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Organization:

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Comments: Dear Slater Turner and the Ochoco National Forest,

First of all, I would like to thank all the parties that have put this together. I took a little time and read the Draft Assessment (not all of it, sorry) and some of the earlier planning reports. An amazing amount of work was put into this. Thank you!

I am from out of state, and will probably not get down to ride in that area very often, but I thought I would put in my thoughts. As I said above, I did read some of the environmental assessment and some of the comments from people who had attended the meetings there, but did not get through everything.

From what I read in some of the earlier meetings, it looked like the first ideas were generally well received, with a few complaints about grazing and a few wanting the area to stay the way it has always been. I know, just from visiting a friend of mine who lives in Bend, how much of a difference there is in cultural and political views in it and the surrounding area. I know that many in the Prineville area are probably a little nervous about the area maybe exploding into a touristy outdoor town like some other towns have. There is always that possibility, but, just by looking at the environmental assessment that was done, it doesn't look like there is that much area around there for other trail systems, so the odds are it won't become another Moab or Bend.

One of the big sticking points appeared to be grazing rights and possible conflicts with cattle. I can honestly say that I have been to many places biking and recreating that had cattle around and have never been bothered by them and don't believe they cared too much about me. I was in Crested Butte a couple months ago and they were all over near one of the most popular trails in the country, and were not a problem at all. Other than the trails are a bit rougher.

Early on in the reading I did, it was stated that there is something like 468 miles of recreational objective in that FS land and only 156 miles are now used. None of which is mountain biking trails. I'm not saying they need to add 156 miles of trails to catch up, but I do believe that Alternative 2, at 52 miles or so, would be a very good thing to start on. It looks like you have some good camping in the area, the wildlife would not be impacted significantly, the town would have some tourism dollars brought in and some new businesses maybe. Generally speaking, I have found that most of the time, mountain bikers tend to be pretty good tenants of taking care of the lands they recreate in, and doing a lot of volunteer work and clean ups.

One of the biggest reasons that I would encourage option 2, is that the population is not getting any smaller. Change is always on the way and always hard, but I have found in 62 years of living, that if you miss the opportunity to get something done the first time, it will cost a lot more later or never get done at all. You have a chance to build something that will be enjoyed and visited by many people in the future.

No matter what decision you eventually make, I will watch with interest and will look forward to visiting the area someday. Congratulations to you all for all the hard work and time and thank you, for allowing me to put in my two cents from another state.

Tara Hamm