



Natural Resources Department

Public Agency Center
333 E. Washington Street, Suite 2300
P.O. Box 2003
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parks@washcowisco.gov
www.washcowisco.gov

Washington County Park Pass FAQs

Index of Questions: [Click a specific question below to skip to it.](#)

1. [What's an invisible park pass?](#)
2. [When were park entrance fees implemented?](#)
3. [How much of the fees actually go towards the park system and what are they going towards?](#)
4. [Why are park entrance fees increasing?](#)
5. [How much do park passes cost?](#)
6. [How do I purchase park passes?](#)
7. [Can I purchase a pass at the park?](#)
8. [Our family owns multiple vehicles and frequently visits the parks. Do we have to pay for multiple annual passes?](#)
9. [I already purchased an annual pass, but now want to purchase a secondary pass. How would I do that?](#)
10. [If I purchased a boat launch pass, do I still need to purchase a daily/annual pass to visit the parks?](#)
11. [How does it work if I want to purchase a pass as a gift for someone?](#)
12. [What county parks require a pass to enter?](#)
13. [Are some county parks still free to enter?](#)
14. [Do I have to pay for a pass if I walk or bike into the park?](#)
15. [Do I have to purchase a pass for my motorcycle or moped?](#)
16. [If I pay for a daily pass at one park, can I use that daily pass at a different park on the same day, or do I have to pay for an additional pass?](#)
17. [I drove into the park and didn't see anyone in the booth, why is that?](#)
18. [I have a state park pass, does that allow me access to county parks?](#)
19. [Why are county park passes more expensive than state park passes?](#)
20. [I have a conservation patron license plate through the WI DNR, does that allow me access to the county parks?](#)
21. [I received a new license plate, how do I update that so my park pass is linked to the new plate?](#)
22. [How will the parks be monitored for people who violate the park entrance fees?](#)
23. [I received a fine in the mail for not paying the park entrance fee and I believe I received it by mistake?](#)
24. [I'm holding an event at one of the park shelters. Do all my guests have to pay the park entrance fee?](#)
25. [Where do I go to validate my event code?](#)



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1. What's an invisible park pass?

- A. An "invisible" park pass means we aren't going to be sending out physical stickers as we have been in previous years. Instead, we will be able to verify that a vehicle has a park pass linked to its license plate by using a license plate reader camera system when entering a park. You will not be receiving any physical park pass stickers in the mail.

2. When were park entrance fees implemented?

- A. Park entrance fees began in 2018 after the County Board approved the [Parks Fiscal Sustainability Plan](#) on June 13, 2017. By 2022, we have implemented the plan resulting in removing \$1 million of parks operating costs from the property tax levy in perpetuity. Park entrance fees are a critical revenue stream applied to the maintenance of our parks.

3. How much of the fees actually go towards the park system and what are they going towards?

- A. 100% of the fees will go towards maintenance and improvements of the County Park System. Some of the scheduled improvements include enhancing hiking trails, updating The Barn at Sandy Knoll, and lakefront development at Glacier Hills.

4. Why are park entrance fees increasing?

- A. The Washington County Parks Department is raising the park entrance fees in 2024 to compensate for increasing costs in utilities, supplies and materials, service contracts, and overall inflationary costs to do business. Since entrance fees were initiated in 2018, this is the first time that fees have been raised. The Washington County Parks Department operates free from the tax levy and these entrance fees are one component of keeping our park system sustainable.

5. How much do park passes cost?

Annual Resident Park Pass: \$35.00

Annual Non-Resident Park Pass: \$50.00

*Annual Senior/Veteran Park Pass: \$25.00

Daily Park Entrance Pass: \$7.00

Daily Boat Launch Pass: \$8.00

Annual Boat Launch Pass: \$90.00

*Annual Senior/Veteran Boat Launch Pass: \$45.00

*Senior passes are considered 60 years or older. (Valid for residents and non-residents alike.)





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6. How do I purchase a park pass?

A. You are able to purchase annual or daily park pass one of three ways.

1. Pay online at <https://www.washcoparks.com/parks/passes/>

We recommend that for your ease and convenience you pay online.

2. Mail in a park pass form found near the booth when driving into the park, along with a check made out to Washington County to the address below.

Washington County Natural Resources
333 E. Washington St., Ste 2300
West Bend, WI 53095

3. Pay in person at the Washington County Natural Resources Office or at the Washington County Golf Course.

Washington County Natural Resources
333 E. Washington St., Ste 2300
West Bend, WI 53095

**Open Monday – Friday
8:00 am – 4:30 pm**

Washington County Golf Course
1365 Clover Rd.
Hartford, WI 53027

**Call for hours
262-670-6616**

7. Can I purchase a pass at the park?

A. The only way to purchase a park pass at the park is by going online and paying via your mobile phone. There aren't park staff at the park that are able to sell you a pass. No money should be left at the park.

