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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Recreation Fees

Dear Willamette and Deschutes National Forests,

Dear U.S. Forest Service:

USFS's 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, violates both the Wilderness Act and the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.

All citizens across the nation already own the Wildernesses in the National Wilderness Preservation System and have paid for them with our taxes. It is unjust and illegal to charge people to access and walk in lands they already own.

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. These quotas are reasonable, in order to protect Wilderness areas from being over-run by people. However, charging hikers a fee to take a walk in the Wilderness, is unacceptable.

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 falsely 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. Hiking, walking, horseback riding are clearly not "specialized recreation uses."

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

Sincerely,

alice nguyen

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