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First name: Bill

Last name: Mason

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Proposed New Forest Service Special Recreation Permit Fee

I am writing in regards to your proposed Special Recreation Permit Fee as it is written.

I have a strong objection to the fee for the following reasons:

Being a long time member of the Scouts of America I have been both a Scout and a Scout volunteer at the Melakwa Scout camp since 1958. This fee would affect every user of the camp as written. The Scouts of America already pay the Forest Service thousands of dollars each year for the use of the camp area.

Camp Melakwa was established in 1948 and every year since the Oregon Trail Council Scouts of America organization has spent hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars maintaining both the camp area and the multiple hiking trails around it. We have 300 - 500 Scouters that take care of the Willamette Forest each year. We have been a multi-generational group of good stewards taking care of the forest for over 70 years!

Just in the last 2 years since the Separation Fire burn we have felled 1000's of dangerous trees to protect the forest, encourage re-growth and help bring the burn area back to a healthy forest and have already begun to chip and mulch the downed timber to enrich the soil and reduce fire danger. Yearly we remove trash left by public users of the area, we provide shelter for winter hikers via some of our camp structures. Over the years we have cleaned the lakes in the area, stocked Melakwa lake with fish and maintained the access roads in the area. We have spent tens of thousands of hours and dollars maintaining this part of the Willamette Forest. Under your proposed fee schedule you now want us to pay you additional money for doing this.

Each year, hundreds of young men and women in the Scouting organization along with adult volunteers attend the camp. When they first arrive, they hike in from the trailhead on FS RD. 2649 near Irish lake to Melakwa Camp as part of their camping experience. Under your plan, this would be at least \$3.00 per person if not more charge (this would actually probably be an overnight fee under your definition; \$5.00 per night!)

Then during their week at camp, our campers may take a short 1 mile hike to Benson Lake or a 2 mile hike to Frog Camp, again another \$3.00 per head or more fee. We make daily hikes in and out of camp. Your proposed fee schedule would place our campers in financial jeopardy. Many Scouters can barely raise the money for their camping costs now. Your proposed fee would add a \$30 to \$50 additional burden per week to each Scouter.

Not only is the fee penalizing us for maintaining the Willamette Forest, it would be yet another bureaucratic mess to manage and enforce and should not be implemented for organizations that already pay more than their fair share.

I would request that you re-think the guidelines for this fee and modify it to reflect my concerns.

Thank You,

Bill Mason

Milwaukie, Oregon

