

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/12/2023 1:41:02 PM

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Comments: While there is no doubt that Blue Lakes is over visited during the summer, I'm concerned with a permit system that limits 40 people per day especially allowing one group to gobble up 10 spots. The demand for those permits will be so great, I doubt I will ever have a chance to go there again and I live 30 minutes away from the trail head. Many of the local folks who think 40 permits is OK, never or rarely ever hike up to the lakes anymore or if they do, they just visit once a year. I usually hike up to Blue Lakes 3-4 times a year and one or two of the those trips would be overnight.

If 40 permits are just for overnight camping, it would be a sensible number. In fact, I think you should make a distinction between day hiking permits and overnight permits. I lived in California for a while and permits in federal wilderness areas were for overnight camping. The same is true for Forest Service areas in Colorado such as Conundrum Hot Springs. You can have fewer overnight permits, say 20-25, and more day hiking permits, say 60-75. Compared to day hikers, it's the overnight campers who do the most harm to the area because of the amount of time they spend there. The offenses I have seen include pooping inappropriately, leaving trash behind, making fire rings, setting up tents in fragile areas, leaving their dogs off leash while camping and letting them wander. Why the wilderness regulations in Blue Lakes allowed dogs to be off leash was a bad decision. Voice control of a dog is often ineffective especially when there are so many dogs in a tight space. The permit system should limit the number of dogs to an even smaller number than the number of overnight and day hike permits available.

Based on my observations at Blue Lakes, the impact from day hikers is less. Because of the high altitude, late starts, steepness of the trail, summer thunderstorms, and tired kids, many hikers don't even make it to lower Blue Lake and if they do, most don't hike any higher, and most stay on the trail.

With the low number of 40 permits, I'm concerned about the impact on other areas including low-use areas such as Blaine Basin and Box Factory Park and high-use areas such as Ice Lake. You know it's going to happen. Local motels, restaurants and visitor centers will start suggesting these areas to tourists. With this low number, the Forest Service will just shifting the problem of over crowding to other locations.