

The Death of the Oregon Outback

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—photo and words by Donnie

I guess I'm one of those naïve Midwestern boys who still thinks people are generally good and do the right thing. I'm almost 40 and I still get surprised when folks don't conform to this view of the world. So, while I had an inkling the Oregon Outback might be a bit of a shit-show this year because a lot more people would be riding, I didn't imagine this would be why – that it would turn into a literal shit show. I'm

sad and disgusted and angry, and I don't see any other way to make this right short of shutting it down so this never happens again. I'm sorry folks, but the Oregon Outback is dead.

Sure, you can still come ride it anytime you like. I can't stop you. But what I will say is this – something I never thought needed to be said because the bikepacking folks I've known have always been respectful of the people and land we cross – if you can't follow Leave No Trace (<https://lnt.org/learn/7-principles>) ethics, if you can't literally take care of your own shit properly, if you can't show respect to the folks who live on this route, and you can't respect the wild nature you ride through, then stay home. Oregon is closed. We don't need you and we most definitely don't want you. You ruined something super awesome, something I was immensely proud of.

Not sure what I'm talking about? Here's a rundown of some of the things that happened on the Oregon Outback this year, from kind of bad to horrendous:

1. Leaving garbage all along the route
2. Leaving bushcamp sites full of actual shit and used TP, not only not burying it, but leaving actual shit and used TP *in* the campsites
3. Leaving garbage all over the barn that a local opened up to folks in Silver Lake during the first, rainy night
4. Leaving the park in Silver Lake in enough disrepair that *the city passed a new ordinance banning camping*
5. Someone taking an actual shit in the yard of the nice folks who opened up their barn for riders to camp (see #3 above, same barn...)

Yes, you read that right. Silver Lake passed a new city ordinance this week banning camping in the city park because of Outback riders. And don't bother camping at the next nearest campsite, because that one is reportedly full of actual shit and used TP. Seriously.

I'm chock full of 4-letter words and I'm offended on so many levels. But I'll leave it at that because... well... just because. However, be aware that any form of an annual ride is done forever. Kaput.

(And yes, I know that 90%, 95%, maybe even 99.9% of you are good folks who had nothing to do with this. I get that and I love and respect you for it. But what's done is done and this can't ever happen again.)