

## **Public Lands Permitting**

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# Washington State US Forest Service Land Permitting 101

According to the legislation, all recreational activities for which there is “pecuniary remuneration” must be permitted with an Outfitter Guide permit. Translation: anything that is not “free and open to the public” must be permitted. This means that if you cannot participate in a given activity for free, then it must be permitted.

In general:

- Trips do NOT need to be permitted because a non-member can participate in any 2 trips in a calendar year for free, so long as they meet the skill qualifications. Therefore, it is *possible* to participate in a trip for free, and therefore it is “free and open to the public”
- Course field trips will need to be permitted because they are not open to anyone besides current students who have paid a fee for the course. Therefore it is impossible to participate in a field trip without having paid a fee, and therefore it is NOT “free and open to the public”
- Free seminars, as long as they are free and open to the public, do not need to be permitted

How does permitting work?

In general, in order for the Forest Service to issue Outfitter Guide Permits, they must conduct an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act). The Environmental Assessment studies the carrying capacity of the land including endangered species, fragile vegetation and soil stability, in the context of a specific proposed use. EA's are expensive and can range from \$5,000-\$60,000+. EA's are also time consuming and there is no guarantee that investing in an EA will get you the permits you need, because the EA could come back and say the land cannot handle our volume of use. Also, conducting an EA relies on the availability of Forest Service staff and resources.

Part of the NEPA process requires public input, so once an EA is done and recommendations are made, it is made available to public input and may be appealed or amended as a result.

Sometimes, certain Forests cannot grant permits to a particular type of activity because the current Environmental Assessment was not scoped for that particular use.

All of this is federal legislation, and the Forest Service is charged with administering accordingly. The Forest Service cannot change the legislation.

Another factor that can confuse things is that sometimes legislation changes, and sometimes litigation forces the Forest Service to comply to new regulations that don't necessarily make sense in the bigger picture, but are a result of a court order following litigation. For example, if an environmental agency sues the Forest Service, the result may be that the Forest Service may have to abide by stricter regulations regarding the Environmental Assessment, which could negatively impact the ability for instructional programs to use the land.

Because there are so many confusing factors to USFS permitting, we have the best success when Mountaineers Staff manage Forest Service permitting, acting as a liaison between volunteers and Forest Service. This way, our staff can foster a positive relationship with USFS staff, and it minimizes confusion for USFS staff because they only need to deal with one or two people.

## **USFS Permitting Definitions**

**Permit** – The written document allowing a group to use a particular section of land. Typically, permits have general language (“The Mountaineers can use the Cle Elum District between May and November for a total of 700 Client Use Days”). Because permits are only issued after an Operating Plan has been agreed upon by both the organization and the Forest, it is important that permit holders abide by the Operating Plan or notify the Forest if the plan will change.

**Client Use Days or Service Days** – One paying client on one day is a “client use day”. This does not include instructors. If one person is using a site in the morning, and another person is using the same site in the afternoon, that is two client use days.

**Party Size** – the party size is the total number of heartbeats in one area. This would include paying students, instructors, and animals. Typically, party size maximums apply equally to permitted groups and non-permitted groups.

# Leavenworth

Updated March 2015

The Icicle Canyon, Castle Rock (Tumwater) and Snow Creek Wall (Stuart Range) are all located in the Wenatchee River District of the Okanagon-Wenatchee National Forest.

Fee-based activities must be permitted. As of 2015, we have a Transitional Priority Use Permit in the Wenatchee River District.

This means:

- All fee-based activities must be listed in our Transitional Priority Use Permit Operating Plan, which is submitted in December for the following year.
- The Mountaineers, and the respective committees, will be charged 3% of our total revenues for the use of the land. So, if a field trip is 1/6th of a course, The Mountaineers will be charged 3% of 1/6 of the total revenues for the course.

The Icicle Canyon, Castle Rock and Snow Creek Wall are all included in a 2005 Environmental Assessment (see Washington State US Forest Service Permitting 101) which was scoped specifically for rock climbing. Because of this, permits can be attained for rock climbing, or for hiking/backpacking on trail. Off-trail travel (aka scrambling) is considering the same use as rock climbing based on the 2005 Environmental Assessment. Any fee-based scrambling activities must go through the same planning and user day process as all rock climbing courses and activities.

Because this area gets such high rock climbing use, the EA is accompanied by a Decision Notice (see below) which outlines the total number of clients that can be in an area each day.

