

Fees and Financing Options

SUMMARY

Despite several increases in annual permit and camping fees in the 1990s, Minnesota's state park fees are similar to those in some neighboring Midwestern states. Also, DNR surveys indicate that park users would accept additional small increases in park fees. The Parks and Recreation Division has made some use of donations and private sector partnerships and has a dedicated fund in its Working Capital Account.

Through the early 1950s, Minnesota state parks were “preserved and maintained for the free use and enjoyment of the general public” and fees were not charged for camping.¹ The Legislature modified these provisions in 1953 when it required a \$1 annual permit fee for motor vehicles entering state parks, recreation areas, or waysides.² Today annual vehicle permits cost \$20, daily permits cost \$4, and camping fees for semi-modern campsites are \$12. Revenues generated from park operations totaled \$7.4 million in 1999, representing about 31 percent of the Parks and Recreation Division's budget. In this chapter we addressed the following questions:

- **How do Minnesota's state park user fees compare with those in other jurisdictions?**
- **How do neighboring states finance state park operations? What are the advantages and disadvantages of different financing options?**

To answer these questions we reviewed public financing and park literature, a 1998 Department of Natural Resources (DNR) state park fee study, and state park data compiled by a national association. We also conducted telephone interviews with representatives of state park management agencies in neighboring states and some Twin Cities regional park agencies.

PARK USER FEES

Minnesota state parks rely on a variety of fees to collect revenue from park users, including annual and daily vehicle permits, camping and lodging fees, and fees for other services. Since 1953, when legislation first required a vehicle permit, the

¹ Roy W. Meyer, *Everyone's Country Estate: A History of Minnesota's State Parks* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991), 83. Quotation is in reference to a law passed in 1923.

² *Ibid.*, 177.

annual permit fees have increased seven times. In 1953, the division also initiated camping fees. Table 4.1 shows changes in annual and daily vehicle permit and camping fees since 1973. The largest percentage increase came in 1981, when the annual vehicle permit fee doubled to \$10 and the daily permit fee increased to \$3. The Legislature last increased annual and daily permit fees in 1996.³

Table 4.1: History of Minnesota State Park Fees

	1973	1981	1985	1991	1997	1999
Entrance Fees¹						
Annual vehicle permit	\$5.00	\$10.00	\$15.00	\$18.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
Second vehicle permit			7.50	12.00	15.00	15.00
Handicapped annual permit		5.00	7.50	12.00	12.00	12.00
Daily vehicle permit	1.50	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Daily group permit					2.00	2.00
Camping Fees²						
Semi-modern site	2.00	5.00	6.00	9.00	12.00	12.00
Rustic site	2.00	4.00	5.00	7.00	8.00	8.00
Backpack site		3.00	4.00	5.00	7.00	7.00
Electric hook-up	0.50	1.00	1.50	2.00	2.50	2.50
Reservation fee				5.00	6.00	6.75

¹The years shown are the years in which the annual vehicle permit fees increased, except for 1999.

²Camping fees increased more frequently than the annual and daily permit fees. Camping fees did not necessarily change in each of the years listed here and did change in other years.

SOURCES: Parks and Recreation Division, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, *Minnesota State Parks Fee Strategy* (St. Paul, 1996), Appendix G: "History of Fees in Minnesota State Parks"; *Minn. Stat.* §85.055; Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, *Fees and Charges Order No. 45* (St. Paul; March 10, 1999), 1.

The last increase in Minnesota's annual and daily state park permit fees was in 1996.

In addition to changes in the amount of fees, the types of fees have also changed several times. For instance, in 1996 the Legislature eliminated reduced-rate entrance permits for people over 65 years of age. Reduced-rate annual permits for second vehicles were added in 1985 and a special daily handicapped permit was eliminated in 1994.

State law authorizes the Commissioner of DNR to set reasonable fees and charges for using Minnesota parks.⁴ Each year the department sets rates for camping and lodging and other services.⁵ DNR has increased camping fees more frequently than entrance fees; since 1953, camping fees have increased ten times, with most of these increases occurring during the 1980s and 1990s. Half-priced camping at semi-modern and rustic sites is available Sunday through Thursday for Minnesota resident seniors and handicapped campers.

