Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/7/2019 3:05:26 AM
First name: Alex
Last name: Wing
Organization: Rico Trail Alliance
Title: Board Member
Comments: The Rico Trails Alliance (RTA) was founded in 2017 with the mission of improving and promoting local and regional trail systems in and around Rico Colorado, with a focus on access, development and use of non-motorized trails.

RTA and its constituents strongly support the full scoping of the Rico Trails Project.

The Rio Grand Southern (RGS) railroad grade is a historic route that has consistently received public use for non-motorized recreation and fishing/hunting access since the abandonment of the railroad. The route is unique for several reasons: The RGS has the potential to be tied directly into the Town of Rico, pending easements with private landowners, and in the future could be connected with the Galloping Goose trail on the RGS grade at Lizardhead Pass; The RGS's gentle grade provides some of the only beginner-level/family-friendly trail access in the Rico area; and, the RGS would safely connect Rico to other popular area trails (via the existing Montolores Bridge and proposed Scotch Creek Bridge), which are currently accessed using Colorado Highway 145.

The Lower Ryman Creek Trail reroutes are necessary maintenance to sustainably restore Lower Ryman as a useful trail within Rico's trail network. Lower Ryman currently becomes difficult to navigate and extremely steep in the areas of the proposed reroutes, severely limiting the usefulness of the trail. Due to Ryman's proximity to Salt Creek Trail, which is popular for downhill-direction mountain biking, sustainable reroutes in the areas proposed by the Forest Service have the potential to create a world-class trail system near Rico.

The Circle Trail is a route that has received continuous use spanning back to Rico's mining era. Bringing the Circle Trail back into the USFS trail inventory will provide several benefits for trail users and for Rico. The Circle Trail will directly connect Rico to the Colorado Trail, provide hunting access, and benefit Rico's businesses and struggling economy. Adding the trail to the inventory will improve safety, as the trail is already in use by locals but is poorly mapped and difficult to access by emergency responders. The upper section of the Circle Trail is faint, leading current users to follow differing routes and cause braiding/erosion. Adding Circle Trail to the trails inventory will allow sanctioned and sustainable maintenance to negate the effects of ongoing use.

The Spring Creek Connector would provide a needed multi-use motorized connection between trail systems on Taylor and Stoner Mesas.

The Town of Rico has struggled economically since the end of mining in the area. Improving recreation and public lands access around Rico supports the town by increasing critical sales and lodging tax revenues, improving quality of life, and by attracting and maintaining long-term residents. The Rico Trails Project as currently scoped would be a true asset to the town and region.