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First name: robin

Last name: carlson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Recreation Fees

Dear Willamette and Deschutes National Forests,

Dear U.S. Forest Service:

I'm 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.

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 and would exclude the public from accessing and enjoying their public lands.

The Mount Jefferson, Mount Washington and Three Sisters Wilderness Areas already plan to require limited-access permits starting next year to prevent overcrowding and resource damage. While I support quotas to protect Wilderness areas from being over-run by people, I'm 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 USFS is incorrectly claiming authority for charging such fees under a clause in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (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.

TAKING SUCH ACTION IN A WAY THAT SINGLES OUT A PARTICULAR SOCIAL TYPE IS A POLITICAL MOVE TOO. WILDERNESS HIKERS ARE COMMONLY MARKED AS OUTSIDE-THE-BOX THINKERS, INTELLECTUALS, AND NONCONFORMISTS. ATTACHING THIS FEE TO THEIR USE OF PUBLIC LANDS IS A POORLY DISGUISED ATTACK ON THESE INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR WAY OF LIFE. AS A RETIRED PERSON NOW, I COULD NOT AFFORD TO HIKE NEARLY AS MUCH AS I DID WHEN YOUNGER, DUE TO ALL THE INCREASES IN USER FEES FOR AREAS THAT I ALREADY TECHNICALLY OWN! IT SADDENS ME TO SEE OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, OF WHICH I WAS ONCE SO PROUD, LOWER ITSELF TO SUCH

PETTINESS.

Sincerely,
robin h carlson
1903 E Providence Avenue
Spokane, WA 99207