

## HOOD/WILLAMETTE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

P.L. 106-393; SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT OF 2000

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January 14, 2020, 0900

### Meeting Minutes

*Keizer Community Center, Claggett Room, 930 Chemawa Road NE, Keizer, OR 97303*

**HOOD-WILLAMETTE RAC MEMBERS PRESENT:** Will Tucker, Patrick Davis, Steve Wilent, Jon Tullis, Hayden Price (chairman), Neila Whitney, Jeff Jaqua, Kevin Cameron, Ron Adams

**HOOD-WILLAMETTE RAC SUPPORT STAFF PRESENT:** Tracy Beck, Jennifer Sorensen, Rachel LaMedica, Matt Peterson

#### Acronyms:

RAC: Resource Advisory Council

SRS: Secure Rural Schools

FS: Forest Service

FY: Fiscal Year

DFO: Deciding Federal Official

REA: Recreation Enhancement Act

FLREA: Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act

NHPA: National Historic Preservation Act

CRGNSA: Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

WNF: Willamette National Forest

MTH: Mt Hood National Forest

Q: Question

A: Answer

**OVERVIEW OF AGENDA:** Today's purpose is to brief the RAC on two major topics – 1. Wilderness permit proposal and 2. Title II proposals. Only information sharing today, no voting on recommendations until February 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS:

WRITTEN (attached).

IN-PERSON (recorded and transcribed):

- **Jerry Adams-** Hi, I am Jerry Adams, I am a user of the 3 Sisters wilderness area and I think this plan that you're proposing is a terrible idea and I hope that you don't approve it. I've hiked there for years I've hiked through the green lakes area, which is the busiest area you mentioned and I don't see a problem there. If I want solitude go hike a couple of miles away. I think that you guys, I appreciate the Forest Service, I'm not personally against you or anything I just think that you should be encouraging more people to use the wilderness because it's such a wonderful resource that we have and if more people used it its more likely to be preserved in the long term. Another thing is the legal basis that you're using is the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, the special recreation permit fee, this provision is for special uses like group activities, recreation

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events, and motorized recreational use. You're using it for general usage that is inconsistent with the law if it goes to court it will probably be thrown out and this whole thing will be a waste of time anyway. I think you should go back to the drawing board and manage the use in the busy areas like there is a trail going off to broken top, that is great for camping on, you should put designated sites there, distribute the use a little bit lighter than just green lakes. Anyway that's my argument. Please consider that.

- **Keith Cunningham-Parmeter**- Well thanks for looking at this proposal, thanks for everyone's work. I backpack a lot with my boys and my concern is that this proposal will become too expensive for other families in Oregon to afford backpacking in Oregon. And, it is unprecedented, there is no proposal like this in the country. For a family to do a backpacking trip, family of four to do a week long backpacking trip \$140. There is no proposal like this in the country, it's unprecedented. Don't take my word for it, there is Matt Peterson, he gets an hour, I only get three minutes, so let me tell you what Matt said to the Statesman Journal, this is in your materials, this is a direct quote "there is a level of uncertainty because it hasn't been done before on this scale". Hasn't been done before on this scale. There is no proposal like this in this country that is this wide or this expansive. There are 760 wilderness areas in the county and none have done this. Now there are a few that have done more limited, ok let me tell you about those. And I would encourage you to get this information because the Forest Service hasn't provided it to you yet. Remember that family of four that spends one hundred and forty dollars here? In California, outside of Lake Tahoe the Desolation Wilderness that trip costs \$40. In the Inyo National Forest, the Sierra, that trip costs \$20. So, when Matt Peterson says this is unprecedented, it is. Day use, they are charging day use. No one does that in the country. The only example that they cite in the northwest are the Enchantments which are in Washington. The Enchantments are 1/10<sup>th</sup> the size of the area they are talking about. They are talking about half a million acres. The enchantments are 1/10<sup>th</sup> the size, guess what, they don't charge for day use. So Matt Peterson was right this is a plan without precedent. It's also not covered by the statute, as Mr. Adams just mentioned the statute says you can only charge for special use. Special use, think about the meaning of that word, special use. Every user who goes overnight has to pay a fee. If you want to fish, if you want to ride a horse, you want to backpack, you want to trail run, you want to climb a mountain, every use. That's just not special use that's illogical. So Jerry is right if this goes to court I don't think a judge is going to buy it. The last thing I'll say is that the statute also says this committee, the Resource Advisory Committee, needs to find general public support. That is in the statute, it's a must. There have been over 12,000 comments submitted on this proposal. And I don't know about you, I haven't had a chance to read all of them yet, but just any sample you see it's overwhelmingly opposed, that's in these articles too. So there's no general public support, this is not special use, and the fees are exorbitant. Thank you.
- **Russ Lipetzky**- I hope Matt has to stand up here without a podium and a table also. Level the playing field a little bit here. Good Morning my name is Russ Lipetzky. I am the organizer of the Salem Outdoors meetup group. We have 2127 members as of yesterday. We are a hiking group we're not a policy group, we're not a lobbying group, we're not organized or have a board so I can't come here and say I speak for the group as a whole because we're just not structured that way. However, I can tell you that when I sent out to my group a request for feedback on this proposal I had one person who responded who was in favor of the proposal and everyone else was universally opposed to it, dozens and dozens of comments and feedback and letters that I received from my group in response to this proposal. So I speak somewhat anecdotally but I do speak as someone who has a lot of contact with a lot of hikers. Predominantly we do day hikes. We do our day hikes in the two national forests and the three wilderness areas that are the

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subject of this proposal. I myself I think have hiked all of those but one of the subject trailheads in the past three or four years. We do literally hundreds of hikes there. I have attended the open houses, I have heard Matt's presentation, and I have reviewed the 188 page environmental assessment, the 44 page decision notice, the actual plan, the various information on the website, and I am trying to limit my objections here to those things that appear to not really be addressed sufficiently legally or any other way. I don't normally just come up here and spew opposition but I'm obviously opposed, so I will try to tailor my comments closely. Many members of at least my hiking group are new to the area or they are new to hiking and they don't have anyone to show them where to go or how to do it appropriately and ethically and to leave no trace and all those things that we all value in stewardship of our National Forests. Groups like mine provide that opportunity. We provide experienced hikers, guidance and we're happy to do that but under this fee proposal I don't know if my group is even going to survive, much less overcome the logistical nightmare that's going to be imposed by the fee proposal. And that's part of the problem is you're going to be excluding people from that benefit. As you've heard and as you're going to continue to hear under the Recreation Enhancement Act this fee is authorized only if it's imposed for a specialized recreation use. Now, I can't think of, and I've tried to think of, a use of our national forests and these wilderness areas that is less specialized than parking and hiking and doing a day hike. I can't think of anything that is more mundane and more common and less specialized and the federal statute is one sentence long and it's not defined any further, it's not rocket science, I'm sure you've read it, I hope you do if you haven't, it allows this fee for specialized use and you can't make non-specialized use, which I submit day hiking is, into specialized use simply by proclaiming that there is a need for revenue or that it's in a high impact area, or that any of the other rationale that I've heard for making it a specialized use. The focus of the statute is on the use not where that use occurs. So I challenge anyone to identify what makes this use specialized rather than the most normal and usual and mundane. High use does not mean special use no matter how often or how loudly the proponent says that it does. Nor does the fact that it takes place in a specialized area which you'll hear they want, they say the wilderness area is a specialized area therefore the fee is justified. But being in a specialized area doesn't make it specialized use and respectfully it's only if it is specialized use that this is authorized. Thank you.

- **Christina Overturf**- I am a part of a group, there were a lot of people who wished to attend today. Unfortunately you guys didn't really schedule it for working people to be able to attend which is pretty disappointing to see the turnout here of members of the community not showing up because there are a lot of people opposed to this. For starters there is concern that it violates the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act because it is not a special recreation, it doesn't fall underneath the special recreation fee guideline. It also states that for camping at undeveloped sites there should not be additional fee for this, such as South Sisters. When you hike and camp at south sisters there are no developed sites to my knowledge and I have hiked South Sisters. So I guess there is a lot of confusion in the community as to why so much fees and limitation. People are concerned South Sisters especially is definitely a high traffic area so the community does have concerns in regards to protecting the environment but nobody understand why there was such an aggressive standpoint taken. That's disturbing to us. We should not have such restrictions to public land usage or hiking. A lot of low income people the fees increase so drastically that how are low income people going to access these lands now? It seems like this is catering more to the wealthy, the wealthier. Hiking here, backpacking here, I am a hiker and a backpacker, it's not cheap in itself. So, for me a mother of three to afford the gear is hard enough, now I have to, plan, what, months in advance just to fight for a permit? For example South Sisters, I was married

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on top of South Sisters in August. We didn't plan it. We planned a week in advance. With this coming proposal that wouldn't have been possible. It's my understanding that there's, what, 300 plus people a day in the peak season, I think South Sisters, that is a lot. That is concerning to the environment. But how is anybody supposed to get permits for these places? How are we supposed to afford these places? What is that going to do to the economy of Sisters and Bend? Especially for PCT hikers. A lot of people stop into local towns, they go have a drink, have dinner, lodging. What is that going to do to the economy? Has this been thought about has business owners been contacted in regards to this? These are all things that I think I haven't seen taken into account, and I know the turnout for this meeting doesn't really show that there's concern in the community but there is a lot of concern. The Oregon hikers and climbers group is just over 7700 people. 7700 people and I am the only person on that group that was able to make it to this meeting because of the timing. So please don't look the turnout and think that the community doesn't care about this. They are for improvements, limitations, fees, whatnot, but not so aggressively. Thank you for your time.

