

Existing Trail System

14.4 miles of Forest Service approved trails exist in the area under consideration (see map below). For the purposes of this plan, Forest Service roads are not considered trails (though clearly they are used as such).

~25 miles of unapproved trails exist, some of which are slated for decommission in this plan. The second table below lists only those unapproved trails that are part of this plan.

FS Approved Trails	Mileage	Notes
Alice In Wonderland	1.0	Part on city or private land, subject to closure.
Bull Gap	3.2	
Caterpillar	1.1	
Catwalk	1.7	
Corp Camp	1.0	
Eastview	2.5	
Horn Gap Connector	1.2	
Lamb Mine	0.7	
Marty's	0.8	
Toothpick	1.2	Partially on private land.
Total	14.4	

Unapproved Trails	Mileage	Notes
Marty's	0.5	Extension of Marty's. In use.
Jabberwocky	1.2	In use.
Fell On Knee	1.0	In use.
Upper Missing Link	1.2	In use.
Lower Missing Link	1.0	In use.
No Candies	2.5	In use.
Upper Eastview	1.3	In use?
Upper Time Warp	3.8	Historical, in use.
Wagner Glade	2.2	Historical, in use.
Wagner-Warp	3.7	Historical, not in use, downed trees.
Total	18.4	

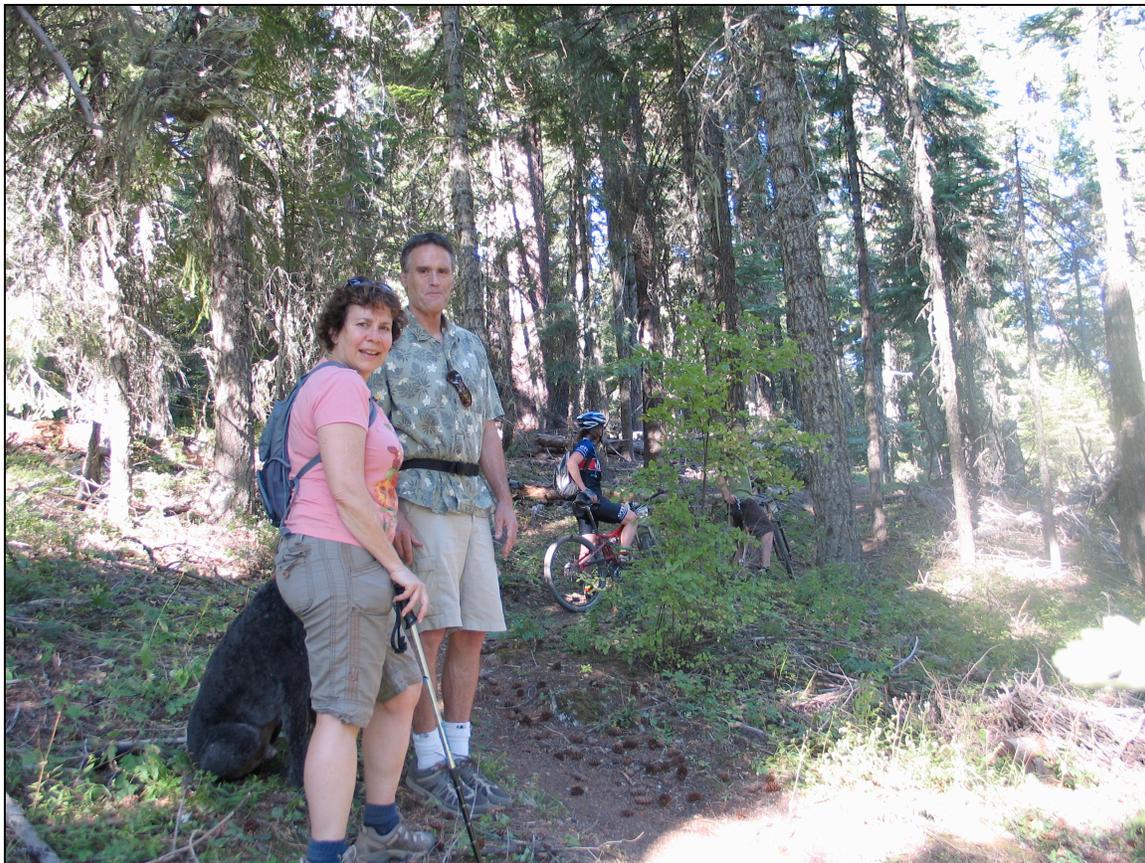
Why Ashland Trails are So Popular

Trail use has flourished in Ashland for a variety of reasons; a better understanding of some of these may help guide future planning.

The proximity of trails to the City of Ashland, the Pacific Crest Trail, I-5 and Mount Ashland.

The Ashland trail system is relatively easy to access. Lithia Park leads right up to some of the trails. The Mt Ashland parking lot, a 35-minute drive away mostly on Interstate -5, also connects directly to the upper trail system. The PCT traverses right below Mt Ashland and the Creek to Crest trail serves to connect much of these points.

Trail systems in other areas are often only accessible via dusty, rutted and bumpy gravel or dirt roads; Ashland's trail system is comparatively convenient and accessible.



The amount of elevation difference between Mt Ashland and Ashland.

Up to 5000 feet of descent makes this an attractive downhill biking area. Very few places in the country can match that kind of elevation change.

Mountain biking has hit critical mass.

