



Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen
PO Box 812
Cortez, CO 81321
www.mesaverdehorsemen.com
mybchorsemen@yahoo.com

December 26, 2022

Tom Rice
Dolores Public Lands Office
29211 Highway 184
Dolores, CO 81323
RE: Recreation - Dolores Recreation Access and Infrastructure Improvement Project

Dear Mr. Rice,

On behalf of the Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced Dolores Recreation Access and Infrastructure Improvement Project. As you know, we have been following trails projects in all areas listed for more than 15 years.

In the state of Colorado we have over 200,000 horses living statewide, making us the ninth largest state in terms of horse population. We have approximately 698,000 acres of land in Colorado used for horse-related purposes. Our direct contribution to the GDP is approximately \$953 million, a monumental economic impact of our horse industry in Colorado.¹ The new statistics for 2021; 2017-2020 updated by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis reflects that outdoor recreation generated \$826 billion and 4.5 million jobs in 2021. This adds up to 1.9 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for the U.S.; proof that the outdoor rec industry plays a vital role in local and national economies. The data also reflects that equestrian-related activities have a higher dollar added value nationally than other popular nonmotorized activities (see spreadsheet).²

Generally, we support the Proposed Action. Please find specific items that are important to the safety, efficacy and accessibility of equestrian users on our public lands.

- Please ensure new trails are to trail management objectives for pack and saddle stock access, ensuring they're wide enough for our pack horses to traverse safely, tall enough for riders to pass under, as well as proper sight distance.
- We are extremely excited about the bathroom proposal at the Transfer Horse Camp! We help maintain this area and our continued access and improved amenities is something we look forward to, also justifying the increased user occupancy costs and reservation requirements. Please take into consideration the possibility of adding more corrals in the future, thereby evaluating the placement of the bathrooms. We would love to consult on this and offer assistance. Many of our members use this site many times throughout the year, along with keeping the area clean and the manure bin emptied.
- The parking area along FSR 385 is a necessity. Please ensure that parking is adequate for our truck and trailer rigs, as we have lost quite a bit of parking space in the original cross-country ski parking lot off of CR 40. It would be advantageous for designated trailer parking sites, marked accordingly with equestrian use only signs installed; at least two and up to six sites would be preferred. We would love to assist with this. Alternatively, please consult the Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads and Campgrounds that we have provided a copy of to the agency previously; also linked in the footnotes below.³ Also, the new parking area at the BLM Summit Lake access is beautifully constructed and can be used for reference.
- Please ensure proper trail etiquette for various uses is being promoted. An example of an education piece is attached, and we'd love to see this at all trailheads and parking areas where multiuse is promoted.

Thank you for this opportunity and your work in maintaining access to and preserving our public lands.

Sincerely,
Latifia "Tif" Rodriguez, MVBCH Public Lands Chair, 970-903-8752

1. Information provided by the American Horse Council, Copyright 2017
2. [Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021 | U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis \(BEA\)](#)
3. [07232816 - FS Publications - Publications - Recreational Trails - Environment - FHWA \(dot.gov\)](#)

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.