



August 16, 2017

Gunnison Ranger District
216 N. Colorado
Gunnison, CO 81230

Attn: Beth Anderson, Acting District Ranger & Matt McCombs, Incoming District Ranger

Closure and elimination of public access to the northern end of NFST 625

Dear Beth & Matt:

Please accept this correspondence on behalf of the Colorado Trails Preservation Alliance (TPA), the Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO), Central Colorado Mountain Riders (CCMR), Tomichi Trail Riders (TTR), and the Gunnison Valley O.H.V Alliance of Trailriders (G.O.A.T.S.).

We are writing you to document our concerns, but more importantly to present our offer of cooperation and potential resources to ensure continued access to NFST #625 in the Gunnison Ranger District of the Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests. It is our understanding that public access to the segment of NFST #625 from the intersection of NFSTs #625 and #474, north to the Marshall Pass County Road has been closed to public access, and that this closure is due to the absence of a legal USFS public use easement through private property near or adjoining the Marshall Pass County Road.

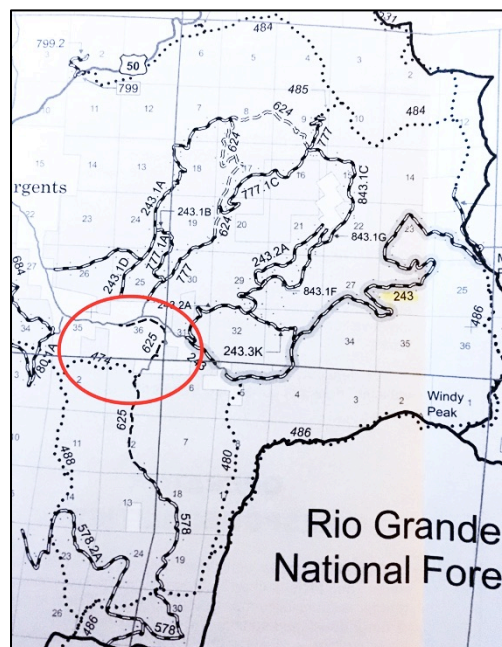


Figure 1. Excerpt from the 2011 Gunnison Public Lands Motor Vehicle Travel Map

We fully understand the issues and complexities associated with USFS public use easements through private property, the often-arduous process of negotiations with landowners and the passion associated with landowner property rights. However, this particular closure and loss of access has substantial impacts and antagonistic affects to OHV recreation in this area and specifically causes an obvious reduction in historic and cherished riding opportunities for motorcycles. Therefore we are offering our assistance and potentially a spectrum of our resources to assist you and the Gunnison Ranger District in re-establishing access to NFST #625.

In order to facilitate a prompt re-establishment of trail access (*e.g. we are aware that there are opportunities for a short bypass, approximately 3/8 of mile in length and other opportunities for more lengthy re-routes*) and to help curtail the potential for future conflicts between trail users of this historic access, the property owner and your USFS staff, we request an immediate in-person meeting (preferably onsite) to discuss and better understand your USFS concerns, constraints and review potential actions for resolution. We would offer that the urgency of this issue will be exacerbated with the rapidly approaching hunting season, therefore our prompt collaboration and cooperation will be beneficial to all parties involved but most importantly to you, the USFS and the trail users. To facilitate the conversation and make for a productive meeting, we request that as a minimum the following topics be discussed:

- *Prior to the most recent property owner, was there a formal or an informal easement with any previous property owner(s)?*
- *If there was an easement prior to the most recent property sale/transfer, was that easement documented in writing by the USFS and or recorded with the Saguache County Clerk? Was that easement (if there was indeed one) Temporary or Permanent?*
- *Were negotiations conducted with the existing/new property owner to renew or establish a new public use easement? What is the current status of any ongoing negotiations for an easement?*
- *What is the status of a trail re-route or a new trail to re-establish access to NFST #625? How will this trail re-route be funded? What NEPA actions are required prior to construction of a re-route and what is the status of any required NEPA actions?*
- *Review the process and timeline eliminating the northern portion of NFST #625 from the most current MVUM.*

The TPA along with our partner clubs, have concerns that the situation eliminating access to NFST #625 may once again be an action by the Gunnison National Forest that we feel demonstrates an unenthusiastic attitude toward OHV Recreation and does not go far enough to work diligently and proactively to provide quality and dispersed OHV recreational opportunities for one of the largest recreational user groups of the Gunnison National Forest. That this action eliminating access to NFST #625, has similarities in our opinion to the “emergency closures” of dispersed camping in the Tincup and Gothic areas that many of our constituents feel is directed specifically at OHV recreationalist.

We look forward to hearing from you soon. I am available for immediate discussion via telephone at 719-338-4106.

Sincerely,

Don Riggle

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

cc

Scott Haas, USFS Region 2

Scott Armentrout, Forest Supervisor

Greg Austin, Gunnison Ranger District

Central Colorado Mountain Riders (CCMR)

Tomichi Trail Riders (TTR)

Gunnison Valley O.H.V Alliance of Trailriders (G.O.A.T.S.)

Paul A. Turke, MSBT Law