



# What Have We Done With Your Dollars?

## Entrance Fee Use at Badlands National Park



*There is one thing that all visitors to Badlands National Park have in common: They each own a part of the future. An entrance fee recommits you and your family to the conservation of a litany of resources: 43 million years of Earth's history, the finest remnant of mixed grass prairie, the most endangered land mammal, bison, 64,250 acres of wilderness, natural quiet, clean air, and the growth of Oglala Lakota economy. Is it worth it?*

### History of Fee Collection in the National Park Service and Badlands National Park

The collection of admission and recreational use fees in the National Park System actually predates the 1916 establishment of the agency. In 1915, seven parks had independently initiated fee collection. By 1917, auto fee revenues for all parks totaled approximately \$91,000.

In the ensuing years, the collection of admission fees for national parks has been an ongoing administrative and Congressional debate. Since 1918, fee receipts have become part of the General Treasury fund. The National Park Service (NPS) has a different times collected or not collected fees at its park units, each time adjusting to the restrictions of the collection legislation and allocation process. At times this has led to a confusing relationship between park entrance gates and the American public. From 1965 - 1995, there was little correlation between the collection of a park fee and the allocation of money to that location.

All units of the NPS watched as visitation increased but revenues did not increase to support this trend. The Badlands story mirrored the national experience. Each year, maintenance, education, and resource management projects at Badlands went undone because of lack of funding. Uniquely, in 1976 Badlands established a partnership with the Oglala Sioux Tribe, sharing lands and splitting entrance fees. Badlands is the only National park in such a relationship with an American Indian Nation. 50% of the entrance fees collected here at Badlands are transferred to the Oglala Sioux Tribe for resource management and recreation projects. In exchange, the NPS co-manages the South Unit of Badlands National Park with the Tribe.

### History and Purpose of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act

With recognition of the problem and to address fiscal needs, in 1996 Congress established the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program with its stated purpose *"to demonstrate the feasibility of user-generated cost recovery for the operation and maintenance of recreation areas or sites and habitat enhancement projects on Federal lands."*

The Fee Demo Program was scheduled to expire on December 31, 2005. New authority - The Federal lands Recreation Enhancement Act was enacted by Congress as part of the 2005 Omnibus Appropriations Bill and signed into law by President Bush on December 8, 2004. The Act will allow agencies to improve the efficiency of the program, provide better facilities and services to the visitors, employ greater use of technology, and enter into more fee management agreements with countries and other entities to provide additional services to visitors.

## Your Dollars Support the Oglala Sioux Tribe

As part of this "pilot program," individual parks will keep 80% of the money generated from entrance fees for use on specific, approved projects. Badlands National Park's relationship with the Oglala Sioux Tribe is a unique arrangement. The Tribe receives between \$500,000 and \$1 million from the Park each year with an equal amount retained at the park level to support the agency mission and visitor needs. When you pay the entrance fee at Badlands National Park, your dollars provide the Tribe with funds to develop recreation and education facilities on Pine Ridge Reservation. We are the only national park with an arrangement like this with people indigenous to the area in which the park exists.

---

## Park-based Projects Funded With Your Dollars

**Conserving Fossil Resources:** in 1998, Fee Demonstration dollars were combined with grant monies to keep the Big Pig Dig for additional seasons of excavation and education purposed. Funds paid a seasonal Physical Sciences Technician to supervise the "Pig Dig," purchased supplies and materials for the summer season dig, and funded John C. Clark Paleo-Education Interns and seasonal park rangers to provide onsite education to visitors.

**Informed Visitors:** Prior to 2000, visitors to Badlands National Park found exhibits at overlooks but little in the way of current information for safety assistance. *Your money at work:*

- Twelve bulletin boards have been installed at key overlooks and trailheads throughout the park to provide orientation and safety information to you before you set out into the Badlands.
  - Dollars were used to improve the audiovisual capabilities and exhibits at the visitor center on the South Unit. Funds paid seasonal NPS rangers to staff the facility, as well as provide a leased vehicle for transportation to and from the North Unit.
  - New wayside exhibits have been designed and will be installed at Door Trail, Cliff Shelf Nature Trail, Fossil Exhibit Trail, and Prairie Winds Trail to provide onsite education for visitors about the park's diverse resources, as well as provide safety and orientation to this vast place.
- \*A new park film has been developed that features the human side of the Badlands' history and compliments the new exhibits in the rehabilitated Ben Reifel Visitor Center.
- New fossil cast will be installed at the Fossil Exhibit Trail to replace the current deteriorated versions.

**Education Outreach:** Your entrance dollars provided the funds to formalize the park's pilot program, Badlands In Your Classroom Enrichment Program. This outreach program now reaches over 8,500 student, up from 5,000 using your entrance dollars, within 100 miles of the park each year. Funds were used to reimburse Badlands In Your Classroom Internships to provide experience to budding educators and purchase equipment, supplies, and materials for the classroom presentations.

### **Natural Resource Management:**

- Restoration of the Bighorn Sheep: A native species, the reintroduction of bighorn sheep at the Cedar Pass are will be continued and potentially expanded to other areas in the park.
- Demonstration of Mixed Grass Prairie Ecosystem: Over 1,000 acres of prairie will be burned to study the impacts fire has on the restoration of native plant species and the reduction of noxious weeds, such as Canada thistle.
- Construction of new corrals for the management of the park's bison herd.

### **Facilities:**

- Installed environmentally-friendly vault toilets at Door Trail, Fossil Exhibit Trail, and Pinnacles Overlook.
- Construct new sewage lagoon and rehabilitate previous site.
- Provide improvements at overlooks and along trails throughout the park.

---

## Beyond the Dollars

Consumer Report has described visiting America's National Parks "a best Buy." Make the most of your visit to Badlands. Become a wise, satisfied consumer. Ask yourself *Is it worth it?* Be sure to make your fee worthwhile. Camp, hike, learn, study, rest, relax, listen to the quiet, take a drive, picnic at sunset, let the landscape move you, take it all in, and come back again and again. We will be here waiting for your return. **For more information on Badlands National Park, visit our website at <http://www.nps.gov/badl>** Click on *IN DEPTH* to reach our expanded research and trip planning site.