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Title:

Comments: Proposed Wilderness Special Recreation Permit Fee

Please accept my brief comments on the Central Cascades Wilderness Limited Entry System Proposed Special Recreation Permit Fee.

Generally, I don't like constraints on freedom to use public lands, including on short notice. And, I don't like the hassle of permits, phone calls and online booking.

But congestion on the Cascade Lakes Highway, and some easily accessible wilderness trailheads and trails, is a real problem and needs to be addressed. Wilderness carrying capacity needs to be determined to have a quality wilderness experience and limit damage and disturbance to nature.

Most of the recreation use of wilderness on the Deschutes side is by locals and is more often day use. Local use needs to be a priority. Deterring people coming from far away would reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions and its effect on climate change. To favor locals, I agree that overnight-use should be 40% the day before and day-use be at least 60% the day before. In addition, some permits should be reserved for that day; I have heard that some Forests in the Sierra Nevada of California do this.

I think the Forests may have problems with commercial tours, guides and outfitters with this policy. The reservation system should not allow these business enterprises to reserve large numbers of permits ahead of time and have little available for individuals, whether for advanced, day-before or same-day booking. This can be a problem with computer online booking. The Forests may want to consider a separate permit quota for commercial enterprises. I believe the Salmon-Challis National Forest does this with raft trips down the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. The Forest Supervisor of the Superior National Forest may be able to assist with ideas regarding this because they have dealt with this problem for a long time.

I recommend the Deschutes National Forest waive limited entry wilderness permits and fees if the user uses public transportation to access a trailhead. Such a user could merely need to have a current dated bus ticket instead of a limited entry permit when in wilderness. The Cascades Lakes Highway has excessive traffic at times, and parking lots overflow. The Deschutes National Forest could do more to incentivize use of public transportation (including in the winter). This would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fit the Forest's climate change action plan. I am less familiar with potential for public transportation out of Sisters or the Willamette Valley to trailheads.

In the end, what is implemented needs to be simple, for both the users and the agency.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate the opportunity to comment.

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