


Nov. 29, 2015

Shoshone National Forest
Travel Management Planners
808 Meadow Lane Ave.
Cody, WY 82414

Re: Proposal for Little Sunlight Motorized Trail Head (reference Map NZ-E)

Dear Travel Planning Team for the Shoshone National Forest:

I wish to go on record as being opposed to establishing a motorized trail head near the confluence of Little Sunlight Creek and Sunlight Creek.

It appears to me that the proposal to create a "Motorized Trail Head" adjacent to the existing Little Sunlight campground is an attempt to create a workable multiple use dynamic. Unfortunately, the "one size fits all" concept is problematic because of an inherent conflict that exists between the established historical use (day hikers and horseback riders) and the more recent use proliferated by operators of OHV's. I acknowledge that a majority of the operators of OHV's are respectful of the other people and horseback riders in the areas of common use, and they yield to them when it is appropriate to do so. In a perfect world, that would be good enough. In the real world there are sometimes exceptions to this preferred behavior. It may be that the OHV operator is a novice rider and is so intent on his or her driving that he or she is oblivious to others using the area. Perhaps the OHV operator is coming around a blind curve at a high speed when he or she comes upon a hiker or horseback rider unexpectedly. Perhaps the OHV operator is intoxicated by alcohol or drugs or is simply intoxicated by the feeling of exhilaration when traveling at high speed. Whatever the reason, when an OHV appears suddenly and unexpectedly amongst hikers or horseback riders, accidents can occur. At the very least, this causes alarm and annoyance for all parties involved. In some cases, most probably with horseback riders, this can cause critical and even fatal results.

The established Little Sunlight Campground lends itself particularly well to summer recreational use by day hikers and horseback riders. The Shoshone Backcountry Horsemen have invested a great amount of volunteer time and money in establishing an excellent trailhead there for horseback users. Furthermore, since 1959 my family's 7 D Ranch, a dude ranch, has been conducting guided horseback trail rides through the Little Sunlight campground

area many times per week, all summer long. The 7 D Ranch pays day use fees to the Shoshone National Forest for the privilege to conduct these trail rides. Moreover, horseback trail rides are the primary activity offered to the paying guests at this established dude ranch.

We have observed at the Little Sunlight campground a steady increase by OHV operators, and a decreased use by day hikers and horseback riders. Correspondingly, our encounters with OHV's when we cross the Sunlight Road or travel through the Little Sunlight campground area to access the Little Sunlight Creek drainage and the North Absaroka Wilderness trails increases every year. Fortunately, to date we have had no serious accidents as a result of these encounters, but they do cause anxiety and annoyance to our guests.

I contend that establishing a Motorized Trail Head near the Little Sunlight campground will only encourage greater OHV use and will further exasperate an existing problem.

I offer the following suggestions as an alternative: Establish two Motorized Trail Heads in the Sunlight area for summer use. The first one might be on the Wyoming Game and Fish property, if a cooperative agreement can be reached between the USFS and the Wyo. Game and Fish to do so. If not, then the Trail Head might be best established in the East Painter Creek drainage, just beyond the fence separating Wyo. Game and Fish and USFS property. Secondly, establish a Trail Head in the area known locally as the Sulfur Camp, which I believe is designated on the Shoshone National Forest Travel Management Map NZ-E as 101.T. This second Trail Head will provide convenient access to the Sunlight Mining Region during its seasonal open period from July 15 through Sept. 30.

I believe that the establishment of these two Motorized Trail Heads will provide ample opportunities for OHV operators to travel on existing roads, will disperse the use of OHV's (which I believe to be a benefit to all concerned), and will reduce safety risks and conflicts between OHV users and other recreational users of the USFS lands.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely yours,
Marshall Dominick