In the 1980s, Ashland was host to one of the early mountain bike races, *Revenge of the Siskiyous*. Since that time, many Rogue Valley residents have embraced mountain biking

in the Ashland watershed. Several businesses target the downhill mountain biking community and several events attract hundreds of participants. The Spring Thaw is a three-day mountain biking festival attracting nationwide participants and the Ashland Super D/Ashland Mountain Challenge has grown to nearly 500 participants and included World Downhill, National Cross Country and Super D champions. In a review of the latter, the magazine *Mountain Bike Action* (Oct 2010 issue) writes: “the 12-mile race covers some of the best single-track trails in the country.”



Rider descending Jabberwocky

The framework of existing Forest Service and other roads.

The existing Forest Service roads predate most of the popular trails and have provided a backbone for the network of trails. It is hard to imagine the trail system without FS 2060, FS 200, etc.

The 9-month long Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

OSF brings in tens of thousands of tourists each year, many of whom seek exercise or an outdoor experience while they are in Ashland.

Southern Oregon University and several thousand students.

SOU is located in Ashland and attracts many students interested in outdoor recreation, including hiking and mountain biking.

United Bicycle Institute.

UBI, a bike mechanic certification school, brings in many cyclists turned mechanics. Some of the employees are notable local riders and racers and have constructed local

bicycle trails. Graduates of the program return to their communities and spread the word of the Ashland trails.

Local trail running has hit critical mass.

Some of the nations best ultra-runners moved to Ashland a few years ago and more have arrived since. Local events such as the Lithia Loop Marathon (the trail marathon national championship in 2010), the Mt Ashland Hill Climb Run, the Pine to Palm 100-mile race, and the Siskiyou Outback (SOB) attract national level competitors.



Runner on Caterpillar Trail

The forest, the weather, and the terrain.

Many of the trails are available year-round, while others are available for a majority of the year. The tree-canopy provides welcome shade in the summer and protects some trails from too much snow in the winter. The terrain, while involving a fair amount of elevation gain and loss, affords wonderful views of the Ashland watershed, the Rogue valley, the Cascades, the Siskiyou, Mt Shasta, the Marble Mountains and the Trinity Alps. The decomposed granite soil in most Ashland watershed trails makes for great all-weather use. While trails in other areas (e.g., Bend, Oarkridge and Falls City) suffer from mud during the winter and spring and are frequently closed, Ashland trails tend to shed water quickly and remain firm.

The attractiveness of the town of Ashland.

The small town of Ashland has a very concentrated downtown with many shops and restaurants, making it an appealing place to visit and stay. Many of the trails culminate in downtown Ashland. Since the town has a significant tourist economy there are many opportunities for recreationalists to enjoy a post-hike/ride dinner and libation.

The proximity of Ashland to outdoor recreation opportunities.

Crater Lake National Park, the Rogue River, Mt Shasta and a host of recreational activities—rafting, kayaking, backpacking, skiing, fishing, etc—make Ashland an excellent place to base a recreational vacation or lifestyle.



Equestrian and dog on the Caterpillar Trail

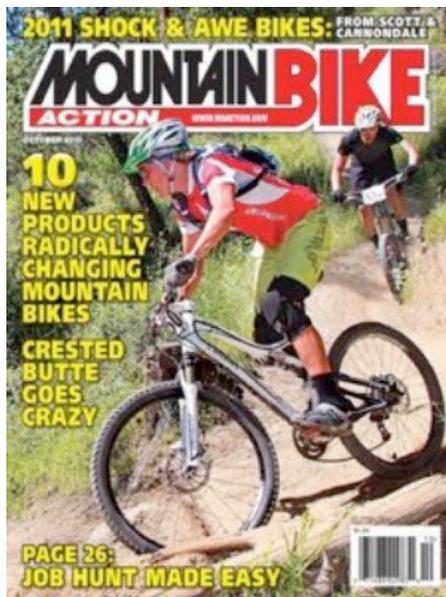
Media coverage

Magazines, websites and other media have, in the last few years, escalated the praise for Ashland and its trail system. It's easy to imagine that this attention will serve to substantially increase trail use.

- Outside Magazine's August 2010 issue named Ashland the top city for trail running in the nation.



- Outside Magazine had previously named Ashland **one of the top ten small towns in the U.S.** saying: "you can bike or trail-run right from town".
- A recent Mountain Bike Action issue (October 2010) featured an 8-page article based on Ashland trails riding, another on the United Bicycle Institute and one on "The perfect Ashland bike."



One of Ashland's trails on the cover of Mountain Bike Action (Oct 2010)

- The Cycling News website (June 16, 2010) featured an article describing one racer’s perfect Ashland mountain bike.



- Another mountain biking magazine, *Decline*, offered a five-page article in their October 2010 issue, with comments like “there are some really cool trails in the area and it’s hard not to ride them...”
- An article in the June 2009 issue of Running Times Magazine calls Ashland the “new trail running mecca ”



- Some quotes from Mountain Bike Action magazine:

“The Ashland trails...are built with a flow that is hard to find in most places. Ashland has a ton of trails to choose from, and the weather is perfect. I have been going to Ashland for many years now, and I never get tired of the place.”

“The more I ride in Ashland, the more I wish I lived there. I don’t know if they have pixie trail builders up there in the hills, or what’s going on, but every time I go up, there is a sweet new section of trail.”



