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First name: Rick

Last name: Jones

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Cancel the Valle Seco Land Exchange

Dear Becca Smith,

I am a retired Federal Resource Manager, with over 30 years with the NPS, USFS and BLM.

I'm writing to **STRONGLY REQUEST** that you **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, to **NO GOOD MANAGEMENT PURPOSE**.

In my experience, this strongly indicates a political, rather than science and regulatory based decision!

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.

Please remember that you serve the American People **FIRST!**

As you know the South San Juan Wilderness is among Colorado's most pristine areas, and the adjacent roadless lands in question have been proposed for wilderness designation for more than 20 YEARS.

Public lands of this unique quality are steadily diminishing and it is the purview of the USFS to protect these lands for the American People, **NOT** to disperse them to private parties.

The San Juan National Forest previously deemed wilderness designation unnecessary because the lands were protected under the Colorado Roadless Rule. So it would be a **BETRAYAL OF PUBLIC TRUST** now to turn around and give away these wilderness-quality public lands just because a billionaire wants them.

What's more, in 2013 the East Fork of the San Juan River was recommended by the Forest Service for protection as a wild and scenic river - after decades of advocacy by anglers, boaters and other river supporters. So **AGAIN**, it violates the public's trust to reverse course and privatize these public resources.

It's also **COMPLETELY** 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 and **HAS POWER AND CONNECTIONS!**

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 (**NOT AN EA**) because the **HARM CAUSED AND IMPACT ON FEDERAL RESOURCES** would be significant and contrary to the public interest. **NEPA REQUIRES** an assessment of this type of proposal prior to

the final decision!

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 to KEEP these public lands in public hands and guarantee access to the San Juan River!

I was a public servant for decades and as I see it, eliminating these lands and access is a SUPREME DISSERVICE to the AMERICAN PUBLIC!

Please DO YOUR JOB and remember that you have to live with your decisions.

I am extremely happy with the decisions that I made in my Federal Career... Will you be happy with those that you made??

Sincerely,

Rick Jones

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