#### SRS PROGRAM UPDATES:

1. Congress passed PL 116-94 on December 20<sup>th</sup> 2019, which reauthorized SRS payments for FY19 and 20 (payments in FY20 and 21). Updated deadlines: 9/30/2022 for project recommendations and 9/30/2023 for funding obligation. Prior year funds now follow these deadlines.
2. RAC Membership: There has been movement on some RAC nomination packages at the Secretary's office. Hood-Willamette RAC package will be resubmitted for consideration since it's been over a year.
  - a) This package includes reappointment requests for R. Ragan, J. Parker, and M. Kate-Mason (second term).
  - b) All current members expire in August 2021. W. Tucker's current appointment will expire Dec 31, 2020 as he is retiring from elected office.
  - c) ETHICS: RAC member should recuse themselves from voting on a recommendation if there is any real or perceived personal benefit.
    - i) Potential conflict from K. Cameron who owns land in one of the Title II proposal areas. Discussion on noting the potential conflict, versus actual conflict. RAC Chair determined this was worth noting a potential conflict, but did not meet the threshold for recusal.
  - d) RAC Members to complete annual ethics certification for 2020 prior to Feb 11 2020 meeting.

#### CENTRAL CASCADES WILDERNESS RECREATION FEE PROPOSAL Matt Peterson, WNF:

1. Thank you for RAC member service and time from members of the public who participated.
2. OVERVIEW: Wilderness Act of 1964 guides the way the FS manages these places.
  - a) Untrammeled, natural, undeveloped, solitude or unconfined recreation make up wilderness character. We are responsible for preserving Wilderness Character.
  - b) 5 Wilderness areas included in this process: Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, Three Sisters, Waldo Lake, Diamond Peak
3. BACKGROUND/CHALLENGES:
  - a) Over 500% increase in use since 2010 in some areas. Examples.
  - b) Discussion

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- i) Q: how accurate is the data? A: we rely largely on self-registration, wilderness rangers track compliance. There is some extrapolation, but overall this data is seen as reflective of what people are seeing on the ground.
  - ii) Q: what is the reason for the increase in visitation? A: No one reason. Social media increases visibility and comfort/familiarity with sites. Broader societal shift to outdoor recreation. Tourism driven economies. Population increases. Marketing focused on outdoor recreation. This is not unique to our area- many others are experiencing the same thing.
  - iii) Q: RAC representation is primarily Westside with the exception of Wasco Co. How will we ensure we get representation from all areas where the public will be impacted by this? A: We see use from all over, though we don't track this in our registration process. The proposal will also go to the John Day Snake River RAC representing east side interests.
4. CURRENT STATUS/CHALLENGES:
- a) Agency funding and staffing has not increased with this increased use.
  - b) Increasing partnerships and volunteers – but still not enough and this still takes capacity.
  - c) Existing Regulations
    - i) Designated campsites
    - ii) Campfire bans
    - iii) Camping and campfire setbacks
    - iv) Two Limited entry areas currently: Obsidian and Pamela. No FS fee, \$6 rec.gov fee for permit for day use and overnight.
      - (1) Discussion:
        - (a) Q: A fair amount of investment has been made to protect these two existing fee areas. What is paying for that? A: Appropriated funds. Our appropriations are not tied to visitation. When we choose to invest in staffing to keep up with use, we forgo work elsewhere.
        - (b) Q: Is it worth advocating for a funding model that is tied to use? A: FS cannot say or lobby in this regard. That's for the public to decide and advocate for.
  - d) Existing conditions:
    - i) Refuse: 1200 pounds of garbage to pack out. Human waste.
    - ii) Trailhead Parking – spills out along highway, creates safety hazard.
    - iii) User created trails. Easy to travel off trails with GPS availability.
    - iv) Graffiti.
  - e) Our mandate is to protect preserve and enhance wilderness character both for now and for the future.
5. PLAN FOR FUTURE:
- a) Willamette of Deschutes are working together. Final decision was signed in 2019 by forest supervisors to implement limited entry.
  - b) Fee Proposal: see PowerPoint
  - c) Discussion
    - i) Q: Did the NEPA process include the proposal of a fee? A: We were upfront about this intention in the NEPA process and included it in the public involvement. We did not have exact fee amounts and could not propose fees prior to completing the NEPA for the limited entry system because that would have been pre-decisional. Working through the public outreach process now for the fee component.
    - ii) Q: What is the thought process behind the campfire ban? A: Many considerations go into an elevational campfire ban including sensitive species. Previous bans were confusing for the public and difficult to enforce. This proposal will provide some consistency.

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- iii) Q: When will this be implemented? A: Working toward implementation of the limited entry system this year- May 2020.
  - iv) Review map of proposed impacted trailheads. There will still be wilderness day hiking opportunities that are not limited. 19 of 79 total trailheads will have day use limits where fees are being proposed.
  - v) Suggestion: FS should consider parking impacts on non-limited entry sites.
  - vi) Q: Is the Northwest Forest Pass still required? A: Currently some of these trailheads do require this pass. Where there is a Central Cascades Permit required, the NWFP will not also be required.
  - vii) Q: What is the plan if the permit fees are not approved? Will you still implement the limited entry? A: Yes. It will be substantially more difficult and less effective, but we'd do what we can.
6. FEE PROPOSAL OVERVIEW (see attached PowerPoint):
- a) Special Recreation Permit (SRP) fee
    - i) DAY USE: \$3 per person for day use + \$1 rec.gov fee = \$4 per day total
      - (1) Applies to 19 of the 79 trailheads
    - ii) OVERNIGHT USE: \$5 per person per night + \$6 assessed per group for rec.gov
      - (i) Applies to all 79 trailheads
    - i) 12 years and younger – no SRP fee, permit still required
    - ii) Fees (if approved) would be used for:
      - (1) Wilderness Rangers, trail maintenance, volunteer and intern opportunities, education (video) and enforcement, etc. and to run the limited entry system.
      - (2) Estimated annual revenue: \$325,000
  - b) Discussion:
    - i) Q: 95% of fee goes to forest, 5% goes to Region – what is the Region contribution? A: Supports the forest and broader program coordination across the region for wilderness management. (i.e. Regional Wilderness program manager)
    - ii) Q: Who runs rec.gov? A: Boos-Allen Hamilton. Rec.gov fees are assessed whether or not the FS fee goes into effect.
    - iii) Q: What is RAC's role in this? A: To make a recommendation to the Regional Forester on whether to approve the fee or not. This is a chance also for the RAC to give feedback, just like the public. This is our initial proposal, and may be modified based on what we have heard from the public. Today is a chance to give us feedback. This RAC plans to vote on a recommendation at their Feb 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.
    - iv) Discussion on cost to administer this program:
      - (1) Q: How much does the permit system itself actually cost the forest to manage this program? A: As far as we know, there are no additional fees paid to Rec.gov for administering the online system.
      - (2) Q: Can people still visit an office to get a permit? A: Yes, however the rec.gov fee still applies.
      - (3) Q: How much staff will be supported with \$325k? Is that enough to make a difference? A: It doesn't provide a lot of additional capacity. Distinction between permanent and seasonal employees. Some are only hired for 120 days over the summer. We have some flexibility in how to invest and expand our capacity.

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- (4) Q: Does this revenue estimate account for future growth? A: The revenue estimate is based on 2016 use levels. If use continues to grow, revenue would increase.
- (5) Fees are Trailhead specific. Permit requires that you start at the TH you got the permit for and on the day you said. Once in the wilderness you can still go anywhere. Unconfined recreation – the confining starts before they enter the wilderness.
- (6) Q: How will you keep people from building social trails? A: We looked at a lot of data to inform this. Where do people want to travel most and how do they travel there? This funding will allow us to better monitor and apply adaptive management principles. When we have more information we understand where we need to make different management decisions.
- (7) Q: Will refunds be issued for cancelations? A: Some hardship and cancellation options are being considered.

### 7. FEE PROPOSAL FAQ:

- a) Q: How does the FS identify volunteers? A: In order to be considered a volunteer you must be working in coordination with the FS under and an approved agency volunteer agreement.
- b) Q: What about senior and interagency passes? A: You still have to pay permit fees.
- c) Q: Library pass concept– won't this create opportunities for abuse? A: Library passes would be limited in number. They would be open to anyone with a library card. It's not a perfect solution, but something that would be create an opportunity for low-income community members.
- d) Q: What are examples of community and non-profit organizations you would work with? A: No specific organizations identified yet. Still exploring this opportunity.
  - i) Q: Is the BLM wilderness doing this? A: Not that we know of.
  - ii) Q: What process are you using to identify non-profits that serve low-income communities? A: Still in early stages of this concept, it's important for us to find partners that already work with these communities. This will develop over time. We do not have all the answers now.
  - iii) Follow up on RAC Request from July 2019: Recommendation for Wilderness permit planning team to consider implication of past fee proposal at sites that would also be impacted by proposed permit system.
    - (1) 7 campgrounds with adjacent day use limited trailheads: Breitenbush Lake, Scott Lake, Devils Lake, Todd Lake, Three Creeks Lake/Driftwood, Lava Camp Lake – all of these CGs have other types of recreation other than the limited entry hiking.

### 8. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

- a) Comment period for fee proposal closed Jan 10
- b) Four public meetings – Bend, Sisters, Eugene, Salem
- c) Federal Register Notice – must be published 6 months prior to implementation. Not yet published. Submitted in April. RAC can still make recommendations, but FS cannot implement potential fees until 6 months after publication.
- d) Presentations to RACs
- e) We received approximately 12,000 comments – over 11,000 were form letters primarily through Wilderness watch. 728 unique letters received through Dec 11, 2019.
- f) Discussion:
  - i) Q: Of the 728 unique letters 140 support, 265 oppose? What about the rest? A: Some of the comments were more general or wanted clarification, not specifically on whether they liked or disliked the fee.

