



August 7, 2017

USFS Dolores Public Lands Office
Derek Padilla, District Ranger
29211 Highway 184
Dolores Colorado 81323

Re: TRAVEL MANAGEMENT – RICO WEST DOLORES ROADS AND TRAILS PROJECT

Dear Mr. Padilla:

Last winter, a group of outdoor enthusiasts and representatives from the Town of Rico formed the **Rico Trails Alliance** (“**RTA**”) as a Colorado nonprofit and 501(c)(3) organization. RTA’s mission is to promote local and regional non-motorized trails in and around the historic Town of Rico. On our website (www.ricotrailsalliance.org) we have begun inventorying and mapping existing trails, both Forest Service and non-Forest Service. We are also identifying areas for creation of new trails to link up existing trails.

While RTA focuses on non-motorized use, we recognize that both motorized and non-motorized uses and users must co-exist. Historically, off-road motorcycles have had access to a majority of the Forest Service trails and roads between Lizardhead Pass and the town of Dolores, Colorado (all except Groundhog/Stock Trail and Colorado Trail). RTA welcomes this opportunity to comment in support of a management plan for our region that would respect this history, while protecting high alpine areas, residential neighborhoods and non-motorized users from the impacts inherent to motorized use on trails not constructed to handle such impacts.

Adopting management plan ALTERNATIVES B or C, with some variations, would be the best approach to accomplishing this. Specifically, RTA would like the Forest Service to adopt a travel management plan that incorporates the following:

1. Develop Rio Grand Southern 3 as a non-motorized trail;
2. Close Burnett Creek to motorized use and allow motorized use of Horse Creek or Wildcat instead;
3. Decommission only unusable portions of Upper Ryman Creek and allow for an alternative Lower/Upper Ryman interconnect;
4. Close motorized use of East Fork (638) until damaged areas are repaired/rerouted; and
5. Allow motorized use of West Fall Creek (640).

1. Develop Rio Grand Southern 3 as a Non-motorized Trail:

The Rio Grand Southern 3 appears to be that portion of the historic railroad grade that runs through the East Dolores river valley from the bridge at the Montezuma/Dolores county line into the Town of Rico. A continuous trail does not exist in here, but several sections of the railroad grade are heavily utilized by hikers, runners, horseback riders and mountain bikers. This area also contains important historic resources, including coke ovens, old railroad trestles, a historic water tank, etc.

The Rio Grand Southern 3 route has been identified by RTA and the Rico community as one of few existing grades in the area that is suitable for family and beginner-level recreation. Motorized designation would compromise the potential contribution of this route to the Rico area. RTA would like to work with the Forest Service, the Town of Rico and adjacent property owners to develop the Rio Grand Southern 3 into a continuous non-motorized trail that leads into the Town of Rico. RTA has retained a grant writer to raise funds for the trail's signage and other infrastructure (including a bridge). RTA will supply volunteer labor under its agreement with the Forest Service and will contract for additional labor, with groups such as the Southwest Conservation Corps or similar entities, for the trail's installation and annual maintenance.

2. Close Motorized Use on Burnett Creek:

ALTERNATIVES B and C both allow for motorized use of Burnett Creek. Burnett Creek should be closed to motorized use, and motorized use should be allowed in Horse Creek or Wildcat instead. To access the base of Burnett Creek from Highway 145, users must travel through the Town of Rico, and the trail itself begins in West Rico. Prohibiting motorized use of Burnett Creek will protect this quiet residential neighborhood from the dust, traffic, noise and safety problems that occur with heavy motorized off-road vehicle traffic. If designated as non-motorized, RTA will supply volunteer labor for annual maintenance under its volunteer agreement entered with the Forest Service.

Horse Creek is the most appropriate point and the quickest means for motorized ingress and egress between the Calico Trail and Highway 145. A staging area exists along Highway 145 at Horse Creek's entrance. Wildcat could also be utilized, in lieu of Burnett, for motorized access to the Calico Trail.

3. Decommission only unusable portions of Upper Ryman and improve Lower Ryman with an interconnect and reroutes:

Upper Ryman must remain open in order to prevent Lower Ryman from becoming a dead end trail. Accordingly, RTA supports decommissioning of only those portions of the Upper Ryman Trail that are severely damaged (trenched) and making the improvements discussed below as well as a non-motorized limitation of both Upper and Lower Ryman as set forth in Alternatives B and C.

Heading east on the Lower Ryman Creek trail from Highway 145, a location is reached where Upper Ryman intersects (entering from the left) with Lower Ryman Creek trail.

This lower portion of Upper Ryman climbs a steep, severely eroded and channelized trail. This portion of Upper Ryman should be decommissioned.

As you continue east on Lower Ryman trail, the trail eventually becomes heavily wooded, very steep and is currently unusable. A reroute is necessary here in order to connect the eastern end of the Lower Ryman Creek Trail to the Upper Ryman Creek trail with a reasonable grade. The new interconnect could be designed in way that avoids the severe degradation present on the lower section of Upper Ryman. An additional section of Upper Ryman, that is higher up, also needs a reroute. Like the lower section of Upper Ryman this is also very steep, severely eroded and barely useable. With these new improvements Ryman Creek will be a very usable/enjoyable trail for ascending as well as descending. This will allow additional options for interconnecting loop trails with both the Colorado Trail and Salt Creek trail. RTA will partner with the Southwest Colorado Cycling Association and support the Forest Service on the above improvements to Ryman trail through volunteer labor under its volunteer agreement entered with the Forest Service.

4. Close Motorized use of the East Fork Trail (638) until damage can be repaired:

The East Fork Trail is damaged near the point of being unusable by anyone. Motorized use should not occur on East Fork unless and until the trail can be restored and maintained. The East Fork trail crosses quite a few wet areas and those spots should be avoided by rerouting the trail where possible.

5. Allow Motorized Use of West Fall Creek (640)

Motorized use of West Fall Creek (640) trail will allow off-road motorcycles to access Calico Trail from the Dunton Road, since Johnny Bull (639) is currently closed.

Respectfully submitted,

RICO TRAILS ALLIANCE



Mike Guskea (Aug 7, 2017)

BY: _____
Mike Guskea, President