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Comments: Please accept my Comments on the Cowhorn Connector Trail Project. I am a retired (mostly) professional trail planner and contractor with 20+ years' experience in design and development of all kinds of trails. I have performed trail assessments and develop trail management plans for a number of USFS trail systems on a range of different user group trails. Additionally I have worked with recreation ecologists on a number of projects and am well verse on the impacts of different user groups on trail treads but also wildlife and ecosystems.

I fully support this proposed connector trail as put forth in the SOPA for Willamette NF (with some on Deschutes). This proposal connects 2 trail systems currently not connected and thus opens up some options for new loops and ride opportunities. This connector will also greatly improve the experience of the long distance bikepacker riding the Oregon Timber Trail by eliminating a lengthy forest road section and replace with some sweet new single track (a much better trail experience).

Mountain bikes have very similar impacts as compared with hikers and far less than horses on trails. In some studies (Spar study on bald eagles) mountain bikers had less wildlife impacts than other users due to the very short duration of stay.

I spoke at length last week with Dana Hendricks from PCTA as she called me to get some feedback on how this connector may affect the PCT. I do not feel this connector will invite or increase mountain biker trespass onto the PCT at the proposed junction and any temptation could be mitigated with appropriate signage and possible ladder stiles (or some other form of stiles such as a maze stile). Should this trail proposal move forward I would be happy to meet with you and Dana on the trail to discuss and develop a program to keep mountain bikers on the new connector trail and off of the PCT.

Attached is a sample USFS trail plan project that I spearheaded as a sample of my trail planning work. This project involved a number of consultants' including Dr. Jeremy Wimpey with Applied Trails Research (he is a leading recreation ecologist). Of particular interest in that sample trail plan is Appendix B which is a thorough review of trail impacts literature to date at the time of this publication. Note, this is a low res version so photos will not be crisp.

Please let me know if you have questions or I can be of assistance.

Woody Keen