



**File Code:** 1500  
**Date:** April 3, 2017

Arthur Pope  
Executive Director  
Wilderness Report  
33190 Bloomberg Road  
Eugene, OR 97405

[art@wildernessreport.com](mailto:art@wildernessreport.com)

To: Arthur Pope

We received your organization's recent request for information about the self-issue wilderness permits on the Willamette National Forest. I've provided answers to your questions below.

**How is wilderness permit information compiled and analyzed?**

The information from wilderness permits is compiled annually, generally during the winter after the busy use season is done. Initial analysis includes tallying and summarizing visitor user days and average group size, but may also include looking at other data, such as overnight/day use, stock use, etc.

**How is wilderness permit data used by resource managers?**

The compiled data is primarily used to track changes in use trends. At other times, as needed for specific projects, we may complete a more in-depth analysis of the information, in order to help inform the existing condition and potential management challenges in a particular area.

**What long-term trends are revealed by this data?**

In short, long term trends are showing significant increases in use at some trailheads and stable use at others (that said, there are always year-to-year variations due to snowpack, fires, etc.). We will soon have a comprehensive summary of the existing condition of the five Cascade Crest wildernesses managed by the Willamette National Forest (Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, Three Sisters, Waldo Lake, and Diamond Peak), as part of our larger Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies planning project. This project is developing a new strategy for managing visitor use in these wildernesses, in order to protect wilderness character. We are happy to share this comprehensive summary with you once it is complete.

**Why is it necessary to collect this data at remote and little used trailheads?**

We have management responsibilities in all areas of our designated wilderness, whether they are highly visited or not. Even at low use trailheads, it is still important for us to track use trends over time. For example, there are some recent examples on the east side of the Three Sisters, where average visitor use increased from an average of about 2000 user days/year to over 14,000 user days last year. Without the data for the "low use" years, it



would be much more difficult for us to recognize the substantial change in use patterns, and just as importantly, communicate those changes with the public.

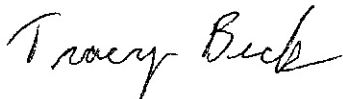
Another reason we require permits at low use trailheads is that all visitors are required to have them when traveling in the wilderness; I've included the Forest Order for the Three Sisters Wilderness, which includes this requirement. Visitors without permits could receive a citation (although we tend to prioritize education over issuing tickets), so we do our best to ensure visitors are able to obtain a permit as they begin their trip, regardless of where the trip originates. The permit is also an educational tool, since it includes the primary rules and regulations that visitors must follow while in wilderness.

As mentioned above, we've just started engaging the public about our joint Central Cascades Wilderness Strategies project with the Deschutes National Forest. I will add your name to our contact list for this effort to ensure you receive future communications about the project, including opportunities for community engagement.

If you have any additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact Matt Peterson, Recreation Program Manager at [mbpeterson@fs.fed.us](mailto:mbpeterson@fs.fed.us) or 541-225-6421.

Thank you for your interest in wilderness management on the Willamette National Forest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tracy Beck".

TRACY BECK  
Forest Supervisor