

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/19/2018 8:00:00 AM

First name: Jim

Last name: Blount

Organization: Team Dirt

Title: Board Member

Comments: It has come to my attention that several concerns have been raised about new trail proposals in the Willamette National Forest on Bunchgrass Ridge and Cowhorn Mountain.

As the manager of a local bike shop, a board member of Team Dirt (an organization that promotes mountain biking and represents mountain bikers in the greater Corvallis area), and an active member of the mountain biking community, I have an interest in these new trail proposals.

It is my understanding that these two proposed new trails create connectivity between existing trails where there was none previously. Each is roughly 2.5 miles long and has been studied by the environmental analysis team from the Willamette National Forest. In neither case were any impediments to the proposed trails found.

I believe that these proposed trails will:

1. Create a more direct, singletrack route over the cascades for long distance cyclists and other forest users.
2. Create better connectivity between the Windy Lakes trail system and Timpanogas trails in the Oregon Cascades Recreation Area, and
3. Close an important gap along the Eugene to Crest Trail from the historic Bunchgrass Ridge to Fuji Mountain.
4. Reduce illegal use of the PCT by cyclists by creating preferable alternatives, and
5. Create a pristine backcountry trail experience, uninterrupted from Waldo Lake to Oakridge.
6. Create an opportunity to manage user behavior in a sustainable fashion.

I believe that these proposed trails will not:

1. Degrade the natural resources of the area.
2. Increase the potential for user conflict in the Willamette National Forest.
3. Negatively impact wildlife in these areas.

Furthermore, multiple scientific studies have found that mountain bike use on trails results in no more negative impact than that of hikers, and much less than people on horses: "The environmental degradation caused by mountain biking is generally equivalent or less than that caused by hiking, and both are substantially less impacting than horse or motorized activities. In the small number of studies that included direct comparisons of the environmental effects of different recreational activities, mountain biking was found to have an impact that is less than or comparable to hiking.." (Michael Quinn and Greg Chernoff, Miistakis Institute, 2010)

In short, I believe that the negative impact to wildlife and sensitive ecological areas by increased bicycle traffic is negligible, tenuous, and far outweighed by the positive impact that can be reaped through human-powered recreation on public lands.

Sincerely,

Jim Blount