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Comments: the agency's proposal would seriously degrade this rugged, high elevation Wilderness by using helicopters and other motorized equipment to reconstruct a sheet metal Quonset hut 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. Prior to the area's 1984 wilderness designation, the hut supported an annual public hike-until the event's excessive impacts caused the Forest Service to end it around 1970. Being only five miles from the trailhead, the hut is neither necessary to administer the Wilderness or for safety.

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 hut not only detracts from the Wilderness, but also fails to meet this Wilderness Act requirement.

Wilderness Watch is urging the Forest Service to adopt an alternative that lets the Wilderness be wild-by allowing the hut to fade with time or by using wilderness-compatible means to remove its remnants.

Rather than adhere to the law, the Forest Service states this blight is part of the area's wilderness character and needs to be rebuilt/updated to protect the Wilderness. This is absurd. Not only that, but the proposal includes helicopter flights, motorized equipment, cement mixers, and other motorized tools. Incidentally, the original hut was supposedly built without helicopters or motorized access, and most supplies were packed in.

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's first responsibility is to protect the wild character of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness. The agency'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 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 to remove it.