



2021 Mount St. Helens Climbing Permit Changes - Frequently Asked Questions

What is different about the permit reservation system this year?

For the 2021 climbing season both the number of permits available and when they can be purchased will be different than in prior years:

The number of permits for April 1 through May 15 will be reduced from 500 per day to 300, while permits issued for climbs beginning May 15 through October 31 will be increased from 100 to 110 per day. This reduction is due to the need to minimize resource damage, maintain a quality visitor experience as well as increase safety during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by reducing crowding along the route during the climbing season.

Rather than all permits for the entire season becoming available all at once, permits will be released on a monthly basis. On the first of every month permits will become available for the entire following month. For example, on March 1, 2021, at 7 a.m. Pacific Time, permits will become available for all dates in the month of April. This pattern for release will continue through the end of the permit season, October 31st.

What is the cancellation policy?

Permits may now be cancelled up to seven days prior to the beginning of the climb. This gives people more flexibility. In previous years permit holders had to cancel at least 14 days in advance. Recreation.gov retains the \$6 non-refundable reservation fee, so refunds will be \$15 per person on the permit. There are no refunds for no-shows or adverse weather conditions.

Why are permits being limited?

The number of permits issued between April and May is being reduced to alleviate congestion on the climbing route and at the trailhead. This will not only allow for more distancing between parties during the pandemic but will also reduce overall human impacts on the resource.

How is this permit system better? Won't this result in fewer people getting permits?

Although going from issuing 500 to 300 permits per day April 1- May 15 may seem like a lot, in the past we typically only sold the full 500 permits when the weather was sunny and nice. Many of the 500-person quota went unsold due to poor weather. This 300-person quota helps reign in the crowds on the sunniest of days, when crowding is a problem, especially during the pandemic. This is an improvement over the permit availability last year, when the Forest Service cancelled all permits for the 500-person days due to the pandemic.





Why are permits being released month by month?

Releasing permits on a monthly basis, rather than all at once, should cut down on the volume of last-minute cancellations and unused permits. Under the previous system many people would purchase permits months in advance only to cancel as the date got nearer.

Why are there only 110 permits available in summer?

The 110 number is primarily based upon 1) the summer route's inability to resist resource damage due to low/no snow cover and 2) the limits of Climber's Bivouac, which is currently at capacity for parking and overnight use.

Will the Forest Service bring in more funds due to this change?

No, the Forest Service will not generate more climbing permit revenue—in fact, the Forest Service will likely collect fewer funds. The price of a permit has not changed, and the Forest Service might not make up for the lost revenue accrued on those sunny 500-person days.

Why are blue bags only available April-October?

The Forest Service only put out blue bags April-October, as the forest does not have sufficient funds to pay for them year-round. We also only supply a limited quantity, due to theft issues. Please bring your own blue bags. Basic Cleanwaste WAG Bags are available for purchase at various outdoor retailers and online.

For more information about climbing Mount St Helens please visit us online at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/giffordpinchot/recreation/recarea/?recid=81369>

Mount St Helens Institute also provides current conditions and other climbing information online:

<https://www.mshinstitute.org/explore/climbing-permits/current-conditions.html>

