Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/25/2019 4:30:05 PM
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Comments: Comments on Wilderness Fees

Hello there, I am writing to echo the sentiments shared by my wife. Thank you for your efforts in preserving our wilderness areas. This is necessary and vital to health of our land. Oregon is getting more and more popular and there are no signs of the growth slowing down. I do believe the Forest Service is heading in the right direction with limiting the use of some trails.

I have been exploring and adventuring in Oregon my whole life, including the Deschutes and Willamette National Forests many times. I particularly love the Jefferson Wilderness and the Metolius basin, so much so that I have recently moved to Camp Sherman. I left the city and urban issues of congestion, noise and pollution in search of clear skies, quietness, and the ability to access to the outdoors from my backyard.

The land belongs to everyone equally of course, but there are some who visit for just a weekend and others who call it their home. Those of us who are neighbors to the wilderness areas consider ourselves stewards of these sacred places. We are the ones who sacrifice modern conveniences in our lives for the privilege of being surrounded by nature. We volunteer to build trails, maintain facilities, pick up trash left by others, and teach our youth how to leave no trace. We hike, bike, swim, fish, ski, live and breathe in these areas. Having access to the wilderness is WHY we live where we do.

It is my sincere hope that these new regulations leave room to acknowledge the neighbors. I'm not sure what that looks like, but it seems like a "local" pass should be available in some way. Perhaps this is defined by proximity; for example those living in Camp Sherman are allowed to use trails within a certain distance for a reduced fee or without needing a reservation. Perhaps a number of passes are prioritized for locals or kept in reserve to accommodate the day-of/spontaneous decision.

As stated above, I sincerely believe these efforts are necessary and limited use is the main way to preserve the trails for future generations. I hope there is a compromise in the new limited use system to recognize & reward the efforts of locals who live and take care of these beloved wilderness areas.

Thank you for taking the time to read.
Sincerely,
Brian Schultz