³ *Minn. Laws* (1996), ch. 407, sec. 38.

⁴ See *Minn. Stat.* §84.03 for fee setting authority. Legislation passed in 1999 states that executive branch agencies "may not impose new or increase an existing fee" unless approved by law. *Minn. Laws* (1999), ch. 250, art. 1, sec. 49.

⁵ Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, *Fees and Charges Order No. 45* (St. Paul, March 10, 1999). Among other things, this order sets golf course and tour fees and rental rates for chapels, conference rooms, and equipment.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER JURISDICTIONS

To compare Minnesota's state park fees with other states we reviewed information in the National Association of State Park Directors' *1999 Annual Information Exchange*. We also conducted telephone interviews with state park officials in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin and collected information on current fees from state Internet web sites. We found that:

- **There is wide variation in state park fee structures and rates across the country; however, Minnesota's annual permit fees are similar to those in twelve other states.**

Park entrance fees range from no fees in 11 states to \$75 annual permits in California and Vermont.⁶ Twelve states, including Minnesota, have annual permit rates of \$20 to \$25.⁷ Three states have annual permit fees that range from \$25 to \$75 dollars based on the park, type of permit, or type of vehicle.⁸ Some states charge a parking fee or a fee per person—in addition to or instead of annual permit fees. A few states charge higher annual permit rates for non-residents. The wide range of differences in fee structures and rates, and the differences among the park systems themselves, make it difficult to compare state park fees.

Daily permit fees also vary from state to state. Where they are necessary for entrance to the park, daily permit fees range from \$1.00 at state parks in several states to \$8.00 at certain parks in New Hampshire. At least 21 states charge different daily entrance fees for different parks, based on location, park amenities, park popularity, or other factors. Similarly, camping fees in state park systems across the country vary depending on the type of campground and campsite, services available, and discounts offered.

While there is wide variation in park fees charged in the nine Midwestern states we examined, we found that:

- **Although four Midwestern states do not charge fees, Minnesota's 1999 state park entrance fees were similar to those in the five Midwestern states that collect fees. Minnesota's basic camping fees were similar to those in other states.**

Table 4.2 shows the variation in annual and daily permit fees for state parks in the Midwest. Four states do not charge entrance fees—Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and Ohio. Minnesota and five other states charge from \$18 to \$25 for annual permits,

⁶ The following states provide free entrance to all state parks: Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington.

⁷ These states include Alaska, Delaware, Georgia, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

⁸ Florida, Nevada, and Utah. For instance, Nevada sells separate annual permits for each state park, and Utah issues a \$60 multiple park permit or single park permits that range from \$40-50 depending on the park.

Entrance fees in some states may vary by park, type of vehicle, or other factors.

Table 4.2: Midwestern State Park Vehicle Permit Fees, 1999

State	Annual Permit (Residents)	Annual Permit (Non-Residents)	Daily Permit (Residents)	Daily Permit (Non-Residents)
Illinois	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$0	\$0
Indiana	18	25	2	5
Iowa	0	0	0	0
Michigan	20	20	4	4
Minnesota	20	20	4	4
Missouri	0	0	0	0
North Dakota ¹	20	20	3	3
Ohio	0	0	0	0
South Dakota	20	20	5	5
Wisconsin	18	25	5	7

¹North Dakota's annual permit fee will increase from \$20 to \$25 in 2000.

SOURCES: Office of the Legislative Auditor telephone interviews with state park officials in each state, September 1999; State Internet web pages on file at the Office of the Legislative Auditor.

and Indiana and Wisconsin charge non-residents higher rates for annual and daily permits.

Table 4.3 contains information on camping fees for Midwestern states, all of which offer a range of campsites at their state parks that vary in price according to amenities and access. Some states, like Michigan, charge different camping fees by park, and others, like Ohio, charge “slightly higher rates” for “select premium sites” in some parks. South Dakota charges a campsite reservation fee for non-residents only.

