The American Legion
For God and Country

bulletin

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission
1608 K Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006
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The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass

Background

In addressing the needs of veterans, and seeing to it that they receive the benefits which they are due from the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), it is easy to sometimes overlook benefits from outside the VA to which veterans may also be entitled. Disabled Americans, which includes disabled veterans, are eligible for The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass. This pass, which is free of charge to disabled citizens, grants access to National Parks and also grants many other benefits to Americans with disabilities.

The Pass, also known as the Access Pass, is a free, lifetime pass - available to U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the United States that have been medically determined to have a permanent disability - that provides access to recreation areas managed by five Federal agencies. The five Federal Agencies affected are the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forrest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation. The access benefits, as well as additional benefits offered, are summarized below.

To apply for this pass, a disabled veteran should secure proof of permanent disability such as a rating decision letter, a VA Healthcare Card noting service connected status, or some other means. The veteran must bring the information ***in person*** to a participating Federal recreation site or office. The information must be presented in person to allow for verification of the status of the recipient by the appropriate staff. Locations for an appropriate site can be obtained from the following places:

- Bureau of Land Management http://www.blm.gov

- Bureau of Reclamation http://www.usbr.gov
- Fish & Wildlife Service http://www.fws.gov
- USDA Forest Service http://www.fs.fed.us
- National Park Service http://www.nps.gov

The Access Pass admits pass owner/s and passengers in a non-commercial vehicle at per-vehicle fee areas and pass owner + 3 adults, not to exceed 4 adults, where per-person fees are charged. (Children under 16 are always admitted free.) *Note: Photo identification will be requested to verify pass ownership.* At many sites the Access Pass provides the pass owner a discount on Expanded Amenity Fees (such as camping, swimming, boat launching, and guided tours—inquire locally). The pass program is managed by five Federal agencies that all function under different regulations and operating structures. Therefore, the discount program for the Access Pass is not handled in the same way on all public lands and therefore, checking with local sites is encouraged to provide the most accurate information.

In general discounts are honored as follows:

- Individual Campsites: The discount only applies to the fee for the campsite physically occupied by the pass owner, not to any additional campsite(s) occupied by members of the pass owner's party.
- Campsites with Utility Hookups: If utility fees are charged separately, there is no discount. The discount may apply if the utility fee is combined (seamless) with the campsite fee.
- Group Campsites and Facilities (including, but not limited to, group facilities, picnic areas or pavilions): There is no discount for group campsites and other group facilities that charge a flat fee. If the group campsite has a per person fee rate, only the pass owner receives a discount; others using the site pay the full fee.
- Guided Tours: The pass offers discounts on some guided tours. Only the pass owner receives a discount if one is offered.
- Transportation Systems: (Inquire Locally)
- Concessionaire Fees: (Inquire Locally)
- Special Use Permit Fees: (Inquire Locally)

Passes of this nature generally run $50-$80 per year for the average citizen, and veterans should be aware that this pass is not only free of charge, but is a lifetime pass for the entire lifespan of the pass bearer. Lost passes may be replaced in the same manner that the original pass was obtained, still with no additional charge.

Further inquiries regarding eligibility or specific benefits is available at the website for the United States Geological Survey located at: http://store.usgs.gov/pass/access.html

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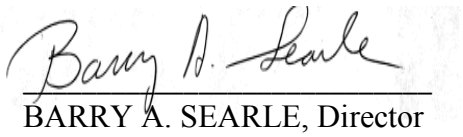

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