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Comments: Central Cascades Wilderness Project

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Dear Willamette National Forest,

Recreation within Deschutes and Willamette National Forests' Wilderness areas has a positive impact on local Oregon communities. Many citizens choose to reside in places like Bend for the accompanying quality of life and the health benefits of outdoor recreation, including climbing, hiking, backcountry skiing, trail running, and other human-powered Wilderness-based activities. Burdensome and limited-entry permit systems could have an unintended economic impact on rural communities, local businesses, and the greater Oregon tourism economy.The new quota-based fee structure for limited-entry day-use permits and overnight users, would restrict climbing access and create more barriers for low-income communities.The Forest Service should implement other, less restrictive management tools prior to implementing limited-entry day-use permits. Examples include educational programs focused on leave no trace practices, administrative signage, revegetation and restoration projects to address areas of concern, and installation of toilet facilities and/or wag bag stations to address human waste issues.A portion of permits should be held for walk-up, first come first serve availability to allow climbers to attempt summits during good weather windows, which decreases potential weather-related accidents and the chances of getting lost, both of which result in increased search and rescue missions within Wilderness areas.The Forest Service should consider an annual pass or volunteer pass to remove undue limitations and financial burden for individuals who frequent the permitted areas and support stewardship.The Forest Service should partner with County and State officials to address parking issues at trailheads. Managing and enforcing parking would self-limit the number of people on trail systems.

Warm Regards,
bianca pyko