



File Code: 1950
Date: August 2, 2021

The Honorable Vikki Breese-Iverson
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court St NE, Room H-381
Salem, OR, 97301

Dear Representative Breese-Iverson:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the issues raised in your recent correspondence I received on July 26th. On your primary point, I completely agree, that process matters. Because of our deep commitment to process, and involvement of community, there has been several years of deep citizen work getting to this project proposal.

Prior to initiating the NEPA process, my staff participated in a community-based Ochoco Trails group that was initiated by the Prineville - Crook County Chamber of Commerce. The Ochoco Trails group (ochocotrails.org), made up of stakeholders such as Oregon Hunters Association, Back Country Horsemen of Oregon, Central Oregon Trail Alliance, etc., worked with Forest Service staff and ODFW to collaboratively identify sustainable trails across the Ochoco NF that would meet existing and growing demand. In addition to organizations, other interested Crook county residents were part of the group including hikers, cyclists, and ranchers including one of the grazing permittees in Lemon Gulch. Their efforts included a community meeting of approximately 100 people where all the potential trail proposals were open for input from the public.

During the two years of work, the group asked the Forest Service and ODFW for natural resource feedback on numerous potential locations for a variety of multiple use trails and activity-specific systems. After assessing the feedback given, covering topics such as elk security and habitat, fisheries, botany, invasives weeds, etc the group approached the National Forest with a proposal. Last year, we undertook the NEPA process on three small projects within the sustainable trails proposal, which will provide improved equestrian trail loops at Dry Creek and Allen Creek Campgrounds, as well as summer trails at Bandit Springs where there is currently only a winter trail.

We initiated the NEPA process on the Lemon Gulch project specifically by providing notification of the proposed action directly to interested members of the public and also making such information publicly available by keeping our web page up to date and posting on Facebook and Twitter. We have acknowledged an oversight in the original direct mailing of the proposed action in the case of the Lemon Gulch trails project. My staff quickly remedied this by directly notifying permittees in the area of the proposed action and providing additional time to receive their feedback. We have met with the permittees in person, have received written input from the permittees, and have continued to dialogue with them via phone calls and letters.

My staff recently attended a meeting at the request of the County Board of Commissioners, and I attended a meeting of the Crook County Natural Resources Advisory Committee. Following those meetings, I agreed to pause the planning process while the Advisory Committee works to



prepare their input to the project. I am committed to a thorough review of the concerns that have been raised to date as well as additional details provided to us regarding the intermixing and multiple use of recreation with livestock grazing on public lands.

It is part of the NEPA process to design projects to minimize negative impacts as much as practical. The important thing for our process is hearing the specific concerns so that we can find workable solutions, such as locating trailheads away from water sources, and design a project to ensure permittees can continue to operate within the terms of their permit on the National Forest. Because the Lemon Gulch project is larger in scope than the previously mentioned projects, the Forest is preparing an environmental assessment which provides the public an opportunity to review and comment on our analysis.

As you also recognized in your letter, small communities in the west are relying more on outdoor recreation as a source of economic stability. This project is a great example of collaboration in our community and is well supported by the mountain bike community, other recreation stakeholders, the Prineville Chamber of Commerce, and local groups such as Crook County on the Move. I see this process as an opportunity to build a model of partnership and working together between different interests for the greater good of Central Oregon communities.

I feel strongly that our rural way of life in and around the Ochocos need to be supported and sustained. Simultaneously, I also support providing opportunities for these communities to utilize their public lands with a multiple use mindset that is ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable. Public lands across the west have successfully brought people and cattle together on the same piece of ground. There are endless examples of non-motorized recreation working in concert with ranchers on grazing allotments. I have faith through other western examples, developed mitigations unique to this piece of ground, and bringing stakeholders together to work on alternatives, that we can find solutions.

I greatly appreciate your interest to ensure we are hearing all our community groups and residents. If you have the time and capacity for continued involvement and feel you can facilitate continued collaboration around Lemon Gulch, I would be very interested to talk more about suggestions you have.

