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Organization: COTA

Title: Sisters Chapter Representative

Comments: Dear Mr. Turner:

I am writing in strong support of the Lemon Gulch trail network in the Ochoco National Forest. The draft Environmental Assessment (EA) clearly states there is a significant need for additional non-motorized trails in the Ochoco National Forest, as outlined in the forest management plan created in 1989. With only 156.5 miles completed of a 468-mile objective (and no trails managed for mountain bikes) the USFS should move forward in meeting the goals of their own forest plan. Specifically, I urge the Forest Service to adopt Alternative 2 - the full 51.3-mile network - because it offers the most attractive range of riding styles for mountain bikers and as concluded in the draft EA, it poses no significant environmental impact.

The Lemon Gulch trail network is a well-planned and thought out proposal that would help the USFS make progress towards those objectives. This proposal would also achieve the following goals outlined in the draft EA:

? The terrain and style of riding in Lemon Gulch is desirable for mountain bikers and is not found in other regions

? By creating a network more attractive to mountain bikers, use will be drawn away from other trail areas in the Ochocos, such as Lookout Mountain, thereby significantly reducing user conflict and crowding.

? The Lemon Gulch trail network shows a wide variety of trails suitable for all levels of riders. The inclusion of trails that meet design standards for adaptive MTBs also adds an element of accessibility that does not exist in the Ochocos and is difficult to find throughout Central Oregon.

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. Studies have shown that in Oregon alone, mountain biking cuts \$26 Million annually in health care costs. Mountain biking has also shown repeatedly in small towns around the country to add a significant boost to the economy. In Oakridge, Oregon mountain bikers spend \$2.3-\$4.9 million every year. 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,

Mark Miskowiec

Sisters COTA Chapter Rep