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Heartfelt comments on proposed plan

Debra Kill

U.S. Forest Service, Dolores CO

RE: Proposed Rico West Dolores Travel Plan (Bear Creek)  
18, 2014

Dec.

Greetings, please consider my heartfelt comments concerning the Proposed Travel Plan.

I am an avid hiker, fly fisherman and backpacker who has used this area for recreation since 1974. I have not been a casual user these last 40 years. I generally spend 30 to 50 days each year in the San Juan forest. More than twenty of those days are spent in the Bear Creek drainage. I feel strongly that the proposed change to non-motorize the lower section of the river does not go far enough. It is time to de-motorize ALL of Bear creek!

HERE IS WHY:

Reason # 1: First and foremost is that Bear Creek is absolutely unique in our area because it is the only trail that closely follows a significant watercourse that does not have a highway or motorized road following it. If one were to find the closest equivalent in the San Juan Mountains you would be required to go 80 miles to the Pine River, Vallicito Creek or Cascade Creek drainages.

Reason # 2: The value of this very special riparian environment is mostly lost on motorcycle riders as their primary objective is the challenge of the trail and the thrill of the ride. The spectacular aesthetic beauty of the river is not the reason they are on this trail. Motorcycle riders need places to ride, that is a given, but they should be kept out of the few riparian areas that are uniquely suited for quiet users. Crowding all types of users on one trail is blatant folly. Surely other trails can meet their needs more readily without sacrificing this absolutely unique local environment that attracts quiet users precisely because of the beautiful river next to the trail.

Reason #3: Consider how special Bear Creek is and it is no surprise that 90 to 95% of the users on these trails are quiet users. These include hikers, fishermen and women, hunters, equestrian folks, wildlife watchers, photographers, mountain bikers, birders and artist. Quiet users seek to experience nature without the intrusions of the internal combustion engine. It makes no sense to sacrifice a quality experience for the vast majority of users just to satisfy a small minority. Motorcycles should be separated from areas where the vast majority of users are quiet users. They especially should be separated in environments where quiet users come because of a river ? a river that is of no special benefit to the primary purpose motorcyclists ride trails.

Reason #4: The section currently being proposed as motorized is the one section where hikers, backpackers and fishermen have the potential to find quality solitude because it is in the middle section of Bear creek where

fewer day hikers and fishermen are evident because of the distance from trailheads. This area of the river is also where the trail runs close to the river and affords easy access. Each year friends and I backpack into Bear Creek and this is the area where we always go to find the best solitude. Under the current proposal we will continue to have the experience of backpacking next to a moto-cross track.

Please, give us Dolores area quiet-users just one significant river trail that is completely devoid of motorized traffic. Bear Creek is the only natural choice for this reasonable and sane request. I urge you to find challenging trails for motorcyclist but do not sacrifice Bear Creek to please a small vocal minority of users. Please de-motorize ALL of Bear Creek.

Sincerely Yours

Keith Hutcheson

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