

2406



TO: Bureau of Land Management, Medford District
FROM: Elizabeth Newfield
SUBJECT: Western Oregon Plan Revisions -- Comments
DATE: January 11, 2007

I am commenting on the Recreational Aspects of WOPR, leaving the more technical environmental concerns to those who have the education and experience to express more highly informed opinions. I have been riding horses in Southern Oregon since 1972. As an avid trail and endurance rider, I have spent many hours enjoying the public lands in our area and am actually considered to be more knowledgeable than most about trail riding opportunities in the area. In fact, I write a popular monthly trail column for the Brushriders Newsletter.

I first want to state that I am not "anti OHV" and, in fact, in my 35 years of sharing venues on public lands with OHVs and other motorized vehicles in Southern Oregon have had only one negative interaction and two dangerous situations arise. (This is partly because I choose the areas and times I use the trails and roads carefully but is also, I believe, because most people are safety conscious and considerate.)

I have consistently ridden in the following areas that are proposed for as OHV Emphasis Areas:

- Elliot Creek – with access from Deer Creek and Cheney Creek
- Ferris Gulch – including access to Panther Gulch, Finley Road and Browns Road
- Illinois Valley – primarily the areas used by and adjacent to the areas used by the Limestone Endurance Ride
- Spencer Creek – including access from Powell Creek and Cedar Flat
- Timber Mountain/Johns Peak – including access from China Gulch and Forest Creek

In all of these areas, I have observed damage caused by OHVs and understand the need to regulate use. However, I question if the best way of doing that is turning the areas over to the groups that have damaged them in order to control the groups. The following statement under "Management Guidelines" on page J-1205 of the draft EIS is of particular concern to me in this context. "Non-motorized travel is allowed on all access routes (e.g. horseback riding, hiking and mountain biking) but is not encouraged due to potential conflicts and safety hazards."

I have enclosed pictures taken recently on Ferris Gulch, which I feel is a particularly vulnerable area based on my observations. I understand that there have been efforts by the BLM and private individuals to limit OHV use in this area and based on the damage that has occurred, this seems like a good idea. (Unfortunately, I was not able to access some of the longer washed out granite trails due to wet conditions.) I would sure hate to see heavy use begin again in that area.

I could find only one reference to use of lands for equestrian activities and that was in the Hyatt Lake-Howard Prairie area which is under snow most of the year and thus not accessible. There only two references to other non-motorized activities, Hyatt Lake-



Howard Prairie and the Rogue National Wild and Scenic River, while there are 13 OHV Emphasis areas listed with the recommendation that non-motorized users stay away from them. Where's the balance for public access and use?

When raising these issues, I have been told that there are plenty of places to ride horses, such as the Boundary Trail, the PCT, and the new Grayback Mountain Trail. This is true and they are wonderful, but are closed by snow much of the year. I feel that it is imperative to leave areas that are at lower and intermediate elevations accessible to non-motorized recreation. The proposed Bolt Mountain Trail and Cathedral Hills trails are a step in the right direction, but are not adequate to fill the recreational needs of non-motorized vehicle users in the winter and wet seasons.

I understand that part of the motivation for establishing these OHV Emphasis Areas is regulation but also understand that there is not enough funding for enforcement. I have attached disc of pictures taken in the Ferris Gulch Area in January of this year. The purpose was to show the need for control and remediation of the damage to the land. We were not able to get to some of the most damaged areas because it was too wet and slippery. While we were out on horseback, an OHV came along and went up the road that we had decided shouldn't be traveled. They had to go around a gate that used to block motorized access and I understand that the OHVs opened access. Pictures enclosed. Without enforcement \$\$\$, what will prevent this type of activity in the future?

I agree that the land needs to be protected and restored. I highly encourage you to find a way to do this without designating such a huge as OHV use areas. I also encourage you to provide for multiple use in these areas.

Please feel free to contact me – both about this issue and to volunteer. I'd be glad to elaborate on what I've seen and to show anyone around. I might even be able to provide a horse!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Newfield".

Elizabeth Newfield
19560 Williams Highway
Williams, OR 97544
541-846-0398
lizfield@apbb.net