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Comments:

Rico West Dolores Roads and Trails Project

I am writing to offer comments on the Rico-West Dolores travel management plan. I would like to offer my support for Alternative E because I believe it best balances quiet use with motorized use. The large majority of the Dolores ranger district is already devoted to intensive motorized recreation and access. The Mancos-Cortez and Boggy Draw travel management areas are overwhelmingly managed for motorized use. By comparison, the Rico-West Dolores region is the one geographic area where significant quiet use areas can be perpetuated or reconstituted. For these reasons of balance and opportunity, I encourage your selection of Alternative E.

I have a number of site-specific comments as well.

I strongly endorse the closure of the Ryman Creek Trail #735 to motorized use in all alternatives. From my experience hiking on this trail, I agree that the soils combined with the area's steepness make it entirely unsuitable for sustainable motorized use. I also support closing the trail to other uses and/or relocating it to a less damaging location. Given the other multiple motorized options from the Dolores river valley up to the Animas/Dolores watershed divide, this trail is unnecessary for motorized access.

I endorse non-motorized management for the Bear Creek Trail, #607. Bear Creek is a gentle to moderate trail easily accessible to families and those without the ability for more strenuous hikes. It is perhaps the only such trail in the Rico-West Dolores travel management zone, and providing a quiet use experience will greatly benefit most users of the trail. Bear Creek draws people for angling opportunities and other experiences that are enhanced by quiet and absence of motors.

It makes sense to take the Groundhog Creek Trail #650 off the map as a motorized trail since it is a dead-end, steep route inappropriate for motorized use and doesn't access any particularly desirable destination.

I would like to offer my support for decommissioning Forest Road #536 at the head of Fish Creek and nearby routes where there have been impacts to wetlands associated with route pioneering. The Fish Creek watershed is one of the hidden gems on the Dolores District, and is essentially an entirely roadless, undeveloped drainage for most of its length other than the Dunton-Groundhog Road, #611, that separates it from the Lizard Head Wilderness.

I also wanted to highlight the benefit of your plan to decommission Forest Roads 424 and 424.A off Lizard Head Pass, which are unnecessary since the formerly private inholding they once accessed is long since acquired.

I look forward to the final decision and implementation of a sustainable travel management plan.

Mark Pearson

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