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First name: Mark

Last name: Pearson

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 560 Clear View Rd

Address2:

City: Durango

State: CO

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code: 813019211

Country: United States

Email: mpearson@frontier.net

Phone: 4065992008

Comments:

I appreciate the chance to offer a couple of thoughts on the Rico-West Dolores trails project.

The project area contains some of the most dramatic aspen forest in Colorado. There are some delightful hikes in fall through shimmering golden stands of aspen, easily the best hikes on the San Juan NF. One of my favorites is Ryman Creek, which is almost pure aspen. I've always been perplexed that the maps show the trail as open to motorized use when it seems so obviously inappropriate in terms of the terrain, soil, and trail design. I strongly encourage the Forest Service to pursue the proposed plan to restrict motorized use here and to eliminate the extra trail segment.

On the other side of the highway, above and behind Rico, I've hiked some of the trails in the Storm Peak roadless area like the Calico Trail, but frankly the overwhelming motorized trail designation makes it tough to figure out where to go for a quiet trail experience. I'm glad to see some modification of the motorized trails in Storm Peak in order to provide a quiet recreation opportunity somewhere. It seems like a disconnect to authorize motorized use through roadless areas where the intent should be to avoid the impact of roads and motors.

I also enjoy hiking the Stoner Mesa trail, both from the trailhead along the West Fork and also from the trailhead on Forest Road 686. This is a terrific, easy walking trail again through wonderful aspen stands. It would be nice to have a non-motorized hiking option at this elevation on the forest, and through aspen stands.

I'm glad to see the Fish Creek trail left as non-motorized. Fish Creek offers an unmatched series of wetlands and beaver ponds, and some massive old ponderosa pines, that make for an uncommon hike in the area. It penetrates the heart of a substantial roadless area as well, and with all the roads, old timber sales, and ATV trails around the periphery of Fish Creek, keeping the heart of the area free of motors is critical.

Finally, I want to offer my enthusiastic support for making the Bear Creek trail non-motorized. That's a really accessible, easy family hike and I like to take my 8-year-old daughter hiking there, but we are put off by the possibility of encountering motorcycles on the trail, particularly in some of the narrower sections at the beginning. Once we find a good picnic spot a few miles in, having hoofed it for an hour or two from the highway, there's nothing more aggravating than hearing the whine and roar of motorcycles roaring past. I hope the Forest Service will find a way to allow for this long, wild valley to be free of motors. There are literally hundreds of miles of other trails and logging roads for motorized users to explore without needing to ruin the quietude of Bear Creek.

Sincerely yours,

Mark Pearson