

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/18/2021 7:00:00 AM

First name: Andy

Last name: Hough

Organization: Douglas County Sheriff's Office

Title: Environmental Resources Coordinator

Comments: [TEXT BELOW COPIED FROM PDF ATTACHMENT]

USDA Forest Service c/o Beth Davis

5575 Cleora Road

Salida, CO 81201

February 16, 2021

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office ("DCSO") appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Integrated Management of Target Shooting on the Pike National Forest project (#57807).

The DCSO has enjoyed a very positive relationship with the National Forest Service that extends well beyond 20+ years , and during that time DCSO has maintained a contractual partnership for law enforcement services in the Pike National Forest ("PNF") that are within Douglas County's jurisdictional boundaries. As the Sheriff, I encourage the continued partnership with the USFS, and provide the following general comments as it relates to the Integrated Management of Target Shooting on PNF (#57807).

* The DCSO recognizes that there is an increasing conflict between Douglas County residents that live within the PNF, the PNF's recreational users, and those PNF visitors that have engaged in irresponsible target shooting. This escalating conflict raises public safety concerns that must be in balance for the overall safe usage for everyone visiting public lands or residing on private property within the PNF.

* DCSO's contractual obligation is to provide public safety services to all PNF occupants within Douglas County. This includes but is not limited to activities such as recreational target shooting opportunities, family target shooting training , and safe-shooting practice for Colorado's wildlife hunters.

* While Douglas County is but only one of the multiple jurisdictions within the PNF. Douglas County is unique in that its geographical boundaries are between two large metropolitan cities: Colorado Springs and Denver. Also, Douglas County is the only area within the PNF that has a target shooting range.

* Colorado 's increased population has increased the usage of PNF thereby creating stress to the natural resources, wildlife, and recreational activities. The increased populations have also resulted in over usage of some areas in PNF, specifically within Douglas County's boundaries, that have increased the potential for dangerous situations.

* There is a significant influx of motor-cross users utilizing the PNF. As such, there is an increased risk of danger that exists between these two allowed activities within limited proximity.

*

In states, like Colorado, that have passed legislation legalizing marijuana activities, there has been an increase in illegal marijuana cultivation, including within the PNF. These activities have minimized areas within PNF for recreational shooting.

* Many responsible shooters are no longer willing to take their families to the designated shooting areas in PNF, like Turkey Tracks, because it is not maintained or developed. DCSO is in possession of photographs of Turkey Tracks area which depicts some of the damage and inappropriate usage of PNF.

*

DCSO has experienced an increase in investigations of both accidental and criminal shootings, as well as an increase in cases involving destruction of public and private property. This is believed to be the result of a lack of safe locations for recreational shooting in the PNF.

* It is the combined responsibility between the DCSO, Douglas County BOCC, and USFS to provide public safety to PNF's visitors and occupants.

Therefore, taking into consideration the above-mentioned concerns, on behalf of DCSO, I would encourage a continued partnership with the following suggestions:

1. Douglas County BOCC continues financial support for an improvement of the Turkey Tracks Shooting area;
2. USFS should undertake a study to increasing a designated area only to be used for recreational shooting in the Douglas County boundaries in PNF and USFS should designate an area within PNF that clearly separates recreational shooting, motor-cross access, and camping/hiking activities.
3. We can't do anything about the irresponsible shooters and those who damage public lands but what we can do is provide an environment where an organized structured shooting facility and a managed area of the National Forest is designated for responsible gun sportsmanship to occur. This will keep the forest safer for citizens who visit.

In closing, it is my opinion that DCSO and USFS can provide a safe environment for a target shooting facility in a managed area of PNF for responsible guns sportsmanship.