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Comments: Please accept the following comments on the Emerald Lake Shelter Reconstruction Project. The U.S. Forest Service claims the proposal would improve the wilderness character of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness along the Wasatch Front in Utah. The agency's proposal, however, would seriously degrade this rugged, high elevation Wilderness because of the proposed use of helicopters and other motorized equipment to reconstruct the Emerald Lake Shelter.

The primary duty of the Forest Service is to preserve the natural state of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness, rather than maintaining structures like the Quonset hut that may detract from the area's wildness and are not essential for managing the Wilderness.

The Forest Service's wilderness policy acknowledges that structures are unnecessary for visitor use. It emphasizes that visitors should be self-reliant, prepared to confront the "inherent risks of adverse weather conditions, isolation, physical hazards, and the absence of quick communication, with the understanding that search and rescue operations may not be as swift as they are in urban settings.

The Forest Service's proposal for helicopter use and the construction of a new structure contradicts the essence of Wilderness. Declaring that such a structure contributes to the wilderness character of the area distorts the Wilderness Act, which explicitly prohibits structures.

The Forest Service should consider an approach that preserves the wild nature of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness, either by letting the metal remains of the Quonset hut naturally deteriorate over time or by employing wilderness-friendly methods, like non-motorized or non-mechanized tools, for its removal.

The "easiest" or most convenient method is typically not the one that is easiest on the environment. It may take more thought, but these kinds of issues can almost always be done in a way that will protect the wilderness.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.