

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/27/2022 4:23:56 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Ochoco National Forest

I just finished reading the environmental analysis that your team has completed on the proposed MTB trails in the ochoco national forest. And first, I would like to sincerely thank the forest service for all their hard work and dedication to this type of work. I am writing to support alternative 2 and against alternatives 1,3,4,5 and the forest service preferred alternative 6. The reasons for this are highlighted below.

Since retiring in 2015 I have had the opportunity to truly focus on things that are of great value to me and many others. A sense of a hard working, fun and kind community are some of them. Another very important one is having an active life style. I moved back to Prineville early this year after leaving for a few years. When we left to follow my wife's work, I did not think we would settle back here especially to a state and county that has one of the highest cost of living expenses for retirees in the nation. I said to myself is this place worth the value? Shortly after leaving I realized I missed this community and the great friendships I formed. There were multiple reasons for moving back, including family in Bend. But the primary draw was the great value I see in our forests, Prineville, Crook County and this state. In this community, I have met and became friends with very diverse, well balanced, smart and kind groups of people. These include cattle ranchers, equestrians, OHVers, Mtbikers, hunters, hikers, and many others. I love this about living here. I have what I believe is a very well balanced mind set and myself have been a small farmer, owned and showed arabian horses, ride OHVs, ride Mt bikes, hike, ski, owned my own business, worked for government and other volunteer activities that create healthy relationships and a connected community. This is where my thoughts on Lemon Gulch come into play.

The proposed alternative 2 clearly falls within the national forests services mission, goals and objectives. In addition, the forest plan for the ochocos clearly supports a significant increase in trails in order to accomplish the objective of 468 user miles and a managed trail system for a variety of users including mountain biking. Even adding a trail network of 51 miles to the existing 156 miles still falls significantly short of the plans objectives.

There are no known (at least that I have read) additional projects that will move the forest service even close to this objective in at least the next decade. Therefore selecting alternative 2 of the proposals does the best job of at least moving the forest closer to the objective over the next 10-15 years.

Building a trail network of 27 or 51 miles will take, by your own writing in the EA, multiple phases and a decade or more to accomplish. Looking forward a decade and by adopting the preferred alternative or any of the other alternatives other then 2 even more so separates the forest service from accomplishing the plan objectives.

Every element of the EA that was studied either has no impact, nominal impact, potential consequences or professional judgment impacts, None have any Significant or absolute negative environmental impacts like the EA calls out in other areas of the ochocos such as lookout Mt, round mt, pot lid trail area Scotty cougar etc. The EA gives the impression there is no other areas in the forest that will accommodate MTB trails with in the goals of the project. This gives more reason to select alternative 2 and the 51 miles of trails and to build the trails in the lemon gulch area.

The only listed reasoning for not selecting alternative 2 is the higher level of disturbance simply by adding more miles and either the potential or nominal impacts but there are no actual significant impacts especially if you consider the cumulative differential between alternative 6 and alternative 2.

Even though the forest inventory states there are 25 miles of trails that can be used for bikes, There are currently

zero miles of purpose built MTB trails in the Ochoco. This contradicts the plan regarding development of the forest in a way that serves all recreational users including MTB. Adopting alternative 2 only gets us part way toward a balanced approach. The preferred alternative is even further from this objective. We need to work toward putting an end to the disparate treatment of MTB tax payers and trail proposals in our national forests. Alternative 2 gets us going in the right direction.

I understand that the comparisons to other forest uses is not a direct part of the scope of this EA. However, as stated in areas of the EA and the plan other uses such as grazing, hiking, logging, implementing the mill creek, McKay, spears fuels vegetation management projects and other uses have a more long term and short term significant impacts to the environment than adoption of alternative 2.

The economic benefit of trail systems are clear and proven. They are also scalable to the size of the trail system. Therefore alternative 2 has the best economic benefit to the community and surrounding areas. Some studies have shown that the economic impact per mile of trails can be \$75,000 annually to local community's and another \$40,000 in the outlying areas. You can research this yourselves and select whichever study and method you want to calculate the economic benefits of each alternative. The consequences of the forest service not selecting alternative 2 over alternative 6 is a negative \$1,800,000 annually to the local community and another \$960,000 to the outlying areas.

The proposed trails will be designated multi use which allows for the 51 miles to be used by other interest groups other than just MTB users. This clearly complies with the plan's objectives of developing trails for a variety of users. It is proven that increasing the number and miles of trails and doing purpose built trails decreases users conflicts. One of the main objectives of this project is to reduce this conflict. By adopting alternative 2 the forest service would maximize the potential for decreased conflicts.

There is no question that creating recreational opportunities close to communities increases the overall health of the community. Every recreational element and mile that can be developed will increase our health. Therefore selecting alternative 2 is the best choice toward community health.

Alternative 6 has broken apart a well thought out 51 mile proposal and has left some technical specifics flawed leading to a negative impact on trail system design. These include the reduced potential to force riders onto the open road way, reduction of all levels of cross country and downhill trails smaller parking areas etc.

One area the EA doesn't study is how to shift our social culture toward change. A little side story relative to the controversy over Lemon Gulch and an example of cultural values, judgement and unbalanced beliefs. While hiking up at Steens pillar earlier this year and after driving past all the no lemon gulch signs, I was day dreaming about the concerns by our neighbors over the impacts this will bring to their "serene" way of life. I was trying to put myself in their shoes and truly trying to understand the concerns. After hiking out to the pillars my wife and I were sitting on the ledge of the pillar talking with a few other hikers and out of the peace and quiet came the very loud noise of gun fire sailing out of the area proposed for lemon gulch. It was a very eye opening moment in my sympathy for the impacts on growth in the area. I know of many others that go to that area to shoot, have fun and hunt. I too am an active hunter and enjoy shooting my guns. But what occurred to me is that this type of activity is never brought up as a problem affecting serenity in the area. (At least not that I have seen or heard from the anti-Lemon gulch comments). And us shooters certainly aren't quiet and create peace while shooting. It is one of those activities along with hunting, cattle grazing, riding horses, camping, OHVing, driving up and down forest roads etc that are just plain excepted as normal culture and we place a high value on them. Don't get me wrong I support a balanced and open use system for all of us to enjoy no matter what our passions are. That is what our national forests are for! I truly believe we can fit MTB into the mix. I also believe we can work together to help shift our cultural beliefs to a more open minded system.

I represent a very large, although very quiet, local group of people that support the MTB lifestyle, the lemon gulch

project and the values it brings to our community. They want to work together to bring in to fruition. I truly hope the rest of our community, the forest service and the lemon gulch neighbors will join us in making this happen. Please select alternative 2 as your choice for our future.

Respectfully

Randy Winders