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Title:

Comments: As longtime property owners in the Alpine community, we have several concerns about the USFS proposed changes to its dispersed camping management in Chalk Creek Canyon.

Since we are part of the Alpine community, we have extra concerns over the fact that portions of CR 292 are involved, even if they aren't the part that runs directly through Alpine. Opening up 292 below and above Alpine will undoubtedly increase the traffic through Alpine, even if campers restrict their parking to areas specifically designated as legal. Increased ATV traffic and similar is also an extremely likely by-product and one that none of us want to encourage. Like most Alpine residents, we go to the mountains to get away from people and enjoy some peace and quiet in nature.

The risk of trespassing, vandalism and potential damage to private property owing to the proximity of an increased number of campers is a worry for us, as is the idea of an increased number of vehicles using 162 (including larger vehicles like RVs and those hauling ATVs, etc.). CR 162 is the only access in and out of Alpine and St. Elmo. Anything that could complicate the ability to come and go easily and quickly could have serious consequences, particularly in an emergency.

Considerations to wildlife, vegetation and conservation should also be taken into account, and the fact that the lands affected would be reviewed on an annual or bi-annual basis (or whenever action is triggered) does little to address those concerns. A lot of damage can happen in a year or two. Risking changing wildlife patterns (beyond the bighorn sheep, elk, etc. that have already been identified) would be extremely unfortunate - as would any risk to polluting the water source.

Obviously, fire is one of the biggest worries. Even though there would technically be rules prohibiting fires outside of campsites along Chalk Creek, we all know that not all people follow those rules. We already see fires up on the mountainside that shouldn't be there; that will only be more likely to happen more often and closer to home if people can legally camp nearby. Even though there are guidelines in place, there is no way to ensure they're followed. And with St Elmo nearby, you're talking about endangering irreplaceable historical treasures.

You may have excellent intentions and have several guidelines thought out and considered - but I think it's important to acknowledge the fact that people simply don't always follow the rules.

Which leads to the larger point - there just isn't enough manpower to keep an eye on all the canyons and miles and acres affected. The staffing is insufficient for the job at hand. And if many of the current issues have been exacerbated, if not caused, by a lack of patrolling and enforcing previous policies, revising those policies to let in more people that will need to be patrolled is pretty much the last thing that seems beneficial.

This policy could have consequences that last for generations. We ask you to please reconsider and not allow increased dispersed camping as proposed in Chalk Creek Canyon.