Sincerely,



A. SHANE JEFFRIES
Forest Supervisor



File Code: 1950
Date: August 2, 2021

The Honorable Dennis Linthicum
Oregon Senate
900 Court St. NE, S-305
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Senator Linthicum:

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I greatly appreciate your interest to ensure we are hearing all our community groups and residents. If you have the time and capacity for continued involvement and feel you can facilitate continued collaboration around Lemon Gulch, I would be very interested to talk more about suggestions you have.

Sincerely,



A. SHANE JEFFRIES
Forest Supervisor

LYNN P. FINDLEY
State Senator



OREGON SENATE

DISTRICT 30

Baker, Crook, Grant,
Harney Lake, Malheur
and parts of Deschutes
and Jefferson Counties

May 04, 3033

Glenn Casamassa
USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region
Regional Forester
1220 SW Third Ave
Portland, OR 97204-3440
glenn.casamassa@usda.gov

RE: Lemon Gulch Mountain Bike Park

Mr. Casamassa,

I'm writing you today to ask that you further investigate the proposed Lemon Gulch Mountain Bike Park. Over the past several weeks I have been contacted by constituents concerned by the project. After reviewing some components of the project, I too am concerned.

The size of the park would require management, and funding to provide that service. Most mountain bike parks of this scale are in combination ski resorts to help absorb costs. It appears the effects of the park could be significant to the entire community and were not a part of the analysis. Several users from within the community did not have the opportunity to provide information during the environmental analysis development. Concerns for the impact to local wildlife and erosion of existing foliage are also valid.

The Crook County Court has passed a resolution seeking cooperator status and asked that the process be restarted. I am asking that you please review the current environmental analysis and start over, working with the Crook County Natural Resource Advisory Committee.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Lynn P. Findley

LYNN P. FINDLEY
State Senator



OREGON SENATE

DISTRICT 30

Baker, Crook, Grant,
Harney Lake, Malheur
and parts of Deschutes
and Jefferson Counties

November 28, 2022

Shane Jeffries
Forest Supervisor
Ochoco National Forest
3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, Oregon 97754

RE: Lemon Gulch Mountain Bike Park

Mr. Jeffries,

I'm writing you today to again express concern over the Lemon Gulch Mountain Bike Park, preferred alternative 6. I have been repeatedly contacted by constituents concerned by the project. And as I have mentioned before, I too am concerned.

The size of the park would require management, and funding to provide that service. Most mountain bike parks of this scale are in combination ski resorts to help absorb costs. It appears the effects of the park could be significant to the entire community and were not a part of the analysis. Several users from within the community did not have the opportunity to provide information during the environmental analysis development. Concerns for the impact to local wildlife and erosion of existing foliage are also valid.

The Crook County Court has passed a resolution seeking cooperator status and asked that the process be restarted. I am asking that you please review the current environmental analysis and start over, working with the Crook County Natural Resource Advisory Committee.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Lynn P. Findley



File Code: 1950
Date: December 16, 2022

Senator Lynn P. Findley
Oregon Senate, District 30
900 Court St. NE, S-301
Salem, OR 97301
Email: sen.lynnfindley@oregonlegislature.gov

Dear Senator Findley:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the concerns you raised in your recent correspondence I received on November 28th.

Unfortunately, exaggerated and sometimes unsubstantiated information about our project continues to be distributed throughout Crook County by some who oppose new trails on the Ochoco National Forest. We developed the attached FAQ document to help provide accurate information to the public. Most importantly, the Draft Environmental Assessment provides a thorough analysis of the potential environmental effects from adding single-track dirt trails on the National Forest. We hope you will take a look at the analysis, which is available here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=58831>

The public process for the Lemon Gulch trails project began in March of 2021. We provided an extensive period of time for the public to provide feedback to the proposal, then the draft Environmental Assessment was developed over a one-year period. We are now providing the public an opportunity to review and comment on the draft Environmental Assessment and we encourage those who have concerns to evaluate the alternatives and the analysis of environmental effects. By providing their comments to our office during the comment period (which ends December 19th) they are an important part of the decision-making process.

