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First name: Scott

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Service Official,

My family has been living on the shoulders of Jackson Mountain for close to 20 years now. One of the top reasons for moving here was the incredible access we have had to the "Jackson Mountain Landscape," a gem here in the upper San Juan River watershed. This area is a great example of an ex-urban pocket wilderness, a place we have come to consider sacred for its near-wilderness quality ecosystem. This is a place that should be cherished and enjoyed by our community for its natural beauty, not a location for an unsightly, noisy, and dangerous gravel pit and processing facility.

Of the four components included in the "Jackson Mountain Landscape Project" plan, a mountain bike trail system, other recreational facility improvements, vegetation treatment plan, and a gravel quarry and processing facility, the first three components strike me as fairly benign. In fact, as a lifelong mountain biker I can see some value in developing the landscape to more effectively manage trail use in the area. The gravel pit, on the other hand, is a horrible idea that runs completely crosswise with the aspiration of cultivating a more accessible and well-managed recreational asset for the Pagosa Springs community.

The need for gravel to maintain the many miles of unpaved county and forest service roads is not debatable. The idea of plopping such a facility in the middle of such a rich and wild landscape with its incredible recreational and natural value is problematic for a few reasons. First of all, the movement of the heavy trucks on the Jackson Mountain Road will pose a safety concern for hikers, hunters, horse packers, and gravel bikers moving up and down the road to access trailheads and campsites. The dust and roadway crowding posed by the trucks will render the road and adjacent recreational facilities into a dusty, noisy, and dangerous mess. The proposed rock crushing operations, along with the heavy truck traffic, will also pose a downwind air quality hazard when the diurnal downslope breezes or the occasional south moving air masses transport airborne particulates into the San Juan River Village residential area. Finally, the noise and visual pollution posed by the operation will significantly degrade the recreational and natural beauty values of the landscape, especially in the Laughlin Park area.

I would strongly urge the USFS to abandon the proposed site for the gravel facility and work with the County to relocate the project that; #1 is not situated adjacent to a densely developed residential area (San Juan River Village) and, #2 is not smack in the middle of a prime outdoor recreational landscape. I would humbly suggest considering preexisting or known gravel resources either up in the Porcupine area (upper Mill Creek Rd.), upper Snowball Creek, or out past the landfill on County Road 500. These areas are just some examples of options that would avoid the inevitable safety and nuisance noise & dust problems associated with the proposed Jackson Mountain project.

Sincerely,

Scott Robbins