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- ii) Q: A permit system by itself will have a certain impact to visitation– potentially reduce usage? Do you have any information on this? A: We expect there to be displacement. We expect people to go to different areas. Some people will avoid all fee sites and this could cause impacts on other places. We will have to adapt as that emerges.
  - iii) Q: In your efforts to get people to embrace this, what have you done to create buy in by the public to see if they are getting something for their money, some benefit (emergency services)? A: We have tried to be clear about how the funds will be reinvested into the system. We have also tried to appeal to the idea that this is what we need to do to protect this area for future generations. People disagree, but from a management perspective this is our best solution. We have made changes to the proposal throughout to be responsive – for example reducing the number of wildernesses and trailheads affected, and a limited the permit window.
9. PUBLIC COMMENT THEMES: See PowerPoint.
- a) FLREA – Has the FS gotten legal opinion? A: Yes – the WO worked with legal to make sure this is in line with our authority. We are not the first- there are other forests who have already done this. There is precedent for using this authority. It has not been litigated.
  - b) PCT hiker- can be difficult to stick to a set schedule and set up schedules in advance. A: For folks who are hiking 500 miles or more, they get permit from PCTA – they do not have to get one of our permits. There are some restrictions – they must camp close to the PCT. For those hiking sections less than 500 miles, they must get one of a permit but we know there are challenges with this; we are still working on this. How do we minimize the impact to this system, while also not creating loopholes?
  - c) What is the fine for not having a permit? A: \$200-\$250. Discussion: So someone with low income could potentially be put in a very bad situation? We don't jump immediately to citations, we try to start with warnings, education, etc. depending on the situation.
10. NEXT STEPS:
- a) Complete review of public comments
  - b) Feedback from RACs
  - c) Discussion:
    - i) Q: We have a policy now to limit entry in these areas. The fee proposal will help the forest implement this limited use. The only alternative would be appropriated funds from congress. Are there other alternatives? A: The fee is a key part of making this new system effective. We can work with more volunteers and partners, yes, but that also takes capacity. None of us are thrilled with this option, but we feel it's out best option at this point.
    - ii) Q: Has the FS ever looked at a bond or GoFundMe? A: We don't have the authority to do bonds at a local level. Nationally we do, but locally we can't. We also cannot do fundraising. We do work with partner groups to do this.
    - iii) Q: Could funding be increased by increasing the fee for the Northwest Forest Pass? A: That program is managed regionally. Most likely no – those fees are paid in support of the facilities where we charge those fees – toilets, parking, and picnic, a small amount for trails. This is outside of our scope.

TITLE II PROPOSALS:

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### 1. Overview of funding and committee breakdown

Forest	County	Available funding (FY18)	Requested Funding	Difference	Proposed Lead for Funding Recommendations
Mt Hood	Wasco	\$83,904	\$178,160	(\$94,256)	Davis
	Hood River	\$44,805	\$42,155	\$2,650	
	Clackamas	\$93,453	\$184,714	(\$91,261)	Tullis, Price, Adams, Whitney, Jaqua, Wilent
	Marion	\$31,876	\$46,505	(\$14,629)	Cameron
	Multnomah	\$14,938	\$0	\$14,938	N/A
Willamette	Marion	\$66,231	\$66,157	\$74	Cameron
	Linn	\$265,535	\$352,115	(\$86,580)	Tucker
	Lane	\$508,685	\$677,104	(\$168,419)	
	Douglas	\$33,000	\$33,705	(\$705)	Default to Chairman Price (only 1 proposal)
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$774,220</b>	<b>\$1,326,595</b>	<b>(\$552,375)</b>	

- a)
- b) Discussion: Multnomah funds – no proposals received. Before we received word of the two year extension, we had asked a partner to put together a proposal to fund ongoing work. Would like the RAC to review, with the understanding that you can choose to roll the current available funds into the next proposal period instead.

### 2. Overview of Proposals

- a) RAC role: reviewing all of the proposals. Ensure they meet the intent of the legislation. Contact other pertinent stakeholders over the next 3 weeks, consider FS leadership priorities (non-binding), and bring recommendations back in February.
- b) Question on proposal form: Some proposals did not complete section on status of project planning? SHPO concurrence? A: If RAC has questions follow up with the project proponent directly.

### 3. Proposal presentations:

- a) We do not have time to hear from all proponents. RAC members should contact project proponents directly for any additional information.
- b) Kris Elsbree, Walama Restoration project overview.
  - i) Q: What is the size of your organization? A: 13 employees, about half are part time.
  - ii) Q: How long have you been working with the FS? A: 13 years. See [Walamarestoration.org](http://Walamarestoration.org).
  - iii) Missing Wasco County proposal for Invasive veg management Crystal Clear Restoration Area. Jennifer will ensure it was received and get to RAC members via email.
- c) Whitney Olsker, MTH 2020 Rocky Fuels Reduction project overview.
  - i) Q: Substantial amount of commercial timber? A: No, this is primarily fuels reduction. Removing Douglas Fir and Grand Fir.
- d) Whitney Olsker, MTH Government Flats Fire Restoration project overview.
  - i) Since 2014, actively planting burn in high priority areas. Planting Ponderosa Pine and Western Larch. After fire, lost seed source. Doug Fir and Grand Fir coming in all their own.
- e) Christina Mead, MTH – Barlow Ranger District & Hood River Ranger District Invasive Plant Control project overview.
  - i) Proposed work will be done with other partners. State, private or other lands also involved. Dales municipal watershed, Weyerhaeuser, Ecotrust Forest Management, Hood River County Forestry.

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- ii) Q: Concern about spending FS dollars on Weyerhaeuser land? A: We have an access road. Keeping the road clear at the beginning of the road will help keep weeds out further down the road.
- iii) Q: Does Weyerhaeuser do weed control at their own expense? A: Unsure, they do some.
- f) Jared Weybright, McKenzie Watershed Council Project overview.
- g) Johan Hogervorst, WNF Deer Creek project overview.
  - i) Q: Is gravel a part of the restoration plan? A: The berms that we took down were full of gravel. A lot of material is naturally moving down.
  - ii) Q: If this started because of a flood, how do we avoid this again? A: The flood wasn't as much of the problem as our response to it in digging a ditch and putting in berms.
  - iii) Q: OWEB grant says pending. Can you still apply these funds to the project without it? A: Yes, it would be a slightly reduced project. OWEB decisions will be made in early Feb so we can update then.
- h) Mike Vernon, South Santiam Watershed Council Wassau tract Project overview.
  - i) Paid internships – two HS students for 2-days per week, for 2 months of the summer.
  - ii) Q: Who owns the land? A: FS, a parcel right along moose creek road.
  - iii) Q: Currently is it just timber and scrub? A: Yes, we will get some forest health and fuels reduction benefits. This activity and beautification may help with the dumping and misuse.
  - iv) Regarding NEPA planning: some members generally object to anyone other than FS paying for NEPA, but this brings in students to help do it. The high school asked FS to do presentation on NEPA, counter-proposed that the students help with a project. Pilot project, there are two additional parcels to consider in the future.
  - v) The \$3000 requested for "other" covers transportation and food.
- i) Greg Wanner, MHNF project overview.
  - i) Q: Any money from USFWS for permit fees? A: No, we work closely with ODFW for smelt trapping.
  - ii) Q: Sandy River Basin changes year to year, what is to keep the flooding from just wiping out all of the work? A: We have learned a lot in this project, some does get wiped out. Perhaps there wasn't enough woody debris in that area. Need enough to disperse the flows. Based on an engineering calculation.
- j) Samantha Wolf- Clackamas County Dumpstoppers project overview.
  - i) Q: Is there a similar program in Hood River County? A: No.
  - ii) Q: Was it funded initially by the county? A: It was funded initially by Title II – 2003, county noticed dumping on adjacent lands.
- k) Sarah Altemas-Pope- South Willamette Solutions project overview.
  - i) Q: Why is this org doing this work, instead of the FS? A: We convene people to develop zones of agreement to help inform the planning process. Discussion on tradeoffs with various types of timber sales and stewardship initiatives.
  - ii) Q: Are there other monies flowing in that can be leveraged? A: Yes, most of these funds go towards funding permanent positions.
- l) Matt Sterner- Lane County – Youth Conservation Corps project overview.
  - i) Prevention strategy to slow down school to prison pipeline. Grant request is for county staff and youth crews. 300 kids served per years.
  - ii) Q: Scalability? A: This project is for 100 days. So less days would be delivered.

## HOOD/WILLAMETTE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

P.L. 106-393; SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT OF 2000

- iii) Q: Are the courts mandated to provide any programs? A: No. Counties provide detention.
- m) Nikki Swanson, WNF, Linn County Quartzville Corridor Partnership project overview.
  - i) Q: When you clean up one area, another pops up? Are you seeing this? A: Because of our saturation, we have seen people cleaning up their behavior. FS is also looking at changing management at some of these sites. This project has helped identify new partners that want to help resulting in more community involvement.
- n) Hannah Siroky, Northwest Youth Corps project overviews.
  - i) Q: Any tracking on success of program? A: Voluntary survey. Don't have specific numbers.
  - ii) Q: State Historic Preservation Office compliance? A: N/A on Camas Prairie – partnering with Grande Rhonde to protect traditional uses. In this case, it probably should have an option for already done. RAC members should assume it's complete if they indicated complete. Another example, Jackpot Meadows proposal; there are historic sites around the border of that meadow but nothing was checked for SHPO.
- o) Audrey Squires Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council Coal Creek Project overview.

