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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Mountain biking is the LIFEblood of the greater Crested Butte community. There's not many places left where a healthy, environmentally friendly, and a sustainable recreation amenity not just defines, but complements a community and its surroundings. Each year, biking and other trail enthusiasts put over 2500 volunteer hours into public lands and open space. Mountain biking, along with other trail use, creates unique ties and connections to our environment where stewardship and advocacy become a staple of users lifestyle choices and actions.

Mountain bike (specific) trails on the GMUG represent the lowest number of actual trail mileage. This number does not correlate with the number of hours mountain bikers specifically put back into the National Forest in terms of stewardship, advocacy, and resource support.

Most bikers, not all, ride their bike to trailheads, create loops from one start/finish point, and take pride in being 'muscle powered'. Most bikers play by the rules, and realize they need to maintain the image of their sport by being good neighbors and creating positive impacts. There are always bad apples, and every sport has them, but mountain bikers are also a part of a nationwide community that seek to organize their user base and provide information, etiquette, and environmental awareness via clubs and organizations such as the Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association, the oldest club in the world. These groups often provide much support to Ranger Districts and other resource and land management agencies in an effort to create better experiences and support the needs of Forests and other natural places.

Mountain bikers generally seek wild and primitive outdoor experiences just as much as a primitive hiker would, and often without the shuttling and other heavy environmental impacts. Sure shuttling is an increasing component of the modern mountain biker, but this Forest Plan can help address those needs with proactive and progressive management. Trail connectivity, parallel trails, and better trail experiences can help get more people on bikes, on trails, and off the roads.

I am a very large supporter of the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative, and I sincerely hope the GMUG planning team considers the recommendations of the COLLABORATIVE approach that the GPLI has taken to consider all users in its proposed management prescriptions.

I believe a Special Management Area is a unique tool that needs to be taken advantage of as a progressive and proactive approach to today's impacts on public lands. SMA's can provide ALL of the same protections of Wilderness, but allow certain recreation opportunities that often follow historic access and use. I am proud of the proposed Wilderness prescriptions proposed in the GPLI process, as they are indeed for specific needs in regards to Wildlife concerns, human impacts, and future protections. I am more proud of the proposed SMA prescriptions in the GPLI as I feel they are direct response to the needs of our Forest in today's age, and looking well into the future. We can have our cake and eat it too - recreation and land protection go hand in hand. One helps to serve the other.

I do not feel that the Granite Basin/Eccher Gulch area should be Wilderness as a small, local group is pushing hard in these final days of comment. Eccher Gulch is a historic trail that was recognized as 'mechanized' in the 2010 Travel Management plan. Mountain bikers take to Eccher Gulch each year to cut out logs and do trail maintenance. It is a means to connect with the Cement Creek and Spring Creek drainages and recreation amenities, and is a beloved trail for many local residents. Wilderness proposals have been suggested by taking the Eccher Gulch trail out of the proposed Wilderness, along with some of the northern boundary for snowmobile use. This whittling down of land protections, just to get Wilderness in a smaller acreage, and also to 'increase

certain users property values', is an injustice to land protection in general. If an SMA would have the same protections and prescriptions as Wilderness in the Granite Basin area, but allow for certain recreation amenities, and cover more acreage and area with protection, than that is a better solution and more land protection. Not just Wilderness for the sake of Wilderness and certain local residents increased property values. This makes the most sense in so many areas of the Gunnison Ranger District, and I sincerely hope the GMUG planning team takes this and other proposed SMA's into consideration.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment, and the best of luck in the Planning Process. Please do justice to the Crested Butte, Gunnison, Gunnison Ranger District, and greater GMUG wild areas by considering progressive and forward thinking management directives that include recreation, specifically mountain biking. - David Ochs, 801 Red Lady Avenue, CB, CO 81224