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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comment on fee proposal for Central Cascades Wilderness

Dear Members of the Resource Advisory Committee:

I am in favor of the proposed fee structure to enter wilderness lands in the Central Cascades. There are two things I'd like to suggest to make this program more effective:

1. Offer free access to people who do volunteer work to restore habitat or improve, build, or maintain trails in the National Forest. Not enough people volunteer today, and this would create a powerful incentive for more people to help. I believe most volunteers are very responsible, so offering them free access wouldn't pose any risk of overuse or damage to the resource. For day visits, I think volunteers should be exempt from quota restrictions. I would like to see the process of volunteers being eligible for passes or other entry permits be made simpler. As someone who's done hundreds of hours of volunteer work, I've found it difficult to get a volunteer pass as they are only given for events where rangers attend. A more flexible system would allow volunteers to fill out a form documenting when and where work is done along with photos. When enough hours are logged, a credit could be used to obtain a pass or entry permit. This would allow volunteers to work where and when it's convenient and not require participation in an organized group.

2. Part of the fee system's educational component should be user education on proper ethics related to the use of social media in our forests. A major contributor to the overcrowding problem the fee system is intended to address is promotion of sensitive places on social media, bringing more users seeking to duplicate someone else's experience posted online. Educational messaging on the ethical use of social media should be posted at trailheads and displayed on permits so users are made aware of how improper use of social media can cause overcrowding, habitat damage, and the need to regulate access. An educated user community could reduce the need for additional restrictions in the future. A sample set of principles called "Leave No Virtual Trace" is included below.

Principles of Leave No Virtual Trace:

1. Don't geotag photos you share.
2. Don't post photos with location details of places that could be harmed by increased popularity.
3. Only post routes or tracks following maintained trails.
4. Preserve solitude by keeping it to yourself so it will be there in the future.
5. Politely let others on social media know when their actions contribute to overuse of recreation sites.

6. Turn off devices and enjoy the moment.

7. Think about the consequences of posting photos; the damage they do could be far more than anticipated.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Chris Carvalho  
Aloha, OR