



# Central Cascades Wilderness Permit System Frequently Asked Questions

## Permit Requirements

### When are permits required?

The Deschutes and Willamette NFs are implementing a wilderness permit system for the Mt. Jefferson, Mt Washington, and Three Sisters Wildernesses this year. In 2021, the season for wilderness permits will begin on Friday, May 28th and end on Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. Every year the season will be from the Friday prior to Memorial Day to the last Friday in September.

### Where are permits required?

#### Overnight Use

- Central Cascades Wilderness Permits are required for all overnight stays in the [Mt. Jefferson](#), [Mt. Washington](#), and [Three Sisters Wilderness](#) areas (see links for permit maps).
- No Central Cascades Wilderness Permits are required for overnight stays in the Waldo Lake and Diamond Peak Wilderness areas.

#### Day Use

- Central Cascades Wilderness Permits are required at 19 of 79 trailheads in the [Mt. Jefferson](#), [Mt. Washington](#), and [Three Sisters Wilderness](#) areas (see links for permit maps).

**In addition to the permits are there other new requirements?** Yes, there is an elevational fire ban to protect the limited amount of dead and down vegetation used by wildlife for habitat in higher elevations and to protect white bark pine.

- All campfires will be banned above 5,700' elevation in Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, and Three Sisters Wildernesses, as well as some areas lower than 5,700'.
- All campfires will be banned above 6,000' elevation in Diamond Peak Wilderness

**What if I don't get a Central Cascade Wilderness Permit? What is the fine?** We expect people to follow the rules of getting a permit to help maintain these special areas for everyone's enjoyment and use for the long-term. Just like you are expected to stop at a red light to protect everyone's safety without a police officer watching you. We expect you to get a permit whether anyone catches you or not without a permit. Your decision to not get a permit may lead to continuing impacts to these wildernesses and additional requirements to protect them for the

future, which will affect all of us. Wilderness rangers can write violation notices to anyone in these wilderness areas without the appropriate permit. Fines for violations start at \$200 plus processing costs, but can go higher and require a court appearance, depending on the individual's behavior and history of past incidences.

## How to Get Permits

**How do people get permits?** All reservations for Central Cascades Wilderness Permits need to be made through Recreation.gov either on-line, by calling 1-877-444-6777 or TDD 877-833-6777. Search for "Central Cascades Wilderness." Our offices are currently closed, but once they open, you can get a permit at one of the Willamette and Deschutes National Forests' offices. However, we encourage people to take advantage of getting permits online – "go on-line, don't stand in line." All permits are only available online. We do not have any permits outside of the reservation system if you visit one of our offices.

**I'm using the recreation.gov app on my smart phone and I can't find the Central Cascades Overnight permits. Why can't I find it?** Currently, the recreation.gov app does not support overnight permit reservations. You will need to use your internet browser (e.g. Chrome, Safari, Firefox) on your phone, or use a computer.

**What is the cost?** There is a \$1.00 processing charge for day-use permits per individual and a \$6.00 processing charge for overnight-use permits per group. An overnight group can be from 1 to 12 people. The processing charge funds the operation of the reservation system, like processing charges for tickets through Ticketmaster or other reservation systems.

## Making Permit Reservations and Permit Availability

**In advance of the permit season:**

**When can I start making reservations in advance of the season?** Reservations for 2021 Central Cascades Wilderness Permits opened on Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 a.m. for advanced reservations. Every year advanced permit reservations will open the first Tuesday in April. Only a portion of the permits for day and overnight use are available for advanced reservation. Most permits are reservable on a 7-day rolling window once the permit season begins.

**How many permits were available in advance?** On April 6, 2021, 40% of a trailhead's daily capacity for overnight use was released and 20-50% of a trailhead's daily capacity for daily use was released.

## **Once the permit season has started:**

**When can I start making reservations once the permit season begins? What is a 7-day rolling window?** Permits available a on 7-day rolling window reservation start becoming available on Friday, May 21 at 7:00 a.m. The 7-day rolling window releases permits daily, for trips starting in 7 days. For example, if you want to go on a hike on July 8, permits for that day become available at 7 a.m. on July 1. The majority of overnight permits (60%) and day use permits (50-80%) will be available through the 7-day rolling window permit reservation system.

**What about overnight trips and the 7-day rolling window? Do I need to log on and reserve a permit for each day of the trip, 7 days out?** For overnight trips, only the start date of a trip needs to be within 7 days. For example, for an overnight trip starting July 8, you can reserve your permit for the entire trip starting July 1. Once you select July 8 as the start date, the calendar will make the next 14 days available for you to reserve as part of that trip.

**Is there a limit to the number of permits an individual can have?** People only can have 5 overnight permits at a time reserved. People should only reserve permits they know they will use. Once the ending date of a permit has passed, an individual can make another overnight reservation.

