

# **CAPITAL TRAIL VEHICLE ASSOCIATION (CTVA)**

**P.O. Box 5295  
Helena, MT 59604-5295**

April 18, 2018

GMUG National Forests  
Attn: Forest Plan Revision Team  
2250 S. Main Street  
Delta, CO 81416  
[gmugforestplan@fs.fed.us](mailto:gmugforestplan@fs.fed.us)

Re: Scoping Comments for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) Forest Plan

Dear Forest Planning Team,

We have assembled the following information and issues from our members and other motorized recreationists for the project record. We appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison Forest Plan. We enjoy riding our OHVs on primitive trails and roads in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests. All multiple-use land managed by the Forest Service provides a significant source of these OHV recreational opportunities. We are passionate about OHV recreation for the following reasons:

## **Enjoyment and Rewards of OHV Recreation**

- Opportunity for a recreational experience for all types of people.
- Opportunity to strengthen family relationships.
- Opportunity to experience and respect the natural environment.
- Opportunity to participate in a healthy and enjoyable sport.
- Opportunity to experience a variety of opportunities and challenges.
- Camaraderie and exchange of experiences.
- We like to build and maintain trails for use by everyone.
- For the adventure of it.

## **Acknowledged Responsibilities of Motorized Visitors**

- Responsibility to respect and preserve the natural environment. We are practical environmentalists who believe in a reasonable balance between the protection of the natural environment and the human environment.
- Responsibility to respect all visitors.
- Responsibility to use vehicles in a proper manner and in designated places.
- Responsibility to work with land, resource, and recreation managers. We are committed to resolving issues through problem solving and not closures.
- Responsibility to educate the public on the responsible use of motorized vehicles on public lands.

We are a locally supported association whose purpose is to preserve trails for all recreationists through responsible environmental protection and education.

Our position is that the existing system of OHV routes does not adequately meet the needs list above. The benefits to the public would greatly benefit from an enhanced system of OHV routes.

Motorized recreation represents and supports many different interests of forest visitors. Supporting motorized recreation is the best way to support diversity of uses and multiple-use. This over-arching fact must be adequately addressed in the purpose and need and adequately considered in the analysis and decision. We are representative of the needs of the majority of visitors who recreate on public lands but may not be organized with a collective voice to comment on their needs during the public input process. These independent multiple-use recreationists include visitors who use motorized routes for family outings and camping trips, weekend drives, mountain biking, sightseeing, exploring, picnicking, hiking, ranching, rock climbing, skiing, camping, hunting, RVs, shooting targets, timber harvesting, fishing, viewing wildlife, snowmobiling, accessing patented mining claims, and collecting firewood, natural foods, rocks, etc. Mountain bikers have been observed to prefer OHV trails because we clear and maintain them and they have a desirable surface for biking.

Multiple-use visitors also include physically challenged visitors including the elderly and veterans who must use wheeled vehicles to visit public lands. All of these multiple-use visitors use roads and motorized trails for their recreational purposes and the decision must take into account motorized designations serve many recreation activities, not just recreational trail riding. We have observed that 97% of the visitors to our national forests are there to enjoy motorized access and motorized recreation. Our position is that the existing system of OHV routes does not adequately meet the needs listed above yet the agency continues its wholesale closure of motorized recreational opportunities using the NEPA process. The agency has a responsibility to adequately identify the needs of the public including those not comfortable with the agency's NEPA process and reasonably provide for those needs. The public would greatly benefit from an enhanced system of OHV routes instead of more and more closures of motorized access and motorized recreation.

We are looking forward to adequate attention and correction to very serious management issues impacting Motorized Recreationists that has resulted from past and current Forest Service actions. We strongly support a reasonable alternative that provides continued and enhanced motorized access and motorized recreation in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests. Please use the following significant issues to justify the development of that alternative.

