

On public roads

Wenatchee World Editorial Board

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Comment

Editorial

It's an old and familiar argument. Orchardists are inconvenienced by bicyclists on public rights of way. They are fearful bicyclists will respond to agricultural spray, possibly with lawyers.

The Chelan County commissioners responded by putting a hold on a proposal by the trail-promoting Complete the Loop Coalition to designate a bike route through county roads in the Wenatchee Valley. The coalition would pay for signing. The commissioners put a possible endorsement on hold until the bicycling advocates speak with the fearful orchardists.

Several points: These roads have been used extensively by bicyclists for decades. These are public rights of way, which they have very right to use. Orchardists cannot claim control, or expect the county to exclude the public and limit lawful use of the roadway. Everyone wants farmers to be able to farm. No one wants to inconvenience anyone, but these are public roads. And if any of the millions of bicycle trips on these roads has ended in a lawsuit against an orchardist for spray drift or anything else, we do not recall it.

We should be happy we have a valley so beautiful it draws bicyclists from hundreds of miles away. Bicycle tourism is good. Bicycles and farming can coexist. We know that, because they already do.

This is the opinion of The Wenatchee World and its Editorial Board: Publisher Rufus Woods, Editor Cal FitzSimmons and Editorial Page Editor Tracy Warner.