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First name: C.

Last name: Saul

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Recreation Fees

Dear Willamette and Deschutes National Forests,

Dear U.S. Forest Service:

I strongly oppose your proposal to charge people for simply taking a walk in the Mount Jefferson, Mount Washington and Three Sisters Wilderness areas in the Oregon Cascades.

Your proposed fee violates the intent and purpose of the Wilderness Act, including protecting Wildernesses from commercialization and commodification.

Wilderness areas belong to the American people. They are an irreplaceable birthright to our citizens, open to all the public, not just those wealthy enough to pay additional fees.

Where do you get the gall to charge us??

We already own the Wildernesses in the National Wilderness Preservation System. We paid for them with our taxes. It is unjust to charge us to visit the Wilderness we already own.

You should know that such proposed fees are illegal under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.

The Mount Jefferson, Mount Washington and Three Sisters Wilderness Areas already plan to require limited-access permits starting next year to prevent overcrowding and resource damage. While I support quotas to protect Wilderness areas from being over-run, I oppose the federal government charging hikers a fee simply to walk in the Wilderness.

This fee proposal is unprecedented as the Willamette and Deschutes National Forests would be the first national forest in the U.S. to implement a fee system across three Wilderness areas that will charge for all overnight use plus day use at 19 trailheads across 450,000-plus acres of Wilderness.

The USFS is incorrectly claiming authority for charging such fees under a clause in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) that allows a fee for "specialized recreation uses" such as group activities, recreation events, and motorized recreational vehicles.

You are skewing that rule. Congress never meant it to apply to private individuals hiking, walking, horseback riding and camping in a completely undeveloped part of a national forest.

Why don't you charge logging companies more, who plunder our national forests?

Abandon this egregious purchase fee scheme for our Mount Jefferson, Mount Washington and Three Sisters Wilderness areas.

You should be ashamed.

Sincerely,

C. Saul

711 Amsterdam Ave  
New York, NY 10025