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Last name: FS-comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-bend-ftrock

Organization:

Title:

Comments: FW: Recreation Fees

Forwarding this from the BFR comment inbox.

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Caring for the land and serving people

From: Kim McCarrel [mailto:kim@nwhorsetrails.com]

Sent: Sunday, December 8, 2019 9:14 AM

To: FS-comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-bend-ftrock <comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-bend-ftrock@usda.gov>;

Subject: Recreation Fees

I am writing to provide my personal comments on the proposed permit fees. I also submitted a comment letter on behalf of all the members of Oregon Equestrian Trails, but since my own views differ from those of the group, I wanted to also submit my own comments.

Proposed Fee, Day Use: I think the proposed fees for day use are very reasonable. Most folks will spend more in gas getting to the trailhead than they will pay for the permit fee. I wouldn't object if the fee were a few dollars higher, to provide more funds for trail maintenance, enforcement, and education.

Proposed Fee, Overnight Use: The proposed fees for overnight use seem quite reasonable to me, though I wouldn't object to them being a few dollars higher, to provide more funding for the trail issues mentioned above.

Uses for the Proposed Fees: I'd like to see the fees be spent on trail maintenance, enforcement, and education. Please emphasize social media as a way of getting the education messages out. I also would like to see social media used to showcase/promote the lesser-used trails (in and out of the Wilderness) that can sustain increased use.

Cancellation Policies: I would like to see liberal cancellation policies, so cancelled permits can go back into the pool to be reserved by someone else.

Advance Reservations vs. Spontaneous Permits: Because overnight trips require more planning than day trips, I'd like to see a large percentage of overnight permits available in advance. As for day-use permits, I like to plan my day rides a week or two in advance, so I hope that some permits for day use will be made available six months in advance, additional permits made available two weeks prior, and the remainder the day prior. Adaptive management will be useful in fine tuning the percentages as time goes by.

Permits to Reward Volunteers: I'd like to see volunteer work rewarded with increased access to Wilderness areas. For example, for every multiple of ten hours of volunteer time, the volunteer might earn one free Limited-Entry Permit (redeemable on any day, no fee). The waived fee is too low to be a motivator, but the prospect of getting access to any Wilderness trail on the day of your choice will be a big incentive for volunteers.

I've seen firsthand that the current Northwest Forest Pass awards motivate volunteers: when volunteers realize they're getting close to earning a free pass, they sign up for additional work parties to ensure their hours meet the minimum to receive the award. I believe a Limited-Access Permit that provides any-day access will be an even more attractive inducement to volunteers. If necessary, the number of passes available to the public could be reduced to ensure that those awarded to volunteers don't push total visitation numbers above the desired limit wilderness-wide.

Other: Please consider establishing a trail education/monitoring/ambassador role that equestrians can fulfill on horseback (inside or outside of Wilderness). Volunteers on horseback can go further and reach more people on the trail than can volunteers on foot. As you know, many equestrian trail riders are no longer spring chickens, and many suffer from physical ailments that prevent them from doing physical trail work. But they still want to make a difference, and I believe many in the equestrian community would be interested in volunteering to greet, educate, and monitor visitors out on the trails.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Kim McCarrel