Sincerely,


A. SHANE JEFFRIES
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: Glenn Casamassa





Lemon Gulch Trails Project

Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions

Project Description and Background

The Ochoco National Forest has released the draft environmental assessment (EA) on the Lemon Gulch Trail proposal. The proposal includes a maximum of about 52 miles of single-track trails on the west side of the forest close to the City of Prineville, in addition to parking areas, a toilet and signage. The EA analyzes and compares five action alternatives ranging from 19 to 52 miles of trail, as well as a “no action” alternative. Each alternative substantially reduces the number of miles of trail from the proposed action based on the key issues raised during scoping. Alternative 6 is the preferred alternative involving construction of 27.5 non-motorized miles of trail. It provides a much smaller footprint than the proposed action by reducing trail density in some areas specifically to address wildlife and grazing concerns, while still maintaining a complete mix of trail opportunity.

Alternative	Miles of Trail by Difficulty			Total
	Beginner	Inter-mediate	Advanced	
1	0	0	0	0
2	8.9	28.6	14.1	51.6
3	4.7	9.7	6.3	20.7
4	2.1	9.3	7.6	19
5	5.1	16.0	7.6	28.6
6	9.8	11.2	6.5	27.5

A low level of development (e.g. native surface parking sites with informal parking, a single vault toilet, and signage) would maintain a rustic character. Having lower, middle and upper parking sites would allow people to leave one vehicle at the bottom and drive to the middle or top to start their ride, though some people may opt to start at any of them.

The trails would be built to mountain biking standards and would be available for mountain biking, trail running, and hiking. Some trails would be designed for adaptive mountain biking equipment used by people with disabilities. Equestrian use would be discouraged on the trails and dogs would not be welcome on the trails before July 1st.

Why are you proposing the trail system at Lemon Gulch?

The location of the trail proposal considers proximity to town, easy access, and good terrain. It also considers how various classes of wildlife habitat are situated across the Forest. Other locations such as Cougar Creek and Potlid Creek are within important summer range for Mule Deer and elk. Summer range is where deer and elk maximize body fat production to survive through winter. Our goal is to avoid fragmenting any summer habitat for deer and elk.

Would this trail system hurt wildlife that depend on this area?

The alternatives are designed to limit disturbance to wildlife by minimizing habitat fragmentation as well as reducing trail miles. The trail system will be closed during the winter months to limit disturbance and minimize undo stress.

Will this trail construction lead to a huge development of trails, like what we see at Mt. Bachelor outside of Bend?

Absolutely not. It is similar in development to many dispersed trail systems across the Region and National system that is supported with small trailheads and a single vault toilet. None of the

alternatives would accommodate or attract thousands of visitors.

How can the National Forest support this use as well as other uses such as livestock grazing?

Public lands across the west successfully support multiple uses in the same space including recreation and livestock grazing. Educating visitors is a key component of successfully sharing the land. The public would be informed about the land management activities and other uses of the National Forest that will be seen and heard in the area. For example, the public would be informed about the extent of grazing season so they could choose to avoid the trails during that time, and we would also provide educational materials on how to behave when livestock are encountered on a trail. The forest is actively managed, and plans are currently underway for restoration thinning and fuels reduction across the same landscape. During logging and underburning activities trail segments may be closed to ensure public safety.

Where did this project originate?

A multi-year collaborative effort by Ochoco Trails, which is a group made up of representatives of recreation user groups and stakeholders, resulted in Forest-wide proposals for trails that would meet existing and growing demand for outdoor recreation. Following internal review of these proposals, the Forest Service chose to move forward with this and others that address equestrian, biker, and hiker interests.

How much use will the trails receive and how will you maintain them?

Though some are concerned that this will create an exponential increase in visitors to the Forest, this just isn't the case. It is expected that the first year the trails are available, there may be extra interest which could lead to the main lower trailhead having more than a typical number of vehicles. Initial capacity will be for up to 20 vehicles at a lower parking area, with smaller areas in the middle and upper parking, and will take advantage of areas that may be used as log landings during upcoming forest thinning project.

