Newsletter #20 (Jan 22, 2006)

Contents

What's New

Q & A

Tips & Techniques

What's New

Custom reports status

Our thanks to everyone who has submitted ideas for custom reports and forms. We're confident that the new version will be able produce most of the reports needed.

We're still working through some of the details to make the new feature as simple to use as possible, but it's taking more time than expected.

We need to let you know that most of the custom reporting functionality will require a pretty high level of technical expertise, on the level of programming for Microsoft Access or advanced Excel spreadsheet design. The documentation will be on a pretty technical level as well. While this functionality is included as part of the standard program, it's primarily for use by developers. As such, we won't be able to provide detailed support to the point of helping you through every step. If you require more than some general suggestions or minor questions answered, then we will need to charge for creating the custom report for you, as custom development work.

We do plan to provide a number of examples that you can import and use as guides or as starting points to modify. Hopefully these will provide sufficient information to get you started, or perhaps even be just the report you needed.

Q & A

Why can't I select "Propane"?

Q: Why can't I select the Propane category for a charge?

A: Some older versions of the program added an extra space in the default text for the Propane category when a new database was created. To fix this, go to Maintenance / Pick Lists / Transaction Categories. Check the "Allow editing of fields" box at the top, and then click twice on the word "Propane" under Normal Text. Move the cursor to the end of the word and you should see it go one space past the end -- use the Backspace key to erase the extra space, and press Enter. Click Done to save the change, and it should work now.

How can I get it to remember by database?

Q: Every time I open Campground Master, I have to use File / Open Previous Database to open it. It doesn't remember where my database is, even though I open it each time.

A: In recent versions there's a special command you must use to tell Campground Master where to load the database by default (this was done to prevent a common problem when File / Save As was used improperly to make backups or File / Open was used to open backups, instead of using the Backup & Restore functions.). To make it remember the current database, go to Maintenance / Program Options / Database and click the big button "Change the Auto-open database to the Current database".

Finding out when Monthlies are due to pay

Q: Why doesn't the Payments Due report show my monthlies that are coming due within 5 days, even though I have the option set for "Checked In and 5 or fewer days until the current paid-thru date"?

A: This is most likely because the Last Night of the reservations are equal to the Paid-Thru date, so the program assumes they're paid in full and will be leaving as "scheduled". It can't assume that the reservation will be extended, so you would have to extend it first before it will appear unpaid. If they are Monthly-type reservations, try using th Monthly Billing report under the Transactions menu. While it might not show the correct charges due if you don't have the Rates set up perfectly for auto-rates, it should at least show all monthlies coming up for renewal.

Changing "Receipt #" on invoices

Q: I don't like it to show the term "Receipt #" on the invoice forms, since it's not a receipt -- can I change that?

A: Go to Maintenance / Data Field Definitions / Transaction Fields, locate the Receipt # field and change the Normal Header to what you want. Note that this will change it on all types of receipts, however, so you'll need to make it something generic like "Statement" or "Ticket #".

Sorting unassigned reservations by date made

Q: How can I add Reservation "Date Made" field to the Unassigned tab? I need to be able to assign sites on a first come first serve basis for events. With that field available to me, I can sort and assign.

A: There isn't an option for this in the current version (the next version will allow field additions to the tabs), but here's an alternative -- if you include the Confirmation number, you can sort by that. It typically includes the record ID of the reservation which will be in the order that they're made, with one exception if you're using multiple networked computers -- the workstation's ID will be the left-most digit(s). So for instance R01000555 was made on workstation #1, and R00000570 was made on workstation #0. The 555 one was made earlier than 570, but will appear "later" in the list because of the "R01" in front. So just pay attention to the right-most digits of the number.

By the way, another alternative is to go to Reservations / Unassigned reservations, which does allow sorting by the date made. However this shows all unassigned reservations in the system, regardless of their starting date, which may include many that you don't want to work with at the time.

Changing "My Park" on the web vacancy grid

Q: When I export the Rack Grid to an html file, it text in the grid says "My Park" instead of our park's name. Is there a easy way of having this grid pick up the name of the park from the database?

A: What you need to do is edit the "All.htt" template file to put your park name in it, or whatever other web page elements you want. This allows you to use whatever you want as a template, to make it look like the rest of your web site. It's just a text file, so open it with Notepad or other text editor.

There's also a mention of this in the documentation here:
http://campgroundmaster.com/help/exportingtowebvacancygrids.html

Tips & Techniques

Handling different numbers of digits on meters

If your park has a variety of electric meters, some older than others, then some meters may have a different number of digits than others. Eventually you'll run into a problem of the numbers wrapping around to 0, which is handled by Campground Master through the wrap-around numbers in the Park record. When a meter reading is entered and charges calculated, it will know that it wrapped around (since the previous reading was much higher than the current reading), and will calculate based on the wrapped-around number. For instance, a reading of 150 when the previous reading was 9800, assuming a 4-digit meter, will be treated as 10150 instead.

However, the Park record only handles one wrap-around number for each meter type. To handle meters with different numbers of digits, you actually have use separate parks. Here's how to do this:

1. Go to Maintenance / Park Setup / Parks.

2. You'll need to copy everything here to another Park record, so Print this one so you have a handy reference. Also write down the Key Code, since that's not part of the printout.

3. Make sure the "Short Name" field is something logical -- usually it's something simple like "Campground" or a short version of your parks' name. The customer never sees this, so the main purpose is so that you can distinguish between different Park records -- so in this case it might be better to have it be something like "Old meters".

3. Click Add New to add another Park record. All fields will be cleared, you're now editing the new record.

4. Enter everything exactly the same as the previous record (from the printout), particularly making sure that the Authorization Code is the same. The only differences should be the Short Name, which must be different for this record (e.g. "New meters"), and of course the meter wrap-around number will be different since that's why you're doing this.

5. Click Save to save the new record. You might get a Warning message about the Auth code -- that's OK. However if you get an Error message about the Auth code, then double-check the park name and address to make sure it's identical. The Key Code should match the other record -- if not, then something is different in the name or address.

6. Now you need to go into the sites and select the appropriate Park for each site. Go to Maintenance / Park Setup / Sites, and change the Park selection as needed for any with the new meters. (The sites should already have the first Park selected, so no change is needed if they will stay with that one.)

Once the sites are all assigned to the correct Park, their meter readings will wrap around properly.