

March 31st 2022

Re: North Valley Trails Project Comments

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a third generation Gunnison resident. I am a cattle rancher, and an avid hunter, dirtbiker and snowmobiler.

I do not support these proposed trails. I think our recreational demands are reaching an unsustainable level, and do not support adding to this problem. Our public lands are one of the most valuable resources we have, and we as a community need to ensure we are protecting them from fragmentation. I say this as a person who wholeheartedly enjoys utilizing our backcountry for a variety of activities.

We are not able to properly maintain trails we already have in existence. The existing single track trails have rapidly become eroded to either a u or a v shape - making it impossible for any other user group besides bikes to utilize. This means that these trails are now either one use (mountain bikes) - or other users start traveling off of the trail. We need to maintain these trails and make them accessible for a variety of users before we build new trails.

Wildlife are facing pressure from the increased use of our public lands. They are being forced to move onto private lands, and even into towns. At our cattle ranch north of Gunnison we are seeing these very real effects of wildlife being pushed off of public land by the new trail system on Signal Peak - we have had mountain lions in with our calving cows, and elk and deer on our valuable summer pasture. I am attaching a study titled "Recreational Disturbance Modeling of Elk Habitat in Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests" written by Larry Desjardina, Alison Gallenskyb and T.J. Thrasher. It gives flight distance associated with various forms of recreation. Routt County has seen a 30% decline in their elk population associated with recreation, according to Larry Desjardin, president of Keep Routt Wild. I think Routt can serve as a valuable warning as to what the Gunnison area can be headed towards if we continue to fragment and create new trails across valuable habitat. I support the trail systems we currently have, but I do not support additional fragmentation of this valuable landscape, and pushing wildlife out of their habitat.

I think it is important to remember that Gunnison needs a diverse economy to survive. We cannot survive on recreation alone. We need ranching, wildlife and hunting, and other industries to maintain a functioning economy. It is important that we not push out our important economic sectors by catering to one sector.

I appreciate the Gunnison Ranger District's commitment to a fair and rigorous process. I look forward to the next stages in this process.

Sincerely,

Hannah Cranor

