

Wilderness Management Review Mount Jefferson Wilderness

Submitted by: Arthur Pope

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Report Title: Cabot Lake Loop

Route: Where did you go? How many days were you camping?

Three days from the Cabot Lake Trailhead, to Table Lake, over to the PCT near Shale Lake and back to Carl Lake and the Cabot Lake trailhead.

Summary: 250 word max

A three-day hike in the Mount Jefferson Wilderness. Seven cars were in the parking lot when we started; we met four parties coming out as we were hiking in and noted two groups come in later in the evening. Despite it being a Sunday evening we observed only one other party camped at Carl Lake

Wilderness or Wild River: Mount Jefferson Wilderness

Management Unit: Deschutes National Forest

Administrative Location: Bend, OR

Head of Administrative Unit: John, Allen Forest Supervisor

Trip Report: Grade the success of the management agency with an A to F letter grade. Comments must support letter grades in each category; skip any category on which you do not want to comment.

B Access; is resource damage occurring at campsites on trails or at trailheads?

Water bars are absent, clogged or failing. Erosion is rapidly exposing rock and rubble and incising the tread in steeper sections of the trail

B Management; regulations, permit systems, education, enforcement actions.

Good educational signage at the trailhead. Permit-only use areas are defined to control/reduce use and campsite closure areas are signed to allow site recovery. Rules banning campfire within 100 feet of lakes and trails are routinely ignored.

B Stewardship; are management actions in accord with wilderness values and best practices in wilderness management?

Campsites are often heavily used; vegetation and firewood are largely absent. Nevertheless, sites visited were free of garbage, trash and micro debris. However, growing impacts seem to indicate, unless education becomes more effective, it may be time to ban campfires in wilderness. Trails in this area are also being abandoned and decommissioned. It is unclear why the agency is abandoning the very significant investment in their construction at a time when the public is increasingly interested in wilderness travel.

B Wilderness; how well is management protecting the wilderness resource?

A lack of effective trail maintenance has resulted in significant amounts of trail erosion. In terms of environmental impact the damage caused by tread erosion seems to far exceed the impact of users on campsites. Simple actions by the agency like maintaining

waterbars, breaking trailside berms, and installing check dams would go far to protect the resource from this damage.

— **Fire Management, Wildlife Management, Other**

Once again, we encounter the "net zero" switchbacks; the ugly outcome of many trail relocation projects from the 70's and 80's designed by FS road engineers—when there was no longer much of a need for newer and bigger logging roads—who seemed to believe that no trail should be steeper than a good logging road. It takes a hiker with endless patience to climb a ridge following countless low-angle switchbacks not one of which seem to gain more than a few feet.