

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/26/2019 12:32:42 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Public Comment on Special Recreation Permit Fee

Regarding the Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project Fee Proposal

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/deschutes/home/?cid=FSEPRD670378&fbclid=IwAR0J3RQCAE1HfmZDK37rZ3uK4DWuzuU5LX23wGLwQkekAbbAqjiH1pLZwPo>

I am writing in strenuous opposition to the proposed entrance fees to, and overnight fees within, the Willamette and Deschutes National Forests. This scheme seems to be in direct opposition to the FLREA, which forbids entrance fees to public lands. The attempted end-run around that law, of classifying hiking as a "special" activity is ludicrous on its face. Walking upright is what humans are designed to do! There is clearly nothing special about it, unlike the various enumerated special activities which Congress foresaw as possible exceptions. The proposed system is inequitable for countless reasons, ranging from the far great impact it will bear upon lower-income persons than those with more disposable income, to the ability of those more able to use a more distant trailhead to access the same destination for "free" while others are paying just to enter the Wilderness. So the proposal also seems in direct contradiction of Executive Order 12898. True, it was mentioned that the USFS would "work with libraries" to find ways to let lower-income people recreate without the proposed fee, no actual details of this aspect of the proposal have been published so there is no way for relevant public comment to be offered.

Personally, I hike in the affected areas several times a year, and this new fee would of course be an extra burden. Being a resident of the Portland-Vancouver metro area, I feel left out of the process and decisions resulting from the process, due to the complete lack of public meetings in this, the most populous region near the affected areas. This area is clearly seen as one from which visitors are drawn, in that Matt Peterson has addressed it as such on the old Portland Hikers web forum, so it should also have been offered an opportunity for public listening and feedback sessions.

Given rumors of the comment period being extended due to inadequate notice, and the possibility of further information to be considered for comment during that period, I reserve the right to modify and extend my comments.

In short, the proposal is an outrage! These are our lands! There should be no fee for walking upon them!

Sincerely,

Karl E. Peterson

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