Comparable trailheads on a nice day usually have about 10 to 20 vehicles, such as the Lookout Mountain trail. Trailheads see more use on weekends, especially holiday weekends, than weekdays. As requested by the public, the Forest Service is planning a phased approach for the project which would mean an initial set of trails would be installed, followed by one to two years of monitoring to determine if moving forward with more trails is warranted.

With our partners, individual volunteers, youth crews, and Forest Service crew, more miles of trail are being maintained across the Forest faster than ever before. The Lemon Gulch trails would be adopted by Ochoco Trails and Central Oregon Trail Alliance to ensure they receive annual and adequate maintenance.

Why is the Forest Service considering this project?

The Forest Service is interested in providing recreational opportunities in a manner that considers the needs of other recreational user groups, other forest uses, and the natural resources, and meets the current and growing demand for this type of trail experience. The project's location provides a combination of good terrain and proximity to town, and accounts for forest-wide objectives for big game habitat. The project also is consistent with the objectives of the Ochoco Forest Plan to provide non-motorized trail opportunities for mountain bikers.

A sustainable trail system is an appropriate use of National Forest System lands and would benefit the Prineville community as well as those who come to visit from elsewhere. Recreation and tourism, including recreational opportunities on National Forest System lands, contribute significantly to the economy and culture of Crook County and Prineville.

Won't more people visiting the Forest increase problems such as litter, weeds, and fire risk, or degraded roads?

General presence of Forest Service recreation crews and Field Rangers interacting with visitors as well as fire patrols would increase in the area. The project is proposed to be completed in phases.

Following monitoring of the initial phase, the Forest Service could choose to add a dumpster and garbage collection to the lower trailhead if deemed necessary.

The main road leading onto National Forest System lands is under the jurisdiction of the County. The public uses the road to access private residences as well as the many amenities of the National Forest, including Steins Pillar, Wildcat Campground, and the Mill Creek Wilderness. A recent count shows an average of 300 daily trips on this road. Additional vehicles at the level anticipated is not expected to not noticeably contribute to degraded road conditions, though monitoring of conditions after the first phase could lead to recommending more frequent maintenance activities if necessary.

How can I participate in the planning process for this project?

You can subscribe yourself to email updates for this and all Ochoco National Forest projects. Go to <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/ochoco/landmanagement/projects>, enter your email address into the box at the middle of the page, and then follow the prompts.

What stage of the NEPA process is the project currently in and what are the next steps?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides a process by which the agency considers and discloses to the public the environmental impacts in their decision-making process. As shown

in the graphic below, the project is in a 30-day public comment period; we are seeking feedback on the analysis in the environmental assessment.

If you subscribe at the link provided above, you will receive notification at every stage of the project. We anticipate a final decision to be issued early next year.



Typical single vault toilet at a trailhead.



Typical trailhead signage



Peer, Beth - FS, OR

From: Jeffries, Shane- FS
Sent: Tuesday, June 22, 2021 1:39 PM
To: Bryan Iverson
Cc: Peer, Beth- FS; Joosen, Christopher -FS; Turner, Slater -FS; Beaupre, James - FS
Subject: RE: [External Email]Lemon Gulch

Thanks Bryan. Thanks for your willingness to help, a bit more information follows, and were certainly able to provide more if it would be helpful. We have been conducting a pretty robust public involvement process over the last several years but acknowledge there may be some folks who we didn't touch directly or who didn't pick up on one or more of the opportunities to be more involved before we announced the proposed action. Having said that, we are certainly taking our time to look at specific concerns in the project area and will work to design a balanced project minimizing impact to current uses. In fact we currently working directly with some of our grazing permittees to ID specific areas of concern in order to find opportunities / solutions and resolve collaboratively. In addition, there will be further opportunity for folks to review and comment on our environmental assessment when it is complete.

