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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am an avid mountain biker, hiker and backcountry skier, 60 years old, and recently moved to Driggs, Idaho after many years living in Utah and Alaska.

I have heard a lot about the world class trail system in the Lionhead area and am eagerly anticipating my first foray onto the Lionhead trails with my mountain bike as soon as the snow melts. I strongly embrace a leave no trace wilderness ethic as well as collaborative efforts between different user groups to maintain trails and promote access to the wonderful trail network in the Tetons and greater Yellowstone region.

From all that I have learned so far about the Lionhead area it is a prime example of access and stewardship by many diverse user groups including hikers, horse riders and mountain bikers. I do not want to see this area closed to bikes. The mountain bike community along with horseback riders and hikers has spent countless volunteer hours maintaining the trails and promoting responsible and sustainable use of the trail system. I believe this sets a stellar example for all who use this area and strongly encourage the US Forest Service to manage the Lionhead area as Backcountry Area as described in Alternative E in the management plan.

I also believe that bikes should be allowed in all Wilderness Study areas that have not been officially designated as Wilderness by Congress.

As far as wilderness areas that are officially designated by congress, for example the Jedediah Smith Wilderness in the Tetons, I do support the full intent of the 1964 Wilderness Act and accept the prohibition on bicycle access. In my view congressionally designated Wilderness should be managed as wilderness as defined by the Wilderness Act.

I believe that areas that are being considered for wilderness designation should be open to all forms of recreational use until such time as congress makes an official wilderness designation. The Wilderness Act requires congress to make the designation. I do not believe it is appropriate for local or regional land management agencies (BLM, USFS) to selectively remove access to lands under study for certain user groups with a management plan that has not been approved by congress. The land management agencies must wait until congress acts and officially designates new wilderness areas before limiting access to public lands.

Thank You,  
Peter Thurston