



September 26, 2012

Dear Representative Polis:

We are writing today to express our strong support for the U.S. Forest Service's recent draft proposal to build a small system of sustainable, multi-purpose trails in the Tenderfoot area of Summit County on the White River National Forest. Once constructed, these trails would continue to provide recreation opportunities for single track motorcycle use along with all other trail uses except ATV's and full size four-wheel drive vehicles.

Before getting into the specifics, we want to thank you for the work you do on behalf of Colorado tourism and small business. In many of our rural communities, small businesses play a key role in the local economy by providing motorized outdoor recreation opportunities such as 4-wheeling, ATV rides, snowmobile rides, and in our case, trails for motorcycle riding. These recreation activities generate essential income and jobs in many of our smaller rural towns such as Ouray, Telluride, Durango, Silverton, Grand Lake, and in areas such as Vail Pass.

Unfortunately, over the past decade, a number of environmental groups have made a concerted effort to exclude motorized users from enjoying our National Forests. Through political pressure and lawsuits, the actions of environmental groups have significantly reduced motorized recreation opportunities. In our opinion, groups such as the Center for Biological Diversity, the Quiet Use Coalition, Rocky Mountain Wild, the Colorado Environmental Coalition, and others have exhibited an attitude of increasing intolerance towards motorized recreation on our public lands. In spite of our best efforts, it is becoming increasingly difficult to work with these groups in an atmosphere of collaboration.

When it comes to the management of public lands, we want to emphasize that decisions are not made according to "majority rules." If this were so, the record shows that our well-funded and large-membership environmental organizations would force our national forests to discontinue grazing and commercial timber harvest that support local ranchers and logging companies. As a result of continuing and long-standing litigation in opposition to timber sales, there is only one large saw mill remaining in Colorado and with the huge amount of beetle-killed timber there is simply no market, such as companies that manufacture biofuel products, for this wood. If the environmental majority ruled, oil and gas exploration and development and many other uses would stop. These activities would be pushed, and in fact already have been, to countries where environmental protections are relatively nonexistent. As a result, our global rain forests are being decimated to meet the demands coming from the United States for energy and forest-based products. Shame on them!

When it comes to outdoor recreation, the number of motorized users in Colorado continues to grow. We do not realistically expect our national forests to meet the entire demand for the growing number of enthusiasts. However, we also do not think that closing more and more trails to motorized recreationists is a viable solution. If closures and opposition to responsible motorized recreation continues, users will be forced to find places where their activity is unlawful in hopes that law enforcement will not “catch” them. From our viewpoint, it seems that almost every other recreation user group, including ski areas and mountain bikers are receiving preferential treatment in terms of meeting increasing user demands. This is simply not equitable.

The Tenderfoot Trail System

The proposed Tenderfoot Trail system in Summit County is a modest trail proposal that the motorcycle community and the Summit Count Off-Road Riders (SCORR) in particular, have worked hard to bring to fruition. Two years ago, a Colorado state OHV grant was used to conduct the associated NEPA analysis and trail layout. As you are probably aware, the OHV fund in Colorado is funded by the state OHV registration program, a fee placed on OHV owners that is supported by the OHV community specifically for OHV trail construction and maintenance.

Working in collaboration with the Forest Service, SCORR and the Forest Service have completed all of the technical analyses including sound tests, meetings with local municipalities and the county commissioners, and public hearings. Additional highlights and of this trail system are as follows:

- ❑ Although designed for motorized use and located away from other non-motorized user trails, the trails will be open to mountain bikers, hikers and equestrian users.
- ❑ The trails will only be open to motorized use between mid-June and mid-October. The trails are closed to motorized use for 8 months of the year.
- ❑ This single track trail system accommodates the recreational needs of motorized users in Summit County and beyond. These users request access to our national forests as do other user groups, yet most single track, motorized trails in Summit County have been closed in recent years.
- ❑ This area and the Golden Horseshoe are the only two remaining areas in Summit County that provide motorized recreation opportunities for thousands of off-highway motorcycle enthusiasts. This single track trail system gives motorized users a legal and sustainable single track recreational opportunity.
- ❑ The proposed single track trail system will be rerouted up the mountain and away from neighborhoods where the existing single track trails have been located for more than 30 years.
- ❑ Single track trails such as the Oro Grande that were heavily used by hikers and other user groups and located in close proximity to neighborhoods are being closed to motorized use. Existing trails that are experiencing resource damage are also being closed.
- ❑ Draft environmental analyses confirm that the rerouted trails have no significant or irreversible adverse impacts on the environment.
- ❑ Noise tests on the rerouted trail system confirm there is no detectable sound in local neighborhoods. Noise to local neighborhoods from Highway 6 on the other hand is significant.
- ❑ There are no impacts to archeological or historical resources.
- ❑ Trail construction, maintenance, and patrol will be funded through volunteers and grants.

With the release of the draft Environmental Assessment, we are aware that local activists and environmental groups have initiated a significant lobbying and letter writing effort in opposition to the project that is aimed at the Summit County commissioners, state representative Millie Hamner, and your office. Copies of their letters opposing the project have also been sent to the White River National Forest Supervisor Scott Fitzwilliams.

In summary, off-road motorcycle riding is not an anti-environmental activity. It is a physically challenging activity that is enjoyed by many of Colorado's citizens as well as visitors from out of the state. The OHV community has always supported responsible riding and has funded its way through fees paid into the state OHV fund. We invite you to review the Responsible Recreation Foundation's user educational program called Stay the Trail Colorado at <http://staythetrail.org/>. Many view it as one of the best user education programs in the nation. , Lastly, we ask that you support our efforts in the Tenderfoot area and thank you for your time and attention to this outstanding project.

With Warmest Regards,



Don Riggle
Director of Operations
Trail Preservation Alliance



John Bongiovanni
Chairman, Board of Directors
COHVCO

Cc:

The Honorable Michael Bennet, United States Senate
The Honorable Scott Tipton, United States House of Representatives
Millie Hamner – Colorado House of Representatives
Karn Stiegelmier – Summit County Commissioner
Dan Gibbs – Summit County Commissioner
Thomas Davidson – Summit County Commissioner
Dan Jiron, Regional Forester, Rocky Mountain Region, US Forest Service
Scott Fitzwilliams – Forest Supervisor White River National Forest