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Title:

Comments: I am writing to show my support for proposed recreation improvements outlined within the USFS Project #62825.

First of all, I think that having groomed trails in the winter as outlined in the proposal would be an excellent use of this terrain in the winter months. Having another option for groomed trails close to Durango would give people quicker access to winter recreation.

However, I do think that if improvements are not made to the parking area, parking will become an issue much like it is in the summer months. At times, there can be almost 50 or 60 vehicles parked at the Vallecito Nordic trailhead, and I would expect this trailhead to be even busier given its ease of access to Durango. So, I support the proposal to improve parking at the Junction Creek trailhead, but I am concerned that 34 parking spots, especially in busy winter and summer months will actually accommodate the need.

As for the proposed road improvements, this is obviously a double edge sword. If access is granted for groomed trails, then chip sealed road top will decrease the feasibility of keeping and maintaining winter trails on the main road because the road with a chip seal finish will inevitably melt the snow much faster. This would ultimately limit access to other groomed terrain in the proposal.

With road improvements, I also am concerned about an increase in traffic to Animas Overlook. Although a more consistent road surface would be nice for access and some types of recreation, an increase in traffic could also prove to be more dangerous to cyclists, runners, and other users on the road. People already drive very fast on this road, and chip-seal would ultimately increase the amount of people driving fast. I also think that improvements to the Animas Overlook parking would need to be made if the road is improved.

I am also in support of the proposed downhill mountain biking trails included in the project. Durango severely lacks access to advanced mountain bike trails and for some reason, the trails we do have are continually being made easier. Having access to downhill only trails close to town will hopefully reduce trail conflicts in other areas where trails are multi-directional and will ultimately be better for all trail users.

My main concern with the downhill mountain bike trails is who the adopting organization will ultimately be. Unfortunately, there is not an organization in Durango that solely represents the mountain bike community and truly understands the needs of the advanced mountain bike users. I don't think this project can be carried out effectively with the current scope of organizations that exist in the Durango area.