

HIKE: Permit limits means fewer hikers in the spectacular area

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That sort of major expedition isn't necessary, though, to enjoy an outing on the Obsidian Trail. However, it has become harder to be spontaneous with this hike since a special entry permit is now required for the trail.

The Forest Service has designated the Obsidian Trail region as a "heavy-use area," and limited entry permits have been required since the mid-1990s. The purpose of the permits, of course, is to limit user impact. Prior to imposition of this requirement, the area was being significantly damaged by over-use.

The Forest Service considers that the permit system has successfully and significantly mitigated damage to the area. Permits are supposedly "free," but there is a \$6 "transaction fee" associated with the permit process. Permits are limited to 30 day-use hikers per day and 40 overnight users.

The permit system is so effective in reducing traffic that, during this recent hike, we did not see a single hiker in the permit area. The only hiker we did see near the area was skirting the high-use area because he was unable to obtain a permit.

The reason for the Obsidian Trail becoming a high-use area is, of course, obvious. Spectacular vistas are seen in every direction. Obsidian Falls and a field of sparkling obsidian chips are a bonus for taking the longer route. The volcanic obsidian rocks, from which this trail takes its name, are especially abundant in this area and played an important role in the area's cultural history. For thousands of years, Native Americans sought out this area as a source for high-quality obsidian for the making of tools and weapons.

If you treasure the gorgeous high-mountain haunts of the Cascades, then this is

a hike for you. Regardless of whether you choose the 13.3- or 16.3-mile versions, you end up at a trail junction where the Glacier Way Cutoff joins the Obsidian Trail. From here it is "only" four miles back to your car at the trailhead.

To enjoy this hike, take the McKenzie Pass Highway (242) west from Sisters. From the pass summit, continue west for another 5.6 miles and turn right (west) at the Scott Lake turnoff. There is a sign advising of the approaching turn, but there is an intervening turnoff, as well; so wait until you are abreast of the brown Scott Lake sign before turning off. Once off the highway, the Scott Trail parking lot is the next immediate right.

Almost the entire hike is within the Three Sisters Wilderness boundary, so wilderness permits are required and are free at the trailhead kiosk. Always be properly equipped for wilderness travel — particularly on a hike of this length and difficulty — and remember that weather conditions can change rapidly in the mountains.

Limited entry permits for the Obsidian Trail can be obtained online at www.recreation.gov or by calling 1-877-444-6777. Permits can be printed online within 14 days of use, so it is no longer necessary to obtain them directly from the McKenzie District Ranger Station.

Fed judge to decide whether lawsuit proceeds

EUGENE (AP) — A federal judge in Eugene, Oregon, is considering arguments about whether a lawsuit brought by a group of children and a leading climate scientist can go forward.

The plaintiffs' lawsuit alleges that the federal government has known for more than 50 years that carbon pollution causes climate change, but it has failed to implement plans to phase out greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, government officials have promoted the development and use of fossil fuels, the plaintiffs allege.

The defendants—including the federal government and trade groups representing energy giants such as Exxon Mobil and BP—have asked the judge to dismiss the case, arguing that emissions policy should be determined by lawmakers and federal agencies, not by the court. They also argue they already comply with the federal Clean Air Act and the plaintiffs don't have legal standing.

U.S. District Judge Ann Aiken heard arguments Tuesday and is expected to issue a ruling by November.

She could adopt, reject or modify an earlier ruling by U.S. Magistrate Judge Tom Coffin, who in March declined to dismiss the case, *The Register-Guard* reported.

The plaintiffs include 21 youths who were between the

ages of 8 and 19 when the suit was filed last year, as well as climate scientist James Hansen. They are seeking a court decision that finds the government is violating their constitutional rights to life, liberty and property by allowing dangerous emissions to be released into the atmosphere.

They're also seeking a court order that requires the government to create a plan to dramatically slash greenhouse gas emissions released by the burning of fossil fuels.

Julia Olson, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, told Aiken her clients are open to engaging in settlement discussions if it would not delay the outcome.

Avery McRae, an 11-year-old plaintiff from Eugene, said outside court that she was upset when people say she and other plaintiffs are too young to sue.

"I know that I love the Earth, and I know it's being threatened by warming temperatures," she said. "I know that I have a constitutional right to a stable environment."

The federal case is among a series of lawsuits filed by youth plaintiffs working with Our Children's Trust, a non-profit environmental group based in Eugene.

Teens in other states have filed similar climate change lawsuits.

In Washington state, several young climate activists,

including one who is a plaintiff in the federal Eugene lawsuit, have sued to force officials to adopt new rules to limit carbon emissions based on the best available science.

“ I know that I have a constitutional right to a stable environment. — Avery McRae ”

In May, a state judge ordered Washington to come up with a rule by the end of the year. Gov. Jay Inslee said at the time that court reaffirmed the need to do what the state already committed to. The state appealed the judge's order in June.

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