

THIS LAND IS
my land

As the Wilderness debate intensifies in Montana, hundreds of miles of singletrack could be closed to bikes. But that's just the beginning. New Forest Service policies—er, *philosophies*—could soon spread across the country, jeopardizing access to thousands of miles of America's best trails. It's high time to start paying attention to the Wilderness battle.

THIS IS A LOVE STORY. And because this is a love story, it is also a story about hate, jealousy, rage and deception. It's about fighting a war, about winning and losing, and ultimately, it's about winners and losers.

And if this story were to end now, you would be one of the losers.

You would lose to the loggers and ranchers. To the developers, hikers, snowmobilers, hunters and everyone else who wants your trails. Because they love these trails more than you do. And because they love them, they want to close them, protect them, develop them, restore them and care for them. They want to walk and run and trot over them. And because they love these trails so dearly, they are fighting for them. And they are kicking your ass.

It's a good thing, then, that this story is just beginning.

It's beginning in Montana, where hundreds of trails could be closed this year. It's beginning in Washington, D.C., where new Forest Service policies could spread across the nation, potentially closing tens of thousands of miles of trails to mountain bikes. And it's beginning in your backyard.

BY LOU MAZZANTE • PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB ALLEN



MAP ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT BIRON

YOU ARE COREY BIGGERS, 51, owner of a Freightliner dealership outside Bozeman, Montana. You are a mountain biker, a hunter, married to a horse-riding rodeo queen. You are a short, direct, firecracker of a man whose face flushes red from excitement, as well as from anger and frustration. And right now, you are frustrated. You have been riding mountain bikes in Montana for two decades, but there are people who want to ban you from your favorite trails. So you helped create the Montana Mountain Bike Alliance to fight for access to those trails. Because that's what you do when a problem arises—you fix it.

Biggers pulls into the trailhead at Mile Creek, his blue Toyota Tacoma heavy with bikes and hunting gear. He has just returned from four days in the Henry's Lake Mountains, where he chased elk and deer through remote corners of the forest on his Cannondale hardtail. Although he never fired his bow, he rode the trails and enjoyed four days of solitude. Now, all Biggers wants to do is celebrate the end of summer by riding Mile Creek one last time before the snows fall, and before he is banned from this beautiful singletrack for good.

It's mid-September and the weather is unseasonably mild. It has been two weeks since rain has fallen in the Henry's, and the temperatures at lower elevations have hovered in the 70s. This weekend, Labor Day weekend, is one of the busiest of the year for our nation's National Forests, when millions of hikers, mountain bikers, hunters, dirt bike riders and fishermen take to the hills and rivers.

But not here. The Henry's are some of the most remote mountains in Montana, a state already known for its remoteness, a state that has more cows than people. Reaching the trailhead requires a two-hour drive south from Bozeman, following the Madison River toward Idaho as it passes the sprawling ranch of Ted Turner, past rivers and lakes, past sleepy villages and long stretches of nothing but tall grass, rolling hills and abandoned homesteads.

Despite its remoteness, this trail in the Lionhead Recommended Wilderness of Gallatin National Forest is relatively new. The narrow, well-defined singletrack gradually climbs along the Mile Creek drainage, gaining elevation as it unravels through thick brush along the water's edge. Two miles in, the trail dips to the south and enters a canyon ringed by granite peaks, some still covered in snow. The Continental Divide Trail rests along the far ridge at nearly 10,000 feet.

To reach it, riders must negotiate more than 40 switchbacks that climb 2,880 vertical feet in 6 miles. The trail clings like a

vine to a wall of loose dirt. Each corner is armored with rocks, buttressed by stones. They are immaculately built—lovingly built.

Partly because of this trail, people love the Lionhead. It is rugged, pristine terrain, inhabited by grizzly bears, eagles and cougars as well as alpine lakes, majestic peaks and crystalline mountain streams. In 1987, the U.S. Forest Service decided it loved the Lionhead, too, and drew a line around 23,000 acres on their map and requested that this area be protected as Wilderness. Because it's natural to protect what we love.

At the top of the trail, where Mile Creek crests a steep granite ridge and runs headlong into the Continental Divide Trail, Biggers surveys the landscape. He looks west into Idaho and south into Yellowstone National Park and Wyoming. His face is red from the climbing, but also from frustration.

