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Organization:

Title:

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FOREST PLAN REVISION

HELENA - LEWIS & CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

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HELENA, MT 59602DELIVERED ELECTRONICALLY

SUBJECT:OBJECTIONS TO HLCNF FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

I was very disheartened to find out that the forest service chose to move forward with Alternative F; specifically, with the choice to disallow bicycles within Recommended Wilderness Areas (RWA's) - thereby banning and discriminating against millions of non-motorized mountain bikers around the country who might someday wish to access RWA's while mountain biking or bikepacking. Alternative C within the draft document was hands-down the most reasonable compromise amongst the various user groups but it appears that the heavily-funded conservation lobby wins yet again with this final EIS document and the decision to move forward with the short-sighted ban on bicycles.

My hope had been that the forest service would take into consideration my recommendation to differentiated between cyclists and 'mechanized' within the EIS document which would have improved the verbiage to reflect real-world conditions. The decision to continue to lump 'mechanized' cyclists in with motorized vehicles does damage to the conservation movement as a whole, as it makes people like me (who support conservation; just not radical conservation) staunch opponents to any further RWA's or Wilderness designations now or in the future.

To address these concerns, it is my hope that you will reconsider the decision to ban bicycles from 135 miles of trails as noted in Table 2 of the FEIS Summary. This could be easily accomplished by removing the text stating that RWA's will be managed as if they are congressionally-approved Wilderness. Doing so would have long-lasting benefits to forest health and the ability for the public to access trails thanks to the continued efforts of the mountain bike volunteer community who has repeatedly helped keep numerous trails clear over the years. I fear that the FS, by disallowing mountain bike access within RWA's is doing a disservice to all trail users as trails frequently fall into disrepair once the main trail stewards are denied access (as evidenced in the Bitterroot Forest over the years since mountain bikes were banned within RWA's).

My above comments are consistent with my original comments submitted earlier on during the public involvement process. I hope that you will take them into consideration.

Regards,

Jake Gunther