



File Code: 1950-1  
Date: June 29, 2010

Dear Interested Citizen:

The Zigzag Ranger District is beginning an analysis to determine the environmental and social impacts of approving a proposal by RLK and Company, the operators of Timberline Lodge and Ski Area, to develop a managed, ski lift-assisted downhill-only mountain bike trails system and skills park within the Timberline Ski Area permit boundary. An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be completed which will lead to a decision concerning the proposed project. A preliminary Proposed Action and project map are included with this letter.

### **Proposed Action Introduction**

The project would consist of a trail network that would encompass 7 to 8 acres (approximately 15 miles of trails) and a separate “skills park” that would encompass approximately 0.75 to 1.25 acres. Projects of this nature are consistent with activities described within the Timberline Ski Area Master Development Plan. The Timberline Ski Area is within the 1990 Mt. Hood National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) A-11 Winter Recreation Area land allocation. A goal of A-11 land allocation includes providing for areas of high quality winter and summer recreation opportunities (Forest Plan, page Four - 190). Mountain biking is listed as a Desired Future Condition (DFC) on page Four – 191 of the Forest Plan.

### **Purpose & Need for Action**

The purpose of the project is to meet the growing demand of year round recreation and development of new summer recreation activities, as outlined by Forest Plan A-11 goals and DFC’s. Oregon is considered the mountain biking capital of the Northwest and more people per capita have bicycles in Portland than any other city in the country. However, there are few Oregon ski areas that offer full-service, lift-assisted mountain biking for all ability levels.

Because of limited managed mountain biking areas on public land the Forest Service is seeing an increase in unauthorized “free-ride” mountain biking areas. These illegally constructed trails are creating resource damage as they appear throughout Oregon’s public lands. A managed, well designed, downhill-only, mountain bike trail system and skills park in Northwestern Oregon would provide an opportunity for safe, managed mountain biking and reduce unauthorized mountain biking and thereby could reduce associated resource damage on public lands. Further

## Timberline Mountain Bike Trails and Skills Park

development of this area is supported by existing infrastructures such as parking lots, restrooms and signage.

### **Proposed Action Details and Preliminary Design Features**

A. Trails Network - The trail network would be constructed in phases over a five year development period, in the area served by the Jeff Flood Express Chairlift. The trail system would offer trails for all ability levels with a design emphasis on beginner and intermediate levels. There would be two types of trails constructed: single tract trail and technical terrain feature trail. Trails would include natural and human-created features and banked turns where appropriate, particularly on the intermediate and advanced trails. Human-created features would include structures such as ladder bridges.

#### Trail Network Design Features

- Bike egress in and out of the trail system would avoid the historic Timberline Lodge and its upper parking lot, and would not conflict with the experience of visitors to the lodge.
- Single track trail would be built at an average width of three feet. Technical terrain feature trail would be built at an average width of six feet.
- Bike carriers would be added to every other chair on the lift, and a temporary wooden deck (to be removed for winter operations) would be built at the top terminal of the Jeff Flood Express to accommodate a safe and efficient offloading procedure.
- Flexibility of exact trail location is incorporated within the design to address issues such as topography, soils, available materials, degree of trail difficulty, and to avoid sensitive areas such as seeps, springs and sensitive plant species.
- Flexibility and adaptive management during the five-year phased development period would respond to user feedback, traffic flow analysis, safety, and stewardship concerns.

B. Skills Park - The skills park would be developed in the Bruno's area directly below the Wy'East Day Lodge. A skills park is a playground for cyclists, especially young riders who socialize together, "show off", and repeatedly practice a range of tricks and jumps off of obstacles. A skills park is an important aspect of a mountain bike program so that riders can hone their skills on a particular feature prior to going on the trails. To be successful, the location would preferably be situated close to the parking lot and close to an enjoyable viewing area such as the sun deck on the Wy'East Day Lodge.

#### Skills Park Design Features

- Obstacles are mostly temporary, human-created features that include jumps, twisty boardwalks, sea-saws, and ramps.
- Although the skills park would be purposely visible from the Wy'East Day Lodge and parking lot, it would not be visible from the historic Timberline Lodge.

