

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/2/2023 5:11:38 PM

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Comments: The following are my comments and some ideas regarding the proposed changes in target shooting in Pike National Forest.

General Comments and Ideas:

I live in Divide, CO very near the forest boundary and often hear people shooting in the forest. I also hike in the forest several times a week and occasionally run into shooters. The vast majority of the time this shooting is being done by responsible people and does not bother me in any way. However, on very, very few occasions over the past 10 years I have seen people being totally irresponsible. Please note that I have never seen these irresponsible people doing their shooting more than a few yards from forest boundaries, trails or roads.

To me the real problem is not so much shooting in the Pike National Forest as it is "where" shooting is being done in the forest. Irresponsible shooters seem to congregate near forest boundaries and near roads or trails through the forest. This is what creates the vast majority of complaints from those that live near the forest. Therefore, I suggest that you simply revise existing laws that already prohibit shooting within 50 yards of a boundary, trail or road. Increase this to one half mile or even one mile from all roads, trails or boundaries and the current problems will disappear.

Of course there is also the problem of enforcing the proposed "no shooting" laws. If you ban shooting in the entire forest people will still shoot regardless of laws. This will create serious problems with enforcement. Most National Forest Service employees are not trained or equipped to enforce these types of laws. That means that County and State police will need to do enforcement. These professionals are already understaffed and overburdened. This will add significantly to their work load. The bottom line is that enforcement will be very difficult.

I also recommend that a contact number and/or email site be setup for citizens to report any shooting that is being done too near trails, roads and boundaries. This would help law enforcement and the Forest Service to better control the new distance laws.

New Ranges Suggestions and Ideas:

I know that the proposal also includes creating several new shooting ranges within Pike National Forest. I believe that this is a good idea but please do not create anymore "Turkey Tracks" type of ranges! That place would be a good example of what not to do! It's dirty and dangerous!

Instead, I would suggest that any new shooting ranges follow the example set by Chaffee County and the National Forest Service at Nathrop, CO. The range there is safe and clean! Safe because of the way the range is constructed and clean because it is monitored by local law enforcement and National Forest Service personnel. The way they have it set-up is that both law enforcement and Forest Service personnel check the site when they happen to be in the area. It is also patrolled by volunteers within the community. I highly suggest that before building new ranges in Pike that you meet with those who did the Nathrop range and use it as an example of what is possible.

Thank You