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Comments: I support the Lemon Gulch Trail proposal.

The Ochoco National Forest is public land and as such it is open to the public. With the exception of wilderness areas, mountain biking is a legitimate recreation activity on our public lands.

The comprehensive EA released by the Forest Service thoroughly addresses potential environmental impacts of a trail network in the Lemon Gulch area and clearly shows that environmental and resource concerns can be mitigated through careful planning.

The EA identifies six alternatives for a Lemon Gulch trail network. Alternative #1 represents No Action. A No Action decision meets none of the goals of this project or the Forest Plan and will not provide any more miles of trail for mountain biking in the ONF. Alternative #2 is the original trail layout of 52 miles and Alternative #6 is the Forest Service preferred alternative.

I would encourage the Forest Service to move forward with Alternative #2 as it most thoroughly achieves the overall goals of this project. Even at 52 miles, when combined with the existing 152.5 miles of trail it achieves only 44 percent of the Forest Service desired goal of 468 miles. In addition, none of those existing 152.5 miles of trail were built for mountain bikes. The Lemon Gulch trail proposal would provide the only trails in the ONF that are built to mountain bike specifications.

However short of the full build of Alternative #2, Alternative #6 is the best compromise. However, I have the following comments regarding Alternative #6:

1. The removal/realignment of the North-South arterial trail below FSR 3360. The original trail design located this trail to follow just above the creek and allowed for an easy green trail that all riders could navigate down to the lower trailhead. In alternative #6 this trail has been moved to a position above FSR 3360. I understand the terrain in this area to be steep and will not lend itself to an easy return to the lower trailhead. The absence of an easy route to return to the lower trailhead will likely force riders to return to the lower trailhead via the road or bypass the lower trailhead completely and just use the middle trailhead. In addition this change would reduce the number of green / easy trail miles in the proposal.
2. The omission of the short trail near the middle area of the network (image attached). This trail, which I understand is isolated and located on an open ridge line and surrounded by other trails, was included in Alternatives #2, #3, and #4. The EA does not appear to identify any environmental or resource concerns, grazing concerns, or fragmentation of wildlife corridors related to this trail. While short in distance, this trail would provide an additional easy trail. I recommend including this trail as part of Alternative #6.

The Lemon Gulch Environmental Assessment clearly shows that environmental and resource concerns can be mitigated through compromise and thoughtful planning. Therefore I encourage the Forest Service to move forward with this project.