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First name: Matthew

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Organization: Oregon Timber Trail Alliance

Title: Executive Director

Comments: Dear Slater Turner and the Ochoco National Forest,

The Oregon Timber Trail Alliance would like to voice our support for the Lemon Gulch trail network in the Ochoco National Forest. This project has enormous potential to bring a well-designed, accessible, and equitable set of trails to the Ochocos. It also has many benefits for trail users and Crook County residents.

There continues to be an increase in trail use and outdoor recreation throughout the state of Oregon and in the Ochocos in particular. The work of Ochoco Trails represents years of dedicated planning and collaboration that has led to a proposal that can solve these issues. With a particular focus on protecting the habitats of more remote areas, a multi-level circuit that is close to town provides trail users of many backgrounds and abilities the chance to maintain a balance between recreation and preservation.

Crook County and Prineville also stand to benefit from both the economic and the health perspectives of this project. Having a trail network much closer to town means easier access for local families to get out and enjoy the forest, which will lead to a healthier population. Studies have shown that in Oregon alone, mountain biking cuts \$26 million annually in health care costs. Mountain biking has also shown repeatedly in small towns around the country to add a significant boost to the economy. Prineville is in a perfect position to gain these advantages that tourism brings without detracting from the small-town lifestyle that residents enjoy.

The Oregon Timber Trail Alliance is a trail stewardship nonprofit that maintains the 669-mile trail that runs through many rural areas and small towns along the way. For some of these communities there was some uncertainty about the Timber Trail at first, but they have come to embrace it as a source of local pride that the trail runs through their town.

In reviewing the environmental assessment, we truly appreciate the range and scope of issues that the USFS assessed and the thoroughness with which this project has been approached. As fellow trail stewards, we offer our strong support for this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Matthew Ruddy

Executive Director

Oregon Timber Trail Alliance