

**MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, MONTGOMERY COUNTY
POLICY ON USER FEES**

PURPOSE

To provide direction and consistent rationale in the development and application of User Fees charged for facilities, services and programs in the Department of Parks, Montgomery County. These fees may be applicable to facilities, services and programs such as recreation buildings, permits, ballfields, Brookside Gardens, group picnic areas, parking, Nature Centers, and primitive camping areas, which are primarily funded through general tax dollars. These fees are applicable to golf courses, ice rinks, indoor tennis courts, conference centers, miniature trains, boat rentals and rides, Wheaton Carousel, Little Bennett campground and selected activities at Brookside Gardens, which are self-supporting facilities, services and programs, and must produce sufficient revenue to cover both direct and indirect costs.

POLICY STATEMENT

Basic facilities, services and programs (such as trails, playgrounds and picnic areas), which appeal to a broad spectrum of the community, are supported by general tax dollars and are provided at no additional charge to residents. User Fees are charged for those facilities, services and programs, which provide an individual benefit or an exclusive use. User Fees may also be charged to balance use with capacity and demand, and to allocate scarce resources. When feasible, the User Fee charged should cover the direct and indirect costs of that part of the facility use, service or program from which the user derives the individual benefit. Fee reductions are given to qualified lower income individuals and groups, and may be given to qualified community based groups and qualified chartered youth groups. In general, User Fees should be higher for residents outside of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

User Fees for self-supporting facilities, services and programs are established at a level which (1) is competitive with comparable public and private facilities and services in the area; (2) can reasonably be expected to generate sufficient revenue to sustain administrative, administrative, operating, and maintenance costs; (3) is likely to generate surplus operating income to fund capital improvements at existing and developing facilities; and (4) reflects user demand and patterns of use.

Criteria For Determining Whether A User Fee Should Be Charged

The following criteria are considered before a User Fee is charged:

- The service can be provided only to the paying users, thus preventing access to all others.
- The amount of net revenue generated from the User Fee outweighs the difficulty and cost of collection.
- The application of a User Fee does not have a significant impact on usage.

Fee Reductions For Lower Income Individuals and Groups

Qualified lower income individuals and groups are offered reductions on normal fees to provide access to selected facilities, services and programs. Pursuant to County Council policy, costs not covered by lower income users will be absorbed by the general taxpayers, not by other users.

Fee reductions may be applicable to facilities, services and programs such as:

Recreation Centers	Picnic Shelters	Indoor Tennis Center
Gymnasiums	Miniature Trains	Brookside Gardens Programs and Facility
Group Picnic Areas	Bus Parking	Agricultural History Activity Room
Ice Rinks	Boat Operations	Nature Center Programs
Primitive Camping	Wheaton Carousel	

Fee reductions are not applicable to merchandise sales, private lessons, bus trips, concessionaire operated facilities, use of ballfields by leagues and teams, some equipment and facility rentals or seasonal reservations. Reductions may not be applicable during peak attendance hours.

Fee Reductions for Community Based Groups and Chartered Youth Groups

Qualified community based groups and qualified chartered youth groups may be offered reductions from normal fees for use of recreation centers and conference centers on weekdays. There may also be a charge to cover the operational costs of administration, security, and custodial services.

Process for Determining Fees and Fee Reductions

Annually, staff from the Department of Parks will review each fee for policy compliance, and cost basis, to determine a fee recommendation. The Park Commission will review the staff fee recommendations and act on them. Approved User Fees will be reflected in the Department of Parks User Fees schedule.

The Department of Parks, in cooperation with the County's social service agencies, and the Department of Recreation, will establish eligibility guidelines, application procedures, and fee reduction levels for lower income individuals and groups, community based groups, and chartered youth groups.

Any reduction of fee not specifically mentioned in this policy must have the approval of the Director of Parks. The Director of Parks' determination will provide the final decision in this fee reduction process.

Approved by the Montgomery County Park Commission November 30, 1992.