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Organization:

Title:

Comments: [CAUTION: Suspicious Link]Please do not do this.

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Questions: Spam.Abuse@usda.gov

Hello,

I'm writing as an Oregonian and someone who makes frequent use of many various trails in the state, particularly in the Jefferson Wilderness area. I actually moved to Salem from North Dakota about a year and a half ago (and no, I am not a drain on your state's resources; I work overnight shift at the Salem hospital in a position that is difficult to fill here because only one college program exists in the state to educate students to do what I do, which is Medical Laboratory Science), and a large part of the reason for that decision was all of the natural beauty and recreation that Oregon has to offer. There are already fee structures in place for state parks, sno parks, coastal recreation areas, and national forest recreational areas, (and I'm sure there's more but we attempt to be fairly frugal)- we have purchased two year long passes to both state parks and national forest recreational areas and it would be a little ridiculous for bureaucrats sitting behind a desk all day to decide that we need to be double charged after buying the permit to go out on a day hike. My husband and I frequent these trails and have never seen a need for limited access due to damage, erosion, or trash left anywhere. These trails are generally quite clean and other hikers seem to respect them as much as we do. Oregon's wilderness trails exist for all of us to share and no politician should be able to say that they are limiting their use to a certain few people.

The social issues present throughout Oregon are no secret- there are major problems with mental illness, drug use, and homelessness. Placing two additional barriers to using these wilderness trails in the form of limited access and fees would only make it more difficult for families to make use of them- and families using these trails, engaging in recreation as a family has been shown to make for stronger marriages and contributes to a healthy childhood (please read this document https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/s_dcfis07report.pdf), probably helping children to grow up and avoid being a statistic. It would be a travesty for a family with 3 children, a mom and dad and maybe a grandparent to have to pay 30 dollars to go on an afternoon hike, if they were allowed at all by the usage quota being proposed. I have to wonder if implementation of these barriers would only serve to exacerbate these social problems.

If you do feel a need to squeeze even more money out of Oregonians after the sky high taxes, fishing licenses, and fee structures already in place for the majority of recreation areas, I would suggest charging fees and regulating several of the hot springs, which apparently do have a problem with trash, damage, hazardous waste, and disrepair.

But for those of us who do no harm, leave only footprints and take only pictures, please do not take our trails away. It's sad that you even have the power to do so and I should not have to beg the powers that be for permission to go for a walk. But I am begging you. Please do not do this.