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Comments: Special Recreation Permit Fee Comments

I would like to formally comment on the proposed Special Recreation Permit Fees for the Willamette and Deschutes national Forest wilderness areas:

In general, while I support the concept of reduced usage pressure on key trails and destinations in the Three Sisters, Mt Washington, and Mt Jefferson Wilderness areas, the fees are too high. In order for my wife and I to enjoy a two-night backpack anywhere in these areas, it would cost \$26. This is much higher than the cost of unimproved car campgrounds and is prohibitively expensive for many folks.

If the goal is to disperse usage from busy areas, I suggest that free overnight permits should be available at lesser used trailheads, such as those on the west side of the Three Sisters wilderness (and others).

Please provide a means other than Recreation.gov for acquiring these permits. There needs to be an easy walk-up option for local residents who want to backpack in the area.

Please take seriously the issue of weather interrupting potential trips. As a backpacker in central Oregon for 40 years, there have been many times I have had to scrub or re-locate backcountry trips. This expensive, cumbersome permit system will make this difficult if not impossible.

The Recreation.gov overnight fee structure of \$6 per overnight group will encourage larger groups since people will figure out they can spread the cost and make it cheaper individually.

An unintended consequence will be an influx of hikers who do not enter the wilderness via one of the 79 identified trailheads.

Bob DenOuden

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