AWTA volunteers working on the White Rabbit Trail

What Are The Problems?

Reading some of the positive press in the previous section, one might be tempted to think that the Ashland trail system is relatively problem-free. However, many hikers and runners have expressed their frustration at near misses with downhill mountain bikers. Forest Service personnel are exasperated with rogue trail building and one user group—the equestrians—feels almost driven out of the watershed. Upon closer examination, some of the above problems derive from one or more of the problems listed below. The trails plan is, in significant part, problem-driven, so a brief trail solution is introduced here with more in-depth analysis later in this document.

1. Explosive User Growth

Trail counters and anecdotal accounts document the increased use of many of the watershed trails. There is no reason to believe that trail use will diminish any time soon.

2. Lack of a Comprehensive Design

Virtually none of the trails in the Ashland watershed were designed with the whole in mind. As the history of the trail system demonstrates, many, if not most, trails were created by individuals as personal motivation dictated. Probably the only network of trails that could be said to be “designed” is the White Rabbit-affiliated network (White Rabbit, Queen of Hearts, Mad Hatter, March Hare and Cheshire Cat), but these are a tiny fraction of the existing watershed trails. The effort by SOMBA and IMBA to create a trail (Caterpillar) parallel to the road was also a step in the design direction, though as discussed later, the design was for a different era of mountain bikes.

Trails continue to be created in a piece-meal fashion—most of them unauthorized—and it is fairly clear that this method is not effectively addressing the major concerns.

This trails master plan addresses the trail system as a whole. It aims to address the traffic patterns, all of the different user groups and their unique trail considerations, the habitat of threatened and endangered species, as well as the preservation of some of the resources in the area.

3. Trail Congestion

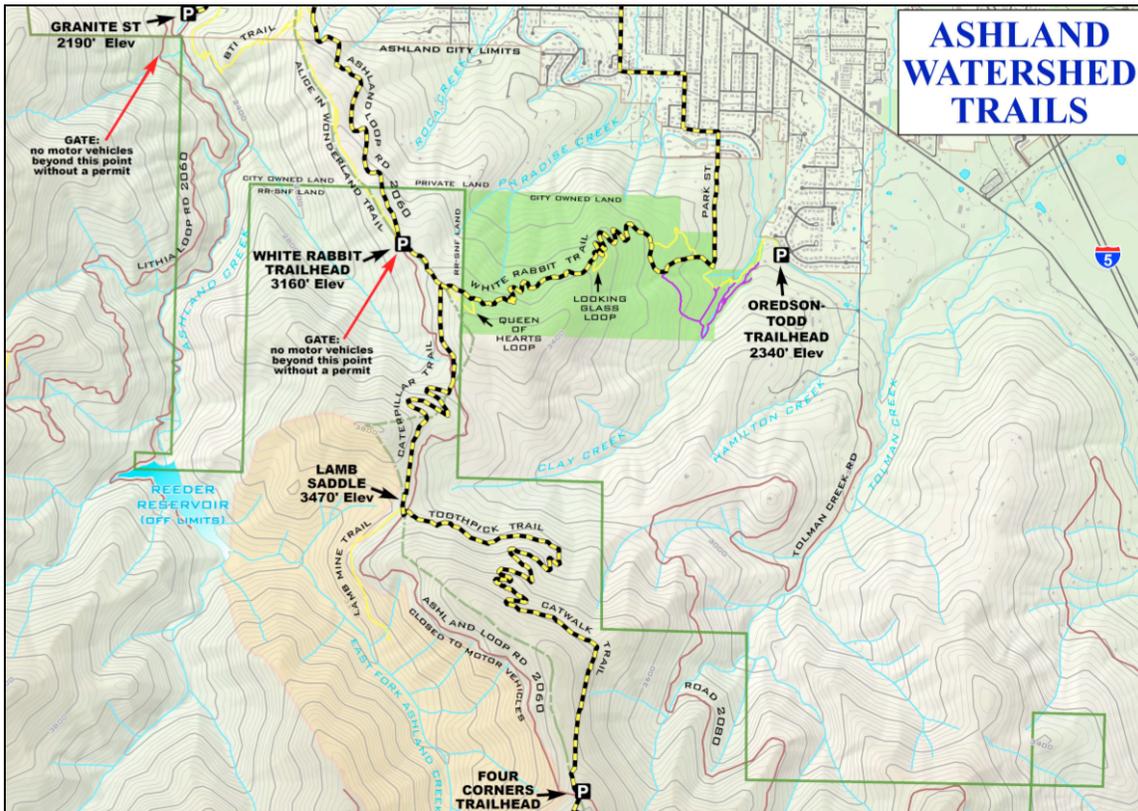
Most of the watershed traffic is concentrated in a relatively narrow corridor in the northeast section of the watershed. Bounded by Four Corners to the South, Toothpick, and White Rabbit to the East and BTI and Jabberwocky to the North (see map below), this sliver of the watershed sees the lion’s share of traffic. This is born out by trail use data, user surveys and anecdotal evidence. This is not surprising given that:

- This area is very close to the city of Ashland (Lithia Park/downtown) and south Ashland (near Park St)
- This area is served by four trailheads, one at the White Rabbit/FS2060 intersection, one at Park Street, one at the Toothpick/Tolman Creek Rd intersection and another at 4 Corners.