This trail, and many others in the area, might soon be closed to mountain bikes because the Forest Service in Montana has new ideas on how to manage its land. And many of those ideas exclude mountain bikes.

"If we lose this trail, it will be bad for mountain bikers in the rest of the nation," he says. "I don't think we'll lose, but God help us if we do."

FOR 20 YEARS, the Lionhead has sat in purgatory, a fate common to all Recommended Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Areas in Montana—800,000 acres of Forest Service land in all. Under the Wilderness Act, only Congress can take land recommended as Wilderness and designate it as actual Wilderness. But for more than 20 years, Congress hasn't passed a single Montana Wilderness bill, creating a logjam two decades long.

This has put the Forest Service in an unenviable spot. The agency is required by law to preserve the "wilderness character" of these lands, but few national policies exist to guide

them. Instead, it is up to each region of the Forest Service to determine how to best manage these lands. This has been especially troubling for the foresters

The rules are clear when it comes to Congressionally designated Wilderness: no roads, no buildings, no mining or logging, no motorized travel, no mechanized transport, and no bikes. They were written into the Wilder-

"IF WE LOSE THIS TRAIL, IT WILL BE BAD FOR MOUNTAIN BIKERS IN THE REST OF THE NATION," HE SAYS. "I DON'T THINK WE'LL LOSE, BUT GOD HELP US IF WE DO."

ness Act of 1964. But the policies on how to manage *Recommended* Wilderness are less clear, especially concerning mountain bikers. The question for the Forest Service boils down to this: If a piece of land is recom-



Jason Durgin rides along Hyalite Peak—which may soon be closed to bikes.

mended for Wilderness, and the Forest Service is required to preserve the wilderness character of that land, since mountain biking is banned from Wilderness, should the Forest Service ban mountain bikers from Recommended Wilderness, even if people have been riding on the trails for decades?

Foresters in the Region 1 offices of the Forest Service debated this question. But while they debated, demands on these lands grew greater every year. More hikers were hitting the trails. Mountain bikers, too. And snowmobilers were riding higher and further into the mountains than ever before. The Forest Service felt compelled to do something. So instead of a policy, it created a *philosophy*. And

the philosophy is this: These lands should be managed as if they were Wilderness.

In doing so, the Forest Service sidestepped Congress and created *de facto* Wilderness—land managers in Montana found a way to create what is essentially Wilderness without any oversight, legislation, public comment or approval of any kind.

The effects of this philosophy first rippled through Montana three years ago, when the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest released its travel-management plan, a document that dictates how the forest manages recreational uses. The Beaverhead Deerlodge includes 16 Recommended Wilderness Areas, and the new plan offered a similar

recommendation for them all: ban mountain bikes, a move that closed 350 miles of singletrack in the forest to riders.

Before mountain bikers could recover from that unexpected blow, the Gallatin National Forest released its travel-management plan with a similar ban. Forests are required to create new management plans every 10 to 15 years, and six other forests are scheduled to release their plans this year. Twelve more will do so in the next three years. By the time Montana's forests are through, a thousand miles of singletrack could be closed to mountain bikes.

Drew Vankat is a policy analyst for IMBA and has been working closely with riders in Montana. For four years, Vankat has fought

for access to trails on behalf of mountain bikers, and he says this is the most threatening situation he's seen. What worries him most is the potential for this local philosophy to become a national policy, and he has good reason to be fearful. Former Region 1 director, Gail Kimball, the woman reputed to be the architect behind this philosophy, now heads the Forest Service in Washington, D.C., and is responsible for setting policy for all the country's national forests.

"When we heard Kimball was leaving the region to head the Forest Service, we were like, 'Oh shit, this is going to be national,'" Vankat said.



LAWYERS ARE EVERYWHERE. Men with close-cut hair in blue suits, gray suits and even a few brown suits loiter in the anteroom of the District Court in Missoula, Montana. These men and women have gathered to decide the fate of our trails. There are lawyers representing the Wilderness Society, the Wilderness Association, the Forest Service, the Blue Ribbon Coalition of motorized users and Citizens for Balanced Use, an off-highway vehicle group. All these men and women—along with clusters of reporters, clerks and concerned citizens—file into a few wooden pews and begin a long debate over who most loves our trails.