To compare state park fees with other jurisdictions in Minnesota, we contacted several regional park agencies in the Twin Cities area. Although the state and regional park systems are not comparable, we found that state park entrance and camping fees are similar to fees charged at the regional parks. Of the regional parks that collect entrance fees, the annual permit prices range from \$16 at Carver County parks to \$25 at Hennepin County parks. Daily permit prices range from \$3 to \$5. Several regional park agencies have reciprocity agreements.⁹ For instance, people with permits for Anoka, Carver, or Washington counties receive a 40 percent discount at Hennepin County parks, and vice versa. Anoka County provides free admission to people with a Washington County park permit, and vice versa.

Camping fees at the regional parks range from \$9 for primitive sites in Hennepin County to \$20 for “full-service” sites in Dakota County. The rates for camp sites without electricity range from \$10 to \$15 a night. Fees at campsites with

State park fees are similar to fees charged in some Twin Cities regional parks.

⁹ The only reciprocity arrangement in state parks involves Interstate state parks in Minnesota and Wisconsin. On weekdays, except for holidays, a Minnesota state park permit is not required at Interstate if a vehicle has a valid, current Wisconsin state park permit or sticker, and vice versa. *Minn. Stat.* §85.054.

Table 4.3: Midwestern State Park Camping Fees, 1999

State	Range of Camping Fees ¹	Electric Hook-up Fee ²	Senior Discounts	Disability Discounts	Reservation Fee ³
Illinois	\$6.00 - 8.00	\$3.00	Yes	Yes	\$5.00
Indiana ⁴	3.00 - 13.00	—	No	No	1.00
Iowa	7.00 - 9.00	3.00	No	No	—
Michigan	6.00 - 15.00	—	No	No	5.00
Minnesota	7.00 - 12.00	2.50	Yes	Yes	6.75
Missouri	6.00 - 15.00	—	No	No	5.00
North Dakota	5.00 - 14.00	—	No	No	5.00
Ohio	8.00 - 20.00	—	Yes	Yes	—
South Dakota ⁵	6.00 - 13.00	3.00	No	No	0.00
Wisconsin ⁶	7.00 - 10.00	3.00	No	No	9.50

¹These rates represent the lowest price and the highest price for camping during the summer. This range does not include off-season, group, or discounted prices, non-resident differentials, utility fees, or extra fees.

²Most states also charge separate fees for water and sewer hook-ups, but those extra fees are not included here. The dashes indicate states that do not list electric hook-up as an item for which there is a separate fee.

³Dashes indicate states that do not offer reservations.

⁴Indiana does not accept reservations by phone. All reservations must be made in person or by mail.

⁵South Dakota charges a \$5.00 reservation fee to non-residents.

⁶Wisconsin charges non-residents \$9.00-12.00 for camping fees.

SOURCES: Office of the Legislative Auditor telephone interviews with state park officials in each state, Summer 1999; and State Internet web pages on file at the Office of the Legislative Auditor.

electricity in Minnesota state parks (\$14.50) are between \$0.50 and \$2.50 less expensive than similar types of rates in four of the five metropolitan area park agencies we examined, but the reservation fees for the regional parks are lower (\$3 to \$5) than the state park reservation fee (\$6.50).

1998 State Park Fee Study

Between 1996 and 1998, the division reviewed the state park annual and daily permit fees and recommended a revised fee schedule for 1999 through 2002. As part of this effort, DNR surveyed park visitors and members of the general population in 1996. DNR survey results show that:

- **Park users generally viewed small fee increases as acceptable, especially if they considered the park services a good value.**

Most park users rated state park fees as a good value.

The majority of park users (85 percent of annual permit buyers and 68 percent of both daily permit buyers and campers) said that the 1996 fees were a “good value.” Furthermore, 79 percent of annual permit buyers said that they would purchase an annual permit after a \$3.00 increase. The same percentage of daily permit buyers (79 percent) said that they would “come just as often” to state parks after a \$1.00 increase in the daily permit fee. The majority of campers

(90 percent) also said that they would “camp just as often” after a \$1.00 increase in the camping fee. The portion of respondents who supported fee increases dropped as the size of the fee increases exceeded \$1.00 for daily permits and camping and \$3.00 for annual permits.

