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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Mountain biking has been an important part of my life for as long as I can remember. From a very young age, I would head out on my single speed bike with my parents and shred (as much as any 4 year old can). We rode near home in Colorado and frequented the mountain bike hub of Moab, Utah. Biking with my parents have created some of my most valued memories, and I learned much along the way, including how to build skill and overcome challenges.

Central Oregon holds much potential as a mountain bike hub, much as it is for many outdoor activities. Smith Rock is legendary in the climbing world. The Cascade highway lakes and surrounding area reservoirs and rivers are legendary for fishing, rafting, and kayaking. Hiking and mountaineering are legendary in our part of the Cascades and on our volcanoes. Dirt biking, horseback riding, ATVing, snowmobiling, skiing - the list is endless.

While the area is legendary for many things, it is not legendary for diversity in mountain bike trail terrain and challenge level. Flow trails are our sweet spot. Yes, Oakridge provides a different flavor of riding, but we are in need of additional trail diversity. We are also in need of volume outside of the Bend area. Lemon Gulch provides for each of these needs.

It's also not just a benefit to mountain biking. Hiking, horseback riding, and more will benefit from having these trails, both by having added volume, but also in reducing congestion on multi-use trails. Hikers generally don't enjoy hiking on trails that have high volumes of mountain bikes, and mountain bikers generally don't enjoy riding trails with high volumes of hikers. Horseback riders share the same. It's not that these users don't co-exist well, it's more about optimizing safe and enjoyable conditions.

I've focused on the recreationalists thus far, but expanding trail access also benefits the region economically. Moab is a prime example, and one that I am familiar with. The economic benefit mountain biking brings to Moab is astounding. Take away just one of the activities in that region (like mountain biking), and the economic hit would be shocking. Similarly, enhancing our regional draw for mountain biking will bring additional tourism dollars to areas that do not benefit as greatly as Bend does currently.

There will never be a 'perfect' solution when there are wealthy, private landowners with properties adjacent to national forest land opposed to recreational use of those public lands. My hope is that approval of these trails will uphold the need to ensure public use of public lands is supported, and that it respectfully messages to private land owners that they do not get to have exclusive control of lands outside of their boundaries. Public lands are a shared resource, not a private one.