

Lemon Gulch Trail System Project

Scoping Report

The District Ranger issued a letter dated March 10, 2021 to announce the release of the proposed action. The letter and the proposed action document were distributed via GovDelivery to 419 email recipients and sent postal mail to 107 recipients. The scoping notice requested that comments be returned to the Forest Service by April 15, 2021. A total of 86 responses had been received by that date (see list on page 3).

Comments were categorized by topic or affected resource. A general summary of the sentiment is presented with a few examples of the comments. The full text of all comments is available for review at the Ochoco National Forest office in Prineville, Oregon.

Wildlife Concerns with Proposed Action

Ochoco Trails group submitted a sustainable trails proposal to the Forest Service in 2019, of which the current proposed action was a part. Planning for the sustainable trails proposal incorporated strategies to minimize impacts to fish and wildlife on the larger landscape while balancing public desires for recreation infrastructure, guided by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Forest Service biologists. However, the Lemon Gulch trail proposal does have potential to impact fish, wildlife, and habitat in the project area. Commenters expressed concern about effects to core habitat patches, big game winter range, and disturbance in general.

- In my experience wildlife will move out of the area.
- This level of activity may effectively drive Deer out of the area to seek more seclusion. Looking at the surrounding area on the maps provided it looks like this area now is an area that could or possibly is used for that purpose by deer, elk and other species of wildlife.
- ODFW recommends placing bridges at Lemon Creek crossings to reduce sedimentation effects on Redband trout.
- ODFW recommends monitoring use of the project area in the context of recreation across the ONF and using current planning guides (provided) in project planning.
- Consider additional road closers and continue to address user-created roads and trails; consider opportunities for using Good Neighbor Authority agreement.
- Recommend using radio collar data on mule deer to help with this proposal.
- Concern for cumulative effects to species sensitive to human disturbance, lack of hiding cover, greater forest density, and multi-layered canopy or shrub layers, such as mule deer, elk, goshawk, and neotropical migratory birds.
- Do not locate trails within goshawk nesting areas or post-fledgling areas. Develop an alternative that avoids all high use or special seasonal use elk and deer areas and all goshawk nest area buffers. Parts of the planned trail system that have high wildlife use or go into areas farther from existing road prisms that are open roads should either be dropped or be designated and designed for hikers only.

Livestock Grazing Concerns with Proposed Action

The Lemon Gulch Trails project area falls within an active livestock grazing allotment within which permitted livestock graze generally from mid-May to the end of June. Commenters expressed concerns about safety and effects to the ability to properly manage livestock.

- There are already many miles of established trail within the watershed and allotment.
- The management allocations emphasize production of timber and forage; permittee use and timber management practices should be prioritized above recreationists.
- It appears that many of the trails are hitting the high points and ridges of the terrain which will ultimately drive cattle off of those grazing areas and pushing livestock to creeks/riparian areas.
- It appears that the system is designed for higher speeds. The safety of the bicyclists and the safety of permittee riders managing cattle would be at risk.
- Wildlife and cattle will use the trails because animals by nature prefer a path of least resistance. Permittees will also be using them if they need to move the cows.
- Consider using existing roadways and/or abandoned roads used in the past for the trail system.
- Safety may be jeopardized and distribution of cattle will be unmanageable. Consider a closure during the grazing period to manage forage resources and adhere to guidelines (through July 1 or when most cattle are moved out of the area).
- The proposed parking area at the top end of the 3360307 road is near Buck Spring which is heavily used by cattle as a water source. Traffic and bikers may displace livestock to the creek bottoms where they would create negative impacts to riparian areas, requiring extra riding to push cattle up the hills. This requires more man days of riding and puts additional stress on the livestock. Consider putting the upper parking spot at the end of the 3360358 and restricting trails to the hillside and ridge east of the 3360 road.

Other recommendations for Analysis, Project Design, or Alternatives

- Prevent sedimentation into the creeks.
- Avoid routing trails through existing invasive plant sites. Educate the public about invasive plants and include prevention measures such as boot brush stations at each parking area.
- I encourage you to work with adjacent landowners to address their concern. In particular it appears that a trail segment would be very near the parcel along the 100/130 road. Consider moving the trailhead from that location.
- Concentrate on shorter loops near the main trailhead for beginners or those with time constraints.
- With all of the radio collars provided by O.H.A. for recording use and routes of Deer I would like to see that information researched and utilize with input from the U.S.F.S. Biologist and O.D.F.W. to help with this proposal to help the Mule Deer population.
- Education of the public should be a main concern in this proposal to encourage multiple-use to enjoy public lands responsibly.
- The trails could meet the needs of the community if it were a loop trail, alleviating the density of trails and reducing safety concerns and disruption.
- There should be clear one-way trails and clear signage for trail users warning of traffic. Specific closure that are inappropriate for some user groups (e.g. equestrians on steep black diamond downhill trail) should be well signed, along with yield signage.
- If the majority of parking will occur at junction of 3360200, should consider having CXT vault toilet available here as well as or instead of 3360100.

