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Organization:

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Comments: Recommendations on hiking and camping permits and fees

Feedback on Willamette and Deschutes National Forest Hiking and Camping Permits:

We support capping and permitting the number of people that can hike each day on the 19 key trails in the Deschutes and Willamette National Forests. The caps on the number of hikers should be set so that people have some semblance of a wilderness experience when hiking the trails.

We also support a cap the number of people that can camp in the wilderness areas on any particular day.

Because many Oregonians cannot determine their ability to do a hike long in advance, we strongly believe that a computer-based lottery should be established that distributes spaces NO MORE THAN 7 DAYS IN ADVANCE of the day they can hike. A similar system should be established for camping spots.

People should be able to apply no more than 2 weeks (14 days) in advance of the day they want to hike---and find out within 3 days if they have secured a hiking spot 7 days out.

We know that some people want to know months in advance if they have a day they can hike. Our experience, however, is that this is IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE. Knowing just 7 days MAX before the day they can hike is far more equitable and fair for the majority of people given the nature of life today.

That said, WE STRONGLY OPPOSE ANY FEES CHARGED to apply for or obtain a hiking or camping permit.

These are public lands that we all pay taxes to support. The general public should be able to use the trails and campgrounds without paying extra.

Instead, the Forest Service should directly charge timber companies more to cut trees in the forests to support the trail and camping system and the huge subsidies given to the timber industry for road building and other activities should be stopped to pay to support the trails and camping.

As many studies have determined, the public essentially pays timber companies to cut trees on public lands with their stockholders and CEOs benefiting. This should immediately stop and the money that is saved or generated by eliminating subsidies should be more than ample to cover the costs of trail and campsite maintenance.

Thank you for considering these recommendations.

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