



Established 1894

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## GUNNISON COUNTY STOCKGROWERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

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P.O. Box 1711 ♦ Gunnison, Colorado 81230

March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022

Re: North Valley Trails Project Comments

To Whom It May Concern:

We would like to thank the Gunnison Ranger District for the opportunity to comment on this trail proposal.

In general, we want to emphasize the importance of ensuring the trails are as close to the road as possible. These trails to get riders off the road are for safety reasons, not aesthetics – and we need to remember this when looking at these plans. It is also important to keep these trails close to the road to lessen the landscape fragmentation caused. The more landscapes are fragmented, the more we displace wildlife and increase the cumulative impacts on the landscape.

As public lands become busier, it is important to ensure that we are protecting this resource rather than tearing it apart. Our public lands are a critical part of our ecosystem and it is important to keep this resource viable for all users. We encourage the agency to use resource conditions, such as erosion, wildlife movements, and the increasing drought, in your decision-making process.

We would like to express our alarm for trail users and livestock conflicts. Management objectives should include trail closures during critical livestock and ranching seasons to avoid moving livestock unnecessarily. We also ask that the District implements seasonal closures on trails that go through critical habitat to minimize impacts to wildlife.

We would also like to express our concern with the creation of more miles of trails. We think it is important to maintain and make existing trails safer for a variety of users rather than creating new trails.

We also wish to express our worry with creating larger parking and trail head areas. A larger trailhead will bring in more visitors which in turn drives more trail expansion in the future. These trail expansions only hurt our land as a resource, and make it difficult for wildlife to survive on the landscape.



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We appreciate the commitment of the Ranger District to the rigorous vetting process. We also appreciate and support removing or modifying trails from the proposed action that had known concerns.

The Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association was established in 1894. The Stockgrowers' Association was established to help promote and protect the rights of Gunnison County's ranchers and producers. Agriculture has a tremendous economic impact in Colorado. In 2020, Colorado generated around \$7.3 billion in agricultural cash receipts with the highest valued commodities being cattle and calves. Cattle ranching and beef production alone contribute more than \$3.4 billion in cash receipts to the state of Colorado. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Gunnison County sold over \$24 million in agriculture products, mainly hay and cattle. This totals an economic impact over more than \$49 million. Gunnison produces about 3 million pounds of beef a year, and over 17 thousand cows and calves live here in the valley. Gunnison County also has 200,000 acres in agriculture.

Sincerely,

Jason Peterson

Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association President