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Organization: Emery County

Title: Public Lands Administrator

Comments: Emery County agrees with the need to change the Manti-LaSal Forest Plan, and has participated in the planning process thus far as a cooperating agency. We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments at this time. Manti LaSal Forest Draft Plan - September 2020

It is important to recognize that it is imperative in maintaining a viable and sustainable OHV trail system that includes connector trails. Connector trails are vitally important especially in Emery County where connector routes need more attention and discussion in order to connect our towns and cities with public lands. This will enhance the recreation opportunities for our county residents, for the visitor experiences and bring visitor monies to our local businesses. The forest service is currently operating on a plan that was established in 1986. This plan, despite being 34 years old has been most effective. This plan has met the growing needs and pressure without causing substantial undue restrictions. Based on this plan we do not see the need for a radical change.

Emery County recognizes that all of our resources are valuable but above all of the resources on the Forest, the watershed health is at the top of the list. Our county is dependent on the runoff of the Forest for municipal, agricultural and industrial water resources.

We would ask that special attention be made on protecting our groundwater and wetland areas. Bridges and culverts should be allowed to be installed in areas of motorized and non-motorized use to help protect these resources. Any new routes or re-routes of roads or trails should be routed around these valuable water resources and the plan should allow for structures to be installed to protect these water sources where needed.

We recognize that camping on the Forest has increased in recent years and the use of dispersed camping sites has expanded the use areas. We recognize the need to monitor this impact and allow for adequate management of that resource.

We highly value the hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities on the Forest and recognize the need to protect and properly manage the habitat for these valuable resources. Non-Mechanized trails including equestrian and hiking trails should be allowed and maintained in all areas of the Forest including primitive and Wilderness areas. Volunteers and user groups should be allowed and encouraged to participate in helping the USFS to maintain those trails to a well groomed and safe standard.

We ask that Emery County be included in any discussion to close or reroute roads or trails.

Winter motorized and non- motorized activities and travel on the snow covered surfaces should be taken into consideration. We recognize that some areas may need to be set aside to non-motorized winter travel to allow for solitude and special recreational activities such as cross country skiing and snowshoeing. Most of these activities can share the same areas. We ask that the plan be the least restrictive as possible to motorized snowmachine travel. The unique opportunity of cross country travel on snow covered surfaces causes very little to no soil or water shed disturbance and allows for a recreational experience of great value. Consideration should be given to limiting over-snow use in areas where wildlife and recreational activity create conflicts. These conflicts will likely arise as visitation continues to increase.

There are now many different sizes of motorized user groups. Single track, 50-inch, 66-inch and full size vehicle trails or routes are being designated. We ask that you consider each group as valuable and not exclude or limit any of those group sizes from your plan. There are routes that have been limited or designated to a smaller size vehicle because of erosion or deterioration of a trail or route. Some of those trails could continue to stay open to

a larger size vehicle with a small amount of maintenance. We ask that you consider maintenance and evaluate those situations before narrowing a trail or limiting the size of the vehicle. Full-size 4WD trail opportunities provide for a diversity of users and vehicle types, as well as different levels of challenge in a variety of terrain and conditions.

We appreciate your work in preparing and updating the USFS plan and protecting our valuable resources. We ask that you consider our comments in the plan revision. Please feel free to reach out to us if you would like to discuss anything further. Thank you for allowing us to make comments.