

Mountain Biking and Wilderness

Questions and Answers:

Is Oregon Wild working with mountain bikers on the Crater Lake Wilderness proposal?

Yes. We have been working with numerous mountain biking organizations regarding this proposal. Our intent has been to engage mountain bikers early on in the process. Since 2010 we have had over 30 interactions (in person meetings, phone calls, etc) with representatives from GOATS, RVMBA, COTA, IMBA, NWTa, TC, as well as numerous individuals. This is an ongoing process, and we have shared GIS data, google earth files, online interactive maps, and large hard copy maps with everyone who has asked. Our goal is to work collaboratively to ensure that we are maximizing conservation while minimizing impacts to mountain bike access.

Is mountain biking a legitimate use of our public lands?

Absolutely. Mountain biking is a great way to explore our public lands. We believe most mountain bikers are conservationists. While mountain biking is appropriate across much of the landscape it is not appropriate everywhere, some landscapes may be too sensitive or have important wildlife habitat.

Are mountain bikes allowed in Wilderness?

Bikes are not permitted in Wilderness. The 1964 Wilderness Act has been the gold standard for protecting our public lands, keeping them safe from logging, mining, drilling, and other development. It does allow many activities such as trail running, hiking, rafting, hunting, horseback riding, fishing, skiing, camping, snowshoeing, bird watching, etc. It does not allow motorized or mechanized activities, and mountain biking fits into the mechanized category due to the use of gears.

How much of Oregon is protected as Wilderness?

Currently, only 4% of Oregon has been protected as Wilderness. Compare that to Washington state at 10%, California at 15% and even Idaho at 10% and you see that only a very small fraction of Oregon is protected as Wilderness.

What are alternative designations that are protective and still allow mountain bikes?

There are numerous alternative designations for our wildlands; Scenic Areas, Riparian Reserves, Special Emphasis Watersheds, National Recreation Areas, etc. Unfortunately these designations often have loopholes big enough to drive a logging truck through. Wilderness on the other hand is the gold standard for protecting our public lands. Once it's designated, it can't be mined, logged, or see encroaching human development. There are places on our public lands where Wilderness is the most appropriate tool and there are places where other designations are more appropriate.

What bike trails are in the proposal?

Good question, we're not sure. After developing the proposal we reached out to a number of mountain bike organizations and asked them to identify where they have trail concerns. After several years we received a draft list of trails, but this list had some errors ranging from trails that are not within the proposal to trails that are not open to bikes. We continue to work with the mountain biking community to identify trails within the proposal, and once we have a comprehensive list we can then work on solutions to modify the proposal in an effort to balance bike access and conservation.

What is Oregon Wild doing to ensure that mountain bikers are not losing trail access?

We are working closely with numerous mountain biking organizations to identify trails and make proposal adjustments to maintain trail access. While we may not be able to address every concern, we do plan to make a number of changes to the proposal to address this issue once we have a final trail inventory to work with. One trail we are aware of that overlaps the proposal is the North Umpqua. Several short stretches in the upper part of the trail overlap the proposal. One of these units (Dread and Terror Ridge) is also proposed for aggressive logging by the Forest Service. As with other trails once we see the full picture based on a final trail inventory we will look for solutions to minimize mountain bike trail impacts.

Please feel free to reach out to the Crater Lake Wilderness Coordinator, Tara Brown at info@craterlakewild.org if you have any questions or comments.