

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/9/2021 12:18:25 AM

First name: Reid

Last name: Wiecks

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Re: public comment on closing FR322 and on the Integrated Management of Target Shooting on the Pike National Forest

Dear Ranger Martinez

We are writing as private citizens who lives in Palmer Lake and enjoys the Pike National Forest year round as a hiker, runner, and mountain biker. We also live less than 1/4 mile from the eastern boundary of the Forest directly between Limbaugh Canyon and the North Monument Creek Canyon that "houses" the two Palmer Lake Reservoirs.

We have lived here for 35 years. During that time we have helped fight the Mt. Herman fire that threatened Palmer Lake's southern boundary, the homes in Red Rocks, and the fire service center in Monument in 1989. We then were pre-evacuated during the Hayman Fire in the early 2000's.

Many times during our time in the backcountry of the Pikes National Forest we have altered our course due to near-by gunshots, 4-wheel trucks and jeeps barreling down FR322, or campers who have set-up their campsites after driving down Balanced Rock Road from Rampart Range Road to camp on the shore of the Upper Reservoir. We were witness to the destruction by bullets and trash left on the south side of Mt. Herman Rd. directly responsible were the folks who went there specifically to shoot their guns. Not content to target shoot they did so at anything that met their momentary fancy. It became so uncomfortable to park in that area to hike Mt. Herman that we stopped going to that trail.

This has increased in frequency over the years and now we are seeing even more damage to the watershed above the Reservoirs and in Limbaugh Canyon as many of the vehicles aren't content to stay on FR322 but create their own roads through wetlands, beaver ponds, streams, over and through fences erected by the USFS or Palmer Lake.

As you are aware this has occurred in this area many times this year and into 2021. Just a couple of days ago my wife and I were hiking the area and on the south end of the Upper Reservoir and on the East side of the wetlands that feeds the reservoir on or more of the trucks drove through the beaver pond numerous times tearing up. I will attach a photo that doesn't due the damage justice but gives you an idea of the destruction. The reservoir is visible in the background. I have sent Town Manager, Dawn Collins, other photos which she no doubt has forwarded to you documenting some of the destruction and fire dangers that have occurred recently. The photo of the campfire ring was taken 2/8/21 at the intersection of the Limbaugh Canyon trail and the trail leading up to Balanced Rock road about 1/2 mile away. It is one about e0 feet from Monument Creek.

We depend on this water-source for our existence as a Town. We depend on this area of the Pike National Forest not only for our prime recreational venue, but for the protection of that watershed that allows Palmer Lake to exist. Pollution, erosion, destruction of the natural resources (trees, beaver ponds, willow groves, stream beds to name a few) all contribute to the potential harming of Palmer Lake's water.

We have been told that Palmer Lake is one of the most vulnerable towns along Colorado's Front Range to fire. We have been told that it is a matter of "not if, but when we will be in the crosshairs of a destructive fire. Those crosshairs are also on the watershed, because without it the Town of Palmer Lake may cease to exist due to lack of water while the building remain standing ghostlike as a reminder of what should have been done to prevent its death.

We would urge you and the USFS decision makers to close Balanced Rock Road, FR322, as near as possible to Rampart Range Road to all motorized vehicles. We would also encourage you to establish as an area unsuited to managed target shooting anything north of the Air Force Academy and at least the area south of and including Perry Park in Douglas County, and all areas East of Rampart Range Road to the Forest's eastern boundary.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on these two important issues.

Sincerely yours,