

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/25/2019 9:19:05 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Wilderness Area visitation constraints

Good People:

After reading of the proposed fee schedule to be instituted next year for those wishing to hike and camp in sections of much impacted, if not abused, designated wilderness areas, I can well see the need for such a user limiting, fee regulated, system. You folks know better than I, the occasional Cascades backpacker, the damage that has been wrought to sensitive alpine areas by a steadily increasing number of users each year. Thus I have not a problem in accepting the reality and need for a user fee to regulate the continuing flow of too many wilderness users. I will gladly pay a reasonable fee for my admission and travel thru a WA and hope that fees so collected will be used for trail maintenance and perhaps restoration of overused prime camping spots within.

Where I do take exception with this proposed regulation is with the requirement that hikers of the PCT, whether thru or section hikers (like myself), apparently have to file a planned camping schedule with their permit, which states exactly where and what date each hiking party or individual plans to camp. I consider this constraint to be wholly unrealistic. As any hiker, whether solitary or with a group, who's experienced with taking on an extended, many days, journey of a trail like the PCT, planning in advance and holding to an exact itinerary is a fool's proposition. That's because unforeseen interruptions, delays, and needs always arise that serve to compel every long distance hiker to take a break or leave the trail for usually a short period of recouping or reequipping time. Thus a weeks before planned, tight and unyielding, hiking and camping itinerary must be abandoned and reworked.

For experienced hikers taking on a weekend or, say, a five day hike, surely they can accurately post a schedule and adhere to it. But for a long distance, many weeks, hiker of the PCT, she or he can not be held to sticking to an exact, previously filed itinerary detailing where they plan to be and camp as they pass thru a WA.

I urge a measure of flexibility on your part and trust you will modify this too strict requirement for precise date and place pinpointing of planned stops for thru and section hikers of the PCT.

Sincerely,

Karl Hartzell
Corvallis, OR