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Comments: The Oakridge Trails Alliance is a 501-c-3 organization focused on developing and maintaining recreational trails, enhancing recreational experiences on trails, and fostering public lands stewardship in the Middle Fork Willamette Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest. Today we are writing in support of the Lemon Gulch trail network in the Ochoco National Forest.

Specifically, the Lemon Gulch project as proposed in the EA as Alternative 2, will help mitigate impacts in other areas of limited access by dispersing user traffic over a wider geographic area. The proposed use of terrain will help generate interest by providing a unique destination for riders, inclusive for MTB adaptive mobility devices. Additionally, Lemon Gulch would create a tremendous asset for local community members, with health and economic benefits that serve to enhance the culture and quality of life for residents.

Similar to the Westfir-Oakridge revival from logging town to an outdoor recreation mecca, communities in the Lemon Gulch vicinity stand to benefit greatly from both economic and health perspectives. As an example, Oregon mountain bikers spend \$2.3-\$4.9 million every year in our local communities, and have helped to drive new business owners to settle in the area - including small farmers, artists, and trades contractors - increasing food security and access to essential services within our community.

The recent surge in demand for outdoor recreation access has also helped to fuel a stronger, more diverse tax base; filling empty storefronts, and supporting various public assets such as expanding library hours and new parks investments, to creating alternatives for after school programming. Overall, by building stronger connections to nature, our communities continue to grow both our civic pride and environmental stewardship ethic. This is apparent in our community's volunteer structure, which draws people both locally and regionally to our township.

Trails and access to nature has been scientifically proven to improve overall physical and mental health. Having such a vital asset located so close to local communities will provide healthier options for access to recreational facilities, especially for youth seeking recreation outside of traditional sports or indoor digital pastimes.

Thank you for your consideration of Lemon Gulch. Please feel to reach out to us directly if you have any questions or would like a tour of some of our local Oakridge area projects.

Very best regards,

Matt McPharlin, President  
Oakridge Trails Alliance