

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/25/2022 7:16:30 PM

First name: Garrett

Last name: Downs

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the North Valley Trail Plan.

I have spent the time to read the original CBMBA proposal, the endorsement letter from STOR, the maps, the USFA Refinement of Proposed Action, and the Proposed Action and Design Feature Documents, along with most of the comments already received and posted.

I am not a resident of the Gunnison Valley but have good friends who live there and am therefore lucky enough to be a frequent visitor, both in summer and winter. As a resident of the Front Range, I can say that the Gunnison Valley is an incredibly beautiful and special place and is potentially my favorite vacation destination in the state. Most of the prior comments I read were from people who are far more familiar with the details of the specific trails than I am, but I have some familiarity with several of them and have focused my feedback on those areas I have firsthand experience with.

I have been coming to the area since the late 1990's, with mountain-biking being the primary reason, and have returned whenever I can since that time.

My biggest recollection of needed improvements was based upon riding a trail in the Cement Creek area that was very deeply eroded into a steep V where my pedals would hit the sides of the trough. I believe this was a trail that allowed both motor cycles and bikes. My best experiences have been on trails such as the 403 and the 401 trails.

Regarding the North Valley Trail Plan and particularly the IDT modifications to the CBMBA proposal, I have the following comments, based upon personal experience:

***UPPER UPPER TO BRUSH CREEK-** I've read most of the responses and particularly that of the Rocky Mt Biological Lab and see a unified theme that also aligns with my own judgement about this. People want the CBMBA alignment honored for various reasons. Points that were made that I would also independently make include the IDT alignment being too close to the road, where cyclists would get dust in the face, motorists would park along the road and walk to the trail across vegetation to take pictures of wildflowers (trampling the grasses), and just generally that riding so close to the road would be a very unpleasant experience. I've also seen situations where riders would cut back and forth between the trail and road as they evaluated to pros & cons of riding on either surface. Trail braiding could be a result here in the narrow strip of grass between this trail and the road. Importantly, the STOR endorsement for this reflects the broad-based community, including ranching interests, if I am not mistaken, and the specific objection in this instance comes from one user. CBMBA seems to feel that no one would want to invest the human power to actually build this trail, and considering how much of this work relies upon volunteers, the IDT alignment seems to be a non-starter.

***DR PARK RE-ROUTE-** the mud and drainage issues are a common theme and I've experienced them myself in September. I saw it stated in the IDT response that the mud issues may have been a result of riders not waiting for snow to melt from the area in spring before riding. This isn't true from my experience. Although I've not been up there in spring, I can attest that this issue is definitely not limited to that time of year. Although it was brought up that the CBMBA proposed re-route may have gone through an outfitter's camp, could it not be possible to simply adjust that re-route to avoid this issue? There is a lot of consensus on this issue from people who are in the area frequently that something needs to be done. I am hopeful that further collaboration on this route can occur and a mutually acceptable alternative can be found.

***USE OF E-BIKES ON NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS-** while not specifically addressed in the plan, I did see some comments advocating for allowance of e-bikes on non-motorized trails. A BLM policy document was included with one of the comments. I feel the need to interject on this issue from an experience I had in the Navajo Rocks/Horsetheif Trails area near Moab Utah this past fall. This area is signed in numerous locations as no e-bikes/pedal assist. One of the locals I ran into explained the rational behind it to me as we had just witnessed an altercation between two e-bikers and a group of non-motorized mountain bikers on the trail. Based upon what I saw, I believe allowing any type of powered bike, regardless of the class of e-bike, is a "slippery slope" and should be avoided. The e-Bikers road the trails in areas specifically signed where they were prohibited and

became combative towards other trail users when confronted on this violation. One thing that anyone who rides in that area will be familiar with is the cryptobiotic crust. The trails traverse through these areas, and the e-bikers carried far more speed through twisting sections of trails and frequently could not hold the turn and stay on the trail, and routinely careened off the trail on tight-turning sections, thereby leaving scallop-shaped scars in the cryptobiotic crust. One of the locals explained to a group of us that there were those in the community that were using these facts to try to get the whole system shut-down to all bikes, not just eBikes. In any case, the additional power of these bikes, even if only the pedal assist type, often exceeds the riders abilities to stay on the trail. I have ridden these bikes on occasion and could easily relate to this being the case. I would respectfully request that non-motorized trails remain truly non-motorized. An electric motor, even if actuated by a pedal stroke, is still a motor.

*The Response from High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA) described the CBMBA as a "reasonable proposal" due to the long collaboration they conducted with numerous stakeholders and the fact that CBMBA removed several desired trail segments from their proposal due to this collaboration with other groups. HCCA also expressed a desire that no organized commercial events be permitted in the area, in order to avoid impacts that such an event would inevitably bring. This seems very forward-thinking and realistic in my experience, as large events cause crowding and resource damage due to a variety of factors. Although this area is already "on the radar", there is no need to make it more so.

*The manager of Pioneer Guest Cabins also made a very good point, specifically about the Upper Cement Creek Trail (if I remember it correctly) that people come to him frequently for recommendations on which trails to ride. Someone in a position such as this would be a very good person to ask, as they would have frequent contact with the vacationing public. He indicated the most frequent request was for "easier scenic non-motorized trails". I can't agree with this enough, as a longtime mountain biker and nature enthusiast who has brought-in a handful of new riders into the sport. Expert riders may be better able to deal with interacting with motorized vehicles on a difficult road, but it's no fun. Beginners are much less able to deal with that, and may be intimidated to the point of crashing. From personal experience, I was nearly run-off a jeep road near Mount Antero years ago by a group of a dozen or so ATV's. I don't think these riders intended on doing this, but they did show a general lack of situational awareness and lack of respect for other users of that road. The CBMBA proposed trail would be a huge help for both of these issues and I fully support it.

In conclusion, thank you for reading and synthesizing all of these comments. Please take them in the spirit in which they were written from all interested parties and I believe the general consensus presented by all those who care enough about this plan to comment will become clear.