

Introduction: Recreation Fee Collection at Mineral King

From 1987 through 2003 there was a staffed entrance station kiosk located in the curve of the Mineral King road at Lookout Point. This kiosk was removed in 2003 due to safety concerns for employees; the grade and curve of the road from both directions made it a potentially dangerous location. Once the kiosk was removed, visitors entering the Mineral King area to recreate on park lands were asked to pay their entrance fee or purchase long-term passes at the Ash Mountain entrance station, eleven miles back from Lookout Point. The difficulty in doing this has resulted in a lack of compliance and a decrease in revenue of approximately \$200,000. The 2006 National Park Service Management Directives states "Examples of the broad range of recreational activities that take place in parks include, but are not limited to, boating, camping, bicycling, fishing, hiking, horseback riding and packing, outdoor sports, picnicking, scuba diving, cross-country skiing, caving, mountain and rock climbing, earth caching, and swimming."

To correct this situation, an Automated Fee Machine (AFM) will be placed on the side of the parking area at Lookout Point in the spring of 2008. Similar machines can be found at 23 NPS sites including Mount Rainier NP, Death Valley NP, Grant Teton NP, Shenandoah NP, Great Smoky Mountains NP, Glen Canyon NRA, Chickasaw NRA, Grand Canyon NP and many more.

Frequently Asked Questions about the new Automated Fee Machine (AFM) on the Mineral King Road

What is an AFM?

The AFM is an electronic, self-pay system that allows visitors to purchase their entry receipt to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. It is sometimes called an "Iron Ranger."

How does it work?

Visitors who do not already have a valid entry pass will stop at the AFM to purchase a 7-day pass (\$20), a Sequoia and Kings Canyon annual pass (\$30), an Interagency Annual Pass (\$80), or an Interagency Senior Pass (\$10). The Interagency Senior Pass is available for U.S. Citizens 62 years and over at time of purchase. The AFM will issue a receipt for any pass purchased, which must then be displayed inside the vehicle windshield for the duration of the visit.

What payment methods does the AFM accept?

The AFM will only accept credit or debit cards from Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover. To pay with cash or check the visitor must go to the Ash Mountain or Big Stump entrance station.

If I purchase a Sequoia and Kings Canyon Annual Pass, Interagency Annual Pass, or Interagency Senior Pass at the AFM, how do I exchange my receipt for an actual pass?

The AFM will issue a date-stamped receipt for the purchase of the pass. These receipts may be exchanged at the Mineral King Ranger Station or at any Sequoia and Kings Canyon entrance station for the actual pass. The Interagency Annual Pass or Sequoia and Kings Canyon annual pass will be punched to expire 12 months from the original purchase month on the receipt from the AFM. In order to exchange your AFM receipt for a Senior Pass identification must be shown that proves the purchaser was a U.S. citizen or permanent resident 62 years or older at the time of purchase.

What if I travel to another National Park Service site before exchanging my receipt for a pass at Sequoia and Kings Canyon?

The 7-day and annual Sequoia and Kings Canyon pass is not accepted at other NPS fee sites. However, visitors may use the receipt to upgrade the 7-day pass only for the Interagency Annual or Senior pass at other staffed National Park fee sites. Requests for upgrades of entrance fee

receipts must take place within a reasonable time frame, which is usually 14 days or the duration of the visitor's travel itinerary.

If an Interagency Annual or Interagency Senior pass was purchased, National Park fee sites that accept these passes will exchange the AFM receipt for an actual pass.

What if I already have a valid pass?

Simply display the pass inside your windshield whenever you leave your vehicle.

What if I am a resident of Silver City, a guest of a resident, or am staying at the Silver City Resort?

Residents and guests of Silver City and guests at the resort are not required to stop at the AFM to pay the park entrance fee if they do not recreate in the park. As usual, residents should obtain their park vehicle sticker at Ash Mountain Fee Program Assistant's Office (inquire at the Visitor Center) or Mineral King Ranger Station for direct access to private property. However, if residents or guests visit the park and/or park at one of the NPS parking areas or campgrounds, they will need to purchase and display a park pass or entry receipt inside their vehicle windshield.