I think also the fact that we're still in the phase of fine-tuning and that we'll be looking at a phased approach is important. Not every single citizen was involved in the actual development of the project, but we did have a diverse group of stakeholders, beginning with the Prineville Chamber of Commerce. Thanks again for reaching out Bryan! SJ

Shane Jeffries
Forest Supervisor
Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest and Crooked River National Grassland

p: 541-416-6625

c: (b)(6)

f: 541-416-6695

shane.jeffries@usda.gov

3160 NE Third Street

Prineville, OR 97754

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fs.fed.us%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca46c975d3b5a4f87d7b608d935bdc9e7%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637599911514573661%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Iik1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C1000&msdata=w90MFhtaz5bH7jheFoelfwHKHVG6oilyjTs%2Bcl53MzM%3D&reserved=0>

Caring for the land and serving people

-----Original Message-----

From: Bryan Iverson <(b)(6)>
Sent: Tuesday, June 22, 2021 9:20 AM
To: Jeffries, Shane- FS <A.Jeffries2@usda.gov>
Subject: [External Email]Lemon Gulch

[External Email]

If this message comes from an unexpected sender or references a vague/unexpected topic; Use caution before clicking links or opening attachments.

Please send any concerns or suspicious messages to: Spam.Abuse@usda.gov

Hello Shane

Hope all is well. I wanted to reach out about the Lemon Gulch trail system. Vikki's office has been getting calls and emails about it from a few people upset about the process apparently. Specifically two folks, Don Vogel and Shelly Santucci. Apparently there was an issue with the public comment period? Apparently they are reaching out to Congressman Bentz too.

I thought I could maybe head off some issues by reaching out to you to see what we can do? I think we are all in favor of allowing access to the woods.

Bryan Iverson

From: [Joosen, Christopher -FS](#)
To: (b)(6)
Cc: [Turner, Slater -FS](#); [Kurtz, Tory -FS](#); [Peer, Beth- FS](#)
Subject: Bryan- Lemon Gulch Trails Proposal and Mill Allotment Overlay Map
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 5:41:40 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[MillAllotment36X30.pdf](#)

Bryan, I'm glad Shane got us connected and together for our call the other day. We appreciate your willingness to help convene ideas and develop alternatives with the Range/Grazing Permittees for the Lemon Gulch trails proposal. In our discussion you asked me for a project proposal site map with an allotment overlay that Beth Peer, our Environmental Coordinator, was able to provide. You'll see (attached) the Mill Allotment (51,304 acres) is broken into 5 pastures (A-Y, Big, Harvey Ck, Lemon, and McKay). As we talked about on the phone the entire allotment is shared by the Santucci's, Roy and Mary Beyer, and Kim and Don Vogel. Tory can provide details on how all that works if needed as well as anything related to the Lookout Mountain District Range Program.

The trails project area is currently 3305 acres, about 6% of the entire allotment, and about 22% of the Lemon Pasture. It is completely understood that just thinking about percentages doesn't reflect the entire picture. We need to know how impacting these 6% are to the permittee operations in as many ways as possible. (i.e. Water sets and infrastructure, salting sites, gate locations, seasonal movement of cows, timing of pasture rotations, etc.) This will help develop alternatives that include their issues and concerns related to on the ground operations. I also have the map printed out in large plotter size and would be happy to meet for a hand off, perhaps at your coffee shop in town. We can chat over a cup if that works out! Call any time and look forward to follow up discussions.
Chris



Christopher Joosen
Recreation, Heritage, Lands and Partnerships Staff Officer

Forest Service
Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River
National Grassland, Supervisor's Office

