



Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen

PO Box 812

Cortez, CO 81321

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September 25, 2019

Re: Sage Hen Motorized Trail Proposal  
San Juan National Forest - Dolores Ranger District  
Attention: Tom Rice  
29211 Highway 184  
Dolores, CO 81323

Dear Mr. Rice:

On behalf of the Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen (MVBCH), consisting of approximately 40 members, we are submitting comments on the Sage Hen Motorized Trail Proposal.

MVBCH would like to voice support for the analysis of a seasonal closure due to declining big game numbers spanning years. Being it is a critical winter range habitat, the cause of this needs to be evaluated and determined. We respectfully ask you consider the following:

-MVBCH supports the recommended seasonal closure from December 1 through April 30, if it's needed to evaluate the health of this critical winter range. Although, many equestrians use this area during the winter, many understand that wildlife is vital to the health and proper management of this area. A question that we would like to see answered is, if the seasonal closure takes effect and things have not improved in a few years regarding big game numbers, further analysis on the cause of declining elk and deer numbers will need to take place.

-MVBCH is not commenting for or against reopening motorized access for 4.25 miles in this area.

-If motorized is permitted, we would like mitigation measures to be put in place to ensure folks stay the trail. How that is done, whether barriers, more agency presence, etc., is up to the agency and its resources. We do not favor, though, that if this 4.25 mile section of road is opened to motorized, that it's only closed to motorized seasonally. If it's closed for critical winter range habitat, then it should be closed to all uses to get a proper analysis on what's happening out there.

As equestrians, Back Country Horsemen work to ensure our historic pack and saddle stock access continues on our public lands. Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,  
Latifia Rodriguez  
Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen  
Public Lands Chair  
P.O. Box 812, Cortez, CO 81321

*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.*