

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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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:

The letters from JoEllyn Loehr, Susie Werts and Isolde Hedemark in the July 1 *Nugget* were obviously coordinated to try to get the proposed Sisters to Black Butte Trail moved to "the north side of the highway" (per Isolde Hedemark).

Ms. Loehr tries to make the convincing case that there is "already a trail from Sisters that goes all the way to Indian Ford ... where it ties into the Metolius Area recreation trails. It isn't paved, but it could be easily developed as the paved trail that advocates want for ADA reasons."

Ms. Loehr, Ms. Werts, and Ms. Hedemark, do you know that the trail you propose instead of the current route happens to be on the other side of Highway 20 from Black Butte Ranch? Are you all in favor of an ADA-type trail where users are required to cross Highway 20 to get to or from the ranch? Are you saying that this is safe for people in wheelchairs? Are you saying this is safe for children much less

adults?

The only thing that is consistent in your letters is that the alternate trail you propose is far away from your properties — "Not in My Back Yard." This despite the majority of Black Butte homeowners and Tollgate homeowners are in favor of a trail that would be convenient for them to use.

We are not talking about building a prison near your properties. The people who use these trails will be either BBR owners/guests and/or Tollgate residents and Sisters residents. We are not felons.

Ken Serkownek



To the Editor:

The need for (a paved) trail supposedly justifies its construction. Need has revolved around several issues — recreation being the priority. In spite of the fact that our forests

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Consider alternative for paved trail

By Greg Werts
Guest Columnist

If STA leadership is sincere about their desire to provide a "trail for everyone," why is there such a myopic reluctance to consider an alternative location for their paved path that would better address the needs of the disabled and elderly, and provide easier (and much less controversial) access for a wider group of people?

After all, Commissioner Unger himself has said that he sees the project as a county recreational trail, not something that should be tailored specifically for usage by Tollgate and BBR residents. If the goal is to provide a paved path forest experience in Sisters to the widest group of people, a more logical, efficient, cost-effective, and eco-friendly location would be between the trailhead at the end of Pine Street and the parking area at the Indian Ford Campground.

Parking: At the Sisters end, the current path plan completely fails to address the issue of parking, let alone provide for handicapped parking and ADA-compliant access points to the path. The Pine Street trailhead provides plenty of on-street parking in an area that sees very little traffic, making it much safer than beginning in the McDonald's parking lot and then crossing W. Railway to access the suggested current path's starting point. There is plenty of flat space adjacent to the Pine Street trailhead that could easily be used to create handicapped parking, ADA compliant access points, and educational kiosks for students. Yes, students — a critical group of potential path-users that seems to have been overlooked in the current proposed path location. Which sounds like a more desirable plan — unloading the kids in the busy McDonald's parking lot and have them walk a path sandwiched between Highway 20 and the Tollgate subdivision, or having them start their journey less than a mile away at the Pine

Street trailhead, which hardly sees any traffic and is completely out of sight of Highway 20? On the Indian Ford Campground end of the path, there is plenty of space as well.

Terrain: From an aesthetic standpoint, the Indian Ford Trail would be further away from Highway 20 than the currently proposed site. Having ridden my bike through the area numerous times, I can attest to the fact that the highway is not visible, nor do you pass by numerous homes. It is a beautiful stretch that would provide more of a true forest experience for the widest population — isn't that the goal? It is also practically flat, with very little grade. In order for a path to be ADA compliant, it must not exceed a grade steeper than 5%. The USFS has already confirmed that the current proposed path cannot meet this standard. Choosing a flatter path would better accommodate a wider group of users with varying abilities. It would simply be the more responsible choice.

Private property: The Indian Ford Trail would make all of these very contentious and potentially litigious issues disappear.

It's already there: The beautiful thing about the Indian Ford Trail is that there is already an existing network of fire trails that run most of the distance between Sisters and the Indian Ford campground. This means significantly less damage to the environment and to the taxpayers who would be paying for all of this.

Some argue that this alternative location fails to "connect our communities," which really is a rather hollow phrase that smacks of grant-speak. Sisters certainly has its fair share of problems, but is anybody really losing any sleep over whether or not we are physically connected as a community by an asphalt slab?

If this path must be built, build it in a location that would best accommodate the widest group of people, cause less damage to the environment, and save the taxpayers some money.

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

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Sunny 78/45	Sunny 77/45	Mostly sunny 76/46	Mostly sunny 81/50	Sunny 84/52	Sunny 84/na

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442 E. Main Ave., P.O. Box 698, Sisters, Oregon 97759

Tel: 541-549-9941 | Fax: 541-549-9940 | editor@nuggetnews.com



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