- This area is served by several dirt roads (FS 2060, FS 2060-200 and Tolman Creek Rd)
- This area is the logical place to end up for gravity-assisted riders descending from Mt Ashland or Four Corners. Downhill or freeride mountain bikers will avoid the west side of the watershed because they would have to climb to get to town.
- This area offers the highest concentration of trails.

Problem Area 1: Alice in Wonderland/White Rabbit

At the present time, the only authorized Forest Service trails leading to town are Alice in Wonderland and White Rabbit. This statement seems extraordinary given the number of trails in the Ashland watershed trail system, but it is nevertheless accurate.



Forest Service approved trail map

Alice in Wonderland currently passes through private property for which no permanent easements exist. AWTA and the City have both tried to obtain the necessary easements with no success. Alice in Wonderland could close at any time, and therefore cannot be relied on as a major traffic conduit in the future. This leaves White Rabbit trail and FS Rd 2060 as the major authorized routes.

Downhill mountain bikers, who comprise a large amount of the user traffic in the trail system, generally won't take White Rabbit because it has a significant climb. In fact, trail counts reveal that over 80% of *all* mountain bike traffic (including cross-country riders) descending from Caterpillar will take Alice in Wonderland over White Rabbit. While this may be a blessing for many of the hikers on White Rabbit, it means the only authorized

trail—for practical purposes—for downhill mountain bikers is Alice in Wonderland, a trail subject to closure if just one of the several property owners decides to develop their property or becomes concerned about potential liability litigation.

Alice in Wonderland links to BTI, an overused city trail and another site of potential user conflict. BTI has over 300 users in a typical week, with 265 of them being bicycles.

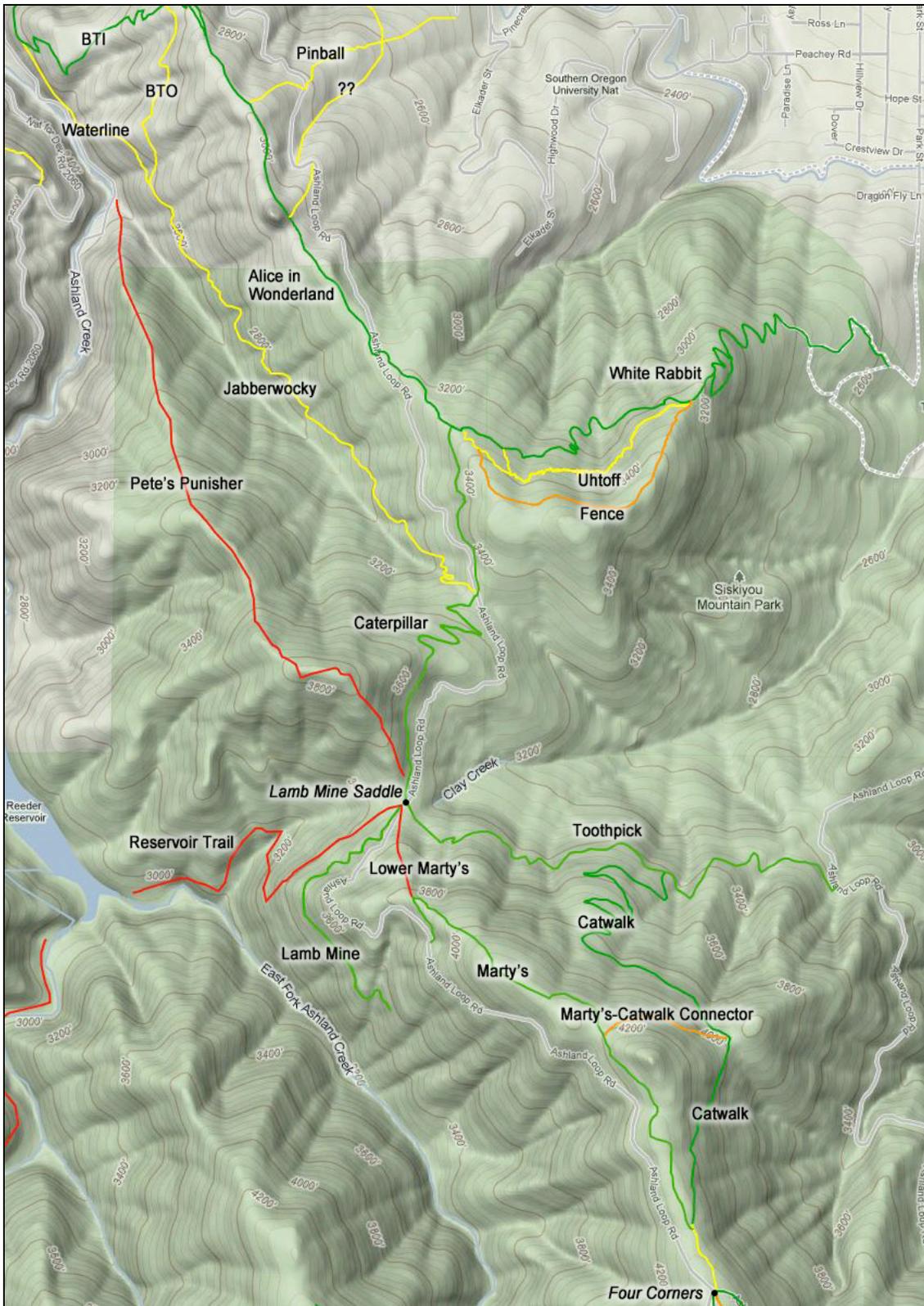
FS Road 2060 (Ashland Loop Road) is open to motorized traffic from Morton St to the White Rabbit trailhead. It has large ruts, potholes, limited visibility turns and off-camber corners. It is a poor pedestrian and bicycle experience.

