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Comments:
To Whom it May Concern;

After having reviewed the recently released Proposed Action Travel Management for the Rico-West Dolores Road and Trails, I would like to formally submit my thoughts and comments.

First, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Ryan Smith, and I live in Woodland Park, CO. I am a hiker, mountain biker, hunter, fisherman, horseman, and also a motorcycle rider. I have a fairly unique view of trails and usage as I see them through the lens of each user type. I donate my time with our local club Dirt Riders Of Colorado, to help maintain our trail systems and educate riders about trail etiquette and stewardship. I very much enjoy the Rico-West Dolores area, and spend a good amount of time in the region each year. As I am sure you are aware, this area is some of the best, most unique/challenging resource for motorized single track riding. The area is also world class for hiking, mountain biking, hunting, and horseback riding. What really concerns me is currently the non-motorized trails in the area far surpasses those open to motorized users. With this proposal, those motorized trails are reduced even further. Reducing the trails open to motorized user 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. In my opinion, we should be adding more motorized trail to disperse users, not reducing trail to concentrate users.

Some of the proposed trail closures present a safety concern by eliminating the most direct path back to Highway 145 in the case of inclement weather, mechanical failure, or injury. Among these are the Bear Creek Trail between Little Bear and Morrison trails, Burnett Trail, and Horse Creek Trail. 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, suffer mechanical failure, injury, or need fuel or food from Rico. Businesses in Rico depend on these riders as well for their income, so there is defiantly a financial factor here as well. 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.

As you may know, the Winter Trail experiences a lot of seasonal 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 or berms would mitigate any wetland impact.

I have participated in many trail work days in the area through PAPA Telluride and the San Juan Trail Riders. 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. 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.

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. Keeping Bear Creek open will negate this potential Issue. I would like to support the proposed realignment of the Grindstone trail away from the Colorado Trail. This is a logical idea 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.

Restricting the use opportunities for motorized 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.

At this time, I would also like to offer the Dirt Riders Of Colorado as a voluntary resource to you for any possible re-routes or trail maintenance to help avoid any possible closures.

Thank you for your time,
Ryan J Smith

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