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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Nez Perce-Clearwater Plan Revision Comment

Dear Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forest Planners:

Please accept this letter in support of maintaining mountain biking in your plan. Mountain bikers have been using these trails for decades. (I have been using these trails for decades). We would LOVE to keep access to:

-the State Line Trail (Trail 738) through Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forest and to RESTORE our access to miles 20-27.

-Maintain access to the State Line Trail by existing single track use. (Dirt Roads are really not that fun to ride.)

Thank you for listening to my reasons below.

Reasons to continue access:

1. Mountain biking is in keeping with the wilderness experience. Data on impact shows minimal impact on the trails and surrounding landscape from mountain bikes. It is nice to have scientific data to support my decades of observation that the environmental impact of mountain bikes is no more damaging than other forms of recreation, including hikers.
2. Mountain biking is compatible with conservation values. If we want to create the next generation of conservationists, we have to allow them access to the land. Not everyone is a hiker and not everyone is a biker but to exclude a man-powered user is not the answer. Every user group has great users and not so great users but you can't exclude an entire group based on a few people's bad experiences. That's called discrimination.
3. Mountain biking is in keeping with the history of Montana. We had the first off-road biking Calvary at Fort Missoula.
4. Mountain biking is man-powered. A bike is a non-motorized tool. I, for one, need that tool in order to access backcountry. I've got crappy feet and I cannot hike 30 miles backcountry but I can bike it. This is true for many individuals that need a tool to get around. Please allow us to use our tool to access the trails that are otherwise not accessible to us.

One of my favorite quotes from John Muir that is in line with every high alpine mountain bike ride that I do is "Keep close to Nature's heart... and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean." The only way that I am able to do that is on a bike. I have ridden the State Line Trail (738) multiple times and it brings me to the Heart Lake Trail in the Lolo National Forest and it is one of my favorite trails. The views are amazing and it brings a sense of peace. It is a great starter trail for mountain bikers interested in leaving trails in town and heading to more remote, backcountry areas. Access to these trails are the reason we live in Montana. Please do not take that away from us. It is soul crushing.

I do not have the body build to be a hiker and unfortunately, forcing my body to hike has resulting in damaging the neurons in my feet such that I am not longer able to hike longer than 3 miles without excruciating nerve pain. I am not alone. I know plenty of people with similar physical needs who can ride bikes for miles but are unable to hike. We need our mountain bike to get around. It is because of trails like these that make life worthwhile and the thought of losing them and not being able to share them someday with my 7 year old and 3 year old is incredibly sad and feels unfair. But because I love these trails, I do what I can for organizations like the Forest Service that create and maintain our awesome trail system and I serve as a board member of our local mountain bike club whose mission is to help maintain trails on public land in the hopes that we can lighten your load. Mountain bikers have lightened your load for decades in this region and will continue to do so.

Thank you for all your hard work,
Dr. Amanda Duley
MTB Missoula Board Member