



Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen

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May 17, 2018

[www.fs.usda.gov/gmug/](http://www.fs.usda.gov/gmug/)  
2250 South Main Street Delta,  
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To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Mesa Verde Country Horsemen, one of the eight (soon to be nine) chapters of the Back Country Horsemen of Colorado, we thank you for the opportunity to continue to provide comments regarding the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest, Forest Plan Revision. Our volunteers are committed to our mission of maintaining access for the historic use of our pack and saddle stock on our public lands and we contribute many hours of volunteer service, assisting our agencies with education, trail work, trailhead design, packing projects, equestrian access, and so much more.

Our comments as this moves forward will most likely remain within San Miguel County and the area of the San Juans, as this is closest to our volunteer efforts, and many of our members recreate and provide volunteer service in that area. A few comments we'd like to offer regarding the three drafts comprising the foundation for the plan.

- We encourage the forest plan revision to fully address the topic of volunteers and partnerships. With passage of the 2016 National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act (PL 114-245), the effective use of volunteers and partners in stewardship has become all the more important. Some of our volunteers possess technical skills such as horse and mule packing, chainsaw and cross-cut saw certification, and serving as *Leave No Trace* educators. The plan revision should provide direction for ensuring such partnerships, consistent with our Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Forest Service to "develop and expand a framework for the Forest Service and BCHA to plan and implement mutually beneficial programs, projects, training, and other equestrian opportunities at the national, regional, and local levels" (FS Agreement No. 16-MU-11132424-223).
- We support the protection of wilderness and wilderness study areas. Forest units should uphold the integrity of the Wilderness Act in these areas.
- We believe the agency's guidance for Forest Plan revisions must provide for a consistent strategy for protection of our nation's National Scenic and Historic Trails (NS&HTs).
- We support the agency's definition of sustainable recreation and its vision to promote quality, sustainable recreation opportunities for all forest visitors and an increasingly diverse population. We feel that Back Country Horsemen fit in nicely within the definition and the agency's guiding principles associated with sustainable recreation. We support recreational activities that are ecologically, socially and economically sustainable and we continue in our efforts to "raise the bar" on *Leave No Trace* and other methods in order to minimize conflicts with other recreational visitors and our collective impact on the land and resources that we share.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and stay engaged in this very important process.

Latifia Rodriguez, MVBCH Public Lands Committee Chair

*To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness; To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use; To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource; To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage; To foster and encourage individuals to join and participate in their local, State, and National Back Country Horsemen organizations.*