

Eagle Post

May 2016



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The newsletter of **Friends of Eagles Nest Wilderness**, apprising you of important activities in and around Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Wilderness Areas.

Greetings! Our newsletter topic this month is an issue of growing concern:

Should bikes be allowed in Wilderness?
(they currently are not)



Introduction: Mountain biking has grown tremendously in popularity during the past several decades. Likewise, the acreage of federally-designated Wilderness has also increased significantly. Bikes are not allowed in Wilderness, and some bikers feel shut out. In his essay below, Tim Drescher reviews these events and presents an interesting and useful solution, which is being put to the test right now...

Bikes in Wilderness

Tim Drescher



An emerging topic of conversation that has been getting increasing run in the mainstream news is the issue of whether to allow mountain biking in our Wilderness areas. Currently, mountain biking is banned in Wilderness. Various mountain biking advocacy groups - led by the Sustainable Trails Coalition (**STC**) and International Mountain Bicycling Association (**IMBA**) - have raised more than \$117,000 to lobby congress to lift the ban.

Why the fuss? After a Google search and a cup of coffee you will soon find yourself sucked into the vortex of this debate. Mountain bikers are feeling left out of decisions to designate increasing acreage as Wilderness. In some cases, biking trails that have been used for years have been closed after an area was given Wilderness status. You may be feeling *deja vu* right now - that is precisely what the Bundy brothers were on about as they occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge - protesting as their decades-long grazing practices were progressively limited by the BLM in order to protect the



Tell us how you feel about bikes in Wilderness. **Email FENW**

Become a **Volunteer Wilderness Ranger!**
Applications due by June 1.
Details

2016 **Trail projects:**
Day Projects Saturdays:
June 4, June 18, July 9
Pack-in weekends (Fri-Sun):
July 15-17 and August 12-14. **Details**

We also need volunteers
outside the Wilderness

- **Member Relations** - **HELP** develop and implement communications plans to keep FENW members informed and involved... and maybe have some fun too.
- **Volunteer Recruitment** - **HELP** devise and deliver plans to

natural environment (see [After Malheur](#) by FENW president Currie Craven). Many mountain bikers are genuinely conflicted - should we support Wilderness preservationists or side with mining, timber, and business interests, who also want Wilderness access?

STC and IMBA face a mountainous hurdle, for several reasons. Most salient, the Wilderness Act of 1964 states categorically that there shall be no "form of mechanical transport" in Wilderness. Arguments that bikes are, like hikers, muscle-powered conveyances, and that while bikes are mechanical, so are oar locks (which are allowed in Wilderness) are a tough sell for most people. In addition, the traditional spiritual values of the wilderness experience - solitude, natural challenges, humility - are not descriptors one typically employs while enumerating the joys of mountain biking, such as exhilaration, adrenalin-rush, and other adjectives that explain why mountain bikers wear all that protective gear. (for more, see the [High Country News](#) article by Tim Lydon)

Still, mountain bikers love wild places, and they are a rapidly growing, vocal group. A win-win way forward is exemplified in [The Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act](#), sponsored by Colorado U.S. Representative Jared Polis. Now in congressional committee, the Act was drafted by hundreds of collaborating stakeholders, including a local IMBA chapter ([Vail Valley Mountain Bike Association](#)) and the [Summit Fat Tire Society](#). The Act has something for everyone. The WILDERNESS part would designate 40,000 additional acres of land as traditional Wilderness (no bikes), and the RECREATION part of the Act would designate 15,000 acres of White River National Forest as '[Special Management](#)' zones, where mountain biking would be allowed. This demonstrated a successful partnership between often misunderstood forces, transitioning into important co-stakeholders for the success of the introduction of this bill at a federal level. This type of collaboration should serve as the gold standard for new potential Wilderness addition. There are many other threats to our public lands and open spaces; creating an unnecessary wall of resentment between two very ideologically-aligned groups who share conservationist values would be deeply counter-productive. Get informed, stay educated and continue to support your local Wilderness stewards!



About Tim Drescher: Tim resides in Eagle County and is a Wilderness advocate both locally and nationally. His popular blog www.timdcy.com chronicles his frequent backcountry adventures with informative trip reports and beautiful photos, mainly in Eagles Nest Wilderness and Holy Cross

greatly expand the field volunteer base through publicity, community outreach and partnerships.

- **Public Relations - HELP** plan and implement ongoing PR programs to raise the public profile of FENW in the community.
- **Advocacy - HELP** preserve and protect our backyard wilderness areas by developing and promoting FENW wilderness public policy positions.
- **Grant Writing - HELP** apply for grants to raise funds for FENW and Forest Service stewardship programs and special projects.

Details: contact **Bill Reed** (billr412@icloud.com).



Friends, Friends, Friends! Check out our sister 'FRIENDS' organizations

- Friends of Dillon Ranger District

(FDRD)

- Friends of the Lower Blue River (FOLBR)



Newsletters

- April: "[After Malheur](#)" by Currie Craven
- Next month: "[Birds of Eagles Nest Wilderness](#)" by Dr. Susan Bonfield

Upcoming events

Join us! for our next **MONTHLY MEETING**
Thu May 26, 5:30 PM,
Silverthorne >> **MAP**

Details at www.fenw.org/

- Thursday, **May 26**: FENW Monthly planning meeting
- Saturday, **May 28**: Gateways/waterworks Trail Maintenance

Wilderness. Tim's mission has gradually morphed from a personal journey to one that encourages his readers to get outdoors and otherwise celebrate Wilderness, which he feels goes underappreciated by many. Tim is a relative newcomer to FENW, but he hopes to become more involved in what he calls a "great organization." He aims to raise support and get more of you involved, too.

