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Organization:
Title:
Comments: Permit feedback

Hi,

I understand the need to reduce impact on popular areas; I just wanted to add a couple of things that may not be among the common concerns you've heard from many.

First, volunteers who spend dozens or hundreds of hours of their free time to maintain trails will no longer have access to some of the very trails they work on. Yes, they can buy permits like everyone else. However, this requires finalizing ones plans for the entire summer in spring. As a trail volunteer, frequent trail runner, full-time Monday-Friday worker, and parent of three children, this type of planning simply doesn't work out much of the time. I have already experienced this with the two limited areas, where either I miss any chance of reserving a spot on a weekend if I happen to try to get permits a couple of hours after the system opens, or I reserve them, and then simply can't go (e.g., 242 wasn't open yet in my last attempt to camp in the Obsidian area). While I try to get permits every year, I end up visiting a limited area maybe once every couple of years if backpacking, and at most once if day-hiking. I may not be the only volunteer who would feel that it's unfair for out-of-state people (with solid vacation plans) to have easier access to the mountains we love and work so hard to make accessible.

The other significant impact is on longer-distance day hikers or trail runners. I, and all the trail runners I know, are extremely conscious of leaving no trace and making minimal impact to the areas we visit. Trail running is actually why I became a trail volunteer. We also tend to plan much longer day trips and hence are much more sensitive to bad weather. So if, for example, rain and wind are predicted on my 40+-mile planned day in a limited area, I simply would not go. So far, I decide on a trip a week or so in advance, then monitor the weather and change plans if needed. If all permits must be obtained in May, then this will no longer be possible. For me, this means that I will just reduce my volunteer time (to accommodate longer travel times), increase my carbon footprint, and go to Washington. Yes, there are wonderful trails in the Waldo Lake wilderness and around Diamond Peak (which I will continue to visit regularly), but above-treeline environments will become out of reach to people like me, and I'd rather take the long drive and certainty of successful outing than risk a "same-day" lucky score on a trailhead permit (or whatever system is used to handle walk-ins). Perhaps it is the intent to drive local people out of state, in which case I think it will be quite successful.

Thank you for all your efforts on dealing with this hard situation and for giving all of us a chance to comment!

Best,
Boyana