### 4. DISCUSSION

- a) Q: What criteria did Rangers use to rank proposals? A: Partners, ability to leverage resources, work that is harder for us to fund on our own
- b) Q: Did Rangers look at consultation and planning needs? A: Yes. Programmatic Agreement with State Historic Preservation Office, Forest wide Invasive Environmental Impact Statement, etc. Sometimes they take another look at project sites, but overall these are part of our core work.
- c) RAC Discussion: How to review proposals and determine funding for RAC consideration?
  - i) LANE & LINN COUNTY: Tucker and Wilent will meet with County Commissioners and Rangers for consultation. Will incorporate public feedback from Parker and Kate-Mason.
  - ii) HOOD RIVER & WASCO: Davis
  - iii) YOUTH PROPOSALS: Adams will take a closer look at all youth related proposals regardless of county. Adams will work with all the other county leads and provide consultation or advice. This should be done before they have the larger county meetings. Will review ASAP and call to let them know if there are any concerns.
  - iv) CLACKAMAS, +MARION (MTH): Cameron, Tullis, Whitney, Jaqua, Price, Adams.
  - v) MARION (WNF): Cameron
  - vi) DOUGLAS: Price
  - vii) MULTNOMAH: Price
- d) Discussion:
  - i) Q: Regarding FS priorities, any advice for RAC members? A: This is all good work. It all has value and contributes to good work on the ground.
  - ii) Shared Stewardship – alignment with the State of Oregon? Some concern on RAC regarding the tradeoffs for things like Good Neighbor Authority.
    - (1) When these projects don't get funded, it can really impact their ability to stay afloat.

### CLOSING:

1. RAC members should contact Sorensen with any questions or support over the next 3-4 weeks.
2. Come to February 11<sup>th</sup> meeting ready to vote on recreation fee proposal and with funding proposals for full RAC vote.
3. Adjourn approximately 4:50pm.

HOOD-WILLAMETTE RAC  
JANUARY 14, 2020- WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

**COMMENT 1**

public comment on federal register

it is well past time that we stop letting some states not pay school costs by raiding our national forests. the states in the east do not do this. i see no reason why western states are allowed to raid forests and denude them of trees for their school costs. their taxpayers should be paying for their schools just like everybody else does. this stinks. this comment is for the public record. its time to make changes here. our forests are very important.

**COMMENT 2:**

To Whom it May Concern:

I have the following comments/suggestions regarding the proposed subject permits:

- 1) Provide permit holders with an opportunity to change/cancel their permit due to emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances (with refund as appropriate).
- 2) If not currently considered in the "Cascade Crest Wilderness Volunteer Pass", provide a benefit to volunteers that do work in these wilderness areas - to include volunteers for the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA), Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) and other agencies/organizations. For years I have been volunteering to help ODFW backpack fish into the Jefferson and Mt. Washington Wildernesses. To me, more fish in the lakes contributes/adds to the Wilderness experience. It would be great to see recognition of this ODFW volunteer program as it relates to obtaining subsequent backpacking permits.
- 3) Give a permit cost break to the Military - Active, Retired and, perhaps other veterans.
- 4) Provide a reduced permit fee for Senior Pass holders.
- 5) The proposed permit fees seem a bit high.

Thank you for your consideration of these ideas.

**COMMENT 3:**

See attached article: "New permit system will limit hiking in Mount Jefferson, Three Sisters wilderness in 2020". Zach Urness, Salem Statesman Journal Published 7:38 a.m. PT Nov. 15, 2018 | Updated 11:35 a.m. PT May 29, 2019

**COMMENT 4:**

See attached article: "Forest Service wilderness fee plan gets negative comments". Posted Dec 30, 2019. <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2019/12/forest-service-wilderness-fee-plan-gets-negativecomments.Html>

**COMMENT 5:**

See attached article: "Wilderness fee plan gets 13,000 comments, mostly opposing". Zach Urness, (Salem) Statesman Journal Published Dec 31, 2019 at 12:01 AM Dec 31, 2019 at 7:41 AM

**COMMENT 6:**

See attached article: "Bend Bulletin Editorial: Forest Service should listen to concerns about wilderness plan". Bulletin Editorial Board Jan 1, 2020,

[https://www.bendbulletin.com/opinion/editorial-forest-service-should-listen-to-concerns-aboutwilderness-plan/article\\_c39d5648-2bf7-11ea-a513-b7cbfaff0d36.html](https://www.bendbulletin.com/opinion/editorial-forest-service-should-listen-to-concerns-aboutwilderness-plan/article_c39d5648-2bf7-11ea-a513-b7cbfaff0d36.html)

# New permit system will limit hiking in Mount Jefferson, Three Sisters wilderness in 2020

Zach Urness, Salem Statesman Journal Published 7:38 a.m. PT Nov. 15, 2018 | Updated 11:35 a.m. PT May 29, 2019

The Forest Service is planning to expand Obsidian Trial's limited access system to many other trailheads in Oregon's wilderness areas. Zach Urness, Statesman Journal

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## ORIGINAL STORY

Hiking and camping in three of Oregon's most popular wilderness areas will be restricted starting in 2020, an attempt by outdoor officials to limit damage from growing crowds of visitors.

...

"The goal is to maintain the quality of our wilderness areas and the experience they offer," said John Allen, supervisor of Deschutes National Forest.

...

"We've tried just about everything," said Matt Peterson, one of the project leaders. "Limited entry is the best tool we have left for protecting places that are getting way too much use."

...

But both Allen and Peterson said having limited entry on such a large scale — across three wilderness areas and 450,000 acres — is an **idea without much precedent**.

A limited entry system will be in effect at 79 different trailheads for overnight use and 30 for day use. That's going to require hiring new wilderness rangers and having a streamlined distribution system.

"There's a level of uncertainty because **it hasn't been done before on this scale**," Peterson said. "We know we're not going to get it perfect, which is why we'll be able to make adjustments as we go. If something's not working, we can change it."

...

*Zach Urness has been an outdoors writer, photographer and videographer in Oregon for 11 years. He is the author of the book "Best Hikes with Kids: Oregon" and "Hiking Southern Oregon." He can be reached at [zurness@StatesmanJournal.com](mailto:zurness@StatesmanJournal.com) or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at [@ZachsORoutdoors](https://twitter.com/ZachsORoutdoors).*

<https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2019/12/forest-service-wilderness-fee-plan-gets-negative-comments.html>

# Forest Service wilderness fee plan gets negative comments

Posted Dec 30, 2019

By [The Associated Press](#)

SALEM — A plan that [would require purchasing a permit](#) before entering three of Oregon’s most popular wilderness areas has received a largely negative response.

The Statesman-Journal [reports](#) that more than 13,700 comments were submitted on a proposal to charge \$4 to \$11 per day to enter the Three Sisters, Mount Jefferson and Mount Washington wilderness areas beginning in 2020.

The comments, which came from across the country, echo the idea that while action is needed to combat overcrowding and garbage on wilderness trails, the proposal is too costly and restrictive.

“There is something amiss when an American citizen has to pay a fee to hike on their lands, which are really our birthright, not a commodity to be ‘sold,’” said George Nickus, executive director of Wilderness Watch.

The Montana-based advocacy group marshaled more than 10,000 comments opposing the proposal by having people submit a pre-written form letter.

Forest Service officials said they'll use all the comments to shape a final decision. They pointed out that public comments already played a role in limiting the scope of the plan.

“I wouldn’t say the response was surprising — fees are rarely popular,” said Matt Peterson, who led the project for the U.S. Forest Service. “We appreciate everyone that sent in suggestions. Public comments have been important to this entire process.”

The Forest Service has been working for three years on a plan to limit crowds in the three wilderness areas, which includes 450,000 acres of Oregon’s most scenic backcountry.

Population growth in Central Oregon and the Willamette Valley has led to a spike in visitors, bringing increased garbage, human poop and damage to sensitive alpine regions.

<https://www.registerguard.com/news/20191231/wilderness-fee-plan-gets-13000-comments-mostly-opposing>

# Wilderness fee plan gets 13,000 comments, mostly opposing

By Zach Urness (Salem) Statesman Journal  
Dec 31, 2019 at 12:01 AM Dec 31, 2019 at 7:41 AM

The comments, which came from across the country, echo the idea that while action is needed to combat overcrowding and garbage on wilderness trails, the proposal is too costly, restrictive and possibly illegal.

A plan that would require purchasing a permit before entering three of Oregon's most popular wilderness areas has received a largely negative response.

More than 13,700 comments were submitted on a proposal to charge \$4 to \$11 per day to enter the Three Sisters, Mount Jefferson and Mount Washington wilderness areas beginning in 2020.

The comments, which came from across the country, echo the idea that while action is needed to combat overcrowding and garbage on wilderness trails, the proposal is too costly, restrictive and possibly illegal.

"There is something amiss when an American citizen has to pay a fee to hike on their lands, which are really our birthright, not a commodity to be 'sold,'" said George Nickus, executive director of Wilderness Watch.

The Montana-based advocacy group marshaled more than 10,000 comments opposing the proposal by having people submit a pre-written form letter.

"If they get away with charging a fee to go for a hike in these three wilderness areas, it will result in similar proposals elsewhere," Nickus said.

Forest Service officials said they'll use all the comments to shape a final decision. They pointed out that public comments already played a role in limiting the scope of the plan since its original proposal.

"I wouldn't say the response was surprising — fees are rarely popular," said Matt Peterson, who led the project for the U.S. Forest Service. "We appreciate everyone that sent in suggestions. Public comments have been important to this entire process."

The deadline to submit comments is Jan. 10. Comments can be emailed to [WillametteRecFeeComments@usda.gov](mailto:WillametteRecFeeComments@usda.gov).

What's the plan, and where is it coming from?

