

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/19/2019 6:44:54 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Trail permit system

Dear Forest Service folks,

I write with respect to the proposed trail permit system for the Three Sisters, Mt. Washington and Mt Jefferson Wilderness areas. My family owns a property on the Metolius River that I have been visiting every summer for the past sixty years. Since retirement, I and other family members have been in almost continuous residence at our Metolius camp from June through September every year. While there, we have always regularly hiked the trails to Cabot Lake, Canyon Creek Meadow (from Jack Lake), Tam MacArthur Rim, Mathieu Lakes, Tenas Lakes and many others. Now we see that permits will be required for all of these trails and the new system will seriously impact the way that we, our children and grandchildren have enjoyed these mountains for years. We implore you to consider in your regulations factors that impact long time residents of Camp Sherman and the Metolius Basin.

1. There is neither cell phone reception nor internet connection at our camp on the Metolius. A system that requires internet registration will shut us out of the mountains we love and respect, or require a special trip to Sisters for registration purposes.
2. As long time residents of the Metolius Basin, we are well aware of constantly changing weather conditions and we accordingly adjust our hiking schedule to the weather. A system that requires advance registration for a specific trail on a specific day with a specific number of people will be ineffective -- or will encourage people to seek multiple permits for multiple days to cover all possibilities.
3. I note that the proposed limit for the Jack Lake trailhead is 60 people per day. This summer, we walked that trail several times, and on one occasion there were easily 30 cars in the parking lot, suggesting well over 60 people on that trail. Yet other than a few parties encountered passing on the trail, we saw no one in Canyon Creek Meadow and only a few people on the saddle of Three Fingered Jack. In NO WAY was the Wilderness overused with 60 people on that day. I respectfully request that the limit for that trail be increased significantly.
4. Residents of Camp Sherman have suggested that local stewards of the Wilderness Areas be trained to promote "leave no trace" ethics and be permitted to use these trails without a further permit. I fully endorse this effort to give special access to long-time residents of Camp Sherman.

Let me state in conclusion that I come each year to the Metolius out of love of the mountains, rivers and streams of Central Oregon. I welcomed and applauded the Wilderness areas that have protected these areas. I acknowledge the danger of overuse of the Wilderness. But I sincerely hope that efforts to protect the Wilderness are not devised in such a way as to exclude the public from an enjoyment of our natural environment. In particular, any new measures should not be devised in such a way as to exclude people with long local histories in the area and limited access to new technologies of wealthy urban elites.

Yours,

Joseph W. Esherick