This orgy of lawyers was set in motion when the Gallatin National Forest released its travel-management plan in December 2006. The Gallatin's 1.8 million acres include six mountain ranges, blue-ribbon trout streams and peaks that top out at more than 12,000 feet. Perhaps most importantly, the forest sits directly between Bozeman, Montana, and Yellowstone National Park. America's land conservation movement began in earnest when Yellowstone was designated as America's first national park in 1872, and land managers in the region have a deep respect for this heritage. They spent four years drafting Gallatin's travel plan.

The proposed plan would curtail motorized use on trails, dropping the total miles of single-track open to dirt bikes from 466 to 295. It also would close 144 miles of trail to mountain bikes. But the plan would keep the Gallatin Crest high country open to motorized users and mountain bikes. The plan drew swift criticism from several groups, who complained that the final version didn't reflect public opinion, or that it didn't go far enough to "preserve the wilderness characteristics" in the Gallatin Crest. The Montana Wilderness Association and two groups representing motorized users—Citizens for Balanced Use and the Blue Ribbon Coalition—all filed suits.

Inside the courtroom, Timothy Preso, representing the MWA, argues that dirt bikes,



Mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians are all fighting for access to Montana's best trails

A CASE FOR THE backcountry



URBAN RIDING HIGHLIGHTED MY INNER-CITY CHILDHOOD and college years. The pedal-powered bond was sealed with blood at age seven, when my groin kissed my Schwinn's toptube on a shortcut—a creepy dirt track through the local cemetery—to my favorite swimming hole. Though the scenery was less than inspiring, my freewheeling spirit was irretrievably launched.

Years later, that sense of adventure initially conceived on the pavement of Detroit has manifested in the wild mountains and backcountry trails of the West. Roadless sojourns on a mountain bike and sleeping under a starlit sky amplifies the sanctuary inside me. Stuffing a backpack with supplies, and strapping extra clothes, a tarp and sleeping bag to the rear rack, I ride through foothills, the powerful magnet of solitude pulling me farther away from all things human. Wildflowers christen the afternoon air as I cross a meadow and a hawk dives into the dense forest floor a short distance ahead. I am alone and self-reliant, miles from nowhere. Riding city trails or local trail networks suffices when time is short, but escaping into the wild and exploring raw single-track—that is what really defines the mountain bike experience.

Riding in the backcountry has no substitute. With millions of acres of public land across the United States, the cost of entry is simply ability and motivation. Rolling along uninterrupted miles of singletrack, remote landscapes stretch deeper into a natural sort of asylum. Only those eager to leave ordinary lives for the challenges of long days in the saddle, unbelievable climbs and variable weather conditions attempt riding the wild terrain.

Where I live, precious little time exists in the high country for wilderness riding; trails can be snowbound in July, and winter arrives as early as September. But our perseverance is rewarded with epic summer adventures in mountain ranges shaped eons ago.

This weekend, friends and I are venturing into a backcountry corridor in southwest Montana, not far from Bozeman. Rounding the narrow singletrack formed by hoof, foot and tread after a steady 23-mile ascent, the freedom of the great outdoors arouses apparitions of our biking heritage—old settlements, railroads and

military compounds from the 1800s left by working-class adventurers on inexpensive two-wheelers who first explored the Yellowstone area. Later, the need to explore by bike gripped the earliest mountain bikers and led to the Repack races in Marin County, California, and Colorado's Pearl Pass tour in the '70s. That sense of adventure has been ingrained in our psyche ever since.

Historic musings dissipate under my wheels as I focus on a short grind to the ridgeline—a jumble of rock spires, patches of snow and scree. The majestic top-of-the-world skyline encircles us: Yellowstone National Park and the Lee Metcalf and Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Areas, along with the Madison and Bridger mountain ranges and faraway peaks still powdered in winter white.

Leaning my bike against a rock face, I dismount and peer down the western side of a steep talus slope. The eastern boundary of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area, the Gallatin River and tonight's campsite are hidden among the pine trees, shrubs and aspens some 3,500 feet below. There are no shortcuts to nirvana.

Clicking into my pedals, seat lowered and adrenaline piqued for the gnarly, technical transition to treeline, I shift into the big chainring and give in to gravity on the loose rock garden. Watching for signs of grouse, bear and mountain lion, I see bright patches of buttercups flash in the periphery, the first blooms of hardy alpine flowers—everything reminds me that I am a visitor in this wilderness.

