

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/2/2019 4:01:48 AM

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Title:

Comments: Comments on the proposed permit system

Hello,

I would like to comment on the proposed permit system changes and raise my concerns. I would like to start by saying I 100% agree with the need to limit the impact of hikers on some of these sensitive areas. I actually don't even mind implementing a permit system. There are a couple things that concern me, however.

One is the per night per person fee for backpackers. This might not seem like a big deal for weekend backpackers, but for people attempting to do something like section hike the Oregon PCT it will be a considerable burden. The PCT in Oregon is less than 500 miles, meaning you can't apply for a long distance permit. So anyone attempting a thru hike will not only have to pay for every day they are in these areas, but they're going to have to hope they can secure a local permit when they hit these restricted areas.

It will also be a bigger burden for families, the larger the family the more painful this will be. A family of four will be paying \$20 a day, plus a \$6 processing fee, plus a trailhead fee. That's almost \$70 for a weekend trip. A youth group trying to hike these areas would face huge costs.

I do have a couple ideas I would suggest.

1. Consider a lower fee for children under the age of 18. Maybe \$2.50 for 10-18 and free to under 10. This would allow families and groups to catch a bit of a break, and honestly, I'm not sure families and kids are a major contributor to the issue. This or create some kind of group rate. You could even provide a limited number of group permits per year.
2. Come up with a limited Long-Distance permit for people attempting an Oregon PCT thru hike. It can still be lottery driven and still cost money, but make it valid through the PCT corridor of the three wilderness areas.
3. Another idea is to provide a discount or free permit(day per day worked) to people willing to volunteer with the Forest Service.
4. Run Leave No Trace workshops and allow people who attend to purchase discounted permits the day of the workshop.
5. More actively promote volunteer work, especially on trails that have fallen into disrepair. There are a lot of trails out there, let's give people an alternative so they don't congregate on a few trails. Get those volunteer events promoted on places like the PCT Facebook group and local hiking clubs.

I feel like limiting the amount of people is only part of the solution. Education and enforcement are also vital aspects of preserving the wilderness. I would like to see some of the money from these proposed fees going towards getting more rangers out there, promoting LNT as well as enforcing the rules.

As someone who hiked the PCT this year, I really appreciate that these areas exist. I want these areas preserved so the next generation can enjoy them. Thank you for giving us a chance to provide feedback rather than just implementing policy.

Thank you for your time,
Kevin McDaniel