effect on January 1, 2027?

- a. "Check out" time for all campers has been changed to 1:00 pm.
 - i. This change is meant to improve the transition from one camper to the next and limit potential conflicts.
 - ii. This change allows the staff time to address maintenance needs before the next camper arrives.
- b. The dump station fee will be raised to \$10.
- c. IDNR will enforce the 14-day maximum stay within a 30-day window year-round, unless designated as a long-term campsite (30 days within a 45-day period).
 - i. IDNR campgrounds are designed for recreational purposes, not as a place of residence.
 - ii. Private campgrounds offer extended stays and are a better fit for the visitors using an RV as a residence.
- d. Pre-paid coupons or gift certificates may be accepted if purchased through the approved camping reservation vendor.

- e. A camp is deemed to have been abandoned if a camper does not appear to remove the camping equipment within two hours after the expiration of the camping permit.