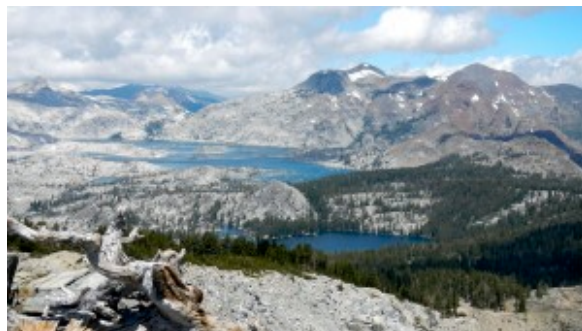


# USFS backs off wilderness photo restrictions

By Rob Davis, *Oregonian*

The U.S. Forest Service's chief backed off proposed restrictions on photography in wilderness areas Thursday after facing sweeping protests from lawmakers, First Amendment advocates and media outlets across the country.

"The U.S. Forest Service remains committed to the First Amendment," the agency's chief, Tom Tidwell, said in a statement. "To be clear, provisions in the draft directive do not apply to news gathering or activities."



The USFS is looking at revising rules for filming/photographing wilderness areas like Desolation. Photo/LTN file

Tidwell's statement said he was attempting to "clarify the agency's intentions" and would not require a permit for news-gathering or recreational photographs in wilderness areas.

Tidwell didn't explain why others in his agency told the *Oregonian* the opposite just two days earlier.

On Tuesday, Liz Close, the agency's acting wilderness director, said the Forest Service would permit reporting in

wilderness depending on its subject matter, with exceptions for breaking news. "If you were engaged on reporting that was in support of wilderness characteristics, that would be permitted," Close said.

She acknowledged that reporters shooting videos, even on iPhones, would need special permits.

The agency's news release Thursday said the maximum \$1,500 permit fees were "erroneous, and refers to a different proposed directive."

### **Read the whole story**

—

### **LTN notes:**

- To comment on the proposal, go online. The deadline is Dec. 3.
- The number of film requests the local USFS office gets was not immediately available.
- Here is a statement from the National Press Photographers Association.