

April 12, 2024

To: Slater Turner
U.S. Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest
Lookout Ranger District

From: Kim Vogel
[REDACTED]

RE: Corral Flats Endurance Trail

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this trail project.

I am generally supportive of this project as it is proposed, as it fits within the desired future condition of the forest to remain a dispersed recreation forest. The restoration elements of the proposed action including work at the Ochoco Creek headwaters, rehabilitation of OHV damage, reinforcing road closures, and replacing make shift bridges with hardened stream crossing improve forest conditions and provide needed management enhancements.

Designation of the trail primarily on system roads and non-system two tracks is entirely appropriate. This forest is very well roaded and with the desired condition to remain a dispersed recreation forest the use of the existing road system should be the priority when adding trail systems to the forest inventory.

It is difficult to discern, but has been clarified (email exchange with Jennifer Abernathy) that while this is being proposed to meet equestrian user needs it is a multi-use trail, open to all users with the exception of motorized use. Towards the effort of meeting LRMP management goals for miles of system trails this trail would lay appropriately on the ground, and fit appropriately into all affected management areas given the minimal development and dispersed nature of the improvements. Email exchange also clarified that traditional events have not exceeded 150 participants and existing facilities have been adequate to accommodate the users.

Given these clarifications, I feel it would be important to include in the project design, BMPs, and/or mitigation measures the following:

1. Clarify in the EA document and the decision that this is a multi-use non-motorized trail open to all non-motorized users. It will be specifically designed to manage the use of equestrian travel, but will not be designed to exclude any non-motorized user.
2. Ensure that all signage, printed material, guide material, and maps note that the trail is a multi-user trail designed for equestrian use. This will ensure that all users know of available opportunity and have appropriate expectations of trail design and maintenance (i.e., hardened stream crossings as opposed to bridges, etc.).
3. Also include in all signage, printed material, guide material, map, and seasonal news releases trail etiquette for respecting other recreation users and encounters with grazing livestock, herding canines and wildlife. While educational materials do not prevent user conflict it does help novice recreationist develop good habits and lets all users know what is expected.

4. Address special events in these sections as well, stating that special events would not exceed 150 users so as not to exceed existing dispersed recreation facility capacity and have appropriate mitigation associated with the permit.
5. Please ensure that all special use permittees, as well as any affected landowners are duly notified and are aware of construction and rehabilitation activities as they are to happen. This will allow permittees (grazing, mining, etc) to plan for and alter their management activities appropriately.

Also, the statement that the trail is too far from town for mountain bikers is subjective, as bikers presently travel that far and further for mountain biking experiences. It may deter some, but many enjoy remote areas and do not mind a drive for the experience.

And lastly, a comprehensive recreation trail plan should and could be the focus of the Forest to attain collaboration, ideas, and consent from all forest users, the community, and forest personnel.

A few recreation users meeting to divvy up the forest for single use trails does not make a collaborative effort for a comprehensive trail system. I realize that we differ in our opinions about the legitimacy of how this trail and other recent trail developments came to be proposed. While I support the design of this particular trail and it is fairly benign in scope, scale, and project design, fitting into the dispersed recreation landscape; I would be remiss to not mention the fact that these projects were ill conceived under the auspices of collaboration.

Having said that, I do want to be clear that I appreciate all the hard work of you and your district employees. I understand the difficulties of managing the needs of all forest users and the changing landscape of regulatory and legal framework.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I look forward to seeing the final documents.

Sincerely,
Kim Vogel