

By MICHAEL PEARCE
The Wichita Eagle

Declining funding from the legislature could mean state park users will see their third fee increases in five years.

At a recent Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks commission meeting, state park director Jerry Hover said his department is already cutting services and still needs to raise fees because of this year's \$500,000 reduction in state funding.

Hover said the state government paid 15 percent of the state park budget, down from 65 percent 10 years ago.

"There would be no increase in day-use rates," he said. "Public surveys have shown they don't want to pay any more for daily permits."

Hover presented a list of implemented cost-saving moves and proposed new increases for commission consideration.

The most notable proposal would increase annual camping permits from \$150 to as much as \$249.

Permits for 14 nights of camping could increase from \$75 to as much as \$99. First vehicle permits would increase from \$45 to \$50.

Other permits could also see nominal increases beginning in 2005 if the proposals are approved. Hover said the proposed increases could generate up to \$700,000 in 2005.

Contact your state legislator and Wildlife and Parks Commissioners concerning these proposed fees.

Commissioners John Dykes, 5641 Tahoe Lane, Fairway, Kan., 66205, 913-831-3058, jdykes@kc.rr.com; Kelly Johnston, 4710 E. 26th St. N., Wichita, Kan., 316-685-5160, shockerJD@johnstonlawoffices.com; Doug Sebelius, 105 S. North Ave., Norton, Kan., 67654, 785-877-5467, rdesbelius@yahoo.com; John Fields, 807 Elmwood Lane, Pittsburg, Kan., 66762, Papa11@mobill.net; Dr. James Harrington, RR 2 Box 374C, Liberal, Kan., 67901, drcrash@swko.net; Shari L. Wilson, 51 S. 64th St., Kansas City, Kan., 66111, Sharilea@kcr.com.

Licenses available to everyone on-line

Topeka — For five years, Kansas hunting and fishing licenses — and a variety of other permits — have been available for purchase directly from the Department of Wildlife and Parks' (KDWP) website www.kdwp.state.ks.us.

Although some anglers and hunters new to the outdoors may be unaware of this service, it has become a popular, quick, easy way to purchase these items from the comfort of one's

home. Anyone with an internet connection, a credit card, and a printer can purchase and print a valid license from anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Almost 20,000 hunting and fishing licenses, permits and other issues have been purchased directly from the KDWP website so far this year, with that number expected to more than double prior to this year's upland bird seasons.

Tips on driving off-highway help keep environment sound

(NAPSA)—With the explosion of off-highway vehicle sales in the last few years, more and more Americans are wanting to take their SUVs and trucks out to scale more than just their office parking garage.

Four-wheeling in the backcountry can be a great way to bond with nature and the family, but it can have a damaging effect on the environment if not done responsibly.

A nonprofit organization called Tread Lightly! was created to educate the millions of Americans who plan to take their vehicles into the outdoors. They offer some practical tips on ways to minimize your impact on the outdoors while driving off-highway.

• Stay on designated roads and trails. Drive only on trails designated for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Never make your own shortcuts, switchbacks or trails.

• Ride in the middle of the trail. Always ride in the middle of the trail to avoid widening it and destroying vegetation along the roadside.

• Cross streams only at designated fording points. If you must cross a stream, do so only at trail fording points (usually where the trail crosses the water). Cross slowly and at a 90-degree angle.

• Don't cross private land without permission. Always contact the landowner for permission to cross private land.

• Cross obstacles at an angle. You may come upon obstacles on a trail, such as fallen trees. Driving around them can destroy vegetation surrounding the trail, so sometimes it's best to move the object or drive over it. Cross obstacles at an angle, one wheel at a time.

• If possible, don't ride in mud. If you can, avoid mud or soft soil while remaining on the road or trail.

• Plan and prepare before you go. Obtain a map and contact your local land management agency to plan a route that is safe, legal and within the limitations of your vehicle.

• Don't litter on the trail. Leave the area a little better than how you found it by picking up your trash and others'.

In addition to quick tips, Tread Lightly! also provides a training program for outdoor enthusiasts, land managers, dealers and educators. The program, called Tread Trainer, is sponsored by Ford Motor Company Fund and the Federal Highway Administration.

For more information, visit www.treadlightly.org.



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