In short, there is a substantial need to create new routes and/or authorize existing unauthorized routes in this, the most-trafficked area of the Ashland watershed.

Jabberwocky (depicted below) is an existing alternative mountain bike trail explained in detail in a later part of this proposal. While it may require some rerouting and/or some erosion mitigation, Jabberwocky represents a successful way to route a substantial amount of mountain bike traffic away from Alice in Wonderland. Another proposed alternative (not depicted here) is Jabberwalkie, a designated pedestrian/equestrian trail, again addressing the need to redirect traffic away from Alice in Wonderland.

Pete's Punisher is an unauthorized trail that is slated for decommission in this plan.

NOTE: Forest Service land is represented by the green-tinted area and some of the trails (e.g. BTI, BTO, Waterline, parts of Jabberwocky) are outside that area. Technically they are within the jurisdiction of the City of Ashland and are not part of this plan. However, they are part of an AWTAs effort pursued in conjunction with the City of Ashland.

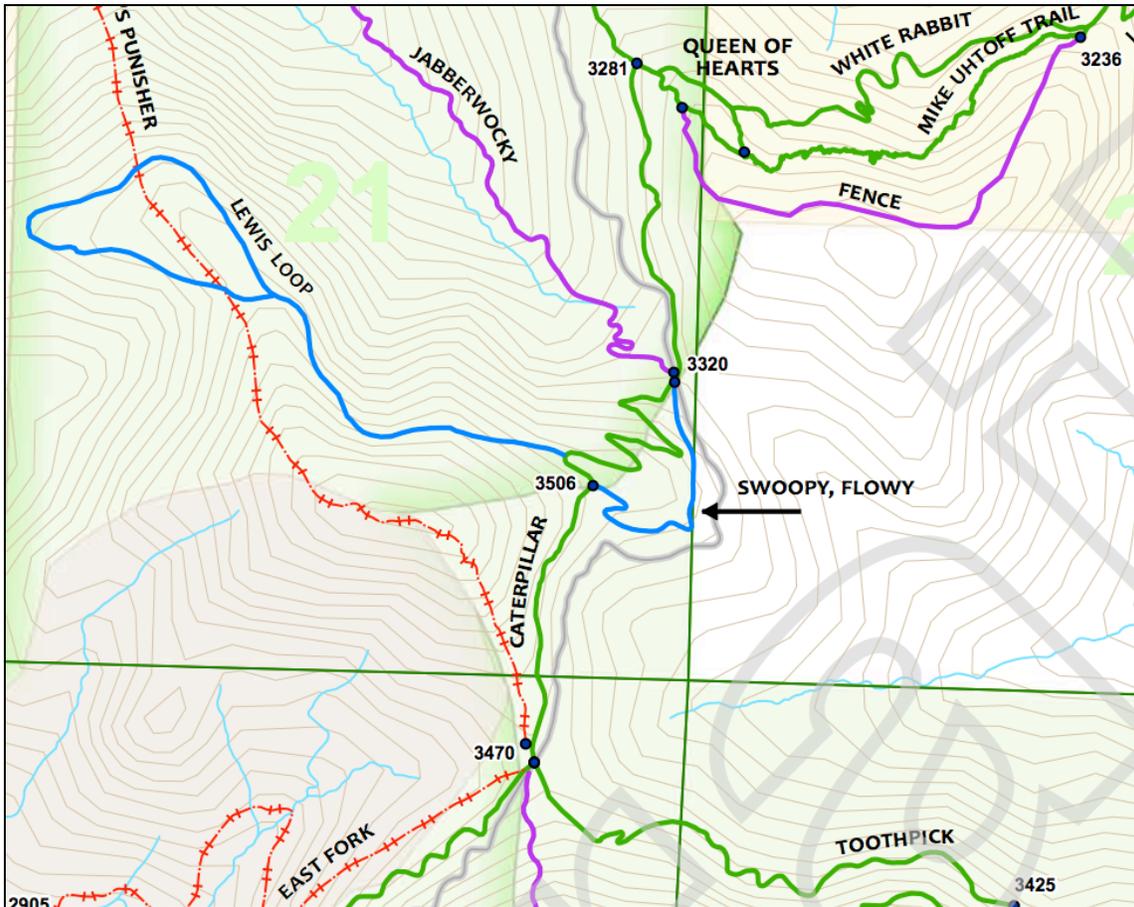


Problem Area 2: Caterpillar

Caterpillar, as mentioned earlier, was a joint project between local mountain bike group SOMBA and a international mountain bike advocacy group, IMBA. It was well constructed for the mountain bikes of the era but has not stood up well under constant use by more modern mountain bike equipment. In fact, the middle section features too many narrow switchback turns and blind corners and thus has been shredded, rutted, and blown out by mountain bikers trying to contain their speed. This trail is the *only alternative* to FS Road 2060 and, as such, is quite popular with all manner of traffic. Virtually all users prefer to be on trail if possible.