The Forest Service has been working for three years on a plan to limit crowds in the three wilderness areas, which includes 450,000 acres of Oregon's most scenic backcountry.

Population growth in Central Oregon and the Willamette Valley has led to a spike in visitors, bringing increased garbage, human poop and damage to sensitive alpine regions.

In May, the Forest Service finalized a "limited entry permit system" that will begin in 2020. Under the

system, each wilderness trailhead will have a quota of overnight and day-use permits people will need to enter.

For example, at popular Marion Lake Trailhead in the Mount Jefferson Wilderness, there will be 10 overnight group permits and 40 day-use permits available.

Nineteen of the most popular trailheads will require a permit for day-hiking while all 79 trailheads will require one for overnight use.

That quota system was the first part of the plan, and it will be implemented either way starting in 2020.

What are people commenting on now?

The second phase of the plan — currently being debated — is deciding how much the permits will cost and how people will get them.

The Forest Service wants to use the permit fees for education, trail maintenance and hiring additional rangers to enforce the new limits.

They say the benefits include more solitude, better trails and a better experience in the wild. They cited other limited entry systems — Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Washington's Enchantment Basin — as evidence it will work in the long run.

A similar system is also in place at Oregon's Pamela Lake and Obsidian Trail.

But the proposed prices can get high.

The proposed fees break down this way:

- \$5 per person, per night for an overnight group permit, plus a \$6 processing fee.
- \$3 per person, plus a \$1 processing fee, for day-use at 19 of the most popular trailheads.
- No fee is required for those 12 and younger, but they would still need a permit.

Many commenters noted that while it sounds cheap, the cost adds up in a hurry.

For a family of four, with two kids older than 13, a three-night backpacking trip would cost \$66.

“Let's say it's really hot out and I wanted to take my family of five — all kids over 12 years old — for a short afternoon hike and swim to Doris Lake,” wrote Chris Jensen of Bend. For this short hike, located just outside Bend, the cost would reach \$16.

“These additional fees and regulations could lessen the public's support for wilderness areas,” Jensen said.

A number of people — including the Pacific Crest Trail Association — suggested a price cap that would limit the cost from rising so high.

“A price cap that occurs after the third night would be helpful, and a price cap for day-use when a family exceeds six people would be helpful,” wrote Dan Shuholm.

Perhaps the most frequent critique was that tax dollars already pay for public lands and that the new system constituted a new tax.

“Please consider not double-billing the public and stop pissing off those who have voted to support you in the past,” wrote Derrick Smithwood.

Tepid support and novel ideas

The comments did include plenty of support for a program that limits crowds and even support for the permit system itself.

But many thought the permits should be free or much cheaper.

“The Forest Service has used its ever-growing budget for logging, livestock grazing, fire-fighting and other programs, while spending a pittance on wilderness stewardship,” Nickus said. “That’s what needs to change.”

On a smaller scale, many users suggested simply limiting parking space at trailheads or charging more for parking. That would limit crowds without the bother of a complex permit system, they said.

Many others suggested a senior discount or “locals only” permit system so nearby residents could go hiking on less crowded midweek days.

“I totally support the permit system because so many of these trails are overrun,” wrote Maureen Sweeney. “Would it be possible to have a special permit (for locals and senior citizens) that costs \$20, for use Monday through Thursday? Otherwise it will be burdensome to do this every week.”

Finally, many comments mentioned free passes for those who do volunteer work for a certain number of hours on trails.

Get permits through a vendor?

Another bone of contention in the comments was over how the permits will be distributed.

Much discussion centered around how many permits people can reserve in advance and how many should be kept for spontaneous hikes.

The Forest Service hasn’t made a proposal on that, but another area of disagreement was whether long-distance hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail should get an exemption to pass through without a permit.

Some thought they should, while others said it would be unfair to locals.

Damage to local economy?

Many others worried about impact on the local economy.

Central Oregon has a booming tourism economy, and some worried the new fees would discourage people from visiting.

“I am a 67-year-old hiker and I hope to enjoy some hiking and backpacking in Oregon, but I will not bring my economic activity if you implement such regressive fees,” wrote Ken Wall of Missoula, Montana.

A number of people decried the “vendor fee” added to the permit cost by Recreation.gov, which is owned and operated by Booz Allen Hamilton.

To run the large public lands website, the private corporation adds \$1 to \$6 to all transactions. That inflates the permit price with money that won’t go toward the wilderness objectives.

Could the fees actually be illegal?

Many groups, including Wilderness Watch, said the fees could be illegal under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which prohibits fees under a number of circumstances.

“This fee proposal cites authority to implement fees under FLREA’s definition of ‘special recreational use,’” wrote comments from the Oregon-based Mazamas and the Access Fund. “However, the average users are hikers, climbers and trail runners and are not considered a ‘special recreational use.’”

“We request the Forest Service clarify how the proposed Fee Plan adheres to FLREA regulations.”

The argument could provide grounds for a lawsuit blocking the plan.

Peterson, with the Forest Service, said he was confident of the plan's legal grounds.

"We followed the same model of other fee systems, in wilderness areas, currently in place," Peterson said, listing a number of places where recreation fees are imposed as part of a limited entry permit system. "We're following systems that use the same provision and haven't had legal problems."

Read the comments

The Statesman Journal requested the public comments under the Freedom of Information Act. The Forest Service responded by making all the comments public, and anyone can read 12,000 of the 13,700 comments submitted at this website: [bit.ly/2F02xVZ](http://bit.ly/2F02xVZ).

For this story, the Statesman Journal reviewed more than 100 non-form-letter comments and looked at common themes, but there are an almost endless number of concepts.

Zach Urness has been an outdoors reporter, photographer and videographer in Oregon for 11 years. To support his work, subscribe to the Statesman Journal. Urness can be reached at [zurness@StatesmanJournal.com](mailto:zurness@StatesmanJournal.com) or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at [@ZachsORoutdoors](https://twitter.com/ZachsORoutdoors).

[https://www.bendbulletin.com/opinion/editorial-forest-service-should-listen-to-concerns-about-wilderness-plan/article\\_c39d5648-2bf7-11ea-a513-b7cbfaff0d36.html](https://www.bendbulletin.com/opinion/editorial-forest-service-should-listen-to-concerns-about-wilderness-plan/article_c39d5648-2bf7-11ea-a513-b7cbfaff0d36.html)

## Bend Bulletin

# Editorial: Forest Service should listen to concerns about wilderness plan

- Bulletin Editorial Board
- Jan 1, 2020

It's a rare day when a new tax or fee is welcomed with open arms. For the Forest Service's proposed fees to access wilderness in Central Oregon, today is not that day.

Many of the [comments submitted](#) about the plan are not happy. We confess we did not read them all. One group opposed to the fees helped motivate people to submit 10,000 form letters.

But regardless if it's a form letter or something somebody put more effort into, the Forest Service should ensure it is sensitive to the concerns. If you have something to say about the plan, there is still time to comment.

The beautiful wilderness trails near Central Oregon can get swamped by hikers on a clear summer day. Get up there early or there may well not be any legal place to park. The Forest Service says it needs to limit the number of people using the trails and charge a fee to control use. Trash, erosion, and the sheer numbers of people are contributing to a decline in the wilderness experience.

There is a problem. It's the Forest Service's solution that people are not happy with. Basically, the Forest Service has been planning a permit system to limit daily use on 19 wilderness trailheads in the Central Cascades and overnight fees on 79 trailheads. It is now developing the associated fees.

The initial plan is that fee will be \$4 total per person for the day-use fee, which includes \$1 for processing. The overnight fee will be \$5 per person per day and another \$6 per group for processing. No fees are going to be required for children 12 and under, though everyone needs a permit. The new system would likely start this year.

Don't like the idea of paying to access federal land? Neither do the commenters.

Don't like how it will make it harder for low-income people to enjoy federal land? Neither do commenters.

Don't like that people who live near the wilderness area don't get any special access? Neither do commenters.

Don't like that the new system will limit people's flexibility to just get up in the morning and decide to head out to the wilderness? Neither do commenters.

And we should acknowledge that some commenters did appreciate Forest Service plan to preserve the wilderness.

One comment from an individual who works in search and rescue made an interesting point. He wrote that it's important that search and rescue teams are able to have basic familiarity with the wilderness. It could help save lives. He asked if search and rescue workers could get some sort of special dispensation to have regular access.

