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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Zach Peterson

Forest Planner

Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forest

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Dear Mr. Zach Peterson,

Thank you for taking the time to listen to the public last week. I was very pleased to have my opinions heard by you and the other supervisors in charge of the current Forest Plan Revision. I hope that this can be the beginning of a working relationship between mountain bikers and the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forest. Mountain bikers in general are both good stewards of the land and economic boosters for the local communities in and around trail opportunities. Our forest is ripe with excellent trails that many have not discovered only due to lack of information available. If properly honed, these trails will become a boon to the economies of the small towns in and around the forest.

Regarding the meeting between your proposed between mountain bikers and the forest planners, I have had the time to talk to a few mountain bikers who do feel that a meeting with the forest to talk about our wants and needs as a group would be beneficial to both the Forest Service and the users. What steps are needed to set up a meeting? We would be open to do it at a particular setting or online. Our purpose of this meeting would be to show to the forest that we do use these trails and to discuss how we as a group can help guarantee access to the trails and the destinations they offer to us.

Historically mountain bikers have used the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forest from the Montana border to the Palouse Ranger District. Many trails in our forest have been designated off limits to mountain bikers due to Congressionally Designated Wilderness, forest supervisor designated Recommended Wilderness, or to bicycle restrictive policies in Special Management Areas which allow for many uses less fitting for wilderness than bikes such as chainsaws and outfitters.

Many images presented both by the extreme sports industry and the wilderness advocates misrepresent mountain bikers by portraying mountain bikes dropping off cliffs and doing backflips. These images cannot be further from the truth. The average mountain biker is nothing like these images. These mountain bikers are moms, dads and children. They are business owners, doctors and lawyers. They are outdoor enthusiasts and conservationists.

I am one of these trail users. I am a father, a small business owner and a contributing member of multiple non-profits. I spend money in local communities before and after every ride in the forest, whether it be for gas, food,

drink or lodging. I also encourage every other cyclist to do the same. This is a mentality that is not just found in me. There are many communities that have shown great economic benefits from not just allowing mountain bikers, but encouraging them.

Other images of mountain bikers from wilderness advocates paint them as reckless, damaging and rude. Again these images cannot be further from the truth. I am always under control due to the fact that there may always be another rider, hiker or trail feature around the next corner. Average speeds of backcountry cyclists are only a few miles of an hour faster than hikers and similar to runners. Proof of this is in the fact that in my hundreds of miles of backcountry riding I have never once injured myself. As for trail damage, mountain bikers have also been proven to cause as little damage to the trail tread as hikers and far less than horses. Mountain bikers can also be some of the most pleasant people in the forest. We don't grumble because our pace was disrupted by hikers. We don't accost horse riders because their horse could have hurt me. And we thank responsible dirt bikers for helping with maintenance. I personally dismount and remove my helmets when yielding to horses and their riders. I stop and talk to other trail users, whether it be hikers, horse riders, runners, or dirt bikers. And I thank local businesses for their services and hospitality.

Idaho Roadless Rule has protected many beautiful areas in our forest. We do want to see healthy forest and wildlife. If further protections are needed mountain bikers will be on the side of protection as long as we are not excluded from these areas. If mountain bikers are a problem, then all users of the forest are a problem. We cannot be clumped in with the more damaging users such as motorized dirt bikes and horses. We leave less trace than a hiker by staying on trail and not damaging fragile ecosystems while "exploring" or camping. We leave the proximity of animals more quickly than hikers and cause less stress to the animals in doing so. We don't pollute the environment with exhaust and sound like motor powered vehicles and chainsaws. We do not treat the forest as a profitable resource similar to miners, guides and outfitters.

When you consider your next steps in changing the Forest Plan please include non-motorized bicycle use in all areas and on all trails of the forest that is not Congressionally Designated Wilderness. Mountain bikes do conform to wilderness ethics and should not be excluded. I will be sending a similar letter to Norma Staaf including specific trails and loops we would like to see maintained for non-motorized bicycle use. These loops will offer recreational opportunities to all mountain bikers. We cannot be assumed that one type or length of loop will please all and therefore a wide variety of trails are needed to support a wide variety of individuals.

Thank you once again for listening to me and I look forward to a long and productive relationship,

Colin Priebe

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