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First name: Paul

Last name: Stahlschmidt

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1:

Address2:

City:

State:

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code:

Country:

Email: pastahlschmidt@gmail.com

Phone:

Comments:

Spring 2017 material Plan Building Blocks

Hi there. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the forest plan during this evaluation period.

I have reviewed the the overview description for the Eastern Escarpment Geographic Area here:

https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd543215.pdf

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It is nice to see that mountain biking was mentioned twice in this document. However more needs to be done than just planning for "increased demand" of mountain biking (p4). Something needs to be done about the CURRENT demand. Here's why:

- * Out of 139,513 acres of Forest Service land in the Eastern Escarpment geographic area, there are 52 FS system trails, and only 8 trails designated for bike use.

- * With that, 15% of the trails in the Eastern Escarpment geographic area allow biking

- * Total trail mileage of the 52 system trails: 143.26

- * Total trail mileage of the 8 bike-designated trails: 34.90 (24%)

- * One of the bike trails listed is the Sand Mountain Trail (7.1 mi), a mostly overgrown old system road that has no loop potential with other trails and doesn't get maintained or used by mountain bikers.

- * Another bike trail listed is Wilson Ridge trail, which has over half of its 11.39 miles on road. These road sections include various segments of NC 90, FSR 4068, FSR 4097, and 4 miles of "jeep road" which is a maintained by private landowners on their land!

- * The numbers used above for mileage include the mileage for the last two trails mentioned, so the percentage of singletrack trail is extremely low in this 129,513 acres.

Biking is a low-impact recreational activity, and the needs of mountain bikers are not being served in the Eastern Escarpment Geographic Area.

The attached spreadsheet contains the FS-provided data that was used to calculate the numbers referenced above. Please use these numbers and all other trail data when evaluating how to further serve the users of the forest, including mountain bikers.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment. As a member of the Northwest NC Mountain Bike Alliance, a chapter of IMBA-SORBA, I look forward to the continued collaboration as well as the volunteer efforts that our members and I participate in through our work with the Grandfather District. I'm excited about the great partnership our chapter has forged with the Grandfather District staff, which has resulted in a signed volunteer service agreement a few years ago, and over 1000 hours of volunteer hours since. We've also begun working with the district on planning for the future of the trails including leveraging funds from many sources/grants. Hopefully that partnership and the direction from the new forest plan can guide us to a better trail system that serves mountain bikers.

Sincerely,

Paul Stahlschmidt
Boone, NC