



March 28, 2017

Pitkin County
Att: Board of County Commissioners
123 Emma Road Suite 106
Basalt, CO 81621

Re: Usage of OHVs on Pitkin County Roads

Dear Commissioners:

Please accept this correspondence as the vigorous support of the above Organizations for the Proposal opening specific roads the county or all roads with volumes less than 100 vehicles to OHV usage in Pitkin County to OHV usage. We apologize for not being able to attend recent public meetings on this issue but we wanted to provide the relevant information we have from other communities who have adopted similar proposals. Prior to addressing the specifics of this Proposal, we believe a brief summary of each Organization is needed. The Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition ("COHVCO") is a grassroots advocacy organization the 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. For purposes of this correspondence, TPA and COHVCO will be collectively referred to as "the Organizations".

Our Organizations vigorously support proposed expansion of roads that are legal to use OHVs in Pitkin County as it has been our experience that these expanded routes can significantly improve the recreational experiences of users, who are now able to connect many trails that currently exist in isolation from parking areas and other support facilities. The opening of municipal roads has allowed these isolated trails to become networks with parking and other

support facilities, which greatly improves the recreational experience. Some communities have also opened routes into communities to allow for increased access to other resources such as fuel stations and restaurants. The Organizations submit there are many routes in Pitkin County that could provide these opportunities to recreational users of the exceptional trail networks in the County.

The Organizations would also encourage a review of the level of traffic usage of county roads where OHV recreation would be permitted, which is currently placed at 100 vehicles per day. The USFS Eagle/Holy Cross Ranger District has performed extensive research on several forest service roads on that district with usages far in excess of 100 vehicles per day and reopened those routes to OHV usage without issue.

OHV recreation is an Economic Driver.

OHV recreation is a major economic contributor to Colorado communities. COHVCO recently commissioned a cooperative analysis of the economic contributions of OHV recreation in Colorado with Pinyon Environmental and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. This multi-year study concluded that OHV recreation contributed more than **\$2.3 Billion dollars** in economic contribution to Colorado communities, which resulted in more than 16,000 jobs and more than \$100 million in tax revenue to local communities. In Central Colorado OHV recreation contributed more than \$224 million in economic contribution which resulted in almost 3,000 jobs and more than \$41 million in tax revenues. We have included a complete copy of this research for your reference with these comments as Exhibit "1". This research also found that the motorized community is also one of the highest per day spending groups in all recreation. The Organizations believe it is important to many local communities to understand not only increased visitation to recreational opportunities but also how to increase revenues from this increased visitation.

The Organizations would also note that many localities in Colorado have opened municipal roads in order to improve recreational opportunities in their community. We have enclosed a complete copy of this list to date as Exhibit "2" and each community has seen significant increases in business and tax revenues with the increased visitation to their community. Representatives of Silverton, Colorado estimate a bump in tax revenues of almost \$100,000 since opening a portion of their community roads to OHV usage. We have also included a summary of the experiences of the Paiute Trail network in Utah, where multiple communities have opened routes to create a regional trail network to further support the economic benefits that are available to local communities from OHV recreation.

Safety.

The Organizations would like to address safety of usage of OHVs in conjunction with motor vehicles on county roads as this is also frequently a concern in discussions around opening county roads to OHV usage. Determining the proper levels of traffic usage of these roads appears to be a factor being reviewed in the Pitkin County discussions. The Organizations are aware that opening any county roads can be HIGHLY sight specific in nature due to the road surface, visibility and numerous other factors and that decisions must reflect these site specific issues. The Organizations are aware that there are many communities in Colorado that have already opened all or part of their municipal road network to OHV usage. None of these communities have identified significant increases in OHV related injuries after opening routes and we are not aware of a deterioration of recreational value of the route to other users as these roads are open to motor vehicle traffic currently. These conclusions are consistent with the experiences of states such as Arizona and Wyoming who have allowed large scale usage of OHVs on municipal roads for an extended period of time,

The Organizations are aware that this issue can be difficult to obtain information on and as a result we have included site specific research on this issue that was conducted on the Eagle/Holy Cross Ranger District in 2014 with traffic volumes ranging from 50 vehicles per day to almost 200 vehicles per day on average. Peak usage levels of these routes frequently exceeded 500 vehicles per day. This research indicates that there was no significant safety issue with mixed usage of these Forest Service roads. This research was very important in reopening the routes identified and more than 150 miles more of forest service roads on the Eagle/Holy Cross Ranger District. We have included the route specific analysis with these comments as we believe this is the most relevant information as Exhibit "3". A complete version of the environmental assessment and related decision documents on this project can be found here. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=41004>

Sound.

The Organizations are also aware that frequently sound levels from OHV usage of county roads is also a concern when municipalities are reviewing opening routes. At the landscape level, the Organizations would note that OHVs in Colorado are subject to very restrictive levels of sound and the Colorado testing procedure is far more vigorous than national standards. We have included background information on this lower level and new testing procedure with this correspondence as Exhibit "4".

The Organizations would also like to provide you with a copy of site specific sound testing that was done outside Dillon Colorado in conjunction with the US Forest Service proposals to expand motorized usage in the area. This study was done in conjunction with Summit County in response to landowner concerns about the new trail system as Exhibit "5". The Organizations are aware that this information is highly site specific and does not address areas within Pitkin

County but we believe the research is also very insightful into actual sound levels at locations. The study concluded that sound levels at each location did not exceed state levels and most sound at locations was the result of heavy truck traffic on high speed arterial roads in the area. We believe these conclusions are highly consistent with the experiences throughout the state and should provide additional levels of comfort to citizens who may be concerned about this issue. We have included a copy of this research with these comments for your reference.

Conclusion.

The Organizations vigorously ask for your support in expanding OHV opportunities in your community. Our Organizations vigorously support proposed expansion of roads that are legal to use OHVs in Pitkin County as it has been our experience that these expanded routes can significantly improve the recreational experiences of users, who are now able to connect many trails that currently exist in isolation from parking areas and other support facilities. The opening of municipal roads has allowed these isolated trails to become networks with parking and other support facilities, which greatly improves the recreational experience. Some communities have also opened routes into communities to allow for increased access to other resources such as fuel stations and restaurants. The Organizations submit there are many routes in Pitkin County that could provide these opportunities to recreational users of the exceptional trail networks in the County.

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Please feel free to contact Scott Jones at 518-281-5810 or by mail at 508 Ashford Drive, Longmont, CO 80504 if you should wish to discuss any of the concerns raised in this correspondence further.

Respectfully Submitted,



Scott Jones, Esq.
COHVCO, TPA Authorized Representative



D.E. Riggle
Director of Operations
Trails Preservation Alliance

