

TO: Forest Planners, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, Gunnison National Forests, Delta, CO

FROM: Bob Goettge, Crested Butte

SUBJECT: Comments on: DRAFT Forest Assessment: Recreation

Hiking/Horse trails

The 2010 Travel Management plan closed a number of non-motorized trails popular with hikers in the Cement Creek Area. The western section of the **Granite Basin trail** was closed because it dead-ends at private property. (The Eccher Gulch, which also dead ends at private property, was left open while the Forest Service tries to find a rerouting.) The **Fenceline Trail** was closed to ALL Users after the Forest Service received comments received from adjacent private land owners that motorcycle and mountain bike riders had used the trail to trespass onto their property. The **Pioneer Ski trail** was closed to hikers because it was determined that the trail was unsafe for horses. I would like to see the Forest Service focus on keep trails open to hiking and horseback riders, especially trails close to high population areas such as Crested Butte South.

Equestrian Safety

The Recreation Assessment correctly identifies the concern for safety when horseback riders share trails shared with mountain bikers. Safety concerns are magnified on narrow trails, especially those traversing steep slopes. The Forest Service trail design standards recognize that a standard tread width of 24 inches is not appropriate for 2 way trails mixing equestrian and mountain biking. Widths of 5 feet or more are cited as appropriate. The Forest Plan Assessment should describe the extent of these conditions and address mitigating the safety risks.

Downhill Mountain Biking

The Recreation Assessment states that equestrians feel like some of their opportunities are impacted by mountain bikes. "Mountain bikers have trended toward high adventure adrenaline experiences with speed and thrills, which are incompatible with hikers and other non-motorized users due to safety. Speed may become an issue on certain trails, as fast downhill or winding trail can create safety concerns for other trail users, including hikers and horseback riders. "

Bike parks are a trend that may reduce these concerns for safety and lost opportunities. All three ski areas in the GMUG National Forests have bike parks. In addition, National Forests are now permitting construction of purpose-built trails offering fast directional downhill trails. GMUG could identify appropriate areas for such trails.