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Title:

Comments: The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has initiated a plan to revise its recreational shooting policy and management plan on the Pike National Forest (PNF). This plan will terminate recreational shooting within the Pike National Forest and initiate the creation of seven designated shooting ranges.

As a responsible gun owner and recreational shooter, I recognize the concern of user conflict, and population growth, and understand the importance of protecting our natural resources (Hence, I have identified and seen dispersed shooting areas that have been trashed which is rather embarrassing for those of us who take pride in our sport. Despite my efforts, it is a problem which is rather unfortunate).

The convenience of recreational shooting in the PNF allows responsible Coloradans to easily and freely exercise their 2nd amendment rights. The elimination of recreational shooting will force shooters to highly occupied ranges and wipe out easy shooting access in the forest. Recreational shooters rely on the forest as a cheap and peaceful place to shoot. Veteran shooters who utilize the PNF understand and follow the shooting regulations that are enforced by the USFS.

The economic footprint of recreational shooters is also something to take into account. Shooters that rely on forest lands generate lots of economic activity by purchasing fuel, ammunition, and food and contribute to business in small mountain towns. Eliminating recreational shooting in the forest will deter sportsmen and shooters from visiting altogether. Without significant evidence supporting the negative impacts of dispersed recreational shooting, I believe the forest should remain open as an option for "responsible shooters."

I support the construction of the seven designated shooting ranges as they would supply the option of a more permanent shooting environment versus a more secluded shooting experience. These designated shooting ranges would require significant monitoring to ensure they aren't doing more harm than good. To ensure the best experience possible; designated shooting lanes, designated parking, restrooms, signage, and trash/brass reciprocals should be required.

Donation boxes and volunteer patrol positions should also be considered. I would support a membership fee to be used to offset costs to maintain these ranges and to encourage "ownership" of these ranges by members.

In closing, I am fully in support of the rights of gun owners to shoot in the forest; however, the blatant disregard of the rules by a small number of people has left no other option than to more carefully manage target shooting through the establishment of shooting ranges and the closure of poorly managed dispersed shooting sites.