- I think this is a great place to allow E-bikes to allow big outer loops easier or pedal up for multiple loops in a day or summer evening. E-bikes allow groups of people with varying physical abilities to ride together.
- Have separate trails marked specifically for hiking instead of the entire system being designated for mountain bike use.
- Consider dropping commercial logging in the mountain bike trails vicinity and leaving hiding cover on either side of the trail.
- Avoid sensitive plant populations.

General Support for the Proposed Action

Most input was received from supporters of the proposal. There has been a demand for this type of trail system in Central Oregon; many commenters expressed their support for the proposal, citing the potential economic benefits, reduction in user conflicts, and excitement to have a new location to ride.

- Downhill specific trails with different degrees of difficulty and a shuttle able road is the type of riding this area is missing. I feel many locals would enjoy this area and it would be a draw for out town riders.
- It will be a popular destination because it's unlike any of the other trail areas in Central Oregon and mountain bikers really enjoy variety of terrain.
- I am pleased to see the needs of people with disabilities addressed with the inclusion of two trails designed for people with disabilities on adaptive mountain bikes.
- Construction of these purpose-built mountain bike trails will benefit equestrians by attracting some of the bike traffic currently on the Lookout and Round Mountain Trails. This will make the multi-use trails safer and more enjoyable for horseback riders and hikers.
- Lemon Gulch is much closer to Prineville than other trails in the Ochocos. This means greater positive economic impact for the community, as well as helping to focus use on this relatively small geographic area.
- Since this has been a collaboration with the Ochoco Trails group, a positive outcome will set a fantastic example of how traditionally adversarial user groups can work together successfully.
- The new trails will attract visitors to Prineville and Crook County, benefitting the local economy. The trails' proximity to Prineville will encourage locals to engage in healthy outdoor recreation.

List of individuals, agencies, and organizations that submitted scoping responses:

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| Christopher Nauer, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation | David Olewiler |
| Darlene Henderson, Ochoco Trails | Kim McCarrel, Oregon Equestrian Trails |
| Emmy Andrews, Central Oregon Trail Alliance | Justin Cook |
| Chris Bernhardt, Oregon Mountain Biking Coalition | Kestler |
| Sara Gregory, Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife | Maria Hatcliffe |
| Crook County Board of Commissioners | Matthew Gerlach |
| Joe Meyers, Bend Trails | Paul Lissette |
| Robert Rekwart, Bend Trails | Rod Adams |
| Chris Grier | Shelley Santucci |
| | Travis holman |

Tyler Simons
Aaron Lazelle
Alex Anderson
Amber Toomey
Angela Tye
Benjamin Taber
Bethany McWilliams
Brennan Morrow
Cal Curley
Calvin Lee
Darlene Henderson
David Caplan
David Hudson
Delaney O'Conner
Don Leet
Donna Barnes, Crook Co. on the Move
Dylan Wood
Earl Alderson
Erika Schmid
Gabriel Tiller, Oregon Timber Trail Alliance
Grant Waring
Heather Lynch
Jack Reynolds
Jason Caron
Jeanette Holman
Jonathon Fogarty
Josh Colvin
Josh Owen
Joshua Diep-Anderson
Justin Kureger
Kelly Burke
Kristen Burch
Mark DeJohn
Mark Landers
Mark Nordberg
Mark Seabourne
Matthew Ison
Matt Leonard

May Holzman
Michael WIngertsahn
Mike Schmeiske
Nat Chotechuang
Nick Hudriede
Owen Rodabugh
Pete Fairhurst
Peter Smith
Ray Budrevich
Rob Dorshorst
Robert Hollister
Ron West
Scott Jackson
Stephen Henderson
Steve Holman
Suzanne Marcoe
Thomas Yeoman
Timothy Henke
Trevor Miller
Roy and Mary Beyer
Bethany Holman
Matt Wesley
Kimberly Vogel
Terry Neill
Rodney and Cora Klein
Karen Coulter, BMBP

