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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Though 99% of the time I'm all for sharing trails with motorized users, I'm very concerned about possible negative consequences for equestrian users who rely on Sage Hen year-round.

I ride all over the San Juans, comfortable with fellow traveler encounters whatever their mode of transportation. And I ride Sage Hen a lot, have for years. I know it's a time-honored, trusted and depended-on place for folks to take out their horses-in-training for their first trail ride, or even their very first ride. The uniquely quiet, uncrowded environment and easy terrain, the soft dirt of the two tracks, make it a safe place to introduce young horses to trails, to take out an adopted mustang in training, to build skills and confidence in a horse with spooking and training issues, to train pack horses, and so much more. Quads and motorcycles and loud engine noises are not distractions that a baby horse, a recently adopted BLM mustang, any green horse in training, or their anxious trainer, needs.

Sage Hen is one of few such local settings that is not motorized, the only one so perfect that I know of for these uses. I've trained horses there, and seen others training horses there, and read about such experiences on social media. People depend on Sage Hen, that's where they go for that. It is also tried and true for giving people and groups a safe place to ride and gain confidence before they and their horse are ready to confront a motorized vehicle in close quarters.

Most equestrians I've met on the trail, including those who aren't training, are usually NOT on the singletrack, they are on the two tracks, either the one to be marked for motorized or ones nearby that will almost certainly be trespassed upon by some motorized users. (Although I do see this has been considered and barriers are planned it's still a concern).

Even for seasoned horses and riders, there is a pretty limited selection of non-motorized trails that don't include steep grades, edges and drop-offs. The few remaining havens where the essential pleasures of horseback riding can be enjoyed - including peace and quiet, relaxation and wildlife sightings - must be protected. I fear that for the above reasons, motorizing part of Sage Hen, as innocuous as the marked part may appear, may constitute a great loss for equestrians.

With regard to seasonal public access restriction, my opinion is that it makes sense to apply to motorized should this go through, but the area's pretty lightly used by current nonmotorized users, and again those users depend on it. For equestrians especially, winter access to non motorized trails is extremely limited. Bikes and skis have groomed snow trails, but where do the horses go? On the road, with the cars. ge Hen I seldom see more than one or two sets of other tracks in the winter, may they be footprints, hoofprints, ski tracks or bike tracks.

As a competitive distance rider, for me Sage Hen has been a key trail system for winter conditioning when it's dry, because of its location and the features of the terrain the singletrack covers.

On a personal note, I love Sage Hen deeply and would be devastated to lose access to it in winter. I love the views of the great San Juans, temporarily out of my reach. I love the feeling and sound of solitary riding through untouched snow. I love the silence. I love to ride along the beach, and marvel at the textures of light in the silver-gray water.

I would be very interested to see any studies that show significant negative impacts on wildlife caused by the nonmotorized use of Sage Hen in winter, as I have just made the above statements in full awareness that I lack such education. In winter, of people sign, I seldom see more than one or two sets of other tracks, may they be

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Thank you for reading my letter.