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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comment on Limited Entry to Wilderness Area

Group permit size:

I am concerned that the number of overnight permits is limited based on the number of groups and not the number of people. If a trailhead is limited to four groups, some days it may have 48 people traveling on it and others four. If you have decided that the area can withstand 48 people why should people be denied access just because four people got permits to camp alone? I camp on my own quite often and would feel guilty under this plan for all the people I'm blocking.

The Forest Service has been collecting hiking permits for many years at the trailheads. This information should reveal the average size of a hiking group: Which may actually differ from trail to trail. My suspicion is that the average group size will be in the 2-4 range. If you define groups to be exactly 12 people strong you will drive the hikers into larger groups and create that reality.

I recommend that when an overnight permit is issued for a small number of people, an additional permit be offered with a capacity smaller than 12. This could work both ways. If a group only contained 10 people it would be possible for a last minute couple to get an overnight permit.

Trail Maintenance:

My principal concern with the entire permit concept is the idea that the sole cause of the damage to the wilderness is the number of people. Part of the reason so many concentrate into a few locations is that the number of trails has decreased. Your table shows that you are limiting the number of overnight campers on the Jefferson Lake and Pine Ridge trails to three groups each, but when I was out there in 2018 both of those trails had been closed for years. How can you say that the number of day-hikers is unlimited when the trail is closed?

The list shows five overnight groups and 80 day-hikers per day for the Tam McArthur Rim, but the trail from the viewpoint to Broken Hand and beyond is signed as "Not Maintained" and has been removed from the Deschutes National Forest map! Are those 60 campers all supposed to camp at the viewpoint? That is going to be one crowded spit of rock!

I have a map of the PCT that was printed in 1982 and it showed even more trails in the area south of Mt Jefferson, connecting between Table Lake and the PCT. With these trails long closed and Jefferson Lake and Pine Ridge more recently closed Table Lake was pretty much abandoned when I

was there in July of 2018. How can you complain that Marian Lake and the lakes west of Three Finger Jack are too crowded when you don't support access to fine alternatives?

If you are going to make limitations on access to these wilderness areas which will have severe impacts on the enjoyment of many people you have to make, at least, a strong commitment to keep open the existing trails, and to work toward reviving some abandoned trails, and finding reasonable places for new trails.

The majority of the people who use the wilderness now have not heard of the restrictions that you are putting into place. Next year when they do they are going to make a lot of noise. You will have to have something better to say to them than "You should have gotten a permit back in March and all you people who didn't know about it are just out of luck". A commitment to providing more access might help contain the pitchforked masses.

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