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Comments: Comments for the proposed National Forest permit system in Central Cascades Wilderness Areas in Oregon

I agree with the need to protect/preserve the national forest and trails in the Three Sisters, Mount Washington, and Mount Jefferson Wilderness. However, the current proposal is inadequate with many unresolved issues.

The meeting in Bend conducted by the forest service was very disappointing. It was not held in the true spirit of a public meeting: no comments or questions were recorded. Additionally, the distributed list of impacted trail heads was incomplete/inaccurate. The audience requested that questions and answers be provided to the group as a whole but forest service personnel declined that request (without saying the reason) and forced people to ask questions in small groups. This was inefficient and many people had the same questions but could not hear the answers. Forest service personnel were not able to answer questions and appeared as confused as the public when asked any specific/detailed questions. Many people just walked out because they could not get their questions answered. Clearly, this permit system is not ready for implementation.

There should be a senior discount, just as there is for the national parks and other public lands.

The permit system should end after Labor Day weekend. I do not know if use was analyzed by month, but it is certain that use declines after Labor Day and there is no reason to continue the permit system after this time.

The proposed fees are too high, especially the "administrative fees" and especially for overnight permits. The current fee system will restrict access to those who have more money or to commercial outfitters who may buy large numbers of permits in advance for their paying clients. Those who cannot afford the fees will not be able to access these public lands.

In addition to buying permits in advance through Recreation.gov, it should be possible to obtain the permit in advance at the forest service ranger stations, not just the day the permit is needed.

Oregon PCT section hikers will be penalized by having to pay high fees for only accessing the PCT and camping in the PCT corridor because they will have to access the PCT on impacted trail heads. There should be an exemption for backpackers only using a trail to access the PCT in these wilderness areas.

A monthly and an annual pass should be available as an alternative to paying per day or per night.

The library pass idea is interesting but how will this be implemented. Can people put the pass "on hold" if it is not immediately available. How many library passes will be available?

People who already paid for an annual parking pass or senior parking pass will be paying double for accessing these trails since the proposed fee system includes parking for the trail heads.

It is unclear how the permit system will be enforced. Will there be forest service personnel or volunteers at the trailheads checking passes as people enter or leave? Obviously this cannot be enforced 24 hours per day. What will happen to vehicles left at trail heads with valid parking permits? What are the consequences of hiking without a permit? Will there be warnings or tickets? How will the forest service monitor violations?

Fifty percent of the permits should be available through ranger stations and fifty percent through Recreation.gov. People should not be required to pay the administrative fee if they chose to purchase the pass in person. The advance time period should be the same for both methods of obtaining a permit.

How will people know how many permits are available---will it be a real time system? How will local forest service personnel monitor the number of permits available at any time? How will the public know how many

permits are available at any time?

How will groups (clubs or meet up groups) obtain an advance permit? Can the leader obtain a permit ahead of time without specifying the names of the individuals in their group?

What happens to permits that are purchased but unused ("no shows")? How will the forest service prevent people buying the permits and then "scalping" the permits at much higher prices?

If people can purchase permits at the ranger stations on the day of the entry but only after the ranger station has opened up, this will delay the beginning of the hike/backpack and could endanger the lives of the hikers if they cannot start early enough to safely complete their hike.

Thanks for considering these comments.

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