



Ms Marybeth Gustafson
Supervisor, White River National Forest
900 Grand Avenue
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Glenwood Springs, Co 81602

1/23/2008

Subject: WRNF Travel Management Plan (TMP)

Dear Ms Gustafson,

It appears that the White River TMP process is going to start up again, and include an opportunity for additional public input. With that opportunity open, I would like to reiterate some of the issues that Jerry Abboud and I discussed with you in 2007.

If you look at past Forest Planning and Travel Management Planning on the WRNF, you can see a drastic reduction in trails and areas for OHV recreation. Of specific concern, are the significant reductions for motorized, single track trail riding opportunities. This is very disturbing in that motorized, single track recreation demand has grown significantly, and the FS has not addressed the issue, other than to continue to reduce "multi-use trails". If you compare the previous actions of the FS with the extremely high volume of motorcycle sales over the past 10 years, you can get a very clear picture that OHV recreation demands of the public are not being positively addressed by the FS. The Forest Service lacks an integrated transportation planning model and strategy for motorized use, and appears to be dealing with it on only a Forest by Forest basis.

In an example of responding to increasing public recreation demands, the WRNF has responded and allowed wholesale expansion of the ski industry. Every major ski area in the WRNF has been allowed to expand their operations to meet changing and growing demands including; building new chair lifts, building service roads, and man-made water reservoirs to hold water for snow making. This does not take into account the wildlife habitat destruction, or the pollution that comes with each ski area expansion. In short, the ski industry and been given the opportunity to develop completely new areas for their business, full time Forest Service snow rangers have been assigned and funded, and Forest Service personnel have been involved in major planning processes based on national need assessments.

Within the OHV community we see a distinct negative bias against OHV recreation and motorcycle trail riding in the WRNF. We are requesting that your TMP planning staff revisit the issue of OHV recreation, and make significant improvements in the areas of OHV recreation for two-track, four wheel drive and single track motor cycle trail riding. Your staff has an abundance of studies and suggestions that have been presented by the OHV community. What is lacking is a balanced distribution of forest opportunities for motorized recreation recognizing both historic and current patterns of use.

In revisiting the issue of transportation on the WRNF, the argument has constantly been repeated that the WRNF is about skiing and wilderness based upon recent recreation planning decisions. Even accepting that motorized is not the preferred niche, responding to and providing opportunity within Forest Plan guidelines is both legitimate and needed.



It is the OHV community that consistently steps forward to provide resources to sustain the economic and environmental elements of motorized recreational use and we are rewarded with diminishing opportunity. Why, indeed, is the Forest not looking to partner with a public eager to bring value? More people and families are enjoying our sport, and are finding fewer and fewer opportunities.

The Chief's comments are often misquoted referring to motorized recreation. We even find ourselves forgetting that "unmanaged recreation" is a general agency problem, with motorized recreation being only one of the specific elements. For the most part, the only issue the agency has had the inclination to address is motorized recreation. Unmanaged use is unmanaged use.

We encourage you to seek planning alternatives that add opportunity and enhance motorized recreation rather than eliminate it. The OHV registration fees in Colorado were just raised in response to forest management needs. OHV enthusiasts take pride in taxing themselves so they can help partner and carry the management costs on public lands. You have fourteeners that look like hill climbs (many in wilderness), and many trails that are receiving resource damage because of deferred maintenance. Yet, as money trickles in to repair all the damage caused by hikers, most of these mountains remain open.

Mr. Abboud and I are available to meet with you again to discuss these issues. What we recommend is that TMP alternatives be developed that are balanced, more in keeping with today's needs, changing recreation use patterns, and systems that can be sustained over time.

We appreciate your help and attention to these matters. We look forward to meeting with you, and will call your office soon to schedule an appointment.

Sincerely

Don Riggle
Colorado 500 and the Trails Preservation Alliance