FEEDBACK FROM READERS:

As one of the founders of the International Mountain Bicycling Asso (IMBA) and as a board member for 12 years I believe bicycles should not be allowed in wilderness. In my experience Mountain bicycling does alter the desired serenity obtained in the wilderness. National, State and Municipal Parks have lots of other lands which can be used for mountain bicycling. I believe you should concentrate your considerable passion for our sport to open up these other areas to mountain bicycling. Leave the wilderness as wilderness. Carl Birkrlbach

I am writing in support of FENW's position to continue to ban bikes in wilderness areas. Thank you for taking a stand on this important issue. I am a former volunteer wilderness ranger w/ FENW-now living in Southern Calif. My 40+ years experience hiking backpacking climbing mountain biking skiing in the Sierras and Rockies makes me think that the balance we currently have between wilderness areas as we currently define them and non-wilderness is a good mix. Especially in Summit Co which has many miles of bike accessible trails just across I-70 from no bike wilderness areas. The basic principles creating the wilderness act still exist. We need a place unmarked by man-made (other than trails) things. Let's leave it like it is. Tom Fry

Terrific job on the newsletter. I liked how you paraphrased what I wrote you ~ FENW's position on bikes in the Wilderness. Kudos. Frank Gutmann

What a great site! Congratulations on a job well done. John T. P.S. No to bikes!

NO bikes in the Wilderness! Too many people in these already. Bikes destroy trails. Jennifer Collins

I totally agree with FENW---no bikes in the wilderness---please Shirley Beaty

FENW, NO, NO, NO!!! to Mountain Bikes in the Wilderness. Keep them in the state forest or designated trails in State Parks but don't ruin the Wilderness. Guy LaBoa

Leave them out. Adam Poe

- Saturday, **June 4**: National Trails Day
- Saturday, **June 11**: Training Day for new Volunteer Wilderness Rangers
- Saturday, **June 18**: FENW trail project
- Thursday, **June 23**: FENW Monthly planning meeting

Visit the FENW **website** for in-depth information at www.fenw.org/

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*The FENW Board: Currie **Craven** (Pres), George **Resseguie** (VP & Secy), Bill **Reed**, Bill **Betz**, Ken **Harper**, Cyndi **Koop**, Mike **Mayrer**, Frank **Gutmann**.

I really don't think so. Bikes come on you so quickly that I personally get startled every time. I also have a little 6 pound dog that I walk on an extended leash in the woods so he can feel like he's free. When bikes come by I am always shouting please watch out for my dog, as they never see and several times have almost run him over. I am in the woods for peace and harmony, not to be startled by a biker. Thanks, Deborah Casaletta

I like your position supporting no bikes in Wilderness, but endorsing special provisions for keeping important mtn bike trails and allowing bikes, but excluding motorized travel. I hike and mtn bike and would prefer to allow non-motorized bikes in Wilderness, but there is too much prejudice against bikes, so your position is most practical. Thanks -----Bill Adamson

just a quick note to express my appreciation for the FENW e-newsletter, "Eagle Post" you are putting together. The last one, featuring the issue of mountain bikes in the wilderness, was particularly informative with links to related information and a concise summary of where this topic is now. Education of the public, in this case all those who benefit from our wilderness areas, whether spiritually, financially, physically, etc., can go a long way towards protecting our wilderness areas for the present and future. FENW Eagle Posts are hopefully reaching those who can(or should) benefit from this information. As the trail project season gets underway, an Eagle Post illustrating what it takes to maintain our existing trails into the wilderness - allowing the public to enjoy these areas, - would be great. I have found most people have no idea who maintains these trails and the effort (volunteers and FS) involved. And trail construction and maintenance is one of the main reasons I am NOT in favor of bikes in the wilderness. I have had some experience in building and maintaining trails used by mountain bikers - a HUGE amount of work requiring MANY people!! Keep up the great work for FENW!! Suzanne Reed

FENW TAKES A STAND: While the Wilderness Act and most rules - including the ban on bicycles - that govern activities in Wilderness Areas were created before mountain bikes evolved to the popular status that they enjoy today,

**FENW strongly believes that
the essence of the Wilderness Act
is best honored by continuing to
ban the use of bicycles in Wilderness,**

whether the vehicles are self-propelled or motorized, and whether subregions within Wilderness are designated as pristine, primitive or semi-primitive (definitions [here](#)).

Mountain biking opportunities blanket hundreds of millions of acres on National Forest Lands, BLM Lands and Special

Management Areas, without encroaching on designated Wilderness Areas, which preserve for us and future generations the most pristine, untrammelled acreage. The underfunded and under-staffed USFS is already challenged to monitor Wilderness; the increased traffic, deeper penetration, and new social trails created by mountain bikes would be nearly impossible to manage.

The "blended approach" like that proposed in Representative Polis' Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act incorporates pure Wilderness as well as "zone" areas where human powered recreation (bikes) would be allowed.

One advocate argues, "Bicycles are machines, but only in the way that oarlocks ... or even soft-soled shoes are." [Link](#)

CHECK OUT THIS \$10,000 "OARLOCK": Yeti Cycles SB6



Carbon XTR Complete Mountain Bike. Carbon fiber frame, FOX Float X CTD rear shock & 36 160 Factory fork, 44/56mm Chris King tapered headset, SHIMANO: XTR 11-speed shifters; XTR 11-speed read derailleur; 32 t XTR crankset; PF92 bottom bracket; 11-40 t XTR cassette; XTR 11-speed chain;

XTR Trail brakeset, hydraulic disc brakes; and 180/180 mm Ice rotors.

Easton Havoc 35 Carbon handlebar & 35 stem, Devo WTB Race Custom saddle, RockShox Reverb Thomson Covert Dropper seatpost, ENVE M70 Thirty wheelset, Maxxis 27.5" tires, PEDALS NOT INCLUDED