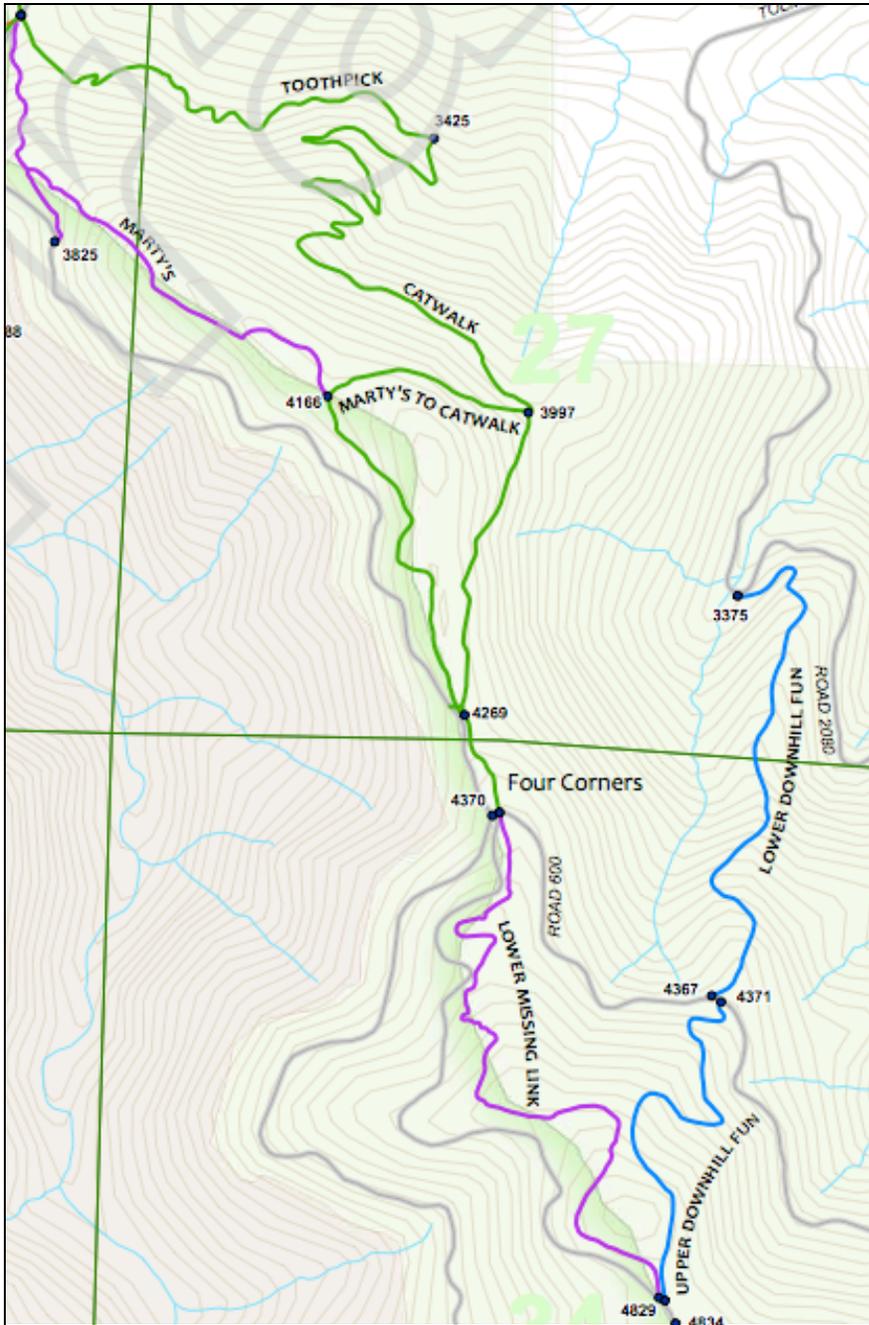
Our trail counter data shows Caterpillar has 250 users a week with upwards of 500 during April and May. Half of the users are mountain bikers. Caterpillar is the second-most used trail in the watershed after Toothpick according to our data.

This proposal includes a parallel section called Swoopy, Flowy which would address the problems of the Caterpillar middle section. Additionally, a primarily pedestrian/equestrian side loop is proposed (see Lewis Loop).



Problem Area 3: Four Corners and Immediately North

The Four Corners area is an intersection of several roads and trails: FS Roads 2060, FS 2060-600, FS 2060-200, Lower Missing Link trail (currently unauthorized) and Marty's Trail (authorized) all join here. One can drive and park at this area, so it both a trailhead and a major intersection. In all seasons, but particularly winter, it is often used as a shuttle drop-off point. Virtually all downhill mountain bike traffic goes through this point. Some equestrians drive here as this is one of the few places they can park. Cross-country teams from Ashland (SOU and AHS) drive here to do flat running workouts.



Problems arise below Four Corners (i.e., to the north) as most downhill traffic eschews Forest Service Road 2060 to choose either Marty's Trail or Catwalk. Traffic congestion is at its worst here as is the potential trail conflict between different user groups.

Both Marty's Trail and Catwalk have been significantly modified by mountain bikers in a manner not conducive to other users. Several jumps and berms have been added to these trails, making for awkward hiking and equestrian use.



Hiker and dog between mountain bike jump and landing.

Catwalk is characterized by numerous 180 degree switchback turns which become rutted. Efforts by some mountain bikers to alleviate this by creating banked turns has helped, but again made for awkward footing for runners, hikers and equestrians.

