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Comments: Thanks for establishing this process to move forward in developing a Dispersed Camping Management Plan. It is time to be heading towards a proactive solution instead of a reactive response to increasing camping use and subsequent impacts on public lands and the users who spend time on our National Forest Lands.

This is our legacy.

Stepping back for a moment and remembering why we're undertaking this project, who we serve, and our responsibility to manage our valuable resources I hope that we can do so with conviction and clarity of desired outcomes. We may not have another opportunity like this again at this confluence of tremendous public support and critical resource management need. This is an important moment in establishing a thoughtful and effective framework to responsibly move forward in stewardship, protection, and addressing current and future user needs and opportunities.

I support a commitment to coordinated and strategic planning communication within the inter-related Trails and Conservation Plan, the 14er's Visioning Process, and Cross District Wilderness Management discussions. The goal would be to avoid adverse impacts to user experience, resource management, ROS mandates, and ultimately agency workloads and efficiency due to a lack of good communication between projects recognizing many shared goals and outcomes.

These comments are offered from the perspective of 45 years backcountry guiding, 39 years of operating an outdoor recreation company, 4 years Chaffee County Envision and Rec in Balance participation. Including trails, wilderness management, and 14er Visioning process. Experience with USFS Capacity Analysis, Needs Assessment, and Outfitting & Guiding Permit revision process.

Respectfully,

Chuck Cichowitz

NOPA - Camping Plan Comments/Recommendations

ROS - Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Recommendations

General Comments

Browns Creek/Raspberry/Antero Recommendations

ROS - Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Maintain ratio of ROS classes for vehicle-based camping dispersed recreation

Maintaining and Protecting ROS distributions and User Experience.

Relates to density of campsites. Needs to have differentiation. Isolated sites to higher density large CG's. Not all camping areas should have the same density of sites or the same capacities.

Diverse opportunity from established campgrounds to areas with few isolated quieter campsites.

Consider camping density relative to level of impact.

Many of our greatest and longest lasting camping impacts are occurring the upper portions of drainages in the Collegiates and Mt Massive areas. For example: N Cottonwood, N Clear Ck (including SF, LF, and NF), S Cottonwood, Denny Ck, and Halfmoon.

Clear Creek Drainage

Clear Creek is a good example of the need to protect ROS distribution and prevent changes to types of uses and activities, and ultimately change of setting.

From the large, developed campground at the reservoir to the town of Winfield, then on to the THs at NF Clear Ck and SF Clear Ck. We have large camping capacity at the reservoir and then dispersed camping, including some large sites along the road with up to the town of Winfield, which has higher density of camping. Then dispersed camping to SF TH and NF TH. Not to discount the impact of high use #'s at the Missouri Basin TH

In the past 5 years this drainage has gotten trashed. As have most of the rest of the drainages with vehicle access in the Collegiates and Mt Massive areas.

The higher up the drainage the greater the VB Camping impacts to wildlife, alpine and riparian areas, water quality, and other user experiences and activities. Not to mention the increase of human waste and trash. This type of use impacts TH's like at Lake Anne. Camping at higher elevations and further up these drainages has a direct relationship to loss of user experience for those travelling on foot. Increased VB camping contact, increased # of large sites, more trash, fewer wildlife sightings, and increased noise.

We used to have many places in the front country and higher elevation non-wilderness areas that provided quality recreation experience opportunities. We've lost many of those characteristics and subsequently pushing more people looking to travel by foot into the wilderness areas, and those looking to find more solitude and in VB camping to adjust expectation or season of use.

Recommendations:(applicable to many areas in the Collegiates and Mt Massive)

1. Manage campsites in the upper portions of all drainages in Collegiates and Massive to be consistent with the more primitive, high alpine environments, and adjoining wilderness areas. Considering types of activities and uses occurring in these settings.
2. There should be fewer sites with less density in the upper portions of all drainages.
3. Limit the # of dispersed VB camp sites in SF and NF past Winfield. LF past the stream crossing.
4. Establish designated sites past Winfield to SF and to NF, and in LF to mitigate excessive impact to riparian areas and meadows as necessary. And oversized expanding hardened sites.
5. Consistency of Signage - pertaining to camping specifically. Separate from other signage to maximize likelihood of users reading. We've been recommending this for over 4 years. It would be more effective and specific to the users' primary concern or intent - camping.
6. Stop Development Creep - Translates to User Experience and Activity Loss

Development creep equates to increased use, change in types of uses/activities, changes traditional user group, and ultimately changes ROS setting.

