



P.O. Box 251
Ouray, CO 81427
OurayClimbers.Org

December 3, 2023

Dana Gardunio, Ouray District Ranger #61979
USDA Forest Service
2505 South Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 8140
electronically via: <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=61979>

Re: Blue Lakes Area Visitor Use Management Plan

Dear District Ranger and the Forest Planning Team:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our feedback from Ouray Climbers Alliance regarding the Draft Plan of the Blue Lakes Area Visitor Use Management Team. We appreciate the amount of effort the Planning Team has dedicated to the Plan revision and are grateful for this chance to submit our comments.

Ouray Climbers Alliance is an advocacy grassroots organization based in Ouray County representing climbers in Ouray County and surrounding areas. Our mission is to provide advocacy, stewardship and education to protect our climbing areas. Our members enjoy climbing opportunities, the sense of relative solitude and adventure the district offers in the beautiful landscapes of the Sneffels Range, and we wish for our experiences in these areas to continue and to be preserved for future generations. Please find our comments on the proposed plan as follows:

1. Ouray Climbers Alliance supports proposed action plans to limit camping to designated campsites only in all areas, requirements for handling human waste, limited use in the wilderness zone and uncapped self-issued permitting system in the Mount Sneffels Zone.
2. In addition to online permits, we encourage the District to make a limited number of permits available daily on the first-come-first-serve basis at the trailhead for the Wilderness Zone. This would allow planning around unpredictable mountain weather and avoid unsafe "summit fever" scenarios of limited pre-planned permits.
3. For climbing safety reasons and to prevent unnecessary rockfall we recommend prohibiting dogs in the Mount Sneffels Zone.

4. We are concerned about increased use of the Yankee Boy area and user groups conflicts over limited roadway and parking. We strongly encourage continued monitoring of the area and improve signage and parking.

Thank you again for your work on creating the Management Plan for the Blue Lakes Area. The plan is much needed to preserve the quality of the visitor experiences for users who reside within and outside of Ouray Ranger District.

Sincerely,

Ouray Climbers Alliance Board of Directors

Jim Donini

Dan Hughes

Grant Kleeves

Hilary Lewkowitz

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