

HOOD RIVER NEWS
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
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Don't change Spur

I am the third generation of my family to form an intimate bond with Mt Hood. My grandfather, W.T. Hukari, was a founding member of the Hood River Crag Rats in 1927. My father, Rob Hukari, is among the generation of Crag Rats who lobbied to save and restore Cloud Cap Inn when the Forest Service proposed destroying it in the 1950s.

I grew up on this mountain. I've only climbed to the summit twice, but I've hiked Elliott Glacier, Cooper Spur, Langille Crags and the Tilly Jane Canyon all my life, and have circumnavigated the mountain via the Timberline Trail several times.

I have always counted myself lucky to be born in such a beautiful place and into a family who taught me to love and respect it. I am proud of that heritage. My father is 80 years old. My grandfather died in 1978. Now I am the one taking my niece and nephew on hikes around Mt. Hood. Already, in my lifetime, I've seen changes in the use (and abuse) of these trails. There is more trash left behind, more erosion (I've even witnessed mountain bikes ripping up the wilderness), more deterioration of alpine meadows, more noise, more people – just plain more use than this delicate environment can sustain.

I remember a time when the Forest Service was advocating LESS use of this area. There was talk of a permit system to protect the area from over use. As much as I'd miss a day hike whenever the fancy hit, I'd prefer this alternative to what I have seen at Rainier National Park – where the trails are paved for easy access and to protect the alpine wilderness from those who claim to love it.

Alpine and sub-alpine habitats like those of the Cooper Spur/Tilly Jane area make up only 0.6 percent of the total landmass of the state of Oregon. Ski resort development is the number one threat to this kind of habitat. I hate to think what will happen to my beloved Cooper Spur if a destination resort is allowed to expand at its base.

Let us not forget, this is our land. Cooper Spur Ski Resort merely holds a permit for its use. We are responsible for what happens here.

It would be easy to love the wilderness around Mt. Hood to death. It will be harder to love it and respect it. My father and grandfather taught me by their examples. What will we teach the next generation? It's up to us.

Althea Hukari
Hood River