Includes not adding of user created roads to access or establish dispersed campsites. Incremental hardening of sites or adding user created trails for the sake of convenience. That presupposed that these roads and sites are necessary and encourages irresponsible use.

1. Campsite Inventory and Camping Need

With a growing population and increased use, demand will consistently exceed supply. Need consideration of capacity limits. Capacity as it relates to ROS, sustainability, experience will protect ROS integrity.

Avoid mind set to recognize every established site as legitimate. Incremental hardening of sites, adding user created social trails, and adding more roads to accommodate user created access to and establish dispersed campsites.

Can't accept current conditions and sites as status quo. Must be based upon agency management and evaluation tools to determine suitability, need, and compliance.

Need a well-defined inventory of existing conditions compared to desired conditions. This will provide a legitimate basis for evaluating and decision-making.

General Comments

1. Funding mechanism. Seems to be missing.
2. What's sustainable to manage. USFS staff vs volunteer or county funded, and volunteer staffed.

Already taking significant volunteer efforts and community funding to address site cleanup, trash and human waste disposal. Seems like we ought to manage dispersed and designated dispersed camping at current levels before adding more of these types of sites.

1. Camping sites at Pomeroy, Grizzly Lake-Baldwin Gulch, and Antero/Little Browns Creek/Browns lake, are barely mentioned if at all, but have significant camping, trash, and campfire ring impacts
2. Not sure how much more traffic towns like Buena Vista can handle. Restaurants, gas stations, parking and grocery stores are increasingly maxed out. We all know what it is like trying to get services for a good part of the summer, and the expanding shoulder seasons, especially in the fall. Its almost impossible and very hectic. Often takes 3-5 minutes to turn on to US 24/285.
3. It looks like Clear ck drainage is underrepresented in terms # of campsites.

Browns Creek Camping Comments

Including: Browns Creek/Little Browns Creek Area/White Mtn

Use Types: hiking, backpacking, vehicle-based camping, 4x4/motorized, horseback riding, mining, fishing, wildlife, biking.

Comments

I have accessed and used the Browns Creek/Little Browns Creek Trails since 1983, both personally and as a permitted outfitter. We historically have viewed this area as one of the most diverse, scenic, and best hiking and backpacking opportunities in Chaffee County. In fact, this area once provided recreation and solitude opportunities similar to or better than opportunities found in some of our wilderness areas. This area supported day hiking up to 6 day backpacking trips. Other permitted outfitters as well as the general public sought out this area for these same characteristics and combined, we all indirectly took pressure off our wilderness areas while enjoying a quality experience.

There has been a significant experience loss with increasing day use at the Browns Creek TH resulting from local resort recommendations, social media, increased visitor use, increased horseback riding usage, increased localized TH VB Camping, and increased motorized camping use coming up Baldwin gulch accessing Mt Antero, White Mtn and down towards the upper Browns Lake area.

Camping user experience has greatly decreased and environmental damage has dramatically increased.

We are seeing the loss of quality primitive hiking and backcountry opportunity experience. Less wildlife sightings. Loss of differentiation of experience. Increased camping in Browns Ck, Raspberry Gulch, via Antero has contributed to these impacts.

The loss of quality recreation opportunity and experience for the Outfitter Industry due to the dramatic use increases over the past 10 plus years, especially for the past 3-4 years has been profound. Including safety and health concerns with abandoned camps, some of which were related to mining enterprises. This type of use historically took pressure off our Wilderness areas. This is what we use to refer to as the Front Country buffer to wilderness areas. It's increasingly challenging to provide the quality experience in this area as it used to be.

Recommendations/Comments

1. Campground site proposal seems logical. Need to see more of overall information and area plan specifics.
2. Do not increase use pressure on Browns Creek TH and Colorado Trail usage by increasing camping opportunities in the Browns Ck/Raspberry Gulch area without provision to protect user experience and recreation opportunity. Trail is already congested and the parking at TH is often overcrowded.
3. Address management concern. It is requiring significant USFS Personnel and volunteer labor to manage/mitigate Increased social trails, trash, and human waste issues. Increase camping specific signage and design impact areas for efficient management while optimizing camping experience.
4. The local landowners need assurance of Fire Risk Provisions.
5. Address increase noise impacts, safety threat from increased target practicing, vandalism to adjacent landowners (fences, trees cut down and motorized use all on private property) and impacts/stress to local elk population and antelope seen in this area as well.
6. Limit or restrict vehicle-based camping near Browns Lake.
7. Address increasing use conflicts with horses and motorized use, user created social trails, including those created by cattle grazing, mtn biking and OHV usage.