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Comments: Central Cascades Wilderness Project

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Dear Willamette National Forest,

As someone who was raised in the Willamette Valley and still returns to Oregon to recreate in these wilderness areas, I understand the impact increased visitor counts has on the backcountry. However, a strict quote-based fee structure would be detrimental to local businesses and the greater Oregon tourism economy, and raise the barriers to entry for low-income communities.

Prior to enforcing this fee structure and permitting system, other, less restrictive management tools should be implemented. Some examples include educational programs focused on leave no trace practices as well as stewardship projects to mitigate existing damage.

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. Not only that, but the Forest Service could 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.

If permitting is the only way forward, 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.

I hope that the Forest Service takes the unintentional impacts permitting will generate into consideration - Oregon is a beautiful place to live, work, and visit but restrictive management practices will hinder visitors' and residents' abilities to recreate here. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sujung Lim