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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Slater Turner and the Ochoco National Forest,

I submit this comment in support of the Lemon Gulch Trail proposal. I have reviewed the EA and I compliment the completeness of the review. It was extremely helpful to have the detail provided in evaluating the proposal for comment.

I support the Lemon Gulch Trail proposal and would be somewhat satisfied if the alternative proposed by the Forest Service, Alternative 6, is adopted. The development of a near town system of trails would be extremely positive for Prineville, both from a commercial perspective, but also, and perhaps more importantly, from a family and health perspective. Lemon Gulch presents the opportunity for a family to participate in a sport together. It also would allow youth in the community an opportunity to get out in the forest and experience its wonder. As a young adult and parent, I spent many days and weeks hiking and backpacking with friends and family in many Pacific Northwest forests. Mountain biking was in its infancy then, so we did not ride as a family, but we certainly had the opportunity to learn about the forests and to appreciate the opportunity to wander on our public lands. Today, I see mountain biking as a newer way to get out and do the same for a younger generation. What a gift to have an opportunity to do so close to home. Other commenters have detailed some changes to Alternative 6 that would make it much more acceptable and workable to all bikers. I suggest that if Alternative 6 is adopted, these changes be made (e.g., changing the location of a trail so it does not require a steep climb, adding back a portion of t trail that was actually included in all other alternatives).

I believe the EA outlines the minimal impact this proposal would have on the forest ecosystem. I also have observed and participated with mountain biking groups in taking care of trails in the area and I believe they would be a positive force in maintaining and caring for not just the trails, but also the forest as a whole.

Although the Forest Service is recommending adoption of Alternative 6, after reviewing the alternatives, I would request strong consideration of the adoption of Alternative 2, for a number of reasons. First, this alternative would add nearly twice the number of miles to be added to the Ochoco National Forest trail network. Because there is a recognized need for 468 miles of trails to be developed in the Ochoco National Forest, it seems that adoption of the alternative moving the forest closer to that number makes sense especially given that the impacts of the project as set out in Alternative 2 are minimal and certainly manageable.

Second, Alternative 2 offers many more opportunities for more varieties and levels of trail development. This alternative presents more options for the beginner and for those using adaptive bikes. This would in turn offer more options for individuals and families with varying skill levels to ride while developing skills. These additional miles of trail network would also make it possible for non-bikers to more easily use some of the trails.

Finally, the larger network of trails would draw more out-of-town cyclists, which will benefit the economy of Prineville and provide needed income to local businesses. The drought has wrought damage to local businesses dependent on natural resource-based tourism (such as water sports in the reservoirs); this trail network could provide the needed traffic to help those local businesses survive.