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Organization: American Trail Running Association

Title: Director of Marketing

Comments: Dear Slater Turner and the Ochoco National Forest,

I am writing in support of the Lemon Gulch trail network in the Ochoco National Forest. This project is clearly a well thought out and well studied proposal that will help meet the current and future needs of recreation including trail running. It also has many benefits to trail runners and Crook County residents.

Increased use in the Ochocos is a completely predictable future. Trail conflict and crowding will be a certainty in the near term if additional trail opportunities are not implemented soon. The work of Ochoco Trails represents years of dedicated planning and collaboration that has led to a proposal that can solve these issues. Mountain bike users and trail runners are a fast growing segment of users in the Ochocos; by creating this network of trails in an already heavily-used area close to town we can maintain the wild and rugged nature of more remote areas in the Ochocos.

Crook County and Prineville will also benefit enormously, from both economic and health perspectives. Having a trail network much closer to town means easier access for local families to get out and enjoy the forest, which will lead to a healthier population. Trail running is a popular and fast growing sport throughout Oregon with over 100 annual races and tens of thousands of recreational trail runners who are looking for new places to run. With many popular trail running venues in Central Oregon becoming more crowded, having new trail systems available can help relieve this issue. This is particularly true for races which are often limited by land managers. Prineville is in a perfect position to gain these advantages that tourism brings without detracting from the small town lifestyle that residents enjoy.

In reading the environmental assessment I truly appreciate the breadth of issues that the USFS assessed and the thoroughness with which this project has been approached.

Thank you for your consideration.

Richard Bolt - Bend, OR

Director of Marketing

American Trail Running Association