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Comments: Comments about Central Cascades wilderness proposals

You have requested comments about the USFS proposal to limit trail access and to charge permit fees.

First of all, I am pleased that the number of permitted trails have been reduced to nineteen. I will comment again that I would rather see the USFS practice and perfect this new process with an even smaller number of trails. For example, choose just Green Lakes, Tam McArthur Rim, and the trails starting at Devils Lake trailhead. Take a year with the process in place and prove it effective or make adjustments. Observe how the process shifts hikers from most popular to less popular trails or causes people to just stay home.

Next, I wonder how the permitting process will operate. When permits are issued weeks or months ahead, will there be a way to back out close to the day of when the weather is looking bad? And will refunds be granted if one cancels? Will cancellations immediately open up those places to those looking 4-5 days out or even night before or day-of?

Allocation of permits I believe that 30% of all the permits spanning the entire four month season offered on April 6, 2020 is only acceptable if hiking group leaders can plan their full season and buy a number of multiple person (how many per permit?) permits at that time. On the other hand the financial outlay at the start of the season will be quite a burden. And that burden will be even worse if refunds are not granted when hikers cancel. And an important question can one hike leader reserve more than one permit? And is the permit unique to the person applying or could they transfer it somehow to another person. Personal plans change occasionally, so a transfer process would be helpful. Even better would be just to hand off the paper copy to a friend who will become that day's leader.

I think a better way to release permits is the way that Recreation.gov handles permits for the lower Deschutes River. They have a rolling schedule of permit releases. That model could be adapted to hiking permits. It would ease the up-front financial burden for groups such as mine

How about shortening the permit season? Does your data indicate very high usage until the end of Sept or could you end it Sept. 13?

Respectfully submitted,

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