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Comments: Work with the people not against the people to protect these areas!

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to provide public comment regarding the proposed fees and permit numbers for the wilderness areas in Central Oregon. While I understand the need to protect these areas and appreciate the effort, I feel the proposed methods are far too restrictive. The combination of permits and fees will significantly impact the ability of low income people, outdoor clubs and education groups from being able to access these wilderness areas. Additionally, it seems as rather than to try other methods of education and outreach regarding protecting these areas the Forest Service has jumped straight to the most restrictive measures with far reaching permit limitations and fees. While there has been public comment periods, it also seems that these decisions have been made unilaterally without engaging input on outdoor clubs that have similar interests to protect these areas while also ensuring that people are able to enjoy them. The key is education not restriction.

Please reconsider these plans, these lands belong to the people. Efforts should be made to educate and punish those who violate these sacred areas instead the proposed fees and permits punish the whole public and not the offenders.

I would propose to leave the fees and get rid of the permit numbers. Fees will will naturally reduce the numbers in these areas as there will be less people willing to pay. Open up a system for low income people, education groups etc. to obtain free/discounted permits and include an ability to people to buy a season access pass. This will raise the money that is needed and not cut off access all together.

If the permit numbers must remain, I would suggest a two pronged approach. Try permit #s and fees in certain areas like the South Sister trailhead and then do just fees in other areas.

These proposed methods will please both sides of this issue and allow an opportunity to experiment with different methods to gain the necessary protection without jumping to the most severe restrictive measures initially, which is what the current system consists of.

Thank you!

Stuart Schmidt

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