

Gunnison Ranger District
216 N Colorado
Gunnison, CO 81230

Re: North Valley Trails Project Comments

March 30, 2022

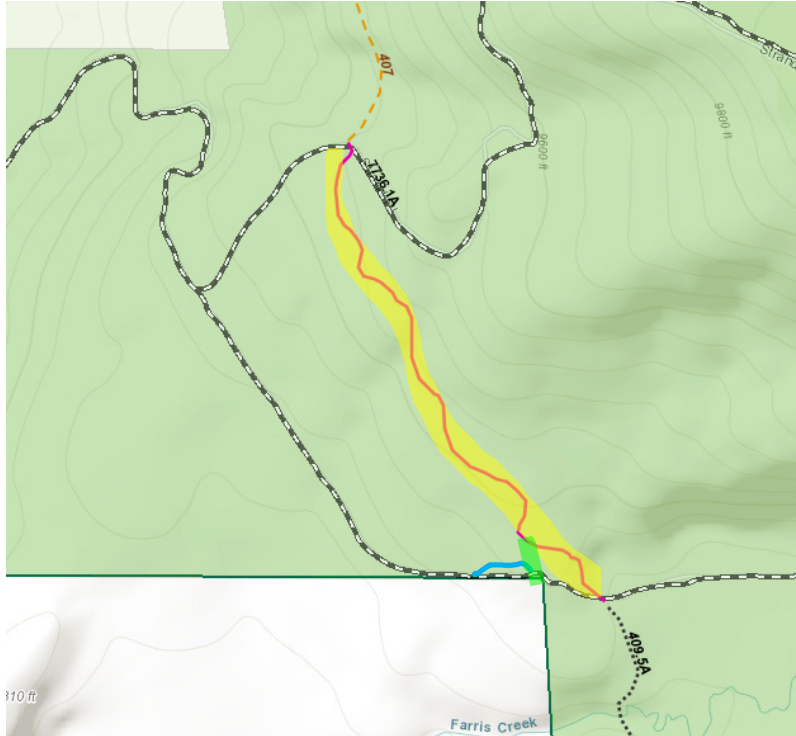
Over time, the cumulative impacts of fracturing the landscape with trails for recreational use creates significant challenges to renewable resource users who, for generations, have participated in the age-old practice of managing working landscapes. Originally, the expansion of recreational use in the North Valley brought a nice balance to the area and a shared sense of appreciation and stewardship amongst the users. Over time, however, recreation has expanded beyond the point of sustainability. Dangerous speeds on trails, endless traffic on the roads, brilliant sunsets of atmospheric dust and layers of dirt choking the rangeland grasses and wildflowers, all amidst the sparkling backdrop from windshields of parked cars. It is recreation gone wrong. It has taken over all uses of the public lands and problems increase with every addition of new trails.

For ranchers, it means more gates to be left open in more places, more dogs chasing wildlife and cattle through fences, more untended campfires, and more noise, which causes wildlife and cattle stress, illness and a tendency to flee the safe areas they once knew. These problems lead to the need to mitigate the effects and that means more human resource costs to both the USFS and the permittees. The sheer number of mountain bikes creates an obstacle course over which to move livestock. More employees are needed on the landscape to monitor range conditions, safely shepherd livestock, and build/repair fences... all at an increasing cost. Tourism and recreation benefit immeasurably from ranching as it is the ranchers who produce that "view of stunning green" in the valleys below, for they are the keepers of the land.

The recreation community itself, seeking solitude in a healthy, functioning ecosystem and watershed, is losing out, too. This is the result of the cumulative impact of activities that do not renew the resource. In the North Valley Trails Project, adding nine miles of new trails and only decommissioning one mile, there is a clear plan to ignore the impacts of recreation in the landscape and grow the problem. Ranchers can operate within the existing trails system in the North Valley if they continue to be safe and accessible for all users but expanding the trails in the area is not the solution.

Thank you to the Gunnison Ranger District for the recent work on campsites and kiosks in the area. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on this project. Please see attached comments on specific sections of the North Valley Trails Project and the direct impacts of the changes being considered.

