

April 4, 2025

Megan Eno, Norwood District Ranger  
1150 Forest Street  
Norwood, CO 81423

RE: Draft Environmental Assessment for Telluride Mountain Club Trails Proposal Project Public Comments

Dear Megan,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the proposed trails outlined in the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Telluride Mountain Club's Trails (TMtC) Proposal.

I am a 24-year resident of Ophir, CO who has enjoyed a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities in our corner of the San Juan Mountains. I've hiked our local trails, ridden dirt bikes on some of the multi-use trails, Skied others and passed through a number on horseback. I've been able to experience trails as a member of several historic and very active user groups, and I strongly support Alternative 2 as the preferred option, while acknowledging the environmental concerns addressed in Alternative 3. I really appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Draft EA.

In by almost quarter century of traveling through our mountains, I've seen an increase in the cost of both living in the Telluride area, but also to use trails that had once been open to the public. The proposed trails in the EA will be publicly accessible, and open to all members of the community, regardless of income level. Access to the outdoors and to wild places is why many of us live here and why more come visit our area. TMtC's proposal emphasizes trail development that will enable all segments of the public to access outdoor recreation, which is critical to the long-term health and sustainability of our community.

I have followed, and been part of TMtC's trail survey, which demonstrated that a vast majority (80%) of respondents supported well thought out trail expansion. Alternative 2 aligns with our community's vision for the future of outdoor recreation in the area. It is based in the data supported by almost 800 community members.

The Draft EA does a commendable job of committing to reduce environmental impacts. The TMtC proposal will connect disparate trail systems and hopefully reduce the need some locals feel to develop rogue or pirate trails, which are less well laid out and challenge the limited resources of the Forest Service. Moreover, proposed system of trails will facilitate the ability to use trail systems as a means of commuting, reducing our reliance on fossil-fuels, and easing congestion along our very limited roadways.

I work in the outdoor recreation space of the Telluride region. Our local outdoor recreation is vital to our economy and promotes more sustainable future for our valleys than does increasing

our reliance on massive, loud events that are disruptive to the lives of residents. The Telluride region is renowned for its amazing trail experiences and Alternative 2 will only enhance that reputation. I recognize that some people are concerned about the proposed trails drawing more people to the region, but I feel they will also help disperse people across a wider geographic area. Also, the way the proposal promotes trail development is responsible and should result in very environmentally sustainable trails. Former Norwood District Ranger Matt Zumstein once said something to the effect of, "Regardless of what we want or don't want, the people are coming, and we need to prepare the land as best we can to accommodate them." The TMtC proposed trails are a big step toward that end.

I deeply appreciate the Forest Service's thorough review of the proposal and its commitment to balancing the need for recreation with importance of conservation. I strongly urge for the approval of this proposal.

Sincerely,  
Todd Rutledge

Ophir, CO