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Comments: Willamette and Deschutes NF proposed wilderness fees

I am writing to comment on the proposed wilderness fee permits to access trailheads in the Willamette and Deschutes national forests.

First, your fee structure should be modified to lower or altogether eliminate fees for seniors. For instance, the holder of a lifetime senior pass, like myself, has already paid the federal government for the right to use the public lands of the national forests. We should not be charged again for the privilege.

In my experience, senior hikers are not overcrowding the trails of the national forests. I have spent the past several years doing section hikes on the Pacific Crest Trail. Backpackers my age are very much the exception out on the trails; the younger generations, as you would expect, are the ones who are out in mass. Your proposed fee and permit structure should seek to encourage senior trail use, not hamper it.

Second, your permit fee structure should be set to provide advantages to US citizens and lawful resident aliens. While I have no problem with visitors from overseas using the trails (I have met a lot of them), I think they should be charged higher fees for the privilege of doing so. The federal taxes I pay help support the USFS and the foreign visitors do not pay these taxes. It is logical to me charge foreign visitors higher access fees than US citizens and lawful resident aliens.

Thanks for considering these comments.

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