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Comments: The construction of McPhee dam and reservoir from 1977 to 1984 had significant environmental impacts, including the inundation of the town of McPhee, rich cultural resources, and critical wildlife habitat. The reservoir occupies 4,470 acres, and that does not include impacts to the shoreline.

It is my understanding that the lands that comprise the Sage Hen area were formerly private agricultural lands acquired by the Bureau of Reclamation for the purpose of mitigating the loss of deer and elk habitat due to dam construction, and are reported to be currently reliable and rare winter range for dwindling deer and elk populations.

The proposed motorized trail within the Sage Hen area would include a fence to keep motorists on the trail and to protect cultural resources. The fence would need to be laid down or removed during the winter, while the area is closed to the motorists. In my opinion a fence would be intrusive, unsightly, and expensive. I would rather see Forest Service resources used for other projects.

The alignment of the Sage Hen Motorized Trail would traverse down into the canyon below the dam. Any meaningful environmental assessment of the proposed Sage Hen motorized trail would need to study the impacts beyond the proposed 4.75 miles located within the Sage Hen area. The canyon below the dam is currently fairly pristine and gently utilized, and also important habitat for all kinds of wildlife. The ecosystem below the dam has already been altered dramatically, and the impacts of motorized recreation would have further significant impacts within a narrow canyon.

While I understand the need for diversifying the local economy, I am opposed to this project because I think the Sage Hen area should be managed with its intended purpose, wildlife habitat, especially ungulates, as the primary management consideration. Motorized and non-motorized use should maximize opportunities for wildlife to be successful in the mitigation area. Seasonal closures may be helpful, but high impact human activities can have year-round unintended consequences. It may increase the introduction of invasive weeds, human caused fire, or damage by a few badly-behaved users. And it will also have significant impact on the Dolores Canyon below.