



BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS
COLORADO

To: Dana Gardunio, District Ranger
Ouray Ranger District

Subject: Blue Lakes Visitor Use Management Draft Environmental Assessment

Prepared by: Lewis M. French for Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
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Date: December 1, 2023

Dear Dana:

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Blue Lakes Visitor Use Management Draft Environmental Assessment. We also appreciate your work to address the high level of visitor use and the associated high, if not extreme, level of impact on the Blue Lakes area. We agree that action is needed in this regard and support your proposed action with the following suggestions.

We understand that overcrowding of trailhead parking is one of the issues to be addressed by your proposal. To this end we suggest that you consider additional actions that could lessen the need to provide parking for both horse and ATV trailers.

Close to ATV use the trail from the north Blue Lakes Trailhead to the forest boundary in Wilson Creek. Leave the trail open pack animals to allow a non-motorized hunting experience.

Close the Blue Lakes Trail from the northern trailhead to Yankey Boy Basin to pack animals. Unlike the Blain Basin or Wilson Creek areas, we believe little stock supported hunting occurs along the Blue Lakes Trail Corridor.

Leave the Dallas Trail open to pack animals.

The intense visitor use of the Blue Lakes is the crux of the issue. By implementing a visitor-use permit system, limiting visitor numbers, minimizing camping, and requiring the removal of human solid waste you are proposing what could be termed drastic changes from the current management scheme. If there is any location where this is necessary, it is Blue Lakes.

Additionally, to help reduce human pressure on Blue Lakes, we suggest requesting Colorado Parks and Wildlife cease stocking Blue Lakes with trout. We understand the over time the lake



would become barren of trout. Angler use would also decrease over time. As trout numbers declined natural process would once again dominate the biology of the lakes fulfilling one of the reasons for the existence of designated wilderness. The extreme level of impact in this area leads us to make this recommendation.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I am a retired Forest Service employee and was responsible for the management of Blue Lakes from 1977 to 2003.

Sincerely,



Lewis M. French
for Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

