

O P I N I O N



Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

Accepting the hyperbole of recent LTE by BBR trail opponents one would think the end is near should the trail be built as planned—excrement, trash, vandalism, trespassing, motor-vehicle gridlock, environmental destruction, lawsuits, scandalous surveys etc.

And yet it is curious that a Tollgate resident whose property is immediately adjacent to the connecting spur can be a supporter of the trail while another resident several hundred feet away from the trail can be so fervently against the plan. The reality is this is a simple meandering trail through public woods — not the Autobahn through Yosemite!

I do not know of a single developed trail that has been built in the U.S. which has later been recognized as a mistake by the majority of residents within the trail's district. Frustrating as it may be to trail opponents, the fact is that board-sanctioned surveys at BBR and Tollgate have clearly shown the majority

of respondents — and by logical extension — the majority of residents, are in favor of this trail.

Let's also be clear that the overriding purpose of the trail from BBR to Sisters is to create safe, environmentally friendly, healthful, human-scale connections between population centers within this community — and not to throw up barricades and Keep Out signs between neighbors. These population centers are on the south side of Highway 20. It is obvious to anyone who has tried to cross the intersection of Highway 20 at Barclay/McKinney by foot or bike how unsafe and irresponsible a north-side trail plan, with multiple crossings of the highway, would be for accessing Tollgate or BBR.

Like motherhood and warm apple pie, trails are wonderful. Paved multi-user trails create minimal-cost long-term opportunities

See **LETTERS** on page 27

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Sunny 91/56	Chance t-storms 86/53	Partly sunny 79/53	Partly sunny 76/52	Partly sunny 76/50	Partly sunny 76/na

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Support for paved trail

By Kent Neff
Guest Columnist

This is written to convey my very strong support for developing the proposed Sisters to Black Butte Ranch paved trail through the National Forest.

I have spent considerable time in Sisters Country for the last 45 years, at first in a rented cabin on the Metolius, followed by ownership of a house at Black Butte Ranch for some 20 years, and as a permanent resident of Sisters for the last four. Central Oregon is my favorite place in the U.S.

I am also an avid cyclist and hiker. From the '60s to the mid-'90s, I rode my bicycle frequently from Black Butte Ranch to Sisters, as well as to Camp Sherman and the Indian Ford area. In those days, Highway 20 was a reasonable route; now, it is a highly dangerous road for cyclists. When my children were younger, we enjoyed bicycling as a family. Now, traveling with children on Highway 20 would be foolhardy. A paved Sisters-BBR trail would restore all those important connections and contribute to an increased sense of community among the residents and visitors to Sisters, BBR, and Camp Sherman.

During my decades in Portland, I spent many enjoyable hours biking on the Springwater Trail, which connects Portland and Gresham. During long trips on the trail, I found people pleasant, families enjoying themselves, and virtually no evidence of litter or property abuse. The natural environment of the area was not affected by the many people on the trail. On weekends, numerous families were walking and cycling on the trail, having a wonderful time.

For eight years our family lived in the Minneapolis area, and I rode on converted railroad right-of-ways through the woods on many occasions. Again, I never encountered anything but friendly people and families enjoying easy access to nature. Handicapped people could get places that they couldn't without the trails.

Because it was a large urban area, the trails often ran adjacent to peoples' houses. Proximity to the trails was considered an advantage and enhanced property values for many, even before cycling came into its own as it has in the last decade or two.

In my experience, the expressed concerns about defacing the forest and harming animals, while reasonable, have little merit. The forest quickly adapts and animals use the trails as thoroughfares. I have seen tracks of numerous mammals: raccoons, bobcats, deer, elk, and the like on STA trails around Sisters.

Our house in Sisters sits in plain view of a frequently used STA trail — much closer than the shortest distance to a house along the proposed trail to Black Butte. There have been no problems whatsoever from activity on the trail. I consider it an advantage to be able to access the trail so easily, as do our children and grandchildren.

It is indeed unfortunate that there has been such a vitriolic response from a few people who live in the area. As I talk to people and get their responses, and read the various surveys, they do not at all represent the view of the majority. There is no need to launch personal attacks on supporters or detractors of the trail or public servants from the Forest Service or City of Sisters who passionately give their time and energy to make this a wonderful place to live.

Negative dialogue and personal attacks will only beget more such behavior. It also gives Sisters a bad reputation, as friends outside the area have noted.

It is time for us to change the dialogue to a more positive, respectful tone. I would ask all of us who express opinions about the trail and other issues to do it in a respectful manner and not attack each other. I would also request that editors of *The Nugget* — a great local newspaper — exercise their editing prerogatives and not print the disrespectful, personal attacks included in some of the comments.

Opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.

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