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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Wilderness Fees: Willamette National Forest

Dear Willamette & Deschutes National Forest,

I'm writing to you today to express my sincere disappointment and strong disapproval of the permit quotas and fees being considered for the Mount Jefferson, Mount Washington, and Three Sisters Wilderness areas.

The fees proposed will greatly increase the cost of recreating and will surely have a negative impact on the potential support needed in the future to keep these spaces wild. My husband and I are avid hikers, climbers, and mountaineers - spending most of our free time in the Willamette National Forest. The proposed fees will have a serious impact on our budget making the public lands - that our taxes support - less accessible to us. To that point, public lands are already being paid for and supported by tax dollars. We should not be double-billed to enjoy these public spaces.

Some of the busier trails may see some accidental garbage left behind, there are many of us that will pick these wayward wrappers up as we find them. If garbage cans were provided at trailheads that had bathrooms this may further incentivize people to help clean trailheads and the trails themselves if they knew a receptacle was nearby.

In regards to human waste, further education could be provided to the amateur/hobby hiker. Those that understand backcountry edict - and practice Leave No Trace ethics - would be aided by the installation of backcountry vault/pit toilets, especially in sensitive alpine areas. I've seen this successfully managed in the more remote and harder to access provincial parks in Canada along with popular trails in the State of Washington. In addition to providing a central location for people to answer nature's second call, these backcountry bathrooms limit the need for people to wander off-trail and further dig up sensitive areas. A win-win.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say that overall the permit quotas set to take effect tomorrow should be reconsidered and rolled back. Sweeping limitations on the entire Willamette Forest will not keep the busy areas from being any less busy. They are popular because they offer a view, a summit, or a place that is beautiful and unique. People will simply acquire access in advance whether or not they plan on getting out that weekend. Eliminating or making it very challenging to plan a spur of the moment outing.

Adding fees to these permits will cause some to make decisions they would have otherwise not made. Any permit I've paid for (be it access to Pamela Lake, a summit permit for St. Helens or Rainier) makes it so that I feel more compelled to make my trip happen - regardless of weather or conditions - because of the lack of flexibility and additional cost. The rigidity of permits plus the added cost will cause users to question less whether or not the weather and conditions are safe for travel. It will be their time to enjoy a trail they have been waiting to get out on, and once committed to a date and having paid the price their choice will be - go and risk it or throw away the time and money.

Please keep public lands open and accessible for all to enjoy. They are the birthright of all Americans and the Willamette National Forest is a gem that should be available to residents and visitors alike.

Thank you for your time.

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