



July 3, 2019

Tom Rice
Recreation Program Lead
Attention: Dolores Aspen Project
29211 Highway 184
Dolores, CO 81323

Derek Padilla
District Ranger

Dear Mr. Rice and Mr. Padilla:

On behalf of the Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen, thank you for this opportunity to comment on the above referenced project. Our chapter consists of about 45 members. We are part of our state and national organizations.

We understand the purpose and need of the project and that more mileage and trails have been requested to be added, specifically in the Chicken Creek ski area. We support the Proposed Action - Expansion/Modification of the Current Trail System.

A couple items to note specifically, from the eye of the equestrian community:

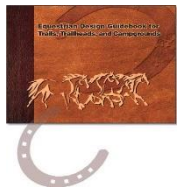
- We recognize these are user created trails in the Chicken Creek area. As part of the equestrian community and a group that does quite a bit of volunteer work on our public lands, please be sure to include us in future planning and projects. It is our hope that once these routes are designated, that the Forest Service will focus on reining in the creation of illegal routes that are then just "adopted" into the trail system.
- We support the change of the Owens Basin Connector per the 2008 Mancos-Cortez Travel Management Plan. We appreciate that a better water crossing of the West Mancos River needs to occur, considering the importance of this water supply to local communities.
- Regarding the recreation guidelines; we appreciate the consideration of the width and height needed for our pack and saddle stock to safely clear a trail, thereby designating Trail Class 2 or 3 should yield sufficient trail clearance.
- Parking areas are always an issue. The more populated an area becomes, the less space we have to park our rigs. Trailheads should be expanded to accommodate horse trailers, not if there is funding available, but as a standard across our public lands landscape. Being that there is funding and manpower to expand the trail system, there should be funding and plans available to accommodate all levels of users. The current parking area for Chicken Creek is

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not sufficient for the amount of traffic this area now experiences. Having separate ingress and egress would help; also possibly designating trailer only parking in half of the parking lot would be beneficial.

General Comments:

- We had asked the signs be posted at the Trex bridges, so equestrians can cross at the water crossings, instead of the slippery Trex bridges. Many folks have had falls on horses as those bridges tend to get wet. Thank you for making both crossings accessible for horses. We had sent some signs to use as examples to post. If you still plan to put those up, we are more than happy to help install them.
- The wooden bridge in the Upper Bauer, Rush Connector area might need to be replaced. It's a bit spongy, something we informed the FS about last year.
- Support education for proper trail yield rules.
- Support the implementation of educational kiosks, to include input from all interested and affected stakeholders on how best to utilize and preserve their public lands and open spaces.
- Allow the continued over the ground use for equestrians on all FS lands, to enable equestrians to get off the trail if needed in dangerous areas and to decrease user conflict.
- Please refer to the copy of the "Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads and Campgrounds" that we've provided in the past for good trailhead design and trail construction, specific to equestrian use.



Some interesting data published by the American Horse Council in 2017: The economic impact within Colorado of equestrians in the recreation sector supports 16,712 jobs statewide, adds \$875 million in value to the state economy, with a recreation sector total economic impact of \$1.49 billion. Other sectors not included in these figures are racing, competition, equine therapy and equine rescues. Although our use is small compared to some others, we contribute significantly here in Colorado and across the national landscape.

We enjoy partnering with the FS on the many projects we've worked on together, currently and over the past many years. We look forward to assisting you in any way we can.

Thank you.

Latifia Rodriguez
Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen
Public Lands Chair
PO Box 812, Cortez, CO 81321

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