

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/4/2017 5:37:45 PM

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Comments: December 4, 2017

United States Forest Service

c/o Forest Planning Team

RE: GMUG Draft Assessment Reports

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in regard to the SMUG Draft Assessment Reports. The Telluride Mountain Club (TMtC) is highly interested in the Recreation Draft Assessment Report as it is closely aligned with our mission statement: to advocate for safe, accessible, enjoyable and respectful opportunities for human-powered recreational activities in the Telluride region, through education, awareness and collaboration. The Telluride region is growing and seeing more outdoor recreational use. Now is the perfect time to reevaluate our forest planning in order to ensure we are set up for a sustainable future.

TMtC believes that a collaborative effort between TMtC and the United States Forest Service (USFS) will provide invaluable support and a positive outcome to many points made in the Dispersed Recreation Section of Chapter Five. The following are our thoughts and notes on each of the relative subjects:

Trails

TMtC is currently working on a Telluride Trails Sustainability Plan to outline the future of trails in the Telluride region over the course of the next five plus years. We, like the USFS, have identified issues with trail overuse, design issues, environmental disruption, lack of maintenance, poor trail signage, user-created trails, and amending current motorized vs. non-motorized recreational opportunities.

Trail Conditions

TMtC has also identified trail maintenance to be a neglected issue that is much needed on a regular basis within our trail system. We are actively applying for funding to support more trail maintenance days in the Telluride region. Additionally, our community has shown an invested interest in providing their support in the form of participating in volunteer trail work days. In efforts to better restore and maintain our regional trails, it is our hope that the USFS provides us a solution for the public to participate more regularly in trail work/maintenance days.

Trail Use

Creating Trail User Education opportunities or a message board that is being delivered to all user groups of trails in regards to who has the right of way, common courtesies, and directional preference, could help eliminate some of the trail user conflict issues identified in the draft reports.

User-Created Trails

Perhaps the USFS could work with local nonprofits and trail advocacy groups to create a process to update user-created trails to meet current USFS standards so that they may begin the process of being added to the USFS inventory. TMtC believes that many of the user-created trails in and around Telluride are trails that would help disperse the current user congestion off of USFS recognized trails, and ultimately help our regional trails system's long term sustainability. TMtC suggests creating an inventory system to add these user-created trails to the current USFS inventory as "proposed trails", so that groups like the TMtC can work with the USFS to help maintain them into the future.

Motorized and Non-Motorized Recreation

TMtC is concerned that once specific trails and recreation areas allow for motorized recreation, it will be more difficult to restrict or alter this kind of access in the future. TMtC acknowledges that there are two trail user groups that both want an increase in outdoor recreational opportunities. We ask that very careful consideration is given to new motorized routes. Many local residents, second homeowners and tourists visit the Telluride region to escape loud noise, pollution and other factors associated with motorized recreation. They come here to enjoy peace and quiet, clean air and our beautiful mountains. It would be a shame to add more noise and pollution to the incredible wild places in our backyard.

Other Use Conflicts on Trails

As mentioned under Trail Use, we believe that a unified marketing message surrounding trails etiquette and right of way will help alleviate some of these issues. Additional signage in certain areas of trails that have multiple trail user groups could also help these issues (i.e. signage before downhill sections where mountain bikers often bike fast that says: "Caution Bikers: Hikers on trail have the right of way! Please alert your presence around blind turns and approach with caution").

The Telluride Mountain looks forward to staying involved and learning more as the Draft Assessment Reports are utilized to form the future forest plan.

Thank you for your consideration,

Josh Borof

Josh Borof, Telluride Mountain Club President