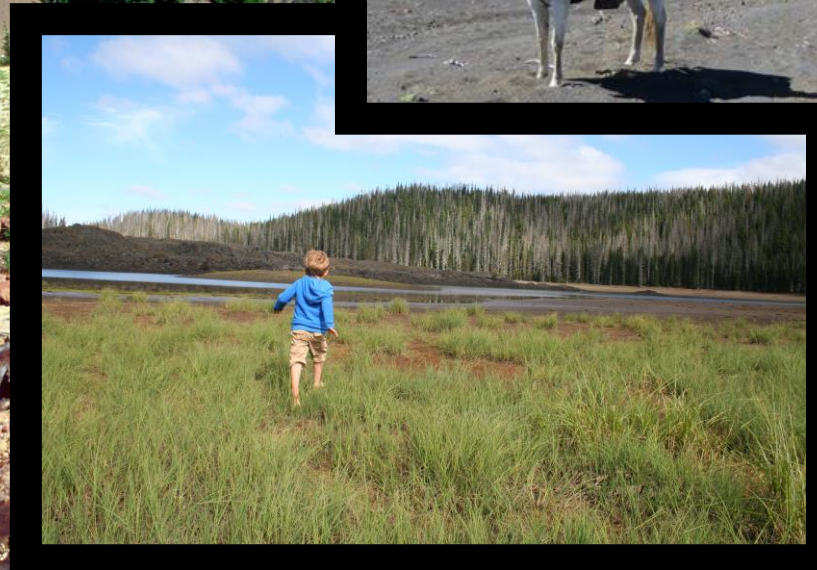
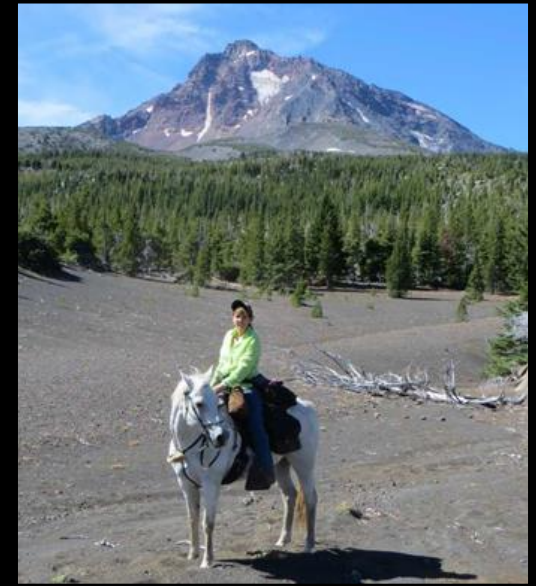
Salem's Statesman-Journal wrote [a story](#) that tried to capture many of the comments.

Comments on the fee can be mailed to the Willamette National Forest, ATTN: Recreation Fees, 3106 Pierce Parkway, Suite D, Springfield, OR, 97477. Comments can also be submitted by email to [WillametteRecFeeComments@usda.gov](mailto:WillametteRecFeeComments@usda.gov) or dropped off at any Willamette or Deschutes National Forest office during business hours. You have until Jan. 10.



United States Department of Agriculture

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



Forest Service

January 2019

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



- Presentation Outline
  - What is Wilderness?
  - The Central Cascades Wilderness Areas
  - Current Challenges
  - Planning for the Future
  - Fee Proposal
  - Fee comments – initial review

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## What is Wilderness?

*"Wilderness is a dark and dismal place where all manner of wild beasts dash about uncooked."* (settler, 1600s)

## The Wilderness Act

- Signed in September 1964
- A Congressional designation
- Does not apply to private lands or most National Forest Lands



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



"...lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition..." Section 2(a)

Three Sisters Wilderness  
Photo from America's Wilderness Areas Flickr group

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



"...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man..." Section 2(c)

Mt. Jefferson Wilderness

Photo from America's Wilderness Areas Flickr group

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



"...an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvement or human habitation..." Section 2(c)

Mt. Jefferson Wilderness

Photo from America's Wilderness Areas Flickr group



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



"...has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation..." Section 2(c)

Mt. Washington Wilderness  
Photo from America's Wilderness Areas Flickr group

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## The Stewardship Mandate

“Except as otherwise provided in this Act, each agency ... shall be responsible for preserving the Wilderness character of the area...”

- Qualities of Wilderness Character:
  - Natural
  - Undeveloped
  - Untrammeled
  - Opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation
  - Some wildernesses:
    - Other features of value: ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