What if I am a Mineral King cabin permittee or the guest of a permittee?

Cabin permittees and their guests are not required to stop at the AFM to pay the park entrance fee if they do not plan to recreate in the park. As usual, residents should obtain their park vehicle sticker at Ash Mountain Fee Program Assistant's Office (inquire at the Visitor Center) or Mineral King Ranger Station for direct access to their permitted cabin. However, if residents or guests visit the park and/or park at one of the NPS parking areas or campgrounds, they will need to purchase and display a park pass or entry receipt inside their vehicle windshield.

What if I am camping in the campground?

Like any visitor, campers are required to purchase and display entrance passes or receipts inside their windshields. The separate camping fee is purchased at the campground.

What happens if I do not display my pass?

Rangers patrolling the NPS parking areas and campgrounds will ensure that all vehicles are displaying a park pass or entry receipt. Vehicles not displaying a valid pass are subject to contact from a park ranger to determine if recreation fees have been paid, and subject to citation if in violation of regulation.

Our cabin in Mineral King/Silver City has 5 owners with 13 children and 27 grandchildren of which 9 of those drive. Who would qualify for a vehicle sticker?

The guideline is to issue vehicle stickers to property owners, their spouses and dependent children. Family members that don't meet that criteria will continue to be able to enter the park without paying in order to directly access the private property.

Many owners access private property in holdings at night when the vehicle sticker issuing stations are closed. How do we get a sticker?

If any of the issuing stations are closed you may pick up a sticker at the next convenient time you are in the area.

I still have the green/gold/purple sticker from many years ago on my car as I have transferred it. IS this still valid?

These stickers are expired and nontransferable, so if someone purchases a new vehicle they will need to get a new sticker. If a person sells their vehicle or property the sticker must be removed.

I have the old Golden Age Passport (over 62) that says it is a Lifetime Admission Permit and it is not the same as the new Interagency Senior pass for \$10. I'm sure the old one would not work on the station. How do you handle that?

Actually there is no change difference between the old Golden Age Pass and the new Interagency Senior Pass except for the name. We still accept the Golden Age Passport, but do not sell them anymore. Those that qualify (US citizen or permanent resident 62 years or older) would be issued the new Interagency Senior Pass. Holders of the Golden Age Passport may continue to use their pass. These passes are valid for the lifetime of the owner and all the same benefits apply. Those passes will allow free entry for the owner and those accompanying them in a private non-commercial vehicle to those Federal Recreation Areas that charge entrance fees and continue to allow for a 50% discount for expanded amenity fees such as camping. If someone lost their Golden Age Passport they will be sold the Interagency Senior Passport for \$10 that will be valid for the lifetime of the holder with the same benefits as the Golden Age Passport.

If a private property inholder has to pay, do they get reimbursed at the entrance station or ranger station? How much are your 7 day fees now??

Owners will not be required to pay the entrance fee in order to access their private property. However, if owners, their family and/or guests plan on visiting the parks then the entrance fee would apply. The private vehicle entrance fee for Sequoia and Kings Canyon, plus the Hume Lake Recreation District of Giant Sequoia National Monument is \$20 for 7 consecutive days. If a property owner or guest mistakenly purchases a pass without visiting the parks they may mail in a refund request and will be fully reimbursed. Forms for the request can be picked up at the Mineral King Ranger Station, entrance stations or any visitor center.

If private property in holders are not allowed to go to Mineral King or any of the vehicle sticker issuing stations and the Park surroundings unless we have a pass, how do we go up to get our sticker?

Any nonrecreational visit to the parks are exempt from paying the fee and that includes entering to conduct business with us. Entering the park to Mineral King Ranger Station or entering through the Ash Mountain Entrance Station to the Ash Mountain Fee Assistant's Office to obtain the vehicle sticker would be considered nonrecreational. Owners would need to let the staff at the entrance station know.