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Comments: I appreciate the opportunity to provide my input on the proposed development of an extensive trail system around Jackson Mountain area northeast of Pagosa. I have not personally spent very much time in the area; however, I am an avid outdoorsman and enjoy spending quality time in the national forest in all sorts of manners. I enjoy using trail systems for both hiking and mountain biking, along with exploring the back country for hunting, fishing, foraging, and general exploring.

I strongly oppose the proposed plan as it is for trail system development, fuels and vegetation management, and gravel pit development due to the significant potential impact to the wildlife in the area.

It appears many the proposed trails in the plan would be to legalize trails that have been illegally created. In doing so San Juan National Forest would be setting a precedent, and an incentive, for people to go into the forest and start making trails wherever they would like, for their own enjoyment, without taking the greatest good for the public into consideration and without full stakeholder input. This could be a very dangerous precedent to set with the increased volume of users experiencing the national forest, resulting in an increased impact to wildlife.

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) department has expressed its' concerns with any trail development in the Jackson Mountain area for years due to the impacts on critical habitat and effects to the migration corridor for elk and deer. It appears from the view of a concerned citizen that these concerns have been shrugged off and not fully taken into consideration. The impact on wildlife should carry even more weight due to the decreasing elk and deer populations in the area, and additional stresses on those populations due to increased human activity will most likely further reduce those populations. The proposed trail system does not include or follow the recommendations from CPW in "Colorado's Guide to Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind."

It appears in the proposed plan there will be seasonal closures in place to help reduce the impacts to wildlife when they are most sensitive. Seasonal closures without active enforcement are inadequate for all areas of national forest, but especially in an area where the local community has already gone about and created illegal trails on their own. I see a similar issue in the area I live and most often use in San Juan National Forest with ATV/UTV users driving around locked forest service gates in the spring to access the forest for the spring turkey hunts. The roads are closed, and clearly indicated as such, yet users continuously drive around the gates without concern, which damages the roads and impacts wildlife.

The proposed trails on the north, west, and southern sides of Jackson Mountain are most likely to have the greatest impact on wildlife and I would urge that those trails are not developed at all. It appears trails proposed on these proposed areas would be most susceptible to further illegal trail development and thus greater impacts to wildlife.

The proposed thinning of vegetation along the trails would likely reduce wildfire risks that are increased with more human activity, but the reduced understory will have greater visual and audible impacts to wildlife. The combination of trail development and fire mitigation projects must account for acceptable distribution of refuge habitat for all wildlife to use.

I would urge the San Juan National Forest to not proceed with the development of the trail system on Jackson Mountain, or greatly reduce the scope of the project if it continues forward. The potential impacts to wildlife in the area are too great and perceived encouragement for people to make illegal trails that will eventually be made legal is too great.