8. Our family owns multiple vehicles and frequently visits the parks. Do we have to pay for multiple annual passes?

A. Washington County offers an option for a household to purchase an additional annual pass at \$20 per vehicle if they already own one annual pass for a different car. (All additional vehicles must be registered to the same address as the first vehicle).

9. I already purchased an annual pass, but now want to purchase a secondary pass. How would I do that?

A. If you'd like to purchase an additional pass, you will need to stop by or call our office during business hours to purchase the pass at \$20. You can also purchase additional vehicle passes for the same household for just \$20 per vehicle. (All additional vehicles must be registered to the same address as the first vehicle).



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10. If I purchased a boat launch pass, do I still need to purchase a daily/annual pass to visit the parks?

- A. No, the daily and annual boat launch passes doubles as a park pass so you can enter all County Parks and use the boat launch at Ackerman's Grove and Henschke Hillside without an additional purchase.

11. How does it work if I want to purchase a pass as a gift for someone?

- A. If you select the pass to be a gift, provide your mailing address and enter UNKNOWN into the license plate section. No physical stickers will be mailed this year. The gift recipient will need to call our office at 262.335.4445 or email us at parks@washcowisconsin.gov and provide their license plate number and the name of the person who purchased that pass for them.

12. What county parks require a pass to enter?

- A. With an annual pass you will be able to visit all six County Parks including Ackerman's Grove, Glacier Hills, Heritage Trails, Homestead Hollow, Leonard J. Yahr, and Sandy Knoll. The boat launch pass doubles as a park pass and also gets you access to Little Cedar Lake at Ackerman's Grove and Silver Lake at Henschke Hillside Lake Access. All other County Parks will be free to enter without a pass. Although, if you frequent other County Parks or the Eisenbahn State Trail, we ask that you support your parks system and purchase a pass because the fees support all the parks and trails.

13. Are some county parks still free to enter?

- A. Yes, the Eisenbahn State Trail, Goeden County Park, and Spaeth County Park are still free for the public. Although, if you use the Eisenbahn State Trail or a County Park, we ask that you support your parks system and purchase a pass because the fees support all the parks and trails.

14. Do I have to pay for a pass if I walk or bike into the park?

- A. Although we have no way of verifying that you purchased a pass, if you use a County Park or the Eisenbahn State Trail, we ask that you support your parks system and purchase a pass because the fees support all the parks and trails.

15. Do I have to purchase a pass for my motorcycle or moped?

- A. Yes, both of these require a park pass to enter into the parks.

16. If I pay for a daily pass at one park, can I use that daily pass at a different park on the same day, or do I have to pay for an additional pass?

- A. The daily pass will get you into all the parks for the date of purchase.

17. I drove into the park and didn't see anyone in the booth, why is that?

- A. We aren't able to staff our booths at this time. No one is ever in the booth, so park passes are validated with a license plate reader camera system to make sure vehicles are registered.



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18. I have a state park pass, does that allow me access to county parks?

- A. Not at this time.

19. Why are county park passes more expensive than state park passes?

- A. The County Park System wanted to set fees at prices that are both affordable and help fund the park operations to be independent of the property tax levy. All park systems have expenses to maintain and improve the quality of the parks and many systems set fees too low that are unrealistic resulting in increased fees every few years. Setting the fees at \$7 daily and \$35 annually was considered an appropriate fee that would keep fees stable.

20. I have a conservation patron license plate through the WI DNR, does that allow me access to the county parks?

- A. Not at this time.

21. I received a new license plate, how do I update that, so my park pass is linked to the new plate?

- A. If you received a new license plate, office staff will need to update that for you. You can email us at parks@washcowisconsin.gov, stop in, or give our office a call at 262.335.4445 Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm and we'd be happy to get that updated for you.

22. How will the parks be monitored for people that violate the park entrance fees?

- A. The six parks that require a pass will have an automatic license plate reader camera system that scans plates when entering a park. Once a person enters a park, they will have 7 days to pay for an annual or daily pass using one of the three ways described in question 6. If a person does not pay within the 7 days, they are subject to a fine.

23. I received a fine in the mail for not paying the park entrance fee and I believe I received it by mistake?

- A. If you received a fine in the mail and you believe it is in error, please email us at parks@washcowisconsin.gov or call us at 262.335.4445 Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm and we'll take a look at it for you.

24. I'm holding an event at one of the park shelters. Do all my guests have to pay to enter the park?

- A. No, the reservation fee for the shelter you reserved includes the park entrance fee for you and your guests. When you reserve the shelter, you will create your own unique event code that you will be able to share with your guests. Guests are responsible for validating their plate(s) and have up to 7 days after the event to do so.

25. Where do I go to validate my event code?

- A. You can validate your event code on our website. Select the park where your event is being held and click "Daily Pass". Enter your email, along with your event code. From there, enter your license plate and your vehicle will be valid to go into the park during your event.

1. Validate your event code at <https://www.washcoparks.com/parks/passes/quick/>

