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First name: Leah

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Slater Turner and the Ochoco National Forest,

I am writing to communicate my support for the responsible forest management of the Ochoco National Forest, including the Lemon Gulch Trail System Project.

The primary question for me is how to integrate human use and natural wild lands in a responsible way. The proposed Lemon Gulch Trail Project does this. Right now, it seems that the proposed area, and the rest of the forest, is used randomly, haphazardly, and irresponsibly. Motorized vehicles going everywhere they want, trash being dumped wherever, and over-grazing by cattle ranchers.

The proposed Lemon Gulch Trail system effectively provides a trail system that consolidates multiple user groups in a focused area. While this increases local impact to the area, it decreases an overall widespread, haphazard use over a wider area. The focused user areas, and specifically Lemon Gulch, helps to limit and consolidate human use in a manner that can maintain healthy ecosystems and provide healthy outdoor recreating opportunities. With the environmental assessments, user group collaborations, responsible prescribed burning, and the restoration of over-grazed areas, the forest flora, fauna, water, biology, and ecology can be restored and maintained at healthy levels.

The Lemon Gulch Trail System project provides healthy and cost-effective ways for people to enjoy the outdoors and increase their mental and physical health. I support alternative #2 of the proposed project because it gives the most diverse trail options for riders, hikers, and runners of all levels.

I am a novice mountain biker and experienced hiker. My husband is an advanced rider and loves hiking with me as well. It would be a great experience to both ride bikes, or hike, within the Lemon Gulch trail system at the same time when we visit. Creating a network with 52 miles of trails (Alternative #2) makes sense as it provides more opportunity for diverse riding levels, and with more trail options and mileage it creates more incentive to drive out there from Bend or other areas.

It also seems relevant to mention that the proposed Lemon Gulch Trail System would improve the local economy without creating a harmful impact on infrastructure. While the Trail System would likely see an immediate boost in traffic (since it would be novel), over time, this usage would fade into the background and be a slow and steady activity level. I have seen this happen with the trail systems in Bend, and Bend is a highly sought out destination for travelers. Prineville doesn't have the same reputation or attraction, and a trail system of 52 miles is not going to change that. It will provide responsible outdoor recreating opportunities for local Prineville residents and the broader Central Oregon community, and attract visitors that happen to be in the area.

In closing, I support the Lemon Gulch Trail System Project, Alternative #2. It provides a new set of trails for mountain bikers, hikers and runner, with a new type of terrain and diverse difficulty levels. It requires responsible use and ongoing maintenance which improved the ecosystem and biosystem of the area. It begins the development of motorized use and cattle rancher areas and encourages the improvement of their use in consolidated areas with responsible management practices.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warmly, Leah