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To:

Derek Padilla, Mark Stiles and any other official involved in the Rico/ West Dolores trail proposal

Regarding the proposed action plan I am appalled. I am writing as a concerned citizen. I am an avid motorcyclist mtn biker, and hiker. I am writing as someone who has been living in the area for the last 16 years. I am writing as someone who is afraid that an entity supposed to represent the population as a whole is catering to a limited user group and one vocal landowner with commercial interests and I feel it is highly inappropriate as far as responsible planning goes.

There are several reasons as to why I feel this way. The main one is that I have never witnessed negative issues with the exception of some hikers glaring one time at the upper junction of Priest Gulch and Calico. Usually we pull over and some great conversations are started as to how each others day is going. I was fascinated by the Llama trips in Bear Creek. Early season we are met with praise from all users when they see us going up trails with chainsaws, to do the clearings that get the trails open for all users.

Another reason I feel this plan is a poor proposal is because there is a disproportionate amount of non motorized trails versus motorized and this proposal looks to make that even more in favor of the non motorized. How about leaving the existing motorized trails and adding some better connections to spread the use out even more? One example would be instead of closing Bear Creek due to the use down low, open a legal connection to the south to access the trails around the Mancos area? That would make the use less in the lower section of Bear Creek as a lot of riders could be through riders, but still keep Bear Creek as a viable way in or out if needed. Closing Winter Trail is honestly ridiculous. This has been a historic motorized trail and is an easier option for those not up to the exposure on Calico Trail. It also gives a safer way out when the lightning storms move in on Calico. I do agree that some re routing should be done, some of the northern section has some wet areas that are growing, but rerouting around it, or mitigating it with elevated wooden sections like on northern Calico would help. If Dunton Hot Springs wants a non motorized trail on their upper borders, how about just have them put their own in on their land and they can maintain it themselves? Honestly, as a side note, I do not understand their thinking in wanting to eliminate motorized trails in the area. These were long established before the current owners purchased, and they even profit from commercial snowmobile tours to their location. Why is one group of motorized users okay in the forest, but another is not? Because one puts money in their pocket. It is as simple as that. I think I saw San Juan Trail Riders recommend putting a non motorized trail up from Burro Bridge into the wilderness area. Do that. Utilize the areas that were already designated non motorized.

I support rerouting Burnett trail, but definitely not eliminating it. I don't think the town is truly in support of that either. With the closures of the Rico Hotel/Argentine Grill and the BBQ joint and the Enterprise up for sale again, it seems that the economy is not doing well in Rico. To push what is probably the largest user group of the trail system out of town is not going to help that situation at all. I think adding on to Wildcat to make it a through trail makes sense. Just spread the use out more and give more options for getting out in regards to weather. The same goes for Horse Creek, mitigate an easy option with the landowners.

In regards to the East Fork Trail, I do agree that the upper/southern section has some damage occurring in the fens. I have seen some braiding occurring because the main trail is so deep and narrow that bikes get stuck by

the footpegs. When the first one does that, the others go around. I would not recommend closing the area, but laying out something around the eastern edge of that area in the trees instead of going across the wetlands.

I fully support opening Corral Draw all the way to the top. It just makes sense. The trail is already there. Closing Ryman doesn't make sense. It does not see a significant amount of use due to the extreme nature of it, but it is nice to have a challenging trail like that in the area.

Seasonal closures are not a good idea. Snow keeps the season short as it is. June is usually when all the work is done just to get the trails cleared of fallen trees and sometimes snow drifts. If you limit the motors to July 1, then we probably won't have the trails open until late July. During that time, when usage is highest by all groups, you will get heavier deterioration by EVERY user group going around obstacles you can't get over. This summer I know the guys who went and shoveled through the snow drift on top of Calico, just to keep the people from going around it. This was a 2 day effort with about 10 different people shoveling. I want you to truly understand the effort that the motorized community really gives to keep these trails open. I do not believe that elk calving is affected any more by motorized users than any other human presence in the area. Close it to everyone or keep it open. It is my understanding that the areas in question are not prime calving grounds anyway. I expect to see studies to the contrary if you wish to push this agenda. I also feel it is a little hypocritical to keep motors out so they can birth in peace, then keep motors out in the fall so they can be killed in peace as well? I am not a hunter, but this just seems odd to me.

I do support opening up more of the trails in the Stoner/Spring Creek area. I have not rode that far south yet, but hope to this year. I see this as another area that by opening it up to a better flow of trails, will once again spread out the already limited users so there will be less density of motors in one area.

Please be realistic to what the situation is here. You have an incredible area, that is overall being managed pretty well, both by the Forest Service and by the motorized community. If you continue to alienate the one user group that truly does the most for the area, do you have the budget to actually pick up the slack and get the trails open as soon as they have been historically? Or is this part of a bigger agenda to then push for more trails to be closed when you can't afford to maintain after a few years?

I also want to make sure you understand that this is not an area like Taylor Park or Flattop/Peach Valley. The trails here are intermediate to difficult. The people that come to ride here are experienced. That is one reason the trails have stayed in good condition. Several times we have made changes during rides when conditions became wet and we were afraid continuing on would cause unnecessary damage to the trails. I have seen what trails look like after a horse goes through when wet which is way worse than a motorcycle tread, but I accept that they are entitled to use the trails as much as I am. The nature of the landscape here does not lend itself to off trail riding unlike around Peach Valley where unfortunately some users tend to ride anywhere, even in the designated closed areas, because much of the terrain looks the same.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my input in this process. I appreciate that Deborah Kills notified me of the travel plan, probably due being a member of PAPA. I would love to actually get a day out on the trails with you or one of your representatives this summer so you can see what a day of riding is really like and how the groups interact. Maybe a joint trail clearing day?

I look forward to attending the meeting on Jan 15 in Dolores and I will probably submit a better letter after that.

Have a great day!
Trevor LaBorde