



March 13, 2014

USFS Region 2 Offices
740 Simms
Golden CO

RE: Rollins Pass Road followup

Dear Sirs;

The Organizations above are contacting you regarding the restoration and reopening of the Rollins Pass Road in the Boulder Ranger District of the Arapahoe/Roosevelt National Forest and its status following the Boulder County Commissioners public meeting on this issue that occurred on February 13, 2014. This meeting was personally attended by County Commissioners from Gilpin and Grand Counties and approximately 300 or more members of the public. Testimony that was received from the public was overwhelmingly in favor of reopening the Rollins Pass Road and was received from a wide range of interest groups including Historical societies, local governments, local businesses, the motorized community, sportsman and railroad interests. Often the public displayed high levels of frustration regarding factual inaccuracies in presentations and positions taken by Boulder County and USFS representatives. Many comments were made that the issue appeared to have moved further away from resolution than ever before.

Prior to addressing the specific concerns regarding the importance of the Rollins Pass Road area, a brief summary of each Organization is needed. The Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition ("COHVCO") is a grassroots advocacy organization of approximately 150,000 registered OHV users in Colorado seeking to represent, assist, educate, and empower all OHV recreationists in the protection and promotion of off-highway motorized recreation throughout Colorado. COHVCO is an environmental organization that advocates and promotes the responsible use and conservation of our public lands and natural resources to preserve their aesthetic and recreational qualities for future generations.

The Trail Preservation Alliance ("TPA") is a 100 percent volunteer organization whose intention is to be a viable partner, working with the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of

Land Management (BLM) to preserve the sport of trail riding. The TPA acts as an advocate of the sport and takes the necessary action to insure that the USFS and BLM allocate to trail riding a fair and equitable percentage of access to public lands.

The Organizations believe a brief summary of the history of this issue is relevant to our concerns regarding the currently conflicted status of reopening the road. The Rollins Pass Road has a long history of motorized and rail usage originating early in the 1900's connecting Boulder and Winter Park, and provided access for many front range residents to dispersed recreational opportunities. This route continues to provide extensive recreational opportunity to a wide range of recreational users, even though users are not able to connect the two portion of the routes that remain. The usage of the Rollins Pass Road was the basis for significant discussion during the development of the James Peak Wilderness and Protection Area Act (PL 107-216). The Rollins Pass Road, which is predominately in Boulder County and a major concern for Gilpin and Grand Counties, was to be reopened as a tradeoff for the designation of significant Wilderness areas in Gilpin and Grand Counties which was a major concern for Boulder County. While the Legislation addressed the Rollins Pass Road, it did not specify the location of the route or level of maintenance that is to be provided on the route other than specifying a two wheel drive car would be able to use the route. It is the Organizations position that the lack of clarity in drafting has taken a small issue and allowed it to become far larger than it ever should have been.

Under the Legislation, the Forest Service was required to provide technical assistance with the reopening of the route. While the Wilderness areas have been immediately designated and closed to multiple usage since the passage of the James Peak Legislation, very little actual headway has occurred to move forward with reopening the Rollins Pass Road. Rather many think the issue has moved further from resolution than ever before. The James Peak Legislation specifically provided reopening of the road upon request of one of the impacted counties. The Organizations are aware that currently 3 of 4 counties impacted by this legislation have requested the Rollins Pass Road be reopened, and that several of the counties have requested as such almost every year since passage of the Legislation. While the process that is to be employed to achieve the reopening of the route is not clearly specified, the intent of all parties under this Legislation was clearly understood and should be honored.

Our concerns following the meeting are:

1. Reopening the Rollins Pass Road is only a small change in the total route as currently the majority of the route remains open on both sides. Only a small portion of the Rollins Pass Road at the Pass has been closed around the tunnel.

2. Safety concerns for users are often significantly overstated as most of the route remains open to multiple use. The route is no more unsafe than many other routes in the several counties involved.

3. Potential Wilderness impacts are not accurately assessed. The Rollins Pass area is heavily used for a variety of recreational activity even with the Tunnel portion of the road area being closed. Much of the Wilderness area is separated from multiple usage activity by significant natural barriers, and this was an issue that was addressed in the legislation with the inclusion no buffer language and boundaries.

4. Boulder County proposals include a complete reconstruction of the entire route. This is not what has been envisioned when the Legislation was adopted and has not been requested by any other party to the discussions.

5. Much of the reconstruction that is alleged to be needed is based on an inaccurate assessment and review of the conditions of the route. Many expenses and safety concerns could be minimized with an accurate analysis of issues and a genuine intent to move forward with reopening the Rollins Pass Road by all parties.

6. Significant conflict has arisen regarding an asserted desire to keep the route open year round. The Organizations are not aware of any intent by any party to keep the route open all four seasons.

Many of these issues could be resolved with technical assistance of the Forest Service, such as bringing the various parties involved together to facilitate a common starting point and hard deadlines for analysis of this issue and movement toward reopening the area. Many of the issues identified above have resulted in a significant rift developing between the county efforts to reopen the road, both in concerns and cost estimates for reopening the route. The Organizations believe that establishing a common starting point for analysis and a vehicle for meaningful discussions of issues with deadlines for performance would be a significant step forward and would be the type of technical expertise that was envisioned when the James Peak Legislation was passed into law.

The Organizations welcome your assistance in resolving this issue, in whatever form is found to be proper by the USFS. The Mile High Jeep Club has displayed significant interest in the reopening of the Rollins Pass Road and has volunteered to function as the point of contact on this issue. The best person to contact with Mile High Jeep is Jim Chambers and his phone is 303-345-1004 and his email is jameslchambers@hotmail.com. The Organizations remain ready willing and interested in assisting with facilitation of resolution of this issue in any way we can.

Sincerely,



D.E. Riggle, Director of Operations
Trail Preservation Alliance

Scott Jones, Esq.
COHVCO Co-Chairman
TPA Authorized Representative



John Bonngiovanni
COHVCO Chairman