



## Mount Hood National Forest sets meeting on idea of private management at Bagby Hot Springs

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RANDY RASMUSSEN/The Oregonian

Bagby Hot Springs in the Mount Hood National Forest.

The Forest Service will host an open house Jan. 18 to discuss the idea of allowing private management of Bagby Hot Springs and numerous campgrounds in the **Mount Hood National Forest**.

**The proposal**, which has been under consideration for several months, would add Bagby and 28 campgrounds and day-use areas to a concession permit that already covers three dozen recreation sites. The Forest Service allows concessionaires to manage many of the recreation sites in Oregon's national forest and has found it to be effective and cost-

efficient, Mount Hood spokesman Rick Acosta said.

However, the proposal to manage Bagby Hot Springs in that manner has caused concern among loyal users and forest watchdog groups. The hot springs, reached by a 1.5 mile trail off a forest road south of Estacada, is a rustic collection of soaking tubs and shelters set amid old-growth Douglas firs and fed by 136 degree water trickling from the hillside. But Bagby has been plagued over the years by vandalism, drinking and rowdy behavior, and thefts from cars parked at the trail head. Volunteers help clean and maintain the hot springs, and the Forest Service paid for renovations, but the setting can vary day to day from serene to sketchy.

Two management companies expressed interest when the Forest Service issued a concession prospectus last fall. An environmental assessment will be completed before Bagby and the campgrounds will be included in a concession permit.

The open house will be held from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the national forest headquarters, 16400 Champion Way, Sandy.

--**Eric Mortenson**

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