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To Whom it May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment at this phase of the forest study. A little background: my son and I enjoy responsibly recreating throughout Colorado and Utah, and part of our activities each year are in the GMUG. We find it to be a wonderful experience to share together and can't wait to return after a trip ends. Most of the time we ride dirt bikes, but we ride our mountain bikes (MTBs) sometimes. Other activities we enjoy, usually elsewhere, includes skiing/boarding and hiking/exploring/backpacking.

Riding dirt bikes (and MTBs) is great exercise that can provide challenge and provides one an excuse to be in the great outdoors. I've read some comments where some members of other user groups seem to think that motorized users don't enjoy nature and the views, etc. They couldn't be more wrong! Riding is a reason to be outside and enjoying everything the land has to offer...views, wildlife, smells, beautiful flowers, camaraderie, camping, on and on! We pretty much live for the opportunity to go on a trip and go riding or exploring somewhere!

Unfortunately, there are getting to be fewer and fewer places where motorized users can responsibly enjoy our sport. Too often, trails are closed to dirt bikes in favor of other users, even though dirt bikers established the trails. A number of trails were closed to dirt bikes about 5 years ago and I urge that no more trails be closed to dirt bikes in GMUG.

An issue we've faced occasionally is conflicts with Rzr drivers. This seems to happen at least once per year. Not all dirt bikers are saints, but Rzr drivers seem to be less experienced when it comes to off-road etiquette and more prone to go 'tear it up' someplace where they shouldn't be. I don't know the answer with the proliferation of those vehicles, but I sometimes rue the fact that dirt bikes are lumped in with them when people talk about motorized users.

Speaking of conflicts, we have found that, as long as we remain on our dirt bikes, wildlife is generally not afraid of us. Thus, it seems to me that dirt bike use has very little impact on wildlife behavior. However, if we get off and walk towards a deer or elk (for example), they will run, so we typically stay on our bikes...actually we often ignore the wildlife unless its something we rarely see.

When it comes to impact on the ground, the most impactful are horses by far. They can pump up some moist ground into a bog whereas bikes will just quickly roll through. Granted, if its super muddy, any bike is going to make a mess of things, but most riders don't like to ride in those conditions.

Dispersed camping needs to be provided in GMUG with as many places as possible in order to accommodate the increased visitation. With the influx of people moving to Colorado, the volume of visitors isn't going to go down and likely the paving of Cottonwood Pass is going to bring even more visitors. We own a 36', 13' tall fifth wheel and so far, have been able to find a few places in Taylor Park where we can dispersed camp with it, but more sites would be good. I've never tried to take it to other parts of GMUG, but was told there are some places big enough at Sargents. Have only done a couple rides there and we didn't bring the big rig...yet. In general, dispersed camping is much, much preferable to campgrounds. If I wanted to be packed in, I could stay home.

We haven't had many encounters with MTBs in GMUG, possibly because we haven't ridden much by Crested

Butte yet. Irrespective, we ride MTBs and understand that we need to yield to them. Similar with horses...I used to ride them with some regularity...at least an equestrian rider can hear a dirt biker coming and their horse doesn't get spooked by the sudden appearance of a dirt bike like they sometimes do with MTBs. Similar with hikers.

GMUG is great for dirt biking because of all the singletrack (ST). I urge that it be retained and expanded if possible. It is the most rewarding type of riding and presents the least conflicts. 4x4 roads can lead to great destinations (eg St. Elmo), but they are often crowded with 4 wheel traffic, so they are dusty and less enjoyable to experienced dirt bikers.

Trail maintenance is a topic that should be mentioned. Many dirt bikers maintain trails, me included (although I've never helped in GMUG yet). As far as I know, dirt bikers are actually THE most involved user group when it comes to maintaining AND creating (legally) new trails. Most dirt bikers understand their value, and I'd guess that 100% of the dirt bike riders in my 125 member strong club fully understand how valuable an open trail is.

Something that could be good to add where feasible would be trash receptacles. Around mid-trip (assuming week-long stay), its sometimes time to dispose of what has accumulated so as to not attract bears or rodents, and there doesn't seem to be alot of options.

Thanks for considering my comments.

Sincerely,
Dave McIntire