

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/30/2021 10:36:36 PM

First name: Michael

Last name: Sherman

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To whom it may concern,

I have been fortunate to grow up along the McKenzie River and visit Tamolitch since the 1990s. Since 2016 I have been paying especially close attention to the changes in the area of the McKenzie River Trail as the popularity has increased exponentially. It is great to see that large scale action is being taken to address these increasing challenges as large action is what has been needed.

As much as I have loved the section of trail through the old growth forest along the McKenzie River, it is understandable that there is a need to relocate the large number of people visiting away from the riparian area. I would agree that there is a need to isolate the "Blue Pool" area to its own space and contain the impacts to a manageable area. I have a few suggestions below that I would strongly suggest be addressed if this is the course of action moving forward.

1) If the new trail and infrastructure being put in is specifically for people visiting Tamolitch, I do not see a need to make this new section of trail part of the McKenzie River Trail system. If the desire is to isolate the impacts of Blue Pool to its own area, I feel like that should apply to the McKenzie River Trail as well. There is already a "bike reroute" section of the trail established that should be redesignated as the main McKenzie River Trail. The main reason being, the large amount of elevation gain required in the new Blue Pool trail would not be consistent or desirable for anyone wanting to enjoy the full length or longer sections of the McKenzie River Trail. It would not fit into the feel or entirety of the McKenzie River Trail.

2) Is there any money being directed to revegetating areas around the pool that already have large amounts of vegetation damage and soil compaction? In all of the areas at the bottom of the pool and along the upper rim, there is immense resource damage that will take years or decades to grow back and reverse. If there is such a large amount of money being put into new infrastructure, I would hope there would be enough money spent to repair damage already done. ?

3) Are there going to be clearly designated paths along the rim or top of the pool and will old user trails be clearly closed for new vegetation to grow? Since the start of the huge increase of visitation to the pool, there were never any established trails for people to walk along the top of the pool or anywhere off of the main McKenzie River Trail. This has caused huge resource damage as well. If there is any hope for the top of the pool to recover very clear paths will have to be put in so people know where to walk. This should apply to the rim of the pool and expanded throughout the surrounding woods to counteract the current and massive amounts of user trails.

4) All of this will unfortunately need to be actively enforced. From visiting the Three Pools day use area on the Detroit Ranger District, it is clear that one or multiple Forest Service employee or contractors will need to be onsite to take parking fees, enforce parking, and maintain crowds and trash around the pool itself. From seeing everything that has happened in the past 5-6 years, putting up signs and asking nicely only goes so far which has gotten us to this point. With the new parking fees being collected hopefully that will cover the costs for maintaining the area. 5) To help with the user experience, a large scale education and messaging program will help with this transition. I hope you are able to work with all of the stakeholders and neighboring tourism and agencies to make this transition. From seeing the lack of information most people arrive at the trailhead with, this will always be an uphill battle. Most people don't bring enough if any water, have a trail map, know the distance or terrain, or wear appropriate footwear. Having this new section of trail include a very large elevation gain and loss going both ways will make it very challenging and potentially dangerous for the skill levels that frequent here. It will be very important that people know what they are getting into.

6) In this new steep section of the trail, I also have concerns about the amount of foot traffic that will be traveling up and down those switchbacks. From seeing the amount of trail work put into widening and hardening the current trail to match the use into Tamolitch over the years. It will be a challenge to make a trail like that on such steep terrain. It would detract from the natural feel of the McKenzie River area, but sadly the best bet might be to pave the trail in sections to make it long lasting to match the foot traffic.

Managing this area has been and will be no small task. Thank you for taking this on and helping it be as beautiful and natural of a place as possible into the future.

-Michael Sherman