

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/30/2024 6:00:00 AM

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Comments: The Rio Grande National Forest is a valuable resource for the people that live within close proximity. The inherent value of the forest exists in the sense that it provides a place where people and nature can interact in a relatively undeveloped and undisturbed manner. Just being able to enter into a natural area and travel around and observe the wildlife, biological and ecological systems at work is something that should be protected and promoted as long as humans exist on this planet. In addition to that value, there is also an extractive resource based value that exists. The timber and mineral extraction is what created the original communities here and that factor shouldn't ever be overlooked. It is an industry that to this day provides revenue and valuable jobs. Of course there is the recreational and tourism value. These values have become more and more appreciated in modern society and will continue to prove some of the highest value to a lot of people. Hunting and fishing are the largest revenue generators for the state of Colorado behind the ski industry. That, in addition to hiking, biking, camping, rock climbing, Nordic skiing, snowmobiling, OHV driving, and any other way you could think of for recreation are possible here. The Rio Grande National forest has some of the best opportunities to participate in those activities in the state and furthermore in the country. The moral of this story is that there is a diversity of uses for the forest and managing all the uses is a large task, prioritizing them is an even harder one at that. So, I commend the Forest Service and the effort put in to appropriately accomplish this task. I also would like to add into the conversation the consideration of a couple of new uses within the forest.

It is my hope to be able to utilize the forest and trails system to operate as a dogsledding outfitter. This is technically an over the snow proposed use but there are some key differences from the typical motorized uses that exist currently. The main thing being that there is no engine that propels the vehicle. The dogs themselves are the driving mechanism and this makes for a very different experience. Noise influences are limited to dogs barking and commands being given by the drivers. The impact on the trails is minimal, of course the most thought about impact is the waste from the dogs. Easily mitigated, it will be a constant task that will be a part of everyday maintenance. The benefit of dogsledding operations on trails is that we will be stewards of the resource and it will be a big part of the operation to keep the trails in good shape. All this being said, the use of snowmobiles does come into play to be able to most effectively operate a dogsledding operation. In order to aid in trail maintenance as well as existing as a safety measure. The range of travel of a dogsled tour is significantly less than just a snowmobile but there is a large enough range of travel that the time saved during an emergency situation with a snowmobile justifies their use.

In addition to dogsledding, backcountry ski guiding is something that I am proposing as a use in the forest. Ski guiding itself does not require the use of snowmobiles to be able to function either. The value that snowmobiles will provide again is the safety aspect. Being able to extract potentially injured participants quickly adds to the functional competence of the business. To be clear the use of the machines will be limited and majority of the time they will not be on trail. Staged at a base area or a trailhead they will not be on trail until needed.

Currently neither of these uses of the forest are occurring in the Rio Grande National forest. I believe that the value of these activities exist in that it creates more opportunity for different users. This will make the national forest in the winter season more accessible to those that don't necessarily snowmobile or go to the downhill ski area. The other positive aspect is that these activities will not have a significant impact on the forest. Continued

monitoring and mapping of the over the snow use is an important management practice and I appreciate the fact that this project is being undertaken. I do hope that the information gathered in this survey aids in the appropriate use and continued improvement of the Rio Grande National Forest. Thank you.