



## **TRAIL RIDERS BRING SUIT CHALLENGING RICO WEST DOLORES PLAN**

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Denver, CO: Several organizations recently filed a lawsuit challenging the Rico West Dolores Travel Management Project Decision on the Dolores District of the San Juan National Forest. The parties bringing the suit are the Trails Preservation Alliance, San Juan Trail Riders, and Public Access Preservation Association, whose members have long enjoyed motorcycle access along prized single-track trails within the Project area. The Decision would close roughly 30 percent of those trails, and impose seasonal restrictions eliminating motorcycle use between November 1 and May 31. The case was filed in federal court for the U.S. District of Colorado, bringing claims under the National Forest Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, various regulations and the Administrative Procedure Act.

“This area has received sustainable trail use by diverse users, including motorcyclists, for more than 40 years,” said Gary Wilkinson with the San Juan Trail Riders. “This Decision, roughly a decade in the making, is mostly a solution in search of a problem that unnecessarily pits trail users against one another where there is ample room to get along,” Wilkinson added. “Our organizations have long partnered with the Forest Service and other users to define and support effective trail management, but this Decision crossed a line which we must defend,” added Don Riggle of the Trails Preservation Alliance.

The planning process leading to the Decision followed an earlier round of litigation brought by anti-access groups represented by the Colorado Law School, seeking to close 14 trails to all motorcycle use. The Forest Service, with the trail riding groups as intervenors, successfully defended that earlier lawsuit, which ended in a 2015 Tenth Circuit decision penned by then Judge Gorsuch finding the case lacked jurisdiction and allowing motorcycle travel to continue. The Forest Service followed that successful defense with the now-challenged Decision, rewarding anti-access interests with closures previously rejected by the courts. The lawyer for the motorcycle riders in both rounds of litigation is Paul Turcke of Boise, Idaho.

The trails at issue are found in an area along the Dolores River, generally between Durango and Telluride in southwestern Colorado. The case is in its early stages, and will likely proceed into 2019 under the Court’s Administrative Procedure docket.

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