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Sonoma County Regional Parks Cuts Off Free Beach Access

Vesta,

I was glad to see the new parking lot built for Sunset Beach by Sonoma County Regional Parks. I have thought for many years that it was too scary to have people crossing River Road there with kids and rafts and picnic lunches. But I am incredibly disappointed that they have decided to charge \$6.00 to park there. Sunset Beach has always been a free beach. If you want to park in a \$6.00 pay-to-park lot in Forestville with plenty of empty parking spaces, we already have Steelhead Beach. Is Sonoma County Regional Parks trying to cut off free access to the river in our community? If they really want people to use the new safe lot at Sunset Beach they should take away the pay station and just let people use the parking.

Coming from the perspective of County parks having to PAY for maintaining these parks and beaches - you can understand why they want people to help defray costs - Without income there are no public parks! The non-public beaches are privately owned properties so then the property owners take HUGE risks having people on their land.

Given the variety of problems people have associated with not getting outside and getting exercise, I feel that people should be encouraged to get out and use their parks - all year round. If it costs \$6.00 every time you want to go eat your lunch or go for a walk by the river, you just won't do it. For people who are unemployed, any charge is too much, because unemployment doesn't even cover gas, rent and food. For low-income people, this is another charge they don't need. And for someone like myself, who just wants to go to the river for a little while, who packs lunches to save a few dollars, \$6.00 is too much for a parking space. I don't pay that much for parking in downtown Santa Rosa!

Meanwhile, how much money are they really collecting for the building and maintenance of the park with these fees? They have to pay people to enforce and administer the paid parking.

I think that the main effect the fees have is to keep people away. Use fees unfairly impact people without a lot of money. I think that the parks should get their funding through public funds, based on that people use the parks and need them. Use of public parks shouldn't depend on ability to pay.

I would rather see free access everywhere, but at least I would like to see free access given back to the public at Sunset Beach. I feel that it is unkind and uncompassionate to cut off free access to another beach in our community. We don't need another big empty parking lot by the river in Forestville. But we could use some more beach access.

Barbara DeLonno

Barbara,

Sonoma County Regional Parks relies on day use parking fees to pay for the cost of operating and maintaining the 45 parks in our system. This revenue also allows Regional Parks to increase public access to lands and features across the entire county. These fees account for a large part of our annual budget and facilitate essential tasks such as trash collection, trail work, vegetation management, fire safety, law enforcement, restroom cleaning, invasive species removal and an array of other functions which keep our parks safe and clean for all to enjoy. The most cost-effective way to enjoy our parks throughout the year is to purchase the Annual Day Use Parking Pass. This pass allows you and your family to park for free at all of our parks, get some exercise in the fresh air, and experience the ecological diversity throughout Sonoma County. The Pass can save you money and sales of the passes help ensure that Regional Parks can afford to keep all of our parks open, safe, and clean in light of the tough budget realities facing our county.

Bert Whitaker, Park Manager
Sonoma County Regional Parks

Dear Vesta,

I just discovered your website while researching mango mulch. I have just finished an amazing workshop with Dr Elaine Ingham (www.soilfoodweb.com). I thought you might be interested because I found your article on mango mulch and herbicide is so great, thank you, thank you.

I am assuming the article is recent, but not quite sure as it is not dated and I could not be certain from the web site format what the date of the article is.

Thank you
Trying to be helpful, with many thanks for your writing and research.

In the garden,
Thomas Van Demark
Oakland, CA

There have been recent changes on that subject which we will be covering in a future issue. You're right - there's no way to tell the date other than the 200709 in the URL! We'll have to fix that! - V

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