

Fee Waiver/Pass Summary Report 2024



2024 Fee Waiver/Free Passes

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (the “*District*”) recognizes the value of waiving or reducing fees in certain instances for the use of District facilities or land. As set forth in Title 7 - Fees, Chapter 1 – Fee Schedule, of the District Code of Ordinances, the Fee Waiver Policy was established (*Policy Number: 02.30.00*). The policy supplemented with the Fee Waiver Form, was established for determining when fees may be waived or reduced. The policy requires an annual report to the Board of Commissioners on discounts and waivers for the sake of transparency.

This report outlines specific discount categories applied toward any district managed facility (*i.e., picnic groves, indoor rental facilities, camping etc.*). In addition, as agreed upon by active concession and land agreements, the District is provided with various passes to be issued pursuant to District Board Approved Resolution, 16-0314, dated July 12, 2016.

Definitions:

Administrative Discount: Discounts and/refunds issued to customers based on district staff booking error or customer retention.

Fee Waiver: Partial and/or full fee waivers for non-District entities/individuals that request a Discretionary Discount.

Veterans Discount: Issued to Veteran organizations as stated in Section 2-4-2 of the Ordinance.

NFP Discount: A discount provided to any nonprofit organization with a valid 501(c)(3).

School Discount: Schools that utilize Preserve trails for Cross Country events are provided a 100% discount.

Student Film Discount: Film projects for educational credit are waived at 100% once provided with school authorization.

Permit/Event (M-Thu) Discount: 25% Discount provided to all patrons for hosting events Monday through Thursday.

In 2024, the Forest Preserves of Cook County issued 7,873 permits, accommodating approximately 911,154 attendees. This reflects an increase over 2023 figures. Permit activity remained consistent with prior trends, and similar numbers are anticipated for 2025.

The District offers discounts at varying levels for different not-for-profit groups, ranging from students to veteran organizations. In 2024, the district provided discounts on 843 permits, totaling \$217,705.40. We have enhanced our procedures to improve access to the preserves and expand opportunities for not-for-profits to bring diverse community groups to these natural spaces.

The Conservation & Experiential Programming Department, operating through its six nature centers, three zone teams, outreach team, and campgrounds, distributed admission and parking passes to Brookfield Zoo and the Chicago Botanic Garden. These passes were utilized as prizes for raffles, games, and activities, encouraging participation in newsletters, volunteer hours, and other events and initiatives.

Fee Waiver Totals:

Discount Type/Name	# of Customers/Org.	Total
Administrative Discount	12	\$890.40
Approved Discount (100%)	13	\$31,115.00
Fee Waiver	15	\$13,014.75
Indoor - NFP Discount	35	\$22,566.25
NFP Discount	238	\$120,745.50
Permit/Event (M-Thu) Discount	305	\$11,007.50
School Discount (100%)	2	\$3,575.00
Student Film Discount (100%)	5	\$13,289.00
Veterans Discount	7	\$452.00
TOTAL	632	\$216,655.40

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Free Pass Totals by Group:

Organization or Department	Zoo Pass	Zoo Parking	Garden Passes	Golf	Go Ape	Total Passes
General Superintendent Office	100	20	30			150
Communications	100	20	40			160
Conservation and Policy Council	100	18	30			148
Nature Centers	600	108	330			1,038
Conservation and Experiential Programming	597	147	326			1,070
Resource Management	300	18	75			393
Volunteer Resources	100	18	75	4		197
Permits, Rentals and Concessions	100	18	40	4		162
Windy City Thunderbolts	14	3				17
Opportunity Knocks	40	2				42
GiGi's Playhouse	11	2				13
Chicago Police Department			8			8
Conservation and Experiential Programming	52	10	12	6		80
Seguin	20	5	14			39
IDNR	18	3	12			33
Natural & Faith Forest Therapy	8		8			16
Girl Scouts	5	2				7
Resource Management	10					10
Gaylord and Dorothy Donnely Fund	20	4				24
Chicago Youth Centers					63	63
Lost Boyz Inc					20	20
Total:	2,195	398	1,000	14	83	3,690

Free Pass Totals with Cost Estimate:

	Zoo Pass	Zoo Parking	Garden Passes	Go Ape	Golf	Total Passes (\$)
Total Passes	2,195	398	1,000	83	14	3,690
Price Est.	\$29.95	\$17.00	\$9.95	\$64.95	\$200.00	N/A
Pass Total (\$)	\$65,740	\$6,766	\$9,950	\$5,391	\$2,800	\$90,647