The process:

- First, the District Ranger grants a permit to a group.
  - Applications are due January 1<sup>st</sup> and permits are usually approved in early March.
  - Mountaineers Staff need to know the entire request list that is submitted collectively by *all climbing chairs* no later than November 1 of the previous year. We recommend that the climbing committees create their requests in a climbing summit in February or March of the previous year so that they can secure camping and plan well in advance for courses.
- Once the District has approved all permits, they send out a lottery request (usually mid-march). The turn-around for the lottery request is usually 1-2 weeks, so it benefits us to have our requests prepared at the time we submit our permit application. In the lottery request, we must indicate the number of client use days we are requesting in each area (Icicle, Tumwater, Stuart Range) by area and by day, and prioritize each request.
- The District Ranger gets back to us within about 2 weeks (typically) to let us know which days are approved for our use.

## Can I add something to the permit at the last minute?

Maybe.

- It's better to add something on with at least 3 weeks' notice. We have a maximum of 500 client use days, so we can only request days that are within the # days we have remaining beyond our approved days through the lottery.
- Send the Activity Details with specific dates, number of students and number of instructors to Mountaineers Staff. Staff will send to the District Ranger to find out whether we can add that activity to our Permit.

## Leaders can help each other out by reporting in advance if they will have fewer students than they were approved for.

- For example, if your course has 24 client use days in Leavenworth on a particular weekend, but you only have 18 students, let staff know *as soon as possible* so that we can report to the District that we will have fewer than our permitted number on the site. This allows the District to open up those client use days to other companies, and adds to our unused days which we can use for last minute requests.
- Our organization also runs the risk of losing user days if we don't use all 500 allocated to us each. If your field trip isn't going to use all of the user days allocated to you, please let Staff know at least a week before the activity. This allows us to give those days to a different field trip.

## What areas in the Icicle are NOT under USFS permit?

- Alphabet Rock
- Bruce's Boulder
- Roto Wall
- Sam Hill\*

*\* Sam Hill is owned by the Chelan Douglas Land Trust. Please use the Sam Hill (Leavenworth) route/place if you plan to conduct your activity there, AND contact Staff to let them know the dates and total number of participants (instructors and students) – there is a use form that Staff must fill out for each Mountaineers trip there*

## Group Size Maximums for Leavenworth

Mountaineers activities on Forest Service land near Leavenworth must meet the Forest Service group size standards: rock climbing groups in the Icicle Canyon or Castle Rock should not **exceed 15 people total (students and instructors)** at any one crag. Please limit total group size on private land to 15 as well.

From the Forest Service: *““There is a party size limit of 15 people (clients and guides [instructors]) in the Icicle Canyon and at Castle Rock. **If you have a group over 15, you are required to split up and not be recognizable as a single climbing group while climbing or staging for climbs in these areas.**”*

The total size for Snow Creek is 4 people.

## The Teanaway

The Teanaway is in the Cle Elum District of the Okanagon-Wenatchee National Forest. Fee-based activities must be permitted. As of 2015, we have a Transitional Priority Use Permit in the Cle Elum District.

This means:

- All fee-based activities must be listed in our Transitional Priority Use Permit Operating Plan, which is submitted in December for the following year.
- The Mountaineers, and the respective committees, will be charged 3% of our total revenues for the use of the land. So, if a field trip is 1/6th of a course, The Mountaineers will be charged 3% of 1/6 of the total revenues for the course.

Leaders need to:

- Provide Mountaineers Staff with estimated use and **Activity Details** for the following year by November 1:
  - Name of course and detailed description of activities
  - Approximate time of year (ie. "2 weekends in March and 2 weekends in April") the activity will be held
  - Estimated number (min & max) of students per day per activity
  - Estimated number (min & max) of instructors per day per activity
- In the event that your course is listed in the existing Priority Use Permit and there are no changes, submit a statement that there are no changes for the following year to staff.
- Ensure that you close your field trips and courses with an accurate roster, so that we can run a report and submit an "actual use" report to the Cle Elum District.

*Can I add something to the permit at the last minute?*

Maybe.

It's best to add something on with at least 3 weeks' notice. Send the Activity Details as listed above, but with *specific* dates that you would like to use the land, to Mountaineers Staff. Staff will send to the District Ranger to find out whether we can add that activity to our Permit.

