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First name: Tom and Kathy

Last name: Heffernan

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Dana:

My wife Kathy and I worked as volunteers for two years at the TH to Blue Lakes advising folks on wise use on the trail and at Blue Lakes. We are totally in agreement that the TH, Trail and Blue Lakes all be put under permit with a severe limit on permit size. We are all for revamping the TH and designating parking spaces. We believe camping at the Blue Lakes should all be designated and in the case of the first lake they should be located in the woods. We would like to see the FS consider at least a couple of pit toilets located in the woods at the first lake similar to the ones located at all camping spots in the Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness. We feel it is imperative to have a kiosk at the beginning of County road 7 to inform people of the permit system, etc. to avoid non permit people driving all the way up to the TH and learn they have to have a permit. The TH should have a decent bathroom at the TH. The existing one is often disgusting for users due to heavy use. I recall many years ago when I was stationed on the Jefferson National Forest that our crews used some chemical to reduce the amount of poop in the outhouses at the AMC huts so they never filled up. I would imagine such a chemical still exists. We believe it is imperative to have a wilderness ranger and/or LEO patrolling the Blue Lakes frequently and citing violations that occur so the word gets around. This is really important for when the permit first is put in place. As you have said, 100% compliance is not feasible but we believe if there is a priority put on patrolling and enforcing violations word will get around and you may at least get 80%. The kiosk should have a message about permit users reporting violations through pictures etc. to aid in prosecutions. I am sure you agree it is a priority to get this area under proper management to cease the pervasive overuse and misuse of this beautiful area. Our saddle club used to ride up to the lakes many years ago and parked our trailers in the existing Th with no problem. We have not rode this trail for several years because of the heavy use and we did not want to compound the problem.