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Title:
Comments: I am a full time resident of Crested Butte living along the Brush Creek corridor very close to the Farris Creek drainage. It is one of my favorite spots and my family and I frequently visit the area in question to bike, hike, hunt, camp, cut our Christmas tree, and for other activities. I agree that the Farris Creek drainage has seen increased use and resource damage in recent years, and it has ben disappointing that this previously quiet and kind of secret valley has become so over-used. That said, I am writing to express strong disagreement with the idea that making this road accessible to OHVs 50" wide or less will fix this situation.

From personal experience in the area, I've noticed that ATVs and UTVs have been the primary vehicle type that these increased uses and damages has occurred from. In Farris Creek, the greater Brush Creek drainage, and all other areas of the Gunnison Basin it has been a boom in these types of vehicles that has been the most noticeable and destructive. The number of trucks and Jeeps seems to have decreased over the years as smaller OHVs have become so widespread. I see no reason to believe that the users of these vehicles are somehow more responsible or do less resource damage than the drivers of traditional vehicles. In fact I think it may be the other way around. They go faster, make more noise & dust, require less skill/knowledge to operate, and are more dangerous than tradition rigs. The majority of the users of these vehicles also seem to be non-residents visiting to camp and off road and those activities often result in road/riparian area damages, user created trails & campsites, noise pollution, and other issues. Eliminating the way locals use the area to camp, hunt, shuttle mountain bike rides, etc... while allowing all the non-resident OHV users to have it to themselves would be real shame. This would also basically eliminate the campsites in the area as most campers are not going to load their gear onto an ATV to go camping. In fact, some of the damage in this area is probably due to large rigs pulling trailers into the camping areas to unload their ATVs/UTVs. It is hard enough to find a campsite anywhere in the valley these days and cutting these off from access would be another hit to locals just trying to enjoy the lands we know, love, and help take care of.

I am personally familiar with the worst parts of this road where people get stuck and go off trail to avoid the mud and obstacles. Again, I don't see how eliminating one user group will correct that problem. The area in front of the main campsites and the main creek crossing where the road turns to the north have become a big mud holes in recent years and many people drive through the meadows and wetlands to avoid them. These could be easily fixed with the installation of some rocky fill and/or a couple culverts in these areas which would alleviate many of the issues. Maybe reaching out to CBMA or other local organizations to work on the road and trails and improve public education would be a better first step.

All this said, if changes and limiting access are inevitable, I would honestly rather see this portion of Farris Creek road closed to all motorized traffic than to have it become only open to ATVs & UTVs. The negative impacts of these specific user groups have become very noticeable in so many areas in recent years and it seems counterproductive to start carving out areas where their impacts are allowed but other users are excluded. At least eliminating all motorized use would allow the wildlife and human powered users to enjoy the area free from the constant noise. Farris Creek is an important migration corridor for deer and elk and a special valley in general. My humble opinion and advice would be to fix the few bad areas of the roads to avoid people going off trail and keep it open to all users, or close it to motorized travel all together and do the elk, deer, & hunters willing to walk a HUGE favor.

Thanks for your consideration in managing/protecting Farris Creek.