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First name: Rob
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Organization:
Title:
Comments: To: FS-Comments Intermtn Ashley ForestPlanRevisionSubject: I Support a Recreation Alternative for the Ashely NFDate: Monday, January 17, 2022 12:36:15 PMDear Ms. Eickhoff:I enjoy recreating and accessing public lands. I believe the recreational opportunities the Ashley NF are world class and need to be preserved for all to enjoy.I am concerned that the Forest Service is being encouraged to consider a conservation alternative without giving an appropriate counter alternative that adequately shows a range of options as NEPA requires. Although Alternative D, right now, is the best option I still would like to see a true recreation alternative proposed in order to comply with NEPA. If Alternative D was truly a recreation alternative it wouldn't just "consider" additional routes and expanding campgrounds. Alternative C is completely unacceptable and restricts too much access for users. I do not support the apparent buffer zones the FS is proposing through management designations to the High Uintas Wilderness. It seems as though the USFS is giving preferential treatment to certain user groups over others. I believe the FS can manage for all types of recreation within this area. Motorized and non-motorized users can co-exist and one should not be restricted to accommodate another.In order to prevent and avoid adverse resource impacts and user conflict, the FS should be actively managing the area and routes. Through different management strategies and proper education, negative impacts can be properly mitigated without closures. As popularity for outdoor recreation grows, the FS should be looking at ways to provide reasonable access that will sustain the growing numbers of visitation. Restricting use and concentrating use will only increase impact. The FS should not just consider, but absolutely add "additional loops and routes for motorized activities" to accommodate the increase of use to mitigate negative impact.The Ashley NF is also crucial for the local economy. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis showed that in 2019 the outdoor recreation industry brought in $459.8 billion nationwide, and other studies recognize a $12 billion impact for the outdoor recreation industry in Utah. By limiting or decommissioning trails the USFS could be harming the local economy and robbing them of potential income.Dispersed camping js a popular recreational activity that also needs to be protected through these plans. Restricting use to designated sites or a specific number of sites is arbitrary. Even the proposals for routes and number of sites in Alternative D are arbitrary and could potentially limit the FS from actively managing use. The FS should be able to add in additional resources as needs increase. Any user conflicts or possible resource damage can be solved through management solutions other than closure and the USFS needs to implement these practices first. These management solutions must start from the position that addressing user conflict should be limited to managing incidents of conflict and not be interpreted to restrict access to public land for some users based on the subjective and arbitrary complaints of other users.In order to advance equity of access on public land for those with mobility impairment disabilities, it is important to recognize that discrimination towards American with disabilities within federal land management agencies is deeply rooted and hidden in plain sight. It is common for motorized recreation to take a backseat to conservation and protection. Motorized recreation is often times the only way those with mobility impairment disabilities are able to enjoy high value recreation experiences on public lands. Current policies actively discriminate against this group of underserved Americans and I would like to see this plan help connect all users with public lands.I support the proposed vegetation projects. The forest needs to be maintained in order to stay healthy and viable. If vegetation projects do not move forward this poses the greatest risk for wildfire. Wildfire is the greatest risk to all forest users, and it is a significant risk to wildlife and habitat. Please manage our forests so that we do not see the catastrophic results from wildfire. The Forest Service should be using non-fire techniques as often as possible such as mechanical thinning in order to prevent these events.Sincerely,Rob Baumgarten