

Dolores Public Lands Office

29211 Highway 184

Dolores, Colorado 81323

January 26, 2015

To whom it may concern:

As quiet users of the trails recently proposed for initiating and or continuing motorized travel, we have serious concerns. Our concerns are focused on #1 safety for all users, #2 erosion, damage to environment and #3 regulations recommended for which the forest service does not have the man power to enforce.

I frequently have young children on llama pack trips who may not be able to control an animal spooked by the sudden appearance of a roaring motorcycle. My clients choose our backcountry experience to get away from the noise of modern society.

As other outfitters have stated, I simply will not utilize trails for which I am commercially permitted that allow motorized traffic. To further address the safety issue, I have seen "dirt bike" users tackle trails too difficult for their level of experience resulting in accidents. This has also been reported by other llama pack outfitters, in particular, on the Gold Run Trail.

The forest service and certainly **all** users of public land are supposed to be stewards of the environment. It should be apparent to all trail users that dirt bikes leave deep ruts in trails that foot traffic walks around creating wider trails. This is clearly in violation of Leave No Trace ethics which the Forest Service supports. This is of particular concern because of the numerous wetlands encountered on the East Fork Trail as well as areas along the upper Calico Trail. One of the reasons I choose to pack with llamas is because of their low impact on the environment, leaving no more trace on a trail than the native deer or elk.

It is my understanding from reviewing the recent proposals that the forest service recommends seasonal motorized use of some trails. It is unclear to me how this can be enforced. This seems to have been recommended primarily to benefit game hunters.

I recently reviewed the Forest Service Rules and Regulations for motorized use posted on their website. It clearly states "damage to roads, trails and other areas is not allowed." "On roads and trails designated as open to motorized vehicles, consider the condition of the surface and your ability to successfully travel without damage to yourself, your vehicle or the road or trail surface." . Not sure how well this can be enforced either.

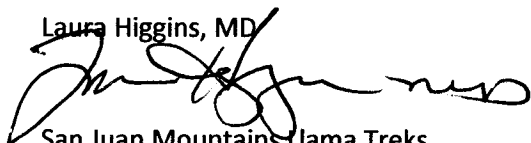
The motorized folks have specifically requested the use of Ryman Creek, Horse Creek Trails which apparently will be closed to motorized use. Upper and Lower Ryman Creek would provide a nice

challenging loop for them. It is apparent that the primary objective of motorcycle riders is the challenge of the trail and the thrill of the ride. The spectacular scenery along the river (Bear Creek Trail) and the high alpine vistas (Calico Trail) is likely not the reason they are on the trail. Ryman Creek, Horse Creek and perhaps Willow Divide Trail would seem good alternatives to meet their expectations of backcountry riding. Trail riders and llama pack stock have enjoyed the upper Calico/ Winter Trail loop which is now divided between motorized and non-motorized use so no group really gets the benefit of this very scenic loop.

Perhaps a survey could be made to determine actual % of quiet users vs motorized use on the trails in question. We all agree that motorcyclist should be given places to ride but not where the vast majority of users are quiet users as appears to be the case particularly on the Bear Creek, East Fork, and Calico Trails.

Calico Trail and the Grindstone Trail are both part of a National Recreational Trail system. To obtain funding to maintain this type of trail system one has to assure that environmental impacts will be minimized. I'm not sure how motorized use on these two trails can keep environmental impact to a minimum.

Laura Higgins, MD

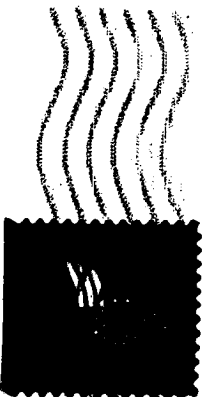
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura Higgins', written over the typed name.

San Juan Mountains Llama Treks

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