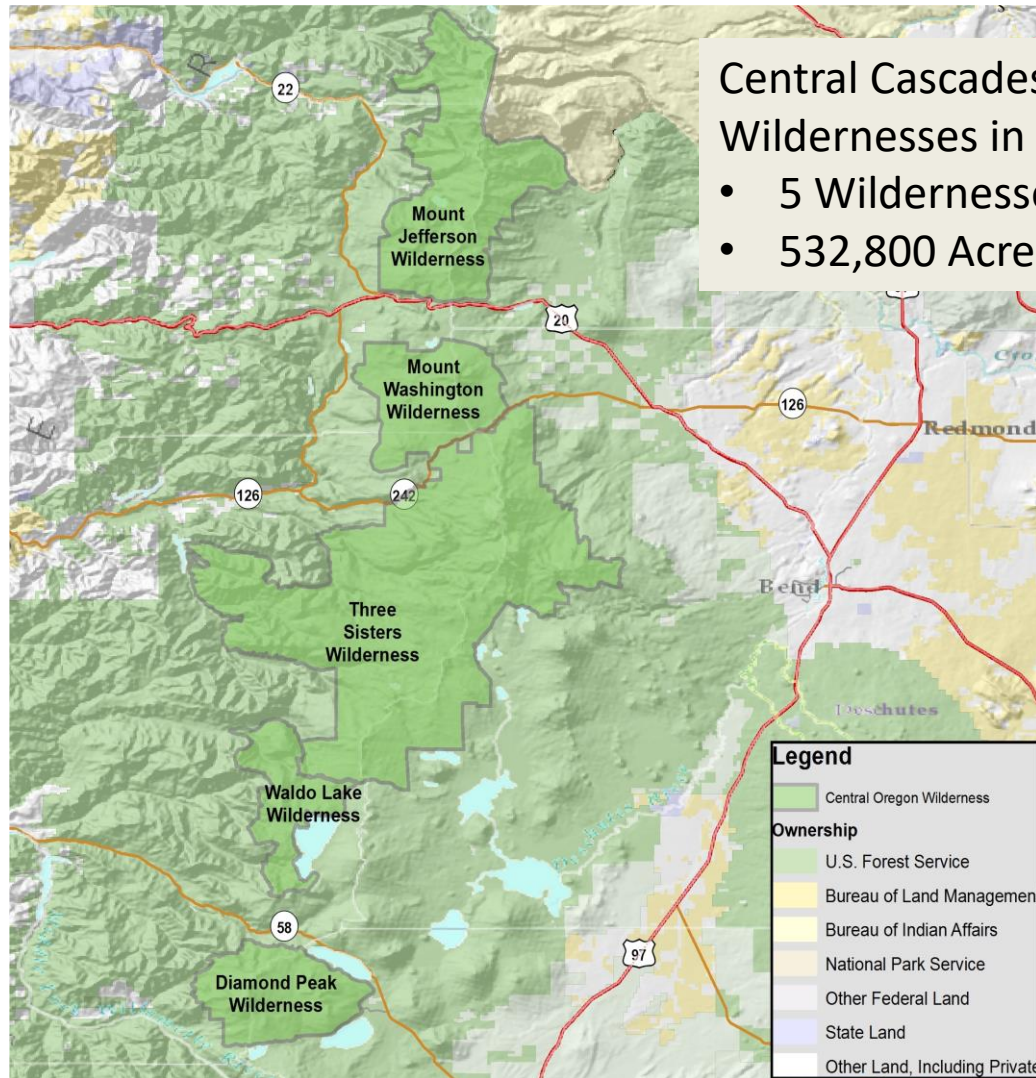
## Wilderness in Oregon



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Wilderness in Oregon

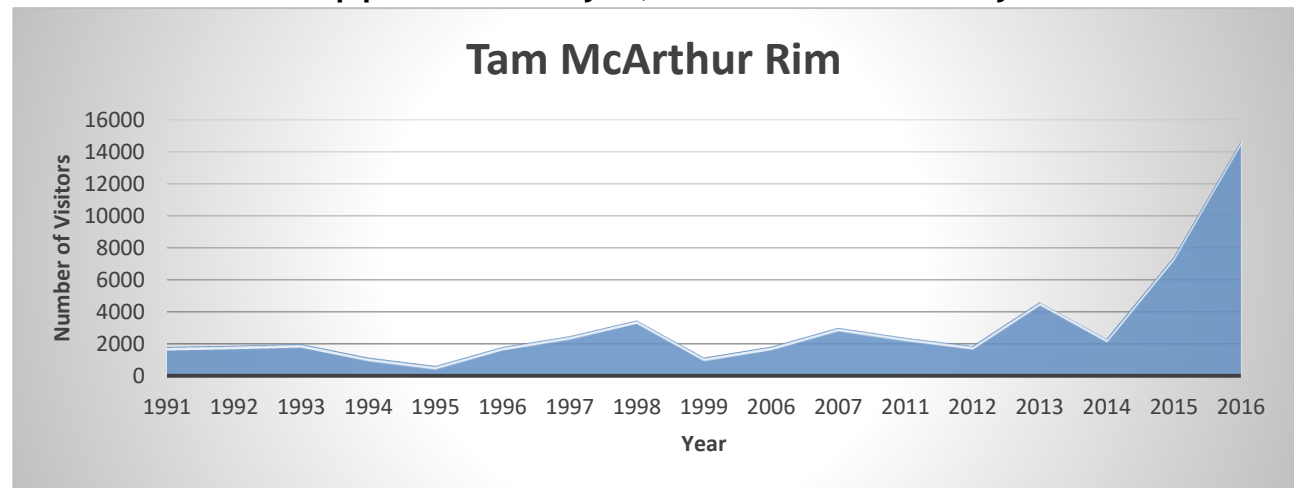


# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project

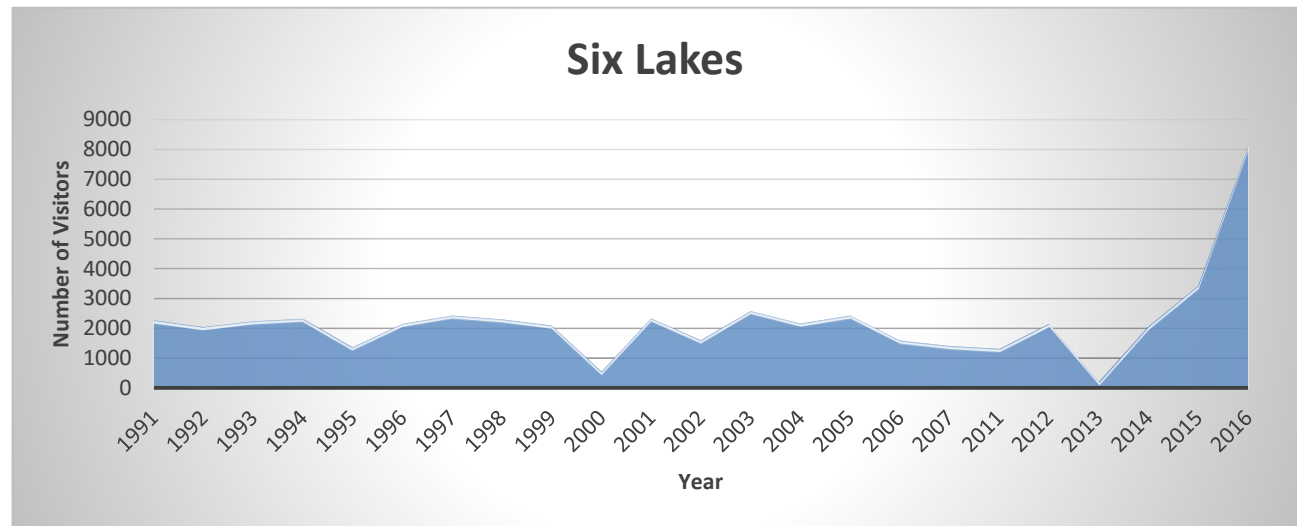
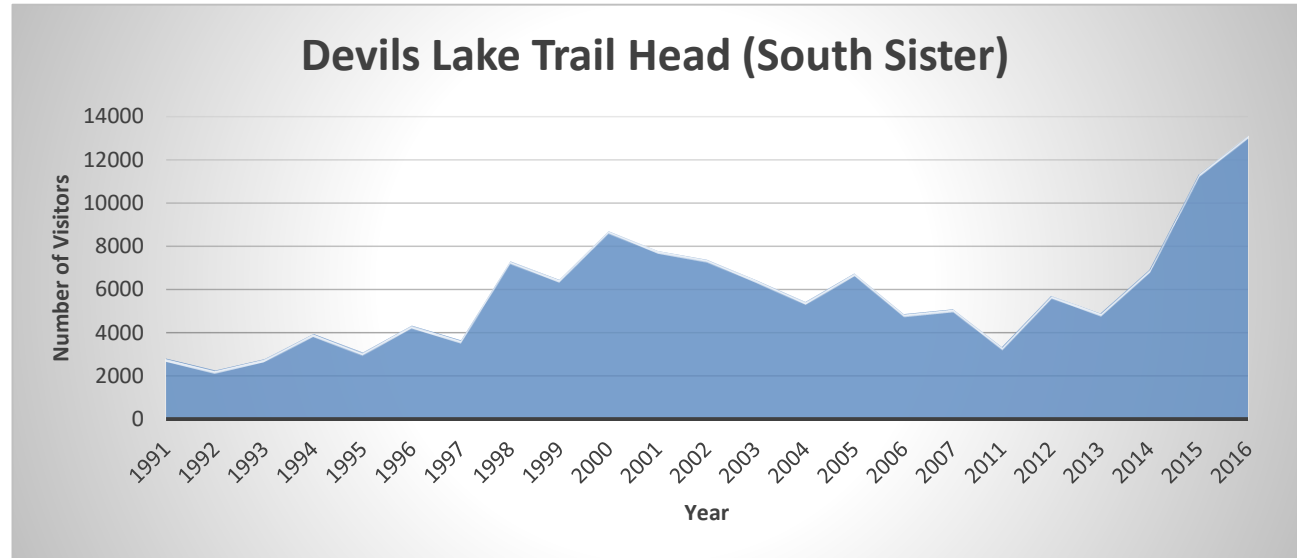


## Current Challenges

- Almost 500% increase in some areas
- Three Sisters – east side access
  - 2011: approximately 35,000 visitor use days
  - 2016: approximately 116,000 visitor use days
- Jefferson Park – Whitewater TH
  - 2012: approximately 4,241 visitor use days
  - 2014: approximately 6,218 visitor use days



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project

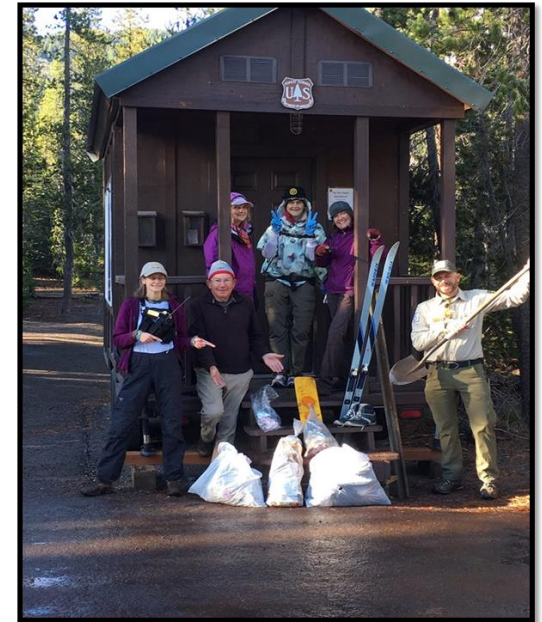


# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Current Challenges

- Increasing staffing, where possible
- Increasing partnerships and volunteers
- Existing regulations
  - Designated campsites (in some areas)
  - Campfire bans (in some areas)
  - Camping and campfire setbacks
  - Two limited entry areas
    - Obsidian and Pamela
- But we're still not keeping up



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project

## Current Challenges

- Garbage: 1,219 lbs packed out



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Current Challenges

- Human waste: 1,033 piles buried



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project

## Current Challenges

- Trailhead parking



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project

## Current Challenges

- User created trails



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project

## Current Challenges

- Graffiti



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Planning for the Future

### Wilderness Act, Section 2(a)

“...to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.”

“... these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use as wilderness.”

Agency mandate:

Protecting, preserving, enhancing wilderness character



# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Planning for the Future

- Willamette and Deschutes National Forests are working together
- Visitor use management strategy
  - Includes all five Cascade Crest Wilderness areas
  - Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, Three Sisters, Waldo Lake, Diamond Peak
- Planning started spring 2017
- Lots of public meetings and 2 comment periods
- Final NEPA decision for a limited entry system signed May 2019.