Based on these results and other analyses, the division’s Fee Strategy Committee recommended that “the annual permit, daily permit, and camping fees be increased at a modest rate over time” and included in its report a four-year fee schedule with incremental, staggered fee increases.¹⁰ The committee also made 18 other recommendations, such as (1) converting from the current calendar year permit to a “12-month-from-date-of-sale permit” and (2) adding a nominal charge for camping at more popular parks and campgrounds within a park (called differential pricing). It considered, but did not recommend, many fee options, including permits issued to individuals instead of vehicles, non-resident differentials, park-specific annual permits, and per person camping fees.¹¹

Minnesota’s state park annual and daily permit fees and camping fees have not changed since 1996. However, the Legislature and DNR have implemented other recommendations in the fee study. In 1997, the Legislature approved a special patron permit.¹² The department, through its fee setting authority, has set rental rates for camper cabins at twice the rate of semi-modern camping.

STATE PARK FINANCING

The division’s 1999 operating budget of \$23.8 million was financed primarily through a General Fund appropriation, with park user fees representing 31 percent of the budget. Revenues from state park operations are deposited in the state’s General Fund and are appropriated to park operations. Other funding sources have included appropriations from the Natural Resources Water Recreation Account (\$632,000 for development), the Working Capital Account (\$300,000 for resource management and interpretive services), and the state park gift account (\$50,000 for various items).

We identified several options for financing park and recreation operations, including park user fees, donations and gifts, partnerships with the private sector, and dedicated funds. The division currently receives varying amounts of financial support from these financing sources, which are discussed below.

User Fees

User fees are often implemented to defray the cost of park operations. The following types of fees are frequently used in park systems: 1) park entrance fees; 2) admission fees to enter buildings, such as a visitor center; 3) rental fees for the use of canoes, bicycles, or other equipment; 4) fees for exclusive use of a facility

State park user fees finance about one-third of the state park budget.

¹⁰ Parks and Recreation Division, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, *Minnesota State Parks Fee Strategy* (St. Paul, 1998), 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Appendix F.

¹² *Minn. Laws* (1997), ch. 217, sec. 67.



Camping fees in Minnesota state parks are similar to those in neighboring states.

or participation in an activity, such as camping, lodging, or tours; and 5) revenues from concessions or sales of merchandise.¹³

Minnesota's state park system collects entrance fees, camping and lodging rentals, and concession fees. Revenues from merchandise sales and equipment rentals are deposited in the Working Capital Account, a special revolving fund used to support resource management and interpretive service projects. To increase revenues generated from park operations, existing fees would have to be increased or new fees would have to be added. The division's 1998 state park fee study considered additional revenue generating options. As mentioned earlier, the study proposed a four-year strategy to increase park permit and camping fees. In addition, the study recommended exploring ways for interpretive services to "provide enhanced fee-charging activities, in addition to maintaining the current level of free services." It also recommended that "individual fees for specific activities within a state park such as biking, hiking and horseback riding not be implemented at this time."¹⁴

Donations and Gifts

Contributions from private individuals and nonprofit organizations are another revenue source for state parks. Examples of such organizations include statewide

¹³ James R. Waters, "Fees and Charges: Underutilized Revenues" in *Current Issues in Leisure Services: Looking Ahead in a Time of Transition*, Joseph J. Bannon, ed. (Washington D.C.: International City Management Association, 1987), 89; Roger Warren and Phillip Rea, "Fee-Supported Parks: Promoting Success," *Parks and Recreation* 33, no. 1 (January 1998): 80-88.

¹⁴ Parks and Recreation Division, *Minnesota State Parks Fee Strategy*, 23-25.

park advocacy groups, such as “friends” groups, foundations or fund-raising organizations whose activities are solely directed to the benefit of state parks, and private foundations. Examples of projects supported by these groups include land acquisition, development of visitor centers, and interpretive programs.¹⁵ The operation of a large-scale fundraising effort might require fund-raising personnel.¹⁶

The Minnesota Parks and Trails Council advocates on behalf of state parks and trails. The Council has provided considerable support to state parks. While the statewide organization has focused primarily on land acquisition, advocacy, and lobbying, local “friends” groups have sponsored Park Partners and other projects. The Council has said it is committed to working with DNR, the Legislature, and the Governor’s office in developing longer-term solutions to the division’s budget issues.¹⁷ About two-thirds of Minnesota’s state parks have a local “friends” group that provides volunteers, money, and advice. Whether these organizations could increase their level of support or direct support to operations in addition to capital development are issues that would need to be explored.

