Hello, my name is Sallie Thoreson. I am a member of the Northern San Juans chapter of Great Old Broads for Wilderness. Along with other organizations, Broads has continued to advocate for wildlife concerns within the State Trails grants program.

I wanted to draw the attention of the Committee - , and all-, to the article “Drought” in the May-June 2023 issue of Colorado Outdoors. The last page quotes Amy Seglund, CPW species conservation coordinator. She discusses concerns for 3 bird species -white-tailed ptarmigan, brown-capped rosy finches and pinyon jays. As with all things in nature, it is not a simple relationship - that drought causes stress on species. As Amy points out, drought (and other conditions) may bring more people into the environment for recreation- as people move to higher elevation to recreate and use lower elevation trails earlier in the Spring and later in the fall. CPW doesn’t know why lower reproductive rates and sex ratios are happening with WTP : do warmer temp lead to greater male fledglings, do females have lower survival, is moisture impacting reproduction, are more people in the backcountry disrupting the species? To help address this issue, how is this guideline from the *Guide to Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind* followed “Implement seasonal trail closures for all trail users from May 1 through July 15 within white-tailed Ptarmigan winter habitat and overall range.”

Another example is that Pinyons Jays are best protected during colony breeding time in Feb-March. This, thankfully, is covered when seasonal trail closures for big game species are designated and strictly enforced during December 1 to April 15. But Pinyon Jay breeding colonies can move, and may need specific protections if they are outside of a current wildlife closure zone or have other impacts from recreational trail use.

These are just 2 examples of how wildlife species protection may interact with recreational trail construction and use.

So I urge the State Trails Committee and trails programs to 1) ensure that CPW include comments from non-game species coordinators when presenting wildlife comments to grant applicants, 2) urge following practices in the *Guide to Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind*, 3) continue to consider the changing needs of wildlife, 4) pay particular attention to closing user created trails since they are designed with wildlife in mind, and 5g) perhaps hearing more from CPW on their role in managing all threats to the 55 Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the state. Thank you.

s CPW -wildlife section, parks, and trails to be nimble and innovative in keeping up with needs of wildlife. For trails that means, know

2015 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Colorado’s SWAP 55 , the threats to the species and habitats upon which they depend, and an articulation of strategies that can be employed to lessen those threats.

included a map of Crucial habitat for Tier 1 terrestrial animal and plant SGCN. Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

Tier 1 list to represent the species which are truly of highest conservation priority in the state. w Tier 1 list of 55 species. Fifty-five species have been identified as Tier 1 SGCN, including 2 amphibians, 13 birds, 25 fish, 13 mammals, and 2 reptiles (Table 3) The revised Tier 2 SGCN list of vertebrates and mollusks contains 104 species, including 8 amphibians, 48 birds, 2 fish, 23 mammals, 14 reptiles, and 9 mollusks. O

BMP’s

White-tailed Ptarmigan ✓ Implement seasonal trail closures for all trail users from May 1 through July 15 within white-tailed Ptarmigan winter habitat and overall range. White-tailed Ptarmigan breed in alpine habitats at or above treeline. Nest sites are located in snow free rocky areas or near alpine willow shrubs or spruce krummholz trees. In summer, males and broods are often found near receding snowfields and rocky areas at higher elevations. In winter, this species occupies willow-dominated basins or riparian areas at or below treeline where snow is available for roosting.

Boreal Toads (State Endangered) ✓ Avoid trail construction within 300 meters of boreal toad breeding sites. ✓ Limit tree removal and minimize trail width, winter grooming, and snow compaction within boreal toad overall range. ✓ Within boreal toad overall range, consult with local CPW field staff to identify and avoid specific boreal toad breeding sites. Boreal toads inhabit a variety of high-altitude wet habitats – such as marshes, wet meadows, streams, beaver ponds, glacial kettle ponds, and subalpine forest lakes- at altitudes primarily between 8,000-11,500 feet. They are Colorado’s only alpine amphibian and an indicator of the environmental health of our mountain streams and wetlands.

We appreciate that the TMP provides for seasonal trail closures to protect pinyon jay nesting colonies.

Direct impacts may continue to occur from human presence in the colony area during the sensitive time for nest establishment (February – March). February – March is considered a sensitive time for Pinyon Jay nest establishment as these are the months when Pinyon Jays are most likely to abandon nests (Seglund personal comm. 2022). The seasonal travel limitation for motorized and mechanized travel from December 1 to April 15 for big game winter range protection in RMZ 2 per the 2020 UFO RMP may minimize some impacts to nesting Pinyon Jay during the sensitive time for nest establishment. Additionally, human use (foot and horse) is often limited during this time because of snow cover or muddy trails. 4.4.4 Effects Common to All Alternatives Impacts to migratory bird habitat are well documented in literature. Trails create and increase amount of edge habitat which can be associated with a reduction in breeding success (Lafferty et al., 2006) and influence how much time species spend at nests (Verhulst et al., 2001). Reducing time at a nest can increase opportunities for nest predation from common nest predators such as corvids. Available nesting habitat can be decreased when migratory birds don’t nest by trails. Miller et al. (1998) found that certain bird species were less likely to nest by a trail and that species composition and abundance was altered. RMZ 1 does not have a seasonal travel limitation and there are typically snow free trails during this sensitive nesting time for Pinyon Jay. Indirect impacts to nesting Pinyon Jay may continue to occur in RMZ 1 and/or RMZ 2 from human presence. Indirect impacts may occur such as increased nest predation or nest abandonment. Human presence can increase occurrence of predators such as common ravens (Walker et al. 2015), which are common predators of nestling Pinyon Jays. Human presence, such as repeated trail use, has been shown to affect both avian abundance and richness (Riffell et al. 1996). A reduction in reproductive output was observed for Pinyon Jay colonies located near urban interfaces in Montrose, Colorado (Seglund et al. 2021) and this finding could suggest that human activity, such as target shooting, trash dumping or recreational pressure from hikers may contribute to an interruption in nesting.

5,800 to 7,000 feet and is dominated by open pinyon juniper woodlands of various age classes, open desert scrub-shrub, adobe badlands and mixed mountain shrublands. The planning area supports habitat for mule deer and elk.

wanted to end with a quote from the author Barry Lopez, who said:

Because mankind can circumvent evolutionary law, it is incumbent upon him, say evolutionary biologists, to develop another law to abide by if he wishes to survive, to not outstrip his food base. **He must learn restraint.** He must derive some other, wiser way of behaving toward the land. He must be more attentive to the biological imperatives of the system of sun-driven protoplasm upon which he, too, is still dependent… Having taken on his own destiny, he must now think with critical intelligence about where to defer.

6 Human Intrusions & Disturbance 6.1 Recreational Activities Colorado residents and visitors are fortunate in the vast array of recreation opportunities our state has to offer. However, when not managed appropriately, recreationists can have significant impacts on native wildlife. Access roads fragment habitat, construction and use of trails introduce weeds, and the presence of humans and their pets can disturb wildlife, potentially Colorado’s 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan 74 leading to abandonment of nest sites, feeding or wintering areas, and other important habitats. Hiking and climbing too close to cliff faces and edges disturbs nesting raptors, and caving can cause abandonment of bat maternity roosts and winter hibernacula. Off-road vehicles can damage stream crossings, wetlands, and vegetation; lead to increased erosion and sedimentation; spread noxious weeds; and facilitate poaching. In addition, noise, unpredictable human presence, and disturbance from motorized recreation can lead to wildlife avoiding or abandoning habitat. Any disturbance during winter (skiing, snowmobiling) that causes wildlife to flee could result in an expenditure of energy reserves needed to survive winter.