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First name: Durango

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Durango Trails proposed several projects in and around the scoping area for Junction Creek and Falls Creek over the years and the following comments address the proposed actions for the Junction Creek Riparian Corridor and Trail, Logchutes, and Falls Creek/Hidden Valley JFIRM Project.

Thank you for pursuing the opportunity and looking at the forest health in a holistic manner. It offers opportunity to collaborate and implement a long range plan.

Outdoor recreation is a major driver for residents and visitors to LaPlata County, employing thousands of jobs at bike shops, running shops, outdoor shops, guides, outfitters, ski resorts, public lands and others involved in the outdoor recreation industry. Developing a comprehensive approach to this plan is greatly appreciated as it has a significant effect on many elements from fire resilience as well as our physical, mental and social well-being.

1) 2.4.2 Hydrologic Restoration and Maintenance

1) We support the stream bank rehabilitation along Junction Creek at the lower Colorado Trail entrance. If trail users are seeking access to the river, please also provide an access that is accessible along with the stream back rehab.

2) We support the work along Steineger Ditch but please consider the user flow of traffic on the trails in this plan so as not to create a blockage along the trail. The Hidden Valley trails are Falls Creek are a popular, easy to access trail system that is flat from the car to the trail, a rare access for our area. Establishing a system of trails in Hidden Valley is suitable and we highly recommend considering a trails plan that addresses current trail connectivity that exists on the ground and how it can be improved. Durango Trails would be willing to adopt this trail system to assist the Forest Service

3) Large scale burning in this area seems precarious.

2) 2.4.2 Large Scale Fuels Reduction

1) The fuels reduction work while needed seems to need more specific planning. The work on Animas Mountain had vehicles drive over trails recently rehabbed and built, leaving wide open spaces where trail users found it difficult to find and stay on the trail and creating additional drainage issues due to the steep terrain.

2) We kindly request a large buffer between the fuels reduction and trail area wherever possible to help with trail access, staying on the trail, retaining corral points, assisting in retaining grade reversals and drainage and enhancing the trail experience.

3) The last fuels project in Log Chutes was impactful to the trails, trees were felled and placed alongside the trail which seems to have limited purpose.

4) Regarding the actual thinning in the Log Chutes trails, Durango Trails has adopted these trails for over 20 years, including rebuilding the trails and adding signage in the last few years. We think it's important that the trail corridor remain intact with three to five feet of vegetation on either side to prevent trail users from cutting the trail corridor. The flora on the inside of corners prevents the trail from becoming straight, if you could please leave vegetation along the trail corridor (especially inside corners) that would be a great assistance for drainage and keeping users on the trail, as well as enhancing the trail experience for riding/running/walking so it remains one

of being in the woods and on singletrack vs a wide open road. Naturalization back to the singletrack trail post-timber removal should also be considered.

3) Habitat reseeding

1) Please consider planning around the trail system in this plan so as not to close trails that are part of a trail use pattern and that they remain open year round.

4) Road Improvements 2.4.4

1) There is a lot of traffic on Junction Creek Road 171 and chip sealing and paving only increases the speed. This is a wonderful and quiet access all year around for users and the speed is a safety issue for hikers, trail runners, dog walkers and bikers. Gravel bikers enjoy the current Junction Creek Road with the gravel and prefer not to chip seal the road. By chip sealing and paving it will make it easier for cars to speed up and down the road. This is a true safety issue and the current condition allows for some speed control. Consideration for bike and pedestrian use on Junction Creek Road should be communicated in the management plan to the timber harvest contractor. If possible, a speed limit should be posted. There are hundreds of through-hikers who complete the Colorado Trail each season and walk down Junction Creek Road into town to finish their journey along with any locals who utilize the road which lacks a safe shoulder or a bike lane, this includes Junction Creek Road, CR 204 and CR 205. Please communicate the safety necessity to the timber contractor about the recreation use on both the USFS and County Road and a request that they operate at a reduced speed and with a general awareness about our community patterns.

We kindly request that any decisions made in this area have no adverse affect on existing trails including the Colorado Trail, Dry Fork, Hofheins, Log Chutes or Falls Creek. The trails in this area are well used and planned, maintained by Durango Trails and provide economic benefit, physical, mental and social connections for our growing community. All decisions should incorporate a balanced approach while understanding the high values are residents place on access to these public lands.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments. We are fortunate to partner with the Columbine District.