

Jeff and Kathy Gates



Slater Turner, District Ranger
Ochoco National Forest
3160 NE 3rd St.
Prineville, OR 97754

October 7, 2021

Hello Ranger Turner,

We've become aware of the possibility of bike trails being planned for Lemon Gulch in the Ochocos, in the midst of active grazing allotments. We are not in favor of this plan for many reasons.

Having ridden Lemon Gulch, gathering cattle, trail riding for over 2 decades, we know the area. Very steep, and hilly with blind corners. Mountain bikers going downhill over 30 miles an hour where horse people are riding is very dangerous. A horse is a prey animal. Something coming at them at that speed can cause serious injuries to the horse, its rider and possibly the biker.

There are some good stewards of bike trails, but the preponderance of them may not be such good stewards of our public lands. And these days, "if you build it they will come".

Can we be sure they will come with respect? Or, will they come with litter, not much regard for shutting gates, not much knowledge of cattle and their needs, danger to horses and their riders in the area? What about upsetting the wildlife, wild birds and native plants in the area? What if the cattle are pushed by the mountain bike activity to an area that is not the season for them to be there? Ranchers have worked for decades to be good stewards of the land and they know the land, where things are and how to take care of it. Will these strangers be able to do that? Or care?

These days mountain bikes, electric bikes, etc are built to go fast. What if they turn a corner and run square up on a big bull? What if the bull charges the bikers and gores them. Is the Forest Service going to be responsible for their injuries? Or what if they get between a mother cow and her calf? Or they frighten a pregnant cow and she aborts? Is the Forest Service going to reimburse the rancher for the loss of that life and the potential income? Will the bikers/hikers bring dogs that don't know how to behave around cattle? Then there are cougars, and probably some bears. What about the riparian areas? Soil erosion? What about blatant vandalism? Does it make sense to mix these uses? It's just plain dangerous.

We have friends in Tumalo, adjacent to BLM that have encountered all kinds of dangerous behavior and disregard for private land, livestock and wildlife. 4 wheelers, motorcycles, mountain bikes. It's just not a good mix to put bike trails in the midst of cattle allotments.

We have seen all kinds of destruction around the forest near Tumalo Reservoir. Dogs attacking dogs & chasing horses. Litter. Campfires. Probable drug manufacturing setups. It is sad.

These are serious matters to think about. We do not want to see this area ruined. We do not want to see people, cattle, horses, wildlife, streams, wild flowers, ruined. Please do not put any public trail heads or bike trails there.

Thank you for considering our concerns,

Jeff and Kathy Gates

Cc: Congressman Cliff Bentz
Crook County Commissioners