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Comments:

To Whom it May Concern;

Having reviewed the recently released Proposed Action Travel Management for the Rico-West Dolores Road and Trails I would like to take this opportunity to submit my comments.

The Rico-West Dolores Trail system is world class resource for Motorized Single track riding. It contains some of the most unique and challenging trails in both the state and the country. Likewise, the area is also world class for non-motorized quiet activities but the available number of trails open to non-motorized far surpasses those open to motorized users.

Further restricting the trails open to motorized users will negatively impact the sustainability of trails through overuse of an increasingly limited resource. Non-motorized user will also be negatively impacted in these areas as they will be exposed to higher concentration of motorized users in the limited remaining area.

Some of the proposed trail closures also present a safety hazard by eliminating the most direct path back to Highway 145 should weather, mechanical failure, or injury become a concern. Chiefly among these are the Bear Creek Trail between Little Bear and Morrison trails, Burnett Trail, and Horse Creek Trail. The former is the least technical and most direct path back to HWY 145 from the Gold Run/Grindstone area. Going back up Gold Run or up Little Bear would be less than ideal because of their difficulty. Retreating back out Grindstone puts you further away from the highway onto a remote dirt road; not the ideal location to extract and injured rider.

Both Burnett and Horse Creek allow riders to retreat to Rico from the Calico Trail should they be caught in a storm above tree line or likewise suffer mechanical failure or Injury. Removing motorized access from all three of these trails will most negatively impact those who travel to the area from out of state who are unfamiliar with the area to begin with. The town of Rico depends on these folks for their summer economy so there is a financial factor here as well.

Finally, Bear Creek makes the most logical connector between Gold Run/Grindstone and Highway 145 as there is no legal single track connector between the top of Gold Run and the Morrison trail. This will increase the amount of traffic conflict between motorcycles, atvs, and automobiles on the Forest Roads and Aspen Loop ATV Trail which connect Gold Run and Morrison. As forest road and ATV trail are less desirable motorcycle terrain, and motorcycles are able to travel much faster on the wider trails there is also an inherent safety issue there for folks who are in a hurry to get back on the single track. Keeping Bear Creek open will negate this potential Issue.

The Winter Trail experiences a lot of deadfall and is kept clear almost entirely through the effort of motorized users. As the trail is proposed to be realigned off of the private easement it would be a benefit to other trail users if motorized users were allowed to continue to use and maintain this trail. Elevated boardwalks would mitigate any wetland impact.

With this in mind, it also bears to say that I have personally participated in many trail work days in the area through PAPA Telluride and the San Juan Trail Riders. I know of no non-motorized groups who regularly participate in voluntary trail maintenance in this area. Clearing of deadfall and snow usually starts around June

and takes 4-6 weeks before the trails are completely clear. Restricting the season motorized users are allowed to access the trails to start in July will negatively impact non-motorized users who will create trail braiding from bypassing deadfall and drifts thus making the trails less sustainable.

Furthermore, once clearing does commence in July there will only be a 4-6 week riding season left after the trails have been cleared. This will limit all motorized traffic into the wettest months of the year for the area and cause increased erosion as well as safety hazards with the afternoon thunderstorms. June to early October would be a much more reasonable limitation, or only restrict the season in areas which are known big game calving areas, as only a few trails affect these regions.

I would like to commend the proposed realignment of the Grindstone trail away from the Colorado Trail. This is a very logical move which will benefit all trail users. Likewise the opening of the entirety of Spring Creek and the Morrison Trails will reduce motorized conflict on Bear Creek and route motorcycles away from Stoner Creek and back towards Priest Gulch.

Motorized users are a generally respectful group who enjoy being stewards of this great public resource. Restricting the use opportunities for those users will create safety issues, have a financial impact on the town of Rico, and create sustainability issues through concentrating these users into a smaller area at a time when the trails are most susceptible to damage as well as reduce the pool of voluntary stewards willing to work to preserve this amazing public resource. ..

Thank you for your time

James Mitchell