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Comments: Comments on Draft

Thanks for taking this extra step in your process of developing your GMUG Forest Plan.

I'm concerned about the wording in MA-GDL-MTR-13 about mileage within a square mile. On very steep terrain switchbacks are needed to keep the slope of the trail at a sustainable grade. Switchbacks can add greatly to the length of trail but if the switchbacks are stacked in a vertical corridor they have a density of a single line through that corridor. Maintaining appropriate density is a good guideline but judging based on trail distance gets complicated when switchbacks are present.

I think the plan needs to have more guidelines on the use of motion activated cameras. On a recent hike I came to a quiet stock pond where I'd planned on sitting quietly to enjoy being next to water. But I found 2 game cameras set up at the pond. This was on July 5th. No where near hunting season. I felt like my privacy was being invaded. Would I find my photo up on some social website? It was creepy and it spoiled my experience of getting into a remote natural setting. Granted the pond was likely man-made but vegetation growth had smoothed the boundaries and the pond looked very natural. The cameras were in camouflage colors, so I didn't even see them until after they'd already captured my image. Shouldn't there have been some kind of an alert to warn me that cameras were ahead?

The current game camera technology usually involves someone coming from time to time to replace batteries and swap out the memory card. But as communication gets more readily available we will likely see motion activated cameras that communicate remotely to the owner. Even more of an invasion of privacy and more of a potential for malicious use. In the future someone might hide a camera near a dispersed camping site or at a quiet trailhead and wait for a signal at home to see who is camped at the site, a single female, someone with great looking gear worth stealing, a car worth breaking into?

What about density of cameras? How many cameras at a given spot is an acceptable density? Shouldn't the forest staff know where cameras are being placed and by whom? Could someone install a camera to monitor forest staff members? It is definitely creepy to think about.

Isn't leaving a camera on public land like leaving some other personal gear in the national forest? After 72 hours, is it considered to be abandoned? Except ahead of hunting season, why should there be an exception for cameras? Should motion activated cameras be part of a permitting system?

I'm surprised there is only one mention of drones in the document. Drones are becoming very popular and they

are becoming more sophisticated. We know the military has drones where the "pilot" is thousands of miles from the drone. When that remote control technology becomes available to the public, people will be able to "visit" GMUG without leaving their sofas in GJ. But their drone activity may well impact the visitors who are in GMUG in person.

I think the definition of "motorized equipment" should explicitly include drones even ones that some might think fit in the "small equipment" category.

There is at least one use of the term "motorized recreation" in the document. Shouldn't that include both motorized travel as well as non-motorized travel with motorized equipment? The latest drones are set up to follow their owners traveling just above and behind them and capturing their epic run/hike/mtn bike ride. (Web search "drones follow mode") Shouldn't that be considered "motorized recreation" and be limited to trails that allow motorized use (with an exception for the occasional permitted professional film makers)? FW-STND-REC-05 for example could be adjusted slightly to include "motorized equipment".

What protects the privacy and natural experience of other visitors as the number of "follow me" drones leaps upwards? Are forest trails really the appropriate place for this new style of selfie that also captures the images of other visitors without their permission?

What about the density of drones? Will every 5th person descending the new Palisade Plunge be permitted to have a "follow me" drone along? How will the noise impact wildlife especially birds?

FW-DC-REC-02 mentions a "variety of group sizes" and yet the only other mention of group size is within wilderness. So the forest plan is just hoping that there will be a variety of group sizes? There isn't even a suggested use of group size limits in the future if warranted by increased use of GMUG. I've stood off to the side of a two-track and waited for a group of 40 ATVers to go by. It was not the experience I'd expected to have that day and it shouldn't be just luck of the day as to whether a visitor will have such an off-putting experience too. Could some areas be limited to 20? At least that would add to the variety of group sizes "any number", "20" and "15" depending on the area. Even 15 within Wilderness seems too large. I would have thought that 12 would be more reasonable. BLM Wilderness is often set to have a max of 12 for group size. So if a group of 15 moves from Forest Wilderness into BLM Wilderness what happens with the extra 3 people? Large groups not only impact other visitors but they impact wildlife and when they take a break they impact the vegetation near where they leave the trail. A larger group of people with or without vehicles trample a lot more vegetation than a small group.

Regards,
Janice Shepherd

