



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Pacific  
Southwest  
Region

Regional Office, R5  
1323 Club Drive  
Vallejo, CA 94592  
(707) 562-8737 Voice  
(707) 562-9240 Text (TDD)

---

File Code: 2350/5330

Date: November 25, 2013

Mr. [Name withheld]  
Pacific Crest Reassessment Initiative  
[Address Withheld]

Dear [Name Withheld]:

This letter is in response to your February 28 and April 27, 2013, letters and our meeting on April 17, 2013. I appreciate the interest and the opportunity to meet with you and discuss the concerns regarding the bicycle prohibition on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT).

Nation-wide, the Forest Service provides more trails for mountain bicycling than any other land-management agency. Over 98 percent of the Forest Service's non-wilderness trail miles are open to bicycle use (125,962 miles). We value this important recreation activity and agree there is much to be gained by selecting focal areas to work with communities and non-profits to improve opportunities for bicyclists.

The primary uses for the PCT were determined by the PCT Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) and are also found in 36 C.F.R. § 212.21, which states that the PCT is to be used "*primarily as a footpath and horseback riding trail.*" Since your initial inquiry, a complete review of the National Trails System Act legislation, legislative history, regulations and policies, PCT CMP, PCT Advisory Council Minutes, and agency correspondence records has occurred. Our research documents a legislative and administrative intent that only hiking and equestrian use were to be permitted on the PCT. There is no evidence that bicycle use has ever been allowed on the PCT.

Your February 28, 2013, letter references bicycle use on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. The National Trails System Act allows for bicycle use in some circumstances. There is a spectrum of opportunities for bicycle use on the national scenic trails. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) CMP and directives may allow for bicycle use if the use is "consistent with the applicable land and resource management plan and will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST." The Arizona and Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trails are currently developing Advisory Councils and CMPs and in the interim allow bicycle use outside of designated wilderness. However, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, designated at the same time as the PCT, prohibits bicycle use. **The opportunities permitted on the national scenic trails allow for a full range of long-distance uses -- from the primitive, wilderness oriented experiences of the Appalachian and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trails to the shared-use opportunities of the Arizona and Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trails.**

The PCT Advisory Council was required by the National Trails System Act to assist the agency with the location and administration of the PCT. The Council contained members from California, Oregon, and Washington at the recommendation of the governors, representatives from each



federal, state, or local agency whose land the trail passes through and members appointed to represent private organizations, including corporate and individual landowners and recreational users of the trail. Bicycle use was considered by the PCT Advisory Council in June 1972, November 1982, September 1983, November 1987 and in September 1988. Correspondance between Zane G. Smith, Regional Forester and Gary L. Rosenberg (1984) and the November 1982 PCT Advisory Council minutes document that there was consensus among the Council that bicycles should be prohibited on the PCT.

The continuation of Regional Order 88-4, which prohibits using or possessing bicycles on the PCT, is consistent with legislation, regulations, directives, the recommendations of the PCT Advisory Council, and the PCT Comprehensive Management Plan. These authorities demonstrate that the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail was intended to be administered as a footpath and horseback riding trail. The PCT was not planned or designed for bicycle use, which has been prohibited since 1971 (National Parks) and 1988 (BLM and U.S. Forest Service). The Forest Service has concerns about the safety of hikers and equestrians if the prohibition were rescinded. The increased rate of speed at which bicycles travel would require, at a minimum, an upgrade to the standards for sight distance; the widening of many sections of the trail or creating passing space and/or trail “pinch points”; and establishing trail anchors to slow speeds of travel. These design features would be necessary before the trail could accommodate bicycle traffic to maintain a safe trail by addressing travel speed, response time and maneuverability, traction, adequate passing opportunities, and awareness of other users. In order to continue to protect the trail as a resource and to provide a safe and unique recreation experience for the primary users – hikers and equestrians – the continuance of Regional Order 88-4 is needed. Regional Order 88-4 is not in conflict with other issued orders or current regulations under 36 CFR Part 261, Subpart A.

I am concerned about the contention that has developed between trail users regarding the PCT and other national scenic trails. I support continuing a dialogue with trail users in the hiker, equestrian, and mountain bicycling communities to identify a balanced solution on our vast national trail system. We will work with stakeholders interested in this issue to organize a professionally facilitated discussion in the coming year, with the goal of finding common ground for resolving disagreements. If you have suggestions regarding potential participants or facilitators to ensure that this is a productive conversation, please contact Kathy Mick, Regional Trails Program Manager at [kmick@fs.fed.us](mailto:kmick@fs.fed.us) or (707) 562-8859 or Beth Boyst, Pacific Crest Trail Program Manager at [bboyst@fs.fed.us](mailto:bboyst@fs.fed.us) or (707) 562-8881.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Randy Moore*  
RANDY MOORE  
Regional Forester