To Rio Grande and Gunnison National Forests

Re: Alternatives to 32 miles of new CDNST trail

Dear Decision Maker:

Salida Mountain Trails is in support of Alternative 3 for the Continental Divide Trail realignment which would allow mountain bikes to use the trail along with hikers and horseback use. Salida Mountain Trails is an all volunteer organization dedicated to building and maintaining non-motorized trails. We have an active volunteer group with a mailing list of over 400 people and growing.

We feel that mountain bikes are an acceptable use of the trail and are compatible with horses and hikers, particularly in more remote backcountry settings as proposed. The potential for any conflicts are low due to the infrequent encounters along this section of trail. There are no large population centers for more than a hundred miles that will use this trail as their back yard or for frequent visits. Salida Mountain Trails has built more than 17 miles of multiuse, non-motorized trails on public lands adjacent to Salida and to date there have been no complaints on mixed user conflicts to the city or the BLM land Stewarts. We try our best to sign the trails and educate the different users to respect each other and to yield to the appropriate use. We also post messages periodically in the local paper and our webpage to inform users when trails are wet and inappropriate for use as it might cause resource damage.

Building a new single track trail to replace the dirt road portion of the trail will make the backcountry experience more enjoyable and will attract more users. We feel that mountain bike use will be a big part of the user base. To exclude them from this recreation opportunity would be a huge disservice and a tremendous loss of trail constituents that can help build, maintain, and manage the trail. We need all the non-motorized trail constituents we can get for this section of remote trail. To build such an attractive new singletrack trail and not allow mountain bike use would be a huge attractive nuisance and very costly and difficult to enforce.

Mountain bikers play a major role for tourism in the Salida community and I’m sure Saguache and the surrounding communities could use their business as well. From a 2012 lodging survey in Salida, bikers were represented in the top three numbers of visitors. Recent studies have shown that for every dollar spent on bike trails there is a return of ten dollars to the communities from people staying in lodging facilities, eating out, and buying merchandise.

Thanks you for the opportunity to comment.

Mike Sugaski

Core Member

Salida Mountain Trails