



Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen  
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July 21, 2020

San Juan National Forest - Dolores Ranger District  
ATTN: Tom Rice  
29211 Highway 184  
Dolores, CO 81323

Dear Mr. Rice,

On behalf of the Mesa Verde Back Country Horsemen, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Rico Trails Project. We have been following the trails projects in the Rico and West Dolores area for better than 10 years.

In the state of Colorado we have over 200,000 horses living statewide, making us the ninth largest state in terms of horse population. We have approximately 698,000 acres of land in Colorado used for horse-related purposes. Our direct contribution to the GDP is approximately \$953 million, a monumental economic impact of our horse industry in Colorado.<sup>1</sup>

Generally, we support Alternative #3.

- As commented before, we appreciate single track motorized users having looped opportunities.
- Please ensure the new trails are to trail management objections for pack and saddle stock access, ensuring they're wide enough for our pack horses to traverse safely.
- Please ensure all bridge crossings are suitable for horse traffic with good and solid footing.
- As we've commented before, there have been issues on Lower Ryman for many, many years. We are happy to see trail reconstruction and reroutes to improve sustainability. We had asked before if a reroute wasn't going to occur, consider making the existing trail horse/hiker only. We feel a seasonal closure of May 15 through June 30 from Salt Creek Trail intersection to the Divide Road is prudent.
- Also as commented before, we are concerned about the displacement of wildlife. New trails, routes and bridges may negatively impact wildlife habitat and viewing in this area, which is rich with it. We support ongoing analysis and measures put in place to monitor and protect our backcountry experiences and wildlife habitat.
- As always, we encourage adequate horse trailer parking at all new construction spots and trailheads.

Thank you for your work in maintaining access to and preserving our public lands.

Sincerely,  
Latifia Rodriguez  
MVBCH Public Lands Chair  
970-882-3477

1. Information provided by the American Horse Council, Copyright 2017

*To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness; To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use; To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource; To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage; To foster and encourage individuals to join and participate in their local, State, and National Back Country Horsemen organizations.*