

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/17/2022 11:12:03 PM

First name: Lorena

Last name: Brown

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Saturday, December 17, 2022

Ochoco National Forest

3160 NE Third Street

Prineville, OR 97754

Dear Slater, Monty, Beth, Jim, and the rest of the team on the Ochoco National Forest,

I am writing in support of the Lemon Gulch project. As you may be aware, 2021 was my first experience working with the US Forest Service and I was fortunate enough to have had that experience on the Ochoco National Forest (Paulina Ranger District) and I resided in Prineville. For the 2022 season, I chose to go elsewhere to enhance my experience in the botanist professional track that I seek, and yet it seems that I will tell anyone who will listen that I wish to return to Central Oregon to stay. I recently completed my season on the Plumas National Forest and, thus, I am using my family's Bend address on the submission form.

I am also an avid mountain biker and the proximity of mountain bike trails is integral in my decision on where I want to work and live. I know that I am not alone in this.

In your environmental assessment, it is noted that the growing popularity of mountain biking was recognized as far back as the 1989 Forest Plan. 2020 saw a tremendous increase in that popularity, along with many other outdoor activities. That year, I was working at a bicycle shop in Ohio and it wasn't long into the pandemic that inventory of nearly all bicycles, including mountain bikes in all price ranges, was at an all time low across all manufacturers. Business may have been booming, and yet it presented many challenges for us trying to get people the right bike for them.

Your EA also notes it is well documented that more recreation opportunities on public lands, such as trails, can be an economic driver for the adjacent communities. I can attest that most of my trips are often centered around mountain bike trails. Many of my weekends over the past few years have been traveling to trails such as at Oakridge and Alsea, OR; Mt Hood National Forest (Sandy Ridge and Timberline to Town), Sedona, AZ; Bentonville, AR; Mt Shasta, CA; Truckee, CA; Ashland, OR; and most recently Beatty, NV to name a few. I often camp at these destinations and usually have dinner out with my friends and riding partners. Even when riding locally, we often end up at a local restaurant or brewery following our ride.

As an avid mountain biker, and an advanced cross country rider, not surprisingly I would encourage the Forest Service to move forward with Alternative 2, the complete build out proposed by Ochoco Trails. Alternative 2 has the most miles and the greatest variety of trails from beginner to advanced and does the most to close the gap between the desired condition of 468 miles of non-motorized trails laid out in the 1989 Forest Plan and the existing condition of 156.5 miles. Even with the 51.3 miles of trails in Alternative 2, there is still a long way to go to get to the desired 468 miles, but it is a step in the right direction.

There are many places throughout the west where grazing and recreational trail use, including mountain biking, coexist. I feel that your EA does a thorough and excellent job of addressing the concerns of a few vocal minorities that favor the no action plan, Alternative 1, including the permittees of the Mill Creek and Steins Allotments. Our National Forests are lands of many uses and recreation is certainly one of those uses supported by the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960. It is unfortunate to me that one small group of National Forest users feel that they can dictate all other activities and uses and be the gatekeepers to our public lands. I understand that these lands belong to all of us and, thus I understand the need for compromise. As such,

although I would love to see Alternative 2 come to fruition, I would still be pleased with the Forest Service's preferred alternative, Alternative 6. Although this alternative significantly reduces the amount of trails, it does keep the majority of beginner trails and a good amount of intermediate trails, and the really important adaptive mountain bike trails, making this system suitable for a wide array of riders and community members.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hopefully having the opportunity to work with you all on this project in the near future.

Sincerely,
Lorena Brown