



Mr. Tom Rice
Dolores Ranger District – SJNF
29211 Hwy. 184
Dolores, CO 81323

October 21, 2015

Re: Nordic Trail Proposal for Dunton Hot Springs

Mr. Rice:

Thank you for the correspondence to members of the San Juan Trail Riders organization (SJTR) for solicitation of comments on the Dolores District proposal to support the development of a Nordic Trail System to enhance the winter recreation opportunities for paying guests at Dunton Hot Springs. As you well know, SJTR members and other single-track motorized enthusiasts recreate in this area primarily during summer months on trails near the boundaries of Dunton Hot Springs. However, many of our members and other motorized users also find winter recreation in the nearby area via snowmobile travel so we have made sure to communicate with them to ensure that their concerns are reflected in our comments.

Our comments/concerns would be as follows:

1. SJTR has strong concerns about the future of motorized (snowmobile, snow cycle) use in this area as to how it might be impacted once the Nordic Trail System is established. Historically, cross-country users in other areas on the SJNF, where similar trails have been established near snowmobile activity, begin to complain about noise from motorized activities disrupting their skiing experience and begin petitioning the FS to take action to remove snowmobiling activity. SJTR would ask that it be made perfectly clear that this entire area is multiple-use/joint-use and there would be no intention of changing use with the proposal of this Nordic Trail System.
2. The proposal states that the groomed trails would be open to the public. Will appropriate areas be developed for the public to have access to the trails (e.g. trail head unloading area, parking, public toilet facilities, etc)? Will the general public have the same access hours as Dunton Hot Springs paying users? SJTR would hope to see that the Nordic Trail usage by the public be identical to that of Dunton Hot Springs and without additional charges.
3. The Dolores District has noted in multiple OHV meetings that it has few if any resources to develop new trails and provide adequate trail maintenance for existing trails. How does the Dolores District intend to support the overall development and oversight of this new system? In other words, where does the funding and manpower come from?

The concern is that this trails project would appear to add to an already overloaded agency budget and staff availability. SJTR would like to know that agency resources would not be stretched by the implementation of this proposal since it is mainly for the profit of Dunton Hot Springs.

4. SJTR finds it somewhat hypocritical, and almost laughable, that Dunton Hot Springs vehemently opposes motorized recreation in and around their resort during summer months but now fully utilizes motorized equipment (snowmobiles, snow tractors and mechanical grooming eq., and snow taxis) to enhance their paying resort guest experiences. SJTR would expect to hear that the agency ensures that all newly introduced equipment meet the 96dba sound / spark arrestor requirement as established for all motorized equipment.
5. The proposal also mentions guided tours to be implemented with this proposal but it is not clear as to the routes of the guided tours, how they would be conducted and if the same routes would be available to the general public. SJTR would like to be ascertained that developed tour routes on public lands be available also to the general public.
6. SJTR finds it somewhat ironic that the Nordic Trail System is to be developed into a “loop” trail system. It should be fascinating to note that most all trail travelers, whether it be on summer or winter trails highly desire “loop” experiences, not out-and-back routes. SJTR believes there is merit in utilizing this concept should this proposal be approved.

SJTR has the opinion that Dunton Hot Springs has not represented themselves as “good neighbors” in interaction with the OHV community. Although the leadership/membership of SJTR generally finds it highly justifiable to oppose most anything that Dunton Hot Springs desires to do to enhance the profits of their resort while they continue to sponsor aggressive opposition to any motorized activity near their resort during the summer months, SJTR will not oppose this proposal. SJTR will not oppose most any recreational development project that enhances opportunity for the public on public lands even if it is created primarily for the profit of private business but does provide some spin-off of use for the general public. Again, the SJTR Organization appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Respectfully,

Allen C. Christy (Director) for: San Juan Trail Riders Board of Directors

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