# Mt. Erie

Details as of March 5, 2012

For ALL instructional rock climbing groups, including fee-based *and* free activities and filed trips, please contact Anacortes Parks & Recreation staff with your dates 30 days in advance and follow the rules listed below. A message from Anacortes Parks & Rec confirming your date(s) does not reserve the site for you as there will likely be other recreational climbers on the mountain at that time. They ask that all groups do their best to share the mountain.

## Rules:

- No more than 50 people per group per day (this includes instructors)
- Please carpool when driving to the summit to allow for other users
- Please inform your climbers of a port-a-potty at the summit (usually March – October)
- Please pack out all the trash that you bring in. If you can haul out extra trash you may find, that is a great service to the park.

## Crystal Springs Sno-Park and The Ehrling Stordahl Trail System

For fee-based activities, Crystal Springs requires a State Park Permit and Ehrling Stordahl requires a USFS permit, which is included in our Cle Elum District Transitional Priority Use Permit.

Mountaineers staff take the lead on these permits. Leaders should submit anticipated use, including approximate dates, list of activities, number of students for each date and number of instructors for each date for the calendar year to Mountaineers Staff by November 1 of the previous calendar year.

- Fee for the both permits will be allocated to the committee.
- State Park fee is \$1 per person per day
- USFS permit is 3% of total revenue. If a day is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total course, then we will owe the USFS 3% of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total revenue for the course.



# Mount Rainier

**National Park** | Washington

## Wilderness Permits



NPS/Kevin Bacher

## Get Your Permit

A **wilderness permit is required for all overnight camping** in the wilderness of Mount Rainier National Park. *Please Note:* Those wishing to climb above 10,000 feet or onto any glaciers **must purchase a Climbing Pass** (<http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/climbing-pass.htm>). Climbers who wish to camp overnight must also get a Wilderness Permit in order to reserve a camp site.

If you would like to camp in Mount Rainier's wilderness you will need a wilderness permit. It is recommended that you **make a reservation to secure a permit**. Your wilderness permit reserves you a specific wilderness camping site for the night you want to stay. Mount Rainier National Park has thousands of visitors during the peak summer months and backcountry camping sites can fill up quickly. About 70 percent of the available wilderness permits can be reserved while the remaining 30 percent are issued on a **first-come, first-served** ([http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/wilderness-permit.htm#CP\\_JUMP\\_664978](http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/wilderness-permit.htm#CP_JUMP_664978)) basis.

## How to Reserve a Wilderness Permit

First, download and complete the **Wilderness Reservation Request Form** (<http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/upload/WildClimbCampResv-form-Feb2015.pdf>).

- **PLEASE READ: Critical Tips for Getting a Wilderness Reservation** (<http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/upload/CriticalTipsWildReservati2015.pdf>)
- The park starts accepting reservation requests on **March 15th** each year.

- We do not accept reservations for trips starting after September 30. If your hike or climb starts after September 30, you must show up in the park in person and attempt to acquire a first-come, first-served permit.
- Reservation requests can be made by **fax, letter, or in person** (after it opens to the public in late May) at the Longmire Wilderness Information Center **only**. No other Ranger Station in the park is set up to accept and process reservations. We do not accept reservation requests by telephone. Fax number and mailing address are listed on the Wilderness Reservation Request Form.
- If you are filling out the Reservation Request Form by hand, **please use black ink only**. Other colors often do not fax clearly. When this happens we cannot process your request until we are able to contact you and sort out the problem in question. In the meantime we move onto the next reservation request while yours sits in a folder waiting.
- Park rangers will **begin processing reservation requests on April 1**. All requests received between March 15 and April 1 will be processed in random order. Requests arriving April 1 and after will be processed in the order in which they were received.
- Please do not fax **and** mail your reservation form. Choose only one method. Doing both creates problems when processing your reservation.

**Requests received in March, April and May could take up to six weeks to process because of the large number of applications.** During this initial two week period (March 15-31) the park will receive around 1,400 or more reservation requests. Each one is processed by hand with usually only 2 rangers assigned to this duty. It will be well into May before this initial batch of reservation requests are completed. This means you may not get a reply from the park for some weeks, depending on when your request is processed. As the season goes on and the initial pile of requests are whittled down, the park is able to process and reply to reservation requests in 1-2 days.