Partnerships With the Private Sector

Private sector support of state parks can take many forms. For example, private companies in some states have paid for outdoor recreation guides, park brochures, or other materials. Similarly, manufacturers or wholesalers of mountain bikes could finance trail maps or safety brochures.¹⁸ One example of a company partnership is New Hampshire’s agreement with PepsiCo, Inc., which has an exclusive five-year right to beverage sales in state parks. As part of its proposal, the company promised to fund an education and awareness program for state parks.¹⁹

While the division has not used this option extensively, it does work with corporations to leverage financial resources. A poultry producer provided \$20,000 for picnic grills in 1998 and the division is negotiating with a company to sponsor the state park guide in exchange for \$50,000 a year for three years. If this arrangement is finalized it would represent the largest contribution of its kind to date for Minnesota state parks.

Dedicated Funds

A dedicated fund designates some or all of the revenues collected from a specific tax for a specific expenditure, with the intention that the designation will continue

The parks division has occasionally worked with businesses to obtain private funds.

¹⁵ Phyllis Meyers, *State Parks in a New Era: Volume 2 - Future Directions in Funding* (Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation, 1989), 24.

¹⁶ Grant W. Sharpe, Charles H. Odegaard, and Wenonah F. Sharpe, *A Comprehensive Introduction to Park Management* (Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing, 1994), 115.

¹⁷ Minnesota Parks and Trails Council, *Newsletter*, Fall 1999, 4.

¹⁸ Sharpe, Odegaard, and Sharpe, *A Comprehensive Introduction*, 114.

¹⁹ Donald R. Leal and Holly Lippke Fretwell, “Users Must Pay to Save Our National Parks,” *Consumers’ Research Magazine* 80, no. 8 (August 1977): 18-19.

into the future.²⁰ Dedicated funds may benefit a specific use or a specific agency, using proceeds from lotteries, sales taxes, or fees. For example, gasoline taxes help support Minnesota's highways and revenues from motor boat gasoline taxes support acquisition, development, and maintenance of public water access sites. Revolving funds, such as the division's Working Capital Account, are a type of dedicated fund.²¹

Some arguments in favor of dedicated funds include:²²

1. Dedicated funds help ensure continuity by removing the financing of certain functions from the ordinary budgeting and appropriations process, assuming that the revenue source is not subject to serious fluctuations.
2. Dedication of revenues to specific functions can remove budgeting and appropriations decisions from the political arena. Technical decisions or sensitive policy decisions can be made less susceptible to political influences if they are not part of biennial appropriations.
3. If the dedication relies on a new or increased tax, then people may be more accepting of the new or increased tax if they know exactly how the money is going to be used.
4. The recent surpluses in the General Fund give the state the luxury of dedicating some of its funds to ensure minimum expenditures for some functions without having to worry about hurting the General Fund.
5. Dedicated funds provide certain agencies or programs with an independent source of revenue.

Some criticisms of dedicated funds include:²³

1. Dedication of revenues introduces rigidity into state operations. This can present problems in the long run as conditions or preferences affecting the state budget change. A dedication could continue to fund programs at levels not determined by need but by available funds and prevent the use of state funds where they are most needed.
2. Dedicated funds remove portions of the state budget from periodic review and prevent the use of comprehensive budgeting.

²⁰ Sharpe, Odegaard, and Sharpe, *A Comprehensive Introduction*, 112; Minnesota House Research Department, "Use of Dedicated Funds for Government Operation" (June 10, 1970); and Arturo Perez and Ronald Snell, *Earmarking State Taxes* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures, 1995): 1.

²¹ Sharpe, Odegaard, and Sharpe, *A Comprehensive Introduction*, 112.

²² Ronald C. Fisher, *State and Local Public Finance* (Chicago, IL: Irwin, 1996), 282-283; Perez and Snell, *Earmarking State Taxes*, 10; Minnesota House Research Department, 8; and John Bartle, "Earmarking State Revenues" (Discussion paper prepared for the Minnesota Tax Study Commission, August 8, 1984), 8.