Many people have expressed concern about people hoarding permits and permits going unused and that is why there is a limit to how many permits a person can reserve at a time.

**What is the cancellation policy for the Central Cascades Wilderness Permits?** If someone decides not to use their Central Cascades Wilderness Permit, we encourage them to cancel their permit to allow others the opportunity to reserve it and go on a trip. The processing charges for permits through Recreation.gov cannot be refunded unless the Forest Service has closed an area due to a wildfire or other public safety reason.

## **How to Use Your Permit**

**Do I have to stay near the trailhead listed on my permit?** No, once you have entered the wilderness using the entry trailhead and on the starting date listed on your permit, you are free to travel anywhere within the wilderness. You may exit the wilderness from any trailhead.

**When I make an overnight permit reservation, do I need to select where I'm camping each night?** No, this permit system is designed to allow freedom of travel once you've entered the wilderness. When making your reservation, you select your entry date, entry trailhead, and every night of your trip. Even though you're selecting every night of trip for your entry

trailhead, you are free to travel beyond that area once in the wilderness and to exit from a different trailhead.

**Can I start a day use trip at a trailhead that doesn't require permits and then hike into an area accessed by a trailhead that requires day use permits?** Yes, once you enter the wilderness, you are free to travel anywhere within the wilderness. If entering from a trailhead that doesn't require the Central Cascades Wilderness Permit for day use, make sure you fill out the free, self-issue permit, available at the trailhead and carry it with you.

**What if I do not use a trailhead to access Wilderness?** Visitors that enter one of the wildernesses not using a trailhead still need to have a permit associated with the trailhead closest to their point of entry into wilderness. For day-use this could be a permit from either a Central Cascades Wilderness Permit trailhead or a self-issued permit trailhead. For overnight use it must be a Central Cascades Wilderness Permit. Avoiding entry from a trailhead does not eliminate the requirement of a Central Cascades Wilderness Permit if one is required.

**Can I get an overnight permit for three days and just go in and out of the wilderness for day trips for three days?** No. An overnight permit is only valid to enter the wilderness on the entry day and entry trailhead that is on the permit.

**Will the NW Forest Pass or other recreation passes be required at trailheads that require one of them?** Yes, if a trailhead currently requires a NW Forest Pass or other recreation pass, the Central Cascades Wilderness Permit DOES NOT cover that requirement. Visitors still will need to display the appropriate pass in their vehicle.

## Where Permits Are Not Required and Permit Exceptions

**What about areas that don't require a Central Cascades Wilderness Permit?** Where Central Cascades Wilderness Permits are not required - free, self-issue permits are required, as they have been for decades:

- Waldo Lake and Diamond Peak trailheads (overnight and day use).
- 60 of 79 trailheads for day use in the Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, and Three Sisters wildernesses without trail quotas.
- All trailheads from the last Friday of September until October 31.

**Are there exceptions to the Central Cascades Wilderness Permit requirement?** Yes, the following situations are excepted from getting a Central Cascades Wilderness Permit:

- Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) Long Distance permit, issued by the Pacific Crest Trail Association for long distance hikers and riders traveling more than 500 miles along the PCT.
  - Camping is restricted to the PCT Corridor and prohibited in certain high use areas. [Maps are available online.](#)
- Hunters holding only the following valid hunting tags:
  - West High Cascade Hunt (119A); exemption is for overnight and day use.
  - General archery deer and elk hunts in general hunt areas; exemption is only for day use.
  - Archery deer hunts in the Upper Metolius (Hunt 139R1) and Deschutes Units (Hunt #134R) only; exemption is for overnight and day use.
  - Hunting exemption is valid for the hunter plus up to three additional individuals.
  - The hunting exemptions are only valid for the season of the hunt, plus one day prior and one day after. For example, in 2021, the West High Cascade Hunt is from September 11-19. The tag would be a valid exception for September 10-20
  - Hunters must have their hunting implement with them, along with proof of their hunting tag.
- Volunteers, while volunteering in coordination with the Forest Service

**What about volunteers who contribute so much to improving these wildernesses?** Volunteers working under an approved Forest Service volunteer agreement who contribute 40 hours of labor directly to wildernesses on the Deschutes and Willamette National Forests will get a volunteer pass, which will exempt them from the permit quotas. All volunteer hours must be accounted for through the two forests' official volunteer programs.

## For More Information

**What if I have more questions?** There are a few ways to reach out with additional questions:

- You can contact any Willamette or Deschutes National Forest (as of 5/17/2021, our offices remain closed due to COVID-19, but they are answering phones)
- Visit the [permit information website](#)
- Email [sm.fs.ccwp@usda.gov](mailto:sm.fs.ccwp@usda.gov)

Updated: May 17, 2021