Sincerely,

/s/ CTVA Action Committee on behalf of our 240 members and their families and friends  
Capital Trail Vehicle Association (CTVA)<sup>1</sup>  
P.O. Box 5295  
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<sup>1</sup> CTVA is also a member of Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association ([mtvra.com](http://mtvra.com)), Blue Ribbon Coalition ([sharetrails.org](http://sharetrails.org)), and New Mexico Off highway Vehicle Alliance ([nmohva.org](http://nmohva.org)),. Individual memberships in the American Motorcycle Association ([ama-cycle.org](http://ama-cycle.org)), Citizens for Balanced Use ([citizensforbalanceduse.com](http://citizensforbalanceduse.com)), Families for Outdoor Recreation ([ffor.org](http://ffor.org)), Montana 4X4 Association, Inc. ([m4x4a.org](http://m4x4a.org)), Montana Multiple Use Association ([montanamua.org](http://montanamua.org)), Snowmobile Alliance of Western States ([snowmobile-alliance.org](http://snowmobile-alliance.org)), and United Four Wheel Drive Association ([ufwda.org](http://ufwda.org))

# **OUTLINE OF SIGNIFICANT ISSUES THAT MUST BE ADEQUATELY ADDRESSED BY THE GRAND MESA, UNCOMPAHGRE AND GUNNISON FOREST PLAN**

Significant overarching issues associated with the Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act Procedures Revision #ORMS-1797include:

## **1. Lack of Reasonable Alternative to Address the Public's Need for More Motorized Access and Motorized Recreational Opportunities**

- There are over 50,000,000 OHV recreationists in the United States and over 1,000,000 OHV recreationists in Colorado.
- The analysis does not include an alternative that would provide a reasonable level of motorized trail opportunities to meet the existing and future needs of OHV recreationists.
- The agency must adequately identify the needs of motorized recreationists and OHV recreationists including those motorized recreationists that the process does not comfortably accommodate and reasonably provide for those needs.

## **2. Lack of a Reasonable Alternative to Address the Need for Motorized Access and Motorized Recreation for Youth**

- The analysis does not include any alternatives that would provide motorized opportunities to replace the closure of opportunities close to town.
- The project areas close to town are used extensively by youth and are being taken away without adequate consideration of the need.
- Consideration for motorized trail riding opportunities for the youth has not been given a hard look.

## **3. Lack of a Reasonable Alternative to Address the Need for Motorized Access and Motorized Recreation for the Elderly, Handicapped, and Disabled**

- The analysis does not include any alternatives that would provide motorized opportunities to replace the closure of opportunities close to town.
- The project area is used extensively by elderly, handicapped, disabled and veterans and is being taken away without adequate consideration of this significant public need.
- The analysis does not include reasonable alternatives that would provide motorized opportunities that adequately meet the needs of the elderly, disabled and veterans.
- Consideration for motorized trail riding opportunities for the disabled, elderly, and veterans has not been given a hard look.

## **4. Fails to Adequately Address the Impacts On and Benefits of Motorized Recreation on the Human Environment**

- A healthy human environment includes adequate motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities as required to meet the needs of the public.
- The public is losing a lifetime of motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities for reasons that are not significant when judged with a reasonable sense of magnitude.
- The motorized closure trend being enacted by the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests are is destroying a culture which is based on motorized access

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and motorized recreation in the forest. The analysis has not given this significant issue a hard look.

- Our pursuit of happiness has been significantly impacted by all of the motorized closures.
- The significant closing of motorized routes in the project area does not meet the basic requirement of the NEPA act of 1969 as stated in “Sec. 101 (b) (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities”.
- The decision significantly affects our pursuit of happiness and the quality of the human environment.

#### 5. Over-Represents the Public’s Need for More Wilderness

- Less than 3% of the visits to the forest are for wilderness recreation and 97% of the visits are for multiple-use.
- Management of the forest must reflect the ratio of visitors and meet their needs in an equal manner.
- Current wilderness is poorly managed and to create more only compounds the problem.
- The current planning process is being used as a backdoor process to create defacto wilderness areas by closing motorized access and motorized recreation on lands designated for multiple-use.

#### 6. Improperly Considers Roadless Areas

- The proposed alternative effectively converts multiple-use lands to defacto wilderness lands which circumvents congressional law and the wilderness designation process.

#### 7. Does Not Adequately Consider Cumulative Impact of All Motorized Closures

- Motorized recreationists have been hammered by motorized closure after motorized closure in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest and surrounding public lands.
- The analysis does not adequately disclose the amount of motorized access and motorized recreation that has been lost to public use since the 1960’s.
- Travel plan and other planning actions have closed 25 to 75% of the historic motorized routes and all cross-country opportunities.
- The significant negative cumulative effect of all motorized closures on the public have not been adequately evaluated and mitigated in this proposal.
- The significant negative cumulative effect of all motorized closures on the youth, disabled, elderly, and veterans has not been adequately evaluated and mitigated in this proposal.
- The public has been squeezed into too small of an area with too few motorized routes. Every weekend when we talk to fellow motorized recreationists they ask us where they can go to ride trails and camp.
- The cumulative effect of this decision combined with many other similar motorized closure decisions significantly affects our pursuit of happiness and the quality of the human environment.
- The continual closure of motorized access and motorized recreation on lands managed by the Agency demonstrates it intent to eliminate motorized access and motorized recreation without adequately disclosing their intent and the cumulative effect.

