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Organization:

Title:

Comments: November 9, 2020

USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region

Attn: Objection Reviewing Officer

P.O. Box 18980 Golden, CO 80402

Submitted online via: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=50041>

RE: Berlaimont Estates Access Route FEIS and ROD

Dear Reviewing Officer:

I write to object to the decision by Scott Fitzwilliams, Forest Supervisor in charge of White River National Forest to allow for substantial development in the form of an improved access road to private inholdings referred to as Berlaimont Estates Access Route FEIS and ROD.

In 2018, I had filed written comments with Matthew Klein stating that I wanted the forest service to consider the following when making their decision:

- * Reasonable use: I asked that reasonable use not disrupt current use.
 - o I further pointed out that current use included recreation, and wildlife.
- * Existing similar inholdings.
 - o Fulford, Colorado which is nearby and in the same forest has only ever had seasonal access.
- * The economy of the valley.
 - o The economy is driven by tourism that expect natural beauty and wildlife, not roads to mansions carved up mountainsides and crippled wildlife populations.

The current decision by the forest service did consider current recreational use but did not sufficiently consider wildlife use to the extent required in an area with dwindling wildlife populations. In fact, even current use is negatively impacting wildlife populations. More development and additional trail building to preserve current recreational activity is not reasonable and will do irreversible damage to the forest that the US Forest Service has a mission to protect.

I also do not believe that the current decision considered my original complaint that there are other examples of inholdings very similar to this proposal that have only seasonal access. Namely Fulford which has had only seasonal access for over 100 years. Again I fear allowing development of year round access to this inholding will only set a precedent that will cause other inholdings such as Fulford and Piney to request similar development and put the US Forest Service in a position where they are forced to fail at their mission to protect the health and diversity of the White River National Forest.

Finally, since 2018, when I filed my original comments, the world has changed significantly. Super-fires are now a common occurrence and Eagle County isn't immune to these fires as documented in articles in both local and national newspapers: <https://www.vaildaily.com/news/eagle-county-isnt-immune-from-the-trend-of-mega-fires/> <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2020/09/most-important-number-for-the-west-s-wildfires-california/616359/>. Why would we allow for the development of this road to these proposed forest mansions and setup a scenario where they may require extremely expensive protection from an under-funded fire protection district? Even the roadwork itself, which would likely take place during the hot, dry months of summer, creates a real risk of triggering a super-fire in the area- definitely not the kind of thing that would look good on the record of the sworn protectors of the White River National Forest.

Another thing that has happened since my initial comments in 2018 is the approval of additional development in

the county which ties back to the forest service's requirement to protect wildlife. These recently approved developments include the Edwards River Park and ski area expansions at McCoy Park. Both projects will undoubtedly put stress on already stressed and declining deer and elk populations in the White River National Forest. The Berlaimont Estates Access Route did not consider them when concluding that the project would not adversely affect existing wildlife populations.

The US Forest Service's dismissal of the No Action alternative is quite surprising given these new developments, the strong case that commentors (including me) already made in our initial comments, and the US Forest Service's mission to protect the forests when put in contrast to the landholders obvious knowledge upon purchasing the land that there wasn't existing year round access to the land. What did the landholder expect? That they would be able to convince the forest service to turn their back on their own mission for the landholder's profit? That is ridiculous and not how forest management is meant to work.

The only way to resolve my objections is take a decision of NO ACTION.

Given that my initial comments were not properly taken into account, I fear that forest supervisor Fitzwilliams may not understand my written statements. Therefore, I would like to request a personal meeting with the Forest Service to clarify and further my objections with supervisor Fitzwilliams.

With regards,
Jonathan Christensen