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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Keep Access Open in Manti-La Sal National Forest

Dear Mr.:

I am writing to voice my concerns regarding the Manti-La Sal National Forest Management Plan. I enjoy recreating on public land and want to express my support of keeping access open in the Manti-La Sal National Forest for all types of recreation uses. I believe through proper management and education trails and roads can remain open without negative impacts. Spanning through Utah, this forest is a large area where various types of recreation activities occur. The management plan proposes designating 5 types areas with varying degrees of restrictions within the forest. These areas have roads and trail systems that should remain open to users and not be closed through these different designations. Dispersed camping and rock climbing are also popular activities on the Manti-La Sal Forest and proper access will help mitigate damage by preventing concentration of use and impacts.

Dispersed camping has grown in popularity over the recent years - especially on the La Sal Mountains. Being next to the high traffic tourism destination of Moab, many seek a more remote area to camp. By restricting access in the forest, campers will be denied the valuable opportunity to camp alone in nature. I support allowing dispersed camping throughout the forest. Proper management and education should be pursued rather than closures of campsites and roads. The plan states, "Dispersed camping next to vista corridors and along many other forest roads has been occurring for generations. Many of these campsites have expanded over time to become launch points for creation of non-system routes. Dispersed site designation and containment to protect surrounding natural resources has proven successful along Huntington Canyon, 12-Mile Canyon, and the Miller Flat Road, and should continue as a management tool." Proper management rather than closure is important as stated by the USFS.

Climbing, especially in the Sanpete region of the northern part of the Manti-La Sal National Forest has increased and has had a positive impact on local economies. The plan states, "User-created trails to climbing areas are identified annually, and then closed and rehabilitated, or incorporated into the designated trail system once sustainable location and design are established." These routes, when responsibly used provide value to our public lands and should remain open and available to use.

The management plan has not been updated since 1986. Therefore, many roads and trails have been used responsibly during that 35 year span. The plan proposes closing all roads and trails that are not currently in the system. Because the USFS has neglected to update their management plan, you are proposing closures instead of the proper management. All roads and trails that are in use should continue to be allowed under the new management plan. Locals and visitors alike rely on these routes and through proper education all can continue to enjoy our public lands through them.

The Manti-La Sal National Forest is located near many small, rural towns. The economies of these local communities depend on recreation access. As interest in OHV's, climbing, camping, hiking and connecting with nature continues to grow the small towns will benefit tremendously. I fear that as we see more restrictions the local economies and small businesses are those that will suffer most. The plan recognizes the economic impact outdoor enthusiasts have and I encourage you to allow these industries to thrive. Surrounding the forest is national monuments, national parks and wilderness areas. In other words, there is already very restrictive management in the areas bordering the forest and Forest Service lands should be managed for the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

The USFS should finally begin to reverse its decades-long systematic discrimination against those with mobility impairment-related disabilities. Travel management policies focused on "minimizing" the environmental impacts of motorized recreation have resulted in a dramatic increase of lands that are closed to those who can only access public lands with motorized assistance.

In conclusion, I believe in shared use and that there is enough public land for all to enjoy as long as agencies use best practices. Please refrain from closures as roads and trails are critical to the forest.