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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Recreation Fees

Hello,

Thank you for taking comments regarding the proposed fees on wilderness trails, primarily in Central Oregon.

As I understand it, USFS is looking to start a new limited entry system, which means limiting the number of people on certain trails.

I don't object to requiring permits per se. These five wilderness areas in the central Cascades are gorgeous, fragile areas. I'm sure that's why they were designated wilderness to begin with. They are highly overused, which degrades the experience of all users. So what can USFS do but limit their use?

I'd like to cover two topics: 1) the cost of the permit and 2) limiting hiking trails, while allowing COTA and others to keep building bike trails. These topics are related because by creating a permit system for trails, USFS is restricting hiking access. If we go in non-wilderness areas (because we can't get a permit the day we want to go), we must contend with bikes, getting hit by bikes, negotiating the trail with bikes, etc. Hiking and biking on single-track trails are NOT compatible uses.

Cost of the Permit

Let's face it, there are a lot of "yahoos" in Central Oregon, i.e., people whose attitude is "I want to go hike, screw the permit system!" USFS must ENFORCE people having permits or they won't do it. My comment is: Set the price of the permit so that it will cover the expense of enforcement. If USFS doesn't have a strong enforcement presence, people like me will go "shoot, I can't hike there today, no permits are available." While the renegades will go anyway. Is that the situation USFS wants to create?

Limiting Hiking Trails

My main concern to the entire USFS permit proposal is where are hikers to hike when wilderness is limited by permits? How is USFS planning to compensate for taking 20 trails out of hikers' reach? And don't say we can use trails that bikes use!

Green time is essential for my mental health, as I'm sure it is for many people.

Seeing too many people on a trail isn't as bad as encountering bikes on a trail! It is wrong to think hikers and bikers can share trails. It's a terrible and dangerous experience for hikers.

Is it fair that Visit Bend advertises Bend as "your place to play," which comes down to inviting tourists here to use our public lands for commercial purposes, i.e., for the monetary benefit of businesses.

Is it fair that recreating on public lands be billed as a tourist attraction? Has USFS asked Visit Bend to limit their summer tourism advertising? Wilderness trails and the Cascades Lakes area in general are billed as a "playground" for tourists even though they are very fragile and should not be promoted, advertised, or commercialized in any way.

Is it fair that more and more biking trails are being built by COTA (and maybe other mountain biking organizations)? Are you limiting the number of bike trails being created in the non-wilderness areas of the forest? There's no denying that bikes take an even greater toll on the land than hikers. And as I've mentioned above, it's unrealistic to think hikers and bikers can use the same trails. The two just don't mix.

Case in point: I hiked the Tumalo Falls trail on 6/14/18. I didn't actually count bikes, but a conservative guess would be about 50 bikes coming in when we were going out. Talk about a very unpleasant hiking experience. Plus, I want to add, bikers are not staying on the little wooden bridges up the meadow areas (you can see bike tracks), so those areas are experiencing severe soil compaction, killing the white marsh marigolds and other vegetation. It is terrible!

In closing, I'm asking the USFS to create more hiking trails that will replace the ones that will require permits. USFS is essentially removing 20 trails from hiking use because obtaining a permit could be difficult, if not

impossible. I think you need to designate additional hiking (ok, maybe horse)-only trails in non-wilderness areas. Beth Peer said USFS might make Tumalo Mt. and Mt. Bachelor more hiking accessible. But we already hike those areas. That's not adding anything new. Finally, please hire enough people to enforce the permit system. Otherwise, why do it at all?

Sincerely,
Lynn Putnam

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