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First name: Seth
Last name: Furtney
Organization:
Title:
Comments: The Rico Trails Project as currently scoped would be a true asset to the town and region. Improving recreation and public lands access around the region enhances the regional economy by improving quality of life, attracting residents, and increasing sales and lodging tax revenues. Recreational trail use is increasing as more people hit the trails. In the 21st century, recreational opportunities and trail system improvements are an effective way to help support healthy mountain communities.

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 RGS has the potential to be tied directly into the Town of Rico and in the future could be connected with Dolores/Mancos/Durango to the south and to Telluride to the north; The RGS's gentle grade provides some of the only beginner-level/family friendly trail access in the greater S/W area; and, the RGS could safely connect to other popular area trails which can only currently be accessed using Colorado Highway 145.

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.

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 including direct connection to the Colorado Trail. Adding the trail to the inventory will improve safety, since the trail is already in use but poorly mapped and difficult to access. Adding Circle Trail to the trails inventory will allow sanctioned and sustainable maintenance to negate the effects of ongoing use.

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

The creation of a connector trail (parallel to highway 145) is important for the safety of all recreationalist, so as to avoid the highway commute.

Seasonal closures are an effective tool for balancing the needs of wildlife and of recreational trail users & the proposed seasonal closure is consistent with other high-elevation early-season wildlife closures in the San Juan National Forest

Alternative 3 represents an effective compromise by restricting use of an identified sensitive area during a critical time period and still providing recreational opportunity when appropriate. Thoughtful and effective compromises will become more crucial with time as more people enjoy our public lands. Without compromise, we only stand to lose access to trails