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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Central Cascades Wilderness Project

Stacy DeLoe
1579 Olive St
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November 20, 2019

Dear Willamette National Forest,

The fee structure you propose will do an untold amount of unintended damage. First and foremost, it will make access to wilderness and outdoor recreation more difficult for low-income Oregonians. You may think that those who come to the woods all have a middle-class income or better. This is not true. Many low-income people enjoy our state's forests and trails, no less than any other economic group. It's a healthy form of entertainment that can be very affordable. When you make it more difficult (or even impossible) for people to enjoy our public lands, you reduce our engagement with the commons to the point where we will be less likely to support your mission with our votes, tax dollars, and advocacy. Why should we vote to increase your funding (or similar) when you have voted to make the wilderness more inaccessible to us? This is a regressive, classist proposal. Access to Oregon's wildlands should absolutely not be the equivalent of an e-ticket ride at Eco-Disneyland.

Second, anything that reduces access to Oregon's wilderness areas will harm rural communities that rely on tourist dollars for their well-being. Every dollar you wrest from lower income members of the public is one dollar less they'll have to spend with locally-owned business in rural Oregon. Maybe a dollar doesn't sound like much to you, but a dollar spent at a local business will be spent at least three more times before it leaves the community, generating more benefit to the people who live there.

Third, going to an undeniably classist quota-based fee structure is an unimaginative solution. It would be better and more productive in the long run to focus on educating those who use the trails and enjoy the wilderness areas to leave no trace, pack out human waste, walk lightly and more. What you spent on education would be saved on maintenance and waste management, while not only preserving public engagement with public lands but improving outcomes for other public parks and forests.

I urge you to reconsider this proposal.

Sincerely,
Stacy DeLoe