

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/20/2025 8:06:55 PM

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Title:

Comments: The tricky thing here is wilderness status. Wilderness is a good thing, and I'm a big fan of it. A few years ago the Forest Service had a Leave No Trace program with pins for hiking in each of the designated wilderness areas in the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest; my daughter and I got them all first. Also, I long supported 5.7 million acres for southern Utah.

However, there is wilderness, and then there is wilderness. Designated wilderness is usually actually wild, which is what makes it precious. But Mount Timpanogos is different. It's wilderness on paper, but in reality much of it is a park, one of the most popular in Utah. Thousands of hikers a day on the main trails on summer weekends. There are parts of the mountain that are genuinely (as opposed to only legally designated) wilderness, that are genuinely wild, but the main trails on Timp serve a different purpose. They introduce many people to the backcountry. That, I suggest, makes them more likely to appreciate and support wilderness elsewhere. They also help forge us in the way Wallace Stegner suggested in his famous wilderness letter that the wild forged American character in the past.

More than that, for over a century Timp has had a particular and special connection with the people living around it. Most of the population in Utah County lives cities in that literally about the base of the mountain. Going to waterfalls, seeing the wildflowers, watching the mountain goats, it is all an important part of many people's life experiences. Climbing Timp is a rite of passage for many. From the annual Timp Hikes of yore, to the campfire programs at the trailhead, to the building of the Emerald Lake Shelter, to the Timp Sticks, and on and on, the people built parts of this mountain into an incredibly well loved resource. It would be easy for National Forest decision makers to apply a one size fits all approach to the Emerald Lake Shelter matter and simply say that it should go away because wilderness should have nothing in it, but this is its own, unique situation. There is wilderness, and then there is wilderness.

This wilderness needs to be preserved, and the Emerald Lake Shelter is part of this wilderness. Restoring it does not detract from what Timp is, it respects it. Please restore the Emerald Lake Shelter, and please include the existing plaque and probably a new one as historical information.

Two related things:

Others have mentioned that the shelter is a shelter. I'd characterize it more as a refrigerator at times, but given the number of clueless people climbing the mountain, the shelter is also helpful for public safety. Better cell coverage on the Timpooneke side would do a lot for public safety also.

I gather that restoring the shelter wouldn't include restoring the toilets it had long ago. That's understandable. It does leave only that open air toilet up the hill as a sit down toilet on the mountain; thankfully few people know about it because it's scary. In the past there were toilets at Hidden Lakes during the summer. That moved a lot of backpacking campers away from Emerald Lake, where there are an awful lot of backpackers camping lately. Also, there was a toilet on the Toilet Trail at the rim of Timpanogos Basin, but for a long time that little structure has been dilapidated, and the toilet full and foul. Please give a little consideration to the possibility that although toilets in a wilderness area aren't necessarily palatable, and probably usually inappropriate, they concentrate a particular type of impact and make it more manageable. I don't know the right answer to poop on the mountain, but this is a thought.