#### 8. Fails to Recognize the Lack of Long Distance Motorized Trail Systems

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- The closure of existing motorized reaches of the CDNST to motorized recreation does not follow the requirements of the originating law.
- Fails to address past illegal motorized closure actions used to create non-motorized trail systems
- The agency has developed many long distance non-motorized trail systems similar to the CDNST and PCT.
- The agency has not develop any long distance trail systems for motorized recreationists.
- Long distance motorized trail systems would see far more use than non-motorized trails.
- Long distance motorized trail systems would provide far more benefit to the human environment including economic benefit.

#### 9. Fails to Adequately Identify and Address the Imbalance of Trail Opportunity in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest

- There are far more miles of non-motorized trail in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest.
- The miles of non-motorized and motorized trail in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest has not been adequately disclosed.
- Miles of trail in wilderness areas and quality must be adequately disclosed.
- Non-motorized opportunity must be compared to motorized opportunity including the miles of trails, costs and conditions, and number of users.
- Every Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest decision has created more non-motorized trail opportunities.
- Non-motorized recreationists have hundreds of potential opportunities in the project area. Motorized recreationists have very limited opportunities as demonstrated by the travel plan map.

#### 10. Does Not Provide for a Reasonable Level of Multiple Use

- The lands in the project area are designated by congress for multiple-use.
- Sharing must be the expectation on all multiple-use land otherwise multiple-use land becomes special-use land.
- The proposed action is illegally converting lands designated for multiple-use by congress into defacto wilderness areas.
- The existing routes, mines, historic use, and current use demonstrate that the area does not qualify as wilderness and, therefore, should not be treated as wilderness.
- Management for multiple-use best meets the overall needs of the public.
- Congress recognized that management for multiple-use best meets the needs of the public and gave their direction in the law.
- The agency is applying wilderness standards to lands designated for multiple-use.
- Some visible use of the land for the good of the public is reasonable.
- The proposed land use actions would effectively convert congressional designated multiple-use lands to defacto wilderness which circumvents congressional law and the wilderness designation process.
- Public lands need to be made great again by restoring wide-ranging multiple-use management to all multiple use lands.

#### 11. Unreasonable Use of Climate Change as a Reason to Eliminate Motorized Access and Motorized Recreation

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- Motorized recreation is not a significant factor.
- If CO2 is a significant factor, then forest fires are a significant impact and this impact must be adequately addressed.

#### 12. Required to Provide Adequate Coordination with Local and State Government

- Coordination with all surrounding counties is required and has not been adequately provided.

#### 13. Fails to Adequately Recognize and Address RS2477 Route Standing

- The proposed action closes and obliterates many routes that have RS2477 standing and should be perpetuated for public motorized access and use as originally allowed by the law.

#### 14. Arbitrary and Capricious Analysis and Decision-Making

- There are no site specific studies and analysis of OHV recreation as required by NEPA.
- Reasons are being used to close motorized opportunities that do not have data and studies to back them.
- Studies that support OHV recreation or give an unbiased analysis are being ignored.
- Impacts on fish and wildlife are being assumed (imagined) without adequate site specific data and studies.
- Impacts on the natural environment are being assumed (imagined) without adequate site specific data and studies.
- The Agency is creating and using bogus issues to justify the closure of valuable motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities.
- The road density criteria assigns equal impacts to single-track motorcycle versus ATV trails versus forest roads versus highways. This criteria is not site specific as required by NEPA and is obviously false.

#### 15. Fails to Adequately Address Justice Issues

- The Agency is simply overwhelming the general public with involvement requirements and catering to environmental groups with paid representatives so that they can further their protectionist agenda in the end.
- The agency must adequately identify the needs of the silent majority including motorized recreationists and OHV recreationists and reasonably provide for those needs.
- The proposed action includes many non-motorized trail opportunities.
- The proposed action does not include any OHV trail opportunities.
- The USDA presents itself as “USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.”
- The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest has considerably many more miles non-motorized trails than motorized trails.
- There is not an equal opportunity in miles of trail and quality of experience for ATV recreationists.
- There is not an equal opportunity in miles of trail and quality of experience for motorcycle single track recreationists.
- The inter-disciplinary team does not include ATV, motorcycle single track, UTV and full-size 4x4 enthusiasts.
- Motorized recreationists are the only group to lose in every Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest action and are bearing a disproportionate share of the negative consequences.

