

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/15/2022 2:06:34 AM

First name: Bethany

Last name: Holman

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Slater Turner and the Ochoco National Forest,

I am a Prineville resident and business owner. I moved here in 2013 and opened Crooked Tails Veterinary Clinic. I am also an avid mountain biker and user of the Ochoco National Forest. I spend many, many days each year biking, hiking, skiing, and camping in the Ochocos. In the time I have lived in Prineville, I have witnessed the growth of the town first hand.

It is clear that the population is growing in Prineville. Neighborhoods, restaurants, bars, and shops have been constantly sprouting up over the last 5-6 years. This is fantastic for a town that was once on the verge of dying after losing its primary industry. However, Prineville must accommodate this growth with jobs and opportunities. The introduction of large data centers has certainly sparked the rebirth of Prineville, but to be sustainable in the long term, we need a healthy and diverse economy and not to rely entirely on one industry. Tourism and outdoor recreation are two of the most reliable ways for small towns to ensure long-term prosperity. Mountain biking in particular has been shown, throughout the US and the world, to bring enormous benefits to small towns in terms of economics and health. Prineville is well positioned to capitalize on mountain bike tourism with the Lemon Gulch trail proposal and I strongly support its development as a local resident and small business owner.

I am a mountain biker, hiker, and trail runner and regularly visit existing trails such as Lookout Mountain and Potlid. Lookout Mountain is particularly well known and highly regarded by many user groups, with many cyclists and equestrians considering it one of the best trails in Central Oregon. I typically ride Lookout 6-7 times each summer and over the years I have seen a dramatic increase in the number of other users, especially mountain bikers, on this trail. A single trail that is the central focus for most users in the Ochocos is not sustainable in any way. Crowding and user conflict is inevitable if more opportunities are not created for users. The Environmental Assessment states that the Ochoco National Forest Plan foresaw the need for additional mountain bike trails all the way back in 1989. It called for 468 miles of non-motorized trails by 2010. Currently, in 2022, there are only 156 miles of non-motorized trails in the Ochocos, none of which are designed for mountain bikes. There is a clear and enormous need for these trails and the full build of Alternative 2 is the best option to fulfill this need.

As a mountain biker, I frequently travel to ride and I typically look for modern, downhill-style trail areas (with both shuttle and non-shuttle access). This type of trail network is virtually non-existent in Central Oregon. While there are certainly great trails in this region, they are almost all XC trails and lack the technical downhill riding that is now common in other regions of the country. Lemon Gulch, by design and due to its natural terrain, will fill this gap exceptionally well. The added fact that it is significantly closer to Prineville than Lookout means that most riders, including myself, will be far less likely to choose Lookout or Round Mountain to ride instead. The logical conclusion is that with fewer riders visiting more remote backcountry trails, users on those trails will have a much better experience.

I have been saddened to see some of the short-sighted, misguided, and misinformed objections to this project but am heartened to see the overwhelming support now that the draft Environmental Assessment has been published. This trail network has the potential to offer huge benefits to Prineville without any negative effects to the small town lifestyle and culture.

I encourage the Forest Service to proceed with implementation of the Lemon Gulch trail network.

Sincerely,

Bethany Holman