If your reservation request is successfully processed you will receive a confirmation letter that shows your itinerary. Please note that this **confirmation letter is NOT your permit. You must come into a Ranger Station to get your permit.** If we are not able to process your reservation request you will receive a letter stating why, and what your options are. If we cannot book a reservation for you, you will not be charged a reservation fee.



The historic Langmuir Administration Building, home to the Langmuir Wilderness Information Center.

*NPS Photo*

### **What you need to pick up your permit**

When the day arrives for you to come into a **Ranger Station**

**([http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/wilderness-permit.htm#CP\\_JUMP\\_664995](http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/wilderness-permit.htm#CP_JUMP_664995))** to get your permit, be sure to have the following information:

- An emergency contact phone number
- The license plate number of any vehicle being left overnight in the park
- The make, model, and color of the vehicle

Also, please note that your **reservations will be canceled by the park if you do not show up by 10:00 a.m. on the day your trip begins**. If you will be later than 10:00 a.m. you need to let the park know in advance. Once canceled, the camps you had reserved become part of the first-come, first-served pool of permits that other hikers will have the opportunity to use.

### **Wilderness Permit Reservation Fee**

- Reservations cost **\$20** per party (1-12 people) per trip (up to 14 consecutive nights). **Reservation fees are non-refundable.**
- The park accepts **VISA, MASTERCARD, AMERICAN EXPRESS** and **DISCOVER** credit cards.
- One change may be made to a Wilderness Camping Reservation after it is confirmed

at no additional fee, provided the change can be accommodated by the park. Each subsequent change requires an additional charge of \$20.

### **How to Acquire a First-come, First-served Permit**

The park saves approximately 30 percent of available wilderness permits to be issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

- These permits can be issued the same day your trip starts, or up to one day before your trip starts, but no sooner than one day.
- The only way to acquire a first-come, first-served permit is by coming to any Ranger Station in the park and attempting to get the permit, which is subject to availability.
- Remember to bring:
  - An emergency contact phone number
  - The license plate number of any vehicle being left behind in the park
  - The make, model, and color of the vehicle
- First-come, first-served permits cannot be issued over the phone.
- There is no fee for a first-come, first-served permit.

### **The first-come, first-served permit was not available when I tried to get it.**

*I want to get a first-come, first-served permit for Summerland on July 15, but when I get to the Ranger Station they tell me there are no more permits for that night. How is this possible?*

**Scenario 1:** Other parties may have gotten the permits before you that very same day (or one day before) from any Ranger Station in the park.

**Scenario 2:** Let's say you want Summerland on the night of July 15. You show up at a Ranger Station that has the earliest opening hours only to find the permits are gone. How is this possible?

A party may have come into the Ranger Station on July 13 to get a first-come, first-served permit to do a four day hike. Their permit looks like this:

July 13 Sunrise Camp  
 July 14 Glacier Basin Camp  
July 15 Summerland Camp  
 July 16 Indian Bar

Summerland Camp has been obtained by this party for the night of July 15, the same night you are attempting to get that campsite.



*NPS/Daniel Keebler*

## **Find a Ranger Station**

**In the summer, Ranger Stations where you can acquire permits are:**

- The Longmire Wilderness Information Center at Longmire
- The Jackson Visitor Center at Paradise
- The White River Wilderness Information Center at the White River Entrance
- The Carbon River Ranger Station at the Carbon River Entrance

**Note:** There is no Ranger Station at Mowich Lake. The closest Ranger Station is the Carbon River Ranger Station.

**In the winter, permits are available at the Longmire Information Center every day and the Jackson Visitor Center on weekends. Self-registration is available at the Carbon River Ranger Station, Ohanapecosh Ranger Station, and at the Highway 410 entrance arch at the park's north boundary. Learn more about winter camping (<http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/upload/Winter-Camping-Nov13-Wmap.pdf>).**

**Most Ranger Stations are open seasonally, so make sure to check their hours of operation (<http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/hours.htm>).**

## Park Tools

### [View Park Map](#)

<http://www.nps.gov#modal-park-map>

### [FAQs \(Frequently Asked Questions\)](#)

<http://www.nps.gov/mora/faqs.htm>

### [Contact Us](#)

<http://www.nps.gov/mora/contacts.htm>

### [Site Index](#)

<http://www.nps.gov/mora/siteindex.htm>

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<http://www.flickr.com/groups/MountRainierNPS>

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<http://www.nps.gov/mora/mountrainiernps.htm>



<http://www.nps.gov/mora/getinvolved/2016.htm>

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