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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Tillman Trails Connectivity Project #58134. I am a resident of Bridgewater, VA and a frequent user of the George Washington National Forest as a hiker and biker using both the trail system and established Forest Service roads. I have been hiking and riding the Narrowback trail system specifically since the mid-1990s and the work the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition has put into these trails, both in trail realignments and maintenance, serves as a model to other hiking and cycling clubs across the country. I strongly support this project for the reasons listed below:

-The trail this project will replace is unsustainable due to its grade. I have used the current trail for over 20 years and in that time the amount of maintenance required to keep it useable as increased greatly. Given the amount of erosion currently I do not know of another alternative other than to decommission the trail.

-The trail as proposed will allow more use of the entire Narrowback trail system by providing a beginner/intermediate trail from the Wolf parking lot. As you know, so many of the trails in the GWNF are only suitable for advanced hikers/bikers due to their grade and limited access making for long loops which require a serious commitment. This trail will make it easy for folks to start several different hiking and biking loops from the Wolf parking lot which will not require an all day backcountry adventure suitable only for a small portion of users. And for our equestrian friends this trail will provide access to the ridge from a designated parking area. I have hiked the proposed corridor and if built this is a trail I would take my 80 year-old mom out on for a hike!

-Along the lines of the above comment, the proposed corridor for this trail will allow for a much more multi-user friendly trail. As you know the existing trail basically falls off the side of the mountain. When descending on a mountain bike, no matter how slow you are going, if there are hikers or equestrians coming up the trail it is very hard to stop just due to the steepness. Due to the more mellow grades of this proposed trail different users will be able to ensure much more positive interaction.

-The location of the trail will also make car-free cycling access from the Harrisonburg/Dayton/Bridgewater area to the Narrowback trail network much easier avoiding traffic on Tilghman Road. Especially during hunting season, traffic on Tilghman Road can be surprisingly busy (and fast). This trail will allow rides from town to almost instantly be on the trail and avoid a significant portion of Tilghman Road.

-Similarly, this proposed trail is the "missing link" for longer single track rides without having to use Tilghman Road. Once built I am looking forward to climbing Wolf Ridge, descending Hearthstone, climbing Tilghman West, riding the Narrowback ridge then descending this new trail back to the car. The connectivity this trail will offer to all kinds of different adventures will be amazing. If an equestrian user, a hiker or a biker wants an all-day backcountry adventure this trail will help facilitate that.

-The Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition has a long track record of maintaining the local trail network. While the Forest Service may have some concern regarding a small amount of trail mileage with this project given its location it will be incredibly easy for the Coalition to maintain. The trail will also provide easier access to the ridge for trail additional maintenance.