



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Anne Brown Kris Holstrom Lance Waring

March 14, 2024

Norwood Ranger District
Krystina Smith
PO Box 388
1150 Forest Street, Norwood, CO 81423

RE: Telluride Mountain Club Trail Proposal 2023 #65616
Submitted online at <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=65616>

Dear Ms. Smith,

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) of San Miguel County, Colorado (County) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments for the Telluride Mountain Club (TMtC) Trail Proposal. The BOCC is fully supportive of the 15 miles of new trails and approximately 5 miles of trail rehabilitation for non-motorized use and the SE Group moving forward on the NEPA analysis of this proposal.

We appreciate the Mountain Club's commitment to recreation in the County's East end. They have stepped up to organize, fundraise, and grow their organization to fill the leadership role needed to manage the Telluride Via Ferrata and successfully plan future trail development in this region.

The County organized a Recreation Round table to bring all interested parties together to discuss recreation development, trails, and Ebikes. TMtC has participated in all the meetings, providing updates at each meeting on the progress of their Trails Proposal. We commend them for their dedication to the process by fundraising every dollar toward this effort, assisting in trail map development, and being involved in the GMUG Forest Plan to ensure their proposal is acknowledged and agreeable with the new plan.

Trail maintenance is a concern when considering new trail development. TMtC has proven its expertise and investment by hiring a trails specialist who communicates with the public, leads volunteer days, designs trails, and assists the USFS by clearing trails for public safety. The development of community surveys has established an authentic grassroots approach to this proposal.

The County has financially supported TMtC and assisted them with planning efforts. Our Parks and Open Space Department and our Open Space Commission have been actively involved with the Perimeter Trail, which will be designated as a County trail. Finally, the County's Historical Commission has been working closely with the USFS and has essentially been the driver for the

historic Ilium Flume Trail. Both our Open Space Commission and our Historical Commission are supportive of the overall Trails Plan.

We appreciate the inclusion of the Sheep Mountain Traverse trail in the heavily used Trout Lake area, which addresses the need for dispersing recreation. The County made the following GMUG Forest Plan comments specifically about this area regarding Wildlife Management Areas and the proposed trail density cap. We see this area continuing to grow, and it will be essential to accommodate future affordable housing projects and the USFS campground expansion.

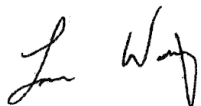
For example, the San Bernardo and Yellow Mountain WMAs are surrounded by multiple HOAs, USFS-designated and dispersed camping (Matterhorn Campground, which will soon be expanded), and current and future deed-restricted housing (the County recently purchased the Pathfinder property for affordable housing), Trout Lake (a popular recreation area) and access to Lizard Head Pass, Hope Lake, and other existing trails in a densely populated area as a stand-alone trail through an already disturbed area, serving the residents and visitors of San Miguel County. These WMAs are excellent examples of how each polygon should be managed site-specific.

This area would be an ideal location for additional trails to serve residents and visitors while also considering climate impacts; nearby trails and campgrounds reduce vehicle miles traveled to access trailheads, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions. When trails can be accessed from homes and campgrounds, this also means fewer facilities, such as parking lots and restrooms need to be provided by the agency.

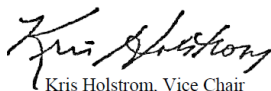
Suggestion: With all of these items in mind, a future non-motorized trail loop originating from the campground would be an excellent addition to this area when the infrastructure is in place and NEPA has been analyzed. However, because of the blanket trail density model, the best alignment and trail plan for this polygon would likely not be possible. The need for trails in this specific area is obvious and can be seen by way of user-created trails. The USFS can eliminate future user-created trails and provide more opportunities in these already-established heavily used recreation areas.

We look forward to supporting the TMtC with future trail development in San Miguel County.

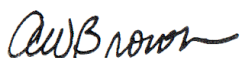
Sincerely,



Lance Waring, Chair



Kris Holstrom, Vice Chair



Anne Brown, Commissioner

San Miguel County
Board of Commissioners