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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Central Cascades Wilderness Project

Chuck Lewis

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November 24, 2019

Dear Willamette National Forest,

The proposal for the permit entry system that is part of the Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project is built on the respectable and firm foundation of protecting our wilderness areas. However, requiring a permit as well as having a quota on the number of permits that will be issued is a detrimental notion for Oregonians that live in the region. It is common for locals, including myself, to not have the leisure of planning months to years ahead for a single day or overnight trip; often due to work schedules and financial matters. Requiring a permit thus inhibits much of Oregon's population to access our wilderness areas. Backpackers, climbers, educational groups involved in disciplines such as geology, and a plethora of other communities would be those that are most harmed by a quota requirement. Perhaps a quota exemption can be granted to certain groups or stricter requirements imposed on travelers during periods of high use. Another matter to consider is that many users of our natural areas often do not do overnight trips; those that do are often educated in outdoor etiquette and usually are not the culprits of bad habits that manifest when overcrowding occurs. From my own humble perspective, it may grant more local support for your future endeavors if you relinquish the idea of overnight permits.

I understand that funding is a major concern for your institutions with regard to this area of the country. I have no intent to present myself as rude, but, have you considered partnering with local organizations or state institutions to help solve the overcrowding problem? Has there been any serious discussion of constructing parking lots at trailheads and installing educational signs? Or, were these ideas neglected soon after their consideration? It is clear from the photos that represent some of your primary concerns in your environmental assessment that these notions may in fact mitigate some of the primary issues. Additionally, this could create desperately needed jobs in central Oregon; albeit they may be short lived and there is simply no way around that. This is clearly an issue derived from the lack of state taxes in Oregon, though that part of the argument is obviously not of the concern of the USDA and USFS.

In summary, the permit quotas must be raised substantially or the proposal must be tweaked to benefit the majority of Oregon's population. Many of the problems you've addressed are simply too intertwined within Oregon's economy and socioeconomic dynamic to be answered solely by your departments alone, though you can most certainly assist in benefiting the lives of the (potentially) disparaged that will be affected by the permit system.

A concerned Oregonian,

Chuck Lewis