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First name: Casey

Last name: Zak

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Central Cascades Wilderness Project

Casey Zak

1434 Russell St

BERKELEY, CA 94702

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Dear Willamette National Forest,

While in general I agree with the spirit of the limited-entry permit systems, it seems like a heavy-handed first step to address overcrowding of parking areas and trail systems and all of the accompanying impacts to the wilderness areas.

Such a limited-entry permit system seems appropriate as a final resort, but the Forest Service doesn't seem to have considered other less restrictive management tools prior to implementing this system. 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. The Forest Service should also 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.

As a climber, my main concern is ensuring that the mountains of central Oregon remain accessible in a more fluid way. A portion of permits should be held for walk-up, first come first serve availability to allow climbers to attempt summits during these 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.

In a similar vein, the new system should not penalize those that enjoy these wilderness area most frequently and support their stewardship. 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.

Sincerely,

Casey Zak