The last leg of our adventure is a leisurely spin on doubletrack to our campsite, and in my case, ruminations on the future of backcountry bike access. A compelling certainty resonates in me: remote mountain trails connect me to nature's core, and preserving public access is an absolute responsibility.

Setting up camp, riverbank nearby, I pause to soak up these surroundings as the sun disappears beyond a horizon streaked with crimson cirrus clouds. We'll pack up and return home tomorrow. Within me that little girl previously thrilled with off-road bicycle sessions at construction sites and railroad yards looks forward to the next fat-tire pilgrimage into the wild. —Estela Villaseñor Allen



■ Montana is blessed with hundreds of miles of high-alpine singletrack—most of it could soon be closed to bikes.

motorized users and mountain bikes destroy the wilderness character of the land. He talks about soil erosion and noise pollution, and claims that there is little difference between mountain bikes and motorized dirt bikes. He claims that motorized use is skyrocketing in the forest. He says that snowmobiles are going further into the mountains than ever before. He argues that mountain bikes barely existed when the Gallatin Crest was made a Wilderness Study Area in 1977, and their mere presence now violates the Forest Service's responsibility to "preserve" the character of the land. He blames the agency for not doing its job.

Preso doesn't mention (and strangely, neither does the lawyer representing the Forest Service) that just weeks before the hearing, the Forest Service ruled that mountain bikes should be managed as a use similar to hiking. Instead, he uses facts pulled from old studies and claims mountain bikes, just like four-wheelers and dirt bikes, lead to soil erosion and trail degradation. And because the judge knows none of this, and because

the argument is clear and logical—even if the facts are fuzzy—Judge Jeremiah Lynch nods his head in agreement.

You are Tom Owen and you sit in a hardwood pew against the back wall of the Montana District Court. You wear a striped button-down shirt and gray canvas pants. You are thin-lipped with a round chin and deep-set ice-blue eyes. You've come to this hearing with the hopes of stating your case to the local press and anyone else who will listen. You sit on your hands while Mr. Preso claims that mountain bikes are essentially motorcycles. You know that what he really means is that mountain bikes don't matter, and they don't have a place in his Wilderness and that you don't matter and neither does the bike shop you own in Big Sky that depends upon revenue from guiding rides in the Gallatin National Forest. You drank a Starbucks Shot in the parking lot and now your blood pressure is rising. You want to scream but you can't. So you do the only thing you can in a situation like this, where you have no power and people are deciding

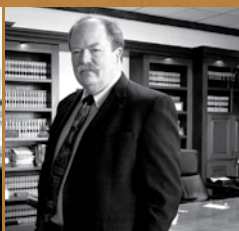
your fate for you: You stand up, walk out of the courtroom, and take a leak.

THREE DAYS AFTER THE HEARING, Tom Owen is back at his store in Big Sky. It's a bright, warm Monday morning and the shop is mostly quiet except for the half dozen mountain bikers preparing to ride the Buffalo Horn to Porcupine trail. They load bikes into the back of Owen's cargo van, and the pyramid of Big Sky's Lone Peak fills the horizon to the rear as they head to the first drop point.

Buffalo Horn begins with a long, rolling climb from a swampy drainage behind a horse ranch. For the first few hundred yards, the trail is barely discernible. Heavy horse traffic has widened it to a dozen feet in places. Elsewhere, trotting hooves have left swampy depressions and pools of mud mixed with grassy manure.

While mountain bikers might soon be banned from these trails, equestrians would still be allowed to ride here. The irony of

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS



From left: Corey Biggers, John Gatchell, Mary Erickson, Tom Owen and Judge Donald Malloy

this is too much for Owen. “The horses are killing these trails,” he says. “They can do more damage in a weekend than a whole summer of mountain biking.”

This trail lies in the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area of the Galatin—the area in which lawyers and judges are debating whether mountain bikers belong. For Owen, the answer is easy. If the WSA is closed to bikes, there won't be any trails left to guide rides on.

“I'd hate for the only offering I have for visitors to Big Sky be a 6-mile paved bike path,” he says. “There are only so many T-shirts you can sell. If I relied only on locals, I would go out of business. I need tourists to survive. These trails bring them in.”

There are no horses on the trail today. No dirt bike riders, no hikers and no lawyers. Owen is hundreds of miles from the courtroom in Missoula, and the only people out are a handful of riders enjoying a perfect summer afternoon. Seven miles in, the trail approaches Ramshorn Lake, its glassy waters reflecting the surrounding peaks. Owen basks in the sun

and stares at the craggy slopes to the east, debating with his wife, Stasia, whether the white specks they see among the cliffs are sheep, or piles of old snow.

