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News Release



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Forests Seek Input on a Special Recreation Permit Fee Next step in changes coming to Central Cascades wilderness areas to begin

Springfield and Bend, Ore – The Deschutes and Willamette National Forests are asking for input on a proposed special recreation permit fee as a part of the new limited entry system for day and overnight use in three Central Cascades wildernesses. The limited entry system will go into effect beginning the summer of 2020. The special recreation permit fee, if approved, also would go into effect in the summer of 2020.

“We are looking for the public’s input on the next steps for managing visitor use in these popular wilderness areas so we can reduce resource damage and maintain access to these areas for current and future generations,” said Deschutes Forest Supervisor, Holly Jewkes.

The Central Cascades Wildernesses include the Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, Three Sisters, Waldo Lake and Diamond Peak wildernesses. Increased recreational use is degrading the resources, wilderness character and recreation experience in these areas. The Willamette and Deschutes National Forests began an environmental analysis in January 2017 to address these impacts. Following this analysis and public input, the forests decided this past spring to apply a limited entry system, with the final decision signed on May 10, 2019. The Willamette and Deschutes National Forests are now seeking authorization through the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to charge a special recreation permit fee as a part of the limited entry system within the three wildernesses.

The Forest Service has proposed the following structure for the special use permit fee:

- No special use permit fees for youth 12 and under, though each person requires a limited entry reservation regardless of age.
- Day-use permit fee \$3.00 per person (needed at 19 trailheads, no fee 60 trailheads)
- Overnight permit fee \$5.00 per person, per night (needed at 79 trailheads)

The special recreation permit fee will be required from the Friday before Memorial Day to the last Friday in September in the Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, and Three Sisters wilderness areas. The special recreation permits would be available through the Recreation.gov website.

Limited entry reservations would include the special recreation permit fee, plus the processing fees charged by Recreation.gov. The processing fees are currently \$1 per person for day use and \$6 per overnight group.

Public input will inform the Forest Service's final proposal for the special recreation permit fee structure, how the fees should be invested, and any concerns or suggestions related to the special recreation permit fee. The public comment period on the proposal begins on October 9, 2019 and end on November 25, 2019.

"During the past two years, as we analyzed the management strategies needed to maintain these wilderness areas, the public shared many concerns and ideas about the fees associated with a limited entry system," said Tracy Beck, Forest Supervisor on the Willamette National Forest. "Now we seek the public's engagement on the specifics of the fee structure."

The Forests will review and consider all comments and use them to inform how the proposal may be adjusted.

The final proposal will be presented to two Resource Advisory Committees, one on the east side of the Cascades and one on the west side of the Cascades. The Resource Advisory Committees will give the Forest Service recommendations on the fee structure. The Regional Forester for the Pacific Northwest, Region 6, will make the final decision.

Under Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, 80 to 95 percent of the proposed special recreation permit fees would be invested in wilderness management activities, trail maintenance, visitor education and expanding work with volunteers and partners within the three wildernesses.

Comments on the special recreation permit fee 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 or dropped off at any Willamette or Deschutes National Forest office during business hours.

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