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Title:

Comments: Hello!

I would like to comment on the Deschutes National Forest's Cave Resource Protection Forest Order. I am a caver who really hasn't been caving in the past 8 years due to 2 young boys and my physician job but I was blessed with the opportunity to explore the caves in the Deschutes National Forest back in October 2019, during a gathering of cavers from the West Coast.

I am sure you will be receiving more specific actions regarding the Forest Order from the National Speleological Society and regional cavers, but I just wanted to put forth my perspective. I have enjoyed visiting caves for 20 years and one thing that makes me very sad is when I see vandalization and destruction. Being involved in organized caving, I have been exposed to the geology and conservation side of caving. Without organized caving, the average caver visitor, although well-intentioned, may not know which of their actions may be destructive. During the federal government closures and from closures on other state or federal properties, I have heard reports of "closed" caves suffering more than usual destruction due to lack of oversight and visitation for assessment / cleanup. When caves are closed, those who do not respect closures are the ones who visit.

The caving community is a valuable resource. These are people who love caves, who love to learn all about and protect caves, and who spend a lot of time and energy exploring and discussing caves. The organized caving community has policies, rules, mission statements, and conservation ethic. These are citizen scientists, and they can be very helpful to the Forest Service in managing Forest Service resources. They are willing to do cave cleanups, install gating, and manage caves. This is done from love, respect, and understanding that only careful management can keep caves available for visitation and appreciation.

I hope you take their suggestions to heart, they are well-reasoned and work hand in hand with the Forest Service's ultimate goal of managing their lands for the benefit of the people and the protection of wildlife and nature.

Thank you for your time,

Jenny Kuo