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First name: Jeff

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Holly and Sasha,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposed Deschutes National Forest cave orders.

As you may remember I am retired Forest Service employee who has worked with you on several projects when I was with the Oregon Lands Zone team. I have 40 years experience in natural resource management of which 27 were with the US Forest Service.

In addition to that, I am a founding member of the Oregon High Desert Grotto and have been a member of the National Speleological Society (NSS) for 50 years. I have written a couple of cave management plans. One was for a 24 mile long cave on private land in Tennessee. The cave is still be managed by that plan for access and resource protection. I have not been an active member of the local Oregon High Desert Grotto for the last 10 years but have up my membership.

I wanted to let you know these things because I understand the relationship between the Forest Service and cave management.

Caves are primarily a recreation resource due to the people with managing them.

On the Deschutes cave management has been a low priority when compared to other recreational uses and this is understandable. There is no way caves can compete with lakes, campgrounds, trails, ski resorts, and wilderness.

However, the Deschutes has over 700 caves which is significant and may be the most caves on a single National Forest when compared to others.

I have 2 main comment I'd like to make.

1. Do not manage caves by closing them for no apparent reason. Recreation should be in charge of cave management. They have the most experience with people management. People and other resources can co-exist in most caves. In some maybe not.

2. In light of budgets and priorities for managing caves the Oregon High Desert Grotto of the NSS should be involved and consulted with on cave management issues. They know more about the caves than the Forest Service does. They can provide volunteer assistance in monitoring and managing caves. The Forest Service should have a cave management person who coordinates with the OHD Grotto .

Thanks again for allowing me to comment. If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jeff Sims