



December 7, 2020

Great Old Broads for Wilderness (Broads) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the non-motorized grant applications. Our Northern San Juan chapter that encompasses four counties with the majority of our members in Ouray and Montrose Counties strongly supports the Ouray Ranger District Trail Maintenance application.

Our chapter works closely with the USFS Ouray District on solitude monitoring in two wilderness areas, and our members collect trail condition data and conduct signage inventories and campsite assessments across the district. Our organization regularly partners with Colorado Mountain Club on stewardship and advocacy projects and we know Julie Mach (Conservation Director) personally. Julie is an excellent program manager, talented educator, skilled communicator and resourceful collaborator. In fact, our members were trained by Julie to utilize CMC's application entitled Recreation Inventory Management System (RIMS) (whose design and implementation was funded by CPW) to conduct many of our USFS surveys.

In addition to our members' volunteer work with the USFS, we are also avid hikers, backpackers and wildlife watchers who utilize the trails in the mountain region of the Ouray District extensively. We can attest to the need for constant maintenance on our non-motorized trails due to avalanches, tree fall resulting from insect infestation and wind, spring run off, increased use, and trail braiding due to livestock grazing. The addition of a CMC crew to assist the USFS will be a great benefit for current needs as well as a backlog of maintenance projects.

Our members are familiar with all the trails highlighted in the grant application as needing particular attention, and we applaud the effort to address this need. We would also like to highlight that our trail system is a valuable asset to our region that (in addition to providing opportunities for recreation, health and renewal during these challenging times) fuels our local economy as residents and visitors alike bring their dollars to our local businesses.

For years, through collaboration with the USFS, the local volunteer Ouray Trails Group (OTG) has maintained 300 miles of trail in and adjacent to Ouray County. OTG board members and volunteers possess extensive knowledge of the trail system in the region as well as considerable skill in trail maintenance and safe use of tools. We ask that if this grant is awarded (as we hope it will be) that the hired CMC trail crew work cooperatively with OTG honoring and capitalizing upon their vast knowledge and

expertise. Coordination of this effort between the three entities (USFS, CMC & OTG) will ensure a productive season - with time and resources used efficiently in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Finally, in keeping with our organization's mission of protecting wild places and particularly unfragmented expansive landscapes, we acknowledge that maintenance of existing trails is critical to their sustainable use. Through regular maintenance and improvement of trail conditions, we not only protect natural resources but also potentially reduce the demand for more trails that fragment habitat. Better maintained trails can support more use, and we can attest to the exponential increase in trail use during this pandemic as people seek time in nature for physical health and mental rejuvenation.

Broads has commented repeatedly for CPW's Trails Program to prioritize maintenance grants over construction of or planning for new trails. The Ouray Ranger District Trail Maintenance application is exactly the kind of proposal we can support whole-heartedly.

We urge you to fully fund this project and would be happy to discuss our comments further if you have questions or need for further information. Thank you!!

Sincerely,
Robyn Cascade, Volunteer Leader
Northern San Juan Broadband
northersanjuanbroadband@gmail.com