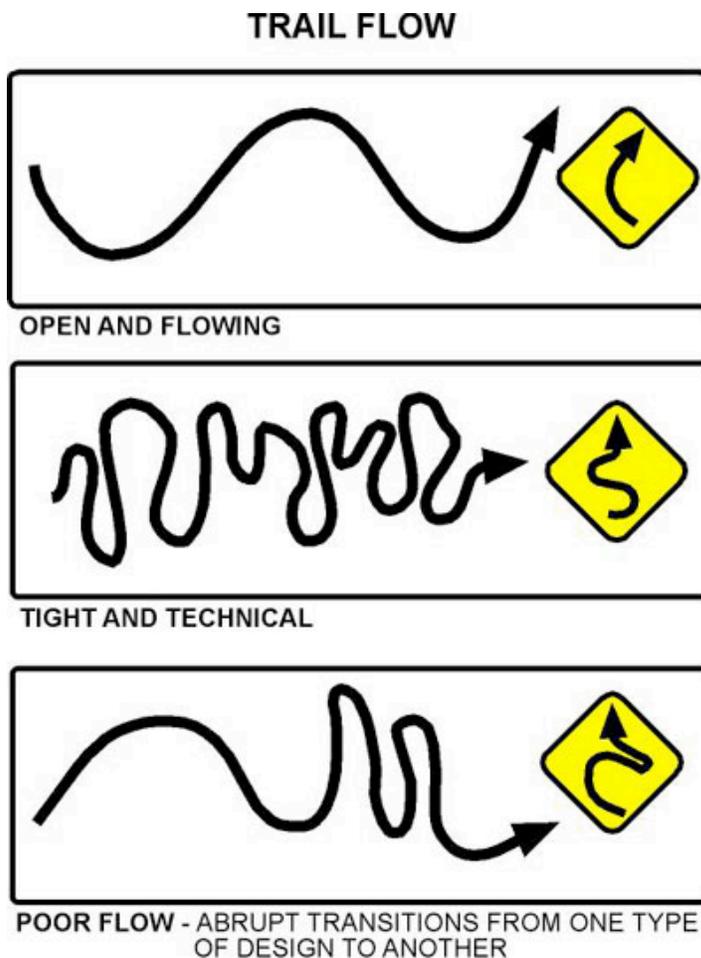
Catwalk is also characterized by many blind corners and slight rises that obscure sight lines. This trail is narrow and offers little room for pedestrians to avoid downhill cyclists. Equestrians have largely given up on this trail because of the potential hazards.

This proposal offers two new trails: Upper and Lower Downhill Fun to channel traffic away from these two major arteries to Tolman Creek Road. Additionally, this proposal suggests an alternative to Catwalk, tentatively called Dog Walk, which would provide a pedestrian/equestrian route to the Toothpick trail.

4. Lack of Modern Trail Design

Most trails were built by individuals and the vast majority were built for mountain bikes of a certain era and prior to modern mountain bike design. The result is current mountain bikers, with their front and rear suspension systems, can carry much more speed over rough terrain, and with their disc brake systems can stop more quickly. Speed carried into a switch-back turn may force a rider to lock up their wheels which leads to skidding, which, in turn, leads to ruts and blow-outs. Examples of this phenomenon are visible on Catwalk, Caterpillar, White Rabbit, Time Warp and many other trails.

At the bottom of the graphic below, note the “Poor Flow” depiction. This, unfortunately, describes some of our trails.



Trail Flow graphic from <http://www.imba.com/resources/trail-building/twists-and-turns>

This trails plan seeks to fix some existing trails and provide appropriate trail design in new trails. Some trails may become more pedestrian-oriented and some trails may become more bike-oriented. Bike-oriented trails will have a natural bike flow to them which will lend themselves to primarily biking (and mitigate against some of the ruts,

blowouts and other problems), while other trails will be engineered--through mostly natural features--to be discouraging to bike users and more desirable by other users.

Specifically, Louis Loop, Jabberwalky, Dogwalk, Split Rock will be designed for pedestrian and equestrian “encouraged use” and may feature characteristics that may be unappealing to mountain bikers. Other trails, such as Swoopy, Flowy, and Upper and Lower Downhill Fun will be designed for downhill mountain bike riders.

5. Illegal Trail Construction

Many illegal trails spring up in the watershed area. Some of this trail building is presumably inspired by the search for alternatives to fire roads. A revealing comment appears in one of the mountain bike magazines (Decline, Oct 2010) about how roads are regarded relative to trails:

“There is one contentious joke that people say about the [Ashland] 12-Mile Super D: the race course is actually the worst route down the mountain. To clear things up, the reason that riders say that is because there are some really cool trails in the area...[the race organizer] has been working really hard to get a trail in the middle of the racecourse—aptly named Missing Link—sanctioned and into the event. It [would] replace the second fire road section and turns it into a meandering single track, which would be really cool.”

Some new trail construction is probably undertaken to simply have some new trail to ride. At the present time, the only authorized path downhill from the Mt Ashland parking lot to Four Corners is the Bull Gap trails (upper and lower) or FS Road 2060-200.

Part of our proposal suggests authorizing Upper and Lower Missing Link (existing, unauthorized trails) because they provide a compelling alternative to FS Road 2060-200. Relatedly, Upper Eastview (existing, unauthorized) connects Upper Missing Link to Eastview for another variation on a theme. The more variations, the less inclination there may be to construct new trails.

