

From: Mark Patterson

Sent: Thursday, January 9, 2020 1:08 PM

To: FS-comments-northern-bitterroot-darby <comments-northern-bitterroot-darby@usda.gov>

Subject: Bike trail: Mark Smith

Hi Mark:

We moved into Hamilton 3 years ago and live there half the year (in the summer months). I was exposed to mountain biking just a few years ago down on a Mexican coast where we live the other 6 months. Wonderful exercise and challenge for people of any age. We have no mail here so I'm writing to you by email.

So we built 3 miles of trail on our property last year and I get to use it 5 times a week. Look forward to riding the new 10 mile trail once completed.

I am not a pro on this topic but would like to offer some suggestions from the process I went through, which may save you \$ and headaches.

1. Avoid all advanced design features - both a riding enjoyment matter and a liability/risk factor (I'm a race driver and love controlled risk, but the very advanced design elements of mountain bike design create undue risk...less fun too).
2. Choosing a top trail designer and builder, even if moderately more expensive, is well worth it. If you have not picked a team, I would be happy to introduce you to Woody (Nathan Woodruff in Arkansas), the owner of Progressive Trail Builders. They've designed and built trails in 3 countries and 18 states, if I recall correctly. Far more important, most clients have invited them back to add mileage, some as many as 4 and 5 times.
3. Consider annual maintenance budgets when designing the trail. This is both a macro and micro point. With snow/melt run off in MT, long declines and climbs will be "funnels" for erosion and therefore cause ugly corrective maintenance; we have heavy rains in semi-desert parts of MX and the repairs can be time consuming, and add safety and budget concerns.
4. Signage: not just from a liability point of view, but clear trail signage at multiple locations is crucial (we even have 2 on our little property at the 2 trail access points). Just as important is language such as "you ride/walk these trails at your own risk" on every sign post and tourist description of this amenity.
6. Critical to have strong language and signage to discourage usage right after rain (at least a day), as this ruins the "baked" and relatively smooth base on which we ride. Ending up with ugly, heavily rutted trails is not the way to go.
7. Lastly, privilege. Who has priority on the track at any one point in time? Allowing horses or horseback riding on a mountain bike trail is rarely encouraged because of what the hoof does to the surface. Creates too much powder, which complicates mountain bike riding. So assuming no horses for the minute, signage and tourist material must make clear that hikers have the first right of space, bikers second...or bikers may well end up tearing into unsuspecting hikers.

We are so appreciative of this new development in our areas. Thank you, thank you.

Be well,
Mark