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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Please consider these alternatives to the Daily Permit System

"The smoke has cleared, the trail snow has melted, the skies are clear with no threat of rain or thunderstorms. Let's go for a day hike to Green Lakes or Broken Top". Oh wait...can't do that anymore, because the hike needed to be planned and permitted months in advance.

The permit decision by the US Forest Service has been concerning and disappointing to me. This means no more spontaneous decisions to hike in these wilderness areas which are most appreciated on a beautiful, sunny and warm summer day. Instead, one must plan the hike weeks to months in advance for a specific day and know how many will be joining the hike.

As a periodic visitor to my Sunriver vacation home, I have been unable to hike my favorite Green Lakes trail for the past 4 years due to: smoke issues; trail snow; and this recent August, threats of rain and thunderstorms. And now, should I be fortunate to get a permit for a specified day, I have to hope the hike day is possible, safe, and good weather. If not, I won't have an opportunity to adjust the hike day.

I share your concern about keeping the wilderness areas pristine. I always remind my hiking partners about respecting the area and leaving no trace. I am amazed that a few don't understand the respectful actions to preserve our wilderness areas.

Instead of limiting the amount of hikers each day, I believe Education is the key to remind hikers of their responsibility to treat the wilderness with care. Therefore, instead of instituting a specific day permit, I'd like to suggest the following ideas to consider preserving our wilderness areas.

1) Online education and test to acquire a yearly hiking permit. Each hiker must carry their completed education permit. This can include reminders such as:

- * Do not walk off the trail or take unauthorized shortcuts
- * Take out all garbage. This includes that orange peel and toilet paper. (How would you like someone throwing an apple core or toilet paper in your front lawn?).
- * Do not pick plants or flowers. Do not take anything from the forest, even rocks. Take photos instead.
- * Be prepared with food, water, proper clothing, bug repellent, etc. Carry emergency items such as whistle, etc.
- * Be respectful of all animal life. Educate how to manage encounters with bears or cougars or other wildlife.
- * Only camp in designated areas
- * And so much more....

2) Post the above reminders at each trailhead to ensure hikers understand their responsibility to preserve our wilderness areas.

3) Do not allow bikes, horses, donkeys, etc on the wilderness trails. They cause so much destruction to the trails (not to mention the annoying horse manure).

4) Perhaps, day permit the South Sister climb, although, this is weather dependent, so unfortunate for those whose permitted day is not a good one.

I'd like to note my other observations and concerns about limiting wilderness hiking in Central Oregon.

- * This summer I thought for sure I could get a mid-week Obsidian trail permit. Unfortunately, it was booked solid for the month, so still have not been able to do this hike. Saddens me to know this will now affect all my favorite wilderness hikes in Central Oregon.

- * About five Labor Day week-ends ago, only one day it was not raining, so that day there were many hikers at Green Lake Trailhead. A Forest Service personnel was counting hikers. I was surprised at the high number she mentioned, as I had not felt overcrowded conditions at the lakes. Not all walk all the way to the end. It is quite a long 8 mile hike for most, so many turn around before getting to the end.

- * I find it ironic that the Forest Service is promoting the Discovertheforest.org website to encourage more family hiking. And yet, the Forest Service is now limiting hiking in the Central Oregon wilderness areas. What is fun about planning a hike months in advance and it is a rainy, stormy day on your permit day?

- * I have hiked the Green Lakes areas since the 60's when my parents introduced me to hiking. I am pleased at how preserved and beautiful the place still is after all these years.

- * This summer I hiked the Mont Blanc Alps area. The Europeans are doing a great job of preserving this area and keeping it open for all hikers at all times. Wish we could do the same in Central Oregon.

Hikes into the Mount Jefferson, Three Sisters and Mount Washington wilderness are the most iconic hikes in Oregon. An opportunity to get to the base of these beautiful mountains is a special treat on a beautiful day. Please do not institute this advance daily permit system. Instead, consider some of the above suggested alternatives to preserve these wilderness areas to keep them open for all. I am concerned about having the availability and opportunity to hike in these special areas on a beautiful Central Oregon day.

Thanks for your time considering my thoughts.

Sincerely,

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