Owen freely admits he wants to keep this trail open so his business will survive. But his motives are not entirely financial. Near the end of the ride he pauses to catch his breath and watch the sun set behind Lone Peak. His shop is just below, in a valley that is glowing gold from the last few rays of sun trapped between the hills.

“I like to bring Stasia up here after work,” he says. “We can close the shop, cut across here, watch the sunset and head back down before dark. It's our date loop.”



YOU ARE JOHN GATCHELL, a 56-year-old conservation director for the Montana Wilderness Association. For 24 years, you've worked to create wilderness in Montana. You're a high-ranking official at a powerful advocacy group

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HITTING home

Montana might set the most damaging precedent to mountain biking in America's national forests, but it is by no means the only threat. Mountain bike trails are at risk across the country—from Colorado to New Mexico, Missouri and Virginia. Though many of our national forests still allow bikes in Recommended Wilderness Areas, the following do not:

- **CARSON NATIONAL FOREST:** Located near Taos, New Mexico, the forest is home to some outstanding singletrack, including the still-legal South Boundary trail.
- **GEORGE WASHINGTON NATIONAL FOREST:** Though small, this forest in eastern Virginia contains some of the region's best riding.
- **GRAND MESA, UNCOMPAHGRE AND GUNNISON NATIONAL FORESTS:** These forests, sandwiched between Grand Junction and Gunnison, Colorado, have separate travel-management plans in the works. The one common denominator? They all prohibit mountain bikes in Recommended Wilderness.
- **MARK TWAIN NATIONAL FOREST:** Southwest of St. Louis, Missouri, this is the state's only national forest, and it has more than 400 miles of multi-use and mountain bike trails.
- **SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST:** Surrounding Santa Fe, New Mexico, it includes miles of amazing singletrack, including the Winsor trail.
- **WHITE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST:** Nestled in the heart of Colorado's Rocky Mountains, the singletrack-laden forest stretches from Crested Butte to Breckenridge, Colorado.



Because the U.S. Forest Service has not issued a nationwide policy on managing Recommended Wilderness Areas, the status of mountain biking and other recreational uses is subject to regional interpretations.

According to Mike Van Abel, IMBA's executive director, this can benefit mountain bikers who are committed, well-organized, and proven stewards of the trails they ride.

The first step to ensuring your favorite trails remain open is to get involved. Here are a few suggestions from IMBA:

- Reach out to local conservation groups
- Talk to county commissioners and other elected officials about the synergies between mountain biking and land protection
- Ask your local Forest Service staff if any mountain biking trails are in Recommended Wilderness Areas
- Get involved early in the forest planning process

Need more info? Visit imba.com and check out their land-protection resources.

—Brice Minnigh

THIS LAND IS MY LAND

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with 5,700 members and a million-dollar budget, and you haven't seen one acre of new Wilderness created during your tenure.

But you love your job, love your mission, and you especially love your trails. So you show up at a trail-building day outside of Helena, Montana, to break ground on a new trail and celebrate the High Divide Trail agreement between hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. You wear a shirt emblazoned with the words "Keep it Wild," put on a big smile, roll your sleeves up and get to work digging out stumps and cutting trails alongside mountain bikers.

Gatchell ducks out of the snow and enters a large canvas tent filled with smoke from wood-fired camp stoves. Inside, a few dozen men and women eager to build a new trail have gathered. It is a diverse group of backcountry horsemen, hikers, conservationists and mountain bikers that include members of IMBA's Trail Care Crew, the Montana Mountain Bike Alliance and local riders from Helena and Butte.

"The work you are doing today is going to create great opportunities for everyone," Gatchell says to the crowd.

The crisp air keeps the words to a minimum, and soon 50 people have grabbed Pulaskis, McLeods, axes and shovels and spread out through the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest pulling roots, discarding deadwood and raking a trail into the hard earth. When completed, this trail will become an 8-mile section of the Continental Divide Trail, replacing a stretch of the CDT that runs through the Electric Peak Roadless Area.