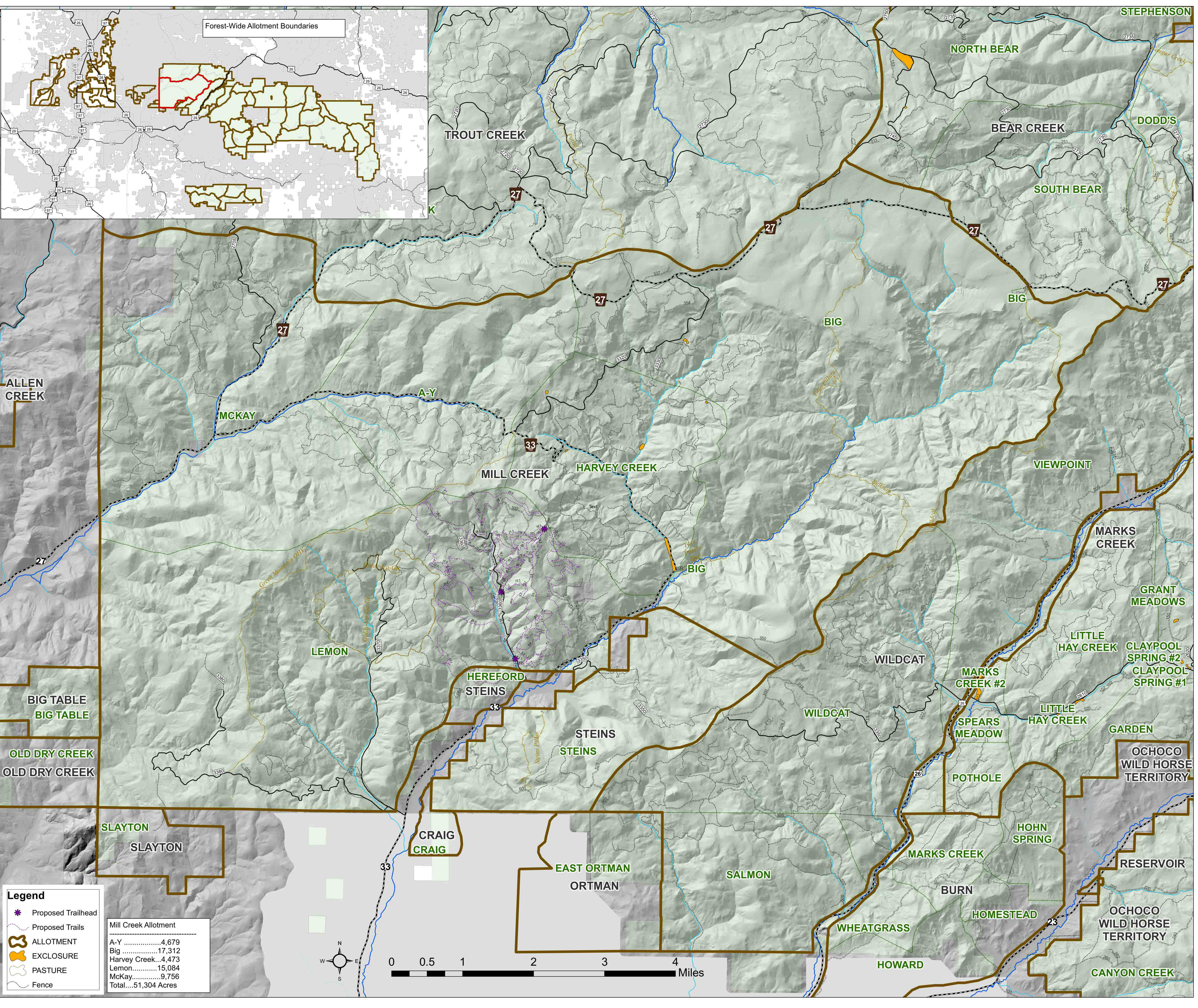
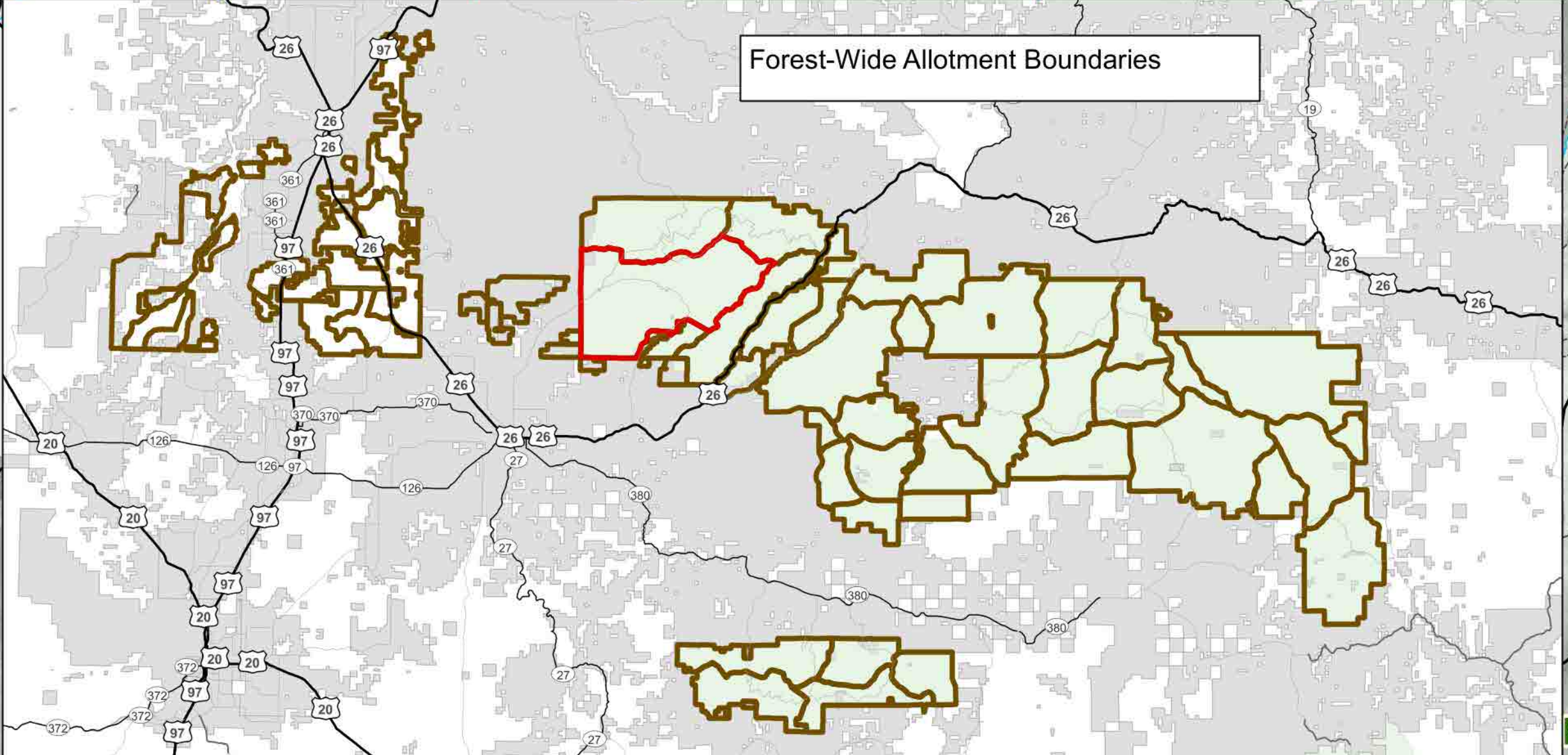
Office: 541-416-6516
Cell: (b)(6)
christopher.joosen@usda.gov

