

Dear Commissioners,

Shoshone County Idaho developed and advertised the Trail of the Coeur d'Alene for non-motorized recreational activities, but they also developed separate motorized trails into their forests for those interested in ORV and snowmobile activities. They realize that *both* types of trails are important to Wallace, Kellogg and other towns along the Silver Valley.

They did not attempt to combine the two types to end up with a "multi use" trail intended to please everyone. Instead, their economy now greatly benefits by attracting *both* types of trail users. There are now more than 40 hospitality providers advertising in towns and along the motorized *and non-motorized* trails that tourist's visit and use each year.

Ferry County Commissioners have joined with other tri-county commissioners, the forest service and a Colville based ORV special interest club in a movement to enact ordinances designating "connector roads" for ORV access to existing national forest recreational trails. By opening additional ORV routes they hope to stimulate a more active motorized tourist industry in each of the three counties.

One of our commissioners has expressed his potential conflict of interests by actually joining the ORV club. He has assured us that the "connector roads" movement is completely separate from the local abandoned rail corridor issue.

Locally, adjacent landowners, non-motorized trail enthusiasts and other citizens have joined together requesting a separate ordinance to keep the rail corridor non-motorized and allow development of a non-motorized trail. In addition to contributing to the health, safety and life style of those within Ferry County this would also attract additional non-motorized tourism.

Perhaps historic Republic could be our Wallace and the rail corridor with its lake, river and small towns could be a smaller version of the Rail-trail of the Coeur d'Alenes. Each type of trail attracts a different set of local and tourist users. If we want to expand the base of a tourism industry in this county we need to pursue both types of trails.

It now appears that in response to requests from this ORV special interest club our commissioners plan to break up the rail corridor by making the section from Malo to Curlew a "multi use" trail. There are over 1000 converted rail-trails in the United States, 80 in Washington State and 18 in Idaho and there are no successful "multi use" trails. Non-motorized users would avoid such trails and ORV use would soon spread to take over the remaining sections of the corridor.

It would be a serious mistake if commissioners turn this five-mile section of the 28-mile corridor into a "multi-use" trail. It would reduce the appeal of the entire trail to both local users and tourists looking for non-motorized recreation opportunities.

It would also eliminate the county's eligibility for much of the non-motorized recreational funding, such as from the National Center for Safe Routes to School, the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, the Washington State Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan and grants from the governor's Healthiest State in the Nation Program.

It would be a mistake to ignore the inputs commissioners received from 126 concerned citizens who attended the special community meeting at the Republic School on May 15th. Sign-in sheets indicated that 95% preferred a non-motorized trail on the corridor.

It would be a mistake to ignore the many letters and email messages sent to the commissioners' office by citizens and absentee property owners. Over 200 have been received. 94% requested a non-motorized trail, including the county sheriff, EMS and fire protection officials, conservationists, bird watchers, bicyclists, hikers, equestrians, cross country skiers and snowshoers.

It would also be a mistake to ignore a petition now being signed by hundreds of concerned individuals requesting commissioner endorsement of a non-motorized trail on the corridor.

The Stevens County ORV Roads Ordinance draft started by describing 20 roads and already has expanded to 141 even before it is finalized. The Ferry County draft presently lists 35 roads and is no doubt expandable in the future. These ordinances are being enacted to provide local residents and tourists with more places to enjoy motorized recreational activities.

The local Rail Trail Partners have described how abandoned rail corridors all across the country have been converted into rail-trails to meet the needs of local communities and tourists. They have described their vision and volunteered their assistance to commissioners for planning, researching available funding and organizing to provide local residents and tourists a place to enjoy non-motorized recreational activities.

Our community didn't ask for an abandoned corridor but it's here. It can be an asset to Ferry County that Stevens and Pend Oreille do not have. We would like to see our commissioners start supporting its development by listening to and working with the citizens who elected them.

This county has the potential for providing both high quality motorized and non-motorized trails that will attract and be enjoyed by local residents and tourists.

Roy and Wanda Lammer  
October 31, 2007

cc: Rail Trail Partners