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Title:
Comments: extra permitting fee comment, from an experienced hiker

I am commenting on the fee that is proposed to be added to the fees we are already paying for use of our Public Lands.
I understand your concern about areas being loved to death but I am wondering if you have thought of all of the ramifications of your proposal? I am a 67 year old with decades and thousands of miles of day hiking Washington and Oregon backcountry.

Here are some of my thoughts on the extra fee proposal.

1. I think older citizens, 65 or at latest by 70 yrs, should have the same permit fee break that under 12 youth's have. 65-70 years old is retirement age and we are already being squeezed by the increase in cost of the "Old Geezer" pass, various other recreation agencies hitting us for ever increasing fees, and cost of gas just to get to the locations, and meanwhile our income is stagnant and low. Hiking and mtn biking are my main sources of recreation and entertainment. Adding $4 (and likely the processing fee will continue to increase), to many of my hikes doesn't sound like much to you, but I am fighting a losing battle with being able to afford all the fees that are being added to recreation. (Watercraft fees are also skyrocketing now that my simple paddleboard will be considered the same as a big powerboat)

2. How do you prevent tour companies from buying up tickets? I have heard the limits could be as tight as only 12 permits a day, which the tour companies could easily buy up all the good windows for hiking areas. They can afford to buy permits whether they end up using them or not. This will make it harder for families, friends and even small local hiking groups to get tickets as ticket availability would be drastically reduced. The average Oregonian cannot afford to buy up blocks of tickets ahead of time and maybe use them, maybe not. Tour companies can also easily load up to the max allowed in a group, whereas an average person is likely to be going with just a couple of people or maybe just wants to get in a short hike with a bit of relative solitude without bringing their own crowd. And I thought avoiding crowds is a major claim for the purpose of this extra fee system?

3. Maybe consider the initial trial of this program to be just the weekend or maybe Friday through Sunday?

4. I would also like to point out that from my observation of decades of extensive hiking, the major amount of impact and heaviest long term use of parking lots is by the overnight backpackers. I can show up at 7:30 am to a parking lot already full of campers, and they plunk down a tent etc, then spend hours/days tromping around a small area. Maybe that would be a good place to start on heavier restrictions?

5. I do hope that locals, those with Central Oregon drivers license, would be favored locally in Central Oregon. It seems harsh to include us with the tourists as locals tend to take much better care of the land. Tourists more often tend to use and abuse, thinking of parks as a playground and forgetting that care must be taken, as they

have no long term skin in the game.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal that will impact my budget significantly.

Sincerely,

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