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Title:

Comments: Expanding the greater Telluride trail network in appropriate areas is a worthy endeavor for the community. The the north-facing hill/cliffside opposite the Idarado Legacy subdivision is not an appropriate area for any trail, including the proposed South Side Perimeter Trail (SSPT). Not only is the slope precipitous and thus problematic for construction and maintenance of a trail, the whole area is one of the few remaining untouched wilderness refuges close to town. The SSPT will adversely affect this heretofore undisturbed watershed and wildlife sanctuary on the south side of the headwaters of the San Miguel river.

In the Wildlife and Botany Report prepared by Rocky Mountain Ecology, updated on the USFW website as of 3/4/25, the authors identify Species of Conservation Concern -- birds, toads, and low-rise vegetation - that they deem "not affected" by the proposed trail(s). Oddly, the report does not venture beyond these SCC species to address larger, iconic species that inhabit our region, and most definitely inhabit the hillside where the SSPT is proposed.

As 15-year Idarado residents on the north side of the river immediately across from the proposed SSPT, my family and I can attest to the presence of such species. Our security cameras have captured, among others, mountain lions (two this winter), black bear, pine martens, red tail fox and porcupines; and in addition to elk and deer, we have ourselves witnessed two bears and a mountain lion cross the river and disappear into the very hillside the SSPT would disrupt. How could building, reinforcing and maintaining a horizontal trail along such a steep slope in a narrow corridor of pristine refuge not adversely affect these and other animals?

Of course, the encroachment of trail infrastructure is just the beginning of disruption to this habitat -- the inevitable human traffic, noise and trespass by some will be the more serious ongoing assault to this oasis of wildness and natural beauty so close to town.

Let's not try to solve a Bridal Veil parking problem, or a desire for a new place to walk, by gouging out a trail through this sanctuary for flora and fauna, untouched precisely because it does not and should not accommodate human recreation.

Respectfully submitted,

Thrus Morton