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Travel Management Plan

Debbie Kill,

I would like to comment on the Rico West Dolores travel management plan. I am a resident of the four corners area and use our public lands for recreational opportunities. I am an avid hiker, trail runner, backpacker, fisherman, mountain biker and motorbike rider. I find ample opportunity for recreation for all of my hobbies on public lands with the exception of motorized single track riding. I believe we need to expand our motorized trail system. As a backpacker I understand the desire and enjoyment of a quiet peaceful place in which to backpack. This is why I almost exclusively use Wilderness areas when I backpack. In this region we have ample designated wilderness areas in which to recreate without the noise and traffic of mechanized use. I believe any travel management plan that seeks to exclude one user group in favor of another is not a good plan and is not following the principal of multiple use of our public lands especially when considering we have wilderness that is set aside for the sole use of a few user groups.

In my years traveling in and enjoying the Rico trail system and others I have never seen or been part of a conflict with another user. It seems issues are rare but the parties are vocal, I doubt people who had positive encounters report them, I know I don't. With population growth our trails are being used more than ever. If we limit the trails of one user group the effect will put more people in a smaller area and this could increase negative encounters. While not in your management area Hermosa Creek Trail is a good example. I have met equestrians who avoid this trail because there are too many motorized users on the trail. I believe the reason for this is that it is one of two access points to the motorized trail system from HWY 550. If more trails were open to motorized use it would spread the users out and create more enjoyment for all.

The high country riding season is short, almost as short as our trail system. I consider myself an intermediate rider and enjoy getting out for a full day. When riding we seek approximately a 100 mile loop of single track which is very difficult to link together, almost impossible without utilizing roads. Closing any trail will make getting out for a full day of riding all the harder. We need more trails open. I'm of the opinion that outside of wilderness areas all viable trails should be open to all users. I say viable, to clarify I mean trails that are well designed to prevent erosion and are easy to maintain. I have ridden down Ryman Creek and agree the upper loop should be closed to all user groups or major reroutes need to be developed to prevent erosion and trenching caused by motorbikes, horses and water. If it is closed another trail should be developed that would replace this critical connecting trail. I have only hiked Bear Creek but see no need to close this vital connecting trail. In 2015 I witnessed an assumed outfitter lead a team of horses, off trail, across the delicate wetland area of upper Calico Trail. The damage was instant and devastating and I can only assume that others followed the "trail" causing even more damage, I understand that there is a grant available to fix this portion of trail, we need to utilize these funds to keep this trail open to all.

I would also like to see the practice dispersed camping continued and increased. Some areas may get used to much over time and have to be rotated out of use for the vegetation to regrow. It would be nice if some old logging roads could be reopened to provide more secluded areas in which to camp.

The Rico West Dolores trail system is one of a kind, There are no other high country riding areas that even

come close to offering such great well maintained trails and the most spectacular views. This area should be managed in a way that provides recreational opportunities for all of our citizens.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.  
Sincerely,  
Richard Gerst

I know this is off topic but thought I'd include it.

Considering trails need maintenance and I know funds are short (we need more enforcement officers). I'd like to suggest a no to low cost idea. Everyone I know, no matter what form of travel, performs some kind of trail maintenance on their own. It may be as simple as moving a downed tree off the trail or packing a saw and clearing trails, up to water diversions to keep erosion to a minimum. The Forest Service could add a page to its web site that lists know maintenance issues and its recommended solution. Then individuals or groups could go and perform the tasks on their own. I know I could muster a group to spend a weekend making our trails better.