

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/20/2019 6:15:33 PM

First name: Mark

Last name: Olinger

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Recreation Fees

Dear Willamette and Deschutes National Forests,

Dear U.S. Forest Service:

I am adamantly opposed to your proposal to charge people for simply taking a walk in the in the Mount Jefferson, Mount Washington and Three Sisters Wilderness areas in the Oregon Cascades.

It is simply unjust to charge people to visit Wilderness areas, which belong to all Americans. They are our irreplaceable birthright as citizens, open to all, not just those wealthy enough to pay fees.

Your proposed fee violates the intent and purpose of the Wilderness Act, including protecting Wildernesses from commercialization and commodification. Wilderness areas belong to all of the American people. They are an irreplaceable birthright to all our citizens, open to all the public and not just those wealthy enough to pay additional fees. All citizens across the nation already own the Wildernesses in the National Wilderness Preservation System and we have paid for them with our taxes. It is simply unjust to charge people to visit the Wilderness they already own.

These fees would also be illegal under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) and would exclude the public from accessing and enjoying their public lands.

The fees are tied to the Forest Service's limited-access permit system starting next summer for the Mount Jefferson, Mont Washington, and Three Sisters Wildernesses to prevent overcrowding and resource damage. While I support quotas to protect Wilderness areas from being over-run by people, I am adamantly opposed to the federal government charging hikers a fee simply to take a walk in the Wilderness.

This fee proposal is unprecedented as the Willamette and Deschutes National Forests would be the first national forest in the U.S. to implement a fee system across three Wilderness areas that will charge for all overnight use plus day use at 19 trailheads across 450,000-plus acres of Wilderness.

The US Forest Service is incorrectly claiming authority for charging such fees under a clause in the FLREA that allows a fee for "specialized recreation uses" such as group activities, recreation events, and motorized recreational vehicles. Congress never meant that to apply to private individuals who are hiking, walking, horseback riding and camping in a completely undeveloped part of a national forest.

Such fees would set a horrible national precedent for other Wilderness areas around the country and I urge you to abandon your fee scheme for the Mount Jefferson, Mount Washington and Three Sisters Wilderness areas.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mark Olinger

1276 Cypress Creek Dr

Mount Vernon, TX 75457