This trail-building day is the first act in a long play called the Montana High Divide Trails, a partnership

"MONTANA RANKS FOURTH OF THE STATES IN SIZE, BUT ONLY TWELFTH IN WILDERNESS AREA...."



between trail users around Butte and Helena that was signed in September 2007. The partnership focuses on creating "quiet" non-motorized trails running along a 240-mile stretch of the Continental Divide in southwest Montana. It spans three national forests and will create 90 miles of new trail to complete the CDT in the region, as well as add 100 miles of new singletrack in other parts of the forest.

To many, this represents the future of the Wilderness debate. They see it as a sign that users have stopped arguing and started conversing.

Eric Grove owns Great Divide Cyclery in Helena and is a leading proponent of the agreement. He is tall and sinewy, built like a racer, and speaks in polished verse. He brought several of his employees and customers to this trail to support the High Divide Agreement.

"The old model is dead," Grove says, referring to the confrontations that define many access issues. "Now, it's about building relationships, and we built relationships today. If nothing else happens, we got a good conversation going."

The plan, however, is not without controversy. Some riders in Montana, as well as hikers and equestrians, see any sort of partnership as sleeping with the enemy. While mountain bikers gain nearly 200 miles of trails, the plan also calls for the creation of 232,000 acres of additional Recommended Wilderness Area in the forest, land that would no longer be open to mountain bikers. And though the plan retains access to a popular stretch of the CDT near Helena, it does little to guarantee access to the trail in the Lionhead and other parts of the state. >

THIS LAND IS MY LAND

Other riders simply don't trust conservationists, who they believe are intent on creating Wilderness at all costs. And for those mountain bikers, men like John Gatchell offer plenty of grist for the mill.

"Montana ranks fourth of the states in size, but only twelfth in Wilderness area," he says while pulling rocks from the trail. "Wilderness is unfinished business in Montana."

There cannot be love without hate, or maybe it's the other way around.

By four, the sun has fallen below a western ridge, and a biting breeze blows through barren trees. To the east, where a pine beetle infestation has overrun the forest, hills of rust-colored trees glow

means that a national policy banning bikes from Recommended Wilderness just became one frightful step closer.

If the story ended today, you would lose those trails in the Gallatin. You would lose several hundred miles of trail in the Beaverhead Deerlodge. You would lose more than 700 miles of trail across Montana. And this is just the beginning. The next chapter is already unfolding. The scenes are shifting and the story is moving outside of Montana.

The next chapter may happen in Washington, D.C., where a new administration and Congress appear more likely to approve more Wilderness, where chief forester Gail Kimball might decide to ban mountain



orange in the low light. The new trail is soft, its edges only roughly defined. But it was made with love. There are spots where it dips and dives through trees—beautiful fall-away corners and smooth sections that climb past granite boulders—and others where it runs along a high ridgeline offering huge views of the Boulder Mountains.

bikes from all Recommended Wilderness across the country. Or the next chapter might be written on the trails in your backyard, in states like California, Colorado, Idaho and Virginia that possess an abundance of Recommended Wilderness Areas.



THIS IS A LOVE STORY, but if you love these trails you cannot sit back and watch this story unfold. Because if you do, you will lose.

In late October, Judge Jeremiah Lynch recommended to uphold the Gallatin travel plan. Those recommendations were handed to U.S. District Court Judge Donald Malloy, who has indicated he would follow them. The decision would ban mountain bikes from the Gallatin Crest high country and the remote trails in the Lionhead, as well as along the stretch of Continental Divide Trail running through the forest—more than 100 miles of trail in all.

More importantly, the move establishes a legal precedent that bikes are no longer welcome in Recommended Wilderness Areas. It justifies the Forest Service's philosophy to create *de facto* Wilderness when true Wilderness is out of the question. It

You are Tom Owen.

You are John Gatchell.

You are a mountain biker.

You are running out of time.

YOU ARE COREY BIGGERS and you love these trails, so you fight to save them. On a crisp fall morning in Bozeman, you walk into the office of Gallatin National Forest Supervisor Mary Erickson and plead with her to keep the Lionhead open to bikes. You unroll a map of the disputed land and trace your finger along Mile Creek and the Continental Divide Trail. She listens intently, cocked sideways in her chair, a pen tightly gripped between her fingers. And you tell her that mountain bikes don't degrade Wilderness. You implore her to consider alternative bike-friendly, land-protection designations. And when she doesn't say much, you let her know that even if the Lionhead is closed to bikes, that you will never stop fighting for the trails you love. 