Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/15/2020 7:00:00 AM
First name: Marshall
Last name: Carter-Tripp
Organization:
Title:
Comments: NO to the Valle Seco Land Exchange

Dear Becca Smith,

I'm writing to ask you to seriously reconsider and ultimately cancel the proposed Valle Seco Land Exchange. I object to the disposal of wilderness-quality roadless lands right next to the South San Juan Wilderness. And I'm opposed to any loss of public access to the San Juan River - or loss of protections for what's been formally recommended as a wild and scenic river.

It's unacceptable to give away a stretch of the only public access to the San Juan River upstream of Pagosa Springs. Access to rivers is a growing concern in Colorado, recently highlighted by Colorado Gov. Jared Polis. It's an enormous step backward to take away existing public access for no other reason than to please someone who lives out of state.

Given the controversial nature of eliminating wilderness-quality roadless areas and recommended wild and scenic rivers for private benefit, this proposed land exchange must be cancelled.

If the Forest Service does go forward, the proposal must be analyzed rigorously in an environmental impact statement because the harms would be significant and contrary to the public interest. And the process must be completely open. The public deserves full transparency and the same access to decision-makers and documents as the lawyers and lobbyists enjoy.

Finally, if the overriding purpose of the project is acquisition of Valle Seco for the value of its big-game wildlife habitat, then a more feasible and widely supported approach is for the Forest Service to simply purchase the 880-acre Valle Seco property using the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which Congress is moving to permanently fund at $900 million per year.

Please - do the right thing and cancel this project, keeping these public lands in public hands. I hope to be able to visit these lands for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Marshall Carter-Tripp

xxxxxxxxxxxxx

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx