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Organization:
Title:
Comments: USFS
I am a Meridian Lake Park homeowner. Our family has owned property here since 1986. I am sending this letter to you in response to your request for comments on the Meridian Grazing Allotment (MGA) assessment.
As you know, Meridian Lake Park Subdivision is located in Washington Gulch in unincorporated Gunnison County and borders MGA.
The decisions made by the USFS on how, where, and which activities are approved and allowed and mitigated on public lands such as MGA are especially important to our subdivision. As we are neighbors with the USFS lands designated as the MGA, the decisions made through this process will directly impact us as homeowners. Accordingly, we have a vested interest in the management of the public lands that are in proximity to the homes of our subdivision. The impacts from users of these lands have a direct and profound impact on our daily lives, most notably the impacts created by the grazing lessee.
The "Yaklich Ditch" infiltration zone (YDIZ) is located within the MGA. This area was developed under Forest Service management many years ago to provide drinking water to the homes in the Meridian Lake Subdivision. At one time, especially sensitive areas within the YDIZ were fenced to prevent livestock grazing on the MGA from damaging or potentially destroying the YDIZ and the source of much of our drinking water. However, over time the fence became useless as it was not maintained or repaired regularly by the grazing lessee. In recent years, as the fence became more and more decrepit, the grazing lessee pulled the barbed wire from the posts and wrapped it around the them. This unauthorized action by the lessee has allowed grazing cows to enter and damage the YDIZ. The junked fence materials are also unsightly and present a safety hazard to other users of the public lands within the MGA.
I request that the USFS include terms in the next MGA lease that will require the grazing lessee to erect and maintain a new cattle-proof fence that will protect the YDIZ from damage from their grazing impacts.
There are also other piles of fencing materials, both worn out and scraps of newer fencing, strewn throughout the MGA by the lessee that also present safety hazards to other users. (see photo 1, attached)
I request that the USFS include terms in the next MGA lease that will require the grazing lessee to remove all old, decrepit and scraps of newer fence materials from public lands and dispose of them legally offsite.
The annual, seasonal "closure" of USFS Trail #590, also known as the Snodgrass Trail, by the grazing lessee is illegal and disruptive to other users of the national forest lands. Additionally, the lessee prevents access to public lands in the MGA by closing and locking gates that are entirely on public lands and posting "No Trespassing/Private Land " signs, among others, on public and private lands. The attached photo 2 depicts a sign posted by the lessee on Meridian Lake Park Corporation property that adjoins public lands. The criteria that the lessee bases the seasonal closure on is to prevent disturbance of their livestock by other users, thereby elevating leased grazing rights over the rights of all other users of the public lands. Of course none of this is allowed under the conditions of the current MGA lease and violates federal law.
Some portions of this trail do cross private property owned by the lessee, however, the annual closure of those private lands to prevent access to Trail #590 is unnecessary since the Trail can be accessed without crossing private land. Nonetheless, the lessee has no right to close an entire USFS trail such as #590 (see photo 2).
I request that the USFS include terms in the MGA lease that would require the lessee to remove all signs illegally posted on the MGA, and assure that all gates that access public lands are left unlocked and operable.
The lessee should be instructed to no longer announce publicly through an announcement in the newspaper each year that Trail #590 is "closed". A private landowner and lessee cannot "close" a USFS trail that is located on public lands. If the lessee chooses to announce that public access to their own privately-owned lands is in effect, so be it, but no longer should they announce closure of public lands.
I request that the USFS relocate the relatively small portions of Trail #590 that cross private lands. Relocating these portions of the trail onto public lands could be accomplished relatively easily. A new trail alignment has been identified and has been previously proposed to the USFS by the Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association.

Our subdivision, the USFS, the lessee, and the Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association should all be involved in working collaboratively towards meeting this relocation goal. Should the portions of the trail located on private lands be relocated onto public lands, a great deal of conflict would be resolved, and users of the trail would have an enhanced, year round experience on Trail #590. In addition, the lessee could enjoy a more stress-free environment for their sensitive cattle on MGA, as the recreational activities that they seem to believe will disturb their cattle would be reduced.