3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754
www.fs.fed.us



Caring for the land and serving people

Forest-Wide Allotment Boundaries

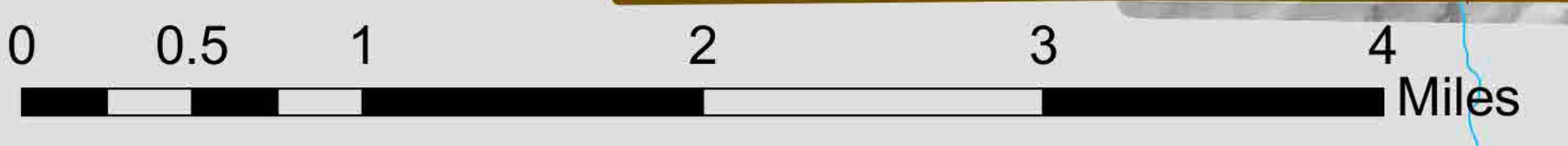
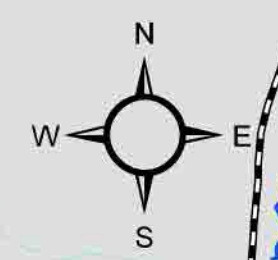


Legend

- Proposed Trailhead
- Proposed Trails
- ALLOTMENT
- EXCLOSURE
- PASTURE
- Fence

Mill Creek Allotment

A-Y	4,679
Big	17,312
Harvey Creek	4,473
Lemon	15,084
McKay	9,756
Total	51,304 Acres



ALLEN CREEK

MCKAY

A-Y

MILL CREEK

HARVEY CREEK

LEMON

HEREFORD STEINS

STEINS

BIG TABLE

BIG TABLE

OLD DRY CREEK

OLD DRY CREEK

SLAYTON

SLAYTON

CRAIG

CRAIG

EAST ORTMAN

ORTMAN

SALMON

WHEATGRASS

HOWARD

TROUT CREEK

NORTH BEAR

BEAR CREEK

SOUTH BEAR

DODD'S

BIG

BIG

VIEWPOINT

MARKS CREEK

GRANT MEADOWS

LITTLE HAY CREEK

CLAYPOOL SPRING #2

CLAYPOOL SPRING #1

LITTLE HAY CREEK

GARDEN

OCHOCO WILD HORSE TERRITORY

OCHOCO WILD HORSE TERRITORY

POTHOLE

HOHN SPRING

RESERVOIR

OCHOCO WILD HORSE TERRITORY

OCHOCO WILD HORSE TERRITORY

CANYON CREEK

STEPHENSON

VIKKI BREESE-IVERSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 55

DENNIS LINTHICUM
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 28



Shane Jeffries, Forest Supervisor
Ochoco National Forest
3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754

Mr. Jeffries,

Central and Eastern Oregon have a rich and deep history in natural resource industries. Agricultural communities laid the groundwork for all we enjoy today. For generations ranchers have worked in concert with the US Forest Service, BLM and state agencies to find balance in resource management of our public lands. In the area of Lemon Gulch, this includes grazing permits paid for by ranchers and used in the scope of the their ranching operations.

U.S. and state agencies have an obligation to manage public lands, owned by all Americans, which includes a variety of uses. These agencies must consider opportunities to serve the public but cannot do so without consideration for agreements already in place. All agencies have a process to follow, especially for complicated considerations such as the proposal of the Lemon Gulch Bike Trail.

We are concerned current permit holders and land owners in the area may have been missing from the public process of the Lemon Gulch Bike Trail proposal. We ask the Forest Service to review their process and make sure all appropriate steps were taking in consideration of input, from the public, the permittees and those land owners in adjacent areas. Oregon has a robust land use system and expectation of similar consideration for all lands within the state is a given. We support transparent processes, active conversations and dotting the 'i's' and crossing the 't's'.

Our small communities throughout our districts rely on the ever growing outdoor activities. Central and Southern Oregon have worked with state and federal lands to enjoy a combined effort to engage the mountain bike enthusiasts. We appreciate the potential economic support it may provide our economies. We hear the voices of those seeking additional biking trails in public lands.

However, true community involvement comes when all parties feel they have been heard and their concerns taken into account and addressed. **Process matters.** We ask you to review the process to this point, back up slightly and make sure all notification has been properly provided and all input has consideration.

VIKKI BREESE-IVERSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 55

DENNIS LINTHICUM
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 28

We appreciate you taking time to consider our request and take a deeper consideration of the process in this matter.



Representative Vikki Breese-Iverson



Senator Dennis Linthicum

CC: Crook County Court

Prineville City Council

Crook County Natural Resource Committee