### Design Features and Best Management Practices Common to Trails Network and Skills Park

- RLK and Company would staff a full time trail maintenance crew and bike patrol to ensure quality maintenance and management.
- RLK and Company would develop a volunteer Bike Patrol for safety, first aid, and guiding guests (similar to the winter volunteer Ski Host and Ski Patrol programs).
- RLK and Company would utilize all applicable protocols and procedures currently in the Timberline Ski Area Operating Plan.
- A plan to address the safety and circulation of riders would incorporate signage and design elements to notify riders of intersections where trails cross other trails, or cross the West Leg Road, and it would address speed reduction at these locations as well as at the bottom of the lift where riders would collect. Signage would be developed and put in place along West Leg Road warning of mountain bike traffic.
- All trails would be constructed to minimize erosion and avoid natural water courses and sensitive riparian areas and plants.
- All trails have been designed with approximately a 5 to 10% average grade over the length of the trail. A 10% grade is generally considered sustainable in terms of resistance to erosion and damage. Moderately graded trails under 10% work with most soil types, minimize erosion, and allow for a flexible design.
- Stabilization of disturbed soil areas would be through a combination of rock armoring and wooden features on the steepest areas, and trails would be designed to minimize sustained steep pitches, grade reversals, and no chance for water to gain enough speed to recruit and encourage erosion. Rock needed for trail stabilization, sediment traps, and erosion control would be from off-site sources.
- Some soil movement is expected on the steeper single track trail segments and would be mitigated by continued monitoring and maintenance.
- Forest clearing in the proposed trail corridors would be reduced to the extent practical through careful trail design and layout.
- All trails would be laid out to avoid removal of trees with a diameter at breast height (DBH) greater than six inches.
- Trail tread would be cleared of all organic material down to mineral soil. In those areas of technical terrain features, the area of cleared vegetation would expand to facilitate the structure or feature as well. When practical, all removed vegetation would be used to revegetate off-trail disturbed areas.
- All water courses (if encountered) would be avoided or spanned by bridges or similar man-made features. Bridges would be built by using a combination of treated and untreated wood. Cribbing material would consist of locally sourced stone or cement. Galvanized fasteners would be used throughout.

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- No dredging or filling of wetlands would occur.
- In watercourses where seasonal flow is expected, but permanent water is not present, culverts (minimum 12 inch diameter) or bridges (site specific) would be used. In any areas where water is not expected, but possible due to rainfall, culverts could be used.
- Revegetation, where applicable, may include topsoil replacement, planting, seeding, and would occur as per Forest Service botanist prescriptions.

The Mt. Hood National Forest is now seeking comments from individuals, organizations, local and state governments, and other federal agencies that may be interested in or affected by this preliminary Proposed Action. Comments may pertain to the nature and scope of the environmental, social, and economic issues, and proposed alternatives to the Proposed Action. Your comments will help us assess the Proposed Action, develop alternatives and prepare an Environmental Assessment.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project, available for public inspection, and released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Forest Service would like your scoping comments by July 30, 2010. Please send your written comments to: Christy Covington, Zigzag Ranger District, 70220 E. Highway 26, Zigzag, OR 97049; FAX: (503) 622-5622. You may also hand-deliver your comments to the above address during normal business hours which are 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Electronic comments may be submitted to [comments-pacificnorthwest-mthood-zigzag@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-mthood-zigzag@fs.fed.us) in a format such as an e-mail message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc). All those who comment will remain on our mailing list and receive future updates on this proposal.

Electronic maps and other information about the project are available on the Internet at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood/projects/>.

I am anticipating completion of the analysis and a decision by December, 2010. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please call Christy Covington by phone at 503-622-3191;

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email (comments-pacificnorthwest-mthood-zigzag@fs.fed.us) or by mail at the following address:

**Zigzag Ranger District,  
70220 E. Highway 26,  
Zigzag, OR 97049**

**ATTN: Christine M. Covington, Timberline Permit Administrator**

Thank you for your participation in this process.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Bill Westbrook*  
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BILL WESTBROOK  
Zigzag District Ranger