6. Fewer Trails on West Side

The east side of the watershed boasts a variety of trails, but the west side is comparatively lacking. In fact, beyond FS Roads, the only two authorized trails are the Horn Gap trail and the unnamed connector trail between the end of Horn Gap Rd and FS Rd 2060. This lack of legal trails contributes to the relative dearth of mountain bike traffic or more importantly to the relative concentration of traffic on the east side of the watershed.

The west side has potential for some excellent trails, particularly for cross-country mountain bikers, vigorous hikers, equestrians and long-distance runners. This proposal suggests authorizing some existing and partially existing trails such as Time Warp, Wagner Glade, No Candies, Wagner-Warp Loop, Split Rock, Fell on Knee, and Hitt

Loop to channel more traffic to this side of the watershed, to provide connectivity between various trails and roads, and to provide authorized alternatives to the FS roads.

7. Legal Status of Trails Unclear

Forest Service law enforcement presence in 2011 confused many trail users. These users, primarily bikers, weren't sure if they were violating the law by riding certain trails. Is Time Warp a legal trail? Jabberwocky? Upper and Lower Missing Link? No Candies? In fact, it appears that some decades-old trails have an unclear legal status.

Some trails may even have dual status. For instance, part of Marty's is an approved trail, but part isn't. How would one know?

8. Lack of Maps and Signage

One of the adverse consequences of so many unauthorized trails in the watershed is that it is hard to create a meaningful trail map. In fact, just a small percentage of existing trails appear on the approved map, jointly produced by the Forest Service, SOMBA, AWTA and the City of Ashland. Besides being confusing, this becomes a safety issue.

This trails plan proposes the authorization of many existing trails and the creation of signs and maps to representing all authorized trails.

Lack of accurate and meaningful signs at trail intersections and trailheads leads to users getting lost or disoriented. Rescue personnel may also have a difficult time reaching injured people if they use different names for unauthorized trails, or describe a trail that isn't on the rescuer's map.



Some current signs: good as far as they go, but missing more than 50% of trails and posted in only a few places.

Trail User Types

Mountain Bikers

Cross-country

Cross-country mountain bikers ride up and down trails and roads. Their bikes are a compromise between climbing and descending so they tend not to have quite as much suspension travel and they generally weigh less than downhill-only bikes. Riders tend to wear helmets, but no other protective gear. Most cross-country mountain bikers begin their rides in Ashland and ride up on some of the popular roads (Ashland Loop Road, Tolman Creek Rd) and then onto single-track trails. Most riders appear to prefer to descend on single-track trails. Because of the grade of some of the roads and trails, a climbing cross-country mountain biker may move uphill at the same speed as a trail runner.

Downhill

Downhill mountain bikes typically have dual-suspension (front and rear) shocks with significant amounts of “travel” to absorb bumps at high speeds. Large disc brakes allow quick stopping. These bikes tend to be heavier than cross-country bikes, often equipped with double or triple crowns to allow the 8 or more inches of suspension travel. Weight isn't the greatest consideration because most downhillers seek out gravity-assisted routes: uphills are avoided. The Ashland trails are immensely popular with the downhill riders because of the virtually unsurpassed vertical available for descending. There are few places in the United States that offer well over 5000 feet of descent with little to no climbing necessary.

Riders will often wear protective gear, including “body armor” and full-face helmets. To non-riders, these outfits make riders look like Storm Troopers from Star Wars.



Downhill bikers may comprise up to half of the number of mountain bikers in the watershed. Most will start their rides by being driven to the Mt Ashland parking lot, 4 Corners, White Rabbit or some other location from which to descend.

Free Riders

Free riders tend to seek out man-made and natural obstacles including ramps, raised platforms, stumps, rocks, and fallen trees from which to jump, drop, and perform balancing acts and tricks. The primary goal is not speed but technical challenge, style and amplitude (on jumps). Freeriders have built various structures in the Ashland watershed on which to practice their craft.

Freeride bicycles are lighter than most downhill bikes and some freeride cyclists will begin their rides in downtown Ashland and ride uphill on roads and trails. However, many, if not most of the freeriders will start by being driven to the Mt Ashland parking lot, 4 Corners or some other location, from which to descend.

Free riders tend not to ride as fast as downhillers and some only have a single gear.

Hikers

This category includes pedestrians, dog-walkers, nature enthusiasts, photographers, etc. Hikers tend to enjoy some of the same trails as cross-country mountain bikers and runners. Most hikers tend to use the Northern-most trails as these are closer to town and feature more trailheads and parking. Many of the same trails enjoyed by hikers are also used by other trail user types including downhill mountain bikes: these are the popular trail corridors including White Rabbit, BTI and FS Road 2060.

Hikers may not be as well organized as mountain bikers, equestrians or runners. Sierra Club outings tend to be outside the watershed and other hiking gatherings tend to be less formal.

Trail Runners

Trail runners tend to start in Ashland and run up the trails and roads and come back down. A small group will drive to a trailhead at White Rabbit, 4 Corners or somewhere else to begin their runs. The trail running community is growing at a rapid rate and several weekly organized runs with groups of 10-20 start in downtown.

Equestrians

Equestrians comprise a very small and diminishing fraction of the number of users. Equestrian use has diminished significantly in the last decade, with some citing conflicts with mountain bikers.