²³ Fisher, *State and Local Public Finance*, 283-284; Perez and Snell, *Earmarking State Taxes*, 10; Minnesota House Research Department, 3; Bartle, 8; Michael J. Ross, *State and Local Politics and Policy: Change and Reform* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1987), 219; Thomas R. Dye, *Politics in States and Communities* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1991), 206; U.S. General Accounting Office, "Performance Budgeting: State Experiences and Implications for the Federal Government" (February 1993): 6.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using dedicated revenues to fund public services.

3. Dedicated funds weaken the policy-making powers of the legislature and reduce the governor's control over operations.
4. Depending on the tax used, dedicated funds can make the supported program or agency vulnerable to fluctuations in revenues from the dedicated tax. Revenues from some sources may fluctuate sharply.
5. Dedicated funds do not guarantee that more of a specific service will be funded than if it received a General Fund appropriation because sometimes dedicated funds simply replace regularly appropriated funds.

A dedicated fund could be designed or structured to avoid some of the above disadvantages. For instance, legislation creating a dedicated fund could require that the fund be subject to legislative review each biennium. Dedicated revenues could be allocated on a biennial basis as a direct legislative appropriation. Similarly, appropriations from a dedicated fund could be indexed to inflation.

DISCUSSION

During our evaluation, division staff and supporters expressed interest in the use of a dedicated source of revenue to fund state park operations. Both the division's 1995-2005 strategic plan and its 1998 fee study identified securing a dedicated funding source as a goal.²⁴ As discussed in Chapter 1, Minnesota, along with Iowa and North Dakota, receives over two-thirds of the state park operating budget from the state General Fund. Of the neighboring states we contacted, Wisconsin, Michigan, South Dakota, and Missouri receive about one-third of state park operating budgets from state general funds, relying predominantly on a combination of park user fees and revenues from dedicated accounts.

In Wisconsin, state parks receive nearly 40 percent of their operating funds from park user fees and one-quarter from a dedicated account (the Forestry Segregated Account) consisting of revenue from recreation fees collected in the state forests.²⁵ In Michigan, 45 percent of the state park operating budget is generated from park user fees and revenues. Funding is also provided from a dedicated fund with revenues from harbor fees and gasoline taxes, and interest from an endowment fund that supports state park operations.²⁶ By law, Michigan's General Fund appropriations for state parks are capped at the amount appropriated in 1993-94. Therefore, increases in the budget must be generated from park fee revenues, which also require legislative approval. In South Dakota, park attendance and camping fees account for about 44 percent of the state park operating budget and a proportion of dedicated revenues from a motor boat fuel tax and other taxes account for 23 percent.²⁷

²⁴ Parks and Recreation Division, Minnesota Department of Natural Resource, *1995-2005 Strategic Plan* (St. Paul, 1995), 17 and *Minnesota State Parks Fee Strategy*, 23.

²⁵ Steve Petersen, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Telephone interview, September 8, 1999.

²⁶ Jim Ribbens, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Telephone interview, September 23, 1999.

²⁷ Rick Collignon, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, Telephone interview, September 7, 1999.

In Missouri, a portion of the state sales tax is dedicated to state park operations, making up approximately 85 percent the state park operations budget. Park earnings (license sales, fees, and concession contracts) account for the remaining 15 percent.²⁸ Only a small amount of General Fund revenues are used to support a historic preservation fund for state parks. Missouri's state park dedicated fund was implemented in 1984 following passage of a constitutional amendment to increase the state sales tax by 1/10 of a cent and dedicate a portion of the tax to state parks and soil conservation.

Since one goal of Minnesota's state parks is to protect and preserve natural resources within the parks for current and future generations, it could be argued that parks deserve some support from the state General Fund. It could also be argued that recreational users receive benefits from the parks and should pay an additional charge for that use. Park user fees and charges help give park users a sense of value and ownership in the state parks. Deciding what proportion of the state park operating budget should be financed from the state's General Fund and whether a dedicated fund should be used to finance park operations are policy issues for the Legislature.

²⁸ Glen Gessley, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Telephone interview, September 8, 1999.