

James Statezny
Yampa District Ranger
Yampa, Colorado

Re: South Routt Fuels Reduction Project.

Dear James,

Routt County appreciates this opportunity to comment on the South Routt Fuels Reduction Project. We are generally supportive of wildfire and forest health mitigation efforts. However, in this case we do have some concerns:

1. Routt County Road #16 accesses project area from the north. This is a heavily trafficked gravel road that supports a large number of residences. CR 16 has steep grades and sharp corners and is often wash boarded. Routt County is concerned that the volume of heavy equipment necessary for mitigation and potential shipping of wood products to market will negatively impact road conditions and driver safety. We would urge that access to the project be limited to coming from the south off of State Highway 134. We believe that at least some traffic will necessarily come from the north through the Stagecoach area. USFS should work directly with Routt County Public Works to address these concerns and be prepared to engage in cooperative maintenance and safety efforts and potentially reimburse Routt County for additional maintenance and improvements that may be necessary on CR #16.
2. While Routt County appreciates USFS efforts to decommission roads that are currently closed we would like to understand better exactly which roads are included. We recently commented on a project in the Hahn's Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District that would add an entirely new trail system on Rabbit Ears Pass (Mad Rabbit), where there is no existing road infrastructure. Yet in this project, roads are being decommissioned rather than being converted to trails.

Chapter 1 (Forest-wide Direction) of the 1998 EIS and Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Routt National Forest notes that there is a regional goal to:

"Provide for scenic quality and a range of recreation opportunities which respond to the needs of National Forest customers and local communities."

We would like to understand if the closure of access included in this project was given Forest-wide consideration in conjunction with the proposal to add additional access elsewhere. Lastly, we are also concerned about potential impacts to the public when forest access may be permanently eliminated.

3. We recognize the potential for the use of forest products to fuel biomass energy production. In particular this supply could work very well to support potential new biomass plant in Hayden, CO. We would ask USFS to work closely with local, state and federal officials as well as Union Pacific Railroad to identify opportunities to ship biomass produced via rail. Property adjacent to rail line near Toponas, Colorado could work very well as a load-out for delivery of these forest products.

4. Routt County has not had sufficient time to fully review all of the possible impacts associated with this project and would like to reserve the right to present additional concerns not listed above at a future date.

Sincerely, and on behalf of the Routt County Board of County Commissioners,



Timothy V. Corrigan
Chair Pro-Tem
Routt County Board of County Commissioners

