

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/2/2025 2:38:20 PM

First name: Lisa

Last name: Allee

Organization: Trout Lake Owners Association Board of Trustees

Title: President

Comments: Thank you for the time, energy and tax-payer money put into this Draft EA. The Trout Lake Owners Association (TLOA) renews its objection to the proposed Sheep Mountain Traverse (SMT) trail-please see our comments from the scoping period with multiple reasons why the trail should not be cut through the intact forest including negative impacts on wildlife, plants and our community and our suggestions for alternative ways to reach the goals purported to be the reasons the Telluride Mountain Club is proposing the SMT trail. TLOA strongly recommends and requests that Option C/Alternative 3 be the choice recommended and selected by USFS-elimination of the proposed SMT trail from the proposed action.

Comments on the TMT Trails Draft EA:

*Consultations--In the section listing who was consulted and who commented during the scoping period, there is a glaring lack of private landowners who will be impacted by the proposed action. We know for a fact that both Trout Lake Owners Association and Trout Lake Land Company provided comments and suggestions and suspect that others, i.e. Lizard Head Land Company and the Hidden Lake community, probably did as well. Hopefully this was an innocent oversight by the USFS personnel and not a blatant disregard for these communities as was demonstrated by the Telluride Mountain Club in their development of this proposal. We highly recommend that the USFS team hold direct discussions with these communities before finalizing this Environmental Assessment as it will not be complete without these necessary consultations.

*Habitat--In the section on lynx habitat the authors state: "The long, narrow distribution of impacts (along trail alignments) would functionally preserve understory forest structure within the immediate vicinity and would not result in significant breaks in the density of low hanging branches, understory shrubs, and downed woody material throughout a stand." This does not make any logical sense as the whole purpose of creating a trail is to clear the understory and low hanging branches. Thus, the authors' conclusion that creating the trail in lynx habitat would not negatively impact that habitat is suspect at best and, actually, just plain wrong. Of course a trail and all its resulting human-bike-horse traffic through the habitat is going to negatively impact the beings who live in that habitat! This is common sense! Also, the calculation of just the trail, a mere 1.8 acres, as the impact area is ludicrous because people, bikes, and horses will go off trail. Please correct the EA to show that the proposed SMT trail's impact would be larger than just the trail and would push the lynx, snowshoe hares, elk, bear, mountain lions, and other species who live on Sheep Mountain into an ever-shrinking space of suitable habitat. Finally, this is an unnecessary negative impact on wildlife as there is an abundance of trails already available in the area and the Galloping Goose is right there! So please change the draft EA to recommend Option C/Alternative 3-eliminate the proposed SMT trail from the action!

*Seasonal Use--There is a comment in the EA that the proposed SMT trail would not be used in winter and, therefore, not impact the lynx and snowshoe hare habitat negatively. This notion is ludicrous for a couple reasons: one, the lynx and hares live here year-round and so will be negatively impacted by spring/summer/fall trail use and, two, the trail is likely to be used by skiers in the winter. Please amend the draft EA to correct this incorrect assessment.

*CORE Act-The boundary for the Sheep Mountain Special Use Area should be the existing Galloping Goose trail/road not this proposed new trail because building and using this proposed trail as the boundary would decrease the size of the Special Use Area not maintain its present size as intended by the CORE Act. Again please correct the draft EA to recommend Option C/Alternative C eliminating the proposed SMT trail from the action.

*Parking and Traffic-this section is woefully incomplete. Whoever did the assessment clearly did not come to Trout Lake in the summer. Please amend the draft EA to reflect the following: Most summer days we are inundated with traffic. Hundreds of cars go up to the Hope Lake Trailhead via North Trout Lake Road. As many go up and down the Galloping Goose, also using North Trout Lake Road. The traffic causes dust, damages the road, and many people speed putting pedestrians at risk. Thus, any increase in traffic would obviously increase these negative impacts on our health and safety. The parking lot at the boat ramp is full most every day and

although parking along most of North Trout Lake Road is technically prohibited there is constant illegal parking along the road making it congested and dangerous. The proposed parking for this proposed trail at the trestle is another problem. That parking is generally full a lot of winter days for the Nordic skiing and often there are cars parked along the road for that as well. Having that parking lot full and overflowing all summer as well as winter is unimaginable and unacceptable. Overall, we are already dealing with the impacts of a lot of recreation on the USFS lands around us and we are adamantly opposed to doing anything to increase these negative traffic and parking impacts on our community. Again, selecting Option C/Alternative 3 is our strong, adamant request as it will help prevent increased traffic and parking. We are already dealing with enough.

*Camping--The draft EA does not appear to deal with the camping situation around Trout Lake and if this proposed trail were to be built, it would increase this problematic and dangerous situation as well. Please amend the EA to include this topic taking into account the following information. Currently there is unmonitored, dispersed camping along the Galloping Goose and Hope Lake Road. We have experienced trespassing, trash, and human waste on our land as a result. And more importantly, we are at great increased wildfire danger because of the dangerous, incessant, and improper use of campfires in the dispersed camping sites. We were told by Megan Eno, USFS, that dispersed camping was going to be stopped along both these roads with an increase in established, monitored campgrounds at Lizard Head Pass and Matterhorn/Priest Lake but neither of these things have happened yet. We sincerely hope the proposed trail will not be built so camping will not increase, and we hope that the dispersed camping and dangerous campfires will be stopped in the very near future.

*Helitrax-The presence of helicopters and bombing during the winter is another recreational activity on USFS lands that we deal with. The sounds of war in our quiet, rural, peaceful community are unsettling to say the least. This needs to be added to the EA in the recreation section acknowledging the high level of recreation the Trout Lake community already contends with. Again, we are already dealing with enough, we oppose yet another trail negatively impacting our and other species' quality of life. Enough already!

Again, thank you to the USFS staff and contractors for their work on this Draft EA. We look forward to working with you all on finalizing this document and hope that you are willing to have direct consultations with us and other private landowners impacted by the proposed action before the project moves forward.