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- The Agency is making decisions that ignore the overall needs of the public for motorized access and motorized recreation, equal opportunity requirements, and congressionally directed management for multiple-uses.
- Motorized recreationists cooperated with the travel management rule believing that travel management planning would be reasonable. In reality travel management planning has been a massive motorized closure process and our trust has not been honored.
- Motorized had been marginalized since the 1960's without adequate disclosure and analysis of the significant negative impacts on the public and the needs of the public for motorized access and recreation.
- The lack of adequate and full disclosure of significant impacts on motorized recreationists and the lack of adequate and meaningful consideration of the needs of motorized recreationists including OHV recreationists by the agency must stop with this action.
- In the past OHV recreationists trusted the agency with the belief that they would look after our needs and we agreed to cooperate and be managed based on that belief. However, in return our needs were ignored and OHV recreationists were rewarded with excessive motorized closures. It is time to compensate and mitigate for this injustice.
- Motorized recreationists including our members have worked hard to maintain all of the existing routes in the project area for over 40 years and have received no recognition for that effort and dedication.
- The proposed action is overly influenced by well-funded elitist environmental groups that represent less than 3% of the visitors but seek exclusive rights to everything. Their excessive influence on public land managers is taking excessive amounts of public land from the public.
- By continuing to ignore the significant needs and issues of motorized recreationists the Agency is creating the need for a significant corrective action to address those needs and issues in the future.

#### 16. Overstates the Impact of Motorized Access and Motorized Recreation on Fish and Wildlife

- The analysis has not adequately considered data and studies that supports an unbiased and a balanced view of how motorized recreation impacts the natural environment.
- The analysis must have adequate site specific data and studies as required by NEPA to justify motorized closures.
- Impacts from all users groups and natural impacts must be adequately compared to demonstrate a true sense of magnitude for impacts.
- Alternatives to wholesale motorized closures that would mitigate fish and wildlife concerns were not given a hard look.
- The common claim that “states own wildlife” is incomplete, misleading and needlessly deepens divisions between federal and state governments and creates unnecessary conflicts and impacts on the public that uses federal lands.
- The road density impact criteria being used is not site specific.
- The road density impact criteria being used grossly over-estimates the impact on wildlife.
- The road density impact criteria being used is not a reasonable measure of motorized impact on wildlife habitat.
- Topography is a significant factor affecting wildlife habitat. Topography such as in the project area greatly reduces the impact on wildlife and is just as effective as or more effective than cover. The analysis does not reasonably consider topography.



- A motorized trail does not have the same impact on wildlife as a road. The impact analysis assumes one size fits all. A criteria and impact analysis must be developed that differentiates between different treads and level of use.
- OHVs cause less severe disturbance of wildlife because the relatively low level of noise that they emit provides a soft warning of their presence and especially compared to non-motorized recreation. For example, OHVs have never had a damaging encounter with a grizzly bear while hikers and hunters have had many that have ended badly for both the humans and the bear.
- There are other impacts on fish and wildlife including natural processes that are far more significant than motorized recreation.

#### 17. Overstates the Impact of Motorized Access and Motorized Recreation on the Natural Environment

- The analysis has not adequately considered data and studies that supports an unbiased and a balanced view of how motorized recreation impacts the natural environment.
- The analysis must have adequate site specific data and studies as required by NEPA to justify motorized closures.
- Impacts from all users groups and natural impacts must be adequately compared to demonstrate a true sense of magnitude for impacts.
- Alternatives to wholesale motorized closures that would mitigate natural environment concerns were not given a hard look.
- A motorized trail does not have the same impact on the natural environment as a road. The impact analysis assumes one size fits all. A criteria and impact analysis must be developed that differentiates between different treads and level of use.
- There are other impacts on the natural environment including natural processes that are far more significant than motorized recreation.

#### 18. Motorized References need to be adequately considered

- The analysis has not adequately considered information that supports the need and value of motorized recreation.

#### 19. Maintenance, Funding and Gas Tax Issues

- The analysis has not adequately considered information that identifies significant issues surrounding maintenance, funding and gas tax issues.
- If motorized is removed, then motorized funds should not be used in the area.
- If motorized is removed, then motorized funds used previously in the area should be returned for use on motorized projects.