

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/9/2023 3:51:32 PM

First name: Jeremiah

Last name: St Ours

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Since at least the mid 1970's, Hang-glider and Paraglider Pilots have used a free-flight launch site within the Durango NW Recreation Project boundary. The site, located at 37.35713 -107.88016, is above and to the west of the closed Falls Creek Archaeological Area and was long ago acknowledged by the USFS District Ranger. Our local club of USHPA (United States Hang-Gliding & Paragliding Association) certified pilots respectfully request that this launch site remain open for public use.

We are an environmentally responsible group who practice Leave No Trace principles while engaged in a harmless recreational activity. Paragliding is completely passive, creates no air or noise pollution, and requires no vehicular access. Parking at the Animas Overlook Trailhead and carrying our backpacks south on the existing Cliffsides Trail -- .70 miles to the launch site -- gives us all of the access we need. Grassy fields below, east of the parking area at 37.35291 -107.86675, provide safe landing. At no time do we enter the restricted archaeological zone.

The only accommodation we request in your plan is to allow us to self-maintain the launch area for maximum safety. Annually, typically in spring, we request permission to do a limited amount of scrub-oak pruning. Trimming the oak, which can invade the periphery of our launch area at roughly knee height, protects our delicate wings from puncture and prevents our many tiny lines from getting ensnared. A clear launch pad makes for a clean and safe get-away from the slope.

In short, the parking lot at Animas Overlook is adequate for the vehicle we use to shuttle pilots up Junction Creek Road to the take-off trailhead. The existing trail takes us directly from the trailhead to the launch site. The launch itself is a natural feature that makes use of predictable, regular, micro-climatic conditions that allow us to fly up, out, and away. Finally, on days when we're unable to fly further afield, we can easily and safely land in the SJNF fields below the launch, just east of CR 205.

Please continue to consider our free-flight activities as a legitimate, low-impact form of healthy recreation within San Juan National Forest. And please allow us to maintain the launch site -- at no cost to the USFS and negligible environmental impact -- so that our safety can be assured. Thank you for your consideration; I look forward to answering any additional questions you might have.

See attached <map.png> for reference. See attached <launch.jpg> and <fly.jpg> to understand how we safely launch and fly a paraglider from this much-loved site.