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Title: Public Lands

Comments: I am submitting these comments on behalf of the Central Oregon chapter of Oregon Equestrian Trails. OET is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to building and maintaining trails and horse camps and advocating for recreational equestrian access to public lands.

OET members were very involved in developing the trail plan submitted to the Forest Service by the Ochoco Trails group, and we enthusiastically support this project. Equestrians have enjoyed the trails out of Corral Flat for decades, whether as part of the Bandit Springs endurance ride or while camping at or riding from Corral Flat. We are excited about signing the trails so riders stay found while exploring this beautiful part of the Ochoco National Forest. We also support your efforts to restore the area's natural resources by curtailing further destructive motorized activity within the non-motorized corridor, restoring the Ochoco Creek headwaters, and hardening creek crossings to reduce resource damage.

We have several suggestions for the project.

Trailhead Amenities: The EA doesn't contemplate installing a vault toilet at Corral Flat, but we believe this would significantly enhance the trailhead. While many people camp at Corral Flat in self-contained trailers or campers, day riders don't have this luxury. A vault toilet would prevent "toilet paper gardens" from blossoming around Corral Flat. Additionally, it may be desirable to create a hardened parking area specifically for day riders, so they can turn around and park without impacting the surrounding vegetation.

Wild Horses: The proposed trail network goes in and out of the Ochoco wild horse management area, but the impact of this project on wild horses was not addressed by the EA. It's important to protect humans from encounters with wild horses and to protect the horses from human interference. At a minimum, we would like to see educational information provided on the trailhead kiosk so riders will know how to behave around wild horses, what to do if the horses approach, and how to report any dangerous encounters to the Forest Service. We would also suggest that the Forest Service define internal procedures for dealing with reports of riders being harassed by wild horses.

Motorized Vehicle Damage: We appreciate your efforts to support meadow restoration by extending fences and blocking OHV access. Extending the buck and pole fence adjacent to the horse camp will create an effective barrier to prevent motorized vehicles from entering the meadow. In addition, the strategic placement of boulders across the road at the east end of the camp may help deter OHVs from entering the trail network.

Enforcement: We hope additional law enforcement presence will be available to further deter illegal activity in the area, including shooting at targets placed in the trail, OHVs on the trail, campfires during no-burn periods, etc.

Trail Routing: The endurance community has informed us that in several places, the map provided in the EA does not correctly show the location of the trails that are in current use. Please see the attached Map 1. The endurance riders also tell us that several sections of the trail are wet on a seasonal basis and may need to be rerouted or hardened to avoid additional resource damage. See Map 2 and Comments.

Trail Names: We would welcome the opportunity for the equestrian community to suggest names for these trails.

Thank You: We appreciate all the work you have done on this project so far. This project will improve the quality of the trail experience for equestrians and restore areas damaged by illegal motorized vehicle use. Our volunteers are looking forward to working with you to implement this project.

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