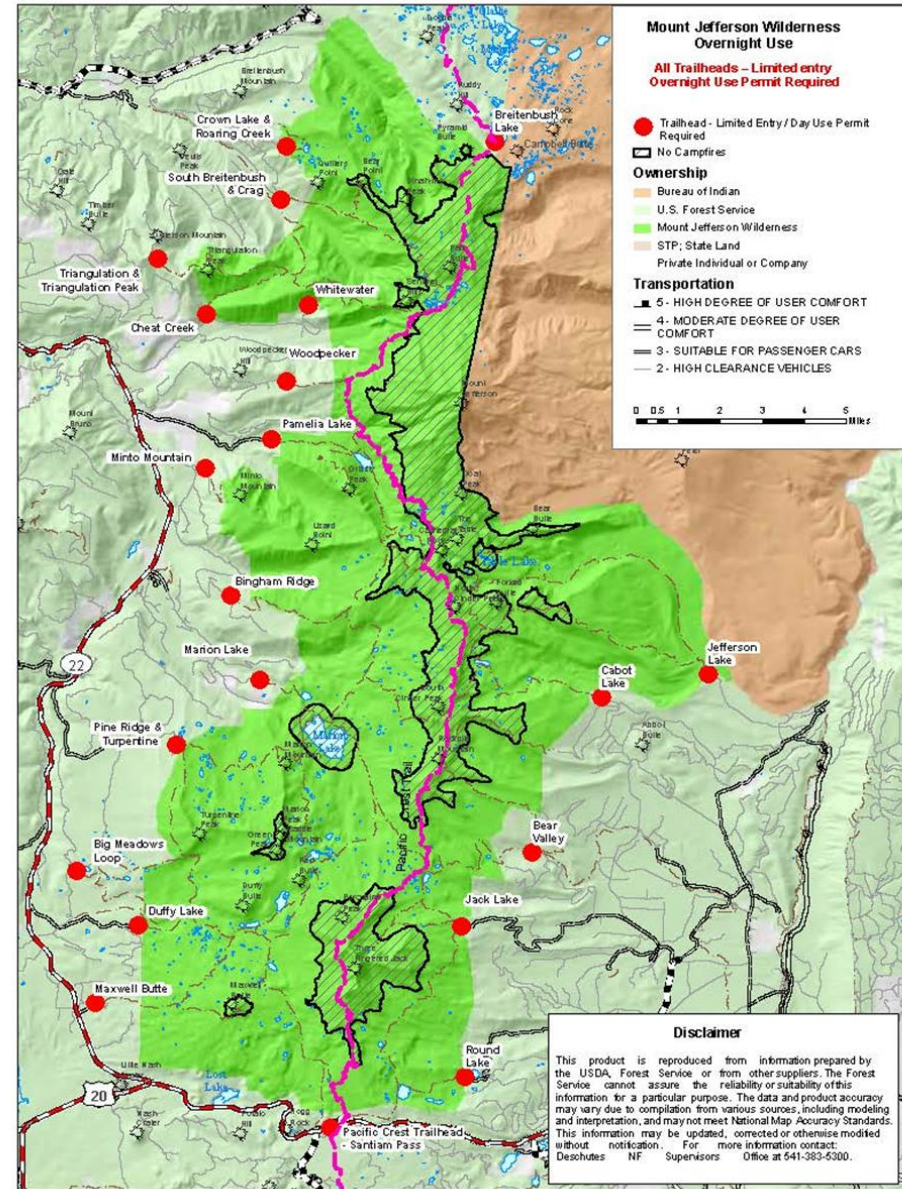
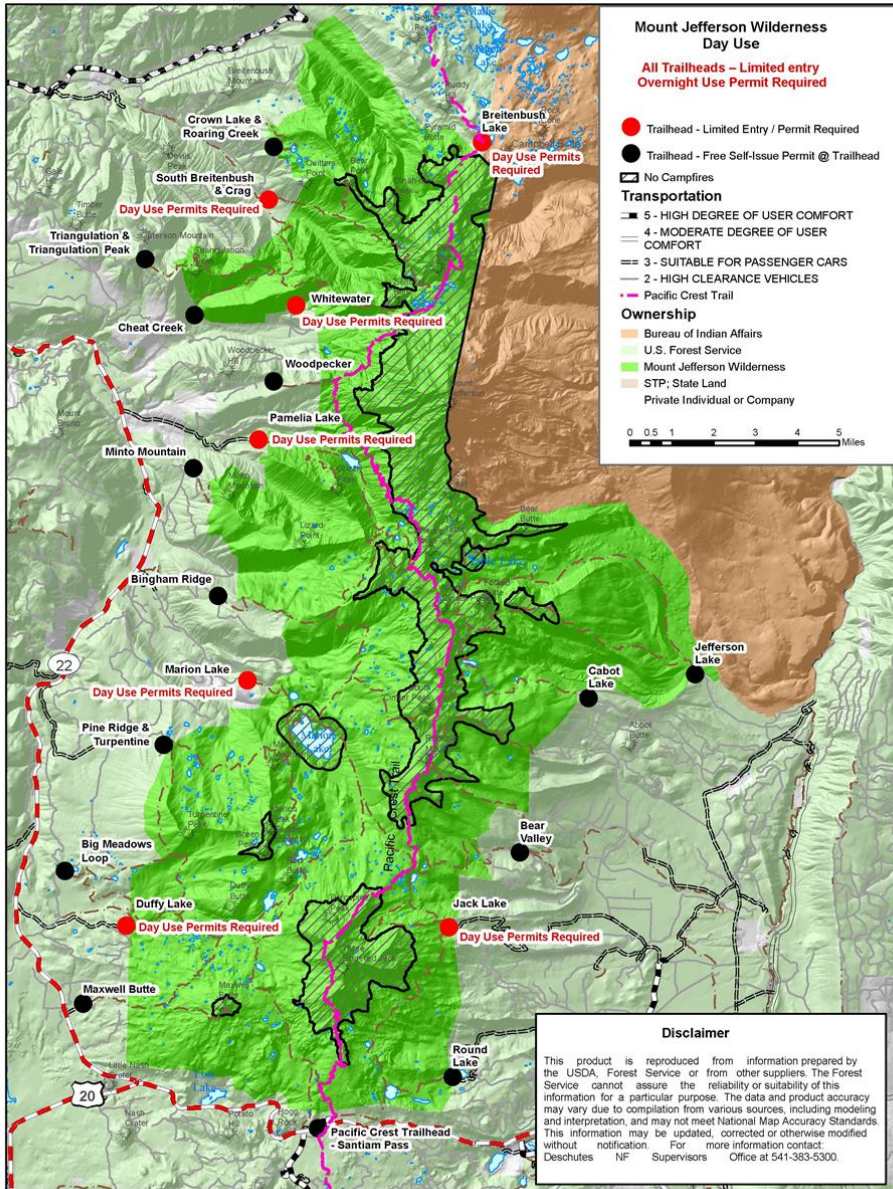
# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Planning for the Future

- Limited Entry system
  - 3 of 5 wilderness areas currently in this system
    - Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, Three Sisters
  - 19 of 79 trailheads with day use limits
  - 79 of 79 trailheads with overnight use limits
  - Managing a mix of ‘other uses’ – PCT long-distance hikers, hunters, etc.
  - Season:
    - Friday of Memorial Day weekend to last Friday of September
- Elevational Campfire Ban
- An adaptive management approach
- Planning to implement the limited entry system in May 2020.

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project





## Fee Proposal

Central Oregon

### Fees for trail permit system to get public comment period

Wilderness access at 19 trails likely to cost more than \$10

#### Meeting on wilderness permits for Three Sisters, Jefferson coming to Salem and Eugene

[Zach Urness](#), Salem Statesman Journal Published 11:00 a.m. PT Nov. 8, 2019

Opinion

#### Our View: Forest trail permits need your 'fee'dback

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Fee Proposal

- Proposed a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) fee
- \$3 per person for day use
  - Recreation.gov reservation fee of \$1 per person.
- \$5 per person per night
  - Recreation.gov reservation fee of \$6 per overnight group
- Youth 12 years old and younger – no SRP fee
  - Permit still required
- Fees (if approved) will be used for:
  - Wilderness rangers,
  - Trail maintenance,
  - Volunteer and intern opportunities,
  - Education and enforcement, etc. and
  - To run the limited entry system.
- Estimated Revenue: \$325,000

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## Fee proposal details: some Q & As

- Do I also need to pay a day use fee/have a Northwest Forest Pass displayed?
  - No, the SRP replaces this at the limited entry trailheads.
- Do volunteers have to pay a fee?
  - No, when working under an approved volunteer agreement in coordination with the FS, you are not subject to limited entry or required to pay a fee.
- Will there be a volunteer pass?
  - Yes, we plan to offer a pass for volunteers who have contributed a certain number of hours. The number of hours required has not been determined – we'd like your input.
- Is there an annual pass?
  - No. We are not currently able to offer an annual pass. We would like to know what benefits/elements of an annual pass people are interested in to see if there are other ways to meet these interests.

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## Fee proposal details: some Q & As

- How will I get a permit/how do I pay the fee?
  - Recreation.gov is the mandatory system for permits on federal lands.
- How will underserved/low-income communities have access?
  - Library pass
  - Community and non-profit groups
- How will fees be spent?
  - Wilderness rangers (seasonal staff and volunteers); supporting education, enforcement, clean-up, site restoration, etc.
  - Trail maintenance, trailhead services (toilets, maps, youth crews)
  - Customer/visitor services (permit manager, front desks, phone)

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## Fee proposal details: RAC Request

- “Recommendation for Wilderness permit planning team (via Matt Peterson) to consider implication of fee proposals at sites that would also be impacted by proposed permit system”
- 7 campgrounds with adjacent day use limited trailheads:
  - Breitenbush Lake CG
  - Scott Lake CG
  - Devils Lake CG
  - Todd Lake CG
  - Three Creeks Lake/Driftwood CG
  - Lava Camp Lake CG
- All have other recreation opportunities (e.g. lake/water based recreation, non-wilderness trails)
- We will monitor impacts to campers and use of nearby trailheads

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## Fee Proposal Public Involvement

- Comment period closed January 10
  - Review, adapt, respond
- Four public meetings
  - Bend, Sisters, Eugene, Salem
- Federal Register Notice
  - Required 6 months prior to implementation
  - Not yet published
- Presentation to Resource Advisory Councils
  - Jan & Feb 2020
- RAC Recommendation to Regional Forester
- Decision by Regional Forester

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Results of Comment Period

- 12,000+ comments
  - Over 11,000 form letters
- Review of 728 unique letters (through 12/11/19)

Support (or support with caveats or suggestions)	140
Oppose	265

Concern about impact to low-income users	91
No fees or reduced fees for seniors/veterans /youth/locals; 'unfair to locals'	56
Fees are too high	50
Don't like the Rec.gov fee	45
Need for some sort of group day hiking permit fee	40
Cost of overnight trips too high	17

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## Public Comment Themes

- Opposition to the proposed permitting system:
  - Limit parking instead
  - Enforce existing rules and regulations
  - Focus on education
  - Quota numbers are too low
  - Limited entry should just be on the weekends and holidays
  - Limited entry should just be at the busiest trailheads
  - “\_\_\_\_\_” user group should be exempted from permit requirements

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Public Comment Themes

- The fee will be too expensive for longer, overnight trips
  - PCT section hikers, especially
- We already pay taxes; we shouldn't have to pay to visit public lands
- We already pay for recreation passes (Northwest Forest Pass, Senior Pass, Interagency Annual Pass)
- The fee will set a precedent for other wilderness areas
- Contrary to the Wilderness Act; commercializes/commodifies public lands

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Public Comment Themes

- The fee should not apply to/be reduced for:
  - Locals
  - Veterans
  - Seniors
  - Individuals with disabilities
  - Youth
- The proposed fee will be too expensive for families
- The proposed fee will negatively impact low income visitors
- Do not charge a reservation fee

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## Public Comment Themes

- The fees will make it hard for hiking groups to plan trips
- The proposed fee is illegal because it is not the intended use of the Special Recreation Permit authority in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA)
  - Use of wilderness (e.g. hiking/backpacking) is not a “specialized recreation” activity

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Public Comment Themes

- We are concerned that:
  - Commercial groups will purchase all of the permits
  - Permits will be reserved but then go unused
  - The permit system cannot be enforced
- Proposed changes:
  - Annual pass
  - Maximum fee
  - Organized group fee
  - Raise the age for children
  - Locals fee
  - Charge for dogs
  - Charge for horses
  - Sliding scale, based on income
  - Free/reduced fee for visitors completing Leave No Trace training

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Next Steps

- Complete review of public comments
- Feedback from RACs
- Consider modifications to proposal based on public and RAC comments
- RACs vote to recommend (or not) the fee proposal
  - February 11 – Hood-Willamette RAC
  - February 20/21 – John Day-Snake RAC
- Regional Forester makes final decision

# Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies Project



## Questions and Discussion