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First name: Mark

Last name: Olinger

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The Forest Service's first responsibility is to protect the wild character of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness, rather than structures such as the Quonset hut, which degrades the area and is not necessary to administer the wilderness. The Forest Service proposes to use helicopters and other motorized equipment to reconstruct the Emerald Lake Shelter, a sheet metal Quonset hut in the wilderness that was damaged by snow during 2021/2022.

This metal Quonset hut with a cemented rock retaining wall was finished in 1960, and the Mount Timpanogos Scenic Area was established in 1961. In 1984, Congress designated the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness. Once this designation occurred, the Forest Service became responsible for ensuring that the area remain wild and primarily shaped by nature. The Forest Service's own wilderness policy recognizes that a structure is not needed for visitor use, stating that visitors must be prepared on their own to face "inherent risks of adverse weather conditions, isolation, physical hazards, and lack of rapid communications, and that search and rescue may not be as rapid as expected in an urban setting."

The Wilderness Act prohibits structures, with a very narrow exception for those that are the minimum necessary to preserve wilderness, a high bar to achieve. This out-of-place hut not only detracts from the wilderness, but also fails to meet this Wilderness Act requirement. Rather than adhere to the Wilderness Act, the Forest Service turns the Act on its head by stating this blight is part of the area's wilderness character and needs to be rebuilt/updated to protect the Wilderness. This is absurd!

The natural deterioration of structures is part of wilderness, it is evidence of untrammeled and timeless natural processes reclaiming the Wilderness from temporary human occupation. Structures should be removed if that can be done in a manner consistent with wilderness principles and if the impact from removing the structure is less than the impact from leaving the structure. This hut is not listed on the national register of historic places, though it has been proposed for listing. Even if listed, it could be documented and allowed to fade into the wilderness.

The Forest Service must adopt an alternative that lets the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness be wild by allowing the metal remnants of the Quonset hut to fade with time, or by using wilderness-compatible means, such as non-motorized/non-mechanized tools, to remove it.