

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/21/2025 6:10:33 PM

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Comments: I am writing to urge the agency to take the "no action" option with regards to the analysis of The Emerald Lake Shelter Reconstruction Project.

Prior to the area's 1984 wilderness designation, the metal Quonset hut in the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness provided shelter and restrooms for an annual public group hike that was first organized in 1912. The hut was used during this annual hike until the event's excessive impacts caused the Forest Service to ask hike organizers to end it after 8,000 people attempted to reach Mount Timpanogos' summit during the 1969 group hike. The group hike ended. 15 years later the area became part of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness. The hut's condition deteriorated over the decades and finally collapsed during winter impact 4 years ago.

The Wilderness Act prohibits structures, with a very narrow exception for those that are the minimum necessary to preserve Wilderness. This out-of-place hut fails to meet this Wilderness Act requirement. Your agency 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."

In the construction plan you propose to use helicopters, jackhammers, cement mixers, and other motorized equipment while claiming that rebuilding the hut structure would improve the area's wilderness character. Your agency is not conducting an official Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as would be imperative with this kind of high impact construction activity in a wilderness designated location.

Allowing the hut to fade with time, or using wilderness-compatible means to remove the collapsed hut's remnants, are the only options in alignment with the wilderness designation. The natural deterioration of structures is part of wilderness-it is evidence of untrammelled 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.

Claiming that the metal cannot be removed without motorized equipment is nonsensical since the hut and footings were built in 1960 without using any of that equipment. All of the stone and cement footings can simply break down over time.

Since you rejected consideration of the use of traditional, non-impact, methods to restore the hut in your Draft EA there is no other option but "no action" in order to stay in alignment with the wilderness designation. That very alignment is the responsibility you have been charged with by the trust of the American people under the Wilderness Act. Please honor your commitment to do just that in this situation.

Thank You,

Pam Youngquist