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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comments on the proposed Central Cascades Wilderness limited entry and special recreation permit fee

To Whom it may concern:

I've been following the process and released information regarding these proposals from the beginning. I attended the initial Salem meeting last year and attended the November 12th meeting in Salem this year. I've provided comments via email, and have been pleased to see some of my concerns addressed. At the November 12th meeting I was able to talk with Forest Service staff, ask questions, and gather some informal feedback from other interested members of the public. However, I did not have time to provide any comments at that time.

I note that today is the last day that public comments are being accepted, so I wanted to ensure that I share what I hope is helpful feedback.

Fees:

Please understand that in general I'm not a fan of fees for use of undeveloped wilderness. Trailhead parking fees seem reasonable. However, I realize that fees at this point are a foregone conclusion. My input would be that the overnight fees are prohibitively high. Rather than a fee per night, I would strongly propose a per person fee that is the same whether one night or multiple nights. I would suggest \$5. Otherwise, it would cost a family of four \$46 (assuming a \$6 reservation fee) for a weekend in the undeveloped wilderness!!! And, THAT is frankly unacceptable. Sure, many of us can afford it, but I believe this would start to keep those with more limited finances out of the wilderness - the place that has always been the one place where people can go without cost. This would be a tragedy.

Limits:

I've spent a lot of time in these three wilderness areas over the past 40 years. I have noted the increased numbers of visitors, primarily in the Green Lakes/South Sister/Broken Top area. I understand the desire to limit "over use". However, as I've reviewed the proposed limits for various trailheads, many of them seem to be EXTREMELY low, in particular the allotted overnight permits. On that note, the Forest Service staff person I spoke with in the November 12th meeting explained that each overnight permit would be per party rather than per individual, along the lines of what has been in place for the Pamela and Obsidian Limited Entry areas. I trust this is the case.

Proportion of permits available in advance v. available for more spontaneous use:

I very much agree that spontaneous wilderness exploration should be allowed for, and I appreciate that this is being addressed. I don't know what the right ratio might be, but in general I feel that overnight permits could have a higher number of permits allotted for advance reservation, while day use permits might have a higher number of permits held back for spontaneous use. Example - Overnight: 60% advance/40% spontaneous, Day Use: 40% advance/60% spontaneous.

Cancellations/No-shows:

This will need to be addressed.

Phone/Digital permit v. Printed permit:

Not everyone has access to a printer, so I assume that a digital version will also be acceptable. Whether an email, a PDF, etc. Not sure what the answer would be for a trailhead parking tag...

Interaction with Wilderness Rangers:

In general, I greatly dislike being checked for a permit or asked questions by rangers once I'm in the wilderness; it really changes the experience. Maybe it's just me, but it's based on years of time in the wilderness, from my teens into my current mid-fifties. If there is someone at times checking at a trailhead, I'm not terribly bothered. Maybe my concern can be addressed with parking tags, and rangers typically checking tags at the trailheads rather than bothering people on the trails and in the wilderness. This would also require less manpower and save costs.

Parking Tags:

I'm not a fan of broadcasting how long my car will be at the trailhead with a tag that shows applicable dates, due to potential vandalism/break-in issues. This is part of the reason why I automatically buy an annual pass. But, I'm not sure there's a way around this with what has been proposed.

Passes for Forest Service Volunteers:

It was discussed that individuals that provide a certain number of volunteer hours could be provided with a "Volunteer" permit which would not incur a fee and could be used outside of the limits. I like this idea, as it encourages volunteerism on the trails. I would propose a minimum of 10 hours per year be required.

Thank you for taking time to review my thoughts. I would welcome any questions, comments or discussion. I can be reached by email or by phone.

Sincerely

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