RE:  Forest Service Manual 7700 Travel Management

 Chapter 7700, Zero Code

 Chapter 7710 Travel Planning

 October 20, 2020

This is a letter of personal perspective to hopefully amplify the well delineated concerns written by my fellow Mt. Hood Chapter of Oregon Equestrian Trails (OET) members, regarding e-bikes on public trails.

In the 1970’s it became very apparent to the youth I was then, that I could no longer just get on my horse and head out, using the tractor paths of berry and vegetable growing fields. I was having to take roadways to get to the Sandy River, or to friend’s houses. As an equestrian, my trails had dried up.

Fast forward to the turn of the century. I had established a career and found myself with the means to obtain a horse and rekindle my bond with animals and nature, but had no idea where I could ride. I discovered OET and found that people had formed a group to claim a place for equestrian activities and provide volunteer services to keep these places safe and accessible. I have been a proud member for many years, and though riding is far limited in comparison to my teen years, at least there are some options.

I do not envy your job in trying to provide access for as many public activities as there seems to be, and the disharmony these activities have with one another. I see the lists of requested rules to help merge all the needs, but do not believe that rules will be prioritized in real-life practice. Horses and quick moving objects/people do not mix which does create an undeniable safety issue. I am a total novice in your world, but I believe one should try to provide a solution if one identifies a problem. My first thought is to designate specific days for conflicting activities? I am sure this is not a new idea and it has limitations. I may be an e-bike rider in the future, and would want to have these trails be accessible, but have a hard time imagining how I could realistically share these trails with horses. Just the nature of nature prevents seeing and hearing around a corner. I would like to see everyone enjoy Oregon in the way they want to experience all Oregon has to offer.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this issue, and hope for equitable solutions. “Happy Trails”

Sincerely,

Erin Mauck

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