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Comments: Central Cascades Wilderness Permit Comments

Central Oregon Cascades Wilderness Permit Comments

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I am writing to offer comment regarding the Permit Plan for the Central Oregon Cascades.

1. To begin with, I would like to say Thank You to everyone involved in this process for taking the initiative and investing a great deal of time and energy on this issue. As a frequent user of the trails under consideration, it is apparent to me that something needs to be done soon to preserve this experience for the coming decades. I sincerely appreciate your work on this project.

2. My first concern is the need for an improved user interface on Recreation.gov when implementing this new plan. I have used this website for a number of activities including day hikes, camp sites and overnight hikes. I found this site confusing when booking overnight hiking into the limited access areas for Pamela Lake and Obsidian Falls.

My confusion was caused by a lack of clarity on whether booking an overnight hike provided me with a trail pass for the second day of my trip. The website was confusing and my searching did not reveal a clear answer.

Based on these experiences, I highly encourage that a major investment be done to provide a clear website experience for all users. I think this will be a key, if not THE key, to how smoothly this plan is able to be implemented.

I am also willing to volunteer in helping with reviewing the user experience in the beta phase of the website.

3. Next, I am wondering if something can be done to limit people over-reserving days just to save them in case they would like to use them during the summer. I have heard individuals comment about reserving a bunch of days, then deciding later whether to use the reservations.

I find this frustrating because it limits my ability to plan for a specific day far enough in advance to accommodate the schedules of my party who live out of state.

I am not aware of what options exist for limiting this abuse, but I am available to dialogue further to discover the possibilities.

4. I would like to suggest that a price cap be put into place for any specific trip. The Pacific Crest Trail Association makes mention of several plans which have similar caps <https://www.pcta.org/2019/comment-period-open-on-central-oregon-wilderness-permit-fees-public-meetings-set-68139/>. I think this would be helpful for encouraging access to everyone.

A price cap that occurs after the 3rd night would be helpful.

A price cap for day use when a family exceeds 6 people would be helpful.

5. Finally, I think that the idea of a Volunteer Access Pass is an excellent idea and interests me. At the meeting I attended on November 12, 2019 in Salem, one of the rangers mentioned 40 hours for the year as a requirement for receiving a pass. I think that number is quite reasonable and interests me.

Dan Shuholm