

Response to Comments on the RIDEM User Fees at State Beaches, Parks and Recreational Areas

250-RICR-100-00-3

April 26, 2021

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) has received three comments on the proposed changes to 250-RICR-100-00-3 for the User Fees at State Beaches, Parks and Recreational Areas. The public comment period began with the public notice on April 12, 2021 and ended at 4:00 pm on May 12, 2021. The comments are available for public review at the RI Department of Environmental Management, Division of Parks and Recreation 1100 Tower Hill Road, North Kingstown 02852 (Attention: Frank Floor Administrator).

Comment #1:

Comment received by Jim Fitzpatrick from Westerly, RI on April 23, 2021 at 3:56PM:
"I support the plan to increase the parking fees at Misquamicut State Beach. The time has come for the Rhode Island taxpayer to no longer subsidize out of state visitors coming to our beach. Your proposed rates are fair and reasonable. Please get this done! Thank you, Jim Fitzpatrick Westerly, RI 02891"

Response:

Response sent by Frank Floor, Administrator:

"The Department appreciates the comment, as well as the commenter's support for the proposed amendments to the regulation."

Comment #2:

Comment received by Mary Ellen Rusnov of Westerly, RI on April 22, 2021 at 10:58AM:
"Dear Mr. Frank, I write in strong support of the proposed fee hikes at Misquamicut State Beach. I come from the perspective of a year-round Misquamicut Fire District resident. It is not the responsibility of RI taxpayers to provide a low-cost beach facility to out-of-state beachgoers. Further, Westerly taxpayers are faced with ever-increasing burdens and costs from throngs of out-of-state beachgoers. We have witnessed every year an increase in flagrant disregard of local laws regarding noise, littering, parking, traffic (speeding, lane violations, stop signs, crosswalks, etc.), alcohol use and more. One visit to the parking lot at Misquamicut will show a heavy preponderance of NY, NJ, MA and CT license plates. The current fees are so low that the State of RI actually loses money trying to operate and maintain Misquamicut Beach. What a ridiculous situation. Ironically, Rhode Islanders avoid Misquamicut Beach because it is so thronged with out-of-state visitors, making it inaccessible to the very people who pay the funds to run it. I know that acceptance and use of federal funds requires the beach to be open to nonresidents of the state, but, my goodness, establish a fee structure that makes sense and aligns better with other similar facilities! Please proceed with the proposed reasonable fee increases. Respectfully, Mary Ellen Rusnov Westerly, RI"

Response:

Response sent by Frank Floor, Administrator:

"The Department appreciates the comment, as well as the commenter's support for the proposed amendments to the regulation."

Comment #3:

Comment received by Lori Bilodeau, a Rhode Island resident, on April 27, 2021 at 12:54PM:

"Dear Mr. Floor-I'd like to register my opinion on the proposed DEM increase in fees at Misquamicut beach. As a frustrated RI resident who had to battle out of state residents for parking spots at the RI beaches all last Summer I support any and all increases in non-resident beach fees. The problem I see with this proposal is that by raising the non resident day passes to \$ 20 on weekdays and \$ 30 on weekends won't the non-residents simply buy a seasonal pass at the low price of \$ 60.? I feel that the non-resident season pass should also be increased to at least \$ 100. This will mean more revenue for the State and possibly more open spots for RI residents. Thank you for your consideration., Lori Bilodeau"

Response:

Response sent by Frank Floor, Administrator:

"The Department appreciates the comment, as well as the commenter's support for the proposed amendments to the regulation."