

COHVCO Corner

By Dennis Larratt

***Gunnison Travel Plan Decision
Released. Good news and bad news
for motorcyclists.***

It's time for an update on some land use issues that affect all of us. First is an update on the USFS Gunnison National Forest and BLM Gunnison Basin Travel Management Plan (TMP). The Record of Decision was signed off on June 28, 2010, and there is good and bad news for motorcyclists.

This process started in early 2007 and has followed the required steps of the NEPA process: Scoping (2007), public comments, Draft Env. Impact Statement (DEIS), more public comments, Final EIS (FEIS), the last round of public comments, and finally the Record of Decision (ROD). The RMEC has partnered with the Colorado Trails Preservation Alliance (TPA) and COHVCO from the start of the process. The efforts have been led by Don Riggle of TPA, myself, a former USFS employee (let's call him Fred), our legal counsel, and the COHVCO team. We also got help from people like Jim Maucker, Jerry Guthals in Creede, Blue Ribbon Coalition, several Western Slope clubs, lots of locals from Gunnison, Crested Butte, Carbondale, and more. A true team effort.

Don, and I calculate that the two of us have had over 15 meetings with USFS and BLM personnel on this plan, mostly in Gunnison & Delta. Along with Fred, we've submitted extensive comments at each step of the way. I've been involved in these processes for nearly 25 years, and I'm proud to say that we've done a better job from the very start of this process than any other plan I'm aware of. Each step resulted in a book of comments from our team. And we've made a difference!

In the April 2009 Checkpoint, I reported on many of the trails that were at risk. Most of the differences came between the DEIS and the FEIS, but we saved one additional trail between the FEIS and the ROD. The combined efforts have kept open the following key trails to motorized use: the Crest Trail from Monarch Pass South, along with Agate Creek, Lime Creek, and virtually all the trails South of Marshall Pass through Cochetopa Hills. We got back the Carbon trail, the Italian Creek Connector (aka Spring Creek), and Teocalli Ridge will be re-opened once trail improvements are completed. Good stuff!

The bad news comes in the form of Doctor Park to Northbank Campground and Matchless Mtn., due to the DOW's protection of bighorn sheep. We lose the Lowline and Highline trails, plus the Beaver Creek / April Gulch trails for what we consider weak resources issues. We lose Ferris Creek to mountain bikes.

Meanwhile, mountain bike trail mileage increases significantly. Over 1,000 miles of roads, including 750 miles of short spur roads will be closed. These spurs don't affect riding much, but they affect everyone who enjoys dispersed camping away from the main roads. And there are significant flaws in the required analysis. While the USFS process

doesn't allow a legal challenge (an Appeal) based on route decisions, it does on the processes by which the decisions were made. The day before I wrote this, Don, Fred & I finalized our work with our attorney and an appeal was submitted on behalf of TPA, COHVCO, RMEC, & Blue Ribbon Coalition. If you are suffering from insomnia, you can read all the details in our comments and the appeal at the TPA website:

www.coloradotpa.org .

While Don and I don't get paid, even for travel, Fred and the attorney are expensive. So are the printing of the maps required to closely analyze each step's changes, the 1000's of pages of USFS documents, as well as publishing our comments for each key member of the USFS and BLM team involved in the process. COHVCO and the TPA have split all of the costs 50/50 (no direct cost to RMEC). So the RMEC's generous contributions to COHVCO are really key. And I'll be asking for some \$ for the TPA this year as well. YOUR SUPPORT OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS IS ALSO NEEDED AND APPRECIATED!

On another note, COHVCO has led a battle to protect the Colorado OHV Registration and Grant program with Colorado State Parks for over a year. A group of anti-motorized groups, led by the Colorado Mountain Club and Responsible Trails America, a Virginia based non-membership group, have tried all sorts of ways to wrest money and control from the system. They made progress on this front when the State Parks Board voted to make changes to the OHV Subcommittee who votes on the grants, and on the grant criteria. The process was extremely messy, and State Parks broke the Colorado open meetings law during the process. COHVCO and TPA are also challenging the process and outcome of this process. Suffice it to say that it has taken a huge toll on everyone involved in the process. We'll keep you informed as this unfolds.

**Please join COHVCO and make an additional donation.
Donations should also be made to TPA are tax deductible.
Ride responsibly, and help us protect Colorado's great riding!**