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Comments: First off, thank you for recognizing that additional motorized routes and loop routes are desired by the public. More and more people are enjoying OHV forms of recreation, including dirt biking, UTVs, ATVs, and other mechanized recreation such as electric bikes and mountain bikes. Since there is an increase in the number of mechanized users there should be an increase in the number of trails available for these folks. More trails for mechanized use would reduce the impact on existing trails as the use would be dispersed.

OHV users pay a fee every year to enjoy their sport on public land. Many mechanized users, either individually or as part of a group, work to maintain the trails and part of the OHV fees are used for trail maintenance. Hikers and horseback riders do not pay an annual fee to use the trails and it appears from the GMUG Report that non-motorized trails rarely receive trail maintenance. The Report also notes that lack of maintenance can make trails hard to find and can cause hikers to have to constantly watch where they step. Opening these types of trails to mechanized use can help clearly define the trails which would then benefit hikers on these trails as well. Dirt bikes are especially good at removing debris from trails and keeping the trails well defined.

Hikers already have far greater recreational opportunities than do mechanized users. The hiker/horseback rider has 20% of the forest for their exclusive use. According to the Report, GMUG contains 553,427 acres designated as wilderness, which is nearly 20% of the total acreage of the forest. In many public land areas, hikers and horseback riders are allowed to travel off-trail. This effectively gives these users an almost limitless recreational area in which to enjoy themselves and the outdoors. Mechanized users are required to stay on the existing trails. Hikers are able to use all of the trails and mechanized use is already prohibited on many of the trails. Accordingly, hikers already have extensive recreational opportunities away from mechanized users, so it would be a waste of resources to open additional trails for hikers that exclude mechanized use, especially when the existing non-motorized trails are not receiving the maintenance that they need.

The number of miles in a single outing by a dirt biker far exceeds the number of miles traveled by any other type of outdoor activity. Depending on the terrain, a dirt bike ride may be from 30 miles to well over 100 miles in a single day. I am sure that the distance traveled by the average hiker in a single outing is probably considerably less than 10 miles. However, according to the Report, there is only just over 1,000 miles of trails open to dirt bikers, while there is over 1,500 miles of trails in GMUG that do not allow any form of motorized recreation, and hikers have access to all 2,632 miles of trails in GMUG. The percentage of trails available for dirt bikers is about 38% while the percentage of trails available to hikers is 100%. Using the miles estimated above, a dirt biker may use from 3% to over 10% of the available trails in a given day. In contrast, a hiker probably uses less than 0.3% of the available trails even if they go on a 10 mile hike. (GMUG report Table 9) More trails open to motorized use will mean less chance for conflict because there will be less encounters between different groups.

There will always be conflict between individuals and no amount of planning or separating the different groups of users will change that fact. I have been riding dirt bikes in the Montrose area since the mid 1970's and have encountered numerous people on the trails. The vast majority of non-motorized users that I have encountered on the trail have been courteous and friendly. The only use conflicts that I have encountered, or have heard about from those involved, have been initiated by hikers. These hikers have aggressively confronted dirt bikers while the dirt bikers are riding on motorized use trails. There will always be some people who will be angry about anything, and this situation is no different.

The interests of hikers or other non-motorized users should not drive changes that are detrimental to other users. There is no reason that the interests of the motorized users should be negatively impacted just because some non-motorized users do not approve of their activity. Motorized users do not generally make such demands on

non-motorized users.

Non-motorized users already have far greater access to public lands than do other users and can avoid other users by using their exclusive trails. Educating non-motorized users regarding the availability of wilderness areas for their use could be a benefit. Also educating non-motorized users about the availability of trails that exclude motorized use could also be beneficial. Motorized users have been aggressively confronted by non-motorized users on trails that are open to motorized users simply because the non-motorized user either thinks the trail is closed to motorized use or because the non-motorized user just doesn't like motorized use. It also may also be beneficial to inform non-motorized users, (especially those new to the area), that many of the existing trails in the area were put in by dirt bikes and have traditionally been used and continue to be used by dirt bikes.

It is estimated that almost 150,000 Colorado residents enjoy motorized recreation every year, and many more also enjoy other forms of mechanized use. Direct sales of hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on OHV every year and the OHV industry employs almost 5,500 people in Colorado. Almost a billion dollars in total gross sales are related to motorized recreation in Colorado according to one report. All OHV users contribute fees and many volunteer time for the maintenance of the trails that they use.

In conclusion, publicly owned land is for the use of the public, not just some of the public. This is fundamentally unfair if some forms of recreation on public land is treated more favorably than other forms. Having a preferred method for enjoying public land does not give you a right to exclude others from enjoying other forms of public land use.

Again, thank you for your hard work on this Report and for recognizing the need for more mechanized use and single track dirt bike trails.

Best Regards,  
Spencer Gibbs