



## **San Miguel County Open Space Commission**

Susie St. Onge, Chair; Jason Merritt, Vice  
Chair; Angela Dye, Laura Kudo,  
Roger Wickham, Yvette Henson,  
Sefra Maples, Joanna Kanow

March 8, 2024

Ms. Krystina Smith  
USFS Norwood Ranger District  
P.O. Box 388  
1150 Forest Street  
Norwood, CO 81423

RE: Support for Trail Expansion (#65616) in the Telluride Region  
San Miguel County Open Space Commission

Dear Ms. Smith,

The San Miguel County Open Space Commission is writing to express our strong support for the expansion of all new trails that the Telluride Mountain Club has proposed within the Telluride region, and the greater San Miguel County. We appreciate the efforts and progress the Telluride Mountain Club has made to add and improve trails in our area.

The County's Open Space Commission would like to see the proposed trails built for our locals and tourists to further enjoy the beautiful open space that this region has to offer. Proactive planning by the USFS is imperative to accommodate the anticipated growth in recreational activity, and we hope for a productive collaboration on this effort. Thank you for your consideration in approving the Nepa process for new trails in our county, on Forest Service land, for everyone to enjoy and utilize.

Expanding the trail system is crucial to address the escalating popularity of outdoor recreation in Telluride and San Miguel County. It is reported that a total of 70,000 visitors come to hike the Bridal Veil trail is adored for the sheer beauty hikers get to experience. It is clear more trails are necessary in order to offer more hiking and biking opportunities to spread out our user groups. This would help alleviate congestion on many of the popular Telluride trails that are obviously being discovered by the masses. The introduction of a wider array of trail difficulties and levels would undoubtedly benefit outdoor enthusiasts with diverse skill sets and preferences; enriching the overall outdoor experience in our community.

Improving connectivity between existing trails is essential for enhancing navigation and accessibility throughout the Telluride area to accommodate more hikers and allow different bail out points for various level hikers to hike as long or as little as they are comfortable. This would not only contribute to a better user experience but also encourage responsible trail use and

minimize environmental impact. The addition of free recreational trails is vital for fostering inclusivity and ensuring equitable access to outdoor activities for all community members. More trails in the area will also contribute to a sense of community well-being and shared enjoyment of our natural surroundings. This approach will ensure the sustainability and resilience of Telluride's trail infrastructure, safeguarding our precious natural resources for future generations.

We recognize the significant economic benefits that new trails bring to our community. Increased outdoor recreational opportunities attract visitors, stimulate the local economy and support the livelihoods of those benefiting from the tourism and retail business that comes with more trails.

Moreover, expanding our trail network will facilitate alternative transportation options for commuting, giving locals an option of a non-fossil fuel transportation that is sustainable and eco-friendly, and we know many will choose to go by foot or bike where available. We appreciate the careful consideration given by the US Forest Service to this matter, and believe that the proposed trail expansion aligns with the values and needs of our community and the County's Open Space Commission.

Thank you for your dedication to preserving and enhancing our outdoor recreational spaces.

Sincerely,

San Miguel County Open Space Commission