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Comments: FW: Middle Fork Cimmaron trail near Silver Jack Reservoir

From: Bill Rolfe [mailto:bill_rolfe@hotmail.com]

Sent: Friday, August 18, 2017 1:39 PM

To: Cuthbertson, James -FS <jcuthbertson@fs.fed.us>

Cc: Bill Rolfe <bill_rolfe@hotmail.com>

Subject: Re: Middle Fork Cimmaron trail near Silver Jack Reservoir

Hi Jim,

One more input for your assessment of the GMUG forest management plan, specifically for the two Wilderness Area trails, Middle Fork and East Fork trails about a mile from the Silver Jack Campground near Silver Jack Reservoir. Note that Silver Jack Campground is a fee based campground run by a sub-contractor for the USFS, I believe.

On the topic of 'Land of Many Uses' which I've seen as a theme or topic for USFS lands in general:

Wilderness area sub-sections of USFS lands have always excluded many uses, such as mountain bikes, ATVs, Snowmobiles, even the use of chain saws for volunteer maintenance work (I've carried in 8 foot saws a half mile in for volunteer work in other Colorado wilderness areas). So that leaves the intention of Wilderness area to be, as the brochure states, "This area was designated as "wilderness" by Congress to provide you and future generations with the benefits of an enduring primitive resource that is unimpaired by human civilization."

That said, that leaves two uses, as Sean Brown quoted the grazing of livestock, where established prior to the effective date of this Act, shall be permitted to continue[hellip]"

Excluded from Sean's quotes was more of the sentence "the grazing of livestock, where established prior to the effective date of this Act, shall be permitted to continue subject to such reasonable regulations as are deemed necessary by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Note the 'subject to reasonable regulations as are deemed necessary by the Secretary of Agriculture.' I can't say what the various Secretaries of Agriculture have said in regulations, but I can say this:

a cow doesn't mind a hiker walking by. But a hiker can't walk on a trail that has degraded to a five foot wide swath of muck interspersed with cow manure, which is what we experienced--a trail unlike any trail I've hiked on in Colorado for 30 years. Hence 'many uses' becomes one use only, cows, in this specific context. I think it would be clear that was not the intent of the Wilderness Act, to preserve the scenic beauty of the Middle Fork and East Fork trails' view of the stunning peaks of Uncompahgre Wilderness area for cows only; that is just counter-intuitive. A five foot wide muck trail excludes hikers; we had to give up after 25 minutes of trying to hike in that stuff. Hence a 'reasonable regulation' would be to send cows over to other places; Alan Miller mentioned Stealey Mountain Trail and I mentioned further upstream where the land is much wider, before the Wilderness Area boundary where it is I presume non-Wilderness area US Forest Service Land. Upstream it does not appear to have nearly the wetlands impact.

So I would input to the planning process that cattle be grazed in less sensitive areas (see the wetlands note of Alan Miller in his input) and the scenic area of the Middle Fork and East Fork trail would not be appropriate for cattle grazing. There are many less scenic and non-trails for the cows to go to--a trail that has been degraded by too many cattle should also be restored.

This would be my interpretation of 'reasonable'.

Thanks again for submitting my comments as the web site I was unable to use without enlisting your help.

--Bill Rolfe