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Comments: Central Cascades Wilderness Project

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Dear Willamette National Forest,

Several proposed hike/climb trails have traditionally been highly trafficked--this is not new to those of us who have been hiking them for the past 50 years. Statistics are very limited and flawed by voluntary nature and (apparently) a lack of history. So here is some history:

1. Places like Marion Lake and the Eight Lakes Basin have been introductory/gateway hiking opportunities for generations of young folks who through family, church, scouts, etc. have had some of their earliest experiences hiking/backpacking/camping in the mountains--these experiences inform and enable them to continue to develop their understanding of the environment and/or come back to it as adults.
2. These trails and camping sites have deteriorated by neglect rather than overuse due to rangers who now think they are eco-warriors from a desk. I personally have seen a dramatic drop in first-hand knowledge among rangers of what is going on in the woods. Trail tending and walking no longer seems to be a high priority, as trails become rutted less by over use (u-shaped) and more by erosion (v-shaped) and obstacles (e.g., downed trees) leading to walk-arounds.

FINAL THOUGHT: Declaring vast sections of the Cascades as wilderness areas has resulted in greater neglect. It does not require more funding or regulation to turn it around, it requires more action with the funds and resources already provided.

Sincerely,

David Rempel