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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Central Cascades Wilderness Project

Fraser MacDonald

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November 19, 2019

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.

The permit system will significantly impact climbers ability to safely access their objectives in the Deschutes and Willamette National Forest. It is worthwhile to consider day or/ lottery permits to enable motivated users the ability to access public lands and wilderness during optimal times. As a climber and backcountry skier, I am scared about the decisions that I'll make based on my permit. Being extremely familiar with other permit systems (Mt. Shasta, Mt. St. Helen's etc). I've witnessed people making poor decisions because of their permit window. People will ignore weather and other human/group risks when attempting summits, because they have a limited duration permit. I am all for limiting the number of people accessing these areas to address the impacts that we are seeing, however I believe a day of, walk up permit similar to what is offered in the Enchantment's (Lake basin) would be advisable and appreciated by climbers without creating additional impacts and reducing the likelihood of poor decision making based on trying to maximize your permit.

Sincerely,

Fraser MacDonald