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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I oppose the several initiatives proposed within the scope of this project. Jackson Mountain supports a diverse wildlife population within what is one of the few remaining somewhat isolated areas near Pagosa Springs . An active gravel pit with processing on site would produce a noise disturbance for the wildlife, generate dust, and result in a large increase in large truck traffic on the access road that is incompatible with other users, creating unsafe conditions. These activities are unsustainable for what is an already heavily stressed wildlife population.

The Turkey Creek trailhead is just fine as it is. This particular area offers a near wilderness experience because it accesses a single hiking trail. Opening this area up to increased vehicle traffic (and I include mountain bikes here) will dramatically impact the area and the wildlife -- the proposed "well designed trails" will not mitigate the damage resulting from an increase in the number users. Build it, and they will come. There are plenty of other trailheads in the Pagosa area that accommodate horse trailers. In fact, the majority of other FS road have been developed for these sorts of uses -- let's leave this one alone.

The proposal offers to recognize and authorize the illegal mountain bike trails that have been built in the area -- this sets a terrible precedent. What's next? If ORV users start building their own trails on FS land, will these too then be officially recognized? Why reward this behavior? Mountain bikers and hikers are not a good mix -- I have almost been run over many times by bikers who think every trail is some sort of a race course. There already exists a system of maintained FS roads -- the mountain bikers can use these. Also, how does the FS plan to enforce compliance during those times of the years when the area is closed to protect wildlife -- it is especially easy to sneak mountain bikes around the barriers (and even ORV users sometimes do this).

I'd like to note the subtractive effect of this type of recreation. Unlike the tax collected on gear purchased by hunters and anglers, funds used to help to manage and support wildlife, making up about 80% of the budget of state wildlife agencies, mountain bikers contribute nothing. Their negative effects on the wildlife will be there. Mountain bikers almost always move at a speed faster than a hiker. When wildlife see this sort of quick, sustained movement, they instantly think "predator," the flight instinct kicks in, and they depart the area as fast as possible. This activity produces additional stress for an already stressed population.

I am very disappointed to see that this plan has gotten as far as it has, but it demonstrates that vocal groups with money can drive the process. I think the demand for mountain biking trails is more imagined than real. It also has the ring of the Chamber of Commerce behind it, a group always looking out for the next best thing to help develop the economic base of the town.

Re. the deadline for comments, I read two different things in the above statement:

1) Scoping comments must be submitted no later than February 23, 2023.

2 Your comments are requested through 3/6/2023 11:59:59 PM (Mountain Standard Time).

Which is it? It looks to me like comments will have to accepted through 3/6/2023.