Sincerely,
Barbara East
Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy

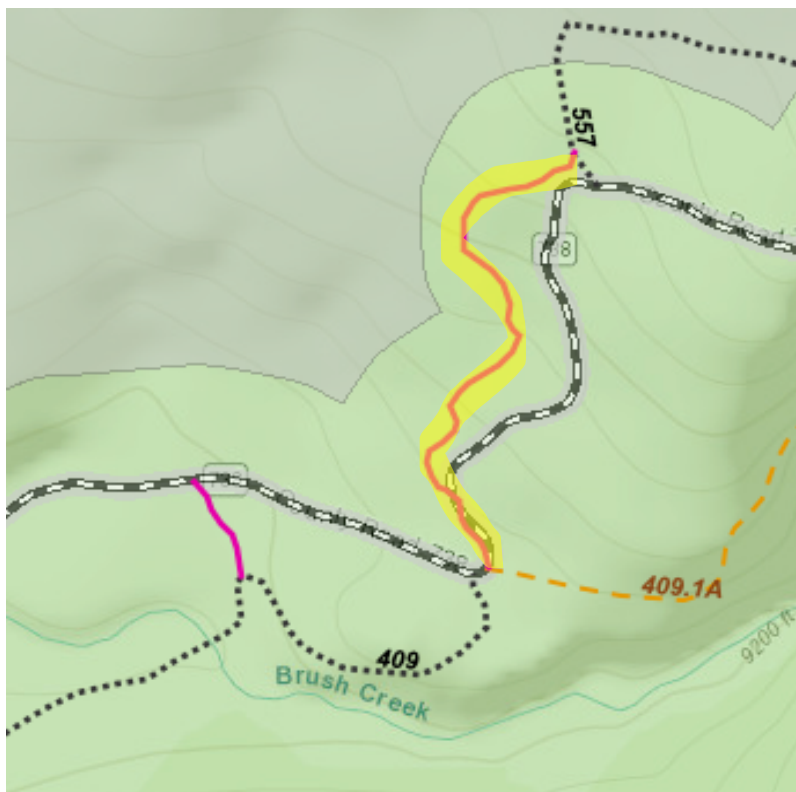


Opposed to (areas highlighted in yellow)

Strand Bonus to 409 Trail for the following reasons:

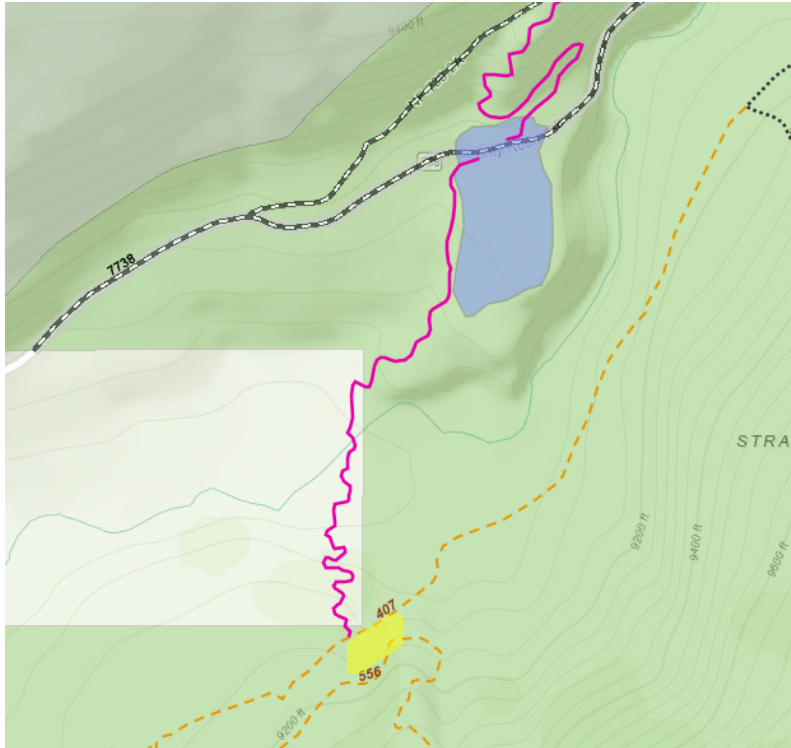
- 1: Trail bypasses the essential General Information Kiosk.
- 2: There already exists a close and very nice, user friendly route for multiple use. The proposed trail would be another unnecessary fragmentation of the land and would greatly disrupt historic cattle safe harbors.
- 3: The proposed trail as illustrated creates yet another gate in very close proximity to a new user-friendly swinging gate accompanied with a walkover. If this proposed trail is allowed, we request that the trail go to the existing walkover and gate (highlighted in green).

4: If the proposed new trail is not allowed to move forward, and all users continue using the existing road, there is a small section of the existing road that is rocky for bicycles. A small section of trail, paralleling but close to the road (shown in blue), could be developed to mitigate the rough area.



1: Opposed to (see areas highlighted in yellow) **Teocalli Extension** because the proposed trail is equally as steep as the parallel road. There is potential for more major erosion and a source for more atmospheric dust.

2: Safety Issue: The road paralleling the proposed trail is already an attractant for speed jumping. The proposed trail likely will be an even greater enticement for high-speed participants, a mindset that is always dangerous and does not balance well with the other users.



The **Budd Connection to Tent City** trail proposal creates a dangerous situation for cattle at the gate that leaves the Forest to enter the Budds property. (Highlighted in yellow.) There is no easy escape route for cattle that have been pressured from above and run down to that gate. The positioning of the trail and gate acts as a funnel to bring cattle down to a trap if gate is closed or If gate is left open cattle get into the Budd's property and Camp City.

Request USFS trail crew communicate with rancher as to clearing side routes or alternative areas for cattle to safely escape in order to mitigate the problem.

Thank you for removing further consideration of the "Tent City Connector" and new trail development north of the intersection of West Brush and Deer Creek, as it would have detrimental effects for natural resources in the area.