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Comments: Special Recreation Permit Fee for Oregon Central Cascades

My life has been shaped by time spent in the wilderness. My first degree was in Outdoor Environmental Education. I have spent countless nights in the Oregon Wildernesses over the years. And I have spent countless hours volunteering in the wildernesses. At 70 my trips are shorter and less predictable but as long as I am able, I plan to seek time in the wilderness.

I am appalled by the proposed fee program. Not because I am against fees per-sea but, I am concerned about legality of the proposed fee system; hunters being excluded from the fee requirements; the collection of the funds without mandated directions and; the use of a secondary entity to collect the fees and in return make money not related to the maintenance of the wilderness. Another issue I see is that not all trailheads are designated as fee trailheads. What if I use a non-fee entrance and stay overnight? How does that work? How will that be policed?

Where will my fee money go? Who is accountable to me as a user to make sure the money I spend to travel in the wilderness goes into the maintenance of the wilderness itself. The Central Cascade Wildernesses do need help with problems caused by overuse such as trail and campsite maintenance. They perhaps need more in-wilderness rangers to help educate users on "no trace" practices; search and rescue activities and; to police the wilderness regulations if necessary. But, do they need more office staff that can't actually collect the entrance fees? Do they need another agency to collect the fees? It appears the Federal Government is not holding up its obligations to fund the wilderness. How do I know this program will do any better? Where is the accountability?

Kay Lee Brown